

Omen or Omission?

There is always a period of quiet transitional chaos at the beginning of a new administration when appointments are being made and policy is vague and no one knows which way to jump. At this time, partly through inertia and partly through dislocation, inestimable damage may be done. This appears to be true for the Office of Midtown Planning and Development, one of the special planning offices established by Mayor Lindsay that have set a record for constructive and creative guidance of the city's growth.

The midtown office has been without a director since the resignation of William Bardel, and not only morale but staff is slipping rapidly away. Its future remains unsettled. This is being taken as a serious omen by the other local planning offices, all of which are uncertain of their role in this administration.

It may be the press of other business, or simple unawareness, but the attention given by the Mayor's office to the staffing of these agencies is the key to their performance. They can be positive instruments of city improvement or ineffectual, hack bureaucracies. New York cannot afford to lose vision or talent. It will be back to the speculative snakepit if this kind of professionalism is let go by attrition or default, and if action is not taken soon.