

Letter to the Planning and Economic Development Meeting
City of Ithaca
108 E. Green St.
Ithaca, NY 14850

Re: Proposed Planned Unit Development Application
Collegetown Innovation District

To the City Planning Department Director JoAnn, Director, City Planning Department Staff, City Planning and Development Board and members of the City Planning and Development Committee:

Below are my comments in support of the PUD Application for the Collegetown Innovation District. I've titled my comments: My Collegetown and Its Awakening.

My family has owned property on East Hill since 1944 and in Collegetown proper since 1949. We have been owners of various properties in Collegetown for over 70 years and businesses to include owning and operating Yeno's Coffee Shoppe at 315 College Ave. and the Collegetown Motor Lodge at 312 College Ave. We lived on College Ave. from 1949 to 1966. The old #9 Fire Station was operating. There were three gas stations, famous bars, grocery stores, book stores, etc. We have seen the change from small mom and pop operations to the current landscape of large scale development, similar to what is occurring in the downtown Commons area.

What sets Ithaca apart from other similar upstate communities? Visionaries! Our first Collegetown Visionary? Those who built the first boarding houses after Ezra Cornell founded the institution (so obvious). Shortly thereafter came food facilities and the list goes on.

Our second visionary was Norbert H. Shickel Jr. He hired a world renowned architect, Marcel Breuer, to design Fairview Heights Apartments – a 7 story apartment building with an elevator. His second Collegetown endeavor? The East Hill Development Corporation! In the late 1960's (I can't remember the exact date) he organized Cornell University and the East Hill Merchants Association to form the East Hill Development Corporation. The vision: to use money from the State of NY Dormitory Authority to build two 12 story apartment buildings on the city owned parking lot. They were to rival the two dormitory towers at Ithaca College. He raised \$60,000 – \$30,000 from Cornell University and \$30,000 from several Collegetown merchants to fund his plans. After a lot of meetings at the First National Bank (now the site of the former Green Café on the southwest corner of College Ave and Dryden Rd) the funding never came through and the project died. Had it gone through we would have had two 12 or story towers matching IC's two towers – that was the vision the city and Collegetown merchants wanted to see!

The latest visionaries are many – look at the multitude of new buildings in Collegetown: recently built, being built and proposed. The biggest new impact to Collegetown of course is the Breazanno Center – the product of a vision to bring more of Cornell onto this side of Cascadilla Gorge.

This latest proposal, the Collegetown Innovation District, is just an extension of plans that have arrived and survived since 1865. I think it's a great opportunity for Collegetown and the city to make another world wide attraction, just like the Colleges themselves, our natural beauty, and the artistic offerings that are at every corner.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris".

Christopher J. Anagnost
Cornell '65

From: david beer <davidbeer6886@yahoo.com>

Subject: Collegetown PUD

Date: December 4, 2020 at 1:16:06 PM EST

To: david beer <davidbeer6886@yahoo.com>, Steven Vincent Beer <svb1@cornell.edu>, John Novarr <jnovarr@twcny.rr.com>

I looked with great interest at the video presentation of the PUD application for College Avenue development by Integrated Properties. I grew up on East Hill and have been involved in our family rental business in Ithaca for 30 years and for 20 years we have owned a property on College Avenue.

The scale of the built environment has changed dramatically in the past 35 years. Collegetown, prior to the mid-1980s, consisted of residential scale buildings with the exception of 1/2 of the 300 block of College Avenue, the entire 400 block of College Avenue, and upper Eddy Street. Development since then has strived to develop a more urban feel. The narrow sidewalks and buildings sited very close to the curbs have made for uncomfortable, uninviting, and in many ways, unsafe situations where walkways are generally unfriendly to pedestrian traffic.

The proposed PUD would allow for development that pulls back from the street and provides much more generous pedestrian space. This has been the design strategy downtown, with the Commons renovation and the widening of sidewalks on Aurora Street and the 300 block of East State Street. From all accounts, this has been a great success.

