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 E. Robert Moore Houses

other names/site number

name of related multiple property listing

2. Location

street & number 674 and 694 East 149th Street, 525 and 535 Jackson Avenue ☐ not for publication

city or town New York ☐ vicinity

state NY code county Bronx code zip code 10455

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

E. Robert Moore Houses | Bronx County, NY
Name of Property | County and State

5. Classification

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

	private
X	public - Local
	public - State
	public - Federal

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

X	building(s)
	district
	site
	structure
	object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2		buildings
1		sites
		structures
		objects
3	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
LANDSCAPE/parking lot
LANDSCAPE/plaza

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling
LANDSCAPE/parking lot
LANDSCAPE/plaza

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete
walls: Concrete, Brick
roof: Asphalt
other: Rubber Membrane

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 E. Robert Moore Houses, commonly known as the Moore Houses, is a federally aided, low-rent housing project located within a predominately residential area in the Mott Haven neighborhood in the South Bronx, New York City. The Moore Houses consist of two T-shaped, twenty-story buildings situated on approximately 2.66-acres on the corner of East 149th Street and Jackson Avenue adjacent to St. Mary's Park. The buildings were completed in 1964 for the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and designed by the architectural firm Edelbaum & Webster with notable landscape architects Darling, Innocenti & Webel. The buildings have served as public housing since their completion and have undergone minimal alterations, retaining a high degree of integrity.

Narrative Description

Site

The Moore Houses consist of two, twenty-story buildings which will henceforth be called Building 1 (674 & 694 East 149th Street) and Building 2 (535 & 525 Jackson Avenue). The site is bounded by East 149th Street to the north, Jackson Avenue to the east, the northerly property line of Bronx Tax Map Block 2557, Lot 78 to the south, and St. Mary's Park to the west. The property parcel (Bronx Tax Map Block 2557, Lot 83) is an irregular trapezoidal shape located in the northeast corner of St. Mary's Park. The NYCHA public housing buildings are separated by a landscaped area (one site), which includes a playground and basketball court. Single and paired non-historic streetlights and metal benches are set within the landscape and a non-historic chain-link fence encloses the basketball courts. A communal garden is situated between the façade of Building 2 and the city sidewalk. A non-historic, simple wrought-iron fence surrounds the property's perimeter and landscaped areas. A parking lot accessible from East 149th Street is south of Building 1. A second parking lot, located to the south of Building 2, is accessible from Trinity and Jackson Avenues. NYCHA's Saint Mary's Park Houses, constructed in 1959, are immediately north of the Moore Houses Complex.

Exteriors

All buildings are uniform in style, scale, and material with minor deviations related to building orientation. Building 1 faces north on to East 149th Street and Building 2 faces east on to Jackson Avenue. Both buildings have T-shaped footprints and are faced with a combination of red and white brick. The buildings rise twenty-stories from a concrete foundation to a flat roof with a slight parapet lined with metal fascia and guardrail. The roof of Building 1 houses the stair/elevator bulkhead, centrally located on its street-facing wing, and a water tower with a decorative enclosure on the rear wing. The roof of Building 2 houses two brick-faced stair/elevator bulkheads.

Main entrances are on the first floor of the street-facing facades. The first stories are faced with blue ceramic tile separated by regularly spaced concrete pilasters that end at a concrete sill course. Rows of fixed windows with exterior security gates are in the upper portion of the tiled panels. Main entrances are centrally located and consist of a metal door with two glazed windows flanked by a series of full-height metal and glazed bays that

terminate at two metal pilasters. A flat-roof metal overhang spans the entryways' width and shows the building address number.

A concrete walkway connected to the city sidewalk leads directly to the entrance of Building 1. A secondary entrance is in the westernmost bay of the north elevation, also accessible by way of a concrete stair and ramp, lined by a metal balustrade. The entrance consists of a metal door with two glazed windows flanked by two full-height metal and glazed bays, sheltered by a flat-roof metal overhang with the numbers "664."

The main entrance of Building 2 is accessible by way of a walkway connected to the city sidewalk and a concrete ramp, lined by a metal balustrade. The entrance to the community center is to the south of the main entrance. A concrete walkway, flanked by two community garden spaces lined by a simple wrought-iron fence, extends from the city sidewalk and is covered by a gabled awning. The entrance consists of a metal door with a single glazed window with a transom and sidelights. All main entrances were replaced during the 1982 renovations.

The upper stories have fourteen bays of paired double-hung aluminum windows and are faced with white brick. Many of the windows have gated bottom sash. Each row of windows rests on top of a concrete sill course. Red brick from the side elevations wraps either end of the facades. It seems the windows were replaced throughout the buildings, and the original configuration was two-over-two.

The sides of the street-facing blocks (east and west elevations on Building 1; north and south elevations on Building 2) are four bays wide and faced in red brick. The middle two bays hold paired double-hung aluminum windows, and the outer bays hold single double-hung aluminum windows with simple metal sills, most of which have gated bottom sash. A flush metal door with a transom is within the easternmost bay on the first floor of Building 2. The entrance is accessible by a concrete stair with a metal railing and is sheltered by a gabled awning supported by metal posts. The grade slopes to the west and a concrete ramp runs along around west elevation.

The rear elevations of the street-facing blocks (south elevation on Building 1; west on Building 2) are intersected by perpendicular wings and faced with white brick with red brick from the side elevations wrapping either end of the facades. Five bays of paired double-hung aluminum windows with simple metal sills are on either side of the rear ell, many of which have gated bottom sash. An exterior chimney is offset east on Building 1 which extends past the roofline. Building 2 has a flush metal door with a single glazed window on the first floor of the south wing, abutting the rear wing.

The side elevations of the perpendicular wings (east and west elevations on Building 1; north and south elevations on Building 2) are ten bays wide. The outer six bays are within a slight bump out. Fenestration consists of paired double-hung aluminum windows with simple metal sills, with single double-hung windows within the protruding wall. The exterior walls are faced with white brick. The protruding wall of the recessed area is faced with red brick. The first story of Building 1 in the outer bump-out is faced in blue ceramic tile and follows the same design as the entrance on the north elevation. An entrance, offset south, consists of a metal door with two glazed windows flanked by a sidelights framed by metal pilasters. A third sidelight is to the north of the northernmost pilaster. Metal signage above the concrete sill course indicates the address as "694 149." The first floor of the north elevation on Building 2 has a similar design with the addition of a flush metal door

that accesses the tenant association office. A concrete ramp and stair lined with a simple metal balustrade provides access to the entrances. Metal signage above the concrete sill course indicates the address as "535 Jackson."

The rear elevations of the perpendicular wings (south elevation on Building 1; west elevation on Building 2) are four bays wide and faced with red brick. The fenestration mimics the east and west elevations of the street-facing wings.

Interior

The layout and condition of Buildings 1 and 2 are nearly identical. Basements are accessible by a ramp running along the street's rear exterior wall facing wing and by a stair along the rear wing. Basements house utilitarian spaces like incinerators, electric rooms, various storage spaces, gas meter rooms, and maintenance rooms. The basement in Building 1 has the laundry room and bicycle storage. Basements are characterized by concrete floors and painted block walls.

The outer portion of the perpendicular wings are treated as separate buildings. Entrances on the façades open into an L-shaped entrance hall. Circulation is provided by two elevators and an enclosed switchback stair within the entrance hall. A second L-shaped entrance hall is in the perpendicular wings accessible by an entryway on the east elevation of Building 1 and the north elevation of Building 2. Circulation is provided by two elevators, an enclosed switchback stair, and a straight stair within the rear entrance hall. A public restroom is in the recessed area of Building 2's rear entrance.

Historic architectural drawings illustrate that a room dedicated to stroller storage was adjacent to all entrance halls. The first floor of the west wing in Building 1 was dedicated to Management Offices, which are not accessible from the entrance hall. The Management Office entrance is offset west on the north façade which opens into a small vestibule and waiting room. A series of rooms are situated along the outer walls that historically functioned as a Staff Room, Clerk's Room, Cashier's Room, Manager's Office, and Housing Assistants Office. An interior hallway extends from the waiting room and provides access to the rooms along the outer walls. A switchback stair abutting the Staff Room communicates to the basement. A public restroom and supply closet are centrally located within the west wing. The upper part of the Boiler Room occupies the first floor of the east wing in Building 1. A stair along the northeast corner provides access to the lower portion of the boiler room.

Unlike Building 1, the first floor of the street-facing block of Building 2 is predominately residential. The southernmost portion is dedicated to the community center, which is not accessible through the main entrance hall. The community center entrance is located to the south of the main entrance on the east façade. The entrance opens into a vestibule which has a public restroom. To the north of the vestibule is an office. A club room spans the width of the south wall. A narrow kitchen is along the west wall which separates the club room along the south wall from the club room along the west wall. A narrow alcove on the north wall of the main entrance hall provides access to the five-bedroom unit that occupies the north wing.

A four-bedroom apartment unit wraps around the south and west walls of the rear entrance hall in Building 2. The entrance opens into a hallway with the kitchen and dining room directly across. The living room is within the northwest corner and the four bedrooms are along the south wall. The bathroom abuts the south wall of the

rear entrance hall. A one-bedroom apartment is east of the rear entrance hall on the west wing. The entrance opens into a hallway that wraps around a bathroom. The living room is situated along the south wall, and the bedroom, kitchen and dining room abut the apartment unit to the east.

The perpendicular wing of Building 1 includes two two-bedroom apartment units that flank the stair off the rear entrance hall. The entrance opens into a hallway which provides access to the living room, kitchen, and dining room and to the two bedrooms along the outer walls. Both apartments have a bathroom along the interior wall.

Both buildings have a five-bedroom apartment unit within the perpendicular wing that is accessible by way of the entrance hall on the street facing façade. The entrance opens into a hallway, which runs north to south through the unit. A kitchen and dining room is directly to the west of the entrance. The living room and bedrooms are situated along the outer walls and two bathrooms are to the east of the hallway.

The second-floor plan of Buildings 1 and 2 are nearly identical and consist of two public halls with a pair of elevators and two sets of stairs in the street-facing and perpendicular wings. Corridors are finished with beige ceramic tile and vinyl composition tile (VCT) flooring throughout the buildings. Five three-bedroom apartment units, five one-bedroom apartment units, and two two-bedroom apartment units are located along the perimeter walls. Apartment units include a full-bath, kitchen, and living room and are finished with painted gypsum wallboard, a variety of VCT flooring, and vinyl baseboard. Both the corridors and apartment units have hard ceilings with fluorescent lighting. Flush particleboard core doors are throughout the units. Some units have had materials removed; however, the layouts remain intact.

The third through twentieth floors vary slightly from the second-floor plan. The two public halls and elevators remain in the same location as the second floor; however, the straight stair only extends to the second floor. Five three-bedroom apartment units, five one-bedroom apartment units, and four two-bedroom apartment units are along the perimeter walls of the upper floors. The materials and finishes are identical to those in the first and second floor units.

Statement of Integrity

The Moore Houses (Project No. NY5-58B) retains overall integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association that convey its significance as a mid-twentieth century public housing project developed for NYCHA. The buildings retain their original location and design, with key design elements intact. Character-defining design features include the towering scale of the buildings, decorative water tower enclosure, and the spare modern building facades that eschew embellishment in favor of repetition of functional form, elements commonly employed in NYCHA public housing projects. The original locations of entryways, fenestration, roof configurations, and interior layout of the buildings remain intact. Alterations to the exterior entrances occurred in 1982; however, the overall integrity of the buildings remains. The relationship between the buildings and the landscape—intended for recreational enjoyment by residents—remains intact. The materials and workmanship of the buildings are also unaltered, allowing the complex to continue to convey the feeling and association of a mid-twentieth century public housing project.

E. Robert Moore Houses | Bronx County, NY
Name of Property | County and State

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.)

- [X] 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.
- [X] 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.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Social History
Politics/Government
Landscape Architecture

Period of Significance

1964

Significant Dates

1964

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Edelbaum & Webster (Buildings)
Darling, Innocenti & Webel (Landscape)

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance is 1964, the year the housing complex officially opened as marked by the ribbon-cutting ceremony on February 3, 1964.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph
(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The E. Robert Moore Houses, typically referred to as the Moore Houses, is an intact public housing development in the Mott Haven neighborhood of the South Bronx. New York architects Edelbaum & Webster were commissioned to design the two twenty-story towers, while notable landscape architectural firm of Darling, Innocenti & Webel designed the development's landscape to be compatible with St. Mary's Park. Plans for the complex began in 1959 and on February 3, 1964, the housing project became NYCHA's 118th housing project to open.[1] The completed project included 463 apartments ranging from three-and-a-half rooms to seven-and-a-half rooms that could house about 1,765 residents and included seventy-six apartments for seniors.[2]

The complex is **locally significant** under **Criterion A** in the area of *Politics/Government* as a representative example of NYCHA's early vest-pocket program, and in the area of *Social History* as an integral component in the mid-twentieth century transformation of South Bronx into one of the most impoverished urban areas in the country. The vest-pocket program was a direct response to the federal Housing Act of 1954, which shifted focus from "slum clearance" to "urban renewal," emphasized conservation and rehabilitation of existing building stock, and promoted targeted demolition and new construction on smaller sites scattered throughout a neighborhood. New York City and its housing authority were at the vanguard of interpreting and implementing federal housing policy. Mayor Robert F. Wagner Jr. initiated a pilot study of urban renewal techniques under the new law and announced that its new federally funded developments would be what NYCHA came to call "vest-pocket" developments: sites a city block or less in size and comprising one to four buildings. This approach aimed to address criticism of larger high-rise projects by minimizing demolition and displacement while promoting targeted rehabilitation.

