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## Ithaca's inner Commons may go smoke-free

BY KRISY GASHLER • JOURNAL STAFF • AUGUST 21, 2008

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"Keep your inner T smoke-free."

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That's the slogan to explain where smoking on The Commons should be banned, according to a Common Council sub-committee.

Alderman Eric Rosario, I-2nd, chair of the subcommittee that's looking at potential outdoor smoking regulations around the city, said the committee first considered creating 25-foot smoke-free zones around certain areas like outdoor dining areas, pavilions and the playground.

But this resulted in a "balkanized approach" that would have been difficult to enforce.

Then, after input from downtown merchants, the subcommittee came up with the "inner T"

approach. Smoking would be banned from the playground on the east to the outdoor dining area on the west, Center Ithaca on the south to the northern entrance of Tompkins Trust Company on the north.

This would ban smoking in the most densely populated area of The Commons and around most of the mobile food vending areas, Rosario said.

Rosario said he was standing in line at the hot dog stand one day and noticed the person in front of him and the person behind him were smoking.

Unable to escape the smoke without leaving the line, Rosario said he thought about "the person serving the hot dog (who) was breathing that all day, and there was no obvious recourse."

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Rosario presented the plan to Common Council's Community and Organizational Issues committee Tuesday night.

Council members supported of the idea.

Gary Ferguson, executive director of the Downtown Ithaca Alliance, said the alliance's board of directors has seen the plan but hasn't taken action on it.

When the idea for a complete ban on The Commons was discussed several months ago, downtown merchants felt "particularly nervous," but the inner T plan hasn't resulted in any "vehement opposition" from the board, he said.

"Our goal with this is we want to make sure downtown is usable by everybody, and that includes people who don't like smoking and people who are smokers," Ferguson said.

The proposed inner T ban would eliminate smoking in the Bernie Milton pavilion but leave three other pavilions available for smokers, Rosario said.

Beyond The Commons, the subcommittee is considering potential bans around the city.

A blanket ban on all city sidewalks was rejected as too restrictive, Rosario said.

Outdoor events and festivals should be considered nonsmoking by default. If organizers want to allow smoking, they'll have to apply for a permit and designate smoking areas, the subcommittee recommended.

The subcommittee's recommendations should be ready by the end of this year, Rosario said.

Alderwoman Robin Korherr, D-5th, asked why smoking should be allowed at festivals at all. Korherr previously chaired a Common Council committee that considered extensive public smoking regulations and bans.

Alderman Dan Cogan, D-5th and a subcommittee member, said the group didn't want the festival regulation to ban smoking in all of Stewart Park, for example, where there likely would be room for people to move away and smoke without impacting others.

Alderwoman Mary Tomlan, D-3rd, asked the subcommittee to give priority to a smoking ban at transit shelters and stops, where it's hard for people to escape second-hand smoke.

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**ErnestHemingway** wrote:

Then where are all the children going to smoke ???!!! .. this is discrimination...

8/21/2008 10:38:49 AM

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**kotler** wrote:

This will end up being yet one more reason for shoppers to avoid the Commons in

favor of the mall or the stores on Elmira Road. Why not establish a small designated smoking area on the Commons that's pleasant for people to use?

8/21/2008 10:05:15 AM

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**Winifred** wrote:

I thought the people in Ithaca celebrate diversity? So now they take a select group and tell them they are bad. Interesting! I'm not a smoker, but its everyone's right to choose whether they want to smoke or not. If I'm outside, I expect to get a variety of smells and pollution. Standing at the corner waiting to cross the street, I get overwhelmed with the exhaust from TCAT buses and the City's SWAT bus!! The City doesn't seem concerned about that!! People in this city need to lighten up! Good thing these legislators don't live in the country or they'd be telling the farmers to stop the smells from the barns!

8/21/2008 8:50:08 AM

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**beebalm** wrote:

So Putherein70, if you are smoking next to the playground where I am with my children, I should leave? No way. In this day and age you are the minority, not me or my children. As for the county/state "dictating" - I am thankful that we have people that actually care enough about our health to try and implement this ban - and keep jacking up the prices on your cancer sticks that you choose to poison yourself with. Believe me I was you once, I quit 9 years ago after I saw my fair share of relatives dragging around oxygen tanks and gasping for breath on their death beds. When I did smoke in public I never had the attitude that others should have to deal with my addiction while I polluted their personal space. I got out of THEIR way. Actually I think that maybe business on the Commons will get a bit of a boost if the ban is implemented.

8/21/2008 8:12:15 AM

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**AndiD** wrote:

I'm a smoker, but I fully support the smoking ban as presented by Alderman Rosario. It's reasonable and balanced, taking into account the fact that there are a large number of fools, like me who either happen to like the filthy habit of smoking or can't find a way out. I reside in the former category most days, visiting the latter from time to time. We have money to spend, too. A little less lately, but we still have it.

Smoking around children is, I think, deplorable, and smoking around food is offensive in that it takes away from the sensory experience eating should entail. I'll even include Lou's hot dogs in this category, mostly because they come with a healthy dose of Lou. He's one of the primary forces behind the ban as well as being a downtown icon, and it's hard not to respect Lou. And one disagrees with him at their own peril.

So...you can't smoke in the "T" and you can't smoke at festivals. You can't smoke in restaurants and bars, stores, buses, taxis, or public and commercial buildings. Fine. We smokers still have everyplace else, and we're used to the dirty looks. And we're perfectly capable of returning them when necessary and appropriate.

Bring on the ban, I say! Let's just get it over with and give Lou the victory he deserves.

8/21/2008 7:17:00 AM

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