

The Town of Aurora



Economic Development Strategic Plan

Prepared by:



McSWEENEY
inspiring economic sustainability®

Prepared for:





AURORA

You're in Good Company



McSweeney & Associates

201-900 Greenbank Road | Ottawa | ON | 1-855-300-8548 | consult@mcsweeney.ca | www.mcsweeney.ca

Table of Contents

1.	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1.	Purpose for a Strategic Plan	2
2.	UPDATE PROCESS.....	4
3.	TOWN OF AURORA'S TOP 10 PRIORITY ACTIONS & TIMELINES	6
4.	TOWN OF AURORA'S STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN	8
4.1.	Theme #1 – Being Business Friendly and Investment Ready	9
4.2.	Theme #2 – Building a Diversified Economy	10
4.3.	Theme #3 – Downtown Aurora as a Destination & Focal Point for the Community ..	12
4.4.	Theme #4 – Improving the Quality of Life through Heritage, Arts, Culture, Tourism and Community Engagement.....	13
4.5.	Implementation.....	15
5.	STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS	16
5.1.	Strategic Action Plan Consultation Process	16
5.1.1.	<i>Interviews & Online Survey.....</i>	<i>16</i>
5.1.2.	<i>Focus Groups.....</i>	<i>17</i>
5.1.3.	<i>Working Session.....</i>	<i>17</i>
5.1.4.	<i>Strategic Planning Session.....</i>	<i>18</i>
6.	A SNAPSHOT OF TOWN OF AURORA	19
5.2.	Executive Summary of the Situational Analysis	21
5.3.	Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results (SCOAR™).....	23

1. INTRODUCTION

The Town of Aurora, population of 58,618, is centrally located in York Region, in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). York Region is home to 1.2 million residents, 660,000 jobs and 52,000 business establishments. As part of the GTA, Aurora has access to a workforce of 2.6 million people.

Aurora is known as a community of affluence and is home to many top senior executives including CAOs, CEOs, CFOs. Situated in the rolling hills of the Oak Ridges Moraine, housing prices average close to \$1 million, supported by more than half of the population with household incomes of over \$100,000.

Aurora's largest employers include Desjardins Insurance, Magna International, TC Transcontinental Printing, York Catholic District School Board, York Regional Police, York Region District School Board, Genpak LP, Bunn-O-Matic, and St. Andrew's College.

Aurora's Unique Value Proposition:

Aurora features a unique value proposition that contributes to its business development opportunities. This value proposition includes:

- it's connectivity to Toronto via the all day, 2 way GO Train running every 15 minutes
- the proportion of high-income residents living in a smaller community with a brand that projects affluence and prestige
- 400 acres of serviced land on the Highway 404 corridor
- Southlake Hospital just north of Aurora
- home of Magna and the Magna Neighbourhood Network
- an emerging differentiator is in the food services/food processing sector that has been growing organically over the past number of years in Aurora and offers the following strengths:
 - Niagara College located in downtown Aurora houses the Canadian Food and Wine Institute
 - extensive agriculture in the area
 - wine sector growing in Holland Marsh and Stouffville
 - 15 to 20 companies in the food processing sector located in Aurora (i.e. Bulk Barn Headquarters)

Aurora has room to grow its economic base and add new jobs to the community and has the key elements for continued growth.



1.1. Purpose for a Strategic Plan

An economic development strategic plan sets priorities and directs the efforts of the municipality in order to help grow the local economy. Town of Aurora approved an economic development strategy in 2003 and has approved Economic Development Action Plans to guide economic development thereafter. As such, the Town has been effectively guiding economic growth in the Town over the past 15 years. It is accepted best practice to routinely refresh economic development strategic plans to re-establish priorities for economic development with the objective of responding to the changes that have taken place and servicing the current needs for the business community.

The 2019 Economic Development Strategic Plan will continue to provide a roadmap for sustainable employment growth for Aurora by focusing on the growth of specific target sectors/industries, including the health sector and food processing.

Aurora will understand the key points of its value proposition to attract targeted industries and understand the target markets from which investment will be attracted and how to attract those investments to the Town. The value proposition will also provide the foundation to develop a clear and distinct positioning of Aurora within its broader market context.

The 2019 Economic Development Strategic Plan will continue to provide a roadmap for sustainable business and employment growth for the Town of Aurora.

The Strategic Plan identifies top priority economic actions for the Town and includes:

- The identification of priority areas of focus that will sustainably and successfully generate wealth, investment and employment and enhance the viability of existing business, expand existing business operations and attract new investment and businesses.
- Short, medium and long-term actions identifying innovative strategies, projects, programs and activities necessary to exploit the Town's strengths, competitive advantages and priority opportunities, as well as address any challenges.

