2026-2030

STRATEGIC PLAN

Aurora Cultural Centre

PERFORMING ARTS
GALLERIES
EDUCATION

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PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

AURORA CULTURAL CENTRE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

THE AURORA CULTURAL CENTRE STANDS AT AN IMPORTANT CROSSROADS, REMINDING US THAT GREAT CULTURAL EXPERIENCES ARE NOT BUILD BY INSPIRATION ALONE, BUT BY THOUGHTFUL GOVERNANCE, RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP, AND A SHARED COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY.

As we returned to Aurora Town Square, we re-opened our doors to artists and audiences and reaffirmed our responsibility as caretakers of a public trust. The arts belong to everyone, and our role as a Board is to ensure that what we build together remains accessible, sustainable, and deeply connected to the community we serve.

For fifteen years, the Aurora Cultural Centre has earned the confidence of our residents, partners, and funders by demonstrating transparency, accountability, and integrity in everything we do. Our ongoing partnership with the Town of Aurora is central to this trust. Thanks to the Town of Aurora's funding contribution to Aurora Cultural Centre, our deeply collaborative relationship, and their commitment to supporting arts and culture, we can all feel secure that the cultural heart of our community will continue to thrive at the centre of civic life.

1. To uphold responsible governance that safeguards the organization's long-term stability and impact.
2. To strengthen relationships with the Town and our many community partners so that cultural growth supports local economic vitality.
3. To champion fundraising and partnerships that sustain our programs and expand access, ensuring everyone can experience and afford the arts.
4. To nurture an environment where creativity, business responsibility, and public benefit coexist harmoniously.

We believe that every concert ticket purchased, every gallery exhibit viewed, every art class attended, and every volunteer hour given contributes to personal enrichment and the prosperity of our local economy supporting restaurants, small businesses, and a thriving downtown core. This is the ripple effect of culture done responsibly: it uplifts everyone.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I extend sincere gratitude to our staff, artists, donors, sponsors, volunteers, and our partners at the Town of Aurora. Your shared dedication ensures that our vision for an inclusive, innovative, and accountable arts organization continues to flourish.

As we embark on this new five-year plan, we do so with optimism and resolve, knowing that through sound governance, collaboration, and creativity, we will deliver cultural experiences that everyone in Aurora can enjoy and take pride in.

The Aurora Cultural Centre's success is, and always will be, a shared achievement, one that strengthens both our cultural spirit and our community's future.

MARY ANN MCCONKEY, PRESIDENT

Aurora Cultural Centre Board of Directors

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Our first year back home in Aurora Town Square has been one of discovery, renewal, and connection. After years of anticipation, stepping back into our permanent home offered both joy and insight, a chance to listen, to observe, and to learn what our community most values about the Aurora Cultural Centre in this new chapter. That first year has been a foundation, an essential period of learning that shaped the priorities, ambitions, and clarity of this 2026–2030 Strategic Plan.

At the Aurora Cultural Centre, the arts are our focus and our field of expertise – the place where we create impact. Through professional presentation, education, and community engagement in visual and performing arts, we contribute to Aurora's cultural vitality and sense of belonging. Our work supports artists, enriches audiences, and nurtures creative growth across generations. This is where culture takes shape: through the arts that inspire imagination, deepen connection, and give expression to the shared human experience.

THIS IS WHERE CULTURE TAKES SHAPE–THROUGH THE ARTS THAT INSPIRE IMAGINATION, DEEPEN CONNECTION, AND EXPRESS OUR SHARED HUMAN EXPERIENCE.

Through this process, we have reaffirmed who we are and why we matter. Our newly adopted vision, mission, and core values reflect how we already operate and what we aspire to be, a trusted, inclusive, and imaginative organization that connects people through the arts. These guiding principles have grounded our decisions and inspired our future. They express our belief that the arts are not peripheral to community life, they are central to it. They bring people together, spark curiosity, and build shared pride in what our community can create.

The Aurora Cultural Centre now stands on a strong base of expertise and collaboration, a team and Board with deep experience in artistic programming, education, marketing, fundraising, and responsible governance. The past fifteen years have strengthened our capacity; the past year has deepened our understanding. Together, they have prepared us to move forward with confidence, relevance, and a renewed sense of purpose.

This plan positions us to lead and to define what that leadership means. For us, a Cultural Leader is an organization that shows both artistic and civic leadership: shaping the cultural conversation, contributing to policy development, and working with partners in tourism and economic development to ensure that culture is woven into the fabric of Aurora's growth. It means being a trusted collaborator in our sector, a go-to for others who want to learn, to innovate, and to make a difference. It means modelling excellence in programming and integrity in practice, demonstrating how an arts organization can be both visionary and accountable.

And as an Artistic Hub, we embody that leadership through the experience we create every day. We are a gathering place where creativity welcomes everyone – individuals and families, newcomers and long-time residents, young people discovering their voices, and older adults sharing the wisdom of lived experience. We are a space where those from diverse cultural backgrounds, languages, and life stories find connection through shared expression and inspiration from professional artistry. Our stages, galleries and classrooms host exceptional professional artists, educators, and creators who enrich our programming and model artistic excellence. Whether arriving alone or with others, visitors feel a sense of belonging and possibility.

We are a welcoming "third space", beyond home and work, where everyone belongs, where creativity is contagious, and where imagination finds a home. It is a space that invites all voices to participate, to contribute, and to shape what comes next. Here, community and professional artistry meet, each elevating the other. If we are not yet offering it, perhaps someone will dream it – and together we will make it real. That, too, is part of our purpose.

The next five years will be defined by curiosity, collaboration, and courage. We will embrace new systems, technology, and innovation not as replacements for creativity, but as catalysts for it. Using tools that deepen emotional connection, and spark moments of awe and discovery, we can respond to our community in more dynamic and timely ways. We will build sustainability through thoughtful partnerships and creative cross-pollination, ensuring that innovation enhances, not replaces, the human experience at the heart of our work.

We envision a fluid, connected ecosystem, one that maintains our reputation for exceptional artist care while expanding opportunities for shared learning and inspiration. Knowledge and creativity will flow freely between stakeholders, participants and partners.

This is what a living artistic hub looks like: A space that learns, grows, and creates in every direction.

The next five years will see us grow as a catalyst for creativity and community pride. Guided by our values of excellence, collaboration, inclusivity, artistic integrity, and responsible governance, this plan will strengthen our relevance and expand our reach, ensuring the Aurora Cultural Centre continues to shine as one of the region's most vital cultural assets.

Thank you to our artists, staff, volunteers, Board, patrons, donors, sponsors, and partners. Your vision, dedication, and trust have shaped this plan, including the spirit that drives it. Together, we will continue to build a cultural home that reflects the very best of Aurora: creative, welcoming, and full of possibility.

Suzanne Haines

Suzanne Haines, Executive Director

ABOUT THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The 2026 to 2030 strategic plan is a living document to be referenced, considered, evaluated, and updated ensuring that the Aurora Cultural Centre develops in alignment with the evolving needs of our community.

The plan was formed collaboratively with the Board of Directors, Aurora Cultural Centre staff, volunteers, and stakeholder viewpoints. As a living document, it will continue to develop with input and ideas from everyone who wants to join us in contributing to the Aurora Cultural Centre's future.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Aurora Cultural Centre aspires to be broadly recognized as a cultural leader and artistic hub, delivering exceptional experiences through diverse performing arts, engaging visual arts, and vibrant arts education. As a not-for-profit charitable organization accredited by Imagine Canada, we are committed to excellence, inclusivity, and responsible stewardship while celebrating diverse voices and connecting people through the arts.

THE AURORA CULTURAL CENTRE ASPIRES TO BE BROADLY RECOGNIZED AS A CULTURAL LEADER AND ARTISTIC HUB

Aurora is evolving rapidly. With a population projected to reach 85,800 by 2051, 37% of residents are immigrants bringing rich cultural diversity. Our community generates 1,154 arts and culture jobs and contributes $128 million to local GDP, according to the Ontario Arts Council 2025 report "Arts Across Ontario". However, we face economic uncertainty with predicted recession conditions, declining charitable giving trends, and growing competition for audience attention and funding. These challenges demand strategic, innovative responses.

Operating from the state-of-the-art Aurora Town Square facility, we have built strong partnerships with the Town of Aurora, established a diverse revenue model blending municipal support with grants, donations, sponsorships, and earned revenue, and developed a robust governance structure with active Board committees and dedicated volunteers.

Strategic Goals for 2026-2030

1. **Establish ACC as a Recognized Cultural Leader and Artistic Hub**
   Position Aurora Cultural Centre as York Region's premier cultural destination through enhanced visibility, tourism partnerships, and integrated programming across our three pillars.
2. **Strengthen Community Connection and Audience Development**
   Broaden engagement with diverse demographics through persona-driven programming, multilingual marketing, and removing barriers to access while building our future audience among youth and young adults.
3. **Continue to Build Funding**
   Diversify revenue through strategic donor cultivation, corporate sponsorship expansion, foundation grants, and innovative fundraising programs that ensure long-term organizational health.
4. **Enhance Marketing, Branding, Visibility and Connections**
   Deploy data-driven, persona-aligned marketing strategies using digital tools, ambassadors, and cross-promotions to amplify our reach and deepen relationships with all stakeholders.
5. **Amplify Signature Programming to Broaden Reach and Recognition**
   Balance artistic excellence with bold innovation through artist residencies, cross-disciplinary collaborations, pop-up experiences, and signature events that surprise and inspire.
6. **Strengthen Internal Capacity and Governance**
   Invest in staff development, implement project management systems, and maintain responsible governance through regular evaluation, professional development for staff and Board, and scenario planning.

Our Impact

The Aurora Cultural Centre generates tangible economic and social value. We contribute to local economic vitality, reduce social isolation through shared cultural experiences, provide accessible arts education year-round, support local artists and emerging talent, and position Aurora as a distinctive, culturally vibrant community. Our flagship KITS program brings professional performances directly into schools, ensuring equitable access for all students.

Looking Ahead

This strategic plan is a living document that will guide our evolution while remaining responsive to community needs. Through careful implementation of these goals, we will strengthen our role as a cultural and artistic hub that enriches lives, supports artists, stimulates economic activity, and builds a more connected, culturally engaged Aurora and region.

Success will be measured through audience growth and diversity, financial sustainability, community partnerships, artistic excellence, and tangible impact on quality of life in our community.

WHY THE AURORA CULTURAL CENTRE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

The Aurora Cultural Centre is more than a local cultural centre. It's a gathering place where people from near and far can feel seen, heard, and connect with the arts in its many forms and expressions.

When people connect with the arts at the Aurora Cultural Centre, they also experience something more. They enjoy Aurora's many attributes, restaurants, and shops. They bring friends, colleagues and business associates who share the connection and joy of music, comedy, visual arts, and arts education programs. They witness senior and young, emerging and established artists interacting and creating synergies for their art and creative journey.

All of which makes Aurora Cultural Centre a cultural leader and artistic hub that delivers real social and economic value for our town.

It's a human impact story

A child's first art camp experience, collaborating to build a popsicle stick sculpture with new campmates. A senior rekindling their love of watercolour painting. A newcomer's first concert in Canada, stomping their feet and clapping their hands as they learn about fishing off the coast of Nova Scotia. A gathering of friends, families, neighbours, singing along with the performers they've idolized, sitting close enough to watch lightening fingers electrifying the strings of a guitar. The arts at the Aurora Cultural Centre represent lifelong learning and discovery. Visual arts exhibitions, talks, and hands-on courses build creativity and critical thinking at every age. Youth discover their voice and adults rediscover theirs.

WHEN PEOPLE CREATE, LISTEN, OR WITNESS ART TOGETHER, THEY CONNECT TO SOMETHING LARGER THAN THEMSELVES – AND TO EACH OTHER.

Well-being through the arts is both emotional and spiritual. When people create, listen, or simply witness art together, they connect to something larger than themselves. Artistic experiences awaken empathy, reduce stress, and open pathways to healing and belonging. Each program we offer on stage, in the studio, or in the gallery is an invitation to reflect, imagine, and to grow. Shared cultural experiences are proven to reduce isolation, lower stress, and stimulate positive behaviours. Our programs intentionally include accessible options so that the benefits of the arts reach everyone, ensuring that the Aurora Cultural Centre is a place where creativity supports community and the human spirit.

As a cultural leader and artistic hub rooted in Aurora, we provide a platform for local, regional, Canadian and international stories with diverse perspectives, helping each other appreciate what makes us unique and share the experiences that bring us together.

It's a community impact story

When people meet across cultures, ages, and shared experiences, we learn from each other and we build trust in each other. Aurora Cultural Centre's programs are designed to bring different audiences together, igniting relationships that extend well beyond our walls.

Subsidized tickets, outreach partnerships, and accessible facilities ensure that cost, mobility, and language are not barriers to participation. From children's matinees to mentorship programs with visiting artists, the Aurora Cultural Centre offers constructive pathways that build confidence and leadership.

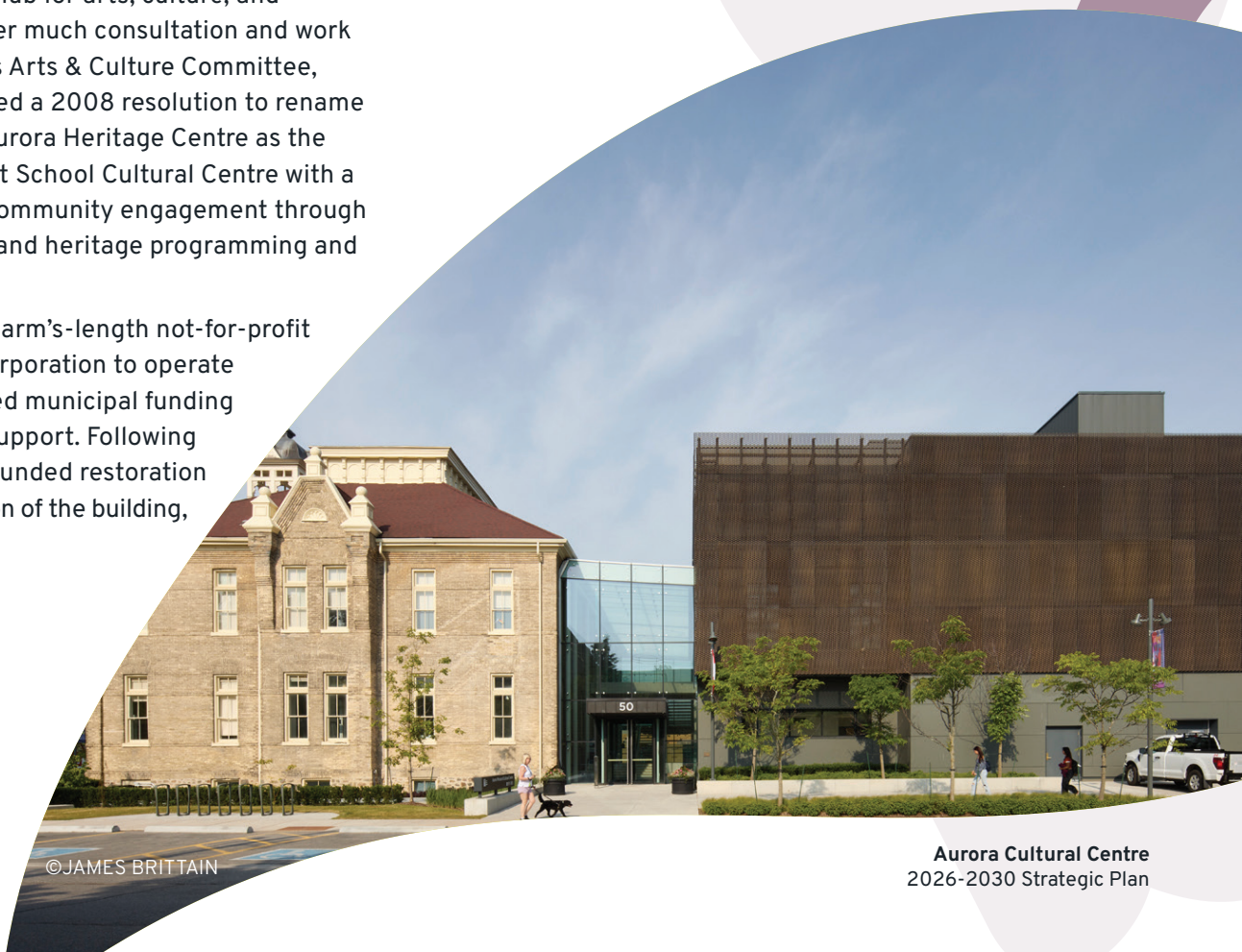
When we celebrate Aurora's heritage and the many cultures that shape it today, Aurora Cultural Centre inspires a shared identity that makes our town distinctive and proud. Transforming cultural moments into community momentum improves quality of life, strengthens the local economy, and builds a more connected Aurora.

AURORA CULTURAL CENTRE, FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS TO CULTURAL LEADER AND ARTISTIC HUB

Aurora began as a small commuting town with big dreams: a place where residents built strong neighbourhoods, cared deeply about their community, and imagined more for the town they called home. Out of that spirit, the Aurora Cultural Centre was born: a grass-roots idea to give Aurora a welcoming home for the arts.

In the early 2000s, the Town of Aurora was looking to infuse new life into the historic 1886 Church Street School, and a Town-led cultural planning process began to imagine the site as a hub for arts, culture, and heritage. After much consultation and work by the Town's Arts & Culture Committee, Council passed a 2008 resolution to rename the former Aurora Heritage Centre as the Church Street School Cultural Centre with a mission of "community engagement through arts, culture and heritage programming and promotion".

It created an arm's-length not-for-profit charitable corporation to operate with dedicated municipal funding and facility support. Following major Town-funded restoration and renovation of the building, the doors were officially re-opened January 2010, as what the community now knows as the Aurora Cultural Centre. Subsequent lease and Provision of Cultural Services agreements formalized the relationship, with the Aurora Cultural Centre delivering cultural programming on the Town's behalf while preserving one of Aurora's most important heritage sites.



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The original Town of Aurora's Cultural Master Plan and, more recently, its Cultural Action Plan have made a clear, long-term commitment to arts, culture, and heritage as being essential to quality of life and community identity. That vision has been backed by consistent support for the Aurora Cultural Centre over all these years through stable funding, shared planning, and an explicit expectation that our organization helps deliver on the Town's cultural goals for the whole community.

WHAT BEGAN AS A GRASS-ROOTS IDEA IN A HERITAGE SCHOOLHOUSE HAS GROWN INTO A CULTURAL LEADER AND ARTISTIC HUB FOR THE ENTIRE REGION.

From those early days in the heritage schoolhouse staging small concerts, volunteer-led exhibitions, and pilot workshops, we've grown into a year-round presenter and producer whose two stages, five galleries, multiple classrooms, and many public spaces pulse with activity. What began as a local experiment is becoming a regional destination where today people plan their weekends around the concerts, exhibitions, and workshops that connect them to the arts and to each other.

Aurora Cultural Centre is a recognized hub for performing arts, visual arts, and arts education, situated at Aurora Town Square and connected with residents and partners across the community.

How we got here

Early programming focused on intimate performances and community art shows, building trust with residents and artists while proving that Aurora wanted, and would support, high-quality cultural and arts experiences.

We added professional presenting, curated exhibitions, and structured courses led by practicing artists. As audiences and participation grew, the Aurora Cultural Centre invested in production standards, accessibility, and artist support.

With our move into Aurora Town Square, close collaboration with the Town's team and local organizations, Aurora Cultural Centre matured into a central gathering place that is equally comfortable hosting a sold-out concert, a family-friendly workshop, and a reflective artist talk.

What We Do

We present a diverse season of first-class entertainment including music and family events with a growing representation of performing art forms, from emerging voices to celebrated headliners representing many genres and cultures.

Rotating visual arts exhibitions showcasing multiple disciplines and perspectives feature local, regional, and national artists, paired with curator talks, artist walkthroughs, and experiences for all ages.

Aurora Cultural Centre's educational programs run year-round with multi-week courses and single-session workshops for beginners to experienced makers, emphasizing skill-building, creative confidence, and inclusive access.

Our school break arts camps offer creative immersion for children and youth. Led by experienced instructors, they ensure campers learn skills, make new friends, and develop a strong sense of self.

Our volunteer program brings people together through shared creativity and community spirit. Volunteers of all ages and backgrounds contribute to events, exhibitions, and programs that make the arts welcoming and accessible for everyone, fostering connection, belonging, and inclusion. Through their participation, volunteers gain valuable skills, teamwork experience, and a sense of altruism that strengthens both personal growth and community bonds. Their dedication enhances the impact of every program we deliver and reflects the caring, collaborative spirit that defines Aurora.

You'll find the Aurora Cultural Centre at town festivals, events, cultural celebrations, and pop-ups. We partner with educators, service agencies, cultural groups, and businesses to extend the arts beyond our walls, reduce participation barriers, and meet people where they are.

Beyond our programming, we serve as an operational and cultural asset to Aurora Town Square and the Town of Aurora. We operate arts and cultural spaces on behalf of the community supporting rentals with technical and front of house services, delivering excellent customer service and keeping the venue active and welcoming. As more residents and visitors discover and use the space, we strengthen local awareness of Aurora Town Square as a destination for creativity and connection.

This growing visibility helps us build stronger, more integrated teams and systems that benefit everyone from Town partners to audiences and artists. Our success is symbiotic with the Town's: as Aurora grows and thrives, so too does the Aurora Cultural Centre. Together, we are expanding the community's creative capacity, deepening engagement, and building a stronger, more vibrant cultural ecosystem for all.

Spotlight on Kaleidescope in the Schools (KITS)

KITS is Aurora Cultural Centre's flagship in-school program that brings professional, curriculum-linked performances and workshops directly into French and English elementary school communities. KITS brings artists to students, reducing logistical and financial barriers while ensuring equitable access.

- Performances at schools by touring and local artists with age-appropriate themes
- Teacher resources aligned to learning goals, with pre- and post-show activities
- Hands-on workshops that translate performance themes into creative making, reflection, and discussion
- Equity focused to prioritize schools and classes that benefit most from barrier-reduced arts access

The result is a consistent, high-quality arts experience that reaches students who might not have enough opportunities to visit a performance hall or art gallery, building their curiosity, empathy, and creative problem-solving.

Becoming a cultural leader and artistic hub

What makes a hub is not one thing. It's a steady layering of many, many good things. Over time, Aurora Cultural Centre's mix of performances, exhibitions, classes, camps, KITS, and community events has created…

1. A rhythm of activity that keeps people coming back and brings new people into the fold
2. A trusted platform for artists to present work and build audiences
3. A bridge between arts, education, business, and social services to strengthen daily life
4. A shared civic identity, where Aurora sees itself reflected on stage, on the gallery walls, and in the classroom.

As we continue growing into our role as a cultural leader, we model how arts organizations can connect creativity with community impact. Through partnerships, inclusive programming, and artist development, we demonstrate leadership that is collaborative, amplifying local voices, nurturing cultural literacy, and championing equitable access to the arts. This leadership extends beyond presenting and teaching; it shapes how the community – our community here in Aurora – imagines itself as a creative, caring, and connected place of belonging.

VISION, MISSION & CORE VALUES
(2026-2030)

Formally adopted by the Board of Directors October 2025.

VISION

The Aurora Cultural Centre aspires to be broadly recognized as a cultural leader and artistic hub that delivers exceptional experiences through diverse performing arts, engaging and thought-provoking visual arts, and serves as a vibrant centre for advancing arts education where people of all backgrounds can deepen their appreciation for creative endeavours.

Aurora Cultural Centre

PERFORMING ARTS
GALLERIES
EDUCATION

MISSION

Our mission as a not-for-profit charitable organization is to be a leading cultural and artistic hub, offering excellent and inclusive experiences to our community and beyond, celebrating diverse voices, and connecting people through the presentation of live performance, visual arts, and arts education that…

1. Deepen our engagement with the creative industries that support our growth and strengthen our connections with the community;
2. Provide tangible opportunities for artists to learn and grow;
3. Invite partnerships to build our reputation, inspire innovation, and expand our voice;
4. Stimulate economic activity and tourism in Aurora with exciting, entertaining, and distinctive experiences.

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CORE VALUES

Excellence
We are committed to the highest quality standards in our performances, exhibitions, educational offerings, and the manner in which we serve our artists, patrons and volunteers.

Collaboration & Community Engagement
We believe that engaging with community groups, listening to community interests, working together with artists, Aurora town leaders, sponsors, donors, volunteers and staff creates stronger programming and greater impact.

Inclusivity
We provide equal opportunity for people to join our team, and actively work together to remove barriers to participation, embrace diverse perspectives, and create programming that reflects and celebrates our community's many cultural identities and lived experiences.

Artistic Integrity
We respect artistic integrity, innovation, new approaches to traditional art forms, and artists pushing boundaries, while maintaining standards that we set in consideration of our community, to present meaningful experiences that resonate with our audiences.

Responsible Governance & Stewardship
As a not-for-profit charitable organization, we operate with a long-term view to fulfill our vision and mission through responsible governance and stewardship of our resources, being accountable for decisions that ensure our financial and organizational health while delivering quality programming at prices that are accessible to the community.

BUSINESS MODEL, GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Aurora Cultural Centre delivers high-quality experiences through a resilient, transparent model that blends diversified revenue streams, strong governance, and a nimble, professional team supported by dedicated volunteers. This model enables us to plan boldly, operate responsibly, and accomplish our goals as a cultural leader and artistic hub.

