

2023 TOWN OF AURELIUS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

I. Introduction

The Town Board, in consultation with the Town Attorney, the Planning Board and the citizens of the Town of Aurelius prepared updates to the existing Comprehensive Plan with the goal of preserving the existing goals of the Comprehensive Plan, while updating and modernizing it to conform with the concurrent updates to the Town of Aurelius Zoning Law (the “Zoning Law”).

II. 2023 Update Process

In early 2023, the Town Attorney began drafting updates to the Zoning Law in order to modernize certain provisions and to add chapters of the law dealing with solar power and the sale of cannabis.

In May of 2023, during the regularly scheduled Town Board meeting, the Town Board determined that the overarching goals of the Comprehensive Plan had not changed since March of 2006, the date of the current Comprehensive Plan. As a result, the Town Attorney recommended an update to the existing Comprehensive Plan without the formation of a new Ad-Hoc Committee.

In June of 2023, the Town Attorney delivered the 2023 Town of Aurelius Comprehensive Plan Update (the “Update”) to the Town Board for review and comment. On June 8, 2023, the Town referred the Update to the Planning Board for review and comment, and also referred the Update to the Cayuga County Department of Planning for its review pursuant to General Municipal Law Sections 239-l and 239-m.

The Town Attorney, in conjunction with members of the Town Board and Planning Board, scheduled three informational sessions to discuss the proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Law. These sessions took place on

Session 1:	June 22, 2023 Town-Wide Zoning Law and Comprehensive Plan Updates
Session 2:	June 29, 2023 Town-Wide Zoning Law and Comprehensive Plan Updates
Session 3:	July 10, 2023 Town-Wide Zoning Law and Comprehensive Plan Updates

The Town Board also scheduled a public hearing for 7:00 p.m. on August 10, 2023 to hear all persons interested in the updates to the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Law.

III. 2020 Census and Other Updated Data

A. Updated Census Data

The 2020 Census reflects a general decline of population in the Town of Aurelius. Overall figures for Cayuga County reflect a 7 percent loss of population since 2000. Year 2020 Census figures for the Town of Aurelius include the numbers for the Village. This section of the Update will breakdown the population characteristics and make some general comparisons to adjacent Towns.

i. Village of Cayuga

According to the 2020 Census and the 2021 data profile estimates from the American Community Survey, there are approximately 472 people, 181 households, and 98 families residing in the village. The population density is 524 people per square mile and there are 207 housing units at an average density of 230 per square mile.

The racial makeup of the village is 93.9 percent White, 1.7 percent African American, 0.00 percent Native American, 0.04 percent Asian, 0.00 percent Pacific Islander, 0.04 percent from other races and 0.36 percent from 2 or more races. 2.8 percent of the population is Hispanic or Latino of any race.

Out of 181 existing households, 17.1 percent have children under the age of 18 living with them, 39.8 percent are married couples living together, 7.2 percent have a female householder with no husband present, and 45.9 percent are non-families. The average household size is 2.00 and the average family size is 2.58.

The percentage of all households made up of individuals is 36.5 and 27.6 percent have someone living alone who is 65 years of age or older.

Age of the Village population varies with 12.7 percent under the age of 18, 5.0 percent from 18 to 24, 6.6 percent from 25 to 44, 33.5 percent from 45 to 64, and 32.0 percent who are 65 years of age or older. The median age is 56.3 years. For every 100 females, there are 75.7 males.

ii. Town of Aurelius

Based upon the 2020 Census and the 2021 data profile estimates from the American Community Survey, there are approximately 2,611 people, 1,115 households, and 722 families residing in the town with an average population density of 86 people per square mile. There are 1,331 housing units at an average density of 44 units per square mile.

The racial makeup of Aurelius is 92.8 percent White, 0.04 percent African American, 0.00 percent Native American, 0.05 percent Asian, 0.00 percent Pacific Islander, 0.14 percent from other races, and 0.42 percent from 2 or more races. The population consists of 1.10 percent Hispanic or Latino of any race.

