

Dear Village Officials,

I am writing as a resident of the Town of Ledyard who has lived and worked in and around the Village of Aurora my whole life. I currently am part of a family trust that owns three properties in the Village, and I run a small school in the Village that brings in students from surrounding communities. I also own and run a small paddle boat rental and delivery business based on and around Cayuga Lake. I care a lot about this place and have a strong personal and professional interest in seeing Aurora become a place that people want to not just visit, but to work and live in harmony with each other and the natural environment.

I feel strongly that our public institutions are important and that their primary purpose is to serve and promote a healthy and thriving community which I believe has some key components: a culture of place and relationship, strong supports for growing families including educational opportunities, safe and affordable housing, opportunities for economic development, and public access to and protection of natural spaces.

I'm writing today to formally request that the Village of Aurora pursue the long form State Environmental Quality Review before allowing the demolition and development of the area that is currently part of the McGordan House property and its surrounding area. I have concerns not only about the potential environmental impact of demolition, but I am also concerned about the precedent this will set for future demolition and development in our community.

After attending a meeting of the Community Preservation Panel on Monday, April 10th, it seems that the decision to allow demolition was made by this committee using biased information regarding the economic viability of renovation. Most members voiced that their votes to allow the demolition were based on the huge cost of saving this building based on the quotes that were provided to them in the application. The proposal cited a cost of \$2 million or significantly more to turn the house into student housing for Wells College. I believe this number was purposely misleading as it was comparing the cost of student housing for an institution (which is highly regulated and very expensive) rather than the cost that the average person would expect to pay to have the house renovated by a typical construction crew in our area for residential use.

There are two significant impacts that I believe warrant deeper study. The first is the diverse and untouched natural environment that not only impacts the quality of life in the village, but due to its proximity, also impacts the health of our entire lake. I have been told by local environmental experts that the land in question is home to several distinct and important environmental zones that are of huge importance to the animals and plants who have been living there, undisturbed, for hundreds if not thousands of years. Demolition and development would have a massive long term impact on all of the plant and animal species living in this area and due to location, would also have an impact on the lake which is immediately downhill and downstream.

The other significant impact is the precedent that this development would have on the community of humans who live and work in this tiny village. We can't undo what has already been done, but I know that many people who have lived here within the past 20-40 years are disheartened and frustrated with the impact that development has already had on the Village. As stated above, economic opportunity is an important pillar of community, but it seems that deals and opportunities have been served up directly to those who least needed the support and access to them. I could cite several examples of this but for the sake of keeping this concise, I will just summarize this to say that the choices made by the

larger and wealthier players in this game have had a real and tangible impact on those who have stayed and watched it all unfold. A few decades ago, Aurora was a thriving community. It was full of families who worked together to build and maintain its public institutions. There were plenty of people to volunteer for the fire department, to work at and send kids to the preschool, to visit the library, and to run and attend summer recreational programs. Today I have met several young families who are actively choosing to live somewhere else because as one parent recently told me, "It looks great on the surface, but it doesn't feel like there is a real community here".

I also recognize that the land in question has an important historical significance to the decedents of those who lived here long before being forced out by General Sullivan's Scorched Earth Campaign, which took place on this very land, known as Peachtown, which my small school was purposely named after. These decedents, who still live and practice their native culture in and near Aurora, and the artifacts that undoubtedly exist on this site, should also be taken into consideration when we think about the bigger picture and long term impact on the community.

I am no expert, but I know that many exist, and that their job is to closely examine the short and long term impacts of development on the "harmony between man and his environment" and to "eliminate damage to the environment and enhance human and community resources; and to enrich the understanding of the ecological systems, natural, human, and community" (SEQR Handbook, 4th edition, Department of Environmental Conservation). I believe that given the size and history of our little Village, this project is one of considerable magnitude and that it deserves a closer and more careful investigation than it is currently being given.

Thank you for your consideration.

Alyssa Binns Gunderson