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River City (1968–1986) and The Form of Urban Redevelopment in Chicago's South Loop

Project description

Between the late 1950s and the 1980s, Chicago, like many other American cities, lived an extended period of "urban crisis" characterized, among others, by the combined effects of suburbanization and deindustrialization, resulting in the a shrinking tax base decline of the central city as center for civic life. By the late 1960s, the planning strategies of the immediate post-war period, defined by large urban renewal projects, combined with modern inner city public housing complexes, a focus on transportation, and functional segregation, were considered ineffective or even deleterious. City planners, consultants, corporate leaders, architects, and social scientists, recognizing urban change, engaged in a rich debate about the new form and strategies for inner city urban development, responding to private- and public-oriented concerns for economic sustainability, fiscal health and quality of life of the central business district and adjacent neighborhoods. In this context, architecture played several roles: symbolic, speculative, moral, functional and technical, always associated with larger planning schemes. These debates came to a head in the the plans for the central area neighborhoods, formulated largely by an association of central area business leaders, in particular the South Loop: an entire new neighborhood to be formed according to new guidelines on the abandoned railroad at the frayed southern edges of the business district.

River City (1968–1986) emerges in this context as a bold, in some aspects visionary, imagination for the future of the South Loop and, by extension, the central city. Its history reflects the interdisciplinary, inter-institutional debates and the slow, nuanced shift away from the model of architecture and planning of the 1950s and 1960s, or "modernism", into the 1970s and 1980s. The original project, designed between 1968 and 1973, represented the culmination of the urbanistic vision of Chicago-based architect Bertrand Goldberg of Marina City (1959–1967) fame. River City would be a "city-within-a-city" comprising several residential tower triads on a park-like site by the lake, occupying 45 acres – with hopes of extending into the entire railroad site. In design as well as in process the architect sought to combine the

functions of land development, architecture, urban planning, and even policy-making, while theorizing it in terms of recent concepts in social sciences and urban studies. Crucial to his systematic understanding of a well-functioning, lively city was density, mixed-use, interconnectivity, and a connection to certain central landscape elements – here, the river. In 1973, when it was submitted for zoning approval, the project was rejected in a decision that echoed ongoing discussions about the adequate height, density, and programme for residential developments and inner city neighborhoods in general. The project was significantly altered and only partially realized, resulting in the 450-unit development existing today. The second iteration reveals yet other popular tropes of architectural and urbanistic developments at the time, all directed at revitalizing the American urban core, such as the interior street or atrium, enclosed park, and emphasis on amenities. The building we can see today bears witness, in its form, to the transformations in the debate about urban form and development in Chicago and the United States in the post-war period.

This paper tells the history of River City in relation to its context in Chicago's urban history, with a focus on contemporaneous planning initiatives, and more broadly the history of post-war American cities and of architectural debates about the city from the 1960s forward. It relies on research at the Bertrand Goldberg Archives at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Chicago History Museum's research collections, the Chicago Tribune and Sun-Times archives, and the Skidmore, Owings and Merrill archives, in addition to conversations with current owners and managers at River City. I consider the work to be still in progress and plan to edit and expand the paper in the next days and weeks.

Project affiliation (BA thesis, capstone, independent research, etc)

BA thesis

Name and Department of course instructor/faculty supervisor for project

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**River City (1968-1986):  
The Form of Urban Redevelopment in Chicago's South Loop**

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## **Introduction**

Skirting the south branch of the Chicago river between Polk and 9th streets, River City (1968-1986) stands out amid new buildings and still-vacant lots in Chicago's fast growing South Loop neighborhood (fig. 1). Conceived by celebrated Chicago architect Bertrand Goldberg (1913-1997), the massive structure is composed of two sinuous parallel cast-concrete residential towers atop a two-story plinth containing commercial and office spaces, opening to a marina. The building seems both futuristic and outdated in its formal and programmatic boldness - a past vision for the future of the city.

The River City we encounter today is the result of fifteen years of planning and construction. Planned during the 1970s and built in the 1980s, the building is among the pioneers of the redevelopment of the area that would become today's South Loop. During this time, the project has undergone several transformations. The project's history parallels that of the early development of the area, and the changes it underwent illustrate a debate about the form and character of the new urban environment.

The redevelopment of the South Loop, previously occupied largely by railroad yards, was part of a strategy for revitalization of the city center. Between the 1950s and 1980s, Chicago, like many other American cities, experienced a period of prolonged crisis. The city center experienced the effects of suburbanization and deindustrialization, associated with a decrease in tax revenue and increasing blight in central area neighborhoods. Downtown was evacuated after work hours, and retail suffered. In response, the city's corporate and civic leaders, planners and government officials united with the objective of stimulating development and business in the central area. Private-public partnerships elaborated plans for the redevelopment of downtown-adjacent areas, including the South Loop.

In this context, River City emerged as a proposal for a new kind of inner city neighborhood. Goldberg, like other planners and architects, was invested in the life of the city center. He believed that new architectural and urban forms would present the solution

for the city's social and economic ailments, and that it was the architect's responsibility to become involved in the political, financial and commercial aspects of construction in order to have an impact on the city. Acting as both developer and architect, Goldberg attempted to integrate architecture, property development, and urban planning for the realization of his vision. River City was proposed in this context as a solution for the urban crisis, among other private-public partnerships that began to shape Chicago.

Originally intended as a complete community composed of seventy-two story tower triads disposed on a forty-five-acre multi-level site, supplied with educational, medical, entertainment and shopping centers, the project was considered the fullest manifestation of Goldberg's urbanistic ideas<sup>1</sup>, hinged on high densities and compact, mixed land use. The project was designed to be

However, this initial proposal, "River City I" was rejected by the Chicago Plan Commission in 1977, leading to significant alterations in the building in response to development guidelines and specific objections by commissioners and the public. The controversial project had integrated the debate over the form and nature of the new urban developments. Rather than tall towers, the revised project, "River City II" was a single continuous mass, atop a mixed-use platform, with only medium heights and density. Eventually, only the first phase of this revised project was constructed.

Scholars have emphasized the "urbanistic vision" combining idealism and pragmatism that motivated River City<sup>2</sup>, associating it with Goldberg's commitment to the reinvigoration of the inner city and his belief in architecture's role towards this objective. But the brief accounts existing about River City have not examined how it interacted with

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah Whiting, *ibid*, 163, 164.

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Whiting, "Speculating Beyond Iconicity: Bertrand Goldberg's Urban Project", in: Zoe Ryan (ed.), *Bertrand Goldberg: Architecture of Invention* (Chicago, New Haven: The Art Institute of Chicago, Yale University Press, 2011);

Gail Satler, *Two Tales of a City: Rebuilding Chicago's Architectural and Social Landscape, 1986-2005* (Chicago: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006);

Heinrich Klutz, Anita Holland-Moritz, Helen Manner and Roger Yee, "Bertrand Goldberg", *Perspecta*, Vol. 13/14 (1971), 316-327;

the political and cultural elements determining the form of the city at the time of its planning, and which ultimately shaped River City.

This paper examines the history of River City in the context of early planning and residential development in the South Loop, as an alternative vision for the shape of the new urban community. It considers relevant planning guidelines, newspaper articles, and correspondence related to River City's planning process, in addition to drawings and diagrams of each proposal, in-person observations and conversations during visits to the building<sup>3</sup>.

Under this lens, River City's alterations illustrate a debate about the form, program, and density of the new neighborhoods to be installed in the redeveloped land. Those debates relate to interrogations about architecture's role in the city, and to recent and long-held conceptions about the relationship of architecture and behavior, density and quality of life.

### **Context of Proposal: Redeveloping the South Loop – The Architect as Developer**

The planning of River City started in 1968, when architect Bertrand Goldberg met with Harris Ward, director of the electricity company Commonwealth Edison. Like other corporations in the city, Commonwealth Edison was invested in developing the city center, particularly in the residential redevelopment of central area neighborhoods.<sup>4</sup> According to Goldberg in his oral history, Ward was smitten with the concept of “all-electric living” introduced in the recently completed Marina City (1958-1967)<sup>5</sup> (fig. 2). There, Goldberg had intended to demonstrate the advantages of modern living in the heart of downtown,

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<sup>3</sup> Most visual materials, correspondence, and newspaper clippings were obtained from the Bertrand Goldberg Archives at the Art Institute of Chicago. Additional resources were found at the Chicago History Museum architectural ephemera collections, at the Skidmore Owings and Merrill archives, and the Chicago Tribune online archives.

<sup>4</sup> Lois Wille, *At Home in the Loop: How Clout and Community Built Chicago's Dearborn Park* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997), 2-5.

D. Bradford Hunt and John DeVries, *Planning Chicago* (Chicago: American Planning Association, 2003), 14, 57-59.

<sup>5</sup> Bertrand Goldberg, “Oral History of Bertrand Goldberg”, interview by Betty J. Blum, Chicago Architects Oral History Project, Art Institute of Chicago, 1992; 251

and the possibility of fostering community in the inner city through architecture.<sup>6</sup> River City would expand on Marina City's multi-functional, dense concept of urban living, aiming to apply on a larger scale the principles learned in Goldberg's previous urban residential projects, and proposing what the architect described as "a new concept of a city" and "an extension of the city's downtown"<sup>7</sup>. Goldberg proposed placing the project on a 350-acre stretch of land south of the Loop, immediately east of the south branch Chicago river, an area owned largely by railway companies and marked for redevelopment since 1958<sup>8</sup> (fig. 3).

Before immersing in an account of the original River City plan, it is necessary to examine the context in Chicago's planning history that created the conditions of possibility for its proposal. River City constituted a major planning effort on a focal area of development in the 1970s, led by Bertrand Goldberg, real estate leaders and property owners acting as developers. Recent planning initiatives and policy reforms in the city allowed this private association to pursue the creation of a new neighborhood on the disused railway yards. The same initiatives, and the political bodies behind them, also shaped the building as we see it today.

The ambition to redevelop the disused railroad properties south of the Loop, as well as other downtown-adjacent areas, was not new. Since the 1950s, Chicago and other American cities had seen significant planning efforts and an increased presence of public-private partnerships in planning and development, in part as a response to a perceived decay of the urban core in the post-war period.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Igor Marjanović and Katerina Rüedi, *Marina City: Bertrand Goldberg's Urban Vision*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), 13

<sup>7</sup> Bertrand Goldberg, "Oral History of Bertrand Goldberg", interview by Betty J. Blum, Chicago Architects Oral History Project, Art Institute of Chicago, 1992; 251

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 252.

D. Bradford Hunt and John DeVries, *Planning Chicago* (Chicago: American Planning Association, 2003), 18, 33.

<sup>9</sup> D. Bradford Hunt and John DeVries, *Planning Chicago* (Chicago: American Planning Association, 2003), 33.

Corporate and civic leaders, planners, City officials, and architects recognized a situation of crisis in the city that had various intertwined causes. Narratives of crisis associated the effects of deindustrialization, the evasion of population to the suburbs, decaying physical conditions, and numerous social problems. Chicago saw the migration of a newly-mobile industrial sector away from the city, resulting in loss of businesses and jobs. This was accompanied by a decline in population, absorbed by fast-growing suburbs that presented the possibility of homeownership and independence for cheaper rates, with significant impacts for the city's tax revenue. The change had racial and economic dimensions: in Chicago, the suburban exodus of predominantly middle- and high-income white families was accompanied by in-migration of African-American, and later Hispanic, populations, often of lower income, into the inner city. At the same time, scholars and consultants noticed an increase in crime, poverty, and social unrest. Businesses saw a decline in downtown retail. An increase in public housing and welfare recipients, and a far greater loss of private housing stock, were observed. The result was an evasion of capital and imminent fiscal crisis that jeopardized the city's ability to sustain its infrastructure and population.<sup>10</sup>

In the 1940s and 1950s, the response to the social and economic conditions of the city focused on areas that were considered blighted or decayed. The City led efforts of slum clearance, built public housing projects, and built infrastructure focused on automobile traffic. These practices, which involved significant demolition and displacement, were by the 1960s known by the common rubric of "urban renewal". Starting in the mid-1950s, under Mayor Richard J. Daley (whose mandate extended from 1955 to 1976), corporate leaders and the City forged an alliance to stimulate development in the city center and surroundings. Their strategy gradually shifted away from the urban renewal practices of

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 3, 15-17, 25, 26.

Robert A. Beauregard, *Voices of Decline: The Post-War Fate of U.S. Cities* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 77-79.

Philip M. Hauser, "River City: a Future for Chicago"; Harvey S. Perloff, "The Present and Future of Chicago", in: River City Corporation, and River City Advisory Board, *Neighborhood: River City Guidelines for the South Loop* (Chicago: River City Corporation, 1977), 7-30, 31-39

the previous decade, moving instead towards a pro-growth strategy that aimed to facilitate private development and strengthen the central business district<sup>11</sup>.

Chicago's concerned corporate leaders, planners, and developers joined efforts in the Chicago Central Area Committee (CCAC), established in 1956 to find agreement and represent their interests.<sup>12</sup> The CCAC would have great influence over the planning and development of the central areas in the following decades. While not homogeneous in their interests, business leaders and developers saw danger and loss of capital in the evacuation of the city center after work hours and feared the encroachment of the "blighted" areas around downtown. They sought to create a compact, pedestrian-friendly, 24-hour city center, with middle-class residents near downtown to support local business and contribute to the city's tax base<sup>13</sup>.

