

Jodi Baldwin
1395 Sherwood Road
Aurora, NY 13026



August 6, 2025

Village of Aurora Board, Community Preservation Panel:
Jim Burkett, Chair
Jeff Blum
Claire Morehouse
Julia Rossman
John Wendler
456 Main Street
Aurora, New York 13026

To the Members of the Community Preservation Panel of the Village of Aurora;

I wasn't even aware, 24 hours ago, of today's public hearing or the proposal the Inns of Aurora has submitted to demolish Judge Walter Wood's law office. And yet, I could FEEL, even 3 miles up the hill, the oppressive negativity of yet another plan to dismantle the village of Aurora for the sole benefit of the exclusive Inns of Aurora monopoly.

I DO NOT SUPPORT the demolition of the "shed" at 348 Main Street, Aurora.

Why? Let me break it down into segments...

First: Basic Historic Age and Significance

When traveling in New England or other east coast areas, one can find many pre-1800 buildings. Not everywhere of course, but there are communities, where neighborhoods remain intact and the 18th architecture of our colonial and early American history can be viewed.

In Central New York, that is an entirely different story. Although this region, the frontier, was being cautiously settled in the mid 1700s and the flood gates opened for large waves of colonists in the late 1700s, there are very few 18th c. structures remaining.

Whether they were gut renovated and expanded decades later (as my home was) or dismantled to rebuild, or fell victim to fire or neglect, there simply is not a large base of physically existing, standing structures to view the early beginnings of our areas settlement history.

For this reason ALONE, the circa 1795 Judge Walter Wood law office, which the Inns of Aurora refers to as a "shed", should not be demolished. But instead, restored with signage, adding to the historical integrity and significance of the Village of Aurora.

The Judge Walter Wood law office is not only significant to the Village history and architectural makeup, but it helps create an AUTHENTIC historic village, nestled in the finger lakes.

Authentic, historic villages are one of the TOP tourist attractions in the finger lakes. And to have an AUTHENTIC historic village, one needs as many of the original buildings as possible. New, modern buildings can of course be built, at greater expense, in the style of historic structures, but there's nothing authentic about them.

If you quickly think of the most successful tourist villages in the Finger Lakes, I bet the ones that would pop into your head immediately would be Skaneateles and Canandaigua- both with largely intact historic villages on the water.

Auburn, just north of Aurora, has been economically struggling for nearly 7 decades and recently, has been exhibiting great efforts towards it's historic appeal and tourism, after realizing the VALUE of the AUTHENTIC and natural tourism such that is drawn to Skaneateles. But what is one of the main challenges which Auburn faces?? The historical downtown was mostly destroyed with urban renewal in the 1950s, and once historic structures are completely destroyed, you can NEVER get them back.

Forgive me for being blunt, but in my opinion, anyone on the Community Preservation panel who votes in support of the demolition of this 18th century structure is either ignorant of history and therefore should not be on a *preservation* panel, or, are in the pocket of the Inns of Aurora and are voting in favor of the will of the Inns as opposed to the will of the people.

Now, this all feels like deja-vu because we were all here in the spring of 2023 with MAJOR community opposition to the proposed demolition of the McGordon house. Which will be addressed later in my third reason for being opposed to the demolition of 248 Main Street....

Second: Demolition Submission Inaccurately Filed - Unacceptable

The Notice Hereby Given states:

"Application #25-20 from the Inns of Aurora for a accessory structure demolition at 348 Main Street."

However, on the Cayuga GIS and Image Mate pages, 348 Main Street, is NOT owned by the Inns of Aurora, but by Pleasant T. Rowland, LLC. Having purchased it from Tracy Leffingwell on October 2, 2017.

Therefore, this application CAN NOT be voted on due to this technical error. The Inns of Aurora has no authority to file a demolition application for 348 Main Street, as they are not the listed owner. Only Pleasant T. Rowland can file a demolition application for this property.

To continue without adhering to this very important and LEGAL technical detail would be to blatantly make a mockery of the Village of Aurora officials and democratic process.

I have included a print out of these two websites from today.

Thlrd: I OPPOSE the Inns of Aurora MONOPOLY of The Village of Aurora

I don't know if this has been addressed formally, in writing, to the Village of Aurora Board, but perhaps it is time to state that I am fully and totally in opposition to the monopoly which the Inns of Aurora holds over the commercial and main street properties in the Village of Aurora.

I am sure that others feel the same.

The proposed demolition of the Judge Walter Wood law house at 348 Main Street, which the Inns of Aurora has labeled as a "shed", in a clear attempt to understate and deflect attention from it's actions, is another move in a decades long game of Simm City that the Inns of Aurora has played in this Village.

