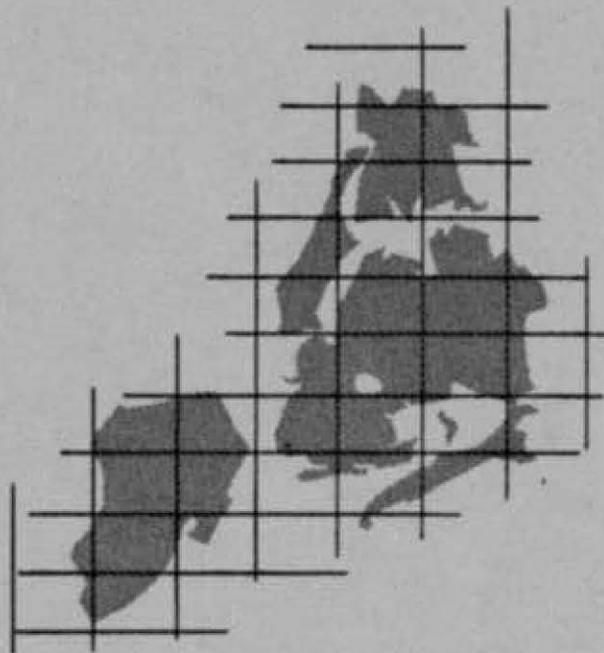


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PLANNING PROGRESS 1961



CITY OF NEW YORK

**CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING**

PLANNING PROGRESS : 1961

A Summary of Activities in 1961

of the

City Planning Commission and Department of City Planning

City Planning took on even greater responsibilities in 1961 in response to the need for more comprehensive planning to meet the myriad growth and development problems of the world's most complex urban center.

The realization of a modern zoning ordinance in 1961 was a milestone in our City's history. The adoption of the new Zoning Resolution, however, was only one step in the awesome task of developing a comprehensive planning program for this City. Even as the staff of the Department of City Planning was consumed with ongoing operations in zoning, public improvements, capital budget, housing and renewal, it was tooling up and marshalling new forces to forge a more comprehensive and practical plan to guide the future growth of our City.

Last year marked the first time that the City Planning Commission prepared an annual renewal and housing program to recommend appropriate renewal development. It also marked the first time that the Department put into action new approaches and new techniques under the Community Renewal Program. It was a year which also saw our first real breakthrough in transportation planning with the establishment of the Tri-State Transportation Committee. Another first was the launching of a land bank program, consistent with the recommendations of the Mayor.

The actions of the Planning Department are also consistent with New York's traditional unwillingness to "stand pat" -- but to search for new ideas and imaginative solutions to the many problems confronting us in an ever-growing metropolis. We are confident that this attitude and approach on the part of the City's Administration and its citizens will enable us to develop sound and practical guidelines to insure the continuing prosperity and well-being of all New Yorkers.

Z O N I N G

The nation's most modern Zoning Resolution became effective on December 15, one year after its approval by the Board of Estimate. The one-year grace period was used to facilitate the orderly completion and processing of building plans under way on the date of adoption, and to adjust the zoning text and maps in response to equitable requests by individuals and groups.

During the year, almost 600 requests for changes in the mapping and text were considered and thoroughly reviewed by the City Planning Commission. Of these, some 260 were adopted.

The new code was reprinted in its entirety in unique binder form with a newly drawn set of 126 maps. Future amendments in text or maps (on punched pages) may be inserted as adopted, making unnecessary the previous need for handwritten cross-references and pasting. As part of its efforts to inform interested parties about the new code, an orientation program was held for other city agencies, assistance was given to professional organizations, and a comprehensive zoning handbook was prepared to provide a guide to the use of the Resolution.

