

# New Patterns For City Housing

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

**T**HE words "city-sponsored housing" bring to mind uniformly tall, barrackslike rows of unfriendly buildings, isolated from each other by dispirited plots of grass that one must Keep Off. In New York, unfortunately, this is the standard formula. The best examples provide comfortable apartments on a realistic economic scale; the worst have been called "vertical slums."

To improve the situation, the city this year opened a middle-income urban renewal site—five blocks in East Harlem, from 106th to 111th Streets and from First Avenue to the river—to competition. The purpose was, in Mayor Wagner's words, "to focus in a single renewal project the fresh thoughts, ingenuity and talent of many architects from all over the nation." The competition was sponsored by a manufacturer of building materials, the Ruberoid Company, which handed over the

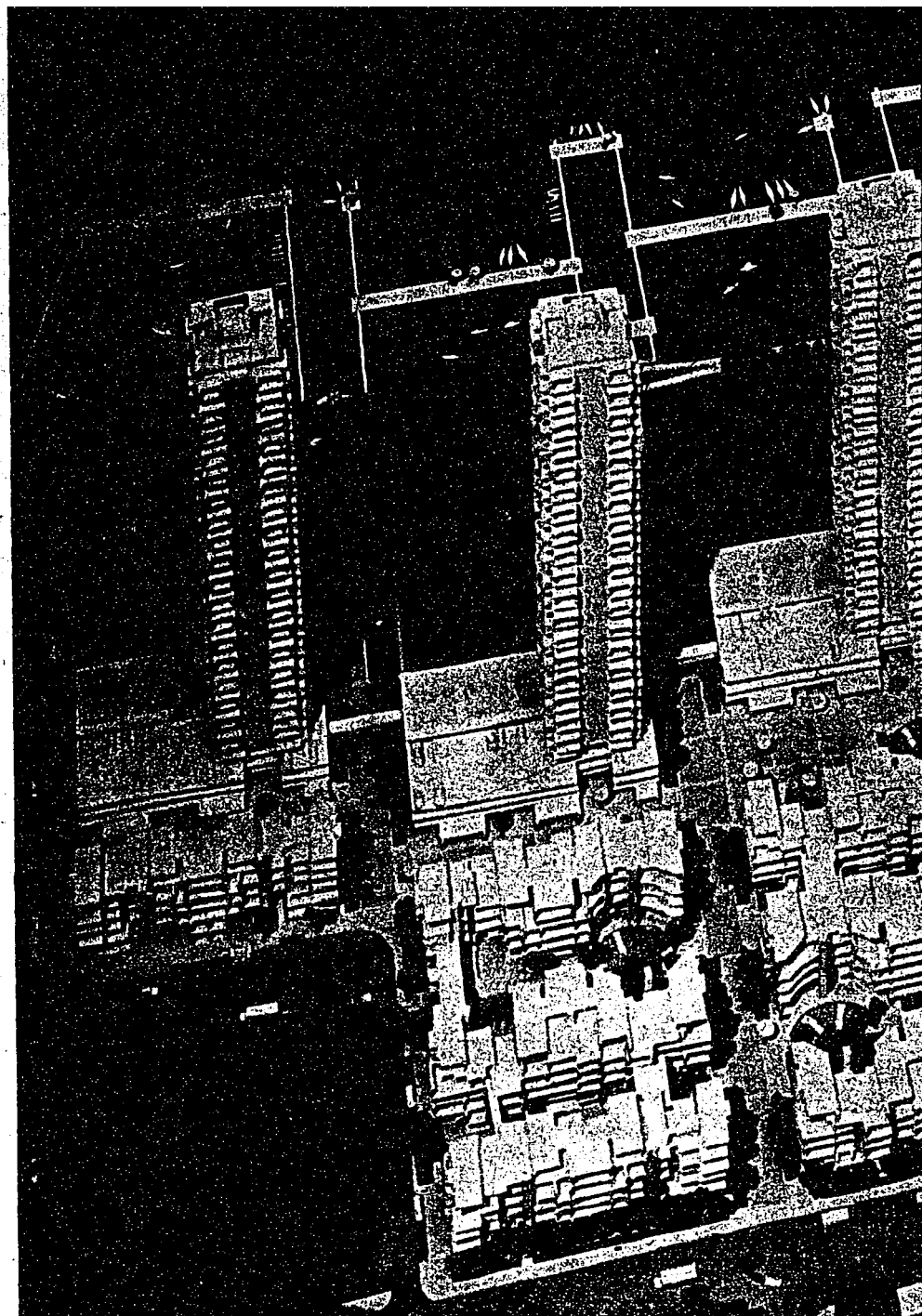
results to the city's Housing and Redevelopment Board. The board will give top priority to the execution of the design that took first place in the competition.

