‘Rockefeller’s Vietnam’?: Black Politics and Urban Development in Harlem, 1969-1974

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Appraising the years-long political struggle over the possible construction of a New York State office building on 125th Street and Seventh Avenue in the heart of Harlem, renowned New York Times critic Ada Louise Huxtable summed up the seemingly intractable controversy in November 1969 by calling it “Rockefeller’s Vietnam.” If hyperbolic in retrospect, at the time the office building fight had evolved into a symbolically powerful flash point for a newly radicalizing black political world. In June, activists began what would become a three-month occupation of the site, successfully shutting down construction until Governor Nelson Rockefeller had them forcibly ousted and construction started in late September. During the fall tensions continued to mount as news of lawsuits, political threats, and community meetings regularly filled the newspapers of Harlem and the city at large. As the sides in the debate dug in and seemed to harden their views, Huxtable wondered: “Can there be an honorable, negotiated peace? Must there be unilateral withdrawal?”[1]

The state office building controversy provided an important, well-publicized opportunity for black critics of public urban development policies to air their views. Young student activists derided the idea that office workers – mostly white and not from Harlem – passing through for eight hours a day would

make a positive contribution to the neighborhood. They called for a new high school and other community facilities on the site instead. The Architects Renewal Committee of Harlem critiqued the prospect of public development meant to drive up private property values, which in turn would lead to the displacement of existing residents and businesses. They demanded community control and ownership of the site as "part of a larger process whereby black people generate manpower, information, capital, land and skills which are needed to gain control of their lives." And in his own inimitable style Congressman Adam Clayton Powell Jr. joined the opposition, declaring that "Rocky's off his skull on this one." But far from a story about unified black opposition to white public development plans, attitudes in Harlem remained deeply divided. Much of the black business community actively supported the building, as evidenced by Freedom National Bank president William R. Hudgins' assessment that opponents were a "small handful of noisy rabble." The Ministerial Interfaith Alliance, the largest and most established group of Harlem religious leaders, backed the project, as did Manhattan Borough President Percy Sutton and many other prominent neighborhood figures. Observing this fractured black political landscape, Huxtable continued her allusions to Vietnam: "It is apparently as hard to get all the factions together in Harlem as it is in Paris, and peace seems equally far away."[2]

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[1] Ada Louise Huxtable, "The State Office Building Dilemma," The New York Times, November 2, 1969.

[2] Juana Clarke, "The Coalition Tell Its Side," New York Amsterdam News, August 2, 1969; "Summary of ARCH's Position," attached to Edward J. Logue to Nelson A. Rockefeller, December 24, 1969, in Folder 3e, Box 271, Series IX, Edward J. Logue Papers, Yale University Library; Alfonso A. Narvaez, "20 Harlem Leaders Threatening a Suit on State Building," The New York Times, September 29, 1969; Simon Anekwe, "Reclamation Site Still Occupied," New York Amsterdam News, July 12, 1969; "Response Mixed to State Offer of Aid for Harlem Office Site, The New York Times, September 22, 1969; Hutxable, "The State Office Building Dilemma."

Using the state office building controversy as a springboard, this paper explores the heterogeneity and intricacies of black politics in Harlem as various factions battled with one another over the substance of state urban development policy as well as the spoils of its patronage. In particular, the activities of the New York State Urban Development Corporation emerged as a focal point from which both a new Harlem political order and lessons about the possibilities for political change began to emerge. The UDC, headed by the combative Ed Logue, built thousands of units of housing in Harlem in these years in collaboration with a variety of local, co-sponsoring organizations. Few projects escaped controversy. It also entered into protracted negotiations with dozens of Harlem leaders over the creation of a subsidiary Harlem Urban Development Corporation (H.U.D.C.). Once established, H.U.D.C. operated in a difficult economic and political environment, but it also created many of its own problems and ended up being, in the view of many observers, less a creative vehicle for neighborhood revitalization than a patronage machine for the Harlem politicians who controlled it.

Historians of urban black politics during this period have tended to focus on its more radical individuals and ideas. But the new black radicalism co-existed with rather than replaced prior, more moderate views, and in Harlem as elsewhere the moderates often came out the winners in the internecine power struggles. As the longer-term meaning of the explosive late 1960s began to be sorted out in the early 1970s, the variety of different demands emerging out of Harlem – for more resources from the white political world, for more community participation in it, for community control – could not all flourish. Many mainstream New York political institutions and individuals reacted to black protests by providing greatly

increased attention and resources, and in the process Rockefeller, the U.D.C. and others set political ground-rules, favored like-minded allies, and otherwise influenced politics in Harlem. In short, who and what came to dominate the new era of Harlem politics emerged out of the intertwined nature of intra-neighborhood struggles and Harlem's relations with the outside world.

