

Staten Island Plan

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and recreation, basic community services and that urban rarity, natural beauty. The legislation deserves support and passage.

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Most planning in New York is nine parts protest and one part compromise; more often than not, the end result of this process is either beaten to death or allowed to die quietly. The attempt to plot the future of the southern half of Staten Island is typical: This lovely natural terrain, still virgin woods and rolling land where ticky-tacky has not already taken its toll, has been the subject of a series of plans of mixed merits that have all been defeated by local opposition.

For Staten Island, the delays have paid off; everyone involved has become a great deal wiser. But further delay is likely to carry a high price. This is probably the last chance to save irreplaceable natural resources while allowing for orderly and inevitable development.

The city's newest plan is a 30-year scheme for 12,000 acres that will join a land-use program to a development and capital improvement program, to assure appropriate building and services and rational conservation. Worked out by the Staten Island Task Force and the city's planners, it is based on the community's own evaluation of its needs and desires, expressed through local planning boards.

The chief feature of the plan is the requirement that builders proceed only on the basis of certification of the existence or scheduled construction of services: roads, sewers and the necessary number of school seats. To achieve these ends will require a Special Purpose District under zoning law. That law, as proposed, is exemplary: It deals with everything from height limitations and the preservation of trees and topography to public transportation, and a road system from highways to bikeways.

The objections of opponents, that the city's lack of cash for the staged public improvements will mean no building, or no growth, if construction is tied to them, is not a validating argument for haphazard or destructive development and inadequate facilities. Staten Island does not need more stripped woods and leveled hills brought about by the routine rape of tract development. This is not no growth: it is a positive and constructive land use and building plan to encourage proper growth.

Since the city owns or has jurisdiction over half the land, its responsibilities and concerns are clear. This sensible and sensitive proposal would guarantee parks