

***DRAFT***



# **SARATOGA SPRINGS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**CITY OF SARATOGA SPRINGS, NEW YORK**

The Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee voted  
unanimously to transmit this Draft Comprehensive Plan to the  
City Council on December 5, 2007.

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## HISTORY

### **Saratoga Springs – A Great American Place**

The City is nationally recognized as a “Great American Place” largely due to its commitment to historic preservation, its vibrant downtown and the amenities it offers. This heritage combines with our community’s excellent quality of life and strong sense of place to create a balance of physical, economic and social assets.

- ◆ We are a safe residential community with world-class recreation and tourist attractions
- ◆ We have an award-winning, walkable downtown
- ◆ We combine a vibrant commercial/retail center with architectural beauty and historic charm
- ◆ We are host to respected institutions of higher education
- ◆ We have a unique open space “greenbelt” surrounding an urban core
- ◆ We have an enthusiastic citizenry that actively participates in a multitude of community, service and governmental activities.

It is this diversity, this balance of economic and sociological assets, that makes Saratoga Springs an attractive destination with an active, year-round residential and business community.

For hundreds of years, Saratoga’s mineral springs were carefully guarded by the Iroquois. It was only after Sir William Johnson’s visit to the High Rock Spring in 1767 that Saratoga’s reputation as a health spa began to grow and the springs became an icon of the city. Our motto of “the city in the Country” reflects this city’s close ties to its natural resources. It expresses our community’s concern for the often-fragile relationship between the economic demands of the present and the need to preserve the environment and our city’s historic landmarks.

The city has a centralized business district and a developed urban core that dates back to the 1800s. Saratoga prides itself in having six local historic districts that include 1100 properties. Local historic landmarks include the Saratoga Race Track with the Oklahoma Track, the Canfield Casino, City Hall, the Bryan House, Yaddo, Congress Park, High Rock Park and the Central Fire Station. Saratoga has many more important historic areas and structures of architectural significance and should seek to expand its local historic districts to insure its connection to the past.

The Saratoga Springs’ thoroughbred racetrack is the oldest continuously operated racetrack in the country and is part of the Union Avenue National Historic District. The advent and prosperity of the racing and wagering industries provides the City with a colorful historic legacy. Horse-related industries including thoroughbred and standard bred racing, polo and dressage events, horse sales and equine services remain important

contributors to the economic, cultural and social makeup of our community as well as the County.

Following a period of deterioration in the 1950s and 1960s, Saratoga Springs rebuilt itself into an award-winning community and celebrated resort destination. In fact, while most cities have experienced serious decline, Saratoga Springs has maintained its momentum as a vibrant community.

Incorporation of the City in 1915 joined the urbanized area of the former village with an expansive and largely undeveloped countryside. Saratoga Springs is now the fourth largest City in New York State in total land area. And although the City has actively tried to protect its surrounding green space, it is continually under development pressure.

The City's open space resources provide both active and passive enjoyment as well as being an economic benefit. They are maintained through a combination of public and private ownership. Private examples include Yaddo and Skidmore College. The City offers Congress Park, High Rock Park and several neighborhood parks. State and private-sector holdings include the more than 2000 acres at Saratoga Spa State Park, the equine polo fields, harness and thoroughbred tracks, and a number of golf courses. These public and privately owned open space resources are complemented by three lakes and an abundance of state and federally regulated wetlands.

The City's population in the 2000 Census was 26,186. During the last century, the City had a slow but steady population increase with annual growth rates near or below 1%. That rate doubled during the late 1980s but leveled back off in the 1990s. Today it is estimated that the annual growth rate for population is about 0.5%. While the population is not increasing at a rapid rate, households are. Historically each household accounted for 5-6 people. At the present time households average 2.5 persons per household. Thirty-five percent (35%) of the assessed value the City is owner by eleemosynary institutions both educational and religious.

## VISION STATEMENT

**This Comprehensive Plan** is a unified set of policies for guiding the physical and community development of the City of Saratoga Springs.

The plan presents a road map depicting how and where growth should occur throughout the City to promote both its economy and its livability. It also specifies policy statements and some action plans with recommendations on how specific issues should be addressed.

The Comprehensive Plan is a document that articulates the City's goals for land use, design and enhancement to protect the unique character of the community. It also provides the justification for planning and regulatory policies that encourage efficient growth patterns to maximize the City's social and economic potential. It is a plan that shall be taken into account by all City legislative, administrative and regulatory bodies. This document refers to zoning districts as found in the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Saratoga Springs as of the date of this plan.

### The Plan is based on the following vision:

Saratoga Springs is a celebrated historic city in the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains with the chosen qualities of a small town. Our motto of "the City in the Country" defines our sense of place. It expresses our community's concern for the often-fragile relationship between the built environment and our historic and natural resources. The city has a centralized business district and a developed urban core of distinct and historic neighborhoods. The core is surrounded by individual established neighborhoods with outlying areas comprised of a rural landscape and open lands.

The overriding philosophy that must guide future development of our "City in the Country" shall be sustainability. Sustainability is an attempt to provide the best outcomes for the human and natural environments both now and into the indefinite future. Sustainable development has been defined as development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Sustainability relates to the continuity of economic, social, institutional and environmental aspects of human society, with emphasis on the non-human environment.

Sustainable development is that which supports long term economic vitality, environmental integrity, and social equity. All three systems -- the economy, the natural environment, and society -- must be carefully nurtured to achieve a healthy, efficient, and more harmonious city. With this concept of sustainability in mind, unlimited growth may not be right for this City.

Fundamentally, the entire community must share the responsibility for sustainable development. All development shall:

- Respect and protect our limited natural and man-made resources;

- Support the fiscal health of our community by insuring that new development and its required support services does not place an undue burden on the community;
- Preserve the integrity of the historic patterns of our neighborhoods by creating harmonious and appropriate relationships between districts through appropriate land use and architectural transitions;
- Protect the human scale of the City by maintaining appropriate relationships between existing building and new development through the control of height, volume, mass, scale, color, materials and textures;
- Encourage non-motor vehicle connectors - sidewalks, walking trails and bicycle paths - to promote interaction among the various neighborhoods.

In addition to being a cultural and tourist destination, Saratoga Springs is a welcoming home to its citizens, both lifelong residents and those new to the community. Like visitors to the city, residents appreciate the many artistic, recreational, natural, social, and business amenities of the community that enrich the quality of life in Saratoga Springs. It is the goal of this Comprehensive Plan to further the interests of the citizens by promoting economic vitality without condoning unrestrained development; by fostering positive change while recognizing the merits of stability, historic preservation, and stewardship of the environment; and by striving to retain the unique character of this small city, our home.

## GOALS

The Comprehensive Plan provides a practical and useable set of recommendations addressing selected issues of concern. It is a strategic plan and, often, an action plan to achieve the vision statement. It is the guide to the physical development of the City.

### The Goals of this Plan are to:

- Position the City to better face with flexibility whatever paradigm the future may hold. This is the true meaning of sustainable growth.
- Enhance the economic and social vitality and success of the City's downtown core area by encouraging a variety of locally owned businesses that attract visitors to stop and shop, as well as attracting larger corporate enterprises.
- Preserve the traditional character of the community including historic resources, open spaces and the "City in the Country".
- Balance the costs of municipal services with revenues.
- Protecting sensitive environmental and historic resources.
- Create a City with enhanced pedestrian and bicycle access, public transit services, and traditional neighborhood design in order to reduce dependence on the automobile.
- Invest in the creative economy to enhance the amenities that contribute to our community's success.
- Promote housing diversity and affordability as well as neighborhood vitality.
- Collaborate with surrounding communities to address issues that transcend jurisdictional and geographic boundaries.
- Increase our community's competitiveness through enhanced, modern utility infrastructure.
- Become technologically current by promoting telecommunication competition and by improving our technological infrastructure.
- Enhance the visual experience of the City, whether it is new development or redevelopment, through the use of appropriate buffering techniques and the creation of additional green space.

## MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

All adoption of land use legislation shall be consistent with this Comprehensive Plan.

- Rewrite the zoning ordinance to reflect this updated plan; make it more clear, consistent and user friendly.
- Conduct a public visioning process to better clarify the City's desired growth. At current zoning levels as per the Development Plan Map, the potential maximum build out of the City is a population of circ. 85,000. With towns around us capping their growth, it puts heavy growth pressure on this City. It is vital that citizens address this issue and decide what a reasonable population growth and/or cap is for Saratoga Springs.
- Undertake an analysis of existing land use, architecture and development patterns and adjust the Zoning Ordinance to better preserve, protect and promote those that are consistent with this plan.
- Promote Saratoga Springs as a year-round destination through the active marketing and support of artistic, cultural and recreational facilities as well as our business assets that contribute to the City's revenue stream. This includes promoting the City as a base from which to enjoy the recreational and natural surroundings of Adirondack life such as fall foliage, winter sports, wedding venues and equine activities and facilities.
- Maintain a compact downtown with adequate parking and supporting infrastructure to insure that business continues to prosper.
- Create enhanced linkages between the diverse revenue producing areas that are so vital to our economic well being of the City. Promote the Art District, the Historic Districts, the Horse District, the museums and Recreational areas and the many other assets in order to keep them viable.
- The City must support a diverse mix of housing types and price levels. Addressing this is a priority in order to supports the many businesses and services that need employees in a range of income levels.
- Protect the complete context of Saratoga Springs' open space resources that constitute a vital economic component and a valuable aesthetic and recreational amenity. It is this unique open space character that creates the ambiance of the "City in the Country". As our neighboring towns develop, it is more vital than ever to enact strong ordinances to protect our open spaces.
- Create and protect inner urban green spaces such as vest pocket parks, passive and active. These areas are as vital to the well being of the City as the green

aspects of the outer districts.

- Attract adequate revenue resources in order to maintain and enhance the many required City services.
  - Update the City's technological infrastructure in order to attract business and empower citizen participation in City government.
  - Maintain, enhance and invest in the amenities that are essential to the City's economic and social dynamics. Saratoga Springs has a unique mix of social, cultural and recreational resources.
  - Design growth patterns that are less dependent upon the use of the automobile in order to advance sustainable growth. Work with the CDTC to extend public transportation system with clearly defined timetables, routes and destinations to provide citizens of the outer areas with easy access to the Downtown. The eastern plateau is notably lacking in this service. Absent this, sustainability is difficult to achieve.
  - Continue to concentrate commerce and business in the inner core of the City. The few special areas that prove exceptions to the rule should be carefully controlled.
  - Update the Zoning Ordinance to strengthen and clarify requirements relating to the transitioning between and the protection of adjacent land uses and parcels. Such requirements may include improved screening using shrubs, walls, fencing, berms and trees of sufficient size and species as to create an affective and attractive visual barrier.

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

A Community or ecosystem becomes sustainable when it is able to meet its own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This Comprehensive Plan is aimed towards establishing sustainability as a planning criterion for the City of Saratoga Springs.

### **Sustainable City Policies:**

All City policies, especially Land Use policies, have a significant impact on the overall ability of that City to be sustainable. These policies affect energy consumption patterns, water and natural resource utilization, ecological priorities, open space, and transportation. Such items can be regional, national or global in character and may, therefore, be beyond the statutory authority or practical reach of the City to control. This, however, does not relieve the City of its responsibility to do its best to create and participate in all initiatives that can ameliorate negative environmental factors.

Therefore, the overriding philosophy that shall guide future growth of our “City in the Country” will be sustainability. As Saratoga Springs looks to the future and the many challenges it will face, the City will need to approach how it deals with individual challenges such as transportation, housing, and open space preservation with an eye towards the future. It must be aware of how each decision will incrementally impact the needs of the future generations. The City must also look at how the sum of all prior decisions will cumulatively affect those needs.

It is broadly recommended that the City’s codes, policies and procedures advance the goal of a sustainable City, recognizing that economics and technology will continue to evolve, and that the cost of such initiatives must be within the ability of taxpayers and property owners to sustain.

### **City Climate Protection Programs and Initiatives**

While the City should work toward making this community energy sustainable, it should also do what it can to support efforts to make the global environment better. The representative to the U.S. Congress from this district has cautioned about losing farmland against the day when we may need to live in a more self contained society. In order to be prepared for any eventuality, the Comprehensive plan offers the following recommendations for the City:

- Conduct a Sustainability Study to inventory City and community global warming emissions and then set appropriate reduction targets;
- Create and implement a Local Action Plan (LAP) identifying initiatives in the following seven critical areas:
  - a. Land Use
  - b. Energy
  - c. Buildings
  - d. Materials
  - e. Transportation

- f. Waste
- g. Water

The LAP shall serve as a comprehensive strategic planning document and define tangible projects that promote open space, energy conservation, waste minimization, resource preservation, and greenhouse gas reduction. The LAP shall be monitored on an ongoing basis to accurately validate project performance. Consider the establishment of a Sustainability Coordinator to administer, implement and support LAP initiatives as a priority when funding permits;

- Consider the establishment of a Sustainability Task Force for the City;
- Continue to adopt and enforce land use policies that reduce sprawl, preserve open space, and maintain a compact, walkable urban community;
- Promote transportation options such as bicycle trails, commute trip reduction programs, incentives for car pooling and public transit. Enforce car and truck traffic routes and regulations to reduce the air and noise pollution on city streets;
- Continue its commitment to using clean, alternative energy by investing in “renewable energy credits”, advocating for the development of renewable energy resources, recovering landfill methane for energy production, and supporting the use of waste to energy technology.
- Consider the construction of a bio mass facility to generate City energy.
- Make energy efficiency a priority through building code improvements, retrofitting city facilities with energy efficient lighting and water use fixtures, and urging employees to conserve energy and save money;
- Purchase only Energy Star equipment and appliances for City use;
- Require new construction and redevelopment to install energy and other resource saving mechanisms available on the market;
- Practice and promote sustainable building practices using the U.S. Green Building Council’s Leed program or a similar system;
- Encourage the purchase and use fuel efficiency municipal fleet vehicles; reduce the number of vehicles where possible; institute an employee education program including anti-idling messages;
- Continue efforts to increase pump efficiency in water and wastewater systems; encourage the County to recover wastewater treatment methane for energy production.

- Increase recycling in the City operations and promote recycling in the community;
- Increase the number of urban trees; require tree planting in all new developments and redevelopments to increase shading and to absorb carbon;
- Conduct an educational outreach program to increase environmental awareness.

## CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Like Open Space, cultural resources such as galleries, museums, and performance venues such as SPAC, Universal Preservation Hall and the Little Theatre in the State Park, play a major role in the quality of life of Saratoga Springs. The strong support of these cultural assets and events is also essential to the financial health of Saratoga Springs. Cultural events in Saratoga Springs offer a significant, revenue-positive, year-round draw to this region.

Arts organizations and arts events, both visual and performance, create economic prosperity around them. By acting as a draw for tourists as well as residents, they increase local spending well beyond the organization's own spending. A recent study by Americans for the Arts (AFTA) in 91 U.S. communities determined that revenue from non-for-profit arts organizations had a highly beneficial financial impact. Nearly \$134 billion was generated in total economic activity by arts organizations and their audiences. The industry supported the equivalent of 4.9 million employees and produced more than \$24 billion revenue for federal, state, and local government.

