

# Saratoga Greenbelt Downtown Connector Trail FAQ's

## **What is the Saratoga Greenbelt Downtown Connector Trail project?**

The City of Saratoga Springs Saratoga Greenbelt Downtown Connector Trail project is a New York State Department of Transportation, Department of Environmental Conservation Climate Smart Communities Environmental Protection Fund, and City funded project to install a 10-foot trail and new sidewalks through a developing urban area. The project will construct a 10-foot-wide shared use accessible paved path along High Rock and Excelsior Avenue beginning at the intersection of Lake Avenue/High Rock Avenue and ending at the existing Exit 15 trail terminus on Excelsior Avenue. The project will also construct missing segments of sidewalk on the south side of the streets to create a continuous sidewalk network. Miscellaneous amenities such as benches, wayfinding signage, bike racks will be installed to support the trail.

Construction will be in strict conformance with all NYSDOT and Federal Aid Requirements and governed by the NYSDOT Standard Specifications Section 100 – General Provisions and Section 200 thru 700 - Technical Specifications. All work will be within existing right-of-way or areas where a purchase or permanent easement have been acquired by the City.

## **What is a Public Right-of-Way?**

City Code § 180-1 defines the public Right-of-Way (ROW) as any real property in which the City of Saratoga Springs holds an easement for the benefit of the public. Its purpose is to allow the city to build the street, curb and gutter, storm sewers and possibly underground utilities. This land is the responsibility of the landowner, but the City has the right to determine what takes place there. A ROW may include curbs, sidewalks, trails, and utilities. It generally is a linear strip along the road frontage.

## **How did the City determine the right-of-way (ROW) for this project? How is ROW determined?**

Property line determinations, which delineates where private property ends and the City's ROW begins, were performed by a licensed Land Surveyor. The land surveyor is currently registered to practice in New York State and followed the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) ROW Mapping Procedures. To find out more, go to [NYSDOT Chapter 4 - Highway Boundary and Property Line Determination](#).

While many may assume that the property line, and the Cities ROW, begins at the curb that is not always the case. The depth of a ROW varies from location to location and the survey was conducted to determine the exact dimension of the ROW for this project.

The ROW boundary lines are shown on the final engineered plan maps and are marked as HB - Highway Boundary.

See map: [http://www.saratoga-springs.org/DocumentCenter/View/13568/176086\\_SGT-Downtown-Connector-Final-Plans-2022-01-12?bidId=](http://www.saratoga-springs.org/DocumentCenter/View/13568/176086_SGT-Downtown-Connector-Final-Plans-2022-01-12?bidId=)

# Saratoga Greenbelt Downtown Connector Trail FAQ's

## **How much of my property will the City use to create the trail or sidewalk?**

All work will remain within the City right-of-way or through property that the City purchased or obtained permanent easements prior to the start of construction. The City worked closely with the engineer to create trail and sidewalk plans with as little disturbance to private property as possible.

## **What if the construction of the trail or sidewalk damages my property (lawn, driveway, vegetation, sprinklers, etc.)? Will the City make repairs or pay for repairs?**

While the Saratoga Greenbelt Downtown Connector Trail project is taking place within the City ROW, if the project impacts or disrupts the adjacent property, the disturbed areas will be restored at no cost to the property owner. If you incur any damage during the construction process, please contact the City BEFORE you attempt to repair it. The City will work with the contractor to repair the damage.

## **What if the project damages my driveway?**

Driveway pavement will be restored as part of the project by the contractor at no expense to the homeowner.

## **Who will be responsible for replacing my mailbox if it is damaged or needs to be moved at no cost to the homeowner?**

Mailboxes in the ROW will be relocated and replaced if needed by the contractor for the project.

## **What if I have an irrigation/sprinkler system?**

Please send an email to [Tina.Carton@saratoga-springs.org](mailto:Tina.Carton@saratoga-springs.org) to let the City know that there is an irrigation system in the ROW area.

## **Do I need to shut-off my irrigation/sprinkler system during construction?**

Yes, for the duration of construction. Also please advise construction personnel that will be along the corridor as to the status of any such irrigation/sprinkler systems.

