

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 N/A

Location

street & number 110 E 129th Street and 111 E. 128th Street

☐

not for publication

city or town New York

☐

vicinity

state NY

code 036

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

Jackie Robinson Houses

Name of Property

New York, NY

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	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	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

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

Jackie Robinson Houses are located at 110 E. 129th Street (North Building) and 111 E. 128th Street (South Building) in Harlem, Manhattan. Jackie Robinson Houses was constructed by NYCHA as a multi-family complex for low-income families with set asides to provide approximately 60 percent of the apartment units for seniors. The complex consists of two, nine-story rectangular pavilions situated parallel to each other and attached by a perpendicular, seven-story hyphen that connects the two pavilions on the ground level. The three interconnected components are considered one building for the purposes of the nomination but will be described as separate features. The two buildings, known as North Tower and South Tower, and the hyphen are clad in ribbed concrete block. In total, these house 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.¹ Jackie Robinson Houses is located on a 1.5-acre site bounded by E 129th Street to the north, Lexington Avenue to the east, E 128th Street to the south, and Park Avenue to the west. The buildings are generally east-west oriented, and the hyphen is north-south oriented. Both buildings are roughly I-shaped, with slight projecting bays at either end. A daycare and a 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 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.

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 surrounding streets are arranged in a typical grid-like pattern and primarily contain low- and mid-rise buildings built in the late twentieth century, with some early twenty-first century buildings. Most 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 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 1.5 acres with iron fencing and street trees along the perimeter of the site. It contains the two rectangular buildings and connecting hyphen, which are centrally located on the parcel,

¹ NYCHA Archives, 1971 Affirmative Action Compliance.

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

North Tower: The north tower 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 Tower: The south tower 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 tower and the south tower. The east and west elevations of the hyphen are eight window bays wide. The bottom two stories of the hyphen constitute 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-story windows.

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.

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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. Above the breezeway, there is no interconnection between the two pavilions, as they have separate entrances, lobbies and vertical circulation. 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 tower, 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 panel ceilings.

In the south tower, the elevator lobby is located on 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 panel 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 are painted metal. At the upper levels, there are no interior connections via the hyphen between the two building sections. On each floor, the hyphen contains two apartment units, one accessible via the elevator lobby in the north tower and the other accessible via the south tower 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 historic ceramic tile flooring. Doors in units have faux wood veneer (**see Photographs 24-27 and 31-34**).

Vertical Circulation: In the north tower, 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 tower, there are also two stairwells (**see 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.

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Integrity

The Jackie Robinson Houses has continuously served the local community as affordable housing since construction in 1973 and retains a high degree of 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 tower 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.

On the interior, the buildings retain their original layouts although some original finishes have been replaced. Notably, the circulation patterns, with a central, east-west, double-loaded corridor in each tower, are intact, and 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 retain integrity to convey its historic use as a public housing complex in the East Harlem Triangle.

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8. Statement of Significance

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.

☐
☐

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL HISTORY

COMMUNITY PLANNING/DEVELOPMENT

Period of Significance

1974

Significant Dates

1974

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Bond Ryder & Associates (architects)

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.

Period of Significance (justification)

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

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

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Summary

The Jackie Robinson Houses, constructed in 1973-74, is significant under Criterion A in the areas of COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT and SOCIAL HISTORY for its association with public housing programs in East Harlem after World War II and specifically for its association with the history and development of a small area in northeastern Harlem known as the Harlem Triangle. In the post-war period, East Harlem witnessed an unprecedented number of new public housing projects, many championed by Robert Moses, who, after taking charge of the city's public housing program, formed the Mayor's Slum Clearance Committee in 1948. The committee gave him license to deem vast areas of the city as slums, raze them, and build large new public housing complexes in their place. The amount of demolition and new construction that occurred in East Harlem within a short period precipitated major changes in geography, street patterns, settlement patterns and living conditions. Within this era of mass demolition and building, a city report condemned the tiny Harlem Triangle as "one of the most blighted and rundown areas in Harlem ...wholly unsuitable for housing." This designation led to the city's efforts to remove and relocate Black and Puerto Rican residents from the triangle and a plan to level the area and redevelop it with industrial resources.

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 and worked to thwart the city's plans, which faced strong opposition from neighborhood residents. CAEHT, led by prominent activist Alice Kornegay, and ARCH, led by important African American architect J. Max Bond, fought the neighborhood's designation as "blighted and run down," forcing the city to amend its urban renewal plan to permit housing. 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. The East Harlem plan included a commercial corridor, new and renovated housing units, green space, and a community services center. The plan proved a catalyst for talks with NYCHA to address the estimated need for 2,000 new or rehabilitated housing units, at least 500 for moderate income families. Although the ambitious East Harlem Triangle Plan was never completely developed, the Jackie Robinson Houses complex emerged directly from it. The complex was designed by Bond Ryder & Associates, composed of two of the most prominent Black architects in New York City, J. Max Bond Jr. and Donald P. Ryder. Max Bond (1935-2009), later touted by the *New York Times* as the most influential African American architect in New York, was an important influence on Harlem not only as an architect but also as a Black social leader and community advocate.² Early in his training, Bond developed theories on sustainable development and reinforced his belief that architecture should embody humanistic values.³ He went on to a career combining his design experience and his philosophies regarding social impact. Bond and Ryder left a powerful imprint on Black history in architecture, especially as advocates for equitable housing in New York. Both strongly believed in community input on the built environment. The design of the Jackie Robinson Houses was an attempt to respond to the expressed needs of the local citizens, including the desire for more apartments for the elderly. To the extent that it responded to those needs, the project was a success; however, constrained by a small site and budgetary

² "J. Max Bond Jr.," Beyond the Built Environment, accessed May 28, 2025, <https://www.beyondthebuilt.com/j-max-bond-jr>. David W. "J. Max Bond Jr., Architect, Dies at 73," *New York Times*, February 19, 2009, 78.

³ "J. Max Bond Jr."

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Population Census, between 1930 and 1960, the Black population in East Harlem more than doubled..⁸ Puerto Ricans began to arrive during this period as well, seeking opportunity after being forced off their homeland by large U.S farming monopolies.⁹ The population of Harlem thereby grew from 83,000 in 1920 to 204,000 in 1934. With the increase of these minority populations came increased racism, segregation, and white flight.¹⁰

Unemployment also increased, as industrial decline left 50 percent of African Americans in Manhattan out of work. Tensions between the Black community and white shop owners during the Great Depression increased substantially, leading to the racially charged “riots” of 1935. This moment mobilized the Black community of Harlem, further establishing the neighborhood as a center for political activism and Black leadership. Harlem’s churches were particularly influenced by the incident, with many church leaders cementing their duty to become involved in the political and economic affairs of their community. Leaders demanded better and more plentiful housing, as well as more job opportunities and other social and educational services for African Americans.

The combination of overcrowding in tenements, poor living conditions, and high rents made upward mobility and the improvement of housing conditions impossible. It was then that local civic leaders, including state representatives, called on the city, which established the New York City Housing Authority in 1934.¹¹ In the post-World War II period, Robert Moses, who became a powerful promoter of urban renewal, took charge of the city’s public housing program. In 1948, he organized the Mayor’s Slum Clearance Committee, which razed large areas of the city he deemed slums and rebuilt them, displacing existing residents.¹² Thus, by 1957, 137 acres in East Harlem alone had been cleared.¹³ This resulted in the construction of many New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) buildings in the late 1940s and 1950 to replace the units lost to demolition. While earlier NYCHA complexes in Harlem were generally low-rise with green space, as land prices increased, it became clear that to make the economics viable and replace the correct number of units, new NYCHA buildings were going to have to be taller and on smaller tracts of land.¹⁴ As a result, high density superblocks and buildings were completed, and though they produced new units economically, critics called them bleak and blamed lackluster design.¹⁵

By 1960, nearly 100,000 Harlem families had been displaced due to redevelopment from the Slum Clearance Committee.¹⁶ A 1960 ethnic breakdown of residents found that the population was 60 percent Black, 20 percent

20until%20the%201970s.&text=The%20First%20Great%20Migration%20(1910%2D1940)%20had%20Black,including:%20New%20York%2C%20Chicago%2C%20Detroit%2C%20and%20Pittsburgh.

