

***The Cherry Ave.-Court St. Local Landmark Historic District:
A Working-Families Neighborhood***

Rationale: Both the current Zoning Law (LL-1-of-2023, as of February 1, 2024) and the Draft Zoning Law (Aurora-Draft-REDLINE-Zoning-11-27-23-1.pdf, as of November 27, 2023) provide for the local designation of Landmarks, including “places,” which may (and in preservation practice often do) include neighborhoods. According to the current law, LL-1-of-2023 Sect, 705.A,

The Community Preservation Panel shall conduct an initial survey of the Village of Aurora for the purpose of determining which places, sites, buildings, structures, trees and other objects, in the opinion of the Panel, may be designated as Village Landmarks. Such Landmarks may be so designated if they:

1. possess special character or historic or aesthetic interest or value as part of the cultural, political, economic or social history of the Village, the region, the State or the nation; or
2. are identified with historic personages; or
3. embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style; or
4. represent an established and familiar visual feature of the Village.

The Draft Zoning Law expands upon this responsibility in Article VII, Sections 705 and 706, as follows:

Designation of Village Landmarks or Historic Districts, Criteria.

- The natural and built environment of the Village of Aurora, as a rural village sited along Cayuga Lake, has significance extending beyond the Village of Aurora-Wells College Historic District as delineated in 1980. This environment includes homes and sites associated with the Cayuga Nation of the Haudenosaunee, settlers, those who arrived enslaved, freedom seekers, immigrants, and others who made possible the growth and sustenance of the community. Therefore, the Community Preservation Panel may review places, sites, buildings, structures, and other objects throughout the village in order to determine if said resources should be so designated and shall make such recommendation to the Village Board of Trustees.
- The Panel is responsible for recommending to the Village Board of Trustees the designation of identified structures or resources as individual landmarks, scenic landmarks, or historic districts within the Village as provided below....

It further defines local Historic Districts:

- **3. *Historic District:*** The Panel may recommend for designation a group of properties within the village as a historic district if a majority of properties therein:
- Meet one or more of the criteria for designation as an individual landmark and which may have within its boundaries other properties or structures that, while not of such historic and/or architectural significance to be designated as landmarks, nevertheless contribute to the overall visual characteristics of the landmark or landmarks located within the historic district; and
- Constitute a unique section of the Village of Aurora by reason of possessing those qualities that would satisfy such criteria.

In Aurora, Court St. (principally the east side) and upper Cherry Ave. (east of Court St.) fulfill these criteria. They show the evolution of the “cultural, ... economic, [and] social history of the Village, the region, [and] the State,” “represent an established and familiar visual feature of the Village,” and “constitute a unique section of the Village of Aurora.” In addition, they are contiguous, all (Court St.) or

in part (Cherry Ave., west of Court St. and on the south with Oak Glen Cemetery). with the National Historic District, and their history connects strongly with the District. The unifying and defining historic feature of this neighborhood is its role in housing and providing familial and social cohesion among the working families who “made possible the growth and sustenance of the community.” On a regional and State scale, this social history also reflects two important population movements: Irish immigration and freedom seekers.

Sources: Mandell, Samuel D. (with Leffingwell, Albert), “A History of the Houses in Aurora,” 1904. Gives names and sequence of owners, and often year of construction. Occupations of owners and tenants are often available from other sources filed by name in the Village Archives, and from census records.

Avery, Baldwin, “The Village of Aurora as I Saw It - and Now,” (1993) an informal house-by-house account starting with Baldy’s early memories (1920s) up to 1993.

Atlases and maps: the 1853, 1859, 1875, and 1904 atlases show changes over time, and are especially valuable in showing the development of upper (eastern) Cherry Ave. The map of the estate of Louise Morgan Zabriskie (1906; in the Archives, not on line) is especially useful since it covers so much of the area under consideration.

Additional Information: Three sources belong to the same era, almost the same year: Mandell’s book, the 1904 map, and the Louise Morgan Zabriskie Estate map. The 1904 map is very detailed and correlates fairly easily with the current properties map from Cayuga County Real Property Services.

Houses on the 1904 map are unquestionably old enough (over fifty years) to merit the designation “historic.” Houses newer than fifty years old are designated “Non-Contributing” to this historic district. This practice follows that for National Historic Districts.

A number of the houses have been owned by the same family for a long time. This project is an excellent opportunity to collect oral histories of the properties.

Historic designation and its underlying documentation may enable owners to obtain a tax credit for qualifying repairs of a primary residence.