

50 things that define Edmonton

Edmonton Journal

At the beginning of the summer, we asked you to tell us what "things" define Edmonton.

Your suggestions came flooding in. We, the Journal's four summer reporters, selected the top 100 items, then passed the list to five judges, who whittled it down to the final 50.

We realize it's impossible to define a place. This project, instead, captures a snapshot of our city.

The 50 things range from the glaringly obvious (West Edmonton Mall) to

overlooked treasures (elm trees).

They are the puzzle pieces of Edmonton. When slotted together, they form an image, an idea, of what this city stands for.

You may not agree with all the choices, but we bet some will make you smile, and remind you why you love — and maybe hate — this city.

One thing is certain. Edmontonians are passionate about their festivals, sports teams and architecture.

They relish the summers, but can't overlook the formidable winters (after all, surviving an Edmonton

winter is what we brag about).

Our sports teams mark us, our community leagues shape us and our river valley runs through us.

We hope you enjoy the list and take advantage of what this city has to offer.

The 50 Things list was written by Kristin Annable, Otiena Ellwand, Alex Migdal and Alicja Siekierska.

For information on our panel of judges, go to B6.



SHAUGHN BUTTS/EDMONTON JOURNAL

From left, Alex Migdal, Kristin Annable, Alicja Siekierska and Otiena Ellwand are the four intern reporters who put together the 50 Things Edmonton project.



Aboriginal Walk of Honour

As CEO of the Dreamspeakers Festival Society, Helen Calahasen knows many aboriginal leaders in the arts and media sectors whose trail-blazing work often goes unrecognized.

That's why Dreamspeakers holds a Walk of Honour every year at Beaver Hills House Park on Jasper Avenue and 105th Street. (The park's name is a translation of the Cree name for Fort Edmonton.)

The celebration honours leaders who have brought a new understanding to the cultures, traditions and languages of Canada's aboriginal people. It's one of the few times that aboriginal heritage is honoured in the city, despite a sizable urban aboriginal population: the last census in 2006 counted more than 50,000, but that number is now thought to have swelled to nearly 80,000.

The walk's impact is widespread, Calahasen says. "It's so important not only to the aboriginal community, but to the community at large."



Al Rashid Mosque

In 1938, Canada's first mosque was built at 101st Street and 108th Avenue, next to the Royal Alexandra Hospital. The Al Rashid centre is now the largest Muslim organization in the Edmonton area with a following of 20,000 people.

That number was significantly smaller in the 1930s, when 20 Muslim families started raising \$5,000 to purchase the land. The city's booming Muslim community eventually outgrew the mosque, and in 1982 the new \$3-million Al Rashid mosque and Canadian Islamic Centre opened at 13070 113th St.

In 1992, the original building reopened as a historical site at Fort Edmonton Park, after the Canadian Council of Muslim Women lobbied to have it saved.

"It's a cultural place, to connect with other communities," says Khalid Tarabain, president of the centre and mosque. "It's an identity. It's feeling and being good as a Muslim and as a Canadian, and participating in society."



Alberta Aviation Museum/Blatchford Field

People often say they dislike flying. But if an airplane passes by, they'll look up.

That's Tom Hinderks's philosophy. As executive director of the Alberta Aviation Museum at 11410 Kingsway Ave., he believes people have an ingrained interest in flight. It's why his museum upholds a long-standing legacy in the city.

"It's not a museum where you wander around with your hands in your pockets," Hinderks says. "I'm not happy around here unless it's a noisy place."

After all, Edmonton was the hub of aviation in Western Canada for decades. The museum is situated on Blatchford Field, the first licensed airfield in Canada. It served as a major stopover zone and hosted flying schools in the Second World War before eventually becoming City Centre Airport.

Now undergoing massive redevelopment, the mixed-use site will turn into a downtown hub within 10 years.



Art Gallery of Alberta

The Art Gallery of Alberta on Sir Winston Churchill Square is an architectural icon even more spectacular than some of the 6,000-plus works of art it houses.

Opened in 2010 to replace the 1968 Edmonton Art Gallery, it features an innovative, curving design that has injected visual flair into the downtown landscape. "It brought to the city a whole new way of looking at architecture," says executive director Catherine Crowston.

The city commissioned L.A.-based architect Randall Stout, who blended the shapes of the aurora borealis with the linear structure of the urban street grid. The 85,000-square-foot gallery incorporated 55 per cent of the gallery's old Brutalist structure — meant to exemplify the beauty of concrete — and more than doubled in space. In 2012, Randall Stout Architects was awarded the American Architecture Award for the AGA's design.

Crowston's favourite part of the building? "I have a really great office."



Canadian Finals Rodeo

Yee-haw!

That's the sound of nearly 100,000 rodeo fans every November as the Canadian Finals Rodeo gallops its way into Northlands.

The national championship is Edmonton's time to shine in the Wild West, after being overshadowed in the summer by the glitz of the world-renowned Calgary Stampede. Since 1974, dozens of cowboys have squared off for the \$1-million-plus prize purse, one of the largest in Canadian rodeo. It showcases the top rodeo athletes in nine events: steer wrestling, team roping, tie-down roping, ladies barrel racing, saddle bronc, bull riding, boys steer riding, novice saddle and bareback riding.

"Somebody asked me what the highlight of the week was," bull rider champion Scott Schiffner told the Journal in 2012. "I'm going to list three things I didn't like this week and that's that I fell off three bulls. Other than that, the week from start to finish was storybook."