Arts organizations bring in cultural tourists whom AFTA defines as people who travel primarily in order to attend arts and cultural events. It is economically desirable to attract these cultural tourists. Cultural tourists spend more per trip than other tourists (\$631 versus \$457) and travel longer than other tourists (5.2 nights versus 4.1 nights).

### **The City should support cultural organizations as much as possible by:**

- Offering operational support such as parking and traffic control for not-for-profit arts organization events
- Publicizing and participating in cultural arts venues on city-owned street signs and banners.

### **Beekman Street Art District:**

Beekman Street Art District is currently zoned NOCD-1 Neighborhood Commercial District (adopted 2001) NCUD-1 "The intent of this NCUD (neighborhood complementary use district - 1) is to accommodate some select and limited non-residential uses in a neighborhood that support nearby residential uses." Current permitted uses are 1 and 2 family houses, art gallery less than 1200 s.f., artist studios less than 1200 s.f., boutique, retail less than 1200 s.f., Service establishments less than 1200 s.f., business office less than 1200 s.f., day care centers, eating and drinking establishments 40 seats or less, Laundromat less than 1200 s.f., neighborhood convenience store less than 200 s.f., Professional office less than 1200 s.f., neighborhood B & B, neighborhood rooming house, corridor B & B, Corridor Rooming House.

**Recommendations for Beekman Street: from Grand Avenue to Ash Street.**

- Consider rezoning this area as Art District with its own defined uses and constraints after consultation of the neighborhood.
- Streamlined permitting processes for artists and small related businesses.
- Create a visual, painted sidewalk to direct visitors from the downtown to the Art District, thereby connecting the Beekman Street Art District to the major downtown area of the City.
- Improve signage to identify the area.
- Height allowances should be established that are in keeping with the texture, mass and scale of the existing historic neighborhood.

## ECONOMIC POLICIES

Maintaining a healthy balance of economic activities will ensure a sound future, encourage a diverse community, and help our community to avoid making rash decisions based upon immediate financial need. The City's focus is on appropriate development to improve and contribute to a balanced economy; that means better and more creative development, not necessarily bigger development.

Clearly the most important policy is to maintain Downtown as the City's economic center. It is imperative to strengthen our successful, compact and defined commercial and pedestrian center rather than succumb to unbounded geographic expansion of the City's primary commercial area. To remain vital the Downtown should serve the needs of both visitors and residents. Efforts to strengthen and enhance this area through infill development and replacement are integral to the overall success of the City. In furtherance of this, the City has established:

- a "485-B" tax incentive program. This legislation as it exists is incomplete. It is recommended that it be re-evaluated and changed or abolished.
- an Economic Development Revolving Loan Program, and
- a real property relief program for owners who improve historic properties.

Furthermore, the current demand to be downtown naturally promotes the increased attention to enhanced construction and design standards. These are desirable throughout the community.

There is a significant need for additional, balanced and compatible development to help pay for the amenities and services upon which residents and businesses depend. A balanced approach to encourage development in the W.J. Grande Industrial Park and in specific Special Development Areas that is complementary, rather than competitive, with Downtown will strengthen the overall long-term economic stability of the City.

There are other areas of economic potential for the City. Our community's proximity to the Northway and other transportation links provides the City an advantage in attracting businesses. The City also has the opportunity to further promote tourism related land uses. Hotel, bar and restaurant taxes provide a significant source of expanded revenue for the City.

In each of these instances, the City's natural resources and its intrinsic desirability as a destination location play a major role in providing this economic opportunity. Therefore, any development to improve the City's long-term financial situation must ensure that these activities are attractive additions to both the community and natural environment.

### **Recommendations of this Plan:**

- Maintain the downtown as the economic center of the community, including the primary retail and commercial center. Encourage the infill of a well-defined urban core.

- 
- Encourage new development in the W.J. Grande Industrial Park and in specifically defined Special Development Areas to complement, rather than duplicate, or compete with downtown.
  - Downtown, in particular, but also in the specifically defined Special Development Areas must encourage distinctive, locally-owned, non-formula businesses that serve both visitors and residents and that include a mix of retail, commercial and residential uses.
  - When formula businesses are approved, they shall be held to local sign and architecture standards.
  - Consider whether it would be appropriate to establish maximum square footage limitations for incubator or other businesses opportunities in the downtown or in the specifically defined Special Development Areas.
  - Downtown and in the specifically defined Special Development Areas, decision-makers should ensure that there is adequate parking and adequate pedestrian, bicycle and handicap access.
  - Review the “485-B” tax incentive program to insure that its criteria are tailored to those who really need it. Revise it if necessary. Complete the legislation. Review the Economic Development Revolving Loan program standards and revise them if necessary.
  - Maintain a diverse property tax base and accommodate a broad range of land uses where appropriate while minimizing conflicts.
  - Support the viability of the community’s unique institutions (e.g. Skidmore College, Empire State College, Saratoga Hospital, Saratoga Performing Arts Center and the racetracks) and promote its rich artistic, cultural, historic and architectural assets, including, in particular the Beekman Street art district.
  - Encourage a range of job opportunities for residents
  - Promote land uses that encourage long-term sustainability.
  - Review and revise if necessary the City’s zoning ordinance to accommodate the increasing prevalence of home use activities due to the electronic revolution and changing business/community needs.
  - Support the diverse entertainment amenities of the City and the efforts of the City Center and Tourism Bureau to attract visitors to the City. Promote and accommodate increases in visitors’ activity during fall, winter and spring.
  - Clearly define the permit process for local restaurant/coffee shop businesses to

have outdoor seating on Broadway in the summer so that it is more quickly available where appropriate.

- Support all efforts to enlarge the Convention Center so that it will be able to attract larger groups.
- Encourage technology and office-based businesses to locate within the City.
- Encourage the creation of business incubator sites.
- Encourage IDA (Saratoga County Industrial Development Agency) support of downtown redevelopment projects.

## E-GOVERNMENT

The European Union defines e-Government as the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in public administrations in order to improve public services, democratic processes and strengthen support of public policies.

The 1997 Smart City Task Force, a 10-member task force comprised of business and educational leaders that met for over a year to chart the city's technological future, defined a "Smart City" as a community that has made a conscious effort to employ and support information technology to improve the quality of life for its citizens.

It recommended looking at this area to:

- Connect government services to this technology
- Increase transparency and accountability of government
- Encourage the city to utilize technology in providing efficient and cost effective government services
- Establish an ongoing smart city task force and advocacy group
- Promote access to these services for all citizens
- Identify funding sources to help establish this.
- Deliver maximum value for taxpayers' dollar

The 1998 Comprehensive Plan included the imperative to "implement the recommendations of the 1998 Smart City Task Force to ensure that our technology dependent businesses are adequately served with the appropriate infrastructure". This Plan enlarges the imperative to government services. The City must utilize technology to improve public services, enhance government transparency and benefit from the efficiencies and financial economies that result from such implementation. City Hall is a mélange of systems and equipment, containing little interconnectivity and few public services. Its website should be made to be more usable according to best practices.

The implementation of e-Government is another hallmark of sustainability. It is still another method of link the community so citizens are able to receive and present information and interact more easily with their government. What is required is the commitment to institute real organizational change. In our form of government, individual departments keep individual records and information. Desired goals can and probably will be reached with integrated, disparate systems and services. The City will benefit from this new paradigm.

**Critical Issues:**

1. Inclusive access – all departments must input all appropriate information accurately and make it available for universal access.
  - multi-platform access through a choice of devices (pc, digital TV, mobile terminal, public Internet access points onsite)
  - access to and through the internet
2. Trust and confidence – all systems must be secure within the purpose for which they are meant.
  - Public access must be accurate
  - Private records must be secured with strict control of access
3. Interoperability - the ability to exchange and use information from different systems and components
  - Define intra-organizational boundaries
  - Agree on unified internal procedures and standards
4. Organizational Change
  - Elected officials and employees shall be willing to use these new systems and this new paradigm.
  - Joint creation of best practices and performance metrics to analyze and assess the benefits and performance of the implemented e-Government initiative.
5. Cost
  - The dollars spent will result in savings of time, energy and materials.

**A web accessible City portal contains, at a minimum, the following:**

- Ability to pay for services (parking tickets, taxes, utilities, etc.)
- A site where all **Request For Proposals** and submitted Bids are listed
- The public can submit any **Request For Information** and track its progress

- Receive notifications of its progress
- Access the information
- View Live and Archived Meetings with links to all content discussed, supporting documents and presentations

**Land Use Issues:**

Electronic Planning, Zoning, Design Review and Building Permit Materials should include but not be limited to:

- All applications and educational material detailing the appropriate way to complete applications
- The ability to submit applications
- Track the progress of the applications
- Receive notification of when and where to appear for hearings
- Receive notification of decisions
- Online Assessment Database of City Parcels
- Online Access to City Tax Maps
- City Zoning Ordinance
- Planned Unit Developments
- Online Access to ALL City Land Use Maps including, but not limited to:
  - Comprehensive Plan Development Map
  - Open Space Resources Map
  - City Zoning Map
  - City Overlay District Map
  - Historic and Architectural Review District Maps

**Receive Other Notification** - including, but not limited to:

- All Municipal services and service schedules
- All Municipal materials
- All City events

- Dates of elections; material showing in what election district each property belongs; the address of each polling station
- Alerts regarding topics of interest
- Volunteer Opportunities
  - View open lists and register on line for volunteering for City Boards, Commissions and Committies

**Recommendations:**

- Quantify all existing ICT resources in the city;
- Identify desired ICT resources for the city and agree on a unified system;
- Create the e-Government initiative and implement it
- Determine what e-Government services are wanted by citizens and implement them
- Identify Funding Sources
- Participate in the County's new Geological Information System (GIS)

Implementing an e-Government initiative will enhance the transparency of government, assist in the land use notification process, and streamline administrative processes resulting in cost savings, to name only a few benefits of such an implementation.

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## HISTORIC AND NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION

The City of Saratoga Springs has an exceptionally rich architectural character and unusually high number of historically significant buildings for a city of its size. These resources afford the community a high quality of life and an economic advantage. Understanding this fact makes preserving its historic resources critical and a high priority for public support.

The community desires to protect its attractiveness for the long term by marrying historic preservation to development in a way that allows the building of the past to be carefully maintained and fully utilized. These irreplaceable assets provide the visual benchmarks by which new additions to the community will be judged. The expectation is that new buildings will contribute to the beauty and integrity of the city and complement those built in the past.

Saratoga Springs' enduring heritage as a renowned spa resort and horseracing venue provides a strong image for the city and so the structures associated with both must remain a focal point for preservation. In addition, preservation efforts will embrace the full range of historic properties and architectural styles - from early neoclassical Federal and Georgian examples to high style Victorian era houses to later 20th century revival structures and to simple vernacular buildings - in order to preserve the tapestried heritage of the whole community.

All public policies, laws, programs and projects shall be considered in light of the impacts they have on the community's historic fabric and archeological resources. Such consideration will include the historic landscapes and open spaces that provide the setting for the community's historic resources. In this way the City will a living heritage for future generations and continue it legacy of being the Historic "**City in the Country**"

### **Recommendations to strengthen Architectural Preservation:**

- For a thorough discussion of historic preservation in this City, including the identification of districts, the historical backgrounds, existing conditions and review considerations for each, this Comprehensive Plan references and directs the reader to the book, *Guidelines for the Preservation of the Saratoga Springs Historic District*, published by the Saratoga Springs Design Review Commission, 1992.
- Neighborhood Analysis – The Planning office shall do a complete study of the neighborhoods and create an overlay map which would be used to assist zoning and planning boards in maintaining the fabric of the different neighborhoods

- Implement Neighborhood Conservation Districts
- Expand the Historic Districts to include all properties currently on the National Register of Historic Places (by district)
- Important Signature Gateway: The City's **Racecourse Area Historic District** must be expanded to include all buildings and lands related to the Saratoga Race Track use with special emphasis on including the Fasig-Tipton auction house, its stables and barns, the Oklahoma Track and its facilities and the former Whitney estate south of the Saratoga Racecourse. On the North side of Union Avenue it is recommended that the Historic area should extend to East Avenue north and then to the east to include Fasig Tipton track related property to Tipton Lane. Then North on East Avenue along North boundary line of Oklahoma and Horse Haven Property to Henning Road. Then South along Henning Road to Morrisey Lane to Interstate 87 interchange (This will include the remainder of the Yaddo estate presently included as part of the Race Course Historic District). On the south side of Union Avenue, the **Racecourse Area Historic District** should also be expanded to include the track related parcels along the east boundary of Nelson Avenue to the north boundaries of individual unrelated residential parcels on Crescent Avenue. The City should designate these properties as additions to the existing "Racecourse Area Historic District". As with all areas of the City, but especially so with this critically important Racecourse Area, it is vital that the City maintain its local land use board (Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning Board and Design Review Commission) jurisdictional protections for all areas of the track and track related properties. It must continue to vigilantly assure that all City land use reviews and decisions are and continue to be honored by the State and present and future thoroughbred racing franchise holders. Further, the City should work in close concert with NY State Historic Preservation Office to protect this prestigious area.

**Consider expanding several existing National Register and City historic districts around the City:**

- The **Union Avenue Historic District** eastward to include currently omitted parcels along Union Avenue to the east and southward along Nelson Avenue near the Racecourse Area.
- 
- The **West Side Historic District** northward to include the historic "northwest side neighborhood and southward along South Franklin Street to West Circular to include the former Delaware & Hudson Freight Office and barn, westward along West Circular Street and northerly on Elm Street to include the historic neighborhood known as "Dublin"
- The **East Side Historic District** in a northwesterly direction to include contributory properties in the area toward North Street and East Avenue, and perhaps jumping over the westerly portion of the Union Avenue Historic District to

include contemporaneous East Side properties south of Union Avenue toward Lincoln Avenue from Broadway to Nelson Avenue

- Craft and implement a Neighborhood Preservation Act in order to save currently endangered historic properties and to assure proper stewardship of all properties in all neighborhoods throughout the City by updating the City Code to recognize and localize the current Property Maintenance Code of New York State, effective January 1, 2003, as well as establishing clear enforcement and penalty guidelines of same.

#### **Consideration of the Design Review Commission Board (DRC) includes:**

- Terms consistent with the other Boards:
  - Recommend 6 hours of mandatory education the first year, with at least 2 hours of Historical Preservation education; four hours every year thereafter.
  - The DRC should be an advisory Board to **State Environmental Quality Review Act** determinations, not the lead agency.
  - Appointing more trained architects with enough alternates to cover any “conflicts of interest”.

#### **Recommendations for Neighborhood Preservation:**

- Reclaim all City rights-of-way that have been paved over either by the City or by individuals. Return these areas to green and treed space. Legislate fines for pave-overs and enforce compliance to keeping these rights-of-way green.
- Rezone the north side of Church Street bounded by Van Rensselaer Street and Seward Street as a Hospital/Medical Office zone. This new zone Hospital/Medical Office district shall replace the old Medical/Office/Commercial district. This district is specifically to facilitate the needed expansion of the Saratoga Hospital. Space in this district should not be taken up by commercial enterprises but should be saved for Medical related enterprises.
- Down zone the area abutting the railroad tracks and running between Route 9N and a point drawn from Allen Road to the railroad tracks from its current Warehouse District to the UR-4 District that it adjoins on the west. This is necessary to protect the residences that already exist in this neighborhood.
- Down zone the area between Putnam and Henry Streets from York Street to Nelson Avenue back into UR-4. This is one of the oldest districts in the City and it is across from the area known as the Farmer’s Market including one of the famous City springs. To down zone this area from the T-Zone back to its original family neighborhood zone is in keeping with the historic and neighborhood preservation emphases of this plan. It also contributes to the charm that is one of the economic benefits to the City. The current urban renewal type structures

should become pre-existing, non-conforming structures. Because Excelsior Avenue is zoned for heavy development, this last area of in-City open space becomes more vital to protect for passive recreation as well as a link to the City in the Country concept.