⁸ “Harlem - Upper Manhattan Church and Community Study Fact Book” (New York, New York, September 1962).

⁹ Marvelli, “East Harlem South / El Barrio: Reconnaissance-Level Historic Resource Survey.” 40.

¹⁰ Nicholas Dagen Bloom, *Public Housing That Worked: New York in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 32 <https://www.pennpress.org/9780812201321/public-housing-that-worked/>.

¹¹ Luis Ferré-Sadurní, “The Rise and Fall of New York Public Housing: An Oral History,” *New York Times*, June 25, 2018, sec. New York, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/06/25/nyregion/new-york-city-public-housing-history.html>, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/06/25/nyregion/new-york-city-public-housing-history.html>.

¹² John T. Metzger, “Rebuilding Harlem: Public housing and urban renewal, 1920-1960,” *Planning Perspectives* 9:3 (1994), 270.

¹³ Bloom, *Public Housing That Worked*, 143.

¹⁴ Metzger, “Rebuilding Harlem,” 270.

¹⁵ Bloom, *Public Housing That Worked*, 62.

¹⁶ Metzger, “Rebuilding Harlem,” 276.

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Puerto Rican, and 20 percent white.¹⁷ That year, Harlem had the largest concentration of public housing in the country, with an estimated 60,000 people living in thirteen NYCHA complexes.¹⁸ The majority of the developments had over 1,000 residential units and primarily non-white residents. Civic leaders had been demanding new public housing in Harlem since the 1930s and 1940s. 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.¹⁹ Additionally, many who were displaced found it difficult to return and had to relocate entirely.²⁰ Though NYCHA did create new, affordable units for a predominantly low-income, African American population in Harlem, ultimately the authority's efforts resulted in dense high-rise buildings concentrated in racially segregated neighborhoods, reinforcing existing social issues.²¹

Community Activism in the East Harlem Triangle: The Impact of CAEHT & ARCH

The Jackie Robinsons Houses are located in an area of East Harlem about one block from the Third Avenue Bridge and Harlem River Drive, in a sub-neighborhood known as the East Harlem Triangle (the Triangle). In general, the East Harlem Triangle shares the history of East Harlem in general, originally a rural area, populated by successive groups of immigrants giving way to a majority Black population. Its distinction comes from its small size and distinctive polygonal shape, which sets it somewhat apart from the larger neighborhood. City officials called the East Harlem Triangle "one of the most blighted and run-down areas in Harlem," with "virtually no new construction" since the 1930s and the Great Depression.²²

In October 1961, the New York City Planning Commission approved redevelopment plans for what it called the East Harlem Industrial Triangle Area, proposing an industrial rehabilitation rather than the residential development that the community preferred.²³ 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.²⁴ Officials called the plan "a major stimulus to the economy," even though residents felt it would devastate the community.²⁵ CAEHT formed in direct opposition to the commission's 1961 plan, focusing its organizing efforts on advocating for housing and welfare within the Triangle and for development that better fit the needs of the community, rather than the will of city administrators.²⁶

¹⁷ "East Harlem Triangle Plan," Architects' Renewal Committee in Harlem, August 1968.

¹⁸ Metzger, "Rebuilding Harlem," 278.

¹⁹ Metzger, "Rebuilding Harlem," 276.

²⁰ Metzger, "Rebuilding Harlem," 276.

²¹ Metzger, "Rebuilding Harlem," 279.

²² "East Harlem Renewal Backed to Create 'Industrial Triangle,'" *New York Times*, October 5, 1961.

²³ "East Harlem Renewal Backed to Create 'Industrial Triangle.'"

²⁴ "East Harlem Renewal Backed to Create 'Industrial Triangle.'"

²⁵ Brian D. Goldstein, *The Roots of Urban Renaissance: Gentrification and the Struggle over Harlem, Expanded Edition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2023), 23.

²⁶ Goldstein, *The Roots of Urban Renaissance*, 42.

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Prominent local Black activist Alice Kornegay led CAEHT.²⁷ Kornegay was from Georgetown, South Carolina. At age ten, following the death of her parents, she moved to East Harlem to live with her cousins. She studied social work at Baruch College and the New School for Social Research and received a science degree from Antioch College in Baltimore, Maryland.²⁸ Kornegay was devoted to improving social and economic conditions in East Harlem, where she'd grown up.²⁹ In 1961, Kornegay joined forces with members of the Chambers Memorial Baptist Church to found CAEHT.³⁰ With her impressive educational background and general knowledge of her community, she became 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.³¹ In her 1996 obituary, she was called "the strongest advocate [in East Harlem] for the African-American community" by the chair of Community Board 11, of which she was a board member.³² During her career, Kornegay secured financing for the construction of low-income housing and established a variety of institutions which became critical social centers for East Harlem. A few examples include the Community Day Care #2, the Beatrice Lewis Senior Center, the East Harlem Senior Center, and the Salvation Army Center. She was also a member of Community School Board 5, the 25th Precinct Community Council, and the Harlem Commonwealth. Kornegay was a major figure and activist in East Harlem, one that shaped both the social and physical landscape of her community.³³

In 1961, when the city proposed bulldozing existing housing to make way for the industrial park, Kornegay and CAEHT denounced these plans. They asserted that few of the residents who would be displaced would qualify for public housing.³⁴ At this time, qualifications for public housing made it a less accessible option for many. The standing requirements for admission into public housing excluded many families in complicated situations, such as those including children born out of wedlock or families separated without divorce, which excluded them from consideration.³⁵ Tenants were also required to be legal citizens, have a bank account and insurance, and earn an income within a strict range. Because of these criteria, those who were selected for housing were part of a more elite group of working-class people. These criteria helped NYCHA ensure that its projects were easier to manage, but they also prevented assistance to those who needed it most.³⁶ Ultimately, thanks to the outcry from the community and the work of CAEHT, the 1961 plan was never realized. Instead, activists like Kornegay worked to propose new plans for Harlem that incorporated community input. CAEHT officially

²⁷ Lawrence Van Gelder, "Alice Kornegay, 65, Advocate For East Harlem Housing Group," *New York Times*, May 2, 1996, sec. New York, 23 <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/05/02/nyregion/alice-kornegay-65-advocate-for-east-harlem-housing-groupdr.html>.

²⁸ Van Gelder, "Alice Kornegay, 65, Advocate for East Harlem Housing Group," 23.

²⁹ "Alice Kornegay Triangle Historical Marker," accessed April 24, 2025, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=183129>.

³⁰ "Alice Kornegay Triangle Historical Marker."

³¹ "Alice Kornegay Triangle," New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. <https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/alice-kornegay-triangle/history>. Accessed September 14, 2023.

³² Van Gelder, "23.

³³ Van Gelder, 23.

³⁴ "Poor in Harlem in Their Own H.Q.," *New York Times*, February 22, 1966.

³⁵ Goldstein, *The Roots of Urban Renaissance*, 42.

³⁶ "Chapter 2: The Life and Times of Public Housing," *City Limits* (blog), January 10, 2009, <https://citylimits.org/chapter-2-the-life-and-times-of-public-housing/>.