The state office building controversy turned out not to be "Rockefeller's Vietnam." The building got built, thanks at least in part to young, ambitious black leaders willing to do business. For example, gearing up for what would be a successful 1970 primary challenge to Powell, then-State Assemblyman Charles Rangel eagerly joined the Rockefeller/Logue team. H. Carl McCall served as a consultant for the U.D.C. in assessing and negotiating with more recalcitrant Harlem leaders. Thus state urban development controversies ultimately contributed to a larger process by which moderate Harlem leaders deepened their participation in an otherwise largely unchanged urban political system.

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The idea of placing a state office building in Harlem originally both emerged and received overwhelming support from black leaders in New York. In response to Governor Rockefeller's announcement that state offices in the city would be consolidated at the new World Trade Center in lower Manhattan when it was completed, National Urban League director Whitney Young countered in May 1966 that state offices should be placed in Harlem instead. Though Rockefeller of course was not about to shift the location of the World Trade Center, in September 1966 – just weeks before voters would go to the polls to determine whether or not he would receive a third term as governor – he agreed that some state offices would be relocated there. Shortly after the election, a

select group of state-chosen Harlem leaders helped choose the 125th Street site for the office building and a community cultural complex also promised, and on June 7, 1967 a demolition ceremony at the site marked the beginning of the construction process. On the dais celebrating the demolition that day included a long and distinguished group of national and local black leaders including Young, Roy Wilkens, Floyd McKissick, A. Philip Randolph, Reverend Wyatt Tee Walker, Jackie Robinson, Percy Sutton, and Basil Patterson.[3]

But the virtual consensus around the desirability of social and economic integration that existed as late as mid-1967 among the vast majority of northern civil rights leaders and other prominent Harlem figures began deteriorating almost immediately thereafter. So too did some of the support for the state office building. In an environment in which newly radicalized calls for black power and community control rapidly gained prominence – 1968 witnessed such famous, racially-charged conflagrations in New York City as the takeover of Columbia University to protest its plans to build a gymnasium in Morningside Park and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school decentralization battle in Brooklyn – a new office building to many local observers no longer represented a welcomed opportunity to benefit from new public jobs and construction money. Part of the reason for the shift stemmed from altered plans for the site. Despite Rockefeller's protestations, the state legislature had only appropriated funds for the office building but not for the community facilities originally promised to go along with

[3] For useful background on the state office building controversy see Eleanor L. Brilliant, The Urban Development Corporation: Private Interests and Public Authority (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company), 83-90; Louella Jacqueline Long & Vernon Ben Robinson, How Much Power to the People? A Study of the New York State Urban Development Corporation's Involvement in Black Harlem (New York: The Urban Center at Columbia University, 1971), 25-42; "Background: Demolition Ceremony for Construction of State Office Building and Cultural Center in Harlem, June 7, 1967," Microfilm Reel 105, Nelson A. Rockefeller Third Administration (1967-1970), Rockefeller Archive Center.

it. But more fundamental questioning of public development policies related to how development decisions were made and who would benefit from them also spread through the neighborhood. In the spring of 1968 a group called the Harlem Committee for Self-Defense formed and later that year claimed to have collected 20,000 signatures on a petition demanding a new high school on the site instead of a state office building. A new coalition called the Ad How Committee for a Better Harlem demanded in January 1969 that construction on the building be halted, and in February protestors burglarized the State Office of Urban Affairs.[4]

At the end of June 1969, vocal protest evolved into direct action. The Harlem Community Coalition moved onto the construction site – which they dubbed Reclamation Site No. 1 – occupying it around the clock so that work there could not proceed. "An essentially youthful opposition," according to one reporter on the scene, the original occupiers numbered about thirty. But additional participants quickly supported those undertaking the sit-in by donating food and other material assistance. Three days later, fearing that attempts to restart work would escalate community tensions, Governor Rockefeller indefinitely postponed construction.

The protestors' arguments against the state office building raised tough questions and provided clear answers about the nature of public redevelopment policies. Although slogans used by building opponents inevitably caricatured their own views – one plaque at the sit-in site read: "Stop the colonizer, no state building in our country. Don't let Harlem be invaded." – in fact their critiques paralleled those developed in various academic, professional and community

[4] Brilliant, The Urban Development Corporation, 85; Long & Robinson, How Much Power to the

circles in prior years. At a neighborhood meeting held the day after the occupation began, a Community Coalition spokesperson read a lengthy statement. "When we are told that Harlem is about to be 'revitalized,'" the spokesperson said at one point, "we ask for whom? For the benefit of the present slumlords? The private developers? A few Harlemites who own land now or can afford to live in luxury apartments?" The statement wondered aloud about the benefits of the jobs in the proposed office building: "Jobs in the state building will be civil service jobs – will the present civil service list be totally overlooked? . . . Or are they trying to tell us that only the location of the office building determines whether or not Blacks can work in it? . . . Furthermore, just situating a handful of jobs in Harlem does not stop money from continuing to flow out of the Black community faster than it comes in. . . . Finally the same amount of jobs could be created in a facility that truly serves the needs of our community." In a second statement published in the New York Amsterdam News a few weeks later, the Community Coalition dwelled on the decision-making process that led to the office building plans: "The 'Harlem redevelopment plan' was fostered far from the Harlem community by those who were completely divorced from any and all comprehension of Harlem's needs." Instead, the Coalition promised that it would "develop a means whereby the Harlem community will decide what is to be built on its land." And finally both statements concluded with similarly critical overviews. As one of them read: "The proposed state office building when examined within the total perspective of community needs and priorities, is not

