

FAIRFIELD DRIVES TO TIGHTEN ZONING

Larger Lots Required for Houses—Some Builders Oppose Restrictions

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STAMFORD, Conn., April 28—A renewed campaign to strengthen zoning restrictions and to institute them where none exist is under way in many Fairfield County communities.

Its purpose is two-fold: to stem the rapid growth in building, both residential and industrial, and to preserve the "rural character" of the burgeoning suburbs.

Random polls taken in recent weeks in several county towns indicated the residents want tighter controls. They recommended the upgrading of existing plot or acreage requirements.

The polls showed, too, that property owners generally favored some sort of local architectural review boards to oversee business, apartment and housing development projects.

This "hold the line" sentiment is not universally shared, however. The big building developers are among the most vocal in the opposition camp. In Westport, for example, court action has been instituted against the town's planning and zoning Commission. The action was started by developers who found themselves stymied by a recent commission ruling prohibiting single-family homes on certain lots.

Yankee Dander Up

A different type of opposition is emerging in communities like Danbury. The township, which covers 45.3 square miles, has never been zoned. A drive is on to change this. But the zoning advocates are up against a hard core of disbelievers — old settlers, for the most part, who assert with Yankee bluntness that "nobody is going to tell us what to do with our property."

Nevertheless, county planners said, the county-wide trend is toward stricter enforcement of zoning regulations and, if anything, narrowing of the scope of future expansion.

In the last eighteen months, Greenwich has upgraded five separate areas. This increased the minimum size of lots on which houses could be built. In some cases the minimum was increased from one-half or one acre to two acres and in others from one-half to one acre. Greenwich also has stoutly resisted attempts to decrease the minimum lot size from four acres in its "back country" north of the Merritt Parkway.

Westport, in addition to its crackdown on the developers, has just soothed the fears of residents of its exclusive Greens Farms section by requiring two-acre lots for houses where only one-acre had been required for many years. Similarly, New Canaan recently upgraded a 400-acre area from one to two acres.

Bucolic Setting Wanted

Paul Davidoff, New Canaan's town planner, is not too sure that even two acres presents the bucolic setting that the average former city dweller envisions when he plunks down the first payment on his new suburban home.

"Two acres seem a lot to the city resident," Mr. Davidoff says, "but when he sees a lot of houses on two-acre plots in one big development it doesn't seem quite so country-like."

Many communities are as much concerned with business zoning as with residential. And local sentiment appears to favor

curtailment of business and industrial expansion.

A survey of 760 residents by the Citizens Planning Committee of Greenwich showed that 78 per cent opposed any increase in light industry. A similar survey conducted by the Riverside Association of Greenwich indicated that 72 per cent wanted to halt further business expansion.

Greenwich is engaged in establishing special types of business area zoning. Darien is planning new zoning for its business district under which the merchants would be divided into two categories. An "A" zone would be devoted to such as groceries, drugs, household appliances and home furnishings. A "B" zone would be restricted to such services as automobile repair shops, laundries and fuel storage facilities.

Under the Darien plan, merchants in the "A" category would be in areas where, after parking, the shopper would find it convenient to go from store to store on foot. Merchants in the "B" category would be along arterial highways adjacent to the retail business zone, where the volume of pedestrian traffic in proportion to automobile traffic is relatively low.