I am a new community member, having only moved to the area in 2018. And what attracted me to this region, what made me invest hard-earned money I had saved for a down payment, was that the Village of Aurora had a small college, indicating there was some level of value placed on intellectual and cultural opportunities; and the small variety of activity in the downtown; when I put an offer on my property in 2016 there was:

- * Bet the Farm Winery - now gone / owned by the Inns / sat vacant for nearly 7 years
- * Shackleton's Hardware - sold to a vintage store / sold again - the ONLY non-Inns of Aurora commercial property on Main Street
- * Jane Morgan's House Boutique - now gone / owned by the Inns / not for public use

It is my observations & understanding, that some of the harmful, monopolistic offenses in the past 8 years since I moved here and include:

- * closing the Bet the Farm business and letting building sit empty for years
- * shifting Village Market from actual grocery store to gift shop
- * breaking the Historical Society's lease and kicking them out of their space
- * interfering with the transfer of Jane Morgan business and taking over the building
- * occupying the "Aurora Cooks" building for guests, no real use to the community
- * hiring Rasa Spa to set up and do all leg work for The Spa, then cutting them out
- * supporting the sale / demolition of McGordon house (by way of first right of refusal)

And, in my opinion, participating, if not specifically assisting in, the closure of Wells College.

This is on top of the I'll-do-what-I-want monopolistic attitude and "vision" of Pleasant Rowland since the beginning of her relationship 2 decades ago. After living outside of Aurora for 2 years, and not understanding why everyone was so miserable and what was the issue with this "quaint" village, I literally had to google key words to try to understand. And plenty of articles and information came up about the unyielding takeover and divisive actions that began this phase of Aurora's history.

How long will this be allowed to continue??

How long will YOU, the Village officials, be submissive to this harmful monopoly??

Will the Inns ever just come out and say they have plans to take over the whole village and make it a fully, exclusive, gated community??? Or are they going to just chip away, one stressful chess move at a time, wearing away at the patience of the residents and eroding their will to fight back??

Will it all end when Pleasant Rowland passes away?? Or are the reigns of control fully exerted by Sue Edinger?

It would give pause to any rational and justice oriented person to consider that a business which has two decades of community pushback and concern, significant and valid concerns which stems from the very beginning of it's plans, is NOT an overall positive business for the community. This is clearly not a holistic, mutually beneficial relationship, but a parasitic relationship. A relationship of Abuser and Abused. Controller and Controlled. This is toxic. The Inns of Aurora pushes to get what they want, framing their desires in a way that seems like they have the community in their best interests, though that is basic manipulation and their goals are all that ultimately matter. Another term is exploitation.

The suffocating atmosphere that I constantly feel from the Village of Aurora, is that there is nearly no opportunity for anyone else to own a business or pursue a creative venture, because the Inns of Aurora has a monopoly on the majority of main street properties. Not only do they have a monopoly, but their vision and M.O. for the past 20 years, has been to literally re-arrange the village to their liking. There is very little AUTHENTIC remaining. The Village of Aurora has been remade under an intentional historic version: keep the "desired", remove the "undesirables". The Inns of Aurora clearly is the Judge and Jury as to what is deemed desirable and what is undesirable.

How is this beneficial to preserving an AUTHENTIC historic Finger Lakes Village?
How is this beneficial for either the community of residents or the traveling tourist??
Does their monopoly and suffocating take-all-control-all attitude foster a welcoming space for people to relocate here?

Yes, I am aware of the economic impact that the Inns of Aurora brings in through their weddings, property taxes and job opportunities, but in my opinion, money isn't everything and the harm they are causing, both to the physical integrity of the Village of Aurora and immediate area and to the local community, far outweighs the "bottom line". In my opinion, the Village of Aurora could have multiple businesses and organizations, which all contribute to the same economic benefit, yet no harmful, controlling and suffocating monopoly.

This past weekend I escaped for a day trip. Driving a meandering two hours to visit the small village of Hammondsport, at the south end of Keuka Lake. I had never been there. My friend and I wanted to visit the Glenn H. Curtiss Museum.

It IMMEDIATELY struck me how cute, adorable, quaint, this historic little lake side village was... all the adjectives tourist offices want to hear. And it also struck me how it seemed comparable in size to Aurora, but there seemed plenty for a day-visitor to do. In the past few years, I've always compared Aurora with Skaneateles, but these two villages are truly not comparable, both in terms of physical size and also population. So, I've hesitated to use that as a documentable case study. However, when looking at the details of Hammondsport, one can clearly see that a thriving village is possible WITHOUT the control of a monopoly.

