

Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

The following chapter summarizes the existing conditions and current trends in the Town of Aurora. This inventory and analysis will provide the community with baseline data on important demographics, economic trends, land uses, housing, natural resources, and much more in and around the Town. The knowledge gained from this community profile helped define the priorities and informed the strategies needed to meet the community's goals. This information will also serve as a benchmark that residents can use to measure progress and analyze changes in their community over time.

Town History & Introduction

A Brief History of Aurora

The history of the Town of Aurora extends back thousands of years, well before the arrival of the Seneca Nation. One of the town's most significant prehistoric sites is the Sinking Ponds Wildlife Sanctuary. Named for the 26 sunken footbridges that once connected Elma to Aurora, the sanctuary was inhabited during the Archaic era by the Meadowood people. Archaeological excavations in the 1960s and 2010s uncovered tools, bowls, and settlement foundations dating back to 4,000–1,000 BCE.

Aurora was officially established in 1818 after separating from the Town of Willink, though Revolutionary War veteran Joel Adams settled there in 1804. The town includes five hamlets—Jewettville, Griffins Mills, West Falls, Blakeley, and South Wales—along with the Village of East Aurora. These communities developed along both branches of the Cazenovia Creek, utilizing its hydropower for mills that supported economic growth. Jewettville's brickyards even supplied materials for Buffalo's streets until the last kilns were removed in 1977.

The Hamlet of Griffins Mills played a key role in the area's abolitionist movement, with Quakers from Orchard Park, Mennonites, and other activists using the Griffins Mills Presbyterian Church (built in 1812) as a meeting place and nearby homes as Underground Railroad stations. West Falls, originally called Crockershire, and later Florence, was founded in 1849 with the establishment of a post office. The hamlet, named after waterfalls on Cazenovia Creek, was a vital stop on the plank road trade route connecting Springville and Buffalo. It once hosted a passenger and freight station, four hotels, general stores, and taverns. Blakeley and South Wales, though smaller, contributed to the town's rural economy and community life, the latter of which is home to the Gow School – a renowned college prep boarding school for students with language-based learning disabilities.

By the late 19th century, Aurora was known as the "horse racing capital of the world" due to breeding programs at Hamlin and Jewett Farms. The Jewett Stock Farm featured the world's only mile-long covered racetrack until its dismantling in 1917. Today, Strawberry Banks Farm continues the town's equestrian tradition.

Despite its rural nature, Aurora has a rich legacy. It contains seven eligible historic districts with 251 buildings, along with several National Register-listed structures in the Village, including the Roycroft Campus, a landmark of the Arts and Crafts movement. As Aurora looks to the future, it can leverage its history for growth. Revitalizing its hamlets can support small businesses, tourism, and residents' daily needs; Griffins Mills' social justice legacy can inspire community engagement; and West Falls' trade history highlights the value of strong infrastructure. By preserving its heritage while fostering sustainable growth, Aurora can balance progress with its deep-rooted past, ensuring a vibrant and resilient future.

Regional Context

The Town of Aurora is in the Western New York region, centrally located within Erie County, and the broader Buffalo-Niagara Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). While the town is characterized by its rural charm and close-knit community, it also benefits from convenient access to major regional amenities and employment centers. A defining feature of Aurora is the Village of East Aurora, which serves as both the cultural and economic hub of the town. The village is renowned for its historical significance as the cornerstone of the American Arts and Crafts movement, particularly through the Roycroft Campus, which continues to attract visitors and artisans from across the region.

Aurora is well-connected through several key transportation corridors, including U.S. Route 20A, New York State Route 240, and the Route 400 expressway. These thoroughfares facilitate easy travel to the City of Buffalo and other neighboring communities, making Aurora an attractive residential option for commuters. The town also benefits from its proximity to regional transportation hubs such as the Buffalo-Niagara International Airport and the Buffalo Exchange Street & Depew Amtrak Stations, further enhancing connectivity to both national and international destinations. Aurora's strategic location within the Buffalo-Niagara MSA makes it an ideal bedroom community for those who work in larger municipalities but seek a quieter, more rural environment. The town offers a balance between accessibility and tranquility, providing residents with a high quality of life while maintaining strong ties to the economic and cultural opportunities of the greater Buffalo region.



Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

Review of Past Planning, Policy Actions & Initiatives

Regional Comprehensive Plan Towns of Aurora, Elma, Holland, and Wales and the Village of East Aurora

The Town of Aurora prepared its first comprehensive plan in 1981 and last completed a comprehensive plan in 2004 as part of the Regional Comprehensive Plan for the Towns of Aurora, Elma, Holland, and Wales and the Village of East Aurora. The plan was funded by Erie County as part of a larger program seeking to encourage communities to work in a regional and cooperative manner to capitalize on opportunities and jointly resolve common issues. Although never officially adopted, the plan has provided the Town with an extensive inventory of existing conditions in the town along with various recommendations that have helped guide the Town with their planning, policy actions, and initiatives since. In the plan, six overarching goals and their preceding strategies were identified for the Town of Aurora. Some key strategies for each of the goals from this previous plan to consider today include:

1. Preserve community character

- Preserve the rural character of the Town through proper planning and development.
- Preserve and enhance existing cultural resources, including the library facilities.
- Preserve historic resources and promote architectural development styles consistent with the character of these resources and the area.

2. Properly manage future growth and development

- Encourage the use of alternative development techniques that manage the density and adverse impacts of residential development, and control sprawl.
- Provide adequate and accessible locations for affordable housing within the overall pattern of development, especially for the elderly.
- Properly plan development to preserve areas identified as important open space, stream corridors, wildlife habitat and corridors, and farmland.
- Allow for the provision of adequate infrastructure that addresses public needs without encouraging excessive growth.
- Promote the development of a diversity of housing alternatives to accommodate all age groups and incomes.

3. Preserve and promote recreational opportunities

- Improve and maintain existing recreational facilities and increase opportunities for diverse recreational activity in the Town.
- Promote bike paths and interconnections between recreational facilities within the Town and the region.
- Provide increased and easily accessible recreational opportunities to address the needs of the Town's youth.

4. Provide for economic development

- Designate sufficient areas to allow for a measured amount of commercial and industrial growth, at an appropriate size and scale, that is compatible with the character of the surrounding community.
- Effectively plan for new commercial business in a manner that promotes new business but manages its growth to prevent sprawl.
- Provide for a diverse economy that offers opportunities to workers of all skills. Encourage and promote opportunities for start-up businesses and local entrepreneurial efforts.

5. Protect environmental resources

- Preserve natural habitat areas to maintain biological diversity and properly manage wildlife populations.

- Protect groundwater aquifers, surface waters, and watershed lands such as wetlands and significant upland areas that recharge potable water sources.
- Protect groundwater resources from the impacts of failing septic systems.
- Preserve and protect important scenic viewsheds and resources.
- Encourage the use of and provide incentives for alternative energy sources to conserve natural resources.

6. Maintain and enhance the existing transportation system

- Provide for a more pedestrian friendly transportation system.
- Promote safe roads for automobile travel with pathways to effectively accommodate bicycles, horses and pedestrians.
- Increase land use density around shopping and activity centers to promote pedestrian activity and alleviate traffic congestion.

Other Planning Initiatives

Since the Town's participation in the 2004 Regional Plan, several other planning projects and initiatives have taken place at the local, county, and regional level. These previous plans were taken into consideration and helped inform the development of this comprehensive plan update.

2010

Town of Aurora Open Space Plan

In 2007, the Aurora Town Board formed the Aurora Open Space Committee with the mission of defining, inventorying, and evaluating the Town's priority open space resources. With the goal of preserving an additional 1,500 acres of open space land in the town from development, the committee published the Town of Aurora Open Space Plan in 2010. Components of the Open Space Plan included informing the public about the importance of open space and how it can be preserved, identifying parcels with high open space value, developing a program for conservation measures, and identifying sources of funding for preservation. Overall, the plan identified nine distinct groupings of parcels covering approximately 4,000 acres of land for conservation.

2019

Erie County Parks Master Plan Update

First completed in 2003, the Erie County Parks Master Plan 2019 update sought to identify ways to preserve, enhance, and improve the nearly 10,000-acre park system the County manages. The Town of Aurora is home to one of the County's 'heritage parks', the 457-acre multi-purpose Emery Park. The plan called out three overarching park priorities: (1) preserve and enhance heritage areas and special park features, (2) reduce lawn mowing, and (3) relocate the disc golf holes to prevent damage to natural features. To accomplish these three priorities, the plan recommends 91 actions items for Emery Park.

2021

Southern Tier Trail Feasibility Study

In 2021, several trail and mobility advocacy groups partnered together to study the feasibility of constructing the 80-mile Southern Tier Trail which would connect residents across 20 cities, towns, and villages throughout Erie and Cattaraugus County together, providing safe and convenient access to recreational opportunities. The process included an inventory of existing conditions, community engagement to gather input on how the trail would be best used, and ultimately a list of 23 project recommendations which would collectively see the full 80-mile trail completed. Two project recommendations were identified in the Town of Aurora, the West Falls Railroad Corridor and the West

Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

Falls to Colden Railroad Corridor. The West Falls Railroad Corridor would span 3.1 miles connecting the Hamlet of West Falls northward to the already active Orchard Park Corridor. The West Falls to Colden Corridor would span 4 miles and would connect the Hamlet of West Falls southward to the Town of Colden.

2022

Erie County Multi Hazard Mitigation Plan – Town of Aurora

An update to the County's original 2015 plan, the focus of the plan is to identify actions that would help reduce long-term risks caused by hazards or disasters such as flooding, earthquakes, or wildfires. Each participating jurisdiction was provided with a profile overviewing their community and the risks they face, along with a list of recommended actions they can take to mitigate those risks. Overall, two hazards were identified as high risk for Aurora, flooding and utility failure. To address these risks and others, four recommended actions were provided for the Town to undertake.

2023

Town of Aurora Complete Streets Policy

Adopted in 2023. The objective of the policy is for the Town to ensure they are creating safe, accessible, and sustainable transportation networks that accommodate the needs of all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, farmers and other businesses. Inspired by New York State's 2011 Complete Streets Act which requires all federal and state funded transportation projects to design roadways for all users, the Town's policy also requires locally funded projects to do the same.

State of the Region: Western New York Strategic Plan

There are ten Regional Economic Development Councils (REDC) across New York State, each designed to empower local officials to address the most pertinent needs in their communities. The Town of Aurora falls within the Western New York (WNY) region, regional priorities identified in the WNY that should be considered with the growth of Aurora into the future include: (1) Catalyze Private Investment in Our Walkable Commercial Corridors, (2) Support Revitalization of Community Anchors, Waterfront Areas, and Tourism Assets, (3) Invest in Infrastructure and Resources That Connect Our Region, and (4) Foster and Promote a Regional Culture of Entrepreneurship.

2025

New York Forward – West Fall Falls Strategic Investment Plan

In 2024, the Town of Aurora was awarded, on behalf of the Hamlet of West Falls, one of the two NY Forward (NYF) program grant awards for the Western New York REDC region. The \$4.5 million NYF program was created with the intent of invigorating and enlivening downtown areas in New York's smaller and rural communities by funding public and private sector development and improvement projects. Seven projects in West Falls were awarded portions of the \$4.5 million, including:

- Expand Programming Capacity of the West Falls Center for the Arts (\$1,245,000)
- Expand Capacity at the Blueberry Treehouse Farm (\$784,000)
- Transform Veterans Park, West Falls-Colden Library and West Falls Community Playground into Local Destinations (\$758,000)
- Reinvent the West Falls Depot (\$725,000)
- Building Access to West Falls by Converting a Rail Corridor into a Multi-Use Trail (\$420,000)
- Preserve the Dog Bar (\$392,000)
- Celebrate Local Flavor at the Florence Market (\$176,000)

Erie County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan Update

The 2025 Erie County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan, and update to the 2012 plan, sets new priorities and goals for land use in Erie County and its agricultural industry. Emphasized in the plan are goals to protect and preserve existing farms and farmland through a variety of means, enable and support new farm and farm-related businesses, protecting the environment and mitigating the effects of climate change, improving the public's awareness of agriculture, and developing the agricultural economy at large.

Based on the Erie County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan, focus areas for the Town of Aurora include:

- Protecting/preserving high-value agricultural land, particularly by encouraging or allowing solar farms on non-agricultural parcels and by providing succession planning resources to existing farmers
- Encourage agricultural parcel owners to participate in the Agricultural District program
- Review zoning codes and building codes to address farm friendliness, such as policies regarding standard farm practices, on-farm businesses, additional (non-farm) businesses on agricultural parcels, etc.

Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

Key Demographics & Trends

The following Section is an overview of demographic trends in the Town of Aurora. To assist in the evaluation and the understanding of current issues, comparisons are made to the Towns of Orchard Park and Concord, as well as the entirety of Erie County. Orchard Park was selected as a comparison community as it is a neighboring southtown community to Aurora which also includes a village. However, alternative to Aurora, Orchard Park has embraced sewer expansions and strip commercial development. The Town of Orchard Park experienced much of their population growth during the second half of the 20th century as many households at the time left the City Buffalo, following the national trend of suburbanization. The Town of Concord was also selected as a comparison community as it is also a southtown with a village within it; however, its rate of population growth and rural/agricultural setting more closely align with the Town of Aurora.

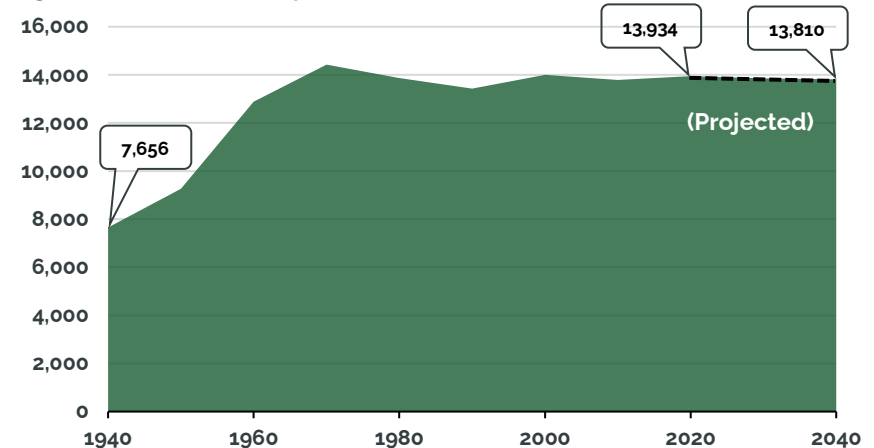
Throughout this section, Community, County, and State data was sourced from the U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census, American Community Survey (ACS), IMPLAN, Envision Tomorrow, data.NYSED, NYSDOL, and Cornell's Program on Applied Demographics (PAD); In some instances, there are slight discrepancies in dataset years between areas of investigation. The closest years are provided for comparison purposes. While conclusions drawn from this dataset should take into consideration data collection methods, these data sources are the most current and accurate statistics available.

Population Trends

As of 2020, the estimated population for the Town of Aurora was 13,934, this includes the Village of East Aurora (5,998). Historically, from 1900 to 1970, the Town experienced more than a 10% increase in its total population with the greatest population shift occurring from 1950 (9,271) to 1960 (12,888) in which the Town saw a 39% population increase. Since 2000, the population of Aurora has remained essentially the same. So, while the Town is certainly not a growing like it was throughout the 20th century, it is not experiencing a decline in their overall population either.

Across Erie County, the population was 954,236 as of 2020 and experienced a population increase of 0.4% since 2000. During this time, the Town of Concord saw a -2.4% decline while the Town of Orchard Park saw a 7.4% increase. Projecting out to 2040, the County is expected to see a decline of 0.9%. Similar trends are expected for Aurora (-1.0%) and Orchard Park (-1.2%) while Concord is expected to see an increase (+2.4%).

Fig X: Town of Aurora Population Trends



Location	2000	2010	2020	% Change '00 – '20	Projected % Change '20 – '40	Projected 2040 Population
Town of Aurora	13,996	13,782	13,943	-0.6%	-1.0%	13,810
Town of Concord	8,518	8,494	8,316	-2.4%	2.4%	8,513
Town of Orchard Park	27,637	29,054	29,686	7.4%	-1.2%	29,323
Erie County	950,265	919,040	954,236	0.4%	-0.9%	945,891

Age Trends

While the population size of Aurora is not changing significantly, its median age is. As of 2022, the median age of an Aurora resident is 50.3, an increase of 22% since 2000. Comparatively, the median age across Erie County is 40 while the median ages for the Towns of Orchard Park and Concord are 47.2 and 46.9 respectively.

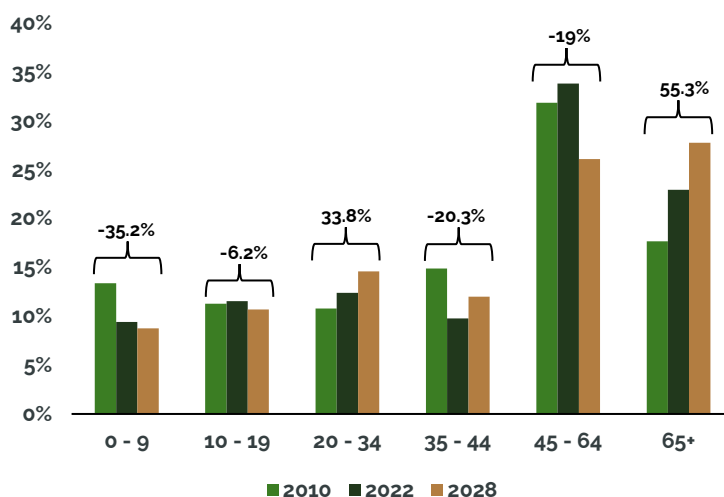
Location	Under 18/% Pop.	Over 65/% Pop.	Median Age
Town of Aurora	2,911/21%	3,190/23%	50.3
Town of Orchard Park	5,978/20.1%	7,199/24.3%	47.2
Town of Concord	1,718/20.7%	1,785/21.5%	46.9
Erie County	189,431/19.9%	188,291/19.7%	40.0

The 45-64 age group is the largest age group in Aurora, making up 33.8% of the total population. However, following the Town's median age trends, the over 65 age group is expected to become the largest age group by 2028 (27.8%). By 2028, the over 65 age group is expected to see a 55.3% increase in their population compared to 2010 proportions. The 20-34 age group is expected to see a 33.8% increase during this time too, however, it will only represent 14.6% of the total population.

Aurora's median age is rising faster than the rest of the County's, yet the comparison communities (Orchard Park & Concord) have similar shares of residents under 18 and over 65. Taken altogether, Aurora is an aging community, albeit not significantly

more than other southtown communities in Erie County. Moving forward, the Town should plan to accommodate its aging population as the 65+ age group will be the dominant population by 2028. The Town must also plan to welcome new young families to help offset the population's aging.

Fig. X Town of Aurora Age Trends

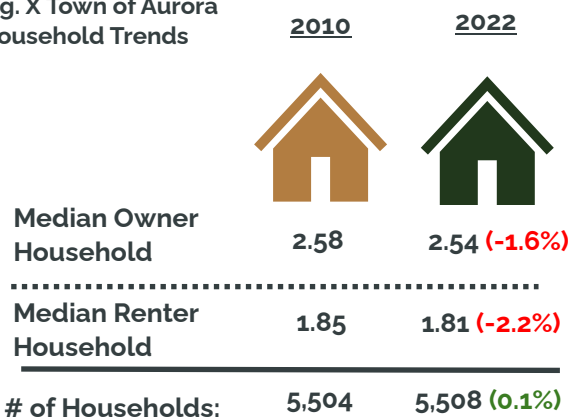


Household Composition

There are an estimated 5,508 households in the Town of Aurora, meaning the number of households have remained effectively the same since 2010 (5,504). While the number of households has remained the same, the average size of both owner- and renter-occupied households has decreased.

The household composition of Aurora differs when compared to the rest of Erie County. While married-couple households are the dominate household type throughout all comparison communities, the percentage of married-couple households in Aurora is much higher than all other communities. Conversely, the proportion of single-parent households in Aurora is also significantly greater than the proportion in Concord and Orchard Park. Coupled with the fact that only 26.3% of households in Aurora have a child

Fig. X Town of Aurora Household Trends



Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

under 18, it suggests that a significant number of married-couple households are empty-nesters. As such, there is likely demand for day cares and other child-care related services to assist the 733 single-parent households in the Town.

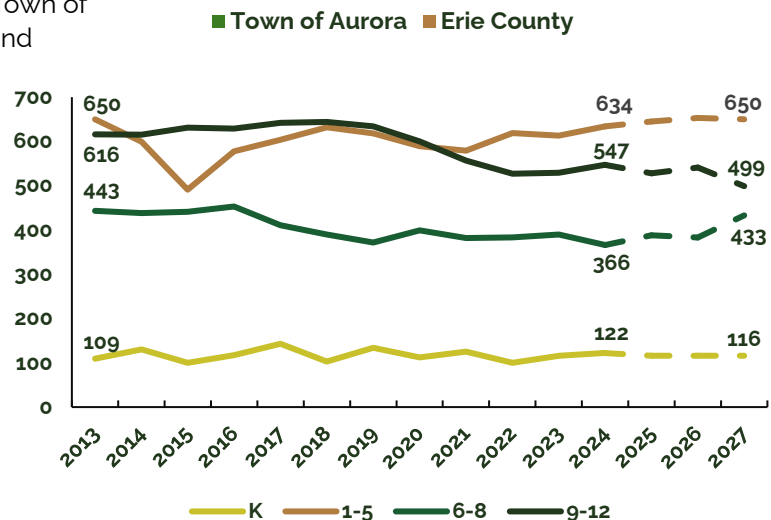
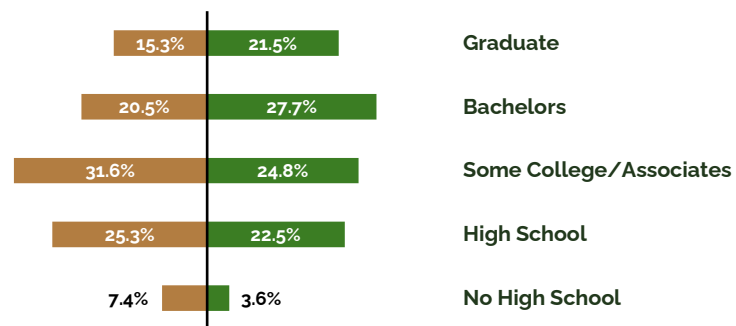
Household Type	Town of Aurora		Town of Orchard Park		Town of Concord		Erie County	
Married-Couple	3,322	60.3%	6,958	55.0%	2,041	55.3%	165,430	40.3%
Single-Parent	733	13.3%	1,200	9.5%	222	6.0%	70,141	17.1%
Non-Family Household	143	2.6%	829	6.5%	173	4.7%	31,694	7.7%
Single Household	1,310	23.8%	3,670	29.0%	1,254	34.0%	143,175	34.9%
TOTAL	5,508	100%	12,657	100%	3,690	55.3%	410,440	100%
Households with children under 18	1,451	26.3%	3,082	24.4%	938	25.4%	101,900	24.8%

Education & Race

Nearly 50% of Aurora residents over the age of 18 have a bachelor's or advanced degree, compared to just 35.8% of the entire Erie County population. Furthermore, just 3.6% of adult Aurorans have not completed high school. Compared to 7.4% of residents across all of Erie County.

