

## **Aurora Town Square Business Plan, 2026-2027**

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## **Land Acknowledgement**

The Town of Aurora acknowledges that the Anishinaabe lands on which we live and work are the traditional and treaty territories of the Chippewas of Georgina Island, as well as many other Nations whose presence here continues to this day.

As the closest First Nation community to Aurora, we recognize the special relationship the Chippewas have with the lands and waters of this territory. They are the water protectors and environmental stewards of these lands, and as a municipality we join them in these responsibilities.

We further acknowledge that Aurora is part of the treaty lands of the Mississaugas and Chippewas, recognized through Treaty #13 as well as the Williams Treaties of 1923.

A shared understanding of the rich cultural heritage that has existed for centuries, and how our collective past brought us to where we are today, will help us walk together into a better future.

## 1. Executive Summary

Aurora Town Square (ATS) is a transformative community hub designed to enrich the cultural, social, economic, and civic life of Aurora. This Business Plan outlines the operational framework for ATS over the next two years, providing a strategic roadmap for its success and sustainability.

Key objectives of the plan include:

- **Community Impact:** Reinforcing ATS's role as a cornerstone of community engagement, inclusion, and cultural vitality. The facility is positioned to meet diverse community needs through accessible, inclusive programming and spaces.
- **Space Utilization:** Detailing the intended uses of each space within ATS, including cultural venues, gathering areas, and flexible programming zones. The plan identifies target user groups ranging from residents and local organizations to regional visitors.
- **Operational Management:** Solidifying the governance and staffing model to ensure efficient day-to-day operations, fiscal responsibility, and alignment with municipal priorities. Financial projections and resource allocations are included to support long-term viability.
- **Risk Mitigation:** Identifying potential operational, financial, and reputational risks, along with proactive strategies to mitigate each. This includes contingency planning and adaptive management practices.
- **Performance Measurement:** Defining success metrics and evaluation tools to monitor progress, assess impact, and inform future decision-making. Regular reporting will ensure transparency and accountability to stakeholders.

### 1.1 Overview of Aurora Town Square's Mission and Vision

ATS is a visionary project that is transforming the landscape of our community by bringing together arts, culture, heritage, economic development, innovation, and creativity to actively support downtown revitalization, build a strong cultural sector, and expand strategic partnerships that contribute to a greater quality of life.

#### 1.1.1 Shared Vision

ATS is not just a building - it is a cultural nexus where creativity, talent, and innovation converge to create unforgettable experiences. Our vision is to establish ATS as a leading destination where artists, educators, researchers, audiences, and enthusiasts come together to celebrate the magic of arts, culture, and community. We will cultivate

an environment that transcends boundaries and genres, evokes emotions, inspires change, and promotes learning.

### 1.1.2 Shared Mission

Within a well-managed, high integrity environment that is fiscally responsible, ATS supports:

- Meaningful, quality experiences that inspire the community
- Community connection through shared experiences and cultural exchange to create a place of belonging
- Community participation that embraces the tapestry of voices, lived experience, histories, and stories to foster diverse opportunities

### 1.1.3 Shared Core Values and Guiding Principles

Our top values are:

- Excellence
- Collaboration
- Embracing Diversity and Equity
- Respect
- Accountability

These five core values will be used to build an operational strategy to work together and better serve the public. We will expect current and new team members to live these values at ATS.

Excellence means:

- Performances are on time, to the best of the artist's ability, supported by quality customer service, production and audience management
- Arts programming strives to be powerful and moving
- Educational programs provide learning that is deep and resonates with the consumer
- There are authentic and sustainable partnerships between partners in the Hybrid Governance Model

Measuring success:

- The community recognizes the value of what they experience through survey results, showing sustained/long-term excitement and return visits
- The venues are booked and busy
- Programming is well attended and consistently successful
- Rental clients are satisfied
- Conflicts are minimal between partners, solved with all interests being considered

Collaboration means:

- Working with others to achieve a shared goal and vision
- Recognizing and utilizing the differing skills, knowledge, specializations, and lived experience from members of the collaborative team
- A successful collaboration results in a cohesive vision, story, and expression of the project

Measuring success:

- Expectations and roles are clear, and results are achieved
- Collaborators feel heard, respected and are proud of the results
- Community stakeholders are satisfied with the outcomes

Embracing Diversity and Equity means:

- The physical space is accessible for a diversity of abilities
- A variety of programming options and offerings are available
- Programming reflects the diversity of the communities we serve

Measuring success:

- The community reflects that ATS is a safe, welcoming, and inclusive space
- Societal issues are welcome, reflected, and discussed in programming
- Representation is welcome and obvious
- All those who enter the facility feel safe and welcome

Respect means:

- Creating an environment that builds a deep sense of belonging for clients, participants and staff

- Sensitivity to cultural appropriation

Measuring success:

- Cohesive working environment with few misunderstandings
- Clients report feeling a sense of belonging in the space
- Participants return for additional programming
- Staff are satisfied and engaged

Accountability means:

- Fiscal responsibility
- Maintaining integrity and being transparent
- Responding to environmental needs

Measuring success:

- Stakeholders feel satisfied with reporting frequency, results, and transparency
- External bodies recognize the integrity of the organizations collaborating at ATS
- Efficiency is monitored, reassessed, and adjusted as needed
- Financial accountability through reporting to stakeholders

## **1.2 Strategic Context**

ATS supports the Town's Strategic Plan by contributing to an exceptional quality of life for residents and visitors alike. As a strategic investment in sustainable infrastructure, ATS celebrates and promotes culture, encourages an active healthy lifestyle, strengthens the fabric of our communities by building on established partnerships, and promotes economic opportunities and resiliency while positioning Aurora as a desirable place to do business.

ATS also supports the following corporate strategic documents:

### **1.2.1 Economic Development Strategic Plan**

- Section 4.3., Theme # 3 – Downtown Aurora as a Destination & Focal Point for the Community
- Section 4.4., Theme # 4 – Improving the Quality of Life through Heritage, Arts, Culture, Tourism and Community Engagement

### **1.2.2 Aurora Promenade Concept Plan**

- Strategy 3 - Strengthen the Cultural Precinct by leveraging the concentration of cultural assets and by creating additional facilities and enhanced public spaces.

