PUBLIC HEARING

January 24, 2000

HELD AT: HOLIDAY INN (DOWNTOWN)

222 SOUTH CAYUGA STREET

ITHACA, NEW YORK

REPORTED BY: ELIZABETH R. BRUCIE, RPR

PRESENT: Mayor Cohen
Support Staff
Chase & Associates
City Common Councilpeople
Citizens

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MAYOR COHEN: Ladies and gentlemen,
if I could get your attention, please. We would
like to get our proceedings started. First I am
going to entertain a motion to open this public
hearing. I have a motion by Manos, I have a
second by Spielholz.

This public hearing is now
officially open. This is a public hearing for the
public to comment on the Draft Generic
Environmental Impact statement regarding the
Southwest Area Land Use Plan. You, as you have
come in the door hopefully all of you have signed
up at the table in the back, if you are here to
speak, and you have as yet not signed up, there is
a sign-up table in the back directly below that
lit exit sign. I would encourage you to go back
there. When you sign-up you will be handed a
general hearing rule sheet and also a slip of
paper for you to sign-up on or to sign-up with.

When you come forward to speak we
are going to ask you to hand the slip of paper to
the gentleman all the way to my left, his name is
Paul. And we will process it from there up here.

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We have two podiums before us, one is labeled odd, the other is labeled even. That is not a reflection of the speakers, it is simply a reflection of the number on your slip of paper. We are staging people so that we can get as many speakers as possible to speak. We understand a lot of people would like to give public comment and it is our intention to try and get as many of you on the record as possible. We are limited in our time. Because of that, as the rules state, we do have a five minute time limit. That time limit will be strictly adhered to. Understand, please, that we are doing so in deference to the other speakers. We already have over 30 speakers that are scheduled to speak this evening. We only have a total of four hours, at the most we can accommodate if we went speaker by speaker exactly one going to the other 48 speakers this evening. But there are limitations to our ability to do so, people will not start exactly after the other, we are human beings not robots. We also have a human being who is taking a written record of this proceeding and that is Beth, our stenographer who I would like to thank for your time this evening.
We will be taking occasional breaks for Beth to stretch out her fingers so that she can continue to take an accurate reporting of the record as you speak to this evening.

A couple of questions were asked and I would like to respond to those. You cannot yield time to another person, if you speak for three minutes you speak for three minutes. The next person does not have seven minutes, they still have five. That is designed as such so we can get as many total number of people speaking during these proceedings. I don't have anything else to report to you.

Any other questions from Council?

Okay. We are ready to begin, if you have numbers one, three, five and so on, odd numbers, we are going to ask you to come to the podium in the center. As a matter of fact, yes. I did mean to mention that.

I would like to clarify something else for the audience, and that is Common Council's involvement in these hearings. There are a number of Common Council members that are not here tonight, as a matter of fact, several of
the Common Council members who are here right now will be leaving at 7:00 for a scheduled committee meeting. Every single comment that you give during the course of tonight, tomorrow and tomorrow night will be produced in a written record and a full copy of that written record will be given to each member of Common Council and they will have the opportunity to read in full the written record. So the fact that any particular member is either not here now or leaves during the course of these proceedings is not an indication of their lack of interest in what you have to say. They are fully aware of the fact that they are getting a copy of the written record. Some prefer to read rather than listen. Others who have the opportunity to listen are here. Some who would like to stay and listen but have other obligations will not be able to. 12 hours is a long period of time to ask for people who have other obligations in their lives. I know many of you here have obligations as well. We do appreciate your taking time to come out and give your opinions on this draft document this evening.

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Immediately to my right is Josh Glastetter, Joan Spielholz, Janna Taylor, Ed Hershey, Tracy Farrell, Pat Pryor and Paulette Manos. (PHONETICS).

Okay. So what I am going to be doing is this, I am going to be asking people to come forward, as a matter of fact, I would like numbers one through four to come forward. And we are going to be essentially cuing people up in a way so that we don't waste an exceptional amount of time asking people to come forward and we will have one person speaking, one person waiting behind them. We will switch back and forth from one podium to the next so that again we can keep the flow going and get as many people the opportunity to speak during the course of the evening. We do have an electric timer with us, Jeannie Lee who is to my immediate left will be operating that, to introduce the rest of the people up here, Stuart and Paul are both with Chase & Associates, they are the consultants that are charged with producing the Final Generic Impact Statement, Environment Impact Statement, and they are here to record and listen to all the
comments, then take the appropriate action. I already introduced Beth our stenographer, Brucie.

Without further adieu, if we can get numbers one and three up here and numbers two and four to the podium to my left and right. Again, the timer will indicate when four minutes is up, you and will have one minute left. We have a sign which indicates you have one minute left. The timer will then indicate your time has expired. If you continue talking I will bang the gavel, ask you to please sit down and I will instruct the next person to start speaking. With that, turn your slip in. I remind you when you come forward to turn your slips in.

The first speaker is Joe Harlan.

JOE HARLAN: The reason why I wanted to be first, cause I am going to another obligation, a bigger meeting than this, about 30,000 fans at the Carrier Dome. I want to see if I can slip in and watch Connecticut and Syracuse game.

As you know, I have been speaking about growth for the past, I don't know how many years, four or five years. I was at the meeting

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with the Wal-Mart issue, we need growth and make
this area a prosperous town. Everybody complains
that big box buildings look sick, they are eye
sores. Well, take a look at the campuses, Cornell
and Ithaca College, those are two cities, and this
is getting to be a driveby thru village.
Everybody is going to Cortland, Syracuse,
Binghamton, Elmira to do their business and
shopping.

I think we need to out gang Cornell
and Ithaca College, especially Cornell, cause the
way I heard, this is a communist town run by
democrats and also it's Cornell is the dictator.
And if the only way I have been preaching at these
Common Council meetings we need to out gang
Cornell. Because these colleges are way ahead of
the eight ball and we are way behind the eight
ball and the eight ball is rolling all over us.
And as you can see, we cannot stop Cornell from
growth. But what rights if they got the growth
and we don't grow with it? If you are going to
stop these growths, why not stop Cornell from
growing? Cause you can see what's going on with
the pipeline, the incinerator and also North
Campus. And look at the neighbors that's involved
with all of what they're doing, money talks, we do
the walking, we go without.

I have talked to a lot of people
from Alpine all the way up to Cortland. And they
all say they are fed up with this town. They go
elsewhere to go shopping because there is nothing
here. I am letting you know, they are boycotting,
they are boycotting and recommend boycotting if
you don't get nothing in here. If you don't get
the people in to go shopping at these stores and
businesses, you are going to lose revenue. If you
lose revenue you are going to lose the stores
totally. Then you are going to have the riff-raff
run all over the town controlling the City.

All's I got to say is let's grow and
let's make an effort of it instead, because we are
living in a town that's got 55 nationalities from
around the world. We should have local access to
these businesses and stores instead of having them
set on the highway to other area towns outside
this town and county. You are losing money
outside the county, and what you are going to do,
if you deny this, you are sending a message and

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what you guys, what these people are doing are saying you don't set shop here, you send your shop and build your shops outside this county and the people go with it to go outside, out of this county to go shopping. Take care of your business. They don't care, they rather lose out, all's you got down on The Commons is high cost of everything, and also there is a lot of hippie clothes and stuff like that that's high priced. We need to get stuff that's affordable for low income and poor families, instead of thinking of the upper high class and, you know, and the rich people that's around here. We got to start thinking of our own people. And instead of also talking about big box buildings, we need something like Corning Glass Works here, a big plant that hires 6,000 people with a blue collar, high wage limit, above the poverty level. You need both of them to work together, stores and the technology, jobs and stuff like that. We could become something if you are willing to work at it. What I tell you a lot of people are up to destroy this project, we got up to Southwest Park and Interlet Island and West End and that lady from Oswego, we
could pick up and become something of like what
she has done for her community in Oswego.

That's all I got to say. I will
just sit here for half-hour or so then I am
heading out to Syracuse. I would rather be up
there where the fans are and see what goes on.
It's going to be a good game.

Let's grow man, let's not just talk
about it, let's do it. You talk about it, it is
going to be too late. And, well, I say I
recommend boycotting if you don't want to do
nothing about it.

MAYOR COHEN: Joe, thank you. Next
speaker is Tom Livigne.

TOM LIVIGNIE: Thank you. I am here
to represent the Cornell Estate Department. I am
also the President of the Board of Directors of
Better Housing for Tompkins County. I don't think
I am here to talk about the obvious things about
the tax base being what it is. I am here to talk,
not to talk to you about the tax base increase as
well as the other obvious things here with jobs,
that type of thing, but I am here to talk a little
bit about sprawl.

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And if this development doesn't go through, I know from personal experience that it is going to happen someplace else in the county and the obvious place for it to happen is somewhere in the downtown area, and this seems to be the logical place. We have been approached numerous times over the last five to seven years by big box developers as well as other developers to build something like this on our land out on Route 13 at the corner of Route 13 and Hanshaw Road. And we haven't to this point done anything, and we don't intend to do anything. But somebody out there is going to do it if it doesn't happen downtown. And the logical place for it is to concentrate it downtown where you have the roads, you have the infrastructure and you have everything that needs to be in place.

We have a great standard of living here, we have the lake, we have the gorge, we have the beauty that we have in town. But also part of the standard of living is good shopping. And good shopping is what this will bring to town.

So that's really all I have to say. If you go someplace other than the downtown area.
of Ithaca, it's going to create sprawl and it's
going to push things outside of the City, and it
is going to happen, believe me. Cause there are
many developers out there looking right now. If
they don't come to the City, they are going to
find out that they can go someplace else in the
county and I am not sure that we want that.
Thank you for your time.

MAYOR COHEN: Thank you. Our next
speaker is Wally Woods.

WALLY WOODS: Yes. Good evening.
Retired here about three and half years ago. And
one of the reasons we came up here was to escape
from what you are now proposing. And we were from
Central New Jersey and we had the sprawl and the
big boxes, etcetera, and etcetera. Listen, and
trying to pick up on the different articles in The
Journal and so forth, this brings out all the
paradox of growth. And we are in this position
now where there is truth here and there is truth
here. And how do we go about working and trying
to solve short-term problems and thinking long
term. That prompted me to write a letter to The
Journal, which I don't know if they are going to
publish, but it's kind of a little, it's based on hindsight and looking at the process of what happened to us about 20 or so years ago. So the rest of this, I will just kind of read my letter with that.

I am just saying about 20 years ago while living in Central New Jersey I observed the beginning of massive development projects. Developers followed a very predictable pattern to subvert the local community. I see the same pattern emerging here, starting with large tax abatements, secret sales of community land, zoning changes, development commitments before approvals, and of course the usual growth that any course clones like Mr. Joe West. We had them down in Central New Jersey too. The exact language, the same strategy, etcetera. I said we had it all.

The developers strategy unfolded a piece at a time. Like putting a frog in cold water then turning up the heat and before you know it you are cooked. Well, that's exactly what happened here. The Township Council easily slid down that slippery slope still with visions of sugar plums dancing in their heads right into the

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developers' pockets, it is a textbook case.

The mayor, township attorney and council really believed that they could control the developers. That was a delusion. Everything sounded great. New infrastructure, roads, library expansion, park-land jobs, ultimately the greedy mayor was no match for the Harvard lawyers.

Now I would like to talk about the consequences. We haven't heard much about that yet. This is real life. The consequences were a 40 percent property tax increase, no parks, minimal infrastructure repair, the City bonds and massive traffic. That's just the stop level. The mayor, city attorney and building inspector just missed being indicted. The evidence was not clear enough to indicate if there was conspiracy or there were just plain incompetent. Most of the town council resigned, one was indicted. After the shopping centers were built, ownership was quickly transferred to a third party, thereby escaping the construction and environmental liabilities. The township had to pay those costs through the City bonds. The state helped out and paid a few million dollars to ease the burden on

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taxpayers. The township changed the City charter and hired a professional administrator. The mayor ended up cutting ribbons and feeding the birds. It was a tragic comedy.

The developers made millions and the homeowners paid for the price. What a deal. And I just have to say good luck Ithaca.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Our next speaker is John Criscitello.

Folks, I just need to caution you, if you want to applaud at the end of a speaker, I can't really stop you. But that's only going to take away time from other speakers' abilities to speak to us later on.

JOHN CRISCITELLO: There is so many pieces of this pie that are distasteful it's hard to focus on just one. But being a homeowner at 401 South Cayuga Street, I would have to say my main focus is traffic through our neighborhood which has been an issue for years now with Wegman's, Tops, K-Mart, over there wreaking havoc, making it unsafe and unsightly for everybody.

If you really want to face the
facts, people in vehicles will choose the shortest
route to get where they are going. That goes on.
If you look at East Spencer Street and West
Spencer Street and North and South Titus Street,
how people cruise through that neighborhood to get
to the other side of town. There is no stopping,
slowing, it is happening now. I think with the
development there is no doubt that traffic will
increase through those neighborhoods, and just
compound the problem and make it worse. I think
that increased traffic through neighborhoods are
definitely a detriment for that neighborhood. I
think you can look at West Clinton Street or West
Green Street and see where the highways go low and
out to Meadow Street, how those neighborhoods are
deteriorating and neglected. It is just a
passageway for people to get from point A to point
B, forget about looking out the window or take a
look at the burned-out houses, boarded-up houses,
the garbage in the streets.

I am really concerned about Spencer
Street, East and West, being turned into an
arterial. My house at 401 is basically the last
vestige of a Victorian neighborhood. We look out

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now on traffic all day long, unstoppable, at peak
hours it is really unbearable. We look out at the
Cayuga corner building deteriorate and boarded
up. And I just want to say I really hope that my
neighborhood isn't paved over, because we moved
here because it is convenient to walk, and it's
nice to walk. If my neighborhood is paved over
just so people can have convenient parking to buy
a cheap plunger, I surely will be disappointed and
probably will find some place else to live.

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Number five is Paul
Hoaoule. Mr. Hoaoule?

PAUL HOAOULE: Hi. I am going to
tell a cautionary tale about what happened in a
town I grew up and I am going to talk a little
about the economic forces that grow the quote
growth.

Manchester, New Hampshire was an
industrial town that had millions that went out of
business in the, went out of business in the '60s
when I was born. In the early '70s it still had a
very active downtown, you could go down, there

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were department stores downtown and restaurants
downtown and lots of shops downtown, lots of
people lived downtown above the shops, people with
a little bit of money.

Then what happened was they built a
highway that short circuited the downtown, it used
to be if you were driving north and south you
ended up driving down Elm Street which was the
heart of town. Then they built a highway which
went around it and all the traffic went around and
these commercial strips that used to be the
important strips going in and out of town had all
these businesses built on it because if you are in
a car it's easy to get off the highway off ramp,
drive into one of these businesses.

But the things these commercial
strips are such terrible traffic and so terrible
to drive in, they are the ways into town, you
would never bother to drive into town because it
is so terrible to drive down a commercial strip.
So you would drive down the strip, stop at a
business. If you live down here, Route 13 is like
that. It's the most miserable drive to come in
from, any other side, on Route 13 it is already a

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nightmare.

What we saw happen was around 1980 when they built the new highway, downtown just collapsed. The last couple department stores went out and they built a mall. And for a while in the '80s things, the economy wasn't that good, most of the time. There was a few real estate booms and quite a few of these people who are dealing with commercial real estate went bankrupt. Result of that was a lot of banks failed in the area. My parents' bank changed its name like ten times in their lifetime. Because just cause of all the financial turbulence caused by developing properties people didn't want.

The terrible truth about these big box stores, the truth is they only last 20 years, they rot. And they have to be rebuilt. That's why you always see these crazy things like Pyramid Mall wants to expand even though it's not full and half of the places seem to be out of business, but they want to build a brand new mall because if they don't the roof is going to fall in. Other than that, one of these stores fails, no other store wants to move into it.

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So recently in Manchester, again a couple years ago, you know, we have had this boom in the stock market and as a result there is just a lot of money around and a lot of businesses have to show their stockholders they are growing. The way they can do that is they can put in their annual report we built so many hundreds of stores this year and they are running out of places to build these stores and they want to build some stores here.

Now they really don't have to make money with these stores because in this, with all these baby boomers putting their money in their mutual funds, all they got to do is show this growth. They don't have to actually make money. Because they have got so much money just to build new stores. And they don't even have to think are these stores really going to last.

And even around Manchester the last couple years, commercial strips all grew a mile. And it's really been terrible because I go there to shop and every time I would go to shop I would come back disappointed. I would go to some store and a lot of times you go with some guy on
commission will try to sell you a whole bunch of stuff you don't want, they can't answer any questions at all about their products.

