

# Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency

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Administration provided by Ithaca Area Economic Development

**Minutes of Public Hearing  
Shift Chainworks Owner 1, LLC (SouthWorks)  
September 30, 2023 @ 4:30 pm  
Town Hall, Town of Ithaca  
215 N. Tioga Street, Ithaca, NY 14850  
and  
Via Zoom and Livestreamed on YouTube**

Present: Russ Gaenzle (Harris Beach, PLLC), Kellea Bauda (IAED for Tompkins County IDA), Ina Arthur – recording (IAED), Rich John, Deborah Dawson, Anne Koreman, Jeff Gorsky, Jerry Dietz, Ducson Nguyen, Todd Bruer (remote) (TCIDA Board), Robert Lewis, Sarah Barden, Greg DeFabio, Brian Murray (remote) (Shift Capital), David Lubin (L Enterprises), Nnenna Lynch (remote) (Xylem Corp)

1. Russ Gaenzle called the public hearing to order at 4:30 pm.
2. Russ Gaenzle gave an overview of the project and the proposed incentives.
3. Robert Lewis and Sarah Barden of Shift Capital gave a brief presentation of the SouthWorks project.
4. Public comment was heard from the following:

**Theresa Alt – 206 Eddy Street**

Stop trying to sell us SouthWorks as one huge project. That can be the vision. But let's deal with it piece by piece.

I add my voice to many others addressing how bad even the revised Economic and Fiscal Impact Analysis is. No word about how this huge project will burden City and Town services maintaining roads, supplying water, treating wastewater, policing. Nothing about the children in the new families moving in, who will attend ICSD schools.

The study suggests incomes in retail and clerical work that sound impossibly high to me. And I know these fields. They must have used New York City numbers. The study's Table 5 Spending Baskets are weird. They don't include rent or taxes. But they are not really about discretionary spending, because they include healthcare. More odd assumptions. Do people really spend more on entertainment than on healthcare? Why is transportation so high? Maybe because there is no plan to insist on a good grocery store on the site. Will South Hill continue to be a food desert? Will every family need a care to buy groceries? What a lost opportunity! What a shameful waste of fossil fuels.

I suggest starting immediately with three steps. Re-use buildings already there first for training in construction skills, needed for the rest of the project and probably eligible for a tax abatement; second for retail space for a large grocery store or small supermarket, which legally is not eligible for a tax abatement. Don't worry that no one will shop there till the housing is built. South Hill is a food desert. But any people already live on South Hill. Third, built the affordable housing. That is what is most needed in this community. It can get a tax abatement.

Stop trying to sell us SouthWorks as one huge project. That can be the vision. But let's deal with it piece by piece

**Wayles Browne – 206 Eddy Street**

On the whole the SouthWorks project looks like a useful project, but the application leaves some questions open. I have been in touch with Ian Greer the Director of the Collab at the ILR School at Cornell. He clarified that the estimates for employment and economic impact are based on input output analysis software. Different results come from different information input. Rough guess in rough guess out – In one place 1076 construction jobs are mentioned and 3745 permanent jobs. 1076 constructions jobs are more than the whole of construction workers in our county. 3745 is not much less than the number of construction workers in all the 7 neighboring counties. If we take this literally it will mean a big shortage of workers while this is going on. We wonder if 1076 people will be employed all through the 15-year construction period. More likely smaller numbers of works will be employed at different times. So the board should look carefully at the estimates before passing judgment. There is not much in the estimates about what particular companies will be interested in setting up shop in the new renovated buildings. It seems like building it and they will come. Another question I have about the application. Am I correct that as each building is completed it will be given a further 20-year abatement? It sounds as if the Town and City and County won't be getting much in tax payments for many years into the future.

**Greg Hartz – 29 Blackchin Blvd.**

Good afternoon. I am Greg Hartz and live in the village of Lansing and am pleased to speak today in support of the project. I've lived in Ithaca most of my life. I am an Ithaca High School graduate and a Cornell University Alum. And I made my career here in banking mostly. I retired last year as the President of Tompkins Trust Company and Tompkins Community Bank. I just want to say that what we have here is a very unique opportunity to make a very positive lasting impact on this community. Ithaca has always been a community that is forward looking focused on doing the right thing and focused on doing things that serve everyone in the community as best possible. I think when you look at this site we can see the 100 year history that served its purpose. We have an opportunity here to help the developers – it's not like there is a long line of people waiting to site. It is very complicated and very expensive, and the developers have already put a lot of their own resources into this project. This tax abatement simply reduces the impact of the cost. There will be long term significant benefit to all. This will be shining example to others in the State. Thank you for all your time and effort as you make your decision. I am strongly in favor of this.

**Jill Tripp – 112 First Street**

On the other hand, I am a 40-year resident of Ithaca. I own a home on First Street in Ithaca's North side. I am here to speak to you because I received my school tax bill today and because as a member of the Ithaca City School District School Board, I have become acutely aware lately of where tax money comes from and where it goes. I am speaking for myself. The proposed tax abatement for the SouthWorks project seems excessive and ill-advised in looking over tax abatements granted over the last 20 years in our community I see that tens of millions of dollars have been diverted from investment in our schools to assist in the development of projects of dubious value. For a long time, I accepted the common wisdom that development is beneficial if only because it lessened the tax burden on other property owners. I now believe this is a fallacy. Development and progress are not synonymous. The tax abatement proposal for the SouthWorks project will harm the school district by taking away desperately

needed revenue and by adding many new students to a district ill prepared to cope with an influx of hundreds of students who will live in this much praised new neighborhood. I urge this board to gather more information about the true costs of this development to our community and to our schools.

**Lindsay Garner – 9 Evergreen Lane**

First, I am in opposition of the IDA. This project would not be possible without the community's investment and currently I've lived in this community for a very long time. I have a business here and I do want responsible development. Currently this will need the attention of local code officers and infrastructure that we just don't have. In July, there was a report that we are actually sub-contracting our waste management services because we can't retain employees because we can't pay them enough. We have problems of transportation. The day the new taxes came out I got many phone calls from people who didn't know how they were going to pay their bills, how they are going to get groceries, how they going to pay their utilities. We are strained right now and although development would be fabulous and having another neighborhood on South Hill would be excellent, why do we need to pick the most expensive to develop? Because of the views? However, we have to put our people, our community first. You know put the oxygen on first get us stable without a good foundation we can't have a successful community. I would suggest to the board to send out a survey because there have been several IDA projects in the past five years to see what the success rate is, meaning how does the community feel about the consequences of those projects being granted incentives. Do we feel like we are in a better position financially or do we feel like we are overwhelmed? If the answer comes back that we are overwhelmed all it is is a pause. I am all for development and I would love to support local developers because I feel unfair treatment if we don't give the same courtesy to a small local developer as we do a big developer to build our community.

**Herb Engman – 120 Warren Road**

When I was the Town of Ithaca supervisor, I worked with David Lubin on this project, and it was called Chainworks. And in some respects, I'm glad it has taken over a decade to get to this point because certain concepts of sustainability and mixed-use development have come into play now. From what I read, 20% of the house is going to be affordable and if that means low income that is a good thing, but we need a lot more worker housing in this community. There has been gentrification going on for decades and the folk who are going to work at SouthWorks should be able to live there and so I would suggest adding another 30% of the housing be dedicated to worker housing. That would also supply some workers for the restaurants and hotels downtown and even adjunct professors at Ithaca College. This would reduce commuters coming into the County. We have 11,000 commuters a day coming into the County to work and that clogs up our roads putting a lot of pressure on the Town and City and residents who are already here, and we need to reduce that traffic by increasing worker housing. The cost to municipalities has already been mentioned. There has been some research that has said that developers don't make their decisions on tax abatements. I would take the tax abatement and make sure we get that affordable housing and working housing not just padding the bottom line of the developers.

**Peter Wissoker – 705 N. Tioga Street**

In many ways, this is a great project.

I urge you to wait to vote on the abatement for this project until you have better information to inform your decision.

The independent economic and financial assessments, as well as the abatement schedule, were poorly done and not up to the task of being used as the basis for your decision. (This is discussed in an editorial Cornell professor Kieran Donaghy and I published this week in the Ithaca Times, and submitted separately as a written public comment.)

The economic impact report and the financial feasibility study put together by Camoin Associates contain many poor assumptions and experts I've asked about them suggest it looks more like an undergraduate student project than one completed by an expert in the field. One glaring aspect of this is the inability to factor in the effects of building over an extended period of time. The reports are neither methodologically nor theoretically defensible.

And yes, I realize Camoin Associates has written reports for agencies all over the state, but that experience hasn't paid off in the work they've done for us. Moreover, their independent assessments use employment and other data drawn from a report commissioned by the developer from ESI Consult Solutions, a firm that has conducted similar studies for the developers in the past. Independent assessments are meant to be independent and question statements made by the developer, not accept them as truth.

Perhaps equally galling is that the cost-benefit analysis doesn't include a prediction of the costs to the city, town, school district, and county that will accompany the building of a full-scale mixed-use neighborhood. It's just a benefit report. I could have sworn this was pointed out when the draft version was reviewed by the Board. We deserve an assessment of the costs as well. The taxing jurisdictions need to plan for the future before being able to decide whether the project will work for them either as is or in a modified one. The project should not move forward without one.

As discussed in a document I sent you earlier, the abatement schedule drawn up for the project is misguided and I'd suggest misleading. The abatements for the entire development will not end in 20 years and the full tax amount will not be available for abatement in the first year. Moreover, the abatements are likely to phase in over 15+ years of construction; we could well be living with the latter portion of them 35 years from now. The amounts of property tax abated, too, are likely to be much greater, at least 15% and likely more. And the promised \$2.3 million average tax collection will not be realized for more than a decade.

We need better information than this to draw data-based conclusions as to whether every element of the project should receive an abatement, how long that abatement should be, and how much it should be.

Finally, I'll say what I always say when folks come looking for an abatement:

- If you do decide to go ahead now, please do so without an abatement for the market-rate units.
- Once each element is completed, all jobs associated with it should pay a living wage. The agency should require that all workers who are attached to the project through the developers, the LLC, or the services they hire to do work such as janitorial services, security, etc., should be guaranteed a living wage.
- TCIDA and the taxing entities should profit from the sale of any element of the project. If the applicant resells any portion of it, whether housing, office, or other, the state, city, county, and schools should be repaid and receive a share of the profits proportional to their investment in it.

In closing, I urge the board to be responsible, and act in the best interests of those you represent. Wait for better data. We count on you to act as if you have a fiduciary duty, and not tolerate anything less than you truly need as decision makers. I recognize the developers have a schedule and winter is looming, but that's no reason to make a rash decision without full and accurate due diligence. Find

someone to do it on an advanced schedule if necessary. Take the project and the IDA in hand and wait to decide until you have a real foundation on which to do so.

### **Susan Holland – 121 Center Street**

I am the executive director for Historic Ithaca. I am glad to express our support for the request for the SouthWorks project for a PILOT as an investment in this project. Thank you for this opportunity. There are a myriad of reasons to support it but I am only going to talk about 5 specific reasons from our viewpoint and in keeping with our mission and the work that we do.

Adaptive reuse – SouthWorks has proposed to use 800,000 sq ft of space that needs infrastructure and building upgrades, Rehabilitation, restoration and the parts of our project that we can imagine for spaces that have been vacant from economic activity for approximately 20 years. Large scale investment is needed, and the PILOT will help the economics of the project but it is not the whole thing. Other sources have been garnered and there will be more financial resources that will have to be garnered as well. The sustainability preservation aspect of existing building stock is one of the most sustainable things we can do. The SouthWorks project has sustainability at the core. Having the chance for the IDA, The Town and the City of Ithaca to make that investment in the future of our building stock and our climate is needed and necessary. It is a great investment which makes sense economically. From the IDA and other municipal sources the new building projects in our community have received PILOTs, property tax abatements and the like. SouthWorks actually matches the community benefits that most of us prioritize in our work and our lives - improving buildings that have high visibility to everyone everywhere, providing much needed housing in this community, providing child-care and providing important training and jobs. Most people in this community will be able to partake in some way of these tangible benefits.

A second benefit that makes sense economically is SouthWorks commitment to workforce development and the construction ecosystem. Our organization has been doing workforce development for 13 years with young adults with barriers to employment. We are part of a network of partners some of us are connected in career pathways and together we are making a huge difference. This project will provide more job opportunities, entryways for those trainees for real world experiences and to allow historically underrepresented people more access to those jobs. This also provides housing. We need all types of housing.

The IDA's commitment and support of this project will raise us all up, restore what needs to be restored and will be a great addition and focal point in our community therefore Historic Ithaca lends its full support to SouthWorks request to the IDA in the Town and City of Ithaca.

### **Mr. Jones – Coddington Drive**

I am going to make some observations and ask some questions. I am looking at the size of this project and comparing it to the size of Ithaca College. Is that reasonable? So about how many additional thousand people are going to be living and working in this project? What kind of traffic studies have been done other than the impact on traffic along Danby Road/Aurora Street. There are three entrances from this place onto Danby Road. Are there going to be traffic lights? Are you going to widen Danby Road? Is there some kind of study I can look at to see the traffic impact where I can see them. There are minor concerns, looking at traffic. Around five o'clock or so there is traffic backed up on Prospect Street all the way from Cayuga. So with an additional thousand people living and working in this SouthWorks campus. This will impact traffic especially at peak times. Will this campus have its own police force like Ithaca College? There are some things to think on. It's a great project but ...

### **Marnie Kirchessner – 74 West Jersey Hill Road**

My name is **Marnie Kirchessner** and my grandson is the ninth generation on my father's side. My father worked at Morse Chain. And my grandmother lived at 515 S. Cayuga Street and I would watch the people leaving Morse Chain with their lunchboxes at 3 o'clock after I went up there from school. Fine develop it but why ask the taxpayers to subsidize it? I was at a meeting recently where I was talking about my grandson's opportunity to own a home in Tompkins County. Someone told me he should look in Elmira. Is that the benefit to me as someone who's lived here forever? That's the benefit, my grandson can't afford to stay. All of these benefits, what is the cost? At two o'clock, trying to pick up my grandson from South Hill where he attends, traffic, even though the school district tried to redo the wait line to pick up students, traffic is already backed up on Aurora Street. Mr. Jones considerations are incredibly valid. There are costs. But then I'm supposed to subsidize all of these supposed opportunities. How many of these projects have you already given significant tax breaks? What is the math on how much benefit I as a taxpayer have received from these projects? I no longer come downtown because the big buildings scare me and I can't figure out the parking system. Is that a benefit to me? I understand how there is tremendous benefits in data collection, but I and my friends see no benefits. I understand that my tax dollars have already done a huge amount to abate the pollution from that site because I also have peers that grew up on Aurora Street who are deceased due to cancer because of the toxicity of that site. Many say there are glorious benefits, yes, but what are the costs?

### **Amanda Kirchessner – 4471 Jacksonville Road**

I am speaking today to voice my opposition to the proposed \$85 million tax abatement for chainworks mixed use development. Why? For one I walked by nearly a dozen or more vacancies on the commons perhaps one of would be a great childcare commercial opportunity for a small business. While I understand the need for development and economic growth, subsidizing developer profits through tax abatement is not our community's best interests. We've seen this pattern before with developments like City Center. Despite the promises made, clawback protocols were never enforced when the abated property changed hands and City Center sold for nearly 50% over its assessed value. None of the tax abatement was reclaimed during the sale meaning our community missed out on potential funding for vital public services such as schools, infrastructure and social programs during Covid that would have deeply impacted children, the aging and infirm and all those who have a hand in their care in our community. The reality is that tax abatements often lack accountability and enforcement measures needed to protect public funds. Once incentives are granted it's proven nearly impossible to recover our investment if agreements are changed or when properties are sold for profit. Subsidizing developers in this manner only enriches them while we bare the long-term costs. Instead of millions of dollars in tax breaks we should be investing in our community directly. We need to maintain manufacturing opportunities here to create more well-paying jobs especially for low-skilled workers. I want to echo what retired Tompkins Community Bank President, Greg Hartz, shared. We have a unique opportunity for sure we do. Recently one of the largest saline manufacturers Baxter Healthcare was destroyed in hurricane Helene. This leaves a crucial gap in the US medical supply chain. This presents a real opportunity to bring a meaningful employment and stability to our area while addressing an urgent national need. With a port worker strike looming we need more national manufacturing and we have a manufacturing site. I urge you to reject this tax abatement and instead prioritize transparent accountable policies that genuinely serve the people of our community, our state, and our nation. Let's focus on building an economy that benefits all of us not just a handful of developers.

### **Reba McCutcheon – 110 Eastwood Terrace**

I am Reba McCutchen of Ithaca City. I own several properties in the area and I am also a licensed real estate professional. I had the opportunity to SouthWorks with a bunch of my colleagues and we are excited. New housing – Yes! We have outgrown our housing stock. When my clients want to touch Fall Creek, they're gorgeous homes and a lot of them are older than Ezra. So please some new housing. The adaptive reuse isn't that what Ithaca is about, to be environmentally friendly, to be environmentally conscious. The environmental clean-up that has already taken place on the site has helped all of us. Something that my clients struggle with is daycare, having another daycare facility on the South Hill would be phenomenal. Here is a bunch of businesses working together who want to work and engage with our community to customize our needs and our wants. South Hill is a food desert. They are getting some great information on how they can customize. I think we have a wonderful opportunity. I think Ithaca needs SouthWorks and to your point that it is hard to buy a house, your grandson, I was lucky enough to get a check from my parents when I bought my first house, I didn't need it, but it helped and that little leg up can really get a project underway.

### **Rafael Chamberlan – 114 Blanchard Height**

I am Rafael Chamberlan and I am a second grade teacher at Northeast Elementary School in Ithaca City School District and I am also the vice president of the Ithaca Teachers Association (ITA). The ITA is a union of almost 600 professional educators in the ICSD. We serve classroom teachers, subject area specialists, academic support teachers speech and occupational therapists counselors social workers and psychologists we work academic support teachers speech and occupational therapists counselors social workers and psychologists we work with students and grades pre-k through 12 and support students across 12 school buildings the ITA exists to prepare organize and support and advocate for educators so we are better able to advocate for the needs of our students and effectively provide a safe supportive learning environment for all as we all know Ithaca has a need for development of safe affordable housing for working families and the prospect of a major project that could bring this type of housing to Ithaca is something to be excited about as a union we support projects that help provide our students and their families with housing and I'm here today to urge the Ida to strongly consider the impact that the large tax abatements the developers of the project are requesting would have on our schools and our community as a whole before making decision to grant these abatements some of you may remember the Ithaca City School District budget debate of last May during the month leading up to that vote Ithaca City School District board meetings were packed with residents worried about their tax residents shared concerns that they or those they loved would soon be priced out of the community that they call home many of our members felt that pain and fear but as teachers we know that passing the budget was crucial we were not successful in convincing enough of our neighbors of that fact and our schools are now operating at a \$7 million deficit this year our students have seen their class sizes increase have lost beloved Educators and have had to change the schedules to accommodate dissolved programs the students and the adults who serve them are already doing a lot more with a lot less this year and the prospects of recouping these losses in upcoming budgets are grim unless a new source of school revenue is found within our community additionally we are concerned about how the location of this new development will impact the long-term organization of this Ithaca city school district due to the current housing trends the only housing sectors in the Ithaca community that are still affordable to the average working family seeking to buy are the South Hill and Danby communities this area of town has seen a significant population rise which is currently reflected in the crowding at South Hill Elementary School staff who work at South Hill describe their school as bursting at the seams teachers are already setting up classrooms and services in closets and lunch rooms are packed. All of this energy in a school full of children is a wonderful problem to have with the potential to add 900 new housing units at the school's footprint without a clear plan for how to accommodate that growth and the possibility of

having little to no new tax revenue to make these accommodations is a challenge that leaves us very concerned the fact of the matter is simple earning high qualities schools isn't cheap and the Ithaca Community is committed to having high quality schools but funding our schools primarily through the local property taxes of people who already own their homes or granting generous tax abatements is systematically unfair our tax base is currently tapped out and doing the best we can to support our schools. I'm simply here today to ask that the IDA consider that this project be greenlit only if it includes a clear plan for the developers to pay their fair share of the Ithaca City School District taxes throughout the entire project our district needs the revenue that would be generated in 15 years of construction to make the necessary changes to support this project we simply cannot wait until these new students are knocking on our school's doors to have the money it will take to support them thank you for your consideration.

#### **John Oakley – 510 Turner Place**

I have been a neighbor of the plant for 30 years and lived fairly close to it for another uh five before that I just wanted to say how much the factories closure worried us how sad it has been to see the decay of the buildings and infrastructure our property abouts on a small lot which has a I think it might be a 30 foot wall that holds up the lower parking lot um houses around the corner are also faced with these big walls that parking lot is being torn apart by nature as is the road that goes down to Cayuga Street buildings are obviously have been visibly deteriorating I too feel that we have to look very carefully at tax abatements I think in some ways in the past they've been given for to generously with far too few safeguards on them but this property it seems to me is going to become an expense to the community if it's not to some extent developed I love the South Works plans but I know that it will produce a some more traffic and some more noise in my neighborhood but I'm getting deaf as I get older so it's okay um and I just like to say that as a neighbor I really want something to happen there I don't want to sell the county and the school district up the river on this one but I really think it's a priority to get something done reasonably quickly thank you.

#### **Clark Young – 206A Dryden Road**

I am Clark Young and I am the owner of Uncle Marty's Shipping office, cards and games. I'm a pretty young business owner. I've owned caner for about two years, and I've worked for Martin Johnson for about 13 years. six years before I started my own business. I'm one of the people that would benefit from SouthWorks. I'm a local business owner that sees an opportunity to get involve and can improve my community and keep my tax dollars here. I can keep my employees tax dollars here I can provide them this audience that is there and the customers that would come from the other businesses that go there and support my employees I can pay them well. I'm for this I think that it should be done reasonably and we've thought making sure that we doing things carefully to maintain our community but I believe that that can be done. I am for it as someone who sees people like me young business owners that can take advantage of the situation to improve themselves to build from the ground up like I've done with my business um so I would say continue thinking and I am in support of the project.

#### **Fred Schoeps – 925 Mitchell #7**

Thank you. I am here to support the project. I have doubts about where we are in terms of the work being done on the terms of the actual abatement structure. Let me share with you some thoughts. This project has the impact of building a whole new Village in Tompkins County. It will eventually have more residents than any of the current designated County Villages whether you are looking at Trumansburg or you are looking at some of the other ones. It will also have an industrial and commercial economic base unlike any previous project that I am familiar with since I've lived here there's a difference between



putting together an industrial site in the town or an apartment building by itself in terms of how it fits into a community. It becomes a component of the economic development of a community. But it does not have the nature of this particular project where it in effect has within it built into it the generation in terms of in terms of both commercial as well as industrial as well as residential. I think it's an important aspect it also on one hand it makes it more complicated but also it really represents in my mind the future of how we should be thinking about Urban Development moreover I think the tax base depending upon how it will be structured could by itself be large enough to separately pay for the Public Services needed to support such a village obviously the question is what aspects will in effect the village bring to the table that in effect will combine with the public services that on one hand the city provides and the other hand the town provides uh be able to fulfill the needs of the folks there I totally agree with some of the some of the comments already that we need to carefully look at the nature of worker apartments and buildings and so on and in terms of the contractual relationship between the developer the county and City and so forth that in effect there is equity there but Equity isn't skewed one way or the other part of the issue that that came up for me is and it may be totally uh mute because I obviously haven't been able to dig below a certain level is why was this viewed as one big request for tax abatement as opposed to looking at it in terms of chunking it the other interesting question is how will the town and City work together on this project because fundamentally usually one takes the lead in the past for example the Maplewood project it was a town project and the city you know what went along with it but this is also going to require a very different type of relationship working relationship and I'm not saying that's not doable but I'm but I am saying is it will require intentionally looking at this project in a different way than we've looked at projects in the past um Ida has uh has come a long way from an industrial development agency that was designed to expand the industrial base decades ago to becoming an economic development agency overseeing a whole economic system as this project will be projects has fall under the jurisdiction of both the town and the City of this magnitude have an listed in my knowledge since I've lived here there have been some great project big project doing but this has a very different mixed approach that at least I'm not will with you know often times when we have these public hearings in terms of getting you know getting us a feeling for the emotional feeling of our community they're smaller project you know we look at the pros and the cons somebody who is within 300 feet or 500 feet or whatever uh within a certain distance and at least my experience has been in terms of communicating about this in terms of transparency as to the level of okay I would also like to point out so few in the general public understand and tax abatement as it was Illustrated here today uh certainly not the benefit it brings to the actual impact on the individual taxpayer for many the seemingly deeply ingrained perception that is it steals from the individual taxpayer by paying more property tax on one's home and gives that money to as a tax break to the rich developer to make an even bigger profit I think that's simply that's simply oversimplifying the whole thing and I think it becomes the responsibility of an of an organization such as Ida as well as other organizations similar help clarify that you know it the last thing you want to do is as a as a taxpayer feel like they're taking it out of my pocket in order to in order to enrich the developer and that is just too simplistic thank you.

5. Written comments from the public received prior to the hearing were acknowledged and are placed into the record as follows:

**John Graves – 319 Pleasant Street**

I was President of the South Hill Civic Association when Emerson decided to close its doors and leave Ithaca. South Hill residents, at the time, were afraid that the industrial buildings, the legacy pollution and the 95 acres of property would be left abandoned and a blight on our neighborhood for a generation. David Lubin and the SouthWorks development team have changed all that and given hope that something transformational could happen on the former Emerson brownfield site.

For many years South Hill residents have followed the progress of David's vision for Emerson and at every step it improved dramatically. Today, the proposed SouthWorks plan is an extraordinary example of smart development that has the potential to improve not only our South Hill neighborhood but the entire Ithaca Community. With the approval of the requested IDA abatements the SouthWorks project will become a living, breathing laboratory for responsible community growth.

One area of the SouthWorks Sustainability Framework that I find so surprising and welcome is under the heading Energy, which reads: SouthWorks will reduce reliance on fossil fuel and prioritize onsite renewable energy.

District Thermal Energy Network with industrial scale electric heat pumps for SouthWorks heating and cooling needs is one strategy that is in the framework and would drastically reduce reliance on natural gas. Besides using geothermal wells for the district heating/cooling storage network the sewer line that runs across the SouthWorks property could also be tapped to generate additional thermal energy.

Solar PV and Battery Storage are both important strategy in the framework because renewable energy production onsite will start a serious conversation with NYSEG and investors regarding how to develop a SouthWorks microgrid. A microgrid would allow SouthWorks the capacity to detach from the grid and generate its own electricity if the larger grid fails.

Renewable Energy Microgrid for SouthWorks electrical needs is a strategy not yet in the framework but this strategy I'm convinced will become part of the framework when NYSEG gets serious about collaborating on renewable energy generation onsite at SouthWorks. The granting of IDA abatements will demonstrate to NYSEG that our community supports onsite renewables and they should support a microgrid pilot project at SouthWorks.

These three energy strategies are a perfect fit for the SouthWorks project and are now main stream strategies for large developments that have zero carbon emission goals. Another common practice is the Network as a Service model where private companies build, own and operate district energy networks, like microgrid and thermal energy systems, if the developer is not interested in becoming an energy supplier. Granting the \$84.9 million IDA tax abatements for SouthWorks will also act as a sustainability multiplier because once the environmental and cost benefits of district energy networks can be demonstrated at SouthWorks other parts of South Hill (like Ithaca College) may elect to join or build their own district energy networks.

Substantial public and private investment will be required to realize the transformational nature of the energy portion of the SouthWorks Sustainability Framework. Now is the time for the IDA to publicly invest in SouthWorks. Approving the requested tax abatements will only strengthen Ithaca and Tompkins County's resolve for more clean energy projects and continue our leadership in energy sustainability.

### **Caleb R Thomas**

My name is Caleb and I newly own a home near the bottom of Pleasant St. just 3 blocks downhill from SouthWorks. A couple months ago, I took a tour of the old factory, and I am impressed by the team facilitating renovations. In the midst of a housing crisis, I'm excited for this new neighborhood to provide so many new homes in Ithaca as well as many businesses.

This is a short email to show my support and request your support to help this neighborhood project grow swiftly.

## **Fernando de Aragon - Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council**

I don't have comments specific to the incentives sought by the SouthWorks developers. However, I would like to offer some thoughts on the transportation challenges faced by SouthWorks.

The project application materials available online, include language recognizing the need to reduce automobile dependency to access the site. This is an important goal since the site's main access road, Aurora St., already operating at near capacity. If this project become car dependent it will have significant negative impacts on traffic circulation on all approaches.

Walking, cycling and other micromobility options, paired with good design, should be able to accommodate internal circulation. The bigger challenge is providing alternatives to the car for out and in coming travelers. Fortunately, the project is located just a few blocks from downtown Ithaca and TCAT's main transit hubs. Unfortunately, the site is up on a hill, making walking and bicycling less feasible. There are a number of infrastructure and service strategies that could help tackle the elevation barrier, however the documents I read make no mention of any specifics.

It is laudable to have goals to increase external trips sustainable modes, but it falls short if no specifics are mentioned. Exploring innovative transportation options takes time, particularly if you will be seeking federal aid of any kind. The time for that planning should not be after the development is approved or funded. It needs to start now.

Finally, page 49 of the application materials lists certain federal funding option for transportation. The Congestion Management Air and Quality Improvement program funds are not available for use in Ithaca-Tompkins County. Safe Streets and Roads for All funding is competitive and is limited to locations included in the safety action plan currently being crafted. The list is missing other promising federal funding programs for active transportation and transit innovations.

## **Jeff Goodmark - Director of Micromobility, [Ithaca Bikeshare](#)**

I am writing in with support for the SouthWorks project and the PILOT application to stabilize the project during construction. I feel this project is an excellent use of space and will make living on South Hill a better overall experience.

I share the values of this project and the community vision as a walkable, mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhood with a variety of commercial spaces, recreation & gathering space, and housing (including for sale & for rent residencies). Our approach is place-based, people-focused, and purpose-driven.

## **Jennifer Minner – 200 Roat Street**

I am writing to express my strong support for the development of SouthWorks and the proposed Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreement that will facilitate this transformative project.

As an associate professor in the Department of City and Regional Planning at Cornell University, I teach land use planning and preservation. I regularly incorporate SouthWorks as a field trip for both graduate and undergraduate students in my classes. I have used SouthWorks as an important example in in-person and app-based tours that I have organized as a partner in the Circularity, Reuse, and Zero Waste Development (CROWD) network. In those tours, we explore historic preservation, adaptive reuse, deconstruction, and the use of reclaimed materials (a spectrum of reuse) as sustainable alternatives to

vacancy, demolition, and waste. Please note that I write this letter not as a representative of Cornell or on behalf of my colleagues in CROWD, but as an individual who has consistently emphasized the importance of this project to students, colleagues, and visitors from outside the region.

SouthWorks is poised to set a significant precedent for our community and beyond. Once realized, it has the potential to become a nationally recognized model for transforming industrial remnants into vibrant, sustainable spaces. The planned district will provide hundreds of affordable and market-rate housing units, addressing the pressing need for housing in Tompkins County. Realizing SouthWorks is crucial for enhancing livability in our region.

Moreover, the development promises to stimulate economic growth by creating opportunities for new businesses and jobs. It will be a district that honors Ithaca's rich history while aligning with our vision for innovation and sustainability.

I urge you to support the PILOT application for SouthWorks, as it represents a vital step toward a sustainable future for our community. A project of this magnitude requires strong public-private collaboration to succeed. In addition to supporting the PILOT application, I encourage the IDA to review progress at key points to ensure that the social, economic, and environmental benefits that have been promised are realized.

Thank you for considering my perspective.

**C. Kelly White, CEO – Illume Projects, LLC**

I am writing this letter in support of SHIFT Capital's application for a PILOT for its SouthWorks project. I am the CEO and Principal Consultant of Illume Projects LLC, an Ithaca-based, woman-owned consultancy and NYS Certified WBE that helps Nonprofit Executive Directors bring strategic plans to life.

I believe the SouthWorks project has tremendous potential to newly construct nearly 1,000,000 square feet and adaptively reuse and revive 820,000 square feet of mixed-use space in Ithaca's South Hill neighborhood. The project would provide much-needed space for new businesses and nonprofits, as well as provide accessible housing and recreational space for Ithacans of all incomes.

This summer I had the opportunity to participate in the community open house and tour of the SouthWorks site. I was impressed by not only the scale of the project but also the intentional approach SHIFT Capital is taking to engage the local community. By proactively reaching out to the community to submit ideas and encourage collaborations to make the best uses of the site, the development team is demonstrating it is focused on making a profit while also being a good neighbor. We need more housing options locally, and the SouthWorks project has the potential to bring that and so much more to improve the quality of life in the South Hill neighborhood and Tompkins County at large.

Feel free to reach out if I can provide any additional input.

**Dr. Louis G. Hom, Ph.D., CEO – Cotyra, Inc.**

I am writing to express my strong support for the SouthWorks project and their PILOT request, which I believe will provide extremely valuable commercial and residential resources to our county. In particular, I believe their proposed life science incubator will fill a critical gap in an increasingly important economic sector.

In the early 2000s, I conducted research at a small biotech startup in downtown Ithaca; and when things didn't pan out I had no choice but to leave the area due to the lack of local jobs in my field. I moved to the Bay Area, where I spent 10+ years leading programs at numerous startups and observing the success of various life science incubators. With my experience and resources in hand, I returned to Ithaca in 2018 with the goal of helping build up the local biotech ecosystem so that the next person won't have to leave like I did. However, as I meet with other life science entrepreneurs, it becomes increasingly apparent that Tompkins County lacks suitable commercial space for our work.

The SouthWorks life science incubator proposed for Building 24 would provide me and others with badly needed space designed for biotechnology research. It would allow young companies to get their start, and to stay here as they grow, which will be vital to the continued economic success of our region. The requested PILOT will play an important role in making all of this possible.

I thank you for your consideration and I hope that you will approve the PILOT request for SouthWorks.

**Melinda Oakes, Executive Director – Triad Foundation, Inc.,**

Thank you for your attention to this letter in support of meeting the financial incentives and operational needs of the SouthWorks project. I fully support removing barriers in whatever form they take in order to move this incredible project forward with gusto.

I'm completely inspired by the scope and scale of this transformative initiative and its clever plans for adaptive reuse and thoughtfully scaled development timeline. As a member of this community and someone who is deeply civically engaged, I believe the SouthWorks has the unique power to stabilize Ithaca's economy for centuries into the future.

Moving into this community 17 years ago from outside the professional world of academia, I found limited opportunities to jump into the workforce at a mid-career level. And while the opportunity to innovate and create a new pathway always exists, it's far easier and more enticing when there is a home for it. SouthWorks will offer a home for innovation as much it will be a beacon for individuals and families who need a place to call home.

SouthWorks has the potential to play a pivotal role in so many key areas; women and economic opportunity, workforce development, housing, and civic engagement. It will provide a diversification of career and housing opportunities and a more competitive marketplace to aid a thriving cultural center, and I want to be a part of it. I want it for our community and I want it for myself. Already I can imagine small businesses I would want to see or create in the numerous available spaces. I also think of the level of community-building and community pride that would come out of such a unique and phenomenal location to live and do business and it's lovely.

Brian Crandall captured an outstanding review of Ithaca's housing situation in his November 7, 2023 The Ithaca Voice article, *County analysis finds housing starts still falling far short of needs*. The article examines Ithaca's current state of affairs as it relates to housing since hosting a solutions summit in 2016. It's grim. However, we have the solution with SouthWorks.

For housing alone, SouthWorks affords an incomparable opportunity to curb the outsized increase in rental prices and provide geographically desirable living for the thousands of individuals and households participating in the workforce and seeking homes in our community. It goes without saying, but I'll say it anyway, the pivotal point being the opportunity for individuals in the workforce. For where there are

motivated individuals, there is entrepreneurship and innovation in creating new opportunities. There is consumer spending and aid to the existing economy and there is human flourishing.

Thank you for your time and the work you have dedicated to this discussion. It's most appreciated.

**Melissa Perry, CEO – Child Development Council of Central NY**

As the Chief Executive Officer of the Child Development Council of Central NY seated in Tompkins County at the base of South Hill, I am writing in support of the SouthWorks project.

Tompkins County is a childcare desert. An area qualifies as a childcare desert when there are more than three children aged 5 and under for every available childcare slot. This means that two-thirds of young children in our community do not have access to regulated childcare. The lack of quality childcare impacts the wellbeing of children and creates barriers to parents working removing skilled professionals from the workforce, which has negative and lasting effects on businesses, community, and the local economy.

Quality childcare is essential to a thriving community.

SouthWorks anticipates operating a large childcare program on its campus in Building 21, adding approximately 144 childcare slots, including desperately needed infant and toddler care. These additional slots could change the landscape of childcare in Tompkins County.

The location of this childcare program is ideal for community members traveling from points south and those living and working on South Hill. Childcare on site will be a draw for those developing the SouthWorks space and, eventually, those that live and work at SouthWorks, offering peace of mind and easy access to their children.

The Child Development Council is in the business of supporting all aspects of childcare. With the information that has been provided thus far, the Child Development Council is in strong support of the development of childcare at SouthWorks and the project as a whole.

If you have questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Paula E.F. Younger, Executive Director [Government, Community, and Constituent Relations](#) – Ithaca College**

On behalf of Ithaca College, I am writing to express Ithaca College's support for the proposed SouthWorks project. This project, which aims to transform 95 acres of land across the road from our college into a vibrant community space, represents a significant opportunity for our community, offering a number of benefits that align with our shared goals of growth and development.

The SouthWorks project will bring substantial economic benefits, including job creation and increased local business activity. The addition of approximately 915 residential apartment and townhome units will address the pressing need for housing in our area. Furthermore, the commercial spaces and green areas will undoubtedly enhance the quality of life for residents through improved infrastructure and community amenities.

As an educational institution deeply rooted in this community, we are committed to supporting initiatives that foster community development and improve the well-being of our residents. We believe

that this project aligns with these goals and will provide substantial benefits to the local economy and the community at large.

Ithaca College is pleased to support the vision and objectives of this development project, and we look forward to the positive changes SouthWorks will bring to our South Hill community.

**Rod Howe, Town Supervisor – Town of Ithaca**

The Town of Ithaca has consistently supported this Project since its inception, including letters of support for grant funding through the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) Cleaner Greener Communities Program in 2015; participation as involved agencies in the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) process (2014-2019); and subsequent adoption of the Town of Ithaca Planned Development Zone No. 16 in 2021.

One of the central land use goals articulated in the Town’s Comprehensive Plan is “ensuring that a variety of housing types and prices are provided that support a broad range of household types, sizes, lifestyles, life stages, and household incomes in new neighborhoods.” To achieve this goal, and help combat the housing crisis, the Town of Ithaca recognizes that it must take an active role in supporting the production of a range of housing products.

The Town of Ithaca, as a municipality within Tompkins County, is acutely aware of the housing crisis; the Town is committed to implementing practices such as incorporating regional housing needs into planning decisions, providing development services in collaboration with other agencies and municipalities, and enacting policies that encourage a broad range of housing development.

As a member of the County’s Community Housing Development Fund, the Town of Ithaca is proud to be a certified Pro-Housing community. The Town of Ithaca recognizes the need to play a role in satisfying the preferences and needs of our increasingly demographically and economically diverse residents. The Town of Ithaca is committed to fostering neighborhoods that are livable, affordable, walkable, transit-oriented, and sustainable.

Please consider this correspondence as full support for the Project and Financial Assistance while encouraging the IDA to carefully consider the PILOT request so that the project’s needs are balanced with the Town’s financial interests.

**Todd Mallinson, President / Publisher – Vizella Media**

To those being tasked with decision making on their PILOT application,

After touring the complex this past summer, I was able to come away with a much deeper understanding of the impact this project can have on this community. We are fortunate to have one of the most robust upstate economies, a developer with great vision to invent this property that has laid dormant for far too long. The cost of living here between housing and taxes remains the biggest barrier to more people considering moving here. With the combined vision of building a multi-use work site and addressing mixed housing needs in Ithaca, I give my full support to you approving the application that is before you to stabilize the project while it continues to gather interest from a diverse cross-section of businesses to be the first wave of tenants for the project.

**Gilbert Bruce Hammer – Hammer Media Group**

My name is Gilbert Bruce Hammer, I am the principal of a media production and technology firm and startup founder based here in Ithaca, I wish to record my support for the stated goals of the SouthWorks redevelopment project. The initiative and its goals align with the adaptive reuse movement, which transforms aging or abandoned industrial sites into vibrant, sustainable spaces for modern use.

This approach not only preserves historical and architectural value but also addresses environmental and economic concerns by reducing waste and revitalizing communities. Successful examples of this movement can be seen in projects like Kearny Point in New Jersey and the Salt Lake Hardware Building in Utah.

While both sites required significant environmental remediation and vision to transform them into business and community hubs, they are visible, vibrant examples of the adaptive reuse movement.

SouthWorks has the potential to create thousands of jobs during various buildout phases and generate long-term employment in sectors like technology, light manufacturing, retail, and other services. The inclusion of mixed-income housing will ensure that a diverse group of residents can call the area home, further contributing to a balanced and inclusive community. That said, it is critical that the opportunity to benefit from SouthWorks be open to all economic and cultural groups.

Moreover, with Tompkins Cortland Community College, Ithaca College and Cornell University nearby, SouthWorks has the potential to offer a valuable outlet for graduates to stay in Ithaca, start businesses, and contribute to the local economy. By creating spaces that support entrepreneurship, the project has the opportunity to retain young talent, offering them opportunities to grow their ventures locally.

It is understandable that residents near the SouthWorks site may have concerns about increased traffic, noise, and other disruptions during the construction phase. Addressing these issues openly with a mechanism for tracking and mitigating issues quickly will be key to maintaining community trust and minimizing disruptions.

Given current economic uncertainties, it is important that both Shift Capital and the City of Ithaca have contingency plans in place for potential U.S. and global economic challenges. Recent events have shown how quickly supply chain disruptions and market fluctuations can arise, impacting construction timelines and costs. By preparing flexible financial strategies and leasing models, SouthWorks can remain resilient and adaptable in the face of these challenges and afford any small business the opportunity to benefit from the synergies which SouthWorks can realize.

SouthWorks presents a unique, once-in-a-century opportunity driven at a local level to create a broad, impactful and inclusive development. The project can create jobs, foster entrepreneurship, and provide housing with thoughtful planning and transparency. By learning from successful projects like Kearny Point and Salt Lake, and by addressing environmental, community concerns and economic challenges throughout the process, SouthWorks will become another adaptive reuse success story for the rest of the country to read about.

6. The hearing was adjourned at 5:39 pm.