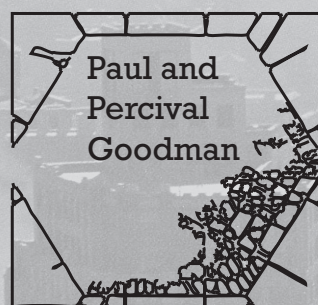


A Historical (Re)Creation



A Master Plan for Manhattan 1947

Prepared by:

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for
New York in the 1940's
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(New York: Random House, 1947)

Goodman, Percival. "The Double E." (New York:
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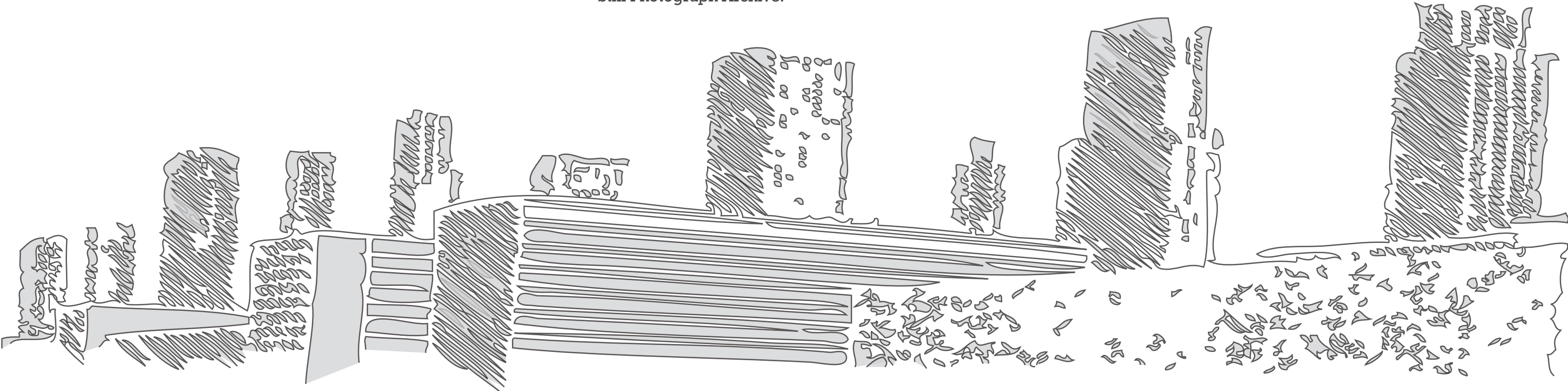
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Historical Context of Manhattan

Historically, the first general plan of New York was the layout of the gridiron avenues and streets around 1800, an expedient for land sale. The gridiron, with its long north-south avenues, gave to Manhattan its famous accessibility and clarity but it has failed to be adequate to the necessities of modern traffic. Further, the street widths were designed in 1811 for buildings of 1-4 stories. There is no doubt Manhattan has outgrown the streets of the 1811 plan and a new system must be proposed.

Although subplans of the Master Plan proposed by the City Planning Commission under Rexford Tugwell (1941) were accepted, the key plan was rejected. The result is the greatest city in the world has no Master Plan.

The majority of apartment and commercial buildings in Manhattan are now obsolescent. In New York, where the housing problem is more difficult than elsewhere, present buildings and blocks have inefficient density and the current gridiron streets and avenues take up 27.4% of the total area of the island.

Recent peripheral highways were not designed primarily for the residents of the city itself, but, like several other works of engineering of the past decade, for commuters outside the city. So long as three million people enter downtown Manhattan each day to increase the population from 360,000 to almost 4 million, there will be traffic congestion and sardine tin subways.

During peacetime the volume of heavy shipping has sharply fallen off, and the war has shown that the present docks are three or four times too large for peacetime demands. The waterfront has therefore diminished in commercial importance.

Now, the island of Manhattan can aim to be, for the next fifty years, the cultural, business, style, and entertainment capital of the world. And by taking advantage, for the first time of its rivers---hitherto almost preempted by commerce and industry---it can become a city of neighborhoods wonderful to live in, as leisurely and comfortable as it is busy and exciting. What is needed for this is a Master Plan.