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opened its own brick-and-mortar offices in 1966 on 129th Street, continuing its work supporting residents of the area.³⁷

In 1966, CAEHT partnered with another significant community organization, the Architects' Renewal Committee in Harlem (ARCH). ARCH was founded in 1964 to provide planning services to low-income communities who would otherwise not have access to designers and planners. Community involvement and saving the land for Harlem residents was at the center of its mission.³⁸ ARCH had three driving philosophies for Black city planning initiatives: there should be more important goals for land use than making money; architecture should be representative of the people living there, not the administrators; and the organization should work to create a better environment than was typically pursued by city planners.³⁹

Black architect J. Max Bond Jr. (1935-2009) led ARCH.⁴⁰ Like Kornegay, Bond was well-educated and shared roots in the South, having been born in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1935.⁴¹ Bond received his bachelor's degree in 1955 and a master's degree in architecture from Harvard in 1958.⁴² He pursued architecture despite being advised by a faculty member that it would be difficult to succeed in a practically all-white profession. Though the field was discriminatory, Bond became one of the most prominent Black architects in the United States and was later touted by the *New York Times* as the most influential African American architect in New York.⁴³ Together, Bond and his partner, Donald P. Ryder, formed Bond Ryder & Associates, "one of the nation's most prominent partnerships of Black architects."⁴⁴ Brian D. Goldstein, a professor of architectural history at Swarthmore College, said Ryder, too, had confronted "an architectural scene that consistently denied African-American firms the kinds of big and sustaining jobs that their peers received."⁴⁵

The East Harlem Triangle Plan & the Realization of the Jackie Robinson Houses

In collaboration with CAEHT, Bond and ARCH oversaw the development of the 1968 East Harlem Triangle Plan. Though the East Harlem Triangle development plan never came to fruition in its entirety, it galvanized efforts to construct more housing through the city's partnership with CAEHT and led to the approval of the Jackie Robinson Houses. Bond's connection with CAEHT likely led to his firm being chosen as the designer for the Jackie Robinson Houses.

³⁷ "Poor in Harlem in Their Own H.Q.," *New York Times*, February 22, 1966.

³⁸ Priscilla Tucker, "Poor Peoples' Plan," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* (January 1969), 266.

³⁹ Tucker, "Poor Peoples' Plan," 265.

⁴⁰ Tucker, "Poor Peoples' Plan," 267.

⁴¹ "J. Max Bond Jr.," National Museum of African American History and Culture, accessed April 24, 2025, <https://nmaahc.si.edu/design/j-max-bond-jr>.

⁴² "J. Max Bond Jr.," *Beyond the Built Environment*, accessed May 28, 2025, <https://www.beyondthebuilt.com/j-max-bond-jr>.

⁴³ David W. Dunlap, "J. Max Bond Jr., Architect, Dies at 73," *New York Times*, February 19, 2009, 78.

⁴⁴ Sam Roberts, "Donald P. Ryder, Architect of Black Heritage Sites, Dies at 94," *New York Times*, April 14, 2021. sec. New York, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/14/nyregion/donald-p-ryder-dead.html>.

⁴⁵ Roberts, "Donald P. Ryder, Architect of Black Heritage Sites, Dies at 94."

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This partnership between CAEHT and ARCH resulted in the creation of the East Harlem Triangle Plan, which included a commercial corridor, new and renovated housing units, green space, and a community services center. The 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.⁴⁶ To achieve these goals, the organizations proposed a new layout for the Triangle that 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.⁴⁷ The plan called for 2,000 new and rehabilitated housing units, which were placed at the center of the area, 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. The economic viability of the plan was supported by a dedicated commercial corridor along 125th 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 a 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, unlike Moses and the Slum Clearance Committee's plans, which were simply imposed from above.

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.⁴⁸ 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," but ultimately, the large-scale redevelopment proposal was never approved.⁴⁹ 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 is the direct result of this advocacy and collaboration between NYCHA and CAEHT to build housing in the neighborhood. Plans for new residential complexes developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and in late 1968, the City of New York 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.⁵⁰ Ultimately, the Jackie Robinson Houses was the only NYCHA development completed in the Triangle, but CAEHT continued to work with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other community organizations to construct or rehabilitate housing units and community service buildings into the twenty-first century.

CAEHT was eager to develop the Jackie Robinson Houses site under HUD's new turnkey program because the method promised expedited timelines.⁵¹ Under the program, housing authorities would approve plans for

⁴⁶ "East Harlem Triangle Plan," Architects' Renewal Committee in Harlem. August 1968.

⁴⁷ "East Harlem Triangle Plan."

⁴⁸ "East Harlem Triangle Plan."

⁴⁹ "East Harlem Triangle Plan."

⁵⁰ NYCHA Archives, 1970 Application Information; 1968 Urban Renewal Plan 2.

⁵¹ NYCHA Archives, 1970 Meeting Attendance.

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developments but would not officially purchase the buildings from the developers until construction was finished. CAEHT acted as managing supervisor of the affordable housing development.⁵² In this role, CAEHT negotiated the turnkey contract with the city and the developer, oversaw construction, and argued for what the community needed, including advocating for elderly housing and families with two adults who were not a couple where extra subsidies could be applied. Alice Kornegay and CAEHT remained involved throughout the entire process of planning, constructing, and leasing the Jackie Robinson Houses. Max Bond also remained a part of the development team for the Triangle.⁵³

Jackie Robinson Houses was originally planned to be one block north (bounded by 129th and 130th streets), but in 1969, Alice Kornegay recommended moving it to its current location on the block bounded by 128th and 129th streets.⁵⁴ The block was previously residential and commercial buildings described in a 1970 NYCHA report as “predominately dilapidated three-story brick structures.”⁵⁵ Initial plans for the housing development drawn by Bond Ryder & Associates called for a six-story, semi-fireproof building.⁵⁶ This later became one eight-story building with 187 units.⁵⁷ As built, the complex features two nine-story pavilions connected by a seven-story hyphen with 189 units and a daycare center in the north tower.

NYCHA submitted plans to the City Planning Commission on December 21, 1970; the council approved the plan for the proposed building on Lexington Avenue between 128th and 129th streets with enough units for an estimated 650 residents on February 3, 1971.⁵⁸ Kornegay had advocated for what the community needed.⁵⁹ The final unit distribution included a set aside of 60 percent of units for seniors since including designated senior housing in the new development was a primary goal of CAEHT, which called “senior citizen facilities “non-existent in the Triangle,” in the 1968 proposal.⁶⁰ It was estimated that the population makeup for the building would not significantly impact schools in the area.⁶¹

On October 5, 1972, dedication ceremonies were held for an 189-unit complex at 128th Street and Lexington Avenue.⁶² The development cost \$5.7 million and was funded by the New York Bank for Savings and the Bowery Savings Bank.⁶³ Rent in the new development would cost \$37 a room per month, much lower than the previous \$90-a-room monthly rent in the area.⁶⁴ Tenant priority was given to applicants who resided on a site affected by the redevelopment efforts.⁶⁵

⁵² Robert E. Tomasson, “Freeze on Funds Shatters a Dream in East Harlem,” *New York Times*, January 28, 1973.

⁵³ NYCHA Archives, 1970, Meeting Report 9.

⁵⁴ NYCHA Archives, 1969 Change of Location Letter.

⁵⁵ NYCHA Archives, 1970 Info for Tentative Site Approval.

⁵⁶ NYCHA Archives, 1969 Fireproof Building Question.

⁵⁷ NYCHA Archives, 1970 NYCHA Project Proposal 5.

⁵⁸ NYCHA Archive, 1971 Proposal Approved.

⁵⁹ NYCHA Archives 1970, Meeting Report 9.

⁶⁰ NYCHA Archives, 1970 NYCHA Project Proposal 5.

⁶¹ NYCHA Archives, 1970 NYCHA Project Proposal 7.

⁶² “\$5.7M Project Is Dedicated,” *Daily News*, October 5, 1972.

⁶³ “\$5.7M Project Is Dedicated.”

⁶⁴ “East Harlem Housing Gets Lift from U.S.” *Daily News*, September 17, 1972.

⁶⁵ NYCHA Archives, 1972 Tenant Selection Priority.

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Construction of residential units was completed in 1973, and the daycare center was finished in 1974. The development was also renamed the Jackie Robinson Houses, a name chosen by the tenants.⁶⁶ Kornegay and CAEHT continued to be involved after residents moved into the complex, advocating to NYCHA, acting on behalf of the tenants since any resident concerns “relate directly to the Triangle’s efforts at community restoration and redevelopment.”⁶⁷ The Jackie Robinson Houses is still owned by NYCHA and remains in operation as public housing.

Bond Ryder & Associates

The Jackie Robinson Houses was designed by the firm of Bond Ryder & Associates. J. Max Bond was an important influence on Harlem as an architect but equally as a Black social leader and community advocate. Bond’s career following graduation from Harvard was informed by travel. He spent time working in France, New York, and Ghana, acquiring a range of global experiences in design and beyond. Bond moved to Ghana in the early 1960s and worked for the Ghanaian government from 1964 to 1967. During his time in Africa, Bond developed theories on sustainable development and reinforced his belief that architecture should embody humanistic values.⁶⁸ Following his return to the United States in the latter half of the decade, Bond embarked on a career combining his design experience and his philosophies regarding social impact. One of his celebrated accomplishments was his position as director of ARCH. He was also chair of the Graduate School of Architecture and Planning at Columbia University; Dean of the City College of New York School of Architecture and Environmental Studies; and City Planning Commissioner for the City of New York.⁶⁹ His partner, Donald 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 1951.⁷⁰ Before joining with Bond in 1970, Ryder was employed by several important firms including Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Marcel Breuer, and Harrison & Abramovitz. Ultimately, Bond and Ryder left a powerful imprint on Black history in architecture, and as advocates for equitable housing New York. Both strongly believed in community input on the built environment.

Between Bond Ryder & Associates formation, Bond’s subsequent partnerships, and Bond’s death in 2009, these designers were responsible for a number of important cultural facilities across the country. They includes an addition to the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (1981) in Harlem; the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta, GA (1982); and the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (1992).⁷¹ The firm was also responsible for the memorial and museum at the site of the World Trade Center in New York City (2014) and the interior of the National Museum of African American History and Culture (developed between 2006 and its opening in 2016) in Washington, DC. Bond’s lifelong interest in humanism

⁶⁶ Edward Deith, “‘A Long Huddle, and I’ve Got It!’ Thus Do Buildings Get Their Names,” *New York Times*, November 15, 1981.

⁶⁷ NYCHA Archives, 1975 Tenant Hardships.

⁶⁸ “J. Max Bond Jr.”

⁶⁹ “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.

⁷⁰ Roberts, “Donald P. Ryder, Architect of Black Heritage Sites, Dies at 94,” *New York Times*, April 14, 2021.

⁷¹ “Overview,” Davis Brody Bond, accessed May 28, 2025, <https://www.davisbrodybond.com/overview>.

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and equitable interpretations of history, culture, and modern living are reflected in his most notable design works, such as his famous museums and educational institutions, but they also inform his less architecturally notable works, such as his early affordable housing complexes.⁷²

Bond's early work with ARCH was primarily focused on community development across a number of fields, not just design. These less architecturally significant early housing developments set the scene for Bond's later designs, in which expanded budgets and more flexible scopes allowed him to explore solutions that provided more than just the essentials and to express these solutions with more architectural freedom. Limited by the small budgets which have long plagued public housing development, the design significance of his housing projects pales in comparison to that of his later works. While, architecturally, these developments do not stand out within their contexts, the impact of those like the Jackie Robinson Houses speak to progress within the realm of urban renewal philosophy in the face of continued discrimination and failures of earlier subsidized housing. The impact of Bond's early housing designs on their largely underserved neighborhood, thanks in large part to his collaboration with the community, is undeniable.

Bond was publicly complimentary of Harlem's existing layout. Through ARCH, he worked to maintain the spaciousness of the neighborhood, ensuring that people could walk and enjoy the streets rather than focus on the development of high-density buildings, which were becoming more and more common with NYCHA's involvement in the neighborhood.⁷³ Bond's design philosophy developed during this period is reflected in ARCH's overall purpose as an advocacy group. Board members described ARCH's focus and philosophy as follows: "We at ARCH believe strongly in the advocacy planning concept. We believe that neighborhood involvement coupled with technical sensitivity to community needs is essential to the planning process if it is to be at all relevant to Black and Spanish-speaking people... architecture and planning are just too important to be omitted from the lives of people who happen to be poor."⁷⁴ Private philanthropies, such as the Ford Foundation, provided early seed grants for ARCH and other urban neighborhood organizations.⁷⁵ Working together with neighborhood associations, ARCH sought to democratize urban renewal in Harlem and generate designs commensurate with the needs and lifestyles of local people.⁷⁶

Likely limited by funding, Bond's focus in Harlem during the mid-century was largely social and planning oriented, not focused on aesthetics, which proved to be a luxury. ARCH's initial projects included advising tenants on their rights and surveying the neighborhood's housing stock, promoting both rehabilitation and infilled housing. ARCH's pursuits included a redevelopment plan for Harlem, created in conjunction with CAEHT. Others included 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

⁷² Charles Henry Rowell, "Dedication to the Memory of J. Max Bond, Jr.," *Callaloo* 38, no. 4 (2015): xiii–xviii.

⁷³ Tucker, "Poor Peoples' Plan," 267.

⁷⁴ Christopher Klemek, "The Rise & Fall of New Left Urbanism," *Daedalus*, Emerging Voices, 138, no. 2 (2009): 73–81.

⁷⁵ Klemek.

⁷⁶ Daniel Matlin, "'A New Reality of Harlem': Imagining the African American Urban Future during the 1960s," *Journal of American Studies* 52, no. 4 (2018): 993.

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Union, provided pre-architectural training to students in New York.⁷⁷ In the mid-twentieth century, the combination of ARCH, led by Bond, and CAEHT, led by Kornegay, formed one of the most powerful, Black-led community-based development teams in Harlem's history, leading to the realization of the Jackie Robinson Houses.

Comparing the Works of Bond Ryder Associates

Bond Ryder & Associates specialized in culturally and contextually sensitive works, from medium- and high-density urban housing; urban planning and design; and university, religious, and community complexes.⁷⁸ While many of Bond Ryder & Associates' works may be judged architecturally significant, particularly those after the 1980s, the firm's earlier works, such as the Jackie Robinson Houses, are best described as a product of community collaboration and activism, with the architectural design being secondary due to budget and scope restrictions. Opened the same year as Jackie Robinson Houses, the Lionel Hampton Houses (1973), a 355-unit complex on Eighth Avenue and 131st Street, was also designed by Bond and Ryder.⁷⁹ Adjacent to the Lionel Hampton Houses are the Gladys Hampton Houses (1980), named for the famed jazz icon's wife. Later in the decade, 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.⁸⁰ Bond Ryder & Associates' most architecturally notable projects are primarily non-residential, including the addition to the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem (1980) and the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta (1982).

In 1990, Ryder retired from the practice and the firm merged with Davis Brody & Associates to become Davis Brody Bond. Ryder became a professor and later chairman of the Spitzer School of Architecture at the City College of New York for nearly thirty years.⁸¹ 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 interior design of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (2016) in Washington, D.C. before his death.⁸²

Bond's reputation for large-scale public buildings primarily rests of three designs mentioned in nearly every catalogue of his works:

⁷⁷ "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.

⁷⁸ "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.

⁷⁹ John Darton, "Hampton Houses Opened in Harlem," *New York Times*, July 2, 1973, Accessed September 29, 2023.

⁸⁰ Alan S. Oser, "Perspectives: City-Assisted Housing; Mixed-Income Condo Nears Completion," *New York Times*, February 7, 1988.

⁸¹ Roberts, "Donald P. Ryder, Architect of Black Heritage Sites, Dies at 94," *New York Times*, April 14, 2021.

⁸² "Smithsonian Institution National Museum of African American History & Culture," Davis Brody Bond, accessed May 30, 2025, <https://www.davisbrodybond.com/smithsonian-institution-national-museum-of-african-american-history-culture>.

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Addition to Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem (1980)

The addition to the Schomburg Center for Research was constructed in 1980. The adjacent related historic building, the original Schomburg Center, a former Carnegie library, is a National Historic Landmark. The addition designed by Bond and Ryder expands on the firm's interest in Modernism, experimenting with simple rectangular forms, brick, and glass, with a similar angled intersection of rectangular forms seen at the Tower on the Park buildings, in addition to the integration of other interesting angles. The building experiments with form more than the residential projects had the ability to, with the placement of glass walls inviting the exterior within. This design marks a shift in the firm's work in New York City and shows what was possible within a different, more flexible program.

Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta (1982)

The Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta, Georgia, was constructed in 1982. The King Foundation commissioned J. Max Bond to design the center, which includes the tomb of Dr. King as well as Freedom Hall, which features an auditorium, gift shop, exhibit hall, and meeting rooms. The Archives and Administration Building is home to the world's largest primary source collection on the Civil Rights movements. Also included are the Freedom Walk, a barrel-vaulted colonnade extending the length of the site, and the Chapel of All Faiths. Throughout the mid-1980s, Bond worked with the center to upgrade the chapel, improve site lighting and finishes, and develop a maintenance program for the buildings. The building proportions, organization of spaces, reflecting pool, and materials reflect a spiritual, cultural, and in some cases economic relationship to the goals of the center. Locally produced brick was used, considered to be more "humble," as opposed to a material like marble, also referencing the earlier work of the firm. The construction process provided an opportunity for the use of minority construction workers as well. The design of the buildings and site was intended to create an environment that is safe and controlled, but also welcoming. The design of the center is reflective of social and cultural purpose; however, unlike Bond's residential works, gives immense focus to design features and aesthetic choices. Post-Modernism is conveyed through elements such as the barrel-vaulted rooflines, which are reminiscent of the work of Louis Kahn, the large, impactful reflecting pool stretching down the center of the site, and the careful selection of materials and placement of other site features and buildings. This building is included in the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historical Park and is one of Bond's most notable works as a master.⁸³

The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute in Birmingham, Alabama (1992).

After establishing themselves as a firm dedicated to the history of Black Culture and Civil Rights in America, as well as having developed a strong reputation in the design of educational and museum facilities, Bond Ryder designed the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute in Alabama in 1992. This project reflects the firm's continued dedication to purpose and how its developed fame and success led the partners to bigger, more high-profile projects where the designers had more control over their concepts. The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute functions as both a locally focused history museum and an international center for civil rights research and education. Max Bond was an integral member of the committee that established the institute's mission and

⁸³ "Martin Luther King Jr. Center," Davis Brody Bond, accessed May 28, 2025, <https://www.davisbrodybond.com/martin-luther-king-jr-center>.

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program and led the design process, which coincided with the merger of Bond Ryder & Associates and David Brody Associates, forming Davis Brody Bond, a new partnership in which J. Max Bond continued to be a strong professional and directorial force. Like his projects before, Bond and his firm remained open to community input while fulfilling their responsibility to advocate for “clear and meaningful architecture.”⁸⁴ Materials and architectural forms reflect Birmingham’s local architecture. The central rotunda echoes the dome of the adjacent 16th Street Baptist Church.⁸⁵ The forms reflect a mix of simple Modern Movement styles alongside historical references, such as the dome and the decorative paved courtyard.

Successes and Failures of Housing Advocacy in the East Harlem Triangle

CAEHT and ARCH presented a wide 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 distinctly opposite to the general approach to earlier renewal efforts in East Harlem, which bulldozed thousands of housing units with little regard for the community’s needs, and to the initial plan for the Harlem Triangle, which called for replacement of the neighborhood itself with industrial development. The Jackie Robinson Houses is an example of the success of that collaboration, as the input from the community resulted in new affordable units. CAEHT had further 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. Unfortunately, however, this was the only NYCHA development completed in the area, and 189 units fell far short of meeting housing needs in a neighborhood of about 4,500 residents.

Perhaps more disappointing, despite the intentions and dedication of CAEHT and Bond Ryder & Associates – with its two important Black designers - the Jackie Robinson Houses was not an idyllic environment. In addition to being insufficient to meet the need, the development took the form of a fairly high-density complex on a small site, creating crowded interior spaces and limited outdoor areas. Although New York public housing was intended to “alleviate the widespread problem of overcrowding [and] hazardous living conditions,” the lack of adequate finances, the cost of urban land, the lack of imagination on the part of housing agencies, and the long tradition of segregation and discrimination all affected the outcomes of public housing efforts in places like East Harlem, often leaving tenants in precarious situations.⁸⁶ Despite the thousands of new affordable units constructed in the neighborhood, many of these issues still existed in the 1970s.

Related Housing Developments in the 1970s

Although there are no other NYCHA developments in the East Harlem Triangle, there are other affordable housing complexes in the Triangle whose construction was overseen by CAEHT. Two of them were completed

⁸⁴ “Birmingham Civil Rights Institute,” Davis Brody Bond, accessed May 30, 2025, <https://www.davisbrodybond.com/birmingham-civil-rights-institute>.

⁸⁵ “Birmingham Civil Rights Institute.”

⁸⁶ Metzger, “Rebuilding Harlem,” 278.

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in the 1970s: the 1775 Houses and the AK Houses. These two eleven-story brick buildings are 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 only other NYCHA housing developed in the area bounded by Park Avenue, 110th Street, and the Harlem River (outside the Triangle) during the 1970s were the Corsi Houses (NR listed), which was constructed exclusively as senior housing, and Park Avenue-East 122nd and 123rd Streets (NR eligible), a smaller turnkey development. 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. Most of the other NYCHA projects were constructed with brick cladding and only four other stand-alone NYCHA towers in the 1970s featured textured concrete: 45 Allen Street (1974) in Manhattan and Bailey Avenue-West 193rd Street (1973), Davidson Houses (1973), and Middletown Plaza (1973) in the Bronx. Most buildings also had uncomplicated geometric forms, primarily T, I, L, or H-shaped patterns. Several feature multiple pavilions attached by hyphens, as at Jackie Robinson, some in Z-shaped or chevron patterns. But overall, the Jackie Robinson Houses stand out for the community involvement that marked their development through the involvement of CAEHT and ARCH.

Conclusion

Bond's early residential projects in 1973 and the decade following placed social and cultural goals first and foremost, prioritizing Harlem's practical needs above loftier architectural goals and more fully developed stylistic expression, which were restricted by lower budgets and the strict, high-density scopes of affordable housing. While the Jackie Robinson Houses does not stand out in terms of its design, it is undeniably significant as an example of community collaboration and social impact through development, which primed Bond Ryder & Associates for their future work combining cultural and social purpose with freedom of design, enabled by larger budgets and higher visibility projects. Their later works, unlike their work in housing, are exceptional examples of social purpose expressed aesthetically, a combination that went on to define their legacy. The history of the Jackie Robinson Houses is closely tied to the history of urban renewal in the Harlem Triangle and the redevelopment goals of CAEHT and ARCH to build housing to meet the needs of the community, rather than develop the area according to the plans of city officials. The project stands out as the only example of a NYCHA development in the East Harlem Triangle and has important 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, J. Max Bond Jr., and Donald Ryder. Jackie Robinson Houses is significant under Criterion A as an intact, representative example of a community-led initiative to build large-scale public housing

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Jackie Robinson Houses

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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 1.50 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

Lat: **40.806894**

Long: **-73.936482**

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map.

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 Mariana Melin-Corcoran/Nika Faulkner CONTACT: Kathleen LaFrank, NYSHPO

organization Heritage Consulting Group

date August, 2025

street & number 15 W Highland Ave

telephone 215-248-1260

city or town Philadelphia

state PA

zip code 19118

e-mail nfaulkner@heritage-consulting.com; projects@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.

