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THE SCHOOLS AND URBAN RENEWAL, A CASE STUDY FROM NEW HAVEN.

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THE SPECIFIC ARCHITECTURAL PLANS FOR NEW SCHOOLS TO BE BUILT AS PART OF AN URBAN RENEWAL PROJECT IN NEW HAVEN ARE BRIEFLY DISCUSSED. OVER A 9-YEAR PERIOD 14 OBSOLETE SCHOOLS WILL BE REPLACED, TWO OTHERS AND ONE ANNEX WILL BE ABANDONED, AND 15 NEW SCHOOLS WILL BE BUILT. THESE CHANGES WILL BE BROUGHT ABOUT THROUGH COOPERATIVE PLANNING AMONG CITY OFFICIAL, THE COMMUNITY, AND THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, WHICH, COMBINED WITH FEDERAL URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS, WILL ALLOW ONE OUT OF EVERY THREE SCHOOLS TO BE BUILT "FREE." THIS WILL BE POSSIBLE BECAUSE FUNDS SAVED BY PURCHASING SITES LOCATED IN RENEWAL AREAS WILL BE USED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF MORE SCHOOLS. THIS DOCUMENT IS ALSO AVAILABLE FROM THE OFFICES OF EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES LABORATORIES, 477 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 22. (JL)

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The Schools and Urban Renewal
A case study from New Haven

by Terry Ferrer

A Report from Educational Facilities Laboratories

Foreword

The schoolhouse in the cities of America is in a general condition of deterioration and decay. Ugly and ill-kept, it adds its forbidding shadow to the depressing environment of city neighborhoods. Its very age and condition contribute to the out-migration of people to the suburbs—with their bright new buildings and their light, air, and space. And the deficiencies of the urban schoolhouse add to the already large gap between the conditions of living and learning provided the suburban child and those available to the generally less privileged children of the city.

John Hersey described its appearance best in his novel, *The Child Buyer:* "The school is an old, dark, brick, two-story contraption, a Norman fortress, built as if learning and virtue needed a stronghold, a place of turrets and parapets, with narrow slits in the bricks through which scholars with crossbows peep out at an atomic world."

While the city school has continued to deteriorate, there has been a growing series of actions, both public and private, whose purpose has been to arrest and even to reverse the trend of general physical decline of urban areas. Thus over the past 13 years in many American cities, areas of slum housing and blighted commercial and industrial uses have had these structures replaced by decent housing, modern shops, offices, and industrial districts. And during these years the concept of the scope and complexity of the task of renewing urban neighborhoods has been continuously enlarged. Each revision of the Federal Housing Act of 1949 has added new dimensions and encouraged more comprehensive plans and programs, for it is clear by now that city blight and decay can be arrested only by massive attacks on problems of housing, land use, roads and transportation, commercial and industrial development.

Moreover such studies as have been made—for example, the one in Detroit's Mack-Concord area—would seem to indicate that the "patch up, paint up, fix up" approach for residential renewal has produced far less than had been hoped for in such matters as improved community morale and stabilized residential patterns. No strong community cohesiveness has resulted. Significant physical changes, among other things, appear necessary to create the symbolism necessary for a personal sense of identification with an area and a feeling of satisfaction with the living space.

In any residential renewal plan (conservation or clearance, or a combination of both), the school building can well become this symbolic focus, for it is one of the community's most important visual and functional elements. Among the generally small-scale structures in a residential area the schoolhouse can become the "neighborhood capital"—*the* significant architectural element.

The belief is also increasing that local residents may be disposed to spend more on repairing and reconditioning their own homes when they see, early in the execution of a rehabilitation or conversion project, an expenditure for a well-designed school building. This can become a sign of intent, an article of faith and interest on the part of the local government in the well-being of the area and its people.

It is in recognizing the role that the school can play in rebuilding a city, and in acting vigorously on this conviction that the leaders of New Haven's urban renewal program have set an example among American cities. Since 1953, Mayor Richard C. Lee has made the redevelopment of New Haven his main concern. Campaigning continuously on the issue of urban renewal, he has put together a program whose projected scope covers more than half of the city's total area. Directed until 1960 by Edward J. Logue, and subsequently by L. Thomas Appleby, Harold Grabino, and Melvin J. Adams, this program has increasingly been concerned with the human and social conditions of urban living. The school and its program have thus become a central element in the plan, according to city officials, "to create an opportunity structure which would make it possible (for each New Haven resident) to achieve personal fulfillment and a sense of worth and dignity."

New Haven has learned that urban renewal needs the schools. It seems equally clear that the schools need the urban renewal program. This case study of New Haven's effort brings out rather dramatically the fiscal advantages which can accrue to a city and a school system through the renewal process, but the end is not financial, nor is that New Haven's goal. The end is a more satisfying and rewarding life for the city's people.

As Paul Ylvisaker of the Ford Foundation has suggested, "A community which made its schools . . . the tender object and physical center of its urban renewal operations would be taking one of the noblest and shrewdest steps forward in the civic progress of this century." New Haven is taking this step.