The complex is also **locally significant** under **Criterion C** in the areas of *Landscape Architecture* as an example of a public housing landscape that was designed to be integrated with the adjacent historic park. The Moore Houses are the only NYCHA development that directly abuts a flagship city park. Landscape architects Darling, Innocenti & Webel created a design that provided an aesthetically pleasing relationship between St. Mary's Park and the Moore Houses.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Development of the Mott Haven Neighborhood

The Bronx is named after Jonas Bonck, a Swedish colonist who in 1639 established a farmstead with his wife, Teuntje Joriaens, in what is now the Mott Haven neighborhood. They were joined by other European settlers, including the Morris family, who moved to the area in 1670 and amassed an estate of approximately 2,000-acres along the Harlem River.[3] The Bronx remained agrarian and sparsely populated throughout the eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth century.

[1] "Bronx Development to get First Tenants on Monday," *New York Times,* January 31, 1964.
[2] Correspondence from Oscar Kanny, Director of Public Relations, September 21, 1960. LaGuardia & Wagner Archives.
[3] "Morrisania: The South Bronx and the old days of American aristocracy," Bowery Boys, September 28, 2016, https://www.boweryboyshistory.com/2016/09/morrisania-south-bronx-old-days-american-aristocracy.html.

Development of the South Bronx began in earnest in the 1840s under the guidance of Gouverneur Morris Jr. His plans for the area include an industrial waterfront centered on deep water access at what is still known as Port Morris, as well as a fashionable residential enclave farther inland. Morris believed that railroads were key to achieving his vision. He was an early investor in the New York and Harlem line, which he granted a substantial right-of-way through his property, and he built his own private line from Port Morris to connect with the Harlem line to the north (this line was initially called the Morrisania Branch and was later known as the Port Morris Branch). Morris also sold portions of his property to other developers, including inventor and industrialist Jordan Lawrence Mott, who purchased several tracts in 1841 and 1848. Mott moved his iron foundry to the Harlem River waterfront, laid out streets and buildings lots, and began promoting a new village that he called "Mott Haven."[4] Initially that name referred to a relatively small area west of Third Avenue, but came to encompass nearly the entire Bronx south of East 149th Street.

By the second half of the nineteenth century residents were predominately Irish with a small Italian community.[5] An early map of Morrisania identifies Mary's Park with a fishpond, curved pathways, and several large residences (Figure 1). The park was originally private property and included the Italianate style mansion of successful iron foundry owner, Adrian Janes.[6] Several other private residences were scattered throughout the private park, including the homes of J.F. Entz, E.D. Ogden, and Captain S. Samuels. As Manhattan's urbanization increased, plans to expand the grid system emerged. An 1868 survey map of Morrisania illustrates plans to redevelop the town, which included subdividing St. Mary's Park (Figure 2). In 1874, the town of Morrisania was annexed to the City of New York, putting the park at risk of being developed. In 1881, John Mullaly (1835-1915) founded the New York Park Association for the purpose of creating parks as an escape from the growing urban environment.[7] The efforts of the New York Park Association resulted in the 1884 New Parks Act, which allowed for the purchase of six parks in the Bronx, including the twenty-five acres (later expanded to thirty-five) known as St. Mary's Park.

Residential development in Mott Haven picked up steam following a series of transportation improvements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[8] In 1887, the Suburban Rapid Transit Company extended its Third Avenue elevated train line into the Bronx, with a station stop at Third Avenue and 149th Street a few blocks west of the Moore Houses site. Brick tenements lined the streets, and the industrial waterfront continued to expand. Two- and three-story dwellings and several sprawling residences surrounded St. Mary's Park during the late-nineteenth century. At this time, Passage Avenue intersected the developed land on the corner of East 149th Street and Jackson Avenue, the site of the present-day Moore Houses (Figure 3).[9] In 1905 the Interborough Rapid Transit Company opened the first subway in the Bronx, with a line running under 149th Street from the Harlem River to Third Avenue (where it connected with the elevated), and then as an elevated

[4] "Mott Haven, The Bronx," Six to Celebrate, Accessed June 9, 2023, https://6tocelebrate.org/neighborhood-items/mott-haven-the-bronx/.
[5] Robert L. Singer and Elena Martinez, "A South Bronx Music Tale," *Centro Journal,* Volume XVI Number 1 (Spring 2004): 181.
[6] Jane's mansion was later converted into an office and remained standing until 1934 when the park was redesigned to include recreational features.
[7] "St. Mary's Park," NYC Parks, accessed June 9, 2023, https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/st-marys-park/history.
[8] "Mott Haven, The Bronx," Six to Celebrate.
[9] By 1908 Passage Avenue would be changed to Trinity Avenue.

above Westchester Avenue with a stop at Jackson Avenue, three blocks north of the Moore Houses site. Also in 1905, the Port Morris Branch railroad was electrified, and all at-grade crossings were eliminated, with a new train tunnel excavated under St. Mary's Park. The old tracks, which had defined the park's western edge, were removed in 1912 and the land incorporated into the park—meaning that the future site of the Moore Houses would directly abut the park.

By the early twentieth century, many early dwellings on the site of the present-day Moore Houses had been replaced with two- and three-story tenements. Several stores emerged along East 149th Street and Jackson Avenue. In 1914 the borough's first public playground was installed in St. Mary's.[10] The rise in personal automobile ownership during the 1930s resulted in the construction of a filling station on the corner of East 149th Street and Trinity Avenue and several auto repair shops along East 149th Street, which remained until the development of the Moore Houses (Figure 4). The area in which the Moore Houses were developed was documented by the New York City's Department of Taxation and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) between 1939 and 1941 as part of a city-wide survey. The photographs depict a predominately residential neighborhood with several commercial buildings and automobile related businesses (Figures 5 and 6). Industry increased when the PWA funded the Triborough Bridge (now known as the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge), which was constructed between 1929 and 1936 connecting the boroughs of Queens, Manhattan, and the Bronx.

Economic Decline of the South Bronx

In 1933 the Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC) was established as part of the New Deal for the purpose of encouraging white middle-class families to buy single-family homes and helping existing homeowners struggling to make mortgage payments following the Depression. The HOLC offered to purchase mortgages that were at risk of foreclosure and issued low-interest mortgages that included principal and interest in monthly payments which provided borrowers with the opportunity to own the home after the mortgage was paid off. The HOLC developed a grading system, primarily based on the racial composition of the neighborhood, to assess the risk of the property depreciating.[11] The four categories—best, still desirable, definitely declining, and hazardous—identified what the HOLC considered the quality of the neighborhoods for investment. The "high-risk" or hazardous neighborhoods were outlined in red, a tactic that would become known as redlining. Many minority neighborhoods were redlined, making it much more difficult for residents to obtain mortgage loans; this practice isolated minorities while creating a segregated middle class.

The HOLC evaluation process would become the foundation for the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), which was created in 1934. The FHA ensured bank mortgages were attractive as they covered 80 percent of purchase prices, had a twenty-year term, and were amortized.[12] The requirements to be eligible for the FHA mortgage insurance program included having an appraisal for the property, which followed the same grading system as the HOLC and therefore legalized and institutionalized segregation. An *Underwriting Manual* was distributed to appraisers with guidelines on how to assess a property for the federal mortgage insurance

[10] "St. Mary's Park," *NYC Parks.*
[11] Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017), 63.
[12] Rothstein, *Color of Law*, 64.

program. A 1935 publication of the *Underwriting Manual* states, "If a neighborhood is to retain stability it is necessary that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes."[13] The federal government denied minorities access to homeownership by systematically redlining neighborhoods. Not only did this enforce the segregation of neighborhoods, but it also maintained segregation in the school system and prevented minorities from accessing resources and opportunities. These and other programs geared towards middle-and upper-class white residents sent millions of white homeowners to the suburbs in the mid-twentieth century.

Neighborhoods redlined by the HOLC were also excluded from federal funds to improve the existing structures and entire communities fell into disrepair, making them targets for slum clearance programs. In 1938, the Division of Research and Statistics appraised the Bronx and identified redlined areas for the HOLC. The area surrounding St. Mary's Park was within the redlined D-6 area that spanned from East 133rd Street to East 163rd Street (Figure 7). According to the Area Description form that accompanied the map, D-6 was 50 percent Irish and German, and 6 percent African American, with a note that there was an "infiltration of Italian" immigrants.[14] The Division of Research and Statistics described the trend of desirability in the next ten to fifteen years as "down fast" and found that the predominate building type was multi-family housing. The Division of Research and Statistics determined that there was "very limited" availability of mortgage funds for home purchases in the area.[15] Features that negatively impacted the desirability rating included industrial encroachment, the elevated railroad, heavy traffic, and congestion.

The redlining of Mott Haven likely contributed to the demographic shift that occurred during the mid-twentieth century. Many white residents moved out, choosing to leave a neighborhood experiencing systematic disinvestment and attracted to the suburbs by generous federally subsidized mortgages. This particularly affected public housing, and the percentage of white tenants in NYCHA's developments citywide fell from 42.7 percent to 27.9 percent during the 1960s.[16]

At the same time, many Black and Puerto Rican citizens were moving to New York City and the South Bronx specifically.[17] Technological advancements in cotton farming resulted in the displacement of Black residents in the south. Established Black neighborhoods became overcrowded as the population in New York went from 450,000 Black residents to 800,000 after World War II.[18]Available work was sparse and white union groups prevented minorities from securing labor jobs.[19] Puerto Ricans became citizens of the United States with the passing of the Jones Act of 1917. During the first quarter of the twentieth century Puerto Ricans sailed to the United States, but relocation ceased when the Depression hit in 1929. Puerto Rico was experiencing an economic downfall during the mid-twentieth century. Many Puerto Ricans fled their country with the rise in

[13] Rothstein, *Color of Law*, 65.
[14] Form 8 D-6 Area Description Map – Security Map of New York City, October 1, 1937.
[15] Form 8 D-6 Area Description Map.
[16] Joseph Heathcott, Lawrence J. Vale, Gregory Holcomb Umbach, and Nicholas Dagen Bloom, *Public Housing Myths: Perception, Reality, and Social Policy* (London: Cornell University, 2015), 111.
[17] "Melrose Playground," NYC Parks, accessed January 25, 2024, https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/melrose-playground/history.
[18] Jill Jonnes, *South Bronx Rising*: *The Rise, Fall and Resurrection of an American City, Third Edition* (New York: Empire State Editions, 2022), 41.
[19] Jonnes, *South Bronx Rising*, 41.

flight availability after World War II; however, when they arrived in the United States they were faced with limited options and impoverished neighborhoods. By 1950 more than 60,000 Puerto Ricans called the Bronx home and in 1953 approximately 500,000 Puerto Ricans resided in New York City.[20]

Federal housing policy denied the same incentives to Black, Puerto Rican, and other minority home seekers, effectively barring them from moving to the suburbs. At the same time, redlining prevented them from obtaining mortgages for property within the city. Housing problems increased and minority neighborhoods became overcrowded. Public housing was one of the only options accessible to them.

Approximately a quarter of the residents of the South Bronx were receiving welfare by 1960.[21] A 1967 study conducted by Fordham University found that the South Bronx was in a dire economic decline largely due to white flight and the closure of many of the industrial businesses along the waterfront.[22] Racial tension intensified, and Puerto Rican communities were faced with hostility. Neighborhoods that were developed by European immigrants transitioned into Spanish speaking communities and bodegas were established to accommodate the residents with imported products from home. Landlords subdivided already crowded tenements to allow for more families to move in. Neighborhoods in the South Bronx declined, and formerly thriving communities suffered from widespread demolition, lack of public services, crime, and vandalism.

