



■ 2026 – 2030 Visitor Growth Plan

Presented by:

- Angela Haynes, Senior Economic Development Officer
- Chuck Thibeault, Executive Director | Central Counties Tourism
- Sara Sterling, Industry Relations Manager | York Region

November 11, 2025





CENTRAL COUNTIES TOURISM

Central Counties Tourism (CCT) is responsible for the strategic development and marketing of the regions of York, Durham and Headwaters as a visitor destination.

CCT works collaboratively with the existing municipal and/or regional tourism offices within these regions, aligning our efforts to maximize the support available to our tourism stakeholders and amplifying the reach of our consumer marketing efforts.



Steering Committee

The Visitor Growth Plan was developed with a volunteer Steering Committee:

- Comprised of **18 representatives** from local businesses, attractions, outdoor assets, residents, and Town staff.
- There were **four (4) monthly** sessions held between **September – December 2024** hosted with Town partners.
- The committee assessed the Town’s challenges and opportunities for “**visitor readiness**”.





About Visitors

The province of Ontario defines a “**Visitor**” as someone who takes a:

- Same-day trip.
- Overnight out-of-town trip.
- 40+ KM away from their home.



Visitation in Aurora

2023 Geofencing research showed that there were:

- **4.4 M + visits** to e.g. retail, sports, park spaces.
- Less than **1.6 M** were actual residents of Aurora.
- **319,000 visitors traveled 40km+ each way.**
- **Approximately \$36.3 M** in visitor spending.



Over 60% of all spending is being done by non-residents.



Five Plan Pillars

PILLAR 1: CHAMPION:

To reach its potential, the Visitor Growth Plan would be empowered by Council support and a dedicated implementing organization.

Strategic Goals

- 1. Designate Accountability:** Assign formal ownership for the plan's execution.
- 2. Establish Advisory Body:** Charter a Tourism Advisory Committee.
- 3. Cultivate Ambassadors:** Mobilize residents, staff, volunteers, and local businesses/services as champions.
- 4. Secure Sustainable Funding:** Develop a long-term funding strategy.

Five Plan Pillars

PILLAR 2: CONNECT:

Cultivate a robust network that seamlessly connects municipal governance, local businesses, and community organizations to one another and to the objectives of the Visitor Growth Plan.

Strategic Goals

- 1. Centralize Information:** Develop a hub for stakeholder communications.
- 2. Cross-Sector Alignment:** Connect staff and businesses for service alignment.
- 3. Invest in Training:** Provide targeted professional development opportunities.
- 4. Bridge Assets:** Connect businesses with local sport, art, and heritage assets.

Five Plan Pillars

PILLAR 3: COLLABORATE:

Forge active strategic partnerships across the municipality, businesses, and organizations to maximize collective effort in driving increased visitation and elevating visitor spending within Aurora.

Strategic Goals

- 1. Implement Cross-Promotion:** Establish a mutual marketing network.
- 2. Activate Downtown Hub:** Partner with the new town square to drive traffic downtown.
- 3. Optimize Visitor Flow:** Develop strategies to guide visitors seamlessly throughout the Town.
- 4. Foster Creative Partnerships:** Partner businesses with e.g. artists to create unique experiences.

Five Plan Pillars

PILLAR 4: CREATE:

Strategically build and enhance Aurora's destination appeal by ensuring a consistently high level of visitor readiness and focusing development efforts on compelling, best-in-class assets and experiences.

Strategic Goals

- 1. Collaborate on Sport Strategy:** Jointly update the plan to attract competitive events.
- 2. Refine/Expand Wayfinding:** Develop and implement a clear branded navigation plan.
- 3. Parking Strategy:** Support a Town-wide parking strategy
- 4. Curate Signature Experiences:** Develop compelling, proprietary reasons to visit.

Five Plan Pillars

PILLAR 5: COMMUNICATE:

Execute a focused marketing and communications strategy to tell distinctive Aurora stories and reach high-value audiences through the most effective channels with consistent, compelling messaging.

Strategic Goals

- 1. Unify Messaging:** Create a set of authoritative brand messages.
- 2. Consolidate Digital Assets:** Support the development of a dedicated visitation website.
- 3. Track Performance (KPIs):** Establish and monitor shared metrics for the plan.
- 4. Welcome to Aurora:** Design and distribute a high-quality visitor welcome package.

Mission & Vision

The last exercise of the facilitated process was to create the Mission and Vision:

Mission

What success looks like: Through strategic collaboration and understanding of what our community offers, we will continue to grow and champion Aurora as a compelling destination.

Vision

How do we get there?: Aurora is a vibrant destination proud to share all it has to offer, with diverse businesses and community champions ready to engage visitors.



Thank You