The Strategic Plan also:

- is focused on supporting and retaining existing businesses and jobs in Aurora.

- leverages assets where it makes sense to do so.
- encourages greater investment and job growth in Aurora
- aims to attract new businesses and industry to Aurora
- identifies business sectors that will complement and support existing businesses that Aurora should work to attract
- helps Aurora to achieve long-term employment growth.

The Town of Aurora's five-year Economic Development Strategic Plan (2019-2023) builds on the achievements of the previous Economic Development Strategy and provides new initiatives to move Aurora forward into the future. The new Strategic Plan aligns with York Region Economic Development Strategy, Aurora's Corporate Strategy, Places to Grow, and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan.





2. UPDATE PROCESS

The process followed to create the Town of Aurora Economic Development Strategic Plan consisted of a document review, statistical analysis of the economy and workforce, and a comprehensive community and economic development partner consultation.

The process was complemented with a community tour of the Town of Aurora which gave the project team an understanding of the uniqueness of Aurora, after which a thorough consultation process was followed that included:

- A series of one-on-one interviews with businesses and economic development stakeholders;
- Focus group sessions with representation from the Chamber, Aurora Business Improvement Association, senior Town of Aurora staff, York Region staff, Aurora Economic Development Corporation Board, Tourism, Arts, Culture, Heritage and Business;
- An online survey; and
- A working session with key stakeholders.



This process led to the creation of a set of detailed realistic and doable immediate, short and long-term action items for the next five years with an aim of:

- Supporting and retaining existing businesses and jobs in the Town of Aurora.
- Encouraging greater investment and job growth in the Town of Aurora.
- Attracting new businesses and industries to the Town of Aurora.
- Identifying business sectors that will complement and support existing businesses that the Town of Aurora should work to attract and identify target sectors/industry cluster investment opportunities.
- Helping the Town of Aurora achieve long-term employment growth.
- Providing solutions to overcome any investment readiness or development challenges, and to maintain and improve the Town of Aurora's overall competitive business environment for the benefit of all firms large and small.

The Economic Development Strategic Plan is based on a comprehensive understanding of the Town of Aurora, its economy, businesses and stakeholders, as well as their collective aspirations.



TOP 10

3. TOWN OF AURORA'S TOP 10 PRIORITY ACTIONS & TIMELINES

Experience indicates that presenting a small number of key strategic actions for communities to focus on is far more effective than an extensive list of items that seem impossible to implement. While the remainder of this strategy and the implementation plan will elaborate on these priorities, below are the **Top 10 Priority Actions**, focused on providing initiatives which are necessary to be carried out first and are the foundational actions required to realise the Town of Aurora's economic vision. These initiatives are aimed at strengthening both the community and economy.

TOP 10 ACTIONS	SUGGESTED TIMING	LEAD / SUPPORT
1. Identify all staffing resources and include defined roles and responsibilities for staff. Have in place adequate resources, both human and financial resources, allocated to Economic Development in order to accomplish the actions.	Immediate	CAO
2. Launch the new Aurora economic development/investment attraction focused website with current and relevant investment information.	Immediate	Economic Development
3. Continue to implement and build a formalized business visitation program with a tracking system that helps to engage businesses directly and understand needs with proactive issue resolution support. Ensure enough resources are in place to expand the program.	Continue	Economic Development
4. Undertake a health-care related business attraction strategy to explore opportunities that could come out of the Southlake Hospital.	Immediate	Economic Development
5. Create a sub-committee of the Aurora Economic Development Corporation to lead a program aimed at building relationships and networks with C-suite (top senior staffers including CAOs, CEOs, CFOs) residents living in Aurora. The goal of the program is to uncover business attraction and investment opportunities through the connections with C-suite residents.	Immediate	Aurora Economic Development Corporation
6. Continue to implement the Business Concierge Program and build on its success. Include early identification of issues and engagement, early coordination of approval agencies and an agreed upon timeline schedule.	Continue	Economic Development

TOP 10 ACTIONS	SUGGESTED TIMING	LEAD / SUPPORT
7. Evaluate the existing food services/food processing sector and explore opportunities that could be undertaken to expand the sector.	Immediate	Economic Development
8. Continue building the 'Why Aurora' value proposition as the foundation for the Aurora business attraction strategy for the Town of Aurora.	Continue	Economic Development
9. Develop programs to maximize the existing and planned parking supply in the downtown and develop and implement a marketing strategy to encourage the use of available parking.	Immediate	Economic Development
10. Partner with local sporting groups and organizations to develop a sports tourism strategy to determine the viability of sports tourism in Aurora and to lay out a plan that needs to be undertaken in order to grow, strengthen and promote sports tourism in Aurora (infrastructure, etc.).	Immediate	Community Services

Continue = ongoing | Immediate = 2019-2020 | Short term = before the end of 2021 | Long term = before the end of 2023

4. TOWN OF AURORA'S STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The following action areas have been derived through a rigorous process that included a thorough study of the Town's economic base analysis, a target sector review, a full consultation and stakeholder engagement exercise and the Town of Aurora's SCOAR™. These strategic areas of focus, not weighted and in no particular order, are where the Town of Aurora should centre their economic development resources.

