

Planning the New City

Modern Museum Exhibits Projects That Link Esthetics and Sociology

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

Art and city government got together yesterday at the Museum of Modern Art for the start of the museum's new exhibition, "The New City: Architecture and Urban Renewal."

Co-sponsored by the city, the show was opened by Mayor Lindsay, who took a 10-minute luncheon break to examine it. He

An then endorsed it warmly to 110 appraisal luncheon guests whose names read

like a Truman Capote party list of political and planning notables. The exhibition consists of four projects for upper Manhattan from 96th to 155th Street, between the Hudson and East Rivers. They were prepared in consultation with city agencies by four university planning teams, from Columbia, Cornell, Princeton and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Although the projects are theoretical, they deal with four real New York problems: how to modify the city's grid plan for better neighborhoods, how to provide housing without relocation, how to make the waterfront visible and useful, and how to develop underused, or misused, land.

The studies that resulted, handsomely displayed in maps, photographs, models and drawings, will be on exhibition through March 13. They would not have been possible within the staff or budgetary limitations of the city's normal planning operations. Financing was

obtained from the J. M. Kaplan Fund, the Frances and John L. Loeb Fund, the van Ameringen Foundation and Mrs. W. Vincent Astor.

There are no plans to build the projects. Much that is proposed, however, is possible. The M. I. T. team, for example, suggests connecting Wards Island and Randalls Island with landfill for housing and recreation, a project that has been talked about by the city. Curiously, unplanned dumping, or filling, goes on there now.

Based on its considerable research resources, the university estimates the total cost of land preparation at \$150-million. Based on published figures, the museum estimates this as six days of expenditures at 1966 rates for the war in Vietnam.

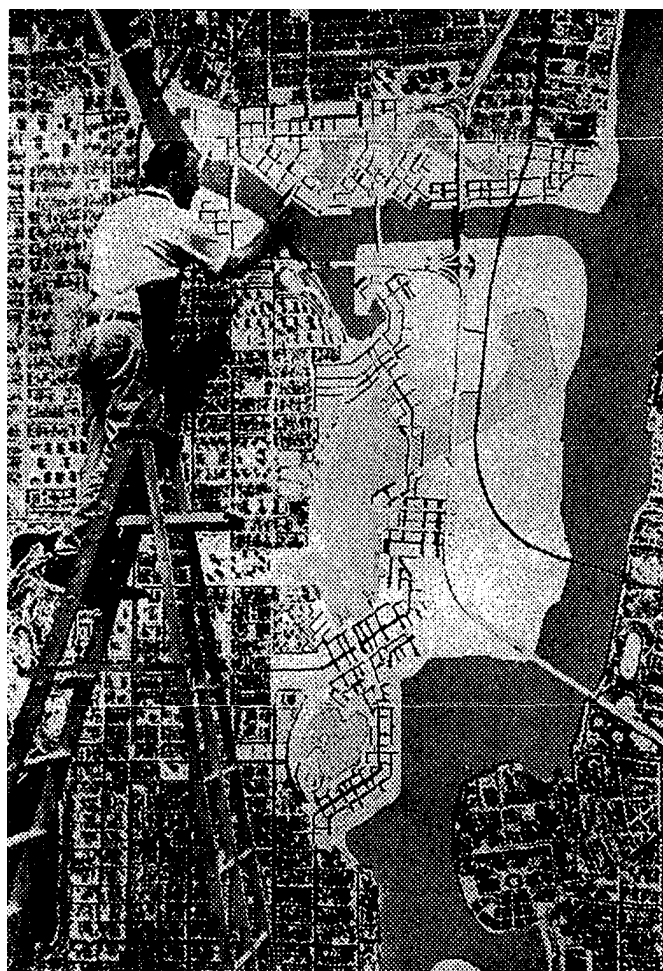
'Spine' of Housing Urged

The Columbia project suggests a "spine" of housing using the air rights over the New York Central railroad tracks on Park Avenue from 96th to 138th Street.

The Cornell plan deals with the high-density area north of Central Park. Rehabilitated housing would be tied to present parks, new construction and housing projects that are now explosively disoriented, in a coordinated neighborhood pattern.

Princeton's project links waterfront, transportation, commerce and recreation at the critical 125th-Street focus.

All of the proposals share recognition of existing values and sensitivity to the city scene—qualities that have been conspicuously lacking in the bulldozer brand of renewal. Their



The New York Times

M.I.T. project calls for connecting Randalls Island, Wards Island and Manhattan. On map, the Bronx is at upper right, with Randalls Island area of new complex just below it and the Wards Island area below Randalls.

scope is deliberately broad; their intention is goal-planning, not detail-planning. The show is that only attention to both will produce a better and more livable city.

The lesson that is hammered home by the exhibition is that esthetics and practical problem-solving are inseparable. That design quality and social purpose have not been considered together in the past is attested to by New York's humdrum public housing. The evidence of

It would be pointless, therefore, for critics to dissect these solutions in detail, something easy to do with projects on this ambitious a scale for a city as complex and conflict-ridden as New York. Actually, there is

Continued on Page 45, Column 1

MUSEUM SHOWS 'NEW CITY' PLANS

Continued From Page 39

not a Buck Rogers proposal in the lot; no organic structures blooming like fungi; no bathysphere living quarters below the sea. The architect-planners being trained by the schools today are steeped in urbanism and deeply committed to its problems.

A map near the beginning of the show indicates areas demolished and rebuilt by the city in the last 20 years within the museum project's boundaries. It adds up to the equivalent of 80 per cent of Central Park. It is clear that the city has been operating on a scale equal to that embraced by the museum's planners.

No Total End in View

What the exhibition also makes clear is that this operation has been carried out without coordination or design standards, with no relationship between projects, and no understanding of the inevitable impact of this mass of building on the city's future. Although the housing produced could solve a smaller city's problems, there has been no total urban end in view.

Professionals consider the exhibition a breakthrough for both the city and the museum. The museum has left its ivory tower to rejoin the world and, specifically, New York. It has taken its planning plunge into one of the city's most troubled neighborhoods. With this show, it trades its comfortably insulated position as arbiter of blue-chip collections and status-insured activities for the chaotic discomforts of the urban crisis.

The city, by its sponsorship, has gone on record for a kind of creative planning uncommon in municipal circles. City participation in the exhibition suggests that this is the elevated standard that it intends to pursue in its urban programs.