Village of Saranac Lake

Community Development Department

39 Main Street, Suite 9 Saranac Lake, NY 12983-2294
Phone: (518) 891 - 4150
Fax: (518) 891 - 1324
Web Site: www.saranaclakeny.gov

APPLICATION #: _____

DATE RECEIVED: _____

DATE PAID: _____

AREA VARIANCE APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Incomplete application forms will not be accepted. If you have questions when filing out the application, please contact the Community Development Department.

1. **Pre-application Conference** – Before filing a formal application, applicant is encouraged to reach out and schedule a pre-application conference with the Community Development Director to discuss application requirements.

2. **Mandatory staff review submission:**
   - **A. Submit one electronic copy of the following to comdevassist1@saranaclakeny.gov:**
     - ☐ **Area Variance Application Form, signed**
     - ☐ **Area Variance Checklist**
     - ☐ **Copy of survey map showing all necessary dimensions with regard to the proposed action**
     - ☐ **Most recent deed to property (must be in applicant's name)**
     - ☐ **Short Environmental Assessment Form (SEQR)**– complete Part 1. Refer to DEC's online mapping tool to complete the form: https://gisservices.dec.ny.gov/eafmapper/
     - ☐ **Waterfront Assessment Form (WAF) -** complete Section 1 only
   - **B. Application fee of $200.00,** in accordance with the Building, Planning, Zoning, and Public Works Fee Schedule. Make check payable to Village of Saranac Lake.

3. **Final submission for review by the Development Board:**
   - **A. Submit one electronic copy of the following to comdevassist1@saranaclakeny.gov, and one hard copy addressed to the Community Development Director:**
     - ☐ **Area Variance Application Form, signed**
     - ☐ **Area Variance Checklist**
     - ☐ **Copy of survey map showing all necessary dimensions with regard to the proposed action**
     - ☐ **Most recent deed to property (must be in applicant's name)**
     - ☐ **Short Environmental Assessment Form (SEQR)**- complete Part 1
     - ☐ **Waterfront Assessment Form (WAF) -** complete Section 1 only

The application shall be accompanied by the information listed above. The Community Development Director may require additional submission materials if determined appropriate for the nature and scale of the proposed project. The pre-application conference may be used to determine the application requirements. The information above should be emailed and brought to the Village of Saranac Lake at least three weeks prior to the scheduled Development Board meeting in order to be placed on the agenda. The Board meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 5:00pm in the Village Board Room, 39 Main St., Saranac Lake, NY 12983.

STANDARDS OF PROOF
AREA VARIANCE

Asking the Development Board for an Area Variance means that you want relief from the sections of the Village Development Code that pertain to distance and measurement. For example, your home is in the J-1 District and you want to build an addition that would be 5ft. from your side-yard property line. The Village Development Code requires a setback of at least 10ft. Your permit would be denied because the addition will not meet the requirements of the Development Code.

You have the right to appeal to the Development Board to grant[1] a variance from that section of the Development Code. However, the Development Board cannot grant any Area Variance unless proof is provided by you, the applicant, that your property warrants special treatment. The fact that you simply "want" a variance is not enough. You may bring photos, drawings, etc. with you to explain your situation to the Board. You may also bring letters of support from neighboring property owners if they are unable to attend the public hearing.

The New York State Legislature has enacted into law requirements that an applicant for an Area Variance must furnish as proof to the Development Board establishing the following "hardship tests:"

- Whether an undesirable change will be produced in the character of the neighborhood or a detriment to nearby properties will be created by the granting of the area variance;
- Whether the benefit sought by the applicant can be achieved by some method, feasible for the applicant to pursue, other than an area variance;
- Whether the requested area variance is substantial;
- Whether the proposed variance will have an adverse effect or impact on the physical or environmental conditions in the neighborhood or district; and
- Whether the alleged difficulty was self-created; which consideration shall be relevant to the decision of the Development Board, but shall not necessarily preclude the granting of the area variance.

In making its determination, the Development Board shall take into consideration the benefit to the applicant if the variance is granted, as weighed against the detriment to the health, safety and welfare of the neighborhood or community by such grant. The Development Board, in the granting of area variances, shall grant the minimum variance that it shall deem necessary and adequate and at the same time preserve and protect the character of the neighborhood and the health, safety, and welfare of the community.

"Proof" is not just parroting these criteria. **You must produce "facts" so as to enable the Development Board to carefully consider each of the criteria.** Then the Development Board will weigh the benefit to you as contrasted with the detriment to the Village. Remember that this is your case. The Development Board does not have the power to grant variances unless the required proof is furnished. Applying for a variance does not guarantee that the Development Board will grant the request. The burden of proof is on the applicant for meeting the hardship tests.

[1] Note: If you are granted the variance(s) requested, you must then contact the Code Enforcement Officer regarding the building permit for your project or the Community Development Director if your project will require further review by the Development Board (e.g., Site Plan Review).

AREA VARIANCE APPLICATION FORM

Applicant Information	
Applicant Name	Adirondack Park Agency
Applicant Address	PO Box 99, 1133 NYS Route 86
Mailing Address, If Different	
Applicant Email	Angela.Bates@apa.ny.gov
Applicant Phone	518-891-4150

If Different from Project Applicant	
Property Owner Name	Village of Saranac Lake
Property Owner Address	39 Main Street, Suite 9, Saranac Lake, New York, 12983
Mailing Address, If Different	
Property Owner Email	manager@saranaclakeny.com
Property Owner Phone	518-891-4150

Project Information

1. Project Address 1-3 Main Street
2. Tax Map # 458.21-2-1
3. Zoning District E-2
4. Current Lot Size ~2.18 AC
5. Current Use Prop. Type Code 712, High Tech-Manufacturing & processing (per Labella 7/21/2026)
6. Proposed Use Public/Institutional Government Office and Parking Lot

7. Please provide a written description of the project (description of construction, alteration, extension, expansion restoration). Indicate the exact variance that you are seeking. Example: Rear-yard setback is 20ft., seeking a 5ft. setback.

Description: The project includes, but is not limited to, interior/exterior renovation of the existing buildings on site; construction of a new 3-story building including a retaining wall; re-construction and reconfiguration of site walkways, parking lot, and access way; new and upgraded utilities, sewers, water service; new landscaping; new signs,: and site features to support the same.
Variance: Article XIV Supplemental Standards §106-91 Fencing, retaining walls and hedges Section G(2) States No retaining wall over four feet in height shall be erected or maintained in the front yard. According to the Village, the subject lot only has Front Yards, which includes Main Street, Lake Street, Petrova Avenue, Pelkey Lane, and the Saranac River. This variance is sought for the proposed retaining wall location and height as the proposed wall is located in the front yard of Lake Street, Petrova Avenue and Pelkey Lane and is approximately 10.5-feet in height (hightest point) as presented on the attached site plan.
Please note that the retaining wall is located behind the proposed building and the face of the retaining wall will face the back of the proposed building.

8. Explain why the variance is necessary:

The new building variance is necessary due to the site constraints and reasonable lack of build able area. The proposed retaining wall can only be located in a front yard due to the subject site only having front yards, and the height being above four foot is necessary due to the existing steep slopes. The building has to be located where shown on the attached site plan.

The site is constrained along the Saranac River due to the regulatory floodway, flood plain, and steep slopes; subtracting those areas the buildable area along the Saranac River then would wedge the building in the north corner of the lot, which would frustrate compliance with Chapter 5 of the NYS Fire Code for fire apparatus access.

The site is constrained along Lake Street due to steep slopes and the National Grid required 20 foot offset to the electrical infrastructure carrying electrical currents from the hydroelectric dam. Considering the steep slopes and National Grid offset, the Lake Street yard does not provide a reasonable location for the proposed building.

The site is constrained along Petrova Avenue due to steep slopes, an existing retaining wall (probably supporting Petrova Ave), and the National Grid electrical offset. Considering those constraints, the proposed building is site as reasonably close to Petrova Ave as the site constraints allow and the proposed retaining wall is needed to create the flat area for the proposed building while mostly maintaining the existing parking layout, adjacent buildings, and drainage patterns.

9. Explain why this variance will not change the character of the neighborhood or cause detriment to nearby properties:

As provided by the Village's designated engineer on July 21, 2026, "Proposed redevelopment appears consistent with the purpose of District E and advances applicable goals of the Village Comprehensive Plan, including historic preservation, adaptive reuse, downtown reinvestment, and maintenance of a vibrant mixed-used environment."