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only superfluous and irrelevant, but detrimental to the redevelopment and interests of the vast majority of Harlem residents."[5]

Supporters of the Community Coalition supplemented these arguments against the state office building with additional ones. The Architects Renewal Committee in Harlem (ARCH), a group of young black advocacy planners, provided alternative proposals for housing, a school, and community services on the site, arguing that "single use office buildings . . . with sterile plazas void of life at night and on weekends" acted as a detrimental neighborhood force compared to facilities "designed to increase the vitality of the streetscape and improve the relationship between 125th Street and the fabric of Harlem." Beyond the physical effects of the office-building proposal, ARCH also focused on politics and economics: "The basic strategy should be ownership of the land and the use of 125th Street as a source of economic development within the community. Ownership of the land is a necessary step toward significant participation in planning. Let's have the land first and then talk business."[6]

Although the arguments made by Harlem groups like the Community Coalition and ARCH, among others, against the proposed state office building attracted significant notice, arguments in support of the construction plans also resonated in parts of the neighborhood that summer. The Reverend Wyatt Tee Walker, an official advisor to Governor Rockefeller, explained his position in an Amsterdam News article, emphasizing that "the entire project . . . is aimed at stabilizing the economic viability of the 125th Street area which has been in the

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[5] Simon Anekwe, "Sit-In To Stop Work," New York Amsterdam News, July 7, 1969; Juana Clarke, "The Coalition Tell Its Side," New York Amsterdam News, August 2, 1969; William Border, "State Postpones Harlem Building," The New York Times, July 3, 1969.
[6] "Summary of ARCH's Position," attached to Logue to Rockefeller, December 24, 1969, in Folder 3e, Box 271, Series IX, Logue Papers.

downward spiral for the last seventeen years." Walker, like virtually every public official in Harlem, preferred the project to include the community facilities in addition to the office building, but he expressly favored something over nothing: "The community has always had, in my view, a firm commitment from the Governor for the entire project, but as a public official . . . he has to deal with political realities. Some pie is better than no pie at all." Furthermore, he noted what he believed to be extensive participation by neighborhood representatives in the project planning process, and he doubted that community groups opposed to the construction represented as broad a segment of the neighborhood as they claimed.[7]

The extensive list of prominent individuals and groups flocking to both sides of the state office building controversy demonstrated how the entire spectrum of views held important appeal. Those joining the Community Coalition – whose members continued to occupy the site throughout the summer – and ARCH in opposition to the project included the New York Urban Coalition, U.S. Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., State Senator Basil Patterson, City Council candidate and neighborhood activist Jesse Gray, James Haughton of the Harlem Unemployment Council, Marshal England of HARYOU-Act, and Livingston Wingate of the New York Urban League. A similarly prominent group assembled in support of the state's plans. Among those that publicly backed the re-starting of construction included Manhattan Borough President Percy Sutton, three state assemblymen representing Harlem including Charles Rangel, the large, well-established Ministerial Interfaith Alliance, the roughly 300 clergymen of the Baptist Ministers Conference of New York and Vicinity, the

[7] Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker, "The Case For The State Bldg.," New York Amsterdam News, July xx,

Harlem Lawyers Guild, the New York branch of the N.A.A.C.P., and the 125th Street Businessmen's Group.[8]

With summer over and the presumed risk of violent conflict diminished, at the end of September Governor Rockefeller sent police in to oust the protestors from the site and ordered construction to re-commence. "We cannot have a society," Rockefeller said, "where a small group which really does not have the representation can hold up the desires of the majority."[9] A cleared site and the resumption of work on the state office building, however, alleviated little of the political tension. Throughout the fall and early winter, building opponents held community protests and threatened lawsuits and political revenge while state officials met privately with a wide array of Harlem leaders to reach an accommodation. A host of crucial questions both old and new underlay the months and then years of public and private battles that ensued: Who really represented Harlem's interests? What were those interests? How would public development decisions be made and by whom? Harlem leaders confronted newly difficult determinations: How to distinguish between exclusion from, participation in and control of state-sponsored projects? Between compromise and cooptation? Between outsiders' rhetoric and actions? And for state officials: How to get anything accomplished in Harlem in such a fractured, deeply suspicious political environment?

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[8] Simon Anekwe, "Reclamation Site Still Occupied," New York Amsterdam News, July 12, 1969; Charlayne Hunter, "Response Mixed to State Offer of Aid for Harlem Office Site," The New York Times, September 20, 1969; Thomas A. Johnson, "Sale of State Site in Harlem Urged," The New York Times, September 30, 1969.

[9] Thomas A. Johnson, "Harlem Squatters Ousted; 9 Arrested," The New York Times, September 24, 1969.

