

December 6, 2022

Mayor Kim and Honorable City Council members,

We at Sustainable Saratoga have recently learned that we have been publicly described as “against” affordable housing. We would like to set the record straight.

We have long advocated measures to create more diverse and affordable housing, because it would make our community more sustainable. During our years of operation, Sustainable Saratoga has fought hard for policies and programs that would result in more economically diverse housing opportunities within the city of Saratoga Springs. We support affordable housing because we believe that increased housing diversity brings greater economic stability and resilience. We have supported the city’s workforce rental housing developments in the city, and have also advocated for more home ownership opportunities for middle income citizens.

We have actively advocated inclusionary zoning as a good solution. In 2016 and 2017, Sustainable Saratoga led an effort to have the city legislate an inclusionary zoning program, which would have resulted in mixed-income housing for larger new residential projects. Although that effort was not acted on by the City Council at the time, Sustainable Saratoga expended considerable time and energy to promote that proposal, and we believe such a program could still be adopted, with some modifications. Our IZ ordinance would have mandated affordable housing in every geographic area of the city -- including the city’s Greenbelt.

We advocated the inclusion of more affordable housing provisions throughout the UDO process. Early in the UDO review process, we presented amendments to the draft UDO that would promote affordability in various ways. We have produced numerous policy positions and proposals that would create more tools in the toolbox that communities need to create affordable housing options for their citizens. We have always urged the city to address affordability through a comprehensive review and enactment of available strategies, rather than through individual applications that do not comport with the city’s legislative and regulatory standards. We have publicly expressed our disappointment that the UDO did little to promote more diverse and affordable housing.

We have maintained that affordable housing and the “city in the country” model are compatible sustainability goals. Our “city in the country” identity means not only promoting a vibrant downtown, but also focusing on a conservation standard in our outer rural areas. The economic and environmental advantages of the city’s Greenbelt are substantial, yet we find that the need to actively protect this rare and valuable asset is almost constant. Other communities recognize the unique formula that has helped Saratoga Springs thrive. However, we have found



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that often some in our city do not recognize the need to protect and promote our rural features. In this era of climate change, in which undeveloped land features will do much to protect the area against flooding, it is even more urgent that we do so.

Affordable housing is an important priority, but so is protecting our city's Greenbelt. Sustainable Saratoga does not believe that we need to sacrifice one to protect or promote the other. From an economic standpoint, both our successful urban core and the surrounding green space make the city more attractive to visitors, businesses, and residents, thus providing a more stable local economy and enhancing the quality of life for all.

We hope that our city will explore some of the approaches to land use regulation that other communities are employing to achieve more diverse and affordable housing. Affordable housing is a complex issue that is not unique to Saratoga Springs. Many other communities across the country have created a variety of programs and regulatory tools to address the issues of housing diversity and affordability. We think that some good solutions exist that might work in our community.

We appreciate the Council's enthusiasm for this issue and would like to be part of the city's efforts to address it. In the coming year, we hope to increase our efforts to address affordability, and we would value the opportunity to work cooperatively with the city in doing so.

Thank you,

Dianna Goodwin

Lara Rappaport

Dianna Goodwin and Laura Rappaport, Co-Chairs