It's all about Place...

- Being Business Friendly and Investment Ready
- Building a Diversified Economy

It's all about People...

- Downtown Aurora as a Destination and Focal Point for the Community
- Heritage, Arts, Culture, Tourism and Community Engagement

	
<p>Being Business Friendly and Investment Ready</p>	<p>Building a Diversified Economy</p>
	
<p>Downtown Aurora as a Destination and Focal Point for the Community</p>	<p>Heritage, Arts, Culture, Tourism and Community Engagement</p>

Strategic Actions

Priority #1

To ensure the most effective and efficient strategic plan implementation, Aurora would benefit from identifying all staffing resources and to have in place adequate resources, both human and financial resources, allocated to Economic Development in order to accomplish the actions.

4.1. Theme #1 – Being Business Friendly and Investment Ready

BR+E


Being business friendly is about having **good customer service, a streamlined process for development, and a knowledgeable council and staff and a supportive community** that are willing to do their utmost to make businesses welcome in the community.

Successfully retaining and attracting investment means being able to provide the appropriate information about the business climate and infrastructure for existing and potential investors. **Being 'investment ready' is understanding what a business needs to be successful.** Continue to undertake a comprehensive business visitation program which includes a tracking process to capture and follow up on the results (issues, gaps or opportunities) of the discussions.

1. Launch the new Aurora economic development/investment attraction focused website with current and relevant investment information.
2. Continue to implement the Business Concierge Program and build on its success. Include early identification of issues and engagement, early coordination of approval agencies and an agreed upon timeline schedule.
3. Continue to implement and build a formalized business visitation program with a tracking system that helps to engage businesses directly and understand needs with proactive issue resolution support. Ensure sufficient resources are in place to expand the program.
4. Examine high-speed internet infrastructure in the Hallgrove Business Park to ensure that there is connectivity for local businesses.

5. Strengthen the Town's value proposition and support programs to spotlight business in Aurora through video, website, brand awareness and by supporting the industry awards hosted by the Chamber of Commerce through the Business Excellence Awards.

4.2. Theme #2 – Building a Diversified Economy

A circular icon containing a stylized white building and three dollar signs (\$\$\$) on a dark blue background.

Having a **diversified economy means that a community can be resilient** through downturns in the economy. The advantages of a diversified economy is that a community isn't tied to one industry, that it remains flexible and sustainable through a diversified set of economic activities.

1. Create a sub-committee of the Aurora Economic Development Corporation to lead a program aimed at building relationships and networks with C-suite (top senior staffers including CAOs, CEOs, CFOs) residents living in Aurora. The goal of the program is to uncover business attraction and investment opportunities through the connections with C-suite residents.
2. Undertake a health-care related business attraction strategy to explore opportunities that could come out of the Southlake Hospital.
3. Evaluate the existing food services/food processing sector and explore opportunities that could be undertaken to expand the sector.
4. Continue building the 'Why Aurora' value proposition as the foundation for the Aurora business attraction strategy for the Town of Aurora.
5. Continue to work closely with York Region Economic Development and neighbouring municipalities as an approach for tapping into business attraction opportunities and identify spillover opportunities from neighbouring business communities that would be suitable for Aurora.
6. Connect with the commuters (into and out of Aurora) to provide them with information about business development opportunities in Aurora.
7. Review existing planning policies to ensure Aurora has the proper policy framework in place to encourage and protect the types of land uses envisioned to be of high development priority.
8. Continue strengthening the local workforce by:
 - a. engaging Aurora's business community (through the Business Visitation Program) to determine their workforce needs and help to provide opportunities to attract workforce.
 - b. developing a strategy to target the highly educated, high income commuters to better match the existing resident base talent with existing gaps and opportunities within Aurora's businesses and industries.