Manhattan Master Plan

In general, the proper solution for problems of transit and housing is to cut down on the number of trips taken and to increase residential acreage and efficiency. This can be done only by bringing work, residence, and recreation closer together. Manhattan Island has a theoretical residential density of 200 to the acre (about 9,000 residential acres to 1,900,000 persons). More efficient land use would allow for spacious, green, livable neighborhoods.

The plan would reduce the tremendous twice-daily flow of uptown-downtown traffic by giving to the majority of Manhattan residents the chance of a home within walking distance of their work.

Our plan is simply:

1. To extend the business and light industry and all through traffic of Manhattan in a continuous axis up the middle of the island.
 2. To remove the through avenues on the sides and develop the land on either side of the axis in park-residential neighborhoods right down to the rivers.
 3. To develop the shores (north of, say, Twenty-third Street) as beaches for bathing, boating, and promenade.
 4. And to ban private cars from Manhattan. Permitted vehicles would be buses, small taxis, vehicles for essential services (doctor, police, sanitation, vans, etc.) and trucking used in light industry.

Already in the Tugwell plan, following the actual trends, isolated new commercial districts were recommended uptown. We propose simply to unite these in a continuous belt served by continuous highways and to relocate uptown not only business but places of light manufacture. It is reasonable to assume that Midtown, the site of the great terminals and therefore great hotels, would continue to be the entertainment, style and idea center; and that business and finance would cluster in its cliffs around Wall Street. The ships and warehouses must occupy the downtown stores. (Therefore we provide Greenwich Village a downtown residential neighborhood in the center rather than on the shore).

Restructuring for two multi-level throughways up the center axis and closing every other neighborhood street would cut the acreage of Manhattan roads in half. Closing nine out of ten cross town streets and every second north-south avenue would provide a handsome fund of land for neighborhood development. Residential neighborhoods would extend on either side of the axis right down to the Hudson, East and Harlem Rivers; served by regular cross highways to the main highways, but without any through traffic. Instead of the bowl its form now takes, Manhattan should be terraced towards the water. A transition from central parks as the focal point to riverfront and neighborhood parks would allow for 29 miles of continuous waterfront parks for sport and residence.

Manhattan Island, as we here propose to alter it. Up the center of the island runs a narrow strip of business and industrial buildings. On either side of it are north-and-south arterial highways. Toward both rivers are residential areas and parks, and the river banks themselves, in most parts of town, would be given over to recreation.



Ban on Private Cars



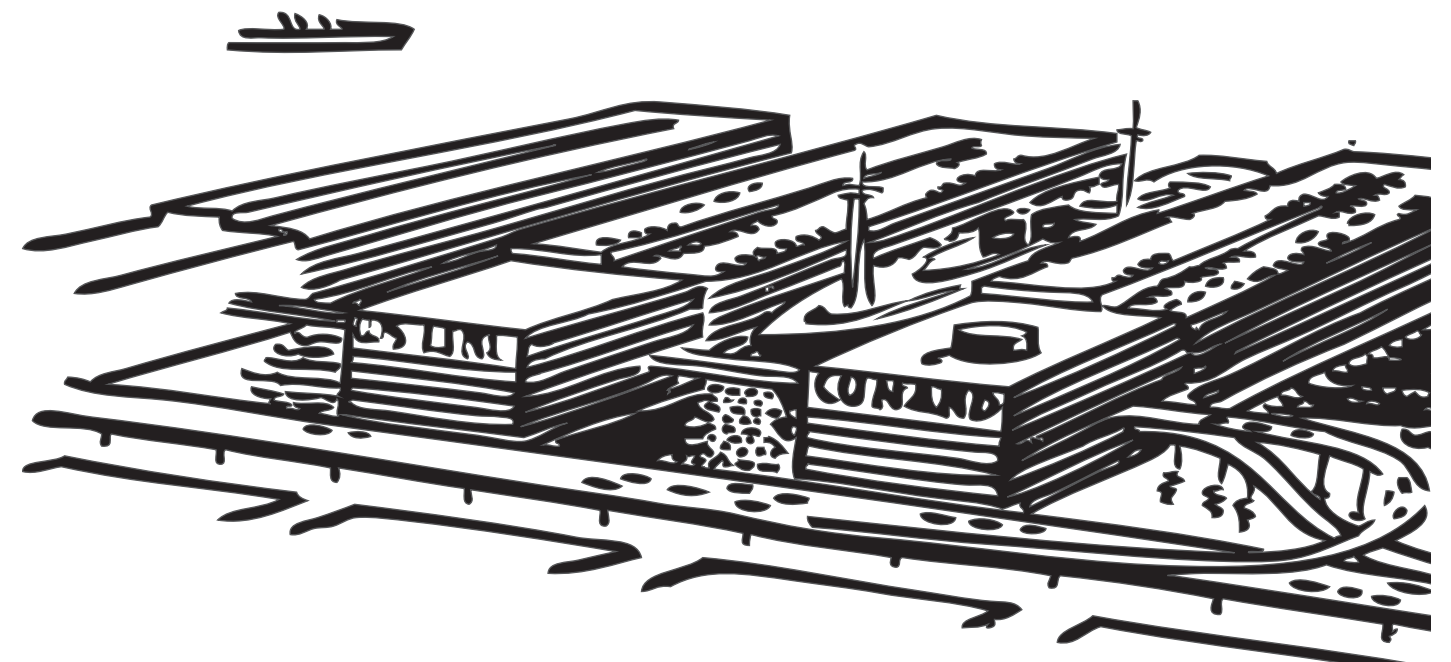
“Motor trucks average less than six miles per hour in traffic, as against eleven miles per hour for horse drawn vehicles in 1911.”

