

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Thank you for all you have done for the betterment of NY Citizens. I admire your stances for Net Neutrality, for the NY State of Health (kudos!!), and for the SAFE Act.

I am concerned, however, by the rumors I keep hearing that the proposed new Hospital for the Utica area was mandated to be placed in downtown Utica (and only in downtown).

This, in my opinion, (and those of many others) is a very bad idea. The new hospital should be placed on the current St. Luke's campus (where there is ample room and infrastructure already in place) and will not require the purchase and rehabilitation of vast swaths of land.

A hospital should not be perceived only as an "engine for economic growth". The goal of a hospital should be to provide excellent health care -- as the MVHS is already doing.

I would rather have the state's \$300 million investment be used for replacing lead pipes in the Mohawk Valley water system. THAT would be a significant investment in our health (and also would result in economic growth in the long term).

I know our elected officials all have the best interests of their constituents in mind, but the process that this site selection has gone through has not been open and too many people are affected by it that seem to have no input into the process.

Please ask that all officials involved in this project (Oneida County, the City of Utica, MV EDGE, included) address these important concerns.

THANK YOU!



"Any change should be welcome..." This sentiment sums up the typical reply to my first post questioning the downtown proposal. It also is, based on many conversations, typical of many residents. To be honest, it reflects my initial response as well. However, after taking time to look into it, I could only reach one conclusion: the Downtown Utica Hospital proposal is the most misguided, short sighted and irresponsible plan ever put forward in Utica's nearly 200 year history. Given that they're trying to fast-track

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it before more sensible minds prevail, I thought writing a response to the "any-change-should-be-welcome" sentiment was not only urgent- but also a responsibility. So here it be . . .

While a knee-jerk "any change is good" response to the Downtown Utica Hospital proposal is understandable, given the probable magnitude of its irreversible consequences, it is also irresponsible. Any plan calling for the demolition of a third of any city's downtown, warrants a respectable amount of consideration, debate, and dialogue, before being matter-of-factly embraced as progress by residents or community leaders.

Proponents of the downtown hospital would like you focused on a single long-neglected Columbia Street block, but the truth is that the block they're exploiting represents only a tiny fraction of what the project will consume. The proposal (almost unbelievably) calls for bulldozing an entire 25 - 35 acre span of Downtown Utica. It is massive, reactionary, and, most importantly, irreversible. It stretches north to south- from Oriskany Boulevard to Columbia Street, and, east to west- from Broadway (Bengees) to the Arterial overpasses on Lafayette, and Columbia Streets! Pointing to a single long-neglected block as justification for the magnitude of demolition they're talking about is misleading and deceitful. Let there be no mistake: what's being proposed is the most massive and consequential demolition in Utica's nearly 200 year history.

It's difficult to get an actual count as to the number of buildings proposed for demolition. That number, and the site's most southern and northern borders, seem to be purposely kept vague. Most likely, to help maintain the prevailing "any change is good-change" sentiment. Whether the number is 50 or 150, in spite of what they'd like you to believe, the vast majority of these buildings are indeed occupied and on the city tax-rolls!

At the heart of the proposed site, are a myriad of under-appreciated historic structures scattered in and around a couple of alleyways. One can even argue that the alleys themselves can be considered increasingly-rare historic artifacts, without which, the bustling downtown storefronts of yesteryear would not have been possible. Hell, just on the western edge of the site alone, slated for demolition, are: the grand turn-of-the-century building that once housed the landmark "Columbia Restaurant," the Witzeberger Building on Columbia and State (an undisputed architectural treasure in it's own right), the lovely group of historic turn-of-the-century "Row Houses" on Lafayette, near the corner of State, (which, miraculously managed to survive for all these years), and even the Urbanik's Paint building! All slated to be bull-dozed just to make way for over-flow parking! Insanity. The number of small businesses being forced to close or re-locate is also kept vague. From what I could gather, that number is between 30 and 50. Among them, some of downtown Utica's most well-known and established: Clemente Novelties, Wilcor International, Urbanik's Paint, Metzler Printing, Rockford Auto and Glass, Eggers, Caryl & Corrigan, North Country Books, etc. Several of these business owners are nearing retirement. I personally know three who,

rather than going through the struggle of moving, plan on calling it quits after getting their appraisal and re-location checks. Two others I know are currently scouting locations outside of Utica. How this can be considered "growth" is beyond me.

What boggles my mind is the fact that the proposal ever even made it off of the drawing room table. That it's now actually being sold to everyone as a reasonable option, is an insult to all of us.

