

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**DRAFT**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Jackie Robinson Houses

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

name of related multiple property listing NA

### Location

street & number 110 E 129<sup>th</sup> Street and 111 E. 128<sup>th</sup> Street  not for publication

city or town New York  vicinity

state NY code NY county New York code 061 zip code 10035

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

    national          statewide        x   local

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

    entered in the National Register     determined eligible for the National Register

    determined not eligible for the National Register     removed from the National Register

    other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

**Category of Property**  
 (Check only **one** box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

NA

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic/Multiple Dwelling  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic/Multiple Dwelling  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

No Style  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete  
 walls: Concrete  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 roof: Synthetic, Asphalt  
 other: Metal  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

**Summary Paragraph**

The Jackie Robinson Houses is located at 110 E. 129<sup>th</sup> Street (North Building) and 111 E. 128<sup>th</sup> Street South Building) in Harlem, Manhattan. Jackie Robinson Houses was constructed by NYCHA as a multi-family complex for low-income families and approximately 60 percent of the apartment units were reserved for seniors. The complex consists of three sections: two, nine-story rectangular buildings situated parallel to each other (but not aligned) connected by a perpendicular, seven-story hyphen. The two buildings and the hyphen are clad in ribbed concrete block. Each of the three sections of the complex contains apartments, for a total of 189 apartment units. The complex, which was completed in 1973, was designed by architects Bond Ryder Associates. Finley & Madison were the structural engineers and Hammaham and Johnston were the mechanical engineers. The contractor was Gibson-Graphic Construction Corp.<sup>1</sup> Jackie Robinson Houses is located on a 1.49-acre rectangular site bounded by E 129<sup>th</sup> Street to the north, Lexington Avenue to the east, E 128<sup>th</sup> Street to the south, and Park Avenue to the west. The buildings are generally east-west oriented, and the hyphen is north-south oriented. The two larger buildings are roughly I-shaped, with slight projecting bays at either end of the rectangular building. A daycare and community center are in the North Building and Management and Maintenance offices are in the South Building. The site features two paved play areas located along the east side of the property and a smaller sitting area on the west side. Based on available historic drawings, the raised, rectangular play area in the southeast corner of the site is original to the complex. The second play area, which was originally accessed directly from the daycare center, remains in its original location directly south of the North Building, but it was renovated in the late twentieth century. The three components are interconnected on the ground floor, which is a double-height breezeway/lobby that contains the entrances to each of the rectangular components and, through them, to the hyphen.

The complex is located on a site that previously featured one- to five-story brick residential and commercial buildings that were cleared between 1966 and 1973 to allow for new construction.

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**Narrative Description**

Setting: The Jackie Robinson Houses is located in the Harlem neighborhood of Manhattan, specifically within an area known as the East Harlem Triangle (the Triangle). The subject site is bound by 129<sup>th</sup> Street to the north, Lexington Avenue to the east, 128<sup>th</sup> Street to the south, and an unrelated parcel to the west. The surrounding streets are arranged in a typical grid-like pattern and primarily contain low- and mid-rise buildings built in the late twentieth century, as well as some early twenty-first century buildings. The majority of the area is residential in nature with a handful of religious, civic, and educational buildings. The area also contains public parks such as the Alice Kornegay Triangle playground and the Harlem River Park, along the river, which are

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<sup>1</sup> NYCHA Archives, 1971 Affirmative Action Compliance.

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just east of the Jackie Robinson Houses across Lexington Avenue. The Harlem River and Harlem River Drive are located two blocks north and east of the Jackie Robinson Houses.

Site: The subject site measures roughly 1.49 acres with iron fencing and street trees along the perimeter of the site. The building is centrally located on the parcel, amid landscaping and hardscaping features (**see Photographs 1-6**). West of the Jackie Robinson Houses is a paved parking lot (**see Photographs 7 and 11**). Additionally, there are paved pedestrian areas and fenced green spaces (**see Photographs 10 and 11**). The primary fenced area is an asymmetrical, geometric shape with a low metal and concrete fence, and it contains grass and shrubbery (**see Photograph 10**). There is a geometric, tripartite wood bench that is set into the concrete part of the fence. East of the building is also paved pedestrian space with some fenced green areas and a paved playground. The play area is located on the southeast corner of the site with concrete or rubber tile flooring, metal benches, and playground equipment. There is also fenced green space on the west side of the site (**see Photograph 11**). This area has the same asymmetrical, geometric design with inset wooden benches and metal or concrete fencing.

*Exterior*

Simple in design, the identical elevations are primarily clad in ribbed concrete block, which is a shift away from the standard brick exteriors seen on contemporary sites. Ornamentation is limited. The building entrances are sheltered beneath the first-floor breezeway of the hyphen that connects the two nine-story buildings (**see Photographs 8 and 9**). Entrances consist of single-leaf painted metal doors with glazed panels with adjacent metal-framed glazed panels. The complex features metal one-over-one windows. Some windows and doors have been replaced; however, they retain their original configuration, and the elevations historically featured one-over-one windows. The buildings feature a simple non-textured concrete cornice.

North Building: The north building is nine stories. It is twenty-eight window bays long (north and south elevations) and four window bays wide (east and west elevations). On the north elevation, the eastern four bays and the western five bays project one window bay from the building plane. On the south elevation, the eastern five bays and the western four bays project one window bay from the building plane. Approximately four bays on the western half of the south elevation are covered by the hyphen.

South Building: The south building is nine stories. It is seventeen window bays long (north and south elevations); the west elevation is four bays wide, and the east elevation is three bays wide. On the north elevation, the western five bays project one window bay from the building plane. On the south elevation, the western two bays and the eastern five bays project one window bay from the building plane. Approximately four bays on the eastern half of the north elevation are covered by the hyphen.

Hyphen: The hyphen is seven stories and runs perpendicularly between the north and south buildings. The east and west elevations of the hyphen are eight window bays wide. The bottom two stories of the hyphen make up the paved breezeway between the two buildings. The breezeway has four rectangular double-height columns on either side (east and west) with simple concrete lintels above them and below the third stories windows.

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**Roof:** The roofs are flat and feature a built-up roofing system covered with a layer of gravel. There is a metal chain link fence around the perimeter of all roofs. There are also mechanical and elevator penthouses on the roofs above the north and south buildings. These are clad in the same textured concrete as the elevations and feature metal louvers and painted metal doors.

*Interior*

**Ground Floor** The ground floor contains the primary entrance lobbies, offices, community spaces, and mechanical rooms.

The ground floor of the hyphen serves as a breezeway connecting the two buildings. The primary entrances at either end of the breezeway lead directly to the elevator lobbies, which serve as the main building lobbies. The elevator lobbies feature the same textured concrete-clad walls as the exterior, as well as vinyl flooring and textured drywall ceilings.

In the north building, the elevator lobby is connected to a short east-west corridor (see **Photographs 12-14**). Corridor finishes consist of vinyl tile flooring, painted CMU walls, and textured drywall ceilings. At the west end of the corridor are offices and mechanical spaces. These spaces feature concrete or vinyl floors, painted CMU walls, and exposed ceilings. There is a Tenant Association Room in the former laundry room to the north of the lobby (see **Photograph 15**). At the east end of the corridor are the day care and community center (see **Photographs 16 and 17**). These spaces feature vinyl flooring, painted CMU or drywall walls, and acoustic drop tile ceilings.

In the south building, the elevator lobby is connected to an east-west corridor that spans the length of the building (see **Photographs 17-18**). Corridor finishes consist of vinyl tile flooring, painted CMU walls, and textured drywall ceilings. On either side of the corridor are offices and storage space (see **Photographs 20 and 21**). Finishes include vinyl floorings, painted CMU or drywall, and textured drywall or acoustic drop tile ceilings.

**Residential Floors (Upper):** The upper levels contain residential units. The two buildings are both organized around central double loaded east-west corridors with apartment units on either side (see **Photographs 22-23 and 28-29**). Corridor finishes consist of vinyl tile flooring, painted CMU, walls, and textured drywall ceilings. Doors in corridors are painted metal. At the upper levels, there is no interior connection between the buildings in the hyphen. On each floor, the hyphen contains two apartment units, one accessible via the elevator lobby in the north building and the other accessible via the south building elevator lobby.

Unit layouts are consistent between floors with a range of studios to five-bedroom units. Typical unit finishes include painted gypsum board walls, textured gypsum board ceilings, and non-historic vinyl flooring. In some units, the concrete subfloor is visible. Many of the unit bathrooms retain the historic ceramic tile flooring. Doors in units have faux wood veneer (see **Photographs 24-27 and 31-34**).

**Vertical Circulation:** In the north building, there are two stairwells – one on either end of the corridor – and the elevator bank is located at the west end of the corridor. In the south building, there are also two stairwells (see

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**Photograph 30)** – one on either end of the corridor – and the elevator bank is located at the east end of the corridor. The elevator lobbies serve as the main building lobby on each floor. They feature vertical brick surrounding the elevator doors, as well as vinyl flooring and textured drywall ceilings. Each elevator bank contains two elevators with simple metal doors and surrounds. Stairwells feature painted CMU walls, metal risers, concrete treads, concrete landings, and metal handrails.

*Integrity*

The Jackie Robinson Houses has continuously served the local community as affordable housing since construction in 1973 and retains integrity in terms of the overall design of the complex. Specific to the seven aspects, the Jackie Robinson Houses retains integrity in terms of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association. While repairs and alterations have been completed at the property under the supervision of NYCHA in the ensuing decades, the original design has not been significantly altered. The complex retains the exterior textured concrete covering, and portions of the concrete were repaired to match the original in 2012. Although the primary entrance doors were replaced in 1995, they remain in their original locations and retain their original configuration. The historic breezeway between the two entrances remains extant. Historic drawings show that the original fenestration featured one-over-one windows. The windows were replaced in 1991 but retain the one-over-one configuration throughout. Further, the original site plan was simple in design with a paved parking lot in the northwest corner of the site, a raised, rectangular paved playground in the southeast corner of the site with retaining walls that match the textured concrete of the building and trees scattered throughout the complex that remain intact. Playground equipment was updated in the late 1990s or early 2000s. A second, slightly sunken play area directly south of the north building is shown in historic drawings. This area remains paved and slightly sunken with a set of angled steps but has been reshaped with new angular concrete retaining walls, planters, and benches added between 1993 and 2004. Metal picket fencing has been installed around the perimeter of the site to increase security.

At the interior, the buildings retain their original layouts, although some original finishes have been replaced and some are deteriorated. Notably, the circulation patterns with a central, east-west, double-loaded corridor in each of the two larger buildings as well as the elevator banks and stairwells remain in their historic locations. Corridors and stairwells historically featured painted masonry block walls, which are still extant on each level. Historically the stairwells featured steel risers, cement-filled metal pan treads, and cement-filled metal pan landings. In 2015, the stairs were repaired and replaced in kind, retaining the historic appearance of the stairwells but updating the finishes. Elevator lobbies also historically featured brick surrounding the elevator doors, which has been retained at each level. Within units, walls and ceilings were historically flat, finished and painted gypsum board. Walls and ceilings throughout remain gypsum board, but some may have been repaired or replaced in kind. The majority of unit flooring has been replaced with non-historic vinyl tile, except within the bathrooms, which retain the historic ceramic tile flooring. In the community center in the north tower, some finishes, such as the ceiling, were updated in 1996. Overall, the Jackie Robinson Houses retains integrity to convey its historic use as a public housing complex in the East Harlem Triangle.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL HISTORY

COMMUNITY PLANNING/DEVELOPMENT

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Period of Significance**

1973-1974

**Architect/Builder**

Bond Ryder Associates (architects)

**Significant Dates**

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance is 1973-1974, the year construction was completed.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**



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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph**

(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Constructed in 1973-74, the Jackie Robinson Houses is significant under criterion A in the areas of politics/government and social history for its association with public housing programs in Harlem after World War II, a period in which an unprecedented number of housing projects were constructed in Harlem, leading to major changes in demography, street patterns, settlement patterns and living conditions. Within this context, the Robinson Houses represents the history and development of a very small area in the northeast part of Harlem called the “Harlem Triangle” because it was defined by a three-sided polygon. Beginning in the 1960s, two local groups, the Community Association of the East Harlem Triangle (CAEHT) and the Architects’ Renewal Committee in Harlem (ARCH) took a strong interest in the area’s future in response to the city’s designation that the East Harlem Triangle was “one of the most blighted and rundown areas in Harlem ... and wholly unsuitable for housing,” a finding that led to the ongoing removal and relocation of numerous Black and Puerto Rican neighborhoods and a plan to develop the neighborhood with industrial resources. CAEHT, led by prominent activist Alice Kornegay, and ARCH, led by influential African American architect Max Bond, fought this designation, forcing the city to amend the urban renewal designation in order to permit housing on the periphery of the triangle. In 1966, CAEHT partnered with ARCH to create the East Harlem Triangle Plan, which gave voice to residents’ concerns and proposed new redevelopment plans that favored those who lived there. As Art Symes, director of Architecture in the Neighborhoods, stated at the time, “Architecture and planning are just too important to be omitted from the lives of people who happen to be poor.”<sup>2</sup> The plan had three overarching goals: to provide better living and working conditions in the Triangle, to attract people who have left the Triangle, and to attract more middle-income residents. The plan included a commercial corridor, new and renovated housing units, green space, and a community services center.<sup>3</sup> The plan served as a catalyst for talks with NYCHA to address the estimated need for 2,000 new or rehabilitated housing units, of which 500 units should be for moderate income families. Emerging from this plan, the two connected Jackie Robinson Houses were designed by Bond-Ryder Associations, composed of two of the most prominent Black architects in New York City, and built as a “turn key” project, in which NYCHA had the complex built on speculation and acquired it when it was complete. The Bond-Ryder design tried to respond to the expressed needs of the local citizens and included apartments for the elderly; however, the design was not built exactly to their initial conception. Unfortunately, despite the efforts of CAEHT and ARCH, the Jackie Robinson Houses was the only NYCHA development completed in the East Harlem Triangle and one of the few East Harlem Triangle Plan initiatives to be fully realized. Further, it was not built exactly the way Bond-Ryder conceived it. Nevertheless, it represents an interesting and important aspect of the history of public housing in Harlem. Jackie Robinson Houses serves as example of a public housing development directed by representatives from community organizations that represented the needs and spoke on behalf of the community and was designed by members of that community. The period of significance is based on the date of construction and when the complex was placed in service, 1973-1974.

<sup>2</sup> Roberta Washington, “Architect’s Renewal Committee in Harlem,” *Now What?!* (November 27, 2018). <https://www.nowwhat-architexx.org/articles/2018/11/27/architects-renewal-committee-in-harlem-arch>. Accessed February 26, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> The plan was prepared in part by architect Roger Katan, another prominent Black architect and a resident of the Triangle. Katan was responsible for the original design for the nearby Corsi Houses; Katan’s design was not used due to disagreements over funding and design, and the final design was the work of Samuel Paul.

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## Narrative Statement of Significance

### *The New York City Housing Authority in Harlem*

In the 1940s, Robert Moses, a powerful promoter of urban renewal, took charge of the city's public housing program after he was appointed a New York City planning commissioner (1946-1960). In 1948, he organized the "Mayor's Slum Clearance Committee," which encouraged wholesale clearing of large areas of the city that Moses condemned as "slums" and rebuilding them.<sup>4</sup> Under Moses's influence, much of Harlem was labeled as blighted and subsequently razed, and by 1957, 137 acres in East Harlem alone had been cleared.<sup>5</sup> Since new affordable housing was immediately needed to replace the lost buildings, this precipitated the construction of many New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) buildings in the late 1940s and 1950s. Whereas some of the earlier NYCHA complexes in Harlem were built as low-rise complexes with green space (Harlem River Houses), as land prices increased, NYCHA began to construct taller buildings on smaller tracts of land to meet the demand.<sup>6</sup> As a result, high density superblocks and buildings were completed that critics called bleak and blamed lackluster design.<sup>7</sup> Much of the historic character of Harlem – particularly East Harlem – was lost to these tall and isolating developments.

By 1960, these practices had resulted in the displacement of nearly 100,000 families in Harlem<sup>8</sup> That same year, Harlem had the largest concentration of public housing in the country, with an estimated 60,000 people living in thirteen NYCHA complexes.<sup>9</sup> The majority of the developments had over 1,000 residential units and were primarily occupied by non-white residents (**see Figure 1**). Civic leaders had been demanding new public housing in Harlem since the 1930 and 1940s; however, by the 1960s, with the demolition of existing areas and the increased concentration of NYCHA buildings and units in Harlem, criticism of the neighborhood's housing options grew louder. Residents and local community groups recognized the need for new dwellings but found the NYCHA replacement housing inadequate with social issues resulting from the high-rise complexes and their density within the neighborhood.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, many who were displaced found it difficult to return and had to relocate entirely.<sup>11</sup> NYCHA's efforts ultimately resulted in dense high rise buildings concentrated in racially segregated neighborhoods, reinforcing existing social problems.<sup>12</sup> The concentration of public housing in Harlem produced isolation, but it also allowed community leaders and politicians to manage a strong political base for elections and local action.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> John T. Metzger, "Rebuilding Harlem: Public housing and urban renewal, 1920-1960," *Planning Perspectives* 9:3 (1994), 270.

<sup>5</sup> Nicholas Dagen Bloom, *Public Housing that Worked*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 143.

<sup>6</sup> Metzger, "Rebuilding Harlem," 270.

<sup>7</sup> Bloom, 62.

<sup>8</sup> Metzger, "Rebuilding Harlem," 276.

<sup>9</sup> Metzger, "Rebuilding Harlem," 278.

<sup>10</sup> Metzger, "Rebuilding Harlem," 276.

<sup>11</sup> Metzger, "Rebuilding Harlem," 276.

<sup>12</sup> Metzger, "Rebuilding Harlem," 279.

<sup>13</sup> Metzger, "Rebuilding Harlem," 280.

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***Redevelopment Proposals and Community Activism in the East Harlem Triangle***

Amid this turmoil, various church and community affiliated groups developed programs to help specific groups of local citizens. Several settlement houses sponsored public housing that incorporated settlement houses themselves and their programs into new housing projects, and several churches (see Morris Park Senior Houses) formed non-profits in order to develop their own housing projects. Other community groups partnered with NYCHA in order to influence the design of new housing that would meet their community's needs. One of those local community groups was the Community Association of the East Harlem Triangle (CAEHT), led by prominent activist Alice Kornegay. Kornegay had moved to East Harlem at age ten and studied social work at Baruch College and the New School for Social Research.<sup>14</sup> She was adept at navigating city bureaucracy and worked to secure financing for low-income housing and other institutions in the community for more than thirty-five years.<sup>15</sup> Kornegay's group focused on a very small parcel known as the East Harlem Triangle, bounded by Park Avenue on the west, 125<sup>th</sup> Street on the south, and the Harlem River on the north and east. Officials had labeled the East Avenue Triangle "one of the most blighted and run-down areas in Harlem" and marked it for demolition.<sup>16</sup> (see **Figure 2**). A 1960 ethnic breakdown of the approximately 6,000 residents found that the population was 60 percent Black, 20 percent Puerto Rican, and 20 percent white.<sup>17</sup>

In October 1961, the New York City Planning Commission approved redevelopment plans for what they called the East Harlem Industrial Triangle Area, proposing an industrial rehabilitation rather than the residential development that the community preferred.<sup>18</sup> The city's plan included more than four million square feet of industrial floor space with limited residential construction along the fringes of the neighborhood.<sup>19</sup> Officials called that plan "a major stimulus to the economy"; however, locals felt that it would devastate the community.<sup>20</sup> The CAEHT was formed in direct opposition to the 1961 plan and focused its organizing efforts on advocating for housing and welfare within the Triangle and for development that better fit the needs and wants of the community, rather than the will of city administrators. Kornegay and the CAEHT denounced the city's plans to bulldoze the existing housing for an industrial park, arguing that few of the residents who would be displaced would qualify for public housing because among this group, 60 percent of children were born out of wedlock, and 70 percent of families were separated without divorce, both situations that then disqualified applicants who sought public housing.<sup>21</sup> This assessment reveals the judgmental attitude long ingrained in numerous reform groups, including NYCHA, which tended to equate virtue with human rights. Ultimately, the 1961 plan was never realized, and activists like Kornegay worked to propose new plans for Harlem that

<sup>14</sup> Lawrence Van Gelder, "Alice Kornegay, 65, Advocate for East Harlem Housing Group," *New York Times*, May 2, 1996.

<sup>15</sup> "Alice Kornegay Triangle," New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. <https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/alice-kornegay-triangle/history>. Accessed September 14, 2023.

<sup>16</sup> "East Harlem Renewal Backed to Create 'Industrial Triangle,'" *New York Times*, October 5, 1961.

<sup>17</sup> "East Harlem Triangle Plan," Architects' Renewal Committee in Harlem, August 1968.

<sup>18</sup> "East Harlem Renewal Backed to Create 'Industrial Triangle,'" *New York Times*, October 5, 1961.

<sup>19</sup> "East Harlem Renewal Backed to Create 'Industrial Triangle,'" *New York Times*, October 5, 1961.

<sup>20</sup> Brian D. Goldstein, *The Roots of Urban Renaissance: Gentrification and the Struggle over Harlem, Expanded Edition* (Princeton University Press, 2023), 23.

