



TOWN OF AURORA

Sport Tourism Strategy 2022-2026



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Introduction to Sport Tourism

As the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry, sport tourism can provide endless opportunities for Aurora to be a destination people want to visit. Sport tourism can have a positive impact on community partnership, support businesses, attract future visitors and celebrate health and well-being.

Sport Tourism provides an opportunity for local athletes to compete in their hometown, celebrate and highlight the achievements of local athletes who are role models for future athletes.

The Sport Tourism Strategy has been developed to provide an intentional and collaborative approach to making Aurora a destination for new and repeat sport participants and their families.

Although sporting events have been hosted in Aurora for many years, no formal approach has been taken to understand the impact of those events and how the community can enhance the experience of those that visit.

The Aurora sport community is strong and the local sport organizations have been leaders in providing positive sport experiences for participants from across the Province and beyond. The Sport Tourism Strategy will provide local sport organizations with additional support to focus on the visitor experience off the field of play.

Why Sport Tourism in Aurora:

Strategically evaluating current events and identifying new events will contribute to achieving outcomes in the *three bottom line* impact areas of sport tourism. The use of the *three bottom line* impact areas will assist in evaluating the success of events and future direction of sport tourism. New events that achieve a greater number of impacts will be considered for hosting with a minimum of two impacts required to host. The *three bottom line* impact areas include: Economic Outcomes, Social/Cultural Outcomes and Sustainability Outcomes.

Economic Outcomes

- Supporting long economic growth

Bottom Line	Impact Area	Impacts
Economic Outcomes	Event Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 – 12 events hosted by local sport organizations annually (further detail in What Comes Next) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Home grown ○ Bid to host • Up to a maximum of two additional events every five years to be led by the Town in collaboration with community partnerships

Bottom Line	Impact Area	Impacts
Economic Outcomes	Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of hotels stays by 100 nights annually • Additional bookings during shoulder season based on hotel availability including weekdays and spring / summer • Increase in local spending when sports teams are hosted in Aurora (restaurants, retail, gas, convenience, other services) • Ability to report on economic impact of known events that are hosted in Aurora, especially those that require hotel stays
Economic Outcomes	Brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive Sport Tourism Communication Plan will be developed and include branding
Economic Outcomes	Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase new volunteer engagement by 5% every two years • Opportunity to support high school community hours and providing youth with valuable volunteer experiences

Social / Cultural Outcomes

- Supporting equity, diversity, and good quality / healthy lives

Bottom Line	Impact Area	Impacts
Social Cultural Outcomes	Community Pride	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host events across all levels of sport to demonstrate the value and commitment to participating and growing through sport • Initiatives to allow younger athletes and community members to meet their role models and leaders of tomorrow • Stories about local athletes through local media to build a connection with the community
Social Cultural Outcomes	Cultural Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport events that deliver and achieve the following <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Try-it events to engage new participants ○ Opportunities to incorporate arts and culture into events such as entertainment, opening acts, art pieces • New events that are not currently offered in the community that would be of interest to the diverse Aurora community
Social Cultural Outcomes	Local Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a Transfer of Knowledge program to increase knowledge and support across multiple sports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Engage 1 – 2 new community members to event organization committees annually to enhance knowledge depth of volunteer base

Sustainability Outcomes

- Interacting in a responsible way with natural resources for future generations

Bottom Line	Impact Area	Impacts
Sustainability Outcomes	Venues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events that can be hosted within current venues • Diverse facility uses; rotation around various facilities (not all in the same facility) • Consideration for impact on user groups and community
Sustainability Outcomes	Legacy	Provide opportunity to create legacy initiatives that will provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New equipment and programs to reach more members of the community • Invest in hosting future events • Provide training and education for the community that will provide a safe space for all to participate in sport
Sustainability Outcomes	Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change impacts will be reviewed, and adjustments identified to reduce impact on a project-by-project basis • Actively promote electronic vehicle charging stations located at Town facilities.

What is Already Happening?

There are several local sport organizations that host events in Aurora on an annual basis. These events are a valuable part of our community and driving sport tourism. Local sport organizations commit several hours to make the competition experience for the participants a memorable one. The following lists several events already taking place under the leadership of local sport organizations.

