The Second Regional Plan

Introduction and summary

Regional Plan Association has begun the final stage in a ten-year program to prepare a new plan for the New York Metropolitan Region—to carry forward the 1929 Plan of New York and Its Environ, which has influenced metropolitan development significantly.

In preparing the second plan, the Association has analyzed present trends and policies and described the future that will result if these forces continue. We also have tried to identify the problems that present trends and policies seem to be bringing. And we have formed some hypotheses on how to meet those problems.

During the next three years, our research will test these hypotheses and modify them. We shall adjust conclusions to the opinion of many groups and the general public. And finally, we shall present the second Regional Plan.

Below, we explain what the plan will be like when completed, the steps leading to it, and, particularly, what we now know about the Region’s future and what we still need to know to plan rationally. In addition, we expose our assumptions, identify the critical issues to be decided, and discuss how the plan can influence the Region’s future.

The work of the past seven years

When it became clear that the first Regional Plan had run its course—its major highways and river crossings were nearly all in place or on the drawing boards and the planning conceptions that were new in the 1920’s were now common currency—Regional Plan Association began to prepare the second plan.

Initially, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, The Ford Foundation, the Merrill Foundation for Advancement of Financial Knowledge, and the Twentieth Century Fund financed the New York Metropolitan Region Study, costing $600,000. A research team organized by the Harvard Graduate School of Public Administration and headed by Dr. Raymond Vernon was commissioned to chart the economic, social, governmental and land development forces now influencing the Region’s growth and to sketch the effects of these forces, if continued, on the Region of 1985. An advisory committee, chaired by Earl Schwalst, then President, now Chairman of the Board of the Bowery Savings Bank, reviewed the work. This analysis was published in nine volumes between 1959 and 1961; Metropolis 1985 by Dr. Vernon summarized the series.

The conclusions were explained to many and varied audiences by Regional Plan Association: in three-day Arden House conferences for business executives, in speeches before literally hundreds of organizations—civic, business and educational; in the Association’s 1961 annual conference attended by more than 600 persons; in a New Jersey Conference of 200 selected leaders.

The audiences were almost unanimous: prospects for the next generation’s development in the Region are not satisfactory. A plan is needed to shape development more rationally than it is being shaped by the sum of the uncoordinated decisions of governments, corporations and individuals.

Regional Plan Association then added to the research that the Harvard team started, publishing in 1962 an updated and more concrete description of the way the Region would be in 1985 if present trends continued: Spread City, Projections of Development Trends and the Issues They Pose, 1960-1985. Particularly, we calculated the resulting pattern of metropolitan development as current economic and population forces meet present zoning ordinances. Earlier, a projection of outdoor recreation and conservation needs and a survey of regional park opportunities had been published by Regional Plan Association in the Race for Open Space (1960). In 1961, the Region’s dependence on suburban railroad service was analyzed by the Association for the United States Senate (Com-

moter Transportation). More recently, existing plans for rapid transit and expressways were reported and principles for evaluating them suggested (Rail Transit Plans, 1963, and Expressway Plans, 1964). A new set of regional maps was prepared in 1963 in cooperation with the Tri-State Transportation Committee. In addition, trends in housing construction have been monitored annually (New Homes), and the number of persons and vehicles entering Manhattan’s central business district has been analyzed periodically (Hub-Bound Travel), most recently in 1960.

In all this research, we have infused data and insight from organizations working on the same issues: the Tri-State Transportation Committee, Port of New York Authority, New York City Planning Commission, county and municipal planners, and many more.

Recognizing that the new plan would be useful only if it led to objectives which a large segment of the population strongly wanted, the Association systematically tested the reaction of some 5,600 persons to the Region’s prospects in a series of meetings held in small groups all over the Region. Participants in this “Goals for the Region” project responded to lengthy questionnaires after (1) reading about the issues, (2) seeing them discussed and illustrated on television and (3) talking about them in their own groups. Overwhelmingly, they declared their concern about development trends. They also reported their housing, neighborhood and transportation preferences.

Based on the Goals for the Region responses, the Association concluded that there are enough concerned citizens in the Region who would lead efforts to change the direction development is taking so that a new regional plan would have a reasonable chance of success.

The Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Taconic Foundation, Old Dominion Foundation, Victoria Foundation, and Fred L. Lavanburg Foundation invested $650,000 in this research.

In 1964, the Taconic Foundation, The Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund and Avalon Foundation subscribed $1,425,000 toward completing the second Plan for the New York Metropolitan Region.

What we have learned

The New York Metropolitan Region will prosper on the whole and spread—if present trends continue. This is the main message of the Harvard Study.

The extent of the spread by 1985 would be some-

thing like this, under 1960 local zoning regulations. (Zoning changes since 1960 generally would result in even greater spread, though there is some increase in density in and right near New York City. References below to “current” zoning are to 1960 ordinances.)

The pattern of development on vacant land required by current local zoning would be new in city building, different enough, Regional Plan feels, to warrant a new noun: spread-city.

