



CITY COUNCIL REPORT

TITLE:

DESTINATION MARKETING AND EVENT TOURISM SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL

PRESENTER:

Gerald Cathcart

DEPARTMENT:

Economic Development

ATTACHMENTS:

DATE:

8/31/2026

CLEARANCE / APPROVALS:

Dave Wardrop General Manager

Dave Wardrop City Manager

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Administration be authorized to negotiate and execute a new Destination Marketing and Event Tourism Services Agreement with Brandon First and,

That tourism marketing responsibilities currently delivered through Brandon Riverbank Inc. be transferred to Brandon First as part of the agreement and,

That Brandon Riverbank Inc's current agreement be amended to reflect the change to their tourism marketing responsibilities.

BACKGROUND:

A new Destination Marketing and Event Tourism Services agreement will position Brandon First as the City's lead Destination Marketing Organization while enabling Brandon Riverbank Inc. (BRI) to focus on its core mandate of operating and enhancing the Riverbank Discovery Centre and surrounding amenities.

The City currently supports tourism and event attraction through two separate organizations. The current Brandon First agreement confirms Brandon First as a not-for-profit destination marketing organization focused on attracting and retaining events that generate overnight stays in Brandon with responsibilities including event attraction, bid support, event assistance, promotional materials, advertising, industry networks and full-time staffing levels.

The current Brandon Riverbank Inc. (BRI) services agreement recognizes the economic benefit of tourism and identifies BRI as the organization contracted to deliver tourism services on behalf of the City.

While both organizations serve important roles, the current model separates functions that are increasingly integrated in modern destination management practice. event attraction, tourism marketing, visitor servicing and destination development rely on the same destination brand, stakeholder relationships and market intelligence. A unified model would improve role clarity, reduce duplication and strengthen accountability.

The proposed change is not a reduction in the importance of Brandon Riverbank Inc. rather; it clarifies organizational roles. BRI would continue to operate the Discovery Centre, maintain a visitor centre, manage rentals and programming, and advance riverbank development initiatives.

The Discovery Centre will continue to be promoted as one of Brandon's premier visitor attractions. Brandon First would be expected to actively promote the Discovery Centre through destination marketing materials, visitor itineraries, event servicing supports and tourism stakeholder communications.

ANALYSIS:

In 2021 Red Deer undertook an extensive study that identified the need for improved organization and role clarity, enhanced collaboration and a lead organization to support major event and destination development. The resulting strategy recommended a single destination development corporation with integrated functions for tourism marketing, major events and destination development. The Red Deer framework has been successful and is especially relevant to Brandon because it addresses the same structural issue: multiple organizations contributing to the visitor economy without a fully consolidated lead organization. The report describes the benefit of a "one-door-in" approach for event and destination development and emphasizes that tourism marketing, major events and destination development are interconnected functions.

Strategic Benefits

- **Single point of contact:** Tourism operators, event organizers, Travel Manitoba and funding partners would have one organization responsible for visitor economy development.
- **Stronger alignment:** Events generate overnight stays and visitor spending. Combining event attraction with destination marketing allows Brandon to package attractions, visitor experiences and accommodations more effectively.
- **Reduced duplication:** The model consolidates overlapping communications, marketing, stakeholder engagement and visitor servicing responsibilities.
- **Clearer accountability:** Council would receive reporting from one organization responsible for tourism marketing and event tourism outcomes.
- **Continued role for the Riverbank:** BRI would continue to operate the Riverbank Discovery Centre and riverbank amenities as a major tourism attraction and community asset.

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS:

A Council resolution is required to amend the agreements established through resolutions of Council.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:

Strategy 4 - Foster and environment that supports economic growth and development.

- Tourism and Event Attraction are significant economic drivers of both employment and investment in new commercial construction.

Strategy 9 - Define and Implement a path forward for large community recreation and cultural facilities.

- Event Attraction growth may be the impetus for leveraging higher level government investments in recreation facilities.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

No net change in funding.

Upon the transition of one tourism staff position, tourism salary and marketing funds in the amount of \$125,000 will be transferred from Brandon Riverbank Inc. to Brandon First.

Looking ahead, it is expected that both Brandon Riverbank Inc. and Brandon First will appear before Council to seek additional funding, as supported by the Tourism Strategic Plan.

RISK ASSESSMENT:

Risk	Comment	Mitigation
Stakeholder confusion	Tourism partners may be unclear where to direct inquiries during transition.	Brandon First to issue a notice to stakeholders and create a communications strategy before agreement effective date.
Service continuity	Website, guide, social media and visitor servicing functions must continue without interruption	Riverbank and Brandon First to prepare an asset and responsibility transfer checklist with joint responsibility for success.
City funding pressures	Any increases to base budget funding may be challenging for Council to approve	Consider utilizing accommodation tax reserve funds to support enhanced Tourism efforts at both Riverbank Inc and Brandon First.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY:

Brandon First will be responsible for the development and delivery of a communication strategy for two audiences, tourism stakeholders and the community at large.

CONCLUSION:

The proposed model reflects contemporary destination management practice and creates a unified organization responsible for Brandon's visitor economy. The change provides a single point of contact, stronger integration of event attraction and tourism marketing, clearer accountability to Council and a continued strategic role for Brandon Riverbank Inc. as a major tourism attraction and community asset.

Economic Development will be responsible to facilitate the establishment of a new agreement with Brandon First and an amended agreement with Brandon Riverbank Inc.

The committee is working towards a January 1, 2027 implementation.

Economic Development and Legal Services will internally supply all required resources.