

Master Plan for the Village of Aurora, New York

Adopted May 21, 2008

Section 1: Introduction

Aurora is a dynamic and picturesque village on the eastern shore of Cayuga Lake. Its residents consider its beautiful historic houses, commercial and institutional buildings, as well as vistas of the lake, beautiful trees, well-kept yards, and natural areas in and surrounding the village to be part of what is Aurora.

The village's cultural life is enhanced by the presence of Wells College, the Morgan Opera House, the Aurora Free Library and two churches. The village has a small lakefront village park, a playground on a side street, a fire and rescue squad, a medical center, an inn, a variety of stores that offer significantly more than the basics, dining-out opportunities, a bank, a post office, high quality drinking water, a municipal sewer system, sidewalks, a funeral home, municipal yard debris and snow removal, a golf course, street lights, and wonderful sunsets over the lake.

Aurora's citizens recognize and appreciate that life in their village includes many conveniences not found in other villages of comparable size. Nearby attractions such as Mackenzie-Childs, Long Point State Park, and local wineries bring some tourism to Aurora, but the loveliness of the village in every season, as well as programs at Wells College and the Morgan Opera House, and dinner or a stay at the Aurora Inn make Aurora a destination in its own right.

Section 2: Authorization of the Planning Board to Make a Master Plan

In Article XI Administration of the Zoning Law enacted in 2002, Section 1101 states that the Planning Board "shall devise and maintain a Master Plan for the development of the Village, as per Consolidated Laws of New York-Village Law, §7-722." Section 1000.B further states that it is "the policy of the Planning Board to consider land subdivision as part of a plan for the orderly, efficient and economic development of the Village while retaining its traditional character. All proposed subdivision of land lying within the village... [and] proposed streets... shall be properly related to the proposal shown in the Master Plan of the Village."

Section 3: The Community Preservation Panel

The Planning Board works in tandem with the Community Preservation Panel, which also, as stated in Section 1102, "is charged with preserving the character of the Village as provided in Article VII." The purpose of Article VII Community Preservation, is "to promote the cultural, economic and general welfare... through the protection, enhancement, perpetuation and preservation of the Village of Aurora, New York" (Section 700).

Section 4: Purpose

General goals of this Master Plan include maintaining the charm and qualities of life that are inherently part of Aurora's traditional character, as well as encouraging greater cohesiveness and community spirit among residents. To that end, the Planning Board is dedicated to promoting reasonable development and change while safeguarding:

1. the community's access to and enjoyment of the lake
2. the built and the natural environments of the Village.

Section 5: Zones

There are five land use zones in Aurora: Agricultural/Residential, Residential, Commercial, Institutional, and Flood Hazard. Definitions and other particulars of these zones are listed in Local Law #4, Article III Zones, Section 300. They are indicated on the Zoning map that is found at the end of Local Law #4.

Non-conforming uses are possible through use variances granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals as outlined in Local Law #4, Article XI, Section 1103.F. A non-conforming use can be changed to another non-conforming use under the conditions in Local Law #4, Article VI, Section 605. "Grandfathered" non-conforming uses are listed as an appendix to Local Law #4.

Section 6: Cayuga Lake Waterfront

A. In order to garner maximum benefits from its location on Cayuga Lake, the Village of Aurora should:

1. protect and improve its views of Cayuga Lake as part of Scenic Route 90
2. provide access
 - a) to the lake for its residents and visitors
 - b) to the village from the lake
 - c) to lakeside recreational areas including walking paths
 - d) for swimming
3. provide sheltered access to the lake for kayaks, canoes and other small non- motorized water craft
4. preserve and improve
 - a) the lakeshore in general
 - b) Cayuga Lake as a water resource
5. ensure that the density of construction allows for maximum lake views between buildings.

B. To achieve the goals stated above, the Village of Aurora should:

1. participate in local, regional and state programs to enhance and develop lakeside resources, and to protect and ensure the quality of Cayuga Lake water and protection of the watershed
2. apply for grants for waterfront development
3. find a balance between maintaining clear views of the lake and preserving existing trees and other natural habitats along the shoreline.

