

Con: The Cowley View

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Maine to Florida. Then, to choose a local instance, every individual American, rich, middle-income or on relief, could exercise what Jack Walter regards as a constitutional right to own a waterfront lot, no matter how small, on Candlewood Lake, or at least to own a bedroom in a condominium there. Until the lake was choked with bodies, I suppose. Or more likely until its shores had to be patrolled day and night to keep people from bathing in hopelessly polluted water.

WatersEdge is one step in a campaign—a "conspiracy," to borrow Jack Walter's brilliant word—now being conducted on a national scale by Suburban Action Institute. Its slogan is, "Break down the wall of the suburbs!" Its proclaimed purpose is to build racially mixed communities of inexpensive row houses and garden apartments, primarily—so the institute implies—to help underprivileged blacks of the inner cities.

Perhaps Messrs. Davidoff, Gold et als are sincere in this philanthropic intention. I like to believe so, out of respect for their crusading spirit, but I also like to believe that crusaders are intelligent. In the WatersEdge project they could be intelligent or sincere, one or the other, but they couldn't be both at the same time.

They are planning to build their inexpensive housing units on some of the most expensive lakeside property in northern Fairfield County. Steve Weil maintained in an interview with The Danbury News-Times that he had refused an offer of \$5.9-million for the 253-acre tract. The offer works out to \$23,320 for every acre, including the unbuildable portions.

Hilly, difficult of access, swampy in spots and elsewhere with thin soil over ledge rock, the site is well adapted for vacation homes on large plots, but miserably adapted for a crowded urban community of 8,000 or more people. As a result, there are other items of capital investment that must be added to the land cost: the grading of hillsides, for example, with erosion (and siltation of the lake) to follow; landfill in the wetlands, with the fill trucked

in, and new access roads over Wanzer Mountain (through other people's property). There are also, of course, sewage connections for 2,500 housing units (with the sewer still to be planned), water mains in trenches blasted from bed rock, pumping stations (if the promoters receive permission to build them)—not to mention actual building costs or interest on multimillion-dollar construction loans.

Housing consultants testify that, in the end, each row house and garden apartment—40 units an acre in the built-up portions of the tract—would cost somewhat more than a single-family dwelling in open country. Very few blacks from the inner cities

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could afford to live in WatersEdge, even if they were subsidized. Low-income families, black or white, who let themselves be sweet-mouthed into buying a WatersEdge apartment would find it hard to support themselves in the center of an area where there is comparatively little demand for labor.

Those indigent blacks and Puerto Ricans so often invoked by Messrs. Davidoff, Gold and Walter are actually a false issue in this case, or at most a minor one. The true issue in the battle over zoning involves three major elements. One of these is the demand for country houses, largely on the part of prosperous families who are adequately housed but dream of owning a vacation home on a wooded lake. Another element is money, not men: billions of dollars invested in building land from Maine to Florida as well as in Colorado, Arizona, California and Hawaii. The third element, hardly ever mentioned by Davidoff, Gold and the et als, is the land itself, the still beautiful land that is almost the only remaining natural resource of the Atlantic seaboard.

Wise money—English, French, Swiss, German, Japanese and American—went into American land when the dollar began to depreciate. Land was regarded as a sure hedge against inflation, better even than equities in South African gold mines. At first huge blocks of it were snapped up at low prices; then prices began to rise and the great boom was under way. Before it ends in a crash, the big speculators would like to obtain a profit from their investment.

The best way to make land profitable is to build houses, factories or shopping centers, and the land-investment trusts are building like mad. But some of their ambitious schemes have been halted by

zoning ordinances. If those ordinances could be upset, the speculators would profit enormously. Land zoned for dwellings on one or two acres is worth only one-fourth as much, roughly speaking, as land on which the developers can place from 10 to 40 units an acre, next door to a shopping center.

Is it any wonder that the big land speculators are cheering every time Suburban Action Institute brings another suit in another court? The cheers are muted because the biggies don't want to make people feel that the institute is involved with selfish financial interests, but still they come straight from the heart and the pocketbook. I imagine that reports about the progress of our little WatersEdge case will be studied by financial analysts and read in board rooms from Tokyo to Zurich. The biggies know that if the institute finds a pliable judge to rule that zoning violates the Fourteenth Amendment, they can move in next day with their Panzer divisions of bulldozers. The whole state of Vermont will be Poconized. Connecticut will go the way of Nassau County.

It had better be admitted that residential zoning for one-acre to four-acre lots is essentially a holding operation, an attempt to preserve the vestiges of open countryside until the state or the Federal Government moves in with a far-sighted scheme for land-use management. Such a scheme would certainly provide for new towns, but only where they are needed and where they can be serviced adequately, never on random plots that happen to be owned by a speculator. The scheme would also provide for greenbelt areas where building is restricted, and my own largely rural town of Sherman might well be one of them. A sound state or national plan now seems far away, however, and zoning has to serve the immediate purpose of saving what it can.

