

Aurora is best place to live in York Region: ranking



By Brock Weir

Aurora is the best place to live in York Region, and among the best in Canada, so says MoneySense Magazine in their annual ranking of Canadian communities.

The magazine ranked Aurora as 24th best place to live in Canada in their Top 25 ranking, one place higher than North Vancouver, British Columbia, offering the "best overall quality of life in Canada."

"This little town outside of Toronto is growing quickly," said the magazine in its findings. "Average incomes here are sixth-highest in the country, coming in at more than \$133,400. They'll need the money too. Average house prices here top \$560,300."

Aurora was the only York Region municipality to make the Top 25. Topping the list overall was St. Albert, Alberta, a suburb of Edmonton. MoneySense singled out the community for its low unemployment rate of approximately 4 per cent, falling crime rates and high incomes.

While large cities like Calgary still made the grade, the majority of communities in the Top 25 were medium cities of 100,000 to 400,000 people like Burlington, Ontario and smaller communities like Aurora.

Following the announcement of the survey on Wednesday, Mayor Geoffrey Dawe welcomed the news and said it pointed to a "thriving community" with a bright future.

He also said there are opportunities to be taken away from the results.

"I think this is great for a town of some 60,000-odd people," he said. "We have lots of green space with access to Canada's largest city and all the amenities it provides while still having a small-town feel. I think it is the combination of all of that together. We have great facilities, we have great resources in Town, including our outdoors. There are a lot of things to do, and it is a great place to raise a family."

In their ranking, MoneySense used a picture of the Aurora Cultural Centre as something emblematic of the community, and this is a facility Mayor Dawe says is a huge draw. Amenities like the Cultural Centre and the Aurora Public Library next door, he says, attract a lot of people, as do great restaurants.

"There are fewer reasons people need to leave Town for entertainment," he said. "I think we have to use this as a stepping stone. We haven't had a problem selling houses. Brookfield opened a couple of weeks ago and they had 650 people register for 50 lots. So, while I don't think selling houses is a problem, I think we can use this as part of our marketing strategy for businesses.

?Why would you want to locate here? Because it is a great place for people to live. People want to live here and I am sure people would much rather live closer to where they work.?

Judy Marshall, CEO of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, says she also sees the MoneySense ranking as an opportunity for the business community. Access to public transportation, Aurora's central location within the Region, and access to almost anywhere in Ontario is a hallmark of the town, she says.

?It is also the community itself and how the community seems to work together to make business better, make social interaction better and very positive. People do look at stats, and they do look at how your town is reviewed when they want to move a business here, or be a resident here, and they will see all the positives.?

When asked whether the ranking indicates anything that should be prioritized or bolstered from the Town Hall perspective, Mayor Dawe added the message is to ?keep on doing what we're doing.?

?We need to focus on providing the amenities that people have come to expect, and doing that in a cost-effective manner is obviously always the challenging part,? he says, noting Aurora just barely cracked the top 50 the last time around. ?I think there is a better sense of calm about the Town. There is a better sense of working towards a sustainable future. We're building our piggybank up. We're moving in the right direction to provide not only for now, but in the future, and we're working ahead.?