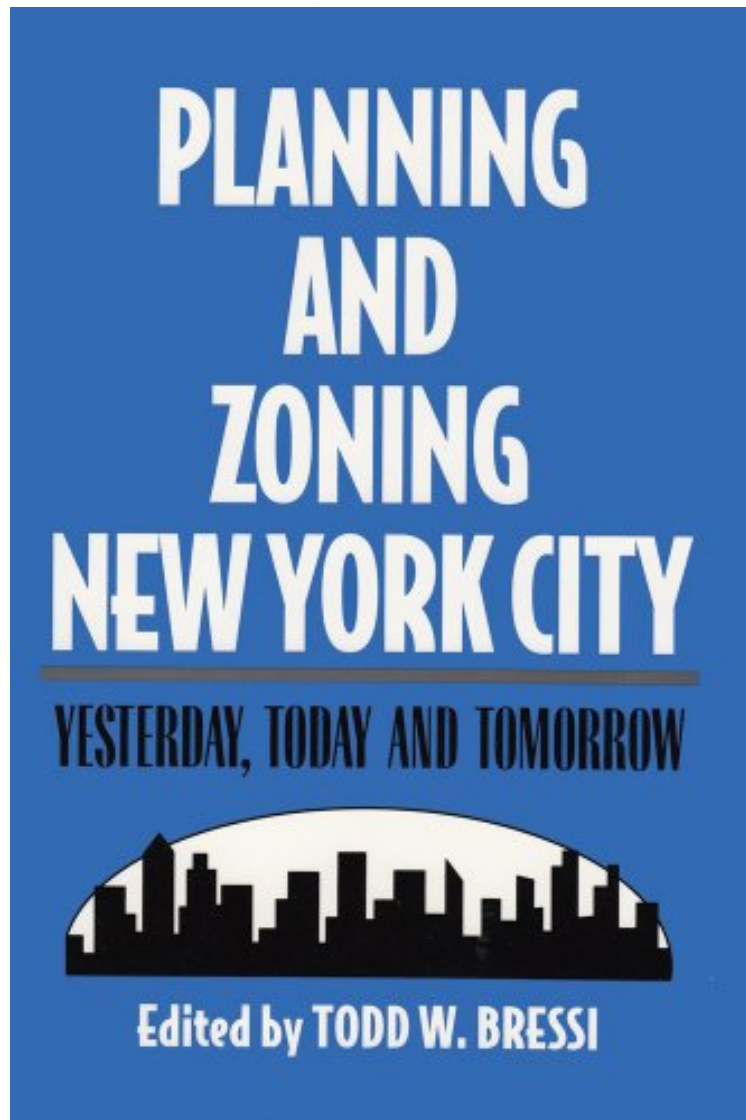


(Library ebook) Planning and Zoning New York City

Planning and Zoning New York City

Todd Bressi

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Todd Bressi : Planning and Zoning New York City before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Planning and Zoning New York City:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. two books in oneBy Michael LewynThis book feels like two books in one. The first half sets out the history of New York zoning until the early 1990s; the second half is a group of reflective essays setting out future directions. The essays were not as impressive; many of them were either collections of pious generalities or examples of outdated urban planning theories (such as miasma theory, the idea that there is somehow less air in a dense city).However, the first half of the book is quite good. The first New York zoning

ordinance, in 1916, was not tremendously restrictive; it allowed the city's most beautiful skyscrapers to be built, and allowed the development of the outer boroughs. The book points out all sorts of interesting little nuances in the law that shape the New York of today. For example, most older apartment houses in the outer boroughs (including the one where I live) are six or seven stories. Why? Because in six-story buildings, the first two floors were required to be fireproof, while in taller buildings fireproof construction was required throughout, increasing costs and discouraging high-rise construction. The book also addresses the mistakes of the 1960s. In 1961, the city enacted a new zoning code based on an obsession with "open space." According to the book, developments outside central business districts were to "provide about as much open space in a neighborhood as there would have been before development, if undeveloped land and vacant lots were considered open space." As a result, buildings were surrounded by vacant lots and useless lawns that became cesspools of crime. Another error was the city's decision to zone large amounts of land for industry; as industry left the city, these zones became useless, and the city had to either allow site-specific changes or let former industrial areas turn into wastelands. The former option, although on balance more desirable, makes zoning more piecemeal and political than would be the case if zoning maps reflected market demands.