<sup>21</sup> Goldstein, *The Roots of Urban Renaissance*, 42.

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incorporated community input. The CAEHT opened its own offices in 1966 on 129<sup>th</sup> Street and continued to advocate for Triangle residents from these headquarters.<sup>22</sup>

In 1966, the CAEHT partnered with the Architects' Renewal Committee in Harlem (ARCH) to create the East Harlem Triangle Plan, which included a commercial corridor, new and renovated housing units, green space, and a community services center. ARCH was founded in 1964 to provide planning services to low-income communities that would otherwise not have access to designers. Community involvement was at the center of its mission, as was saving the land for Harlem residents (see **Figure 3**).<sup>23</sup> Originally composed of all white members, by 1968, when J. Max Bond took over leadership, ARCH was composed entirely of Blacks.<sup>24</sup> ARCH had three goals for Black city planning initiatives: there should be more important goals for land use than making money; the architecture should be representative of the people living there, not the administrators; and they should develop a better environment than typical city planners had yet achieved.<sup>25</sup> Beginning ca. 1968, ARCH was led by J. Max Bond (1935-2009), a Harvard-educated architect who, at the time of his death, was touted by the *New York Times* as the most influential African American architect in New York. Bond supported the preservation of Harlem's existing layout and, through ARCH, he worked to preserve the spaciousness of the historic neighborhood, where people could walk and enjoy the streets, over the high-density complexes that were beginning to proliferate through NYCHA's involvement, erasing much of the traditional grid.<sup>26</sup>

The CAEHT and ARCH's East Harlem Triangle Plan had three overarching goals: to provide better living and working conditions in the Triangle, to attract people who had left the Triangle, and to attract more middle-income residents.<sup>27</sup> To achieve these goals, the organizations proposed a new layout for the Triangle which would create a more cohesive neighborhood. The proposal emphasized the general need for updated housing in the area, since only 11 percent of land in the Triangle was designated for residential use, compared to 33 percent for streets and alleys and 40 percent for non-residential uses.<sup>28</sup> As such, the plan called for 2,000 new and rehabilitated housing units, which were placed at the center of the plan, rerouting heavy vehicular traffic around the neighborhood rather than through it. In the residential areas, there would be pedestrian-only throughways, as well as buffers of green around the perimeter (see **Figures 4 and 5**). The economic viability of the plan was supported by a dedicated commercial corridor along 125<sup>th</sup> Street, and the plan emphasized providing employment specifically for Triangle residents. Also part of the proposal was a block dedicated to services for the Triangle community, such as health center and social services offices, and cultural, educational, and recreational spaces. This block would be located at the center of the residential area. At the core of CAEHT and ARCH's plan for the Triangle was community review and input, ensuring that any redevelopment plans would cater first to the needs of Triangle residents, goals directly opposed to those of Moses and the Slum Clearance Committee.

<sup>22</sup> "Poor in Harlem in Their Own H.Q.," *New York Times*, February 22, 1966.

<sup>23</sup> Priscilla Tucker, "Poor Peoples' Plan," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* (January 1969), 266.

<sup>24</sup> "ARCH: Black Advocates," *Progressive Architecture*, September, 1968, 107-110.

<sup>25</sup> Tucker, "Poor Peoples' Plan," 265.

<sup>26</sup> Tucker, "Poor Peoples' Plan," 267.

<sup>27</sup> "East Harlem Triangle Plan," Architects' Renewal Committee in Harlem, August 1968.

<sup>28</sup> "East Harlem Triangle Plan," Architects' Renewal Committee in Harlem, August 1968.

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ARCH had hired Roger Katan (another advocate architect who lived and worked in East Harlem), to do a traffic study of the Triborough Bridge intersection in the Triangle area. Katan had served as the initial architect for the nearby Corsi Houses, a NYCHA senior housing project; however, his exuberant and costly design had been dropped after a decade of revisions. With the Triangle plan, ARCH was trying to help restore the community. Thus, the new housing was staged in a checkerboard pattern so that no one will be relocated outside the area. Arch even discovered some of the former residents who want to move back.<sup>29</sup>

The East Harlem Triangle Plan was presented to the New York City Housing and Development Administration in 1968. At the time, ARCH estimated that the population had decreased to roughly 4,500, with 70 percent Black, 20 percent Puerto Rican, and 10 percent white residents.<sup>30</sup> Bond said of the plan, “its organizational structure represents an urban renewal innovation. For the first time a community participated fully in the decision and planning process from its inception.” Unfortunately, the large-scale redevelopment proposal was never approved.<sup>31</sup> However, it did serve as a catalyst for talks with the city about the needs of Triangle residents, particularly regarding new dwellings. The Jackie Robinson Houses was the sole result of the local advocacy and collaboration between NYCHA and the CAEHT to build housing in the neighborhood. Plans for new residential complexes were developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and in late 1968, New York City approved plans to construct more housing in the Triangle, with the goal of 2,400 new units, 1,600 of which would be designated for low-income tenants.<sup>32</sup> Ultimately, these were never completed. The Jackie Robinson Houses remains the only NYCHA development completed in the Triangle, but CAEHT continued to work with the Department of Housing and Urban Development and other community organizations to construct or rehabilitate housing units and community service buildings into the twenty-first century.

***Development of the Jackie Robinson Houses***

Alice Kornegay and the CAEHT stayed involved throughout the entire process of planning, constructing, and leasing the Jackie Robinson Houses. J. Max Bond also remained a part of the development of the Triangle, and his firm, Bond Ryder Associates, was the architect for the development.

***Bond Ryder Associates (Architects)***

J. Max Bond (1935-2009) was educated at Harvard University, receiving his bachelor’s degree in 1955 and his master’s degree in 1958. He pursued architecture despite being advised by a faculty member that it would be difficult to succeed in a practically all-white profession. Bond became one of the most prominent Black architects in the United States. At the time of his death in 2009, Bond was touted by the *New York Times* as the most influential African American architect in New York.<sup>33</sup> At the time of partner Donald P. Ryder’s death in 2021, the newspaper called the pair “one of the nation’s most prominent partnerships of Black architects.”<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> ARCH, *Progressive Architecture*.

<sup>30</sup> “East Harlem Triangle Plan,” Architects’ Renewal Committee in Harlem, August 1968.

<sup>31</sup> “East Harlem Triangle Plan,” Architects’ Renewal Committee in Harlem, August 1968.

<sup>32</sup> NYCHA Archives, 1970 Application Information; 1968 Urban Renewal Plan 2.

<sup>33</sup> David W. “J. Max Bond Jr., Architect, Dies at 73,” *New York Times*, February 19, 2009.

<sup>34</sup> Sam Roberts, “Donald P. Ryder, Architect of Black Heritage Sites, Dies at 94,” *New York Times*, April 14, 2021.

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After Bond's graduation from Harvard, he traveled and spent time working in France, New York, and Ghana. Bond worked for the Ghanaian government from 1964 to 1967 before returning to the United States and leading the Architects' Renewal Committee of Harlem (ARCH). ARCH had many pursuits, including a redevelopment plan created in conjunction with the Community Association of the East Harlem Triangle, education regarding tenant rights, diversification of the New York City Planning Commission, and the creation of the Architecture in the Neighborhoods program, which, with help from Cooper Union, provided pre-architectural training to students in New York.<sup>35</sup> Bond oversaw the development of the 1968 East Harlem Triangle plan in collaboration with the Community Association of the East Harlem Triangle. Though the plan was never fully developed, it galvanized efforts to construct more housing through the city's partnership with the CAEHT and led to the approval of the Jackie Robinson Houses. Bond's connection with the CAEHT likely led to his firm being chosen as the designers for the Jackie Robinson Houses.

In 1970, Bond partnered with Donald P. Ryder (1926-2021) to found Bond Ryder Associates. Ryder served with the Army Air Forces from 1945 to 1947 before earning a bachelor's degree in architecture from the University of Illinois in 1951.<sup>36</sup> Before joining with Bond, Ryder was employed at several firms including Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Marcel Breuer, and Harrison & Abramovitz.

Bond Ryder Associates specialized in medium- and high-density urban housing; urban planning and design; and university, religious, and community complexes.<sup>37</sup> In terms of housing in New York City, the firm designed the Lionel Hampton Houses (1973), a 355-unit complex on Eighth Avenue and 131<sup>st</sup> Street. The Hampton Houses was built as part of the Mitchell-Lama affordable housing program, a private-public partnership, but exited the program in 2007 and now has a private owner.<sup>38</sup> The firm also designed Towers on the Park (1989), a high-rise development located just northwest of Central Park, where moderate- and middle-income buyers received federal and state subsidies.<sup>39</sup> Bond Ryder Associates' notable non-residential work includes the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta (1982) and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem (1980).

In 1990, Ryder retired from the practice, and the firm merged with Davis, Brody & Associates to become Davis Brody Bond. Ryder went on to become a professor and later chairman of the Spitzer School of Architecture at the City College of New York for nearly thirty years.<sup>40</sup> At Davis Brody Bond, Bond continued to design prominent cultural and civil buildings, including the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute in Birmingham, Alabama (1992). Bond also advised on the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and

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<sup>35</sup> "J. Max Bond Jr." *African American Design Nexus*, Harvard Graduate School of Design. <https://aadn.gsd.harvard.edu/people/j-max-bond-jr/>. Accessed September 14, 2023.

<sup>36</sup> Roberts, "Donald P. Ryder, Architect of Black Heritage Sites, Dies at 94," *New York Times*, April 14, 2021.

<sup>37</sup> "J. Max Bond Jr.," Columbia Graduate School of Architecture, Preservation, and Planning. <https://www.arch.columbia.edu/news/j-max-bond-jr>. Accessed September 14, 2023.

<sup>38</sup> John Darton, "Hampton Houses Opened in Harlem," *New York Times*, July 2, 1973. Accessed September 29, 2023.

<sup>39</sup> Alan S. Oser, "Perspectives: City-Assisted Housing; Mixed-Income Condo Nears Completion," *New York Times*, February 7, 1988.

<sup>40</sup> Roberts, "Donald P. Ryder, Architect of Black Heritage Sites, Dies at 94," *New York Times*, April 14, 2021.

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Culture (2016) in Washington, D.C before his death. Both architects remained strong believers in community input on the built environment.

The CAEHT was eager to develop the site under the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) turnkey program because the method promised expedited timelines.<sup>41</sup> Under the turnkey program, housing authorities would approve plans for developments but would not officially purchase the buildings from the developers until construction was finished. While in some cases this led to a more efficient financing schedule, in others it encouraged developers to use shoddy materials and take short cuts in construction because they were not under the close supervision of government inspectors. Occasionally public agencies chose not to purchase the finished buildings because they were not up to current design and material standards. In this case, however, CAEHT acted as managing supervisor of the affordable housing development.<sup>42</sup> In this role, CAEHT negotiated the turnkey contract with the city and the developer, oversaw construction, and argued for what the community needed, including elderly housing and dwellings for families with two adults who were not couples where extra subsidies could be applied.<sup>43</sup> The organization's close supervision ensured the success of the turnkey project.