The distinction of the winning design (as well as of the five runners-up) lies in its variety, in its departure from the dull, depressing sameness of most housing projects. Its buildings stand both high and low. Their exteriors vary greatly, having curves as well as straight lines, and balconies in random places. The low buildings lie closer together instead of being isolated in the customary manner. Studies have shown that this density, as well as the lowness of the buildings—five to six stories high—is psychologically better for tenants.

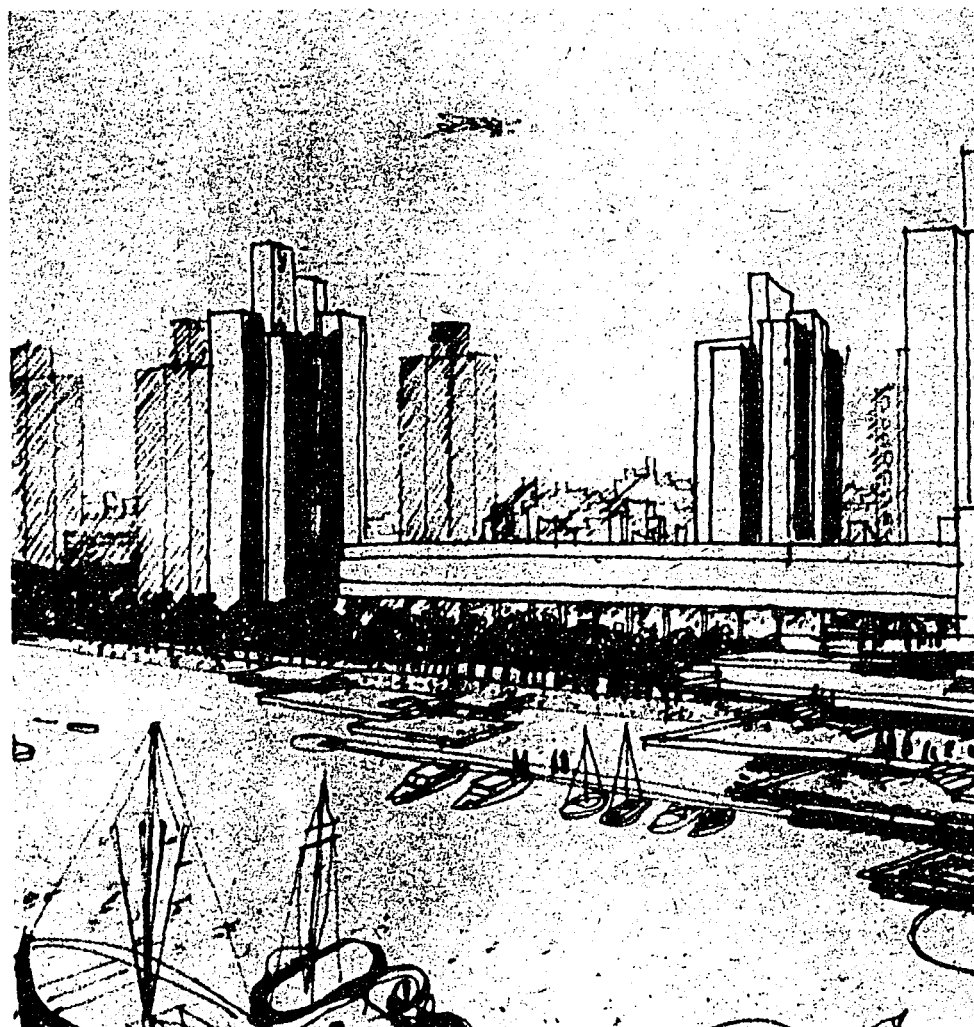
Here are five of the six prize schemes. They offer startlingly different solutions to the building challenge. But all strike at the conformity of New York housing.



