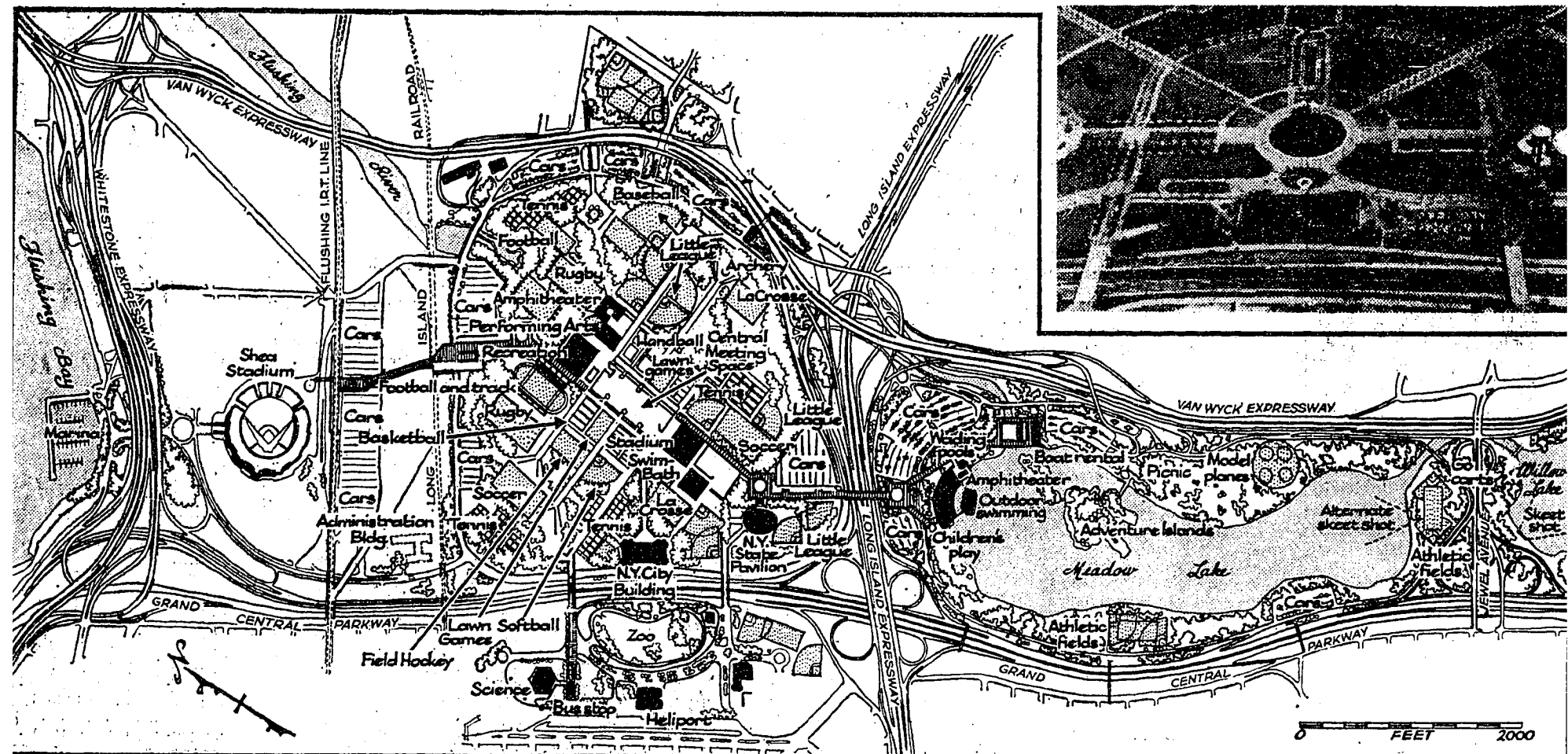


Flushing Meadows Park Plan Delayed by Auditing: AUDITING DELAYS PARK IN FLUSHING

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

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TIVOLI IN NEW YORK: Map of the park planned for Flushing Meadows on site of the 1964-65 World's Fair. Photo shows park today, with New York City Building in foreground.

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Flushing Meadows Park Plan Delayed by Auditing

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

A plan for Flushing Meadows Park by a prize-winning international design team is being delayed because the City Controller's office is refusing payment for the first stage of the work, pending required investigation of the architects' contracts and status.

The problem began last October, when the Parks Department, eager to acquire the best architectural talent available, hired the three architects without coordinating with the Controller's office. As a result, the necessary, but belated, investigation has forced the project to a standstill.

The payments are being held up because two of the celebrated architects are not registered in this state; a quibble about whether work by a landscape architect is architecture rather than landscape architecture and the

auditing of bills by the Controller's office for "reasonableness."

Planners who have seen the design for the old World's Fair site call it a breakthrough. They believe that it is as important for New York in the 20th century as Olmsted's Central Park was in the 19th century.

The architects for the project are Marcel Breuer & Associates of New York and Kenzo Tange of Tokyo, and the landscape architects are Lawrence Halprin & Associates of San Francisco.

The Park Department's action in hiring the architects last fall was one of the first here to offer increased fees and a more encouraging climate toward innovation by top architects. As a result, the city has begun to attract architects of outstanding reputation, among them Philip Johnson and Paul Rudolph. The city has also been experimenting with designs by

young talent for parks and playgrounds.

