

A GUIDE TO HISTORIC NEW YORK CITY NEIGHBORHOODS

# LANDMARKS OF THE FUTURE CITYWIDE





The Historic Districts Council is New York's citywide advocate for historic buildings and neighborhoods. The Six to Celebrate program annually identifies six neighborhoods that merit preservation as priorities for HDC's advocacy and consultation over a yearlong period.

The six, chosen from applications submitted by community organizations, are selected on the basis of the architectural and historic merit of the area, the level of threat to the neighborhood, the strength and willingness of the local advocates, and the potential for HDC's preservation support to be meaningful. HDC works with these neighborhood partners to set and reach preservation goals through strategic planning, advocacy, outreach, programs and publicity.

The core belief of the Historic Districts Council is that preservation and enhancement of New York City's historic resources—its neighborhoods, buildings, parks and public spaces—are central to the continued success of the city. The Historic Districts Council works to ensure the preservation of these resources and uphold the New York City Landmarks Law and to further the preservation ethic. This mission is accomplished through ongoing programs of assistance to more than 500 community and neighborhood groups and through public-policy initiatives, publications, educational outreach and sponsorship of community events.



**Council on  
the Arts**

**NYC Cultural  
Affairs**

The Six to Celebrate is generously supported by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature. Additional support is provided by New York City Councilmembers Margaret Chin, Corey Johnson, Ben Kallos, Mark Levine, Stephen Levin and Keith Powers.



232 East 11th Street, New York, NY 10003  
tel 212-614-9107  
e-mail [hdc@hdc.org](mailto:hdc@hdc.org)  
[www.hdc.org](http://www.hdc.org)

## LANDMARKS OF THE FUTURE

In recent years, a number of notable late-20th century buildings including Philip Johnson's AT&T Building (1978), the Citicorp Center (1973-1978), the interior of the UN Plaza's Ambassador Grill and Lounge (1969-83) and six sites with ties to the LGBTQ community of the 1960's and 1970's, have been designated as New York City Landmarks. As buildings, landscapes and interiors of this period continue to age and their significance and merits come into question, it has become evident that it is time to consider what resources of the more recent past deserve designation.

The task comes with many challenges, but it is also an opportunity to revise a period of great change, characterized by a remarkable variety of architectural forms, technical advances and urbanistic ideas. For this, the Historic Districts Council has partnered with Docomomo-US and Queens Modern to develop a list of architecturally and culturally significant buildings from the 1970s and 80s that have yet to be protected or officially recognized.

Spanning all five boroughs, these examples range from residential (**Sites 6, 8, 10, 16, 19**), commercial (**Sites 3, 21**), educational (**Sites 1, 2, 11, 14, 15, 17**) to institutional architecture (**Sites 18, 19**) as well as open space (**Sites 4, 9, 13**). Although it is not envisioned as an exhaustive record, highlighting these sites seeks to further the discussion about how to protect the more recent heritage, and raise public awareness about the threats some of these now iconic places are facing.

Since architectural styles from this period have only recently reached the 30-year-old eligibility requirement for landmark consideration under New York City Law, advocating for their designation remains a complex and uncertain task, even with ample support from the community and preservation organizations. Rapidly increasing land values, and in many cases lack of maintenance and obsolete technology and/or uses, has created an environment prone to discard these structures rather than trying to understand and embrace their cultural and historical value.

One of the most representative cases seen in recent years is the atrium at 60 Wall Street (**Site 7**), where a 2021 proposal by Kohn Pedersen Fox would completely transform the original design by Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo and Associates. Because the building is tied to 55 Wall St (a NYC Landmark) the redesign of its exterior required LPC's approval, which it did not receive. Thanks to a campaign led by Docomomo-US, it was deemed that further study was needed to determine its merits for designation, but in August of 2023 the Commission decided not to prioritize the case and approved a revised version of the developer's proposal.

On the other side of the spectrum are cases like the Modulightor Building (**Site 5**), designed by Paul Rudolph and widely admired, which has established safekeepers advocating for its protection.

Until we can reach an agreement, or at least a middle point, it's important to continue and expand the discussion about the city we're sending into the future, and all the parts we should keep.

## MANHATTAN

### NORTH ACADEMIC CENTER, CITY COLLEGE

160 Convent Avenue  
(1984, John Carl Warnecke)

I



This extensive educational complex covers three blocks of West Harlem, housing near 1,200 classrooms, labs, lecture halls and a media center. It is also the location of the Cohen Library, the Finley Student Center, administrative offices, a small theater, cafeterias, and other student facilities, making it the largest academic building on the campus.

Designed by the esteemed architect John C. Warnecke, the complex was meant to evoke a ship's bow from various angles. The building was, however, criticized due to its stylistic and scale differences in comparison to the surrounding

neighborhood and was built on the site previously occupied by the 6,000-seat Lewisohn Stadium.

Known for his master plan for Lafayette Square in Washington D.C., Warnecke was one of the first architects to use contextualism as the basis of their design. His work on John F. Kennedy's grave site earned him national notoriety, becoming a member of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts until 1967. He would later establish a successful practice in New York, and retired in the 1980s.

Recently, the building underwent extensive restoration work that included the renovation of its brick and granite facades, reconstruction of parapet walls at the Plaza level, and replacement of large portions of the roof.

## LEGEND OF DESIGNATIONS

National Historic Landmark	NH L
National Register of Historic Places - District	NR D
National Register of Historic Places - Property	NR P
New York City Historic District	NYC HD
New York City Individual Landmark	NYC IL
New York City Interior Landmark	NYC INL

At the time of its conception, a movement to transform schools into “fortified strongholds” had gained traction among city officials and architects. The goal was to provide children with shelter from the chaos and social crisis that New York was facing, and to create spaces that protected students and allow them to concentrate.

Located on a corner lot in Lincoln Square, the five-story building is preceded by a wide elevated plaza on Amsterdam Avenue, featuring a memorial sculpture honoring Dr. King by artist William Tarr. Classrooms are situated on the center, surrounded by perimeter corridors with floor-to-ceiling windows. This means that despite the façade’s transparency, many of the interior rooms do not have direct light or ventilation. The materials used also conveyed the idea of sturdiness, simplicity and rationality, namely self-weathering steel, tinted glass and concrete.

In 2005, the NYC Department of Education closed the high school and transformed it into an Educational Center with six specialized schools. *Photo courtesy of Midcentury Mundane.*

## MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. EDUCATIONAL CENTER

122 Amsterdam Ave

(1969-75, Frost Associates)

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## SOLOW BUILDING

9 W 57th St

(1969-74, Gordon Bunshaft)

3



Located in Midtown Manhattan, overlooking the Plaza Hotel and Central Park, this 689-foot tall skyscraper was developed, owned and managed by Sheldon Solow, until his death in 2020. Solow purchased the site in the 1960s from various owners, and commissioned a design that maximized views and included resting areas for workers. This, to attract high-profile tenants who could pay higher rents, thus increasing the value of the property.

The building’s most iconic feature is its gray-tinted glass north and south façades, which curve inward from ground level to the 18th floor. The west and east walls are clad in travertine, as is the plaza at ground level.

Upon completion, it was the first major structure in New York City to have a sloped façade, and was considered too disruptive of the city’s skyline. Gordon Bunshaft would replicate this design

element in the W. R. Grace Building (1114 Sixth Avenue), completed in 1972, which is said to have been an early proposal for the Solow Building. *Photo courtesy of SOM.*

This 41-story, 603-foot-tall tower was originally developed for the technology company IBM as their main headquarters in Midtown Manhattan, thus consolidating some of its operations.

The building's façade is made of gray-green glass and polished granite, with the intention of giving it the appearance of a prism. The northeast corner of the tower is cantilevered over the main entrance.

At the southwest corner, a public atrium covers around 11,000 square feet, and creates a continuous corridor between 55th and 57th Streets. Also known as Garden Plaza, most of it is enclosed by a 68 foot sawtooth-shaped glass canopy with an air conditioning system that accommodates around 300 Carolina-sourced bamboo trees. The landscape design by Zion & Breen utilized these trees to divide the atrium and filter overhead sunlight. It was originally conceived as a space open to the outside, but it was necessary to add doors to avoid becoming a wind tunnel. In 1995, three of the eleven stands of bamboo were removed, eight sculptures were installed, and modern art began to be displayed at the atrium. *Photo by Matthew Bisanz.*



Originally a regular commercial structure, this building was purchased in 1989 by architect Paul Rudolph and his partner Ernst Wagner for the headquarters of their company Modulightor. They had co-founded it in 1975, developing a system of interchangeable lighting fixtures, furniture design, and other interior accessories.