Out of 1,115 households, 22.6 percent have children under the age of 18 living at home, 54.3 percent are married couples living together, 5.5 percent have a female householder with no husband present, and 35.2 percent are non-families. The average household size in the Town is 2.35 and the average family size is 2.83.

The percentage of all households are made up of individuals is 24.1 and 13.7 percent have someone living alone who is 65 years of age or older.

In the Town of Aurelius, the population is spread out with 17.5 percent under the age of 18, 6.1 percent from 18 to 24, 21.2 percent from 25 to 44, 27.2 percent from 45 to 64, and 27.9 percent who are 65 years of age or older. The median age is 49.4 years. For every 100 females, there are 105.4 males.

The Town of Aurelius is relatively large in population compared to the surrounding municipalities. It is the second largest in the immediate region and is comprised of 24 percent of the population of the surrounding communities.

The percent of population for the Town as a whole has decreased approximately 11 percent while the Village of Cayuga saw a 7.3 percent decrease in population (see table below). Slightly more than half of the Town, including the Village is between the ages of 25 and 64, with 17.5 percent of the population being between under eighteen years of age.

Town of Aurelius Population Change from 2000-2020			
Population (2000)	Population (2020)	# Change from 2000-2020	% Change from 2000-2020
2936	2611	325	-11.0%
Village of Cayuga Population Change from 2000-2020			
Population (2000)	Population (2020)	# Change from 2000-2020	% Change from 2000-2020
509	472	37	-7.3%

Population change in Aurelius is consistent with many communities in New York State who have experienced either very little decline or increase in population overall or have been relatively stable. The region’s population stability has been the result of a variety of factors, including a general outward migration by people from the northeast to the Sunbelt states for retirement or employment opportunities. Another factor is the birth to death ratio. In addition, conventional suburban development trends are attributed to some increase in population among local communities as people are continuing to move from older urban areas into newer modern housing tracts that are being built on cheaper land.

Between 2000 and 2020, the total number of households in the Town of Aurelius (including the Village) decreased. In 2021, there were 1115 households in the Town, which decreased from 1124 in 2000 (2020 Census Data - A household is defined as consisting of all the people who occupy a housing unit and includes the related family members and all the unrelated people sharing the housing unit. A person living alone or a group of unrelated people sharing a housing unit, is

also counted as a household).). Of the 1296 households counted in 2020, 820 or 63 percent were identified as occupied by families.

It was noted by the 2020 Census that the numbers of persons living in alone in a household has increased over the years. This trend may affect the type of residential development may occur in the future. Another factor that will affect the type of housing stock needed in the future is dependent upon the age distribution of the population. Between 2010 and 2020, the median age in the U.S. grew older representing an increase in the older population.

A comparison of 2000 and 2020 age distribution data was made to determine any significant changes in such information for the purposes of establishing a relative idea of future housing stock needs. Due to the difference in the age, distribution ranges from 2000 to 2020 Census data a reliable quantitative analysis could be ascertained. The comparison revealed the increased percentage of changes were in the 45 or above age group in both the Village and the Town. The percentage of the population over age 45 increased, and the percentage of the younger population decreased. The population overall has decreased in both municipalities. When considering these numbers, it can be said that, at the time of the 2020 census there does not appear to be a need for new housing in the either the Village of Cayuga or the Town as a whole.

iii. Employment and Education

U.S. Census information reveals that in 2021 approximately 50 percent of the Town (including the Village) labor force (employed persons 16 years of age or older) was employed in two general categories: management & professional, and sales and office. In addition, a little less than 40 percent was employed in either service occupations or production and transportation. Five percent of the Towns labor force was employed in the agricultural, forestry or mining industry.