The web of black and white political actors seeking to impose their own answers on these questions would come to no easy or clear-cut resolution. But the political chaos of late 1969 in Harlem did slowly give way to a refashioned order over the following years in a process usefully viewed through the prism of the New York State Urban Development Corporation. Created in 1968 by Governor Rockefeller in a legendary episode of legislative arm-twisting, the U.D.C. was an independent public corporation empowered to plan, build and manage all types of residential, commercial, and civic projects, and it possessed the ability to float its own bonds and override local building regulations. At the helm of this unprecedented operation stood Edward J. Logue, the former head of both New Haven's and then Boston's massive redevelopment programs. Logue had already begun work in Harlem; in late 1968 he had initiated discussions with city-designated neighborhood groups about co-sponsoring housing developments. But once he announced in September 1969 that the U.D.C. would develop the non-office building portion of the 125th Street site in consultation and conjunction with the Harlem community – the office building itself was being planned and built by the state Office of General Services – much of the controversy then played itself out in relationship to Logue and the U.D.C.

The U.D.C.'s role in sorting out the competing claims of rival black political camps developed along two parallel paths. First, the U.D.C. continued ahead with its prior housing plans, in the process providing bricks-and-mortar sustenance to those neighborhood groups willing and able to work with it. Second and more crucially, the U.D.C. entered into protracted negotiations with dozens of Harlem leaders over the creation of a subsidiary Harlem Urban Development Corporation (H.U.D.C.) that once established would guide state

development efforts in the neighborhood and serve as a lasting legacy of the state office building crisis. In both realms, Logue's decisions and especially the opportunities and constraints of the U.D.C. as an institution influenced how the internecine black political fights resolved themselves.

The housing developments that the U.D.C. negotiated and broke ground on prior to the active functioning of the H.U.D.C. demonstrated the multiple ways in which the U.D.C. both responded to and helped shape neighborhood political forces apart from the central focus of Harlem attention. Two relatively less controversial developments provided contrasting examples of the U.D.C.'s relationship to neighborhood institutions. In the St. Nicholas Park Urban Renewal Area, the city-designated St. Nicholas Park Renewal Council had virtually no development experience, so in its eagerness to get a first project underway it agreed to cede primary local sponsorship to a new, equally inexperienced entity – but one with special political clout. The new entity was headed by the musician Lionel Hampton, a political friend of Rockefeller whom the Governor wanted to assist and thus with whom the U.D.C. wanted to work. A note Logue sent to Rockefeller along with newspaper clips about the 355-unit Hampton Homes ground-breaking ceremony succinctly summarized the origins of the development: "Dear Governor, This all started when you called me one afternoon and said we want to help Hamp build some housing in Harlem." Where in the St. Nicholas Park area the U.D.C. used its powers to legitimize Hampton's emerging role in Harlem, in the upper Park Avenue area just south of 125th Street the U.D.C. reinforced an existing group's prestige to their mutual benefit. The Upper Park Avenue Community Association and the New York Federation of Reform Synagogues' joint U.P.A.C.A. Non-Profit Housing Corporation already

possessed land, housing development experience, and both public and private funding sources before the U.D.C. arrived on the scene. So when the U.D.C. and the U.P.A.C.A. entered talks, U.P.A.C.A. negotiated from a position of strength. It wanted and got certain equity, ownership and management provisions in the agreement other local co-sponsors often didn't because the U.D.C. – in order to get a number of Harlem projects going quickly – was at least as eager to work with it as it was to work with the U.D.C.[10]

A third, much more complex set of relationships between the U.D.C. and neighborhood organizations – this time taking place in the Frawley Circle area at the northeast corner of Central Park – demonstrated in ways both more obvious and more subtle how the U.D.C.'s political and institutional roles affected the politics of development in Harlem. In order to start the planning process in the Frawley Circle area, Logue turned first in late 1968 to the city-designated citizens group there, the Milbank-Frawley Circle Housing Council. But representatives of the Housing Council almost immediately signaled their disagreement with U.D.C.'s approach. After an initial meeting, the Housing Council's legal counsel Cora Walker wrote to Logue that "To us it is impossible to think in terms of buildings, without the deeper concern of the occupants." Thus, she explained, the Housing Council wished first to pursue a labor skills/job training program and would only discuss new housing "in the event you are prepared to meet the immediately needed $2,000,000 initial training budget." To Logue, Walker's letter seemed deeply incongruence in at least two ways. First, the U.D.C. did not run job-training programs and so a request for them to do so was impossible to

[10] Logue to Rockefeller, November 24, 1971, in Folder 696, Box 304, Logue Papers; Long & Robinson, How Much Power to the People?, 86-7, 90; Brilliant, The Urban Development Corporation, 125-6.

