

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Aurora Historic District

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Roughly bounded by Middle Street, Second Street, Pearl Street, Chapin Street, and Eighth Street

☐ not for publication N/A

city or town Aurora

☐ vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Beaufort zip code 27806

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Signature of certifying official

Date

North Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer
Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

☒	private
☒	public - Local
☐	public - State
☐	public - Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box)

☐	building(s)
☒	district
☐	site
☐	structure
☐	object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
73	26	buildings
6	1	sites
0	1	structures
0	0	objects
79	28	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/secondary structure

DOMESTIC/hotel

COMMERCE/TRADE/business

COMMERCE/TRADE/professional

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

COMMERCE/TRADE/department store

COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant

COMMERCE/TRADE/warehouse

GOVERNMENT/city hall

GOVERNMENT/correctional facility

GOVERNMENT/fire station

GOVERNMENT/public works

RELIGION/religious facility

RELIGION/church-related residence

FUNERARY/cemetery

RECREATION AND CULTURE/theater

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/secondary structure

COMMERCE/TRADE/business

COMMERCE/TRADE/professional

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

GOVERNMENT/city hall

RELIGION/religious facility

FUNERARY/cemetery

RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum

VACANT/NOT IN USE

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

MID-19TH CENTURY/Greek Revival

LATE VICTORIAN/Italianate

LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne

LATE VICTORIAN/Shingle Style

LATE VICTORIAN/Romanesque/Romanesque Revival

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY

REVIVALS/Colonial Revival

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Late Gothic Revival

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/Commercial Style

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/Bungalow/Craftsman

MODERN MOVEMENT/Ranch

OTHER/Period Cottage

OTHER/Minimal Traditional

OTHER/Vernacular Commercial

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Brick

Concrete block

walls: Wood/weatherboard

Wood/plywood/particle board

Metal/aluminum

Asbestos

Synthetics/vinyl

Brick

roof: Asphalt

Metal

other:

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

SUMMARY PARAGRAPH

The town of Aurora is located in the center of Richland Township in southern Beaufort County, approximately 20 miles southeast of the county seat at Washington.¹ The town is on the west side of South Creek, a tributary of the Pamlico River. The Aurora Historic District contains buildings that primarily date to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and illustrate the growth of the town into an agricultural trade and commercial hub along South Creek and, later, the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad around 1908 (Photos 1 through 14). Aurora's topography is flat, and the town is laid out in a grid pattern with Main Street serving as the primary east-west road through the heart of town. The area of Main Street between Second Street and North Sixth Street serves as Aurora's commercial corridor. The historic residential buildings within the district are clustered on and around Main Street and portions of North Fifth Street and North Sixth Street.

Outside of the historic district, single-family houses and mobile homes lie to the north. Marshland that forms the banks of South Creek lies to the north and east. Houses built in the 1950s and 1960s, to house the local phosphate mine workforce, lie southwest of the Main Street commercial area in a plat called Chapin Acres. The S. W. Snowden Elementary School and additional single-family dwellings and mobile homes lie west of the Aurora Historic District.

The Aurora Historic District encompasses approximately 39 acres of land and consists of 107 resources: 73 contributing buildings and 26 non-contributing buildings; 6 contributing sites and 1 non-contributing site; and 1 non-contributing structure for a total of 79 contributing resources and 28 non-contributing resources. Aurora's contributing resources present a range of building types including commercial, religious, civic, and residential resources. The oldest building in the district is the Henry and Susan Sugg Harding House (#2, Photo 11) that dates to around 1850, which is approximately 30 years before the official incorporation of the town. The majority of buildings within the district were constructed between 1900 and 1940, with 21 extant resources dating to the 1940s, the highest number built in any single decade. Construction in Aurora continued into the late 1940s, after which point it slowed significantly due to shifts in transportation, agricultural decline and mechanization, and population migration. Despite the loss of historic buildings, primarily between 1975 and 2020, the Aurora Historic District reflects its significance as a historically and architecturally prominent agricultural and commercial hub for southern Beaufort County. The Period of Significance for the Aurora Historic District dates from circa 1850 through 1950.

The Aurora Historic District's character evolved with different building types and styles throughout the decades. Houses constructed from the late nineteenth century through 1920 are primarily vernacular dwellings with either a single- or double-pile form. A few houses constructed during this period exhibit the form and ornament of nationally popular architectural styles, including Colonial Revival, Queen Anne, and Shingle. Houses constructed between 1920 and 1950 continue a vernacular character in type, with a few exhibiting the characteristics of the Craftsman and Period Cottage Revival styles. There are two churches in the Aurora Historic District: the Romanesque-style Aurora Methodist Church (#7, Photo 9) and the Gothic Revival-style Church of the Holy Cross (#28, Photo 10). The commercial buildings are one or two stories tall, are brick or concrete block faced with brick, and display standard forms with little decoration.

Overall, the Aurora Historic District retains its integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling, as evidenced by its original and historic street patterns, lot sizes and configurations, and building placement within the platted and unplatted sections. Commercial and civil buildings reflect typical small-town development patterns, consisting primarily of one- and two-story brick structures with rectangular footprints, stepped parapets, and large display windows. The district's two churches demonstrate thoughtful design and retain a high degree of material integrity. Residential architecture is varied and includes vernacular forms like single- and double-pile, I-house, and gable-and-wing, alongside nationally popular

¹ North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (HPO) survey files identify the district as the "Aurora Commercial Historic District." However, the 2009 "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey" prepared by Circa, Inc. recommended the district be called the "Aurora Historic District" to reflect the diversity of building types, which include commercial, residential, religious, and other structures. The name "Aurora Historic District" was adopted for this reason.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

styles including Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, and Minimal Traditional. While many buildings have undergone alterations, such as the replacement of siding, windows, or porch elements, these changes do not significantly compromise the district's overall historic character. Aurora maintains a strong degree of integrity through its diverse and well-preserved collection of buildings, which represent over a century of architectural evolution. Collectively, these resources reflect Aurora's importance as a regional center and offer a compelling visual record of its economic, social, and architectural development.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE NOMINATED PROPERTY

Settled in the early nineteenth century by free Blacks and incorporated in 1880, Aurora grew from a small farming community to a commercial hub for residents of southern Beaufort County. Aurora is located approximately 20 miles southeast of the county seat at Washington and lies on the west bank of South Creek, which feeds into the Pamlico River to the north. Early development was hampered by the settlement's isolation on the peninsula with a lack of sufficient roads, as well as weather-dependent water travel on South Creek and the Pamlico River. However, Aurora's proximity to major water transportation routes has played a significant role in its development and early success. NC 306 skirts along the west side of Aurora and NC 33 runs east-west south of town. As of 2023, Aurora's population was 451.

Over half of the buildings within the Aurora Historic District are residential with a commercial corridor centered on Main Street and extending along the cross streets of Fourth Street and North Fifth Street. Aurora is characterized by its flat, marshy terrain with access to South Creek along the east side of the town. Mature trees are scattered throughout the district and provide canopy to many of the homes. The streets of Aurora are oriented towards the cardinal directions.

Lot sizes in Aurora vary throughout the district due to the town's developmental period, which extended from about 1880 through the 1950s. The blocks throughout Aurora are relatively uniform and lot depths typically span a half-block. In general, the commercial lots are much smaller than residential lots and the commercial building's side walls abut one another. Many of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century dwellings were built on combined lots, providing these substantial houses with more acreage. For the most part, residential buildings vary slightly between 20 and 40 feet. The commercial buildings abut the sidewalks.

Outbuildings, when present, are behind the primary buildings and accessed by paved or gravel driveways. Though many properties have driveways, these features are not a prominent feature in Aurora, as buildings were built before the personal automobile was commonplace. In addition to buildings and outbuildings, manmade elements within the Aurora Historic District include streets, curbs, sidewalks, and driveways. All streets within the district are paved, and only Main Street has sidewalks. Drainage ditches are present along many of the streets, including Middle Street and Seventh Street. A canal, located north of Middle Street, lies outside of the historic district and runs parallel to the northern portion of North Fifth Street.

INVENTORY LIST

Key

The inventory for the Aurora Historic District is organized alphabetically by street name and numerically by address number along each street. Each resource has a heading that lists its inventory number, the address, the building type or historic property name, date of construction, and contributing status. After the heading is a description of the primary resource that includes information regarding the resource's form, height, style, construction material/method, exterior wall finish, and roof form and material. Whenever possible, resources are named for their first owner and/or occupant. This information was primarily derived from deed research. Houses and commercial buildings for which an owner or resident were not identified are listed as "House" or "Commercial Building."

Construction dates are either exact or approximate. Circa dates were determined using historic maps and aerial images, oral histories, and stylistic clues. The Beaufort County Geographic Information System (GIS) website includes tax data that includes building construction dates. Many of the buildings constructed before 1950 have approximate dates that are not accurate; however, buildings constructed after 1950 typically have more accurate build dates.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

Contributing status indicates the status of the resource as either contributing or non-contributing to the historic character of the Aurora Historic District. Contributing resources are resources whose construction dates fall within the Period of Significance (circa 1850 to 1950), that possess sufficient integrity to contribute to the district's historic character, and which relate to the historic themes and areas of significance (Commerce and Architecture) of the district. Common changes found within the Aurora Historic District include the installation of vinyl, aluminum, or other synthetic siding and the replacement of windows and doors. Additions are uncommon, but when present, they are small and are most often affixed to side or rear elevations. These changes alone or in combination with one another do not typically render a resource non-contributing. A resource is considered a contributing resource if it retains its original form, fenestration pattern, and some character-defining features. Vacant lots, identified by their PIN and italicized in the text, are included in the inventory list to note their location and frequency, though they do not typically have addresses.

Survey data regarding outbuildings was limited and is included when available. Many outbuildings are located behind the primary resources and are not visible from the right-of-way. Due to their temporary nature, prefabricated sheds and carports were not counted as resources in the inventory.

The inventory list was compiled from data gathered during fieldwork in March 2024.

Main Street

**1. 226 Main Street – A. L. Lupton House – Circa 1926
Contributing Building**

The A. L. Lupton House is a one-and-one-half-story frame dwelling constructed around 1926. The bungalow-form dwelling has a rectangular footprint with a hipped-roof porch on the primary (south) elevation. The A. L. Lupton House rests on a brick pier foundation infilled with brick. Vinyl siding clads the exterior, and composite shingles cover the roof. An exterior brick chimney rises along the west elevation.

The front porch, supported by square replacement posts, spans the three-bay primary elevation. A replacement front door protected by a glazed metal storm door occupies the center bay. Original, paired, four-over-one, wood-sash windows pierce the flanking bays. Paired, six-over-six, vinyl replacement windows perforate the gable. Most of the windows are original.

**2. 229 Main Street – Henry and Susan Sugg Harding House – Circa 1850
Contributing Building**

Built in the mid-nineteenth century, this two-story, double-pile I-house with Greek Revival proportions is believed to have been built for Henry and Susan Sugg Harding, and is purported to be the oldest home in Aurora. Based on available deed records and other historical documents, it could not be determined for certain if Henry and Susan Sugg Harding were the first occupants of the house. The house is comprised of a two-story, side-gabled main block with a rear ell. A hipped-roof porch spans three bays of the primary (north) elevation. The original plain weatherboards clad the exterior, and tin panels cover the roof. The house features boxed eaves and corner boards, indicative of its mid-nineteenth-century construction. A centered, exterior, stuccoed chimney rises along the east elevation. Between 2009 and 2024, the chimney on the west elevation failed and was removed.

The primary elevation measures three bays wide. Square posts support the porch. The front door occupies the center bay, though the vinyl storm door is the only visible door. Four-light sidelights flank the door. One-over-one, vinyl replacement windows with fixed, vinyl shutters pierce the flanking bays. These replacement windows are found throughout the house.

An additional, recessed entry door occupies the east elevation of the rear ell. Plywood covers another section, and the windows are vinyl replacements.

**Garage – Circa 1940
Contributing Building**

A frame, front-gabled garage lies south of the Harding House. Tin covers both the exterior and the roof. A double-leaf door, centered on the primary (north) elevation, enables access to the interior.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

Shed – Circa 1940

Contributing Building

A concrete block, front-gabled shed lies southwest of the Harding House. Metal covers the roof, and an opening centered on the east elevation enables access to the interior.

**3. 250 Main Street – Brothers Lodge – 1940
Non-Contributing Building (Alterations)**

The Brothers Lodge at 250 Main Street is partially contained by a wood fence and is composed of three connected buildings. The west end is the oldest section, a 1940 flat-roofed brick commercial building. A front-gabled addition was made to the original block in the mid- to late twentieth century. The original building is clad with brick laid in a Flemish bond, and the addition is faced with brick laid in a running bond. An exterior brick chimney rises along the primary (south) elevation. Original wood-sash windows pierce the east and west side elevations of the original building. An entry bay, located on the west elevation of the gabled addition, features a metal awning and one-over-one windows, in addition to plate glass windows on the primary elevation.

The central building of the Brothers Lodge is a front-gabled, concrete block building with gabled hyphens connecting it to the east and west sections. It was constructed around 1980. Metal covers the roof and vertical wood siding sheathes the gables. A metal door and two, single-light windows pierce the primary elevation.

The easternmost section of the Brothers Lodge is the newest, constructed around 1985. This gabled, metal-frame building rests on a concrete block foundation and corrugated metal covers both the exterior and the roof. Sliding metal sash windows pierce the primary elevation.

The business started as a grocery store and fishing supply store and gradually evolved into a full-time restaurant with accommodation for tourists. The significant additions and alterations made outside the Period of Significance render this property non-contributing.

Vacant Lot – PIN 6567-03-7095

**4. 290 Main Street – (former) Childcare Facility – Circa 1988
Non-Contributing Building (Age/Integrity)**

The former childcare facility, housed in a manufactured building at 290 Main Street, is in ruinous condition with its roof caving in. The building has a rectangular footprint with a gabled entry porch on the primary (south) elevation. The building rests on a continuous concrete block foundation that has been parged, and T-111 siding clads the exterior. Composite shingles cover the failing roof. The windows are one-over-one metal sashes. A metal door centered on the façade is accessible by way of a wood ramp.

**5. 295 Main Street – Staley-Rutledge House – Circa 1915
Non-Contributing Building (Alterations)**

Originally built as a Queen Anne-style residence by Dr. Rutledge around 1915, the Staley-Rutledge House was altered in the 1980s as part of a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) project that converted the residence to a town hall, along with the construction of the brick community center to the south. Because of these alterations, the Staley-Rutledge House is a non-contributing building.

The asymmetrical Staley-Rutledge House is a two-story frame dwelling with complicated massing. The house is composed of a hipped-roof main block anchored by a gabled cross section and various projections off the primary (north) and rear (south) elevations. The original porch had a semi-circular, double-height portico with a flat roof, and features a denticulated cornice supported by square columns. The replacement porch retains the same semi-circular form and double height; however, a conical roof supported by round Corinthian columns now caps the porch. The house rests on a continuous brick foundation. Vinyl

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

siding clads the exterior and composite shingles cover the roof. A denticulated cornice follows the roof's eaves, and louvred vents pierce each gable. Originally, the gables were closed and had a slight overhang, and now the eaves have boxed appearance.

The windows and doors throughout the house are replacements, and original windows in the two front gables have been removed. The centered replacement front door has sidelights with a broken pediment, which replaced the original paneled door with sidelights and surmounted by a fanlight. The windows throughout the house are nine-over-nine vinyl replacements and two windows on the primary elevation have been removed.

**Community Center – Circa 1980
Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

The Community Center lies south of the Rutledge House. The Community Center was built around 1980 and is composed of a side-gabled, Ranch-style main block with a rear section. Brick laid in a running bond clads the exterior, and composite shingles cover the roof.

**6. 298 Main Street – Service Station – 1947
Contributing Building**

Built in 1947, the one-story brick service station is oriented with its primary elevation facing south. The building has a rectangular form with a flat roof and a stepped parapet along the east and west side elevations. Brick laid in a running bond clads the exterior, and brick pilasters divide the façade into three bays. Each bay has a recessed sign panel in the frieze. Plywood covers all the window and door openings.

**7. 327 Main Street – Aurora Methodist Church – Circa 1949
Contributing Building**

The congregation erected the Romanesque Aurora Methodist Church in 1949, which replaced a nineteenth-century frame sanctuary. The church is composed of a gable front main block with an impressive projecting central belltower off the primary (north) elevation and hipped-roof additions off the rear portion of the east and west side elevations, which are connected by a shed roof section. The prominent belltower has a pyramidal roof, concrete-capped stone buttresses, and a recessed, arched entry. The batten, double-leaf door features strap hinges. Narrow arched windows pierce the entry bay, with wider arched windows lighting the chapel. Throughout the building the window openings have concrete sills and stone jack arches. Stained glass fills the window openings. The wings have metal casement windows, bracketed entry pents, and half-round ventilation dormers.

**Cemetery – Circa 1870
Contributing Site**

A small cemetery containing roughly a dozen marked graves lies southwest of Aurora Methodist Church. Gravemarkers date from the 1870s through the 1970s and are inscribed with the names of prominent families in Aurora's history such as Swindell, Bonner, Hollowell, and Hooker.

**8. 350 Main Street – Commercial Building – Circa 1940
Contributing Building**

The commercial building at 350 Main Street is a one-story commercial building with a brick-faced façade with an arched parapet and corner piers. A metal-clad, gabled roof caps the building, and metal covers all elevations other than the façade. Brick laid in a common bond clads the façade. The primary (south) elevation has two glass storefront windows separated by a modern metal commercial door surmounted by a transom. A metal roll-up garage door pierces the west bay of the façade.

Vacant Lot – PIN 6567-03-2290

**9. 354 Main Street – Commercial Building – 1946
Contributing Building**

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

This one-story, flat-roofed commercial building is constructed of concrete block. The east and west elevations reveal a stepped parapet roof that has collapsed. Square piers at the corners anchor the façade. The primary (south) elevation features a glass storefront which has lost its glazing, and a recessed, metal commercial door in the center.

Vacant Lot – PIN 6567-03-2053²

**10. 389 Main Street – Commercial Building – 1939
Contributing Building**

Originally built as part of a car dealership, 389 Main Street is a one-story commercial building constructed of concrete block. The commercial building has a flat roof with a stepped parapet along the east and west side elevations. Concrete block piers anchor the primary (north) elevation, and a cornice runs along the windows and entry. The glass storefront has metal-frame windows, and the recessed, modern metal commercial door occupies the center bay. The transom above the door has been covered. A circa-2010 addition on the west elevation connects the subject building to the former service station at 395 Main Street. Both the subject building and the former service station at 395 Main Street are part of the Aurora Fossil Museum.

**11. 395 Main Street – Service Station – Circa 1935
Non-Contributing Building (Alterations)**

The building at 395 Main Street is a circa-1935 service station that has been significantly altered and adaptively reused as the Aurora Fossil Museum Learning Center. The building has a gable-and-wing-form with a hipped-roof addition off the west elevation and an open shed-roof on the rear (south) elevation. Brick laid in a running bond clads the exterior and vertical wood siding sheathes the gables. Composite shingles cover the roof.

The primary (north) elevation measures five bays side. Three bays pierce the gable-front with a metal door in the center flanked by plate glass windows. The east wing portion of the façade was originally two garage bays, which are enclosed with vertical wood siding and are painted. A circa-2010 addition on the east elevation connects the service station to the commercial building at 389 Main Street. Both the former service station and the commercial building at 389 Main Street are part of the Aurora Fossil Museum and serve as the Learning Center.

Vacant Lot – PIN 6567-03-2220

**12. 398 Main Street – Commercial Building – Circa 1974
Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

The commercial building at 398 Main Street is a front-gabled structure built around 1974. The building has a rectangular footprint with its primary elevation facing south. Apart from the brick entry bay in the west bay of the façade, much of the building is sheathed in corrugated metal siding. Metal also covers the roof. A flat metal awning covers the brick-clad entry and protects the four glass storefront windows, which are split by a commercial metal door. These details are mirrored in the south bay of the west side elevation. The windows throughout the building are metal sashes.

**13. 400 Main Street – B. H. Thompson Store – 1886
Contributing Building**

The 1886 brick commercial building at 400 Main Street is home to the Aurora Fossil Museum and was originally built as a store for B. H. Thompson. It is the oldest extant commercial building in the Aurora Historic District. The building shares its parcel and address with the one-story commercial building to the west. The building is composed of a two-story main block with a shed roof addition on the rear (north) elevation. Brick laid in a common bond clads the exterior. A flat roof with a stepped parapet along the east and west side elevations caps the building.

