

Map 3 shows the locations of the priority properties that scored the highest in the ranking process. Designation by the Open Space Committee as a priority property does not imply interest or commitment by the landowner. The total area covered by these properties is approximately 4,000 acres. Most of the priority properties can be thought of as falling into logical groupings, and the locations of these groupings are indicated on the map. In several cases, existing parks can be regarded as the nucleus of a group. The groupings, ordered from north to south, are as follows:

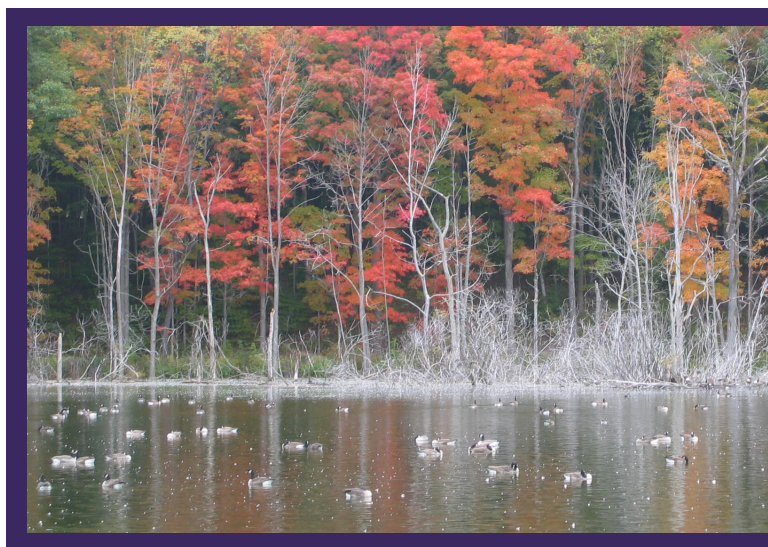
1. **Knox Park area.** Adjacent properties primarily on Willardshire Road in the northwest quadrant of the town.
2. **Sinking Ponds wildlife sanctuary area.** Properties adjacent to the existing nature preserve.
3. **Agricultural districts.** Properties on or near Davis Road to the Town of Aurora line.
4. **Stream corridors.** Properties along East and West Cazenovia Creeks and near the Village of East Aurora.
5. **Mann's Creek Glen.** Properties located between Majors Park and the high school.
6. **Central area.** Properties on Mill, Sweet and Blakeley Roads near the high school.
7. **Emery Park area.** Neighboring properties on Blakeley Road and the steep slopes bordering the East Cazenovia Creek valley.
8. **West Falls area.** Properties near J. P. Nicely Memorial Park in West Falls.
9. **South central area.** Properties close to Center Street near the southern border with the Town of Colden.

LAND PROTECTION TOOLS

Zoning laws alone do not protect land from development over long periods of time. It is the prerogative of governments to change laws, and this could result in residential development in places where it was once prohibited. Although land can be preserved through outright purchase by a governmental agency, this is an expensive option, and it removes land from the local

tax rolls. While the Town of Aurora may purchase some land through the open space plan, another tool that may be used is known as a *conservation easement*.

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a tax-exempt, charitable conservation organization known as a land trust. An easement permanently places limitations on how the land may be used in order to protect its conservation values. It is a recorded deed restriction, and the right and responsibility to enforce the restriction is given to the land trust, which monitors each property annually to ensure that conditions of the easement are being met. Conservation easements resulting from the Aurora Open Space Plan will be held by a local land trust such as the Western New York Land Conservancy⁹ or they



may be co-held by a land trust and the Town of Aurora. One of the benefits of a conservation easement is that the property remains on the tax rolls.

⁹ The Western New York Land Conservancy is a 501(c) 3, not-for-profit land trust whose mission is to preserve and protect important open spaces, scenic vistas, fragile natural ecosystems and working farms in the eight counties of Western New York. In the Land Conservancy's 19-year history, it has protected almost 4,500 acres of land and has ongoing partnerships with several area municipalities including Amherst, Marilla and Clarence. More information about the Land Conservancy can be found at www.wnylc.org.



When a conservation easement is placed on a property, the right to do certain things (most typically build houses or further subdivide the land) is restricted, but the ownership of the property is not affected. The landowner can still sell the property or leave it to his or her heirs. Typically, activities like farming and limited logging are still allowed, additional farm buildings can be erected, and the owner can choose to permit hunting. Furthermore, an easement need not apply to a complete parcel as it is presently constituted. For example, owners can reserve additional lots for family members. Each case is treated individually, and the owner can specify the restrictions that will apply to his/her property as long as the conservation values of the property are still maintained.

The presence of an easement changes the monetary value of a property. The cost of the development rights is the difference between the (higher) value of the property before the easement and the value afterwards as determined by a thorough, detailed appraisal. Placement of an easement involves the purchase of the development rights from the landowner or the donation of those rights by the landowner. There are significant tax benefits¹⁰ for landowners who donate, or partially donate, development rights.

