

Lower Manhattan Plan

Project: Lower Manhattan Urban Design Plan, New York.

Site: An area of more than one square mile, from Chambers Street and the Brooklyn Bridge approaches south to the tip of the Battery, which constitutes the third largest downtown business district in the nation.

Program: To propose physical improvements that will address long-term weaknesses of the area as a setting for business activity, which are underscored by the current 28 percent vacancy rate in its commercial real estate.

Solution: The plan identifies three major physical limitations of the area, which will limit its future prosperity, regardless of "conventional solutions such as better lighting and signage, more trees, more parks, or even revived commercial development." These limitations are:

1. A flawed street network, confusing and discontinuous, which the plan would alter with new rights of way and public open spaces that would yield "a coordinated street network, without losing the character of the different districts."

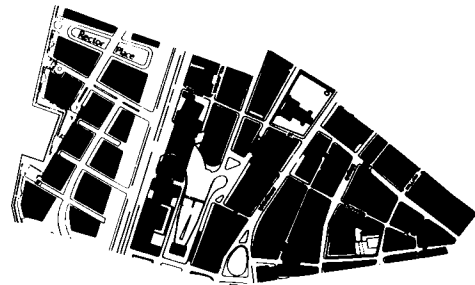
2. Restricted transportation connections, with no direct connections for suburban commuters, to which the plan would add a new centrally located Long Island Railroad terminal and ferry terminals with service to other suburbs; there would also be new continuous east-west routes to improve automobile circulation.

3. Insufficient housing to support round-the-clock use of the infrastructure and commercial services, a need which would not be met by expanding housing solely in Battery Park City and Tribeca, at or beyond the edges of the area; the plan proposes 6,000 new dwelling units in reused office buildings and 10,000 units of new housing to be located around – and stimulated by – new residential squares carved out of the existing fabric. (The area now has only 6,800 units, 4,500 of which are peripherally located in Battery Park City.)

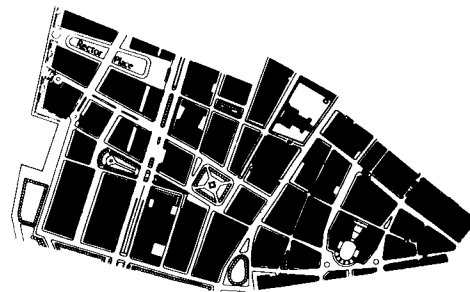
The plan also proposes changes in the plan for the northern portions of Battery Park City, where thousands of housing units are to be built, that would integrate the area more effectively with the existing street grid.

The documentation behind the plan includes thorough inventories of vacant and underutilized land and buildings and of landmark structures, officially designated and otherwise. The plan was developed with representatives of public agencies, and it has been presented to community leaders and government officials in conferences and public meetings. It has been accepted by the clients who commissioned it, but the process of implementing it is only beginning.

Jury Discussion: The jury's reaction touched on the sheer audacity of redesigning Lower Manhattan. As Michael Dennis put it, "If you asked someone what they were doing and they told you they were working on a plan for Lower Manhattan, you would think they were on something pretty strong." "The term megalomaniac comes to mind," added Nicholas Grimshaw. But the discussion soon focused on the proposal's persuasive qualities. An enthusiastic Richard Fernau felt, "It's just terribly intelligently written and clearly laid out. Someone once said that



EXISTING STREET PLAN, PORTION OF SITE ALONG HUDSON



PROPOSED STREET PLAN, SAME PORTION, CENTERED ON BATTERY SQUARE

Urban Designers: Steven K. Peterson, Peterson/Littenberg Architects, New York (Steven K. Peterson and Barbara Littenberg, principals; Gilbert Rosa, Zon Sullenger, design team).

Clients: Battery Park City Authority; The Port Authority of New York

and New Jersey; New York Landmarks Conservancy; James Lang Wooton; The Downtown Lower Manhattan Association; The J.M. Kaplan Fund.

Consultant: Alexander Garvin.

Model Photographer: Jock Pottle/ESTO.

master plans have to be clear because when the planner goes away, if the principles aren't apparent and can't catch the imagination of folks who are less involved, it will just disappear." Michael Dennis agreed: "The way they have gone in and found exactly which buildings are good and which are vacant and made a strategy for transforming and boosting that area of the city – knitting together relatively small things – is almost miraculous. What really blew me away was the adjustments to the upper parts of Battery Park City, where the actual plan calls for yet another piece that is disjointed from the city. They make three moves and integrate that piece back into the city." Merrill Elam cautioned that they had rejected another urban design entry because too little was said about implementation strategies; all the jurors agreed that putting this plan into effect could be a long and convoluted process, but they were convinced that it had exceptional power to attract public and official support. Fernau attributed this in part to its lack of the usual verbiage: "It has a confidence that cuts through and says, 'This is what I'm doing, and this is why, I think it's brilliant.'"