The new zoning, which is the result of more than five years of study and public review, has the following major features:

- An appropriate place is designated for every use.
- Loopholes are eliminated, by specifying uses allowed in a district rather than those prohibited.
- Performance standards are set for industry which will make for more desirable plants that are not offensive to residences and to other businesses.
- More open space and less overcrowding in residential areas are insured by a carefully worked out set of interrelated controls.
- Bulk regulations encourage more light, air, and better design, and permit construction economies.
- Requirements for off-street parking of automobiles and off-street loading of trucks are built into the Resolution.
- Commercial districts are zoned to help retail shopping meet modern needs.
- Provision is made for large-scale residential and community facility developments.

COMMUNITY RENEWAL

The Department of City Planning, in order to make the soundest judgments in planning future urban renewal activity, initiated the operational phases of the three-year, \$2,250,000 Community Renewal Program in 1961. Financed two-thirds by the Federal Government and one-third by the City of New York, this program is being carried out by a specialized staff of planners, engineers, architects, community workers, researchers and other skilled technicians. The object of this undertaking is to identify areas of blight and decay, analyze the problems which tend to downgrade neighborhoods and create slums, and formulate a series of recommendations to meet the City's current and long-term needs.

To facilitate this study process, the City has been divided into a number of residential planning areas. These are being studied, in varying degrees of intensity, depending on each area's need for renewal and planning action. On the basis of the information gathered in these studies, a coordinated program is being developed to guide all future urban renewal activity.

The recommendations that emerge from the Community Renewal Program will be the result of a thorough evaluation of physical needs -- and most important, the careful consideration of the hopes, the needs and the concern of local residents. The cooperation of the people who live in each area is vital in this program, not only in diagnosing problems, but in helping to prescribe for their cure. Teams of experts trained in dealing with local problems began work during the year to insure the fullest public participation in the development of the program.

Community renewal is an integral part of the Commission's comprehensive planning program. Data collected in the course of community renewal studies will add another dimension to total, city-wide planning efforts in housing, education, transit, transportation and industrial development.

During the program's first year of operation a general survey of the City was completed and intensive study was launched in the following 15 areas:

Crown Heights, Coney Island, Fort Greene, East New York, Brownsville, and Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn;

Central Harlem, East Harlem, and the Lower East Side in Manhattan;

Corona, Astoria, and The Rockaways in Queens;

Clason Point and Tremont in The Bronx; and

Annadale in Staten Island.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

With the new Zoning Resolution in effect, increased emphasis was placed in 1961 on the development of a comprehensive plan for this largest and most complex of cities. A comprehensive plan -- if it is to serve its fundamental function of providing sound guidelines for future development -- cannot be a "one-shot" effort. It must be a continuing and painstaking process of research, survey, study, evaluation and decision-making. The process must be directed to answering key questions involving choices affecting billions of dollars of public and private investment. This endeavor will set forth the essential framework for our programs for housing, urban renewal, industrial development and redevelopment, transportation, schools, community facilities, and other public improvements.

To carry out this important assignment, special research, analytical, and administrative organization teams were set up in 1961 in the Office of Master Planning, and a start was made on gathering and evaluating all available knowledge about the City's problems and growth potential. In addition, a thorough assessment of present and needed staff, budget, and other resources has been made. Out of this will be developed a more complete frame of reference for arriving at sound planning decisions and in developing more comprehensive planning studies and programs in the future.

LAND BANK

An essential facet of comprehensive planning is a land bank program, which was launched in October. The Planning Commission, working with the Department of Real Estate, has initiated action on compiling an inventory of City-owned land and recording such ownership on maps and electronic data processing cards. Inter-agency meetings have been held on the legal questions pertaining to the reservation of private property for future public use. Among the tools being explored are the "Public Place" designation, full and partial condemnation, easement rights, and options. Thorough review is also being made of all City-owned land to ensure that opportunities for present or future use will not be foreclosed by public auction. Among the areas in which this policy has been instituted are Annadale in Staten Island, Soundview in The Bronx, Somerville Basin in Queens, and Coney Island-Gravesend in Brooklyn. At the end of the year the Planning Commission was engaged in replatting studies for these areas to provide a more efficient and realistic circulation system and to recapture substantial amounts of land now devoted unnecessarily to streets.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

In a city changing as rapidly as New York, there is constant danger that structures of historic or esthetic importance may be overwhelmed by the building rush. The past history of our City cannot and should not be ignored. Accordingly, the Mayor appointed a committee in July to work with the City Planning Commission to develop a program for historic and esthetic preservation. Late in 1961, the committee submitted recommendations for the creation of a Landmarks Preservation Commission.

