

1 STATE OF NEW YORK

2 COUNTY OF TOMPKINS

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4 In the Matter of a Public Hearing

5 for the

6 draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement

7 for the Southwest Area Land Use Plan

8 - - - - -

9 A Public Hearing held at 222 South Cayuga  
10 Street, Ithaca, New York, on the 25th day of January,  
11 2000, commencing at 1:15 PM.

12

13 BEFORE: MAYOR ALAN J. COHEN

14 Chairman

15

16 REPORTED BY: CZERENDA COURT REPORTING, INC  
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18 Binghamton, New York 13901-3318  
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20 Notary Public  
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20

21

22 ALSO PRESENT:  
23 ITHACA COMMON COUNCIL  
24 STUART MESINGER, Consultant to Planning Board.  
PAUL ELCONIN, Consultant to Planning Board.  
JOANN CORNISH, Environmental Landscape Planner.

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1                   MAYOR COHEN:   We're going to get  
2                   started here today.  I bang the gavel and  
3                   call us back in session.

4                   This is a continuation of a public  
5                   hearing that was started last evening, a  
6                   little after 6:00 PM, I believe.  For  
7                   those of you who were not here last night,  
8                   let me give you a little information about  
9                   what we're doing and why we're here.

10                  This is a hearing on the draft  
11                  Generic Environmental Impact Statement for  
12                  the Southwest Area Land Use Plan.  The  
13                  purpose of this hearing is for members of  
14                  the public who have reviewed the document  
15                  aforementioned, the draft Generic  
16                  Environmental Impact Statement, to comment  
17                  on the content of that document; what you  
18                  think about it, what you think about the  
19                  topics that were covered, do you have  
20                  questions about it.  That is the purpose  
21                  of the hearing that we are conducting  
22                  right now.

23                  I know I have other notes to share  
24                  with you and I'm trying to find them.  And

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1           somebody ripped them out, so I'm going to  
2           have to wing it.

3                       Several points. There are rules  
4           that you have picked up if you are already  
5           signed up as a speaker. So, those are  
6           pretty much self-explanatory. If you are  
7           here to speak and you have not signed  
8           up, there is a table right next to the  
9           entrance here. Please sign up.

10                      I'm going to -- in order to get as  
11           many people in as possible, we had over 50  
12           speakers last night and we were able to do  
13           that by queuing a few people up at a  
14           time. So, we've asked people to come  
15           forward to the first row so that the next  
16           person is ready to go when the previous  
17           speaker has finished.

18                      We ask you, when you come forward  
19           and you are waiting, to first bring your  
20           slip with your number and name on it over  
21           here to the table (indicating). Paul,  
22           Stuart, Joann and myself are going to be  
23           all processing various things regarding  
24           the conduct of this hearing. And if you

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1 bring the information up to us, that will  
2 make our job easier, as well as Brenda's.

3 Brenda is our stenographer for  
4 this session today. We will be taking an  
5 occasional break so that she can stretch  
6 her fingers and everything else that she  
7 wants to. She's not a robot, she's a  
8 human being and we want to make sure that  
9 she's as comfortable as you and I are.

10 A couple of questions were raised  
11 last night for clarification. You do have  
12 a five-minute limit. We will strictly  
13 adhere to that so that we can accommodate  
14 as many speakers as possible. If you use  
15 less than five minutes, you do not have  
16 the right to yield your time to somebody  
17 else. You simply finish when you finish  
18 and then the next person starts and they  
19 have five minutes to speak as well.

20 Another comment. As you see,  
21 there are at present no members of City  
22 Council here. They will be, through the  
23 work of Brenda as a stenographer,  
24 receiving a full written record of this

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1 entire proceeding.

2 Paul and Stuart are consultants  
3 that the city has hired. Joann is with  
4 the planning department. They are all  
5 taking notes on every substantive comment  
6 that is made. We will make a note of it.  
7 We will then determine whether or not,  
8 through a process that the City Council  
9 ultimately decides on, whether or not the  
10 comment is already covered or not in the  
11 document in question; if it's not, how  
12 we'll go about ensuring that that topic,  
13 if deemed substantive, is included in the  
14 document. So, this is really a technical  
15 hearing.

16 You are welcome to speak during  
17 your five minutes on how you feel about  
18 development, I know many people did. That  
19 is not the purpose of this proceeding.  
20 The purpose is to comment on the document  
21 itself and the impact of what's in that  
22 document. No, it's really just what's in  
23 the document itself.

24 Also, very importantly, we are in

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1           the midst of a written comment period.  
2           That period ends February 17th.  Until  
3           that time you can submit written comments  
4           of any length that you so choose, there is  
5           no limit on those.  And they can be  
6           submitted care of Jeannie Lee, that's  
7           J-E-A-N-N-I-E.

8                         Is that correct, Jeannie?

9                         MS. LEE:  Yep.

10                        MAYOR COHEN:  Lee, L-E-E, care  
11           of the City of Ithaca Planning and  
12           Development Department, 108 East Green  
13           Street, Ithaca, New York 14850.  And we do  
14           encourage you to submit those if you have  
15           further comments.

16                        All right.  At this time I would  
17           like to ask speakers one through four to  
18           please come forward, bring your slips and  
19           we will -- that's right.  I'm sorry.  
20           Numbers 60 to 64, if you are here, please  
21           bring your slips forward.  Okay.

22                        Starting, then, our first speaker  
23           is John Yntema, Y-N-T-E-M-A, and he's from  
24           the Town of Ithaca.



1           scorpion in an area that had been surveyed  
2           many times.

3                       I mention these facts to indicate  
4           that I have some expertise in the area  
5           about which I'm testifying, and to  
6           show that new species can be found in  
7           unexpected places.

8                       My testimony will be short, but I  
9           am submitting -- I have submitted four  
10          pages of written comments documenting the  
11          following details.

12                      One, the scoping document calls  
13          for examining the study area for the  
14          presence of plants and animals. One can  
15          assume the examination was meant to be  
16          thorough and complete.

17                      Two, the individual doing  
18          the surveying of the study area is  
19          acknowledged as an expert botanist, but to  
20          the best of my knowledge he is not a  
21          wildlife biologist. Typically, botanists  
22          are not experienced in accurate  
23          identification of various forms of  
24          wildlife, or indicators of their presence,



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1           whether past or current. Deer are an  
2           obvious exception.

3                       Three, there is no basis in fact  
4           for the executive summary's conclusion  
5           that, quote, adoption and implementation  
6           of the plan is not expected to have any  
7           substantial effect on plant and animal  
8           resources, unquote. Why?

9                       Because the botanist's surveys and  
10          literature searches necessarily dealt  
11          almost exclusively with the flora, which  
12          even he, himself, states were not  
13          adequately covered, and explains why.  
14          This is a serious deficiency.

15                      No competent field surveys were  
16          made of the animals that might inhabit or  
17          use the Southwest Land Area, as permanent  
18          residents, transients, or as migratory  
19          species. This is another serious  
20          deficiency.

21                      Simply stated, the dGEIS for the  
22          Southwest Area Land Use Plan is not  
23          complete. The plant and animal surveys  
24          are incomplete and inadequate, by a very

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1           significant amount. As others will  
2           testify, or have done so, in person or in  
3           writing, there are other deficiencies in  
4           the dGEIS, as well.

5                         It should be very obvious that no  
6           further action should be taken until all  
7           these deficiencies have been rectified.

8                         Thank you.

9                         MAYOR COHEN: Thank you very  
10           much, sir.

11                        A couple more reminders. We ask  
12           you to please speak as closely to the  
13           microphone as much as possible so that the  
14           speakers in the back of the room can hear  
15           what you are saying. And the folks back  
16           there can speak.

17                        Also, we have told people last  
18           night, and I'll repeat it again, that  
19           during the sessions if you've spoken once  
20           already, you will be entitled to speak  
21           again, but only after every other new  
22           speaker has had the opportunity to speak  
23           first.

24                        So, I don't see any return

1 speakers just yet, but if we do have any  
2 and they are given a number, that number  
3 will actually be bumped back until such  
4 time as all new speakers have been given  
5 an opportunity. And then we'll use a  
6 chronological order of the numbers that  
7 have been given out to determine the order  
8 of returning speakers. So, if you were  
9 given a number, that's a good thing.

10 Do we have any returning speakers  
11 yet?

12 (Whereupon there was no response)

13 MAYOR COHEN: No. Okay. Number  
14 61, Steven Ehrhardt, E-H-R-H-A-R-D-T, City  
15 of Ithaca.

16 MR. EHRHARDT: Will you please  
17 let me know when I have a minute left?

18 MAYOR COHEN: We do have a timer  
19 up here in front. It will beep when you  
20 have one minute. And Joann will also hold  
21 up this sign, which is a visual reminder.

22 MR. EHRHARDT: I'll try to be  
23 brief. I hope I can be heard over this  
24 cold. I swear I'm going to the doctor's

1 as soon as I leave here.

2 My name is Steven Ehrhardt. I  
3 live at 409 South Albany Street in the  
4 City of Ithaca. I come to speak as a  
5 member of the city board and a city  
6 taxpayer and resident of downtown Ithaca.

7 I'm going to have plenty of  
8 opportunity to deal with the dGEIS on the  
9 planning board. I've come today to speak,  
10 frankly, about some stuff I've read in the  
11 paper.

12 Here we go again. People who  
13 oppose development will say anything to  
14 stop it. I've watched them for years.  
15 They'll throw one attack after another in  
16 front of any effort to bring change.  
17 They'll summon catastrophes. This time  
18 it's exploding parking lots, asphyxiated  
19 shoppers.

20 I got a flyer from two members of  
21 the citizens planning alliance last week  
22 when I got home one night telling me that  
23 this plan could lead to a child being  
24 killed, about a child on Spencer Road, as

1 if I didn't know that child's mother and I  
2 didn't work with that mother for months.  
3 They'll say anything.

4 Last night speakers told you the  
5 Southwest area was a unique ecological  
6 site in New York State. They may be  
7 right. I have to find out. I have to  
8 know whether that is true. I want to  
9 know. But I do know the same people told  
10 us eight years ago that 28 single-family  
11 homes on West Hill could threaten the  
12 snout-nosed butterfly population. It  
13 swarms in the tens of millions in South  
14 America and successfully swarms in  
15 New York State itself.

16 Now they've summoned up last week  
17 images of a flood. And I was worried  
18 maybe a month ago there would be a flood  
19 from the landfill. So, I checked into  
20 it. In the event of a 100-year flood the  
21 water would rise by 24/100ths of an inch.

22 I've heard them accuse good  
23 people, honest people, hard-working people  
24 of corruption and malfeasance, people I

14

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1 know. And it disgusts me. My message to  
2 them is to please stop it. Please stick

3 to the facts.

4 As a planning board member I want  
5 to hear all opinions. I need to hear from  
6 you, I want to give credibility to what  
7 you say. And my biggest fear is that  
8 I will make the mistake of ignoring  
9 something you say as true and important  
10 because of everything I've heard from  
11 you in the past that is false and  
12 meaningless. I can't make that mistake.  
13 Council can't make that mistake. Please  
14 stick to the facts. Please abandon the  
15 hysteria.

16 These hearings are important.  
17 They are democratic, they are necessary  
18 and I'm glad they are happening, but they  
19 are not the most democratic way to engage  
20 public opinion.

21 The elected officials had sworn to  
22 uphold the Constitution of the United  
23 States. For three successive election  
24 days in 1997, 1998, 1999 the people in the

1 City of Ithaca have asked for responsible  
2 economic development that increases the  
3 city's fiscal capacity to improve the

4 neighborhoods.

5 Review the dGEIS carefully, find  
6 a way and use the money to help our  
7 neighborhoods. Thank you.

8 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you.

9 Our next speaker, number 62, is  
10 Barbara Blanchard, B-L-A-N-C-H-A-R-D, City  
11 of Ithaca.

12 MS. BLANCHARD: Well, you've  
13 already told them my name. I guess I  
14 should fill out the address, though. I  
15 live at 316 Brookfield Road, on West  
16 Hill. And I'm the representative from  
17 District 1 on the Tompkins County Board of  
18 Representatives. Previously I've served  
19 this district on the Common Council.

20 District 1 includes all of the  
21 area that's included in the GEIS. And so,  
22 I am very pleased to be here to address  
23 you, and whoever else is going to read  
24 this, today.

16

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1 I want to tell you a little bit  
2 about my background because, as Mr. Yntema  
3 mentioned, I think it's important for you

4 to know the credentials of people that are  
5 speaking with you.

6 My undergraduate studies were in  
7 housing finance and design. I have a  
8 master's degree in city and regional  
9 planning. I've been a professional  
10 practicing planner for 34 years in  
11 New York State and some other states as  
12 well. And during that time I have  
13 concentrated in three areas; housing  
14 market analysis, community facilities  
15 development and environmental impact  
16 analysis.

17 In that last capacity I've worked  
18 for a number of years on a team of  
19 professionals in doing a variety of  
20 environmental impact statements and other  
21 environmental reviews.

22 I want to mention what I think is  
23 the quality and the completeness of the  
24 GEIS. I think this is a very good

17

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1 report. I think that you could keep  
2 working on it until hell freezes over and



3           you would never have it complete enough  
4           for some of the people who will address  
5           you, but you know that. I don't have to  
6           tell you that.

7                         In general I think it's a very  
8           good job and I especially thought that the  
9           illustrations and the mapping was very  
10          good. Your patience is going to be tried  
11          over the next couple of days and I'm sure  
12          it was last night. But I hope that the  
13          people that are listening to this  
14          testimony will remember that the hordes of  
15          nay-sayers that are here are reflecting  
16          one point of view.

17                        The most recent election reflected  
18          another point of view. And what that  
19          said was that the majority of the voters  
20          support the course of action that the city  
21          appears to be set upon. Many of the  
22          comments that you will hear don't reflect  
23          material in the GEIS. They are preformed  
24          judgments and preformed points of view,

1           and to some extent that applies to those  
2           of us who support development in the

3 Southwest area.

4 I want to comment on four  
5 particular issues that are raised in the  
6 document. The first is a question of  
7 housing. I served on the group that  
8 originally studied the Southwest area and  
9 did the land use plan for it some years  
10 ago when I was on Common Council. That  
11 was the genesis of any idea that this  
12 would be a useful area for housing. That  
13 was not a position that was well supported  
14 in that group. There was no clear support  
15 for housing. And some of us were simply  
16 opposed to it. I was one of those.