Jackie Robinson Houses

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- **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

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

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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

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.

New York, NY

County and State



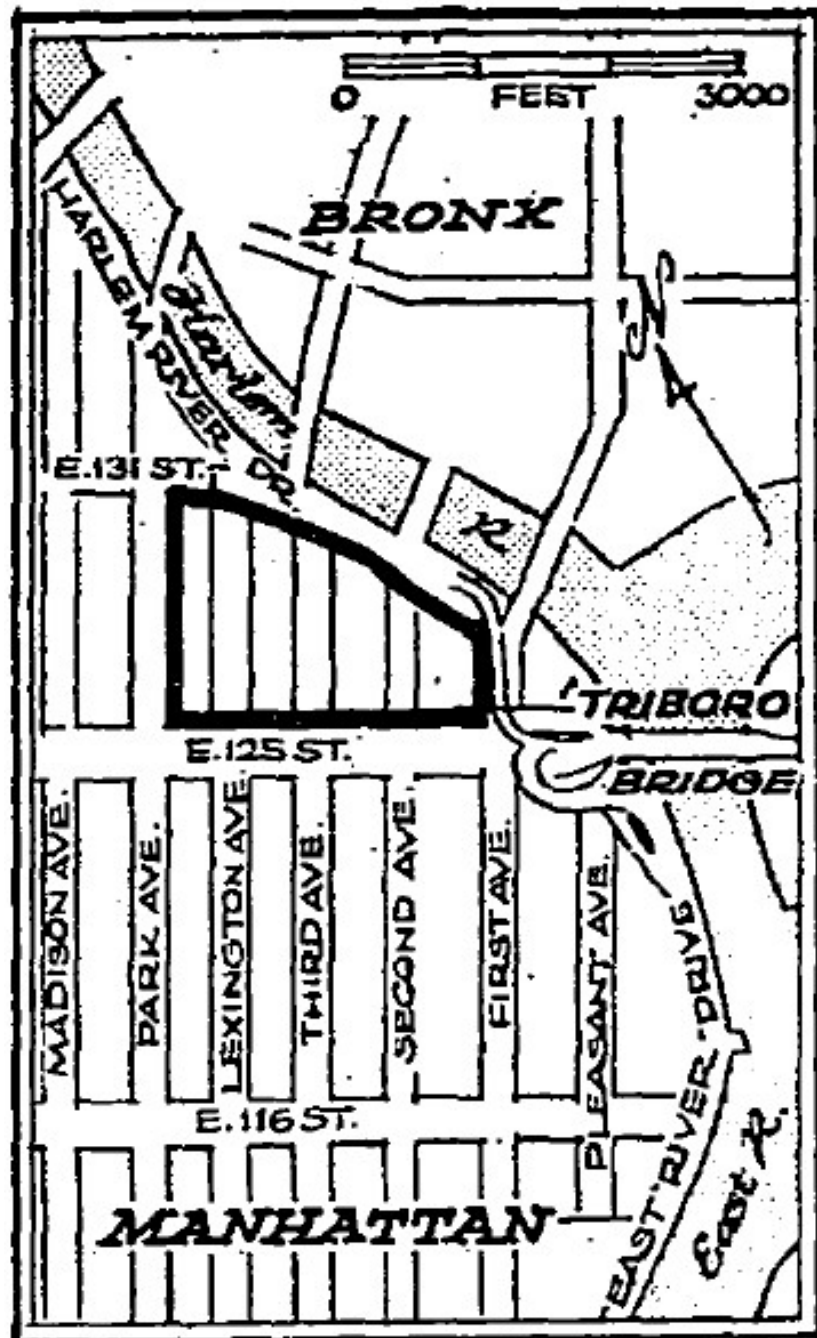
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Figure 1: East Harlem Triangle Map (Source: *The New York Times*, October 5, 1961).



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Figure 2: Community members reviewing ARCH's 1968 plans. Community input through CAEHT was a major factor in the Jackie Robinson development.



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Figure 3: Drawing from the 1968 plan for the East Harlem Triangle prepared by ARCH and CAEHT, showing the overall planning and breakdown of building uses.

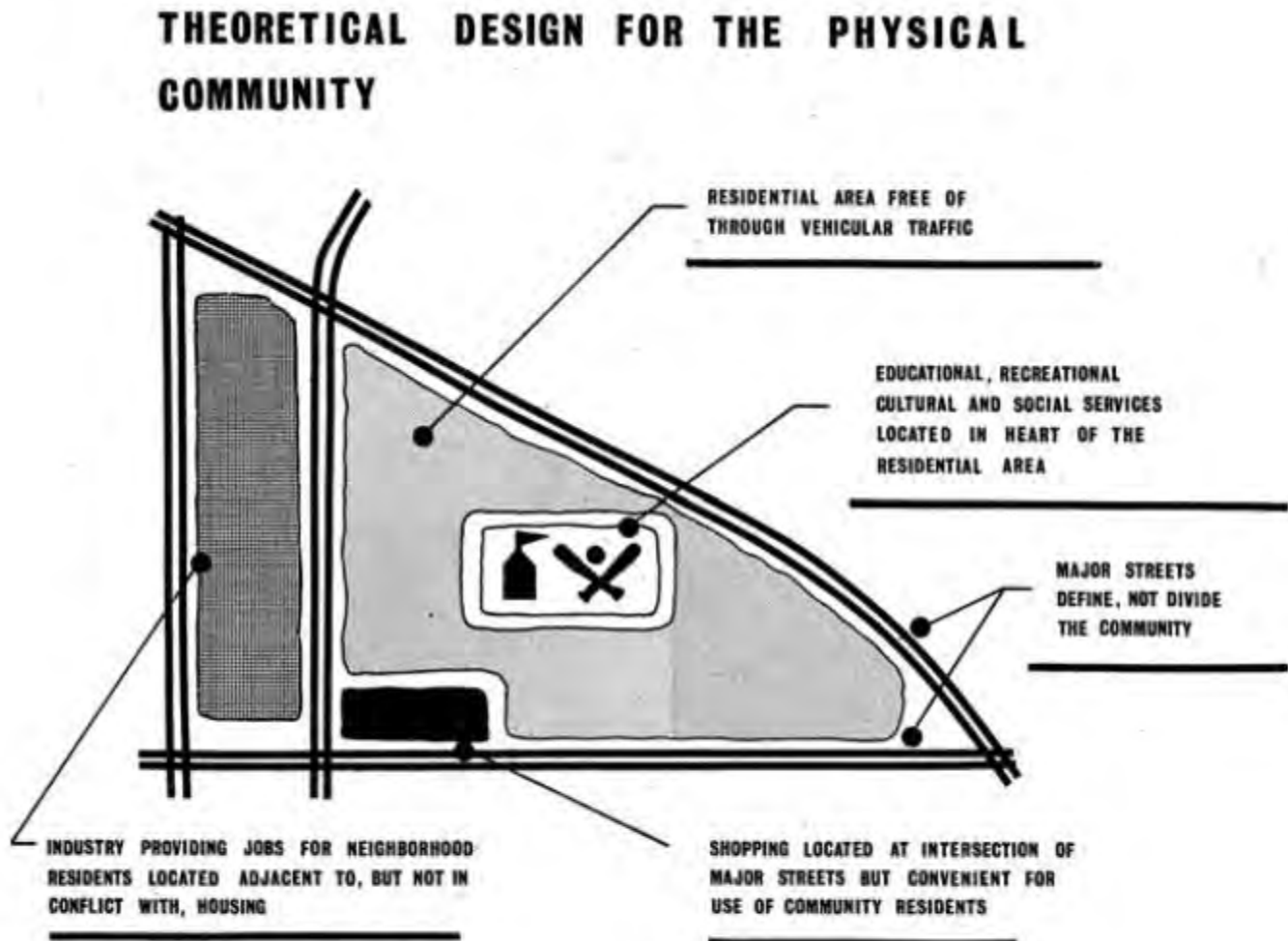


FIGURE 2.5. Conceptual plan prepared by ARCH and CAEHT in 1968, showing a mixture of land uses within the East Harlem Triangle neighborhood and needed community and social services at its “heart.” Madison Avenue defines the western boundary of this diagram, while 125th Street forms its southern boundary.