The shift in planning strategy began with a centralization of City planning activities around the mayor. Between 1955 and 1957, Daley turned the Chicago Plan Commission into the Department of Planning and Development - a shift that gave him command over several planning activities<sup>14</sup>.

Several measures were then put in place to foster development in the central business district and adjacent areas. The Zoning Ordinance of 1957 facilitated dense, high-rise, mixed-use (retail and office) construction downtown. The Central Area Plan of 1958, produced by the Department of Planning and Development, indicated guidelines for the post-industrial development of the city center, focusing on strengthening and expanding the core with a combination of residential, office, and industrial land uses. This plan, which took recommendations from the CCAC, suggests the development of residential neighborhoods to the north and south of downtown to maintain the compactness of downtown and attract middle-class residents to the inner city, in order to provide a consumer base to downtown businesses and add to the city's tax-paying population. The

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<sup>11</sup> Hunt and DeVries, *Planning Chicago*, 25

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 57, 58.

<sup>13</sup> DeVries and Hunt, 28-33.

<sup>14</sup> DeVries and Hunt, 26.  
Wille, 1, 12, 13.

plan relied largely on reclaiming railroad land, by means of air rights or land redevelopment. Bertrand Goldberg's Marina City (1959-1967) was one of few projects that carried the vision through - introducing also high density and a compact mixed-use program within the building complex. This and other projects were realized with significant subsidy from the Federal Housing Authority. However, residential development in the Loop remained a challenge, as developers were still hesitant to introduce middle-class housing in the area due to fears associated with race and class, particularly at the edges of the central business district.<sup>15</sup>

A plan for the South Loop, more directly relevant to River City, appeared in 1973. The South Loop New Town plan, as it was called, followed the Chicago 21 Plan for the Central Area Communities of 1973. Chicago 21 was, in turn, a complement to the 1966 Comprehensive Plan of Chicago. The 1966 plan, produced by the Department of Planning and Development, had divided the city in sixteen areas, producing development guidelines for all but one of them. The sixteenth division, comprising the Central Area Communities - the central business district, surrounding areas to the south, west, and north, and the lakefront - and was turned over to the CCAC. The CCAC then hired the architecture and planning firm of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM) as consultant or co-author of the plans - Chicago 21 and its subsidiaries.<sup>16</sup> D. Bradford Hunt and John DeVries argue that, after 1966, the City's role in planning declined, and the participation of private consultants in the city center increased.<sup>17</sup>

The southern edges of the business district, bordering with the railroad properties, had the reputation of a vice district, with adult bookshops and film arcades, bars, cheap hotels, and frequent muggings. The railroad properties themselves were in disuse, after the decline of the rail industry. Residential streets around it had high vacancy rates, with many buildings dilapidated or vandalized<sup>18</sup>. Thus, while physically nearly a clean slate for new

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<sup>15</sup>DeVries and Hunt, 36.

<sup>16</sup> DeVries and Hunt, 58.

DeVries and Hunt affirm that, starting in the 1970s, SOM "became the de facto planning agency" of the City of Chicago, producing Central Area Plans in 1983 and 2003, and the Olympics Plan in 2009.

<sup>17</sup> DeVries and Hunt, 58

<sup>18</sup> Wille, 8-10.

development, this portion of the South Loop was burdened with connotations that had to be considered by developers interested in introducing middle-class housing in the area.

The challenge faced by plans such as South Loop New Town was to devise the constitution of the new urban environment that would best serve the growth of the central area and appeal to middle-class residents who might have been attracted to the suburbs, especially families. (The idea of “new town” itself was imported from British New Towns or planned suburbs in the 1960s)<sup>19</sup>. In a context where City policy sought to facilitate private development, but significant cultural and political challenges remained to the residential development of the South Loop, there was significant disagreement with regards to the form, uses, and density of new inner-city housing. The terms of the debate were rooted in the history of residential building in the city and in the suburbs, activating both new and long-standing conceptions about living in the city.

River City’s history illustrates the public debate over the form and program of central area residential development, throughout the first decades of a long history of planning that only now seems to come to fruition. The project proposed a bold vision for this new form, very different from either the proposed with South Loop New Town - yet responding to many of the same requests and premises, and emerging from the same context of large-scale privately-led urban redevelopment.

In order to insert River City among major private initiatives that bid for the areas recently opened for redevelopment around the Loop, Bertrand Goldberg composed a coalition (perhaps a “counter-coalition”) of developers and advisers to manage land purchase, financing, marketing, and other aspects of the development. Around 1970, Bertrand Goldberg formed River City Development with the real estate developer Jerrold Wexler.<sup>20</sup> Around the same time, Harris Ward stepped down from Commonwealth Edison and the company, now headed by Thomas Ayers, did not renew its interest in River City. Around

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<sup>19</sup> DeVries and Hunt, 59

<sup>20</sup> Bertrand Goldberg, “Oral History of Bertrand Goldberg”, interview by Betty J. Blum, Chicago Architects Oral History Project, Art Institute of Chicago, 1992; 253.

1974, Robert McGowan, president of Chessie Resources, the parent company of Chesapeake Baltimore Ohio Railways, who owned most of the land identified by Goldberg, joined the organization, now named River City Corporation<sup>21</sup>. At the center of the operation was Bertrand Goldberg himself, corresponding with all parties in design, development, finance, and planning. He produced numerous documents, presentations and a 30 minute film promoting River City for investors and political figures<sup>22</sup>. River City's objectives exceeded those of typical private development projects; at the same time, this involvement exceeded the typical tasks of the architect, and made a statement about the architect's role in the city.

Thus, River City was, from the beginning, envisioned not only as a novel, even "utopian" type of urban dwelling, but also as a situated project that responded, in its process of production and in architectural form, to local urban history, political and economic interests and conditions of development. The original design and the rhetoric associated with it reflect Goldberg's attempt to integrate architecture, property development and urban planning. Each aspect of the proposal was framed both in terms of spatial effects and quality of life, and of financial viability and fiscal sustainability, a rhetorical duality that scholars have highlighted as a combination of pragmatism and vision.<sup>23</sup> More than a

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<sup>21</sup> Robert McGowan, letter to Jerrold Wexler and Bertrand Goldberg, September 4, 1873. Bertrand Goldberg Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago.

<sup>22</sup> Goldberg's correspondence and presentation files at the Bertrand Goldberg Archives at the Art Institute of Chicago include communications with a diversity of partners, clients, city officials, possible tenants, and the public.

<sup>23</sup> Sarah Whiting, "Speculating Beyond Iconicity: Bertrand Goldberg's Urban Project", in: Zoe Ryan (ed.), *Bertrand Goldberg: Architecture of Invention* (Chicago, New Haven: The Art Institute of Chicago, Yale University Press, 2011), 163.

Gail Satler, *Two Tales of a City: Rebuilding Chicago's Architectural and Social Landscape, 1986-2005* (Chicago: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), 92-95.

Goldberg had manifested previously an interest in expanding the architect's responsibilities, especially in his work with pre-fabrication and, more closely, in Marina City. During the war, Goldberg first designed and oversaw production of mobile delousing units for the United States government. In the 1950s, Goldberg worked with the Unicel company to produce the "Unishelter", an affordable pre-fabricated residential module made from pre-stressed plywood. The modular units could be joined together if the residents wished to expand it. He had also designed a pre-fabricated bathroom unit that could be simply attached to existing systems. Both projects were concerned with affordability and flexibility for homeowners. These projects contributed to the architect's interest in, and experience with, the different aspects of the production of architecture, including, besides design, structural engineering, financing, fabrication, and distribution. This experience, as curator Alison Fisher argues, informed his "invention" in

duality, this combination is what defines Goldberg's particular "urbanism" and his view of the architect's role in the city.

This integrated vision of architecture and property development emerges in a period of intense interrogation within architectural culture about the social function of architecture and its responsibility and the part of the architect in the formation of the urban environment. Urbanism became an architectural question. This debate, correlated with the rise of urban planning as a specialized profession and ignited by post-war, post-industrial "urban crises", manifested itself in experimental and "utopian" architectural movements across the globe<sup>24</sup>.

For Goldberg, the incorporation of concerns for development and market was a means for architecture to achieve its social function and have an impact on the urban environment<sup>25</sup>. His specific ideology was characterized by a belief in private development, the emphasis on the needs of the individual, and the reduction of the role of the State in architecture and planning. Two often repeated speeches and articles, "Rich is Right" and "The Critical Mass of Urbanism", can be considered Goldberg's manifestos for urban architecture starting in the 1960s. In "Rich is Right", Goldberg argues, after recapitulating the history of the modern Western city, that architecture has always worked, and always performed best, for the powerful and wealthy clients, while government-led projects directed at the lower classes, and the accompanying architectural ideology that ignored

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form and structure starting in the 1960s, but also his approach to urbanism in Marina City, River City, and other projects.

<sup>24</sup>Charles Rice, "Transformations in modern architecture », in: *Interior Urbanism: Architecture*, John Portman, and *Downtown America* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 15-30.

Alison Fisher, "Humanist Structures: Bertrand Goldberg builds for Healthcare", in: Zoe Ryan (ed.), *Bertrand Goldberg: Architecture of Invention* (Chicago, New Haven: The Art Institute of Chicago, Yale University Press, 2011), 134-137. Fisher compares Goldberg's healthcare projects to megastructures, Japanese Metabolism projects and mat-building, some of the experimental urbanistic architectural forms arising in the post-war period.

<sup>25</sup> Bertrand Goldberg, "The Critical Mass of Urbanism", in: Ragon, Michel, Paris Art Centre, *Goldberg dans la Ville*, 193. While this is the version this paper uses as a reference, several other versions were found in the Bertrand Goldberg Archives from publications and speeches given by Goldberg.

socio-economic classes, had proven to be a failure, and often plainly “inhuman”.<sup>26</sup> This socio-political critique of modernism melds with a criticism of the grid - the city grid and the frame system of steel construction -, which, for Goldberg, materialized the dehumanizing, collectivizing ideology of State bureaucracy.<sup>27</sup>

In “The Critical Mass of Urbanism”, he writes that “the urban planning provided by the force of our bureaucracy has produced a uniformity of our cities and their failures as centers of civilization”.<sup>28</sup> The solution for this problem was the of the architect’s responsibility:

“We must ask a question of our architects: can our almost deliberate urban deterioration be turned? Is there a realistic way toward urban rejuvenation that can shape us, our governments, and our human condition? Amidst the failure of our planners, does the architect know how to make a plan for the possible city, and give us a community we can pay for? A plan which can house both our density and our humanism at once? I believe yes (...). Can we, through government action, stop the decay of humanistic values in our cities? I believe yes, but not yet. These values can be restored only when governments believe in humanism and believe the city to be its shelter. Perhaps the architects first must believe, as Vitruvius warned, that they must know more about government than the king. Perhaps the architects can then teach the king”.<sup>29</sup>

Goldberg believed that the very form of the city was outdated: it had been planned for the industrial activities of the nineteenth century, and it was the architect’s responsibility to update it combining an understanding of society and economics. The solution, he affirms, was to produce a new urban environment, “structured for the new society”: new forms of living, new economic activities, and changed social relationships required new building forms. It was also the responsibility of architects to ensure that these plans could be

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<sup>26</sup> Bertrand Goldberg, “Rich is Right”, in: Ragon, Michel, Paris Art Centre, *Goldberg dans la Ville*, 199-209.

<sup>27</sup> Bertrand Goldberg, “Newton’s Grid and Urban Gridlock”, *Aspen Institute Quarterly* 6, 4 (Fall 1994). Bertrand Goldberg, “Bertrand Goldberg, interviewed by John Cook and Heinrich Klotz, *Conversations with Architects* (New York: Praeger, 1973), 135.

<sup>28</sup> Bertrand Goldberg, “The Critical Mass of Urbanism”, in: Ragon, Michel, Paris Art Centre, *Goldberg dans la Ville*, 193

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 193

realized: they should find ways of financing the high costs of implementation of this large-scale reform, and they should realistically consider the marketability and economic sustainability of their projects even at the design stage.<sup>30</sup>

The principle that solved the social and financial requirements of the new urban environment was that of “critical mass”, comprising a compact mixed-use program and a high population density, and an approach to form that was based on an understanding of the relationship between social behavior and architectural form. These considerations are reflected directly in the design and planning choices in the River City project. They also engendered some of the more controversial aspects of the plan, which were contested in the public debate over the form of the new inner city residential neighborhood.

### **River City I: “A New Concept of A City”**

The original proposal for River City, elaborated between 1968 and 1977, when it was submitted for zoning approval, was devised as a complete urban community. The proposal integrated architectural design, property development and urban planning. “River City I”, as the first plan was labelled in Goldberg’s files, allied a mixed-use program, appearing at the levels of site and building, high density, and architectural form with the objective of forming an instant community that would be socially and economically sustainable.

