



# Investigating the CHPC archives

**In the 1950's, CHPC calls for well-planned urban renewal**

*"The Citizens' Housing and Planning Council is concerned because New York has done little planning since colonial times. True, the charter of 1938 required the City Planning Commission to prepare a master plan--a general guide to the growth of the city. There isn't any."*

## Citizens Housing & Planning Council

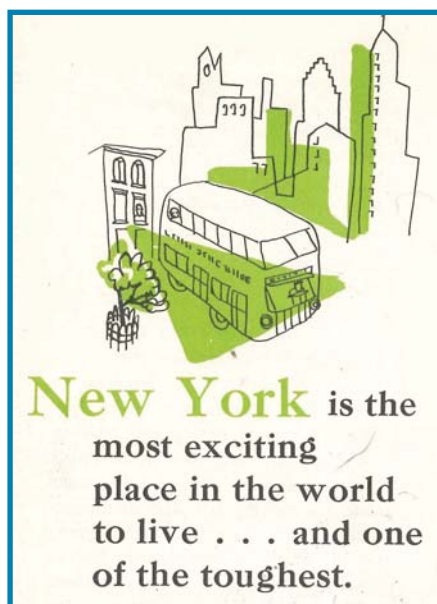
Founded in 1937, CHPC is a non-profit policy research organization dedicated to improving housing and neighborhood conditions through cooperative efforts of the public and private sectors.

The **Federal Housing Act of 1949** gave American cities the financing to clear slums and to launch urban renewal projects that would plan these blighted areas from scratch. In the 1950's, **Citizens' Housing and Planning Council** published a pamphlet urging New York to embrace quality urban planning and redevelopment and to invite New Yorkers to become involved with CHPC's work on the issue.



*"Don't let anybody checkmate your future. Get into the game."*

*"What New York does with urban redevelopment will affect the face of the city for 100 years,"* CHPC argued, emphasizing that this was a pivotal moment for the city and pointing out that little comprehensive planning had been done since colonial times.



Further, CHPC proclaimed, *"We can decide that the comfort and happiness of people rank above everything else."* CHPC warned New York City against constructing large, congested, and more profitable buildings, and called instead for the creation of livable neighborhoods and vibrant communities.

CHPC's charming pamphlet can be seen in the following pages.



**New York** is the  
most exciting  
place in the world  
to live . . . and one  
of the toughest.

More than 500,000  
families live in slums.  
Decent housing at a  
moderate price  
is scarcer than  
deer in Central Park.

There is no  
long-range planning.



The prospects? So far, not good. Despite a lot of private building, the average family cannot afford a new dwelling. The New York City Housing Authority has made a good start with low-rent housing. But public housing is only a partial answer to the shortage.

### The Magnificent Chance

Today New York has an opportunity that is nothing less than magnificent. The federal Housing Act of 1949 enables municipalities to condemn blighted areas and replan from scratch, using private corporations and public agencies to redevelop the sites with private apartments, public housing, parks, playgrounds, schools, commercial buildings or whatever the land is best suited for. This is called urban redevelopment.

Private developers have been stymied in the past by two things: first, the exorbitant cost of land in central slum areas; second, the hopeless task

of assembling large tracts by negotiation with many small owners.

The new Housing Act cuts away these difficulties. The federal government will pay two-thirds of the difference between the high cost of slum sites and their real value for redevelopment. The city must supply the other third and the law makes this easy. Finally, the power of condemnation is granted to public agencies so they can assemble large areas for redevelopment.

### Two Choices

What New York does with urban redevelopment will affect the face of the city for 100 years. More important, it will affect the faces of the inhabitants.

We can build congested projects, great masses of brick with tiny playgrounds for tiny children but no churches, no schools, no auditoriums, no recreation rooms and very little grass.

Or we can decide that the comfort

and happiness of people rank above everything else. If we make that decision, we shall have housing developments with neighborhood flavor: true communities with all the facilities for complete and wholesome living, places where the tenants don't feel like inmates.

It's a lot easier, and superficially more profitable, to house 40,000 people in huge brick blocks than to plan a community that gives 10,000 people a chance to enjoy scout troops, clubs, hobbies, child care programs, health centers, reading, dancing, swimming and so on. But there is no dodging the fact that the better the community, the better the people. You can't buy good citizens at the bargain counter.