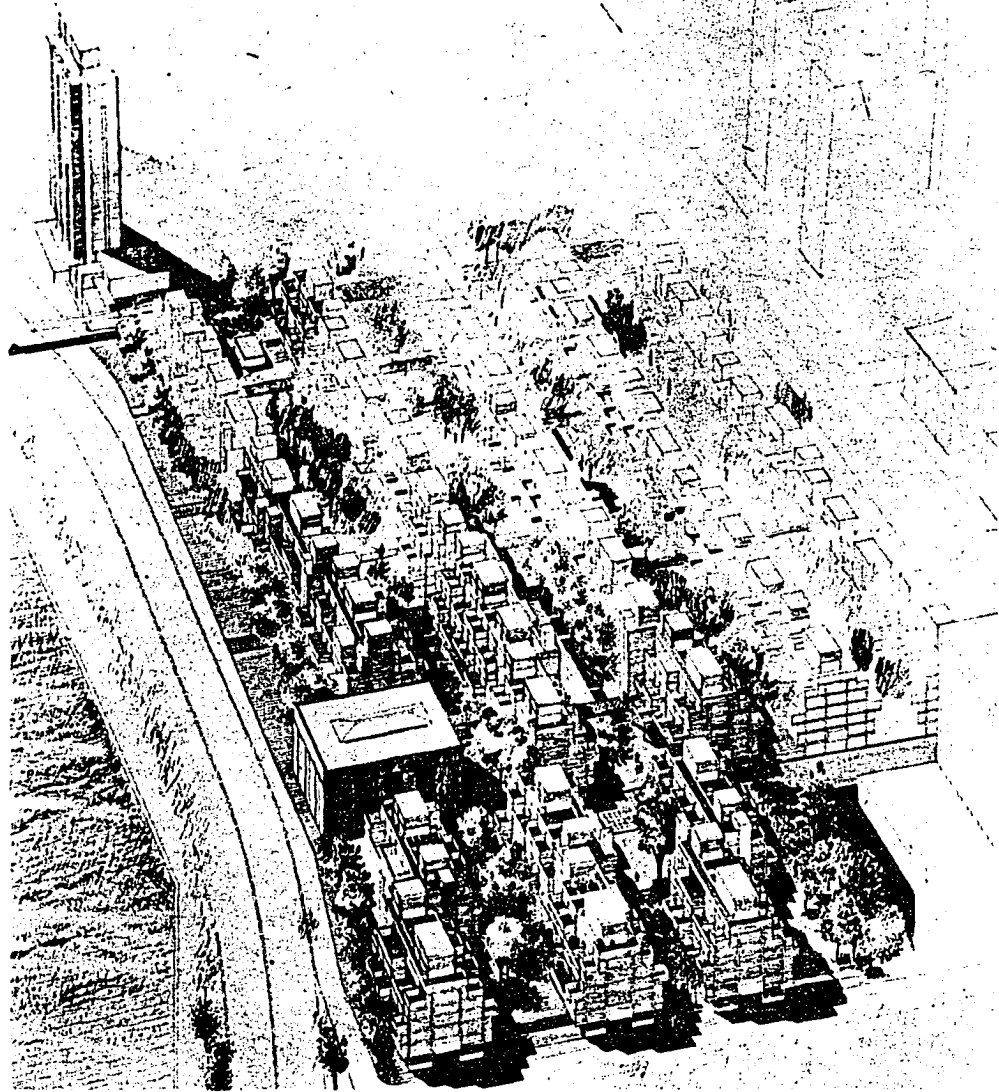
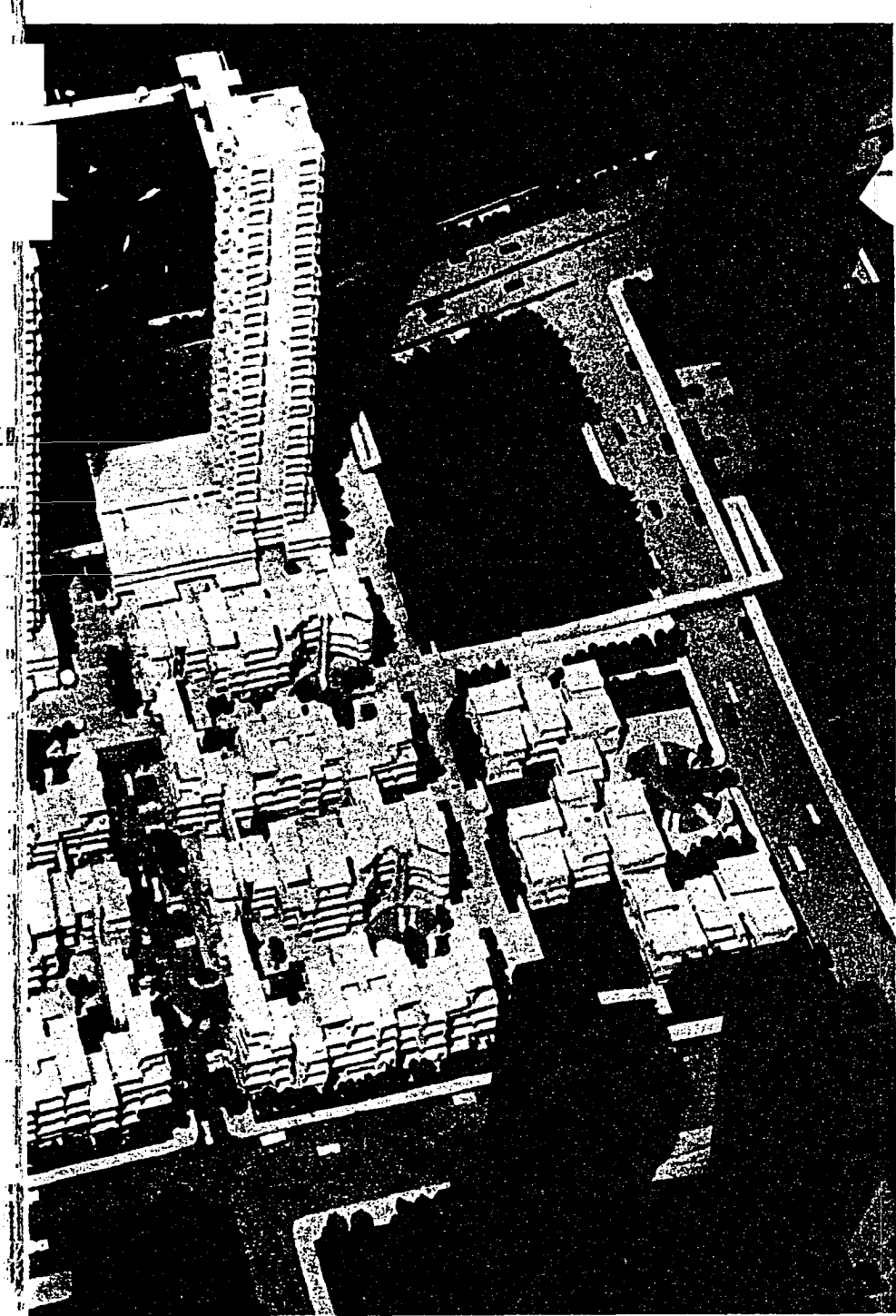
**TODAY**—Towering apartments, widely spaced out on a site, have light and air, but look monotonous. Penn Station South typifies such middle-income housing.