17 At that time there was a very  
18 different housing market in the City of  
19 Ithaca, very different pressures. Those  
20 pressures do not exist now. And I think  
21 that as you consider the alternatives, to  
22 consider housing in this area would just  
23 not be wise.

24 Secondly, I want to talk about the

1 service road structure within the various  
2 alternatives. I would really urge you

3 to insist on the service road network.  
4 Especially the connection between the Tops  
5 Plaza and Kmart. This will be very  
6 important for the TCAT bus system.

7 We would love to have that  
8 connection now because timing is  
9 everything with bus service and if we did  
10 not have to come back onto Route 13 and  
11 Elmira Road to serve that area, it would  
12 be very helpful. Segue into the shuttle,  
13 the shuttle idea is good. TCAT will do  
14 everything we can to make that for you.

15 And finally, the view and the  
16 noise issues from Buttermilk Falls State  
17 Park I simply think are a ruse. I've  
18 tried to see that view. And as far as the  
19 noise is concerned, you really have to  
20 fight your way through the boom boxes and  
21 the camping area.

22 Thank you. And good luck.

23 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you.

24 Number 63 is Doria Higgins,

2 Town of Ithaca?

3 MS. HIGGINS: Town of Ithaca.

4 MAYOR COHEN: From the Town of  
5 Ithaca.

6 MS. HIGGINS: It's this  
7 community, let's face it.

8 MAYOR COHEN: Doria, I understand  
9 that. And anybody can speak from anywhere  
10 in the world, actually, if they want to  
11 today. That's the purpose of public  
12 comment.

13 Before you start, if I could have  
14 numbers 65, 66 and 67 come forward, that  
15 would be much appreciated.

16 Mr. Harlan, I don't know if you  
17 were here when I spoke earlier, but we  
18 have to give all people who have not had  
19 an opportunity to speak the opportunity to  
20 speak first before repeats. You hold on  
21 to your number. That puts you first in  
22 the order of repeat speakers. And then  
23 when all other new speakers have spoken,  
24 then I'll ask repeat speakers to come

21

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1 forward with their numbers.

2 MR. HARLAN: How long do I have  
3 to wait?

4 MAYOR COHEN: I have no idea,  
5 sir. I can't tell you.

6 MR. HARLAN: What a game. What a  
7 game.

8 MAYOR COHEN: I have to conduct  
9 this hearing, sir. Mr. Harlan. Thank  
10 you.

11 MR. HARLAN: Made it up with six  
12 minutes to go.

13 MAYOR COHEN: You've got to love  
14 Ithaca.

15 Doria, please begin.

16 MS. HIGGINS: I do understand  
17 the purpose of this public hearing is to  
18 hear comments on possible inadequacies of  
19 the draft Generic Environmental Impact  
20 Statement on the Southwest Park Plan.  
21 But please don't let that focused purpose  
22 prevent you from also hearing and  
23 absorbing the very valid and substantive  
24 criticisms of the plan itself which have

1                   been voiced at these meetings.

2                   The City Conservation Advisory  
3                   Council has done a most praiseworthy,  
4                   careful and meticulous study of the draft  
5                   GEIS and identified a number of major and  
6                   significant gaps and inadequacies in it.  
7                   In other words, it is not okay as it is  
8                   by a group of people who have spent  
9                   considerable time and research on it.  
10                  Please hear that.

11                  Paul Glover, in an article in  
12                  today's January 25th JOURNAL has outlined  
13                  not only many deficiencies of the draft  
14                  GEIS itself but also itemized many items  
15                  which the draft GEIS itself says show the  
16                  project will be harmful to the community.

17                  He points out and he documents  
18                  the paragraph in the draft Generic  
19                  Environmental Impact Statement from which  
20                  it comes that the Southwest Park Plan will  
21                  result in higher taxes according to the  
22                  GEIS, higher trash fees according to the  
23                  GEIS, higher water rates according to the  
24                  GEIS, and public health hazards, and a

1                   worsening of traffic conditions, according  
2                   to the draft GEIS.

3                   The major and significant gaps in  
4                   the dGEIS documented by the CAC and the  
5                   facts identified by Glover in the  
6                   Environmental Impact Statement which  
7                   clearly show the plan will be destructive  
8                   to our community I think lead inevitably  
9                   to the conclusion that the plan should be  
10                  dropped, abandoned, stopped now before  
11                  more money is wasted on the matter. The  
12                  evidence is in. It should be stopped  
13                  now. Who wants higher taxes?

14                  If people want big-box buildings  
15                  with multinational corporations, as  
16                  Mr. Harlan, let them go to Syracuse or  
17                  Elmira or Cortland. Don't let them change  
18                  this beautiful spot because of something  
19                  that's not here that they want.

20                  I remember my childhood in the  
21                  early '20s first in Summit, New Jersey,  
22                  and later in Pomfret, Vermont. In  
23                  Summit the nearest department store was  
24                  Bambergers in Newark miles away. We

1           gladly drove there. We didn't want it in  
2           Summit. And later in Pomfret we had to  
3           drive seven miles to Woodstock to buy  
4           groceries, which we gladly did. We didn't  
5           want the A&P and Gillinghams and Kitters  
6           Market up on our hilltop. God bless  
7           them.

8                        My advice to those who want  
9           Wal-Mart and big boxes is to move where  
10          they are. And besides with online  
11          shopping, the prediction is that they, the  
12          big boxes, are soon going to be ghost  
13          boxes. Who wants ghost boxes down on  
14          Route 13? Please don't spoil Ithaca by  
15          making it like downtown Elmira or  
16          Syracuse. That is not progress.

17                      And one last word if I have it.  
18          Steve Ehrhardt, who tried to condemn so  
19          many people himself, I remember condemning  
20          a group I was a member of at Stewart Park,  
21          Citizens to save Stewart Park. And he  
22          made absolutely false allegations about  
23          how inadequate our research was when it  
24          was absolutely exact. So, he does -- he's



1 the person I know does what he condemned  
2 other people from doing. So, maybe he's  
3 doing it today. Thank you.

4 MAYOR COHEN: Our next speaker,  
5 number 64, is Noel Desch, D-E-S-C-H, Town  
6 of Ithaca.

7 MR. DESCH: Thank you very much.  
8 It's a pleasure to be here. I'm speaking  
9 today as the new chair of the Tompkins  
10 County Chamber of Commerce, but I'll give  
11 you a little background about my career.

12 I am a registered licensed  
13 professional engineer licensed to practice  
14 in New York State. I had the good fortune  
15 of serving the Town of Ithaca as a  
16 supervisor for 12 years in the '70s and  
17 '80s. So, I had the opportunity to  
18 become very familiar with this area,  
19 worked very closely with the City of  
20 Ithaca to extend quite a bit of the  
21 infrastructure that you find in place  
22 today; namely water, sewer, drainage,  
23 some roadway circulation.

24 I'd like to recommend to the city

1           that you incorporate the Tompkins County  
2           economic development strategy, which was  
3           adopted in 1999, and provides quite a bit  
4           of reference to the dilemma that the City  
5           of Ithaca faces with respect to its tax  
6           revenue base.

7                         I realize that that may or may not  
8           be specific to the environmental issues at  
9           hand. However, I know that a number of  
10          previous speakers have said that the plan  
11          should not move forward because it will be  
12          a tax burden to the city rather than a  
13          tax benefit. This plan is a very sound  
14          plan, not only environmentally but  
15          economically. It's been carefully thought  
16          through. It is in keeping with the  
17          Tompkins County economic development  
18          strategy and will go a long way to  
19          stopping the leakage of sales tax revenue,  
20          retail sales out of Tompkins County.

21                        The economic development strategy  
22          will tell you that in 1992 there was a  
23          \$60 Million retail sales leakage out of  
24          Tompkins County primarily to Chemung and

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1 Cortland. Those numbers I am sure at this  
2 point in time some eight years later are  
3 far greater than \$60 Million a year.

4 And finally, I would just simply  
5 make one comment. And that is that if  
6 this plan is not adopted, the question I  
7 would ask those who oppose the plan would  
8 be how can you expect the City of Ithaca  
9 to continue to provide the level of  
10 services that all of the people in Ithaca  
11 have become accustomed to? It simply will  
12 not be possible without a tax increase  
13 that many of the people in the city will  
14 not be able to afford.

15 Thank you very much.

16 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you. Number  
17 65 is Kevin Walker. And Kevin is from the  
18 City of Ithaca.

19 MR. WALKER: Hi. I'll start with  
20 a brief introduction of who I am. I'm a  
21 second-year master's student in city and  
22 regional planning. I'm a resident at  
23 319 Lynch Street, Apartment 1, of Ithaca.

24 I have come today just to present

1           a few concerns primarily geared around  
2           some of the costs that I think are left  
3           out of the draft GEIS as it stands now.  
4           The second part of my comments will simply  
5           talk briefly about livability issues in  
6           Ithaca, which I think are very important  
7           to think about as we think about the  
8           character of the city. And third, perhaps  
9           proposal of what might take the place of  
10          the kind of development promoted in the  
11          GEIS.

12                        To start out, first I think a  
13                        number of the costs that have come to my  
14                        attention that are really not addressed in  
15                        the GEIS as best, the analysis available  
16                        indicated was first the cost for expanded  
17                        road repair city-wide due to additional  
18                        traffic in the area.

19                        Second, the costs of emergency  
20                        delays that might occur as a result of  
21                        traffic bottlenecks.

22                        Third, the concerns about a city  
23                        shopper shuttle and the extra costs of  
24                        providing the kinds of transportation that

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1           need to be made available to shoppers that  
2           want to shop in the new box development.

3                       Next, the costs of removing and  
4           replacing soil that needs -- that has been  
5           poisoned in the area from the Southwest  
6           dump.

7                       And also I think a very important  
8           piece, especially of Ithaca which does  
9           have its reputation as a progressive city,  
10          is thinking about the costs of the type of  
11          development that might come along with  
12          the new big boxes, which would include a  
13          particular look at the kinds of benefits  
14          and wages that will be available to  
15          employees who work in that area.  
16          Especially the costs of the insecurity  
17          that tends to accompany jobs without  
18          health insurance.

19                      Finally, I think also a critical  
20          piece of this certainly is the cost of  
21          upgrading sewer mains for the additional  
22          water demands that will be made in the  
23          area.

24                      I think these and a number of

1           other costs that have been made by a  
2           number of analysts are things that will be  
3           very important as the GEIS continues under  
4           its further review.

5                         Secondly, I would like to address  
6           the character of Ithaca. And I think we  
7           all appreciate, those of us especially  
8           living in Fall Creek and some of the other  
9           neighborhoods in the city, how special of  
10          a place Ithaca really is.

11                        I come from a town in Minnesota.  
12          And I've seen each time I go home much of  
13          the prime agricultural lands and trees  
14          that used to occupy the area and that made  
15          it a place that I was proud to be from  
16          torn down and put into vast parking lots  
17          and retail stores that I don't think have  
18          a lot to do with long-term considerations  
19          but merely short-term pursuits for tax  
20          base considerations.

21                        I understand Ithaca is under a  
22          great deal of pressure around tax base and  
23          that Ithaca perhaps hasn't been doing as  
24          well as some of the other cities that have

1           actually pursued big-box proposals in the  
2           past. My hope is that Ithaca could build  
3           on its progressive heritage to actually  
4           really adopt some benchmark strategies for  
5           a different character and a different type  
6           of development and the kinds of proposals  
7           that might put Ithaca back on the map for  
8           being a progressive city rather than in  
9           fact taking that area around Route 13 and  
10          turning it increasingly over to the  
11          automobiles with all of the kinds of  
12          gradations that follow that.

13                        So, I'd like to finish, then, with  
14           a possible counterproposal, which is that  
15           of a -- something like a participatory  
16           design plan which would be something that  
17           would be developed by the involvement of  
18           interested citizens and other residents in  
19           the area.

20                        I think there are a number  
21           of concerns in Ithaca that could be  
22           potentially addressed, such as around  
23           affordable housing and those issues that  
24           could be integrated into a different kind

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1 of plan. And while I don't think that  
2 that's by any stretch the full possibility  
3 of what might develop, I certainly think  
4 that a participatory approach would be a  
5 very different one and one that Ithaca  
6 could be proud of.

7 Thanks a lot.

8 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you very  
9 much.

10 Number 66 is Rachel Walker, also  
11 City of Ithaca.

12 If I could have numbers 67 through  
13 70 please come forward.

14 MR. HARLAN: I'm 67.

15 MAYOR COHEN: Hold on to that  
16 number, Joel.

17 MS. WALKER: I speak as a citizen  
18 and I am also a graduate student at  
19 Cornell University, PhD student in natural  
20 resources.

21 I speak very simply today. First  
22 I speak regarding my background in terms  
23 of some of the cities that I've lived in.  
24 And I appeal to a very similar sentiment



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1           and point that my husband just made  
2           regarding the character of Ithaca.

3                       I lived for eight years in the  
4           Asia-Pacific region; in Hong Kong for four  
5           years and Taipei, which is the capital of  
6           Taiwan. And I spent a lot of time in  
7           Beijing and Changjiang and Shanghai,  
8           cities in Asia and China.

9                       This part of the world is probably  
10          changing the most dramatically in the  
11          world. I have had an ability to  
12          appreciate cities of many different  
13          sizes. And I, too, come from an area that  
14          has experienced a lot of urban sprawl in  
15          central Minnesota.

16                      And I simply say that as a person  
17          who has driven on roads in Ithaca and has  
18          driven down past this area, that I'm just  
19          not interested in seeing more development  
20          there. And it's just that simple.

21                      And I recognize a lot of the  
22          points that actually were raised by my  
23          husband. I just second those and agree

24

with them. So, I just appeal to that

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1           sentiment that there is so much dramatic  
2           change, so much devastation that has  
3           occurred in ways that we can't even  
4           comprehend really from the point of view  
5           of Ithaca, but it is fast causing a kind  
6           of depletion I think of the environment  
7           and of a way of life that is not something  
8           that makes me feel proud. And I would  
9           like to see alternatives to this kind of  
10          development.

11                           Thank you very much.

12                           MAYOR COHEN: Thank you. Number  
13                           68 is Bill Houston, City of Ithaca.

14                           Lisa, how many numbers do we have  
15                           signed up so far? 73. Okay. So, if I  
16                           could have numbers 70, 71, 72 up front as  
17                           well. Thank you.

18                           MR. HOUSTON: Thank you. My name  
19                           is Bill Houston from the City of Ithaca.  
20                           I've lived in the city for two years now.  
21                           I grew up in Westchester County. And  
22                           before I moved here to Ithaca I also lived  
23                           in Westchester.

1           New York City because I couldn't take the  
2           sprawl anymore. I got fed up with the way  
3           of life that is created by sprawl. I  
4           think it is detrimental to human life and  
5           it is a killer of community.

6                       And I see that happening with this  
7           development in the Southwest Park. I'm  
8           going to attend to two points that are  
9           close to me.

10                      First is the expected traffic  
11           increase in the city. I do not own an  
12           automobile. I do not want to own an  
13           automobile. That's one of the reasons I  
14           moved up to Ithaca. It's fairly bicycle  
15           friendly. I think there is a long way to  
16           go, but I can make it pretty well or get  
17           along pretty well around here without a  
18           car.

19                      And there is plenty of other  
20           people out there, I'm sure you heard from  
21           some of them last night, I wasn't here,  
22           but I think it's wrong that there should

23 be any more development in this town.  
24 Because of the traffic increase there will

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1 be a decrease in air quality. There will  
2 be an increase in noise pollution. Biking  
3 and walking will become more difficult.

4 It is said in the GEIS that there  
5 will be serious implications for the  
6 neighborhoods, especially on the south  
7 side. And I wonder, because there is  
8 talk in the GEIS about traffic-calming  
9 options. But can we take these  
10 seriously? What are the real options?  
11 Can we take the City of Ithaca seriously  
12 when for years we have talked about  
13 getting bike lanes here and nothing has  
14 happened?

15 I believe it will be more of the  
16 same promises and yet life will become  
17 more difficult for people who do not have  
18 access to automobiles. This is unjust.  
19 So, with the traffic increase it's obvious  
20 there will be more pavement and less soil  
21 to absorb water. This means there will be  
22 more run-off. "More run-off" meaning more

23 pollutants, mostly from cars, but also  
24 from buildings.

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1 Ithaca was once a huge swamp  
2 filtering water into a once clear lake  
3 full of healthy fish and other organisms.  
4 And while I don't believe that we can  
5 return to that state of ecological  
6 balance, this development will only make  
7 things worse.

8 If the development goes through,  
9 we will never see swimming in Stewart Park  
10 again. I moved to Ithaca because it is a  
11 unique town and area. It's not Cortland.  
12 We have to have more pride in this town or  
13 we will become another Cortland.

14 I was in Cortland a few months ago  
15 in the downtown business district. There  
16 is plenty of places to shop outside of  
17 downtown, but downtown is very scary and  
18 depressing. And I see that happening in  
19 Ithaca as well. The only thing -- the  
20 only business downtown that seems to be  
21 doing well are bars and taverns. Is this

22 what we want the Commons to become?

23 I'm sorry I can't offer a

24 solution -- a different option than the

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1 draft GEIS has proposed, but I think it's  
2 obvious that sprawl is not a logical  
3 solution at this point. It is too big a  
4 price to pay for such a beautiful town.

5 Thank you very much.

6 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you, sir.

7 Number 69 is Betty Dudman,  
8 D-U-D-M-A-N, from Rochester.

9 MS. DUDMAN: Good afternoon. I'm  
10 a project manager for Wegmans Food Markets  
11 real estate division and I'm here this  
12 afternoon only to clarify that any of the  
13 alternatives at this time that represent  
14 or illustrate some public access way  
15 through our property would not necessarily  
16 represent our consent or support of this  
17 application or of the plan. And that we  
18 are aware of the February 17th cutoff for  
19 written comment and we'd reserve the right  
20 to submit any substantive comments at that  
21 time.

22 Thank you.  
23 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you.  
24 Is there a number 70 or 71 here?

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1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm a  
2 repeat.  
3 MAYOR COHEN: Okay. 71.  
4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm 71.  
5 I'm a repeat.  
6 MAYOR COHEN: 72, please come  
7 forward. And 73, are you here?  
8 Mr. Glover, please come forward, turn  
9 in your slip.  
10 This is Richard Charsky,  
11 C-H-A-R-S-K-Y, Town of Ithaca.  
12 MR. CHARSKY: Thank you very  
13 much. I'm here on behalf of the Chamber  
14 of Commerce of Tompkins County. I chair  
15 up the city affairs committee and I'd like  
16 to read a resolution of support for the  
17 Southwest Park Plan.  
18 Whereas, in 1992 the City of  
19 Ithaca initiated a comprehensive planning  
20 process for the land use, zoning and

21                   circulation of the area of the city known  
22                   as Southwest area.

23                   And whereas, the city as a result  
24                   of the planning process has determined

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1                   that it is in the best interest of  
2                   the city and its neighbors to foster  
3                   environmentally-sensitive commercial  
4                   development in Southwest area rather than  
5                   a combination park lands and industrial  
6                   development.

7                   And whereas, the city has  
8                   completed the delineation, dealienation of  
9                   the designated park land to accomplish the  
10                  first step in the planning initiative.

11                  And whereas, the city has prepared  
12                  a draft environmental impact statement to  
13                  assess the impact of the proposed land's  
14                  use on natural features, water resources,  
15                  fill areas, air resources, visual  
16                  resources, transportation, daily life,  
17                  utilities, solid waste, plants and  
18                  animals, cultural resources and community  
19                  character and many other factors and has  
20                  presented the GEIS for public comment.





20 to the table up front.

21 Paul, thank you.

22 MR. GLOVER: Thank you. I'll  
23 have a more general statement this  
24 evening, but right now I wanted to relay

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1 an article in a magazine which emphasizes  
2 the theme of smart growth which has been a  
3 headline in the community for a long time  
4 but has not been extensively explored and  
5 certainly not in public policy so far here  
6 in Ithaca.

7 This is a description of a mayor's  
8 vision for a sustainable city. The Mayor  
9 of Asheville, North Carolina.

10 In the middle of her first term as  
11 mayor, Leni Sitnick articulates the needs  
12 of Asheville, North Carolina, and what it  
13 would take for her city to become a model  
14 for sustainable development. She starts  
15 off with the potential of using the river  
16 that runs through the city, the French  
17 Broad, more creatively. She segues easily  
18 into ways to make ecotourism a strong  
19 factor in an urban economy that already

20 depends heavily on visitors and conference  
21 attendees.

22 "We have the inherent ability  
23 to be a model green city, becoming a  
24 center for environmental technology and

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1 consulting firms that are housed in  
2 ecoindustrial parks. These companies  
3 would be involved in goods and services  
4 related to areas like waste reduction and  
5 wellness," she told us during our visit  
6 to her office last month. "We've got to  
7 stress our strengths, our quality of life  
8 and strong work ethic midst the beauty of  
9 our natural surroundings."

10 Mayor Sitnick came to City  
11 Hall with a strong reputation as an  
12 environmental activist who wanted to reach  
13 out to the business community. Several  
14 years ago, she gave a speech to the  
15 Western North Carolina Alliance which  
16 outlined her beliefs. "What a luxury it  
17 is to be able to take part in our future.  
18 Because we care, we must help set the

19 agenda and direct strategies for a  
20 healthier and safer environment. We must  
21 bring the resources necessary for  
22 alternative thinking and actions to the  
23 business and industry community. We can't  
24 afford the 'us' and 'them' mentality

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1 anymore because a healthy environment and  
2 a sound business economy are mutually  
3 supportive of and necessary for  
4 sustainable development. We are no longer  
5 the fringe, and we are here to stay. Our  
6 leaders must begin to articulate a bold  
7 vision for the future if we are to thrive  
8 and survive together."

9 An actual mayor in an actual city  
10 in the United States of America.

11 To conclude, at an increasing  
12 rate, the activists can now be found  
13 in elected and appointed governmental  
14 offices. It's a good sign of meaningful  
15 change which will bring supportive  
16 policies for ecoentrepreneurs and the  
17 consumers they serve. Meanwhile, the  
18 nongovernmental activists continue to

19 exert constructive force through such  
20 organizations as Appalachian Sustainable  
21 Development, based about two hours from  
22 Asheville in Abingdon, Virginia. In an  
23 article beginning on page 19 of this  
24 issue, director Anthony Flaccavento

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1 writes: "Appalachian communities  
2 increasingly face 'jobs or the  
3 environment' trade-offs, but there is  
4 another Appalachian tale unfolding." He  
5 goes on to mention companies that are  
6 building an infrastructure for  
7 sustainability. "A healthier, more  
8 ecologically-sound economy is beginning to  
9 take shape that is both market driven  
10 and market shaping, creating practical  
11 opportunities for people to act  
12 responsibly vis-a-vis their neighbors and  
13 the natural world."

14 With mayors, ecoentrepreneurs and  
15 sustainable economic development acting in  
16 sync, the visions keep getting more  
17 attainable.

18                                Pretty exiting. And that's all I  
19 want to say right now.

20                                MAYOR COHEN: Thank you.

21                                We're going to take a quick  
22 five-minute break so our stenographer can  
23 rest. Well-deserved, I might add. And  
24 then we will be right back.

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1                                (Whereupon a short break was  
2 taken)

3                                MAYOR COHEN: Okay. We're going  
4 to get started again. So, all those who  
5 need to be in particular places.

6                                Okay. As far as our records show,  
7 we only have one new speaker signed up  
8 right now and then we can start with  
9 repeats.

10                                Unless is there a gentleman  
11 signing up in the back? Lisa? Jeannie?

12                                MS. LEE: No.

13                                MAYOR COHEN: Mr. Ferguson,  
14 F-E-R-G-U-S-O-N, from Dryden. Gary  
15 Ferguson.

16                                MR. FERGUSON: I've been asked to  
17 speak before you today at the request of

18 the board of directors of the partnership  
19 to provide a couple pieces of information  
20 relating to the environmental impact  
21 statement.

22 You have a written presentation,  
23 so I won't go over it in detail. Let me  
24 just cover the three key points which are

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1 part of that written response.

2 First I'd like to talk a little  
3 bit about economic impact. The economic  
4 analysis that was done acknowledges that  
5 downtown will be impacted by new growth by  
6 a new growth center in the Southwest area  
7 of the city. And several aspects of  
8 this probably need to be looked at or  
9 considered a little bit further,  
10 especially considered in light of how we  
11 move forward with this project.

12 First of all, the severity of  
13 impact of a project will really depend on  
14 the type of commercial activities that's  
15 permitted. And obviously, as many of you  
16 know, the impact that's been postulated in

17 the analysis is based on a prototype or a  
18 couple basic assumptions. But impact will  
19 really vary depending on the type of  
20 big-box store permitted.

21 An example of that would be I  
22 guess a category killer box store would  
23 have a different impact on downtown than a  
24 discount apparel store. So, the type of

1 store that's considered would really help  
2 guide what type of impact downtown would  
3 face.

4 Secondly, the significance, there  
5 is a significant difference in impact  
6 between a big-box retailer and a strip  
7 center comprised of many smaller retail  
8 stores. Downtown's building block unit is  
9 really the 1,000 to 4,000 square foot  
10 specialty storefront, a Southwest mark  
11 that is comprised of some of these small  
12 stores will have a significant and  
13 different impact on downtown than one  
14 big-box or several big-box stores.

15 Finally, an office development in  
16 Southwest Park will also have a different



17 impact than big-box retail. One of the  
18 niches that downtown is trying to lay  
19 claim to and work hard on is trying to  
20 become an office center for -- that is  
21 built out of downtown for the region. And  
22 an office center that is built out of  
23 downtown will obviously have a very  
24 different impact than big-box retail.

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1 So, the message there really  
2 is one of the type of use really will  
3 determine the severity of impact. And the  
4 more we can look at that and hone in on  
5 that, probably the better.

6 Let me skip down to the second  
7 major point, which is providing links to  
8 downtown. If Southwest Park is to be  
9 redeveloped as proposed, it is critical  
10 to consider how this area will link and  
11 connect with downtown. And there are  
12 several issues you might want to  
13 consider.

14 First of all, the idea of kiosks  
15 that would be located in Southwest Park in

16 some of the key traffic centers of that  
17 area to help provide physical linkages  
18 with downtown, and we described how we  
19 might do that, informational highway  
20 signage in Southwest Park. Then highway  
21 corridors that connect Southwest Park with  
22 downtown need to be obvious and they need  
23 to be easy to access and easy to navigate,  
24 whichever those are. We're not proposing

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1 what they would be.

2 Finally, investment in a shuttle  
3 system might be looked at. Although,  
4 again, I think we want to look at how well  
5 a shuttle system imports shoppers to  
6 downtown from Southwest or, conversely,  
7 how it takes people from downtown and  
8 brings them to the Southwest Park.

9 Final point I wanted to talk  
10 about is mitigation measures as they  
11 relate to downtown. One of the key policy  
12 justifications for proceeding with a  
13 Southwest Park development was that it  
14 would create additional tax revenues for  
15 the city to reallocate to other portions

16 of the community, including hopefully  
17 downtown.

18 Among the options one might want  
19 to look at in terms of mitigation measures  
20 as they relate to economic and community  
21 impact would be some of the following:  
22 Creation of a small independent business  
23 support funds that might assist impacted  
24 retailers. Secondly, that the adoption

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1 of a permanent two-hour, no-cost parking  
2 plan for downtown to help it retain its  
3 competitiveness with an area such as  
4 Southwest. Thirdly, a commitment to  
5 provide funding to complete capital  
6 improvements called for in the common  
7 redesigned plan.

8 MAYOR COHEN: I have to ask you  
9 to stop.

10 MR. FERGUSON: That would be  
11 fine.

12 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you.

13 MR. FERGUSON: Thanks.

14 MAYOR COHEN: We still have no

15 new speakers signed up?

16 MS. LEE: We have one more. He  
17 would like to wait.

18 MAYOR COHEN: So, then, I'll  
19 ask our repeat speakers to please come  
20 forward. So, that's Joel, Betsy and Fay,  
21 I believe.

22 Okay. Our next speaker, number  
23 67, is Joel Harlan, H-A-R-L-A-N, from  
24 Dryden.

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1 MR. HARLAN: I'm not going to  
2 make too much of a statement. I'm glad I  
3 left from a negative meeting to a positive  
4 meeting up to Carrier Dome. What are  
5 these antidevelopers? Are they as nuts as  
6 the people -- the hooplas in the Carrier  
7 Dome last night? It was fun, man. I was  
8 right out in there with the hooplas. Got  
9 in six minutes to go in the game, slipped  
10 right in slicker than heck.

11 I forgot to mention something last  
12 night. It just dawned on my head. You've  
13 got four different kinds of people that  
14 will come in if you get Southwest and the  
15 Pyramid Mall going. You've got the easy  
16 access for the campers for Buttermilk and

17 Truman Park just to drive right down and  
18 walk right down into Southwest Park. And  
19 you've got the college kids. You've got  
20 people from out of town. And you've got  
21 the local people.

22 Let's bring them all in. Come on,  
23 let's bring them in. Let's get this  
24 stuff going. Let's stop thinking about

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1 antidevelopment and let's get this thing  
2 going. Because there is jobs, there is  
3 money that people are throwing out of the  
4 counties. And you wait, if Wal-Mart gets  
5 going over in Watkins, if you don't do  
6 nothing, you are going to see everybody  
7 going to the Arnot Mall or Watkins from  
8 the west end and the southwest end of this  
9 county.

10 So, you are going to lose a lot.  
11 You might as well get started and start  
12 building before all of these other  
13 counties build around us. And you are  
14 going to lose a lot. Just think, you've  
15 got four different kinds of people in this

16 county I mean, you know, that will come  
17 shopping; from out of town, from the  
18 colleges, from the tourists, from the  
19 state parks and also our local people.  
20 That's all I've got to say.

21 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you.

22 Our next speaker, number 70, is  
23 Betsy Darlington, the City of Ithaca.

24 MS. DARLINGTON: Hi. I wanted to

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1 correct something that Steve Ehrhardt said  
2 before. I don't know if he was here last  
3 night and heard the CAC's comments, maybe  
4 he got it from the newspaper where it was  
5 not completely reported.

6 We never said -- nobody on the CAC  
7 said that the entire Southwest area was a  
8 very rare ecosystem in the state. What we  
9 were referring to and we said last night  
10 was the floodplain forest down there and  
11 particularly the floodplain forest, that  
12 is one of the rarest ecosystems in  
13 New York State. And I wanted to correct  
14 that so that misinterpretation doesn't  
15 enter the record and not get corrected.

16 I also wanted to address something  
17 else that is a very deep concern to me and  
18 to a great many other people, people who  
19 are involved in this process and people  
20 who aren't. And that is the process  
21 that happened in the city regarding  
22 Widewaters.

23 I think there is a tremendous  
24 amount of distrust of City Hall as a

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1 result of what happened with Widewaters.  
2 Circumventing all environmental review  
3 before filling 22 to 23 acres with 80,000  
4 cubic yards of fill, I think that this  
5 process was a very, very unfortunate thing  
6 for the city and a tremendous amount of  
7 distrust now exists. And Common Council  
8 is going to have to work very hard to know  
9 that they really do care about what the  
10 citizens of the city think. And that they  
11 are not just going to run rough shot over  
12 the process.

13 I know Common Council was not to  
14 blame at all in that. They probably

15 didn't even know that it was happening.  
16 But it is something that has appalled  
17 people that this happened. And I think  
18 you've got to be deeply concerned about  
19 that and I hope it never happens again.

20 And I hope that this process  
21 you've really heard that most of us are  
22 not saying no development in that area.  
23 We're saying let's do it carefully. Let's  
24 do it thoughtfully. Let's be a little

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1 more creative and not just bring in big  
2 boxes which are going to be empty holes  
3 like so many other places along Route 13  
4 where they are now empty places that --  
5 it's depressing to drive down Route 13  
6 now with all of these empty spots where  
7 buildings have been torn down. Why aren't  
8 those being filled first with multistory  
9 buildings, maybe. I've heard that places  
10 like Wal-Mart and Target are putting in  
11 multistory buildings. Why aren't we  
12 trying harder to fill those places?

13 So, anyway, I do hope that Common  
14 Council takes these comments very



15 seriously. There is a great feeling  
16 that -- for all of the comments that  
17 Common Council's mind has been made up.  
18 And I dearly hope that that isn't true.  
19 Thank you.

20 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you, Betsy.  
21 Number 71 is Fay Gougakis,  
22 G-O-U-G-A-K-I-S, City of Ithaca.

23 MS. GOUGAKIS: I wanted to thank  
24 Betsy Darlington for her comments. She

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1 spoke so eloquently and I agree with her  
2 100 percent.

3 I'm not going to repeat my  
4 statements from last night, but I as usual  
5 have a few more points that I want to  
6 make.

7 Number one is balance. And I  
8 think that we all are working to better  
9 this community, but we all differ in how  
10 we want the end product to be. I think  
11 the challenge here is for us to work  
12 together. And I think you said that,  
13 Mayor Cohen, during your election. And

14 I'm not trying to point fingers, but I'm  
15 just bringing out the process and bringing  
16 out what we promised each other, okay.

17 And I think that, you know, this  
18 dGEIS is very overwhelming for a lot  
19 of people. And my concern with this  
20 statement is that people are reading it --  
21 or people are not reading it because they  
22 feel they are not understanding it. It's  
23 this huge volumes of work. And my  
24 challenge and my -- I'm asking you if we

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1 can change things a little bit, okay. You  
2 have these hearings today and tonight.  
3 But I suggest that we all sit together and  
4 we have somebody explain to us or give us  
5 a summary. You have it in writing, but  
6 have like a public forum where we can  
7 interact.

8 Now, before the dGEIS came out, we  
9 were meeting at City Hall with the people  
10 who were doing the study, correct? We  
11 were meeting in quarterly meetings. And  
12 then it stopped. And it stopped because  
13 apparently some people got sick or there

14 was a problem and they couldn't, you  
15 know -- there was another topic they were  
16 going to bring to us and then it stopped  
17 and then the elections came and then now  
18 we got the dGEIS.

19 What I'm asking is that we have a  
20 review from the people that did this  
21 statement, okay, sit down. It might be a  
22 lot of people in the room or maybe we can  
23 do it in segments so people have an  
24 understanding of what this is about.

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1 A lot of people -- you are  
2 expecting people to understand what's in  
3 that document. People are not experts.  
4 Why do you think this room is empty? I  
5 for one have not read it yet. And I'll  
6 tell you why. I was very sick this  
7 weekend. I was planning on doing it this  
8 weekend. I felt sick and I worked very  
9 hard to get myself better to come to these  
10 meetings because they are important to  
11 me. It is important to me to hear what  
12 people have to say about their community.



13 at how many people have spoken here  
14 against -- or at least concerned about  
15 Southwest Park and the statement. How  
16 many people have spoken, you know, to that  
17 effect? I mean think -- my concern is  
18 where are all of the people who want  
19 development or -- let's say this grand  
20 development that you are proposing? They  
21 are sitting at home because they are  
22 saying, you know what? We got Alan Cohen,  
23 we've got the Common Council and they are  
24 going to do it for us.

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1 For me that's sad because what  
2 I'm asking of you -- and I know it sounds  
3 critical, but I'm not trying to be  
4 critical, I'm trying to be fair. And  
5 that's the basis of my public work, is  
6 fairness and justice. And I'm asking you  
7 to be fair and to be honest. Okay. And  
8 when we do this, we have a community.  
9 Okay.

10 When we do that, when we sit and  
11 we discuss our future together without

12 labeling and dividing each other, we're  
13 going to have a great Ithaca. Because a  
14 lot of the comments that were said in the  
15 last two hearings are important. They  
16 might be not what you want, there might be  
17 variative opinions, but they are all  
18 important.

19 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you, Fay.

20 Okay.

21 Our next speaker. Lisa, what

22 number?

23 MS. LEE: 75.

24 MAYOR COHEN: What other numbers

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1 do we have? 76 and 77. If there is no  
2 one signed up after that, we'll take  
3 another break after 77.

4 MR. GLOVER: As I said a few  
5 minutes ago, I'll have a more general  
6 statement --

7 MAYOR COHEN: This is, once  
8 again, Paul Glover, City of Ithaca.

9 MR. GLOVER: I have had a lot to  
10 say already and today's JOURNAL had a  
11 pretty good spread, a summary of what I

12 had found in the impact statement.

13 There is so much to be said about  
14 this impact statement and what is not in  
15 it and what is in it that have some tag  
16 ends that I wanted to raise in this  
17 forum.

18 To second what Gary Ferguson said,  
19 the impact statement makes clear that this  
20 project would be in direct competition  
21 with the Commons. In order to accomplish  
22 trip linking, this is a way to reduce car  
23 travel through the city by putting all  
24 your needs in one place and among these,

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1 according to the impact statement, are  
2 supporting or contributing land uses,  
3 including local services, medical  
4 offices, hotels, motels, movie theaters,  
5 restaurants, convenience retail, day care  
6 centers and other desirable uses. In  
7 other words, pack it all together in the  
8 Southwest Park and nobody needs to go  
9 home.

10 But this is not a concern to --

11 this placement, this location is not a  
12 concern to the impact statement because,  
13 according to section 7-5, there will be an  
14 opportunity for local businesses to adapt  
15 to the change in competitive circumstances  
16 since the retail component is phased in  
17 during a two- to six-year period.

18 Very optimistic on behalf of  
19 filling that space, that 160 acres  
20 which is 19 times greater area than the  
21 Commons. The Commons is 400 feet by 900  
22 feet, 360,000 square feet. And the 160  
23 acres of the Southwest project is 19 times  
24 greater at 43,560 square feet per acre.

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1 The impact statement should run  
2 off results for 50- and 100-year floods.  
3 They do only for 25-year floods. There is  
4 a trench, a ditch 2,300 feet long and 3  
5 feet deep with sheer sides. And there is  
6 no reference to any fencing required.  
7 Little kids.

8 We've had two 100-year floods  
9 within the last 21 years, 1972 and 1993.  
10 The environment apparently is becoming



11 more and more erratic. This is a  
12 community which respects science and a lot  
13 of scientists are saying this is becoming  
14 chronic.

15 The Ithaca -- quote, the Ithaca  
16 City School District did not provide  
17 information to make a judgment as to  
18 whether or not there would be additional  
19 education costs.

20 The impact statement should  
21 thoroughly explore the effect on  
22 additional education costs of this  
23 project.

24 That would be my exciting

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1 conclusion to these remarks at this time.

2 Thank you.

3 MAYOR COHEN: Reserving the right  
4 to speak again. Thank you, Paul.

5 Number 76 is David Post. And  
6 David is from the City of Ithaca.

7 MR. POST: Hi. I'm a resident of  
8 downtown. I live on North Geneva Street.  
9 I'm not completely opposed to any

10 development in the Southwest area. I  
11 certainly oppose the Wal-Mart project.  
12 And, you know, what's -- the area that's  
13 being filled and looks -- looks like a  
14 store that would be even larger than the  
15 proposed Wal-Mart, so I question that.

16 But since that time, since the  
17 Wal-Mart time I've come to see that it's  
18 probably not possible to stop that kind  
19 of development. And if it doesn't happen  
20 within the City of Ithaca, it will  
21 probably happen just outside the City of  
22 Ithaca and I'd rather see it within the  
23 city. I think that's what smart growth is  
24 about.

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1 Speaking on the environmental  
2 impact statement draft, first I found it  
3 difficult to read the thing. I appreciate  
4 that some of it was available online, but  
5 without the figures and the grafts, it  
6 loses a lot. So, I'd really like the city  
7 to make the effort to scan in the entire  
8 document and make it available online.

9 Also, to get a copy of this thing,

10 I believe it was \$162 at Kinko's. And  
11 that's not affordable. Is it possible  
12 that a condensed version, a summary could  
13 be available at a cheaper price so that it  
14 could be widely available? Consequently,  
15 I haven't read more than just a tiny  
16 fraction of it.

17 But what I want to speak mostly  
18 about is the economic impact. I  
19 understand that the city is proposing to  
20 invest \$10 Million to \$14 Million in  
21 subsidizing this project. That money --  
22 I believe it says in the environmental  
23 impact statement that that money may not  
24 be recovered from the developers. And I

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1 think that interferes with competition.

2 I think if the city is going to  
3 put that much money into creating  
4 large-scale development, more and bigger  
5 stores, that the city should put an equal  
6 amount of money into renovating the  
7 downtown, specifically the Commons.

8 I would like to see tax incentives

9 to fill the empty stores on the Commons,  
10 to improve the upper floors on the Commons  
11 for apartments, to get more people living  
12 downtown, working downtown, to support  
13 downtown businesses. Also to try to bring  
14 back some of the businesses that have left  
15 downtown. I mean we have like one tiny  
16 grocery store anywhere near the Commons.  
17 The loss of Woolworth's, you know, you  
18 can't buy anything downtown. A lot of  
19 things downtown you can't buy.

20 That's it. Thank you.

21 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you.

22 For the public's information, I  
23 would like to just let you know that there  
24 are three sites where you can go and at

1 your leisure read physical copies of the  
2 full Generic Environmental Impact  
3 Statement. They are the Tompkins County  
4 Public Library, Olin Library at Cornell  
5 University and City Hall in the planning  
6 department. And those are available  
7 during the hours of operation for those  
8 various institutions or entities.

9                                   Our next speaker, number 77, is  
10 Marty Blodgett, B-L-O-D-G-E-T-T, City of  
11 Ithaca.

12                                   MS. BLODGETT: Hello. I want to  
13 express my appreciation for my council  
14 reps. With this great absence of the  
15 council here, I really appreciate that my  
16 representatives are here right now. I  
17 wish the rest of them were also.

