

CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE TRINITAS PLAN AND THE VARNA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN in
the DRYDEN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Here is a list of some of the major specific conflicts between the Trinitas Plan and the Varna Plan:

1. In the Varna Plan, in the VARNA DESIGN GUIDELINES & LANDSCAPE STANDARDS: Guidelines for Building Scale” section (page 8), it states, “Maximum building height for buildings should be no more than three stories and 40 feet in height.”
In the Dryden Zoning Law, Section 701: Design Guidelines and Standards: it states, “All development and re-development of Lots and property in Varna **shall comply with the Varna Design Guidelines** and Landscape Standards”.

In the Trinitas Updated-Dryden-SUP-Form (6/15/18), “A. Compatibility of the proposed use...”, it states, “The structures are designed to be 2-4 stories”

2. In the Varna Plan, in Buildings and Form Recommendations (pg. 69), it states, “**Each new house or townhouse should face open, green space** to encourage healthy, active living that is consistent with the existing character of the hamlet.”

In the Trinitas “L2.0_Improvement-Site-plan”, almost none of the buildings face substantial open, green spaces.

3. In the Varna Plan, the area proposed for the Trinitas development is described as one of the two sites that “can provide for **new, desirable uses while enhancing the existing traditional neighborhood**” (page 18).

It describes the characteristics of a traditional neighborhood as “The houses are oriented towards the street and retain human-scale dimensions— minimal distance between the front of the house and street, pedestrian-oriented, and manicured landscapes and gardens” (page 18). It further suggests that, as an “underutilized and vacant site”, it should “provide the space that when developed, can incorporate public green spaces” (page 20).

The Plan later states that, “despite physical appearance, the character of Varna is defined by a variety of building and lot forms, patterns, and configurations which contribute to the resident’s sense of community” (Varna Design Guidelines & Landscape Standards: page 2).

“Unlike conventional developments, hamlets typically retain housing and development patterns similar to many nineteenth-century neighborhoods—unintentional varying lot sizes and setbacks. Common hamlet characteristics include a commons or central green, dominant civic/institutional buildings (such as a church, court house, etc.), **with predominantly single-**

family residential homes and limited mixed-use buildings adjacent to the community center (Varna Design Guidelines & Landscape Standards: page 2).”

In the Trinitas “L2.0_Improvement-Site-plan”, none of these features are present.

4. The Varna Plan presents an example of a development the community liked on the parcel on which Trinitas seeks to place 222 student townhouse/apartments. Pictured in the Varna Plan (page 28) are approximately 90 “**single-family home development with townhomes at 10du/acre**. The emphasis of this site design is single-family homes with alleyways so that each building fronts green space, and accessible footpaths that connect to Route 366 and the Varna Trail. It also has amenities such as a small park and pond that also serves as storm water detention area. This type of development is commonly referred to as Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND)”. “The Varna Plan specifies that “**Using Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) elements, a variety of single-family houses, townhouses, and duplexes to create quaint neighborhoods that fit into the landscape**” (page 69).

The Trinitas proposal ignores following any aspect of this example, with the exception of the townhouses. They propose to develop the site at a density 50% higher, and with a number of units more than double, of that pictured. Yet somehow Trinitas claims in their application that they are following the concepts in the Varna Plan.

In addition, although they have indicated they will request a variance so that they only have to provide 50% green space, their Full Environmental Assessment Form states that fully 10 of the 16.7 acres will be become impervious, leaving only 40% green space.

5. The Varna Plan describes the character of Varna as “**a quaint rural suburb**” that “**affords a quality of life that has kept many residents in the area for years**, while attracting new families, professionals and students” (page 31).

The Trinitas proposal seeks to provide housing nearly exclusively for students.

6. In the Varna Plan, it states as a goal to, “allow growth to occur in such a way where building footprints, new uses and amenities **fit in to the existing fabric of Varna**” (page 31).

It further states, “... the general plan is to find the means for **encouraging redevelopment and new development in the hamlet, but in a way that compliments and continues the current character**” (page 66).

The Trinitas proposal fails to demonstrate how any aspect of its development fits into the existing fabric of Varna. **It proposes development that neither compliments nor continues the current character.**

7. The first goal of the Varna Plan is to **“Protect and enhance hamlet character”** (page 34), and in particular to **“utilize existing infrastructure to potential without degrading or changing overall character”** (page 34).

The Plan clearly states, **“The primary purpose of this plan is to find the means for encouraging redevelopment and new development in the hamlet, but in a way that compliments, continues and improves upon the current character”** (page 37).

The character of Varna is defined as described in (5) above, and the Plan adds to this description by indicating that the Varna hamlet, like other hamlets, “has a defined boundary and you can often see the surrounding open space from almost any point in the hamlet area; there is no street pattern or grid, and buildings are arranged linearly along a main road with one or more crossroads. The buildings are well spaced lending to a feeling of openness, and there is a mix of uses scattered along the roadway” (page 36).

8. The Varna Plan warns about the fear that **“the character of the hamlet will be lost with new development that is focused on meeting the needs of the rental market”** (page 36).

The development that Trinitas proposes is precisely what the Plan indicates the residents fear would cause the loss of the character of the hamlet.

9. The Varna Plan’s Goal #3 is to **“protect and improve the quality of life in the hamlet” (page 35). The objectives for reaching this goal included:**

☞ **“Identify limits of development relative to traffic, bulk and density of buildings”** (page 35).

☞ **“Create landscape standards that are in keeping with a relaxed, quaint country hamlet i.e. low maintenance, basic landscape standards”** (page 35).

A doubling of the population of Varna in one project is not a recipe for “standards that are in keeping with a relaxed, quaint country hamlet”.

10. The Varna Plan cites its parent Comprehensive Plan in sharing, among its goals, **“encouraging home ownership; and regulating hamlet transformations so that the character of the community is maintained or shifts slowly, not in dramatic steps”** (page 40).

The Trinitas proposal fails to promote either of these goals.

It does not encourage home ownership, but instead removes a parcel from potential development that the Plan identified as an opportunity to add a community of single-family homes in a Traditional Neighborhood Design arrangement.

Secondly, the Trinitas proposal violates the goal of transforming the hamlet character slowly, “so that the character of the community is maintained or shifts slowly, not in dramatic steps”. **An overnight doubling of the population of Varna is a very dramatic step.**

The Varna Plan mentions in many places that maintaining and protecting the character of the hamlet is the highest priority, including such statements as “many of the very specific recommendations have to do directly with continuing the character of a hamlet as described here” (page 40).

11. The Varna Plan specifies that it is necessary to have, “leadership by the development interests to engage the community, and respect local plans and community goals and demonstrate that they are as committed to reaching them as they are making a profit” (page 43).

As demonstrated above, the Trinitas developers have not demonstrated respect to local plans and community goals. As with the developers, the town should avoid putting revenues, which in all likelihood will be outpaced by expenditures for services, above commitment to community goals.

12. The Varna Plan states that, in referring to specific zoning controls involving regulating the bulk and area requirements of a site, **“These controls should still be a minimum standard, something that the development community should seek to not only meet, but to exceed in form and character and performance”** (page 43).

The Trinitas proposal only attempts to meet the minimum bulk and area requirements, with no effort to exceed these minimums in either protecting local character or performance.

13. Although the Trinitas proposal offers a small amount of commercial space, and in the Varna community “there was also a desire for the return of some local services that did not require using the automobile”, the Varna Plan specifically indicates that **the hamlet does not need additional population in order to support these services** should a developer seek to provide them. It states, “Fortunately, Varna has the population to support such services to a limited extent, which is subsidized by the higher traffic counts on Route 366” (page 66).