



2011-2031

Town of Aurora strategic plan

Today, tomorrow, our future together.



Today, Tomorrow, Our Future Together

THIS PLAN IS AVAILABLE IN ALTERNATE FORMAT BY REQUEST



2010-2014 Town of Aurora Council



Geoffrey Dawe
Mayor

905-726-4741
mayor@aurora.ca

John Abel
Deputy Mayor & Councillor

905-727-3123 ext. 4267
jabel@aurora.ca

Michael Thompson
Councillor

905-727-3123 ext. 4268
mthompson@aurora.ca

Evelyn Buck
Councillor

905-727-3123 ext. 4269
ebuck@aurora.ca

Sandra Humfries
Councillor

905-727-3123 ext. 4266
shumfries@aurora.ca

John Gallo
Councillor

905-727-3123 ext. 4262
jgallo@aurora.ca

Wendy Gaertner
Councillor

905-727-3123 ext. 4265
wgaertner@aurora.ca

Chris Ballard
Councillor

905-727-3123 ext. 4264
cballard@aurora.ca

Paul Pirri
Councillor

905-727-3123 ext. 4263
ppirri@aurora.ca

The 2031 Strategic Plan was approved by Council on [DATE TBD].

Acknowledgements

The Town would like to acknowledge the efforts of Council, the Strategic Plan Steering Committee, Town staff, partner organizations, stakeholders and residents who have participated in the process and provided guidance and direction to create the Strategic Plan.

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Our Vision for Aurora 2031 is:



*An innovative
and sustainable community
where neighbours care
and businesses thrive.*

Aurora 2031: Today, Tomorrow, Our Future Together



The Town of Aurora has developed this new Strategic Plan to identify and assess growth and development opportunities that ensure the future economic, social and environmental sustainability and health of Aurora. This Strategic Plan emphasizes the development of local assets which capitalize upon the many strengths and opportunities in the area.

The outcomes of the Strategic Plan include the establishment of a collective vision and a plan for the next 20 years that defines ways to maximize resources and communicate priorities to all citizens. This Plan includes an implementation strategy that will be aligned with the goals of respective departments that deliver municipal services across the Town of Aurora.

This Plan also aligns with other municipal planning documents and budget processes using established performance measures that will ensure that resources are allocated appropriately and reported annually to identify progress, measure success and establish future goals.

What is a Strategic Plan?

A Strategic Plan is a collaborative and inclusive community planning tool that identifies the desired future for the community; what it looks like, how it functions and how to achieve the vision for the future.

Municipalities across Canada are developing Strategic Plans as a mechanism to implement actions that will lead them in a sustainable direction over the long-term. Sustainable development recognizes the interrelationship between the natural environment, economic and social development.

Why develop a Strategic Plan?

Aurora Town Council confirmed the need for a long-term vision for the entire community.

There are many benefits to developing a Strategic Plan:

- Understanding community needs and expectations (social, economic and environmental)
- Developing a renewed sense of purpose/future direction
- Clarifying short, medium, long-term goals and objectives
- Identifying and enhancing the ability to manage change
- Mitigating potential risk through planning
- Improving decision-making and effective management
- Enhancing communication between staff and the public
- Strengthening coordination of activities between corporate departments
- Clearly defining responsibilities and accountability