18                                   I moved to Ithaca in 1971. I  
19 visited a lot before then because my  
20 grandma lived here. Came down pretty much  
21 every week. And one thing I used to like  
22 doing with my grandma was going swimming  
23 at Stewart Park or Buttermilk Falls Park.  
24 I'm wondering -- I already can't swim at

1                                   Stewart Park with my daughter. Will I  
2 have the option of swimming with my  
3 grandchildren at Buttermilk Falls Park?

4                                   So, I live right now at  
5 549 Spencer Road. It's not the first home  
6 I've owned in the area. And I want to  
7 address my comments today to some very

8 specific Spencer Road type of details. I  
9 will be submitting written comments later  
10 on.

11 So, starting out with the visual  
12 impacts. View number six is from Spencer  
13 Road, but it's a very low view. Maybe  
14 it's even from someone's back yard, I'm  
15 not sure. And it really didn't represent  
16 the view from Spencer Road.

17 Now, my yard extends up right  
18 to the railroad bed. I think there is  
19 15 feet from the railroad bed. And I  
20 actually use my back yard a lot. I love  
21 the woods and that's why I live there.  
22 That view would be very, very impacted by  
23 this development.

24 I think in fairness to homeowners

1 on Spencer Road an additional view needs  
2 to be added there. That's a typical  
3 situation on that side of the street that  
4 everyone's yard goes almost that high,  
5 with a few exceptions.

6 We are also very affected in our  
7 yards by the noise pollution. Right now

8                   you can hear the traffic from Route 13  
9                   all the time. I heard someone say they  
10                  thought it wasn't so bad at Buttermilk  
11                  Falls campsite. I personally spend a lot  
12                  of time wandering around in Buttermilk  
13                  Falls State Park. It is very audible all  
14                  of the time. We're going to be just  
15                  adding a lot to that. And we're taking a  
16                  lot of vegetation which does help cut  
17                  the noise a little bit. That's really  
18                  noticeable in the summer when the trees  
19                  come into leaf. And just think what we're  
20                  not going to have down there in the valley  
21                  which we have now.

22                                 In addition to the traffic  
23                                 increase which may be 25 percent or more,  
24                                 we're taking out a lot of our filtering.

1                   That's really going to affect the  
2                   residents quite a lot. Those are the kind  
3                   of impacts which make it a lot harder to  
4                   sell our homes, change our property  
5                   values. And those are subjects very dear  
6                   to every homeowner in the city.





7 pedestrian crosswalk across Route 13 but  
8 not across Elmira Road. That means any  
9 child who wants to walk down to Taco Bell  
10 to get something to eat or walk to their  
11 friend's house on the south side of town,  
12 there is no pedestrian crossing. There is  
13 traffic turning -- in other words, you  
14 have to be looking pretty sharp.

15 It was less than three or four  
16 weeks ago that a close friend of mine was  
17 hit by a vehicle in a crosswalk with the  
18 light in downtown Ithaca, okay. I'm a  
19 massage therapist. I see the ongoing pain  
20 and agony people are in as a result of car  
21 accidents, often which happen at under 30  
22 miles an hour. These issues can affect  
23 people for years and years.

24 And to think that that's not going

1 to be happening more with the incredible  
2 increase in traffic we're talking about is  
3 just a fantasy to think that that's not  
4 more of a risk. That's that particular  
5 intersection.



6 each other. It's hazardous.

7 Thank you.

8 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you.

9 Jeannie, Lisa, we have new  
10 numbers?

11 MS. LEE: Goes up until 82.

12 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you.

13 78, 79 and 80, please come  
14 forward. And give us your slips over here  
15 (indicating).

16 Number 78 is Sara Brown. And  
17 she's from Caroline.

18 MS. BROWN: Hi, everybody. I  
19 am completely and adamantly opposed  
20 to bringing large-scale commercial  
21 development to anywhere in Ithaca.

22 How can we humans with any sense  
23 of morality and good conscience continue  
24 to pave over and develop this beautiful

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1 planet which is the soul source for life,  
2 for all forms of life, including  
3 ourselves? Where are we really going in  
4 this mad rush to create yet even more

5 opportunity to buy and buy and buy all  
6 kinds of things made with precious  
7 resources and often with unjust labor,  
8 things that do not provide us with any  
9 lasting sense of joy, vitality or  
10 satisfaction in life?

11 I would like to ask all folks  
12 present here today to look inside  
13 themselves and consider these two  
14 questions. What is life about? And what  
15 are people for? Is the gift of life that  
16 we are all blessed with about taking care  
17 of ourselves always first? Making sure  
18 our bank accounts are securely filled, our  
19 homes overly comfortable filled with every  
20 possible thing to make our lives easy,  
21 happy and safe? Is this what we are after  
22 no matter the cost? No matter that others  
23 struggle in the poverty and injustice  
24 which is the run-off of our shameless

1 consumerism and affluence? No matter that  
2 to support our blind head-long rush to  
3 provide for ourselves we are destroying  
4 the natural state of mother Earth? Who

5 are we considering here? Ourselves only?  
6 Surely not all life.

7 How can we possibly believe that  
8 paving and building excessively in our  
9 small and beautiful town is for a greater  
10 good? How can 55 acres of parking lots,  
11 more cars, cars, cars to plug our streets  
12 and foul our air and more opportunities to  
13 endlessly buy make anyone happier, make  
14 anyone feel that their life is richer and  
15 more fulfilling? Is this really what  
16 people are for? To develop this planet  
17 for ourselves only? To destroy the  
18 natural state of our planet and the homes  
19 of other living beings?

20 Why are we participating in this?  
21 We have a choice. And it is critical that  
22 we make responsible choices. Why choose  
23 to continue the rampant destruction of our  
24 only life resource? Who here wants to

1 stand up and say, I helped pave over  
2 America, I helped eradicate forests,  
3 streams, fields and many animal and plant

4 species? Also, that people could buy  
5 anything they want in any quantity  
6 meanwhile creating everlasting mountains  
7 of trash.

8           Is there a long-term greater good  
9 that I can't see achieved by enacting this  
10 crime against ourselves, our children, all  
11 living beings and our mother planet? We  
12 are not alone here. We do not own this  
13 planet. We are members of a whole  
14 community of life. We are smart and we  
15 are able. Can we please use these  
16 qualities in a gently powerful way to  
17 benefit all life?

18           We also have an incredible  
19 capacity for caring and loving. Could  
20 this be what people are for? Creating  
21 beauty, justice and equality? Living  
22 respectfully, compassionately and  
23 responsibly? Interacting with life, not  
24 things and money?

1           The way I see it, we are  
2 ultimately benefiting no one when we  
3 destroy natural habitat, pave over the

4 Earth and build more stores. Who is  
5 feeling at ease and contentment with the  
6 joy of life when these things occur? Who  
7 is really sure deep in their being that  
8 this is a right thing to do? My intuition  
9 says no one is sure.

10 If you are in a place of power,  
11 please use it respectfully, honestly and  
12 lovingly with clear, long-term vision.  
13 The ripples of misused power can be far  
14 reaching and exceedingly painful. Ithaca  
15 is a special place. Why take the chance  
16 on spoiling it? We can be an example of  
17 resisting growth and welcoming true  
18 vibrant life.

19 Thank you.

20 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you.

21 Jessy, you are our next speaker.

22 Before you go, we're going to do  
23 new speakers first. So, if numbers 81 and  
24 82 will please come forward.

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1 Our next speaker is number 79,  
2 Jessy Lind, L-I-N-D, from the City of

3 Ithaca.

4 MS. LIND: I didn't realize this  
5 wasn't a question-and-answer session, so  
6 I'll just pose the question and hope that  
7 my Common Council representative or the  
8 Mayor could publish the answer in the  
9 newspaper. And forgive me if this has  
10 been addressed. I tried to follow this,  
11 but it might have slipped my attention.

12 I will hypothetically accept the  
13 premise that development is needed to  
14 raise our tax base and that we are not  
15 able to meet our city expenses and needs  
16 based upon our current tax base.

17 I would like to know if there is a  
18 point at which we will be and if at that  
19 point we can discontinue the process of  
20 developing the quick and easy way and  
21 possibly go -- return to a more long-term  
22 sustainable approach to our development.

23 I have many other issues, I have  
24 just shown up and haven't attended the

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1 other hearings. I'm sure they've been  
2 mentioned, so I'll leave it at that.



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Thank you.

MAYOR COHEN: Thank you. Speaker  
81 is Harris Roberts from the City of  
Ithaca.

MR. ROBERTS: I just have a  
few brief comments to make.

From my understanding, this  
project is being touted necessary for  
an increase in tax revenue. One of my  
concerns is that there are several  
businesses located very near to this  
proposed site which will be in direct  
conflict and competition.

There is no guarantees in this  
life. If these businesses were to go  
under, including lumber yards, high-tech  
electronics stores, discount stores, I'm  
just wondering how this will increase the  
tax base.

The only other issue I'm concerned  
with right now is the hidden costs. And I  
would like us all to take a better look at

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those. Thanks for your time.



2 development costs residents more money  
3 than it brings in. Roads, bridges, water,  
4 sewer, government, time, more buildings  
5 and means to accommodate traffic are paid  
6 for by residents while developers, and in  
7 most cases it's not local developers, haul  
8 away large profits, our money. The GEIS  
9 projects \$10 Million to be spent on this  
10 kind of infrastructure.

11 Second, a less viable Commons and  
12 center city area. This in combination  
13 with the inlet project competes with the  
14 downtown areas for tourists and resident  
15 dollars. Ithaca has a unique and  
16 treasured quality of life that is  
17 dependent even on a viable downtown. We  
18 must spend money on what we already have  
19 and enhance it and not throw it away by  
20 trying to draw business away from it.

21 Thirdly, Southwest Park as a park,  
22 not an industrial retail park. This area  
23 has a wetlands within it and has in the  
24 past and can in the future be enjoyed by

1 hikers, bikers, et cetera, as a park with  
2 trails, wildlife and an aesthetic value  
3 with opportunity for recreation on the  
4 edge of the city.

5 This open space and natural areas  
6 is also enjoyed in the view from the  
7 popular Buttermilk Falls trails. That's  
8 the state park trails. This view then  
9 becomes one of buildings and pavement with  
10 the proposed plan.

11 Fourth, future abandoned and  
12 opened paved vacant lots. It seems this  
13 will happen either here or in Lansing or  
14 Pyramid Mall or both. It depends which  
15 mall outcompetes the other. Our  
16 population can't possibly support so many  
17 stores.

18 As we see all across America,  
19 after ten years or whenever the novelty  
20 wears off customers from farther away will  
21 not come. How many times would Elmira  
22 area residents come here instead of Arnot  
23 Mall? Maybe a few times to see what the  
24 new mall looks like. Do we want to

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1           attract customers from there so that those  
2           shops can go under and Elmira then has  
3           more financial problems? Or maybe we  
4           would rather it happen to Lansing and the  
5           Pyramid Mall. Or maybe they won't come to  
6           ours anymore. Do we not have plenty of  
7           choice of big-box development in our  
8           current configuration?

9                         Fifth, letting our money go out of  
10           county and city. Most of this development  
11           calls for large national chains which  
12           would take at least 90 percent of the --  
13           local mall businesses would spend most of  
14           it here. Let's spend our tax base with  
15           local businesses. Even if we had to pay  
16           slightly more for their product, our taxes  
17           could be less.

18                        Sixth, loss of potential  
19           housing and good jobs. In addition to  
20           preservation and park and natural  
21           area, this land could be used for new  
22           neighborhoods and/or locally small-owned  
23           business to accommodate the small amount  
24           of growth that suits Ithaca.



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1           affect the environment, the animals that  
2           live in the area, the plants, the trees  
3           and especially tourism to the park,  
4           Buttermilk Falls State Park.

5                        If we put this big, gigantic super  
6           mall, or whatever you guys are calling it,  
7           in the area, it's going to make noise,  
8           tons of traffic. It's going to affect the  
9           scenic views of Buttermilk Falls State  
10          Park. People are not going to want to  
11          camp at the state park if they have to  
12          hear traffic going in and out of parking  
13          lots 24 hours a day and see, you know,  
14          like bright lights. Who wants to go  
15          camping right next door to a mall? You  
16          don't see too many people pitching their  
17          tents up at Carousel in the parking lot.

18                       Getting back to we're spending all  
19          of this money. We're loaning \$14 Million  
20          here, \$100,000 for this environmental  
21          study. We need to take all of this money  
22          and reinvest it in the Commons and also  
23          reinvest it in development on Route 13.

24                       I had a couple of friends here the

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1           other day and we cruised down Route 13 and  
2           they were shocked at how bad things  
3           looked. Businesses have like weeds and  
4           garbage all over Route 13. Right across  
5           the street from Wendy's it looks like a  
6           garbage dump. Even though they tore the  
7           building down, it still looks terrible.

8                         We need to redevelop those areas,  
9           make Route 13 look good because Ithaca's  
10          biggest resource is tourism. If we turn  
11          back the clock and go back six or seven  
12          years, hundreds and thousands of people  
13          used to come to Ithaca, walk around and  
14          see all of the shops. These people have  
15          stopped coming here because the stores  
16          have cleared out on the Commons. People  
17          don't want to come to Ithaca and walk  
18          around the Commons anymore because there  
19          is nothing -- the stores have emptied out  
20          and it's progressively getting worse. So,  
21          you have to look at the future for the  
22          city. And we need to improve what's gone  
23          bad first before we start building things  
24          on top of it.





1           was the Internet-related business. We  
2           need to like take these students and even  
3           the local people, there are local people  
4           here that have good ideas that can go into  
5           small business. Right now in Collegetown  
6           there are four or five empty storefronts  
7           and there are tons of offices that are  
8           empty.

9                         There are a lot of things that can  
10           be going on here, but the city needs to  
11           reinvest that money into these small  
12           businesses. And for the amount of money  
13           that you guys are going to spend here in  
14           the Southwest project plan, if you took  
15           that money and gave it to people that  
16           wanted to go into small business, we could  
17           fill all of these empty storefronts up,  
18           Ithaca would be revitalized once again and  
19           then the tourists would return.

20                        The next thing is you need to  
21           spend money on tourism. Provincetown,  
22           Massachusetts, does it. Ithaca doesn't  
23           seem to spend any money on tourism and  
24           promoting itself. We have this big,

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1           gigantic lake here. If you took one-third  
2           of that money, spend it on TV commercials  
3           and ran it down in New Jersey, I can  
4           guarantee you hundreds of people would  
5           come up here. College students in town,  
6           they are all transient. There is a big  
7           force here.