Rudolph was renowned for his innovative residential work, but the success achieved through his collaboration with Wagner prompted plans to move out of the company's SoHo office in the late 1980s. Rudolph's plan for the building included facilities for the company on the ground floor, mezzanine and sub-basements, while the upper floors would be rental apartment units and a source of supplemental income. He also moved his architecture office to the building, acting as contractor.

Due to financial issues, the project suffered delays and modifications, but remains as a unique example of late-modernism and interior design. It is currently

being considered for designation by LPC. *Photo courtesy of the Paul Rudolph Institute for Modern Architecture.*

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## WATERSIDE PLAZA

FDR Drive at 25th Street

(1971-74, Davis Brody &amp; Associates)



Developed by Richard Ravitch, and designed by the architectural firm of Davis, Brody & Associates, this residential and business complex was built on landfill made up of WWII rubble brought to the United States by ship. The firm had designed Riverbend, in Harlem, in 1967, which introduced new design concepts to a public housing project. They continued this exploration during the development of Waterside, as well as River Park Towers in the Bronx in 1975.

Overlooking the East River at Kips Bay, the complex has four residential towers and a row of duplex townhouses, all clad in red brickwork. It features a large plaza, a health club, a parking garage and commercial space. In the 1980s, there were plans to build additional above-water apartments, offices, and a hotel, but they were never carried out due to environmental concerns and community opposition. Following its completion, it received several awards. *Photo courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York.*

Formerly the J.P. Morgan Bank Building, this 55-story, 745-foot-tall office tower is located in the Financial District of Lower Manhattan. With influences from classical architecture, it features a hip roof and chamfered corners with double columns at the top floors faced in glass and stone. The 4-story base was designed with columns resembling architectural arcades, and the ground floor contains an enclosed public atrium connecting the building's entrances.

The atrium was included in exchange for more interior area on upper stories, as Roche rejected the idea of an outdoor space. It is uniquely decorated with planters and predominantly white materials, such as marble, stone and bricks. Ten octagonal columns divide the space, topped by flared capitals that support a mesh-shaped ceiling, with seating added to the base. The western area features stone sculptures with water spouts, while the eastern area has commercial space and services. *Photo courtesy of On the Grid.*

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## 60 WALL STREET

60 Wall St

(1989, Roche, Dinkeloo &amp; Associates)



## NORTHTOWN

501-681 Main St

(1974-76, Philip Johnson & John Burgee-  
master plan)

In 1968, Mayor John V. Lindsay named a committee to make recommendations for the redevelopment of Roosevelt Island (then known as Welfare Island), which had been previously used exclusively by health services and facilities, with limited non-aquatic accessibility.

The following year, the firm of Philip Johnson and John Burgee created the New York State Urban Development Corporation, and signed a lease to develop a plan for a residential community. The island was divided into two medium-density residential clusters – Northtown and

Southtown – interspersed with public spaces, while also providing infrastructure and services.

Dan Kiley and Zion & Breen were in charge of designing the island's open space and parks. In 1973 the island was renamed for Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The original plan intended the area to be vehicle-free, with parking garages for residents and links to public transportation. A campus-like system was proposed for the location of public intermediate schools, with classrooms distributed among all residential buildings.

Northtown was the first to be developed, and consists of four buildings totaling 2,100 units: Westview, Island House, Rivercross, and Eastwood. They were completed in 1975 and are constructed in a U shape facing the river.

Eastwood, the largest apartment complex on the island, was designed by prominent Spanish-born American architect Josep Lluís Sert and is his only documented work in New York.