- The UR-5 zone should be abolished and all lands in this designation should be returned to a UR-4 from which it was carved before urban renewal changed it. Any higher building in this area should become a pre-existing non-conforming use.
- Allow uses along Brook Road in the vicinity of the quarry to remain until such time that the quarry is exhausted. When or if that occurs, any future re-zoning should not increase density levels above those permitted by current zoning. In addition, the intensity of these uses should not increase.
- All properties facing Grand Avenue, west of West Avenue, excluding only the corner property that faces West Avenue, should be returned to the UR-2 zone from which they were carved. This will give much needed protect to the residential neighborhood already existing there.
- Properties on 9N (Church Street) from the railroad tracks to the City's border should be returned to the RR-1 from which they were carved. This area is in the "open space" on the outer edge of the City and therefore, should be part of the "Country" component of the City. Any commercial buildings there should become pre-existing, non-conforming uses.
- Return Excelsior Springs Road to the UR-1 district from which it was carved. Anything that does not conform to UR-1 standards should be a pre-existing, non-conforming use. With the intense development on Excelsior Avenue, this by-way becomes an important transitional area to protect the many residential neighborhoods to which it leads.

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## HOUSING POLICIES

The dynamic social and community structure so highly valued in Saratoga Springs is a direct product of the diversity in our population. We are fortunate to enjoy a variety of ages, heritages, educational backgrounds, professions, cultural backgrounds and interests. The City needs affordable/workforce housing in order to further foster its support of this diversity. Such housing, also, fulfills the need to provide accommodations for the hourly wage workers who service our tourist industry, restaurants and hospitals among other businesses. Additionally, it provides housing for young people who are born here or choose to live here. Only with these young people can the City assure itself of the future leadership necessary to protect the continuity of this special place.

We recommend the elimination of density bonuses for affordable/workforce housing in this plan. After study, this committee finds that the only way to assure a diversity of housing is to legislate the following recommendations.

For the purposes of this plan, Affordable/Workforce Housing is defined as housing that costs less than 30% of hourly worker or workforce income. Income figures for need should be calculated against the median income of the County. Such housing is to serve but not limited to hourly wage workers, lower income earners, seniors on fixed incomes, and young people just starting out. The affordable/workforce portions of this section is not directed towards section 8 of the U.S. Housing Act

### Recommendations of this Plan

1. Legalize existing garage and carriage house apartments where they exist in UR-3, UR-4 and UR-4A districts.
2. The Planning Board shall impose a **Proportional Impact Fee** on developers who construct or renovate buildings to assist with affordable/workforce housing. It will be in the same manner that the PB levies parking fees on new construction in the downtown or recreational fees. This shall entail a detailed study showing the nexus between the City's business growth and the need for affordable housing.
  - This fee shall go into an established Saratoga Housing Trust that may be used to reimburse the City where tax abatements occur – see #4, or it may be used to assist with condo maintenance fees where workforce units are included in expensive developments.
  - The City should further consider sources of funding the Housing Trust. A small mortgage tax that is dedicated to the Saratoga Housing Trust is one possibility with the agreement of the State.
  - Housing trust funds are permanently dedicated sources of revenue used to support the preservation and production of affordable housing. They demonstrate long term public commitment that can leverage additional resources and bring together various stakeholders to develop coordinated regional housing solutions.

3. Any person or corporation that builds a project comprising 50% affordable/workforce rental apartments or rental units will:
  - Receive a 485-B abatement in property taxes to help them re-coop investment costs, commencing with the certification of the rental units by the administering agency.
  - Have these rental prices administered and monitored by the DPED or an appropriate social agency if the owners are to receive the tax abatement.
  - Keep these units affordable for forty years and be maintained in good condition.
  - Should market conditions or housing needs change, the City DPED may decide at which point these units are no longer necessary. With a vote of approval by the City Council, these units will revert to market prices.
  - The City may recover tax abatement amounts from the Housing Trust, see #2.
  
4. The Housing Authority owns the public lands of Vanderbilt and Jefferson Terraces. A number of these 1960's urban renewal projects are in a condition of deferred maintenance. The Housing Authority could partner with a private developer using pass through tax credits to rebuild this entire area into a new neighborhood. The T-4 mixed use area is suggested as a pattern (a neighborhood including small convenience and small retail shops to service the area, parking off alleys in the rear of town house units, sidewalks and small pocket green areas for active and passive recreation). Such a project could result in many new units. It would include:
  - Housing Authority Seniors and
  - Housing Authority families
  
5. Other recommended mechanisms to assist with affordable and workforce housing:
  - COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS (CLT'S)
    - a. Community land trusts are independent not for profit corporations legally chartered by municipalities. Many CLT's target their activities and resources toward charitable activities like providing affordable housing. The CLT can purchase land, develop and manages it.

- 
- HOUSING TRUST FUNDS
    - a. The Workforce Housing Partnerships are initiatives that have been started but greater momentum and results are needed. Federal support for affordable housing has declined by 77% during the time period from 1978 to 1997. The federal government expresses plans to cut housing programs by an additional 622 million dollars. There is also a proposal to eliminate the community block grant programs. This committee advocates for greater city cooperation with the Workforce Housing Partnership through the good offices of the Economic Opportunity Council.
6. Encourage new housing to be consistent with the human scale, historical context and design characteristics of traditional Saratoga neighborhoods.
    - Height in each district should be consistent with the prevailing height of existing structures in the district.
    - The Comprehensive Plan Committee recommends adoption of the plurality report of the Downtown Study Heights Committee presented to this Committee. (See appendix V).
  7. Promote the conversion to residential use of upper floors in commercial districts as per the T-Zone legislation and the Downtown Transportation Plan.
  8. Reconstruct and rehabilitate existing housing to revitalize neighborhoods to maintain affordability, and reintroduce good affordable units into the City's housing stock.
  9. Promote affordable/workforce housing throughout the City to avoid over-concentration in any one area.
  10. Rehabilitate and develop affordable housing via a "whole-site approach" with attention to site location and layout, façade design, pedestrian movement and accessibility, adequate infrastructure provision, and sensitivity to historic preservation.
  11. Make greater use of City-owned properties for affordable/workforce housing.
  12. Promote more aggressive enforcement of housing codes and zoning regulations to ensure decent, safe housing units. This should include Housing Authority properties.
  13. Review zoning and development policies to actively encourage affordable housing construction or redevelopment through mechanisms such as:
    - Permitting conversion and permanent residential use of accessory buildings

such as carriage houses and garages in UR-3, 4, and 4A Districts as affordable housing, recommended above.

- Establishment of the dedicated fund from development fees, recommended above.
- A period of tax reduction for affordable/workforce rental construction, recommended above.

14. Maximize participation in Federal, State and County funding programs for the construction and rehabilitation of affordable rental and homeowner units.

15. Encourage construction of all housing to be in proximity to transit services.

## OPEN SPACE, NATURAL RESOURCES AND COUNTRY OVERLAY

“The City in the Country” describes Saratoga Springs. This simple phrase captures the unique opportunity that history and geography have provided our community (see *City of Saratoga Springs Open Space Resources 2002 Report 1*). But given a 5% rate of population growth since the 1990’s, our city is at risk of losing the sharp distinction between the city and the country. Saratoga’s natural landscapes encircling the city are in danger of being fragmented and transformed into urban and suburban sprawl.

Since Saratoga cherishes its “City in the Country” character and seeks to preserve its open space and natural resources, it has become a member of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) <http://www.iclei.org/>. ICLEI is not only an association but a movement of local governments dedicated to achieving sustainability.

Saratoga has made a commitment to the environment by choosing to substitute 42% of its electricity use formerly derived from non-renewable sources of energy with wind power. The city could decrease its ecological footprint even more by setting goals for lowering carbon emissions and encouraging residents and visitors to walk, bicycle, and use public transportation.

Saratoga’s natural resources have helped to create a unique landscape and richness of culture that has made our city an attractive and interesting place to live and visit. Land use decisions, especially in regard to the acreage of open space left in the city’s outer district, that consider natural constraints as required by the city’s Conservation District zoning, will work to protect and preserve surface and groundwater resources, reduce air and noise pollution, limit erosion, moderate temperatures, and sustain healthy wildlife habitats and population.

The city has been gathering data on its natural resources and in 2002 the Open Space Project completed a detailed mapping of open space and recreation resources which identifies environmentally sensitive lands, agricultural lands, permanently protected open space, bike and pedestrian trail systems, etc. This map has been a valuable tool that the city has used to identify open space for purchase under the Land Preservation Bond Act (Local Law 2001-5) approved by the voters in 2002.

The Open Space Plan for Saratoga Springs aims to protect the critical boundary between rural landscape and town with purposeful urban design. As the city continues to develop, care must be taken to maintain a vital urban center with a strong rural edge. The edges of the urban core might be defined as Skidmore College campus and Loughberry Lake on the north, the D&H railroad on the west, Saratoga Spa State Park on the south, and the Northway on the east. These boundaries are described more precisely in the city’s zoning ordinance.

Open Space means different things to different people; however, it all contributes to quality of life and provides earth services. In the 2004 New York State publication, *Land Open Space Planning Guide*, open space is described as “land that is not intensively developed for residential, commercial, industrial or institutional use”; for our purposes, this includes:

- 
- Public (city and state) parklands (e.g. Congress Park, Saratoga Spa, etc.)
  - Farm lands (e.g. Pitney, Sunnyview/Ashgrove)
  - Private institutional properties (e.g. Skidmore College and Yaddo)
  
  - Race tracks
  
  - School and public recreation fields
  
  - Golf courses
  
  - Pocket parks and community gardens (providing passive and active recreation)
  
  - Wetlands and stream corridors
    - Land at the edges of our rural and scenic roads
    - Trails and pathways
    - Historic and geologic resources (e.g. Petrified Gardens)
    - Nature preserves (Corcoran property-Ballston Spa/Milton Preserve; Excelsior Park Preserve)
    - City entranceways (, Exits 13, 14,15, Rte 29W, Rte.29 E.; Rte.9 N, Rte. 9 S: Rte. 50 N & S)
    - Waterway paddling trails and access (Kayderosseras Creek; Fish Creek)
    - Waterfront recreation land and access (Saratoga Lake; Lake Lonely boat launch; Loughberry Lake waterfront land)

The city needs to provide both active and passive recreational opportunities for all of its residents and visitors. As our population ages, passive recreation is of increasing importance. Passive parks are aesthetically pleasing green spaces that may have gardens, paths, or a fountain where people can sit, take their children, listen to music, stroll, or read. Congress Park is a perfect example of a passive park.

In order to be responsible stewards of our open space, recreation lands, and natural resources the Plan recommends that:

- The City shall create policies regulating the use of the lands and facilities in the parks and open lands system.
  
- The City shall regularly update and maintain an inventory of City-owned land, open space, parkland and buildings.
  
- Actively promote public transportation, bicycling and walking.
  
- Implement the City of Saratoga Springs 2006 Comprehensive Bicycle Plan (see appendix VIII) within a reasonable length of time.

**Open Space Goals and Objectives:**

1. Continue to maintain and strengthen the city's Conservation District through conservation design and low density development (the equivalent of no more than one unit per two acres).
2. Develop and promote an approach to open space and natural resource protection that is based on watershed boundaries, wildlife habitat areas, and open space corridors.

- Adopt a 100 ft. "green" buffer (no permanent development) along all of its stream corridors into its zoning regulations (see OSP 2002 report p.17). In addition, the city's zoning should limit soil disturbance activities and require a vegetated buffer (no cutting) within 75 ft. of all streams.

Note: The method for measuring the 100-ft. buffer zones needs to change. The distance shall begin from the "top of the bank" on either side of the stream. This would guarantee a complete 100 ft. buffer on each side of a wider stream.

- Conduct an inventory of sensitive wildlife habitat in the conservation districts and in all of the city's open space land including bike path areas and stream corridors. Identify places of special importance such as vernal pools, endangered or rare habitats and species, and sites of archaeological significance.
  - Cooperate with neighboring communities and coordinate local activities with recommendations of the Green Infrastructure Plan for Saratoga County .
  - Clarify and sharpen the definition of "buffer" as it relates to open space, address setback requirements, encroachments, public right-of-ways, and potential pathways, placing greater emphasis on substantial vegetative buffers that screen property on a year-round basis.
3. Create a network of multi-use trails throughout the city, linking downtown with outlying neighborhoods and recreational facilities.
    - Make Saratoga Springs a truly walkable city, end-to-end by creating a spider web of pathways from the city's core to all of the outer city neighborhoods. Require that all new residential construction include sidewalks and curbing.
    - Emphasize multi-use and off-road treatments to enhance the safety and enjoyment of trail users.
    - Use existing passages such as utility right-of-ways, abandoned rail beds, and stream corridors whenever possible to separate trail users from vehicular traffic

- Accommodate different types of trail users (i.e. walkers, bikers, skiers, equestrians) when trails are designed
- Procure additional funding to fully implement the plan to connect Railroad Run to Saratoga State Park.
- Double our city's trail system mileage by adding 35 miles.
- Identify trails and other city-owned open space and parks as parkland on the comprehensive plan map.

4. Implement all of the mandatory requirements of the City Charter to enable Saratoga Springs to better acquire and manage its open space and ensure that the city is able to procure funding for such management, environmental programs, and future land acquisition..

- Re-activate the city's conservation advisory council by filling any vacancies that exist. This council will report to the Mayor and City Council through the Administrator of Parks, Open Land & Historic Preservation.

5. Update the city's *Open Spaces Resources 2002 Report*, prioritizing parcels for acquisition and preservation within the urban core as well as exploring greenway linkages between parcels that have already been purchased.

- Identify, through surveys, neighborhood meetings and other means, areas of the city that are under-served in terms of passive and active recreational facilities and prepare and implement a five-year plan to address these deficiencies.
- Explore opportunities to protect land adjacent to existing open space parcels to create a connected network of greenways.
- Establish a permanent trust fund, supported by a dedicated revenue source such as a fractional percent of property taxes, to purchase lands and conservation easements to preserve and protect our city's open spaces. Prepare a management plan for city-owned parklands and open spaces.

6. Increase public education and awareness about the value of protecting our natural resources, our agricultural land, our wildlife habitats, and our open spaces.

- Work with large landowners, i.e. the Pitney, Seaman, and Ashgrove Farms, to identify alternatives to development such as conservation easements and the purchase of development rights.
- Conduct neighborhood public information meetings to discuss the city's plans for open space, recreation, and trails/pathways.

