

**AMENDMENT TO THE
2012 VILLAGE OF SARANAC
MASTER PLAN**



*Approved by the Saranac Village Council
August 12, 2019*

Purpose of the Amendment

In 2012 the Jean K. Harker Middle School at 234 Vosper Street, which taught grades 6-8, was closed. Students were transferred to the nearby Saranac High School to continue their education. Since its closing the school has remained vacant and has deteriorated due to lack of proper maintenance.

The 2012 Village Master Plan recommended a continuation of all of the Saranac School District property for school use as it was not known at the time of the Plan preparation that the middle school was about to close. The Village has received a number of inquiries since that time to utilize the building for non-school purposes. The lack of a specific Master Plan recommendation, however, made it difficult to determine which of these proposals would constitute a suitable re-use of the middle school.

The Village therefore has taken the pro-active step to update the 2012 Master Plan to create a sub-area plan specifically for the middle school property in order to guide the future re-development of this property in a manner which will be compatible with the neighborhood and be a benefit to the Village as a whole.

*2019 Master Plan Amendment
For Re- Use of Former Middle School Site*



Plan Update Process

The Village Council and Planning Commission met in a joint workshop session on April 3, 2019 to first identify the issues and assets of the school property. Two groups then formed, each with a mix of Council members and Commissioners, to review large air photos of the school property and surrounding neighborhood. Using markers and post it notes each person in the group noted their concerns with the redevelopment of the middle school and their desired future land uses for the middle school. The land uses were recorded on large sheets and members voted with sticky circles for their preferred future land uses.

The results of the voting and the group comments are found in Appendix A and serve as the basis for the following future land use recommendations of this Master Plan Amendment.

Background Information

ZONING

The entire Saranac School District property including the middle school is zoned MDR-1. Medium Density Residential -1.

Permitted uses include:

- A. One single family dwelling on each lot or building site with accessory uses, buildings and structures as provided by this ordinance.
- B. State licensed family day-care homes, adult day-care homes, foster-family homes, and adult foster –care family homes (care for six or fewer persons).
- C. Home occupations: Type I home occupations in accordance with the requirements of Article 18.
- D. Essential service installations including pipes, hydrants, poles, transformers, lines, manholes and lift stations, subject to the provisions of Section 30.17.15.
- E. Non- commercial communications towers and satellite dish antennae less than fifty feet in height subject to the applicable provisions of Article 17.
- F. Open space preservation projects as promulgated by Public Act 177 of 2001, subject to the provisions of Article 21

Uses allowed by Special Land Use permit include:

- A. Two-family dwellings on corner lots.
- B. Private, non-commercial kennels.
- C. State licensed group day-care homes (day-care for 12 or fewer individuals).
- D. State licensed foster-family and adult foster small group homes (care for 12 or fewer individuals).
- E. Airports and heliports.
- F. Bed and breakfast establishments.
- G. Churches, mosques, synagogues and other places of religious assembly.
- H. Schools, public and private not-for profit.
- I. Colleges and universities, accredited.
- J. Parks and Playgrounds.
- K. Public and private utility and service buildings and facilities such as regulator stations, telephone sub stations, and water storage towers, excluding equipment and materials storage yards.
- L. Communications towers, antennae and facilities greater than 50 feet in height.
- M. Home Occupations: Type II home occupations in accordance with the requirements of Article 18.
- N. Cemeteries and crematories.
- O. Earth removal, sand and gravel mining.
- P. Residential Planned Unit Developments.

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

The area around the middle school consists of single-family houses along Vosper Street to the west and north and to the south along Clover Lane. A school operated practice field abuts the middle school parking lot to the east and Saranac High School and Elementary School are located east of the athletic field. Galilee Baptist Church is located to the northeast of the middle school at the corner of Orchard Street and South Pleasant Street.

The middle school portion of the property consists of about 4.85 acres including the parking lot and two lots fronting on Clover Lane. The middle school building is one story with the gymnasium portion being approximately two stories. Access to the middle school is from South Pleasant Street. No driveways are located on Vosper Street. A sidewalk fronts the school along Vosper Street. The school is served by Village water and sanitary sewer.