In 1948, Robert Moses initiated the Cross-Bronx Expressway, which would require a mass demolition of tenements in its path. The Cross-Bronx Citizen's Protective Association formed in opposition to the expressway, advocating for "Housing before Highways."[23] Despite public outcry, the expressway was completed in 1972; it physically divided neighborhoods, and allowed for vehicular traffic to bypass the South Bronx, further isolating the neighborhood. In Robert Caro's biography, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*, he emphasizes the scale of the residents' displacement by the project,

> …what was most significant about the Cross-Bronx Expressway was not that seven miles of brick and mortar and steel and iron had to be removed from its path but that seven miles of people had to be removed, removed from homes which in a time of terrible housing crisis in New York were simply irreplaceable.[24]

Existing issues in the South Bronx escalated. Amid the upheaval, NYCHA was demolishing large tracts of land for housing projects. Beginning after World War II, NYCHA began the construction of housing projects in the South Bronx. Entire communities were demolished to construct large-scale Towers-in-the-Park style projects, such as the Patterson Houses (1950), the Melrose Houses (1952), and the Forest Houses (1956). Lower-income neighborhoods on the Upper West Side of Manhattan were destroyed with the introduction of Moses's Title 1 slum clearance projects. Displaced residents were faced with limited options as Manhattan was transitioning into a middle- and upper-income area, in turn making the already overpopulated South Bronx the only viable

[20] Jonnes, *South Bronx Rising*, 42.
[21] Evelyn Gonzalez, *The Bronx* (New York: Columbia University Press: 2004), 119.
[22] Gonzalez, *The Bronx*, 118.
[23] Jonnes, *South Bronx Rising*, 47.
[24] Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1974), 848.

option for people with fewer means.[25] Between 1950 and 1977, 9,000 low-income apartments, most of them in high-rise public housing buildings, were constructed in the South Bronx.[26]

NYCHA and the Early Vest-Pocket Program, 1954-1966

The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) was the first public housing authority in the United States, established in 1934 during the height of the Great Depression, and its first affordable housing development was built in collaboration with the New Deal-era Federal Public Works Administration (PWA). NYCHA expanded its scope considerably when it was allowed to receive funding directly from the federal government (following the passage of the Housing Act of 1937) and from New York State (following a state referendum in 1938); the state law also enabled New York City to borrow money for its own developments, thus creating a three-tiered public housing program under which NYCHA could tap federal, state, and city fundings sources.[27] Construction of public housing was severely curtailed during World War II, although NYCHA continued to acquire sites and plan for future developments.

When the war ended, the authority aggressively resumed its building campaign in response to an acute housing shortage in New York City, exacerbated by the influx of returning service members and a halt to construction during the war years.[28] One source in 1945 found that "of 2,255,850 dwellings in New York City, only 2,000 vacancies could be found," while another noted that veterans were so desperate for lodging that they were even willing to sleep in Central Park if the city would only allow it.[29]

NYCHA's post-war building boom was characterized by large developments of high-rise buildings surrounded by open landscaped areas in superblocks that interrupted large swaths of the street grid. As a later NYCHA chair would note, these "'superblock projects' were planned…to meet the post-war demand for housing by getting up buildings as quickly as possible.'"[30] While the 1949 federal housing law emphasized slum clearance projects, much of New York's post-war public housing was in fact sited on vacant land at the periphery of the city. This was particularly true of the middle-income, city-funded developments. As one historian noted, "By 1955, NYCHA had built public housing projects evenly on 500 acres of slum land and 500 acres of vacant land."[31] All, however, were of the superblock, towers-in-the-park model.

By the mid-1950s, public housing in general—and the superblock model in particular—were being questioned by a range of public housing advocates and critics. What was once seen as a patriotic endeavor—providing government-built housing for returning World War II veterans amid staggering demand—had increasingly acquired a taint of socialism and was losing its broad public support. The federal government, for example, had

[25] Jonnes, *South Bronx Rising*, 48.
[26] Michael Sterne, "Low-Rise Buildings Urged in South Bronx," *New York Times*, October 22, 1977.
[27] Nicholas Dagen Bloom, *Public Housing that Worked*, (Philadelphia; University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 40.
[28] These developments initially employed state and city funds, and eventually federal money once Congress passed the Housing Act of 1949.
[29] Bloom, *Public Housing that Worked*, 112; Peter Kihss, "City's Housing Shortage Worse; Building Programs Deadlocked," *New York Times*, October 14, 1945; "Housing Shortage Erases Moving Day," *New York Times*, October 2, 1945.
[30] "Public Housing to Get New Look," *New York Times*, May 5, 1957, 76.
[31] Bloom, *Public Housing that Worked*, 131.

pledged to fund annually 135,000 new public housing units in its 1949 housing law, but that number had dropped to just 35,000 a year in 1954. Even staunch advocates increasingly lamented the lack of innovation in public housing. Catherine Bauer, who had written much of the original 1937 housing act, noted, "Everybody tends to sit tight, clinging desperately to the beleaguered formula, instead of trying to improve it in the light of experience and public attitudes."[32]

The federal government took its first, halting steps at improving public housing policy and learning from recent experience when it adopted the Housing Act of 1954. The law explicitly shifted focus from "slum clearance"—a fraught term denoting the wholesale demolition of large portions of economically disadvantaged neighborhoods—to "urban renewal," which would involve a range of public and private interventions aimed at revitalizing and preserving those neighborhoods. As one contemporary commentator noted, "The Housing Act of 1954 gave explicit recognition to the need to continuously 'renew' our cities…Where the 1949 Act was limited essentially to slum clearance and redevelopment (the bulldozer approach), the 1954 Act provided that an urban renewal project might involve rehabilitation and conservation as well."[33]

The 1954 law contained several key provisions. It emphasized rehabilitation and conservation, primarily through private development aided by federal mortgage insurance for renovation projects (Section 220). It required every municipality receiving federal housing funds to develop a workable plan including provisions for building codes, developing a comprehensive community master plan, and conducting analysis of deteriorated and declining neighborhoods.[34] The act also authorized funding for 35,000 units of public housing; President Eisenhower had asked for this to extend for four years but Southern Democrats, upset about recent anti-segregation rulings at the Supreme Court, limited it to one year. Finally, the act also authorized the federal government to dole out demonstration grants to municipalities seeking to explore new models for urban renewal.

New York City and its housing authority were at the vanguard of interpreting and implementing federal housing policy. The Housing Act of 1954 was passed just months into the first term of Mayor Robert F. Wagner Jr., who served from 1954-65 and was instrumental in steering NYCHA, however slowly, in a new direction. Wagner came into office with public housing bonafides; his father, a US senator from 1927-1949, helped sponsor both the Housing Act of 1937 (the Wagner-Steagall Bill) and the Housing Act of 1949 (the Taft-Wagner-Ellender Bill).

In October 1955, speaking in front of a Congressional subcommittee, Wagner announced a pilot program to study urban renewal techniques under the new law.[35] He noted that this study "involves a cooperative effort on the part of private enterprise and the city, State, and Federal Governments to rehabilitate one entire section of

[32] Catherine Bauer, "The Dreary Deadlock of Public Housing," *Architectural Forum* (May 1957).
[33] New York City Planning Commission, "Urban Renewal: A Report on the West Side Urban Renewal Study" (New York, 1958), 83.
[34] "The workable programs submitted by most large cities consist of a brief textural statement summarizing local compliance"; "The New York workable program comprises a 7-page printed letter of the Mayor to the HHFA Administrator, supported by 45 exhibits." Quintin Johnstone, "The Federal Urban Renewal Program," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 25, no. 2 (Winter 1958), 340 and footnote 231.
[35] U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Banking and Currency: Investigation of Housing, 1955, 84th Cong., 1st sess., 1955, 3-7; "City Gives Plan to Rehabilitate Upper West Side," *New York Times*, October 6, 1955, 1 and 22.

our city, to concentrate on it rather than a few square blocks here and there. If it works in this one area, we will repeat it elsewhere."[36] The following year, New York City received a federal demonstration grant—as provided under Section 314 of the Housing Act of 1954—to fund the study of what came to be known as the West Side Urban Renewal Area, encompassing twenty blocks between West 87th and 97th Streets and Central Park West to Amsterdam Avenue in Manhattan.

Crucially, Wagner also noted in his Congressional testimony that the city had received clarification that "Federal low-rent housing funds previously used only for the superblock type of construction can be used both for single buildings and rehabilitation of old buildings."[37] With this confirmation in hand, NYCHA announced in February 1956 that its federally funded developments would be "departing from the superblock pattern of projects covering six to eight blocks…[and] will diffuse the low-rent apartments widely in small development covering a single block, a half-block, quarter-block and in some cases a single building."[38] It also noted that, "The city's decision to go from superblock construction to smaller projects and scattered single buildings in its federally aided public housing will, if continued, retain neighborhood characteristics of many older residential sections while slowing or halting the encroachments of slum blight," therefore achieving one of the primary goals of the Housing Act of 1954.[39]

It took a couple of years for NYCHA to implement this plan, but in 1958 it announced fourteen new developments, of which nine were to be what the authority now termed "vest-pocket" housing.[40] As one article announcing the new program claimed, "This will be the first widespread use of small islands of public housing to rehabilitate neighborhoods affected by spotty deterioration alongside other buildings still in good condition."[41] The article also provided a simple definition of what constitutes a vest-pocket development: sites a city block or less in size and comprising one to four buildings.

It took another few years for the city's first vest-pocket developments to go from the drawing board, through construction, to finally openings for tenants. Hylan Houses, opened 1960 in Brooklyn, became NYCHA's first stand-alone tower, although the authority took pains not to call it a vest-pocket development since it was sited adjacent to the Bushwick Houses superblock.[42] Ditto the Mill Brook Extension in the Bronx, opened in January 1962 immediately adjacent the original Mill Brook superblock. The authority's first true vest-pocket development was Audubon Houses (NR 2022), opened in April 1962 on Amsterdam Avenue at West 155th Street in Manhattan.

NYCHA's early vest-pocket program was well received. In 1962, the same year the Audubon Houses opened, the city announcing another $60 million toward vest-pocket developments in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the

[36] Investigation of Housing, 1955, 5.
[37] Investigation of Housing, 1955, 6.
[38] Charles Grutzner, "City Will Scatter U.S. Housing Units," *New York Times*, February 25, 1956, 1.
[39] Grutzner, "City Will Scatter U.S. Housing Units," 1.
[40] NYCHA had in fact used the term "vest pocket" in March 1955 to refer to an unbuilt development in Chinatown. "'Vest-Pocket' Housing for City," *New York Herald Tribune*, March 24, 1955.
[41] "City Housing Unit Plans 14 Projects," *New York Times*, February 2, 1958, 49.
[42] "Vest-Pocket Plan in Housing is Set," *New York Times*, November 5, 1959.

Bronx.[43] A newspaper article from the time noted that, "Thirty-two per cent of all housing projects now being planned or built by the New York City Housing Authority are vest-pocket developments. Such developments occupy less than a city block, and in many instances consist of a single building. The small developments, the mayor said, are intended 'to preserve neighborhoods throughout the city which may be destroyed because of more extensive public housing activities.'"[44] Another newspaper article from 1964 claimed that "Vest-pocket development, as conceived by Mayor Wagner, 'is proving to be one of the most practical and popular techniques in our low-rent housing program.'"[45]

In spite of its popularity, however, Wagner always viewed the vest-pocket program as an adjunct to traditional slum clearance and superblock developments. As he noted in the same Congressional testimony that launched the program in 1955, "In describing the project as 'new and workable supplementary approach' to the city's housing problem the Mayor made it clear that the individual block rehabilitations…would not be a substitute for larger public and quasi-public housing projects."[46] NYCHA continued to build superblock developments throughout his term as mayor, and completed those still on the books when his successor, John Lindsay, took office in 1966.

The Moore Houses

The Moore Houses were part of NYCHA's multi-million-dollar redevelopment program in the South Bronx.[47] Unlike many of the early projects that consisted of large-scale, high-rise public housing developments, which required mass slum clearance, the Moore Houses were constructed with minimal demolition and displacement. The 1951 Sanborn Map illustrates how undeveloped the proposed site was when compared to the surrounding neighborhood, which made the location an ideal candidate for a vest-pocket development (Figure 8). Initially proposed to be called the St. Mary's Park East Area, the name quickly changed to the E. Robert Moore Houses in honor of the Reverend Monsignor E. Robert Moore, pastor of Old St. Peter's Church and member of NYCHA between 1934 and 1944.

An important characteristic of vest-pocket housing was integration into the surrounding neighborhood, and the proposed site and surrounding area were surveyed to ensure that the location would benefit future tenants. Access to parks, shopping, transportation, and educational facilities were documented when surveying the site. The proximity to Midtown Manhattan and public transportation proved to be an ideal location for the housing project. The development was advertised for its convenient walkability to the popular commercial center known as The Hub, which included movie theaters and department stores, several public schools, houses of worship, hospitals, grocery stores, and bodegas. In 1958, preliminary visits to the site were conducted that documented twenty-nine residential buildings (of which twenty-five were wood framed and four were brick), a gas station, storage yard, plumbing supply shop, a scrap yard, two used car lots, and an auto repair shop (Figures 9-12).[48]

[43] Susanne Schindler, "The Housing that Model Cities Built: Context, Community, and Capital in New York City, 1966-76," Doc. thesis, (Universität der Künste, Berlin, 2018), 48.
[44] "City Plans Housing in Small Projects," *New York Times*, April 8, 1962, quoted in Schindler 48.
[45] "4 Housing Projects to be Started Here," *New York Times*, January 20, 1964, 84.
[46] "City Gives Plan," 1 and 22.
[47] New York City Housing Authority News Release dated June 17, 1963. Moore Houses, NYCHA Archives, New York.
[48] City Planning Commission dated March 19, 1958. Development File NY5-48. Moore Houses, NYCHA Archives, New York.