- Establish relationships with volunteer organizations such as Sustainable Saratoga Springs to foster a community that is more ecologically sensitive.
  - Apply for funding to set up community gardens and greenhouses for the city's cultivation of decorative flowers for its public parks, and set aside a certain percentage of the land from agricultural land acquired for open space.
7. Identify, through surveys, neighborhood meetings and other means:
- Areas of the city that lack adequate sidewalk and trail systems and develop a five-year plan which creates a comprehensive pathway network that connects all of the city's neighborhoods and districts.
  - Inventory all existing pathways and record information such as age, condition, description, permitted uses, ADA compliance, lighting, signage, and crosswalks.
  - Finance trail system development, aggressively pursue both public and private sector funding sources.
  - The City should conduct an inventory of trees in the public rights of way for their protection and care and as a means of educating the citizenry as to their importance.
  - Identify a list of all city-owned properties available for public use (such as trails, open space, parks) to ensure easy accessibility to such information by the public.
8. Enforce existing city laws to ensure that natural resources, open spaces and wildlife habitats are respected and protected.
- Survey the city and identify all of those parcels of land where the City or landowners have illegally annexed the public right-of-way for personal use, most commonly to park vehicles.
  - Notify residents who are in violation of the relevant city laws and reclaim lands after proper notice. Institute fines for non compliance.
9. Control noise, air and light pollution.
- Adopt development and road standards that help reduce noise and light pollution.
  - Strengthen enforcement of the existing noise ordinance, particularly in the downtown area.

A primary aim of this Plan, and indeed prior plans, is to encourage quality development that can be clearly balanced with the preservation, protection and enhancement of open space. In fact, economic growth and open spaces are interdependent and there is compelling evidence that the presence of ample and accessible public open space

increases community property values and contributes to economic growth.

Furthermore, the provision of diverse and high quality indoor and outdoor recreation areas and facilities and a community that is linked by walking and bicycle trails adds immeasurably to quality of life. Saratoga Springs is unique in its distinct edge between the “city” and the “country”.

There are several types of open space/recreation resources worthy of protection and enhancement to preserve the image and experience of Saratoga Springs as the “City in the Country”. These general types of resources are described in the “Open Space Plan for Saratoga Springs 1994” adopted by the City Council in 1994. These resources include:

**Natural Features** such as stream corridors, wetlands, and important habitat.

**Rural View Sheds** of particular value along selected roadways and entranceways to the City.

**Linkages** provide natural corridors for wildlife, accommodate the city’s growing trail and recreational system, and promote greater accessibility to existing areas.

**Productive Farmland**, contributes to sustainability and a locally self-sufficient economy by, ensuring current and future generations a continued food supply

**Private Recreation Lands** provide essential leisure services, tax revenue and jobs.

**Public Recreation Areas** include parklands, pocket parks, trails and open spaces in public ownership primarily put to passive use.

The Country Overlay Area Map is a graphic representation of these resources for comprehensive planning purposes. It is incorporated into this plan.

The following policies are proposed to maintain, promote and enhance the City’s open space and recreation resources without diminishing private owners’ property value or resulting in a “taking’ without compensation.

- Promote concentrated, compact growth in the “City’ while protecting and enhancing the rural quality of and access to the “Country’ and maintaining a sharp edge between the two.
- Use open spaces, natural features, institutions, recreational facilities and regional transportation features to form a well-defined edge to the City’s urban core.
- Provide linkages (such as trails, bikeways, recreation-ways, wildlife corridors, greenways) between existing areas of protected open space and natural resources.
- Preserve and protect important open spaces and natural areas including stream

corridors, wetlands, agricultural resources and views sheds of aesthetic value.

- Ensure adequate buffers and encourage unique forms of development for commercial and industrial growth. Enhance rural views along roadways and entranceways to the City.
- Establish creative mechanisms to protect historic properties and key farmland parcels.
- Update systematic and timely implementation of the recommendations in the City's adopted Open Space Plan.
- Develop adequate and diverse active and passive recreational areas and facilities and encourage their frequent use through appropriate location and design. Such facilities should meet the needs of as diverse a range of age groups and interests as possible. The City should concentrate first on facilities for which there is an actual shortage.
- The City should pursue public/private partnerships to meet identified recreational needs, for example, providing access to Saratoga water bodies or working in conjunction with the YMCA.
- The City should establish an on-going dialogue with adjacent communities and the school district on opportunities for inter-municipal recreational programming and facility use.
- The City should establish new recreational areas in under-served areas of the City.

### **“Country Overlay” Area**

Because the balance between the “city” and the “country” is fundamental to the general health, welfare and economic viability of the community, this plan sets out to define and enhance the “country” within the City's jurisdiction. Since the development of the towns surrounding Saratoga Springs is indeed beyond the city's control, the city must take proactive measures to preserve the greenbelt surrounding the urban core.

The state of open space in the city has changed dramatically during the last decade, with new development threatening to blur the distinction between the “City” and the “Country”. Several farms have ceased operations, and numerous parcels have been subdivided for suburban residential developments. Major entranceways to the city have experienced commercial and retail growth. Recent prolonged controversies regarding development proposals at key city gateways speak to the need for comprehensive planning in the “greenbelt”.

The map of the Country Overlay Area illustrates the open spaces that remain and that are important to be considered in the preservation of city character. In a general way, the Country Overlay Area depicts a nearly contiguous “greenbelt” around the urban core

which defines and shapes the “Country” in the “City in the Country” vision of this comprehensive plan. The map illustrates the diverse open space resources that collectively convey a sense of the traditional settlement pattern – a dense urban core with a distinct edge surrounded by open lands – that characterizes the historic settlement pattern of Saratoga Springs.

**The Country Overlay Area includes:**

- Private recreational lands and institutional open space resources such as the Saratoga National Golf Course, Yaddo, and the Saratoga Racetracks, the Oklahoma Race Track and the Trotting Track.
- Public recreational lands including the Saratoga Spa State Park.
- Designated wetlands and stream corridors
- Rural and scenic view-sheds including Exit 14, Union Avenue, Route 9P to Saratoga Lake, Adams Road, Locust Grove Road, Geyser Road between the City boundary and Route 50, Route 9 south, Route 9N from West Avenue to the City boundary, Lake Avenue becoming Route 29 out to the City boundary, Washington Street from the railroad tracks out to the City boundary, Ballston Avenue/Route 50 south to the Ballston Spa boundary, Route 50 north to Exit 15, and Grand Avenue from Slade Road out to the City boundary.
- Linkages to provide natural corridors for wildlife, to accommodate the city’s growing trail and recreational system, and to promote greater accessibility to existing areas.
- Farm land, including lower West Avenue, outer Lake Avenue, and the northwest agricultural area of the city.

Within the Country Overlay Area, the enhancement and protection of natural resources and the open space values present on a site, along with development tools to effect this enhancement, should be added as items to be considered by the Land Use Boards when evaluating development proposals. This evaluation will consider the balance between an activity’s positive contributions to the city and the potential negative effects on natural resources and open space character.

Establishing this innovative approach to the Country Overlay Area will:

- Improve the City’s open space resources by encouraging development in the other Special Development Areas and limiting suburban sprawl.
- Clarify the City’s wants and expectations for the preservation of open space character, make the approval process more efficient and clear, and encourage

general community interest and participation in the planning process early rather than confront later reaction to development proposals inconsistent with the “City in the Country” vision.

- Improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of infrastructure and service provision in the outer district by limiting suburban sprawl.
- The intent of this section is not to prohibit or permit any land use activity but instead is to reaffirm that open space values be taken into consideration in development proposals within the Country Overlay Area or in adopting any zoning amendments for areas included in the Country Overlay Area.

### **Conservation District (CD)**

This district was formerly known as the Conservation Development District (CDD). It has been re-designated as the Conservation District (CD) in order to recognize what the district is intended to be. The re-designation neither discourages nor encourages development in this area.

In order to achieve a balance between well designed residential development, meaningful open space conservation, and natural resource protection, the land within the Country Overlay Area has been designated as a Conservation District. The boundaries of this district are indicated on the Development Plan map. It is the intent of this Plan that uses in the Conservation District will be limited to residential, recreational and other open space uses.

Within the Conservation District, residential development shall correspond to the following requirements:

- Base density: 0.5 dwelling units / acre of unconstrained land (equivalent to 1 home per two acres of land).

Note - unconstrained lands are areas of the site that do not contain lands with severe constraints to development such as: wetlands, very steep slopes, stream corridors, floodplains, etc.

- Conservation subdivision design requires mandatory clustering
- In subdivisions served by public sewer, a minimum of 50% of the unconstrained land, and all of the severely constrained land, will remain permanently protected open space (under conservation easement). The City should institute/continue a building moratorium on all land that is not yet served by the County Sewer System.

### **The Design Approach to Conservation Subdivision:**

The conservation subdivision design approach is quite simple and involves collaboration between the planning board and the applicant at the earliest stage of design - the concept or sketch plan phase. To determine the yield, or possible lot count for a site, subtract the lands which contain severe constraints to development (to be defined in the subdivision regulations). The maximum number of housing units would then be based on

the number of acres remaining and the maximum allowable density in the Conservation District (0.5 du/acre).

Once the number of housing units is established, the design process can begin. Start by identifying the resources present on the site (agricultural land, historic or scenic views, significant tree stands, etc.)<sup>1</sup>. These open space resources will be designated as the conservation lands of the new subdivision. At least 50% as the minimum percentage of unconstrained land outlined above, plus all of the severely constrained land subtracted out earlier, shall be set aside as permanently protected open land. A conservation easement will be used to ensure that this land remains undeveloped.

Once the analysis of resources is done, it is possible to identify lands where development is most appropriate. Locate the homes in these development areas, design road alignments to connect these homes, and then draw the lot lines. Randall G. Arendt, in his book *Conservation Design for Subdivisions: A Practical Guide to Creating Open Space Networks* (1996), provides excellent guidance in the use of this approach to subdivision design

#### **Continue to update of the city's adopted Open Space Plan:**

The update will include a detailed map of "Lands of Conservation Interest." This map will guide the Planning Board, the applicant, and the public in understanding the open space resources present on individual sites. This information will form the basis for designating conservation lands for new subdivisions in the Conservation District.

There are several advantages to the approach outlined for the Conservation District. They include:

- Open space conservation and natural resource protection guide the subdivision design process. Because the area and bulk regulations used for conventional subdivisions are not applicable, the design process is creative and not driven strictly by arbitrary minimum lot size requirements
- Significant networks of open land are created through the development process – the value of homes within these subdivisions are enhanced as are the value of the surrounding neighborhoods, and the quality of life of all city residents is improved
- Developers can provide homes on a variety of lot sizes. This allows for a more diversified housing stock to meet the needs of our changing society.

It is recommended that the City amend its zoning and subdivision regulations as soon as is possible to reflect the provisions outlined for the Conservation District.

Additional Open Space Conservation Tools for consideration by the city are discussed in Appendix ix.

#### **Low Density Residential (LDR) District**

In order to achieve a balance between well designed residential development,

meaningful open space conservation and natural resource protection, additional areas of the city have been designated as a Low Density Residential (LDR) District. The boundaries of this district are indicated on the Development Plan map.

Within the Low Density Residential (LDR) District, residential development will correspond to all of the provisions outlined for the Conservation District (CD) above, except:

- Base density: In the LDR, the maximum density shall be 1.0 dwelling unit / acre of unconstrained land (equivalent to 1 home per one acre of land).

Note – unconstrained lands are areas of the site that do not contain lands with severe constraints to development such as wetlands, very steep slopes, stream corridors, floodplains, etc.

It is recommended the city amend its zoning and subdivision regulations to reflect the provisions outlined for the Low Density Residential (LDR) District.

## SCENIC RURAL ROADS, VISTAS, AND SIGNATURE GATEWAYS

The following sections on “Scenic Roads,” “Scenic Vistas,” and “Signature Gateways” rely substantially on the 2002 Open Space Plan for Saratoga Springs.

### **Scenic Roads:**

Rural or scenic roads and vistas enhance the character of our community in many ways. Roads are the primary vantage points from which many citizens and visitors experience the land around them, and the quality of the roadside has a lasting impact on our perception of place. In rural areas such as the city’s outer districts, country roads and undeveloped lands adjacent to them create a sense of remoteness and calm. In Saratoga Springs, this experience is particularly meaningful because these rural features are in such close proximity to the city’s vibrant inner core. It is still possible to enjoy the city’s active downtown area and, within minutes, drive a car or ride a bicycle down a quiet country road.

Protection of the character of rural or scenic roads can be accomplished through two approaches. First, development of properties which include or border rural roads can preserve a “country” feel when undertaken in accordance with the development provisions of the Conservation District, which would steer development away from rural or scenic roads and cluster homes elsewhere on the site as determined through the Conservation Analysis. In some cases, land acquisition or easements from landowners should be used to conserve critical lands along these roadways.

The second approach involves the scenic roads themselves. Excessive widening or straightening of rural roads can adversely affect the special character of these roadways. The city, the county, and Department of Transportation (DOT) should work together to establish guidelines for the treatment of these rural roads in our community.

### **Scenic Vistas:**

Scenic vistas, from which the visual qualities of the natural landscape are particularly rewarding, are present in a number of locations in the city. Several places have emerged in recent years through public discussion as especially significant to our community, including lands around Exit 14, the Geyser Road area, Gilbert Road, and Crescent Road, among many others. The community has placed value on rural vistas, such as those afforded by these and other roadways, as well as roads with open vistas that have cultural significance, such as East Avenue at the Oklahoma track.

Scenic vistas can be protected through the development process, using the provisions of the Conservation District, or through the acquisition of land or easements. It is recommended that the city consider further defining its visual resources by establishing a Visual Assessment and Visual Impact Program Policy.

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**Rural or Scenic Roads and Vistas in Saratoga Springs:**

Rural or scenic road segments and roads with scenic vistas are listed below, and include but not limited to portions of:

- Petrified Gardens Road, Hickock Road
- NYS Route 9N (from the railroad tracks to the city's border)
- NYS Route 29 West (from the railroad tracks to the city's western boundary)
- Grand Avenue (from West Avenue to the city's western boundary)
- Adams Road
- Hutchins Road
- Geyser Road
- Route 50 (from the Geyser Road to the city's southwest boundary)
- Kaydeross Avenue
- Crescent Avenue
- Union Avenue (from Exit 14 to Nelson Avenue)
- NYS Route 9P (Union Avenue east of the Northway to the City boundary)
- Gilbert Road
- Meadowbrook Road
- Dyer Switch Road
- Stafford's Bridge Avenue
- Ruggles Road
- Ingersol Road
- Old Schuylerville Road
- NYS Route 29 East (east of the Northway)
- East Avenue (to the Oklahoma Track area)

**Signature Gateways:**

Gateways are important entrances to the city where the scenic qualities and character of our community are on display for residents and visitors alike. Saratoga's signature gateways come in two forms: gateways that are primarily undeveloped and relatively pristine in appearance, and gateways that are somewhat developed with a mixture of commercial and residential uses.

In the case of Saratoga Springs' primarily undeveloped gateways, the city should do everything in its legislative and enforcement ability to conserve the pristine qualities of these entrances to the community. The experience of arrival to the city is greatly enhanced by the transition from these undeveloped gateways to the developed inner core of the city. To accomplish this, the city should seek to protect significant gateway properties from development that is not in keeping with the city character. This can be accomplished through the land trust acquisition of a conservation easement. The city should also use the development process, under the provisions of the Conservation District, to steer the location of new homes away from the gateway areas.