- c.** Facilitate relationships with local schools (private and public) and business, in an effort to tap into the students, alumni and their families, and to engage and build their connectivity to Aurora.
- 9.** Capture and capitalize on the entrepreneurial spirit in Aurora by:
 - a.** identifying co-working spaces and incubation services located in Aurora.
 - b.** continuing to work with entrepreneurs to assist with their site selection process by targeting entrepreneurs that need a physical location to set up their business in the Town of Aurora.
 - c.** partnering with innovation centres, such as YSpace at York University's Markham Campus, to bring programs to Aurora that support entrepreneurship such as a satellite location.
- 10.** Continue to work with post secondary partners to attract additional post secondary programming in Aurora at a strategic location.
- 11.** Work with the business community and York Region to examine and implement solutions aimed at providing transportation options to allow staff to easily commute to businesses located in employment areas currently not well serviced by public transit.
- 12.** Work with regional, provincial and national partners to ensure Aurora is promoted as a preferred location for investment.
- 13.** Leverage partnerships with local boards, chambers, Business Improvement Association and business organizations to promote Aurora as a preferred location for business.
- 14.** Work with the Northern 6 York Region municipalities to examine the feasibility of a medium-sized enterprise centre located in Aurora that assists local business to support the transition from small to medium sized business.
- 15.** Work with the Northern 6 York Region municipalities to investigate the opportunity to develop a program for investment attraction strategy, with Aurora as lead.
- 16.** The newly formed Board of Directors for the Aurora Economic Development Corporation should undertake the following:
 - a.** Examine opportunities to provide incentives for new office development in the downtown core and in employment lands.



4.3. Theme #3 – Downtown Aurora as a Destination & Focal Point for the Community

Downtowns are often the centres of the community acting as public meeting spaces and commercial centres. Economically vibrant downtowns are the heart and soul of the community, provide an identity for the Town, and should be a point of pride for the community.

1. Develop programs to maximize the existing and planned parking supply in the downtown and develop and implement a marketing strategy to encourage the use of available parking.
2. Continue to implement the Aurora Promenade Downtown Revitalization Plan that is currently in place.
3. Continue to support and work closely with the newly formed Aurora Business Improvement Association.
4. Develop a plan to implement the Aurora Promenade Streetscape plan.
5. Establish and implement a wayfinding signage program for downtown Aurora.
6. Develop a marketing and communications strategy along with programming to attract and direct local residents to downtown.
7. Continue to support residential intensification development on the main corridors of Yonge Street and Wellington Street.
8. Develop a business mix strategy to determine the types of retail and commercial businesses that could be successful in the downtown.
9. Develop a communications strategy to better inform and engage residents and businesses in the downtown.
10. Work with community partners to consider attracting a bike share/e bike program to downtown Aurora.
11. Work with the Aurora Economic Development Corporation to examine opportunities for the Town to actively promote downtown revitalization through the redevelopment of private and public property.

4.4. Theme #4 – Improving the Quality of Life through Heritage, Arts, Culture, Tourism and Community Engagement

Heritage, Arts, Culture and Tourism

Tourism is a broad industry based around the attraction of people into a specific area. The sector encompasses local and regional activities and attractions such as food, accommodations, retail, festivals, sporting activities, arts, culture and heritage. To best benefit from tourism, there needs to be a plan to ensure that it grows and develops based on the community's vision.

1. Partner with local sporting groups and organizations to develop a sports tourism strategy to determine the viability of sports tourism in Aurora and to lay out a plan that needs to be undertaken in order to grow, strengthen and promote sports tourism in Aurora (infrastructure, etc.).
2. Contribute to the development of the Cultural Masterplan in 2019. Review the document and identify and implement actions in the Cultural Masterplan.
3. Work with the Aurora Business Improvement Association to highlight and promote business opportunities in and around the cultural precinct and library square.
4. Help residents connect with the identity of Aurora by crafting a program aimed at promoting, educating on history and heritage of Aurora to newcomers – (as potential examples, use waste management handbook to promote heritage – invest in historical pictures/photos to give to newcomers through Welcome Wagon).
5. Work with the development community to explore the potential and feasibility of building artist live/work studios (i.e. the use of vacant industrial buildings that could house artists and a makerspace).
6. As a focal point for the local artist community, complete a business case to validate the development of small, accessible, inclusive space for community art making and artist rehearsal space, something similar to an 'Art Hive' space.



Community Engagement

Community engagement is about being loyal to your community, caring about your own backyard, about giving back, connecting, creating networks, and having an attitude and willingness to give back to the community. Volunteerism is a very important way to engage the residents and businesses and involve them in the community and make them feel a part of the community.

1. Work closely with community partners to understand the Community Volunteer Network in Aurora and if necessary, work to find solutions to continue to promote volunteerism.
2. Continue to support the celebration and recognition of volunteers through an annual event.
3. Create an outreach program aimed at educating all residents on the importance of volunteering in Aurora and volunteer opportunities that are available.



