

# Destination Stratford


## 2022 Year in Review



## 2022 YEAR IN REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS:

1. Destination Marketing
2. Destination Development
3. Destination Management



“Thank you so much for this post StratfordON! Dining in Stratford makes for a delicious summer!” - Adam W. 

“Be sure to bring an empty cooler and wear stretchy pants when visiting Stratford. There is no shortage of delicious food in this town.” - @amandaofavery 

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](https://visitstratford.ca/about)

As we entered into 2022, the Government of Ontario began gradually easing pandemic public health measures, cautiously allowing increased capacities and resuming normalcies province-wide. The local tourism and business sectors were optimistic and ready to welcome back visitors to our destination. The team at Destination Stratford worked diligently to find innovative and creative collaborations and new strategic partnerships to aid in continued economic recovery and support for the local tourism industry. The organization ensured marketing campaigns were built with flexibility should public health measures change, and looked ahead to create storytelling ideas to entice both regional and overnight visitors year-round.

Over \$1,000,000 in Federal and Provincial grants were successfully obtained in 2022 providing direct investments in the community for destination development and management projects such as Stratford Al Fresco, Boathouse Public Washroom Expansion Project and Lights On Stratford. Destination Stratford is pleased to share highlights, performance results and successes for 2022.

“The Tom Patterson Theatre IS stunning!

We are soooo lucky to have this building in Stratford! I have enjoyed concerts, theatre productions and talks in this space this year and look forward to many more.”

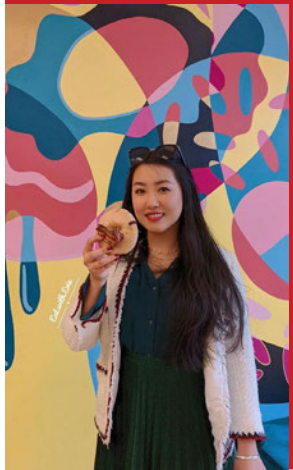
- Cathy R. 

“Bravo Stratford. It’s all so amazing. I visited Shakespeare Gardens numerous times, even during a snowstorm - it’s magical.” - @sillygoatstudio 

**1. DESTINATION MARKETING** Destination Stratford successfully executed compelling marketing campaigns throughout the year across multi-media platforms including: strategic print marketing, radio campaigns, contesting, broadcast TV, social media and influencer marketing. As a result, there was a significant increase in destination awareness both in-person and online which could be measured through website statistics, culinary trail sales and an increase in social media followers and engagement. Creating compelling destination marketing initiatives that were measurable and set Stratford apart from competing destinations was an important area of focus in 2022.

**32**  
INFLUENCER  
CAMPAIGNS

**823,657**  
INFLUENCER CAMPAIGN SOCIAL REACH



**27,066** LIKES

**1,313** COMMENTS

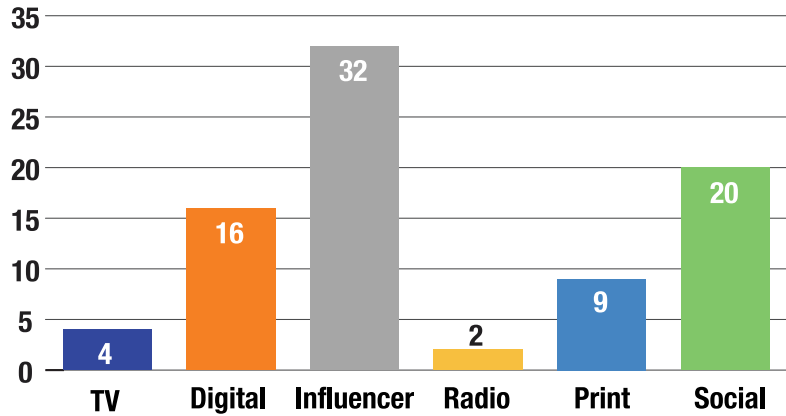
**9,924** SHARES

**667,771** VIDEO VIEWS

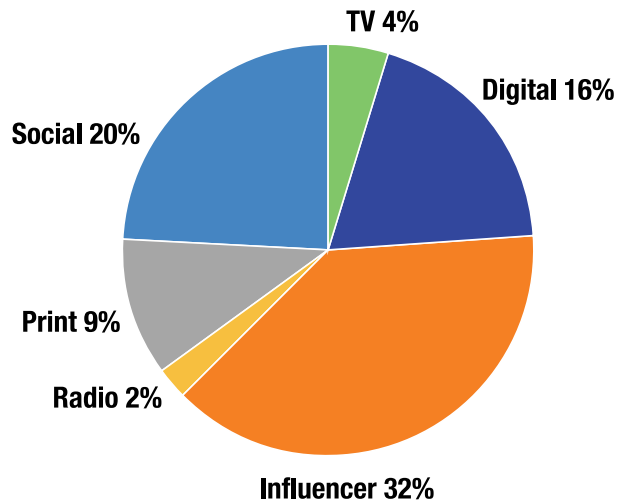
Destination Stratford captured **over 100** tourism related articles and blogs across print, online and radio channels including content generated directly by our team. The team distributed 12 press releases and conducted multiple interviews across local and regional outlets. The captured articles covered 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.



## 2022 MARKETING CAMPAIGNS (83) BY CHANNEL



## 2022 ADVERTISING SPEND BY CHANNEL



## Digital Promotion with Google Ad Grants

In 2022, Destination Stratford spent their first full year working with a local digital marketing firm, Louise Street Marketing. Because of this innovative firm working so closely with the Destination Stratford marketing team, there was an increase of 9% in overall traffic coming from the Google search ads that were created, bringing the annual total percentage of referral traffic from this source to 15%. The total in free ads gained through this program in 2022 was \$103,827 and represents 64,772 clicks to the VisitStratford.ca site. Google Ad Grant ads appear next to search results when people search for terms that match the relevant terms that Louise Street has set up for ads to appear. Louise Street Marketing is paid a monthly management fee for their work on our behalf.

*“Stratford is a great place for walking and garden strolls and not just the large formal gardens. Homeowners have amazing front gardens, planting veggies and herbs on the boulevard of the main street, the beauty is everywhere. The plays, shopping, restaurants you have everything.”*  
- @margaretmc556

*“We love Stratford! My parents brought me for the first time when I was a teenager, and we’ve visited many times over the years. I loved being able to celebrate Mother’s Day in Stratford with her this year. 💕💕”* - @withwonderandwhimsy

*“Thanks for having me, Stratford is the perfect place for a weekend getaway 💕💕 I thoroughly enjoyed all the restaurants, shops and activities to do around town”* - @evie.officially