Section 7: Housing

A. The Village of Aurora should protect and promote the variety of

housing opportunities available to its residents as a means to assure a variety of incomes, family sizes and life styles that help define its traditional character. To that end, the Village should encourage:

1. limited development on available land
2. various types of housing including apartments, senior citizen housing, new single-and two-family homes.

B. To further these goals, the Village should seek advice and support from County and State offices.

Section 8: Economic Development

A. Because diverse commercial enterprises are important to Aurora's viability, the climate for successful economic opportunity and diversity should be maintained and enhanced through:

1. zoning that allows for entrepreneurial opportunities, possibly by creating a new commercial district, or by encouraging and approving home occupations
2. encouraging a variety of business owners and businesses that serve residents as well as visitors, and that are afford-able by both.

B. The Village's Boards should seek and maintain active dialogue with:

1. The Aurora Arts and Merchants Association and other village entrepreneurs
2. Wells College and the Aurora Foundation
3. the Town of Ledyard.

Section 9: Parks, Recreation and Community Enhancement

A. The Village owns a small but wonderfully situated park located on the lake shore south of the Aurora Inn property. However, to make it more inviting, the park needs:

1. better access for all, including the disabled
2. service and emergency vehicle access
3. picnic tables, benches and trash receptacles
4. a gazebo or similar structure with electricity for community events
5. signs indicating its location
6. landscaping
7. a dock and access to the water
8. additional lands to make the park larger.

B. In addition to the Village Park and the Children's Memorial Playground on Court Street, the Village should seek:

1. additional land along the lake shore for parks, playgrounds, walking paths, etc.
2. other land away from the lake for parks and playgrounds, thus providing space for basketball, soccer, and skate boarding among other possible recreational activities
3. continued commitment from Wells College for summer swimming at the college dock and the Village Recreation Program for area youth at the Athletic Association Field House
4. advice on beautification of Village properties and public spaces.

C. There are two theaters, an amphitheater, a labyrinth and terraced lawns in Aurora that overlook the lake. The Village should work with the Morgan Opera House and Wells College to develop a summer performing arts

festival of theater and music using these resources.

Section 10: Vehicular and Pedestrian Traffic

A. Sufficient parking in the heart of the village is a continuing concern for residents and visitors alike. Delivery trucks that double park on Main Street are particularly troublesome for the smooth and safe flow of traffic. The Planning Board should work with the Village Trustees to designate areas that could provide additional car parking within reasonable walking distance of the village's center and delivery parking in reasonable proximity to businesses.

B. One of the pleasures shared by Aurora's residents for many decades has been the use of the lake shore path that spans the length of the village across multiple private properties. The Village should work with regional and state offices to explore ways to ensure continued use of this treasure.

C. The regulation of the 30 mph speed limit on Main Street/ NY State Route 90 has become more difficult with increased truck traffic. The Village should work with local, regional and state offices, including the Department of Transportation, to find ways to better control traffic and increase safety. One possibility would be to lower the Village speed limit.

Section 11: Historic District

A. The Historic District includes all of the buildings on Main Street and the Wells College Campus. Most exterior work done to buildings in the Village is regulated in Article VII of the Zoning Law. Interior work is regulated by the New York State Building and Fire Code. The Planning Board and the Community Preservation Panel should continue to seek ways to enforce the law and respect citizens' rights.

B. Two properties in the Historic District that invite attention are the ruins of the Grist Mill and Patrick Tavern.

1. The Village should work with Wells College and public and private agencies to explore stabilization and possible uses of the Mill.

2. The Village should work with public and private agencies to find the best use for historic Patrick Tavern.

Section 12: Periodic Review

The Planning Board shall review the progress toward the goals set out in this document one year after its adoption by the Village Board of Trustees and conduct annual reviews thereafter.