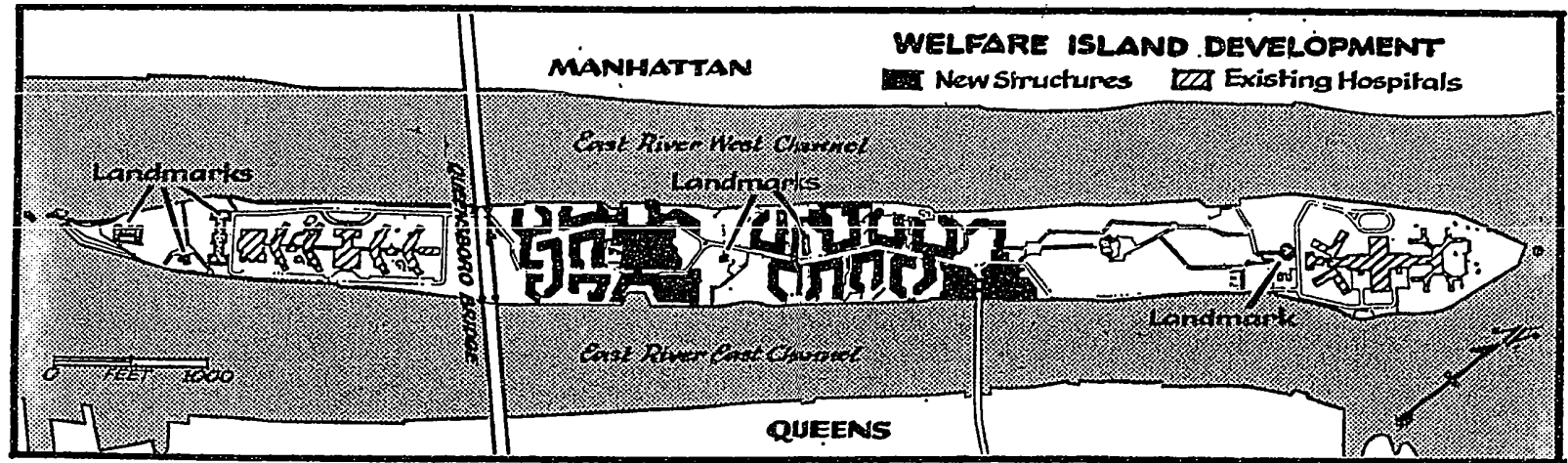


A Plan for Welfare Island Is Unveiled

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

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New proposal for Welfare Island would provide two new towns, indicated by the black diagrams at center, as well as five parks, spaced from northern end, right, to southern end. A promenade would extend four miles around island.

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

Plans were unveiled yesterday for a \$200-million development project for Welfare Island, the two-mile-long, 147-acre sliver of city-owned land in the East River that has been the sparsely settled site of city hospitals and a gleam in real estate developers' eyes for many years.

The proposal calls for a virtually auto-free residential island for 20,000 people, dotted with parks. There would be two "island towns" with 5,000 units of clustered housing for low-income residents, including the elderly, and moderate- middle- and high-income groups.

A 25-acre ecological park—a new city resource—would reproduce the natural features of the region, including characteristic plants and wildlife. The four-mile waterfront would become a promenade.

The plan is the latest of almost a dozen that have been set forth for the island in the last 10 years. The others have been privately sponsored; this one is backed by the city and the state.

Plan on Exhibit
The proposal has been prepared by the New York State Urban Development Corporation. Philip Johnson and John Burgee are the architects. The announcement was made by Mayor Lindsay and Edward J. Logue, who is head of the Urban Development Corporation, in a joint news conference at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The plan will be on exhibit at the museum through Oct. 23.

The island—which is 800 feet across at its widest part—has two active city hospitals: the Bird S. Coler Hospital and Home at its northern end and the Goldwater Memorial Hospital near the southern tip.

Between them are nurses' residence, utility buildings and a Fire Department training school. Abandoned 19th- and early 20th-century city structures in overgrown, near-rural surroundings, give the island its familiar quality of ghostly surrealism.

The development plan has a better chance than others that have languished on paper because the State Urban Development Corporation has both the legal and financial power to put it into operation.

The state and the city have reached an agreement on a 99-year lease and contract to carry out the construction.