Two unique events shaped the magnificent unnatural geography of New York City and created its sense of place: the Commissioners Plan of 1811 and the zoning resolution of 1916. The first imprinted Manhattan with a two-dimensional plan, a rectangular grid defined by broad north-south avenues, multiple east-west cross streets, and by its standard units: blocks of two hundred feet by six hundred to eight hundred feet. The second determined the city's three-dimensional form by restricting uses by district, by limiting the maximum mass of a building allowed on a given site. This book addresses the fundamental challenge facing every American municipality: Can zoning the basic tool of municipal land-use control balance growth and equity? As New York plans for the future, the nation's foremost commentators on urban planning, architecture, land-use law, and design discuss the accomplishments of New York's zoning laws and explore alternative scenarios for guiding the city's future development. The chapters in this book were originally prepared for a symposium on the history and future of planning in New York City. The authors provide a skillful blend of urban history, architectural review, economic analysis, and social commentary. Contributors include such experts as Jonathan Barnett, Sigurd Grava, Frances Halsband, Jerold Kayden, Brian Kintish, Eric Kober, Michael Kwartler, Larry Littlefield, Norman Marcus, R. Susan Motley, Richard A. Plunz, Peter D. Salins, Richard L. Schaffer, John Shapiro, Robert A. M. Stern, Roy Strickland, Marilyn Taylor, Robert F. Wagner, Jr., and Carol Willis. This book is essential reading for planners, architects, historians, developers, and municipal officials concerned with guiding the future of America's cities. Its lessons are vital for every city in America.

Planning and Zoning is based on a January 1992 symposium held in observance of two 1991 anniversaries: the 75th anniversary of New York's 1916 zoning resolution, often called the nation's first comprehensive zoning law, and the 30th anniversary of its 1961 comprehensive revision. The main idea in this volume edited by Todd W. Bressi is that the premise that planning equals zoning doesn't work. A second message is that in trying to make zoning do more than it perhaps should, we have got less than we could have. Although this book is nominally about New York City, it has much wider application. The specific circumstances that New York's zoning has been asked to address are familiar to planners everywhere: stimulating downtown development; preserving the historic or natural environment; providing housing of appropriate scale, cost, and location. Much of the discussion in Planning and Zoning New York City is explicitly about zoning. But the book is implicitly a dialogue about planning, and therein lies its importance. Articles in issues of both this journal and the Journal of Planning Education and Research have reopened discussion of the appropriate nature and scope of planning. The discussion should be expanded to include zoning as well as the relationship between planning and zoning. Planning and Zoning New York City begins that expansion and is thus as important for planning theorists and educators as for practitioners who see their zoning codes massaged and manipulated until, like New York's, they are less than the sum of their parts. Patricia Burgess, Journal of the American Planning Association "A first-rate primer on public finance . . . relevant for understanding the hard choices facing other states." Publius "A guide to responsible fiscal behavior in all states." Growth and Change "[A]n excellent book." Book News "[A] stimulus for further studying the problems of big cities in general and New York City in particular." Business Library "About New York City [but] has much wider application... [It is] as important for planning theorists and educators as for practitioners." APA Journal "Interesting to non-New York City planners for its cogent analyses of alternative regulatory strategies." Journal of Planning Education and Research About the Author Todd W. Bressi has taught at Pratt Institute's urban design department, Hunter College's Department of Urban Affairs, and the University of Pennsylvania. For more than ten years he led the journal Places. His expertise includes urban design, public art, open space, cultural districts, and design guidelines.