4.5. Implementation

What normally makes a Strategic Plan successful is the ability and clarity in implementation.

Following endorsement of the Aurora Economic Development Strategic Plan, a detailed Implementation Action Plan will be crafted – in collaboration with staff – that will outline and prioritize the actions and steps Aurora will need to take in order to most effectively implement this Strategic Plan. The Implementation Plan will contain the following elements:

- Name of the Strategic Theme and Accompanying Actions;
- A roles and responsibility matrix that outlines:
 - Who has the lead responsibility for implementing the action as well as others that will support the lead during implementation;
 - Identify either current or proposed partnerships and collaborations required to achieve success.
- Estimated Resources – what are the estimated costs, resources and any assistance required from others to successfully implement the action (human resources, financial resources, other resources);
- Progress measures – measures and indicators to allow an indication of successful tracking and completion of the actions, and achievement of the intended outcomes on the local economy. and
- Timeline – when the action starts/be completed in the short, medium or long term;



5. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

5.1. Strategic Action Plan Consultation Process

Approximately 155 key community and business stakeholders were consulted throughout this process.

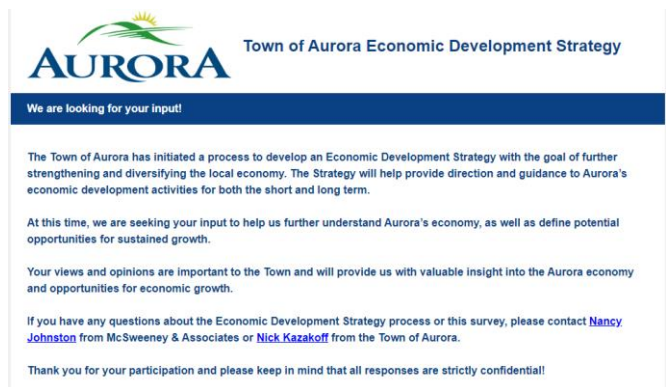
The consultations consisted of confidential one-on-one interviews, an online survey open to the public, eight focus groups based on key stakeholder groups and a working session with targeted community leaders and economic development stakeholders.

5.1.1. Interviews & Online Survey

One-on-one interviews were undertaken with economic development stakeholders including members of the Economic Development Board members, senior Town staff, Regional partners, the Mayor and Council, and key businesses.

As well, there was an online survey posted for the general public to provide input. The same six open-ended questions were used to guide both the interviews and the on-line surveys.

These questions probed into the major strengths and challenges of doing business in the Town of Aurora and looked forward to help define future opportunities, aspirations and results. All participants provided feedback on these questions, contributing to a statistically significant result.



5.1.2. Focus Groups



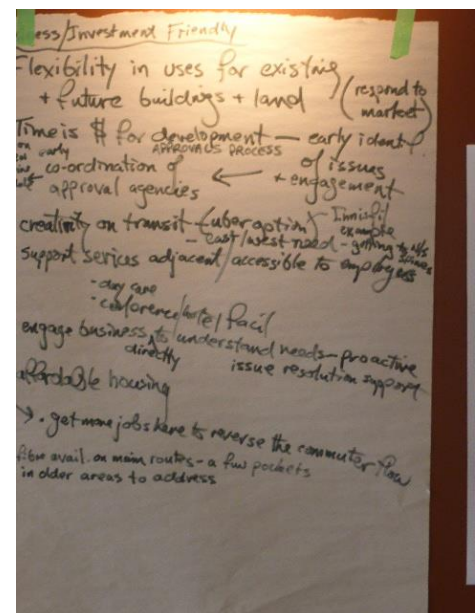
Eight focus groups were held with representation from key strategic areas including:

- York Region;
- Aurora Chamber of Commerce;
- Aurora Business Improvement Association;
- Manufacturers,
- ICI Realtors and Brokers;
- Arts/Culture;
- Sports/Tourism; and,
- the Economic Development Corporation Board.

5.1.3. Working Session

The Working Session was held April 2, 2019 and was attended by approximately 50 participants including representation from the Mayor and council, the business community, real estate community, arts and culture sector, tourism sector, business associations, York Region, and Town of Aurora staff.

The purpose of the Working Session was to bring together economic development, community and business leaders to review the project findings, to get confirmation on the themes that were derived from the research, and to begin strategizing and crafting action items for each of those themes that emerged from the consultation process. Working groups identified actions that would address the challenges and opportunities under each theme.



The themes brought forward to the Working Session and validated were:

	
<p>Being Business Friendly and Investment Ready</p>	<p>Building a Diversified Economy</p>
	
<p>Downtown Aurora as a Destination and Focal Point for the Community</p>	<p>Heritage, Arts, Culture and Tourism as Economic Drivers</p>

During the Working Session it was determined that **Community Engagement** should be considered a key priority for the Town as well and was subsequently included in the discussions as a fifth theme.