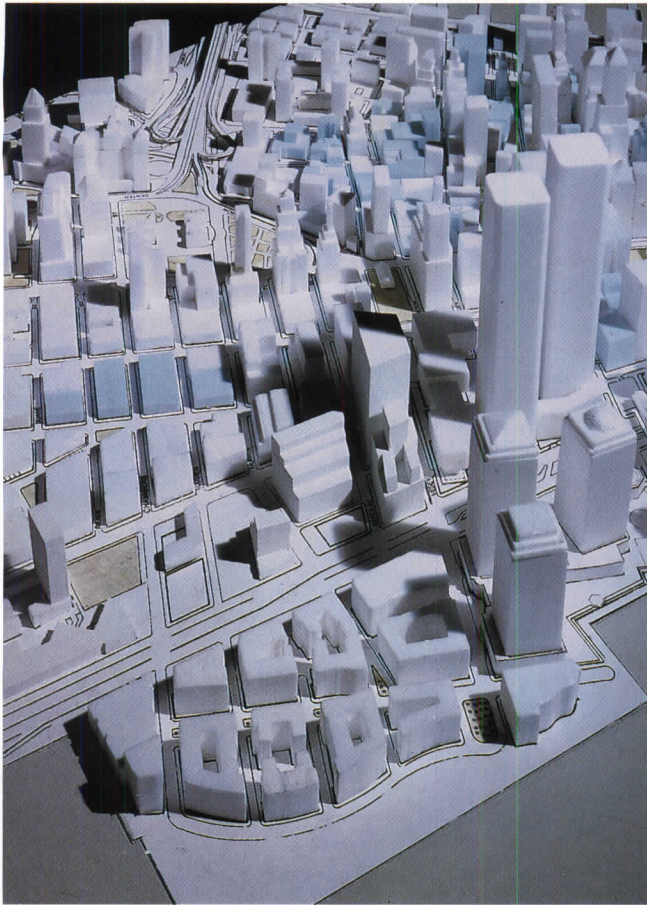


URBAN DESIGN PLAN

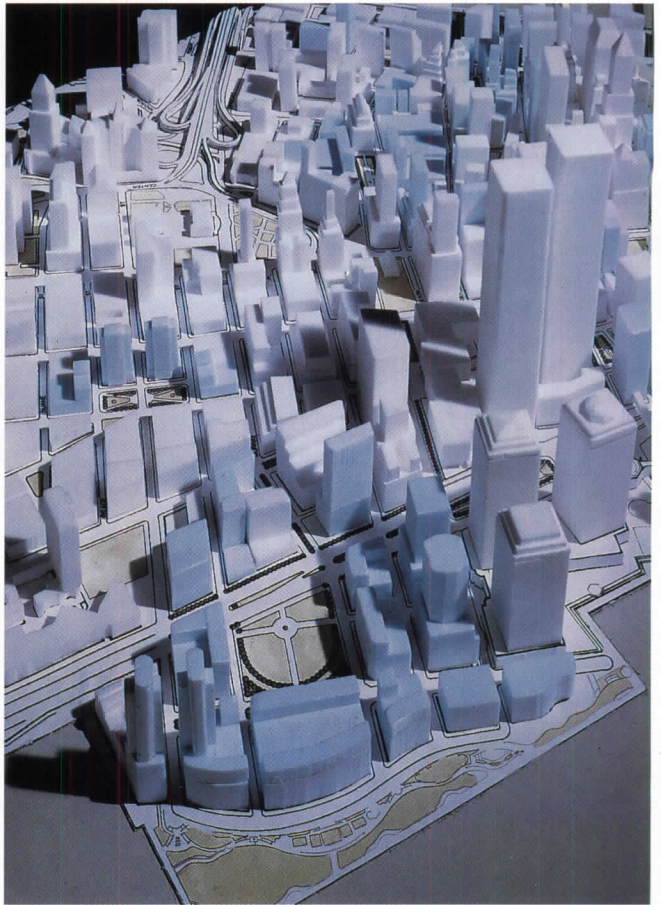
- 1 BATTERY PARK NORTH/
TRIBECA SQUARE
- 2 REVISED WORLD TRADE
CENTER PLAZA
- 3 FULTON SQUARE
RESIDENTIAL AREA
- 4 PLATT SQUARE
RESIDENTIAL AREA
- 5 EAST RIVER PROMENADE
- 6 BATTERY PARKWAY
- 7 WALL STREET
RAILROAD STATION
- 8 BATTERY SQUARE
RESIDENTIAL AREA

DEEP RED AREA INDICATES
BUILDINGS.
LINES OF TREES INDICATE
NEW PARKS AND LANDSCAPING.

