.... but what is good urban form ?

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degrees of

MASTER OF CITY PLANNING and

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ARCHITECTURE STUDIES

at the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

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May 20, 1983

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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies
and Planning on May 20, 1983, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degrees of MASTER OF
CITY PLANNING and MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ARCHITECTURE
STUDIES.

ABSTRACT

This thesis takes a look at the evolution of
urban design ideas - Schools of Thought, as we
will refer to them - in New York City over
the last two decades. The transformation of
the " image of the good city " from the Modernist's
sleek, abstract, and minimalist towers-in-parks
to a less visionary, people and street centered
urban fabric is the focus of this evolution. The
state of the art in urban design resulting from
the experiences of the last two decades is taken
as the position from which we begin to answer the
question, ... but what is good urban form ?

Three themes are woven together; 1 Good urban form
is essentially a question of a good public
environment, ie. the street, 2 Building activity
needs to recognize and relate to the setting or
" context " in which it occurs, context- sensitivity
being an essential urban form consideration,
3 Building regulations such as zoning have been
recognized as design tools, an innovative or
sophisticated approach to their use is a possible
way to promote/achieve an improved urban environment.

abstract

MY THANKS TO:

My family and friends for support
and encouragement

Tunney Lee for our countless discussions
on urban and environmental design and
this thesis

Christine Cousineau for dedicated and
indepth comments on this doucment

John DeMonchaux for crisp, to the point
observations on the central themes of
this thesis

Donald Schon for helping me to " reflect "
on my arguements

Gary Hack for urging me to " telegraph
what is going to be said, say it, and
then say it again "

acknowledgements

table of contents

This thesis is both a story and a story about a story. The story is told in the Framework section of the thesis. It is essentially a declaration of principles on urban design; what it needs to recognize and respond to. The story about a story unfolds around the two case studies used in this thesis, the Battery Park City landfill development and the Times Square/42nd Street Redevelopment, both in New York City. Through them the evolution of schools of thought in urban design and city planning can be seen. This evolution of urban design philosophy in N.Y.C., the story about a story, is also the foundation for the story told in the Framework; its principles growing out of the experience which the case studies document.

prologue

The Cooper/Eckstut plans for Battery
Park City and the Times Square Redevelopment,
1979 and 1981 respectively, are taken as
examples of the state-of-the-art in
urban design and it is argued that they
have a positive urban vision and that
they represent appropiate approaches
towards intervention in the urban
environment. The four Battery Park City
plans which precede the Cooper/Eckstut
plan illustrate a movement away from the
Modern Movement's view of the city
to a context-sensitive urban design ethic,
from the sleek, abstract, simple city to
a rediscovery of the phenomena of the city
experience and the street as the heart
of the urban environment. It is from this
position that the Framework/manifesto
is written and from which the succession
of proposals for Battery Park City will

be critiqued.

The focus of " ... but what is good
urban form?" is the evolution of the image
of the " good city " from one school of
thought to another; Modernist to a
Jacobs/Lynch, the major transitions
in this evolution , and the resulting
urban design ethic growing out of this
experience.

... but what is good urban form ?

For most of its history, New York has carried
on a romantic, not to say intimate, involve-
ment with congestion. To be New York was to
be crowded - out of crowding came energy,
ideas, excitement, power. If traffic was a
bit slower here than elsewhere, if tall buil-
dings gave you less sun and sky than there
was in Des Moines or Dallas - well, who really
cared about moving fast once you were already
here? And who came to New York in search of
sun and sky anyway?

Paul Goldberger

"The Limits of Urban Growth"

introduction

It goes without saying that the New York,
Manhattan to be precise, environment is dense
and despite its all too rational street pattern
life and activity on its streets is bustling,
at times hectic, rarely rational. There is
something vibrant to be found in New York City.
Its people and form are flexible, they can ad-
just to a broad range of changes. Change, those
who would change parts of the city, however
should not take this adaptability as license to
intervene, without careful thought and study,
in the urban environment.

The physical form of an urban environment is
the product of a dialogue between building and
context, object and subject. The architecture
of a building, defined in a far too narrow
sense, is the product of the discourse between
internal form and internal use; internal as in
a logic specific to a building proposal such
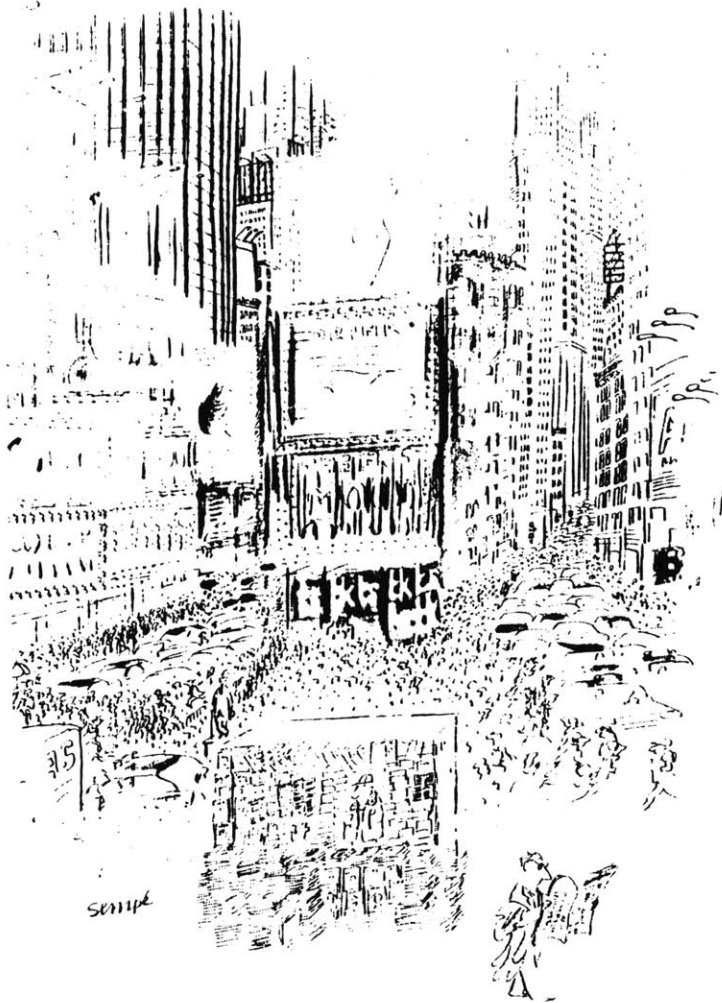
as site, program, budget, users; not in the
sense of "interior" space. The architecture
of an urban fabric is the result of the archi-
tecture of buildings in dialogue with <u>external</u>
<u>relations</u>; external meaning issues not imme-
diately part of the architectural program.
The external relations of a building is its
context. Context is people, buildings, places,
character, image. Context is location speci-
fic. Ideally, the internal dialogues of archi-
tecture reach out to external relations, if
only limited to a degree. An urban fabric,
and urban design, thus becomes a complex inter-
action of a series of three-way architectural
dialogues. The internal discourse of the archi-
tecture of one building becomes the context -
external relations - of another. It follows
that an architecture which is in dialogue with
its context is in communication with the forms
and activities which surround it.

This thesis asks "How does one build in a way
that is sensitive to context?; indeed, What
does it mean to be sensitive to context; What
does it mean to be sensitive to the crowding,
energy, ideas, excitement, and power of New
York City?" It aims its questions particularly
at large-scale developments, because of their
ability to change their settings more than any
single conventional structure. Two current
large-scale developments in the city, Battery
Park City (92 acres) and the Times Square/42nd
Street Redevelopment (13 acres), are employed
to illustrate possible answers and approaches.

In the two case studies, the use of design and
development guidelines are the focus of our
attention. The 42nd Street case poses the
urban form question <u>within</u> an existing, built-
up urban fabric. The guidelines regulate not
only land-use and building location, but

building configuration and image as well, to
yield an integrated development of individual
structures, new and existing, without, indeed,
executing the redevelopment as a single archi-
tect/developer project. The Battery Park City
case poses the urban form question in a situa-
tion where a major land-fill development is to
act as an addition to an existing urban fabric.
Its guidelines seek to break down the "project"
into "nieghborhoods" and connect the land-fill
development with the street pattern of Lower
Manhattan.

In both cases it can be argued that good urban
form is essentially a good street/public envi-
ronment resulting from a thoughtful design pro-
cess. In both cases the design process is
guided by design regulations as a way to promote
attention to the urban design issues each case
presents. Throughout the thesis we will explore

the use of regulation as a design tool, its evolution and current state in N.Y.C., and as one way to achieve good urban form.

When we ask the question, ... but what is good urban form?, it must be recognized that the definition of "the Good City" has changed over time and indeed there have been and are multiple rather than singular definitions of good urban form. The Beaux Arts "White City" and the Modernist (C.I.A.M.) "Radiant City", as pure types, espouse theories of good urban form which are in conflict with one another. So too would an "organic model" of urban form conflict with a "machine model" of urban form. Clearly our thinking about urban form and intervening in it is in a constant state of change; ideally we learn from our experiences and adjust - change our thinking in response.

As our conception of good urban form is trans-
formed over time a period of transition results
whereby old and new ideas are in dialogue and
conflict. Such a period is rich in information.
The Battery Park City case allows us an oppor-
tunity to examine one of these periods, the
late '60's/early '70's, via a progression of
plans for its development spanning over 17
years. The 42nd Street case allows us to
examine where the experiences of this period
have brought us; to the rediscovery of the
street as the essential unit of design in an
urban environment.

This thesis is divided into four major chap-
ters: Framework, The Battery Park Case, The
Times Square/42nd Street Redevelopment Case,
and Conclusions.
The Framework covers, the use of <u>Zoning</u>, that
is, built form regulations, <u>As An Urban Design</u>

Tool and as an indication of the essential urban form issues-of-the-day which the various zoning ordinances were legislated to address; The Social Critics of City Planning, essentially a look at cities from a non-formal perspective; The Street As Place, an argument for the importance of the street to the urban environment; Good Urban Form Is ..., an encapsulation of an urban design ethic, and The U.D.C., a look at the powerful development agency controlling the development of the two interventions used as case studies in this thesis. The case study chapters present a body of information on the current state of urban design thinking about the perception/conception and execution of large-scale urban planning and design efforts. In the Conclusions, we reflect on the meaning of the changes in the defination of good urban form exhibited in the case study plans.

framework

In _Urban Design as Public Policy_ (Architectural Record Books, 1974) Jonathan Barnett asked the question "If a city can get the buildings it asks for, why can't it get the buildings it wants? ... while it is easy to blame greedy real-estate developers for row after row of "ticky-tacky" look-alike houses, in many cases the combination of street grid and zoning setback lines has left the builder no alternative ... (if) you find the skyline of the average American city to be full of unimaginative boxy buildings, the combination of zoning rules and street grid must, again, bear at least part of the blame".

Zoning regulations are taken for granted, so much so that their utility can be ignored. They are not however a natural working of the market system, but an imposition on it, intended to protect public health and safety in addition to private property values through

zoning
as a design tool

the control of built form.

Zoning today limits or structures what can be designed and built. It has been and remains as the most versatile tool of urban designers in New York since Barnett and company took a close look at who and what exercise the great-est influence over the form of a city.

New York City has used zoning regulations in 1916,1961, and 1967 to control the form of buildings in light of broader, city wide considerations. The ordinances espouse at least mid-level theories of good urban form; there is an image of the city they seek to achieve. An examination of these ordinances is due because of the potential such regulations to achieve a new urban vision and because the ordinances and their related views of the good city relate to the evolving urban design ethic explored in the csae studies.
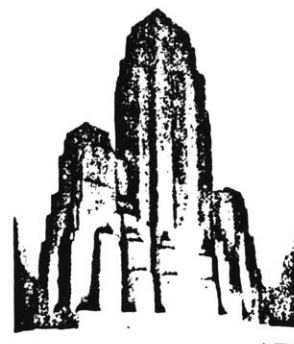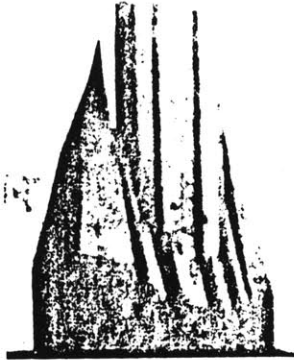
Studies by Hugh Ferriss showing building masses are "carved" out of the zoning setback lines of New York City's 1916 ordinance.

The 1916 Zoning Ordinance was in reaction to the laissez-faire role of public authority on private development. Its regulations sought
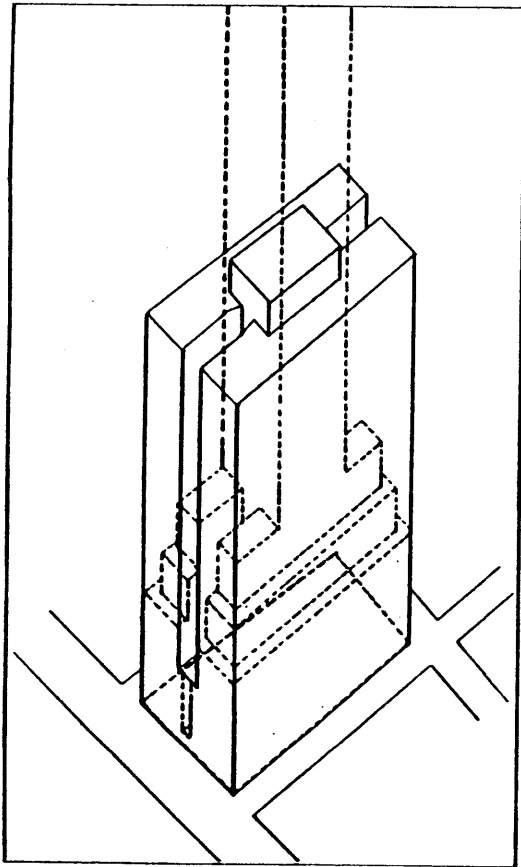
The second Equitable Life Assurance Building, 1915, violates the bulk that was a year later allowed to the site by the zoning ordinance of 1916. The solid-line outline is the building as built;

to protect both private property heights and the public's right to light and air; buildings were held to the street - their mass carved by height and setback requirements. The "public interest" was served by countering the increasingly canyon-like pattern of development Manhattan was experiencing; the Equitable Building, 1915, being the quintessential example of this - its footprint covering in excess of 90% of its site, and bulk rising in an uninterrupted line from street to roof 36 stories above.

The Equitable building was not an isolated event but a symbol of a building and "type", the pure block, and it was this building type which the 1916 ordinance rejects in favor of the integrated block and tower; Cass Gilbert's Woolworth Building, 1913, being cited by Stephen Zoll in Space and Society # 18 as an "ideal" model of this type.
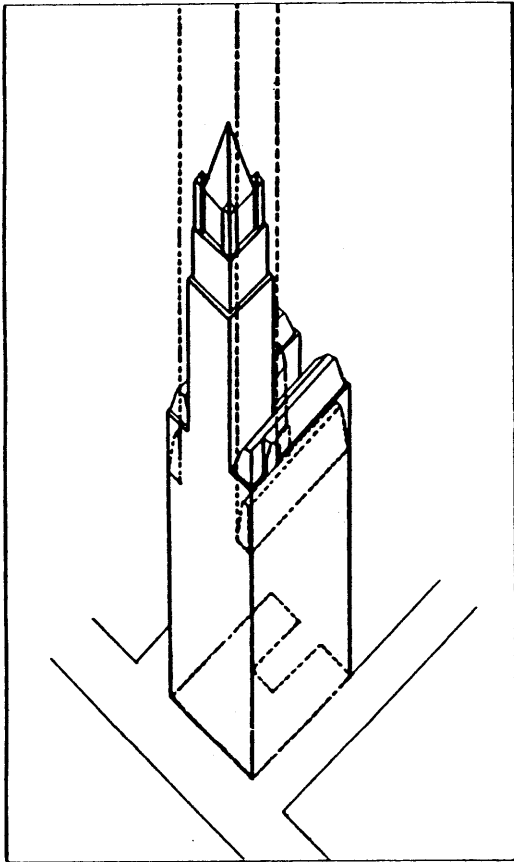
The close conformity of the Woolworth
Building, 1913, with the zoning envelope
(represented by the volume shaded gray),
shows the use of this building as a model for
the zoning legislation of 1916.

Already, we can begin to see the link between design and regulation. However in the early 1900's it was design which influenced regulation. A choice was made between the two predominant high-rise building types and legislation written to encourage the desired type. In turn, regulation influenced the form of future design. The same scenario can be written about the 1960 resolution. The tower/plaza relationship exhibited by the Seagram Building, 1957, was adopted as the new desired "type", and then regulation was effected to promote design in this direction. Design influences and is influenced by regulation.

The 1916 ordinance was a first step in the regulation of built form in the city. The actual bulk of buildings however was not directly addressed. Granted, the tower section of a building could not exceed 25% of

its site, but this meant that the larger the site, the larger the tower could be. In addition the lower, non-tower floors were left free to, potentially, cover the entire site. As development in the city continued under the ordinance, its limits were pushed; buildings literally filled the maximum zoning envelope, resulting in dense and overbuilt streets.

In the space of two decades, five proposals were made to limit the bulk which buildings in N.Y.C. could achieve, residential as well as commercial:

1936   Regional Plan Association, Information Bulletin No. 20, Zoning Revision to Limit the Bulk of Buildings Proposed for New York City Business Districts

1939   N.Y.C. City Planning Commission, Rexford Tugwell, Commissioner, Minutes,

Three ways of controlling bulk

Floor area ratio (FAR). This ratio indicates how much gross floor area may be built over a specific lot area in any given zoning district. Both diagrams above show buildings with a FAR of 80—yet, obviously, their shapes differ radically. The building at left, above, has two 1,000 sq. ft. floors; the building at right has eight 1,000 sq. ft. floors. The lot area is 10,000 sq. ft. The FAR is the total floor area (8,000 sq. ft. in each case) multiplied by 100, and divided by the lot area (10,000 sq. ft.). Result: a FAR of 80, for both buildings. For midtown Manhattan a FAR of about 1,000 is proposed. This is the FAR of the new Seagram Building (FORUM, July '58).
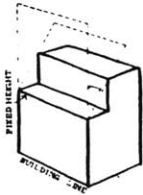
Sky exposure plane (SEP). This device is designed to control the heights of buildings on a given street. The zoning proposal suggests two different standards—one for narrow streets, the other for wide streets. There would be a fixed height to which any structure may rise directly from the building line; after reaching that height, the building must be set back. The depth of setback and height of any additional floors will be determined by the slope of a plane which is assumed to start slanting back and away from the street once the fixed height has been reached. No part of the building, except for the lower, may penetrate this theoretical plane (diagram above, left). However, if a builder agrees to set back his building from the building line, he gets a bonus in terms of added building height. This bonus is determined by making the angle of the SEP a little steeper, so that the building can go farther up before hitting the plane (diagram above, right).
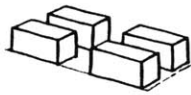
Open space ratio (OSR). This ratio indicates how much communal park space is available in any given apartment project. The drawings above show two kinds of apartments—low and high —both conforming to the same FAR. However, the taller development has a much higher OSR, because it has opened up a much more generous park area to communal use. The OSR is figured by multiplying the area of open space by 100, then dividing by the total area contained within the buildings on the property in question. If the required OSR in a specific district is 50, then an apartment development containing 100,000 sq. ft. of floor area must provide at least 50,000 sq. ft. of open space. Where a builder goes beyond the required minimum, the proposal offers him a bonus of an increased FAR and slightly higher densities.

Meeting of May 3, 1939

1944   N.Y.C. Planning Commission, Robert Moses, Commissioner, Report on the Amendment of the Zoning Resolution

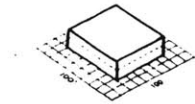1950   Harrison, Ballard and Allen, Plan for Re-Zoning the City of New York

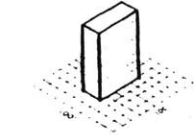1958   Voorhees, Walker, Smith and Smith, Zoning New York City.

All plans, with the exception of the 1958 one, were defeated. The Voorhees, Walker, Smith and Smith proposal became the base new zoning of 1961.

The 1961 Comprehensive Revision of N.Y.C.'s zoning was a major step in the City's use of zoning as an urban design tool, a step further developed in 1967 with Special Design Districts. Instead of working in a restrictive manner, zoning was asked to encourage, via "incentive" bulk bonuses to developers,
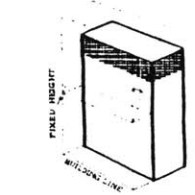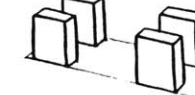
The Seagram Building, 1957, shows, against the legal zoning bulk envelope for the site, just what the building gave up of its allowed bulk in order to achieve its design.

a new building type. A developer could achieve up to a 20% increase in FAR, a device introduced by the '61 resolution to set a bulk limit/gross floor area buildable on a specific site in any given zoning district, contingent upon the provision of public plaza space. Later covered, i.e. interior galleria, were also allowed. Four years after the '61 revision, John Lindsay was elected Mayor of N.Y.C. "New York was a glorious place to live in 1965 - anything seemed possible, even the purification of the air and the reconstruction of vast deterioration ... it wasn't completely ludicrous to refer to New York as Fun City ... (Lindsay) was elected because of a wide-spread optimism about the city's future as a place to live [S. Zoll et al]". It is from this spirit of optimism that Special Design Districts evolved.

Special Design Districts are a product of the

NEW DEVELOPMENT ■ NEW DEVELOPMENT WITH THEATERS
□ EXISTISTING THEATERS ⨇ MID-BLOCK PEDESTRIAN PASSAGES
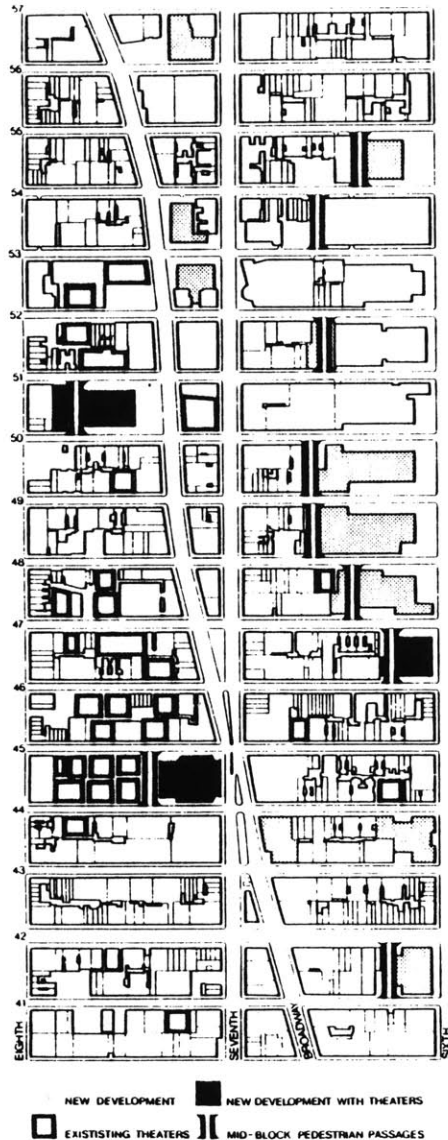
Map of the Theater District.

Urban Design Group. The Urban Design Group was established, circa 1967, as a force within the City Planning Commission in response to the Paley Report, (The Threatened City), a document issued in '67 by a twelve-man committee appointed by Mayor Lindsay to study urban design in N.Y.C. Two major observations of the report were:

1) the City's ability to control both public and private design under the current zoning law and, 2) "...The City's endless process of redevelopment was conceived piecemeal, a building at a time, and lost valuable opportunities to coordinate, through design, an increased ease of use and style of place." In recognition of these points, the Urban Design Group used the influence which the zoning law allowed the city, the granting or withholding of bonus FAR, as their principal bargaining tool with developers to get desired
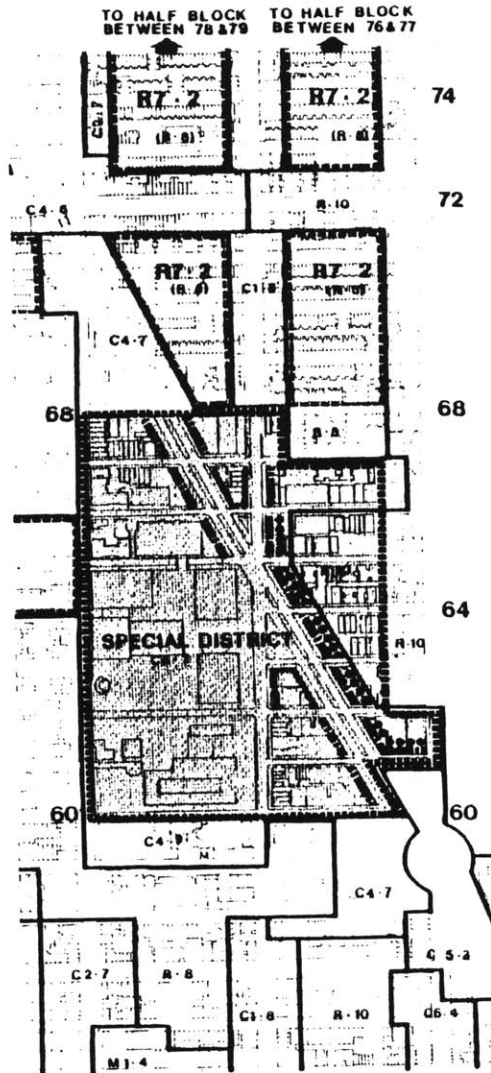
The Lincoln Square Special Zoning District shapes private development in the area surrounding the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

public amenities.

Special Design Districts set forth urban design objectives for a part of the city in zoning language. The five most important such districts in NY.C. are, in chronological order: the Theatre District, Lincoln Square, the Fifth Avenue District, Greenwich Street, and the Lower Manhattan Districts. In each, zoning regulations were recognized as both part of the urban design problem (i.e. the zoned/ segregation of land uses usually associated with zoning is counterproductive in complex and diverse urban areas), and solution. In the special districts, zoning was explicitly used as a design and negotiation tool. "In each of the special districts, individual proposals had signaled the need to reconsider land-use controls for a particular area, and negotiations with a developer were used as a

test case for the new controls. The intent

was to create an improved set of regulations

which would operate without additional new

legislation and would require the minimum of

individual, ad hoc decision making [Barnett,

Intro to Urban Design]."
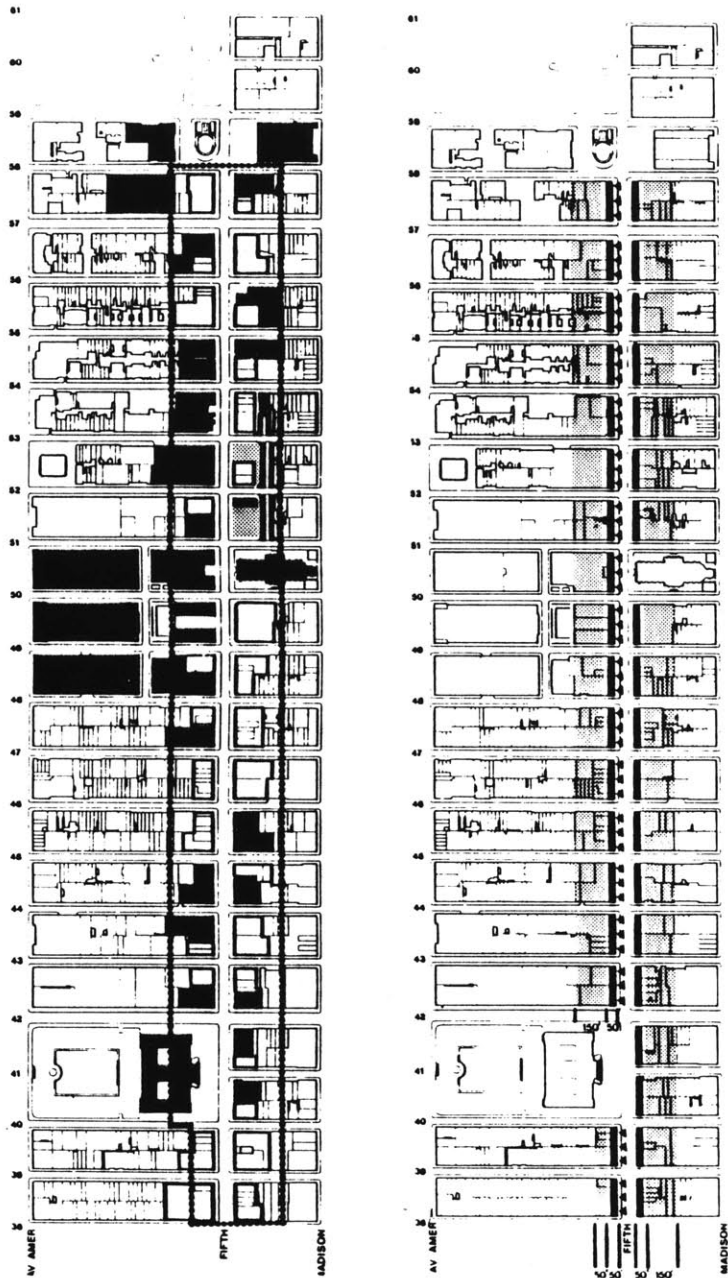
The Greenwich Street District
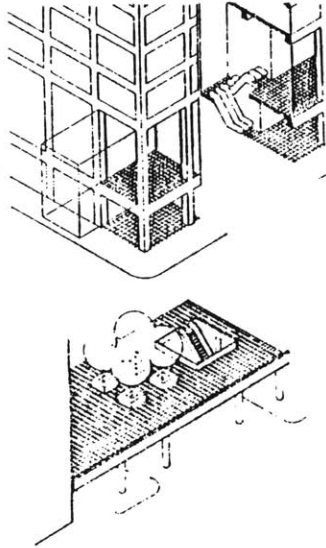
The drawings describe some of the improvements that are rewarded with bonus points in the Greenwich Street District.

