

The Planner's Constituency

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No position is more intimately involved with the destiny of New York than the job of Chairman of the City Planning Commission. The man who made the city most aware of that, in everything from financial survival to the quality of urban life, was John Zuccotti. After he became Deputy Mayor, the man who has quietly carried on a series of long-range but critical programs is Victor Marrero.

Mr. Marrero has made a far-reaching but potentially cumbersome provision of the new City Charter work: the requirement for a uniform land-use review procedure in which every aspect of change, from tax abatement to housing, must pass through community boards to the City Planning Commission for approval. Where there could have been chaos, there is now an established balance between local and central authority and neighborhood and citywide interest. Among his achievements are numerous community improvement projects and the

initiation of a total zoning review. His office has developed the housing and economic strategies for the Bronx and South Bronx now being considered in Washington.

Mr. Marrero is being replaced in the Koch administration by Robert Wagner Jr., whose conscientious intelligence augurs well for the job. Mr. Wagner is clearly capable of sensitivity on difficult, often divisive, planning issues and objectivity in resolving them. But the mandate he now has is quite different from the one he sought in his race to be Manhattan Borough President. His focus will be on the needs of the city as a whole, far beyond any political measurement of the future. At the same time, the city's chief planner must display exceptional political skill. He will find that not all development is evil, and not all communities are virtuous; he will have to forge alliances and compromises to reach the city's environmental goals. Mr. Wagner's constituency now is the public interest.

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