8                         We need to revitalize the theater  
9           district, bring concerts here, cater to  
10          the students. Ithaca has pretty much  
11          gone to hell and you guys need to do  
12          something. You know, building a big-box  
13          store is not going to be the answer.  
14          Thank you.

15                        MAYOR COHEN: Thank you. We're  
16          going to take a ten-minute recess.

17                        (Whereupon a short break was  
18          taken)

19                        MAYOR COHEN: We do have a few  
20          speakers, so we're going to get started.  
21          If you are a speaker waiting to speak,  
22          please come forward now over to the table  
23          to my left. Bring your slip forward so we  
24          can identify who you are and call you in

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1           the order in which you have signed up.  
2           And all of you can just sit in the front  
3           row and we'll be ready to call you.  
4           Okay.

5                         So, Marty, you're next.

6                         Our next speaker is 83, Marty  
7           Blodgett, B-L-O-D-G-E-T-T, City of  
8           Ithaca.

9                         MS. BLODGETT:    Again, I was  
10          cut off when I was detailing about the  
11          infrastructures that affects pedestrians  
12          and bicyclists in the area, very  
13          affected by the study, by the proposed  
14          development.  And I was talking about how,  
15          particularly on Elmira Road, there is no  
16          facilities for pedestrians at all.  It's  
17          very, very hazardous there.

18                        MAYOR COHEN:    Ladies, please, if  
19          you want to have a conversation, take it  
20          outside.  Thank you.

21                        Marty.

22                        MS. BLODGETT:    So, my point  
23          is really that the infrastructure we  
24          already have affects pedestrians and

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1           bicyclists. We can't possibly think about  
2           more until we complete the holes in our  
3           infrastructure. These are really big,  
4           major issues. There are major risks of  
5           accidents for the people, the residents of  
6           the City of Ithaca.

7                         In terms of bicycling, the study  
8           implies that, for example, employers could  
9           encourage their employees to bicycle to  
10          work. I imagine they are thinking people  
11          are going to bike down Route 13 to go to  
12          this area. And that just seems like it's  
13          such a risk that it's ridiculous. If  
14          people did choose to do that, they have  
15          the right to do that. It would bottle  
16          traffic so much it would be boggling. So,  
17          the bicycle facilities are also really  
18          lacking in this part of town.

19                        Of course that's very true also on  
20          my own street, Spencer Road. It's like  
21          a one-lane street basically with two  
22          lanes of traffic. No sidewalks and no  
23          facilities special for bicycles. It is a  
24          major thoroughfare for pedestrians,

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1           particularly young people on skateboards,  
2           roller blades approaching Buttermilk  
3           Falls.

4                         And that's why I want to mention  
5           that three areas that were defined for  
6           their impact on livability, the first area  
7           lists several different roads; Elmira  
8           Road, South Main, South Albany and Cayuga  
9           Street. It's the only place Spencer Road  
10          is mentioned. I think Spencer Road  
11          deserves to be looked at a lot more  
12          closely.

13                        If you look at a map, one thing  
14          that you clearly notice is if there is any  
15          congestion on Route 13, the only real easy  
16          way to get around it is Spencer Road. To  
17          get around it on Floral Ave you have to go  
18          all the way back to Floral bridge. This  
19          puts Spencer Road in a very unique  
20          position to being a bypass to Route 13.

21                        This is what we experienced during  
22          the '80s and '90s when we peaked out with  
23          the traffic at something like 1,200 to

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1,400 vehicles per day. And, of course,

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1 that was at the time of the accident. So,  
2 you know, I'm speaking from personal  
3 experience here.

4 It would be very easy for Spencer  
5 Road to get back in that situation.  
6 Particularly if we had some kind of a  
7 store facility at the end of the street  
8 that was a big attraction to drivers who  
9 really wanted to get to that store, you  
10 might say something of a target for those  
11 commuters who would want to use a shortcut  
12 down our street.

13 This is exactly the situation we  
14 had in the early '90s. So, I think we  
15 really need to be really looking for major  
16 mitigation on Spencer Road because of  
17 where it's located. Some of the homes are  
18 probably within hundreds of feet of the  
19 entrance to this development site. And  
20 I think that should be considered  
21 separately.

22 Another function of Spencer Road,  
23 Spencer Road is the official bypass if

1 example, there was a bad accident on  
2 Route 13, all of the traffic was put onto  
3 Spencer Road while they cleaned it up.  
4 All of that traffic from five lanes on  
5 Route 13 went down Spencer Road. It was  
6 only a matter of maybe an hour or less,  
7 but it was really interesting to look out  
8 your window and see these tractor-trailers  
9 going by from the second story of your  
10 house. This is another way in which the  
11 facilities we already have are really  
12 quite inadequate.

13 I mentioned the signaled  
14 intersections labeled 19 and 20 in the  
15 study. 20 is the one that probably will  
16 have to go to stop allowing Spencer Road  
17 to be a shortcut. In other words, a major  
18 mitigation of some sort.

19 In terms of flooding, we  
20 experienced a serious flood I believe it  
21 was in '96. It took me about two hours to  
22 get around the block. I thought I would



23 go over to Wickes, maybe pick up a pump  
24 or something for my basement which was

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1 flooding. It's pretty incredible how fast  
2 those things can happen.

3 My dad grew up here. He told me  
4 every spring he would stand down where  
5 Route 13 currently is and stand in  
6 thigh-deep water every single spring.  
7 Now, when that flood happened, I believe  
8 that Wickes ended up making some kind of  
9 settlement with the damages they got from  
10 that flood because I think they said that  
11 the flood mitigation wasn't maintained  
12 properly. So, we could be in that  
13 situation again.

14 Thank you.

15 MAYOR COHEN: Our next speaker is  
16 David Nikita-Werier, N-I-K-I-T-A. Werier  
17 is W-E-R-I-E-R, Caroline.

18 MR. NIKITA-WERIER: I just wanted  
19 to leave off where I was at yesterday. I  
20 just remind folks of who I am and what I  
21 do. I'm an ecological consultant, I do  
22 botanical surveys.

23  
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I left off last night in talking  
about the forest issues. And one of the

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issues down there is that we have down  
there what's considered floodplain  
forest. Even some young floodplain  
forest. This is defined by Robert Wesley  
who did the botanical surveys down there.

What isn't mentioned is that  
floodplain forests are considered a rank  
of S2-S3 by the New York Natural Heritage  
Program. And what an S2-S3 means is that  
they are not -- as of now it's documented  
as an S2 in terms of what they found in  
New York State. S2 is typically 6 to 20  
occurrences, few remaining individual  
acres or miles of treatment or very  
vulnerable to extirpation in New York  
State for other reasons.

What they believe is after all of  
the survey of entire New York State is  
done it would probably fall into an S3  
category, although right now they don't  
know that. Both S2s and S3s are

22 considered vulnerable in New York State  
23 and as such the New York National Heritage  
24 Program monitors them. It doesn't mean

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1 that private landowners can't destroy  
2 them, but it means that they are fragile  
3 and important ecosystems.

4 The next point I want to make  
5 about forests is about the old hedgerow  
6 that's there. I think it's a little bit  
7 of an oversight that in the report it says  
8 that -- if you are not familiar with it,  
9 that there is a small hedgerow of  
10 floodplain remnant -- excuse me, old  
11 growth floodplain remnant and trees.  
12 There is a large oak there that is the  
13 largest in Tompkins County. Actually  
14 about four-and-a-half feet in diameter.  
15 It's strewn with lots of junk about it and  
16 garbage. If you've been down there, it's  
17 not necessarily the prettiest thing, but  
18 that tree is probably at least 200 years  
19 old. And it's an important part of our  
20 heritage.

21 Even though again old trees aren't

22 really regulated at all, I think there  
23 should be some provision in the plan that  
24 says that we're going to maintain this

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1 hedgerow. In fact, it will probably be  
2 nice.

3 So, I don't see anywhere in the  
4 plan that says this old hedgerow would  
5 have to be removed. It does say it in  
6 there. It's in there. I'll have it  
7 quoted for you.

8 So, now moving on to wetlands.  
9 The first thing I want to mention is that  
10 the Southwest Park parcel was delineated  
11 in 1994 and the Army Corps of Engineers  
12 doesn't recognize delineations that are  
13 more than five years old. So, those  
14 delineations are out of date at this  
15 point. Those need to be redelineated.  
16 You could probably get away with it, and  
17 I'll give you your argument, is that we're  
18 not going to be delineated until we decide  
19 what building is going to be put there.  
20 And once you decide that, then you have

21 to redelineate because then you have to  
22 figure out how many acres of wetland you  
23 have.

24 So, that makes sense, but at the

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1 same time, as you can see, this is a  
2 pretty controversial issue in this  
3 community. The reason you have to  
4 redelineate after a five-year period is  
5 that wetlands change and boundaries and  
6 that can grow and shrink. And so, it's  
7 important that the redelineation should  
8 happen.

9 The other thing that I wanted to  
10 mention as well is that right now the DEC  
11 doesn't regulate those wetlands because  
12 they are too small. If they were just a  
13 few acres more, the DEC would regulate  
14 them and the DEC regulations are more  
15 stringent than the federal regulations.

16 One, the DEC even though they are  
17 not that large might find these of special  
18 concern. And the DEC should be contacted  
19 and brought in because they are special  
20 wetlands in that they fall into a

21 floodplain forest. DEC can make that  
22 decision even if they are under four --  
23 \$50,000 to \$100,000 per acre. If we're  
24 talking ten acres of mitigation, we're

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1 talking a million dollars.

2 No animal survey by professional  
3 wildlife biologist was done. That needs  
4 to be as well.

5 Again, I'll submit all of this  
6 with reference.

7 MAYOR COHEN: Next speaker, 85,  
8 Daniel Rapaport, R-A-P-A-P-O-R-T, from  
9 Newfield.

10 MR. RAPAPORT: I own a computer  
11 store here in Ithaca, Cayuga Computers. I  
12 just want to preface this by talking a  
13 little bit about the lack of looking for  
14 technology in this whole plan. Really the  
15 resources here in this county and in  
16 Ithaca are its natural beauty and its  
17 brain power. And this plan doesn't  
18 address any of that. You are going after  
19 the wrong stuff here. It's a dumb plan.



20 stores shout come here, see me, buy here.  
21 What these images look like are a lot more  
22 like technology building. This part  
23 really needs to be redone. It's pretty  
24 much, you know, a lie. That's about it.

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1 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you. The  
2 next speaker, number 86, is Vickie  
3 Schiloni, S-C-H-I-L-O-N-I, from the Town  
4 of Ithaca.

5 MS. SCHILONI: Hi. I'm a  
6 business owner on the Commons. I own a  
7 shop. And speaking of lies, which Dan was  
8 just speaking of, I feel that we've been  
9 basically lied to in the past year that we  
10 opened our business in Ithaca. We've seen  
11 no improvements on the Commons. As a  
12 matter of fact, the Commons has gotten a  
13 lot worse in a lot of ways. Even police  
14 presence has dwindled, although that has  
15 recently been addressed.

16 At any rate, I think it's really  
17 bizarre that this hearing is taking place  
18 while development is already under way



19 down at the Southwest end. I thought that  
20 hearings took place before an action was  
21 committed. I think it's outrageous. I  
22 think it's illegal, I'm not really sure,  
23 that people are allowed to be tearing  
24 up -- as we speak tearing up the Southwest

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1 end. It's kind of heart breaking.

2 I think it's very obvious from the  
3 dGEIS statement that this is not good for  
4 Ithaca. It's not good for the Southwest  
5 area land. It's not really good for  
6 anybody except the people who are making a  
7 lot of money off this project.

8 My questions are: Where are those  
9 people? Why aren't they in this room?  
10 Why aren't we allowed to see who they  
11 are? I'd like to know if they have  
12 contributed to any campaign funds for  
13 anybody that has run for office in  
14 Ithaca. I'd like to know if they are  
15 friends with anybody who is up there right  
16 now, anybody that I'm addressing. I'd  
17 like to know how the contractors and  
18 developers slid this by the public. I'd

19                   like to know why the first announcement  
20                   the general public heard was about  
21                   Borders, a bookstore.

22                   I think it's pretty obvious that  
23                   nobody wants another bookstore in Ithaca,  
24                   nobody needs one. You are just going to

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1                   wipe out all of the small bookstores.

2                   And there are just so many things  
3                   that I think are outrageous that the dGEIS  
4                   statement is merely -- I haven't read the  
5                   whole thing, obviously. Nobody could read  
6                   the whole thing. But it merely is a  
7                   confirmation of all of the issues that are  
8                   going on. It's not -- it isn't even an  
9                   argument against this project. It's very  
10                  obvious that this project doesn't need an  
11                  argument against it, in my opinion.

12                  And I would love to hear those  
13                  questions addressed. I have sent letters  
14                  to the papers, but they've never been  
15                  published, any of these questions. And I  
16                  would love to hear them answered. And  
17                  that's all I have to say.

18                   MAYOR COHEN:    Thank you.  The  
19                   next speaker, number 87, is Maylon Flood  
20                   M-A-Y-L-O-N, Flood, from the Town of  
21                   Caroline.

22                   MR. FLOOD:    Yes.  I've been a  
23                   resident of this county since 1959.  Ten  
24                   of those years -- fifteen of those years

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1                   were in the City of Ithaca.  And as a  
2                   resident and consumer I think we should  
3                   be spending our time and effort on  
4                   revitalizing the Commons rather than  
5                   diversifying.  The area that you wish to  
6                   develop now would be better used as a  
7                   recreational area for the community and  
8                   for tourism.

9                   I'm also very concerned about  
10                  the traffic.  As it exists now you put  
11                  yourself in great peril if you exit any  
12                  of the businesses on the west side.  It  
13                  actually takes less time and is safer to  
14                  drive south to Spencer Road and return to  
15                  town that way.

16                  I see that on your proposals that  
17                  you have some new access roads in mind.



17 immediately, as I said three times  
18 before. Here are some good ideas of what  
19 we should call the place.

