



## **SARATOGA COUNTY PLANNING BOARD**

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April 28, 2016

Susan Barden, Senior Planner  
City of Saratoga Springs  
City Hall 474 Broadway  
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

**RE: SCPB Referral Review#15-171-Area Variances-Moore Hall LLC/Bonacio**  
Proposal to demolish existing structures (previous 6-story college residence hall and cafeteria) and obtain variances (setback variances for front yard, side yard, rear yard, and variances for density and maximum building coverage) to construct 26 residential dwelling (condominium) units.  
Union Avenue (NYS Route 9P) and White Street

Received from the City of Saratoga Springs Zoning Board of Appeals on March 23, 2016.

Reviewed by the Saratoga County Planning Board on April 21, 2016.

**Decision:** No Significant County Wide or Inter Community Impact

Previously, in September of 2006, the Saratoga County Planning Board reviewed a near-identical appeal for a special use permit and for area variances that was followed three months later by a referral for site plan review. On September 21, 2006 the SCPB rendered a recommendation of No Significant Countywide or Intercommunity Impact on the area variances and special use permit. On December 21, 2006 the county board approved the site plan associated with Norstar Development's proposal for demolition and construction of 18 residential condominium units. Prior to the Norstar application for redevelopment of the properties under review they were zoned Institutional, then re-zoned to UR-4, and remain so zoned now.

The review of area variances requires the board of appeals to conduct a test in which it considers the benefits sought by the applicant (through the proposed project) in balance with any potential detriment to a community's health, safety and welfare. Just as the previous proposals warranted positive recommendations from this body, we found the newly-proposed concepts as being consistent in mass, scale, and design with the neighborhood and warranting again a positive recommendation (No Significant...).

We noted that the 1.3 acres under consideration are split by an alley and front on two different streets (Union Ave. and White Street), accentuating the need for variances.

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Additionally, there are no vacant parcels or adjacent lands/lots for sale which might help to minimize or eliminate the need for variances. It does not appear that the option of constructing two large structures up to the permitted height of 70 feet would create residential uses consistent with that of the existing neighborhood. Over the years since the college has relocated to its North Broadway campus, the surrounding neighborhood(s) has/have experienced the conversion of many large single-family residences and former college structures into multi-family residential buildings which have resulted in a mix of residential types along with apartments and offices. We see the proposed development as complementing the existing neighborhood.

In our review of the submitted materials and visits to the project site, we are aware that the same variances as approved in 2006 are being presented with this application (with only minor variation in degrees of measurement for some). We note that from the main visual approach of Union Avenue there is no front yard setback variance required. On White Street the required 25' setback is not met but it should be noted that the setbacks of existing residences are approximately at a build-to line or setback of 5' and the proposed construction is designed to match the context of the existing neighborhood. In regard to the appearance and context of new construction it should be noted that in the April 5, 2016 correspondence from OPRHP the project's demolition and new construction "will have no adverse impact upon the Union Avenue Historic District" if:

1. Bldg materials used are sympathetic to surrounding architecture and work well within the streetscape of the historic district, and
2. Setbacks and lawn areas on both streets are consistent with neighboring properties.

We understand that the project was before the city's DRC last Wednesday night (20<sup>th</sup>) and it appears that the project was seen as positive for the neighborhood and contextually presented no problem with mass of scale.



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Michael Valentine, Senior Planner  
Authorized Agent for Saratoga County

**DISCLAIMER:** Recommendations made by the Saratoga County Planning Board on referrals and subdivisions are based upon the receipt and review of a "full statement of such proposed action" provided directly to SCPB by the municipal referring agency as stated under General Municipal Law section 239. A determination of action is rendered by the SCPB based upon the completeness and accuracy of information presented by its staff. The SCPB cannot be accountable for a decision rendered through incomplete or inaccurate information received as part of the complete statement.