2012 MASTER PLAN

While the 2012 Plan did not specify a different future land use for the Harker middle school, the Plan did recognize the former school building at Vosper and Church Streets as having the potential for a variety of non-school uses. The Plan proposed a new category called Adaptive Re-use of Old Buildings and Structures or the AR Category. Uses proposed included “multi-family residential, offices, service and retail use and any combination of uses in a multi-use configuration”

The Plan recognized the historic importance of this type of landmark structure and the benefits that could be derived to the Village through the re-use of these older buildings. The Plan recommended that flexible zoning tools be put into place which would allow for adaptive re-use of these older existing buildings while minimizing the impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

The preparation of a sub-area plan for the middle school property satisfies and is guided by the following Residential Development Goal and Objective:

Residential Development Goal 2: Make sure all neighborhoods are walkable and maintain and develop adequate sound and decent housing in a desirable environment, for a variety of social and economic groups.

Objective 4: Protect residential areas from incompatible uses, including the elimination of non-conforming uses, but recognize that the re-habilitation and adaptive re-use of old structures may be a positive alternative to demolition and re-development.

Workshop Results

Standards and Concerns

Council members and Planning Commissioners noted that any future use of the middle school must provide some type of barrier or separation between the new use and the existing neighbors. This could be a wall, a fence or landscaping.

Other matters which should be addressed in a future re-use of the middle school included:

- Vehicle access from Clover Lane and Vosper Street;
- The possibility of another building being constructed in the middle school parking lot;
- Additions to the existing school building;
- Retention of the existing building;
- Ensuring the safety of school children using the practice field;

- Night time quiet;
- On-site lighting.

Preferred Future Uses

The following uses received the most votes from Council members and Planning Commissioners.

<u>Use</u>	<u>Votes</u>
Gym/sport center/fitness	6
Daycare center	4
Restaurant	4
Residential w/mixed use	3
Retirement community	3
Banquet hall	2
Park	2
Movie theatre	1
Mixed use	1
Micro business	1

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RE-USE OF MIDDLE SCHOOL PROPERTY

The following recommendations regarding the future use of the Jean K. Harker Middle School are based on the workshop results, the recommendations of the 2012 Master Plan regarding the Adaptive Re-Use category, the characteristics of the neighborhood around the middle school and the desires of the Village Council and Planning Commission to preserve an historic landmark in the Village of Saranac.

The Plan recommends that the middle school property be planned for the AR category; Adaptive Re-use of Old Buildings and Structures. This category was established in the 2012 Master Plan and the purpose as described in that Plan appropriately applies to the middle school property in the year 2019.

The Plan recommends the following standards, criteria and requirements for a re-use of the middle school building and property:

- Land Uses

Permitted uses of the school building include but are not limited to:

- Indoor commercial recreation facilities such as theaters, community swimming pool, fitness center, boxing and martial arts, bowling alleys, skating rinks, rock climbing, tennis, basketball and handball courts. Indoor firearm and archery range, however, would not be appropriate uses;
- Daycare center;
- Restaurant / coffee house;
- Housing for the elderly including retirement housing, assisted living and nursing facilities;
- Residential use either renter or owner occupied;
- Banquet facilities.
- Mixed use options include any of the above uses in conjunction with residential use.

- Criteria for Other Land Uses

The 2019 Plan recognizes that there are other uses for the school building that are not included in the above list but which may be just as suitable. The Village should have the flexibility to approve such uses when they are presented provided such uses meet all or most of the following criteria:

- The use is similar to Permitted and Special Land Uses allowed in the MDR-1 Zone.
- The use would be compatible with the adjacent residential and school uses if it is determined that the use has operational characteristics similar to those of the former middle school.
- The traffic generated by the use does not create a conflict with existing school traffic and does not generate any truck traffic.
- The use does not include any outdoor activities that would be a visual and noise nuisance to nearby neighbors at any hour of the day.
- The use would not have outdoor storage of equipment.
- The use would be compatible with the adjacent practice field operated by the Saranac School District

▪ Density

Residential use should be limited to 5 dwelling units per acre which is slightly higher than the 4.35 units per acre recommended for single family dwellings in the surrounding MDR-1 zoning district. The slightly higher density is a marginal economic incentive to promote the re-use of the school for residential use but is still compatible with adjacent densities. A five-acre middle school site would allow up to 25 apartment units.