A PUD approval could bring back the vibrancy that Collegetown has lost over the years. The pedestrian unfriendliness of Collegetown contributes to its lack of appeal to people living outside of the immediate area. Improving this situation will attract these people and benefit Collegetown businesses that have long struggled to survive on the 8-9 month per year student population.

Although I have some reservations about the proposed increased building heights in Collegetown, their negative impact will be far less than the taller buildings that have gone up recently downtown. The tall downtown buildings block views across the Ithaca basin, especially from lower Easthill and Southhill. These views contribute to the living experience of being in Ithaca. Many of us choose to live in Ithaca because of Ithaca's unique mix of qualities- while rural scale, Ithaca is abundant in natural beauty and accessibility to amenities usually seen in more metropolitan areas. The taller buildings of the proposed PUD are situated at the top of the steeper portion of Easthill so that they will not interfere with desirable views across the Ithaca basin.

Hopefully, the approval of the PUD will lead to a better designed Collegetown with an improved pedestrian experience that will lead to a more vibrant and inviting area for the entire Ithaca community to enjoy.

David Beer
303 Valley Rd

FW: Collegetown Innovation District Project: Tompkins County Landlord's Association Concerns Voiced

Deborah Grunder

Sent: Monday, December 07, 2020 1:28 PM
To: Lisa Nicholas; Jennifer Kuszniir; JoAnn Cornish
Cc: Anya Harris
Importance: High

From: takeaction@landlordsassociation.com [takeaction@landlordsassociation.com]
Sent: Sunday, December 06, 2020 10:16 AM
To: Deborah Grunder
Subject: Collegetown Innovation District Project: Tompkins County Landlord's Association Concerns Voiced

The Landlords Association of Tompkins County (LATC) is concerned with the proposed **Collegetown Innovation District Project**, and urges the board to consider the thoughts collected by members within our organization represented herein.

In February of 2006 the City of Ithaca Common Council adopted a resolution authorizing the establishment of a taskforce to prepare a vision statement for the future of Collegetown. The work of the task force took place over a 10-month period, between May 2006 and March 2007. Development of the vision statement included an extensive public process, in which the comments of individuals, members of civic groups, and elected officials were gathered and incorporated. On June 6, 2007, Common Council endorsed the Collegetown Vision Statement as a guide for shaping the growth and form of Collegetown. The resolution also authorized the establishment of the Collegetown Vision Implementation Committee (CVIC) to develop a strategy for implementing the ideas of the vision statement. Preparation of an urban plan and design guidelines was a high-priority recommendation, as it served to bring together many ideas and recommendations of the vision statement.

Further, the City Planning and Development Board recommended additional modifications to the plan, described in a preface to the Goody Clancy Document, and the two documents, considered together as: "The 2009 Collegetown Urban Plan and Conceptual Design Guidelines" were endorsed by Common Council in 2009.

Lastly, Collegetown Area Form Districts were approved on March 5, 2014. Since then, the City has focused on implementing the plan's recommendations. Over a decade of extensive planning went into the creation of the plans that now serve as a guide for shaping the growth of Collegetown.

We believe that the proposed Collegetown Innovation District Project ignores many of the guidelines **established within the 238 pages of the 2009 Collegetown Urban Plan and Conceptual Design Guidelines except for "use" on the majority of the buildings.**

