

April 16, 2018

Mayor Meg Kelly
Commissioner of Finance, Michele Madigan
Commissioner of Accounts, John Franck
Commissioner of Public Safety, Peter Martin
Commissioner of Public Works, Skip Scirocco
City of Saratoga Springs
City Hall
474 Broadway
Saratoga Springs, New York 12866

Dear Mayor and Commissioners,

RE: SUPPORT FOR MANAGED PARKING

Sustainable Saratoga applauds the City Council's effort to initiate a managed parking system for downtown Saratoga Springs. A well-integrated parking and transportation system is critical for the long-term sustainability of the downtown area.

The current parking operations within the downtown area are flawed from a sustainability perspective. Specifically:

- Sustainable development encourages supporting local businesses. The current parking system is not producing the high parking space turnover rates that are critical to local business in our downtown core.
- The true costs of parking operations and maintenance and revenue from fines are not known and that gives rise to concerns over financial inequities.
- Traffic congestion wastes fuel and creates avoidable air pollution. In Saratoga Springs, traffic congestion is common, and it is exacerbated by people searching for parking spaces. This is frustrating to visitors and contributes significantly to air pollution.
- Part of SMART development is taking a long view of development, and planning for a more sustainable future transportation system. There is too little focus on long-range planning, maintenance and capital investment, as well as under-utilization of new technologies that could more effectively manage the system.

Parking should be viewed as an integral component of our economic and transportation system. The parking issue in Saratoga Springs has significant implications for the three pillars of sustainability – social, environmental, and economic. A thoughtfully designed parking system can address these three components of sustainability while also meeting the needs of businesses, residents and visitors alike. The new parking system will better support the development of an improved and more highly utilized alternative transportation system.



Managed parking does come in many forms. In January 2015, we presented a set of community forums entitled “Solutions for Downtown Parking and Transportation.” Two nationally known speakers provided research that documented the successes of managed parking all around the country. We have looked at a number of similar sized resort communities. We have been most impressed with the managed parking system that exists in Newport, RI. It actively promotes alternative transportation throughout the city to reduce congestion and takes a balanced approach to tourist and residential parking needs.

But each community must devise its own comprehensive approach. We are encouraged that the City Council is embracing this. We are convinced that with the help of an experienced professional, Saratoga Springs can also develop a plan that will be a benefit to retail owners, employees, visitors and residents, while also addressing sustainability issues within our community.

We realize that there are controversial issues associated with this process, in particular the concept of whether a fee structure will be part of the solution. Currently, parking costs are paid by taxpayers. The managed parking process that the City has initiated will help to determine the best way to deal with the inherent costs associated with parking issues in this City.

By our count, in recent years there have been 15 studies with resulting recommendations relating to parking in our downtown. All called for more effective management of the downtown parking system. In spite of these recommendations, there have not been any significant improvements in parking management in the last 25 years.

It is clearly time for our community to take meaningful action on these issues and Sustainable Saratoga thanks the City Council for doing so. We know that change is hard and applaud your leadership.

Sincerely,



Art Holmberg
Chair, Sustainable Saratoga