Island House and Rivercross were designed by Johansen & Bhavnani. Island House included retail spaces facing Main Street, while Rivercross had larger public spaces than was customary for a New York City apartment building. Both used Corspan as exterior finish, which allowed them to be constructed without any scaffolding, thus lowering costs. *Photo: view of the Eastwood building, by Zach Korb.*

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## FOUR FREEDOMS PARK

1 FDR Four Freedoms Park  
(1974, Louis Kahn - project)



Although it opened in 2012, this four-acre park at the southern end of Roosevelt Island began its planning process almost forty years before. Originally designed by renowned architect Louis Kahn in 1974, it became one of his last works. After his passing, the firm of Mitchell & Giurgola Architects took on the assignment, holding on to Kahn's original intentions.

The park was named in honor of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's famous speech from the 1941 State of the Union address, where he described his vision for a world founded on four essential human freedoms: of speech and expression, of worship, from want, and from fear.

Among its main features is a 3,600-square-foot plaza with 28 blocks of North Carolina granite -carved with excerpts from Roosevelt's speech- framing a bust of Roosevelt sculpted in 1933 by Jo Davidson. *Photo courtesy of FDR Four Freedoms Park Conservancy.*

## THE BRONX

Following a six-year tenure as chair of the Yale School of Architecture, architect Paul Rudolph returned to private practice in 1965. During this period, he designed three apartment complexes in The Bronx: Tracey Towers, Middletown Plaza and Davidson Houses.

At 38 and 41 stories, Tracey Towers became the tallest building in Jerome Park, and a remarkable example of Rudolph's style of brutalism. They were part of the Mitchell-Lama middle-income housing program, and used air rights above a neighboring MTA train yard and maintenance shop.

The two towers are positioned at different elevations on the site, and consist of nine narrow windowless cylindrical columns built with grooved blocks and without setbacks. Windows and balconies are located between the columns, which are also designed to spiral around a central keystone-like structure on a square-shaped plot. The building base is a one-story curved concrete structure that frames the entrances to the parking garage. *Photo courtesy of the Paul Rudolph Institute for Modern Architecture.*

## TRACEY TOWERS

20-40 W Moshulu Pkwy S  
(1972, Paul Rudolph & Jerald L. Karlan)

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II

## WORLD OF BIRDS, BRONX ZOO

2300 Southern Blvd.

(1972, Morris Ketchum and Associates)



After twelve years of planning -and double the original budget- the World of Birds building became a model for the construction of museum exhibitions.

The structure is composed of a series of large cylinders of varying heights and widths, topped with angled skylight roofs. It was made from reinforced concrete poured in place, and rough-hammered. No stairs were used, with ramps instead connecting the interior

spaces and framing the main entrance.

The design of the exhibits was a priority, with the walls of the building seemingly wrapped around them. For this, the architects worked closely with the Zoo director to create a hospitable environment for the animals, using concrete as a “protective skin.” With 30,000 square feet and 24 separate exhibit areas, the building was noted for implementing immersive displays, enhanced by advanced features and technologies mimicking the species natural habitats. *Photo courtesy of the Bronx Zoo.*

Mott Haven was one of the three areas in NYC that were part of the Model Cities federal program in the 1970s. Created by President Lyndon Johnson in 1966, it focused on the development of plans to improve the urban environment, providing cities with a new alternative to fight against inequality, while actively including local communities in the process.

Plaza Borinquen is a low-density social housing project, with 88 units located in previously vacant lots between 137th, 138th and 139th streets and Willis and Brook avenues. The varying types of units (three-story single-family homes and tenements of four and five levels) maintained the scale, typology, and materiality of the neighborhood, while also proposing variations in the design and use of public space. This created different levels of visual and physical accessibility for each resident, and among the houses and their surroundings. Each group features

small central plazas outlined by the backyard of the houses, and pedestrian walkways were kept at one level while gardens and gathering areas were slightly elevated. *Photo by Nathaniel Lieberman, courtesy of Ciardullo Architecture & Engineering.*

PLAZA BORINQUEN  
APARTMENTS

I2

137th, 138th & 139th St,  
between Willis and Brook aVe  
(1974, Ciardullo & Ehmann)



## QUEENS

### SOCRATES SCULPTURE PARK

32-01 Vernon Blvd

(1986, Mark di Suvero, Alice Aycock,  
Richard Serra)

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of Astoria. It gained widespread recognition for fostering ambitious and visionary artworks, and is the largest outdoor space in New York City dedicated to exhibiting sculpture.