Examining school enrollments, students in the Town of Aurora area attend school at the East Aurora Union Free School District (EAUFSD). The EAUFSD covers the entirety of East Aurora, the majority of Aurora, and portions of the Towns of Colden and Elma. Other portions of the Town of Aurora fall within the Iroquois, Holland, and Orchard Park School Districts. As of the 2024 school year, there are 1,669 students across three schools in the East Aurora School District. Since the 2013 school year, the district's overall student population has decreased by 8.2% (1,818 in 2013). While year over year student populations fluctuated between -6.7% and +6.9%, the average change in the student population each year for the last decade was -0.7%. The total number of kindergarten students in the district is 11.9% larger today than it was 10 years ago, however, the total number of 6th - 8th and 9th - 12th graders have both decreased by more than 10%. The EAUFSD's latest annual student enrollment report projects a reversal of the school district's declining population trends with an increased student enrollment of 1,698 by the 2027/2028 school year. The report

Fig. X Aurora and Erie County Education Levels



anticipates kindergarten enrollment to decline by 4.9% and 9th-12th grade enrollment to decline by 8.8% by 2027/2028. However, 6th-8th grade enrollment and 1st-5th grade enrollment are projected to increase by 18.3% and 2.5% respectively, over the same period.

In addition to the school district, there are six private schools in the Village of East Aurora and Town of Aurora. These include The Aurora Waldorf School, The Gow School, and the Guiding Earth Montessori School, East Aurora Montessori School, Mandala School, and the Immaculate Conception School. None of these private schools offer full K-12 education and instead specialize in specific student populations or methods of education.

Grade	East Aurora School District		Aurora Waldorf School		The Gow School		Guiding Earth Montessori School		East Aurora Montessori School		Mandala School		Immaculate Conception School	
Pre-K	N/A	N/A	19	19.7%	0	0%	7	28%	28	87.5%	N/A	N/A	0	0%
K	116	6.1%	23	45.3%	0	0%	4	16%	4	12.5%	5	25%	11	7.5%
1-5	613	37.9%	53	18.8%	0	0%	14	56%	N/A	N/A	11	55%	80	55.2%
6-8	390	23.6%	22	0%	19	17.6%	0	0%	N/A	N/A	4	20%	54	37.3%
9-12	529	32.4%	0	16.2%	89	82.4%	0	0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0%
TOTAL	1,648		117		108		25		32		20		145	

Racial identity in the Town of Aurora lacks diversity, especially when compared to the rest of Erie County. According to the 2020 Decennial Census, 95.2% of the Town of Aurora identify as White. 3.1% identify as two or more races, and just 1.7% of the population collectively identify as Black (0.3%), American Indian (0.3%), Asian (0.6%), Pacific Islander (0.01%), or Other (0.5%).

Race	Town of Aurora		Erie County	
White	13,274	95.2%	693,563	72.7%
Black	41	0.3%	134,795	14.1%
American Indian	35	0.3%	5,594	0.6%
Asian	82	0.6%	46,384	4.9%
Pacific Islander	1	0.01%	280	0.03%
Two+ Races	434	3.1%	51,816	5.4%
Other	76	0.5%	21,804	2.3%

Comparatively, across Erie County, 72.7% of the population identifies as White. Three other race groups have populations at or above 5%, including Black (14.1%), Asian (4.9%), and two or more races (5.4%). The County's racial diversity is likely due to the more urbanized areas such as the City of Buffalo and Lackawanna, as well suburban areas like Cheektowaga and Amherst.

Household Income & Employment

The MHI for the Town of Aurora as of 2022 when adjusting for inflation is \$93,537. When adjusting for inflation, the Town of Aurora has seen a 47.2% increase in their median household income (MHI) since 2000. During this time, the Town of Concord saw a similar 45.2% increase in their MHI. However, Concord still lags behind Aurora's MHI by more than \$30,000. Erie County saw an 81.6% increase in their MHI but still lags Aurora by more than \$20,000. Despite outpacing Erie County's MHI, Aurora still lags behind Orchard Park's MHI by over \$7,000.

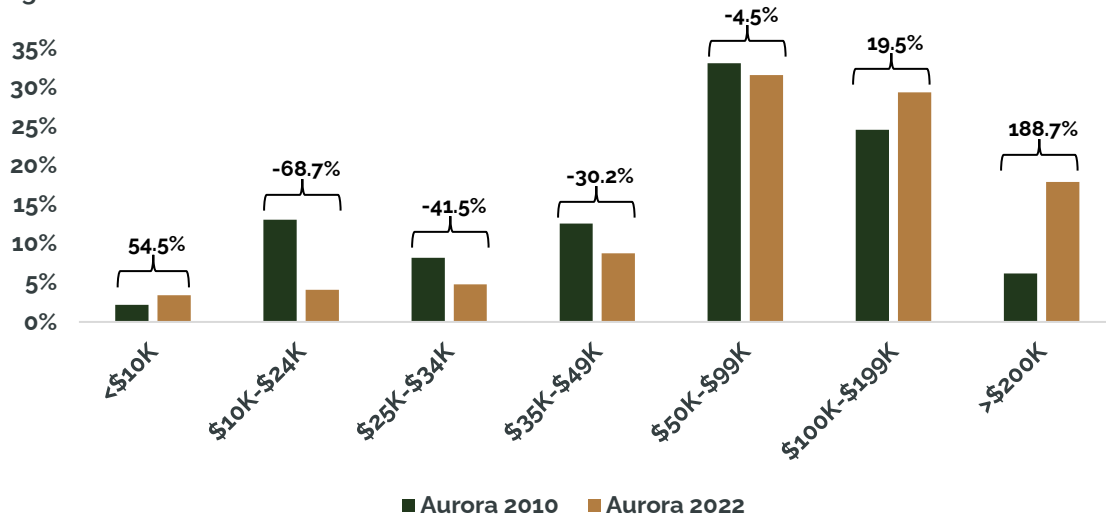
Location	2000 (IA)	2010 (IA)	2022 (IA)	\$ Change '00 - '22 (IA)	% Change '00-'22
Town of Aurora	\$63,550.00	\$66,009.00	\$93,537.00	\$29,987.00	47.2%
Town of Orchard Park	\$59,762.00	\$75,158.00	\$100,575.00	\$40,813.00	68.3%
Town of Concord	\$40,891.00	\$46,977.00	\$59,360.00	\$18,469.00	45.2%
Erie County	\$38,567.00	\$46,816.00	\$70,044.00	\$31,477.00	81.6%

Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

Examining Aurora's Median Household Income by income brackets, the greatest change in the number of households for each bracket was observed in the > \$200K income bracket. In 2010, 6.2% of households in Aurora were making \$200,000 or more. As of 2022, 17.9% of all households make over \$200,000. Despite significant shifts in this income bracket, most households in Aurora still make between \$50K-\$99K (31.6%).

Fig. X Town of Aurora Median Household Income Bracket Trends



Employment Trends

Employment Sectors

As of 2022, there are 6,935 employed residents in the Town of Aurora. The major employment sectors for residents include Education, Health & Social Services (32.6%), Manufacturing (12.6%), Professional & Administrative (9.8%), Arts, Entertainment & Food Services (9.24%), and Construction (8.9%).

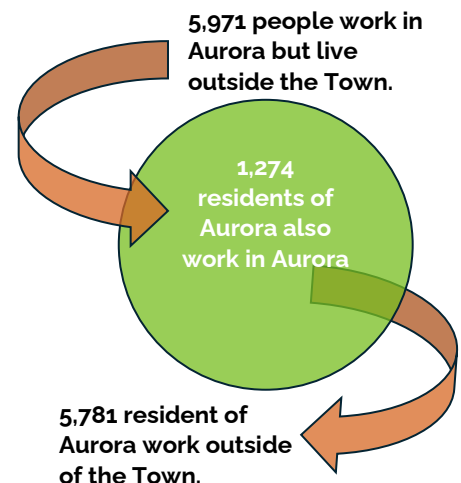
Industry	2010		2022		% Change
	#	%	#	%	
Education, Health, & Social Services	1,795	26.4%	2,267	32.6%	26.3%
Manufacturing	1,138	16.7%	879	12.6%	-22.8%
Professional & Administrative	807	11.9%	682	9.8%	-15.5%
Arts, Entertainment, and Food Services	442	6.5%	641	9.24%	45%
Construction	426	6.3%	618	8.9%	45.1%
Retail Trade	478	7%	558	8%	16.7%
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	390	5.7%	434	6.2%	11.3%
Public Administration	181	2.7%	323	4.6%	78.5%
Other	418	6.2%	217	3.1%	-48.1%
Wholesale Trade	204	3%	116	1.6%	-43.1%
Information	96	1.4%	104	1.5%	8.3%
Transportation & Warehousing	345	5.1%	93	1.3%	-43.1%
Agriculture	76	1.1%	3	0.04%	-96.1%
TOTAL	6,769	100%	6,935	100%	2.0%

The median yearly wage by industry in the Town of Aurora varies widely, ranging from \$13,658 for accommodation & food service jobs to \$132,139 for wholesale trade jobs. When adjusting for inflation, the median individual income in the Town of Aurora was \$88,832 in 2022 which indicates that three industry sectors have a higher median wage than the townwide median wage: Manufacturing, Wholesale Trade, and Finance, Insurance & Real Estate. Since 2010, the median individual has seen a 39.7% increase to their yearly income, only three industry sectors have seen a greater increase in their median wage: Wholesale Trade, Finance, Insurance & Real Estate, and Arts, Entertainment, and Food Services.

Industry	2010 Median Wage (IA)	2022 Median Wage (IA)	% Change
Agriculture	\$48,905	N/A	N/A
Construction	\$73,824	\$79,717	8.0%
Manufacturing	\$75,750	\$96,481	27.4%
Wholesale Trade	\$66,890	\$132,139	97.5%
Retail Trade	\$58,391	\$28,228	-51.7%
Transportation & Warehousing	\$74,659	\$69,002	-7.6%
Information	\$55,699	\$63,924	14.8%
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	\$62,058	\$109,967	77.2%
Professional & Administrative	\$84,567	\$87,571	3.6%
Education, Health, & Social Services	\$64,036	\$66,343	3.6%
Arts, Entertainment, and Food Services	\$9,712	\$15,782	62.5%
Public Administration	\$73,258	\$67,278	-8.2%
Other	\$30,290	\$41,214	36.1%
Median Individual Income	\$63,585	\$88,832	39.7%

Commuting Patterns

Most of the employed residents of Aurora work outside of the Town. As of 2022, an estimated 5,781 residents leave the Town of Aurora to get to their place of employment, while just 1,274 residents both live and work inside the Town. An additional 5,971 workers who live outside of the Town of Aurora work within it. Since 2012, the number of residents who also work in Aurora has decreased by 6%. With only 18.1% of the resident workforce working within the community, the private automobile is the preferred method of commute as 77.4% of residents drive alone and an additional 4.6% carpool. Only 3.0% of residents in Aurora walk, bike, or rideshare to their place of employment while an estimated 15% work from home.



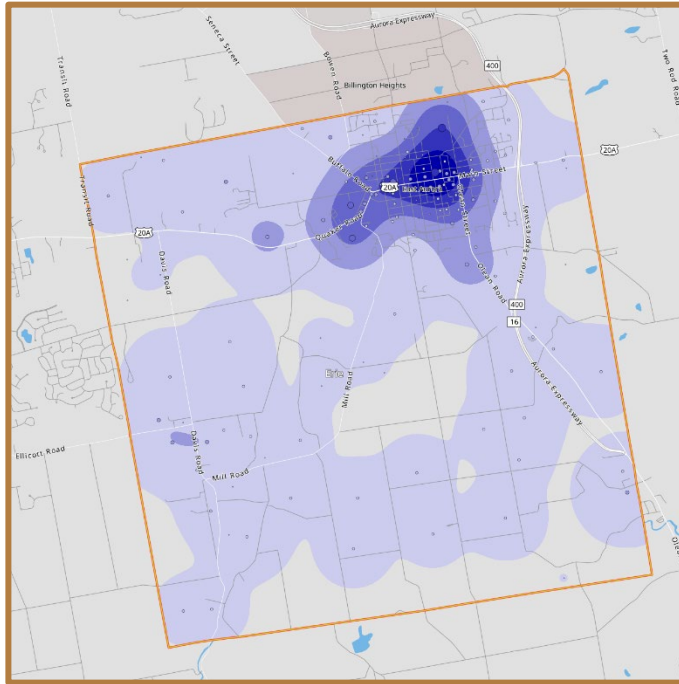
The majority of the Town's workforce (82%) is employed outside of the Town, with an average commute time of 25 minutes. Most residents (50.1%) travel 10-25 miles to work, however, some residents commute 25-50 miles (4.8%) or even greater than 50 miles (8.3%). The most common places of employment for Aurora residents include the City of Buffalo (18.9%), the Village of East Aurora (14.5%), and the Towns of Cheektowaga (5.0%) and West Seneca (4.4%).

As for areas of employment within the Town of Aurora, jobs are mostly concentrated in and around the Village of East Aurora, as seen on the map below. Other centers of employment can be found along the primary transportation corridors for the Town, such as NYS Route 20A, the Aurora Expressway, and Davis Road.

Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

Town of Aurora Jobs Density



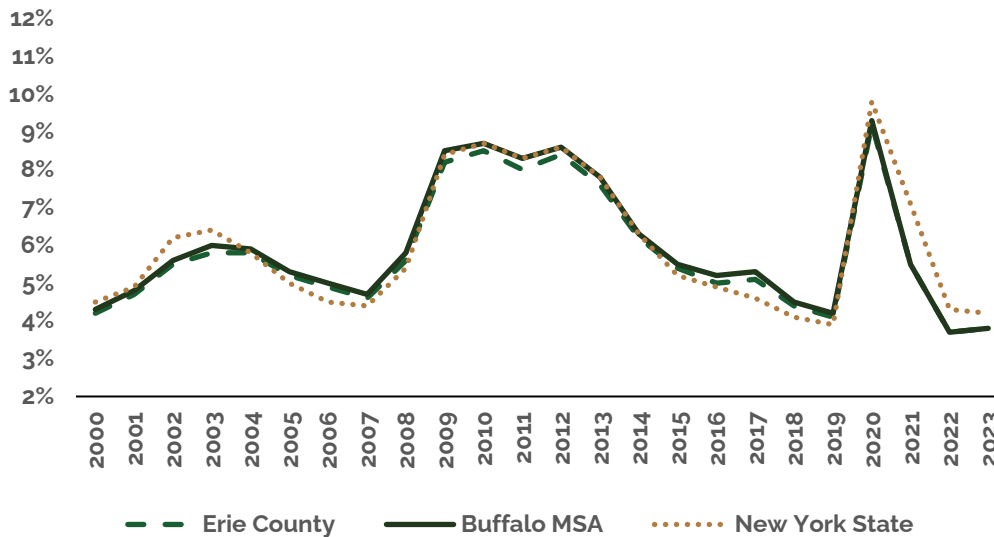
Commuting Characteristic	Number	Percent
Mode of Transportation		
Car/Carpool	5,552	82%
Work From Home	1,016	15%
Walk, Bike & Rideshare	446	3%
Travel Distance		
<10 miles	2,447	36.8%
10-25 miles	3,333	50.1%
25-50 miles	316	4.8%
>50 miles	553	8.3%
Place of Employment		
City of Buffalo	1,255	18.9%
East Aurora	965	14.5%
Cheektowaga	335	5%
West Seneca	290	4.4%
Other	3,804	57%

- 1 - 3 Jobs
- 4 - 35 Jobs
- 36 - 177 Jobs
- 178 - 558 Jobs
- 559 - 1,361 Jobs
- 5 - 244 Jobs/Sq.Mile
- 245 - 961 Jobs/Sq.Mile
- 962 - 2,156 Jobs/Sq.Mile
- 2,157 - 3,829 Jobs/Sq.Mile
- 3,830 - 5,980 Jobs/Sq.Mile

Economic Projections

Since 2000, unemployment trends in Aurora and Erie County have closely mirrored those of New York State. Aside from the temporary spike caused by the 2008 financial crisis and COVID-19 pandemic, all three areas have experienced declines in unemployment since 2012.

Fig. X Unemployment Rates



Source: New York State Department of Labor – Local Area Unemployment Statistics Program

Since 2003, Erie County has experienced a slightly stronger increase in total business establishments, growing by 9.9% compared to the 7.0% growth across the Western New York region. However, this growth was not uniform across all industries, as five of the 21 sectors in Erie County saw declines.

The most significant decreases in establishments occurred in Mining, Wholesale Trade, and Manufacturing. In contrast, notable gains were recorded in the Management of Companies, Transportation & Warehousing, Unclassified, Administrative & Waste Services, and Government sectors.

The employment projections by industry provide a clue into which type and the approximate square footage (sq ft) of additional building space that will be needed in the future. The annual gross demand in the Town of Aurora (Census Tracts 138, 139 & 140) is estimated to be over 30,022 sq ft across all industry sectors.

- The Manufacturing sector is expected to grow the most, comprising 74% of the demand for the area.
- The Accommodation & Food Services, and Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation sectors will drive the next greatest annual gross demand for additional space: 7,664 sq ft and 3,354 sq ft respectively.
- Based on these employment statistics and knowledge of the regional and local economies, LaBella performed an economic and real estate market analysis for the following market sectors: office and industrial.

Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

Industry	Average sq ft per Employee	Employment			Gross Annual Demand (sq ft)
		2020	2030	Change	
Wholesale Trade	750	544	440	-104	-7,793
Educational Services	300	159	115	-44	-1,315
Government	300	63	49	-14	-423
Finance & Insurance	250	176	160	-16	-405
Other Services	300	149	137	-12	-349
Information	300	22	29	7	207
Professional, Scientific, & Tech Services	300	234	249	16	472
Health Care & Social Assistance	300	901	927	26	786
Construction	500	242	267	25	1,256
Transportation & Warehousing	500	12	44	31	1,556
Retail Trade	300	567	658	91	2,724
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	500	31	99	67	3,354
Accommodation & Food Services	300	651	906	255	7,664
Manufacturing	1,000	1,628	1,851	223	22,287
Total:		5,379	5,931	+552	30,022

Office Market

- The office market remains strong across the Western New York region but is slightly weaker within the Town of Aurora study area (Census Tracts 138, 139, and 140). Based on projected employment trends in office-oriented industries—Information, Finance & Insurance, Government, Other Services, Educational Services, Health Care & Social Assistance, and Professional & Business Services—LaBella estimates an annual demand of more than 1.96 million sq ft of office space across WNY.
- Within the Town of Aurora, office space demand is projected to decline by 1,027 sq ft annually. Over a 10-year period, this translates to a total demand for approximately 19.6 million sq ft of new office space across WNY, while the Town of Aurora study area is expected to see a net reduction of 10,275 sq ft.

Industrial Market

- Unlike the office market, demand for new industrial space remains strong in both the Western New York region and the Town of Aurora study area (Census Tracts 138, 139, and 140). The WNY region is projected to require approximately 1.25 million sq ft of industrial space annually, with an estimated demand of 17,306 sq ft per year within the Town of Aurora.
- Based on projected employment trends in industrial-focused sectors—Manufacturing, Construction, Transportation & Warehousing, and Wholesale Trade—LaBella estimates a total demand of 19.6 million additional sq ft of industrial space across WNY over the next decade. Of this, more than 173,000 sq ft would be needed in Aurora alone.

When selecting targeted industries for attraction and retention, key factors to consider include the number of jobs, total wages generated, and the average wage of workers. Economic development efforts should generally prioritize industries that create the most jobs and contribute significantly to overall economic growth. The following list serves as a catalog of potential industries, allowing economic development agencies to strategically determine their areas of focus.

Sub-Sector Industry	2023		
	Employment	Total Wages	Average Wage
Existing Strengths			
Computer and Electronic Product Mfg	40	\$3,715,332	\$93,882
Electrical Equipment and Appliances	145	\$18,518,107	\$127,346
Chemical Manufacturing	96	\$12,166,454	\$126,170
Beverage & Tobacco Product Manufacturing	41	\$1,936,725	\$47,578
Miscellaneous Manufacturing	112	\$9,446,750	\$84,455
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Instrument, Book, and Misc Retailers	93	\$2,962,808	\$31,801
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	150	\$7,978,395	\$53,230
Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	119	\$9,827,033	\$82,349
Food Manufacturing	141	\$9,738,183	\$69,226
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	79	\$5,952,655	\$75,159
Performing Arts and Spectator Sports	12	\$4,689,170	\$389,412
Nonmetallic Mineral Product Mfg	38	\$3,166,313	\$82,467
Accommodation	69	\$2,382,898	\$34,427
Furniture, Home Furnishings, Electronics, and Appliance Retailers	53	\$2,705,982	\$51,352
Primary Metal Manufacturing	28	\$2,551,377	\$91,819
Furniture and Related Product Mfg	12	\$979,305	\$84,622
Plastics & Rubber Products Manufacturing	32	\$2,859,460	\$90,527
Credit Intermediation & Related Activity	84	\$8,956,453	\$107,114
Building Material & Garden Supply Stores	51	\$2,642,143	\$51,582
Paper Manufacturing	40	\$2,982,709	\$75,298
Emerging Strengths			
Construction of Buildings	2	\$128,129	\$64,064
Amusement, Gambling & Recreation Ind	22	\$669,904	\$31,058
Real Estate	30	\$2,257,079	\$74,868
Motion Picture & Sound Recording Ind	2	\$87,195	\$43,598
Gasoline Stations and Fuel Dealers	2	\$76,599	\$38,299
Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction	17	\$1,729,472	\$104,478
Personal and Laundry Services	43	\$1,806,766	\$42,085
Telecommunications	2	\$180,178	\$90,089
Petroleum & Coal Products Manufacturing	2	Insf. Data	Insf. Data
Rental and Leasing Services	12	\$733,262	\$62,561
Textile Product Mills	2	Insf. Data	Insf. Data
Agriculture & Forestry Support Activity	2	Insf. Data	Insf. Data
Museums, Parks and Historical Sites	2	\$96,885	\$48,442
Utilities	2	Insf. Data	Insf. Data
Hospitals	2	Insf. Data	Insf. Data
Wood Product Manufacturing	2	\$116,830	\$58,415
Financial Investment & Related Activity	2	\$300,825	\$150,413
ISPs, Search Portals, & Data Processing	1	Insf. Data	Insf. Data
Warehousing and Storage	1	Insf. Data	Insf. Data

Existing Strengths – Industries that currently have a large employment share (relative to the U.S.) and have strong regional growth over time. **Emerging Strengths** – Industries that currently have a relatively low employment share but have shown strong regional growth over time.

Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

Key Issues & Opportunities

"Opportunities (✓)" represent existing strengths or assets in the Town that can be further leveraged and supports the potential for new development, business creation, or achieving the plan's vision statement and goals.

✓ **Growth Potential in Manufacturing & Industrial:**

The WNY region is projected to need 1.25 million sq ft of industrial space annually; Aurora alone could see demand for 17,306 sq ft per year. Leveraging available sites for light manufacturing or advanced industry can diversify the Town's economic base.

✓ **Rising Senior Demographics and Service**

Demand: With a projected 55.3% increase in the 65+ population by 2028, there is a market for health care, senior living, and support services—potentially creating local jobs and investment in these sectors.