- Annual Father's Day Baseball Tournament (June)
- Annual International Silver Stick Hockey Tournament (February)
- Annual League 1 / Reserve League for Soccer (April – November)
- Annual Provincial House League Hockey Tournament (March)
- Annual Provincial Rep Hockey Tournament (December)
- Annual Ontario Cup for Soccer (August)
- LPGA CP Women's Open (August 2019)
- Provincial Softball Qualifier Tournaments (July 2022)

Moving Forward from Here:

The implementation of this strategy will be successful through the following key steps:

- Develop a Sport Experience Package in partnership with the Aurora Chamber of Commerce on the Explore Aurora platform. This resource will direct visitors to places to eat, experiences to enjoy with family and teammates, sites they don't want to miss and much more.
- Communications Strategy that will increase awareness among the public and businesses about events taking place in the community, celebration of local athletes competing and highlighting successful events that have a positive impact on the community.
- Coordinated effort with Neighbourhood Network to promote and recruit volunteers to support the execution of sporting events in the community.
- Supporting current events hosted by the local sport organizations through tools and resources outlined in the Sport Tourism Strategy.
- Coordination among local sport organizations looking to bring more annual events into the community taking into consideration the impact on user groups and community members as well as cross over among other sports.
- Actively seeking opportunities to bring new events into the community with the current assets available and that contribute to achieving identified economic, cultural and sustainability outcomes.
- Investing and/or leveraging in opportunities to evaluate the impact of events in the community through economic assessment tools.

Recommendations for What Comes Next:

Execution of this recommended strategy will be done in a collaborative manner with multiple community partnerships but may be dependent on additional human and financial resources. Aurora has an opportunity to elevate sport tourism in the community, provide visitors with an experience to remember and profile many sectors in the community through sporting events.

- Seek the additional human and financial resources required to execute the strategy
- Develop the Sport Visitor Experience Package through the Explore Aurora platform including:
 - Outreach to local restaurants owners to support large group bookings, discounted meals, and pre-set menus
 - Develop list of events taking place annually throughout Aurora
 - Engage with businesses that can provide experiences for teams and families, where interested at discounted rates and accommodating larger groups
 - Identify list of attractions (parks, trails, Town Square, skate parks) to encourage visitors to experience
- Create a volunteer recruitment campaign in partnership with Neighbourhood Network to engage community members as sport volunteers for sport tourism events

- Meet with Local Sport Organizations to develop a coordinated and collaborative effort on events they are hosting in the community
 - Provide information to their participants through Sport Visitor Experience Package
 - Incorporate opportunities for community members to try sport during the events, building awareness and engaging more people in sport and physical activity
 - Coordinate efforts to welcome participants through signage and electronic boards, stories sharing through social media and the local newspapers
- Attend Sport Tourism Canada annual congress to meet with rights holders and attend educational workshops to attract more sporting events into the community
- Meet with arts and cultural groups to identify opportunities to collaborate on providing experiences for visitors to the community
- In collaboration with sport organizations, community partners and neighbouring municipalities new event hosting opportunities. This would include a two-prong approach:
 - Home grown events – which are new events created and delivered by the local community. Example would include a house league or rep sport tournament.
 - Bid to host events – which are owned by a rights holder that seeks communities to host the event. Example would include a provincial championship which is the responsibility of a Provincial Sport Organization. Bidding to host an event requires human resource time to write the bid, identify community partners, allocate funds if a fee is associated with the bid, and coordinate a site visit if required.
- Identify one multi-sport event to bid on over the next five years and partner with neighbouring municipalities to coordinate the potential opportunity
- Identify events that align with the shoulder season and low bookings at local hotels and the opportunity to bring them into the community.

Marketing and Communications:

- Create a webpage on the Town of Aurora website to communicate information about the sport tourism strategy, promote upcoming events, provide one location for visitors and local sport organizations to obtain the information they need
- Build community awareness of sport tourism events through social media campaigns, news releases and information to local businesses that can be impacted by the influx of visitors. Utilize the Explore Aurora and Aurora Chamber of Commerce partnership to reach local businesses.
- Celebrate local athletes and good news stories of participants for the community to connect with and learn more about sport
- Highlight stories of positive environmental, cultural, and economic impacts of the sporting events to our community

What Aurora Has to Offer:

Aurora has much to offer new and returning visitors to the community. Located in the heart of York Region, Aurora can provide a unique opportunity for visitors near and far.

- Small town charm
- Ease of moving around the community with all amenities in proximity
- Dedicated sport community ready to welcome visitors and provide a first-class experience
- Local sport organizations with a strong volunteer base to deliver quality sport experiences for participants
- Enthusiastic and welcoming business community
- Multiple unique events throughout the year to enhance the visitor experience package
- A strong combination of nature, art and culture that can be incorporated into sporting events in the future
- The addition of Aurora Town Square will provide a gathering space for activities off the field of play
- Proximity to two major highways for each of access in and out of the community
- Addition of two new hotels now open and a proposed 3rd hotel on the way

Conclusion:

Aurora is ready to support the local sport organizations to the extent possible with current human and financial resources. Several sport organizations are already hosting events on a regular basis and there is an opportunity to enhance the visitor experience while identifying new opportunities to bring other events into the community. Aurora is a warm and welcoming community that can provide the optimal experience for any visitor.