

Urban Renewal: NYC

CITIZENS HOUSING
& PLANNING COUNCIL
20 WEST 40th STREET,

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HARLEM

**SLUM CLEARANCE PLAN
UNDER TITLE I OF THE
HOUSING ACT OF 1949**

91.0

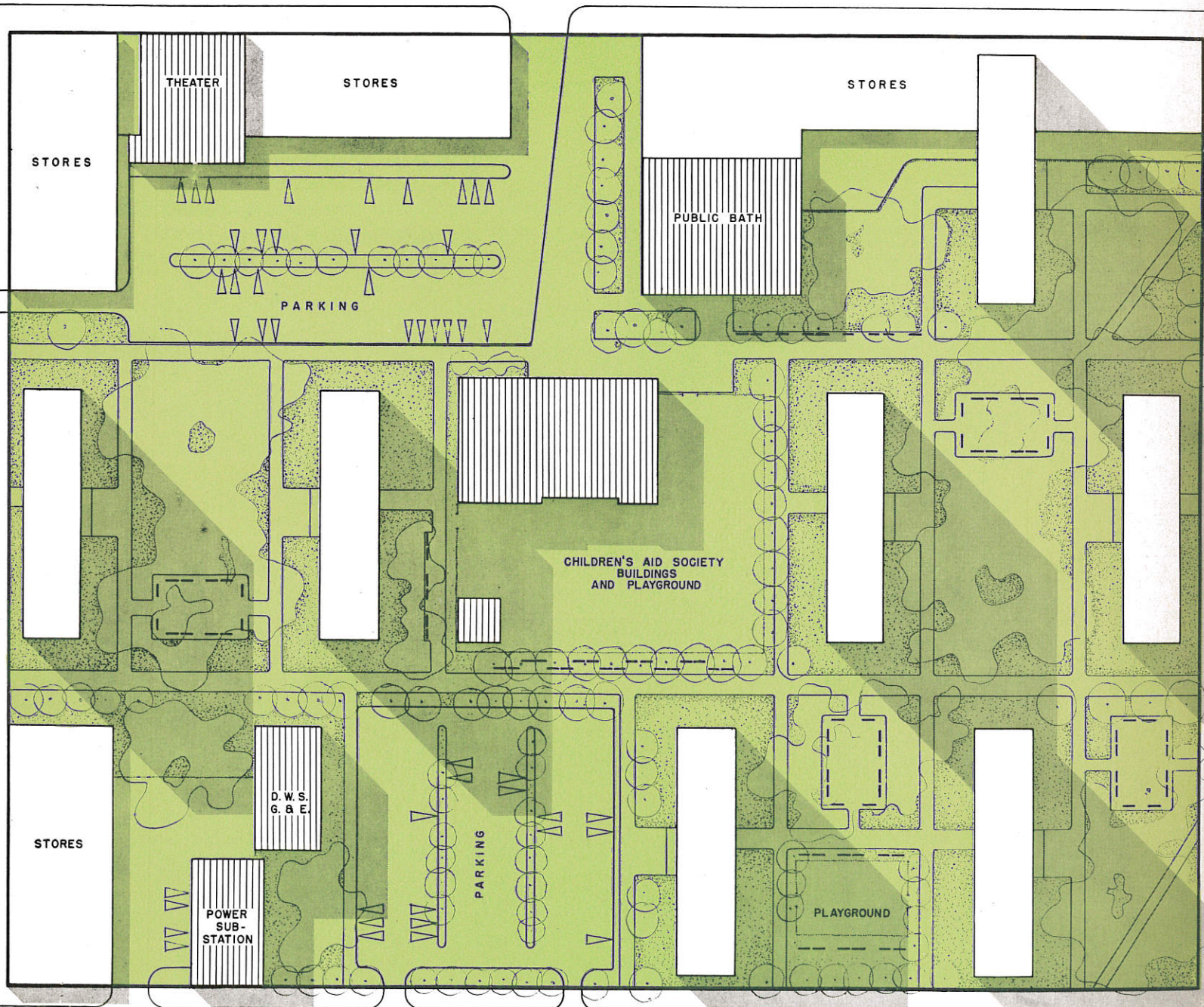
LOCATION

The Harlem site is in a densely populated, blighted neighborhood lying in Section M2 of the Master Plan of Sections Containing Areas for Clearance, Redevelopment and Low Rent Housing. The site is limited to the three city blocks from West 132nd to West 135th Streets, between Lenox and Fifth Avenues. Directly east of it lies Abraham Lincoln Houses, a low-rent housing project operated by the New York City Housing Authority, with rentals subsidized equally by the State of New York and the City of New York. Northeast of the site is Riverton, a moderate rental housing development of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. In all other directions stretch gloomy and overcrowded buildings so poorly lighted they are unsafe after dark. The whole area is slated for eventual improvement at the densest ratio of population recommended on the Master Plan. The Harlem project will replace approximately 15 acres of this blighted area with modern apartments, stores, and off-street parking places, leaving ample space for light and grass and trees, and play areas for small children.