The concept was described by both the press and Goldberg multiple times as a “city-within-a-city”. The idea of the self-contained community was engaged at the levels of site and building: River City was composed of sets of seventy-two residential tower triads, each containing shared services and amenities, atop a multi-level platform featuring a park on the raised ground level and accommodating traffic and productive (light industrial) functions on the lower levels. Mid- and low-rise commercial buildings created an intermediary level between the tall towers (fig. 4). In other words, a layered “city-within-a-city” was created by a mixed-use program distributed horizontally and vertically on the site and within the towers.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 193-195

River City's original design combined residential, retail, services and entertainment, and even productive functions at site and building levels. The mixed-use program would provide the necessary services and amenities for a brand-new neighborhood, with 24-hour activity and a walk-to-work culture<sup>31</sup>. The site was envisaged as a system connecting all the edifices and their functions, a strategy previously adopted, in smaller scale, in Marina City, where the two residential towers were placed atop a commercial platform with street access. In River City, these connections represented the project's implications at the scale of the block and the neighborhood, expressing relationships between the towers as well as between the project and the surrounding city. The ground level was raised, forming an elevated "pedestrian level" featuring a park with lakefront access (fig. 5). The towers would engage with the river in lagoons functioning as marinas. Low- and mid-rise buildings with commercial (non-residential) functions would have provided an intermediary level between the park and the towers. These structures included office buildings, medical and educational institutions, and shopping and entertainment centers, including a conic auditorium that Goldberg would bring back in River City II (fig. 6).

Two lower levels housed vehicular traffic, divided between light and freight vehicles, and productive land uses. The street level, appearing as the lower level under the pedestrian park, would absorb automobile traffic, extending the city grid and providing underground access to parking space and to the bases of buildings. Structures entirely below grade were conceived to welcome larger vehicular traffic and other dispositions necessary for light industrial functions. The inclusion of these functions at close proximity reflects Goldberg's belief in the efficiency of compactness as a solution for affordable urban living, on the one hand, and to reduce infrastructure and service costs, on the other.

The most intense mixed use happened at the residential towers, which were conceived as "cities-within-cities" in themselves. The towers' program demonstrated an understanding of the social and functional organization of an urban community that

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<sup>31</sup> *Neighborhood: River City Guidelines for the South Loop* (Chicago: River City Corporation, 1977), 1-5.

informed River City as a community planning effort. This foundation appears in a conceptual representation of the residential towers in the original project (fig. 7), describing standards for River City's program and relative distribution of amenities and population. The diagram describes three levels of socio-spatial organization - the block, the neighborhood, and the community - defined by the population and services they comprise. The tone of the image is quasi-scientific: here, as in other instances, Goldberg appeals to the authority of urban studies and social sciences to understand the city and obtain guidelines for the production of a new environment. The expression of population by number of families and bedrooms, and the mention of floors, indicate the schema's application to architectural form, initiating a process of "translation" from an understanding of urban structures to architecture and planning.

The spatial distribution of these levels of organization appears on a second diagram, a schematic drawing of River City's main architectural components, the residential towers (fig. 8). Three towers, over seventy floors in height, are abstractly represented, compared to Marina City's sixty-five-floor twin buildings. The legends inform that each tower would be composed of predominantly residential levels, each constituting a "block", linked by vertical transportation. At regular intervals, shared floors with communal services connect them to two other towers, constituting a horizontal connector. Together, the floors grouped around each shared platform would make up a "neighborhood"; three connected neighborhoods would form a "community". Thus, every tower triad would comprise three stacked "communities" that are arranged not according to each building's vertical spine, but to the horizontal markers of the common floors. The vertical transportation system would connect each floor to a base or ground, simply labeled "city center". This might refer to the activities on the supra-community level located on the raised platform, and to the downtown connection that was emphasized as a central property of the project. As such, the lifts can be compared to roads, while the platforms might be paralleled to pedestrian streets and plazas.

These images indicate that River City sought to translate social and geographical structures of the urban environment in architectural form. This translation is the basis on

which the buildings were imagined as “cities-within-a-city”. The diagram also suggests that River City was conceived, on a fundamental level, as an interconnected system, in terms of program and density. These representations indicate, ultimately, guidelines for community planning, and seem to lay out almost scientific quantitative standards without yet denoting formal specificity. These specifications of density, use, and connections presume standards for the social and economic wellbeing and sustainability of a community, as well as financial viability of the building: these standards were justified by Goldberg in his own writing, by social scientists whom he consulted during the design process, and who wrote in support of the project in 1977, and by feasibility market research conducted before 1977.

Finally, the new architecture should provide new household types fit for new family structures, and new definitions of “middle income” that included two sources of income.<sup>32</sup> A third diagram, a conceptual floor plan for a level containing service connections, introduces for the first time a formal architectural specificity which is, nevertheless, critical for River City’s proposal of a vertical community (fig. 9). The cylindrical form with petal-shaped apartment plans resembles the plans for other built and unbuilt towers by Bertrand Goldberg (fig. 10). Each floor would be accessed from a service and circulation core and contained apartments of different sizes. The intention was to promote stability by enabling residents to move within the same building in case of change in household size and structure, and to house people with different income levels and family structures. Goldberg understood this as a method of promoting “democracy through architecture”<sup>33</sup>. The inclusion of and emphasis on family units and amenities for families with children, such as daycare and schools, were adaptations to accommodate families with children.

The architect spoke of his curvilinear forms as a result of economic, structural, and social considerations. Form was conceived as a critical element for the formation of social relationships between residents in high-rise buildings, as well as a way of reducing

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<sup>32</sup> Goldberg, Bertrand, “The Critical Mass of Urbanism”, in: Michel Ragon, *Goldberg dans la Ville* (Paris: Paris Art Centre, 1985). 196

<sup>33</sup> Bertrand Goldberg, Oral History, 252.

construction costs. In the section titled “*Philosophie et formes*” in the catalog for “*Goldberg dans la ville*”, a retrospective exhibition organized by Michel Ragon in 1985 at the Paris Art Center, Goldberg writes that rectilinear forms are “sociofugal”, while curvilinear ones are “sociopetal”, that is, are favorable to social encounters and the formation of social ties.<sup>34</sup> He elaborated on these ideas in a 1976 interview with John Cook and Heinrich Klotz. He described the combination of space and structure obtained in Marina City and the Hilliard Homes (1962-1964), previous inner city high-rise projects, as “kinetic space”, a concept defined in opposition to the static rigidity of the post-and-beam system, which often produced the effect of “spatial anonymity”, or lack of relationship to the human being<sup>35</sup> - an extension of Goldberg’s criticism of the grid.

Klotz referred to those observations as “psychosociological” preoccupations. Indeed, these concepts echo, to some extent, emerging investigations in urban studies and social sciences that were qualitative rather than quantitative. The cultural anthropologist Edward T. Hall, best known for his popular theory of “proxemics” (the study of personal space), corresponded with Goldberg and appears to have been particularly influential on his ideas, along with urban sociologists and economists. Hall studied, among others, cultural attitudes toward space, including the spatial dimensions of social interactions and the effects of architecture on behavior, coining the terms “sociofugal” and “sociopetal” to describe space<sup>36</sup>. The form of River City’s original residential towers appears, then, as an important component of the community planning effort, corresponding to the “humanistic” treatment of space which considered the experience of the individual in spaces designed for specific sets of purposes.

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<sup>34</sup> Michel Ragon, and Bertrand Goldberg, “Philosophie et Formes”, in: *Goldberg dans la Ville* (Paris: Paris Art Centre, 1985).

<sup>35</sup> Bertrand Goldberg, “Bertrand Goldberg”, in: John W. Cook and Heinrich Klotz. *Conversations with Architects: Philip Johnson, Kevin Roche, Paul Rudolph, Bertrand Goldberg, Morris Lapidus, Louis Kahn, Charles Moore, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown*. Praeger, 1973 (New York: Praeger, 1973), 130, 139.

“I think it is necessary to create focal points, points of reference, for the individual in our megastructured society” (139)

<sup>36</sup> *Neighborhood: River City Guidelines for the South Loop* (Chicago: River City Corporation, 1977), 41-54

Goldberg always maintained that the cylindrical concrete tower with load-bearing core and walls as a structural system emerged first from considerations of economy of construction materials, labor, and time. The levels could be produced, as in the Hilliard Homes, with slip-form casts reproducing each floor as a module from the same mold, saving time and resources.<sup>37</sup> It can also be argued that the modularity of the units, on the one hand, and of the tower systems within the larger plan for River City, was amenable to development, allowing for a certain flexibility in execution faced with the conditions of the real estate market.

This consideration appears in the phasing plan for River City I, which would have started with the preparation of the site, providing connections to the city center, and with one triad of towers. Goldberg even suggested, in the zoning application sent in 1977, that it was predicted, if not encouraged, that future towers might be built with a different design - as long as the guidelines for use and density were preserved.<sup>38</sup> Thus, that each tower and group of towers provided the necessary amenities and density for the creation and maintenance of a certain level of community organization appears also as a strategy of development that attempts to be mindful of the conditions of the market.

If completed as proposed in 1977 to the Plan Commission, River City would house six thousand families in clusters of seventy-two story towers on a forty-five acre stretch of land along the river, for an estimated cost of four billion dollars. The project also stipulated 4.3 million square feet of industrial and commercial space.<sup>39</sup> Goldberg claimed that it would take no municipal funds: only Federal Housing Authority funds for mortgage insurance. Neither would it displace existing residents and uses. Thus, the benefit to the city would have been net. But the project encountered many obstacles, and would only break ground nearly seven years later, dramatically altered and significantly downscaled.

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<sup>37</sup> Bertrand Goldberg, "Bertrand Goldberg", in: John W. Cook and Heinrich Klotz. *Conversations with Architects: Philip Johnson, Kevin Roche, Paul Rudolph, Bertrand Goldberg, Morris Lapidus, Louis Kahn, Charles Moore, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown*. Praeger, 1973 (New York: Praeger, 1973), 135.

<sup>38</sup> *Neighborhood: River City Guidelines for the South Loop* (Chicago: River City Corporation, 1977)

<sup>39</sup> Hill, Lewis, in: "Chicago Puts Damper on River City Project", *Chicago Tribune*; February 12, 1978, NB1F

## River City II: Tower to Street

Between the early 1970s and 1977, River City Corp aggregated 45-acres of land, secured financial resources, a long-term financing plan and successfully completed feasibility studies, and zoning approval was the next step needed to proceed with the project and start construction.<sup>40</sup> The approval of a project of such scale and scope required considerable political support, and the project's partners had actively sought interaction with members of the Central Area Committee and City Hall. After Mayor Richard J. Daley, who had been supportive of the project, passed away in 1976, Goldberg sought to form a relationship with the newly elected Mayor Michael A. Bilandic. Goldberg asked supporters of the project to write to the Mayor's office and the Plan Commission defending the project.

Around mid-1977, River City Corp submitted the proposal for zoning approval with the Chicago Plan Commission at the Department of Planning and Development. Goldberg had assembled, between 1976 and 1977, an advisory board composed largely of scholars, including urban sociologist Philip M. Hauser, from the University of Chicago, Edward T. Hall, Harvey S. Perloff, dean of the School of Architecture and Planning at the University of California in Los Angeles, and professors of education, medicine, psychiatry, and medical economics at Northwestern University - specialists involved in the project's medical and educational facilities<sup>41</sup>. Marjorie Benton, from the Better Government Association, and Patrick O'Malley, president of the Chicago Park District and former chairman of the Chicago Plan Commission, were also on the board. Six members contributed essays for a document titled *Neighborhood: River City Guidelines for Development*, prepared in 1977 as part of the project proposal, containing additionally a project fact sheet, the full list of names on the board, letters and press coverage about River City - but no plans or other images of the project. The essays provided perspectives on the

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<sup>40</sup> Jerrold Wexler and Bertrand Goldberg, letter to Michael A. Bilandic, September 8, 1976.

<sup>41</sup> *Neighborhood: River City Guidelines for the South Loop* (Chicago: River City Corporation, 1977), 10

The members of the advisory board included Harvey S. Perloff (Dean of the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of California, Los Angeles), Edward T. Hall (anthropology, Northwestern University), Harold M. Visotsky (Psychiatry, Northwestern University Medical School), and B. J. Chandler (School of Education, Northwestern University).

city's situation and needs then and in the future - the urban crisis -, and endorsed River City's proposal for revitalization.

The assembly of such an advisory board, and the inclusion of their essays in the proposal, seem to be intended to lend the project expert or scientific authority, or credibility it summons is based on data-based research and the expert opinion of urban scholars. The publication of "guidelines for development" appear to place the River City plan parallel to community planning guidelines such as commissioned by the Central Area Committee or produced by the Plan Commission.

River City's premises had much in common with those of the Chicago 21 and South Loop New Town plans. They shared fundamental notions about the needs of the central city and of the South Loop in particular. They shared the ideas that it was necessary to restore the city's middle-income population, and that the South Loop should be redeveloped for residential use with the purpose of attracting such residents, with an emphasis on families. Both also proposed the creation of "holistic" communities, incorporating all needs of an urban neighborhood. The South Loop New Town prescribed that "[e]mphasis should be placed in creating a total environment of high quality; excellent educational, transportation, security and other community services must be provided throughout; public-private cooperation and coordination of efforts is essential; planning efforts should cover the entire South Loop railyard area and vicinity".<sup>42</sup>

Importantly, those guidelines also opposed, in certain ways, functionalist planning, by then perceived as a failure, and encouraged the incorporation of commercial activities and multi-purpose buildings in certain areas within a predominantly residential area following the patterns found in older Chicago neighborhoods.<sup>43</sup> Both plans also operate under the assumption that private-public partnerships were the solution for better planning and development.

