



August 1, 2016

Honorable Mayor Joanne Yepsen  
City Hall – 474 Broadway  
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

RE: Affordable Housing Task Force

Dear Mayor Yepsen:

The Saratoga Builders Association, Inc. (SBA) is a non-profit, specialized professional trade association representing the entire building industry. Our members include home builders, developers, remodelers, suppliers, sub- contractors, financial institutions, architects, engineers, realtors, attorneys and other industry professionals. The SBA is committed to the continued growth, prosperity and quality of life in Saratoga County, including the City of Saratoga Springs.

As an organization, we offer our members opportunities to work together, learn and share information. We are also committed to supporting a diverse, quality housing stock for our region. Our members are currently involved with two Habitat for Humanity projects in Saratoga Springs. Additionally, proceeds from our *Showcase of Homes* benefit Rebuilding Together Saratoga County and Northern Saratoga Habitat for Humanity.

The SBA recognizes the issue of affordable housing is complex and will require a creative approach. We encourage you and the City Council to engage partners, such as the SBA, as you work to address it. The establishment of the Affordable Housing Task Force (Task Force) has once again started the affordable housing discussion in the City. The SBA would welcome an open dialogue with the City Council and the Task Force to discuss challenges and realistic, implementable approaches for addressing this very important issue.

Specifically, the SBA is interested in understanding if the Task Force has identified areas within the City to focus more affordable and diverse housing (through zoning, incentives, or other mechanisms). We would request that information be provided to the SBA and other partners. That important information could be shared with our members to assist in facilitating the City's goals of a more affordable and diverse housing stock.



Our members are the very professionals that construct or support the construction of quality housing that contributes to the high quality of life in Saratoga County. As such, we have the understanding and knowledge to approach this issue in a practical and realistic manner. Again, we encourage the City Council and the Task Force to engage industry partners to assist in tackling this issue in the City of Saratoga Springs. Further, we would also welcome the opportunity for a representative from the SBA to join the Task Force to ensure ongoing communication and coordination.

Should you have any information to share on the Task Force's efforts to date or wish to include the SBA in discussions about affordable housing solutions, please do not hesitate to contact me. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Barry Potoker", is written over the typed name and title.

Barry Potoker  
Executive Director

CC: Commissioner Franck, Commissioner Madigan, Commissioner Mathiesen, Commissioner Scirocco, Bradley Birge, SBA Board Members



August 29, 2016

Honorable Mayor Joanne Yepsen  
City Hall – 474 Broadway  
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

Dear Mayor Yepsen:

You indicated in your comments at the August 16th City Council meeting that the Saratoga Builders Association (SBA) was "in favor of moving forward with this type of ordinance," referring to the proposed SPA Zoning Amendment presented by Sustainable Saratoga to be sent to City and County Planning Boards for advisory opinions.

To be clear, this is not the case, and is in no way what our letter indicated. In fact, the central point of our letter was a request that the SBA be invited to the table to help draft an effective ordinance. The fact that an entire ordinance amendment has been drafted and presented with little or no input from the builder/developer/finance community was exactly the situation our letter was seeking to avoid.

The process of creating affordable housing through incentive mechanisms is challenging and complex. Expecting an arbitrary collection of requirements, density bonus, and fee alterations will work because they appear to have "worked in another community" or because work done 10 years ago is "still valid" is preposterous and unrealistic.

As has too often been the case, broad politically charged ideas are playing a poor substitute for the real work that would be required to bring about meaningful change.

We have the tools to conduct a factual analysis - to look at the revenue impact of various requirement levels of affordable housing and competently show what the required offset would need to be to maintain a viable, financeable project. We have the expertise to produce feasibility studies and schematic pro-formas that can be discussed with and vetted by our local financial institutions. We have the experience to engage in an honest discussion about the vehement NIMBY attitudes we encounter in the neighborhoods in which we develop and how the City will act to mitigate the delays and expenses associated with countering them.



To be forced, by uninformed regulation, to build a product that is not financeable, does not result in more housing options, it results in no housing options.

We look forward to working with the other members of the task force to explore how the City and our members can work together to create a broader housing mix in our city.

Sincerely,

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Barry Potoker  
Executive Director

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