honor. As Logue replied: "We are not prepared to meet the immediately needed $2,000,000. That is not our statutory purpose, and we do not have that kind of money for that kind of expenditure. What I did say, and what I will repeat, is that we are prepared to try to help you obtain those funds from other sources." And, in fact, Logue wrote Mitchell Sviridoff at the Ford Foundation two days later asking for "advice and counsel" about ways the Housing Council could get such money. Second and more broadly, the Housing Council's people- rather than building-focused approach seemed at odds with what leaders and community activists in Harlem of most political stripes were saying. For example, many of the opponents of the state office building wanted housing on the 125th Street site instead. And given, as the Housing Council knew, that the U.D.C. was already planning to accommodate at Frawley Circle many long-standing objections to urban renewal housing projects – by building for low- and moderate-income tenants, by minimizing and humanizing relocations, and by including community facilities like day care centers and co-op stores that the local sponsors identified – Logue had little patience for further critiques.[11]

So as the relationship between the U.D.C. and the Housing Council deteriorated in 1969, Logue gave up trying to appease his opponents and instead sought to work with a more friendly concern. The Frawley Circle area possessed political divisions and rivalries prior to the U.D.C. negotiations – in fact, the Housing Council itself was torn by deep in-fighting – and Logue seized on these. He had always wanted to work with Kenneth and Mamie Clark in this part of Harlem. Kenneth Clark, a long-time expert on and activist in Harlem, was on the

[11] Walker to Logue, December 15, 1968; Logue to Walker, December 18, 1968; Logue to Sviridoff, December 20, 1968; Logue to Harold Dolly, January 31, 1969, all in Folder 699, Box 304, Logue Papers.

U.D.C. Board of Directors, and an earlier 1968 list of proposed U.D.C. projects Logue reviewed with Rockefeller included a listing for "Central Park North (K. Clark)." Now with what Logue surely thought was ample cause, he turned away from the Housing Council and took up working with Mamie Clark, who put together the 110th Street Plaza Development Corporation that became the local co-sponsor of the project. Beyond cutting out the more heterogeneous and citizen participation-oriented Housing Council, another political effect of the move was to provide bolstered neighborhood standing for the Clarks, who had taken sides against Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. earlier in the 1960s when Powell effectively forced Kenneth Clark out of the Harlem anti-poverty agency HARYOU-ACT that Clark had founded. The Housing Council did not go away quietly. Walker filed numerous lawsuits against the U.D.C. that lasted into 1974. But the fight proved fruitless: that also was the year that the Frawley Circle project, renamed Schomburg Plaza – its twin 35-story octagonal buildings towering over the corner of Central Park – opened with 600 mixed-income housing units, commercial space, day care facilities, and the new home for the Clarks-founded Northside Center for Child Development.[12]

At the same time that the U.D.C. chose with whom among various Harlem organizations it wanted to work on initial housing developments, the U.D.C.'s entrance into the state office-building crisis in the fall of 1969 also required it to begin negotiations with dozens of black leaders – and oversee negotiations among

[12] On the declining U.D.C.-Housing Council relationship, see for example Logue to Dolly, May 1, 1969; Walker to Logue, May 15, 1969 and July 2, 1970, all in Folder 699, Box 304, Logue Papers; Brilliant, The Urban Development Corporation, 88, 121-4; Long & Robinson, How Much Power to the People?, 87-9; "Proposed UDC-NYC Projects reviewed with NAR Oct. 7, 1968," Folder 3d, Box 271, Logue Papers; on Powell-Clark relations, see Charles V. Hamilton, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.: The Political Biography of an American Dilemma (New York: Atheneum, 1991), 426ff.; for a photograph and an architectural assessment of Schomburg Plaza, see Robert A.M.

them – about the form and membership of a U.D.C.-subsidiary Harlem Urban Development Corporation. Since a future H.U.D.C. would play a large role in shaping the U.D.C.'s construction program on the remainder of the 125th Street site and throughout the neighborhood, Logue hoped to include a broad enough group of Harlem leaders in the H.U.D.C. that the deep divisions emerging out of the state office building controversy would not derail those future plans. In order to achieve this, Logue, a young but experienced local black consultant on urban affairs named Carl McCall, and other top U.D.C. staff members convened dozens of meetings with a wide range of Harlem leaders throughout the fall of 1969.

But compromise proved difficult. As McCall explained at the time, most Harlem leaders "privately agree that the U.D.C. can play a useful role in Harlem, but most believe that the Office Building issue must be settled first." However, the very public office building controversy had grown too big to easily sidestep. It had become both an emblem – a dividing line separating old and new black political styles and substance – and an opportunity to build political reputations and careers. On the one hand, according to McCall, "those people who are in favor of the Building take a more traditional approach to leadership" but "do not seem able to organize a force that is sufficiently representative and respectable to carry out a program." On the other hand, "the people who are opposed are more creative in their tactics", "have been able to keep the controversy alive", and "are reluctant to negotiate." And among those opponents motivations ranged widely, an impossibly complex web of political principle and just plain politics. Assessing the entire situation in early November, Logue wrote privately to New

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Stern el al., New York 1960: Architecture and Urbanism Between the Second World War and the Bicentennial (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1995), 880-1.

