gions and in regions still largely undeveloped. The several categories of problems resulting from such abuse and misuse include the following:

• *A decline of environmental quality within urban regions.* "Urban sprawl" is one of the weariest of clichés, but the problems capsulized by this term are still very much with us and, in some places, become more aggravated by the day. New subdivisions are still often being built far beyond the reach of established urban services, in areas where efficient sewage collection and treatment are necessarily absent and where existing roads are inadequate to handle heavy new traffic flows.

Strip development along highways—a problem long recognized and long neglected—continues to occur, with the hamburger and fried chicken drive-ins, the pizza parlors, the used car lots, and the shopping centers proliferating endlessly. The scarcity and hence the extraordinarily high value of sizable tracts of strategically placed undeveloped land in urban areas generates powerful economic and political pressures to convert such land to high intensity use even though the crying need may be for open space and public parkland (of this, the accompanying article about the controversy in Yonkers, New York, over a huge shopping center proposed for land owned by the Boyce Thompson Institute provides a prime example).

In general, the standards of urban development have been so lax and so uneven that many people have come to regard land development as just another form of pollution. For instance, owners of single family homes generally oppose the construction of high-rise, multi-family apartment or condominium buildings in their neighborhoods. They assume, often correctly, that the developer will try to maximize his profits by squeezing as many living units as possible onto the land rather than take advantage of the fact that, if properly designed, high-rise development can offer the distinct environmental advantage of allowing much of the site to be left as green space or as a neighborhood park. One can all too easily find examples of such problems as have been described here in practically any fast-growing urban region, whether it be the San Francisco Bay area, southern California, the Colorado Front Range, peninsular Florida, or the expanding metropolises of the East and Midwest.

• *Suitable and convenient sites for necessary utilities and public facilities are being lost—and environmentally unsuitable ones are still sometimes being selected.* With foresight and plan-

Botanical Laboratory's Plans to Sell Land for

A fairly typical urban land use drama is being played out in Yonkers, N.Y., where a long-standing resident of the area, the Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research, has revealed that it intends to sell 118 acres of its 146-acre estate to the Taubman Company, a large Michigan shopping center developer. The land is not currently zoned for commercial use, and citizens of this heavily populated residential area along the Hudson River in northern Westchester County do not want to see it converted to intensive commercial use.

Boyce Thompson, a hitherto benign organization that went quietly about its business, is finding itself in a highly uncomfortable position, caught between the pressure of community political action and the lure of an $8 million package deal on its land.

Citizens of Yonkers fear the changes that the proposed shopping center would bring to their community. Of the 700 or so shopping centers added annually to the face of America, most are constructed not in downtown areas, but in the suburbs. While many people initially welcome the convenience and pseudo-community atmosphere created by large, modern, enclosed malls, they are discovering serious disadvantages to them. Besides leading to increased automobile traffic and air pollution, say critics, the construction of large suburban shopping centers undermines efforts to revitalize urban centers by encouraging urban sprawl, making it more difficult to develop urban mass transit systems, and draining business away from downtown merchants.

The $50 million center proposed for Yonkers is designed to include four major department stores and 160 smaller shops and would be one of the largest of its kind in New York State. There would be parking for 7,000 cars to handle the expected 30,000 a day, plus several hundred trucks.

Members of ACT (Active Citizen Taxpayers) for Yonkers, a group set up in Yonkers last spring to fight the center, feel this project is particularly inappropriate for their neighborhood. They say the Boyce Thompson property—rolling land covered with grass and trees—is one of the last green spaces left in the city, that traffic would be suffocating, and that existing utilities are inadequate to handle the needs of the center. In addition, they say, the development would ruin the character of the area and destroy any chance for revitalizing Getty Square, the downtown business district a mile or so to the south, or for expanding the Cross County shopping center, which services southern Westchester County.

Alfred Taubman, the company's president, plans to solve the traffic problem by widening two residential streets into two six-lane highways on the north and south borders of the land. A Taubman official says the center will not compete with downtown business because it will draw dollars that were going out of the community anyway. The Taubman attitude is that the people don't know what they are talking about and they'll love the center once they get it. As Taubman said to the *New York Times* last spring, when citizens of a Detroit suburb succeeded in thwarting his plans for a new center there, "We never build a development in a community that demographically, that's not to say emotionally, doesn't need a shopping center."

The issue has created considerable mistrust between the Boyce Thompson Institute and the Yonkers people and their allies in neighboring Hastings-on-Hudson. The latter say the institute's celebrated interest in ecology does not extend to preserving the ecology of the neighborhood.