The survey found that the residential buildings contained sixty-nine units that housed an estimated eighty-two residents.[49] It was estimated that about 30 percent of the residents would be relocated into public housing developments and about 40 percent would self-relocate to other housing. The director of program planning submitted preliminary site plans to the Department of Parks in 1959.[50] While plans for the Moore Houses were being developed, the city-aided St. Mary's Park Houses projects were under construction directly north of the proposed site and plans were being developed for the federally aided John Adams Houses, just four blocks northeast.

The proposed site of the Moore Houses was within Area BX-3 of the Master Plan of Section Containing Areas Suitable for Development and Redevelopment, delineated by the City Planning Commission in December of 1954 (Figure 13).[51] The planning commission declared that the early twentieth century tenements on the site were substandard and unsanitary, which made them eligible for clearance, and approved NYCHA's proposal to construct the St. Mary's Park East Area (later the E. Robert Moore Houses) in 1958. On December 23, 1959, NYCHA petitioned the Board of Estimate to the City of New York to obtain acquisition of the properties within the proposed development site by eminent domain.[52] The board approved the petition and NYCHA utilized Section 125 of the Public Housing Law to acquire the properties. Portions of the proposed site were previously owned by the city, including a lot on Jackson Avenue and the public avenue that intersected the site. The 1950 United States Census of Housing documented that 32 percent of the apartments within the site either had no private baths or were dilapidated.[53] The same census found that 5 percent of the entire Bronx borough was in this condition.

The City Planning Commission initially disapproved of the scale of the plan to house 178 families, or 716 persons per acre; however, it allowed the density because of the large open space the park provided.[54] A representative of the Citizens' Housing and Planning Council vocalized the council's approval of the proposed housing project at a public meeting held on February 25, 1958.[55] The location abutting the city park differentiated the Moore Houses planning process from other housing projects. In addition to the demolition of existing buildings, the streetscape was altered during the Moore Houses' construction. In preparation for the development of the housing project, Trinity Avenue became a cul-de-sac, terminating at the southwest corner of the site, abutting the southernmost parking area, and slightly intersecting the park. Since the cul-du-sac extended into the park, the parks department had to approve the design.[56] Consequently, existing pathways within the park had to be modified to adapt to the introduction of the cul-du-sac. These alterations were included in the housing contract and paid for by NYCHA. A chain-link fence bordering St. Mary's Park was

[49] New York City Housing Authority Management Department Correspondence, February 11, 1958. LaGuardia & Wagner Archives.
[50] Correspondence from Harry J. Trivisonno, Director of Program Planning, October 27, 1959. LaGuardia & Wagner Archives.
[51] Correspondence from Philip J. Cruise, NYCHA Chairman, February 10, 1958. LaGuardia & Wagner Archives.
[52] Petition of the New York City Housing Authority to the Board of Estimate of the city of New York; submitted pursuant to Article VIII of the Public Housing Law for the acquisition by eminent domain of certain tracts of land in the County of Bronx, City, and State of New York as site for E. Robert Moore Houses Federally-Aided Project No. NY 5-48B, LaGuardia & Wagner Archives.
[53] City Planning Commission dated March 19, 1958. Development File NY5-48. Moore Houses, NYCHA Archives, New York.
[54] City Planning Commission dated March 19, 1958.
[55] City Planning Commission dated March 19, 1958.
[56] City Planning Commission dated March 19, 1958.

removed, as well as a drinking fountain and trees within the park during the creation of the cul-du-sac.[57] Approximately nine feet fronting East 149th Street on the northwest portion of the site remained outside of the chain-link fence boundary that would surround the development area. This portion of the site was one of the main entry points into St. Mary's Park and therefore NYCHA decided it should continue to be maintained by the parks department.[58] The existing stone retaining wall that separated the project site from the ca. 1927 mixed-use building to the south was removed and replaced with a new concrete retaining wall and chain-link fence.[59]

In 1958 Basil Thomas Coleman, director of programming for the Board of Education of the City of New York, estimated that forty of the eighty-two tenants displaced during the demolition were K-6 students, but the construction of the housing project would result in approximately 330 K-6 students living on site.[60] Displaced students were attending Public School 27 on St. Ann's Avenue between East 147th and East 148th Streets, which was at capacity during the survey. Public School 25 was three blocks east of the site, and plans to construct Public School 5 directly across from the proposed site were in place in 1958. Coleman estimated that there would be about fifteen students in grades seven through nine that would be displaced, but students in this age range would increase to 130 with the new construction.[61] Junior High Students in the area attended Junior High School 139 on Brook Avenue and East 141st Street and Junior High School 149 on Willis Avenue between East 144th and East 145th Streets. Students could attend Morris High School on 166th Street, Boston Road, and Jackson Avenue, and plans to build an additional building at the Bronx High School of Science were in place.[62] The proposed site was deemed a suitable location because of the accessible educational buildings. Vest-pocket projects were developed to integrate tenants into the surrounding neighborhood, including the integration within the school system. Access to educational programs enhanced tenant resources and economic opportunities.

William Reid announced the proposed plan for the E. Robert Moore Houses in September of 1960 as part of NYCHA's redevelopment program in the South Bronx. NYCHA selected New York based architects Edelbaum & Webster to design the two twenty-story federally aided, low-rent, public housing development on the approximately two-and-a-half acre lot abutting St. Mary's Park. In a press release Reid declared, "Construction of the buildings in a 'T' shape will avoid overcrowding in the lobbies. The 'T' design provides for separate lobbies in two wings of each building, with two elevators in each wing, making four elevators per building."[63] The T-shaped footprint also provided about 60 percent of the apartments with views of St. Mary's Park.[64] The

[57] Hugh McClellan Files, June 6, 1960. LaGuardia & Wagner Archives.
[58] MOORE HOUSES – Questions to be Settled with Reference to Adjacent Properties, Jun 6, 1960. LaGuardia & Wagner Archives.
[59] Correspondence from Sydney Schneider, Vice President, January 30, 1961. LaGuardia & Wagner Archives.
[60] Correspondence between Basil Thomas Coleman and Philip J. Cruise dated April 7, 1958. Mo-900-Robert Moore Houses. Moore Houses, NYCHA Archives, New York.
[61] Correspondence between Basil Thomas Coleman and Philip J. Cruise.
[62] Correspondence between Basil Thomas Coleman and Philip J. Cruise.
[63] Correspondence from Oscar Kanny, Director of Public Relations, September 21, 1960. LaGuardia & Wagner Archives.
[64] Correspondence from Oscar Kanny.

Moore Houses occupy approximately 19 percent of the 2.7-acre site, with the remaining space functioning as recreational spaces and parking.[65]

A *New York Times* article published in March of 1961 announced that NYCHA was planning the sale of $45,728,000 temporary loan notes for the purpose of financing fourteen projects, as well as rehabilitation of eight existing projects, including the construction of the Moore Houses.[66] Tenant applications became available in June of 1963 and on February 3, 1964, Mr. and Mrs. Nargi and their four children were the first residents welcomed during the ribbon-cutting ceremony. At the ceremony Mrs. Nargi stated, "I can't wait until I get into my new home, where I live now it is infested with mice and roaches."[67] The completed projects included 463 apartments ranging from three-and-a-half rooms to seven-and-a-half rooms which could house about 1,765 residents and including seventy-six apartments for seniors.[68] The housing project cost approximately $7,150,000, less than the estimated $10,710,000 projected when the building plans were filed in September of 1960.[69] Annual income eligibility for a family could not exceed $3,600 for a one-person family, $4,720 for a two-person family, $5,080 for a three-to-four-person family, $5,712 for a five-to-six-person family, and $5,964 for a seven or more person family.[70] In 1964, rent at the Moore Houses, including utilities, ranged from $58.00-$67.00 a month for a one-bedroom apartment, $69.00-$77.00 for a two-bedroom apartment, $80.00-$86.00 for a three-bedroom apartment, $86.00-$92.00 for a four-bedroom apartment, and $92.00-$94.00 for a five-bedroom apartment.[71]

Life at the Moore Houses

NYCHA's interior finishes changed after the mid-twentieth century in response to an increase in vandalism and maintenance issues. Ceramic tiles were used in public corridors and lobbies because they were easier to clean than the painted walls of the past. NYCHA released a monthly management newsletter for the housing project, which included general information, tenant concerns, community activities, and rent collection schedules. An early newsletter dated April 1964 expresses the intention of a mutually beneficial partnership between NYCHA and the residents,

> The New York City Housing Authority is your landlord, but your landlord in not a big faceless public agency. We in Management are very human. We'd like to be the best landlord, and we're going to do all we can to be to be the best. We'll know we're succeeding when:
>
> 1. Our buildings and grounds are sparkling clean.
> 2. Apartments are clean and in good repair.
> 3. Service is excellent.
> 4. Heat and hot water are always there when needed.

[65] News Release from Oscar Kanny, Director of Public Relations, January 31, 1964. LaGuardia & Wagner Archives.
[66] "Housing Agency Plans Financing," *New York Times*, March 11, 1961.
[67] News Release from Oscar Kanny, Director of Public Relations.
[68] Correspondence from Oscar Kanny, Director of Public Relations.
[69] News Release from Oscar Kanny, Director of Public Relations; Correspondence from Oscar Kanny.
[70] NYCHA E. Robert Moore Houses Brochure. LaGuardia & Wagner Archives.
[71] NYCHA E. Robert Moore Houses Brochure.

5. Our Housing Police spend all their time answering questions and giving directions.
6. Our children respect people and property.
7. There are no accidents.
8. Rent is paid on time.
9. We all practice courtesy and consider each other.
10. We are all happy to live here and to work here.[72]

In the early years of the project, a housing patrolman was on duty twenty-four hours a day to ensure safety. Many of NYCHA's employees were required to pass civil service exams, an element that was not required in other states.[73] Residents formed a neighborhood committee that organized gatherings at the community center intended to foster neighborliness and a community atmosphere.[74] In the January 1965 issue of the management newsletter, an unnamed tenant reflected positively on the first year living in the Moore Houses,

> For E. Robert Moore Houses, the year 1964 was a year of accomplishment, a year of fulfillment. We watched our new homes taking shape before our eyes. Delays occurred, sometimes heartbreaking delays. We shrugged them off. We all had confidence that the final results would be well worth waiting for. And they were. There is no better project in the entire city.
>
> This time last year, those of us who had already been assigned a new apartment could do nothing more but come and look hopefully at the still unfinished buildings. Those of us who had not yet been assigned could only wait and hope that we would be one of those 'reached.'
>
> We watched as our buildings were finished. We saw our ground transformed from a sea of mud to a beautiful area of walks and grass, of benches and playgrounds. As winter progressed into spring, and spring blossomed into summer, we gradually moved into our brand new homes. We filled them to capacity. Unfortunately, many had been turned away. The housing shortage is still a problem.
>
> For those of us who are here, we are now in the 'lived happily ever after' period. The future will be largely what we make of it. Let us all resolve to be 'Good Neighbors in 1965.'[75]

Minor alterations to the landscape design were made approximately a year after the housing project opened. Durable shrubs replaced some of the original plantings and additional fencing was added to prevent children from damaging the landscape.[76] At this time a sitting area for seniors, including checkerboard tables, was added to the landscape. The community center at the Moore Houses was an essential part of the community at the housing projects and offered activities such as summer recreational activities and field trips. Documentation regarding the purpose of the community center states,

[72] NYCHA, *Management News Letter* (April 1964). Moore Houses 203, NYCHA Archives, New York.
[73] Heathcott, et al., *Public Housing Myths Perception, Reality, and Social Policy*, 98.
[74] NYCHA, *Management News Letter* (May 1964). Moore Houses 203, NYCHA Archives, New York.
[75] NYCHA, *Management News Letter* 2, no. 1. Moore Houses 203, NYCHA Archives, New York.
[76] Correspondence between Sidney Schackman and Max B. Schreiber dated August 7, 1975. E. Roberts Moore Houses Grounds Maintenance Files. Moore Houses, NYCHA Archives, New York.

> To provide a neighborhood center for individual and cooperative activities devoted to social development, education and civic responsibilities to the end that the neighborhood, and as far as possible, the larger community, may better meet the human needs and aspirations of men, and women and children, regardless of race, color, or creed; that all may learn and practice better ways of living and working together.[77]

The E. Robert Moore Coordinating Council formed in 1965 as a response to tenant complaints and concerns. Early complaints included the location of the management office at the nearby St. Mary's Houses, use of the community center, and criminal activity. Tenants were conflicted on whether the community center should be exclusively used by seniors or children.[78] In a meeting held in December of 1965, senior residents vocalized that when they filled out the application for the Moore Houses they were told the center would be a senior center. During the meeting, concerns were voiced that the social club that used the community center, also identified as the aged group, had developed into a gambling group. Supervisor of Community Services W. Hermenia Jackson documented the meeting, "Thus the Social Club, left on their own, developed into a gambling group. Outsiders frequented the Social Club meetings during lunch hours solely for the purpose of gambling."[79] The coordinating council terminated the social club's meetings temporarily, but ultimately the community center became the Moore Houses senior center, and an opening celebration was held on December 11, 1969.[80] The center was operated by the Department of Social Services and co-sponsored by Forest Neighborhood Houses (Forest-Gould) along with NYCHA. By 1969 the council's name had changed to the Moore Houses Tenants' Council.