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<sup>42</sup> Chicago (Ill.). Department of Development and Planning, *South Loop New Town: Guidelines for Development* (Chicago: Dept. of Development and Planning, 1975), 9

<sup>43</sup> Chicago (Ill.). Department of Development and Planning, *South Loop New Town: Guidelines for Development*. (Chicago: Dept. of Development and Planning, 1975), 11, 12

This similarity was defended by Harvey S. Perloff, Dean of the University of California in Los Angeles' School of Architecture and Urban Planning and a member of the River City advisory board. In his essay for "Neighborhood", he argues River City enacts the same strategy of urban development that served as basis for South Loop New Town. This model was based on the introduction of "new towns-in-town" as described in the New Communities Act of 1970. The strategy was meant as an alternative to "urban renewal", by then perceived as a failure. The revitalization of the inner city would be based on the provision of services and amenities to "[meet] the demands of the post-industrial age". Mixed and residential development should be designed to incorporate "some of the good features of suburban living but in a totally different, highly urban environment". Those attractive suburban features included safety, individuality, and access to open space, considered especially important for families.<sup>44</sup>

According to Perloff, this vision aligned with Chicago 21 and South Loop New Town, which were "in the spirit of new-town-in-town" by planning town-scaled urban communities and taking into consideration lessons from "the successful suburban building and the unsuccessful urban renewal". Those included the consideration of critical scales and densities for community living, focus on amenities and services (open space, recreational facilities, retail, schools, health facilities, transportation, and adequate security); and a strategy to attract middle- and upper-class residents to support public services for themselves and for poorer families. River City, too, was an amenities-focused plan providing convenient access to urban services and facilities as well as semi-private open spaces, "[meeting] the needs of the urban present and future" - for which Perloff hoped it would become the "lead project in Chicago 21".<sup>45</sup>

The relationships with existing plans and the Department of Planning and Development and with public opinion proved more contentious. River City's high densities and tall towers, correlated factors that were central to Goldberg's understanding of social

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<sup>44</sup> Perloff, "The Urban Present and the Urban Future" in: *Neighborhood: River City Guidelines for the South Loop* (Chicago: River City Corporation, 1977), 31-39

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

and financial sustainability, motivated controversy around the project. Additionally, the limited public access to the riverfront was questioned. These criticisms were accentuated by the project's reliance on federal subsidies and some skepticism about the Corporation's claims that the project would come at no cost to the city. All those elements were considered in the 1977 zoning review.

The Chicago Plan Commission met in July of 1977, and a hearing was scheduled for August 12th. On the 14th, River City Corp received notice that the zoning application was rejected, and the project was stalled.<sup>46</sup> The months following the rejection of the plan were described by Goldberg in letters and notes as “black days”, and “dark times” of struggle to revive the project. In the next years, the design was significantly altered in response to the objections leveled by the Plan Commission, as well as shifting economic conditions and the loss of financial support. The reasons cited for the rejection of the project reveal much about attitudes to housing and urban development in the city at that time and place. Fundamentally, the rejection of the first plan illustrates the struggle to define the form of new residential development in the city center, a debate that was focused on land use, density (and consequentially height), and accessibility of public spaces and natural assets.

The main objections to the proposal were the lack of public access to the riverfront, the amount of non-residential land use, and, above all, the elevated density and height of the residential towers. This criticism was based on recent guidelines and plans for the city center, in particular Chicago 21 and South Loop New Town.

Recent plans recommended that the waterfront, along the river as well as the lake, should be reserved for public recreational uses. The South Loop New Town guidelines recommended that uninterrupted public access should be provided along the entirety of the riverfront, with one hundred feet of public space along the edge - River City provided only forty. The Riveredge plan of 1974, produced by the Department of Planning and

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<sup>46</sup> “Chicago Puts Damper on River City Project”, *Chicago Tribune (1963-Current file)*; February 12, 1978, B1

Development, expanded on the Central Area Committee's plans and represented a significant step towards claiming the river as a public space, as had been done in the lake - even though public-private cooperation was still expected on the realization of river walks and parks, unlike the publicly-managed lakefront.<sup>47</sup> River City, while decidedly treating the river as a positive natural asset for its community, restricted access at certain points, where tower triads surrounded the water and where marinas were installed. (A similar problem was identified in Marina City: while pioneering in its use of the river as a natural asset, the complex did not provide public access to the waterfront). These complaints indicate the tension between private and public in a total community such as River City - where types and forms of the urban environment were appropriated in a private development. Attached to the issue of accessibility is that of security, from the point of view of tenants, which was of primary concern for real estate developers.

The height and density of the proposal, while paramount to Goldberg's social and economic objectives, were undoubtedly the most controversial aspect of the plan, and probably the main reason why its zoning proposal was rejected. Lewis Hill, city commissioner for planning and development, cited that the proposed project would occasion development "three to five times more intense than recommended in the guidelines" for the South Loop<sup>48</sup>, housing 6,000 families where the City recommended 1,750, and incorporating far more industrial and commercial uses than outlined in the plan. Newspapers commenting on River City and most often focused on the density of the development, which seemed to counter common sense notions about density and quality of life<sup>49</sup>: as summarized in a 1967 article on Bertrand Goldberg's defense of the high-rise, "[h]igh density living ha[d] been attacked by many as a cause of slums and social unrest"<sup>50</sup>. These objections demonstrate disagreements about density and height,

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<sup>47</sup> DeVries and Hunt, 51-54

<sup>48</sup> Stanley Ziembra, "River City Project is Rejected", *Chicago Tribune*, August 12, 1977.

"Chicago Puts Damper on River City Project, Chicago Tribune", *Chicago Tribune (1963-Current file)*; February 12, 1978, NB1

<sup>49</sup> See, for example: Jerry Crimmins, "High Rise Lets City Survive, Says Architect", *Chicago Tribune*, April 23, 1970, W9

Catherine Collins,, "High-Rise vs. Low-Rise: Housing's Ups and Downs", *Chicago Tribune*, November 4, 1984, N1

<sup>50</sup> High-Density Neighborhoods Propose City of Future, *Chicago Tribune*, June 25, 1967, D1

specifically for residential buildings, that had deep roots in the history of policy, planning, and development practices.

Tall buildings were considered particularly inadequate for families with children. Writing in 1978, John McCarron says that many sociologists and city planners believed children needed both open space and constant surveillance - a so-called “zone of influence”<sup>51</sup> - that high-rises could not provide. In addition, tall buildings were thought to be isolating, creating a division between an “inside” and an “outside” worlds. He mentions specifically the thoughts of Oscar Newman, then a very influential voice in architecture and planning, who argued that the form of a building was of crucial relevance for raising children, and high-rises were equally problematic for lower- and higher-income families<sup>52</sup> - and shared facilities and social spaces did not usually solve the problem. Julian Levi, then chair of the Chicago Plan Commission, put it simply: “nowhere in the world has there been any success raising families in high-rises”, except perhaps for the wealthy - whose self-contained living arrangements Levi accused of “ghettoization”.<sup>53</sup> He argued the project might have even been in conflict with federal law that restricted federal financial support for high-rise, high-density housing for families with children. (Goldberg denied that any legal problems had been identified)<sup>54</sup>. McCarron indicates that even academics that were favorable to high-rises, or who did not consider them inherently problematic, believed that River City was excessively massive.

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<sup>51</sup> John McCarron, “The Towering Debate”, *Chicago Tribune*, February 23, 1978, W1.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> David Axelrod. “River City Violates Federal Law: Plan Chief”, in: *Chicago Tribune*, June 12, 1979.

See another recounting in:

John McCarron, “There Went the Neighborhood”, *Chicago Tribune*, November 11, 1966

“A developer wanted to build a series of 72-story residential towers south of the Loop “for middle class families”. Levi thought the project too dense, and he didn’t like the idea of raising kids above the clouds. When I asked him why, he looked at me like I was from Mars, and said in that howitzer voice of his: “Because it reminds me of what that poultry farm stamped on every package of chicken: ‘Their feet never touch the ground.’ The developer withdrew that 72-story plan and resubmitted a far more humanely scaled version now known as River City. Chalk up another favorable outcome for Julian Levi and the city he loved. Somebody wipe the developer’s blood off the floor”.

The scale and location of River City might also have made the question of density particularly pressing. The failure of other high-rise developments to attract enough residents caused fear that River City, with 6,000 units already at the first phase and a final scale of the size of a neighborhood, would not succeed<sup>55</sup> - in particular given its rather undesirable location. Goldberg recalls, in his oral history, that the mayor was afraid that River City would not be able to keep up with its size and density, and would soon become “distressed area”, and would allow the occupation of poorer minorities<sup>56</sup> - in short, the project would be turned into the “blighted” areas that surrounded it.

River City Corp and its advisory board knew there would be controversy regarding the project’s density: several of the essays and letters supporting the project preemptively justify this aspect. Philip Hauser, for example, writes in the *Neighborhood* document: “[p]opulation per square mile or dwelling per acre (...) can be also be quite misleading if interpreted as measurements of quality of life style”<sup>57</sup>, before indicating how a “critical mass” was key for the success of the planned community, and how River City’s innovative model would enable the creation of “instant communities” in apartment buildings. Goldberg defended that it was possible to house families with children adequately in high-rises, and that the Commission had overlooked how River City had been designed specifically to accommodate children.<sup>58</sup>

Goldberg was not alone in defending the type. Several architects and academics claimed that high-rises were not necessarily bad for children, and could be designed to accommodate family living better than the suburbs.<sup>59</sup> Many attributed the bad reputation of tall residential buildings to the public perception of public housing projects. The public housing fiascos of the previous two decades had left in the public imagination a strong impression linking certain architectural types with social problems - not to mention associations of race and class.<sup>60</sup> The problems faced by public housing were often

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<sup>55</sup> Stanley Ziembra, “River City Backers Seek Compromise”, *Chicago Tribune*, September 5, 1977, p. 3

<sup>56</sup> Bertrand Goldberg, *Oral History*, 254

<sup>57</sup> *Neighborhood: River City Guidelines for the South Loop*, 7

<sup>58</sup> Stanley Ziembra, “River City Backers Seek Compromise”, *Chicago Tribune*, September 5, 1977, p. 3

<sup>59</sup> John McCarron, “The Towering Debate”, *Chicago Tribune*, February 23, 1978, p. W1.

<sup>60</sup> Catherine Collins, *ibid.*

attributed to architecture, resulting in the demolition of many projects throughout the United States during the 1970s and 1980s - producing iconic images such as the implosion of St. Louis's Pruitt-Igoe complex in 1972, the symbolic death of the high-rise project.<sup>61</sup>

It is important to note that views on high-rise living were not monolithic. Rather, there was at the time a debate about the adequate density and type of housing structures that often hinged on issues of lifestyle preference<sup>62</sup> - not unlike today. The 1970s saw surge in high-rise private housing construction, indicating that many middle-class people chose to live in tall buildings associated with, among others, convenience or glamour.<sup>63</sup> Different lifestyle preferences, such as the proximity to the street and to nature, led others to chose low-rise living. Evidently, River City Corp certainly relied on there being a market for high-rise apartments. However, the conditions of family housing, scale, and location might have made the factors of density and height particularly critical in River City, influencing the Plan Commission's decision.

Additionally, supporters of River City speculated that political reasons might have influenced the judgment.<sup>64</sup> In the aftermath of the decision, the architect saw the rejection as politically motivated, possibly a means of protection of the neighboring SOM-designed condominium community Dearborn Park - despite the fact that River City Corp and Dearborn Park Corp, Dearborn Park's development group, affirmed publicly several times that their projects were not in conflict. In response to a letter expressing support from Adeline P. Burns, Goldberg wrote in November of 1977:

“The problem is not the price of the land or the cost of the city: we are not asking the city for a single dollar. The problem is mysterious and obviously political. It is somewhere between the First Ward and the protection for the establishment building Dearborn Park which we do not regard as a comparable project nor do we regard it as possibly even being a successful one. I am, with the help, of people

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<sup>61</sup> Catherine Collins, *ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Catherine Collins, *ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Collins calls this the “condo craze” of the 1970s. Catherine Collins, *ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Ziemba, *ibid.*

like yourself continuing to work hard to get a “yes” on the zoning for River City which is our only hang-up. It would be helpful if you wrote a letter to Mayor Bilandic and told him your feelings (...)<sup>65</sup>.

Goldberg was not the only one to raise this suspicion. Dearborn Park was led by some of the city’s most powerful corporate and civic leaders, with strong political ties. Dearborn Park Corp included Commonwealth Edison’s CEO Thomas Ayers, developers Philip M. Klutznick and Ferdinand Kramer. The sense of opposition between the two projects, at least from Goldberg’s perspective, dated from their conception. Assuming the leadership of Commonwealth Edison after Harris Ward left, Thomas Ayers did not renew the company’s the interest in River City, turning instead to Klutznick, Kramer, and SOM in the Dearborn Park project.<sup>66</sup> Their aim was to realize the schemes proposed by SOM in the South Loop New Town plan, and, accordingly, Dearborn Park adhered much more closely to the guidelines presented there<sup>67</sup>.

The project exemplified a more acceptable proposal for inner city residential development, for the City planners, developers, and corporate leaders in control designed by Bruce Graham, who had composed the Chicago 21 and South Loop New Town plans, was constituted of townhouses, low- and mid-rise residential buildings enclosing a park on a 51 acre south east of the River City site, bounded by Polk, State, Clark and 15th streets. The project included high-rises, but those were accepted by Levi since they were not directed at families with children. In his oral history, Goldberg described Dearborn Park as “three level houses and those various other kinds of rather unhappy looking buildings out there on the South Loop”.<sup>68</sup> Goldberg saw Dearborn Park as a conventional, unoriginal, developer- or market-led project that failed to integrate private development strategies with innovative architectural design.