² The commercial building that stood on this site was demolished between 2006 and 2008.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

The first story storefront dominates the primary (south) elevation. The recessed front door has been replaced, but the flanking wood storefront windows remain intact. A fabric awning, surmounted by a decorative brick cornice, protects the storefront. Four, six-over-six, vinyl replacement windows with concrete sills pierce the second story of the primary elevation. The windows on the east elevation have also been replaced. This commercial building shares its parcel with 404 Main Street.

**14. 404 Main Street – Commercial Building – Circa 1920
Contributing Building**

The circa-1920 commercial building at 404 Main Street shares its parcel and address with the two-story commercial building to the east. The building serves as part of the Aurora Fossil Museum. The flat-roofed building stands one-story tall and has a rectangular form with a shed roof addition on the rear (north) elevation. Brick laid in a running bond clads the exterior. Decorative brickwork accents the façade in the form of a denticulated cornice below the recessed sign panel, a soldier course below the denticulated cornice, and arches above each of the two windows and two doors.

The primary (south) elevation has twin storefronts, each with an arched entry pierced by single-leaf replacement doors and an arched display window. The east display window has its original wood-sash, but the west display window has been replaced with a metal-framed window. Fabric awnings cover each of the doors and windows.

**15. 408–424 Main Street – Commercial Building – Circa 1920
Contributing Building**

The circa-1920 commercial building is a one-story brick building with two storefronts divided by a brick pilaster. The tan brick building is similar in design to its neighbor to the east at 404 Main Street. The brick is laid in a running bond and used decoratively as a basket weave pattern in the cornice below three courses of corbelling. Denticulated brick lines the two recessed sign panels. Brick headers form decorative arches above the doors and windows. The roof is flat with a stepped parapet on the west side elevation.

The east storefront on the primary (south) elevation features a metal replacement door in the west bay and a metal-frame storefront window in the east bay. The west storefront has two, single-leaf metal entry doors spanned by a metal-frame storefront window. Three six-over-six, vinyl replacement windows pierce the west elevation.

**Shed – Circa 1930
Contributing Building**

A circa-1930 shed lies north of the building. It is constructed of brick laid in a common bond, and capped by a front-gabled, standing seam metal roof with exposed rafter tails. A batten door pierces the south elevation.

**16. South Side of Main Street – Fossil Park – Circa 2000
Non-Contributing Site**

On the south side of Main Street across from the commercial buildings at 400–424 Main Street, the park was established by the Aurora Fossil Museum around 2018. The town of Aurora previously owned the property and sold it to the Aurora Fossil Museum. Originally, four commercial structures sat on the site but were demolished between 1982 and 1993.

Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-92-9978

Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-93-9033 – Parking Lot

**17. 456 Main Street – Warren’s Barber Shop – Circa 1945
Contributing Building**

This circa-1945 one-story commercial building is the easternmost section in a commercial block of three buildings including 462 and 468 Main Street. The concrete block building has a rectangular form with a wing on the east elevation. A flat roof with a stepped parapet wall with terra cotta coping along the east side elevation caps the building. Brick laid in a running bond clads

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

the two-bay storefront on the primary (south) elevation. Plywood covers both the window and door, which are further protected by a metal awning. A sign panel above the storefront features a "W" formed of brick stretchers and outlined by a border of brick headers with stone squares at the corners. Two modern paneled doors occupy the east elevation of the building and are demarcated by gabled entry stoops supported by plain square posts. Another door pierces the south elevation of the east wing.

The "W" in the sign panel refers to Warren's Barber Shop, the original occupant of the building. The building later housed a soda shop.

**18. 462 Main Street – Thompson's Feed Store – Circa 1940
Contributing Building**

Originally used by Thompson's Feed Store, the commercial building at 462 Main Street was built around 1940. This one-story building is the center section in a commercial block of three buildings that include 456 and 468 Main Street and stands slightly taller than the flanking buildings. The building has a flat roof and brick laid in a running bond clads the primary (south) elevation. Brick pilasters anchor the corners of the façade. A brick cornice accents the crown of the building and below the recessed sign panel. The three-bay storefront was altered through installing two metal-frame windows separated by a modern, double-leaf commercial door.

**19. 468 Main Street – Commercial Building – 1932
Contributing Building**

The commercial building at 468 Main Street is the westernmost section in a commercial block of three buildings that include 456 and 462 Main Street. The building is capped by a flat roof with a stepped parapet along the west elevation. Brick laid in a running bond clads the primary (south) elevation, while the west elevation is parged over. There is a corbelled brick cornice and open ventilators arranged in two diamonds in the divided sign panels. A brick pilaster divides the façade into two bays. A window pierces the east bay, and a modern metal commercial door and window perforate the west bay.

A pool hall was an early tenant of the building, and it now houses the Aurora/Richland Township Chamber of Commerce.

**Side Yard
Contributing Site**

The parcel immediately west of the commercial building at 468 Main Street is a gravel parking lot owned and used by the Aurora Richland Township Chamber.

Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-93-8053³

**20. 491 Main Street – Commercial Building – Circa 1900
Contributing Building**

The circa-1900 building at 491 Main Street is the easternmost section of a two-story commercial block that includes 495 and 499 Main Street. Between 2020 and 2024, a one-story, brick commercial building along the east side of the subject building was demolished (487 Main Street). The subject building has a flat roof with a stepped parapet on the east side elevation. Brick laid in a common bond clads the exterior. Brick pilasters divide the buildings and the two storefronts. A brick corbelled cornice runs the span of all three buildings in the block and underneath lies a brick soldier course. Clinker bricks laid at a 45-degree angle accent the cornice. The two storefronts, which are covered with plywood, were remodeled in the 1960s with new metal and glass storefronts when Heilig-Meyers Furniture store occupied all three buildings in the block. Plywood also covers three windows in the second story, which feature brick jack arches and cast stone sills. The windows and doors on the east and rear (south) elevations have been either boarded up or the glass broken in the original, one-over-one wood-sash windows.

21. 495 Main Street – Commercial Building – Circa 1900

³ The commercial building on the lot was demolished between 2020 and 2022.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

Contributing Building

The circa-1900 building at 495 Main Street is the center section of a two-story commercial block that includes 491 and 499 Main Street. The building has a flat roof with a stepped parapet, and brick laid in a common bond clads the exterior. Brick pilasters divide the façade into bays. A brick corbelled cornice runs the span of all three buildings in the block and underneath lies a brick soldier course. Clinker bricks laid at a 45-degree angle accent the cornice. The storefront was remodeled in the 1960s with new metal and glass storefronts when Heilig-Meyers Furniture store occupied all three buildings in the block. Plywood covers the storefront and the second story windows, which feature brick jack arches and cast stone sills.

Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-93-8118⁴

22. 498 Main Street – Aurora Hardware Company Building – 1926
Contributing Building

Built for the Aurora Hardware Company in 1926, the two-story commercial building at 498 Main Street has a flat roof with stepped parapets on the east and west side elevations. Brick laid in a common bond clads the exterior. A simple, corbeled brick cornice accents the primary (south) elevation, and brick pilasters anchor the corners of the façade. The façade has two storefronts, both of which are altered. The east storefront is mostly covered with vertical wood siding, and a metal replacement door pierces the enclosure. A window, obscured by metal grates, perforates the easternmost bay. The west storefront has metal-framed storefront windows and the original, double-leaf, glazed and a recessed, paneled front door in the center. Five window openings line the second story, but the sashes have been removed. The same is true for the windows on the west side elevation.

The commercial building at 498 Main Street has served several functions over the years. Originally, a 10-pin bowling alley was located on the second floor and at various times the first floor housed a dentist, beauty shop, attorney's office, hardware store, and grocery.

23. 499 Main Street – Cherry Hotel – 1914
Contributing Building

Originally built to house the Cherry Hotel, the 1914 building at 499 Main Street is the westernmost section of a two-story commercial block that includes 491 and 495 Main Street. Ira C. Congleton served as both the architect and builder of the Cherry Hotel. The building has a flat roof with a stepped parapet on the west side elevation. Brick laid in a common bond clads the exterior, and brick pilasters divide the buildings and the two storefronts. A brick corbelled cornice runs the span of all three buildings in the block. The storefront was remodeled in the 1960s with new metal and glass storefronts when Heilig-Meyers Furniture store occupied all three buildings in the block. All sections of the storefront are covered with plywood, as are the four windows in the second story that feature brick jack arches and cast stone sills. The windows and doors on the east and rear (south) elevations have been either boarded up or the glass broken in the original, one-over-one wood-sash windows.

24. 500 Main Street – W. T. Bryan Store – 1943
Contributing Building

The one-story commercial building, known as the W. T. Bryan Store, at 500 Main Street, was built in 1943. The building has a flat roof with a stepped parapet along the east and west side elevations. Brick laid in a running bond clads the exterior. Oriented with its primary elevation facing south, brick pilasters anchor the façade, and a corbelled brick cornice accents the roofline. The storefront features two original wood storefront windows. A single-leaf vinyl door replaced the original double-leaf entry doors. A metal awning, surmounted by a sign panel, protects the storefront.

25. 524 Main Street – Guilford Market – 1928
Contributing Building

⁴ The commercial building on the site was demolished between 1982 and 1993.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

Built to house the Guilford Market in 1928, the commercial building at 524 Main Street now houses the Hazel W. Guilford Memorial Library. A flat roof with stepped parapets along the east and west side elevation caps the one-story building. Brick laid in a common bond clads the exterior and a corbelled brick cornice runs along the roofline.

A brick pilaster divides the primary (south) elevation into two storefronts. The east storefront features the original wood-frame storefront windows divided by a glazed replacement door. The west storefront retains its original wood-frame storefront windows, in addition to its original, glazed, double-leaf doors. Metal awnings protect both storefronts.

Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-93-4108

26. 577 Main Street – Alex and Lona Hudnell House – 1887
Contributing Building

The house at 577 Main Street is a frame, two-story I-house built in 1887 for Alex and Lona Hudnell. A rectangular side-gabled main block anchors the house, with a later Mount Vernon porch on the primary (north) elevation and a shed-roof porch off the east elevation. The rear (south) elevation has a two-story rear ell at the west side and a one-story ell at the east side. The house rests on a brick pier foundation infilled by lattice brickwork. Asbestos shingles cover the exterior, and metal covers the roof. Two interior brick chimneys project from the apex of the roof near the gable ends. Cornice returns accent the house throughout.

The Mount Vernon porch, supported by tapered square posts spanned by a square balustrade, dominates the primary elevation. A flight of concrete steps with stepped brick wing walls enables porch access. The original front door, composed of two arched lights above panels, occupies the center bay of the three-bay primary elevation. A storm door partially obscures the original front door. Four-over-one, wood-sash windows accented by fixed, louvered shutters pierce the flanking bays. The windows throughout the house follow this sash pattern and material.

Modern screens and wood lattice enclose the porch on the east elevation, and a wood fence partially encloses the backyard.

27. 610 Main Street – House – Circa 1900
Contributing Building

The circa-1900 house at 610 Main Street is a rare example of the Shingle-style in Aurora. The two-story frame dwelling is composed of a side-gabled main block with a wraparound porch on the primary (south) and east elevation, a shed-roof dormer across the south roof slope, a port cochere off the west elevation, and a rear ell. The house rests on a brick pier foundation infilled with brick. Most of the original siding material has been covered with vinyl, apart from the original wood shingles that clad the second story and gable ends. Composite shingles cover the roof.

Brick piers surmounted by tapered posts support the wraparound porch and porte cochere. A set of concrete steps with stepped brick wing walls enable porch access. The primary elevation measures three bays wide. The original multi-light front door occupies the center bay, and a divided-light transom surmounts the door. Original, paired, four-over-one, wood-sash windows perforate the west bay, and a single unit of the same sash pattern pierces the east bay. The windows throughout are original. The second story of the east elevation features a recessed porch.

28. 640 Main Street – Church of the Holy Cross – 1917
Contributing Building

Originally constructed in 1917, the Church of the Holy Cross has three distinct sections: the original gable-front church with a central belltower at the east end, a front-gabled west wing, and a flat-roofed education wing (or hyphen) connecting the two. The building incorporates both Gothic and Craftsman design elements. Brick laid in a common bond clads the exterior of the original church, and gabled parapets adorn the roof. Exposed rafter tails line the eaves. A water table, lined with concrete, continues from the façade onto the tower. A recessed, pointed-arch entry opening pierces the belltower's primary (south) elevation. The batten, double-leaf entry door with narrow boards features Christian cross battens, and another cross surmounts the door in the transom. Buttresses divide the five bays of the east and west side elevations. Within the fourth bay on both side elevations is a

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

parapet wall that projects slightly from the wall plane. Window openings have flat and rounded arches and header course sills. The windows throughout the original church are stained glass.

The front-gabled west wing is also clad in common bond brick. Decorative knee braces adorn the eaves of the front gable, and exposed rafter tails line the eaves. The primary elevation of the west wing features paneled, double-leaf doors flanked by nine-over-nine wood sashes, each composed of small panes surrounding a larger central pane. The flat-roofed education wing, which acts as a hyphen between the original church with the west wing, follows the same brick bond pattern and window sash pattern as the west wing. A wood-frame belltower marks the centered entry into this connecting section.

**29. 659 Main Street – Robert H. and Clarissa Bonner Thompson House – Circa 1950
Contributing Building**

The house at 659 Main Street is a one-story, side-gabled Minimal Traditional-style dwelling built around 1950 for Robert H. and Clarissa Bonner Thompson. The house has a rectangular footprint with a gabled entry stoop on the primary (north) elevation. The house rests on a continuous brick foundation, and vinyl siding sheathes the exterior. Composite shingles cover the roof, and an exterior brick chimney rises along the east elevation. The primary elevation measures three bays wide. The gabled entry stoop, supported by plain square posts and brackets and accessed by a flight of brick-faced steps, protects the replacement front door in the center bay. A tripartite picture window with two-over-two, horizontal, flanking wood sashes occupies the east bay, while original three-over-one, wood-sash windows pierce the west bay. Scrolled metal bars cover the windows and fixed, louvered shutters accent the windows.

**30. 672 Main Street – Church of the Holy Cross Rectory – Circa 1900
Contributing Building**

Originally built as the rectory for the Church of the Holy Cross to the east, the house at 672 Main Street is a two-story, cross-gable house built around 1900. The frame dwelling has a T-shaped plan with one-story projection off the rear (north) elevation. The former rectory rests on a brick pier foundation infilled with concrete block. Vinyl siding clads the exterior, and standing seam metal covers the roof. Two interior brick chimneys project from the apex of the gable and wing sections. Cornice returns adorn the gable ends.

A shed-roof porch supported by turned posts and decorative brackets spans the two bays of the wing. A set of concrete steps with a metal railing enables access to the porch. The single-leaf front door, composed of six lights over two panels, occupies the center bay of the three-bay façade. The windows throughout the house are the original, six-over-six, wood sashes. Fixed, louvered shutters accent the windows.

Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-83-9129

**31. 699 Main Street – Mobile Home – 2003
Non-Contributing Building**

A mobile home, moved to the site in 2003, occupies the parcel. The building has an elongated, rectangular form. It rests on a continuous brick foundation and is clad with vinyl siding. Composite shingles cover the side-gabled roof. The windows throughout the house are vinyl replacements.

**32. 720 Main Street – Willie Bryan House – Circa 1890
Contributing Building**

The two-story, cross-gable house at 720 Main Street, known as the Willie Bryan House, was built around 1890. A rear ell gives the house a T-shaped form. The foundation of the house is not visible because the original, plain weatherboards which cover the house run all the way to the ground level. Corner boards accent the corners of the house throughout. Standing seam metal covers the steeply pitched roof and the original wood shake roof is visible where metal panels have fallen off. Two interior parged chimneys pierce the apex of the roof.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

The primary (south) elevation has a partially enclosed hipped-roof porch. Heavy, turned posts support the open porch that leads to the front door in the center bay. The windows throughout the house are the original two-over-two wood sashes. A fallen tree has partially damaged the east side elevation of the house.

**Garage – Circa 1940
Contributing Building**

A two-bay, front-gabled garage lies north of the house with its primary elevation facing east towards North Seventh Street. The building has a rectangular form, and standing seam metal covers the roof. Exposed rafter tails line the eaves and an interior brick chimney projects from the apex of the roof. Two metal roll-up garage doors occupy the primary elevation.

Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-82-7997

**33. 302 Main Street – Frank Bonner House – 1914
Contributing Building**

The frame, two-story dwelling at 302 Main Street (also referred to as 743 and 763 Main Street) was built for Frank Bonner around 1914. The Colonial Revival-style dwelling consists of a side-gabled main block with a Mount Vernon front porch, a hipped-roof wing off the east elevation, and an expansive, cross-gabled rear ell that is not visible from the right-of-way. The house rests on a brick foundation and aluminum sheathes the exterior. Composite shingles cover the roof of the main block and rear ells, and standing seam metal covers the east wing roof. An interior brick chimney projects from the apex of the main block and its south roof slope. Cornice returns accent the gable ends.

The Mount Vernon porch, supported by plain square posts, spans the primary (north) elevation. A set of brick-faced steps with a metal railing enables access to the porch. The front door, composed of an original glazed and paneled door with a broken pediment surround with fluted pilasters pierces the center bay. Paired, two-over-two, wood-sash windows pierce the flanking bays. The windows throughout the house follow this sash pattern and are original. Fixed, louvered shutters accent the windows throughout.

**34. 760 Main Street – Mabel Baucom House – 1921
Contributing Building**

The one-and-one-half-story Mabel Baucom House stands as an example of a bungalow-form house with minimal Craftsman-style details. Built in 1921, the house is composed of a front-gabled main block with a wraparound porch that extends to form a porte cochere off the west side elevation and a screen porch on the east side elevation. The house rests on a brick pier foundation infilled with brick, and the original, plain weatherboards clad the exterior. Composite shingles cover the roof.

Brick piers surmounted by tapered posts support the wraparound porch on the primary (south) elevation. A set of brick-faced steps with a brick wing wall enables porch access. A glazed and paneled front door occupies the center bay of the three-bay primary elevation and is flanked by paired, four-over-one, wood-sash windows. The windows throughout the house are original. Fixed, louvered shutters accent the windows in the gable peak.

**Shed – Circa 1950
Contributing Building**

A one-story, front-gabled garage lies north of the house and is only partially visible from the right-of-way. It has a plywood exterior and metal covers the roof.

**35. 765 Main Street – House – Circa 1915
Contributing Building**

The two-story frame house at 765 Main Street is an example of the American Foursquare style. A hipped-roof main block anchors the house, and a wraparound porch extends along the primary (north) elevation, around to the west side elevation, and

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

out to the east side of the house to form a porte cochere. The house rests on a brick pier foundation infilled with parged concrete block. Vinyl covers the exterior, and composite shingles cover the roof. A hipped-roof dormer projects from the north roof slope.

Brick piers surmounted by tapered posts spanned by a square balustrade support the porch. A set of concrete steps with brick wing walls enables porch access. The replacement front door pierces the center bay of the three-bay primary elevation. It is a replacement door composed of panels surmounted by four divided lights. A transom remains intact above the door. The windows are one-over-one sashes but storm windows obscure the material.

**36. 801 Main Street – George Williamson House – Circa 1910
Contributing Building**

The two-story, three-bay circa-1910 I-house located at 801 Main Street was built for George Williamson. A chain-link fence encloses the parcel. The house is composed of the main block with a hipped-roof porch on the primary (north) elevation and a hipped-roof rear addition. The house rests on a brick foundation, and asbestos siding sheathes the exterior. Standing seam metal covers all the roof sections, and an interior brick chimney pierces the apex of the main roof.

Scrolled metal posts support the front porch. A metal storm door with the letter “B” protects the original glazed and paneled front door. Divided light sidelights flank the door. The windows throughout the house are the original, four-over-one wood sashes.

Middle Street

**37. 243 Middle Street – House – Circa 1930
Contributing Building**

Built around 1930, the house at 243 Middle Street is a one-and-one-half-story frame dwelling with a gable-and-wing form. The house rests on a parged concrete block foundation and T-111 siding clads the exterior. Composite shingles cover the roof. An exterior brick chimney rises along the west side elevation, and a gabled dormer projects from the north roof slope.