### 1.2.3 Cultural Plan

- Strategic Direction 2: Expand Culture's Role in Economic Development
- Strategic Direction 3: Build a Strong and Vital Cultural Sector

### 1.3 Demand for Aurora Town Square

As Aurora's population continues to grow, so too has interest and participation in arts and cultural events. Recent national indicators show that while the GDP of Canada's culture sector grew modestly by 0.2% in early 2025, there is a notable increase in engagement with visual and applied arts, reflecting a shift toward more immersive and relevant cultural experiences. [worldpopulationreview.com] [www150.statcan.gc.ca]

The 2025 Giving Report reveals evolving patterns in charitable giving. While the overall number of donors has declined, multicultural Canadians are increasingly generous, with nearly 80% having donated to charitable causes in the past year, and 60% expressing a desire to give more. This trend underscores a growing commitment to support cultural initiatives that align with personal values and community identity. [imaginecanada.ca]

Locally, Aurora has seen a steady expansion in cultural programming. ATS presents a timely and strategic opportunity to meet the diversifying cultural interests of Aurora and the broader York Region. It is well-positioned to leverage the public's favourable perception of culture and the evolving philanthropic landscape to drive meaningful community impact.

## 2. Market Analysis

The following section assesses ATS's target market and audience in relation to local and regional competitors.

### 2.1 Audience Demographics

Aurora is home to a diverse and growing population of 62,057, based on the most recent census data. This represents an 11.9% increase from 2016, significantly outpacing both the provincial (5.8%) and national (5.2%) growth rates. The Town spans 50 square kilometers, with a population density of 1,241 people per square kilometer. As of 2025, Aurora has 22,253 private dwellings, with 21,506 occupied by usual residents. [capopulation.com] [thedatainsider.com]

The median age in Aurora is 42.0, with a notable proportion of residents aged 45–64, reflecting a community with a significant number of older adults. The 45–54 age group alone accounts for 15.6% of the population. [point2homes.com]

Aurora’s population is culturally diverse: 61.5% are non-immigrants, while 36.8% are immigrants, and 1.7% are non-permanent residents. While English remains the predominant language, Mandarin, Cantonese, Persian, Russian, and Spanish are among the most commonly spoken non-official languages at home. [point2homes.com]

Aurora residents are highly educated: 65% of adults aged 25–64 hold a postsecondary certificate, degree, or diploma, significantly above the provincial and national averages. This educational attainment contributes to the town’s strong economic profile. [point2homes.com]

In terms of income, Aurora ranks among the most affluent communities in Canada. The average household income is approximately \$161,800, with a median employment income of \$107,400 for full-time workers. This is well above both provincial and national averages. [careerbeacon.com]

Aurora’s cultural sector continues to thrive. While specific per capita cultural spending data for 2025 is pending, Ontario’s culture sector contributed \$26 billion to the provincial GDP in 2022, supporting 270,000 jobs, with nearly half of Canada’s cultural economy centered in Ontario. Aurora, as part of York Region, benefits from this robust cultural infrastructure and is well-positioned to expand its local cultural workforce and offerings. [occ.ca]

ATS represents a strategic investment in cultural infrastructure, aligning with Aurora’s demographic trends, economic strengths, and growing demand for inclusive, relevant cultural programming.

## 2.2 Target Audiences

Marketing and communications efforts at ATS foster two-way engagement and maximize visibility among the following target audiences.

### 2.2.1 Primary:

- **Residents**
  - **Active Retirees (55+ years old)** – Survey data from 2025 performances indicate that the majority of attendees were within the 65+ and 55–64 age groups. This reflects Aurora’s growing population of active retirees who seek opportunities to stay engaged, socially connected, and meaningfully

involved in local programs and events. Prioritizing outreach to this demographic not only aligns with their interests but also strengthens intergenerational connections across the community.

- **Families (age ranges 25-34 and 35-44)** – the average age in Aurora is 40.9, with an average household size of 2.9. This segment represents a cornerstone of the community and holds enormous potential for long-term engagement when it comes to education, arts, culture, and community connection.
- **Downtown Aurora Businesses** – on Yonge St. between Wellington and Golf Links.
- **Partners** – Aurora Cultural Centre, Aurora Museum & Archives, and Aurora Public Library.
- **Cultural Partners** – Aurora Farmers' Market, Aurora Historical Society, Aurora Seniors Association, Aurora Sports Hall of Fame, Pine Tree Potters Guild, Society of York Region Artists, and Theatre Aurora.
- **Arts, Culture, and Heritage Groups** – Aurora Community Band, Borealis Big Band, Aurora Film Circuit, Marquee Theatrical Productions, Aurora Black Community, Aurora Black Caucus, York Pride, and more.
- **Mayor and Town Council**

### 2.2.2 Secondary:

- **York Region Communities** – residents from neighbouring municipalities – Newmarket, East Gwillimbury, Georgina, King City, Markham, Richmond Hill, and Stouffville.
- **Aurora Businesses** – particularly local businesses in the performing arts, fine arts, literary arts, food, and entertainment industries.
- **Event Organizers and Facility Renters** – Prospective renters of ATS's Performance Hall, Multi-Purpose Rooms, and Outdoor Square represent an important audience segment for generating revenue and expanding community programming. These users include arts and cultural organizations, community groups, educators, and private clients seeking venues for concerts, theatre productions, lectures, conferences, screenings, dance recitals, ceremonies, meetings, workshops, rehearsals, classes, and public gatherings.
- **Town of Aurora Staff** – creating engaged and informed employee ambassadors with a deeper understanding of the long-term vision for ATS.

### 2.2.3 Tertiary:

- **Residents** – younger residents between the ages of 18-24 with interests in entertainment, music and art.

- **Local Schools** – Several elementary and secondary schools are located within walking distance of ATS, presenting strong opportunities for group visits, educational programming, and youth engagement initiatives. These institutions represent a valuable audience for curriculum-linked learning experiences, arts, and culture, and heritage programs.
- **Nearby and Niche** – arts and culture enthusiasts that live approximately 1 hour or less from ATS (Toronto, Simcoe County, etc.).
- **Other Cultural Organizations and Groups** – faith-based, music, dance, and theatre from Aurora and York Region.

