

MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

Edmonton's 2007 River City Roundup: Go Cowboy!



Edmonton, Canada's Festival City, is the home of the fourth annual River City Roundup. This festival hits Edmonton streets from November 2 to 11, 2007 and celebrates our western roots culture during Canadian Finals Rodeo (CFR) and Farmfair International.

Edmonton's River City Roundup festival was created to celebrate the city's frontier heritage and welcome an estimated 195,000 visiting ranchers, farmers and athletes during rodeo week. The programs, events and competitions of CFR and Farmfair will take place at Northlands, while River City Roundup takes the profile and energy of these major events into the rest of the city.

The festival also celebrates Alberta's and Western Canada's vital agricultural industry and Edmonton's proud tradition as a major commercial and social hub serving the province's farming and ranching communities.

River City Roundup is organized by a group of dedicated volunteers with the support of Northlands, the City of Edmonton, the Chamber of Commerce and other event partners.

The significance of CFR and Farmfair International in Edmonton

For more than 30 years Edmonton has proudly welcomed many of North America's top rodeo athletes competing in the Canadian Finals Rodeo (CFR), Canada's richest rodeo event. CFR has been a proud part of Edmonton's history and boasts one of the richest purses in Canadian rodeo worth \$1.158 million. More than 95,000 fans took in the rodeo action last November.

At the same time, the city has long hosted Canada's premier livestock showcase, Farmfair International (FFI), featuring a significant number of exhibitors, prize money, and international buyers.

It is conservatively estimated that the economic impact of CFR and FFI amounts to more than \$60 million in direct spending annually to city businesses.

Festival Programming

River City Roundup promises to take the excitement of CFR and Farmfair and bring the energy to the rest of the city. It is an opportunity for all Edmontonians to get into the western spirit, rediscover their frontier roots, and acknowledge the city's proud tradition as a major hub serving the province's farming and ranching communities.

The ten-day festival will showcase a variety of entertainment and activities focusing on western culture, music and food. Festival events and activities are open to the public, with some events being free of charge.

Q. What is River City Roundup?

A. River City Roundup is where city and country meet – it's designed by the community, for the community. It is a region-wide festival to celebrate our western culture and pioneer heritage. It also supports Canadian Finals Rodeo and Farmfair by reaching outside the boundaries of Northlands to the larger community. River City Roundup is made up of fun, entertaining events and activities that anyone can enjoy.

Q. Where did the idea for River City Roundup come from?

A. Edmonton has a long and proud history of serving as a commercial and social hub for the farming and ranching communities in northern and central Alberta. For more than 30 years Edmonton has hosted CFR, one of North America's premiere rodeo events drawing visitors from across Canada and the United States. And, for 127 years, the city has been home to the agricultural fair now known as Farmfair International. Research sponsored by Northlands revealed that residents would support a city-wide western-themed festival during rodeo week.

Q. What does River City Roundup mean to the city?

A. The economic impact of River City Roundup, CFR and Farmfair International is significant, generating more than \$60 million in direct spending for the local economy. As a festival, River City Roundup encourages Edmontonians to support events, welcome out-of-town guests and, most importantly, have some fun partaking in the cowboy and agricultural way of life.

Edmonton is known as Festival City for its bright array of different entertainment events throughout the year. River City Roundup, combined with CFR and Farmfair, create the autumn anchor for Festival City season at a time when other cities across North America are stagnant.

Q. What kinds of events make up River City Roundup?

A. River City Roundup showcases a number of events and activities happening around the city. Here are a few examples of what's in store this year:

- Sylvia Tyson rocks Festival Place in Sherwood Park
- Cook County Saloon, Oil City Roadhouse, and The Ranch kick it up with country celebrations over several nights
- City Centre Mall comes alive with country music during noon hour
- The city's independent restaurants serve up menu items with a western flavour
- The musical drama, "Two Minutes of Silence: A Pittance of Time" plays at the Jubilee Auditorium
- Office workers wear denim to "Be Seen in Jeans" in support of United Way
- The Premier's River City Roundup Breakfast with Premier Ed Stelmach

These and many other activities will be happening during River City Roundup. There are a variety of events for everyone to enjoy, even those who don't typically take part in country culture. Visit www.rivercityroundup.com for details on all events.

Q. What does the “Go Cowboy” theme mean?

A. River City Roundup encourages Edmontonians, visitors to the city and people living in the capital region to enjoy a little western spirit during the 10-day of the festival. “Go Cowboy” is a direct call to action to encourage everyone to adopt the “cowboy” way; through how they dress and community spirit they show during River City Roundup. “Go Cowboy” is also an actual character that the festival is using to market and promote the activities and events that are a part of River City Roundup this year.

Q. River City Roundup is using some unique, web-based tactics to market this year’s festival. Tell me a bit more about them and why you chose this route.

A. Under the theme of “Go Cowboy”, River City Roundup created a character called “Go Cowboy” that embodies the city meets country spirit that guides the festival. A series of three humorous videos were produced and will be used to market the festival using all the resources offered by marketing through Web 2.0. These videos will spread virally through YouTube, email, Facebook and start to build excitement and awareness for River City Roundup. This approach mirrors how many people receive information today and it was a way to differentiate the festival.

Q. Who is involved in organizing the festival?

A. Under the chairmanship of Northlands Volunteer Director Steve Graham, the River City Roundup festival is organized by volunteers from a variety of backgrounds and organizations. The events and activities are organized and supported by community-based and private sector organizations that want to support our region’s western culture and pioneer heritage. Partners include:

The City of Edmonton
Cook County Saloon
Edmonton City Centre Mall
Destination West Edmonton Hotel Group
The Downtown Business Association
Edmonton Chamber of Commerce
Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation
Oil City Roadhouse
The Ranch
Originalfare Group of Restaurants
Next Gen
Festival Place
The United Way of the Alberta Capital Region

Q. How is the festival financed?

A. The marketing of the River City Roundup festival is financed chiefly by Northlands with funding and value-in-kind from Northlands, the City of Edmonton, the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce as well as local businesses and organizations. The individual events that make up River City Roundup are independently run and supported by the festival’s event partners. The more events that are a part of River City Roundup, the more successful the festival becomes.

For more information, visit www.rivercityroundup.com.