

## The World Trade Center

The project that has come out of the complexities of the proposed World Trade Center is a miracle of organization and order. If all the problems involved in bringing it to successful completion—relocation of displaced businesses, planning relationships to surrounding areas, participation of Federal and state agencies—can be resolved as handsomely and expeditiously as the design, New York will have an achievement of notable proportions.

Just its physical proportions are overwhelming. The twin-towered complex unveiled by the Port Authority covers sixteen acres of lower Manhattan and dwarfs all of the city's landmarks, including the Empire State Building. Its impact on New York, for better or worse, economically and architecturally, is bound to be enormous. The city can absorb a lot, but the effects of this gargantuan scheme will be inescapable. A bad design could have been a major civic catastrophe.

Fortunately, these soaring 110-story skyscrapers, with their handsome low buildings enclosing a five-acre plaza, promise to be a civic ornament. By the greatest good luck—because New York has no architectural controls beyond bulk and use zoning—this \$350-million group of buildings sets a standard well above the city's average. After considerable shifting of site and components, the project landed in an area where there will be little destruction of the city's pathetically small historic heritage. What will be destroyed, however, is a healthy commercial community of thriving small businesses, a serious problem still to be solved.

There are other problems. The Federal Government has been backing and filling, but it will now at least consolidate its customs operations there. New York State will move its offices out of the City Hall area into the Center, after Governor Rockefeller's previous announcement that his sleight-of-hand fiscal policies involving selling state properties and renting office space would not be pursued in the city. The state's move also raises the question of planning relationships to the proposed Civic Center just to the northeast. The City Planning Commission is left once again in its usual anomalous and anachronistic position of planning after the fact.

Even with these difficulties, no project has ever been more promising for New York. It is in the best tradition of city-shaping complexes like Rockefeller Center, which the past thirty years have demonstrated to be one of the city's outstanding successes. And it carries New York's superb romantic symbol, the skyscraper, to literally new heights through legitimate technological advances. From the delicate Gothic tracery of the nearby Woolworth Tower to the "modernistic" stainless steel Chrysler spire, these famous shafts are the city's great visual drama. The World Trade Center could be a fitting successor.