An engaged front porch runs along two bays of the three-bay primary (north) elevation. Square posts support the porch and a stoop with concrete steps enables access to the replacement front door in the center bay. The windows throughout the house are either single or paired, one-over-one vinyl replacements.

Shed – Circa 2010

Non-Contributing Building

A front-gabled shed, oriented with its primary elevation facing east, lies southwest of the house. Vinyl drop siding sheathes the exterior, and corrugated metal covers the roof. A single bay pierces the center of the primary elevation.

Empty Lot

Contributing Site

The lot to the west of the house is vacant. It is owned and used by the same individuals as the house.

**38. 299 Middle Street – Mobile Home – Circa 1960
Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

The parcel at 299 Middle Street is occupied by a metal mobile home that was moved to the site in the mid- to late twentieth century. The exterior is clad with metal, and pressed metal meant to mimic rusticated concrete block covers the foundation. The original windows are four-over-four sashes, found as both single units and groups of three.

Vacant Lot – PIN 6567-03-4335

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

**39. 361 Middle Street – House – 1981
Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

Built in 1981, the house at 361 Middle Street has a side-gabled linear form. A gabled hyphen connects the east side of the house to the front gabled garage. The house rests on a parged concrete block foundation and vinyl clads the exterior. Composite shingles cover all roof sections, and an interior brick chimney projects from the north roof slope.

The primary (north) elevation measures four bays wide with an inset porch, supported by turned posts spanned by a metal railing, spanning the two east bays. A paneled front door pierces the east-central bay and a picture window with flanking sashes perforates the easternmost bay. The windows throughout the house are the original, one-over-one sashes. A modern, paneled, double-bay garage door occupies the center of the garage.

**40. 395 Middle Street – House – Circa 1940
Contributing Building**

The house at 395 Middle Street is difficult to see from the right-of-way due to overgrown bushes. The building is a one-story, side-gabled house covered with rolled asphalt siding meant to imitate brick. An engaged front porch spans the façade and has a low porch wall. The windows are the original, four-over-one, wood sashes. The east side elevation has a shed-roof pent that protects a single-leaf door, and an interior brick chimney pierces the north roof slope.

**Shed – Circa 1940
Contributing Building**

A front-gable shed lies east of the house. Metal siding clads the exterior of the frame building and metal sheathes the roof.

**41. 398 Middle Street – Benjamin Thompson House – Circa 1900
Contributing Building**

The circa-1900 Colonial Revival-style Benjamin Thompson House is a frame dwelling anchored by a two-and-one-half-story, side-gabled main block with one-story wings on the east and west side elevation. The house rests on a brick foundation and plain weatherboards clad the exterior. Metal covers all roof sections, and cornice returns adorn the gable ends. Two vented shed dormers perforate the south roof slope, and two interior brick chimneys project from the north slope of the roof.

The three-bay primary (south) elevation has a pent roof that delineates the first and second stories. A gabled entry stoop with flush eaves and square replacement posts marks the entry. The original glazed and paneled front door with sidelights and flanking pilasters occupies the center bay. The windows throughout the house are original ten-over-one, wood sashes. A tripartite wood-sash window pierces the west bay of the primary elevation and paired original windows perforate the east bay. Shutters with diamond-shaped cutouts accent the windows on the primary elevation.

The west wing sun porch is supported by three square posts at the corners surmounted by a plain frieze. An additional entry door is tucked beneath the porch. The east wing has a metal carport attachment that was added in the late twentieth century.

**42. 409 Middle Street – Aurora Body Shop Garage – Circa 1935
Contributing Building**

The garage at 409 Middle Street is a double-bay, front-gabled structure with a rectangular form. It rests on a continuous brick foundation, and plain weatherboards sheath the exterior. Composite shingles cover the roof, and decorative trusswork with brackets adorn the front gable peak. The double-bay, wood, X-batten doors dominate the primary (north) elevation. The gable peak features a fixed, two-light window. This building is associated with the Aurora Body Shop at 449 Middle Street.

**Mobile Home – 1990
Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

The mobile home lies east of the garage and has an elongated, rectangular form. The home rests on a continuous brick foundation, with a rounded brick planter box on the west side elevation. The building is clad with vertical metal siding, and metal covers the rounded roof. The windows throughout the mobile home are one-over-one sashes.

Garage – 1972

Non-Contributing Building (Age)

A large, side-gabled metal garage lies south of the main garage and mobile home. The primary (north) elevation features three garage bays with metal rollup doors.

**43. 449 Middle Street – Aurora Body Shop – Circa 1940
Contributing Building**

The Aurora Body Shop is a concrete block building constructed around 1940. The building has a rectangular, front-gable form. Wood shingles clad the gables. Composite shingles cover the roof, and exposed rafter tails line the eaves. An interior concrete block chimney rises from the apex of the roof. A batten garage door and fixed, four-light window pierce the primary (north) elevation. These four-light windows can be found throughout the buildings. A single-leaf entry door and an additional garage bay are on the east elevation. A shed roof wing extends from the south end of the west elevation and has a single-leaf entry door.

Two circa-2000 prefabricated sheds lie west of the Aurora Body Shop and are not counted in the Section 5 resource count.

**44. Middle Street – Aurora Body Shop Storage – Circa 1940
Contributing Building**

The Aurora Body Shop Storage building is a large frame structure that rests on brick piers spanned by pressed metal that replicates rusticated concrete block. Metal paneling clads the exterior, and metal covers the roof. Exposed rafter tails line the eaves, and an interior brick chimney projects from the east roof slope. Two large openings pierce the west side elevation, and a door pierces the north elevation. The building is associated with the Aurora Body Shop.

**45. 598 Middle Street – House – Circa 1935
Contributing Building**

Built around 1935, the one-story frame house at 598 Middle Street has a T-shaped plan with a front-gabled main block with a gabled wing off the east elevation. A chain-link fence encloses the west part of the parcel. The siding obscures the foundation. Plain weatherboards clad the exterior and corner boards accentuate the corners. Composite shingles cover all roof sections, and an interior brick chimney projects from the apex of the main block.

The primary (south) elevation measures two bays wide. An original three panel and six-light window pierces the east bay, and an original, three-over-one, wood-sash window perforates the west bay. The windows throughout the house are original and follow this sash pattern. All windows and doors feature original trim with plain caps.

**46. 610 Middle Street – Bell House – 1917
Contributing Building**

The 1917 Bell House at 610 Middle Street stands as an example of a Victorian-style house. The house is composed of a front-gabled main block with a curved, wraparound front porch and a one-story rear ell. The house rests on a brick pier foundation infilled with brick, and vinyl clads the exterior. Composite shingles cover the roof and cornice returns accent the gable ends.

The curved, wraparound porch, supported by original turned posts, dominates the two-bay primary (south) elevation. An original glazed and paneled front door occupies the east bay and paired, original, six-over-six, wood-sash windows pierce the west bay. The windows throughout the house are original and flanked by fixed, louvered shutters.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

Shed – 1917

Contributing Building

A side-gabled frame shed lies northwest of the Bell House. It rests on brick piers and plain weatherboards clad the exterior. Composite shingles cover the roof. A single opening enables access to the interior on the south elevation.

Shed – Circa 1960

Non-Contributing Building (Age)

A gambrel-roofed shed lies directly north of the house. It is composed of a main block with a shed roof addition off the west side.

**47. Middle Street – House – Circa 1945
Non-Contributing Building (Integrity)**

A circa-1945 house, constructed concrete blocks, occupies the lot between 610 Middle Street and 674 Middle Street. According to the survey file from 2009, the house was built to serve as temporary housing. The building has a compact, rectangular footprint with an engaged carport at the east end. Composite shingles cover the roof, and exposed rafter tails line the eaves. A set of two-over-two, horizontal wood-sash windows pierce the west bay.

Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-93-0352

Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-83-9279

**48. 674 Middle Street – John Jones House – Circa 1940
Contributing Building**

The one-story Ranch-style house at 674 Middle Street was built by John Jones, janitor for Aurora School. The dwelling has a gable-and-wing form and is constructed of concrete block with asbestos shingles in the gables. Metal covers the roof, and an interior brick chimney projects from the north roof slope. The primary (south) elevation measures three bays wide. A shed-roof entry stoop with scrolled metal post supports protects the paneled front door in the center bay. A tripartite picture window with vinyl replacement sashes pierces the east bay, and a six-over-six, vinyl replacement window occupies the west bay. The windows throughout have been replaced.

**49. 698 Middle Street – House – Circa 1900
Contributing Building**

Built around 1900, the house at 698 Middle Street is a two-story, frame I-house anchored by a side-gabled main block with a shed-roof front porch and elongated rear ell. Foundation plantings obscure the foundation material. Original weatherboards clad the exterior, and composite shingles cover the roof sections. An interior brick chimney projects from the apex of the main block and another from the rear ell. Cornice returns adorn the gable ends of the house.

The shed roof porch, supported by original Tuscan columns, spans the primary (south) elevation. The original glazed and paneled front door with a transom occupies the center bay. Fixed louvered shutters accent the front door. Original, two-over-two, wood-sash windows pierce the flanking bays. The windows throughout the house follow this sash pattern and material, including the rear ell. Fixed, louvered shutters frame the windows.

Pearl Street

**50. 525 Pearl Street – House – 1977
Non-Contributing (Age)**

The 1977 Ranch-style house at 525 Pearl Street is composed of a larger, center block with smaller flanking wings and a garage off the west elevation of the west wing. Multi-colored brick clads the exterior, and composite shingles cover the roof. The

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

primary (north) elevation features an inset porch with fluted columns, which is accessed by a flight of brick stairs with a metal railing. The original paneled and glazed front door pierces the century bay. The windows throughout the house are paired, six-over-six, wood sashes with fixed, louvered shutters.

**51. 575 Pearl Street – Bryan and Ginny Bonner House – Circa 1925
Contributing Building**

The Craftsman-influenced house at 575 Pearl Street was built for Bryan and Ginny Bonner around 1925. A side-gabled main block anchors the one-and-one-half-story frame bungalow with two telescoping gabled additions off the east elevation. The house rests on a brick foundation, and aluminum siding clads the exterior. Composite shingles cover the roof. A shed roof dormer spans the north roof slope, and two interior brick chimneys project from the apex of the roof.

An engaged porch, supported by tapered posts atop brick piers and spanned by a square balustrade, spans the three-bay primary (north) elevation. A flight of concrete steps flanked by brick wing walls enables porch access. The original front door has been replaced with a glazed and paneled double-leaf door with sidelights. The windows throughout the house are the original four-over-one wood sashes found in pairs on the primary elevation and as single units on the side elevations. Fixed, louvered shutters adorn the windows.

**Driveway
Contributing Site**

This driveway is owned and used by the same individuals as the Bryan and Ginny Bonner House.

Third Street

**52. Third Street – Garage – Circa 2020
Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

A one-story, metal-framed shed occupies the lot between 564 Third Street and 298 Main Street. The parcel does not have an address. The metal shed has a low-pitched front gable, and the exterior is clad with metal siding. A paneled roll-up garage door pierces the center of the primary (west) elevation and is flanked by one-over-one vinyl windows.

**Shed – Circa 1980
Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

A front-gabled frame shed lies southeast of the garage. Metal covers the exterior and the roof. A double-leaf door pierces the primary (west) elevation.

**53. 564 Third Street – House – 1916
Contributing Building**

The house at 564 Third Street is a two-story frame dwelling constructed in 1916. The house has a rectangular, side-gabled form with a gabled replacement entry stoop and rear ell. Sheets of plywood obscure the foundation, and asbestos siding sheathes the exterior. Tin covers the roof, and the gable ends feature cornice returns. Two interior brick chimneys pierce the apex of the roof and the east slope of the roof. An additional brick chimney projects from the apex of the rear ell.

The primary (west) elevation measures three bays wide. The gabled entry stoop is supported by plain square replacement posts spanned by replacement balustrade. The replacement front door occupies the center bay. Paired, three-over-one, wood-sash windows pierce the north bay, and a single unit perforates the south bay. The windows throughout the house reflect this sash pattern and material.

Fourth Street

**54. 436 Fourth Street – Former Aurora Town Hall and Police Station – 1948
Contributing Building**

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

The former Aurora Town Hall and Police Station at 436 Fourth Street was constructed in 1948. The one-story, flat-roofed masonry building has a rectangular form and shares its southern wall with the commercial building at 458–460 Fourth Street, the former Fire Station. Brick laid in a running bond clads the exterior and metal covers the flat roof.

Oriented with its primary elevation facing west, the building has a symmetrical façade with two original doors composed of six divided lights above three panels that are separated by two original, two-over-two, horizontal, wood-sash windows in the center bays. The windows throughout the building follow this sash pattern and material. Each window is also accented by a concrete sill.

**55. 458–460 Fourth Street – Aurora Municipal Complex – 1948
Contributing Building**

The Aurora Municipal Complex is composed of three structures dating from 1948 to 1964. The oldest building, the former Fire Station, was constructed in 1948, and shares its north wall with the former Town Hall and Police Station at 436 Fourth Street. The subject building is constructed of concrete block, and brick laid in a running bond faces the primary (west) elevation. The primary elevation measures four bays wide. Two single-leaf, metal frame doors occupy the center bays. A fixed, metal-sash, plate glass window pierces the north bay, and a divided, metal-sash window perforates the south bay. Windows on the south elevation are the original, two-over-two, horizontal, wood-sash windows, which are also on the adjacent building at 436 Fourth Street.

A six-bay, concrete block garage, built in 1958, is connected to the former Fire Station by a flat covered roof. Oriented with its primary elevation facing south towards Pearl Street, a metal-sloped roof caps the building, and the walls are exposed concrete block. The westernmost bay is enclosed with T-111 siding. The bay consists of a modern paneled door flanked by six-over-six vinyl windows. The remaining five bays have metal roll-up garage doors with three lights across the center of the door.

Two prefabricated sheds lie east of the former Fire Station and are not counted in the Section 5 resource count.

Water Pump Station – 1964

Non-Contributing Building (Age)

The Water Pump Station lies south of the former Fire Station. The building has a rectangular, gabled form with a shorter, flat roof addition on the west elevation. Brick laid in a common bond clads the main block's exterior, and running bond brick clads the west addition. Bricks laid in a stretcher course accent the window and door bays. Metal covers the roof.

The building is oriented with its primary elevation facing south towards Pearl Street. A modern paneled, single-leaf door with a transom pierces the west bay of the three-bay façade. Fixed, divided light wood windows pierce the center and east bays. An additional modern, paneled door pierces the primary elevation of the west extension.

Water Tower – 1964

Non-Contributing Structure (Age)

The metal Water Tower lies east of the former Fire Station. Towering far above the buildings in Aurora, the structure was built in 1964, at the same time as the Water Pump Station to serve the growing Aurora community.

**56. 462 Fourth Street – Commercial Building – Circa 1945
Contributing Building**

Constructed around 1945, the one-story commercial building at 462 Fourth Street has a rectangular footprint and is built of concrete block with metal coping. It has a flat roof with a stepped parapet on the north and south side elevations. The primary (west) elevation measures two bays wide. A single-leaf door with a jalousie light pierces the north bay, and a single-bay garage door pierces the south bay.

57. 465 Fourth Street – House – Circa 1900

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

Contributing Building

The two-story, side-gabled frame dwelling at 465 Fourth Street was constructed around 1900. The dwelling is anchored by a rectangular main block with a hipped-roof front porch and two-story rear ell. Foundation plantings obscure the foundation material, and replacement vinyl siding clads the exterior. Paneled metal covers the roof. Two exterior brick chimneys rise along the north and south gable ends, and the gable ends feature cornice returns. An additional exterior brick chimney rises along the rear (west) elevation of the rear ell.

The primary (east) elevation measures three bays wide. Turned posts support the front porch which is accessible by a set of concrete steps. The original front door, composed of a single light above three panels and protected by a vinyl storm door, occupies the center bay. Original divided sidelights flank the door. Original, six-over-six, wood-sash windows pierce the north and south bays. The original windows can be found throughout the dwelling, and fixed vinyl shutters accent all windows.

**58. Fourth Street – Garage – Circa 1940
Contributing Building**

Originally built around 1940 as a restaurant, the garage north of the house at 465 Fourth Street is a one-and-one-half-story, front-gabled masonry structure. Oriented with its primary elevation facing east, the building has a rectangular form. Stucco covers the concrete block exterior and asbestos shingles clad the gable. Tin covers the roof, and exposed rafter tails line the eaves.

The primary (east) elevation measures two bays wide and is pierced by single-bay metal roll-up garage doors. Original, paired, two-over-two, wood-sash windows pierce the gable peak. Fixed louvered shutters accent the windows. Metal-sash, horizontal sliding windows pierce the north and south side elevations.

**Lot
Contributing Site**

An empty lot, owned and used by the same individuals as the garage, lies to the west.

**Lot
Contributing Site**

A lot between the house at 465 Fourth Street and the subject garage is owned and used by the same individuals as the garage.

**59. 470 Fourth Street – Aurora Bus Station – Circa 1920
Contributing Building**

Built in the 1920s, the Aurora Bus Station is a brick building with a rectangular form. Brick laid in a common bond clads the exterior, and composite shingles cover the hipped roof with deep, overhanging eaves. Two single-leaf, replacement doors pierce the north and south bays. Three original, four-over-one, wood-sash windows occupy the west elevation, which fronts Fourth Street. A set of four glass block windows perforates the north elevation.

**Garage – Circa 1940
Contributing Building**

Oriented with its primary elevation facing west towards Fourth Street, a side-gabled, brick bus garage lies to the west behind the Aurora Bus Station. Brick laid in a common bond clads the exterior, and metal covers the roof. Exposed rafter tails line the eaves. The primary elevation is lined by bay openings with batten doors. An additional, single bay pierces the south elevation. Four original, six-over-six, wood-sash windows line the west elevation.

**60. 560 Fourth Street – Commercial Building – Circa 1950
Contributing Building**

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

The circa-1950 commercial building at 560 Fourth Street is a one-story, flat-roofed commercial building with a stepped parapet along the north and south side elevations. Metal panels cover the exterior. The primary (west) elevation measures five bays wide and most of the bays are covered with plywood. The north-central bay is pierced by a tall double-leaf door. The three south bays feature an original, glazed and paneled, single-leaf door flanked by windows.

**Shed – Circa 1950
Contributing Building**

A one-story, shed-roof concrete block structure lies south of the commercial building. It is partially obscured by vegetation.

North Fifth Street

**61. 207 North Fifth Street – Bonner-Cherry House – Circa 1870
Contributing Building**

This two-and-one-half-story house was built around 1870 as an Italianate-style dwelling by John B. Bonner. At an unknown date, the house was updated to reflect the changing tastes to the Victorian style, though many of these architectural details have now been removed. The house may have been enlarged and subsequently used as a hotel by the Cherry family after they took possession of the property in 1901 and before they built the Cherry Hotel on Main Street, though this could not be confirmed based on available records.⁵

The frame dwelling has a rectangular footprint with a shed roof porch that spans the primary (east) elevation and a one-story, hipped-roof addition off the rear (west) elevation. The house rests on a brick pier foundation that has been infilled with brick. Aluminum siding clads the exterior and the original, plain weatherboards are exposed where the aluminum siding has been removed. Composite shingles clad the jerkinhead roof. Three dormers with gable returns perforate the primary roof slope. Two exterior brick chimneys rise along the south side elevation.

The front porch, supported by plain square posts, features a central gable with decorative knee braces. The porch has lost its brackets and frieze. The primary elevation measures three bays wide. The original, double-leaf front door occupies the center bay, and features arched panels above square panels. An aluminum storm door protects the original door. The door surround features a divided light transom and divided light sidelights. The south bay extends out to the east, while the center and north bays are flush. Paired, two-over-two, wood-sash windows pierce the north and south bays. This fenestration pattern and materials are found throughout the house. All window and door openings feature prominent lintels.

A bay window with five faces occupies the east bay of the north side elevation. Narrow, one-over-one windows protected by metal storm windows pierce the bay window, and metal board-and-batten siding clads the exterior.

The rear (west) elevation is comprised of a one-story, hipped-roof addition that spans the length of the main block and extends out to the north and a gabled-roof section that lies perpendicular to the house on the north bay of the west elevation. The windows throughout echo the two-over-two, wood-sash pattern found on the main block.