York Times critic Ada Louise Huxtable: "The opportunism of many of the leaders uptown has to be experienced directly to be believed."[13]

The political opportunism Logue surely was thinking about when he made such complaints had to do with people like Livingston (Roy) Wingate. A former staff member and on-going ally of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Wingate had run the anti-poverty agency HAYOU-ACT after Powell took it over from Kenneth Clark and later moved on to be director of the New York Urban League, the position he held in 1969. After the U.D.C. entered the state office building controversy, Logue and McCall had met with Wingate on several occasions and believed him to be the kind of office building opponent who might nevertheless be interested in participating in the larger H.U.D.C. undertaking. But to Logue's frustration, the messages Wingate delivered in private conversations seemed different than his public pronouncements. For example, on September 26 Wingate "reacted favorably" to the U.D.C.'s 125th Street plans but then just two days later participated in a bellicose press conference with Powell pledging to stop the state office building. In multiple meetings in October Wingate again indicated his interest in negotiating and turned around in early November and announced that he would convene a public Community Convention in December to determine what should be done at the site.[14]

Identifying the differences between political opportunism and political practicality, of course, depended on one's perspective, for Logue and others supporting the U.D.C. sought to strengthen their positions in ways not entirely dissimilar to Wingate's. In November Logue continued his courtship of

[13] McCall to Logue "Re: Interim Report on UDC/Harlem," December 22, 1969 in Folder 691, Box 303, Logue Papers; Logue to Huxtable, November 3, 1969, in Folder 1162, Box 321, Logue Papers.

potentially influential black figures by commissioning the architectural firm headed by J. Max Bond, a recent executive director of ARCH, to come up with schematic plans for the rest of the 125th Street site. In December Logue tried to refocus discussions about the state office building by announcing that – rather than an anonymous collection of state offices – it would instead serve as a Harlem "service center" housing government agencies and community groups directly working on neighborhood issues. And also in December Logue actively plotted how the U.D.C. could both influence and reap the benefits of Harlem political maneuvering. Writing to Rockefeller after Wingate's Community Convention – and at a time when many assumed Powell would not seek re-election in 1970 – Logue opined: "There can be little question that this matter is going to be a pawn in the political strife over who will be Harlem's next congressman. Charlie Rangel, with some impressive, more traditional political support, is not only interested in the seat, but interested in working with us. Roy Wingate is interested in the seat, but without the kind of organization necessary to win the nomination. It is widely believed in Harlem that his community convention was intended to help solve that problem." Then Alton Marshall, Rockefeller's Executive Officer and closest advisor at the time, replied in hand to Logue: "This is great. How about throwing our lot in with Charley Rangle [sic]. Maybe he can be the top dog."[15]

Indeed Rangel and representatives from the office of Borough President Sutton – one of Rangel's closest allies – headed the list of prominent state office

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[14] McCall to Logue, "Interim Report," December 22, 1969.
[15] Bond Ryder Associates, "Preliminary Program Analysis For a Harlem Community Center," in Folder 148, Box 254, Logue Papers; David Shipler, "State Changes Plan for Site in Harlem," The New York Times, December 11, 1969; Logue to Rockefeller, December 24, 1969, in Folder 3e, Box 271, Logue Papers.

building supporters and other would-be Harlem allies Logue brought together in March 1970 to get serious about forming a H.U.D.C. But if the initially similar interests of the U.D.C. and this gathering of neighborhood leaders portended calmer times ahead, nothing about the formation of the H.U.D.C. or its early activities proceeded smoothly. Renewed conflict between different factions of Harlem leaders erupted. Once-friendly relations between moderate black negotiators and the U.D.C. turned accusing and acrimonious. And faced with its own internal identity crisis and a difficult economic environment, a finally inaugurated H.U.D.C. proved unable to produce significant or imaginative development projects. Ultimately, Harlem's new economic development institution strengthened the hand of moderate black leaders and further marginalized the neighborhood's more radical voices – all while the fundamental orientation of public development policies remained largely unchanged.

This troubled fate of the H.U.D.C. began emerging shortly after that March 1970 meeting with the U.D.C. and Harlem community representatives including the Ministerial Interfaith Association and local business and political leaders. With Rangel and Sutton on board, the entire group quickly agreed on common goals for the negotiations and decided that they were "prepared to go down this road without a broader representation." However Logue in particular still hoped to widen the participation in what would become the H.U.D.C., and he pressed the moderate Harlem leaders already supportive of the U.D.C. – who now comprised a formal thirty person Harlem-U.D.C. Negotiating Committee – to continue reaching out. In short order, Logue reported having several "very friendly conversations" with Wingate, who "had become disenchanted with the site people" and "expressed a desire to work together." But further negotiations

bogged down in personality and politics. First, Ministerial Interfaith Association Director James Gunther, a key member of the Negotiating Committee, simply did not get along with Wingate. Each accused the other of missing meetings, not returning phone calls, and misrepresenting the other's positions. While Gunther sought to have Wingate become the thirty-first individual member of the Negotiating Committee, Wingate insisted that, as chairman of a new United Federation of Black Community Organizations representing 100 neighborhood groups, the entire Negotiating Committee would have to be vastly expanded and reconfigured for him to participate. At a bitter impasse by early July, the existing Negotiating Committee and Logue decided to go ahead without Wingate, despite an anonymous leaflet circulating at the time that "there will be blood in Harlem" if they did.[16]