Suburban Action Institute has been playing the part of a destroyer. I do not charge that it is deliberately conspiring with the big land speculators, though it has had some curious bedfellows. I do charge, however, that the institute—whatever its intentions—is acting as a racist organization when it uses black Americans as pawns and patsies in its effort to upset the zoning laws. If the effort succeeds, it is the big-money boys who will profit by building still more shopping centers, still more industrial parks, not to mention retirement condominiums, vacation homes and ski chalets to be pressure-sold to prosperous families with credit at the bank.

And what will happen to the low-income blacks? They will have served their purpose as a means by which Suburban Action Institute can wheedle money from foundations and instill a feeling of guilt in middle-class white liberals. They will have been bound to crosses born at the head of a parade: *In hoc signo vinces*. Afterward they will be left in the inner cities as before, except for token families in a limited number of projects.

Indeed, the blacks will be poorer like all Americans because an important part of our heritage, the last open countryside in the East, will have been irretrievably bulldozed, built upon, paved over and destroyed.



Construction has begun on Putnam Plaza, a four-story office building on Railroad Avenue, opposite the railroad station, in Greenwich, Conn. The L-shaped structure, which was designed by Emery Roth & Sons of New York, will be set on a two-acre site behind a sunken plaza and linked to the street by a pedestrian bridge across the plaza. The building will contain

about 115,000 square feet of space and an underground garage that will accommodate 300 cars. Floor areas range from 23,000 to 32,000 square feet, and the building is scheduled to open for occupancy in June, 1974. The developer is Sinjon, Inc., a Greenwich concern headed by Imre and Thomas Cholnoky, and the contractor is the Morganti Construction Company.

Princeton Adopts Plan

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related to the university's academic interest and its financial and social goals. There will be no rendering plants, warehouses or gaudy shopping centers.

Officials here have begun negotiations with several prospective tenants. They are convinced that blue-chip companies will be willing to pay the environmental and architectural premiums involved in the plan in exchange for the prestige and strategic location the proposed center would offer them.

The center would occupy only about a third of the 2,784 acres now owned by Princeton University, which uses about 414 acres for its main campus across Lake Carnegie from the development site.

In July, 1972, the university's trustees began a review of the school's land needs and the impact of rapid regional development on the surrounding community.

Last month, the trustees announced their decision to exercise an option to acquire from the Phipps Land Company a 228-acre tract along

Route 1 abutting the northern boundary of the so-called Forrestal tract, a 927-acre parcel acquired in 1952.

As the first move in the development plan, the university will sell 70 acres of the Phipps property to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, a large philanthropic organization specializing in health and medical care. The foundation will build a headquarters on the site.

The remaining 158 acres of the Phipps tract has been designated for office building and research development and for open space preservation.

In addition to the Phipps land and the Forrestal tract, which runs from Lake Carnegie across Route 1 to the main line of the Penn Central Railroad, the proposed project is to include an adjoining 452 acres owned by Walker-Gordon Laboratories.

Princeton has signed a joint venture agreement with Walker-Gordon under which the laboratories will retain ownership of the land, but the university will control its development.

According to plans being

drawn up by Paul B. Firstenberg, Princeton's financial vice president, more than a quarter of the site—482 acres—will be set aside for open space, and special emphasis will be given to the protection of the eastern shore of Lake Carnegie and the banks of the Delaware and Raritan Canal, which parallels the lake.

Streams would also be protected, as would the forest areas, which include some of the best beech, oak and lowland red maple trees in the state.

Mr. Firstenberg said the planners did not envision any building that would rise above the present tree line.

According to John P. Moran, general manager of physical planning and facilities at the university, long-term land leases will be worked out with tenants, who will provide their own financing and construction.

The university presented its plans to the Plainsboro Planning Board on Oct. 15, and initial indications are that the project will enjoy considerable local support. It complements a proposed

5,000-unit housing complex east of the site that would more than double the township's population.

Nearly 200 acres of the Princeton project would be on what is now rolling farmland and nurseries between Route 1 and Lake Carnegie. The initial phase of the development would involve this tract, the Phipps parcel and a northern segment of the Walker-Gordon land. It would include 600 residential units and 1.5 million square feet of office space, enough to accommodate 4,000 to 5,000 employees.

According to present plans, the land in Forrestal Village, the residential area, will be sold to a developer for the construction of clustered townhouses with an average density of six or seven units an acre. There will also be a 200-room conference hotel and a modest shopping center.

The over-all plan for the project was developed by Sasaki, Dowson and DeMay Associates of Watertown, Mass., together with the real estate advisory firm of K. S. Sweet Associates, and a marketing concern, Hammer, Siler, George Associates.

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