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September 13, 2019

Hon. Meg Kelly, Mayor
City of Saratoga Springs
City Hall
474 Broadway
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

RE: FLAT ROCK CENTRE PHASE II

Dear Mayor Kelly,

Sustainable Saratoga has focused on the development of the City-owned High Rock parking lot since a proposal for a City Center parking structure was proposed in 2012. Because this important parcel is of great interest to all the people of the city, from the beginning we have advocated an open public process, a comprehensive planning approach for the entire parcel and strict adherence to the requirements of the City's comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance, and other pertinent plans and policies.

Following the 2016 City Council election, you initiated a new planning process for a concept called Flat Rock Centre. The proposed parking structure was redesigned, and you prudently expanded your vision to take in the entire parcel. In response to public comment, you and the Council agreed to rethink the original concept, which involved parking throughout the parcel, to reduce parking capacity and devote a large part of the area to uses that would contribute more to the vitality of our downtown.

On November 20, 2018 the Council passed a resolution which, among other things, separated the development of the parcel into two phases. Phase I would include the design and development of the Greenbelt Trail and the smaller parking structure. In phase II, the Council and the committee who developed the original concept would work to "increase and reconfigure the public park, green space and outparcels," and the council would "schedule a special meeting to present the proposals to the public for input and consideration."

We are very pleased that you are taking a comprehensive look at this key downtown parcel, and that you recognize the importance of public involvement in the process of planning for its future.



In keeping with our longstanding advocacy goal of greater government transparency, we asked that the Phase II meetings be open to the public and include greater representation from the community. We feel strongly that planning for such a valuable public asset should include the public throughout the process. To ensure that the plan for Phase II will be informed by regular public input, we urge you to publish the schedule of meetings by the committee and invite the public to attend and participate in the meetings in a meaningful way.

When we met earlier this year, I suggested that the Flat Rock Phase II Committee appointed to determine how the High Rock lot will be used could be expanded to include members of the general public, who have demonstrated strong interest in the future of this publicly-owned land. Expanding this committee to achieve that goal of greater inclusivity could only benefit the process, and I offered the participation of a representative of Sustainable Saratoga. Unlike other organizations focused on specific issues, such as complete streets, trails, or open space protection, Sustainable Saratoga's advocacy encompasses the full spectrum of sustainability and smart growth issues of our community.

Sustainable Saratoga has developed some preliminary ideas and a sketch of what we think should be the focus of Flat Rock Phase II development. We would be happy to present these thoughts to the Flat Rock Phase II Committee. We ask that you forward our thoughts on to the Committee. Attached is a copy of our two documents.

- Ideas for Flat Rock Centre Phase II Development
- Sketch Plan for Flat Rock Centre Development

We look forward to the creation of an exciting plan for the future of Flat Rock Centre. We hope you will agree that a good program of public participation is essential to the success of the planning process.

Sincerely,



Art Holmberg
Chair of Sustainable Saratoga

Attachments:

- Ideas for Flat Rock Centre Phase II Development
- Sketch Plan for Flat Rock Centre Development

Cc: John Franck, Commissioner of Accounts
Michele Madigan, Commissioner of Finance
Peter Martin, Commissioner of Public Safety
Anthony Scirocco, Commissioner of Public Works



SUSTAINABLE SARATOGA'S IDEAS FOR FLAT ROCK CENTRE – PHASE II DEVELOPMENT

The initial planning for Flat Rock Centre was altered at the end of 2018 to become two distinct phases. Phase I relates to the parking structure and the Greenbelt Trail, while Phase II focuses on the development of the remainder of that parcel. Below are some ideas that Sustainable Saratoga would like to suggest for consideration by the Phase II committee.

The Mayor's original volunteer citizen committee came up with the following Guidelines for Flat Rock Centre last year (this is a subset that relates to the Phase II planning):

1. Create a strong greenspace connection to High Rock Park from Lake Ave / Greenbelt Trail +/- 50' from curb to structure.
2. Create a strong civic space on Lake Avenue or future building location.
3. Allow for potential incubator or commercial infill along Maple Ave.
4. Introduce new covered marketplace on High Rock Ave.
5. Include a location for public restrooms.
6. Include space for Bike Share and public transportation stops.
7. Explore alternative energy and sustainable elements to reduce storm water.
8. Increase % of greenspace from 25% existing to 30.5% proposed.

We hope you will consider Sustainable Saratoga's ideas for the Phase II concept plan.

Suggestions for procedural changes:

We would like to see these committee meetings up to the public.

- Advanced public notice of all meetings
- All meetings open to the public
- Include a public comment period at each committee meeting
- Conduct a public workshop

Development concept ideas:

We hope that all development conforms to the T-6 zoning principles and standards. This includes:

- Multi-story structures
- Buildings brought out to street edges
- Interesting and lively street level uses
- Wherever possible parking along streets
- Full complement of street amenities (sidewalks, benches, lighting, trees, etc.)
- Civic space

The concept plan should allow for flexibility and multi-year development.



We hope the City will mandate the maximum use of alternative energies and sustainable infrastructure.

We hope the plans will encourage public/private joint partnerships.

To foster the imagination, we encourage the use of “bubble diagrams” in the concept plan rather than depictions of structures.