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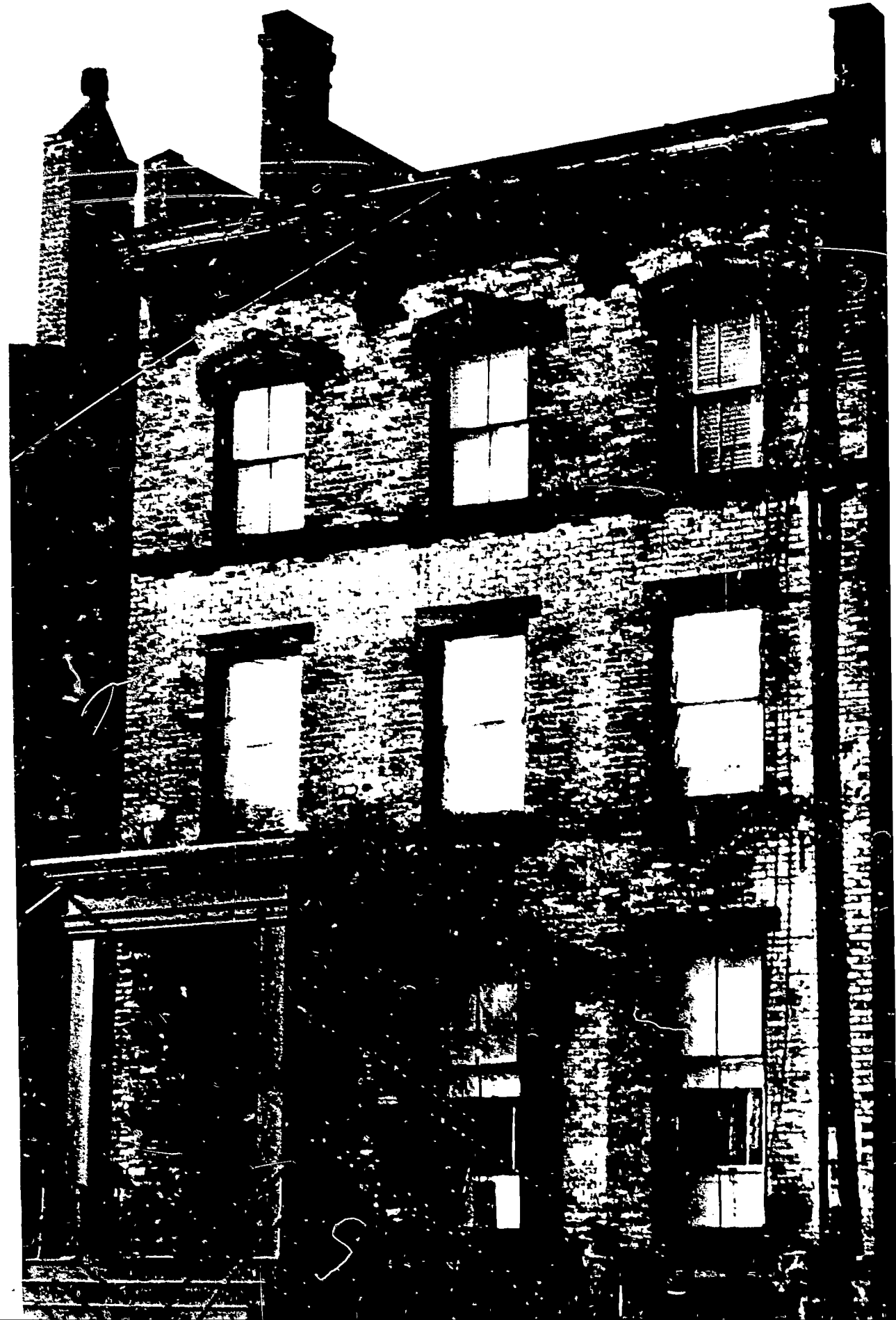
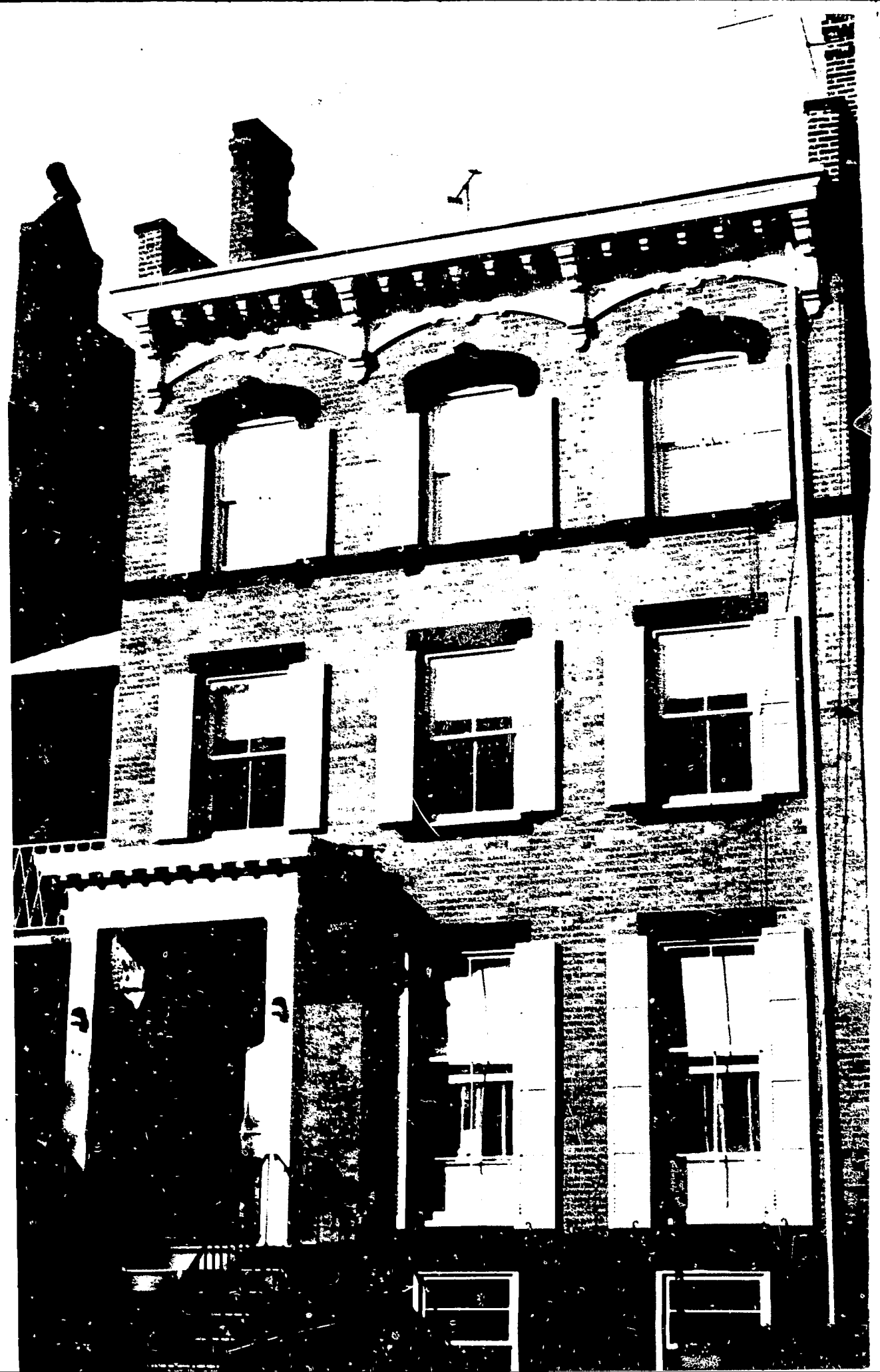




