511. Nutter (151) The bicycle and pedestrian "Analysis" is contained in a single paragraph, and the bicycle, pedestrian and transit "Impacts and Mitigation" discussion is contained in a single paragraph (p2-50). Both are completely inadequate. There is no mention of the high rates of walking and riding in Ithaca, which had the highest bike-to-work rate of any metropolitan area in NYS according to the 1990 US Census. Nearly twice as many people in Tompkins County ride bikes (on an incomplete bikeway system) to work as ride (heavily subsidized) buses (NPTS 1995, ITCTC LRP), while nearly seven times as many people walk to work as ride buses. There is no mention under "Analysis" or "Impacts and Mitigation" of the bike/ped trail systems planned for the Southwest Area, that they will serve transportation, that they connect to State Parks and local parks, and that tourism is one of our area’s largest industries. The "limited" existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities in and around the Southwest Area are mentioned, along with the City’s plans to eventually fix them, but the necessity of fixing them in order to prevent Southwest Area development from raising the level of hazards should also be included. There are no usage or demand data given for bicycle or pedestrian travel for this flat area of the City nor any analysis of how, with good facilities in and around the Southwest Area, bicycle and pedestrian travel can help replace motor travel, especially if residential development is included.

Response: Bicycle and pedestrian demand projections would contain a high level of uncertainty. Furthermore, safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian facilities are warranted even if the volume of trips is low compared to the volume of automobile trips. Therefore, demand data are not projected, and bicycle and pedestrian facility improvements are recommended in the response to comment 516.

512. Nutter (151) 32) p2-50 "2.7.5 Transit, Bicycle and Pedestrian Analysis

"Bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the study area are more limited. As reported in the 1997 Ithaca Bike Plan, there are no particular bicycle provisions on the five lane 62-foot Meadow Street/Elmira Road right-of-way south of Clinton Street. Meadow and Fulton Streets between Cascadilla and Clinton Streets have 14-foot outside travel lanes to accommodate bicyclists. All three segments, as well as Spencer Street, West Green Street and West Seneca Street are proposed to be re-striped
Street; There are also significant problems for bicycle users and pedestrians (which can be addressed) on the rest of Route 13, the West End, and the other streets/intersections which this dGEIS analyzed.

* Bicycle and pedestrian travel deserve to be analyzed and considered both to accommodate the users of these modes, and to help mitigate motor traffic impacts.

- Bicycle and pedestrian access to the Southwest area will likely become worse unless concerted efforts are made to mitigate increased traffic levels specifically as they affect bicycle users and pedestrians. Therefore it is imperative that bicycle and pedestrian accommodations be in place in the surrounding area as a pre-requisite to development of the Southwest Area.

Response: Your comments are acknowledged; providing good bicycle and pedestrian facilities is an important goal of the Southwest Area development. See the response to comment 516 for the recommended bicycle and pedestrian improvements related to the Southwest Area development.

513. Nutter (151) p.ix "Design a transit oriented and pedestrian/bicycle friendly development;" The dGEIS should devote more effort to this, including travel to, as well as within, the SW Area, an area in need of better bicycle and pedestrian accommodation. Pedestrian transportation and bicycle transportation should be fully developed categories within Travel Demand Management Strategies. Bicycle travel in general in Tompkins County, though not well accommodated, is already comparable to bus travel and near double bus travel for commuting, while pedestrians account for several times the number of trips that transit does (ITCTC, 2020 Long Range Plan Update, December 1999, Table 11A, National Personal Transportation Survey data).

Response: See response to comment 516.

514. Nutter (151) p.9 "approximately 23% of households in the City of Ithaca did not have access to a vehicle."
and to provide an alternate mode for those who cannot or do not want to drive. Admittedly, the DGEIS did not provide recommendations to thoroughly address the impacts to bicycle and pedestrian and the need for bicycle and pedestrian access to the proposed Southwest Area development. Implementing the recommendations noted below would allow improved pedestrian and bicycle access to the Southwest Area. SRF & Associates praises the agencies and citizens commenting on the DGEIS for their public involvement, and hopes that these responses address those concerns as best as possible.

In an effort to provide safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian access to the proposed Southwest Area development, SRF recommends a combination of on-site and off-site facility improvements as follows:

- The development guidelines could be adopted into the local zoning regulations for the Southwest Area and the Elmira Rd. / Meadow St. corridor.

- All new roads could be built to the standard cross-section as proposed by the development guidelines.

- To allow convenient bicycle and pedestrian access, all buildings should be constructed adjacent to and facing the road, with parking in the rear.

- Mixed-use development (retail, office, and residential uses) should be permitted and encouraged to promote a continuous pedestrian presence.

- Central parking should be shared among complementary uses, allowing an efficient use of the parking capacity, and a reduction in the total number of spaces required.

- A multi-use trail should be constructed as a spur of the proposed Black Diamond Trail. The spur trail should intersect the Black Diamond Trail at the southwest corner of the development, run adjacent to the proposed drainage easement on the south and the east sides of the development, and continue north along the relief channel to intersect Cecilia Malone Blvd. (formerly W. Clinton St.). This trail will have the added benefit of allowing access between the Wegmans, Tops, and Kmart properties.
hybrid lanes) may or may not be warranted depending on the resulting automobile volumes and speeds.

- All new or modified traffic signals should be designed to allow safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian movement in all directions.

- The proposed Court Street bridge should be designed to accommodate the proposed Cayuga Inlet Trail by providing a multi-use crossing outside the flow of automobile traffic.

517. Blodgett (251) I would like to see a rating system for both transit routes and intersections from the pedestrian and, bicycle perspective.

Response: The Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) includes a chapter on pedestrian Level of Service (LOS). The HCM defines pedestrian LOS in terms of space per person. The HCM also includes a chapter on bicycle capacity, but does not define a bicycle level of service. These measures do not account for many of the factors affecting bicycle and pedestrian safety and comfort.

The North Central Florida Regional Planning Council has defined more comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian LOS criteria in the 1994 Gainesville Mobility Report. Their bicycle LOS is defined in terms of width of the outside through lane, frequency of conflicting movements, speed differential, maintenance, motor vehicle LOS, and travel demand management support. Unfortunately, these criteria were developed in Florida and do not include two factors important in Ithaca: weather and grade. Their pedestrian LOS is defined in terms of sidewalk continuity, crossings, conflicts, amenities such as trees or landscaping, maintenance, motor vehicle LOS, and travel demand management support. These LOS are not commonly used and were not applied to this environmental impact statement. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities are instead evaluated qualitatively in these comments and responses. It may be appropriate to apply bicycle and pedestrian LOS measures similar to those used in Florida for future decisions.

Another relevant measure is environmental service capacity, which considers community livability criteria. This environmental impact statement considers environmental service capacity, and the effects of traffic on neighborhood
Response: See response to comment 524.

521. Nutter (151) 33) p2-50 "2.7.6 Impacts and Mitigation

"Traffic impacts on bicycle and pedestrian street users are related both to operational and livability impact measures. Bicyclists and pedestrians may be reluctant to use streets with substantial vehicle congestion or high volumes particularly if no provisions have been made to accommodate them. The proposed roadway configuration includes curbs and catch basins within a 68-foot right-of-way to provide two eleven-foot travel lanes, two 5-foot bike lanes, two 8-foot sidewalks, and 10-foot planting strips between each travel lane [sic] and curb. This road configuration is intended to encourage bicycle and pedestrian circulation. The looped street network also facilitates service by public transit. These features as well as the anticipated mixed land uses serve to minimize traffic impacts by encouraging internal trips, transit use, and off-peak travel. They also provide opportunities to improve transit bicycle and pedestrian access in the Southwest Area compared to existing conditions."

Again, this paragraph, while mostly true, hardly constitutes mitigation.

The "mixed land uses" above would refer to Alternate 2 but not Alternate 5. The proposed new road configuration is good but leaves out many important details of design of drainage, intersections and signalization. Mitigation of motor traffic, including the West End, the Elmira-Meadow Corridor, and the traffic study area, to alleviate the negative effects of motor traffic on bicycle and pedestrian travel, as outlined in the above comments, is necessary.

Trails should have access to developments for utilitarian purposes. Trails should have visual buffering including from the proposed trail bridge over Route 13 at the City line and the adjacent railroad grade purchased by State Parks for trail use.

Response: See response to comment 524.

522. Nutter (151) The first goal of traffic calming as stated on p2-44 is to "encourage... transit, bicycling, and walking". How will it do so?
511. Nutter (151)  The bicycle and pedestrian "Analysis" is contained in a single paragraph, and the bicycle, pedestrian and transit "Impacts and Mitigation" discussion is contained in a single paragraph (p2-50). Both are completely inadequate. There is no mention of the high rates of walking and riding in Ithaca, which had the highest bike-to-work rate of any metropolitan area in NYS according to the 1990 US Census. Nearly twice as many people in Tompkins County ride bikes (on an incomplete bikeway system) to work as ride (heavily subsidized) buses (NPTS 1995, ITCTC LRP), while nearly seven times as many people walk to work as ride buses. There is no mention under "Analysis" or "Impacts and Mitigation" of the bike/ped trail systems planned for the Southwest Area, that they will serve transportation, that they connect to State Parks and local parks, and that tourism is one of our area's largest industries. The "limited" existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities in and around the Southwest Area are mentioned, along with the City's plans to eventually fix them, but the necessity of fixing them in order to prevent Southwest Area development from raising the level of hazards should also be included. There are no usage or demand data given for bicycle or pedestrian travel for this flat area of the City nor any analysis of how, with good facilities in and around the Southwest Area, bicycle and pedestrian travel can help replace motor travel, especially if residential development is included.

Response: Bicycle and pedestrian demand projections would contain a high level of uncertainty. Furthermore, safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian facilities are warranted even if the volume of trips is low compared to the volume of automobile trips. Therefore, demand data are not projected, and bicycle and pedestrian facility improvements are recommended in the response to comment 516.

512. Nutter (151) 32) p2-50 "2.7.5 Transit, Bicycle and Pedestrian Analysis

"Bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the study area are more limited. As reported in the 1997 Ithaca Bike Plan, there are no particular bicycle provisions on the five lane 62-foot Meadow Street/Elmira Road right-of-way south of Clinton Street. Meadow and Fulton Streets between Cascadilla and Clinton Streets have 14-foot outside travel lanes to accommodate bicyclists. All three segments, as well as Spencer Street, West Green Street and West Seneca Street are proposed to be re-striped
to provide a four or five foot bikelane or a 14-foot hybrid travel lane with stencils to alert motorists to bicycle use. While installation of sidewalks has been required in conjunction with more recent development/redevelopment projects, sidewalks are intermittent in the NY Route 13 corridor."

While mostly true, the above paragraph hardly constitutes a bicycle or pedestrian analysis, as it is labeled. It should take into account the following items commented on elsewhere and:

* the 1997 Bike Plan was approved as part of the City Plan;

* major bike/ped trails are planned through the SW Area connecting spectacular State Parks with high potential for tourism as well as local use;

* Route 13/34/96 has good shoulders for bicycle and pedestrian use immediately adjacent to the Southwest Area.

* very high levels of bicycle and pedestrian travel, such that Ithaca had the highest bicycle-to-work rate of any metropolitan area in NY State according to the 1990 Census, and it had extraordinarily high walk-to-work rates as well;

* 1995 National Transportation Survey data indicated that bicycles accounted for as many trips in general as buses did in Tompkins County, and nearly twice as many for commuting;

* the same data showed major increases in bicycling which may be related to inexpensive improvements in infrastructure which could be applied to the Southwest area;

* TCAT buses have bike racks on them;

* The Southwest Area is flat and conducive to riding and walking, such that any development will likely generate a great deal of bicycle and pedestrian traffic;

* Bicycle and pedestrian facilities are poor, unmarked, or discontinuous on the roads surrounding the proposed development, including Elmira Road, Spencer Road, Malone (West Clinton Street), Cherry Street, Taber Street, and Brindley
Street; There are also significant problems for bicycle users and pedestrians (which can be addressed) on the rest of Route 13, the West End, and the other streets/intersections which this dGEIS analyzed.

* Bicycle and pedestrian travel deserve to be analyzed and considered both to accommodate the users of these modes, and to help mitigate motor traffic impacts.

- Bicycle and pedestrian access to the Southwest area will likely become worse unless concerted efforts are made to mitigate increased traffic levels specifically as they affect bicycle users and pedestrians. Therefore it is imperative that bicycle and pedestrian accommodations be in place in the surrounding area as a pre-requisite to development of the Southwest Area.

Response: Your comments are acknowledged; providing good bicycle and pedestrian facilities is an important goal of the Southwest Area development. See the response to comment 516 for the recommended bicycle and pedestrian improvements related to the Southwest Area development.

513. Nutter (151) p.ix "Design a transit oriented and pedestrian/bicycle friendly development;" The dGEIS should devote more effort to this, including travel to, as well as within, the SW Area, an area in need of better bicycle and pedestrian accommodation. Pedestrian transportation and bicycle transportation should be fully developed categories within Travel Demand Management Strategies. Bicycle travel in general in Tompkins County, though not well accommodated, is already comparable to bus travel and nearly double bus travel for commuting, while pedestrians account for several times the number of trips that transit does (ITCTC, 2020 Long Range Plan Update, December 1999, Table 11A, National Personal Transportation Survey data).

Response: See response to comment 516.

514. Nutter (151) p.9 "approximately 23% of households in the City of Ithaca did not have access to a vehicle."
This indicates that there should be a far greater emphasis in the dGEIS on bicycle and pedestrian issues as well as more care in the transit analysis. The dGEIS should have an entire category in this section, including trip generation estimates, on bicycle traffic. Bicycle use has comparable overall rates to transit and nearly double the commuting rate of transit usage in Tompkins County (ITCTC, 2020 Long Range Plan Update, December 1999, Tables 10A and 11A). Ithaca had the highest bike to work rate of any metropolitan area in New York State according to the 1990 Census. Note that these data were obtained with minimal bicycle accommodations in place. Complete bicycle systems to and from, not just within the Southwest area should be the basis of planning and a requirement of the Southwest area development.

Response:

See response to comment 516.

515. Nutter (151) It doesn't mention that -- it didn't mention Black Diamond Trail, bicycle and pedestrian transportation within the project area. It didn't mention the tours in from state park. It didn't mention the high levels of bicycle and pedestrian transportation in Ithaca, highest level of bicycle in the metropolitan state for commuting to work. Didn't mention that there would be expected high bicycle and pedestrian usage of any development in the area.

Response:

See response to comment 516.

516. Nutter (151) p.vii "The study's primary objectives are...to recommend alternate means of addressing traffic increases on area roadways and through neighborhoods" There should be greater emphasis and analysis in the dGEIS on accommodating pedestrian and bicycle travel to the Southwest Area, and their potential to reduce motor traffic. Bicycle and pedestrian travel can carry more than transit, at less cost, and with more flexibility to the traveler.

Response:

Response to Comments 509-516, 520:

The majority of space in the transportation section of this EIS is dedicated to automobiles because automobiles have by far the most adverse impacts. The relative space dedicated to each mode does not reflect a desire to promote only automobile travel. To the contrary, SRF & Associates hopes to encourage bicycling and walking both to minimize the number of automobile trips,
and to provide an alternate mode for those who cannot or do not want to drive. Admittedly, the DGEIS did not provide recommendations to thoroughly address the impacts to bicycle and pedestrian and the need for bicycle and pedestrian access to the proposed Southwest Area development. Implementing the recommendations noted below would allow improved pedestrian and bicycle access to the Southwest Area. SRF & Associates praises the agencies and citizens commenting on the DGEIS for their public involvement, and hopes that these responses address those concerns as best as possible.

In an effort to provide safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian access to the proposed Southwest Area development, SRF recommends a combination of on-site and off-site facility improvements as follows:

- The development guidelines could be adopted into the local zoning regulations for the Southwest Area and the Elmira Rd. / Meadow St. corridor.

- All new roads could be built to the standard cross-section as proposed by the development guidelines.

- To allow convenient bicycle and pedestrian access, all buildings should be constructed adjacent to and facing the road, with parking in the rear.

- Mixed-use development (retail, office, and residential uses) should be permitted and encouraged to promote a continuous pedestrian presence.

- Central parking should be shared among complementary uses, allowing an efficient use of the parking capacity, and a reduction in the total number of spaces required.

- A multi-use trail should be constructed as a spur of the proposed Black Diamond Trail. The spur trail should intersect the Black Diamond Trail at the southwest corner of the development, run adjacent to the proposed drainage easement on the south and the east sides of the development, and continue north along the relief channel to intersect Cecilia Malone Blvd. (formerly W. Clinton St.). This trail will have the added benefit of allowing access between the Wegmans, Tops, and Kmart properties.
• The levee parcel should construct a multi-use trail linking to the proposed Black Diamond Trail or to the proposed Flood Control Dike Trail.

• A multi-use trail should be constructed linking Cecilia Malone Blvd. to the proposed Black Diamond Trail.

• Bicycle and pedestrian should be improved on the entire length Cecelia Malone Blvd. for potentially increased bicycle and pedestrian volumes. These improvements should include continuous sidewalks, and either bicycle friendly traffic calming or bike lanes. This will improve access both to the site and to the proposed Black Diamond trail.

• Bicycle friendly traffic calming should be implemented on South Street, Wood Street, South Titus Avenue, and Spencer Road. These streets should be designated as bicycle routes. The reduced traffic volumes and speeds will allow a safer and more pleasant experience for bicyclists and pedestrians. (Traffic calming measures are currently in place on these streets, and being evaluated.)

• A traffic calmed Spencer Road will provide a route parallel to Elmira Road, but much safer and more pleasant for bicyclists and pedestrians due to the lower traffic volume. To provide access to the Elmira Road commercial corridor and to the Southwest Area development, bicycle and pedestrian links should be provided to Route 13 at the proposed site access road to Elmira Road, and at the proposed levee parcel driveway. The exact location of these links will depend on right-of-way considerations.

• Provide bicycle friendly traffic calming measures on Albany St., Plain St., Cayuga St., W. Buffalo St., and W. Clinton St. as appropriate to the context of the specific street. Specific measure should be carefully selected for the function of the street, the surrounding neighborhood, volumes of each mode of transportation, the need for on-street parking, and the recommendations of the Ithaca Bicycle Plan.

• The effectiveness of traffic calming should be evaluated after being implemented. Further bicycle treatment (i.e. bike lanes or
hybrid lanes) may or may not be warranted depending on the resulting automobile volumes and speeds.

- All new or modified traffic signals should be designed to allow safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian movement in all directions.

- The proposed Court Street bridge should be designed to accommodate the proposed Cayuga Inlet Trail by providing a multi-use crossing outside the flow of automobile traffic.

517. Blodgett (251) I would like to see a rating system for both transit routes and intersections from the pedestrian and, bicycle perspective.

Response: The Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) includes a chapter on pedestrian Level of Service (LOS). The HCM defines pedestrian LOS in terms of space per person. The HCM also includes a chapter on bicycle capacity, but does not define a bicycle level of service. These measures do not account for many of the factors affecting bicycle and pedestrian safety and comfort.

The North Central Florida Regional Planning Council has defined more comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian LOS criteria in the 1994 Gainesville Mobility Report. Their bicycle LOS is defined in terms of width of the outside through lane, frequency of conflicting movements, speed differential, maintenance, motor vehicle LOS, and travel demand management support. Unfortunately, these criteria were developed in Florida and do not include two factors important in Ithaca: weather and grade. Their pedestrian LOS is defined in terms of sidewalk continuity, crossings, conflicts, amenities such as trees or landscaping, maintenance, motor vehicle LOS, and travel demand management support. These LOS are not commonly used and were not applied to this environmental impact statement. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities are instead evaluated qualitatively in these comments and responses. It may be appropriate to apply bicycle and pedestrian LOS measures similar to those used in Florida for future decisions.

Another relevant measure is environmental service capacity, which considers community livability criteria. This environmental impact statement considers environmental service capacity, and the effects of traffic on neighborhood
streets. In general, streets with lower traffic volumes rank higher on livability measures, and are more friendly to bicycles and pedestrians.

10.9.3 Bike/Pedestrian Mitigation

518. Fischer (15) Related to bicycle and public transportation and pedestrian analysis, would the planners also include as mitigation plans, include education of the public about sharing the road with pedestrians and bicycles? And would the planners also include details of public transit related mitigation?

Response: See response to comment 519.

519. CAC (220) 10. The GEIS needs to include, as part of mitigation plans, specific means for educating the public about sharing the road with pedestrians and bicycles.

Response: Response to comments 519-520.

The Ithaca Bicycle Plan provides recommendations regarding bicycle related education, enforcement, and encouragement programs. Such programs would serve the Ithaca community well. These are an existing community initiative, and should be done regardless of the Southwest Area development, rather than linked to the proposed development.

520. Nutter (151) Traffic mitigation measures listed in the dGEIS include those used in the Octopus which were not done in bike- and ped-friendly ways (although they easily could have been): optimizing signal phasing (for motor traffic, but conflicting with pedestrians and cutting off bikes), adding through and turning lanes (despite hazards to bike as well as motor traffic in parallel turning lanes), restriping intersections (restriping for bike lanes is still awaited), adding a bridge over Cayuga Inlet (space for bikes, peds, and trails should be included). There must be assurance that any such measures are only used in completely bike- and ped-friendly ways, and that previous problems be corrected in the area.
Response: See response to comment 524.

521. Nutter (151) 33) p2-50 "2.7.6 Impacts and Mitigation

"Traffic impacts on bicycle and pedestrian street users are related both to operational and livability impact measures. Bicyclists and pedestrians may be reluctant to use streets with substantial vehicle congestion or high volumes particularly if no provisions have been made to accommodate them. The proposed roadway configuration includes curbs and catch basins within a 68-foot right-of-way to provide two eleven-foot travel lanes, two 5-foot bike lanes, two 8-foot sidewalks, and 10-foot planting strips between each travel lane [sic] and curb. This road configuration is intended to encourage bicycle and pedestrian circulation. The looped street network also facilitates service by public transit. These features as well as the anticipated mixed land uses serve to minimize traffic impacts by encouraging internal trips, transit use, and off-peak travel. They also provide opportunities to improve transit bicycle and pedestrian access in the Southwest Area compared to existing conditions."

Again, this paragraph. while mostly true, hardly constitutes mitigation.

The "mixed land uses" above would refer to Alternate 2 but not Alternate 5. The proposed new road configuration is good but leaves out many important details of design of drainage, intersections and signalization. Mitigation of motor traffic, including the West End, the Elmira-Meadow Corridor, and the traffic study area, to alleviate the negative effects of motor traffic on bicycle and pedestrian travel, as outlined in the above comments, is necessary.

Trails should have access to developments for utilitarian purposes. Trails should have visual buffering including from the proposed trail bridge over Route 13 at the City line and the adjacent railroad grade purchased by State Parks for trail use.

Response: See response to comment 524.

522. Nutter (151) The first goal of traffic calming as stated on p2-44 is to "encourage... transit, bicycling, and walking". How will it do so?
How will bicycle access to destinations be enhanced? The criteria for instituting traffic calming should include bicycle related issues. If "Citizen involvement is an essential part of all traffic calming projects" (p2-45) and "Collaborative efforts among all stakeholders and all interested citizens are needed to find solutions" (p2-46), why have bicycle advocates and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Council been kept uninformed and out of the process of formulating solutions, despite repeated requests? What bicycle expertise is being used in the dGEIS and in the City’s Traffic Calming Program? Traffic calming devices "must minimize conflicts between motor vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrian[s]" and "must not pose a hazard to bicycles or pedestrians" and "must assure safety and visibility to pedestrians and other non-vehicular traffic" (p2-47). Yet, in Table 2-20, Potential Residential Traffic Calming Measures (p2-47), of the 16 items listed, at least 6 may cause problems to bicycle travel if not designed carefully. Note that traffic calming, except on short stretches of highly modified streets with exclusively local traffic, does not slow motor traffic to bicycle speeds, therefore there still must be room on traffic-calmed through streets for motor traffic to pass bicycles safely. There must be assurance in the dGEIS and in City Hall that the traffic calming process followed will indeed include bike issues, bike users, bike expertise, and the BPAC, and that the methods used will be bike-friendly and enhance bike travel.

Response: See response to comment 524.

523. Nutter (151) 27) p2-47 Table 2-20, Potential Residential Traffic Calming Measures; also: "At a minimum, potential new devices should meet the following criteria:

*Devices must minimize conflicts between motor vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrian....

*Pavement treatments must not pose a hazard to bicycles or pedestrians, or impede people with disabilities.

*Devices must ensure safety and visibility to pedestrians and other non-vehicular traffic."

These criteria are important, but they should include actual encouragement of bicycle, pedestrian and transit as mode choices.
Of the 16 measures listed in Table 2-20, at least 6 have the potential, unless very carefully designed, to adversely affect bicycle use, and this should be noted. There is no evidence as yet that such care is being taken, and corrections must be made to the process. The potentially harmful measures include: Chicanes, Pavement Narrowing, Parking Variants, Modified Intersection Channelization, Mid-Block Bump-outs, and Curb Extensions at Intersections. There must be room for motor traffic to pass bicycle traffic on collectors and arterials because, except on very short local streets, even heavy traffic calming will not bring motor traffic down to the speed of bicycle traffic. Traffic diverters must be designed so that bicycle users may either pass through safely, as is the goal stated by the BPW, or will not be tempted to do so dangerously. The dGEIS should promote bicycle use as it says it intends.

Response: See response to comment 524.

524. Nutter (151) 4) pES-4 "Mitigation ...include[s]... optimizing of signal phasing, addition of through and turning lanes, restriping of intersections and construction of an additional bridge over the Cayuga Inlet"

How will bicycle and pedestrian travel be accommodated in new intersections and signal phasing, added lanes, and restriping of old intersections? These are the same actions that were done in the Octopus which unnecessarily made legal bicycle and pedestrian travel was more difficult and dangerous in several places. The dGEIS should provide assurance that motor traffic mitigations, unlike similar actions taken in the City in the recent past, will fully accommodate bicycle and pedestrian transportation.

Example 1: Signal phasing was optimized for motor vehicle movement throughout the Octopus without regard to legal bicycle traffic, so that green lights end 2 seconds after a motor vehicle leaves a sensor. Often a bike rider must take a place in a line of stopped cars, either in a through- or left-turn lane which lacks room to share, or a wide "shared" lane in which, because it is undivided by a bike lane stripe, drivers center their cars leaving insufficient room for bikes to move forward. When the light turns green, motor vehicles move faster and pull away from bikes, creating a gap such that the light changes before the bike gets through the intersection. This non-accommodation of bicycle
traffic leads to unsafe and illegal behaviors: Drivers behind bikes are therefore more inclined to pass bikes unsafely or run the red light, while riders, are more likely to slide up close on the right of motor vehicles or run red lights.

Example 2: Optimized signal phasing for motor traffic in the Octopus put most lights on sensors instead of timers, and bike riders using less traveled roads find that their green light phase is omitted unless a motor vehicle joins them during the cycle. The unfortunate lesson to riders is to ignore traffic signals. This and the previous example could be addressed easily by increasing by a second or two the time between the last sensed car and the end of the green phase, readjusting the sensitivity of existing sensors, painting and stencilling bike lanes, and stenciling the optimum spots for a bike to stop to trigger a green light. NYSDOT knows this but has been unresponsive to repeated requests to accommodate legal bicycle traffic.

Example 3: Pedestrian safety has also been compromised in the Octopus in order to maximize the motor vehicles moved during various signal phases. This is why "walk" signals do not protect pedestrians in crosswalks, but instead direct turning traffic at them, in some cases with a verbal warning to the visually impaired to "be alert". This hardly constitutes accommodation. When a pedestrian pushes a button to signal a need for help getting across the street due to traffic, the result should be that signals promptly stop all traffic from crossing the crosswalk.

Example 4: Walk signals are at phases which are confusing to both pedestrians and drivers, and not necessarily at the safest phase, merely convenient to the purpose of moving motor vehicles. Pedestrians find that jay-walking is the best way to avoid cars and the annoying broadcasts, but of course this compromises their legal protection. Such signal phasing which promotes illegal and dangerous behavior by drivers and pedestrians, should be corrected where it exists and prevented from being repeated in new signals.

Example 5: In at least one case, in front of Joe's Restaurant, a crosswalk has been entirely omitted because NYSDOT did not want motor traffic movement cut off from that leg of the intersection at any time. A NYSDOT official explained that pedestrians were welcome to use the other 3 crosswalks instead
as a substitute. It is unreasonable to ask pedestrians to triple their distance and time to cross. Therefore they cross where by rights there ought to be a crosswalk, but their safety and legal standing has been compromised. This should be corrected, not repeated.

If "optimized signal phasing" is proposed as a form of traffic mitigation, the dGEIS should give firm clear assurances that these problems will not be repeated, and that legal bike riders and pedestrians will be encouraged and fully accommodated. Furthermore these existing problems on the streets near the Southwest Area should be corrected regardless, but certainly as a condition of any action which would increase traffic (motor, pedestrian or bicycle) in the area.

Addition of through and turning lanes: The purpose of multiple turning lanes is to move more motor vehicles faster through an intersection, but they add hazards to legal bicycle travel as well motor travel.

Example 6: On Seneca Street because the center lane approaching Meadow Street allows right turns the bike rider going straight must not only move out of the right lane but must beware of being cut off by motorists in the center lane as well. Bicycle riders should not be required to shift from the far right to the far left lane and back simply to cross an intersection. There should be a single right turn lane and a marked through bike lane to the left of it (there is room for this) in order to guide riders and drivers safely through this intersection. The center lane should be for through traffic only, for the safety of motorists as well as bike riders.

Example 7: Parallel turning lanes add hazards, especially from Seneca onto Meadow Street where there are so many lanes into which right turning traffic may and does choose to go. This extra turning lane adds little to the amount of turning traffic, which can be accommodated by a single turning lane, but every time the extra turning lane is used it adds dangers and confusion to any traffic (motor or bicycle) in the rightmost lane.

Example 8: The multiple left turn lanes from Meadow Street onto Buffalo Street add a hazard to bike riders because the right one on Meadow, which leads to the proper lane for bikes on Buffalo,
is also the highest speed through lane for Meadow. Therefore left-turning riders frequently use Meadow’s left curb lane as a refuge, but they must of course cross traffic again in order to regain proper placement on Buffalo.

Example 9: These parallel turning lanes from Meadow to Buffalo have been the scene of many near-misses between motorists that I have witnessed. A single left turn lane would promote legal safer behavior by riders and drivers. This should be corrected, not repeated in the SW plan.

Example 10: On the 300 and 400 blocks of Elmira Road, which is Route 13 along the Southwest Area, there is a two-way left turn lane (TWLTL) to accommodate maximum motor traffic, but there are no pedestrian crossings points or refuges at all. TWLTLs are very dangerous to both motorists and pedestrians, according to the presentation by Florida Department of Transportation Director Dan Burden at a conference attended by City of Ithaca officials on making cities pedestrian and bicycle friendly.

These additions of turning lanes represent an attempt by road designers to move additional motor traffic, but it has been done at the expense of safety especially of bicycle users and pedestrians. The dGEIS should include corrections of these existing safety problems in order to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle travel to the Southwest Area and mitigate the effects of increased motor traffic. There should be assurances in the dGEIS that safety and travel by other modes will not be compromised by the addition of any lanes for the purpose of moving additional motor traffic.

The “additional bridge over Cayuga Inlet” may refer to Court Street (This should be made clear in the dGEIS).

Example 11: As another example of motor traffic mitigation not serving bicycle and pedestrian traffic well, bike lanes have yet to be added to all the Octopus bridges, though they easily could be. In addition a Cayuga Inlet Trail crossing easily could be added to the new bridge between Cliff Street and Inlet Island. Bike riders on these bridges now often ride on sidewalks. This is illegal for anyone over age 10 and creates a conflict because the sidewalks are not wide enough to be shared with pedestrians.
These restripings would allow all these modes to share these bridges more easily, safely, and legally. Will Design Guidelines for bike lanes and sidewalks be in effect regarding the Court Street bridge? How will the Cayuga Inlet Trail, another bicycle and pedestrian trail separate from motor vehicles, be accommodated on the Court Street bridge? This would be the best place for this trail to cross Cayuga Inlet without conflicting with existing roads and traffic. What traffic conditions would trigger the construction of this bridge? The dGEIS should answer these questions along with costs and funding sources.

Response:

Response to comments 520-524:

The purpose of this Environmental Impact Statement is to document the expected impacts of the proposed Southwest Area development, and to recommend mitigation for those impacts. The recommended bicycle and pedestrian facility improvements are outlined in the response to comment 516.

Design and implementation of the recommendations contained in this EIS will follow as development occurs. Specifics, such as signal design, selection and location of traffic calming devices, and the exact facility locations, will be addressed at that time. Design should be completed by a qualified engineer with input from relevant stakeholders including neighborhood residents, the traveling public, the City of Ithaca and other involved agencies, and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Council. Final signal design and traffic calming measures should take note of the bicycle and pedestrian concerns expressed in these comments.

10.9.4 Bike/Ped Mitigation: Implement Design Guidelines

525. Nutter (151) The dGEIS should address the effectiveness of the Design Guidelines as a process for creating bicycle and pedestrian accommodation. Without assurance of effective implementation, the guidelines are meaningless. For example:

At its January 25, 2000, meeting, the City of Ithaca Planning Board, acting on a site plan within the Southwest Area, namely Maguire Ford at the southwest corner of South Meadow Street
and West Clinton Street (soon to be renamed Malone Drive), decided not to require any sidewalk along the property on the south side of Malone/Clinton. This section would have linked an existing sidewalk alongside the Southwest Area's newest big box store, Wegmans, and the only sidewalk on South Titus Avenue. The only entrance to Nate's Floral Estates trailer park, the other major destination, is also on the south side of the street, although no sidewalks reach there.

Instead, the Planning Board required Maguire to pay for a half of a sidewalk on the opposite side, in front of the Super 8 Motel. Super 8 may decline to build the other half, and the resulting bit of walkway may not connect with any existing sidewalk to the west. The disjointed bits of walkway and incomplete walkway on the south side will continue to encourage jay-walking and walking in the street for the major destinations instead of crossing in the crosswalk at the signalized Meadow Street intersection. Since an obvious opportunity to complete a sidewalk link has been given up, when and how will this sidewalk gap be filled at this major entrance to the Southwest Area?

The decision not to require a sidewalk along Maguire was made so as not to affect any of the adjacent car display area. Although the Planning Board had requested changes to other parking designs, and there were some parking losses on the site, the Planning Board declined to make such a request here for this reason. The Planning Board wanted a green space between a walkway and the curb, and there was not room for both without affecting the rest of the site. The Planning Board did not establish that it could not fit a walkway without a green space between the curb and the parking barriers. Nor did it discuss at this meeting the exact location of the street right-of-way compared to where Maguire's uses begin.

Response: See response to comment 526.

526. Van Dyk (246)  Section 2.2.2 Land Use and Zoning/Mitigation of Impacts. The paragraph pertaining to streets, pedestrians, and bicycle travel (p. 2-8) sounds great, except for the fact that the design guidelines are only guidelines, not mandates. The guidelines are good; the plan should commit to adhering to them.
the section for transportation, and I didn't find any other mention of multi-modal transportation.

What will be done to improve it? I mean there is lots of pages involved for automobile traffic. I would like to see the mitigation of, you know, that includes multi-modal transportation to be included in the environmental impact statement.

Response: See response to comment 537.

537. CAC (220) 6. The first of three goals and objectives of traffic-calming mitigation is to "Encourage greater use of multi-modal transportation." But the focus of recommended mitigation is directed toward engineering measures. The GEIS needs to include mitigation measures that clearly and specifically address encouraging people to use non-auto transportation. Specific engineering measures are outlined in Table 2-20 (page 2-47). The GEIS should outline in a similar way measures that can or will be used to achieve the goal of getting people to use non-auto transportation.

Response: Response to comments 536-537:

Development in the Southwest Area is an excellent opportunity to promote bicycle and pedestrian travel because the area is flat and located close to major population centers in the City of Ithaca. If development is not permitted in the Southwest Area, developers will probably build further away from the city on the outskirts of the metropolitan area instead. This areas of Tompkins County would be less accessible to the major population centers in the city, and at Cornell, making biking and walking much less attractive modes. Development in more remote areas would not be subject to the Southwest Area design guidelines, would still generate traffic, and would contribute to suburban sprawl.

Development in the Southwest Area would generate automobile traffic, but many of those auto trips would be a shorter distance. If the bicycle and pedestrian recommendations of this plan are implemented, and the Ithaca bicycle network is further developed, bicycling and walking will become more attractive modes. Furthermore, with the addition of traffic calming measures on neighborhood streets, and the projected increase in
traffic on Route 13, automobile travel times are expected to increase. A goal of designing intersections for motor vehicle LOS “E” is to make driving a less attractive alternative. With a decrease in the attractiveness of driving, and an increase in the attractiveness of biking and walking, more people will choose to bike or walk. Finally, by developing an area within the City, rather than on the outskirts, development in the Southwest Area will minimize suburban sprawl.

538. Blodgett (251) "Development of a multi-modal transportation link between West Hill and the Route 13 commercial corridor and Buttermilk Falls State Park." This is not shown on any maps. Where will it be, when will it be built?

Response: This refers to the proposed Black Diamond Trail, which is shown on the site plans for each alternative. The Black Diamond Trail is planned by the state parks, the city, and other agencies. It will allow bicycling, walking, and other non-motorized modes, but not automobile traffic.

The specific location/alignment for a pedestrian/bicycle Trail between West Hill and the SWP area is conceptually identified opposite Cecil A. Malone Drive, connecting to the Black Diamond Trail, as shown on Figures for each alternative.