Public housing developments in the South Bronx gradually became centers of crime, violence, and vandalism. The lack of preventative maintenance and limited staff resulted in poor living conditions, the same conditions that the NYCHA housing projects were designed to solve. The South Bronx experienced an exodus of the middle class during the 1970s, leaving many buildings abandoned, in turn becoming victims of vandalism. The population in the South Bronx decreased from approximately 150,000 in 1970 to 117,000 in 1974.[81]

Federal policies slowly evolved during the late 1950s in an attempt to correct the overt segregation of minorities beginning with the Civil Rights Act of 1957 as an amendment to the Civil Rights Act of 1870. The Civil Rights Act would be amended again in 1960 and 1964. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited segregation in federal subsidized housing; although that was not applied to homes purchased with FHA loans.[82] In 1962 President Kennedy initiated the Equal Opportunity in Housing (Executive Order 11063), which "prohibits discrimination in the sale, leasing, rental, or other disposition of properties and facilities owned or operated by the federal

[77] Excerpt as to Purpose. E. Roberts Moore Houses Grounds Maintenance Files. Moore Houses, NYCHA Archives, New York.
[78] W. Hermenia Jackson letter dated December 8, 1965. E. Roberts Moore Houses Grounds Maintenance Files. Moore Houses, NYCHA Archives, New York.
[79] W. Hermenia Jackson letter.
[80] NYCHA, *Management News Letter* 6, no. 4. Moore Houses 203, NYCHA Archives, New York.
[81] Sterne, "Low-Rise Buildings Urged in South Bronx."
[82] Yeeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 14.

government or provided with federal funds."[83] Six years later the federal Fair Housing Act was enacted, which protects minorities from discrimination in the sale or rental of housing. Despite efforts made by the federal government to reverse the actions of the past, segregated neighborhoods were already in place.

Crime and social disorder continued to increase throughout the 1960s. Arson became common beginning in 1968. Apartment buildings were in poor condition and overcrowded. Landlords observed the city's employment of eminent domain to raze blocks of buildings and therefore were not motivated to maintain their own buildings. Landlords abandoned their buildings and committed arson to claim insurance money, leaving the residents of the South Bronx in a dire predicament. Renters used arson as an attempt to obtain an apartment unit in newly constructed public housing buildings.[84] During this period, 80 percent of housing was razed due to the fires, resulting in the displacement of 250,000 people.[85] Ten million dollars was paid to building owners out of the state pool insurance.[86] Funding for fire departments, police departments, and sanitation services were cut, which intensified the situation. The City of New York installed a subpar fire alarm system and terminated fire stations in the South Bronx during the period they were needed most.[87]

In 1973 Dr. Harold Wise, the founder of the Martin Luther King Jr. Health Center told the *New York Times*, "The South Bronx is a necropolis-a city of death."[88] Three hundred companies employing 10,000 people in the Bronx closed or relocated in the years between 1970 and 1977.[89] President Jimmy Carter's infamous visit to the derelict Charlotte Street in 1977 brought attention to the state of the South Bronx. Following the visit, Carter said, "It was a very sobering trip for me to see the devastation that has taken place in the South Bronx in the last five years. But I'm encouraged in some ways by the strong effort of tenant groups to rebuild. I'm impressed by the spirit of hope and determination by the people to save what they have. I think they still have to know we care."[90] In the same year sports journalist Howard Cosell famously announced during a Yankees game while looking at the skyline of the South Bronx, "There it is ladies and gentlemen, the Bronx is burning." The following year urban planner Ed Logue was hired to manage the South Bronx Development Office, which focused on Charlotte Street. Today the blighted area has been redeveloped into rows of two-story single-family homes. Community groups rose out of the devastation of the South Bronx. In 1975 Roman Rueda founded the People's Development Corporation, a sweat equity group that rehabilitated the abandoned and vandalized buildings. Other groups, such as the Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association, followed the same formula. Community activists organized grassroot initiatives and utilized government work programs to initiate the revitalization of the Bronx.

[83] "Fair Housing and Related Laws," U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, accessed April 26, 2024, https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/fair_housing_and_related_law.
[84] Gonzalez, *The Bronx*, 126.
[85] Deiogomaye Ndiaye, "How the Bronx Burned," Bronx River Alliance, September 14, 2020. https://bronxriver.org/post/greenway/how-the-bronx-burned.
[86] Ndiaye, "How the Bronx Burned."
[87] Gonzalez, *The Bronx*, 125.
[88] Martin Tolchin, "South Bronx: A Jungle Stalked by Fear, Seized by Rage," *New York Times,* January 15, 1973.
[89] Gonzalez, *The Bronx*, 118.
[90] Lee Dembart, "Carter Takes Sobering Trip to the South Bronx," *New York Times*, October 6, 1977.

By the late 1970s, the area surrounding the Moore Houses had become a notoriously crime ridden, impoverished neighborhood with 40 percent of its 60,000 residents living on welfare.[91] The New York City Planning Commission expressed its concern, "High rates of fire, crime and drug addiction mark the area, and local residents are the victims of social economic and physical problems that categorize the decaying cores of many large American cities."[92] In 1979 the South Bronx Development Office drafted a $375-million rehabilitation plan for the South Bronx to create jobs and renovate existing housing that had fallen into disrepair.[93] The few new construction projects in the plan were low-rise buildings constructed in proximity to existing NYCHA projects.

The crack epidemic and the War on Drugs of the 1980s had a major impact on the reputation and conditions in NYCHA's housing projects. As a *New York Times* article published in 1988 recounted, "In 1986, there were 5,730 arrests for drug offenses on Housing Authority property and its perimeters. Last year, in the second year since the creation of a special lower-Manhattan strike force involving the housing police and the Police Department's narcotics division, there were 8,510 arrests. And the total through July is running far ahead of any year in the decade, with 5,445 arrests." [94] In 1990 NYCHA initiated a local Drug Elimination Program (DEP) with a focus on public housing sites.[95] Tenant-organized patrols, in combination with the DEP, resulted in a decrease in drug use during the late twentieth century. The introduction of Operation Safe Home (OSH) increased police officers at public housing developments from forty-eight in 1991 to eighty-one in 1994.[96]

NYCHA experienced federal and city budget cuts since 2001, which resulted in declining maintenance standards. In 2013 NYCHA employed 670 maintenance workers, a number that would increase to 800 if HUD fully funded the projects.[97] In 2012 Hurricane Sandy hit New York City causing massive damage. Large housing projects were severely impacted as many of the boilers, electrical conduits and panels were located at basement level.[98] Residents were left without power or heat for weeks to months, affecting approximately 80,000 residents in 423 NYCHA buildings.[99] Despite NYCHA receiving a three-billion-dollar Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant in 2015, considerable damage remains. The grant was intended to fund repairs due to hurricane damage and protect against future environmental disasters in thirty-three NYCHA housing projects.[100] In addition to the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, NYCHA faced government

[91] Sterne, "Low-Rise Buildings Urged in South Bronx."
[92] Sterne, "Low-Rise Buildings Urged in South Bronx."
[93] Ari L. Goldman, "New Plan Submitted for Housing and Jobs in South Bronx Area," *New York Times,* August 14, 1979.
[94] David E. Pitt, "At Night, Drugs Invade the Projects," *New York Times*, September 1, 1988. Accessed February 14, 2023.
[95] Jeffrey Fagan, Garth Davies, Jan Holland, and Tamara Dumanovsky, *The Bustle of Horses on a Ship: Drug Control in New York City Public Housing*, Columbia University Law School Pub. Law Research Paper No. 05-89 (2005). https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2364&context=faculty_scholarship.
[96] Fagan, et al., *The Bustle of Horses on a Ship*.
[97] Heathcott, et al., *Public Housing Myths Perception, Reality, and Social Policy*, 107.
[98] Luis Ferre-Sadurni, *The Rise and Fall of New York Public Housing: An Oral History* (July 9, 2018). Accessed February 8, 2023.
[99] "Hurricane Sandy: Ten Years Later," October 26, 2022, accessed February 9, 2023. https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/sustainability/downloads/pdf/publications/Sandy-10-Years-Later.pdf
[100] "Mayor de Blasio, Senator Schumer Announce $2 Billion in Federal Funds to Repair and Protect 33 Sandy-damaged NYCHA Developments Housing Thousands – Largest FEMA Grant in History," New York City Office of the Mayor, March 31, 2015. Accessed February 9, 2023, https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/206-15/mayor-de-blasio-senator-schumer-3-billion-federal-funds-repair-protect-33#/0.

defunding. Throughout the 2000s NYCHA experienced disinvestment, including the exclusion in the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, in turn preventing necessary improvements to buildings.[101] Over the years, continuous government defunding has resulted in neglected buildings and substandard living conditions.

According to the 2010 Census 72 percent of the 58,000 residents in the Mott Haven neighborhood were Hispanic.[102] Between 2000 and 2010 the Morrisania-Melrose neighborhood gained approximately 8,100 residents and the Melrose South-Mott Haven neighborhood gained 6,000.[103]

Moore Houses' Landscape Design & Relationship to St. Mary's Park

Although many of NYCHA's projects were in proximity to playgrounds and parks, the Moore Houses are the only project that directly abuts a substantial city park. The 35.31-acre St. Mary's Park is one of the Bronx's six original parks and is a significant part of the community. One of the two Woodson Houses (1970) abuts the 0.92-acre Livonia Park in the Brownsville neighborhood of Brooklyn. Housing projects such as the Queensbridge Houses (1939) and Soundview (1954) were constructed near parks; however, city streets create a boundary in between. Robert Moses was outspoken about the benefits of selecting public housing sites near parks. In 1938 Moses proposed fifteen locations for potential housing projects near parks, including the area between East 143rd Street, East 149th Street, and Willis Avenue to the west of St. Mary's Park, which would later become the site of the Betances Houses in 1973.[104] NYCHA's landscaping program was extensive and well-planned, in large part because of Moses. Early housing projects provided tenants with green space and playgrounds; however, the design of the buildings was seen as more important than the landscaping. In 1938 Moses vocalized his disdain for the lack of recreational facilities in housing projects.[105] Moses saw the early landscaping as a missed opportunity to create more public parks and by the 1940s NYCHA's landscape drawings were reviewed by the Parks Department.[106]

Plant species were chosen based on the amount of maintenance required and survival in an urban environment.[107] Horticulture maintenance was not the only complication with the copious plantings, they also became a hazard when children took to climbing them. This issue was solved by introducing larger playgrounds and recreational spaces in the complexes, while still maintaining green space.[108] The increased recreational space also saved on the cost of maintenance. Instead of standard playsets, the NYCHA team observed how children play and developed equipment that sparked imagination. A.J. Moffat was inspired by children climbing trees and playing among the rubble of a demolished building and created equipment such as the 'dodger,' which

[101] Samar Khurshid, "Despite Tens of Billions Proposed, NYCHA Again Left out of Major Federal Funding Packages," *Gotham Gazette*, August 9, 2022. Accessed February 9, 2023. https://www.gothamgazette.com/city/11511-despite-tens-of-billions-proposed-nycha-again-left-out-of-major-federal-funding-packages.
[102] C.J. Hughes, "Mott Haven, the Bronx, in Transition," *New York Times,* March 25, 2015.
[103] New York City Department of City Planning, "NYC2010 Results from the 2010 Census: Population Growth and Race/Hispanic Composition," March 2011. https://www.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/data-maps/nyc-population/census2010/pgrhc.pdf.
[104] "Huge Housing Plan Offered by Moses," *New York Times,* November 23, 1938.
[105] "Moses Asks Rise in Play Area Fund," *New York Times,* October 28, 1938.
[106] Bloom, *Public Housing that Worked*, 67.
[107] Bloom, *Public Housing that Worked*, 66.
[108] Bloom, *Public Housing that Worked*, 163.

consisted of an E-shaped concrete wall that children could climb.[109] Historic architectural plans illustrate that the play area at the Moore Houses was equipped with a variety of typical NYCHA concrete play structures, such as a saddle, turtle, and porpoise (Figure 14). These structures were likely created with molds designed by Jim Miller-Melburg, a sculptor and founder of Form, a company that designed playground sculptures. Although Miller-Melburg designed many whimsical concrete molds for playgrounds, his turtle play sculpture became an iconic fixture within mid-century playgrounds throughout the United States.