About this Plan

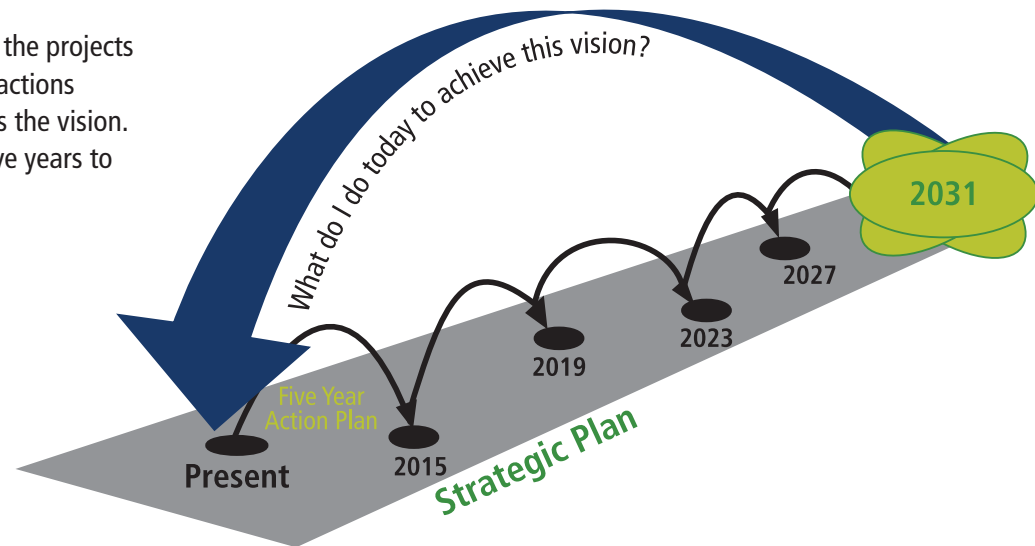


The Aurora 2031 Strategic Plan is a long-term planning document that describes the vision for Aurora in 2031. In order to fulfill this vision, Council has established a series of goals and related objectives that further describe the broader vision. The vision, goals and objectives provide long-term direction to inform future decision making.

The Plan also includes a five-year action plan that outlines the projects and programs that contribute to the long-term vision. The actions represent the Town's current detailed plan to work towards the vision. The intent is to review and update the action plan every five years to progressively move towards the 2031 vision.

"Strategic planning has the potential to be a powerful process that catalyzes the municipal organization, bringing together the public, staff and management in the development of a common vision, direction and goals."

Municipal World



1. Begin with the end in mind
2. Move backwards from the vision to the present
3. Move step by step towards the vision

Aurora: A great place to live, work and play



“Aurora is a growing modern town with that older small town feel and charm.”

Aurora resident

The Town of Aurora is a growing community of over 55,000 residents and 1,300 businesses, including approximately 150 major industries and head offices. Aurora has experienced tremendous growth over the past several years with population and employment doubling since 1986. Aurora’s family friendly communities, local amenities, cultural and recreational activities, vibrant local economy, attractive natural environment and strategic location in York Region continue to attract residents and workers to the area. Over the next 20 years, Aurora is anticipated to add 15,000 people and 12,000 jobs to the community.

Aurora's location offers all the advantages of an urban centre while maintaining its small town atmosphere. Portions of the Town exist within the environmentally-significant Oak Ridges Moraine, which provides rolling terrain, rich valley land and large forest tracts. A scenic and friendly Town with a rich cultural heritage, recreational facilities and neighbourhoods make Aurora an ideal place to live and grow a business.

Aurora is a progressive, forward-thinking community that has a long history of guiding growth through community based strategic plans. This plan is framed by the principles of sustainability and built on community input and feedback. Throughout the consultation, residents clearly articulated a number of community characteristics that are highly valued including:

- The family-oriented, small town feel of Aurora;
- Heritage, arts, culture and community events;
- A revitalized downtown area;
- Managed growth that encourages mixed-use, transit-oriented development and affordability;
- Flexible services and infrastructure that match the Town’s changing demographic;
- High quality green space;
- Proactive Green Energy initiatives;
- Connected trails and green space that improve connectivity and mobility;
- A growing business sector that supports local employment; and,
- High quality employment lands that entice new business development and quality employment.

Background



“A sustainable Aurora looks like one that is keeping youth and seniors connected. Bring in businesses that will also contribute to or partner with Aurora’s vision.”

Aurora resident

The Town of Aurora has been coordinating services to respond to the needs of residents through the development of Strategic Plans since 1992. Aurora’s first Strategic Plan was published in 1993 and was last updated in 2006. As a progressive municipality, the focus of this new Strategic Plan includes sustainability principles that reflect the public’s vision for an ideal Aurora in 2031.