In brief, spread-city is characterized by one-family houses on larger lots than are typical of the suburbs of the past (or of most other metropolitan areas today). Jobs are scattered as are facilities, such as stores and churches, banks and professional offices. This spread-city form of development began in some of the postwar housing developments that grew up between and beyond the older suburbs, out as far as 25-30 miles from Manhattan. Spread-city is now extending rapidly and is becoming more widely spread as it moves outward.

It is not city, as we normally picture a city, because it is neither compact nor focused on a major “downtown” and important minor centers. It is not suburb, as suburbs were fashioned two or more generations ago, attached by an umbilical cord of rail to a central city. Rather, most spread-city residents work outside the older job centers in scattered locations and do most of their living in a broad ring around the central city.

Though this new development may constitute in part a nostalgic effort to return to the frontier or at
least to the lost rural days of America’s recent past, there is no question that spread-city is urban. In this Region, 10 million people or more soon will be living in areas that can roughly be described as spread-city, and most of them will be working there at industrial and office jobs.

Because the older central cities—as they are today—clearly are losing their attraction for families with children, we can only assume that in a period of rising income the out-movement will continue, lacking special effort to retain these families in the city. During the 1950-60 decade, more than 1½ million people moved to the suburbs and spread-city parts of the Region from the Core. (Regional Plan defines the Core as New York City excluding Staten Island, Hudson County and Newark, New Jersey). Population of the older parts of all the Region’s cities dropped, despite large natural increases (more births than deaths). Those who left generally had higher incomes than the majority of those who stayed, and nearly all those moving out were white.

Because of the severe population pressure, some additional people may be absorbed in outer areas of the cities and already-completed suburbs in apartments that replace some of today’s one-family-house neighborhoods. But the reluctance of families with children to live in apartments seems likely to hold this increase down. The present apartment boom in cities and inner suburbs mainly results from a change in the age pattern in the Region. There is a momentary decline in families of home-buying age, i.e., 30-34, those with children of romping and school age and enough savings for a downpayment. And there is a corresponding increase in small households—older persons and young adults. This explains why population seldom rises much and sometimes even declines when apartments replace houses in a city or inner suburb.

With the population of older cities dropping for the most part and with the older suburbs absorbing little more population, it is quite possible that about 6½ million people—more than the total expected regional population rise—will be looking for housing on land surrounding present suburbs between 1960 and 1985.

Under current zoning regulations, most of the new housing in the outer areas would be relatively expensive—almost exclusively one-family houses and more than half on lots larger than one-third acre (14,500 square feet). This is more than twice the size of the typical suburban development of the late 1940’s. Nearly one in six homes of the future would have to be on a lot of one acre or more.

We can expect just about enough jobs to keep the prospective population employed without any net migration in or out, according to the Harvard study.

All of the net increase in jobs can be expected to locate outside of the older cities and the Region’s Core, except for additions in the New Jersey Meadowlands (if and when the state and affected municipalities agree on a development plan). In fact, the older cities are losing blue-collar jobs in the net and probably will continue to do so. On the other hand,
office employment seems likely to increase in Manhattan. Altogether, jobs will spread outward, but not as fast or far as the homes of the job holders.

Since many of these new jobs will not pay enough to allow their holders to live in the relatively expensive residences we can expect under current zoning outside the older cities, many will be commuting outward from the low-rent sections of cities. At the same time, more Manhattan employees will commute inward longer distances.

On the average, the journey to work for all employees will be longer. Even the increasing number of workers who would both live and work in spread-city or the old suburbs would not necessarily live near their jobs. This is true partly because home prices are far lower at the periphery of development—already fifty miles in some places—than they are in the inner suburbs, partly because there are personal reasons for housing choices aside from cost and commuting. As leisure time increases, these other reasons assume greater importance compared to the costs and the rigors of commuting.

All of this would require a much denser network of expressways than we now have and probably would bring heavy traffic on each artery as well, particularly if jobs in the old suburbs and in spread-city continue to be scattered in groups too small to be served efficiently by bus or rail.

In addition to transportation to work, travel to learn and to play must be considered. Suitable places with suitable transportation must be found for new universities and colleges for some 700,000 more students than are now enrolled in higher education. Increasing leisure and income will raise in importance the location of recreational, cultural and shopping facilities and suitable transportation to them.

In designing residential areas, an apparent expansion of interest in civic and government participation should be considered. This growing interest might suggest designs that foster strong communities in which citizen action can be effective. It might also have a bearing on the methods that can succeed in effectuating a regional plan.

Finally, we know enough about the causes of the present development pattern to realize that it does not necessarily reflect a positive choice of a metropolitan pattern by a majority or even a large minority of the Region’s population. We know, for example, that, taken as a whole, the Region’s present residential zoning probably does not reflect regional housing demand. At least our impression is that there is great unfulfilled demand for less expensive one-family houses than are now available, houses that could be built economically within the free market if zoning permitted. Certainly the Region’s homebuilders feel there is such a market, and they would like to serve it. Homebuilders also visualize a much greater market close to the Region’s center for high-rise and garden apartments than present zoning allows.