“If it were possible to translate into dollars the time consumed by workers in excess travel, the result would be startling. At least one million persons spend two hours a day going to and from work in New York. At 50 cents an hour, this becomes a million dollars a day or \$312 million a year. This is three percent of \$10 billion, which would pay for building large sections of New York City without calculating revenues from rents.” - Cleveland Rogers

The first step towards achieving a livable city is the elimination of a large part of the traffic altogether. Banning private cars in Manhattan would relieve tension, noise and anxiety; purify the air of fumes and smog; alleviate the crowding of pedestrians; and provide safety for children.

We have had a vehicle tax; it could be so pegged as to be prohibitive. A prohibitive entry fee could also be charged. There must be a provision for cars to pass across Manhattan, east and west. Such a ban should, of course, be leniently interpreted to allow for special cases and emergency use. It is likely that the ban on cars could be lifted on weekends, when truck and bus traffic is much diminished.

The banned private cars can be accommodated by various kinds of peripheral parking. We propose the construction of multipurpose parking piers on the Hudson and East Rivers for cars entering by the main bridges and tunnels. These piers could be developed for promenade or recreational use. Parking piers could be served by both bus and taxi.

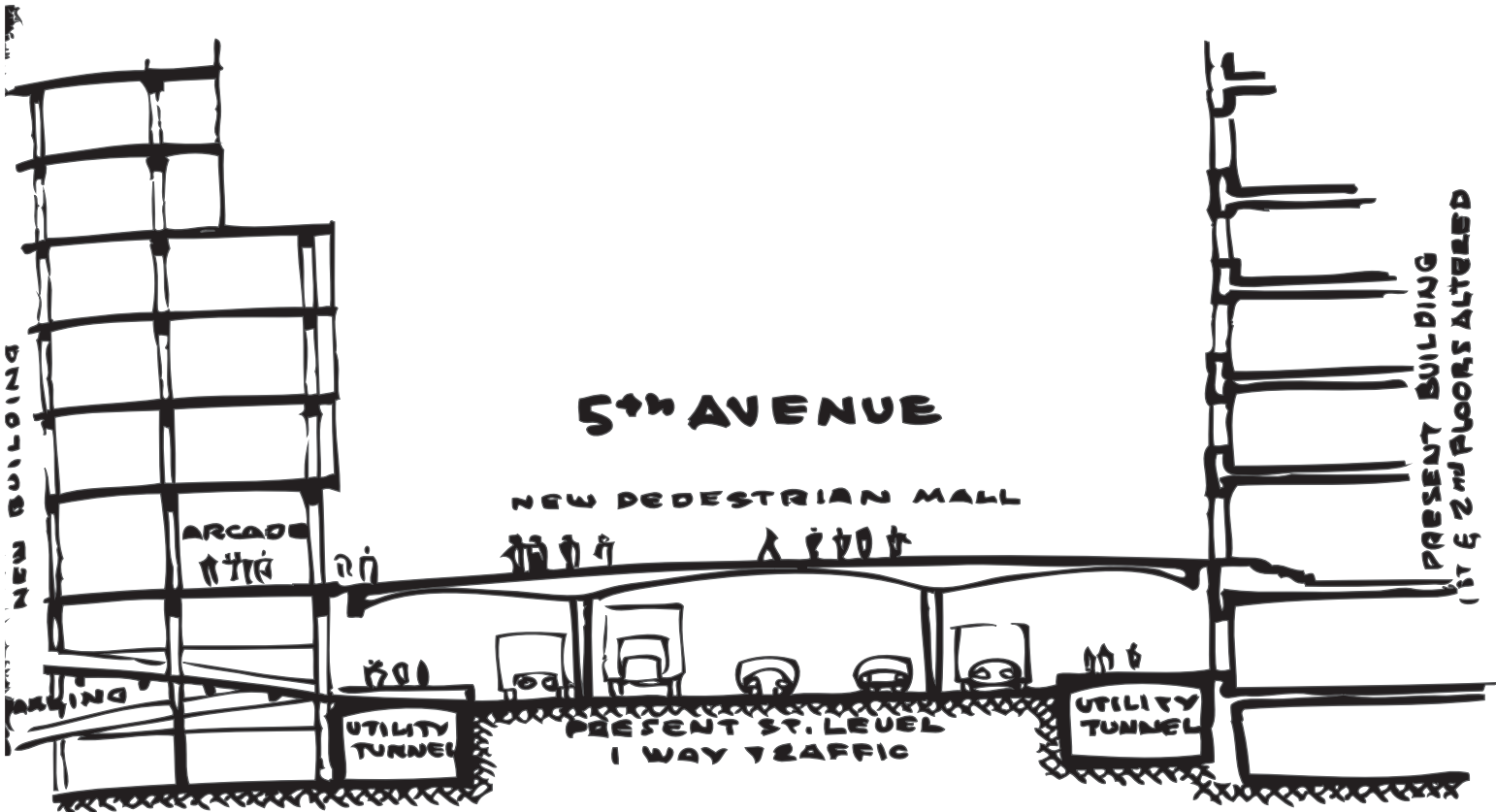


Updating the Gridiron

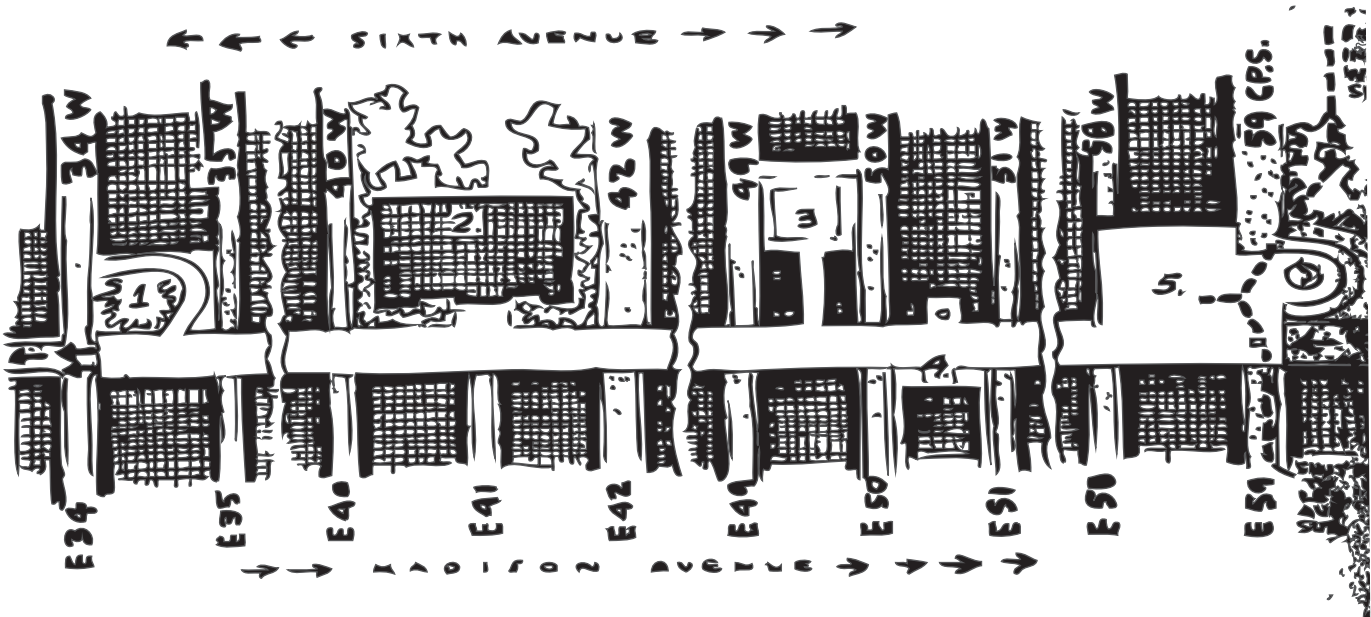
We keep the broad commercial cross streets---Greenwich Avenue, 14th Street, 23rd Street, 42nd Street, 57th Street, 59th Street, etc.---as two-way bus and taxi arteries; and also First, Third, Fifth, Seventh, Broadway, Ninth, and Eleventh Avenues. As previously indicated, we keep Twenty-third to Fifty-ninth Streets to serve the shops, theaters, etc.

