

## Green Light on Tudor Parks

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Anyone who played "red light" as a child must have a familiar feeling about the stop-and-go negotiations over Manhattan's two Tudor City parks. For those who came in late, the game has been as follows: Harry Helmsley, the owner of Tudor City, announced an intention to build on the parks and sent in bulldozers just long enough to prove he meant it. Though environmentally outrageous, the plan was perfectly legal; he owns the land, and it had been mapped, through idiosyncratic procedures, as building lots rather than protected open space.

The neighborhood's outcry triggered a city counterproposal. Mr. Helmsley was offered another park in which to build — next to the United Nations — in exchange for making the Tudor City parks public. After long negotiations, the swap seemed to have a green light. But suddenly the lights flashed red again at the

Board of Estimate, when it heard questions about who was getting the better bargain. Manhattan Borough President Andrew Stein brought in developer Donald Trump, who offered to buy the city-owned park at much more than its appraised value in the swap. That stopped the deal and led to the discovery of another solution.

The city now proposes to swap a site at First Avenue and 51st Street, a much better idea than trading off a park. Although it had hoped to sell this land, a loss of revenue was averted by removing the tax exemption from whatever is to be built there. The arrangements are not yet complete, but if this plan goes through, the city would get income from its land, Mr. Helmsley would get his new building, the public would get the Tudor City parks and the issue of the ethics of park-swapping would be cancelled out. Score one for delay.

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