## 2.3 Competitor Analysis

For 2026–2027, it is important to evaluate ATS’s marketing and communications performance both internally and relative to comparable organizations. Monitoring engagement, reach, and impact against peer and competitor benchmarks provides critical context for understanding market position, identifying opportunities, and setting realistic growth milestones.

### 2.3.1 Nearby Municipalities

The Regional Municipality of York consists of nine municipalities, including the Town of Aurora.

- **City of Richmond Hill** – the City of Richmond Hill is in York Region and is home to more than 200,000 residents. Their Mission is, "The City of Richmond Hill Council and staff are committed to providing exceptional public service to our community."<sup>[1]</sup>
- **City of Markham** – more than 340,000 people call Markham home. So do hundreds of corporate head offices and more than one thousand high tech and life science companies.<sup>[2]</sup>
- **Town of Stouffville** – Stouffville is a vibrant town on the outskirts of Canada's largest city, Toronto, with beautiful landscapes, bustling communities and friendly neighbours.<sup>[3]</sup>
- **King Township** – King City is home to the Municipal Centre, and has an exceptional education sector, which includes Seneca College King Campus, Country Day School, Villanova College and the Kingsbridge Hotel and Conference Centre.<sup>[4]</sup>
- **Town of Newmarket** – a Provincial Urban Growth Centre, located in York Region, just north of Toronto. With a population of approximately 91,000 people, Newmarket is home to over 41,000 local jobs, dozens of great restaurants, and a

regional healthcare facility that make it an attractive place to live, work and visit.<sup>[5]</sup>

- **Town of East Gwillimbury** – located in the northern part of York Region, the municipality is a balanced community made up of several growing urban areas and villages including Holland Landing, Queensville, Mount Albert, River Drive Park, and Sharon.<sup>[6]</sup>

<sup>[1]</sup> [City of Richmond Hill website](#)

<sup>[2]</sup> [City of Markham website](#)

<sup>[3]</sup> [Town of Stouffville website](#)

<sup>[4]</sup> [King City website](#)

<sup>[5]</sup> [Town of Newmarket website](#)

<sup>[6]</sup> [East Gwillimbury website](#)

### 2.3.2 Performing Arts, Culture, and Heritage

- Flato Markham Theatre – one of Canada's premier theatre houses serving the GTA and Markham residents. With over 300 live performances each year, the Theatre presents a performance calendar that showcases the cultural diversity of the community.
- Main Street Newmarket – in 2016, Newmarket's Historic Downtown Newmarket was named the “people's choice” best street in Canada in the Great Places in Canada contest held by the Canadian Planners Institute.
- Main Street Unionville - Main Street Unionville is home to a variety of boutique shops, local food, and historic buildings.
- New Roads Performing Arts Centre (Town of Newmarket)
- Peel Art Gallery Museum & Archives (PAMA) – PAMA is an accessible, safe space for the diverse communities of the Region of Peel (Brampton, Caledon and Mississauga) to come together and celebrate arts and culture.
- Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts (RHCPA) – located in the heart of the historic downtown, (RHCPA) is a 4,000 square metre, 631 seat, cultural facility that offers a full season of professional entertainment celebrating the many cultures of York Region.
- Nineteen on the Park – located in Stouffville, Nineteen on the Park is a multi-purpose municipal venue that hosts concerts, live theatre shows, fundraisers, programming, weddings and private events.
- SaugaLIVE – a place to connect you to live events, entertainment and experiences happening at five venues in Mississauga.

- King Heritage and Cultural Centre - home to the King Township Historical Society, the Township of King's museum and archival collections, a long-term museum exhibition, and four historic buildings.
- Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum & Community Centre - home to over 18,000 artifacts; provides programs and services related to local history, culture and heritage.

## **2.4 Measurement**

For 2026–2027, comparing survey data with 2025 will reveal trends to better engage target audiences and align with their preferences and behaviors. Tracking attendance, feedback, and campaign performance provides actionable insights for strategic marketing decisions and resource allocation. Data-driven evaluation enables trend identification, strengthens community connections, optimizes engagement, and supports informed, long-term planning for ATS's marketing growth and success.

## **3. Overview of Roles and Responsibilities**

ATS requires an adaptive operating structure that reflects its multi-functional capacity, diverse programming roster, and allows for the expansion of performing arts, visual arts, recreation and heritage services offered by the Town and its partners, including the Aurora Cultural Centre and Aurora Public Library. During the start-up period, spanning the first 3-5 years of operations, the Town will be strategic in determining which staff positions are needed in the short term and which ones can be onboarded as external demand for space and programming continues to increase in year two and beyond.

The following Town staff currently work out of ATS:

Cultural Services Division:

- Manager, Cultural Services
- Cultural Services Coordinator
- Collections and Exhibitions Coordinator
- Collections Technician

Cultural Services staff are responsible for delivering cultural, community and heritage programs and services from ATS.

Business Support Services:

- Customer Service Representative (2)
- Customer Service Representatives (PT)

In addition to the CSR positions, a Facility Bookings Administrator is dedicated to ATS and is responsible for booking ATS for use by internal and external user groups.

Facilities:

- Crew Leader
- Maintenance Person (4)
- Maintenance Person (PT)

In addition to the staff listed above, business cases for the following additional staff may be brought forward in future years as demand grows:

- Venue Manager
- Program Instructors
- Cultural Services Program Assistant
- Contract and seasonal support staff

The Town also relies on volunteers for various programs and event.

## **4. Program and Service Descriptions**

### **4.1 Heritage Services**

ATS has become the headquarters for heritage services offered by the Town, through the Aurora Museum & Archives (the Museum). The Museum is guided by the strategic plan, *The Next Level: Growing a Robust and Relevant Community Museum*, which was endorsed in principle by Council on March 30, 2021, and which will be updated in 2026.

The Museum collection consists of over 30,000 items, a number that grows each year as members of the public reach out to find a safe place for their cherished items that connect to Aurora's history. Heritage services offered by the Museum include research and image requests, donation inquiries, collections care, ongoing documentation, educational programs, and curatorial activities.