15.0   FAR   18.0

18.0   FAR   18.0
40%   TOWER   60%
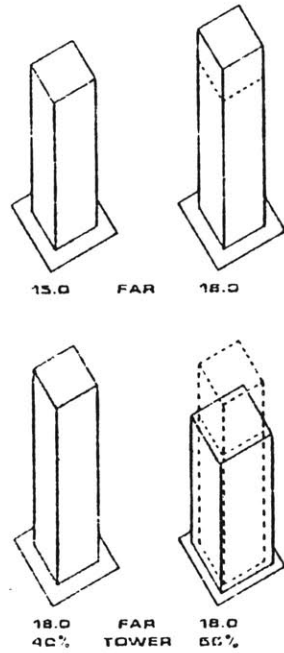
The developer's reward can take the form of increased tower coverage, as well as bonus floor area.

1 □ ELECTIVE PEDESTRIAN
      CIRCULATION
      IMPROVEMENT

A □ MANDATORY PEDESTRIAN
      CIRCULATION
      IMPROVEMENT

■ MANDATORY LOT
    IMPROVEMENT
▼▼ BUILDING TO STREET LINE
    PREFERRED LOT
    IMPROVEMENT
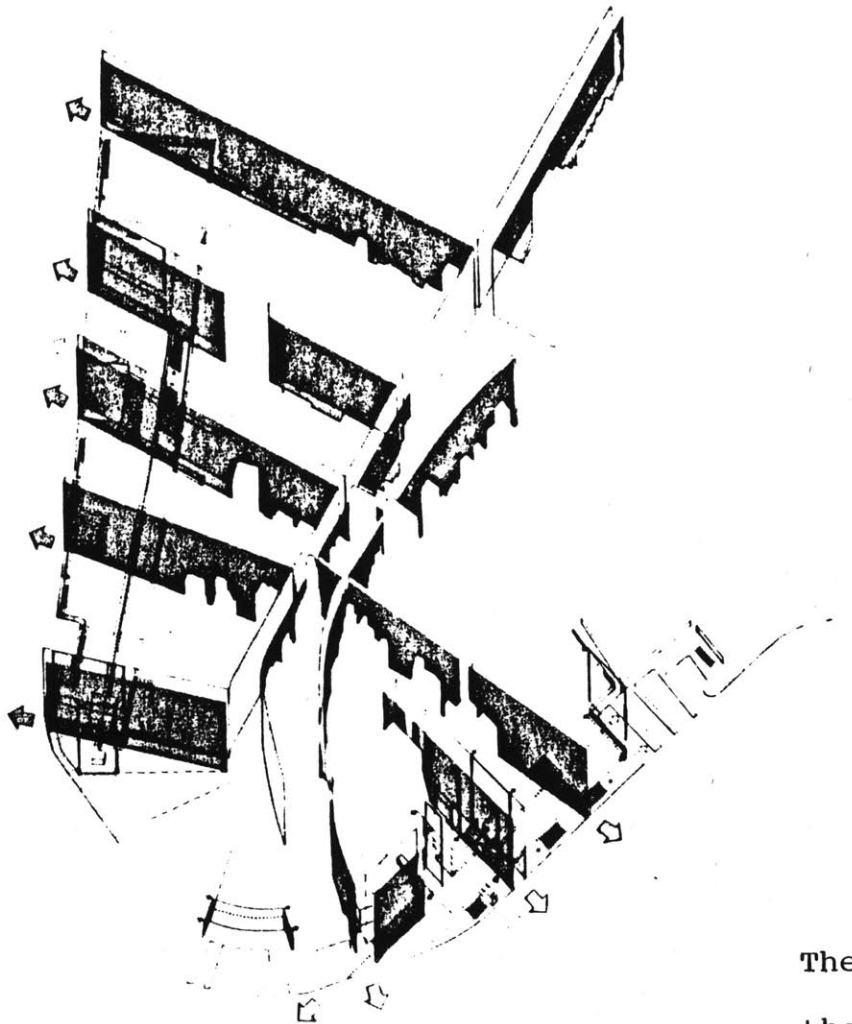
Map of Greenwich Street Special District shows mandatory and elective improvements based on a predetermined design plan

21

The zoning districts adopted for the lower Manhattan perimeter required that visual corridors not only be left open but defined by new construction, through the use of "build-to" lines.

The 1916 ordinance by no means solved all of the city's planning problems. It allowed the construction of tenement buildings with poor light conditions and segregated land uses into near mono-functional districts with the

result being parts of the city which are vibrant and others which close down after business hours. The urban fabric continued to be developed both higher and denser. It, therefore, was not unreasonable for the '61 revision to provide a mechanism, such as negotiable zoning, for the relief of congestion and excessively crowded streets. The plazas provided by incentive zoning developments or the quais-public gallerias can potentially be enjoyable urban amenities. However the '61 revision provided no means of "placing" such amenities where they are needed, other than confining their use to a district; however district boundaries too became negotiable.

The promise and problem of negotiable zoning as a design tool on a city wide basis is that it provides or allows random or accidental

yet intentional development. As mentioned

previously, much of a building's form in N.Y.C.

is determined by the zoning regulations it is

subject to. In this respect, the building is

the product of the intent of zoning - what

the city asked for. However the particulars

of a building - the client, the program, the

architect, the degree to which it simply con-

forms to the zoning requirements or pushes

their limits or tries to get around them, its

site, the fit with its context, are all fairly

random. There was no way to place a single

open space in an area via incentive zoning

without opening the possibility of 6th Avenue,

that is a proliferation of so-called plazas

in series, providing little more than expanded

sidewalk without a further level of development

and identity. The Seagram Building may have

been the model for the '61 resolutions building/

plaza relationship and its intent, but the

accident of 6th Avenue - half a dozen Seagram
Buildings with their plazas unboond - is also
within the possible outcomes of the transla-
tion of this desired outcome into zoning law.
The formal coherence of development which re-
sulted from the 1916 ordinance, though ad-
mittedly too bulky when it filled the maximum
zoning envelope, was eroded by the 1961
resolution, which could be argued to have been
at odds with the context it was proposed for.
In adopting the Seagram Building as a proto-
type, the assumptions about good city form
it held seem to be " ... based upon the
'revolutionary' concepts of architecture ex-
pounded by LeCorbusier and others during the
Nineteen-twenties. Their vision of the city
of the future as a series of towers set in
parkland does not seem to be adaptable to
implementation on a lot-by-lot basis [Barnett,
1974 etc.]." In effect the layering of the
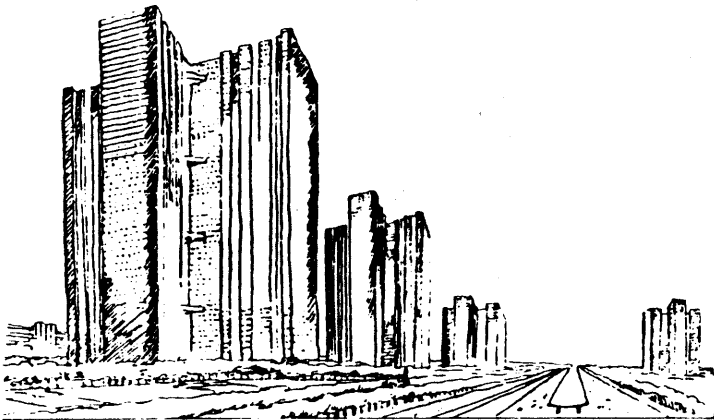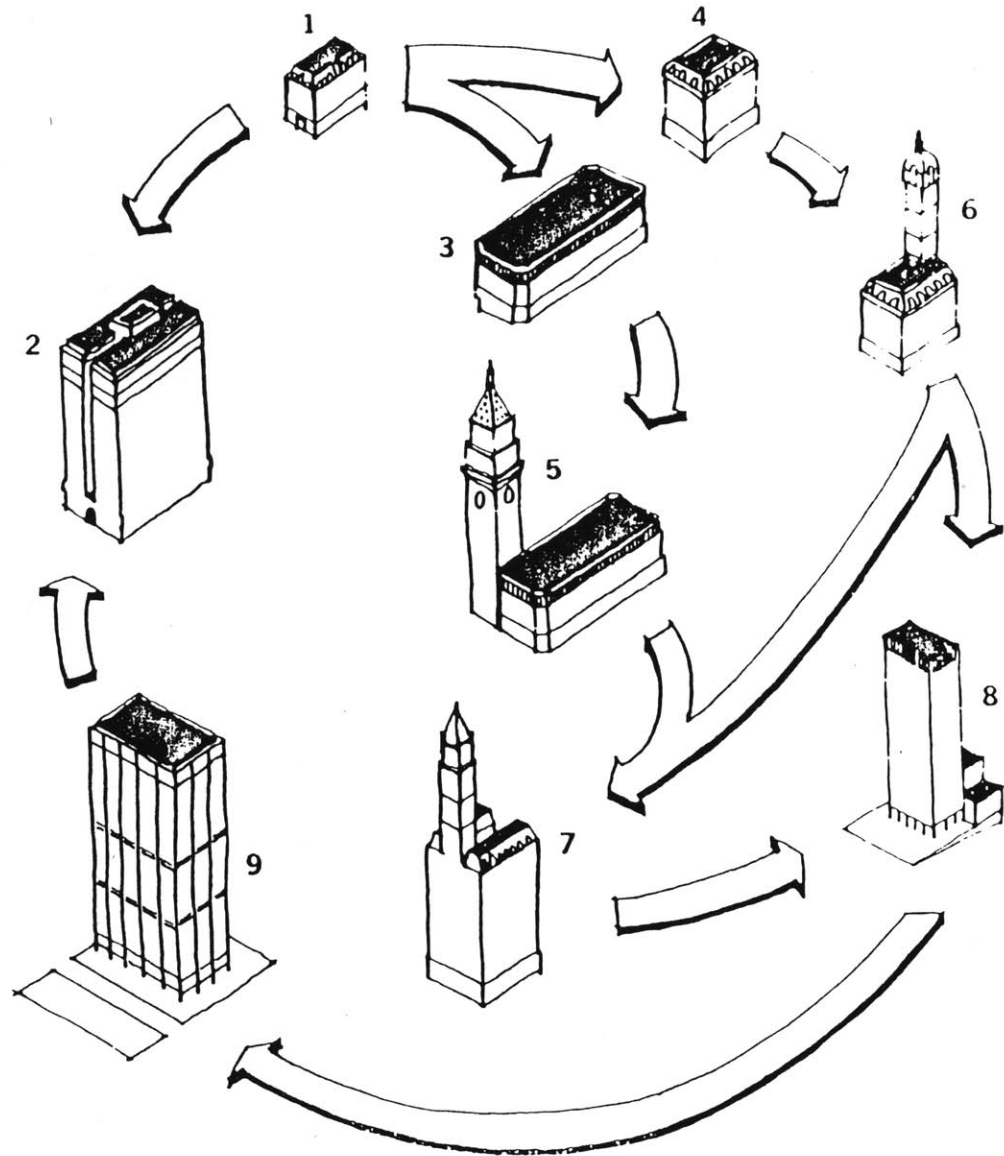
Stages in the development of the tall building in New York.

1. First Equitable Life Bldg., 1870, block
2. Second Equitable Life Bldg., 1915, tall block
3. Metropolitan Life Bldg., 1890, block
4. Singer Bldg., 1899, block
5. Metropolitan Life with tower, 1909, block with added tower
6. Singer Bldg. with tower, 1908, block with added tower
7. Woolworth Bldg., 1913, integrated block and tower
8. Seagram Bldg., 1957, tower
9. U.S. Steel Bldg., 1972, slab or tall block

modernist ethic over the existing city
fabric produced built events in which new
buildings pulled away from old ones, standing
isolated in their plaza/parkland waiting for
more towers in a park to connect to, an im-
pure version of the modernist city waiting to
grow. If the obstacles in this new city, that
is, the current city, could be cleanly and
quickly removed then a Corbusian future may be
at hand, but it may well be without the
potential for an active and human public en-
vironment the current city possesses. The
current use of streets, definition of turf,
and associated expectations/meaning of life
in an urban environment may well be lost.

Questions of good urban form are an ideological
discourse between problems of spatial form, the
production of spatial form, and the society
which produces spatial form. Spatial form

doesn't exist in and of itself or for itself.
It is a product of economic, political, social
and ideological structures interacting. There
is a social base to the question of good urban
form, rooted in the experience -- of individuals
and groups with city form. In the next section
of this chapter we look at the criticisms of
city planning with respect to this view of the
city as more than a formal exercise.

the social critics of city planning

FIG. 35. *The Boston image as derived from verbal interviews*

FIG. 36. *The Boston image as derived from sketch maps*

FIG. 37. *The distinctive elements of Boston*
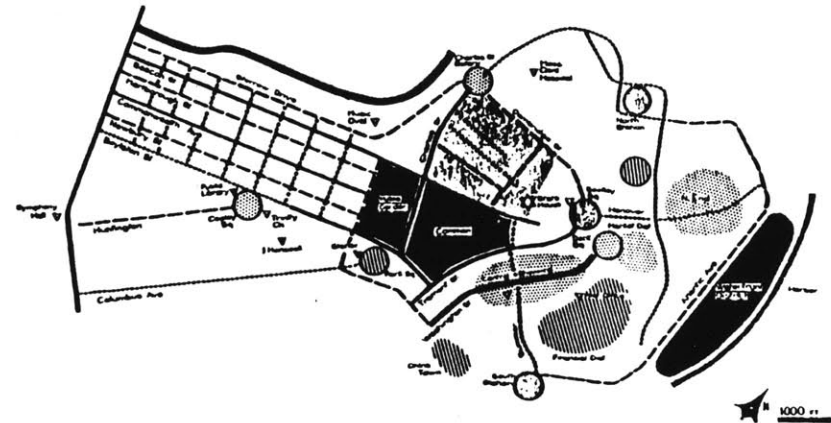
The critics of city planning who emerged in the 1960's focused their attention on the social phenomena and networking which define and energize neighborhoods and communities. They noted city planning/planner's insensitivity to such matters. The human qualities of place street, and city need to inform city planning and design, and should be translated into re-quirements/goals for the planning process.

In the 1950's Boston's city planners took a look at the city's West End and saw a slum: density was too high, physical condition of the housing stock was below their standards, open space was lacking. The West End was leveled and the new vision of the good city erected, highrise buildings sitting in open space - contained. As the West End neared death Herbert Gans took a look at this "slum" and saw a viable community. The residents of this

urban village had a way of life and a vitality which simply didn't register with the city's planners. The social grouping and community institutions - church, school, social, civic and political organizations, commercial establishments, shopping streets, etc., which Gans saw mean as much to community as the physical condition of housing and proximity to open space, if not more so. We view the West End as an example of city planning at its least sensitive to the social base of urban form.

CONDITION 1: *The district, and indeed as many of its internal parts as possible, must serve more than one primary function; preferably more than two. These must insure the presence of people who go outdoors on different schedules and are in the place for different purposes, but who are able to use many facilities in common.*

Jane Jacobs, in her poetic ballet-of-the-street analysis of New York's Greenwich Village addressed similar issues as did Gans, and actually Jacob's Death and Life of American Cities was published in 1961, four years before Gan's The Urban Villagers recounted the West End saga. The Village

CONDITION 2: *Most blocks must be short; that is, streets and opportunities to turn corners must be frequent.*

CONDITION 3: *The district must mingle buildings that vary in age and condition, including a good proportion of old ones.*

CONDITION 4: *The district must have a sufficiently dense concentration of people, for whatever purpose they may be there. This includes people there because of residence.*

– Jacobs

fortunately did not suffer the fate of the West End. She brought to our attention the phenomena of neighborhood, the activities of people preparing for the day and their use of the street. The city, Jacobs contended, is a work of life, not a work of art. In her prescription for what ails city planning and development, Jacobs made reference to diversity of land-use, street and block system, and building-street relationship -- all easily within the province of the urban designer to understand, observe, manipulate or leave alone.

In books from Image of the City to Site Planning to Theory of Good City Form, Kevin Lynch has continued to call for sensitivity in urban planning and design to human needs and qualities in urban form. The human experience, he contends, should be the central

consideration. Recently, he has proposed

five dimensions of performance and two meta-

criteria by which the quality of spatial form

can be measured for the humanness of its

making. They are:

"1) Vitality - the degree to which the form

of the settlement supports the vital functions

the biological requirements and capabilities

of human beings ...,

2) Sense - the degree to which the settlement

can be clearly perceived and mentally differ-

entiated and structured in time and space by

its residents and the degree to which that

mental structure connects with their values,

and concepts - the match between environment,

our sensory and mental capabilities, and our

cultural constructs,

3) Fit - the degree to which the form and

capacity of spaces, channels, and equipment

in a settlement match the pattern and quality

of actions that people customarily engage in,
or want to engage in - that is, the adequacy
of the behavior settings, including their
adaptability to future actions,

4) Access - the ability to reach other per-
sons, activities, resources, information,
services, or places, including the quality
and diversity of elements which can be
reached,

5) Control - the degree to which the use and
access to spaces and activities, and their
creation, repair, modification, and manage-
ment are controlled by those who use, work,
or reside in them,

6) Efficiency - (a meta-criteria) the cost,
in terms of other valued things, of creating
and maintaining the settlement, for any given
level of attainment of the environmental
dimensions listed above,

7) Justice - (a meta-criteria) the way in

which the environmental benefits and costs

are distributed among persons according to

some particular principle such as equity,

need, intrinsic worth, ability to pay, effort

expanded, potential contribution, or power

[K. Lynch, Theory of Good City Form, M.I.T.

Press 1982]."

Lynch's Performance Dimensions take us from

a social criticism of city planning to a pre-

cription for evaluating urban form in social

and human terms. From them, particularly

Sense, Fit and Access, we can generate a set

of questions to ask of the urban form pro-

posed in the two case studied.

1. What is the primary public, people-

centered environment? What/Where are the

public places?

2. What is the role of Streets? How are
they used? How are they detailed?

3. What is the relationship between building
and building, building and street, building
and person?

4. What function does existing development
and pattern have in the generation of form
for the new development?

Questions 1 and 2 draw upon a streets-as-the-
measure-of-good-form theme, while 3 and 4
are questions exploring urban fabric/pattern
issues and the relationship of building to
place to pattern. The four questions will be
invoked recurrently as a running dialogue
throughout the two case studies.

The theme which questions 1 and 2 explore

will be further elaborated upon in the following section, The Street As Place. In so doing, our social critique of physical form planning which has moved to method of evaluating the socialness/humanness of physical form takes yet another step in exploring the interaction of form and human response.

Streets in cities serve many purposes besides carrying vehicles, and city sidewalks—the pedestrian parts of the streets—serve many purposes besides carrying pedestrians. These uses are bound up with circulation but are not identical with it and in their own right they are at least as basic as circulation to the proper workings of cities.

A city sidewalk by itself is nothing. It is an abstraction. It means something only in conjunction with the buildings and other uses that border it, or border other sidewalks very near it. The same might be said of streets, in the sense that they serve other purposes besides carrying wheeled traffic in their middles. Streets and their sidewalks, the main public places of a city, are its most vital organs. Think of a city and what comes to mind? Its streets. If a city's streets look interesting, the city looks interesting; if they look dull, the city looks dull.

The Battery Park City and 42nd Street cases
both accept the street as an integral part of
their developments. In the former, the street
gives order to a tabula rasa site, in the
latter it provides a means to hold together
existing and proposed new development. In
both cases Street is given its traditional
form: a mono-level circulation and communi-
cation artifact. This is in contrast to
projects which create interior realm and leave
the street's function unaddressed - such as
the 1969 plan for Battery Park City - or seek
to separate pedestrians and the auto into
their own mutually exclusive zones.

The street, the most public of public spaces,
is a mixed bag of stimuli, possessing varied
and possibly conflicting meanings. This makes
the partial rejection of the street by planners
and critics easy to understand and the necessity

the street
as place

of its acceptance seems all the more

important.

When we speak of the rejection of the street,

as in the traffic-free super-blocks of a

Garden City or the self-contained, inward-

looking Modern Movement projects such as

the Prudential Center in Boston, we mean the

cognitive omission of it as a place for

human activities. Street, after all is plural

in nature. "Part of the nature of a street is

that it serves as a physical connector, a link,

among various places. Another part of a

street's nature is that it is more than just a

link, more than simply a path. A street is

framed and influenced by that which it passes

through and modifies its character in response

to the aforementioned [W. Benjamin and O. Cana-

lis, "A Street in Depth: the Via Raffaello -

Reformatorio Link" ILAUD '81, Language of

Architecture]."

Street, seen in this fuller sense, is place

as well as link. It is an urban element

interactive with its context. "We thus

define "street" as an element within the

larger, three-dimensional communication

artifact called the city: an element which,

in being both place and link, supports move-

ment, access, and local activity, an element

which can serve in radically different ways

as its public use boundaries refine the

meaning and location of public and private

places and activities [S. Anderson Streets

Phases 1-2, Institute for Architecture and

Urban Studies]."

The rejection of street-as-place by planners

when rebuilding parts of the city leaves us

with street-as-link. It leaves us with a

mono-dimensional element whose sole function

is movement; thus the design of street

becomes a technical exercise in efficiently
accommodating traffic. Supporting human
activities is left to the private realm; the
public realm - the street - at best provides
access to the private. We lose both a unique
institution and the heart of an urban environ-
ment. Let us not, however, romanticise the
street. Its reality and connotations: to be
put on the street, mean-streets, street
people, street life, etc., can be harsh. But
likewise and conversely, the connotations of
a street fair, streetscape, stoops, a cafe,
a promenade, are all positive. The existence
of such opposite interpretations/uses of
streets are an indication of the interplay
between the physical environment and human
behavior. One sees physical form, be it a
car or a street, from a subjective position
of expectations and experiences, financial
and psychological security, health, age, race,

gender, et al. Who we are affects how we interact with the street. Two people can feel quite differently about the same street.

Anderson, in Streets Phases 1-2, defines three levels of physical environment and speaks to the fit between physical form and its meaning. The levels are: the potential environment, the affective environment, and the latent environment. The potential environment is the physical environment, an environment created and altered only via physical form manipulation, a forum for human activities. The affective environment is "that version of the potential environment that is manifestly or implicitly adopted by users; the societal conception of the man-made environment ... (the) potential environment ... reinterpreted by each user, thus yielding his subjective environment

Within the same physical place, different individuals have different affective environments [Anderson Streets ...]." The affective environment, the subjective environment which can see mean streets or streets paved with gold in the same place, can change without physical form manipulation, a changed attitude is all that is required. The latent environment is "those aspects of the potential environment that are not assimilated by society (unrealized potential, if you will). "Latency" in the environment allows for societal change without physical change. Latency can be increased (or decreased) by physical change [Anderson Streets ...]."

Place, drawing upon the above definitions of environment, comes into being when an actor(s) is put in a physical setting. What one does in "Place" is framed by perception of place

which is in turn framed by a broader societal
perception of place and the rules which should
govern it. Multiple actors yield multiple
affective environments of a single potential
environment, implying a socio-physical inter-
dependency of man and form, but in a non-
deterministic manner, given multiple rather
than singular perceptions of place. "Multiple
affective environments imply no strict rela-
tionship, but rather a loose fit among
physical form (potential environment), use and
meaning. Within this loose fit, whatever is
not realized in the affective environment is
an "unrealized potential" of the environment
in relation to society ... the latent environ-
ment [Anderson Streets ... et al]." Place,
to be versatile and flexible, needs to be
designed for a broad possibility of activities.
The street needs to be the primary public
environment, recognized as possessed with

a broad range of potential and affective environments, lending to a better fit with more of the needs of users than a less diverse public setting.

In both the 42nd Street and Battery Park developments, the street is the primary focus activity. The proposed potential environments are similar to those possessed by the City in general; i.e. private bounded by public, street framed by building, street forming a matrix of settings. The potential environment of a shopping mall or incentive zoning amenity galleria are of a different nature. First, the latency in the environment would no doubt be decreased due to "management's" imposition of its restrictions upon those of society. Second, these potential environments would close, unlike a street. Third, an increased sense of private rather than public space may

arise from being enclosed affecting one's perception of place and thus one's affective environment.

To be good, urban form needs to exploit the publicness that streets afford. The amenities brought to the urban environment via incentive zoning have not always lived up to their promise. The CitiCorp Center may well be an asset to midtown, though it is far too inward looking, as the branch of the Bronx Botanical Garden at the IBM Tower should prove to be, but many of the interior public spaces, like that of the Olympic Tower (and there is a growing matrix of such galleria amenities in the East 50's, brought on by the office building boom) are, at best, grand corridors from one street to another, offering little activity. Life has come to such spaces by means of private concessions: salad bars,

croissant shops, et al., leased in this supposed public place. As a result the author's perception upon entering is similar to entering a private eating establishment. As public potential environments these amenities must take a back seat to the street; while a galleria amenity holds the activity generated by private concessions, cafes, shops, pedestrian movement et al., to the interior of a building, the street allows such activity to be visible and to animate the public realm.

The general point to be drawn from this glance at the study of streets is that the physical environment is interactive with human behavior. We are not disinterested about where we live and work. The potential environments with which we interact help shape our attitude about the city and the quality of life it

offers.

The physical matters. Community exists in a
physical as well as cultural context. Street
needs to be understood as an element in the
socio-physical construct known as City;
sensitivity to the quality and use of its con-
text is essential. The distinctions between
contextual design as a style and as a process
will be discussed in greater depth in the
42nd Street case. The concept of contextualism
has already been introduced as the external
relations which the internal form and use
dialogues of architecture reach out to yield
urban design. Street and context form the
network of public places which are the setting
for human activities.

We've looked at zoning as a means to make physical form development conform with ideas of good urban form; in the next section, the implementation of regulations to this end, via a development agency, will be discussed. Physical form as a social act, interactive with human behavior has also been reviewed. Where has this brought us? Now, in response to the question, ... but What is good urban form, we can reply: an urban fabric which "... directly attends to the issues of livability ... encourages public places and a public life (and) also creates a setting which is more meaningful to the individual inhabitant and small groups [D. Appleyard & A. Jacobs "Towards an Urban Design Manifesto" U.C. Berkeley March 1980]." Such an environment should emphasize the human experience of the city; its sights, smells, sounds, glamour, grit, feel, moods, features, places, and

good urban form is...

people. Multiple values and priorities must
be taken into account. The good city must
offer its best to all. Streets need to be
recognized as valuable assets.

The professional and layperson must read and
critique the city as a city; not a medieval
hill town, a village, a suburb, a garden, or
utopia. In a city people live and work in
close proximity. City implies some degree
of density though this need not be taken to
extremes. "Density of people alone will ac-
count for the existence or non-existence of
certain uses and services we find important
to urban life. (T)he number and diversity of
small stores and services - say groceries,
bars, bakeries, laundries and cleaners,
coffee shops, second-hand stores, and the
like - that will be found in a city or area
is in part a function of density. The via-

bility of mass transit ... is in part depen-
dent on the density of residential areas, and
in part on the size and intensity of commer-
cial and service destinations [Appleyard &
Jacobs "Towards a ..."]."

Good urban form must be communication with
the forms and uses of the city. It must
respond to the urban life that urban residents
seek. It will not satisfy all, no place does.
The good life, like good urban form, is a
plural concept. Thus city planning and design
need concern itself with promoting the good
urban life, understanding that urban life is
not suburban life is not rural life.

To the professional practitioner having a theory of good urban form is not enough, answering the question, ... but what is good urban form? is only a first step. There needs to be a way to achieve the vision of good form. Zoning, conventional - incentive - special design - we have shown, is one such implementation tool. It has had the problem of being unable to address specific urban design issues without having the intent of building regulations twisted.

Urban renewal is another implementation tool by which a city can obtain land through compulsory purchase, demolish buildings, adjust the cost of land to make desirable development which the city may want to occur, and set what ever conditions it deems necessary to the sale of land. In practice urban renewal has been abused, in theory it is a

the u.d.c.

useful tool.

The design guidelines for Battery Park City
and the Times Square Redevelopment are a
combination of special urban design district-
like zoning used in the legal framework of
city power and control afforded by urban
renewal. The New York State Urban Develop-
ment entity, has used its urban renewal powers
to package the development guidelines in both
of our case studies. The degree of site and
form-specific regulation exhibited by the
guidelines is both bolder and more explicit
in intent than anything the city has attempted
in the past in a similar vein.

Since the 1916 zoning ordiance, building form
regulations have been legally bound to be
equitable, every property owner in a district
had the same development rights. Today,

guidelines are used when a greater degree of
explicitness and public control of private
development is desired.

In the two case studies "the urban design
controls are a paradoxical combination of
complete discretionary authority expressed as
explicity, and apparently unchangeable, series
of building descriptions [Barnett ... Intro to
Urban Design]." They use zoning within an
urban renewal context - with which the UDC has
been well-equipped to operate.

One of the many semi-autonomous state agencies
spawned by the Rockefeller era in the Empire
State, the UDC is a super urban-renewal agency
initially headed by urban renewal czar Ed Logue.
With the powers granted it by the State Legis-
lature the UDC can in theory, and in essence,
operate outside of a city's building regulations

THE ROLE OF CITY PLANNING
IN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

1. AN INDEPENDENT ACTIVITY
OF THE
CITY-PLANNING COMMISSION

2. A STAFF AIDE TO
THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

3. A POLICY-MAKING
ACTIVITY OF
THE CITY COUNCIL
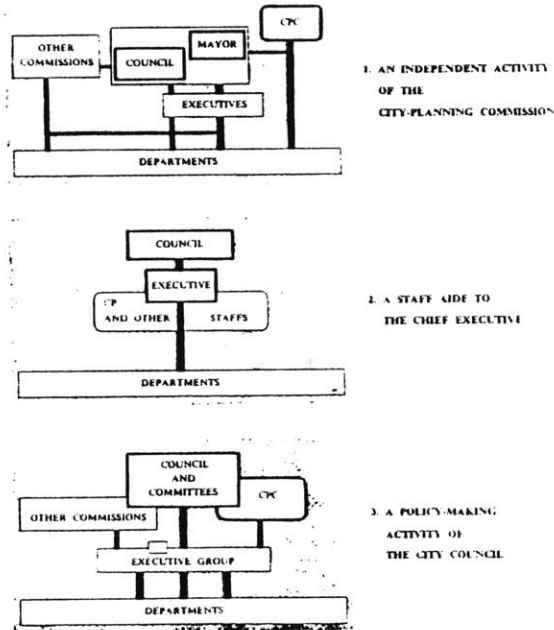
and approval process. It is an extreme or aggressive form of planning as-an-activity-of-a-planning-commission, outside of the mainstream of political activity and is one possible answer to the question "Where should/ does planning occur?" - as an independent activity of a planning commission, by an aide to the Chief Executive, as a policy-making activity of the city council.

