

## STATEMENT FOR CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING ON CITY CENTER PARKING STRUCTURE LEASE Tuesday, September 17, 2019

My name is Art Holmberg. I am Chair of the non-profit organization Sustainable Saratoga.

For the last six years Sustainable Saratoga has been monitoring and offering public comments on this project.

We have never been opposed to the concept of the City Center building parking to accommodate its needs. Like any downtown establishment, we support the City Center's effort to take steps to meet the needs of its "users". We have always recognized that the City Center needs to be provided some additional parking, but we have also recommended that the City use this opportunity to promote more sustainable alternative transportation solutions to bring conventioners to the City.

From the beginning, Sustainable Saratoga has pointed out that the City Center's building proposals have failed to comply with the City's established planning and urban design guidelines. We have repeatedly pointed out that the project has the following shortcomings:

- The structure is not set back a minimum of 50 feet from the street property line or public right-of-way line.
- The street-level first-floor uses are not civic or commercial spaces that are intended to create vibrant streetscapes.
- The pedestrian bridge over Maple Avenue counters smart growth principles that strive to keep pedestrians at the street level.
- Very few green infrastructure elements have been included in this project.

The proposed lease agreement that is being voted on tonight will give approval to the parking structure design. We know that technically this project is exempt from the City's planning and zoning requirements, but we believe that the City would benefit from having this important civic structure follow those guidelines. If the private sector must comply with the guidelines, why not this major public structure? This is the City's last opportunity to provide more meaningful sustainability and planning on this project. The public deserves to know why this project does not meet these very basic planning and urban design guidelines.