#### **4.1.1 Services Initiated by the Public**

Research and image requests, and donation inquiries are heritage services initiated by members of the public, which have increased significantly since re-opening at ATS. The topic of research and image requests varies, and can include inquiries related to genealogy, property, businesses, object context, landscape use, Indigenous presence, historic business owners, and much more. The Museum maintains extensive research files; however, rarely are two inquiries the exact same and each requires dedicated staff time.

Image requests are made by residents, business owners, political figures, researchers, family descendants, and other institutions. Whether the purpose is to enhance household décor, design a calendar, or feature a historic Aurora scene in a local business, there is increasing demand for access to the Museum's archival photographs.

The Museum is frequently approached by members of the public with donation inquiries and actively accepts items that tell the story of Aurora. Since re-opening, the Museum has accepted several meaningful donations, including photographs from Aurora Orchards, a silver cloche used aboard the train that transported the Prince of Wales through Aurora in 1860, the bass drum used by the old Town Band, and a small desk that was used by a succession of Aurora Reeves. The community has come to trust that the Museum as a safe place for their cherished items related to Aurora's history.

#### **4.1.2 Services Initiated by Museum Staff**

Collections care, ongoing documentation, community and education programs, and curatorial activities are heritage services that are primarily initiated by Museum staff. In the new Jim and Joyce McAlpine Collection Storage Area, collection care activities are more visible to the public due to the visible storage feature, which highlights the important collection care work that is taking place.

Staff regularly meet with members of the community to document memories and stories related to Aurora. This engagement allows for nuanced reflections to make their way into the historic record. While this activity is often included as part of producing a larger exhibition or project, there are times when it is a stand-alone occurrence. Staff also conduct ongoing internal research to ensure our reference files are up to date.

ATS heritage programming consists of community and education programs, which are facilitated by Cultural Services staff. Examples include Museum Mondays, Making a Museum, P.A. Day at the Museum, and various workshops that are offered along with special events. Education programs have curriculum connections and focus on students and youth groups (e.g., Girl Guides/Cubs). Staff have found that programs that provide behind-the-scenes access have been successful and is an area of growth.

Additional education program subject matter will include diversity, public art, and modern-day issues relevant to students. With the addition of the Performance Hall and Performing Arts Dance Studio, students can explore learning opportunities through theatre and music. Further, with ATS located in the downtown core, there are rich historical and cultural features accessible as content for education programs. Students will have the opportunity to embark on a public art walking tour to view the Community

Builds Community Diversity and Inclusion Mural by Moonlight Murals Collective, the “Lean on Me” Downtown Street Mural by Vicki Carruthers, the Little Free Art Gallery, and the Bee and Firefly sculptures by Indigenous artist, Donald Chrétien, located at Town Park. Tours will be reinforced with lessons on public art and its ability to connect a community.

Education programs present the opportunity to partner with local community organizations to provide fulsome and enriched programming while also providing opportunities to those organizations to showcase their knowledge, skills, and programming possibilities.

ATS presents exciting exhibition opportunities that are featured in the Aurora Room and the newly constructed exhibition infrastructure in ATS. The activation of these spaces is made possible through curatorial services and collections care activities completed by Museum staff.

The Aurora Room is home to a long-term exhibition titled Echoes of Aurora: Bridging the Past & Present, which explores the evolving yet enduring aspects of Aurora’s history. Themes such as architecture, health and healing, local business, and popular pastimes are woven together to reflect both change and continuity.

A highlight of this space is the striking mural by Indigenous artist, August Swinson, inviting reflection on living in harmony with the land and all living beings. Throughout the museum, the presence of Indigenous knowledge is further honoured with several items from Ancestral Knowledge Keeper, Kim Wheatley, offering deeper insights into Indigenous traditions and culture.

Throughout ATS are four display cases and a gallery rail system. This infrastructure, referred to as the Town Square Galleries, is used to showcase archival materials, objects, textiles, photographs, and stories connected to Aurora.

Staff continue to focus on broadening their understanding of the historical record while completing exhibition and interpretive plans for the available spaces mentioned above.

#### **4.2 Programs & Performances**

ATS features a well-rounded calendar of cultural, heritage and recreation programs and events, including art exhibitions, live performances, workshops, lectures, film screenings, and cultural festivals that cater to a wide range of interests. The Town’s Cultural Development Coordinator and Collections and Exhibitions Coordinator lead the development and implementation of the Town’s culture, heritage and community

programs. The Town's Recreation Division also offers various programs at ATS, including summer camps.

As co-located organizations, the Town, ACC and APL have formed a Collaborative Programming Working Group that meets monthly, or as required, to ensure the public receives a range of complementary programs geared to various skill levels and life experiences.

ACC provides the following types of programs:

- Performing Arts (Music, Theatre, etc.)
- Visual/Fine Arts (Gallery Exhibitions/Tours, Painting & Drawing and Photography Classes, etc.)
- Curriculum-based/Curriculum-enhanced arts programming
- Crafts (Textiles, Glass, Jewelry Classes)
- Camps
- Community Events

The ACC develops accessible and community-focused programs geared to beginners, right up to pre-professionals and professionals, serving an audience from 18 months to adults. ACC has extensive experience hosting professional live performances and professional visual arts programs and exhibitions and develops year-round education programs that complement their performing arts and visual arts streams.

APL offers nearly 1,900 programs annually that provide individuals with skills to navigate everyday life. APL's goal is to enhance the experience of residents of all ages in a way that is complementary/adjunct to more advanced programs offered by other partners. Many of these programs are not designed for a specific skill level but are meant to be more experiential in nature and open to people of all skill levels and life experiences.

APL continues to provide the following types of programs in their home space:

- Adult Learning
- Literary Arts (Fiction, Non-fiction, Poetry, Storytelling)
- Electronic Arts (New Media, Digital & Animation)
- STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math)
- Crafts
- Community Events

Some programs may expand into ATS when partnership opportunities present themselves. One recent example of this is the Steve Paikin and Bruce Dowbiggin discussion that was co-hosted by the Town and APL in the Performance Hall, and which included a meet and greet and book signing.