You know, there's another downtown Utica block (not in the current proposal's footprint) that, for many years, was also similarly dismissed as a hopelessly

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neglected urban wasteland. I'm referring to the Genesee Street block between Oriskany Blvd and lower Whitesboro Street, now commonly referred to as Baggs Square West. It really wasn't all that long ago when it, too, sat dormant nothing more than a crippled single sided block of mostly vacant buildings that survived the disastrous "Urban Renewal" projects of the 1960's and 70's. In fact, if it wasn't for what it would've cost to demolish the 10 story Utica City National Bank Building there, that block, too, would be gone. Like the Columbia Street block now being exploited by the proposal's supporters, this block was regarded as nothing more than an dreary and desolate ghost-like remnant of the downtown that once was.

Well here we are some 40 years later. All it took were a few young entrepreneurs and dreamers to roll-up their sleeves. While everyone else saw nothing but a decaying urban wasteland, a few dreamers looked at that block and instead saw a unique urban asset, ripe with abundant possibilities and potential.

Today, that lower Genesee Street block houses some of the most progressive and successful newer small businesses in Utica: The Utica Bread Co., The Utica Coffee Roasting Company, and the Tailor and Cook restaurant. That's what real urban progress is about - character and spirit. the two traits that play the most important role in defining any city. Not a massive and short sighted proposal calling for the bull-dozing of a full third of downtown.

No one is refuting the desperate need to regenerate that Columbia Street section of downtown Utica. What's needed is a reasonable proposal that doesn't require the senseless "collateral" demolition of an entire 25-35 acre swatch. In the meantime, we've had to live with that block being in decay for some 30 years now, and we certainly can wait a few more. If the politicians can't get their act together, one day the right mix of young dreamers and entrepreneurs will undoubtedly come along and see it as a unique urban asset, with an abundance of possibilities and potential. As far as the current proposal goes, we would be much wiser preserving the neighborhood, blemishes and all, for future dreamers and entrepreneurs. We owe it to them and to the future of Utica to do so.

Why would such a ridiculous proposal ever be put forward in the first place?

It's an interesting question. The only thing I can figure is that it was to give local politicians a way to save face in view of the failure of the Marcy Nano Center to materialize. While I can understand and sympathize with their dilemma, sacrificing a third of Downtown Utica to help them save face, is simply too high of a price for Utica to pay.

To be honest, just the total hell that downtown business would have to endure during the minimum 5 years of destruction and construction is, in itself, unacceptable- particularly for a project that, while being sold as "growth" is, in reality, a dramatic downsizing.

There's no doubt that the proponents counted on the knee-jerk

"any-change-is-good" sentiment to move the proposal forward. Their challenge has always been to maintain that sentiment long enough to carry the proposal to the point of no return. There is no other explanation for the secrecy, lack of substantial public hearings, lack of details, and the invitation-only unveiling of its master plan. It's also pretty telling that a day after the first "real" public hearing, where 60% of those polled were in favor of the St. Luke's site, letters of intent-to-purchase went out to downtown Utica building owners. So, exactly what was the purpose of the so-called public hearing if there never was any intention for the public's input to matter? No one is against building a new regional state-of-the-art hospital. It just doesn't take a brain scientist to conclude that the most suitable location

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would be the present site of St Lukes. Plenty of land, minimal disruption due to construction, etc, etc. Choosing downtown Utica was just a PR stunt to bolster the visibility of the project for the sake of politicians.

The assertion that a downtown hospital will have a huge positive economic impact on the city is such political nonsense that I hate even addressing the myth. Think Fort Stanwix in Rome. The (in perpetuity) loss to the city tax rolls alone would ultimately amount to millions of dollars (lasting forevermore, and not just 1 year). Hospitals are tax exempt and self-contained. They come complete with their own cafeterias, gift shops, and florists. Other cities have regretfully taken this route. If you're so inclined, there are many studies verifying the lack of economic impact that these recently built facilities have had on the communities they've been built in. Keep in mind that the proposal combines EXISTING local hospitals. No new jobs would be created. In fact, mergers usually result in job losses. And as far as the temporary construction jobs created, just like the Rt. 12 Arterial Project, large outside firms with New York State connections will be called in. Either way, any regional economic boost stemming from actual construction, will occur whether the hospital is built in Utica or the obviously more sensible, St Luke's location.

In fact, studies of the impact of similar urban projects show that the only "real" economic benefit (which is dramatically offset by the over-the-years loss to city tax rolls) will be reaped by bar owners within 5 blocks of the facility, serving after work drinks to hospital employees. While this may indeed be something to raise a glass to- once again, it 's certainly not a good reason to tear down a third of downtown Utica

Dear Mr. Cuomo:

I just found out that the 300-million-dollar grant, or whatever it's called, specifies that the new hospital must be located in "the largest population center" in Oneida County. First of all, why the double talk about the largest population center, as if there is any question about what that is? Why not just say this hospital must be built within the boundaries of Utica, NY? But, the most important question, what is the reasoning behind tying this grant to a Utica location only? Being the cynic that I am, I could suggest some possible reasons, but I would like to see what yours are.

