

**From:** "stephanie waring" [REDACTED]

**To:** "Susan Barden" <susan.barden@saratoga-springs.org>

**Sent:** Sunday, March 13, 2016 2:06:36 PM

**Subject:** Downton Walk

Dear Ms. Barden,

I've read the Saratogian article on Downton Walk and I have been aware of this project. I'm worried that it is a clever way to get around zoning laws. What is the point of zoning laws if you can get around them so easily? I'm not from this neighborhood. I live in Saratoga. If John Witt is granted what he's asking for then why do we have laws if any developer can come in and develop any way he/she wants in this City? I don't understand how this project was approved the first time and why it is being considered again. Thank you and I appreciate the opportunity to make my feelings known.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Waring

Confidentiality/Privilege Notice: This e-mail communication and any files transmitted with it contain privileged and confidential information from the City of Saratoga Springs and are intended solely for the use of the individual(s) or entity to which it has been addressed. If

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** "Susan Barden" <susan.barden@saratoga-springs.org>  
**Cc:** "Linda" [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Saturday, March 12, 2016 11:36:51 AM  
**Subject:** Fwd: Witt Construction Downton Walk

Ms. Braden -

My wife Linda and I live at [REDACTED] East Ave. and also own the residence at [REDACTED] East Ave. As we have previously communicated to Mr. Witt, we are in support of his project and believe it will ultimately improve the neighborhood. Our one concern, also communicated to Mr. Witt, is in regards to the demolition of the current property. Specifically, this property has been (mostly) vacant and in disrepair for several years and we are worried that there may be various 'pests' living in/on the property that may become dislodged during demolition and then relocate throughout the neighborhood. Mr. Witt has assured us that he will take proper measures to ensure this does not happen. We would ask that the city be aware of this concern and stress/ensure remediation measures are taken when granting Zoning approval.

Regards,

Jeff & Linda Anderson  
[REDACTED] East Avenue  
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

Ph. [REDACTED]

- sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Marci Robinson [REDACTED] >  
**Date:** March 11, 2016 at 11:38:09 AM EST  
**To:** Marci Robinson [REDACTED] >  
**Subject:** Witt Construction Downton Walk

All,

We are pleased to inform you that we are moving along with our plans for the property on 27 Jumel Place, Saratoga Springs. Due to the lengthy probate process the City approvals we received have expired. We received approval for an extension from the Planning Board last night and we are scheduled to go before the Zoning Board again this month to apply for an extension. Attached is a drawing of the proposed 7 lot single family condominium project. The project will improve the neighborhood by eliminating the existing commercial building and constructing attractive homes which will fit in the neighborhood with similar setbacks to the existing homes on the street. This project is sure to enhance the neighborhood and increase property values.

We hope that you will express your support by sending a brief email to Susan Barden (the planner assigned to the ZBA) [susan.barden@saratoga-springs.org](mailto:susan.barden@saratoga-springs.org). as we go before the City Zoning Board of Appeals for approval on Monday, March 21, 2016 at 7pm. It is important to include your name and physical address on the email. Please send the email to Susan Barden and cc me so that John Witt will have a copy of all letters supporting the project.

Once the extension is approved, we plan to close on the property and move full speed ahead with construction!

Best,  
MR

Marci Robinson  
Sales Assistant

[Witt Construction, Inc.](#)  
563 North Broadway  
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866  
518.587.4113



[image/jpeg:image002.jpg]

---

**From:** "John Cashin" [REDACTED] >  
**To:** "Susan Barden" <susan.barden@saratoga-springs.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 11, 2016 3:09:21 PM  
**Subject:** Downton Walk Zoning Variance

Dear Ms. Barden,

I wish to add my voice to those City residents in opposition to the proposed zoning variances necessary to permit the Witt subdivision called Downton Walk. John Witt has repeatedly shown his insensitivity to the needs of the communities where his subdivisions are being developed. His only concern is to maximize the return on his investment in the parcels he purchases. He has wantonly cleared in a designated "no cut" zone in the Town of Greenfield and has proposed clear cutting in a designated "Open Space" in a planned Conservation subdivision in the town of Saratoga. In the furtherance of his plans, he has repeatedly attempted to misconstrue the provisions of the zoning regulations and the explicit provisions of the Comprehensive Plan to achieve his ends.

While he is fully aware of the Zoning requirements in a Urban Residential-3 zone, Witt simply believes that the Zoning laws and the provisions of the City's Comprehensive Plan do not apply to him. Below I have reproduced an excerpt from an well written and researched article by City resident, Sandy Cohen. The article succinctly describes Witt's attempt to manipulate the zoning provisions well beyond their original intent and shows his total disregard to the explicit provisions of the City's Comprehensive Plan. His lack of concern for community character simply knows no bounds.

Please advise the Zoning Board of Appeals to deny this application.

Respectfully,  
John Cashin

The most basic of the issues was the **seven condominiums** he is proposing to build. All will be free-standing structures. So, in his mind, they are basically single-family homes. However, the owners will only be buying the walls and the space within them. The land under and around them will be owned by all the homeowners with an undivided interest and managed by a Homeowners Association that they will direct to maintain and care for it – thus the condominium moniker. The ZBA feels that such ownership is not enough to consider the project a “regular” condominium for zoning purposes – because it will “look like” it’s made up of single-family homes. This becomes a confusing issue, because, on one hand, the builder is admitting he is building condos, only because of the land-ownership factor; but, on the other hand, he wants special consideration for his request to place more structures on the lot than allowed by law.

