

Aurora receives Platinum Youth Friendly Community designation

**By
Brock Weir**

Aurora is often billed as a place to live, work and play and once again, the municipality can live up to this tall order this time being named a Platinum Youth Friendly Community by PlayWorks.

PlayWorks is an umbrella group of organizations that focus on youth programming and bringing back the power of play to youth in Ontario.

According to the Town, the Youth Friendly Community Recognition Program recognizes communities across Ontario that meet the changing needs of adolescent youth.

As a growing community, it is critical that we provide our children and teens with the space and freedom to play and learn in a supportive environment, said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement. Our staff work closely with young people in Aurora to develop programs that evolve as they evolve and grow. I am incredibly proud we have been recognized as a Platinum Youth Friendly Community.

Aurora has been vying for the title of Youth Friendly Community for several seasons.

Last spring, the Town held two information sessions for community groups and organizations to show how they could become involved with the Town's Youth Friendly Communities recognition program.

The Town received silver designation in 2016, based on programs for youth, but they had their eyes on a bigger prize, one which would not only showcase the work that is done for youth within Aurora, but allow the Town to see how they measure up against other municipalities.

To achieve platinum status, communities must recognize that adolescent youth have different needs for play than children or adults do, and intentionally develop, fund and sustain programs and services to meet youth needs. The criteria to achieve a platinum designation stems from connecting and empowering youth to express themselves and have a continuous voice in the community.

We are always looking at opportunities to engage young people in healthy activities that will give them the tools and support to make positive lifestyle choices, said Robin McDougall, Aurora's

Director of Community Services, in a statement. ?This recognition is reflective of our ongoing commitment to the youth of Aurora.?