

**EDITORIALS:****On the move ?**

It's too early to say for sure, but the Whalen administration is giving every appearance that it's embarked on a course of growth, revitalization and rehabilitation for Albany.

Departing, thankfully, from a long tradition, Thomas Whalen III has in recent weeks 1) proposed the undertaking of an ambitious year-long effort to write a strategic plan designed to identify the issues and problems of the next decade, 2) encouraged the construction of a moviehouse in the downtown area and 3) pushed for the construction of a civic center in the city.

All are ambitious projects — and all could greatly contribute to a resurgence of life, especially night life, in the city's historical downtown area.

The strategic 10-year plan is especially a good sign as it suggests that Albany's new leadership is not content to let the city's center slip into further decay, or allow more business and commercial enterprises to leave the city. The year-long study is expected to cost \$50,000 — a small enough amount to invest in the city's future.

Mr. Whalen also believes, if we can judge from his actions, that the downtown area will not be reborn — people will not return to the downtown area after dark — unless there are sights and activities for them to return to. Hence the need for a major moviehouse, one big enough to bring in the major pictures.

Hence also, we would think, the need to at least try to locate the proposed civic center there. As is becoming ever more clear, constructing such a facility in the Latham area is a bad idea all around. Studies of civic centers around the state reveal that the more popular civic centers are located adjacent to other centers of activity. In Latham there is little that would help attract spectators to the center, or keep them in that neighborhood. The proposed SUNY sight, which Mr. Whalen seems to favor, while better, would not be nearly as good for the region as a whole as a place downtown.

One proposal that has received a great deal of support from downtown businessmen is building the center on the vacant land near Madison Avenue and Eagle Street. It's an excellent location — centrally located and near the highway system and several parking lots.

And, because it could be situated next to hotels, restaurants, bars, a moviehouse (?), a major highway system and other places of business, it would have a much better chance of becoming a popular focus of activity.

Perhaps as good, or maybe even better, would be a location near the river: in or near, for example, Union Station. As F. Joseph Leone of the Sons of Italy in America says in a letter to the editor, "The river has been denied us, first by the railroad and now by the arterial highway ... The construction of a civic center (there) ... could give the river back to the city."

A downtown location for the civic center has a great deal to be said for it. It could be the catalyst for revitalizing the center city and for putting some life into its nights. It almost assuredly would help the entire area become a more popular tourist and vacation spot.

It deserves some very serious thought.

