

PROGRESSIVE ARCHITECTURE

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A New Quality of Life
A New Aesthetics of Building



Jordan L. Gruzen



Norval C. White



Samuel Posner

CITATION

Gruzen & Partners

Formerly Kelly & Gruzen

Project: Public Housing, 157th Avenue and 79th Street, Queens, New York City. Urban housing project is designed to retain neighborhood's scale and character.

Partner in Charge of Design: Jordan L. Gruzen.

Partner in Charge of Project: Norval C. White.

Project Architect: Samuel Posner.

Project Designers: Stuart E. Cohen and Alden Taylor Mann IV.

Structural Engineers: Farkas Barron and Partners.

Mechanical Engineers: Herman Scherr Associates.

Landscape Architect: M. Paul Friedberg & Associates.

Client: New York City Housing Authority.

Site: Trapezoidal plot of three city

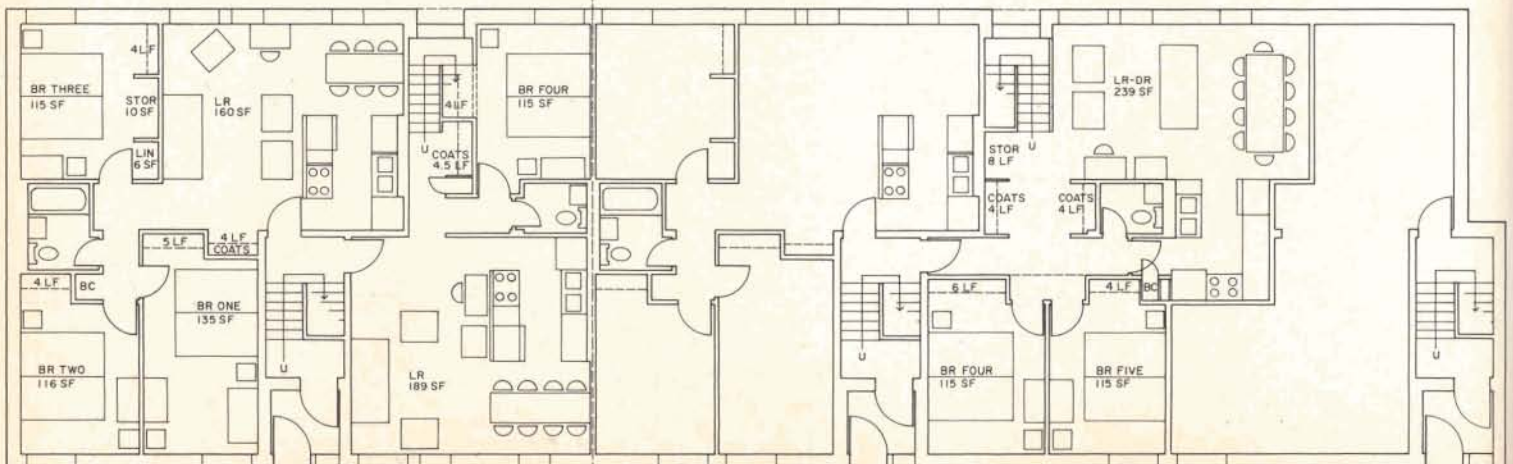
blocks adjacent to Shore Parkway and Jamaica Bay.

