



Ezra Stoller Associates

OUT OF THE ORDINARY: At center of model, new headquarters of Ford Foundation is shown. Square structure was designed by Joseph N. Lacy, John Dinkeloo and Kevin Roche. Interior court will have sheer glass walls on 42d Street and east sides of building.

Bold Plan for Building Unveiled

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

The Ford Foundation announced plans yesterday for a new headquarters building that departs radically from routine New York office construction and promises to add a distinguished landmark to the United Nations neighborhood.

The 12-story structure, to be built at 321 East 42d Street, to the west of Tudor City, is budgeted at \$10 million. It is the work of Eero Saarinen Associates, carried out since Mr. Saarinen's death. The designers are Joseph N. Lacy, John Dinkeloo and Kevin Roche, principals of the Saarinen firm. Construction will begin next month, and is expected to be complete by December, 1966.

Overlooks Skylit Court

Designed as an open-sided square, the building will consist of an L-shaped office and service block glassed in on two sides, revealing an open, 10-story high, interior skylit court as its heart. The court will contain a 100-foot, parklike, year-round garden with full-scale trees and natural rock. The landscape architect will be Dan Kiley.

This dramatic court design will provide one of the city's largest and most spectacular interior spaces as well as a humanized kind of office plan that New York lacks, and could learn from.

In a sense, it turns conventional office construction inside out. Instead of windowless interiors, with a perimeter of windowed offices that look out into windows across the street, this building turns in on itself, creating its own view. The landscaped court will be seen not

Edifice of 12 Stories for Ford Foundation Overlooks Garden

only from the surrounding offices that open onto it but also from the street, giving the city the visual advantage as well.

At the same time, the plan is tailored to the Ford Foundation's needs. In its present accommodations on 10 floors of a typical speculative office building on Madison Avenue, there is little contact among its personnel and no general sense of the organization's size, make-up and purposes.

The court plan unifies its people and programs, with the garden reception and meeting area as the visible focus of most offices. All the foundation's functions, including the independent Educational Facilities Laboratories, will be housed in the building's 250,000 square feet of floor space.

"It will be possible, in this building," says Kevin Roche, speaking for the architects, "to look across the court and see your fellow man or sit on a bench in the garden and discuss the problems of Southeast Asia. There will be an awareness of the whole scope of the foundation's activities."

Three-fourths of the 42d Street, or south side and two-fifths of the east side of the building will be sheer glass, rising 130 feet of the building's full 160-foot height. The rest of the facade will be faced in warm-toned granite tied to the color of the adjoining towers of

Tudor City. Construction will be of reinforced concrete.

The design is surprisingly reminiscent of a popular kind of Victorian business building of the late 19th century where elaborately balconied office floors surrounded a full-height, skylit court. These buildings are being destroyed across the country as obsolete.

To reach this contemporary version of an old delight, the architects studied and rejected several more conventional plans for the 200-foot-square site. Among these were a routine five-story block covering all of the land and high-rise towers with plazas.

Utilizes Less Space

This is not a plan, however, that could be carbon-copied by the city's investment builders, because it utilizes considerably less space than current zoning allows. But it is an object lesson in the possibilities opened by fresh thought and a creative approach to the city's most important commercial building problem: the provision of ample and impressive headquarters for large corporations or equivalent organizations, in structures that have some civic conscience as well.

This building promises to achieve the rather remarkable feat of living comfortably with neighboring styles that range from hasty-pudding-commercial to mock-neo-Tudor. It is a small addition to a big town, in New York's way of measuring landmarks by size, but it is a large potential dose of design quality in a city that matches its extraordinary vitality with the deadliness of its building clichés.