While the density of the surrounding single-family neighborhood is 4.35 dwelling units per acre, a higher density is recommended for any residential use of the former middle school building. A higher density would likely be needed to offset the economic challenge of converting this large, older building to uses recommended by this Master Plan update. The density allowed for this property would be dependent upon the type of residential use proposed.

For typical apartment or condominium dwellings marketed to all ages a density of 6-8 units per acre would be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. Residential uses designed for independent senior living could have a higher density of 9-15 units per acre as the impact on the neighborhood would be minimal but such density would allow for a more economically sustainable project.

Assisted living facilities, which are often licensed as adult foster care facilities or as homes for the aged, would not be counted in the density calculations as the individual living quarters are not considered separate independent dwelling units. Residents in this type of facility have little to no impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

These recommended densities are intended to serve as guide in evaluating redevelopment proposals for the former middle school and any final density approved could be higher or lower. The Village Council and Planning Commission should base their decision regarding density on the Criteria for Other Land Uses listed above while recognizing the unique characteristics of the former middle school building and the challenge of converting it to another use or uses so that these uses can be economically sustainable.

▪ Access / Traffic

New driveways onto Vosper Street and Clover Lane as part of a re-development project for the middle school are not desirable due to the possible negative impact on the residents of adjacent houses. However, such driveways may be permitted in order to ensure that traffic from the re-development site will not create safety or congestion issues for the traffic that travels on Pleasant Street to and from the high school and elementary school.

▪ Screening / Lighting

The Plan recommends that any re-development of the school property provide an effective separation between the new use and adjoining uses. This separation may consist of a solid fence, trees, a wall or combination of these methods with the objective of reducing the visual and noise impact on the adjoining uses. Exterior lighting on the site should be designed to avoid spill over onto adjoining properties and be of a height that does not create a visual nuisance for neighbors. The landscape, lighting and parking requirements of the Zoning Ordinance are adequate to ensure these standards are met although these may be increased if necessary, to ensure a new use is a suitable fit for the neighborhood.

Additional Considerations

These recommendations apply to the re-use of the existing building, and also the expansion of this building. Construction of a second free standing building on the site may be allowable if the use, building style, and location were compatible with adjacent land uses and met the standards of the Plan.

The Plan however, would also support removal of the school building. In this case, uses permitted in the existing MDR-1 Zone would be acceptable subject to the applicable regulations of the Zoning Ordinance.

Another alternative land use should the school building be removed is a new category called **Attached Urban Housing**. This housing type is one which consists of attached housing that may include duplexes, fourplexes, multiplexes of a small scale, and townhouses. The type of person seeking this type of housing is interested in a vibrant community, with walkability and cultural amenities nearby, at a cost commensurate with incomes.

This housing type is intended to be compatible with single family neighborhoods, and can provide opportunities for infill development on land that is otherwise not suitable for high density apartments or not attractive for new single-family detached dwellings. The intent is that this type of housing can be developed in small areas consisting of just a few lots, and that these types of dwellings do not add significant density to a neighborhood.

ZONING PLAN

Implementation of the Adaptive Re-use of Old Buildings and Structures recommendation will require the drafting of zoning ordinance regulations pertaining primarily to compatibility with surrounding land uses. The Plan recommends that this type of use be permitted as a Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning district which requires a site plan with a public hearing by both the Planning Commission and Village Council with final approval by the Council.

The new zoning requirements would be patterned after the standards, criteria and requirements described in the Recommendations for Re-Use of Middle School Property section of this Master Plan amendment. The regulations would permit flexibility in determining number of units, setbacks, parking, lighting, pedestrian and vehicle access, and other site design attributes to ensure that the development fits into the existing or desired neighborhood fabric.

This will help assure neighbors and citizens that the approval of the project use includes an approved site plan, which will establish the number of units allowed on the site, as well as the site attributes such as architecture, setbacks, landscaping, lighting, parking, pedestrian access, signs, and other features which will impact neighborhood character.

Implementation of the **Attached Urban Housing** land use category will require the drafting of regulations for a new zoning district which would be a Planned Unit Development or PUD zoning district. Any developments proposed will require an application for a rezoning. The regulations would be similar to the standards proposed for the Recommendations for Re-Use of Middle School Property section of this Master Plan amendment. The new language would establish the number of units allowed on the site, as well as the site attributes such as architecture, setbacks, landscaping, lighting, parking, pedestrian access, signs, and other features which will impact neighborhood character.