How we're funded and steward resources

To remain accessible and sustainable, Aurora Cultural Centre balances multiple revenue streams.

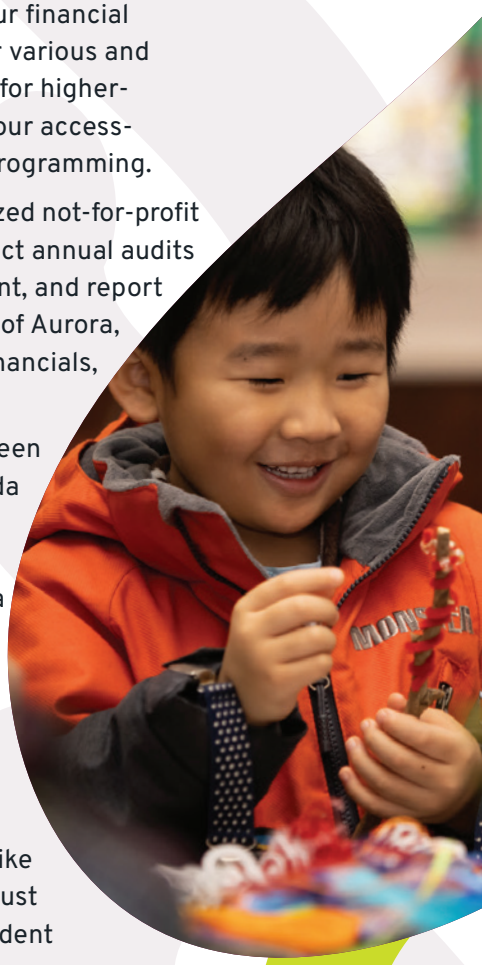
1. The Town of Aurora continues to be a valued partner since our inception, supporting Aurora Cultural Centre through a significant base funding program
2. Funding from provincial and federal arts bodies
3. Individual and corporate donations, corporate sponsorships, and foundation grants
4. Ticket sales, course and camp fees, art sales, and show merchandise

We build financial plans tied to strategic priorities, with annual operating budgets approved by the Board and reviewed on a monthly basis.

We monitor liquidity and cash flow, and stress-test different scenarios. Insurance, safeguards, and clear policies protect both the organization and artists.

Every program is assessed on outcomes that include audience participation, artistic contribution, and fit within our financial capacity. Management of our various and diverse programming allows for higher-margin activities to support our access-driven and emerging artist programming.

We strictly adhere to recognized not-for-profit accounting standards, conduct annual audits by an independent accountant, and report regularly to the public, Town of Aurora, and other stakeholders on financials, participation, and impact.



Aurora Cultural Centre has been accredited by Imagine Canada for high standards of good governance since 2013. The standards of Imagine Canada cover Board governance, financial accountability and transparency, fund raising, human resources, and volunteer involvement. To qualify for accreditation, not-for-profit organizations like the Aurora Cultural Centre must complete a rigorous independent peer review of operating and governance practices. Achieving and maintaining these high standards assures our funders, partners, staff, volunteers, and the community whom we serve, that the Aurora Cultural Centre is in good and trustworthy hands.

IMAGINE CANADA

Aurora Town Square: A Hybrid Governance Model

On June 16, 2020, Aurora Town Council strategically adopted a Not-for-Profit/ Municipal Hybrid Governance Model for Aurora Town Square, positioning the Aurora Cultural Centre as a vital resident tenant and partner. This pivotal decision forged an expanded, deeply collaborative relationship with the Town of Aurora, centered on defining mutual roles and responsibilities for the new venue. Together, we established a comprehensive operational framework governing programming, space utilization, and the specific services the Centre would provide to the Town, alongside the essential support required from the municipality to ensure our shared success.

The Aurora Cultural Centre's established expertise in performing and visual arts, arts education, and volunteer management became the programmatic foundation for our cultural offerings at Aurora Town Square. In addition to our core programs, the Centre assumed responsibility for providing professional front-of-house, audience services, and technical support for the state-of-the-art Davide De Simone Performing Arts Hall and Brevik Hall.

To maximize community impact and operational efficiency, programming was streamlined into a model where delivery is led by the partner best suited to the role. This collaborative synergy is maintained through ongoing dialogue aimed at continuously improving services, developing joint programming, enhancing patron communications, and strengthening the relationship between all partners.

How we lead and safeguard our vision, mission and core values

The Aurora Cultural Centre is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors that holds fiduciary responsibility, and sets strategy and policies. The Board recruits for diverse skills including finance, legal, education, arts, fundraising, marketing, and community leadership.

There are four standing committees that provide input, develop and implement initiatives that are in alignment with the established Board strategy.

Finance & Audit
Budgeting, reserves, investments, audit oversight, and risk.

Governance & Nominating
Board recruitment, policy, code of conduct, conflict-of-interest.

Development
Fundraising including sponsorships, donation activities, relationship building.

Outreach
Community and social engagement.

Organizational structure

We are staffed by a core team of full-time and part-time professionals, augmented by contract artists, educators and seasonal staff.

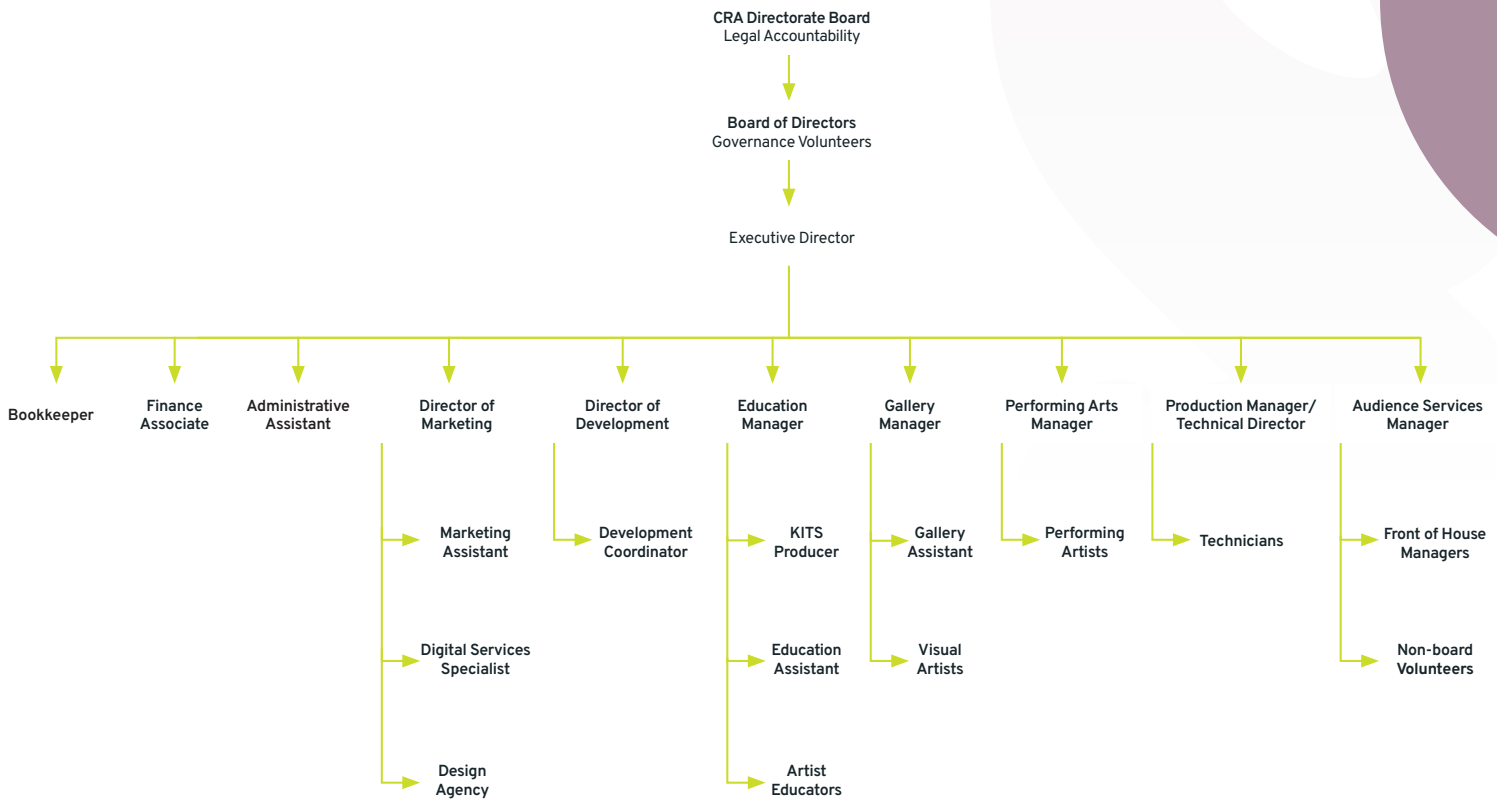
The Aurora Cultural Centre invests deeply in its people. We prioritize staff growth and professional development through ongoing learning, mentorship, and sector-informed training. Our team is encouraged to embrace flexibility and innovation, adapting to evolving community needs and emerging trends in arts management, education, and technology. By nurturing curiosity and keeping pace with

best practices that change and evolve, we ensure that our organization remains relevant, resilient, and responsive to both our local community and the broader cultural landscape.