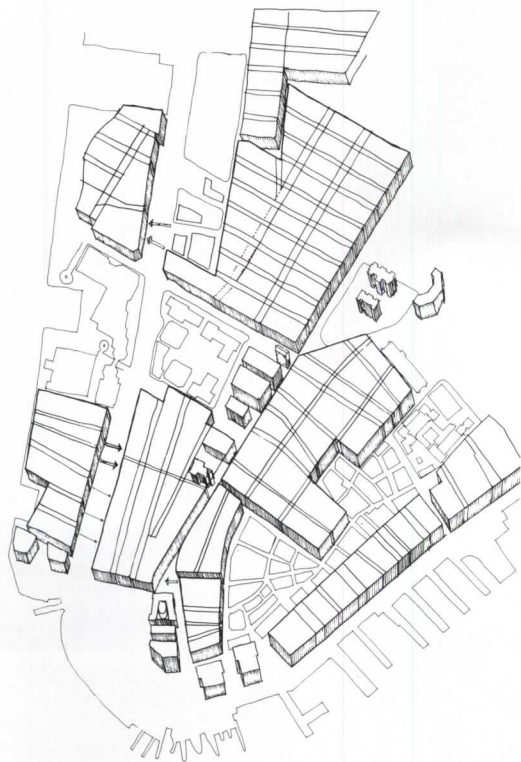
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EXISTING PROPOSAL FOR BATTERY PARK CITY NORTH



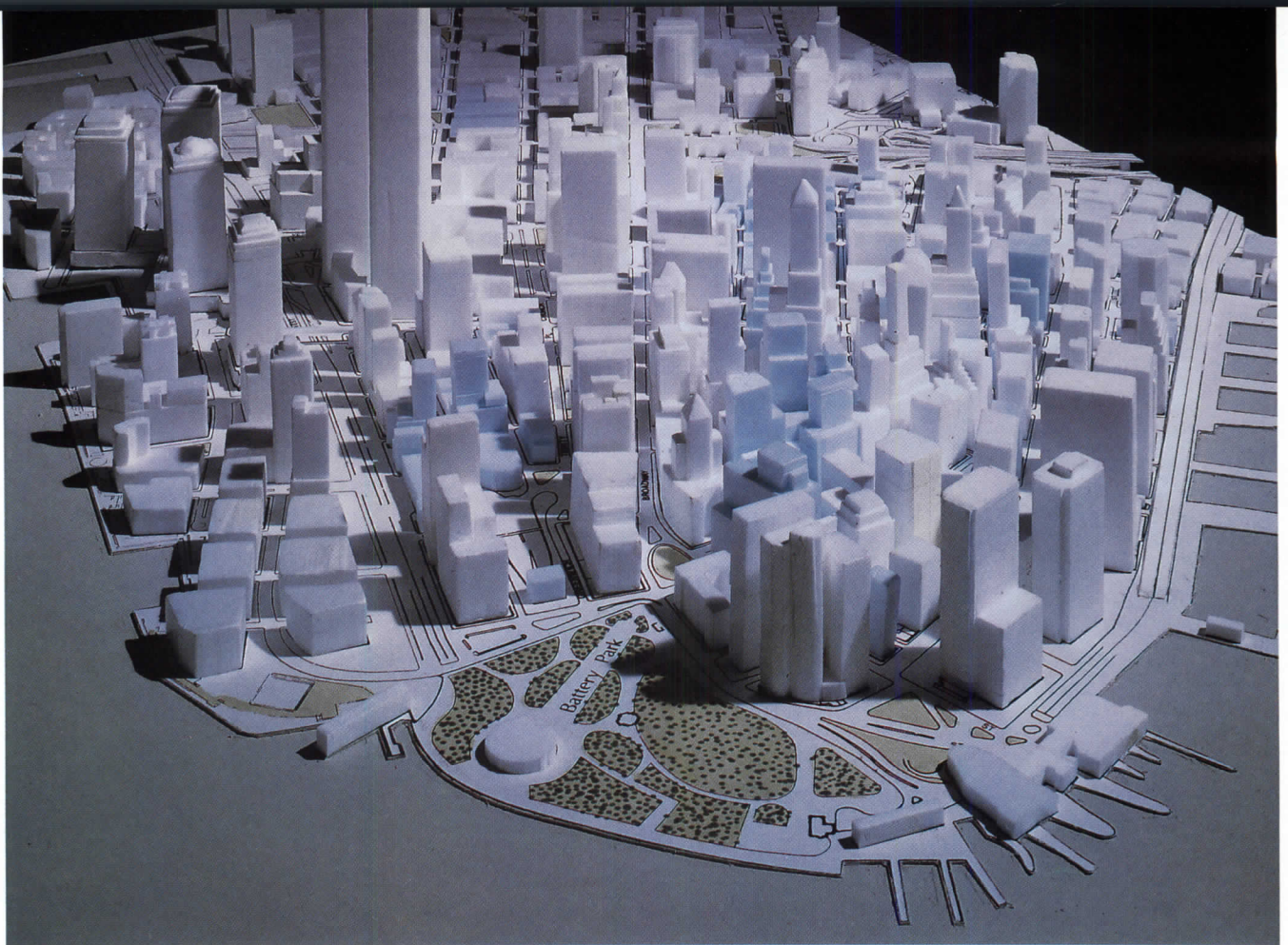
PROPOSED BATTERY PARK CITY NORTH WITH NEW TRIBECA SQUARE



EXISTING URBAN FABRIC



PROPOSED FABRIC CENTERED ON NEW SQUARES



EXISTING BATTERY PARK WITH ILL-DEFINED EDGE AND AWKWARD ROADWAYS (ABOVE), PROPOSED BATTERY PARK WITH STRONGER EDGES AND SINGLE PARKWAY ARC (BELOW)