# Social Media 2022 Growth

**INSTAGRAM** = 27% increase (Jan 2022: 9,413 | Dec 2022 11,977)

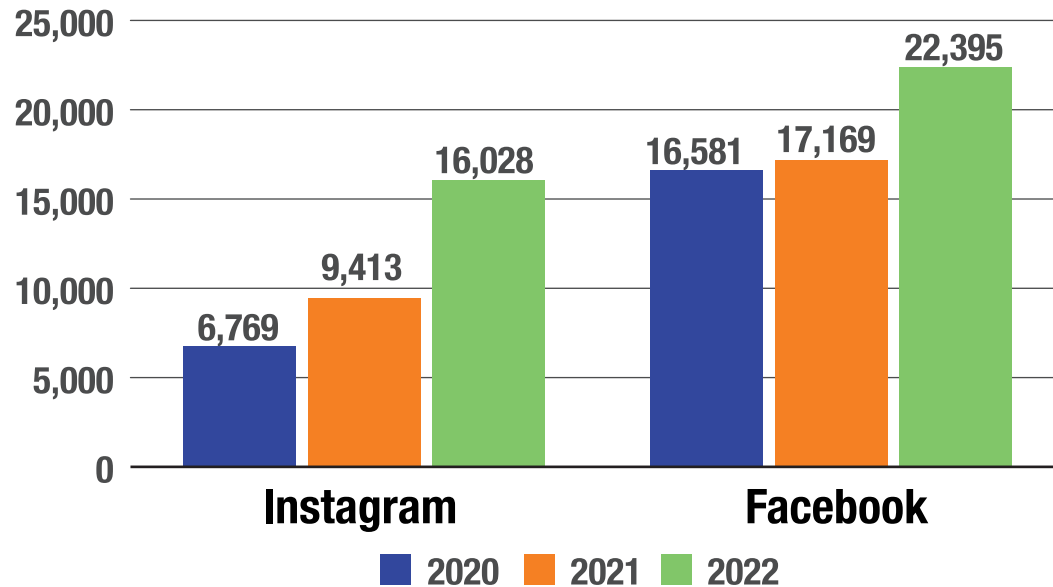
**FACEBOOK** = 8% increase (Jan 2022: 17,169 | Dec 2022 18,595)

**DESTINATION STRATFORD + LIGHTS ON STRATFORD:**

**INSTAGRAM** = 70% increase (Jan 2022: 9,413 | Dec 2022 16,028)

**FACEBOOK** = 30% increase (Jan 2022: 17,169 | Dec 2022 22,395)

Instagram & Facebook Follower Growth



\*2022 metrics include Lights On Stratford social media channels with 4,051 followers on Instagram and 3,800 followers on Facebook

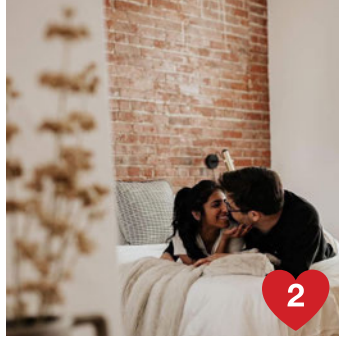


# Top 10 engaged Instagram posts of 2022



1

Total Engagement: 1,437  
Total Reach: 5,834



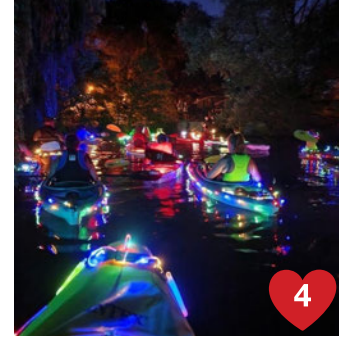
2

Total Engagement: 1,393  
Total Reach: 5,473



3

Total Engagement: 1,024  
Total Reach: 3,595



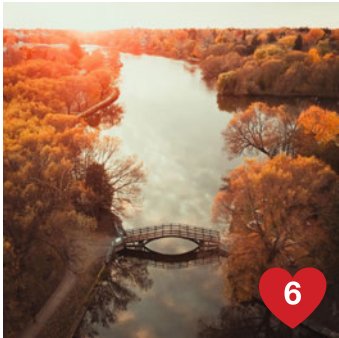
4

Total Engagement: 848  
Total Reach: 7,093



5

Total Engagement: 733  
Total Reach: 5,653



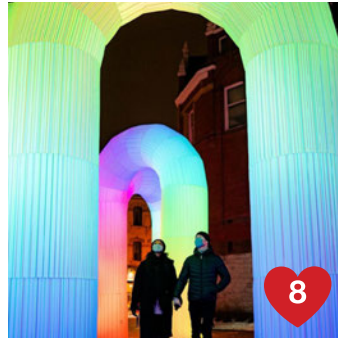
6

Total Engagement: 603  
Total Reach: 4,451



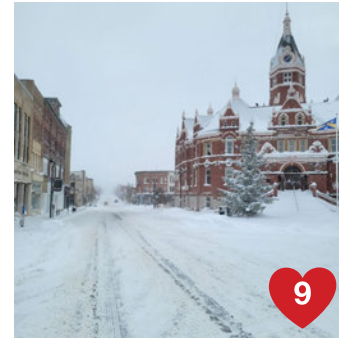
7

Total Engagement: 594  
Total Reach: 4,806



8

Total Engagement: 564  
Total Reach: 6,899



9

Total Engagement: 546  
Total Reach: 4,478



10

Total Engagement: 514  
Total Reach: 3,103

# Top 10 engaged **Facebook** posts of 2022



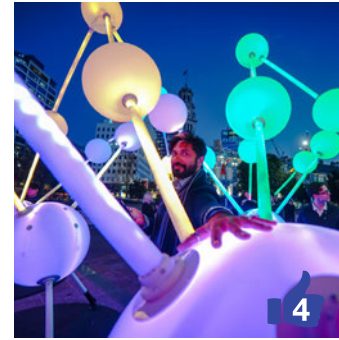
Total Engagement: 2,020  
Total Reach: 90,162



Total Engagement: 1,962  
Total Reach: 30,383



Total Engagement: 1,159  
Total Reach: 28,556



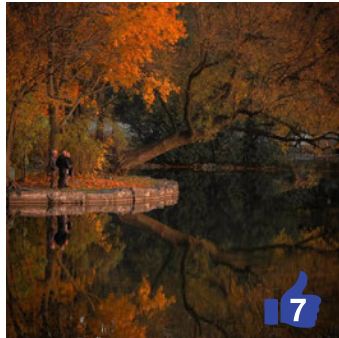
Total Engagement: 689  
Total Reach: 25,306



Total Engagement: 463  
Total Reach: 19,757



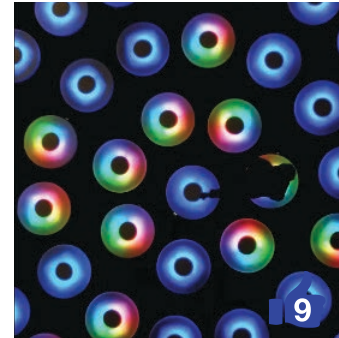
Total Engagement: 446  
Total Reach: 9,068



Total Engagement: 443  
Total Reach: 8,439



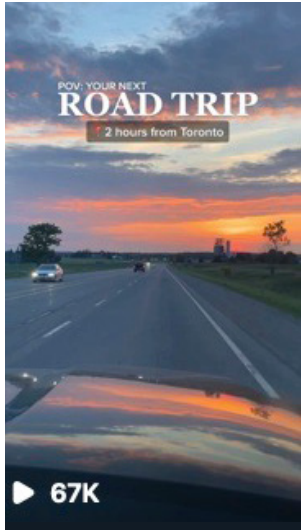
Total Engagement: 416  
Total Reach: 25,699