✓ **Growing White Collar Workforce:**

Nearly half of Aurora's adult residents hold a bachelor's or advanced degree, compared to just 35.8% countywide. Additionally, 15% of Aurorans work remotely from home. This skilled talent pool can attract knowledge-based employers while the Town's rural character can be seen as attractive for remote workers.

✓ **Retaining & Attracting Young Families:**

Encouraging modest-density housing options (e.g., duplexes, townhomes, courtyard homes) around the village, near schools, and walkable hamlets can appeal to younger households, bolstering school enrollment and local services.

"Issues (✗)" represent either existing needs or gaps in the Town the limits to future development or from achieving the plan's vision statement and goals.

✗ **High Out-Commuting Rate:** More than four in five employed residents leave Aurora for work. Such out-commuting can reduce local spending power during weekdays and limit employer incentives to locate within the Town.

✗ **Declining Younger Population & 'Brain Drain':**

Aurora's median age continues to rise, and the share of 20–34-year-olds is comparatively small (14.6% projected by 2028). Furthermore, while the EAUFSO expects modest improvement in some grades, overall enrollment has dropped 8.2% since 2013, echoing a slow decline in younger families. Without concerted efforts to attract or retain young adults, the Town risks a narrowing labor force and reduced family-oriented services.

✗ **Incomplete Support for Multi-Generational**

Living: While Aurora has rising senior demographics, younger families, and single-parent households, limited housing styles and intergenerational programming mean these groups often compete for resources and suitable living arrangements.

Land Use & Zoning

Land use information and development regulations show how the community has developed historically, how land is being used today, and how it may be developed or redeveloped in the future. In the Town of Aurora, the land use patterns, and zoning regulations depict a rural community with historically built-up hamlets, while the Village of East Aurora acts as the area's economic and cultural center.

Existing Land Use

Residential

77.9% of all parcels in the Town of Aurora are classified as residential land use, making it the most common land use type in the Town. Most residential land uses are single-family homes (96.7%), followed by parcels where there is more than one primary residential dwelling (1.7%), duplexes and triplexes (1.5%), seasonal residences (0.02%), apartment buildings (0.01%), and one manufactured home park which is in the hamlet of South Wales. Residentially classified parcels vary widely by parcel size, with some parcels as small as a tenth of an acre, while others exceed 100 acres. Overall, residential land uses cover more land area than any other land use in the Town at 61.7% (12,857 acres).

Vacant

17.5% of all parcels in the Town of Aurora are classified as vacant land use, making it the second most common land use type in the Town. While vacant land is prevalent throughout the Town and some vacant parcels are the size of a typical single-family lot, most vacant parcels in the Town are either heavily forested or actively used as farmland. Vacant parcels with these characteristics help contribute to the rural nature of the Town and in preserving its natural assets. Development strategies for the Town's smaller vacant parcels should focus on those most immediately outside the Village of East Aurora, thus helping to reduce sprawl and the need for expanded water/sewer infrastructure. Overall, vacant land uses cover 24.4% of all landcover in the Town (5,072 acres).

Commercial

1.9% of all parcels in the Town of Aurora are classified as commercial land use. Commercial land uses are found scattered throughout the Town, however, these uses are more frequently found along NYS Routes 240, 20A, and 16. These routes are regional travel corridors, allowing these businesses to benefit from a local and regional customer base. Historically built-up places throughout the Town, such as the Hamlet of West Falls, also have pockets of commercial land uses. Commercially classified parcels vary widely by parcel size, with some parcels as small as a tenth of an acre where others exceed 61 acres, however, most do not exceed 7 acres in size. Overall, commercial land uses cover 1.4% of all landcover in the Town (297 acres).

Public Services

0.8% of all parcels in the Town of Aurora are classified as public service land uses. Generally, these parcels are used for energy transmission and railroad lines. The only active railroad line remaining in the Town is the Buffalo and Pittsburgh Railroad which is owned by railroad company Genesee & Wyoming. Overall, community service land uses cover 0.5% of all landcover in the Town (109 acres).

Community Services

0.7% of all parcels in the Town of Aurora are classified as community service land uses. These parcels are evenly distributed across the Town, however some of the larger community service parcels include the World Mission Society of God seminary (114.5 acres), the East Aurora School District High School (98.2 acres), and the Gow School (62.7 acres). Overall, community service land uses cover 2.0% of all landcover in the Town (417 acres). Properties classified as community services are generally exempt from real property taxes.

Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

Agriculture

0.3% of all parcels in the Town of Aurora are classified as agricultural land uses. Historically, farming was an important component of the land use, character, and economy of Aurora; however, much of that land has been converted to residential uses over the past several decades. Prominent agricultural land uses still present in the Town include the Strawberry Banks Farm (equestrian breeding facility), several nurseries and garden centers, and a few remaining family farms. Overall, agricultural land uses cover 2.4% of all landcover in the Town (508 acres). The true total number of agricultural parcels and the total land area they cover cannot be determined as a significant portion of actively farmed land in the Town is classified as vacant.

Recreation & Entertainment

For parcels, or 0.1% of all parcels in the Town of Aurora are classified as recreation & entertainment land uses. These land uses include the Bob-o-Link Golf Club, the East Aurora Country Club, The Blueberry Treehouse Farm, and the Quaker Aurora Tennis Club. Overall, recreation & entertainment land uses cover 0.5% of all land cover in the Town (106 acres). Parks classified as Parks and forested land uses make up 0.8% of all parcels and cover 7.0% of all land cover in the Town (1,458 acres). For information on parks and other parcels dedicated to recreational uses, refer to the Recreational, Historical, and Cultural Resources Chapter.

Industrial

There is only one parcel throughout the entirety of the Town of Aurora that is classified as an industrial land use, the IRR Supply Center, which is a distributor of parts for plumbing, heating, and cooling systems.

EXISTING LAND USE

Town of Aurora

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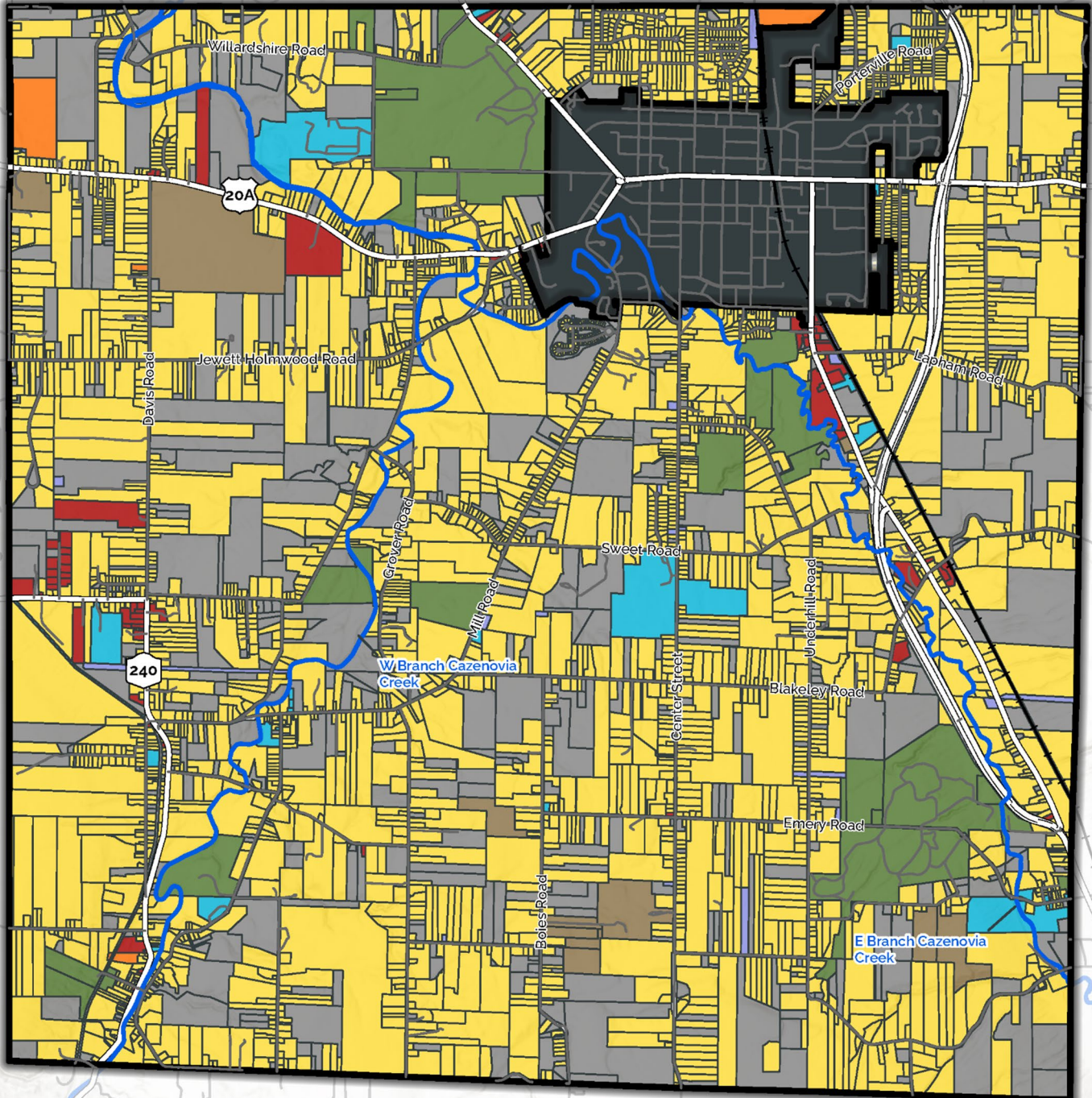
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Legend

- | | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Town of Aurora | Agricultural | Industrial | Recreation & Entertainment |
| Village of East Aurora | Commercial | Parks & Forested Land | Residential |
| Community Services | Public Services | Vacant Land | |

Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

Zoning Districts & Regulations

Residential Districts

Agriculture District (A)

The agricultural district is the most expansive zoning district in the Town as it covers approximately 14,589 acres (67.1%) of land within the Town. The zoning district covers the majority of lands that are not immediately adjacent to a roadway. Permitted uses within this zoning district include one- and two-family dwellings, agricultural pursuits, and seasonal cottages. Regulations in this district cover maximum height, building size, minimum lot size, and setbacks.

Rural Residential District (RR)

The rural residential district is the second largest zoning district in the Town as it covers approximately 3,941 acres (18.1%) of land within the Town. Parcels regulated by this district are those up to 300' from the road rights-of-way in the Town. Permitted uses within this zoning district include one- and two-family dwellings, places of worship, public and private schools, parks, home occupations, day cares, and bed-and-breakfasts. Regulations in this district cover maximum height, building size, minimum lot size, and setbacks.

Residence 1 District (R-1)

The residence 1 district (R-1) covers approximately 2,174 acres (10%) of land within the Town. Parcels regulated by this zoning district are well represented throughout the Town, however, the largest expanse of this district is found along the Town's northern boundary, around the Village of East Aurora. Permitted uses within this zoning district include single-family dwellings, places of worship, schools, parks, home occupations, day cares, and bed-and-breakfasts. Regulations in this district cover maximum height, building size, minimum lot size, and setbacks.

Residence 2 (R-2)

The residence 2 district (R-2) covers approximately 519 acres (2.4%) of land within the Town. Parcels regulated by this zoning district can be found around the Village of East Aurora, as well as the Town's more historically built-up areas such as the Hamlets of West Falls and Jewetville. Permitted uses within this zoning district include any uses permitted in the R1 district, two-family dwellings, professional home offices, and dwellings for up to three temporary roomers. Regulations for this district cover maximum height, building size, minimum lot size, and setbacks.

Residence 3 (R-3)

Residence 3 district (R-3) is the least expansive zoning district in the Town as it covers approximately 13.4 acres (0.1%) of land. Parcels regulated by this zoning district are found exclusively in the Hamlet of West Falls, aside from one small outpost north of the Village of East Aurora. Permitted uses within this zoning district include any uses permitted in the R2 district, multi-family dwellings (3+ units or townhouses), rooming houses, and nonprofit institutions with a special use permit. Regulations for this district cover maximum height, building size, minimum lot size, and setbacks.

Commercial Districts

Business 1 District (C-1)

The business 1 district (B-1) covers approximately 19 acres (0.1%) of land within the Town. Parcels regulated by this zoning district can be found in small groupings along the Town's major thoroughfares such as NYS 78, 240 and 400. The purpose of the zoning district is to provide areas or centers for shopping and service-oriented uses that are easily accessible to the neighborhoods which they serve and are not intended to draw customers from considerable distances. Permitted uses within this

zoning district include professional offices, goods and retail services, and any uses permitted in the R-2 district. Various other commercial uses are allowed by a special use permit.

Business 2 District (C-2)

The business 2 district (B-2) covers approximately 169 acres (0.8%) of land within the Town. Like the C-1 district, parcels regulated by the C-2 district can be found along the Town's major throughfares. The purpose of the zoning district is to provide areas in the Town where business offices and businesses may be located which include activities that may draw clientele from all areas in the Town and from outside the Town. Permitted uses within this zoning district include those allowed by right and special use permit in the C-1 district as well as other commercial uses that have a higher intensity of patronage and generation of potential nuisances. Regulations for this district cover maximum height, building size, minimum lot size, and setbacks.

Industrial District (I)

The industrial district (I) covers approximately 332 acres (1.5%) of land within the Town. Parcels regulated by this zoning district are largely concentrated along the Town's border with the Town of Orchard Park, along NYS route 240. The purpose of the zoning district is to provide areas in the Town where businesses, medium-sized retail, and industrial and manufacturing facilities may be located, which include activities that may draw clientele from all areas in the Town and from outside the Town. Permitted uses within this zoning district include any uses permitted in the C-2 district along with manufacturing facilities, food processing, junk yards, and adult-use cannabis establishments.

Overlays

West Falls Hamlet Overlay

Recognizing that the Hamlet of West Falls is an existing built-up area consisting of mixed-uses at a higher density than the rest of the town, the Town of Aurora's zoning ordinance includes a zoning overlay for the hamlet with the intent to preserve the character and quality of the area while encouraging service-oriented uses focused on meeting the needs of customers within West Falls. The overlay district covers properties contiguous to Bridge St and Route 240 from the southern border of the Town of Aurora to Behm Road. Overall, approximately 119 acres (0.5%) of land within the Town falls within the overlay district.

The overarching objectives the overlay are: (1) emphasizing redevelopment of existing properties, (2) permitting the conversion of residential structures to office and commercial space, (3) focusing projects at the pedestrian scale, (4) citing parking to the side or rear of buildings, (5) buffering development that adjoins sensitive land uses, (6) architectural standards that improve the image of the area, and (7) permitting franchise architecture. All uses permitted within the overlay are the same as those of the underlying zoning district. In addition to the regulations of the underlying zoning district, additional regulations include architectural standards, building standards, and landscaping standards.

ZONING

Town of Aurora

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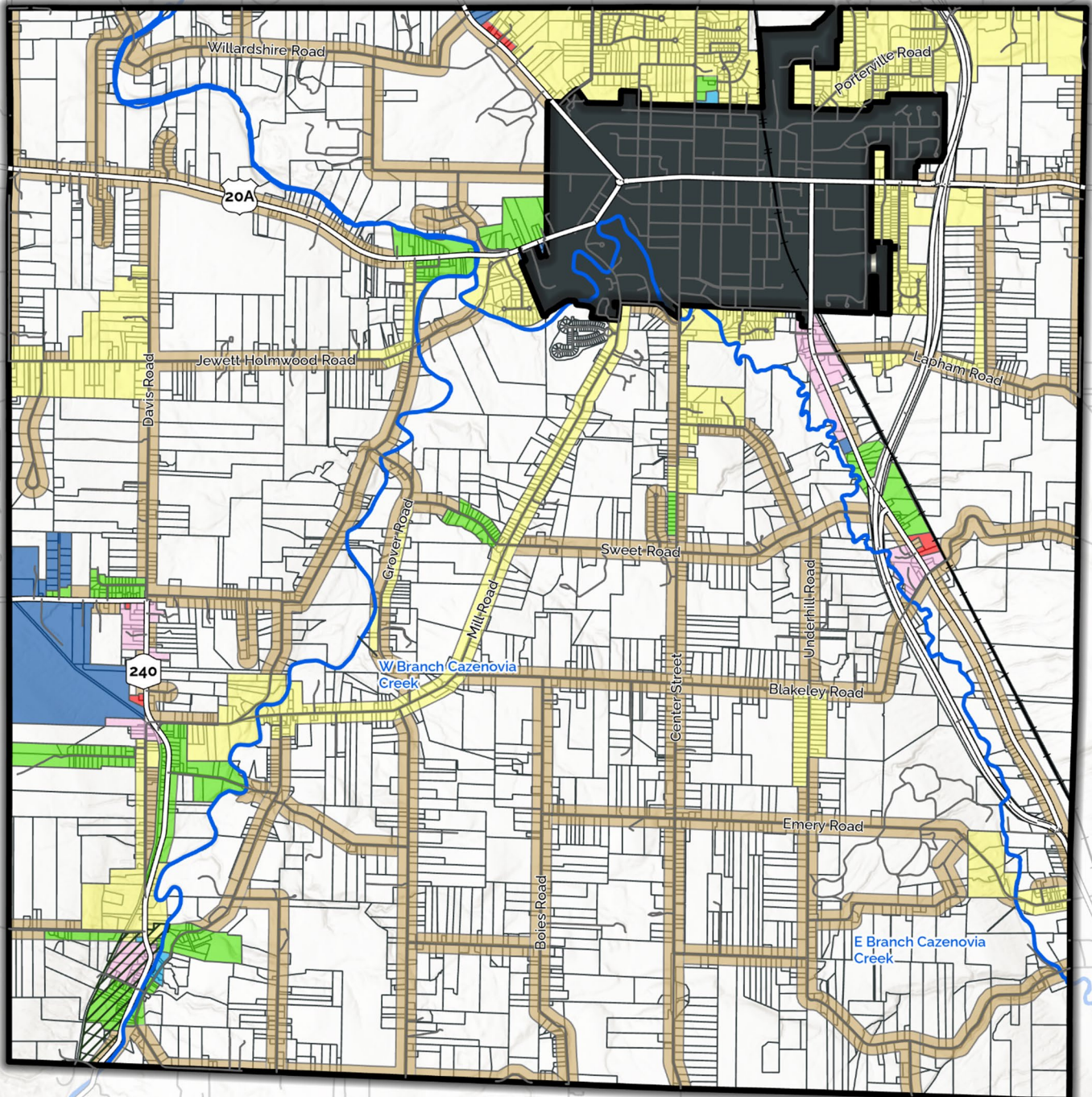
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Legend

Town of Aurora

Village of East Aurora

A - Agriculture

R1 - Residence 1

R2 - Residence 2

R3 - Residence 3

RR - Rural Residential

B1 - Business 1

B2 - Business 2

I - Industrial

West Falls Hamlet
Overlay District

Land Use Utilization by Zoning District

To determine how effective the Town's zoning regulations are at producing the desired land uses within each zoning district, an analysis was conducted to determine what types of land uses fall within each zoning district and how frequently they occur.

Based on the analysis of land use distribution, it is not surprising the single-family residential is the most common land use type across nearly all zoning districts, even for residential zoning districts whose intentions are to allow higher density residential uses. For instance, the R2 zoning district was established to allow for single-family and two-family housing, however, two-family housing only makes up 2.6% of all residential land uses in the district. Similarly, the R3 district is intended to allow multi-family housing, however, only 7.1% of housing types in the district are multi-family and an additional 7.1% are two-family homes.

Another misalignment between the Town's zoning districts and land use distribution is within their industrial district. The purpose of the zoning district is to provide areas in the Town where businesses, medium-sized retail, and industrial and manufacturing facilities may be located. However, 0% of the land uses within the district are considered industrial land uses. The majority of businesses within this district includes "Other storage, warehouse and distribution facilities".

		Zoning Districts						
		R1	R2	R3	RR	B1	B2	I
Land Uses	Residential	74.7%	81.5%	82.4%	66.5%	56.3%	39.8%	11.8%
	Single-Family Residential	98.6%	96.7%	85.7%	98.4%	88.9%	82.2%	50.0%
	Two-Family Residential	0.4%	2.6%	7.1%	1.6%	11.1%	13.3%	50.0%
	Multi-Family Residential	0.5%	0.7%	7.1%	0.1%	0.0%	4.4%	0.0%
	Commercial	0.3%	0.9%	5.9%	1.7%	18.8%	34.5%	52.9%
	Community Services	0.9%	0.9%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	1.8%	8.8%
	Public Services	0.5%	0.3%	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	0.9%	2.9%
	Industrial	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%	0.9%	0.0%
	Parks & Forest	0.7%	1.2%	0.0%	2.3%	0.0%	2.7%	0.0%
	Rec & Entertainment	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%
	Vacant Land	22.8%	15.2%	11.8%	26.1%	18.8%	18.6%	20.6%
	Agricultural	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	2.9%

Note: Land Use utilization could not be determined for the Agricultural District as this district is not bound by parcel lines and overlaps with parcels that are included in several other districts.

Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

What We Heard

Throughout the planning process, residents and stakeholders of Aurora were continuously engaged to ensure the plan reflects their desires and vision for the community. Engagement opportunities included a public survey, stakeholder interviews and focus groups, and a public workshop. With regard to land use and zoning, Community members strongly valued Aurora's rural character and voiced a clear preference for preserving open space, managing growth carefully, and updating zoning to reflect today's housing and business needs.

- **Preserve Rural Character and Open Space:** Residents support protecting farmland, forests, and scenic landscapes. Conservation and open space were the top land use priorities in the public survey.
- **Limit and Focus Development:** A majority of respondents want to *limit new development entirely* or direct it to specific locations, such as near the Village of East Aurora or in existing developed areas (i.e. hamlets). Infill development and reuse of vacant parcels were preferred over expanding into rural or natural areas
- **Modernize Zoning:** Many residents and stakeholders called for updated zoning that supports small-scale, context-sensitive growth, allows accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and enables mixed-use development in hamlets.
- **Infrastructure & Environmental Concerns:** Residents stressed that future development should align with existing infrastructure to avoid costly expansions. Concerns included increased traffic, loss of green space, and stormwater impacts.
- **Support Hamlet-Scale Growth:** West Falls and other hamlets were identified as appropriate places for modest, walkable development that respects their historic scale and character.

Key Issues & Opportunities

"Opportunities (✓)" represent existing strengths or assets in the Town that can be further leveraged and supports the potential for new development, business creation, or achieving the plan's vision statement and goals.

✓ **West Falls Hamlet Overlay District Encourages Thoughtful Growth:** The West Falls Hamlet Overlay offers a strong framework for maintaining historical character while promoting mixed-use development in a walkable environment. This approach supports small businesses and adaptive reuse of buildings. Similar overlays could be considered for other Hamlets and historically built-up areas in the Town.

✓ **Potential for Increased Housing Diversity in Higher-Density Residential Zones:** The R-2 and R-3 zoning districts were intended to support a mix of housing types, but single-family homes dominate. Encouraging duplexes, triplexes, and multi-family housing through zoning adjustments or incentives could provide more affordable housing options while accommodating changing demographics.