539. Van Dyk (246) Section 2.7 Transportation/Impacts and Mitigation. As stated on page 2-44, goals of traffic calming mitigation include "encourage greater use of multi-modal transportation (i.e. transit, bicycling, walking)"

This general reference to a desirable goal is meaningless unless the plan commits to ensuring the existence of sidewalks throughout the development area and adjacent neighborhoods.

Response: See response to comment 505, 516, and 537.

540. Nutter (151) The dGEIS must explain the "multi-modal" reference, which appears to refer to provisions for bicycle riders and pedestrians. This term is not used elsewhere, and Design Guidelines say that there should be bike lanes and sidewalks as standard practice on all new collector roads in the Southwest Area. How would such a road relate to the Black Diamond Trail Bridge? The Black
Diamond Trail bike/ped bridge is planned to be opposite the west end of Malone Dr/W. Clinton. In general the City is to provide rights of way and State Parks is to build the trail. The rights of way have been arranged in the City, and since 1994 Parks has had almost $1M in federal money available to build this trail. However, the City is responsible for this and some other as-yet-unfunded bridges because the City changed the route creating the need for the bridges. The trail was agreed to be separated from motor traffic throughout, which would be complicated on a road bridge. These functions, the bike/ped bridge with or without the road bridge, should be discussed with cost estimates and potential funding sources in the dGEIS. The City and State Parks have repeatedly stated over the years that this trail system is a "high priority".

Response:

The “multi-modal transportation link to West Hill” would be the proposed Black Diamond Trail bridge. The bridge and the trail would allow bicycle, pedestrian, and other non-motorized modes, but not automobile traffic. The Black Diamond Trail is an existing community initiative. It should be pursued regardless of the Southwest Area development, rather than linked to the proposed development.

541. Nutter (151) p.25 "While traffic flow measures in this [Level of Service] context are solely from the drivers perspective, an equally important measure generally lacking in most Traffic Impact Studies involving residential areas, would also take into account, a resident viewpoint of traffic. The influence of traffic on the quality of life ..." The perspectives of people using other modes than private cars to travel (bus, bike, and foot) should also be considered, including thorough level-of-service analyses designed for the modes.

Response: See response to comment 517.
10.10 Auto Bias

SUMMARY

The comments questioned the sincerity of the DGEIS's plans to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transportation based on the perceived inadequacies in the DGEIS in detailing the impacts to these transportation alternatives and the perceived lack of viable mitigation measures.

542. Nutter (151) ...it makes me question what commitment there is to the guidelines, what commitment there is to bicycle or pedestrians in the whole document.

Response: See response to comment 505, 516, and 537.

543. Wetmore (19A) The proposed South West Area Development is designed to maximize automobile use. Each store has its own parking lot. No effort is made to make it easy for bikes or pedestrians to be able to move from one part of the propose project to another, let alone two and from the proposed project.

Response: See response to comment 505, 516, and 537.

544. Wetmore (19A) The report does not adequately explore modes of transportation for other than the automobile. Bike lanes on proposed roads is obvious, but what about roads leading to the project? Another possibility is designating roads, or lanes, for bus traffic only. Let's consider a single parking lot serving the entire project, with shuttle bus transport throughout the area. This kind of commuter parking would eliminate driving from one parking lot to the next, a great deal of which would inevitably occur otherwise, and allow a major reduction in the total paved area as well. This single lot could be city owned, and would serve as a source of significant revenue as.

Response: See the recommendations in response to comment 516. Central parking should be shared, and allow a reduction in the number of spaces needed.

545. Peterson, C (239) page 2-27. This is one of the strangest ironies of the document and reflects on the divisiveness in the community over
the human scale of the project. Much of the document's thesis is based on a huge increase in trip generation by car to the new development. There is a reliance on drawing people from 15 to 30 miles from Ithaca to the new stores; there is a reliance on pulling people away from Pyramid mall and the locus of population in the Northeast. These people ARE NOT riding their bikes or walking to Southwest park and I think using bikes and walking as a traffic mitigation is plain dishonest.

page 2-32. "The construction of buildings, drainage channels, parking areas, and roads imply a scale more comfortable for vehicular use rather than pedestrian level activities."...You can't have it both ways. This is not a pedestrian friendly project in any respect.

Response:

Most trips to the Southwest Area development are expected to be by automobile; the analyses contained in this report are based on an estimated 93% of trips by automobile, with the remaining 7% by transit. For a conservative estimate of the impacts of automobile trips, reductions were not made for walking or bicycle trips. While the fraction of trips made by bicycle or walking may be low, it is still a valuable community goal to provide safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian facilities for the following reasons:

- For each bicycle or pedestrian trip to the development, there will be one less automobile trip, with the associated impacts.
- Bicycling and walking are important alternatives for those who do not want to drive.
- Bicycling and walking are important alternatives for those who cannot drive or do not own a car.
- Promoting bicycling and walking modes enhances the livability of a community.
- The comments contained in this report articulate many of the other benefits of promoting bicycle and pedestrian use.

The statement on page 2-32 is misleading because talking about the "scale" of a development is ambiguous. One could as easily say that the construction of sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, buildings close to the street, parking in the rear instead of the front, and landscaping imply a scale that is comfortable for
pedestrian level activities. While many travelers will arrive by car, specific pedestrian features are included to allow safe and pleasant pedestrian accessibility.

546. Van Dyk (246) Appendix F: Transportation Report. The structure of this report, with its emphasis on vehicular traffic, reflects the plan's bias towards automobiles. Pedestrians are given inadequate consideration throughout the plan.

Under "Travel demand management strategies and traffic calming measure," (pp. ix-x), we find this: "6. Walking May be encouraged by providing sidewalk and other pedestrian amenities"

We need a plan that allows the DGEIS to say Walking will be enabled by providing sidewalks and other pedestrian amenities.

Response: Walking will be enabled by providing sidewalks and other pedestrian amenities as outlined in the response to comment 516.

547. Van Dyk (246) 4. Pedestrian Traffic (page 9). This section refers to a "vision" for an internal pedestrian circulation plan. How nice! Let's hope they're serious about it.

Response: See the recommendations in the response to comment 516.

548. Van Dyk (246) 5. Walking (page 24). Paragraph reads "Nevertheless, walking may serve as (1) a primary mode of travel for some people for some trips..."

Change "walking may serve as" to "walking serves as"

Response: Acknowledged.

549. Van Dyk (246) In terms of accommodating pedestrians, the plan makes too much of a distinction between new roads in the area and the existing Elmira Road/Route 13 Corridor. All these roads need sidewalks.

Response: All roads should have sidewalks. The difference between existing and new facilities is whether the developers or the city
Response: Response to comments 525-526: The development guidelines should be adopted into the local zoning regulations for the Southwest Area and the Elmira Rd. / Meadow St. corridor to ensure that development is built according to the guidelines.

10.9.5 Sidewalks/Trails

527. Seitz (59) I especially endorse major design improvements in the Meadow Street/Elmira Road corridor including a green median with left-turn cut-outs, bicycle lanes, and sidewalks with treelawns between them and the highway.....In addition, I recommend bicycle and pedestrian TRAILS throughout any new development in the Southwest Area. Trails are preferable to having to compete with motor vehicle traffic.

Response: Those suggested improvements to Meadow Street and Elmira Road would be a great benefit to the community. See the response to comment 505 for further detail.

As noted in the comments, trails provide safer and more pleasant bicycle and pedestrian travel than lanes or sidewalks adjacent to motor vehicle travel. Therefore, the traffic report recommends extending the trail network as noted in the recommendations above. A trail adjacent to the drainage easement will provide a location separated from automobile traffic, allow a pleasant walk or ride by trees and plants rather than pavement, and minimize right-of-way concerns. Finally it would provide an important link between the City and the proposed Black Diamond Trail. The details are outlined in the response to comment 520.

528. CAC (220) 7. The GEIS needs to address the need for sidewalks along all of route 13.

Response: See response to comment 505.

529. Van Dyk (246) Section 2.7.5: Transportation/Transit, Bicycle, and Pedestrian Analysis. The report acknowledges the intermittent nature of sidewalks along the Route 13 corridor (page 2-50) but fails to stress the importance of this inadequacy in the plan.
The plan does not include measures to install a continuous sidewalk along Route 13 and this should be clearly stated in the DGEIS.

New developers or people seeking to change their developments are required to install a sidewalk along their frontage on Route 13. But these sidewalks stop at the property line, and there's nothing in the plan that commits the City to linking these sidewalks.

Response: See response to comment 505.

530. Nutter (151) What is the City's commitment to good complete pedestrian facilities in general and in this area? The DGEIS maps for all alternates clearly show the new guidelines in place for Clinton/Malone. And the paved street width at this location is wide enough to be striped as the new guidelines show. There may be room to move the curb away later to create green space between the curb and a new walkway while leaving the site use unaffected.

In contrast to the DGEIS, staff said the guidelines only apply to new roads. However, even if this site is considered part of the Elmira Road - Meadow Street Corridor, per the map on p54, the guidelines on p55 say "Separate pedestrian and bikeways, where practicable, should occur on all streets. New sidewalks in the corridor should link smoothly into existing walks when possible." Currently some pedestrians walk in the street on the south side of Clinton/Malone in the path of bicycle and motor traffic. Tree lawns are only included in this section of the guidelines specifically for Elmira Road and Meadow Street.

Staff also said the Planning Board had concluded that the guidelines asked for walkways that were too wide. The Planning Board chair noted that the guidelines are "only guidelines" implying that they need not be followed. To give an assurance of the guidelines being used, the DGEIS must say where, at what point, at whose expense, and to what degree they must be implemented. To ensure adequate pedestrian and bicycle facilities there must be complete walkways and bikeways.

Response: See response to comments 505 and 516.
531. Nutter (151) p.24 Bicycling. Note bicycling is the most energy-efficient mode, about 3 times more energy efficient and faster than walking, while offering similar advantages of low cost and personal schedule. The Southwest area is flat, raising the potential for bicycling and walking. Because bicycle travel must often share roads with faster, more dangerous motor vehicles, good bicycle facilities to, as well as within, the Southwest area are a must. The Southwest area has the advantage of a planned and funded bike/hike path, the Black Diamond Trail which can provide a pleasant bikeway link in certain directions.

Response: See response to comment 527.

10.9.6 Pedestrian Specific

532. Tompkins County Planning (218) Pedestrian Movement in Project Area. The creation of large swales impedes pedestrian mobility around the site, especially the drainage swale proposed for the center of the project area. Appropriate design measures need to be included to ensure pedestrians are welcome to gain access to the opposite side of areas separated by these bodies of water.

Response: Pedestrian links should be designed as necessary.

533. Wetmore (19A) The report ignores pedestrian travel. Not only does it fail to designate sidewalks throughout the area, it fails, also, to note that many of the surrounding areas will need sidewalks, traffic signals, etc., as well. The report should investigate how development can be designed to encourage, rather than discourage, pedestrian travel (e.g.: building close to roads, with parking in back).

Response: See response above. The buildings should be built adjacent to and facing the road with parking in the back, as shown in the site plans. Guidelines should be adopted to ensure that the development is built to these standards.
534. Nutter (151) p.9 "no adjustments to overall trip generation have been made for pedestrian traffic." Tompkins County pedestrian levels for are far higher for commuting (8.1%) and shopping (9.2%) than they are for transit (1.2% and 1.0%). Pedestrian trip generation rates should be calculated. They should be applied to a plan with residential development. Complete pedestrian systems to and from, not just within the Southwest area should be the basis of planning and a requirement of the Southwest area development.

Response: Internal pedestrian trips are expected to be significant. Due to the location of the proposed development in relation to the major population centers, the volumes of people walking to the site are expected to be low. However, the recommendations above outline a pedestrian network to provide access to and from the site for those who do walk.

Adjustments to the overall trip generation would have reduced the projected number of automobile trips. Reductions were not made for pedestrian traffic in order to maintain a conservative estimate of the impacts of automobile trips.

535. Nutter (151) p.24 Walking. Complete, safe sidewalk systems separated from motor vehicles are needed. All street crossings should be convenient and safe, with short waits until all conflicting motor traffic is stopped. These are needed throughout the area and at the intersections affected by traffic from Southwest area development. Walking, unlike transit, allows a personal schedule. Land use management is also important for walking as a mode: inclusion of residential development will greatly enhance the possibilities for this mode. Note walking is the is least costly of modes.

Response: See recommendations in the response to comment 516.

10.9.7 Multimodal

536. Fischer (15) Then another point that I wanted to bring up was that the environmental impact statement talks about three goals and objectives of mitigation. And the first one is to encourage greater use of multi-modal transportation. I looked through the rest of
is responsible for these. See the response to comment 505 for further details.

550. Dunaway (348) Development of a multi-modal transportation link between West Hill and the Route 13 commercial corridor and Buttermilk Falls State Park

Although prominently displayed as an objective of the plan, when we search for the specifics, "multi-modal transportation link" means a bike lane and a sidewalk. Should we thus assume that the city intends shoppers to travel on foot or bicycle? If so, we should not expect large-volume purchasing. The "multi-modal" link is nothing more than a ruse. The developers are quite aware that this is an automobile-only shopping area, those without wheels are not in the target demographic. Although bike lanes and accommodations for pedestrians are laudable and certainly should be included, they will have little effect on the automobile traffic generated by the development. The words 'public transportation' do not occur in either the economic impact or GEIS documents. Although many references to Transit are made, no additional TCAT service is discussed, nor are any other public transportation modalities included.

Anyone who has seen one of these big-box developments anywhere in the country realizes that they are designed so that automobiles are the primary, if not only, method of transportation seriously contemplated. Rhetoric aside, the dGEIS is making the same assumptions. The Southwest Park development will increase vehicular traffic in the city which will diminish the attractiveness of the city of Ithaca as a place to live, work and shop.

Response: See response to comment 545.
10.11 Quality of Life

SUMMARY

Comments contend that the impacts due to increased traffic are understated in the DGEIS. The detailed impacts are perceived to not account for assumed decreases in the quality of life of the City if traffic increases as expected. In addition, some comments state that property values will decline to increased traffic, and noise will increase, and that these impacts are also not adequately detailed and mitigated in the DGEIS.

551. Wemore (19A) No survey was done of the affected neighborhoods to determine if people would move out of the city because of increased traffic on their streets.

Response: See response to comment 560.

552. Wemore (19A) Table 2-17 suggests that if the Southwest Area plan is adopted, traffic will go from fairly manageable to poor, at best. With Ithaca's experience of the unreliability of these kinds of traffic studies, we should expect traffic to be worse than predicted. Note that after the "Octopus" reconstruction Fulton Street went to 100% capacity in two years, rather than the ten predicted. Given the dismal state the DGEIS predicts for Ithaca's traffic if this plan is adopted, the anticipated traffic snarls alone provide ample reason to dismiss the plan. Much of the new traffic would invade our residential neighborhoods. The traffic generated by a project this of this size would be tremendous. Table 2-17 shows every street studied deteriorating from a usable street to poor or worse. One intersection is so bad as to be off the scale, even after application of mitigation measures. Most intersections studied are this bad before mitigation - not a good sign.

The study envisions major intersections like the Octopus becoming, once again, the nightmares they were before recent, very expensive, improvements. Fulton and Meadow streets can also be expected to be jammed with cars. Ithaca's main arterial streets are already nearing capacity therefore, the additional traffic will spill into residential neighborhoods. Streets such as Albany, Titus, Plain, Turner, Spencer, South and Buffalo would all experience major increases in auto traffic. This report does
not discuss the ways in which this will impact these neighborhoods. Splitting the city into smaller and smaller squares, each surrounded by walls of traffic, will result in destruction of neighborhood integrity. Children will no longer be able to walk to their friends' houses, or to school. Parents, of course, will have to drive them to these destinations, with even more traffic as a result. Is this really what we want to turn our town into?

The real question that should be asked is not how we can manage an ever-increasing number of cars on our streets, but how we can develop our town so that people don't need a car in order to visit neighbors. The report says the city's population is declining (page 2-67), yet traffic is increasing annually.

Response: See response to comment 560.

553. Harber (235) Putting the SWDP or its proposed “alternatives” into action will completely change the nature of a huge part of Ithaca, as it will drastically affect the entire southwest side of town, much of the west side and beyond. Partly this is due to the enormous increase in traffic predicted in the DGEIS of around 2500 vehicles per peak hour (let alone increases at other times). The plan to make South Meadow Street a 6 lane highway, along with the DGEIS predicted increases of almost 50% on South Albany Street, and projected increases on West Clinton and at the Octopus will drastically change the quality of life and atmosphere along and near those streets due to greatly increased noise, air pollution, traffic dangers and other effects. Many other city streets will experience large increases of traffic as people head to the southwest side or try to avoid the huge increase in traffic on Route 13, Clinton and Albany Streets. These will include Titus, Plain, Turner, Spencer, South and Buffalo among others, and result in similar deterioration of neighborhoods and safety for children, elderly and bicyclists. And all the people who already drive on these streets will have to deal with the unpleasantness of these enormous traffic increases. At peak times, the blocks between Esty and State on Fulton/Route 13, which I'm familiar with, are already jammed and hardly moving. What will it be like with 2500 more vehicles on these roads at that time?
Response: See response to comment 560.

554. Blodgett (251) 213.1, 213.2 Area Residential Neighborhoods, Impacts and Mitigations. The mitigation traffic volumes rest on a number of assumptions (such as 7% of trips will use bus - very, very unlikely). Higher than predicted traffic volumes are probably much more likely. Residences more than 225 feet from development activities will very likely be adversely affected by construction activities. No specific traffic mitigation measures have been discussed for Spencer Road, in spite of known danger to pedestrians due to lack of sidewalks (I would expect to see discussion of speed humps, etc.).

Response: Traffic calming measures should be implemented on Spencer Road also. See response to comment 560 for further discussion of adverse affects of traffic.

555. Kessler (44) Traffic on streets such as S. Albany, S. Plain, Clinton, and Spencer are likely to increase (an estimated daily increase of 8500 additional cars on S. Albany St.), making these residential areas less safe for pedestrians and bicyclists. There is no calculation in the GEIS for the effect that this increased traffic may have on emergency services...

...It is obvious that congested roadways will cause delays in the response time of police, fire fighters and EMTs and other emergency vehicles.18

Response: Emergency vehicle access is a concern of congestion. Special consideration should be given to emergency vehicle access, and origin and destination points. Street design should allow emergency vehicle to pass through a street with cars or emergency vehicles using the shoulder, excess lane width, etc..

556. CAC (220), Fischer (15) 5. The dGEIS talks about impacts to neighborhoods only in numerical terms, but does not address impact on quality of life or property values of the neighborhood. These need to be included in the statement.

18 This paragraph taken from Kessler's (44) public hearing testimony.
Response: See response to comment 560.

557. CAC (220) The dGEIS Target area does not fully consider the impacts of traffic on property values. Level of Service decreases and the resulting impact on both quality of life as well as tax base impacts should be addressed in the GEIS. For example, recent anecdotal evidence from the year 2000 reassessments points to declining tax base on Albany Street due to increased traffic volumes.

Response: See response to comment 560.

558. Allen (321) Concerning Community Character, the dGEIS does not adequately discuss the character of the new development.

In the Transportation section, Page ix of the traffic summary suggests "higher-density residential" occupation. "Peak travel uses such as higher density residential, and retail uses are essential." (P. 6) However, it is unclear what this means for the five of the six alternative plans that do NOT consider residential occupation. I did not read of any in-depth discussion of new residential areas or their impact. This seems incomplete. It also makes me wonder why this sort of mixed-used development couldn't be figured out for the downtown area.

The transportation section suggests that walking and biking are essential aspects of the development, to reduce traffic to and between areas of the development.

Response: Comments acknowledged. See response to comment 560. Also, creating a hierarchy of efficiently networked transportation facilities for all modes cannot be overemphasized.

559. Milner, J (186) ... and (2) the increase in traffic that would pass by my massage therapy office at 108 S. Albany Street (estimated to increase from 7,500 cars daily to over 16,000). A major goal of my practice in therapeutic massage is to create a tranquil environment in which my clients can focus on healing chronic pain. My office is already affected by road noise, and my clients and I would be immediately aware of an increase in traffic.

Response: See response to comment 560.
560. Wegmans (252) Page 5-Scope, first paragraph: "Traffic generated as a result of the anticipated development in the Southwest Area may have an impact on air quality." There should be some discussion on the noise impacts that the traffic will have on the surrounding area also.

Response:

Response to comments 551-554, 556-560:

Noise impacts, property values, and other specific livability measures are not investigated individually. These factors are addressed as an overall livability measure, environmental service capacity. Traffic impacts have negative livability effects, to which residential neighborhoods are more sensitive. Efforts are made to minimize traffic volumes and speeds (and therefore noise) on neighborhood streets by implementing traffic calming measures. Traffic is concentrated in the Route 13 commercial corridor, which is less sensitive to livability constraints than the residential neighborhoods.

If development is not permitted in the Southwest Area, developers will probably build further away from the city on the outskirts of the metropolitan area instead. These areas of Tompkins County would be less accessible to the major population centers in the city making biking, walking, and transit much less attractive modes. Development in more remote areas would not be subject to the Southwest Area design guidelines, would still generate traffic and livability concerns, and would contribute to suburban sprawl.

With the addition of traffic calming measures on neighborhood streets, and the projected increase in traffic on Route 13, automobile travel times are expected to increase. A goal of designing intersections for motor vehicle LOS "E" is to make driving a less attractive alternative. Furthermore, development in the Southwest Area is an excellent opportunity to promote bicycle and pedestrian travel because the area is flat and located close to major population centers in the City of Ithaca. If the bicycle and pedestrian recommendations of this plan are implemented, and the Ithaca bicycle network is further developed, bicycling and walking will become more attractive modes. With a decrease in the attractiveness of driving, and an increase in the attractiveness of biking and walking, more people will choose to bike or walk.
By implementing traffic calming measures, mitigating to LOS E, implementing the recommended bicycle, pedestrian, and transit network improvements, and developing an area within the City rather than on the outskirts, development in the Southwest Area will minimize suburban sprawl while maintaining the livability of Ithaca neighborhoods.
10.12 Nates Floral Estates

SUMMARY

The comments focus on perceived impacts to Nate's Floral Estates and suggest additional mitigation measures.

561. Tompkins County Planning (218) Traffic Mitigation for Nates Estates. In the dGEIS, the proposed road network serving the study area is routed around the Estates by a proposed extension of Taughannock Boulevard in Alternatives 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6. This road is likely to create potentially significant impacts due to noise and light on the residents immediately adjacent to the proposed road. Appropriate mitigation measures should be proposed including berms, landscaping, and lighting standards.

Response: Nate's Estates should be buffered from the proposed Taughannock Boulevard extension with berms, landscaping, and/or a sound wall. This should be done prior to construction if at all possible.

562. LaBrecque (261) 1. The five alternatives, 1, 2, 4-5 and 6, would remove Nate's Floral Estates Mobile Home Park's vehicular entrance from W. Clinton St., soon to be renamed the Cecil A. Malone Drive. This entrance from W. Clinton St. and adjacent to the park's office entrance provides park and tenant security, and the five alternatives are unacceptable to Nate's Floral Estates Mobile Home Park, Inc. All traffic entering or leaving the park presently must pass the park office building. Except for Alternative 3, your plans would eliminate this important safety control feature. The owners have discussed the implications of change due to any of these five alternatives, which would cause major compromises, and believe strongly that only Alternative 3 would be acceptable. To curtail access to a public highway involves eminent domain proceedings. The park was designed and engineered with the north access.

Response: The residents should be aware of the following important points:

- it is more difficult to provide bus service to cul-de-sac developments;
- one point of access is less efficient in terms of mobility;
- good planning indicates multiple access points;
- multiple ingress/egress points allow better access for emergency vehicles;
- Nates Estates traffic will no longer use Cecilia Malone Blvd. Instead, more efficient access will be provided at the new traffic signal located south of the existing TOPS signal (see response to comment number 404 above).

The report suggests allowing pedestrian access at the southeast corner of the development, so residents may conveniently reach the Southwest Area development, and the proposed multi-use trail along the flood relief channel (see response to comment 520). It should also be noted that the existing community building at the north entrance to the park will be relocated to the southwest corner of the park. The ultimate number and location access points for Nates Estates can be discussed with the residents when the design phase of the project is initiated.

563. LaBrecque (261) The bridge just in front of and east of the park’s entrance should be widened for wide vehicles and pedestrian use of sidewalks, safe from all vehicular traffic.

Response: As the recommendations in response to comment 520 outline, appropriate bicycle and pedestrian mitigation should be provided along the length of Cecilia Malone Blvd. This mitigation could include bike lanes and improved sidewalks, and/or bicycle friendly traffic calming, depending on the context most appropriate for that specific street.

564. LaBrecque (261) City busing and a shelter should be returned to Nate’s Floral Estates entrance area, as it existed in the past.

Response: The TCAT routes to the Southwest Area could be modified to also serve Nate’s Estates. The request should be submitted to TCAT.

565. LaBrecque (261) In the unlikely event the road, "Taughannock Blvd. Extension," is ever built just to the west of Nate’s Floral Estates
Mobile Home Park, plans for plantings and a sound barrier meeting with the approval of the owners of Nate's Floral Estates should be provided to them by whomever would design this road well in advance of such construction being started.

Response: Nate's Estates should be buffered from the proposed Toughannock Boulevard extension with berms, landscaping, and/or a sound wall. This should be done prior to construction if at all possible.
10.13 School Crossings

SUMMARY

The comments point to a perceived lack of detail in the DGEIS concerning the impacts to school crossings from projected increases in traffic. The Ithaca City School District is requested to be designated an involved agency the District's comments on these impacts are sought.

566. Wetmore (19A) Page 2-49 states that the new traffic created by the project would adversely affect school crossings. Appendix J, Pages VI-6 through VI-8, discusses the enrollment of the Ithaca City schools and how this project would affect them. Therefore, the Board of Education of the City of Ithaca should be an Involved Agency.

Response: See response to comment 567.

567. Glover (73) School crossings will be affected by added traffic (2.7.4: 2-49). Will the School Board evaluate this?

Response: Appropriate traffic calming measures should be provided in the vicinity of schools, considering the presence of children, as well as school bus operations. A qualified traffic engineer with knowledge of school safety and operations should review network modifications in the vicinity of a school.
10.14 Miscellaneous

**SUMMARY**

The comments below cover a wide range of topics which did not readily fall under the main topics above.

568. Nutter (151) 7) p1-5 Table 1-3 Permits and Approval Requirements

"Adoption of Design Guidelines "Approval of Traffic Calming Measures "(DEC) Easement for Black Diamond Trail". The dGEIS should say what is the process and status of each of these categories and how the BPAC will be involved in these processes? They have not been even informed to date.

569. Nutter (151) 29) p2-48 "a gateway treatment will be constructed along Albany Street extending from the 600 block south along Elmira Road approximately halfway to its intersection with Plain Street."

How will this accommodate bicycle and pedestrian travel, if at all? This measure has not been described or defined, nor have any working examples been given. This block already is a choke point for bicycle travel, the blocks north and south being significantly wider with more room for motor vehicles to pass safely. Will the proposed treatment improve or worsen the situation? There is room for bicycle lanes to be easily and cheaply constructed to continue the bike facility on the 200 block of Elmira Road. Will this potential be destroyed? Traffic calming measures are supposed to clearly promote bike & foot travel.

570. Nutter (151) Appendix F – Traffic

**GLOSSARY**

p.v "LOS - Level of Service ... LOS concepts can also be applied to other transportation services as an indication of the quality and quantity of transportation service provided."

The LOS concepts should be applied in the dGEIS to transit, pedestrian, and bicycle modes analyzing how well the transportation system in and to the Southwest Area does and
will serve the comfort level and convenience of people using these modes.

p.v "Mode - A mode is a particular form of travel, for example, walking, traveling by automobile, traveling by bus, traveling by train." The definition of mode should include "traveling by bicycle". In Tompkins County, bicycle usage overall is comparable to transit usage, and bicycle usage for commuting is nearly twice that for transit (ITCTC 2020 Long Range Plan, December 1999, Table 11A, 1995 National Personal Transportation Survey data). There is no passenger rail service, so that category could be dropped.

571. Nutter (151)  p.6 Text appears to be cut off at top.

572. NYSDOT (223)  5) Reference to Conrail should be changed to the Norfolk Southern Railroad. They also should be listed in Table 1-3, Permits and Approval Requirements, for approval of new, or alteration of existing, railroad grade crossings. Department approval is also necessary on this issue.

Response: Comments acknowledged.

573. NYSDOT (223)  6) An Administrative Law hearing is usually necessary for the alteration of, or creation of a new railroad grade crossing. The railroad traditionally opposes at-grade crossings. Grade separated crossings will add a significant cost to the proposed traffic mitigation that should not be overlooked. There may also be additional benefits realized from a grade-separated crossing that would factor into the discussion.

Response: Comments acknowledged.

574. Zanfordino (122) I bring this up because under the current development plan the footbridge would be demolished to handle the anticipated overflow of traffic from South Albany Street. I'm concerned that we're not thinking about our younger citizens, as well as the seniors who live at Titus Towers who enjoy going out and walking. Increased traffic, noise, will bring increased risk of serious injury and less personal security.
Response: It is acknowledged that a common goal of the community is to balance the needs of all users, and to provide a well integrated and coordinated multi-modal system that is safe and efficient for all users.

The recommended mitigation does not include replacing the footbridge with an automobile bridge.
SECTION 11.0 ECONOMICS

11.1 Costs

SUMMARY

Many comments attacked the DGEIS for its presumed failure to accurately represent the costs associated with the Southwest Area Land Use Plan. While several comments include itemized lists, others mention one or two specific costs only (i.e. costs for bridges, police personnel and equipment, sewer and water rates, cleanup of contaminated soils, etc.).

Some comments addressed social costs, externalities, and other less easily quantified costs due to a perceived loss of quality of life should the Southwest Area Development proceed. Additionally, many comments questioned the DGEIS's assumption that developers would cover the costs of infrastructure improvements, and these comments queried that, if the developers do not ante up as projected, then to whom do the costs get passed? Finally, comments highlighted "cost of community services" studies to attack the DGEIS conclusion of net revenue gains from the proposed development.

11.1.1 Costs Not Included in DGEIS: Itemized

575. Glover (73) Although the consultants expect the project to cost taxpayers about $10,000,000 to construct (roads, bridges, sewer, electric, drainage), plus maintenance costs of $150,000 yearly for five extra police officers and $109,000/year for maintenance of 2.6 miles of new road (J:VI-2), they expect a net profit for the City of $1.7 million yearly (5% of City budget) for the largest of six alternative plans (Alt 3) which least risks shoppers' lives and least congests traffic (Appendix A Summary). This profit assumes that the area is built and shopped to full capacity, and does not consider that the City's Carpenter Industrial Park had been vacant for over 15 years.

Yet the dGEIS does not include costs for the following:

* The greater cost of porous paving, to reduce methane explosions, is not included.

* There is no calculation for general landscaping.
* There is no calculation of the cost of interest on Southwest bond issues, nor the impact of reduced debt limit on other City projects.

* There is no cost calculated for extra City government staff (except for five additional police officers) needed to manage a larger infrastructure.

* There are no cost specifications or schedules for expanded road repair citywide, following greater traffic.

* There is no "design year" calculation for the failure of traffic flow after new construction.

* There is no calculation of emergency delays (police, fire, ambulance: T2-74) due to greater traffic congestion (G11: 4.1). Of 27 intersections studied, 12 are expected to become more congested even with wider roads.

* There is no calculation of the costs to operate the new "City Shopper Shuttle" bus, regarded by the DGEIS as essential to traffic function. No costs are presented for bike lanes, also considered essential to "traffic calming."

* There is no calculation of the costs of removing and replacing soil poisoned by arsenic, acetone, arsenic, benzene, barium, lead, mercury from Southwest Dump (1,164,500 cubic ft: 2.4.5). As the DGEIS says, "The site does not present a significant threat to the environment if left undeveloped" (2.4.5).

* In calculation of new jobs, there is no survey of expected wage scales and benefits, nor the economic impacts of public subsidy for low wages. Fully 75% of managerial jobs there are expected to go to non-Ithacans (IV- 4). If it does not pay health insurance it is not a job; it's a treadmill.

* No costs are specified for the larger diameter water pipe required from the West Hill holding tank (2.9.2). Nor are costs calculated for upgrading older sewer and water mains (as much as 100 years old), to handle increased flow velocity. In fact there is no expectation that the costs of new sewer lines will be repaid: "The ability to require developers to front the total cost of utility extension may not be feasible" (G 5.1).
* There is no calculation of expected cost increases for household solid waste disposal, as extra retail garbage (8,000,000 lbs/year) must be trucked farther and farther away (2.10). There is no calculation of the greater fuel/staff/equipment costs for disposing of the city's C&D waste farther from Ithaca, where it can leach into the Lower Treman Park swimming pool.

Response:

Costs for the majority of the items covered by this comment will be borne by private developers. The City anticipates that private developers will be responsible for all cost related to landscaping, internal road construction or dump clean-up, if required.

See the Executive Summary of the FGEIS for a discussion of costs the City anticipates incurring and the mitigation fee the City anticipates requiring in order to recover such costs. In essence, the City’s intends to recover the developers' fair share costs for certain improvements linked to this project. Note that the City can only recover costs which may be reasonably linked to demands from this project. Thus, the City does not believe it can reasonably recover costs for certain bridge, traffic calming on bikeway improvements which are already needed or are in the planning stages and which will benefit all residents of the City. The City intends to seek grants and other funds for such improvements.

With respect to the general costs to City government vs. benefits, see Appendix 6, which contains a Fiscal Impact Analysis for the project. This analysis demonstrates that the revenues to the City will far exceed the costs and that whatever incremental costs might be associated with routine maintenance demands on staff or services such as operation of a shuttle bus will be more than outweighed by revenues from the project.

With respect to emergency delays, the Lead Agency does not anticipate that there will be significant impact. State Law requires that vehicles move to the side to let emergency vehicles pass, and this law has not changed. The GEIS traffic analysis demonstrated that contrary to the commentor's assertion, traffic flow will not “fail” and emergency vehicle traffic will be able to pass.
With respect to the wages paid by various businesses, it is expected that prevailing wages will be paid. As the City has low unemployment, many jobs will be filled by non-“Ithacans” who will travel to the City where they will also presumably shop, etc., but where they may not choose to relocate their residence.

With respect to the infrastructure costs, the City anticipates constructing certain water and sewer costs up front, and recovering such costs as part of a mitigation fee. Other utility improvements are anticipated to be privately constructed. Routine maintenance costs are included in the fiscal impact analysis discussed above.

The costs of waste disposal will be privately borne so no impact to the City is anticipated.

576. Cogan (49) Costs (Section VI)

There is no analysis of the impact on sales tax revenue if Tompkins County votes to eliminate the sales tax on clothing and footwear under $110. This could have an order of magnitude effect on the expected revenue for the City and County.

Assumes costs for infrastructure will be borne by the developer; however, the dGEIS clearly states: "...the ability to require the developers to front the total cost of utility extension may not be feasible." (Appendix G, p. 16) Therefore, there should be calculations for all the costs for infrastructure. In addition, there will be may secondary effects in other parts of the City for which the costs of mitigation will be difficult to pass on to the developers.

The only costs calculated are for 5 police salaries and for Public Works maintenance. There are no costs calculated for the following:

* Costs for new workers moving to the area having school age children. This could add 150 immigrants for management positions and 500 immigrants for office positions to the county. (p. V-4) If we assume each immigrant requires a household and that there are .22 children per household, this will add 143 children to the local school system. At $11,250 per student, this will cost the school district $1.6 million per year. Of course each
new student probably will not cost as much an average student (page VI-8). If we assume $5,000 as the marginal cost per student, the cost will be $715,000.

* Spencer Street widening and reconfiguration: the City's plans include tearing down houses on Spencer Street, digging into the hillside, and widening the road. How much will this cost, and what will be the loss of property tax revenue to the City from the destroyed houses?

* Police equipment: Police need guns, cars, uniforms, computers, office space, benefits.

* City staff: what effects will this have on the need to hire new staff to oversee development in this area and to manage a bigger infrastructure?

* Bridge at Plain Street: the dGEIS cites the need to consider construction of a bridge over 6-Mile Creek at Plain Street. Who will pay for this?

* Bridge at Old Taughannock Blvd: The plan calls for putting in a bridge over 6-Mile Creek at Old Taughannock Blvd; how much will this cost?

* Costs for premature repair of roads due to additional traffic throughout the City. The City should budget the replacement cost of infrastructure into the current calculation of costs so the true costs of this development are apparent.

* Costs for time lost sitting in traffic.

* Costs for additional fuel consumption due to slower speeds and traffic congestion.

* Cost for operating a shuttle bus between Downtown and the Elmira Road corridor.

* Cost of debt service for building infrastructure. Presumably, even if the City is going to pass on the costs to the developers, they will need to issue bonds to build much of the infrastructure and mitigation measures. According to the dGEIS (page 1-3 of main volume), the City intends to distribute the costs to the developers
with a formula and hold the money in escrow until time to build. What happens when the City discovers the costs are more than in escrow?

The costs estimated in the dGEIS are $255,000 per year vs. $2.3 million in new tax revenue to the City. This is a ratio of 0.11, but the data in Table VI-1 indicates that this number is unrealistically low. If we use the numbers in this table to dismiss residential development as too costly, then we should also be using the numbers given here as a comparison for cost calculations.

Response: The GEIS does not consider speculative effects such as changes in sales tax formulae. With respect to the costs for infrastructure and traffic improvements, see the above response and the Executive Summary of this FGEIS.