Some places I go in, you know, I went, we were going to a record store at the mall and all these people just followed me around like I was a shoplifter. And they were doing this to a whole bunch of young people that were shopping there, you know, the kind of people that are the heart of their business.

And what we have seen lately is a lot of these big box stores have been putting other big box stores out of business. Home Depot has killed HQ. Office Max seems to be killing Staples and, you know, Circuit city and Circuit city killed Fretter and a bunch of other stores. And you know what happened, you are left with these big stores which take up space and still don't create any jobs in the long term and just mean you have to drive further, there is more traffic. And all that's really going to do is kill off all this big money from Wall Street, all it is going to do is kill off the small businesses that make Ithaca a really unique place that

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Attracts high tech workers here, that attract people, that attract tourists here, that really make Ithaca the place that I came here to settle. That's all I have to say.

MAYOR COHEN: Thank you.

(APPLAUSE).

MAYOR COHEN: Next speaker is Olivia Direnzo.

OLIVIA DIRENZO: Like a lot of people, I originally came to Ithaca for Cornell. But almost immediately I just fell in love with this place because it's beautiful, it's unique, it's walkable. And I am a freelance web designer and an artist so I can choose to live wherever I want and I chose to live here because this is a nice place. I mean I come from Binghamton which has beautiful old brick downtown, it could be lovely, but it's completely empty, but it's, you know, surrounded by all sorts of commercial junk and miracle miles.

It just seems like Ithaca is a unique and pretty town, but, you know, that's the reason why I came here. But seems like you are just trying to make this into Ithaca is like
everywhere else, like so many other places that
are just junkie and ugly and lost all their
character. That's all.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Thank you. Number
seven is Daniel Karpen.

DANIEL KARPEN: Thank you. My name
is Daniel Karpen, professional engineer. My
office is located 3 Harvard Hill Drive,
Huntington, New York 11743. I have been retained
by the Citizen's Alliance, a group of area
residents. Attached to the back of this testimony
is a professional resume.

Point Number One. The alienation of
Southwest Park was an action subject to SEQRA.
The alienation process started with a formal
resolution by city of Ithaca Common Council prior
to July 1998. The action of passing a resolution
requesting that the State Legislature alienate
parkland cannot be separated under SEQRA from any
subsequent actions.

According to 6 NYCRR 617.2 (b):

"Action's include:

(1) projects in physical activities,
such as construction or other activities that may affect the environment by changing the create the use, appearance or condition of any natural resource or structure, that:

(i) are directly undertaken by an agency; or

(ii) involve funding by an agency, or

(iii) require one or more new or modified approvals from an agency or agencies;

(2) agency planning and policy making activities that may affect the environment and commit the agency to a definite course of future decisions;

(3) adoption of agency rules, regulation and procedures; including local laws, codes, ordinances, executive orders and other resolutions that may affect the environment; and

(4) any combinations of the above."

Furthermore, SEQRA regulation at 6 NYCRR 617.7 (c)(2) provide: "For the purpose of determining whether an action may cause one of the consequences listed in paragraph (1) of this subdivision, the lead agency must consider
reasonably related long-term, short-term, direct, indirect and cumulative impacts, including other simultaneous and subsequent actions which are:

(i) included in any long-range plan of which the action under consideration is a part;

(ii) likely to be undertaken as a result thereof; or

(iii) dependent thereon."

A positive declaration should have been issued prior to the resolution to request that the state legislature alienate Southwest Park. That positive declaration should have included any subsequent actions.

There is plenty of case law to support this thesis. See, for example, Onondaga Landfill Systems, Inc. v. Flacke, I will leave the legal citation out. This case has been very frequently cited.

The Environmental Conservation Law at Section 8-0109, Subsection 4 states: "As early as possible in the formulation of a proposal for an action, the reasonable agency shall make an initial determination whether an Environmental Impact Statement need be prepared for the action.

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When an action is to be carried out by two or more agencies, such determination shall be made as early as possible after the designation of the lead agency."

In summary, the City of Ithaca Common Council violated the law by failing to follow the statutory and regulatory provisions from Article 8 of the Environmental Conservation Law with regard to the resolution requesting that the State Legislature act to alienate Southwest Park.

Point Two. The entire Southwest Area Land Use Plan area was in its entirely part of a vast flood plain forest, significant remnants of which still remain.

Early settlers cleared almost all of the forest for agricultural purposes, as the flood plain had rich soils. The Southwest Park was farmed into 1950s. Along the east side of Southwest Park and near the entrance there is a flood plain forest, according to the Wetlands Investigation Map 4 prepared by Stearns & Wheler, dated August 19, 1994. At the southeast corner of Southwest Park there are some red maple trees up

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to three feet in diameter. These trees, which I saw when I visited Southwest Park in April of 1999, may be 100 to 150 years old.

The same map shows approximately 30 acres of mature woodlands containing flood plain forest habitat with open areas with a dominant growth of grasses with some areas of wildflowers or rushes or reeds or sedges. The forest is about 35 years old and contains cottonwood, boxelder, green ash and white willow.

These 30 acres of forest meet the definition of fresh water wetlands as defined in Environmental Conservation Law Section 24-0107 Subsection 1, "means lands and waters of the state ... which contain any or all of the following: (a) lands and submerged lands commonly called marshes, swamps, sloughs, bogs, and flats supporting aquatic and semi-aquatic vegetations of the following types: --

Is that five minutes?

MAYOR COHEN: Yes, it is.

Our next speaker is David Gallahan from the city of Ithaca.

DAVID GALLAHAN: I will be

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continuing the statement.

This area, which appears to be
greater than 12.4 acres, satisfies the
requirements of an individual wetland of
sufficient size to be included on the Freshwater
Wetlands Map of New York State, as promulgated by
the Commissioner of the NYSDEC.

There are other small areas in the
entire Southwest Area Land Use Plan that would
also satisfy the requirements of Article 24,
Freshwater Wetlands Act, to be mapped as
freshwater wetlands, because they are the only
remaining open spaces along crowded riverfronts.

On June 7, 1999 David Gallahan,
myself, petitioned the Commissioner of the NYSDEC
to map these areas and to place them on the
Freshwater Wetlands Map. Attached to this
testimony is a copy of the letter.

All these freshwater wetlands
satisfy the requirements of being an a Class II
wetland, and I won't cite or read all of the
details of that. They just simply by being in an
urban area, they qualify as a Class II wetland.
There are other reasons also.

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Freshwater wetlands "permit, with or without conditions, may be issued for a proposed activity on a wetland of any class or in a wetland's adjacent area if it is determined that the activity (i) would be compatible with preservation, protection and conservation of the wetland and its benefits, and (ii) would result in no more than insubstantial degradation to, or loss of, any part of the wetland, and (iii) would be compatible with the public health and welfare."

Those are the only cases in which a permit would be issued.

"Class II wetlands provide important wetland benefits, the loss of which is acceptable only in very limited circumstances."

This is 6 NYCRR 663.5(e)(1).

"A permit shall be issued only if it is determined that the proposed activity satisfies a pressing or economic or social need that clearly outweighs the loss of or detriment to the benefits of the Class II wetland."

I will skip over some other.

Mr. Daniel Karpen in his professional opinion, based upon the above
citations of law, the probability of any applicant
obtaining a Freshwater Wetlands Permit for any
major construction in the Southwest Area is zero.

Point Number Three. The City of
Ithaca has been using Southwest Park as an illegal
dump for some time.

On May 18, 1999 the Ithaca Journal
in a front page news story reported that the
NYSDEC found illegal dumping at Southwest Park.
I will skip over some of this.

I will point out according to
regulation 6 NYCRR 617.2:, physical alteration
includes, but is not limited to, the following
activities: Vegetation removal, demolition,
stockpiling materials, grading and other forms of
earthwork, dumping, fill and etcetera.

Illegal dumping should have stopped
on May 1st, 1998, the date that the environmental
assessment form was prepared by the city of
Ithaca.

Upon information and belief, illegal
dumping has been intermittently taking place in
Southwest Park since the enactment of SEQR by the
State Legislature in the mid-1970s.

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The city of Ithaca should look into the alternative of removing all of the illegally dumped material from Southwest Park, and adjacent city land and restoring the flood plain forest on the entire area.

Point Number Four. The positive declaration is defective in that it failed to include the action of officially delineating the freshwater wetlands by the NYSDEC as part of this project.

The City of Ithaca through the 1994 Stearns & Wheler Wetlands Investigation knew that there was extensive flood plain forest in Southwest Park and in the remainder of the Southwest Area Land Use Plan area. Based on my site inspection in April 1999 these maps appear to be reasonably accurate.

It is obviously clear that delineation of the wetlands was an action related to the entire project. The New York State DEC should verify, by means of site inspection, the relative accuracy of the Stearns & Wheler maps.

And the New York State DEC should hold a public hearing before an administrative law

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judge to formally map the freshwater wetlands and place them on a Freshwater Wetland Maps of the State of New York.

Point Number Five. The City of Ithaca Common Council in December 1999 voted to sell a parcel of land, a part of tax map parcel 127-1-1, owned by the City of Widewaters Route 13 II Company, LLC.

This action is a clear violation of the SEQR regulations at 6 NYCRR 617.3(g): "Actions commonly consist of a set of activity or steps. The entire set of activities or steps must be considered the action, whether the agency decision-making relates to the action as a whole or to only a part of it. (1) considering only a part or segment of an action is contrary to the intent of SEQR. If a lead agency believes the circumstances warrant a segmented review, it must clearly state in its determination of significance, and any subsequent EIS, the supporting reasons and must demonstrate that such review is clearly no less protective of the environment. Related actions should be identified and discussed to the fullest extent possible."

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As this land has been cleared and has been filled (See Point Number Six below), it is obvious that the mandated environmental safeguards that should have been brought to bear on this project before any physical alterations took place were completely sidestepped.

Point Number Six. On November 12, 1999, the City of Ithaca granted a permit to Widewaters Route 13 II Company, LLC for the placement of 80,000 cubic yards of fill on property at 398-400 Elmira Road, located within the Southwest Area Land Use Plan.

This is a clear violation of the SEQR regulations at 6 NYCRR 617.3(a) and 6 NYCRR 617.2(ab) as cited in Point Number 3 above, and the one I just cited in Point Number Five above.

The Court of Appeals has held that after the fact compliance with the requirements of SEQRA will not cure a failure to comply initially. And there is a quote here of a case.

The DGEIS cannot be used as a subterfuge to justify the illegal action of granting this permit. As mentioned above, the mandated environmental safeguards that should have

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been brought to bear on this project --

MAYOR COHEN: Mr. Gallahan.

DAVID GALLAHAN: -- before any --

MAYOR COHEN: No, I am sorry, sir.

Mr. Butterbank, you are next.

We have this in print, sir, and we can read it.

DAVID GALLAHAN: Okay, very good.

MAYOR COHEN: Mr. Butterbank. I have William Butterbank from the Town of Ithaca.

WILLIAM BUTTERBANK: Good evening, Mr. Mayor, staff, members of Common Council, fellow human beings. You folks are going to be very tired by the time this process is over and I don't envy you having to sit here. But I encourage you to try to make sense of the comments and hear both the words and the passion that people are bringing to this process. I think anybody that's going to be speaking cares about the future of our city. And we all have visions that are somewhat different. What we are specifically being called upon to do is address the Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement that lies before you. I hope all of you have

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spent some time trying to make sense of this
document. I cannot pretend to read everything.

But I can tell you I did spend
several hours at it trying to understand basically
three things, one, what was going to be the impact
on my neighborhood and other neighborhoods that
are adjacent to that project. Secondly, what was
going to be the impact on local businesses and to
what extent were locally owned businesses going to
be displaced by concerns that are owned by large
companies out of town. And, thirdly, I tried to
understand how this was going to impact the usage
of cars in our community.

I can tell you on the first two
points that I couldn't find very much. I
literally couldn't find more than a few lines in
terms of the impact on adjacent neighborhoods.
And I thought, well, I must be missing something,
it is a huge report. I called Mrs. Lee and
perhaps Mrs. Lee, I know you are very busy in this
process, but you did not respond to my first
message or my second message or my third message.
About the fifth time I finally succeeded in
getting your supervisor, Chase Vancourt, I says,
Chase, what is going to be the impact on neighborhoods? And he said, well, it really wasn't in the radar screen in terms of the decision-making process. We weren't looking at that in looking, in developing this document. I said, Chase, what is going to be the impact in terms of displacement of local businesses? Once again, it wasn't a question that was included in this document.

I mean, think about this, folks, we are setting in motion a process that's going to be profound negative effects on Nate's Floral Estates, on the Glenside neighborhood, on Spencer Street. We are going to be setting up a whole infrastructure that's going to be encouraging people to move automobiles through those neighborhoods. We are going to be adding sound and light and exhaust vapors, we don't even know what's going to be the effect on the immediate neighborhoods. Also we don't know what's going to be happening in terms of displacement of local businesses.

The recent mayoral election, congratulations, Mayor Cohen. There was also a
race for Common Council and Mr. Hershey, you got
on cable and were saying that you felt it, that we
needed these large stores because you couldn't buy
a refrigerator in this town. Apparently you were
not aware that you can go to Wernick's or Thayer's
or for that matter, Rex. You do not need to drive
to Syracuse to get these kind of things. But if
we move forward as planned with the largest -- we
will have to only go to large corporate owned
concerns, because the local ones will not be able
to compete.

Finally I would like to echo what
several previous speakers have said about the
specialness of this community. I came here about
30 years ago. I never went to Cornell. I, my
wife and I literally chose this community because
we spent about a year driving around America,
exploring other communities and when we got here,
we could not believe what a unique and special
kind of place this was. And I can tell you that
part of what makes it special is that not only the
natural beauty, but the sense of care about our
locality and we are in danger of losing that.

Thank you for your attention.

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MAYOR COHEN: Speaker number 10 is David Nakita Werier. Town of Caroline.

If I could also have speakers 12 and 13.

DAVID NAKITA WERIER: Thank you, Allen. Thank you, Council Members and for being here to listen for comments for a while. I want to introduce myself, I am a botanical consultant. I do wetland delineations as well as surveys of plants.

And I just want to start my comments out by saying I am a little surprised that the Council allowed DGEIS to be released for public comment at this time, seems a little inadequate and I think that perhaps in the future a little more observation should be done of the statement before it's released for public comment. Any rate, it is out there now so let's go forward.

Rare plants. There is one rare plant that is missing in the report, and all this stuff is going to be in writing so I might not get to it in my five minutes, I want to do the best I can. I sort of want to have a little personal

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contact with you folks as well around this

information. Can I get your attention or are you

just going to talk a little bit?

MAYOR COHEN: We are discussing the

fact that people in the back cannot hear you, sir,

and we are trying to figure out --

DAVID NAKITA WERIER: I can talk

into the mic. I'm sorry, Allen, this is the time,

this is all going to be in writing so you will be

able to read it too.

One plant is called Ulmus thomasii.

The name of it is Rock Elm, and it wasn't

mentioned in the report. But it's been found in

the Cayuga Inlet Valley at Larch Meadow as well as

by Lick Brook. It's a seriously endangered

plant. We are talking S2,S3, that means in the

state it is reported in 6 to 20 locations. Okay.

There is other rare plants that have

been found in the area in the past. They weren't

found recently. And as Robert Wesley, the person

that was doing the work reports in the, it's in

the appendix, that he was out there in November

doing this work and all those species are not easy

to find. Now there is a good chance that a lot of

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these species won't be there, there is a lot of
disturbances that happened to the soil. We
shouldn't let that go. We shouldn't allow the
person that's doing the botanical work to go out
in November to do this work. It's very
important. These are important species.

One of the species on the list is
Chaerophyllum procumbens. It is a small little
plant. Right now it is basically only a historic
record from the state. In other words, there is
no current extent populations of this plant. If
there happens to be one in Southwest Park area,
and for some reason it gets affected by the
development there, this plant will be gone from
New York State. So it is important, and as an SH
listing, that means it's not considered extirpated
from the state at this point. That means there is
some hope it can be refound, that's why it is
listed as SH and not SX.

It's very important we get some more
work out there, perhaps this next summer to look
for plants again. It could be a little plug for
myself I guess. Just to let people know as well I
was out with Troy Weldy of the Heritage Program

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this summer, in adjacent lands, we were actually
in Buttermilk Falls State Park, Heritage Park -- I
don't want to get into all the. Details, I was
out with Troy and we were looking for these plants
in adjacent lands thinking there is a good
possibility they could be there. We weren't going
on the Southwest Park parcels because it is
privately owned or owned by the city, and it
wasn't as available a resource, anyway it is
important stuff.

