

Jess Troisi

Candidate for Commissioner of Accounts

Sustainable Saratoga Candidate Questionnaire

1. In the city's Comprehensive Plan, Saratoga Springs is defined as the "City in the Country," meaning an intensively developed urban core and vibrant downtown surrounded by "the Greenbelt," an outlying area of rural character and natural resources, with low-density residential development. Do you support this vision of Saratoga Springs or do you think it should change? What are your ideas for economic development that promote smart, sustainable growth for our community?

-I strongly support the "City in the Country" vision of Saratoga Springs. Economic development should happen incrementally on existing infrastructure in the inner district. The city should support small, local, employers through grants and permitting reform that would permit ground floor commercial uses in specific areas paired with small public investments that promote walkability and streetscapes. The greenbelt could also provide tourism through a promoted trail network that would turn the greenbelt from growth constraint to economic asset.

2. The Saratoga Springs Hazard Mitigation Plan ranks severe storms, flooding, and extreme temperatures as the top hazards for the city. The city's natural "green infrastructure," including forests and wetlands, helps protect against flooding, reduces urban heat, and absorbs carbon from the atmosphere. What is your plan for keeping the city's "green infrastructure" intact and for protecting city residents and our local economy from intensifying climate hazards?

-It can be very expensive to replicate the benefits of green infrastructure with grey infrastructure, so it is both financially and environmentally important that the green infrastructure is kept intact. Street projects should include tree planting and projects that involve tree removal should also include tree replacement. The canopy cover of streets and parking lots should be examined, and efforts should be aimed at strategic plantings to increase canopy coverage in low coverage areas. The city should create an overlay to identify the areas that are of high importance in regard to climate resiliency. The overlay could then be considered during any development permitting.

3. Approximately 40% of the food produced in the U.S. for human consumption is wasted, with much of it ending up in landfills and resulting in further environmental problems. Should municipal food scraps collection be added to the City's existing composting operations?

-I am in support of municipal food scrap collection if it can be operated efficiently and effectively. Any city investment would need to be matched with community buy in to succeed and would need a strong partner, like Sustainable Saratoga, to assist with education and outreach. If elected Commissioner of Accounts, I will work collaboratively with all the City Departments and Community Partners to support a pilot program that has collection sites. Later, a model that has the city doing curbside pick-up could be considered once viability, cost, and participation can be assessed.

4. The cost of housing in Saratoga Springs continues to rise. In other resort communities such as ours, simply building more housing has not reduced housing costs. Please discuss your ideas for making Saratoga Springs more affordable.

-Housing affordability won't be solved overnight, but that does not mean Saratoga Springs shouldn't be a regional leader on the issue. There is a lot of pent-up demand for housing in our city, so I appreciate the question's acknowledgement that additional housing alone will not reduce local housing costs. It will take everyone at the Commissioner's Table working together. If elected, I will work with the other commissioners to incentivize infill in the urban core, enable zoning that allows denser housing (duplexes, townhouses, etc..) and incentivize their construction. I will work to create incentives encouraging all large-scale housing developments to contain a certain percentage of affordable units. Permits from the Accounts Department will play a large role in this. If elected Commissioner of Accounts I would pursue permit reforms to reduce barriers and prioritize affordability.

5. Sustainable Saratoga and the city of Saratoga Springs have worked hard for years to increase the presence of trees in the city—the "urban forest"—which provides environmental, social, and economic benefits for Saratoga Springs. This ongoing program requires investment in trained professional staff, tree planting, and maintenance. How important is funding for the urban forest among other city priorities?

-I support the funding of this program and find it important. Trees are a multi-benefit asset that reduce the cost of climate adaptation, support tourism, increase the quality of life, and increase property values. Investing in this program is a cost-effective investment that should compete strongly with other capital priorities.

6. Please feel free to address your top sustainability priorities for Saratoga Springs or any other sustainability topics.

-My top sustainability priorities are protecting the Greenbelt, enabling affordable infill housing, embedding resilience in every project, and supporting people-first projects. Permitting is how we make these priorities real: by rewarding projects that align with Saratoga's long-term vision and holding back those that put our future at risk.