

# The Clinton Community

Demolition and development have been the natural processes of New York. For some it has meant profit and dynamism, for others the loss of their homes and way of life. The loss has been great for the city, too, in terms of neighborhoods and services, but it was not until recently that the relationship between community health and the city's survival was perceived as anything more than a set of real estate transactions.

New York has finally understood this urban equation, and has taken action. Last year, five Neighborhood Preservation Areas were named. This week, the City Planning Commission has held hearings on a plan for one of the most critical sites—the Clinton neighborhood on the midtown West Side.

Clinton is threatened by two things: the very real, immediate environmental problems of the proposed new Convention Center, such as traffic and air pollution, and the even more permanently damaging reality and prospect of land speculation spurred by its midtown location and the imminent Convention Center construction. The related abuses of stores and buildings left vacant or structures destroyed for parking lots because that makes land more negotiable are already clearly visible.

The threat is to a stable community that exists only by virtue of an irreplaceable makeup. This is an old-fashioned, mixed-use, walk-to-work neighborhood of extraordinary health, value and resiliency. There are older, low-cost housing units affordable by blue-collar families, a support structure of jobs and industries, lively streets of shops and services, and a good part of the city's restaurant and entertainment business with related employment. All will be wiped out if the normal New York development takes place.

The conservation plan prepared by the city and the community could prevent this from happening. The core of the residential area would be off limits to builders, with no demolition of sound housing allowed, while an ingenious transfer of zoning rights would permit large-scale peripheral development and mandate the return of benefits and subsidies to the older section.

This is good planning and good sense. Not only is the proposal socially and economically viable in terms of keeping a community alive, but it is humane in its housing policy and sophisticated in its urban objectives. It emphasizes those things that are increasingly found to be the heart and soul of a city—its people and its places. Planning Commission approval should be followed by Board of Estimate acceptance of the plan.