Moving right along. Lichens are not
something that is generally considered, the
Heritage Program doesn't have state rankings for
them. I am an acuologist as well, probably one of
the top field acuologist in the country. At
present I am doing some studies on if like
conditions for this area and there is a lichen
that I found in that area called Physciella
chloantha. Anyway that lichen has only been found
by me in that spot, as I know of there is no other
records for Tompkins County.

Just quickly moving on to forest.

Flood plain forest is already an endangered
community by the New York Natural Heritage

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Program. It's an S2,S3 listing. It was put in the appendix but it wasn't brought to, it wasn't dealt with in executive summary. That's a big oversight. This is an ecological community, that's an endangered in New York State and needs to be addressed. You can't just write it off. I mean you can if you want, but it's a, it's really, it's not good policy. Okay. There is no legal standing, if you own the land, yeah, you can destroy your own community. But since it's endangered we are talking about the possibility of only a few of these going on in the state.

Thank you very much. A lot more will come in my report.

MAYOR COHEN: Thank you. Number 11 is Peter Pfarrer from the city of Ithaca.

PETER PFARRER: As Mr. Cohen said, my name is Peter Pfarrer. My wife and I moved to Ithaca quite deliberately like some other people. But only about six years ago. We live in a house we bought on Lynn Street since 1998. One thing I share with everyone in this room is a love for this city, really fallen in love with it. I still am in love with it.

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But I supported the idea of commercial development in the Southwest Area for some time because it has been clear to me many people from this region prefer the modern, strip-mall, car-centered version of commerce that such development represents. Like the big retailers who won't consider Downtown Ithaca for development, these folks aren't interested in the charm of our Commons; instead, they are choosing to drive to Lansing, Elmira, and even Syracuse for their shopping. And not only is this situation depriving our city of much needed tax revenues; it is also contributing to the very sprawl so many in the community decry by turning Lansing into a suburb of Ithaca.

Making commercial use in our city along an already heavily developed Route 13 corridor, has always made sense to me. If a Target is going to target Tompkins County, and its choice is either Lansing or Southwest Ithaca, I favor it coming to Southwest Ithaca.

Ironically, the DGEIS document concerning the city's plan for Southwest is already being dismissed by some of the very people
who called for it in the first place. So as a
balance to the worst-case scenarios that are being
presented through selective readings of the
document, I'd just like to stress the Impact
Statement's more positive conclusions, and its
generally optimistic vision.

The DGEIS's overall conclusions are
clear, I quote: "Adoption of the plan and
development would result in the following
benefits: Stabilization or increase in city sales
and property tax revenues; opportunity for the
City to maintain or enhance its competitiveness
within the region as a desirable region to live,
work, shop and recreate; job creation; creation of
substitute parkland."

According to the DGEIS, the only
completely unavoidable impact identified in the
document's Summary of Impacts is an aesthetic and
thus subjective, and that is the change in
Viewshed at key view locations. This is
unavoidable. For other impacts identified,
mitigation strategies are listed. Although I
understand many of them don't seem to be up to
many people's standards.

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I quote: "The retail market analysis concluded that potential development of Southwest Ithaca would not have a blighting influence on Downtown Ithaca." As a resident of Downtown Ithaca, I am of course concerned about how development of the Southwest Area is going to impact The Commons, for which I have frequented for years and its surrounding neighborhoods. While it seems clear there will be increased competition in the Southwest District, it does not have to pose a threat to those Downtown businesses which seem to represent what seems to be its commercial niche, restaurants, bars, specialty shops, etcetera.

In addition, many potential big box customers are not currently shopping in the downtown area anyway; and hopefully the increase in shoppers to the City will most likely have a spillover effect in downtown, which will soon be featuring a State Theater and a world class public library.

Finally, Ithacans, I support continued subsidizing of the downtown business district as well as other public efforts to keep

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it alive and flourishing.

Many folks have brought up the issue of the project's costs to the city, but the Impact Statement reports that, and I quote, "The City intends to develop a formula that equitably distributes the costs of the off-site improvements...". I will leave it to many opponents here to make sure the City does that. It also states: "Additional service costs for schools, roads, utilities and public services are expected to be substantially less than anticipated additional property and sales tax revenues."

Joe Wetmore has argued recently that we should just simply let the Southwest area return to flood plain forestland. And this suggestion has the benefit of being straightforward and very honest, but it doesn't gibe with the we're in favor of mixed-use development line that we have been hearing for months now from some opponents of the big box development.

In addition, I quote. "Under the no-action alternative, development of several parcels within the study area would still occur
but with unmitigated adverse traffic, visual, wetland, buried waste and drainage impacts." Maybe that's what's going on with Widewaters, I am not sure. It seems better to undertake a comprehensive plan for the whole area.

Despite my admiration for many of the folks who oppose this project, I think it is important to remind them that this last election cycle was in many ways about the very issue before us. Dan Hoffman and Allen Cohen were quite specific about the importance of development issues to the City's future, and took clearly different positions regarding them. So the resulting election results should be seen, to some degree, as a democratic verdict on Southwest development by Ithaca's citizenry. In fact, I think it's fair to say that the pro-development tone of the entire Common Council (with the exception of its new Green Party member) reflects the desire, on the part of Ithaca's residents, for more commercial activity in the city, more sales tax revenues, and a more vibrant economy overall.

So I thank you for considering my comments.

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MAYOR COHEN: Number 12 is Judy Jones, city of Ithaca.

JUDY JONES: I am a member of the Conservation Advisory Council. I am sure the forepersons who follow me will all be reading to you a subset of our comments which we will be submit in writing at later date to you.

We all choose different sections of the DGEIS, focussed on our own individual sections.

So I would like to first comment on the former dump site, Section 2.4 in Appendix D, the remediation of some or all of the former city dump would clearly be necessary should development occur according to any of the six alternative plans.

CAC believes the DGEIS needs to clarify the regulatory requirements including oversight responsibilities for such remediation. The scoping documents specifies a closure plan based on a workable plan approved by DEC. The consultant for the site assessment, Clark Patterson of Rochester says in the draft GEIS that the site is exempt from DEC oversight since it is
not a listed hazardous site.

Section 2.4.6 of the DGEIS specifies a construction pollution prevention plan to be filed by the contractor and approved by the city at the time of site plan review. Presumably the City would oversee city implementation of plan as well. A SPEDIS permit is also specified. The DEIS should contain a list of regulations, standards and guidelines the City would expect to use in the review of such plans.

Public trust in the permit enforcement has been damaged by recent observations at the Widewaters site. Trucks were seen and photographed avoiding the SPEDIS requirement to remove soils from their tires prior to exiting on the Route 13.

The CAC wants assurance with the GEIS that the City could provide the kind of oversight that's needed to tighten the enforced permits and plans that are designed to prevent the uncontained movements of soils contaminated heavy metals into adjacent communities as soil sediment or dust.

The other section I would like to
comment on are impacts on visual resource section 2.6 and Appendix E. There are a number of weaknesses in the visual resources study which leads CAC to conclude that the visual impacts are understated in the graphic projection and conclusion. The projections are based upon the retention of some of the existing vegetations, large trees and parking lots instead of new plantings, no rooftop utilities or penthouses appear in the photographs. There are no conspicuous signs that building heights are uniform and regularized contrary to the recommendations in the guidelines for varying roof lines.

Further, the study states that the major mitigation to visual impact would be to retain as much of existing vegetations as possible especially the large trees. The study was completed and photographs taken before work began on the Widewater site where all trees and shrubs were removed, thus impacts on key view, one at Buttermilk Falls State Park are certainly understated. Major opportunity for mitigation has already been lost through allowing live water site
development before site plan review.

CAC recommends that vegetations removal and especially large trees should be strictly minimized in the Southwest Area Land Use Plan and through the site plan review process.

Thank you.

MAYOR COHEN: Number 13 is Paul Salon, S-A-L-O-N, from the Town of Ithaca.

PAUL SALON: Hi, I am Paul Salon. 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 "adoptions 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.

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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 City of Ithaca has granted a permit for this filling in this controversial area which violates the intent of this whole planning process. The permit is presently in the appeal process, yet the filling goes on.

The drainage swales proposed to handle the flood flows from the Buttermilk Creek neighborhood and the rest of the project are

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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.
This type of flooding will deposit sediment and
debris into the ditches.

Most important point I probably have
today is that with all the engineering work done
in the DEIS, they state in several places that
brush, debris and sediment removal should be
performed at least annually. To me that's a cry
from the engineer saying we are going to try to
give you the best plan we can because we know we
want to develop. I am going to cover myself by
saying you are going to have to dig those ditches
out annually, that is going to be extremely

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expensive. It is going to basically happen annually once you remove the vegetations, it is just going to be a constant procedure here. And you need to have those ditches to carry the flood water and also later it will be stated that you need those ditches to treat the contaminants.

The initial sediment load due to construction, erosion and lack of vegetation is expected to be above normal according to the DGEIS, to cleaning may be required after one season, which will again remove all vegetation from the ditch.

The Widewaters Creek Road drainage ditch outlets are, or the Buttermilk Creek Road drainage ditch outlets through or into the substitute parkland so that the annual maintenance and sediment removal will become the responsibility of the City and will adversely impact on the new substitute parkland. The maintenance of this system and the entire drainage system for the entire Southwest project will become the responsibility of the City. These costs need to be considered in any cost benefit ratio.

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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.

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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.

MAYOR COHEN: Thank you, Paul.

Betsy Darlington.

BETSY DARLINGTON: Hi. I also am representing the Conservation Advisory Council and I will be addressing the plants and annual portions of the DGEIS and Appendix H. I am just presenting a summary of a much more detailed statement and you will get that as well as all the other statements tonight in much longer form.

Part one, evaluation of impacts.

The Executive Summary, ES, as I will call it later, draws the conclusion that there would be no substantial impacts from the various alternatives on plants and animals. Yet this conclusion is not supported by either the body of the DGEIS nor by Robert Wesley's survey.

The significant old-growth flood

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plain forest remnant at the eastern edge of the
original Southwest Park would be eliminated under
all alternative scenarios. This is not even
mentioned in the Executive Summary. This is one
of the rarest ecosystems in the state. And I
think it would be criminal to just wipe it out.
Every single alternate wipes it out.

(APPLAUSE)

Number three, all six of the
alternatives are likely to have significant
adverse impacts on Negundo Woods, which is one of
the county's unique natural areas and is
identified as being significant in the DGEIS.

Four, the nearly uninterrupted
forested corridor currently in the Southwest area
is needed for wildlife and plants. It should not
be further fragmented, to do so would be to have
significant impacts on them.

Five, removal of so much forest will
have adverse impacts on air quality, air
temperature, and drainage, in addition to impacts
on wildlife and plants.

Six, increased human disturbance
will have adverse impacts on regionally rare
species as well as more common ones.

Seven, Robert Wesley's survey was conducted in October to November. As Wesley states, the DGEIS cannot draw realistic conclusions without surveys done from April through September of both herbaceous plants and wildlife.

Eight or nine, whatever the number is I have lost track, an ornithologist, Wesley is a plant ecologist, not a wildlife biologist. An ornithologist at least must study the site during spring migration and the breeding period.

Part two, conclusions and alternatives.

The DGEIS conclusions are puzzling and do not jibe with anything that is known about wildlife or plants. The CAC would like to propose a more balanced vision for the City.

The CAC recommends excluding existing woodlands and wetlands (primarily in unfilled portions of the original Southwest Park, the old-growth flood plain remnant, and southern, unfilled portion of the proposed Cherry Street Industrial Park Extension) from rezoning and

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development. Add these areas to the new Southwest Natural Area.

Three, seek a mix of development in the remaining Southwest area, not exclusively large-scale retail. Some other development types tend to have less impact and to allow for retention of more natural features.

Four, capitalize on tourism and especially birding in the City's Southwest area, in light of proximity to the State Park, the Black Diamond Trail, and the new city park/natural area.

Six, re-establish a fine flood plain forest, as another draw for tourists (as well as wildlife).

Seven, enhance the area as a draw for birds and other visitors, and bring in businesses that cater to them.

Eight, build new businesses on the areas that have already been filled by the DPW, in areas that are currently developed, but could support more intense development, for example, multi-stories, and, if safe to do so, in the old city dump area. From Judy Jones's analysis, it

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may be totally unsafe to do so, however.

Let our legacy be one that enhances and capitalizes on the natural attributes of the area. We can, at the same time, increase income to the City.

Let us not destroy the natural qualities of the area, and simply leave large shopping malls for our children, grandchildren and beyond. This is the city's last opportunity to do something wonderful rather than shortsighted and outdated. Let's show the rest of the country that is it is possible to increase development without destroying vast acreages of natural area.

I wanted to just say a couple more things from Paul, Paul ran out of time.

Wetlands are important resources, providing protection against flooding and they serve as reservoirs for storm water and storm melt events. Wetlands also provide habitat for specific plants and animals. 10.98 acres of wetlands have been delineated within the Southwest area. We heard tonight that area is probably larger than that. It is a very unusual system that they used for delineation. We support the
maintenance of all wetlands on-site and the
mitigation of disturbed wetlands to be
reconstructed on-site, by the expansion and
enhancement of existing wetlands.

We do not support the creation of
new wetlands in the new Southwest Park until a new
management plan has been developed for the park.
We are concerned about adding more water with
contaminants in Negundo Woods. Additional
consultations by a forester or ecologist are
recommended. The use of mitigated wetlands --

MAYOR COHEN: Number 15 is Martha
Fischer, city of Ithaca.

MARTHA FISCHER: I read the
transportation section of the Draft Environmental
Impact Statement. So my comments will be related
to that.

First, in relation to intersection
capacity analysis -- I am kind of nervous. The
authors provide tables portraying the current
level of services and the future levels of service
for three or four different parameters. One of
them is alternative five, two of them are, one is
a 20-year no-action scenario which includes annual

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background and traffic growth rate of 1.2 percent, and a 200,000 square feet of development. Another one of the scenarios includes development of levy parcel only in 20 years.

I would like to have those two scenarios clarified in such a way that the differences would be outlined clearly with the development that's going on in the levy parcel right now, they seem to be one in the same. That would be great if that could be clarified.

Some more about level of service stuff. I read about the 27 affected intersections, and found that the planners decided that they need to be mitigated to what's called level E. Level E entails a wait of 40 to 60 seconds, along with that is, they measure frustration and discomfort on the part of the driver, that seems to me to be an unacceptable level, if that's going to be held at that low level, then mitigation isn't offered for impacts to air quality, and to noise considering that the heavy amount of traffic at some of the intersections.

Mitigation wasn't offered for

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intersections of Meadow and Seneca Street, and at Meadow and Green Street, and I am not really sure why those two were left out. Cause when I read the neighborhood analysis section, it talks about the sections, a couple of sections of Meadow Street, one between Buffalo and Seneca and the other between State and Green Street as increasing by 22 and 25 percent respectively. It seems like there might need some mitigating efforts at the intersections that coincide with those sections of Meadow Street.

Another point about the neighborhood analysis is that Spencer Road isn't included at all. And it runs parallel to Route 13 and is very close, it runs into Route 13 very close to where the levy is. And it seems to me -- well, it's clear to me is that there would be lots of negative impacts on that area.

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 the section for

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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.

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? Thanks.

MAYOR COHEN: Thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Number 16 is Harry
Bowman from the city of Ithaca.

HARRY BOWMAN: Yes. I would like to
talk a little bit about growth. Now, you know, in
this particular area, the population has not
really increased in recent decades. And one would
reasonably assume that the demand that those

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people have to shop would be roughly constant. So we really would not expect there to be an expansion in the demand for retail space. When you look at retail space in the City of Ithaca, you find that there is a great deal of empty retail space. This would seem to indicate that there is already more retail space than is necessary to meet demand.

This particular development, according to some estimates, nearly doubles the stock of retail space in this area. It seems very unlikely that there will ever be a demand for that much retail space in this area. Now that I have said, however, that it is unlikely that it will fill, maybe I am wrong. Let's say that it does. I happen to live on Prospect Street, you know, which is right out here in, by the police station, and I looked at the plan here and assuming that those numbers on the parking lots are the number of parking space in those lots, this development has 4,498 parking spaces connected to it. Let's say that just a few of those cars were coming down Route 96 here, you know, coming down Aurora Street and then they want to get to this development.
Well, they would take a left onto Prospect Street, then they would probably take the closest, the shortest route which would cause them to turn onto Spencer Street and head out that way. That will take them right in front of the police station. Now since I live in the area I know that traffic is already sometimes backed up in front of that police station. And if you take a look at the roads there, it would be very difficult to widen them. You would have to demolish some houses and probably dig out quite a bit of earth to increase the width of that road. So, you know, even if it fills there are still a lot of problems associated with this project.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: 17, Michael Culotta,
city of Ithaca.

MICHAEL CULOTTA: Good evening. I am here as a member of the Conservation Advisory Council. Can people hear me? I read the section on community character and economic development in the DGEIS, and found it really educational. A lot of things in there that I had never seen in print anywhere and feel like it would be a good section
for anyone considering this plan to read carefully and thoroughly.

In there it kind of poses the question that's a difficult one to answer. What's a city to do, its tax base, this tax base in Ithaca which has depended in the past on real property tax is now increasingly dependent on sales tax revenues to cover the cost of administering city services. The intent of Southwest Park as currently designed is to directly bolster this tax revenue base decline, which is estimated in the DGEIS at $150,000 a year. And it leads to that, with that figure in mind, I would like to move then to this whole DGEIS discussion, is retail the best way and retail sales, the best way for Ithaca to increase its tax base?

It's kind of a question of scale and that's really what I think is one of the most important messages in this complete and comprehensive document is scale. 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

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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.

Thank you.

What city, the City envisions is a site plan review process and the City Zoning Board that can hopefully control this transfer of space. But I question whether that's sufficient. And I am wondering if we bit off more than we can
chew here. With alternative five of 800,000 new
square feet of retail space, can Ithaca control
the retail serpent that's created as it sneaks its
way through existing Ithaca businesses? Let's
make some intelligent choices. Let's look at the
effect that this plan has on existing retail
businesses and mitigate or compensate for it
appropriately. Thanks.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Number 18 is Tom
Barron, he's from Newfield.

TOM BARRON: Mayor, members of the
Council, my name is Tom Barron. I live in the
Village of Newfield. I have read through the
draft DGEIS and there are several comments I would
like to make about that.

One is I am concerned about traffic
growth. We have already heard a lot about that
tonight. The DGEIS estimates there will be an
increase of as much as 25 percent traffic along
Route 13 during peak hours. And as someone who
commutes into and out of Ithaca along that road, I
know it is already fairly severe, so it is not
going to make things any better.

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My second point is that my concern over the impact on existing Ithaca businesses which the previous speaker spoke very eloquently about. But my concern is about the health of existing Downtown and the Commons. The scope of this project which is said to be 55 acres and is going to be larger than the current Pyramid Mall and the Commons combined, seems to be out of scale and out of proportion to the size of our community and will have negative impacts on our local economy, not to mention our own local businesses.

A third point is that we are in an era of drastic economic changes with the Internet and the rapid growth of e-commerce and the economic viability of brick and mortar retail stores is increasingly being called into question, particularly in small markets like ours. If big box retailers that are the target of this development begin to feel the pinch, these will be the first stores they close and our tax payers here will be left holding the bag.

My final point is about the issue of smart growth. It’s currently big news everywhere except the pages of the Ithaca Journal that
development, for development sake does not make
for an attractive community. Instead more
communities are moving away from
vehicle-dependent, mall-type development, toward
integrated communities that include retail
residential park, and even industrial space
integrated together.

For many small cities that have
already gone down the path that Mayor Cohen is
pushing Ithaca down with this plan, the current
Ithaca Downtown and the Commons would be objects
of envy for some of these other cities that have
already made these mistakes. Instead of heeding
the lessons of these cities, which are lessons
they have learned are economically undermined
downtown, severe traffic problems, car dependence,
replacement of local businesses by generic chain
stores, and the subsequent loss of character that
makes these cities unique, Ithaca is poised to
repeat these very same mistakes. I urge the
Council to rethink this initiative and consider
more beneficial approaches to development.

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

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MAYOR COHEN: Number 19 is Eric Miller from Danby.

ERIC MILLER: Good evening. My name is Eric Miller, as I said. I am a resident of Tompkins County living in the Town of Danby. And I have lived in Ithaca for five years. I, like many people who have spoke this evening, have chosen Ithaca as my home and I am a homeowner in Tompkins County and I have been employed by the city school district for five years. And the reason that I, one of the reasons that I chose Ithaca, from the millions of places I may have chosen to live, was the character that's unique to our community of downtown and the feeling of community that you get and ability to access stores by walking and in being in a historic downtown area.

And also an added attraction was the access to natural places so immediately and close to our downtown area, Buttermilk Falls being right on the edge of downtown, people being downtown being able to walk up Cascadilla Street is a very unusual and attractive .... To me it would be very disappointing to take another beautiful

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natural area so accessible to downtown to
completely pave it over and turn it into a
cement jungle which may look very nice for the
first year with all the grand opening banners and
the very nice flat black asphalt and the bright
yellow lines, but as those start to fade away and
the asphalt starts to crack and the businesses
start to change over or go out of business, it's
going to seem like a real waste of really
beautiful area and resource to leave completely
paved over.

I hear a lot of people speaking
about development versus no development, shopping
versus no shopping. And you know these
dichotomies, which for me it is not about whether
there should be shopping or no shopping,
development or no development, but it feels like
the plan as it's been proposed and the maps as
they have been proposed are highly uncreative use
of the space for a town that has very many
creative people.

I would like to see the energies
that are going towards this very simple design go
to really enhancing what we already have. We have
so much empty space as it is, Route 13 has a lot
of empty space along it that's just kind of
wrecked down lots and some, you know, different
kinds of just empty parking lots and things. I
think I would like to see the millions of dollars
that are going to have to be spent on creating the
infrastructure for this development and
maintaining it spent to enhance what's already
here. And to, just to bring it to life, instead
of just trying to spread it so thin.

I guess that's all I have to say. I
don't have statistics or quotes to bring to this,
just my personal opinion. Thanks.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Our next speaker,
number 19, is Joseph Wetmore.

JOSEPH WETMORE: Thank you for this
opportunity to address the committee. I have also
submitted written comments which I hope will be
seriously considered, although I have little hope
that they will be. This is because I have
observed several of these approval processes here,
I have learned some of the tricks that city
officials use to ignore or dismiss comments they

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don't like.

    Trick number one: If a commenter makes a point that is problematic, declare it non-
    substantive. For example, when considering the Wegman's expansion, the draft environmental review indicated that Wegman's didn't vacuum the parking lot and concluded that the new much larger lot could be vacuumed once a week and end up cleaner than before. This was presented as a mitigation measure to include cleaner run-off. Citizens pointed out that Wegman's actually vacuumed the large lot twice a week, so vacuuming a larger lot less frequently probably wouldn't improve the quality of run-off. This observation was declared non-substantive.

    Trick number two: Declare the comments illegible. During the Wal-Mart hearings there was a three-inch stack of written comments. In the process of sorting the stack, all the handwritten comments were dismissed as illegible, including one submission which had the commenter's name printed clearly in block letters, above neatly typed copy.

    Trick number three: Misplace the
comments. During the Wal-Mart hearings, written comments were delivered to many members of the lead agency. At least one of those never made it into the public record, let alone to consideration by that agency. Who knows how many other comments were lost this way.

    Trick number four: Declare that you will do something, then change your mind. During the scoping sessions for the Southwest Project, Susan Antash made it clear that they believed that SEQR prohibited them from examining the economic impacts of the project, specifically, the effects on downtown Ithaca. When it was pointed out that such logic would preclude examining the tax gain the city might receive from the project, they said, you are right, we will take it out. This is an example of why we ask for public comment. Of course if you look at the report, you will discover it went right back in.

    Trick number five: Rig the clock. After giving Clark Patterson Associates hours to present the 1,200 page document, give citizens only five minutes to respond. The public may actually believe that you will read the comments
you don't have time to listen to.

(APPLAUSE).

If you decide to actually pay
attention to citizen input on this proposal,
please consider the following:

The Southwest Area development plan
will result in a danger to public health and
safety, higher taxes, higher fees for city
services, and a nightmare of traffic jams in our
neighborhood. This destructive proposal will
cause major damage to our environment or local
economy and unique character of our community.

In scramble for revenue at any cost,
you are proposing to provide a baker's dozen of
big box retail chains to pollute our city with
their ugly buildings and uglier employment
practices.

In order to reward the developers
and speculators who fund your political campaigns,
you are hell-bent on creating the largest new
shopping center in Central New York, regardless of
the damage it does to our downtown, our local
businesses, our neighborhoods, and the streets our
children walk and ride their bikes on.

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So eager are you to force this travesty upon our city, that you are even willing to risk the lives and health of shoppers and workers, who may be exposed to the toxic methane fumes.

Stop this destructive madness.

Ithaca, our city, the City you were elected to care for, is one of the finest small cities in America precisely because it does not foster this kind of sprawling, auto-centric, ticky-tacky development that has eaten out the hearts and souls of most communities.

If you don't want to go down in history as the Common Council that has destroyed Ithaca, you will call an immediate halt to this dangerous, expensive, soul-destroying project. You will heed the warnings in the DGEIS and consign this very expensive Southwest area plan to the bad ideas file. And, most importantly, you will turn your attention and efforts to the tasks of preserving and protecting Ithaca instead of ruining it.

(APPLAUSE)

(RECESS TAKEN)

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MAYOR COHEN: Ladies and gentlemen,
we are going to resume the hearings now. Will you
please have a seat. Number 20 is Nancy Ramage,
city of Ithaca.

NANCY RAMAGE: Good evening. I
would like to make two brief points. The first
has to do with the question of fill. I would like
to ask the City, not in this particular venue, but
in another one to explain how the permission was
given for the fill to be put there in the
Southwest area after the permit had been denied by
Mr. Eckstrom.

And I would also like to mention
that I think the spill of the fill that goes from
the area where the buildings will be that go, the
spill that slopes into the area that is supposed
to be saved as parkland is inappropriate and
should be removed.

And thirdly, in regard to the fill,
the fact that there is a buffer zone required, but
the plan is that the buffer zone be within the
parkland is a mistake, and the fill, the buffer
area should be within the commercial zone and not
in the area that is a park area.

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My second point has to do with the downtown, and I refer you to what I considered an excellent letter in the paper the other day by Harvey Fyside, the quality of life in Ithaca is so dependent on our shops, our book shops and our many other kinds of special stores, someone earlier mentioned appliance stores like Thayer's, there are Bishop stores and the many other downtown stores that will be threatened by the new kinds of shops that are proposed for the Southwest area.

And I would plead with Common Council to consider that it's not only an economic issue, but also a question of quality of life in Ithaca. Thank you.

(APIPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Number 21 is Ernest Bury, city of Ithaca.

ERNEST BURY: Thank you for your patience. I see the list is well over a hundred now. I would like to introduce myself, I am a landlord who tries to provide affordable energy-efficient housing, which is very difficult to do when you have a stagnant economy and your
taxes keep going up.

Regarding housing, it is no coincidence that there are so many cars heading in all directions from Ithaca like to Elmira, because there they can afford to live. So it's really difficult to provide housing for what I call service personnel. I don't think there are many service personnel here tonight.

Regarding the destruction of businesses, I drive out Route 13 several times a week and I noticed just in the very recent past, four buildings have disappeared. So we are already destroying buildings, taking them off the tax rolls. So it would be a real pleasure to see something going up out there to add to the tax roles, so hopefully I don't have to pay $100 per month per unit per taxes.

The next part of my talk has to do with credibility. I am a cofounder of the group called Trash which four or five years ago tried to provide a more rational alternative to the white elephant we have out there now. Where were all the people that were so concerned about the wetlands, the wildlife, the trees, etcetera, when
they built that monstrosity right smack in the middle of it. Talk about run-off. They have plenty of run-off and it is pretty bad stuff that people bring in on their vehicles when they have a load of who knows what. I didn't hear any consistent environmental objections to that project at the time. Now what makes it particularly specious is there were viable alternatives available for the Solid Waste Center such as Wallace Industries, and the Triangle facility.

Another comment I heard tonight, well, how about the impact on small businesses. Well, again, credibility is in doubt because I know what Ida Webber who ran a small recycling center for decades, she tried valiantly to keep in business when the government came along and put her out of business. So I would hope that people would realize there are many service people that are, like one person I just recently ran into was making $9.50 an hour, and he was one of the higher paid people that I deal with. They would like affordable housing. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

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MAYOR COHEN: Thank you. Number 22 is Patrick Savolskis, city of Ithaca.

PATRICK SAVOLSKIS: Thank you. I will try to keep this real brief because I know there is a lot of people that want to speak. I am a homeowner down on North Titus right near where this development would occur. I feel we need some development. I am not saying that this is the perfect answer, but I do know that when I go shopping I don't really shop in Ithaca. The stores here, while some of them have some things, they are not everything that we are looking for, we have to go elsewhere to find a lot of materials, we cannot find things here in the city.

All I am asking is when development is considered, I think it does need to be considered. I think it does need to be done smartly. I don't think the City should give away the farm. I do understand to bring businesses you sometimes have to make some concessions. But just be careful of doing anything that people feel that you are hiding. But I do feel that the development needs to happen. I am worried about

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my property tax. I am worried about the mix of stores. I don't see that on the Commons. When the Commons is nice when nice weather. I was down there the other day. People weren't walking around. I don't think the mix of stores is there to bring people to the downtown area. I would like a place where I feel I can go shopping instead of driving half an hour or 45 minutes away to Lansing or Elmira. Those are the places many people go, at least that I go. I am not going to speak for other people.

If Ithaca does not put those kind of businesses in, I think people will keep going out of town. I mean those stores do well, I think they do a lot of business in area because people drive here from there. Stores here don't draw that much business in. So I do support the development. I am not, I don't know if this is the best thing, though, I think it's not necessarily a bad thing. And I just ask that people that are leading the city to do it carefully and do it smartly. A lot of you are smart people and I think you will do the right thing. But just, you know, be careful. That's
all. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE).

MAYOR COHEN: I think I have 23 and 25 here. If number 24 is here please come forward and bring your slip here. Number 23 is Katherine C. Robertson, City of Ithaca.

KATHERINE ROBERTSON: Hi, I am a homeowner in southside. I am also a small business owner in the City of Ithaca. I think it is a real shame that in the interest of politics, in the interest of keeping this issue black and white, the first speaker was derided for some of things he said. I think this has become a class side debate for people who don't want development or whatever reason and people who want more shopping or more choices, I don't see it.

I don't want more traffic in my neighborhood and I don't approve of gigantic tax abatements for big box retailers.

However, aside from the daily necessities in Ithaca, I spend all my discretionary income out of town. If I have discretionary money, I go to Elmira, I go to Syracuse, because I don't have the choices I need.
of things here in Ithaca as far as shopping. So maybe Ithaca hasn't been, quote, unquote, ruined by big box retailers, maybe that's because people like our first speaker here tonight and people like me spend their money elsewhere at other big box retailers. That's it.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Number 24 is Kristen Solana-Walkinshaw, Town of Ithaca.

KRISTEN SOLANA-WALKINSHAW: Hi. I don't have any statistics or anything like that, I am just a mom and a wife and a pharmacist. And I am, you know, one of the pharmacists at one of those big box places.

But all that aside, I just want to say that one of the things I really love about living in Ithaca is that most of the people that I know think really well about the decisions they make, they think really well about how those decisions affect other people. And it's hard for me, I guess, it's hard for me -- nobody is looking at me. Hi. Are you? I just wanted to make sure I had your attention. I just, I, that's what I want from you guys is to think really well about
these decisions, about the long-term effects that those decisions are going to have.

I am totally for growth, and I want to, but I want to do it smartly, I want to do it in a well thought out manner. We have so much retail space available already. I think we need to be really creative about how we use that space, we need some creativity about how to use the existing space. I think this is an incredibly creative plan that we have, but maybe a little too creative.

And I think I want to share that I come from Houston, Texas. And that's like capital in the United States of traffic, the capital of sprawl, the capital of strip malls, it is also the capital, it has more per capita strip bars than anyplace in the world and I hope that's not where we are headed. You know, I don't want to go there. It's a really ugly city for the most part. And they didn't think about it, they grew really fast and they didn't think really well about it. So you can tell, you can go and see pockets of places that just went up, and, you know, plywood places and they just went up and

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they look ugly. And they cut, they went and clear
cut all the trees, then they put in the mall.
There are some really pretty places there, but
they were well planned communities where they
planned the housing, they planned where the
buildings were going to be, to leave existing
trees and leave existing brush. And my parents
live in a community and the wildlife still comes
through their backyard because of the way the
community was created.

But so anyway, I am going to be
short and just, what I want from you guys is to
renew my hope. I want you to renew my hope that
Ithaca can be different from Houston. That I want
you to think really well. I want you to renew my
hope that elected officials can be different.
Thanks.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: If I can have number
25 in front of us. This is Orrin Dickerson from
city of Ithaca.

ORRIN DICKERSON: Thank you, Mayor
Cohen. Thank you, Council, and thank you fellow
Ithacans for being here for the hearings. I
especially wanted to thank you all for letting us have this forum to talk about what's on our mind.

As I said, my name is Orrin Dickerson. I live here in Ithaca, I own a home in North Aurora Street in the Fall Creek. I work with the city school district, I also earn my money here in Ithaca and I am a registered voter.

I wanted to talk a little bit about my spending patterns when it comes to things like necessities. Food, I do shop in Ithaca for all my groceries. I shop at Greenstar, I shop at Ludgate's, I do shop at Tops and Wegman's. When it comes time to eat out at a restaurant, I am going to going down to Viva. I bank on the Commons as well. My local bank is down there and they have a 24 hour ATM which I really like. I find it is a good value for my money to do those things in town.

Other things I choose to do elsewhere because I deem it a better value for money to go out of town to shop for them. I won't list the many things that I buy in Syracuse or Elmira or Binghamton. I would prefer to buy them here in Ithaca, I regret having to go out of town.

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to get better value for my money by leaving Ithaca
and taking Ithaca money with me.

If there were those stores on the
Commons I would be very happy to walk from my
house downtown and shop there. If there were new
development somewhere in town and a bus that took
me there, I would be happy to take the bus there.
I am not saying I want to drive a car and park in
a huge parking lot. Whatever the City and the
taxpayers and the people who shop will support, I
would be happy to support as well. I think that
many people like myself are already voting with
their money and voting with their feet or their
wheels and leaving town with that money. I think
that the City Council is trying to do what they
think the people would like. I realize that there
are thousands, tens of thousands of people in
town, obviously we are not all here tonight.

But I do think that the election was
a chance for you all to put into action the plans
that you said that you were going to do. Ithaca
is a city, I think Ithaca should acknowledge that
and say if we want to be a city, continue to grow,
we need to let people spend their money here.

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That's all I have to say.

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Is either number 26 or 27 here? Okay, if not then number 28 is Elizabeth Feldman from the City of Ithaca.

ELIZABETH FELDMAN: I want to start out just by saying that this is kind of frustrating, I am really nervous, I have never talked to this many people before, for my big night finally doing it, I wish there were more of you here, I guess that would have made it a little more satisfying, but I will go ahead anyway.

Some other people have come up here tonight and talked about other towns that they have been in or that they grew up in that have been ruined by over-development and by strip malls and by traffic. And I guess I could do that, both of my parents are from New Jersey and left New Jersey as soon as they were old enough and moved to Massachusetts where they now live in a quiet town surrounded by other people from New Jersey. But I don't want to talk about New Jersey.

I would like to talk about a town

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that didn't build huge malls, that didn't allow
Wal-Mart to move in and has no strip mall section,
this is Elmhurst, Massachusetts where I grew up.
Today Elmhurst is a thriving small town surrounded
by universities, filled with natural outdoor
spaces and maintains a vibrant Main Street with
successful independent book stores, clothing
stores, coffee shops, and other retailers.

When I first moved to Ithaca it
surprised me how much Ithaca was like Elmhurst.
It seemed that two towns were really similar.
Most importantly, people love Elmhurst. Young
people move there in search of jobs, college
students remain there after graduation, children
who grew up there really return often to start
families and senior citizens often stick out the
cold weather that we have in Massachusetts just
like in New York rather than moving to Florida. I
love Elmhurst and I would be happy to return there
some day to start my own family.

However, last year I ventured to
Ithaca where I now live and work, and I love it
here. Ithaca is really similar to Elmhurst in a
lot of ways. Yet really quickly I decided that it

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surpasses my own hometown in its sense of community and partnership. Are you typing or are you listening? I am just curious.

MAYOR COHEN: I am doing both actually.

ELIZABETH FELDMAN: Could you listen and not type?

(APPLAUSE)

ELIZABETH FELDMAN: I just -- I worked on writing this.

MAYOR COHEN: Thank you, Elizabeth, please continue.

ELIZABETH FELDMAN: Okay. Please listen.

MAYOR COHEN: It is your time.

ELIZABETH FELDMAN: I am sorry, I think that is really rude. I would like you to stop my time. I really asked you to listen.

So far Ithaca is the only place outside of Elmhurst which I would be happy living out my life. However, I fear and suspect that if Ithaca permits the Southwest area plan to go ahead, it will send the City down a path less like the one Elmhurst has taken and more like the one

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my parents' old New Jersey neighborhood has taken. I foresee a noisier, less centralized, less creative and more mundane town than the one we all now enjoy. If this happens, I will certainly not stay here, and neither will so many others who came here at some point in search of community, stability, open land, beautiful woods and a small town feel that Ithaca now offers.

I would like to ask all of you to think back to the day you decided to live in Ithaca. Ask yourself what were the features that you were attracted to. Why did you stay? I am sure that at that point there was no huge Southwest Land Development because it hadn't happened yet. Now ask yourself if those same features that you liked about Ithaca when you decided to stay will remain intact if the Southwest Park goes ahead. I think that's an important question.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Number 29 is Dan Hoffman, city of Ithaca.

DAN HOFFMAN: Good evening. I have lived in the Ithaca area for over 30 years, before
that I grew up in New Jersey. It gets a little weary having your state picked on all the time. Fact is that New Jersey has learned from its mistakes and is now a leader in smart growth and in restoration of open space. Some have tried to paint the Southwest plan as an either/or, win/lose situation. It doesn't have to be that way. And it doesn't serve our community's interests to perceive it that way. I will get back to that in a minute.

The draft GEIS which I have read through, even though it is couched so as to minimize the apparent impacts of what's clearly the preferred alternative, alternative five which, you know, involves a million square feet of new commercial development, even with that inclination, it's clear from the GEIS that the impacts on Ithaca will be dramatic and far reaching. The impacts on development on that high end of the scale. They include greatly increased traffic up to 50 percent more on streets such as South Albany Street which are already feeling under siege by heavy traffic. Loss of business by existing and locally owned stores. The loss of
significant areas of open space, wildlife habitats and natural assets in the Southwest area. Visual impacts which the GEIS admits cannot be mitigated for the larger scale projects. Unknown municipal costs associated with this development. I believe there will be other significant developments as well which are not adequately addressed in the GEIS, including impacts on air and motor quality, flooding hazards, the impact on the quality of life in nearby neighborhoods, and the quality of the remaining recreational and natural resources in the Southwest area.

In response to the radical scale of the City's proposed plan, some say don't develop at all in the southwest area. The GEIS itself while conceding that 1.25 million square feet of new commercial space is too much and the impacts cannot be satisfactorily mitigated concludes that the impacts of one million square feet of new space are acceptable. Million square feet of new commercial space including 800,000 square feet of new retail is still a huge project with massive impacts on the environment and nearby neighborhoods and the local economy.

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Now City Council understandably wants to encourage new business growth and recreation of new retail opportunities and many people do want new retail activity here. Ultimately, though, the question here should be one of scale and of balance. By opting for one extreme, trying to create a new retail center two or three times as large as the current downtown and filling and developing virtually all the undeveloped parts of the site, except for the substantive parkland, the City would be taking a huge risk in creating a huge risk—opposed to. Some of those impacts are traffic, cost of new infrastructure and service, threat to existing business and the destruction of virtually all the other woods and wetlands in the area.

On the other hand, by doing nothing, the City may forego the opportunity for the attraction of certain kinds of new business and possibly new revenues for the City. Between these two ends of the scale, there is a lot of room, literally 160 acres and a reasonable middle ground possible.

If the issues of appropriate scale
and balancing of variance needs can be addressed rationally by all sides. The key here is careful creative zoning and land use planning. If we can agree, for example, that 700,000 square feet of new development is enough, then the middle ground becomes visible. If it's proven to be safe, we can rezone the entire former city dump area for commercial development and we can have new development in that area. But instead of rezoning all of the original Southwest Park, we can leave the southern half which is filled with wetlands and woodlands as a natural area. We can do the same with the property the City has just built for the extension of Cherry Street Industrial Park, the southern part of which includes wetlands and woodlands that could be preserved.

Essentially what I have described is a reconfigured version of alternative three. And the GEIS provides ample justification for restricting the scope of the new development as I have described. I hope that Common Council will be, will approach this issue very carefully and will look for the middle ground that I have described.

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Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Number 30 is Diane Olden from Danby.

DIANE OLDEN: Hi. My name is Diane Olden. During the break, I just want to tell a little quick story, I think I have the time. I had a little tiff with the mayor about the fact that Council wasn’t here. And I want to apologize to you publicly for losing my temper. One of the things that I feel very frustrated by is not feeling listened to. And it feels the imbalance of power is getting greater and the stakes are so high I just put it to my passion and I do apologize for losing my temper with you.

I am sad that Council isn't here and I really believe that hearing comments is very different than reading the comments. Hearing them from the source and feeling the heart of what is happening here is so vital. Thank you.

So anyway, I am going to address the community here tonight. So thank you all for coming. So I grew up in Trumansburg, so I'm a local, I have sort of, I have longevity. And I
don't want to make that seem like it's more important, but I want to take away one of the potential names that I can be called, you cannot call me a transplant. I lived all over the country, I traveled, I left in 1979, and traveled all over the country, mostly in the west. And I returned in 1985 to make my homeland my home. I saw all sorts of strip mall development. I saw it all over the place and what struck me the most was that we hadn't done that here. And what a powerful thing that is. So I have been, I want to talk particularly tonight about the Widewater site which is now known, I would like to rename it Laurax land. I have been involved with the protection of that land for over, for actually for longer than any of you have been on Council and for longer than you have been the mayor. I would like to point that out. And I want to speak tonight about that land. Tonight you are going to get my heart, you will get my intellect in my written report. So I wrote the following in Redwood Forest when I was in California I stayed in a

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redwood tree for a few days. And what I would
like to do tonight is dedicate that to all the
beings on the land here who make that land their
home. And the trees that have been destroyed and
are slated to be destroyed by that development,
and those trees have been there since before I was
born on this land.

So here is my story. (SINGING):

Out walking quietly in the harvest
moon, I heard a haunting and beautiful tune.
Looking over, I saw a fell tree and walked near a
sister to be. Do you hurt, what can I do I said,
and kneeling began to cry. She said I'm fine,
through all of my years, I surround myself
peacefully to die. But you were cut down I
shouted aloud, don't you hate us for this. Hate
is a human curse she said, but in the earth lies
eternal peace.

Then she said please listen to me,
for my time is passing on. You must help spread
the light we all share, so my spirit may live on.
Dance with life gently she whispered to me, in a
song that was calming and warm. I leave you now
to go back unto my original perfect form. I said

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a prayer and left head down, remembering her
magical sound, and smiling, began to dance so
lightly upon the blessed ground.

Protect that land.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Next speaker is number
31, David Kingsbury from the city of Ithaca.

David.

DAVID KINGSBURY: Good evening.
First I would like to say I agree that it's pretty
outrageous that so few Council members stayed. I
am a local artist, I have been a resident of
Ithaca since 1978. I chose Ithaca because of its
progressive nature and physical beauty. I am
currently involved in three organizations that are
very vital to the unique character of Ithaca. I
am a member and past board member of the Ithaca
Farmers Market, a member of Handwork which
represents 40 smaller locally owned businesses,
and my own business, Turtle Island Pottery. I
list these to demonstrate how much I am involved
with retailing in the City.

I have for 22 years met and
continued to meet thousands of people that come to

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Ithaca to buy and I engage them in conversation. And many say they come to Ithaca because it's so beautiful, it's so unique. But lately I have actually run into people who express concern at what has happened so far on our own Miracle Mile out on Route 13. I just came from a meeting of Handwork where we were unanimous in feeling that the City really should focus more attention on revitalizing downtown.

I am not anti-growth, I actually think humanity is much like wine yeast in that we will keep growing until we choke on our own waste. Growth is inevitable, but let's make it smart, let's slow it down, let's make it in keeping with the unique and beautiful character we already have here but are in danger of losing.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Okay. Number 32 is Tony Ingraham from the Town of Ulysses.

TONY INGRAHAM: My name is Tony Ingraham, I live in the Town of Ulysses, but I have lived in the City of Ithaca and the surrounding area for more than 30 years. The fact that I don't live in the City I hope does not
cause you to discount what I have to say, because I do pay sales tax in the City of Ithaca and will continue to do so. And I am reminded of that old slogan, no taxation without representation. So my comments this evening represent my own opinions and not those of the agency for which I work.

For more than 20 years I have been a professional environmental editor and I am intimately familiar with Buttermilk Falls State Park and the public's use of it. I have a number of points to make regarding the DGEIS. I am very disappointed to see that all of the six alternatives considered in the DGEIS involve location of a huge freestanding discount super store and its associated parking lots directly across the road from Buttermilk Glen.

The DGEIS is lacking in not recognizing the unique aesthetic character of this area by providing other alternatives of a much more conservative nature. Optimally any land use in the Widewater area as we are coming to know it, would be municipal parkland or other uses which would -- or vegetations in the character. This is

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a serious omission in the DGEIS.

The DGEIS alternatives show up to 14 to 16 large retail stores in the study area. Therefore, there are numerous alternatives in the rest of the study area in Southwest Park for the super store being constructed right now across from Buttermilk Falls. The Widewaters store is being built in the most environmentally sensitive and controversial portion of the entire study area. If it must be built, there is plenty of room for it elsewhere in the plan and it should be moved.

The DGEIS both undercounts the number of relevant views and the amount of time visitors can be expected to linger at them in Buttermilk Falls State Park. The DGEIS discusses visual impacts of the alternatives proposed labeling a view from the gorge trail in Buttermilk Falls State Park as key view V-1. This view is next to Buttermilk Falls itself, and is a significant place for visitors to catch their breath on the steep ascent of the gorge trail. It is also the best location for park naturalists leading groups to stop to interpret the glacial
history of the Cayuga Valley and the formation of
the falls themselves. Degradation of the
aesthetic quality of this view will result in the
damaging of an important educational resource of
the park.

Key view V-1 has a grandstand view
of the Widewaters footprint pad for its impeding
mystery super store. I have been up there in the
park and I have photographed it and I can vouch
for that. Shortly up the trail is a second
outstanding view of the valley at an overlook
established by running defense to the gorge rim
above the falls. The Widewater store location is
placed squarely in this view. The aesthetic charm
of this and V-1 are already ruined by the
construction operations underway.

There are other views in the park
that may be affected by the construction of the
super store. There is a view along the rim trail
that should be evaluated and there is a view along
the road to the campground that should be
evaluated.

So including only one view from the
park in the DGEIS is inadequate and underestimates

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the effect of the six alternatives upon the park's view shed.

There are other aesthetic impacts in the park that are not addressed in the DGEIS currently, noise from traffic and commercial activity on Elmira Road can be heard well up into the gorge above the falls along the gorge trail. Surely the 764 trips per hour at peak times by vehicles into and out of the Widewaters store site will significantly increase noise pollution in the gorge, damaging the very qualities for which the trail was constructed, certainty, tranquility and pleasureless beauty.

Second, noise from Elmira, noise can already be heard in the campground by overlooks the side. Increased traffic, turning, stopping, acceleration, deceleration, honking will surely increase the noise pollution in the campground from all the development site alternatives. Noise impacts will continue into the night in the campground as may light pollution along the road to the campground and in the west end of the campground itself. These impacts have not been evaluated.

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Finally the cumulative aesthetic
impacts of increased noise, visual pollution and
traffic will combine significantly to degrade the
overall feeling that visitors will have when they
come to the park. The waterfall and the gorge and
forest beyond provide a healing refuse for the
public escaping for a short while from the
hurriedness, clamor and stress and visual
pollution of everyday life in an urban
environment. Buttermilk Falls is a priceless
resource for the public, psychological, physical
and spiritual health.

MAYOR COHEN: Number 33 is Mary
Hegarty, city of Ithaca.

MARY HEGARTY: Hi. If I could kind
of repeat and say I grew up in Westchester County
and the land that I grew up in is now corporate
park. And it really breaks my heart and I could
come into the passionate emotional side of it, but
it's kind of been repeated a few times just about
how Ithaca is different and why I am here is
because it's different. And one of the things
that restored my hope in humanity, I heard on MPR
this amazing report that the government, I think
it was of Iceland or Greenland, I don't remember exactly, actually listened to its citizens and believed that they actually believe in little people and that development couldn't happen because they believed in fairies and little people. And I was like, oh my God, their government actually listened to them. And believed them. Maybe they didn't believe them, but honored their belief system and there is no development on this particular area that was considered very fragile and important to the little people. So that's just to say that that was for me some hope for government and humanity and citizens to interface.

When I looked through the DGEIS briefly, I was really amazed at the scale of it, very shocked. I have a bunch of proposals in writing, probably won't get them in, I definitely think it is too large. Alternative two and three are smaller but again too large. With Internet commerce rising I think the big box retail shopping is definitely going to decrease and I think it is going to be obsolete. I suggest that building A not happen at all, and to leave that
land alone as a flood plain because it is
important to watershed management.

Mixed use definitely should be
considered. Alternative two had the most mixed
use. I am recommending more. Some retail, I
recommend technology, computer companies, light
industry. I am recommending a nature center or
something, a water museum or Finger Lakes museum
or center or winery info center or museum perhaps
in conjunction with ecosystem that's happening on
Stewart Park. This is exciting to me. I think
from my knowledge, I don't think there is actually
a Finger Lakes museum, like this is an amazing
place that we live in, beautiful. And maybe I am
wrong, there might be a Finger Lakes museum. But
people, tourists could come, first stop Ithaca,
New York, check out, get their bearings and talk
about, it could be an amazing project. It could
either be a focus on water, it could be a focus on
the wineries, we could get into the history of
it. It could be a very really exciting project
that could bring in jobs, bring in creativity,
bring in tourism, and really accent our natural
beauty. So this idea, this could attract schools

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from all over, much like the Science Center does and it could attract tourism.

Some other for the mixed use I would like to see some residential. I would like to see a community center. I don’t know if you notice, but our community seems really segregated. I don’t know if this would do it, but perhaps a community center would get more cultures interfacing and together and working towards a common goal. So those are the mixed use. I have a few other ideas but I won’t get into all of them.

Another point I have is I have a major concern about the destruction of wetlands in the flood plain as has been said already tonight, more pavement causes silt and toxins to just run-off into the flood channel. It is definitely going to lower our water quality. Our drinking water comes from the lake and what’s one of our main tourist attractions is our amazing lake and the gorge.

So my question is: Do we want to further jeopardize this by lowering the water quality at the mouth of the Cayuga Lake? And
lowering the water quality of the entire lake eventually.

So in closing consider, Council, and, Mayor, please, heavily the long-term, rather than the short-term. I think some people shop in Elmira and Waterloo to go to the outlet malls, I hear different people talking differently tonight. But my, I shop almost predominantly here in Ithaca. Sometimes I go out to Syracuse because I want to get out of town. You know, I think that's inevitable that people shop elsewhere sometimes because, you know, you want a different scenery, you want to get out of town, you take a drive. I really don't, I don't know why in Ithaca we need to attract shoppers mainly. I don't think that is what we are about. People come to Ithaca for unique small stores.

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

FAY GOUGAKIS: I choose this one because I wanted to be more closer to the audience.

MAYOR COHEN: This is Fay Gougakis, City of Ithaca. Thank you, Fay.

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FAY GOUGAKIS: Thank you. Good evening everybody. I am actually going to speak tomorrow, I wasn't prepared to speak tonight. I was just going to come and listen. But because I am allowed to speak again tomorrow I have a few thoughts that I wanted to share with everybody tonight.

Number one is we talk about honesty, and, Mayor Cohen, you said that in your statement to the City as well as Council, and my concern with all of what's happening is I don't think you are being honest with the community. And I will tell you why I feel you are not being honest because for one the whole purpose we're here tonight is because of that statement, the DGEIS. We were supposed to wait for that to come out before any development to start. And yet you had Widewater out there cutting trees and putting fill in. I call that dishonest. I call that ...

(APPLAUSE).

I call that deceiving this community. The rezoning, the tax abatements, that restaurant in Interlyon, I hope all of you come out for those public meetings starting with next

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Wednesday, they want a tax abatement, okay, but I am not going to talk about that tonight.

The things that are going on are fast tracked, they are going as fast as they can go, and I find that very secretive and I find that very deceiving to this community. And what's pulling that I think are a lot of private interests, I don't know who's going to get the pay off, we could only suspect. Okay. Is that the whole driving issue here is the taxes, we want to lower taxes? Is this development going to lower taxes? Why do we have to develop the whole plot of land out there? Why do we have to do it so fast? We are going to be here, folks, for a long time hopefully. Hopefully we won't blow ourselves up.

Again, I wasn't ready to speak tonight, but one of the other things that bothers me is the labeling. Even on your show, on Simm you lie, I sit there and I watch it and there is Barbara Rosnossis (ph), the usual suspects are going to show up at the meeting, right, Allen, the usual suspects, I am one of them. Okay. Is it right to call people concerned about their

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community the usual suspects? No, I don't think so. They care, they care just as much as the people who are sitting home and looking at the majority here, the same thing with Wal-Mart. The majority here are people who don't want to trample over the land, okay.

Now granted, granted I ran for Council, okay. Granted development is going to happen. I am not saying not for it to happen. But it's got to happen right. And it's not happening right and it's happening dishonestly. And that's what really bothers me. And that whole piece of land and Buttermilk Falls which we prize, and I prize and all of us prize, and we are going to just trample it with a huge big box that's already started, mind you it already started and this city, maybe could get away, you think you could get away. No, this city will not allow you to get away with what you did, with allowing that soil to go on and those trees to be cut off.

DAVID GALLAHAN: You will be sued.

FAY GOUGAKIS: Okay. But to label us oh it's those environmentals again, they are going to destroy our development. No, there is
such a thing, Mr. Cohen, as appropriate
development and that's not what's happening. The
abatement, the tax abatements, that's not fair.
So until you do things fair, I cannot trust you.
You have lost my trust with this kind of
development. Okay.

(APPLAUSE).

Have you considered, if you have
children, let's say if you have children, Mr.
Cohen, okay, what will your children see in 50
years from now? Okay. What kind of Ithaca are
they going to see? Okay. But unfortunately you
have a Common Council that agrees with you time
and time again. Okay. I want, I challenge you,
where are they anyway? Be nice if they were
here. One or two days out of the year for an
important meeting, they should have been here. I
am sorry.

(APPLAUSE).

And you shouldn't be typing, you
shouldn't be typing. You can put, close your
computer for two nights. Okay. And listen to
these people. Because you know why, you know why,
you are not listening to people. You are not.

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You are listening to your developers and you are listening to your agenda. How many people voted in this community, 4,000 out of the 40,000 that live here. That's not enough for me. Okay.

MAYOR COHEN: Thank you, Fay. The next speaker.

(APPLAUSE).

MAYOR COHEN: Number 35 -- number 36 please come forward. Saraina Monoblossom, city of Ithaca. What town do you live in?

SARAINA MONOBLOSSOM: Caroline.

That was one passionate thing Fay just did. Sorry I can't really follow-up with that one, but I will do my best.

First of all, I love Ithaca as much as anybody else in this room and hopefully as much as you do if you live here. Occasionally I go to Elmira, I go to Cortland, Binghamton. I say thank God Ithaca is not Cortland and not Binghamton, it is not that developed.

(APPLAUSE).

The big businesses that you are talking about bringing in do not care about this community. This community cares about itself. If
you bring them in they stay for what, 20, 30, what
maybe 40 years. They don't bring in good jobs,
they don't bring in lasting jobs. They bring in
cheap labor that people has a high turnover rate.
And when they leave they don't care what state
they leave this place in. They can leave it
deserted as a ghost town and it doesn't matter to
them because they made big profit.

And there is no shame truthfully in
saying that you had a bad idea and that you backed
out of it.

(APPLAUSE).

But what I do think is important is
that we have businesses here, family business,
people who stay here that care about this area.
You should consider putting more money into them
and doing more stuff like Greenstar, they have a
community that cares about it. I do believe that
not every place, every piece of land that doesn't
have a house, a road going through it, or a store
is going to waste. I believe it's meant to be
that we leave some places alone.

Maybe that place in Southwest Park
is to be left alone. There are plenty of other
places that are already developed that you could
put, place this into. You could do better stores,
K-Mart is not a high quality store, neither is
Wal-Mart. I believe that bigger is not
necessarily better. And growth should not mean
destruction.

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE).

MAYOR COHEN: Number 38 is Nancy
Manos from Dryden.

NANCY MANOS: I didn't really come
prepared to speak this evening. I think you are a
little bit outnumbered, if you still have the same
position you had coming in. I am very puzzled by
a couple things.

One I am puzzled about the decision
to allow fill in the absence of a plan and to make
the decision sort of when everybody is getting
ready for the holidays and nobody is paying
attention and there is no opportunity to comment.
There are serious issues involved in putting lots
and lots of cubic yards of fill in a marsh. I
mean there are serious, serious issues.

I am also concerned about the

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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 maining, plowing, those things? I don't know.

In terms of what I guess is a public perception here about being listened to, I am reminded, must be 35 years ago, I was a participant in an Army Corps of Engineers hearing about a proposal to build a Hudson River Expressway down in Westchester County. The Corps of Engineers sat patiently through 40 witnesses. 39 statements were against the project, one statement was in favor of the project. The next morning the colonel who conducted the hearing left for Washington from LaGuardia airport with a grocery cart full of documents that were all pieces of testimony, he basically on the plane drafted a recommendation that the project be approved. Needless to say we were a little surprised at why we bothered to go out. I will also say that the Hudson River Expressway does not exist.
Thank you.

MAYOR COHEN: Speaker number 39 is David Colt from the city of Ithaca.

DAVID COLT: Actually I am like the discomforted New Jersey, are you from my hometown Paramus? Anyway, unlike you, I am rather glad to see the reduced approaching negligible presence of Council and the attention of his Honor the mayor approaching zero because we need a few visual ideas, as the editors say, to remind us that we are on our own here if we intend to save our town. So as, I am going to cheat the angles here because these minds we know are closed. What these minds may do, because may be still connected to their muscles, interests me.

In fact when I think about it, I feel sort of like that-- that's to remind you that you are the people that interest me. So we are going to cheat the angles here.

I reminisce my box of deities which are sawed-off shotguns three minutes -- people who know me know. Like the poor staffing guys in Africa, that's terrible. I thought instead of any of that I am going to try, even within the five
minute frame, a parable, I think there is a parable which is largely to the point.

Judge says, Mr. X, can you account for your behavior? Guy says, Judge, as a child I played the violin, the other children shunned me, but I followed my star and I studied every day. The group of toughs called Legs O'Donnell and the dead man's lot gang, is that better than Southwest Park, dead man's lot gang, put out the word that if they ever caught me on their turf they would beat me silly. So I stayed away from dead man's lot.

One winter evening I was hurrying home, I had studied late and I knew my mother would be worried. So I took the shortcut across dead man's lot. Halfway across I looked up and there was O'Donnell and his gang. They said they were going to beat me. I felt that if I was going to get a beating I would take it for that in which I believed. So I took out my violin and played. I played as I had never played before. And when I had finished, I looked up, prepared to take my medicine and I found that I was alone.

Many years later I was taking a cab.
through Midtown and I passed by the artists entrance of Lincoln Center -- that's capital country, capital of Manhattan County -- artists entrance of Lincoln Center and I saw several men who looked familiar and I asked the cabby if he knew who those men were. He said they were the Juilliard String Quartet. I paid off the cab and I stepped out on the sidewalk. I stared at them. The Juilliard String Quartet were no other than Legs O'Donnell and the dead man's lot gang.

It became clear to me that my playing for them on that cold December night had turned them from a certain life of crime, present company excepted of course, a certain life of crime and had inspired them to become the most accomplished string musicians in the world. I drew nearer to them, and I saw recognition come into their faces. And then they beat the shit out of me.

Now it behooves us to recognize that we are not going to turn the dead man's lot game into the Juilliard String Quartet, the leopard will not change his spots, no matter how sweetly we play our violin and how deeply and passionately

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we tell moving stories. These people are committed to a certain mode of life, and the prizes thereof.

If like me you have a haunting nagging nostalgic superstition that there might be more to a town than a shopping strip, because to me there may be more to life than buying stuff, an old fashioned idea, but then I remember when Paul Ribson (ph) was the first Jewish mayor of Paramus. You probably don't. Anyway, something so important that Aristotle thought -- which does not mean anthropologists zoom in on the voting booth. Means that human beings like to hang out and be townies. If you feel that way, then before you leave this room you make sure the young lady with the typing -- where have you gone Charlotte? Well, the old fellow with the tiger spirit and the tiger hall -- make sure we have you on our yellow legal pad or I will take it on the fly in here, because we are not going to take it lying down, being paved over and submitted, submerged under this sea of vomit. It is us that has to rise up off our butt and do something.

(APPLAUSE)

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MAYOR COHEN:  Number 40 is Erica VanEtten, city of Ithaca.

ERICA VANETTEN:  Hi. My name is Erica. I am a lifelong resident of Tompkins County and hope to continue to be so if it's still a place that I really passionate and feel like I have a responsive community to live in. I worked for local business and I am presently self-employed.

What I want to talk about tonight is local businesses and long-term businesses and what I have seen as being a social and economic infrastructure that they waived in the community. It goes far beyond the products that they sell on a given day, a given week, a given trend. 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 webbing 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. Also long-term
businesses, local businesses have a personal
rather than a corporate relationship to our
community as many people have already talked
about. And they also have the power, because they
are a small locally owned, the power and the
flexibility to respond to the needs of the
community. They can't just say, well, my
supervisor isn't working this week, or I don't
have that kind of control, the decisions are made
in Atlanta. They can make the decisions here.
Which is why I really value the local and the
long-term committed businesses in our community.
So let's look at the plans and the
amount of retail space that's allotted in these
plans which some of the numbers run about twice
the amount of space there already is in the town.
And I would attest that this is beyond low income
shopping alternatives like K-Mart, and that type
of need based shopping, and these boxes are going
to be filled, must be planned to be filled by
specialty stores, such as specialty camping stores
or book stores or, you know, those kind of natural
food stores, whatever, chain stores. And those
are going to be competing directly against our
local businesses. It's not a matter of a local business can't own a K-Mart, these are going to be directly competing against like Cayuga Mountain Bike Shop that does work in the community. Or other local specialty stores.

So people have come here and said they go to other communities to shop. I think that's great information.

So let's find out, well, what are they looking for, they are not going to other communities probably just to go to K-Mart, they are going to the special kind of shopping, I don't know what they are going for exactly, that's great information and let's use that information to support our local communities to meet that market. Then we can have that same shopping down here. Instead of rolling over and shooting our local community and all the people involved in that in the foot.

So this is really a big piece of land that we are talking about. And all the plans that we, that are on the table don't, are very not creative, are very much just rolling over and saying, oh, just bring in something that's maybe
20 percent better than what we have. Instead of taking that land and we have a whole, we have a whole community of committed and caring and creative people, creative citizens.

And I would like to see long-term planning, looks beyond this big box trend that who knows how long it will last, and reflects the diverse interests. And I am just one and there is more here and there is many more diverse interests not here tonight. And I don't think the plans we have reflect the diverse interests of our community, not just my interests, but the diverse interests and the multi-level interests and the trickle down interests.

So I would like the plans we have, I would like to return to the drawing board, come up with some more, have some honest public discussion and some thoughtful plans played out in front of us.

Thank you.

MAYOR COHEN: Number 42, Elan Schapiro from the Town of Ithaca.

ELAN SCHAPIRO: I came here only three years ago for the same reasons that so many
people have stated. My remarks will be brief because I feel like people who have been here a lot longer and whose commitment has been long-term have spoken so well that I really don't want to repeat the beautiful words that have been spoken. You will notice I am trying to speak to the audience and speak to the Council and the Mayor because I think my biggest concern right now is that we really look for middle way, we find a way to find a path that honors the people who feel like their shopping needs are not being adequately met, and honors the creativity of this town and the need that we have to me serve its unique character.

It's so easy to fall back into the kind of polarization that it's easy to experience here. We know that's not going to get us to where we all need to go. Somehow or another we got to maintain a tone that looks for diversity, a reasonable scale, a sense of dialogue, a sense of trust. I am not being mamby pamby about this. I think that sense of trust has to be earned. There is a reason why there is so much rancor in this room right now. Nonetheless, I think we all owe
it to ourselves to maintain dignity and respect for each other. I would like to try to do that, continue to do that with Mayor and Common Council. And I would like everyone else here to realize it is our sacred job to treat everyone with respect and I understand that we all have a reason for our perspectives and that we have to honor them.

The main point I think that is coming from the smart development crowd, and I am certainly one of them, is that we have such amazing strength here that if we support those strengths and build them, we will create a place that is thriving economically and that is beautiful to be in. We have such charm, such natural resources, such creativity in the arts, such educational resource here, such a strong tourism place, that if we design it in our own terms in a way that's uniquely within our character, we will build a strong, durable economic base that could leave room for people who want to have less expensive shopping, but at a scale that's dramatically less huge than the one that's being called for here.

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The key point I want to make again is that what's really the problem to me is the erosion of trust that has happened by the way the process has occurred. We really need to address that.

(APPLAUSE)

Even if the majority of people strongly wanted this Council and strongly wanted this mayor, if there is a 30 or 40 percent smart-growth crowd or anti-development crowd or however they are labeled, if those people become more and more infuriated and more and more insulted, it is going to really hurt any development that anyone has here. So we have to work on careful truth of each other and careful dialogue at a level that is really not happening right now.

Thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Number 43 is Joan Bokaer, Town of Ithaca:

JOAN BOKAER: Okay. First of all, I don't know if I -- can you hear me? I am a little uncomfortable, there is this dichotomy, and I feel
like you are getting a lot of insults hurled at
you and then a lot of applauding, I don't know, I
am feeling uncomfortable. So I want to say that
here, like cause I am about to say some things
that will be difficult for them to hear and I
don't want you applauding, because it is really
important to me and I don't want you diminishing
it.

I also share with a lot of people
here a sense of desperation and tremendous sadness
because, and I know you are really well meaning, I
have certainly spoken with you, I have spoken with
you, Susan, and you are good people. And I am
really, I have this horrible feeling that you are
destroying our city. And I think that's what is
coming through. And I don't want it to come
through in a way that just makes you defensive or
makes you want to just dismiss everyone here.
Because there are some very thoughtful people.

And before I get into what I really
want to say, I also want to point out January 1st
in the New York Times, there was an article about
how the big malls at the edge of cities or near
cities all over the country are dying. And the

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I just want to point out a series of events, the sequence that has me very disturbed. May 19, the CNH Engineers that were hired by Widewaters to do a Phase II investigation listed the intended use of the property, and that was a 200,000 square foot shopping center with adjacent parking. That was listed on May 19 by the engineers of Widewater.

On July 2nd, Rick Eckstrom, the building commissioner, refused a fill permit application to this group based on, I imagine their intended use.

Shortly thereafter Rick Eckstrom was very strangely suspended. It just seemed so strange at the time I couldn't figure out why all the sudden he was suspended.

Four, October 24, Widewater rescheduled, or resubmits their application. Now in the meantime an acting building commissioner
was appointed, the City attorney issued an opinion
to this acting building commissioner saying
Widewater didn't need an environmental review
because they didn't know their intended use.

Six, November 12, after the
election, the issue for a fill permit, I mean the
fill permit was issued, very quickly, very
quietly.

And then December 31st, the acting
building commissioner resigns and today now, I
maybe have that number wrong, I may have that date
wrong, but it doesn't negate the series of events
I am describing.

Now you drive down 13 and there is
this massive thing right across from Buttermilk
that just happened so quickly, it just happened.

So I think, I would like to see
these, the sequence of events addressed. I hope
it isn't what it looks like here. I hope for you,
Alan, it isn't what it looks like here. But you
know. That's all.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: 44 is Jody Kessler,
city of Ithaca.
JODY KESSLER: Thank you. I am
going to read some excerpts from a letter that I
will be submitting to the City.

I live on Hillview Place, just a few
blocks from The Commons. Over the past few years
I have seen a very disturbing trend in the
business climate of this community. In
particular, I have noticed that more and more
large, big box chain stores have sprung up along
Route 13, whereas The Commons has had an
increasing number of vacant storefronts.

I am concerned that our beautiful
city is losing its unique charm, as the area that
once served as the hub of the community slowly
succumbs to the ravages of large scale retailers.
As a property owner, I am concerned about how this
trend will affect the value of my property if the
downtown area continues to deteriorate.

And other people have commented on
my concern about the money being drawn away from
local businesses. So I won't read that part.

I fail to see how this type of
massive retail development that you are proposing
could possibly help The Commons. I feel that the

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needs of downtown and local businesses are being ignored in favor of large national and multi-national corporations that are not necessarily concerned with the best interests of our community.

And other people have very eloquently addressed the traffic issues so I won't talk about that. But I will say that there is no calculation made in the GEIS for the effect that this increased traffic may have on emergency services. But it is obvious that congested roadways will cause delays in the response time of police, fire fighters and EMTs and other emergency vehicles.

The promotion of tourism is an essential way that we can increase revenue in the area. It seems ironic to me that a city that aims to attract tourists with slogans like Ithaca is Gorges, would build a massive unattractive chain store directly across from Buttermilk Falls State Park. There is no doubt that the noise, traffic and visual pollution from this monstrosity will negatively affect tourism in one of our areas most beautiful natural resources.

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One way to attract tourism is to create a vibrant, rich, downtown area that has unique character and charm. I believe that visitors do not want to vacation in areas that are characterized by strip malls that contain the same stores that they can find in every other city, and they don't want to be greeted by congested roads as they enter Ithaca. They want to enjoy the relaxed atmosphere and local flavor that The Commons can offer. Tourists also want to enjoy the magnificent beauty of our state parks, as well as the striking natural areas that we have within our City, such as Cascadilla gorge and Ithaca Falls.

A healthy and vibrant downtown area that is culturally rich, eclectic, inviting to pedestrians, aesthetically pleasing and economically thriving is what gives the community its heart and soul. It has the ability to serve as the hub of the community, the cultural core, and a gathering place with local residents, visitors and students can intermingle, and is easily accessible to those who prefer to walk or don't have vehicles.
I urge the City to reconsider its current plan to develop Southwest Park, and instead put its energy into revitalizing the downtown area, utilizing the already existing infrastructure.

In closing, I must mention my feelings of dismay and outrage at the way the City has handled or mishandled the area across from Buttermilk Falls State Park. Some very disturbing questions come to mind regarding this issue.

One: Why was this decision made behind closed doors without informing the public about the city's plan for the use of that land?

Two: Why is construction being done on a flood plain, posing risk to adjacent homes and natural wetlands?

Three: Why was the construction project done before the completion of an environmental impact statement?

Four: Why did the mayor not mention plans for that area before the November election?

(APIEAUSE)

Five: Why was the sale of this land approved when the majority of the people at the
public hearing spoke out against it? Let's hope there is not a repeat of that here. Why are we not being told outright about the specific plans for that parcel of land?

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that the mayor and his supporters on Common Council clearly did not want a replay of what happened a few years ago when Wal-Mart wanted to build a store on that same site. The City knew there would again be a public outcry, so they chose to push the deal through behind closed doors, (during the busy holiday season when people were preoccupied with other concerns), without informing the citizens of its plans.

In my opinion, this type of exclusivity and secrecy is shameful, and I cannot, in good conscience, allow this development to proceed without putting up a fight.

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Our next speaker is Marion Deats, city of Ithaca.

MARION DEATS: I live on Spencer Road. There is a fair percentage of people in the
audience tonight who are my neighbors on Spencer Road. And living on Spencer Road I can talk about -- oh, I just noticed I am supposed to be at podium one. The focus of this isn't, it's not necessary to focus on my neighborhood, on Spencer Road and my neighborhood being Buttermilk Park where I walk all the time.

Everything that I had jotted down as notes to say tonight to address has already been addressed. I just want to add my voice to many of the issues that have been said tonight.

I also have some images that play in my mind, images of the past and images of the future, images of the past, not too very long ago, 1996 I believe it was, when our back yards flooded in Spencer Road and when we were scooping up carp out of our back yards and taking them to Buttermilk, carp. When we were canoeing on the parking lot of K-Mart, literally, you know, taking inflatable rafts in April I think it was and canoeing.

I am very concerned, if that situation happened, what the implications would be without, with paving that entire area over.

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Another image I have in the past is that horrific Ann Page I believe development it is in Elmira. Every time I drive down Route 13 and I see this acres and acres of ghost town, does everybody know what I am talking about? That's a scary image to me. It has been said tonight four times I think about the future of big box commerce. What's going to happen to our park 20 years from now? Is it going to look like Ann Page? I mean that's kind of a nightmare scenario.

I can't deny that I go to Syracuse occasionally, I go to Carousel Mall myself to shop, it's fun to get out of Ithaca. The world is full of variety and variation, so be it. It's great, but do we have the market here to support something even close to that? I mean who would come here? Population wise it is just infeasible to think we have the population who would frequent a place like that. Who is going to come? People from Elmira? Arnot Mall. Who is the projected market for this scale of development?

The other point I want to make is the theme that we hear tonight, it's a sizeable

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majority of us, it's a characteristic of our community, it cannot be denied, it's a quality of our community in Ithaca. It's something, something to hear, something to listen to.

Other than that I think everything I have been thinking of saying has already been said. Thanks for listening. I agree, I think I have had dialogue with several people I am talking to right now. I think that we are reasonable people. And I hope that we can keep our minds open and try to go through this one intelligently.

Thank you.

MAYOR COHEN: We will take a five to ten minute break for our reporter.

(RECESS TAKEN)

MAYOR COHEN: We are ready to start with number 47. This is number 47, Eric Skalwold, City of Ithaca.

ERIC SKALWOLD: Okay. I am not nearly as knowledgeable on the issues as people who have been speaking before me. So I will take very little time with my comments. One thing I do know is that people who care about the

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environment, people who are worried about the rain forests being cut down, to not fill in a wetland with a bunch of dirt. And I will join the people who may be suing to have that stopped or removed.

Speaking of what's going on across from Buttermilk, we have, there are a number of issues that need to be addressed before we think about development. One of the things is we have gotten all but vital downtown and its rental practices of one or two landlords that keep it from being a vital downtown. Nothing has been done in the past several years, even though there has been some talk about what to do about it.

We need to fix what's broke before we try and create something new. The way to fix it is with zoning ordinances and with taxation. We can settle taxation so that will make it so it isn't profitable for Jason Fane to keep rental property empty.

Before going any further with this big box development, it would be nice if we got the situation right. If we are going to do development, we need to see what's going on in the world. And if you do, you will notice that big

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box development is as passe as downtowns.

If we are going to do something, do what's on the cutting edge of development. What's on the cutting edge of development is to recreate the charm that downtowns have, to recreate the charm that Ithaca has, to recreate the charm that people like myself drive 40 and more miles to commute outside of town to bring our income back to this town because it's a wonderful place to live.

The charm of this city has a value beyond the personal value to me and other people who live in it. For you people to think about ruining it is despicable. You need to get on a bus, all of you, and you need to go to Geneseo where I did my graduate work, it was a charming beautiful town. It had been destroyed by big box development. All the charm and the downtown are now gone. That's what will happen to Ithaca if you continue with this big box development.

You haven't analyzed the financial effects of destroying what is essentially Ithaca and you certainly haven't looked into the kind of development that if you are going to develop you
should develop in something that will tie in with the community. We already have a downtown we already have. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Is number 48 here?

Number 49 is Daniel Cogan from Enfield.

DANIEL COGAN: Hi, my name is Daniel Cogan. I do live in Enfield now but I have lived in the City of Ithaca for most of the time I have been in Ithaca which I moved here in 1992. Again, I moved here because Ithaca was such a special place. I have a background in engineering, I have a master degree from Cornell in environmental engineering and I am currently a computer programmer. I tell you that because the reason I am a computer programmer and not an engineer is because I didn't like the fact that engineering was mostly about making assumptions and then calling it an answer.

Now, you have in front of you a $300,000 document that was produced by engineers. And it's full of assumptions and those assumptions basically tell you what you want to hear. Now you have had a lot of people come up tonight and

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attest to the fact that there is not enough retail
in Ithaca. So the problem is now we need to
quantify that. So what do we do? We go to census
data and we go to Clartos who provides the
statistics that are useful for that. And then we
try to show that, yes, indeed, there is a huge
untapped potential.

The problem is if you look at the
data that's shown, it turns out that there is more
retail spending in the 15 mile radius of Ithaca
which is Tompkins County than the people here are
spending. So, therefore, we think, huh, well,
that doesn't really show what we need to know.
For instance, on page 216 it says that the total
retail spending in 1997 was 613 million dollars.
Well, that's actually for the 14850. ... 775
million dollars of retail sales and only 602
million dollars of retail spending. So,
therefore, people are obviously coming in here to
spend money and they are not all spending it
elsewhere.

We do know people are going
outside. So what do we do? Well, we decide we
have to increase what we consider our sales area.

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So let's increase it to 30 mile radius which includes 80 percent of Chemung County, 80 percent of Tioga County, all of Schuyler County, half of Cortland County. And we will say, well, people will come here from those areas, people who will come here from Cortland and people will come here from Elmira and Horseheads and Owego. But then we are going to make an assumption, well, only half of those people will come here and then that will be more reasonable. We will make another assumption there. So then suddenly if we made those assumptions we can suddenly say, well, there is a huge untapped market of 500 million dollars that we can tap into.

Now I was making some assumptions today and I was looking, okay, well, this room here I figure is about 75 feet by, here I wrote it all done, 75 feet by 40 feet. So that's 3,000 square feet, there is about 150 people in this room. That's one person every 20 square feet. So let's build more meeting rooms and so if we built 800,000 square feet of meeting rooms and we figure there is about one person every 20 square feet that is going to be 40,000 people coming out to
our public hearings. Unfortunately, that's unreasonable. The population of Ithaca is only 30,000 people.

Let's make an assumption of five percent of the people who live in New York State will also come. That increases it to 90,000 people. So now suddenly we have 90,000 people plus the 30,000 people in Ithaca. I think we can reasonably assume we are going to get 40,000 people out at our next public hearing in our meeting room.

Now I want to tell the story about what happens to me when I get hungry. When I get hungry I don't pay very good attention to what's going on, I don't think very clearly, and I usually make way too much food because I am starving you see. So now I think we can say that Ithaca is hungry, and, you know, it's obvious that, you know, the revenues are flat and we need some new revenue.

But I think we maybe are a little over hungry here. We are biting off way more than we can chew. I think what we need to do is take a step back, have a little snack. And then after we

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do that we can think a little more clearly and we
can realize, well, maybe a million square feet of
new commercial space is a little more than we
need. I think we could probably get by with, ah,
something a little bit more modest and not cause
all these problems.

I think it is interesting that
alternative six, the traffic impacts are
unmitigatable. Well, that's pretty strong, so
let's drop back to alternative five which we can
just barely mitigate those impacts. I think that
shows right there that we are bucking up against
the wall of what's mitigatable. And I think we
need to drop back even further.

Thanks.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Number 50 is Chris C.
Bobrowich, from the city of Ithaca. Thank you,
Chris.

CHRIS BOBROWICH: Okay. As you
said, I am a resident of the City and I have been
now for ten years. I very much love living here
and hope to continue to live here.

However, I have some concerns about

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the possible negative changes that would come
with, in regards with the quality of life in this
community because of the size of the proposed plan
that we are speaking about.

Before I continue along those lines, though, I would like to say that I do think that
there are stores and businesses that are needed in this city, especially since Woolworth's closed its
doors. There are many people in this community that afford, need those types of places to buy
from, they cannot afford more expensive stores. However, I am not sure that the size of the plan
being promoted would be the best for improving the quality of life in our community.

In that regards and as well as in other regards, I have some personal experience regarding this that I would like to share with you. I don't know if anybody has spoken to this so I will go on with it. I grew up in Staten Island, New York during the '50s and '60s. It was during this time that the Arizona bridge was built. The bridge was the first to join Staten Island to the rest of New York City. It was expected to cause many people to move on to Staten
Island because of easier access to the rest of the City and it did. One half of -- which is fine. One half to -- however, it's the way in which development was completed that created some problems.

One half to one mile from my house lay a considerable stretch of swamp land that divided my community from the beach. Once the bridge was built and people started to move in, a considerable amount of this land was filled in so that many homes could be built because there really weren't many other places to build homes. At least not on that end of the island which is closest to the bridge. Many homes were built, and closely together so that little swamp land was left to soak up the rains. Prior to this my parents' home did not have problems with flooding however, following this large scale construction, my parents' house as well as my neighbors and surrounding streets had frequent problems with flooding.

As a current resident of Ithaca I am very concerned that the amount of development being looked at in an area of our city that seems
to act in a similar way to the swamps of my childhood home will do the same, that is create flooding far beyond what is believed possible. And based on the previous speaker and his comment about assumptions, I have to question how much we do know would be the impact of that on the land from the city.

Now the next point I wanted to make was about the traffic. And I know a lot of people have spoken to that. I would like to repeat it, though, because it just makes the point. How many times must history repeat itself before we learn from its mistakes? The costs of the increase in traffic and the problems that that brought, pollution, noise pollution, delays on roads that weren't built for such traffic.

This is one of the reasons why me and many of my childhood friends left Staten Island. I mean there certainly were others, but that was a good part of it, it affected the quality of life. I don't think this would have happened if the government had the insight to look at the impact of what could happen, not just into the immediate future, but into the future of the
children and beyond that, and make a plan based on those things. Which is something I am not sure we are doing here given a lot of the comments that were made.

There are related reasons, one was a lack of attention to providing services such as adequate bus service, is that going, is that addressed? As our elected officials, I hope you consider the impact that such changes may have on our community. How will this affect the homeowners that remain, will they stay or go? Is it something worth taking a chance on?

On a personal note I was recently told that the citizens of Vestal, New York were led to believe their property taxes would decrease when many large chain stores opened in their area. Over time their tax only increased due to the need for the area to provide infrastructure such as roads, water and sewer. And so the political people involved with bringing in the stores were soon elected out of office.

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Number 51 is Daniel
Tourance, Town of Ithaca.

DANIEL TOURANCE: I am deeply concerned by the process that's been going on, in particular with the Widewaters development. I remember several years ago when Wal-Mart proposed to build on that site, the City finally agreed with certain restriction, for example, I think we reduced the size from 130,000 square feet to a 115,000. We wanted trees in the parking lots, and the building had to be moved closer to the road. I have yet to see any similar restrictions placed on the Widewaters development. It's just being welcomed with open arms. I am sure even if there were some restrictions on it, we would, still could have some reasonable development in this area.

I should also say I would like to compare this to the treatment of the Black Diamond bicycle trail which has been proposed for years, it doesn't even have a final location. I have the map of the Southwest development plan and even on here it says location to be determined. Like, it's as if it were some new idea that just came along.

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Why isn't there the same concern shown for the Black Diamond trail that there is for Southwest Park? Why are we not being informed of this. The Widewater development, the 80,000 yards of fill, Wal-Mart only proposed to put in 50,000 yards, and yet now with 80,000 yards, the City determined that they didn't even need an environmental impact statement. Why? For 50,000 yards they did, but 80,000 they don't. Seems very strange to me.

We heard from a lot of people tonight who go shopping in Elmira, Cortland or Syracuse, and I am sure they do have things there that they don't have here. I mean this is a fairly small city, it's not, we have 30,000 people, Syracuse has 200,000. But I would also like to point out that the population of those areas has been declining, Syracuse has declined by at least 20 percent. Elmira has gone down, I don't know the figures, but similar amount. What are people saying? They like to shop there, but they don't want to live there.

(APPLAUSE)

I mean I would rather have a place
where I would rather live and shop somewhere else occasionally than the reverse. Those are not desirable places.

(APPLAUSE)

I mean like a lot of other people here I grew up in other places, I lived in shopper's heaven, I grew up in New York City. I have lived here for 27 years. We had all the shopping in the world. You will see a lot of people from those areas in Ithaca. I wonder how many Ithacans move in the other direction, not as many. So I would like to -- my daughter just wants to say something for a short time here.

DAUGHTER: I think we need an a amusement park because people will come from all around to go to an amusement park. It will not compete from downtown, but will help because people shop and eat out. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Number 52 is Rob Steuteville, from the city of Ithaca.

ROB STEUTEVILLE: Thank you very much. I am not anti-growth. I recognize that the City has to grow and will grow, regardless of
whether this land is developed, it is going to
grow. I find this plan, however, to be very
disappointing. A couple words to describe it is
inelegant, crude is another word.

You have some waterfront there and
what do you have, you have the back of some office
buildings and a parking lot on the water. You
have some open space parcels that are behind
K-Mart and bordered by parking lots. Who is going
to use that open space? Maybe somebody to walk
their dog. The plazas are going to be dead zones
because they are designed poorly.

It doesn't, the plan to me doesn't
show any good connection to Route 13, doesn't show
any good connection to the existing development.
The way the streets are, the buildings are lined
up, I mean it doesn't seem to create any street
scape or any sense of place. The intersections
don't seem to make any sense to me.

Beyond that, it's, you know, it's
not a mixed use and it just doesn't create a
place. There is a renaissance out there in town
planning right now that is creating places that
are actually as good for the next millennium as
The Commons was for the year 1900. And this plan is not part of that renaissance. Not even close.

So I just think that if we do go forward and develop this land or part of it, that Ithaca can do a lot better than this particular plan. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Number 53 our speaker is Suzie Kossack, Town of Ithaca.

SUZIE KOSSACK: Yes, my home is in the Town of Ithaca, but my place of work, my place of worship, most of the other activities that I am involved with are in the City of Ithaca. I have been living here for nine and a half years and before that I lived in Syracuse for 24 years. I was in Syracuse yesterday driving along Erie Boulevard East which is the expanded version of what Route 13 is going to become. And earlier in the late '70s, '80s, I watched that region expand. And I thought it had reached its max when I left. I was appalled yesterday when I was there. It was unbelievable. I just couldn't imagine how anything more could be built there and it was. Every little strip mall was stuffed into
a space, every mall that was there before had more
buildings expanding off the side. The places that
had parking lots in front of them before, you
know, so you could park and then go to the strip
mall or building or whatever it was, now the
parking lots weren't there any more, there were
more strip malls in front of the malls. And it
was mind boggling to see this. I hadn't been
there in a while. I was shocked. And it was a
terrible thing, it was tragic. So, and I guess I
should point out that the company that had a lot
to do with that development and the company whose
headquarters is in the midst of that is
Widewaters. So that's just an interesting
observation.

But I have a three point solution
for the shopping needs for the people in Ithaca.

Point number one: Expand the
service league. They do wonderful work, we need
to support what they are doing.

Number two: Expand the store at the
Salvation Army, good prices, affordable to
everyone.

And number three: I ask the City to
promote and do what they can to develop increased
garage sales among residents. That certainly will
meet my shopping needs.

So many people have addressed this
earlier in terms of we are an enlightened city,
but there are enlightened counties more than we
are, Westchester, Marine, some places in Oregon
who are now making conscious efforts and conscious
legislation to cease, not restrict, but cease any
more malls or highways or pavement going up in
their area. And I think we need to do a study of
those areas and follow suit.

And in closing I am going to say
after tonight with the most members of the Common
Council not having been here for the majority of
the night, clearly this demonstrates that we must
have another scheduled evening forum scheduled
around the time when all of the Common Council
members can be present, and well, and the mayor,
you can come too. And so we can all share this so
everyone can hear what we have to say.

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE).

MAYOR COHEN: 54, our speaker is

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Rebeka Doyle, city of Ithaca.

REBEKA DOYLE: Greetings, hi. I want you all to think about something for a second. How many of you had to put on an air mask, a mask over your face before you walked out the door today? And probably guarantee you that none of you had to do that. I just got back a few days ago from being in Ecuador where air and water pollution, like many other developing countries, struggling with a number of growing pains is intense and when you are in the City you can't breathe. And you think of all these things, just the things you take advantage of.

When I got back to Ithaca the other day I just felt so privileged and relieved of air and water again. And then I found out pretty much right away about what had been going down and about all the development. I just became so deeply saddened.

And I was even just so completely saddened. I am a graduate student at Cornell in soil and crop science. I could go on with a million different reasons, hydrology, ecology, of why this project and many other projects,
something like that would just be devastating.

But more than anything I will bring up what I said
to my housemates when I was going to this meeting,
I live with 12 other graduate students and we own
our own house, it's a cooperative. So we are
taxpayers to the City. They all asked why are you
going to this meeting? What store could they
possibly build, that was the question everyone
had, what could they possibly build, don't we have
a Staples and an Office Max. Wouldn't that be
redundancy? And they are very disciplines, it's
not even an ecological question to them. We are
just like why.

So no, I don't have a vested
long-term interest in this community, and maybe I
am just one of those transient people, but I feel
it is important to care about where you live
wherever you are and the time you live there. And
I feel very privileged to live in this town and to
have these resources available that we have. And
I just think about that and I hope that everyone
else is making these decisions is thinking about
that too. To spend a short time in some
developing country city, and I am so happy to be
in a place like Ithaca and you would think how ironic we would be. Is this what we call development and progress when we damage and destroy a wetland or something like that?

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Number 55 is Nick Pafpatonis. Judging on the time we will probably be able to take four to six more speakers depending on the length of speaking. If you are signed up to speak tonight, and we do not get to your number, when we start the hearing tomorrow we will start with the numbers that we have given out tonight. If you are not here tomorrow, you will have the ability to sign-up again to speak when you do come back if you are not here at the beginning of the hearings tomorrow which does start at 1:00 p.m. here in this same room. So we will see how many more we can get in this evening.

By the way, the hearings tomorrow go from 1:00 until 5:00. Then there is a 7:00 until 11:00 session as well tomorrow evening. Nick.

NICK PAFPATONIS: What we need to do
is stop this project immediately. That area is
meant for a park area, possibly, we don't need to
put any kind of like big gigantic stores in this
area. We have stores, we have tons of stores here
in Ithaca. What we need to work on first is
filling up all the empty holes that are on Route
13.

A couple friends of mine came down
to visit Ithaca for the first time a few days ago,
and they were just shocked at how horrible Route
13 looked when they had heard that Ithaca was like
a beautiful city. They seen, they said like why
are there all these empty spaces here and some
people's properties look like total garbage dumps
on Route 13?

We need to develop those spaces
first and fill them up with like smaller stores
that are, you know, where people can buy things
that are here in Ithaca. A lot of people are
complaining they have to go elsewhere to get
things. We can put smaller stores in these empty
storefronts and spaces on Route 13 as opposed to
developing a whole other area which is near, you
know, like what's that thing called where the

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Another thing, too, we have about 14 or 15 empty store fronts in The Commons. The City should take millions of dollars and invest into small businesses. We need to take people who are disabled, people who are on welfare, people who don't have money to start a business, and we need to start up, like small projects and business development where these empty storefronts can be filled.

I even had an idea I wanted to start a business up in Collegetown doing like a used record and CD store or something, in an empty storefront up there. But I have gotten turned away from all the banks because I don't have credit. So, therefore, my ideas and plans could never happen which I have to continue to live on welfare. And that's your tax dollars that are paying, you know, me to live because I am disabled. Where I would like to be working. But there is no opportunities here in Ithaca. We need to fill up all the storefronts in The Commons.

You guys should realize that your mainstay here in the City of Ithaca are college
students. We can't like develop stores that
people aren't going to buy anything from. We need
to cater to the majority of the population in this
county.

            Getting on a few other issues, the
City and County need to share tax revenue
together. There is no point in building a big
mall in the Southwest Park and trying to compete
with the Pyramid Mall when the County and the City
and all the other cities and towns around us, if
everybody shared their revenues and all the money
was shared like on a County-wide project paying
for fire service, sewer, city works, then things
you wouldn't have to compete. You wouldn't have
to be building this. Then the money would be all
distributed equal. Does that make sense, Alan?
What's your opinion on that? You have no
opinion?

            Okay. We need to start small, we
need to put small businesses into business. So
the City needs to spend money on starting small
business programs, to find people who want to
start, there is tons of people in this town that
would love to start a small business but nobody
has money to do it. I saw an article in the paper the other day that some business development was asking the City for $100,000 loan to have something to do with this project or something. If you took that $100,000, you could probably put 20 different small businesses in The Commons and fill them up.

Thank you.

(APIPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Number 56 is Sara Regenspan from the Town of Ithaca.

SARA REGENSPAN: Hi. As he said, I am Sara Regenspan. I know like I might not sound very important because I am only 12, I am not like voting age or, but I am really concerned about this, not only because of the small businesses and downtown, but also I go to ACS and that's up on West Hill right next to the octopus. And I am concerned about the number of kids in my school that walk to school up that hill. And if traffic is increased by what they say, 25 percent, the kind of hazards that it is going to bring to all the kids that walk to school.

And I also agree, about downtown
also for younger people downtown it's, you know, it's a really good place where people can get together and just have a good time. And it's really important to the people of Ithaca and just I have been to these cities where it's just mall after mall after mall after mall, and, you know, when is it going to end? You know, it's so useless and there is just so many empty stores where we can, where you can make, where you can put this money into small businesses to open there.

And the other thing is we can't keep complaining that we can't buy things here, we can't keep saying I have to go out of town. Because the fact is we buy too much. We don't need everything we buy. We can buy what's here. We have to put our money into the stores that we have here. Or we have to develop into the stores that are open and we can't just say, well, I have to go out of town because I can't find a decent pair of jeans here. We have to, even me, I am like very invested in my clothes, I really like my clothes. And I mean Reserve New York I don't think I should shop -- New York is New York.

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So we really, we have to buy what's here. I mean, you know, we have a mall and we have downtown. And I think that should be enough.

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Sara, I would like to give you a special thank you for coming this evening.

Number 57 is Joan Tregaskis from the City of Ithaca.

JOAN TREGASKIS: I will speak to these folks because I don't have anything that is probably really considered pure GEIS facts and figures. Although since I do live in the City, I own two properties there, I am a critical care nurse at the hospital, this weekend is 18 years in this town, this hospital, etcetera.

Obviously enough people have heard we don't believe much of what we have been told by our city officials, they don't come, they don't rearrange meetings, poor attendance by them tonight, I was shocked by that. When I a student here a few years ago about Wal-Mart I talked about

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the impact.

I can't mention, I am not a
developer or a lawyer or whatever to go over these
figures, but I know the hospital puts its own
propaganda in the paper about how we are able to
handle the increased new cases, etcetera. We
don't need to call people in. I am called to come
into work almost every day I am off. When I am
not it's only because they know I will say no
anyway. There is not enough critical care nurses
to staff our unit on a regular basis. I don't
think people here would want to be cared for by
float nurses, but that's what happens.

You all want to increase
development, traffic, that certainly is going to
have an impact on fire, police safety, etcetera.
You know, again I just question can we really
handle all of this when information given to the
public via The Journal is not always accurate.

My needs for clothing, I can relate
again to what many people have said, you know, if
you listen to 89.7 Geneva about third-world
countries and many of these stores, these people
can't even afford to care for their families on
the wages they are given, etcetera. I don't need
to shop in shoes stores.

I'm no longer proud to invite people
to come to this community, I have relatives that
live here because they came to school here, they
liked it, I can't do that any more. I will begin
to look myself for where I will live. I am just a
drop in a bucket, it won't be noticed anyway. But
I just need to say that for myself. One day I
will go. I can't believe what you have done
across from Buttermilk, I just can't believe it.
I will just leave it at that. I just need to
share my emotions.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Our last speaker for
the evening will be Mahal, is 58 here? I think
that's our last number for this evening. Oh, 59.
Is 59 here? This will be our last speaker. This
is Kurt Seitz from Newfield.

KURT SEITZ: I just want to say
starting out that I used to live in the City of
Ithaca. I work in Ithaca and I shop in Ithaca.
And when the people ask where I am from I usually
say Ithaca. I can't understand how anyone can

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think that the proposed retail development in the existing Southwest Park would be good for the people of the City of Ithaca or the people of Tompkins County.

How can you prefer to bring in retail development to open space on the outer fringes of the City, instead of putting your energy into promoting growth downtown?

How can you prefer a clear cut and paved natural areas in one of the most scenic places of the City instead of reserving that place for scenic enjoyment and recreation?

This proposed retail development certainly wouldn't benefit the workers of Ithaca as the unemployment rate is currently about as low as it gets. And the kind of development you are proposing probably wouldn't bring wages up to a more livable level either. Instead of relieving the already difficult traffic situation in the City, it would make it much worse. It may increase the tax base in the City temporarily, but it seems obvious that it would result in higher taxes for city residents in the long run.

Are you just looking for short term
gains as you push the problems that are created
onto a future mayor and a future Common Council?
Retail space is absolutely the last thing that
should be considered for the Southwest area.
There is already much empty retail space in the
City and encouraging retail development in
Southwest could kill an already troubled
downtown. Encouraging development that could
result in a phenomenal increase in traffic on
streets that are already too congested to allow
kids to safely ride bicycles on them is an attack
on the quality of life of the City's residents.

So if you are still insistent on
making use of the Southwest area, what should be
done? If this area is developed, it should only
be used for low and middle income housing along
with offices, light industry and parkland. This
way people can live near where they work and can
afford to live in a pleasant, scenic environment
with open space filled with many recreational
possibilities, including bicycle and pedestrian
trails.

Let's bring back the days of open
space. Residents of Ithaca and Tompkins County

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could enjoy the meadows and fairgrounds of the
Southwest. Let's bring back some affordable
housing to make up the more than 30 houses
demolished and 185 parcels of land taken to make
way for the flood control channel. Old trees
should be saved, wetlands and wildlife should be
preserved. Inevitable flooding should be
accommodated, not pushed onto other businesses and
neighborhoods.

And finally what should be done with
the waste water site? If removing the newly
placed fill is impractical, then let's use this
site for ballfields in the new Southwest Park.
Kids and adults can safely ride their bikes on the
new scenic Black Diamond Trail to Buttermilk Falls
and to the new Widewaters ballpark and
playground.

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

MAYOR COHEN: Okay. With that we
are concluded for this evening. We will recess
until 1:00 tomorrow afternoon.

*   *   *

JANUARY 24, 2000
CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the proceedings and testimony are contained fully and accurately in the notes taken by me on the above cause and that this is a correct transcript of the same to the best of my ability.

______________________________
ELIZABETH R. BRUCIE, RPR

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