In the case of Saratoga Springs' more developed gateways, the city should work to improve site design and architecture of development that occurs at these entranceways.

Design standards should emphasize, among other things, pedestrian and bicycle connections to the inner district, buffering of parking areas through the placement of buildings or the use of native vegetation, and appropriate architecture and signage. The goal for these areas is not to foster a more dense pattern of land use, but rather to improve the attractiveness and sense of arrival for these more developed gateways.

**Signature Gateways in Saratoga Springs:**

## Rural Gateways:

- Route 29 East (Lake Avenue), from the Northway east to the City boundary
- Union Avenue, from the Saratoga Racetrack to the Route 9P Bridge at Fish Creek
- Route 9 South (South Broadway), from Crescent Avenue to the Malta boundary
- Route 50 South, from West Avenue to the Ballston Spa boundary
- Route 29 West, from the Slade Creek area to the Milton boundary
- Route 9N from West Avenue to the Greenfield boundary

## Developed Gateways:

- Exit 15 interchange area
- Route 50 North, from Exit 15 to Broadway

## SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT AREAS

The Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement forms the basis of the City's development plan. If we are to be successful in preparing for the future, the City must accommodate the rapidly changing needs of business and commerce in our community in a sustainable manner, consistent with the Vision Statement, and we must protect and enhance the environmental, cultural and social amenities that make Saratoga Springs such an attractive and vibrant locale.

Saratoga Springs is currently in a good position to capitalize on our collective strengths and enthusiasm. We can move beyond a traditionally limiting reactive posture to a positive and creative approach to changing land use and community needs. It is proposed, therefore, that the City harness its current momentum to implement the following recommendations addressing previously identified issues and advance the Plan's overall goals.

The Development Plan shown in Figure 2 is a graphic representation of the growth and development policies set forth in this Comprehensive Plan. With maximum input from the public, the City should conduct a through study of this Comprehensive Plan and the Development Plan Map (Figure 2), to clarify the desired growth potential of the City. Nothing in this section should push the City over a level of growth with which it is comfortable.

The various land use categories shown on the map represent in a general way the intended uses and densities desired or anticipated for the community in the future. There are a number of important points to note about these land use categories:

- The land use categories should reflect a vision for the City in the future, consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's Vision Statement.
- There should be street relief from the 12'/80% T-Zone setbacks. Mandated setback for art work, trees or greenery, porches, colonnades, small vest pocket parks going into recessed lobbies, etc. will bring us back to a City that is known for its designed standards.
- The land use categories in the Development Plan are not zoning districts. The land use categories are broader and more general than zoning districts.
- The land use categories are general guides to future zoning and development policies. State law mandates that zoning must be in conformance with the policies of the Comprehensive Plan. This means that the intensity of use reflected in the zoning for a particular area must be equal or less than that stated on the Development Plan map of this document. When areas are to be rezoned, the uses and densities permitted within the zoning district must be compatible

and may not exceed the ranges presented in the land use category of the Development Plan.

- The boundaries for each of the land use categories are intentionally non-precise. Except where otherwise noted within the Comprehensive Plan, the boundaries of the zoning districts are far more specific and detailed. This Plan provides the overall objectives and policies for a given area without the details.

### **“Special Development Areas”**

Seven distinct geographic zones are identified as Special Development Areas based upon their present characteristics and their individual need for infill and enhancement, their potential for future development, and/or the need for creative solutions to topographic, physical and environmental complexities.

The intent is to provide creative solutions resulting in better designed in-fill construction, more efficient infrastructure, better neighborhoods, better transitions between adjacent development areas and/or zoning districts and an improved tax base, while mitigating adverse impacts. The seven Special Development Areas are:

1. Downtown
2. Excelsior Ave – inner area
3. Excelsior Ave – outer area
4. Weibel Ave – northern area
5. West Ave – northern area
6. West Ave – southern area
7. “Northern” South Broadway

Within each Special Development Area, uses specific to the opportunities and constraints represented within that Special Development Area will be encouraged, with the objective of enhancing appropriate development in a sustainable way.

Activities within the Special Development Areas undergo a thorough evaluation through the “Special Use Permit” process. This evaluation will consider the balance between an activity’s contribution to and its impact on the site, the street, the neighborhood, the Special Development Area, and the City.

The intended result is to ensure that new development is designed and constructed with greater sensitivity to and compatibility with adjacent man-made features and the natural environment and that it is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan vision for that area.

**Proposed land uses within these selected Special Development Areas should help to:**

- Improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of infrastructure and service provision within more concentrated areas.
- Preserve the City's open space resources by focusing development in selected areas and limiting urban sprawl.
- Embody more desirable development through better design.
- Enhance the pedestrian experience through creative landscape and architectural design, quality building construction, and general site compatibility.
- Respect the historic patterns and integrity of our neighborhoods and community by creating harmonious and appropriate relationships between uses and districts through building and site design, as well as prudent use of buffering, lighting and landscaping.
- Protect the human scale of the City by requiring new construction to be compatible with characteristic neighborhood patterns and architecture. Provide appropriate relationships with existing building and new development through the control of height, volume, mass, scale, color, materials and textures.
- Incorporate non-motor vehicle connectors - sidewalks, walking trails and bicycle paths - to promote interaction among the various neighborhoods.
- Support the City's flexibility in contending with emerging complex land use activities.
- Embody "revenue positive" development and increase the City's "jobs to housing ratio" to enhance revenue opportunities and minimize potential negative impacts to property taxes. Applicants for large scale residential projects should provide information about the requirements of the proposed development projects for public services (schools, police, fire, roads, etc.) and about anticipated tax revenues from the project, to allow the city to plan proactively for services and facilities.
- Improve the City's long-term financial health and stability through sustainable development.

## Identification of Specific Special Development Areas

### Special Development Area - 1

#### Downtown

**Location** - Generally the existing “Central Business District”, this area represents the City’s primary retail and service area.

#### Current Characteristics

Saratoga Springs’ Downtown has a very special quality that many believe is the key to the City’s success. In addition to its prominent role as the City’s social, commercial and retail center, it also represents a significant portion of the City’s taxable assessed value. Given its inherent importance, its success may also be attributed to its broad-based community support system. As illustrated by the 1998 report by the Downtown Comprehensive Plan Committee, “many divergent constituencies act in a singularly unified voice when it comes to protecting and promoting Downtown.”



A virtual prototype of the flexibility and standards envisioned within these Special Development Areas, this combination of mixed land uses working in concert with strong design guidelines contributes to the vitality of this destination location. The downtown area should be both strengthened and kept compact in order to maintain the necessary critical mass of business.

While the bulk of this area is generally constructed, there exists potential opportunities for significant in-fill, replacement, redevelopment and vertical expansion of existing low buildings within the Downtown core. Further steps are required in the near future to address parking deficits in this area of the city. Other necessary infrastructure is present, although aging and in need of improvement in some areas. Truck traffic continues to be a problem for the downtown.

#### Comprehensive Plan Vision

The vision for this area of the City is to preserve, protect and enhance the image and vitality of downtown by encouraging mixed-use in-fill development with strong pedestrian elements in a compact and concentrated form. Additionally, land uses here should enhance the balance and diversity of architecture and activities through a compatible, approachable and livable combination of formula and non-formula, as well as incubator retail establishments, high density (smaller unit) residential opportunities and commercial services.

#### Comprehensive Plan Recommendations

1. Maintain and enhance primary retail/service area with a diversity of mixed commercial, office and high-density residential land uses. Consider implementation of coordinated signage within this special development area.
2. Review current “advisory” development guidelines in the adopted “Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines”, developed by the Saratoga Springs Design Review Commission, for possible incorporation into the zoning ordinance.
3. Require new development to meet compatible density (height, bulk, etc.) requirements to sustain and to complement adjacent structures. Promote use of first floor space for retail/office and promote upper floors for office/residential use.
4. Encourage the maintenance and creation of public open space – including pocket parks - within general site development in the Downtown Special Development Area.
5. Continue to improve and / or add parking areas and structures in convenient locations and integrate such new facilities with nearby land uses. Projects in the Downtown Special Development Area shall provide parking and/or contribute proportionately to a fund to provide meaningful public parking solutions. The Planning Board shall cease waiving parking requirements.
6. Recognize the range of architectural diversity and historic neighborhoods that make Downtown unique and vital. The range of historic Downtown architecture is much broader than solely Victorian and can be complemented by compatible contemporary architecture.
7. Support and enhance the pedestrian and streetscape experience within Downtown including pedestrian connections with other areas of the City, with special attention given to pedestrian safety and access.
8. Create appropriate transitions from a compact Broadway thru the Downtown and to surrounding areas through building height, siting, mass and scale supported by use of public pedestrian space, buffering, landscaping, etc.
9. Conduct a lot-level analysis of land ownership, use and occupancy to identify available areas for infill, improvement and expansion and the subsequent analysis of community and consumer needs to promote marketing of available areas.
10. Encourage public, private and non-profit creative marketing and development strategies designed to continue the success of Downtown.
11. Require planting of appropriately selected and sized street trees to reintroduce or strengthen the street tree canopy that is so vital to the pedestrian experience of our city.

## Special Development Area – 2

### Excelsior Ave - inner area -

**Location** - The inner extent of Excelsior Ave south of the Route 50 arterial from the former Van Raalte mill to the brewery and Quality Hardware.

#### Current Characteristics

Historically, a railroad/industrial avenue of the City, this area contains prominent structures including the adapted reuse of the former Van Raalte knitting mill and the National Grid (formerly Niagara Mohawk) gasholder facility.



This area contains a combination of separate land use zones including mixed business and light industry; general, highway- and tourist-related businesses; and 1/7-1/4 acre residential zoning. Topographic constraints limit development in certain parts of this area.

#### Comprehensive Plan Vision

Given the diversity of topography, current land uses and lot sizes, this area was targeted as a Special Development Area to encourage a more efficient and compatible development pattern transitioning from the greater density mixed use Downtown special development area to the more residential surrounding areas.

The intent is to maximize the economic and development potential of this area adjacent to the city core, encourage improvement in certain areas through infill/replacement and redevelopment, protect and enhance the City's entranceway along NYS Route 50, and promote a mixture of uses compatible with surrounding residential neighborhoods. Development along the Route 50 arterial shall not be allowed a curb cut or a break in access onto or off of the arterial.

#### Comprehensive Plan Recommendations

1. Establish a higher to medium density transition Special Development Area through a diversity of mixed commercial, retail, office, light industrial, high tech manufacturing, and residential land uses.
2. Establish strong design standards to ensure that flexibility in allowable uses is balanced with improved compatibility with surroundings.
3. Create a more vibrant neighborhood atmosphere with new development created

- in walkable blocks. Incorporate safe pedestrian connections to neighborhoods across Route 50 to the north.
4. Encourage construction of multi-story buildings with main entrances fronting on primary and secondary streets. Promote construction to establish enhanced connection with neighborhood.
  5. Create appropriate transition from Downtown core to surrounding areas, through building height, placement, mass and scale, supported by use of buffering, landscaping, lighting, etc.
  6. Promote use of first floor space for retail/office use; upper floors for office/residential use. Encourage the creation of business incubator sites.
  7. Require new parking areas to be located behind building, or within the interior of a block significantly buffered from street and surrounding residential areas. Large pavement areas should be divided by planted islands. Encourage on-street parking.
  8. Advance pedestrian/bicycle emphasis with enhanced pedestrian/bicycle circulation to Downtown. Completion of the proposed Spring Run Trail and the proposed Route 50 improvements should be strongly promoted.
  9. Conduct a lot-level analysis of land ownership and occupancy to identify available areas for infill, improvement and expansion. Conduct subsequent analysis of community/consumer needs to promote marketing of available areas.
  10. Investigate solutions to correct drainage problems in this area.
  11. Require planting of appropriately selected and sized street trees to reintroduce or strengthen the street tree canopy that is so vital to the pedestrian experience of our city.

### Special Development Area – 3

#### Excelsior Ave - outer area -

**Location** - The outer portion of the Excelsior Ave area from Veteran's Way to the Northway and Exit 15, including the north side of Route 50 and the Spring Run area.



#### Current Characteristics

Formerly zoned for light industry, this area now contains a mix of storage and light commercial uses to the north of Route 50 and light industry, a hotel and large mixed used residential development as well as the proposed Spring Run trail to the south of Route 50.

#### Comprehensive Plan Vision

This Special Development Area was designated in 1999 after a major controversy over a proposed retail development for the site, and with consideration of its current zoning, proximity to the Northway, and its impact upon a primary entranceway to the City.

The intent is to allow for reasoned and compatible expansion of existing businesses, and to allow flexibility in development options within this area while protecting and enhancing the City's entranceway along NYS Route 50 and surrounding neighborhoods. Facilities are envisioned with an orientation towards internal circulation significantly buffered from their surroundings. Development either north or south of the Route 50 arterial shall not be allowed a curb cut or a break in access onto or off of the arterial.

#### Comprehensive Plan Recommendations

1. Allow a mixture of land uses including mixed residential, office, light industry, high tech manufacturing, institutional, service and distribution. General retail uses are excluded with the exception that ancillary retail uses may be allowed only when directly related to primary permitted uses.
2. Ensure that flexibility in allowable uses is balanced with significant buffering and improved compatibility with their surroundings.
3. Encourage construction of buildings with a low visual profile, oriented to facilitate internal circulation. Building height, placement, mass and scale should be compatible with surrounding areas. Extensive buffering should be employed.
4. Require buildings to be significantly buffered from Route 50 and the Northway

and adjacent residential areas. Facilities are envisioned with an orientation towards pedestrian and motorist convenience. Parking areas should be significantly buffered from street and adjacent residential areas. Large pavement areas should be divided by planted islands. On-street parking is encouraged.

5. Advance pedestrian/bicycle emphasis with enhanced pedestrian/bicycle circulation to Downtown. Completion of the proposed Spring Run Trail and the proposed Route 50 improvements should be strongly promoted.
6. Require planting of appropriately selected and sized street trees to reintroduce or strengthen the street tree canopy that is so vital to the pedestrian experience of our city.

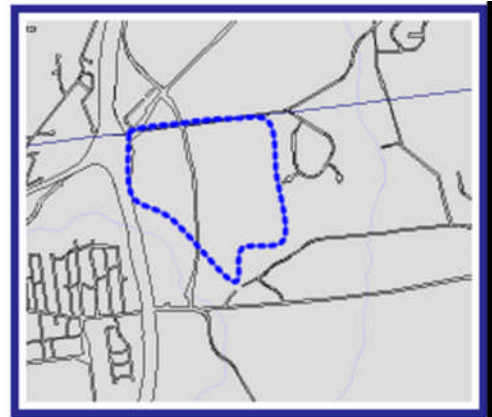
## Special Development Area - 4

### Weibel Ave - northern area -

**Location** - The upper portion of Weibel Ave area east of Exit 15, including the municipal and institutional lands, south to the former railroad right of way.

#### Current Characteristics

Currently the site of a planned unit development (PUD) and rural residential zoning, this area contains a large shopping plaza, an indoor recreation center and a variety of vacant land parcels. The approved PUD includes plans for a hotel or offices. Athletic fields at the PBA site are currently under construction. Immediately to the east of this area, low density residential and open lands predominate.



#### Comprehensive Plan Vision

This area provides an opportunity for light industrial, mixed residential and commercial development with limited access and internal circulation.