The development was originally planned to be one block north (bounded by 129<sup>th</sup> and 130<sup>th</sup> streets), but in 1969, Alice Kornegay, president of the CAEHT, recommended moving the development to its current location on the block bounded by 128<sup>th</sup> and 129<sup>th</sup> streets.<sup>44</sup> The block was previously residential and commercial with buildings described in a 1970 NYCHA report as "predominately dilapidated three-story brick structures."<sup>45</sup> Initial plans for the development drawn by Bond, Ryder & Associates called for a six-story, semi-fireproof building.<sup>46</sup> This later became one eight-story building with 187 units.<sup>47</sup> Ultimately, the design evolved into two nine-story buildings linked by a seven-story hyphen, totaling 189 units. There is a daycare center in the north building

NYCHA submitted plans to the City Planning Commission on December 21, 1970, and the commission approved the plan for the proposed building on Lexington Avenue between 128<sup>th</sup> and 129<sup>th</sup> streets with enough units for an estimated 650 residents on February 3, 1971.<sup>48</sup> Kornegay advocated for what the community needed, such as more elderly housing and units for families with two adults who were not couples.<sup>49</sup> The final unit distribution included 60 percent of units set aside for seniors. Including designated senior housing in the new development was a primary goal of CAEHT, which called "senior citizen facilities "non-existent in the

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<sup>41</sup> NYCHA Archives, 1970 Meeting Attendance.

<sup>42</sup> Robert E. Tomasson, "Freeze on Funds Shatters a Dream in East Harlem," *New York Times*, January 28, 1973.

<sup>43</sup> NYCHA Archives 1970, Meeting Report 9.

<sup>44</sup> NYCHA Archives, 1969 Change of Location Letter.

<sup>45</sup> NYCHA Archives, 1970 Info for Tentative Site Approval.

<sup>46</sup> NYCHA Archives, 1969 Fireproof Building Question.

<sup>47</sup> NYCHA Archives, 1970 NYCHA Project Proposal 5.

<sup>48</sup> NYCHA Archive, 1971 Proposal Approved.

<sup>49</sup> NYCHA Archives 1970, Meeting Report 9.

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Triangle,” in the 1968 proposal.<sup>50</sup> It was estimated that the population makeup for the building would not significantly impact schools in the area.<sup>51</sup>

On October 5, 1972, dedication ceremonies were held for an 189-unit complex at 128<sup>th</sup> Street and Lexington Avenue.<sup>52</sup> The development cost \$5.7 million. Rent in the new development would cost \$37 a room per month, much lower than the previous \$90 per room monthly rent in the area.<sup>53</sup> Tenant priority was given to applicants who resided on a site affected by the redevelopment efforts.<sup>54</sup>

Construction on residential units was completed in 1973, and the daycare center was finished in 1974. In addition, by 1974, the development was renamed the Jackie Robinson Houses, a name chosen by the tenants.<sup>55</sup> Kornegay and the CAEHT continued to be involved after residents moved into the complex, advocating to NYCHA on behalf of the tenants since any resident concerns “relate directly to the Triangle’s efforts at community restoration and redevelopment.”<sup>56</sup> The Jackie Robinson Houses is still owned by NYCHA and remains in operation as public housing.

***Successes and Failures of Housing Advocacy in the East Harlem Triangle***

At around the mid-century mark, during the height of Robert Moses and New York City’s urban renewal efforts, the majority of Harlem was written off as a blighted area and due to be demolished. The East Harlem Triangle, in particular, was deemed one of the neighborhood’s most blighted areas; yet, it still had a strong neighborhood identity and housing advocates had been working for new housing on the small plot since the 1930s and 1940s. The 1961 plan to turn the Triangle into an industrial area galvanized community organizations to oppose the city and develop their own redevelopment proposals. The Community Association of the East Harlem Triangle and the Architects’ Renewal Committee in Harlem presented a sweeping plan in 1968 to reorganize the entire Triangle around housing and community services. While the plan was never implemented, it was a catalyst for discussions between the community organizations and the city about what was necessary for residents. This was the opposite approach to other urban renewal projects in the area, which simply bulldozed thousands of units with little regard for the community’s needs. The community group’s strong input pushed this successful collaboration and insisted on gathering input from the community in planning for affordable housing. CAEHT also advocated for more elderly housing and community services, and it successfully secured set asides for seniors and a day care center to support families and children. Ultimately, though, the small Jackie Robinson Houses was the only NYCHA development completed in the area, and its 189 units fell far short of fulfilling the required housing needs. Its design was also a modification of that proposed by architect Max Bond.

<sup>50</sup> NYCHA Archives, 1970 NYCHA Project Proposal 5.

<sup>51</sup> NYCHA Archives, 1970 NYCHA Project Proposal 7.

<sup>52</sup> “\$5.7M Project Is Dedicated,” *Daily News*, October 5, 1972.

<sup>53</sup> “East Harlem Housing Gets Lift from U.S.,” *Daily News*, September 17, 1972.

<sup>54</sup> NYCHA Archives, 1972 Tenant Selection Priority.

<sup>55</sup> Edward Deith, “‘A Long Huddle, and I’ve Got It!’ Thus Do Buildings Get Their Names,” *New York Times*, November 15, 1981.

<sup>56</sup> NYCHA Archives, 1975 Tenant Hardships.



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Despite the intentions and dedication of the CAEHT, Bond Ryder Associates, and NYCHA, the Jackie Robinson Houses was not an idyllic environment. In a neighborhood with around 4,500 residents at the time, the NYCHA project provided only a handful of affordable units at the complex. And although the Jackie Robinson Houses was only nine stories tall, its lack of neighbors and small site gave the impression of a high-density complex on a small site, creating crowded interior spaces and limited outdoor areas. NYCHA's housing program had the worthy goal of alleviating "the widespread problem of overcrowding, hazardous living conditions, and exorbitant rents that characterized the precarious situation of tenants in Harlem."<sup>57</sup> Though there were thousands of new affordable units constructed across city, many of these issues still existed in the 1970s at complexes like the Jackie Robinson Houses.

### **Comparative Analysis**

#### ***Related Housing Developments in the 1970s***

There are no other NYCHA developments in the East Harlem Triangle, but there are other affordable housing complexes in the Triangle whose construction was overseen by the CAEHT, two of which were completed in the 1970s: the 1775 Houses and the AK Houses. Both are eleven-story brick buildings on the same site, with a green plaza between them. The 1775 Houses are "L"-shaped and the AK Houses are "U"-shaped.

Most other NYCHA Developments in this northern portion of East Harlem were built earlier (1950s/1960s) or later (1980s) than the Jackie Robinson Houses. The closest NYCHA housing developed in this area bounded by Park Avenue, 110<sup>th</sup> Street, and the Harlem River during the 1970s was the Corsi Houses, which was constructed exclusively as senior housing, and Park Avenue-East 122<sup>nd</sup> and 123<sup>rd</sup> Streets. However, there were approximately fifteen other NYCHA housing complexes developed in Manhattan during the 1970s as well as seventeen in the Bronx, fifteen in the Brooklyn, four in Queens, and one in Staten Island. Of these developments, seven in Manhattan were constructed as stand-alone towers, as well as nine in the Bronx, two in Brooklyn, two in Queens, and none in Staten Island. The rest of the 1970s developments were constructed as campuses, scattered sites, additions, or towers in the park. Twelve of the stand-alone towers were eight stories or taller, and the other eight were up to seven stories.

#### **Glebe Avenue-Westchester Avenue Apartments and Fort Independence Street-Heath Avenue Apartments**

Few of these 1970s stand-alone towers had simple, rectangular footprints. The architects primarily chose shapes such as "T," "I," "L," or "H"-shaped patterns, or even more irregular shapes. The two buildings connected by hyphen seen at the Jackie Robinson Houses is relatively uncommon, particularly the offset "Z"-shape. No. 572 Warren Street (1972) in Brooklyn and Glebe Avenue-Westchester Avenue (1971) (see **Figure 6**) in the Bronx each feature two connected towers, but the overall form of both buildings is more regular and "H"-shaped than the Robinson Houses, and both examples are less than eight stories in height. The Fort Independence Street-Heath Avenue complex (1974) (see **Figure 7**) in the Bronx is also similar in footprint to the Robinson Houses, but it is more irregular and features four segments instead of three, creating a chevron-like pattern rather than "Z." Like the Robinson Houses, Fort Independence Street-Heath Avenue is above eight stories in height. No.

<sup>57</sup> Metzger, "Rebuilding Harlem," 278.

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572 Warren Street, Glebe Avenue-Westchester Avenue, and Fort Independence Street-Heath Avenue were all designed to have brick cladding, distinguishing the textured concrete of the Robinson Houses. Only four other stand-alone NYCHA towers in the 1970s featured textured concrete: 45 Allen Street (1974) in Manhattan and Bailey Avenue-West 193<sup>rd</sup> Street (1973), Davidson Houses (1973), and Middletown Plaza (1973) in the Bronx. Overall, however, the Jackie Robinson Houses are most distinguished for the community involvement that brought housing to the Triangle, as both CAEHT and ARCH proved strong advocates for the needs of the Triangle and its residents. Bond and Ryder were active in designing affordable housing in Harlem in the second half of the twentieth century. Research has not uncovered any other designs that the firm did for NYCHA, and it does not appear that they partnered with the CAEHT on any other housing developments. It seems that the only other major 1970s housing development completed by Bond and Ryder was the Lionel Hampton Houses (1973) in Harlem. Like the Robinson Houses, the Hampton Houses feature textured concrete cladding and offset rectangular towers. Further research may be necessary to determine if any other residential complexes can be attributed to the firm during this period.

Comparative Examples

Metro North Plaza (NR listed)

Metro North Plaza (see **Figure 8**) was completed in 1971 as a result of joint efforts by NYCHA and the local community organization, Metro North Citizens' Committee (MNCC), similar to the Jackie Robinson Houses. The development consists of three towers, seven-, eight-, and eleven-stories high, located on the block bounded by East 102<sup>nd</sup> Street to the north, 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue to the east, 101<sup>st</sup> Street to the south, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue to the west. Though there are three buildings, they are not connected like the buildings at the Jackie Robinson Houses. The buildings were designed by prominent architect William Lescaze, and after Lescaze's death in 1969, the project was completed by architects Hausman and Rosenberg. MNCC partnered with Lescaze and NYCHA throughout the process to provide community input on the development. In addition, the MNCC worked with the Mayor's Housing Executive Committee to create an overall plan for the redevelopment of the Metro North neighborhood of East Harlem as a whole. Like the Jackie Robinson Houses, Metro North Plaza represents public housing created as a result of cooperation and collaboration by NYCHA and the surrounding community. The site is still in operation as public housing under the ownership of NYCHA.