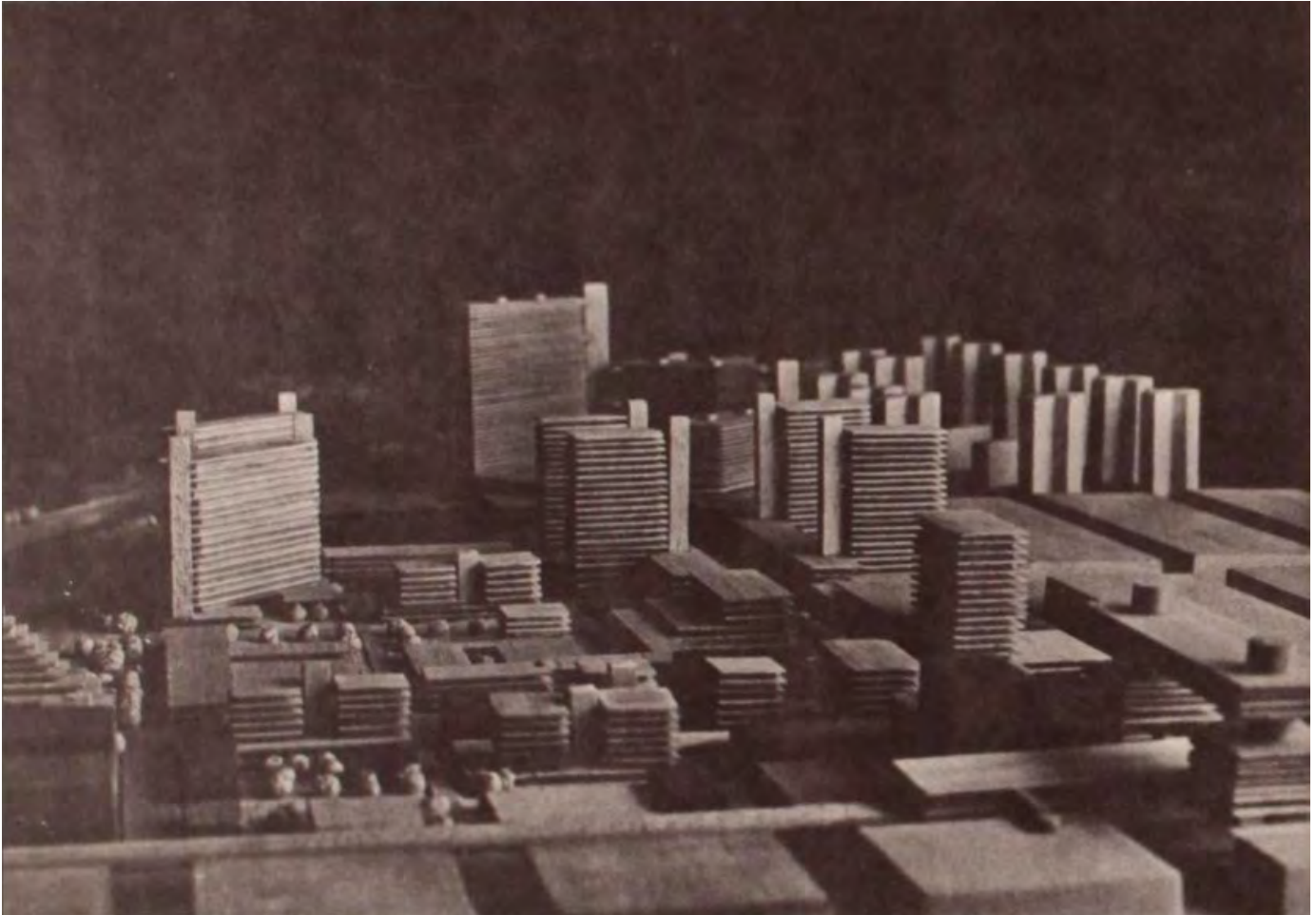
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Figure 4: Model from the 1968 plan showing a proposed mix of high- and low-rise buildings in the Triangle. The area currently features a mix of high- and low-rise buildings.



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Figure 5: 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
16 projects			21 131			

Source: New York City Housing Authority.

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Figure 6: Lionel Hampton Houses, 410 St. Nicholas Ave, NY, NY (Google 2024)



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Figure 7: Gladys Hampton Houses, 410 St. Nicholas Ave, NY, NY (Google 2024)



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Figure 8: Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Harlem. (Source: Davis Brody Bond)



Figure 9: Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta, GA. (Source: Davis Brody Bond)



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Figure 10: The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. (Source: Davis Brody Bond)



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Figure 11: Birmingham Civil Rights Institute rotunda interior. (Source: Davis Brody Bond)



Jackie Robinson Houses

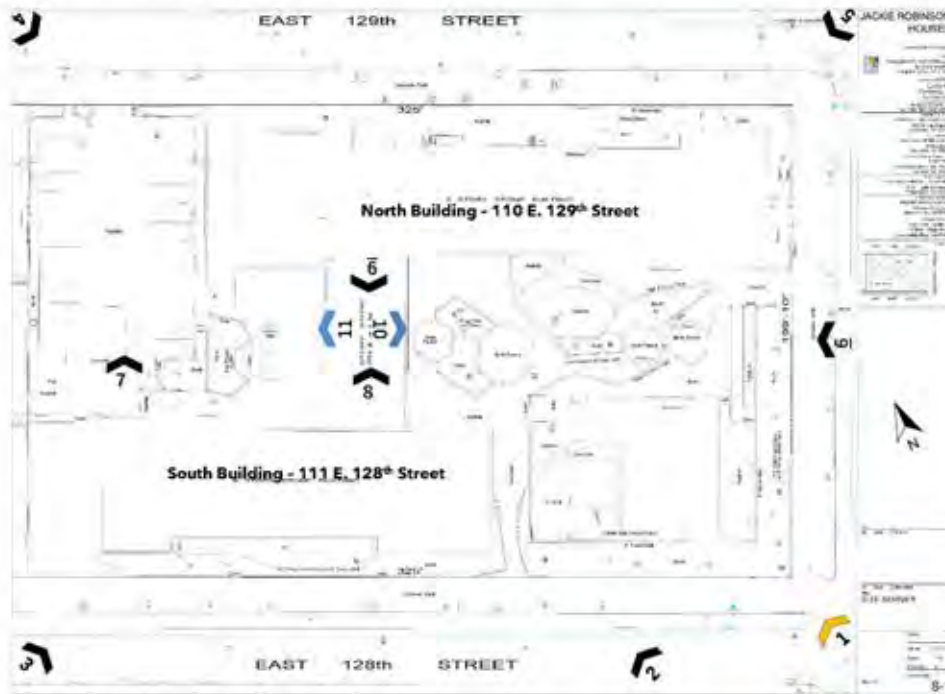
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Figure 12: Photo Key, Ground Floor Plan

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



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



Figure 13 Photo Key, Ground 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