Possible uses:

We envision that priority uses should be largely civic in nature. These might include:

- Office space for city, county or other governmental agencies
- Office space for non-profit organizations
- Office space for short term incubator businesses
- Classroom space
- Public meeting rooms
- Underground parking
- Public restrooms
- Public springs, water fountains
- Public plaza as a gathering place for individual and small group functions lined with cafes or restaurants.
- Small children’s playground/play area
- Small visitor’s information area
- Transit center for making easy interconnections with local and regional buses, taxis, etc.
- Subsidized affordable housing

Second priority uses could be offered to the private sector. These might include:

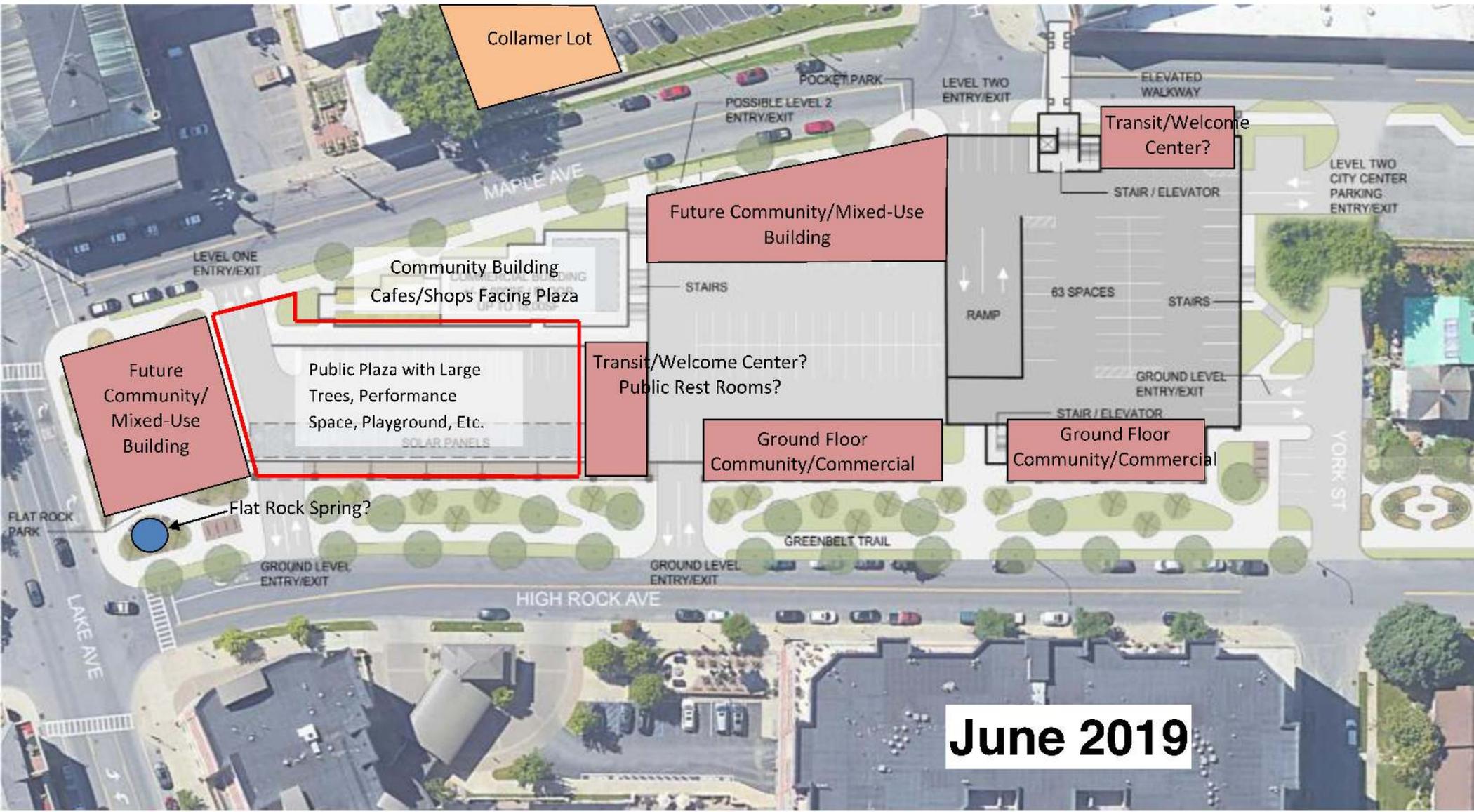
- Retail spaces
- Service centers
- Office spaces
- Restaurants/bars



Flat Rock Center – Develop conceptual plan for entire parcel, one approach shown below. Add elements as market conditions, funding, partnership opportunities allow. Don't foreclose future commercial uses based on current conditions. Add them to community uses through land sale or lease only when appropriate.

Phase 1: Design and construct parking structure with 600± spaces: 500 for City Center and local uses, 100 for City Hall. Address zoning ordinance guidelines for liner buildings by requiring City Center to leave space for mixed-use building fronting Maple Ave. To create attractive and vibrant street frontage, require City Center to incorporate enclosed ground-floor commercial or community spaces fronting Greenbelt Trail and High Rock Ave. Upper floors of parking structure would extend over those ground-floor spaces. Potential for spaces to be leased by City to management firm. Simple awning likely won't provide adequate conditions for stable long-term commercial activity. Opportunity to incorporate simple transit/welcome center along Maple Ave near City Center entrance to provide shelter for those using mass transit. Alternative location on south side of parking structure.

Phase 2: Convert remaining parcel area to new elements of conceptual plan when feasible and appropriate. Elements include Flat Rock Spring, a public plaza, and mixed-use buildings focusing on community uses. New buildings could be built by the City or private developers or both to accommodate government offices, commercial, residential, educational, entrepreneurial, and recreational uses, and contain spaces for art and public meetings.



June 2019