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<sup>65</sup> Bertrand Goldberg, letter to Adeline P. Burns, November 21, 1977. Bertrand Goldberg Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago.

<sup>66</sup> Bertrand Goldberg, *Oral History*, 253.

<sup>67</sup> DeVries and Hunt,

<sup>68</sup> Bertrand Goldberg, *Oral History*, 253

Goldberg's suspicion of favoritism towards SOM was not unfounded. After Chicago 21, the firm would produce the Central Area Plans of 1983 and 2003 and the Olympics plan of 2009, becoming, in the words of DeVries and Hunt, the "de facto planning arm of the City of Chicago".<sup>69</sup> But it can also be argued that SOM's planning was more attuned to its time and the needs, operation and logic of the growth coalition, despite Goldberg's involvement with the politics of planning and development. As one critic assessed when River City opened in 1986, Goldberg seemed to still carry the "heroism" of modernist architects, which by the end of the 1970s had considerably faded.<sup>70</sup>

Regardless of those disagreements, River City's developers had to accommodate those criticisms as they continued to push for zoning approval. For the next two years, the project was altered in collaboration with the Chicago Plan Commission. The first answer was to shorten the buildings, reducing the number of units and residents, and spread them across a larger footprint, to decrease the density of the development. Goldberg described this poetically as "unwinding" the seventy-two-story towers into a sinuous form running along the river (fig. 11), much like had been done for the family towers at the Hilliard Homes in the early 1960s (fig. 12). The project was still envisaged on the site extending from Polk Street to Roosevelt Street along the river, but the new design reduced building heights to a maximum of fifteen stories and the density to about one hundred inhabitants per acre.

Around 1979, River City Corp applied for zoning approval and for an Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) from the federal government<sup>71</sup>, a new element in its financial package. The revised plan was approved by the Plan Commission and announced by Mayor Jane Byrne in 1980, drawing significant public attention<sup>72</sup>.

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<sup>69</sup> DeVries and Hunt, *ibid*, 58

<sup>70</sup> Paul Goldberger, "A Venerable Modernist Brings a Breath of Fresh Air", *New York Times*, January 9, 1986.

<sup>71</sup> River City Corporation UDAG application, Bertrand Goldberg Archives, Art Institute of Chicago.

<sup>72</sup> Articles were published in the Chicago Defender, Sun-Times, Tribune, and others, on February 12 and February 22, 1980. Reception was mixed, with many quoting developer Edward Martinez, who said the project would imply great costs to the city in the form of extended urban infrastructure. Many also questioned the decision to offer only condominiums.

The redesigned building kept many of the services and amenities provided in the original project. Two curvilinear residential towers, parallel and connected, were to be positioned atop a commercial platform (fig. 13). The long building now touched the water, partially suspended on stilts on a section of the river which would have been slightly widened to create inlets to be used as marinas (fig. 14). The towers would accommodate apartments of different sizes and types, designed for different family structures and, in principle, income levels - with the same objectives as the original plan. Additionally, fixtures such as plumbing and electricity in each unit would be installed as to permit the expansion of a unit by joining it with another.<sup>73</sup>

The entire edifice was conceived, analogously, in modules (fig. 16) that would enable expansion in phases, according to the demands of the real estate market. A phasing plan shows that the project would begin at the southern end, where a section of the curvilinear towers, followed by a conic auditorium and one of the original high-rises would be built (fig. 17). The complex would expand north in the following phases of construction.

The site was again conceived as a multi-level system, with lower levels accommodating traffic, parking and, at the lowest level, a “high-tech center”: a rental facility equipped with the latest communication technologies. This facility would house a “Business and Technology Center” managed by corporations to act as an incubator for new businesses. Above ground, the first three floors formed a commercial plinth. The fourth level above ground, and the first residential level, featured an elevated park for tenants, a structure that appeared for the first time in the revised plan. A public “River Walk” was also added on the riverside, providing the continuous waterfront access required in development guidelines (figs. 18-21).

The second plan added another design element of great conceptual consequence: the River Road. This is, formally, the chief organizing element of the new plan, and programmatically or conceptually, the main innovation of River City II, transforming it from a vertical community to a horizontal one. The River Road was an enclosed walkway

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<sup>73</sup> “River City Designed to Change with the Ages”, *Chicago Tribune*, April 10, 1983, NB1D

between the two residential towers, covered by a glass ceiling and providing access to the elevated park. Apartment units would be accessible via the interior of the atrium, by elevated corridors parallel to the River Road. These corridors then acted both as reiterations of the ground, providing street level-like entrances to each unit, and as balconies overlooking the River Road (fig. 22).

Goldberg had previously introduced a street-like element in the family housing towers of the Hilliard Homes (fig. 23). The gallery or walkway was described as a result of unraveling the central communal room in the empty core of the elderly housing buildings to provide a street-like approach to the family apartments. This was combined with curves on the concrete walls that visually and architecturally distinguished each unit from the outside. The intended experience was that of arriving at a ground-level entrance to an individual townhouse, breaking the effect of anonymity and loss of individuality in large multi-family dwellings, which Goldberg considered dehumanizing.<sup>74</sup> The River Road and the galleries giving access to the units in River City would achieve a similar effect.

This spine now appeared as the primary architectural element that would lead to community formation, substituting the shared cores and “community service” floors of the previous towers. This claim was based on the association of the pedestrian street with social life and a sense of community. River City’s “Road” represented the incorporation of an element of the urban landscape within the architectural project, an even more direct transference or translation than in the original plan.

Goldberg associated the River Road with certain European references: the Parisian arcades, enclosed public spaces connected to streets and plazas, and the narrow, meandering streets of the pre-modern hill town, such as in old Italian cities. The architect had experienced in both places the sort of lively urban environment he intended to create.<sup>75</sup> Both references exemplify intermediary spaces between private and enclosed, and public

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<sup>74</sup> Bertrand Goldberg, in: Cook and Klotz, *ibid.* 132.

<sup>75</sup> Paul Goldberger, “A Venerable Modernist Brings a Breath of Fresh Air”, *New York Times*, January 9, 1986.

and open, providing an intimate public or social setting. Goldberg hoped that the reproduction of such a space would allow for the same kinds of social interactions found in those societies, where the city was the “center of civilization”.<sup>76</sup>

The attraction of the street was pervasive in architectural culture in the post-war period. Goldberg’s atrium-street might be compared to the atria, skybridges, and internal galleries that began to populate the urban environment in the 1960s and 1970s, often in reference to the public urban realm and influenced by the social sciences. Others saw the incorporation of the street with suspicion. The sociologist Robert Gutman criticized the assumption, by such architects as Alice and Peter Smithson and Robert Venturi and Denise Scott-Brown, that the creation of pedestrian balconies and galleries would instantly produce a sense of community, regarding the proposition as a problematic treatment of sociological factors<sup>77</sup>.

Architectural historian Charles Rice argues that these spaces were “the city’s ersatz analogue”, arising from a context where the street became a contested element in architectural culture and planning<sup>78</sup>. Like those spaces, River Road holds an ambivalent relationship to the street, at once paying it homage and turning its back to the real street outside.

As Rice also argues, the production of this “interior urbanism” emerged from the political, economic and cultural transitions lived by the inner city in this period, as the response of the architect-developer. When River City was completed, and thus could be seen clearly in its urban environment, the River Road would become a contested space for critics. It expressed the tension between private and public, urban and architectural (or domestic), and between concept and reality, that permeated architects’ efforts to create

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<sup>76</sup> Bertrand Goldberg, “The Critical Mass of Urbanism”, in: Ragon, *ibid.*

Goldberg’s nostalgia for the European streets recalls Bernard Rudofsky’s *Streets for People: A Primer for Americans*, intended to educate those used only to roads to the social life of the street

<sup>77</sup> Robert Gutman, “The Street Generation”, in: Stanford Anderson (ed.), *On Streets* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978).

<sup>78</sup> Charles Rice, *Interior Urbanism: Architecture, John Portman and Downtown America* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 100

community and impact the city, and, ultimately, debates about the form of urban housing and its relationship to the urban environment.

### **River City built (1983-1986)**

The River City we see today corresponds to phase I of River City II. The project broke ground in 1983 and was completed in 1986. While Goldberg continued to sketch and plan extensions until 1989, no additions were ever built. The building comprises 449 residential units on two S-shaped towers varying between eight and fifteen stories in height, atop a two-story, 250,000 square feet commercial and office platform, located between Polk and 9th streets along the river, west of Wells street. The ground level gives access to a seventy-slip marina is situated on widened section of the river. The residential towers are connected by an atrium covered with glass blocks - the River Road -, which can be accessed from residents' elevators and gives access to an elevated park on top of the commercial platform, facing Wells street (fig. 23). An elevated "River Walk" meanders on the riverside face of the building, parallel to the River Road and accessible only from the marina and commercial levels.

The plinth would contain several of the amenities and design features identified in previous plans as necessary to sustain a community, albeit restricted by the lower population. River City's developers imagined, and pursued, a grocery store, a gym or "athletic club" for resident and non-resident members, a daycare, office space, and, at one point, a movie theater. A laundry room and a meeting room could be found on the base of the River Road, and the park featured an event space for tenants. The towers contained eight different apartment types, ranging from studios to two-level townhouses to penthouses with rooftop access (figs. 24, 25).

The building's critical reception and its representation in promotional materials indicate, respectively, the place it occupied in architectural culture and in the real estate market. The marketing campaign for the building shows how the ideas and architectural elements of River City could be interpreted in the real estate market. The advertisements

echo many of Goldberg's descriptions and principles, yet in a commercial context that highlighted privileges and amenities for their desirability rather than their social and economic impact. Those campaigns also reveal the project's eventual target clientele, which Goldberg had avoided defining, standing by the ideal that the project could include a democratic mix of incomes and backgrounds.

Brochures prepared by real estate developers Metroplex and Daniel Epstein, who joined the project in its final phase, advertised the building as a luxury development. Newspaper ads proclaiming, "You belong in River City" and "A New City Rises" promote luxury rental apartments in a place to "live, work, and play". A folder included in the Epstein portfolio listed the main selling points of the building: the location, at once near the central business district and at the waterfront; the athletic center, called "City Club"; the atrium; amenities including front desk staff and a video surveillance system, grocery store, shops and services; and the variety of residence types and sizes, all fully equipped and providing views of the city center. The advertisement depicts individuals and families enjoying the view, sitting on the park walking on the riverfront and on the River Road, and exercising at the club in bright watercolors (fig. 26). The campaign conveys an image of River City as a place of respite and relaxation, while in proximity to the city center. Separate advertisements for the rental office space also highlighted the building's amenities and location, exclaiming "Welcome to the 21st century" (fig. 27). A promotional booklet for the City Club, perhaps directed at Loop office workers, depicts a gilded plaque on a stone background with the words "Hard work has its rewards" (fig. 28).

These campaigns, focusing on activities and amenities, create and promote the idea of a lifestyle associated with the building's program and setting<sup>79</sup>. A direct relationship can be seen between the strategy of selling an urban lifestyle and the ideas that guided River City's planning. The project's "holistic" planning concept, comprising different functions and activities associated with urban life, while responding, in theory, to general needs of the middle-class urban dweller, needed to be promoted as a specific lifestyle for those who would be attracted to inner city apartment living. As Catherine Collins wrote in a 1984

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<sup>79</sup> For its self-containment and luxury target public, River City can also be compared to a gated community.

article surveying the debate over housing density, markets for high and low rise housing were, by then, determined by lifestyle preferences, which could be constructed or leveraged by architects, developers and real estate agents<sup>80</sup>. In this capacity, the advertisement, like the project, attempted to “build or rebuild a new concept of a city” or, more specifically, to redefine the image of the South Loop as a place for living.

Yet, the meaning or concept promoted in the advertisements was limited if compared to Goldberg’s humanistic principles. Reviews by architecture critics, and the architect’s own assessment, suggest that the building at a reduced scale could not accomplish or communicate those social goals. Critics suggest, more importantly, that those high humanistic goals were both outdated and could not correspond to the reality of architecture.

Critics saw River City as a formal triumph, but were more doubtful about its social promises. They were drawn primarily to the River Road, considered the building’s greatest architectural achievement - and possibly one of the most compelling interior spaces created by Goldberg (fig. 29). Paul Goldberger says the atrium was “exquisitely proportioned (...) balanced between community and intimacy”,<sup>81</sup> and Ed Zotti compares the effect of the soaring atrium to that of a Gothic cathedral.<sup>82</sup>

Reviewers were, however skeptical of the social effects imagined by Goldberg, and considered the architect’s approach somewhat outdated. Goldberger notes that River City departed from the conventional form of the late 1970s and 1980s - “medium height buildings built right to the street”. The futuristic style of the building, he remarks, seemed “more and more out of touch” with the trend of classical reinterpretations; and the architect seemed to have staid committed to a “set of modernist ideals” and a “philosophical leaning” that had by then been discredited. Those ideals were precisely Goldberg’s social statement:

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<sup>80</sup> Catherine Collins, *ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Paul Goldberger, *ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Ed Zotti, “Dreaming of Density”, *Planning*, January 1986, 4.

that architecture could provoke social change, and projects at “megastructural” scale and could change the fate of the city.