The functionality and integration of the building and landscape design was an important design feature in NYCHA's housing projects. The two residential buildings occupy less than 19 percent of the 2.7-acre lot, allowing for ample green space.[110] The landscape was intended to provide residents with an urban escape into a natural setting while walkways within the development connected to the city sidewalk. The Moore Houses relationship to St. Mary's Park was a vital component of the project planning. Landscape architects Darling, Innocenti & Webel visually integrated the landscape within the housing project with the park. Although fencing separates the housing project, Darling, Innocenti & Webel designed pathways to be harmonious with the park's. The introduction of green space in a previously developed area unified the project site with the adjacent park and provided tenants with an enhanced quality of life (Figure 15). In addition to having the first playground in the Bronx, in 1951 St. Mary's Park became the first park in New York City to have an indoor recreation center which housed a swimming pool, community center, gymnasium, and locker room facilities.[111] Tenants of the Moore Houses would have access to the park's playgrounds, baseball diamond, tennis courts, indoor recreation center, and community garden in their backyard. Many apartment units had views of the sprawling green space, a feature that is rare within the densely urbanized city.

Umberto Innocenti (1895-1968) and Richard Webel (1900-2000) were introduced while working for the landscape architecture firm Vitale & Geiffert, a firm well known as the landscape designers for New York's elite. The Great Depression forced the firm of Vitale & Geiffert to terminate business in 1931 and Innocenti and Webel formed a partnership.[112] Webel worked part-time at Harvard while maintaining his position at Innocenti & Webel.[113]

A native of Italy, Innocenti immigrated to the United States in 1925 on a scholarship in landscape architecture from the University of Florence.[114] Innocenti's early life was surrounded by agriculture which gave him hands-on experience and knowledge of horticulture. Webel was born in Frankenthal, Germany, but immigrated to the United States as a child and was raised in Washington. He would study landscape architecture at Harvard and was awarded the Rome Prize in Landscape Architecture and Harvard's Sheldon Traveling Fellowship which

[109] Bloom, *Public Housing that Worked*, 67.
[110] New York City Housing Authority News Release dated June 17, 1963. Moore Houses, NYCHA Archives, New York.
[111] "St. Mary's Park," *NYC Parks*.
[112] "Innocenti & Weber," The Cultural Landscape Foundation, accessed March 4, 2024. https://www.tclf.org/pioneer/innocenti-webel.
[113] Robert Karson, "A Practice Defined by Complementarity: Innocenti & Webel," *View: The Magazine of the Library of American Landscape History* no. 21 (2021): 38.
[114] "Umberto Innocenti, Landscape Designer," *New York Times*, October 11, 1968.

allowed him to study three years in Rome.[115] Upon Webel's return from Rome in 1929, he began his career at the New York based landscape architecture firm of Vitale & Geiffert.

Many of Vitale & Geiffert's clients hired Innocenti & Webel when they opened an office on the north shore of Long Island. Known as the "Gold Coast," the north shore of Long Island was home to the Manhattan elite's extravagant summer estates. The collaboration highlighted each designer's skills; Innocenti's expertise in horticulture prompted him to be more involved with the site work, while Webel's talents in drawing the designs were utilized. The partners derived inspiration from their experiences in Europe as their luxurious designs often incorporated water features and classical compositions.

Innocenti & Webel completed the landscape design at the 230-acre Langdon K. Thorne estate which had been started by Vitale & Geiffert. Other early landscapes included the estates of Evelyn Marshall Field, Howard K. Phipps, Robert Winthrop, and Charles McCann. In 1939 the firm was hired to design their first of several projects for the prominent Frick family.[116] Weber left his position at Harvard in 1939 to fully dedicate himself to the firm and business expanded to include institutional and corporate projects. The second phase of the landscape firm included participating in the 1939 World's Fair, landscaping at the Frick collection in New York City, headquarters of Doubleday & Company in Garden City, and Belmont Park in Queens. The landscape architecture firm would expand when Webel married fellow landscape architect Janet Darling (1913-1966) in 1947 and she became a partner. Born in Riverdale, New York, Darling studied at Smith College and the Cambridge School of Architecture. Darling and Webel had a son, Richard C. Webel, who later joined the firm. In addition to being a partner at Darling, Innocenti & Webel, Darling worked independently under the name Darling & Weber, designing residential gardens, as well as larger projects like Damrosch Park at Lincoln Center.[117] As Darling, Innocenti & Webel the firm expanded its projects to include federal and New York City housing projects and corporate landscapes.[118] Among these projects were the NYCHA-owned Manhattanville Houses in Manhattan, New York (1958-1961; NR 2024), Reader's Digest Headquarters in Chappaqua, New York, and Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina. The firm continued to evolve and adapt to changes in architectural trends. Landscape historian Robin Karson remarks on how the landscape architectural firm was founded on traditional designs and historical reference instead of following midcentury trends; yet, the firm had a modern approach to space.[119] Karson goes on to say, "…the partners' merging of inventive space and expressive planting was both distinctive and exceptional."[120] The firm of Innocenti & Webel is still active today.

Moore Houses' Architectural Design

The Moore Houses housing project was designed by the architectural firm Edelbaum & Webster with Wilaka Construction Company, Inc. as the general contractor. Edelbaum & Webster was formed in 1947 when Saul

[115] "Richard Webel," The Cultural Landscape Foundation, accessed March 4, 2024. https://www.tclf.org/pioneer/richard-webel.
[116] Karson, "A Practice Defined by Complementarity," 35.
[117] Cynthia Zaitzevsky, *Long Island Landscapes and the Women Who Designed Them* (Canada: Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities, 2009), 244.
[118] "Mrs. Janet D. Weber," *New York Times,* September 12, 1966.
[119] Karson, "A Practice Defined by Complementarity," 43.
[120] Karson, "A Practice Defined by Complementarity," 43.

Edelbaum (1908-2003) and Ida Brown Adelberg Webster (1899-1983) opened their office in New York City. Born in Poland, Edelbaum studied architecture at Yale University and began his career at the architectural firm of Harvey Stevenson and Dear Evans Moore & Woodbridge.[121] Born in Rochester, New York, Webster studied at Adelphi College and MIT. Like Edelbaum, Webster worked for Evans Moore & Woodbridge. Webster is notable as one of the first female partners in an architectural firm.[122] Edelbaum & Webster are known for their designs for the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens Research Laboratories, commercial and public housing projects, as well as many modernist residential homes for Jewish merchant families.[123] The firm received the New York State Association of Architects award for excellence for their design for the Brutalist style Riverside Neighborhood Assembly (RNA) House, located at 150-160 West 96th Street, which was part of the West Side Urban Renewal Area Plan completed in 1967.[124] Inspired by I.M. Pei's 1957 design for the Kips Bay Towers, the reinforced concrete superblock features continuous rows of inset windows.

The utilitarian design for the Moore Houses was typical of NYCHA public housing projects (Figures 16-17). Edelbaum & Webster included characteristic features such as the alternating buff-brick and red-brick elevations and the checkerboard patterned water tower enclosure on the roof of the East 149th Street-facing building. The buildings contain seventy-six apartments designed specifically for senior residents with features such as non-skid tile floors, grab bars in bathrooms, and automatic shut-off devices on gas ranges.[125] Both the interior and exterior design of the projects took into consideration the daily lives of the residents, such as the first-floor community center and terraces with benches were located at both main entrances which provided residents with a communal gathering space. Many early NYCHA projects did not include closet doors to save on building expenses; however, the apartments within the Moore Houses provided ample closet spaces with doors. Changes in design and materials occurred when NYCHA was reorganized in 1958. The cost-cutting design features of the early projects proved to be difficult to clean and did not create an inviting environment. Concrete floors in lobbies, lack of closet space, and elevators operating on a 'skip-stop' system were among the early features that NYCHA later abandoned.[126] Under NYCHA's new leadership, colorful ceramic tiles and terrazzo flooring were installed which made spaces more inviting and easier to clean. Although the Moore Houses had a central laundry room, apartment units were designed with a space for a personal washing machine. Brochures for the Moore Houses boasted, "463 new apartments in two attractively designed buildings on beautifully landscaped grounds (Figure 18)."[127]

Late post-war urban renewal phase housing projects in the Bronx

NYCHA favored local architects to keep uniformity in the design of their developments, which were generally characterized by a standardized modern style void of ornamentation that projected utilitarian functionality. A range of architects were commissioned by the agency to design housing projects between 1935 and 1995

[121] "Edelbaum/Webster," NC Modernist, accessed June 8, 2023, https://www.ncmodernist.org/edelbaum.htm.
[122] "Edelbaum/Webster," NC Modernist.
[123] "Edelbaum/Webster," NC Modernist.
[124] "Three Area Architects Create New Company." *New York Times,* November 20, 1969.
[125] News Release from Oscar Kanny, Director of Public Relations, January 31, 1964. LaGuardia & Wagner Archives.
[126] Bloom, *Public Housing that Worked*, 182.
[127] NYCHA E. Robert Moore Houses Brochure. LaGuardia & Wagner Archives.

throughout the city; 65 percent of the projects were constructed before 1970.[128] Between 1959 and 1964, the years of development of the Moore Houses, twelve NYCHA public housing projects were completed in the Bronx. With the exception of a pair of two-building projects—the Morrisania Houses (1963) and the Murphy Houses (1964)—the developments constructed in the borough during the period were large-scale complexes inspired by the Towers-in-a-Park concept. The John Adams Houses (1964) consist of seven fifteen and twenty-one story buildings, Baychester Houses (1963) consist of eleven six-story buildings, Butler Houses (1964) consist of six twenty-one story buildings, Castle Hill Houses (1960) consist of fourteen twelve and twenty-story buildings, Jackson Houses (1963) consist of seven sixteen-story buildings, McKinley Houses (1962) consist of five sixteen-story buildings, Mill Brook Houses (1959) and the Mill Brook Extension (1962) together consist of ten sixteen and seventeen-story buildings, Monroe Houses (1961) consist of twelve eight, fourteen, and fifteen story buildings, and the St. Mary's Park Houses (1959) consist of six twenty-one and twenty-two story buildings. As with all NYCHA properties, the South Bronx projects are faced with brick and are without ornamentation with regularly spaced single and paired aluminum framed windows and rise to a flat roof. Landscape design and common spaces, such as basketball courts and playgrounds, enclosed within fencing is a character defining feature of each property.

Three of these housing projects were constructed in proximity to the Moore Houses; however, the projects were substantially larger than the Moore Houses which used the early vest-pocket approach rather than the superblock Towers-in-a-Park concept.

The St. Mary's Houses are located on the north side of East 149th Street, across the street from the Moore Houses. The project spans the width of East 149th Street to East 156th Street, crossing Westchester Avenue and includes 1,007 apartment units. Units were spacious with the largest unit being four-and-a-half rooms. The large-scale, slightly irregular rectangular buildings are faced with brick and are without ornamentation. The six buildings are separated by a communal green space which includes parking lots, basketball courts and playgrounds accessible by concrete walkways. When the housing complex was completed in 1959, it became the most expensive project in New York City, with units costing an average of $113.50 per month.[129] Black residents made up 98 percent of the racial demographics when the projects opened for occupancy.[130]

The John Adams Houses, just east of the St. Mary's Houses, were completed in 1964. The complex consists of two superblocks separated by Tinton Avenue and seven fifteen to twenty-one story buildings with 925 apartment units. The housing project incorporated a parking, basketball courts, and communal green space connected by winding sidewalks.

The Mill Brook Houses, located south of St. Mary's Park and bounded by East 137th Street, Cypress Avenue, East 135th Street, and Brook Avenue created two superblocks separated by St. Ann's Avenue. Similar to the St. Mary's Houses and John Adams Houses, the Mill Brook Houses include ten sixteen to seventeen story buildings. The first nine buildings were completed in 1959, with another built in 1962 on the corner of Cypress

[128] Fagan, et al., *The Bustle of Horses on a Ship.*
[129] John Aigner, "The Service is Lousy," *New York Age*, October 31, 1959.
[130] Aigner, "The Service is Lousy."