Gaylord White Houses (NR listed)

Also located in East Harlem, Manhattan, the Gaylord White Houses (see **Figure 9**) was completed in 1964 as standalone elderly affordable housing in East Harlem, Manhattan. Designed by Mayer, Whittlesey & Glass, the Gaylord White Houses consists of a twenty-story tower and nine-story extension at the northwest corner of East 104<sup>th</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. A one-story children's center and three-story community center are located along East 104<sup>th</sup> Street and are connected to the main building. Gaylord White serves as another example of NYCHA working closely with a neighborhood organization (Union Settlement) in the overall design of a development, in this case working with Union Settlement specifically on the community center and amenities for senior center. However, Gaylord White was constructed earlier than the Jackie Robinson Houses and was also created

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exclusively for elderly housing. The CAEHT advocated for the Robinson Houses to designate about 60 percent of units for seniors, but it was not exclusively elderly housing.

UPACA

UPACA 5 (see **Figure 10**) and UPACA 6 (see **Figure 11**) are located at Lexington Avenue and E 120<sup>th</sup> Street in East Harlem, Manhattan. These buildings were completed in 1986. They are named after the Upper Park Avenue Community Association (UPACA), which was founded by Harlem residents Mary Iemma and Margaret Jenkins, in 1963. Their mission was to redevelop Lexington Avenue between 117<sup>th</sup> and 124<sup>th</sup> Streets. This collaboration between NYCHA and a community organization is similar to the Jackie Robinson Houses. Like the CAEHT, UPACA also completed multiple projects that are not part of the NYCHA portfolio but were constructed as affordable housing for residents of East Harlem. UPACA 5 and UPACA 6 were built over a decade after the Jackie Robinson Houses, however, and are located on two separate parcels that are separated by 120<sup>th</sup> Street and the two buildings feature very different designs.

1775 Houses and AK Houses

At the same time the proposal for the Jackie Robinson Houses was approved in the late 1960s, CAEHT also planned to move forward with two other housing developments – two eleven-story buildings and one thirteen-story building with a total of 603 apartments and 35,000 square feet of commercial and community space – using a federal mortgage subsidy program.<sup>58</sup> However, in 1973, the federal government announced a moratorium on these funds after sites had been cleared and residents and businesses relocated.<sup>59</sup> The freeze ended in 1976, and the CAEHT moved forward with a smaller scope of work.<sup>60</sup> The 1775 Houses – 246 low- and moderate-income units – and the AK Houses – 157 units – were finished in 1979 (see **Figure 12**). The architects for both eleven-story buildings were by S.J. Kessler & Sons.<sup>61</sup> These complexes were not developed in conjunction with NYCHA. After construction was completed, the complexes were managed by a private company that specialized in subsidized housing in partnership with the CAEHT.<sup>62</sup>

Though they are separate developments, the two eleven-story towers are located on the same parcel of land and share a plaza between them. They are relatively simple in design, featuring brick facades with limited ornament. Unlike with the Jackie Robinson Houses, the CAEHT did not collaborate with NYCHA on the 1775 Houses and AK Houses, instead using federal mortgage subsidy funds and partnering with private management companies.

Lionel Hampton Houses

The Lionel Hampton Houses (see **Figure 13**), a 355-unit affordable housing complex on Eighth Avenue and 131<sup>st</sup> Street., was completed in 1973 and designed by Bond Ryder Associates. The Hampton Houses features brick exteriors with limited ornament since it was affordable housing and cost-effective designs and materials were prioritized. The development was named for noted jazz musician Lionel Hampton, who provided the 5

<sup>58</sup> Robert E. Tomasson, "Freeze on Funds Shatters a Dream in East Harlem," *New York Times*, January 28, 1973.

<sup>59</sup> Tomasson, "Freeze on Funds." *New York Times*, January 28, 1973.

<sup>60</sup> Charlayne Hunter-Gault, "Housing in Harlem Gains in Vitality," *New York Times*, December 12, 1976.

<sup>61</sup> Tomasson, "Freeze on Fund," *New York Times*, January 28, 1973.

<sup>62</sup> Jill Jones, "The Art of Running Subsidized Buildings," *New York Times*, April 19, 1981.

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percent cash equity for the \$13 million project. The rest of the funding was made available at a low-interest rate mortgage through the New York State Urban Development Corporation and subsidized through federal funding.<sup>63</sup> Like the Jackie Robinson Houses, it had units designated for seniors as well as units for families.

**Conclusion**

The Jackie Robinson Houses is the only example of a NYCHA development in the East Harlem Triangle and is notable for its connections to groups like the Community Association of the East Harlem Triangle (CAEHT) and Architects' Renewal Committee in Harlem (ARCH), as well as to figures like Alice Kornegay, Max Bond, and Donald Ryder. Jackie Robinson Houses is locally significant under Criterion A in the categories of social history and community planning and development as an intact, representative example of a government initiative to build large-scale public housing during the 1970s in East Harlem with significant community input from prominent community organizations. The history of the Jackie Robinson Houses is also closely tied to the history of urban renewal in the Triangle and the redevelopment goals of the CAEHT and ARCH to build housing to meet the needs of the community, rather than the plans of city officials.

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<sup>63</sup> "Ground is Broken for City Project," *New York Times*, November 22, 1971.

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**Jackie Robinson Houses**  
Name of Property

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 1.49  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

**Jackie Robinson Houses**  
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**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the attached map with scale.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary encompasses the extent of the land historically associated with the Jackie Robinson Houses during the complex's period of significance. The boundary is inclusive of the contributing building, surrounding fenced green space, paved walkways, play areas, and parking.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Cindy Hamilton/Mariana Melin-Corcoran; edited by Kathleen LaFrank, NYSHPO  
organization Heritage Consulting Group date February 2025  
street & number 15 W Highland Ave telephone 215-248-1260  
city or town Philadelphia state PA zip code 19118  
e-mail chamilton@heritage-consulting.com

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Jackie Robinson Houses

City or Vicinity: New York

County: New York

State: New York

Photographer: Scott Doyle

Date Photographed: February 28, 2024

Description of Photograph(s) and number: 1 to 34

**Jackie Robinson Houses**

New York, NY

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- 0001\_Exterior, South and East Elevation, view looking north
- 0002\_Exterior, South Elevation, view looking north
- 0003\_Exterior, South and West Elevations, view looking northeast
- 0004\_Exterior, North and West Elevations, view looking south
- 0005\_Exterior, North and East Elevations, view looking southwest
- 0006\_Exterior, East and South Elevations, view looking west
- 0007\_Exterior, Site, Parking Lot, view looking north
- 0008\_Exterior, North Building, Entrance, view looking north
- 0009\_Extreior, South Building, Entrance, view looking south
- 0010\_Exterior, Site, Playground, view looking east
- 0011\_Exterior, Site, Courtyard and Parking Lot, view looking west
- 0012\_North Building, Ground Floor, Lobby, view looking north
- 0013\_North Building, Ground Floor, Lobby, view looking south
- 0014\_Ground Floor of North Building, Corridor, view looking east
- 0015\_Ground Floor, North Building, Tenant Association Room, view looking north
- 0016\_Ground Floor, North Building, Daycare, view looking west
- 0017\_Ground Floor, North Building, Community Center, view looking east
- 0018\_Ground Floor of South Building, Lobby, view looking north
- 0019\_Ground Floor of South Building, Corridor, view looking west
- 0020\_Ground Floor, South Building, Office, view looking east
- 0021\_Ground Floor, South Building, Staff Lounge, view looking northeast
- 0022\_North Building, Second Floor, Elevator Lobby, view looking southwest
- 0023\_North Building, Second Floor, Corridor, view looking east
- 0024\_North Building, Second Floor, Unit 2B, Living Room, view looking south
- 0025\_North Building, Second Floor, Unit 2B, Living Room, view looking north
- 0026\_North Building, Second Floor, Unit 2B, Kitchen, view looking south
- 0027\_North Building, Second Floor, Unit 2B, Bedroom, view looking northwest
- 0028\_South Building, Eighth Floor, Elevator Lobby, view looking east
- 0029\_South Building, Eighth Floor, Corridor, view looking west
- 0030\_South Building, Eighth Floor, Stairwell, view looking east
- 0031\_South Building, Eighth Floor, Unit 8W, Living Room, view looking north
- 0032\_South Building, Eighth Floor, Unit 8W, Living Room, view looking south
- 0033\_South Building, Eighth Floor, Unit 8W, Kitchen, view looking south
- 0034\_South Building, Eighth Floor, Unit 8W, Bedroom, view looking northwest

**List of Maps:**

- Map 1: Jackie Robinson Houses Aerial Map
- Map 2: Jackie Robinson Houses Boundary and Site Plan

**List of Figures:**

- Figure 1: Public Housing Table Harlem (Source: New York City Housing Authority).
- Figure 2: East Harlem Triangle Map (Source: The New York Times, October 5, 1961).
- Figure 3: Community members reviewing ARCH's 1968 plans. Community input through the CAEHT was a major factor in the Jackie Robinson development.
- Figure 4: Drawing from the 1968 plan for the East Harlem Triangle prepared by ARCH and CAEHT, showing the overall planning and breakdown of building uses.
- Figure 5: Model from the 1968 plan showing a proposed mix of high- and low-rise buildings in the Triangle. The area currently features a mix of high- and low-rise buildings.
- Figure 6: Glebe Avenue-Westchester Avenue, 2125 Glebe Avenue, Bronx, NY. (Google 2024)
- Figure 7: Fort Independence Street-Heath Avenue. 3340 Bailey Avenue, Bronx, NY. (Google 2024)
- Figure 8: Metro North, 307 East 101st Street, NY, NY (Google 2024)
- Figure 9: Gaylord White, 2029 2nd Avenue, NY, NY (Google 2024)
- Figure 10: UPACA 5, 1980 Lexington Avenue, NY, NY (Google 2024)
- Figure 11: UPACA 6, 1940 Lexington Avenue, NY, NY (Google 2024)



**Jackie Robinson Houses**

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Figure 12: 1775 Houses, 107-129 East 126th Street, NY, NY (foreground) and AK Houses, 112 East 128th Street, NY, NY (background) (Google 2024)

Figure 13: Lionel Hampton Houses, 410 St. Nicholas Ave, NY, NY (Google 2024)