New Haven

Ten years ago the city of New Haven, Connecticut, was 315 years old—and looked every minute of it. Its buildings of drab brick and age-stained wood were pressed into narrow streets. Its grimy slum areas had been breeding and spreading in the midst of the city. Its population had been dropping: In the decade ending in 1960, more than 12,000 fled the city for the more attractive suburbs—a sizable loss in a city whose population in 1950 was between 164,000 and 165,000. This was New Haven—until 10 years ago.

Wedged in the streets of the seemingly dying city were its 40 schools, most without adequate acreage, poorly lit, poorly ventilated, many still with basement toilets, many more with their plaster walls cracking, their ancient stairs creaking. Twelve elementary schools were built before 1900—one the year Grant took Vicksburg. Sixteen more elementary schools date back before 1920. Only two elementary schools were constructed between 1920 and 1950.

Thus, the vast majority of New Haven's schools were educational tenements, drab, ugly, dilapidated. While the city's perimeter and suburbs beckoned families with new schools and good playgrounds along with a home of one's own, New Haven—like many another American city—had not renewed the urban schoolhouse.

Not until the last few years, that is. For New Haven is currently engaged in the largest urban renewal per capita project of its kind in the country. Within this total redevelopment, the city will tear down, between 1961 and 1970, 14 of its obsolete schools, abandon two others plus one annex, and build in their stead 15 new schools. In less than 10 years, the city will replace some 40 per cent of its schools. And the city itself will be refurbished as well.

The secret of how to do it: tying in the new schools with federal urban renewal projects. By cooperative planning among city officials, the community, and the Board of Education, savings for the school system and the city have been effected which make possible a program of school construction which the community would probably otherwise never have considered. One of every three of New Haven's schools will be "free" to the city—with site acquired and school erected by funds saved on the purchase of 11 of the 15 sites which are located in existing or planned renewal areas.

How has New Haven's program come about? It all began when the State in 1953 announced plans for a New Haven Interchange for the new Connecticut Thruway, which would have cut right through a thickly populated Italian neighborhood and one of the oldest residential areas, Wooster Square.

Fortunately, New Haven had an imaginative modern plan for the future drawn by Maurice Rotival the year after he joined the Yale faculty in 1940 as associate professor of planning. Based on the recommendation of the Rotival Plan, the City Planning Commission protested the state's interchange location and proposed that it be shifted further east. In addition, it urged that a six-lane, depressed connector road be built which would link downtown New Haven directly with the thruway. Mayor Richard C. Lee pressed these proposals

Blighted rooming houses, far left, were rehabilitated under New Haven's urban renewal program to transform Academy Street slum into charming residential street.

vigorously and persuaded the state not only to accept the alternate route but to pay for the downtown connector which was to cost $15 million.

"Building the '*new*' New Haven," as the slogan became, was under way. The Oak Street project for the connector road was followed by the Church Street project for rebuilding the commercial and business district in the heart of downtown New Haven and the Long Wharf plan for reconstructing the waterfront. These were succeeded in turn by a major rehabilitation of the Wooster Square neighborhood which had been "saved" by the highway relocation.

Wooster Square had been the city's first suburb by about 1820, with fine homes overlooking the harbor and a pleasant park. But, as happens in so many expanding American cities, in 40 years the neighborhood began to deteriorate. Small factories rose on the vacant land beyond the handsome houses on the square, followed by jerry-built homes and tenements to house the factory workers. Nearby Court Street, terminating in the square, was little more than a skid row of filthy buildings leased by the room at $3 a week, often to local drunks. Rat-infested dwellings multiplied; fire hazards grew—in 17 years, 35 persons were burned to death in the area. The three public schools went further and further downhill along with the neighborhood.

