

## A Pragmatic City Plan

The city's Master Plan, guarded with superspy secrecy during three years of preparation and now released for public discussion and debate, is a pragmatic document. It does not give a list of specific, phased, and "how to" actions based on long-range predictions and aimed at utopian goals; it pulls out no magic rabbit solutions for New York's tragically familiar problems.

What it does do is put the city's dilemmas together into necessary focus, setting forth New York's complex, troubled totality. It states policies for handling those problems and outlines programs started and recommended, specifying further needs where city action is frustrated or inadequate. Its approach and objectives are based on a view, and a kind of plan, that is radically new. This is a social, or action, or "now" plan that deals primarily with goals for the way people live and work, and with ways to promote the quality of New York life, from how its citizens are housed and educated and provided with job opportunities and health care to the process by which the city is built and administered. Its policies, in a no-policy city, are not to be dismissed as generalities.

There are no easy answers given, and sometimes no answers at all. Many must still be sought. But two significant things are here and should be emphasized: a framework of strong guidelines for the city's growth objectives against which action can be charted and measured, and the unequivocal acceptance of city initiative in setting standards and taking responsibility for the future, in place of the usual lethal drift. This is the 1970's interpretation of a master plan.

It is, in essence, a loose-leaf document. Every page is meant to be updated, amended and changed as conditions dictate and permit. But the stated principles are constant. Many subjects, rent control and zoning, for example, require complete restudy. Others, such as welfare and housing, are stymied without state and Federal action. The cost of \$52 billion beyond anticipated revenues in the next ten years can be called unrealistic, because the resources are not there; or realistic, because it is the actual, shocking price tag of putting the city and its people in shape. But the point and purpose is that whatever portion of that money may be forthcoming, there are things to be done within the established framework immediately.

The plan is already the subject of sharp criticism; undoubtedly there will be much more in the year of hearings and revisions ahead. The important thing is that the discussion focus on means of improving a document vital to the city's future. Constructive discussion now will turn a good start into an even better comprehensive plan.