**Garage – Circa 1940
Contributing Building**

A one-story, front-gabled garage lies west of the Bonner-Cherry House and is accessible via Chapin Street. The frame structure rests on a concrete block foundation, and asbestos siding covers the exterior. Composite shingles clad the roof. Double-leaf doors occupy the center bay of the primary (south) elevation, and a square, fixed-light window pierces the east bay.

**Pumphouse – Circa 1940
Contributing Building**

⁵ Beaufort County Register of Deeds, Book 111, Page 138.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

A concrete block Pumphouse lies northwest of the Bonner-Cherry House. Composite shingles clad the roof and exposed rafter tails line the eaves.

**62. 375 North Fifth Street – House – Circa 1945
Non-Contributing Building (Alterations)**

Built in 1945, the house at 375 North Fifth Street has been subject to alterations. It is anchored by a side-gabled main block with an engaged front porch and gabled projection on the primary (west) elevation and a shed roof addition off the south side elevation. The house rests on a continuous brick foundation, and asbestos shingles cover the exterior. Composite shingles cover the roof, and an interior brick chimney projects from the west roof slope.

The primary elevation measures four bays wide, with the porch supported by plain square posts with decorative brackets spanning the two north bays. The porch protects the paneled replacement front door. A set of original, six-over-six wood-sash windows pierce the south bay, but the remaining bays have six-over-six vinyl replacement windows. Fixed, louvered shutters accent the windows. An original divided fanlight pierces the front gable peak.

**63. 403 North Fifth Street – William T. and Minnie E. Hudnell House – Circa 1900
Non-Contributing Building (Integrity)**

The circa-1900 house at 403 North Fifth Street is a deteriorated two-story house with a two-story wing on the north elevation and a one-story ell off the rear (west) elevation. Built for William T. and Minnie E. Hudnell, the lot is heavily overgrown, and the house is vacant. Vegetation obscures the foundation materials. The original plain weatherboards sheath the exterior. Metal covers the roof. A wraparound porch extends across the primary (east) elevation and onto the north and south side elevations. The house has a side hall plan, though the front door is gone. The original, four-over-four wood-sash windows remain in the second story of the primary elevation.

**64. 441 North Fifth Street – William A. Thompson Jr. and Sallie Carr Thompson House – Circa 1920
Contributing Building**

Built around 1920 for William A. Thompson Jr. and Sallie Carr Thompson, the two-story frame, Colonial Revival-style house at 441 North Fifth Street stands on a spacious, overgrown lot. The house features a rectangular form with a hipped-roof front porch and a port cochere on the south elevation. The overgrown foundation plantings obscure the foundation, but at least one brick pier is visible. Aluminum siding clads the exterior and composite shingles cover the hipped roof. Two interior brick chimneys project from the north and south roof slopes.

The primary elevation measures three bays wide. Original square posts spanned by a simple, square balustrade support the porch, which is accessible by a flight of wood steps. The replacement, double-leaf door occupies the center bay and has an intact transom. Original, tripartite windows composed of eight-over-one flanked by four-over-one, wood-sash windows are found throughout the house. The south side elevation features a porte cochere, which is supported by square posts atop brick piers.

Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-93-6010⁶

Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-93-6017

**65. 550 North Fifth Street – Garage – 1972
Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

Built in 1972, the metal frame building at 550 North Fifth Street is a tall, one-story garage. It rests on a concrete slab foundation and corrugated metal covers the exterior and the low-pitched, front-gabled roof. A modern, roll-up garage door pierces the primary (west) elevation.

⁶ This parcel was previously occupied by the Rupert Bonner House, which was demolished around 2020.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

**66. 590 North Fifth Street – Aurora Jail – 1939
Contributing Building**

The square, hipped-roof Aurora Jail was built by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1939. Constructed of brick laid in a common bond, the building features decorative brickwork in the form of a water table, arch surround for the front door, and denticulated cornice. Metal covers the roof. The primary (west) elevation measures three bays wide with the front door centered on the façade and obscured by a metal storm door. The flanking bays are pierced by original, eight-over-eight, wood-sash windows. According to the survey file for the Aurora Jail, the original double jail cell and magistrate's office remain intact on the interior.⁷

Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-93-4381⁸

North Sixth Street

**67. 310 North Sixth Street – House – 1946
Contributing Building**

The one-and-one-half-story house at 310 North Sixth Street stands as an example of a front-gabled bungalow with Craftsman-style details. The main block of the house has a rectangular footprint with a gabled addition off the south elevation and dormers on the north and south roof slopes. Brick laid in a running bond clads the exterior, and composite shingles cover the roof. Two interior chimneys project from the roof. Exposed rafter tails line the eaves, and decorative knee braces adorn the front gable.

The primary (west) elevation measures three bays wide. An entry portico supported by tapered square posts surmounted by a flat roof with a square railing occupies the center bay. A set of concrete steps enables porch access. The entry portico protects the original glazed and paneled front door. Original, paired, four-over-one, wood-sash windows pierce the flanking bays. These windows can be found throughout the house.

**68. 414 North Sixth Street – J. G. Rutledge Jr. and Junie N. Rutledge House – 1940
Contributing Building**

Built for J. G. Rutledge Jr. and Junie N. Rutledge in 1940, the Minimal Traditional-style house at 414 North Sixth Street is a one-and-one-half-story building with a side-gabled, rectangular form, and a gabled addition off the north elevation. Vinyl siding clads the exterior, and composite shingles cover the roof. Two gabled dormers, with original six-over-six, wood-sash windows, project from the west slope of the roof.

The asymmetrical, four-bay primary (west) elevation features a gabled entry stoop supported by thin fluted columns. The stoop protects the front door, which is composed of three lights over two vertical panels and protected by a vinyl storm door. Original, six-over-six, wood-sash windows pierce the remaining three bays. The original windows are found throughout the house. The gabled north wing is clad with T-111 siding and a modern, one-over-one sash window pierces the west elevation.

A prefabricated shed, erected around 2000, lies east of the house and is not counted in the Section 5 resource count.

**Garage – Circa 1945
Contributing Building**

An elongated, one-bay garage lies to the east behind the house. It rests on a concrete block foundation, and vinyl siding clads the exterior. Metal covers the roof. A modern, paneled garage door occupies the south elevation, oriented towards Pearl Street. A five-paneled, wood door and a six-over-six, wood-sash window pierce the west elevation.

69. 415 North Sixth Street – Charles G. and Jessie Midyette House – Circa 1900

⁷ Aurora Jail (BF1009) Survey File. On file, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, NC.

⁸ The circa-1900 house that occupied the site was demolished prior to 2008.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

Contributing Building

The Queen Anne-style house at 415 North Sixth Street was built around 1900 for Charles G. and Jessie Midyette. The two-story frame house has a cross-gable footprint and complex massing, which is typical of the Queen Anne style. A one-story ell projects from the rear (west) elevation of the main block. The house rests on a brick pier foundation. The original weatherboards clad the exterior, and diamond shingles sheath the front gable. Metal covers the roof. Two interior brick chimneys project from the roof, as does a gabled dormer. Both the front gable and the gabled dormer have closed gables with a heavy cornice and a finial. The side gables feature cornice returns.

The expansive, one-story, wraparound porch dominates the primary (east) elevation. The hipped-roof porch features two front gables with finials and Tuscan columns surmounted by a plain frieze for support. The balustrade has been removed. The front gable projection of the south bay features cutaway bay windows. The single-leaf front door is set back into the central bay of the house. The windows throughout the house are one-over-one, wood replacement sashes, found both in pairs and as single units. Some of the original two-over-two wood-sash windows remain in place, particularly on the second story of the main block and the rear ell.

**70. 429 North Sixth Street – House – Circa 1915
Non-Contributing Building (Alterations)**

Built around 1915, the one-story frame dwelling at 429 North Sixth Street has a complicated roofline due to additions on the primary (east), south, and rear (west) elevations, but the core has a gable-and-wing form. Siding obscures the foundation, and plain weatherboards clad the exterior. Standing seam metal covers all roof sections.

The hipped-roof porch defines the primary elevation. Square replacement posts spanned by a square balustrade support the porch. The single-leaf entry door is set back into the porch and obscured by a vinyl storm door. A divided sidelight flanks the south side of the door. The windows throughout the house are the original, two-over-two, wood sashes. The south side elevation has a shed-roof carport supported by plain square posts. The carport covers an additional single-leaf entry door.

**71. 434 North Sixth Street – Tut and Loma Bonner House – 1933
Contributing Building**

The Tut and Loma Bonner House, built in 1933, is a one-story dwelling anchored by a side-gabled main block with a gabled entry stoop on the primary (west) elevation, an enclosed porch off the north elevation, and a shed roof addition on the south elevation. Brick laid in a running bond clads the exterior, and composite shingles cover the roof. Exposed rafter tails line the eaves, and a brick chimney projects from the west slope of the roof.

The replacement front door occupies the center bay of the three-bay primary elevation. The gabled entry stoop, supported by fluted columns and sided with shingles, protects the door. Paired, one-over-one, vinyl replacement windows, which are found throughout the house, pierce the flanking bays. The enclosed porch off the north elevation features clusters of three, square posts at the corners and decorative knee braces in the eaves. A set of three, vinyl windows pierces the west elevation.

**Garage – Circa 1950
Contributing Building**

A two-bay, front-gable garage lies east of the house. The frame structure has a plywood exterior, and metal covers the roof. Exposed rafter tails and decorative knee braces adorn the eaves. A set of double-leaf doors and a single-leaf door enable access to the building on the west elevation.

**72. 465 North Sixth Street – Max F. and Dorothy Thompson House – 1928
Contributing Building**

The 1928 Max F. and Dorothy Thompson House stands as an example of a Period Revival Cottage. The frame house is one-and-one-half-stories tall with a cross-gable plan and shed roof front porch that extends across the façade and off the north elevation to form a carport. The house rests on a continuous brick foundation and brick laid in a running bond clads the exterior.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

Composite shingles cover all the roof sections, including the front gable with a sloping eave and the shed roof dormer that projects from the east roof slope. An interior brick chimney rises from the south roof face.

The primary (east) elevation measures four bays wide and is protected by the porch, which is supported by replacement posts spanned by a square balustrade. A set of concrete steps with a metal replacement railing enables access to the porch. The front door, protected by an aluminum storm door, occupies the north-central bay. Original, paired four-over-one, wood-sash windows perforate the north and south-central bays. The north bay features a double-leaf glazed and paneled door with a transom that leads into a sunroom. The original windows can be found throughout the house, including a single unit in the front gable and a ribbon of three in the dormer.

**Garage – Circa 1930
Contributing Building**

A two-bay garage lies southwest of the Max F. and Dorothy Thompson House. The structure is built of concrete blocks, and weatherboards clad the front gable. Metal covers the roof. Original wood-paneled garage doors occupy the two bays on the primary (east) elevation.

**73. 493 North Sixth Street – House – 1973
Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

The building at 493 North Sixth Street is a linear Ranch-style house that was built in 1973. The house has a rectangular footprint with an engaged carport at the north end. Brick laid in a running bond clads the exterior, and vinyl drop siding encloses the carport. Original drop siding clads the gable ends, and modern metal covers the side-gabled roof. An interior brick chimney projects from the west roof slope.

A circa-2015 shed-roof porch, supported by plain square posts spanned by a square balustrade, spans the entry and north bays. A storm door obscures the front door. The windows throughout the house are the original, two-over-two horizontal wood sashes. A modern, double-leaf door pierces the center of the enclosed carport.

A circa-2015 prefabricated shed lies west of the house and is not included in the Section 5 resource count.

Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-93-2315⁹

**74. 107 North Sixth Street – Jack and Willie C. McWilliams House – Circa 1935
Contributing Building**

The circa-1935, one-and-one-half-story dwelling at 107 North Sixth Street is a Period Revival Cottage built for Jack and Willie C. McWilliams. A side-gabled main block anchors the dwelling and features a front gable bay on the primary (west) elevation, a façade chimney, and a north wing. Brick laid in a running bond clads the exterior, and composite shingles cover the roof.

The primary elevation measures four bays wide. The original, arched and recessed front door occupies the south-central bay and is covered by a shed roof extension. A brick stoop with a semi-circular set of brick steps enables access to the door. A set of three, six-over-six, vinyl replacement windows pierce the front gable projection and an original, six-over-one, wood-sash window perforates the north bay. Original, multi-light casement windows are situated in the south bay.

The north wing has an additional, original entry door composed of six lights over panels. It is protected by a storm door. Original, six-over-one, wood-sash windows flank the door.

**Garage – Circa 1950
Contributing Building**

A two-story, two-bay concrete block garage lies behind the house to the east. The garage doors and siding are no longer intact. Metal covers the roof.

⁹ The circa-1919 Wilbur Miller House that occupied the parcel was demolished around 2012.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

North Seventh Street

**75. 424 North Seventh Street – House – 1956
Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

The house at 424 North Seventh Street is a one-story dwelling with an elongated form built in 1956. The house is anchored by a side-gabled main block with a front-gabled projection on the primary (west) elevation and garage wing connected by a short hyphen off the south side elevation. The house rests on a continuous brick foundation, and vinyl siding clads the exterior. Composite shingles cover the roof, and the gable ends feature cornice returns while the eaves are nearly flush with the exterior walls. An interior brick chimney projects from the apex of the roof.

The primary elevation of the main block measures four bays wide. The original front door with three horizontal lights occupies the north-central bay. A tripartite picture window with flanking sashes occupies the south-central bay, which pierces the front-gabled section. The windows throughout the house are one-over-one, vinyl replacements. The hyphen towards the south end of the house has an original, glazed and paneled door, and the garage includes two, modern roll-up garage doors.

**76. 454 North Seventh Street – House – 1961
Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

The building at 454 North Seventh Street is a compact, one-story house that was built in 1961. The house rests on a continuous brick foundation, and vinyl drop siding clads the exterior. Modern metal covers the side-gabled roof. The primary (west) elevation measures three bays wide, with the entry stoop situated in the center bay. The replacement front door occupies the center bay, and the flanking bays are pierced by paired, six-over-six, vinyl replacement windows, which can be found throughout the house.

**77. 588 North Seventh Street – Cuthrell House – Circa 1945
Non-Contributing Building (Alterations)**

The Cuthrell House at 588 North Sixth Street was built around 1945. The one-story frame dwelling is composed of a side-gabled main block with a gabled addition off the north end. An enclosed porch spans the primary (west) elevation and compromises the dwelling's original side-gable form. The house rests on a continuous brick foundation. Asbestos siding covers the main block and north wing, and vinyl siding encloses the porch. Composite shingles cover the roof. The roofline features cornice returns at the gable ends, and an interior brick chimney projects from the east slope of the roof.

The primary elevation has been heavily altered by the enclosure of the porch. The door to the porch is vinyl and the screens that line the west and south elevations of the porch obscure the front door. The windows are predominantly paired, six-over-six, vinyl replacements accented with fixed vinyl shutters. The exception to this is the paired, two-over-two, horizontal wood-sash windows in the north wing.

Garage – Circa 1975

Non-Contributing Building (Age)

A single-bay garage with a front-gable main block and shed roof wing on the south elevation lies southeast of the Cuthrell House. T-111 siding clads the exterior, and composite shingles cover the roof. A garage bay opening pierces the front-gabled section of the garage and a double-leaf door covered with T-111 siding occupies the west elevation of the south wing.

INTEGRITY ASSESSMENT

Overall, the Aurora Historic District possesses integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The district encompasses the town's historic commercial, civic, and residential core roughly bounded by Middle Street, Second Street, Pearl Street, Chapin Street, and Eighth Street. Although there has been some loss of buildings in the district, the relationships amongst the district's extant resources and infrastructure illustrate Aurora's development. Original

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

street patterns, building setbacks, and lot sizes and configurations remain the same. Aurora's setting remains the same due to the district's remote location on the southern Beaufort County peninsula, and the community's relationship with South Creek to the east.

Resources within the Aurora Historic District retain integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Seventy-nine resources contribute to its significance. Commercial buildings are typically brick or concrete block with a brick façade that stand one or two stories tall. While some façades remain intact, other storefronts have been modified; and original fenestration patterns remain on the second stories. Other than the commercial buildings, most of the houses have received later siding materials, such as aluminum and vinyl, and replacement windows and doors. Few of the contributing buildings have experienced additions or alterations that substantially change their overall footprints and massing, resulting in intact streetscapes. Collectively, the district's resources possess sufficient integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to convey historical and architectural significance.

STATEMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

(TBD by OSA)

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations N/A

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Architecture

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Period of Significance

Circa 1850–1950

Architect/Builder

Ira C. Congleton, Architect

Thomas Weisiger, Builder

Significant Dates

1880, 1908, 1940

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Aurora Historic District is locally significant under National Register Criterion A at the local level in the area of Commerce for its role as an important civic, commercial, and social center for southern Beaufort County. The area that would become Aurora was first occupied by Native Americans and later settled in the early nineteenth century by free Blacks who named their community Betty Town. Around 1856, William H. Cunningham arrived in southeast Beaufort County, forced the free Black population from the area, purchased the land that would become Aurora, and laid out a gridded pattern of streets on land prized for its fertile soils and proximity to navigable waterways.

In the late nineteenth century, townspeople and local farmers came to downtown Aurora for its general stores, groceries, the post office, professional services, and civic activities. With the county seat at Washington lying 20 miles to the northwest, residents of southern Beaufort County had difficulty accessing the larger markets due to poor roads and the difficulty and expense of navigating South Creek and the Pamlico River. Specialty stores such as millineries, harness shops, blacksmiths, and barbers also served the community. Hotels served businessmen, as well as out of town guests who passed through the area. Through the turn of the twentieth century, Aurora was a crucial hub for residents across the peninsula, which was difficult to access and dotted by swamps, savannahs, and pocosins, severely hindering transportation to larger metropolitan centers like New Bern, Washington, and Beaufort. The 1908 arrival of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad spurred a development boom in the growing community. Although numerous other nearby stations, including Royal, Edward, and Blounts Creek, were created along the line, none grew to the density or prominence of Aurora. Even though it facilitated transportation to and from the peninsula to larger cities, the railroad solidified Aurora's role as a regional town center for area residents.

As the twentieth century progressed, Aurora's population fluctuated. Changes in agricultural practices and transportation routes diminished Aurora's role as a commercial hub for residents of southern Beaufort County. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, residents and town officials hoped that the discovery of phosphate, a rock mined primarily for use in fertilizer production, would breathe life back into Aurora's economy and community. The anticipated growth from phosphate mining did not materialize and Aurora's population continued to decline throughout the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

The Aurora Historic District is locally significant under Criterion C at the local level in the area of Architecture for its distinctive collection of commercial, religious, civic, and residential buildings from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that, altogether, are a distinguishable entity whose individual components lack individual distinction. The extant resources within the Aurora Historic District are a cohesive collection of nationally popular architectural styles applied to common building types and forms that tell the story of the town's early growth, boom, and bust. Aurora's earliest extant buildings are dwellings. The Henry and Elizabeth Sugg Harding House is believed to have been built around 1850, though deeds and other historical records do not confirm whether the white Sugg or Harding families were its original occupants, or if it first belonged to the Hodge family, founders of the earlier free Black settlement known as Betty Town. The second oldest dwelling is the Bonner-Cherry House, constructed approximately 20 years later in 1870. Aurora's streets are believed to have been initially laid out by William H. Cunningham after he acquired the land. Land surveyors R. T. and R. R. Bonner are thought to have followed Cunningham's original plan and expanded upon the town's gridded pattern when surveying for its incorporation on March 29, 1880.

The decades following its 1880 incorporation saw Aurora's commercial building increase significantly. The earliest extant commercial building in Aurora is the 1886 B. H. Thompson Store at the intersection of Main and Fourth streets. Earlier one-story, frame commercial buildings were replaced with brick structures along Main Street, signifying the community's economic success. Additional residences, both nationally popular styles and vernacular buildings, were erected along Main Street and its intersecting roads, including North Main Street and Sixth Street.

As Aurora grew following the 1908 arrival of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, the increasing density of its building stock became more sophisticated, with construction peaking in the 1910s and 1920s. Additional commercial buildings were erected along Main Street to serve the growing town and surrounding area, including the Cherry Hotel at 499 Main Street and Aurora Hardware Company Building at 498 Main Street. Residential construction coincided with commercial construction, with the majority of new residences built along the west end of Main Street and the north side of Middle Street. Notable houses constructed during this time include the circa-1915 Staley-Rutledge House at 295 Main Street and the circa-1920 William A. Thompson Jr. and Sallie Carr Thompson House at 441 North Fifth Street.