In 1955, the Wooster Square Neighborhood Renewal Committee and the city's planning and development staff began working on plans to rebuild the area. Planning *with* the residents was substituted for planning for them, and the urban renewal staff became increasingly attuned to the human factors in the renewal process. Schools began to assume a dominant role, not only in Wooster Square plans, but in the Dixwell and State Street projects as well.

Reflecting on the Wooster Square and Dixwell projects experience especially, Edward J. Logue, Development Administrator in the city, suggested a comprehensive survey of all the city's schools. The Board of Education agreed, and Dr. Cyril G. Sargent, then Professor of Education at Harvard University was engaged to do the survey.

In March of 1961, Dr. Sargent finished his report. His indictment of the condition of the city's schools could well apply to countless other communities. As Dr. Sargent wrote:

"In common with almost every older American city, New Haven's school plant, particularly in its older neighborhoods, is over-aged, worn-out, and obsolete. For too many years in the past, New Haven has built too few schools . . .

"An obsolete and inefficient school plant has consequences beyond reducing the quality of education for our children. The ugliness and drabness of old schools are a major cause of the flight to the suburbs and the decline of older city neighborhoods.

"Schools, well designed, on adequate sites and made a center of community activity, can go far in arresting blight and improving neighborhoods where residents must establish new confidence in their community and hence their city. Schools that are community-centered can serve as recreational and adult education facilities.

"To achieve substantial economies, the school construction program needs to be integrated with urban renewal and neighborhood improvement programs. New Haven's well-advanced urban renewal and neighborhood improvement program makes such a combination feasible and timely.

"The school building program recommended in this report, if adopted, will enable New Haven to provide an improved and efficient school plant on an economical basis."

Specifically, Dr. Sargent proposed that 14 schools—including the 12 built before the turn of the century—be torn down, and that three other schools be abandoned. In their places would rise 15 new schools, and extensive renovations would be done on some of the schools retained.

The report emphasized the substantial savings which could be realized through tie-ins with urban-renewal projects. The total cost of the 15 schools—including sites totaling 71 acres—without urban renewal would have been $19,967,000. This was prohibitively high. With urban renewal tie-ins, the cost would drop to $12,947,000—a saving of $7.020,000 through writedowns on sites.

Dividing the 15 schools into the larger cost of $19,967,000 produces a cost-per-school of slightly more than $1,330,000. Using this figure, with the $7,020,000 saved through urban renewal, five schools could be financed by this saving. Thus these five schools—one of every three of the 15 proposed—are "free" for New Haven.

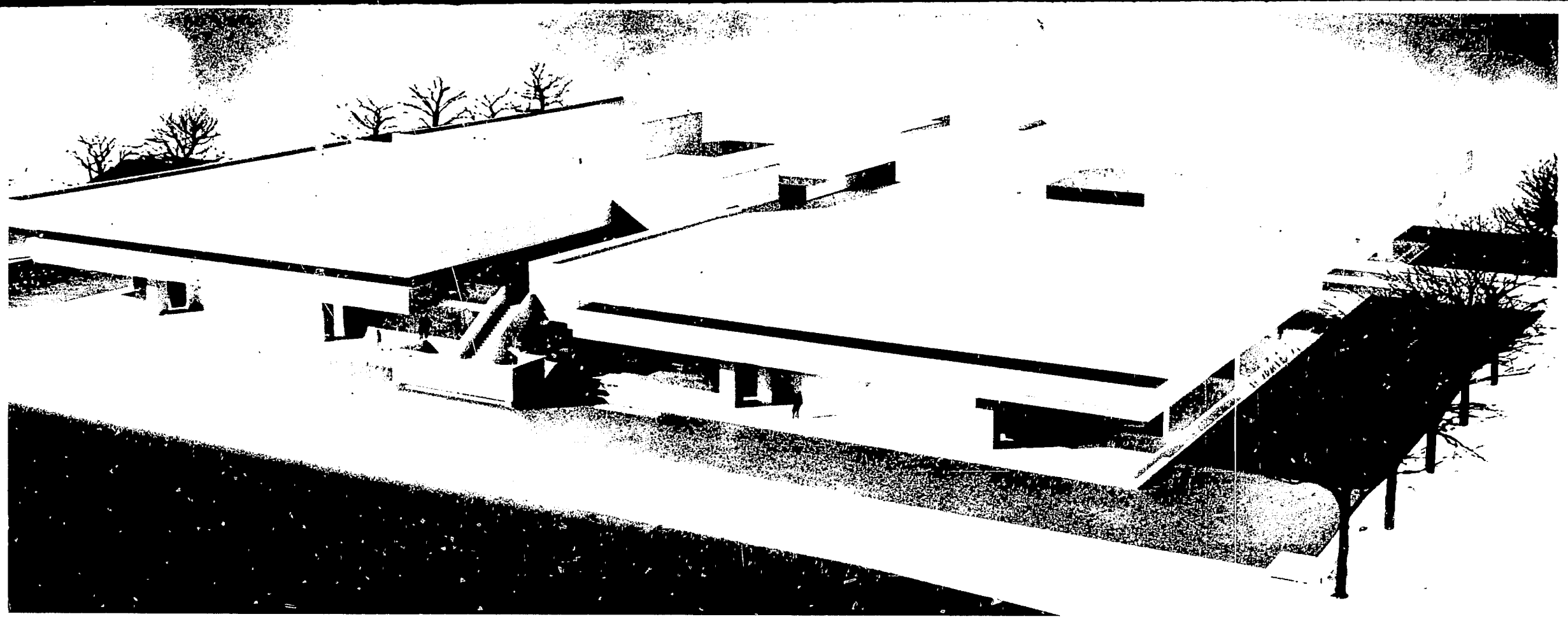
But these are only the direct savings of cash outlays required to modernize the city's school plant. As the report pointed out.

