

Wells College Named One of New York's Seven to Save

This biennial list from the Preservation League of NYS highlights the most at-risk historic places across the state

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AURORA, NY, 3/24/25 — The Preservation League of NYS is thrilled to announce the inclusion of Wells College on our 2025-2026 Seven to Save list. The League's [Seven to Save program](#) has been drawing attention to some of the most important at-risk historic places across New York since 1999.

"Our hope is that by recognizing the campus as one of this year's Seven to Save, the Preservation League can help PACNY bring together stakeholders to find a path forward through consensus," said **PACNY President Andrew Roblee**. "This spirit of working together is captured by the Wells motto *Habere et Dispartire*, 'to have and to share.'"

"Wells College is a cornerstone of Aurora, NY, and its closure puts not just its buildings and landscape at risk, but also the sense of place it has helped foster in the wider community," said **Caitlin Meives, Director of Preservation for the Preservation League of NYS**. "But its significance goes beyond the local. As the state of higher education continues to change, other small liberal arts colleges may shutter as well. In the long term, a sensitive adaptive reuse of this storied college campus would positively impact the local community while providing an example for other similar campuses across the state and beyond. In the meantime, it is imperative that the College protect the viability of its buildings by heating them through the winter and conducting regular monitoring."

Wells College, founded in 1868 as a women's college, is a historically significant institution that embodies the educational and architectural legacy of 19th-century liberal arts education. Its campus features notable historic buildings and landscapes that contribute to its designation as part of the Aurora Village Historic District (NR-listed 1980). Just outside the district boundaries are three modern architectural masterpieces designed by Walter Netsch of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), which were each less than 15 years old at the time of the original listing.

Currently, Wells College faces threats resulting from its sudden closure in the spring of 2024. The closure of Wells College holds significance that extends beyond the immediate Aurora community, warranting statewide recognition. The closure threatens the preservation of the campus's historic structures and the cultural continuity they represent. Beyond the architectural loss, the college's closing seriously affects the local economy and community identity, which are closely intertwined with the institution. Recognizing this moment on a statewide level underscores the importance of safeguarding New York's educational and architectural heritage, while raising awareness about the broader challenges small liberal arts colleges face. Proper preservation planning and strategizing adaptive reuse of the campus could inspire solutions for other struggling institutions, providing both economic and cultural benefits.

Through the work of a partnership group including PACNY, Historic Ithaca, the Landmark Society of Western New York (Wells was also added to [Landmark's 2025 Five to Revive List](#)), and the Preservation

League, outreach has already begun to the community, college administration, and the state government to ensure protection and continued use of this incredible property.

2025-2026 Seven to Save List

- **Guild House, Albany, Albany County**
Threat: Demolition, Deterioration, Lack of Public Awareness, Loss of Visual/Architectural Integrity, Vacancy
- **Church of the Mediator, Bronx, Bronx County**
Threat: Demolition
- **Wells College Campus, Aurora, Cayuga County**
Threat: Vacancy
- **Humboldt Parkway/Kensington Expressway, Buffalo, Erie County**
Threat: Deterioration, Development Pressure, Lack of Public Awareness, Loss of Visual/Architectural Integrity
- **The New York Amsterdam News HQ Building, Harlem, New York County**
Threat: Deterioration, Lack of Public Awareness, Vacancy
- **Lower River Street Buildings, Troy, Rensselaer County**
Threat: Demolition, Lack of Public Awareness, Vacancy
- **Hepbron Hall, Silver Bay, Warren County**
Threat: Demolition, Deterioration, Lack of Public Awareness, Vacancy

The League collaborates with property owners, elected officials, and other stakeholders to craft preservation strategies and put these plans into action. Through partnerships with groups and individuals, threats to dozens of at-risk buildings, landscapes, downtowns, and neighborhoods have been reduced, and in many cases, eliminated by the Preservation League's Seven to Save listing and subsequent actions. For more information about the Seven to Save program and this year's list, please visit preservenys.org/seven-to-save

Interviews with representatives from the Preservation League and all the Seven to Save sites are available by request.

About the Preservation Association of Central New York (PACNY)

Founded in 1974, the Preservation Association of Central New York is dedicated to the conservation of our area's historic architecture, neighborhoods and main streets, preserving the past through adaptive reuse to serve as a living part of our community. Since 1974, PACNY has led efforts to save historic resources throughout the region – including sites such as [Hanover Square](#), [Armory Square](#), [Hawley-Green](#), [Sedgwick](#), the [Landmark Theater](#) and many more local treasures – all of which have been threatened with demolition or unsympathetic development at one time or another. Recently, PACNY successfully listed the Westcott-University Neighborhood Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places – the second largest NR-listed historic district in New York State!

About the Preservation League of New York State

Since its founding in 1974, the Preservation League of NYS has built a reputation for action and effectiveness. Our goal has been to preserve our historic buildings, districts, and landscapes and to build a better New York, one community at a time. The League empowers all New Yorkers to use historic preservation to enrich their communities, protect their heritage, and build a sustainable future. We lead advocacy, economic development, and education programs across the state. Connect with us at preservenys.org, facebook.com/preservenys, youtube.com/c/PreservationLeague and instagram.com/preservenys

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