Figure 14: Photo Key, Site Plan

Figure 15: Photo Key, Ground Floor Plan

Figure 16: Photo Key, Second Floor Plan

Figure 17: Photo Key, Eighth Floor Plan

**Property Owner:**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name N/A

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

**Jackie Robinson Houses**

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**Map 1: Jackie Robinson Houses Aerial Map - - Property Boundary outlined in red**



**NOTE:** boundary drawn incorrectly here – it does not include the building on the far left

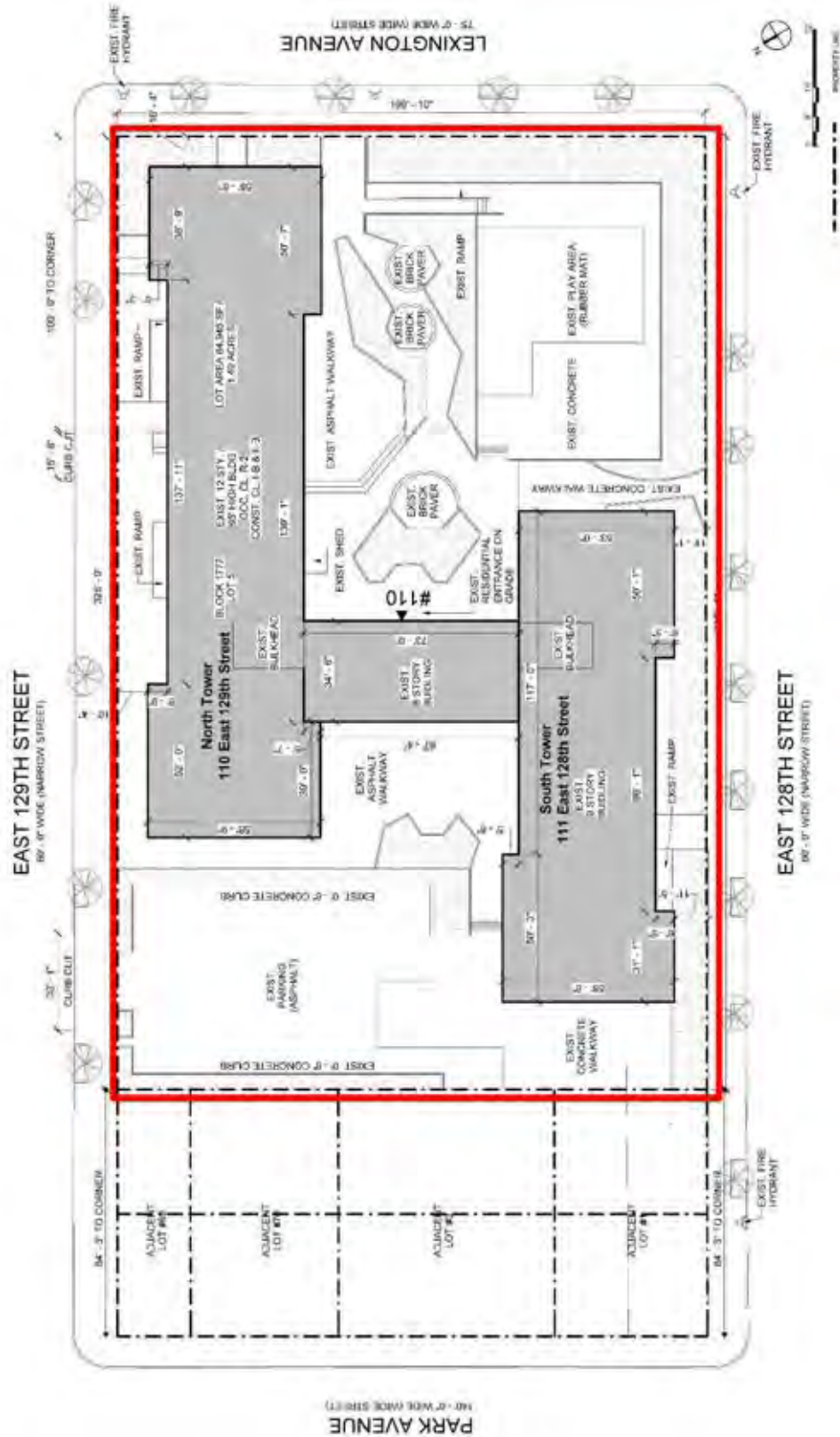
**Jackie Robinson Houses**

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**Map 2: Jackie Robinson Houses Boundary and Site Plan – Property Boundary outlined in red**



**Jackie Robinson Houses**

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**Figure 1: Public Housing Table Harlem (Source: New York City Housing Authority).**

Table 3. Public housing projects planned for Harlem, 1942–1958

Project name	Year announced	Year completed	Units	Per cent nonwhite			Population density
				Start	1965	1980	
Lincoln	1942	1948	1286	99.6	99.5	99.7	261
Johnson	1942	1948	1310	89.7	94.9	98.7	278
King	1946	1954	1379	98.3	97.2	99.6	258
Carver	1947	1958	1246	90.5	93.4	97.4	206
Colonial Park	1948	1951	984	97.9	99.7	99.7	205
St Nicholas	1949	1954	1526	99.9	99.7	99.8	238
Lexington	1949	1951	448	69.9	83.5	90.5	255
Jefferson	1950	1959	1493	72.7	74.8	91.3	214
Washington	1950	1957	1515	92.3	89.0	95.4	170
Wagner	1951	1958	2162	80.6	82.8	96.4	208
Grant	1952	1957	1940	92.7	90.6	98.1	324
Taft	1954	1962	1470	94.9	95.2	97.5	291
Manhattanville	1954	1961	1272	75.0	82.0	96.1	253
Franklin Plaza	1954	1962	1635	(Not available)			448
Drew-Hamilton	1956	1965	1217	—	98.0	99.5	422
White (elderly)	1958	1964	248	34.7	35.5	68.6	356
<b>16 projects</b>			<b>21 131</b>				

Source: New York City Housing Authority.

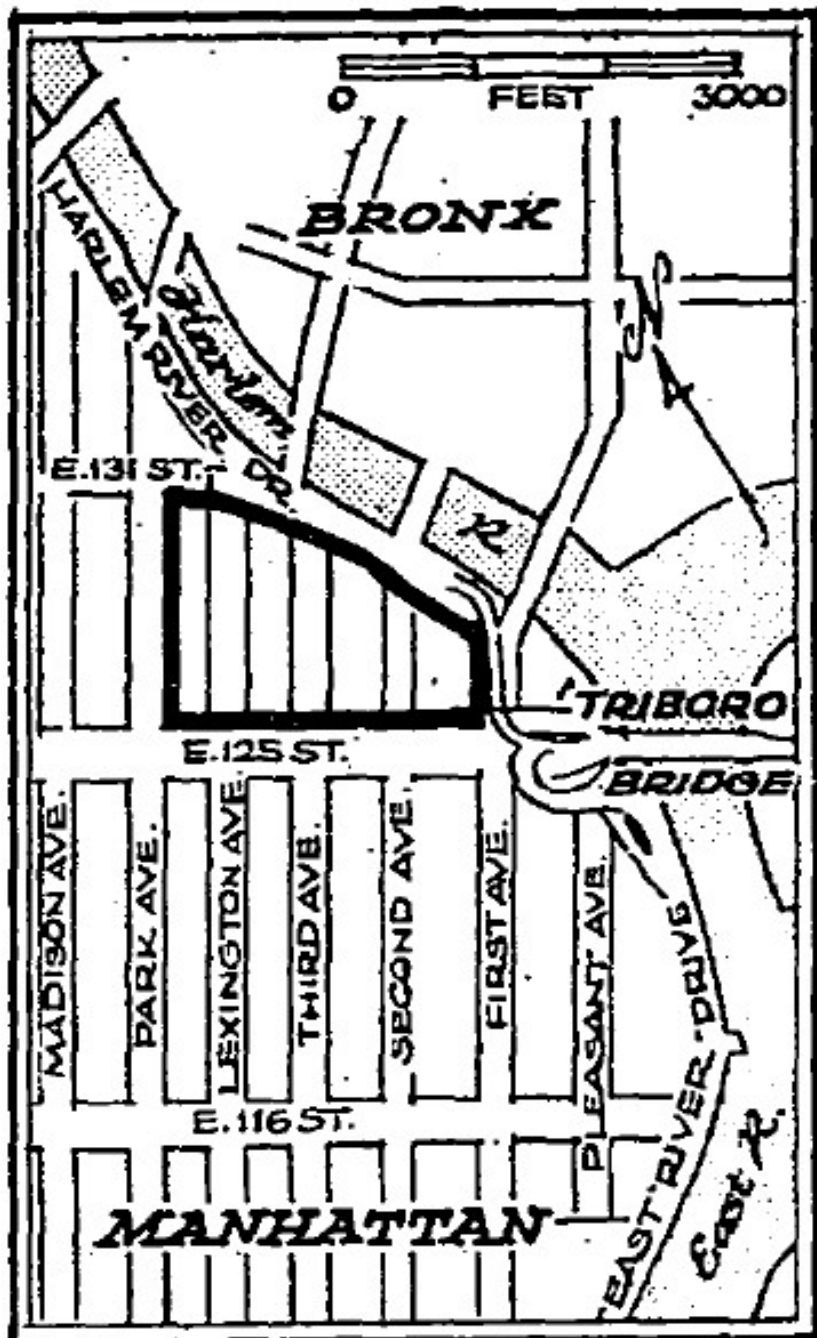
**Jackie Robinson Houses**

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Figure 2: East Harlem Triangle Map (Source: *The New York Times*, October 5, 1961).



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**Figure 3: Community members reviewing ARCH's 1968 plans. Community input through the CAEHT was a major factor in the Jackie Robinson development.**



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Figure 4: Drawing from the 1968 plan for the East Harlem Triangle prepared by ARCH and CAEHT, showing the overall planning and breakdown of building uses.

