

Toward Eden, the 1981 book on land planning by the late Arthur E. Palmer, Jr., is a vital document for land reformers setting out to aid the nations of the former Soviet Union, and indeed for all those who see the need for Henry George's reforms in the present day.

I had the pleasure of working with Arthur Palmer, who died at 83 in February of this year, in 1986-88, when I was a village trustee in Croton-on-Hudson, New York. With no compensation from anyone in our village, Mr. Palmer wrote a detailed and visionary report on the future development of our village. Although this work was never formally recognized, it was heeded and bore fruit in our subsequent development.

Mr. Palmer's prescription was simple, but profound. "Land use planning, to be effective, must be based on concrete scientific evidence based on an environmental inventory." He also advocated regional land use planning and "mixed-use communities," since he saw that walking, bicycling and public transportation require such planning tools to avoid becoming irrevocably car-choked.

Town planning, Palmer insisted, must start with maps of the environment. All the natural elements and resources of a region should be mapped before any public revenue or market considerations are calculated. That sounds obvious - but an open and honest picture of any region's environmental conditions is almost always obscured by secrecy concerning resource location and rights of use. The community, however, has the right to know this information, before any new or further development is pursued on its land.

Town planners can record each aspect of the environmental inventory on transparent mylar sheets, and then lay one on top of another, forming a composite picture of resource factors. This technique would allow planners to make informed decisions on whether any so-called improvements will truly enhance the quality and sustainability of the area's life. Once the environmental maps are completed, use-zoning can be based on a complete and scientific overview, incorporating natural as well as social criteria. Then, once layman and specialist alike can see the impact of various kinds of develop-

ment in an appropriately rigorous long-range view, true and accurate market-based land values can be obtained.

As things are now, the world over, nature's integrity is violated: she is fully negotiable, subject to the highest bidder.

Russia, for example, has the opportunity to do such mapping now - before the inevitable wheeling and dealing for the control of land. Maps should be widely published and openly discussed. Otherwise, any new owners/renters will assert an I-can-do-anything constitutional "right to property." Accordingly, ten copies of Palmer's book are being sent by this writer to Fred (continued on page eight)

Harrison for the Russian Fund.

Toward Eden is an invaluable contribution to the debate over land privatization, and the time for its message to be heard is now! Arthur Palmer's daughter, Constance Hildesley, is an

architect and urban planner who will surely enlarge upon her Dad's contributions, and help us if we ask.

Toward Eden is available from Julia R. Palmer, 157 East 81st St., New York, NY 10028. Send \$15; \$10 of which will be a tax-deductible contribution to the Natural Resources Defense Council of New York.