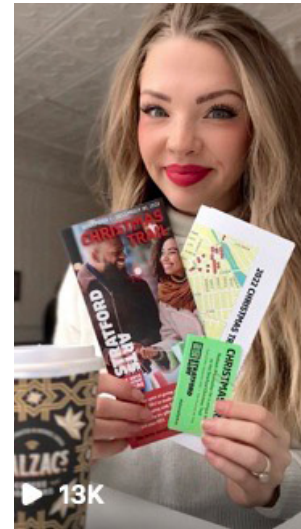
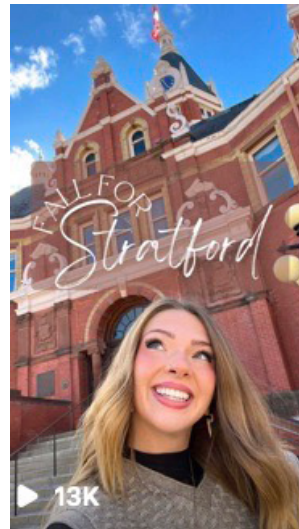
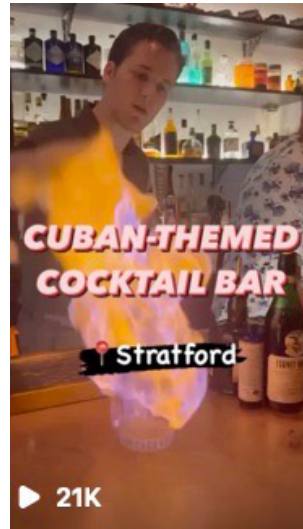
Total Engagement: 354  
Total Reach: 13,102



Total Engagement: 337  
Total Reach: 31,461



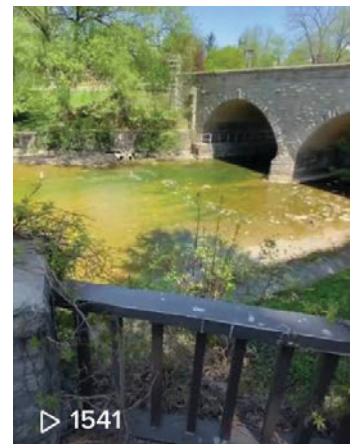
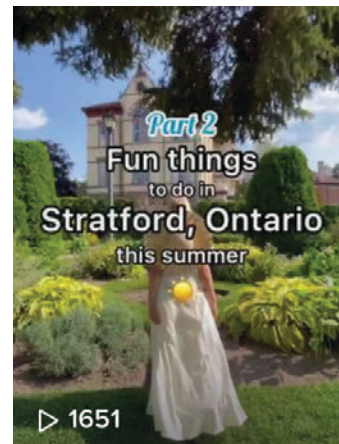
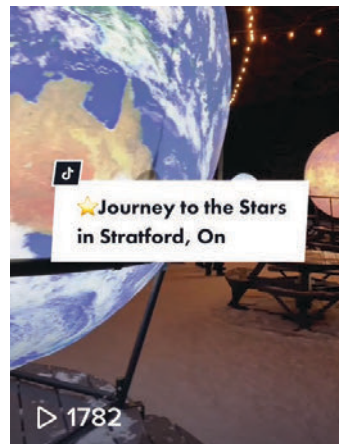
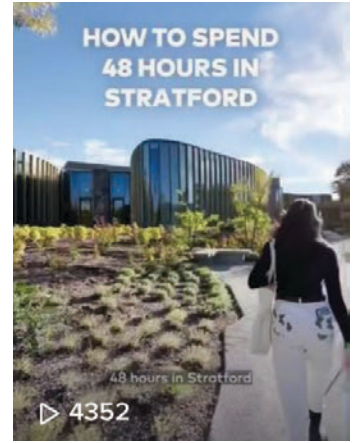
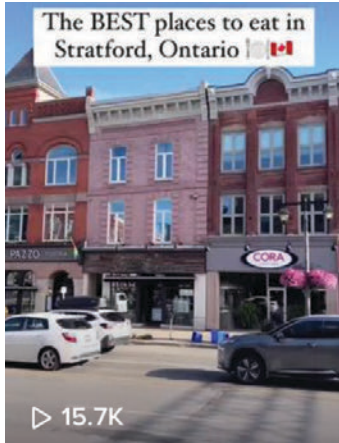
# Top 10 Instagram reels of 2022



“Thanks for having me!  
This campaign has been so successful, reposts on so many larger accounts plus the reach between our two accounts collaborated was also amazing. So happy we got to work with each other again and hoping to collaborate again soon!!! My followers are always looking forward to the Stratford content - such a fun city!”  
@tofooddiary.



# Top 10 TikTok videos of 2022



TikTok Stats: 867 followers, 73,205 Views, 4,862 Engagements

# Website Analytics

## TRAFFIC SOURCES

Direct & Referral: 45% Growth of +9% in 2022 (earned visits)

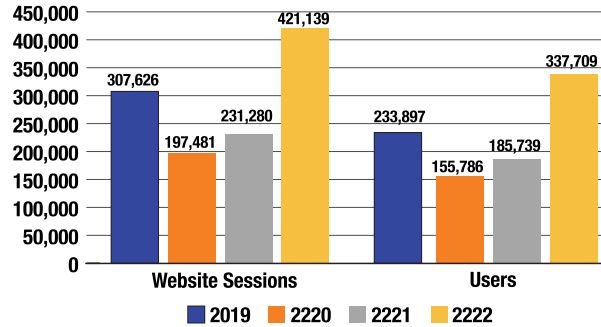
Google Grants: 15% Growth of +9% in 2022 (free Google search ads)

With mobile device traffic increasing to 78% of VisitStratford.ca online traffic, Destination Stratford continues to take a mobile-first approach to improve the user experience. In 2022, 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.

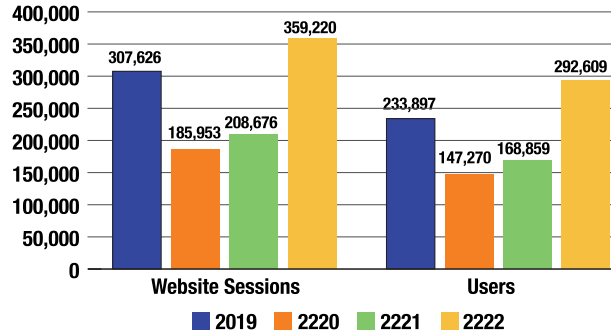
**Phone 75%    Desktop 22%    Tablet 3%**



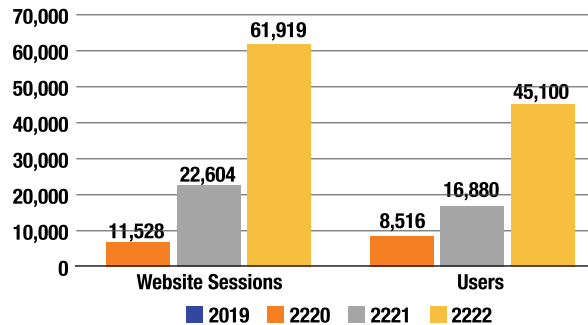
TOTAL WEB SESSIONS/USERS 2019 vs 2020 vs 2021 vs 2022



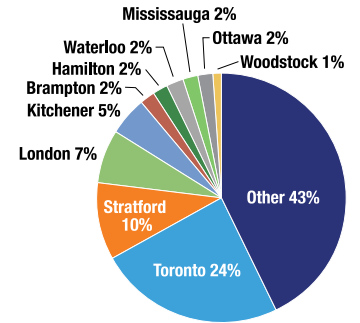
VISITSTRATFORD.CA 2019 vs 2020 vs 2021 vs 2022



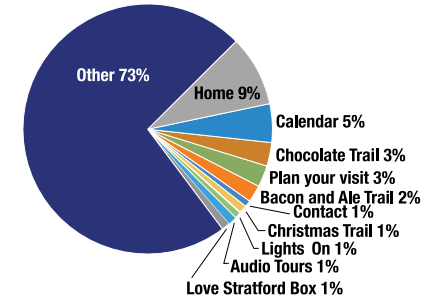
LIGHTSONSTRATFORD.CA 2019 vs 2020 vs 2021 vs 2022



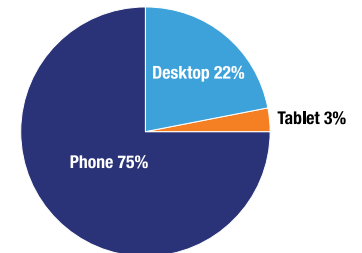
2022 TOP 10 WEBSITE VISITOR LOCATIONS



2022 TOP 10 VISITSTRATFORD.CA PAGES



2022 VISITSTRATFORD.CA USER DEVICE TYPE



**2. DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT** Our Guiding Principles for all of our Destination Development and Management initiatives are included in this diagram. Each project must holistically improve our community, grow the tourism economy, enhance the visitor's experience, and maintain and expand our tourism and community infrastructure.