The Town of Aurora identified several specific objectives and tasks for the Strategic Plan including the preparation of a Town of Aurora profile and environmental scan which includes relevant background information (e.g. demographic data, socio-economic data, resource base), as well as key trends. This feedback was used to draft the Strategic Plan framework which includes vision and goals.

The Town of Aurora recognizes and acknowledges key sustainability issues and forces of change. It has dealt with the population doubling in size since 1986 and must deal with the anticipated growth of an additional 15,000 residents by 2031.

The Strategic Plan not only sets corporate strategic priorities, it also guides Council in decision-making for Aurora’s future. Furthermore, it influences and coincides with existing plans and studies in Aurora and York Region.

The components of the Strategic Plan were based on:

- Stakeholder engagement
- Three pillars of sustainability – environment, community and economy
- Emerging issues and trends

The outcomes of the Strategic Plan include:

- Understanding key considerations facing Aurora ratepayers over the next four years
- Understanding longer term strategic issues affecting Aurora ratepayers over the next 20 years
- Developing clear and concise actions to help guide future decisions/implementation by Council
- Enhancing stakeholder cooperation and communication
- Integrating sustainability into strategic planning and decision-making processes

Background cont'd...



The Town has been successful in moving forward with sustainability initiatives and has made significant contributions towards making Aurora more sustainable – environmentally, economically and socially. According to the Clean Air Partnership scan conducted in 2010, these contributions include: a commitment to green energy, municipal buildings retrofitted to energy-efficient standards, a Green Fleet Management Study, traffic lights replaced with LED lights, Green Roof technologies being investigated and an anti-idling policy for corporate vehicles. Most recently, the Corporate Environmental Action Plan (CEAP) was released in 2010 to further support sustainability in Aurora.

Did you know?

Sustainability or sustainable development was initially described as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Our Common Future (Brundtland Report), 1987

Three Pillars of Sustainability



Community Engagement



Background Research

This task included collecting, reviewing and analyzing documents from a wide variety of sources, including programs, policies, literature and studies. The Town's existing initiatives, programs, studies and planning documents were examined.

Interviews with Staff and Council Members

More than 30 in-depth interviews were conducted with Council members, Town staff, community groups, political leaders and business leaders to collect additional background information and review the strategic planning process. Interviews included questions on community strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges or threats. Interviewees provided feedback on actions that the Town could take to better address the threats and challenges and take advantage of the strengths and opportunities.

Community Survey

A community survey was prepared that included questions on what residents valued most about the Town, what they felt were the most distinguishing features of the Town and how they could be improved. The surveys were made available online and were also administered face-to-face with residents and Aurora business owners.

Hundreds of surveys were completed. The information collected was used to support the development of goals, objectives and actions. Many residents used the survey as an opportunity to share what they really appreciated about the Town and provide ideas that could make the Town a better place to live, work and play.

Youth Engagement

Youth were engaged at soccer tournaments and community workshops. A Youth Design Contest was also held to get a sense of what the next generation wanted Aurora to be like in the future.



Winning entry youth design contest by:
Carolyn Metcalfe

Community Engagement cont'd...



Community Workshops

Community consultations were held at the Aurora Seniors' Centre where a brief presentation was made to the participants. This included background information on strategic planning, the process of developing a Strategic Plan and key community priorities identified to-date through background research, community surveys and interviews. Participants engaged in discussions on their vision for the Town and actions that could be taken to achieve that vision.

The information collected at the workshops was used in the development of the Strategic Plan, including the creation of a vision that reflects the desires of citizens, key priority areas that should be addressed and actions that the Town could take to achieve the vision.

Internet, Communications and Social Media

The Town of Aurora's Strategic Plan website, located at www.aurorastrategicplan.ca was used to advise residents, business owners and community organizations about the development of the Plan. The website also included information on where the next community engagement sessions would be held. This included Ribfest, the Farmer's Market and Concert in the Park. Along with the survey, strategic planning forums and a Youth Design Contest were organized to encourage discussion and involvement. Across the entire community, other communications on the Strategic Plan were conveyed using the local newspaper, newsletters, emails and mobile signs.