All other streets would become pedestrian walks broad enough to serve as one-way roads for servicing: fire, garbage, mail, and so forth. The proposed grid of through arteries is such that the maximum walk to the nearest bus stop would always be less than one-fifth of a mile.

By and large, given the improvement of the bus service and added taxis, most travel about town would be swifter and more convenient than it is at present with private cars.



Section Through Fifth Avenue



Improving Fifth Avenue

As early as 1870, it was proposed, by Egbert L. Viele and others, to double deck Lower Broadway and Wall Street because of “excessive and dangerous congestion.” We here make a similar proposal to revive the amenity of New York’s greatest shopping and promenade street, Fifth Avenue.

The present ground level is widened by the elimination of the sidewalks and all pedestrian use. Sixteen feet above it we would construct a continuous promenade from 34th Street to 59th Street. This mall is accessible by ramps and stairways from the side streets, and provided with a slow moving shoppers trolley of its own.

As a further proposal, the entire area from 8th Avenue to 3rd Avenue could be similarly double decked.

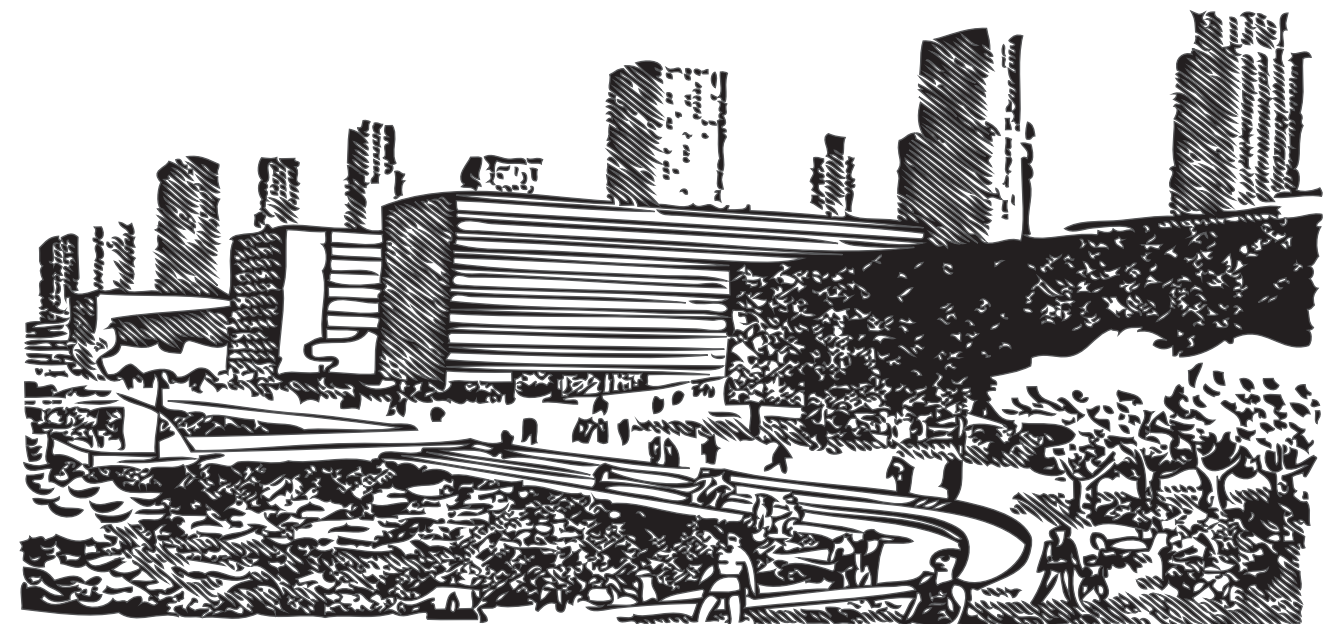
Developing the Waterfront



Except for a few spots where the currents are dangerous, Manhattan's rivers are ideal for swimming and boating. (The job for cleaning them up has already begun and is on the postwar agenda). Visitors to Chicago or Rio, for instance, know what it means to have a great sweep of water for bathing at the foot of every street, and Manhattan has twice and three times as much shorefront per person. The rivers, the parks and the inhabitants must be a continuous visual and ambulatory experience.

In the interest of the shore neighborhoods we diminish the waterfront available for shipping and remove the Hudson River tracks. The tracks have long been moribund and peacetime shipping is progressively being reduced.

The giving up of the parks in the central axis provides an enormous reservoir of land to exchange for the commercial and industrial property now located along the rivers, the sites of the future residential parks. Further, the money value of one square foot of land along the central main street would be at least five times that in the scattered riverfront sites; and this would provide a great fund to carry out the plan.