But it is not just the housing market that seems poorly reflected in the present regional zoning. Present zoning frequently fails to reflect the considered choice of a good local community pattern even by those who passed the ordinance. Local zoning issues frequently must be attuned to anticipated local taxes and costs rather than to the appearance of the locality or its convenience as a place to live and work. At other times, large lot zoning is chosen to bar unappealing subdivisions of mass produced small houses. But, municipalities might not choose large lots as uniformly as they do today if houses on small lots, including row houses, were attractive and well-placed (they can be) and if the local fiscal effects were neutralized.

We know, also, that few municipalities are planned and zoned with a knowledge of the total metropolitan mosaic of which any one municipal plan is but a piece. Since residents of the Region increasingly “live” in many municipalities of the Region as they conduct their daily affairs, the total mosaic becomes important
to them, not just the single piece for which their own local representatives take responsibility.

Similarly, corporations locate plants without knowing the effect of the location on the Region's total efficiency and therefore the eventual efficiency of their own plants.

The private and public costs of the underlying investment needed to serve the emerging new pattern of development (highways, utilities, etc.) compared to some other pattern has not been considered by any of those whose decisions are contributing to it. Regional Plan Association estimated these "infrastructure" costs for the projected development pattern (see Spread City) and will compute them for alternative patterns.

Most decisions shaping the Region, then, are not deliberate choices of the kind of metropolitan development people want. In fact, nearly all those who have had a chance to react to the projections seem dissatisfied with them.

This evidence, taken altogether, has strengthened Regional Plan's judgment of the mid-1950's that the New York Metropolitan Region would develop far better over the next generation if there were a new regional plan for guidance.

**Some problems identified**

After projecting present policies and trends into the future and describing the probable results, Regional Plan and groups with which the projections were discussed identified several prospective problems.

One is the narrowing choice of housing type and location for many families. The type of house and neighborhood that can be built on the outer edges under present zoning offers some but not wide choice. Living in the old cities is becoming less acceptable to middle-class families, and nearby suburbs are becoming very expensive. Middle-class families at the lower end of the middle-income scale, industrial workers for example, would be particularly limited in choice of housing location.

Another result of current development trends is the growing separation of the affluent and the poor, which also is, in large measure, a separation of Negro and white. Most of the people in the Region have been able to extend a barrier of distance between their homes and the homes of the poor even while, paradoxically, the areas affected by poverty have been enlarged. The segments of the Region infected by poverty understandably are avoided by many of those who can live elsewhere. The boundary between these areas and those protected by distance from the effects of poverty generally coincide with the boundaries of the old cities and a few of the close-in older suburbs. This seems to have increased the psychological and political separation of the old cities and the newer areas surrounding them, a separation that could result—perhaps has re-

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Table 1

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Note that the distribution of low-income families in the Region in 1949 quite closely followed the distribution of the population as a whole in the Region in 1950, county by county. But by 1955-56, the gap between some counties' share of low-income families and their share of population began to widen—negatively in New York City's older boroughs, Manhattan, Bronx and Brooklyn, and in Newark; positively in Nassau, Bergen and, a little less so, in Morris, Middlesex, Union, Somerset and Westchester. The use of family income figures underplays the contrast between the suburbs and central cities because of the larger number of low-income households that are not included as families (single persons) living in the older cities.

Because per capita income in the country rose approximately 25% between 1949 and 1959, we have used $5,000 a year as low-income cutooff in 1956, $4,000 in 1949. The percentage of families falling in this low-income category of all families in the Region dropped from 55% in 1949 to 30% in 1959 so that almost all counties had fewer low-income families in 1959 than in 1949.
sulted—in unnecessary friction and bitterness. In addition, it will delay the solution of some of the problems of poverty, of minority groups and of the city. Furthermore, the central cities, with over half of the present population of the Region and far more than half of its jobs and other major activities, probably cannot function well if a large segment of their residents—most of the families with children—want to leave as soon as they can afford to.

The limited choice of housing types in the outer areas, coupled with the outward movement of industrial jobs, is likely to cause an increase in reverse commuting. Many industrial workers will not find suitable housing they can afford near suburban factories. At the same time, the zoning in the outer areas pushes the new residences, even of those who can afford spread-city living, out farther than jobs. Combined, the growing out-commuting and the spread of housing farther out than jobs will increase the distance between home and jobs on the average.

In addition, most new jobs in the suburbs and spread-city can be reached only by automobile so the percentage of persons driving to work is bound to rise from the very low figure, 1 out of 3, recorded for the New York metropolitan area in the 1960 census. All of this multiplies rush hour automobile traffic, which threatens existing communities with new roadways cutting through, particularly in the inner suburbs where traffic already is heavy. The highways required by the traffic this new pattern will generate will cost more than all the new schools and college buildings needed for the swelling population.