"It should particularly be noted that in many cases the cost of the school construction itself—a sum which the city would plan to spend in any event—is sufficient to make up the city's required one-third share of renewal project cost. . . . In fact, it may eliminate the need for any further direct cash contributions on the part of the city for urban renewal projects."

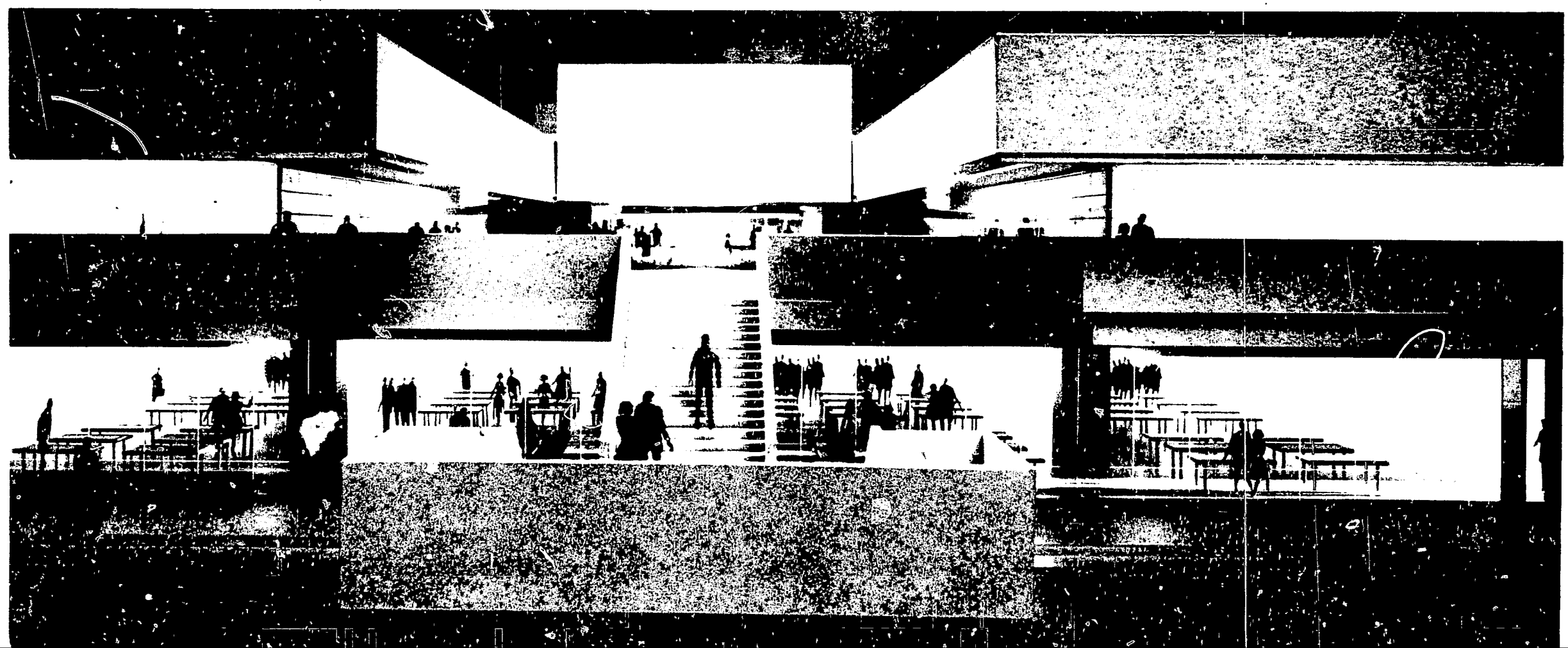
The new schools would be sprinkled throughout the city to serve neighborhood areas and to provide community facilities. Eleven of the 15 should be elementary on a K-4 organization, three should be "intermediate," or 5-8, and one should be a new four-year high school (9-12). What actually was proposed was a switch from the 6-3-3 organization used in most New Haven schools to a K-4-4-4 plan.

In a subsequent letter to the Board of Education, Dr. Sargent outlined what he feels are the "substantial educational advantages" of the K-4-4-4 plan for New Haven. He wrote:

"A four-year high school not only gives recognition to the maturity of ninth-grade pupils but permits and encourages a more sustained and vigorous education program throughout the high-school years. There are aspects of the ninth grade, including the elective system, that bear special relationship to



Model of proposed new "house plan" high school for New Haven.



the tenth grade and later sequences of study. A four-year high school plan also provides continuity in the guidance program which can effectively support educational goals.

"The fifth- through eighth-grade intermediate school extends the basic principle of the junior high school to the fifth-grade. It can mean offering courses on a department basis, the extension of guidance programs to fifth-grade students, as well as the introduction of special facilities and courses. New Haven first adopted the junior-high-school principle in 1924, but has never totally completed its grade organization to carry out that system.

"The small, neighborhood-oriented K through 4 elementary school can be a school specially designed for very young children. The classrooms, special facilities, and even the school sites themselves can be adapted for children of kindergarten through fourth-grade age. In addition, the schools would be so located as to serve relatively compact neighborhoods wherever possible."

Dr. Sargent's report was unanimously approved by the Board of Education, and numerous community meetings were held to explain it—including a huge public meeting—the largest in the history of the city—which voted 1,300 to 20 for his plans.