Candy Cane Lane

When Kees Den Hartigh moved to his new home in 1991, the previous owners issued a curious warning: "We're gone every Christmas down in Arizona. But something happens down the street here that you might want to be aware of."

Welcome to Candy Cane Lane.

For two weeks in mid-December, dazzling lights illuminate the eight-block stretch on 148th Street between 92nd and 100th avenues. Tens of thousands of visitors flock to glimpse life-size Santas, snowmen and reindeer that populate 140 houses.

"It's such an Edmonton tradition," says Den Hartigh, the self-proclaimed King of Candy Cane Lane.

Although he has only spent \$600 on his lights — a paltry sum compared with some neighbours — he's invested years in spreading the word about his cherished street.

"It's not about the lights," he says. "It's about the spirit."

50 THINGS THAT DEFINE EDMONTON



Capital city

What does it mean to be a capital city?

It certainly counts for bragging rights when you're battling for attention with a neighbouring metropolis. And you'll want to remember Edmonton when studying for that geography exam.

But the Alberta government is also one of the city's largest employers, with public service jobs mainly clustered in the Government Centre district within downtown. And just south of the area lies the Alberta legislature building, which houses the legislative assembly and the executive council. The building, completed in 1913 at a cost of \$2 million, is a blend of Greek, Roman and Egyptian architecture.

Our designation as capital ensures international recognition, as witnessed with U.S. talks over the Keystone XL pipeline. Alberta may be the word tossed around amid the political drama, but Edmonton is the stage on which it's set.

And hey, it's always fun to spot the premier at a local coffee shop.



CFB Edmonton

The Canadian Forces base in Edmonton has a knack for making history.

In June, it was the first military base in Canada to raise the gay pride flag. One month later, the garrison deployed its final troop of soldiers to Afghanistan, capping off an 11-year mission originating in Edmonton.

With more than 5,000 military personnel, the Edmonton Garrison plays a key role in the Canadian military, serving as headquarters for the Land Force Western Area and a number of brigade groups.

Their 8,000 family members are also crucial to the city, says Col. Derek Macaulay, giving back through philanthropy and community work.

But above all, Edmonton is defined by its unwavering support for its armed forces, Macaulay says.

"I can't think of any place more than here where I've been stopped and someone says thank you. That kind of gesture, although small, is so powerful for a soldier."



City Hall

Sending a postcard from Edmonton to faraway relatives? Chances are it features a shot of City Hall, a pair of steel-and-glass pyramids piercing the downtown landscape on Sir Winston Churchill Square.

If architects had their way, the building would have been topped with five cones, meant to commemorate the teepees of the First Nations people who once lived on the site. Edmontonians were unimpressed with the design, dubbing it the "Cone Dome," so Dub Architects regrouped and came up with the pyramids, meant to evoke the Rocky Mountains, atop a three-storey concrete structure.

Our City Hall is a flexible building. In the summertime, we splash in its fountains. In the wintertime, we skate on its rink. It embraces all seasons, like a tried-and-true Edmontonian.

The structure, which opened Aug. 28, 1992, replaced Edmonton's second City Hall, completed in 1957 on nearby 102A Avenue between 99th and 100th streets.



City of Champions sign

On July 31, 1987, we were a city in ruin.

On Black Friday, as it became known, a powerful tornado left 27 dead and 300 injured in the worst natural disaster in Alberta's recent history. In the aftermath, mayor Laurence Decore proclaimed Edmonton the City of Champions to mark the massive effort residents made in coping.

Coincidentally, it was also a fitting moniker for the sports frenzy that was the 1980s: the Oilers dominated with three Stanley Cup wins, while the Eskimos revelled in Grey Cup glory during a five-year streak. The City of Champions soon became Edmonton's unofficial slogan, greeting anyone entering the city.

Thirty years later, as tough times befall our hockey team, the slogan sometimes seems ironic. But it arose at a time of resiliency and triumph, when the city was gaining international recognition. For that reason, it will endure.



CKUA

In 1927, the country's original public broadcaster transmitted its first radio waves from a studio at the University of Alberta.

Since then, CKUA has helped launch the careers of prominent Alberta artists such as k.d. lang and Jann Arden, and established itself as the formative public broadcaster in Canada.

Content director Adam Fox says CKUA's innovation challenges people's perceptions of Edmonton. "There's nothing else like it in the country, and there's nothing else like it in the world, to be honest."

The city was instrumental in helping the station acquire its new headquarters in 2012 at the rebuilt Alberta Hotel at 9804 Jasper Ave. The station boasts a 1.6 million-song library, including 70,000 CDs and 50,000 LPs. Diverse programming helps explain why so many love tuning in to 580 AM every day, Fox says. That connection with Edmontonians "always reminds me how important they are for the continuing survival, success and evolution of our station."



Commodore restaurant

The city's oldest hole in the wall, the Commodore, is nestled on the west side of Audreys Books on Jasper Avenue and 107th Street.

David Gee and his wife, Wilma, are third-generation owners. David's grandfather traded his Chinatown property for the foreclosed lot in 1942, then passed ownership to David's parents, who handed the reins to David and Wilma in 1997, making it the longest continually operating restaurant in Edmonton.