A fifth problem is the possible diminution of choice of jobs, goods, services and leisure pursuits within convenient range of the homes of many people in the Region because these activities are spreading and scattering. Increasingly, persons who would use Manhattan for these activities will be living far away while transportation to Manhattan becomes less satisfactory. And no substitutes for Manhattan on a smaller scale are being built or planned for the new areas.

A sixth problem is the threat to natural countryside posed by the large number of new homes on large lots that will have to be built on now-vacant land if net out-movement from the older cities continues and the large-lot requirements remain. Do we want to substitute hundreds of thousands of acres of back yards for an equal land area of natural countryside?

A seventh is the lack of suitable housing for the growing number of older people in the communities in which they have spent their middle years, because many presently developing communities do not allow apartments or houses on small lots. This difficulty is compounded for those who no longer can drive safely because the spread-city pattern of development does not suit either public transportation or walking.

Eighth, the recreation activities that are growing fastest in popularity—outdoor sports like skiing, swimming and boating and cultural pursuits like music, art and drama—are those which the prospective development pattern will make increasingly inconvenient for most residents of the Region. Here and there journey-to-play traffic jams already are competing with journey-to-work congestion for the frustration of the motorist.

A ninth problem is the visual dullness and mediocrity of many parts of the Region, without much variety in basic patterns over large stretches and without a positive conception of what would be attractive. The heavy mesh of expressways that would be needed to tie together a spread and scattered metropolitan area adds to the likelihood of ugly urban design.

A tenth is the deterring effect that the prospective pattern of development seems likely to have on residents’ sense of community. The spread pattern without clear focal points, the political boundaries un-
related to distinct social, economic or topographic characteristics, and the lack of distinctiveness between neighborhoods probably will discourage community relationships in the new areas. The exodus of many middle-income families with children from the cities already may have weakened community activity in the older areas.

A final problem is the high cost in taxes, wasted resources and inefficiency that the spread pattern on the outside and gradual depopulation and social deterioration of the older cities seem to imply.

Hypotheses and research to test them
Regional Plan Association is continuing to test the probability that these problems will occur if there are no major changes in present policies. At the same time, we are testing hypotheses about how to meet or mitigate them, trying to resolve the many issues that are involved.

The first set of hypotheses relates to the older cities: To retain at least as many people in the older cities and to keep the population fairly balanced in age, income and race, substantially raising the percentage who really want to live there—who are not simply forced to, it will be necessary to improve city housing, inject open space and improve services. These improvements in city living would be no more costly, considering all expenses on whomever they fall, than providing the new housing and urban services for the population that would otherwise leave the cities and seek housing elsewhere in the Region. In addition, the improved city conditions would better life for all city residents.

To find the changes needed to retain a balanced city population, Regional Plan Association will consult experts on various public service programs, such as education and public safety, and compare standards in different parts of the Region. We will look at Goals for the Region project responses and other surveys of urban attitudes. We will study the way people have reacted to city conditions up to now.

A study is underway comparing the cost of improving living conditions in old residential areas of New York City with the cost of building new subdivisions on vacant land for the same number of people.

We will try to assess what will happen to the older cities if today's middle-income families and those who will achieve middle-range incomes over the years continue to move out at a rapid rate. First, we will estimate how many lower-income families can be expected to raise their income to middle levels in the next generation; the rate of unemployment and degree of poverty that might occur under various conditions, including the expected trend in automation of both office activities and production; and the number and kind of people who might move into the Region. We will study income trends and the probable job mix which will determine a good deal about this migration. We also will look at the effects on the price of housing of various rates of population decline in cities and estimate the reaction of the housing market to the possible price changes.

A second set of hypotheses and research projects deal with the housing that will have to be built on vacant land. We will test the idea that a variety rather than similar housing types and prices (including rents) in all parts of the Region will satisfy more persons' housing preferences; give more persons the option of living fairly close to their jobs; cut the average distance to work in the Region; tend to improve the appearance of the new areas; and leave more natural countryside convenient to the Region's residents.

But perhaps most of the people who will look for housing in the newly-developing areas want the kind of housing that zoning has called for a one-family house on a third-acre or larger lot. To find the market for housing over the rest of the century, we will analyze the age, family status, and incomes of the anticipated 1985 and 2000 population; the Goals for the Region responses about housing preferences; present residential choices; and the way people now live, showing how the housing and neighborhood patterns affect their way of living. We also will look for housing and neighborhood designs that provide the indoor and outdoor privacy and attractiveness on small lots that many people are now seeking by living on large lots.

We will compute the residential densities needed to support social activities, entertainment and shopping that can be reached without a car by older people, young adults and children, and the kind of shopping and other activities and services that can be provided profitably within convenient driving range at various residential densities.

