

Book Review

Planned Residential Environments by John B. Lansing, Robert W. Marans and Robert B. Zehner. Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1970. 269 pages, \$7.00.

APPRAISERS GENERALLY CONCUR that the income of a community's residents indicates the value of residential property within the community. By knowing certain brackets of income, certain brackets of value can be established.

Planned Residential Environments verifies the truth of this axiom through research. The book provides an in-depth study of the environmental characteristics of neighborhoods and communities that are essential for the appraiser or counselor to identify in determining the feasibility of a new town. The research includes interviews with 1,253 residents who answered an average of 86.1% of the questions propounded. Those interviewed generally were upper-income people living in new communities and one older community (Radburn) where residential values ranged from a low of \$31,000 to a median of \$45,000. As this range is typical of current new construction prices, the comparisons fit the annual income range of \$12,000 to \$20,000.

The questionnaire revealed the human characteristics of buyers, including *physical factors* which appealed to them before and after purchase and the *environmental* characteristics which they later did or did not enjoy.

On the basis of the responses, the following factors were analyzed: type of land planning, environmental influence of recreation, shopping, transportation by public and private vehicles, level of social acceptability, race, religion, age, marital status, children and architecture. The authors state, "Contemplating these mixed results, we are forced to the conclusion that level of life is a complex subject. The simple view of the early enthusiasts that people who lived in new towns would be happy underestimates the many forces which impinge upon the lives of the highly educated, high-income people who live in the environments we are studying."

The writer directs the attention of appraisers and counselors to the study of real estate psychology represented by this book. "What causes people to want what they want in housing?" is the question it pursues. The book is a guide to human relations in studying the feasibility of a building, a new town or a satellite to a big city. Lansing, Marans and Zehner answer such questions as: how far or how many minutes the head of a household will travel to work; who uses the car on weekends; how far people travel for recreation; whether neighbors like each other, or whether they go to church; whether people like to cut the grass or play tennis and many other practical questions for which every appraiser and counselor should have an authoritative answer. This book confirms the view that real estate is not land and buildings but *people*.

(Reviewed by Percy E. Wagner, real estate counselor with Park Forest South Investment, Inc., Park Forest, Illinois.)