This approach builds a workplace culture grounded in collaboration, inclusivity, and continuous improvement where staff feel empowered to contribute ideas, expand their expertise, and lead with purpose.

AURORA CULTURAL CENTRE HAS BEEN ACCREDITED BY IMAGINE CANADA FOR HIGH STANDARDS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE SINCE 2013. THE STANDARDS OF IMAGINE CANADA COVER BOARD GOVERNANCE, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY, FUND RAISING, HUMAN RESOURCES, AND VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT.

2026 Organizational Leadership Chart



Volunteers, at the heart of our organization

Aurora Cultural Centre's volunteer base is a powerhouse of dedicated, passionate people who share their time, energy and experience to deliver exceptionally high-quality experiences to everyone who participates in our programming, from audiences to artists.

Volunteers receive training in accessibility, visitor services, and safety, ensuring that every engagement reflects our commitment to inclusion and hospitality. Their contribution extends far beyond operational support reflecting community spirit in action and creating a welcoming environment where people feel connected and valued.

Senior volunteers bring a remarkable combination of skill, altruism, and lived experience that enriches our organization. Many have spent years in leadership, education, or service roles, and now choose to share their valuable time with us, teaching through example what exceptional customer service, patience, and empathy look like in action. Their calm presence during busy events, their kindness toward guests and staff, and their consistent professionalism set a tone of care and excellence that uplifts the entire organization.

Their lived experience is a vital resource as a bridge between generations that strengthens our culture of learning and respect. Senior volunteers share stories and insights that give depth and context to our community work, mentoring others with gentle guidance and practical wisdom. By modelling generosity, inclusivity, and lifelong engagement, they remind us that giving back is both a privilege and an art form. Their contributions strengthen our organizational capacity, ensuring that experience, empathy, and wisdom continue to shape a vibrant and sustainable cultural future for Aurora.

Youth engagement is a cornerstone of our volunteer culture. The Aurora Cultural Centre offers volunteer, co-op, and internship opportunities designed to build skills, confidence, and leadership among emerging generations. Participants gain hands-on experience in arts administration, event coordination, education, and community outreach, translating passion into professional growth.

These programs reflect our ongoing investment in people: nurturing curiosity, teamwork, and responsibility while opening doors to future careers in the arts and culture sector. Our youth bring fresh ideas, creativity, and digital fluency that help us stay current and connected. They infuse our social media and outreach efforts with content that resonates with younger audiences and ensures that the arts remain relevant and exciting for their peers.

They grow with us as we grow with them shaping the future of the Aurora Cultural Centre and contributing to the next generation of cultural leaders in our community.

RESEARCH AND IMPLICATIONS

A cornerstone for our organization is to understand the realities of what happens in our community, region, province, country and the world we all share. Sometimes we must respond to change, and at other times we can prepare for change. That is why we are committed to ongoing research and consideration of the events that shape our future.

We are impacted by many factors. Political. Economic. Social. Technology. Legal. Environmental. And of course, as a not-for-profit, we must also understand funding our organization in a way that will allow us to fulfill our vision and mission.

The PESTLE+F research reflect the conditions in which we operate. This research will be updated internally by the organization and considered each year to continually refine our five-year plan. This research, along with an internal SWOT analysis, is found in the appendices to this document.

ACC STRATEGIC GOALS AND STRATEGIES

With the contributions of our Board, Aurora Cultural Centre staff, and input from stakeholders, we have established strategic goals to direct our efforts for the 2026 to 2030 period.

How goals will be implemented

Aurora Cultural Centre staff will translate goals and prioritized strategies into initiatives that will be built into annual operating plans with timelines, budgets, success metrics, KPIs, and owners. Work will be phased to ensure teams are properly equipped and have the capacity to deliver quality outcomes.

Functional requirements such as planning tools, data practices, partnerships, and skills development give our initiatives a solid springboard, and instill confidence they will be managed effectively.

We will pilot, learn, and scale, retire or refine initiatives based on results. We will also monitor the evolving needs of the Aurora Cultural Centre and our community to ensure the work we focus on remains aligned with the intended outcomes.

GOAL 1

Establish the Aurora Cultural Centre as a recognized cultural leader and artistic hub

STRATEGIES

1. Use research, benchmarking, and professional development to learn from cultural leaders and artistic hubs around the world about how we build upon our Town of Aurora's economic and tourism strategies, to establish the Aurora Cultural Centre as a destination that must be experienced.
2. Enhance our mission to deliver accessible live performances, education programs, and gallery exhibits that build new and recurring audience participation.
3. Educate, inspire, and equip team members from the Aurora Cultural Centre, Aurora Town Square, the Town of Aurora, and other partners to passionately communicate the value and joy of our programming to the public.

GOAL 2

Strengthen community connection and audience development

STRATEGIES

1. Ongoing refinement of target personas to broaden outreach to visitor and tourism patrons and diverse demographics including, youth, seniors, newcomers, culturally specific groups, including developing our future audience through engagement with young people in high schools, universities and through their 30's.
2. Market through hyper-local community touchpoints, expand marketing that connects with demographic groups and cultures, and institutionalize feedback loops to ensure we remain connected and relevant throughout our community.
3. Leverage "Buy Local / Support Local" movement by establishing local partnerships with retailers, restaurants, and hotels to create unique and valued-added experiences that focus on visitor growth to the community and give residents more options to enjoy day, evening, and weekend art and entertainment at the Aurora Cultural Centre.

GOAL 3

Continue to build funding through grants, donor, and sponsor development

STRATEGIES

1. Develop and implement donor/sponsor/grant pipeline management system and approaches for targeting, tracking, measuring, forecasting, and achieving objectives.
2. Enhance donor and sponsor stewardship program, integrating communication channels, marketing strategies, and team member engagement to build, nurture, and retain relationships that support efforts to fund the Aurora Cultural Centre's mission.
3. Focus energy and resources on opportunities with highest potential yield to optimize the return on investment of our time, energy, resources, and investments to generate funding from all potential sources.

GOAL 4

Enhance marketing, branding, visibility, and connections with all target personas

STRATEGIES

1. Align messaging and objectives to target personas, giving all involved in our marketing and sales initiatives clarity about who we are talking with, what we need to share with them, and how to build strong, meaningful connections that lead to greater engagement.
2. Invest in digital marketing capacity and training including, SEO, paid campaigns, content creation, and performance analytics, leveraging AI tools for improved personalization, predictive analysis, and campaign fine tuning to fully optimize outcomes.
3. Implement a process to guide prioritization, development, execution, and measurement of all marketing activities to achieve objectives, while ensuring alignment with our brand and target audiences.

GOAL 5

Amplify Signature Programming to Broaden Reach and Recognition

STRATEGIES

1. Create processes, procedures, and implement tools that provide a deeper understanding of emerging trends, as well as our audiences' interests, enhancing our ability to evaluate and balance risk vs reward for bold programming.
2. Develop our mentorship and training programs for emerging artists to attract more applicants and broadening the scope of artistic expression we can support, advancing the Aurora Cultural Centre's cultural leadership and artistic hub positioning in the marketplace.
3. Support ongoing communication and collaboration between visual arts, performing arts and arts education to explore and experiment with programming synergies that attract new audiences and introduce existing audiences to new experiences.

GOAL 6

Strengthen internal capacity and governance

STRATEGIES

1. Refine and update Board, staff, and volunteer roles and job descriptions based on growing the Aurora Cultural Centre as a cultural leadership and artistic hub, explaining how individuals and departments support fundraising, sponsorship, and program development.
2. Embed technologies that improve internal communications, cross-departmental collaboration, and knowledge sharing.
3. Ensure responsible governance with ongoing KPI tracking, risk assessment, and scenario planning.

APPENDIX:
PESTL-F AND SWOT

AS OF AUGUST 2025

P POLITICAL

International Context

2025 is characterized by significant international tension, conflict, political and economic upheaval, and widespread uncertainty. The US administration's policies continue to impact Canada directly. Ongoing conflicts in Ukraine, Yemin, Gaza, and Sudan resonate deeply within Canada's multicultural society, creating an environment where uncertainty and fear prevail.