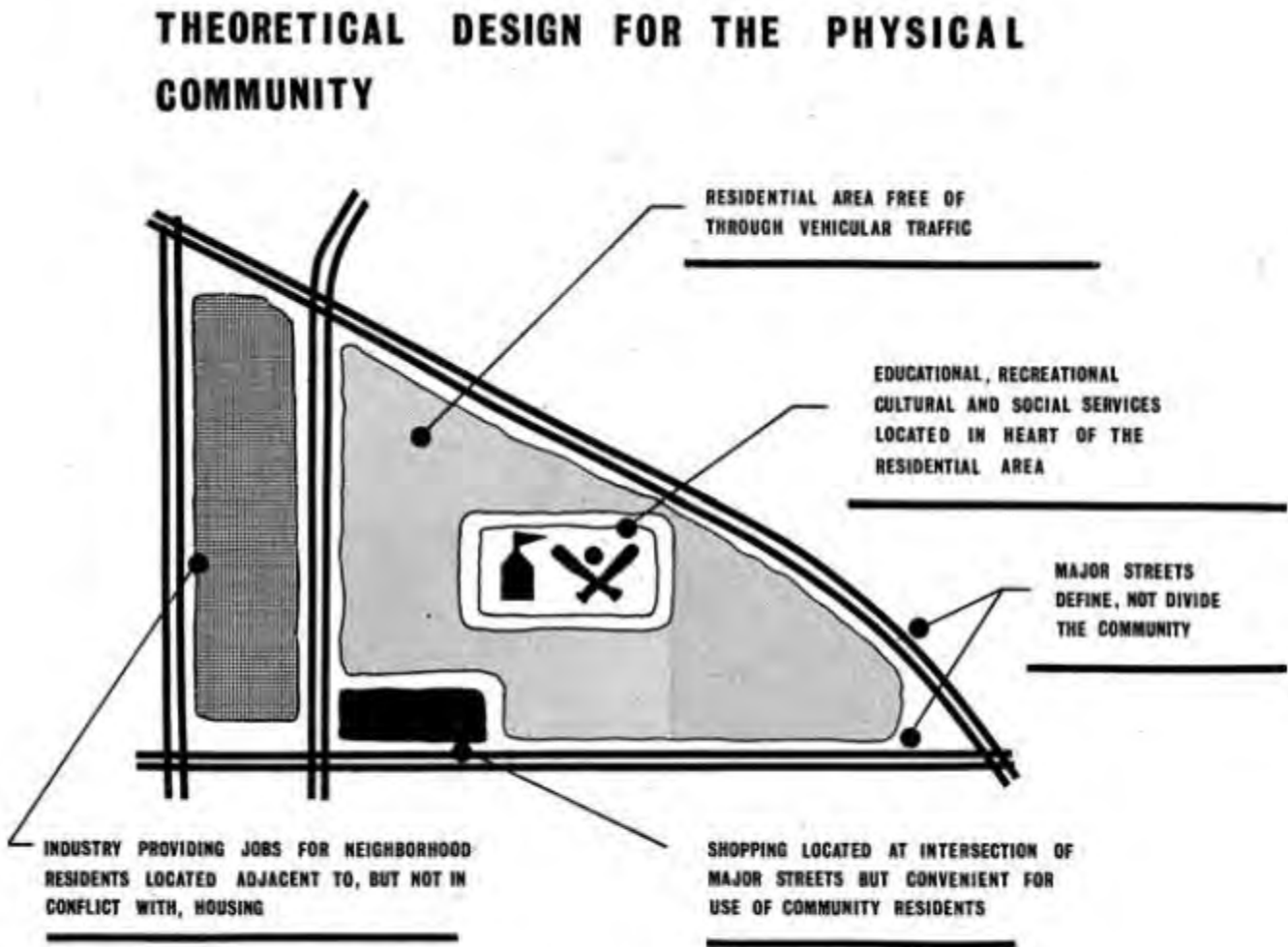


FIGURE 2.5. Conceptual plan prepared by ARCH and CAEHT in 1968, showing a mixture of land uses within the East Harlem Triangle neighborhood and needed community and social services at its “heart.” Madison Avenue defines the western boundary of this diagram, while 125th Street forms its southern boundary.

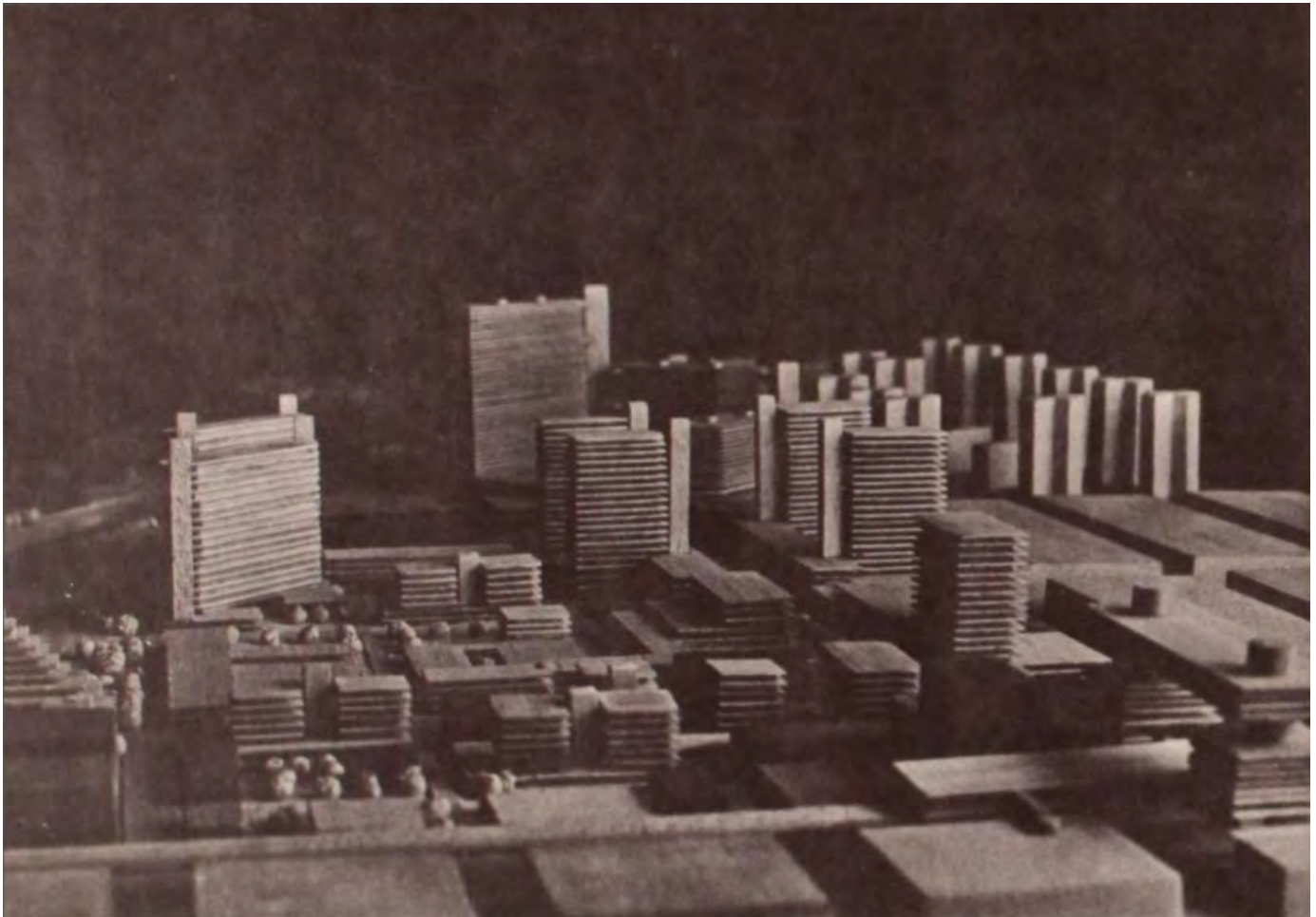
**Jackie Robinson Houses**

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**Figure 5: Model from the 1968 plan showing a proposed mix of high- and low-rise buildings in the Triangle. The area currently features a mix of high- and low-rise buildings.**





**Jackie Robinson Houses**

Name of Property

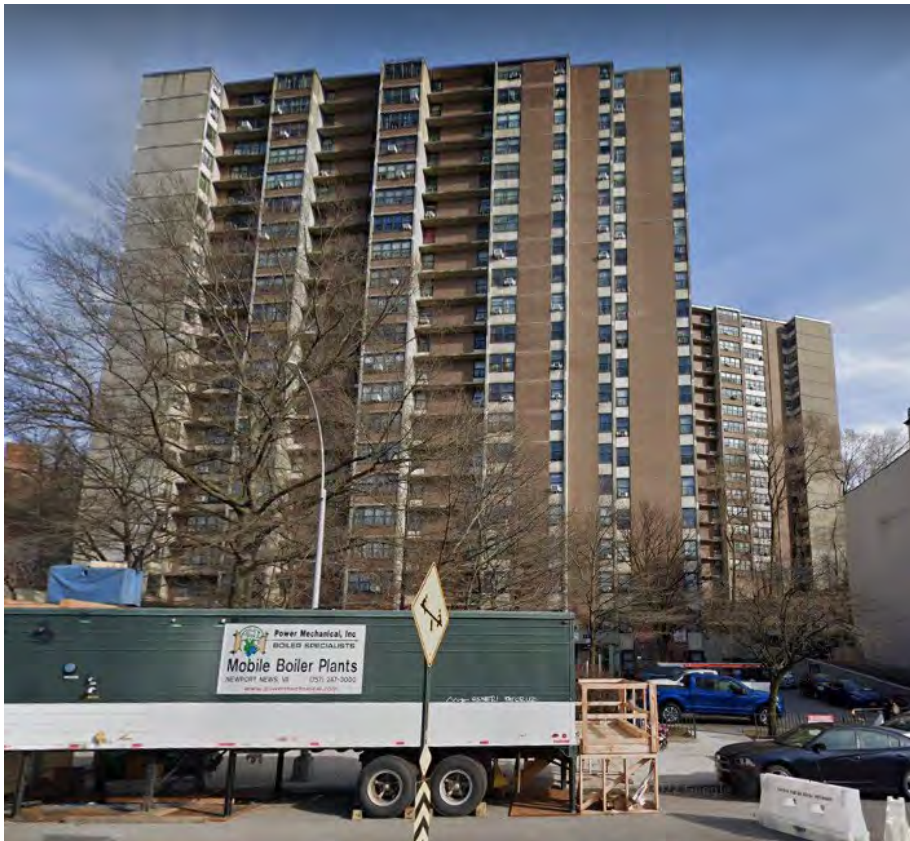
New York, NY

County and State

**Figure 6: Glebe Avenue-Westchester Avenue, 2125 Glebe Avenue, Bronx, NY. (Google 2024)**



**Figure 7: Fort Independence Street-Heath Avenue. 3340 Bailey Avenue, Bronx, NY. (Google 2024)**



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**Figure 8: Metro North, 307 East 101<sup>st</sup> Street, NY, NY (Google 2024)**



**Figure 9: Gaylord White, 2029 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, NY, NY (Google 2024)**



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**Figure 10: UPACA 5, 1980 Lexington Avenue, NY, NY (Google 2024)**



**UPACA 6, 1940 Lexington Avenue, NY, NY (Google 2024)**



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**Figure 12: 1775 Houses, 107-129 East 126th Street, NY, NY (foreground) and AK Houses, 112 East 128<sup>th</sup> Street, NY, NY (background) (Google 2024)**