Goldberg himself was not satisfied with the realized project, which critics did not fail to notice. He regarded it as an incomplete version of his ideas, losing, with a reduction in scale, functions, systematicity and density, some of the core conceptual elements that were central to the (theoretical) mechanism by which the project’s social goals would have been achieved. The architect claimed that, with a reduced population, the building could not engender or sustain the holistic community originally imagined - neither would it have a significant effect on the urban situation.<sup>83</sup> Goldberg rejected the perception of his work from the 1970s and 1980s - including healthcare projects - as individual sculptural objects, which he considered a misunderstanding originated from a narrow conception of the nature of architecture.<sup>84</sup> For this reason, he refused to allow River City and some of his hospital projects to be published individually, when he felt the publication’s portrayal would have mischaracterized the intention and meaning of the work.<sup>85</sup>

Many criticized River City’s inward orientation and isolation. Architectural historian Sarah Whiting notes that “the project is more autonomous than any of Goldberg’s other urban proposals: (...) the site lacks the porous qualities that had so typified Goldberg’s means of tying his schemes into existing urban contexts”.<sup>86</sup> In Ed Zotti’s long review of the project for *Planning*, architects and planners denounced the project’s self-containment as antithetical to the neighborhood dynamic it claimed to seek. Canadian architect and planner Jack Diamond argues that the enclosed, resident-only River Road detracted from the public, open street<sup>87</sup>. In the same article, Vicki Granacki, director of central area planning for Chicago’s Department of Planning and Development, saw River City as an isolated community that did not relate to the rest of the neighborhood. What

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<sup>83</sup> Ed Zotti, *ibid*, 6

Bertrand Goldberg, *Oral History*, 253

<sup>84</sup> This might be in part a reaction to the characterization of his work as “expressive modernism”, comparable to contemporaneous buildings in Miami, whose goals seemed primarily aesthetic.

<sup>85</sup> Goldberg, *Oral History*, *ibid*, 254.

<sup>86</sup> Sarah Whiting, “Speculating Beyond Iconicity”, *ibid*, 165.

<sup>87</sup> In: Ed Zotti, “Dreaming of Density”, 7, 8

might have been an understandable choice of developers pioneering housing in a derelict area also excluded the possibility of future integration, once the neighborhood was developed - creating a less lively urban environment, rather than the vibrant community Goldberg claimed to defend. For those critics, River City's isolation – and, most poignantly, River Road - assumed political dimension, standing for the privatization of the public urban realm and the self-exclusion from street life.

These criticisms point to the tensions that emerge from an attempt to integrate urbanism in architectural form. But they may also indicate something more general about the kinds of urban spaces created by piecemeal private development, as the pedestrian experience of the South Loop today seems to suggest.

### **River City today**

The experience of the building today seems to corroborate Diamond and Granacki's remarks. Approaching from Polk street, one sees the sinuous towers, the commercial platform screened by Romanesque-style wall clad in rusticated stone with arched openings – an unexpected reference to the area's past function. One arch provides access for vehicles as well as pedestrians. From there, a vast lobby leads to both the residential portion and the commercial and office space (figs. 30-34) – another private-public interface. Today, most offices and stores are vacant, and the second commercial floor is shuttered. Recently, the gym was also closed.

The lack of success of the commercial spaces does not seem surprising given the seemingly private entrance and the isolation of River City in the urban environment. Certain conditions of the urban environment make it appear isolated and inaccessible: the site is bounded by major multi-lane avenues on each end and by an elevated rail to the east. It is surrounded by empty lots – one still functioning as parking, another in construction – and by buildings which turn away from the street. This experience extends beyond River City. The experience of the South Loop's public urban environment is fragmentary, interrupted by boundaries and barriers, and broken by the independent and largely non-communicating private developments that constitute the neighborhood.

The building is somewhat devalued in comparison to the newer buildings rising next to it, certainly due to its age and to infrastructural problems it has experienced (and which raise maintenance dues)<sup>88</sup>. While the occupancy rate is high, its form and demographics are not what the developers expected in the 1980s<sup>89</sup>. The building is currently undergoing conversion from condominiums to apartments – this is at least the third conversion since the building’s inauguration. According to a manager and real estate agent representing River City and to the owner of a unit in the building, residents are demographically diverse, but both point out that many of the building’s apartments are rented by students attending downtown institutions<sup>90</sup>, businesspeople who come to Chicago only occasionally, and need to be close to the central business district, and information technology workers, many coming from Southeast Asia. Importantly, there are also families residing in the building<sup>91</sup>.

River City’s life after construction – its treatment in the real estate market, from ownership model to prices, its physical condition, among others – have direct impact upon the formation of community. Goldberg did attempt to stipulate rates and ownership model while planning River City, but these aspects, like many others, are ultimately beyond the architect’s control. While Marina City is said to have once enjoyed a lively community<sup>92</sup>, there are no indications that River City ever had the same success.

River City did not have either the publicity or the cultural impact of the Marina City. As Goldberger and Zotti’s reviews indicates, the building seems to have been outdated from its very construction. But River City might be experiencing its second moment with the construction of a high-profile “mega-development” north and south of the building – exactly where unrealized phases were to be located. The proposal is familiar:

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<sup>88</sup> These problems include leaks from the glass-block ceiling and cracks on the concrete. In addition, in 2007, river water flooded the lower level, where most electrical and mechanical systems were installed, causing great damage and decreasing the building’s value.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Bret Derrickson, agent at Urban Aire Realty and manager at River City, August 19, 2017.

<sup>90</sup> According to Bill Michel, some downtown colleges made agreements with River City real estate managers to facilitate rental by students.

<sup>91</sup> Interview with Bret Derrickson, agent at Urban Aire Realty and manager at River City, August 19, 2017. Interview with William Michel, River City condominium owner, January 8, 2017.

<sup>92</sup> Igor Marjanović and Katerina Rüedi, *Marina City: Bertrand Goldberg's Urban Vision*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), 82.

in the words of Curbed editor Jay Koziarz, the Riverline project, by Chicago-based international firm Perkins and Will, will create “nothing short of an entire new neighborhood”<sup>93</sup>.

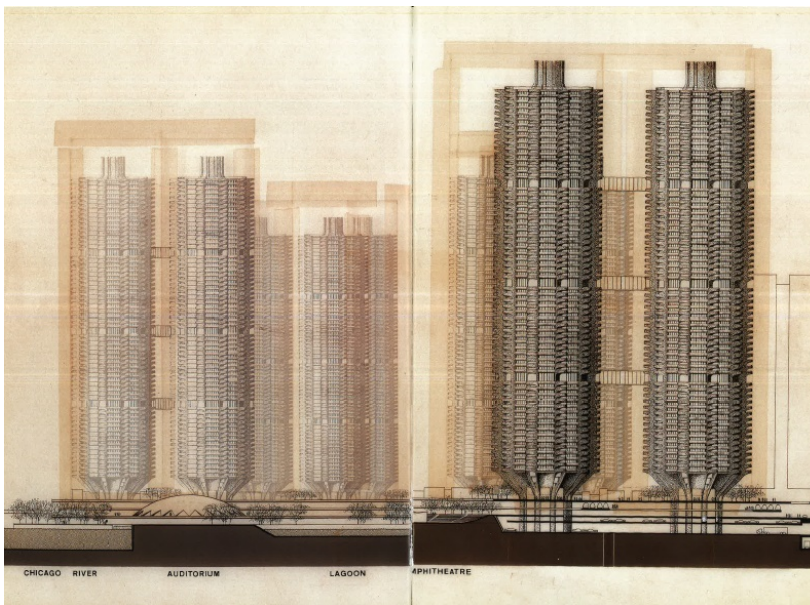
## **Conclusion**

River City stands today as materialization of debates about the best form and density for urban living at a time when the South Loop and other central area neighborhoods experienced a push for new residential construction. The redevelopment responded to the needs and interests of a growth coalition which then achieved increasing control over the future of the city center. River City appears both as a beneficiary of the new arrangement, sharing its fundamental premises, and as adversary in the debate over the shape of the new urban community.

The building can be seen both as a manifestation of the privatization of the urban landscape and as a forward-looking project invested in an area, and in issues and preferences that are discussed today. The debate over how to create communities efficiently in urban environments, and how to foster community in tall buildings, is still strong today. The issues tackled by River City – the relationship to the urban environment and to the river, street life, economy, and the negotiation of the finance and development of architectural projects – reappear today. Knowing of River City’s rhetoric and its relationships with political and economic forces might equip us, then, to better judge new developments arising in similar conditions.

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<sup>93</sup> Jay Koziarz, “Chicago breaks ground on 3,600 unit Riverline mega-development in the South Loop”, *Curbed Chicago*, September 13, 2016. Available from: <https://chicago.curbed.com/2016/9/13/12897772/chicago-construction-south-loop-riverline-development-groundbreaking>



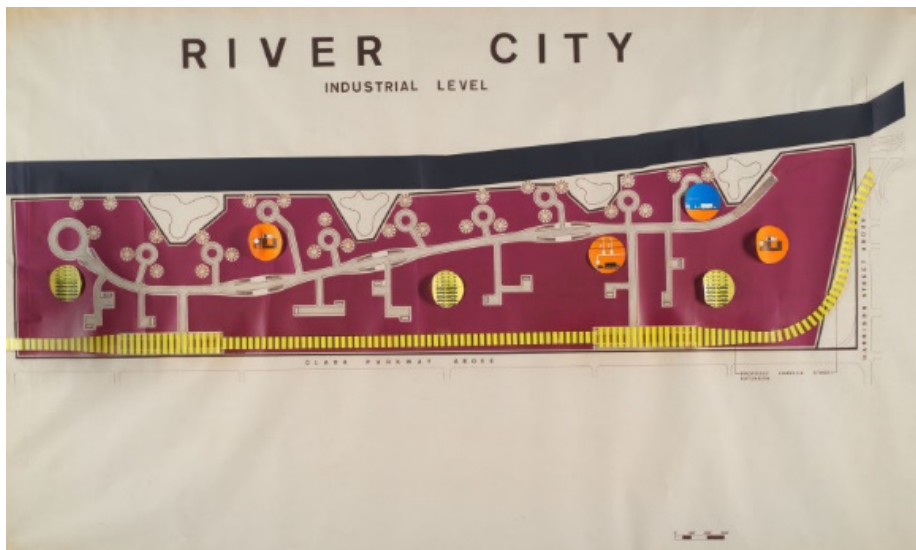
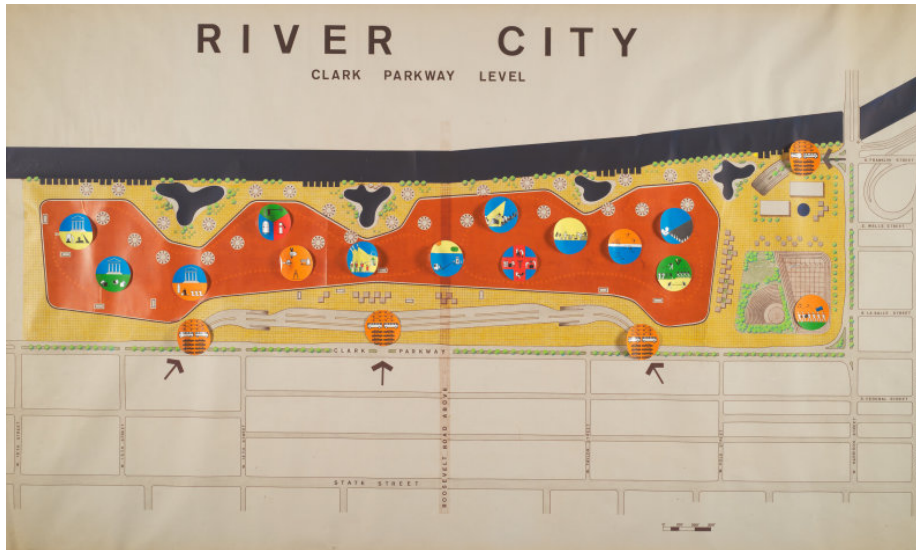
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Fig. 1: River City (1983-1986), aerial photograph . From : Michel Ragon, *Goldberg Dans la Ville* (Paris : Paris Art Centre, 1985).

Fig. 2 : Marina City (1959-1967), exterior view, c.1965. Goldberg Family Archive. From: Zoe Ryan (ed.), *Bertrand Goldberg: Architecture of Invention* (Chicago, New Haven: Art Institute of Chicago, Yale University Press, 2011).