In general, residents in the Town of Aurelius and Village of Cayuga have average incomes slightly higher than that of Cayuga County as a whole. The median income for families in Cayuga County in 2021 was \$63,511. The median family income at that time for the Town was \$70,673 while those in the Village were \$64,375. Below is a table of household and family incomes for the Town of Aurelius and Village of Cayuga in 2021.

Household and Family Incomes for the Town of Aurelius and Village of Cayuga.				
Income in 1999	Total Town Households	Total Village Households	Total Town Families	Total Village Families
\$0-\$10,000	37	19	7	0
\$10,000-\$14,999	21	11	7	0
\$15,000-\$24,999	68	13	28	0
\$25,000-\$34,999	59	5	28	0
\$35,000-\$49,999	165	13	55	6
\$50,000-\$74,999	243	40	166	32
\$75,000-\$99,999	112	18	108	16

\$100,000-\$149,999	257	41	200	27
\$150,000-\$199,999	82	9	57	12
\$200,000 or more	58	7	48	4
Median income	\$70,673	\$64,375	\$91,818	\$84,688
<i>Source: 2021 American Community Survey, U.S. Bureau of Census</i>				

When comparing these figures with the 2000 Census data, the analysis shows income levels in 2020 to be higher, thus providing evidence that income levels in the Town of Aurelius and Village of Cayuga have exhibited steady growth.

iv. Local Estimated Income

Census statistics reveal that the median income for a household in the Village of Cayuga is \$64,375, and the median income for a family is \$83,438. Males have a median income of \$57,292 versus \$53,750 for females. The per-capita income for the village is \$37,709 and 10.8 percent of the population is below the poverty line. Out of the total population, 7.0 percent of those under the age of 18 and 14.0 percent of those 65 and older are living below the poverty line.

In the Town of Aurelius (including the Village), the median income is \$70,673, and the median income for a family is \$91,818. Males have a median income of \$67,500 versus \$46,759 for females. The per-capita income for the town is \$42,633 and 8.0 percent of the population is below the poverty line. Out of the total population, 9.0 percent of those under the age of 18 and 6.0 percent of those 65 and older are living below the poverty line.

v. Location of Resident Employment

Location of employment for the local population is important to determine the availability of a skilled workforce and helps to project growing transportation needs and well as economic opportunities. For example, a declining population may still place increasing demand on infrastructure if the locations of employment opportunities shift to a specific location in the Town or to another municipality.

According to the Census, a large majority of the population works within three major industries as follows:

- 1. Educational, health and social services 24.5%
- 2. Manufacturing: 17.5%
- 3. Retail Trade: 10.9%

These three sectors account for more than 52 percent of Town workforce employment. The employed civilian population of Aurelius reveals that 35 percent of residents work in management, professional and related occupations while 21.5 percent are in sales or office occupations. The remainder work in service, maintenance, and transportation occupations and only 3.5 percent are employed in farming, fishing or forestry. Census data for 2021 reveals that the average travel time

to work for residents is approximately 20 minutes. This suggests that the Town's main employment destinations continue to be the City of Auburn (< 20 min.) and the City of Syracuse (> 20 min.) of Resident Employment

vi. Local Educational Profile

The Town of Aurelius has a relatively well-educated population compared to many rural communities. Of the total population more than 90 percent of local residents hold High School Diplomas and 37.6 percent of the population, have at least some college education.

Additionally, 73% of individuals hold an Associates Degree, a Bachelors Degree, or a Masters Degree from a college or university. This level of education provides a number of opportunities to present new concepts to the local population that may enhance the ability of the local community in establishing future planning goals and objectives for the area. It also suggests that there is an adequately trained workforce available to local businesses and entrepreneurs.

