

March 19, 2025

To the Village Board of Trustees:

Last month, you received several expert opinion letters asking you to designate Barler, Campbell, and the Boathouse Lawn as Local Landmarks. I would like to remind you of their content.

The north-east chapter of DOCOMOMO, a world-wide advocacy group which spans 70 countries, wrote eloquently of the esteem accorded to the internationally significant trio of buildings built by architect Walter Netsch in the Village of Aurora. The chapter also featured the buildings in their February news magazine, and characterized the “stern letter” sent to you by the College’s lawyers opposing the designations as being “riddled with errors.”

The renowned architectural firm for which Netsch worked (S.O.M.) was founded in 1939, and today has offices in Chicago, New York City, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Seattle, London, Melbourne, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Dubai. A partner in the firm took the time to write you a very moving and thoroughly documented tribute to Netsch’s magnificent work in Aurora.

Three regional nonprofit organizations, each 50+ years old (the Landmark Society, Preservation Association of CNY, and Historic Ithaca) joined a highly regarded state-wide entity, the Preservation League of NYS, to write a letter in detailed support of these Local Landmark designations. They observed that:

**“Historic preservation has...become an ethical code, sponsored by government at nearly every level, and incentivized into a real estate development tool. Time and data have shown that the argument for obsolescence and demolition is faulty, and that preservation is more advantageous and financially sound than demolition and rebuilding, both environmentally and economically.”**

Regarding the Boathouse Lawn, they further noted that:

**“As part of the Aurora/Wells College National Historic District, the lawn contributes to the district’s integrity by preserving the setting that defines the historic character of the campus. ... [It] has long served as a vibrant space for both the college and the broader Aurora community, hosting a range of academic, recreational, and celebratory events. With over a century and a half of continuous use and cherished memories, this space is not merely a lawn but a Historic Designed Landscape, as explicitly recognized by preservation authorities. Designating it as a scenic landmark ensures the protection of this irreplaceable setting for future generations.”**

For the good of our community, in consideration of these expert opinions I ask that you add Barler, Campbell, and the Boathouse Lawn to our list of Local Landmarks.

Thank you,

Crawford R. Thoburn  
Aurora, NY