Concerns

1. **Creating a PUD for the Collegetown Innovation District project would be considered spot zoning and sets a dangerous and concerning precedent.** According to City Code 325-12-B-1, "The PUD is a tool intended to encourage mixed-use or unique single-use projects that require more creative and imaginative design of land development than is possible under standard zoning district regulations. A PUD allows for flexibility in planning and design, while ensuring efficient investment in public improvements, environmental sensitivity, and protection of community character. A PUD should be used only when long-term community benefits will be achieved through high-quality development, including, but not limited to, reduced traffic demands, greater quality and quantity of public and/or private open space, community recreational amenities, needed housing types and/or mix, innovative designs, and protection and/or preservation of natural resources." **This project does not meet the criteria given the scale, density, and non-contiguous connection of parcels.** We believe it does not seek to provide a greater benefit to the local community through any of the above listed means, but rather, is profit driven.
2. The proposed PUD in Collegetown seeks height variances on fifteen of seventeen parcels. At the corner of Dryden Road and College Avenue existing zoning allows six stories and the developers have requested twelve. They propose ten story buildings for the blocks surrounding the corner of Catherine Street and College Avenue, currently zoned for six stories. We believe both the quantity of height variances and the scale of the variances are excessive.
3. Up to \$3 million has been offered in exchange for approval of the development. The disclaimer states "Distribution of these funds will be contingent on PUD approval for the total amount of square footage proposed in this application. Should, through the approval process, this amount of square footage be reduced there will be a proportionate reduction in this \$3,000,000 contribution since the economic viability of the project and this contribution is dependent on the proposed amount of space." (p 133)." We believe that no development should be driven by such sums of money, but the primary focus of approving any development should be to enhance the local community. As aforementioned, we do not believe this development does this, as it is significantly outside the boundaries of the Collegetown Vision Plan, which was developed via community input and is not in keeping with the intent of a PUD, which provides community enhancement as a primary motivating factor.
4. Given the scale of the proposed development and the proximity to the Belle Sherman and Bryant Park neighborhoods, this project may have unanticipated consequences due to the density proposed, limited parking, stormwater run-off, utility demands, etc.

Segregating students in high-rise buildings vs integrating students into the community limits diversity and inclusion. We are an inclusive community where having the opportunity to live side-by-side with local residents is a unique part of the Cornell College experience and should be preserved and valued.

- 5. Finally, creating such a large number of high rent apartments also goes directly against the goal of creating affordable housing. This plan is not welcoming to working members of the community and will further exclude those looking for affordable housing. The LATC has been diligently working to keep rent low despite increases in our costs. Due to the cost of building, new development will always be more expensive for renters. Continued development has not assisted the market to reduce costs that would result in reducing rents. Costs have continued to rise with the constant expansion.

The LATC is concerned with this project and urges the board to consider the impacts a development of this scale would have on the Collegetown and larger Ithaca community. **The LATC would like to see projects in keeping with the character and vision of the neighborhood and what is reasonable within the current framework of development guidelines. We strongly believe that the proposed Collegetown Innovation District is not in keeping with such guidelines, and as such, the proposal, in its current iteration, should be rejected. We feel the greatest benefit to the City of Ithaca and its residents is for this project to conform to existing zoning code.**

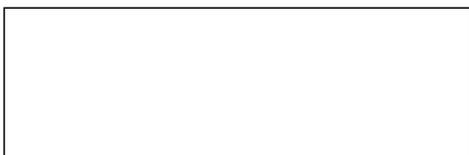
Thank you for your time and attention to the concerns we as an association have towards the PUD zoning for the Collegetown Innovation District Project.

Development is an important part of any growing city. However, development should happen in keeping with what has been established and done so responsibly and gradually, over time, and within the parameters of what the current infrastructure can handle. Up to this point, development has been required to stay within the established guidelines with few exceptions. Favoritism should not be shown to one developer over another for financial gain.

Sincerely,
Karla Terry
107 Worth Street
Ithaca, NY 14850

Proud Member of the Landlords Association of Tompkins County

Sender is a member of the LATC but is not representing the association as a whole



· Landlords Association of Tompkins County - P. O. Box 337, Ithaca, NY 14851 ·

This email was sent to dgrunder@cityofithaca.org [unsubscribe from this list](#)



Ithaca Area Economic Development

December 7, 2020

Common Council Members
City of Ithaca
VIA Email

Re: Public Comment – Public Information Session / PUD Application / Collegetown Innovation District

Dear Common Council Members:

I offer this letter in support of the PUD application for the Collegetown Innovation District. I have worked for IAED (formerly TCAD) for 14 years in the economic development field. This is an ambitious project and one that will truly transform central Collegetown. This project will not only attract faculty and students, but also young professionals and the businesses that will contribute to making this a more vibrant and active area of the City.

The local development team of Phil Proujansky and John Novarr has a strong track record of investing in this community. They understand the market and have demonstrated success in housing, office, and hi-tech spaces. And they get projects done! The Breazzano Family Center for Business Education is just one example of their ability to deliver not only an award winning building, but also a building with a long-term tenant that is contributing to the tax base. The faculty and students this building has anchored in the neighborhood provide much desired foot traffic for local shops and restaurants.

The PUD process is an opportunity to achieve many of the goals and objectives set forth in the Collegetown Urban Plan and Conceptual Design Guidelines. This will involve negotiation and there will be trade offs. I ask you to keep in mind as you weigh those trade offs that perfection may in fact be as elusive as finding a unicorn in your own backyard. Don't let the desire for perfect get in the way of great.

I would like to comment specifically on the proposed 12-story office building at the corner of Dryden Road and College Ave. Based on the proposed square footage, there is the potential for 350 employees. I have no doubt that this building will ultimately anchor important businesses in Collegetown when it is completed in phase II – businesses that likely do not even exist today leveraging technologies that may not yet be invented.

Mr. Proujansky and his partners and investors at Cayuga Venture Fund and Integrated Acquisition & Development have a successful model of not only investing in start up companies that transfer technology from Cornell, but also investing in building after building at the Cornell Business and Technology Park so those companies have space to move in to as they grow. Examples include Advion, Kionix, Q2 Solutions, Rheonix, Binoptics, and most recently Conamix and Odyssey Semiconductor.

This building in Collegetown will not be for manufacturing companies. It will capture a new generation of software and technology companies that will need office space and will benefit from the proximity to research and development on campus. Let's make sure they grow here, create high quality and high paying jobs, year-around Collegetown area housing and diversify the economy throughout the City.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Heather D. McDaniel'.

Heather D. McDaniel
President



205 Dryden Road, Ithaca NY, 14850

To: Svante Myrick, Mayor, Common Council, Planning and Development Board, City department Heads

RE: Collegetown Innovation District - PUD

Back in 2006 then Mayor Carolyn Peterson in working with the common council and Cornell University initiated a process to help transform Collegetown into a 21 century neighborhood. The Vision statement, the beginning of an Urban design process, included Essential elements from Goody Clancy and contributed to the Form Based code that has been enacted.

With many stakeholders, including the CID development team The end goal as conceived would be a clean and safe Collegetown that has a vibrant 24/7/365 economy. Ultimately the form based code that currently governs Collegetown Development was the result of these efforts.

The Plan Unit Development being suggested has the potential to be transformative, However I hope the City of Ithaca will recognize the substantial efforts to of the entire community and to move forward cautiously.

Progress has been made in Collegetown over the past 20 years. The City of Ithaca, Cornell University and the entire town gown community have all contributed to this effort. I also believe the planning department has done a great job navigating this process of the past decade and that there is a fair and balanced approach that will provide success in accomplishing our goals.

Additionally I continue to support development in Collegetown. I also believe The Collegetown Innovation District can play an important role in helping complete the intended efforts of so many to make this a truly special place.

Nevertheless I hope that moving forward the City will respect the rights of everyone. Some of the suggestions in the PUD and exceptions suggested within, have the potential to have negative impact on adjacent neighbors and property owners.

Sincerely,

Patrick Kraft



DemosJohnny
COLLEGETOWN RENTALS

December 6, 2020,

Dear Ms. Anya Harris,

My family had operated the Cosmopolitan restaurant from 1963-1981 and the Greek house restaurant from 1982-2005. I grew up in Collegetown and worked for many years and continue to work it every day. I know what it means to have a business for only 9 months of the year.

This is a transformation that will forever allow hardworking business owners to prosper and support our community all year round.

The Collegetown economy will thrive again with all the new jobs and increase in consumer demand for neighborhood services and restaurants.

This will bring much needed employment which will help the Collegetown economy tremendously. Bringing in huge tax revenues, sales tax revenues and property taxes that will help the City of Ithaca.

They are also building using eco-friendly methods which will increase sustainability. Various building uses will bring economic stability and year-round people to Collegetown.

Everyone I know that has developed has built for their own benefit including myself with student housing.

Let's not pass on this opportunity that is truly visionary and life-changing to the community of Collegetown and the City of Ithaca.

We would like to say that we will support the project.

Stay Safe and Healthy

Sincerely

Ike Nestopoulos

John Puglia

<https://www.demosjohnnycollegetownrentals.com/>

From: nick@lambrourealestate.com [nick@lambrourealestate.com]
Sent: Monday, December 07, 2020 3:38 PM
To: Svante Myrick; JoAnn Cornish; Lisa Nicholas; Jennifer Kuszniir
Subject: Letter Supporting Collegetown Innovation district PUD efforts

Dear Mr. Mayor, Ms. Cornish, Members of Common Council and Members of the PEDC:

Please allow this letter to acknowledge my support for this PUD application.

I believe most projects that are not run-of-the-mill and instead transformative only come around once in a great while. SOOOOO many stars have to line-up to make them come to fruition. That's what happened with downtown once our team took the risk and built the Hilton-Cornell building during 9-11 attacks and stock market melt-downs. That's what I think will happen with the waterfront with our Guthrie/City Harbor proposal, during the aftermath of a pandemic. And when my late father Gus built the first new building in years in Collegetown on corner of Eddy and Dryden in early 1980's, with high-interest rates that few folks younger than 60 years of age today even remember, it started it all up here too with the addition of thousands of new (net) beds (not including all the new dorms Cornell has built on North and then West and now again on North Campuses) ever since.

What Collegetown now needs is exactly that: a mix-use development that when complete will provide for year-round Collegetown activity. So I believe Mr. Novarr and Mr. Proujansky and their team have the ability and right connections to complete it as proposed.

As I life-long Ithacan (by the way Mr. Novarr is also a graduate of Ithaca High School), I have always wished there would be more ways to attract Cornell graduates to stay and live in Ithaca. They come from all over the country and all over the world and I believe it would so greatly enhance our already amazing community. And I think many do want to stay here and raise their families as well, and we know that has been happening for decades as well. This is the kind of idea that would enhance that effort even more in my opinion--that's who I see living in Catherine-Summit.

I am convinced that if this project is not approved in some acceptable form to the public, we will lose a huge opportunity for a potential tech park right here, and other improvements that this project is proposing. The development team has been working on this for many years and have already invested their own personal gains by taking the risk and setting their parcels up, losing potential income along the way for years prior, and years to come actually. Only worthwhile projects can hold on like that.

To wit, as you know Student Agencies is well underway and is adding 100 beds and a little bit of retail on ground floor. That corner is probably the most valuable piece of real estate in all of New York State, outside 5th Ave in Manhattan. They could have done something magical there, a kind of project that not many, if any, other parcels in Ithaca, or the state, could even entertain to even attempt. But instead chose what they think must be less risky investment (i.e. risk exists for them--high construction costs will cause high rents, and as we see from Pandemic and economic destruction we have witnessed as a result, they will have their hands full for years). And I want to be clear that I believe Student Agencies is a good project and an excellent improvement, I just mean that I believe if the default in Collegetown continues for projects of this magnitude, that it will not make Ithaca or Collegetown better in terms of getting to the long-term goal of jobs, community and improvements. Though I am very proud of our own developments, and Collegetown-Crossing, and Dryden-South and Breazzeano and Dryden-Eddy, and recent housing by this

same development team, I think this proposed development to me has a chance to accomplish so many more goals for our community.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I wish you all strength and peace as you attempt to help guide this through.

Sincerely,
Nick Lambrou
405 Eddy St
Ithaca, NY 14850

Collegetown Innovation District Comments

Kevin Sullivan [kevin@lunastreetfood.com]

Sent: Monday, December 07, 2020 4:35 PM

To: Anya Harris

Anya,

Hope you and the team at city hall are doing well! I was told I could pass along some comments about the Collegetown Innovation District project proposed on College ave under discussion tonight. Thanks so much!

My name is Kevin Sullivan and I am the owner/operator of 5 kitchens located in downtown and collegetown. Projects such as the one under discussion tonight are the reason why after 14 years in business creating new jobs in our community I continue to remain confident the horizon is bright. As someone who grew up in Ithaca, it is very important to me that the character of the residential neighborhoods and the "small town" feel of Ithaca is preserved.

That being said, focusing large developments such as the Collegetown Innovation District, into zones that already have an urban neighborhood feel, I believe is the best path forward for our community. This project will create jobs, reduce seasonality of the collegetown neighborhood for businesses and continue to ensure that our vibrant community thrives for generations.

The financial tax burden that the Collegetown Innovation District would carry from the many ways they generate tax for our community are a vital piece of the puzzle to keep the cost of living affordable for the very neighborhoods and residents we all care so much about.

Not only do I support development in the two major urban feel neighborhoods of collegetown and downtown, I am counting on projects such as these to sustain my business as many storefronts sit vacant. Seasonality has plagued collegetown businesses for decades. I consider our businesses lucky to have made it so long and there have been many hard years and failures along the way. Projects like this are crucial to providing a sustainable business environment for the many businesses in the neighborhood.

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Sincerely,

Kevin Sullivan

cell: (607) 351-6139

Uncle Marty's Shipping Office

Collegetown

206A Dryden Road | Ithaca, NY 14850

Planning and Economic Development Committee
City of Ithaca Common Council

RE: Collegetown Innovation District PUD

December 8, 2020

Dear Committee,

Thank you for allowing me a few minutes to speak at the public information session last night. Following the session—and some personal time spent afterward walking around Collegetown, looking at the plots where new buildings are proposed and imagining what possibilities could be in store for our neighborhood—I feel compelled to write to you with a few of my thoughts for your consideration as you discuss the Collegetown Innovation District PUD.

I'm in my 10th year as a small business owner in Collegetown and am also a co-founder of the Collegetown Small Business Alliance. For the past near-decade, the improvement and growth of our neighborhood has been near and dear to me. Comparing where we are now to where we were when I opened my doors in 2011 shows a seriously positive change due to the development that has happened. The Breazzano Center, for example, has been very beneficial to small businesses here, and I can only imagine what a constructive effect having more year-round offices in our area would have! More people living and working in Collegetown perennially will be fantastic for its economy and the vitality of its small businesses.

Collegetown is the welcome mat—the grand entrance corridor—to Cornell and, as such, should be bright, shiny, warm, and welcoming. The proposed Collegetown Innovation District will make the trek up College Avenue something grand, and just that simple boost of energy and excitement will draw business, residents, and interest in our area more than I think most are considering; it will boost Cornell's curb appeal, so to speak, which is so very important to our whole area's growth and engagement. A landmark tower will also draw attention from areas Collegetown currently struggles to attract, including South Hill and downtown Ithaca.

I can't tell you how excited I am at the prospect of this development! I know that there are still unanswered questions and conditions that will come along with a preliminary approval of the PUD, but I want to express my support for that preliminary approval so we can do more research and learn more about this project and the change that it could catalyze in our community.

With gratitude for your time,



Marty Johnson
Owner, Uncle Marty's Shipping Office
Co-Founder, Collegetown Small Business Alliance
Director of Communication & Advisor to the Board, Association of Mail & Business Centers

unclemartysoffice.com

Collegetown Innovation District Planned Unit Development
December 9, 2020

This letter is written to express my enthusiastic support for the proposed Collegetown Innovation District Planned Unit Development.

I was Director of Planning and Development for the City of Ithaca from 1973 to 2008. One of the major undertakings by the City during that time was an effort to stimulate redevelopment in Collegetown. At the beginning of this program in the early 1980s, there was considerable skepticism that anything could be accomplished. Collegetown was known primarily for its extremely rundown condition.

Housing in Collegetown was deteriorated and dangerous. Several apartment fires had killed a number of students, and the risk of further tragedy was constant. The sidewalks were broken and uneven. There were virtually no street trees or other amenities. There had been no new private sector development of residential buildings in Collegetown in over 50 years. Few thought that developers would built anything new, even with major changes to zoning.

During the public hearings that preceded approval of the first project (Eddygate on Dryden Rd between College Ave and Eddy St), opposition was expressed to its scale, height, and density. Many residents of the nearby single-family neighborhoods (where my wife and I have lived since the 70s) were opposed to the project. One speaker even predicted that if the Collegetown proposal was allowed to proceed, our neighborhood would end up looking like the South Bronx.

Quite the opposite happened. Owners of single-family homes near Collegetown have invested tens, and in some cases hundreds, of thousands of dollars in their properties. These neighborhoods have not just survived but thrived, with homes greatly increasing in value.

Furthermore, the development of taller buildings in downtown Ithaca and along College Ave has not negatively affected home values in the nearby neighborhoods.

I expect that similar objections will be raised about the Collegetown Innovation District proposal. It will be argued that it's too big, too tall, too dense. I would argue that it is the right scale for its location and time. The uses outlined in the plan, combined with the strength of the design team, are outstanding and timely. Other cities would be extraordinarily eager to have an opportunity such as this.

The proposed buildings are roughly the same scale, height, and density as the new construction in downtown Ithaca. This makes complete sense for Collegetown, historically a high density student neighborhood. It is right next to the university, an area attractive to high technology firms, which will increase the mix of uses and add new jobs in the City. Collegetown is an extremely important community node, second only to downtown. This new development will support activities that complement downtown and add to Ithaca's overall economic health and tax base.

The city has the good fortune to have this proposal by John Novarr and Philip Proujansky, a local partnership with a long record of designing, building, and managing high quality projects in the City. The project's design team includes architecture firm ikon.5 and Kathryn Wolf of the landscape architecture firm TWLA. Both firms are highly experienced and have won numerous prestigious awards. Development proposals don't get much better than this!

The proposal features a strong mix of student and professional housing, retail space, and space for high technology firms, which will benefit Collegetown and the City. With these additions, Collegetown should become more of a 12 months community, no longer essentially empty when Cornell is not in session.

In addition, the project has at its core a string of public gathering spaces, which will be of enormous benefit to Collegetown residents and visitors. There was no useful public open space in earlier Collegetown redevelopment projects, as it could not be made to work economically. This development corrects that considerable failure and proposes to do so at the developer's expense, instead of at the expense of the tax payer.

This project can only be built using the City's Planned Unit Development (PUD) ordinance, which is definitely the best, and I would say only, land use control mechanism through which the City could control the development of this project. Use of the PUD provides greater flexibility and control than conventional zoning. Through the PUD approval process the City can control the form and uses in the development to a far greater extent than would otherwise be possible, and receive private funding for public amenities.

The developers will benefit from the greater density necessary to make the project work economically. The City will benefit from a well designed, mixed-use development, instead of scattershot development by individual property owners who would demolish existing structures and erect a hodgepodge of new apartment buildings.

The developers have proposed to make several million dollars worth of public improvements and make cash payments to the City and area non-profits, including Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services, a nationally recognized leader in providing housing for low and moderate income households and individuals. In addition, the project will pay substantial property taxes or payments in lieu of taxes in perpetuity, and it will bring in technology companies that want to be proximate to Cornell.

There is temptation with a project of this scale for the City to try to exact as much as possible from the developers. Beyond a certain level of public contributions the project will no longer work economically. Be careful not to kill the golden goose by asking more than the project can pay.

The only accurate prediction one can make about the future of Collegetown is that it will continue to change. The question is only whether that change will be piecemeal and haphazard, or guided by a coherent design vision and substantial privately funded public amenities. If I were in a position to make a decision, I would certainly choose the latter.

H. Matthys Van Cort