With respect to the costs for municipal services such as road maintenance and to schools from the new residents, see the Fiscal Impact Analysis in Appendix 6. The fiscal impacts of this project are overwhelmingly positive.

The purpose of DGEIS Table VI-1 is to provide for a comparison of the relative fiscal benefits of competing proposals.

577. Walker (65) 1A. COSTS NOT FACTORED INTO CALCULATION OF THE PROJECT BOTTOM LINE

I start with an outline of costs that could impact the City's bottom line for this project. These are:

a) the higher cost of porous paving;

b) the costs of general landscaping;

c) the cost of interest on bond issues for the Southwest projects, or the reduced debt limit on other City projects;

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Walker's (65) public hearing comments of January 25, 2000 are largely included in his written comments, and therefore the public hearing testimony is not duplicated here. In addition, Aslanis (168) forwarded Walker's (65) written comments in an email comment.
d) the cost of extra government staff beyond the additional five police officers needed for the expanded infrastructure;

e) cost specifications or schedules for expanded road repair that will be needed citywide;

f) no calculation of the cost of emergency delays or mitigating such delays in the case of anticipated bottlenecks;

g) costs of bike lanes, considered critical in the dGEIS itself for "traffic calming";

h) costs of operating the "City Shopper Shuttle";

i) costs of removing and replacing toxic soils from the Southwest Dump;

j) costs for larger diameter water pipe for West Hill holding tank;

k) costs for upgrading sewer and water mains;

l) cost increases for household solid waste disposal.

Until these costs are accounted for, the City cannot expect to rely on the dGEIS conclusion that it will reap $1.7 million/year for implementing Alternative 3. Moreover, this figure assumes the area is built and shopped to its fullest capacity, with highest negative impacts on the city at large.

578. CPA (231)

Analysis of New Municipal Costs of Infrastructure, Maintenance, and Services

There is no analysis of the impact on sales tax revenue if Tompkins County votes to eliminate the sales tax on clothing and footwear under $110. This could have an order of magnitude effect on the expected revenue for the City and County.

The revenue projections assume that the costs for new infrastructure will be borne by developers. However, the DGEIS clearly states: "...the ability to require the developers to front the total cost of utility extension may not be feasible" (Appendix G, p. 16) Therefore, the GEIS should include projections that assume public financing of the costs for necessary new infrastructure. In
addition, there will be many secondary impacts in other parts of the City, and it will be difficult to pass on the costs of mitigation in these other areas to developers of property in the Southwest.

The only costs calculated are for five police salaries and for Department of Public Works maintenance. There are no costs calculated for the following:

- Costs for new workers moving to the area having school-age children. Southwest development could add 150 immigrants for management positions and 500 immigrants for office positions to the county. (p V-4) If we assume each immigrant requires a household and that there are .22 children per household, this will add 143 children to the local school system. At $11,250 per student, this will cost the school district $1.6 million per year. Of course each new student probably will not cost as much as an average student (page VI-8). If we assume $5,000 as the marginal cost per student, the cost will be $715,000.

- Spencer Street widening and reconfiguration. The City's plans include tearing down houses on Spencer Street, digging into the hillside, and widening the road. How much will this cost, and what will be the loss of property tax revenue to the City from the destroyed houses?

- Police equipment. Police need cars, guns and other equipment.

- City staff. What effect will Southwest development have on the need to hire new staff to oversee projects in this area and to manage a bigger infrastructure?

- Bridge at Plain Street. The DGEIS cites the need to consider construction of a bridge over Six Mile Creek at Plain Street. Who will pay for this?

- Bridge at Old Taughannock Blvd. The plan calls for putting in a bridge over Six Mile Creek at Old Taughannock Blvd; how much will this cost?

- Costs for premature repair of roads due to additional traffic throughout the City. The City should budget the replacement
cost of infrastructure into the current calculation of costs so the true costs of this development are apparent.

- Costs for time lost sitting in traffic.

- Costs for additional fuel use due to slower speeds and traffic congestion.

- Cost for operating a shuttle bus between downtown and the Elmira Road corridor.

- Cost of debt service for building infrastructure. Presumably, even if the City is going to pass on the costs to the developers, it will need to issue bonds to build much of the infrastructure and provide the mitigation measures.

- Cost of maintaining a complex new drainage system, requiring annual cleanout of all ditches and swales.

According to the DGEIS, the City intends to distribute the costs to the developers with a formula and hold the money in escrow until time to build. What happens when the City discovers the costs are more than it has in escrow?

The costs estimated in the DGEIS are $255,000 per year versus $2.3 million in new tax revenue to the City. This is a ratio of 0.11, but the data in Table VI- I indicates that this number is unrealistically low. If the numbers in this table are used to dismiss residential development as too costly, then they should also be used as a comparison for cost calculations.

Response: See response to comment #575 above.
11.1.2 Costs Not Included in DGEIS: General

579. Tompkins County Planning (218) *Estimate Development Cost* (per square foot). The dGEIS includes plans for a variety of costly mitigation measures. Once the preferred alternative is selected, please provide an estimate of the final cost per square foot (average for whole project area) to a potential developer, according to the guidance given in the dGEIS. This cost should include such factors as: cost of traffic improvements, environmental mitigation and maintenance (i.e. wetland creation, purchase of parkland, manhole system, swale development and maintenance), infrastructure (new water and sewer, plus necessary off-site upgrades), cost of producing the dGEIS, off-site mitigation and site development for any structure (fill).

Response: See the Executive Summary of this FGEIS.

580. Entlich (233) *Delivery of Public Services and Infrastructure Costs*

Just as the DGEIS overestimates sales potential and tax revenue from the proposed development in SWP, it also underestimates the costs associated with the project.

Most absurd is the blanket presumption that “For the purpose of this study, it is assumed that the costs of infrastructure will be the responsibility of the developer.” Given that Appendix F (the traffic study) estimates the need for $9 million in road and bridge improvements and traffic calming measures just to maintain minimally acceptable traffic movement on many city streets, it seems the height of folly to presume that developers will pick up these costs. This is especially true in light of an ongoing struggle to get existing property owners in the City of Ithaca to pay the cost of an upgraded traffic light. This battle has been going on for a couple of years now, and involves only about $100,000, split among at least two property owners.

On page J(VI-3) the DGEIS maintains that the five additional police officers required would cost $150,000/year. That figure is based on a median $30,000/year salary including benefits. That figure comes from a survey of fire and police salaries and is taken from Elmira. Why couldn’t CPA get an accurate figure from the...
Ithaca police department? The $30,000 figure seems very low. A figure commonly used for fringe benefits is one third of budgeted salary. If applied here, that suggests that the median salary for Ithaca Police officers is $22,500. I find that hard to believe. In addition, no estimate is included for training, equipment, uniforms, etc., nor is there an estimate for the purchase and maintenance of two new vehicles. The FGEIS should address these costs forthrightly. My guess is that an accurate number, including all costs (vehicles, too) would be closer to $50,000 per officer. $250,000/year starts to eat significantly into the projected revenue of the SWP development, and we've barely started calculating costs.

Response: City government departments made their estimates of additional costs in the DGEIS. This FGEIS contains a Fiscal Impact Analysis (Appendix 6) which more accurately determines costs and benefits. This analysis demonstrated that the fiscal impacts of the proposed project are overwhelmingly positive.

581. Wetmore (19A) Why is there no chart showing total city/county expenses offset by total revenue? If the city claims that this project would result in a net increase in revenue, it should demonstrate this, specifically and in appropriate detail. There are too many foreseeable expenses, obviously related to this proposed project, that are not revealed (for example: No figure is given for the two additional police cars that would be required, or for the additional equipment. Of the figures that are provided all are for initial purchase, with not accounting for future costs, etc.). Any claim of increased revenue is pure speculation until all numbers are on the table.

Response: The DGEIS focused on the City of Ithaca, not Tompkins County. See Appendix 6, Fiscal Impact Analysis.

582. Carini (344) It's taken over 200 years to build Ithaca to its current extent. Now the City proposes to increase its size by some 7% in a span of 2-6 years. How could this possibly be achieved without a correspondingly massive increase in the size of the City government? Major increases in the budgets of the Planning Department, the Building Department, the Police Department, and the Fire Department would be necessary. The dGEIS wildly underestimates these costs. It makes the hilarious statement that
"As regards the potential development at Southwest Area, the City of Ithaca Fire Department will cover the area without staff or equipment increases despite being understaffed and working with a zero-growth budget." The dGEIS does mention an estimated need to hire 5 additional police officers; the cost given for this is only the salary/benefits and an unspecified amount for equipment. The costs of training and administration are not provided.

Response: See Appendix 6, Fiscal Impact Analysis.

583. Wetmore (19A) Table 2-23 suggests that water rates will go up if this project is allowed. The general population should not have to pay for the added costs of this development. An alternative is to have a Business Improvement District set up for the proposed development area, and have it fund the added costs of water and other infrastructure costs (e.g.: Appendix J page VI-3 "...the Police Department will have to allocate $150,000 from its budget to fund these positions, not including costs for additional motor vehicles and other equipment."; Appendix F states road improvements will cost $7,003,883 and traffic mitigation measures for traffic will cost $2,035,705, a total of $9,039,5888; or as stated in Appendix G 5.1 "With the city's concern for the quality of infrastructure proposed and its long term maintenance cost implications, the ability to require developers to front the total costs of utility extensions may not be feasible."; etc.).

Response: See response to comment #575 above.

584. Wetmore (19A) In several places, the study states that the proposed project would cost the city substantial sums of money. Some of these expenses the study proposes be charged directly to the general population (e.g.: higher water and sewer rates for individuals, p.2-56, while others would be borne by the city budget (e.g. Appendix J page VI-3 "...the Police Department will have to allocate $150,000 from its budget to fund these positions, not including costs for additional motor vehicles and other equipment."; Appendix F states road improvements will cost $7,003,883, and traffic mitigation measures for traffic will cost $2,035,705, a total of $9,039,5888, or as stated in Appendix G-5.1 "With the city's concern for the quality of infrastructure proposed and its long term maintenance cost implications, the
ability to require developers to front the total costs of utility extensions may not be feasible.; etc.). Since the costs are not itemized, in fact, some are not even mentioned, there is no basis for stating that the City will gain revenues.

Response: See response to comment #575 above.

585. Wetmore (19A) Appendix J Page VI-4 "The development at Southwest Area will certainly create additional demand for services, though the Fire Department stated that the demand would be more likely in the form of EMS services related to traffic accidents." Why doesn't the report look into the increased EMS demand, and its impacts on the community?

Response: The Fire Department has estimated the cost of the proposal, which is included in the estimate of increase in City government costs above. The Lead Agency considers it unlikely that the types of uses proposed for Southwest Park will have significant EMS demands.

586. Byard (347) 5. Increase in City Revenue: It appears that its possible we may get an increase in revenue, but the DGEIS never does an actual numbers for numbers comparison of the increased costs. It provides some numbers from the Police ($150,000 plus vehicles), and from public works ($108,000 plus salaries for 2 full time workers and 2 seasonal workers), and suggests the Fire department might need some money. Not only doesn't estimate totals, but it doesn't add them up and compare with revenues. Also it does not include external costs such as public works costs on roads outside the area due to increase traffic. Its not clear to me if these costs included Elmira road intersections or not, but they certainly did not include all the traffic mitigating suggestions needed for the rest of the city. The mitigation ideas for problems included in the DGEIS often were not included in costs calculated for the city, and it was not clear who would end up paying many of these or how they might be enforced (i.e. using less road salt and sweeping parking lots to decrease runoff pollution). The DGEIS cites studies which find that the cost to municipalities of the new developments was not more than revenues, but even this statistic does not seem to include externalities, such as excess traffic, that the city will have to deal with. The DGEIS does not convince me that there is certainty
that the city will make money on this or that the money that might be made will be worth the loss of open space, more traffic, ugly suburban sprawl, and losses to existing downtown businesses. I am also not clear if my water and sewer bill might increase due to this project. As there is more traffic, it is less enjoyable to walk and more dangerous to bicycle. Traffic increases will also affect commuters who need to use Route 13 and may increase their daily commutes when extra traffic lights need to be installed.

Response: See Appendix 6, Fiscal Impact Analysis.

587. Jennifer Schriber (125) COST: The projected costs of development do not accurately represent the actual costs. The environmental mitigation costs are underestimated. Building and paving in a flood plain create exorbitant maintenance costs. The projected income in tax base and the cost of maintenance of the site with tax dollars narrows the profit margin CONSIDERABLY.

Response: See Appendix 6, Fiscal Impact Analysis.

588. Jennifer Schriber (125) UTILITIES: The existing infrastructure to provide utilities is old and decrepit. The initial capital improvement costs again narrow any profit margins and are not adequately addressed.

Response: The Lead Agency respectfully disagrees with the characterization of the City's infrastructure. Infrastructure costs borne by the City will be recovered through a mitigation fee. Other infrastructure costs will be the responsibility of private developers.


Response: Engineering costs associated with soil conditions are primarily associated with building foundations, and as such, will be the responsibility of private developers.
590. Wetmore (19A) page 12-77 states: "The project will bring substantial new fiscal revenues to the city and the county, with the estimation by city officials that there will be relatively low additional service provision costs. In addition, these new revenues can be used to support and enhance City services, which in turn improves the quality of life in the City's neighborhoods, thus strengthening the future via ability of the city as a whole." This statement is a mere assertion, rather than a reasoned argument or presentation of conclusive evidence. As such, its inclusion in this report is inappropriate. Allegedly (and hopefully!) The city has sponsored the study to determine the likely real impacts of the proposed project. Therefore, the study must not simply base its conclusions on the sponsor's unsupported opinions.

Response: See Appendix 6, Fiscal Impact Analysis.

591. Roberts (81) 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 those.

Response: See Appendix 6, Fiscal Impact Analysis. While unanticipated costs are always a consideration, the Lead Agency believes the net impact of this project will be overwhelmingly positive.

592. Gougakis (34) Page 2-76 (in summary book) there are many increases in different city dept. But I find it unusual that the fire department does not foresee needing budget adjustments.

593. Gougakis (34) On page 2-77: It states that city officials do not see high cost, but low service costs, to the project. Revenues will go back to the city services...From reading the DGEIS, I see a lot of cost and budget department needs and utility additions.

594. Manos (38) I am also concerned about the economic effects. Not only are we looking for tax revenues, but we are also looking for ways to have sensible smart growth in this town that does not bring us more municipal costs. What are the costs of fire protection, root maiming, plowing, those things?

595. Buchberg (205) Infrastructure Costs:

The various estimates of retail sales and property tax values listed in the report show, if not an equivalence, but at least an
approximate correspondence to those in the BID area, although Southwest Park covers a much larger geographic area. I hope those evaluating the police and D.P.W. hours and cost estimates will compare those with what the city provides to downtown to see if those estimates are reasonable (see letter from Doug McDonald to Gary Ferguson, re: MOU [Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Ithaca and the Ithaca Downtown Partnership]).

Response: See Appendix 6, Fiscal Impact Analysis.

596. Buchberg (205) The report does overlook the cost of building kiosks on the Commons, in the new library directing shoppers to Southwest Park...Any advertising...in other established parts of the city leading them there would be beneficial.

Response: The costs for mitigation measures such as these will likely be borne by the City; however, they are not expected to be significant.

597. Highlands (108) The GEIS has a major hole in it I would like to see addressed. In reaching its conclusion the development would yield the City a net profit, it states, appendix J.5.2, quote, for the purpose of this study it is assumed that the costs of infrastructure will be the responsibility of the developer, unquote. Without this questionable assumption the project looks a good deal more expensive....

On page 13 it states that a project that can -- as to how the City would be collecting for infrastructure costs, a project that contributes 10 percent of the demand for a particular off-site improvement may be required to pay up to 10 percent of the cost of the improvement.

Now, suppose the development were to be started, roads built to open up the area and some tenants found and that we have 60 percent occupancy and 80 percent projected infrastructure costs. Who would pay for that 20 percent? The study does not address this and it should.
Another issue is that of the cost of building on a flood plain. The soils are described as clay and silt. These are lousy substrates for buildings. Read expensive.

GEIS calls for building, quote, substitute wetlands, end quote, as well as drainage ditches and swales and other measures to divert storm water runoff and mitigate flooding. Again, lots of earthwork and concrete. Read expensive. How the expense of building on a less than suitable site will affect the budget of potential developers or their willingness to pay in full for infrastructure costs has not been addressed in this study and it should be.

Another recent event illustrates what we are up against. Last Thursday, January 20th, the Ithaca Journal reported that Marina Realty, Incorporated, has asked the City of Ithaca for a loan of $100,000 to help pay for building a restaurant on Inlet Island. This loan is on top of substantial tax abatements and money from the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The main reason they gave for needing the loan was a faulty estimate. The project was estimated as costing $1.8 Million but the lowest bid came in at $2.4 Million.

That’s an easy math problem. The bid, not including change orders, is 30 percent higher than the estimate in the original budget. The causes the company gave for higher costs were mainly poor building soils and the cost of removing contaminated soils from the site. Doesn’t this sound rather similar to conditions in Southwest Park?

A miscalculation of 30 percent or even 10 percent of the costs of building could have a drastic effect on developers’ willingness to pay infrastructure costs. And by the time the City reaches that point, they may be in too deep to bargain effectively and be stuck with the costs. As a taxpayer that concerns me.

I conclude that the City has no business in exploiting undeveloped areas so long as there are large underdeveloped areas available. Elmira Road has a number of these. So does Carpenter Industrial Park, the west end of State Street and downtown itself. All of these areas also have water, sewer and
roads. All of them are closer to most Ithaca residents than Southwest Park. There are also many new development projects going on in the west end and we should take it one step at a time and not own ourselves up to the huge costs that can arise when one estimates too hastily and too optimistically.

Response: See response to comment #575 above. Costs of wetlands mitigation and for foundations on difficult soils will be the responsibility of private developers.
11.1.3 Costs Not Included in DGEIS: Transportation

598. NYSDOT (223) 7) The cost estimates for the identified highway mitigation appear low, particularly for the proposed structures. A review of the costs for the proposed bridge between Court Street and Taughannock Boulevard indicates it should be increased by over 50% to realistically portray the possible cost. There may be similar discrepancies elsewhere in the estimates.

Response: See the Executive Summary of this FGEIS. The City intends to seek Federal and State grants and other funding for bridge improvements which will benefit all residents of the City.

599. Klein (93) I mentioned the new roads that will have to be put in. There are five new roads and bridges recommended in the environmental impact statement. The cost of these is at least over $10 Million. I calculate it as at least $14 Million.

Response: See the Executive Summary of this FGEIS for a discussion of how costs will be allocated among various road improvements.

600. NYSDOT (223) 8) The cost of acquiring the right-of-way necessary to construct the proposed mitigation should be included. In an urban setting such as this, not only the price of the property, but the cost of the process can be significant.

Response: See the Executive Summary of this FGEIS. Right-of-Way acquisition costs have been included in the mitigation formula.

601. MConboy (198)20...The DGEIS needs to contain a realistic [economic] analysis of developer/city cost sharing of these big-ticket [infrastructure] items [such as roads, a new bridge, sewer etc.]..

Response: See the Executive Summary of this FGEIS for the proposed formula.

602. Flores (206) There are no costs projected for general landscaping, bike lanes or the City Shopper Shuttle bus. The increased costs to the city

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20 Comments submitted by MConboy (198), excerpted from written statements of Glover (73). These comments were not submitted by Glover as part of his written comments.
for staff to manage the larger infrastructure and for the maintenance funds needed for road repair are not adequately represented.

Response: See response to comment #575 above.

603. Wetmore (19A) There is no estimation of street cleaning and plowing expenses for the city.

Response: These expenses are included in the Fiscal Impact Analysis, Appendix 6.

604. Wetmore (19A) There is no discussion of increased capital and operating expenses for the bus system. With a 7% increase in coverage, there would be an increase in costs for TCAT. These costs should not be passed along to the public in the form of fare increases or service cutbacks - the project developers should be made to cover the expenses attributable to their project.

Response: Comment noted. The Lead Agency will consider this mitigation measure when making its findings.

605. Ahlers (254) The GEIS should also provide a fuller evaluation of infrastructure costs for Southwest Area development-for roads, sewage and water, traffic lights, traffic calming of all affected city neighborhoods (not just those identified in the current draft), police, and so forth. In evaluating those infrastructure costs, the GEIS should include the costs of financing bonds and the cost for ongoing maintenance of new roads and other new infrastructure. We should also consider the cost of added maintenance of existing roads to cope with the increased traffic.

Response: See the Executive Summary of this FGEIS.
11.1.4 Costs Not Included in DGEIS: Water/Sewer

606. Glover (73) Water and sewer rates will rise. Loss of water capacity due to diversion to Southwest will require the City to "develop capital improvement plans and supportive utility rate structures." The resulting "increasing costs due to higher flow rates" will require the City to "reevaluate rates" (vol. 1; 2.9.3 table 2-23).

Response: The City believes it has ample capacity to service development in the Southwest Park and has made a determination to allocate capacity here, as opposed to elsewhere. The use of a mitigation fee will help ensure that users do not have to pay for capital costs. User fees are always structured to recover actual service costs. Rates may actually be lower, depending on the demands of individual users.

607. Wetmore (19A) The DGEIS suggests that there is a good chance the city would have to raise water and sewer rates to accommodate the increased demands from the proposed project. Although not emphasized in the DGEIS, it is also likely that we would see substantial increases in costs for police and fire protection, snow removal, street maintenance and other taxpayer-supported services. The DGEIS suggests that this could exceed $10 million, with an additional $500,000 in annual costs. These figures are based upon favorable projections (like full occupancy--unlikely given the precedent of Carpenter Business Park going 15 years without any takers), and do not include many of the residual costs of the project (which are, for some unknown reason, ignored by the report).

Response: To the extent that the project takes time to lease (or fill up), there would be lower costs associated with the project along with lower revenues. See Appendix 6 of this FGEIS.
11.1.5 Costs Not Included in DGEIS: Dump

608. Flores (206) The makes no calculation for the cost of removing the 1,164,500 cubic feet of soil poisoned by the dump with arsenic, acetone, benzene, barium, lead and mercury. It suggests using porous paving to reduce the problem of methane explosions, but does not include the cost for the more expensive paving.

609. Milner (186) Among my primary concerns are (1) the environmental impact of building on a former dump site (which I understand will require the use of porous pavement that has not been included in projected costs).

Response: The GEIS does not propose that the City incur such costs. Any costs for dump remediation, including the use of porous paving, required by a regulatory agency, would be borne by private developers.
11.1.6 Costs Not Included in DGEIS: Solid Waste

610. Wetmore (19A) Impacts on Tompkins County’s solid waste disposal operations and capacity have not been investigated. Both construction waste and additional wastes from packaging operations of proposed new businesses, etc. must be examined.

Response: The GEIS does not propose that the City incur such costs. Any costs for solid waste disposal would be borne by private developers, and all waste would be disposed of according to applicable Federal, State, and local regulations.
11.1.7 Costs Not Included in DGEIS: Quality of Life/Externalities

611. Walker (65) 1B. SOCIAL COSTS

If the consultants were to provide a complete assessment of the social costs of this proposal, they would need to employ techniques like the social accounting matrix (SAM) techniques developed by Sam Cole at the SUNY-Buffalo. Professors like Sid Saltzman teach these techniques no further from City Hall than Cornell University. Analysts using SAM techniques look at the first, second and subsequent round income distributions of major development projects like the one proposed here. Most studies looking at retail projects similar to the one proposed for SW Park find dramatic inequalities in income distribution and wealth generation associated with them.

...In other words, the social costs of the project, while unlikely to directly affect City Hall returns from such a project, will have a tremendous impact upon Ithaca citizens. A recent study found that the income of the richest Americans has grown by 30% and that of the poorest Americans has fallen by 21%. The Economist.21 The causes are complex, but a contributing element is the lack of living wage commitments by local governments and developers around the nation. This lack of commitments is embodied in proposals like this one for Southwest Park.

Response: The commentor's opinion is noted.

612. CAC (220) 1. Potential costs to City taxpayers are grossly underestimated and fail to take into account numerous additional costs, some of which are mentioned above.

One example is loss in property values in nearby neighborhoods, as a result of increased traffic, noise, and air pollution.

613. Ahlers (254) Economic Impacts

In evaluating the economic gain brought by the Southwest Area development, the GEIS should determine whether there is a potential for declining residential property taxes. Residential property values tend to decrease when traffic increases or is likely to increase. This may be why some houses on Plain Street, for example, are selling at or being offered at below tax assessment.

The City of Ithaca may see a greater decline in residential property values than traffic alone would cause. Some speakers at the dGEIS public hearings mentioned choosing Ithaca over other locations in the United States. These are people with relatively high-paying jobs who probably buy some of the more expensive houses in the City, and help keep the price of housing in Ithaca higher than in neighboring villages and cities. If the quality of life in the City of Ithaca declines, such people will be more likely to move outside the city or even to another part of the country.

Response: Comments noted. See Appendix 6, Fiscal Impact Analysis. Other "qualitative" considerations may be that people living in the Ithaca Area have overall higher property values because the area has a more complete array of shopping opportunities. There is less of a need to drive out of town to access desired goods and services.

614. Herrmann (256) Traffic is already a huge problem on Rt. 13 and it already a very dangerous road. Adding lots of new cars will make my life, and the lives of others who travel this route, miserable. The DGEIS for Southwest Park describes a huge and UNACCEPTABLE increase in traffic and degradation of numerous intersections. It is also unwarranted and destructive to remove housing on Spencer St. to "save" other neighborhoods the traffic. This is an unfair privileging of certain neighborhoods over others. I work in Cortland, and, as it is, people from there complain that they try to avoid Ithaca as much as possible because of the traffic. Instead of drawing shoppers from Cortland, this Development plan, as now conceived, is only likely to keep them away because of even more traffic. Further, the types of improvements needed for the roads, such as widened bridges, extra lanes and special lights are all expensive and difficult to pass along to specific developers.

Response: Comment noted. See Section 11 for responses to traffic related comments.
11.1.8 Costs Not Included in DGEIS: Who Pays?

615. Wegmans (252) Utilities Evaluation Report: Page 16, second paragraph: "...the ability to require developers to front the total cost of utility extension may not be feasible." Why can't the developers pay for these costs? The costs for all other incurred expenses are intended to be recouped from the development of the Southwest Area.

Response: See the Executive Summary of this FGEIS.

616. Wegmans (252) Utilities Evaluation Report: Page 17, table 5.1: "Under the Description column" Are any of the listings intended to cover the costs of easement acquisition and compensation?

Response: Right of way acquisition is not included in this Table.

617. Wegmans (252) Page ES-4, fourth paragraph: "...costs to develop the additional infrastructure required. These impacts are mitigatable through user fees..." Who would be paying these fees? Would these fees be City wide, district wide or development orientated?

618. Wegmans (252) Page 6-Scope, fifth paragraph: "The mitigation plan will result in payment of mitigation fees by future developers." How is the mitigation plan going to be implemented and managed? One could foresee a possible conflict between implementation of the mitigation plan and the development of the project in phases.

619. Wegmans (252) Page 6-Scope, first paragraph, fourth paragraph; Page 7-Scope, first paragraph, fifth paragraph: "The mitigation plan will result in payment of mitigation fees by future developers." Same comment as above. How is the mitigation plan going to be implemented and managed?

Response: See the Executive Summary of this FGEIS.

620. Wegmans (252) Page 1-3, second paragraph: "The City intends to recover the costs...10% of the demand...10% of the cost..." This method may
become somewhat cumbersome, inequitable and difficult to manage. There may be delays in implementation of the improvements if all of the funding is not available.

Response: The City may choose to implement certain improvements, recouping the costs later through mitigation fees.

621. Dunaway (348) As someone pointed out recently in a letter to the Journal, the city has been unable to get K-Mart to pay for a simple stop sign at a dangerous intersection directly in front of their store, so there is no reason to be optimistic that the city will be able to get the Southwest Park retailers to pay for the major infrastructure improvements being planned. Certainly it is unlikely that they will provide the money up-front to the city, so the city will have to incur considerable expense prior to receiving any of the expected revenue. This means borrowing money and repaying it with interest. The dGEIS does not take this into account, and certainly the debt service will cut deeply into the tax revenue, particularly in the first years.

622. Schwartz (210) Who will pay for the necessary infrastructure and tax breaks that have been promised to prospective developers? There is no guarantee that added revenue will be adequate to cover them.

623. Nassar (92) There is no guarantee that the taxpayers will not end up financing the needed infrastructure;

624. Carini (344) The economic analysis in the dGEIS is based on the highly optimistic assumption that the developers would pay 100% of the infrastructure costs: roads, a new bridge, sewers, etc. But successful retail corporations are tough negotiators. How realistic is this assumption when the stores can threaten to build somewhere else? The dGEIS needs to contain a realistic analysis of developer/city cost sharing of these big-ticket items. Otherwise it's impossible to do a serious cost/benefit assessment.

625. Kraus (342) ...a new large development should have all impact fees for now and the future paid for by the developers, without tax exemptions or breaks...

Response: See the Executive Summary of this FGEIS.

The Chazen Companies
Draft May 18, 2000
626. Daniels (352) Infrastructure (roads, sewers, water, police, fire) will cost money. Although tax revenue will come in from the new stores, it will also be lost by existing stores. Ithaca residents should not have to pay for the “privilege” of having big box stores in their town, and development does not pay for itself.

627. Herrmann (256) Developers should be required to PAY ALL COSTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE for their developments. These include roads, sewer and water lines, and maintenance of them. Extra police will be required, as well as maintenance, yet OF THE COSTS HAVE NOT BEEN INCLUDED IN THE DGEIS.

Response: See the Appendix 6, Fiscal Impact Analysis. The fiscal impacts of the project are expected to be positive.

628. Blodgett (251) The study cites a need for funds to support aging infrastructure. This development will create an enormous need for additional funds for infrastructure, which will likely create an additional property tax burden. We would like to see developers pay for infrastructure, but it is not a reasonable assumption.

Response: See the Executive Summary and Appendix 6 of this FGEIS.

629. Daniels (352) The proposed development site is in a floodplain, as the environmental reports have made clear. Damage to homes and small businesses not part of the new development is inevitable. Who will pay for these damages?

Response: The DGEIS does no identify the likelihood of damage to homes and small businesses that are not part of the development as a potential impact of the project.

630. Blodgett (251) Flood control measures are very difficult (if not impossible) to maintain adequately in a floodplain. As a city, we may be incurring vast legal liability for commercial enterprises that suffer flood damage.

Response: The DGEIS does not conclude that significant flood damage will occur to commercial businesses as a result of the project.
631. Peterson, C (239)  page 2-16 This page addresses maintenance of swales, manholes, etc. Who exactly does this- does the taxpayer pay for it eventually? This should be made very clear because it impacts economic cost/benefit calculations.

Response: The improvements and the maintenance thereof will be the responsibility of the developers.

632. Peterson, C (239)  page 2-55. Who pays for possible shortcomings of the water distribution system for fire service that are due to new construction? This, too, needs to be considered in cost/benefit studies.

Response: The DGEIS evaluated fire service demands and concluded that adequate pressures could be provided to project sites.

633. Nathanielsz (343)  There are, no doubt, many other hidden, unforeseen, or otherwise overlooked costs (For example, potentially tremendous costs should the mitigations provided by engineers to prevent flooding prove to be too little for nature.).

Response: See Appendix 6, Fiscal Impact Analysis. While unanticipated costs are always a consideration, the Lead Agency believes the net impact of this project will be overwhelmingly positive.
11.1.9 Costs of Community Services

634. Entlich (233) On pages J(VI-1 and VI-2), the DGEIS cites Cost of Community Services (COCS) studies (COCS) carried out by the American Farmland Trust (AFT) to support its contention that commercial development of SWP "should provide a clear fiscal benefit to the City of Ithaca" since commercial development only costs $.29 in community services for each $1.00 raised, as opposed to $1.11 for residential development (a net loss). The same data is used by CPA to discourage consideration of alternative 2, which includes substantial residential development. However, this selective presentation of data from the studies seriously misrepresents the COCS studies findings.

The American Farmland Trust is an organization primarily devoted to the preservation of farmland. Their COCS studies are designed to provide evidence for the fiscal soundness of leaving agricultural land undeveloped, not to promote commercial development. Furthermore, as explained to me by staff of the AFT's northeast regional office (located in Saratoga Springs, NY), all the COCS studies contain a statement regarding the long-term impacts of commercial and industrial development on community costs. For example, a recently (1999) completed study for Skagit County, Washington includes this clarification about the seemingly low costs associated with commercial/industrial development:

When interpreting the commercial and industrial ratios, it is important to understand that this study analyzes current, direct costs to the county. New industries bring new jobs and residents to the region. Consequently, they also increase population, housing and county government spending over time. However, existing businesses and industries, including agriculture and forestry, will not increase population and spending as new industries would. Therefore, when deciding whether to develop new business and industries or protect existing ones, existing ones have two clear advantages. Existing farms, forests, businesses and industries provide surplus revenues to the county and do not contribute to increases in the population. Although not part of this analysis, the fiscal
consequences of these long-term, indirect impacts should be considered when making land use decisions.

I have attached this report fragment as Exhibit A.

In addition, I have attached portions of two other reports forwarded to me by the American Farmland Trust. One is entitled “The Effects of Development and Land Conservation on Property Taxes in Connecticut Towns” (1995). The other is “Land Conservation, Development and Property Taxes in New York” (1997). Both reports show that communities with the most commercial development have the highest property taxes. In the Connecticut study, higher retail sales, higher sales tax collection and higher value of commercial/industrial/utility property all correlated with higher property taxes. I have attached these study fragments as Exhibit B1-B12.

Furthermore, the American Farmland Trust recently did a comprehensive survey of farmland throughout the United States and classified agricultural land into several categories. The study was called Farming on the Edge. As can be seen from the map they produced for New York State, large portions of Tompkins County, especially the area surrounding the City of Ithaca, are colored red. This indicates an area with high quality farmland which is under pressure for development. This is precisely the area which would feel the biggest demand for new housing from job creation spurred by SWP. (Note: A full color version of the map is attached as Exhibit C1. Since the text accompanying the map is yellow, a second black and white copy of the map is attached as Exhibit C2 in order to facilitate reading of the text).

The manner in which CPA utilizes a tiny snippet of AFT COCS study findings to fiscally justify the SWP development is unsupported by a full reading of the study. The FGEIS should make clear that the data cited, when fully examined, does not support, and in fact contradicts, the conclusions drawn by CPA.

Response: The quotes from the American Farmland Trust data were used in the introductory overview to the section on direct costs due to the project. This work by AFT, while developed in support of retention of farmland, and not of promoting commercial development, nonetheless clearly indicates that commercial
development in itself has superior fiscal benefits to residential
development, in a given municipality. These data are not used
as a ratio of benefits or in any other analytical technique.

The site proposed for commercial development is not farmland.
This landfill land is currently underutilized land within the
existing urban fabric of Ithaca. This project in an urbanized
environment can theoretically relieve development pressure on
non-urbanized areas in the region by meeting demand for these
development types in an urbanized setting.

635. Nathanielsz (343) Studies have shown...that “development does not cover new
public costs; that is, it brings in less revenue for local
governments than the price of servicing it.”

A 1991 study in DuPage County, Illinois, showed that as the
county grew, taxes kept going up, and that new development
tended to increase property taxes, especially in communities with
rapid growth. These findings made the front page of the Wall
Street Journal.

Response: Applying general data on growth in general to a specific
proposal are not enlightening. This case does not specifically
refer to the nature of the development, the fiscal status of the
County, or other factors that could potentially cause higher
taxes and is, therefore, not instructive. See Appendix 6, Fiscal
Impact Analysis, which concludes the impacts are positive.
11.2 Effect of SALUP on Downtown

SUMMARY

Comments address four main issues. Several comments took issue with the definition of “blighting” and its use as a threshold to measure impacts on downtown, and the comments emphasized that the standard was inappropriate and did not account for all impacts.

Many comments address the competition that downtown would face from the Southwest Area development, and the commenters feel that the DGEIS either understates or misrepresents the competitive impacts and the projected results. Highlighted specifically are the presumed impacts from so-called “category killer” stores, like Barnes and Noble or Williams-Sonoma, which are thought to easily overwhelm smaller stores with a particular niche (like books or cookware).

Finally, other comments addressed the statistics used or the proposed mitigation measures. Note that, while Ferguson’s (74) comments cover a wide range of topics, his comments are included in their entirety under “Mitigation” and responses to his comments will be included there.

11.2.1 Blighting

636. Tompkins County Planning (218) Impact on Downtown. The Final Scope for the dGEIS states it will determine the impact of the proposal on downtown Ithaca. The dGEIS sets the impact threshold as resultant “blighting” of the downtown. This standard is inappropriate. Concluding that the proposal would not result in a blighted downtown does not fully document the potential impact of this project on downtown.

Response: Comments noted. This standard is per the State Environmental Quality Review law, and current case law.

637. Buchberg (205) ...I feel that the GEIS greatly overlooks the damage that may occur downtown, even if it doesn’t fit the technical definition of a “blight” while it overlooks other ways the city can generate revenue from this project.

Response: The commentor’s opinion is noted. The GEIS preparers stand by their analyses.
638. CAC (220) What if the impact of adding 85% more retail within City limits is distributed differently? What happens if more sales are transferred from existing business within City limits? The GEIS should address these possibilities. The potential impacts of blighting of existing commercial areas and the resultant impacts to tax base and community character should be carefully postulated.

Response: The "potential impacts of blighting of existing commercial areas" was "carefully postulated." The threshold for causing blighting conditions is not even remotely reached under the evaluation of the DGEIS, nor any reasonable sensitivity testing of the evaluation.