One of New York's historic buildings was saved by municipal action last year. The Jefferson Market Courthouse in Greenwich Village, voted one of the ten most handsome buildings in America in an 1888 poll of architects, was scheduled to be rehabilitated for use as a branch library.

RESEARCH

Comprehensive planning must be based on sound population, housing, economic, and land use data. The major projects carried through by the Department's research arm in 1961 were related to gathering and evaluating material from the 1960 Census of Population and Housing, the single most important source of statistical data for New York City. Among the studies made during the year were an analysis of population change, natural increase, and net migration by race for the City and the Metropolitan Region, and an analysis of the condition, size, tenure, and vacancy status of housing, and size of household.

Electronic data processing is playing an important role in New York's research effort. Duplicate magnetic tapes of all Census data for New York City were purchased from the Bureau of the Census, and were programmed by the Department of City Planning to provide more than a hundred tables analyzing the City by community renewal area, health area, census tract, and enumeration district. The resulting data will be used by many municipal and private agencies.

Other major research studies made in 1961 were on employment distribution in the City and the Central Business District (Manhattan south of 60th Street), and continuing studies of changes in the housing supply and in non-residential construction.

HOUSING AND RENEWAL PROGRAM

Legislation sponsored by the City Administration was adopted by the State Legislature in 1961 to consolidate the many urban renewal procedures into a single section with uniform and simplified procedures. Within the new legal framework the Planning Commission prepared a 1961-62 housing and renewal program to give the public an early opportunity to react to individual proposals as a part of a total program. In accordance with announced goals of the Mayor, the program was directed toward:

- A large increase in the net housing supply. Three to four new dwelling units were scheduled to replace every substandard unit in proposed clearance areas.
- Provision of a substantial number of publicly-assisted middle- and low-income units. Some 85 to 90 percent of all housing proposed fell in these categories.
- Improvement of the existing housing supply, with emphasis on conservation and rehabilitation as well as redevelopment.
- A minimum of tenant displacement. Many of the study areas proposed are sparsely populated or vacant. In areas involving more substantial relocation, it was recommended that redevelopment be carried out in stages.
- Application of sound land use principles, with a rational redistribution of land uses in areas of noncompatible mixed uses.

At year's end, 16 areas recommended by the Commission were under study or awaiting study approval. They include a wide range of sites and techniques, including conservation and rehabilitation areas, development of vacant land and abandoned railroad yards, and redevelopment of badly blighted areas.

The Commission will continue to develop such coordinated housing and renewal programs, increasingly geared to the Community Renewal Program, to provide a sound framework for evaluating and carrying out renewal activity on a continuing long-range basis.

Stress on middle-income housing continued in the 1961 program as the City Planning Commission approved 31 middle-income housing developments with a total of 15,887 new apartments. Together with the 18,136 new units approved in 1960, this new construction will be more than enough to house the population of Stamford, Connecticut. Government stimulates this new housing through low-cost mortgage loans, tax abatement, and, in some cases, condemnation. Sponsors must follow an approved plan and may not exceed a return set by law. In addition, the Commission approved ten public housing projects with a total of 1,379 apartments during the year.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Strengthening of the City's commercial and industrial base has been a major goal of the Administration. Through the new Zoning Resolution, 17,500 acres of industrially-zoned land have been protected against future encroachment by residential development. Not one acre of land in New York had this protection in the past. Land still vacant and best suited for industrial development will thus be reserved for appropriate use.

The industrial development program currently includes three industrial park sites on predominantly vacant land, and two industrial redevelopment projects. New York's first municipally-assisted industrial facility will be the Flatlands Industrial Park, final plans for which were approved in 1961. Reports by engineering consultants on the feasibility of industrial development in the 591-acre College Point area and the 950-acre Mariners' Harbor area were in final preparation at year's end.

Two industrial redevelopment areas in Manhattan were also advanced in 1961. The Planning Commission approved a plan at the end of the year for the commercial and industrial redevelopment of the 35-acre Washington Street Market area on the western fringe of Lower Manhattan. This area now houses most of the City's wholesale fruit and vegetable market, which will be relocated in the new terminal market under construction in the Hunt's Point section of The Bronx.

Industrial redevelopment potential is also shown by the East Harlem Industrial Triangle -- bounded by 125th and 131st Streets, Park Avenue and the Harlem River. This badly blighted area was designated as suitable for redevelopment with high performance, non-nuisance producing industry. Blocks facing playgrounds and the waterfront are being studied for possible residential use.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

A major task of the Planning Commission in 1961 was helping to create the necessary regional machinery for the development of a balanced traffic and transportation program to meet present and future needs of the City and the Metropolitan Region.

In September 1960, the Mayor directed the Chairman of the Commission to discuss with State and Federal officials the establishment of a comprehensive and continuing transportation and land planning program for the Region. Ensuing discussions led to the formation in August 1961 of the Tri-State Transportation Committee, composed of top officials responsible for making key decisions at each level of government, including the Chairman of the Planning Commission. This Committee, which has already made considerable progress in assembling a staff and developing a comprehensive work program, has the dual task of recommending immediate action programs and of developing longer-range transportation policies.

Improvements in two important links in the network of arterial highways and major streets were approved during the year, both in the World's Fair area. Grand Central Parkway will be widened from the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway to Clearview Expressway, and Van Wyck Expressway will be extended from Kew Gardens Interchange north to Whitestone Expressway at Northern Boulevard. Among the 176 other changes in the City Map approved by the Commission were the widening of Fulton Street in Downtown Manhattan from South Street to Broadway, the widening of Second Avenue at the Manhattan end of the Queensboro Bridge to facilitate traffic flow from the bridge, and the elimination of mapped streets in the Hunt's Point section of The Bronx to permit construction of the new terminal market.

C A P I T A L B U D G E T

One of the major means by which municipal policy is related to planning is through the preparation by the Planning Commission of a one-year Capital Budget and five-year Capital Program. The Capital Budget process is a balancing of priorities for funds for schools, transit, hospitals, piers, and other public facilities against available funds, on the basis of departmental requests, special studies and public hearings.

The 1962 Capital Budget as finally adopted included the following allocations:

Schools and Colleges	\$182,968,068
Transit	144,160,443
Sanitary Facilities	117,350,694
Hospitals and Health	57,658,333
Piers	31,357,537
Public Safety	17,910,567
Public Buildings and Bridges	14,522,161
Other Purposes	<u>251,398,287</u>
Total	\$817,326,090

The Planning Commission adopted site reports in 1961 for a wide variety of public improvements. There were 29 school sites -- for 13 public schools, five public school additions, five junior high schools, a junior high school addition, the West Side High School, three high school additions, and an addition for Queens College. Also approved were nine parks, five fire houses, Police Headquarters, three precinct houses, a police automotive repair shop, two hospital additions, the Vleigh library, the Hawtree Basin bridge, a rail link to the Hunt's Point Terminal Market, a bus garage addition, an office and garage for Meter Maids, and a parking facility.

KEEPING THE PUBLIC INFORMED

Efforts to keep New Yorkers informed of planning objectives and proposals continued to be an important part of the planning program. More than 50,000 requests for information in person, by phone and by mail were handled during the year. The community organization staff of the Community Renewal Program was strengthened to ensure the greatest possible community participation. Agency reports and Newsletters were published and widely distributed among civic and professional people in New York and to interested professionals throughout the world. Commissioners and staff members spoke at numerous meetings and conferences, and met with 98 foreign planners and administrators during the year, ranging geographically from Thailand to Sweden to Nigeria.