EAST CORRIDOR INSIDER

PEOPLE. PLACES. PROJECTS. INVESTMENTS.

Understanding the people, places, projects and investments shaping Calgary's East Corridor.

INVESTMENT WATCH

THE ECONOMY BEHIND THE TRACK

A proposed racing investment puts agricultural suppliers, rural businesses and regional employment in focus.



Century Downs. Image supplied by Lori Olijnyk.

Highfield Investment Group has agreed to buy the racing and gaming operations at Century Downs near Calgary and Century Mile near Edmonton. Century Casinos announced a combined price of approximately **C$23.2 million**. Closing is expected in late 2026 or early 2027, subject to approvals and other conditions. [1]

Highfield brings more than 20 years of breeding, ownership and racing experience through Highfield Stock Farm. Its October 1 announcement describes a long-term commitment to Alberta racing and hospitality. [2]

Century Downs sits near Balzac in Rocky View County, at the northern end of the region ECI follows. [6] Its significance extends beyond race-day visitors: the surrounding equine economy links agricultural production with specialized services and employment.

C$23.2M
Agreed purchase price
Combined operations [1]

2 TRACKS
Century Downs and Mile
Racing and gaming [1]

PENDING
Approvals and closing
Expected Q4 2026 / Q1 2027 [2]

THE ECI TAKE
The proposed purchase is a signal of investor confidence. The next test is what it means for operations, suppliers and employment. Expansion will need its own evidence.

Sources (click to open): [1] Century Casinos announcement, September 28, 2026 [2] Highfield acquisition announcement, October 1, 2026 [6] Travel Alberta, Century Downs location. Research current to October 7, 2026.

AGRICULTURE AND EMPLOYMENT

THE BUSINESS BEYOND RACE DAY

A racetrack depends on a network of farms, skilled workers and services that operates well beyond the spectator stands.

Horse Racing Alberta reports that the province's racing industry supported nearly **1,900 jobs** and approximately **$124 million in annual GDP** in 2025. Its broader estimate is **$264 million in economic activity**, including direct, indirect and induced effects, and more than **$72 million in wages and salaries**. These are provincial estimates, not Century Downs employment figures or gains from the proposed purchase. [3]

THE SUPPLIER NETWORK

CityNews interviews identify hay, grain, breeding, veterinary care, farrier services, feed and tack businesses among the connections. Track operations also purchase surface materials, bedding and manure-removal services. [5] The practical business relationships include:

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Hay, oats and other feed connect horse care to farm output and reliable delivery.

HORSE CARE

Veterinarians and farriers supply specialized skills needed to keep horses healthy and working.

BREEDING AND TRAINING

Breeders, trainers and grooms invest time and labour long before a horse reaches the track.

TRACK AND STABLE SERVICES

Bedding, surface maintenance and waste removal create recurring operating requirements.

37% OF THE FARM CENSUS COUNT

Alberta accounted for 37% of the horses and ponies counted nationally in the 2021 Census of Agriculture. Operations devoted solely to boarding or riding, without selling agricultural products, were excluded. This is a farm-census measure, not a count of every horse in Canada. [4]

THE ECI TAKE

The useful economic question is where recurring purchases and skilled work occur. Provincial impact figures establish scale; local supplier contracts and payroll would show how much of that activity reaches the corridor.

Sources (click to open): [3] Horse Racing Alberta industry update, September 29, 2026 [4] Statistics Canada, August 4, 2026; 2021 Census of Agriculture [5] CityNews reporting, October 2, 2026. Research current to October 7, 2026.

CORRIDOR INTELLIGENCE

WHERE THE REGIONAL LINKS LIVE

The venue has an address. The businesses that support it can be spread across a much wider area.

BALZAC IS THE LOCAL ANCHOR

Century Downs is in Rocky View County near Balzac, north of Calgary. [6] The wider corridor connection is through suppliers, agriculture and operating space. The transaction does not establish new projects in Langdon, Chestermere or Wheatland County.

THE BUYER ALREADY WORKS IN THE EQUINE ECONOMY

Highfield’s Stock Farm near Okotoks breeds and boards Thoroughbreds and provides training and rehabilitation services. [7] Although outside the East Corridor, the farm shows the buyer’s existing equine operations and the regional network behind the transaction.

THE PROPERTY QUESTION IS ABOUT USE

The purchase covers operations. VICI subsidiaries own the underlying real estate; Highfield would become the tenant at closing. [1] Supplier property needs remain a separate question:

Operating need	Questions to investigate
Horse care	What facilities, water, pasture and daily care capacity are needed?
Deliveries	Can trucks and horse trailers use the site safely year-round?
Neighbouring uses	How would traffic, noise, storage and manure handling fit?
Permitted activity	What land-use approvals and site permissions would be needed?

ANOTHER SIGNAL IN THE HORSE MARKET
Horse Racing Alberta reports 74 yearlings sold for $1,119,200 at the September 23 Alberta Thoroughbred sale, with gross sales almost 10% above 2025. [3] This separate market signal does not establish rising corridor land values.

THE ECI TAKE
Investor confidence and stronger horse sales are encouraging. A property conclusion still needs evidence of demand from actual businesses for suitable sites.

Sources (click to open): [1] Century Casinos announcement, September 28, 2026 [3] Horse Racing Alberta industry update, September 29, 2026 [6] Travel Alberta, Century Downs location [7] Highfield Stock Farm project profile. Research current to October 7, 2026.

DEVELOPMENT WATCH

WHAT WOULD CONFIRM GROWTH

These six milestones would show how the proposed investment translates into activity on the ground.

1. TRANSACTION COMPLETION

Watch for a closing announcement and regulatory approvals. The company announcements still describe a conditional transaction. [1, 2]

2. THE OPERATING PLAN

Look for confirmed management, staffing, facility names and continuity arrangements as the transition proceeds.

3. RACING AND PARTICIPATION

Track approved race dates, participation and stable use. More activity needs a published operating record.

4. CAPITAL INVESTMENT

Look for specific improvements, budgets, approvals and construction. An acquisition announcement is not an expansion schedule.

5. LOCAL PURCHASING

Identify supplier opportunities and awarded contracts. Ask which goods and services are sourced within the region.

6. JOBS AND REGIONAL VALUE

Separate existing employment from new positions, seasonal work and construction jobs. Seek local evidence alongside provincial estimates.

FROM THE PUBLISHER

The East Corridor’s economy includes businesses whose influence is easy to overlook from the highway. Agriculture and equine services deserve attention alongside industrial development because they put land, skills and local purchasing to work.

I see this proposed investment as a reason to follow the horse industry more closely: which businesses benefit, where the work happens and what the operating decisions reveal. Documented activity will tell us how far the story goes.

Lori Olijnyk | Publisher, East Corridor Insider

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Work in a corridor farm or equine business? Share a supplier opportunity or documented investment milestone with ECI.

Sources (click to open): [1] Century Casinos announcement, September 28, 2026 [2] Highfield acquisition announcement, October 1, 2026. Research current to October 7, 2026.