The Flushing Meadows plan stresses activities rather than a pastoral quality. This form was chosen in response to the results of a survey of the needs of New York's most underprivileged areas. These needs go beyond the scarcity of open green space to the lack of recreational programs and facilities.

In an attempt to fill these requirements, the plan proposes a combination of landscaping and building for sports, entertainment and culture on every level from drag racing to little theater and picnicking.

There was some confusion yesterday about whether two famous structures of the World's Fair—the Unisphere and the Federal Building—would remain in the park. They were not on the tentative plan. The architects were out of town and could not be reached and their assistants

warned against assuming that the absence of these buildings was an oversight. But Parks Commissioner August Heckscher said that so far as he knew, the buildings would stay.

If the project proceeds into its final stages, it will provide outdoor playfields, indoor courts and an arts center. There will be a series of "adventure islands" in the existing lagoons. Some noisy activities would be sunk into landscaped earth "berms," in which protecting grassy slopes are raised at the edge of depressed playing fields.

"Spines" of restaurants, eating bars, shops and concessions would connect buildings and outdoor activity areas. All would focus on a landscaped plaza, or central meeting place. The facilities would be intended for all-year, day and night use.

Mr. Breuer and Mr. Tange

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are working on designs for buildings for recreational and cultural activities within this scheme, as well as a swim-bath and sports stadium. Preliminary possibilities being studied for the site include ball games of all kinds, tennis, track, ice hockey, bowling, billiards, boxing, wrestling, judo, movies, theater, television and a discotheque.

At present, however, the plan is becalmed. The architects are unable to obtain payment from the city for the first stages of the work. The Halprin firm says that it has already invested close to \$100,000 in design, and the other architects say they have incurred lesser, but substantial, costs.

The Controller's office says that the city cannot legally contract for work with Mr. Tange because he is not registered by the State of New York, and therefore the contracts that he and the city have signed are not valid.

They emphasize that Mr. Tange's professional qualifications are not at issue. Mr. Tange is the designer of the Olympics' buildings in Tokyo, the winner of an international competition for rebuilding the earthquake-ravaged city of Skopje in Yugoslavia, and the recipient of the Gold Medal of the American Institute of Architects, the profession's highest award. Others who have received the medal were Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe.

Mr. Halprin's contract is also questioned by the Controller's office because he is registered in California. New York and California have reciprocal licensing agreements, but this arrangement has not yet been accepted by the city.

Payment is also being withheld because the city cannot determine whether Mr. Halprin's work in site design, which includes the location of roads and bridges, is architecture or landscape architecture. Since he is a landscape architect, according to the Controller's office his contract would be illegal if he is practicing architecture.

Mr. Halprin is known in the profession as a pioneer of the modern art of landscape design. He has worked on private houses and civic projects, including Kansas City's Civic Center and a downtown mall for Minneapolis.

Mr. Breuer is the architect

of New York Whitney Museum, the nearly completed new headquarters for the Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington, and the Paris UNESCO buildings, in collaboration with Pier Luigi Nervi and Bernard Zehruss.

Since he is registered in New York State, Mr. Breuer's contract is not in question. But the Controller's office says his bill for the work thus far is being audited for "reasonableness," a power the city possesses.

The office feels that the audit is necessary because the architects' claims are for work undertaken before the contracts were signed. Actual work was started on the basis of a letter

of intent from the Parks Department, to expedite the job.

The contracts were negotiated and completed after nine months. According to Mr. Breuer and Mr. Halprin, other governments for which they have worked require four to six weeks for the process. They cite Boston and the Federal Government as examples.

To speed the job, design was begun on the park plan in January, three months after the announcement of the project. Work proceeded while the contracts were being prepared and the Corporation Counsel's office checked them. They were signed in May and registered by the Controller's office.

By this time, the architects had already finished six months' work, which included the first phase of the job, site programming and design. They are now well into the second phase, actual building design. And, despite the money problem, all three men are meeting in Tokyo this week to continue their collaboration on the park.

"We haven't seen a red cent," Mr. Halprin said last week. "My office can't afford to carry the job much longer. I'll have to go to the bank."

"It's up to us to catch these things when the time comes to pay," says John Carty, First Deputy Controller. Mario Proccaccio, the Controller, is on vacation in Italy until Sept. 7.

"We are here to check these things out, but the Parks Department did not avail themselves of our service," Mr. Carty explained. "Some people don't know how things are done in the city."

In the case of Mr. Tange, the New York registration board has agreed to bring up the matter of giving him temporary certification at its next regular meeting, a procedure followed for distinguished visiting architects working on local jobs. This would eliminate the need for him to take the New York examination, which is usually required.

A photostat of Mr. Halprin's California registration has been obtained for the Controller's office, but the general opinion in that office is that Mr. Halprin's case will be difficult to resolve.

According to Mr. Carty, the contracts themselves will probably have to go back to the Corporation Counsel's office to have their legality determined.

"We've sort of got to keep these people in line," he said. He would not predict how long the audit of Mr. Breuer's accounts would take, or when payments might be made.

Even after plans are approved and paid for, the project must get approval from other city agencies before the work can be carried on.