## **Why must my irrigation be turned off during the repairs?**

Irrigation should remain off until contractor verifies that no irrigation lines are damaged. Please avoid water run-off in the construction work site.

# Saratoga Greenbelt Downtown Connector Trail FAQ's

## **How will street trees be impacted by the new trail and/or sidewalk?**

The Downtown Connector Trail will remove forty-nine (49) trees and **plant sixty-two (62) new trees**. To see the list of new trees, please refer to sheet thirty-four (34) of the final plans found here <http://www.saratoga-springs.org/DocumentCenter/View/13568>.

In collaboration with the City Arborists and Sustainable Saratoga's Urban Forestry committee, the trail plans were evaluated and modified, if possible, to minimize damage or removal of trees. After evaluation from the City Arborist, it was determined that forty-nine trees will need to be removed as part of this project. Trees being removed are for a variety of reasons including invasive species, removal of species not in keeping with the City arborist species list, poor health of the existing tree, or expected health of the tree after ground disturbance. Also, the imminent threat of the Emerald Ash Borer, an invasive pest decimating the Ash population in the Mid-west to Eastern United States, could possibly kill the ash trees identified in the project area. Therefore, removal of these trees and replacement with better suited species of urban street trees as part of this project, after the trail is constructed, was determined to be the most efficient and cost-effective strategy.

The project is planting **sixty-two** new trees as part of the project. The entire list of trees can be found on sheet 34 of the project plans. New tree species were selected on the recommendation of Arborists and follow the City's preferred tree list.

In unison with the project, the Department of Public Works City Arborist received an Urban and Community Forestry Grants to complete a Phase I Street Tree Inventory by a team of ISA Certified Arborists to document urban forest health and data. The Inventory data will be utilized to develop a comprehensive Urban Forest Management Plan to organize work function priorities & improve the efficiency of the Urban Forestry Division which will facilitate the preservation, maintenance, improvement, expansion & long-term stewardship, and sustainability of the City's urban forest infrastructure. Based on the findings, the City arborist recommended locations and species of new streets trees in the project area where trees will or have been removed.

## **Will the City replace any damaged or torn down trees?**

Trees on private property impacted by this project will be replaced. The project plans show the locations for new street trees along High Rock and Excelsior Avenue. In total **sixty-two** new trees are being planted as part of this project.

## **Will the City be planting trees as part of this project?**

# Saratoga Greenbelt Downtown Connector Trail FAQ's

**Sixty-two** new street trees are part of the project scope and funding.

## **Are endangered species impacted?**

Kurt Weiskotten, Environmental Scientist for Greenman-Pedersen Inc., reviewed the entire proposed trail corridor for potential and suitable Karner Blue Butterfly (KBB) habitat and/or potential for actual populations of KBB to occur within or near the project corridor. Typical and suitable supporting habitat for KBBs are described as oak savannahs and pine barren ecosystems that likely contain many different herbaceous plants and grasses with scattered small groves of trees and shrubs. These sites are typically open and sunny creating the right conditions for wild lupine to grow, a plant that the Karner blue caterpillar depends on. Wild lupine is the only plant that the caterpillar is known to feed on and therefore critical to survival of the butterfly. Adult KBBs feed on nectar from a variety of wildflowers such as horsemint, butterfly weed, and bachelor's button. Sandy soils are also a common denominator in appropriate KBB habitat and host plant survival.

Screening within the on-line US Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) system asks if the project area and a zone within 200-meters is limited to land uses of "paved developed areas" and "areas regularly mowed during the growing season" (among others). Nearly all of the area within the 200-meter surrounding zone was occupied with areas with ">50% canopy cover", another limiting land use for KBB. If these conditions are prevalent, then a no suitable habitat conclusion may be likely. A review of aerial photographs and a site walkover confirmed that the entire project length consists of disturbed lands adjacent to urban roadways, parking lots, driveways and residential and commercial areas. For most of the corridor length, a maintained strip of grass or extended lawn area is adjacent to the road and in the zone where any project construction would take place. There are no areas that are vegetative naturalized where blue lupine host plants or adult nectar species are established or could become established. Beyond any grassed areas, the land where the project activities would take place is occupied by structures, parking lots, and sidewalks.

