



# City of Ithaca Community Investment Incentive Tax Abatement Program (CIITAP)

*The City of Ithaca is committed to creating a work environment and community that values and supports diversity and inclusion and to developing laws, policies and procedures that are mindful and inclusive of our diverse community.*

**Canopy Hotel Project  
— Public Information Session —  
Meeting Minutes  
February 9, 2015 – 5:00 p.m.  
Borg Warner Room-Tompkins County Public Library**

This meeting was advertised in the Ithaca Journal on 1/13/15 and again on 2/7/14. It was also posted online on the Ithaca Journal website. Below is a copy of the media release that was distributed.

### ***Media Release***

**City of Ithaca Community Investment Incentive Tax Abatement Program  
Public Information Session-Proposed Hotel Project- 320-24 East MLK Jr./State  
Street**

**Day:** February 9, 2015

**Time:** 5:00 PM

**Place:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room-Cityhall  
108 East Green Street, Ithaca

On February 9, 2015, the City of Ithaca will hold a Public Information Session for a proposed project located at 320-24 East MLK Jr./State Street. The Public Information Session will begin at 5:00 PM, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room, Cityhall, 108 East Green Street, Ithaca. In accordance with the City of Ithaca Community Investment Incentive Tax Abatement Program (CIITAP), the developer and project team will present information about the project and answer questions from the public.

The proposed project consists of a 7-story 123 room boutique hotel. The ground floor will include a café and bar, a retreat area, public restrooms, a garden patio, and approximately 2,000 SF of retail space.

For questions regarding this project, or to see the completed CIITAP application please contact Jennifer Kuszniir at [jenniferk@cityofithaca.org](mailto:jenniferk@cityofithaca.org) or 274-6550.

### **Introductions**

JENNIFER KUSZNIR, City of Ithaca, Economic Development Planner

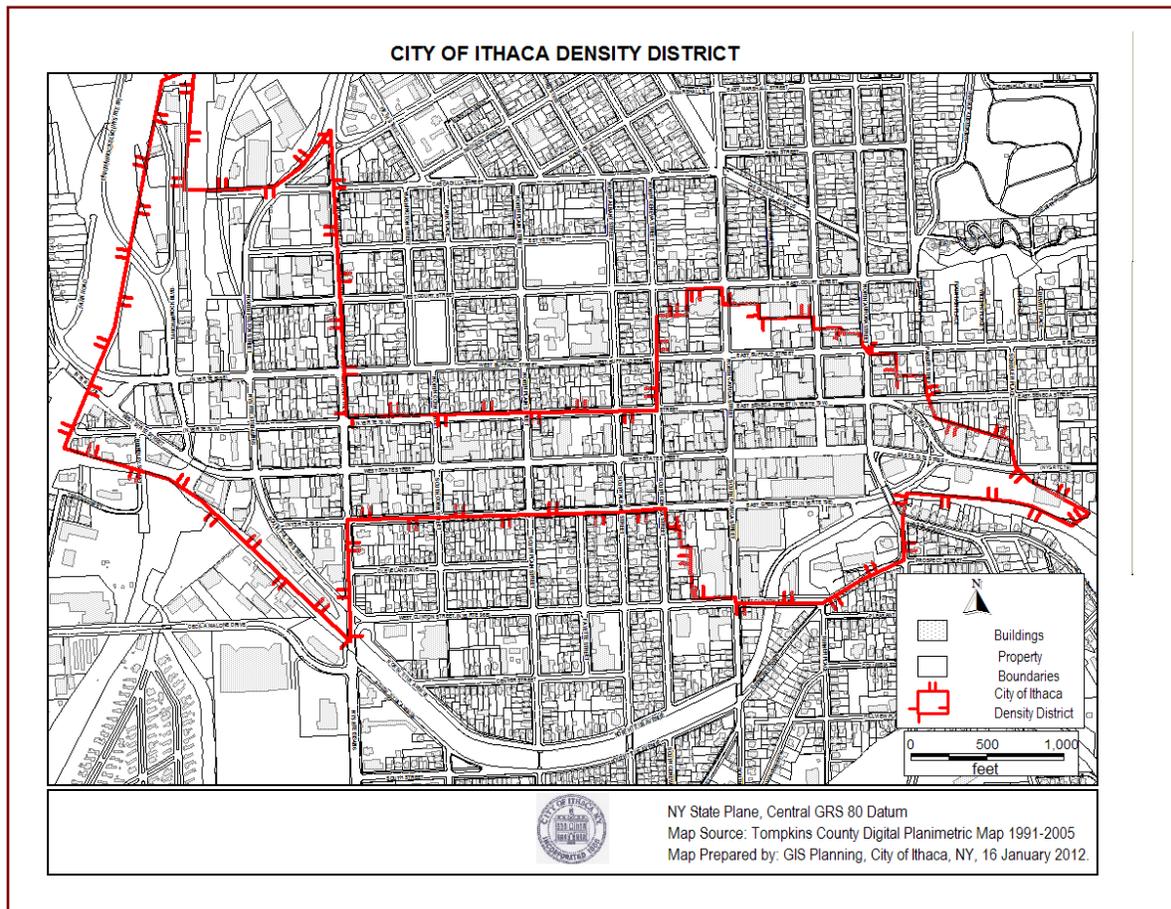
Nels Bohn, Director of Economic Development for the IURA



## **Overview of Community Investment Incentive Tax Abatement Program (CIITAP)**

Kusznir briefly summarized the City's CIITAP process and the minimum size, density, and location criteria. Minimum eligibility criteria are as follows:

- Minimum Size – Projects must be able to demonstrate that they will increase the property value.
- Minimum Density – Projects must be at least 3 stories in height or be a major restoration of an existing structure.
- Project must be located in the City of Ithaca Density District shown below.



## **Overview of Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency (TCIDA)**

Filiberto summarized the role of the IDA and the full application process. After a project receives City endorsement, the IDA has a preliminary meeting to review the application and schedules a public hearing. After the public hearing is held, the IDA has a subsequent meeting to review the comments received and consider the project for abatement. Since the new CIITAP was approved two projects for property tax abatement Ithaca Hotel and Harold Square.

## **Project Presentation**

Scott Whitham presented a brief overview of the project. The proposed project consists of a 7-story 123 room boutique hotel. The ground floor will include a café and bar, and a restaurant. Whitham

## **Questions & Answers**

Applicable questions from attendees and developer responses are summarized below, but are not recorded verbatim.

**Public Comment:** Will there be truck access off of State Street?

**Developer Response:** Deliveries will likely be off of Seneca Way.

**Public Comment:** Where will be the accessible entrance?

**Developer Response:** Accessible entrance will be on MLK/State Street.

**Public Comment:** Where will construction staging take place?

**Developer Response:** Staging will be on site with off-site contractor parking.

**Public Comment:** Has a tenant for the restaurant been determined?

**Developer Response:** The management of the restaurant has not yet been determined, but the developer is interested in securing a local restaurant tenant.

**Public Comment:** Will there be another meeting due to the fact that the journal listed the wrong date for the meeting and there were poor weather conditions.

**Staff Response:** The City posted this meeting twice in the journal and once online and the property owner posted a sign on the property. The journal separately wrote a story on this meeting and printed the wrong date, this is unfortunate, but was not a requirement and was out of the City control. In addition, since the meeting was advertised and Cityhall remained open, it seemed appropriate to hold the meeting. There will be more opportunity for public comment on this project at the Site Plan review public hearing on February 24, 2015, as well as at the public hearing that will be scheduled by the IDA when they

consider granting the abatement. Staging will be on site with off-site contractor parking. The CIITAP Review Committee, consisting of the Mayor, the Director of Planning and Development, and the Director for Community Development for the IURA, will need to determine if another meeting is necessary.

**Public Comment:** Have the legal requirements been met for this hearing, since the wrong date was printed and since there was nothing listed in the legal notice portion of the paper?

**Staff Response:** This meeting is not a public hearing, it is a public information session. A public information session is a chance for the developers to present their project and then to have a dialogue with the public. A public hearing will be scheduled by the IDA prior to voting on the tax abatement. For public hearings a legal notice is required. For public information sessions we send out a press release and purchase two display ads, which was all done for this meeting.

**Public Comment:** Is this hotel going to be a franchise and does the owner own additional hotels?

**Developer Response:** The proposed project is a Canopy Hotel by Hilton. The owner owns additional hotels, but does not have any other Canopy projects. Canopy is a newer brand by Hilton. The owners of this project also own the Hampton Inn on Rt. 13.

**Public Comment:** The Hilton chain has a public statement on their diversity hiring. Does this hotel have a specific diversity plan?

**Developer Response:** The developer has worked with the hospitality training program in the past and has reached out to them for assistance with hiring for this project.

**Public Comment:** Who will be the tenant for the coffee shop? Will it be locally owned?

**Developer Response:** It has not yet been determined whether the hotel will run the coffee shop or if it will be rented out. There have been discussions of having local product, but it is unknown as to whether it will be locally owned.

**Public Comment:** Local ownership will have more of a local economic impact than would carrying local product. Please consider local ownership of the café.

**Public Comment:** Will the hotel offer living wages to the room attendants?

**Developer Response:** The hotel plans on having 33 new full time equivalent positions (FTE) and has committed to at least 16 FTEs that will be paid a living

wage. The hotel has also committed to paying no less than 120% of the minimum wage to all of its employees, which is currently about 75% of the local living wage.

**Public Comment:** Will the hotel use local labor and labor with apprenticeship programs?

**Developer Response:** The owners are very supportive and in favor of using local labor whenever possible, but they cannot make any commitments regarding local labor and apprenticeship programs at this time.

**Public Comment:** What environmental standards will the hotel strive to meet? They should consider meeting or exceeding the County guidelines for 2030 goals.

**Developer Response:** There is still time to evaluate these standards and see what items might be able to be incorporated into this project. The project is not expected to go for LEED certification, however, many of the standards make sense to include even without certification.

**Public Comment:** Who are the project owners?

**Developer Response:** The property is owned by the Patel family.

**Aldersperson Brock Comment:** Would it be possible to hold a second public information session and would it be possible to hold the meeting after the developer has completed the entire IDA application?

**Staff Response:** The current process does not require the applicant to complete the IDA application until after they have received endorsement from the City.

**Public Comment:** The City has to make a process that would allow the community to participate in supporting local building construction to go to local labor. The CIITAP program should be changed in order to achieve the community goals for local labor.

**Developer Response:** The general contractor for this project has not yet been selected, but they will be the ones to seek the bids for the subcontractors.

**Public Comment:** IDA members should be present at all IDA public hearings.

**TCAD Response:** It is not a legal requirement for the IDA members to be present at the public hearings. They are notified of all public hearings and are also given all comments from the meeting.

**Public Comment:** All jobs should be given a living wage.

**Public Comment:** The hotel should consider placing recycling, trash and compost bins in every room.

**Alderson Brock Comment:** The Mayor has begun discussions on revisiting the criteria for the CIITAP program and also explore implementing this policy countywide.

**Public Comment:** Around the Country there is a new vision for sustainable economic development. There are many models for the City to follow for projects that are developed on City land.

**Public Comment:** Solar panels on the hotel could reduce the impacts, help the County to meet its energy goals, and could save energy costs to the hotel.

**Developer Response:** The project team can take a look at solar panels and see if it would possible to incorporate them.

**Public Comment:** If the abatement is denied, will the project move forward and what is the construction schedule?

**Developer Response:** The project schedule is looking to get site plan approval in February and then to complete construction drawings by the fall and begin the 12 month construction period in the fall of 2015.

**Public Comment:** Concerns were raised that there would not be adequate parking and nighttime parking in the garages that could support this project.