11.2.2 Category Killer/Overwhelming Competition

639. Wetmore (19A) Appendix J page II-7, table II-2, and again Appendix J Page II-12, table II-5. Why is there not a category labeled "bookstores?" Bookstores are one of downtown Ithaca’s main attractions. In ignoring this category, the DGEIS makes it more difficult to accurately assess the impact of the project on downtown Ithaca.

Response: Bookstores were not included in Appendix J page II-7, Table II-2 because this was data drawn from an earlier study. Bookstores are included in page II-12 Table II-5.

640. Wetmore (19A) Page 2-73. "However, It is unlikely that certain businesses would absorb all competitive effects and the remainder none. It is more likely that ail businesses that have competitive product lines would share some of the competitive pressure." This assertion is not backed up in the report, or in the appendices. Common sense shows it to be false. So-called category-killer stores direct their effect at specific businesses, and are likely tenants of the proposed project. For example, if a Borders opened in SW Park, the downtown bookstores would suffer major revenue losses. If an Eastern Mountain Sports opened, outdoor stores, such as Wildware, would take a direct hit. Williams Sonoma would probably put Now You're Cooking out of business. And so forth.
Response: Comments noted. Common sense indicates that there would be a sharing of competitive pressures based on product lines. Price is only one factor in the consumer decision-making process. Brand/store loyalty, shopping environment, and location are other important considerations.

641. Herrmann (256) Downtown is and should continue to be the focus of the City's efforts for commercial development. Any stores that go in the Southwest (or Carpenter Park) should not be "category killers" such as huge bookstores. Better signage to the Commons and more attractive entranceways (i.e. by Cinemopolis) should be created. We are blessed with great variety downtown (and I do as much of my shopping as possible there) and we must work to preserve it. Don't create office space in the Southwest that competes with downtown. Invest in downtown before all this other development.

Response: The commentor's opinions are noted.

642. MConboy (198) DGEIS: Page 2-73, states: "However, it is unlikely that certain [downtown] businesses would absorb all competitive effects and the remainder none. It is more likely that all businesses that have competitive product lines would share some of the competitive pressure.” This assertion is not backed up in the report or in the appendices...

So-called category-killer stores direct their effect on specific businesses, and are like tenants of such a development. For example, if a Borders opens in SW Park, then the downtown bookstores would suffer a major hit. If an Eastern Mountain Sports opened, local camping stores would take a direct hit. Williams Sonoma would probably put Now Your Cooking out of business. And so forth. The effect would not stop there.

On page 2-73, the report predicts 17,900 square feet of new vacancies in the downtown that would be directly attributable to the proposed project. If downtown is not able to fill these quickly, they will cause a loss in traffic that will affect the neighboring stores. This effect will be amplified if the stores that go out of business are some of the downtown "draw" stores, like the bookstores. The accelerating decay of our downtown area would
cause people to flee the city for its suburbs. This would result in a net loss of tax revenue to the city.

Response:
Comments noted. Competitive pressure is likely to be based on product lines. 17,900 square feet of potential vacancies forecast in this analysis are unlikely to create a downward spiral in the downtown leading to blighted conditions. Further, the new shoppers drawn to Ithaca are an opportunity to reinforce the economy of the downtown by emphasizing its unique offerings, versus the "standard" offerings typical of the types of retailing proposed for the southwest area.

643. Bem (180) NEGATIVE IMPACT ON DOWNTOWN & EXISTING BUSINESSES. The type of retail development the City is anticipating (eg., Target, Borders, Home Depot, etc) tends to overwhelm and drive out existing, smaller, locally-owned businesses. Ithaca's downtown is already fragile (and neglected, as City resources go into the Route 13 corridor); a competing retail center of this scale will undermine it further.

Response:
The potential vacancies forecast in this analysis are unlikely to create a downward spiral in the downtown leading to blighted conditions. Further, the new shoppers drawn to Ithaca are an opportunity to reinforce the economy of the downtown by emphasizing its unique offerings, versus the "standard" offerings typical of the types of retailing proposed for the southwest area.

644. Dunaway (348)...In the case of downtown particularly, the Southwest Park development could be the final blow that kills downtown Ithaca as a shopping destination. If the negative effect is higher than estimated, there could be a significant impact on sales tax, property tax and employment.

Response:
The potential vacancies forecast in this analysis are unlikely to create a downward spiral in the downtown leading to blighted conditions. Further, the new shoppers drawn to Ithaca are an opportunity to reinforce the economy of the downtown by emphasizing its unique offerings, versus the "standard" offerings typical of the types of retailing proposed for the Southwest Area.

645. Buchberg (205) Clearly small stores and to some extent medium stores will compete directly with downtown. Not only will they compete
directly for consumer sales, but the developers will, out of necessity try to have current downtown stores either open second locations, or entirely move to Southwest Park, or the adjacent Elmira Road corridor. The GEIS author also states p 1-2 “development of other retail centers is not considered in this analysis.”

Response: Comments noted. The potential vacancies forecast in this analysis are unlikely to create a downward spiral in the downtown leading to blighted conditions. This DGEIS, focuses on the project under consideration. It cannot assess the contingencies of unknown possible future events such as other retail proposals etc.

646. Curran (107) Southwest is going to have free parking. Southwest I guarantee will have good road signage like the mall. And Southwest will probably have some degree of aesthetic attention. Why is it that Southwest can move so rapidly and yet on The Commons when we ask for the basics for doing business in this new century that somehow we cannot get equal treatment? What happened to paid parking in Southwest? That was the original plan. What happened? It is not viable and the City allowed it to be dumped, but not for us on The Commons.

Response: Comments noted. The issue of parking fees for the Commons or other areas is separate from the adoption of the Southwest Plan. The Lead Agency does not believe that it can mandate parking fees on privately owned land.

647. Titus (145) 17,900 square feet of new vacancies in the downtown that would be directly attributable to the proposed project. If downtown is not able to fill these quickly they will cause a loss in traffic that will affect the neighboring stores. This affect will be amplified if the stores that go out of business are some that downtown draws to us, like the bookstores.

Response: The potential vacancies forecast in this analysis are unlikely to create a downward spiral in the downtown leading to blighted conditions. Further, the new shoppers drawn to Ithaca are an opportunity to reinforce the economy of the downtown by emphasizing its unique offerings, versus the “standard” offerings typical of the types of retailing proposed for the southwest area.
648. Buchberg (205) Although it is currently on hold, the Pyramid Mall, Lansing expansion will cause increased recruitment from the downtown area. The consultant's report states no downtown merchants are located there, but 1 has a semi-permanent location and another has been there for the last 2 holiday seasons.

Response: This level of downtown retailer presence at the Pyramid Mall does not appreciably change the underlying analysis.

11.2.3 Statistics

649. Kilgore (153) Maybe -- maybe we ought to see about putting in the report how much vacant office space we have right now as opposed to how much we're adding. How much vacant retail space we have right now. You're going to be cannibalizing. 36 percent of the local businesses is going to be the revenue from this. What's the net loss here?

Response: The DGEIS report analyzed impacts to retail space. Whether office space is built or not will be a function of market demand.

650. Wetmore (19A) Appendix J, Page 11-6 states: "A Detailed space inventory for downtown Ithaca was compiled by the City of Ithaca Planning Department in 1990 and updated in 1994." Why are six-year-old figures being used when the Downtown Ithaca Partnership has current ones?

Response: The Downtown Ithaca Partnership stated that these were the most up-to-date figures available, and that they are representative of current conditions.

11.2.4 Downtown as a Niche Market

651. Vanetten (40) In some of the GEIS it says that the retail development that would be built would not compete with the specialty shops of the Commons. And in other parts of the statement it says that the planned retail development is expected to take $3 Million a year
from the local -- from the downtown business district. And that is an inconsistency.

Response: The GEIS evaluation indicates that while there would be low levels of direct competition to the downtown, that nonetheless, some sales now made in the downtown may shift to the proposed southwest retail area. However, some of the sales shift from the downtown may be made-up by "spill-over" sales to new shoppers attracted by the new retail area.

652. Vanetten (40) ...it can't just be filled with like large Kmart/Target kind of stores, it's going to have to be charged with specialty big-box stores, like EMS Sports, these kind of specialty shops that would be directly competing with existing niche businesses that we have that are largely concentrated on the Commons.

Response: The retail mix has not been set for the project area, other than it would likely be "mass retailers". The exact make-up will be a function of the market demand.

653. Vanetten (40) the environmental impact statement doesn't include the economics that we have, the specialty market that we are effectively competing in because people do come from Syracuse and other areas to shop in what we have already.

Response: This point is well taken, and underscores the strong competitive position that the downtown area has, and this established and unique position of the downtown area is the basis for finding that there is a relatively low competitive threat to the downtown from the proposed southwest retail area.

11.2.5 Mitigation

654. Tompkins County Planning (218) Adequacy of Mitigation. The dGEIS identifies mitigation measures intended to address potential impacts on downtown Ithaca. However, the dGEIS does not identify to what degree the measures will mitigate the identified impacts, where the funding will come from or how they will be implemented. Please provide this information.
Response: The mitigation efforts are expected to keep the negative economic impacts (i.e. sales transfers) at the forecast levels, and possibly to even lower levels of impacts.

The funding and implementation of mitigation will be determined by the Lead Agency when it makes its Findings.

655. Ferguson (74) The GEIS economic analysis acknowledges that downtown will be impacted by a new growth center in Southwest. Several aspects of this analysis deserve further consideration:

(a) The severity of economic impact on downtown will depend on the type of commercial activity permitted.

- Impact will vary depending on the type of big box store permitted. For example, a category killer bookstore will have a very different direct impact on downtown retailing than a discount apparel store.

- There is a significant difference in the impact of a big box store and a strip center comprised of many small retail stores. Downtown’s building block unit is the 1,000 to 4,000 square foot specialty storefront. Southwest strip centers that offer lots of small retail spaces will compete head-to-head with downtown for the same retail businesses.

- A Southwest office park will also compete head-to-head with one of downtown key market niches. Conversely, the development of industrial office flex-space represents a niche needed by the community that cannot be readily accommodated downtown.

(b) The GEIS economic analysis does not consider impacts to downtown that might arise in the years after the development of the proposed commercial properties. Big boxes will act as traffic generators and surrogate anchors for the Southwest area. As the experience of numerous other communities show, this traffic will serve as a magnet for additional development and investment not necessarily contemplated by the original planners. Service businesses, smaller retailers and offices may all want to position themselves closer to the traffic hub of the City. How the City is

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22 Ferguson’s (74) public hearing comments of January 25, 2000 are largely included in his written comments, and therefore the public hearing testimony is not duplicated here.
able to deal with this pressure will determine how severely downtown will be affected.

Providing Links to Downtown

If Southwest Ithaca is to be redeveloped as proposed, it is critical to consider how this area will link and connect with downtown. There are several important linkage issues to consider:

(a) The big box, high traffic centers in Southwest should be required to install kiosks located at key pedestrian locations. Kiosks could be managed by the Downtown Partnership and would help direct and entice shoppers to extend their trip to downtown.

(b) Information highway signage in the Southwest area should clearly highlight downtown as a destination.

(c) The highway corridors connecting downtown with the Southwest Park area need to have clear and obvious linking elements. These should include, but not be limited to frequent and visible directional signs and pole banners to provide visual connection. The selected corridor(s) should also allow for easy traffic flow and not be subject to over-capacity.

(d) Investment in a shuttle system to enable parked shoppers from Southwest to access downtown should be tested. It will be important to determine if the shuttle system serves to import shoppers to downtown or export downtown workers to Southwest.

Mitigation Measures for Downtown

One of the key policy justification for proceeding with the development of the Southwest Park area and the Route 13 corridor is the capacity of the new development to provide tax revenues to the City for re-allocation to other portions of the community, including downtown. As discussions about the scope and nature of this development are finalized, it is important for the City to consider how revenues generated from these projects should be earmarked for downtown mitigation. Among the options that should be considered are:
(a) Creation of a small independent business support fund to assist impacted retailers to remain competitive and work collaboratively in the face of new national competition.

(b) Adoption of a permanent two-hour no cost parking plan for City owned and operated downtown parking facilities. Currently, two-hour free parking is made available during the Christmas holiday season as a way to encourage more people to shop and visit downtown. Making this incentive year round can serve as a mitigation measure for downtown businesses.

(c) Commitment to provide the funding to complete the capital improvements called for in the Commons Redesign Plan.

(d) Commitment to adopt a downtown development plan that will enable the City to visibly focus resources and attention toward downtown.

Response: With respect to the level of impact, this is likely to be true. The DGEIS was based on the project as proposed and described to date. Other project manifestations could have different outcomes, however, they are not proposed.

With respect to secondary development, such development could well have additional economic impacts. The extent and nature of additional development is speculative. Such development should be evaluated on its own merits and impacts at the time it is proposed.

With respect to mitigation, measures of the type discussed are assumed in the baseline analysis of the DGEIS. The mitigation measures would counter competitive pressures, and lower the risk of negative consequences of the proposed project.

656. Buchberg (205) The GEIS talks of other mitigation measures:

Signage: I see nothing in the current plan that gives me any assurances that we won't see another 20-25 years of all talk and no action on this issue.

BID Funding: If Southwest is going to provide funds to help downtown, we need to see specifics first.
Response: The Lead Agency agrees that to maintain the validity of the DGEIS, it is important that the mitigation measures are implemented, enforced and maintained. The Lead Agency will specify which measures it will require during the Findings process.
11.3 Transferred Sales

657. Tompkins County Planning (218) Existing Businesses. The dGEIS indicates potentially significant impacts on existing businesses in the Elmira Road Corridor (loss of 12-22% of sales). The dGEIS does not discuss the impact of these losses on the character of the Elmira Road Corridor. Will there be increases in the number of vacant businesses? Will this create an 'unattractive' entrance to the study area, detracting from its potential business? Will this discourage pedestrian and bicycle access to the study area? Please address these issues in the fGEIS.

Response: The loss of sales suggest that there is potential for changeover in some businesses, while others may stay in business at reduced operating scale. The inherent value of these properties within the approach areas to a regionally serving retail and service center should ensure continued use and reuse for business. It should be noted that other comments inquired about secondary development occurring in the Elmira Road Corridor due to the project spurred by the project. It is likely that there will be some of both effects, countervailing each other, with the end result being reasonable stability in this area.

658. Tompkins County Planning (218) Regional Approach. The Final Scope for the dGEIS states that it will consider the impact of the proposed project on the City of Ithaca. However, the analysis shows a potential for impact on the Triphammer Road/East Hill Plaza business area of between 7 and 15%. Will the development of the study area create economic hardships outside the City? How will the proposed expansions of retail space in Pyramid Mall affect projections in the dGEIS?

Response: The new retail district is expected to compete effectively against competitive retailing in the Ithaca area and Tompkins County as a whole. The proposed expansion of the Pyramid Mall will reinforce its capacity to compete effectively. As older shopping facilities, it will be important for the existing comparison shopping facilities to update their buildings and offerings, and to adjust to a changing competitive environment. While the question of the direct impact on these outlying comparison shopping areas was not a part of the scope of the DGEIS, the
magnitude of potential lost sales does not suggest that the proposed project would cause blighted conditions in these areas.

There would probably not be a dollar-for-dollar reduction in occupied square footage related to average sales per square foot. Rather, a change in the overall retail environment that might include preclusion of other retail development that would happen in any event, differing uses for certain buildings and so forth.

659. Titus (145) The DGEIS, in 1995 for the Wal-Mart store said that of the expected annual sales of 20 million dollars, 80% would be taken from existing Tompkins County businesses. The Southwest Park DGEIS claims 51 million dollars a year will be taken from county businesses.

Response: The $51 million transfer from existing businesses is in Scenario 6, the maximum retail build-out, but other scenarios have sales transfer 7 to 47 percent lower than the maximum level cited in the comment. The Wal-Mart proposal was a smaller project, and of a different potential to draw from the wider region.

660. Culotta (17) What it envisions as far as retail sales in Ithaca under alternative five which calls for 800,000 square feet of new retail space in the Southwest Park is 78 million dollars of new sales for Ithaca resulting in 1.5 million in new sales tax revenues. But of the, of that component of new retail sales, there is also a large component of transferred sales, from existing businesses to the new retail area. That number is 55 million of transferred sales.

What is the mitigating factors from transferring the sales of 55 million dollars from existing retail businesses? Well, what I did was I, in looking at the analysis, I took an assumption on how many square feet that means to the transfer of retail square footage that's now going to be, the sales is going to be transferred to the new space, and I figured it up and it ends up being about 300,000 square feet of retail space that would be affected by or reduced by the transfer of sales to the new retail section.

And it's this area that I feel is most concerning with respect to the DGEIS. Can Ithaca control how, and can Ithaca mitigate for the loss of existing businesses to 300,000 square feet of retail space?
And how much space is that. Well, let's talk again a little bit about scale.

The DGEIS envisions Ithaca transformed from its current evolved retail kind of evolved retail landscape where you have some nice interesting retail sections up in Collegetown, you have Downtown Ithaca which has specialty retail to an area which now nearly increases the retail space by almost double. And 300,000 square feet is approximately the size of Wegman's, K-Mart and Tops added together. So basically you are going to be displacing space about the size of Wegman's, K-Mart and Tops to new areas. This kind of a scale loss really seems like it would disrupt a lot of Ithaca's current economy as it currently exists and as it is currently evolved. And I am wondering if there is any real plan or sense of scale to this development.

Response: The potential new sales in Ithaca due to the project are estimated at $70 million to $139 million depending on the development scenario. These would be offset by sales reductions of $40 to $51 million at other Ithaca stores, for net new sales of $30 million to $88 million.

There would probably not be a dollar for dollar reduction in occupied square footage related to average sales per square foot, but rather, a change in the overall retail environment that might include preclusion of other retail development that would happen in any event; differing uses for certain buildings and so forth.

661. Roberts (81) ...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.

Response: As in any competitive situation, loss of a business may have adverse tax consequences. However, the DGEIS analysis indicated that the net impact of the project will be positive.
662. Daley (340) The dGEIS says that the new shopping area is estimated to draw $51,000,000 in annual sales away from existing Tompkins County businesses. This includes as much as $6,000,000 in annual sales taken from the businesses on the Commons. If this plan goes through and the Southwest Area is blocked up with big box chain stores, our local businesses will lose significant revenue and many may have to shut down. Ithaca would lose a significant amount of income tax revenue, independence, accountability and charm if it became dependent on big retail corporations for supplies, services and jobs.

Response: The outcome suggested is not forecast in the DGEIS.
11.4 Sales Tax

SUMMARY

The commenters pointed out that surrounding counties have been or are in the process of repealing the sales tax on clothing purchases under $110.00. They also commented that the DGEIS fails to calculate the impacts on sales tax revenues if (a) Tompkins County also eliminates the sales tax on clothing purchases to remain competitive with neighboring counties or (b) if Tompkins County maintains the sales tax and projected Southwest Area shoppers do not come to Ithaca due to lower taxes in the other counties.

663. Wetmore (19A) The DGEIS does not take into account that the state of NY is in the process of repealing the sales tax for clothing. How long will Tompkins county hold on to its clothing tax when neighboring Broome County has abolished theirs? This is especially important given the DGEIS's prediction of gaining some of the Broome County market. All the figures for tax revenue should be adjusted to account for the fact that all clothing sales, along with any grocery, will produce no sales tax revenue to the city.

664. Cogan (49) Sales Tax Legislation

There is no calculation on the retail market of the surrounding counties eliminating sales tax on clothing and footwear under $110. Broome and Tioga Counties have already voted to eliminate this tax; Onondaga and Chemung Counties may vote to do the same.

665. Dunaway (348) If the retail sales projections are highly inflated, then the sales tax projections are also highly inflated. To add to the problem, there is great pressure already to eliminate city and county sales tax on clothing purchases under $110 to retain competitiveness with surrounding counties. If Ithaca and Tompkins County succumb to this pressure, sales tax revenues will be even lower. If they don't, we can expect many consumers to prefer those shopping areas without additional sales taxes. Either way, there is a high risk that sales tax revenues will not rise significantly because of big-box development in Southwest Park. Also, should the economy experience a downturn, the city could be left with a large debt and virtually no viable retail
stores, because the chain stores will certainly close their least profitable outlets.

666. Entlich (233) Overall sales tax rate. Several counties adjacent to or nearby Tompkins County have a lower sales tax. Seneca, Yates, Schuyler, Chemung and Onondaga Counties all have 7% sales tax. Only Broome and Cortland counties, amongst those near Tompkins, share its 8% sales tax. In the past, local residents writing to the Ithaca Journal have cited this factor alone as their reason for leaving the area to do their retail shopping.

667. Entlich (233) Sales tax on apparel. Several area counties (currently including Cortland, Broome, Tioga and Schuyler) have eliminated collection of local sales tax on sales of clothing and footwear under $110. Tompkins has not. Again, this will attract shoppers from Ithaca. Schuyler County, which has both a lower overall sales tax and has dropped the local tax on apparel may well have a new Wal-Mart in Watkins Glen by the end of the year 2000, which would be a powerful draw from Ithaca, even if Ithaca had its own Wal-Mart.

Response: The analysis was conducted based on current market conditions, which include the influence of in-place sales taxes. The DGEIS has not considered all possible contingencies such as changes in sales tax regulations. Typically these differences are sorted out in the marketplace, with retailers in the higher tax jurisdictions having to compete on total customer cost with those stores in areas with advantageous tax laws.
11.5 Jobs

SUMMARY

The majority of comments in this subsection deal with the quality of jobs projected for the Southwest Park development. Commenters repeatedly stressed Ithaca's low unemployment and the presumption that the jobs offered by the prospective tenants were predominantly entry-level, low wage, unskilled positions with few benefits. Comments were also received which focused on the number of jobs which could be lost if the projected transfers of sales were to occur, and the DGEIS's prediction of the number of jobs to be created.

11.5.1 Quality

668. Skalwold (47) 1) Unemployment in Ithaca is approximately 2.3%. ITHACA DOES NOT NEED MORE LOW PAYING JOBS.

If the City of Ithaca is to be involved with promoting any sort of development, that development should be designed to attract businesses which provide jobs which pay at least "a living wage". Frankly, I think IF THE CITY DOES ANYTHING REGARDS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IT SHOULD BE TO ATTRACT BUSINESSES WHICH PAY IN EXCESS OF $20 per hour PLUS BENEFITS.

669. Wetmore (19A) ...With the lowest unemployment rate in the state, Ithacans can afford to be picky about what kind of jobs they want coming into the community. Big box retailers traditionally pay minimum wage to their employees; a wage that is well below a living wage. The size of the propose development means that rather than having to accept the prevailing wages of the community, it will be able to set its own wages, presumably minimum with no benefits. This is anything but positive, no matter how many of these jobs are established.

670. MConboy (198) On page 2-67 the report says that Ithaca lost 3.5% of its population between 1990 and 1996. Since 1981 the number of service jobs in the area has doubled. Why, at a time of population decline and job growth, is the city doubling the size of its retail area, emphasizing a market that offers mainly low-wage, no-benefit jobs?
671. MConboy (198)\textsuperscript{23}...The DGEIS estimates the number of jobs to be created by the Southwest Plan, but does not investigate the quality of the jobs created under the various alternatives...

672. Spragne (212) The development will also create more minimum wage, non-benefit, non-skilled jobs, which should not be the kind of jobs you should create.

Response: The DGEIS economic analysis does not make value judgements on the worth of creating a new job in the community. Rather, it reports to the community and regulators on the estimated impacts of the proposal. It should also be noted that these market conditions may be advantageous for prospective employees at these stores with the potential for competition for labor bidding up wage rates.

673. Wetmore (19A) The study implicitly assumes full-time jobs in an industry that notoriously hires mostly part-time workers. Given this reality, the number of people coming to the county would much higher than the study projects. Further, the impact on schools, social service agencies, the health care system, etc., of creating thousands of part-time, no-benefits jobs in the community has not been examined.

Response: The study makes estimates of the new residents estimated to be attracted by the project. Part-time and low-wage retail employment tends to be filled not by a household's primary wage earner, but by a secondary wage earner. Thus, the Lead Agency's economic consultant has advised that the assertions made are unlikely.

674. Ashdown (349) Job creation is another area that needs controls. The employment practices of any business that comes to Southwest Park should be investigated and a reasonable proportion of livable jobs should be required. Businesses that bring primarily part time jobs with no benefits bring financial loss to the city, as people who take these jobs are more likely to need public services. Again, if it is not profitable for the business to provide enough good jobs for people in the community then it is not a business that we need, as it will be more of a drain than an asset for us.

\textsuperscript{23} Comments submitted by MConboy (198), excerpted from written statements of Glover (73). These comments were not submitted by Glover as part of his written comments.
675. Carini (344) The dGEIS is also highly deficient in comparing the impact on the region's employment situation under various alternatives: it estimates the number of jobs to be created by the Southwest Plan, but does not investigate the quality of the jobs created (apart from the disquieting estimate that 75% of the managerial and supervisory retail jobs would be filled by people relocating to the Ithaca area.) A true plan for economic development would emphasize smaller-scale retail establishments and light industrial, microenterprise, and office uses. This would generate job creation at a substantially higher pay scale than that offered by the big-box retailers. The many businesses in and around Cornell's technology park are good examples of this. Better pay translates into many economic quality-of-life improvements including an increased rate of home ownership, increased disposable income, and less demand for social services. Moreover, the sale of products made in the area would draw capital into our region: a positive cash flow as opposed to the negative flow of the big-box retail scheme. None of this is touched upon in the dGEIS.

Response: The DGEIS economic analysis does not make value judgements on the worth of creating a new job in the community. Rather, it reports to the community and regulators on the estimated impacts of the proposal. It should also be noted that these market conditions may be advantageous for prospective employees at these stores with the potential for competition for labor bidding up wage rates.

676. Dunaway (348) Unemployment in Ithaca is a rock-bottom 2.3% and Tompkins County is at 3.2%, both well below the statewide New York rate of 5%. Certainly providing more job is a worthwhile goal, but one which the Southwest Park plan does not meet.

Although 1600 retail 'jobs' are estimated for alternative 5, we need to examine the actual effect of those jobs on the unemployed of this area. First of all, it is likely that most if not all management jobs will be filled by moving employees from other locations, not from the local labor pool. Second, the large-scale retailers of the variety being contemplated for this development have a reputation for hiring at or near minimum wage, using as many part-timers as possible to avoid paying benefits, and resisting unionization. If the employment offered is part-time, or pays minimum wage, or has no benefits, it is not a job at all - no
one who really needs a job to support themselves or their family can consider this kind of employment...

As for the 800 or so office jobs estimated for the project, one must note that the study also states "For the industrial, office and residential support economic sectors, it is assumed in this analysis that this employment would probably occur anyway." Creating another 'office park' rather than supporting businesses who relocate downtown will only further deteriorate the heart of the city of Ithaca. In addition, the city is incurring a considerable expense for the utility and highway infrastructure to support these offices, when they could be attracted to the downtown area where the infrastructure is already in place.

677. Byard (347) 4. "Job creation": Ithaca has one of the lowest unemployment rates around. Ithaca's problem is underemployment- people working for less than their level of education might dictate. More large retail stores will not help this problem. Other types of employment can be created without destroying open land.

Response: The DGEIS economic analysis does not make value judgements on the worth of creating a new job in the community. Rather, it reports to the community and regulators on the estimated impacts of the proposal. It should also be noted that these market conditions may be advantageous for prospective employees at these stores with the potential for competition for labor bidding up wage rates.

With regard to location of "industrial, office and residential support economic sectors," locating in the Southwest Park rather than downtown, the Southwest Park development would create modern office environments within the urban context of the City of Ithaca that would not contribute to suburban sprawl, or encroachment on rural land or farmland. Further, these employees would be excellent prospects to be customers for the downtown versus more distantly located suburban office parks.

678. Hodes (176) 5) Jobs produced by the proposed sort of development are low-paying minimum benefit jobs. Better forms of development... could produce better jobs or better housing.
Response: The DGEIS economic analysis does not make value judgements on the worth of creating a new job in the community. Rather, it reports to the community and regulators on the estimated impacts of the proposal. It should also be noted that these market conditions may be advantageous for prospective employees at these stores with the potential for competition for labor bidding up wage rates.

679. Jennifer Schriber (125) JOBS: The number of jobs created is not analyzed with the average wage each job provides. This makes a significant difference is cost benefit analysis and the impact such jobs would have on the cost of living.

Response: The jobs created would include a mix of retail jobs ranging from sales associates to managers. Service, light industrial and office employment at the site to the extent such uses are included in the building program would be in response to market demand created generally within the Ithaca economy. These jobs would tend to have higher pay than is average for retail employment. Again, the retail portions of employment at the site would tend to be those jobs that are in place due to the nature of the development type.

11.5.2 Job Losses

680. Wetmore (19A) The study makes no note of job losses as a result of this proposed project. Given the $51 million in transferred sales projected for the Ithaca area, it is absurd to assume that there will be no job losses to accompany that loss in sales revenue.

Response: The DGEIS has noted total jobs on-site. The net-new jobs in the retail sector are estimated at 60 to 68 percent of the total retail jobs based on percent net new sales to Ithaca. The remainder of the retail jobs is assumed to be transference of employment from existing retailers in Ithaca. This is a conservative estimate (that is, it is likely that the net new jobs will be a higher percentage of total jobs, as it is likely that some of the sales transference will result in lower sales per employee at other existing retailers.) The total net new jobs are estimated at 680 net new jobs in Scenario 3 to 2,360 net new jobs in Scenario 6.
11.5.3 Estimates

681. Wetmore (19A) Appendix J, PP IV-3 through IV-5. This section talks about new residents as a result of the proposed project. "Assuming one out of ten jobs are managerial or supervisory, this could create up to 200 new jobs at this level." Why should we assume this ratio? What is the industry standard? Why is the study guessing at numbers that could easily be looked up? Next, the study examines the "200 jobs" and their impact on the city. It does not talk at all about the non-supervisory jobs, which are 90% of the new jobs. If one were to accept their numbers, which my experience says are low, there are an additional 1800 jobs to talk about. Or, using the studies multipliers, 1012 (101 supervisors and 911 employees and their families in the city of Ithaca) more people in the city. The impact on schools, housing, etc., would be much higher for this number of people. The impacts on the surrounding communities should be explored as well.

Response: This is a conservative ratio used to avoid over-estimating the portion of jobs that would be 'high-paying' and thus potentially overestimating community benefits. There is no industry standard that is reasonable to apply to that the type of retailing that will be introduced is not set. Again, a conservative approach is used. "Easily looking up numbers" of this type may lead to the presumption that a particular retail type will be put into place. This would be erroneous.

The DGEIS economic analysis does not make value judgements on the worth of creating a new job in the community. Rather, it reports to the community and regulators on the estimated impacts of the proposal. Any new residents would not simply be "negatives" to the community as the comment suggests. Rather, they would in turn pay taxes and become part of the community at large. The implication is that there are moderately scaled, growth inducing aspects to this project that are part of its overall implications. The project would, in balance, increase the private-sector component of the Ithaca economy.
11.6 Online/Catalogue Shopping

SUMMARY

Several commenters pointed out the rise in online and catalogue sales and their perception that the DGEIS did factor these “markets” into sales projections. The commenters feel that a continued increase in online sales will result in lower-than-projected sales at the Southwest Park development, and therefore sales projections in the DGEIS should be revised.

682. Entlich (233) Ithaca has an unusually computer- and Internet-literate population. The availability of both cable modem service and DSL telephone service (both broadband Internet access technologies) in a city the size of Ithaca is extremely unusual. These services are popular here, despite their high monthly cost, suggesting a higher overall level of Internet use. As pointed out (page J(I-6), college students make up over 28% of the population in Tompkins County. College students in particular are heavy users of e-commerce sites. Thus the impact of e-commerce on local retail sales can be expected to be greater in Tompkins County than in other parts of the country.

683. Entlich (233) Appendix J of the DGEIS makes no mention of catalog or mail/phone order shopping as a source of sales leakage. However, anyone who has seen how busy the UPS and Fedex trucks are in Ithaca’s residential neighborhoods knows that such shopping is popular amongst city residents. People shop by mail for a variety of reasons, including convenience, 24-hour availability, greater product selection and greater ease in finding desired items. Therefore, greater availability of big-box and discount retailers may not convert catalog shoppers into local shoppers. However, capture of some catalog sales as local sales may not increase collection of sales tax revenue. Many catalog retailers already collect sales tax for purchases made by NY state residents, because they have operations within the state. Among the major catalog retailers which already collect NY state and local sales tax on mail and phone orders are Land’s End, Crate & Barrel, REI, Harry & David, Smith & Hawken, Hanna Anderson (children’s clothes) and Jackson & Perkins (garden supplies). There are many others.
684. Blodgett (251) "Stabilization or increase in City sales and property tax revenues"

This conclusion is based on assumptions including "The Ithaca consumer sales market sales potential includes all spending by households within 15 miles of the potential development area and one-half of the spending by households in the band between 15 and 30 miles of the potential development area." (p.2-69).

These assumptions are inaccurate. Mayor Cohen mentioned mail-order buying at city council meeting 2\2\2000. Trends regarding mail-order and internet buying are lacking in this study. These are major factors to be considered. Likewise, developments that could affect consumer habits of households 15-30 miles away are lacking (example: Wal-Mart in Watkins Glen).

685. Wetmore (19A) ...Why, at a time when on-line shopping is the fastest growing sector of the economy, at a time when cities around the country are struggling with the malls they hastily permitted to be built, and are now white elephants, is Mayor Cohen leading the City of Ithaca in sponsoring the largest new shopping center development in Central New York?

686. Nassar (92) also the economic forecasting fails to adequately evaluate the increased use of internet marketing. The serious limitations of the economic forecasting means that the projections for downtown prosperity are skewed.

687. Titus (145) The DGEIS does not address the fact that malls as well as small business owners are losing customers to the incredible increase in catalog and Internet shopping.

Response: Comments noted. Factoring the e-commerce sector into the analysis, given its early stage of development, is beyond reasonable estimation. While this is a market factor, achieved market demand from retailers to fill retail space at the development will reflect this market factor. Current trends do not indicate that conventional retailing will end due to Internet retailing.

Catalogue shopping is currently a factor in the market that is reflected in the analysis that is reflected in the analysis based
on current sales volumes by retail location in the analysis. It might be argued that the catalogue market segment is the most vulnerable to the emerging e-commerce sector, thus mitigating the potential impact of the e-commerce sector.
11.7 Keeping Money in Local Circulation

SUMMARY

The comments in this subsection deal with one primary issue: the difference in how larger “multinational” “big box” companies circulate money in the community versus how locally owned businesses do. Commenters frequently cited a statistic (or a variation thereof) from the Mayor of Rochester that:

“absentee-owned’ businesses leave about 6% of their profits in the local economy; the rest goes to their corporate headquarters. Locally owned businesses re-invest about 60% of their profits in the local economy”

The commentors worry that this supposed drain of money from the local economy will have far-reaching effects that are not detailed in the DGEIS. Commenters also highlighted the perception that locally owned businesses rely on other locally owned businesses for goods and services, while absentee owned businesses of the sort anticipated to fill the Southwest Park development have their own internal staffs, suppliers, and contractors.

688. Nathanielsz (343) Perhaps, however, some comparative studies would be beneficial. The proportion of money spent at stores that are not locally owned that will stay in Ithaca is relatively small. It takes the form of some sales and property taxes and some wages. Comparatively, money spent at locally owned stores remains within the community, continuing to bolster the economy as, by in large, it remains in circulation here.

Response: The figures cited should be cited. With a basis of support the comments would be more useful to the discussion of and understanding of the proposed project.

The primary uses of sales proceeds for retailers is:

• For the cost of goods sold, which are largely imported for either locally owned or out-of-town owners;

• Wages, which typically are retained in the community for either locally owned or out-of-town owners;
• Utilities which are typically imported for either locally owned or out-of-town owners;

• Insurance, accounting, legal etc. These would tend to favor local businesses retaining more of the expenditures in the community. However, insurance costs largely go out-of-community for the actual insurance product, with locals possibly being brokers.

• Marketing, the expenditures for advertising of local businesses, which can circulate inside the community (local newspapers, radio, printers) or circulate outside of the community (television, etc.) depending on the product or service and the potential market for that product or service;

• Building maintenance, which typically are retained in the community for either locally owned or out-of-town owners;

• Cost of buildings, which are typically mortgages on buildings, which are typically imported for either locally owned or out-of-town owners. To the extent that the buildings are locally owned, and unmortgaged, there is a benefit to the local community of locally owned buildings. However, as noted in the report, the proposed project would tend to compete with national retailers more than local retailers do. Therefore, the negative effects here would not be pro rata.

• Charity. Donations and charity are anecdotally assumed to be a greater portion of receipts from local businesses than out-of-town owned businesses. However, out-of-town owned businesses typically have allowances for stores for local charities. These are typically justified by these businesses as "public relations," but they still provide local benefits. Indeed some national retailers have been proactive in building community relations by this means.

• Profits. Here, pure profits are typically remitted to non-local ownership. To the extent that the businesses are locally owned, the profits are a benefit to the local community. However, as noted in the report, the proposed project would tend to compete with national retailers more than local retailers do. Therefore, the negative effects here would not be pro rata. Since profits on retail sales from national retailers are typically only a few
percent of total sales, from a macro perspective this potential for transfer of profits from local to non-local owners is not a major issue. This is not meant to diminish the importance to the local retailer, but to comment on community-wide economic issues.

In balance, it is likely that there is a higher rate of re-circulation of dollars into the community from locally owned retailers. However, because the portions of total dollars for items that can be retained in the community is low, the differential between locally owned and out-of-town owned businesses is not great from a macro perspective compared to the new dollars brought into the community (with some of it being re-circulated) when a great increase in net new sales occurs as would be the case at the subject project.