✓ **Industrial Zoning District as an Underutilized Asset for Economic Growth:** The Town's industrial zoning district covers 332 acres, yet there are no industrial land uses within it. This presents an opportunity to attract targeted industries such as light manufacturing, technology, or green energy businesses, which could diversify the local economy and provide new job opportunities.

"Issues (✗)" represent either existing needs or gaps in the Town the limits to future development or from achieving the plan's vision statement and goals.

✗ **Infrastructure Limitations for Future Growth:** Expanding residential and commercial development could require significant investment in infrastructure, including water, sewer, and roads. The Town's current rural land use pattern makes infrastructure expansion costly, so strategic infill development where infrastructure already exists should be prioritized to maximize efficiency and minimize costs.

✗ **Traffic and Transportation Challenges Along Major Corridors:** With commercial uses concentrated along NYS Routes 240, 20A, and 16, there is potential for congestion and safety concerns, particularly if development increases. A lack of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure along these corridors' further limits mobility and access.

Housing & Neighborhoods

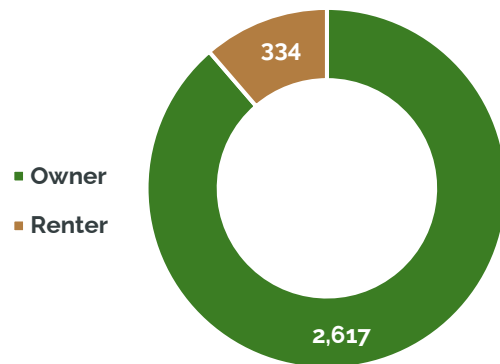
A comprehensive assessment of local housing conditions is crucial for understanding how current residents live and for identifying strategies to attract new residents to the Town of Aurora. Ensuring that the town remains accessible and appealing to a diverse population is key to its long-term vitality. This section examines Aurora's housing landscape, including the age of its housing stock, housing types, tenure rates, and housing costs and affordability, as well as projections for future housing demand. To assist in the evaluation and the understanding of current issues, comparisons are made to the Towns of Orchard Park and Concord, as well as the entirety of Erie County.

Housing Characteristics Data sources: U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-year estimates & Decennial Census; Landmax Data Systems; Redfin Real Estate Brokerage)

Housing Tenure

As of 2022, the Town of Aurora (excluding the Village of East Aurora) had an estimated 3,392 occupied housing units (95%) and 173 vacant units (5%). Of the occupied housing in The Town of Aurora, 2,617 of those units (89%) are owner occupied while 334 (11%) are renter occupied.

Comparatively, both the towns of Concord and Orchard Park have higher percentages of renter-occupied units, making up approximately 26% of their housing stock, compared to just 11% in Aurora.



Housing Stock Type

The distribution of housing units in The Town of Aurora is heavily skewed towards single family housing which makes up 82.8% of all housing units in the Town. Large multi-unit homes (5+ units) are the second most common housing type, making up 7.4% of all units. In total, all multi-family housing (2 or more units) comprises 16.8% of all housing within the Town of Aurora.

Orchard Park has a slightly lower percentage of single-family homes (8.9% fewer) compared to Aurora. The second most common housing type in Orchard Park is apartment complexes with 5 or more units, which represents 18.3% of all their housing, compared to just 7.4% of Aurora's

In Concord, single-family homes constitute a smaller share of housing at 74%, followed by buildings with five or more units at 11.6%, and triplexes or quadplexes at 6.9%.



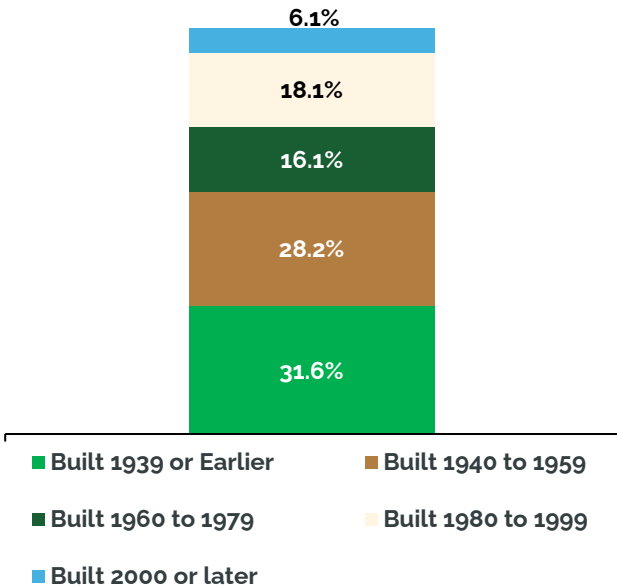
Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

Housing Stock Age

Most homes in the Town of Aurora are over 65 years old, with 59.8% built before 1960. In contrast, fewer than 30% of homes in Orchard Park and 43.5% in Concord were built before 1960.

Since 2000, only 6.1% of homes have been constructed within the Town of Aurora, including 180 units since 2010. Comparatively, 14% of Orchard Park's homes and 13.2% of Concord's homes were built after 2000.



Housing Sales

Based on data collected from Landmax, which compiles information from public records (tax assessor, county deed records, etc.), there were 86 homes sales in The Town of Aurora throughout 2023, a 56.4% increase compared to the 55 home sales in 2013. Through both years, single-family homes were by and large the most common home sale type, making up 98.2% of home sales in 2013 and 98.8% in 2023. Even after accounting for inflation, the average home sale price increased by 62.3% or \$181,311 over this 10-year window. Compared to Erie County as a whole, the increase in home sales prices in Aurora outpaced the county, which saw only a 37% increase—equivalent to \$85,064—over the same period.

	Town of Aurora							
	SFH		MFH		Seasonal		Mobile	
	Count	Avg \$	Count	Avg \$	Count	Avg \$	Count	Avg \$
2013	54	\$294,905	1	\$93,752	0	N/A	0	N/A
2023	85	\$473,098	1	\$426,796	0	N/A	0	N/A

	Erie County							
	SFH		MFH		Seasonal		Mobile	
	Count	Avg \$	Count	Avg \$	Count	Avg \$	Count	Avg \$
2013	4,180	\$171,379	387	\$175,399	10	\$61,376	3	\$61,000
2023	7,165	\$307,300	886	\$291,608	6	\$82,608	7	\$63,057

Over the five-year period from 2020 to 2024, the Town of Aurora experienced a surge in real estate sales immediately following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (2021–2022), with 134 single family home sales recorded in 2021 and 142 in 2022. Since then, the number of single-family home sales has returned to pre-pandemic levels, with 86 sales in 2023 and 67 sales in 2024. In reviewing the most recent sales, there are clusters of activity near the Village of East Aurora, with a particularly high concentration of sales along Aurora Mill Road, Milestone Drive, and Creekstone Drive. These sales mostly involve newly constructed homes. When comparing sales prices over this same period—and adjusting for inflation—single-family home prices increased by more than \$50,000 on average. In contrast, multi-family home prices remained relatively steady, ranging from \$341,000 to \$463,000. However, there was considerable fluctuation due to the small number of multi-family transactions (only five) during this span.

Single Family Home Sales (Landmax)

	SF Sales	Sale Price	Inflation Adjusted
2020	112	\$354,281.40	\$432,077.40
2021	134	\$351,950.80	\$401,017.80
2022	142	\$455,411.10	\$487,440.57
2023	86	\$458,913.40	\$475,258.00
2024	67	\$480,618.30	\$483,765.50

Multi-Family Home Sales (Landmax)

	MF Sales	Sale Price	Inflation Adjusted
2020	1	\$380,000.00	\$463,443.49
2021	3	\$300,000.00	\$341,824.30
2022	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
2023	1	\$414,000.00	\$428,745.00
2024	0	\$0.00	\$0.00

Housing sales transactions for single-family homes were also compared against MLS data from 2013 to 2024. MLS Brokerage data is data collected and managed by real estate professionals (brokers and agents) who list properties for sale or lease. When excluding the Village of East Aurora, the following sales trends emerged. The Realtor MLS database recorded a higher total number of transactions in 2013; however, the average sales price was approximately 18% lower than that reported by the Landmax system. By 2023, the most recent year with data from both platforms, MLS recorded seven fewer transactions, with an average sales price 2.7% lower than that reported by Landmax. However, this data only includes transactions reported in the Realtor MLS database and does not account for private sales conducted independently. Year over year, MLS Brokerage data reported an average sale price increase of 6.8% for Aurora homes. Nationally, home sale prices typically increase by 3-5% annually; across Erie County, home sale prices increased by 6.3% on average each year.

Year	Count	Average Cost (\$)	Year Over Year % Change
2013	78	\$240,947	N/A
2014	83	\$275,430	14.3%
2015	68	\$281,895	2.3%
2016	95	\$313,268	11.1%
2017	89	\$313,845	0.2%
2018	91	\$345,569	10.1%
2019	93	\$347,977	0.7%
2020	92	\$360,561	3.6%
2021	81	\$399,854	10.9%
2022	99	\$489,262	22.4%
2023	64	\$460,461	-5.9%
2024	73	\$481,702	4.6%

HOME SALES (2021 - 2024)

Town of Aurora

400

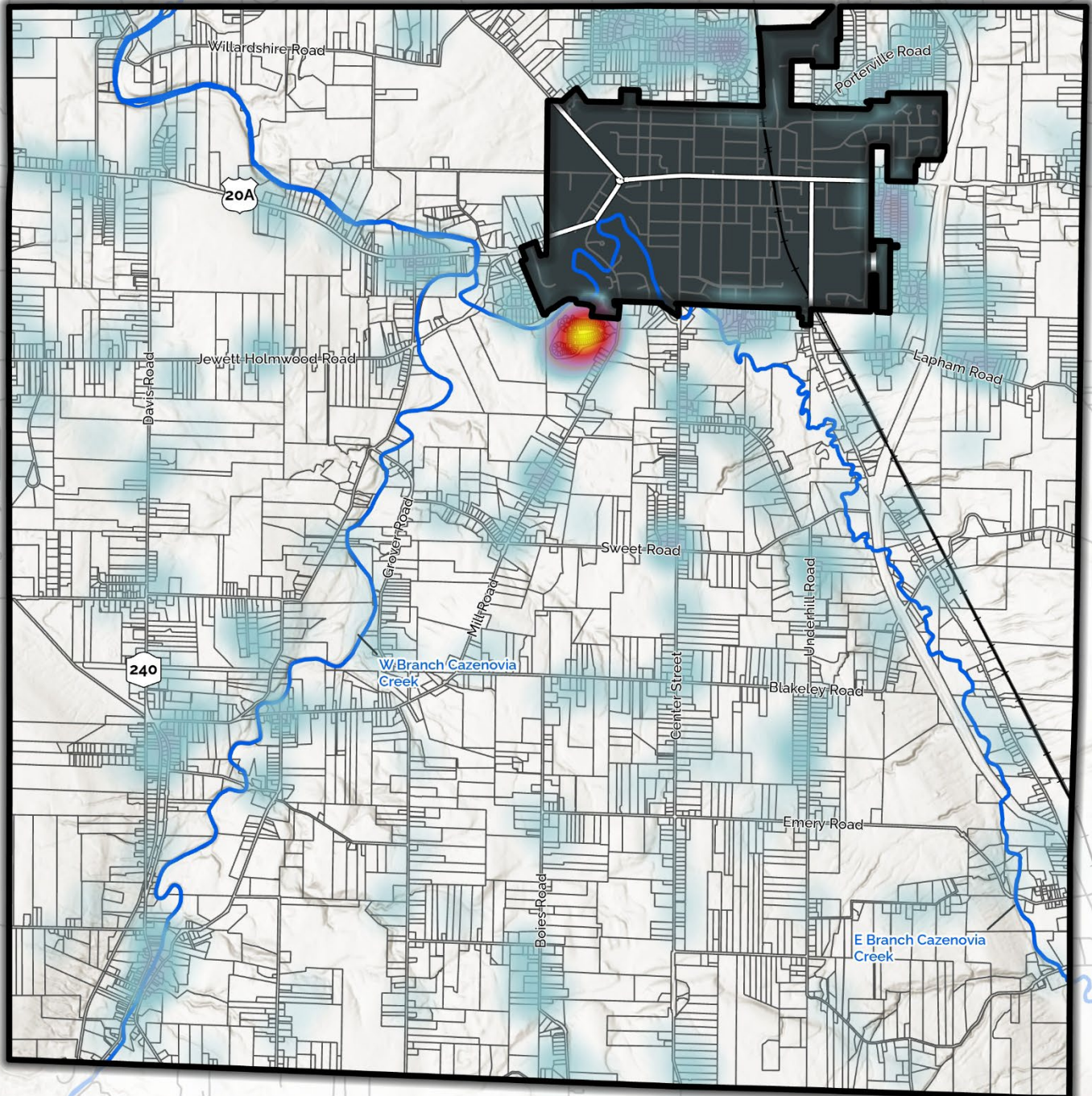
1



Miles

187

78



Legend

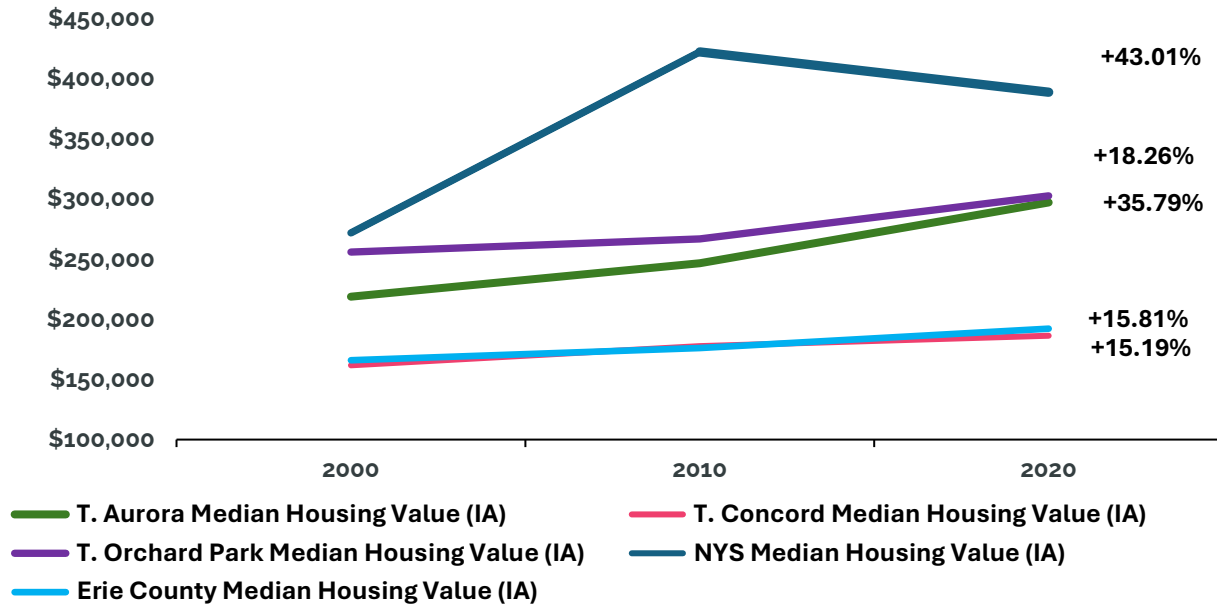
-  Town of Aurora
-  Village of East Aurora

Homes Sales Density



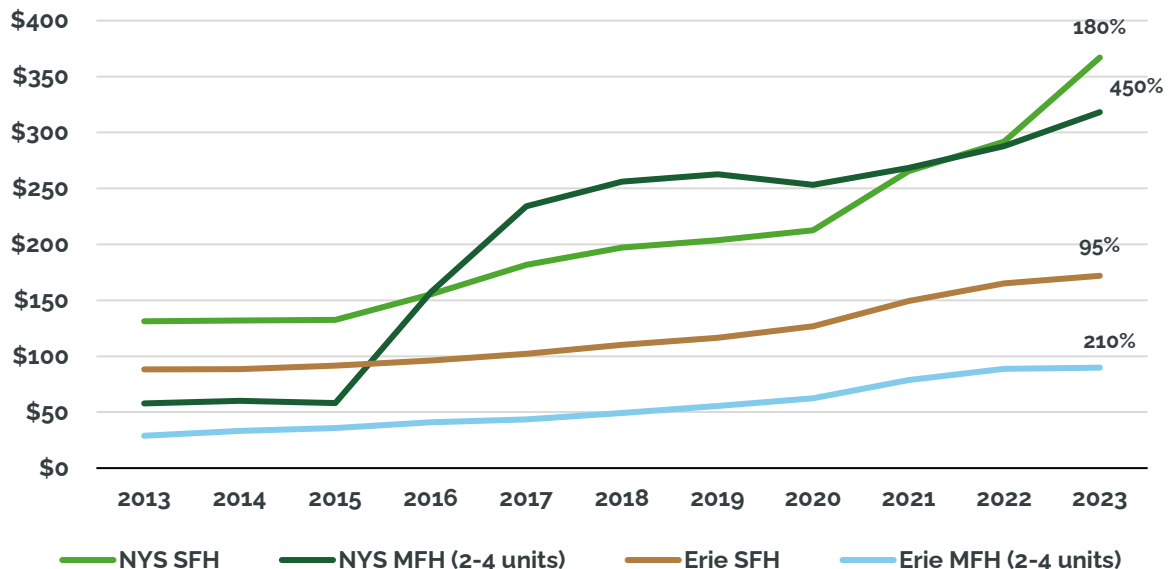
Housing Value

Between 2000 and 2020, the median home value in the Town of Aurora rose 35.79% to \$296,974. While this increase was lower than the statewide growth of 43%, it outpaced Erie County (+15.81%) and neighboring communities like Orchard Park (+18.26%) and Concord (15.19%).



Housing Sales per Square Foot

Using data from Redfin Real Estate Brokerage, the average cost per square foot of home sales for single-family and 2-4-unit multi-family homes was analyzed from 2013 to 2023 for Erie County and New York State. As of 2023, it costs an average of \$171.91 per sq ft for a single-family home and \$89.79 per sq ft for a 2-4-unit apartment in Erie County. Since 2013, square footage costs for these types of homes have increased by 95% and 210%, respectively. Statewide, the average cost per square foot for a single-family home is \$367 per sq ft, and for a 2-4-unit multi-family home, it is \$318.17 per sq ft. Since 2013, costs across New York State have increased by 180% and 450%, respectively.



Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

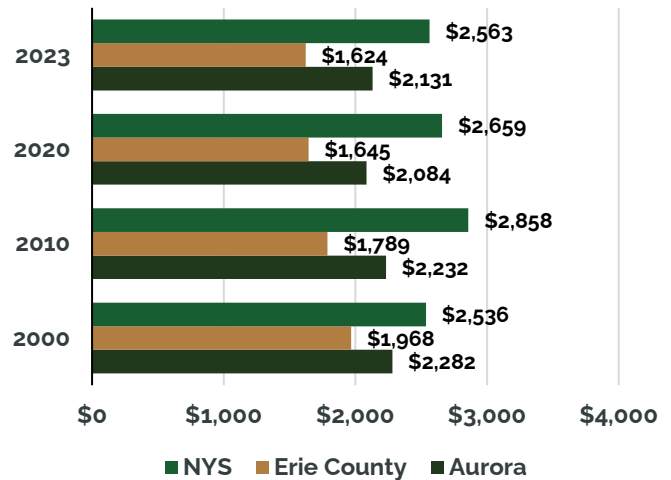
Community Profile Draft

Housing Affordability

(Data sources: U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-year estimates & Decennial Census; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI Inflation Calculator; HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy)

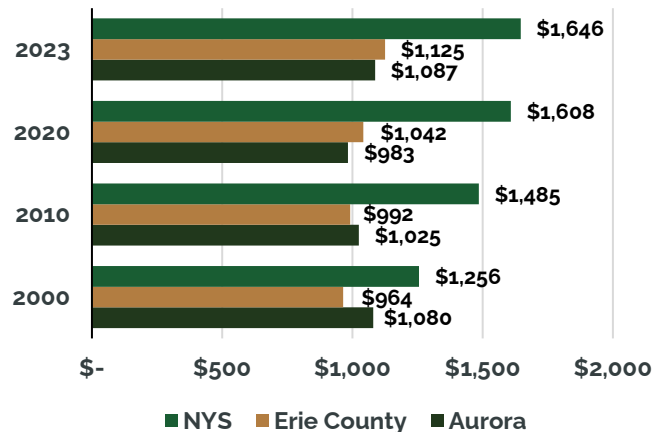
Monthly Mortgage Costs

Since 2000, when adjusting for inflation (IA), the median mortgage in The Town of Aurora has decreased by 6.6%. Comparatively, in that same time, the median mortgage in Erie County has decreased by 17.5%; across NYS it has increased by 1.1%. As of 2023, the median mortgage (IA) in The Town of Aurora is \$2,131 while across NYS the median mortgage (IA) is \$2,563, a difference of \$432. This likely due to a higher frequency of cash sales as the housing market has intensified throughout the region.



Monthly Renter Costs

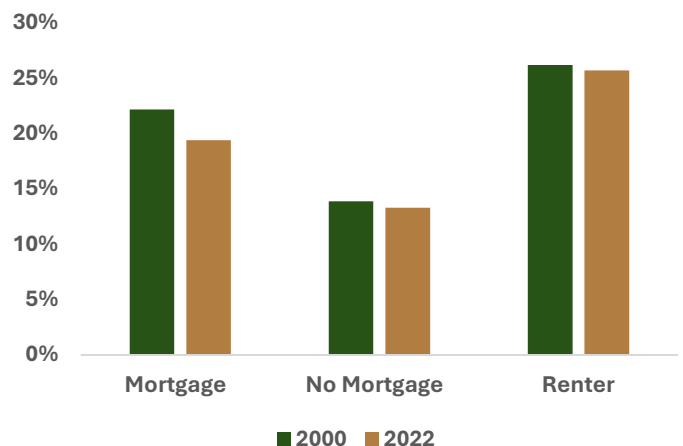
Since 2000, when adjusting for inflation (IA), the median gross rent in The Town of Aurora has increased by 0.65%. Comparatively, in that same time, the median gross rent in Erie County has increased by 16.7%; across NYS the gross rent has increased by 31.05%. As of 2023, the median gross rent (IA) in the Town of Aurora is \$1,087 while across NYS the median gross rent (IA) is \$1,646, a difference of \$559.



Household Income v. Housing Costs

As of 2022, the median household income (MHI) in the Town of Aurora, adjusted for inflation, is \$104,899—an 8.1% increase since 2000.

Meanwhile, the median annual housing cost in the town is \$25,064, reflecting a 6.4% decrease from the inflation-adjusted cost of \$26,771 in 2000. Overall, housing costs have declined for both owners and renters since 2000, with the average household in both categories spending less than 30% of their income on housing—below the threshold for being considered cost-burdened.