**TOMORROW**—First prize, \$10,000, in the city's competition for a scheme for middle-income housing for East Harlem has gone to this unusual plan. Instead of a very few tall buildings, the plan mixes tall and low buildings in closer proximity than has been usual in such projects. But the low buildings are far from crowded together. They form three shallow rows across the

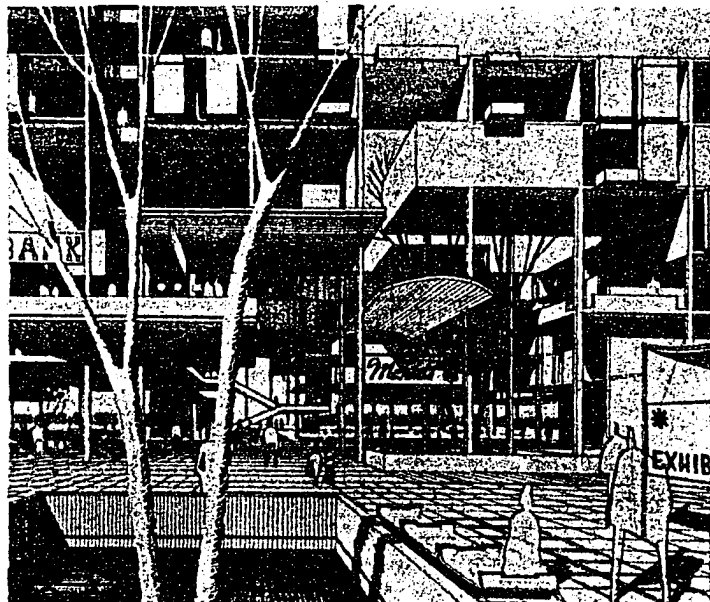


**"WALL" HOUSING**—Like the two other awards, the third prize, \$2,500, was given to a dramatic array of high and low buildings. The low houses form a continuous rampart, linked by