This discussion suggests that this proposal is a "zero-sum game." That is, that this proposal is simply to replace local businesses with "out-of-town" businesses. In fact, sales are projected to increase substantially, thus introducing new dollars into the local community (even under the assumptions of the commentator.) Further, a major portion of the competition (and replacement) of sales between the proposed project and existing retailing in the Ithaca area is likely to be with existing non-locally owned businesses. Thus, there is not a one-for-one replacement of local businesses for out-of-town businesses, and therefore, the effect is not as dramatic as suggested.

This discussion is in no way meant to diminish the importance of small business to the community. These retail and service providers meet market demand for specialized products and personal service that competes effectively with the mass retailers. As noted, these businesses likely spend a greater percentage of their proceeds locally. Indeed, the overall finding that the downtown will not receive undue economic harm from the proposed project is predicated on the quality and vitality of the downtown as a unique, desirable and competitive economic district that would compete effectively, and be differentiated from the retail types proposed for the Southwest Area

689. Harber (235) The DGEIS also does not take into consideration the effect losing local businesses and the lowered revenues of the stores that do stay in business will have on our local economy. I refer to the
established fact that for every dollar of our money spent at locally owned stores, an overwhelming majority (on average 80+% is the figure I've seen) remains in the community, while for every dollar spent in big-box stores, which are owned far away, only a small minority (average of 16% is the figure I've seen) stays in the area. Even if these particular figures are not exact or true everywhere, the disparity between the two is supposed to be typical. This is because local business owners use almost entirely local services (insurance, accounting, contractors, legal, etc.), while the chain stores and other big non-locally owned ones rarely use any of these local services. The effects of having possibly $51 million annual sales go from existing businesses (although not all locally owned) to new mostly non-locally owned is not touched upon in the DGEIS and is extremely important to the long-term well-being of the Ithaca area.

Response: Comments noted. The figures cited should be sourced. With a basis of support the comments would be more useful to the discussion of and understanding of the proposed project.

This discussion suggests that this proposal is a “zero-sum game.” That is, that this proposal simply replaces local businesses with “out-of-town” businesses. In fact sales are projected to increase substantially, thus introducing new dollars into the local community (even under the assumptions of the commentator.) Further, a major portion of the competition (and replacement) of sales between the proposed project and existing retailing in the Ithaca area is likely to be with existing non-locally owned businesses. Thus, there is not a one-for-one replacement of local businesses for out-of-town businesses, and therefore, the effect is not as dramatic as suggested.

690. Hodes (176) The national and multinational companies the city is courting will, as absentee owned businesses, drain about 94% of their profits out of the local economy...(While locally owned businesses on average reinvest about 60% of their profits in their local economies and have long-term stakes in their communities.). The trend in the U.S. has been that when outside businesses replace local businesses the drain of local dollars increases 10-fold, more than offsetting any gains in property & sales taxes.
691. Bem (180), Baum (187) As Mayor Johnson of Rochester noted when he spoke in Ithaca, "absentee-owned" businesses leave about 6% of their profits in the local economy; the rest goes to their corporate headquarters. Locally owned businesses re-invest about 60% of their profits in the local economy...As outside owned businesses replace local ones, the drain of local dollars will increase by tenfold, more than offsetting any gains in property or sales taxes.

692. Baum (187)24 As Mayor Johnson of Rochester noted when he spoke in Ithaca as part of my campaign, "absentee-owned" businesses leave about 6% of their profits in the local economy; the rest goes to their corporate headquarters. Locally-owned businesses re-invest about 60% of their profits in the local economy (and have a long-term stake in the community). As outside-owned businesses replace local ones, the drain of local dollars will increase by tenfold, more than offsetting any gains in property or sales taxes.

Response: See the response to comment #688 above.

693. Wetmore (19A) The DGEIS also forecasts that, if the city's Southwest Area plan, is adopted, the downtown business district can expect to lose at least three million dollars of sales revenue yearly. This would have a devastating impact on our town. The downtown, which is already struggling to fill current vacancies, would be saddled with nearly 18,000 square feet of new vacancies as a result of the proposed project. Money which is now spent in local business, and is thus recirculated in our community, would instead go to large corporations, who will rush it out of town, lost forever to the local economy. It is estimated that 6% of the money spent in a corporate chain is recirculated in the local community, whereas 60% of the money spent in a locally owned business is recirculated. The DGEIS does not predict a ten-fold increase in spending in our community; how is our community going to make up for that major exodus of money?

Response: Comments noted. Lost sales do not necessarily translate into one-for-one loss of occupied square footage. If there were 18,000 square feet of increased vacancy, the increase would be on the order of magnitude of 5 percent of downtown. While a substantial increase, the DGEIS found that this level of increase in overall vacancy would not cause blighting conditions. It is the

24 Baum forwarded a letter written by Dan Hoffman.
commentator's interpretation that this would be a "devastating" condition.

Regarding re-circulation of profits, see the responses to comments #688 and #689 above.

694. Cope (82) Fifth, letting our money go out of county and city. Most of this development calls for large national chains which would take at least 90 percent of the -- local mall businesses would spend most of it here. Let's spend our tax base with local businesses. Even if we had to pay slightly more for their product, our taxes could be less.

695. Wetmore (19A) The speed at which corporations remove money from a community is staggering. Wal-Mart wires money back to the corporate office twice a day. It doesn't stay in the community long enough to allow the community to make any use of it. Accounts, lawyers, architects, etc. are all centrally located, so local professionals will disappear. Independent retailers hire local professionals and spend their profits locally. The money circulates through the local economy allowing its benefits to multiply over and over again. It is economic suicide to switch from local to corporate stores.

696. Wetmore (19A) The study does not address the effects of this development will have on professionals working in and around Ithaca. The big box retailers come with their own accountants, lawyers, etc. Surely, moving $51 million in sales from locally-owned business to corporate chains will have an effect on the practice and income of professionals serving our city.

697. MConboy (198)\textsuperscript{25}...there would also be a radical change in the proportion of sales to locally-owned, as opposed to distantly owned companies. Incredibly, there is no mention of the overall impact on our regional economy as our cash is transferred to distantly-owned companies....

Another result of the emphasis on big-box stores is that local contractors are left out when it comes to building them...The

\textsuperscript{25} Comments submitted by MConboy (198), excerpted from written statements of Glover (73). These comments were not submitted by Glover as part of his written comments.
DGEIS does not assess the positive [economic] impact of scenarios in which the scale of development would permit local developers to do the work...

698. Vanetten (40) Local businesses have a long-term investment, a multi-level investment in the community. When they need to renovate, they hire local carpenters, when they need lawyers, they hire local, local accountants. This is weaving of these businesses that is not going to happen if there is Home Depot or these larger industries that come and bring their own lawyers and accountants and do that work outside of our community.

699. Vanetten (40) The GEIS only talks about retail and office jobs. It doesn't talk about the effect on other types of jobs that right now local businesses employ in terms of the local lawyers, accountants, cleaners, payroll clerks. These corporate stores come with all of their own menagerie of these jobs. And this is a real effect that's not accounted for. It's only talking about retail and office jobs.

Response: See the response to comment #688 above.

700. Vanetten (40) Another effect that's not included in the report is what's called the multiplier effect, the effect of dollars spent locally. Those dollars spent locally, depending on the type of store and the community, will be spent again locally eight to ten times before they leave town. And that could be considered eight to ten times more value for each dollar spent. That's a real effect. That's really an effect in this community. The big-box stores, that's not going to be nearly as an effect. They are going to send all of the money out of the town much more efficiently.

Response: This description of the multiplier effect on the economy of Ithaca is incorrect in this comment. To the extent that the proposed new stores bring in non-local net new or "import" spending to the community, the economic impacts are more positive than if the action were not taken. This statement is made from a mathematical perspective and is not intended to address qualitative comments made by other commentators.

701. Carini (344) The alternatives presented contain up to 1,000,000 square feet of retail space, with estimated sales of $190 per square foot. Under the proposed zoning this retail space would be predominantly or
completely of the "big-box" variety, or other non-locally owned businesses. Studies have shown that 94% of the money spent at such businesses leaves the area; the remaining 6% is all that remains here in the form of wages to the workers, sales tax and property tax. This means that as much as $179,000,000 per year would be drained from our region under alternative 6! Yet this enormous loss of capital is not even mentioned in the dGEIS!

Response: The information stated in this comment is likely incorrect, as local inputs to retail businesses in the form of wages, local taxes, local services purchased and other local inputs are much higher than 6 percent. The figures cited should be sourced. With a basis of support the comments would be more useful to the discussion of and understanding of the proposed project.

702. Carini (344) Where the scale of development is smaller, we see more locally-owned businesses. Money spent at these businesses remains in our community, since the profits accrue to and are spent by local citizens. The dGEIS should analyze the positive impact on the region's balance of capital under scenarios in which the scale of development is restricted, resulting in a higher proportion of locally-owned businesses.

Response: Such an analytical approach is highly speculative, and is not appropriate to the analysis of a given proposal.

703. Carini (344) Another result of the emphasis on big-box stores is that local contractors are left out when it comes to building them. These projects are developed by out-of-town firms (as in the Widewaters project.) So what could be an incredible boon to our economy, providing employment to our many talented architects, developers and tradespeople, becomes a lost opportunity. The dGEIS does not assess the positive economic impact of scenarios in which the scale of development would permit local developers to do the work.

Response: Though the developers of the proposed development might not be local, many of the people employed in its construction, operation and maintenance would be. In general, businesses will hire the lowest bidder(s) to construct their project.
704. O'Connell (127) I should admit to you that I haven't read the entire Environmental Impact Statement, so I could be wrong about what I'm going to say, but it seems that there is one important aspect missing from the City's environmental analysis, and this is the impact of diverting more of Ithaca's money away from the local businesses and into the hands of multinational corporations which I know you're suggesting building here.

Local businesses are accountable to the community because they depend on the community for their entire economic survival. Multinational corporations, on the other hand, are really accountable to no one. They can pull out of places where people have started to complain too much, and they can also -- and they have a history of doing this -- they can manufacture their products in places with the lowest environmental and labor standards and then sell them to consumers in far away places who have no idea how their products are being made.

Response: Informed judgments and commentary are reinforced by reviewing entire impact sections.

These comments represent issues beyond the scope of the DGEIS. Further, it is not likely that the development of the proposed project will affect global manufacturing practices. That is, local retailers meet demand for goods from similar manufacturing sources as larger retailers.

705. Logue (310) I write this letter to comment on the part of the draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement that I have actually read. It seems to me that a crucial part of the Economic Study (Appendix J) was left out, a piece of information without which the City should not make its decision in regards to this plan. The report discusses many things; many of them are quite interesting. The analysis that I find missing, however, pertains to the question of where does the money go after people spend it in the proposed Southwest Park development and how does that relate to the City's goals for economic development?

The Office of Thomas J. Martin estimates potential sales in Southwest Park development to be between $76 million and $190 million dollars per year, a sizeable amount of money for a small city economy such as the greater Ithaca area. What happens to that money after it is spent in whatever retail stores appear down
there? A short list, off the top of my head, leads me to think that some of it will go towards salaries, some towards local and state taxes, some towards the operation and maintenance of the facilities, and some towards purchasing and transporting the products that line the shelves. But, obviously, some of that money is also surplus - profits, rents, and interest. My question again is what is the breakdown of this distribution of potential sales? How will capital flow into and out of the proposed development?

The report finds that some of the inflow capital to the Southwest Area would be attributable to consumer opportunities not otherwise available in the area. Sales leakage corrections and new import sales are projected to account for 60% of new sales in the Southwest Area. On the flip side, however, it finds that the remaining 40% of expected sales would be transfers from existing businesses in the greater Ithaca area.

What the report does not furnish is a picture of the outflows of capital. Where does the money go? If the City where to find that 60% of sales went to running the businesses (a portion of which goes to wages), and 30% of sales went to corporate profits (in another part of the country, no doubt), leaving only 10% to pay taxes, might the City want to reconsider its plans for economic development? It seems downright wasteful to let so much of sales escape the local economy. Ithaca would be capturing a portion of sales through taxes and wages, to be sure, but the majority (I assume) of sales would not continue to circulate in the local economy; they would be plucked from our City and no longer available for reinvestment locally - a system certainly not in the interest or general welfare of Ithaca and Tompkins County residents. If that is the case, what kind of economic development is that? To me, it might be called growth, but it is too much like a vacuum to be real development.

Response: With regard to economic development, the project would have the effect of increasing the “retail” industry in Ithaca, and would likely import net new spending to the local economy, which would in turn have a positive effect on the local economy from a spending and employment perspective.

As regards taxes, property taxes are assessed as a function of the value of the property and are not based on a percentage of
sales of a business. Sales taxes are collected by the business and transferred to the taxing authority at a rate established by the taxing authority, not the business.

For discussion of uses of sales proceeds, see response to comment #688 above.

706. Logue (310) One of the questions in my mind, then, is how can the City further capitalize (beyond tax revenues and wages) on the sales potential of developments in the Southwest Park area? How can the public capture a greater portion of the capital flows through that part of town? How can businesses be woven into the local economy?

Potential answers to these questions come to me in the form of:

1. Community based ownership of land (whether public or non-profit), capturing rents from businesses.

2. Exactions requiring new businesses to purchase intermediate products or services from existing local businesses - might include things from building materials to financial services to transportation services.

3. Requirements for living wages and health benefits - may reduce corporate profits somewhat, but actually benefits local citizens (this is after all local economic development and not Ithaca's good deed for the national economy).

4. Locally owned (community or private) businesses or local shareholders who will in turn spend their portions of wages and surpluses in other Ithaca businesses.

...the whole point of a dGEIS is to understand the impacts of development before they happen. The report as I read it does not address this aspect of economic impacts and it should. Without this type of analysis, the sales leakage that the report claims would now be caught here in the City of Ithaca may be as ephemeral as the time it takes the consumer to swipe her or his debit card through the point of sale machine.

Response: The suggested business practices can be debated in the public realm, but measures of this type were not considered as part of
the baseline scenarios under consideration. The results of the baseline scenarios are projected in the report. The results of development under the proposed business practices would likely be different.
11.8 Revenues

SUMMARY

The comments center on three main points. The first is that revenue projections for the Southwest Park Development are overstated for a variety of reasons, including unaccounted for costs and loss of sales tax revenue if the tax on clothing is repealed. Next, the comments question the assumptions of the economic projects, specifically the 100% occupancy rate and the $190/ft² revenue generation. Finally, the economic justification for the project itself is faulted.

707. Entlich (233) Tax Revenue

Sales and Property Tax Concerns

Sales and property tax revenue projections are, of course, based on assumptions about total sales and the size of the infrastructure to be built at SWP. I have already indicated why I think the sales projections are severely inflated, and why I think Ithaca cannot support the size retail/office infrastructure proposed in alternative 5. If alternative 5 were to be built, I believe it would either result in disappointing sales for many of its occupants, or would cannibalize a higher percentage of sales from existing local businesses than the DGEIS projects. Either way, tax revenue suffers and fails to meet the optimistic projections contained in section V of Appendix J.

Regarding sales tax revenue, two things should be noted. First, in New York state, sales tax on both new and used automobiles is always collected by the municipality where the vehicle is registered. Thus, the location of dealerships is irrelevant to sales tax collection except for parts sales and service. Second, Tompkins County is considering dropping the sales tax on clothing and footwear sales under $110, as now permitted by the State. The fact that the county has not yet done this may put it at a competitive disadvantage with neighboring counties, as mentioned previously. However, if Tompkins County joins other nearby counties and agrees to drop local sales tax collection on such apparel sales, most apparel sales will no longer generate sales tax revenue. Both scenarios need to be factored into the sales tax projections.
The 95% retail occupancy rate should be based on the reality of retail marketing in Ithaca, not a “typical occupancy rate for well-performing retail space given normal tenant turnover rates.” Real numbers for the largest retail spaces around Ithaca (in the Triphammer corridor and East Hill Plaza) should be obtained for the FGEIS. Also, a more realistic $/ft² figure should be used.

In section II of the report, it is presumed that retail sales losses to downtown stores would average 3-5% of current sales volume (page J(III-10)). This relatively small impact is predicated in part on the assumption that the retail mix in SWP will be very different from the small specialty stores found downtown (see page J(III-5)) and will consist largely of the “big-box” and “discount general merchandise” types which the DGEIS repeatedly claims to be under-represented in the Ithaca area. However, on page V-4, as part of the projected property tax computation, it is projected that the retail store mix will include 25% small stores (500 to 10,000 /ft²). This serves to increase the projected property tax revenue substantially, since retail space in small stores is assessed at twice the rate of retail space in large stores. However, it contradicts the claim that SWP will not have stores of the size and type that compete with downtown. This discrepancy needs to be clarified in the FGEIS.

Page J(V-5) assumes “No adjustments for tax abatements or phased taxation for potential property owners have been made. All property owners are assumed to pay taxes based on the full market value of the property as assessed.” How realistic an assumption is this? For reasons already discussed, large-scale retail development in the Ithaca area is a risky proposition, which may not pay developers back on their investment. Are there really developers banging on Ithaca’s door ready to put in a million ft² of retail and office space without any tax abatements or phased taxation?

On pages J(V-7 through V-11) figures are given for projected property tax revenue to the city, county and school district. In all cases, property taxes are presumed to be a clear gain. No “net” calculation is done, except to caution that if the development scenario chosen includes residential units (alternative 2 only), then net revenue will be higher due to the high cost of services, including school district expenses for children of new residents.
This analysis is incomplete. First of all, job creation projections given on page J(IV-4) suggest that approximately 195 new immigrants will come to the City of Ithaca, bringing household members who will raise the total to 439. The DGEIS suggests that the city should be able to absorb these new residents. It is claimed that “The City's current infrastructure and resources are presently not strained by population growth.” Let’s accept this assumption for now. The DGEIS also projects that 460 new immigrants will settle outside the city, bringing household members who will raise the total to 1024. These people are and their impact on areas outside the city are not discussed. We can assume that this large an in-migration to the more rural areas around Ithaca will indeed put pressure on county services for housing, infrastructure, social services, etc. In addition, some of the children will attend Ithaca City School District Schools, since the Ithaca City School District (ICSD) extends well beyond the borders of the City of Ithaca. Therefore, it is unrealistic to assert that only if residential units are built in SWP will there be a drain on Tompkins County or the ICSD that would offset new property tax revenues. The influx of new people to take jobs created by retail and office development will also have such an impact, and that impact should be estimated and subtracted from projected property tax revenues for the County and Ithaca City School District in the FGEIS.

Net property tax revenues will be lower than those estimated in the DGEIS for another reason. In-market competition for retail sales and office space will not just result in a smooth percentage downturn for all competing businesses. Some businesses will fail because even a small loss in sales will make them unprofitable. Some buildings which are currently in active use will become vacant. The same will happen to some office space that transfers in-market to SWP. The resulting empty buildings will quality for reduced property taxes, partially offsetting any gains from new construction in SWP. The FGEIS should attempt to estimate these losses.

On page J(V-10 and V-11) it is stated “Higher property tax rates can create a disincentive for prospective homeowners and businesses seeking to invest in the City. The additional revenue provided to the City by the development of the Southwest Area can help ease the tax liability on existing homeowners and businesses while stimulating new residential and commercial
investment in the City." This suggests that, in response to receipt of new property tax revenue from SWP, the City of Ithaca will lower property tax rates throughout the City. This may be a worthy goal, but it is largely incompatible with the notion that SWP will generate large net gains in City property tax collection.

707. Highlands (108) Another assumption that is made is that the developed area is filled to capacity with stores, offices and industry and is yielding the full projected sales tax revenue. Again, a questionable assumption.

Response: Comments noted. Automobile sales are not considered as part of this analysis.

The DGEIS has not considered all possible contingencies such as changes in sales tax regulations. Typically these differences are sorted out in the marketplace, with retailers in the higher tax jurisdictions having to compete on total customer cost with those stores in jurisdictions with advantageous tax laws.

A 95 percent occupancy rate was used as an industry standard for new retail developments. Further, the reflection of “full potential sales” at this level is important in assessing potential competitive impacts; that is, lower occupancy rates were assumed. Then the evaluation of sales transfers from existing retailers would be lower than if “full” or 95 percent occupancy were assumed.

Regarding size of retailers at Southwest Park, the assumption of store sizes was used consistently in the analysis. This study projects substantial competition for local retailers. Fully 40 percent of the sales are assumed to be transfers from existing retailers. However, it is not conservative to assume that only big box retailers will be developed. Therefore, a mix of retail types to include some smaller retailers is included. These might range as noted from 500 to 10,000 s.f. However, of the stores in this range, the majority are likely to be of the larger sizes, which tend to have less overlap with existing downtown retailers. Further, the majority of the retailers in these stores is likely to be different than in the downtown. They would include a mix of national and local retailers.
Potential property tax revenues are stated at 100 percent of estimate. To discount them based on a speculative scenario would not be helpful to information provision. It is the role of the reader to use the information presented to aid in their understanding of project implications based on the reader’s personal experience and opinions.

The commentator asks about population growth due to the project, and assumes that the service provision for these people would be a simple subtraction from the projects net tax revenues. This is not correct. These people will generate revenue (to both City and County) through property taxes on their owned or rented homes, from the sales taxes on their local expenditures, from the taxes on the autos registered, and from the employment and taxes generated by any other household members who are employed or generate taxes. Thus only the marginal cost of service provision less other local taxes generated would be applicable. Such an analysis is beyond the capacity to provide meaningful data to readers, and from a qualitative perspective, the net result is estimated to be low in comparison with the introduction of a major new tax revenue source as proposed.

Regarding tax rates, no assumptions are made regarding lowering tax rates or other future decisions by the community and leadership. However the statement that is quoted from the DGEIS is true that enhancing the tax base promotes a healthy economic environment and investment in the City

709. Carini (344) The analysis of expected tax revenues is also faulty. It is based on a vacancy rate of 0%. But the effect of just 1 big-box closing, due to corporate downsizing or other reasons (remember Woolworth’s?), would be tremendous. The estimates of tax revenues need to be revised based on a realistic vacancy rate. Furthermore, the likely prospect of the elimination of sales tax on clothing would have a huge effect on revenue. This is not discussed in the DGEIS.

Response: The assumed vacancy rate is 5 percent in the report. Properties that are vacant still pay property taxes. However, if a higher vacancy rate were to occur, then there would likely be lower sales tax proceeds, and possibly property tax abatements.
This report cannot guarantee the results projected; nor can it assure that the project will be properly and successfully designed, built, marketed and operated. As with all actions there is risk. The strong market potential of the project suggests there is an excellent opportunity for project success. Community vigilance is suggested to ensure quality planning, development and operation.

709. Dunaway (348) Stabilization or increase in City sales and property tax revenues

The validity of this claim rests on the assumptions noted above. If the market potential is not realized, the sales will not match predictions and the tax revenue will suffer as well. If the business cycle turns downward, consumer sales will drop off and adversely affect tax revenue. If the developers do not assume the costs of infrastructure improvements, those will have to be borne by taxpayers, thus reducing the positive effect of the tax revenue projected.

Response: This report cannot guarantee the projected results, nor can it assure that the project will be properly and successfully designed, built, marketed and operated. As with all actions there is risk. The strong market potential of the project suggests there is an excellent opportunity for project success.

710. Wegmans (252) Page 1-8, fourth paragraph: “Stabilization or increase in City sales and property tax revenues.” Was the reduction of the sales and businesses in the City caused by this plan implementation taken into account?

Response: The sales and property taxes are based on net new sales to Ithaca. No reduction in property taxes from existing businesses is assumed. The scale of the impacts suggests that these properties will continue in retailing, or be productively reused.

711. Tompkins County Planning (218) Demonstrated Economic Need, Revenue and Costs. The dGEIS identifies economic necessity as the primary reason for the proposed project, however the need (or threshold) for revenue generation is not clearly outlined and/or evaluated along with the economic costs the City will incur as a result of this project.
Response: The economics section identifies project potential, but it is not charged with justifying project need in the community. Project need is addressed in Section 1.2 of the DGEIS. Net fiscal impacts are discussed in Appendix 6 of this FGEIS.

713. Harber (235) The idea that any increase in sales tax revenues, not yet proven when the costs are considered, let alone with more complete and long-term cost estimates not offered in this DGEIS, makes this plan worthwhile seems completely absurd to me...

Response: The commentor's opinion is noted.
11.9 Multiplier

SUMMARY

These are comments which outline how the DGEIS underestimates projected revenues or does not account for additional sources of revenue.

714. Murray (234) Development in the southwest will bring back county shoppers who are spending over $60 million dollars for non-automotive retail purchases outside of the county. It will also attract new shoppers to our area. This will result in a spillover of business to the downtown. This spillover effect needs to be more closely looked at and quantified as part of the total economic impact equation.

For example, when I shop out of town, my family and I spend the day exploring other parts of the communities we visit. We visit downtown areas, shop at downtown stores, and eat at least one meal out of town. If we had more shopping opportunities here, particularly big box alternatives, we would shop more in our own downtown....

What would the economic impact be to the city if this development does not take place? How likely is it to happen outside of the city, and what would the net impact on city revenues and city businesses be? Are shoppers who go to new big box stores in an area like Lansing (Pyramid Mall) as likely to patronize stores in the city's downtown area as shoppers who are shopping at big box stores located in the city?

Response: The DGEIS makes estimates of additional spending in Ithaca due to new shoppers drawn to Ithaca by the proposed development. The success in drawing these shoppers to other areas in Ithaca will depend on the extent of mitigation measures put into place, and maintained, and the aggressiveness of existing businesses in taking advantage of the market opportunity the proposed project creates.

715. Ruswick (174) If the impact statement maintains that 1/3 of business would be drawn from downtown, then how much would retail be added to
downtown because people coming from the outside would also shop down town (sic) while they are in the vicinity.

Response: About 3 to 5 percent of proposed project sales are estimated to be drawn from existing downtown activity. In turn, about one-third of these sales are assumed to be “made-up” by new shoppers to downtown drawn to Ithaca by the proposed project.

716. Buchberg (205) Infrastructure Costs:

The various estimates of retail sales and property tax values listed in the report show, if not an equivalence, but at least an approximate correspondence to those in the BID area, although Southwest Park covers a much larger geographic area. I hope those evaluating the police and D.P.W. hours and cost estimates will compare those with what the city provides to downtown to see if those estimates are reasonable (see letter from Doug McDonald to Gary Ferguson, re: MOU [Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Ithaca and the Ithaca Downtown Partnership]).

Response: See Appendix 6 of this FGEIS for an analysis of costs and benefits associated with the project.

717. Buchberg (205) In all fairness, the GEIS neglects to estimate income that Southwest will generate for the city: According to guidelines from the international council of shopping centers, a development of this size will have anywhere from 2,000-5,000 parking spaces. (I didn’t find anything in the economic analysis concerning this). Each parking meter in this spot would generate $400-$600/year so total parking revenues would be $800,000 - $3,000,000 per year. This does not include additional revenue from tickets for shoppers...Since parking meters have not been a deterrent to having retail stores (small or big box) locate downtown and since they do not deter consumers from shopping where they are located, either the consultant or the city planners & council are negligent in overlooking this.

Response: The analysis has assumed free surface parking for the proposed project. The Lead Agency does not believe it can mandate paid parking on any private land.
718. Buchberg (205) The GEIS also mentions not one, but three bridges will be necessary. Each of these could be toll bridges....Since the city doesn’t want Southwest Park to be just like every other big box center in Upstate, N.Y., the tolls could be used to finance public amenities such as fountains and sculptures there.

Response: The economic sections did not address possible bridge toll revenue. The Lead Agency will consider this idea during the Findings Process.

719. Pastel (173) 3) Community Character - Economics. Recent data that the TC Chamber of Commerce obtained indicates that over 25% of the Cortland Wal-mart’s shoppers live in Tompkins County. It would be interesting to see what the customer composition of the Horseheads Wal-mart is. If only half of the shoppers who shop out of the county were to buy at the retail outlets that would be in the area covered by the dGEIS, an enormous beneficial impact on the tax revenues for the city and county would be realized. Since The Commons does not include many stores that would be duplicated in the new retail outlets, the impact to The Commons should be minimal.

Response: Comments noted.
11.10 Tourism

SUMMARY

The following comments alleged that the DGEIS fails to account for the economic benefits of Ithaca's tourist industry. Other comments in the "Aesthetics" Section (Section 7) attacked the Southwest Area Land Use Plan for its presumed impacts on Buttermilk Falls State Park and state that degradation of the park will undermine Ithaca as a tourist destination.

720. Skalwold (47) 3 Ithaca's character is what gives it its charm. Destroy the charm and you may "kill the golden goose". Tourism is not an insignificant part of our economy. We could drive that business away. Ithaca's charm has a financial as well as an intrinsic value.

Response: Comments noted. The location of the project would seem to create minimal impact on Ithaca's charm.

721. Mudrak (236) Tourism Dollars - The economic impact of the Cayuga Lake Fishery is estimated at $10,000,000 per year with the cold water fishery (e.g., trout and salmon) estimated at $5,000,000 per year. People come from all over the northeast to fish here and tourism is supposed to be an important centerpiece for Ithaca's future economic development.

Response: Comments noted. The Lead Agency does not believe the project will have adverse impacts on the tourism.
11.11 Cornell University and Ithaca College

SUMMARY

The comments question why the economic statistics for Cornell University and Ithaca College were not factored into the DGEIS, and the commenters feel that these (unwarranted) omissions skew the DGEIS’s economic projections.

722. MConboy (198) The DGEIS groups Cornell campus as outside the city in order to make the sales generated by this project look better (Appendix J Page II-13). Leaving out information to prove a point is dishonest and does not lead to a more objective understanding of the true impact of the proposed plans.

Response: Cornell is located partially in and partially out of the City. Whether the University is included in or out of the City does not affect the economic analysis. Baseless, uninformed accusations of this type degrade the process of evaluating the merits of a proposal. The reader is also referred to Appendix 6 of this FGEIS.

723. Wetmore (19A) Appendix J Page II-13. Why is Cornell’s campus left out of the Ithaca statistics? Cornell is actively operating several retail establishments which account for a large amount of student spending...By grouping Cornell with the rest of the County, the study makes it appear that the proposed development would bring a greater percentage increase in sales tax to the City than it actually would.

Response: Detailed revenue and retail spending data were requested from Cornell University but not furnished. Cornell University did only provide a basic per-student expenditure budget, which was then multiplied to the number of students in Ithaca. A conservative estimate of over $42 million in annual student spending was calculated. This spending is assumed to be in Ithaca, which would include spending in Cornell’s own retail establishments.

724. Gougakis (34) Also, could C.U. or I.C. is never mentioned. How their tax exemption status leads to so much of our problems. I would have loved to have seen how much their impact is in terms of dollars
and what difference it would make in the city's budget in their financial additions.

Response: It was not the focus of this study to determine the impact of Cornell University's tax-exempt status on the City budget. A study conducted by Planning/Environmental Research Consultants for the city of Ithaca found that 59 percent of all property in Ithaca is non-taxable. This is an important fiscal issue for the City. This issue is noted throughout the DGEIS.

724. Entlich (233) Page J(I-11) asserts that “Collegetown is a mid-rise, high-density residential and retail cluster that caters almost exclusively to the Cornell University student community.” This is a serious mis-characterization of the region. As a Cornell University staff member for the past 10 years, I know that Collegetown is heavily used by Cornell faculty and staff, especially as a restaurant destination for lunch. Although it is clearly beyond the scope of the DGEIS to examine the tax generating potential of Collegetown, stating that Collegetown caters exclusively to students bolsters the notion that SWP offers the last, best, and only hope for increased tax revenue. In fact, other parts of the city, including downtown and Collegetown, deserve much more attention in this regard.

Response: Comments noted. Clearly Collegetown provides services for persons other than students, though students are the principal users of these services. A better characterization of Collegetown’s economic status would be to state that it’s principal function is to serve the needs of the Cornell University community, including students, faculty and staff, but that it serves other segments of the City as well.
11.12 Other Communities and Failing Malls

SUMMARY

The comments focus on several issues. The first is the DGEIS's assumed retail area of 30 miles around Ithaca, and the comments question the validity of and justification for this radius. The second issue concerns the overlooked effects on other communities if the Southwest Area Development proceeds as envisioned. Commentors also cited articles which describe the closure of malls across America and the relatively short life span of malls and the types of stores expected to become tenants in the proposed development. Finally, one commentator suggests there are impacts on the Ithaca School District which were not detailed in the DGEIS.

11.12.1 Retail Area

726. Cogan (49)\textsuperscript{26} Economics (Appendix J)

\textit{Retail Area (Section II)}

The dGEIS presents the retail area as being a 30-mile radius around Ithaca. This is an area more than 2 times what RKG Associates predicted would be the retail area for the proposed Wal-Mart. There is no data to support this claim.

On the contrary, this area seems far too big. In looking at the map in Figure II-2 on page II-15 of Appendix J, the 30-mile area includes:

* 100% Tompkins
* 100% Schuyler (Watkins Glen)
* 80% Chemung (Elmira, Horseheads)
* 80% Tioga (Owego)
* 50% Seneca
* Broome (Whitney Point)
* Cayuga
* Cortland (Cortland)
* Yates
* Onondaga
* Steuben

\textsuperscript{26} Cogan's (49) written comments include this statements made at the public hearing of January 24, 2000. Therefore, those public hearing comments are not included here.
All told, the 30-mile area includes all or portions of 11 counties.

RKG put market area at 20 miles. This is 225% the size, or more than double.

The large population centers are all at the edge of this 30-mile ring; therefore claiming we can compete for 1/2 the sales in the 15-to 30-mile band is suspect.

As an example, let's assume that all the sales are equally distributed in the 15- to 30-mile band; in other words, this assumes that all the people living in the ring are equally distributed. This is unlikely because, as pointed out above, most of the large population centers (Elmira, Owego, Whitney Point) are at the edge of the 30-mile ring, but it will only benefit this plan if assume it, so let's assume so. Then, to compete for 50% of the sales in the 15- to 30-mile band is equivalent to competing for all of the sales in an area only 1/2 the size. This means that we could compete for 100% of the sales in the 15- to 23.7-mile band.

What is within this 15- to 23.7-mile band? It includes Cortland and Watkins Glen. It extends as far as Horseheads. It seems unlikely what we could compete for all the sales in these areas, especially when Cortland and Horseheads both have large retail shopping centers. In fact, the Arnot Mall is 28 miles from Ithaca and is considered a super regional mall. How likely is it, then, to assume we can compete for sales out to 30 miles?

Response:

A Wal-Mart is a single store which may be 15 to 25 percent the size of the proposed development (depending on the scenario). Therefore, its critical mass of retailing creates a potential draw area smaller than the larger proposed project. As an example, malls in Syracuse draw regionally, while a smaller mall such as the Pyramid Mall in Lansing draws from a smaller area. Clearly, the market areas and estimated consumer draws are estimates based on the best available information. They are used to inform decision-makers. Clearly there cannot be 100 percent assurance that any forward-looking analysis or decision made based on future expectations will occur as predicted. Nonetheless, decisions must and are still made on a variety of issues based on imperfect information and future estimates.
With regard to area that the project can compete in, the analysis states that the project can compete in these areas, but that it will only capture a portion of market demand. The demand is in place. The analysis focuses on this project’s capacity to compete for the existing demand.

727. Entlich (233) Attraction of import sales

Even less supportable is the claim “This analysis conservatively estimates consumer spending in the secondary market area being “available” to Ithaca at 50%, with the other half more closely associated with other retail areas such as Elmira, Horseheads or Cortland.” which appears on page J(II-18) There is nothing conservative about this estimate. In fact, by any reasonable measure, it appears to be a gross exaggeration. The 15-30 mile ring around Ithaca includes or is within easy reach of several major retailing areas. These areas coincide with the most heavily populated parts of the 15-30 mile ring. Besides Elmira/Horseheads, and Cortland, they include Big Flats (home of both a Sam’s Club and a Lowe’s), Auburn (home of JC Penney, Lowe’s, Ames and Wal-Mart SuperCenter), Binghamton/Vestal/Johnson City (home to Bon-Ton, JC Penney, Sears, Sears Hardware, Ames, Lowe’s, Target, Home Depot, Wal-Mart, and Sam’s Club), Syracuse/Dewitt/Camillus (home to one or more Bon-Ton, JC Penney, Sears, Ames, Wal-Mart, Home Depot, etc.), Sayre, PA (home to Sears, Wal-Mart and Kmart). These areas cover directions to the southwest, south, southeast, north and northeast of Ithaca. Areas to the northwest and west will be partially served by Geneva, Seneca Falls, Waterloo and Penn Yan (especially given the obstacle presented by Seneca Lake). Route 81 is likely to funnel shoppers to the East of Ithaca either north to Cortland or Syracuse or south to Binghamton, rather than taking two lane roads into Ithaca. A more realistic estimate of the portion of consumer spending within the 15-30 mile ring which is “available” to Ithaca might be 20%.

On page J(II-24) the DGEIS states “Consumers typically comparison-shop much more in [general merchandise] categories than in the food categories, which are more convenience oriented.” Despite this admission, the report assumes that “potential” new import sales will occur at the same rate for all categories of retail. That is, it assumes that 100% of sales within
the 15-mile ring and 50% of sales in the 15-30 mile ring around Ithaca are potential sales, even for the “much more convenience oriented” categories of food, restaurant, and gasoline service station sales. To be realistic, as well as consistent with its own analysis, the percentage of potential sales, within the 15-30 mile ring should be much lower for the convenience categories than for the comparison-shopping categories. For the 15-30 mile ring, I suggest they should be closer to 5-10% rather than 50%.

