



SAVE Colonie

A Partnership for Planning

Media Release

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Contact: Susan Weber, Spokesperson, SAVE Colonie: A Partnership for Planning [518.462.3247](tel:518.462.3247)

Save Colonie releases its New Year's Resolutions for the Town of Colonie in 2018

Since its inception in 2016, SAVE Colonie has been working to help bring Colonie residents' views into the Town's development process. While the organization counts some successes -- the Town's Comprehensive Plan process is well underway, the Neighborhood Coalition is stronger and more involved than ever before, and the Planning Board regularly asks developers to consider and protect existing natural features of a site -- much remains to be done.

SAVE suggests the following five easy and cost-effective steps the Town can institute to make the development review process more user-friendly for ALL:

1. Encourage developers to reach out to neighbors, early in their project planning.

It is common for neighbors of land under development to be leery of change. Neighbors also may have specialized knowledge of site characteristics, or particular local issues of use to a developer. Early involvement may calm neighbors' concerns and allow a cooperative relationship to develop, which would be beneficial to all.

2. Provide access to all project documents on line, throughout the review process.

It is unfair to residents that project documents (including TOC staff, TDE & other agency comments) are unavailable except through a FOIL request; even posted plans disappear after the Planning Board meeting date. Other municipalities maintain complete on-line files which are readily available to the public. This eliminates time-consuming and costly Town FOIL responses, and readily provides the public what it is entitled to, anyway.

3. Post Planning Board agendas in formation.

Developers know well in advance when their project will be reviewed by the Planning Board. Residents deserve as much notice. Rather than merely posting agendas a few days in advance of a meeting, the Town should maintain a public schedule of PB meeting agendas *as they are being formulated*. Also, the PEDD website should provide a current list of all projects which have undergone Development Coordination Committee Review, with links to the relevant files.

4. Encourage public comment at Sketch Plan review.

Frequently, neighbors are much more familiar with a site and its characteristics than the Planning Board when a project comes before them for Sketch Plan review. The Board can learn valuable information and better assess a project's impacts if residents are allowed to raise issues at Sketch Plan review, as well as at Concept. Earlier input offers a better opportunity to resolve difficulties before a developer is heavily invested in a particular plan.

5. Electronically project documents under review to allow public access during meetings.

The current antiquated system for displaying project documents at Planning Board meetings hampers public and Planning Board access, and frustrates the public. Even elementary schools in Colonie have better visual technology. We look forward to improvements that have been promised.

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