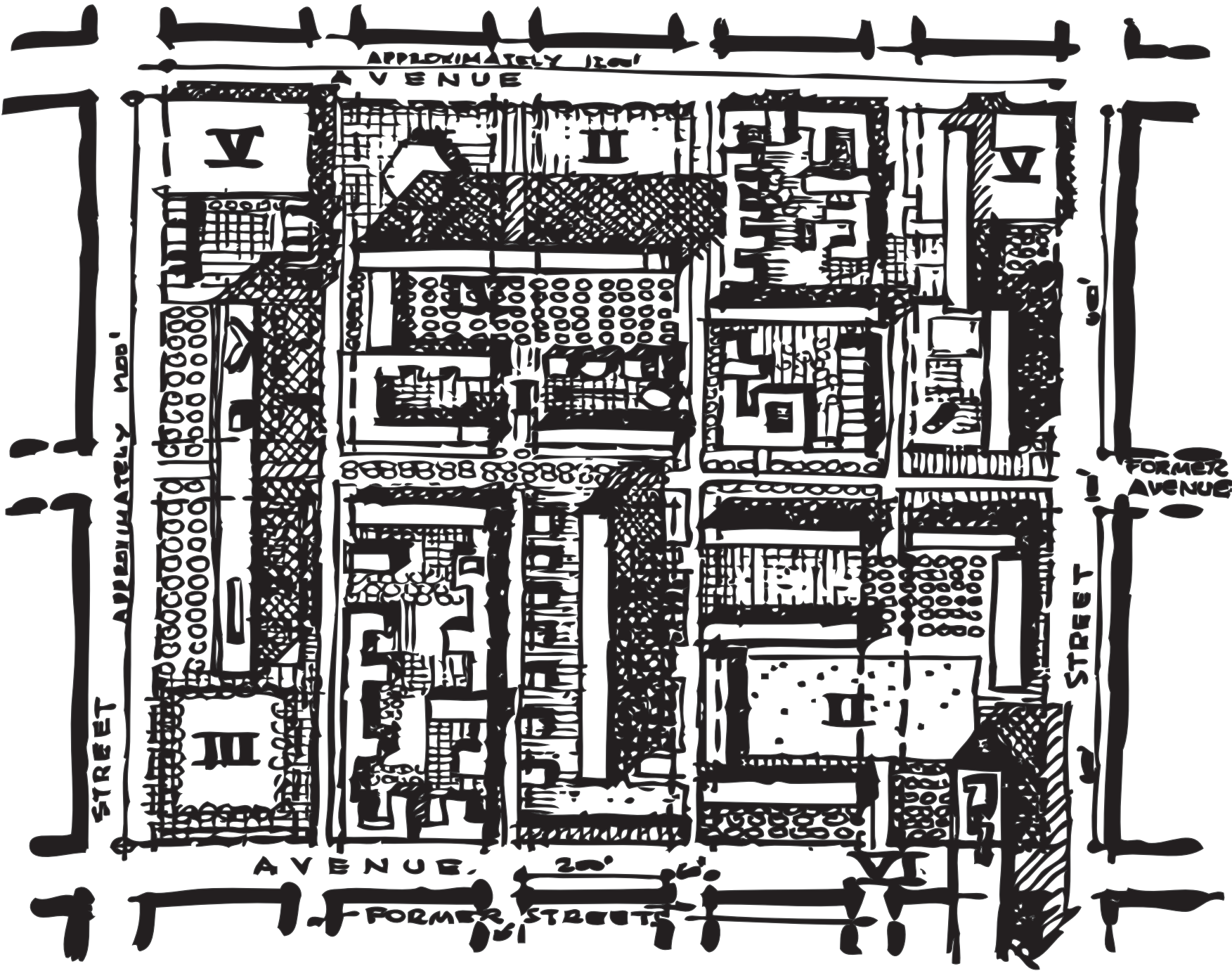