We will add up the space needed for all the homes and myriad activities we expect by 1985 and 2000 and sketch with a broad brush how the Region will look and feel under various patterns of high and low density, more centralization or less.
We also will have to see whether local government financing might prevent local acceptance of the most satisfactory residential patterns because these patterns would distribute the taxes and financial burdens unevenly. If so, we will try to suggest how fiscal fairness can be achieved along with well-planned residential areas and how the effect of municipal tax needs on land use can be neutralized.

A third hypothesis and set of research projects deal with the trip to work. In the Region’s center and the inner ring of development around it, there is no reasonable alternative to public transportation to get the majority of workers to their jobs. As jobs increase and locations change and as the location of the homes of the employees working in the central parts of the Region changes, public transportation must be adapted to the new situation, and the new jobs should be located so they can be served by buses or rail. If not, the inner suburbs and outer parts of the Region’s core will be inundated with automobile traffic. Then highways probably will have to be cut through these communities.

To serve inner-area jobs, a transportation system will have to be worked out that suits the probable residential locations of the employees. Techniques for financing adequate transportation service also will have to be drawn up and justified.

In the outer areas, there may be more choice among job locations and transportation systems to work. If residents are to have public transportation available and a wide choice of jobs, work places will have to be concentrated to a considerable degree. If, on the other hand, the primary goal is to allow most people to live very close to their jobs and drive there in their own cars, scattered jobs and a dense road network may be best.

To decide these issues, we will consult technical experts on the new kinds of transportation and communication that can be expected by the end of the century and how they will affect the way we can live and the way we want to live.

The highways needed for various patterns of job and residential locations will be measured—without public transportation and with various percentages of public transportation. The relative transportation costs and travel times of different arrangements of job location and transportation also will be figured.

We also will try to discover the conditions under which people will use public transportation and for what purpose and the cost of providing these improved conditions compared to providing enough highways for the same access. We will come at these answers by trying to find out people’s attitudes—partly revealed in responses to (1) the Goals project, (2) other recent surveys and (3) several demonstration projects that have improved public transportation in several metropolitan areas. In addition, we will compare costs of faster, more frequent and more comfortable public transportation with the cost of the automobile alternative.

If use of public transportation seems preferable for most trips to work, we will still have to find out whether the new jobs can be located efficiently in such a way that they can be reached by public transportation. We will look at possible industrial location arrangements in the light of factors considered by location experts. We also will look at the effects of various patterns of job location on local real estate taxes to see whether—as with the residential patterns—local government financing must be adjusted to assure fair distribution of revenues and burdens.

A fourth hypothesis and set of research projects
set standards for local and county parks and made specific recommendations for regional parks based on projections of outdoor recreation demand. But we also must compare the cost and advantages of providing outdoor recreation close to homes on the one hand or improving transportation (highways and/or public transportation service) to parks further away.

And seventh: How much public and private money should be devoted to good design and attractive appearance of what is built and renewed, and how much regulation for this purpose should be tolerated? We will bring together the best design ideas from this country and abroad and suggest ways of promoting and financing beauty in buildings and in open spaces that would be most acceptable to the Region’s residents.

What will the plan be like?

The resulting regional plan can be compared to a local plan by imagining two different views of the area—one from the ground, the other from an airplane. To local planners, every square foot of land is important—what is there and how it is designed and used. Regional planners are concerned primarily with those sweeping aspects of the metropolitan area that could be discerned from a plane—activities that serve large numbers of people who come together from a wide area. These would include most work places, major shopping, specialized recreation facilities such as large parks, Shea Stadium or a theater, higher education, plus the regional transportation network—both highways and public transportation service—that brings
people to and from these large scale or highly specialized activities. In addition, the location and extent of general areas suited to residence and open space are of importance to the regional pattern.

Planners of a single municipality cannot deal suitably with these aspects of the Region's development. The forces that determine their location are regional, the facilities might spill over the boundaries of one or even several municipalities, and the activities are vitally important to residents of dozens of communities.

The second Regional Plan will propose locations for the facilities (including transportation) that serve the whole or major parts of the Region and will suggest public policies and other conditions needed to bring about these locations.

In addition, policies and standards will be suggested for achieving or maintaining excellent cities, older suburbs and new areas of development. For the cities, these will include standards of public services, attractive housing designs for city densities, planning and renewal policies, and conditions that might encourage a sense of community and a closer relationship of citizen to city government. Designs and design principles for developments in the new areas will be suggested as will improvements in planning procedures and powers at all levels of government. Sources of financing to implement desirable standards of public service and the public and private policies needed to assure a well-designed and attractive Region will be proposed.

Some underlying assumptions about goals

The problems, hypotheses and issues identified here did not leap by themselves from our research. Assumptions about what makes a good metropolitan area lay behind them.

Typically, planners want to design the cityscape for efficiency and beauty. An efficient region would, among other characteristics, keep trips as short as possible via the cheapest transportation (leaving to individuals the choice of locations and transportation mode); keep economic units that have frequent face-to-face relations close in time and convenience; minimize costs of serving homes and facilities with utilities, etc. The search for urban beauty goes beyond good architecture. It includes positioning of buildings and open space and the state of the space left open—i.e., whether natural, developed for open uses or ravaged.