5.1.4. Strategic Planning Session

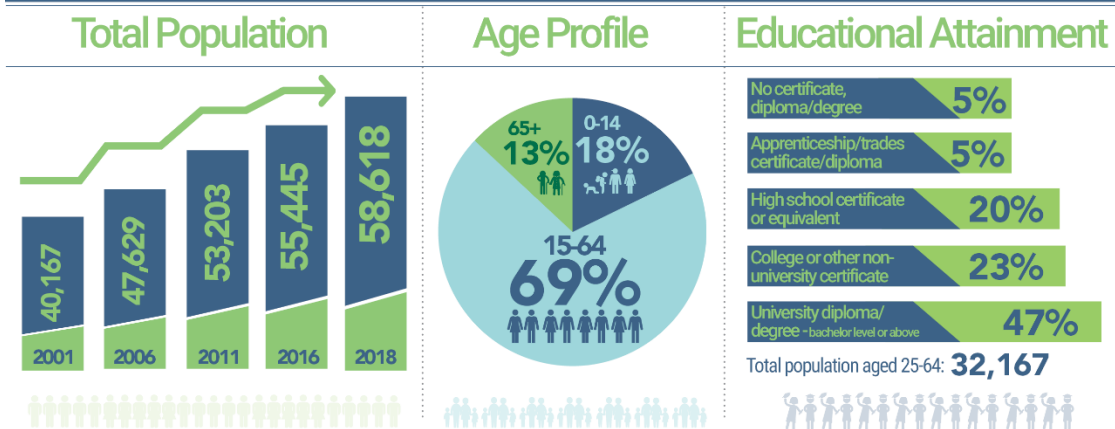
Upon completion of the Working Session, a draft set of strategic economic development directions and actions were prepared and provided to the Economic Development staff for review in order to ensure that the actions aligned with the Town of Aurora's aspirations and vision, a strategic planning session was held with the Town's key Economic Development staff.

Working through the Strategic Planning Session, McSweeney & Associates and Aurora's Economic Development staff were able to reflect collaboratively on the directions and actions and derive a set of agreed upon strategic initiatives that are doable and realistic for the Town of Aurora over the next five years.

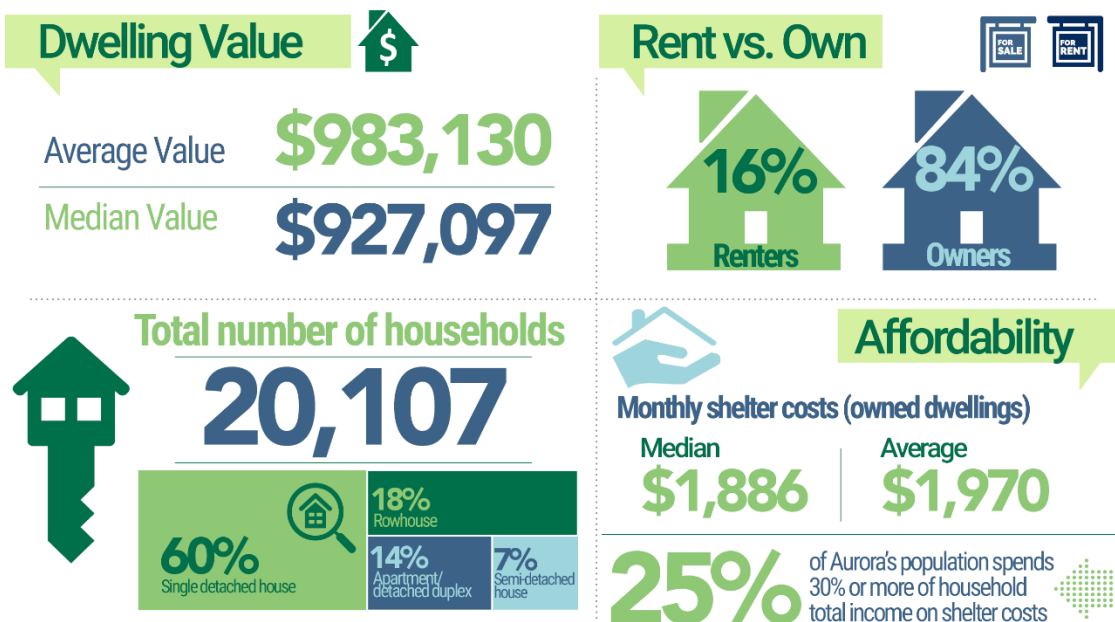
6. A SNAPSHOT OF TOWN OF AURORA

Economic SNAPSHOT of the Town of Aurora

POPULATION



HOUSING



All data are estimates from Manifold SuperDemographics 2018, except population levels from the census between 2006 to 2016