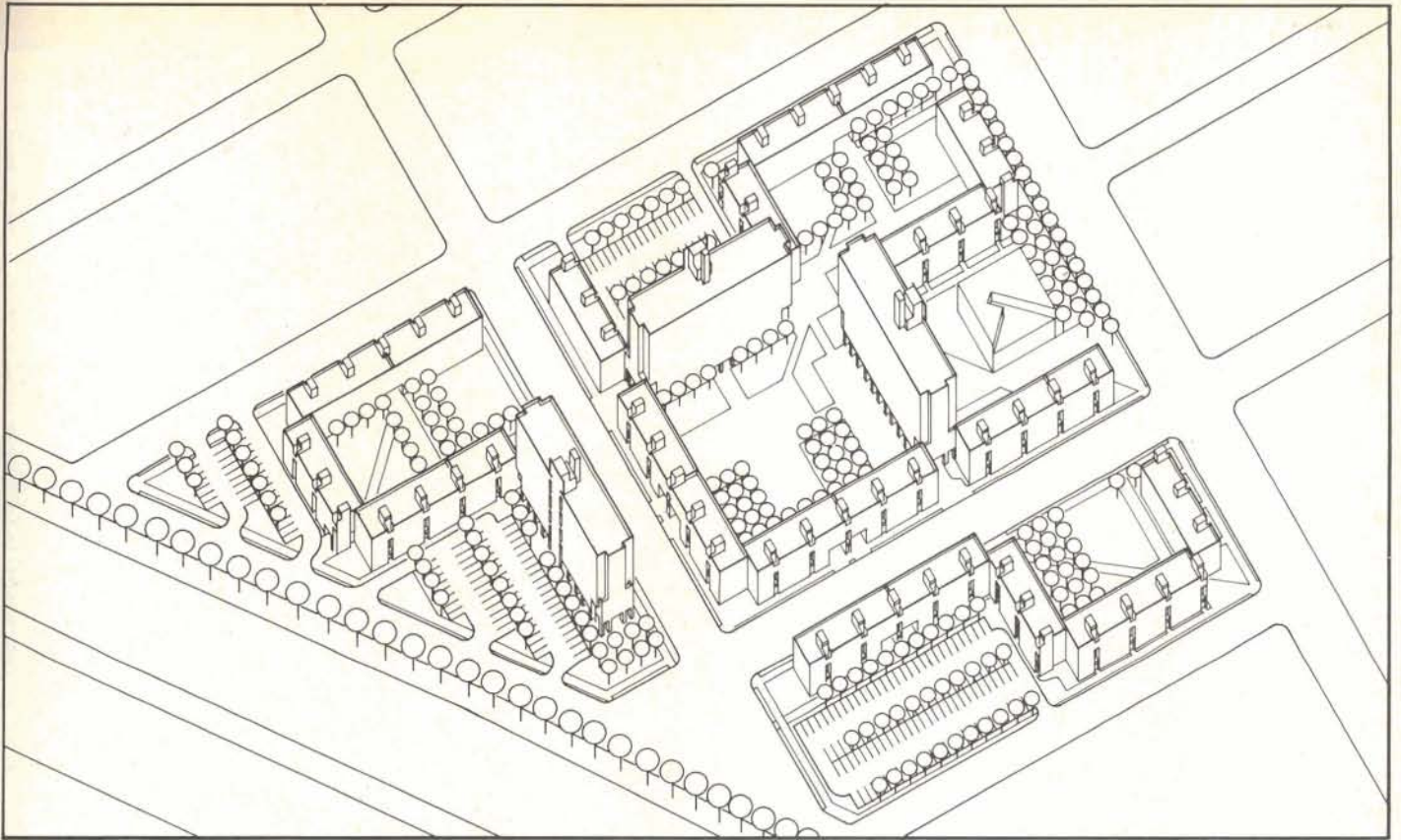
Program: To provide low-cost, low-income housing principally for the elderly (approximately one-third) and for large families.

Design Solution: The scheme is intentionally simple and ordinary — a mix of eight-story elevator buildings and three-story walk-ups, positioned like walls to define and enclose open spaces. The elevator buildings contain studios and one-bedroom apartments for the elderly, as well as some apartments large enough to accommodate families. The walk-up buildings are specifically for large families and have as many as five bedrooms per apartment with some



Low-rise building, first floor plan





Axonometric projection showing triangular site

of the apartments arranged in duplex fashion. Although varying in height, the buildings are kept low to fit in with the scale of the detached homes and garden apartments in the surrounding neighborhood. This "background architecture" approach intentionally uses conventional materials and construction to create a scheme that is appropriate to the character of the existing neighborhood and provides a functional and economical solution to public housing.

Construction and Materials: The eight-story buildings are reinforced concrete flat-plate construction with exterior masonry curtain walls. Masonry bearing walls are employed for

the low-rise buildings however — a more economical construction method for a building of this size in New York City.

Jury Comments:

Brubaker: I object to the tendency to concentrate people of low economic status in one place, and object to the spirit and form — the institutional quality of long narrow corridors, the hotel-like atmosphere. It is a very ordinary design.

Venturi: But, it is an honest solution since the architects were given an ordinary situation and an ordinary site. Also it is particularly interesting for not being high-fashion architecture where high-fashion

would be superficial and inappropriate.

Vreeland: One tends to overlook this scheme as almost a put-on with its very ordinary, almost ugly, housing quality. It requires a second look, a double take, to appreciate its seriousness of purpose and its virtues. It is commendably "banal." Probably a good direction for much of future architecture to take. God knows, we want to get away from the commercial confections of much of today's modern architecture. These buildings represent a vernacular type of building that has been with us right along, unnoticed, and that we are just beginning to elevate into serious consideration.

Low-rise building, second floor plan