Avenue and East 135th Street. Unlike the original nine slightly irregular rectangular buildings, the 1962 building, known as the Mill Brook Extension, has an L-shaped footprint.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

__X__ 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
__X__ Other
Name of repository: **NYCHA Archives**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

E. Robert Moore Houses Bronx County, NY
Name of Property County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.66
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 40.812876 Longitude: -73.909993

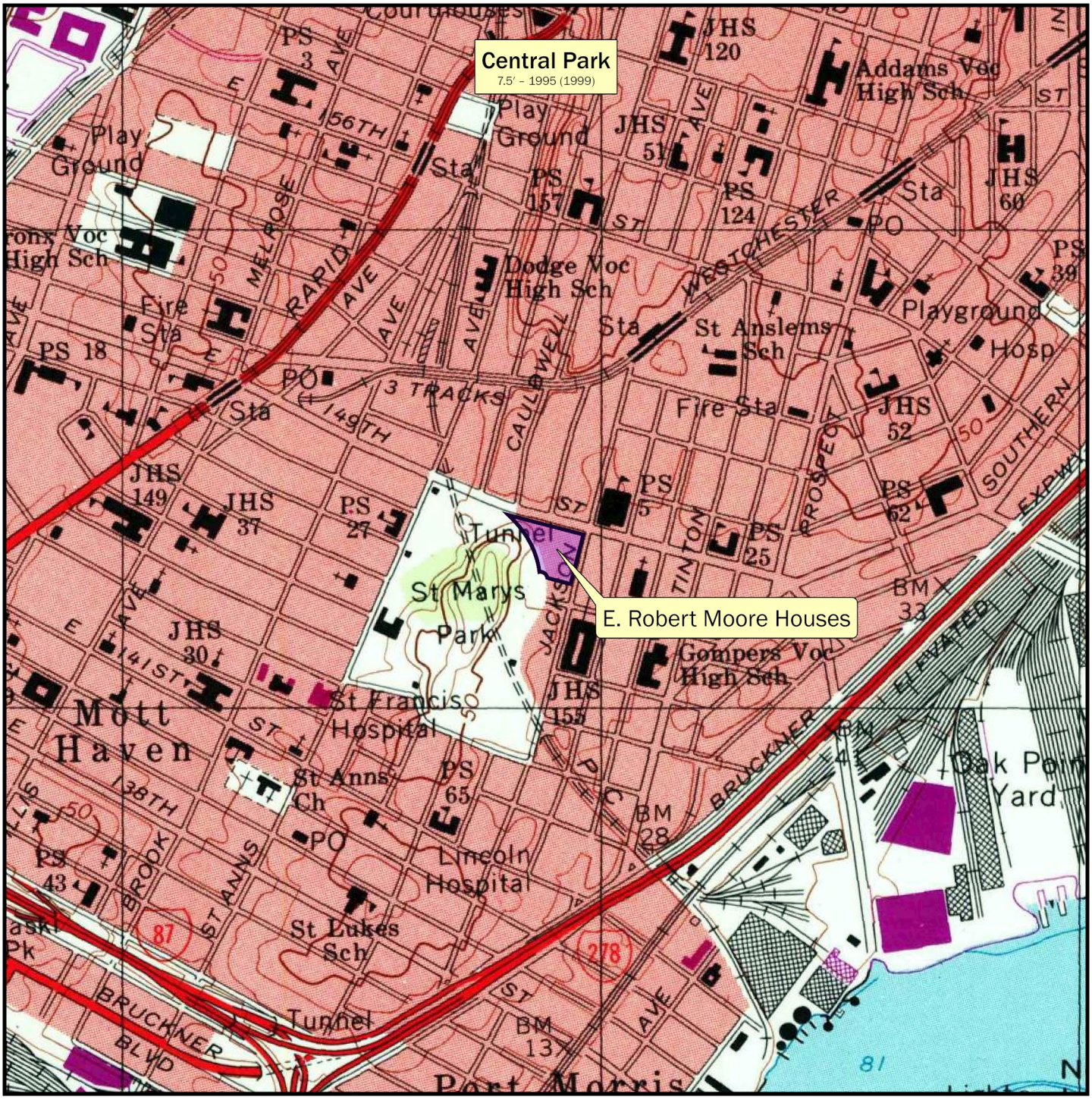
Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

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

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary encompasses the historic and current tax parcel associated with the housing project.

E. Robert Moore Houses Bronx County, NY
Name of Property County and State



Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 18N

Mapped 04/09/2025 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

E. Robert Moore Houses
Name of Property

Bronx County, NY
County and State

1:1,200
0 50 100 ft

Nomination Boundary (2.66 ac)

New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 18N

New York State Orthoimagery Year: 2021

Mapped 04/09/2025 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

E. Robert Moore Houses Bronx County, NY
Name of Property County and State

1:2,400
0 100 200 ft

Nomination Boundary (2.66 ac)
Tax Parcels

New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 18N
MAPPLUTO Parcel Year: 2025
Mapped 04/09/2025 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

E. Robert Moore Houses Bronx County, NY
Name of Property County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kendal Anderson, edited and revised by Christopher D. Brazee, NYSHPO

organization Ryan, LLC date May 2025

street & number 100 Oliver Street, Suite 1840 telephone (207) 593 3008

city or town Boston state MA zip code 02110

e-mail Kendal.anderson@ryan.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.)

Figures

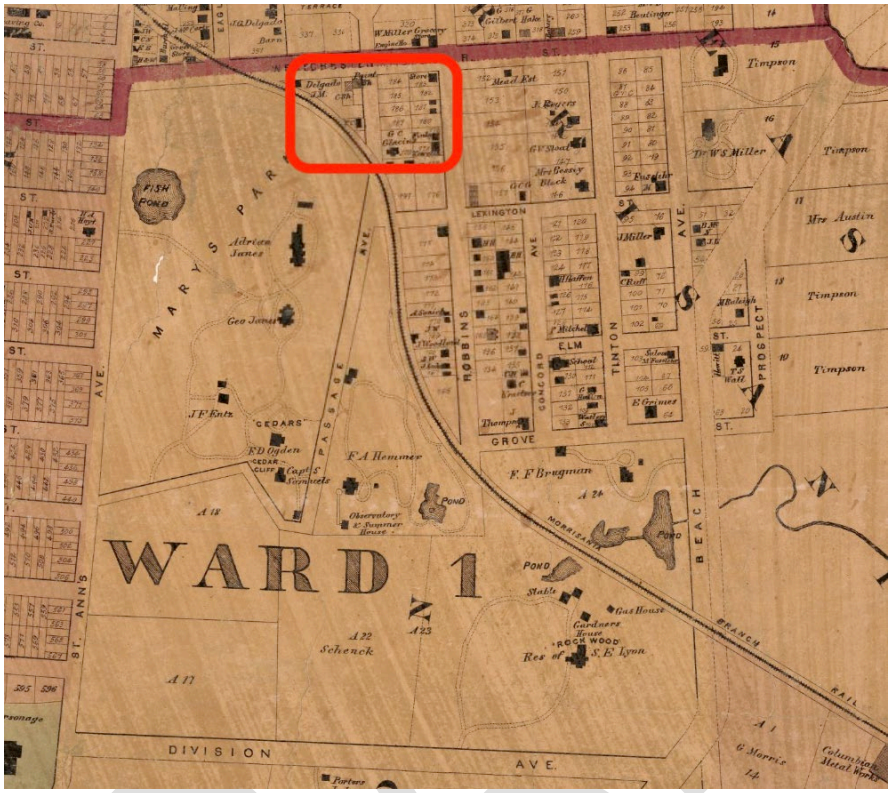


Figure 1. ca. 1865 Map of Morrisania. *Library of Congress.*

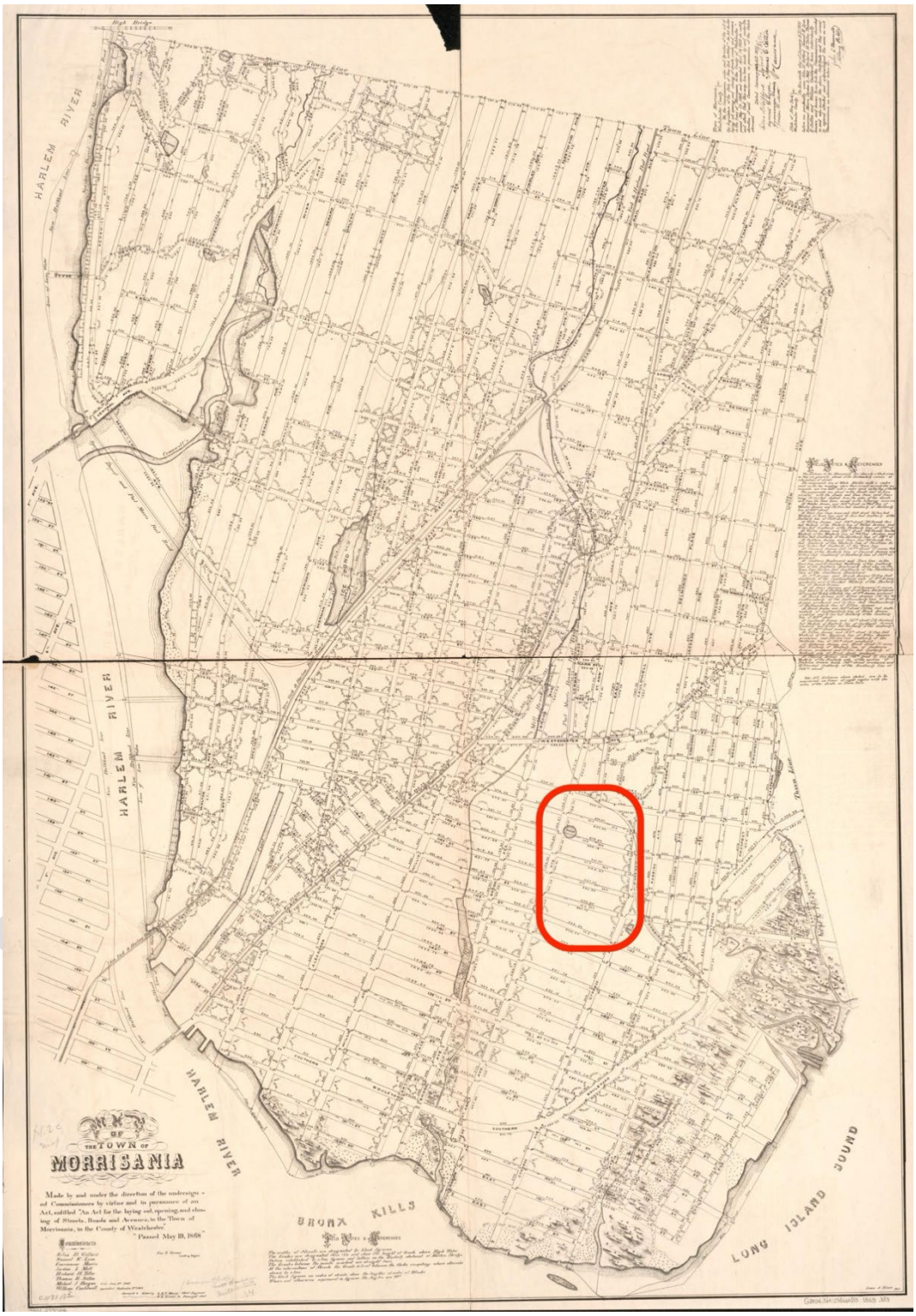


Figure 2. 1868 Map of the Town of Morrisania. *Library of Congress.*

Figure 3. 1891 Sanborn Map.

Figure 4. 1935 Sanborn Map.

Figure 5. Commercial buildings along East 149th Street taken during the 1939-1940 survey. The five-story building is identified on the 1935 Sanborn map as a store and dwelling on the corner of Trinity Avenue and East 149th Streets. *NYC Municipal Archives.*

Figure 6. Examples of two-story dwellings along Trinity Avenue taken during the 1939-1940 survey. *NYC Municipal Archives.*

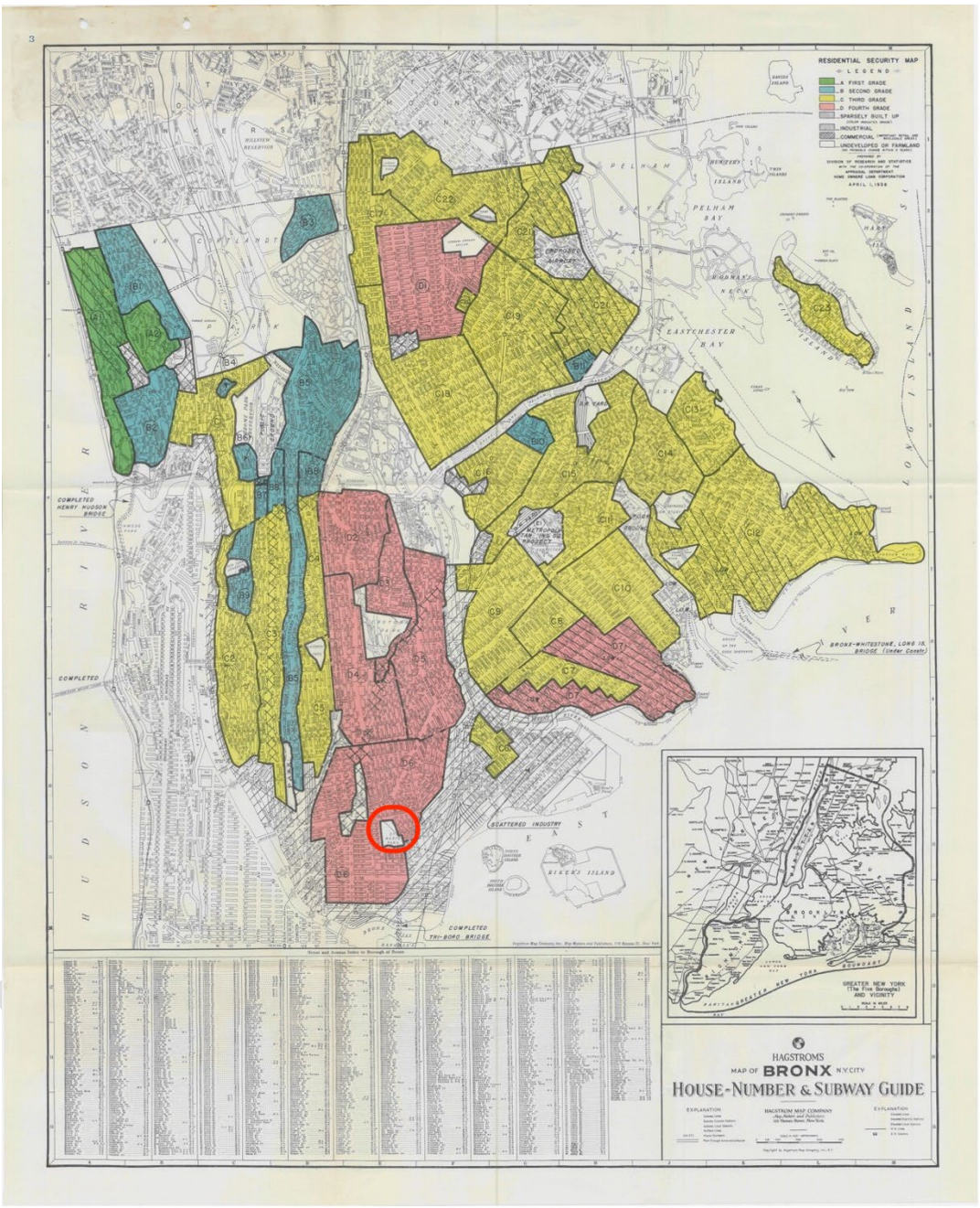


Figure 7. Home Owner's Loan Corporation Map dated April 1, 1938.