Steering Committee Meetings

Council and Steering Committee members were provided with updates throughout the Strategic Planning process. Key information, revisions and next steps in the process were presented regularly.



Sample consultation materials.

Strategic Plan Framework



“My vision for the Town of Aurora is to have more businesses and residents using green energy.”

Aurora resident



The structure of this plan is as follows:

Vision

The vision is a general statement that presents a timeless inspirational view for the ideal future of the Town.

Goals

Goals are qualitative statements that highlight key issues raised during the sustainable community planning process, which add depth to the vision statement and chart the direction for the plan.

Objectives

Objectives are more specific statements of the general goals and describe how the goals will be achieved. Each goal has multiple objectives.

Actions

The actions refer to specific tasks that need to be undertaken to achieve the objective.

Implementation

The implementation section includes the steps necessary to ensure that the proposed actions are implemented by the Town and partners and progress is measured.

Vision



Aurora 2031 – Imagine...

Imagine an inclusive, growing, family-oriented community that retains its small-town charm and celebrates heritage, arts and culture. A place where friendly neighbours gather at community events and public spaces to enjoy a summer evening. An integrated community seamlessly connected by trails and open space that promotes green energy and provides accessible and convenient alternatives to driving through improved transit operations and mixed use development. A place with a stable and thriving economy that includes a mix of small and large-scale businesses, access to local goods and services, employment opportunities for residents and a revitalized downtown core. This place is Aurora in 2031.

The Town's community vision summarizes the picture of Aurora described above. The proposed vision was developed based on research, interviews (internal and external stakeholders), online input (community at large), community engagement, visioning sessions and workshops.

***Our Vision for Aurora 2031 is:
An innovative and sustainable
community where neighbours
care and businesses thrive.***

Guiding Principles



Guiding principles are the architectural framework to enact the vision. The following principles were developed from information provided through the consultation process. These principles reflect the shared values of Aurora. They articulate the ethical standards by which the organization makes decisions and conducts activities. The Strategic Plan is framed by the following seven principles:

“My vision for the Town of Aurora is to maintain the safe family atmosphere that encourages community.”

Aurora resident

- 1 **Commitment to the Strategic Plan as a long-term planning document**
- 2 **Leadership in corporate management**
- 3 **Broad community outreach and engagement with partners, businesses, newcomers and community groups to ensure inclusiveness**
- 4 **Recognition and encouragement of community contributions and volunteerism**
- 5 **Leverage partnerships**
- 6 **Dignity and integrity**
- 7 **Progressive corporate excellence and continuous improvement**

The Pillars of Success: Community



GOAL:

Supporting an exceptional quality of life for all

Objective 1: Improve transportation, mobility and connectivity

- Advocate for improved accessible transit service
- Establish east-west linkages to facilitate movement across the community for all modes of transportation
- Examine traffic patterns and identify potential solutions to improve movement and safety at key intersections in the community
- Explore partnership options to support the transportation needs of the Town's changing demographics
- Implement and regularly update the Trails Master Plan to improve connectivity
- Examine the merits of developing a Transportation Master Plan that considers competitive and sustainable alternatives to driving
- Monitor and update the Accessibility Plan to ensure compliance with AODA (*Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*)

"A sustainable Aurora looks like a place where we can find everything we need for our daily lives, without traveling too much."

Aurora resident

Did you know?

There are over 25 kilometres of pedestrian walking trails in Aurora, and Aurora is serviced by nine main YRT/Viva transit routes.

The Pillars of Success: Community cont'd...