SITE PLAN

W. 135 STREET



W. 132 STREET



AERIAL VIEW





LAND USE

Deterioration of property characteristic of "blighted areas" can be seen throughout the site. Violations of the Zoning Resolution of 1916 occur in each block due to conversions from residential use made prior to that date. There are numerous vacant lots, abandoned buildings, rooming houses, and many stores and churches in the ground floors of residential buildings.

Of approximately 12 acres to be acquired at the site, 7.9% are used entirely for commercial purposes while about 27% have ground floor stores. Buildings of institutional character, private and public, occupy 6.6% of this area, while another 3% occupy only the first floors of structures. Vacant land comprises 3.3% of the area and vacant buildings 1.2%. This leaves 81.4% of the area to be acquired as purely residential. Of this residential area, almost 40% of the most northerly block consists of rooming houses. Hotels, although classed as commercial, add to this congested land use for residential purposes.



CONDITION OF EXISTING STRUCTURES

The classifications of residential buildings shown on the accompanying map indicate buildings as "well-kept," "fair" and "run-down." It must be emphasized that these descriptions are purely relative and apply to a group of buildings which are almost all ancient, poorly lighted, badly laid out, inadequately ventilated, and generally occupied by more families than they were originally designed to accommodate.

The condition of the structures was determined during a house to house survey and the ratings are from the tenants' point of view. These tenants are accustomed to living conditions existing on the site and to paying the prevailing rents. Their point of view was required to establish criteria for tenant

relocation in comparable accommodations. To be graded as "well-kept" an older building had to be very clean requiring no major repairs or painting. A "fair" grading meant a building that was moderately clean and tidy, perhaps requiring some painting and repairs. To be graded as "run-down" a building would need drastic restoration to be brought into decent shape. Such a building might have deteriorated to the stage of being an object for demolition.

On the Harlem site, no residential buildings were found that met the requirements of "well-kept." Only 18 out of 164, or 11% were found in "fair" condition. The balance, 146 out of 164, or 89% were classified as "run-down."



AGE OF EXISTING STRUCTURES

The date of construction of every building on the Harlem site was obtained from the New York City Department of Housing and Buildings. 71 % of the residential structures were built before 1901, 28 % between 1902 and 1914 and less than 1 % since that time. Of the non-residential buildings, 76 % were built before 1916.

The so-called "model tenements" built before 1901, with their excessive coverage of the lot, and inadequate courts and air shafts, were only slightly improved by the Tenement House Law of 1901. The notorious "dumb-bell" plan and variations of it are found in most five and six story tenements until 1916.

Since the Zoning Resolution of the City of New York of that year and the Multiple Dwelling Law of 1929 the trend has been toward larger courts and more open space between buildings.



IV LAND COVERAGE

Land coverage has been considered both as to residential and non-residential use. Where the buildings are residential, including those with first-floor stores, the land coverage averages approximately 73% of the lot.

Non-residential structures approach 85% average coverage with a number of one-story and a few multi-story buildings having 100% coverage.

The redevelopment plan proposes 10.3% coverage for residential structures on the area of land to be acquired, and 26.5% coverage when stores and apartments are considered as a whole. Some of this gain in space is accomplished, of course, by the closing of streets.



IV POPULATION DENSITY

Population density has been analyzed on the basis of present residential areas only, within property lines, for comparison with the proposed density within net residential areas. This is at variance with the practice used in the census maps, which report on residential use, but give densities per acre, taking areas to the middle of streets. As a result, the 1940 census categories that show over 400 persons per acre on the Harlem site, actually indicate densities of over 594 per net acre of residential use. Contrasted to this is the Wood, Dolson Co., Inc. finding of a total population of 7,419 persons in the three blocks of the site, including rooming houses, but excluding hotels. This indicates a present population of 803 persons per net acre of residential use. The proposed redevelopment will have a density of 440 persons per net residential acre, or 349 persons per acre for the entire acquired area including new one-story stores.