In August of 1961, the New Haven Board of Finance agreed to let the city float some $13,000,000 worth of bonds as needed to finance the Sargent report, despite some political opposition to the lump-sum permission. This meant that the Board of Education did not have to return to city officials 15 times in 10 years to get approval for each school.

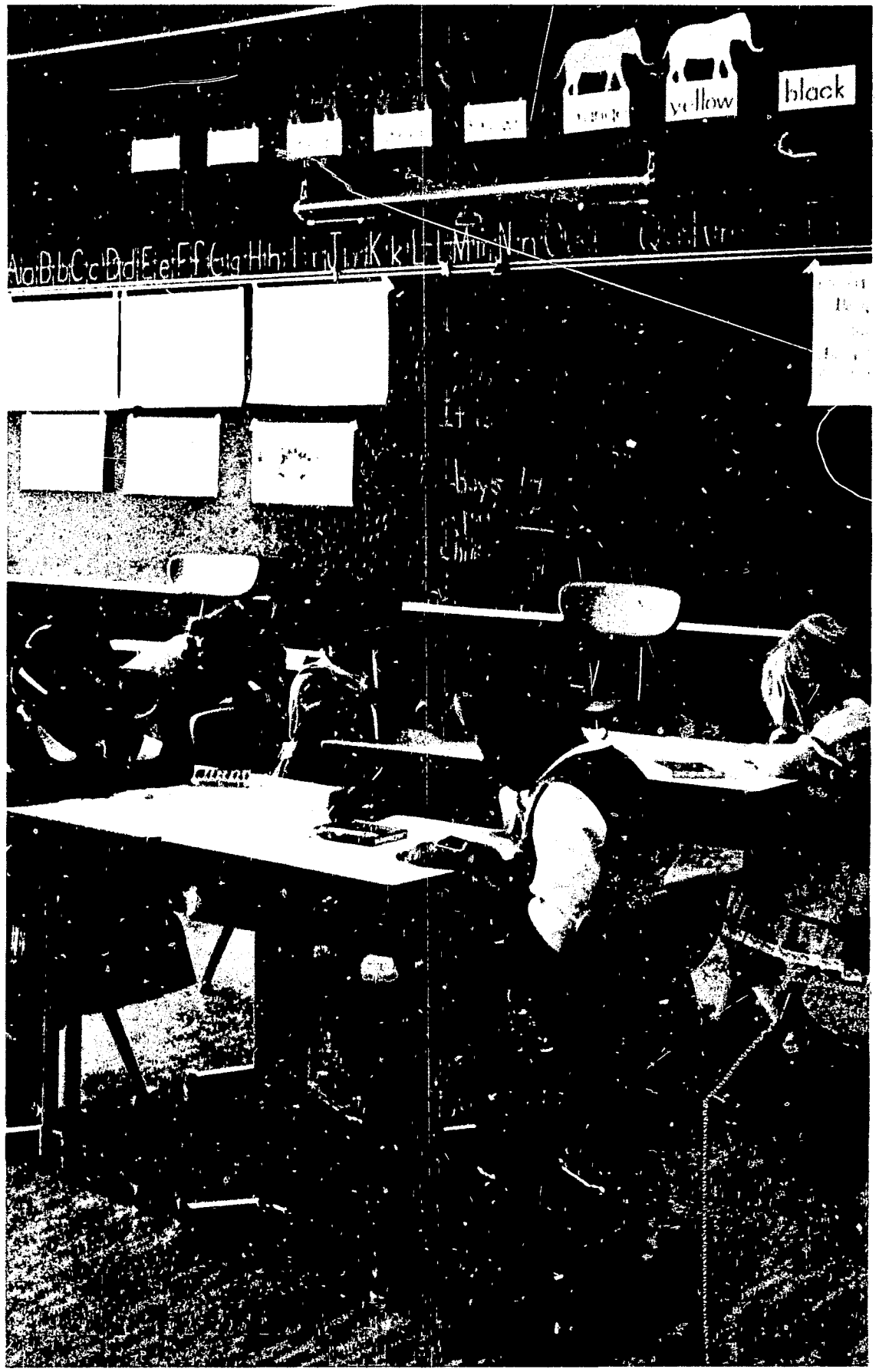
The new high school has been designed by Saarinen Associates, and is scheduled for completion by 1965. The four-year school is on the "house" plan to provide smaller units for its 1,600 pupils. Four houses will accommodate 400 pupils in each—a cross section of all four classes—under four administrators, who can get to know their pupils far better than if they were trying to keep track of the whole 1,600.

Concurrently, the architectural firm of Perkins and Will and a New Haven architect, Carleton E. Granberry, were retained to prepare programing studies of the K-4 schools recommended by Dr. Sargent.

The architects designed a school which they felt would be used on eight of the 11 planned elementary sites. Their idea: in a city which desperately needs a feeling of space, drop the school partly underground, put the playground on roofs of the school's sections, and give the effect of a park by using only three acres of a site of seven to eight acres.

Each classroom of the architects' proposed school has windows on an inner court. The kindergarten is separate from the other classrooms, and can use the inner court for play. Grades 1 to 4 can play on the roofs or adjacent park-like land.

The proposed school has not as yet been built in New Haven on any site, but it has been suggested for the Fair Haven section. Perhaps not surprisingly,



Interior court of Conte School, left, offers play space for younger children. Exterior, above, enhances neighborhood.

in the light of earlier citizen discussions, at a recent public meeting to discuss the school, one Fair Haven resident objected to the plans on the grounds that "if we are going to have a new school, we want to be able to see it."