A look at the abilities of the UDC, the means used to control physical form development and promote a vision of the city, is in order. "The formidable powers of the (UDC) are described in broadly inclusive, positive, and permissive terms. There is the power to condemn, to clear land and to relocate displacees ... UDC, its lessees and successors in interest are specifically exempted from municipal permit-granting powers and certificates of occupancy

(it is) authorize(d) ... to waive local laws,
ordinances, zoning codes, charters and con-
struction regulations, substituting compliance
with the state's own building construction
code 'when, in the discretion of the corpora-
tion ... compliance is not feasible or prac-
ticable'... UDC and its subsidiaries are
granted exemption from local property taxes
on value added after acquisition ... (it can)
create limited profit subsidary corporations,
enter into contracts for purchase, lease,sale
or mortgage property, promulgate regulations,
and issue general revenue, or project-secured
bonds and notes [W.K. Reilly & S.J. Schulman,
"The State Urban Development Corporation: New
York's Innovation" The Urban Lawyer Summer
1969, American Bar Association]." No mecha-
nism, however, was provided to write-down land
cost, a familiar and useful renewal tool, or
provide housing subsidies beyond those which

existed.

The point of all this is that the UDC is
capable of executing any and all of the tasks
associated with urban land development. It
can legally require the urban form under its
jurisdiction to be manipulated in specific
ways, in compliance with the corporation's
goals. The site specificity of the Battery
Park City and 42nd Street design guidelines
are an example of this.

It seems ironic that the chosen, and assumed
most effective and flexible, way for the City
to address the issues presented in these two
large-scale developments is to step outside
of the structure of city government. As
Rockefeller was pushing the UDC legislation
through the State government, opposition to
it on the grounds of home-rule and municipal

integrity came from many directions, including the city government. Then Mayor John Lindsay was quoted in the N.Y. Times (which was also opposed to the legislation) of April 12, 1969, as follows: "At a time when we are trying to make democracy work in the streets of our cities, the legislature has decided that the answer is greater, more distant authority. That, in my judgment is asking for trouble [Urban Lawyer, etc.]." Today, the City makes use of this greater and more distant authority to give itself a streamlined development process/mechanism.

A last note on the UDC would be a mention of its accomplishments to date and commitment to quality architecture and environments. Given the scope of its work the quality of it assumes great importance. In addition to Battery Park City and the 42nd Street Redevelopment, the

Urban Development Corporation: A Range of Projects

The extent of U.D.C. assistance ranges from partial investing to the lending of technical help. Figures for total value are estimated, in millions of dollars.

IN PROGRESS		
Project	Location	Total Value
New York Convention and Exposition Center	West Side	$ 375.0*
42d Street redevelopment	Times Square	1,000.0
Rochester Riverside Convention Center	Rochester	40.0
Facade Improvement	Manhattan, Bronx, Brooklyn, Nassau County, Buffalo	6.5
Farberware renovation and expansion	South Bronx	18.0
Fordham Plaza	Fordham (Bronx)	45.0
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (development of high-technology center)	Troy, N.Y.	65.0
Federal Archives Building conversion	Greenwich Village	52.0
Nettleton Shoe Company renovation	Syracuse	2.7
South Street Seaport/ Schermerhorn Row	Lower Manhattan	115.5
COMPLETED		
Carrier Dome stadium	Syracuse	28.5
Grand Hyatt Hotel	Midtown Manhattan	100.0
Albee Square shopping mall	Downtown Brooklyn	22.5
St. George Hotel renovation and conversion	Brooklyn Heights	11.0
Sheraton Motor Inn	Utica, N.Y.	7.5

* Original projection; cost has exceeded that figure

Source: Urban Development Corporatio

UDC has Roosevelt Island - a 2100 unit residential development between Manhattan and Queens - to its credit and had undertaken the development of N.Y.C.'s $400 million convention center (Pei's design for it is reputed to be a landmark for convention center design), due to be completed in the mid-80's. "The UDC has ... produced (in excess of) 34,000 units of housing and other construction worth close to $300 million. Many of these projects have won awards for design excellence; the corporation received a 1974 A.I.A. citation as an outstanding client. One project, Metro North by architects Conklin and Rossant scores highest in a New York City quality survey [Charles Hoyt, "Crisis in Housing: What did the new super-agency mean to the architect", Architectural Record Oct. 1975]." In fact, the number of UDC developments which have been honored for their design and urban qualities

number over a dozen. "The UDC has come in
for criticism by housing experts for its
insistence on thoughtful planning and fine
architectural design, showing a kind of
social recidivism garbed in concern for
cost cutting. (It however) was able to
demonstrate that good architecture amortizes
in more than just the matter of revenue
return - that amortization consists also of
having a quality environment that can pull
people in, keep them there, and impel
community participation [William Marlin,
"After the Pitfall: UDC Dusts off the Debris
of Default", Architectural Record Oct. 1975]."

Before we move on to the case studies, let's
restatate what has been said.

The question of good urban form is essentially
a question of a good public and street

environment. Buildings, streets, and the
urban fabric respond to one another.

Urban form has a social base. It is created
for and used by people, regardless of any
other singular issues which may claim to be
its cause. It needs to respond to the
presence, activities, expectations, and
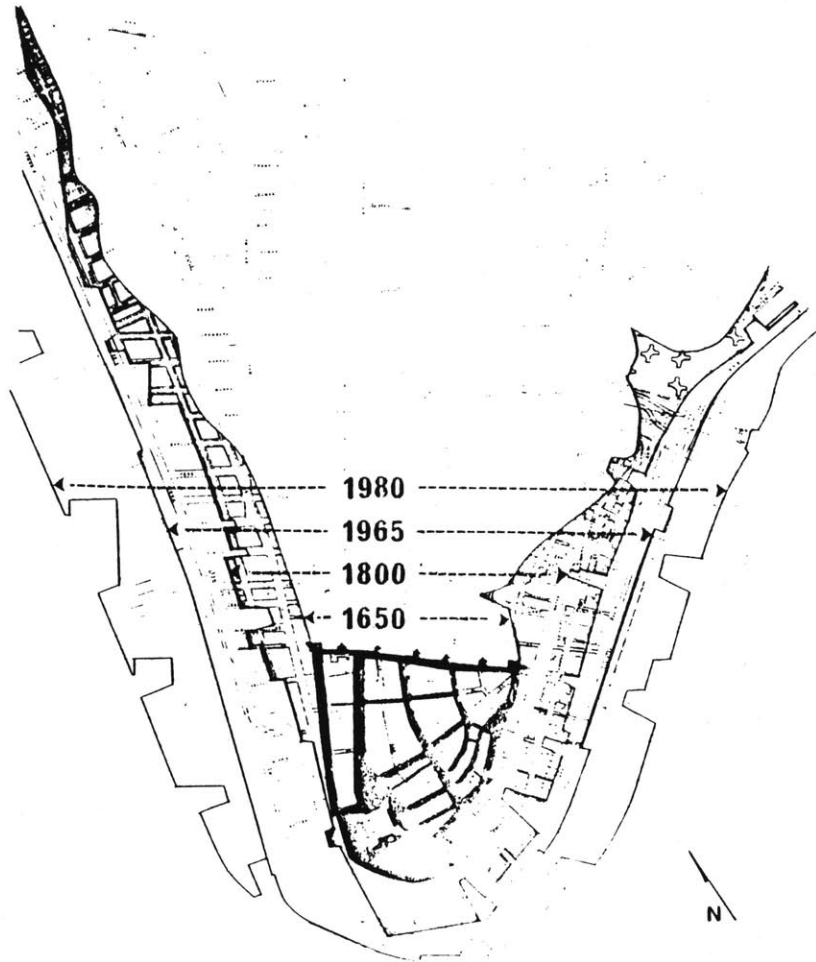diversity of individuals and groups.

As one means of promoting urban form develop-
ment to attend to the essential urban design
issues of the day, regulations can be employed
and tailored to the problems at hand.

battery park
city

New York Harbor

The history of Battery Park City goes back almost two decades. We can identify five plans/schemes for the development of a new residential development on land-fill along the western edge of Lower Manhattan. Growth via land-fill is not an alien idea to the Lower Manhattan context. Between 1650 and the present, extensive landfill operations have contributed 200 acres to the current 560 acre land area of Lower Manhattan. With reach of the five schemes the commitment to this new community has held firm. But for nearly two decades the schemes for Battery Park City have been just that - plans on paper.

"Battery Park City is a paradox; it occupies one of the most spectacular and potentially valuable sites in the world, yet it has been unable to generate development activity.

(Since the early to mid '70's) its landfill has stood substantially complete, but unused. Rarely has such a development opportunity - 92 acres of vacant land immediately adjacent to downtown Manhattan - gone unheeded [Battery Park City Draft Summary Report and 1979 Master Plan, Cooper/Eckstut]."

The 1979 Master Plan prepared by Cooper/Eckstut Associates analyzes this paradox and seeks to resolve it. To put this plan in perspective we take a look at the procession of Battery Park City Plans which are the ancestors of the 1979 Plan. As mentioned earlier, the four questions developed in the Social Critics of City Planning Section will be used to measure the proposed urban environments of the five plans.

PLAN 1 - 1963

Sponsor: Downtown-Lower Manhattan

Association, Inc., Department

of Marine & Aviation/S.O.M.,

proposal

In 1963, the Downtown-Lower Manhattan Association, Inc., chaired by David Rockefeller and having such members as AT & T, Manufacturers Hanover Trust, the American Stock Exchange, Consolidated Edison, The Wall Street Journal, Irving Trust Co., First National City Bank, and the Chase Manhattan Bank, issued a report entitled Major Improvements; Land Use, Transportation, Traffic - Lower Manhattan. Their planning consultants were Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill. The Association contended "that commercial occupancy of the greater part of Lower Manhattan will represent the most logical and economically sound use of the land in the area, but that provision should be made for as high a proportion of residential

RECOMMENDED MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS
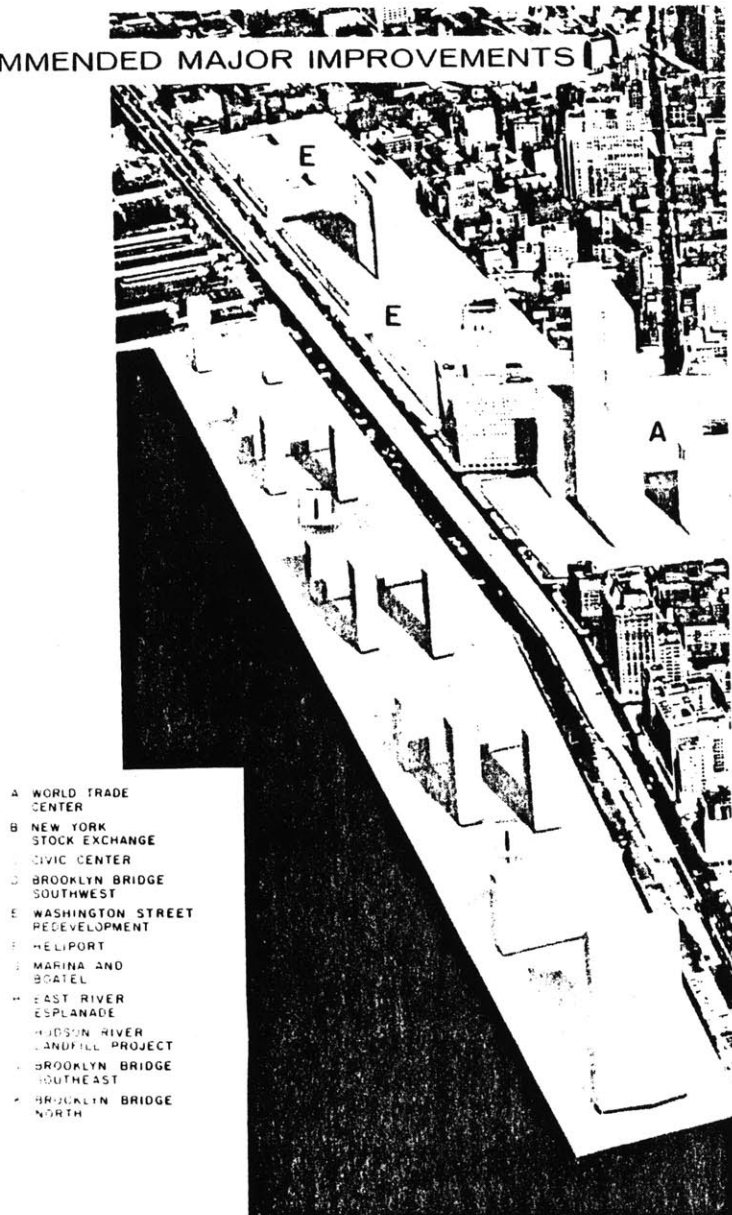
A WORLD TRADE
  CENTER
B NEW YORK
  STOCK EXCHANGE
  CIVIC CENTER
  BROOKLYN BRIDGE
  SOUTHWEST
E WASHINGTON STREET
  REDEVELOPMENT
  HELIPORT
  MARINA AND
  BOATEL
  EAST RIVER
  ESPLANADE
  HUDSON RIVER
  LANDFILL PROJECT
 BROOKLYN BRIDGE
  SOUTHEAST
  BROOKLYN BRIDGE
  NORTH

occupancy as is consistent with this principle." One such provision, consistent with this principle, was the Hudson River Landfill project; a 65 acre proposal advanced by the Department of Marine and Aviation, consisting of six lateral commercial pier slips, a hotel, 4.5 million square feet of commercial space, and 4500 apartments. The Association found the hotel and residential components of the proposal "highly desirable" in that it would stimulate more shopping outlets, service facilities, and provide advantages for those who work in the area. Lower Manhattan as an around-the-clock-living center for people was the espoused goal.

The business-oriented Association, however, objected to the commercial piers as "inappropriate" and the commercial space as "unnecessary". When this report was written Lower Manhattan had
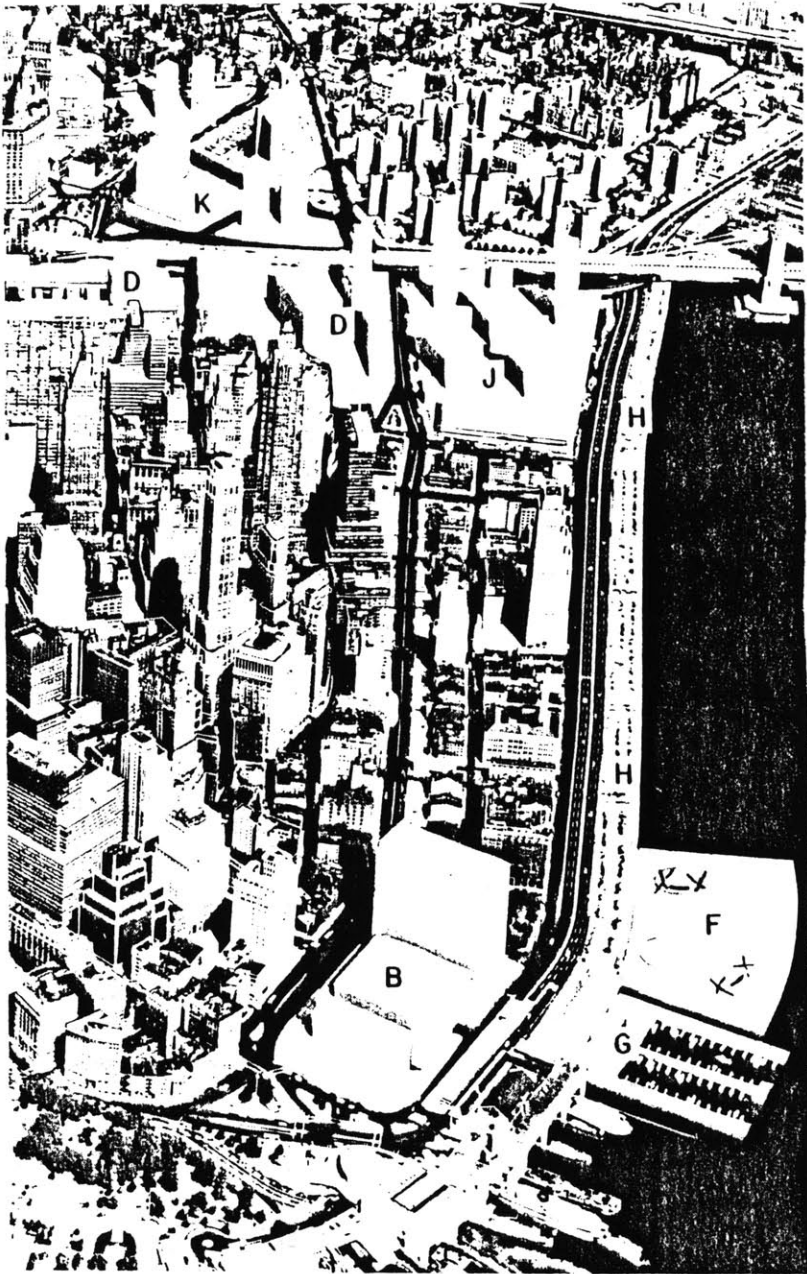
witnessed the construction of "over 8 million square feet of commercial space over the last five years ... since 1950 a total of 13.5 million square feet of office space (had) been built or (was) under construction ... Further, some 16 million square feet, in existing buildings had been modernized [Major Improvements: Land Use. Transportation, Traffic - Lower Manhattan]." Why were commercial piers inappropriate or commercial space unnecessary given this context? One can only speculate that whereas residential development on the landfill site was an asset to the existing commercial establishments, commercial development was strong competition.

In any event, the Association and their planning consultants, S.O.M., did not discuss in any detail how they envisioned the development of the landfill project to proceed or what its
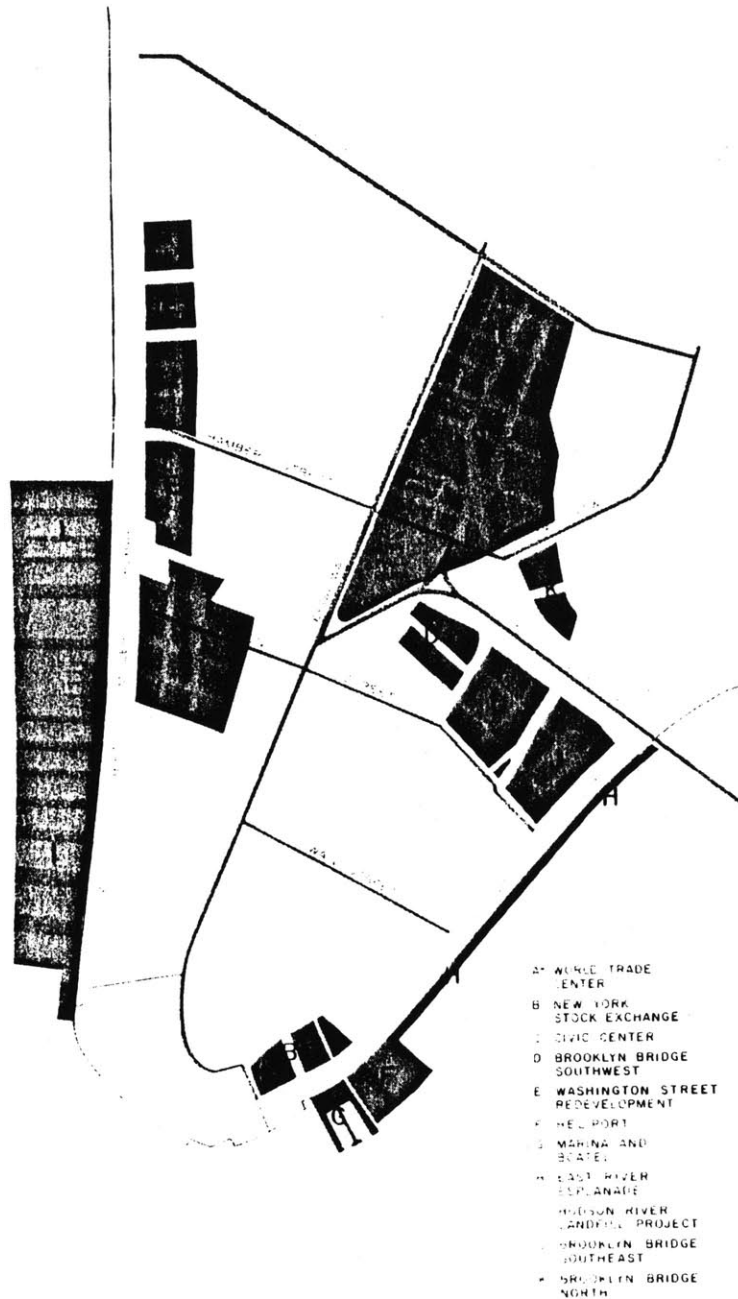
character would be, and why, when completed.
We have only a photo-montage in the report
of Lower Manhattan indicating the Association's
recommended major improvements. In it, there
appears to be no distinction between commercial
and residential development in terms of form,
scale, or siting. Though only a representation
of the development in gross terms, its intent,
appears clear - the landfill development for-
mally is an island unto itself, isolated
towers sitting in acres of space, community de-
fined by project name.

This first scheme for Battery Park City, not at
this point so named, represents the very essence
of the Modern Movement's vision of the City.
Its form is simple, sleek, abstract, and mini-
malist. On its 65 acre site, a land area
rivaling the Wall Street Business District in
size, two basic building types rise above an

A WORLD TRADE
  CENTER
B NEW YORK
  STOCK EXCHANGE
C CIVIC CENTER
D BROOKLYN BRIDGE
  SOUTHWEST
E WASHINGTON STREET
  REDEVELOPMENT
F HELPORT
G MARINA AND
  BOATS
H EAST RIVER
  ESPLANADE
  HUDSON RIVER
  LANDFILL PROJECT
  BROOKLYN BRIDGE
  SOUTHEAST
  BROOKLYN BRIDGE
  NORTH

undifferentiated and unarticulated horizontal plane which seems to innocently float on the Hudson River, not really addressing Lower Manhatton or the river.

The primary public environment, we must assume, is the horizontal plane, the towers clearly are, not. As a place-for-people, this vast flat slab makes no provision for its use as such. Where would one sit to eat lunch or stop to talk? Are there parks and plazas or is the plane really monolithic? What is the transition between public and private space? Is there Place or merely space?

The role of streets is simple, they have none - they do not exist, or at least none are indicated. There is, in fact, no sense of connection, pedestrian or auto, between the new development and the existing. This lack of streets is consistent with the Modernist vision

of the City. Towers were to sit in parkland, expressways innocently roamed the parkland giving access, a means to get from A to B, but they were not to invade the Tower/Park relationship.

An individual would feel lost in the urban form this scheme proposes. The open spaces are, in general, the size of entire blocks in Lower Manhattan. Perhaps one such major space would be useful, it would have to be detailed, broken down. What, however, would over half a dozen major open spaces in series be used for?

The size of the development allows the internal dialogues of architecture to apparently reach out to external relations without truly con-sidering context. The scheme, as a single project, has an internal logic but not an external one. What is the edge condition?

The form is generated solely from a stream of design and planning theory, showing no response to its setting. Perhaps it is unfair to contend that the proposed urban form is not "good"; we could argue that the form is not urban at all. In either case, the central point is that as a response to a city of buildings, streets, parks, neighborhoods, etc., the proposed form is inappropriate. It distances itself from its setting, provides little diversity in building form, leaves space without a developed identity, and really does not explore the human experience of inhabiting Place.

The concept of a major landfill development on the Hudson River side of Lower Manhattan is carried through all five plans. The form and sponsors of development are the factors which change and which we study. The first plan was

a combination of the business community's inventory of development activity or proposals in the Wall Street area and a further expression of their desire to see development continue to serve their interest.

The second plan follows up on the Department of Marine and Aviation's landfill proposal, supported for the most part by the Downtown-Lower Manhattan Association, keeping it as a mixed-use development.

PLAN 2 - 1966

Harrison Plan: sponsored by
                 Governor Rockefeller

The second plan, of early 1966, was a State initiated action. Sponsored by Governor Nelson Rockefeller, the plan was prepared by Wallace K. Harrison and proposed "a surprisingly complete community for 63000 people to be built on "air rights" over the Hudson River ... the scheme is a two-level one, with major buildings and parks, and pedestrians on the
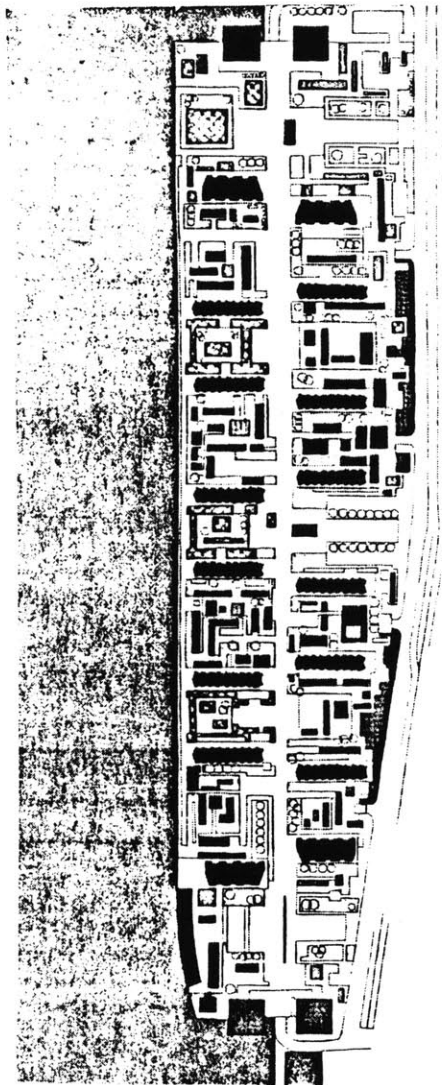
There are tremendous
opportunities in the
growing trend to
larger-scale planning

■ HOUSING
▨ CULTURAL & RELIGIOUS
▨ MUNICIPAL
■ SCHOOLS
■ COMMERCIAL & OFFICE

upper surface; light industrial, automobile,
and garage areas are below under a concrete
platform.

Landfill for the project will comprise some
98 acres [Architectural Record July '66,
"The Changing Job To Be Done", Herbert L.
Smith, Jr.]." The concept of a 24-hour,
multi-function community "to inject vitality
into the night and weekend vacuum of the
Wall Street area" remained a primary goal.

The second plan for Battery Park City is in
some respects the reformed child of the
Radiant City. It still exhibits a similar
"conceived and executed with a single pattern
(cookie cutter)" mentality as the first plan:
similar towers march one after another down
the site. There is, however, another level
of thought in this scheme as represented by
the smaller scale, various shapes, buildings

Most of the facilities needed to form a complete community are included in this big scheme by Wallace K. Harrison for Battery Park City in Manhattan. Sponsored by Governor Nelson Rockefeller, the project would be built on fill over the Hudson River.

■ HOUSING
□ CULTURAL & RELIGIOUS
▦ MUNICIPAL
■ SCHOOLS
▦ COMMERCIAL & OFFICE
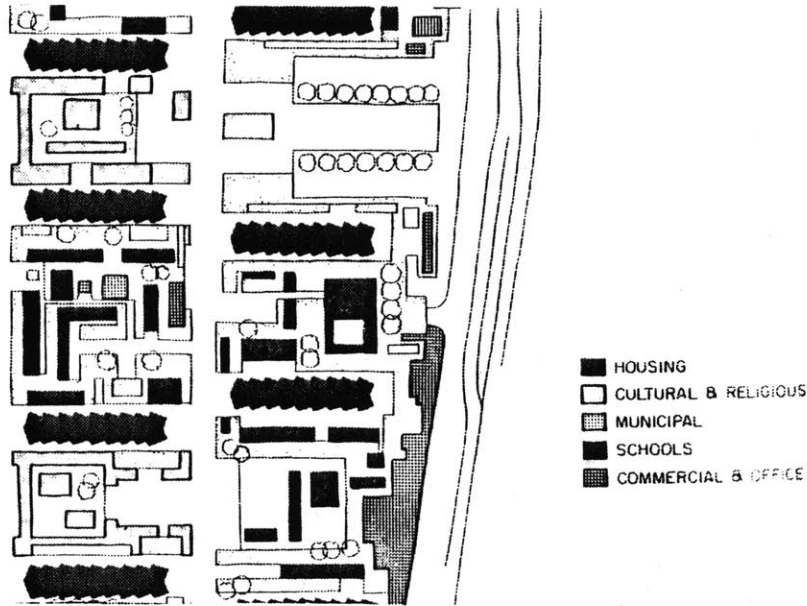
between the towers, the indication of building/land use and planted areas. This is the reform, the relationship between buildings and setting in recognition of the necessity for varying degrees of openness and size of public space. The texture of buildings and space defines smaller groupings of built form which come together to compose the whole.