The Aurora Historic District's Period of Significance begins circa 1850, with the construction of the Henry and Susan Sugg Harding House, the earliest surviving building within the district, and ends in 1950 to capture the impact of the loss of the railroad and to illustrate the decline in both new construction and updates to existing buildings after that time.

Narrative Statement of Significance (provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Early Aurora Area History

Located in southern Beaufort County in the heart of Richland Township, Aurora lies on the west bank of South Creek, a tributary of the Pamlico River to the north. The county seat of Washington and town of Chocowinity lie approximately 25 miles northwest of Aurora. NC 33 terminates 15 miles east of Aurora at the Intracoastal Waterway, which divides mainland Beaufort County from Goose Creek Island. Aurora's proximity to navigable waterways has played a vital role throughout its history, as has the abundance of natural resources such as fertile black soil, hard and softwood forests, and underground phosphate deposits.

The area that became Aurora was first inhabited by Pamlico, or Pomouik, Native Americans. Following the Tuscarora War, the Pamlico were slaughtered as part of the Tuscarora tribe's treaty with British colonists who still saw the tribe as dangerous.¹⁰ Any surviving Pamlico tribe members were likely enslaved by or integrated into the Tuscarora tribe.¹¹

¹⁰ Ruth Y. Wetmore, "Pamlico Indians," in *Encyclopedia of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

¹¹ Wetmore, 2006.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

In the early to mid-eighteenth century, the town of Aurora was known as Betty Town.¹² A free Black couple, Isaiah and Betty Hodge, owned over 500 acres of land and named the community to honor Betty.¹³ Isaiah Hodge was recorded in the 1810 U.S. Census as living in Beaufort County with a household of 10 free “colored people” and 1 enslaved person.¹⁴ His neighbors included other free Black families, headed by Edy Hodge, Peter Hagen, James Bloomfield, William McKey, and Cullen Hudnell. Likely living in the same area, Hodge appears in the 1830 U.S. Census in the South Creek section of Beaufort County with a household of 10 people.¹⁵ His free Black neighbors included Cullen Hudnell, William Hill, Thos. Bowen, Jno. Moore, Jno. Blango, and Mary Kuse.

The only building that survives from this early period of Aurora’s development, and the only one believed to predate William Henry Cunningham’s arrival, is the Henry and Susan Sugg Harding House at 229 Main Street (#2, Photo 11). Traditionally, it has been believed that Henry and Susan Sugg Harding, a white couple, were the original owners. However, based on the estimated construction date of 1850, this seems unlikely, as the couple did not marry until 1867.¹⁶ It is more plausible that the property previously belonged to Susan Sugg Harding’s parents, Benjamin Hardy Sugg and Nancy Cunningham. Another possibility is that the house originally belonged to Isaiah and Betty Hodge, although deeds and other historical records have not confirmed the home’s original ownership. Notably, no maps from the Betty Town era have survived, making it more difficult to determine the property’s early history and original owners with certainty.

Establishment of Aurora, 1860–1880

In 1856, Methodist clergyman Reverend William Henry (W. H.) Cunningham came to Beaufort County from Lenoir County, likely recruiting students for his school, the Lenoir Institute.¹⁷ During his visit, Cunningham learned of the valuable lands and natural resources in southern Beaufort County that lay on the west side of South Creek, then known as South Dividing Creek. Three years later, deed records from 1859 document Cunningham’s land acquisitions, which he purchased from Isaiah Respass. Together, these deeds encompassed over 1,000 acres on the west side of South Creek, including the land of Betty Town.¹⁸ Secondary sources state that Cunningham laid out the town’s gridded pattern of streets following the purchase.¹⁹

¹² William S. Powell, *North Carolina Gazetteer: A Dictionary of Tarheel Places* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 16.

¹³ Leesa Jones, “A town known by many names,” *Washington Daily News*, August 7, 2023.

¹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1810.

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1830. A search through the 1820 U.S. Census did not return any conclusive results for Isaiah Hodge, and the 1840 U.S. Census is missing the South Creek section of Beaufort County where the Hodge family lived.

¹⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1900.

¹⁷ Circa Inc., “Beaufort County Municipalities Survey,” On file, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, 2009, 6.4; Jayne Stanley Silliman, “The Story of Old Aurora,” Collection, Articles on Aurora, Hazel W. Guilford Memorial Library, Aurora, NC. Cunningham has also been found in sources as Cunniggim. For the sake of clarity and consistency throughout the report, the more common spelling of Cunningham is used.

¹⁸ Beaufort County Register of Deeds, Book 32, Pages 264 and 265; Aurora Commercial Historic District (BF0464) Survey File. On file, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, NC. Very little research has been conducted on the Betty Town community; however, census records offer insight into the free Black community in South Creek. The 1850 U.S. Census documents 178 free Black residents in the township, forming a well-established community with multiple extended households, particularly the Moore, Hodges, and Hudnells, living in close proximity. Most adult men were listed as laborers, though some, including Richard Moore, Jordan Moore, George Hagins, and Isaiah Hodge, owned real estate valued between \$90 and \$300. This suggests a kin-based settlement pattern marked by economic independence and social cohesion. By 1860, the free Black population of South Creek had grown to at 232 individuals, with many bearing the same surnames as in 1850, including Moore, Hudnell, Hodge, Godett, and Simpson. While many worked as laborers or farmers, a number held property, including William Moore (age 23) who owned \$400 in real estate and \$300 in personal estate, and Isaac Simpson (age 75) who held \$1,500 in real estate. Further research into the 1870 and subsequent censuses, wills and probate files, land deeds, Freedmen’s Bureau papers, and court records is likely to yield additional insights into the Black community in around Aurora before and after the Civil War.

¹⁹ Aurora Commercial Historic District (BF0464) Survey File. These original plans for Aurora are not known to exist today, though it is suggested that later surveyors, R. T. Bonner and R. R. Bonner, followed Cunningham’s original plans. No primary sources were found to confirm that Cunningham laid out the streets.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

Aurora's first two decades of growth were slow. W. H. Cunningham and Reverend John W. Litchfield founded Aurora United Methodist Church in 1860.²⁰ The congregation first built a frame chapel, which has since been demolished. Aurora United Methodist Church Cemetery lies south of the church and contains roughly a dozen marked burials, the earliest of which dates to 1871. Business directories for the late 1860s suggest that most of the business conducted in Beaufort County occurred in Washington. The only known commercial enterprises near Aurora at that time were two steam-powered grist mills and sawmills, which demonstrate the area's agricultural character. One was operated by the Springer brothers roughly 6 miles to the northeast in the community of South Creek, while the other was operated by a man named Willard in the non-extant community of Durham's Creek roughly 6 miles to the northwest. Ruff & Brothers operated a water-powered grist and sawmill in the community of Blounts Creek, roughly 10 miles northwest of Aurora. The nearest post offices were in South Creek and Blounts Creek.²¹

With the outbreak of the Civil War, Cunningham fled to Raleigh as Union forces occupied the area around Aurora. Upon his return to Beaufort County after the war, he was alleged to have been involved in the forcible removal of Black residents from Betty Town. A 1916 article in the *Washington Progress* claimed that Cunningham "tore down their houses and took possession of their lands."²² With their homes, possessions, and lands destroyed, many of the displaced Black residents reportedly relocated to Ohio. The same article states that in 1885, a few heirs of Isaiah Hodge, then living in Ohio, hired lawyer E. S. Simmons to file suit against the citizens of Aurora. The case supposedly fell through when an unrecorded deed from Isaiah Hodge to Isaiah Respass was discovered.²³ No contemporary accounts of the property dispossession or the legal proceedings involving Hodge's descendants has been found to date.

Aurora's strategic location along the water source played a crucial role in its development. The confluence of the Pamlico and Pungo rivers northeast of Aurora forms the Pamlico Sound, which further provides access to ports along the eastern seaboard. Additionally, the Tar River forms the headwaters of the Pamlico River at Washington and was navigable inland to Greenville and Tarboro. Because of its location between these major bodies of water, South Creek served as a stopping place for both freight and passenger vessels, and many boats used Aurora as their home port. This movement encouraged both settlement and commercial activity in the area.

One of the earliest references to Aurora is in the 1872 *North Carolina Business Directory*, which offers a glimpse into the early development of the town. From the outset, Aurora's economy was dominated by agriculture (corn), lumber (shingles), naval stores, and fish.²⁴ The business directory listed eight farmers in Aurora, including W. H. Cunningham who owned 1,500 acres valued at \$7,000 and S. T. Carrow with 657 acres worth \$4,870.²⁵ Although Aurora's 1872 population is not known for certain, the growing community was serviced by several businesses that included a grocery and liquor store and a general store.²⁶ The town also supported three physicians, while the remaining four doctors in Beaufort County all resided in Washington.²⁷ This concentration of doctors may indicate Aurora's rapid rise to prominence in the region, as it was the only community on the entire peninsula, an area of roughly 600 square miles, with any physicians at all. Three Methodist churches operated in Aurora: Durham's Creek, Aurora, and Campbell's Creek.²⁸ Aurora Academy, presided over by Sarah Hooker, wife of Methodist minister Rev. Dr. Erasmus Roscoe Hooker, was the town's only school.²⁹

The 1874 map of *Pamlico [sic] River, North Carolina* illustrates Aurora's isolation from the surrounding region (Figure 1). With the Gum Swamp and Bay City Pocosin spread across nearly 35,000 acres to the south and southeast, the 1,700-acre Beacham Savanna to the north and northwest, and a 3,000-acre swamp to the west, the small settlement of Aurora was tightly confined and cut off from the rest of peninsula. Though published in 1874, the map provides an excellent illustration of Aurora based on

²⁰ The frame church was replaced with the present-day stone church around 1949. Aurora Commercial Historic District (BF0464) Survey File; Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.5.

²¹ Rev. Levi Branson, *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory 1869* (Raleigh, NC: Branson & Jones, 1869), 18.

²² "The Past And Present History of Aurora, N.C.," *Washington Progress*, June 8, 1916.

²³ "The Past And Present History of Aurora, N.C." *Washington Progress*, June 8, 1916.

²⁴ Rev. Levi Branson, *The North Carolina Business Directory* (Raleigh, NC: J. A. Jones, 1872), 28.

²⁵ Branson, *The North Carolina Business Directory*, 28.

²⁶ Branson, *The North Carolina Business Directory*, 30.

²⁷ Branson, *The North Carolina Business Directory*, 30.

²⁸ Branson, *The North Carolina Business Directory*, 28–30.

²⁹ Branson, *The North Carolina Business Directory*, 30. The location of Aurora Academy is unknown.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

surveys conducted between 1869 and 1873. The map shows the street layout, with present-day Main and Fifth streets. Furthermore, it appears to depict building locations and fields under cultivation.



Figure 1: Detail view of Aurora on the 1874 map of Pamlico River.³⁰

The only extant building representing the 1870s is the Bonner-Cherry House at 207 North Fifth Street (#61, Photo 12). Likely constructed in the 1870s as an Italianate-style residence, the house was later modified and appears to have been converted into a hotel operated by the Cherry family.

Aurora's Slow and Steady Growth, 1880–1907

Aurora was officially incorporated on March 29, 1880.³¹ Land surveyors R. T. and R. R. Bonner followed Cunningham's early gridded plan for the town and expanded upon it.³² Census records from the same year show Aurora's total population of 81 people living in 19 households, including 60 white residents, 10 Black residents, and 11 residents who were identified as mixed-

³⁰ U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, *Pamlico River, North Carolina* (Washington, DC: U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, 1874).

³¹ Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.5.

³² Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.5.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

race.³³ The vast majority of Aurora's residents were involved in agriculture and held occupations such as farmer, farm laborer, blacksmith, and harness maker. T. P. Bonner served as the community's physician, August Eisle was a pattern maker, and John B. Whitehurst operated a sawmill.³⁴ Winnie Jarmin, a Black servant, worked for the W. H. Cunningham household.³⁵

By the time of its formal incorporation in 1880, Aurora had begun to establish itself as a commercial and social hub for residents throughout southern Beaufort County. The town boasted a variety of civic, commercial, social and recreational, and religious organizations, making it a vital center for Richland Township. As a result, Aurora served nearby unincorporated communities, like Idalia, Small, and Harding, which lacked these amenities.

In 1887, residents of Aurora and the surrounding peninsula, frustrated by their geographic isolation from the Beaufort County seat in Washington, advocated for the creation of a new county with Aurora as its center.³⁶ A newspaper article from February 1887 describes the efforts of Dr. A. B. Chapin, Major T. G. Sparrow, T. F. Mayhew, and J. B. Bonner to establish "Richlands County" to avoid having to ride 30 or 40 miles over "bad roads to transact a few minutes of business."³⁷ The proposal reflected a desire for more direct access to government services and infrastructure. Despite gaining some attention, the effort ultimately failed in February 1888, and the region remained part of Beaufort County.³⁸

Census records, business directories, and newspapers from the time illustrate Aurora's increasingly diversified economy. Agricultural remained a major part of Aurora's economy during this period. Farmers in and around the community cultivated cotton, rice, and corn. Due to the fine, sandy loam and high mineral content of the Richland Township's soils, potatoes became the most grown crop in the township, making the area a top producer of potatoes in the state.³⁹ Between 1900 and 1910, North Carolina's potato production increased by 26 percent, due in part to the substantial number of potatoes harvested in Richland Township.⁴⁰

Fishing and seafood processing in Aurora was fueled by South Creek and other nearby water sources. South Creek was also used for shipping crops and other goods to larger markets, including Washington. Around the turn of the twentieth century, several of Aurora's residents owned boats. Bryan Tripp Bonner owned the *Cobb* and the *Virginia Dare*, which were both two-masted schooners used for transporting goods and fishing.⁴¹ The Litchfield family owned and operated the *Dependence*, which they used to move groceries and farm supplies between Aurora and Washington. The Litchfields also owned a tug called *Lola*.⁴² Newspapers from the time list ferry schedules, which ran to and from Washington, as well as Ocracoke.⁴³ The *Hatteras*, a passenger steamer, was one of the first to carry passengers between Aurora and Washington.⁴⁴

Despite utilizing waterways for the transportation of goods and people, Aurora's relative isolation from larger markets hampered its economic and population growth. Water routes were subject to seasonal weather conditions and the inefficiencies of indirect overland connections made treks slow and unpredictable. Likewise, the overland routes were hindered by limited infrastructure and wet conditions, especially during rainy weather. Without a reliable way to transport goods and people, Aurora remained at a disadvantage compared to towns like Washington. Rumblings in newspapers from the 1880s suggested a railroad line might finally link Aurora to larger markets, fueling hopes for economic expansion, but it was not until 1907 that these aspirations materialized.

³³ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1880.

³⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1880.

³⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1880.

³⁶ "The County of Richlands," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), February 2, 1887.

³⁷ "The County of Richlands," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), February 2, 1887.

³⁸ "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), February 28, 1888.

³⁹ Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.6.

⁴⁰ Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.6.

⁴¹ Silliman, "The Story of Old Aurora," Ursula Fogleman Loy and Pauline Worthy, *Washington and the Pamlico* (Washington, NC: Beaufort County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 490.

⁴² Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.8.

⁴³ "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), June 4, 1885; "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), August 23, 1885.

⁴⁴ "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), June 4, 1885; "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), August 23, 1885.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

By 1884, the number of merchants and tradesmen in Aurora increased dramatically from 2 in 1872 to 11. They included John B. Bonner's general store, John W. Chapin's drug store, and a cattle dealer named Jolly Selby.⁴⁵ Newspaper articles also detail the variety of stores and commercial enterprises that opened in Aurora. In 1885, William A. Harvey opened one of Aurora's first hotels in addition to the livery stable he operated.⁴⁶ In 1886, Sallie Ham Thompson opened a hotel and livery stable, which was built by her son, Benjamin H. Thompson.⁴⁷ William H. Gaskins built an ice house, which was likely located near the grocery store he operated.⁴⁸ Benjamin H. Thompson built several stores during this period, including the two-story brick structure at 400 Main Street (#13), which now houses a portion of the Aurora Fossil Museum.⁴⁹ Mary Snell, along with a Mrs. Weisiger, opened a millinery.⁵⁰

Manufacturing in Aurora increased between 1890 and 1900. The town boasted a lumber plant, barrel factory, and cotton gin owned by the J. B. Whitehurst Company; William H. Gaskins continued his work as an ice dealer; and Dixon & Bonner and F. F. Cherry were tobacco dealers.⁵¹ While no early maps of Aurora show the locations of manufacturing entities, it is likely that they were situated east of Second Street along the banks of South Creek. To serve the growing population and businesses of the community, the Bank of Aurora opened its doors in 1903.⁵²

The remarkable expansion and success in Aurora's formative years instilled in residents the hope for future prosperity. As the author of one newspaper stated in 1887, "We have a banker and broker, a jeweler and a milliner, a coach shop and two blacksmiths and several carpenters. We are coming to the front."⁵³ By 1890, Aurora's population grew to 150 people, an 85 percent increase from 1880, making it the third largest town in Beaufort County behind Washington and Pantego.⁵⁴ Sixteen merchants and tradesman operated in Aurora; this included 9 general stores, 3 grocers, 2 carpenters, 1 drug store, and 1 saloon.⁵⁵ The town even supported a newspaper called the *Progressive Age* which ran between 1893 and 1896.⁵⁶ As Aurora modernized into the turn of the twentieth century, telephone wires were installed from Aurora to the Pamlico County line beginning in 1896.⁵⁷

As the twentieth century dawned, Aurora's population growth continued. According to the 1900 census, the population totaled 312 people, including 195 white residents and 117 Black residents, together representing 75 households.⁵⁸ Aurora's town government included a mayor, clerk, treasurer, tax collector, chief of police, a Board of Aldermen, and a school committee.⁵⁹

Aurora's growing population prompted the opening of Aurora Academy, a private school for white children led by principal R. T. Bonner, in the 1880s.⁶⁰ A public school opened in 1896 and operated alongside Aurora Academy until the latter closed in the late 1890s.⁶¹ In 1905, construction began on a graded school for white children, located on Sixth Street at the west end of town.

⁴⁵ Rev. Levi Branson, *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory for 1884* (Raleigh, NC: Levi Branson, 1884), 132.

⁴⁶ "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), May 28, 1885.

⁴⁷ "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), October 19, 1886; "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), December 14, 1886.

⁴⁸ "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), July 14, 1885. Based on available information, it is believed that Gaskins' ice house and grocery store are non-extant.

⁴⁹ "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), January 26, 1886.

⁵⁰ "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), May 12, 1886. Newspapers also documented the activities of Black residents, though much more sparingly. In 1885, the Black citizens of Aurora formed their own fire company called Excelsior. A Black-owned business, operated by men named Donaldson, Ham, and Moore, opened in the same year and sold "oysters, beef, ham, and cabbage." "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), May 28, 1885; "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), November 10, 1885.

⁵¹ The News and Observer, *The North Carolina Yearbook 1902*, 83–84.

⁵² This building is believed to no longer exist.

⁵³ "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), August 23, 1887.

⁵⁴ Rev. Levi Branson, *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory 1890* (Raleigh, NC: Levi Branson, 1890), 95.

⁵⁵ Branson, *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory 1890*, 95.

⁵⁶ Aurora Commercial Historic District (BF0464) Survey File. No copies of the *Progressive Age* are known to exist.

⁵⁷ "Aurora Articles," *The Washington Gazette* (Washington, NC), April 30, 1896.

⁵⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1900.

⁵⁹ The News and Observer, *The North Carolina Yearbook 1902* (Raleigh, NC: The News and Observer, 1902), 83–84.

⁶⁰ "Aurora Academy," *New Berne Weekly Journal*, March 1, 1888.