Fig. 3: River City site, n.d. (Original site for full-scale project). From Michel Ragon, *ibid.*

Fig. 4. River City I, (1972-1979). View looking north, c. 1979. Goldberg Family Archive. From: Zoe Ryan (ed.), *ibid.*



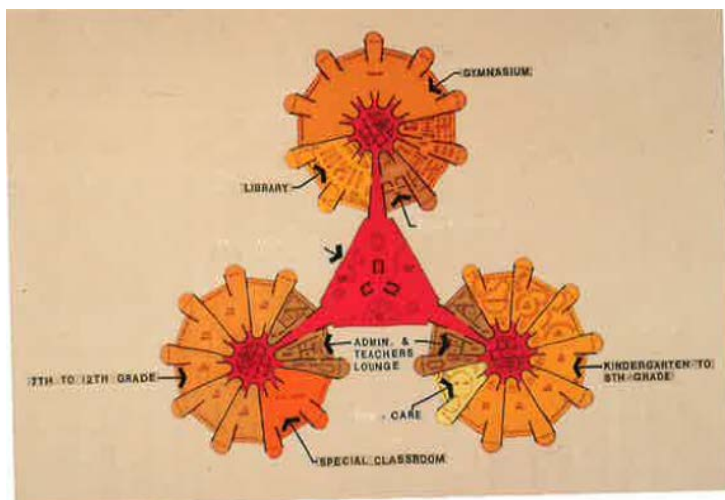
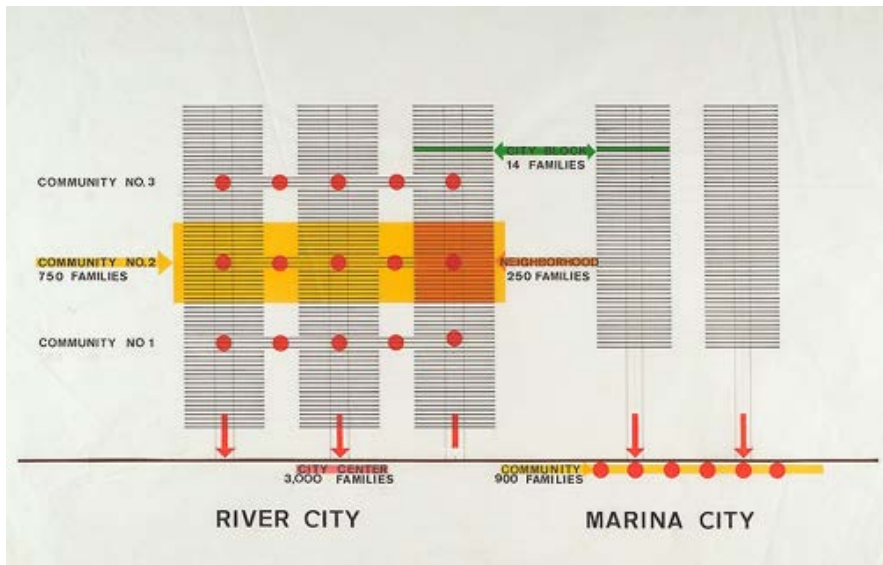
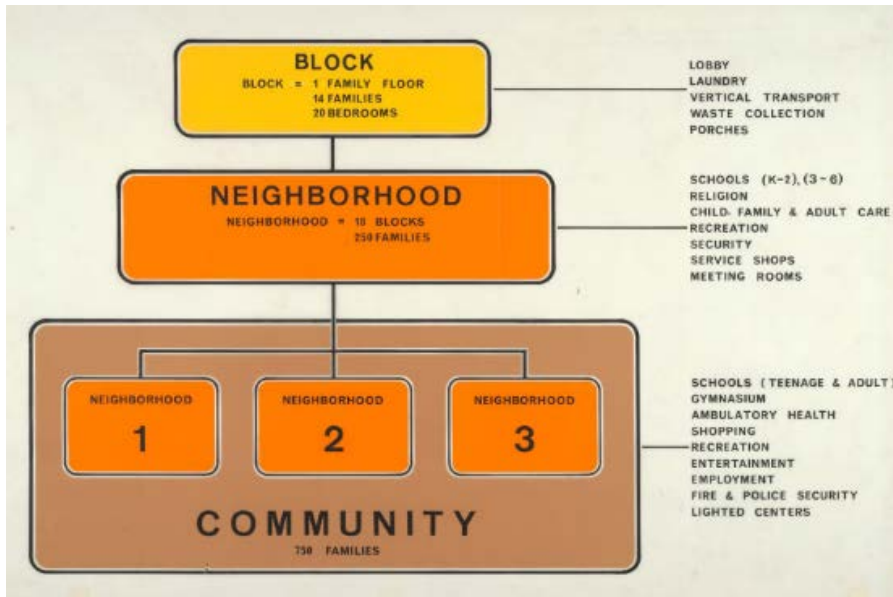
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Fig. 5: River City I, Pedestrian park level, n.d.

Fig. 6.1.: River City I, Clark parkway level, n.d.

Fig. 6.2: River City I, Industrial level, n.d.

Bertrand Goldberg Archives, Art Institute of Chicago.



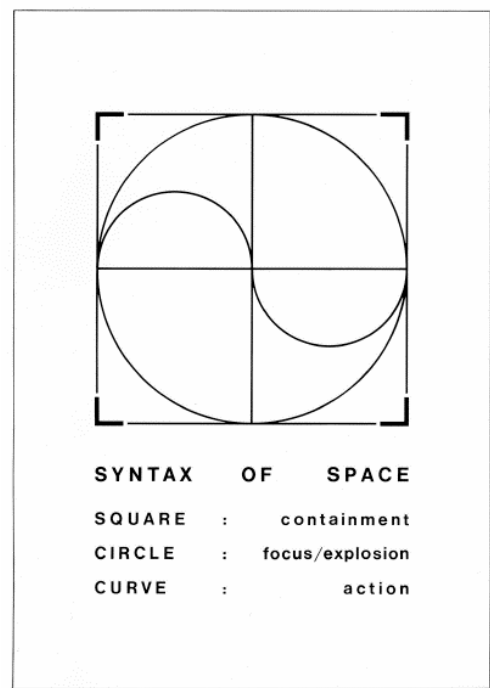
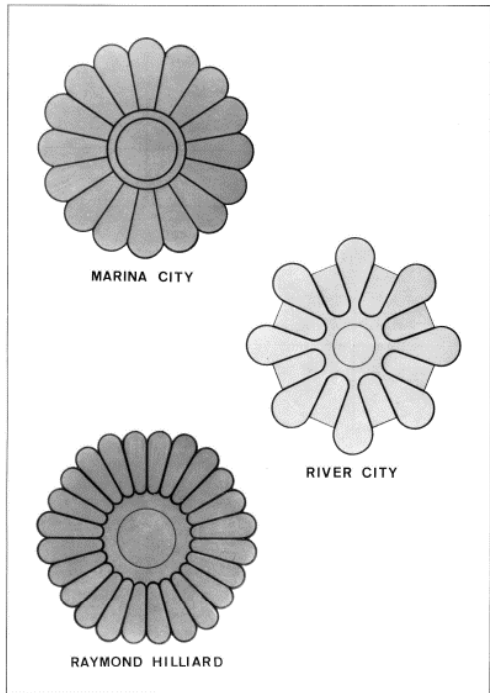
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Fig. 7: River City conceptual diagram, n.d.

Fig. 8.: River City and Marina City conceptual diagram, n.d..

Fig. 9: Family-Community Service Bridge Plan, n.d.

Bertrand Goldberg Archives, Art Institute of Chicago.

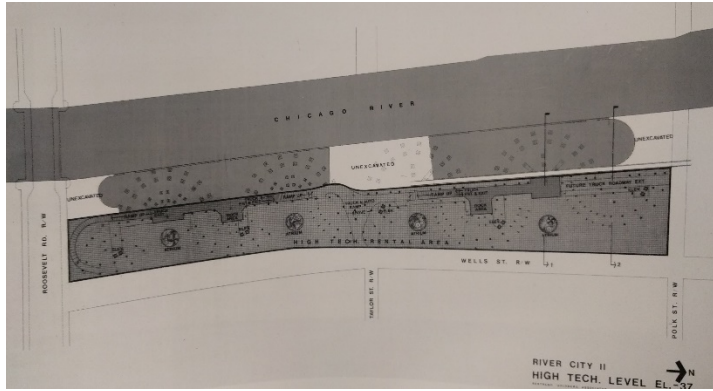


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Fig. 10: Daisy-shaped floor plans of three apartment towers. From Ragon, *ibid.*

Fig. 10a.: Syntax of space (form and philosophy). From Ragon, *ibid.*





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Fig. 18-21: River City II floor plans:

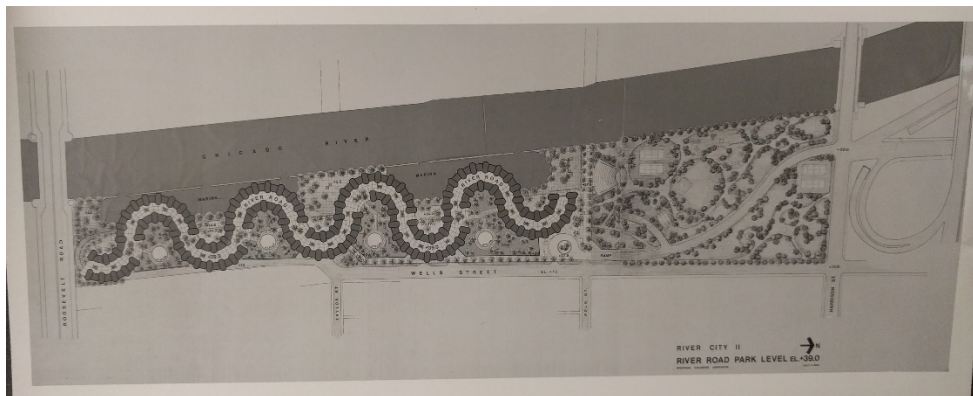
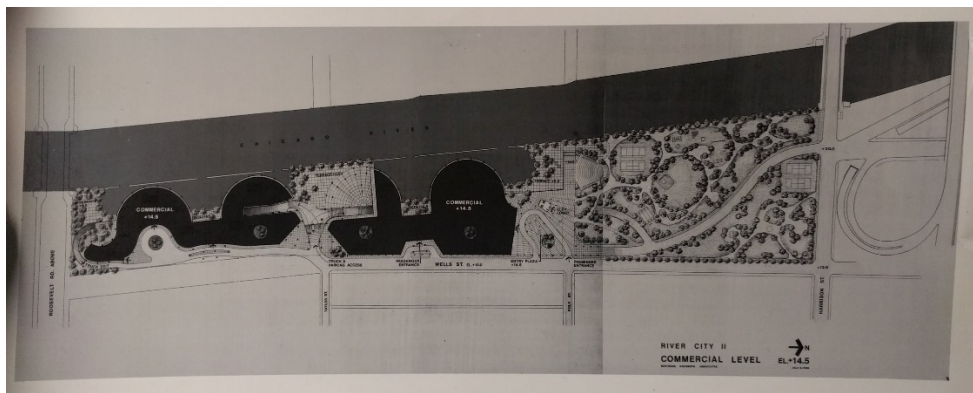
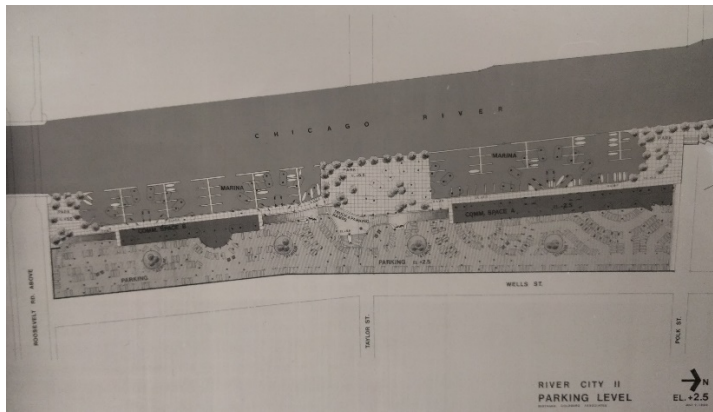
Fig. 18: High-tech level floor plan.

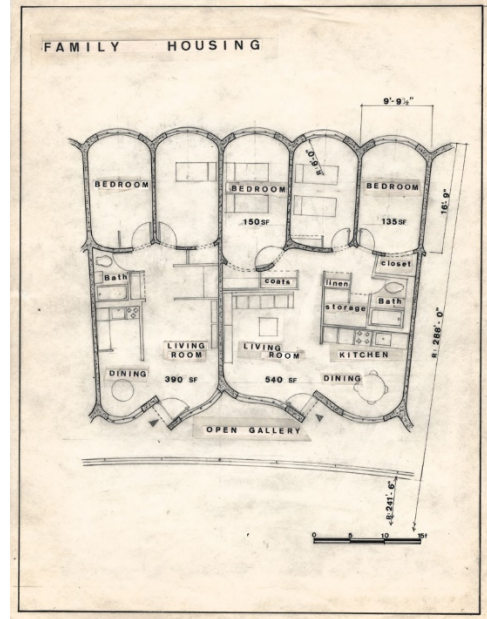
Fig. 19.: Parking level floor plan.

Fig. 20.: Commercial level floor plan.

Fig. 21: River Road and pedestrian park level plan.

Bertrand Goldberg Archives, Art Institute of Chicago.