In 2022, Destination Stratford continued building on creative destination development initiatives, which consisted of existing and new growth opportunities to increase visitation year-round. We distributed \$30,000 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. The continuation of the highly successful Love Stratford Box launched two new consumer

boxes. The organization recorded the highest culinary trail sales to date. We executed yet another year of success for both Stratford AI Fresco and the third-annual Lights on Stratford. In addition, strategic destination development was prioritized in a number of areas including: cycle tourism, sport tourism and the building blocks to create a new municipal cultural plan in partnership with the City of Stratford.

The graphic features a dark background with several logos and text elements. At the top left is the Ontario logo. In the center is the Canada logo, which includes the text 'Government of Canada' and 'Gouvernement du Canada' above the word 'Canada', and 'Canada Community Revitalization Fund' below it. To the right is the RTO4 tourism INNOVATION logo. Below the logos, the text reads: 'Funded by: Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario', followed by the Canada logo, and then 'Federal & Provincial Grants and Contributions >\$1,000,000 Destination Development Additional Funding'.

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 2022, as a non-profit entity separate from the City, Destination Stratford was able to secure over 1 million dollars in Provincial and Federal funding for direct investment in our community for projects such as Stratford AI Fresco, Lights On Stratford and the Boathouse Public Washroom Expansion Project.

**“As each municipality struggles to find its place in a post pandemic tourism industry, initiatives such as AI Fresco and Lights On Stratford allow us to set ourselves apart from other areas, all scrambling for a share of the consumer travel, tourism, and destination dollars. Stepping outside of mainstream ideas and developing these trend setting concepts, these festivals and attractions are making a real measurable and quantifiable difference in our downtown businesses. You can feel the guest’s excitement especially as they find themselves in Stratford, perhaps for the first time in winter, wondering why they haven’t been coming for years.” – Shelley Windsor, Vice-President, Windsor Hospitality Inc. / Mercer**

# Destination Stratford Culinary Trails

Destination Stratford's culinary trails have been in the market for 13 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). Each trail is \$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. We have seen tremendous success with our trails from both visitors and locals; selling thousands each year. 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, 75 local businesses are included across our 3 trails and the number of partners continues to grow each year.

**Destination Stratford saw a tremendous increase in 2022 for culinary trails sales resulting in the highest number of sales ever!**

## PERCENTAGE INCREASE OVER PRE-PANDEMIC 2019

**CHOCOLATE TRAIL**

**+68%**

**BACON & ALE TRAIL**

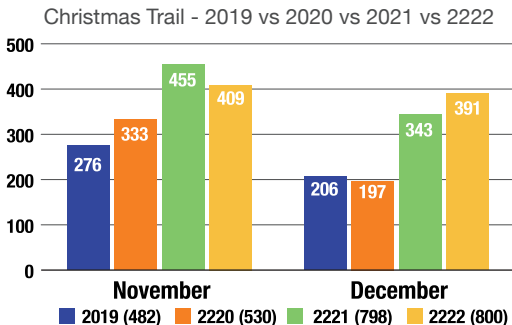
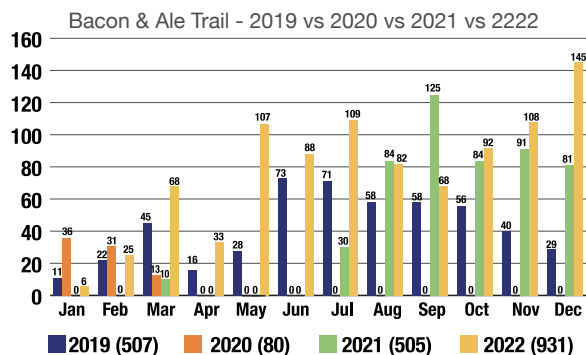
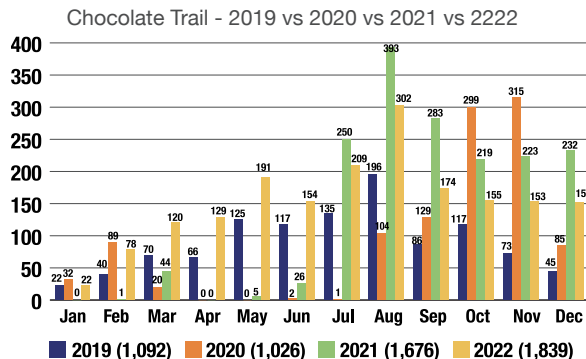
**+84%**

**CHRISTMAS TRAIL**

**+66%**

## CUMULATIVE TIME SPENT ON 2022 CULINARY TRAIL WEBSITE PAGES

22,579 sessions for the year x 4.25 mins = <b>1,599 HOURS</b>	12,103 sessions for the year x 4.5 mins = <b>908 HOURS</b>	14,740 sessions for the year x 4 min = <b>983 HOURS</b>
---------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------



“We have had a great start to the trail season, you all do a wonderful job promoting us and the other businesses in Stratford.” - Owner, Olive Your Favourites

“The Bacon & Ale Trail is worth every penny! We did this for father’s day and had a great time!” - Facebook, Cassie Barclay

# The Love Stratford Box

The Love Stratford Box was first created in spring 2021 while the province was experiencing travel restrictions and lockdowns. Destination Stratford wanted to find safe and creative ways to keep Stratford top of mind, while supporting local businesses and aiding in the economic recovery. After receiving overwhelming interest and an enthusiastic response throughout 2021, two brand new boxes were launched and sold out in 2022; The Love Stratford Box – Mother's Day Edition (April 2022) and the Father's Day Edition (May 2022).

These carefully curated consumer boxes featured high-quality products and showcased the incredible businesses in Stratford. The strong success of The Love Stratford Box can be attributed to the incredible love and admiration both visitors and locals have for Stratford; paired with the unique and passionate retailers and quality products. As a result, The Love Stratford Box 2022 series showcased 29 local businesses, organizations and artists, raising nearly \$2,000 for local charities.



*"Love being part of this offering"*  
- @revelstratford

*"This is a wonderful idea!!!"*  
#supportlocalbusiness"  
- @theliveryyard



Destination Stratford aligned social media influencers to share the box on their channels to help create buzz including a partnership with local social media phenomenon Stewart Reynolds, known online as Brittlestar.