**Figure 13: Lionel Hampton Houses, 410 St. Nicholas Ave, NY, NY (Google 2024)**



**Jackie Robinson Houses**

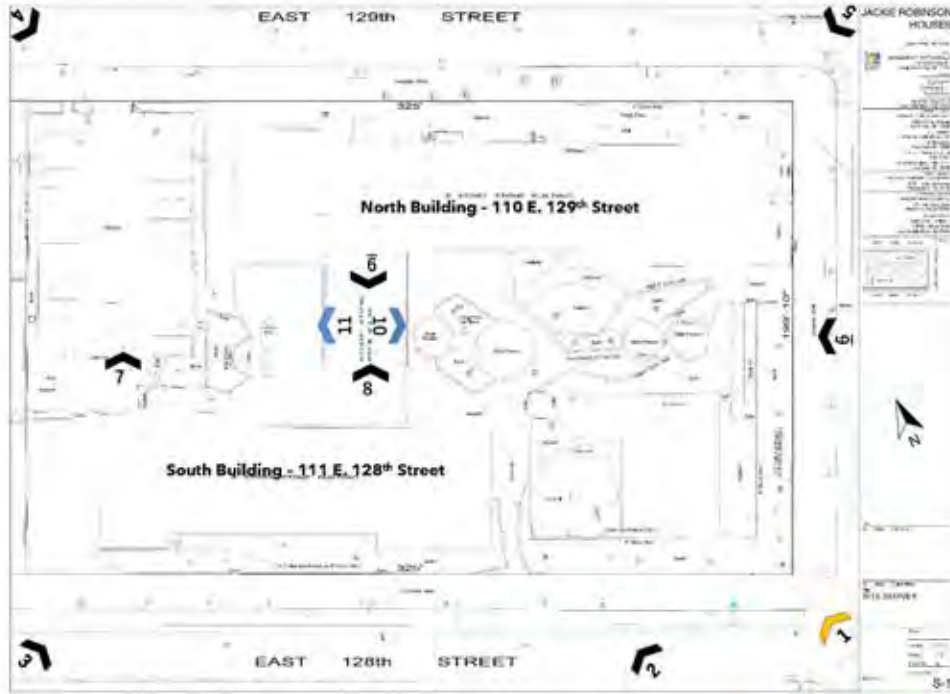
Name of Property

New York, NY

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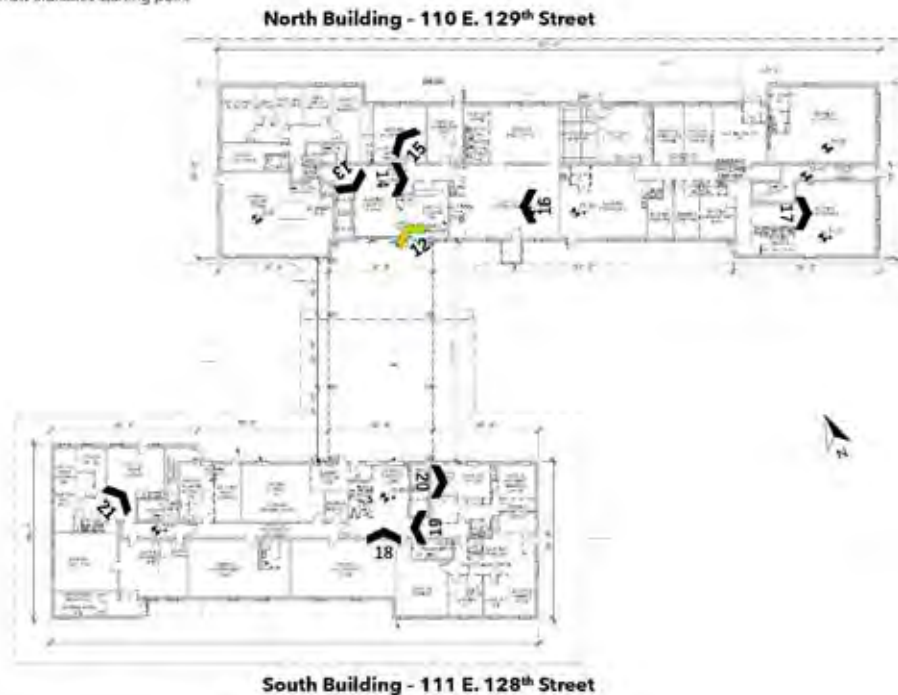
**Figure 14: Photo Key, Site Plan**

**Figure 14: Site Photo Key Plan**  
**Jackie Robinson Houses - 110 E. 129<sup>th</sup> Street and 111 E. 128<sup>th</sup> Street - Site Plan**  
**Photos 1-11**  
*Yellow arrow indicates starting point*  
*Blue arrow indicates aerial view of site from roof*



**Figure 15: Photo Key, Ground Floor Plan**

**Figure 15: Jackie Robinson Houses, Ground Floor Photo Key Plan**  
**North and South Building**  
**Photos - 12-21**  
*Yellow arrow indicates starting point*



**Jackie Robinson Houses**

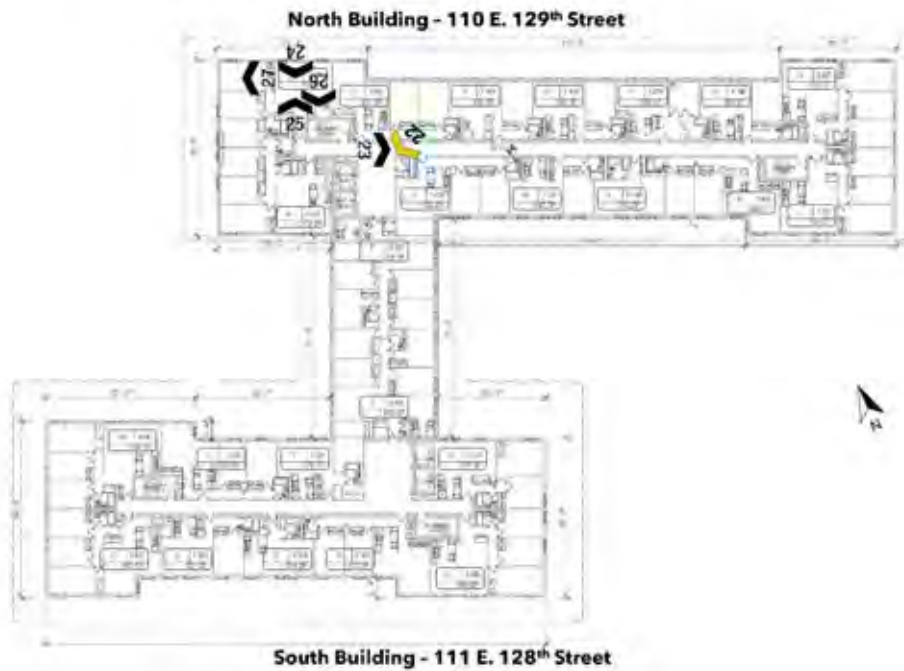
Name of Property

New York, NY

County and State

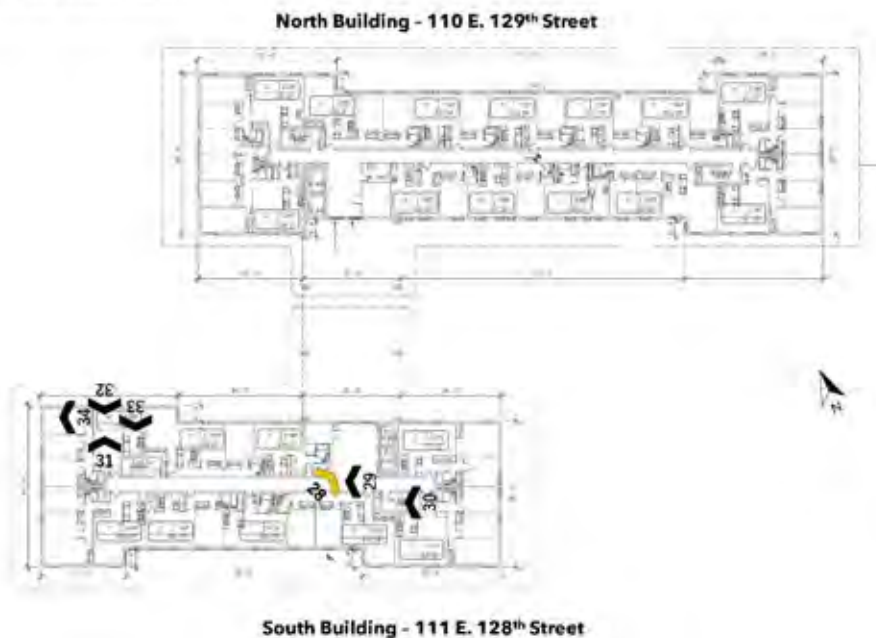
**Figure 16: Photo Key, Second Floor Plan**

**Figure 16: Jackie Robinson Houses, Second Floor Photo Key Plan**  
Photos - 22-27  
Second to Seventh Floors are identical in plan  
Yellow arrow indicates starting point



**Figure 17: Photo Key, Eighth Floor Plan**

**Figure 17: Jackie Robinson Houses, Eighth Floor Photo Key Plan**  
North and South Building  
Photos - 28-34  
First and Eighth Floors are identical in plan  
Yellow arrow indicates starting point





10 E. 125 ST

NO PARKING IN  
FRONT OF  
BUILDING AT  
ANY TIME

NO  
PARKING  
IN  
FRONT  
OF  
BUILDING  
AT  
ANY  
TIME



III E. 128 ST.

WELCOME TO  
Edmonton House









B

Emergency  
Exit

A



TENANT PATROL  
ACTIVE IN  
THIS BUILDING  
YOUR COOPERATION IS  
NEEDED TO MAKE IT WORK  
ALL VISITORS MUST SIGN LOG BOOK

NO SMOKING

CAUTION  
WET FLOOR  
CUIDADO  
PISO MOJADO

LOVE



Red sign with a graphic of a person and some illegible text.

NOTICE  
SIGN LOG  
CHECKED IN  
BY SUPERVISOR  
BEFORE  
FINISHING



NO WEAPONS  
PERMITTED  
IN THIS AREA

110E




















EXIT

NOTICE

NOTICE

FIRE EXTINGUISHER

NOTICE

NOTICE

NOTICE





SLOP  
SINK

NOT AN  
EXIT













NO TRESPASAR  
PROHIBIDO EL FUMAR

A



**SLOP  
SINK**

**NOT AN  
EXIT**

R  
→













ONE WAY

Lexington Avenue

NO LEFT TURN

Handicap Accessible











CITY  
SPEED  
LIMIT  
**25**  
PHOTO  
ENFORCED

Lexington

ONE WAY



AY

ONE WAY

CONSTRUCTION

CONSTRUCTION