The Boyce Thompson Institute, housed in a capacious brick mansion built in the 1930's, is one of the last

ning on the part of public officials and utility executives, the sites that will be needed for airports, highway rights-of-way, reservoirs, power plants, and so on, can either be acquired in advance or zoned for uses (such as farming or forestry) that will not preclude the eventual development there of the essential facilities. The fact is that such foresight generally has not been exercised, with the result that desirable sites are being preempted by housing or other forms of development that could just as well have gone elsewhere. Utilities have sometimes secretly bought sites against long-term needs, but, as repeated controversies over power plant siting have shown, there is no proper substitute for having the selection of such sites either made or ratified (and at an early stage) by public officials.

Just as appropriate sites for public facilities are often lost through lack of advance planning and zoning, the sites finally chosen and used for such facilities are sometimes highly inappropriate, at least from an environmental standpoint. A classic case in point was the Dade County (Florida) Port Authority's decision, joined in by the Federal Aviation Administration and assented to initially by officials of the National Park Service and a number of state agencies, to select a 39-square-mile site in the Big Cypress Swamp for a pilot training facility that might ultimately become one of the world's great jetports. The controversy arising from that decision led in early 1970 to a demand by the Nixon Administration that the training facility be removed from the Big Cypress—with the result that now the jetport, if it is ever actually built, will (while avoiding the Big Cypress) intrude deeply into an Everglades water conservation area near Miami.

The jetport dispute was one of the more significant factors causing the President's Council on Environmental Quality to come forward in 1971 with a land use policy bill. This controversy was also among several disputes over the siting of major facilities which led Senator Henry M. Jackson (D–Wash.), chairman of the Senate Interior Committee, to begin work on such legislation in 1969.

● *Promiscuous development of vacation homes is causing degradation of wild and scenic areas that should be protected for general public benefit and enjoyment.* Whether one looks to the Big Cypress Swamp in South Florida, the Adirondack Mountains of upstate New York, the coastal reaches of Maryland and Virgina, the alpine areas of the Rockies, or the deserts of

Shopping Center Alarms Residents of Yonkers

reminders of gracious living along the Hudson. Its charter is simple: it can attack any problem of plant or animal life anywhere in the world whose solution will advance the welfare of mankind. About half of its income comes from federal and foundation grants and industrial contracts, the rest from its endowment. It has laboratories in Texas and California, where it studies pine beetles. But it has been forced to alter the nature of its outdoor plant research in Yonkers because of the pollution that has resulted from turning old estates along the river into housing developments.

The institute is seriously considering a move to the campus of Cornell University, where it has been invited to relocate. (The state legislature recently allocated $8.5 million to Cornell for building the institute a new headquarters.) Its managing director for 24 years, George L. McNew, says the institute is reluctant to leave its old home and abandon its cherished independence, but that unless it moves it will eventually have to reorient its research entirely to laboratory work.

People in ACT contend that the institute wants to make a fast buck on its property and leave, and they say McNew has reneged on a promise not to sell the land for any use that wouldn't fit in with the community. They would like to have the land bought for a park, but the city can't afford it. So they say they would be happy to settle for an industrial park—a use for which the land is now zoned—which they envisage as a tasteful gathering of insurance companies and the like. Workers would be "in at 9, out at 5, 5 days a week. Not like a shopping center which is open 12 hours a day, 7 days a week," says one resident.

McNew says the institute tried to find an industrial buyer, but the last real possibility, a purchase by Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Co., fell through at the 11th hour because of a "defect in the contract." So when Taubman came along it was with an offer the board of directors couldn't refuse.

McNew says critics of the plan have been unable to come up with a realistic alternative use for the land and tends to dismiss them as a coalition of local commercial interests and "people who want green." McNew seems to feel that the proposed shopping center is the next best thing to a park and would do wonders for Yonkers' tax base. As evidence of faith in the project, he points out that Boyce Thompson might decide to stay and continue operations on its remaining 30 acres.

A major obstacle stands in Taubman's way—in order to build, he must persuade the city council to rezone the property. All but one of the 12 city council members have expressed opposition to rezoning, which they called "special-interest, privileged spot-zoning." Nonetheless, the prevailing opinion among ACT, which purports to represent 15 civic organizations and 25,000 individuals, is that, as one said, "With Taubman's money, anything is possible."

The council is up for reelection this month, and citizens fear that lame-duck councilmen, whether out of malice or second thoughts at the prospect of an additional $5 million a year in real estate and sales taxes, will change their votes in favor of rezoning.

A Taubman official says the company's plans are now in limbo. But citizens find it ominous that Taubman has reportedly invested over $600,000 in the project and has taken over payment of $200,000 a year in taxes on the land. (The option to buy extends through 1975.) Citizens also point to several new bank branches that have opened in the area. They aren't doing much business now, says one ACT member, but "they can smell the shopping center."—C.H.