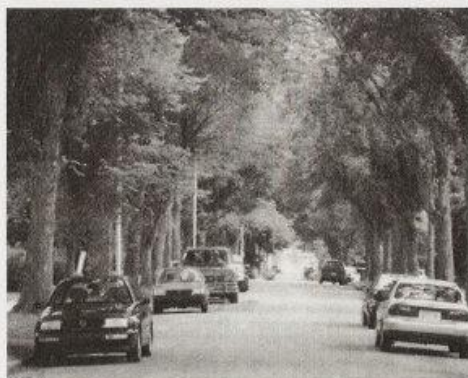
Fire tore through it in 1971, but it was rebuilt into the old-style diner that endures today.

"We're a fixture around these parts," says David.

Environmentalist and broadcaster David Suzuki has taken a seat on one of its swirly stools, and Mayor Stephen Mandel is a regular. Gee says a younger generation of diners can expect the tradition to continue.

"Nobody's ready to retire. I think we'll be at it for a while."

50 THINGS THAT DEFINE EDMONTON



Elm trees

Taking a walk down the street or a leisurely stroll through one of its many parks will reveal something about Edmonton that some people might overlook.

Edmonton loves its role as a sprawling urban forest. Approximately 130,000 trees of a wide variety line boulevards across the city, while more than 180,000 are scattered along roadways and in parks. The city estimates these trees are worth more than \$1.2 billion, and has an annual budget of nearly \$6 million to maintain them.

Edmonton is also home to North America's largest urban forest of elms.

With more than 60,000, the city holds the title of the having largest population of Dutch elm disease-free trees in the world — and hopes to keep it that way. With the help of numerous groups, the city monitors the magnificent elms and even has disease prevention efforts in place to keep them alive and healthy.



Eskimos

What would the City of Champions be without its Canadian Football League team, the green and gold Edmonton Eskimos?

The team fans know today was founded in 1949, although there were other football clubs in the city with the same name dating back to 1895.

Since their inception, the Eskimos have won the Grey Cup championship 13 times, making them the most successful franchise in modern CFL history. But it was "Five in a Row" dynasty that most fans will remember, where the Eskimos won a record five Grey Cups between 1978 and 1982.

But a word of caution: don't go around the city telling local fans that you're a Calgary Stampeders supporter. The Eks-Stamps rivalry is one of the league's most heated, proving that the Battle of Alberta is still alive in the world of football.



Festivals

Watching the sun set just beyond the downtown skyline while listening to live music at the Folk Fest, eating a delectable international dish at the Heritage Festival, or getting hauled on stage to participate in a Fringe play are quintessential summer experiences in this city.

Two of the big three are the Edmonton Folk Music Festival, a perpetually sold-out event — general tickets were gone within 12 minutes this year — and the massive Heritage Festival, one of the world's largest multicultural events, featuring food from around the world.

And you can't talk about festivals without mentioning the Fringe, the oldest and largest theatre festival of its kind in North America. The Fringe has boosted the local theatre and arts scene, and raised Edmonton's profile across the world.

The sign coming into Edmonton may read "City of Champions," but it could easily say "City of Festivals."



Fort Edmonton Park

There's only one place in Edmonton where the second you walk in, you feel like are stepping through a time machine and going back 150 years.

At Fort Edmonton Park, you can enter a trading post, admire the hanging beaver pelts and barter with the merchants. You can take a ride on a steam train, chat with the local blacksmith and visit the bakery to craft some bread the old-fashioned way.

Named after the Hudson's Bay Company trading post established on the North Saskatchewan River in 1795, the park is Canada's largest living history museum. Using original and reproduced buildings on its river valley site, the park recreates four significant time periods in Canadian history — the 1846 fur trade, the 1885 wild west, the settlements of 1905 and the roaring 1920s.

It's a popular spot for families and visitors keen to learn about Edmonton's pioneer history.



Fort Road smokestack

The Fort Road smokestack, on the site of the old Canada Packers plant just north of Yellowhead Trail, is a sentinel pointing to our city's industrial past.

It was given municipal historical designation in 2001, thanks largely to a big push by the Fort Road Business Association, which wanted to preserve a reminder of a meat-packing industry that employed so many in northeast Edmonton.

"We're not just saving a smokestack, but that smokestack represents the industry and lives of the people involved in it," association project co-ordinator Deanna Fuhlendorf said in 2001.

Back in the 1950s, Edmonton had four different meat-packing plants in the area — all of which have since shut down.

The \$1-million plant, built in 1936 during the height of the Depression, came down piece by piece in 1995 — except for that 30-metre brick chimney stack.



Government House

This year marks a milestone for Government House, the majestic sandstone mansion located on a sprawling estate overlooking the North Saskatchewan River.

In January, the government declared the building a National Historic Site — the only structure in Edmonton to boast the honour. In October, the building will celebrate its 100th anniversary. For more than two decades, Government House served as the residence of Alberta's lieutenant-governor. But in 1937, a kerfuffle between then-premier William Aberhart and lieutenant-governor John C. Bowen led to Bowen's eviction.

After the dispute, the building was leased by the American army and Canadian government, with the latter purchasing it in 1951 and using it first as a hospital for wounded soldiers, then as a convalescent home for veterans.

The province bought back the building in 1966. Today, it hosts government meetings and conferences, and is open for tours on weekends and holiday Mondays.



Green onion cakes

The savoury smell of sizzling green onion cakes in summertime is almost as ubiquitous to Edmonton as the festivals that serve them.

The Asian-inspired, scallion-filled pancakes have become a staple since they were first introduced to the city more than 30 years.