On page J(II-24) the DGEIS compares retail sales in the 15-mile ring around Ithaca to NY state averages. It emphasizes well-below average sales in the apparel and miscellaneous27 categories as evidence that a “significant opportunity exists for the recapture of sales by the development of the study area for retail uses.” However, a look at Table II-10 on page J(II-26) reveals that the 15-mile ring around Ithaca is at or above the NY state average in all the big ticket categories: automotive dealer sales, building material and hardware store sales, furniture/appliances, etc. sales and the all important general merchandise sales. Furthermore, the 14850 area, which includes all the major population centers around Ithaca is much closer to the NY state average (apparel at 60% instead of 37%, miscellaneous at 66% instead of 45%). For categories where the 15-mile ring already outdistances the NY state averages, the 14850 area does so by even larger margins.

Table II-11 on page J(II-27) compares retail sales in the 15-mile ring, 15-30 mile ring and NY state to US country averages. As far as I can tell, these comparisons (nor those involving comparisons with other parts of NY state) are not corrected for per capita median income. This is despite the fact that it is acknowledged elsewhere in the DGEIS (page J(I-7)) that “Residents of the County had higher per capita median household and median family incomes than the residents of the City” and that residents of both the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County had lower median per capita incomes and lower median household incomes than average NY state residents. Whether this is due to the high percentage of students or not, it means that one should expect lower retail sales without having to resort to “sales leakage” for an explanation.

27 The miscellaneous category is shown in Table II-10 as the second only to automotive dealer sales in size, yet I could not find any description of what this category includes. How significant is it to “underperform” the NY state average in this category?
Also, there are clear discrepancies between the NY state and US tables. For example, the NY state table (Table II-10, page J(II-26)) shows per capita spending in the 15-mile radius at 3.31 times the NY state average in the furniture/home furnish/appliance category. The US table (Table II-11, page J(II-27)) for this same category shows NY state at 89% of the US average and the 15-mile ring around Ithaca at 58% of the US average. That says the 15-mile ring sales are less than the NY state average sales, contradicting the other table. Even with this obvious discrepancy, however, the 15-mile radius still bests the NY state average (relative to the US average) in 5 of the remaining 8 categories, including general merchandise, food, building materials, and automotive dealer sales. However, the significance of comparisons of local area sales to US country average sales (where both the Ithaca area and NY state averages are low in most categories) is extremely dubious, given the tremendous diversity of the country.

Response:

The DGEIS estimates the portion of this market area that the project can reasonably compete in. The percentage of the sales demand captured is the next step. If a more strictly drawn market area is used as suggested by the commentator, a higher capture rate of available sales demand would occur.

With regard to categories of sales, again, the analysis does not suggest that the project would capture 50 percent of the available sales, only that it could compete for these sales. The market penetration rates used then reflect the market opportunity in that category.

The commentator asks about comparisons of the City of Ithaca sales performance to the State averages and to the 15-mile ring. The important finding here is that the area within 15 miles of Ithaca overall has relatively low retail sales volume, but that much of it is concentrated in Ithaca particularly in general merchandise. However, overall, there is still significant sales leakage from the area that the project could serve, thus indicating market opportunity to attract net new sales to Ithaca.

728. Wetmore (19A) Further, the [following] statement is contradicted by the study itself:
The project will bring substantial new fiscal revenues to the city and the county, with the estimation by city officials that there will be relatively low additional service provision costs. In addition, these new revenues can be used to support and enhance City services, which in turn improves the quality of life in the City's neighborhoods, thus strengthening the future via ability of the city as a whole (p.12-77)

On page 2-70 the study shows that the project will draw from mostly the county (the 15 mile band most directly describes the county, see appendix J page 11-1 5. The report does not isolate the effects of the proposed project to the county, so it seems odd that the conclusions do), because outlying areas are too close to other urban areas. Shoppers further out will continue to go these- other retail centers rather than travel the longer distance to Ithaca. Moving retail from one part of the county to another will not generate more county revenue. Further, the study states openly that it is not considering the impacts outside the city: Appendix J Page III-10 "It is important to note that this study focuses on the effects on the city of Ithaca. The Triphammer Road Corridor is outside of the study area, and it is beyond the scope of this inquiry to examine the potential blighted conditions along in this area."

Response: The DGEIS focuses on impacts to the City. Because some County revenues would occur due to the project, a general statement regarding this effect is made. A cost-benefit analysis to the County as a whole is not included in the DGEIS.

11.12.2 Impacts to Other Communities

729. Wetmore (19A) What will be the quality of life in Ithaca if its downtown is as empty as Elmira? This is an important example given the 60% vacancy in downtown Elmira after building a project similar to that proposed in the SW Area plan. Why didn't this report compare Ithaca with other communities that have tried this style of development?

Response: Because the competitive effects of the project are projected in the 3 to 5 percent net loss scale to downtown Ithaca,
comparisons to downtowns which are not comparable, but which have experienced high vacancy rates is not included. Certainly, high vacancy rates are a major problem in some communities. In contrast, Ithaca has a relatively healthy downtown economy.

730. Wetmore (19A) The study does not explore the possible reactions of neighboring communities to this project. Would they try to implement even larger developments? Could the SW Park project be the beginning of a county-wide paving rush? What actions could the City take to prevent such sprawl?

Response: It is not helpful to speculate on contingent occurrences as the commentator suggests.

Ithaca is relatively isolated from other urban areas. With its colleges, history, architecture, restaurants and unique stores it is a desirable destination for local and regional residents and tourists. Thus it can compete effectively in the regional marketplace as the DGEIS suggests.

With regard to sprawl, locating major new economic activity in the Southwest Park reinforces the urbanized area of Ithaca and would not contribute to suburban sprawl, or encroachment on rural land or farmland. Ithaca would be a more densely developed place, with less development pressure on area and regional open space.

731. Cope (82) a less viable Commons and center city area. This in combination with the inlet project competes with the downtown areas for tourists and resident dollars. Ithaca has a unique and treasured quality of life that is dependent even on a viable downtown.

How many times would Elmira area residents come here instead of Arnot Mall? Maybe a few times to see what the new mall looks like. Do we want to attract customers from there so that those shops can go under and Elmira then has more financial problems? Or maybe we would rather it happen to Lansing and the Pyramid Mall. Or maybe they won't come to ours anymore. Do we not have plenty of choice of big-box development in our current configuration?
Response: The commentor's opinions are noted.

732. Medsker (324) ...I do not believe that there is a market for the kind of large scale development that is being planned in this area. We already have so many vacant spaces around town and Pyramid Mall can't stay full. I would like to see the "numbers" that they came up with substantiated. I quite frankly don't know where the anticipated tax revenues are going to come from. I also don't hear any one asking what happens if they fall short...

Response: This report cannot guarantee the projected results, nor can it assure that the project will be properly and successfully designed, built, marketed and operated. As with all actions there is risk. The strong market potential of the project suggests there is an excellent opportunity for project success.

11.12.3 Decline of Malls

733. Titus (145) Nearly one of every five shopping malls standing in 1990 will be out of business by the end of next year according to "Engineering Trends in Real Estate" an annual report for institutional property buyers jointly published by Price Waterhouse Coopers and Lend Lease Real Estate Investment Inc., both of New York/The New York Times, Sat January 1, 2000).

Response: Vacant malls have emerged as a problem in many communities. Many of these properties are economically or functionally obsolete, or they have been the outcome of overdevelopment in a given marketplace. The DGEIS was prepared as an estimate of the impacts of the proposed project. The economics of the project will be put to the test of the marketplace if a developer is sought. That is, developers will evaluate the potential of the project from an investment and market perspective. Lenders in turn will underwrite the project as another layer of market discipline. Therefore, while there are never total assurances that a given project will succeed, there are substantial feasibility hurdles the project must pass to allow development. Further, as a relatively isolated location, a major project in Ithaca is somewhat less vulnerable to entry of additional major competition than a retail center in a larger urban context.

The Chazen Companies
Draft May 18, 2000
This report cannot guarantee the projected results, nor can it assure that the project will be properly and successfully designed, built, marketed and operated. As with all actions there is risk. The strong market potential of the project suggests there is an excellent opportunity for project success.

11.12.4 Ithaca City School District

734. Glover (73)  The Ithaca -- quote, the Ithaca City School District did not provide information to make a judgment as to whether or not there would be additional education costs.

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

Response: The DGEIS made the best possible attempt to evaluate this issue given the information, which was provided by the Ithaca School District. Repeated requests were made for additional information to no avail. This FGEIS analyzes fiscal impacts to the school system in Appendix 6.
11.13 Miscellaneous

SUMMARY

These comments cover a broad range of topics which do not readily fit into the categories above.

735. Harber (235)  ...This SWDP proposes to double the retail space in Ithaca, yet we do not have any sizeable population increase to warrant such a massive retail expansion, especially one to occur in 2 to 6 years or so.  In fact, the DGEIS says that Ithaca lost 3.5% of its population between 1990 and 1996....

Response: While population trends are part of the analysis of project potential, the basis for the analysis is the potential for the project to correct sales leakage, attract new sales, and to compete in the local and regional marketplace.

736. Peterson, C (239)  This last comment draws on a number of areas in the DEIS and what I feel is backward planning, that is, one decides what the city officials want and then tries to fit it to existing conditions- it doesn't work.  Throughout the document there are statements that supposedly denote a support for neighborhoods (for example page ES-1 "The City of Ithaca, in seeking adoption of the plan, is intent upon appropriately guiding land use in southwest Ithaca to benefit the community as a whole."  "At the same time, the City will continue its efforts to improve and strengthen existing City neighborhoods.") But then, on page 2-73, it states "...placing further emphasis on specialty retail goods that may further secure the downtown's retail niche".  I often feel that those of us who live in the downtown core are the most ignored.  We are a neighborhood.  By living and working downtown, we practice what city officials should encourage-making our livelihood in town, shopping in town, recreating in town.  What will even a so-called "minimal 3-5% loss" in downtown businesses mean to us?  What if the loss is in the "comparison shopping" area?  After Woolworth's left, many of us downtownies have been able to meet our needs with CVS, the Corner Store, or the Dollar Store.  That's how we are able to walk or bike to businesses.  Will anyone consider the impact on downtown as a residential neighborhood?  Not just a dollar and
cents statistic but as an impact on those of us who strive to live in and support the central core?

Another interesting irony in the DEIS is its emphasis on Alternative 5 throughout the document (again an indication that the City has already made up its mind before the entire verdict is in). Alternative 5 includes no residential component, yet at the end of the DEIS we read, "Under the no action alternative, the types of development possible would be limited and may not accommodate the public need for additional residential, (my emphasis) commercial/retail space." And "New growth would reflect market demand and may include additional residential units (my emphasis) and/or commercial uses as depicted by the six land use alternatives." It's interesting to me that the final pages of the DEIS focus first on residential uses, but the rest of the document barely pays lip service to it. The City owes its residents a realistic plan 7 that has been given careful thought and consideration, in other words a plan that does indeed include a livable mix of residences and shops.

Finally, the DEIS starts and ends on opposing notes. Page ES-1 "Adoption of the Plan and development would result in the following benefits: Stabilization or increase in City sales and property tax revenues." Page 6-1 "It is expected that Plan adoption and subsequent development may aid in stabilization of the City's sales and property tax bases." May? Would? Stabilization or increase? Which is it? I don't think we know. I feel that the DEIS is weak when dealing with sales leakage. Can't some of that leakage be due to e-commerce, catalog sales, and spending in student's hometowns? That would be leakage that won't all be recovered by the big box miracle. Additionally, how much value is put on Ithaca's unique character (as mentioned earlier)? Part of that uniqueness is surely its rural character, its scenic vistas, the ability to get around easily, its unusual shops and the arts, the schools, and its creative solutions to small city issues. The economic strength that I see for Ithaca is to bolster the, tourism dollar. A near-sighted vision for a possible few extra dollars toward taxes could preclude the, far-sighted vision of a prime Central New York tourist destination that truly is unique.

Response: Indeed, the DGEIS does not diminish the effect of potential sales losses in the downtown; it only estimates the economic impacts.
The community should strive through mitigation measures, and personal choices to support diverse business and retail activity throughout the community. Value judgements on the implications of the estimated economic impacts are certainly an important part of the evaluation process.

The economic section tends to reference Alternative 5, because it is a larger scale Alternative, but not necessarily the largest. This choice is made so that a reader can assess smaller and larger alternatives more readily. The economics section was not prepared with any knowledge of a “preferred” alternative.

The semantic differences noted between page ES-1 and page 6-1, of the DEIS should be understood as follows: the “may stabilize” reference refers to the understanding that none of the outcomes can be guaranteed. The “would stabilize” reference refers to the successful implementation of the development.

Regarding sales leakage, it is reasonable to assume that some retail leakage is due to other retail sources. However, only a portion of the total estimated sales leakage is recaptured in the scenario analyzed.

Regarding effects on tourism, the project as proposed would tend to support visitation to the community by non-residents of Tompkins County rather than diminish it.

737. Wetmore (19A) On page 2-65 the DGEIS states that the numbers in table 2-26 are from 1994. On page 2-66 it says that same table uses 1999 numbers. Which is correct?


738. Titus (145) The DGEIS does not address if there are too many stores planned for shoppers to support.

Response: The DGEIS addresses this issue implicitly in its analysis of retail sales and supportable square footage.

739. Buchberg (205) The consultant's vague statement that large general merchandise stores do not draw shoppers from specialty stores is certainly true only in some cases... Consumers only have so much...
time in a day or week to devote to shopping, and if the initial stop is Wegman’s or Southwest Park (several stores) there often is no time to go elsewhere regardless of advertising kiosks or public transportation.

Response: While no quote was provided in this comment from the report to respond to, it certainly is not intended or implied in the report that large stores are not competition for specialty stores. Rather, large stores and specialty stores generally satisfy different market niches. The analysis certainly recognizes displaced retail sales in the downtown area. Further, it is clear that mitigation cannot resolve all of the negative impact, but appropriately designed and well-executed mitigation certainly can help address the issue.

740. Buchberg (205) I’m not suggesting this is wrong, but that the GEIS overlooks the fact that for many, especially students, downtown was in the past, the best choice if using public transportation, but this is changing, again showing that the report minimizes negative effects on downtown.

Response: The commentor’s opinion is noted.

741. Buchberg (205) The report (p. VII-2) states there is only 1 big box retailer in the city, K-Mart. However, a walk through Wegman’s Tops, Rite-Aid, etc. shows that a large % of their merchandise should be included in this group.

Response: From a definitional perspective, the judgement was made to classify local retailing as in the report.

742. Buchberg (205) P.S.: P. III-3 Sales/SQ. FT. Elmira Road Corridor – clearly a substantial portion of that is groceries, which I believe have another sales/sq. ft. amount than general merchandise (I couldn’t find any reference to document this). This would imply that sales/ sq. ft. of general merchandise is lower than $190/ sq. ft., which means that the sales tax estimates throughout the report may be overly generous.

Response: In the report, a balance was established in estimating sales per square foot. Low estimates of sales per square foot would lower the estimates of potential competition to existing retailers, but
would lower the estimates of tax revenues as the commentator suggests. Conversely, if high sales per square foot estimates are used, then the estimates of potential competition to existing retailers are more conservative, but the estimates of potential tax benefits may be exaggerated. Therefore, a balanced mid-range estimate was used.

743. Buchberg (205) If $190 is a valid number, the consultant should have verified that Kmart is recording approximately 20 million annually in sales (gross, or taxable) 109,000 sq. ft. *X* $190/ sq. ft and should have provided statistics on what big box retailers are doing in cities like Cortland, which are not on major, state or federal highways as Elmira. If you can’t see these numbers, how will you know once Southwest is built if it is successful?

Response: As a private concern, Kmart does not share its sales data.

744. Buchberg (205) The 95% occupancy rate seems overly optimistic. What has Pyramid’s vacancy rate been? My guess is that Southwest Park will have restaurants which will directly compete with existing restaurants, both downtown and on the Elmira Road Strip, further cannibalizing existing city sales tax revenue.

Response: See response to comment #707. With regard to restaurants, as in retail, there will likely be competition in the restaurant category. However, some of the sales for both new and existing restaurants will be derived from the additional shoppers drawn to Ithaca due to the new proposed Southwest Park development.

745. Buchberg (205) Also, the report doesn’t address the issue of whether a successful Southwest Park will lead to further strip mall development along Elmira Road.

Response: Secondary development pressures are not addressed in this report. Such development should be evaluated on its own merits. As noted, The Southwest Park project will be competing against existing Elmira Road retailers. Therefore, these businesses can likely absorb additional growth pressure in that area.

746. Buchberg (205) Perhaps a condition of any lease would be to confidentially provide sales numbers to the city.
Response: The Lead Agency will consider this during the Findings process.

747. Desch (64) I'd like to recommend to the city that you incorporate the Tompkins County Economic Development Strategy, which was adopted in 1999, and provides quite a bit of reference to the dilemma that the City of Ithaca faces with respect to its tax revenue base.

Response: The Lead Agency is aware of and has access to this Strategy.

748. Ahlers (254) In suggesting that we evaluate these environmental impacts, I'm not pitting "quality of life" against "economics." I'm not opposed to Southwest Area development per se. I shop at Wal-Mart and Target. I'd prefer not to have to drive to Vestal, N.Y. to find a shower curtain that I like. However, if the environmental impact of Alternative 5 is fully evaluated, we may find that the proposed development will have a negative economic impact on the City in the long term.

My perspective is influenced by living in Syracuse for fifteen years: been there, done that. First there was large scale retail development outside the city. Downtown died. Then there was large scale retail development inside the city. The suburban malls died. More recently, there's been a revival of downtown via boutique stores, restaurants, and urban townhouses. Right now, in Syracuse, they're planning to enclose one of the downtown streets near Armory Square. A catchword there is the "New Urbanism," a mix of small scale retail and business with traditional city neighborhoods.

Maybe we can skip the blind overdevelopment phase of city life. One quip I heard often during the recent mayoral campaign was "No one is ever for dumb growth," but that's what Alternative 5 is. Let's recognize that quality of life is an economic issue, downscale the planned development, and balance the needs of everyone in the City.

Response: Comment noted.

749. Tompkins County Planning (218) Absorption Rate for Development. The dGEIS identifies a very fast absorption rate for retail space, 600,000 square feet in three years. No basis for this assumption
is identified in the dGEIS. How were the assumptions made? How do the approved and proposed expansions to retail space in the Village of Lansing influence these assumptions? How does the timing of development (and resultant revenues) relate to the timing of City expenditures for this proposal?

Response: A fast absorption pace was conservatively assumed because the proposal by the City stresses large retail units. Further, this assumption was used to delineate the impacts so that they are not masked by an assumed long absorption period. With these points made, the absorption period will depend on the aggressiveness of the developer and any negotiations on this point with the City. See the Executive Summary of this FGEIS for a discussion of the timing of City expenditures.

750. Wegmans (252) Page ES-5, first paragraph: “The retail market analysis concluded...” What market analysis? Is this a part of the report? “...downtown retailing to focus on specialty goods and superior customer service not available from mass merchandisers.” Are we to assume that the commercial portion of the plan is intended to have mass merchandisers? “Comprehensive efforts in business retention/recruitment; marketing and promotions; ...improving signage and the overall physical environment downtown are also recommended.” How would these improvements be funded?

Response: There is a retail market analysis included in the Appendix J of the DGEIS. Funding of mitigation measures will be considered by the Lead Agency during the Findings process.
11.14 Entlich (233) and Cogan (49)

SUMMARY

Both Entlich (233) and Cogan (49) submitted extensive, detailed comments concerning the economic (and other portions) of the DGEIS. Excerpts from their comments are included in the subsections above. Entlich’s comments are included in their entirety below in order to preserve the comment’s original context. Cogan’s comments are interspersed with Entlich’s where appropriate.

751. Entlich (233) Development scenario: In general, I assume that alternative 5 (800,000 ft² of retail development and 200,000 ft² of office development) is the most likely to occur. City officials have indicated that they favor a development of this scale.

The central thesis of Appendix J (the Economic Study) of the DGEIS is that the proposed development in SWP will result in net gains in sales and property tax revenues. The analysis which results in that conclusion makes several assumptions which are either unsubstantiated or poorly reasoned. In addition, other factors which weaken the conclusion regarding the size of sales and property tax gains are not considered. My comments will review the assumptions point by point and suggest reasons why they may not be valid.

Introduction and Project Location Context

Page J(I-10) claims “there is evidence that consumers are using the general merchandise offerings in the regionally competitive shopping areas such as Cortland, Horseheads, Elmira, Waterloo, Seneca Falls and Syracuse.” However, little evidence is actually cited. I do not dispute that some such activity occurs, but without understanding the reasons why local residents may choose to shop elsewhere, it is impossible to conclude that such out-of-area shopping will cease or be reduced just because the proposed SWP development occurs. I will argue later that there is good reason to believe that much of the so-called “sales leakage” may continue, even if SWP is developed.

Page J(I-11) asserts that “Collegetown is a mid-rise, high-density residential and retail cluster that caters almost exclusively to the
Cornell University student community.” This is a serious mis-
characterization of the region. As a Cornell University staff
member for the past 10 years, I know that Collegetown is heavily
used by Cornell faculty and staff, especially as a restaurant
destination for lunch. Although it is clearly beyond the scope of
the DGEIS to examine the tax generating potential of
Collegetown, stating that Collegetown caters exclusively to
students bolsters the notion that SWP offers the last, best, and
only hope for increased tax revenue. In fact, other parts of the
city, including downtown and Collegetown, deserve much more
attention in this regard.

752. Entlich (233) Market Evaluation

Pages J(II-1 and 2) assert the following:

The selection of “shoppers” or comparison retailing is limited. The
Pyramid Mall which is outside of Ithaca in the Village of
Lansing has Ames, Sears, JC Penney and the Bon Ton as
anchors to its 600,000 square feet of retail shops. However, this
retail supply for comparison goods type shopping is limited
compared to malls in Syracuse and Horseheads. In the emerging
and very important “big box retailing” and discount
merchandiser retail segments, Ithaca is substantially under-
served and market area residents generally use the offerings of
this type in Syracuse, Horseheads/ Elmira and Binghamton. The
relatively small inventory of mass-merchandiser retailing in
the Ithaca market is an important indicator that there is
potential to develop new retail space in the department store, big
box and/or discount store segments.

First of all, Syracuse, Horseheads/ Elmira and Binghamton all
have larger populations than Ithaca, so it should be expected that
they have larger retail infrastructures to serve those populations.
Despite this fact, the DGEIS, p.2-65 shows the Gross Leasable
Area (GLA) in the Triphammer area of the Village of Lansing to
be 975,300 ft² (sum of Pyramid Mall, Triphammer Shopping
Center and Cayuga Mall) with comparable figures for Syracuse,
Horseheads/Elmira and Binghamton given as 1,500,000 ft²,
902,000 ft², and 858,000 ft². On a per capita basis (and an
absolute basis in the cases of Horseheads/Elmira and
Binghamton), it would seem that the Ithaca area already has more GLA in the Triphammer area than comparable areas in nearby cities.

In addition, in table II-5 on page J(II-12), it is shown that, in almost every area of merchandising, Tompkins County already exceeds the New York State average in retail establishments per 10,000 residents. Only in the areas of food stores (74% of the NYS avg.), apparel stores (92% of the NYS avg.), Drug and Proprietary (61% of the NYS avg.) and Miscellaneous (99% of the NYS avg.) does Tompkins County lag. None of those areas where Tompkins County shows a significant deficit relative to NYS are likely to be featured by the big-box retailers sought for SWP.

It may be true that Tompkins County residents are “substantially underserved” in the “big box retailing and discount merchandiser retail segments.” But that suggests only that a particular style or retailing is absent, not access to the goods which such stores would sell. Since Tompkins County residents already also exceed the NY state average (again shown in Table II-5, page J(II-12) in retail sales per capita in the major retailing areas of general merchandise, building and garden supplies, food stores, automotive and eat and drink, there is no reason to believe that bringing big-box and discount retailing here would do anything but shift existing sales from existing stores to new stores offering the same goods at lower prices. There is no reason to believe that they would generate additional sales, since local residents are already spending heavily in those retail categories.

I also question the basis upon which it is assumed there is substantial demand for the big-box and retail discounting style of merchandising in Tompkins County. The Ithaca areas has seen many large general merchandisers come and go in recent years. Among these are several where the entire chain closed down, such as Woolworth’s, Hills, Jamesway and Zayre. However, in other cases, the local store was selected for closure due to “underperformance” or poor sales. These include the Montgomery Wards store in Pyramid Mall and at least one wholesale club type store (perhaps Wholesale Depot or BJ’s Wholesale Club, I can’t remember). Such selective closures suggest that the demand for such merchandise and the style of retailing they offer is not as great as CPA suggests. The FGEIS should examine the recent history (last 10 years) of general
merchandise and discount retailing in the Ithaca area as partial evidence for the level of demand for the goods and services offered by such stores.

753. Cogan (49)  Consumer Spending and Sales

The data in tables II-6 and II-7 show that there is more money being spent in the 14850 ZIP Code than the people who live here are spending. The sales in the 14850 ZIP Code is more than twice what the people living in that ZIP Code are spending. The sales figure in the 15-mile radius is more than 28% higher than the spending in the 15-mile radius. Rather than a "leakage," this data would indicate a net import of sales. No explanation is given, and there is no analysis as to which stores are accounting for this net surplus and how they would be impacted by this project. It is possible that the sectors of the economy that are accounting for this surplus would be negatively impacted by a project of this size and scope.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tables II-6 and II-7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>14850 ZIP Code</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales as % of Spending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-mile radius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-30 mile band</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Claritas and Thomas J. Martin

754. Entlich (233)  Sales leakage

Footnote 9 on page J(II-2) defines sales leakage as "the retail sales that residents of an area make outside of their local area." On page J(II-13) the local market is defined as "those areas within a 15-mile ring" around Ithaca. Therefore, all retail purchases by residents within the 15-mile ring around Ithaca in areas outside the 15-mile ring are defined as sales leakage. The amount of sales leakage is calculated by comparing actual retail sales with household consumer spending (page J(II-16). Even after adding in over $50 million in calculated spending by students and tourists, total consumer spending within the 15-mile market ring still trails total retail sales by some $121
million\textsuperscript{28}, suggesting that Ithaca is already bringing in sales from households outside the 15-mile ring.

It is unsupportable to presume that the retail businesses in the 15-mile ring around Ithaca have the potential to capture all the household consumer spending of residents within that ring. As the DGEIS itself says on page J(II-16) "The reasons a potential consumer decides to make purchases in one area over another depends on a number of factors, including among them location, ease of access, traffic, store type, comparison shopping opportunities, and personal preferences." Some residents of the 15-mile ring are actually closer to shopping available in Cortland than Ithaca.

In addition to the reasons stated in the DGEIS, there are many unexplored reasons why shoppers in Ithaca may continue to spend their retail dollars elsewhere, regardless of the existence of big-box or discount retails in Ithaca. The FGEIS needs to consider these factors in order to arrive at a more realistic estimate of how much "sales leakage" can actually be captured by development in SWP.

- **Overall sales tax rate.** Several counties adjacent to or nearby Tompkins County have a lower sales tax. Seneca, Yates, Schuyler, Chemung and Onondaga Counties all have 7% sales tax. Only Broome and Cortland counties, amongst those near Tompkins, share its 8% sales tax. In the past, local residents writing to the Ithaca Journal have cited this factor alone as their reason for leaving the area to do their retail shopping.

- **Sales tax on apparel.** Several area counties (currently including Cortland, Broome, Tioga and Schuyler) have eliminated collection of local sales tax on sales of clothing and footwear under $110. Tompkins has not. Again, this will attract shoppers from Ithaca. Schuyler County, which has both a lower overall sales tax and has dropped the local tax on apparel may well have a new Wal-Mart in Watkins Glen by the end of the year 2000, which would be a powerful draw from Ithaca, even if Ithaca had its own Wal-Mart.

\textsuperscript{28} Calculated from Table II-9, page J(II-23) by taking the actual retail sales in the 15 mile ring ($774.8 million) and subtracting total consumer household spending ($602 million), student spending ($42.1 million) and tourist spending ($9.7 million).
• Ithaca has an unusually computer- and Internet-literate population. The availability of both cable modem service and DSL telephone service (both broadband Internet access technologies) in a city the size of Ithaca is extremely unusual. These services are popular here, despite their high monthly cost, suggesting a higher overall level of Internet use. As pointed out (page J(I-6), college students make up over 28% of the population in Tompkins County. College students in particular are heavy users of e-commerce sites. Thus the impact of e-commerce on local retail sales can be expected to be greater in Tompkins County than in other parts of the country.

• Appendix J of the DGEIS makes no mention of catalog or mail/phone order shopping as a source of sales leakage. However, anyone who has seen how busy the UPS and Fedex trucks are in Ithaca's residential neighborhoods knows that such shopping is popular amongst city residents. People shop by mail for a variety of reasons, including convenience, 24-hour availability, greater product selection and greater ease in finding desired items. Therefore, greater availability of big-box and discount retailers may not convert catalog shoppers into local shoppers. However, capture of some catalog sales as local sales may not increase collection of sales tax revenue. Many catalog retailers already collect sales tax for purchases made by NY state residents, because they have operations within the state. Among the major catalog retailers which already collect NY state and local sales tax on mail and phone orders are Land's End, Crate & Barrel, REI, Harry & David, Smith & Hawken, Hanna Anderson (children's clothes) and Jackson & Perkins (garden supplies). There are many others.

• Like it or not, the Ithaca area has attracted a large population of people who are not avid consumers. Many of these people do not own cars or televisions, even if they can afford them, and wear second-hand clothes and read used books. Derisively referred to as "hippies" by pro-development forces, these people would probably describe themselves as environmentalists, practitioners of voluntary simplicity or perhaps anti-materialists. No matter what the name, there is a large population of people here who define quality of life through measures other than acquisition of material goods. My point is not to debate the merits of such a lifestyle, but to suggest that the presence of such a population has an impact on local retail sales,
and must be factored into per capita sales projections. How does one go about quantifying such an impact? Consider that in the most recent mayoral election (November, 1999), a torrid disinformation campaign (mostly successfully) branded the challenger as a fervent foe of development who would permit no development of any kind. Despite that, 46% of the electorate voted for him, many probably thinking that he would block any attempt to bring large, new retail development to the Ithaca area. There is already talk of boycotting merchants who locate in SWP. Dismiss these people if it suits you, but ignore them at the peril of grossly overestimating the retail sales potential of the area.

755. Cogan (49) Economics (Appendix J)

Retail Area (Section II)

The dGEIS presents the retail area as being a 30-mile radius around Ithaca. This is an area more than 2 times what RKG Associates predicted would be the retail area for the proposed Wal-Mart. There is no data to support this claim.

On the contrary, this area seems far too big. In looking at the map in Figure II-2 on page II-15 of Appendix J, the 30-mile area includes:

* 100% Tompkins
* 100% Schuyler (Watkins Glen)
* 80% Chemung (Elmira, Horseheads)
* 80% Tioga (Owego)
* 50% Seneca
* Broome (Whitney Point)
* Cayuga
* Cortland (Cortland)
* Yates
* Onondaga
* Steuben

All told, the 30-mile area includes all or portions of 11 counties.

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Cogan’s (49) written comments include this statements made at the public hearing of January 24, 2000. Therefore, those public hearing comments are not included here.
RKG put market area at 20 miles. This is 225% the size, or more than double.

The large population centers are all at the edge of this 30-mile ring; therefore claiming we can compete for 1/2 the sales in the 15- to 30-mile band is suspect.

As an example, let's assume that all the sales are equally distributed in the 15- to 30-mile band; in other words, this assumes that all the people living in the ring are equally distributed. This is unlikely because, as pointed out above, most of the large population centers (Elmira, Owego, Whitney Point) are at the edge of the 30-mile ring, but it will only benefit this plan if assume it, so let's assume so. Then, to compete for 50% of the sales in the 15- to 30-mile band is equivalent to competing for all of the sales in an area only 1/2 the size. This means that we could compete for 100% of the sales in the 15- to 23.7-mile band.

What is within this 15- to 23.7-mile band? It includes Cortland and Watkins Glen. It extends as far as Horseheads. It seems unlikely what we could compete for all the sales in these areas, especially when Cortland and Horseheads both have large retail shopping centers. In fact, the Arnot Mall is 28 miles from Ithaca and is considered a super regional mall. How likely is it, then, to assume we can compete for sales out to 30 miles?

756. Entlich (233) Attraction of import sales

Even less supportable is the claim "This analysis conservatively estimates consumer spending in the secondary market area being "available" to Ithaca at 50%, with the other half more closely associated with other retail areas such as Elmira, Horseheads or Cortland." which appears on page J(II-18) There is nothing conservative about this estimate. In fact, by any reasonable measure, it appears to be a gross exaggeration. The 15-30 mile ring around Ithaca includes or is within easy reach of several major retailing areas. These areas coincide with the most heavily populated parts of the 15-30 mile ring. Besides Elmira/Horseheads, and Cortland, they include Big Flats (home of both a Sam's Club and a Lowe's), Auburn (home of JC Penney, Lowe's, Ames and Wal-Mart SuperCenter), Binghamton/Vestal/Johnson City (home to Bon-Ton, JC Penney, Sears, Sears Hardware, Ames, Lowe's, Target, Home
Depot, Wal-Mart, and Sam’s Club), Syracuse/Dewitt/Camillus (home to one or more Bon-Ton, JC Penney, Sears, Ames, Wal-Mart, Home Depot, etc.), Sayre, PA (home to Sears, Wal-Mart and Kmart). These areas cover directions to the southwest, south, southeast, north and northeast of Ithaca. Areas to the northwest and west will be partially served by Geneva, Seneca Falls, Waterloo and Penn Yan (especially given the obstacle presented by Seneca Lake). Route 81 is likely to funnel shoppers to the East of Ithaca either north to Cortland or Syracuse or south to Binghamton, rather than taking two lane roads into Ithaca. A more realistic estimate of the portion of consumer spending within the 15-30 mile ring which is “available” to Ithaca might be 20%.

On page J(II-24) the DGEIS states “Consumers typically comparison-shop much more in [general merchandise] categories than in the food categories, which are more convenience oriented.” Despite this admission, the report assumes that “potential” new import sales will occur at the same rate for all categories of retail. That is, it assumes that 100% of sales within the 15-mile ring and 50% of sales in the 15-30 mile ring around Ithaca are potential sales, even for the “much more convenience oriented” categories of food, restaurant, and gasoline service station sales. To be realistic, as well as consistent with its own analysis, the percentage of potential sales, within the 15-30 mile ring should be much lower for the convenience categories than for the comparison-shopping categories. For the 15-30 mile ring, I suggest they should be closer to 5-10% rather than 50%.

On page J(II-24) the DGEIS compares retail sales in the 15-mile ring around Ithaca to NY state averages. It emphasizes well-below average sales in the apparel and miscellaneous\(^\text{30}\) categories as evidence that a “significant opportunity exists for the recapture of sales by the development of the study area for retail uses.” However, a look at Table II-10 on page J(II-26) reveals that the 15-mile ring around Ithaca is at or above the NY state average in all the big ticket categories: automotive dealer sales, building material and hardware store sales, furniture/appliances, etc. sales and the all important general merchandise sales. Furthermore, the 14850 area, which includes

\(^{30}\) The miscellaneous category is shown in Table II-10 as the second only to automotive dealer sales in size, yet I could not find any description of what this category includes. How significant is it to “underperform” the NY state average in this category?
all the major population centers around Ithaca is much closer to the NY state average (apparel at 60% instead of 37%, miscellaneous at 66% instead of 45%). For categories where the 15-mile ring already outdistances the NY state averages, the 14850 area does so by even larger margins.

Table II-11 on page J(II-27) compares retail sales in the 15-mile ring, 15-30 mile ring and NY state to US country averages. As far as I can tell, these comparisons (nor those involving comparisons with other parts of NY state) are not corrected for per capita median income. This is despite the fact that it is acknowledged elsewhere in the DGEIS (page J(I-7)) that “Residents of the County had higher per capita median household and median family incomes than the residents of the City” and that residents of both the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County had lower median per capita incomes and lower median household incomes than average NY state residents. Whether this is due to the high percentage of students or not, it means that one should expect lower retail sales without having to resort to “sales leakage” for an explanation.

Also, there are clear discrepancies between the NY state and US tables. For example, the NY state table (Table II-10, page J(II-26)) shows per capita spending in the 15-mile radius at 3.81 times the NY state average in the furniture/home furnish/appliance category. The US table (Table II-11, page J(II-27)) for this same category shows NY state at 89% of the US average and the 15-mile ring around Ithaca at 58% of the US average. That says the 15-mile ring sales are less than the NY state average sales, contradicting the other table. Even with this obvious discrepancy, however, the 15-mile radius still bests the NY state average (relative to the US average) in 5 of the remaining 8 categories, including general merchandise, food, building materials, and automotive dealer sales. However, the significance of comparisons of local area sales to US country average sales (where both the Ithaca area and NY state averages are low in most categories) is extremely dubious, given the tremendous diversity of the country.

757. Entlich (233) Retail Market Implications

On page J(III-4) the DGEIS calculates sales potential for the six alternative development scenarios. These figures are based on
some unjustifiably optimistic assumptions. First, they use an average square footage sales figure which the DGEIS itself acknowledges (page J(III-2) and J(V-1) are too high. Second, they assume full build-out and full occupancy. Full build-out for alternative 5 is projected (in Appendix A of Appendix J) to take five years for the retail space. Thus the sales projections, all other assumptions unchallenged, would not be seen for a number of years, and that assumes that all goes according to plan in terms of developer interest. Finally, an assumption of 100% occupancy (or even the 95% figure the DGEIS later uses when computing sales tax revenue) is unsupported by Ithaca area experience. Large spaces in what are considered the most desirable retail areas in the Ithaca area have gone unfilled for long periods. Pyramid Mall has been unable to find a long-term tenant for the large space vacated by Montgomery Ward over two years ago. Both Cayuga Mall and Triphammer Shopping Center have had similar difficulties with vacancies, losing many large tenants such as Jamesway, Zayre's, Paper Cutter, the Party Store, CarQuest Auto Parts, etc. East Hill Plaza now has large areas occupied by Cornell University Offices. Cornell pays rent, but generates no sales taxes.

