

# The Museum of Modern Art

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**THE NEW CITY: ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN RENEWAL** by Elizabeth Kassler, Sidney J. Frigand and Arthur Drexler. 48 pages, 64 illustrations. Paperbound \$1.95. Published and distributed to the trade by The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

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How can new housing be built without the jarring social effects of relocation? How can a large city locate and develop new land areas? How can an old waterfront area be transformed into an asset? And how can a monotonous grid plan be modified to improve circulation and create new neighborhoods? These widespread problems of cities and some possible solutions to them are explored for New York's Harlem area in **THE NEW CITY: ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN RENEWAL**, just published by The Museum of Modern Art.

Edited by Arthur Drexler, Director of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design, **THE NEW CITY: ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN RENEWAL** presents the projects of specially commissioned faculty teams from four universities and includes essays by Sidney J. Frigand, former Deputy Executive Director of the New York City Planning Commission, and Elizabeth Kassler, author and critic.

"Planning for New York is a humbling pursuit," states Mr. Frigand. In a city whose budgetary expenditures exceed India's and whose population is larger than that of 65 percent of the nations in the world, consensus is, at best, difficult to achieve. Thus, although the problems of cities are similar, the magnitude of New York's is unique. Mr. Frigand stresses the factors of size, scope, density and complexity, as well as the various and often conflicting pressure groups, and the historical pattern of economic determination of the city's growth as obstacles to the planning process. The "master plan" concept is therefore no longer meaningful, Mr. Frigand observes. "Perhaps the key word in the new planning approach is 'strategy.' It is the ingredient that enables a course of action to be launched which has a clear set of objectives but which is adaptable to continuing changes; sensitive to political and economic realities, and to shifts in taste, demand and need. In this context the comprehensive plan is a set of broadly based planning policies which would represent the current official expression of overall

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development strategy...."

Planned cities have not been a part of the American experience, states Elizabeth Kassler. "Americans have never had much confidence in city pavements, city crowds, city ways, city slickers. Since industrial cities were necessary to the economy, we built them, but with left hands and half a heart." In this profusely illustrated section of the book, Mrs. Kassler discusses the early de-centrist planning tradition and the European conception of new towns, beginning with Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities of 1898. She comments on projects by Frank Lloyd Wright and other Americans, and such recent developments as Tapiola Garden City in Finland, begun in 1953, and Britain's Cumbernauld New Town, developed since 1955. American examples of New Town planning include Reston, Virginia, and a project for a self-contained community within a city by Philip Johnson. Other approaches to planning, such as the linear city, are illustrated, as are examples of individual buildings that embody larger planning principles. "It's a great big country," Mrs. Kassler observes, "still with room for a few more subdivisions, but let us explore some of the splendid alternatives: not only revitalized centers, but New Towns in town, New Towns out of town, and New Cities developed in regions far from existing megalopoli -- regions where ecology is favorable, landscape beautiful, vested interests few, prospects bright."

"It would be presumptuous to suppose that problems of poverty and prejudice, and the hundred other evils that beset us, can be solved by architecture alone," states Arthur Drexler in the introduction to the four projects. "Works of art are not a substitute for human decency. The arts of architecture and urban design are tools at our disposal: how we use them depends on what we want." Faculty teams from Cornell, Columbia and Princeton Universities and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology approach four problems in terms of New York; all the problems were defined to include specific social as well as aesthetic goals. "Taken together, their solutions suggest broad patterns of development rather than a 'master plan.'"

A proposal to use the air rights over the railroad tracks on upper Park Avenue for a 37-block vault, erected in stages, on top of which new housing could be built,

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is the scheme of the Columbia University team under the direction of Jaquelin Robertson, Richard Weinstein and Giovanni Pasanella, AIA. This proposal provides new housing for Harlem's residents without relocation, as well as community and commercial facilities.

The extension of the park system north from Central Park to the Harlem River in two "green corridors" in which apartment towers and other free-standing structures could be built, is the Cornell University team's approach to the problem of creating parks and new neighborhoods while simultaneously reinforcing the clarity and order of the existing grid plan of the area. The project was directed by Colin Rowe and Thomas Schumacher.

The Hudson River waterfront around 125th Street is presently unsightly and unused; the Princeton University plan turns this area into a community amenity by proposing a public plaza opening to the river at this major crosstown street, with a new park and sheltered boating area, and a coherent group of buildings stretching 30 blocks out along the riverfront for institutional and commercial use and for community facilities. Peter Eisenman and Michael Graves, directors.

A high-density city like New York needs to develop new land areas; the Massachusetts Institute of Technology plan would connect Randall's and Ward's Islands in the East River to each other and to Manhattan, thus creating three new lakes for swimming and boating. These would serve as centers for new neighborhoods which could be built on land that is now under-used. Project directors: Stanford Anderson, Robert Goodman and Henry A. Millon.

The exhibition The New City: Architecture and Urban Renewal, on which this book is based, was co-sponsored as a public service by the City of New York and was presented at the Museum through the generous support of the following foundations and individuals: The J.M. Kaplan Fund, Inc., Frances and John L. Loeb Foundation, van Ameringen Foundation, Mrs. W. Vincent Astor, and Mrs. Douglas Auchincloss.

Sixty-four photographs, maps, and renderings, many with color, illustrate **THE NEW CITY: ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN RENEWAL**. Presented in a large 9 x 12" format, the catalogue is available for \$1.95 at the Museum Bookstore or by mail from the Museum. The Museum of Modern Art is the trade distributor.

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Review copies, photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, and Patricia B. Kaplan, Associate, Press Services, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, N.Y.C. 10019. 245-3200.