Most planners also seek to enlarge the range of choice open to people—a choice for each family of the over-all pattern of environment (neighborhood and community density; social, economic and racial mixture; type of housing; type of facilities and distances to them; general “feel” and appearance; etc.). They also try to suggest patterns that provide the largest choice of activities within the over-all environment—jobs, stores, goods, services, entertainment, transportation modes, etc.

Flexibility of design to meet future tastes and unexpected technical changes also is a goal of most planners.

Some planners (including the Regional Plan staff) would include a sense of community as a goal of neighborhood and community design.

But when these principles conflict, how should the planner choose the value to emphasize most?

For example, we may all favor a wide choice of jobs, goods and services but prefer the kind of neighborhoods, job locations and transportation that cut down such choice. What mixture should be chosen? Most people want to save trees and natural open space yet they may want, at the same time, the kind of neighborhoods that make such conservation all but impossible. In other cases, majority preferences may make life difficult for a minority; for example, even if spread-city satisfied many people, what about those who cannot drive and whose jobs have moved to spread-city, accessible only by car?

To resolve these issues relating to personal preferences, planners are increasingly consulting the public. Regional Plan Association's Goals for the Region public opinion program in 1963 is an example. In the concluding three years of preparation for the second Regional Plan, the Association will closely consult a large Committee on the Development of the Region and hold many other meetings in which individuals will respond to tentative proposals and record personal preferences. Special efforts will be made to assure
adequate reflection of a wide variety of people who may have different preferences and aspirations from the majority.

These consultations with the public not only keep the staff from clinging to considerations which do not reflect general needs and preferences in the Region but also help us ascertain the degree of public concern for solving approaching problems. Responses therefore suggest the action that may be possible to meet these problems.

But continuous checking with the public does not relieve the planner of responsibility for creating forms and relationships far more imaginative than the average citizen might accept immediately. Even while framing his proposals as solutions to critical problems, he is in a position to do more than just meet crises. He can, if he is capable, carry people to much better conditions than they have known. While the planner cannot risk going ahead without testing what the public finds reasonable, he fails in his role if he does not envisage a Region that is better, more attractive, more satisfying and exciting than it now is.

Who will be guided by the plan?

In any case, once the plan is completed, every decision to follow it must pass through the usual political process of government, the decision process of business corporations, or the family council of individuals. So the public is protected against goals of planners that might be unacceptable.

The decisions that the plan will seek to influence will be made by many agencies and individuals: federal and state highway officials, public and private transportation companies; federal, state and local agencies concerned with public transportation; municipal councils and planning boards; business corporations; special public agencies such as the Port of New York Authority; federal, state, county and municipal park officials; urban renewal and housing agencies at all governmental levels; private builders and subdividers; the individual choosing a place to live and a way to travel.

The function of the plan is to provide a unified guide so that decisions of all these organizations and individuals relate to each other rationally. No formal ratification of the plan is needed to do this.

Some of the critical decisions will be made according to the plan without much question. As they participate with Regional Plan in the planning process, some corporations, governments or subdividers will see how different parts of the Region's development relate and will make decisions accordingly. For example, many of the major expressways and all of the major river crossings in the metropolitan area have followed the 1929 Plan. They had to be built one at a time, but the plan showed how they eventually would relate to each other. The builders of the new city of Reston, Virginia, located it in conformance with the National Capital Planning Commission's Year 2000 Plan without any particular public disagreement.

Other parts of the plan probably would be adopted because they are convincing design ideas, as Rockefeller Center, Lincoln Center and Fresh Meadows in Queens followed concepts described in the 1929 Plan.

In other words, some parts of the plan will simply be recommendations on the best place or way to do what would have been done anyhow—taking advantage of the current stream of development and guiding it.

But on some issues, the plan will seek to turn the flow of present trends. This may not, however, require that any one change his goals or make a personally unselfish choice for the benefit of the Region. In some instances, a change in the requirements under which local, corporate or personal decisions are to be made could bring individual self-interest into consonance with the Region's best interests. For example, the municipality that zones on the basis of tax considerations might be pleased to fit its local plan to what is best for the Region if tax considerations could be neutralized. Or public costs might be allocated differently so the individual or corporation or local government whose choices affect the development pattern pays the full costs resulting from the choices. For example, the man driving his car to work in the inner
part of the Region during rush hours does not pay the full cost that this entails. Arrangements might be made to charge him more of that cost.

Similarly, subdivision regulations prohibiting septic tanks where they cannot operate safely for more than a decade or two might result in smaller lot sizes because septic tanks require large lots while community sanitary sewers encourage smaller lots. Often home buyers are not informed that their septic tank is only a temporary expedient.

