

# A Billion Burgers

Fast food places, though welcome on open highways, are a mixed blessing on New York's residential streets.

The operating premise of these establishments is high traffic and fast turnover on a prefabricated food product. The chief virtues of fast food are that it is cheap and convenient. Its takeout format may attract as many as 1,500 transient customers during a noon lunch hour.

The drawbacks are environmental: the operation aims at generating heavy use, by both people and cars, with a high refuse disposal rate. The chains themselves acknowledge this with their emphasis on trash cans that are as prominent as the signs created for maximum visibility and conflict with existing surroundings.

The sock-in-the-eye appeal is backfiring now. Its incompatibility of appearance, even in toned-down versions, added to the incompatibility of function, is drawing protest from residential neighborhoods as these chains eye the city market. Opponents claim the odor, litter and transient congestion belong only in commercial areas or on the road.

The response of many New Yorkers is contained in a proposal, now before the City Planning Commission, to make fast food outlets illegal in residential areas by amending the zoning law.

A basic purpose of zoning is to protect established amenity or character. It is a long way from the local bistro to a billion burgers; one reinforces the neighborhood, and the other destroys it.