Where the Negotiating Committee-Wingate riff represented a continuation of already drawn battle lines, the tensions that flared between the Negotiating Committee and the U.D.C. after the details of the Memorandum of Understanding were agreed upon created a new layer of suspicions and ill-will complicating efforts to get anything accomplished. The search for a H.U.D.C. chief executive officer that everybody could agree upon, which was the last detailed to be worked out before Logue would sign off on creating the H.U.D.C., proved difficult. Logue's management style depended heavily on forceful and experienced head managers, so he played a personally active role in finding someone he respected and trusted. John Edmonds, a member of the Negotiating Committee and already

[16] Logue to Rockefeller, March 6, May 26, 1970 both in Folder 3f, Box 271, LP; Logue to Alton Marshall, April 3, July 9, 1970, both in Folder 3c, Box 271, LP; "March 6, 1970 Harlem Steering Committee Meeting Minutes", Wingate to Logue, May 26, 1970, "New York Urban League Meeting, May 18, 1970", Wingate to Gunther, June 3, 1970, and Daniel Miller to Logue, June 23,

Director of the Harlem-East Harlem Model Cities group, wanted the job, and Gunther backed him. But Logue had both long criticized the entire Model Cities program and wanted a more independent development corporation. So as the search dragged on, Negotiating Committee members grew frustrated and began accusing Logue of stalling for various reasons. In January 1971 everyone signed off on the appointment of a prominent Harlem judge to the chief executive's position, but just weeks later he suddenly turned down the offer for health reasons. With the prospect of starting the search all over again, tempers over-heated at a U.D.C.-Negotiating Committee meeting in March. Suspicious that the U.D.C. continued to work on getting various Harlem housing development projects started without them, John Edmonds proclaimed: "U.D.C. would not do a goddam thing in Harlem unless they do it through this body." According to meeting minutes, another Negotiating Committee member "said if U.D.C. thinks the group is playing and is to be toyed with, it has a new understanding coming. He said the Negotiating Committee is not a house-nigger nor a field-nigger." Two months later, Logue, Percy Sutton, and the Negotiating Committee settled on a new chief executive candidate – Jack Wood, a co-director of the National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing – and the Memorandum was finally signed shortly thereafter. But the foundation for future personality, administrative, and financial conflicts between U.D.C. and H.U.D.C. had already been laid.[17]

1970, all in Folder 668, Box 303, LP; Miller to Logue, July 8, 14, 21, 1970 and Logue to Percy Sutton, July 24, 1970, all in Folder 669, Box 303, LP.

[17] Brilliant, The Urban Development Corporation, 87-90; March 26, 1971 Meeting Minutes in Folder 669, Box 303, Logue Papers; Logue to Rockefeller, January 27 and May 20, 1971, both in Folder 3h, Box 271, Logue Papers.

The period from 1972 through the beginning of 1975 – when Logue was forced to resign and the U.D.C. plunged into financial collapse – dealt both the U.D.C. and the H.U.D.C. a variety of external blows. The Nixon administration's federal housing subsidy moratorium in early 1973 devastated their ability to sponsor new housing development.[18] Governor Rockefeller's resignation after fifteen years in office at the end of 1973 removed their most essential state political and economic sponsor. And the real estate market in Harlem in these years remained mostly unattractive to private investors with whom H.U.D.C. hoped and needed to partner. Yet even given these difficult circumstances, the inexperience and indecision that H.U.D.C. demonstrated played an important role in limiting its own success. H.U.D.C. did assume control over several housing developments that the U.D.C. had already planned and broken ground on, and it did start a few additional ones, though again primarily with neighborhood co-sponsors previously cultivated by the U.D.C. But H.U.D.C.'s very existence owed to the controversy on 125th Street, and thus inevitably the fate of the remainder of the office-building site would demonstrate most clearly the H.U.D.C.'s ability to act as a dynamic force for neighborhood development.

Well aware of the importance of the 125th Street site, the new H.U.D.C. Board of Directors that commenced substantive work in early 1972 focused attentions there immediately. Three years later, however, the Board would still be at the same planning stage, with little if anything to show for its efforts. How did nothing get accomplished? H.U.D.C.'s political caution offers one important explanation. At first, president Jack Wood worried about "community problems" and continuing political opposition. In April 1972 an impatient U.D.C. senior

[18] For an overview of how the Nixon administration's housing moratorium affected the U.D.C.