Siu To, born in Tsingtao in northwestern China, has been credited as the first person to add the delectable dish to his restaurant's fare. They became such a hit that To's competitors began incorporating the dish into their own menus. Edmontonians couldn't get enough of the cakes, dipped in a mix of sambal olek and soy sauce.

The rest is history.

No other city in North America serves green onion cakes at just about every major summer event, or has the yummy snacks available on countless restaurant menus year-round. You can even buy them ready-to-cook at grocery stores across the city.



Gretzky statue

"Just listen. I've never heard applause like this before — just for Wayne," proud father Walter Gretzky told the Edmonton Journal on Aug. 27, 1989, at the unveiling of a larger-than-life bronze statue of his legendary son raising the Stanley Cup as an Edmonton Oiler.

More than 14,000 fans came to the arena that day to remember the 10 great years of hockey Wayne Gretzky gave Edmonton before his emotional trade to the Los Angeles Kings in 1988.

The statue outside Rexall Place is where wedding parties pose for photos, young players make pilgrimages and, sometimes, security staff find ashes scattered at the monument's feet.

With the city finalizing plans for a new downtown arena, there's debate about the future of the iconic landmark. Some argue it should remain where it is, while others believe a new arena without the most famous Oiler standing in front would be wrong.



Hawrelak Park

The sprawling 68-hectare William Hawrelak Park in the river valley is one of Edmonton's greatest treasures.

In summer, it's full of families having picnics and playing games, and becomes home to some of the region's most popular events, including the Heritage Festival, the River City Shakespeare Festival, the International Blues Festival, Symphony Under the Sky and the new Interstellar Rodeo music festival. In winter, it's a popular spot to skate and cross-country ski, and home of the Silver Skate Festival.

When it opened in 1967, it was known as Mayfair Park but was renamed to William Hawrelak Park in 1976, after the controversial mayor who led the effort to create the park.

Edmonton's longest-serving mayor, Hawrelak was forced to step down twice after being implicated during an inquiry into his land sales. He served as mayor from 1951-59, 1963-65 and again from 1974 until his death in 1975.

50 THINGS THAT DEFINE EDMONTON



High Level Bridge

At first glance, the High Level Bridge may not look like anything more than a convenient road that takes you from the north to the south side of Edmonton.

With its nearly 8,000 tons of black-painted steel zig-zagging 755 metres from one side to the other, 15 storeys above the North Saskatchewan River, the bridge is a landmark that reveals much about the city's history.

It opened in June 1913, one year after Edmonton and Strathcona merged as one city. It didn't just link the two cities by rail and road; the bridge became a symbol of the amalgamation of the separate communities.

In 100 years, the bridge has been used by pedestrians, cars, trains and streetcars — it was even home to the Great Divide Waterfall until the federal government raised concerns about chlorine-treated water entering the river.

Today, approximately 30,000 vehicles cross the bridge every day.



Hotel Macdonald

The Fairmont Hotel Macdonald — named after Canada's first prime minister Sir John A. Macdonald and referred to by locals simply as "the Mac" — opened its doors to the public on July 5, 1915.

Built by the Grand Trunk Railway on the site of a former squatters' camp, the high-end hotel was one of several buildings designed to serve the stylish passengers of the expanding railway system across the country, including the Banff Springs Hotel and Ottawa's Chateau Laurier.

Like many of Edmonton's historical sites, the building fell into a state of disrepair, forcing it to close in 1983.

The Mac narrowly avoided destruction by a wrecking ball when the City of Edmonton stepped in, designating the chateau building as the first Municipal Heritage Resource in 1988.

It was purchased by Canadian Pacific Hotels and restored to its original grandeur, reopening in 1991.



La Ronde revolving restaurant

In its heyday, La Ronde was the largest revolving restaurant in the world at 30.6 metres in diameter.

The restaurant and the 307-room luxury hotel housing it, the Chateau Lacombe, officially opened in 1967. As the big day drew near, the city was abuzz with excitement.

Since then, the fine dining restaurant has played host to countless prestigious parties and events.

It takes one hour and 30 minutes to complete one revolution, offering some of the best views of the river valley and downtown.

The name Chateau Lacombe was chosen to honour the memory of Father Albert Lacombe, an Oblate missionary. The pioneer priest was instrumental in the foundation, settlement and growth of Alberta in the late 1800s.

Although the shine and novelty of a rotating restaurant has worn off in its later years, the 24-storey building atop Bellamy Hill remains a visual landmark for people coming into downtown.



McLeod Building

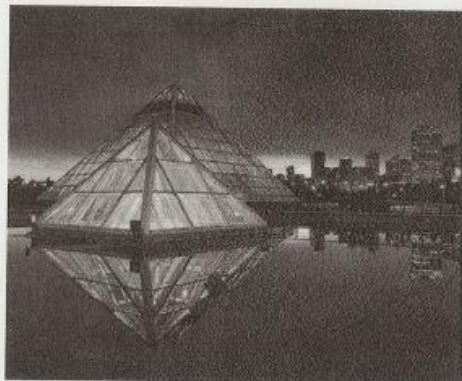
Unlike many historic buildings that have been torn down as the city continues to grow, the McLeod Building endures as outstanding piece of architecture in a noticeable location downtown.

The nine-storey building, constructed in 1915, was one of Alberta's first skyscrapers, towering over its competition as the tallest in the city for 46 years.

It was originally used as a high-end office building, housing medical and legal offices. Despite a complete overhaul of the interior, the outer facade survived being converted to condos in 2001, retaining its original structure.

