

SCHENECTADY HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Fostering Historic Preservation in Schenectady County

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Comment on Mohawk Harbor Supplemental Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement

Schenectady Heritage Foundation is a not-for-profit group whose mission is to foster historic preservation in Schenectady County. Since 1979, the Foundation has worked diligently for the preservation of Schenectady's Stockade Historic District. The area is considered so special by the Federal government that it is listed, in its entirety, on the National Register of Historic Places. The City of Schenectady concurs; the Stockade has its own category of zoning, RH-2 Residential, and is legally protected by Schenectady's Historic District Commission. It is New York State's first historic district and is located upstream along the Mohawk River, within walking distance of the proposed "Mohawk Harbor" development (the Development).

The Foundation has concerns about the Development's potential for negative impacts on the preservation of the Stockade Historic District. These concerns are flooding, traffic and quality of life.

FLOODING. In 2011, Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee caused considerable flooding and damage in the Stockade. Although much rebuilding has been done, mitigation measures have yet to be undertaken, and the Stockade remains vulnerable to flooding. The Foundation is on record requesting that the US Army Corps of Engineers consider possible negative flooding impacts on the Stockade Historic District upstream when deliberating on granting permits for the proposed Development.

No aspect of the Development can be allowed to exacerbate flooding in the Stockade Historic District.

TRAFFIC VOLUME. Ever-increasing vehicular traffic over the centuries has taken a toll on the irreplaceable historic architecture in the Stockade. Volume, noise, fumes and vibrations already cause damage to the fragile plaster walls, leaded glass windows, original stone and brick work, and slate sidewalks in the historic district.

TRAFFIC SAFETY. With its narrow streets, historic buildings built up to the street, and proximity to downtown, the Stockade is Schenectady's most walkable urban neighborhood. The City's 2020 Comprehensive Plan lists this as an asset and promotes elevating the pedestrian experience, and diminishing the importance of the car. Increased traffic creates a safety hazard for pedestrians and limits emergency vehicle access. The recent reconstruction of Erie Blvd. demonstrated how increased and "cut through" traffic will affect the Stockade. Residents witnessed increased volume of cars to a point of gridlock, cars driving the wrong way on one-way streets, and trucks exceeding the weight limit of roads.

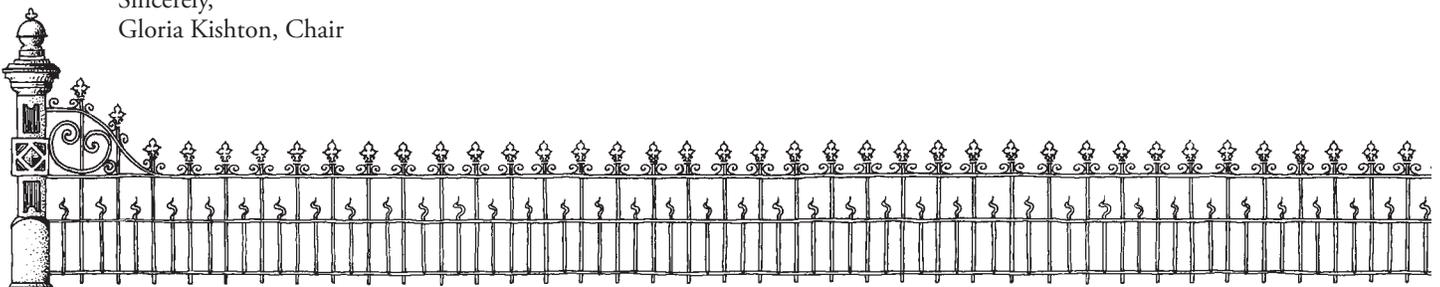
Traffic generated by the Development - with or without a casino - must be directed away from the residential Stockade Historic District.

QUALITY OF LIFE. The Stockade is one of the residential neighborhoods closest to the Development. Schenectady's 2020 Comprehensive Plan endorses "New Urbanism" concepts and these should be required in the design of the Development. The design standards included in the Plan should also be followed. Public access to the waterfront is a priority, as well as the continuation of the bike path, connecting Scotia and the Stockade.

The quality of life in the Stockade must be protected and improved for it to continue as a historic district, and for it to thrive as the City's premier urban neighborhood.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this issue.

Sincerely,
Gloria Kishton, Chair



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