



CITY OF SARATOGA SPRINGS

DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

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July 16, 2021

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Michele Madigan, Commissioner of Finance
John Franck, Commissioner of Accounts
Anthony Scirocco, Commissioner of DPW
Robin Dalton, Commissioner of DPS
City Hall - 474 Broadway
Saratoga Springs, New York 12866

RE: **Advisory Opinion to the City Council**
DRC #20210471 Final Draft Unified Development Ordinance

Dear Mayor and Commissioners:

Pursuant to City Council action on May 5, 2021 requesting an advisory opinion from the Design Review Commission, this Board has reviewed the Draft Unified Development Ordinance, heard from the public, and deliberated at its May 26, June 14, and July 7, 2021 meetings.

On June 16, 2021, the Design Review Commission requested a two-week extension from the City Council to provide the advisory opinion. On July 6, 2021, the City Council honored the Design Review Commission's request, affording the Board until July 17, 2021 to provide their opinion.

The Design Review Commission, as required by the City's Zoning Ordinance, reviewed whether the proposed revisions are consistent with the City's 2015 Comprehensive Plan and discussed possible changes that would align with the goals and purpose of the document in order to encourage positive development in the City of Saratoga Springs.

The DRC finds the proposed Unified Development Ordinance to be consistent with the 2015 Comprehensive Plan and issues a favorable advisory opinion with the following considerations.

Considerations:

1. **Table 4-B:** The DRC recommends modifying to read, "All buildings must be oriented toward a *primary* public street." In the instance where there is a corner lot involved, a structure should be oriented to face the most prominent street rather than a side street. It is recommended that this standard be applied to all single-family, single-family – attached, and two-family dwellings (Article 8).
2. **Table 4-B:** The DRC recommends adding the design requirements #3, 6, 8, 10, and 15 to the NCU and AC Districts. The three Zoning Districts that this table encompasses are very similar and the Board feels it is appropriate to require new construction in these zones to meet the same standards.

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3. **Section 8.4.GG.2.a (Historic Carriage House):** The DRC recommends the conversion of a historic carriage house be permitted for parcels of any existing use, not only single-family. In order to encourage the restoration of many of these old carriage houses, we would not want to place too many restrictions on a homeowner's ability to do so.
4. **Section 8.4.GG.1. (Historic Carriage House):** The DRC proposes modifying the definition of Historic Carriage House to read, "historic carriage house that historically served as storage of horse-drawn carriages and tack *or automobiles*, and sometimes..." Some of these historic structures were built specifically to house automobiles, not necessarily carriages and are historic in their own right.
5. **Section 8.4.GG.2.a (Historic Carriage House):** The current language states that a historic carriage house or barn can be converted to a dwelling if it is listed or eligible to be listed as a historic structure or contributing structure on the local, state, or national historic register. The DRC recommends that if a property is only eligible to be listed and a conversion to a dwelling is made that the homeowner would be required to go through the process to list the structure on the National Register in order to further protect the structure and promote its longevity.
6. **Section 8.4.GG.2.d (Historic Carriage House):** Modify to say, "...as a principal dwelling, *any initial or future* alterations require historic review approval by the Design Review Board *whether or not located in a Design Review District.*" for clarity.
7. **Section 9.4. Exterior Lighting:** Light pollution is a big issue in and around the City. The DRC recommends an evaluation done on the proper illumination at the property line so as not to become a hindrance on neighbors, traffic, and pedestrians.
8. **Section 9.5.J.:** This section notes that the front face of a detached garage shall be a minimum of 20' from the front property line. The DRC recommends this standard for the front of an attached garage as well, to allow for a car to be parked in a driveway without impeding pedestrian access to the sidewalk and/or right-of-way.
9. **Section 12.4.E. Illumination:** The allowable illumination of 1 foot-candle is much brighter than what many other communities are considering acceptable. The DRC recommends an evaluation on proper illumination of signage be done so as not to become a hindrance on neighbors, traffic, and pedestrians.
10. **Section 12.4.E. Illumination:** In order to promote consistency of color temperature in our downtown, the DRC would recommend adding a range scale of 2500-3500 kelvins. Anything higher than 3500 can result in harsh glare with greater off-site impacts.
11. **Section 12.6.K.5. Window Sign:** The DRC recommends adding, "Any illuminated window sign or electronic screen between 2 square feet and 6 square feet in size requires review by the DRC regardless of the need for a sign permit. Each storefront is limited to a maximum of one such sign per store front regardless of size."
12. **Section 12.7.B.3. Blade Sign:** Based on research and evaluation of other municipalities, the DRC recommends a maximum projection of 3 feet 6 inches. Based on other size and height restrictions, the Board feels this is more appropriate in scale. The proposal of 30" or the 24" that was previously proposed has not been readily used elsewhere and is not recommended.
13. **Section 12.7.B.3.f. Blade Sign:** The DRC proposes modifying this point to only permit externally illuminated signs.