It was designated a Provincial Historic Resource on Jan. 3, 1995. Located at 10136 100th St., the neoclassical building is one of the last remaining terra cotta structures in Edmonton.

Its position as the tallest building in the city was usurped in 1961, when the Hotel Macdonald added a 16-storey addition, that was later demolished.



Muttart Conservatory

Since opening in September 1976, this botanical garden has stood as a landmark south of the river valley.

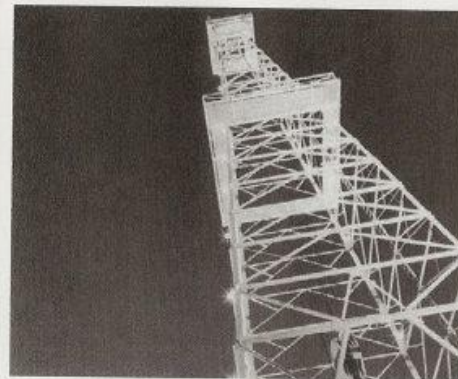
The Muttart Foundation donated half the \$2 million needed to build the Cloverdale conservatory. Created in 1953, the Muttart Foundation is an Edmonton-based charitable organization that donates money to various projects all across Canada.

The unique architectural design by Peter Hemingway features four pyramids with one core pyramid in the centre.

It was renovated in 2009, with impressive results. But the appeal of the pyramids isn't limited to the architecture.

"The whole Muttart Conservatory celebrates the spirit of life, plant life, particularly," said member Keith Turnbull to the Journal last year.

The Muttart offers Edmontonians somewhere they can experience more than 1,000 different plant species year-round.



Oil derrick info centre

Whether you're leaving Edmonton along Calgary Trail or arriving on the Queen Elizabeth II Highway, your landmark to say hello or goodbye is the Gateway Visitor Information Centre.

The centre opened in 1991 in what was then a remote area. As both Edmonton and the Nisku Business Park grew larger, the gap between the city and the centre narrowed.

With its trademark oil rig standing outside of the centre, it's a definitive image to greet visitors to "the Oil Capital of Canada."

Yet many Edmontonians probably don't realize the derrick at Gateway Park is Imperial Leduc No. 1, commemorating the historic oil strike near that community on Feb. 13, 1947. Since then, the surrounding oil reserves and oilsands have become integral parts of Alberta's economy and history.



Oilers

Edmonton Oilers fans have had their share of memorable, remarkable and sometimes heartbreaking moments since the team switched from the World Hockey Association to the National Hockey League in 1979.

Fans have seen Cinderella-like playoff runs, and five Stanley Cup championships.

They've witnessed what the Hockey Hall of Fame has dubbed the "Dynasty," featuring such all-stars as Paul Coffey, Mark Messier, Jari Kurri, Glenn Anderson and the greatest hockey player of all time, Wayne Gretzky. Their hearts were broken as they watched the Great One get traded to the Los Angeles Kings. More recently, they've been disappointed by back-to-back last-place season finishes, but remain hopeful for the future after getting three first-overall draft picks in a row.

The Oilers are one of the most financially successful teams in the NHL, thanks to devoted fans who consistently sell out the building, and will for years to come as their young team develops.



Outdoor ice rinks

For many Canadians, few things are more symbolic of our culture than playing hockey outside in winter. For Edmontonians, that ritual is played out across the city's neighbourhoods, where a network of volunteers faithfully maintains hundreds of outdoor rinks.

Generations of Edmonton kids have grown up under the rink lights, the smell of wet mittens and hot chocolate bringing them right back to those dark evenings after school when they practised their hockey skills and dreamt of playing in the big leagues.

"They are where hockey started, which is a big part of our culture; it's where hockey players hone their skills and practise for hours on end," says Allan Bolstad, executive director of the Federation of Community Leagues.

The outdoor rink represents our resilience in the face of a long winter.



Perogies

In October, the people at Lay's Potato Chips conducting a national contest will be judging four new chip flavours, with the winning entry picking up \$50,000.

The fact that the Edmonton-inspired "Perogy Platter" is Alberta's offering is proof enough that these savoury dumplings reverberate on our collective palate. Edmonton resident Lucas Crawford came up with the flavour, saying it reminded him of home and his favourite dish.

Whether it's the monthly St. Andrew's Ukrainian Parish Perogy Supper or the perogy platter at Uncle Ed's Ukrainian Restaurant, perogies are everywhere in the city.

Maybe it is the joy of eating a carb-filled, comfort food in our cold winter months — or more likely the strong Eastern European influence.

Our city has the largest population of people of Ukrainian origin in Canada, at 150,000.

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Pickup trucks

When asked why Ford chose Edmonton as the city to unveil its latest truck series earlier this year, Jack Palazzolo, the company's vice-president of marketing, had a simple answer: "Edmonton is truck country."

One look at a parking lot anywhere in the city and the truth in that statement is revealed. The pickup truck is a symbol of Edmonton and the chosen mode of transport for many Albertans.

A particularly busy time for truck sales is early November, coinciding with the Canadian Finals Rodeo, a nod to our Prairie city's agriculture roots. The pickup has proven to be the vehicle of choice for ranch life and the oilpatch.

And there's no better way to navigate through the city's ubiquitous potholes or make it through snowbanks on a cold winter day.



