

February 28, 2016

To: The Zoning Board of Appeals of the City of Saratoga Springs, NY

cc: Saratoga Springs City Council, Saratoga Springs Planning and Economic Development Department, gridsaratoga.com, saratogaspringspolitics.com, Saratoga Today, The Saratogian, The Times Union

Re: Illegal Application for “seven single family condominiums,”
and requests for substantial Zoning Variances at
27 Jumel Place, Saratoga Springs, by ANW Holdings, Builder, John Witt

Public Hearing #2 to be held at the Zoning Board of Appeals meeting on March 7, 2016

Fr: Neighbors of Surrounding Properties

On Monday night, March 7th, the Zoning Board will be deciding on a major project on Jumel Place which is illegal and out of character with the neighborhood. The builder, John Witt, is asking for 7 single condominiums which would be selling for up to 1.5 million dollars per unit. Condominiums are not allowed in UR-3 zoning and the lot is zoned for only 5 units. The builder should be required to follow the zoning law. Mr. Witt is also asking for substantial variances as well.

The Zoning Board of Appeals needs to protect the residential neighborhoods on East Avenue, Lake Avenue, Granger St, and Jumel Place, which surround 27 Jumel Place, from this massively overdone and illegal application. This project will negatively impact the value of our homes and the quality of life in our neighborhood. There are far too many legal questions and large variances being sought, which if granted, would make zoning law useless.

First and foremost, the Land Use category of Jumel Place in our city’s 2015 Comprehensive Plan is a Core Residential Neighborhood-1 (CRN-1), allowing a maximum density of 10 units/acre. In our city’s Zoning Ordinance, Jumel Place is located in an Urban Residential-3 (UR-3) Zoning District, which allows for only single and two-family homes to be built. By law, this particular parcel of land is large enough to allow five single family homes or four two-family homes.

The applicant is requesting to build “seven single family condominiums.” Condominiums are not allowed on Jumel Place, as by definition in our Zoning Ordinance, condominiums are multifamily. The city’s Zoning Ordinance states the definition of a condominium as follows: “CONDOMINIUM: A multifamily dwelling containing individually owned dwelling units, wherein the real property title and ownership are vested in an owner, who has an undivided interest with others in the common usage areas and facilities which serve the development.”

Multifamily structures are not allowed in a Core Residential Neighborhood-1 or a UR-3 Zoning District. The request by the applicant must be called what they are, 7 single family homes. However, only 5 single family units are allowed on this size lot, or 4 two-family units. (Actually only one unit is allowed, as the applicant has not sub-divided the lot.)

The request for seven single family homes is 40% over the density allowed in an UR-3 Zoning District and creates a 40% density bonus for Mr. Witt's \$700K to \$1.5 million dollar homes. In our city's Zoning Ordinance, a density bonus of this magnitude is only allowed for affordable senior housing. This is not affordable housing.

To allow for the density the applicant is requesting, the city council would have to change the Land Use category of this area in the Comprehensive Plan from a Core Residential Neighborhood-1 (CRN-1), which allows up to 10 units/acre, to a Core Residential Neighborhood-2 (CRN-2), which allows up to 15 units/acre.

Why is the applicant insisting on calling these seven single family homes "seven single family condominiums"?

Is it because the applicant believes he will only have to provide back yards for two of the seven units, as his application shows? Five of the units have no back yards at all. A 25' back yard setback is required for every unit in a UR-3 Zoning District.

Is it so the applicant doesn't have to spend the money to subdivide the lot?

Is it because the applicant thinks he will be allowed more units than the maximum of five single family homes allowed on this lot?

Is it because these \$700K to \$1.5 million dollars homes may receive a condominium tax break, thereby forcing the far more modest homes in the area to virtually subsidize them?

Is it because of all of these reasons? We simply do not know.

Legally, whether these seven single family homes are called condominiums, or not, they are not allowed on this property site. **Only five single family homes are allowed by law on this property.** Approving this application would be in violation of the city's Comprehensive Plan and its Zoning Ordinance.

In addition to the applicant requesting two units more than legally allowed on this lot, the applicant also is asking for the following massive variances.

Variance 1) The maximum building coverage allowed on this lot is 30%. The applicant had previously asked for a 43.5% building coverage allowance, or 45% more than what is allowed. He has recently increased this request to 46%, or 53.3% more than what is allowed. Granting either of these requests would be substantial.

Variance 2) The rear yard setback required for each unit is 25 feet. The applicant is asking that this requirement be eliminated by 100% for five units, going from the 25 feet required to zero (0) feet. For the remaining two units he is asking for a 76% reduction in the rear yard setback from 25 feet to 6 feet.

Variance 3) The front yard setback required for the two front units is 10 feet. The applicant is asking for one (1) foot, a 90% reduction in the front yard setback. The applicant claims that this is so "our (2) front porches [can] be placed on the unit." However, his drawings show that he is not proposing porches, only overhangs.

Variance 4) The fence height allowed in this UR-3 residential area is six feet. The applicant is asking for an eight foot fence, a 33% increase in height over what is allowed. Why is this necessary only for this development? Is the applicant trying to exclude the rest of the neighborhood? A fence this high would create an exclusive walled enclave shutting out the existing neighborhood.

Variance 5) The applicant is asking for a maximum principal building on one lot to be increased from one to seven, a 600% increase. As mentioned earlier, only five single family units are allowed by law on this property, after the property is subdivided. Why is this property not being subdivided?

This project will negatively impact the value of our homes and the quality of life in our neighborhood.

There are far too many legal questions and large variances being sought, which if granted, would make zoning law useless.

This illegal application with its substantial variances needs to be denied by the Saratoga Springs Zoning Board of Appeals at their upcoming meeting on March 7th.

The neighbors would support a more balanced project with 5 single family homes on 30% of the land with more standard setbacks.

For additional information contact: [REDACTED]