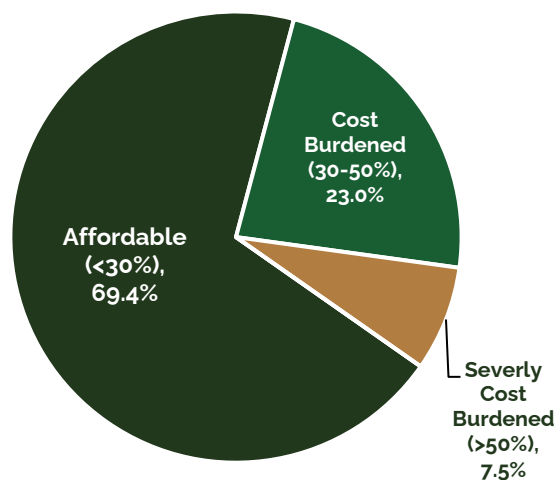


Owner & Renter Cost Burdens

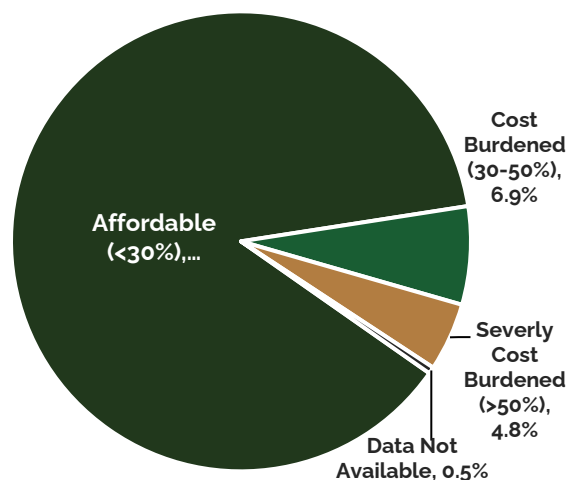
While housing affordability in Aurora has generally improved over time, a significant number of residents, particularly renters, still experience housing cost burdens. The HUD Area Median Family Income (HAMFI) is the median family income calculated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for a given jurisdiction. These values are used by HUD to determine fair market rent rates and income limits for HUD funded programs. The Town of Aurora is a part of the Buffalo-Cheektowaga Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), for which HUD calculates the median family income to be \$96,900, \$2,331 less than the median household income in The Town of Aurora (\$99,231)

Also maintained by HUD, the Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy dataset (CHAS), provides information on household income, housing affordability, and housing cost burdens. CHAS data is expressed as a percentage of HAMFI spent on housing costs. For renters, housing costs include the cost of rent and utilities. For homeowners, housing costs include the cost of mortgage payments, utilities, association fees, insurance, and real estate taxes. Households spending less than 30% of their total income on housing are considered to have "affordable" housing costs. Households spending 30% to 50% of their income on housing are "cost-burdened," and households spending more than 50% are considered "severely cost burdened". As of 2021, 30.7% of renters and 11.7% of homeowners in Aurora are living in housing that is unaffordable.

Housing Affordability for Renters (2021)

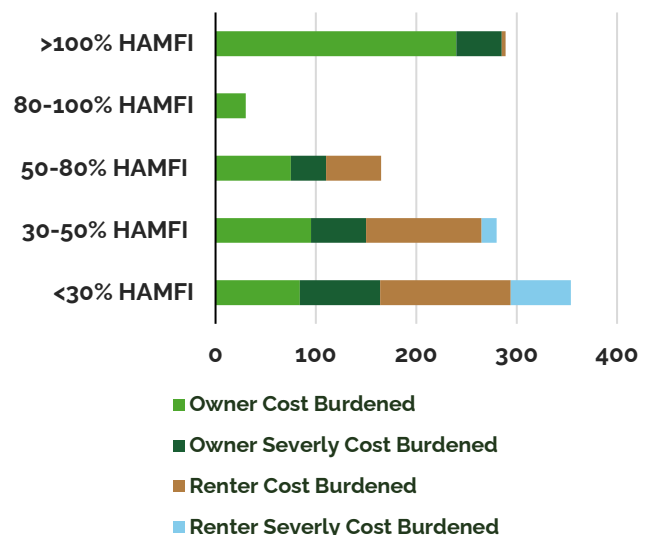


Housing Affordability for Owners (2021)



Cost burden by Income

When examining cost-burdened households by income, the most significant housing affordability challenges are found among households earning 50% or less of Aurora's HAMFI, with 634 households experiencing cost burdens. At the over 100% HAMFI level, a notable 285 owner-occupied households are also cost-burdened. No renter households earning 80-100% or more of Aurora's HAMFI are cost-burdened; however, cost burdens are observed among owner-occupied households at all income levels.



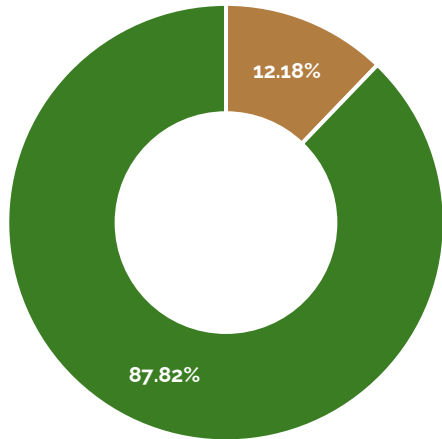
Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

Housing Problems

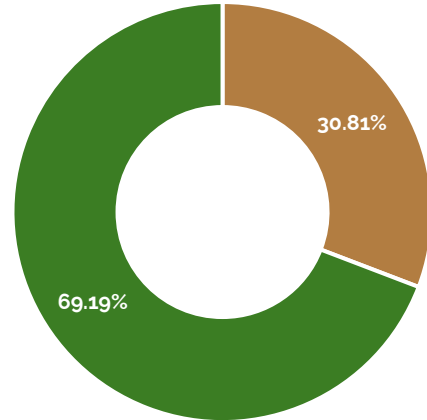
Approximately 31% of renter-occupied rental units throughout the Town of Aurora have at least one recorded housing problem. Comparatively, only 12.8% of owner-occupied units have a recorded housing problem. Housing problems include incomplete kitchen facilities, incomplete plumbing, there is more than one person per bedroom, or the housing cost burden is greater than 30%.

Owner Units with Housing Problems, 2021



■ Housing Problems ■ No Housing Problems

Rental Units with Housing Problems, 2021



■ Housing Problems ■ No Housing Problems

Future Housing Demand

There are an estimated 2,840 single-family and 230 multi-family homes in the Town of Aurora. Of the 2,840 single-family homes, 2,223 are on standard large lots (>7,000 sq ft) and only 617 are on small lots (<7,000 sq ft). The Envision Tomorrow Balanced Housing Model was used to project the additional housing units needed by 2040 under both high-end and low-end growth scenarios.

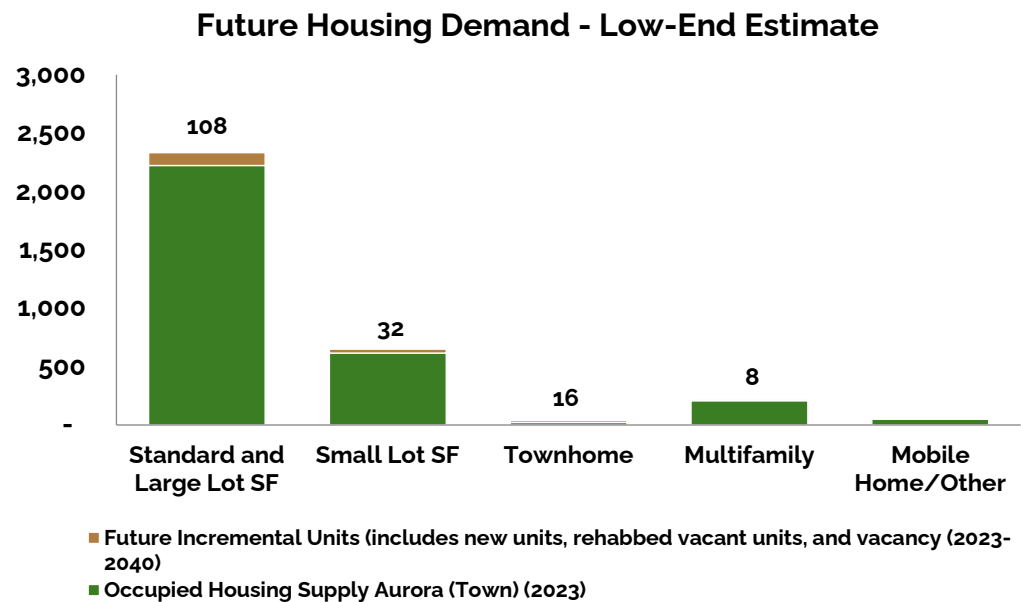
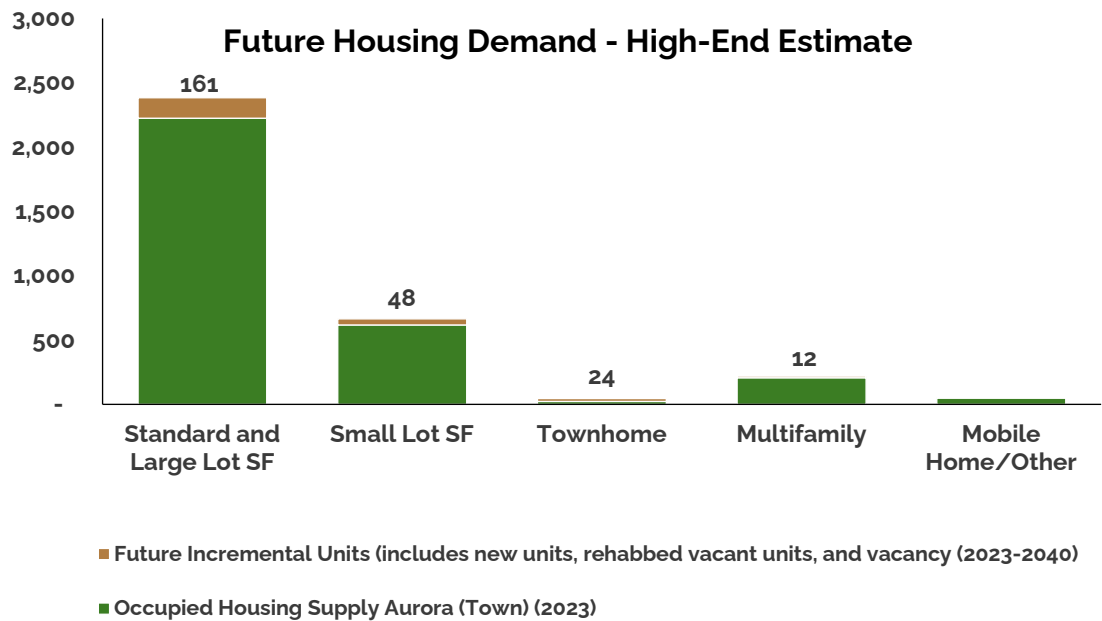
High Estimate

Under the high-end growth scenario, the Envision Tomorrow Balanced Housing Model predicts that to accommodate the Town's new households, there will need to be 245 future incremental units. These new units don't only include new builds but also may include vacant building rehabilitations or the conversion of single-family homes to higher densities (i.e. duplexes). Most of these households (65%) are projected to be large lot single family homes. To provide a balanced and sustainable supply of housing, the model has projected that there will need to be 161 new large-lot single-family homes, 48 small-lot single-family homes, 24 townhomes, and 12 multi-family units.

Low Estimate

Contrastingly, under the low-end growth scenario, the Envision Tomorrow Balanced Housing Model projects a demand for 164 additional housing units—one-third fewer than in the high-end growth scenario. These units are not limited to new construction but may also include rehabilitated vacant buildings or the conversion of single-family homes into higher-density housing (e.g., duplexes).

As with the high-end growth estimate, the majority (65%) of these households are expected to be large-lot single-family homes. To ensure a balanced and sustainable housing supply, the model forecasts the need for 108 new large-lot single-family homes, 32 small-lot single-family homes, 16 townhomes, and 8 multi-family units.



Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

What We Heard

Throughout the planning process, residents and stakeholders of Aurora were continuously engaged to ensure the plan reflects their desires and vision for the community. Engagement opportunities included a public survey, stakeholder interviews and focus groups, and a public workshop. With regard to Housing & Neighborhoods, residents expressed concern about the availability and affordability of housing in Aurora, with an emphasis on maintaining community character while expanding options for all life stages.

- **Need for Diverse Housing Options:** Many emphasized the need for senior housing, affordable rentals, and “missing middle” housing types like duplexes and townhomes to support aging residents and young families.
- **Affordability Concerns:** Rising home prices and limited rental availability were frequently cited. Residents worry that younger generations and local workers are being priced out of the community.
- **Focus Housing Near the Village and Infrastructure** Community members prefer concentrating on new housing near the Village of East Aurora or within existing neighborhoods, where infrastructure and amenities already exist.
- **Support for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs):** There was strong support for allowing ADUs as a way to increase affordability, support multigenerational living, and help seniors age in place.

Key Issues & Opportunities

"Opportunities (✓)" represent existing strengths or assets in the Town that can be further leveraged and supports the potential for new development, business creation, or achieving the plan's vision statement and goals.

✓ **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) & “Missing Middle” Infill:** Updating zoning to permit ADUs by right, and encouraging duplexes, triplexes, or cottage courts would expand lower-cost options without large-scale development, accommodating seniors, young families, and single professionals.

✓ **Housing Rehabilitation & Preservation Programs:** Significant amount of existing housing in Aurora is over 65 years old. A local revolving loan fund or grant program could help maintain these structures, improve energy efficiency, and keep housing affordable for existing homeowners, preventing displacement and preserving neighborhood character.

✓ **Targeted Senior Living Near Infrastructure:** Encouraging senior-friendly or assisted-living developments within or adjacent to sewer service areas near the Village could reduce sprawl, ensure easy access to essential services, and help older adults age in place.

✓ **Workforce Housing Close to Jobs:** Incentivizing mixed-use or higher-density housing near commercial corridors and employment centers would allow teachers, service workers, and first responders to live closer to workplaces, bolstering Aurora's workforce and local economy.

"Issues (✗)" represent either existing needs or gaps in the Town the limits to future development or from achieving the plan's vision statement and goals.

✗ **Limited Housing Diversity and Choice:** Over 80% of Aurora's housing stock consists of single-family homes, leaving few options for renters, seniors, or moderate-income households seeking multi-family, duplex, or townhouse units.

✗ **Affordability Pressures & Cost Burdens:** Although inflation-adjusted mortgage costs have declined overall, an estimated 31% of renters and 11.7% of homeowners still spend more than 30% of their income on housing, impacting lower-income residents most acutely.

✗ **Lack of Senior-Friendly Housing:** With Aurora's median age rising, many older adults have difficulty finding accessible, single-floor living or assisted-living facilities; this lack of senior options can force longtime residents to relocate elsewhere.

✗ **Aging Housing Stock & Rehab Needs:** Most homes in Aurora are over 65 years old, often requiring costly maintenance or energy efficiency upgrades that can strain homeowner budgets and limit overall housing quality.

Municipal and Public Services

An inventory of municipal and public services within the Town demonstrates all the amenities that make the community a desirable place to live as well as helping call out any gaps that exist which could be targeted for improvement in the future. Various services are provided throughout the Town of Aurora; however, some services are limited or may not exist due to the rural and low-density character of the community.

Community Services

The Town of Aurora offers a variety of community services to support residents of all ages. The Aurora Municipal Building houses essential services, including the Town Clerk's Office, which manages records, permits, and licenses such as marriage certificates, dog licenses, and handicap parking permits. The Building & Code Enforcement Department oversees zoning regulations and ensures compliance with safety standards, while the Assessor's Office maintains property records and tax assessments.

The Town of Aurora Senior Center offers a range of services and programs to support the well-being of residents aged 55 and older. The center provides a Nutrition Lunch Program, offering hot, nutritious meals on weekdays at noon for a suggested donation of \$3.50 per meal. Seniors can reserve meals in advance and enjoy socializing with peers in a welcoming environment. Additionally, the center hosts various fitness programs aimed at promoting health and mobility, including exercise classes tailored for older adults. The Aurora Senior Center is a highly utilized facility and service in the Town and is outgrowing its limited space, which in turn limits the ability to expand the services it offers.

The Aurora Town Public Libraries (Town of Aurora Public Library & West Falls-Colden Community Library) offers free internet access, community meeting rooms, and lending services, including books, media, and unique items like the Empire Pass for state parks. The Town maintains parks and recreation programs, including sports leagues, fitness classes, and community events. Seasonal activities and town-sponsored events provide opportunities for social engagement and enrichment.

Police & Fire Department

The Town of Aurora, in conjunction with the Village of East Aurora, is served by the East Aurora/Town of Aurora Police Department. This department is dedicated to protecting life and property, enforcing laws, preventing crime, and providing emergency services to the community. Additionally, the Erie County Sheriff's Office may provide support and assistance within the Town of Aurora as needed.

Fire protection services in the Town are provided by the East Aurora Volunteer Fire Department. This all-volunteer organization is committed to delivering professional emergency fire, rescue, and EMS services to residents. Additionally, the West Falls Volunteer Fire Company serves areas within the Town of Aurora. This volunteer organization provides fire protection and emergency response services to the West Falls community and surrounding areas.

Towns Roads

The Town of Aurora Department of Highway Department provides a variety of road maintenance services across the Town, including but not limited to repairing and paving roads, mowing roadsides, trimming and cutting down dead trees, cleaning out ditches, installing new culvert pipes where they are needed, chipping branches, and picking up chunk wood. The Highway Department also plows and salts all Town and County roads throughout the winter. Across the town, approximately 26.2 miles of roads are owned by New York State, 45 miles are owned by Erie County, and 50.9 miles are owned by Aurora.

Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

Waste & Recycling

Town waste and recycling services are managed through a contract with Waste Management for residents outside the Village of East Aurora. Town residents are advised to place their garbage and recyclables at the roadside within 5 feet of the road before 7:00 a.m. on their designated collection day.

The Town of Aurora Highway Department offers additional services, including the collection of tires (limit of two per household) and car batteries during scheduled weeks in April, June, August, and October. In the fall, leaf collection is provided from mid-October through December 1, weather permitting; residents should rake leaves to within 3 feet of the roadside for pickup. The department also handles the pickup of chunk wood and tree limbs, with specific guidelines for size and stacking, during the first working Monday of each month from April through October.

Drinking Water

Drinking water in the Town is supplied via direct access by the Erie County Water Authority (ECWA). ECWA owns and operates the entire system, and is responsible for all customer service, billing, and capital improvements. Overall, 2,799 properties (68% of properties) in Aurora have access to public drinking water, while 974 (23.9% of properties) get their water via private wells. Property owners with a private well system are responsible for ensuring proper well maintenance, testing, and treatment to maintain water quality. In contrast, all municipalities east and south of Aurora either have their own municipal drinking water system or are totally reliant on private well systems.

Sewer & Stormwater

The Erie County Water Authority (ECWA) provides the Town with direct sewer service. The Erie County Division of Sewerage Management (DSM) serves the Village and portions of the Town. The Village and portions of the Town are assigned to Sewer District No. 8, which operates infrastructure such as collector sewers, pumping stations, and a water resource recovery facility. Erie County's sewer district 8 covers approximately 2,462 acres of land within the Town, which includes the entirety of the Village of East Aurora, several town parcels around the Village, and parcels along Center Street leading up to the high school. Overall, 417 properties (10% of properties) in the Town of Aurora have sewer service. Additionally, the Town still maintains a small sewer district, including the following roads:

- South Herrick
- Heiler Drive
- Hickory Lane
- Mary James Lane
- Mitchell Road

In addition to sewer services, the Town manages stormwater drainage to prevent flooding, erosion, and water pollution. The stormwater system includes a network of drains, culverts, and retention basins that direct runoff from roads, properties, and public spaces into natural waterways.

2,963 properties (72.8%) within the Town rely on private septic systems for wastewater treatment, as municipal sewer services are not available in all areas. A typical system consists of a septic tank, where solids settle and break down, and a leach field, where effluent liquid is filtered into the soil. Homeowners are responsible for routine maintenance, including pumping the tank every 3-5 years to prevent system failure and environmental contamination. The Erie County Health Department regulates septic system installation and maintenance, requiring permits for new or replacement systems to ensure compliance with health and environmental standards.

Telecommunications

Internet services in the Town are provided by multiple broadband and wireless providers, such as Spectrum, GoNetspeed, T-Mobile Home Internet, Viasat, and Starlink. These providers offer residents access to high-speed internet, cable, and fiber-optic connections, depending on location. While areas within and near the Village of East Aurora typically have access to fiber-optic and cable internet, more rural parts of the town may rely on DSL, fixed wireless, or satellite internet due to infrastructure limitations. Additionally, some locations where fiber-optic lines have been installed have negatively impacted tree cover by significantly trimming tree limbs to accommodate the installation. Major service providers offer a range of speeds and packages to meet residential and business needs, with ongoing efforts to expand broadband coverage to underserved areas.

Erie County is currently in the process of building out their middle-mile community fiber optic broadband network called ErieNet. The mission of the new county not-for-profit will be to address the broadband needs of underserved communities by developing the infrastructure needed for service providers to install last-mile service connections. ErieNet is expected to begin build-out in the nearby Town of Boston by 2026, with tie-ins to the Town of Aurora slated for the future.

Electricity and Natural Gas

Electricity in the Town of Aurora is provided by New York State Electric & Gas (NYSEG) while natural gas is provided by National Fuel. These utilities ensure reliable energy distribution to homes and businesses, with NYSEG maintaining the electrical grid, responding to outages, and offering energy efficiency programs, while National Fuel supplies natural gas for heating, cooking, and other residential and commercial uses. Customers have the option of choosing alternative Energy Service Companies (ESCOs) for electricity and gas supply while still relying on the main utility providers for distribution and maintenance.

Recently, through the support of the Town's Climate Smart Communities Committee, the Town has rolled out a Community Solar program called Aurora Solar Savings, which is an opt-in program. Through NYSEG, residents can sign up at no cost to have a portion of their electricity they use to be sourced from a solar energy farm. The program currently receives its energy from a solar project in Halfmoon, NY which is north of Albany, NY. there are only a few hundred spots provided to Aurora which have all be claimed, but the Town is actively working to expand the number of slots for the program. The program is a benefit to the community and residents for several reasons, including up to 10% off utility bills, no need for roof-mounted solar panels, and the town receives additional grant funding through the program success which can be invested towards other clean energy projects.

What We Heard

Throughout the planning process, residents and stakeholders of Aurora were continuously engaged to ensure the plan reflects their desires and vision for the community. Engagement opportunities included a public survey, stakeholder interviews and focus groups, and a public workshop. With regard to Public & Municipal Services, community feedback emphasized the importance of maintaining high-quality public services while addressing infrastructure gaps and preparing for future needs.

- **Internet & Cell Service Gaps:** Many residents, especially in the southern and more rural areas, reported poor internet and cell service. Expanding high-speed broadband was a top priority for improving access to work, education, and emergency services.
- **Desire for Sustainable Services:** There is interest in expanding recycling, e-waste drop-off, and composting programs to improve environmental sustainability.
- **Protecting the Tree Canopy:** Utility upgrades have resulted in significant tree loss, prompting calls for a coordinated tree management and preservation plan.

Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

- **Senior Services in High Demand:** With a growing senior population, residents called for enhanced transportation, health services, and community programming to support aging in place

Key Issues & Opportunities

"Opportunities (✓)" represent existing strengths or assets in the Town that can be further leveraged and supports the potential for new development, business creation, or achieving the plan's vision statement and goals.

✓ **Broadband Expansion to Enhance Connectivity in Rural Areas:** While some areas have high-speed internet, rural parts of the Town still rely on DSL or satellite services. Expanding broadband access, particularly fiber-optic networks, could attract remote workers, support small businesses, and improve digital access for residents.