Potholes

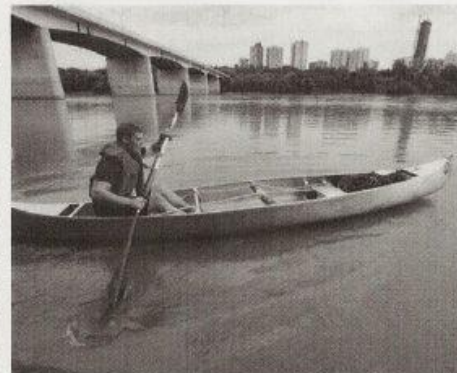
Many Journal readers, when asked what defines Edmonton, said potholes.

The freeze/thaw cycle of our long winter months is the breeding ground for these pockets of vehicular destruction.

At one point, our city was a lake bottom, meaning absorbent soils and clays sit below the streets. As our temperature fluctuates along a 70-degree spectrum, the recipe for pothole destruction is complete.

Hidden in the winter months over layers of ice and snow, new potholes are created every spring and the old ones remain, ready to pop tires and give your car some extra bounce. Every year, the city fixes and fills more than 400,000 potholes.

The city spent more than \$10 million this year alone filling potholes. It's sad to be defined by something so annoying, but Edmonton, when it comes to potholes, we are king.



River valley

"It is the heart and soul of Edmonton," said Sol Rolingher, the former chairman of the River Valley Alliance, when asked what makes the river valley such a defining feature. "It's the oldest thing in Edmonton and allows you to connect with nature — right in the middle of a city."

Along with its paths, stairs and greenery, the North Saskatchewan River valley was one of the most popular submissions to the 50 Things project by Journal readers, and is often the thing Edmontonians first speak of when asked what they like about their city.

The valley system is 2,960 hectares, has 22 major parks, is the largest urban parkland in North America and features more than 150 kilometres of trails.

Whether you're looking for an intense stairs workout or seeking a quiet place to picnic, "it binds us together," said Rolingher. "It's the best thing we've got."



Road construction barriers

Everyone knows the joke and retells it every summer. Edmonton has two seasons: winter and construction.

Commuters making their way downtown this summer (or it seems like any summer for past few years) have been met with road construction barriers.

The short construction season comes fast and dominates the streets. It's easy to complain about a forced detour, but next time you're cursing the roadwork, remember this: Edmonton is one of the fastest-growing cities in Canada. Edmonton led the way in real GDP growth in 2012 and in 2013 was named the fourth best Canadian city in economic growth by the Conference Board of Canada.

They attribute much of this growth to the influx of commercial and residential construction.

This creates jobs, adds value to the city's properties and in total helps boost our collective profile.



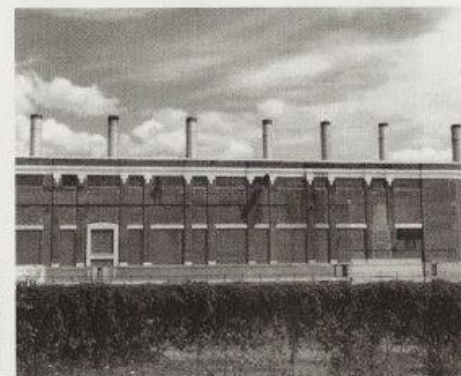
Rosssdale Flats

It's fitting that an archeologically rich area many call the city's birthplace made it to this list. The Rosssdale Flats, named for Scottish pioneer Donald Ross and known in Cree as Pehonan, can be found at 105th Street and River Valley Road.

The flats are where indigenous people thousands of years ago would gather to celebrate life and trade in goods, said Lewis Cardinal, president of the Indigenous Peoples' Art and Culture Coalition.

Later, it was common for the Métis and Cree to camp out while trading at Fort Edmonton. For a while in the late 1800s, fur traders moved the twin forts Edmonton House and Fort Augustus (which made up Fort Edmonton) to the flats.

Whether it was as a trading centre, a burial ground or a place where people camped, the Rosssdale Flats' role in how Edmonton became a city cannot be forgotten.



Rosssdale power plant

Over the years, many have protested the expansion of the Rosssdale power plant. Now, a group of citizens is attempting to save, restore and repurpose it.

The industrial-art deco style building was designed by award-winning architect Maxwell Dewar between 1931 and 1954. As technology evolved and the city grew, the structure was modified six times over 22 years to cover an area about the size of two football fields.

The five-storey brick and steel building continued to generate electricity until 2008, when Epcor's operating licence expired. Its future remains uncertain.

Heritage Canada lists it as one of the country's top 10 endangered historic sites. A 2011 report suggested it house restaurants, shops and studio space.

Recently, city councillors approved a move to save it, but still haven't decided how much money to spend. That will be up to the newly elected city council to decide in November.



Rutherford House

Surrounded by modern buildings on the University of Alberta campus is Rutherford House, home to Alberta's first premier, Alexander Cameron Rutherford, from 1911 to 1940. The furnished Edwardian-era home on Saskatchewan Drive offers visitors a glimpse into Alberta's past, with costumed interpreters and guided tours. In 1940, the Rutherford family sold the red brick mansion to the Delta Upsilon fraternity.

Over the years, many prominent members lived there, including Peter Lougheed, later Alberta's 10th premier. In the 1960s, the U of A planned to demolish the mansion to make room for a new humanities building.

The University Women's Club, among other organizations, fought that decision and raised more than \$30,000 for its restoration. In 1974, it was designated a provincial historical site.

The government currently leases the mansion, which celebrated its centennial in 2011, from the university for \$1 per year for 40 years.



Shaw Conference Centre

The Shaw Conference Centre, built directly into the river valley walls, is one of the city's most striking buildings.