Best regards,



December 6, 2017

New York State Health Department
Corning Tower
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12237

Greetings:

I oppose the building of a new hospital downtown. We don't need a new hospital.

A few of my concerns:

Why is it that one or two people are making the decision about a new hospital that the Utica tax payers have to pay taxes for the hospital? Why would they make this huge decision for the people of this area? Who will be paying for the parking garage we the taxpayers will have to pay for the garage?

The buildings in the city where the hospital will be built has old buildings and we will have to pay for the demolition who will pay for the cost of the demolition, plus removing the lead and asbestos in the buildings.

Because of the thinking of a few people, they are considering brand new, co-located and combined DPW/Parks Department/Police Station/City Courts (the tax payers are still paying for the Police Maintenance facility which was built in 2005 all at the City's taxpayers' expense.

What if there was a disaster one hospital?

A personal friend of mine has a [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and has to be treated out of Utica because we don't have the facility to deal with children.

What about the red zone evacuation?

What will happen to the St. Elizabeth's and St. Luke's hospital buildings - leave them empty.

By putting the hospital downtown, they think the city will be rebirth.

The number of the two hospitals combined is not enough now and having one hospital with less beds is crazy! How many ER beds will be available?

Employees will be laid off if we build a new hospital.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

There is growing unhappiness in Oneida County and the City of Utica over the continued march to place a hospital into Downtown Utica. We have documented three years of concerns and this discontent here:

www.NoHospitalDowntown.com

We see a Downtown Utica that is rebounding without a hospital and realize future nanotechnology workers, while wanting a new facility for healthcare, seek an interesting city life. A hospital in Utica's urban core is much more likely to become a poor and blighted neighborhood like that surrounding

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Syracuse's St. Joseph hospital - and most urban hospitals are surrounded by lower value properties and demographic.

Utica is poor, our childhood poverty rates prove this. Downtown is no place for this "hospital as economic development" experiment. I'm worried that the Mohawk Valley Health Systems has continued to fail in providing a list of urban hospitals that have revitalized downtowns. It is probably the case because no such list exists!

Would you please write me with your personal answers to three questions:

- 1) Do you support a Downtown Utica hospital?
- 2) Is the \$300 million in funding for the Oneida County hospital only for use in downtown?
- 3) Do you support government's taking private property only turn around and making it available to another private business?

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.



#NoHospitalDowntown

PS- We are positioned for a long eminent domain court battle should local leaders continue to ignore taxpayers and residents.

Dear Governor Cuomo:

I ask that you please pay attention to the majority of taxpayers and voters in CNY. This is what we are up against with facing a downtown hospital that the majority of taxpayers and voters are against. Please, pay attention as

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we are all referred to as idiots and a few comments referring to you as an idiot that I will let you look up yourself.

<http://www.uticaod.com/assets/pdf/NY29824111.PDF>

The evidence is very clear, politicians, MV EDGE, lawyers/lobbyist/ and other vendors "pushed and cajoled" the hospital team into downtown. This while believing and marketing the Columbia Lafayette Neighborhood is a dump, a "teardown start over area" and that a hospital could rejuvenate it. This without NOT ONE example of an any urban hospital that has revitalized a downtown neighborhood (Hey "yes people", we're still waiting for that list). This aside, never thought caring for my downtown would bring such scorn! Just two emails (a cut and pasted from page 559), that appear just after MVHS announces in the UticaOD, "Hospital Going Downtown" and as Mr Brindisi is explaining that government officials should quickly prepare a follow-up letter for the UticaOD print...

On Tuesday, September 22, 2015, Steven DiMeo wrote:

What kind of reaction are you getting to the hospital announcement?

From: Anthony Brindisi

Sent: Wednesday, September 23, 2015 6:38 AM

To: Steven DiMeo

Cc: Picente, Anthony

Subject: Re: Hospital

I'm getting mostly positive comments. I spoke to several business owners downtown who were very excited. There are some comments on my FB page about traffic, why a new hospital, loss of tax base, etc. These comments can easily be combated in a thoughtful response. That's why I think the op-Ed is a good start. If we don't have a communication strategy, the idiots will fill the vacuum left by our silence.

Worst proposal in Utica's 200 year history!!!!

Wed 12/13/2017 9:34 AM

To doh sm.CONNS <cons@health.ny.gov>;

ATTENTION: This email came from an external source. Do not open attachments or click on links from unknown senders or unexpected emails.

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The Utica Custom Shirt Company

315/731-7845