

From: Linda Schwab <lschwab.glebefarm@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 19, 2026 2:37 PM
To: villageclerk
Cc: James Orman; Janet Murphy; John miller; JD Balloni; Alexis Boyce
Subject: Historian's Report January 2026

Because of the Martin Luther King holiday, I am sending this directly to you all to give you extra time to consider the opening material on "Heritage Tourism." This comes from a joint suggestion from the Community Preservation Panel and myself, that you think about how to bring together the work of the Gateway Park Committee with other DRI projects on Village-owned properties. The Mayor has emphasized the importance of the Gateway Park, and given leadership to the Vice-Mayor; the DRI contract process has begun, so this work is timely.

Historian's Report
January 2026

Tourism Promotion (one of the four State-mandated duties of municipal Historians in NYS.)
Continuing the Gateway Park query (see my December 2025 report), I met with the Community Preservation Panel on Jan 7, 2026, to discuss the role and style of interpretive signage connecting several municipal properties: the Gateway Park, Patrick Tavern, and three lakeside Public Access Points along Main St.



I was delighted to find strong support in CPP and a recommendation from them to develop a common and unified style for interpretive signage across these five locations.

Why is this important? Mayor Orman has identified Aurora's Gateway Park as a key entry point to the Central Finger Lakes. As such, its greatest potential value to the Village is in visitors who extend their time to explore what Aurora has to offer, return often, and even think of moving here.

What is interpretive signage? This type of signage is different from the strictly informational blue and yellow historic markers. Interpretive signs engage the visitor with strong visual elements, such as photographs and maps, to tell a story about the human and natural history of the place.

Here are examples from Pannier Graphics, a well-known firm. Almost everyone has seen these in State and National Parks, historic sites, and more. Close to home, the Inns has just added such signs to their walking trail.



How would interpretive signage be an asset to the Village on its properties?

The State Historian observes that “Heritage Tourism is the largest segment of the tourism industry and studies show that heritage tourists spend more time (and more money) on their trips than other tourists.” Interpretive signage is an excellent way to offer “an accurate and engaging presentation,” with a lasting “positive effect on local and regional economies.” (quotes from “Duties and Functions of New York State’s Local Government Historians,” <https://www.accessiblelaw.org/Documents/duties-functions-local-government-historians.pdf>)

Equally important is the lake itself and its Atlantic Flyway corridor to Montezuma, a designated “Important Bird Area.” Watching waterfowl, sometimes rare, in Aurora Bay is *a year-round activity*. At least five Aurora residents are outstanding bird and wildlife photographers, and many other local artists are inspired by the views along the lakeshore. These activities continue through months when water recreation does not.

Interpretive signage can serve both communities. We can discuss specific examples.

Is interpretive signage an expensive or difficult project? No to both! Interpretive signage is reasonably priced, especially compared to bronze markers. A “guesstimate” from conversation with Pannier graphics puts each sign at or under about \$500, plus design by a local graphic designer and mounting. *These costs are already written into the two Village-owned properties with DRI projects, Gateway Park and Patrick Tavern.* The Gateway Park DRI description also cites connecting with the Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail, which might open up using DRI money for the Public Access Points as well (remains to be determined).

Why now? State Park standards determine sign features like point size for text and sign height. Familiarity with these will be helpful in complying with the extensive environmental/historic forms required (to be explained in the February 2026 DRI webinar). Basic preference questions like “framed or frameless” and text font can be compared and discussed now. Teaming up makes this process simpler and gives visual unity to the final result, generating “more than the sum of its parts.”

What are we looking for from you? Support and encouragement for the relevant projects to work together and suggestions from you of effective interpretive signage you have seen.

The remainder of my usual report follows. A copy of my Annual Report to the State Historian will follow shortly.

Queries: Two queries about preservation practice and the work of local and regional preservation organizations.

Education: Ithaca College student Travis Conway, who prepared a documentary about Aurora after the Wells closure as a class project, presented an outstanding short film to which I was pleased to contribute, along with Mayor Orman, Dr. Heather MacAdam, Barbara Post, and many others.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Schwab, PhD
Village Historian

From: Linda Schwab <lschwab.glebefarm@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 20, 2026 7:32 PM
To: villageclerk
Cc: James Orman; Janet Murphy; John miller; JD Balloni; Alexis Boyce
Subject: Re: Historian's Report January 2026 ADDENDUM

Historian's Report Addendum, 20 Jan 2026

Today I spoke with Patricia O'Reilly, who presented the DRI webinar last Thursday. You might know the following information but it might be helpful to have a preliminary version on one page. Points of interest to the Village Board from this conversation were:

Contracts. Each of the Aurora projects is contracted with a different State agency: Patrick Tavern with HCR and Gateway Park with NYS DOS. Therefore, the contracts are not necessarily the same, although *both contracts are long and time-intensive*.

Hiring. All State contracts require soliciting bids from Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises. The State maintains a list by county. You may still take the lowest “responsible” bid and if it can be justified to DOS or HCR as appropriate. (For example, if the Village wants to work with Ken Teter for certain engineering services, that is possible but might require a letter.)

Management/Administration. The management and administrative burden is very heavy, especially for small organizations. It would fall on Village Office staff (for Gateway) or volunteers (for Patrick Tavern), neither of which is tenable. A reasonable solution is to use some of the “soft costs” money to hire as appropriate. “Soft money” for Gateway can be as much as \$154.6K, and would cover such things as flood zone compliance, permits, and design, as well as management. (For Patrick Tavern, comparable areas would be a preservation architect and management.) This is a generous allowance, and as someone familiar with the administration of large grants, I see some ways to share the burden among the Aurora projects.

“A bigger bang for [our] buck.” I ran the signage proposal by Ms. O'Reilly, and at least from the HCR perspective, she thought that connecting the Public Access Points to the Gateway Park (and/or in the case of Dublin Lane to Patrick Tavern) can be included in the re-evaluation of the scope of work that is normal at this point. Citing the Blueways connection can extend the visibility of the project almost throughout the Village while adding almost negligibly to cost (less than 5% of the Gateway budget).

Summary: Signage is necessary to both/all Aurora projects. Choosing a couple of common features to produce a unified appearance is easy to do, increases visual impact, and checks off one task from the scope of work.

Respectfully submitted,