

CITY URGED TO END DENSITY BUILDING

**New Zoning Laws to Prevent
Congestion Are Demanded
by the City Club.**

CURB ON HEIGHT SOUGHT

**Commission Proposed to Study
Entire Subject of Residential
and Industrial Slums.**

Warning against the creation of new industrial and residential slums with the resumption of building construction here, the City Club of New York yesterday urged sweeping changes in the present zoning regulation which would drastically reduce "the excessive building heights and density of population now permitted within the city."

In a letter signed by Richard S. Childs, president, and addressed to Mayor La Guardia, the club suggests the appointment of a zoning commission, which would be instructed to recommend within two months the proposed modifications of the present law.

Carrying out the recommendations of its housing committee, the civic organization asks that the appointment of the commission be followed by a detailed study and complete revision of the zoning laws. In support of the plan to lower density use of land here, Mr. Childs pointed out that city areas now zoned for business and industry could provide working space for 340,000,000 people, or more than the entire population of North and South America.

Slum Lesson Not Learned.

"The absurd exaggerations implied in our present zoning regulations present an immediate and pressing danger," the letter declares. "Already apartment house building has been resumed on the same old scheme of crowding the land to a much greater degree than is safe, necessary or economic. The speculators and the lending companies appear to have learned little from the lesson of our crowded slums and the endless blighting of real estate, both of which are certain to continue unless we substantially modify the present reckless misuse of our city land."

The need for permanent revision of the whole scheme of city zoning is stressed in the suggestion that the temporary amendment be followed by such a careful and detailed revision of the building zone resolution, as to areas, densities and uses, "as will be consistent with a planned and sane program for the rehabilitation of our blighted areas and slums and the future building up of the now undeveloped areas of the city."

Attached to the letter to Mayor La Guardia was a statement regarding the proposed new commission by Robert D. Kohn, former director of housing of the PWA and chairman of the City Club's housing committee, who said the landowner should not be allowed to make a fool of himself with his own money, or with the money of the depositors in some savings bank, by crowding up his land with an excessively high building covering 70 per cent of the lot.

Must Stop Future Crowding.

"We must not allow the present opportunity to escape us to put a stop to such further crowding of land as will make the damage irreparable," Mr. Kohn commented. "The average built-up residential areas of our city now house 189 persons per gross acre. The Lower East Side averages 450 persons per gross acre in its old tenements. Surely not an ideal! Yet one new Lower East Side housing development, financed by the government, has 750 persons per acre. Is there any sense in allowing such congestion?"

Mr. Kohn recalled the early history of zoning in this city, crediting the first zoning ordinance with some steadying of land values and prevention of some of the worst abuses of nuisance building. But here, as elsewhere in the country, zoning was at best a preventive measure, he pointed out. "Zoning laws brought 'the haphazard doings' of the builder under some sort of restraint," he continued. "They did nothing to cure the haphazard doings of the past; indeed, in many cases, they did great harm by giv-

ing the sanction of law to repetition of nuisance uses once such uses were established in a neighborhood."

As it set the pace for the rest of the country in earlier zoning laws, New York is asked by Mr. Kohn to show the way again by providing ordinances based on a broad view of what is to be the function of a city in the years to come, and what relation housing, recreation, industry and business in the city should bear to the physical form which the city takes as a whole.