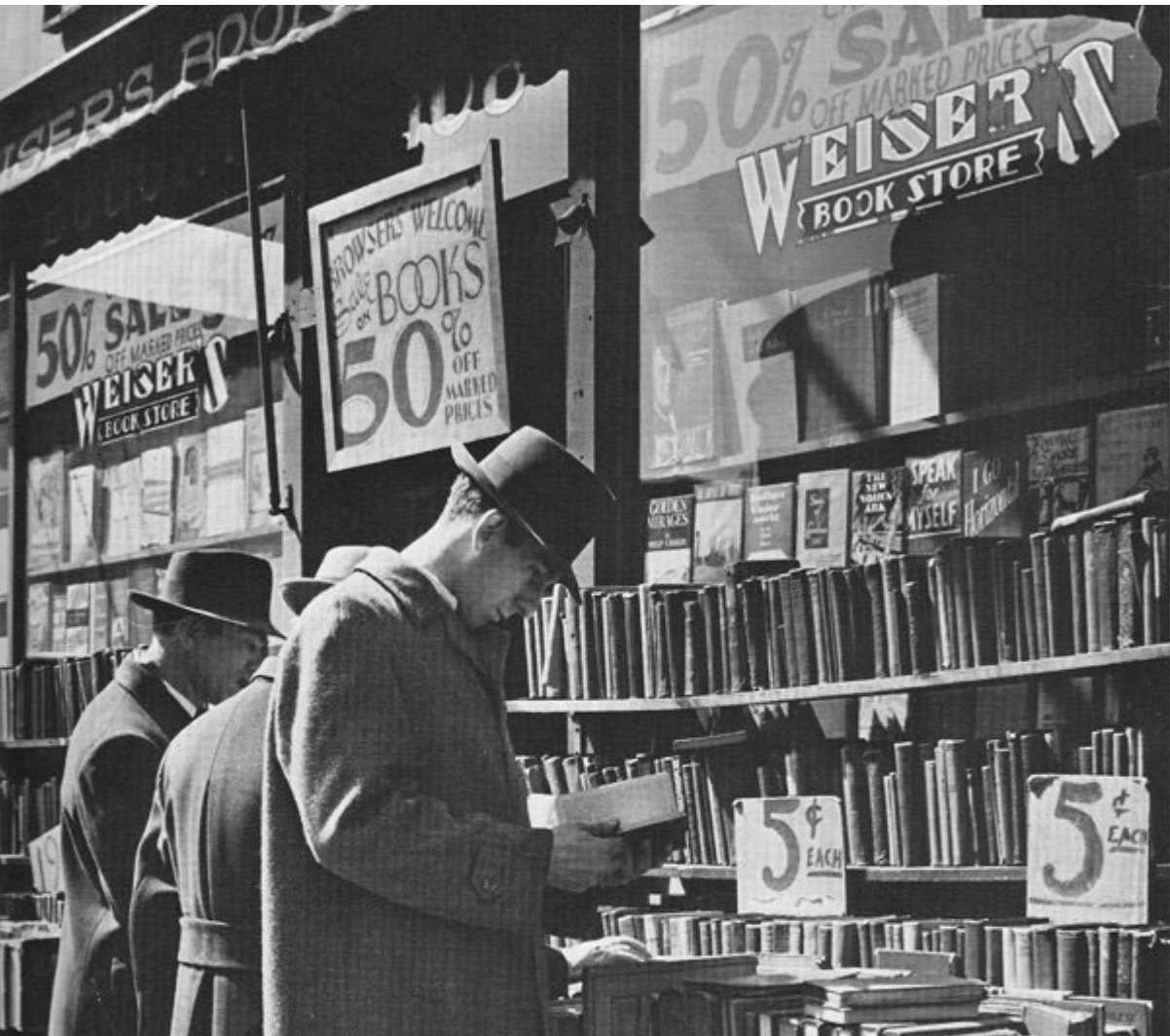


