



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



# 2014-2018 Town of Aurora Council



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*The 2031 Strategic Plan was approved by Council in June 2012.*

## **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 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 on 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 2031 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 develop 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

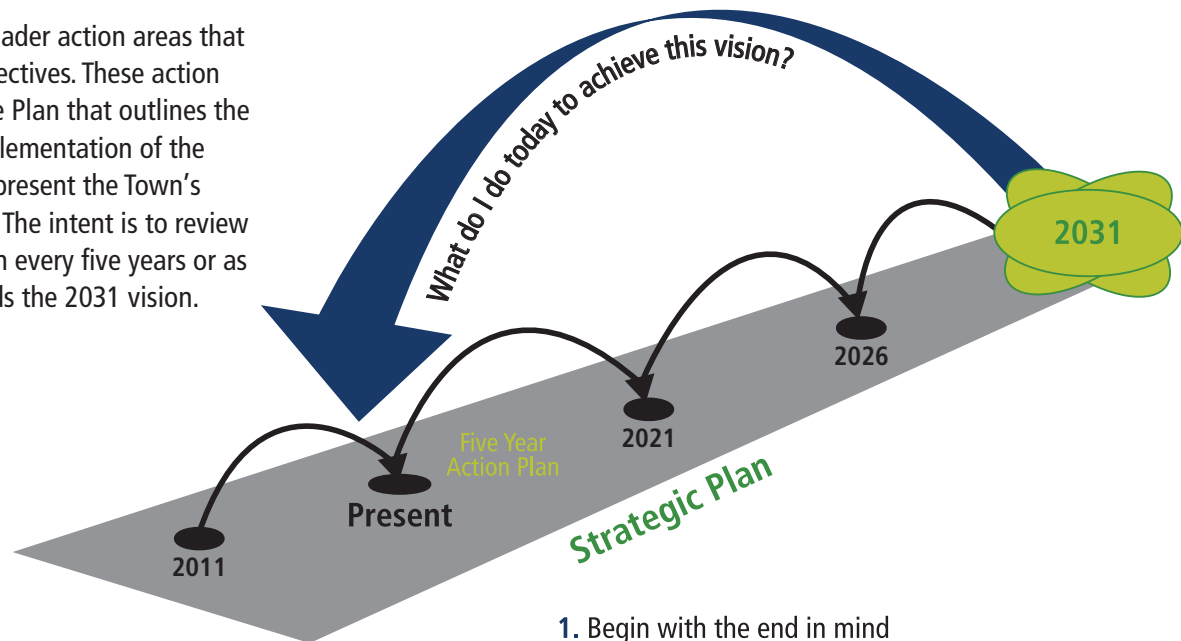


The Aurora 2031 Strategic Plan is a long-term planning document that describes the vision for Aurora in 2031. In order to fulfill this vision, Council has established a series of goals and related objectives that further describe the broader vision. The vision, goals and objectives provide long-term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

As part of the 2017 update, the Plan includes broader action areas that support the implementation of the goals and objectives. These action areas are complemented by a five-year Corporate Plan that outlines the projects and programs that contribute to the implementation of the Plan. The actions in this companion document represent the Town's current detailed plan to work towards the vision. The intent is to review and update the Strategic Plan and Corporate Plan every five years or as directed by Council 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 60,000 residents and 1,500 businesses, including approximately 150 different industries and head offices. Aurora has experienced tremendous growth over the past several years with population and employment doubling since 1990. 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 15 years, Aurora is anticipated to add at least 10,000 people and 10,000 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 related to the preparation and update of the Plan, 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 with the current Strategic Plan approved in 2012 and updated in 2017. As a progressive municipality, the focus of the 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 1990 and anticipates growth of an additional 10,000 residents, likely before 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 15-20 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.

### 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



**The preparation of the Strategic Plan included extensive public engagement that supported the development of the Plan. These activities are summarized below:**

## Background Research

Background work 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 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 value most about the Town, what they felt were the most distinguishing features of the Town and what 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 appreciate 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 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.

# Community Engagement cont'd...



## Internet, Communications and Social Media

The Town of Aurora's Strategic Plan website, located at [www.aurorastrategicplan.ca](http://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 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.

**As directed by Council and outlined in the Strategic Plan, staff implemented an update of the Plan for 2017. The update included a validation of the key aspects of the Plan and a scoped review and update of the Strategic Plan action areas. As part of the 2017 update, a Corporate Plan was introduced to provide detailed actions and performance indicators that support the implementation of the Strategic Plan. The update included additional public engagement. These activities are summarized below:**

## Interviews with Staff, Council Members and Stakeholders

Approximately 20 in-depth interviews were conducted with Council members, Town staff, community groups, political leaders and business leaders. Interviews included questions on the key challenges and opportunities impacting the community over the long and medium term as well as specific actions and partnerships to support the implementation of the Plan. Interviewees provided feedback on the structure of the Plan and the actions that the Town could take to address the threats and challenges and take advantage of the strengths and opportunities.

