

# A Call to Save Neighborhoods

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Neighborhood conservation is an idea whose time has come.

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That is expected to be the theme when 400 planners, foundation representatives, politicians, bankers, real estate people, academicians and neighborhood activists convene here today for the first National Conference on Community Conservation Through Historic Preservation.

The conference, though national in scope, poses a direct challenge to New York City, which is seen as a national leader in preservation and neighborhood conservation but is being strongly criticized by local

## Flies Bread to Beirut

CAIRO (AP)—A Lebanese pilot for Middle East Airlines delayed his take off to purchase 10,000 loaves of bread because of food shortages in embattled Beirut, airport authorities here said yesterday.

groups for not doing enough.

Preserving neighborhoods has long been the goal of community groups here and in other cities. Now, they are being joined—sometimes reluctantly — by government officials faced with a lack of money for new developments.

Kent Barwick, former director of the Municipal Art Society and an active local preservationist, summed up a prevailing view that cities "have been forced by economy and common sense to make use of what we have—and that's a new idea for this country."

Barwick, now director of the New York State Council on the Arts, expressed the view that it was not "aesthetic appeal" that was giving neighborhood preservation new status among public officials, but rather its "fiscal attraction."

In remarks prepared for the opening of the three-day conference at the McGraw-Hill Conference Center, 1221 Sixth Av., Mayor Beame said

"neighborhood conservation today assumes almost monumental importance" in the midst of the fiscal crisis.

"So long as government subsidies and mortgage monies are scarce," the Mayor added, "neither new construction nor large-scale rehabilitation is possible. We need new federal legislation and we must put our scarce funds, insofar as possible, into neighborhood preservation."

He mentioned instead using existing mechanisms that do not cost money, such as designation of historic districts by the Landmarks Preservation Commission, "thoughtful" zoning decisions by the City Planning Commission, the Housing and Development Administration's Neighborhood Preservation Program and the office of Neighborhood Services.

A small group of demonstrators, some of whom were scheduled to be on conference panels, picketed outside the conference site today to protest what they called Beame's

"total lack of commitment to low-cost housing programs" essential to neighborhood preservation.

The demonstrators, members of the Assn. of Neighborhood Housing Developers, said they were protesting the "planned dismantling" of the Municipal Loan Program for housing rehabilitation, which they called a key tool in the fight against housing abandonment.

Historic district designations are increasingly being sought by community groups as a means of upgrading and stabilizing neighborhoods.

However, housing rehabilitation is also given high priority by community organizations and the Beame Administration has come under substantial criticism in this area. HDA's Neighborhood Preservation Program has rehabilitated few units, and there are rumors that its existence is endangered. Moreover, Beame is considering freezing all the funds for housing rehabilitation as well as for new housing.