Most communities refer to Witt’s model as “zero-lot-line” homes and do not “condominiumize” the land. Zero-lot-line homes are considered **cluster housing** and, in Saratoga Springs, are allowable **only** in the Urban Residential-1 (UR-1) and Suburban Residential-2 (UR-2) districts. The codes for those types of communities require the land to be subdivided before it can be approved. Witt has not applied for subdivision, which requires much heavier oversight before approval. The codes addressing cluster housing **require** adherence to proper set-backs to existing properties, although they can be ignored between the homes within land being developed. They also require a strict percentage of the land to be left green. Witt is requesting relief from those setbacks; and has not even made a request for as much relief as he would need, because of the orientation of the homes on the land. And he is not leaving anywhere near as much green land surrounding those homes as required by law. But even those two issues are trumped by the fact that these **are** condos that may NOT be built in a UR-3 district.

If Witt wants to continue to ask for such allowances, especially for condos/multi-family housing in a UR-3 area, we believe it is incumbent on him – by the City’s Comprehensive Plan, Charter, and Zoning Codes – to petition the City Council, which we also believe is the **only** group that can make such exception, by changing language in the Comprehensive Plan itself to allow multi-family housing in a Core Residential Neighborhood-1 (CRN-1) category. However, such a drastic change as this would be opposed by most of the more than 10,000 homeowners throughout the residential neighborhoods in our city.

We contend that the Zoning Board of Appeals will be operating outside of its purview, if it approves Witt’s application.

Confidentiality/Privilege Notice: This e-mail communication and any files transmitted with it

---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** "Susan Barden" <susan.barden@saratoga-springs.org>  
**Cc:** "Marci Robinson" [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, March 11, 2016 11:24:45 AM  
**Subject:** Witt Construction Downton Walk-Jumel Place

Meghan O'Connor  
Realty USA-Scott Varley Team  
66 Warren St  
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

Susan,

I'm writing this email in support of the Downton Walk on 27 Jumel Place. I have several clients that are very interested in building in this neighborhood. The proposed plans and neighborhood concept will only help and increase the value of existing homes. This John Witt project will be a great addition to the city of Saratoga Springs. Please make sure that this email is recorded in favor of the project. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Meghan OConnor

3/14/2016

To: Saratoga Zoning Board of Appeals

Saratoga Council and Planning Board,

First of all I can appreciate the awkward position in which the proposal to develop 27 Jumel Place puts the Zoning Board of Appeals, after having already approved the numerous substantial variances two years ago. Having said that, this also gives the Zoning Board, the neighborhood, and the Saratoga Community at large, another opportunity to take a second look at this proposal and its potential city wide long term effects.

I think we all agree the development of the property into residential use could be an asset to the neighborhood and the City Tax Rolls as well.

**The broader questions, First :** Is this is the right development for this piece of property? John Witt and his construction company are well-known at producing high quality, high end units. By John's own description this would add six million + to the tax rolls. However, a project of this magnitude on this property is requiring numerous (at least 5) and substantial variances (90% and more) relief with major modifications to the zoning regulations in a residential area.

**Second:** There are questions as to this type of development in the UR-3 zoning. This kind of development seems to be a first for the City's residential areas...Do we really want to make quasi-single family / condominium a precedent for change for other parts of the City's residential zoning?

One of the criteria that the Zoning Board of Appeals must consider is **"Whether the benefits sought by the applicant can be achieved by any other means"**.

Does anybody really believe you need a six million dollar plus project to reasonably and economically develop this site? It seems reasonable that a scaled back project even in the 3 to 4 million dollar range that stays within zoning requirements would be feasible and lucrative. Even at that level it far surpasses the value of any property in the area, perhaps even the Eastside. Understandably a developer wants to maximize their investment; however it should not be the role of the Zoning Board of Appeals to grant variances to ensure increased profitability of the development. A more modest development that remains within the guidelines is in order.

Another criterion the ZBA must consider is **"Whether the variances will produce an undesirable change in the neighborhood or a detriment to nearby properties"**.

An increase of lot coverage over 50% above Zoning restrictions is very significant, especially considering this is one of the largest parcels in the neighborhood. Although none of the public materials available indicate the height of any of the buildings, presumably all are well under the 60 ft zoning limit. Pertaining to the two Jumel Place facing structures however, the graphics indicate 3 stories with copula's which are well above the surrounding 1 to 1 ½ story homes; in addition they rise up 1 foot from the sidewalk. Slightly smaller homes appear to be depicted toward the rear of the property. At such heights privacy to the surrounding neighboring back yards is reduced. The development is also surrounded with a 6 to 8 foot opaque wall separating the older neighboring properties from the new development. All of these would seem to be an undesirable change if not a detriment to the neighborhood. A more modest development that remains within the guidelines would be appropriate.

A third consideration of the ZBA is **"Whether the variance is substantial"**

**All Five** of the variances sought after seem very substantial, ranging from a 50% to 90% relief in the codes. A more modest development that remains within the guidelines is obtainable.

And the last ZBA consideration: **"Was the alleged difficulty self created?"**

The concerns of criteria 1, 2, & 3 can all be resolved with: A more modest development that remains within the guidelines of the zoning.

I urge the Zoning Board of Appeals to deny the zoning variances and to suggest a redesign of the proposed development.

Respectively Submitted,

Gerald Mattison

████████████████████