

# Developers of a Mid-Block Site Propose Low-Rise Design

By CARTER B. HORSLEY

Large mid-block and through-block sites are seldom available for redevelopment on side streets of Manhattan's residential areas. But such sites are desirable because of their distance from the traffic and noise of the avenues. Also they afford more exposures and a design opportunity to control views of rear yards or to do away with them altogether.

Many builders, however, find such sites difficult because the intensive high-rise development that they justify

surprise that further enriches urban life. And low-rise mid-block buildings, they say, enhance the value of corner towers by serving as "light protectors" to preserve their views.

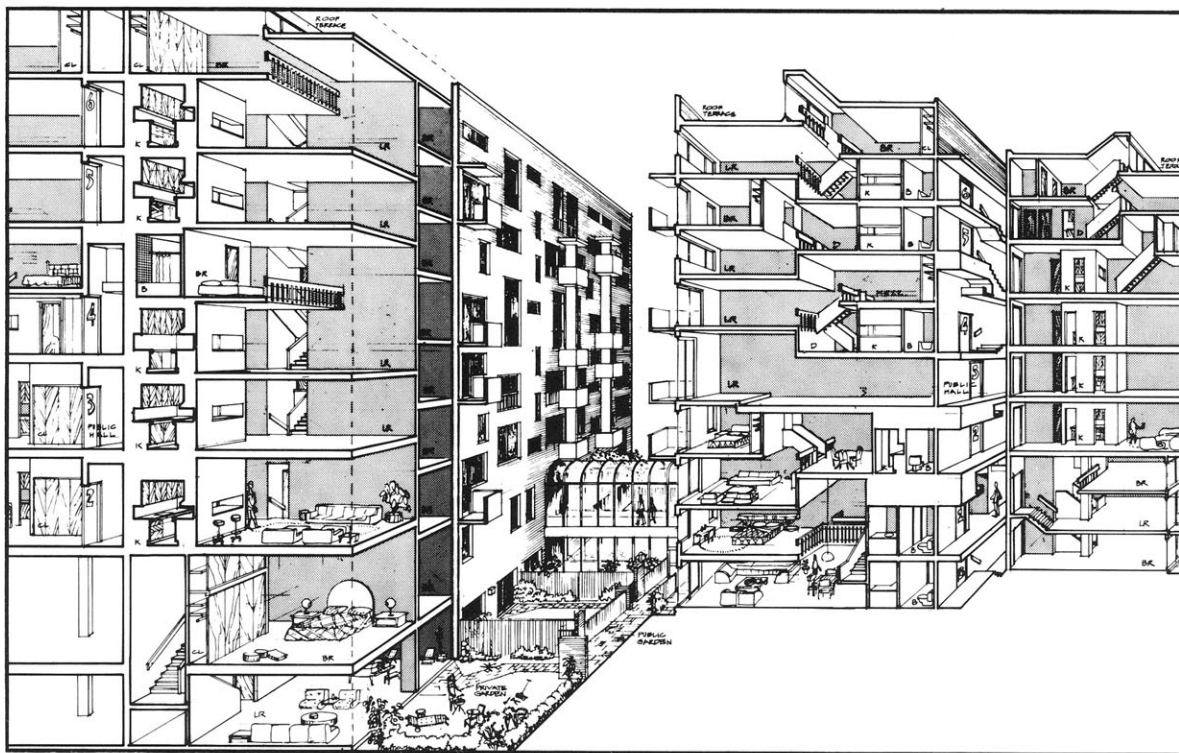
The debate is also clouded by some communities that equate tall buildings with either low-income, minority-group "projects" or with small households where economic, sociological and cultural values may be quite different from those predominant in the neighborhood.

The Bakery project represented "a lot of problems" because of its large

ished. It is necessary to fast-track — that is, organize the job sequentially — and to take a much more technological approach structurally."

It is necessary, he said, to adopt a lot of "new construction" building designs and methods such as "steel-to-steel connections" that require skills often not employed on small conversions.

The project's complex salmon-colored brick facade is new and reflects the diversity of apartment layouts behind it. Arches at street level provide a human scale and recall the masonry designs of Henry Richardson, the 19th-



Part of the design for buildings on East 64th and 65th Street includes a glazed bridge over a court yard that connects the two structures

economically is usually bitterly opposed by community groups who argue that mid-blocks should be reserved for low-rise development.

Consequently the Community Board, which has jurisdiction in the Upper East Side, was somewhat surprised by a proposal from developers of a new project known as the Bakery, 325 East 64th Street. The developers want a low-rise rather than a high-rise plan to redevelop the former Gnome Bakers plant in the middle of the block bounded by First and Second Avenues and 64th and 65th Streets in the heart of "singles" country.

The logic for using low-rise development in mid-blocks has been that high-rise projects shut off valuable "light and air" on narrow side streets and are more in scale with broad avenues where their neighborhood impact is less severe.

The juxtaposition of high-rise buildings at corners and low-rise structures in the middle of blocks, many planners argue, provides diversity and visual

scale and the need to create adequate light and air, according to its architect, Stephen B. Jacobs, who has designed many major rehabilitations and conversions in New York.

His solution was to separate the two wings with a 28-foot-wide backyard, or court. That is narrower than zoning requirements for new construction, but a zoning variance was granted because the plant's original six buildings, of varying heights and levels, covered virtually the entire site.

The developers — the 320 East 64th Street Realty Company, of which Jack Rosenthal is a principal — were entitled to keep the same bulk that had been developed on the site. So Mr. Jacobs restructured most of the buildings to shift the bulk for more efficient layouts. He said that bigger buildings required a new approach.

"It has been customary," Mr. Jacobs said, "to include a lot of handcraft work on such projects. But when the scale is expanded, as the case here, it just doesn't work, it doesn't get fin-

ished. It is necessary to fast-track —

Many of the windows are recessed about 16 inches with a "battered," or sloping, sill to add depth and texture to the facade. A pale beige brick, facing the gardens, will be used to lighten that area. The two wings will be connected by a skywalk over the rear yard gardens, which belong to maisonette duplex apartments that are entered through the common garden area.

The \$6 million project will have 158 apartments. Most of them will be one- and two-bedroom units with unusual multilevel layouts. Rents at the Bakery, which is being developed under the city's J-51 abatement program for rehabilitation, will range from \$390 for a studio apartment to about \$1,000 for the larger two-bedroom unit.

The first phase of the project, to be ready for occupancy in October, will have its entrance on 64th Street. Construction of the second and final phase will begin shortly and will be completed in about a year. The entrance will then shift to 65th Street.