Mayor Svante Myrick ’09 promised to safeguard Ithaca residents’ civil rights and called for increased civic engagement in the wake of Donald Trump’s election at a town hall event in Collegetown Tuesday.

Myrick pledged to protect residents who could be threatened by President-elect Trump’s future policies, in light of the views that he expressed on the campaign trail. The mayor specifically spoke in defense of LGBTQ citizens, religious minorities and undocumented immigrants.

“I want to make a promise,” Myrick said. “No matter what this president does, those of you who had reason to be afraid to live in America, those who do not have the full legal protection under the law, those who do not have full protection of the civil rights, do not have the right to vote, to get married, to practice your religion freely, those of you who are living in this community without documentation, have no reason to fear, while my administration is in office.”

The mayor said he will not cooperate with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to deport undocumented immigrants living in Ithaca.

“We will not cooperate with any attempt to violate human rights.” Myrick said. “We will not cooperate with any attempts to use ICE as a deportation task force [and] we will not cooperate with any unconstitutional attempt to expose you to harm.”

Myrick called threatening to deport undocumented immigrants a violation of American values, and said he will begin working with other public officials soon to coordinate a policy response to any such effort.
“Folks who have lived in America for years feel unsafe. Frankly, that’s un-American,” Myrick said. “Tomorrow morning, I am meeting with the New York City assemblywoman and chair of the legislature to coordinate our efforts. Our intentions would not be secret. We will do this.”

Additionally, the mayor advised Ithacans to remain politically involved and active, even if the results of this election were disappointing.

“We have a new president-elect. Many of us, frankly most of us, did not vote for him. But he [will] be our president anyways. We owe [it] to him to be good citizens,” Myrick said. “But citizenship does not mean we fall in line. It means to remain engaged. If we see something we don’t like, if we see something that threatens us, we stand up for ourselves.”

Myrick stressed that polite discourse is often the most effective form of civic engagement.

“We can [remain engaged] without being rude, crude and disrespectful. In fact, you get better results that way,” Myrick said. “I tell you, from being inside in politics, people who send us nasty emails do not get what they want. The people who are firm but polite, they get the world out of us.”

The mayor concluded by re-affirming that Ithaca will stand by its values. “Ithaca will remain a place of community, a place of refuge. Free and safe for all Americans,” Myrick said.