Just to flesh it out for you, here is a side by side comparison based on what comes up on Google Maps pinpoints:

	Aurora	Hammondsport
Total Area (sq miles)	0.92	0.37
2020 Population	607	583
Places to Eat	<p>Fargo Bar & Grill (Inns owned) Aurora Inn (Inns owned)</p>	<p>Timber Stone Grill Maloney's Pub Village Tavern Rest & Inn Portside Bistro & Street Food Wise Guys of Hammondsport The Hidden Cork Aroma Coffee Art Gallery Service Station FLX (coffee shop) Verns Bakery Clarissa's Cottage (bakery) Crooked Lake Ice Cream Depot Park (snack shack)</p> <p>(Just Outside borders) TJ's Coffee & Bagels Keuka Creamery Finger Lakes Beer Co.</p>
Places to Stay	<p>Inns of Aurora Resort & Spa Rowland House (Inns owned) E.B. Morgan House (Inns owned) Zabriskie House (Inns owned) Wallcourt Hall (Inns owned) Aurora Mainstays Annie's Guest House</p>	<p>Village Tavern Rest & Inn Blushing Rose B&B Keuka Lakeside Inn Hammondsport Bed, Breakfast & Experiences Champaign House Amity Rose Park Inn 1835 House J.S. Hubbs Guest House Hammondsport Lodging Cottage on the Square</p> <p>(Just Outside borders) Black Sheep Inn & Spa Vinehurst Inn & Suites</p>
Places to Shop	<p>Vintage Lighting Village Market (Inns owned) Constantia Wine Company (Inns bldg)</p>	<p>Poppysea Floristry Opera House Antiques Browsers Gift Shop Mersur (boutique) Mango Moon Studio Cinnamon Stick (gift shop) Depot Park Lakeshop</p> <p>(Just Outside border) Crooked Lake Antiques</p>

Activities	Bianconi Tours (Just outside border) The Spa (Inns owned) Wells Golf Course (Inns connection)	Aroma Coffee Art Gallery Club 39 (nightclub)
Public Lake Access	Aurora Village Park newly acquired parcel	Depot Park Boat Rentals at Depot Park
Amenities	Post Office Aurora Free Library Aurora Opera House	Visitor's Center Post Office Fred & Harriet Taylor Memorial Library Hammondsport Grocery Park Pharmacy Vine City Supply & Hardware Funeral Home Hammondsport Barbershop Tobias & Co. Salon Beauty by Barlow Main Street Hair & Nails
Banks	Cayuga Lake National Bank	Five Star Bank Community Bank
Museums		(Just outside border) Glenn H. Curtiss Museum Finger Lakes Boating Museum

The Village of Aurora and the Village of Hammondsport are very close in population and physical size. And they both occupy a beautiful setting on their respective Finger Lakes. And yet, look at all the Hammondsport has to offer, both for it's local residents to enjoy, or as business opportunities and for visiting tourists. Aurora has more than double the land space, and should be able to easily accommodate a variety of small, locally & independently owned businesses. A healthy variety which would have continued to keep enrollment rates at Wells College up due to vibrant and AUTHENTIC village life.

However, Aurora does not compare. Aurora looks sad in comparison. And if the goal of the Inns of Aurora is not to be A PART OF a small, flourishing, historic village, but to CONTROL and TAKE OVER a historic village for it's own exclusive vision, than it is succeeding.

And YOU, as the Community Preservation Panel, are assisting in that monopolistic chokehold which affects us all, not only financially, but mentally and emotionally.

I asked earlier, how long you as Village Officials were going to be submissive to the Inns of Aurora's desires.

But perhaps the more accurate questions is:

Who is personally benefitting from the Inns of Aurora?

Are there personal, financial reasons, for any of you to side with the Inns, and to continue allowing their monopoly to dictate every aspect of the Village? As opposed to simply holding the line and setting up healthy boundaries for the Inns of Aurora to exist as a business, not a control-all monopoly.

This is not a rhetorical question. I want to know.

Jim Burkett, are you financially or otherwise, personally incentivized to side with the desires of the Inns of Aurora, over the community?

Jeff Blum, are you financially or otherwise, personally incentivized to side with the desires of the Inns of Aurora, over the community?

Claire Morehouse, are you financially or otherwise, personally incentivized to side with the desires of the Inns of Aurora, over the community?

Julia Rossmann, are you financially or otherwise, personally incentivized to side with the desires of the Inns of Aurora, over the community?

John Wendler, are you financially or otherwise, personally incentivized to side with the desires of the Inns of Aurora, over the community?

The only member of the Community Preservation Panel who wasn't fully in support of the demolition of the McGordon house was Chris MacCormick and he has moved from the area. A win for the Inns of Aurora?? Breaking the spirit of another resident??

Two years ago, in opposition to the McGordon House proposed demolition, I stuck with the very obvious and very logical arguments, which should have been enough, combined with the HUGE public opposition, to create a No vote from the Preservation Panel.

Now that the McGordon house has been demolished and the property listed for sale, for a pretty penny I will comment, it is clear that the intentions for demolition which we were all told by Kevin Fitzgerald, of Rt 90 Group LLC and then Wells President Gibraltar, and Mayor Jim Orman were all lies. As most of us knew at the time.