There are still no streets indicated, they are not the primary public place. Streets are recognized in that vehicular access points disappear into the lower deck of this two-deck scheme. The streets that exist in Lower Manhattan are allowed to approach Battery Park City, then they are devoured. The upper deck is the primary public space; public if you are a pedestrian, inaccessible if you are in a car. The length-wise promenade is almost a main-street for the development - a mainwalk -
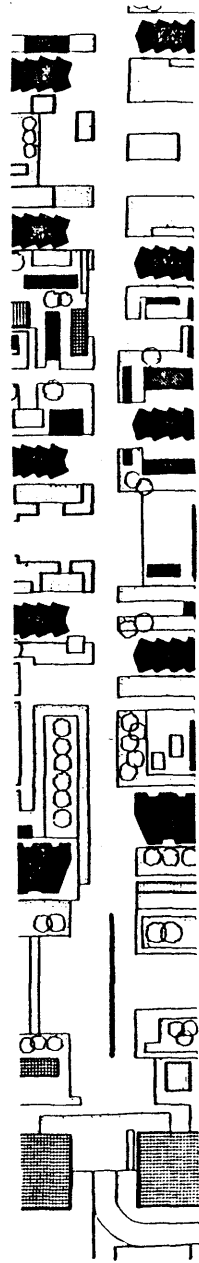
but without the romantic landscape one

associates with the car-free pedestrian

environment, or even a grand tree-lined

boulevard. We move from cluster to cluster,

use to use, along this main-walk but the

public place, by virtue of being isolated

from the existing network of public space(s),

that is, the street pattern one level below,

becomes a quasi-private terrace and the added

level of thought and articulation of the

built form relationships simply looks onto

Lower Manhattan, connecting to it only

visually, and from a safe distance.

Little is published on this plan, at least not

in the form Harrison set down; the fourth plan

is also, partially, a state effort and Harrison

was also involved with its planning, so there

may be some design considerations carried over,

but the form of the fourth plan is clearly

different than that of the second. There are
two points to remember: 1) Unlike the first
plan, which was the business community's
recommendation for physical improvement,
this plan is a State government-initiated
proposal, sponsored by a strong Governor
who would, in three years, give birth to the
powerful development entity - the New York
State urban Development Corporation. The
UDC's powers and record has already been
discussed. 2) This 1966 plan makes a far
more sincere attempt at organizing the urban
form of a new community than does the first,
as evidenced by its greater attention to
texture and detail.

In the midst of the proposal to develop
Battery Park City as an autonomous State
effort, the City of New York issued its plan
for future development in Lower Manhattan,

The Lower Manhattan Plan. It addresses not only what is to be developed but also the guiding urban design principles to be followed. In this respect, the City has begun to look at the questions of formal relationship of old and new development, something the first two Battery Park City plans did not.
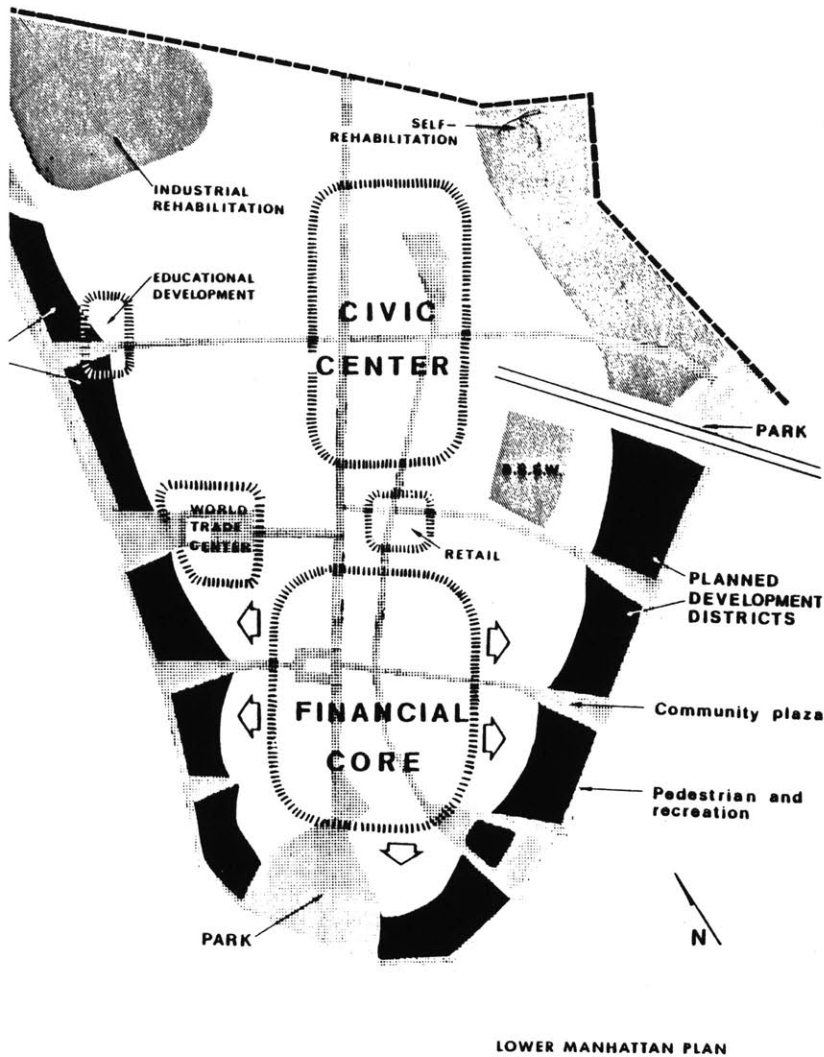
PLAN 3 - 1966, Lower Manhattan Plan

Sponsor: City of New York Planning Commission, Wallace, McHarg, Roberts, & Todd/Whittlesey, Conklin & Roussant proposal

The third plan, also issued in 1966 (perhaps an indication of contending interest around this waterfront development) is a City-sponsored effort. The Battery Park City plan is part of a general strategy for the growth of Lower Manhattan. The plan, by Wallace, McHarg, Roberts, and Todd/Whittlesey, Conklin and Roussant, proposed a process/approach which put development activity within the framework of problem statements, goals, and guiding principles. The Battery Park City

site becomes a part of a nearly continuous
Waterfront development.

"The plan begins with an analysis of the
inner city: historic downtown, the financial
district, with its great canyons, its dense
network of subway lines, its position in the
national economy. Long-term goals are out-
lined for this core, as well as the surrounding
areas. Areas of growth and change are de-
marked and formed into a coordinated pattern
in which each improvement has a related and
multiplying effect ... . Proposals for the new
Waterfront are set within the context of this
analysis: each link in the conceptual plan -
pedestrian routes, waterfront plazas, the
peripheral highway, the housing and office
groupings - are all related to the core, as
well as to each other [The Lower Manhattan
Plan: Summary Report, prepared for the N.Y.C.
Planning Commission 1966]." Problems are

INDUSTRIAL
REHABILITATION

SELF-
REHABILITATION

EDUCATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

CIVIC
CENTER

PARK

WORLD
TRADE
CENTER

RETAIL

PLANNED
DEVELOPMENT
DISTRICTS

FINANCIAL
CORE

Community plaza

Pedestrian and
recreation

PARK

N

LOWER MANHATTAN PLAN

separated into three categories:

1) Function, 2) Environment, and 3) Access and Movement. The problems of function concentrate on the decrease in Lower Manhattan employment in spite of office expansion and the lack of diversity in the area and thus its inability to compete with Midtown locations. The problems of environment focus on the peripheral and waterfront areas, pointing to the remnants of once-thriving establishments (e.g. the fruit and fish market, obsolete piers, the elevated expressway, and poorly organized subway stations as the cause of an "uncongenial" atmosphere. Access and movement problems for the most part center on the conflict between the area's narrow streets as "natural pedestrian ways" and the necessity of their handling heavy vehicular traffic.
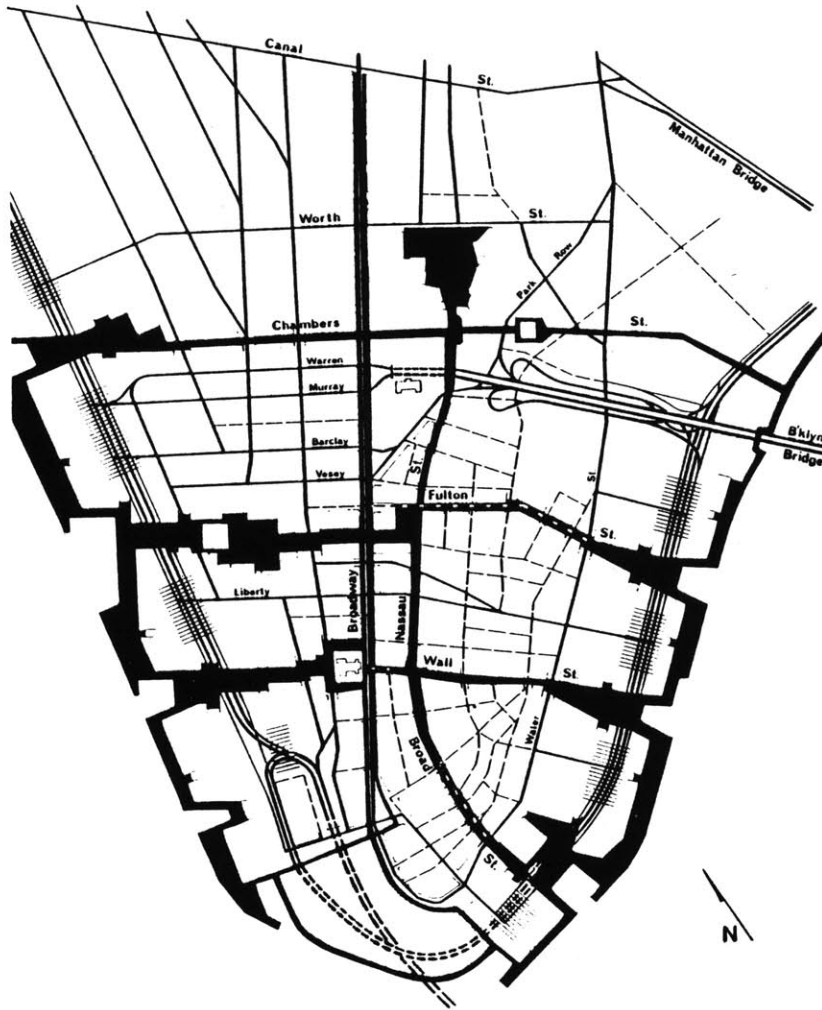
The major goal of the plan was the strength-
ening of the business core " ... by providing
for prime office expansion, improving its
working environment, diversify its business
life - reducing its vulnerability to the
decisions of a single institution, improving
internal transportation, and enhancing the
city's economic and tax base [Lower Man-
hattan Plan et al]." Three other goals which,
once again, support the residential waterfront
development are: a) the provision of a "power-
ful magnet for housing in the City's core
area, b) the introduction of new housing in
the vicinity of major existing and expanding
employment centers and c) "to take maximum
advantage of the great beauty of the downtown's
waterfront and its striking physical plant."

The plan calls for the development of "a down-
town waterfront residential community of
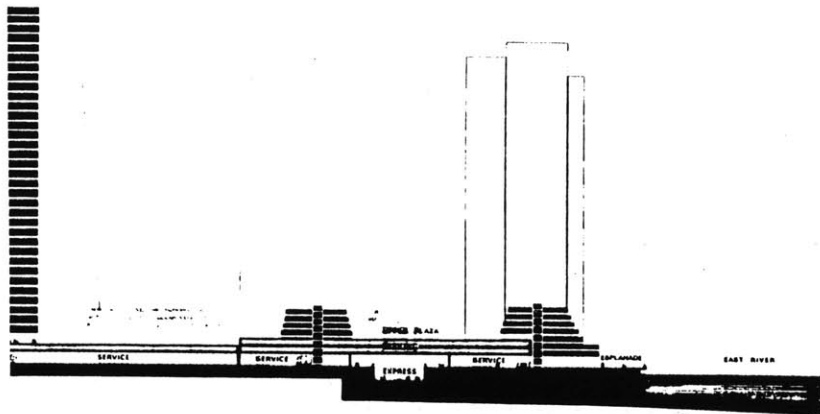
Transverse Section
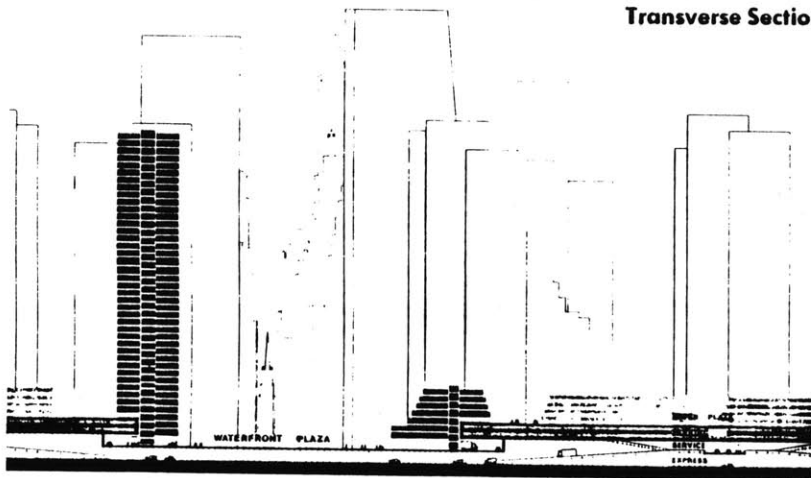

Longitudinal Section

80000 to 100000 people ... the new community is to be composed of six interconnected development areas ("neighborhoods") of 10000 - 15000 people, each centering around waterfront plazas at the ends of the major downtown streets and axes: Wall, Broad, Chambers, Fulton, the World Trade Center ... These plazas will form "windows on the waterfront", broad openings into the very heart of the city ... each development district (or "neighborhood") will contain a mixture of housing at the water's edge and offices next to the existing business core [Lower Manhattan Plan]."

The analysis for and form of the third plan for Battery Park City, now a part of an overall strategy for development in Lower Manhattan, is the first to ask questions about building, street, and pattern relationships. The Waterfront development along the edge

of the island is an extension of the uses
and pattern of development in the financial/
civic core. Although it remains a two-deck
scheme, the new development addresses setting,
new context, and the waterfront. Streets as
carriers of cars and people is still lacking.
Cars, again, are only allowed to occupy the
lower level of the development. The public
environment remains a somewhat private terrace,
mimicking a street pattern. However, the con-
nections from the core to the waterfront, the
extension of old into new, begins to open up
this upper terrace and bestow it with a less
removed feeling, thus old and new are bridged,
not separated.

The proposed buildings in general recognize
their dual relationship to setting and inter-
vention. They face the river, existing
buildings across-the-street, and the plazas

and paths which form the new public environment. There is a sense of neighborhoods, at least defined in physical terms. The parts of the proposed form are understandable and suggest larger relationships without pushing the scheme to the extent of being a single "project". There is a sense of a well thought out, diverse exterior environment. Most of all, there is a sense of dialogue between context and intervention.
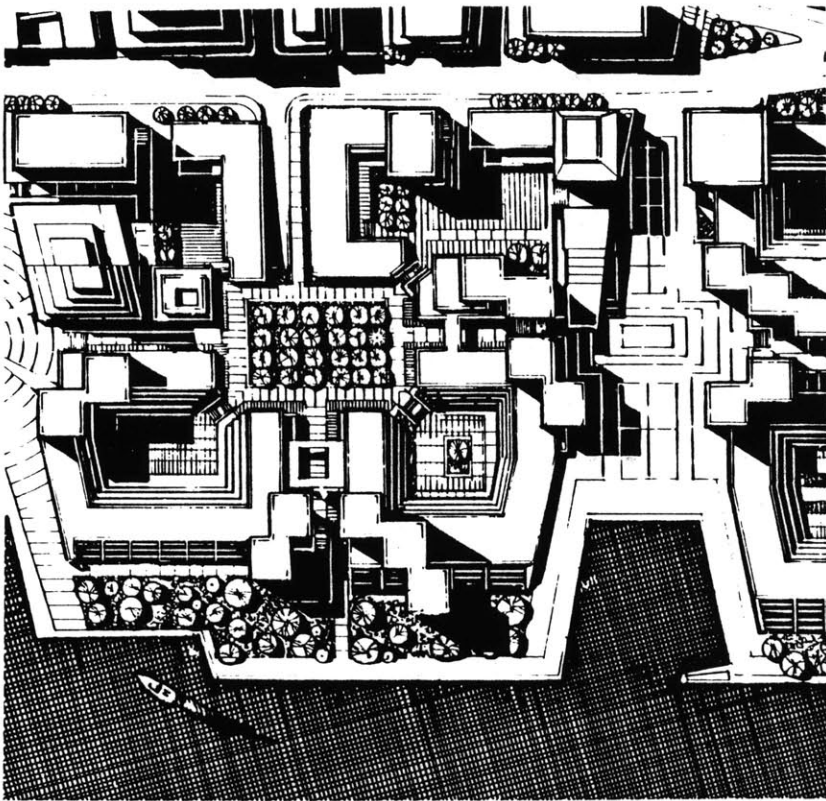
Although the site plan for the development is typical of master plans, i.e. an illustration of what the development should/will/would look like when complete, the plan's report does recommend that the City put in place a development agency "with broad powers to carry out the major elements of the plan", which would establish the basic form, sequence, and control of the development projects. In the

next two plans the Battery Park City
Authority and the UDC serve such functions.
Implementation becomes part of the develop-
ment plan and strategy.

LOWER MANHATTAN SPECIAL DESIGN

DISTRICTS - 1967-68:

The Urban Design Group

The Lower Manhattan Districts, discussed
earlier in the Framework section, as one of
the products of the Urban Design Group's use
of negotiable zoning to achieve urban design
goals, are not a plan for Battery Park City,
but rather the most complex of N.Y.C.'s special
design zoning districts. They are related to
the third plan in that they were designed to
transform the Lower Manhattan Plan's intent
into zoning law; "while the Lower Manhattan
Plan was expressed in the traditional illus-
trative site drawing ... the special districts
undertook to identify the essential design
elements and express them in legal language.
These design elements were defined as:

The zoning districts adopted for the lower Manhattan perimeter required that visual corridors not only be left open but defined by new construction, through the use of "build-to" lines.

Design Continuity, Visual Corridors, and Visual Permeability ... Based on these concepts,a text and illustrative drawings were devised to control the essential aspects of the new building without prescribing the design of buildings ... The City government seeks to define only those elements of concern to the public, leaving the developer to operate at will within these clearly stated constraints ... The elements of the plan are tied back into the pre-existing fabric of Lower Manhattan [J. Barnett, Introduction to Urban Design]." With these zoning controls augmenting the Lower Manhattan Plan, achieving its vision of improved urban form becomes structured, general, and understandable. But then comes forth the fourth plan.

PLAN 4 - 1969 PLAN

Sponsors:
- . Office of Lower Manhattan Development, N.Y.C.
- . Battery Park City Authority, (a N.Y. State public, non-profit corp created by the State in 1968 to finance and develop the site)
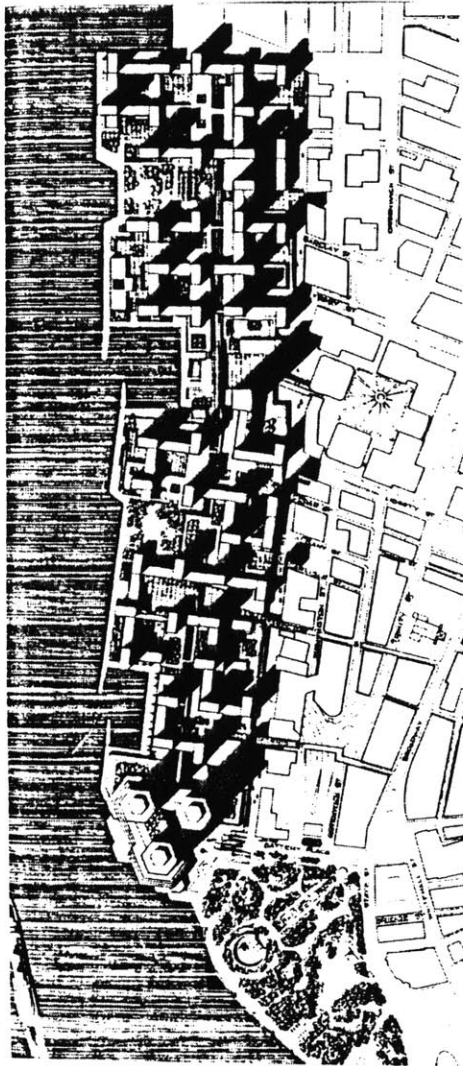- . Harrison & Abramovitz/Conklin & Rossart/Johnson & Burgee proposal

The fourth Battery Park City Plan by Harrison and Abramovitz (Harrison prepared the second plan), Conklin and Rossant (Architects and Planners associated with the third plan), and Johnson/Burgee, is a later, 1969 version of the third plan. It is a joint City and State venture which focuses, again, on the 91-92 acre land fill site, now known as Battery Park City. The scheme proposed 19000 apartments for 55000 residents - one third of them to be subsidized - and 5 million square feet of office space to generate 35000 new jobs.

"The land has been divided into two principal parts ... The southernmost portion (ten acres) for the ... office space (and) the remainder (for) high density residential (development) including shops, plazas, greens, coves, and an esplanade along the river's edge,

Battery
Park
City:

A proposal for new housing,
new jobs, and new land . . .
perhaps a new kind of urban life

Battery Park City is a sweeping proposal for
the revitalization of a portion of our largest
city, launched by both Nelson Rockefeller
and John Lindsay as the largest urban de-
velopment project in the history of the
country. It will be located in what is now a
portion of the Hudson River (see aerial
photo, above) on filled land between Bat-
tery Park and Chambers Street in lower
Manhattan. The two agencies principally
involved in its creation have been New York
City's Office of Lower Manhattan Develop-
ment, and the Battery Park City Authority,
created by the State Legislature in 1968 as
a public, non-profit corporation for the pur-
poses of directing and financing the devel-
opment of the site. Under these two
groups, the present design and master plan
have created by the architectural firms of
Harrison & Abramovitz, Philip Johnson &

[Architectural Record June 1969 "Battery Park
City: A Proposal]." The total cost was
estimated at over $1 billion with cost to the
city being $100 million for depressing the
Westside Highway, and projected revenue to
the city between $25 and $35 million annually.
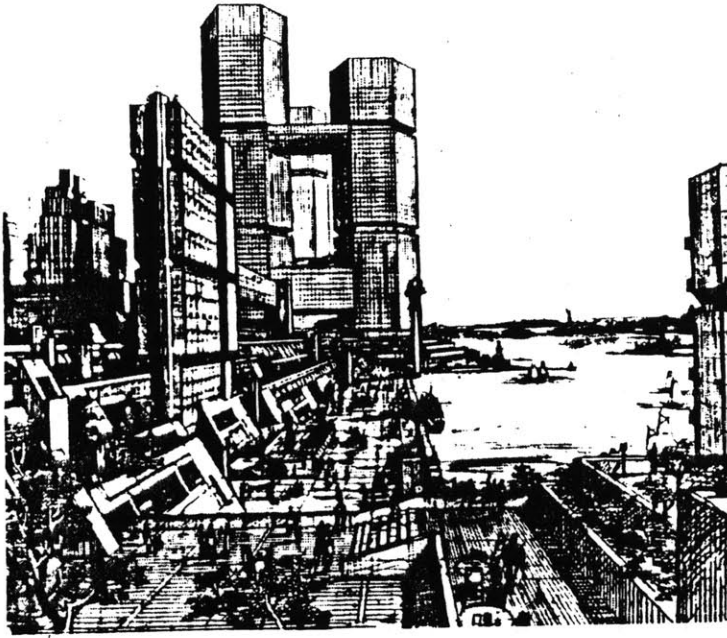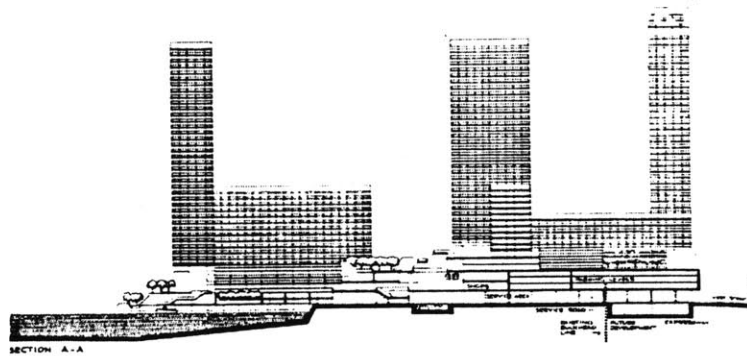The early 1980's was the slated completion
date. It wasn't.

The form of the '69 plan is rigider, less
integrated into the existing, than the third
plan, the Lower Manhattan plan. Like the
second plan, Harrison's, it takes the southern
tip of the site to concentrate its office space
onto isolated "pods". The proposed "City"
works as a single "Building", its core a
shopping and circulation spine/mall running
the length of the site - pedestrian activity
drawn into the building-as-city and isolated
from Lower Manhattan's core. It is not a

series of neighborhoods. In 1973 the scheme was modified in response to financial and market conditions. "The spine was shortened and the multiple uses along it simplified. The housing was moved onto pods, and the shopping center became a separate, though connected, unit. The office buildings (remained) to the southern end of the site [Battery Park City Draft Summary Report and 1979 Master Plan]." One of the housing pods was constructed, to keep the Battery Park City Authority financially afloat, but executing the entire plan was given up on.

Although the 1969 plan is a version of the 1966 (Plan 3) Lower Manhattan Plan, which takes on part of the proposed waterfront development, it violates the '66 plan in many respects. Mostly, it doesn't fully respect the "essential design elements" -

CIVIC
FACILITIES

VEHICULAR
CIRCULATION

PEDESTRIAN
CIRCULATION

design continuity, visual corridors, visual permeability - of the Lower Manhattan Districts which were designed to translate the '66 plan's intent into zoning law. (This probably is due to two factors: 1) as a partial State effort the 1969 Plan did not have to obey the City's zoning law, and 2) there was room in the zoning laws translation of the third plan's intent to interpret the "essential design elements" and degree of compliance with them). The '69 plan treats the site as a single building/project with an internal logic which sets it apart from the pre-existing context. It, like the plans before it, is a multilevel deck scheme - for service, parking, and shops - and thus effectively cuts the new places for pedestrian activity and the waterfront - its new plazas, parks, and esplanade - from the Lower Manhattan core,

SECTION A-A

The two sections here are located on the maps
(page 14a). The covered pedestrian walk
and most of the open space is at elevation 38,
with the main road and vehicular services below.
The West Side Highway is shown lowered,
with its air rights fully developed.
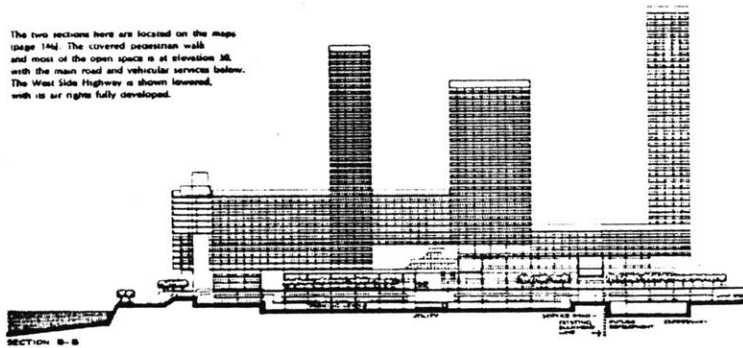
SECTION B-B

which, since 1963, the waterfront development
was intended to reinforce. It isn't clear if
the primary public environment is intended to
be the Waterfront esplanade and plazas or the
shopping and circulation mall/spine. Clearly
streets do not serve this function. Although
the Lower Manhattan Plan, Plan 3, also pro-
posed a two-level car free scheme for Battery
Park City, it did, as mentioned before, begin
to mimic them and open up the new urban develop-
ment to the street. Instead of building upon
this theme, the 1969 plan, Plan 4, ignores it;
its rigid wall of development serves to dis-
connect rather than connect the waterfront
pedestrial amenities from the Lower Manhattan
core.

The first plan for Battery Park City structured
the development as an isolated building event,
a single-minded project. The fourth plan
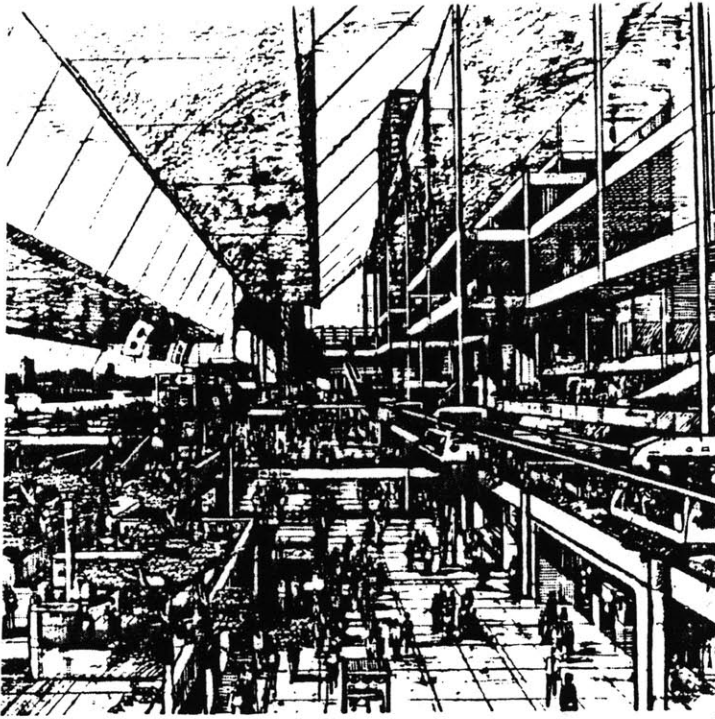
conceives of the development as a single structure. Buildings related to each other in a tight all too literally formal sense. The general pattern of development which results from this rigid building to building relationship sets this megastructure apart from its setting as much as the First Plan's pure, sleek and minimalist ethic set it apart.