⁶¹ "Aurora Articles," *The Washington Gazette* (Washington, NC), March 19, 1896; "Aurora Articles," *The Washington Gazette* (Washington, NC), October 1, 1896.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

A newspaper article touted the new school as a “modern up-to-date and commodious structure, furnished with the latest school apparatus.”⁶² Around 1915, another school building was constructed, which was demolished.⁶³ In 1916, Beaufort County built a frame school for Aurora’s Black children; this building has also been demolished, and its original location remains unknown.⁶⁴

Churches in Aurora served as both spiritual and social hubs, allowing for people to gather for worship, events, and socializing. The Aurora United Methodist Church continued to serve Aurora residents as the first established congregation. A second congregation, the Church of the Holy Cross, was an Episcopal organization founded in the 1880s. J. B. Bryan donated a lot of land in the 600 block of Main Street for the construction of a church.⁶⁵ The original chapel was completed in 1886.⁶⁶ The congregation built the present-day, Gothic Revival-style church at 640 Main Street (#28) in 1917, and the chapel was subsequently moved and converted into a parish house.⁶⁷ The parish house was replaced in 1932 with the existing brick building west of the chapel. A 1935 breezeway connects the 1917 chapel with the 1932 parish house.⁶⁸

Reverend Braxton Cragg founded a Baptist congregation in Aurora in 1898.⁶⁹ In 1902, the congregation erected a non-extant frame church at the southeast corner of Main and Second streets on land donated by A. B. and Lizzie M. Chapin.⁷⁰

Many of Aurora’s residents were farmers, yet an increasing number of individuals had occupations such as merchant, shop owner, grocer, horse dealer, and hotel operator.⁷¹ W. W. Moore operated a barbershop; John M. Litchfield, a hotel; Samuel T. Selby, a butcher shop; W. H. Hall, an insurance agency; and William T. Bryan, the telephone exchange.⁷² Women were employed as teachers, clerks, dressmakers, “sales ladies,” midwives, and domestic servants. Many of these in-town jobs encouraged individuals to live in town in order to be closer to their places of employment, contributing to a growing demand for local housing. As a result, a substantial amount of residential construction took place between 1880 and 1907.

Newspapers encouraged people to move to Aurora, with one anonymous author stating that “if you know of anyone enquiring for rich lands or a rapidly growing town be sure and send them to Aurora.”⁷³ Demand for housing caused town officials to open additional streets in order to accommodate the construction of houses in 1888.⁷⁴ Whether these additional streets were included in the original plat or created through an entirely new one remains unclear. One newspaper article stated that the “carpenters

⁶² “Aurora Items,” *Washington Progress* (Washington, NC), May 25, 1905.

⁶³ Insurance Company of North America, “Beaufort County Public School Insurance Report, 1935,” On file, George H. and Laura E. Brown Library Local History/Genealogy Room, Washington, NC.

⁶⁴ Circa, Inc., “Beaufort County Municipalities Survey,” 6.7.

⁶⁵ Circa, Inc., “Beaufort County Municipalities Survey,” 6.9.

⁶⁶ “Aurora Items,” *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), April 6, 1886.

⁶⁷ Circa, Inc., “Beaufort County Municipalities Survey,” 6.9.

⁶⁸ Circa, Inc., “Beaufort County Municipalities Survey,” 6.9.

⁶⁹ Crestena Oakley, “A Brief History of the Town of Aurora,” Collection, Articles on Aurora, Hazel W. Guilford Memorial Library, Aurora, NC.

⁷⁰ Beaufort County Register of Deeds, Book 112, Page 204; “Aurora Baptist Church Notes Membership Growth,” *Washington Daily News* (Washington, NC), August 19, 1952. After 1975, the church building was sold to and used by Phillips Chapel Methodist Church. In 2008, the building was condemned and demolished and the lot is vacant. Beaufort County Register of Deeds, Book 722, Page 724. Circa, Inc., Phillip Chapel AME Zion Church (BF1015) Survey File. On file, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, NC. Aurora’s Black residents were served by at least two congregations. Saint Judes was an African American Episcopal congregation that was established around the turn of the century. The church was likely built around 1915, and though vacant, the building remains at the terminus of North Fifth Street and lies outside of the boundary for the Aurora Commercial Historic District. “Aurora Articles,” *The Washington Gazette* (Washington, NC), October 24, 1895. St. Paul AME Zion was established in 1903. The congregation first worshipped in a “little wooden hut on a small plot of land” on the “former Colored Folk Street” (now North Fifth Street) “that was donated to black people by the white people in town.” In the 1920s, the original church building was destroyed by a storm, and the congregation purchased a lot on Railroad Street where they erected a frame church. The second church building suffered the same fate as the first, and the present-day church, constructed of concrete block, was completed in 1966. This building lies outside the Aurora Commercial Historic District. The congregation remains active. St. Paul AME Zion Church, “History,” St. Paul AME Zion Church, accessed April 2024, <https://jbdesign4u7.wixsite.com/stpauls/history-of-st-paul>.

⁷¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1900.

⁷² The News and Observer, *The North Carolina Yearbook 1902*, 83–84.

⁷³ “Aurora Items,” *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), May 28, 1885.

⁷⁴ “Aurora Items,” *New Berne Weekly Journal*, February 16, 1888.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

are so busy that we can't get an old gate hung on new hinges."⁷⁵ There were "no vacant dwellings in...town and more than one family in some of them."⁷⁶ Thomas Weisiger, a local builder, constructed many of Aurora's early houses and was kept busy as growth continued.⁷⁷

Early residential development concentrated in areas adjacent to Aurora's commercial corridor.⁷⁸ As a result of a growing and successful economy rooted in agriculture and transportation channels, merchants and well-to-do residents were able to build fine houses, such as the Charles G. and Jessie Midyette House at 415 North Sixth Street (#69, Photo 13), which stands as a high-style and intact example of a Queen Anne dwelling constructed around the turn of the century. Also constructed around 1900, the house at 610 Main Street (#27), though slightly altered, is an example of the Shingle style. Several examples of finely finished I-houses further demonstrate Aurora's growth during the period. The I-house at 698 Middle Street (#49) was built around 1900 and features its original windows and Doric porch columns.

Aurora's Era of Prosperity, 1908–1920

Because of Aurora's isolated location, transportation networks prior to the arrival of the railroad were limited to steamboats on the Pamlico River and a network of poor overland routes, both of which could be hampered by seasonal weather conditions. Despite the community's early desire for a rail connection, the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad (A.C.L.) only arrived in 1908. The A.C.L. passed through Aurora as it ran between Washington and its terminus at Vandemere in Pamlico County (Figure 2).⁷⁹ The railroad had two passenger cars, a baggage car, and freight cars that transported Aurora's agricultural and timber products to larger markets.⁸⁰

In 1910, the population totaled 440 citizens, including 255 white residents, 114 Black residents, and 71 mixed-race residents.⁸¹ The various races within Aurora tended to live along the same streets; however, higher concentrations of Black and mixed-race residents lived along Pearl, Second, and South streets (now North Fifth Street).

Aurora's development in the 1910s is illustrated in the 1914 *Rural Delivery Map* produced by the United States Postal Service (Figure 3). Centered on Main Street, Aurora's commercial corridor continued to expand. In 1910, there were 15 general stores, 3 livery stables, and a hardware store.⁸² The town's train depot was rebuilt in 1910 after the first one burned.⁸³ The Cherry Hotel at 499 Main Street (#23, Photo 4), owned by F. C. Cherry, was completed by architect and builder Ira C. Congleton of Washington in 1914.⁸⁴ The Cherry Hotel, as well as the McWilliams Hotel on Fourth Street (gone), were built to serve businessmen as well as tourists from the north who came down to hunt deer, ducks, geese, and turkey in the fall and winter.⁸⁵ In a testament to Aurora's growth and influence throughout the area, the Aurora Fair was held on a vacant lot south of the Aurora Methodist Church, outside of the Aurora Historic District boundary, for the first time in 1909.⁸⁶ From the outset, the

⁷⁵ "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), November 3, 1885.

⁷⁶ "Aurora Items," *Washington Progress* (Washington, NC), October 29, 1889.

⁷⁷ "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), July 1, 1885.

⁷⁸ Census records indicate that Black and white residents lived amongst one another and were not segregated. However, there were streets with higher concentrations of Black residents, including Pearl and Second streets. In a history of the St. Paul AME Zion Church, located at 410 Railroad Street and outside of the Aurora Historic District, the north end of Fifth Street was formerly known as "Colored Folks Street."; U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1910; St. Paul AME Zion Church, "History."

⁷⁹ Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.8.

⁸⁰ Aurora Commercial Historic District (BF0464) Survey File; Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.8.

⁸¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1910.

⁸² The News and Observer, *The North Carolina Year Book and Business Directory 1910* (Raleigh, NC: The News and Observer, 1910), 86–90.

⁸³ "Aurora Depot Burned," *The News & Observer* (Raleigh, NC), May 5, 1910.

⁸⁴ "Aurora Depot Burned," *The News & Observer* (Raleigh, NC), May 5, 1910.

⁸⁵ Aurora Commercial Historic District (BF0464) Survey File; Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.6.

⁸⁶ "Aurora Holds Second Agricultural Fair and Corn Show," *Washington Daily News* (Washington, NC), November 12, 1910; Louis Van Camp, *Images of America: Beaufort County, North Carolina* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2000), 80.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

fair drew in visitors from all over Beaufort County, as well as Pamlico, Craven, and Pitt counties.⁸⁷ Just six years after its inception, the Aurora Fair brought in 6,000 visitors.⁸⁸

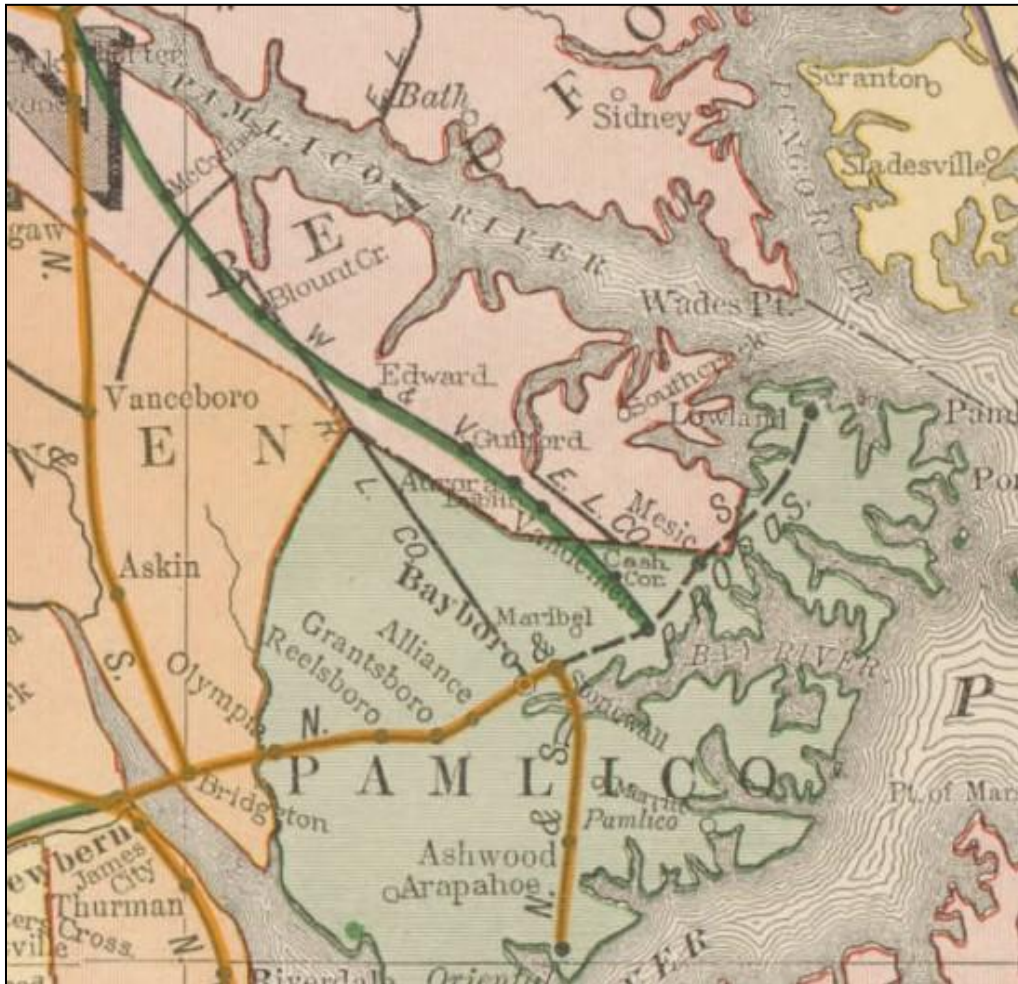


Figure 2: The first railroad map to show the stop in Aurora from 1909.⁸⁹

Relatively few houses constructed during this period exhibit the high styles seen around the turn of the twentieth century. The Colonial Revival-style Frank Bonner House at 302 Main Street (#33) was constructed in 1914, and around the same time, the American Foursquare house at 765 Main Street was constructed. Other houses constructed during this period lacked a finite style, and were single pile, side-gabled houses like the George Williamson House at 801 Main Street (#36) and the house at 564 Third Street (#53). The diversity of house sizes and forms constructed between 1908 to 1920 reflects the socioeconomic conditions of the people working in town.

⁸⁷ "Aurora Holds Second Agricultural Fair and Corn Show," *Washington Daily News* (Washington, NC), November 12, 1910; Van Camp, *Images of America*, 80.

⁸⁸ "Over 6,000 Persons Attended The Fair At Aurora Yesterday," *Washington Daily News* (Washington, NC), November 12, 1915.

⁸⁹ Henry C. Brown, *Railroad map of North Carolina, 1909* (Chicago, IL: Rand McNally and Company, 1909).

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

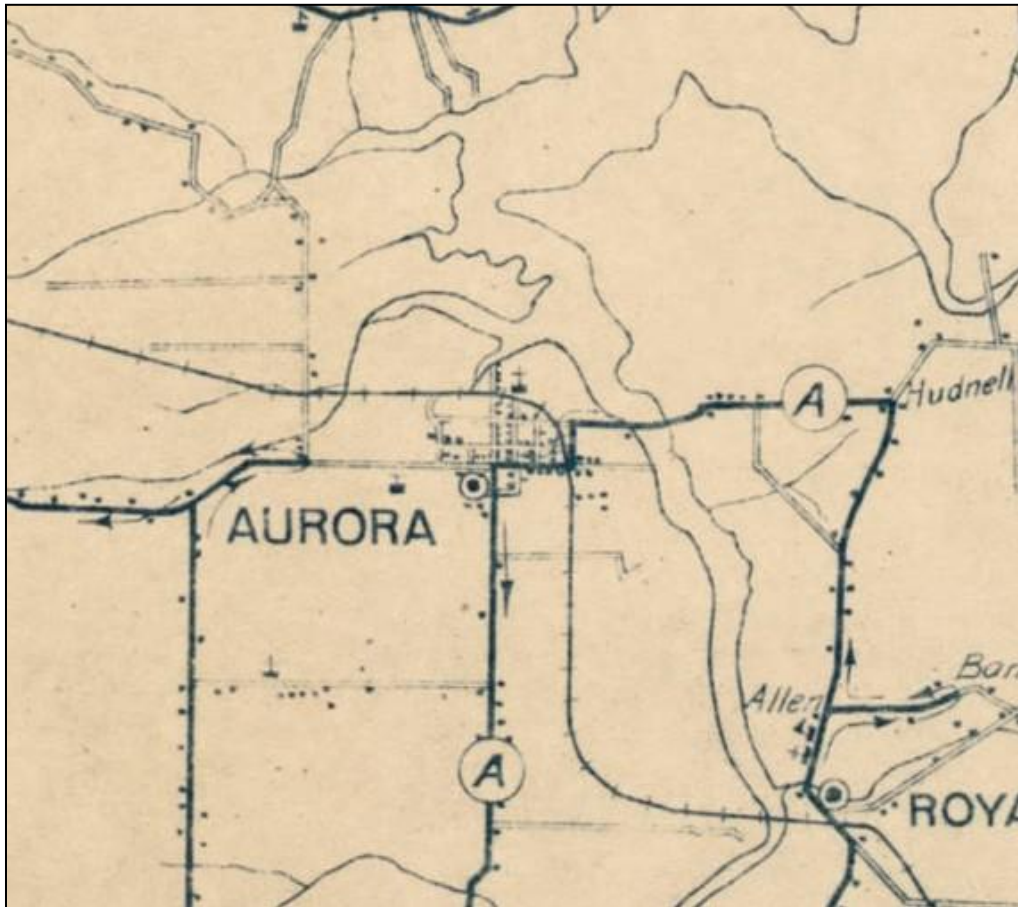


Figure 3: The 1914 Rural Delivery Map created by the United States Postal Service showing Aurora and its growth.⁹⁰

Aurora in Flux, 1920–1955

Beginning in the 1920s and into the 1930s, Aurora's population fluctuated. Aurora's total population was 523 in 1920, including 321 white residents and 202 Black residents.⁹¹ By 1930 the population decreased by 18 percent to 429, including 287 white residents and 142 Black residents.⁹² Notably, Aurora lost 30 percent of its Black population, likely in part due to the Great Migration as many Black people moved from the American South to the Northeast, Midwest, and Western states.⁹³ Both the 1920 and 1930 censuses recorded most individuals involved in agriculture. However, a wide range of occupations were listed in the censuses, including an automobile salesman, a fire insurance agent, cooks for private families, carpenters, telephone operators, and electrical workers.⁹⁴ The population rebounded between 1930 and 1940. According to the 1940 U.S. census, Aurora's population increased slightly to 492.⁹⁵ By 1950, the population was the highest it had ever been at 525 residents.⁹⁶

Aurora's economy primarily relied upon agriculture through the 1950s. Agricultural goods, primarily Irish potatoes, as well as lumber and fish, were shipped to larger markets at Washington and New Bern through the use of boats along South Creek and

⁹⁰ United States Post Office Department, *Rural delivery routes, Beaufort County, NC* (Washington, DC: United States Post Office Department, 1914).

⁹¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1920.

⁹² U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1930.

⁹³ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1920; U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1930.

⁹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1920; U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1930.

⁹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1940.

⁹⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1940; U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1950.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

the A.C.L. rail line. During the 1930s, Esso-Standard and Sinclair Oil installed docks on South Creek at Aurora, furthering Aurora's local prominence.⁹⁷

In the mid-twentieth century, several shifts in agriculture had a major impact on the community. The first was the trend toward mechanized farming, which replaced manual labor. Until the twentieth century, most farms relied heavily upon human and animal labor to complete tasks. In 1900, nearly 21.6 million animals were used for labor on farms across the United States.⁹⁸ By 1930, that number dropped to 18.7 million, while the number of tractors totaled 920,000.⁹⁹ The shift toward mechanization accelerated after World War II, with the number of tractors reaching 2.4 million by 1945.¹⁰⁰

At the same time, the United States potato consumption declined in the 1940s, and competition from potato farmers in California and Idaho increased.¹⁰¹ Local potatoes did not ship well due to a blight caused by a soil deficiency.¹⁰² Around the same time, corn and cotton markets also declined.¹⁰³ Since potatoes, cotton, and corn had been the mainstays of Aurora's economy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the declining demand and outside competition dampened a once hot market, adversely affecting Aurora's farmers.

As farms were becoming increasingly mechanized, the rise of truck farming also impacted farmers in Aurora. Truck farming refers to the commercial production of fruit and vegetables for market, typically involving transportation of these perishable goods over short distances to nearby towns or cities. While truck farming granted farmers access to larger markets, it also intensified competition. Oftentimes large-scale operations could lower costs, therefore, undercutting the smaller-scale farmers. Furthering its effect on Aurora, the rise of truck farming negatively impacted the railroad.

In the 1940s, the A.C.L. tracks were taken up, ending rail service between Washington and Vandemere in Pamlico County and severing Aurora's connection to larger markets.¹⁰⁴ This loss marked a major shift in transportation for the town as rail, once essential to moving people and goods, had become increasingly obsolete. The rise of automobile travel, coupled with significant improvements to roads and bridges, contributed to the railroad's decline on the peninsula. Transportation in and around Aurora was significantly transformed during the 1930s and 1940s. NC 33, which connects Chocowinity and Aurora, was completed after 1931, and by the late 1940s, traffic had shifted away from Main Street to a new southern corridor, bypassing the town's commercial center.¹⁰⁵ Around the same time, the wood bridge that crossed South Creek at the eastern end of Main Street in Aurora was replaced with a concrete bridge linked to NC 33, further facilitating automobile travel and integrating Aurora into the growing highway network.¹⁰⁶

New construction in Aurora continued steadily from 1920 to 1955, though not at the same pace as in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Figure 4). New commercial buildings were erected along Main Street in order to serve the needs of those living in town and those in more rural areas. A series of three buildings were built between 1930 and 1945 (456, 462, and 468 Main Street; #17, 18, and 19). The original tenants of two of the buildings are known, including Thompson's Feed Store (462 Main Street; #18) and Warren's Barber Shop (468 Main Street; #19) (Photo 5). Transportation-related buildings were constructed during this time, including the Aurora Bus Station at 470 Fourth Street (#59) and two service stations, with one at 395 Main Street (now part of the Aurora Fossil Museum, #11, Photo 6) and the other at 298 Main Street (#6). The Brothers Lodge opened at 250 Main Street in 1940 (#3). The business started as a grocery store and fishing supply store and gradually evolved into a full-time restaurant with lodging accommodations for tourists.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁷ Loy and Worthy, *Washington and the Pamlico*, 490–491.