Economic SNAPSHOT of the Town of Aurora

LABOUR FORCE & LOCAL ECONOMY

Top 5 Industries



33,185
total # of jobs
in Aurora

Top 5 Occupations



2,265
businesses
with employees

Participation

70.31%

GTA: 65.95%

Employment

67.14%

GTA: 62.04%

Unemployment

4.51%

GTA: 5.92%

Top 5 Highest Paying Occupations

1. Senior government managers & officials
2. Engineering managers
3. Other managers in public administration
4. Senior managers in financial, communications & other business services
5. Senior managers in construction, transportation, production & utilities

Top 5 Fastest Growing Occupations

1. Retail sales supervisors
2. Light duty cleaners
3. Early childhood educators & assistants
4. Information systems analysts & consultants
5. Real estate agents & salespersons

\$42,854

Median employment
income

GTA: \$36,836

\$59,153

Average employment
income

GTA: \$47,929

\$7.1

billion in total
local sales

\$3.5

billion in exports

All data are estimates from Manifold SuperDemographics 2018 and EMSI 2018.Q4

5.2. Executive Summary of the Situational Analysis



POPULATION

Aurora has a fast-growing population (16% growth over the past 2 census periods), with most of its growth concentrated in young people (less than 30 years old) and mature adults (45 or older). It is an affluent community with average employment incomes 23% higher than those in the rest of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). This is partly due to a highly educated resident base, where nearly half (47%) of residents between the ages of 25 to 64 have completed a university education at the Bachelor level or above. Residents primarily hold post secondary degrees or diplomas in the fields of 'Business; management, marketing or related', or 'Engineering and related technologies'.

WORKFORCE & LABOUR FORCE

The local workforce in Aurora boasts higher participation and employment rates compared to Newmarket and the GTA as a whole. However, when examining the local labour force by age and gender, men ages 15 to 24 were found to have by far the highest unemployment and lowest participation rates. Thus, men in this age group remain an underutilized/underemployed labour group within Aurora.

The municipality has large labour surpluses in occupations related to management, business, finance; and natural and applied sciences. Many residents with the skills and talent to work in these occupations are leaving to work in other communities. Resident labour primarily commutes to Toronto, Newmarket and Markham. Conversely, the municipality primarily attracts labour from Toronto, Newmarket and Richmond Hill.

EMERGING OCCUPATIONS

In total, the labour shed has approximately 2.5 million employees available to support businesses in Aurora. From these, the following are a subset of the key occupations identified in the labour shed (those that are growing, emerging, and concentrated), which can be leveraged for labour-based investment attraction:

- Information systems analysts,
- Financial and investment analysts,
- Computer and information systems managers, and
- Business development officers

EMERGING SECTORS

In order to better understand the trends in the local economy, the economic base analysis looked at the joint economies of Aurora and Newmarket, as they share consumers, producers and workers. In terms of industry performance for the joint economy of Aurora plus Newmarket, the area had 9% job growth between 2013 and 2018, and a total of 84,800 jobs, approximately.

Emerging sectors for the joint economy include management of companies; healthcare and social assistance; and professional, scientific and technical services. Based on employment and exports sales, Metal and motor vehicle/parts manufacturing remain important economic drivers and core sectors of the economy. There may be an opportunity to further develop the Transportation equipment manufacturing industries given the existing employment concentrations in supporting industries. Lastly, there may also be an opportunity to attract small

businesses or contractors within management, scientific and technical consulting; business support services; and specialized designs industries, as these types of small businesses are growing and can be supported by the skills of the labour shed.

POTENTIAL AREAS OF INTEREST

Food and Food Processing Sector

The food processing sector has been growing organically, without involvement from the Town, and has become a strong contender for a significant opportunity.

Health Sector

Southlake Hospital is located in Newmarket, 6 kilometres north of Aurora's northern boundary. The hospital is a regional infrastructure piece that Aurora would like to leverage to create additional business development opportunities.



5.3. Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results (SCOAR™)



The following comprehensive SCOAR™ (Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) Analysis was prepared by analyzing the current statistics and data, a document review plus the feedback from elected officials, staff, community stakeholders, and residents engaged in the consultation.