In addition to the Town, ACC and APL, numerous other service providers, including the Town's Cultural Partners, have provided a range of programs in the new spaces. ATS has presented opportunities for the Town to work with these local organizations and businesses to provide exciting and enriching experiences. Some successful examples include the Black History Month Paint Night with Aurora Black Community Association, Aurora Pride Festival with Aurora Community Band and York Pride, Great Canadian Songbook on Vinyl with Dave's Vinyl Party, Emancipation Day with Aurora Black Caucus, Doors Open Aurora with numerous local partners, Rocky Horror Picture Show 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary interactive screening with Marquee Theatrical Productions, We Lend a Hand film screening with Aurora Film Circuit, and more.

Additional Town workshops are in the works that will connect the community to fun and exciting arts and culture activities that will also touch on important global factors such as sustainability and environmentally friendly practices.

### **4.3 Special Events**

A variety of Town Special Events have been hosted at ATS since opening, including the following:

- Mayor's Levee – January
- Arctic Adventure – Hybrid with Town Park – Family Day Weekend, February
- Aurora Performing Arts Festival – June
- National Indigenous History Month – June
- National Indigenous Peoples Day – June
- Culture Days – September to October
- Multicultural Festival – September
- Doors Open – September
- National Day for Truth & Reconciliation – September
- Aurora's Christmas Market – December
- Menorah Lighting Ceremony – Hanukkah – December/January
- Family First Night – December

These special events will become a mainstay of the ATS programming schedule and will expand as resources and partnerships become available.

#### **4.4 Pricing and Fee Structure**

The Town's goal for each program and performance at ATS is to balance cost recovery through earned revenue generation with accessibility and affordability. The ATS Fees and Charges Schedule has been approved by Council and was developed in consultation with internal staff and external partners, such as the ACC. It ensures that a range of user groups can access each of the spaces that comprise ATS without negatively impacting their capacity to deliver services to the community.

#### **5. Marketing and Communications**

ATS, the largest capital project ever undertaken by the Town of Aurora, has now completed its first full year of operations following a successful grand opening in fall 2024. This cultural hub continues to play a transformative role in the Town's downtown revitalization—enhancing Aurora's small-town charm with big-city amenities, driving local economic activity, and strengthening Aurora's identity as a destination for residents and visitors alike.

Building on the momentum of the grand opening and first year of programming, the 2026–2027 Marketing Strategy focuses on sustaining and growing community engagement through creative, data-informed outreach. Our 2025 audience survey results provide valuable insights that guide content development, event promotion, and communication channels—ensuring that marketing efforts are inclusive, responsive, and aligned with evolving community interests.

In today's rapidly changing marketing landscape, trends such as short-form video, authentic storytelling, collaboration, and targeted digital advertising have become essential tools for public-sector engagement. By leveraging these approaches, the Town can better reach residents where they are—on social platforms, mobile devices, and community networks—inviting them to connect meaningfully with their local culture, heritage, and shared spaces.

Marketing ATS is not just about promoting events, programs, and performances—it's about fostering a sense of belonging. Our communications approach continues to highlight the vibrant mix of experiences at ATS, from live performances and festivals to museum exhibits and creative workshops. Through consistent, audience-driven messaging, marketing plays a key role in connecting people to their community and positioning ATS as the heart of Aurora's cultural and social life.

## **5.1 Marketing and Communications Strategy**

ATS's Marketing and Communications Strategy continues to evolve from its initial focus on launch and awareness to a sustained, data-driven approach that builds long-term community connection, audience loyalty, and destination visibility. Following a successful Grand Opening and first year of operations, the strategy now focuses on audience retention, program participation, and measurable engagement growth across digital and in-person channels.

The 2026–2027 Strategy reflects shifting trends and audience expectations, ensuring authentic, inclusive, and impactful outreach. Short-form video, social storytelling, and user-generated content will continue to drive engagement and community pride, while hyperlocal and geotargeted campaigns convert awareness into attendance and extend reach regionally.

Accessibility and inclusivity remain central, with marketing materials reflecting Aurora's diversity and encouraging broad participation. Data-driven insights from the 2025 audience survey and digital analytics will refine key messages, content formats, and promotional timing to strengthen engagement and maintain relevance.

All activities align with the ATS brand identity introduced in 2021, integrating social media, e-newsletters, website content, media relations, and storytelling initiatives. Collaboration with the Aurora Cultural Centre, Aurora Museum & Archives, and Aurora Public Library will continue to expand promotional reach and reinforce ATS's role as a shared civic and cultural hub.

## **5.2 Strategic Focus (2026–2027)**

- Strengthen awareness and attendance across all program areas.
- Enhance digital engagement through platform-specific strategies.
- Leverage analytics and audience insights to optimize messaging and timing. Support Aurora's economic and cultural vitality by positioning ATS as the heart of downtown.

As ATS enters its next phase of growth, marketing and communications will balance creativity with analytics—driving participation, sustaining momentum, and deepening community connection.

### 5.3 Social Media Strategy

The Social Media Strategy, developed as part of ATS's broader Marketing and Communications Strategy, guides the implementation and growth of our Facebook and Instagram channels. ATS's social media plays a critical role in connecting with audiences, sharing cultural offerings, and amplifying engagement through compelling content. In 2025, social media emerged as one of the most effective channels for audience awareness of performances, highlighting its value as a primary marketing tool. In an environment of evolving algorithms and increasingly saturated platforms, understanding audience behaviors and platform dynamics is essential to maintain relevance, visibility, and measurable impact. The Social Media Strategy balances paid and organic content to ensure a comprehensive approach: organic posts foster community and authentic engagement, while targeted paid campaigns extend reach and connect with key demographics.

### 5.4 Partnerships and Collaborations

Fostering partnerships and collaborations yield results that are mutually beneficial and often exceed individual marketing and communications efforts and capacities. They amplify reach, connect resources, and enhance credibility, ultimately cultivating a stronger, more engaged community for all.