Given its proximity to Exit 15 and commercial development pressures and opportunities, the intent of this Special Development Area is to encourage the consolidation of land to maximize the area's economic and development potential to broaden the City's tax base. Facilities are envisioned with an orientation towards pedestrian and motorist convenience with significant buffering with surroundings. Specifically, development along the eastern side of this Special Development Area shall transition to medium / low density residential, and include substantial vegetative buffers to protect the character of existing residential neighborhoods to the east.

#### Comprehensive Plan Recommendations

1. Allow a mixture of land uses including light industrial, residential, commercial service facilities. Development in this area should generally be oriented around an internal grid-style road network. Parking should be oriented to facilitate pedestrian activity, convenience and circulation.
2. Ensure that allowable uses are compatible with surroundings.
3. Encourage consolidation of individual land parcels to maximize development opportunities.
4. Encourage building orientation to facilitate internal pedestrian and automobile

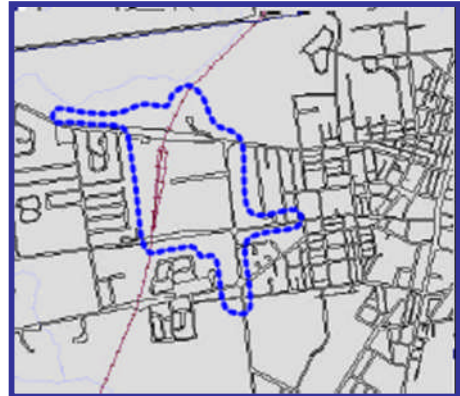
circulation. Building height, construction mass and scale should be compatible with and transition to surrounding areas.

5. Parking areas should be significantly buffered from street and adjacent residential areas. Large pavement areas should be mitigated through landscaping. On-street parking on internal roads is encouraged.
6. Provide pedestrian/bicycle access from Lake Avenue to existing and planned future recreational uses. Promote linkages to Spring Run and Bog Meadow Trails.
7. Improve the appearance of city owned land and the Weibel Avenue right-of-way.
8. Require planting of appropriately selected and sized street trees to reintroduce or strengthen the street tree canopy that is so vital to the pedestrian experience of our city.

## Special Development Area - 5

### West Ave - northern area -

**Location** - West Ave runs north and south stretching from just north of Church Street to south of West Circular Street. This area extends west to include the railroad station and areas along Washington and Church Streets, and east along Washington Street.



#### Current Characteristics

This generally commercial area currently is zoned for highway, office/medical, warehousing and general business uses. This area also contains many retail and professional establishments and is adjacent to several residential neighborhoods.

#### Comprehensive Plan Vision

The Plan's premise for this area is that it is appropriate for secondary commercial development complementary to downtown. The "West Avenue Concept Development Plan & Site Design Guidelines" prepared by the Saratoga Springs Planning Board describes the vision for this area as a neighborhood service and shopping area mixed with medium and high density residential (especially above ground floor commercial and service uses), reflecting a form of the "traditional neighborhood" with greater pedestrian use of the street. This emphasis on neighborhood services and enhanced pedestrian circulation and is also reflected in the West Side Neighborhood Association's "West Side Master Plan and Action Plan".

#### Comprehensive Plan Recommendations

1. Establish a Special Development Area encouraging a diversity of neighborhood-oriented commercial/retail uses mixed with medium to high density residential land uses (especially above ground floor commercial and service uses), and warehousing along the railroad tracks.
2. Establish strong design guidelines and performance standards to ensure that flexibility in allowable uses is balanced with improved compatibility with and transitions to surroundings.
3. Encourage the creation of business incubator sites.
4. Create a more vibrant neighborhood atmosphere with new development created in walkable blocks.

5. Encourage construction of buildings with a low visual profile, oriented to facilitate internal circulation, with main entrances fronting on streets. Prohibit large parking expanses in front of buildings.
6. Building height, placement, mass and scale should complement and transition to adjacent structures and surrounding residential areas. Promote a continuous edge of structures, a consistent “build-to” line, away from the sidewalk and with landscaped area between buildings and sidewalks.
7. Significantly buffer commercial and warehousing activities from neighboring residential areas by screening with fences, berms and trees at rear of lots.
8. Promote shared driveways and use of rear alleys to minimize congestion along West Ave and reduce the number of congestion-creating curb cuts.
9. Require new parking areas to be located behind buildings or within the interior of a block, significantly buffered from street and adjacent residential. Large pavement areas are to be avoided. Encourage on-street parking.
10. Advance pedestrian/bicycle emphasis with enhanced pedestrian circulation within the Special Development Area and improved access to Downtown.
11. Participate in master planning for the train station to achieve integration with transportation facilities in the rest of the City.
12. Require planting of appropriately selected and sized street trees to reintroduce or strengthen the street tree canopy that is so vital to the pedestrian experience of our city.

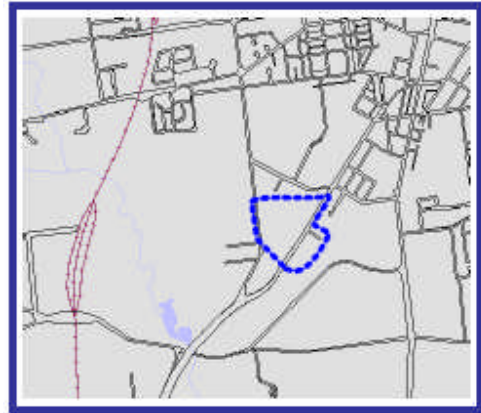
## Special Development Area - 6

### West Ave - southern area -

**Location** - The land to the east of lower West Ave approximately between the juncture with Route 50 in the south and Congress Ave to the north.

#### Current Characteristics

Currently the site of the Saratoga YMCA planned unit development (PUD), this Special Development Area borders on the high school, and contains the new YMCA facility, an industrial facility, some housing and additional open land, and extends to Ballston Ave behind the current Espey industrial area. The area is between two important open space resources -- the northwest corner of the Saratoga Spa State Park on the east and south, and the Pitney Farm on the west. The Railroad Run public trail to the north is currently being extended through this area to connect with the Spa Park and future trail networks to the south.



#### Comprehensive Plan Vision

This area is that it provides a unique opportunity for creative land uses developed in an integrated fashion. This Special Development Area is envisioned as an extension of the higher density urban fringe. Mixed institutional, light industrial, high-density residential and recreational land uses would be encouraged to be compatible with and transition to the surrounding areas. If possible, the area should be developed as a whole.

#### Comprehensive Plan Recommendations

1. Establish a Special Development Area encouraging a diversity of high-density residential, recreation, light industrial and institutional land uses. Creative options compatible with surroundings are to be encouraged.
2. Establish strong design guidelines and performance standards for this Special Development Area to ensure that flexibility in allowable uses is balanced with improved compatibility specifically within the unique characteristics of this Special Development Area.
3. Extend the adjacent higher density neighborhood atmosphere with new development created in walkable blocks.
4. Encourage construction of buildings with a low visual profile, oriented to facilitate internal circulation, with main entrances fronting on streets. Prohibit large parking expanses in front of buildings.

5. Building height, placement, mass and scale should complement and transition to adjacent structures and surrounding areas.
6. Diminish side setback requirements to promote a continuous edge of structures along street, and mandate a maximum front yard setback (or “build-to” line) that is close to the street. Significantly buffer commercial activities from neighboring residential areas by screening with fences, berms and trees at rear of lots.
7. Promote shared driveways to minimize congestion along West Ave and reduce the number of congestion-creating curb cuts.
8. Require new parking areas to be located behind building, or within the interior of a block significantly buffered from street. Large pavement areas should be divided by planted islands. Encourage on-street parking.
9. Enhance pedestrian access and circulation within the Special Development Area and improved access to Downtown. Promote opportunities to link the Railroad Run trail with the Saratoga Spa State Park and trail networks to the south, and to create linkages to the high school campus. Continue sidewalks along West Avenue to link the high school campus with the Geyser Crest neighborhood to the south.
10. Require planting of appropriately selected and sized street trees to reintroduce or strengthen the street tree canopy that is so vital to the pedestrian experience of our city.

## Special Development Area - 7

### “Northern” South Broadway

**Location** - The upper portion of South Broadway from Circular to Fenlon Streets including adjacent portions of Ballston Ave.

#### Current Characteristics

This area contains a combination of separate land use zones including urban residential and mixed general/highway and tourist-related business including a preponderance of auto-related facilities.



#### Comprehensive Plan Vision

This is a transitional area which should be complementary to downtown. Significant transportation and pedestrian improvements are planned in the future. This area is targeted as a Special Development Area to encourage a more efficient and attractive development patterns, transitioning from the higher density Downtown core along the City's entranceway to the lower density areas to the south.

The intent is to maximize the economic and development potential of this area adjacent to the city core, enhance a major entranceway into the City, and promote a mixture of uses compatible with surrounding residential neighborhoods.

#### Comprehensive Plan Recommendations

1. Establish a mixed use Special Development Area allowing a diversity of commercial and residential uses. Promote commercial uses including retail and offices along South Broadway with residential opportunities along the further eastern and western edges of the primarily commercial corridor. Along the commercial corridor, promote use of 1st floor space for commercial use; upper floors for office/residential use.
2. Establish strong design guidelines and performance standards to ensure that flexibility in allowable uses is balanced with improved compatibility with surroundings, and to enhance the entranceway to the downtown core area.
3. Create a more vibrant neighborhood atmosphere with new development created in walkable blocks.
4. Building height, placement, mass and scale should transition from Downtown core to surrounding areas. Promote a continuous edge of structures, a consistent

- “build-to” line, away from the sidewalk and with landscaped area between buildings and sidewalks. Require new buildings to have volumes that are compatible with adjacent structures in adjacent residential areas.
5. Significantly buffer commercial activities from neighboring residential areas by screening with fences, berms and trees at rear of lots.
  6. Promote shared driveways to minimize congestion and reduce the number of congestion-creating curb cuts.
  7. Require new parking areas to be located behind building, or within the interior of a block significantly buffered from street and adjacent residential areas. Large pavement areas are to be avoided. Encourage on-street parking.
  8. Enhance pedestrian circulation within Special Development Area and improve access to Downtown and to the state Spa Park to the south.
  9. Conduct a lot-level analysis of land ownership and occupancy to identify available areas for infill, improvement and expansion. Conduct subsequent analysis of community/consumer needs to promote marketing of available areas.
  10. Encourage the creation of business incubator sites.
  11. Beautify the South Broadway and Route 50 corridors with attractive streetscape, and tree plantings particularly as buffering between pedestrians and street.
  12. Encourage the development of pedestrian/bicycle linkages to the existing State Park system to the south.
  13. Require planting of appropriately selected and sized street trees to reintroduce or strengthen the street tree canopy that is so vital to the pedestrian experience of our city.

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## TRANSPORTATION POLICES

This goal of this plan is to create a “pedestrian safe City” while improving traffic flow. The aim of this plan is to immediately institute traffic calming strategies to lower the air and noise pollution and damage caused by through truck traffic; lower the air and noise pollution caused by general traffic; and prioritize public safety. It also provides direction for walking and biking connections that are the cornerstone of sustainable development.

### Recommendations of the Plan:

- Strict enforcement of laws and prosecution of truck infringements, to discourage truck trips through the City.
- Special attention should be paid to enforcement of **all** City speed limits on a rotating basis.
- Broadway from Circular Street to Route 50 should be reduced to a 25 mile per hour speed restriction.
- Immediate Implement the **Saratoga Springs Traffic Assessment Report** truck traffic improvement recommendations that include:
  - Synchronization of traffic signals on Church Street, Van Dam Street and Broadway;
  - Signage plan to direct truck traffic to Grande Industrial Park;
  - Designate of all of West Avenue for special dimension vehicles;
  - Designate Van Dam Street as the preferred truck route;
- Prohibit all truck traffic on Lake Avenue between Broadway and Weibel Avenue.
- Negotiate with the State Department of Transportation and Wilton to designate the 1000 feet of Weibel Avenue between Loudon Road and Route 50 as a truck route.
- Complete the 2-stage upgrade of South Broadway to upgrade the drainage, road and pedestrian improvements from Circular Street to West Fenlon.
- Upgrade northern Route 50 (arterial) to a boulevard-style roadway, including a planted median, turning lanes and pedestrian/bicycle paths. NYS DOT should be encouraged to complete this project.
- Continue pedestrian improvements particularly to major activity areas including Skidmore College, Embury/Wesley apts., Spa State Park and the racetracks.
- Develop a comprehensive sidewalk plan that identifies priority areas for new sidewalk construction and rehabilitation including links to City recreation/ice rink

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along Lake Avenue and connections under the Northway to Bog Meadow nature trail.

- Develop a comprehensive citywide multi-use (to include bicycles) trail plan that integrates existing pedestrian, bicycle, road, and open space systems, and provides critical linkages.
- Lobby the State and the County for a regional commuter rail and local bus line. These are priorities for future sustainability.
- Publicize and promote the Park and Ride at Wilton Mall.
- Urge alternative location for the bus station that would be more accessible to the public and discourage through bus traffic from passing through the City. We recommend East Avenue and Excelsior for new location for local and regional bus station. This would take through buses off of Broadway as they would go on and off Northway at exit 15
- Enact that part of the Downtown Transportation Plan that assures funds for future parking needs. Make sure that all parking proposals are strictly reviewed to consider neighborhood impact.
- Improve accessibility for the mobility impaired.
- Coordinate with the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) and other mass transit operators to assess impacts on and benefits to the city of the routes and alternative routes.

### **Commuter Rail Line:**

The need for an alternate mod of transportation to alleviate the Northway U.S. 87 vehicle gridlock is imperative not only as a public safety measure, but also as a contingency plan if the country should become involved in an energy crisis.

The City must participate in all proposals/committees to advance the possibility of commuter rail transportation between Albany and the commuter community towns north of the State Capital including Saratoga Springs.

To enhance the possibility of rail transportation, consideration should be given to the importance of State/Federal/Community funding with commuter train operation under the creation of a newly created State Rail Transportation Authority.

Through cooperation between City, town and village governments, communities should be formed to lobby for a commuter rail plan.

Relative to routing of any rail proposal the route selected should be one including the transit population of Saratoga County in the Wilton, Clifton Park/Mechanicville/Halfmoon/Waterford Area.

### **Southern Bypass:**

Work with the State to implement a by-pass route using Driscoll Road off U.S. Route 9 North, at the City limits Boundary through the State Park Dumpsite area to Leonard's Crossing Road on the NYS Route 50 south of performing arts center. This provides the critical link to West Avenue/Church Street/Van Dam/Route 50 East in order to take trucks off the Broadway business district.

This also provides the opportunity to establish a truck weigh station away from the center of the City. Other recommended locations for truck weigh stations are on the Water Works property on Excelsior Avenue that is already owned by the City, route 29 on Brooke Road at the industrial site.

### **Broadway Pedestrian Plan:**

- Plan so that new white striping can be done at the beginning of each tourist season. Add striping across Phila Street at Broadway.
- Consider the use of red pavers in business district crosswalks to enhance the historic look of the downtown and provide more visibility for pedestrians and motorists alike.