staff member explained to Logue that he had advised Wood that "he will never have one hundred percent agreement on what he does on that site. I have encouraged him to move ahead with some speed." By the end of 1972 the Board agreed to seek proposals for a combination hotel/convention hall/cultural center on the site and approved in May 1973 the preliminary plans offered by Center City Communications, a Harlem firm owned in part by Amsterdam News publisher Clarence B. Jones, Percy Sutton and Carl McCall. But given this ownership contingent, the H.U.D.C. Board felt uneasy. As Wood wrote to Logue in December 1973: "A substantial portion of [Board] members are reluctant to be responsible for an action which may be interpreted by the community as an 'award' to CCC, Inc. or a 'rip-off.' While several Directors seem convinced that the CCC, Inc. proposal may be the only solid and financially viable offer available, I think it is fair to say that all of them would feel a great deal more comfortable if that position were taken after the review and consideration of other proposals." And so it was that H.U.D.C. issued a new call for proposals and spent most of 1974 reviewing ten of them.[19]

Yet if political caution and indecision played a crucial role in delaying development of the site, so too did the economic and political environment. None of those ten proposals claimed to have a hotel firm lined up to operate in the facility, and only one listed prospective tenants for the office space. Such private investors simply did not find Harlem an attractive location at the time, and there was little that even well connected black business and political leaders could do to change that perception. Furthermore, such a complex for 125th Street, as

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and its subsidiaries, see UDC 73 (U.D.C.'s 1973 Annual Report), esp. 5-7.

H.U.D.C. officials knew, required significant state assistance, but by 1974 – with Rockefeller gone and fiscal crises emerging – it was no longer forthcoming. When the H.U.D.C.'s General Manager wrote Logue in the fall of 1974 informing him of the latest 125th Street development plans that included state-sponsored cultural facilities, Logue replied testily: "There is no, repeat no, educational/cultural component as a state project. . . . I am somewhat surprised this is still showing up. Please cut it out and revise the program immediately."[20]

The north side of 125th Street between Seventh and Lenox Avenues constitutes merely one block among hundreds in the neighborhood, but the controversies and construction that emerged on that site provide a revealing and symbolic history of black politics and urban development in Harlem. Just as Governor Rockefeller's plans to locate an austere, modernist state office building there reflected a liberal vision of urban renewal and economic integration widely held at the time, so too the building protestors' critiques of that vision encapsulated important elements of the substance and style of a black radicalism blossoming in the late 1960s. Those that objected to the office building did not produce the results they sought. The building got built, and no dramatically altered political mechanisms allowing for community control and economic self-determination emerged. But the vehemence of the protests did help create a new if unforeseen era of black politics in Harlem that extended well beyond its inception in the early 1970s. In many respects the institutional life of the Harlem

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[19] Miller to Logue, April 3, 1972 and Wood to Logue, October 30, 1972, both in Folder 691, Box 303, Logue Papers; Wood to Logue, December 4, 1973 in Folder 692, Box 303; Cogsville to Logue, March 27 in Folder 693, Box 303; Brilliant, The Urban Development Corporation, 130-32.
[20] Cogsville to Logue, March 27 and October 11, 1974 and Logue to Cogsville, November 12, 1974, all in Folder 693, Box 303.

Urban Development Corporation characterized that era usefully: born out of and in direct response to late 1960s radicalism, the H.U.D.C. came to represent black Harlem's deepened participation in an otherwise largely unchanged urban political system. Confronted with increasingly harsh economic and political environments that made creative neighborhood revitalization a monumentally difficult task, the H.U.D.C. and its politician leaders joined a long urban tradition. It attempted to launch occasional noteworthy projects but came to be best known as a patronage machine run by its politician leaders – a vessel for the receipt of government funds and the distribution of jobs, contracts, and favors.[21]

The view of 125th Street in the early 1980s provides a final and symbolic overview of what emerged out of the state office building controversy. In 1980, a parking garage was constructed on the eastern part of the site next to the office building. In 1982, the H.U.D.C. demonstrated it had long ago gotten over concerns about conflicts-of-interest when it invested $1 million in an Apollo Theater renovation project headed by H.U.D.C. co-founder and now Inner City Broadcasting Corporation chief Percy Sutton. And in an extraordinary recasting of historical memory, in 1983 – fourteen years after Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.'s angry 1969 declaration that "If that [state office] building goes up I promise you I will leave both Harlem and this country" – that same building was posthumously renamed in his honor.[22]

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[21] Eventually Republican Governor George Pataki shut down the H.U.D.C. in 1995. Debate between critics and defenders of the H.U.D.C. during this final period can be followed in: Brett Pulley, "Governor Closes Harlem Development Agency," The New York Times, August 31, 1995; Matthew Purdy, "Audits Indicate Misuse of Funds By Aid Agency in Harlem," The New York Times, May 1, 1997; Matthew Purdy, "Ex-Leaders of Harlem Agency Defend Development Record," The New York Times, May 10, 1997.

[22] Sheila Rule, "Signs of Harlem Rebirth Seen in Construction Spurt," The New York Times, March 1, 1980; David W. Dunlap, "Harlem's Apollo Theater To Be a Cable TV Studio," The New York Times, May 18, 1982; George Dugan, "Powell sees 'Breaking Point' on Harlem Building,"

The New York Times, October 13, 1969; "Name Change to Honor a Harlem Hero," The New York Times, July 20, 1983.