The Philanthropic Foundation of Canada's 2025 report highlights the profound impact on the sector:

As the US navigates the return of Donald Trump's presidency, the philanthropic landscape faces profound uncertainty and transformation... From economic disruptions, including tariffs on Canadian goods, to broader geopolitical shifts, the ripple effects of Trump 2.0 will be felt deeply. But beyond policy and politics, this moment is about humanity, about the real lives impacted by these changes and the moral responsibility to respond with generosity and solidarity.

The following research reflects information relevant to Aurora Cultural Centre, not-for-profit organizations, and arts and culture.

Federal Government

Current government as of 2025:

- Liberal Minority Government elected Spring 2025
- New cabinet sworn in May 13, 2025
- Parliament opened with Speech from the Throne delivered by King Charles III
- Federal budget delayed, to be presented in October 2025

Announced measures:

- Various tariff relief measures
- Temporary expansion of EI Work-Sharing program eligibility for organizations experiencing revenue reduction due to tariffs, including the nonprofit sector
- Imagine Canada has approached the Prime Minister to strengthen government-nonprofit sector relationship

Government platform commitments:

- $130 billion in new spending over 4 years
- Increased funding to CBC
- Enhanced support for Canadian artists and creators through agencies like Canada Council for the Arts, "recognizing the economic importance of Canada's creative industries and creators"
- Expansion of Student Work Placement Program, Youth Employment and Skills Strategy, Canada Summer Jobs, and Canadian Service Corps
- Commitment to work with nonprofit sector to improve federal funding effectiveness

ACC funding sources:

- Canadian Heritage
- Canada Council for the Arts
- Federal student work placement opportunities

Political risk:

- Given the narrow election results resulting in a minority government, significant government change is possible during the strategic plan period

Ontario Provincial Government

Current government as of 2025:

- Progressive Conservative Party, led by Premier Doug Ford
- In power since 2018
- Re-elected with majority government in 2024

Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming (MTCG):

- Provides funding through grants and investment agencies supporting the nonprofit sector, artists, arts organizations, and tourism industries

Ontario Arts Council (OAC):

- In 2024, they awarded…
  - 3,192 grants awarded totaling $53.3 million
  - 2,149 grants to individual artists
  - 1,043 grants to organizations ($42.6 million)

Ontario Trillium Foundation:

- From 2023 to 2024, $110 million distributed to community organizations
- Their focus remains on community-based projects, healthy and resilient communities
- They support new program initiatives, community youth programs, capital funding

Minister's statement (Stan Cho, 2024):
"Ontario's arts and culture sectors are vital pillars of our economy, contributing tens of billions of dollars to our GDP annually and supporting nearly 300,000 jobs. By investing in arts and culture, we are investing in both our economy and in the very fabric of our society."

Additional government announcements:

- MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy announced nearly $20 million investment in 350 festivals and events across Ontario
- Provincial support for Ontario Culture Days, in partnership with municipalities
- 2025 provincial budget (May 15):
- No new investments in the arts announced

Housing:

- Commitment to build 1.5 million homes by 2031
- Aurora must fast-track development to meet targets
- Expected impact on community growth and service demands

Population forecast:

- Continued growth to over 2 million people by 2051

Newcomer inclusion plan 2024 to 2028:

- Key objective is to promote welcoming and inclusive communities for newcomers

Experience York Region recognition:

- Aurora Cultural Centre ranked #1 of top 10 things to do in Aurora:
  - *For those who love culture, the Aurora Cultural Centre has much to see and do. This beautiful historic venue has a wealth of arts programming and classes, arts displays, special events and live performances related to arts, culture and heritage.*

Town of Aurora Municipal Government

Cultural Action Plan (2024 to 2028) - Goal #3:

- Review cultural services (heritage, music, art) to provide more cohesive and coordinated cultural services
- Expand opportunities and partnerships celebrating community culture
- Work with community partners to deliver community-building events celebrating diversity and multiculturalism

Economic development:

- Leverage Aurora's cultural resources to support business investment, accelerate downtown revitalization, and grow tourism
- Use Culture Days to increase awareness of local cultural groups and demonstrate their value
- Allocated up to $10,000 to support Culture Days

Aurora Town Square:

- Grand opening was September 20 through October 13, 2024
- Official ribbon-cutting took place September 21, 2024
- Mayor Tom Mrakas spoke about Aurora Town Square, that it "represents the culmination of our community's vision for a dynamic gathering place in the heart of downtown Aurora"

Aurora Cultural Centre and Town of Aurora agreements:

- Temporary Amending Agreement (TAA):
  - Defines ACC's role as resident tenant and cultural service provider at Aurora Town Square
- Provision of Cultural Services Agreement (PCSA):
  - In place for 13 years
  - Expires December 31, 2027
- Lease Agreement (LA):
  - In place for 13 years
  - Expires December 31, 2027
- Intention to renew PCSA and LA upon TAA conclusion and establishment of new long-term agreement with Town of Aurora

Bill 9 - Municipal Accountability Act (May 1, 2025):

- Creates standardized municipal code of conduct
- Mandates training for council members and certain boards
- Changes to integrity commissioner inquiry process
- Confers authority on municipal government to require and provide training
- Unlikely to have direct ACC impact but continue to monitor

Town funding:

- Town of Aurora is Aurora Cultural Centre's largest and most significant funder
- Two Town Councillors serve on Aurora Cultural Centre's Board of Directors

Community growth:

- Government housing focus driving significant community growth
- Increased service demands from new residents in Aurora and region

E ECONOMIC

National Perspective

Canada's Tourism Sector (2024):

- Tourism spending reached $116 billion, up 8% from 2023, 23% from 2019
- Domestic spending grew 35% since 2019, international spending grew 25%
- GDP growth was 1.5% in 2024, improved from near-stagnation in 2023
- Tourism sector growth rates significantly exceed non-tourism economy

International markets:

- North American and European markets recovering faster than Asian markets
- 2024 vs 2019 arrivals to Canada: US +2%, Mexico +2%, UK -9%, France -8%, Germany -18%, China -61%, Japan -31%, South Korea -28%

2025 economic forecasts:

- Expected GDP growth 1 to 2%, trending lower due to trade tensions
- Inflation projected to stabilize near 2%
- Higher interest rates and housing affordability constraining consumer spending
- US trade disputes creating uncertainty for business investment
- Unemployment potentially surpassing 7.5% before easing in Q4
- Wage growth falling in the 2% to 3% range, from 3.5% in March 2025
- Almost 1.5 million unemployed in Canada as of August 2025
- Ontario experienced worst employment declines with 26,000 jobs lost

Recessionary pressures:

- Conference Board of Canada forecasts 65% probability of recession in next 12 months
- TD Bank forecasts mild recession mid-2025, below-trend growth until 2027
- Wells Fargo predicts Canada entering technical recession in 2025
- Tariffs and trade war with US creating inflationary risk and sapping consumer confidence
- Slowing population growth impacting economic momentum

Tourism sector impacts:

- Cross-border spending imbalance with Canadians spending $27 billion in US vs $13 billion from Americans in Canada
- If US travel decreases, Canadian domestic tourism could backfill losses
- Data show Canadian travel to US declining more than US travel to Canada
- Declining Canadian dollar making Canada more attractive to international visitors
- Long-term forecast remains positive, with Oxford Economics projecting 16% to 31% spending growth by 2030

Ontario Perspective

Ontario Arts Council Impact Report 2025 and Ontario Trillium Foundation funding:

- Ontario Arts Council distributed $53.3 million across 3,192 grants in 2024
- OAC-funded operating organizations generated approximately $1.1 billion in GDP and created 16,164 jobs
- With tourism spending on arts and culture activities included, total contribution reached $2.7 billion to GDP and supported 28,600 jobs in 2022
- Arts and culture sector attracts domestic and international tourists who stay longer and account for 30% of tourist spending in the province

- Ontario's culture sector provided more jobs in 2022 than real estate, auto manufacturing, and forestry and mining industries combined
- Ontario Trillium Foundation distributed $110 million in 2023-2024

Regional impact (South-Central Ontario):

- Total culture sector jobs: 69,590
- Contributes 25% of Ontario's culture sector GDP
- In Aurora specifically, Arts & Culture sector generates 1,154 jobs

Central Counties Visitor Economy 2024:

- Total visitor spending: $3.5 billion in 2024 (7% increase over 2023)
- 47% higher than 2019, marking full recovery since pandemic and setting new record
- Even after adjusting for inflation, 24% real growth since 2019

Economic activity generated:

- $5.5 billion in total economic activity ($15 million daily business revenue)
- $2.6 billion in GDP contribution
- 28,400 jobs supported (2.5% of all Central Counties jobs)
- $1.5 billion in income (2.4% of all income in Central Counties)
- $130 million in municipal tax revenue ($190 tax offset per household)

Visitor spending by category (2024):

- Food and Beverage: $1.177 billion (33%)
- Transportation: $720 million (20%)
- Accommodation: $613 million (17%)
- Retail: $575 million (16%)
- Recreation and Entertainment: $430 million (12%)

Market composition:

- Ontario visitors: 60% of total spending ($2.12 billion)
- Toronto alone: $1.306 billion (37% of all spending)
- Rest of Ontario: $815 million
- Overseas markets: 14% ($471 million)
- US visitors: 13% ($466 million)
- Inter-provincial: 13% ($460 million)

Growth trends and seasonal patterns:

- International markets driving growth with US spending up 26%, overseas up 21% in 2024
- Domestic markets relatively flat with Ontario up 2%, inter-provincial down 1%
- Central Counties outpacing provincial growth by 47% since 2019 vs Ontario's 31%
- Gained market share within Ontario is now 9.2% of provincial tourism spending
- Peak spending is August ($403 million)
- Lowest spending is January ($202 million)
- Strong correlation between visitor spending and accommodation revenue

Community Perspective

Aurora and York Region:

- Aurora maintains standing as one of Canada's most affluent communities
- Significant population growth forecast with York Region expected to exceed 2 million by 2051
- Housing development pressure means 1.5 million homes needed by 2031
- Aurora fast-tracking development to meet targets
- Growing diversity creating new economic opportunities through entrepreneurship and innovation

S SOCIAL

Ontario Arts Council - ARTS Across Ontario Impact Report 2025:

- Beyond economics, participation in arts and culture activities enhances quality of life, fosters inclusion, and strengthens communities
- Arts build community through volunteer opportunities
- Volunteering enhances job skills, communication skills, and knowledge while reducing social isolation

Aurora demographics (2021 Census)

- Population Growth:
  - Population increased 11.9% from 2016 to 2021, reaching 63,455
  - Immigrants accounted for 84% of population increase
  - Population projected to reach 85,800 over next 30 years
  - Aurora's arts and culture sector employs approximately 1,200 people and contributes $128 million to local GDP
- Cultural and Linguistic Diversity:
  - 37% of population are immigrants
  - Among those born outside Canada:
    - 41% born in Europe
    - 32% born in East Asia
    - 20% born in Middle East and West Central Asia
  - Primary non-English languages spoken at home are Mandarin, Cantonese, and Persian, in that order
  - Close to 450 people identified as Indigenous
- Age Demographics:
  - Seniors (65+) represent approximately 10,000 people, 15.4% of population
  - Preschool-aged children declined by 9%
  - Aging population with significant senior cohort
- Socioeconomic Profile:
  - Average household income was $161,800, which is higher than national average
  - Aurora ranks among wealthiest towns in Canada
  - Approximately 65% of population hold post-secondary degrees or diplomas
  - Highly educated, affluent community

CanadaHelps 2025 Giving Report:

- Donors 65+ account for 35% of all donors and 50% of all donated dollars
- Wealthy families contribute 29% of overall donation dollars
- Wealthy families spread giving across causes but disproportionately donate to health, education, followed by arts and culture
- Senior demographic represents critical donor base

Hate crime, antisemitism and islamophobia:

- Police-reported hate crime in Canada jumped sharply in 2023 with 4,777 incidents, up 32% YoY
- Largest drivers were religion motivated crimes (+67%), notably anti-Jewish (900 incidents, +71%) and anti-Muslim (211 incidents, +94%), and crimes targeting sexual orientation (+69%)

- Ontario recorded 15.6 incidents per 100,000 in 2023, among the highest provincial rates
- Latest national release shows slight rise in 2024 (+1%) to 4,882 incidents, following large 2023 increase
- York Regional Police recorded 456 total hate occurrences in 2024 (-19% YoY), religion accounting for 39% with 76 anti-Jewish (-8% YoY) and 26 anti-Muslim (+8% YoY) incidents, while race/ethnicity accounted for 54% (notably Black and Arab/West Asian)
- Toronto reported 443 hate motivated occurrences in 2024 (+19% YoY), with anti-Jewish incidents 40% of all cases (177), anti-2SLGBTQI+ (79), anti-Black (76) and anti-Muslim (28)

T TECHNOLOGY

Audience segmentation:

- Digital divide exists across age, education, and other demographics
- Younger audiences showing growing adoption of virtual/AI-enhanced experiences
- Segment of market "absolutely against AI/virtual experiences", wanting in-person only
- Technology tools enabling arts access for those who couldn't otherwise participate
- Long-term adoption patterns unclear

AI potential:

- Will become industry standard for operational efficiency, reporting, analysis, and trend prediction
- Nonprofit fundraising expected to use AI for contact and donation record management
- Can enhance learning and audience experiences
- Fundamental questions about AI's relationship to art creation
- Rapid evolution outpacing arts industry adaptation
- Legal and intellectual property issues
- Ethical considerations around AI-generated art

ACC experience:

- Intersection of digital technology, dance, sound, and visual arts
- Bridging disparate cultural communities
- Successful technology-art integration model

L LEGAL

Governance framework:

- ACC operates under nonprofit corporate structure subject to federal and provincial regulations
- Three major agreements with Town of Aurora govern operations:
  - Temporary Amending Agreement (TAA) - expires December 31, 2025
  - Provision of Cultural Services Agreement (PCSA) - expires December 31, 2027
  - Lease Agreement (LA) - expires December 31, 2027
- Two Town Councillors serve on Aurora Cultural Centre Board of Directors appointed by Mayor for one-year terms

Bill 9 - Municipal Accountability Act (May 1, 2025):

- Creates standardized municipal code of conduct
- Mandates training for council members and certain boards
- Changes to integrity commissioner inquiry process
- Confers authority on municipal government to require and provide training
- Unlikely to have direct Aurora Cultural Centre impact but establishes precedent for increased accountability

Not-for-profit regulations:

- CRA charitable registration requirements and ongoing compliance
- T3010 annual reporting obligations
- Donation receipting requirements
- Gift acceptance policies
- Anti-money laundering considerations

E ENVIRONMENTAL

Municipal environmental:

- ACC operates under nonprofit corporate structure subject to federal and provincial regulations
- Three major agreements with Town of Aurora govern operations:
  - Temporary Amending Agreement (TAA) ongoing until new agreement in place
  - Provision of Cultural Services Agreement (PCSA) - expires December 31, 2027
  - Lease Agreement (LA) - expires December 31, 2027
- Town dedicated to environmental protection and sustainability
- All Town facilities built to LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standard
- Aurora Town Square developed consistent with environmental commitments
- Corporate energy plan and commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Joined ClimateWise Building Challenge to take action on climate change
- Participating in "friendly competition" among York Region municipalities and local businesses
- Two Town Councillors serve as ex-officio members of the Board of Directors
- *"Aurora is an environmentally savvy town that is dedicated to the management and protection of our local environment. The Town of Aurora takes pride in its environmental stewardship actions and is continually working towards greater sustainability."*
- Aurora Cultural Centre values align with Town of Aurora's environmental commitments
- Potential partnerships with Environmental Defense for art in natural settings

Concerns:

- Aurora Town Square water supply through its artesian well potentially vulnerable to climate change impacts
- Climate refugees from uninhabitable regions may add to Aurora/York Region population
- Physical infrastructure resilience and access implications

F FUNDING

National perspective:

- Percentage of tax filers making charitable donations declined to historic low of 16.8% in 2023
- Overall charitable giving declining for 11th consecutive year
- Inflation-adjusted donations in 2023 were 7% higher than 2022, but 2.5% lower than 2021
- Donor participation rate erosion even as total dollars fluctuate

Conference Board of Canada - Nonprofit Industry Outlook (July 23, 2025):

- Despite economic uncertainties, charitable giving historically remains resilient during downturns
- Giving does not always decline during recessions
- Foundation giving has historically increased during recessions
- Charitable contributions increase significantly during economic growth and decrease less significantly during recessions
- Nonprofits should persist in bold fundraising initiatives, sustain donor relationships, diversify revenue streams

Local giving shift:

- CanadaHelps 2025 Giving Report identifies strong connection between social connection and generosity
- Donors increasingly directing support to causes and organizations rooted in their own communities
- Major opportunity for local nonprofits

Demographics and wealth:

- New wealth and wealth transfer during COVID created opportunities
- Young adults represent untapped donor market requiring education on giving benefits
- Legacy and planned giving opportunities such as insurance policies benefiting donors
- Corporate fundraising potential in Aurora and Greater York Region

Recent ACC funding performance and trends:

- Grant funding declined since 2023
- Program revenue increasing since 2023
- Development team established in 2023 bringing professional expertise, strategy, and focus to fundraising

SWOT Analysis

The Aurora Cultural Centre, like any well-run organization, must take a critical and honest look at what makes us who we are, and how we do things.

