

Bayonne Still a Little Town

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BAYONNE — There is a sameness to the streets and houses in this city that belies the continuing efforts of the 72,500 residents to remain modern in dress. The three major concerns — transportation, environment and housing — reflect the desire of residents for recognition, despite the fact that

The Talk of Bayonne

they feel isolated. Physically, Bayonne may well be isolated from the rest of Hudson County. A peninsula, it has Newark Bay to the west, the Kill van Kull to the south and the Upper New York Harbor to the east. It is narrow and completely urban, although new one- and two-family houses are being built where tenements stood a few years ago. The stores on Broadway are busy, and the city's economy appears to be booming.

Says Mayor Francis G. Fitzpatrick: "We're penalized by the county because we haven't lost ratables, and we don't get enough state and Federal financial aid because of existing formulas. Bayonne is a city of middle-income citizens, and they have maintained their homes and the community in a good state of repair. There is no welfare problem here."

He pointed out that the city had modernized its library, built a new sports stadium and set up portable swimming pools for young people. And yet, he said, 15 per cent of the city's annual income—about \$7-million a year—went to help defray county expenses.

"We've never quite outgrown the little town status," Mayor Fitzpatrick went on. "Everyone knows one another in Bayonne."

The Mayor's views were reiterated by store owners and shoppers on the six main streets of the city. "We get along, and we don't have the problems of other cities," said a woman who owns a stationery store on Avenue C. "The fact is we are lucky because we don't have the problems that towns here in New Jersey are describing."

Still, getting out of Bayonne by car is difficult because it usually means going through Jersey City to the north, where the streets are narrow and clogged. Because of this, Bayonne's residents are striving to improve transit facilities. The threat of a shutdown by the Jersey Central Railroad



muters to jobs in New York, Kearny and other nearby cities.

"Our biggest problem is the railroad," said Mrs. Joan Rackley, who has lived here all of her 31 years. "They're thinking of demolishing the Eighth Street bridge, and that would eliminate Jersey Central service here."

Talks are now going on in Trenton to see what can be done to assure the city that some form of rail transportation will be maintained in Bayonne. A connection with PATH trains in Jersey City's Journal Square is one of the recommendations.

Mrs. Rackley also said that residents were delighted with what had been done to improve the environment on major streets. In the last two years, about 1,000 trees have been planted on major thoroughfares in an effort to improve the environment.

Along this line, the Bayonne Conservation Commission has distributed a questionnaire asking residents to do "an environmental audit and establish our environmental priorities." The questionnaire covers water and air problems, in addition to the use of land and control of noise. The deadline for returning the questionnaires is next Sunday.

The questionnaire, like many other things in the city, lends emphasis to the fact that Bayonne is eager to correct flaws that have existed for years. Last July, a new, \$5-million Municipal Building was opened at Avenue C and 28th Street. With more than 200 rooms, it has led to the merger of city offices that had been spread throughout Bayonne.

has lived here for 25 years, said he felt the major concern of most residents was the improvement of living conditions.

"Everybody talks about high taxes," he observed, "but most people here, especially the young, appear to be ecology minded. They want to improve living conditions."

The tax rate here is high, being \$61.87 for each \$1,000 of assessed valuation. But in the 4.18 square miles that comprise the city, improvements in facilities are seen at every intersection.

Another interesting phenomenon in Bayonne is that property taxes are not the sole source of revenue, for much of the land along the waterfront is owned by major manufacturing companies. Also, several new warehouses have begun operations in that area.

"There's a good mixture of skilled and semi-skilled labor in Bayonne, and that helps draw and keep industries," Mayor Fitzpatrick said. "This is a very stable city, with a very stable community. There are a lot of churches, and they're all successful."

Police Inspector Edward Roake, who recalled that his grandparents had lived in Bayonne, reported there was not much of a crime problem. He said the State Law Enforcement Planning Agency had given the Police Department a \$30,000 grant to work with high school sophomores in an effort to develop a rapport between the students and the police.

"We take 25 kids at a time and hold 'rap' sessions with them," Inspector Roake said. "This helps the police understand the thinking of the kids, and helps them know what we're trying to do. It's been a very successful thing."

Because of the way Bayonne is isolated from the rest of Hudson County, most residents do their shopping in the city. "Not many of us go to shopping centers because they're not that convenient," said a housewife in a market on Broadway. "Anyway, shopping really is better in town."

She also said that many residents stayed in Bayonne for social and cultural programs, with civic centers and religious halls being readily available for lectures and meetings. "We're quite fortunate that there is not much of a crime problem," she