On other issues, the plan might convince people to eschew minor benefits that might come through their municipal decisions because these decisions would cause major injury to them as residents of a larger area. For example, the municipality that ignores an efficient plan for industrial location in order to attract industry for its tax base might forego the tax benefit rather than reap the consequences of heavy traffic in the municipality and its vicinity when fully informed of the alternative. If, on the other hand, many future residents feel that the municipal tax return from industry is so important that good industrial location must be ignored, traffic or no, a reorganization of the local tax system is possible.

In some cases, however, the needs of those making decisions that affect the Region will conflict with the best interests of the Region, and it would be naive to assume that the Region's interests will unselfishly be accepted. Some municipalities go out looking for industry to help pay their taxes while restricting housing types so that few industrial workers can afford to live there. Some resist having state and county parks within their borders because they attract "strangers" to the community. Neighborhoods have become increasingly reluctant to allow highways to cut through, whatever their importance for the Region. Builders often try to cut corners on appearance to sell their houses as cheaply as possible, and few municipalities are equipped to regulate this.

In such cases, it seems likely that municipalities might make decisions that will not lead to good development for a wider area. If these decisions appear to be serious obstacles to the proper development of the Region, the people who are concerned can express their interests through state or federal government if local government is itself the obstacle or cannot cope with the problem. Either financial incentives or regulations could be used to protect the interests of the greater number. In our view of American politics, this happens only when people become seriously dis-

ursed about a roadblock to what they feel is important and right. But then they do take the action needed.

Finally, there are parts of the plan that are likely to need substantial amounts of money to fulfill. Disagreement is less likely to come on what should be done than on how much the action is worth. This is particularly true of improvements in the older cities. For large strides in city improvement, the plan must be persuasive that cities are worth preserving and that future expansion of low-income ghettos with poor living conditions in the cities will present a state and national problem that is worth considerable investment to deter. Similarly, the shape and functioning of the Region may depend upon substantial investment in modernizing and integrating the commuter railroads.

What we are saying, then, is that the plan will never be officially ratified and thereafter followed in its entirety. Rather, if it is successful, it will influence separate decisions made throughout the period. Some decisions will be influenced because the Plan provides a logical framework showing the relationship of various development decisions that will be made separately. Other decisions will be debated at length in the political arena and will follow the Plan's recommendations only if the argument is persuasive and the interest of the general public sufficiently strong to engender positive action against unsatisfactory trends. Furthermore, the Plan will be fairly loose and flexible; many of its recommendations will be able to work with considerable variation.

The plan can succeed, then, without a metropolitan government—even though it is a metropolitan plan.
The contribution of other agencies

Regional Plan Association has a small staff, thirty-six people in all. Fortunately there are many other sources of ideas and data which the Association regularly uses: the New York City Planning Commission, which will be working on a master plan for the City simultaneously with the Association's plan for the Region; planning departments in all but one of the Region's counties and in some of the larger cities; three regional (i.e., multi-municipal) planning agencies in Connecticut; planning consultants who serve the municipalities; the Port of New York Authority; the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority; planning departments in the three states; federal officials concerned with urban affairs, transportation and parks; public utility research staffs; and the Tri-State Transportation Committee, formed in 1961 after a decade of urging by Regional Plan.

Tri-State is particularly important. It is a planning agency which covers almost the same area as Regional Plan; it has a much larger staff and budget than the Association. Indeed, there is reason to ask whether Regional Plan is still needed. We feel there is a major role for a citizens' organization in metropolitan planning. The Association can take more risks with new ideas, face the outspoken minority—often so deadly for official agencies—and present its conclusions openly to the public. In addition to the special contribution it can make as a citizens' organization, Regional Plan brings to this planning program over forty years of experience and a breadth of interest that reaches to issues which are not ordinarily classed as planning but which increasingly affect and are affected by it: among them, the social effects of urban design, standards of public services, and maximizing opportunity for citizen participation in government and civic affairs.

Tri-State and Regional Plan Association will, on the whole, do different though related types of research. Tri-State's will be more detailed and will be based on a great harvest of data. Regional Plan's is likely to be broader in the subjects considered. It will be aimed at establishing a recommended over-all development policy but without some of the details on the transportation mesh that Tri-State will provide. The two organizations are likely to look at regional needs from different vantage points and so contribute to a rounded view. They will take complementary roles in presenting planning ideas to the public and to those who ultimately will decide the Region's shape over the next generation—Tri-State having direct lines to state officials and formal relations with county and federal officials, Regional Plan being free to approach citizen leaders directly and having close relations with professional planners at all levels.

Cooperation between the staffs of the two organizations has been close. It has included joint mapping and surveys of selected regional functions as well as exchange of information and circulation of work for comment.

The Association also will assimilate as much as possible of the ideas and data of organizations which specialize in parts of the research needed before doing studies of its own. Particularly the work of many social agencies will be helpful in ascertaining appropriate levels of city services and their costs.

