

## 2015 Sustainable Saratoga Candidate Survey

**CANDIDATE NAME:** Matthew Veitch

**CANDIDATE FOR (OFFICE):** County Supervisor

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**Question #1: What sustainability initiatives or efforts have you implemented or advanced as an elected official or private citizen?**

As both a private citizen and elected official, I have brought several sustainability initiatives forward. I have been an advocate for more Open Space, and especially trail development. Back in 2002, I began pushing for a multi-use trail on Geysers Road, which is now coming to fruition. I advocated for and had the first trails committee created at the County level and served as its first Chairman. We built forest parcel trails, which will preserve those open spaces in the County for years to come. I also chaired the temporary Green Committee, which studied and proposed several actions Saratoga County could take to become more sustainable, such as implementing solar on our buildings, using LED lighting at County facilities, among other things. I also have, in my capacity as Supervisor, restored our Open Space Fund (\$250,000) and started a Trails fund (\$100,000), for the 2015 budget, so we can fund sustainability projects throughout the County. I will continue to advocate for all of these initiatives going forward.

**Question #2: What, if anything, would you propose to do locally to confront climate change?**

There are a few things that I would do to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and do things that would not harm the environment. Automobiles are still the largest polluter in our nation, and finding ways to reduce our reliance on vehicle travel can do much to reduce damage to our environment. As mentioned before, I will continue to advocate for more trails in our City and County. In addition, bike routes and ‘complete streets’ on our roads to accommodate non-motorized traffic is needed, and I would work to achieve that goal. I would look to see if we can also improve our mass-transit options for the City. Working to improve our bus routes and work with CDTA on alternatives is something I have been doing over the years. We should also find ways to make our rail service to Saratoga County work better for residents and visitors alike. Sadly, this is one of the most neglected parts of our transportation network.

**Question #3: The City Council recently adopted a new Comprehensive Plan, which embodies and continues the “City in the Country” vision for Saratoga Springs. According to the Comprehensive Plan: “This concept reflects a city with an intensively developed urban core and an economically vibrant central business district, with well-defined urban edges and an outlying area of rural character, comprised of agriculture, open lands, natural and diverse environmental resources, and low density development.”**

**Do you support the “City in the Country” vision?**

Yes, I support the “City in the Country” vision for Saratoga Springs.

**Do you believe that sustainable economic growth can be achieved through this vision?**

I do believe sustainable economic growth can be achieved through this vision. We have done a great job of keeping sprawl to a minimum, and also have done well in preserving our City’s natural resources through this development vision.

**Do you think the “City in the Country” vision should be altered? If so, how?**

This is a difficult question. I think the overall concept of ‘City in the Country’ works for Saratoga Springs at the current time. That being said, there needs to be some flexibility in allowing certain uses in the ‘Country’ area of our City, or ‘outer downtown (i.e. South Broadway)’ that will complement the Downtown core. There is only a finite amount of space in the downtown area, and either our City will need to grow up, or out, or not grow at all. Having the ‘City in the Country’ creates other issues such as parking problems, traffic, and makes the land and development in the core very expensive. The question is where is the perfect balance of intensive core development, with affordable, sensible amenities in the outer districts. It will take much more discussion and community debate before we get to the answers to those questions. I hope to remain involved in the discussions.

**Question #4: What comments do you have about the following priority issues for Sustainable Saratoga?**

**Affordable housing:**

I have been an advocate for more affordable housing in our City, since before I ran for office in 2007. As a native Saratogian, I have seen many people and families that were the ‘citizens’ move to other areas either elsewhere in the County or other areas, because it became too expensive to live here. That being said, the devil is in the details. About 8-10 years ago, there was a proposal for ‘Inclusionary Zoning’ that would allow for development density bonuses for affordable units being built. Unfortunately that proposal did not allow for homeowners to recoup the equity earned in the affordable unit, and it was an unworkable plan. Since our economy is built on free market principles, it only stands to reason that housing is at a premium in a great City that people want to move to. I am unsure of the proper solution, but I will be involved in the discussions, and do what I can to make progress on this important issue to our City’s future.

**Managing downtown parking:**

As I mentioned before, one of the more difficult aspects of executing the ‘City in the Country’ vision, is that more extensive development of downtown leads to parking issues. We do live in a world where the automobile is still the primary mode of transportation. I think we have done well in building our parking infrastructure, but there is more to be done. There are still a few vacant City-owned lots in downtown that could

be developed. We do need a comprehensive parking development plan for this City, which I don't believe has ever been done. I hope the City Council sees the need for doing this in the near term.

**Waste management, including plastic bag reduction:**

Looking at Waste Management is important for a City that relies on a tourist economy. When people are traveling or are visiting a different place, they do not feel the same sense of ownership that a local person may have, with that place. Littering and not using proper receptacles becomes a problem. I would advocate for a city-wide recycling program at all City facilities, and for all trash receptacles downtown. It is a shame that our City is not more progressive on this issue. As a concept, I believe that reducing plastic bags is a good thing (my family uses reusable fabric bags whenever practical), but I do not think it should be a local law or regulation at this time.

**Promoting renewable energy:**

I think us, as a community should be promoting renewable energy whenever practical. I commend the City for being a Climate Smart community, and also the plan to build a solar array at the site of the former landfill. It has been recommended at the County level to undertake some of these initiatives, but they have not gotten traction yet with the administration and departments. I will continue to advocate for using renewable whenever possible to reduce or reliance on traditional energy sources.

**Expanding the city's urban forest, and increasing green infrastructure:**

As a member of the City's Open Space Committee, I am a strong advocate for expanding open space and the City's Urban forest. Saratoga Springs lacks a network of pocket parks within the City, and we are reliant on developers to preserve treasured open spaces (for example, the lot next to Former St. John Neumann Center on Lake Avenue). I have proposed at the Committee that we take an inventory of all vacant land in the City, and begin a program of developing pocket parks, as well as looking at other larger tracts in the greenbelt that would be suitable for purchase. Our 2002 Open Space Bond Act monies are rapidly being depleted, and I would advocate for doing the program again, with a new bond act referendum. I also think the efforts of TreeToga and others are commendable, and I think that program of urban reforestation is something that should be continued. We also need to continue building our network of trails to connect the entire green infrastructure in the City.

**Question #5: If elected, what types of sustainability efforts (other than those listed above) would you promote or emphasize?**

I think the only other initiative I would suggest would be for the City to explore using Hybrid or green vehicles in our fleet. I do not believe any of our vehicles are hybrid, and with a City that is 29 square miles, with a concentrated urban core, there is a lot of stop-and-go use of our City's vehicles. I believe there could be some savings achieved if we considered hybrids for everything from Police vehicles to snowplows.