

# Model Cities Construction to Start Here by Fall

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

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The New York Times (by Meyer Liebowitz)  
A block in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn that will be demolished for a vest-pocket public housing project. The block is bounded by Troy Avenue on the left, Dean Street, foreground, Schenectady Avenue and Pacific Street. The site is a block south of Atlantic Avenue.

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The first buildings of New York's Model Cities program will be under construction in the Bedford-Stuyvesant and East New York section of Brooklyn and Mott Haven in the South Bronx by September.

About 2,300 units of public housing on 54 vest-pocket sites have been approved by the City Housing Authority and are now in working drawings. Relocation is proceeding on the sites, where necessary, and demolition contracts have been let. The new projects represent a complete break with the city's much-criticized, stereotyped public housing and an attempt to get construction going again.

In a program started last November, the Housing Authority authorized a single New York architectural firm, Gruzen & Partners, to coordinate the work of 15 other architects with the aim of improving standards and expediting plans.

The results, although only a start in the major battle to meet slum housing needs, are considered a model of new thought and design in a field in which New York has been labeled a laggard, not a leader.

### Disputes Delay Other Work

An additional 1,700 units on 11 sites in the Milbank Frawley (south-central section of Harlem) are currently being held up by community disputes between Negroes and Puerto Ricans. This brings the total program to about 4,000 units on 65 sites in Model Cities areas.

The Model Cities program is the Federally promoted and financed undertaking administered by the Department of Urban and Housing Development, aimed at renewing the country's urban slum areas through a combined housing and social effort.

Construction of public housing has been criticized in New York for its slowness, and has even been jeopardized by the city's failure to use up Federal funds allocated under the Housing Act of 1965 to provide 28,000 units here by June 30, 1969.

### Reorganization Delays

The delays have resulted from administrative changes in the Housing Authority, the reorganization of the Housing and Development Administration and attempts of the city to restudy its housing programs in terms of community needs and participation.

A major factor has been the bureaucracy-encumbered, multiple-contract construction process in city housing that takes months and sometimes years longer than private building.

When Walter Washington left to head the new District of Columbia government last November, Albert A. Walsh succeeded him as chairman of the Housing Authority. The new vest-pocket program had already been initiated and architects selected.

Mr. Walsh appointed Gruzen & Partners to work with the firms under contract with the objective of breaking the existing mold of public housing here. It now consists chiefly of regimented groups of standardized brick towers that have been attacked with equal vehemence by esthetes, sociologists and minority activists.

Gruzen was selected because of its experience in building middle-income housing and schools here and its

familiarity with the city's procedures. Its work includes Chatham Green and Chatham Towers in Manhattan and plans for the new Police Headquarters near City Hall. Four basic principles have guided the new plans, all of which are regarded as typical of today's most progressive housing theory.

First, the idea of breaking up masses of public housing by putting it on small, scattered sites, including even minisites on parts of blocks, is meant to encourage the absorption of the tenants into the community.

Second, in an attempt to

counter the cold, impersonal atmosphere of much public housing, the emphasis is on low-rise housing rather than towers, predominantly four stories, built in small groups for more intimacy and human scale.

Third, there has been a conscious effort to relate the buildings to the existing scale and pattern of their neighborhoods, rather than to disrupt the neighborhoods socially and environmentally by dropping in massive "alien" projects.

Fourth, open space is enclosed usefully by the houses as community plazas, parks

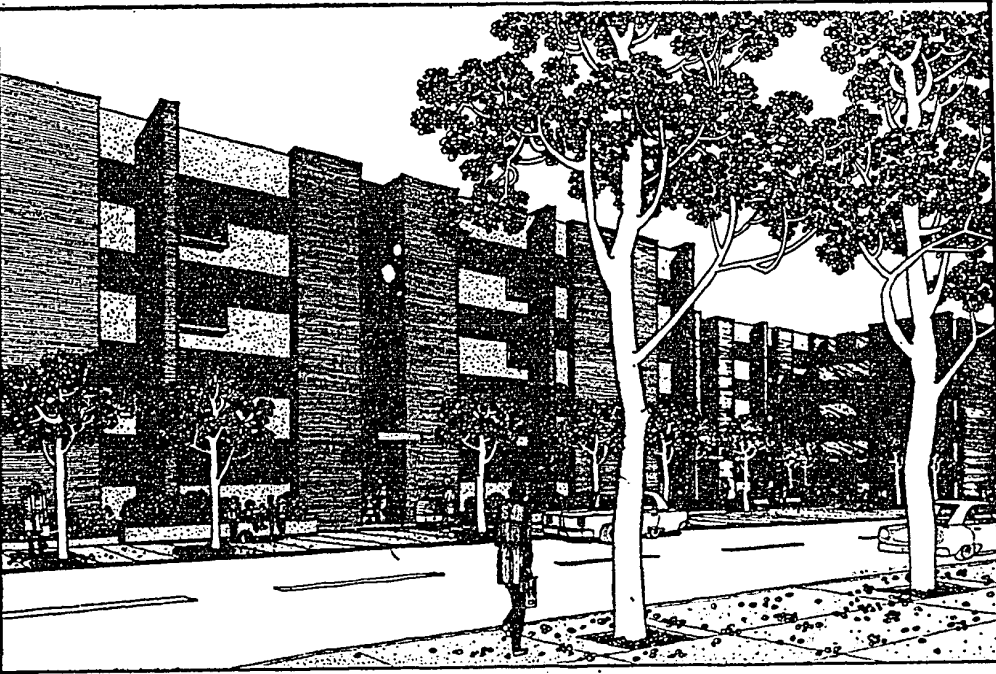
or playgrounds, not left as a vacuum around the buildings. M. Paul Friedberg, the landscape architect, has been the authority's open-space consultant for the program.

Other features are varied facades instead of flat brick walls, the use of bay windows or sliding windows, partly underground parking and community facilities such as parks, neighborhoods and health centers.

The program calls for using small local companies for demolition concerns have al-

ready been selected on this basis.

Architects for the projects in Bedford-Stuyvesant are Gustave W. Iser, Knappe & Johnson, Seymour Joseph, E. N. Turano and Martyn & I. Donald Weston; for East New York in Brooklyn, Ames Associates, Jerrald L. Karlan; for Mott Haven in the Bronx, H. I. Feldman, David Kraus, Ralph E. Leff, Fred Liebmann, John A. Pruyn, Jonas Vizbaras; for Milbank Frawley in Harlem, Fisher Associates, Simeon Heller and George J. Meltzer, Gruzen & Partners.



Sketches of two of the 54 vest-pocket housing projects to be built here under the Model Cities program. Above, a project designed by Gustave W. Iser for the Bedford-Stuyvesant section. Below, a building designed by Jerrald L. Karlan for East New York, in Brooklyn.

