

Holiday magic at Town Park as Aurora hosts Christmas Market

No matter how you look at it, Christmas 2020 is not going to be one you will soon forget.

But, as the holidays get ever-closer, Aurora is looking to sprinkle a little extra magic with the annual Aurora's Christmas Market ? re-imagined to reflect our new reality.

This year's free Christmas Market, which will be held at Town Park for the first time, will be spread over six nights, featuring dozens of vendors, artisans and activities both in-person and virtually.

Festive vendors, artisans and chefs from across York Region will showcase holiday décor, toys, jewellery and clothes, art, baked goods and more during this physically-distant experience, open to no more than 25 Market-goers in any one time slot between 5 ? 9.30 p.m.

?The planning for the Market has taken on many different layouts, as well as locations,? says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. ?Due to the ongoing changes within our circumstances, which are beyond our control, the Market has been scaled down from what the original version was. The objective of the Market, for those who are able to register and attend, is to be able to provide an experience that enables people to get lost in the magic of the environment and just take 45 minutes to forget what we're dealing with on the bigger picture and to actually feel the spirit of the season.?

Imparting that spirit of the season will be a number of holiday-themed huts which will house each vendor, with thousands of Christmas lights strung from hut to hut across the pathway bisecting Town Park, which will make for an impressive sight.

Organizers are aiming to have 40 different in-person vendors throughout the course of the multi-evening Market, with new vendors each Market day. In addition to the complement of in-person vendors, a total of 70 vendors will also be participating in the virtual market, which will be organized by product and service. Each in-person market will offer 12 or 13 vendors at a time, but all 70 vendors will be online for a full seven days.

?I have to say our online components are pretty cool,? says Ms. Ware. ?One of the event plans was to house the activities in the park. Those activities we have put online and the park activities are going to be showcasing the vendors that we have, which I have got to say are such high quality this year. Some of our virtual programming, we have Mrs. Claus doing some baking demos so kids can learn how to make Santa's favourite cookies. We actually have a D-I-Y festive gnome that you can make for your own front porch. We have a full kit prepared with greenery and everything of that nature, as well as a step by step guide for making it. We're even going to have a workshop on how to make the most of this holiday season and still make it a memorable one. This is in addition to online children's games and activities.

?Whether they come in-person or take part online, we want people to leave with a re-set of their personal energy and a re-set in their ability to look for the blessings that are still around us. Obviously, the holidays are going to look very different, but that just means we have to look at the holidays differently because there are still ways of making them special and memorable ? mind you, no one is going to forget the Christmas of 2020.

?While they walk through the Market, they get to take a time out of worry or whatever they're focusing with and be able to literally feel what those lights give them and the atmosphere. Just that Hallmark feeling that Aurora's small-town charm can deliver, especially at an event like this. Whether it is virtual or in person, is really supporting our local small businesses and the entrepreneurs [and] this is a time for them to shine.?

For more information on the Aurora Christmas Market, which runs from Friday, December 4 ? Sunday, December 6, from 5 ? 9.30 p.m., and again from Friday, December 11 to Sunday, December 13 at the same time, visit aurora.ca/Christmasmarket. There, you can register for your preferred time slots and learn more about how to access the online market and roster of activities.

By **Brock Weir** Editor Local Journalism Initiative