Connecting downtown to the river valley, it was designed by Edmonton architect B. James Wensley. The glass atrium cascades down Grierson Hill hiding the majority of the building — all 10 storeys, that is — underground. It was a costly undertaking — original construction costs rose from \$32 million to more than \$80 million in 1983 when abandoned coal-mine shafts were discovered on the site.

Every year, the centre hosts 650 events, attracting half a million people to trade shows, meetings, conventions and entertainment events. In 2006, the \$29-million Hall D was built, adding another 25,000 square feet for a total of 144,406 square feet of rentable space. The Edmonton Economic Development Corp., which runs the centre, is doing preliminary work on another proposed phase to upgrade the facility and expand it south across Grierson Hill Road.



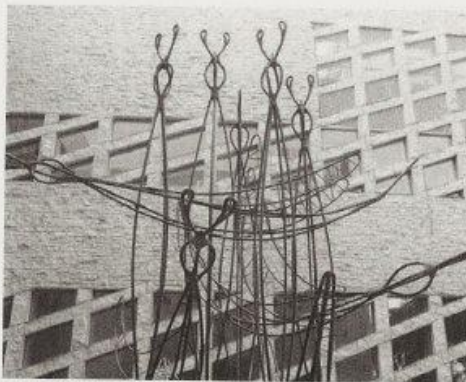
Strathcona Farmers Market

The Old Strathcona Farmers Market is Edmonton's largest year-long indoor market, attracting a bustling crowd of about 10,000 people every Saturday. Even in the middle of winter, it's a fantastic place to browse and forget the chill outside.

After 29 years in the business of selling homemade and homegrown goods, the market has expanded from about 15 vendors to nearly 300.

Roam the rows and you'll find everything you may want or need, from fresh fruits and vegetables to organic cosmetics, handstitched notebooks and, of course, green onion cakes. The market began in a parking lot at the corner of 83rd Avenue and 103rd Street. Three years later, it moved inside the old Bus Barns building. As the crowd frequenting the market became more diverse, so too have the products. As many as 16 vendors sell different ethnic cuisines, including Mediterranean, African, Caribbean and Asian food.

50 THINGS THAT DEFINE EDMONTON



The Migrants (a.k.a. the spaghetti tree)

Before the \$600,000 Talus Dome beside the Quesnel Bridge was the most maligned piece of public art in the city, there was Lionel A.J. Thomas's *The Migrants*.

He sold the idea of an abstract bronze sculpture depicting a flock of Canada geese to then-mayor William Hawrelak, who approved it without asking council.

When the \$16,900 sculpture was unveiled in front of City Hall in 1957, it was compared to a "burnt-out airplane carcass," "a spaghetti tree" and "a tempest-tossed bicycle rack." Edmontonians have traditionally been ambivalent about public art, especially when it's abstract and involves taxpayers' dollars.

While *The Migrants* was one of the city's first controversial pieces, it wasn't the last.

Today, it sits in an alcove on the northwest side of the current City Hall building, long forgotten since others — such as the giant aluminum baseball bat at 118th Avenue and 97th Street — stole its limelight.



University of Alberta

There's no doubt the University of Alberta has a massive footprint in this city as the fifth largest employer.

A huge economic driver, it's also one of the leading research universities in Canada. It was established in 1908 with 45 students and five faculty members.

The university's first president, Henry Marshall Tory, ensured all courses and programs were open to women, and the first woman graduated in 1912. The U of A established satellite campuses in Calgary and Lethbridge, which later became independent.

Today, there are nearly 40,000 students enrolled in 18 faculties. They're a diverse bunch, representing all Canadian provinces and territories and 152 foreign countries.

U of A research has played a role in the discovery of insulin, made significant findings about feathered dinosaurs, produced two new varieties of disease-resistant wheat and created the basic process for separating petroleum from the oilsands, among other achievements.



Victoria Golf Course

Despite Edmonton being covered in snow and ice for half the year, golfing has a long history here.

The first golf course was established in 1896, eight years before Edmonton became a city.

It had five holes and was located where the legislature now stands. By 1907, the course was moved onto a piece of land in the river valley leased from the Hudson's Bay Company. Four years later, the city purchased the land for about \$300,000, creating the first municipally run golf course in Canada.

The course was nearly shut down in the 1930s when a large coal deposit was found beneath it.

Luckily for golf enthusiasts, this never happened. In 1957, the Edmonton Municipal Golf Course was renamed the Victoria Golf Course.

The 18-hole course and 60-stall driving range remains a popular spot to golf in the heart of the city.

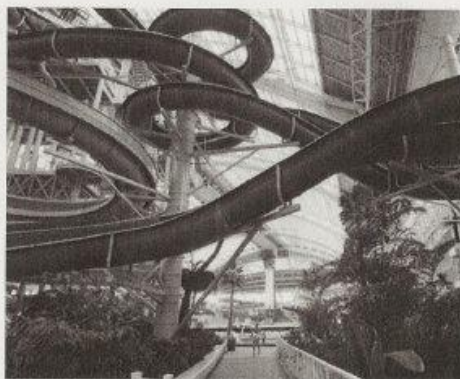


Waste management system

Even Ukraine wants a piece of Edmonton's trash. The city's waste management system has long been lauded as state-of-the-art and now its expertise is going global. Edmonton's Waste Management Centre at Clover Bar includes facilities that process electric and electronic waste, recover landfill gas, recycle mixed materials and extract organic waste out for composting, helping to divert 50 to 60 per cent of residential trash from the landfill.