The SWOT analysis gives us better clarity into our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and strengths. Like the research we undertake, this is an evolving set of insights that we use to guide our efforts, prioritize our initiatives and continually evaluate our performance.

Strengths

Programming and artistic excellence

- High-quality performing arts, visual arts, and educational programming with growing recognition of excellence
- Reputation for attracting artists with significant professional pedigree
- Investment in local and emerging artists building loyalty and return engagement
- Gallery exhibition demonstrates successful technology-art integration
- Increased attention to diversity with more inclusive programming for diverse cultural groups
- Strong I.D.E.A. (Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility) framework in programming and recruitment

Brand and market position

- Trusted brand known as community-centric and grassroots
- Reputation for "hyper-local entertainment" with large York Region target audience
- #1 ranking on Experience York Region's top things to do in Aurora
- Level of professionalism creates repeat patronage and growth
- Contributes to Aurora's 1,154 arts & culture jobs and $128M local GDP

Infrastructure and partnerships

- State-of-the-art Aurora Town Square facility (LEED-certified)
- Co-location of all programs creating synergies between disciplines
- Strong relationship and effective working agreements with Town of Aurora
- Expanded relationships with local institutions and community groups
- Partnership with Imagine Canada offering credibility and accountability

Governance and human resources

- Skilled and active Board of Directors
- Highly skilled, talented, and committed staff
- Professional Development team hired 2023 bringing fundraising expertise
- Strong volunteer program and recruitment
- Access to growing group of skilled, dedicated community volunteers

Financial and operational

- Program revenue increasing since 2023
- Diversified funding model in development
- Strong relationship with largest funder (Town of Aurora)

Weaknesses

Organizational capacity and systems

- Staffing requirements assessment in growing community requires regular review and monitoring
- Staff capacity challenged by increased artist interest and audience growth
- Insufficient technology implementation for organizational efficiency
- Lack of integrated CRM, ticketing, and financial systems
- Feedback/complaint management challenging within current staff capacity
- Not fully equipped with skill sets and resources to fulfill vision, mission, and core values
- Unclear environmental policy or sustainability measurement

Data and intelligence

- Limited tools for metrics through survey and sales data on attendees
- Lack of demographic mapping and audience segmentation strategy

- Cultural programming underperforming due to insufficient actionable insights
- PESTLE+F and SWOT not dynamic/ living documents updated regularly
- Limited capacity for KPI capture, trending, and analysis over time

Market reach and engagement

- Difficulty engaging broader demographic through program offerings and digital presence
- Small network of patrons, online presence, and donor base limits prospects
- Shrinking donor participation rate (16.8% of Canadians donate)
- Limited media coverage and local promotional outlets
- Insufficient marketing budget requiring creative approaches
- Digital divide considerations not fully addressed across age and demographic groups

Financial Sustainability

- Grant funding declined since 2023
- Difficulty building sustainable funding model based on variety of sources
- Donor base concentrated in older demographic and seniors; young adults underrepresented
- Challenge diversifying revenue streams to mitigate economic challenges
- High dependence on Town of Aurora funding creating concentration risk

Strategic planning and competitive intelligence

- Lack of in-depth competitive landscape analysis and competitor differentiation assessment
- Insufficient identification of programming, marketing, and fundraising gaps
- No clear organizational position on AI use in operations vs. artistic production
- Limited scenario planning for economic recession or agreement non-renewal

Infrastructure and Operations

- High security costs for bigger-name artists
- Privacy and cybersecurity compliance requires detailed review

Opportunities

Strategic positioning and market leadership

- Leverage #1 regional ranking and strong Town relationship during agreement renewals (PCSA/LA expire Dec 2027)
- Increase visibility and brand awareness distinguishing ACC from regional competitors
- Position as economic development asset (tourism, downtown revitalization, job creation)
- Sector leadership demonstrating municipal-nonprofit partnership best practices
- Thought leadership on climate-arts and technology-arts intersection

Facility and programming

- Maximize Aurora Town Square facility potential through partnership with Town
- Develop programming activating Square creating visible community value
- Continue previous models of technology-integrated, culturally bridging programming
- Explore innovative artistic genres meeting changing community needs
- Leverage co-location for cross-programming and cross-promotion synergies
- Climate-focused programming and Indigenous environmental partnerships

Community engagement

- Address 84% of population growth from immigrants through culturally responsive programming
- Serve growing senior population (15.4%) with age-appropriate programming and legacy giving cultivation
- Multilingual access (Mandarin, Cantonese, Persian) for linguistic diversity
- Indigenous partnership for reconciliation and land-based art
- Messaging and financial accessibility strategy countering "affluent only" perception

Tourism and economic development

- Capture share of $3.5 billion Central Counties visitor economy (7% growth 2024)
- Target high-spending international markets (US $466M, China $138M)
- Attract Toronto day-trippers ($1.3 billion market)
- Tourism partnerships leveraging ACC's visitor appeal
- Programming timed to peak tourism months (May-October)
- Cultural tourism packages with accommodation providers

Fundraising

- COVID wealth transfer created new donor prospects
- Foundation giving historically increases during recessions
- Local giving trend of donors prioritizing community causes (CanadaHelps 2025)
- Legacy and planned giving with financial institution partnerships
- Young adult donor cultivation through education and partnerships
- Corporate fundraising throughout Aurora and Greater York Region business community
- Environmental grant pursuit as climate-arts intersection grows
- Federal platform promises of $130B including arts, student employment programs

Technology and innovation

- AI for administrative efficiency (fundraising, donor management, reporting)
- Hybrid programming (in-person, virtual, on-demand) expanding access
- Data-driven decision-making through integrated systems and analytics
- Digital content monetization and virtual revenue streams
- Technology enabling accessibility for people with disabilities or mobility limitations

Environmental leadership

- Align with Town's environmental commitments and LEED facility standards
- Green operations and carbon measurement demonstrating stewardship
- Arts-based environmental education and climate dialogue experiences

Partnerships and collaboration

- York Region Newcomer Inclusion Plan alignment and partnerships
- Town Cultural Action Plan alignment (coordination, diversity, partnerships)
- Regional cultural organization collaboration and sector capacity building
- Cross-promote with other Aurora Town Square events
- Environmental Defense partnerships for art in natural settings
- Settlement agency partnerships reaching newcomer populations

Local artist and community investment

- Investing in local artists elevates Aurora and brings national attention
- Support 1,200 local arts sector workers
- Volunteer opportunities reducing social isolation and building skills (per OAC research)

Threats

Economic

- 65% probability of recession in next 12 months (Conference Board)
- Unemployment potentially surpassing 7.5%, wage growth falling to 2-3%
- US tariffs and trade tensions creating economic uncertainty
- Charitable giving declining 11th consecutive year; only 16.8% of Canadians donating
- Inflation and economic downturn reducing government funding, corporate and patron donations
- Sponsors may reduce long-term commitments
- Consumer confidence deteriorating; discretionary spending under pressure
- Audience hesitancy due to economic stress

Competitive landscape

- Competition from arts and entertainment organizations for funding, space, audience
- Central Counties tourism market share competition
- Grant competition intensifying across nonprofit sector
- Audience fatigue with many events/activities
- People preferring home-based entertainment (post-pandemic behaviour)

Demographic and social

- Shifting local and regional demographic/cultural trends requiring responsive programming
- Potential flashpoint geopolitical issues impacting visual arts and performing arts programming
- Rapid population growth (11.9% increase 2016-2021) creating integration challenges
- Declining preschool population (-9%) requiring programming adjustment
- Risk of fragmentation without intentional community-building
- Digital divide across age and education creating technology adoption challenges

Environmental

- Climate change affecting venue operations, access, and participation
- Extreme weather events reducing attendance and earned revenue

Governance and regulatory

- PCSA and LA expire December 31, 2027 (medium-term pressure)
- Bill 9 precedent potentially increasing accountability/reporting requirements
- Risk of unfavorable agreement renewal terms during economic uncertainty

Technology

- AI and technology changing faster than arts industry can adapt
- Generational divide as some wanting in-person experiences, others expecting virtual/AI-enhanced
- Cybersecurity vulnerabilities as organization digitizes
- Intellectual property uncertainty around AI-generated art

Operational Capacity

- Staff capacity insufficient for growing demand and complexity
- Technology infrastructure not supporting data-driven decision-making
- Insufficient development capacity relative to fundraising need