A City of Neighborhoods

The ideal for New York or any other vast city is to become a large collection of integral neighborhoods sharing a metropolitan center and metropolitan amenities.

Given the large fund of newly available land, now wasted on largely unnecessary and always inconvenient traffic and parking, it is possible to develop new neighborhoods in a leisurely fashion, with careful study and without problems of relocation or dislocation of such neighborhood ties as exist.

Instead of the present grid we can aim at various kinds of enclosed neighborhoods, in approximately 1,200-ft to 1,600-ft superblocks.



A ten block area. Density 300-400 at acre. The streets turned into service roads which are also pedestrian walks.

Former traffic area =

Avenues: $100' \times 1,240' = 124,000$

4 Streets: $1,200' \times 240' = 288,000$

412,000 sq. ft.

Gross area ten blocks = 1,612,000 sq. ft. We have added 25% to the usable area.

- I. Neighborhood Shopping Center
 - II. Play and Recreation Areas
 - III. Swimming Pool
 - IV. Housing with School in Lower Floors
 - V. Non-nuisance Factories
 - VI. Bridge Building - Office or Apartment Use
- The balance is housing for various incomes.

Conclusion

In New York City there is too much substandard housing, not enough housing all together, standard or substandard, and not enough space to build new housing before demolishing old.

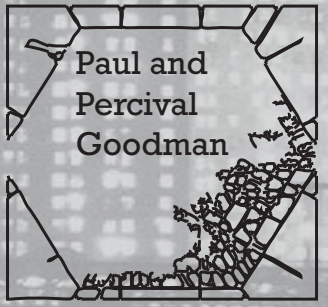
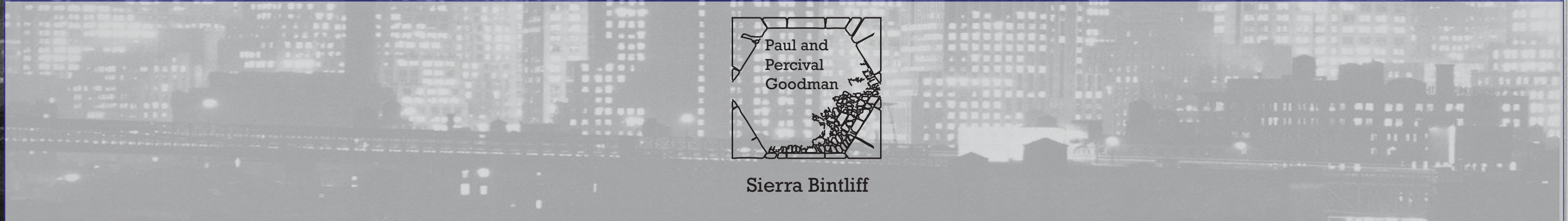
We propose integrating housing development functions. To give a partial list:

housing, slum-clearance, location of industries, transportation, adequate schools and teachers, clean streets, traffic control, social work, racial harmony, master planning, recreation, etc.

The aim of integral planning is to create a human-scale community of manageable associations, intermediary between the individuals and families and the metropolis; it is to counteract the isolation of the individual in the mass society. The idea is to create smaller communities that have a closer and less parasitic dependence on the surrounding agriculture and natural resources.

Important progress toward the completion of the plan could begin immediately after the war as part of the billion-dollar six-year budget. It is estimated that for 75-80% of the buildings in Manhattan are overage and there will be vast reconstruction on any plan.





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