As a megastructure, the new development does not pick up on any cues from the existing urban fabric. Building to street relationships do not exist because there are no streets, building to context relationships do not exist because the development reflects solely on the internal logic and order it creates, and there are no neighborhoods because "neighborhood" is not contained by four walls. The fourth plan takes a step backwards from the

Zone B
Residential

Retail Mall

Zone A
Commercial

context-sensitive foundation laid down by the Lower Manhattan Plan (Plan 3).

The problems of the 1969 plan set the stage for the current 1979, Cooper/Eckstut plan. In their review of the 1969 plan Cooper/ Eckstut examined the real and perceived problems associated with the '69 plan and thus hampered development. The "real" problems are: 1) Market uncertainty, 2) Overly complicated planning and development controls, and 3) Questions as to the financial stability of the Battery Park City Authority. During the mid-1970's Lower Manhattan experienced a glut of commercial office space and had a weak residential market. "During this period of uncertainty, the City's large developers were unwilling to build in Battery Park City. These developers, though few in
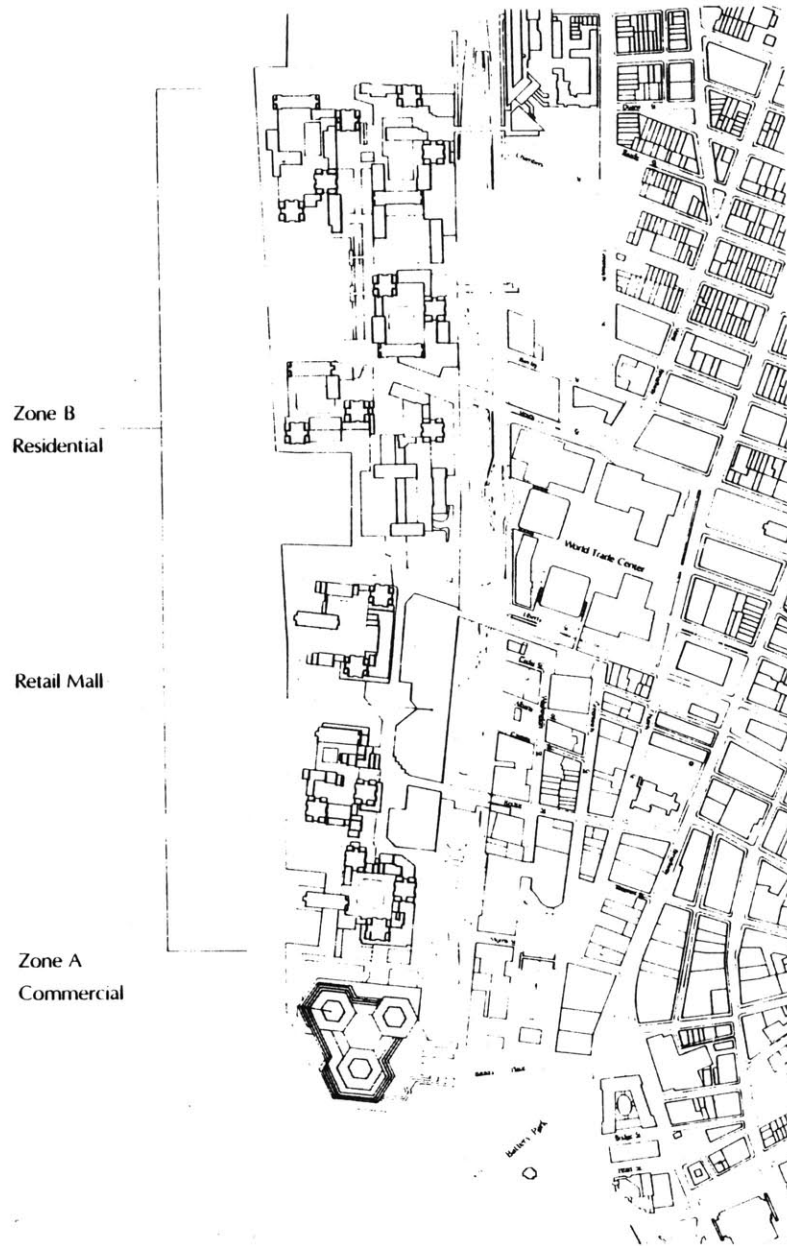
number, are influential in the construction

of high-rise, large-scale properties that the

Master plan called for [1979 Master Plan Draft

Summary Report, Cooper/Eckstut]." Problems

arose with the development controls and con-

trolling agencies. By law, the Battery Park

City Authority must have all of its major

expenditures approved by the State's Financial

Control Board. This is a possible source of

delays in appropriations. In addition, the

Lower Manhattan Special Zoning Districts,

which cover the site, is administered by the

City Planning Commission and Director of City

Planning. The multiple approvals needed may

also be a possible source of delay.

"As the Authority began to negotiate with

developers, difficulties arose with the

special zoning district provisions. The pre-

scribed elevated pedestrian system proved

cumbersome and expensive. The pedestrian
connections and overhead bridges only worked
when linked to other sections of the develop-
ment. The plan was clearly not geared to an
incremental building program scheduled to
last more than a decade. Most importantly,
the District's rigid requirements encouraged
developers to propose buildings that met the
requirements in the most literal way. The
design quality suffered. The regulations
caused developers to give first priority to
minimizing their risks, and the broader
design considerations were lost [Battery Park
City Draft Summary Report and 1979 Master Plan]."

The Authority, which depended on the revenue
from development activity to cover the debt
service on its bond issues and administrative
expenses, was put in a position where it was
unable to meet its financial obligations,

due to the lack of development activity.

"Since the provision of infrastructure to

support development has to be carried out by

the Authority, private developers required

complete confidence in the ability of the

Authority to finance such improvements

[...Draft Summary Report and 1979 Master Plan]."

The "perceived" development problems are in

part out-growths of the "real" problems.They

are: 1) Lack of assurance about the timely

provision of infrastructure, 2) Uncertainty

about Westway and, 3) Lack of construction

by an initial developer.

As mentioned above, the Authority's shaky

financial picture raised questions as to its

ability to provide infrastructure for the

'69 megastructure scheme when needed. As a

megastructure, much of the internal circulation

space, e.g. the spine, became public space
and infrastructure for private development,
the way a new road would be, and thus an item
of public expense.

"The state of uncertainty that surrounds West-
way (the depressed expressway to replace the
deteriorated West Side Highway) has created
doubts about future access to Battery Park
City. One doubt relates to access to and from
Battery Park City if Westway is not built.
Another doubt concerns the potential impact on
Battery Park City during the construction
period if Westway is built [1979 Master Plan]."

Finally, as with many large-scale projects,
no developer wanted to be first on an unbuilt
uncertain site, especially with the economy
in a state of recession.
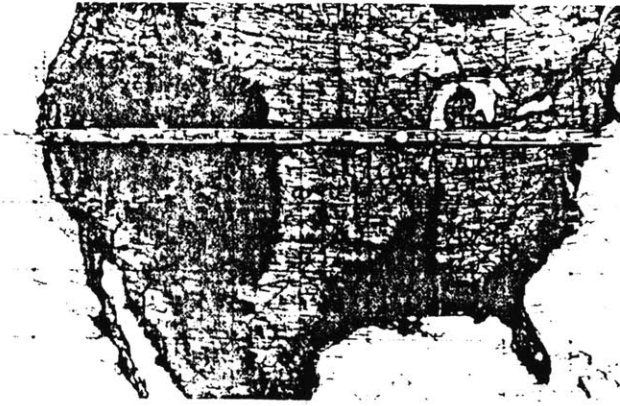
Comprehensive City project (Mike Mitchell and Dave Boutwell, 1969). If the idea of a single building stretching right across North America now looks ludicrous or – worse – old-fashioned, it is the more important to remember that this kind of proposition was in fashion and credible less than a decade ago, at least as a 'vision'. Nor was it alone: by that date the Austrian Raimund Abraham had already proposed a structure covering the entire surface of the globe!

The 1969 plan is a product of its time. It comes at the beginning of a period of transition in thinking about the city, society, and city building. The urban design concepts in good currency were framed by a booming expansion-oriented can-do economy and mind-set. 20/20 hindsight shows us that this economic prosperity was about to change as we entered the transition period - the 70's - but in the late 60's, when this plan was produced, we could still conceive of building bigger and better. New York was "Fun City".

As a product of its time, Battery Park City as a single building - a framework of retail, commercial, and residential uses - a mega-structure, should not be looked at simply as a rigid costly scheme, the product of architectural and planning ambition. To do so would be to forget the complexity of its
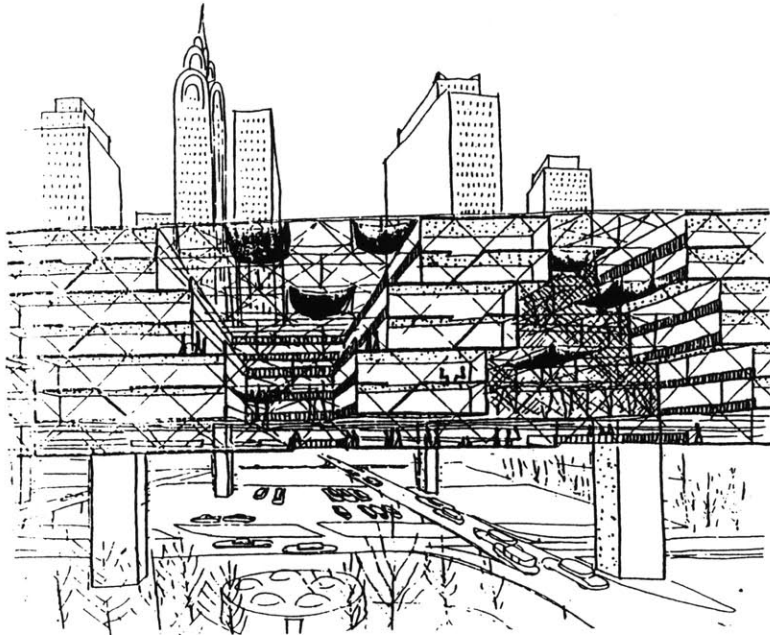
Urbanisme spatiale *(Yona Friedman, 1960-62). Characteristic applications of Friedman's almost invariable system of 'space-frames-in-the-air' to the renovation of New York   The elevated frames were to be filled with adjustable lightweight structures, in studied contrast to the mass and mess of the city below.*

context, its time. "The megastructure ... symbolized the libertarian aspirations of a whole post-Beatles generation. Cities, as found in real life or envisioned in conventional town planning wisdom, were perceived to be too lumberingly unmanageable to satisfy the demands of what was described 'the Now Generation'. Whay they wanted was 'instant city', and although megastructure proved incapable of delivering it fast enough, it had seemed - as of 1964 - that it might [R. Banham, Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past, 1976 Thames & Hudson, London]."

Megastructure can be seen as the Modern Movement's vision of the city in the 60's. "As a way of imposing a form of order on 'the chaos of our cities' it was an invention of architects, whatever other tides of opinion

appeared to support it; and it was finally

abandoned by them because it offered to

generate a form of order that they themselves

could not manage [R. Banham, Megastructure...]"

The context of the sixties both nurtured and

attacked the permissive promise of instant/

compact/plug-in/flexible city. Megastructure

was an interpretation of the mood of the "now

generation". But, the management and capital

investment required to realize megastructure

linked the concept too closely with "the

establishment", the antithesis of the "now
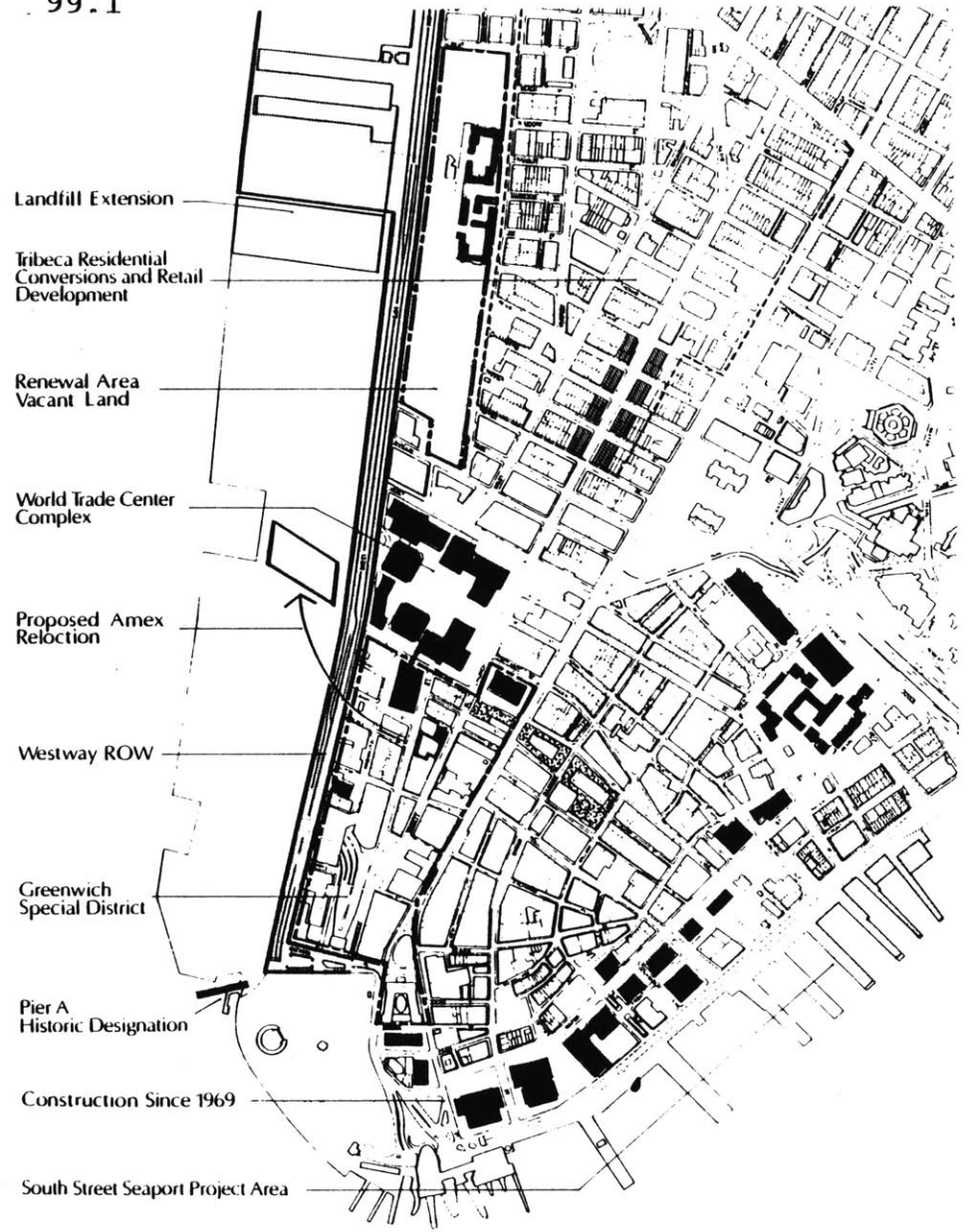
generation".

"Megastructure, almost by definition, would

mean the destruction or overshadowing of

small-scale urban environments; those who

had just rediscovered "community" in the slums

would fear megastructure as much as any other
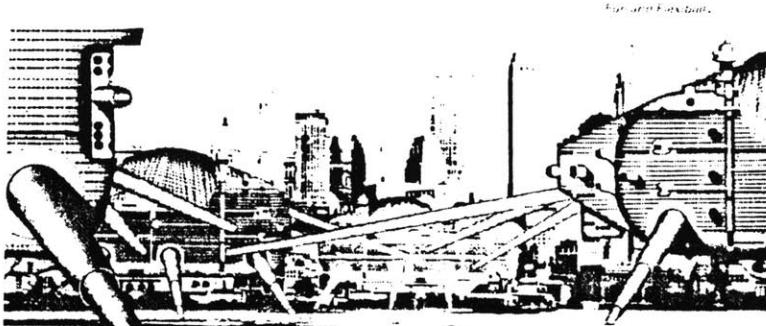
Walking City project (Ron Herron and Brian Harvey of Archigram, 1963). Most celebrated of early Archigram projects, largely because of the alarm caused among the older planning Establishment by the thought of 'elements of the capital city' being put on legs and set to roam the world. Their location here in the East River, with the towers of Manhattan in the background, suggests a deliberate challenge to older visions of the future — but it was always dangerous to take Archigram too seriously, or at apparent face value.

kind of large-scale renewal programme...
For the flower children, the drop-outs of the desert communes, the urban guerrillas, the community activist, the politicized squatters, the Black Panthers, the Middle-Class amenitarians and the historical con-servationists, ... the art-school radicals, and the participants in ... street democracies. Megastructure was almost a perfect symbol of liberal-capitalist oppression. It was con-demned almost before it had a chance to happen [R. Banham, Megastructure ...]."

Given this changing social climate could commitment to the '69 plan's Megastructure have held firm for over a decade to see it through? Given this chaning social climate, is it a wonder that the fifth, 1979, plan for Battery Park City goes back to the con-textual aspirations of the 1966 Lower Man-hattan Plan?

99.1

Landfill Extension

Tribeca Residential
Conversions and Retail
Development

Renewal Area
Vacant Land

World Trade Center
Complex

Proposed Amex
Reloction

Westway ROW

Greenwich
Special District

Pier A
Historic Designation

Construction Since 1969

South Street Seaport Project Area

Changes Since 1969

PLAN 5 - 1979

Sponsor : Battery Park City
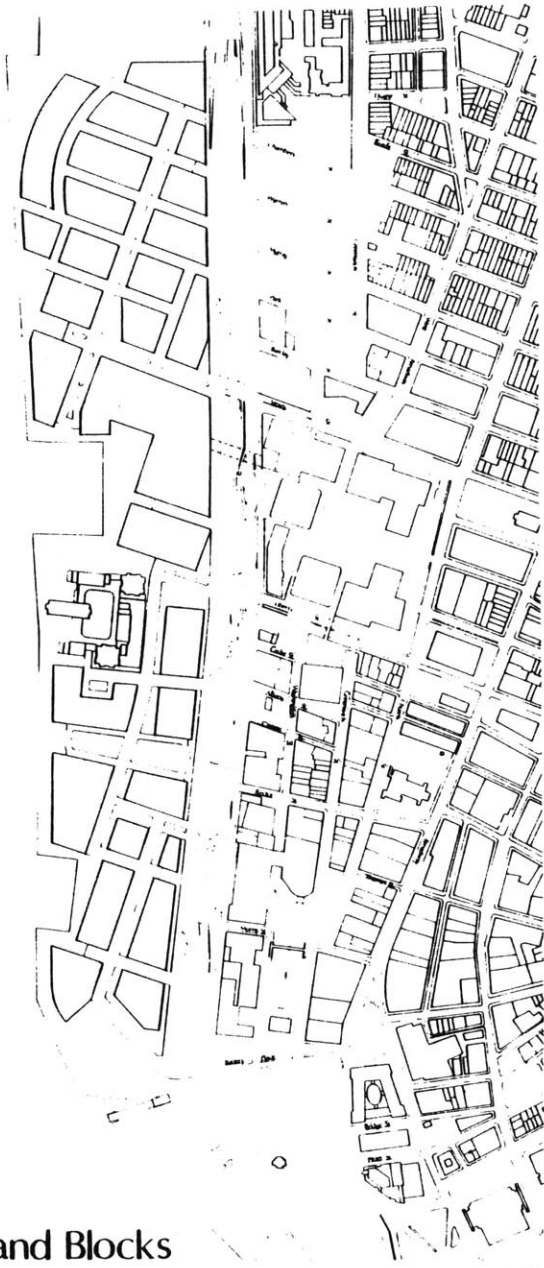
Authority

Proposal: Cooper/Eckstut Associates

The fifth and current Battery Park City plan is a cooperative effort between the U.D.C., The Battery Park City Authority, New York City, and New York State. The UDC acquired title to the landfill site, in late 1979, through the use of its power of eminent domain. This was done in cooperation with the City, which until this point owned the site.

The Battery Park City Authority, now a subsidiary of the UDC and having the same Chief Executive Officer, has leased the site from the UDC and is required to develop it in compliance with the new, 1979, Master Plan prepared by Cooper/Eckstut. The City is given the right to re-acquire the development area within 18 months of notice of the date upon which all notes, bonds, and other indebtedness of BPCA and advances made by New York to BPCA
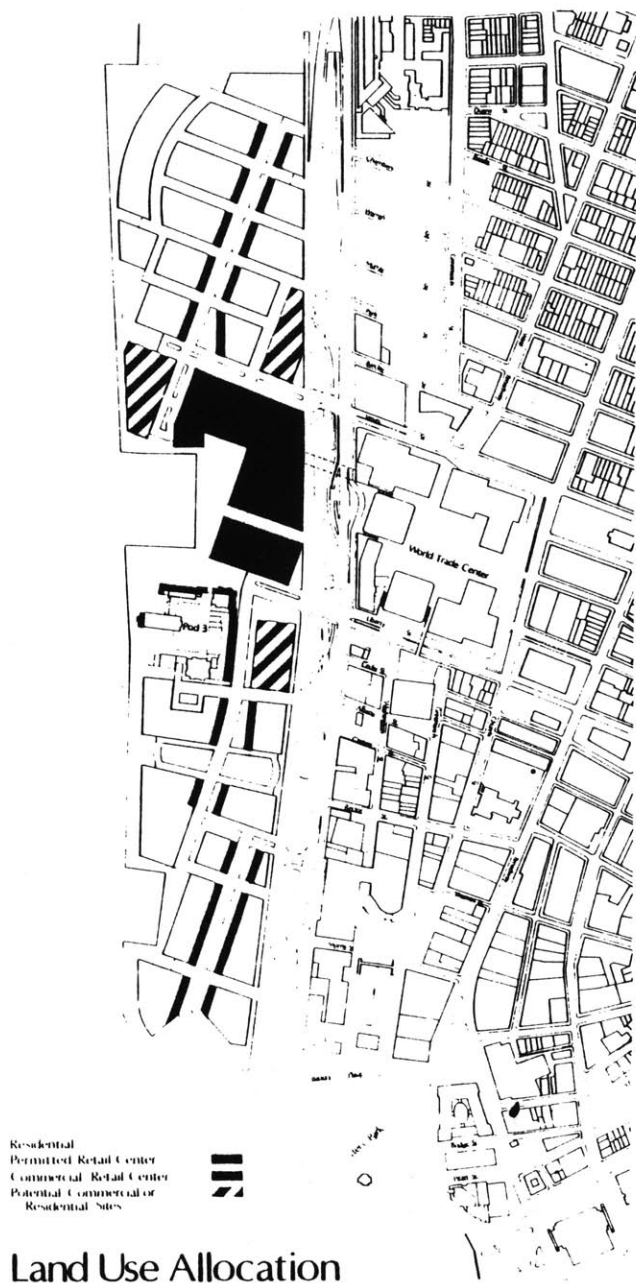
are repaid, subject to existing leases,
tenancies, etc. The Governor, Hugh Carey,
and Mayor, Ed Kock, are to propose and support
legislation to make an $8 million fund avail-
able to BPCA bondholders for amortization of
outstanding BPCA obligations. The Authority
is given the power to reduce ground-rent and
in-lieu-of-real property tax payments as in-
centives for commercial development.

The 1979 Plan for Battery Park City calls for
the development of: a maximum of 6 million
square feet of office and commercial space,
16,000 apartment units, and 65 acres of open
space ranging from public right-of-ways to
parks, building courtyards, and esplanades at
a projected cost of $53,200,000 in 1979 dollars.

In this fifth/Cooper/Eckstut/1979 plan, design,
and development guidelines are used to control

Streets and Blocks

Residential
Permitted Retail Center
Commercial Retail Center
Potential Commercial or
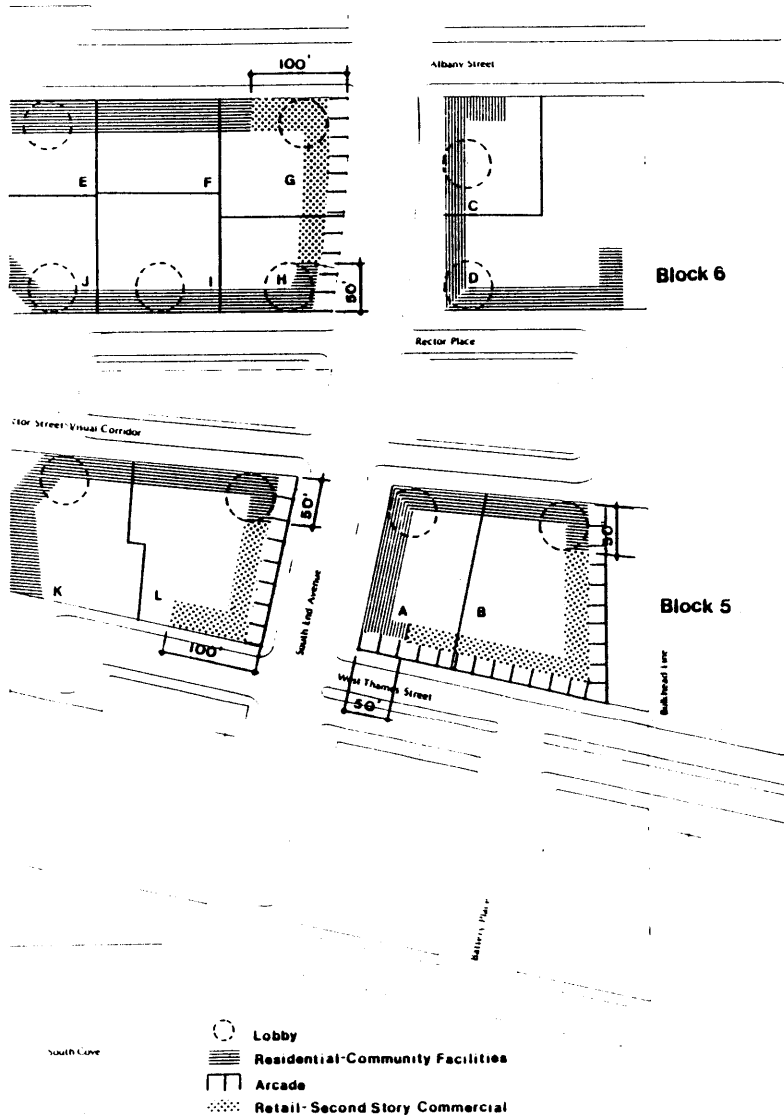   Residential Sites

Land Use Allocation

the generation of the overall pattern of development, map open spaces, locate structures, control building form, and develop a detailed street environment. The general pattern of development of the '79 plan calls for a system of streets and blocks consistent and continuous with the existing level and grid pattern of the immediate area as a structure for development. Streets are the "spine" of activity and movement. Buildings are to occupy locations on these blocks and are regulated in their form by near-conventional, though site-specific, bulk controls. The building-as-city concept is rejected in favor of a series of smaller development areas, an idea the Lower Manhattan plan advances, by various architects and developers. The street system is the framework in which development occurs and human activity takes place, as the 1811 plan for Manhattan set the pattern for

Chambers Street Park

North End Avenue

North Cove Plaza

World Trade Center

Rector Place

South Cove

South End Avenue

Battery Place

Special Places

the City's development to date.

Open space occupies close to 70% of the site but it is broken down to a familiar urban scale; special outdoor places, arcaded streets, parks, waterfront coves, are created which buildings enclose and reinforce: attention is given to access points to retail and residential uses, the location of building lobbies, planting, and street-wall dimensions and character.

The basic image of the plan is clear, the best that New York has to offer in buildings and streets serve as a model for designing this addition to the city. The use of zoning regulation, building height restrictions, build-to lines, setbacks, in conjunction with urban renewal mapping of streets, parks, and arcades, has allowed the Cooper/Eckstut plan
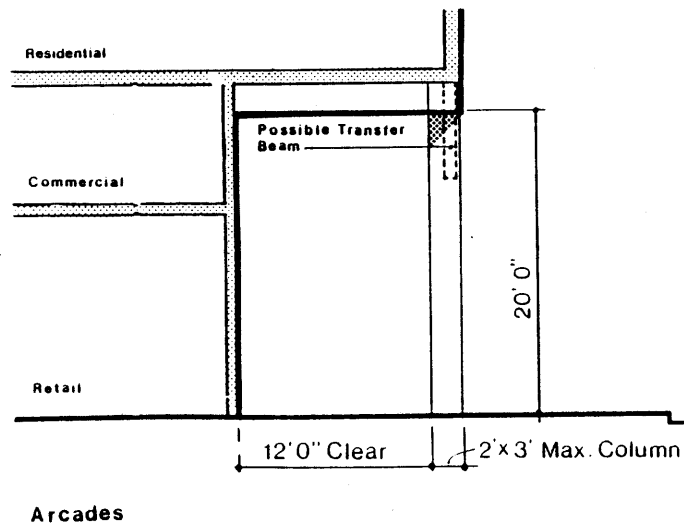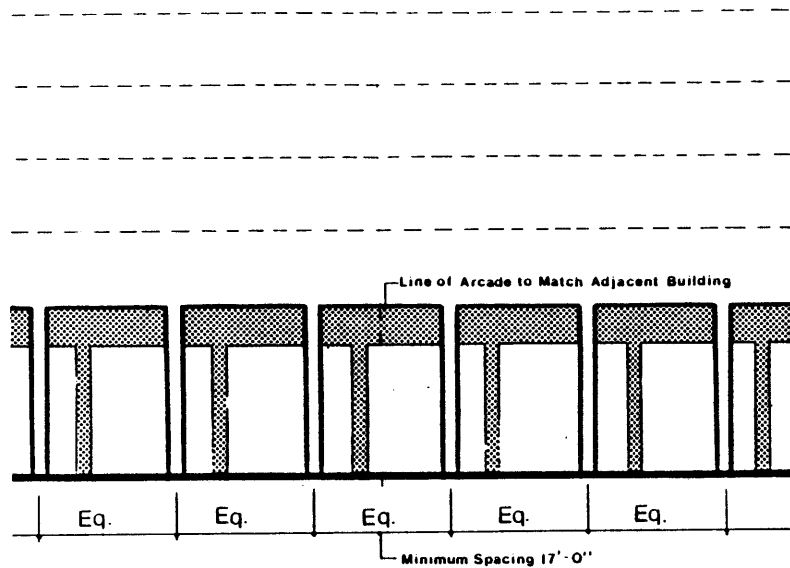
100'

Albany Street

E   F   G

C

J   I   H

Block 6

50'

Rector Place

:tor Street Visual Corridor

50'

K   L

South End Avenue

100'

A   B

Block 5

West Thames Street

50'

South Cove

Battery Plate

○ Lobby
≡ Residential-Community Facilities
⊓ Arcade
∷∷ Retail-Second Story Commercial

Battery Park City · 1979 Master Plan
Cooper,Eckstut Associates

to directly address the site and location specific design issues of the development. Clearly the design approach of the 1979 plan best answers the four questions asked in this thesis of the proposed Battery Park plans. The street is the primary public environment, it holds the development together. As an organizing element, both in terms of urban form and development phasing, this thoughtful comment on and replication of the Lower Manhattan street pattern is certainly a less expensive, more flexible form of infrastructure than what was proposed in the 1969 plan (Plan 4). Finally we have a plan which gives the street its multiple purpose, link, access to place, and place. Its form and place in the urban environment is consistent with our expectations of it from experiences in the City.

