

A Place for People

Nothing makes the abstractions of zoning so real as summer weather; suddenly the city's plazas come alive. The Avenue of the Americas exchanges its overscaled institutional facades for a kind of corporate garden of delights. *Dolce far niente* thrives in the best of the open spaces that builders have ceded at street level in order to obtain bonuses in height. There are fountains, trees and benches and a slowing and softening of the New York pace.

Mid-block passages are filled with loiterers utilizing every available place to sit. What were too often merely sterile spaces when plazas were first required have in large part been transformed into people-places, through sensitive adjustments of the zoning law. Many of the mandated setbacks around apartment houses have become impressive green gardens after a few tentative seasons, and a welcome refreshment for hard city streets.

All this is the visible and useful result of special zoning amendments, suddenly proving with the sun that they were designed for people. They have changed the amenity score of New York. Another abstraction, the quality of life, becomes tangible reality. It only takes two people sitting beneath a tree.