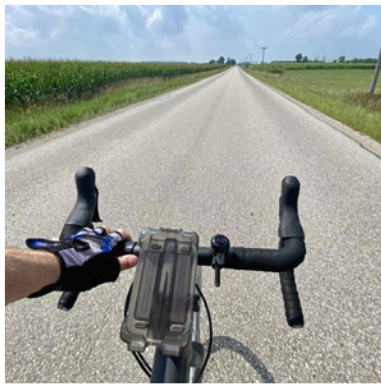
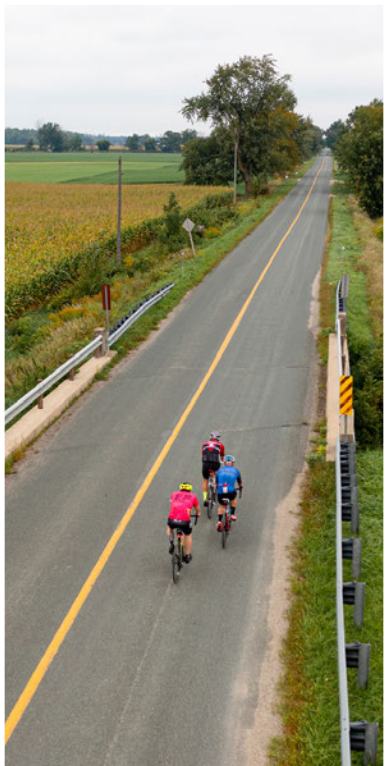
*"Such an incredible collection of businesses!"*  
- @sobrii0

*"Can't wait! Love those Stratford boxes!!"*  
- @doucettemarian



*"These are always sold out by the time I hear about them-such a great initiative. Hopefully I'll find out in time this time around."*  
- @marilynholmes488





## Cycle Tourism

In 2021, a collaborative effort to strategically build Cycle Tourism in the region started with Destination Stratford, Perth County, the Town of St. Marys and RTO4 creating a robust and informative pocket-sized cycle map to promote key cycling routes including city, rural, gravel and mountain bike. Thousands of maps were handed out to residents and visitors at regional businesses and visitor centres. The 2021 cycle map received positive feedback from users and will be refreshed with an updated version by the partners in 2023.

To continue the development of Cycle Tourism, the organizations partnered on a combined membership with the Ontario By Bike Network to utilize their promotion and resources in expanding this fast growing tourism segment.

Building on the success of our partnership with cycle enthusiast and social media influencer, Christopher Mitchell (@travellingmitch), Destination Stratford hosted Christopher again in 2022 to expand, explore and promote more of the region's cycle routes and off-route activities. [visitstratford.ca/cycle](https://visitstratford.ca/cycle)

“Besides having a remarkably picturesque downtown core and burgeoning restaurant scene, Stratford is also a hub for cycling enthusiasts. It's an ideal place to base yourself and to promptly explore the city and surrounding area on your preferred bike.”

- Christopher Mitchell

**“Best city for cycling! I utilize the roads around Stratford for upwards of 200km a week of riding.” - @arroncarley**

# Stratford Al Fresco

*“The creation of Al Fresco was an idea born out of necessity for a space to dine without health concerns or constraints of indoor dining. This evolved into a true revenue generator for restaurants as most saw their takeout business thrive despite the fact that people now had options for inside. It created a European atmosphere, a community feeling of people dining and sipping on their favourite beverage in what felt like a European Piazza or dining lake-side at a picnic table shaded by weeping willows.” – Shelley Windsor, Vice-President, Windsor Hospitality Inc. / Mercer*

Building on its success from the previous 2 years, Stratford Al Fresco dining areas were in high demand in 2022 as more residents and visitors returned to the outdoor spaces and restaurant options throughout the city. In response to the changes in pandemic health and safety requirements, Destination Stratford’s Al Fresco staff focused on providing visitor information at the welcome hut in Market Square, and daily cleaning and maintenance of Al Fresco tables at all locations. The liquor-with-food bylaw remained in place and was very successful. Giving residents and visitors safe gathering options while also expanding opportunities for outdoor public dining options for the community remained a priority in 2022. [visitstratford.ca/alfresco](https://www.visitstratford.ca/alfresco)



# LIGHTS ON STRATFORD

WINTER FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS



Free to the public, Lights On Stratford lit up this winter, starting December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022 through to January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023, from 5:00pm-10:00pm nightly. This winter's theme was REKINDLE – “relight (a fire) or revive (something that has been lost).”

*“Lights On Stratford in all its magical glory certainly provides a great destination for visitors looking for a getaway during the winter season. It also delights our local residents. From a child’s first experience using public city transit on the free Lights On Stratford shuttle bus, to the joyful laughter emanating from the interactive light installations across the city, this winter festival excels at making our community shine.” – Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma*

Over the 6 week festival period, Lights On Stratford welcomed over 83,000 patrons across the main exhibits, including over 6,500 visitors to the Destination Stratford office, which was kept staffed as a warming station with an accessible public washroom.

First launched in 2020 during the pandemic, the award-winning Lights On Stratford annual winter festival – a Destination Stratford winter development initiative – once again transformed Stratford’s heritage downtown core and park system with luminous art and interactive light installations.

Market Square was brought to life with internationally renowned artist Jen Lewin’s THE POOL – a giant field of concentric circles that swirl with light when activated by touch. Inspired by Australian tidal pools, Lewin developed mesh-network technology and code to bring this experience around the world. Visitors activated any of the 100 large circular pads

that responded to walking, dancing, jumping, or playing – encouraging participation in an ever-changing composition.

Tom Patterson Island was aglow with the Canadian Premiere of AFFINITY – an interactive light sculpture that depicts the dazzling complexity and connectivity of the human brain and our relationship with our memories.

The Festival also featured Made-in-Stratford light displays along the Light Trail connecting Market Square to Tom Patterson Island, including LightWall, a new interactive experience on the west façade of 70 Ontario Street comprised of a series of 25’ tall LED pixel banners that project out from the heritage building with a stunning display of colour and movement, but also incorporates the ability for people to speak into nearby microphones that impact the light display in real-time. LightWall was so well received that it will remain up throughout the rest of this winter and spring.

And welcomed news for all those that were unable to take in the Tom Patterson Theatre display from the inaugural 2020 Lights On Stratford, the Governor General award winning architectural gem was once again infused with colourful light.

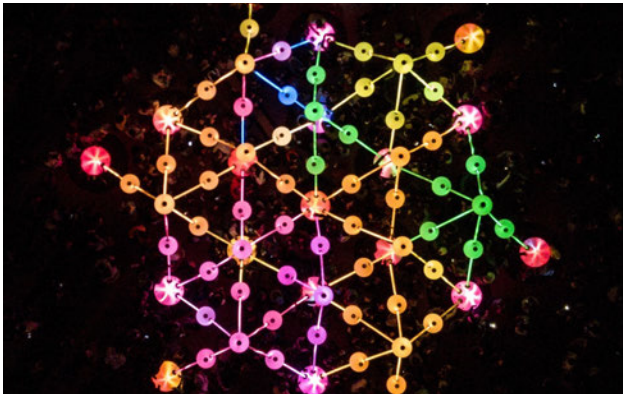
**“The Stratford Festival is excited to support year-round tourism for Stratford. Our beautiful new Tom Patterson Theatre sits like a jewel on the waterfront, and leveraging it to bring light and joy to the visitors of Lights On Stratford as well as our local neighbours is an opportunity we treasure.” – Anita Gaffney, Executive Director of the Stratford Festival**



This year's collaboration with Stratford Transit provided a free-to-the-public accessible hop-on-hop-off shuttle bus with over 3,800 rides, including introducing many children to public transit for the first time. Destination Stratford also partnered with Stratford Perth Museum to bring back the popular Culture Cab program, which provided free cab rides to and from the main light displays, the museum, the train station, as well as accommodations and restaurants across the city.


The final weekend of the festival also featured STRATFORD'S ON for Lights On – a collaboration between Destination Stratford, Downtown Stratford BIA and over 60 local businesses that coordinated downtown cafes, restaurants and retailers to all stay open late to celebrate the closing weekend of Lights On Stratford and to welcome the thousands of visitors exploring the city and light displays.