As discussed earlier, the estimates in the DGEIS of capturable sales leakage and potential import sales are grossly exaggerated. Stores in SWP may indeed be able to capture 4-11% of sales leakage or 3-8% of new import sales, but the actual dollar value of those sales should be calculated as percentages of much smaller base numbers. If, as I propose, sales leakage is closer to $200 million rather than the $580 million proposed by CPA, then 4-11% of that number would be $8-$22 million. If we similarly downsize the potential new import sales, what we wind up with is not nearly enough to provide $190/ft² in sales for 800,000 ft² of retail. Either retailers will have to be satisfied with more “underperforming” stores, or the size of the development will have to be severely scaled back.

758. Cogan (49) Market Implications (Section III)

The dGEIS assumes that the new retail will average sales of $190/ft², but on page V-1 it says that this number is too high. We should be using a number that is based in reality. There is no adjustment of this number as the size of retail changes.
Obviously there is a point beyond which there would not be any additional increase in sales, no matter how much retail was built. For example, if we built 10 million ft² of retail, could we assume we would have sales of $1.9 billion per year?

There is no analysis of how different types of retail would differ in their impacts on retail in other parts of the City. For example, a "category killer" bookstore would have a very different effect than a discount clothing store. The assumption of 32% to 40% of sales at the new development being from competition with other retail areas and the assumption that only 10% of this competition would be with downtown need to be adjusted to account for different retail categories.

The model for predicting the effect of this new development on downtown is extremely sensitive to the assumptions made. There needs to be a sensitivity analysis of this model to show how unstable the model is. For example, if we increase by 1% (not 1 percentage point, but one percent) the percent of total sales for the new facility that are taken from elsewhere, then the sales lost to downtown jumps by 2% (between 1.8 and 2.3 percent, depending on the scenario). If we increase by 1% the percent of sales that are taken from downtown then the sales lost jumps between 1.5 and 2 percent. If we decrease the percentage of secondary sales that go to downtown by 1% then the sales loss jumps between one half and one percent. If the sales per square foot for downtown decreases by 1% then the sales lost increases by the same amount. And if the new sales rate decreases by 1%, then the sales loss for downtown increases from .5% to .9%.

The model makes the following assumptions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sales per ft² in new development</th>
<th>$190</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of sales taken from elsewhere in the county that are taken from downtown</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of the secondary sales effect that goes to downtown</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary sales effect</td>
<td>7.5% of new sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales per ft² in downtown</td>
<td>$180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent of total sales that are taken from elsewhere in the county

- Scenario 1-4: 40%
- Scenario 5: 36%
- Scenario 6: 32%
Using these assumptions, the primary loss to downtown is predicted to be between 3 and 5%.

If we adjust these numbers slightly:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sales per ft² in new development</th>
<th>$190</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of sales taken from elsewhere in the county that are taken from downtown</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of the secondary sales effect that goes to downtown</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary sales effect</td>
<td>5.0% of new sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales per ft² in downtown</td>
<td>$170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent of total sales that are taken from elsewhere in the county

- Scenario 1-4: 40%
- Scenario 5: 40%
- Scenario 6: 36%

Percentage of sales lost to downtown:

- Scenario 1: 13.8%
- Scenario 2: 9.2%
- Scenario 3: 11.5%
- Scenario 4: 11.5%
- Scenario 5: 18.4%
- Scenario 6: 20.4%

Then we see that the primary loss to downtown ranges from 9.2% to 20.4%, with scenario 5 producing an 18.4% loss. Also important to note is that this is only the primary loss. It does not account for the effects that a loss of foot traffic will have on other stores in the downtown area.

759. Entlich (233) Employment and New Residents

Although an entire section of Appendix J is devoted to retail market implications of the SWP development, no similar implication study was done regarding office space. This despite the fact that 5 of the 6 development scenarios include office space in percentages from 16.75 to 33.3 of the total. The FGEIS must address this oversight.

There is some discussion of office space issues in section IV related to employment issues. On page J(IV-4) the DGEIS states “The Ithaca Downtown Partnership has indicated that there is
currently a shortage of quality office space in Downtown Ithaca. It is seeking opportunities for converting existing commercial space and even building new office space in downtown, a clear indicator that there are existing firms looking to upgrade from their current office space. Therefore, this project may meet community economic development needs for this real estate sector.” But, nothing is said about the potential impact on downtown if SWP office space siphons office tenants who might otherwise occupy currently vacant retail space downtown. Obviously, such a development has the potential to exacerbate the vacancy problem downtown.

In a guest column published in the 2/9/2000 Ithaca Journal, page 9A, Gary Ferguson, Executive Director of the Ithaca Downtown Partnership says “A Southwest office park will also compete head-to-head with one of downtown[s] key market niches.” Clearly, downtown is not as sanguine as CPA about the impact of office space at SWP.

760. Entlich (233) Tax Revenue

Sales and Property Tax Concerns

Sales and property tax revenue projections are, of course, based on assumptions about total sales and the size of the infrastructure to be built at SWP. I have already indicated why I think the sales projections are severely inflated, and why I think Ithaca cannot support the size retail/office infrastructure proposed in alternative 5. If alternative 5 were to be built, I believe it would either result in disappointing sales for many of its occupants, or would cannibalize a higher percentage of sales from existing local businesses than the DGEIS projects. Either way, tax revenue suffers and fails to meet the optimistic projections contained in section V of Appendix J.

Regarding sales tax revenue, two things should be noted. First, in New York state, sales tax on both new and used automobiles is always collected by the municipality where the vehicle is registered. Thus, the location of dealerships is irrelevant to sales tax collection except for parts sales and service. Second, Tompkins County is considering dropping the sales tax on clothing and footwear sales under $110, as now permitted by the State. The fact that the county has not yet done this may put it at
a competitive disadvantage with neighboring counties, as mentioned previously. However, if Tompkins County joins other nearby counties and agrees to drop local sales tax collection on such apparel sales, most apparel sales will no longer generate sales tax revenue. Both scenarios need to be factored into the sales tax projections.

The 95% retail occupancy rate should be based on the reality of retail marketing in Ithaca, not a “typical occupancy rate for well-performing retail space given normal tenant turnover rates.” Real numbers for the largest retail spaces around Ithaca (in the Triphammer corridor and East Hill Plaza) should be obtained for the FGEIS. Also, a more realistic $/ft^2 figure should be used.

In section II of the report, it is presumed that retail sales losses to downtown stores would average 3-5% of current sales volume (page J(III-10)). This relatively small impact is predicated in part on the assumption that the retail mix in SWP will be very different from the small specialty stores found downtown (see page J(III-5)) and will consist largely of the “big-box” and “discount general merchandise” types which the DGEIS repeatedly claims to be under-represented in the Ithaca area. However, on page V-4, as part of the projected property tax computation, it is projected that the retail store mix will include 25% small stores (500 to 10,000 ft^2). This serves to increase the projected property tax revenue substantially, since retail space in small stores is assessed at twice the rate of retail space in large stores. However, it contradicts the claim that SWP will not have stores of the size and type that compete with downtown. This discrepancy needs to be clarified in the FGEIS.

Page J(V-5) assumes “No adjustments for tax abatements or phased taxation for potential property owners have been made. All property owners are assumed to pay taxes based on the full market value of the property as assessed.” How realistic an assumption is this? For reasons already discussed, large-scale retail development in the Ithaca area is a risky proposition, which may not pay developers back on their investment. Are there really developers banging on Ithaca’s door ready to put in a million ft^2 of retail and office space without any tax abatements or phased taxation?
On pages J(V-7 through V-11) figures are given for projected property tax revenue to the city, county and school district. In all cases, property taxes are presumed to be a clear gain. No “net” calculation is done, except to caution that if the development scenario chosen includes residential units (alternative 2 only), then net revenue will be higher due to the high cost of services, including school district expenses for children of new residents. This analysis is incomplete. First of all, job creation projections given on page J(IV-4) suggest that approximately 195 new immigrants will come to the City of Ithaca, bringing household members who will raise the total to 439. The DGEIS suggests that the city should be able to absorb these new residents. It is claimed that “The City’s current infrastructure and resources are presently not strained by population growth.” Let’s accept this assumption for now. The DGEIS also projects that 460 new immigrants will settle outside the city, bringing household members who will raise the total to 1024. These people are and their impact on areas outside the city are not discussed. We can assume that this large an in-migration to the more rural areas around Ithaca will indeed put pressure on county services for housing, infrastructure, social services, etc. In addition, some of the children will attend Ithaca City School District Schools, since the Ithaca City School District (ICSD) extends well beyond the borders of the City of Ithaca. Therefore, it is unrealistic to assert that only if residential units are built in SWP will there be a drain on Tompkins County or the ICSD that would offset new property tax revenues. The influx of new people to take jobs created by retail and office development will also have such an impact, and that impact should be estimated and subtracted from projected property tax revenues for the County and Ithaca City School District in the FGEIS.

Net property tax revenues will be lower than those estimated in the DGEIS for another reason. In-market competition for retail sales and office space will not just result in a smooth percentage downturn for all competing businesses. Some businesses will fail because even a small loss in sales will make them unprofitable. Some buildings which are currently in active use will become vacant. The same will happen to some office space that transfers in-market to SWP. The resulting empty buildings will quality for reduced property taxes, partially offsetting any gains from new construction in SWP. The FGEIS should attempt to estimate these losses.
On page J(V-10 and V-11) it is stated "Higher property tax rates can create a disincentive for prospective homeowners and businesses seeking to invest in the City. The additional revenue provided to the City by the development of the Southwest Area can help ease the tax liability on existing homeowners and businesses while stimulating new residential and commercial investment in the City." This suggests that, in response to receipt of new property tax revenue from SWP, the City of Ithaca will lower property tax rates throughout the City. This may be a worthy goal, but it is largely incompatible with the notion that SWP will generate large net gains in City property tax collection.

761. Entlich (233) Delivery of Public Services and Infrastructure Costs

Just as the DGEIS overestimates sales potential and tax revenue from the proposed development in SWP, it also underestimates the costs associated with the project.

Most absurd is the blanket presumption that "For the purpose of this study, it is assumed that the costs of infrastructure will be the responsibility of the developer." Given that Appendix F (the traffic study) estimates the need for $9 million in road and bridge improvements and traffic calming measures just to maintain minimally acceptable traffic movement on many city streets, it seems the height of folly to presume that developers will pick up these costs. This is especially true in light of an ongoing struggle to get existing property owners in the City of Ithaca to pay the cost of an upgraded traffic light. This battle has been going on for a couple of years now, and involves only about $100,000, split among at least two property owners.

On page J(VI-3) the DGEIS maintains that the five additional police officers required would cost $150,000/year. That figure is based on a median $30,000/year salary including benefits. That figure comes from a survey of fire and police salaries and is taken from Elmira. Why couldn't CPA get an accurate figure from the Ithaca police department? The $30,000 figure seems very low. A figure commonly used for fringe benefits is one third of budgeted salary. If applied here, that suggests that the median salary for Ithaca Police officers is $22,500. I find that hard to believe. In addition, no estimate is included for training, equipment, uniforms, etc., nor is there an estimate for the purchase and maintenance of two new vehicles. The FGEIS should address
these costs forthrightly. My guess is that an accurate number, including all costs (vehicles, too) would be closer to $50,000 per officer. $250,000/year starts to eat significantly into the projected revenue of the SWP development, and we've barely started calculating costs.

On pages J(VI-1 and VI-2), the DGEIS cites Cost of Community Services (COCS) studies (COCS) carried out by the American Farmland Trust (AFT) to support its contention that commercial development of SWP “should provide a clear fiscal benefit to the City of Ithaca” since commercial development only costs $.29 in community services for each $1.00 raised, as opposed to $1.11 for residential development (a net loss). The same data is used by CPA to discourage consideration of alternative 2, which includes substantial residential development. However, this selective presentation of data from the studies seriously misrepresents the COCS studies findings.

The American Farmland Trust is an organization primarily devoted to the preservation of farmland. Their COCS studies are designed to provide evidence for the fiscal soundness of leaving agricultural land undeveloped, not to promote commercial development. Furthermore, as explained to me by staff of the AFT's northeast regional office (located in Saratoga Springs, NY), all the COCS studies contain a statement regarding the long-term impacts of commercial and industrial development on community costs. For example, a recently (1999) completed study for Skagit County, Washington includes this clarification about the seemingly low costs associated with commercial/industrial development:

When interpreting the commercial and industrial ratios, it is important to understand that this study analyzes current, direct costs to the county. New industries bring new jobs and residents to the region. Consequently, they also increase population, housing and county government spending over time. However, existing businesses and industries, including agriculture and forestry, will not increase population and spending as new industries would. Therefore, when deciding whether to develop new business and industries or protect existing ones, existing ones have two clear advantages. Existing farms, forests, businesses and industries provide surplus revenues to the
county and do not contribute to increases in the population. Although not part of this analysis, the fiscal consequences of these long-term, indirect impacts should be considered when making land use decisions.

I have attached this report fragment as Exhibit A.

In addition, I have attached portions of two other reports forwarded to me by the American Farmland Trust. One is entitled “The Effects of Development and Land Conservation on Property Taxes in Connecticut Towns” (1995). The other is “Land Conservation, Development and Property Taxes in New York” (1997). Both reports show that communities with the most commercial development have the highest property taxes. In the Connecticut study, higher retail sales, higher sales tax collection and higher value of commercial/industrial/utility property all correlated with higher property taxes. I have attached these study fragments as Exhibit B1-B12.

Furthermore, the American Farmland Trust recently did a comprehensive survey of farmland throughout the United States and classified agricultural land into several categories. The study was called Farming on the Edge. As can be seen from the map they produced for New York State, large portions of Tompkins County, especially the area surrounding the City of Ithaca, are colored red. This indicates an area with high quality farmland which is under pressure for development. This is precisely the area which would feel the biggest demand for new housing from job creation spurred by SWP. (Note: A full color version of the map is attached as Exhibit C1. Since the text accompanying the map is yellow, a second black and white copy of the map is attached as Exhibit C2 in order to facilitate reading of the text).

The manner in which CPA utilizes a tiny snippet of AFT COCS study findings to fiscally justify the SWP development is unsupported by a full reading of the study. The FGEIS should make clear that the data cited, when fully examined, does not support, and in fact contradicts, the conclusions drawn by CPA.

In general, the FGEIS needs to realistically assess all costs related to infrastructure development, maintenance and service provision related to the SWP development and to subtract those
costs from equally realistic assessments of revenues. The DGEIS falls far short of achieving that goal.

762. Entlich (233) Additional Attachments

In addition to the attachments already described, I have included two recent newspaper articles, both of which describe major changes in the design of retail business establishments. These articles should give pause to anyone convinced that any particular style of retail development will provide a long-term stability to a community facing fiscal difficulties. Both indicate that traditional malls are failing all across the country, and one suggests that the newest designs look more like downtown Ithaca than like the massive commercial park proposed for SWP. The first article, originally from the Boston Globe, was reprinted in the 11/25/99 Youngstown Vindicator and is labeled Exhibit D1. The second article is from the 1/1/00 New York Times and is labeled Exhibit D2.

Response:

While the majority of the particular points made in these comments addressed previously, it is important to discuss the intent of the DGEIS economics section. It may be characterized as follows:

Proposals have been put forward to develop retail space in South Park. Is it reasonable to expect developers to be interested in such a project, and would the project have a reasonable chance of success.

This analysis found that there are reasonable market justifications for a developer to be interested in the project, and that the project will have a reasonable chance of success. It is of course possible to quibble about any or all of the factors, data and analyses used. However, the conclusion is that the project may well be well received in the marketplace. A more definitive test will be when developers are solicited for the project. The development financing process would make a much more exacting evaluation of the market potential of the project and will more precisely determine the type and scale of development to be undertaken, if any.

A second question to be answered is, “If the project were built, would the competition cause blighting conditions in the
downtown?” A fairly high sales volume assumption was used for the proposed retail center to test this issue. While this assumption indicates that strong competition would occur due to the project, it is found that the project would not cause blighting conditions in the downtown area.

A third question asked is whether strong fiscal revenues would be created by the project. The analysis finds that there would be substantial net fiscal revenues due to the project.

Any number of reasonable questions and comments has been made. However, while many judgements and assessments of the situation and the proposal are made, the analyses of the economics section are useful input to answering the basic questions as put forward above.
SECTION 12.0 INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES

12.1 Infrastructure and Utilities

SUMMARY

The following comments concern infrastructure and utilities issues including modeling, assumptions, and capacity and design features.

763. Wegmans (252) Page 1-5, first paragraph: “Permits and Approval Requirements” Would the Tompkins County Health Department and the New York State Health Department have review and approval of water and sewer supply extensions? Wouldn’t the City Building and zoning Departments have approval of building plans?

Response: The comment is correct. Approvals required include the following:

- Tompkins County Health Department: Watermain Extensions, Sewer Extensions, & Pump Station

- City of Ithaca Building Department: Building Plans

- City Water & Sewer Departments: Utility Extensions

764. Wegmans (252) Utilities Evaluation Report: Page 2, second paragraph: “The determination of actual fire flow available needs to be done at the point of system design...” Why wasn’t this modeling and design done conceptually at this point?

Response: The specific requirements for building fire flow protection ranged over such a universe of need (e.g. from 250 gallons per minute (gpm) to 9000 gpm) that it was more realistic and practical to describe the general capability of the area without focusing on an infrequent, emergency-only need at the maximum end of that range, especially considering that need might be unique and handled by internal sprinkler heads in combination with a more modest fire flow at the hydrant(s).
Extensions from the current systems on the perimeter of the study area can meet most normal fire flow needs, especially if paired with some selective sprinkler installations and onsite water storage tanks.

765. Wegmans (252) Utilities Evaluation Report: Page 2, third paragraph: “The plant which has a capacity of 7.0 million gallons per day...is limited by its ability to draw water from Six Mile Creek.” What is limiting the draw from the Creek?

Response: The current capacity of 5 million gallons per day (MGD) is the safe sustained yield from Six Mile Creek based on 95 years of operation. The City water supply system can meet peak needs up to 7 MGD if the stream flow is coincidental with demand. There is not currently a problem with capacity as the average demand is now 3.4 MGD.

766. Wegmans (252) Utilities Evaluation Report: Page 2, first paragraph: “A potential of 2.93 million gallons of storage is available in this area...” What is the historical fluctuation of this storage volume? Is this storage available all of the time or only during times of low demand?

Response: Storage at the Elm Street tank can fluctuate in peak demand to approximately half the 1.5 million gallons, or 0.75 millions gallons. The large diameter connections to both tanks, and particularly the water plant and clear well (which is nearly always close to full) can offset peak demands in this area by effectively delivering to the demand rather to the tank and back.

767. Wegmans (252) Utilities Evaluation Report: Page 7, second paragraph: “The first phase would be to eliminate a dead end in the Tops/K-mart area then connecting that main to the main loop through the development area from Wegmans...” The proposed routing does not have to take place through the Wegmans property this could just as well be connected through the Tops/K-mart property.

Response: The comment reflects some misunderstanding as to what is meant by connecting through Wegmans or some misunderstanding as to existing utilities on the Wegmans site.
When the new Wegmans store was built, the City agreed to take the new 12 inch water main through the Wegmans site and a side spur to a hydrant at the "pet store" end of the store as public utilities on easement. The 12 inch main was actually connected to the eight inch main on the Benderson (Tops) property, also a public main on easement. It was agreed the parallel main on the Wegmans property south of the old store would also be a public main tied into the Tops line where they both end (almost at the southwest corner of the existing Wegmans property). When design details for the "future Wegmans bldg." are finalized, the old Wegmans 8 inch line to the old store will also be a part of the system.

The DEIS is referring to an extension from this point west and nothing else that does not already exist. The description of the rest of the improvements at Kmart are all part of a total system to upgrade water in the area; however, one extension is just as vital as the other if looping occurs and all the discrete links are to be an integrated loop and available for public use.

The present public/private partnerships of public utilities in a total system on private land with easements was developed to replace private lines, which required expensive floodproof structures. A number of owners--Threshold Plaza, Benderson, and Wegmans, in that chronological order--have contributed money to the City towards the current system.

DGEIS Figure B in Appendix G is misleading in that the old 8 inch watermain needs to be connected at the new 12 inch watermain on the Wegmans property. However, the extension to the west starts more opposite the northwest corner of the Tops building (opposite the southwest corner of the old Wegmans Store). All the mains shown east of there are already in the ground. The final parts of these mains could not be done at the time of the building of the new Wegmans store because the old Wegmans store would have had its service significantly disrupted, and there was no pressing priority at the time or up until the present.

768. Wegmans (252) Utilities Evaluation Report: Page 8, Table 3-1: "The estimated unit flow rate for light industrial uses is listed as NA yet there is an average daily flow." Why wasn't the column filled in with an estimated flow rate of 0.22 gpd/sf?
Response: The figure is an average of the type light industries existing in the City and not so much associated with square footage.

769. Wegmans (252) Utilities Evaluation Report: Page 9, third paragraph: "This system layout was done at the City's request to minimize the amount of sewer needing to be maintained by the City." One would believe that the City would have to take responsibility (operation and maintenance) for any sewer or pump station that services multiple independent property owners regardless if it were a gravity sewer or a forcemain.

Response: The question presumes the opposite of what is being conveyed. It was originally thought to serve the initial buildings with a gravity sewer out to Elmira Road and putting in the system as shown to serve the remainder of the development. This original concept would have been approximately twice the footage as presently proposed or needed. The City suggested the plan as proposed as a simpler, more cost effective total system which, if capital costs are equitably shared by the developers, would be half as expensive for initial costs, and in turn would be half as expensive for the City to operate and maintain. There was never an intention to infer that the City would not own, operate, and maintain the sewer system as shown in DGEIS Figure B of Appendix G.

770. Wegmans (252) Utilities Evaluation Report: Page 10, Table 3-2: "The estimated unit flow rate for light industrial uses is listed as NA yet there is an average daily flow." Why wasn't the column filled in with an estimated flow rate of 0.185 pgd/sf?

Response: The figure is an average of the type light industries existing in the City and not so much associated with square footage.

771. Wegmans (252) Utilities Evaluation Report: Page 13, second paragraph: "...lift stations that service the area, Elmira Road and Wood Street...these stations appear to have ample capacity under average flows..." Would this still be true under peak flows? What is the history of the operation and maintenance of the existing lift stations?

Response: Currently, grease and inflow/infiltration tax the existing system. The existing system is fine for the uses that exist and those
reasonably expected to locate along the Elmira Road frontage. The existing system combines with sewage pumped from Cherry St. and points in the Town of Ithaca all the way out to Robert Treman State Park. It also manifolds with the Eagles, Wegmans and other individual pumps. The City has installed SCADA systems in the Cherry St., Wood St., and Elmira Road Pump Stations to more quantitatively diagnose the drag that occurs during peak flow times. It was felt the new pump station with a separate discharge directly into the new 30 inch interceptor, already constructed from Agway to the Treatment Plant would serve this new development area to whatever level of need materializes, be it food processing to brewery-pub to a four fold expansion of Evaporated Metal Films (an existing high user in the area), etc.

Also, the growth in the Town of Ithaca southwest of this area could follow along the lines of their comprehensive plan without being complicated by the needs of the GEIS area.

772. Wegmans (252) Utilities Evaluation Report: Page 14, fourth paragraph: “The likelihood of the utility infrastructure installed to serve this area ultimately being extended further to facilitate additional development is minimal.” Has any additional capacity been designed into these utility systems at all?

Response: The separation of needs of the areas outside of the study area from the needs served by the new infrastructure within the GEIS area provide the opportunity to serve additional capacity needs beyond the norms used for the loading forecasts. The critical element in the whole system is the sewer foreman. The pump station can be modified at almost any point in history to deal with unexpected demand of the GEIS area.

773. Wegmans (252) Utilities Evaluation Report: Page 15, Table 4-1: “Possible Mitigation” column 3. There is no mention of additional municipal storage and transmission mains that could mitigate some of these potential adverse impacts. User fees and charges back costs were mentioned as possible mitigation measures. Would these fees be based only on the new area or would these taxes be extended over a wider area?
Response: See the Executive Summary of this FGEIS. The intention is to create a mitigation fee to offset the City's cost in constructing the initial infrastructure to service the Study Area. The remaining infrastructure is anticipated to be constructed by private developers.

774. Wegmans (252) Utilities Evaluation Report: Page 18, fourth paragraph: "It is offered as an average to be used in, for example, a 'life cycle' cost analysis..." What is the anticipated life expectancy of these intended infrastructure improvements?

Response: Water and sewer improvements, for the sake of this analysis, would have a 50 year life expectancy. The pumps and controls in the pump station would have a 25 year life expectancy.

775. Wegmans (252) Utilities Evaluation Report: Drawing B, Proposed Utility Infrastructure. The proposed routes of the proposed water main and sanitary sewer force main extend through the Wegmans property. These improvements can be rerouted to other locations.

Response: As discussed extensively above, the watermain location is in error on the Wegmans property. What would be involved is extending to the west from the end of the line preexisting with the original store, about 5-10 feet north of the south property line, is to the western property line at the relief channel. Also, the connection of the 8 inch line at the new twelve inch line would complete the system. The dramatic sweep into the Wegmans site is not accurate or necessary.

As to the location of the force main, what is shown is the most logical and straightforward route to the new interceptor on Fulton Street. It is quite possible in time that this route could serve a back parcel on the Wegmans site as well as afford a more direct solution to "non-sewered-land," an area within which the new Wegmans and a number of businesses find themselves on old West Clinton St. These areas are not part of the GEIS study area, but by virtue of the route could, in the future, be afforded a better alternative to sewer than that which currently exists.

Alternatively, water sewer routes may be revised to follow the route of the major access road to the interior of the property from the Wegmans property to the south.
SECTION 13.0 STORMWATER

13.1 Stormwater Analysis

SUMMARY

These comments attacked various components of the stormwater analysis in the DGEIS, including the drainage analysis, figures residence time, collection devices, and the underlying premise of rapid removal versus retention for quality enhancement.

776. Tompkins County Planning (218) Drainage Analysis. The DGEIS states that an alternate emergency discharge point to Cayuga Inlet should be developed. A threshold for the use of this emergency discharge point should be identified as well as location and specific construction requirements.

777. Tompkins County Planning (218) Residence Time in Vegetated Swales. The DGEIS identifies the residence time for water in swales and their corresponding treatment level. Please provide estimates for residence time in the proposed system at various points in the drainage configuration (subareas) and the estimated pollution removal rates (for individual constituents) in varying rain events. Will the underlying impervious characteristics of the site, along with the artesian gradient, influence infiltration rates (and subsequently, ‘treatment’) in the proposed swales?

778. Tompkins County EMC (204) Water Resources Relying upon swales and four mechanical collectors seems to underestimate the potential for a floodplain-related emergency in this area. While sedimentation ponds may or may not be useful it is clear to our committee that additional research and planning needs to be done in advance of any development in the study area. A more complete understanding of water movement through this study area is needed. Too much is left to chance and the benevolence of the unknown developers. The Water Resources section of the DGEIS should be redone to provide a more comprehensive plan for handling water issues in the Southwest Area.

779. CAC (220) The DGEIS simultaneously proposes removing water from the site as fast as possible, to reduce flooding on the site, and slowing it down as much as possible, to trap or remediate
pollutants and sediment. Obviously, both scenarios are not possible.

780. Gallahan (8) 2. Water Resources--Surface Water

I have analyzed the area north of the levee containing Southwest Park to which the DGEIS devotes most of Appendix C. Examining the impact of development on runoff characteristics of this area, their calculations for the smaller build scenario analyzed (alternative 4) indicate a dramatic increase in runoff. The runoff volume for a 24 hour storm would change from 18 acre-ft with existing conditions to 31 acre-ft; the peak discharge would change from 70 cubic-feet-per-second to 240 cfs. Given the flooding tendency of this area (the "Relief Channel" is the creek directly behind K-Mart, Tops and Wegmans) the increased runoff from the study area could cause serious problems.

How then did the DGEIS conclude that storm water runoff will not be a problem? Naturally they did what they had to do to match the model to the desired outcome--they made the proper assumptions. They couch their assumptions in reasoning from the obvious. They state: "Because the study area is located at the downstream end of a much larger surface drainage system, storm water runoff peaks generated in the study area reach the Relief Channel significantly ahead of the storm water peak generated by the rest of the watershed, and are smaller in volume."

This reasoning cannot be used to conclude that the added runoff would not be a significant problem in a storm event. The drainage plans for the area north of the levee depend on getting the water efficiently into the "Relief Channel," but water in this channel is actually a serious problem during common flood events. Just because the study area is smaller than the rest of the watershed does not mean that the extra 13 acre-ft of runoff (31 instead of 18) in 24 hours might not result in a extra foot of water covering 13 acres, or some such very severe unmitigatable added flooding.

But to avoid finding such a result, the runoff flow studies in the DGEIS only look at 24 hour storm events, a very unrealistic assumption for Ithaca. This assumption has the effect of showing the runoff peak from the study area passing downstream before runoff from the rest of the watershed has much impact.
This allows the DGEIS to conclude that there will be no significant runoff problems, but is an unrealistic assumption. Indeed with this assumption the flow studies show that runoff from the study area would be zero before the 26th hour. Instead, with more realistic (but harder to model) assumptions, such as a longer term or ongoing intermittent storm, the projected increase in storm water runoff could be a huge adverse impact.

This single area of concern should be enough to stop the adoption of this Land Use Plan. And indeed this potential impact has been recognized and given the force of law by New York State in Wetlands laws that very properly restrict the City from shooting its own foot by implementing this plan (see section 4 below).

Response:

These comments generally criticize the analysis contained in the DGEIS as being inadequate, but they do not offer hard evidence or analyses that would contradict the findings of the DGEIS analysis. Consequently, the Lead Agency believes the conclusions and findings of the DGEIS remain the best available data on which to judge the drainage impacts of the project. Additional details and mitigation measures with respect to stormwater quality are discussed in the sections below.

It was the purpose of the DGEIS stormwater analysis to determine whether stormwater could be adequately managed from the intensity of development proposed by the action. Having demonstrated that the overall project area is capable of safely managing stormwater drainage from development of the intensity proposed, it is the Lead Agency's intent to make a Finding that specific stormwater management plans be subject to review during the site plan review process in order that they may be constructed so as to coordinate with other plans in the project area. The Lead Agency specifically intends to make a Finding allowing the Planning Board to require that projects design their systems to work with one another, and, if necessary, to construct larger portions of systems than might be necessary to serve any specific development. In so doing, the Lead Agency also intends to make a Finding empowering the Planning Board to create fee systems that will allow developers who construct larger stormwater management systems than needed for their particular project to recover a portion of their costs from other developers who may benefit from such systems.
13.2 Offsite Related Impacts

SUMMARY

These comments highlight a perceived inattention to off-site impacts related to stormwater control on the Southwest Area development parcels.

781. Town of Ithaca (219) Section 2.3.7 – Recommended Drainage Configuration (pg. 2-17): Concerning the statement in the dGEIS, "Sedimentation control measures, such as check dams or siltation basins, should be implemented in the streams draining South Hill, to minimize sedimentation concerns in the Relief Channel".

A certain amount of sedimentation occurs naturally from stream erosion, and its deposition in the low lying lands of the Southwest area are part of a natural process. The two South Hill creeks that discharge near the Relief Channel reside within very steep slopes in the Town of Ithaca. These steep slopes would largely rule out the feasibility of employing engineered sedimentation controls within the Town’s portion of these creeks. The Town does employ erosion and sedimentation rules which are applied to its subdivision and site plan review development process. The Town is also considering adopting additional requirements, including measures that would protect against creek erosion due to development, thus minimizing additional sedimentation with future development of the Town. The City of Ithaca should also consider additional measures to protect against creek erosion due to development.

782. Tompkins County Planning (218) Off-Site Sediment Reduction Projects. As part of the drainage plan, the dGEIS mentions that off-site projects may be implemented to control sediment before it reaches the Relief Channel and aggravates the existing sedimentation problem. No further information is provided. Please provide additional information on off-site projects (i.e. site locations, maintenance) in the fDEIS.

783. CAC (220) The dGEIS recommends sedimentation control measures, such as installing check dams or siltation basins in the streams draining South Hill, to minimize sedimentation concerns in the Relief Channel. These would be helpful, since the Relief Channel is the
major outlet for most of the drainage system in the plan. But much of the South Hill area in question is in the Town of Ithaca, over which the City has no control. If the Town permitted the City to install dams or basins, the cost of installation and maintenance will presumably be borne by the City and should be considered in the cost/benefit ratio of the project. Has this matter been discussed with Town officials?

Response: The Lead Agency believes that DGEIS comments related to the need for sedimentation basin sand other sediment control measures apply to the entire City, as well as the Town, and not just the study area. The adoption of such measures would need to be a part of general City and/or Town initiatives. The DGEIS has pointed out the desirability of such measures, and the Town has confirmed that it is considering the same. The Lead Agency intends to consider beginning initiatives to adopt such measures during the Findings process.

13.3 100 Year Storm Event

SUMMARY

Several comments questioned the analysis of a limited number of storm events and called for an examination of the impacts of 100 year storm events. The comments pointed out a perceived significant number of large storms in the recent past and felt that the stormwater analysis in the DGEIS did not adequately model the impacts from large storms.

784. Tompkins County Planning (218) Drainage Analysis. The drainage information provided in the dGEIS only evaluates the potential impacts from Alternatives 4 and 6 for a 25-year storm event. The Final Scope dictates that each of the six alternatives be evaluated using a 25-, 50- and 100-year storm event. The Final Scope also states that stormwater management structures be located and designed for each different alternative.

785. Tompkins County Planning (218) Backwater in Vegetated Swales. The dGEIS Appendix C states that the swales will receive water from the stormwater system and will be able to convey a 25-year storm event, and greater flows may result in backwater effect in the
swales. Will the drainage easements/swales proposed in the dGEIS provide storage capacity sufficient to handle a 100-year event as illustrated in the Draft Design Guidelines (Ill. H)?

786. Tompkins County Planning (218) Safety. The swales, as proposed in the dGEIS, range in channel bottom width from 80 to 15 feet with varying side slopes and widths. Even the narrowest swale proposed for this project might present a liability threat due to the potential for drowning. Please propose mitigation and provide information related to the high, low and average depth of water in each swale, and the expected velocity in each segment (if varied) for a 25-year, 50-year and 100-year storm event.

787. City of Ithaca Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) (220) The SW Area Plan calls for the development of up to 1.25 million square feet of buildings, plus associated roadways and parking lots, with a projected doubling of storm runoff volume and a near quadrupling of storm peak flow off the site. The dGEIS states that typical storm water pollutants from urban areas include oil, grease, sediment, solvents, various metals, nutrients and salt. The design of the system for a 25-year storm event is not adequate for mitigating significant impacts from these. Designing around old weather patterns, at a time of global climate change that is causing increasing frequency and severity of storms, is short-sighted. The GEIS should detail more robust systems for handling weather events, rather than marginal systems.

788. Byard (347) Flooding Concerns Drainage designs appear to be planned for only 25 year floods. Why doesn’t it take into consideration 100 year floods? During flooding it appears that there is not enough capacity to keep runoff from going into the inlet, and therefore all the nonpoint-source pollution that is supposed to settle out in swales will go direction into the lake.

789. Glover (73) The impact statement should run off results for 50- and 100-year floods. They do only for 25-year floods. There is a trench, a ditch 2,300 feet long and 3 feet deep with sheer sides. And there is no reference to any fencing required. Little kids.

We’ve had two 100-year floods within the last 21 years, 1972 and 1993.
790. Wegmans (252) Long Environmental Assessment Form – Part III: Impact on Water, fifth paragraph: “Potential flooding resulting from various levels of development needs to be investigated...” Assessments of filling within the floodplain must also be addressed and how this may effect other areas.

791. Wegmans (252) Drainage Study Report: Page 5, third paragraph: “future projects...south of the levee...be required to demonstrate that there would not be no significant impacts to the 100-year flood zone...” How is this requirement going to be enforced and managed?

Response: Stormwater runoff calculations for the 50 and 100-year events are included as Appendix 7. With respect to designing more robust stormwater systems to handle severe weather events such as the 100-year storm, this is impractical. To design a system to convey a 100-year storm event would be extremely over designed. Stormwater systems typically are designed as to not completely fail during severe storm events. That fact remains that during a 100-year event, “everybody is wet” and as long as the stormwater system does not cause harm to human health it is often considered adequate. The drainage plan presented in the DGEIS achieves this objective.

With respect to specific water heights in the drainage swales, these will be calculated at the time specific development proposals, and thus, run-off rates are known. The DGEIS presents a conceptual plan for managing stormwater and demonstrates that this plan will work. Design details will be reviewed during the site plan review process.

With respect to global warming or similar concerns, to say that the severity and frequency of storm events has increased due to global climate changes is somewhat incorrect. It is true that the Southwest Area and on a more regional note, the entire east coast may have seen increase severity and frequency of storm events in the last 10 to 20 years, but weather patterns are cyclic. The rainfall data available to the designer includes and accounts for these cyclic variations in weather patterns.
13.4 Stormwater Quality

SUMMARY

Numerous comments were received which highlighted perceived threats to stormwater quality. These comments questioned the efficacy of the treatment measures, especially given the acreage of impervious surfaces, topography of the Southwest Area, and the proximity of the proposed development to the Cayuga Inlet and Cayuga Lake.