Objective 2: Invest in sustainable infrastructure

- Maintain and expand infrastructure to support forecasted population growth through technology, waste management, roads, emergency services and accessibility
- Implement actions that ensure the long-term safety of the community such as CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) and other urban design principles
- Promote the adaptability and flexibility of services to respond to demographic shifts
- Establish policies and programs that enhance the accessibility and safety of new and existing facilities and infrastructure
- Investigate the merits of a program that promotes and actively supports innovative green building and infrastructure in Aurora
- Develop and implement a technology plan to improve the Town's efficiency in providing services

Objective 3: Celebrating and promoting our culture

- Develop a Cultural Master Plan that includes heritage, music and art to promote more cohesive and coordinated cultural services
- Continue to explore opportunities and partnerships that contribute to the celebration of culture in the community
- Actively promote and support a plan to revitalize the downtown that includes culture

Objective 4: Encouraging an active and healthy lifestyle

- Develop a long-term needs assessment for recreation programs, services and operations to match the evolving needs of the growing and changing population
- Continue to encourage and support the efforts of businesses and volunteers by recognizing outstanding community contributions
- Support multi-generational programming in cultural and recreational activities to encourage every age cohort to interact and share experiences
- Implement and regularly update the Trails Master Plan to improve connectivity
- Continue to develop awareness programs that promote the benefits of recreation in supporting a healthy lifestyle
- Develop programs and policies that nurture and contribute to the development of youth
- Continue to support and enhance community planting programs in appropriate locations

Did you know?

One in seven people in Ontario have a disability. Over the next 20 years, that number will rise as the population ages.

Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services

The Pillars of Success: Community cont'd...



Objective 5: Strengthening the fabric of our community

- Collaborate with the development community to ensure future growth includes housing opportunities for everyone
- Work with the development community to meet intensification targets to 2031 as identified in the Town's *Official Plan*
- Identify new formats, methods and technologies to effectively and regularly engage the community
- Actively promote and support a plan to revitalize the downtown
- Assess the feasibility of establishing an entertainment district in the downtown area, a community square/gathering area/piazza and a permanent or scheduled outdoor pedestrian mall on Yonge Street in the Aurora Promenade
- Investigate opportunities to establish a year-round farmers' market/artisan fair
- Undertake a review of surplus lands and structures to facilitate growth and revitalization in the community
- Investigate opportunities to enhance the Town's representation at York Regional Council
- Explore opportunities to further strengthen partnerships with neighbouring municipalities
- Work with development community partners to establish a hotel and/or convention centre that meets the growing needs of our business and residents
- Assess opportunities to partner with a college or university to establish satellite facilities in Aurora
- Prepare and regularly update the Town's *Official Plan* and *Zoning By-law*
- Develop a Customer Service Strategy and Implementation Plan

Did you know?

Aurora's 2006-2031 intensification target is 3,140 dwelling units to be located within the Town's existing Built-Up Area.

The Pillars of Success: Economy



GOAL: Enabling a diverse, creative and resilient economy

Objective 1: Promoting economic opportunities that facilitate the growth of Aurora as a desirable place to do business

- Develop a 10-year Capital Investment Plan to assess and balance infrastructure affordability and renewal with anticipated revenues
 - Undertake a 25-year fiscal analysis and five-year rolling plan that reviews revenue options within the context of planned growth patterns
 - Leverage partnerships with local boards, chambers and business organizations to promote Aurora as a preferred location for business
 - Develop plans to attract businesses that provide employment opportunities for our residents
 - Assess the feasibility of a research and innovation centre to promote the commercialization of technology and business and employment growth
 - Create, implement and regularly update an Economic Development Strategy
 - Actively promote and support a plan to revitalize the downtown
- Assess the feasibility of establishing an entertainment district in the downtown area, a community square/gathering area/piazza and a permanent or scheduled outdoor pedestrian mall on Yonge Street in the Aurora Promenade
 - Work with regional, provincial and national partners to promote Aurora as a preferred location for international investment
 - Assess opportunities to partner with a college or university to establish a satellite facility in Aurora

Did you know?

Between 2001 and 2011, the number of businesses in Aurora has increased by 25%, while the number of jobs has increased by 60%.

The Pillars of Success: Economy cont'd...