Context and consistency are key words in the
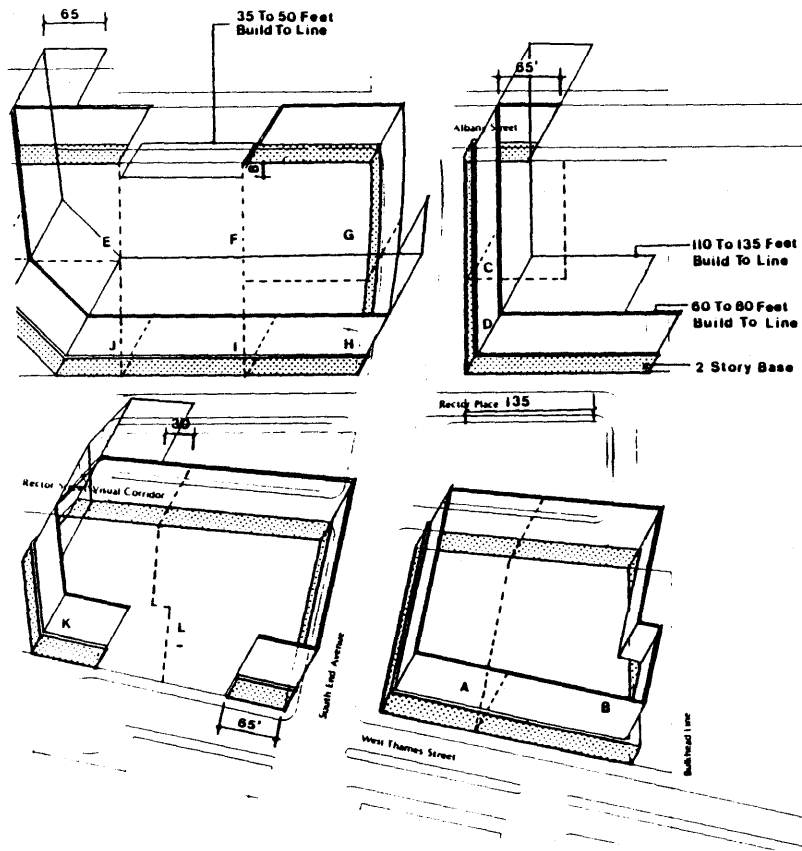
1979 plan. In fact, it proves interesting to note what other key words and phrases are used, in terms of their physical form and urban theory implications. "The (1979) Master plan takes as its theme the acceptance of all that is desirable about New York's basic pattern of development." Implicit in this theme is a contextual approach to urban design. Pattern and grid are recognized as generators of urban form. These form generators are "extended" to achieve a development that is a part of a whole. This extension of patter and grid will "easily integrate its building forms with adjacent area's existing development". The extension and integration of the existing and the proposed should yield a "recognizable and more understandable form". Basic circulation access should "emphasize the ground level". "Visual corridors connect" the pedestrian, the building, the new, the
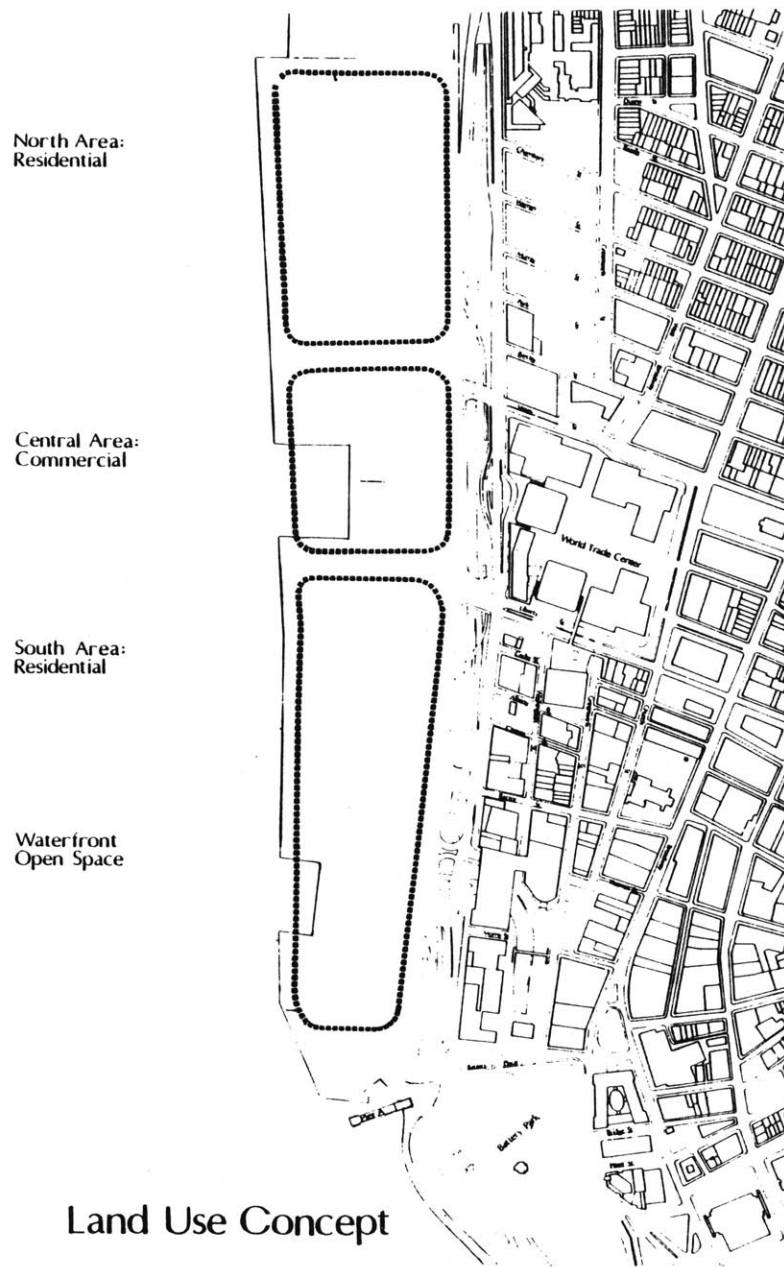
existing, the context. "Battery Park City
should reproduce and improve 'what is best
about New York's neighborhoods ... neighbor-
hoods being the product of 'incremental
development' ... having ... 'intense mixture
of land uses, special character, small scale
spaces, and intimate texture."

We have in the 1979 plan an approach to urban
design which roots itself in an existing
context, investigates/reads its structure,
searches for strengths and proposes to act
in a way familiar to the existing context.
Like the Lower Manhattan Plan, the '79 plan
continues the pattern and forms in the con-
text into the intervention. The major
public and pedestrian realm is the street or
the waterfront amenities. Sense of place is
structured in a similar fashion in the inter-
vention as in the context: by street relating

Line of Arcade to Match Adjacent Building

Eq. Eq. Eq. Eq. Eq.

Minimum Spacing 17'-0"

Residential

Possible Transfer Beam

Commercial

20' 0"

Retail

12'0" Clear

2'x 3' Max. Column

Arcades

to building relating to block. There is a sense of continuity of pattern and access. The building/street relationship allows for a familiar use and control of street-as-place. The principles of the '79 plan can provide for a more sensitive plan, a site specific response, than can those of the '60's. Today we contend that context is essential to architecture and planning. We (should) fault the Modern Movement City Planning, or the 1969 Plan not for their vision, for without vision where are we, but for the exclusion in their vision of the complexity of context.

One can question the degree to which an urban environment designed in a contextual manner can avoid the flaws of its context. We can ask this of the '79 plan, in particular to its allocation of land-use and its scale of development/buildings.

North Area:
Residential

Central Area:
Commercial

South Area:
Residential

Waterfront
Open Space

Land Use Concept

The concept diagram shows that the development is basically a commercial core flanked by two residential areas. Despite its praise for the intense and varied/mixed land-use offered in New York's neighborhoods (Greenwich Village, Brooklyn Heights, and the Upper East Side are cited as examples), the '79 plan segregates the residential and commercial/retail uses to their own "neighborhoods". A closer look at the Lower Manhattan Context reveals a possible influence - the World Trade Center.

Battery Park City's commercial core seeks to relate to the Trade Center, thus its location as directly opposite. The trade center is essentially a commercial super-block. It possesses none of the qualities the '79 plan espouses, yet its influence is felt in the '79 plans proposal for the commercial center. The clearest sign of this influence is the
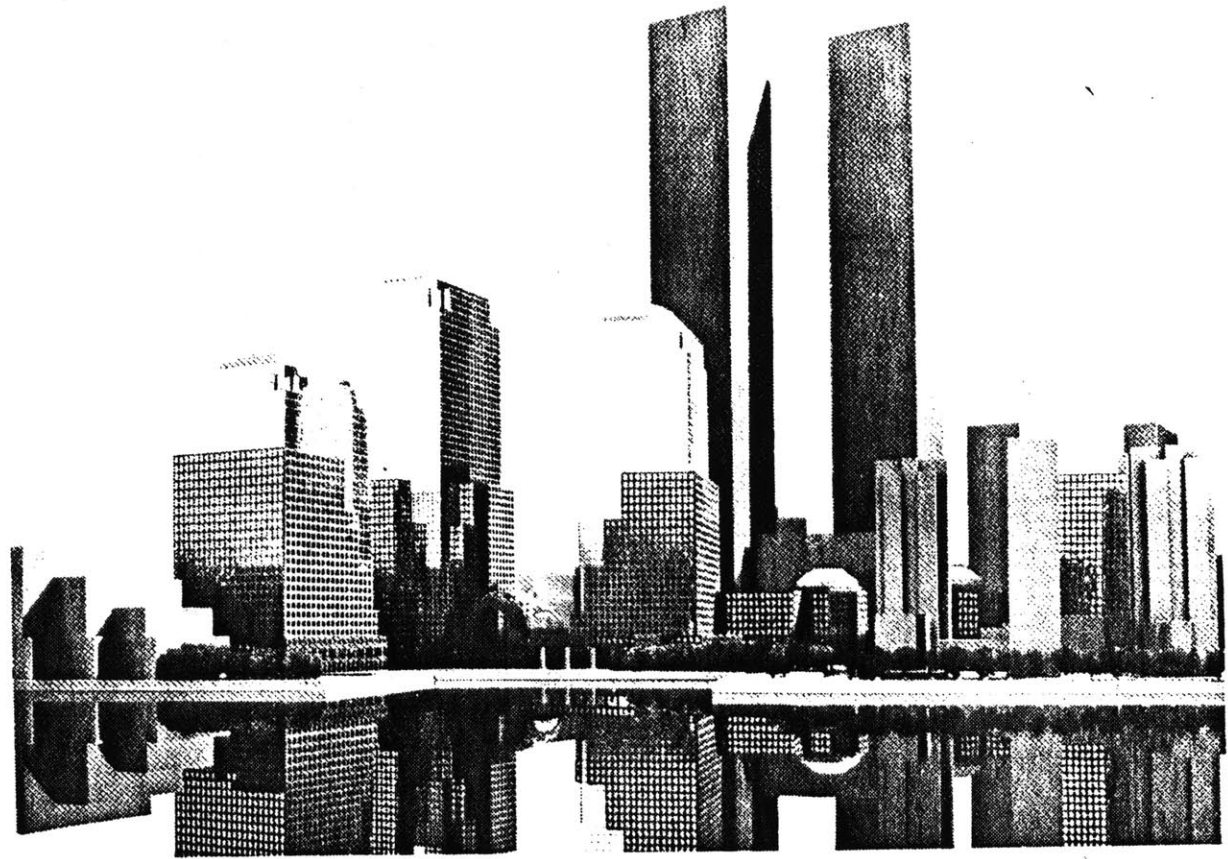
Commercial Center
Roof Plan

Battery Park City · 1979 Master Plan
Alexander Cooper Associates

fact that a commercial center is proposed. Why couldn't there be several smaller commercial areas? Why couldn't commercial activity occur along a "main street"? Why couldn't there be the mix of land-uses the plan in theory admires? Clearly to do so would be to propose the exact opposite of the World Trade Center, but isn't this what the plan has as its intent?

Given a commercial core, why is it a super-block? Granted, it isn't a super-block which is insensitive to its context, but why is there a need to create an isolated commercial island which cannot be penetrated by car? Why should the two residential areas be separated in such a fashion? Neither midtown nor Lower Manhattan are super-blocks but they are, nonetheless, major commercial centers. Why couldn't Battery Park City's commercial

The actual design for the commercial core
of Battery Park City. Cesar Pelli is the
architect for Olympia & York Properties.
Above: the whole complex as it will be
seen from the Hudson River with the
World Trade Center towers in the
background.

center follow their example?
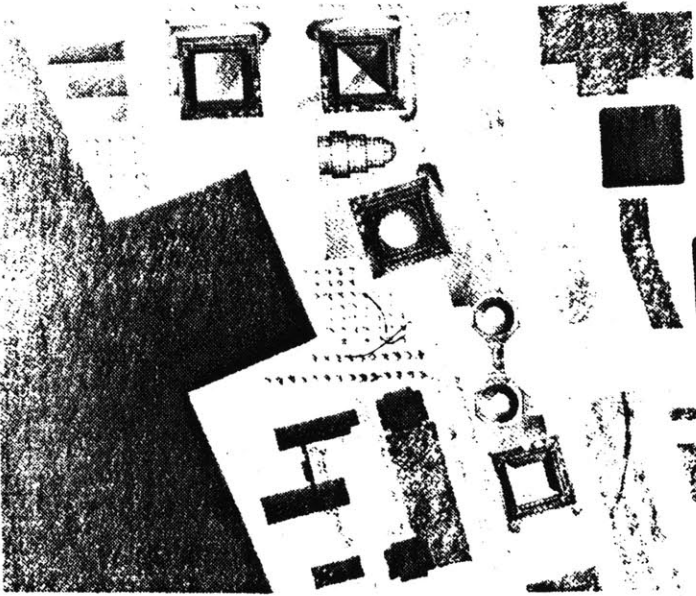
Given a commercial center which takes the form of a super-block, why are the proposed structures the size of entire blocks in the surrounding area? They are huge and their size does not seem warranted given that there is 13 acres of open site on which to array them. Don't they violate their context? Do they accept and reproduce the best or the worst in the context?
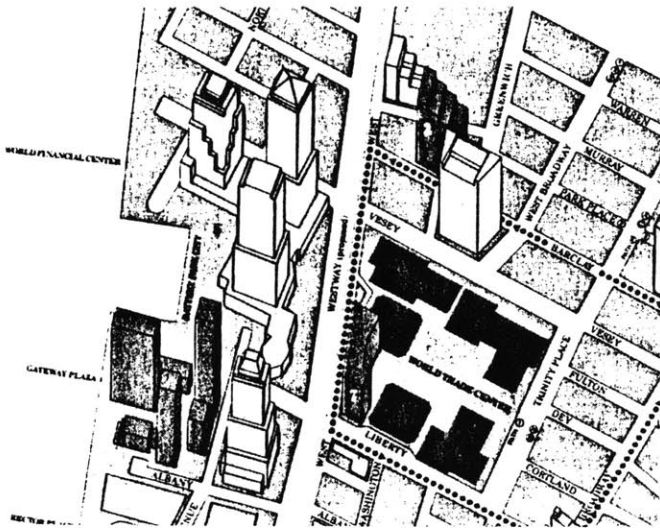
In context there are conflicts. There are developments/buildings/events which go counter to the majority. We cannot of course assume that the majority of anything is necessarily "correct", the exceptions may well be the best that context has to offer. But, in a specific case, if we contend that positive urban qualities are in the majority, then qualities
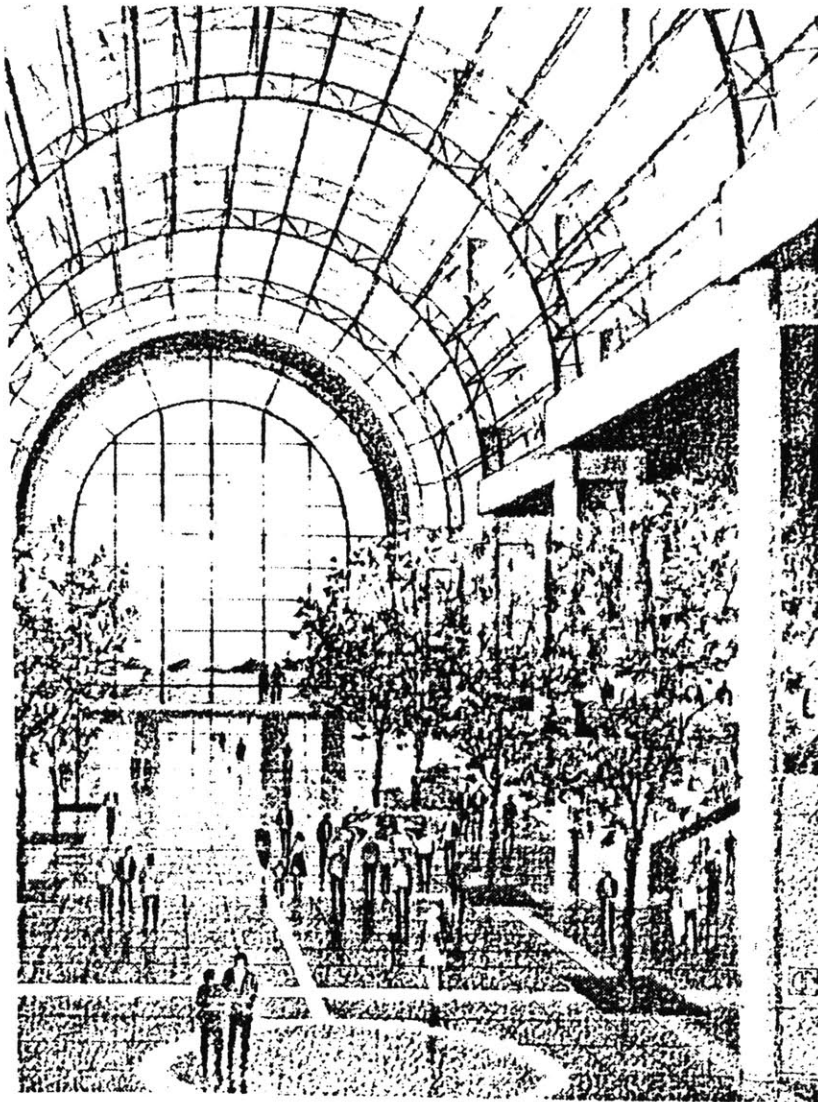
Rendering of a gallery in the Battery Park City complex.

counter to these should not be "extended and integrated" into the intervention.

Ideas in good currency are not cure-alls. They do not replace thought. Although we may agree that the Lower Manhattan Plans initial contextual concerns which was later picked up by the 1979 plan is indeed an appropriate way to intervene, physically, in the city, the acceptance of context without thought is as much a fault as its rejection without reason.

Throughout the procession of plans for Battery Park City the changes in the proposed urban form has been the focus of our attention. From this examination of physical form we have commented on the implicit urban design ethic. Three basic city planning approaches are evident: The self-contained Modern City,

The Megastructure, and the Extension of existing setting into intervention. The first two plans are variations on the minimalist modern city, the third and fifth plans fall into the third, contextual category, and the fourth plan stands alone as the only attempt at a true megastructure.

The first four plans were conceived in a time of optimism - Watergate and Vietnam were not yet household words, the age of Camelot lingered on, the economy was booming, we had the confidence to build "bigger and better", as the saying goes. The '69 plan comes near the end of this era. As the sixties gave way to the seventies, a booming economy gave way to recession, building activity in the city came to a near halt, N.Y.C. flirted with bankruptcy opposition to the war mounted, and the White House was scandalized. The mind-set of

American society experienced changes felt by
professionals and non-professionals alike.
To the City/planner, the plurality of public
interests was formally recognized as a part
of the planning process. Advocates for the
rights of the under-represented gained
support. Community and neighborhood re-
emerged as participants in the planning
process.

The urban form changes exhibited by the pro-
cession of Battery Park City plans suggests
a growing sensitivity to the public environ-
ment and existing development, greater
attention to implementation means, and a more
sophisticated use of public control of
private development. Planning a part of the
city is a complex undertaking; appropriately
enough, the plans become more complex with
each successive iteration - the fourth plan

pushes formal complexity or at least rigidity
to an extreme and in so doing ignores the
complexity of relationships with its setting.

From 1963 to 1979, the schemes for Battery
Park City have been a design inquiry into
the planning of a city. The driving force
behind this inquiry is the dialogue amongst
proposed intervention, means of achieving
the new urban vision, and evolving urban
design theory. It has been, and is, a
learning experience for the city planning
profession and students of the city. The
new direction taken by Cooper/Eckstut in
the fifth, 1979, Battery Park City plan
is further developed in their plan for
the redevelopment of Times Square. In that
proposal, which we examine next, the new
direction in urban design in N.Y.C. is
brought up to date.
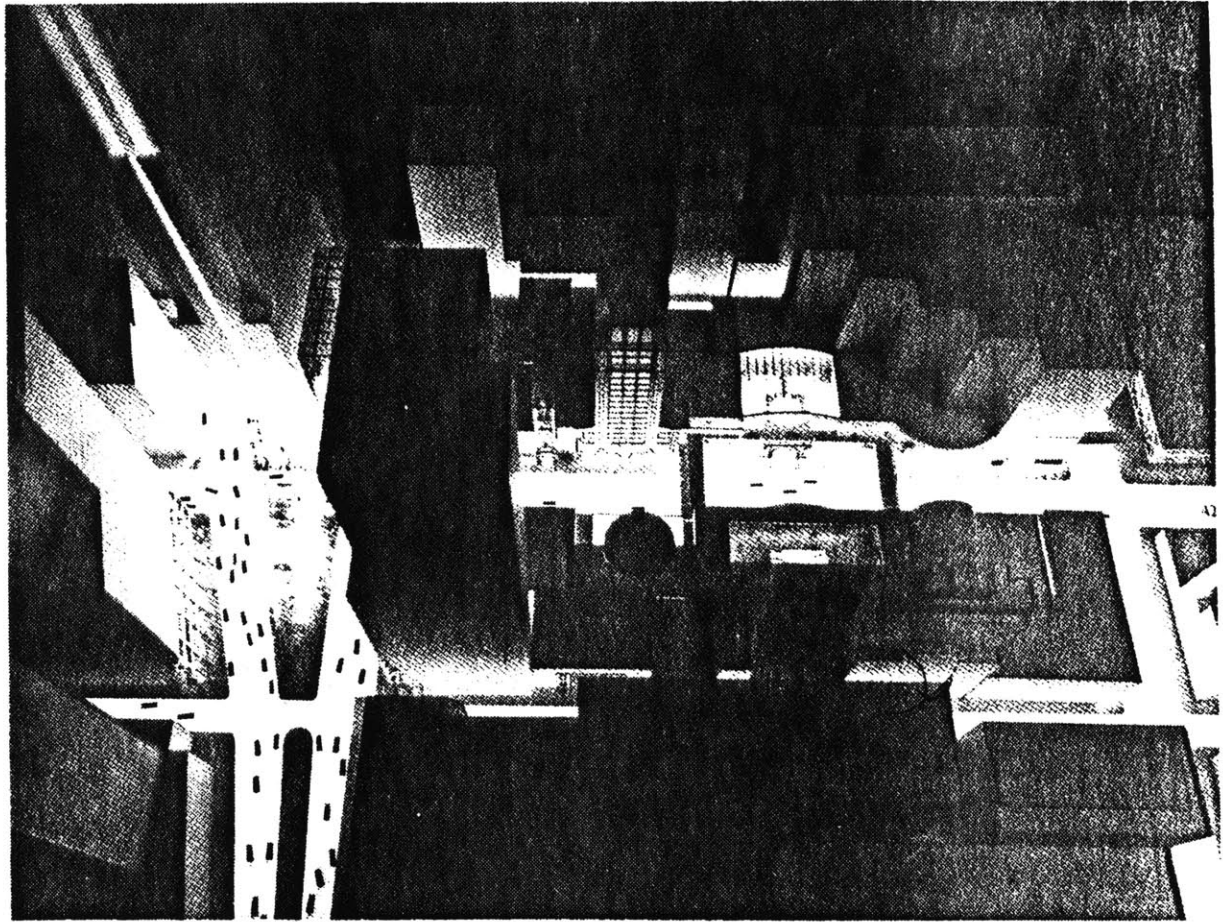
42nd street redevelopment
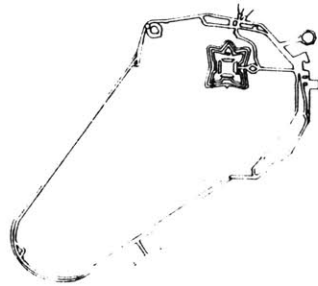
The purpose of the 42nd Street Redevelopment is self-explanatory. Times Square is synonymous with entertainment and tourism in New York City. Worldwide, along with the Manhattan skyline, it is the image and signature of the city. Times Square and 42nd Street have also become synonymous with crime and pornography. As a place for business or tourism, the area is currently less than attractive. Its potential however is great; there are of course the theaters and restaurants of Broadway; there is the ease of access provided by the numerous subway lines in the area as well as the Port Authority Bus Terminal, Grand Central Station, and Penn Central Station; there is a growing amount of office development around it, and a gigantic convention center being constructed just blocks away. With a joint City/State (via the UDC) effort, a major intervention