10. List the feasible alternatives (can your goal be achieved by some means other than a variance?):

Overall, considering the site constraints, including but not limited to, steep slopes, regulatory floodway, flood plain, National Grid electrical infrastructure offsets, and the narrow nature of the site, there are no feasible alternatives, especially considering compliance with Section 5 of the NYS Fire Code. A shorter distance between the retaining wall and proposed building was considered, however 10-feet between the two was recommended by the fire code official.

The proposed retaining wall is required to create a flat area for the building and all existing yards are front yards so the wall must be erected and maintained in a front yard.

11. Explain why this variance will not have an adverse effect on the physical or environmental conditions in the neighborhood:

This variance will not have an adverse effect on the physical nor environmental conditions of the neighborhood. As provided by the Village's designated engineer on July 21, 2026, "Proposed redevelopment appears consistent with the purpose of District E and advances applicable goals of the Village Comprehensive Plan, including historic preservation, adaptive reuse, downtown reinvestment, and maintenance of a vibrant mixed-used environment."

In addition, the site will be developed consistent with the NYS SMDM, therefore providing treatment of runoff, which does not occur under existing conditions.

12. Explain why this alleged hardship is not self-created (did you purchase the property with knowledge of the hardship)?

The alleged hardship is not self-created. The existing site is heavily constrained.

13. Refer to Code dimensional standards at https://ecode360.com/attachment/SA0109/SA0109-106b%20Schedule%202.pdf to complete the 'Allowed/Required' column on the Project Data Table below. Complete the 'Requested Relief' column for each standard from which a variance is requested.

Project Data Table	Allowed/Required	Proposed	Requested Relief
Lot Area	SPR	SPR	None.
Front Setback	0'	See site plan layout	See site plan layout
Rear Setback	N/A		
Side Setback	N/A		
Shoreline Setback	N/A		
% of lot coverage by principle building	SPR	SPR	None.
% of lot coverage by impervious surface	SPR	SPR	None.
Building height/stories	Min. 24' & 2 Stories - Max. SPR	SPR	None.

14. Please list any professionals who will be assisting you with your application

Name	Company	Profession	Phone	Email
Richard Adams	Suozzo, Doty, & Associates	Engineer	518-240-6293	Radams@sdapllc.com
Sean Doty	Suozzo, Doty, & Associates	Engineer	518-240-6293	Sdoty@sdapllc.com
Nicole Zumpano	NYS OGS	Architect	518-408-8613	nicole.zumpano@ogs.ny.gov
Greg Springer	Colliers Engineering and Design	Architect	877-627-3772	greg.springer@collierseng.com

Applicant's Signature _____ **Date**

Property Owner's Signature _____ **Date**

	For Office Use Only – Public Hearing	Date
☐	Public Hearing Set	
☐	Mailing list provided to the applicant	

For Office Use Only - Essex County Referral Property is located within 500 feet of:	Y	N
Property located in Essex County	☐	☐
Municipal boundary (village or town)	☐	☐
County or State Parks	☐	☐
County or State Roads	☐	☐
County or State Facilities	☐	☐

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Name	Company	Profession	Phone	Email
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Sean Doty	Suozzo, Doty, & Associates	Engineer	518-240-6293	Sdoty@sdapllc.com
Nicole Zumpano	NYS OGS	Architect	518-408-8613	nicole.zumpano@ogs.ny.gov
Greg Springer	Colliers Engineering and Design	Architect	877-627-3772	greg.springer@collierseng.com

Applicant's Signature  **Date** 9/14/2026

Property Owner's Signature _____ **Date**

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☐	Public Hearing Set	
☐	Mailing list provided to the applicant	

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Greg Springer	Colliers Engineering and Design	Architect	877 627 3772	greg.springer@colliersenq.com

Applicant's Signature _____ **Date**

Property Owner's Signature _____ 9/11/2024 **Date**

	For Office Use Only – Public Hearing	Date
☐	Public Hearing Set	
☐	Mailing list provided to the applicant	

For Office Use Only - Essex County Referral Property is located within 500 feet of:	Y	N
Property located in Essex County	☐	☐
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