

The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce has always promoted our city as a globally-progressive place where businesses, individuals, and families alike, can safely invest in the future.

And now with the long -anticipated downtown arena project getting the green light from the City Council, we are pleased to know that a leap forward to the creation of a vibrant and exciting downtown has been taken. This initiative is aligned with the goals of many influential organizations in Edmonton – organizations whose responsibility it is to ensure our city's economic and social wellbeing.

We believe the construction of a downtown arena, as an anchor to a new Sports and Entertainment District (SED), will represent a real change in the process of renewal and revitalization of Edmonton's downtown core.

There are a host of reasons why constructing a city-owned downtown arena is a good investment for Edmonton. First, this arena will certainly enhance Edmonton's image as a world-class city. Additionally, the proposed SED will also enhance Edmonton's status as a northern business center and a place for local, regional, and global investment to occur.

The arena, which will be home to one of the more prominent professional sports franchises in North America, will help Edmonton and the region's employers recruit and retain talent. The future success of the Edmonton economy relies on the creation and development of a young, dynamic, diverse workforce and there needs to be compelling reasons for the best and the brightest of the workforce to make their homes in our city. When developed, the SED will certainly contribute to that advantage and help business located in Edmonton and surrounding areas retain and attract more international labour to the city.

Edmonton has been provided with an opportunity to build a vibrant downtown community anchored by the sports and entertainment district. A new downtown arena aligns with a large number of other recently announced developments in the downtown area including a growing residential community to the west of downtown, the recently announced Royal Alberta Museum, and development of the Legislature and Capital Boulevard. Collectively these developments could spawn an exciting revitalization and growth period for our city. The commercial development and investment potential that will be centered on the SED is significant.

In addition to being a home for the much loved Edmonton Oilers Hockey Club, the arena and surrounding entertainment district could play host to concerts, fairs, indoor/outdoor markets, hotels, a casino, restaurants, conferences facilities, homes, parks, shopping – all contributing to the continued enhancement of both our city's and our province's image locally and globally.

Although the arena came about as a result of a private initiative, we are not adverse to government making strategic investments in infrastructure that benefits the community at large in such a tangible manner; investments such as the downtown arena.

Our board of directors, on behalf of our members, worked diligently with all sides of the arena discussion to ensure that this decision was made in a timely and efficient manner. We are very happy with the vision and leadership shown by Mayor Stephen Mandel and council and applaud them for making such a positive decision for Edmonton. This is a terrific time for our Great Northern City.