Figure 8. 1951 Sanborn Map.

Figure 9. Photograph taken on Jackson Avenue looking south during the 1958 survey for the proposed site. *NYCHA Archives.*

Figure 10. Photograph taken on Trinity Avenue looking north from East 147th Street during the 1958 survey for the proposed site. *NYCHA Archives.*

Figure 11. Photograph looking south from East 149th Street towards Trinity Avenue taken during the 1958 survey for the proposed site. *NYCHA Archives.*

Figure 12. Photograph taken from the corner of Jackson Avenue and East 149th Street looking west during the 1958 survey for the proposed site. *NYCHA Archives.*

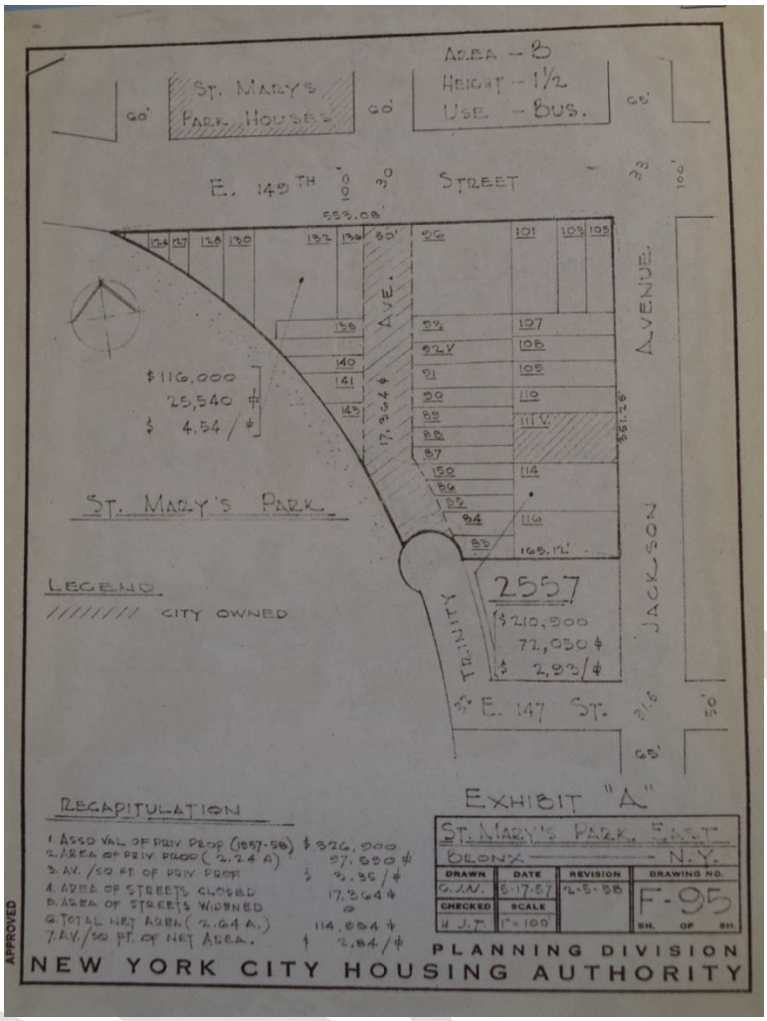


Figure 13. 1957 map identifying Area BX-3 which was delineated by the City Planning Commission in December of 1954. *NYCHA Archives.*

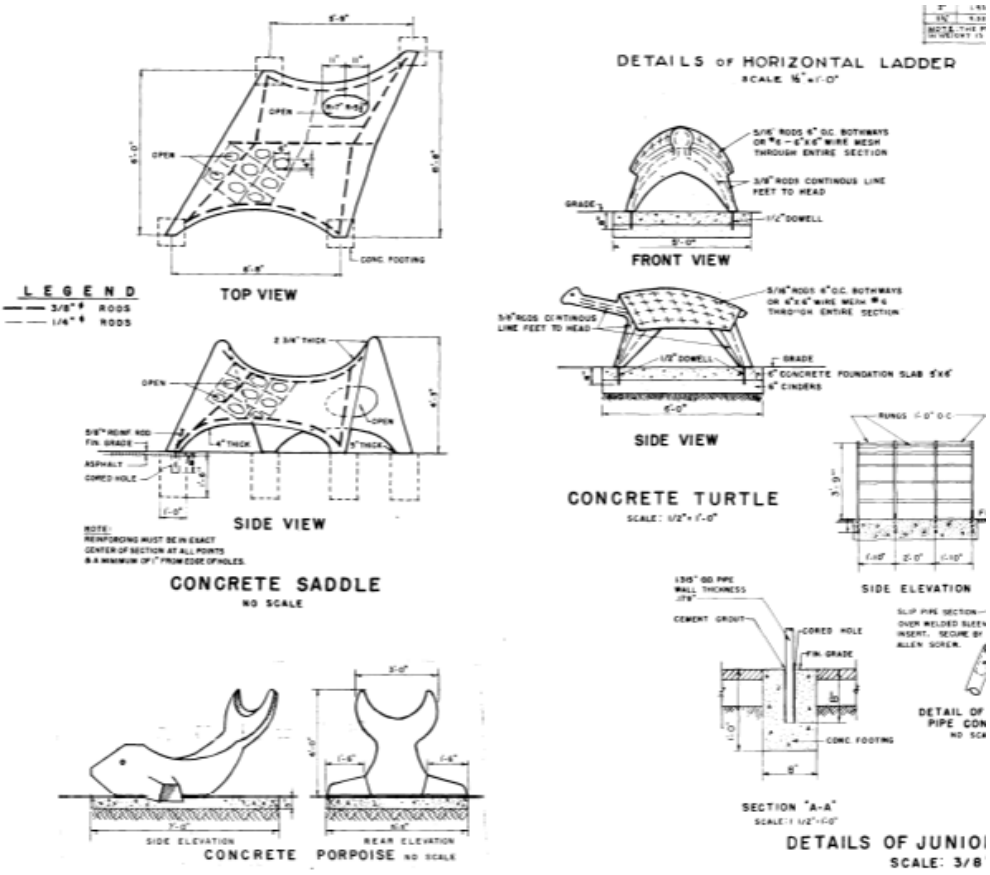


Figure 14. Play Structure drawings dated 1961. *NYCHA Archives.*

Figure 15. Aerial imagery of St. Mary's Park 1934. *NYC Department of Records & Information Services.*

Figure 16. 1964 photograph of the Moore Houses. *NYCHA Archives.*

Figure 17. 1964 photograph of the Moore Houses. *NYCHA Archives.*

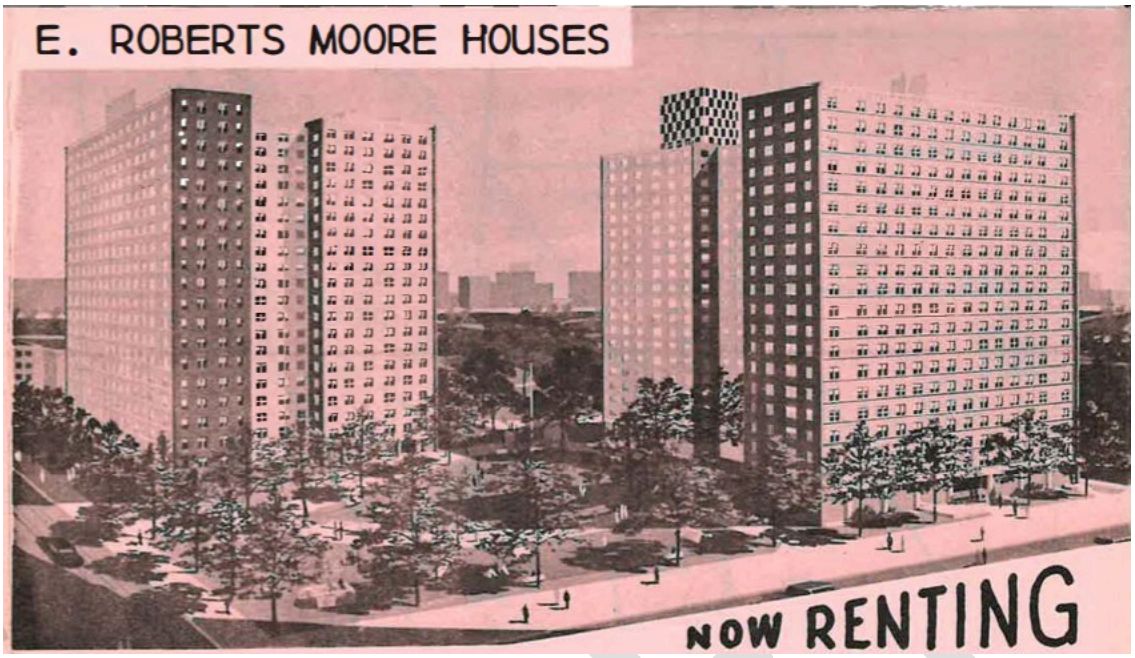


Figure 18. 1964 Brochure for the E. Robert Moore Houses. *LaGuardia & Wagner Archives.*

E. Robert Moore Houses Bronx County, NY
Name of Property County and State

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: E. Robert Moore Houses
City or Vicinity: New York
County: Bronx State: NY
Photographer: Kendal Anderson
Date Photographed: January 2024

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of 23. Building 2, looking west.
2 of 23. Building 2, looking northwest.
3 of 23. Building 2, looking northeast.
4 of 23. Building 1, looking north.
5 of 23. Building 2, looking southeast from the interior of Building 1.
6 of 23. Building 2, looking southeast.
7 of 23. Building 1, looking southwest.
8 of 23. Building 1, looking southwest.
9 of 23. Building 1, 1st floor lobby in 654 East 149th Street, looking north.
10 of 23. Building 1, 1st floor lobby in 694 East 149th Street, looking northeast.
11 of 23. Building 1, typical three bedroom apartment on the 20th floor, looking south.
12 of 23. Building 1, typical three bedroom apartment on the 20th floor, looking southwest.
13 of 23. Building 1, typical three bedroom apartment on the 20th floor, looking northwest.
14 of 23. Building 1, typical three bedroom apartment on the 20th floor, looking northwest.
15 of 23. Building 1, corridor, looking east.
16 of 23. Building 2, 1st floor lobby in 525 Jackson Avenue, looking west.
17 of 23. Building 2, 1st floor lobby in 525 Jackson Avenue, looking south.
18 of 23. Building 2, 6th floor, looking southwest.
19 of 23. Building 2, typical one bedroom apartment on the 6th floor, looking south.
20 of 23. Building 2, typical one bedroom apartment on the 6th floor, looking north.
21 of 23. Building 2, typical one bedroom apartment on the 6th floor, looking northeast.
22 of 23. Building 2, typical one bedroom apartment on the 6th floor, looking east.
23 of 23. Building 2, typical one bedroom apartment on the 6th floor, looking southeast.

NY_Bronx_ERobertMooreHouses_0001

NY_Bronx_ERobertMooreHouses_0002

NY_Bronx_ERobertMooreHouses_0003

NY_Bronx_ERobertMooreHouses_0004

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NY_Bronx_ERobertMooreHouses_0023