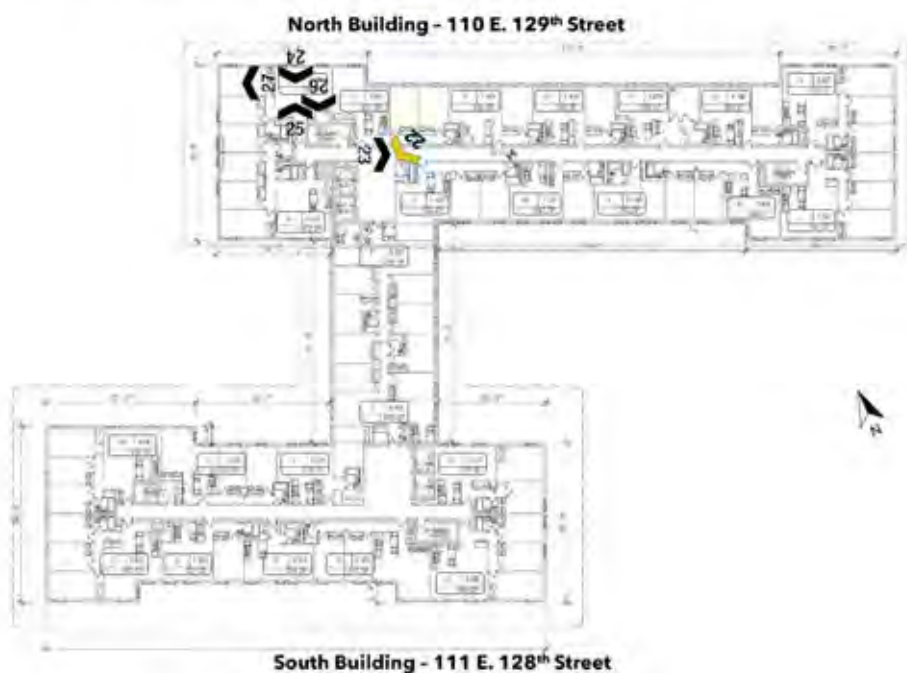


Figure 14 – Second Floor Plan

Jackie Robinson Houses

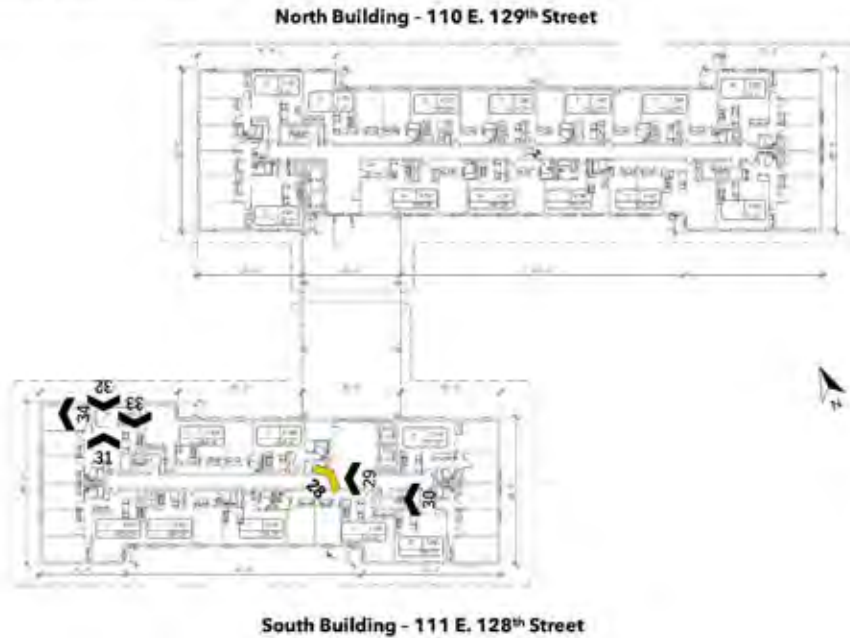
Name of Property

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Figure 15: 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











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

CAUTION
WET FLOOR
CUIDADO
PISO MOJADO

NO SMOKING

110E129





110E











111E128

**RESIDENT PATROL
ACTIVE IN
THIS BUILDING**
YOUR COOPERATION IS
NEEDED TO MAKE IT WORK
RESIDENT PATROL NOT
AUTHORIZED TO OPEN DOOR

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SINK**

**NOT AN
EXIT**













**SLOP
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**NOT AN
EXIT**













1:1,200



Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 18N



Nomination Boundary (1.50 ac)



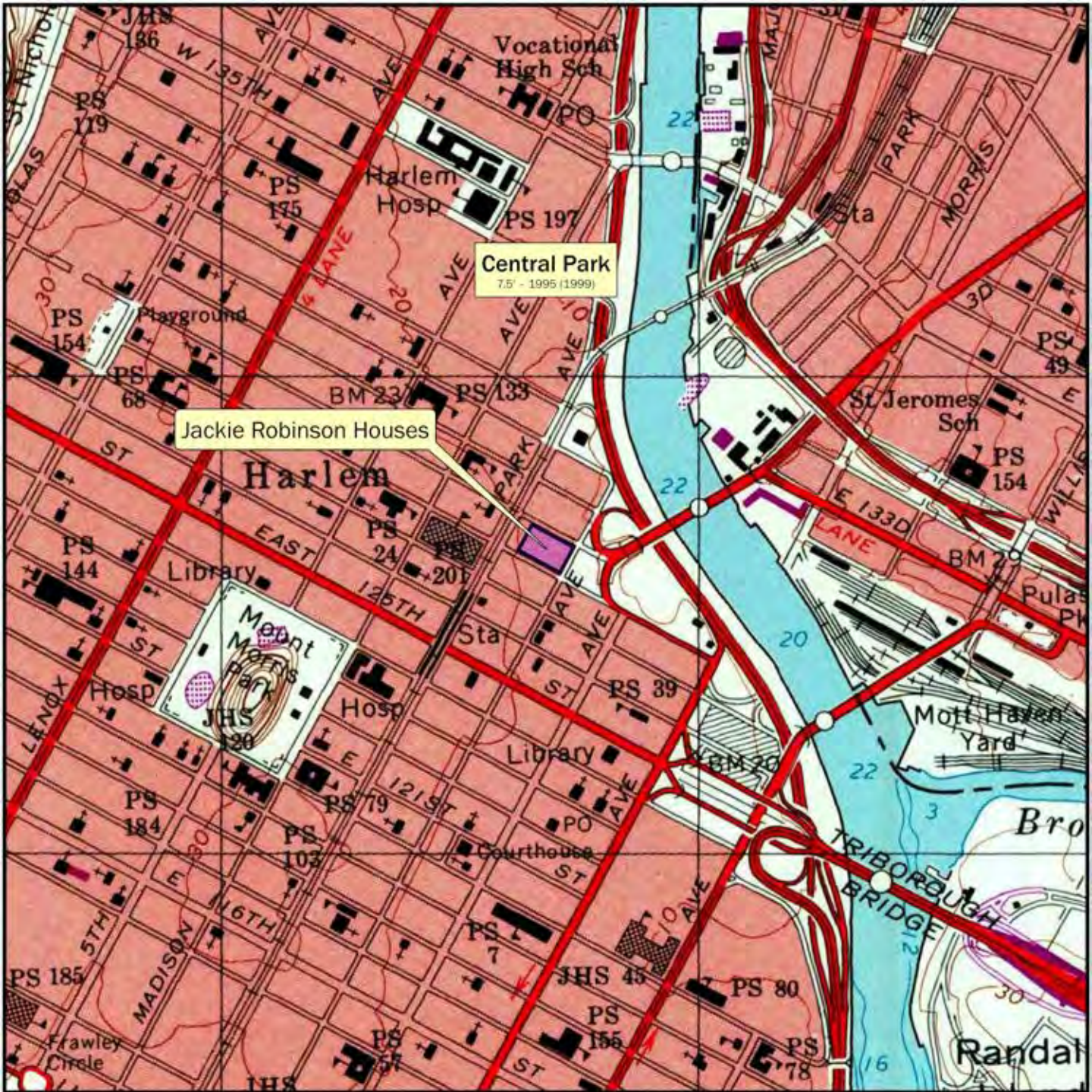
Tax Parcels

New York County Parcel Year: 2023



New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation

Mapped 02/21/2025 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO



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Jackie Robinson Houses



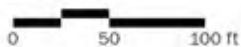
New York State
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Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 18N

Mapped 02/21/2025 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO



1:1,200



Nomination Boundary (1.50 ac)



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