Objective 2: Supporting small business and encouraging a more sustainable business environment

- Explore opportunities to enhance the Town's business support services such as a business concierge service for non-residential development approvals
- Work with community partners to promote local employment practices/opportunities for local businesses and residents
- Work with development community partners to establish a hotel and/or convention centre that meets the growing needs of our businesses and residents
- Continue to liaise with municipal, provincial and senior levels of government to investigate potential opportunities to attract economic investment
- Establish regular communication with the Aurora Chamber of Commerce and the business community to better understand and address local business needs and promote business retention/expansion
- Identify the roles that the Town can play to support small home-based business in Aurora
- Recognize corporate social responsibility in the Aurora business community
- Attract new business that are green, clean and knowledge-based
- Investigate opportunities to encourage the creation and mobilization of knowledge in the local economy

“My vision for the Town is a great place to live work and play that is safe and economically viable for people of all ages.”

Aurora resident

Did you know?

Between 2001 and 2011, the number of firms in Aurora employing more than 100 people has increased from 27 to 40. However, the majority of businesses employ less than 20 people.

The Pillars of Success: Natural Environment



GOAL: Supporting environmental stewardship and sustainability

Objective 1: Encouraging the stewardship of Aurora's natural resources

- Implement and regularly update the Town's Corporate Environmental Action Plan
- Continue to create and promote waste diversion education programs in partnership with York Region
- Assess the merits of measuring the Town's natural capital assets
- Investigate opportunities to establish an environmental interpretative centre

Objective 2: Promoting and advancing green initiatives

- Investigate a program that promotes and actively supports innovative green buildings and infrastructure
- Promote community involvement in environmental initiatives
- Continue to support and enhance community planting programs in appropriate locations

- Implement and regularly update the Trails Master Plan to improve connectivity
- Continue to encourage and support the efforts of businesses and volunteers by recognizing outstanding environmental contributions

Did you know?

Over 1,000 trees, shrubs, and flowers were planted in the Aurora Arboretum in 2011.



Implementation



The Town of Aurora's Strategic Plan combines goals, objectives and actions that work to support an overall vision that will help position the Town as a leader in the three pillars of sustainability. Over the next 20 years, the Town will place a strong emphasis on achieving the actions outlined in this Plan. This demonstrates Council's long-term commitment to shaping Aurora's future according to the public's input. Implementation of this plan requires the Town to:

- Integrate the Strategic Plan framework into the day-to-day function of the municipality
- Maintain and enhance internal and external partnerships
- Continually review and enhance this Plan

"Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare."

Japanese proverb

Implementation cont'd...



Integrate the Strategic Plan framework into the day-to-day function of the Town of Aurora

The implementation of the Strategic Plan is made possible with a governance and accountability structure that allows the plan to move forward. Council will be responsible for assigning responsibility and coordinating the monitoring and implementation phases of this Plan.

Recommendation

- Council to assign actions to departments and develop an implementation team, which includes representatives from all departments. Council will act as the internal champion for the Strategic Plan and its implementation.
- Individual departments, with the assistance of Council, will consider the implementation of this Plan when developing departmental priorities and preparing departmental budgets.
- Implementation of Strategic Plan to flow through Council, which will be responsible for assigning respective departmental staff to complete.
- Council to assign responsibility of compiling information and reporting to Council by way of an annual report card regarding the Strategic Plan implementation.

Maintain and enhance internal and external partnerships

As the Town progresses with the implementation of the Strategic Plan, existing internal and external partnerships will need to be enhanced. Internal partnerships are defined as those between departments, while external partnerships include community groups, residents, private organizations, as well as other municipalities and levels of government. Further, the Town will continue to take a leadership role with respect to sustainability and balancing the three pillars – community, economy and natural environment, in part, by establishing new partnerships.

Continually review and enhance Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan is a 'living plan' that must be recognized as an evolving document. Council is committed to:

- Reviewing and updating the Plan every five years
- Reviewing annual implementation plans together with departmental business plans
- Preparing an annual report card

Contact Us



Address

100 John West Way, Box 1000
Aurora, Ontario
L4G 6J1

Hours of operation

Monday – Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Phone

Local: 905-726-4742

Toll-free: 1-800-269-3753 ext. 4742

Fax

905-726-4738

Email

strategicplan@aurora.ca

Website

www.aurorastrategicplan.ca



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Town of Aurora

strategic plan

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AURORA
You're in Good Company