✓ **Enhancement of Senior Services and Community Programming:** With a growing senior population, there is an opportunity to expand programs at the Senior Center, such as transportation services, health screenings, and technology training to improve digital literacy and social connectivity.

✓ **Sustainable Waste Management Initiatives:** The Town already offers some waste and recycling services, but opportunities exist for expanding composting programs, hazardous waste collection, or educational initiatives to promote waste reduction and environmental sustainability.

"Issues (✗)" represent either existing needs or gaps in the Town the limits to future development or from achieving the plan's vision statement and goals.

✗ **Aging Road and Stormwater Infrastructure:** With a significant amount of road maintenance responsibility, ongoing repairs and stormwater management will require investment. Flooding and erosion concerns may increase with more extreme weather events.

✗ **Tree Canopy Loss Due to Infrastructure Upgrades:** Broadband and utility installations have led to significant tree trimming, impacting the Town's natural character and environmental benefits. Implementing policies for responsible tree management alongside infrastructure expansion could help mitigate this issue.

Transportation Systems

Transportation systems are the arteries of community life—supporting mobility, shaping land use patterns, and influencing public safety and environmental health. In the Town of Aurora, the rural landscape, limited public transportation, and reliance on personal vehicles have defined a transportation network that is both an asset and a challenge. Key corridors such as NYS Routes 20A and 16 serve as vital connectors to regional employment centers, yet high traffic volumes and limited pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure present growing concerns for safety and accessibility. As the Town continues to evolve, identifying opportunities to enhance connectivity, support alternative transportation options, and promote walkability will be critical in fostering a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Transportation Network

The Town of Aurora's transportation network is characterized by roadways under various jurisdictions. NYS Route 20A, otherwise known as Quaker Road, Hamburg Street, Main Street and Big Tree Road, is an east-west two-lane minor arterial in Aurora and is considered a gateway to the Town of Orchard Park, the Town of Wales, and NYS Interstate 400, otherwise known as the Aurora Expressway. NYS Route 20A generally consists of 12-foot-wide travel lanes with added turn lanes and various lane width changes throughout the Town boundary. NYS Route 16, otherwise known as Olean Street and Olean Road, is a north-south corridor that begins at Main Street in the Village of East Aurora and spans through the Hamlet of South Wales within the Aurora township boundary. NYS Route 16 consists of approximately 12-foot-wide travel lanes and varying shoulder widths. Other key corridors in the Town include Center Street, Buffalo Road, Davis Road, Mill Road, and Maple Street.

TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Town of Aurora

400

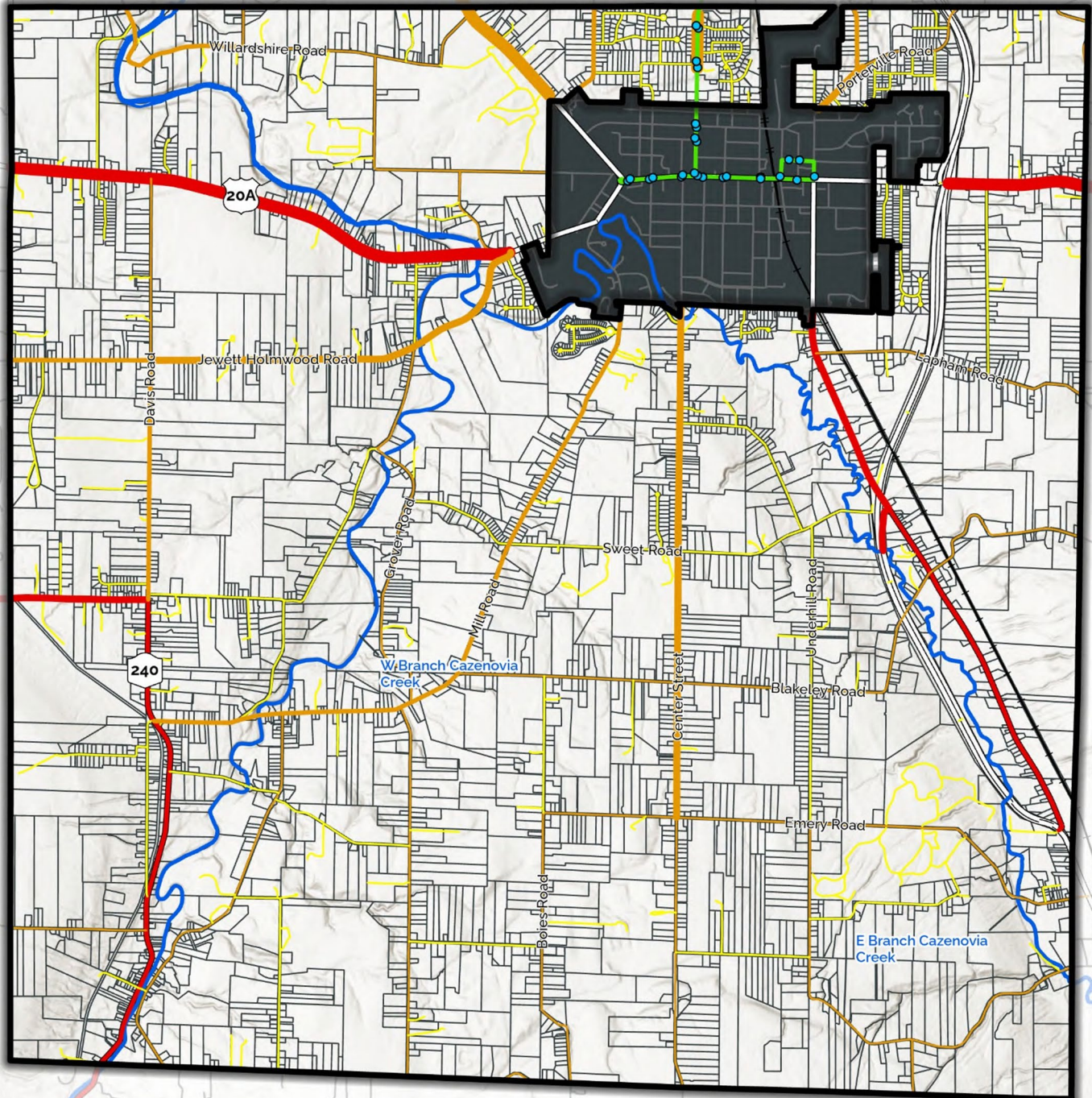
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Miles

187

78



Legend

- Town of Aurora
- Village of East Aurora

Jurisdiction

- State
- County
- Local/Private

AADT

- 13 - 1543

- 1544 - 3354

- 3355 - 5973

- 5974 - 10115

NFTA

- Route 70

- Bus Stops

Traffic Volumes

Traffic volumes throughout the Town of Aurora vary depending on the road classification. Most roads classified as either principal arterials or minor arterials will have the highest traffic volumes. Roadways in the Town that are under either State or County jurisdiction have been noted to have the highest traffic volumes as they have been designed to accommodate commuters and through traffic.

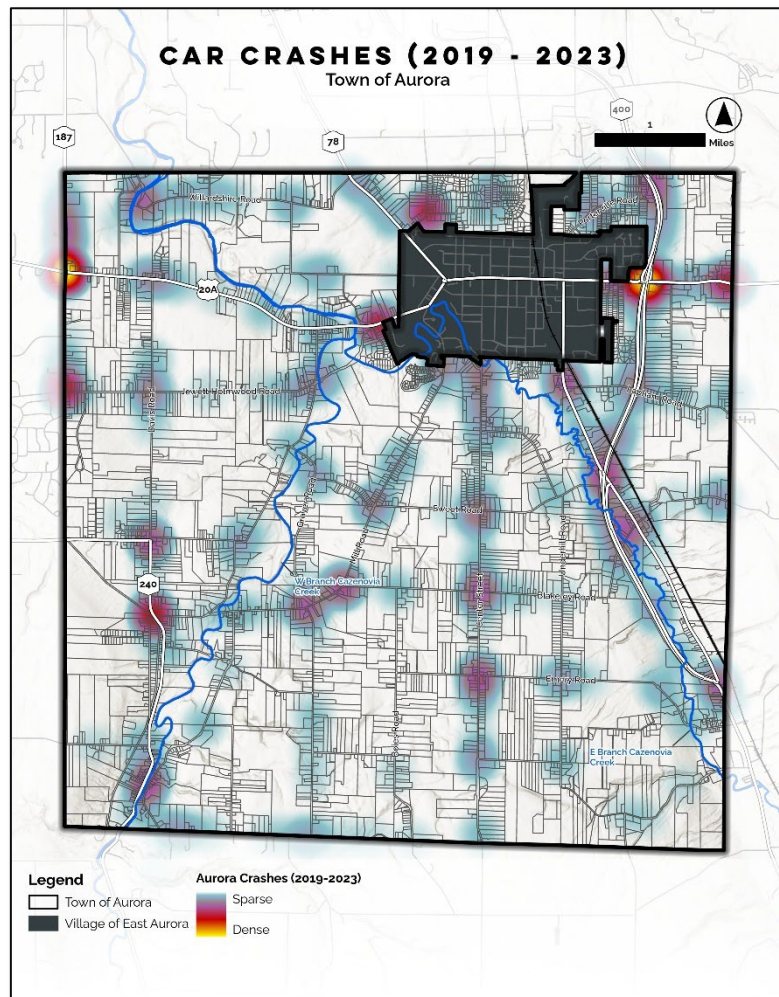
Roadway	Jurisdiction	AADT, 2013	AADT, 2023	% Change in AADT 2013-2023	% Trucking Traffic
US Route 20A (Route 400 to Townline)	New York State	10,145	10,115	-0.3%	8%
Buffalo Road	New York State	9,146	9,528	+4.2%	4%
Maple Street	Erie County	7,542	7,775	+3.1%	3%
Quaker Road	New York State	7,168	7,100	-0.1%	5%
Olean Road	New York State	6,195	5,782	-6.7%	6%
Center Street	Erie County	4,500	5,415	+20.3%	5%
Jewett Holmwood Road	Erie County	4,230	4,138	-2.2%	5%
Davis Road	Erie County	3,119	3,243	+4.0%	4%

Traffic Crashes

Based on data from the NYS Department of Transportation, 507 motor vehicle crashes were reported in the Town of Aurora between 2019 and 2023. The highest number of these crashes occurred on NYS Route 20A along the Towns border at Transit Road and the entrance and exit ramps for NYS Interstate 400, as well as at the intersection of Davis Road (NYS 240) and Mill Road. Other notable high crash locations include NYS Route 20A at Jewett Holmwood Road, Transit Road at Jewett Holmwood, Bowen Road at Hillcrest Road, and Center Street at Emery Road. No crashes resulting in fatality were reported. Among the 507 motor vehicle crashes reported, one crash involved a bicyclist, and one crash involved a pedestrian.

High Crash Roads (2019-2023)

Road	Crash Frequency
Center St	43
NYS 400	43
Transit Rd	36
Davis Rd	35
Mill Rd	32
Jewett Holmwood Rd	25



Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

Transit Service

The Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) provides transit service to Erie County with one bus route serving the Town of Aurora. The 70 route is an express route that operates between Downtown Buffalo and East Aurora. This route runs only on weekdays and has scheduled timeframes running every 30-35 minutes between 7:15am and 5:15pm. This route reaches the Town via the Maple Street exit on NYS Interstate 400, Continuing through the Village via Maple Street again. The two stops within the Town are both located on Maple Street at Hillcrest Drive and Highland Drive.

The Going Places Transportation Program is a program provided by the Erie County Department of Senior Services. This service provides van transportation for health-related services, food and nutrition, personal business, and social activities. available Tuesday through Friday (except holidays) to Town of Aurora residents over the age of 62. This program has a suggested donation of \$8 per person each way, however, donations are confidential.

Rural Transit Service (RTS) is a non-profit transportation service that provides transportation to senior citizens, low/moderate income individuals and clients with disabilities. Eligible residents are transported to dialysis clinics, medical offices, physical therapy, pharmacies, colleges, workplaces, senior centers, nutrition sites, adult day cares, grocery stores, banks, salons/barbers, etc., with medical trips taking priority. The Rural Transit vans run between 8:30 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday, except holidays. Rural Transit riders are not required to contribute to services utilized through RTS, although donations are accepted and encouraged.

Railroads

The Town of Aurora, particularly the Village of East Aurora, has a rich history of commuter rail service dating back to the 19th century. Initial proposals for a rail line from Buffalo to East Aurora emerged as early as April 1832 by the Buffalo and Aurora Railroad Company. However, due to economic challenges, the project was delayed. It wasn't until December 23, 1867, that the first passenger train arrived in East Aurora under the direction of the Buffalo & Washington Railroad Company, which later became part of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

At its peak, Riley Street Station in East Aurora saw 18 passenger trains daily, serving approximately 300 passengers traveling to and from Buffalo. However, with the rise of automobile travel, demand for rail services declined. The last passenger train departed the station on December 31, 1973, marking the end of over a century of commuter rail service in East Aurora. Today, the historic station building has been repurposed and operates as Riley Street Station, a gastropub that preserves and celebrates the rich railroad heritage of East Aurora. Existing Amtrak services are available nearby in the City of Buffalo or the Village of Depew.

According to the United States Department of Transportation, there is one active rail line in the Town of Aurora. The Buffalo Line is the main line rail owned by the Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad. There are nine over-grade crossings, four at-grade crossings, and two under-grade crossings.

In May 2020, a significant train derailment occurred in the Village of East Aurora. A freight train operated by Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad derailed near Main Street and Riley Street, resulting in 15 cars leaving the tracks. Fortunately, there were no injuries reported among the crew or residents, and no substantial damage to nearby structures. The derailment led to the evacuation of 41 homes as a precautionary measure due to a diesel fuel spill from the locomotive. Investigations revealed that the incident was caused by a track crew leaving a siding switch unlocked, which allowed the switch to move and misalign the tracks. This event highlighted concerns about rail safety in the community, especially regarding the transportation of hazardous materials.

Air Travel

The Town of Aurora does not have its own airport. Residents typically rely on nearby airports for air travel. The closest major airport is Buffalo Niagara International Airport (BUF), situated approximately 17 miles from Aurora. The airport offers numerous daily flights to various destinations and serves as the primary hub for travelers in the region.

For general aviation, several smaller airports are accessible within a reasonable distance:

Buffalo Airfield (9Go): Located in West Seneca, this public-use airport is approximately 6 miles southeast of downtown Buffalo.

Akron Airport (9G3): Situated near Akron, New York, this privately owned, public-use airport is about 12 miles northeast of Aurora.

Buffalo-Lancaster Regional Airport (BQR): Found near Lancaster, New York, this public-use airport is approximately 3 miles northeast of Lancaster and serves the surrounding communities.

These facilities primarily accommodate private pilots and small aircraft operations.

Active Transportation

On-Road Bicycle Facilities

There are no dedicated on-road bicycle facilities in the Town of Aurora or Village of East Aurora. However, when Main Street in the Village of East Aurora was redesigned several years ago, the NYS DOT included a shared shoulder space between the travel lanes and the on-street parking spots. Although this space does not meet legal width requirements to be considered a bike lane, it is used as a bike lane for all intents and purposes. While some bicyclists do utilize the space as a bike lane, most novice cyclists do not feel safe doing so and opt instead to use the sidewalks.

Sidewalks

Sidewalk infrastructure is primarily concentrated within the Village of East Aurora, where the Department of Public Works oversees maintenance, including snow removal. Property owners are responsible for keeping sidewalks adjoining their lands free from snow, ice, and other obstructions. Outside the village limits, the presence of sidewalks is limited, with pedestrian pathways being less common. The Town's Highway Department focuses on maintaining 62 miles of town roads, handling tasks such as plowing, salting, and general road upkeep, but sidewalks are not a primary feature in these areas.

Multi-Use Trails

Majors Park offers trails in both the northern and southern sections of the park. The northern section of the park is primarily a wetland with a trail/boardwalk offering access throughout the wetland complex. The southern section of the park offers trails through forests, meadows, and riparian habitats along Cazenovia Creek. Knox Farm State Park has an expansive set of trails that provides amenities for various activities such as biking, hiking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. Trail surfaces range from paved paths to natural terrains, accommodating different preferences and skill levels. The park's trail system includes several notable paths:

- **Outer Loop (3.5 miles):** This extensive trail circles the park's perimeter, providing a comprehensive tour of its varied landscapes.
- **Backyard Trail (1.45 miles):** A moderately distanced path that offers a closer look at the park's natural features.
- **Butterfly Trail (0.8 miles):** A shorter trail ideal for observing local flora and fauna, particularly butterflies.

Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

- **Library Trail (0.7 miles):** A scenic route that provides a peaceful walking experience.
- **Lower Pond Trail (0.5 miles):** A brief trail that leads to a serene pond area, perfect for a leisurely stroll.

JP Nicely Park features approximately 2.25 miles of trails. The main loop trail begins near the park's south end and leads through wooded areas down to Cazenovia Creek. The trail is well-marked and wide, providing a comfortable hiking experience. Much of the path runs alongside the creek, offering scenic views and shaded by large trees. Along the way, there are spots to rest near the water, making it a pleasant environment for hikers and their pets.

The Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail is a planned 27-mile multi-use trail that will eventually connect the Town of Orchard Park in Erie County to the Town of Ashford in Cattaraugus County, utilizing the former right of way for the Buffalo, Rochester, and Pittsburgh Railroad. The portion of the trail that will traverse through the Town of Aurora will begin on the border of Aurora and Orchard Park on Ellicott Rd (NYS Route 240). The trail will pass through the Hamlets of Jewettville and West Falls before exiting the Town into the Town of Colden along Davis Rd (NYS Route 240). Once fully completed, the trail will provide residents and visitors of Aurora with 27 miles of uninterrupted access throughout multiple historic communities in Western New York.

What We Heard

Throughout the planning process, residents and stakeholders of Aurora were continuously engaged to ensure the plan reflects their desires and vision for the community. Engagement opportunities included a public survey, stakeholder interviews and focus groups, and a public workshop. With regard to Transportation Systems, residents emphasized the need for safer, more accessible transportation options beyond personal vehicles, with a strong focus on walkability, biking, and road maintenance.

- **Support for Trail Connectivity:** Expanding trail networks, including the Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail (ECRT), was widely supported to improve recreation, access to parks, and connections between throughout the town.
- **Expand Sidewalks and Bike Infrastructure:** Residents called for more sidewalks and bike lanes—especially along Center Street, Mill Road, and routes to the high school, Knox Park, and West Falls. These improvements were seen as essential for safety, accessibility, and community connectivity.
- **Improve Transit Access and Options:** There was notable demand for enhanced public transit, including shuttles to Buffalo, service to events, and options for seniors and low-income residents. Several participants suggested exploring on-demand or expanded bus routes
- **Enhance Road Maintenance and Conditions:** Many survey respondents expressed dissatisfaction with road conditions and requested more consistent maintenance, particularly on rural roads and bike lanes

Key Issues & Opportunities

"Opportunities (✓)" represent existing strengths or assets in the Town that can be further leveraged and supports the potential for new development, business creation, or achieving the plan's vision statement and goals.

✓ Enhance Trail Systems and Park Linkages:

Completing the 27-mile ECRT multi-use trail will connect Aurora to Orchard Park and Colden, promoting recreation, healthy living, and potential economic spin-offs (e.g., local cafés, bike rentals) near trailheads. Trail connections at Majors Park, Knox Farm State Park, and JP Nicely Park can be further integrated with future sidewalks or bike paths, increasing accessibility and encouraging eco-tourism and alternative mobility around Aurora's natural assets.

✓ Opportunities for Complete Street Initiatives:

Many roads already have 12-foot travel lanes that may be suitable for re-striping or adding bike lanes, traffic calming, or pedestrian crossings to improve safety for non-drivers.

✓ On-Demand or Microtransit Pilot Projects:

Building on NFTA's express routes and existing senior transit, Aurora could explore phone-app-based or reservation-driven shuttles to expand service hours or coverage areas, benefiting young workers and older adults alike.

"Issues (✗)" represent either existing needs or gaps in the Town the limits to future development or from achieving the plan's vision statement and goals.

✗ Rail Safety Vulnerability: The 2020 derailment near Main Street in East Aurora highlights potential risks posed by freight rail lines transporting hazardous materials, emphasizing the importance of local emergency preparedness and communication.

✗ High-Crash Locations on Major Corridors: NYS Route 20A near the 400 ramps, Davis Road (NYS 240), and other intersections experience notably higher crash rates, suggesting the need for better signage, turning lanes, or traffic-calming measures.

✗ Speeding and Cut-Through Traffic on Secondary Roads: Local roads like Center Street and Mill Road sometimes serve as cut-throughs for drivers avoiding main arteries, leading to higher speeds, noise, and safety concerns for residents.

Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

Recreational, Historical, and Cultural Resources

The following sections provide an overview of the recreational, historical, and cultural resources within the Town of Aurora, including parks and other recreational spaces, historic sites eligible to be included in the National Register of Historic Places, and areas of cultural significance to the Town. Together these places help shape the character of the Town and are attractions that bring visitors into the community.

Town Parks

J.P. Nicely Memorial Park

Located in the Hamlet of West Falls, J.P. Nicely Memorial Park covers approximately 65 acres of land along West Falls Road and is adjacent to the Aurora Waldorf School. Amenities at the park include several baseball fields, a basketball court, pickleball courts, a small lodge and three picnic shelters, 2.25 miles of walking trails, and tennis courts. J.P. Nicely Park is also home to the Town of Aurora's Summer Day Camp, where children ages 8-12 are exposed to a variety of different sports and themed events.

West Falls Veterans Park & Community Playground

Located at the corner of Davis Road and Bridge Street, Veterans Park covers approximately 1 acre of land along the western side of the Cazenovia Creek in the Hamlet of West Falls. This park is multifaceted in that it provides a memorial to veterans of the West Falls area as well as home to the West Falls Memorial Day Parade ceremony. The parks also provide daily recreational amenities such as seating, public parking for nearby businesses, historic interpretive signage about the community, and scenic views of the Cazenovia Creek. Veterans Park is essential to the character of West Falls as it both celebrates the area's past while providing direct access to one of the community's greatest assets, the Cazenovia Creek.

Located on the eastern side of Cazenovia Creek, the West Falls Community Playground is found along W Falls Rd and covers approximately 0.26 acres of land. While the playground provides an area for families to take their children for recreation, there is currently a lack of sidewalks along West Falls Road which makes accessing the playground difficult by foot.

Warren Drive Park

Located in Warren Drive in the Village of East Aurora, the town park covers 2.5 acres of land, providing a playground, a small picnic area, pickleball courts, and athletic fields. The park also hosts a picnic shelter that is rentable to host parties and events.

Majors Park

Located just south of the Village of East Aurora, Majors Park covers 160 acres of land along Olean Rd (NYS Route 16). The primary feature of the park is the east branch of the Cazenovia Creek which bisects the park into a northern and southern half, inhibiting direct access between the two sections. The northern section of the park is primarily a wetland with a trail/boardwalk offering access throughout the wetland complex. The southern section of the park, which is only accessible from Hubbard Rd, offers trails through forests, meadows, and riparian habitats along Cazenovia Creek.