#### 5.4.1 Advantages:

- **Reach and Exposure** – by partnering, individual networks and audiences are expanded. This synergy enhances brand visibility and attracts diverse audiences for each partner. Additionally, partnering with organizations that share target audiences can lead to highly targeted efforts with greater engagement rates.
- **Expertise and Resources** – marketing tactics are strengthened by new perspectives and specialized skills of partners and collaborators.
- **Shared Costs and Efficiencies** – joint efforts can lead to shared expenses, extending the reach of each partner's budget, in addition to increasing efficiency across partnering teams.
- **Credibility** – reputable partners enhance credibility, which can expedite audience participation and shifts to neutral, and ideally positive, sentiment.
- **Community** – partnerships and collaboration reinforce a commitment to the community and local growth.
- **Sustainability** – collaborative relationships set the foundation for mutually sustained success.

#### 5.4.2 Partners:

- **Partners** – ATS’s partners – the Aurora Cultural Centre, Aurora Museum & Archives, and Aurora Public Library – operate independently from ATS. Each partner has a wealth of expertise and experience that collaboratively enhances opportunities for arts and culture in Aurora. As partners, we support one another and build on our individual capacities, by drawing upon each other’s internal competencies. Together, we will provide the community with greater opportunities for arts, culture, and connection for generations to come.
- **Celebrating Culture through Partnerships** – foster collaboration with the Town’s Cultural Partners to amplify impact and deepen community engagement resulting in mutually beneficial results.
- **Downtown Revitalization** – bolster the Town’s downtown revitalization efforts through an action-oriented and community focused approach. Building relationships with local business owners in downtown Aurora encourages cross-promotion and future collaborations as opportunities arise. These relationships are the foundation of converting contacts to local ambassadors of ATS.
- **Local Ambassadors** – collaboration that nurtures a network of diverse, local ambassadors.

#### 5.5 Community Engagement Initiatives

Robust community engagement efforts play a vital role in driving awareness, building excitement, and ensuring long-term sustainability. By consistently attending Town-led and Town-supported community events, we establish deeper connections with residents and members of the broader community, ultimately fostering excitement, transparency, and on-going credible communication.

- **Creating Excitement and Anticipation** – with ATS now open and established as a cultural and social hub, community events continue to play a vital role in maintaining excitement and deepening public connection. Branded activations at community events continue to serve as high-impact touchpoints. Giveaways, on-site engagement opportunities, and consistent brand visuals reinforce ATS’s identity while building positive associations and repeat visitation. Combined with data-driven digital marketing and community partnerships, these efforts ensure sustained visibility and meaningful connection with residents, fostering pride and participation in Aurora’s downtown and cultural growth.
- **Two-way Communication** – our engagement efforts present a unique opportunity for residents to ask questions, provide feedback, and voice concerns in-person. This open dialogue fosters transparency and trust between the project team and

Aurora community. By actively listening and responding to comments, questions, and challenges, we demonstrate our commitment to creating a facility that meets the needs and desires of the residents it serves.

- **Long-term Sustainability** – community initiatives set the tone for ongoing community engagement for years to come, propelling ATS into a thriving community hub. Sustained interest translates into consistent patronage and generates revenue streams.

## 6. Operational Plan

The following areas of expertise are required to operate ATS successfully:

- Facility Maintenance
- IT Services
- Programming and Event Planning
- Collections and Exhibitions Management
- Customer and Visitor Services
- Marketing and Communications
- Technical Production Services
- Audience Management

Of these areas of expertise, the Town is responsible for facility maintenance, IT service delivery, customer service, bookings and rentals, box office administration, program registration, heritage services and museum management, and programming, including community special events.

Technical production and audience services is provided by the ACC.

### 6.1.1 Facility Maintenance

The Facilities Division supports the APL, Victoria Hall, ATS, the Armoury and the commercial properties on Yonge Street.

ATS operating hours require seven days a week coverage. The staff complement includes a fulltime Crew Leader, 4 additional fulltime Facility Maintenance staff, complemented by part time maintenance support as needed.

The goal is to operate ATS in an environmentally responsible manner by adopting sustainable practices wherever possible. As part of the asset management program, staff will continuously assess the facility's state of repair to ensure its long-term sustainability.

Facility maintenance staff are responsible for the following duties:

- Ensure the building is clean and maintained in good repair, including interior and exterior architectural and structural features, parking area, skating loop, water features, the Amphitheatre, storm water drainage systems, plumbing, electrical, roofing, Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC), fire suppression and fire alarm equipment, elevating systems, and security systems.
- Establish clear procedures and protocols for handling emergencies and evacuations, including fire drills.
- Provide labour support for the setup and strike of furniture and equipment required for all user groups throughout ATS.

Note: Some exterior grounds maintenance, including landscaping and snow removal, is provided by the Town's Parks Division and contracted services respectively.

### **6.1.2 Information Technology (IT)**

The Town's IT Division supports all Town and ACC staff working out of ATS, and their portfolio includes:

- Maintenance and life-cycling of hardware/software
- Technical help desk support for hardware/connectivity issues
- Technical help desk support for software in Town's IT Business Unit
- Telephony equipment and support
- Cellular equipment and support (where required)
- Domain hosting for the ATS microsite and e-commerce
- Architecting, installing, and administering both the wired and wireless networks
- Cybersecurity services and Active Directory account administration
- A/V equipment and support

### **6.1.3 Collections and Exhibitions Management**

ATS is home to the Aurora Collection and serves as the primary venue for exhibitions. Collections management activities include accessioning, cataloguing, ongoing documentation, digitization, preventative conservation, and item specific storage and mounting solutions. The process of creating exhibitions includes creating an interpretive plan, research, developing didactics, writing, artifact selection, and exhibit installation. The Collections & Exhibitions Coordinator and Museum Collections Technician are responsible for providing these services.

### 6.1.4 Customer and Visitor Services

Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) provide day-to-day support for public inquiries, program registrations, facility rental information, and all data entry for programs and events that take place at ATS. This includes promotion and sales of third-party bookings such as ACC performances. CSRs also manage box office transactions, in person and online.

Two fulltime CSRs, supplemented by parttime staff is required to cover all operating hours. Additional parttime support may also be required for events and activities outside of normal customer service desk operating hours.

Town CSRs are responsible for:

- Box office administration using the Town's ticketing software
- Program registration using the Town's booking administration software
- Customer and referral services for the ACC's programs and services

### 6.1.5 Marketing and Communications

The Marketing and Communications Specialist leads all ATS marketing and communications initiatives, supported by the Communications Division and Cultural Services Division.

