

## Time for a re-think on Aurora's Hydro Reserves

**(Re: 5.09% tax hike on table as budget talks near end. March 12, 2015)**

The Aurora Council is currently discussing the 2015 budget.

One of the recurring topics will be the use of the Hydro Funds. That Fund now amounts to a nest egg of over \$30 million.

As early as 2006, I have advocated for a special way of repeat utilization of those funds, not to spend those moneys on one time projects.

My suggestion is to use the funds to secure public space and off-road trail right-of-ways.

Principally, the Town would buy lands that are useful for public space and trails purposes when such lands go on the market. Next, the Town would register against title the conditions that would pre-determine any desired uses, among them public space and trail easements ? and then sell the lands, with conditions in place.

The sale would recover most, if not all or more of the purchase price.

Little by little, the Town would assemble desirable public spaces and trail easements that would otherwise be hard to obtain.

This approach would be especially useful for the downtown revitalization.

In order to revitalize Downtown Aurora, public space is a key ingredient, as is pedestrian access from areas surrounding downtown, as will be confirmed by every planner who is up-to-date.

If Aurorans have to use the car to make downtown a destination, then they will drive elsewhere, because of the parking and congestion difficulties, and because the selection of merchandise is better elsewhere.

So, having funds to increase public space and pedestrian access, along with pedestrianizing downtown, and increasing shopping opportunities for daily needs, will act as a catalyst to a happier Aurora.

We already know that a pedestrian-oriented Aurora Street Festival in June, and a weekly pedestrian friendly Farmers' Market, both in public spaces, where people can meet and see each other, are popular.

Off-road trails are certainly very popular, year round.

The Hydro Funds can be one key catalyst to a much more people friendly ? and healthy Aurora.

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Aurora