Aurora Community Pool Park

Aurora Community Pool Park is a 7-acre park found on the border between the Village of East Aurora and the Town of Aurora. The park is equipped with an outdoor pool and wading pool, a picnic shelter with picnic tables and grills, tennis and pickleball courts, a small playground, and several sports fields.

Village Parks

In addition to all the town-owned parks, both in the Town of Aurora and Village of East Aurora, there are several recreational spaces in the East Aurora that are managed by the Village. These spaces are also often frequented by Town residents too.

Hamlin Park

One of the oldest parks in the Town, Hamlin Park was established in 1899 and covers 16-acres of land along S Grove Street. The park offers various amenities for all types of recreational activities, including two picnic shelters and a pavilion, several picnic tables, a volleyball court, a baseball court, a rotary bandstand, horseshoe pits, a half mile track, tennis and pickleball courts, a baseball diamond, and a multi-purpose sports field.

Cazenovia Creek Nature Sanctuary

The Cazenovia Creek Nature Sanctuary is a protected natural space located on the border between the Village and Town covering approximately 5.59 acres, 2.16 of which is located in the Town of Aurora. Heavily forested with direct access to the Cazenovia Creek via rudimentary trails, the nature sanctuary seeks to provide space for the flourishing of native species of flora and fauna while also offering residents the opportunity to immerse themselves in nature.

Sinking Pond Wildlife Sanctuary

Located on the northern border of the Village, the Sinking Pond Wildlife Sanctuary covers approximately 73 acres of ponds, hills, and wetlands. Formed tens of thousands of years ago by glaciers, the site was purchased by the Village in 1930. The sanctuary today is a refuge for the area's native species and will also provide limited trails and seating areas for visitors to appreciate the natural beauty of the area. Programming and maintenance at the park are provided by Friends of Sinking Ponds Wildlife Sanctuary.

County & State Parks

Emery Park

Emery Park is a 457-acre park and one of the oldest in the Erie County system as it was acquired in 1925 from the Josiah Emery farmstead, a former resident of the Town. The park is multi-purposed, offering both passive and sports-specific recreation options for all four seasons. With a major ravine and the Cazenovia Creek cutting through the park, the park offers an abundance of opportunities for hiking and immersion in natural settings. Other prominent recreational facilities in the park include a ski-slope and lodge, an 18-hole black diamond disc golf course, an amphitheater, and various sports facilities and picnic areas.

Knox Farm State Park

Knox Farm State Park is a New York State owned park and the former country estate of Buffalo's renowned Knox Family. The 633-acre park is comprised of a variety of habitats, including over 400 acres of meadows, 100 acres of woodlands and several prominent ponds and wetlands. The park's expansive set of trails provides amenities for various activities such as biking, hiking, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing. The park is also home to a 6-acre dog park and nursery which supplies planting to State Parks all throughout Western New York (WNY). However, the park is most notable for hosting the Borderland Music & Arts Festival, which is a three-day festival celebrating the rich history of the WNY region. Going on for six years now, the festival welcomes over 10,000 attendees to the Town of Aurora each year.

Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

Trails, Waterways, and Other Recreational Opportunities

Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail

The Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail is a planned 27-mile multi-use trail that will eventually connect the Town of Orchard Park in Erie County to the Town of Ashford in Cattaraugus County, utilizing the former right of way for the Buffalo, Rochester, and Pittsburgh Railroad. Currently under development, portions of the trail are open in the Towns of Orchard Park and Concord, and the Village of Springville. The portion of the trail that will traverse through the Town of Aurora will begin on the border of Aurora and Orchard Park on Ellicott Rd (NYS Route 240). Following the Buffalo, Rochester, and Pittsburgh Railroad right way, the trail will pass through the Hamlets of Jewettville and West Falls before exiting the Town into the Town of Colden along Davis Rd (NYS Route 240). Once fully completed, the trail will provide residents and visitors of Aurora with 27 miles of uninterrupted access throughout multiple historic communities in Western New York.

Cazenovia Creek

Cazenovia Creek is the primary waterway traversing through the Town of Aurora and is comprised of two branches, the east and west branches which join in the Village of East Aurora, before joining the Buffalo River in the City of Buffalo. This waterway holds significant cultural and historic value to the Town as it was historically utilized for hydropower to run the various mills that once existed in the Town's hamlets. Today the creek is frequently utilized for recreation, such as fishing, kayaking, and cooling off from the summer heat.

Owen Falls Sanctuary

Owen Falls Sanctuary is a 58-acre nature preserve managed by the Western New York Land Conservancy. Located just south of the Village of East Aurora, the Sanctuary covers a portion of Mann's Creek as well as the woodlands, vernal pools, and wetlands that surround it. The Sanctuary also hosts a 1.4-mile trail which provides spectacular views of two waterfalls and various rare wildlife indigenous to the region.

Mill Road Scenic Overlook

Located along Mill Road, the overlook provides picturesque views of over 60 acres of land along the Town rolling hill. While owned by the Town, the 60 acres, which include 18 acres of mature forest and over 30 acres of open meadows and marshland, is maintained by the Western New York Land Conservancy. Although there are no trails on the overlook, there is a small parking area and benches so visitors can take in all the excellent views.

Genesee Valley Land Conservancy Lands

The Genesee Valley Land Conservancy is a nonprofit group whose mission is to protect the habitat, open space, and farmland of the Genesee Valley region. While their focus is primarily along the Genesee River, there are several parcels within the Town which are privately owned but forever preserved as open space through conservation easements. Overall, these preserved open spaces total 278 acres, most of which are found west of the Route 400 expressway, however, there are some also along Willardshire Rd near Knox Farm State Park.

West Falls Conservation Society

The West Falls Conservation Society is a 300-member conservation club located in the Hamlet of West Falls, offering opportunities for target shooting and sportsmen education. In operation since 1943, the society also hosts competitive leagues for various shooting sports in the spring and fall. The society's lands are significantly forested which help contribute to the natural and rural character of the area.

East Aurora Fish & Game Club

The East Aurora Fish & Game Club is a private member only club founded in 1905. Situated on 76 acres of woodland and hills in the Town of Aurora, the goals of the Club is to preserve, promote, and provide a place for enjoyment of outdoor activities that support conservation.

PARKS & RECREATION

Town of Aurora

400

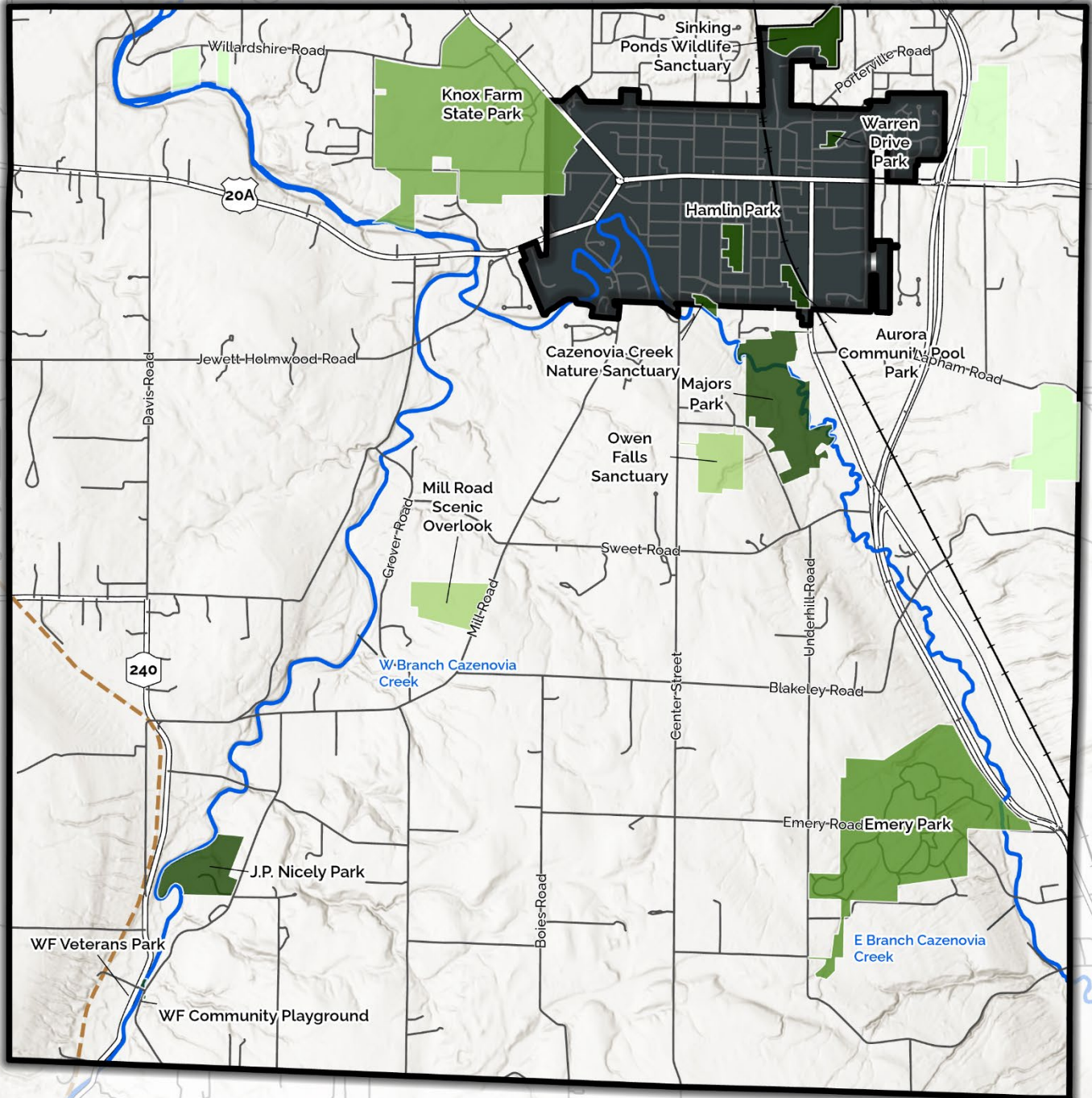
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Miles

187

78



Legend

- Town of Aurora
- Village of East Aurora

- Aurora Parks
- East Aurora Parks
- Erie County Parks
- New York State Parks
- WNYLC Parks
- GLVC Lands

- Existing ECRT Trail
- Proposed ECRT Trail Extension

Parks Performance Analysis

Understanding the performance and quality of services parks and other recreational facilities within the Town of Aurora provide is a key factor to consider when trying to understand how these spaces can be improved to better serve the public. The [National Recreation and Park Association's \(NRPA\) 2024 Agency Performance Review](#) summarizes key finding on how well parks throughout the US are performing. These findings can assist park and recreation professionals in effectively managing and planning their operating resources and capital facilities. NRPA's review provides 29 different metrics to consider which are broken down by the total jurisdictional population, some relevant and key metrics to consider for the Town of Aurora include:

1. A Town typically offers one park for every 1,172 residents
2. A Town typically offers 12.6 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents
3. A Town typically offers 4.5 miles of trails for walking, hiking, and/or biking
4. A Town's park's department typically budgets for \$135.53 per resident

Though not mentioned in the NRPA 2024 Review, access to parks is also another key metric to consider. The Town of Aurora is largely rural in character, therefore, there is not an abundance of sidewalks for residents to access park with, so parks in the Town are only accessible by foot for residents who live immediately next to them. However, a driving analysis was conducted to determine the accessibility of parks in the Town of Aurora for residents by car.

Median Park Metric for Jurisdictions <20,000 Residents	Town Parks	Town, Village, County, State Parks & Nature Preserves
One park for every 1,172 residents	One park for every 2,788 residents	One park for every 1,072 residents
12.6 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents	16.9 acres for every 1,000 residents	103.5 acres for every 1,000 residents
At least 4.5 miles of trails	3.35 miles of trails (J.P. Nicely and Majors Park)	12.72 miles of trails
Annual operating expenses of \$135.53 per resident	\$47.00 per resident*	N/A

*Town's annual budget for Culture and Recreation as of 2025 is \$655,435 – besides parks and recreational programming administration and maintenance, the budget also includes funding for celebrations (i.e. Independence Day) and the Town Historian.

Comparing the performance and quality of services for parks and recreational opportunities in the Town of Aurora to nationwide benchmarking metrics for jurisdictions with 20,000 residents or less, it demonstrates that that Town falls short for the number of parks per capita but exceeds the acreage of parkland available to residents. Additionally, the Town is lacking in the availability of trails and the amount of funding allocated towards parks and recreation.

The Town of Aurora Recreation Department serves approximately 13,943 residents by maintaining 235.76 acres of parkland across five parks. This equates to approximately one park for every 2,788 residents and 16.9 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents. Based on nationwide metrics, the Town falls just short of the nationwide metric of one park for every 1,172 residents, however, it does exceed the metric of 10.6 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents by providing 16.9 acres for every 1,000 residents. When factoring in Village, County and State Parks, as well as nature preserves in the Town, the Town's metrics far outperform nationwide metrics for parkland availability and the number of available parks.

Considering trails, the Town falls short of the national metric for 4.5 miles of trails. Across the Town's parks there are approximately 3.35 miles of trails. Considering trails within County and State Parks, as well as nature preserves in the Town, the Town offers approximately 12.72 miles of trails. Once the portion of the Erie Cattaraugus Trail that will traverse through the Town is completed, Aurora will far

Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

surpass 4.5 miles of available trails and will be able to offer residents the opportunity to connect to other trails outside the Town.

Lastly, the Town of Aurora dedicates approximately one-third of the operating expenditure expected for parks & recreation in jurisdictions of 20,000 or less residents nationwide. Much of the land the Town's parks cover, especially its largest at Majors Park, embraces the area's natural environment and allow natural features and vegetation to permeate. This in turn reduces maintenance costs for the Town while also allowing residents to immerse themselves in truly natural settings through passive recreation.

Parks Accessibility Analysis

One of the most important aspects of a great park system is its accessibility to the residents it serves. To determine the accessibility of parks in the Town of Aurora, a driveshed analysis was conducted for every town, village, county, and state-owned park in the Town, as well as nature preserves. As seen in adjacent map, 95.3% of residential parcels in the Town are within a 5-minute drive of a park in the Town (light pink); 100% of residential parcels are within a 10-minute drive of a park in the Town (dark pink). Due to the Town's rural nature, there is a lack of a pedestrian network (sidewalks and trails) that connects residents to the Town's park system, however, everyone in the Town does have convenient access to parkland with just a short car trip.

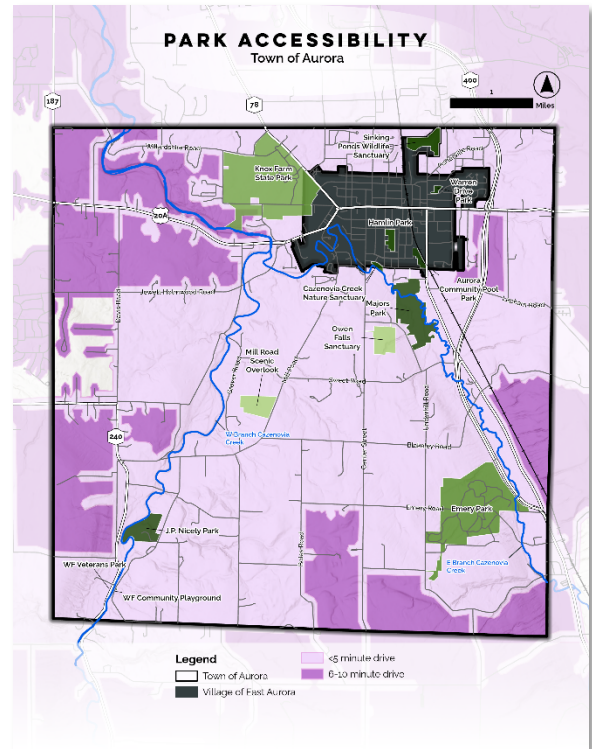
Historical Assets

There are no historic districts or sites in the Town of Aurora that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. However, there is 1 district and 42 sites that are eligible for historic designation with the National Register of Historic Places. Of the 42 eligible sites throughout the Town of Aurora, 31 of them are within Knox Farm State Park, which itself is eligible to be listed as a historic district. Below is a heat map indicating the location of historically eligible sites throughout the Town. Some notable sites include:

West Falls Train Depot: Reconstructed in 1917 following a fire which destroyed the original depot. This building functioned as a passenger station for visitors to the Hamlet of West Falls along the Buffalo, Rochester, and Pittsburgh Railroad which ceased passenger operations in West Falls as of 1961.

The Dog Bar: Originally built in 1835 to serve as a hotel for traveling hunters, farmers, salesmen, and loggers passing through the Hamlet of West Falls, the building has remained in operation as an upscale yet cozy restaurant by the same family since 1941.

Knox Farm & the Knox Family Mansion: Constructed in 1917 with late 19th and early 20th century colonial revival styles, the 14,400 sq ft Knox Farm Manion was the former summer estate of the Knox Family, a prominent family involved in various businesses throughout the Buffalo area. Situated on the present-day 600+ acres plus Knox Farm State Park, the summer estate and 30 other buildings



scattered throughout the park are eligible for historic designation. Today, the Knox Family Mansion is available to rent for various events such as weddings, while the park grounds are utilized most commonly for daily park activities but also hosts the annual Borderland Music and Arts festival which attracts over 10,000 attendees each year.

If these sites were to be listed in the State and National Register of Historic Places, they could be eligible for historic tax credits to assist in repairs and renovations. Additionally, preserving historic sites such as these would help the community to preserve its historic character, thus making the area more attractive to residents and visitors alike.

Cultural Assets

West Falls Center for the Arts: Located at 1863 Davis Road, the West Falls Center for the Arts is a nonprofit arts venue providing programming for veterans, kids, caregivers, and those with mental disabilities. In addition to providing this programming, the Center also hosts live music entertainment for residents and visitors of West Falls throughout the year.

The Blueberry Treehouse Farm: Located at 1897 Davis Road, the Blueberry Treehouse Farm is a multi-entertainment venue open to the public throughout the summer and fall months. The business's primary draw is its u-pick organic blueberry farm which is open from July to August where visitors to West Falls can harvest their own fresh blueberries. In addition, they also have a treehouse café and outdoor concert stage where visitors can purchase delicious food and listen to local music, all while enjoying the rural setting of Aurora. The café and farm bring in thousands of visitors to the West Falls area each year, helping stimulate the economic activity of other businesses nearby.

Aurora History Museum: Located in the Town of Aurora Municipal Building, The Aurora History Museum features American Indian artifacts, personal possessions of the community's earliest settlers, and items related to local industry and business. Additional, new and special exhibits debuted periodically. In addition, showcasing the history of the Town, the Museum and the Town's Historian research resources and assistance for any visitors seeking to learn more about their ancestral history in the area.

Hawk Creek Wildlife Center: Located at 1963 Mill Road in the Hamlet of Jewettville, Hawk Creek Wildlife Center is an aviary wildlife center that promotes the conservation and education of flying birds through shows, animal interactions, and educational programs. Hawk Creek Wildlife Center is a recreational and entertainment experience which helps attract visitors to the Town.

HISTORIC & CULTURAL ASSETS

Town of Aurora

400

1

Miles

187

78

Willardshire Road

Porterville Road

20A

Jewett-Holmwood Road

Lapham Road

Davis Road

Grover Road

Sweet Road

240

W-Branch Cazenovia Creek

Mitt Road

Center Street

Blakeley Road

Emery Road

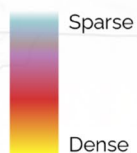
Boies Road

E Branch Cazenovia Creek

Legend

- Town of Aurora
- Village of East Aurora

Concentration of Eligible Historic Sites



Cultural Sites

- Aurora History Museum
- Hawk Creek Wildlife Center
- The Blueberry Treehouse Farm
- West Falls Center for the Arts

What We Heard

Throughout the planning process, residents and stakeholders of Aurora were continuously engaged to ensure the plan reflects their desires and vision for the community. Engagement opportunities included a public survey, stakeholder interviews and focus groups, and a public workshop. With regard to Recreational, Cultural, and Historical Resources, residents emphasized the importance of high-quality parks, cultural amenities, and preserved historic character as core elements of Aurora's identity.

- **Expand and Connect Trails:** Trails were the most requested recreational feature, with strong interest in expanding multi-use trails, walking and biking paths, and connections between parks and neighborhoods
- **Preserve Historic Assets:** Residents value the Town's heritage and support the adaptive reuse of historic structures, better promotion of historic sites like the Millard Fillmore House, and incentives to maintain historic homes
- **Improve Communication and Accessibility:** Resident suggestions included creating a centralized and accessible resource for sharing information about events and recreation and ensuring parks are welcoming and usable for all ages and abilities.

Key Issues & Opportunities

"**Opportunities (✓)**" represent existing strengths or assets in the Town that can be further leveraged and supports the potential for new development, business creation, or achieving the plan's vision statement and goals.

✓ **Historic Preservation & Cultural Tourism:** Formally listing eligible sites (i.e., portions of Knox Farm & West Falls Train Depot) on the National Register would unlock historic tax credits, bolster community pride, and attract visitors seeking heritage experiences.

✓ **Potential Rail Trail & Trail Connectivity:** Tying in the Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail with existing park trails, can form a broader network joining hamlets, scenic overlooks, and historic points together—ultimately surpassing the 4.5-mile national standard for walkable and bikeable trails.

✓ **Local Artisan & Agri-Tourism Partnerships:** Collaborations with farms, the West Falls Center for the Arts, and the Blueberry Treehouse Farm can produce workshops, seasonal festivals, or artisan fairs that highlight local goods and cultural traditions.

"**Issues (✗)**" represent either existing needs or gaps in the Town the limits to future development or from achieving the plan's vision statement and goals.

✗ **Limited Pedestrian Connectivity to Recreational Sites:** Many parks (i.e., Knox Farm & Majors Park) lack sidewalks or safe pedestrian routes, making it difficult for non-drivers—especially children and seniors—to reach recreational amenities.

✗ **Gaps in Trail Mileage and Linkages:** Town parks collectively have about 3.35 miles of trails, below the 4.5 miles recommended by national metrics. Despite natural assets like Cazenovia Creek and scenic preserves, trail connections and signage remain inconsistent.

✗ **Insufficient Year-Round Indoor Facilities:** Most local parks offer primarily outdoor amenities, leaving limited indoor gathering or recreational space (gyms, community centers) during winter months or inclement weather.

Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

Agricultural & Natural Resources

Understanding and managing the Town of Aurora's agricultural and natural resources is essential for preserving the rural charm, environmental integrity, and cultural identity that residents value deeply. Inventorying these resources—including farmland, forests, wetlands, water bodies, and wildlife—helps illustrate the town's ecological richness and supports informed decision-making that balances growth with stewardship. While agricultural uses and open lands continue to define much of the Town's landscape, they face increasing pressure from residential development, invasive species, and climate change. Informed planning and protection strategies are needed to conserve these vital resources, promote sustainable farming, and safeguard natural systems for future generations.

Water Resources

Watersheds

A watershed is a land area that channels all rainfall and snowmelt to a given body of water. Water from creeks and streams flow from high ground to lower ground, into waterbodies like rivers that themselves feed into a larger waterbody such as a lake, bay, or ocean. The United States Geological Survey delineates watersheds by a system of decreasing geographic levels: national regions, subregions, basins, subbasins, watersheds, and ending at sub-watersheds. Each of these features is assigned a hydrologic unit code (HUC) which is given two additional digits for each level in the system.

