

Open Streets inviting people, not cars into Aurora neighbourhoods

By Jake Courtepatte

Mark June 4 on the calendar as a day to put away the car keys.

Aurora residents and visitors are invited to come out and enjoy the inaugural Open Streets Aurora, a partnership between the Town, Activate Aurora, the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, York North Basketball and Music Aurora to bring foot and bicycle traffic to Aurora's cultural district.

Closed to vehicular traffic from 1 to 5p.m., the area east of Yonge Street and South of Wellington Street will play host to dozens of fun and interesting activities.

"We are thrilled to host the first ever Open Streets Aurora in the historical cultural precinct area," said Ron Weese, chair of Activate Aurora. "All residents can engage and improve their health while walking or wheeling along some of our most culturally significant streets."

Held in conjunction with the Aurora Chamber Street Festival which annually closes Yonge Street in Aurora, Weese said both events should "complement each other" and will allow residents and visitors to "enjoy the town outdoors without traffic."

Javed Khan, the chair of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, said the annual Street Festival attracts over 33,000 visitors per year, a number he believes can be boosted by the addition of Open Streets.

"The potential that Open Streets brings to the day is monumental," he said.

The route will include Mosley Street from Yonge Street to Wells Street, Wells Street from Metcalfe Street to Mosley Street, and Victoria Street between Mosley Street and Church Street, in addition to Town Park.

Six activity hubs will line the route, including the introduction of Court 33, a three-on-three basketball tournament and skills demonstration held at the corner of Victoria and Mosley.

Run by the YNBA, teams can be registered at www.court33.ca, with a cost of just \$30 per team. Six courts will run with non-stop action, while members of the Laurentian University women's basketball team will provide free training sessions and lessons.

All skill levels in three divisions, youth, adult, and special needs, are encouraged to participate.

Other hubs will include "Porch Fest" by Music Aurora to entertain passersby with music, A street art activity centre, a KidZone featuring the York Regional Police obstacle course, a Healthy Kids Community Challenge, and a pop-up centre with rotating activities like Zumba and pickleball.

Aurora mayor Geoff Dawe said the initiative is a huge step forward in the ultimate goal of making Aurora "Canada's healthiest community."

"It's a great opportunity to get people out, get them interested, and get active."