Under terms of the lease the city will receive a flexible amount of money in excess of \$1-million a year, to which will be added the equivalent of any profit earned in future years. The rent will be adjusted periodically and at the end of 99 years the land and its improvements will revert to the city.

The lease is scheduled for Board of Estimate hearing and action on Oct. 23. If it is approved, detailed designs will go ahead immediately. The agreement stipulates that construction must begin 18 months after ratification and be completed in eight years.

Work could proceed quickly because the state law that created the Urban Development Corporation to expedite renewal and housing within the state also exempts it from local code or zoning regulations and design review.

The plan is based on the report of the Mayor's Welfare Island Planning and Development Committee, headed by Benno C. Schmidt, which submitted its recommendations in February.

The committee, composed of city officials and prominent citizens, suggested retaining the existing hospitals, keeping as much green open space as possible and adding a moderate amount of housing. The plan follows the recommendations closely.

The island would be divided into nine zones—five parks and four building groups, with parks and buildings alternating—across the island's width to avoid long, monotonous strips.

Waterfront 'Town Square'

Two of the building groups are the existing Coler and Goldwater Hospitals. The other two are proposed "island towns," made up of clusters of apartment houses four to 12 stories high, supported by commercial and public facilities. There would be no high-rise towers.

The northern island town terminates in a multilevel, 2,000-car parking garage, called Motorgate, where all private autos would be left. Circulation from that point would be "minitransit" bus or rail, except for service and emergency vehicles.

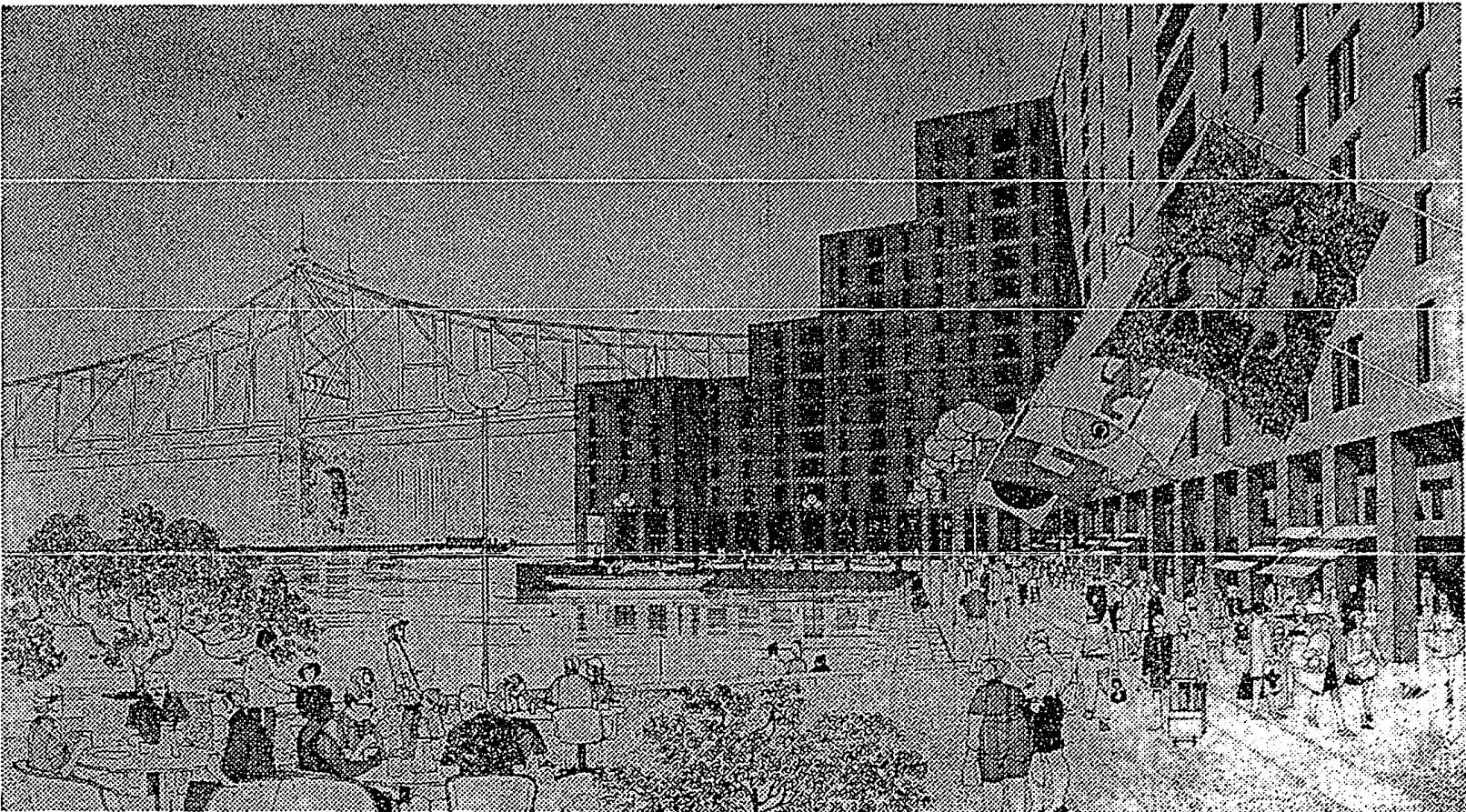
The more southerly cluster would have a "town center,"