792. Wegmans (252) Drainage Study Report: Page 7, second paragraph: "...it was determined that storm water detention would not be used to control peak runoff rates..." The additional detention may be justified to improve storm water quality.

793. Wegmans (252) Drainage Study Report: Page 8, first paragraph: "Drainage would be directed towards stormwater treatment manholes..." Is the inclusion of stormwater treatment manholes better than stormwater drainage?

794. Wegmans (252) Drainage Study Report: Page 12, seventh paragraph: "...sweeping has been credited with an 80% removal of stormwater pollutant loads..." What pollutant loads were intended to be removed? How was this percentage derived?

795. Wegmans (252) Drainage Study Report: Page 13, first paragraph: "...salt can be reduced by increasing the frequency of snow removal, by the use of abrasives such as sand, or by the use of alternative chemical..." Which is the better alternative, sand, salt or chemical deicer?

796. Wegmans (252) Drainage Study Report: Page 13, third paragraph: "...heavy metal removed by vegetated swales have typically found values ranging from 20% to 60%..." How would detention basins compare to these values?

797. Wegmans (252) Drainage Study Report: Page 13, fourth paragraph: "For each land use scenario, the residence time in vegetated swale would depend on several factors." What would be the minimum residence time and how would this effect the pollutant removal percentage? What would be the maximum time be and the
associated pollutant removal rate? What is the conclusion of the Drainage Study?

798. Town of Ithaca (219) Section 2.3.10 - Water Resources - Mitigation of Impacts (2.17, 2.18): Given its location, the development of the Southwest Area poses some daunting hydrologic challenges, both in terms of flood control and water quality protection for the Inlet and Cayuga Lake. Water quality protection for the Inlet and Cayuga Lake is of utmost concern to the Town of Ithaca, as well as all our area residents.

The large scale development as proposed for the Southwest area could have significant water quality impacts, and the treatment of urban stormwater runoff needs to be thoughtfully considered to ensure strategies that can adequately mitigate these impacts. However, no thorough analysis of the water quality impacts is presented in the GEIS. There is no indication that the chosen strategy for treating the stormwater runoff was based on an analysis of the estimated pre-development pollution load compared to the post-development estimated pollution load. Completion of an analysis equivalent to what would be required in a State Pollution Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit application should be part of the GEIS. Completion of such a study would assess estimations of how much runoff can be expected to be treated, and what kind and amount of pollutants will be entering the water ways.

Discussion of the stormwater treatment manholes is limited to the Kistner Concrete Products stated claims for their product. The manufacturer's claim is repeated in the GEIS, which states that the manhole system "exhibit an 80% removal rate for typical bimonthly rainfall events". Would these rates also be expected in Ithaca given typical Ithaca rainfall events? Are there other projects in the Central N.Y. area where these devices are successfully used that can be reported on? Greater clarification is needed in describing what type of stormwater pollutants are expected to be removed by the manholes and what pollutants will remain to be treated by the vegetated swales. Also, how many stormwater treatment manholes are required per acre of impervious surface?

Similarly, the GEIS presents widely varying reported removal rates for heavy metals, oil and grease. But this information does
little to provide an understanding of how much treatment can be expected given the proposed Southwest area development scenarios and stormwater management strategies, with weather and rainfall conditions in Ithaca. Again, a more complete analysis should be performed so that pollutant removal strategies can be better tailored to the situation at hand. For instance, some soluble pollutants require at least a 24 hour residence time for extraction. And while detention facilities are not necessary for flood attenuation, they (or retention ponds) may need to be considered for water quality treatment purposes.

As reported in the GEIS, the success of the vegetated swales in treating stormwater runoff is highly dependent on the maintenance and cleaning program that will be established, but it is also highly dependent on the composition and density of vegetation matter used in the swale, and of the soil composition. Some discussion of these important elements should be included.

The Center for Watershed Protection in Silver Spring, Maryland is a leader in urban stormwater management. They have developed guidelines for site assessments and have developed design manuals. They would be a valuable resource for developing a comprehensive and effective stormwater management program for the Southwest area.

799. Tompkins County Planning (218) Water Quality Pollutants. All alternatives presented in the dGEIS include the construction of a significant portion of the site as parking areas. Parking areas and roads will generate a variety of water quality pollutants. Due to the sensitive location of the project area, next to a significant resource Cayuga Inlet, the potential contamination from other constituents should be evaluated and addressed in the fGEIS (metals, salt, phosphorus, nitrogen, antifreeze, MTBE, oil and gas derivatives). It is not clear in the dGEIS what constituents will be removed (and the effectiveness of the system for each pollutant) by the proposed stormwater manhole treatment.

800. Tompkins County EMC (204) Water Resources The dGEIS needs to take a stronger position on storm water clean up. The proposed mechanical collectors are not adequate for oils and other contaminants, which will be washed off the extensive parking
lots and into Cayuga Inlet and quickly into Cayuga Lake, and they do nothing at all if not maintained.

801. Salon (13)

The Executive Summary also stated the project will improve water quality. This seems impossible since the site was completely vegetated prior to the present filling action by Widewaters. The vegetative swales may allow as per the GEIS for nutrient absorption by plants but unless the plant material is removed from the site, where the grass is removed, there will be no net nutrient loss from the plant. The use of the drainage swales as an area of sedimentation will only reduce life of the drainage swales and reduce maintenance costs. All of the sediment should be removed during the maintenance and not spread on the site.

It is our recommendation that larger sedimentation and retention basins be constructed and incorporated into a wetland design. This will allow for a more economic and effective treatment and removal of sediment, nutrients and metals rather than spreading the pollutants out over a lengthy drainage system. The use of sweeping and vacuuming parking lots should be used only as a practice to extend the life of other more realistic treatment structures.

The DGEIS recommends sedimentation control measures, such as check dams or situation basins be implemented in the streams draining South Hill to minimize sedimentation concerns in the Relief Channel. These should be installed since the Relief Channel is the major outlet for the majority of the drainage system in the plan.

802. CAC (220)

The dGEIS states that typical storm water pollutants from urban areas include oil, grease, sediment, solvents, various metals, nutrients and salt. The proposal for addressing these pollutants by collecting storm water runoff in catchment basins is inadequate, since only the first ½ inch of runoff from a rainfall event will be collected in the proposed basins. The GEIS needs to evaluate this more carefully, along with the impact of these materials entering the important Cayuga Inlet and lake fisheries and the drinking water of Cayuga Lake.
803. CAC (220) The dGEIS recommends that the site drainage configuration also include the ability to discharge directly into the Cayuga Inlet/Flood Control Channel, due to fear of high water in the Relief Channel. This would provide an emergency alternative discharge location for floodwaters. The design should take into consideration that any direct discharge into the Inlet will by-pass most planned treatments and should be designed to be used only during a 25-year storm or worse.

804. Kiefer (267) B. Water resources.

Given the Southwest Area's geologic location, development poses major hydrologic challenges, both with respect to flood control and water quality. The DGEIS does not include a comprehensive analysis of water-quality impacts (e.g., a discussion of pre-development and post-development pollution loads). The DGEIS should be factually clearer on storm-water-management strategies (for example, mechanical collectors and swales may be helpful but insufficient; it is impossible to know absent a more complete understanding of hydrology/water movement (or lack of movement)) through the area.

One cannot simply conclude that "proper engineering controls" can/will mitigate floods to the extent that there will be no unavoidable impacts, or that 'replacement wetlands" can be guaranteed to provide the same function as existing wetlands so that again there will be no unavoidable impacts".

The DGEIS does not provide decision makers with sufficient information to make an informed choice among alternatives.

805. Mudrak (236) Surface Water Management. As stated earlier, the DGEIS deals mostly with quantity of surface water management but quality is barely addressed. The site design perpetuates the dumping of surface pollutants and who knows what else into the Inlet. Go look at the oil streaks on the Wegman’s parking lot; look at the huge, 20-foot tall snow piles (complete with salt and grunge) melting into the Flood Relief Channel, which flows directly into the Inlet.

806. Mudrak (236) "Studies of heavy metals removed by swales have typically found values ranging from 20 to 60 percent of runoff concentrations."
dGEIS page 2-18." What about the other 80 to 40 percent? Heavy metals persist in water sediments. What about accrual through time? What are we doing? Collecting heavy metals in the flood relief channel and in the swales so they can be gullywashed away during a nice big storm? Right into the Inlet?

Regarding oil and grease removal in vegetated swales; "One study found a 49 percent removal rate in a swale where the flow residence was 4-5 minutes, rising to 75 percent in swale where the residence time was 10 minutes." What about the other 51 to 25 percent? What one study? I've read one study where it didn't work at all; I've read other studies where it depends on rainfall pattern and the species mix of vegetation present. (This section of the DGEIS sounds like it was written by a beginning planning student whose main goal was to fill up a quota of pages.)

...There is absolutely no information discussing the cumulative effects (through decades at least) of all of these pollutants and toxins on the vitality of the waterways and the fishery.

807. Peterson, C (239) pages 2-13 and 2-14. On page 2-13, a Sear-Brown study of 1994 concludes, "filling would not significantly impact the flood level or velocity, thus allowing for potential development." On page 2-14, the DEIS states that "the volume of runoff from large storms would be greater under any development scenario when compared to existing conditions given the additional amount of impervious surfaces (roofs, parking lots, roads, etc.)." Any Ithacan knows what flooding looks like at Tops and Wegmans. (Apparently it's OK to flood to a depth of one foot or less.) It is hard for me to reasonably explain the expense and work done by the Army Corps of Engineers through the flood control channel and the levee and the rationale behind adding to the flood burden that the lands already carry. I believe there should be further and more detailed analysis on the impact on the neighboring lands, not just the land in the study area.

808. Hagedorn (350) Flooding and water quality are not adequately addressed in the draft GEIS. The Southwest park area is seasonally very wet and I have seen the new Widewaters site seriously flooded at least three times in the last four years. What will serve as a holding reservoir during flooding, now that this flood plain is
being filled. How will water running off parking lots be treated so that the Cayuga Inlet isn't polluted?

809. Gougakis (34) I am concerned about runoff and how well the swales will mitigate chemicals, pesticides or other unsafe runoffs that will enter the lake.

810. Gougakis (34) I haven't seen serious talk about silt, erosion and natural runoff which will accumulate at the lake's end.

811. Jennifer Schriber (125) WATER RESOURCES: The drive continues to try to contain water and control it. Discussion needs to be provided that would project long term costs of such efforts. The Cayuga Inlet has also been identified as the major contributor to the fish population in Cayuga Lake. A discussion of impacts of development on the fish populations and health needs to happen.

Response: Control of the "first flush" is important in stormwater management because most runoff related water quality contaminants are transported from land, particularly impervious surfaces, during the initial stages of a storm event. For example, 70% to 95% of the contaminants in stormwater can be removed by capturing the first flush of runoff through infiltration practices.

Stormwater management facilities for treating the first-flush should be designed to capture the first ½" of runoff or runoff from a 1-year 24-hour storm event, whichever is greater, from all land areas which the pervious surface has been changed over predevelopment conditions due to land clearing, land grading and construction.

The following are tables that demonstrate best management practices relative to their performance at certain locations, specific storm events and removal efficiencies.
### Table 13.4-1:
Common Environmental Resource Constraints on Siting Stormwater Management Facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>slope</th>
<th>high water table</th>
<th>close to bedrock</th>
<th>proximity to foundations</th>
<th>Space consumption</th>
<th>Maximum depth</th>
<th>Restricted land use</th>
<th>High sediment input</th>
<th>Thermal impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extended detention pond</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wet pond</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infiltration trench</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infiltration basin</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Porous pavement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water quality inlet</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grassed swale</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 = may preclude the use of a BMP  
2 = Can be overcome w/ careful site design  
3 = Generally not a restriction

### Table 13.4-2:
Comparative Stormwater Benefits Provided by Urban BMPs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2-yr storm</th>
<th>10-yr storm</th>
<th>100-yr storm</th>
<th>Volume control</th>
<th>Groundwater recharge</th>
<th>Streambank erosion control</th>
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<tr>
<td>Extended Detention</td>
<td>Dry</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dry w/ marsh</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wet</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wet pond</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infiltration trench</td>
<td>Full exfiltration</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partial exfiltration</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Water quality inlet</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porous pavement</td>
<td>Full exfiltration</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partial exfiltration</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infiltration basin</td>
<td>Full exfiltration</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infiltration/detention</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Off-line basin</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Water quality inlet</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grassed swale</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 = seldom or never provided  
2 = sometimes provided w/ careful design  
3 = usually provided
Table 13.4-3: Comparative Pollutant Removal of Urban BMP Designs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stormwater Management Practice</th>
<th>TSS</th>
<th>Nutrients</th>
<th>Organics</th>
<th>Metals</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extended Detention</td>
<td>30-70%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15-40% for COD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wet Pond</td>
<td>50-90%</td>
<td>30-90% for total P</td>
<td>mod-high removal</td>
<td>mod-high removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stormwater wetlands</td>
<td>50-90%</td>
<td>somewhat lower than wet ponds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Pond System</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infiltration Trenches</td>
<td>+90%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>+90%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Infiltration Basins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porous Pavement</td>
<td>Up to 80%</td>
<td>up to 60% for P</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>up to 80% for Nit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sand Filter</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>40% for dissolved P</td>
<td>50-70%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>35% for Nit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peat Sand Filter</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>70% for P</td>
<td>90% for COD</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50% for Nit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grassed Swale</td>
<td>Up to 70%</td>
<td>30% for P</td>
<td>50-90%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25% for Nit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Filter Strip</td>
<td>28%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

These tables demonstrate the removal efficiencies to be achieved by various mitigation measures. Pollutant loadings from the measures proposed in the DGEIS are calculated and provided in Appendix 8.

13.5 Mitigation

SUMMARY

Several comments questioned the proposed stormwater mitigation measures and issues, including the use of swales, the size of proposed detention basins, and the proposed vacuum sweeping of parking lots. Comments also included standards and mitigation measures highlighted in the DEIS published for Wegmans.

812. Tompkins County Planning (218) Parking Lot Design. Appendix C suggests using pervious surfaces, instead of the concrete lots as proposed in the Design Guidelines, to reduce the generation of stormwater from the proposed project area. This potential mitigation option is not presented in the main text of dGEIS. Please provide
information as to why this was not considered a feasible mitigation alternative.

813. Wegmans (252) Drainage Study Report: Page 8, third paragraph: “site drainage configuration also include the ability to discharge into the flood channel...in case the Relief Channel is prevented due to high water...” How is the drainage going to be diverted from one channel to the next during high water events?

814. Mudrak (236) Storm Drains Inadequate. The proposed storm drains are supposed to hold the first 1/2 inch of a rainfall event; this is presumably so pollutants and toxins are settled out and then periodically taken away. But if the timing isn’t right, what actually happens is that all of the pollutants collect there so when a precipitation event greater than 1/2 inch comes along, and the drain hasn’t been cleaned yet, then it all gets washed away and eventually finds its way to the Inlet. My cursory analysis, based on Cornell weather data, showed that there were 15 precipitation events greater than 1/2 inch in the drought year of 1999. I haven’t done earlier years but someone needs to. Real local, Ithaca weather data need to be used as a basis of managing the quality and purity of surface waters on the site.

815. CAC (220) The Widewaters example illustrates the problems inherent with massive filling in a flood plain (and with piecemeal development occurring before the environmental impacts are analyzed). Historically, the overflow from Buttermilk Creek has rushed through an opening in the railroad embankment and spread out harmlessly across the flood plain area, before draining into the Cayuga Inlet. Widewaters has filled in much of the flood plain, and proposes to create a drainage swale to carry the floodwaters into the substitute parkland (and, ultimately, the Inlet). However, due to the extremely flat topography of the flood plain, it will be very difficult to build a ditch that will have sufficient fall to carry floodwaters at high velocity. A low-velocity ditch will allow for rapid accumulation of sediment and require constant maintenance. This area was totally submerged in flood waters in 1996, and has been inundated by storms other than 100-year events. During these events, additional sediment and debris will drop out into the drainage systems.
The drainage ditch at the Widewaters site will empty into the substitute parkland, so that the annual maintenance and sediment removal at its mouth will become the responsibility of the City and will impact on the new substitute parkland. The maintenance of this ditch and the entire drainage system for the larger SW project area will be the responsibility of the City. These costs need to be considered in the GEIS in any cost/benefit ratio of the project.

The dGEIS states as a general guideline, that site grading for drainage, roadway and building pad construction is to be limited to fills of approximately five feet or less. This guideline is presently being exceeded at the Widewaters site.

Drainage ditches in the rest of the SALUP area will not be able to carry the design flow of water without expensive maintenance—costs which the GEIS needs to consider. The initial sediment load due to construction and erosion is expected to be above normal, according to the dGEIS, so that cleaning may be required after one season. Yet, this will remove vegetation that is needed for sediment and pollution remediation. The dGEIS states that "brush, debris and sediment removal should be performed at least annually." If the maintenance is neglected and channel dredging and re-shaping becomes necessary, then the activity may require a permit from the US Army Corps of Engineers and would likely require engineering designs.

816. CAC (220)  The vegetated swales proposed in the plan will allow for the nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) to be absorbed by plants, but unless the above-ground portions of plant materials are removed from the site, there will be no net loss of nutrients from plant absorption. The use of the drainage swales as an area of sedimentation will only reduce the life of the drainage swales and increase maintenance costs.

If the swales are dug out every year, as will probably be needed to maintain flow from the site, the GEIS needs to address where the dredged materials, laden with pollutants, will be put. Will they simply be spread on the site—maybe even in the new SW Park? In addition, the GEIS needs to address what will happen to pollutants in the period before vegetation starts.
to grow back in the swales. The CAC feels that a drainage system designed to need annual cleaning is not a viable alternative.

817. CAC (220) It is the CAC's recommendation that larger sedimentation and retention basins be constructed and incorporated into a wetland design within each development site, allowing for a more economic and effective treatment and removal of sediment, nutrients and metals, rather than spreading the pollutants out over lengthy drainage swales. This would also save the City money, as maintenance would be the responsibility of the owners. In the original SW Park, it would be better, and much less costly, however, to retain the woodlands and wetlands already there, so that they can continue to perform the important flood management and pollutant remediation services that they currently perform.

The GEIS should propose systems that would result in no net increase in either volume or velocity of runoff from each development site, as is recommended in State guidelines.

The sweeping and vacuuming of parking lots should be seen only as a practice to extend the life of other, more realistic, treatment structures. The GEIS needs to explain what mechanism will be in place for ensuring that they will be so maintained.

The GEIS should provide details of routine monitoring of all drainage and sediment control structures: who will oversee this, what mechanism will be in place for handling problems, how much will this cost the City, etc.?

818. Wetmore (19A) The impact of runoff from 55 acres of parking lots and roads into the inlet has not been sufficiently studied, nor are reasonable mitigation measures proposed to offset the potential harms. In 1998 the city reviewed an Environmental Impact Study for the building of the new Wegmans. In this study, a much more thorough look at the damage to the inlet from polluted runoff was conducted (see attachment 1). Given that all the development is going to drain into the inlet, either by direct runoff or via storm drains, and that the total runoff is much larger than that considered in the Wegman’s study, the city must set standards as
high as, or higher than, it did in the Wegmans case. These include, but are not limited to, minimum buffers between paved surfaces and water channels, weekly vacuum sweeping of paved surfaces, and proper filters for storm drains. The city must also commit to maintaining its paved streets to the same standards it requires of developers. Why should the city be allowed to pollute Cayuga Inlet? The costs of these added services should be added to the developers tab.

Attachment 1: Excerpts from Wegmans DEIS:

An number of potential mitigation measures for drainage impacts have been suggested by the Lead Agency. These consist of:

- Re-siting the building to improve drainage flows and patterns

- Splitting of storm water distribution to both the Flood Control Relief Channel and Six Mile Creek

- The incorporation of sediment traps in all drop inlets

- The establishment of a regular program/schedule of vacuum sweeping of sediment traps

- Minimization of the use of de-icing salt

- The creation of vegetated areas for storm water infiltration

- ... A regular program of vacuum sweeping of all paved areas has been offered by the applicant and, as shown above, will be effective at reducing stormwater pollutant loads. In addition, the applicant agrees to minimize the use of deicing salts on the property, consistent with maintaining safe footing for pedestrians. Finally, stormwater flows from the main parking lot are being directed to a vegetated strip in order to further reduce off-site pollutant loads.

819. Wegmans (252) Drainage Study Report: Page 9, first paragraph: "...Sedimentation control measures, such as check dams or siltation basins, should be implemented..." Will these measures be included in the development plan of the Southwest Area?
820. Wegmans (252) Page 1-4, fourth paragraph: “Any proposed alteration of such circulation and drainage elements must be supported with clear documentation that it will result in no greater adverse impacts.” If there are greater impacts, can mitigation measures be implemented that reduce these impacts to a level that is no greater that the intended original plan and be acceptable?

Response:

The following discussion is intended to assist in the prioritization and adoption of mitigation strategies for drainage in Southwest Park. The Lead Agency will consider the adoption of some or all of these potential mitigation strategies when it makes Findings.

High Priority Strategies

1. Minimization of stormwater runoff.

Measures to minimize stormwater runoff can include the use of pervious pavements for parking and sidewalks. These construction methods allow for more water infiltration to the subsoil through the media or at construction joints. Landscaped areas can be planted with trees, thick mulch beds or vegetative ground covers like wildflowers, all of which promote more infiltration of rainfall and less runoff, as opposed to closely cut lawns.

2. Minimization of pollutants contained in stormwater runoff

The most effective means to protect existing water resources, whether groundwater or surface water, is to reduce the amount of pollution entering into them.

An avoidance of all pollutants in stormwater is virtually impossible. Nature causes phosphorous (and other pollutants) to collect on impervious surfaces through “dry fall”; however, man contributes a tremendous quantity of “unnatural” pollutants to the receiving water ecosystem that can be reduced through effective stormwater management planning.

Strategies for the reduction of pollutants include elimination of chemical wastes (household and otherwise) thrown away on the ground or leached from storage containers, reduction or
elimination of landscaping chemicals such as pesticides and herbicides, as well as the reduction of sand and salt used for ice control on paved surfaces.

Specific concepts for inhibiting stormwater pollution include:

i. The reduction of sediment loads associated with roadway maintenance activities could be accomplished by:

a. The use of the NYSDOT sand specification for deicing control. This specification requires fewer fines in the materials dispersed on roadways during winter. These fines are difficult to remove from stormwater discharges using conventional drainage structures.

b. Dispersion of sand and salt for deicing needs to be carefully monitored to assure dispersion is limited and used only as needed. Monitoring the quantity collected in the spring can be used as a tool to measure effectiveness.

c. Stockpiled sand for snow and ice control should be provided with a cover (such as a tarp) to prevent soil erosion. In addition a grass lined diversion ditch should be constructed to minimize surface runoff impacts.

3. Improved cleanup maintenance

Paved surfaces that are subject to pollutants should be cleaned frequently to remove the pollutants. This includes a wide range of cleanup activities from manual sweeping of sidewalks to mechanical cleaning of streets. Generally the programs should focus on cleanup of spills on paved surfaces, cleanup of animal feces and on removal of sand and salt from paved surfaces following storm events.

In addition to cleanup of paved surfaces, structures utilized for stormwater management must be kept clean. A catch basin that is full is no longer effective. A swale that is full of sediment is also ineffectived.
Secondary Priority Strategies

1. Reduce the runoff from individual residential and commercial properties.

The runoff that is generated, despite efforts to minimize that generation described in the previous section, should be collected and infiltrated back into the soil wherever possible. At minimum, the “first flush” of stormwater should be handled in this manner. First flush is the first rainfall that falls on a site which flushes previously deposited pollutants off-site. The “first flush” is sometimes defined at the first one-half inch of rainfall. The devices that can be utilized to collect and infiltrate runoff from individual sites are numerous. Examples are:

i. A parking area is an ideal location for use of catch basins, which can be placed to intercept sheet flow runoff. The catch basin could be designed with an open bottom to directly infiltrate collected runoff or could slope or drain to an open or closed infiltration basin located in adjacent lawn area.

ii. Construction of a grass lined ditch or swale across the lower portion of a paved area or landscaped area to collect runoff. The swale can be designed to infiltrate stormwater directly or it can direct stormwater to an adjacent area for this purpose.

2. Infiltrate the first flush of stormwater runoff from roadways

Roadways create stormwater problems in two ways. First, they are a major source of pollutants. Secondly, they are pathways for stormwater to reach watercourses. Several roadway configurations occur within the study area, which dictate varying strategies for improved stormwater management.

i. Roadways that are aligned parallel to tributaries and terminate at another road.

In this situation, if the roadway has minimal or no provisions for stormwater management (ditches or storm sewer systems) then a structure to intercept runoff, such as a catch basin, should be installed at the bottom of the roadway or at intervals along the
roadway. One or more sets of interceptors should be installed at intermediate points on the slope. They should drain to an area designed to collect and infiltrate the first flush of stormwater runoff. The infiltration area could be drywells within the roadway shoulder (if groundwater conditions permit use) or an open basin on adjoining properties (possibly requiring easements).

ii. Roadways that are served by storm sewer systems can be managed in a manner previously described for large parking lots.

13.6 Maintenance/Costs

SUMMARY

Comments questioned which party or agency would be responsible for long-term maintenance responsibilities and who would pay the costs of proposed mitigation measures. Other comments queried where and how wastes and dredged soils from sedimentation basins would be disposed.

821. Tompkins County Planning (218) Design and Maintenance of Vegetated Swales. The dGEIS proposes the vegetated swales be planted with grass and mowed to prevent woody debris from establishing. Will these areas also be treated with herbicides? While this action may eliminate the concern that the capacity of the swale will be reduced by encroachment, a diverse, native vegetative community provides many significant benefits not provided by mowed grass, and eliminates the need to use chemical controls. Native vegetation can help slow the movement of water in the swale increasing the residence time and level of treatment, thereby enhancing deposition rates for sediment, uptake of nutrients and the treatment of other potential pollutants. Furthermore, an intact riparian community is probably more aesthetically pleasing than a mowed channel with steep slopes (80 feet wide with 2:1 side slopes, as proposed for behind K-Mart). A native community with little to no maintenance required is also less expensive and provides a disincentive for people to approach the swale, reducing the liability associated with the drowning hazard. If the proposed swales are to be developed as outlined in Illustration H of the
Design Guidelines (including a woody buffer in riparian area), please provide schematic designs for each vegetative swale (to scale) proposed in the dGEIS.

822. Tompkins County Planning (218) Plant Species in Vegetated Swales. The dGEIS defers to the Draft Design Guidelines for a planting list of the proposed species. Species proposed for planting in Section 7 of the Guidelines includes several species that are not native, naturalizing or considered the most appropriate for the conditions outlined. Separate comments will be submitted on the Design Guidelines and the fGEIS should be updated accordingly. Again, this supports our earlier statement that the fGEIS be contingent upon approval of the Design Guidelines.

823. Tompkins County Planning (218) Relief Channel Maintenance and Contingency Plans. The dGEIS identifies sediment deposition in the Relief Channel as an existing problem and states that maintenance should be required. The proper management and maintenance of the Relief Channel is vital to the success of the overall drainage plan for the proposed project. Therefore, a plan should be developed identifying the responsible party and actions for maintenance to ensure the channel is regularly maintained and provisions are made for a contingency situation.

824. Tompkins County Planning (218) Manhole Sediment Tanks. Similar to the comment above, a maintenance plan for this system should be developed and included in the fGEIS that covers proper maintenance, responsible parties, and potential contingency situations (greater than a 25-year event).

825. Wegmans (252) Drainage Study Report: Page 7, seventh paragraph: “stormwater treatment manholes...would be placed at appropriate intervals...” Who and how will these manholes be maintained and operated? What is done with the sediments?

826. Wegmans (252) Drainage Study Report: Page 8, fourth paragraph: “...maintenance of the vegetated swales consists of moving during the growing season and annual removal of brush...” Who would be responsible for maintaining these swales and the annual removal of brush may not be frequent enough. Who would make this determination?
827. Wegmans (252) Drainage Study Report: Page 8, fifth paragraph: "...the Relief Channel should also be maintained." As a City wide drainage facility, the maintenance of this structure should be done by a municipal entity, maybe the City.

828. Wegmans (252) Drainage Study Report: Page 9, fifth paragraph: "The swales have a shallow broad section and are relatively flat..." Large broad flat swales will also expedite wetland generation and the affinity to hold water, both of which may cause maintenance problems in the future.

829. Wegmans (252) Drainage Study Report: Page 10, second paragraph: "...the Relief Channel does not have a regular maintenance program..." The City must take control of operation and maintenance of the relief Channel as part of the overall improvements in the Southwest Area.

830. Mudrak (236) Management of Flood Relief Channel water is not well addressed The existing flood relief channel as it flows up behind Wegman's and Top’s is a sorry sight. It is really yucky. The water is brown, there is oil visible floating on top, there is junk in it. Along the banks across from Nate's entrance I have seen old bed mattresses, food containers, metal debris, all matted among the vegetation. In short, who is taking care of this waterways or the banks? The whole area is quite disgusting and an eyesore. When big rains come, I guess the design is that all of this stuff gets washed into the Inlet?

And the Southwest Development surface water treatment plan seems to an extension of this whole system. Where are the buffers? Who is going to maintain them? When? How about maintenance of what exists now; it does not seem to be maintained.

831. Mudrak (236) Storm Water Quality Impacts and Mitigation Measures is Very Weak. DGEIS Section 2.38-10 is poor and basically describes ways in which water quality is not being adequately treated in the design. Vegetated swales, manholes and street sweeping do not effectively minimize sediments, pollutants, salts, grease, solvents, oils and heavy metals from entering the Inlet. All kinds of vague statements about maintenance etc. do not constitute a plan. Who is going to do them? When? Where will the stuff be put? What about monitoring water quality in selected areas in
the swales, the flood relief channel and flows into the Inlet? Who will do that? When? Where?

832. Salon (13): I am a member of the Conservation Advisory Council. And I will be talking about surface water and drainage.

The Executive Summary unrealistically states that the "adoption of the plan would allow design criteria to be imposed on development that could act to improve surface water quality in the area through flood mitigation and storm water management practices." The plan calls for the building of up to 1.25 million square feet of buildings, parking lots with a projected doubling of storm run-off volume and a near quadrupling of storm peak flow off the site.

The design of the system for a 25 year storm event and lack of any storm water retention basin seems inadequate to make such a claim.

The DEIS states that typical storm water pollutants from urban areas include oil, grease, sediments, solvents, various metals, nutrients and salts. The treatment of only the first one-half inch of run-off is inadequate.

According to the DEIS again, "abrupt slope changes from steep to flat sloping channels where tributary streams enter the inlet alluvial plain result in conditions where flooding can be frequent." This has been a historic problem well documented along Buttermilk Creek Road where residents are now concerned about the present filling being conducted by Widewaters Incorporated....

The drainage swales proposed to handle the flood flows from the Buttermilk Creek neighborhood and the rest of the project are located in a difficult position. Due to the land being extremely flat and located in a 100 year flood plain, it will be extremely hard to build ditches at the designed slopes down to .15 percent, that's one and a half foot fall in the thousand feet or three times the size of a football field. These ditches will have very low velocities allowing for rapid accumulation of sediment requiring constant maintenance in order to carry the designed flows. This area also was totally submerged in flood waters in 1996 from a storm event, of less than the 100 year frequency.
13.7 Groundwater

SUMMARY

There were several comments concerning groundwater issues which challenged the DGEIS’s finding that there would be no adverse impacts on groundwater and questioned the proposed mitigation measures for high groundwater conditions.

837. Wegmans (252) Page ES-2, Summary of Impacts: Under the Water Resources – Ground Water element there is no mention of the positive or adverse impacts yet there are mitigation measures proposed. Why are there mitigation measures with no adverse impacts?

838. Wegmans (252) Page 3-Scope, first paragraph: “...construction on land where the depth to the water table is less than three feet...Each of these conditions must be examined and mitigation measures identified.” We cannot find how mitigation is to occur for the high groundwater conditions.

839. Wegmans (252) Page 3-Scope, fifth paragraph: “Possible mitigation measures to protect the aquifer will be proposed.” We cannot find a reference on how this aquifer will be mitigated.

840. Gougakis (34) I have a serious concern about the study saying that since the contaminants will not migrate from the subsoil at this point and that an aquifer lies below, for there to be need to take out the waste, raises many concerns for me.

Response: Mitigation for high groundwater conditions essentially relates to foundation design, except that any construction in the former dump area must also consider contamination issues. With respect to the latter, the Lead Agency expects that the NYSDEC and TCDOH will have review authority over any such construction. With respect to the former, foundation design is essentially an engineering issue that will be reviewed by the City during the site plan review process. The Lead Agency does not believe there are any significant community wide adverse impacts associated with such construction, given that it already occurs throughout the western half of the City.
13.8 General

SUMMARY

These comments cover a wide range of topics, including alerts about missing figures, requests for clarification, and questions concerning a variety of stormwater related issues.

841. Tompkins County Planning (218)  **Missing Figure E. Our version of Appendix C did not contain Figure E. Drainage-Alternative 6.**

842. Wegmans (252)  Page ES 3, first paragraph: "...Subsidence is a concern that can be mitigated through engineering practices." Is this mitigation economically feasible and would there be an adequate return on this investment?

843. Eisner (255)  The following statement is taken from a letter from the Army Corps of Engineers in May 1995, included in the DGEIS: "development, even though done within the '100 year flood plain' is alright, as long as built as high or higher than the 100 year flood line". This seems to indicate, that with this development a large part of the flood plain will be eliminated, which may be of no consequence to this particular area, but does it serve the rest of the city? When I researched the plans for the Walmart project some years ago, I found out that in the early part of the last century the ACE had built a levee in the area and had recommended that the land around it be kept undeveloped in order to serve as a flood plain. The City of Ithaca, at the time, adopted this policy. I would urge the board not to abandon this policy. Relinquishing it might have disastrous consequences, especially to other parts of thee city.

844. Rumsey (237)  The DGEIS does not discuss the problem of flooding along route 13 from the many waterways that empty into the southwest part of the City. As the major highway through the City, the DGEIS should discuss this, and the additional flooding problems that will, without any doubt, result from the proposed development of the southwest area.
845. Klein (93) There will be up to 55 acres of parking lots in this development, 55 acres of floodplain will be paved. And also, I figured it out, that's just the parking lots and the roads. The square footage which is a million or million and a quarter, depending on which scenario is chosen, that's the equivalent of approximately 30 more acres of pavement. We're talking 80 to 85 acres of impervious surface in a floodplain. The water will go somewhere else.

846. White, M.L. (335) Doesn't anyone remember the floods of the nineties when the parking lots in the south end flooded AND more importantly and more expensively, the rise in ground water levels destroyed half the sewer system in the north end and flooded most basements. This householder's sump pump didn't stop running for weeks. Aurora and Tioga streets were torn up for months while new pipes were laid. That groundwater rise is directly attributable to the huge concrete parking lots in the south end. The flood plain soils that can act as sponges and hold excess water in years of high precipitation don't function when covered and sealed. The last thing the taxpayers of this city need is for more of the floodplain to be filled, covered, and sealed.

We need for that land to remain as minimally developed as possible. Perhaps use as sports fields, places for birdwatching, dogwalking, soccer, baseball, etc, can be worked out compatible with the primary use of this area as a functioning spongey, ever available FLOOD PLAIN. We need this big soft sponge at the end of the lake. This whole town is built on a swamp. Look at the geology and think about it.

847. Jennifer Schriver (125) LAND USE AND ZONING: Concessions are not included to preserve the integrity of any adjacent natural area and protect them from the pollution and run off from paved areas with high vehicular traffic volumes.

848. Wegmans (252) Drainage Study Report: Page 6, seventh paragraph: "...development would encroach on the 100-year floodplain..." How will these encroachments effect and change the limits of the floodplain? How will these encroachments be mitigated?

849. Wegmans (252) Drainage Study Report: Page 7, third paragraph: "...required grades would be achieved primarily by importation of earth
materials..." How much fill is anticipated and how would this effect the floodplain?

850. Wegmans (252) Drainage Study Report: Page 10, third paragraph: "The discharge point for this configuration would be near the drop structure..." This whole paragraph is somewhat confusing and clarification would be appreciated.

851. Wegmans (252) Drainage Study Report: Page 11, third paragraph: "For the maximum build alternative, approximately 600,000 cubic yards of earth material would need to be imported." How will these fills be accomplished? How will these fills effect the floodplain?

852. Wegmans (252) Drainage Study Report: Page 12, fifth paragraph: "...vegetated swales would provide mitigation for ordinary runoff events because they would promote infiltration of stormwater..." How much infiltration can be expected? How will this be effected by the formation of ice and snow? Why are pervious pavements for the parking area needed?

853. Wegmans (252) Drainage Study Report: Page 13, fifth paragraph: "Wetlands are to be protected and retained as part of any site plan development when practicable." What is envisioned with the existing wetlands? Are there provisions to maintain these wetlands? If replacement were envisioned, where would this take place?

Response: The Lead Agency regrets the missing figure, which has been supplied to the commenter.

With respect to impacts to the floodplain, such impacts will depend on the specifics of grading plans. Generally speaking, no construction is allowed within the FEMA designated 100-year floodway, while construction is allowed within the 100-year floodplain so long as it does not raise the base flood elevation more than one foot. It will be the Planning Board's responsibility during site plan review to review any grading plans within the floodplain to ensure that this requirement is met.

With respect to the amount of infiltration that can be expected from a vegetated swale, this is dependent on the soil type within
the swale. Again, site specific drainage plans will be reviewed during the site plan review process.