ATS's marketing and communications efforts foster collaboration that enhances the collective capacity and supports the success of each partner in meeting their objectives. Marketing and communications activities align partner goals, target audiences, and key messaging, to enhance community recognition, awareness, and value proposition.

#### Partner Marketing and Communications Initiatives:

- **Community-Driven Events and Cross-Promotion** – in organizing and promoting shared community events, we will showcase the synergy between ATS and its partners. Cross-promotion at community events that ATS participates in maximizes exposure for our partners and emphasizes a sense of unity and shared purpose within the community.
- **Marketing Collateral** – to enhance community engagement and awareness, partner marketing collateral will serve as tangible reminders of the unique experiences and opportunities to learn and immerse in arts, culture, and heritage at ATS.

- **Microsite** – the ATS website hosts information about our partners. By integrating this partner information into ATS's online presence, we ensure that the partnership remains at the forefront of communications efforts.
- **Social Media** – monthly partner spotlight posts provide in-depth insights into their unique offerings and current initiatives, further strengthening the connection between ATs and its partners.
- **Newsletter** – to amplify each partner's reach, we dedicate a recurring section in our monthly ATS newsletter to highlight their current news, events, and initiatives.

### 6.1.6 Technical Production Services

Technical Production are provided by ACC staff. Technical Production costs are partially offset by earned revenue from recoveries incurred by Performance Hall user groups. Technical Production staff:

- Manage the technical needs for each client in ATS including advance quoting and production consultation, recruiting for and staffing events
- Facilitating equipment needs, reporting, and backstage health and safety
- Providing audio and lighting requirements that meet the client's expectations for each event

### 6.1.7 Audience Management

Audience management is also provided by the ACC and include the activities that support a safe, welcoming and professional audience experience including ticketing issues, seating, emergency evacuation, health concerns, latecomer entry, reception needs, special concession requests, and hearing-assist support. Audience management also supports a robust volunteer program to recruit, train, schedule and manage community participation in ATS.

Audience Management staff are responsible for:

- Volunteer recruitment, training, scheduling, and management during events
- Facilitating front of house client needs
- Ensuring audience health and safety

These services are also partially offset by earned revenue from recoveries incurred by Performance Hall user groups.

## **7. Financial Projections**

The total net operating budget for ATS in 2026 and 2027 is approximately \$990,000 and \$997,000, respectively. The 2026-2027 projections take into consideration that it will take approximately five years to ramp up and maximize the opportunities that exist for additional revenue generation and added cultural and community activities within the expanded facility.

The Town's net operating requirement allows the Town to provide the following services at ATS:

- Facility Maintenance
- IT Service Delivery
- Customer Service
- Bookings and Rentals
- Box Office Administration
- Program Registration
- Heritage Services and Museum Management
- Café and Concession Services
- Programming, including community events
- Audience Services (contracted to ACC)
- Technical Production Services (contracted to ACC)

A multiyear funding strategy is being utilized (i.e., phased into the operating budget over a three-year period), so that the new pressure is fully funded by the tax levy by 2026. In the interim, any budget shortfalls are to be funded from past unused ATS operating funding that is being held within the tax rate stabilization reserve.

### **7.1 Economic Benefits**

Vibrant spaces such as ATS exert a noticeable economic influence on their communities. They foster job creation, invigorate tourism, and yield revenue for local enterprises. The information presented below was prepared using the Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM), which is a regional economic impact model that helps to determine the economic impact of tourism-related activities on the local and provincial economies.

**Aurora Town Square Economic Benefits in York Region**  
**Direct Economic Impact of Capital Investment in a Tourism Facility\***  
**Based on \$53,000,000 Capital Investment in Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation**

GDP	Labour Income	Full-time Job Equivalents	Tax Revenue (Federal, Provincial, Municipal combined)
\$18.75M	\$15.4M	157	\$4.2M

\*2025 Dollars

**Aurora Town Square Direct Economic Benefits in York, Durham and Hills of Headwaters**  
**Based on \$3,250,000 Combined Annual Revenue from Cultural Performances\***

GDP	Labour Income	Full-time Job Equivalents	Tax Revenue (Federal, Provincial, Municipal combined)
\$1.655M	\$2.74M	25	\$1.13M

\*2025 Dollars

Notes:

Direct impact: refers to the impact generated in businesses or sectors that produce or provide goods and services directly to travelers, e.g., accommodations, restaurants, recreations, travel agents, transportation and retail enterprises etc. Direct impact on GDP, employment and tax revenues is also called tourism GDP, tourism employment and tourism tax revenues.

Employment: refers to number of jobs; it includes full-time, part-time, seasonal and temporary employment (based on the share of the year worked), for both employed and self-employed workers.

## 8. Risk Analysis and Mitigation Strategies

The Risk Analysis below identifies several potential risks and analyses the appropriate ways in which they can mitigated.

### 8.1.1 Marketing and Promotion

- **Risk:** Lack of awareness of ATS, leading to an underutilized facility and reduced ROI on marketing spend.
- **Mitigation Strategy:**
  - Develop a multi-channel marketing and communications plan (social media, local media, email newsletters, community boards).
  - Use storytelling and behind-the-scenes content to build excitement.
  - Partner with local community leaders for authentic promotion.

### 8.1.2 Market and Demand

- **Risk:** Low audience turnout and program participation due to misjudged community interest or duplication of services from other arts and cultural institutions.
- **Mitigation Strategy:**
  - Develop a comprehensive programming and performance schedule that includes an ongoing plan of action to ensure meaningful and appropriate programming at ATS.
  - Work with project partners and local cultural organizations to understand the community's preferences and interests.
  - Ensure the programming schedule includes a variety of events and programs that cater to different demographics.
  - Ensure the performance schedule includes a diverse and appealing lineup of local and regional talent that appeals to Aurora and York Region residents.
  - Seek community feedback on an ongoing basis to ensure programming is meeting community needs.
  - Ensure staff are provided with the necessary networking and professional development opportunities to remain on top of industry trends.