42nd Street Development Project
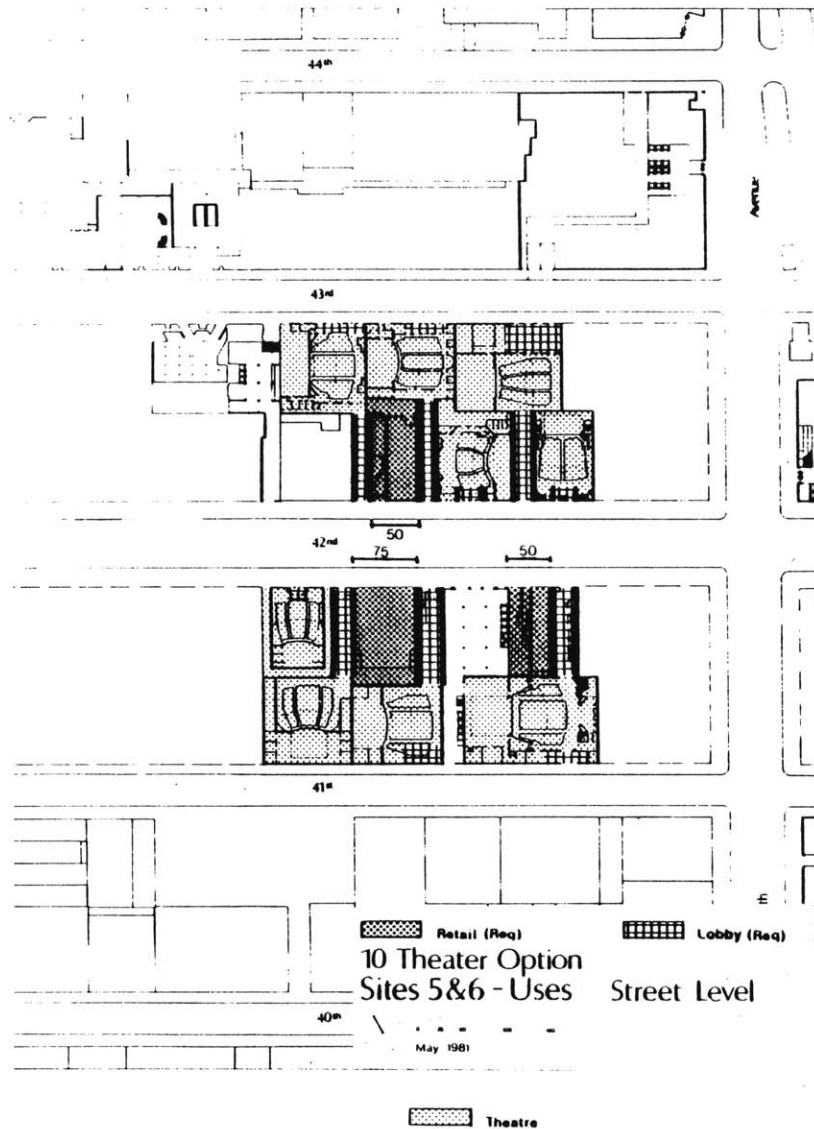Cooper, Eckstut Associates
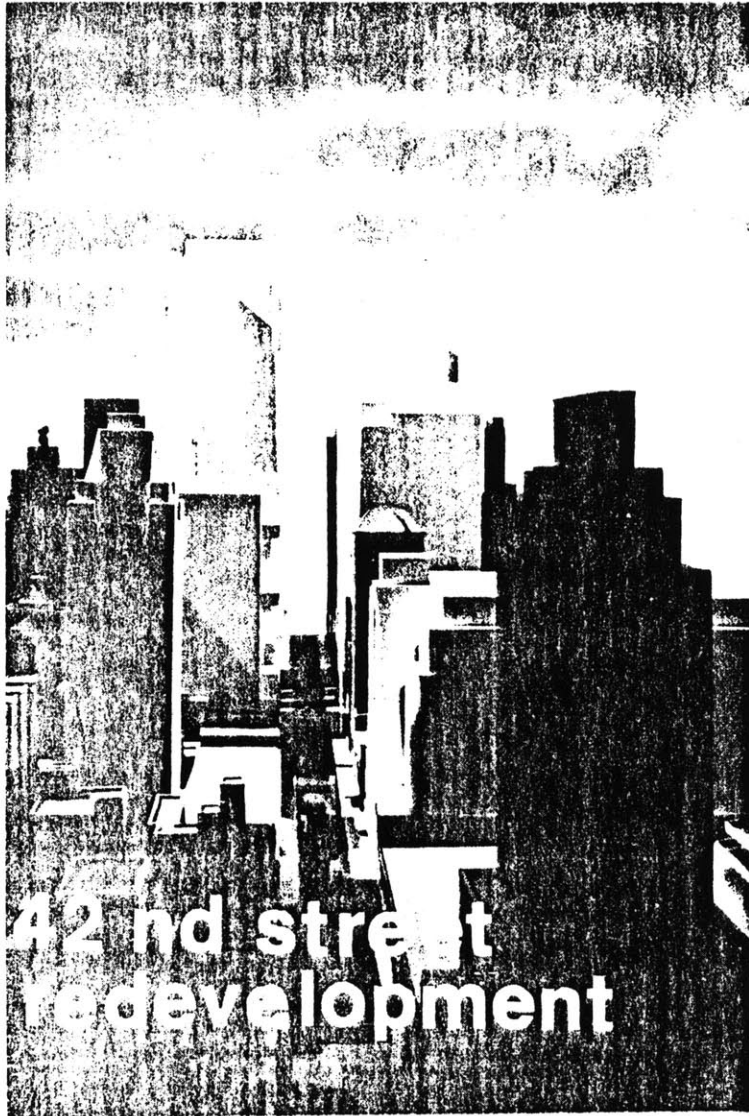
is proposed for the area to stimulate development and realize its great potential. The 42nd Street case doesn't have a history as long as that of Battery Park City's, nor a procession of plans leading to the present. Its sole and direct ancestor is the "City at 42nd Street", a plan/study executed by Richard Weinstein (a former director of N.Y.C.'s Urban Design Group), Donald Elliott, Davis Brody & Associates, and Jaquelin T. Robertson. The current plan, by Cooper/Eckstut, "accepts most of the original design concept, but translated it into a series of explicit descriptions of building shapes, elevator cores, facing materials - in other words, almost to the level of detail that would be described in an architectural contract as the schematic phase of design [Barnett ... Intro to etc.]."
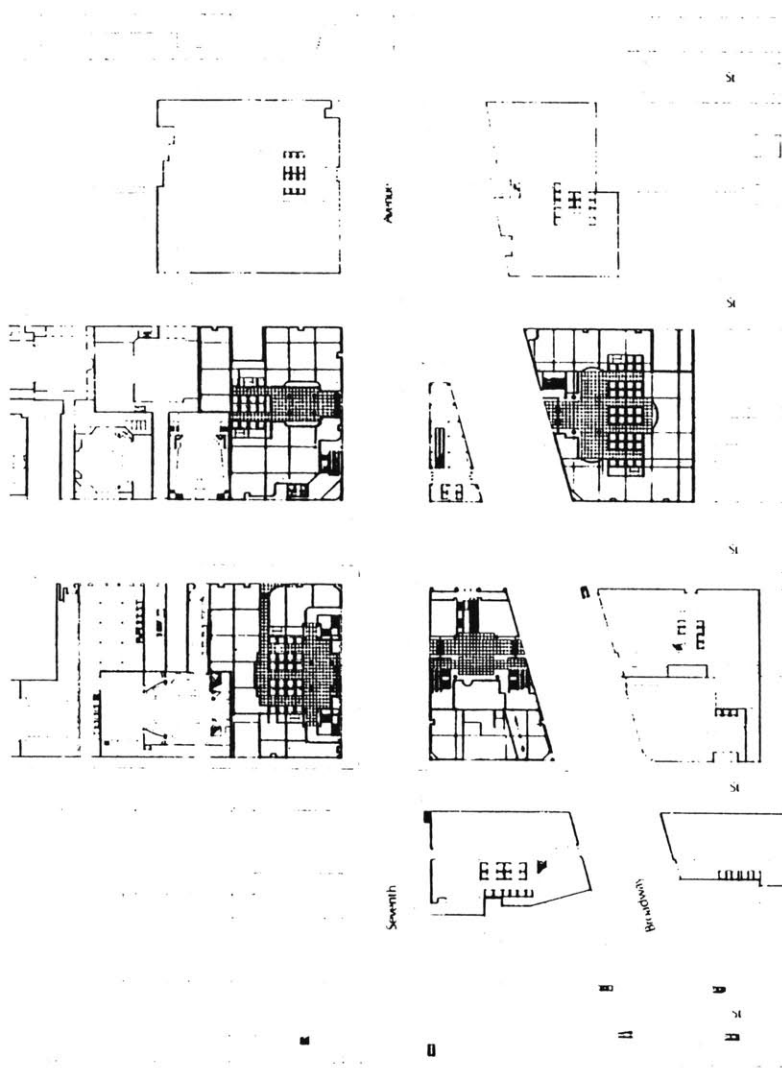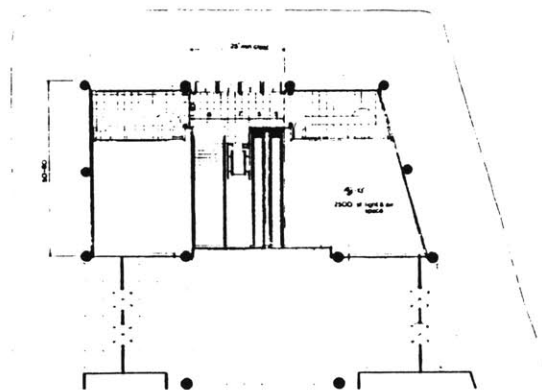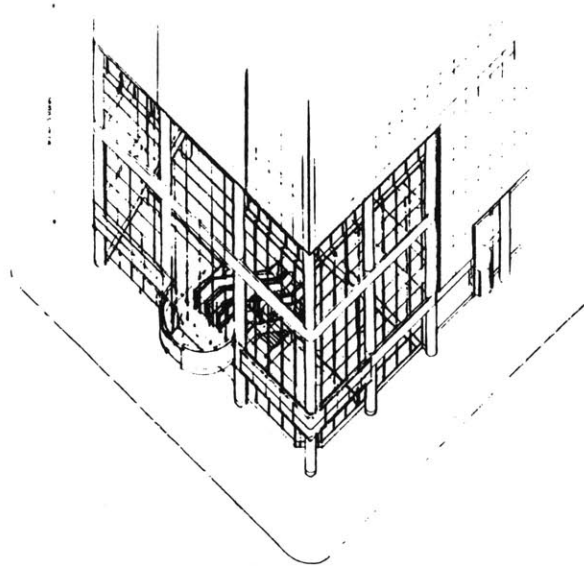
Model of the original design concept for the 42nd Street redevelopment, made under the direction of Richard Weinstein and Donald Elliott, urban design by Davis Brody & Associates and Jaquelin T. Robertson.

Retail (Req)   Lobby (Req)

10 Theater Option
Sites 5&6 - Uses   Street Level

May 1981

Theatre

42nd Street Development Project
Cooper, Eckstut Associates

The history of Battery Park City is that of a progression of plans which, in the end, seek to control the public-oriented aspects of the development without designing the buildings past the stipulation of bulk, set-backs and arcades. In the 42nd Street case design of buildings also falls into the realm of the public's concern; architectural design becomes development requirements. The redevelopment proposal calls for the development of up to 7 million square feet of new office and commercial space, the improvement of the numerous subway stations in the Times Square area, and the renovation and re-use of nine theaters. "The design guidelines, which serve as a framework for developers ... are intended to keep 42nd Street and Times Square a vibrant and public space. Diversity in ground floor retail space, directly visible and accessible from the street is

Transit Easement
Site 1: Crossroads

42nd Street Development Project
Cooper, Eckstut Associates

required. Designed to frame the public spaces to Times Square and 42nd Street through bulk, height, and setback requirements, the guidelines will coordinate the development of separate buildings and assure an integrated urban approach [UDC Press Release, "Governor Carey and Mayor Kock release a request for proposals for the redevelopment of the 42nd Street/Times Square Area", Thurs. 6/4/81]."
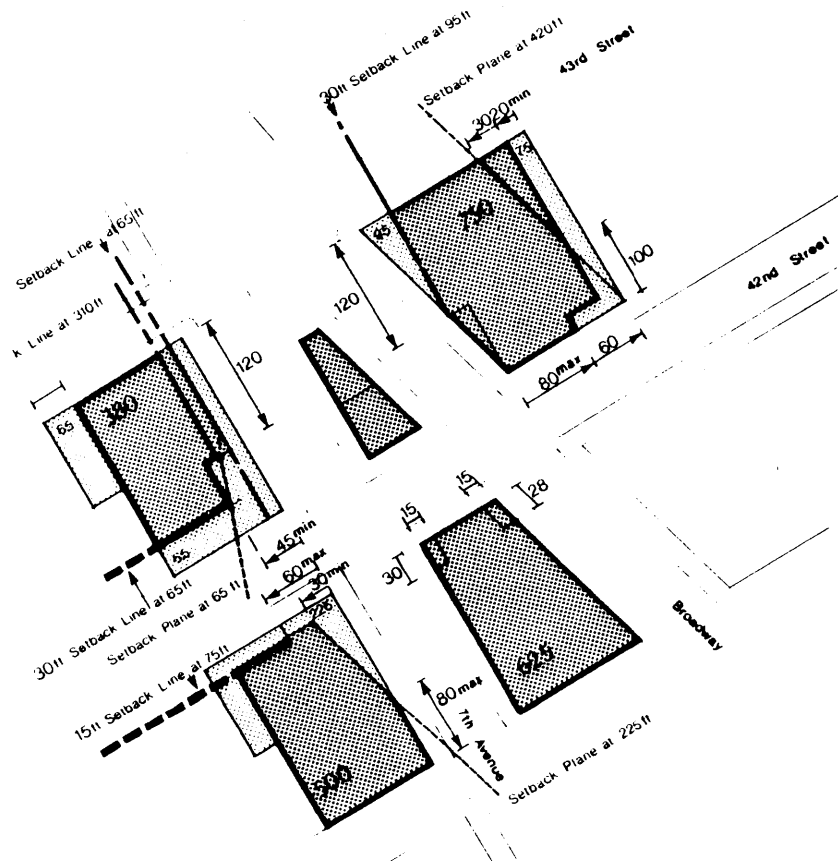
The most striking feature of the design guidelines is their translation of a contextual design/planning ethic into what appears to be a design proposal rather than guidelines. In these tightly crafted guidelines we see the UDC's ability to impose its own building regulations used boldly and creatively. On any parcel in the development site, the allowed building envelope is described in detail. For example, if we look at the office structures
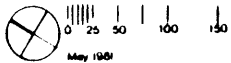
42nd Street Development Project
Cooper, Eckstut Associates

Required
Bulk Controls
Roof Plan Office Sites: 5 Site Design

proposed for the Times Square intersection, the intended outcome is: " ... the design of the office building group at the southern end of Times Square shall give special emphasis to the proportions of the building facing Times Square and shall incorporate prominent features in their exterior treatment of highlight corners, edges, and roof tops visible from Times Square [42nd Street Development Project, Design Guidelines, Special Features Supplement]."

As a statement, there is room to interpret the desired outcome. This is often the case if we seek to achieve a physical/visual result using solely text. However these guidelines go beyond a statement of intent to a fine-tuned series of bulk and elevation controls which both sculpt and give image to the buildings.
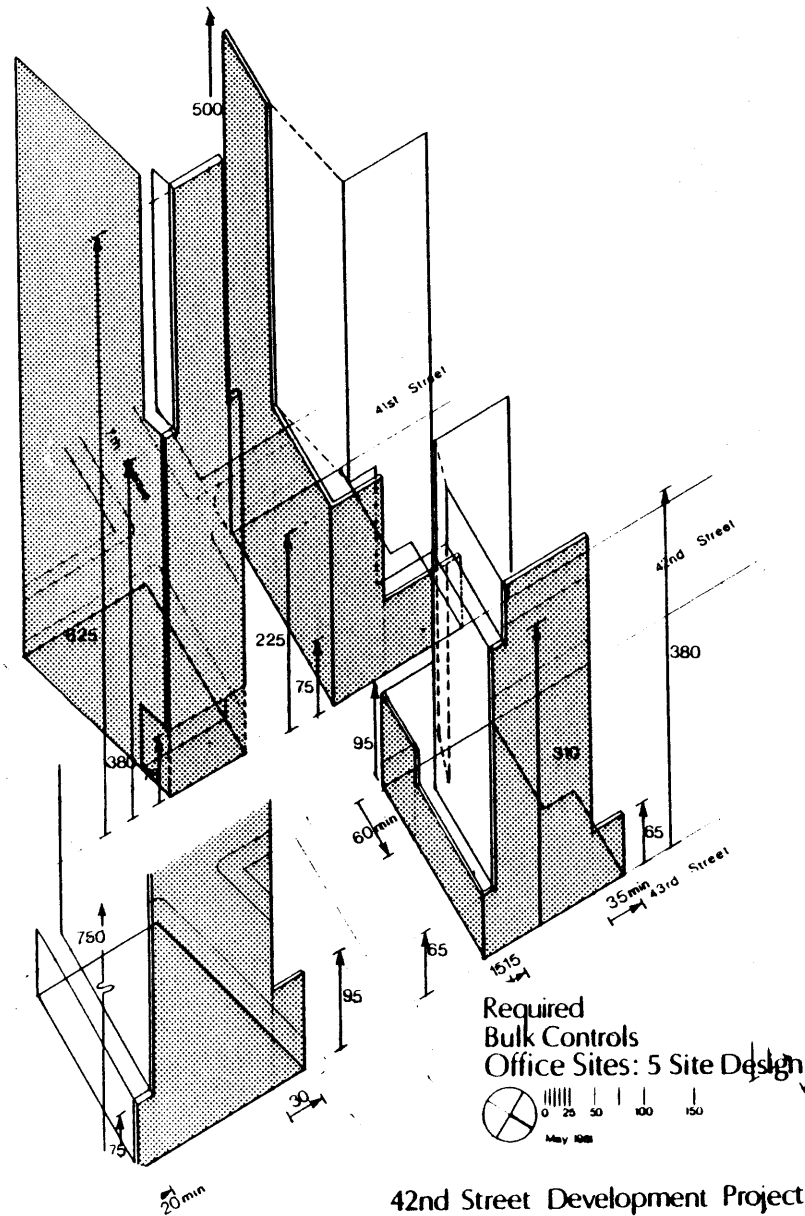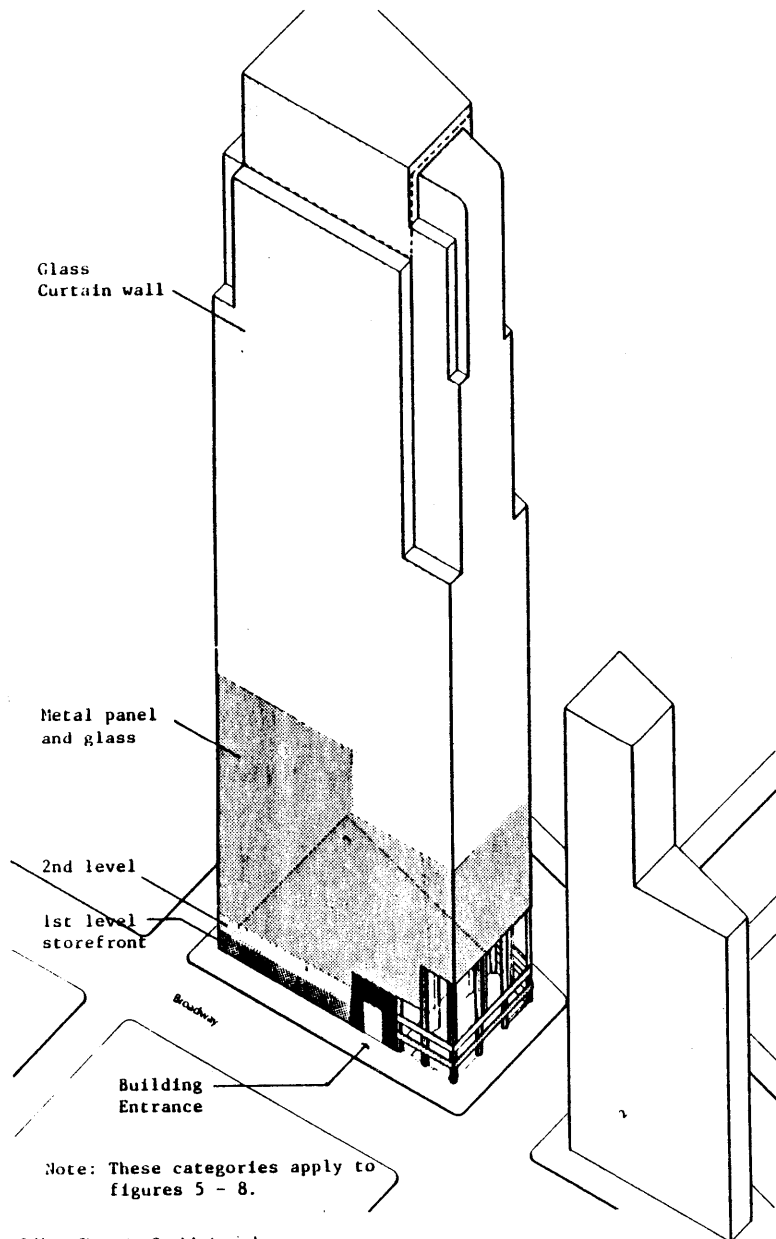
The bulk controls "have been established to enhance the pedestrian environment, take advantage of prominent and highly visible locations along the street, and to provide appropriate transitions between preserved buildings and adjacent new development ... there are typically no coverage requirements, rather, coverage is treated indirectly through control of street walls, setbacks, and building heights; ... street walls, particularly in the mid-block, are the key to maintaining the low-rise character of the street. The articulation of those walls can also reinforce important height relationships with surrounding buildings, capitalize on highly visible locations, and break down the size of larger building surfaces ... The height of new buildings is controlled to ensure the integrated development of separate buildings; ... New developments should avoid

Required
Bulk Controls
Office Sites: 5 Site Design

42nd Street Development Project
Cooper, Eckstut Associates

Glass
Curtain wall

Metal panel
and glass

2nd level

1st level
storefront

Broadway

Building
Entrance

Note: These categories apply to
figures 5 - 8.

Office Sites 1 & 2 - Materials
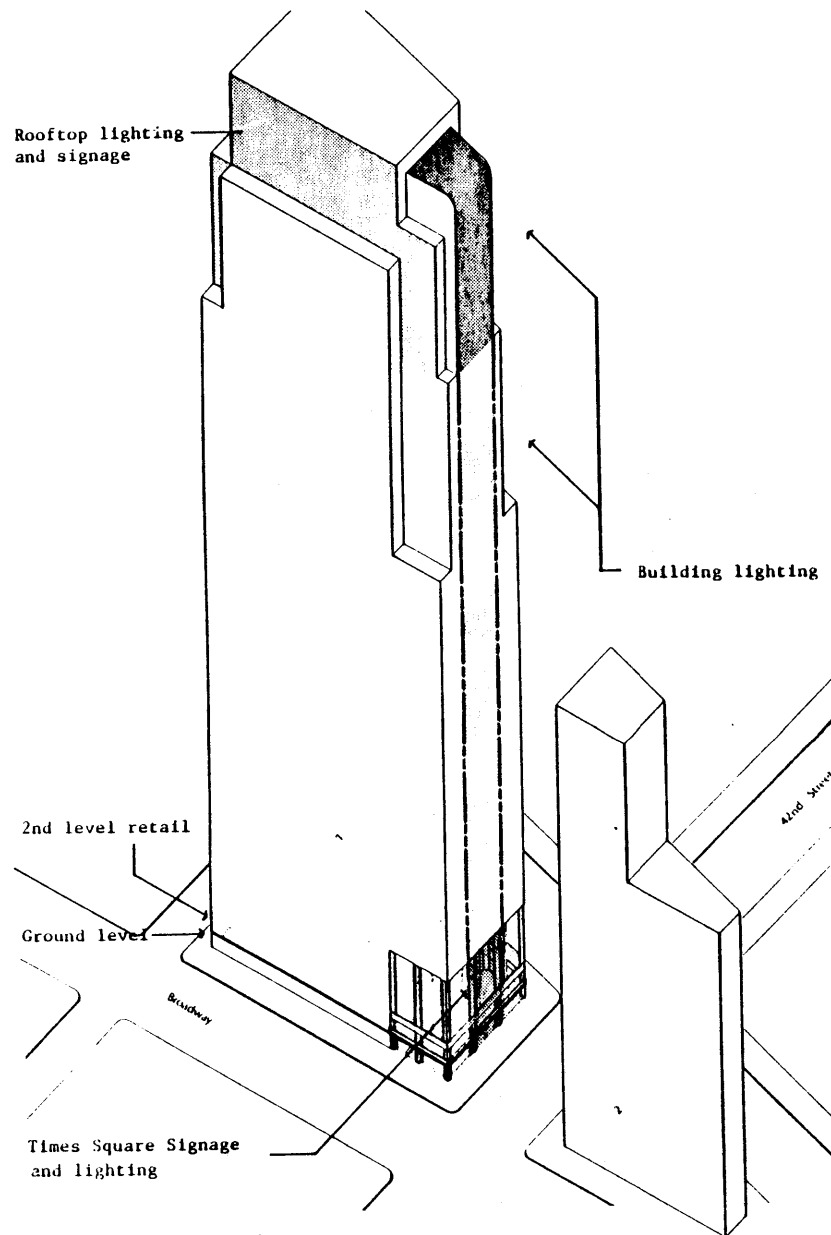
Elevation Controls

scale conflicts with adjacent buildings ...
where the height of buildings change at the
boundary between sites, the street height
wall of the building to be preserved shall be
continued for 30 linear feet into the new
development. This will ensure continuity and
a sufficient transition to the smaller scale
of the mid-block [42nd Street Development
Project, Design Guidelines]."

The bulk controls seem akin to end requirements
or performance standards which yield the basic
physical form configuration of the development.
This configuration emphasizes three levels;
the street-as-place/the pedestrian level, the
Times Square zone of prominent buildings and
views within the square, and the city-wide
scale of the skyline. To enhance the building
configuration from the bulk controls, Special
design features - elevation controls - are

Rooftop lighting
and signage

Building lighting

2nd level retail

Ground level

Times Square Signage
and lighting

Office Sites 1 & 2 : Lighting & Signage
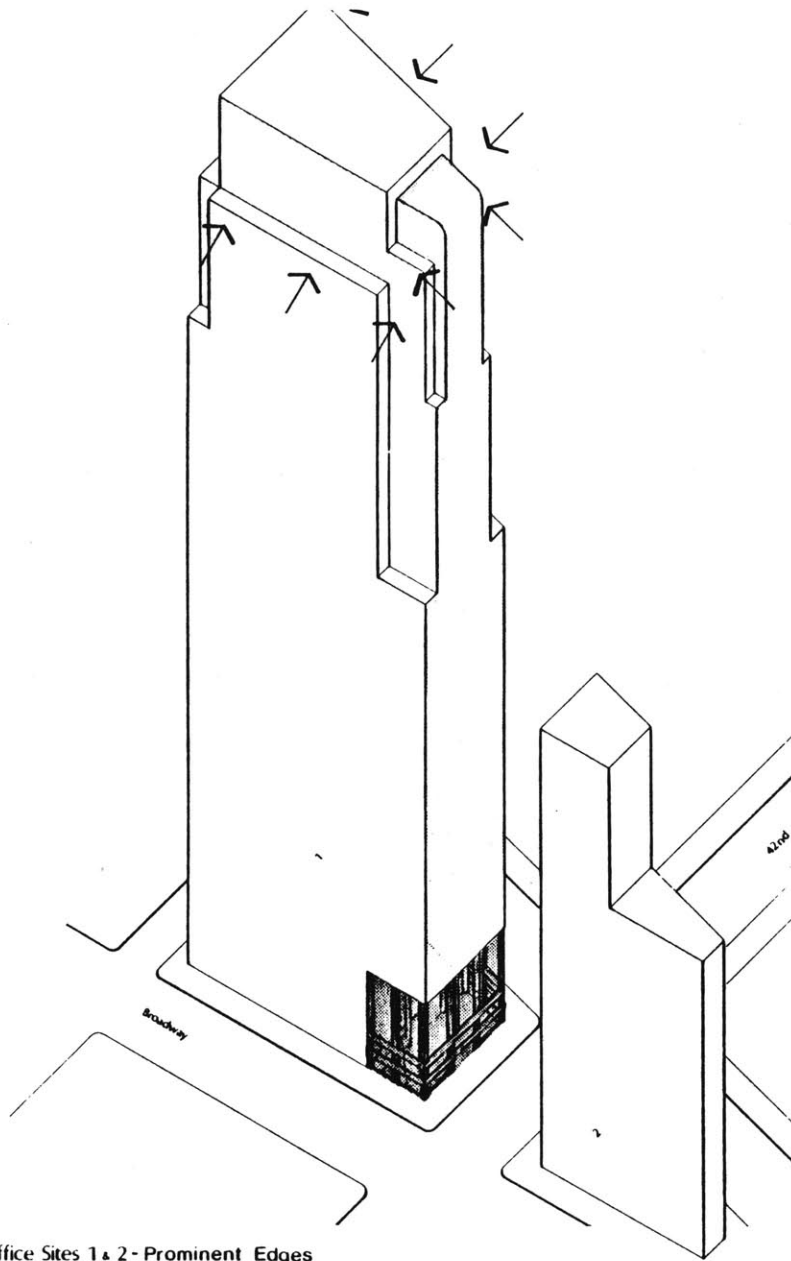**Elevation Controls**

layered over the bulk requirements. Together the two seek to produce a New York art deco-ish type of skyscraper, occupying a middle ground between N.Y.C.'s landmark early skyscrapers and the curtain-wall structures currently erected.

"Several principles underlie the special features controls: 1) Incorporation of changes of scale in order to highlight the most prominent building faces visible from Times Square, to vary wall surfaces and to provide appropriate transitions from avenue developments (where bulk is concentrated) to mid-block theaters, 2) Diversity and contrast in the use of materials, colors, and finishes to develop such scale changes, to prevent a monolithic appearance in any of the buildings, to emphasize building elements such as entrances, retail spaces, public

Office Sites 1 & 2 - Prominent Edges
Elevation Controls

circulation areas, or other promient parts of buildings, to achieve visual variety along the street, 3) Greater transparency of glass surfaces near the street level, than on upper floors to maximize visibility of activities from the street, 5) Incorporation of prominent signage and dramatic lighting techniques in order to maintain the 'bright lights' character of the street, 5) Use of reflective or highly polished surface materials in order to enliven the daytime environment of the street, and 6) Retention and restoration of historic masonry facades as places of special emphasis along the street [42nd Street ... Special Design Suppl.,]." The concept of contextual design plays a more central role in the 42nd Street case than it does in Battery Park City. In the latter, the problem posed was that of addition to an urban fabric, the former asks for a method of intervening
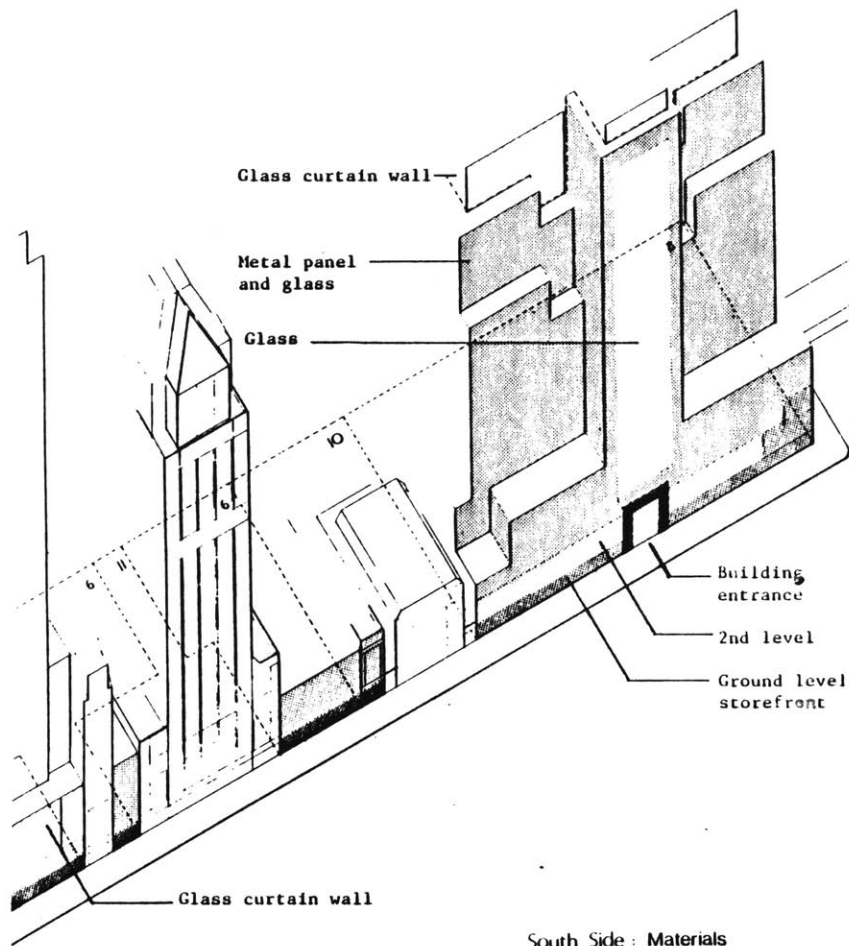
Glass Curtain Wall

Metal Panel & Glass
50 % min. Solid

2nd Story Retail
75 % Transparent

Signband
up to 15'

Shopfront
up to 10'   —Storefront

Sill
1'-2"

42nd Street Development Project
Cooper, Eckstut Associates

within the fabric of a city. Although the
site of the 42nd Street proposal, 13 acres,
is only 14% of the 92 acre Battery Park site,
it is 13acres in the very heart of the city,
having the potential of severely affecting,
in a positive or negative way, a physical
setting important to the city. Sensitivity
to context is demanded if good urban form
is to result. The proposed guidelines ex-
hibit such sensitivity, from its recognition
of the site as three places - the dense, ac-
tive, visible 7th Avenue-Broadway intersection
with 42nd Street, the low-rise, mid-block
theaters which give the area its night life,
and the 8th Avenue corridor dominated by the
Port Authority Bus Terminal - to the balance
between new construction and renovation and
preservation.

