

INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

This is the Comprehensive City Plan for Utica. The studies, analyses and recommendations contained herein represent almost three years of intensive work on the part of the Planning Board, its Advisory Committees and their planning consultants.

While the report is termed a final report because it culminates a specific program of studies and individual preliminary reports on various phases of the Plan, actually its submission is but the initial stage of another and more important phase of the planning program, namely the execution of the plan and the refining, detailing and keeping alive of its various provisions. Neither is the plan final in the sense it cannot be improved as a result of further study on the part of the Planning Board, its citizens' committees and the people of Utica. The report's primary function is to furnish a definite set of proposals to be considered, revised, if necessary and gradually put into effect in the years to come.

Some twenty-five years ago, a Planning Board was created in Utica and a comprehensive plan of Major Streets, Transportation, Recreation Facilities and Zoning was prepared and published. For a number of years there was active interest in the program on the part of the Planning Board, but because of lack of public understanding of the purpose of the plan, the Planning Board gradually became dormant and, in 1929, it ceased to function.

Although there was no Planning Agency in Utica between 1929 and 1945 when the present Planning Board was appointed, Utica has realized some benefits from the original program. The Major Street plan resulted in the construction of Oriskany Street on the old Erie Canal right-of-way; improvement of the Broad Street connection over the old Canal; and in the Barnes Avenue Bridge over the Railroad and River.

The Recreation studies guided the development of many

playgrounds and playfields during the 1930 decade. The Zoning plan which was adopted in 1924 has been an important factor in controlling land uses throughout the City, in protecting property values and in guiding orderly development.

Many of the proposals made in the previous planning program are still valid and have been incorporated in the proposals of this report.

The current planning program is on a much firmer foundation than that described previously. It is realized that no plan can be successfully carried out unless it meets the test of practicality and comprehensiveness, and meets the needs of all the people. An excellent beginning has been made in presenting the proposals of the plan to the citizens of Utica and arranging for their active participation in the planning process. The appointment of an Advisory Citizens' Committee to the Planning Board has resulted in bringing into the picture representatives of practically every civic organization in the City. The work done by members of these Citizens' Committees to date demonstrates that such an organization will be increasingly valuable in the continuing process of bringing the pressing needs of the City to the attention of the voters and tax payers. Such citizens' participation and interest in the plan must be sustained in the ensuing years if the program is to play a vital part in the City's future.

City planning is now generally recognized as an essential part of municipal administration. There must be an agency which can visualize all of the community's needs; translate these needs into definite and realistic plans; resolve conflicting interests; and act as a co-ordinator for all of the official agencies concerned with the physical development of the community. To function effectively, the Planning Board must keep in touch with the people of Utica in order that it may transmit their wishes as to the kind of a community they want to live in, to the Governing Body which has the final responsibility of making it possible for these wishes to materialize.

The plan contained in this report is comprehensive in

that it embraces all of the various elements which comprise the physical structure of the City. The plan is idealistic in the sense that it envisages goals which may not be obtained soon nor easily but, at the same time, its proposals are realistic and capable of being carried out within the financial limitations of the City.

Previous to the preparation of this report, eleven preliminary reports on different functional subdivisions of the plan have been prepared and submitted to the Planning Board and its Advisory Committee. This report contains the high lights of these previous studies and a summary of their conclusions. For a more detailed description of the supporting data and the conclusions drawn therefrom, the preliminary reports are available for reference.

#### Objectives of the Plan.

The general objective of the Comprehensive City Plan for Utica is to guide the orderly and efficient development of the community.

Specific goals of the City Plan include the following:

1. Establish a balanced pattern of Land Uses for the entire community, providing adequately for residential, commercial, industrial, recreational and circulation uses.
2. Facilitate access to Centers of Business and Industry by providing an adequate system of major streets for arterial traffic; and by providing parking facilities in scale with existing and future needs of the community.
3. Define Residential Neighborhoods and protect them from encroachment of commercial and industrial uses and from arterial traffic. Major streets and commercial centers should lie between residential neighborhoods.
4. Provide adequate Public Recreational areas and facilities properly located in relation to the various residential neighborhoods.
5. Provide a system of Schools in scale with the present and expected child and adult population.
6. Encourage development of efficient Transit and Transportation facilities, including terminals

for bus, railroad, truck, airplane and barge services, Integration of local and inter-urban bus, truck and rail services with a major street system and terminals is essential for an efficient transportation system.

7. Assure a system of Public Utilities, adequate for present and future needs of the community. This comprehensive City Plan will serve as a guide for installation of utilities and facilities for residential, commercial and industrial areas at the proper time, scale and location.
8. Point the way for redevelopment of sub-standard Residential, Commercial and Industrial areas. Slum clearance in residential areas is only one phase of the redevelopment problem. Private enterprise must initiate and promote most of the urban redevelopment projects which are necessary in Utica. The importance of designing both private and civic projects to conform with desirable standards of health, safety, welfare and morality, and to increase civic beauty should be appreciated.
9. Encourage development of modern Industrial and Commercial facilities. Utica should secure a high position in the industrial and business fields by creating conditions attractive to existing and potential enterprises.
10. Implement action on recommendations contained in the Utica City Plan through analysis of the financial structure of the City, and coordination of the improvement program therewith.

#### Summary of Important Conclusions.

Although Utica lost population between 1930 and 1940, there has been a recent reversal of this downward trend and, since the War, a substantial increase has occurred. It is now estimated that there are approximately 106,750 persons and that a continued increase may be expected until in 1970 there should be approximately 116,000 people residing within the present corporate limits. If properly directed, this population growth can be accommodated within the present City without creating excessive congestion.

The Utica Zoning Ordinance which has been in effect since 1924 is obsolete and should be entirely revised. Not only does the text need modernization to meet present conditions, but the various defects should be adjusted to more

nearly conform to a more logical and balanced plan of land uses.

Being an old city, Utica has large areas of obsolete and decadent residential structures. These areas should be brought back to full usefulness and by large scale rehabilitation and re-development made to become attractive again as places in which to live. The plan proposes to organize the City on the basis of a number of neighborhood areas to be improved in accordance with the Master Plan.

The plan recognizes the problem of traffic congestion and lack of adequate parking facilities and proposes to remedy these conditions by gradual modernization of the street system and by providing ample off-street parking facilities in the downtown area. An important part of this program relates to the improvement and re-development of the Oriskany Street area and the development of a co-ordinated grouping of public buildings adjacent to the shopping center.

The plan also provides the basis for improving the Transit system and the various transportation media whether by air, rail, highway or water.

The plan is supplemented by a long-range Financial and Capital Improvement Program designed to effectuate the major proposals during the next 22 to 25 years without straining the financial resources of the community.

If the citizens of Utica decide they really want a more efficient and attractive city in which to live and work as exemplified by the objectives of the plan summarized previously, they may obtain their desires by seeing to it that the provisions of the Comprehensive Plan contained herein are carried out.