### 8.1.3 Operational Considerations

- **Risk:** Inadequate staff training, staff coverage and infrastructure for smooth facility operation.
- **Mitigation Strategy:** Develop a comprehensive training program for all staff members and volunteers that includes ongoing training sessions and a process for regular feedback and communication. Implement regular maintenance schedules for equipment and facilities and ensure it is followed thoroughly. Invest in appropriate technology systems to streamline ticketing, scheduling, and resource allocation and provide appropriate training for staff accordingly.
- **Risk:** Damage to and/or theft of Museum collection.
- **Mitigation Strategy:** Follow established operational security plan and preventative measures.

### 8.1.4 Technological Considerations

- **Risk:** Technical glitches during performances, impacting audience experience.

- **Mitigation Strategy:** Perform thorough testing of all technical systems before events. Have backup equipment readily available. Employ skilled technicians to manage and troubleshoot technical setups during performances. Ensure appropriate customer service strategies are in place and staff are prepared to employ them when necessary.

### 8.1.5 Health and Safety

- **Risk:** Accidents, injuries, or health emergencies during programs, performances and events or within the facility.
- **Mitigation Strategy:** Develop and communicate comprehensive health and safety and emergency protocols to staff and visitors. Install safety equipment, such as fire alarms, first aid stations, automated external defibrillator, and emergency exits, in compliance with regulations. Ensure all on site staff members are up to date in Standard First Aid and CPR level C certifications.

### 8.1.6 Reputation and Public Relations

- **Risk:** Negative publicity, public backlash, or controversy surrounding programming choices.
- **Mitigation Strategy:** Engage with diverse perspectives throughout the community to address concerns and feedback. Have a strong and responsive marketing and communications team to manage communications and address any issues promptly. Develop standardized and thorough messaging in response to such concerns.

### 8.1.7 Environmental and Sustainability

- **Risk:** Inadequate sustainability measures leading to negative environmental impact.
- **Mitigation Strategy:** Incorporate sustainable design elements into the facility's construction, such as energy-efficient systems and waste reduction initiatives. Implement waste diversion programs. Educate staff and visitors about the facility's sustainability goals. Develop an ongoing sustainability model with all programs, supplies and equipment.
- **Risk:** Environmental damage to the Museum collection.
- **Mitigation Strategy:** Follow a regular schedule on environmental monitoring and insect/pest monitoring. Ensure HVAC system is regularly serviced so that an optimal storage climate is maintained.

### 8.1.8 Economic and Financial

- **Risk:** Economic downturn affecting program registration, performance attendance and sponsorships.
- **Mitigation Strategy:** Develop flexible pricing strategies to accommodate a range of economic conditions. Diversify revenue streams beyond ticket sales, such as offering memberships or exclusive packages. Maintain flexibility and creativity with programming options to allow for a programming pivot accordingly. Maintain strong relationships with partners.

### 8.1.9 Partner Relations

- **Risk:** Failure to engage with local organizations and Cultural Partners to develop relevant exhibitions, programs and collaborations.
- **Mitigation Strategy:** Continue to meet monthly with Aurora Arts, Culture & Heritage Network and Collaborative Programming Working Group. Ensure ongoing communication with invested parties is maintained and a collaborative approach to programs and exhibitions is utilized. Dedicate staff time on an ongoing basis to ensure thorough consultation and collaboration.

## 9. Impact and Evaluation

### 9.1 Measurement of Success and Impact

Robust measurement practices provide valuable insights into the long-term growth and success of ATS. Monitoring and analyzing attendance data, participant feedback, and utilization rates supports strategic decision-making for resource allocation, along with meeting evolving community needs. Data-driven evaluation highlights trend identification and provides a comprehensive framework for informed decision-making.

Table 14. ATS Measurement and Tracking Methods

Measurement	Tracking Method
Customer satisfaction with the quality of ATS programs	Annual and Program Survey % of satisfaction in each program area
Customer satisfaction with the diversity of program offerings	Annual Survey % of satisfaction
Customer satisfaction with Box Office, Facility Maintenance, Customer Service, Programming, Heritage Services	Survey of User Groups % of satisfaction in each area

Community satisfaction with donation inquiries and Museum research requests	Survey donors and researchers Brief testimonials
# of participants in Town programs at ATS	Reports from Red61 and ActiveNet
Community engagement (volunteering)	Track number of volunteer hours earned at ATS
Earned Revenue (programs and rentals)	Shown as a figure

## 9.2 Continuous Improvement Strategies

By consistently implementing improvement strategies based on thorough evaluation, ATS will continue to deliver quality and dynamic programs and events that cater to the community and provide a vibrant and creative experience to attendees and participants.

Staff will continue to benchmark ATS performances with similar venues to analyze their programming, audience engagement strategies and overall management practices to help to ensure ATS is following industry best practices and identifying methods for improvement.

Ticket sales and program registration records will assist in analyzing audience and participant demographics. This will help to provide insight into the popularity of genres, dates and times for programming and the types of audiences being engaged, therefore also identifying any gaps.

As part of the comprehensive staff training program, staff and volunteers will participate in ongoing training and development opportunities, as well as performance appraisals to identify areas for learning and growth. This will enhance the overall visitor experience at ATS.

Staff will continue to collaborate with Cultural Partners and local organizations to gather insight and address feedback and recommendations from vested parties.

## 10. Conclusion

ATS represents a bold investment in Aurora’s cultural and civic future, designed to serve as a dynamic hub for creativity, connection, and community pride. This Business Plan provides a clear roadmap for operational excellence, financial sustainability, and inclusive programming that reflects the diverse voices of our community. By aligning governance, staffing, and resource allocation with municipal priorities, ATS is positioned

to deliver meaningful cultural experiences while fostering economic vitality and downtown revitalization.

Through a commitment to excellence, collaboration, diversity, respect, and accountability, ATS will create an environment where arts, culture, and innovation thrive. The strategies outlined—ranging from risk mitigation and performance measurement to community engagement—ensure that ATS remains adaptable, resilient, and responsive to evolving needs. Ultimately, ATS is more than a facility; it is a shared vision brought to life—a place where residents and visitors alike can gather, learn, and celebrate the richness of our collective heritage. With this plan as a foundation, ATS is poised to become a cornerstone of Aurora’s identity and a catalyst for cultural growth for years to come.