It is important to remember that the landowner participation in open space protection is completely voluntary.

¹⁰ More information about donations and tax benefits is available at http://www.townofaurora.com/open_space_committee.php.

Communities have discovered that once open space is lost, there is no going back.



The Town of Aurora is committed to preserving the rural character of our community and protecting the town's scenic views and diverse natural resources. The goals of the Open Space Plan are:

- Identify, research and pursue specific land protection projects. The following criteria will be used to select the projects: open space value, community support, cost and funding prospects.
- Educate the community about the benefits of open space protection and the methods for accomplishing it (e.g. available tax benefits for donated conservation easements.)
- Research additional public and private funding mechanisms.
- Make recommendations on policies for open space.
- Support and provide input into the Planning Board's work to develop a Master Plan for the Town of Aurora that compliments the recommendations of the Open Space Plan.

The Open Space Plan will be reviewed and updated as necessary, but no less frequently than every five years.

TOWN OF AURORA OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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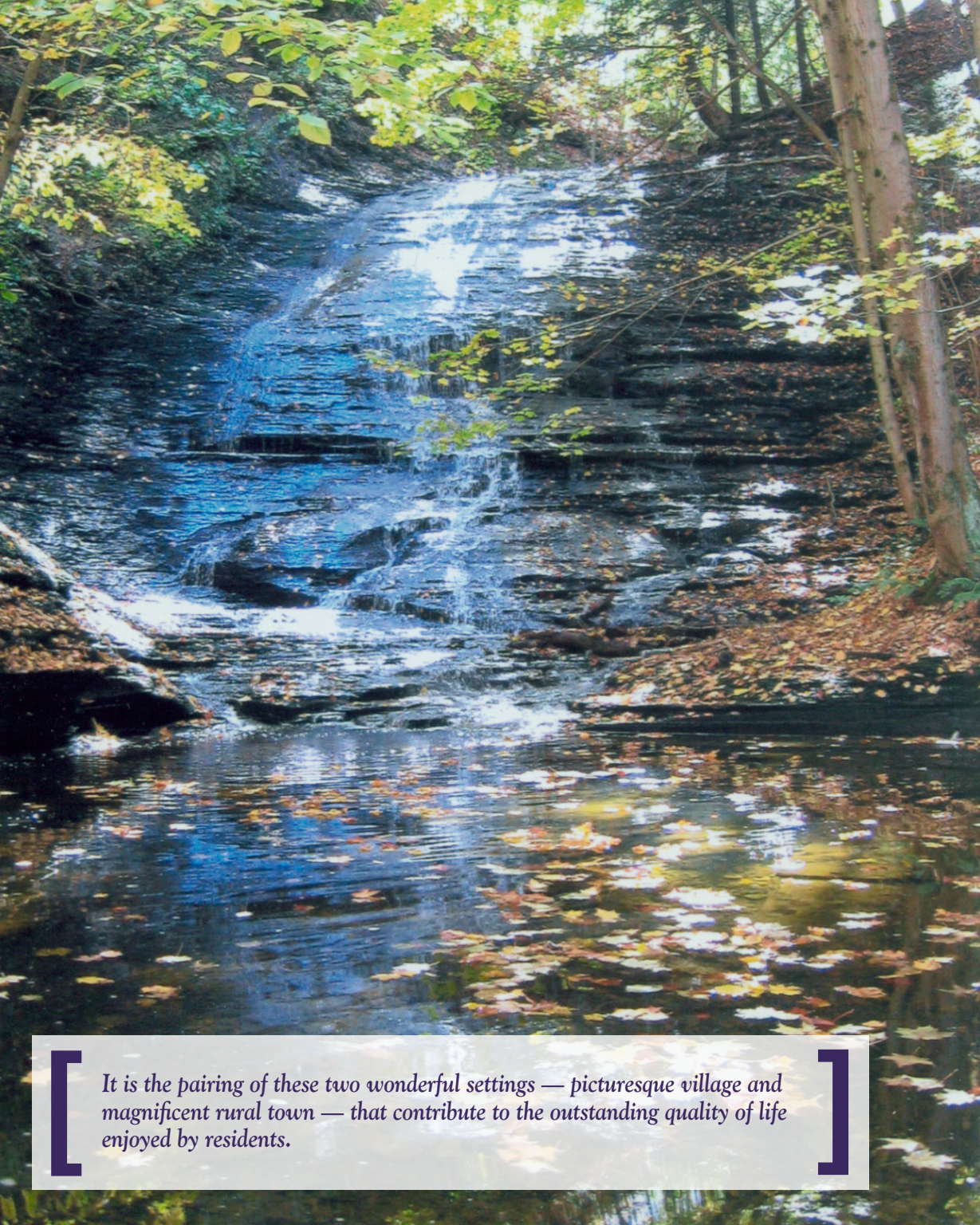
If you have comments or questions about the open space plan, please contact

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It is the pairing of these two wonderful settings — picturesque village and magnificent rural town — that contribute to the outstanding quality of life enjoyed by residents.