B. Fingerlakes Crossing and Fingerlakes Mall

On or about 2007, the Fingerlakes Crossing shopping plaza opened across the street from the Fingerlakes Mall. The Fingerlakes Crossing shopping plaza attracted major national retail tenants including Home Depot, Kohls, and Dick's Sporting Goods. This additional retail space has increased commercial activity in the area. Despite this additional traffic, the Fingerlakes Mall has failed to revitalize to date. However, there is renewed optimism in the community for the Fingerlakes Mall, as it was recently sold on or about September 19, 2022 to Vachi Fingerlakes LLC. In a press release discussing the purchase, the purchaser noted that it is now considering multi-stage redevelopment plans for the mall while noting that it has 55.31 acres with development potential.

C. The Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act

Following in the footsteps of more than a dozen other states, on March 31, 2021, New York passed legislation legalizing the recreational use of marijuana for individuals over the age of 21.

The Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act (the "MRTA") legalizes the licensed cultivation and distribution, as well as the use and possession, of recreational marijuana in New York State. Though medical marijuana has been legal in New York since the Compassionate Care Act was passed in 2014, the Act significantly expands the lawful use of marijuana in the state.

The MRTA creates an expansive recreational marijuana program; establishes the cannabis control board and office of cannabis management, which is tasked with regulating medical and recreational use of marijuana and hemp extracts; and makes several statutory amendments, including changes to the tax law and penal law, among others.

As part of the MRTA, cities, towns, and villages were able to opt-out of allowing adult-use cannabis retail dispensaries or on-site consumption licenses from locating within their jurisdictions on or before December 31, 2021. Municipalities were not able to opt-out of adult-use legalization, or cultivation. Any municipality opting out of dispensaries and on-site consumption would not

receive any of the tax revenue related to the cannabis industry. The Town of Aurelius did not opt-out of allowing cannabis retail dispensaries or on-site consumption licenses within the Town.

D. New York State’s Climate & Community Protection Act

The Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (the “CLCPA”) was passed in 2019. Through the CLCPA, New York State has set out on a path to reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. Through this Act, New York State has set ambitious goals, including doubling the distributed solar deployment to 6,000 megawatts by 2025, 70% of the state’s electricity from renewable energy sources by 2030, and 100% emission free clean electricity by 2040. To achieve the solar power benchmark, New York State has provided solar developers with various incentives to build out the solar energy grid.

IV. 2023 Goals and Recommendations

A. Section 8.2.2 of the Comprehensive Plan provides that “Aurelius will encourage agriculture to continue as the primary economic activity in the Town for an indefinite period or for as long as necessary to ensure that the farmer’s economic health is sustained.” Consistent with that goal, the Town of Aurelius will continue to maintain agriculture as a viable economic activity. While the Town of Aurelius does not have jurisdictional authority through the MRTA to regulate the cultivation of cannabis, the MRTA provides the legislative framework for introduction of an additional cash crop that provides an alternative pathway for agriculture to remain a viable economic activity within the Town. It is recommended that the goal of encouraging agriculture as a primary economic activity within the Town shall continue, and shall include the economic activity of cultivating cannabis so long as it remains a legal activity under New York State law.

B. Section 8.3.2 of the Comprehensive Plan provides that the Town of Aurelius shall “Encourage business development that will compliment regional agriculture within the surrounding community.” To further this objective, the continued development of commercial economic activity within the Town should include the possibility of cannabis retail dispensaries or on-site consumption sites, consistent with the MRTA. Such sites will increase the tax revenue directed to the Town. Such retail or consumption sites should be directed toward existing areas of commercial development, including, but not limited to the area surrounding the Fingerlakes Mall. Such sites will also potentially synergize with regional agriculture within the surrounding community.

C. Section 7.4.2 of the Comprehensive Plan provides that “The Town of Aurelius will encourage state of the art wireless and clean energy technology that is compatible with agricultural operations in the most appropriate areas of the Town.” In furtherance of that goal, the Town of Aurelius will encourage state of the art solar energy sites that do not disrupt prime agricultural soils and are placed within the most appropriate areas of the Town that do not damage operating agricultural businesses. Wherever possible, such solar energy sites shall not disrupt

the agricultural characteristics of the Town, or diminish the sightlines of the citizens of the Town.

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