Meanwhile, the school which started New Haven on its present program of school building, the Henry A. Conte School & Community Center, opened in September of 1962. The school enrolled 750 pupils, just about half of whom are Negroes, in kindergarten through grade eight.

Designed by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill—the first architects brought into New Haven from the outside to design a school—the Conte School and the Center are placed on two city blocks.

The school is square and two stories high, with 26 classrooms. The exterior is poured reinforced concrete, with cinderblock on the inside. In the interior of the square, windows look out at the playground for the smallest pupils, safely enclosed. Two other play areas for older children are on the outside of the school square.

The school has a swimming pool, large gymnasium, and science laboratory. In a separate building, connected to the school by an underground passage, is a community and school auditorium.

Further, across a broad plaza are the two other buildings of the Conte complex, a three-room senior citizens' center linked to a branch of the public library. The school, auditorium, senior citizens' center, and library are open most nights until 9 p.m. or later for community meetings, plays, or other entertainment and relaxation.

And then there is Court Street, the former rooming-house block terminating in the square. At a cost of $250,000, the city rehabilitated the shabby buildings, also under urban renewal. New Haven's Redevelopment Agency bought up the blighted and blotched buildings, painted and spruced them up and resold them, barring rooming-house use. The whole area was planted with trees.

The result is a charming street which looks like Boston's Beacon Hill or part of the French Quarter of New Orleans. The rehabilitation, first of its kind in the country, "provided more housing per dollar than could have been achieved by new construction and will return a substantial tax revenue to the city," says New Haven's 1963 budget report. "Court Street has been praised by officials on every level of government, and it is an example that is sure to be followed by many other communities."

Conte has not been without its critics. The principal complaint about the school has been its extremely high cost, which ran to $30 a square foot in the four buildings (as contrasted with the Connecticut school average of about $14 a square foot). New Haven Board of Education officials defend the expense by pointing out that the $14 figure is a classrooms-only per-square-foot cost, while the $30 for Conte includes such expensive items as the swimming pool, which is open for community use, the neighborhood library, and the auditorium.

Expensive or not, the Conte School-Community Center showed New Haven

what could be done financially, and how a new school could become—by design—the hub of community life by day and by night. And the open areas in the plaza between the buildings gave a refreshing feeling of space in a city which previously had built most of its schools virtually to the edge of the sidewalks surrounding them.

To understand the relationship of the new schools to such other urban renewal project building as housing, an industrial district, a commercial park, a central fire station, a shopping area, and new sewers and streets, it is necessary to examine the financing of the whole Wooster Square project and compare the project with and without schools. Here is the way it works:

The Federal government loans New Haven $23,858,000 to buy properties which have to be cleared of dilapidated buildings. Improvements such as sewers, firehouses, and city-owned property add to the cost of the project by $3,498,000, bringing the total to $27,356,000. If the Wooster Square School cost and the share of the cost of the new Wilbur Cross High School for pupils attending from Wooster Square are added, the total project cost becomes $31,556,000. From this is subtracted the income received from the sale of all the land, making the net project cost $28,920,000 with schools and $24,720,000 without. After subtracting the federal share (⅔) of this cost and the state's contribution (50% of the local cost), the net cost to the city is $4,820,000 with the schools as compared to $4,120,000 without. But the federal government allows—as a non-cash credit toward the city's ⅓ payment—the schools, firehouses, and public land so that with the schools the city has an actual cash credit of $2,878,000 (which can be applied to its share of other renewal projects), as against an additional outlay of $622,000 without the schools. And this credit can yield an additional $17,268,000 of federal funds for other projects.

While the Conte School was under construction New Haven's mayor and other city officials pressed ahead, and in addition to wiping out slums and rebuilding the schools, they embarked on a "human renewal" program, supported by $2,500,000 from the Ford Foundation. Called Community Progress Inc., the

Table 1. Wooster Square Project / Comparative Costs to New Haven

Item	With Schools		Without Schools	
1. Project Expenditures		$23,858,000		$23,858,000
2. Non-Cash Grants-in-Aid				
School:				
1) Wooster Square School	$3,600,000			
2) Wilbur Cross High	600,000			
Nonschool:				
1) Firehouse, sewers, etc.	2,403,000		2,403,000	
2) City-owned property	1,095,000		1,095,000	
	$7,698,000	$ 7,698,000	$3,498,000	$ 3,498,000
3. Gross Project Cost (1 + 2)		31,556,000		27,356,000
4. Land Sale		2,636,000		2,636,000
5. Net Project Cost (3 – 4)		28,920,000		24,720,000
6. Federal Share (⅔ of 5)		19,280,000		16,480,000
7. Minimum Local Grants-in-Aid (⅓ of 5)		9,640,000		8,240,000
8. State contribution (½ of 7)		4,820,000		4,120,000
9. Net City Grant-in-Aid (7 – 8)		4,820,000		4,120,000
10. Local non-cash (2)		7,698,000		3,498,000
11. Local cash		2,878,000 (CR)		622,000

program began in the fall of 1962 to attack such social problems as lack of jobs for the poorly educated and juvenile delinquency, and to stress the community school as the center for solving these problems. CPI's executive director is Mitchell Sviridoff, who was formerly chairman of New Haven's Board of Education.

CPI, with special attention to the city's Negroes—15 per cent of the population—will try everything from pre-kindergarten programs to acquaint children with books before they go to school to neighborhood service directors to coordinate social services. Legal community workers will be in each community school to "help what is now a fear of the law into an awareness that the law presents an opportunity."