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14. **Table 13-B Required Notice:** The DRC recommends that published noticing should be done for all demolitions of structures regardless of significance. We feel that this is an educational opportunity to inform the community of a proposed loss to the historic fabric.
15. **Table 13-B Required Notice:** The DRC recommends that on-site property noticing should be done for all new construction including additions, accessory structures, and fences that are in the process of going through design review. We feel that this is an educational opportunity to inform the community of proposed projects.
16. **Table 13-B Required Notice:** The DRC recommends that on-site property noticing for all approvals by the Design Review Commission be required, similar to a building permit. This helps to make people aware of the process and indicate that approvals have been given.
17. **Section 13.9.D.1.e.iv. Historic Review Applicability – actions subject to review:** The DRC recommends this be modified to include the review of “mini splits and the necessary plumbing”.
18. **Section 13.9.D.1.j.iv. Historic Review Applicability – actions exempt from review:** The DRC recommends adding the language, “Replacement in-kind of any exterior feature that is deteriorated beyond repair.” This is language derived directly from NYS Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation guidelines for historic preservation and reduces subjectivity of “in-kind” replacement.
19. **Section 13.9.H. Demolition:** The DRC notes that there are many historic properties and structures that should be protected that are outside of the Historic and Architectural Review Districts. In order to help protect these important pieces of Saratoga Springs history, the DRC suggests modifying this section to read, “The removal of 25% or more of an existing principal or accessory structure either listed or eligible to be listed on the National Register located within the inner district of the City of Saratoga Springs will be subject to Design Review Board review.”
20. **Review of City Projects:** The Design Review Commission appreciates that the current City Council has been doing an excellent job in the stewardship of the City’s historic buildings. In case this is not always the situation, the DRC proposes to mandate an advisory opinion from the necessary land use boards for all City projects, not just City Landmarks. This offers some protection for our new and Historic buildings, things that the Council seems to value now.
21. **Architectural Review District Map:** To eliminate vagueness in review areas, the DRC recommends this language for review of parcels, “*Architectural Review extends to the full extent of the lot for any lot with 50% or more of its frontage within the 100 foot review setback as dictated on the Architectural Review map.*”

Commissioner Madigan’s Questions:

The Design Review Commission received an undated letter from Commissioner Madigan seeking additional input regarding a number of items. The DRC has reviewed and discussed each of the points made and finds the following as applicable to the Design Review Commission:

- I. **South Broadway Split Zoning:** The DRC does not typically comment on matters pertaining to zoning, as it is outside of our purview, however, development and design along the gateway is an important consideration to our City. As it pertains to the question on the split zoning along the gateway area of South Broadway, the Design Review Commission believes that it is possible that development will not be impeded should the Zoning Districts remain as is. The goal of the gateway areas is to encourage appropriate development along the entrances into the City, and by pushing back development, it starts to

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detract from the goal of the gateway areas. It is possible that development will not be impeded should the Zoning Districts remain as is, and in fact, there have been several recent projects that have been successful in their planning and design despite zoning constraints and restrictions. The DRC would not recommend modifying the depth of the Zoning Districts.

2. **Saratoga National Golf Course Project and Definition of a Golf Course:** The DRC would not typically comment on uses, however, form in terms of mass, scale, and height are important considerations. The property specifically in question is located in the Rural Residential (RR) Zoning District, the goal being to preserve rural character and open space. If a large resort were to be proposed in this location, it would be important that any structures reflect the rural character of the District. A large, extravagant structure would be inappropriate; however, there may be ways that such a structure could be creatively designed in a way that would be appropriate in form for this area.

Overall, the Design Review Commission finds this to be a user-friendly document that is very helpful in aiding applicants and Board members alike in development for the City.

Following discussion on this matter on May 19 and June 2, 2021, the Design Review Commission issues the following opinion:

Motion to issue a Favorable advisory opinion to the City Council on the proposed Unified Development Ordinance – passed 6-0 (Ehinger, Bennett, Cavotta, DiCarlo, Roemer, Sheehan)

Respectfully submitted,

Design Review Commission



Tamie Ehinger, Chair

June 16, 2021
Received by Accounts

cc: Accounts Dept.
Applicant/Agent