- supportive Mayor, Council, Staff and Economic Development Corporation
- financially affluent, educated resident population
- small town feel, safe place to live and work
- a historic downtown area with a newly established Business Improvement Area
- good location in the Greater Toronto area with strong connections to the 400 series highways, Toronto and 2 airports (Pearson and Buttonville)
- GO Train accessibility that connects to Toronto
- access to a labour shed of 2.5 million with a large pool of highly skilled workers
- existing machine manufacturing expertise found locally and, in the region
- existing transportation equipment and motor vehicle manufacturing supply chains found in the region
- growing population within a growing York Region
- existing concierge program in place to guide investment (commercial/industrial) and support development applications
- private educational facilities such as St. Andrews College that attracts international students
- strong relationship/identity with Magna and the Magna brand
- Southlake Regional Health Centre is located in the region



- no central location in the community for residents to congregate for events, etc.
- a downtown that is disconnected, lacking a good mix of business, events, etc. to draw people to the area
- low vacancy rate for industrial/commercial properties
- fibre/broadband/connectivity lacking in employment areas (i.e. Don Hillock Business Park)
- limited amount of serviced available land
- cost of housing is significant making it unaffordable for most
- lack of diversity in housing stock makes it difficult for lower paid workers/people to live here
- public transit gaps in employment areas (24/7 manufacturing facilities)
- attracting lower skilled and entry level workers
- matching workforce with Aurora businesses
- cost of doing business (i.e. trucks getting to the 400 series highways circuitous routes through town)
- some of the current employment lands (industrial areas) are not strategically located within the Town
- lack of east-west connections
- restrictive land use planning and zoning limits business growth
- 75% of persons that commute into Aurora, the majority are lower paid, whereas 76% of residents commuting out of Aurora, the majority are educated, high income residents
- perceived lack of connection between the residents of old Aurora vs new Aurora
- Southlake Regional Health Centre is located in Newmarket and not in Aurora



- define employment lands and market them
- plan and develop a successful downtown that is a meeting place and destination for the community
- Support industry clusters already embedded in the local economy and promote a business climate that helps them flourish. For example: food manufacturing; transportation equipment and machine manufacturing; financial investment, computer systems, and design.
- determine types of businesses that are best suited for the employment lands and reach out to those businesses that would be suitable
- continue to develop relationships with York Region to ensure that Aurora attracts their share of business
- better communicate the Aurora message
- identify and work with the executives living in Aurora to determine if there are any opportunities to bring their business to Aurora so that they can live and work in the same community
- support the new Business Improvement Area's initiatives to build the downtown

- increasing the sports tourism opportunities in Aurora
- to build a health hub to complement the Southlake Regional Health Centre



- 1. To have a vital, vibrant downtown that is a destination for the community.**
- 2. To have a diversified economy along with available lands and properties that are ready for business to locate.**
- 3. To capitalize and build on the cultural, heritage and arts sector.**
- 4. To be the best municipality for existing business, for attracting new business and for business start-ups.**



- 1. To have a vital, vibrant downtown that is a destination for the community.**
Downtown Aurora will be a vibrant destination with a good mix of exciting businesses (restaurants, unique shops, high end shops) that residents and tourists visit and support.
- 2. To have a diversified economy along with available lands and properties that are ready for business to locate.**
Aurora will have serviced land available. It won't only be associated with a single industry but will have a broader business base.
- 3. To capitalize and build on the cultural, heritage and arts sector.**
Aurora will be known as a cultural and arts centre, with a strong heritage component that connects the community.
- 4. To be the best municipality for existing business, for attracting new business and for business start-ups.**
Aurora will be known as the best place to have a business in York Region.

STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR DOWNTOWN AURORA

Strengths

- small town feel
- loyal customers
- assets including churches, farmers' market, town park, historic buildings, library, street sale, Christmas parade, Aurora Cultural Centre, residential all within walking distance
- new Business Improvement Area with enthusiastic business members
- new developments and new investment taking place including Library Square, seniors' centre, Niagara College

Challenges

- lack of parking (reality and perception)

- conflict arise over heritage designated area, façade program creating a lengthy process for improvement approvals
- lack of pedestrian traffic
- lack of unique businesses such as coffee shops, restaurants, boutiques to draw people to the downtown
- large turnover of businesses
- lacking downtown signage
- derelict buildings
- poor communications within the downtown and to the downtown businesses and residents
- no opportunity for businesses to bring products, signage onto the sidewalks
- Yonge Street and Wellington Street have significant traffic and divides the downtown

Opportunities

- the newly renovated Niagara College – to become a draw bringing new people and new investment into the downtown – opportunities to partner with Niagara College and potential for a food incubator
- improving the arts and culture sector to be more robust
- to create more vibrancy in the downtown through a pedestrian friendly
- opportunity for the newly established Business Improvement Area to lead the coordination of downtown activities