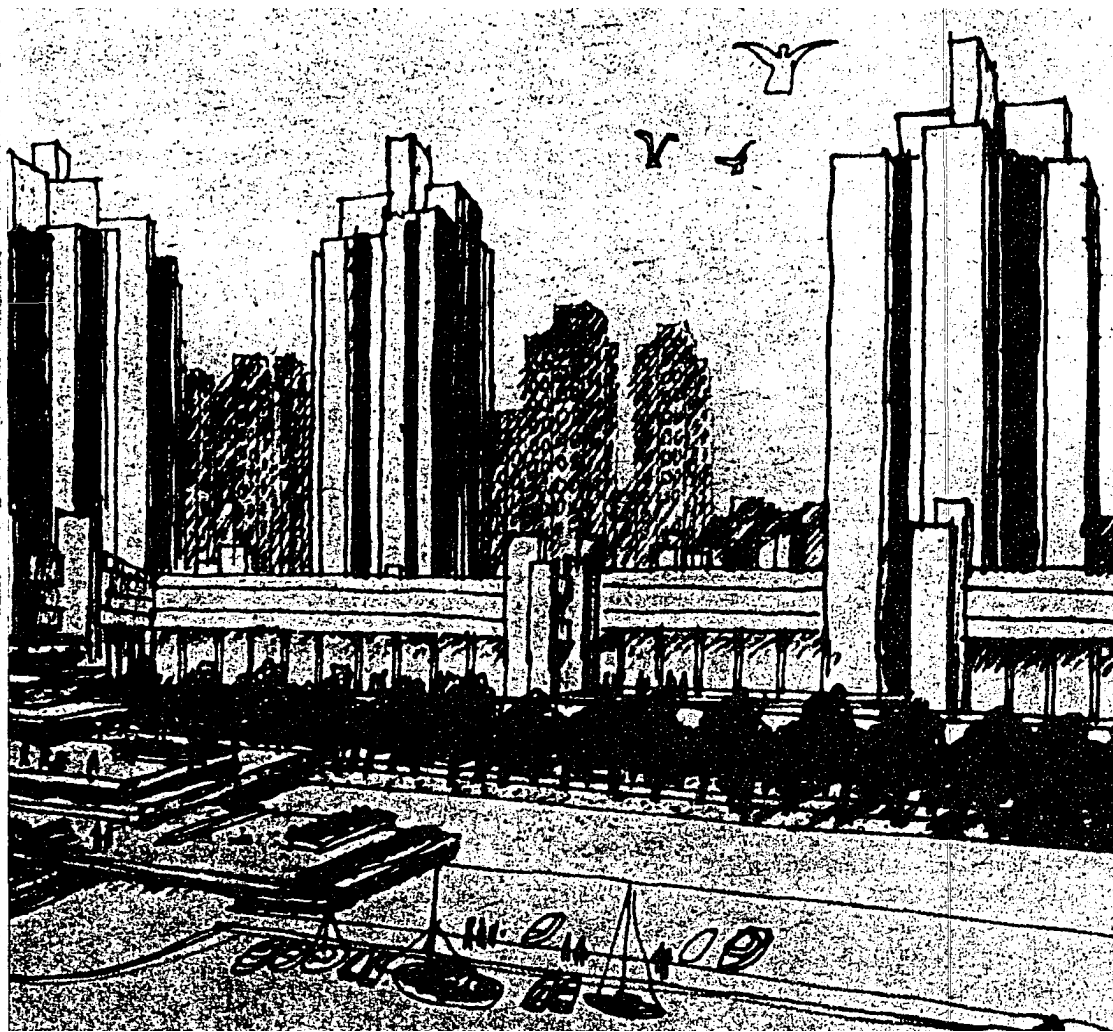


**SMALL HOUSING**—Second prize, \$5,000, honors another fresh approach to city housing. There is only one tower; it contains efficiency units. The other buildings are all low, balconied structures. Architects: Edwin Stromston, Ricardo Scofidio, Felix Martorano.

blocks, and are well separated by pedestrian walks which widen into circles and squares for repose and recreation. The serenity of the project is aided by the limited entree it affords to automobiles. A marina for the neighborhood is planned on the river side. Rooms will rent for under \$30. Architects are Hodne Associates, Minneapolis.



**YOUNG THINKERS**—Student architects, as well as professionals, were invited to submit designs in the competition. The first student award went to Robert Holmes and Robert Wright, University of Illinois, for the prefabricated project, above. The second student award went to Michael Wurmfeld, Princeton, for his plan, shown below.



skyscrapers. The ramparts are of the same height as buildings in the surrounding neighborhood. Inside the walls are open, parklike spaces. Hanford Yang and Amiel Vassilovski.