Necessary decisions along the way

Difficult as it may be for the planner, the Region won't wait for his answers. Decisions that will affect the Region for a generation or more are being made while we plan. Where the Association has done enough research to support a position even before the plan is completed, we are making public recommendations.

Over the past eight years, for example, the Association has successfully urged the organization of the Tri-State Transportation Committee and is now supporting more permanent status for it. The Association also has recommended open space bond issues that have passed in the three states of the Region. It has waged a successful fight for a 4½ mile ocean-front park at Breezy Point in Queens, supported acquisition by the Port of New York Authority of the Hudson and Manhattan Tubes, and favored construction by the Authority of the World Trade Center.
More than $2 million in federal aid for local parks was given on the basis of the Regional Plan park study under legal requirements that a metropolitan open space plan is necessary to justify federal grants. The Association worked for a National Seashore on Fire Island (just approved) and is supporting the proposed Tocks Island National Recreation Area. State or federal acquisition of other regional parks identified in the Association's report, The Race for Open Space, also will receive continuing attention. Since 1961, Regional Plan has recommended a public agency to contract for or otherwise insure continued railroad commuter service on a unified, modernized basis. In addition, the Association's New Jersey Committee has proposed low-interest loans for middle-income housing in blighted city neighborhoods and state action to assure well planned development in the Meadowlands.

Within the next three years, it may be necessary for the Association to study and comment on the location and design of expressways (Regional Plan's recent proposal to put the Lower Manhattan Expressway below ground is an example), on the location of a new major airport, on a plan for speeding rail service between Boston and Washington (which a federal advisory committee is investigating). In 1962, in cooperation with the Twentieth Century Fund the Association organized a meeting on Boston to Washington transportation and other issues affecting metropolitan areas in the Northeast urban corridor.

**Conclusion**

For every three residents of the New York Region today, there will be four in about twenty years, yet already the links that hold the Region's economy and society together are stretched and entangled. Transportation failures irritate and threaten outright disruption. Social classes, increasingly separated in their living areas, appear to have developed heated antagonisms. And in the midst of the greatest prosperity man has known, we are building a metropolis that is more tawdry than great.

The total quality of our lives and our children's lives is at stake.

The issues have been identified with advice from many groups and individuals. Regional Plan Association will propose a Second Regional Plan as a framework within which individuals, businesses and governments can take hold of the Region's future and guide it as they wish.

The Plan will be completed by 1967.

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**REGIONAL PLAN BOOKSHELF**

**Architecture as Total Community: The Challenge Ahead**
by Albert Mayer in consultation with Clarence Stein.
ARCHITECTURAL RECORD, May through October, 1964

Seven articles by two of our most imaginative planners on the creation of community order with diversity, beauty and humanity.

**Cluster Development** by William H. Whyte. American Conservation Association, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, 1964. 130 pp. $3.00

Arguments for and experience with a new concept of relating open space to each new subdivision, rapidly becoming one of the most talked about planning ideas.


A good analysis of supply and demand factors underlying the market for housing in the “gray areas” of central cities.


A plan to guide development in New York State over the next sixty years, with an outline of machinery for the cooperation of state, local and regional planning agencies in ten newly-defined regions of the State.

**Connecticut Takes Stock for Action** by Connecticut Interregional Planning Program, Connecticut Development Commission, Hartford, Conn., 1964. 143 pp. plus land-use map

A summary of facts and projections on economic, demographic, governmental and natural characteristics of the State and its fifteen defined “planning regions” (one or more municipalities oriented to the economy of an urban center), obtained during the inventory phase of a program initiated by the Connecticut Development Commission in 1960 to coordinate the planning activities of the regions, individual departments of the state government, and federal agencies whose functions involve the future growth and development of Connecticut.


A new report on travel from the entire New York Metropolitan Region to Manhattan south of 60th Street, combining data from the Agency’s previous report covering Chambers Street to 60th Street and the Downtown Lower Manhattan Association’s report covering the area south of Chambers Street.


One of the special studies in the Commission’s comprehensive planning program, recommending improvements for passenger service, cargo-handling, recreation, and housing along the waterfront of New York City.

Artists in Metropolis: An Exploration for Planners by Hall Winslow. New York, 1964. 165 pp. $3.50 from Planning Department, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, N. Y.

A unique and competent examination of New York City’s artists, art institutions, and art-related activities, with emphasis on the special needs and preferences of the many artists who live and work here.


The “Buchanan Report,” a significant effort to balance the needs of traffic with the need for an attractive and livable urban environment.

Planning Our Town by Martha E. Munzer for The Conservation Foundation. Alfred A. Knopf, 1964. 180 pp. $3.95

A fine introduction to city and regional planning for young people, interestingly written and well illustrated with photographs.

Fair Housing Handbook by National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing and American Friends Service Committee, 323 Lexington Avenue, New York, 1964. 42 pp. 50¢

A practical, well documented manual for persons trying to end racial discrimination in housing.

Sarah H. Smith