

**Statement at the Unified Development Ordinance Public Hearing**

**March 15, 2022**

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Sustainable Saratoga is a not-for-profit organization that promotes sustainable practices and the protection of natural resources for the benefit of current and future generations. The Unified Development Ordinance, or UDO, is a document of great consequence to the future of our community; it provides the regulations that will shape our city, our neighborhoods, and the Greenbelt for years to come.

The city's Comprehensive Plan expresses the city's future land use direction. It is the basis for development and conservation within the city. As you all know, State law mandates that all zoning regulations must be in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan. The UDO provides the means of enforcing the Comprehensive Plan and must not deviate from it.

In Saratoga Springs, our Comprehensive Plan identifies "the city in the country" as our guiding vision. The need for balance between development and the protection of our open spaces and natural resources is repeated throughout the Comp Plan. By protecting our vibrant downtown, as well as the open space and natural areas in the outer areas of the city, all of us – businesses, visitors, and residents – can continue to benefit from this pattern of sustainable land use. We find examples all around us of communities that lacked the strong vision of our Comprehensive Plan. Sprawl is a common element in all of them.

Sustainable Saratoga actively participated throughout the UDO process with the goals of improving environmental protections and ensuring the UDO is in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan. While the document makes some progress, it falls short in addressing several of the Comp Plan's guiding principles. In particular, we need stronger protections for the city's Greenbelt. We must also enhance protections for streams and wetlands, which are vital resources that we will increasingly depend on to mitigate the impacts of climate change and maintain our water quality. The requirements for green building standards and building decarbonization fall far short of where we need to be in reducing our contributions to the climate crisis. And finally, affordable housing must be addressed; the lack of affordable housing is a major problem that has consequences for the diversity and vibrancy of our city and has development and environmental impacts well beyond our city's boundaries.

Both through the upcoming amendment process and beyond, we look forward to making this case to you in more detail. Thank you for the opportunity to be heard on these important issues.

