

HOUSING WITHOUT RELOCATION - COLUMBIA

Problem: How can we provide housing and other kinds of renewal without relocating the people for whom such improvements are intended, and at the same time convert neighborhood blights into acceptable components of the visual scene?

The Columbia team proposes a dramatic solution that turns a major source of blight -- the railroad tracks that run above ground from 97th Street north -- into a 37 block long building that would be erected in stages. The railroad viaduct, because of its length, its strategic location and the fact that it belongs to a single owner, is the key here to the problem of relocation.

The tracks would first be covered by a concrete vault and on top of this would be built new housing, shops and community facilities. The concrete vault would be no wider than the existing street.

The present level of Park Avenue at 97th Street would then extend along the top of the vault as a traffic-free pedestrian boulevard supporting shops, restaurants, theaters and schools with mixed income housing rising on either side. Along the sloping slides of the vault would be town houses and apartments, related to the scale of the surrounding developments.

Local transportation would be provided by electric buses within the structure. At major intersections there would be such community facilities as a wholesale food market, large office buildings, a new railroad station and a bus terminal.

The buildings rising above the vault would be varied in character and height. As the old buildings on either side are removed, construction would extend into those vacated areas to relate the new Park Avenue building to existing housing projects as well as to old buildings worth renovating. Because the project is linear it can be built in stages that permit people living in the path of construction to be re-housed in completed portions as the vault advances.

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