Based on these screenings and observations, there is no suitable habitat and no opportunities within the project corridor, or within 200 meters of the site, for KBBs to persist.

## **How does this project address accessibility issues and public safety?**

Sidewalks allow pedestrians to get off of the streets and therefore increase safety. Additionally, the new sidewalks and crosswalks will meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant increasing access for disabled users. The new sidewalks, crosswalks, and curb ramps will be made accessible to the maximum extent practicable.



# Saratoga Greenbelt Downtown Connector Trail FAQ's

Figure 2: Simplified Intersection Rendering



## **Why are the changes to the intersection of High Rock and Excelsior Avenue necessary?**

During the preliminary design phase, the engineering consultant determined that the majority of vehicular traffic traveling west on Excelsior Avenue turned left to High Rock Avenue. There were also a number of vehicular crashes at this intersection due to its current configuration due to its current design.

Additionally, the engineer consultant recommended the reconstruction of the intersection to improve safety of trail users. Intersections are the place where the most vehicle-bike conflicts

# Saratoga Greenbelt Downtown Connector Trail FAQ's

occur. In 2017, 43% of urban bicyclist fatalities occurred at intersections.<sup>1</sup> A stop-controlled intersection with a shortened crosswalk is a low-cost countermeasure recommended by the Federal Highway Administration to reduce the time a trail user is in the roadway.

During the preliminary design phase, the engineer consultant considered five different options for the intersection. After careful review, city departments agreed to the current design. In addition to increasing safety at the intersection, the new design reduces pavement and creates new green space. The Old Red Spring Pavilion will be set in a more parklike setting and can serve as a new destination for travelers. A new signage will include a history of the spring. In fact, the first public bathhouse within the City's limits was constructed here in 1784.

**A WALK BACK IN TIME**  
**Old Red Spring**  
 Saratoga Greenbelt Trail

**Old Red Spring Discovery** 1770  
 Samuel Nelson discovered this particular spring.

**City's First Bathhouse** 1784  
 The City's first bathhouse, named Regina's bathhouse, operated here in the Old Red Spring.

**'New' Red Spring Found** 1808  
 During the re-excavating of the Old Red Spring for use as a new bathhouse, the 'new' Red Spring was discovered, which came from a different vein.

**First Bottling** 1871  
 The first plant to bottle Red Spring water was built in 1871.

**Last Bathhouse Removed** 1913  
 The last bathhouse at this site was removed in 1913.

**Pavilion Constructed** 20th/40s  
 The pavilion that now covers the Red Spring was first built during the 1930s or 1940s.

**EPA Superfund Site Cleanup** 2015  
 Soil cleanup work was completed over the Spring in 2015 in an effort to verify and stabilize environmental areas of soil that had migrated from the 1980's asbestos deposit.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT THE FOLLOWING LINKS:**  
 City of Saratoga Services: [www.saratogacity.org](http://www.saratogacity.org)  
 Saratoga Springs Parks & Recreation: [www.saratogaparks.com](http://www.saratogaparks.com)  
 Saratoga Historical Trail: [www.saratogahistorical.com](http://www.saratogahistorical.com)  
 Saratoga Springs History Museum: [www.saratogahistory.com](http://www.saratogahistory.com)  
 Saratoga Springs Public Library: [www.saratogalibrary.org](http://www.saratogalibrary.org)

Credit: Saratoga Greenbelt Trail by City of Saratoga Services. "The Red Spring (Old Red Spring)" by John Owen, courtesy of Saratoga Springs Library. EPA. <http://www.epa.gov/epaospp/pressreleases/0318/0318031501.cfm>

## Will traffic on street be shut down during construction? What vehicles will be used for construction?

City Streets will remain open during construction of the trail and sidewalks along High Rock and Excelsior Avenue. During some construction operations, one of the two travel lanes will be closed to accommodate the construction equipment. When the lane is closed, 1-way traffic will be maintained with flaggers directing traffic. Vehicles used during construction will consist of small excavator, dump truck, and concrete truck.