Helping teachers, trained in city family and cultural problems, will be hired to reach pupils—to "find out what makes Johnny tick"—and help involve regular teachers in neighborhood life. There will be funds provided for extra remedial reading teachers. Improved guidance aimed at today's labor market and post-high school technical programs will help high school graduates get better jobs. "School" will be in session 12 to 16 hours a day.

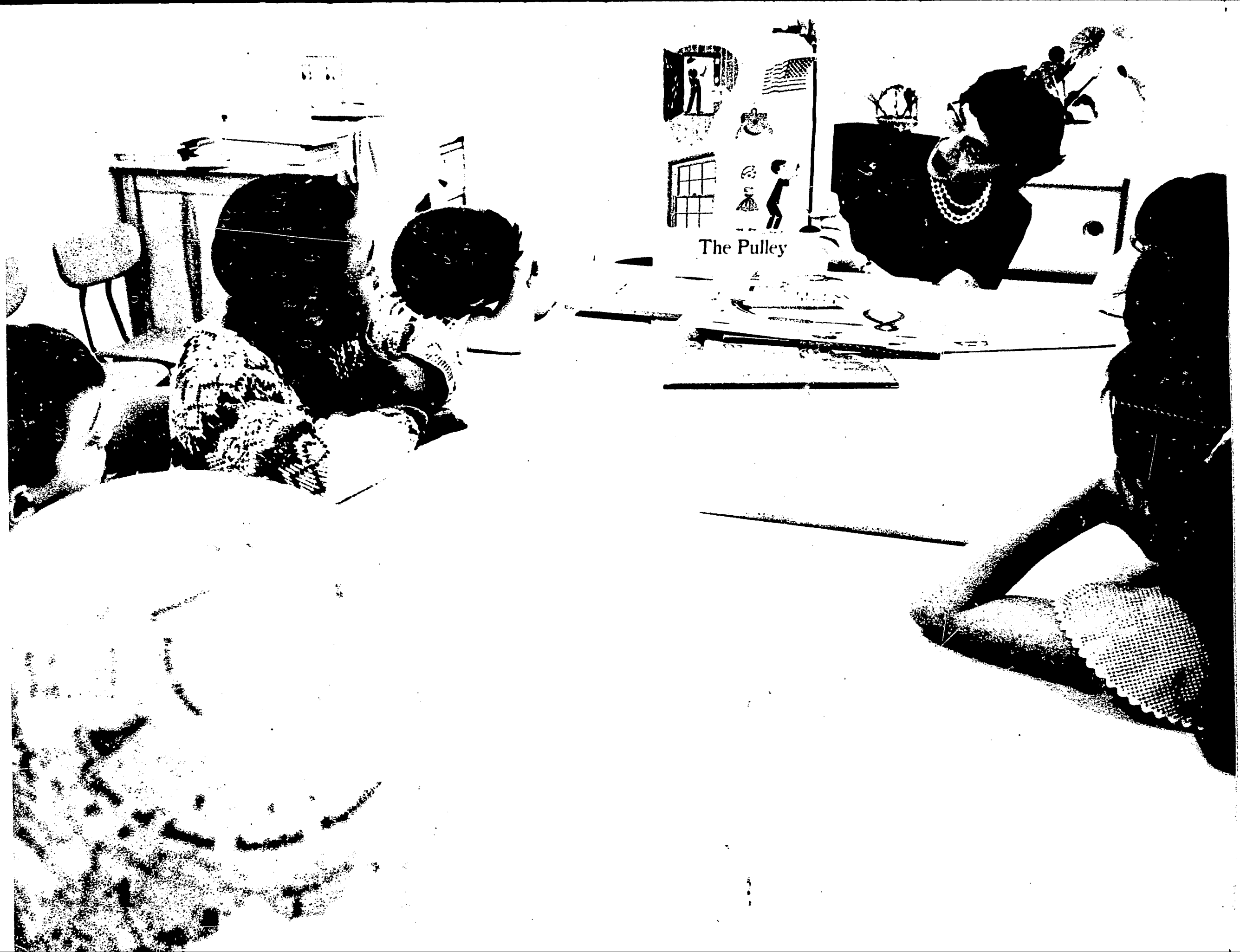
New Haven's new school superintendent, Dr. Laurence G. Paquin, welcomes these efforts to provide better buildings and better lives for his 21,000 pupils. He is also well aware that neighborhood cooperation plus coordinated efforts of city officials, city planners, and schoolmen are essential to the city's effort at rebirth.

Building new schools through urban renewal projects may not be the answer for every large city in the country. It can be a long and tedious process. Total urban renewal plans must clear one of the seven regional offices of the Housing and Home Finance Agency spotted throughout the country. The cities' plans must also be approved in Washington. The whole procedure takes at least two years before building can begin, although school plans must get no approval as such—only as part of the city's plan.

But New Haven has found it worth the effort. Other communities might well consider urban renewal as an economical and practical way to renew the schoolhouse in the heart of the city.

New Haven's school bond issue of $13,000,000 could bring the city $46,500,000 more in federal and state funds toward general renewal purposes. For in the case of the 11 schools planned in the renewal areas the state would match their estimated $9,300,000 cost. The federal grant on the $18,600,000 of state and local money would be $37,200,000. Thus the state and federal government could provide an additional $46,500,000 for New Haven in its drive to be the first slum-free city in America. And the schools would be in the forefront of this drive.

Congress made $2.5 billion available for urban renewal in 1961. So far, big urban centers have not made as much use of these funds as the smaller cities, according to federal renewal officials. New Haven is the exception.



The Pulley

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