As in previous years, storefronts and locations throughout the City were lit up with unique light displays and experiences.




**We've received consistently glowing feedback from our community and visitors with sincere gratitude for creating something beautiful that brings light to the dark winter nights:**


**"My toddler absolutely loved the interactive lights she could step on. She didn't even notice how freezing cold it was that night 🥰 We love the displays every year! Thank you 😊" – Michelle O. **


**"I just wanted to thank the organizers of this event. I am the only single in a small family where all my siblings go to their partners' families for Christmas. It's hard to be festive. Not this year. Such a joy to come be part of your town for 3 days and support small business, go for blissful winter walks and see twinkling lights. Thank you for bringing that holiday feeling back." – Kristen H. **


**"Thanks to Lights on Stratford for another winter wonderland experience, the best one yet!" – Judy M. **


**"Our New Years Eve with @lightsonstratford Thank you for bringing these amazing experiences to our town every year. It's one of our favourite parts of winter!" – @kailynsteingardphotography **

**"This was so awesome! We just took our kids the other day and I highly recommend making the trip!" – @kort.terry **

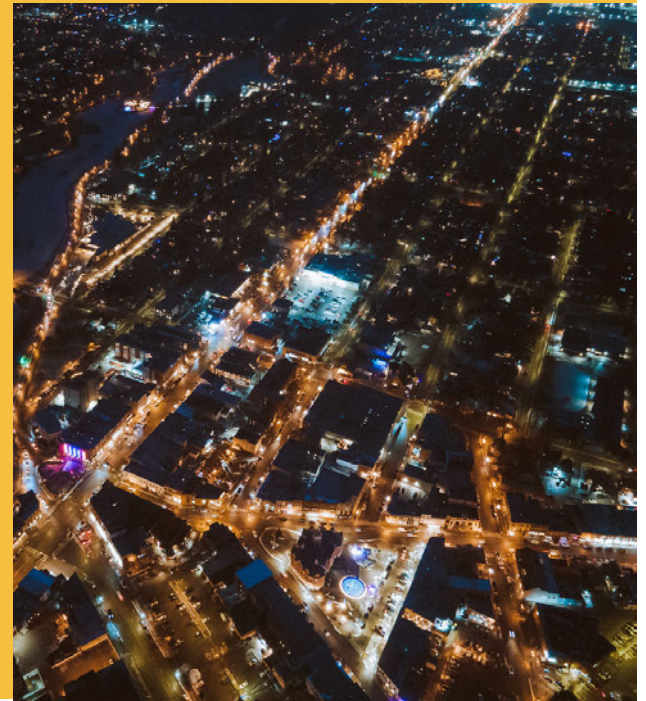
**"Better every year! 🍷 Congratulations!" – Phyllis H. **

**I loved the lights!!! We're definitely coming back!! The light show was amazing! Thank you for allowing it to be dog friendly! We really really loved it!! Definitely going to tell all our dog friends to go before it ends!! – Anika A. **

**"Starting a new holiday tradition to come down from the city for this annually. Perfect little hallmark holiday... man the summer only visitors are missing out." – Kristen H. **

**"We stayed at Bentley's just after Christmas to enjoy the Lights On Stratford. Awesome family vacation." – William F. **

**"I look forward to this event every year! My favourite way to get outside in the winter & see Stratford in a new LIGHT (get it?)" – Emma W. **



Stratford is home to some of the world's best artists, lighting designers, props builders and creative minds. Lights On Stratford harnesses this precious resource of local talent, crafting a truly unique experience that can't be found anywhere else.

The beacons of Stratford-made light sculptures, displays, exhibits and projections attracts and amazes visitors, who in turn strengthen and grow a robust and diversified year-round tourism economy. This provides much-needed support to the myriad Stratford businesses that help define the character of our city and rely on tourism for their survival. [lightsonstratford.ca](http://lightsonstratford.ca)

## Earned Media

The third annual Lights On Stratford Festival gained media coverage across Canada including features and mentions in local media papers and radio segments as well as coverage in various print and online sources including: Toronto Star, Narcity, Canada Travel & Lifestyle Magazine, BlogTO, London Free Press, and reached US visitors through Long Weekends Ohio. In addition, Destination Stratford hosted 7 high-quality social media influencers to create their own videos, reels and blog posts that were strategically aligned throughout the duration of the festival.

Lights On Stratford was also seen on digital billboard screens located in regional markets such as London and Cambridge, as well as positioned along 400 series highways in the GTA and Toronto. Lights On Stratford also launched two TV campaigns to showcase the newly created 30-second video in both December and January across CTV Kitchener and CP24.

## Social Media Engagement

### Lights On Stratford Social Media Engagement\*:

(FB: 25,499 | IG: 23,931 | TW: 3,435 | TT: 282 | LI: 1,009 )

**TOTAL: 54,156**

### Lights On Stratford Influencer Engagement\*:

Reach 892,458, Video views 924,288, Engagement 36,406

*\*These numbers are very conservative given that the majority of engagement happens on other accounts beyond Lights On Stratford's official channels.*

*"Words cannot fully describe the joy, the pride, the honour, the fun and the warmth you bring to a wintry ol' Ontario town. We are sincerely privileged to be part of this incredible, inspiring and truly inclusive festival every year." – CLEANFIX*



**LightsOnStratford.ca**

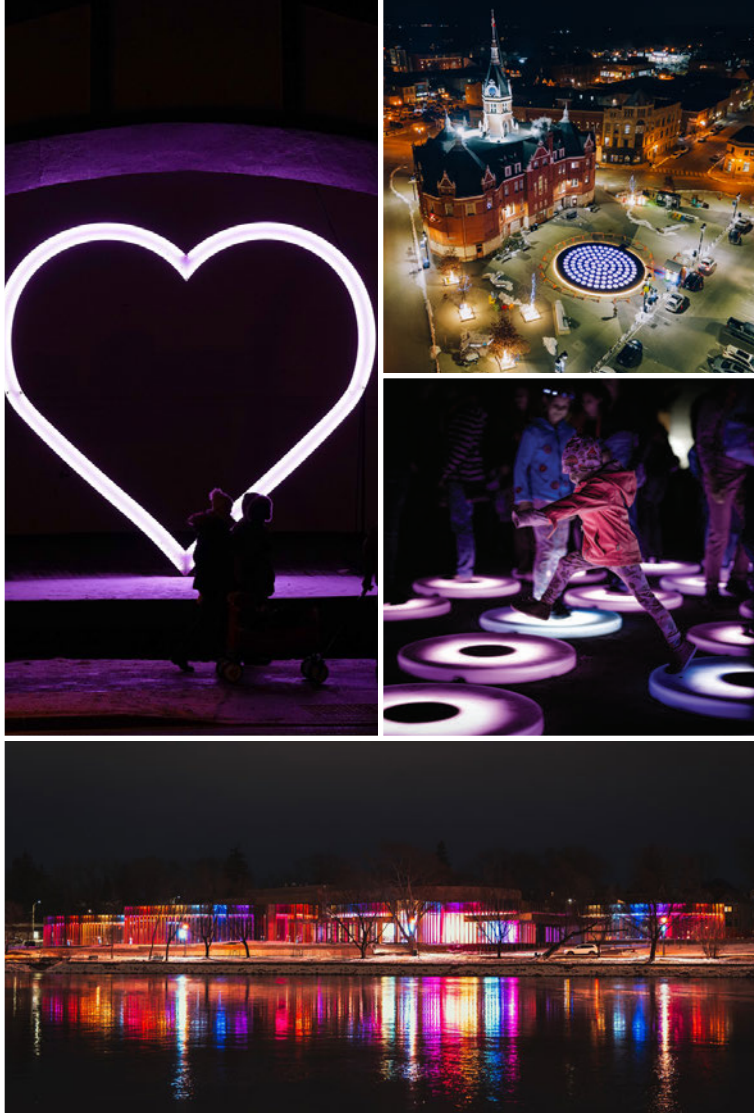
December 1-31, 2022

Site visits:

2022 - 61,919 | 2021 - 22,604

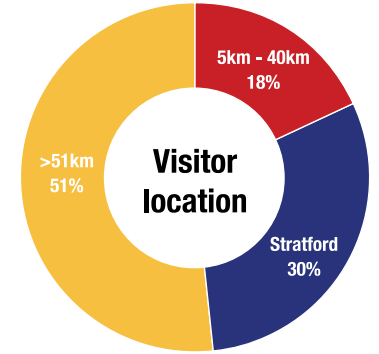
Site users:

2022 - 45,100 | 2021 - 16,880

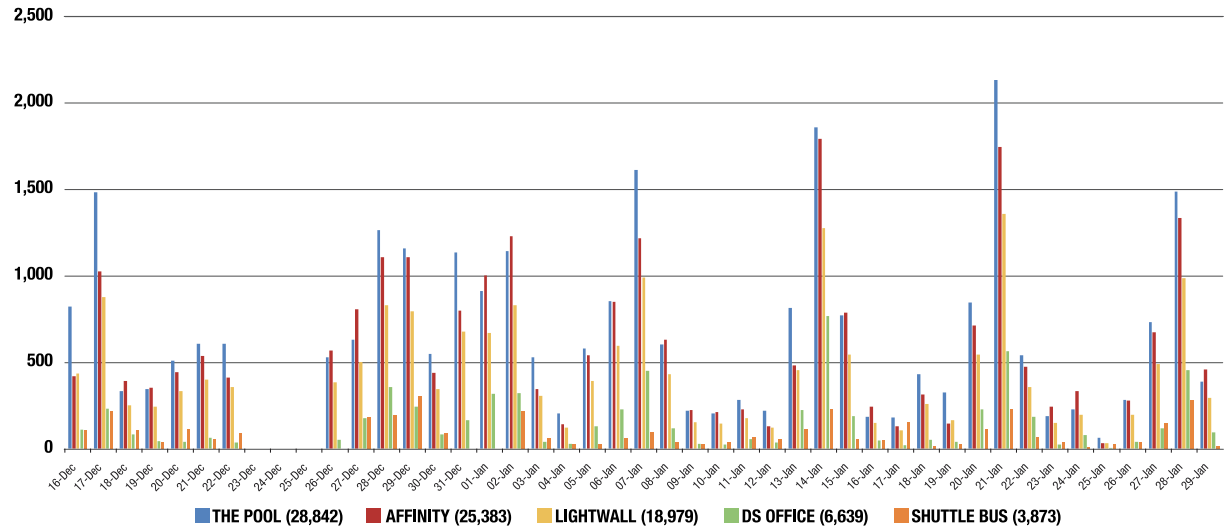


## 2022 Top Visitor Location

Stratford & Area 48%, Kitchener/Waterloo 13%, London 8%, Greater Toronto Area 7%, Woodstock 3%, Seaforth 2%, Listowel 2%, Vancouver 2%, Ottawa 1%, Guelph 1%, Cambridge 1%, Windsor 1%, Other 14%



Lights On Stratford 2022/23 Attendance Across Main Displays (83,715)



\*Lights On Stratford attendance was recorded nightly by staff at several of the main light displays as per the chart above. The Destination Stratford office has a digital person counter used to determine nightly totals, and Stratford Transit recorded nightly ridership throughout. The overall tracked number is conservative as the Bandshell and Tom Patterson Theatre locations were not tracked/included, and nor were the 16 Shareable Moments locations across the city. The light festival was closed from December 23rd through to December 25th due to the county-wide road closure.



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 project, funded by the Government of Canada through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario via RTO4, assessed the City's current tourism assets, gathered information through public consultations and provided a strategy for growth and next steps.

All members of the public, sports groups, and service clubs were encouraged to participate in the consultations. Opportunities included online engagement via the City of Stratford's Engage Stratford platform, as well as in-person public consultations.

The Sport Tourism Strategy project included:

- determining the economic impact, and the size and scope of existing sport tourism opportunities – including an inventory of capital assets (infrastructure) and human assets (volunteer groups, local sport associations)
- 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
- considering and recommending technology tools that link sport bookings to tourism assets, amplifying the visitor experience with local retail, food/beverage and accommodation providers
- providing a needs analysis for growth and potential funding opportunities

Destinate Group was selected as the consultant to lead this work, and started public consultation on the Sport Tourism Strategy in September 2022. The final report 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. [visitstratford.ca/sporttourism](http://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), will assess the City's current cultural assets, gather information through public consultations and provide recommendations for growth and next steps.

The Municipal Cultural Plan will offer guidance on the long-term and short-term growth of Stratford's cultural fabric and community and will knit 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, City 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 work, 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.

STEPS Public Art was selected as the consultant to lead this work, and started public consultation on the Municipal Cultural Plan in October. The final Municipal Cultural Plan is to be presented to City Council in April 2023. [visitstratford.ca/municipalculturalplan](https://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. The organization continues to play a large tourism advocacy and leadership role. In 2022, the organization, along with the community, prioritized building a more diverse and equitable business ecosystem by providing Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) training. As a result, Destination Stratford is working closely with the Stratford community to identify and define what it means for Stratford to be a “welcoming community”; increasing inclusivity and attractiveness to residents and visitors.

## Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Initiatives



“The Welcoming Community initiative driven by Destination Stratford has provided a productive space to discuss what is needed to create a safe and inclusive Stratford for equity-deserving communities. With a phenomenally organized and facilitated session, I could share my experience in the city of

Stratford as City staff and a racialized person. After leaving the session, I was motivated and empowered to continue collaborating to define what a welcoming community is in Stratford. As part of the working committee, it has been exciting to work collaboratively to share and learn from communities.” - Kevin Bonnell, Manager of Diversity, Equity and Indigenous Initiatives, City of Stratford

Destination Stratford and their partners seek to serve their community of business operators to build a more diverse and equitable business ecosystem by providing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) training to its regional business stakeholders. As an organization that is on the frontlines of engaging with a mosaic of cultures, people and social enterprises, Destination Stratford seeks to examine opportunities to fortify its strategy for achieving workplace and program equity while engaging in the work of dismantling symptoms of individual and systemic racism, bias, or prejudice. This project was funded by Regional Tourism Organization 4 (RTO4).

The two distinct groups this learning was directed to were:

1. Destination Stratford, InvestStratford, City of Stratford, Stratford Downtown Business Improvement Area (BIA) and Stratford Public Library Boards of Directors and their staff.
2. Small business owners/tourism operators and their staff.

In 2022, two DEI sessions were held specifically for members of the mentioned local Board of Directors and organization staff. After these sessions, four community sessions were held inviting small business and tourism operators, and their teams, to contribute to the learning and conversations.

The overall goals of this education program were:

- 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.
- 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.

The discussions and the desire to do more led to the creation of the Welcoming Community Statement conversations that began in 2022 with local organization leaders.

**“RTO4 was thrilled to partner with Destination Stratford, a leader in destination management, on a variety of progressive initiatives in 2022 including the Sport Tourism Strategy, Welcoming Community project and regional storytelling initiatives.” - Andrea Gardi, Executive Director, RTO4**

# Welcoming Community Initiative

The focus of this next phase in our DEI journey is to, in consultation with the Stratford community, identify and define what it means for Stratford to be a “welcoming community.”