<sup>1</sup> NACTO analysis of NHTSA FARS data: Non-Freeway Urban Bike Fatalities (U.S., 2017): Intersection or Intersection-Related: 226 Total Known: 531 Percent Intersection or Intersection-Related: 43%

## Saratoga Greenbelt Downtown Connector Trail FAQ's

Construction of the intersection is expected to take place from September until November. During this time the intersection will be closed to all traffic and an offsite detour will be in place. Advance signage and Variable Message Boards will be used to notify the public at least 4 weeks in advance of this work.

During construction of the intersection, road closures will be posted on the City website and through the use of electronic boards along the roadway.

### **Will older sidewalks adjacent to the new sidewalks be repaired as part of this project?**

The project will not be repairing existing sidewalks – only constructing new segments.

### **Who is responsible for maintaining the new sidewalks and trail? Who is responsible for snow removal on the sidewalk and trail?**

While the sidewalk is in the Cities ROW, the adjacent property owner is responsible for maintaining the sidewalk and snow removal. According to city code, the property owner has a responsibility to maintain a safe sidewalk adjacent to their property. Property owners are also required to keep a four feet path cleared of snow whether they have a sidewalk or not.

#### City Code: § 203-26 Snow and ice removal.

*The owner, occupant or person in charge of an improved or unimproved lot adjoining a City street shall remove the snow from the sidewalks in front of such lot within 12 hours after each snowstorm and shall keep the sidewalks clear of snow and ice and, when slippery, keep the same safe by sanding. The portion of the sidewalk required to be kept free from snow and ice is the portion thereof which is paved, if any, and if no portion thereof is paved, a space at least four feet in width shall be kept free and clear as above stated. A storm ceasing after 7:00 p.m. shall be considered as ceasing at 7:00 a.m. the following morning.*

*The sidewalk is to remain at the established grade, be in good working order and be free of ice, snow, earth, obstructions, etc. Property owners are responsible for any sidewalk repairs and a permit for repairs is required. For more information on sidewalk maintenance, please read the city code which deals with care of sidewalks. § 203-Article X – Care of Sidewalks.*

### **Will this project address stormwater issues on the street or within the ROW?**

This project includes funding to mitigate stormwater issues that arise from the new sidewalk and trail construction. It does not include funding to improve current stormwater issues. In some cases, new curbing and drainage structures may help with existing water pooling. The new curb, driveway apron, and some slight pavement work will allow water to drain and should help in mitigating any existing drainage issues.

### **How long will construction take or what is the timeline on the project?**

# Saratoga Greenbelt Downtown Connector Trail FAQ's

The construction phase of the project is expected to last from May 2022 until December 2022. Access to individual driveways will only be affected for 2 to 3 days. During this time, the construction contractor will place a steel plate over any excavation area so residents will be able to get in and out of their driveway in the evening or allow for other means of access to the driveway.

## **Why wasn't I notified about this project?**

A project page was added to the City website after the project grant funds were accepted by City Council in 2017. The project has been on the City Council agenda nineteen times prior to the March 15, 2022, City Council approval of the construction contract. City Council unanimously approved applying for the first grant funding on July 19, 2016. The first grant award announcement took place on May 2, 2017.

A press release with preliminary map was distributed on February 15, 2019, to the media and added to the City website. An information meeting flyer was posted at the Saratoga Public Library, the City's Recreation Center, through stakeholder email list serves as well posted at numerous local businesses downtown and throughout the corridor. A public information meeting was held on March 4, 2019, at the Saratoga Public Library. The most recent public presentation was held at the January 15, 2022, City Council meeting. Additionally, there were two public hearings at the January 21<sup>st</sup> and February 1<sup>st</sup> City Council meetings.

## **What are the plans for this project, and where can I find more information about this project?**

The City has created a Saratoga Greenbelt Trail website for property owners and interested parties to get more information on this project: <http://www.saratoga-springs.org/2425/Saratoga-Greenbelt-Trail>

On this web page, under Downtown Connector, you will be able to find the relevant documents for the project as they become available.