### Wanted: A Plan

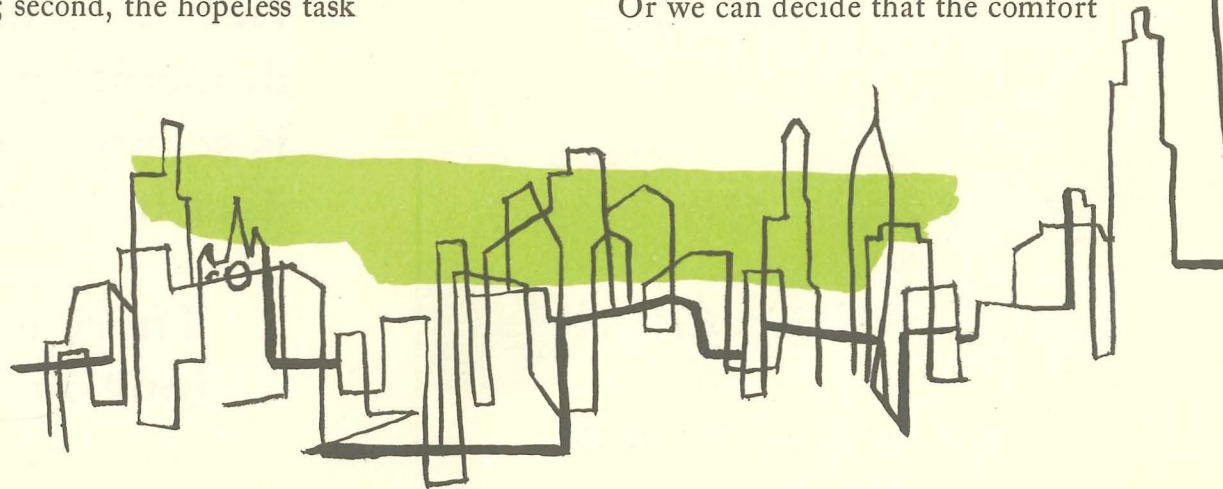
Both the law and common sense require that urban redevelopment be based on a sound plan. The Citizens' Housing and Planning Council is concerned because New York has done little planning since colonial times. True, the charter of 1938 required the City Planning Commission to prepare a master plan—a general guide to the growth of the city. There isn't any.

OCCUPANCY  
BY MORE THAN  
300,000,000  
PERSONS IS  
DANGEROUS  
AND UNLAWFUL



Our zoning laws prohibit industry in residential areas but permit residence in industrial areas. The present zoning law would allow 77,000,000 people to live in the city and 300,000,000 to work here.

The city charter requires an annual inspection of every multiple dwelling. The charter has never been obeyed. There is a backlog of 150,000 building law violations. Tenants complain and complain. When an inspector finally shows up, the enforcement machinery is often so slow that motion is barely perceptible.





## It's Your Move

No single individual can do anything effective about the lack of housing and planning in New York. But thousands can, when they support the Citizens' Housing and Planning Council. Don't let anybody checkmate your future. Get into the game.

CHPC is effective because its policies are drafted by some of the city's foremost experts. Volunteers work generously to prepare popular and technical reports.

Goal of CHPC is a decent home in a well planned neighborhood for every New York family. Every tenant, owner and builder would benefit. These are CHPC's objectives:

1. Adequate neighborhood planning and rezoning.
2. More building by financial institutions (with better planning), more public housing, more cooperative housing.
3. Continuation of rent control as long as necessary, with fair adjustments for landlords and tenants.
4. Enforcement of the multiple dwelling law.
5. Modernization of building techniques.
6. National and state legislation to encourage private housing for the middle income group.



## An Invitation

New Yorkers who like this program are invited to join CHPC and share its knowledge and activities. *Housing News* is published monthly to keep members informed on city, state and national developments. The *Legislative Bulletin* is the outstanding source of evaluations of pending bills. Members may use the Council's library of more than 5,000 books, pamphlets and other documents. Speakers may be obtained for neighborhood meetings.

The basic work of CHPC is done by eight committees. Their assignments are planned development, legislation, research, investment housing, cooperative housing, housing law enforcement, interracial problems and taxation. Special problems are handled by additional committees.

If you want decent housing and pleasant neighborhoods, sign up now. CHPC welcomes your participation.

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**CITIZENS' HOUSING  
and PLANNING COUNCIL**

**OF NEW YORK**

**20 WEST 40 STREET • NEW YORK 18**