20 We should call it the Southwest  
21 recreation area and we should build a  
22 recreation area there. We should put some  
23 bike trails in there, playground in  
24 there. We should put a winter sports park

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1 in there. I think a winter sports park  
2 would attract a lot of people to Ithaca  
3 for the -- little ice-skating rink. I  
4 know we already have one, but we could put  
5 a toboggan shoot in there. That would be  
6 a perfect area in the wintertime. It's  
7 snowing outside right now. You know, we  
8 could put like a toboggan shoot in and  
9 during the wintertime utilize it as a  
10 winter sports park area.

11 During the summer we could have  
12 tennis courts there. We could also add  
13 some small additional parking like towards  
14 Route 13, turn all of that empty space  
15 there across from Buttermilk Falls into  
16 like a small parking area so people

17 don't have to pay five dollars to go to  
18 Buttermilk Falls Park.

19 There is a lot of people in town  
20 that would love to go to the park. You  
21 have to park at the Chinese buffet in  
22 their parking lot to walk over to the park  
23 if you don't want to pay the \$5 fee that  
24 the park is charging to park over there.

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1 That would bring some additional people to  
2 go swimming at the park, additional people  
3 to hike around.

4 We should aim this recreation park  
5 and gear it towards all ages and put all  
6 different kinds of things in there. You  
7 could even put a little nature center over  
8 there where people could check out birds  
9 and owls and all different animals that  
10 live in the area of the park.

11 Another good use for that area  
12 would be to put an information booth in.  
13 People who are coming to Ithaca for the  
14 first time -- I don't know if you've ever  
15 traveled on roads, but when you go into

16 different towns people have little tourist  
17 centers, kiosk-type small booths where  
18 people can stop in, get information about  
19 tourism, where they can go to launch their  
20 boats, hotels that they can stay in. We  
21 could man the booth, you know, with  
22 somebody working in it so that people  
23 could just go in and find out information  
24 about what there is to do in the area.

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1 And third of all, if you took all  
2 of this money that you were going to  
3 spend, besides doing radio and TV  
4 advertising in the New York City area to  
5 get people to come up to Ithaca, there is  
6 a lot of rich people down in New York City  
7 and New Jersey, especially Bergen County.  
8 Bergen County is the biggest -- got the  
9 biggest 14 miles of big-box stores  
10 on Route 17 which is like totally  
11 disastrous. Like people have mentioned  
12 Paramus, New Jersey. There is like --  
13 that's not what Ithaca should be.

14 I think we need to work on our  
15 natural resources. We need to be

16 concerned about the environment. Building  
17 this store is just like oversaturating the  
18 market once again. People want things,  
19 there is plenty of stores. Pyramid Mall,  
20 Kmart carries a lot of things. People  
21 might complain they have -- there are  
22 spaces in the Commons that we could bring  
23 trendy stores to such as The Gap, such as  
24 Abercrombie & Fitch, which seems to be

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1 where the students happen to be buying  
2 most of their designer clothing, so on and  
3 so forth.

4 One minute. Cool. I'm going to  
5 talk my one minute out.

6 The City of Ithaca can publicize  
7 tourism on the Internet. And that is  
8 basically pretty much free. It doesn't  
9 cost a lot of money. Put up posts, put  
10 up web pages. Market yourself in other  
11 news groups across the Internet to get  
12 people here for tourism. They do it in  
13 Provincetown. One person does it full  
14 time and they attract 10,000 people a day



15 on a daily basis. Check out craft stores,  
16 whale watches. Cape Cod is very big on  
17 preserving its natural resources and I  
18 think Ithaca should be too.

19 And we need more bars and  
20 restaurants and you need to like let the  
21 students drink until 4:00 in the morning  
22 and quit crashing their parties with the  
23 Ithaca Police Department. The Ithaca  
24 Police needs to do better things than bust

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1 up student parties.

2 MAYOR COHEN: We're recessed.

3 (Whereupon a short break was  
4 taken)

5 MAYOR COHEN: We're going to get  
6 started now. If you are a speaker that  
7 has signed up, please come forward and  
8 bring your slips with you over to the  
9 table to my left and I will call you in  
10 the chronological order in which you have  
11 signed up.

12 Number 89 is Lael Gerhart,  
13 L-A-E-L, G-E-R-H-A-R-T, City of Ithaca.

14 MS. GERHART: Hi. Good

15                   afternoon. I hate speaking in public. I  
16                   never do things with politics, but this  
17                   issue -- I just want to say that I'm  
18                   opposed to the development with the  
19                   big-box stores.

20                   I don't know the environmental  
21                   impact specifically on it, but it seems  
22                   to me that more needs to be considered  
23                   regarding this. I think it's a good idea  
24                   to expand it as a recreational area

1                   drawing in tourism and making it more  
2                   enjoyable for everyone in the community.

3                   Also, I'm opposed to it for the  
4                   fact that it seems to be detrimental to  
5                   local businesses and the economy, although  
6                   bringing in money or more jobs, but it's  
7                   not money that's going to be staying  
8                   within the community. And the jobs that  
9                   it seems to be -- that it will be  
10                  providing are service position jobs.  
11                  Which is fine, but it seems like it would  
12                  be good if there could be some more  
13                  emphasis made for people who have already

14 open businesses. I don't see why there  
15 would need to be a Target when there is  
16 already a Kmart. Why there would need  
17 to be a Borders when there are already  
18 locally-owned bookstores in this  
19 community.

20 I find it distressing because I've  
21 grown up in Ithaca all my life. I value  
22 its alternativeness and I get very  
23 distressed -- sorry, I hate speaking in  
24 public.

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1 MAYOR COHEN: You are doing  
2 great. Take your time.

3 MS. GERHART: -- when I drive and  
4 I see the light of all these stores, it's  
5 like every town in the United States is  
6 becoming -- is becoming Kinko's, all of  
7 these stores that is exactly the same  
8 everywhere else.

9 The power locally within the  
10 community to control your own environment  
11 is becoming so scarce. If the only  
12 bookstore providers left are Barnes &  
13 Noble and Borders and the corporate money

14 is that this big man and there is no power  
15 in the small community, you don't have a  
16 choice of what books are provided for  
17 you. It seems to me rather a bit much  
18 like Brave New World.

19 And I live on Spencer Road and  
20 this is right behind where all of this is  
21 planning on coming. I'm not saying I  
22 don't think there should be development  
23 and economic growth, I just think it  
24 should be thought through more thoroughly

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1 and with more mind of a longer  
2 sustainability with the community to make  
3 it a more appealing place.

4 Why would you need to go anywhere  
5 else if there is a Borders here, there is  
6 a Borders there, there is a Target here, a  
7 Target there? Why would you need to go to  
8 Syracuse, why would you need to go -- I  
9 mean Paramus, all of these places are  
10 becoming exactly the same.

11 It just seems to me things can be  
12 done with a little bit creativity and

13 thought for the long-term future and  
14 providing service and community support  
15 within where we live, who we give our  
16 money to, who we interact with on a daily  
17 basis.

18 I don't want to be looking at  
19 cars and traffic and parking lots in my  
20 neighborhood. I would like it if the  
21 Commons, which when I was growing up was a  
22 very thriving place where people would  
23 come to congregate with one another,  
24 everyone knew who they were giving their

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1 money to. People can walk there, ride  
2 their bikes there, people can leisurely  
3 in the summertime socialize with one  
4 another. It just seems to me to be a  
5 better way of approaching things.

6 And I would hope that if  
7 development were to take place, that  
8 it could be done with some thought of  
9 hopefully being able to maybe incorporate  
10 people who would like to start businesses  
11 or working with people to do something  
12 more local rather than bringing in

13 complete corporate big man, big box-like  
14 stores.

15 And that's all I have to say.  
16 Sorry.

17 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you, Lael.

18 Number 90 is Rob Steuteville,  
19 S-T-E-U-T-E-V-I-L-L-E, City of Ithaca.

20 MR. STEUTEVILLE: First I want to  
21 just talk about the Widewater site and not  
22 the Southwest Park as a whole.

23 I've only been in town for  
24 two-and-a-half years, so I was not around

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1 when -- in the big Wal-Mart fight. And to  
2 me the issue is not development or no  
3 development or big-box store or no big-box  
4 store, but it just seems to be a big  
5 mistake.

6 The zoning and planning ought not  
7 to be just about commercial viability, and  
8 certainly that's a commercially viable  
9 site. But it's also about public  
10 interest. And you wouldn't, for example,  
11 zone a lot in the middle of a residential

12 neighborhood for a fast-food drive-through  
13 restaurant, even though it might be able  
14 to survive there.

15 It just seems incredible to me  
16 to -- that the site right across from one  
17 of the natural wonders in Ithaca is zoned  
18 for large-scale commercial development  
19 right where it could be seen by everybody  
20 going up and down that trail. It just  
21 seems like it's a bad site for that type  
22 of development, perhaps for any type of  
23 development. I don't know when it was  
24 zoned for large-scale commercial, but it

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1 was just a bad decision.

2 Now I'd like to talk about the  
3 rest of the Southwest Park plan. Last  
4 night I emphasized that I was not opposed  
5 to the development of that area per se,  
6 but I criticize various elements in the  
7 plan. I'm not going to repeat those  
8 criticisms. However, I will say that if  
9 the land is developed as proposed, it will  
10 be huge missed opportunity.

11 I wanted to submit a copy of a

12 report that I just recently published on  
13 urbanism retail development. This is  
14 not a political report. It's not all  
15 positive. It's not propaganda. But what  
16 it does say is that new urbanism is the  
17 hottest trend in retail right now  
18 nationwide.

19 For those who aren't familiar with  
20 the new urbanism, it's essentially about  
21 building main streets and -- main streets  
22 and town centers as opposed to shopping  
23 centers and malls. It's about building  
24 neighborhood -- mixed-use walkable

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1 neighborhoods as opposed to subdivisions.  
2 And it's about revitalization of cities  
3 and towns as well as reconfiguration of  
4 suburbs.

5 This is not just a pie-in-the-sky  
6 idea. There are real projects going on  
7 all around the country. They have a  
8 number of advantages. They are profitable  
9 to developers and can include any type of  
10 business that is currently going into a



11 shopping center or a mall. What's more is  
12 they are not just about shopping. Like  
13 the Commons, a new urbanism town center or  
14 main street is a well-rounded place with  
15 civic uses, high-quality public spaces,  
16 residential areas and sites for local,  
17 regional and national retailers.

18 And if you can compare that to  
19 a mall which has almost all national  
20 retailers, has no civic place purpose and  
21 has no redeeming quality except for a  
22 place of commerce.

23 A lot of people are opposed to  
24 this project. And if it is built as

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1 currently planned, I think it's going to  
2 create a lot of ill will and bitterness in  
3 this community for a long time. There are  
4 some people in town who will never support  
5 any development on this site, regardless  
6 of what type of development it is.  
7 But there are others who would be  
8 significantly happier with a better plan.  
9 And maybe not entirely happy, but  
10 happier. And if the plan is truly

11                   excellent, I think people in the town are  
12                   going to recognize once it is built, most  
13                   of them, that it's a real asset to the  
14                   community.

15                   The current plan is not excellent,  
16                   it's not good, it's not even borderline  
17                   good. It's bad, in my opinion. If you  
18                   are willing to listen to these people and  
19                   include their input in a design that  
20                   is led by professionals, you have an  
21                   opportunity to really heal a wound that is  
22                   festering in this community. Plus you  
23                   could help create a better place, a place  
24                   that in years to come you could truly be

1                   proud of.

2                   But you'll never get an authentic  
3                   main street town center environment if you  
4                   don't plan for it right from the start, if  
5                   you don't -- and you'll never get it if  
6                   you don't bring in people who are capable  
7                   of and experienced in this type of  
8                   planning and development. I think you  
9                   have everything to gain from changing and

10 improving the plan and you have a whole  
11 lot to lose if you continue on your  
12 present course.

13 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you. Next  
14 speak, 91, is Neil Golder, G-O-L-D-E-R,  
15 City of Ithaca.

16 MR. GOLDER: Hi Alan and hello  
17 everyone. I'm sorry if I don't know all  
18 of your names. I've been a little bit  
19 remiss in my connections with Common  
20 Council.

21 I've lived in Ithaca for 32 years  
22 now and owning a house in Collegetown.  
23 And I was on Common Council in the early  
24 '90s. And so, in a way I can -- I

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1 identify with the Common Council members  
2 here. And I sat through many hearings,  
3 probably nothing this long, but many, many  
4 hearings. And it was actually my favorite  
5 part of Common Council, was listening to  
6 the public.

7 And I wanted to say that in a  
8 sense the city government and the Common  
9 Council people are the elders of the

10 community, no matter how old you are. I  
11 mean elder persons, the word is related to  
12 elders. And in our culture elders are not  
13 given the respect that they are in many  
14 other cultures. And in our culture I  
15 think maybe elders have to act a little  
16 bit differently or earn their respect. I  
17 mean I think they should get more of their  
18 respect.

19 And one of my concerns is -- that  
20 I've been gathering is the erosion of  
21 public trust. And I think that's very  
22 serious, not just for this project but for  
23 the whole governance of the city, for the  
24 whole -- for inspiring our youth to be

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1 hopeful for the future, to be interested  
2 in maybe participating in government and  
3 voting. So, I think that's something you  
4 need to pay very careful attention to  
5 process.

6 I also want to say that it's funny  
7 to speak in this position with my back to  
8 people and I am speaking to you and trying

9 to speak to your hearts. And there is an  
10 element of performance here, especially  
11 last night with all of the people. But if  
12 I can at all touch you, I don't think -- I  
13 don't know if any of you were here last  
14 night for the song. There is a lot going  
15 on here. You are hearing a lot of  
16 different -- you are hearing a lot of  
17 facts and figures. You are hearing  
18 alternate proposals and you are hearing a  
19 lot from people's hearts.

20 And I have to feel that as I'm  
21 speaking, I'm speaking for many people who  
22 are not speaking when I speak against the  
23 project or against the incredible size and  
24 difficulty of the project and the danger

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1 and the detriment of the project. And I  
2 also feel that in some way I am speaking  
3 for the land, for the land and what's on  
4 the land. For the trees, for the water,  
5 for the plants, for the animals that are  
6 on that land. It doesn't mean we can  
7 never use the land for anything, but we  
8 have lost certainly in this culture, maybe

9 in western culture, a real respect for the  
10 land. But I think it's still there. I  
11 think it's still there in Ithaca.

