

## 2015 Sustainable Saratoga Candidate Survey

**CANDIDATE NAME:** Richard Wirth

**CANDIDATE FOR (OFFICE):** Commissioner of Public Safety

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

I have proposed installing charging stations for electric vehicles in city owned parking garages. Many local grocery stores are promoting charging stations but this is not enough. Government needs to become part of the solution by promoting easy access and providing charging stations in a visible area. Also, charging stations should be a requirement for future parking garages.

In my private life as a citizen of Saratoga Springs, I moved into the downtown district and now walk to many of my daily activities. If we all make lifestyle changes, our collective impact on the environment is lessened. I believe that leading and living by example has a great impact.

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

In addition to installing charging stations for electric vehicles I would look at the fleet of vehicles owned by the city to determine if any could be replaced with electric vehicles. I would encourage bike, walk and other means of environmentally friendly transportation. With the recent increase in traffic congestion, biking and even walking in our city, is more dangerous. We need to study our pedestrian safety routes and make them safer for individuals and families. When people feel safe, they will utilize these means of transportation more often, lessening the amount of cars on the roadways and thereby decreasing the levels of emissions. We should explore a bike rental program for summer months and strongly promote it with the help of our Convention and Tourism Bureau and Chamber of Commerce.

**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?**

I support the “City in the Country” vision. This is what drew me to Saratoga Springs when I first moved here. The greenbelt area perfectly balances the downtown core and gives us the best of both worlds, right here in our own city.

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

The downtown core has been the economic engine for Saratoga Springs and it attracts tourism dollars into the city. We need to continue that downtown urban core planning: economic growth can and will succeed if tourists and residents feel safe.

I have announced a 5 point plan for the Public Safety Office which includes adding surveillance cameras in the parking garages and creating a task force to humanely address the homeless issue. These measures help correct two of the most prominent issues facing downtown right now.

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

The “City in the Country” vision has been successful and we need to continue with it. The Collamer lot land swap should be put on hold until the investigation and pending lawsuit has been completed and we should explore the highest and best uses for the Collamer lot which fit the downtown core. I am not comfortable building a new Fire Station in the ‘greenbelt’ and feel another location is a better answer.

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

**Affordable housing:**

As a community we have had difficulty creating affordable housing. The cost of building materials is high and those costs are passed along to the homebuyer/renter. We need to better manage what constitutes ‘affordable’ and take a closer look at what portions of our citizens are underserved with regards to housing. Affordable housing is a necessity in Saratoga Springs and we need to make it happen. We also need to keep taxes low so those that live here can stay here.

**Managing downtown parking:**

The parking garages built in the city were done so additional parking decks can be added. Before any new parking garages are built we should be exploring the cost of adding additional parking decks to existing facilities. I also have proposed adding electric vehicle charging stations and security cameras in the existing parking garages.

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

The small changes we individually make have a large collective impact. I plan to encourage and promote any smart, environmentally friendly waste management program.

**Promoting renewable energy:**

I have proposed installing electric vehicle charging stations in the parking garages and I also believe we need to explore what other renewable energy opportunities are available such as examining the possibility of installing a geothermal system at the city’s hockey rinks, and solar panel installation in city owned areas where they comply with local laws.

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

Installing charging stations for electric vehicles and solar panel installation in city owned areas where they comply with local laws would be a great step toward green infrastructure. I also love the idea of planting trees and adding to the urban forest downtown as this lessens pollution, helps reduce noise pollution, and gives a cleaner and more historic look to our downtown.

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

The sustainability efforts I have mentioned in the answers above are investments in the future of Saratoga and an investment in the next generation of Saratogians. The changes we make today have large impacts on the Saratoga Springs of tomorrow and being cognizant of that will lead to a better, greener, and more sustainable city.