The intention is to consult with a broad representation of sectors that employ local and regional residents and to continue including key partners, such as InvestStratford, Downtown Stratford BIA, the City of Stratford, Stratford Public Library and the Stratford Festival, to be engaged in this process. This project was funded by Destination Stratford, Downtown Stratford BIA and RTO4.

**“The Welcoming Community Initiative is a collaborative opportunity for the multitude of organizations, businesses and community members that make up the city of Stratford to come together and build initiatives that work toward making this city a more safe, equitable and inclusive destination. It is my hope that the people of Stratford will know that all community members are welcomed in this process and that we each share the responsibility of making Stratford a city that warmly welcomes everyone.” – Davierr Snipes, Director of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion, Stratford Festival**

A steering group representing Destination Stratford, City of Stratford, Stratford Festival, Downtown Stratford BIA, Stratford Public Library, InvestStratford, United Way Perth-Huron, Stratford & District Chamber of Commerce, and Stratford-Perth Pride met to lay the groundwork for four community conversations and a community survey that will collect data to inform the Welcoming Community statement in 2023, working towards the goal of presenting the statement to City Council for formal recognition.

The overall goals of this Welcoming Community engagement are 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.

Mending the Chasm was the consultancy that was selected to work through our DEI journeys to-date. They specialize in designing innovative and culture-changing solutions that strengthen competencies in building equitable environments for people to thrive within. [visitstratford.ca/welcoming-community](https://visitstratford.ca/welcoming-community)

# Governance

The former Chief Administrative Officer for the City of Stratford was brought on as a consultant to review and update Destination Stratford’s bylaws, especially those pertaining to the former funding model of selling memberships to local businesses. A thorough review of the current governance documents was completed, comments and recommendations were provided to the Executive Director, and a final draft of the recommended Governance Policy was submitted to the Governance Committee for consideration. The committee-recommended version was presented to the Destination Stratford Board for final approval and direction for implementation in May 2022.

# Downtown Dollars



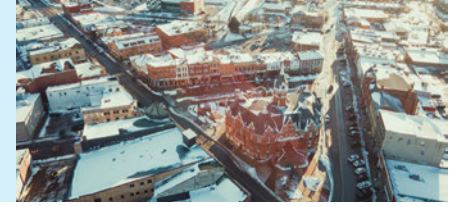
Downtown dollar sales continued to be strong in 2022 with over \$110,000 in sales.

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

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



The interactive digital maps on [VisitStratford.ca](https://www.visitstratford.ca) that were started in 2020 have exceeded our expectations as a guide for visitors and locals to explore the city based on interests, location and events.



28,692

SELF-GUIDED AUDIO WALKING TOURS



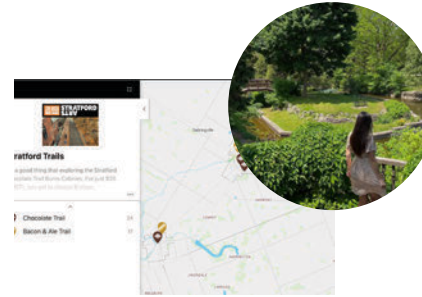
44,645

ACCOMMODATIONS



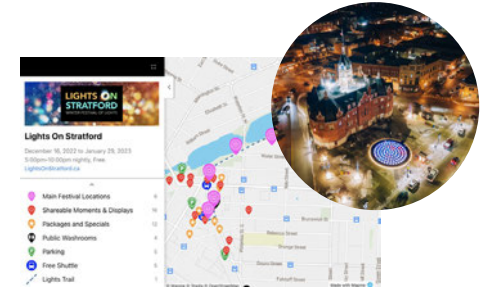
60,197

DINING



91,280

STRATFORD TRAILS



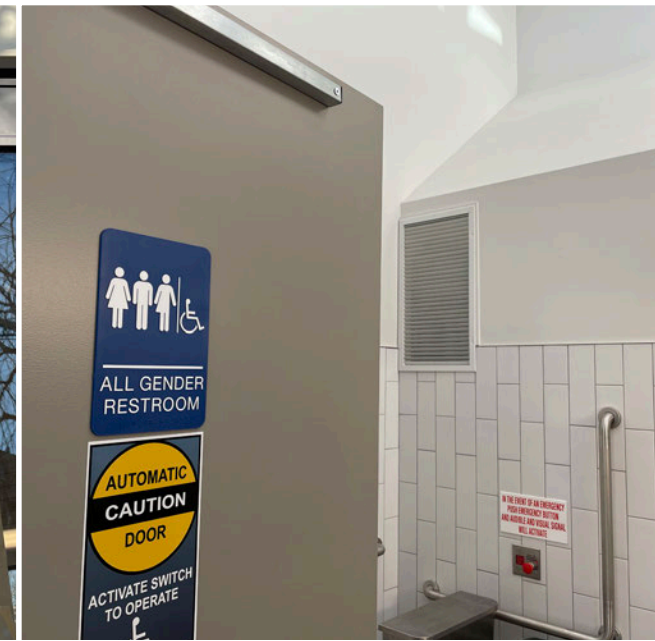
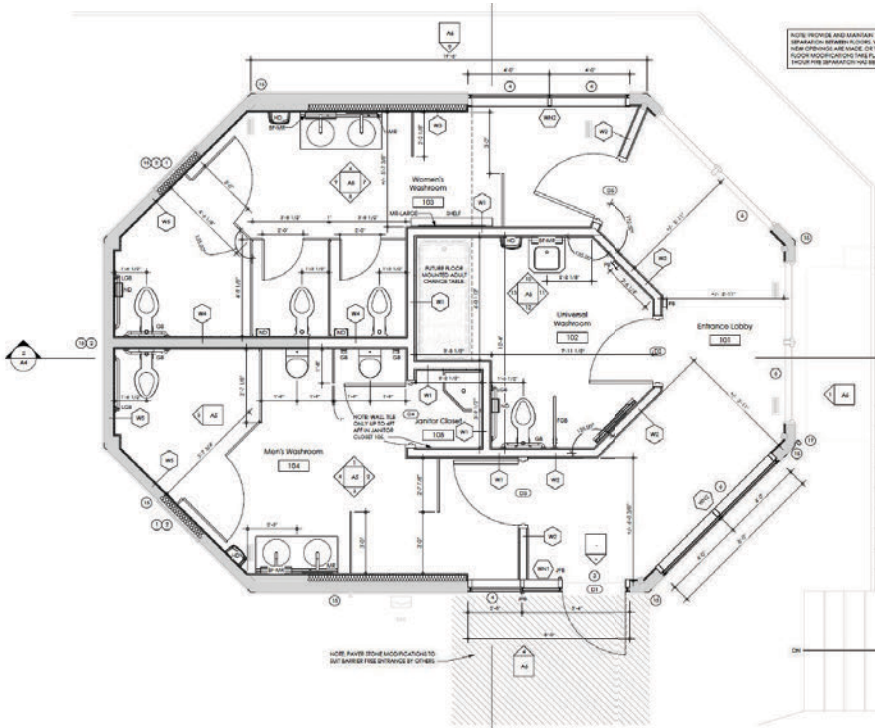
261,911

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, especially the Community Services Department, to manage the renovation. The upgraded public facility is scheduled to be unveiled and opened in February, 2023. [visitstratford.ca/boathouse](http://visitstratford.ca/boathouse)





[VisitStratford.ca](http://VisitStratford.ca)