

**To:** Saratoga Springs Planning Board  
**From:** Sustainable Saratoga  
**Subject:** Project 20230877 – NYS 29 Mixed Use  
**Date:** 8/29/2025

The Planning Board has resumed review of a project to build 344 residential units in two 4-story buildings, along with 40 2-story row houses and a 110-room hotel on a 17-acre parcel between Route 29 and Station Lane. The parcel is forested and undeveloped.

The Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) includes the parcel in the Neighborhood Center zoning district, which “is intended to accommodate a wide variety of residential and nonresidential uses in a moderate intensity mixed-use environment. This district also focuses on providing quality streetscape amenities and civic spaces to enhance pedestrian activity.”

Sustainable Saratoga supports growth and development in the city that conforms with the principles of sustainable land use, as embodied in our city’s Comprehensive Plan. The Plan’s city-in-the-country vision “reflects a city with an intensively developed urban core and an economically vibrant central business district, with well-defined urban edges and an outlying area of rural character, comprised of agriculture, open lands, natural and diverse environmental resources, and low-density residential development.” Where appropriate development is proposed, we believe it should be designed and conducted to minimize environmental impacts and enhance environmental benefits.

## **Wetlands**

Sustainable Saratoga strongly supports the protection of streams and wetlands. According to the application materials available on the City website, there is a large area of regulated wetlands near the east boundary of the project parcel. The application materials include a letter from DEC dated February 15, 2024, which makes reference to the proximity of regulated wetlands and the importance of protecting them, as well as the surrounding buffer, from disturbance.

The letter reflected the DEC position at the time. However, the Board should be aware that the letter is out of date. As of January 1, 2025, the jurisdiction of State wetlands regulations was expanded to include “wetlands of unusual importance,” defined as wetlands of any size that meet any of 11 specified characteristics. One of the characteristics is a location within or next to an urban area, as designated by the US Census Bureau. Because the project parcel appears to lie within a designated urban area, wetlands of any size within the project parcel would now be under DEC jurisdiction.



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**The Board should ensure that the applicant contacts DEC as soon as possible to determine whether there are regulated wetlands within the project area and to what extent the project design should be modified to protect them.**

## **Landscape**

Article 11 of the UDO contains extensive requirements for the preservation and planting of trees and other vegetation. It requires specific plantings in and around parking areas and along streets.

Section 11.9.A. provides:

Existing significant trees should be preserved to the maximum extent feasible. Where preservation is not feasible, trees that are removed should be replaced on-site with comparative native trees that will provide the same benefit in accordance with this section.

Section 11.9.C. provides:

As part of site plan review, a tree survey depicting the species, size, location, and condition of any existing significant trees on the site by a land surveyor or registered arborist is required, including a preservation and replacement plan to demonstrate compliance with these standards.

While it is inevitable that a development as intensive as the one proposed will require significant tree cutting, **the UDO indicates that project design, including the layout of buildings and streets and the size of their footprints, should maximize the preservation of existing trees and the size of areas set aside for new trees and other vegetation.**

The Board should work with the applicant to enforce the remaining sections of 11.9, with particular attention to 11.9.E, Permitted Tree Removal, 11.9.F, Tree Replacement or Mitigation, and 11.9.H, Clearcutting of Forest Prohibited. Planting trees along streets or in undeveloped areas at greater densities than required minimums could serve as partial mitigation for the removal of trees to accommodate buildings and infrastructure.

Sincerely,



Kelsey Trudell  
Executive Director



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