

## Why Aurora? Businesses leaders set to make pitch for ? and to ? community

Aurora is a community where many business leaders live, work and play.

Some have brought their businesses here to grow, while others make Aurora their base for work further afield.

Whatever their story, prominent business owners will be asked to share their stories about why they planted personal and business roots in Aurora as part of a plan to make the Town a draw for others.

Council has approved a plan spearheaded by the Aurora Economic Development Board to produce a series of videos with business leaders pitching the Town as a place to live, work and play.

The project will be funded with a budget of \$20,000 from reserves initially set aside for the Town's Community Improvement Plan.

?The marketing campaign proposal is designed to engage resident business leaders and share their message about ?Why Aurora' as a place to live, work and play,? said Lisa Hausz, Manager of Economic Development and Policy for the Town, in a report to Council last week. ?The proposed video and social marketing campaign are described as an innovative style of conversation with resident business leaders in a variety of business sectors, who all reside in Aurora. The intent is to capture unique stories of those residents that have started and/or are a growing business in Aurora, as well as capturing interesting perspectives of business success from resident experts in their respective field of work.

?Both categories of residents (living in Aurora and doing business in Aurora, or living in Town and working elsewhere) will be selected and invited by the committee to share their view of ?Why Aurora' as a place where other innovators, entrepreneurs and thought leaders can connect and grow.?

Council, sitting at the Committee level on June 15, gave the tentative green light to the plan, but sought assurances that approving the budget from a nearly-defunct reserve would not lead to any duplication of work already being carried out by the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Aurora BIA, and other like organizations.

?I just don't want to?make it seem like we're doing the same thing,? said Councillor Rachel Gilliland.

In response, Ms. Hausz said what is intended is a ?unique project? that will not be duplicating other areas of work. The only place where there might be cross-over is the sectors that are being targeted.

?This connects with those business leaders they have identified to build those relationships and grow that network,? she said. ?We are looking for a number of our business leaders who have a unique story, that would be a mix of businesses? people who have started their business and grown it here from Day One; other businesses who have moved here; business leaders who gather roots and grew from there in the last 40 years or so; immigrant business owners; female business owners? a real mix and collection of people. Those are the unique stories we want to get out.

?We want to get those stories about why they have selected the Town, what is unique, and what recommendations they would give to other business leaders in looking at Aurora for their business location.?

From the perspective of Councillor Michael Thompson, going down this path would underscore the issues that matter.

?I love the concept; identifying these stories helps you pick out what matters most to business owners and leaders in being able to relay those stories to everyone,? he said. ?It helps resonate and I think it is a different tact than what we have taken in the past. Instead of just facts, figures and numbers, and so forth. I am optimistic about the program and supportive of it.?

So too was Councillor Harold Kim who said the Town and Council has 'come a long way' in the last few years in terms of economic development and marketing the Town to others.

'If you look at previous packages Aurora had to give out to potential businesses who wish to expand in Aurora, it was really just one little pamphlet that gives you the demographics of Aurora ? that we have an educated population, it talks about taxes and things of that nature ? but what we're doing here is more than just a pamphlet. It is more than just a one-time marketing opportunity. This is something we can use for years and years that can be the foundation of something larger.'

Council approved the plan 6 ? 1 with Councillor John Gallo the opposing vote.

**By Brock Weir** Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter