

# Islands of Amenity

New York is not wall-to-wall congestion everywhere. There are residential areas where planned community development has included open space and trees within the city's borders. To the people who live there, the advantages of their well-disposed housing and green and pleasant surroundings are obvious; to some investors, the open land earns nothing and creates the itch to build. With building sites increasingly scarce and costly, these areas are about as safe as the speculator's next dollar.

Recognizing this, the City Planning Commission has moved to designate these islands of amenity with a new zoning category: the Special Planned Community Preservation District. This would protect the nature of such developments as Parkchester in the Bronx and Fresh Meadows and Sunnyside Gardens in Queens, by preventing construction on their open land. That this is needed was made clear by the recent battle to save Tudor City's planned parks from high-rise commercial construction.

Increasingly, the city has been recognizing environmental and social values in its zoning legislation; it has, in fact, treated these regulations as a tool to improve New York or safeguard what is good about it. In this case, it has been understood that not only historic districts require the protection available through designation by the Landmarks Preservation Commission; districts with less architectural significance but with exceptional features through planned design are acknowledged to be equally deserving of recognition and conservation. By establishing the desirability of this special community character, the Planning Commission has taken an important step forward.

New York's planners are continuing a trend toward the progressive and creative interpretation of zoning in the interests of a more livable city. Status quoism, which seems to be on the upswing in official circles, never solved a city's problems.