Since 1993, the park has been under the jurisdiction of the NYC Department of Parks, and in 1998 it was officially assigned as Parkland. *Photo by Scott Lynch, courtesy of Socrates Sculpture Park.*

### NOGUCHI MUSEUM (1ST EXPANSION)

9-01 33rd Rd

(1985, Shoji Sadao)

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This museum and sculpture garden in Long Island City was established by Japanese American sculptor Isamu Noguchi to preserve and display his work. He had relocated from Manhattan to Queens in 1961, and purchased the two-story brick structure in 1974 as his new studio. The building had originally hosted a photoengraving supply company.

In 1980, Noguchi acquired the adjoining lot to build a museum. He then began developing a project with architect Shoji Sadao, which included the construction of a concrete pavilion to serve as the main entrance and an indoor-outdoor gallery. Remnants of the factory were also kept as part of the design, like wood beams and sections of the metal ceilings. The courtyard

was transformed into a sculpture garden, for which Tim DuVal brought unusual trees and plant specimens indigenous to the East Coast.

The museum opened to the public in 1985 on a seasonal basis, and was the first of its kind be established by a living artist in the United States. It was expanded and renovated in 1999, and underwent repair work in 2008. *Photo by Nicholas Knight. ©Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum / Artist's Rights Society.*

## MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

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36-01 35th Ave

(1988, Gwathmey Siegel & Associates)



In 1920, the Famous Players-Lasky Studio -known later as Paramount- built a thirteen-building complex in Astoria as their East Coast production facilities. After falling into disrepair during the 1970s, it was restored to productive use and listed on the National Register.

In 1988, one of the buildings was converted into a museum by architects Gwathmey Siegel & Associates. The main requirements for the design were program flexibility and cost-effectiveness.

The ground floor was redesigned to include a 200-seat movie theater, a museum shop, a lobby and a café. A second theater, administrative offices, and a multi-use exhibition loft were incorporated on the second floor. Although currently not visible from the exterior, the main new feature was a large stair and elevator tower on the north side of the building, which acted as an orientation element for visitors. The museum was expanded in 2008 by architect Thomas Leiser. *Photo by Nick Prior.*

Originally named Kissena II Apartments, this was the second affordable housing development built by Selfhelp Community Services. This organization was founded in 1936 by a small group of German emigrées to support the influx of refugees fleeing Nazi-occupied Europe. They helped refugees find work, housing, and community, and eventually expanded to provide affordable housing and home care services for older New Yorkers from all backgrounds.

The design of this 19-story brick and concrete structure was highlighted by the Queens Chamber of Commerce. It was the work of Gruzen & Partners, a prolific architectural firm founded in 1936 through the partnership of engineer Hugh A. Kelly and architect Barnett Sumner Gruzen. They achieved prominence during the 1950s for their educational structures, and by the mid-60s had offices in San Francisco, Newark, Washington DC, and New York City. *Photo courtesy of Queens Modern.*

## MARTIN LANDE HOUSE

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137-47 45th Ave

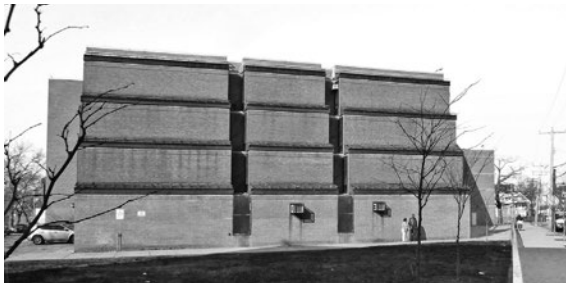
(1970, Gruzen & Partners)



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## MS 53, BRIAN PICCOLO SCHOOL

10-45 Nameoke St  
(1972, Victor Lundy)



Located in Far Rockaway, this building is another example of late-1960s and early-1970s school design which sought to provide children with a secluded and quiet environment, isolated from the chaos of the city.

MS 53 was named after Brian Piccolo, an American professional football player who died from cancer at the age of 26.