## Steering Committee Meetings

Council and Steering Committee members were provided with updates, revisions and next steps in the process.

## Community Workshops

Community consultations were held at the Aurora Seniors' Centre where a brief presentation was made to the participants. Participants were asked to review the proposed amendments to the Plan and provide feedback to Council for consideration.

# 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 action areas refer to the task areas that need to be undertaken to achieve the objective. The action areas are implemented through a Corporate Plan that outlines detailed implementation.

## 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 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 strong 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 and financial 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 and a commitment to quality customer service**
- 5 **Leverage partnerships**
- 6 **Respect and integrity**
- 7 **Progressive corporate excellence, innovation and continuous improvement**

# The Pillars of Success: Community



## **GOAL:** Supporting an exceptional quality of life for all

### **Objective 1: Improve transportation, mobility and connectivity**

- Work with York Region and Metrolinx to improve transit infrastructure and commuter transportation options
- Work with residents, stakeholders and regional and provincial partners to adapt to and leverage planned investments in rapid transit to positively impact the community fabric
- Work with residents and stakeholders to manage the significant changes that will impact the community as a result of the planned investment in rapid transit
- Advocate for the improvement of key Regional and provincial infrastructure such as necessary road widenings and improved access to Highway 404
- Consider transportation capacity when determining the location of new municipal services/amenities
- Advocate for improved accessible transit service
- Expand 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

***"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 57 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
- 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
- Develop policies to ensure that growth is phased and coordinated with existing and planned infrastructure

## Objective 3: Celebrating and promoting our culture

- Continue to review cultural services, including heritage, music and art, to promote more cohesive and coordinated cultural services
- Expand opportunities and partnerships that contribute to the celebration of culture in the community
- Work with community partners to deliver a series of community building events that celebrate diversity and multiculturalism

## 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
- Support multi-generational programming in cultural and recreational activities to encourage every age cohort to interact and share experiences
- Continue to develop awareness programs that promote the benefits of recreation in supporting a healthy lifestyle
- Continue to develop programs and policies that nurture and contribute to the development of youth

## 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
- Work with residents and stakeholders to protect and enhance the character of existing stable neighborhoods when accommodating the planned residential intensification
- Work with residents and stakeholders to manage the significant changes that will impact the community as a result of growth through residential intensification
- Identify new methods and technologies to effectively and regularly engage the community
- Advocate for enhanced Town representation at York Regional Council
- Work with York Region, college and university partners to establish post-secondary education options in Aurora
- Examine the impact of increased growth and demographic diversity on municipal service delivery
- Update the Town's Official Plan to consider the potential impact of infill growth as the Town transitions to a mature municipality
- Develop a coordinated approach to Town planning that manages growth, plans for the necessary infrastructure and aligns fiscal accountability

## Objective 6: Promoting service accountability, excellence and innovation

- Work with community partners to define, redefine and meet community expectations
- Regularly examine the Town's municipal structure and resource allocation to maintain flexibility and respond to rapid changes within the community
- Develop a plan to review and realign service levels to reflect current and future demographic trends
- Develop a strategy to expand e-services where possible
- Continue to explore opportunities to further strengthen partnerships with neighbouring municipalities
- Continue to pursue partnerships/initiatives to drive efficiency and potential cost savings
- Examine opportunities to expand multi-year budgeting and performance budgeting to drive efficiencies
- Work with community partners to pursue the establishment of business incubators as a driver of economic activity
- Develop a long term capital investment plan to assess and balance infrastructure affordability and the renewal with anticipated revenues
- Undertake a long term fiscal analysis that reviews revenue options within the context of planned growth patterns

# 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

- Work with the Aurora Economic Development Corporation to create, implement and regularly update a community wide Economic Development Strategic Plan
- Work with post-secondary partners to assess the feasibility of establishing a research and training centre to promote the commercialization of technology, skills development and business and employment growth
- 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
- Actively promote and support the plan to revitalize the downtown
- Work with regional, provincial and national partners to promote Aurora as a preferred location for international investment
- Leverage partnerships with local boards, chambers and business organizations to promote Aurora as a preferred location for business

## Did you know?

*Between 2006 and 2016, the number of businesses in Aurora has increased by 15%, while the number of jobs has increased by 35%.*

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



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

- Work with community partners to promote local employment practices/opportunities for local businesses and residents
- Continue to liaise with municipal, provincial and senior levels of government to investigate potential opportunities to attract economic investment
- Continue work closely 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 role that the Town can play to support small home-based business in Aurora
- 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 2016, the number of firms in Aurora employing more than 100 people has increased from 27 to 41. However, the majority of businesses employ less than 20 people, which is consistent with most Canadian businesses and municipalities.

