REGIONAL PLAN ASSOCIATION, INC.

. . . a research and planning agency supported by voluntary membership to promote the coordinated development of the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut Metropolitan Region.

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NEWS RELEASE

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REGIONAL UNIT SEEKS CITIZEN PLANNING HELP; 10,000 GROUPS TO BE ASKED TO ADVISE ON METROPOLITAN NEEDS

Some 10,000 invitations will be issued to organizations in a 22-county area this month and next asking their help in planning for the New York Metropolitan Region's next 25 years.

Regional Plan Association, whose 1929 Plan for the New York Region guided much of the recent development, is now preparing new guidelines for the Region's anticipated growth of 6 million people by 1985. The Association wants to learn how the 16 million people of the Region want to live: particularly the kinds of houses and neighborhoods and transportation and job locations they prefer.

"Preparing for the 1929 Plan, the planners of the 1920's met with groups in all sectors of the Region. Television will now allow Regional Plan to reach many more people. Groups will meet all over the Region at the same time, watch a television program, and send their responses to the Association," according to James S. Schoff, President of Regional Plan Association, who announced the project.

"This project differs from a simple public opinion poll or even from depth interviews," C. McKim Norton, Regional Plan's Executive Vice President, explained. "Preferences about the places we live, work, shop and play, how far apart these places should be and how we get between them can only

be decided after people understand fully what the choices are and what effect one choice has on the other.

"Regional Plan's questions will be answered after people have learned the facts and discussed them with friends and neighbors," Norton added. The Association is inviting organizations to set up groups to discuss the issues before participants fill out questionnaires.

Invitations will be sent first to organizations active in civic and community affairs, business and labor, politics, conservation, race relations, welfare and religious activities, but the Association welcomes the participation of other groups as well. Public school adult education programs, school boards, county and municipal officials, and planners will be invited to join the project, also.

Each organization will be asked to set up one or more committees of five to 15 persons to meet two hours weekly for five weeks in March and April, 1963.

First, participants will read background material based on a five-year, $1 million research program of Regional Plan Association. The research shows what the metropolitan area will be like over the coming generation if present trends and policies continue. After members read the material, the committees will come together and watch a half-hour television show produced by the Association to be shown on WPIX-TV (Channel 11) as a public service. Then the groups will discuss questions suggested in the background reading. Finally, each participant will fill out a questionnaire with information needed by Regional Plan Association to develop new planning policies for the 7,000-square-mile Region surrounding the Port of New York.

Social scientists will assist the Association in analyzing the answers.

There will be no charge for the reading materials for the study groups. All expenses, such as postage and envelopes for returning the questionnaires to Regional Plan, will be borne by the Association.

About 1,000 groups averaging about 10 persons each are expected to take part.

The new planning guidelines on which Regional Plan Association is working will build on the Plan of New York and Its Environs published in 1929, which the Association has supported. Nearly all of the parkways and expressways, bridges, tunnels, and regional parks built since 1929 have followed the Plan closely. In addition, the general locations of the four major airports of the Region were on the Plan. The Plan also publicized the commercial superblock idea followed a few years later in Rockefeller Center, the neighborhood unit concept followed in Fresh Meadows, Queens, and even the idea of Lincoln Center, which was located on the Plan only a block or two from the present site.

Recommendations for the future development of the metropolitan area will be made by Regional Plan Association after (1) additional research on alternatives to the present pattern of growth, (2) analysis of the study group responses, and (3) discussions with a committee of well-known leaders of the Region.

"This appears to be the first time a planning organization has made a systematic effort on this scale, first to make clear what the realistic choices of living patterns are and then to find out the kind of pattern people want," Norton said.

"It also will be the largest adult education program ever held at one time, as far as we know. After groups have spent five weeks thinking about planning issues, they should know much more about what they want and how to get it.

"In addition to giving Regional Plan the information we need, the study groups may stimulate local action to improve their own neighborhoods," Norton commented.

"In the 33 years of its work, Regional Plan Association has divided its time between encouraging effective local and county planning and pointing out metropolitan planning issues," Norton concluded. "The study groups will have the same dual results.

"While we expect to get ideas for regional guidelines, it seems likely that the thought and information going into the discussions will improve local and county planning and civic action, too."

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(NOTE: Details of the project are attached.)

GOALS FOR THE REGION PROJECT

WHAT will the project do?

Provide Regional Plan Association with information on the preferences of the citizens of the New York metropolitan area: where they like to live, what types of housing and yards they prefer, whether they like to live in or visit the cities of the Region, whether they like to live near or visit the open countryside, how they travel to work and why, where they like to work and why...and many more questions directly related to planning the kind of metropolis people want.