### **Special Needs:**

- A traffic signal should be installed at Van Rensselaer Street and Church Street with a pedestrian striped crosswalk to facilitate pedestrian entrance to the Saratoga Hospital.
- Post two street signs at each intersection to identify both roadways throughout the City. This will promote a more visitor-friendly environment.
- Assess all intersections as to the necessity of installing left turn signals.
- Consider the procedure for taking property at the intersection of Rtes. 9, 50 and Circular to facilitate traffic calming measures.

### **Delivery Vehicles:**

- Address the problem of double parking by delivery trucks. Consider limiting delivery hours to before 10:00 AM and after 6:00 PM. Work with the Downtown Business Association on this issue.

**Motorcycles:**

- Consider a motorcycle parking area at the east side of Broadway near the entrance of Congress Park.

**Walking/Bike Paths:**

Implement walking and biking connections between all neighborhoods. Consider the use of the former Niagara Mohawk/ trolley line right of way. Extend Railroad Run from Congress Avenue to SPAC and into State Park following the former Railroad Bed.

## UTILITIES POLICIES

### **PUBLIC:**

The location, capacity and control of the City's water, sewer and storm water infrastructure strongly affects several key characteristics of the city: growth patterns, community character, housing affordability, economic diversity and fiscal autonomy, in short, whether the City can become a sustainable community.

### **Water**

The City has four independent water resources: Loughberry Lake, the aquifer-fed Geyser Crest water system, the Bog Meadow system and the Interlaken wells. The Albany Aquifer-fed Interlaken water system was acquired by the City from the Saratoga County Water Authority in 2006. Approximately 95% of the City's population is served by these four resources, consisting of more than 115 miles of pipe.

Past efforts to enhance these water sources, including the employment of a weed harvester in Loughberry Lake and other City efforts, have significantly upgraded the quality of City water. The City's overall sustainable safe yield continues to be about 5.5 million gallons per day, as confirmed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the City's Water Source Development Project. However, as affirmed in the FEIS, (*City of Saratoga Springs website, search FEIS*) the Loughberry Lake source will eventually be outmoded due to environmental factors over which the city has no control, such as siltation. In recent years, a moratorium on new connections has been imposed on the Geyser Crest area, due to yield reductions from that system. This moratorium should remain in place until further capacity is obtained. At the same time, about 300,000 gallons per day of supply was added from the Interlaken system, an amount which can comfortably supply not only the Interlaken development, but the other neighborhoods east of the Northway, along Meadowbrook Road and Crescent Avenue. For these reasons the City has pursued the permitting of a long term alternative source of supply from Saratoga Lake.

### **Sewers**

Sewage is conveyed to, and treated at, the County Sewage Treatment Plant in Mechanicville. The sewer system serves approximately 90% of the City's population. The County owns the trunk lines while the City owns the local collector lines. Although the treatment plant has capacity to treat greater flows, the County's trunk line along Route 9P has reached capacity, forcing the City (in early 2007) to impose a sewer connection moratorium on the area served. Building moratoria should remain on all properties without sewer service until the County Sewage system is upgraded to have greater capacity.

**Storm water**

Storm water is collected via mains that have been mostly separated from old combined sanitary/storm water systems. The storm water system is discharged to Village Brook, Putnam Brook and Geysers Brook. New Federal and State storm water regulations have brought on increased attention to the proper management of this environmental factor. Staff of the Department of Public Works and City Engineer offices have been assigned to manage local compliance with these rules.

**Recommends for City-owned and City-managed utilities.**

- Continue to coordinate infrastructure improvements based on the Plan's land use vision—concentrate on the City's downtown and other Special Development Areas as the highest priorities. This should include storm water collection points around Beekman Street and Ash Avenue.
- Implement the capital improvements program to prioritize, upgrade and replace aging utilities, in accordance with an overall plan and priority system, with a focus on older sewer and water pipes within the Inner District.
- Encourage both the conservation of water through policies and programs and the utilization of best management practices to conserve water usage in newly constructed and renovated structure.
- Pass legislation requiring the installation of all water saving devices in new and redevelopment projects in the community both public and private.
- Continue to pursue permitting of the proposed Saratoga Lake Water Source project.
- Protect existing water sources through the implementation of a comprehensive watershed management program and City acquisition of land, where feasible in cooperation with neighboring communities.
- Work with adjacent municipalities toward the adoption of watershed management rules and regulations.
- Identify storm water system rehabilitation needs and areas for new storm system development. The plan should include standards for storm water detention, retention, infiltration and water quality consistent with NYS DEC and USEPA guidelines.
- Continue the Southeast neighborhood drainage project until completed.

**Recommendations where private utilities are installed in city rights of way:**

- Mandate, in the zoning ordinance, the placing of all utilities underground (including electricity and natural gas delivery systems, telephone and cable lines) in all new, redeveloped or substantially renovated buildings, and work with the local utility companies to resolve other aesthetic issues.
- Work with local utility companies (electric, phone, cable, etc.) to develop a plan for placing existing overhead wires underground in priority areas of the city.

**Recommendations for Private Utilities:**

- Implement the recommendations of the 1998 Smart City Task Force to ensure that our technology dependent businesses are adequately served with the appropriate infrastructure.
- Work to get television coverage of all City Hall Meetings of the Legislature, Boards, Commissions and Committees.
- Rewrite the existing cell tower legislation in the city code to include:
  - Cell towers must use existing structures wherever possible.
  - Prohibit cell tower construction in residential districts.
  - All free standing cell tower installations must be the height of the tower distance from the property lines.
  - Free standing cell towers must be placed in stands of trees in order to protect view sheds. “No cut” easements should be obtained for these stands of trees.
  - No tower should be higher than ten feet above the average height of the stand of trees in which it is located.
  - Where cell towers are visible, require the use of stealth technology.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY POLICIES**

### **Construction:**

- Finish the work of planning and constructing a new public safety facility for the police.
- Constantly monitor the needs for a fire/emt facility east of the Northway. The current 9-22 minute response time is not adequate to protect the public. This area of the City is aging as is its population. Failure to address this issue may be detrimental to public safety and welfare.

### **Enforcement:**

Actively pursue enforcement in all areas of responsibility under this jurisdiction as these areas are particularly important to the public welfare, including but not limited to:

- Truck traffic
- Speed issues
- Illegal use of property

## PROCEDURAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Hire a consultant to write a new zoning code that corrects the many contradictions and inconsistencies in the existing code and brings the code into compliance with this Comprehensive Plan. Clarity should be the hallmark of the new code.
- Conduct a thorough study of this Comprehensive Plan and the Development Plan Map (Figure 2) with input from the public to clarify the desired growth potential of the City. At current zoning levels as per the Development Plan Map, the potential build out of the City is a population of circ. 85,000. With towns around us capping their growth, it puts heavy growth pressure on this City. It is vital that citizens address this issue and decide what a reasonable population growth and cap is for Saratoga Springs. The Development Plan Map and Zoning Code must be adjusted accordingly.
- Enforce all land use regulations and conditions.
- Utilize the city's website and local media to inform the public about and promote the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Revise Land Use Board applications and Building Permit applications with attendant educational materials for clarity and ease of use. All application forms including educational material related to accurate completion of applications, Board meeting dates and times, agendas and decisions/actions shall be put on the City website.
- Prepare and maintain an inventory and analysis of existing land uses.
- Require the Administrator of Parks Open Land and Historic Preservation to prepare and maintain an inventory of all City owner property.
- Illustrate zoning standards graphically.
- Provide adequate staffing for processing project proposals.
- Continue quarterly review meetings for Land Use Boards and city staff.
- Appoint alternate members for the Planning Board, Design Review Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals.
- Initiate preliminary review of land use applications by Planning Staff and Chairs of the Land Use Boards.
- Cease the use of Planned Unit Development (PUD) districts. Where

legislatively possible withdraw PUD permission from projects that have not been started. Bring these PUD locations back into regular zoning.

- Review paper streets and eliminate those that have no future purpose.
- Implement creative design provisions within the land use regulations.
- Encourage legislative, administrative and regulatory compliance with zoning regulations that are revised as per this Comprehensive Plan.
- In applications before the city's Land Use Review Boards, establish the Planning Board as SEQRA lead agency, or, in the case of applications involving Use Variance requests, the Zoning Board of Appeals.
- **As funding permits**, the City should hire a Director of Environmental Sustainability. The Director will propose and coordinate all activities related to responsible environmental programs including recycling, education, communication, procurement and proposed policies and legislation relating to this area. The Director will support the sustainable policies articulated in this Plan. This individual must have a Master's degree in Environmental Science with experience in Public Administration or Urban Planning

## APPENDIX

- I. Comprehensive Plan Review Process
- II. List of Contributors to the Comp Plan
- III. Source Material
- IV. Conservation Overlay Map
- V. Building Height Recommendations
- VI. Open Space Resources Map
- VII. Summary of 2006 Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Bicycle Plan
- VIII. Additional Open Space Conservation tools
- IX. Administrator of Parks, Open Lands and Historic Preservation
- X. Assets

## Appendix - I

### Comprehensive Plan - 2006-2007 Review Process:

The members of the Committee were appointed by the Mayor and each Commissioner on the City Council. They were:

Manuel Choy, Chairman

Gordon Boyd; Martin Carovano; Gene Corsale; Camille Daniels; Amy Durland; Steven Ethier; James Gold; Nancy Goldberg, Vice chair; Debbie Kwazneski; Marjorie Martin; Rich Martin; Daniel Neary; Bill Stanley; and Barbara Trypaluk.

The Mayor's charge to the Committee was to review the Comprehensive Plan to make sure that it remains current, balancing land use pressures with the needs and wishes of the community. The Comprehensive Plan Committee met on Thursday evenings from October, 2006 until June 2007. All meetings were open to the public and a public comment period was available at the beginning of every meeting.

#### Review Procedures:

The **first phase** of the review process consisted of an articulated goal by the Chairman to hear from and listen to as many expert presenters and members of the public as possible in this forum. Pursuant to that idea, experts in various fields of business and social agency leaders, land use experts and elected and appointed officials were invited to speak including the heads of all of the area associations and homeowners associations. At the beginning of every session the public was invited to speak on any subject of interest to them. During this period, the Chairman took and distributed notes on every speaker with a detailed description of his or her issues. This process lasted for four months.

**Phase two** was to take every issue mentioned by every speaker and subject it to the funnel and screening process. Every comment, recommendation and suggestion was weighted and presented to the committee for a decision about further consideration. If one member of the committee voted in favor of an item, it remained under consideration. Each of the remaining issues under consideration along with information gathered from written submissions, periodicals, seminars, workshops and other comprehensive plans were sorted into one of the categories or modules that fit the structure of the Plan. Each Committee member or group of members was assigned to lead a module consistent with their area of knowledge and expertise.

During **phase three**, the module leaders presented their material to the entire committee for consideration and discussion. With committee consensus and generally agreement, the module was presented to a committee writing team.

The writing committee took the module material and put it into a consistent and organized format. Further additions and edits were made by the Committee during this time period.

**Final Acceptance:**

The final step was for the entire committee to vote to accept each module as presented. Some modules were voted on in their entirety. Others were voted on point by point. This being done, the committee presented the 2006 -2007 amended Comprehensive Plan to the public. Two public meetings were held for the public's final input. On December 5, 2007 the Committee voted 12-0 to submit the final version to the City Council.

## Appendix - II

### Contributors to the Review Process:

#### Formal Presentations

Geoffrey Bornemann	City Planner, Saratoga Springs
Matthew Jones	Attorney for the Builders Association
Christian Mathiesen	Chair, ZBA
Lewis Benton	Chair, PB
Patrick Kane	Chair, DRC
Jason Kemper	County Planner
Thomas Lewis	Chair, Country Planning Board
Bradley Birge, Director	Department of Planning and Economic Development, Saratoga Springs
Carrie Woerner	Director of the Preservation Foundation
Elaine Ball Chinian	Director of Saratoga Plan
Amejo Amyot	Beekman Street Association
Andrew Brindisi	Downtown Business Association
Robert Cleary	Northside Civic Association
Remijia Foy	Westside Civic Association.
Joseph Scala	Waters Edge Homeowners Association
Molly Gagne	Southwest Civic Assoc.
Martha Strohl	Interlaken Homeowners Assoc.
Jack Kelley	Saratoga County Economic Development Council (SEDC)
Dennis Brunnell, Dir.	Saratoga County Economic
Bob Pasciullo, Bd. Chr.	Opportunity Council
Angelo Carboni, Pres.	Saratoga Hospital
Linda Toohey, Chrm. of Bd.	Saratoga Hospital
Michael Ingersoll	The L.A. Group
James Zack	Sustainable Saratoga Springs
J. Lawrence Toole	Edge Thinking Consulting, LLC
Ronald Kim	Commissioner of Public Safety
Sergeant Crandall	Officer in charge of Truck Inspection

#### Public Comment

Chris Cuccio  
Chris Boyea  
Larry Levine  
Gary Derusso



Joseph Dalton	Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce
Geoff Bornemann	City Planner, Saratoga Springs
David C. Eger	

**Workshops, Seminars, Meetings attended**

Skidmore Master Plan Presentation, September 2006 by Lo-Yi Chan, Architect and Campus Planner.

Saratoga County Planning Conference, September 2006.

Neighborhood Preservation Workshop, April 2007.

Saratoga Plan, Dec. 2006, Training on Conservation Easements.

Downtown Transportation Committee Charettes and Meetings, 2006, 2007.

Lunch sponsored by SEDC (Saratoga Economic Development Corporation) to discuss implications of AMD facility on Saratoga County. Speakers were: Terry Caudell, AMD Director of Wafer Manufacturing Strategies, Steve Groseclose, AMD Director of Environmental, Health and Safety, Ward Tisdale, AMD Manager of Community Affairs and Travis Bullard, AMD Corporate Public.

## Appendix – III

### Source Material:

- Comprehensive Plan of the City of Saratoga Springs, 2001
- Saratoga Springs Energy Conservation Project, 2007, by Sara. Energy, Environmental, and Development (SEED) Project.
- Saratoga Wind Energy Project, 2007, prepared by SEED This report advocates investing in Wind Energy to Reduce Long-Term Election Energy Costs.
- City of Saratoga Springs Open Space Plan, 2002 by Saratoga Plan
- Material on cell tower legislation, Mark Hoppe, Principal of Blue Wing Consulting
- Material on Local Action Plans for Sustainability, Mark Torpey
- A Report to the Celebrate Downtown Saratoga Committee, 2006, by Robert Millis, an informal analysis of formula businesses and the local economy in Saratoga Springs.
- Random Observations and Comments, 2007, by Robert Millis,
- Breakout, 2007, History and information on Proportional Impact Fees.
- Zoning and the Comprehensive Plan, 1999, by James A. Koonz, Local Government Technical Series.
- Placemaking in Practice, DESIGN GUIDELINES, 2006, John J. Behan.
- Possible Approach for Amending the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance for Neighborhood Protection/Affordable Housing, 2006, by Geoff Bornemann, City of Saratoga Springs Planner.
- What a Comprehensive Plan is or Isn't, 2006, by Joe S. Russell.
- Have It Your Way, 2005, by Edward McMahon, Land Use Planner and Director of the Conservation Fund, "American Greenways Program", Public Management/June 2005. Discussion of the Design of Formula businesses.
- All Development Is Not Created Equal, 1998, by Edward T. McMahon. Planning Commissioners Journal/32/Fall 1988.
- Tourism and the Environment, What's the Connection?, 1997 by Edward T. McMahon, Planning Commissioners Journal/28/Fall 1997.
- Downtown Building Committee Report, February 2007.
- Possible Compromise Alternative Downtown Transportation Plan, January 2007, by Lewis Benton, Chairman, Downtown Transportation Advisory Committee.
- New York Zoning Law and Practice Report, January/February 2007, Vol. 7, No. 4.
- Regulatory Barriers Clearinghouse "*Breakthroughs*" Newsletter, May 2007. Article about the history and uses of Proportional Impact Fees.
- Other Comprehensive Plans referenced:
  - Auburn, NY;
  - Brattleboro, VT;
  - Ithaca, NY;
  - Newburgh, NY;
  - Northampton, NY;
  - Portsmouth, NH

## Appendix - V

### Building Height Recommendations:

#### Broadway between Congress Park and Van Dam Street:

- It is recommended the front facade be no higher than 70' high.
- It is recommended no new building be less than three stories or 40'. The average building on Broadway is 55' high.
- A height allowance for **unoccupied\*** adornment without Zoning Board approval is recommended.