Contextual design today can probably be put

Glass curtain wall

Metal panel
and glass

Glass

Glass curtain wall

Building
entrance

2nd level

Ground level
storefront

South Side : Materials
Elevation Controls

into two categories: 1) Contextual design
as a process which seeks to mimic the form,
scale, texture, and aura of its environs or,
2) Contextual design as the expression of an
historicist impulse to recapture the vocabu-
lary of forms rejected by the modern move-
ment. The first strand produces buildings
which seek to fit into their context. It
recognizes the location-specific nature of
a site. The second strand produces buildings
in context with a stream of architectural
theory and forms, but not necessarily, the
context of the site. Although there may be
similar intent in the two strands, the second
category of contextual design, i.e. Context
as Style, can easily be at odds with its con-
text if the context in question is not with-
in the vocabulary of forms in vogue.

A local case of contextual-design-as-style
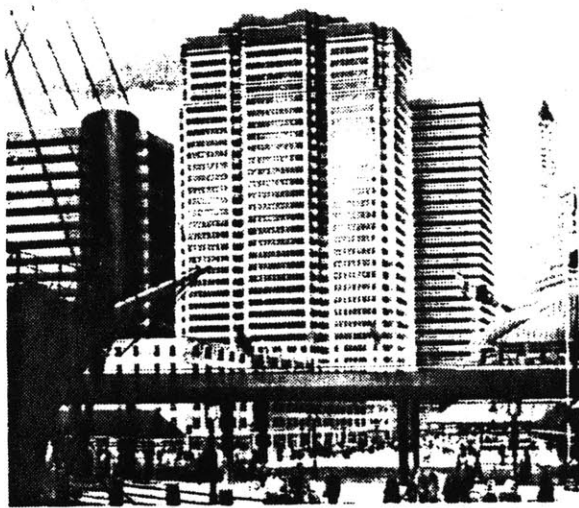
2) Seaport Plaza

Schermerhorn Row

is One Seaport Plaza, advertised in the New York Times as New York's first contextual office building. The context is the South Street Seaport, a collection of low-rise buildings circa early 1800's and the focus of one of the lower Manhattan waterfront developments set forth by the same strategy which proposed Battery Park City. The so-called contextual office building is a 34-storey, very modern structure with strip windows. The supposed contextual part of the building is the east facade which faces the seaport buildings and, in response to them, changes from strip windows to individual ones - 34 stories of individual windows. "The fact of the matter is ... it is a big, modern office building. There is real reason to question whether any 34-storey tower, no matter how thoughtfully designed, can be fully 'in context' with a group of
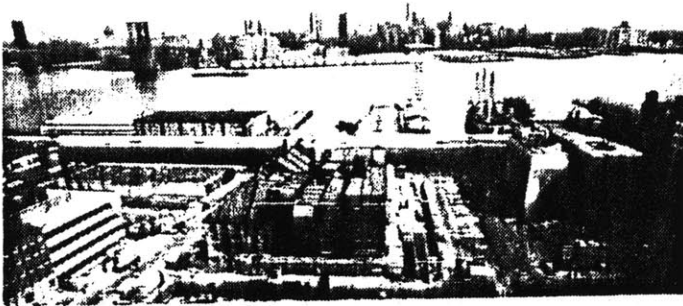
South Street Seaport
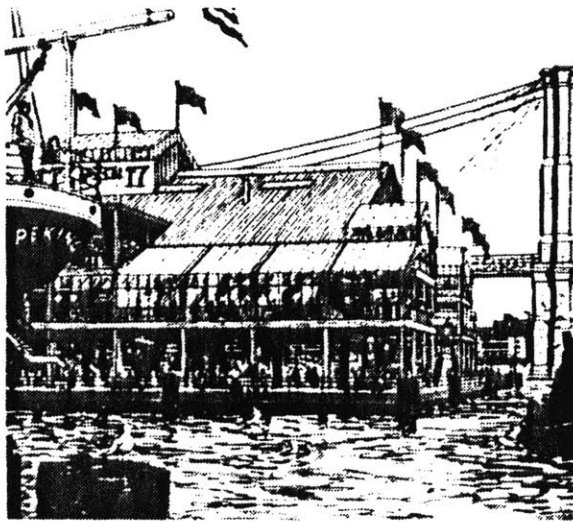
Pier Pavilion, South Street Seaport

small and fairly delicate 19th century buildings. But to claim that this building is contextual architecture is to cheapen that valuable and important concept [P. Goldberger, "When Architect's Labels Don't Mean What They Say", N.Y. Times Magazine]."

Arguments can be made against contextualism or for limited contextualism. My critique of the World Trade Center's influence on the commercial core of Battery Park City can be seen as such an argument. One can also propose a non-contextual intervention for polemical purposes, to question the status quo of context. It is clear however that a project the scale of the 42nd Street redevelopment, in a location as landmark, in all senses of the word, as Times Square calls for, is an intervention which responds to its physical form as sensitively as we

The Lever House site could accommodate a larger building, and Lever Bros. has begun to negotiate with a real estate developer.

argue city planning should respond to the needs of communities.

To understand the urban form of Manhattan we must realize that real estate deals are the force which drive it. A European city such as Paris has a long history of slow, steady growth, with the exception of the Haussmann and post-WW II interventions, whereas New York turns over its urban fabric at a far more rapid pace. The Lever Brothers Building, a landmark of Modern Architecture and a mere 25 years old, is currently threatened by destruction to make room for a larger, more profit-maximizing structure. Paris indeed may have experienced major growth since WW II, but not for the most part in historic Paris. It accommodated a population increase of 3 million in the suburbs of paris. The island of Manhattan has experienced

such growth within its borders. "The
immediate office boom after World War II in
Manhattan, variously estimated at between
57 million square feet to 70 million square
feet, was more than twice the amount built
in the same period in the nine cities ranked
in size below New York: Los Angeles, Chicago,
Philadelphia, San Francisco, Boston, Washing-
ton, St. Louis and Cleveland. [S. Zoll,
"King Kong in New York" Space & Society, 18,
M.I.T. Press]."

In the process of this perpetual destruction
and rebuilding it appears that "(t)he city
has fallen prey to an attitude that can be
called Urban Darwinism - the survival of only
the most lucrative use of any given plot of
land. It gives us not a city of Brownstones
and large buildings in balance with each
other, but a city of huge towers crowded

one upon another, filling block after block.
It's a different kind of mid-town altogether -
one with vastly greater numbers of people
crammed into what feels like less and less
space, of choking traffic. It is, in short,
a place in which the quality of life - which
is presumably the reason any one who has a
choice in the matter settles in cities in
the first place - inevitably must decline
[P. Goldberger, "The Limits of Urban Growth"
N.Y. Times Magazine, 11/14/82]."

In New York it becomes easy to violate the
"existing city" because others may soon
follow with similar outlaw developments, thus
changing context and producing a "New City",
a new status quo it seems. Oddly enough,
the fairly sensitive 1966 Lower Manhattan
Plan is an example of this. To counteract
the effect of the mammoth World Trade Center

on the area's scale and skyline, the plan recommended the construction of more mammoth buildings.
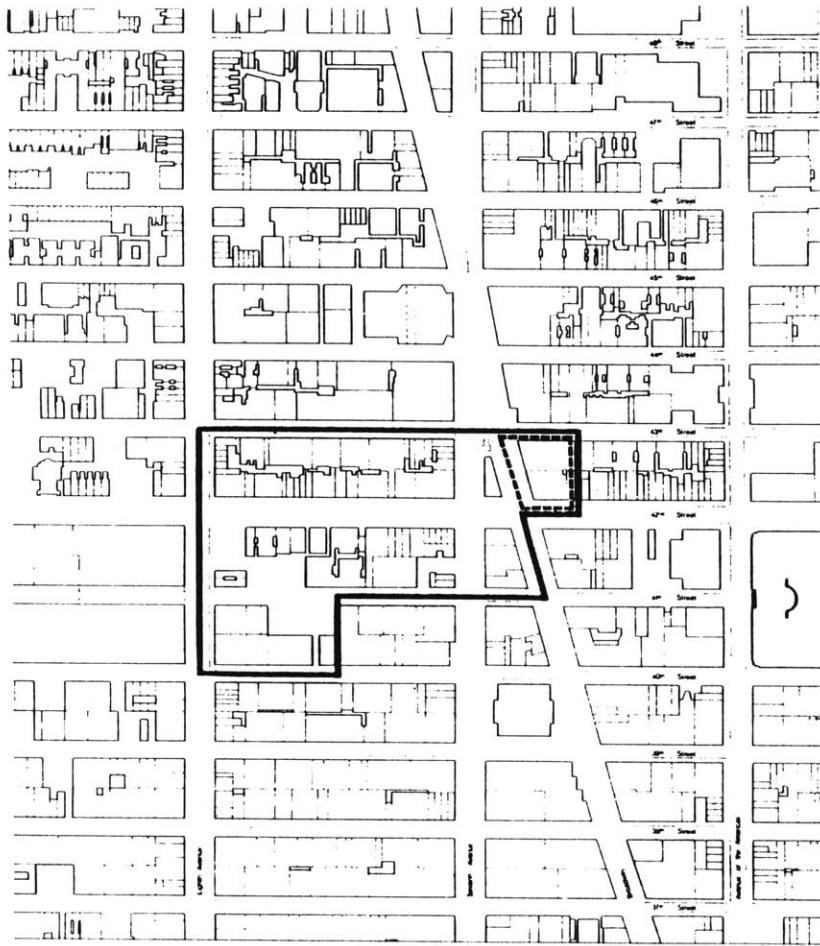
The total demolition of the 13 acre Times Square site probably was not possible given strong support for the theater and historic preservation groups, but certainly, as in the case of John Portman's New York Marriott Marquis Hotel, a handful of blocks north of the 42nd Street site, we could have lost some portion of the theaters which the Cooper/Eckstut plan saves. Portman's project isn't contextual at any significant level. Contextual design doesn't prevent new development but it does suggest appropriate and in appropriate actions. Portman's hotel - his work in general - has an insular, imported, dropped-in feel. As a mode of urban intervention, this is insensitive; one starts from
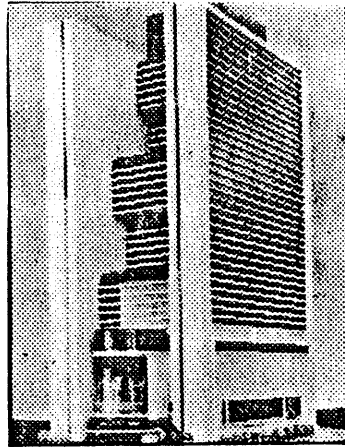
Marriott Marquis Hotel

scratch - scratch achieved by leveling the
site. This is, of course, the way develop-
ment occurs in general. However, the Port-
man project is in the Theater Special Design
District which seeks to avert the destruction
of existing theaters and promote the con-
struction of new ones via incentive bulk
bonuses to developers. Portman's scheme does
have a theater in it but it also destroys
two of them. When Radio City Music Hall,
during the mid '70's, was in danger of falling
prey to what Goldberger calls urban darwinism
[note: "In the legal battle to exert control
(over real estate via zoning in the early
1900's) - or to avoid it - Darwin was evoked
by both sides. The biological battle for
life developing into a way of interpreting
the social sciences, of which life in the city
was a chief topic of concern [S. Zoll, "King
Kong in New York", Space and Society, 18].")

Innovative schemes were prepared to explore
the feasibility of office structures rising
above the music hall with minimal disturbance
to its landmark Art Deco interior. Similar
schemes could have been executed for the
Portman project, indeed the Helen Hayes and
the Morosco, the theaters razed, are/were
less sensitive than Radio City in terms of
landmark status. But, in Portman's words,
" ... the foot-print of the structure made
it impossible to build over and still handle
the logistic of all that has to move in and
out of a facility of that size [Skyline,
Jan. '83, "Interview: John Portman and Peter
Eisenman"]." The problem with this argument
is the the "foot-print" existed only on
paper whereas the theaters which it stamps
out existed in full-scale, three-dimensional
reality. Paying attention to its place in
the theater district - especially the

'matched pair' relationship of the Helen
Hayes and the Lunt Fontanne Theater, across
the street, a sensitive intervention would
have sought to maintain and modify rather
than eliminate the theaters.

The irony is that the Portman Hotel is a
neighbor of One Astor Plaza, an early develop-
ment under the Theatre District Zoning. Here,
the developers were required to building a
theater although the construction of their
office tower did not destroy one. In this
case Broadway gained a new theater. In the
Portman case Broadway gains a new Theater and
loses two.

Given the status quo method of development,
as exemplified above, the Cooper/Eckstut
plan - a plan despite its architectural
specificity is more conventional than the

A section through the One Astor Plaza
building shows the location of the theater
and the way the lobby areas look out over
Times Square.

special design zoning districts - seems
justified. Perhaps, in this instance, the
essential urban design elements are indeed
the buildings. Together, the parcel specific
bulk and elevation controls refine our
definition of a contextual approach to inter-
vention within an urban fabric, but also
brings out some of the complexity in the
concept.

The approach is illustrated by a look at
the words and phrases used throughout the
master plan: incorporate, preserve, charac-
ter, maintain, reinforce, character of streets
restore, transition, appropriate, relate,
articulation, relationships, perception,
integration, avoid scale conflicts, continuity,
highlight, avoid undifferentiated, scale,
historic, place. Like Lynch's dimensions of
performance these terms call for place to have

vitality, sense, fit, access, efficiency,

and justice. Like Anderson's Streets Phases

1-2, they call for the recognition of street

as a complex setting for human activities.

The complexity of the concept is a product

of questions raised by the design-specific

nature of the guidelines: 1) How much of the

physical form prescription is essential to a

contextual approach and how much is subjective?

2) Why should one firm's interpretation of

contextual design be enforced as law?,

3) How have the guidelines selected influenced

from its plural context to yield its physical

form requirements?, 4) How has context-percep-

tion of context - shifted over the last decade

or two?, 5) When are design-specific guidelines

warranted?

The retention of the mid-block theaters is
the least contestable requirement of the
plan. Without them the City and State's
talk of returning Times Square to its former
glory would be without foundation for we
would have no Times Square. The transition
in scale of the new buildings as they approach
the theaters is also fairly straightforward.
What however determines the 30 linear foot
dimension as the appropriate dimension of
transition area within which the height of
the buildings to be preserved is to be res-
pected? Are the facades of the theaters
best "highlighted" by contrasting them with
highly polished, reflective surfaces on the
new developments? Could the bulk controls
alone have sufficed? Could the elevation
controls alone suffice? Clearly, the
different controls serve various purposes,
pay attention to different features of the
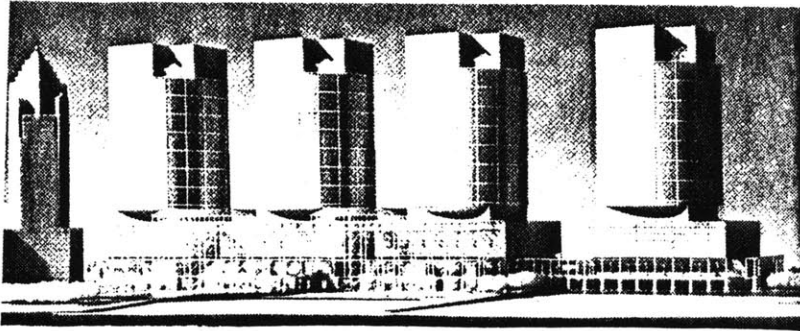
*The Kohn, Pederson, Fox entry in the
Battery Park City competition.*

*The Mitchell/Giurgola entry in the
Battery Park City competition.*
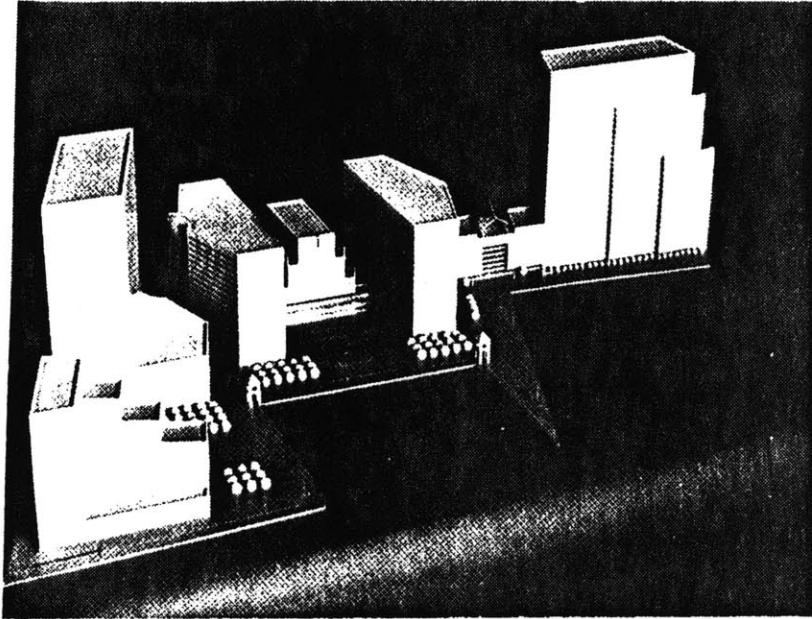
development, but we have little idea of where they come from. They seem to make sense but it isn't clear what else might make sense.

The commercial center in Battery Park City is equal in size to the 42nd Street site. For it, Cooper/Eckstut prepared a set of design guidelines which were written into the lease between the Authority and the developer for the site, Olympia and York. The developer then held a limited architectural competition using the design guidelines as its foundation. The selected scheme, by Cesar Pelli, differs somewhat in form and orientation of its buildings but, as one might argue in a court of law, it is within the intent of the guidelines. The other submitted schemes are all markedly different from Pelli's and from one another. The multiple interpretations which can result from a competition avoid the issue of having
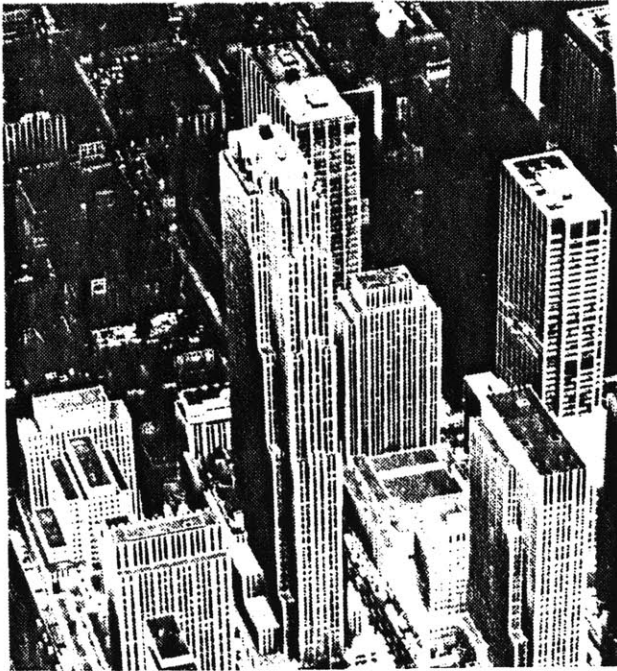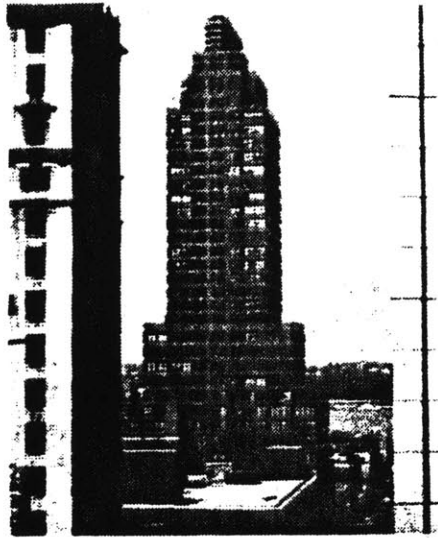
one form's parti taken as law without con-
sidering alternatives. In addition, whole
or partial schemes can be selected, or none.

The third and fourth questions are linked.
The selection of physical form elements/
considerations from context are guided by a
perception of "what's good about context"
that is in a constant state of change. The
vaguely Art Deco buildings presented as
illustrations of what the design guidelines
could/want to yield are certainly influenced
by the late and post-modern rejection of the
skyscraper-as-cigarette-box. In form, the
illustrations are closest to the RCA Building
at Rockefeller Center or the old McGraw-Hill
Building, just one block west of the Times
Square site. In surface treatment however,
they are closest to curtain-wall structures
such as the Olympic Tower, Lever House, and

the Grand Hyatt Hotel - all unequivocally modern buildings which take the Miesian facade and smooth it out into a more two-dimensional mirror surface. The public's interest is no longer served by setting buildings back from the street and providing plazas and gallerias, but by holding them to the street and providing a diverse and visible range of activities along it. Good urban form, we contend, is contextual. Contectual urban form, by the above example, is plural; making "sense" of the many trends occurring in an area. By what process is this sorting-out of context done remains a question.

We have touched upon an answer to the fifth question. Design-specific guidelines may be warranted when buildings are the essential urban design elements, as in a historic

district. Place depends heavily on the
potential environment. If manipulation of
it threatens to damage or alter a strong,
vital and valuable place then we need to pay
close attention to physical form changes.
Coming to this point, like determining when
a building is a landmark, is an artful task.
it is an architecture of resistance -
resistance to the tendency to reduce city
building to single issues - ignoring its
complexity. It isn't an architecture of
nostalgia, imagery, kitch, futurism, or
rigid conservationism, but rather a critical
look at context in the perspective of the
job to be done, the qualities of context,
and time.

141.1

What is the meaning of the procession of

Battery Park City Plans ? Are the

differences in the schemes simply the

result of the architect/planners involved,

their style ? What is the connection

between the 42nd Street plan and the

Battery Park City Plans ?

The Five Battery Park City Plans and the

42nd Street plan give an account of the

evolution of urban design thinking in

N.Y.C. over the last two decades. The

changes in the basic approach to an urban

intervention suggest a transition in

schools of thought .

Battery Park City plans 1 and 2 are

variations on the Modern Movement's view

of the city; <u>free standing buildings sit</u>

<u>in large open spaces</u>, the good city is

composed of abstract towers and free-flowing

parkland. The Cooper/Eckstut plan for Battery Park City, plan 5 - 1979, and Times Square belong to a <u>real streets with context-sensitive buildings</u> school of thought, the good city has active and diverse streets with human scale public places. BPC plans 3 and 4 are a mixture of the above two schools, <u>real streets are mimicked but are within a framework which does not accept the street as a multi-functional element in the city</u>, the good city has car free places for people.

These differences are not specific to the planners involved; they represent streams of thought to which the planners belong. In other words , it is not at all a surprise that Harrison was the designer of the second BPC plan. He is known for

the type of late 50's/ early 60's

Modern architecture which he proposed

and which was the city building

approach in good currency. Likewise,

it is not a surprise that Cooper/Eckstut

are the planners for the fifth BPC plan

and the Times Square redevelopment,

they are from the school of thought

which has come into currency from the

experience of the last two decades.

There are two major transition points in

this evloution from one urban design school

to another; one circa 1966 and between

Battery Park City plans 2 and 3, the other

in the mid-70's and between BPC plans

4 and 5.

Many of the forces behind the changes in

the first transition period have already

been discussed in the Framework section.

The new critics of city planning , such
as Lynch, Jacobs, and Gans had emerged
and although their influence will be
felt more in the second transition period
clearly they began to present alternative
ways of viewing the city and city planning.
The election of John Lindsay as mayor of
New York City, a young, liberal, progressive
mayor, must also be cited as a factor
causing change. It is under his adminis-
tration that the Urban Design Group was
formed as a force in the City Planning
Commission as a direct attempt to address
the urban design issues of the day.
The Urban Design Group too is a new
factor in this period; their creative
use of zoning in special design districts
and the City's ability to regulate the form
of development given the 1961 zoning

resolution made achieving a new urban

vision possible. Members of the Urban

Design Group such as Barnett, Cooper, and

Eckstut did much to influence urban design

in New York in the direction it currently

follows, as exemplified in the Cooper/Eckstut

plans for Battery Park and Times Square.

In fact, the Urban Design Group in

conjunction with the social critics of

city planning can be thought of as the

two major " departments " in the current

context-sensitive school of urban design.

During this first transition period, new

institutions such as the U.D.C. and the

Battery Park City Authority were created

by the State to finance and execute

major city rebuilding efforts. The agencies

were given a broad scope of authority and

powers and were intended to streamline

the city building process. The economy

during this period was strong and expanding

and the new institutions could expect to

command major capital resources.

The proposals for Battery Park which come

during this period, plans 3 and 4, exhibit

the duality of schools of thought mentioned

earlier. They break with the conventional

Modernist city image but in principle they

still seek to be strong, bigger and better,

gestures in city building.

The third plan, Conklin/ Roussant and others,

did begin to mimic the scale and texture of

streets and buildings existing in Lower

Manhattan but the new urban fabric was

placed on a deck. The deck was a continuous

structure, a large scale development which

makes attempts at breaking down its scale.

This hybrid school accepts the street as

a part of the good city , but they are

to be for people only. The city of

Jacobs and Lynch is accepted in part

but " improved " by removing the

the car and service spaces from sight.

The-street-as-pedestrian-path however

brings with it images which contradict

the Jacobs/Lynch image of the city;

images of networks of pedestrian only

streets, malls, gallerias - just the

type of environment proposed in the 3rd

and 4th BPC plans, the latter's Megastructure

pushing the pedestrian only/ deck scheme

to its limits.

During this period there was a desire to

improve the urban fabric and the ability to

do so boldly. The combination resulted in

schemes which despite their good intent

opened the possibility for a separation

of new and existing urban fabrics rather

than the integration of new and old

to their mutual benefit.

The second transition period, mid-70's,

gives us the Cooper/Eckstut plans and

" real streets " in the urban environment.

Here, the social critics have become

household names in the planning and design

community, not to say that all city planners

accepted the arguments they presented.

The sleek and simple city was giving way

to the city of historic preservation

and restoration, neighborhoods, and community.

Urban renewal was out of favor and concepts

of defensible space and turf definition

were being used to critique the environments

produced by public housing and urban

renewal agencies produced; new models

of public housing environments were explored

by these agencies as discussed in the academic

community. Neighborhoods like Greenwich

Village and SoHo experienced increased

growth and popularity , supporting the

Jacobs/Newman/Lynch/Gans et al image of

the city.

Again the economy also proves to be a major

factor affecting the changes in this

period. In the first period the economy was

booming, in this second period thenation

was experiencing a major economic crisis;

New York City flirted with bankruptcy,

the agencies created during the first

period, the U.D.C. and the BPC Authority,

did go bankrupt. The ability to command

major captial reserves to support extensive

city building efforts was no longer a given.

It is not a coincidence that the Cooper/
Eckstut plan for Battery Park City,
executed during this second transition
period, calls for a traditional system of
streets and blocks to structure the
development. In addition to providing
a place for active and diverse human
interaction the street is also an efficient,
flexible, and moderately priced form of
infrastructure. By regulating the location
and character of the street, the City or
development agency can structure the urban
fabric without committing major capital
expenses, as would be required for the
infrastructure for the '69 Plan's
Megastructure. It also provides a familiar
way of dividing a large site into smaller
developments to be executed in an
incremental manner.

In the 42nd Street proposal, the street

is again used in its traditional form -

as a means to structure the overall develop-

ment and as the primary public environment,

private development is again publicly

regulated to attend to the character

and quality of the public environmnet

without public authorities taking on

major financial obligations, the street

is again real, active, and diverse.

The evolution of urban design schools of

thought in N.Y.C. has brought us to a re-

discovery of the street as an intrejral

part of the city, as a place for people

and a means to structure: the pattern of

development. The current image of the good

city is somewhat eclectic; the good city

is beautiful, the good city is picturesque,

the good city is intimate, the good city

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has tree-lined streets, arcades and parks.

Perhaps theories of good city form are

cyclical or perhaps there are some basic

scale, texture, and use considerations

which must be addressed regardless of

what the image of the good city is.

Models of the good city must be viewed in

the context of events which framed the

basic urban questions of their time.

The perspective on the evolution of urban

design ethics in N.Y.C. explored in this

thesis suggest that the definition of the

good city changes with the ability to affect

change, achieve an improved urban setting,

and the evolving questions asked about

and demands made on the urban environment.

There will continue to be changes in city

planning, its critics, and the forces which

influence. There will continue to be

transition periods in the evolution
of urban design philosophy. There will
continue to be the need to rethink and
restate urban design manifestoes in light
of these changes.

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