⁹⁸ Carolyn Dimitri, Anne Effland, and Neilson Conklin, "The 20th Century Transformation of U.S. Agriculture and Farm Policy," Economic Information Bulletin Number 3, Economic Research Service, United States Department of Agriculture, 2005.

⁹⁹ Dimitri, "The 20th Century Transformation of U.S. Agriculture and Farm Policy."

¹⁰⁰ Dimitri, "The 20th Century Transformation of U.S. Agriculture and Farm Policy."

¹⁰¹ Loy and Worthy, *Washington and the Pamlico*, 492; Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.9.

¹⁰² Loy and Worthy, *Washington and the Pamlico*, 491.

¹⁰³ Loy and Worthy, *Washington and the Pamlico*, 492.

¹⁰⁴ Loy and Worthy, *Washington and the Pamlico*, 492.

¹⁰⁵ Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.8.

¹⁰⁶ Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.8.

¹⁰⁷ "Aurora Landmark Sold," *The Pamlico News*, November 13, 1980.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State



Figure 4: This 1938 aerial photograph is the first of its kind to show Aurora's development.¹⁰⁸

Civic construction occurred during this period as well with the Aurora Jail (590 North Fifth Street, #66, Photo 7), built in 1939 using funds and labor from the Works Progress Administration.¹⁰⁹ In 1942, a fire destroyed three businesses and a residence along Main Street. According to a newspaper article, the fire started in Lucille Dudley's dry goods store and spread to the J. B. Bryan and Son merchandise store, a shoe shop operated by J. H. Fagan, and to Annie Snell's two-story house. The fire also heavily damaged the Aurora Hardware Company building. Though slow to respond to the tragedy, possibly due World War II, the town of Aurora eventually built a town hall with an attached fire department (436 Fourth Street, #54, Photo 8) in 1948.¹¹⁰ The town hall served as a gathering place for the community and housed a health center. One fire truck served the area, which was the "only motored method of fighting fire."¹¹¹

As commercial and civic structures were being built, many houses in Aurora were constructed during this time. Approximately 42 houses were built between 1920 and 1955, most of which were either bungalows or Minimal Traditional-style dwellings. The continued construction of houses during the period demonstrates the modest growth Aurora experienced between 1920 and 1950, due to families leaving farms and moving into town.

The community remained committed to education throughout the 1920s to the 1950s. In 1928, a two-story, brick Colonial Revival-style high school for white students was erected on the large tract of land north of Middle Street between NC 306 and

¹⁰⁸ United States Department of Agriculture, *Aerial Photograph, 1938*, accessed April 2024, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/north-carolina-state-archives/46796525855/in/album-72157680104684838>.

¹⁰⁹ Aurora Commercial Historic District (BF0464) Survey File.

¹¹⁰ Dr. John B. Bonner, "Aurora Is Trading Center For Richland Township Area," *Washington Daily News* (Washington, NC), August 17, 1951; Aurora Planning Board and North Carolina Division of Community Planning, *Community Facilities Plan & Public Improvements Program* (Aurora, NC: Aurora Planning Board, 1968), 12.

¹¹¹ Bonner, "Aurora Is Trading Center for Richland Township Area"; Aurora Planning Board and North Carolina Division of Community Planning, *Community Facilities Plan & Public Improvements Program*, 12.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

Seventh Street.¹¹² It was built to accommodate the consolidated rural schools in the area, likely replaced 1915 school building, and served both elementary and high school students, despite being named Aurora High School.¹¹³

As Aurora moved into the second half of the twentieth century, the population began to decrease, as is evidenced by the 1960 U.S. census that recorded 449 residents.¹¹⁴ In 1950, the Bank of Aurora was transferred to Guaranty Bank and Trust Company of Greenville, North Carolina.¹¹⁵ The acquisition of the Bank of Aurora foreshadowed the gradual decline Aurora would experience in the latter half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century.

Phosphate in Aurora, 1955–1975

While Aurora could not rival the economic scale of larger regional municipalities like Washington and New Bern, it remained an important local hub and market center for the rural communities of southern Beaufort County's peninsula. However, despite the discovery of phosphate, the town experienced a steady decline in population and economic growth between 1955 and 1975.

Phosphate, a mineral used in making fertilizer and animal feed, was discovered near Aurora in the late 1950s. Beaufort County is situated on the Albemarle Embayment, which covers the northeastern part of the state. This embayment contains the fossilized remains of reptiles, fish, and sea mammals. The discovery of phosphate brought hope to Aurora as its population began to drop. In a 1963 newspaper article, town officials and representatives of TexasGulf, Inc. stated that "phosphate reserves here spell well for the development of the industry," and predicted that "the town has got to go," with the expectation that Aurora would "join the ranks of growing towns in the nation."¹¹⁶

In the 1960s, TexasGulf, Inc. began purchasing land near Aurora for an open-pit mining operation. The company offered farmers above market value for their lands. Many farmers accepted the deal as making a livelihood in agriculture was becoming increasingly difficult as markets shifted to large-scale farming operations. In 1964, TexasGulf, Inc. officially opened its phosphate mining and refining operation outside of Aurora. The company even re-laid new tracks along the former A.C.L. route to move the mined phosphate.

Aurora residents hoped that the phosphate mine would boost industry and reverse Aurora's economic decline. Chapin Acres, a small subdivision that lies southwest of downtown, was laid out in 1965 from Chapin family lands. When Aurora failed to see significant growth after the opening of the mine in 1964, North Carolina State of the University of North Carolina at Raleigh's (now North Carolina State University) School of Design came to work with town officials and residents to figure out a path for further development (Figure 5).¹¹⁷

Despite the best efforts of town officials and residents, Aurora never grew as anticipated. There was no major increase in population and construction continued to slow along with the economy. The mine continues to be the largest taxpayer and employer in Beaufort County, though most upper-level managers and professionals choose to live in Washington and New Bern. Today, the mine is operated by Nutrien of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.¹¹⁸ The Aurora mine is one of the largest phosphate mines in the United States.

¹¹² "Flood Delay Opening of Aurora High School," *The News and Observer* (Raleigh, NC), October 17, 1928; Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.7. The nearest Rosenwald School to serve the area's Black children was the Ware Creek School, more than 10 miles to the northwest in the vicinity of Blounts Creek.

¹¹³ "The ups and downs of the Aurora schools," *The Pamlico News*, May 15, 1991. Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.7.

¹¹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1960.

¹¹⁵ "FDIC Will Advance Funds For Transfer Of Bank Of Aurora," *Washington Daily News* (Washington, NC), July 11, 1950.

¹¹⁶ "Aurora Welcomes Texas Gulf People," *Washington Daily News* (Washington NC), June 8, 1963.

¹¹⁷ Ernie Wood, "Aurora Mines Her Future," *The News and Observer* (Raleigh, NC), September 14, 1975.

¹¹⁸ Nutrien was formed through the result of PotashCorp (PCS Phosphate) and Agrium, both Canadian companies.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State



Figure 5: A photograph of Aurora's commercial corridor from 1966, looking east down Main Street from its intersection with North Fifth Street.¹¹⁹

Aurora Today, 1975–Present

Discoveries made during phosphate mining became the foundation for the Aurora Fossil Museum. Established in 1976, the museum educates visitors about geology, paleontology, and the prehistoric history of coastal North Carolina. Its extensive collection includes Megalodon teeth, whale vertebrae, shark teeth, corals, and shells, as well as geological exhibits detailing prehistoric marine environments. Many of the specimens come from the nearby Nutrien mine, which has yielded fossils dating from the Miocene and Pliocene epochs (about 5 to 23 million years ago). Today, the museum plays a key role in education and tourism in Beaufort County and hosts the annual Aurora Fossil Festival, which draws large crowds.

Since 1990, Aurora's population has declined by approximately 10 percent each decade.¹²⁰ The town has also lost several historic structures, including four commercial buildings, such as the Aurora Theater, which were demolished in 1992 as part of a revitalization effort.¹²¹ Further destruction of Aurora occurred in August 2011 with the landfall of Hurricane Irene. The hurricane dropped about 14 to 15 inches of rain on the town and spawned several tornadoes. Additional damage was done in September 2018 by Hurricane Florence.

In recent years, the community has renewed its focus on preservation and revitalization of the historic downtown core. The Aurora Fossil Museum has expanded its presence, and Nutrien has expressed interest in rehabilitating vacant commercial buildings.

¹¹⁹ *Daily Reflector, Aurora Downtown*, September 1966, photograph, East Carolina University Digital Collections, <https://digital.lib.ecu.edu/9063>.

¹²⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1990; U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 2000; U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 2020.

¹²¹ Tracy D. Boyd, "Old Buildings Take Tumble In Aurora's Downtown Project," *Washington Daily News* (Washington, NC), December 26, 1992.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

Summary

Aurora is significant under Criterion A: Commerce for its role as a regional hub for southern Beaufort County. Relatively isolated on a peninsula and far from Beaufort County's seat at Washington, Aurora's central location in Richland Township and its access to South Creek and the Pamlico River enabled it to become a hub not only for local farmers and residents, but for those living in unincorporated communities. Aurora developed in the late nineteenth century despite lacking a railroad connection; commerce centered on a rough network of roads and bridges, as well as moving goods on boats. By the arrival of the A.C.L. in 1908, Aurora had already grown substantially. While other communities developed along the new A.C.L., Aurora's previous development and central location enabled it to surpass other nearby communities and rise to a regional hub through the first half of the twentieth century. Today, Aurora retains a substantial concentration of commercial, residential, religious, and civic resources that embody its historic associations.

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

Aurora's architecture is locally significant as a distinct entity with buildings dating from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, reflecting the town's prominence as a commercial hub for local farmers and those residing in the surrounding unincorporated communities. Isolated on a peninsula, Aurora stands apart from other communities in southern Beaufort County. Nearby unincorporated communities, such as Small and Bonneron, contain only a handful of buildings, primarily houses, with occasional small roadside stores and churches. Edward, located 4.5 miles west of Aurora, features a modest concentration of historic residences along Main Street and a small commercial presence, including three stores and a beauty parlor, most of which have simple frame structures with front- or side-gabled forms.

In contrast, Aurora developed as a more substantial town, due in part to its location along South Creek. It grew to serve the broader southern Beaufort County region, which was geographically isolated from the county seat at Washington and the next largest town, Chocowinity. Aurora's diverse collection of residences and commercial, civic, and church buildings underscore its historical role as a vital center of commerce and community life.

Commercial and Civic Architecture

Aurora's commercial architecture is concentrated along the north and south sides of Main Street, extending from Second Street to North Sixth Street. These buildings were erected between 1886 and 1974, with the majority built between 1886 and 1950. Following late nineteenth-century development patterns, the earliest commercial buildings in Aurora were likely one- or two-story frame structures clad with weatherboard, though none have survived. As business flourished, the earlier frame buildings were replaced with fire-resistant brick structures that reflected growing financial prosperity. This pattern of development was common throughout eastern North Carolina, including larger towns like Washington. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, brick was widely encouraged for commercial construction due to its fire resistance, durability, and versatility. Aurora's commercial buildings, constructed primarily of brick or concrete block, exhibit vernacular designs with limited architectural detailing in the form of brick corbelling. The commercial buildings generally have rectangular footprints, flat roofs concealed behind stepped parapets, recessed storefronts, and large display windows.

The oldest surviving commercial building in the Aurora Historic District is the 1886 B. H. Thompson Store at 400 Main Street (#13, Photo 3). This austere two-story building is constructed of brick laid in a common bond. Although its original front door has been replaced, the flanking wood storefront windows remain intact. The façade features decorative brickwork across the first story, a brick cornice, and concrete windowsills.

The most prominent stretch of commercial buildings is located east of Main Street's intersection with North Fifth Street. These two-story brick buildings line both sides of Main Street, with the Aurora Hardware Company Building on the north side. Constructed in 1926, this building features common bond brickwork, a brick cornice, and corner pilasters. While the storefronts have been altered, they retain their original form and second-story window openings. Opposite the Aurora Hardware Company Building, the buildings at 491, 495, and 499 Main Street line the south side of Main Street (Photo 4). The Cherry Hotel (#23), completed in 1914, stands out for its decorative brickwork, including a belt course separating the first and second stories, brick jack arches above the second-story windows, and a second-story belt course that spans the façade and follows the curve of the

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

arched windows. The adjacent buildings at 491 and 495 Main Street (#20, #21) contain three storefronts divided by pilasters, with parapets adorned with clinker bricks arranged at a 45-degree angle to create diamond-shaped accents.

A group of three buildings at 456, 462, and 468 Main Street illustrates the last phase of historic commercial construction trends from the 1930s through the 1940s (Photo 5). Anchoring this group is Thompson's Feed Store (462 Main Street; #18), a one-story brick structure with a tripartite façade, brick pilasters at the corners, and a brick cornice crowing the façade. To the east stands Warren's Barber Shop (456 Main Street; #17), constructed of concrete block and clad in brick laid in a running bond. A distinctive sign panel above the storefront features a "W" formed of brick stretchers, referencing its original owner and operator, Calvin D. Warren.

Similar in design to Aurora's commercial architecture, the town's civic buildings are one-story, brick-faced structures. The former Aurora Town Hall and Police Station (436 Fourth Street, #54) and the Aurora Municipal Complex (458–460 Fourth Street, #55) were built by the town in 1948 (Photo 8). These buildings, which share a firewall, are constructed of concrete block and the façades are clad with brick laid in a running bond. Their lack of architectural detailing reflects their utilitarian role in the community. In contrast, the Aurora Jail (590 North Fifth Street, #66, Photo 7), built by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), exhibits limited classical architectural influences. Capped by a metal-clad hipped roof, the brick jail features a symmetrical exterior with a denticulated cornice. Its eight-over-eight wood sash windows and decorative door surround lend it an air of mid-nineteenth-century design influence. In addition to its intact exterior, the interior retains its original double metal jail cell and magistrate's office.

Religious Architecture

There are two churches in the Aurora Historic District. The Gothic Revival-style Church of the Holy Cross (640 Main Street, #28, Photo 10) was built in 1917. The brick building features a batten, double-leaf door and buttresses that divide the bays of the side elevations. The original window openings have flat and rounded arches that are filled with stained glass. Constructed around 1949 as a replacement for an earlier frame church, the Aurora Methodist Church (327 Main Street; #7, Photo 9) is a strong example of the Romanesque style. It is constructed of stone, and its central belltower is a prominent feature. A recessed, arched entry pierces the belltower.

Residential Architecture

Houses within the Aurora Historic District vary in size and architectural style. Older houses are primarily concentrated along Main Street, North Fifth Street, and the adjacent side streets. Many houses in Aurora can be described best by their forms, and do not display strong stylistic features. Vernacular dwellings in various forms are scattered throughout Aurora and date to between 1887 and 1950. These residential forms include single pile, double pile, and gable-and-wing.

Single-pile dwellings appear a handful of times in the Aurora Historic District, with construction dates between 1900 and 1925. The house at 698 Middle Street (#49) is a highly intact dwelling with a single-pile, I-house form with a rear ell. The original weatherboards clad the exterior, and cornice returns adorn the side-gabled ends of the roof. The front porch, which spans the first story of the three-bay façade, features the original Tuscan columns and the windows throughout the house are the original two-over-two wood sashes. Another example of a single-pile house is the George Williamson House (801 Main Street; #36). The house has a rectangular, side-gabled form with a hipped-roof front porch. Aluminum replacement siding clads the exterior, and the original standing-seam metal covers the roof. Original four-over-one, wood-sash windows remain intact.

An early example of a double-pile house is the Alex and Lona Hudnell House (577 Main Street, #26, Photo 14). Built in 1887, the house has a side-gabled main block with a Mount Vernon porch addition on the primary (north) elevation. The original front door features two arched lights above panels. Four-over-one, wood-sash windows, which date to the 1920s or 1930s, are found throughout the house.

The Willie Bryan House (720 Main Street; #32) was built around 1890. This two-story house has a cross-gable form. The house retains its original weatherboard siding; two-over-two, wood-sash windows; and the original cedar roof shingles are visible beneath the metal. Porch posts suggest the house had limited Victorian-style details.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

There are several dwellings that exemplify nationally popular architectural styles. This includes Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Craftsman-style houses, Period Revival Cottages, and Minimal Traditional dwellings. Houses of these styles are primarily located west of North Fifth Street.

There are seven Craftsman-style bungalows within the Aurora Historic District, which date to between 1921 and 1946. The Mabel Baucom House (760 Main Street; #34) was built in 1921. The one-and-one-half-story house features paired, original, four-over-one, wood-sash windows and the original multi-light and paneled front door. The expansive front porch is supported by tapered wood posts atop brick piers. Details, such as decorative knee braces, have been removed from the house. An altered, but well-executed example stands at 575 Pearl Street (#51). The Bryan and Ginny Bonner House is a side-gabled dwelling with a shed dormer that spans the front (north) roof slope. The windows throughout the house are paired four-over-one, wood sashes. Like the Mabel Baucom House, the Bryan and Ginny Bonner House has a front porch supported by brick piers surmounted by tapered posts.

Outside of the Craftsman style, the bungalow form prevails seven times within the Aurora Historic District. These are typically dwellings with front-gabled, three-bay forms with minimal architectural detailing; however, side-gabled forms also appear, albeit less frequently. The A. L. Lupton House (226 Main Street; #1) was built around 1926. This one-and-one-half-story house features a simple, front-gabled form and retains its four-over-one, wood-sash windows on the first floor.

The Colonial Revival style appears five times in the Aurora Historic District, all of which date to between 1900 and 1966. The Benjamin Thompson House (398 Middle Street; #41) is one of the oldest examples of the style in Aurora. Though altered and updated to have Craftsman-style, multi-light windows, the Benjamin Thompson House features original weatherboard siding, dormers on the roof, cornice returns on the gable ends, and a screen porch off the west elevation that is supported by Classically inspired posts. Another well-executed example of the Colonial Revival style is the circa-1920 William A. Thompson Jr. and Sallie Carr Thompson House (441 North Fifth Street; #64). The two-story dwelling has a symmetrical façade with a Classical entry porch. The building is capped by a hipped roof pierced by two interior brick chimneys.

Two houses in the Aurora Historic District exhibit details of the Queen Anne style, which was popular in the United States between 1880 and 1910. Common characteristics of Queen Anne-style dwellings include steeply pitched roofs, a complicated footprint often with a front-facing gable, bay windows, and an asymmetrical façade. The circa-1915 Staley-Rutledge House (295 Main Street; #5) has been significantly altered through the replacement of the original porch, doors, and windows; the eaves have been boxed in; and vinyl siding has been installed. Despite these alterations, the house retains its complicated footprint, typical of the Queen Anne style. The circa-1900 Charles G. and Jessie Midyette House (415 North Sixth Street, #69, Photo 13) is another two-story, cross-gable example of a Queen Anne-style house. The house retains many of its original materials, including the plain weatherboards, the diamond-shaped shingles in the front facing gables, finials on the gables, the wraparound porch with Tuscan columns, and the cornice returns. Overall, the Midyette House is the best example of a Queen Anne-style house in the Aurora Historic District.

The house at 610 Main Street (#27) is the only example of a Shingle-style house in Aurora. Though most of the exterior has been covered with vinyl siding, parts of the west side elevation reveal intact shingles that cover both the gable and the second story. Other features include the inset porch, and the banks of windows in the shed-roof dormer. Perhaps the most intriguing feature of the house is the cutaway porch on the second floor of the east side elevation.

The circa-1915 house at 765 Main Street (#35) exhibits all the features of an American Foursquare-style dwelling, including the square floorplan; low-pitched roof with overhanging eaves; two stories with a wing, porch, and/or porte cochere; and an off-center front door. The windows have been replaced. This is the only example of an American Foursquare in the Aurora Historic District.