Last year, a new \$4.3-million plant to process unsorted construction and demolition debris was completed. It is expected to process 65,000 tonnes of debris per year, turning materials such as wood, metal ducting and shingles into compost, asphalt and other usable products.

The next addition, to open in 2016, will be a waste-to-biofuels facility to turn non-recyclable, non-compostable material into ethanol, which is blended into gasoline. Once that's built, the city should be diverting 90 per cent of its waste.



West Edmonton Mall

For 24 years, West Edmonton Mall was listed as the world's largest mall in the Guinness World Records.

It spans an area equivalent to 48 city blocks. Its size standing has since been demoted to No. 12, although it's still the largest mall in North America.

It was constructed over four phases between 1981 and 1998, and was one of the first malls to offer tourist attractions like a water park, skating rink, amusement park and themed streets.

The mall has about 30 million visitors a year, more than 800 stores and services and two hotels.

The mall's history has a dark side: a diver drowned in the submarine pool, three people were killed on the Mindbender roller-coaster in 1986 and thousands were evacuated in 2004 when a drainage pipe burst.

Thanks to the mall, the city routinely leads the country in retail space per person.



Whyte Avenue

Whyte Avenue has long been the popular strip to see and be seen. Its proximity to the University of Alberta makes it a magnet for young people.

Cruise the street, shop, step into one of the many bars and enjoy the dog days of summer on a patio.

There's much music, dancing and late-night debauchery to be had. Whyte Avenue's hustle and bustle is the heart of Old Strathcona, designated a provincial heritage area in 2007.

Historic sections like the Tipton, Hulbert and Douglas blocks dot the street, which features an eclectic mix of independent establishments and brand-name, chain outlets.

It's had its bad times, including car accidents, fires, shootings and a Canada Day riot in 2001 that sparked national headlines. Damage topped \$100,000 and police charged more than 30 people.

With all that history etched into its sidewalks, Whyte is one of the liveliest destinations in Edmonton.



Windrows

Only those who have lived through an Edmonton winter will understand and appreciate what a northern city's windrow looks like.

The City of Edmonton's website explains that it is a pile of snow on the side of the road created by snowplowing equipment.

What it doesn't say is how big these piles get — how they bury cars, barricade sidewalks and what a nuisance they can be.

This March, when the city was blanketed with twice its average snowfall, city crews had to reduce the windrows to a maximum height of 30 centimetres.

Anything weather-related is a hot topic in this city, so here's a fun fact: in 2011, there was so much snow the city went \$30 million over its snow-removal budget.

A massive pile of hauled snow in west Edmonton didn't fully melt away until September. So let summer fool you into forgetting that windrows will be back.



Yardbird Suite

A jazz venue since 1957, the Yardbird Suite is one of the city's best known spots for live music.

Named after a Charlie Parker song, the venue began as a private, after-hours weekend club run by musicians and their friends, where alcohol was banned.

The Suite moved locations several times, but no matter where it went it was still a draw for local musicians and jazz luminaries alike. American trumpeter Don Cherry, leading jazz artist Nat King Cole and bebop pioneer drummer Max Roach all made appearances.

It closed its doors in 1967 in the midst of the British rock and pop invasion, and remained shuttered for 17 years before finally reopening on Tommy Banks Way in the hub of the city's vibrant music, arts and theatre scene in Old Strathcona.

It's still run entirely by volunteers and is the only venue of its kind in Canada.

JUDGES

Five locals were tasked with picking the top 50 things from our reader submissions. It was a tough job, but someone had to do it. Without further ado, meet our judges (drum roll please):

■ **Stephen Mandel** has been Edmonton's mayor for nine years. During that time, he has championed major construction projects such as the Art Gallery of Alberta and the downtown arena deal. He previously served as a city councillor for three years. Mandel moved to Edmonton in 1972 from his hometown of Windsor, Ont. He brings more than 30 years experience in the private business sector.

■ **Sheldon Elter**, a Grimshaw native, is an actor, writer, director, comedian and musician now based in Edmonton. This summer, he performed in *King Lear* at the Freewill Shakespeare Festival. He won two Sterling Awards for his one-man show, *Métis Mutt*, which he toured across Canada and abroad. In 2006, he was a top 14 finalist on *Canadian Idol*. He's now part of a ukulele cover band.

■ **Ashif Mawji** grew up in Kenya and immigrated to Canada in 1987. He is a local entrepreneur and CEO of NPO Zero Corp, which helps not-for-profit organizations around the world run more efficiently. He recently retired as CEO of Upside Software Inc., a contract management software company. He has served on several boards including the Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation and Economic Development Edmonton.

■ **K. Linda Tzang** moved to Edmonton in 2005 to oversee the cultural communities program at Royal Alberta Museum. She has worked at the Transport Museum in Glasgow, Scotland and was curator of local history at the Chinese Cultural Centre Museum and Archives in Vancouver, her hometown. She was a board member of the Asian Canadian Writers' Workshop and an editor of the e-journal, *Cultural Policy, Criticism and Management*.

■ **Stephanie Coombs** is managing editor of the *Edmonton Journal* and the architect of the 50 Things That Define Edmonton project. For her, Edmonton wouldn't be Edmonton without its summer festivals. She grew up in Sherwood Park, and following stints as city editor at the *Victoria Times Colonist* and news editor at the *Ottawa Citizen*, she moved back to Edmonton in 2011.