The design by Victor Lundy features skylights and

side windows for each classroom, thus providing light and ventilation, but without the “distraction” of windows on the main façade. This was achieved by offsetting each floor from the one below.

Born in New York, Lundy became one of the most interesting exponents of modernist architecture, especially during the 1960s. He has received several honors and some of his works have been listed on the National Register. *Photo courtesy of MS 53.*

## BROOKLYN

Engine Company 233 was originally established in 1893 at 243 Hull Street. They would later join the Brooklyn-Queens Fire Department, and in 1913 they were incorporated into the FDNY. The Company’s slogan, “To Hell and Back!” derives from the street name of their first location.

In 1987, Engine Company 233 relocated to this two-story 13,500 square feet firehouse, containing fire-fighting equipment, the battalion chief’s offices, company offices, and sleeping accommodations. The design, by renowned architect Peter Eisenman, incorporated the two grids that were identifiable in its urban context, highlighting the shift in street patterns. Lights were also used to emphasize the roof beams of the superimposed structures. It received an Excellency Award from the Public Design Commission in 1985.

Eisenman was one of the main exponents of the Deconstructivist architecture movement from the early-1980s. This building is one of the first examples of this approach in urban settings, which he would later consolidate with works like the Wexner Center for the Arts at Ohio State University.

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## FDNY ENGINE 233 &amp; LADDER 176

25 Rockaway Ave  
(1983-85, Peter Eisenman)



## MARCUS GARVEY VILLAGE

Newport St, Riverdale Ave, Livonia Ave & Dumont Ave, between  
Rockaway Ave & Thomas S. Boyland St  
(1973-76, Kenneth Frampton)



Encompassing nine city blocks of Brownsville, this 625-unit affordable housing complex was built by the New York State Urban Development Corporation as part of the Model Cities Urban Renewal Initiative for Central Brooklyn. It was named after Jamaican politician and activist Marcus Garvey, who was the founder and first President-General of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League.

The design, by a team at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (IAUS) and led by British architect Kenneth Frampton, received major attention for its innovative urban planning approach, and it became one of the first low-rise, high-density public housing projects.

The four-story townhouse-like structures feature duplex apartments with private backyards or terraces, semi-public courtyards, and mostly private front doors that open onto a stoop or mews. The Village also includes a community center, a day care facility, commercial shops and parking.

The complex underwent a substantial renovation from 2014 to 2016 by Curtis + Ginsberg Architects, which included common area and unit upgrades, energy efficiency, accessibility and security improvements.

Through a community planning process that began in 1966, the site for the Jamaica Bay Library site was chosen after a public hearing in the early-1970s, and construction began soon after.

The design by Leibowitz / Bodouva and Associates was awarded a bronze plaque from the New York Society of Architects. The firm would continue to gain recognition, with Bodouva participating in the design of the Times Square and 34th Street subway complex, the US Airways terminal at La Guardia, the PATH line, and most notably, the Baltimore-Washington International Airport.

The interior has a split-level design, connecting the reading room with the collections through a central staircase. The exterior features a vertical textured finish and glass brick, with a plaza framing the main entrance on Seaview Avenue. It underwent renovations in 2001, which included the installation of a skylight, the elimination of the sunken pit, and the addition of a wheelchair lift. *Photo courtesy of the NYPL, ca. 1972.*

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## JAMAICA BAY BRANCH, NYPL

9727 Seaview Ave

(1971-72, Leibowitz, Bodouva & Assoc.)



## STATEN ISLAND

21

## PHYSICIAN & SURGEONS BUILDING

1460 Victory Blvd

(1980, Charles Azzue)



Charles Azzue was a prolific artist, designer and trained architect, known for his unusual designs with sculptural and pictorial elements. Born in Brooklyn, he lived in Italy with his wife from 1960 to 1963, and after returning to New York, he studied architecture at Pratt Institute. Azzue established his practice in Staten Island in the late 1960s, where he specialized in private residences and offices.

This building on Victory Boulevard is among his signature works, with long top curves in smooth concrete. At the top of the building, he included a sculpture titled

“Wo-man”, which depending on the angle, resembles a female or a male. *Photo by Charles Azzue, ca. 1980.*

