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Town of Aurora
Committee of the Whole Report
No. PDS25-104

Subject: Doors Open 2025 Summary

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Manager of Policy Planning and Heritage

Department: Planning and Development Services

Date: November 11, 2025

Recommendation

1. That Report No. PDS25-104 be received; and
2. That Council authorize staff to register and host another in-person Doors Open event in 2026.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a summary of the Doors Open 2025 event and to recommend that an in-person Doors Open event also be pursued for 2026.

- The Doors Open 2025 event featured 20 participating sites/programs.
- 2,544 site visits were recorded, and the visitor experience was highly positive.
- A total of approximately \$4,150 was spent to facilitate the Doors Open 2025 event, and Council direction is required to participate in the event again next year.

Background

The Doors Open 2025 event featured 20 participating sites/programs

The Aurora Town Square generally served as the headquarters for the Doors Open event, which took place from 10AM to 4PM on Sunday, September 21, 2025.

The following 20 sites and programs participated in the Doors Open 2025 event:

- St. Anne's School
- The Hillary House National Historic Site (Koffler Museum of Medicine)
- The Rising Sun Masonic Lodge
- Harmony, Heritage and Haunts Walking Tour by David Heard
- Saltbox Café
- Royal Rose Art Gallery and Gifts
- Tales from the Groove by Dave's Vinyl Party
- Trinity Anglican Church
- Doors Open Collage Workshop (Aurora Cultural Centre)
- Independent Order of Odd Fellows Lodge 148
- Keys to the Past: An early keyboard journey with Celeste Music
- Machell's Alley
- Pine Tree Potters' Guild
- Future Grounds Art Exhibit at Treasure Hill Bridge
- Architect Talk at Town Square
- Artist in residence Julia Mobbs in Studio (Aurora Cultural Centre)
- Aurora Public Library
- Public Art Strategy: Ready for Launch
- The Aurora War Memorial
- William Rowland House at 56 Spruce Street

As the Town looks to pursue Doors Open again in 2026, additional sites will continue to be considered to add variety year-over-year.

Analysis

2,544 site visits were recorded, and the visitor experience was highly positive

Visitors indicated they were either local or travelled in from locations that were predominantly within the GTA, including Mississauga, Clarington, Newmarket, Markham, Richmond Hill, Barrie, Toronto, and Bradford (amongst others), but additional visitors also indicated they were visiting from as far as Dufferin and Wellington County areas. The total visits align with the approximately 2,500 visits that occurred during the Town's last in-person Doors Open event in 2019.

Feedback from the event was highly positive, with many visitors enjoying the return of Aurora's in-person event to the Doors Open circuit. Notably, the Town is one of the only in northern York Region to be participating in an in-person Doors Open event

(Whitchurch-Stouffville is the only other municipality to have participated), which resulted in a good visitor draw within the Regional context.

Planning and Development Services and Community Services staff worked collaboratively on the Doors Open event, and special thanks is also extended to all volunteers who assisted in making the event so successful.

A total of approximately \$4,150 was spent to facilitate the Doors Open 2025 event, and Council direction is required to participate in the event again next year.

The Doors Open 2025 event came within the target \$5,000 budget and was largely spent on registration with the Ontario Heritage Trust, site material/preparation, and print brochures and advertising. The Aurora Doors Open event is believed to provide a very valuable return on investment, given its status as a tourism and cultural draw with 2,544 visitor attendees. Local businesses also indicated a general uptick in commercial activity due to the Doors Open event.

Due to the success and value of the event, it is recommended that Council authorize staff to proceed with registering and participating for an in-person Doors Open event in 2026. It is the intent to continue to re-use materials to save costs and also continue to add new and diverse sites to keep the Doors Open event engaging and fresh for visitors.

Advisory Committee Review

The Heritage Advisory Committee recommended that the Town proceed with pursuing an in-person Doors Open event in 2025. Many of the Committee members also volunteered with the event, and even had properties or programs directly participate as sites, to which thanks and appreciation are extended.

Legal Considerations

None.

Financial Implications

The cost for the Doors Open 2025 event was as expected and within budget, totaling approximately \$4,150. The costs for the 2025 event were covered through the Heritage Committee budget, which historically was assigned to Doors Open events. Alternative funding sources can be considered for future events as needed, such as the Heritage Reserve Fund.

Costs to participate in the 2026 event are expected to generally be consistent with previous years at around \$4,000-\$5,000. Staff will try to continue to save costs by re-using appropriate materials such as signage moving forward, which may lower this value.

Communications Considerations

Successful advertising and outreach occurred to promote the Doors Open 2025 event, including signage and social media posts. Brochures and a site map were also developed to assist attendees, and media coverage was positive leading up to the event and after. Acknowledgements of thanks were extended to participating sites and all volunteers who assisted with the event.

Climate Change Considerations

Many attendees indicated they were walking or cycling as part of the Doors Open event, which encouraged pedestrian activity and alternative modes of transportation throughout the downtown and between participating sites.

Link to Strategic Plan

The promotion of heritage resources supports the Strategic Plan goal of Supporting an Exceptional Quality of Life for All through its accomplishment in satisfying requirements in the objective of Celebrating and Promoting our Culture.

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. That Council provide direction.

Conclusions

The Town's 2025 Doors Open event marked the return of in-person sites and programs, with 2,544 visitors attending. Staff recommend proceeding with registering and hosting an in-person Doors Open event again in 2026.

Attachments

None.

Previous Reports

PDS24-107 dated October 1, 2024.

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on October 23, 2025

Approvals

Approved by Marco Ramunno, Director, Planning and Development Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer