

Friends of Clifton Park Open Space  
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Letters to the Editor  
Gazette Newspapers  
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Recent news articles have outlined a prospective plan to allow the town's Industrial Development Agency to assume the role of applicant for potential development projects on various land parcels in the town's Empire Zones. It is our understanding that the intent of this proposal is to provide "shovel-ready" locations to attract businesses to the area. It has been demonstrated on many occasions that Clifton Park is very attractive to all kinds of development without any special inducements. Retail, industrial, and commercial businesses already know that we have a qualified work force, a favorable tax setting, attractive communication and transportation amenities and an appealing environment. Indeed, Clifton Park has continued to realize growth during the past 3 years, without any special inducements, when other communities have been impacted by the nation's economic downturn.

There is no question that the goal of quality business development is laudable. We have concerns, however, about how this fundamental change in role for the IDA fits with the current Master Plan, Open Space Plan, and the GEIS and the attendant building moratorium now in effect in the western part of town. The above plans and the moratorium are the result of considerable research, debate, and study coupled with a great deal of public involvement and professional input. Unlike the above efforts and plans, the Industrial Development Agency operates on a much more reclusive basis. It is possible that, in its zeal to induce various businesses to locate or relocate to Clifton Park, the IDA could undermine the analytical approach and goals of these larger strategies. The Friends of Clifton Park Open Space is very concerned that significant progress and good work performed by town officials and many citizens could be sacrificed to address a single concern—job creation and expansion of the tax base.

According to the newspaper articles referenced earlier, the IDA "project applicant" plan calls for coordination with landowners, building professionals and other economic development agencies. It does not cite a requirement to also coordinate with the Town's planning agencies, zoning board or environmental control commission. Nor does it mention adherence to the Master Plan or goals of the Open Space Plan, and offers no acknowledgement of the building moratorium now in effect.

If the IDA is the project applicant before a bonafide business applicant presents itself, how can there be any meaningful public input into the development approval process. Indeed, unless the news articles are inaccurate, the IDA would appear to have no accountability to any public body in these matters. This would result in an incomplete or cursory project review that would take place in an abbreviated timeframe, which could be too rapid to accommodate public awareness and expressions of concern.

The concept of blanket prior approval of projects without concrete definitions or consideration for public input risks the substantial progress realized during the past few years. Further, it would be imprudent to give the impression that our town gives special attention to development interests over the consideration of the broader values inculcated in the Master Plan and the Open Space Plan.

In summary, it has been the overall quality of our town, which makes it the target of interest by so many groups, and the meshing of all these interests is essential to retaining that quality of life which attracts so many. Friends of Clifton Park Open Space would like stress its opposition to this short-cut in the review process for IDA projects in the Town of Clifton Park.

Friends of Clifton Park Open Space  
Steering Committee