To me, this is all clearly a performative process.

Which is why I'm not bothering to elaborate again on the merits of the building itself.

After more than two decades of constant takeover by the Inns of Aurora, it is time to draw a line and set boundaries. It is time to say: we are happy for the Inns of Aurora to be A PART of this village but not to CONTROL and OWN this village.

And it is time for the Village of Aurora officials to be transparent about whether they are willing to set those boundaries. Whether those officials are working for the community or whether they are assisting the Inns of Aurora monopoly in all its self-promoting, self-benefiting, exclusive, exploitive, and I will also add as many of you know my other stance, it's racist development visions.

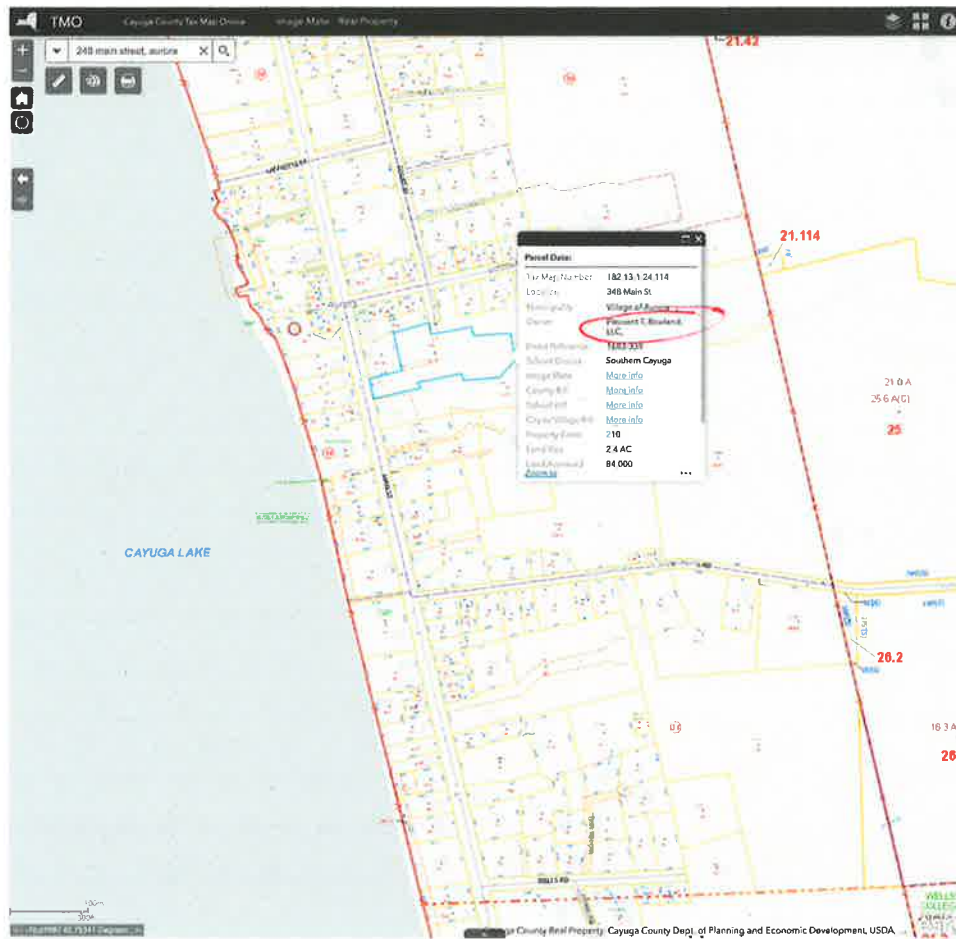
End the Inns Monopoly NOW.

Oppose the demolition of 348 Main Street

Sincerely,



Jodi Baldwin



← C imate.cayugacounty.us/propdetla.aspx?swis=053401&prinkey=18201300010241140000

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Cayuga County


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Residential

Property Info

Owner/Sales

Inventory

Improvements

Tax Info

Report

Comparables

Municipality of Village of Aurora

SWIS:	053401	Tax ID:	182.13-1-24.114
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Ownership Information


Name	Address
Pleasant T. Rowland, LLC	6120 University Ave Middleton WI 53562

Sale Information

Sale Date	Price	Property Class	Sale Type	Prior Owner
10/2/2017	\$25,000	210 - 1 Family Res	Land & Building	Leffingwell, Tracy
	Value Usable	Arms Length	Deed Book	Deed Page
	No	No	1863	339

Photographs

(Click on photo to enlarge it.)



File Photo

Documents

- Transfer 8-25-2010
- Transfer 9-24-2010
- Survey 2000-182
- Survey 2001-106
- 81033 P240 07/27/2000
- Transfer 3-28-2017
- Transfer 12-29-2016
- Transfer 10-11-2017
- Survey Map 2017-31

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