Two examples of the Period Revival Cottage are found within the Aurora Historic District with construction dates ranging from 1928 to around 1945. The circa-1935 Jack and Willie C. McWilliams House (107 North Sixth Street; #74) is a good example of a house with Tudor stylistic tendencies, including a brick exterior, front gabled projection, façade chimney, and original arched entry door.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

The Minimal Traditional style is found three times within the Aurora Historic District. These dwellings, which date to between 1945 and 1956, are small in scale with simple architectural forms and minimal detailing. The J. G. Rutledge Jr. and Junie N. Rutledge House (414 North Sixth Street; #68) is an example of a one-and-one-half-story, side-gabled Minimal Traditional dwelling. The house has a simple form with a gabled entry stoop and the windows throughout the house are the original six-over-six wood sashes. A few Minimal Traditional-style houses exhibit Ranch-style tendencies as they are elongated but retain their simple form with flush eaves and minimal detailing.

Summary

Aurora's architecture, spanning from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, reflects its historical role as a commercial and civic center for southern Beaufort County. Unlike nearby unincorporated communities, Aurora developed a more substantial built environment due to its location on South Creek and its significance in regional commerce. Aurora's historic architecture reflects its evolution as a regional hub, blending functional commercial and civic structures with a variety of residential styles. The district's intact collection of buildings illustrates local trends in small town development and architectural design.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

Aurora Commercial Historic District (BF0464) Survey File. On file, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, NC.

Aurora Jail (BF1009) Survey File. On file, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, NC.

Aurora Planning Board and North Carolina Division of Community Planning. *Community Facilities Plan & Public Improvements Program*. Aurora, NC: Aurora Planning Board, 1968. Accessed February 2025.
<https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/community-facilities-plan-amp-public-improvements-program-aurora-n.c/3708999?item=5183690>.

Beaufort County Register of Deeds. Deed Books. Washington, NC.

Bonner, Dr. John B. "Aurora Is Trading Center For Richland Township Area." *Washington Daily News*, August 17, 1951.

Bonner, Lottie Hale. *Colonial Bath and Pamlico Section, North Carolina*. Aurora, NC: Lottie Hale Bonner, 1939.

Boyd, Tracy D. "Old Buildings Take Tumble In Aurora's Downtown Project." *Washington Daily News*, December 26, 1992.

Branson, Rev. Levi. *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory for 1869*. Raleigh, NC: Levi Branson, 1869.

— *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory 1884*. Raleigh, NC: Branson & Jones, 1884.

— *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory 1890*. Raleigh, NC: Levi Branson, 1890.

— *The North Carolina Business Directory*. Raleigh, NC: J. A. Jones, 1872.

Brown, Henry C. *Railroad map of North Carolina, 1909*. Chicago, IL: Rand McNally and Company, 1909. Accessed February 2025. <https://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ncmaps/id/506>.

Circa, Inc. "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey." On file, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, 2009.

— Phillip Chapel AME Zion Church (BF1015) Survey File. On file, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, NC.

The Daily Journal (New Bern, NC). "Aurora Items." May 28, 1885.

— "Aurora Items." June 4, 1885.

— "Aurora Items." July 1, 1885.

— "Aurora Items." July 14, 1885.

— "Aurora Items." August 23, 1885.

— "Aurora Items." November 3, 1885.

— "Aurora Items." November 10, 1885.

— "Aurora Items." January 26, 1886.

— "Aurora Items." April 6, 1886.

— "Aurora Items." May 12, 1886.

— "Aurora Items." October 19, 1886.

— "Aurora Items." December 14, 1886.

— "The County of Richlands." February 2, 1887.

— "Aurora Items." August 23, 1887.

— "Aurora Items." February 28, 1888.

Daily Reflector. Downtown Aurora. September 1966. Photograph. East Carolina University Digital Collections.
<https://digital.lib.ecu.edu/9063>.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

- Dimitri, Carolyn, Anne Effland, and Neilson Conklin. "The 20th Century Transformation of U.S. Agriculture and Farm Policy." Economic Information Bulletin Number 3, Economic Research Service, United States Department of Agriculture, 2005. Accessed April 2024. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details?pubid=44198>.
- Insurance Company of North America. "Beaufort County Public School Insurance Report, 1935." On file, George H. and Laura E. Brown Library Local History/Genealogy Room, Washington, NC.
- Loy, Ursula Fogleman and Pauline Worthy. *Washington and the Pamlico*. Washington, NC: Beaufort County Bicentennial Commission, 1976.
- Jones, Leesa. "A town known by many names." *Washington Daily News*, August 7, 2023.
- New Berne Weekly Journal*. "Aurora Items." February 16, 1888.
—— "Aurora Academy." March 1, 1888.
- The News and Observer* (Raleigh, NC). "Aurora Depot Burned." May 5, 1910.
—— "Flood Delay Opening of Aurora High School." October 17, 1928.
- The News and Observer. *The North Carolina Yearbook 1902*. Raleigh, NC: The News and Observer, 1902.
—— *The North Carolina Yearbook and Business Directory 1905*. Raleigh, NC: The News and Observer, 1905.
—— *The North Carolina Year Book and Business Directory 1910*. Raleigh, NC: The News and Observer, 1910.
- Oakley, Crestena. "A Brief History of the Town of Aurora." Collection. Articles on Aurora, Hazel W. Guilford Memorial Library, Aurora, NC.
- Ormond, Jesse Marvin. *The Country Church in North Carolina: A Study of the County Church in North Carolina in Relation to the Material Progress of the State*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1931.
- The Pamlico News*. "Aurora Landmark Sold." November 13, 1980.
—— "The ups and downs of the Aurora schools." May 15, 1991.
- Powell, William S. *North Carolina Gazetteer: A Dictionary of Tarheel Places*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968.
- Realtor.com. "229 Main St, Aurora, NC 27806." Realtor.com, 2019. Accessed April 2024.
https://www.realtor.com/realestateandhomes-detail/229-Main-St_Aurora_NC_27806_M90849-95188.
- Reynolds, Eric. Bonner-Cherry House (BF0155) Survey File. On file, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, NC.
- Silliman, Jayne Stanley. "The Story of Old Aurora." Collection. Articles on Aurora, Hazel W. Guilford Memorial Library, Aurora, NC.
- St. Paul AME Zion Church. "History." St. Paul AME Zion Church. Accessed April 2024.
<https://jbdesign4u7.wixsite.com/stpauls/history-of-st-paul>.
- U.S. Census Bureau. Population Schedules, 1810–2020. Accessed April 2024.
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/usfedcen/>.
- U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey. *Pamlico River, North Carolina*. Washington, DC: U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, 1874. Accessed February 2025. <https://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ncmaps/id/699>.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

United States Department of Agriculture. *Aerial Photograph, 1938*. Flickr. Accessed April 2024.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/north-carolina-state-archives/46796525855/in/album-72157680104684838>.

United States Post Office Department. *Rural delivery routes, Beaufort County, NC*. Washington, DC: United States Post Office Department, 1914. Accessed February 2025. <https://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ncmaps/id/1723>.

Van Camp, Louis. *Images of America: Beaufort County, North Carolina*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2000.

Washington Daily News (Washington, NC). "Aurora Holds Second Agricultural Fair and Corn Show." November 12, 1910.

— "Over 6,000 Persons Attended The Fair At Aurora Yesterday." November 12, 1915.

— "FDIC Will Advance Funds For Transfer Of Bank Of Aurora. July 11, 1950.

— "Aurora Welcomes Texas Gulf People." June 8, 1963.

— "Aurora Baptist Church Notes Membership Growth." August 19, 1968.

The Washington Gazette (Washington, NC). "Aurora Articles." March 19, 1896.

— "Aurora Articles." April 30, 1896.

— "Aurora Articles." June 18, 1896.

— "Aurora Articles." October 1, 1896.

— "Aurora Articles." October 24, 1896.

Washington Progress (Washington, NC). "Aurora Items." November 22, 1887.

— "Aurora Items." October 29, 1889.

— "Aurora Items." May 25, 1905.

— "The Past And Present History of Aurora, N.C." June 8, 1916.

Wetmore, Ruth Y. "Pamlico Indians," in *Encyclopedia of North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

Wood, Ernie. "Aurora Mines Her Future." *The News and Observer* (Raleigh). September 14, 1975.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been

Requested)

☐ previously listed in the National Register

☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State agency

☐ Federal agency

☐ Local government

☐ University

☐ Other

Name of repository: **Office of Archives & History;**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): BF0464

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 39 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum, if other than WGS

1	<u>35.3051705</u> Latitude	<u>-76.7841473</u> Longitude	2	<u>35.3045276</u> Latitude	<u>-76.7841397</u> Longitude
3	<u>35.3040434</u> Latitude	<u>-76.7845150</u> Longitude	4	<u>35.3035606</u> Latitude	<u>-76.7851408</u> Longitude
5	<u>35.3023460</u> Latitude	<u>-76.7886965</u> Longitude	6	<u>35.3023430</u> Latitude	<u>-76.7899563</u> Longitude
7	<u>35.3039699</u> Latitude	<u>-76.7932077</u> Longitude	8	<u>35.3044803</u> Latitude	<u>-76.7932131</u> Longitude
9	<u>35.3053049</u> Latitude	<u>-76.7924750</u> Longitude	10	<u>35.3059528</u> Latitude	<u>-76.7913935</u> Longitude
11	<u>35.3059699</u> Latitude	<u>-76.7900648</u> Longitude	12	<u>35.3057017</u> Latitude	<u>-76.7865677</u> Longitude

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The National Register boundary of the Aurora Historic District is illustrated by the heavy black line on the accompanying “**Boundary & Coordinates Map**,” created by Donald Rowe in April 2025. The boundary encompasses approximately 39 acres. The district is roughly bounded by Middle Street to the north, Second Street to the east, Chapin and Pearl streets to the south, and Eighth Street to the west. The district’s boundary is described as starting at the northeast corner of the parcel for 226 Main Street and running 232 feet south before turning west and extending 113 feet; thence turning south and extending 175 feet; thence turning west and extending 100 feet; thence turning north and extending 30 feet; thence turning west and extending 87 feet; thence turning south and extending 210 feet; thence turning west and extending 228 feet; thence turning north and extending 167 feet; thence turning west and extending 82 feet; thence south and extending 43 feet; thence turning west and extending 100 feet; thence turning south and extending 122 feet; thence turning west and extending 193 feet; thence turning north and extending 169 feet; thence turning west and extending 152 feet; thence turning north and extending 44 feet; thence turning west and extending 70 feet; thence turning north and extending 33 feet; thence turning west and extending 74 feet; thence turning south and extending 28 feet; thence turning west and extending 161 feet; thence turning south and extending 647 feet; thence turning west and extending 376 feet; thence turning north and extending 414 feet; thence turning west and extending 412 feet; thence turning north and extending 183 feet; thence turning west and extending 551 feet; thence turning north and extending 186 feet; thence turning east and extending 226 feet; thence turning north and extending 298 feet; thence turning east and extending 90 feet; thence turning south and extending 126 feet; thence turning east and extending 234 feet; thence turning north and extending 358 feet; thence turning east and extending 395 feet; thence turning south and extending 18 feet; thence turning east and extending 175 feet; thence turning south and extending 209 feet; thence turning east and extending 234 feet; thence turning southeast and extending 41 feet; thence turning east and extending 412 feet; thence turning southeast north and extending 127 feet; thence turning east and extending 185 feet; thence turning south and extending 127 feet; thence turning east and extending 566 feet; thence turning south and extending 64 feet; thence turning east until reaching the starting point.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

The boundaries of the 39-acre Aurora Historic District were determined according to the density of contributing structures built between circa 1850 and 1950. The boundary includes the extant resources historically associated with Aurora's role as a commercial hub for southern Beaufort County, as well as the civic, religious, and residential buildings that served the larger community. Altogether, these historic resources illustrate Aurora's success in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a commercial hub for southern Beaufort County. The district excludes properties to the north of Middle Street and south of Pearl Street. Many of these properties have been significantly altered, demolished, or were constructed outside the Period of Significance, which is circa 1850 to 1950.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Olivia Heckendorf/Architectural Historian

organization Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc.

date May 2025

street & number 525 Wait Avenue

telephone 262-305-0055

city or town Wake Forest

state NC

zip code 27587

e-mail oheckendorf@rgaincorporated.com

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Aurora Historic District
City or Vicinity: Aurora
County: Beaufort County
State: North Carolina
Photographer: Olivia Heckendorf
Date Photographed: March 2024

Photo 1 of 14

View east along Main Street from its intersection with North Fifth Street, within the Aurora Historic District.

Photo 2 of 14

View east along Main Street with the Church of the Holy Cross to the left, within the Aurora Historic District.

Photo 3 of 14

View northwest of the commercial block on the north side of Main Street at its intersection with Fourth Street, showing the B. H. Thompson Store building on the right, within the Aurora Historic District.

Photo 4 of 14

View southwest of the commercial block (491, 495, and 499 Main Street) on the south side of Main Street at its intersection with North Fifth Street, showing the former Cherry Hotel on the right.

Photo 5 of 14

View north of the Warren's Barber Shop, Thompson's Feed Store, and commercial building (right to left) at 456, 462, and 468 Main Street, within the Aurora Historic District.

Photo 6 of 14

View south of the commercial building and former service station at 389 and 395 Main Street, within the Aurora Historic District.

Photo 7 of 14

View east of the 1939 Aurora Jail at 590 North Fifth Street, within the Aurora Historic District.

Photo 8 of 14

View northeast of the former Aurora Town Hall and Police Station and Aurora Municipal Complex at 436 and 458–460 Fourth Street, within the Aurora Historic District.

Aurora Historic District

Name of Property

Beaufort County, NC

County and State

Photo 9 of 14

View south of the 1949 Aurora Methodist Church at 327 Main Street, within the Aurora Historic District.

Photo 10 of 14

View north of the 1917 Church of the Holy Cross at 640 Main Street, within the Aurora Historic District.

Photo 11 of 14

View south of the circa-1850 Henry and Susan Sugg Harding House at 229 Main Street, within the Aurora Historic District.

Photo 12 of 14

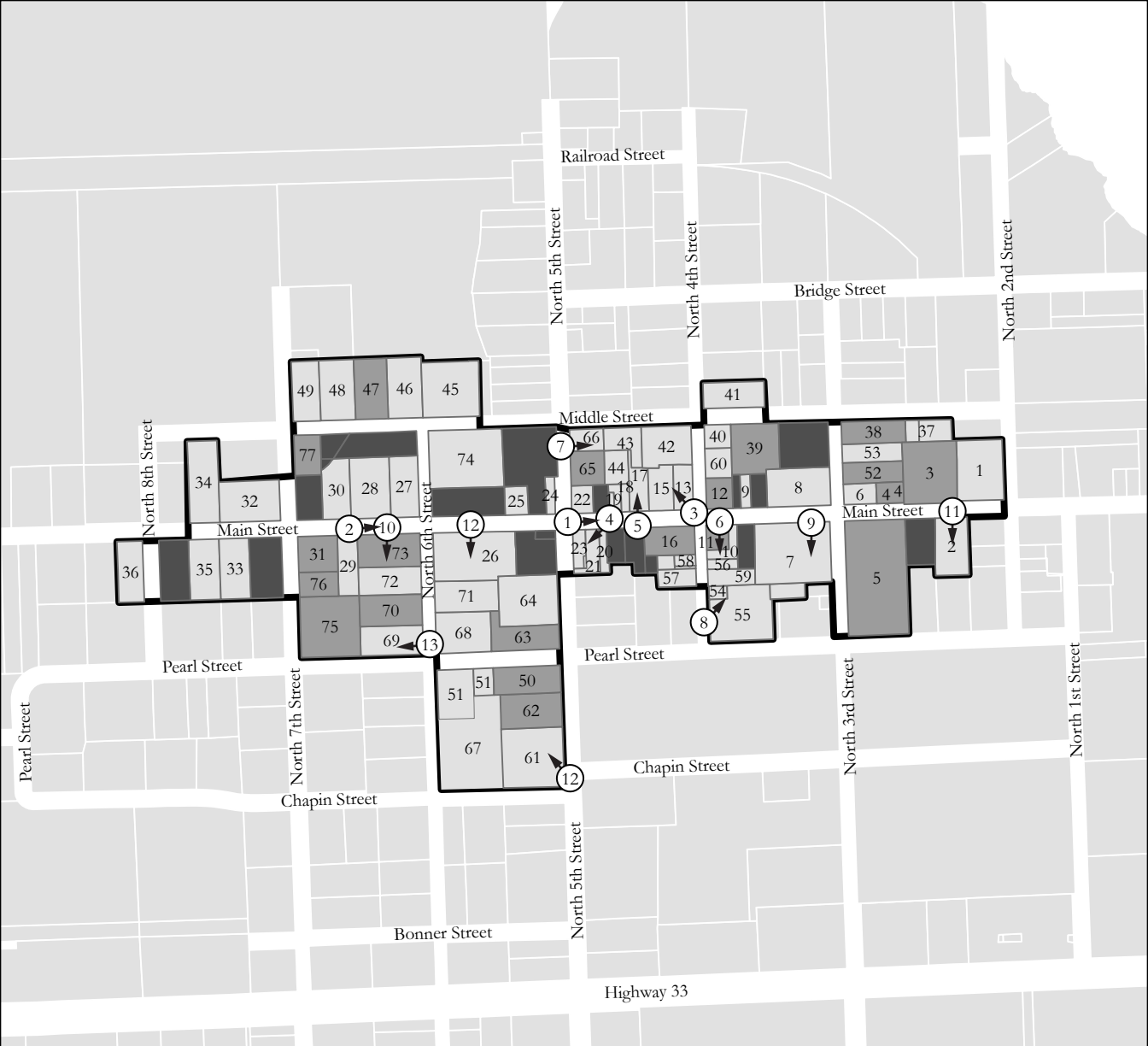
View northwest of the circa-1870 Bonner-Cherry House at 207 North Fifth Street, within the Aurora Historic District.

Photo 13 of 14

View west of the circa-1900 Charles G. and Jessie Midyette House at 415 North Sixth Street, within the Aurora Historic District.

Photo 14 of 14

View south of the 1887 Alex and Lona Hudnell House at 577 Main Street, within the Aurora Historic District.



National Register of Historic Places
Aurora Historic District
 Aurora, Beaufort County, North Carolina
Boundary Map and Photo Key

- Aurora NRHD Boundary
- Contributing Resource
- Non-Contributing Resource
- Vacant Lot
- Photo Location and Direction

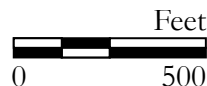




Photo 1 of 14. View east along Main Street from its intersection with North Fifth Street, within the Aurora Historic District.



Photo 2 of 14. View east along Main Street with the Church of the Holy Cross to the left, within the Aurora Historic District.



Photo 3 of 14. View northwest of the commercial block on the north side of Main Street at its intersection with Fourth Street, showing the B. H. Thompson Store building on the right, within the Aurora Historic District.



Photo 4 of 14. View southwest of the commercial block (491, 495, and 499 Main Street) on the south side of Main Street at its intersection with North Fifth Street, showing the former Cherry Hotel on the right, within the Aurora Historic District.



Photo 5 of 14. View north of the Warren's Barber Shop, Thompson's Feed Store, and commercial building (right to left) at 456, 462, and 468 Main Street, within the Aurora Historic District.



Photo 6 of 14. View south of the commercial building and former service station at 389 and 395 Main Street, within the Aurora Historic District.



Photo 7 of 14. View east of the 1939 Aurora Jail at 590 North Fifth Street, within the Aurora Historic District.



Photo 8 of 14. View northeast of the former Aurora Town Hall and Police Station and Aurora Municipal Complex at 436 and 458-460 Fourth Street, within the Aurora Historic District.



Photo 9 of 14. View south of the 1949 Aurora Methodist Church at 327 Main Street, within the Aurora Historic District.



Photo 10 of 14. View north of the 1917 Church of the Holy Cross at 640 Main Street, within the Aurora Historic District.



Photo 11 of 14. View south of the circa-1850 Henry and Susan Sugg Harding House at 229 Main Street, within the Aurora Historic District.



Photo 12 of 14. View northwest of the circa-1870 Bonner-Cherry House at 207 North Fifth Street, within the Aurora Historic District.



Photo 13 of 14. View west of the circa-1900 Charles G. and Jessie Midyette House at 415 North Sixth Street, within the Aurora Historic District.



Photo 14 of 14. View south of the 1887 Alex and Lona Hudnell House at 577 Main Street, within the Aurora Historic District.