The Town of Aurora is primarily within the Buffalo River watershed (HUC-10) of the Niagara River/Lake Erie subbasin (HUC-8). The Buffalo River watershed is in the southern portion of the Niagara River/Lake Erie watershed. It has a total area of 105,392 acres and includes 312 miles of waterways. Waterways within the watershed include the Buffalo River and Cazenovia Creek, the latter of which branches into its West Branch and East Branch in the Town of Aurora. To a smaller extent, portions of the Town are also in the Buffalo Creek and Smoke Creek-Frontal Lake Erie sub-watersheds.

Watershed Name	Total Area of Town Covered	Farmland		Forest		Developed Land	
		Acres	% of Total Area	Acres	% of Total Area	Acres	% of Total Area
Buffalo Creek	818 acres	34.5	4.2%	376.8	46.1%	352.9	43.1%
Buffalo River	19,612 acres	4,791.5	24.4%	10,271.6	52.4%	3,420.9	17.4%
Smoke Creek-Frontal Lake Erie	1,311 acres	391.9	29.9%	613.2	46.8%	213.8	16.3%

Water Bodies

There are three large ponds and 60 small, unnamed ponds in Aurora. The large ponds are the Bob-O-Link Golf Course Pond, Christ the King Seminary Pond, and the East Aurora County Club Pond. In addition to the West and East Branches of Cazenovia Creek, Aurora also contains portions of Smokes Creek and Tannery Brook. Tannery Brook is in the northeast corner of the Town and primarily runs through the Village of East Aurora, where it reconnects with Cazenovia Creek. Smokes Creek is located on the western border of the Town of Aurora and primarily runs through Orchard Park and Lackawanna, before emptying into Lake Erie.

Water Quality

The NYSDEC classifies the quality of waterbodies with a grade of A-D. Class "A" waterbodies are a suitable source for water supply and contact recreation, while Class "D" waterbodies are only deemed suitable for recreational fishing. Both branches of the Cazenovia Creek are Class "B" waterbodies,

meaning they are suitable fishing as well as primary and secondary recreation. The lower East Branch Cazenovia Creek and its tributaries, including Tannery Brook, are considered a Section 303(d) Listed Impaired Water. The 303(d) List is a part of the Clean Water Act which requires states to identify waters where water quality standards are not met and where uses are not supported. Uses of the creek impacted include aquatic life and water recreation, both of which are considered “stressed” in terms of impact. The creek is polluted by nutrients (particularly phosphorous) that are likely due to stormwater runoff. The other branches of the creek, including Smokes Creek (a tributary), are not considered impaired.

Flood Zones

Floodplains are areas of low-lying land typically found adjacent to bodies of water that become inundated during times of high-water flow. Floodplains offer several ecosystem services that benefit the natural environment and residents of Aurora. These ecosystem services include regulating flood damage, recharging groundwater capacity, regulating sediment and nutrient levels, and maintaining wildlife habitats.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) maps flood zones with boundaries that represent the 1% (100-year floodplain) and 0.02% (500-year floodplain) chance of an annual flood. Residents in communities like Aurora who participate in FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and reside within the 100-year floodplain are entitled to a low-cost federal flood insurance plan that protects their property if damaged by a flood. While flood zones can be mapped, they are not static. Land use, climate change, the level of impervious surfaces, precipitation levels, and run-off rates can all impact flood zones. Furthermore, areas outside of flood zones may flood during intense storms.

In the Town of Aurora, the 100-year floodplain boundary covers land (1,456 acres) directly surrounding the East Branch and West Branch of Cazenovia Creek. The West Branch of the creek is considered a Zone A area, or a Special Flood Hazard Area. The East Branch of the creek is mostly considered Zone AE, meaning it is in a Regulatory Floodway. Both Zone A and Zone AE areas are considered high risk and properties within these areas are required to have flood insurance while any new development is required to obtain a floodplain development permit from the Town. The 500-year floodplain is very small (315 acres.) and is located only around the split of the East Branch and West Branch of Cazenovia Creek and small portions of the East Branch.

Wetlands

Wetlands provide habitat for wildlife, filter surface water runoff and help control flooding. They also provide scenic and educational value. Wetlands include forested swamps, open water marshes, wet meadows, and vernal pools. National Wetland Inventory (NWI) mapping by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service identify the location of several wetlands within the Town. Most mapped federal wetlands in Aurora are classified as PUB (pond), PSS (shrub swamp), PFO (forested or wooded swamp), or PEM (emergent marsh, fen, or wet meadow), and riverine beds. In Aurora, there are over 440 federally mapped wetlands which, in total, comprise approximately 2,368 acres of land in Aurora (10.9%).

FEMA's Community Rating System

The Community Rating System (CRS) is a voluntary incentive program that encourages community floodplain management practices that exceed the minimum requirements of the NFIP. In communities that participate in CRS, NFIP insurance rates are discounted to varying degrees depending on the amount of “credit points” earned by the community. Credit points can be earned by a series of actions, including map information services, hazard disclosures, publicly sharing flood protection information, providing flood protection assistance, stormwater management, floodplain management planning, building dams and levees, and many more.

The Town of Aurora does not currently participate in the CRS program. The Town could become a participant of the program by appointing a CRS Coordinator to serve as the liaison between the community and FEMA. The application process begins by submitting a letter of interest to the FEMA Regional Office and the implementation of floodplain management activities that warrant at least 500 CRS credit points.

Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) maps wetlands greater than 12.4 acres or of unique value. State-mapped wetlands include a 100-foot buffer to protect wetland quality and function. There are nine state-mapped wetlands in the Town of Aurora comprising of approximately 239 acres of land in Aurora (1.1%).

WATER RESOURCES

Town of Aurora

400

1



Miles

187

78

Willardshire Road

Porterville Road

20A

Jewett-Holmwood Road

Lapham Road

Davis Road

Grover Road

Sweet Road

Mill Road

Underhill Road

240

W Branch Cazenovia Creek

Center Street

Blakeley Road

Emery Road

Botes Road

E Branch Cazenovia Creek

Legend

Town of Aurora

Village of East Aurora

HUC10 Watersheds

Buffalo Creek

Buffalo River

Smoke Creek-Frontal Lake Erie

Wetlands

DEC Wetlands

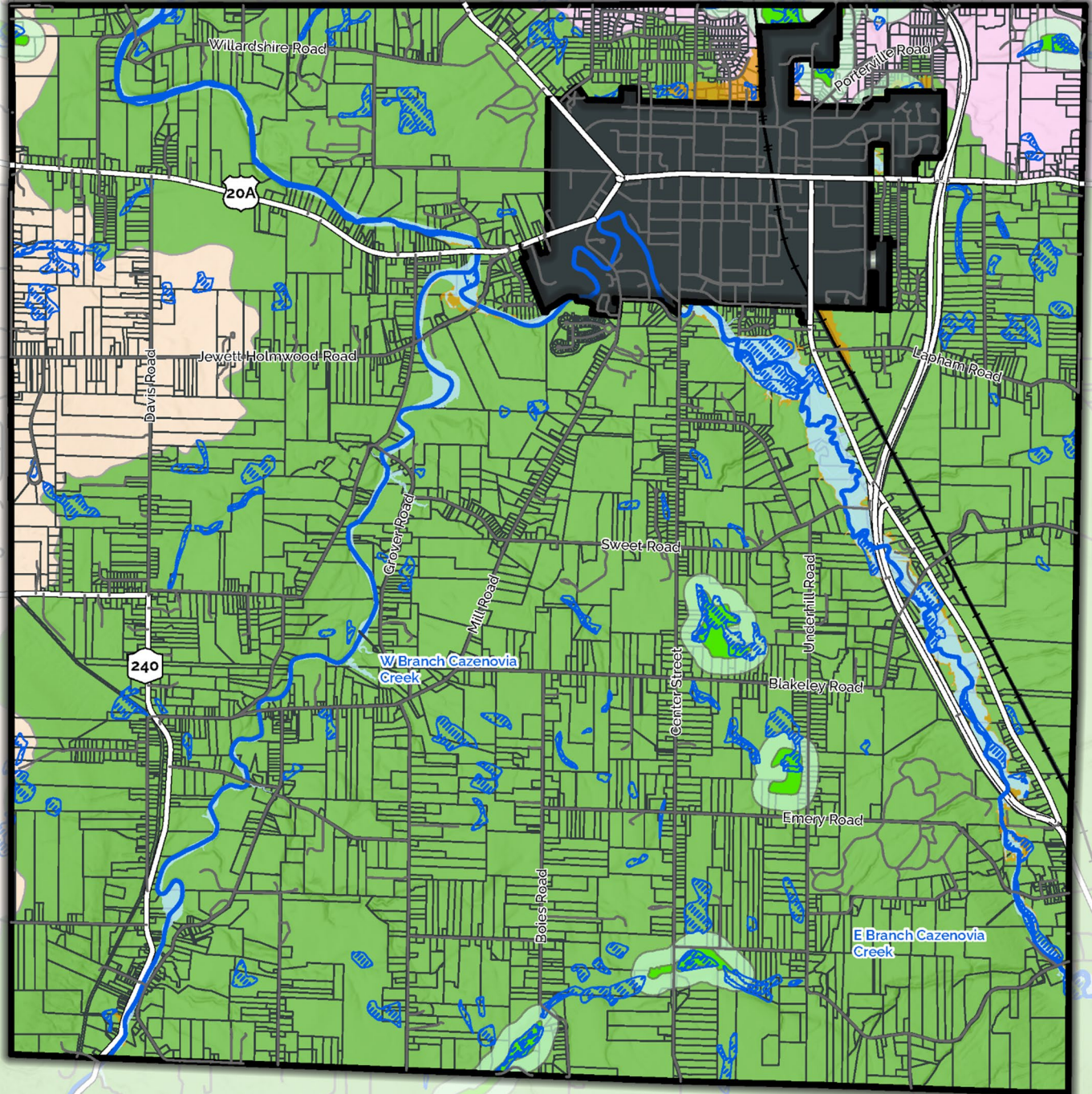
DEC Wetlands Checkzones

NWI Wetlands

Flood Zones

100-year Flood Zone

500-year Flood Zone



Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

Climate & Air Quality

The Average yearly temperature in the Town of Aurora is 48.4°F, with July highs around 78°F and January lows around 15°F. The Town receives approximately 44 in. of rain and 116 in. of snow each year. The annual average Air Quality Index for Aurora is 27, which is considered very low and safe for almost all individuals.

Climate Change

Erie County, including the Town of Aurora, is included as part of Region 1 of NYSEERDA's ClimAID Climate Regions. The ClimAID report was published in 2011 and updated in 2014 with new projections for climate changes to the year 2100. The report projects an increase in temperature for Region 1 between +4.3°F to +6.3°F by the 2050s and as much as +11.7°F by 2100. Additionally, projections for increased precipitation range from +2% to +7% by the 2050s to as much as +19% by 2100. Precipitation is projected to increase mostly within the winter months, i.e. increased snowfall. By 2100, the state's growing season could increase by a month, which could prove to increase agricultural productivity; on the other hand, summers will be more intense and more strenuous for human activity, especially those with respiratory issues and allergies.

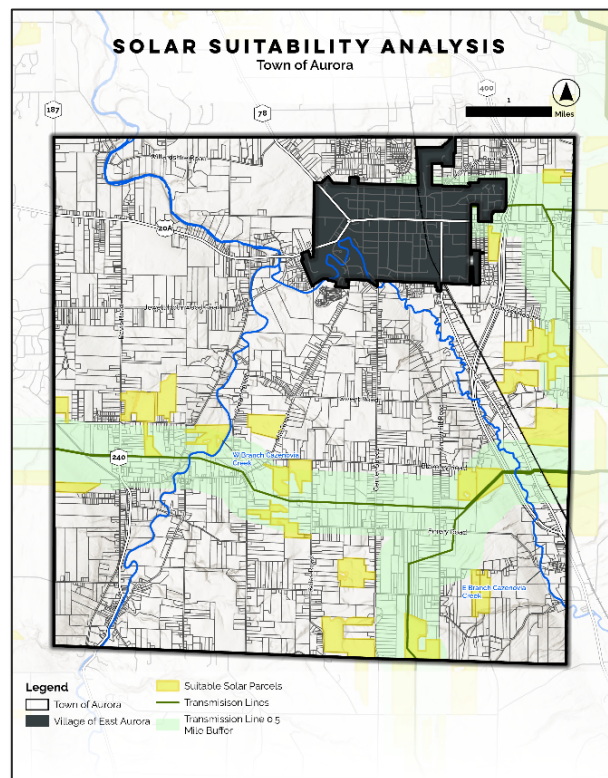
Aurora's Climate Smart Communities Participation

The Town of Aurora is a participant in New York State's Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program and has a Bronze Certification. The certification program recognizes communities for their accomplishments towards mitigating and adapting to climate change at the community level. Each level involves earning points and meeting certain requirements related to priority actions and CSC pledge elements. The Town of Aurora passed the Climate Smart Community Pledge in September 2022 and approved a CSC Task Force in October 2022. In October 2023, the Town of Aurora was awarded the Bronze Certification with 132 points earned from 19 completed actions.

Solar Suitability Analysis

In 2019, Erie County sought to identify parcels throughout the County that would be suitable for solar farm development in excess of 20 acres and/or approximately 5 MW of energy. The objective of this analysis was to 1. Identify areas for development to meet the State's renewable energy goals and 2. Find alternative suitable land besides farms, so to ensure the land remains productive farmland. The criteria for a parcel to be considered suitable included 1. Being greater than 20 acres, 2. Within 0.5 miles of an existing transmission line, 3. Not a wetland, and 4. Is either vacant or undeveloped according to NYS tax parcel codes. Across the Town of Aurora, 29 parcels spanning 1,537 acres were identified as being potentially suitable for solar farm development. The majority of these parcels are found in the southern half of town, congregate along two transmission lines that cut through the town there.

In addition to traditional solar energy farms, a burgeoning trend in rural communities over the



last several years has been the act of agrivoltaics. Agrivoltaics is the combination of agricultural practices with solar installations, that allows for dual land use, optimizing space and increasing agricultural yields. By leveraging synergies between solar generation and farming, communities can benefit from enhanced food and other agricultural product production while simultaneously generating renewable energy, creating a win-win scenario for local economies.

Soils & Topography

Soils are the foundation for ecosystems and can greatly impact projects such as drainage systems, septic systems, building basement and foundation construction, and agricultural yield. The Town of Aurora has over 100 different soil types. Using data from the Soil Survey Geographic Database (SSURGO) the Town's slope gradient can be calculated. (in weighted averages), which is important given that slope heavily affects the potential for development and can incur additional construction costs. The elevation in the Town of Aurora varies from a less than 1% slope to up to 43%. The steepest slopes in Aurora are near the southeast of the Town, near the East Branch of Cazenovia Creek. To a smaller extent, there are also some steep slopes near the West Branch of the creek. Approximately 996 acres of the Town have slopes over 20%, constituting about 4.6% of total land in Aurora. Approximately 681 acres (3.1%) have slopes between 30% and 43%. The vast majority (over 92%) of land in Aurora has slopes of 12% or less.

Wildlife

There are two species which are considered Rare and Endangered that have been recorded in Aurora: the Bigeye Chub (*Hybopsis amblops*), a freshwater fish, and the Yellow Giant Hyssop (*Agastache nepetoides*), a perennial flowering plant. The Bigeye Chub is listed as Critically Imperiled or Imperiled in New York but secure throughout the world. The Yellow Giant Hyssop is listed as Threatened (likely to become Endangered in the foreseeable future) in New York, but secure throughout the world.

In The Town of Aurora, according to the New York iMapInvasives mapping tool, there are 35 confirmed documentations of invasive species. Invasive species are ranked by a tier system formulated by state agencies including the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the NYS Natural Heritage Program. The tiers range from 4 to 1, with 4 being the most urgent, described as a "highly invasive species with great abundance in the region, [with the] management goal of local control." Of the 86 Tier 4 species which have been identified in the Western New York region, 29 have been identified in the Town of Aurora. This also means that over 80% of the invasive species in Aurora are considered the most urgent with management response being focused on local control.

Forested Land

There are 17,374 acres of land in the Town of Aurora that are forested. This equates to 79.9% of the total land in the town having at least 2% - 96% tree coverage. Tree canopy data through the NLCD is provided by the U.S. Forest Service at 30-meter resolution. Tree canopy cover is derived from multi-spectral satellite imagery and other available ground and ancillary information. Tree canopy refers to the layer of branches of leaves that cover the ground when viewed from above. Tree canopy is an important metric for communities not only because of the ecosystem services that trees provide (removal of pollutants, reduction of stormwater runoff, carbon sequestration, and more), but also because trees provide shade and cooling for homes, businesses, and users of sidewalks and streets. The presence

Calculated % Tree Cover	Acres	% of Total Acres in Town
0	4,366.0	20.1%
2% to 5%	4.46	0.02%
6% to 25%	1,489.9	6.85%
26% to 50%	3,233.1	14.8%
51% to 75%	4,937.5	22.7%
76% to 96%	7,709.1	35.5%
Note: Due to rounding differences, the percentage of total acres is not equal to 100%.		

Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

of trees nearly universally increases property values and the desirability of a neighborhood. Tree canopy cover is calculated on a percentage scale from 0% to about 96%. In the Town of Aurora, about 4,366 acres have 0% tree cover, equating to about 21% of total land in the town. Conversely, 7,709 acres (35.5% of land cover) have 76% – 96% tree cover.

Agriculture and Farmland Protection

Agricultural Parcels

0.3% of all parcels in the Town of Aurora are classified as agricultural land uses. Prominent agricultural land uses still present in the Town include the Strawberry Banks Farm (equestrian breeding facility), several nurseries and garden centers, and a few remaining family farms. Overall, agricultural land uses cover 2.4% of all landcover in the Town (508 acres). The true total number of agricultural parcels and the total land area they cover cannot be determined as a significant portion of actively farmed land in the Town is classified as vacant land.

Agricultural Soils

The majority of farmland in the Town of Aurora is considered high-quality by the USDA Soil Survey. High-quality soils are characterized as "Prime," "Prime if drained," and "Farmland of statewide importance." Approximately 3,558 acres, or 16% of land within the Town, is considered prime farmland, which is land that is most highly suited for productive agriculture.

Type of Farmland	Acres	Percent of Total Land
Prime farmland	3558.8	16.40%
Farmland of statewide importance	9674.3	44.50%
Prime farmland if drained	4858.1	22.30%
Not prime farmland	3649.1	16.80%

Agricultural Regulations

The Town of Aurora has a Right to Farm Law, adopted in 2007, which recognizes the importance of the agriculture industry to the Town and "limits the circumstances under which farming may be deemed a nuisance and to allow agricultural practices inherent to and necessary for the business of farming to proceed and be undertaken free of unreasonable and unwarranted interference or restriction."

New York State Agriculture and Markets law authorizes counties to establish Agricultural Districts for the purpose of promoting agriculture. Erie County currently has four consolidated Agricultural Districts comprising approximately 265,661 acres. Each Agricultural District must be reviewed every eight years, at which time parcels may be added or removed. Land included in an Agricultural District must be "highly suitable for agricultural production" and "feasible for farming if conditions remain the same." Agricultural Districts protect agricultural parcels by prohibiting local governments from enforcing laws, ordinances, rules, or regulations which would "unreasonably restrict or regulate farm operations within an agricultural district; discourage private nuisance lawsuits; limit the impact of projects that receive public funding or require an eminent domain; and limit assessments for special improvement districts to dwellings and farm structures directly benefiting from the services. The Town of Aurora is in the Central Ag District (#5). As of 2022, there are 24 parcels in Aurora totaling 2,143 acres that are within the Ag District.

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

Town of Aurora

400

1



Miles

187

78



Legend

-  Town of Aurora
-  Village of East Aurora

Farmland Soil Class

-  Prime Farmland
-  Farmland of Statewide Importance
-  Not Prime Farmland
-  Prime Farmland if Drained

-  Agricultural Districts
-  Agricultural Parcels

Town of Aurora Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Draft

What We Heard

Throughout the planning process, residents and stakeholders of Aurora were continuously engaged to ensure the plan reflects their desires and vision for the community. Engagement opportunities included a public survey, stakeholder interviews and focus groups, and a public workshop. With regard to Agricultural & Natural Resources, the community strongly values the preservation of farmland, forests, and natural ecosystems. Feedback emphasized both protection and responsible use of Aurora's rural and environmental assets.

- **Protect Farmland and Rural Character:** A major concern is the growing loss of farmland and open space due to subdivisions. Residents overwhelmingly support stronger land conservation measures and zoning tools to preserve Aurora's agricultural heritage and rural identity.
- **Promote Small-Scale Farming and Local Food Access:** Residents want to expand micro-farming, homesteading, and community gardening. There is support for reducing barriers to small-scale agriculture, such as lowering permit fees for chickens or gardens, and offering tax incentives for light agricultural use on residential properties
- **Conserve Natural Resources and Ecosystems:** Forests, wetlands, and stream corridors were identified as critical natural areas in need of protection. Residents advocated for expanded tree planting, invasive species management, and stronger stormwater controls to protect water quality and natural habitats.
- **Support Agritourism and Local Agriculture:** Community members see potential for farm-based tourism, local food events, and greater visibility for Aurora's agricultural economy. Many residents support farm-to-school programs and enhanced marketing of local farms and products.

Key Issues & Opportunities

"Opportunities (✓)" represent existing strengths or assets in the Town that can be further leveraged and supports the potential for new development, business creation, or achieving the plan's vision statement and goals.

✓ **Solar Farm Siting on Less Productive or Vacant Lands:** The County's solar suitability analysis identified 29 parcels suitable for solar. Directing large-scale renewable energy projects away from prime farmland helps the Town meet green-energy goals while minimizing loss of productive acreage.

✓ **Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Initiatives:** Aurora is already Bronze CSC certified, and the Town should continue to support actions that would lead to silver certification. This would in turn position the Town well to pursue additional grants and programs—such as flood resilience projects, green energy development, and farmland preservation—that address both climate adaptation and agricultural needs.

✓ **Targeted Preservation of Key Farmland & Wildlife Corridors:** With prime farmland, forested areas, wetlands often adjacent, Aurora can prioritize key parcels to conserve via easements, purchase-of-development-rights (PDR), or public-private partnerships, strengthening critical habitat connectivity.

"Issues (✗)" represent either existing needs or gaps in the Town the limits to future development or from achieving the plan's vision statement and goals.

✗ **Vulnerability in Flood-Prone Areas:** Approximately 1,456 acres near the creek's floodplain are at high risk of flooding, yet Aurora does not participate in FEMA's Community Rating System (CRS), missing out on opportunities for reduced flood insurance rates and enhanced flood mitigation.

✗ **Nutrient Runoff and Stream Protection:** The lower East Branch of Cazenovia Creek is Section 303(d)-listed due to elevated phosphorous, highlighting the need for better stormwater management and agricultural best practices to improve water quality. Furthermore, although waterways like Cazenovia Creek provide vital ecosystem services, not all riparian corridors have protective setbacks or are recognized for conservation, risking erosion and reduced water quality.

✗ **Incremental Loss of Tree Canopy on Private Lands:** While Aurora enjoys an overall high tree-cover percentage, ongoing residential development and clearing for utility installations can gradually reduce forest continuity, impacting habitat corridors and long-term ecological health.