connecting a waterfront "town square" on the Manhattan side to a waterfront "harbor square" on the Queens side with a glassed-in "galleria" of shops. There would also be a public school for 2,000 children, a day-care center, swimming pools and fire and police stations, and 200,000 square feet of office space.

The city-state agreement calls for 5,000 residential units. That number was dictated not only by the original report's recommendations for a maximum of open space, but also by the amount of traffic that can be supported by the Welfare Island station of the projected 63d Street subway tunnel, plus existing bridge and bus facilities. A \$69.5-million contract for the tunnel was let by the Authority last week.

The housing mixture has been set at 30 per cent low income, of which 10 per cent will be for the elderly; 24 per cent moderate income, 20 per cent middle income and 25 per cent conventionally financed units.

Conventionally financed means high-rent, fully tax-paying housing produced on the open market to rent at \$125 to \$150 a room.



This is a rendering of a harbor square proposed for the Queens side of the island. Housing to be built would range from four to 12 stories, as envisioned by Philip Johnson and John Burgee, architects. Queensboro Bridge is at left.

Middle income, which would be Mitchell-Lama housing with tax abatement, is now up to \$55 to \$60 a room, which moves it to the upper-middle-income category. Therefore there is the additional category of moderate income, at \$30 a room, to be produced by Mitchell-Lama financing with the aid of provisions of Federal housing legislation.

Federal Subsidies Due

Low-income housing, at \$18 to \$20 a room, will utilize Federal subsidies.

In addition to the housing, the state's agreement to the plan guarantees parks for local and citywide use. The largest is to be a major recreational and educational innovation—the ecological park.

Some of the island's old structures are to be preserved within the parks as landmarks.

They include a house built around 1789 for the Blackwell family, after which the island was originally named, and early hospital buildings by such architects as James Renwick, designer of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington and St. Patrick's Cathedral here.

For financing, the Urban Development Corporation can sell bonds up to \$1 billion for all of its projects, of which it anticipates using \$200-million to \$250-million for long-term capital investments for Welfare Island.

The corporation is committed to build all public facilities, including schools. These will be sold or leased to the city. It will also build the commercial space. State housing programs are available for residential building. The ecological park might be

a state parks undertaking.

Construction would be carried out by a special Welfare Island Development Corporation to be set up as a subsidiary of the Urban Development Corporation. It is to include four city officials, three officers of the state corporation and seven private persons drawn initially from the Mayor's committee that prepared the Welfare Island report.

Steps Toward Reality

The first step after Board of Estimate ratification would be to execute a new contract with the Johnson-Burgee architectural firm for a final plan and staging program. The architects' renderings of housing and other construction are only meant to suggest a schematic framework, and are not actual designs.

A variety of architects might participate.

Jason R. Nathan, head of the Housing and Urban Development Administration, is the city official working with the state on the project. Mr. Logue, head of the state agency, says he has had "unofficial" city consultations. Donald H. Elliott, chairman of the City Planning Commission, has declined to comment on the design because he says he has not seen the final version.

Legally, the city has no review powers over an Urban Development Corporation undertaking. If the Board of Estimate approves the lease, which has been carefully worked out with the city, such action would carry with it acceptance of the outlines of the general development plan.