

Aurora Proposes Open Space Plan That Would Protect 1,500 Acres

By Karen Robinson, The Buffalo News, N.Y.

Jul. 15--Just as Clarence did a few years ago with open land, the Town of Aurora is looking to take bold steps to preserve 1,500 acres of undeveloped land as part of a broad open space plan that is being pitched for a bond referendum this November.

In tandem with the Western New York Land Conservancy, the town's Open Space Committee got rave reviews Monday during a two-hour public hearing on its proposal that was favored by many residents who jammed the meeting to comment on the idea.

"This is a way to protect the land and still keep it on the tax rolls," said Nancy Smith, the land conservancy's community outreach director.

"You're not under a tremendous amount of development pressure, but that could change," said Kent Gardner, president and chief economist of the Center for Governmental Research.

Advocates of land preservation spoke of Aurora's blend of community character, rural vistas, wildlife, rolling hills and meadows, and streams that they want preserved for future generations. A retired West Falls farmer said it amounts to preserving a little bit of the town that is valued for future generations, and does not amount to a windfall for just a few landowners.

"This is the best time for this plan," said David Floyd, a retired town justice. "Four to five years from now, the development pressures will be much more serious and the cost of conservation easements will be that much higher because of development pressures."

A survey last summer determined that the community largely favors preserving its open space. A preliminary list identifies 4,000 acres that have the greatest conservation value, though the immediate goal is to protect about 1,500 acres from development.

Doing that would double the current amount of protected open space in Aurora. Meetings were held last summer and early this year with those who own some of the identified tracts.

Even though the town wouldn't own the land, the properties would be protected forever from development and would be monitored by the land conservancy.

Town officials are considering a \$2.5 million bond that would span 20 years; if approved by voters, it would function like a line of credit as the town bought development rights and negotiated conservation easements that would be overseen by land preservationists.

krobinson@buffnews.com

To see more of The Buffalo News, N.Y., or to subscribe to the newspaper, go to <http://www.buffalonews.com>.

Copyright (c) 2008, The Buffalo News, N.Y.

Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Information Services.

For reprints, email tmsreprints@permissionsgroup.com, call 800-374-7985 or 847-635-6550, send a fax to 847-635-6968, or write to The Permissions Group Inc., 1247 Milwaukee Ave., Suite 303, Glenview, IL 60025, USA.

Story from REDORBIT NEWS:

<http://www.redorbit.com/news/display/?id=1478564>

Published: 2008/07/15 09:00:44 CDT

© RedOrbit 2005