HOW will the project work?

Groups of five to fifteen people will meet weekly for five weeks, each meeting to last two hours. The meetings will consist of: 8:30 - 9 p.m. watching a special television program on WPIX-TV (Ch. 11); 9:00 - 10:15 p.m. discussing questions suggested by Regional Plan Association; 10:15 - 10:30 p.m. filling out questionnaires related to the discussion.

Before the meeting, each participant will have read a brief background paper with maps, charts, and pictures, giving study group members the facts they will need to discuss the issues usefully. Reading and thinking about the discussion questions before the meeting should take each person a half-hour to an hour.

WHY was the project organized?

For more than two years, Regional Plan Association has presented to many audiences a sketch of what life will be like in the New York metropolitan area over the next generation if present policies continue. To many, it is not an attractive picture. But what do they prefer? What policies would they accept that might improve the prospects?

The Goals for the Region Project will seek answers to these questions. The background reading and television series, based on five years of research, will compare the metropolitan area that exists with the Region we will have if trends continue and with what the area could be like if we plan it differently.

Responses of study group members will be interpreted by social scientists and new ideas found in the replies will be considered. Then Regional Plan Association will work out a new set of planning recommendations based on the study group responses, the Association's research and the advice of regional leaders.

These recommendations will be tailored to guide the hundreds of individuals and organizations whose daily decisions shape the metropolis: local governments, many state and federal agencies, business corporations, builders, civic groups, and individuals. Now, there is no way for them to know how their actions are affecting the whole area or whether their agency policy conflicts with another agency's as it affects the metropolitan area.

WHERE will the groups meet?

Anywhere in the Region. (See the map of the Region.) In someone's home or a school or public building--anywhere there is room to meet informally before a television set. Each group will choose its own meeting place.

WHEN?

The last four weeks in March and the first week in April. The day of the week will be set before the end of this year; it will be either a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday.

Because of the television program, all groups will meet at the same hour.

WHO?

Anyone who wishes may organize a group. Regional Plan Association will send--free--background materials and questionnaires to each group member and stamped envelopes for the group leader to return the completed questionnaires.

Regional Plan expects that most of the participating groups will be committees of organizations concerned with community improvement, conservation, business, labor, social problems, outdoor recreation, cultural institutions, political action and education, transportation, building, local government, planning, education, race relations, churches--all that will be affected by the way the Region will be shaped.

No organization will be identified with any answers submitted by members of the groups it sets up. It is the individual responses that are important to Regional Plan Association. But it is important that active continuing organizations establish the study groups to assure participation over the full five weeks and to make sure the groups are headed by skilled chairmen.

Though Regional Plan will be inviting organizations to take part, individuals are welcome to establish study groups if they wish.

WHY should your organization want to take part?

Affiliation with the project will be useful to participating organizations: first, because the points of view of their membership will be considered in the planning for the New York Region; second, because after the discussions are over, each study group can constitute an informed committee of the organization on problems of the metropolitan area as they affect organization members; third, because the organization will be ready to take action on its own to meet oncoming problems if it wishes.

Regional Plan Association has contributed for thirty-three years to the coordination of the Region's development. The 1929 Plan of New York and Its Environs, sponsored by the Association, strongly influenced the shape of the Region. Prepared before the automobile and the truck were major forces in the living and working arrangements of the area and before any but a handful of persons had flown in an airplane, the Plan nevertheless laid out the parkway-expressway network that has been built, located the four major airports of the Region, identified locations used by all of the tunnels and bridges built since 1929 (including the Narrows Bridge, the last link in the network of highways the Plan laid out), called for many of the regional parks since acquired, publicized the building idea followed in Rockefeller Center and the neighborhood concept of Fresh Meadows (in Queens). Even Lincoln Center was located on the Plan close to where it is being built.

Because so many people and organizations do affect the way the Region grows, policymakers have found the Plan's coordination helpful. With ever-increasing recognition of the need for metropolitan planning, there is reason to expect that the new planning guidelines to which the Goals for the Region Project will contribute can have even more effect on the way the Region will take shape than the 1929 Plan did.

We are about to build on as much open countryside in 25 years as we built up in 325 years, doubling the urbanized area of the metropolis. We are about to spend a quarter of a trillion dollars building or rebuilding the Region. Everyone concerned about the effect these changes will have on his life and on the appearance of his community can consider the choices open to him and have some influence on the plans being made, through the Goals for the Region Project.