

THE UDO CAN DO MORE TO ADDRESS THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Statement by Sustainable Saratoga

City Council UDO Workshop on August 24, 2021

While the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) contains some good climate mitigation measures, Sustainable Saratoga urges the City Council to take additional steps to address the climate crisis, which is one of the most critical issues of our time.

We would like to draw attention to the issues of energy, building decarbonization, clean transportation, and water efficiency outlined in the City Planning Board's Advisory Opinion to the Council. The Planning Board's recommendations in these areas are consistent with our proposals as expressed in our submitted comments regarding Draft 2 of the UDO and we support the recommendations made by the Planning Board in the Energy and Sustainability section of their opinion which can be found on page 4 of the report.

Additionally, in Appendix C of the Planning Board Advisory Opinion, the Planning Board notes that several opportunities remain to be explored that would make alignment with the Guiding Principles of the Comprehensive Plan outlined in the Environmental Health and Resiliency Chapter even stronger. In particular, the Planning Board highlights portions of Guiding Principle 2.2, particularly the commitment to create a city that is prepared for the impacts of climate change and one that ensures the long-term sustainability of our environmental quality and energy sources that do not contribute to greenhouse gas emissions.

As evidenced by this summer's extreme temperatures, drought, wildfires, and floods, climate change is already here. The assessment report released by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change earlier this month concludes that "Unless there are immediate, rapid, and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, limiting warming to 1.5°C will be beyond reach." The 1.5°C threshold is the point beyond which we will experience even greater climate disruption.

Incorporating the energy and sustainability recommendations listed on page 4 and the additional modifications to the UDO proposed in Appendix C of the Planning Board's Advisory Opinion would not only be consistent with the Guiding Principles of the Comprehensive Plan, it would show leadership on the part of the City in recognizing the urgent need to enact policies that help protect current and future residents from escalating climate events. We urge the City to incorporate these items into the UDO and to explore further opportunities such as the adoption of the NY Stretch Energy Codes that may fall outside of the UDO process.

We further urge the City to remain committed to the Comprehensive Plan's vision for the protection of our Greenbelt, in which the climate mitigation importance of this area was specifically highlighted. The Comprehensive Plan reads: "The greenbelt plays an important function in mitigating the adverse impacts of climate change, including carbon sequestration. The lands in the greenbelt area absorb and retain water, protecting against flooding, which is projected to increase due to more intense and more frequent storms resulting from a warming atmosphere. Open lands and wetlands in the greenbelt also serve to naturally treat and infiltrate stormwater runoff before it enters groundwater or surface water bodies." (page 63).

Thank you for your time. Please reach out to us if we can be of support.