#### Other districts excluding T-Zones:

- A maximum height of 45' is recommended for UR-4 & UR-4A districts. There should be a height allowance for **unoccupied\*** adornment without Zoning Board approval.
- It is recommended that the UR-3 district have a maximum height of 40'.
- UR-1 and UR-2 districts are recommended to have a maximum height of 35'.
- A maximum height of 35' is recommended for RR-1, SR-1 and SR-2 districts.

#### T-Zones other than Broadway:

1. A maximum height of 50' is recommended in T-5 Zones. There should be a height allowance for **unoccupied\*** adornment without Zoning Board approval.
2. A maximum height of 40' is recommended in T-4 Zones. There should be a height allowance for **unoccupied\*** adornment without Zoning Board approval.

The aim of this plan is to have a height plan descending outward from the center of the City.

#### Additional Recommendations:

- All roof top services should be hidden from public view
- Design guidelines should be codified so that they are clearly understandable. The straight front building with a straight, unadorned roof line should not be acceptable as a modern Saratoga Springs "landmark".

\*Unoccupied adornment is defined as space that is not habitable for living, storage, or any other use.

## VII - Summary of 2006 Comprehensive Bicycle Plan

The goal of the 2006 Comprehensive Bicycle Plan is to improve and encourage bicycle transportation in the city of Saratoga Springs.

Previous efforts, such as the Union Avenue Cycle Path, constructed in the late 1890's, made it possible for city residents and visitors to pedal all the way to Saratoga Lake and to points of interest all over the city. After the advent of the automobile, everything changed. Currently, Saratoga Healthy Transportation Network is hoping to coordinate previous efforts of the city of S.S. to create a useful plan that will be instrumental to the citizens and policy makers of the city with regards to bicycling.

Because of the dramatic rise in the use of the automobile over the last 50 years, today these vehicles rule the streets. Even though half of all automobile destinations are less than three miles, most city-dwellers use their bikes primarily for recreation purposes in the country. Bicycles are under-utilized for reasonable transportation trips in Saratoga Springs.

Another problem identified by the Bicycle Plan is that elementary schools located in the city where students live within walking distance of the school do not encourage the students to walk or bicycle to school. The cause of concern is the potential for conflict between the individual and the automobile. This situation has come at a cost of decreased independence for the school children and less vigorous cardio-vascular health. Measures like the "Bike & Foot Free Zone" instituted by Maple Avenue Middle School, which have banned walking/biking to school, have contributed to the rise in air and noise pollution and the obesity epidemic in the United States.

### **Bicycle Plan and Objectives:**

The Saratoga Healthy Transportation network is working to improve the bicycle and pedestrian environment in the City of Saratoga. This plan is to be used in conjunction with other planning resources, tools, and plans (such as the Comprehensive Plan) affecting the overall future direction of the City. The *2006 Bicycle Plan* is intended to be a tool to reverse the current local and national trends described above.

### **The goals of this Bicycle Plan include the following subjects:**

- Recommended changes to the transportation section of the Comprehensive Plan that refer to bicycling.
- A recommendation to review existing City codes and traffic ordinances that affect bicycling.
- Support by the City Council and the school district to participate in the new Safe Routes to Schools programs funded by New York State.
- Upgrading of the 1993 Bicycle route system, creation of on-street bike lanes, paved shoulders and enhanced signage and striping on key routes.
- Implementation of the community trail system identified in the Saratoga Springs Open Space Plan, including the Saratoga Heritage Trail from the Spa State Park to Downtown.

- Proposals for other ordinances and recommendations for resolutions the City should adopt.
- An evaluation of the existing system of bicycle registration in Saratoga and recommendations for an enhanced Saratoga Springs bicycle registration program.

In addition, this plan deals with a variety of subsidiary policies that reflect Saratoga Springs' view of bicycling as a mode of transportation. The *2006 Bicycle Plan* asserts that careful attention to policy can help to improve the climate for bicycling. More importantly, a genuine concern for bicyclists' needs will eventually be manifested in Saratoga Springs' policies and decisions.

The guiding principle of these policies is to consider bicycling as a **legitimate mode of transportation, with rights (and responsibilities) equal to those of other, more familiar modes, including the automobile**. If a policy affects transportation and parking, bicycling should, at a minimum, receive equal treatment. Equal treatment for bicyclists means that they receive what they need on the same basis as motorists, not that they receive exactly the same facilities as motorists. The phrase "at a minimum" means that in some circumstances Saratoga Springs may want to recognize the social, environmental, space-related, and energy benefits of bicycling and negative impacts of the automobile by according it preferential, rather than equal treatment.

For a detailed description of the plan's proposed ordinances and policies see pp. 6-15 of the *2006 Comprehensive Bicycle Plan*.

## **APPENDIX VIII: ADDITIONAL OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION TOOLS**

The following land use tools should be considered for use by the City in its ongoing efforts to protect and enhance the natural and open space resources in the community. The City could take a more pro-active approach to keeping specific parcels of land undeveloped, and to protecting important resources, through any or all of the following approaches:

### **Acquisition**

The City may acquire land in fee title interest or in partial interest from willing sellers at fair market value. Acquisition of fee title may be appropriate for parcels of land that are intended for active or passive public recreational uses.

### **Conservation Easements**

One way to protect scenic resources, farmlands, and environmental resources would be to use conservation easements. A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a municipality, or a third party such as the Land Trust for the Saratoga Region, to protect land from development by permanently restricting the use and development of the property, thereby preserving its natural or manmade features. The legally binding agreement is filed with the County Clerk in the same manner as a deed. The landowner retains ownership of the land, and all of the rights of ownership except the ability to develop the land. The specific restrictions or other stipulations are detailed in the easement agreement.

A landowner also can choose to donate a conservation easement on all or part of his/her land. Income and estate tax benefits may accrue to the landowner. Conservation easements can also be used to permanently protect open space set aside as part of a conservation subdivision.

### **Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program**

When development rights alone are purchased using a conservation easement, the process is called Purchase of Development Rights. The cost of PDR depends on the specific parcel. It is calculated by determining the current appraised value of the property and its appraised value as open or agricultural land without development potential. The difference between these two numbers is the value of the development rights.

Generally speaking, PDR programs are regarded as being fair to landowners because the landowners are compensated directly for their contribution to something the public desires. The land remains on the tax rolls and is taxed at an assessed value that reflects its restricted use. These programs are also popular with residents because they achieve permanent land protection.

In order to implement a PDR program, a community needs to make a commitment to funding this activity. Initially this may seem to be a very large expense - and it is. However, through careful analysis of their fiscal situation, some communities have found that their investment will actually cost less in the long term than it would cost to provide services for new residences that might instead be built on that land. Communities have paid for these programs in various ways including issuing revenue bonds to spread the cost over a period of years. There are also sources of State and federal grant funding available to assist communities in permanently protecting farmland and other open space in this manner. Local conservation organizations should also be considered as partners in this type of program.

Implementation of a Purchase of Development Rights program requires a fair amount of planning to implement. In terms of grant funding, communities with well defined programs tend to fair much better due to the competitive nature of these grants. The return on this investment in planning can be substantial in terms of both the community's fiscal situation and community character.

### **Term Easements and Tax Abatement Program**

This type of program, used by several communities in New York State (including the Town of Clifton Park), provides tax abatements for term easements on particular parcels of open space or farmland. As the name implies, a term easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and the municipality which is written to last for a period of years, most commonly for 5 to 20 years. Tax abatements are usually calculated on a sliding scale with a larger tax abatement for a longer term easement. If these protected lands are converted to development prior to the expiration of the term, the tax benefit must be returned in full and a penalty paid. While these programs are effective in addressing the loss of open space and farmland in the short term, they simply place these lands on hold. Long term solutions must still be developed for the future of these spaces.

### **Environmental Protection or Scenic Special District**

The municipality could also establish special districts to protect specific scenic or natural resources. For instance, the district could include all land within a specified distance from a stream or lake. Specific provisions or standards for protecting the quality of these water bodies could be incorporated into special use permit provisions for all development within the overlay district.

### **Develop an Alternative Road Standard for Low Volume Local Roads**

An alternative road standard for local streets (including low volume subdivision streets) could be considered. Such a standard would complement the character of subdivisions developed in the Conservation District. A local road standard does not sacrifice accepted engineering practice but, rather, takes into consideration the actual

function and expected volume of local streets. The Dutchess County Department of Planning, in a publication entitled *Alternative Road Standards* (February 1992), states that, "Smaller, well designed roads have less of everything: less pavement, fewer and smaller drainage structures, and fewer curbs, and as such are less expensive to construct and maintain." Later it notes that, "In addition to cost benefits, more flexible standards can also improve aesthetics. Wide roads with deep bases require extensive grading and cutting of vegetation. Frequently the construction of standard roads leaves the landscape barren, robbing it of its more rural and scenic qualities." With an emphasis on street connectivity, another benefit of a rural road standard is that narrower streets deter speeding and can offset the perceived loss of safety resulting from the reduced use of cul-de-sacs.

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## Appendix - IX

### Administrator of Parks, Open Lands, and Historic Preservation:

The position of the Administrator of Parks, Open Lands and Historic preservation shall be under the direction of the Mayor.

The Administrator shall be a qualified professional in the field of parks, open lands, and historic preservation administration, and shall be appointed on the basis of education and experience in a like jurisdiction.

The Administrator of Parks, Open Land, and Historic Preservation shall be responsible for the planning, management development and administration of parks, and open land within the City of Saratoga Springs and shall integrate and coordinate the activities of the Heritage Area Program, the City Historian, and all polices and programs of the City dealing with historic preservation. The City's parks and open lands, whether used for active or passive recreation, environmental protection, or scenic enhancement, are held in trust by the City of Saratoga Springs for the public. Open lands shall be defined as all land owned by the City of Saratoga Springs. The parks and open lands may not be alienated from the purposes except as provided by the laws of the State of New York and the United States.

**Policy Development.** The Administrator of Parks, Open Lands, and Historic Preservation shall recommend policies regulating the use of the lands and facilities in the City's park, open land and open lands system. Such policies regarding use shall be subject to review and approval by the Council

**Inventory.** The Administrator of Parks, Open Lands and Historic Preservation shall regularly update and maintain an inventory of City-owned land and buildings currently used as parkland, open land, or for historic purposes and shall request formal designation of such lands and buildings by the Council.

**Master Plans.** The Administrator of Parks, Open Lands, and Historic Preservation shall, in conjunction with the Commissioner of Public Works and the Office of Planning and Economic Development, develop a citywide Parks, Open Land, and Historic Preservation master Plan, which shall include all lands and facilities extant or proposed. The Plan shall be developed and transmitted to the Council for comment and adoption. The Council shall hold a public hearing prior to adoption of the plan. If not adopted by the Council within ninety (90) days, the Master Plan as submitted shall be the official parks Open Lands and Historic Preservation Master Plan of the City until subsequently modified by the Council. Such Master Plan shall be reviewed and updated periodically, but not less than once every five (5) years.

**Capital Plan.** The Administrator of Parks, Open Lands, and Historic Preservation shall develop a long-range Capital Plan in cooperation with the Office of the City

Engineer for all lands and facilities under its jurisdiction. The long-range Capital Plan shall be transmitted to Chairperson of the City's Capital Program Committee in sufficient detail on or before August 1<sup>st</sup> and in time for inclusion in the City's 6-year Capital Program. The Administrator shall transmit its capital and operation budget requests annually, including maintenance and improvements, to the Commissioner of Finance on or before August 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Acquisitions.** The Administrator of Parks, Open Lands, and Historic Preservation shall be responsible for identifying, negotiation, and recommending lands for addition to the City's parks and open land system including gifts offered to the City. The Administrator shall provide the Council with the following information for each recommended acquisition:

- location
- size
- description of natural and cultural resources
- any needed improvements
- whether the cost of such acquisition and improvements are within the limits of available monies and/or appropriations.

The Administrator shall utilize whatever acquisition techniques are appropriate including, but not limited to, purchasing property, conservation, and/or development easements, or using private/public partnerships to achieve open land preservation and public access. No additions to the City parks, open lands, or historic preservation system shall be made without approval of the Council.

**Grants.** The Administrator of Parks, Open Lands, and Historic Preservation shall, with approval of the Council, seek out and apply for private and public grants for the purposes and benefit of the system.

**Bond and Grant Allocation.** The Administrator of Parks, Open Lands, and Historic Preservation shall make recommendations to the Council regarding use of proceeds from bonds for park, open lands, or historic preservation purposes or from State, Federal, or private grants for such purposes.

**Concession Standards.** The Administrator of Parks, Open Lands, and Historic Preservation shall recommend general standards to the Council relative to concession on City-owned property within the system, including concessions for sale of merchandise and food.

**Coordination with the Department of Public Works.** The Administrator of Parks, Open Lands, and Historic Preservation shall assist the Commissioner of Public Works in developing a maintenance, operation, repair and public use policy for each site in the system.

**Coordination with the Recreation Commission.** The Administrator of Parks, Open Lands, and Historic Preservation shall work closely with the Recreation

Commission to ensure that the Recreation Commission has access to appropriate lands and facilities for scheduling the Recreation Commission's programs.

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## Appendix - X

### Assets:

Historic Architecture  
Natural Resources such as springs  
Open space including trail systems  
Rural gateways  
Downtown  
Saratoga Spa State Park  
The Spa Park Baths  
The State Park Theatre  
Saratoga Performing Arts Center  
The Gideon Putnam Hotel  
Skidmore College  
Empire State College  
Beekman Street Art District  
City Center  
Congress Park  
The Canfield Casino  
The Carousel  
The Saratoga Race Track  
The Oklahoma Track  
The Saratoga Harness Track  
The Racino  
Saratoga Lake  
Lake Lonely  
Saratoga National Golf Club  
The two State Park Golf Courses  
The Saratoga Polo Grounds  
The National Museum of Racing  
The National Museum of Dance  
The New York State Military Heritage Institute  
The Automobile Museum  
The Saratoga Springs Children's Museum  
The Saratoga Springs History Museum  
The Tang Museum and Art Gallery  
Historic burial grounds  
The Saratoga County Art Council  
Many Horse Events  
The Saratoga Springs Ice Skating Rinks  
Victorian Bed and Breakfasts  
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