12 We care about our resources and  
13 our gorges and our parks and we take care  
14 of them. And we do make changes to  
15 accommodate the land. So, please, take  
16 this into consideration.

17 Thank you.

18 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you, Neil.  
19 92, our next speaker is Susan Nassar,  
20 N-A-S-S-A-R, from the City of Ithaca.

21 MS. NASSAR: I've been a resident  
22 of Ithaca for 20 years. I oppose the  
23 project. I came out of a -- out of bed,  
24 actually. I was struck by a car on

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1 December 23rd while walking. And  
2 interestingly enough, this morning I had a  
3 massage from a woman whose son was killed  
4 by a car.

5 I'm here to say the cost is too  
6 great, human life is too important. The  
7 quality of our community should start with

8 human life. And the traffic that will be  
9 generated is a danger to all of us. It's  
10 a danger to you and the people you love.  
11 There are going to be more people like  
12 me. I was lucky. I didn't get killed.  
13 That truck stopped after I was struck and  
14 my head was on the ground. This is what  
15 happens when we increase traffic.

16 I've known too many people who  
17 have died from traffic accidents. I don't  
18 want this project to proceed in the way --  
19 we don't need this. I don't see the  
20 need. The cost is too great.

21 I also want to speak about the  
22 cost in terms of the public trust. I  
23 think the public trust has really eroded  
24 by the way this process has gone on. I

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1 think it just feels like something is  
2 wrong with what's happening.

3 I know that I have no trust in the  
4 government -- in this Ithaca government  
5 right now. I feel like it's sold out,  
6 that I have no representation. I am  
7 dedicated to this city, I want to do

8                   whatever I can to make it work. I'm not  
9                   opposed to development in general, but  
10                  this development seems wrong, this process  
11                  seems wrong. Downtown is going to  
12                  suffer. I made sacrifices so that I would  
13                  live in downtown Ithaca, I want it to  
14                  prosper.

15                                 And I'd like to conclude by  
16                                 talking about a very talented woman who  
17                                 has been considering moving to Ithaca  
18                                 because of the quality of life. Someone  
19                                 who could bring quite a bit. And this is  
20                                 exactly the type of project that will stop  
21                                 people from coming here, it will stop a  
22                                 certain level of human development. And I  
23                                 really believe that. I really believe  
24                                 this is the wrong project.

1                                 And I ask you to think of my  
2                                 aching neck, how my quality of life has  
3                                 changed forever because of being struck by  
4                                 a car and to remember that and to try to  
5                                 change this. Please, we need you to be on  
6                                 our side and change it.



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Thank you.

MAYOR COHEN: Thank you.

Dan, I need your address, please.

MR. KLEIN: 56 Durfee Hill Road.

MAYOR COHEN: Municipality?

MR. KLEIN: Town of Danby.

MAYOR COHEN: Thank you. 93, our next speaker, is Dan Klein, K-L-E-I-N, from Danby.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you. I've been trying to decide about what I was going to speak about, whether I was going to speak from my heart or speak from my head and I'm going to try to do a little bit of each.

I've come to think that this project, this development is not just about taxes and about shopping choices,

but it's about dreams as well and even hearing people talk one after the other about -- passionately about their love for Ithaca and about the uniqueness about it and a lot of people why they came here and why they stayed here.

7                   And the reason people are so upset  
8                   is because their dream, this unique thing  
9                   that they have in Ithaca is about to be  
10                  destroyed. That's why people are so  
11                  upset. And I know that several members of  
12                  Council and Mayor are not from Ithaca. I  
13                  know some of you are. I don't know your  
14                  stories, but I'm wondering if you can  
15                  think back when you first came to Ithaca,  
16                  if there was some magic here for you.  
17                  What brought you here? Did you appreciate  
18                  the uniqueness of this place? Did you  
19                  realize that it wasn't like every other  
20                  place in the country and maybe that was  
21                  something that drew you here? Again, that  
22                  thing is to -- about to be destroyed in a  
23                  lot of people's minds and that's where the  
24                  passion is coming from.

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1                   I read the Generic Environmental  
2                   Impact Statement, as much of it as I  
3                   could. And there were a number of points  
4                   that concern me and I'm going to try to  
5                   highlight a few.

6 I believe that there is a number  
7 of things outlined in the impact statement  
8 that are unmitigatable. First of all, the  
9 size of this, over a million square feet  
10 of new commercial space. If you take all  
11 of the commercial space that's in Ithaca  
12 already, it's under a million square  
13 feet. In other words, this will more than  
14 double the size of commercial space in  
15 Ithaca.

16 It's difficult for me to believe  
17 that anyone could imagine that the  
18 population here can support doubling the  
19 size of retail -- of commercial space  
20 in Ithaca. The environmental impact  
21 statement also says that under the maximum  
22 build out it will draw \$51 Million in  
23 annual sales from existing businesses in  
24 Tompkins County. This is appendix J,

1 page III-11. It says that it will draw  
2 approximately a third of the business  
3 that will be in this business -- new  
4 development will come from existing  
5 businesses in Tompkins County.

6                   If I were a business owner in  
7                   another part of the county, I would be  
8                   furious. And not just because somebody  
9                   was coming to town that might compete  
10                  against me, but this new development is  
11                  going to be subsidized by taxpayers. In  
12                  other words, as a business owner or as a  
13                  resident I'm going to pay to have new  
14                  roads, bridges, sewer lines, et cetera,  
15                  installed so that somebody can compete  
16                  with me. To me this is the definition of  
17                  corporate welfare.

18                  The figure for the Commons is  
19                  between \$3 Million and \$6 Million in  
20                  annual sales that will be drawn away by  
21                  this new development just from the Commons  
22                  alone. There will be up to 55 acres of  
23                  parking lots in this development, 55 acres  
24                  of floodplain will be paved. And also, I

1                   figured it out, that's just the parking  
2                   lots and the roads. The square footage  
3                   which is a million or million and a  
4                   quarter, depending on which scenario

5 is chosen, that's the equivalent of  
6 approximately 30 more acres of pavement.  
7 We're talking 80 to 85 acres of impervious  
8 surface in a floodplain. The water will  
9 go somewhere else.

10 I mentioned the new roads that  
11 will have to be put in. There are five  
12 new roads and bridges recommended in the  
13 environmental impact statement. The cost  
14 of these is at least over \$10 Million. I  
15 calculate it as at least \$14 Million.

16 The Mayor said all along this cost  
17 will be paid by the developer. This is  
18 a quote from the environmental impact  
19 statement, quote, with the city's concern  
20 for the quantity of infrastructure  
21 proposed and it's long-term maintenance  
22 cost implications, the ability to require  
23 developers to front the total cost of  
24 utility extension may not be feasible,

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1 unquote.

2 We've talked about jobs for this  
3 development. The unemployment rate in  
4 Tompkins County is 2.3 percent, one of

5 the lowest in the state. It has been  
6 forever.

7 This development will result up to  
8 2,800 additional cars per hour.

9 Thank you.

10 MAYOR COHEN: You can sign back  
11 up again for this evening if you'd like.

12 The next speaker, 94, Erica  
13 Van Etten.

14 MS. VAN ETTEN: 215 First Street.

15 MAYOR COHEN: Erica is City of  
16 Ithaca. Thank you.

17 MS. VAN ETTEN: So, I spoke last  
18 night and some of you were here. And I'm  
19 speaking again for the people who weren't  
20 here and just to have more time to try to  
21 refer my comments more directly to the  
22 impact statement.

23 I'm a lifelong resident of the  
24 county. I'm self-employed now. In the

1 past I've worked for local contractors.  
2 The points that most interest me are the  
3 economic impact in terms of the impact on

4 the local and long-term businesses that  
5 are in our community.

6 In some of the GEIS it says that  
7 the retail development that would be built  
8 would not compete with the specialty shops  
9 of the Commons. And in other parts of the  
10 statement it says that the planned retail  
11 development is expected to take \$3 Million  
12 a year from the local -- from the downtown  
13 business district. And that is an  
14 inconsistency.

15 My -- looking at the maps of  
16 the type of stores that are planned in  
17 specialty retail stores, the retails --  
18 there is so much retail area there I can't  
19 believe that -- that it can't just be  
20 filled with like large Kmart/Target kind  
21 of stores, it's going to have to be  
22 charged with specialty big-box stores,  
23 like EMS Sports, these kind of specialty  
24 shops that would be directly competing

1 with existing niche businesses that we  
2 have that are largely concentrated on the  
3 Commons.

4                   One thing the report doesn't  
5                   include is an estimate on the shoppers  
6                   that are currently being drawn to the  
7                   Commons to do the specialty shopping that  
8                   is done here. And if we develop a kind  
9                   of big-box shopping center, amusement  
10                  shopping kind of complex, I just don't  
11                  think that's the market that we have the  
12                  most strength to compete in.

13                  Because we're not a big city like  
14                  Syracuse that can build bigger, more fancy  
15                  stores in this way. I think we have a  
16                  real niche market in the type of specialty  
17                  shops we already have, as far as planning  
18                  for the use of that land.

19                  So, the environmental impact  
20                  statement doesn't include the economics  
21                  that we have, the specialty market  
22                  that we are effectively competing in  
23                  because people do come from Syracuse and  
24                  other areas to shop in what we have

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1                   already.

2                   The other point that I mentioned



3 last night that I think is really  
4 substantive is the subcontractors that  
5 these businesses would use and the type of  
6 employers. The GEIS only talks about  
7 retail and office jobs. It doesn't  
8 talk about the effect on other types of  
9 jobs that right now local businesses  
10 employ in terms of the local lawyers,  
11 accountants, cleaners, payroll clerks.  
12 These corporate stores come with all of  
13 their own menagerie of these jobs. And  
14 this is a real effect that's not accounted  
15 for. It's only talking about retail and  
16 office jobs.

17 For myself when I worked for a  
18 carpenter contractor before I became  
19 self-employed, we worked for a local  
20 business, it was remodeling, you know,  
21 their one building, small building.  
22 They were remodeling to provide better  
23 service. And that's the kind of job that  
24 wouldn't be available if we replace

1 smaller businesses in the downtown  
2 business district with these large big-box

3 stores that just don't support that type  
4 of -- they use bigger contractors. They  
5 don't use the smaller contractors, just  
6 for example.

7 Another effect that's not included  
8 in the report is what's called the  
9 multiplier effect, the effect of dollars  
10 spent locally. Those dollars spent  
11 locally, depending on the type of store  
12 and the community, will be spent again  
13 locally eight to ten times before they  
14 leave town. And that could be considered  
15 eight to ten times more value for each  
16 dollar spent. That's a real effect.  
17 That's really an effect in this  
18 community. The big-box stores, that's not  
19 going to be nearly as an effect. They are  
20 going to send all of the money out of the  
21 town much more efficiently.

22 And the last point I'd say is that  
23 some people say that if we develop down  
24 here, it will bring more business to

1 downtown. And I think that common

2 sense can tell you that there is so many  
3 towns that have already tried that.  
4 They've developed big malls on the edge of  
5 town and their downtowns have failed. I  
6 can't see how anyone with experience in  
7 the world can believe that we're really  
8 going to get more business downtown.  
9 Thanks.

10 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you.

11 I believe our last speaker for  
12 this session, and number 95, is Obie  
13 Buell, O-B-I-E, B-U-E-L-L, from  
14 Freeville.

15 MR. BUELL: All right. Let me  
16 start by saying I'm opposed to this  
17 project. Ithaca is such a special and  
18 unique place. Why jeopardize that for  
19 short-sided big-box stores? Why not take  
20 a long-term look at the town and ask  
21 questions like are we looking at this  
22 project through the eyes of greed or the  
23 shopping needs of the community? Why does  
24 the Commons continue to have vacant

1 storefronts? Why not put our energy into

2 the town and to downtown rather than take  
3 away from it?

4 I grew up taking an active part in  
5 family businesses and see the need for  
6 those kinds of businesses to continue.  
7 So, we may form real relationships with  
8 the people we do business with. I've  
9 never been in a box store and had an  
10 employee greet me by my first name. And  
11 why would they when they find little  
12 enjoyment in their workplace and their  
13 attention is on the clock on the wall or  
14 the greenback in my hand.

15 I'm looking to do business with  
16 people who enjoy their workplace and are  
17 invested in the product they are selling  
18 and the community they live in.

19 When I first came to Ithaca, I was  
20 amazed by the city. It really felt like a  
21 town. It was before I actually saw 13 and  
22 Pyramid Mall. I thought, wow, this is too  
23 good to be true. An amazing farmers'  
24 market, a wonderful co-op, thriving

1 stores, place for kids to hang out in.  
2 Real sense of community. I felt like this  
3 was a place I could really live.

4 I've been to a lot of places all  
5 over the world and Ithaca is a truly  
6 unique and special place. And I would  
7 personally love to see it preserved like  
8 that because I feel that it's a quality we  
9 have such as no other town that I've  
10 personally been to. After seeing 13 and  
11 Pyramid Mall, I realize, well, it's not my  
12 true dream, but it is nonetheless better  
13 than a lot of what I've seen.

14 I do realize it is important to  
15 have some box stores, there are those in  
16 our society who need that kind of thing  
17 who may not have the money to shop in  
18 places that would be a little more  
19 expensive. But I for one, as well as  
20 many people I know, would be happy to  
21 spend the extra money supporting small  
22 businesses, family businesses rather than  
23 supporting big-box chains that would  
24 eventually put small family businesses out

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of business.

That's about it. Thank you.

MAYOR COHEN: Thank you. This  
hearing is recessed until 7:00 PM.

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1 STATE OF NEW YORK :

2 COUNTY OF BROOME :

3

4 I, BRENDA K. BOYCE, Registered  
5 Professional Reporter, do certify that the foregoing  
6 is a true and accurate transcript to the best of my  
7 ability of the proceedings in the matter of a Public  
8 Hearing for the draft Generic Environmental Impact  
9 Statement for the Southwest Area Land Use Plan, held  
10 in Ithaca, New York, on January 25, 2000.

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BRENDA K. BOYCE, RPR

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Notary Public

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