# The Pillars of Success: Natural Environment



## GOAL: Supporting environmental stewardship and sustainability

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

- Work with community partners to promote environmental protection and build a culture of environmentalism in the community
- Develop, implement and regularly update a corporate environmental plan
- Continue to create and promote waste diversion education programs in partnership with York Region
- Advance and improve policies to ensure the protection of the Town's urban tree canopy

### Objective 2: Promoting and advancing green initiatives

- Investigate a program that promotes and actively supports innovative green buildings and infrastructure
- Continue to support and enhance community planting programs in appropriate locations
- Continue to support the expansion of the Town's trails system

- Continue to invest in green initiatives and infrastructure to promote environmentalism locally
- Develop a climate change adaptation plan for the Town of Aurora

## Did you know?

*Over 2,000 trees, shrubs, and flowers were planted in the Aurora Arboretum in 2017.*



# Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting



The Town of Aurora's Strategic Plan combines goals, objectives and action areas 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.

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

Japanese proverb

# Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting cont'd...



## Implementation

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

The implementation of the Strategic Plan is achieved through the development and approval of a Corporate Plan that outlines the governance and accountability structure, support services, specific actions and Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) that allow the plan to move forward. Through the approval of the Corporate Plan, Council will assign responsibility for coordinating the monitoring and implementation phases of this Plan.

To achieve this end, Council is committed to:

- Acting as champion for the Strategic Plan and its implementation
- Directing staff to consider this Plan when developing departmental priorities and preparing departmental budgets
- Establishing collaborative cross-functional teams to support the implementation of the Plan where appropriate
- Reviewing an annual report to Council regarding the Strategic Plan's implementation progress

### **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.

### **Creating a quality employee experience**

The effective implementation of the Strategic Plan and related Corporate Plan requires the support and dedication of staff. Providing a quality employee experience is essential to the attraction and retention of talent and the realization of the Town's vision for 2031.

## Monitoring and Reporting

The Strategic Plan is a 'living document'. This means that it will be regularly monitored and updated to ensure that the Plan is relevant and current. To achieve this, Council is committed to:

- Reviewing and updating the Plan at least every five years
- Ensuring that Corporate and Departmental Business Plans and budget submissions reflect the Plan
- Monitoring the implementation of the Strategic Plan and the Corporate Plan

# Contact Us



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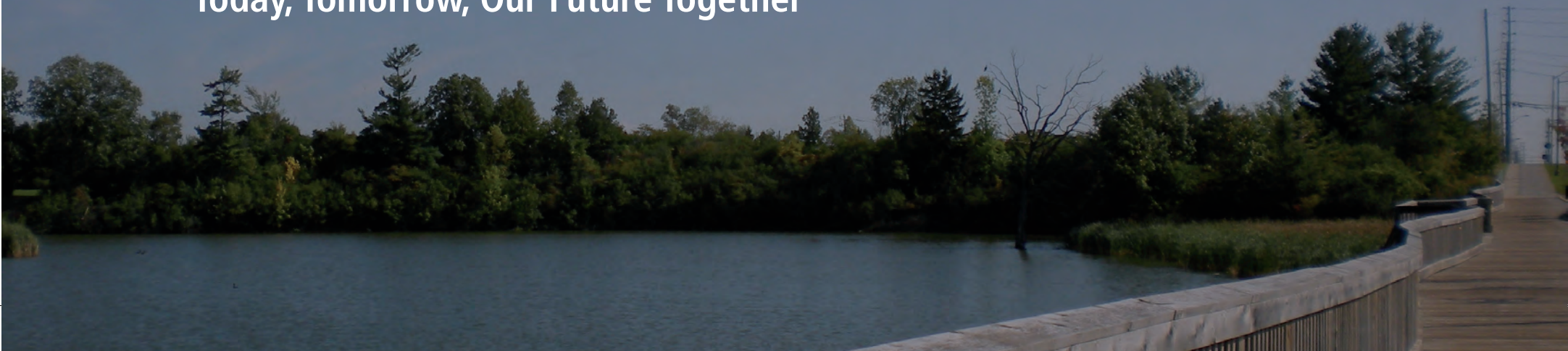
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Town of Aurora  
**strategic plan**  
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**AURORA**  
*You're in Good Company*