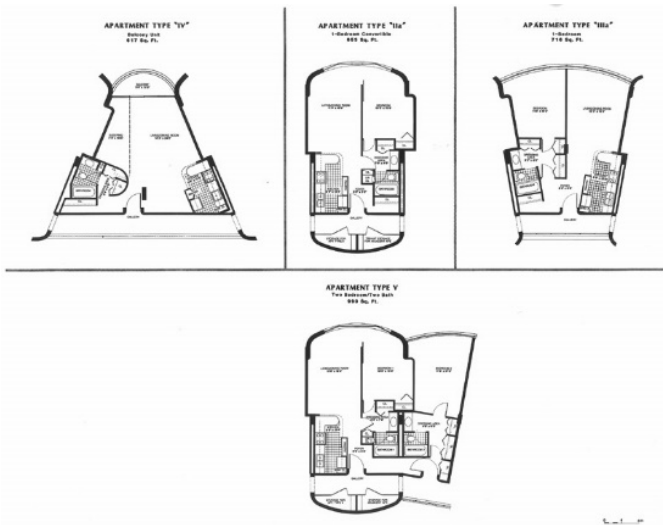
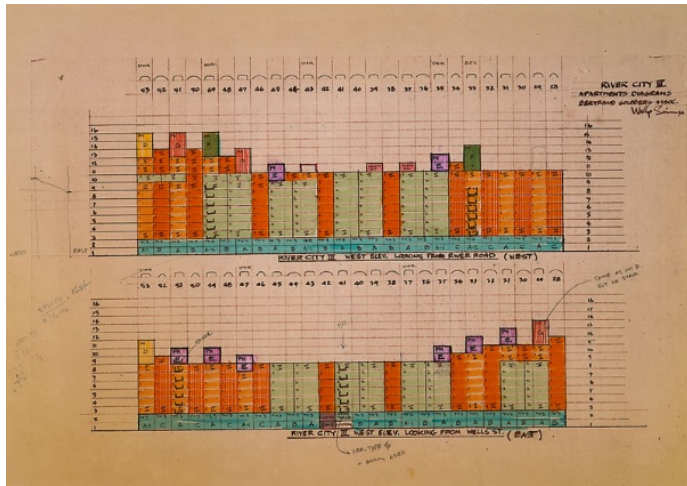
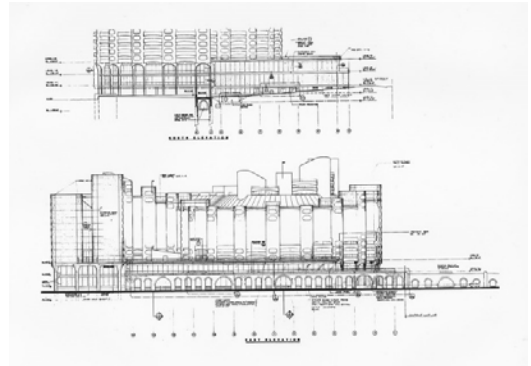
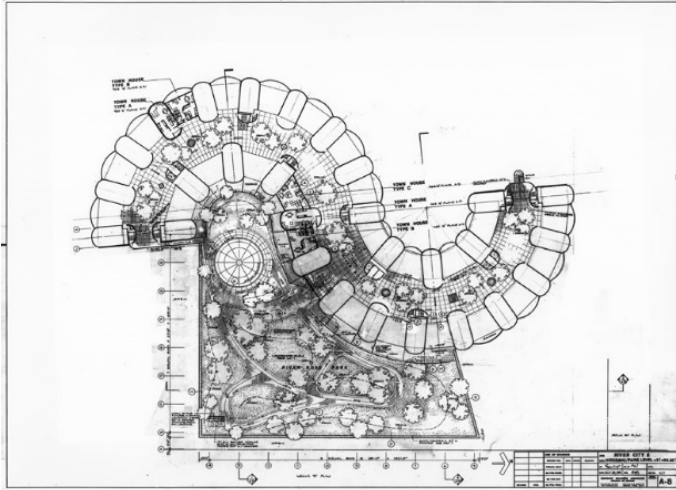


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Fig. 22: Perspective of the River Road.

Fig. 18: Raymond Hilliard Center, floor plan showing two apartments and gallery entrance.

Bertrand Goldberg Archives, Art Institute of Chicago.



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Fig. 23a: River City II, Phase I, River Road and elevated park level.

Fig. 23b. River City II, Phase I, elevations.

Fig. 24. River City II, Phase I, diagram representing distribution of unit types in residential towers.

Fig. 25.: Four of eight unit types in River City.

Bertrand Goldberg Archives, Art Institute of Chicago.

**River City—The Setting**  
The exciting new River City Marina is bordered by a delightful river walk and deck. As a result, on-duty one-way comes arriving vehicles, and the riverfront plaza invites you to sit, talk, and enjoy the excitement of the revitalized Chicago River. You'll also enjoy the city's largest outdoor party space, over an acre of river bank, and an outdoor jogging track. The restaurant's exterior environment gives residents a new sense of space and freedom.

**River City—The Soaring, Curving Atrium**  
Inside, the elegant, five-story, curved atrium is a truly extraordinary indoor environment. This landscaped stair-plateau from the balconies above. Glass-enclosed elevators to "sky-bridges" and in-house restaurants and an outdoor cafe create a lively atmosphere that invites you to social, meet friends, and relax in the time-honored European way.

**River City—The City Club at River City**  
For an active approach to life in the city, the new City Club at River City will be the ultimate in luxury and convenience. 25,000 sq. ft. of space will include:

- indoor and outdoor swimming pools
- and tennis and joggers will glory in the outdoor track. There are six racquetball courts, dance and aerobic classes, and a full complement of the newest, most up-to-date progressive resistance exercise and weight equipment. For relaxation, what you'll benefit from the tranquility of the indoor wellness and spa treatments provided by the city's premier spa.

**River City—The Residences**  
Choose from lake-view units, convertible one bedrooms, one and two bedroom apartments, two and three bedroom duplex town homes, some with private patios, and two separate duplexes and triplexes. All these residences with rooftop terraces. All residences feature Lexolite® marbles, operable windows with breathtaking views of the city, plush wall-to-wall carpeting, individually controlled heating and air conditioning at no additional cost, microwave ovens, self-cleaning ranges, in-house refrigerators, and dishwashers.

**River City—The Services and Amenities**  
There's a door attendant 24 hours a day and an electronic safety surveillance system, plus an in-house grocery store.

**River City—The Location**  
River City is just a short walk away from the city's largest exchange complex. Only two blocks away, nearby are all the city's major expressways as well as all the city's public transportation. You'll also find an array of multi-level cultural, educational, and recreational facilities that thousands of visitors from every part of the globe.

**River City—The Invitations**  
Come see for yourself this in development. More than a new City is a whole new way to live—plus in a convenient, comfortable, modern building adjacent to downtown Chicago.

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River City  
800 River City  
Polk & Wells  
Chicago, Illinois 60607  
Phone: (312) 431-2800

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ONE FINANCIAL PLACE  
POLK ST  
TAYLOR ST

CBQBE  
1 Fin. Pl.  
2 Fin. Pl.

WELLS ST  
LASALLE ST  
CLARK ST

**AREA:**  
83,000 Square Feet per Floor Available

**AMENITIES:**  
 Full Service Health Club  
 Wellness/Sports Medicine Center  
 Marina  
 Restaurants  
 European Style Market  
 Luxury Apartments

**COMMENTS:**  
 Available for Occupancy Summer 1985  
 22% Preleased  
 Bertrand Goldberg Design Architect

**LOCATION:**  
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 Adjacent to New Financial District

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**THE CITY CLUB**

HARD WORK HAS ITS REWARDS

Top to bottom, left to right:

Fig. 26: Metroplex portfolio, promotional folder for River City apartments.

Fig. 27. Epstein portfolio, advertisement for River City rental commercial and space.

Fig. 28.: Metroplex portfolio, cover of folder advertising the City Club (athletic club at River City).

Architectural ephemera collections, Chicago History Museum.

More legible images on the next page.

The crowning achievement of renowned architect Bertrand Goldberg, River City embodies all that's desirable about life in a futuristic downtown location. There's nothing like River City anywhere! The scale, imagination, and pathbreaking daring of the design are equaled only by the quality of life you'll enjoy as a resident. Your home on the river, right in the heart of the most exciting city in the world, will be an endless source of enjoyment and discovery. Come to River City, and experience all that's magnificent about Chicago.

**RIVER CITY**

River City  
800 River City  
Polk & Wells  
Chicago, Illinois 60607  
Phone: (312) 431-2800

**River City—The Setting**  
The exclusive 75-story River City Marina is located by a delightful river walk, where you can walk to luxury yachts, arrive and depart. A covered circular drive well serves arriving vehicles, and the prominent plaza invites you to sit, talk, and expect. Once the excitement of the revitalized Chicago River, you'll also enjoy the city's best of everything. **Two modern parking garages**, over an acre of **river walk**, and an **outdoor jogging track**. The extraordinary outdoor environment gives residents a new sense of space and freedom.

**River City—The Soaring, Curving Atrium**  
Inside, the glass and terrazzo curvilinear atrium is topped by a sculptural light roof that creates an equally extraordinary indoor environment. The architect's signature "train street" is bordered with glass from the balconies above. Glass-looked elevators rise to galleries, skybridges, and in-house restaurants and an outdoor cafe create a leisurely atmosphere that invites you to stroll, meet friends, and relax in the time-honored European way.

**River City—The City Club at River City**  
For an active approach, come to the country-club-quality 55,000 sq. ft. City Club at River City. Swimmers will enjoy the swimming, 25-meter Olympic-size pool, and racquet and fashers will glory in the outdoor track. There are six courtball courts, dance and aerobic classes, and a full complement of the newest, most up-to-date progressive resistance exercise and weight equipment. For relaxation, wind down in the steam, sauna, or whirlpool. You'll benefit from the guidance of the advanced wellness and sports medicine professionals of the fitness center. **Luxury** kitchen, dining, and bar arrangements will be created and furnished by the most advanced commercial equipment. The result can be a life of fitness and vitality.

**River City—The Residences**  
Choose from luxury units, starting like one bedroom, one and two bedroom apartments, two and three bedroom duplex town homes, some with private pools, and incorporating duplex and triplex penthouses with rooftop terraces. All residences feature Levolor® mini-blinds, operable windows with breathtaking views of the city, plush wall-to-wall carpeting, individually controlled heating and air conditioning plus additional coat, microwave ovens, self-cleaning ranges, freezers, refrigerators, and dishwashers.

**River City—The Services and Amenities**  
There's a door attendant 24 hours a day and an electronic safety surveillance system, plus an in-house grocery, receiv-

ing room, valet, bike storage, shops, and services. The laundry facilities feature an adjacent lounge area that overlooks River City's private park. Fully monitored and attended indoor or outdoor parking is available for you and your guests. As a resident, you'll also enjoy being linked to an advanced telephonic access system offering state-of-the-art personal, as well as business, telephone and data support services. **Advertising, a master internet network, and faxed local, cross-city, networking** will be available. In short, River City offers everything you need to make this your complete, self-contained neighborhood.

**River City—The Location**  
River City is part of Chicago's new Burnham Park neighborhood and just a short walk away from Sears Tower and Chicago's financial district. The world's largest exchange complex is only two blocks away. Nearby are all the areas, major expressways as well as all modes of public transportation. You'll also find an array of unmatched cultural, educational, and recreational facilities that are thousands of visitors from everywhere on the globe.

**River City—The Invitation**  
Come see it all yourself! This magnificent development. More than a new city, River City is a whole new way to live, work, and play in a convenient, comfortable neighborhood adjacent to downtown.

**“WELCOME TO THE 21st CENTURY”**

**LEASE**

**RIVER CITY 195,000 S.F. of Office and Commercial Space**

JACKSON BLVD  
Financial District  
CBOE  
1 Fin. PL  
CONGRESS PKWY.  
River City  
ONE FINANCIAL PLACE  
2 Fin. PL  
WELLS ST.  
POLK ST.  
LASALLE ST.  
TAYLOR ST.  
CLARK ST.

**AREA:**  
83,000 Square Feet per Floor Available

**AMENITIES:**  
Full Service Health Club  
Wellness Sports Medicine Center  
Marina  
Restaurants  
European Style Market  
Luxury Apartments

**COMMENTS:**  
Available for Occupancy Summer 1985  
22% Preleased  
Bertrand Goldberg Design Architect

**LOCATION:**  
East Bank of Chicago River  
Adjacent to New Financial District

**CONTACT:**  
SAMUEL C. DELISI  
or ROBERT M. SIX 663-4800

Real Estate  
111 West Jackson Boulevard  
Chicago, Illinois 60604  
312-663-4800

**SR STROBECK, REISS & CO.**

Information contained herein is subject to verification, change or withdrawal without notice and no liability is assumed for errors or omissions.



Fig, 29a and b: Views of  
the River Road, c. 1984.  
From Ragon, *ibid.*



Top to bottom, left to right:

River City today.

Fig. 30: View of entrance on Wells street.

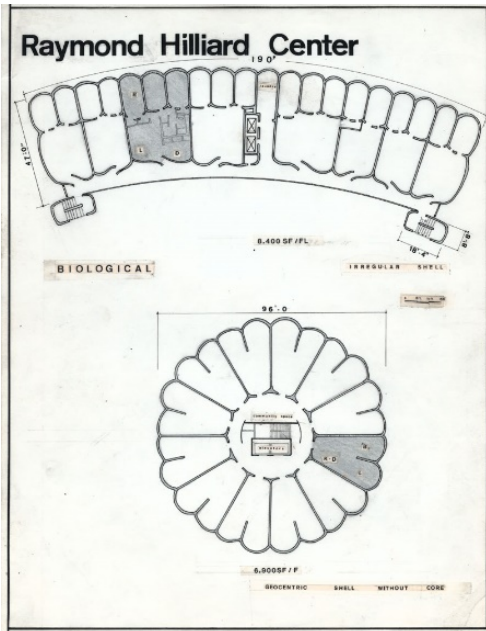
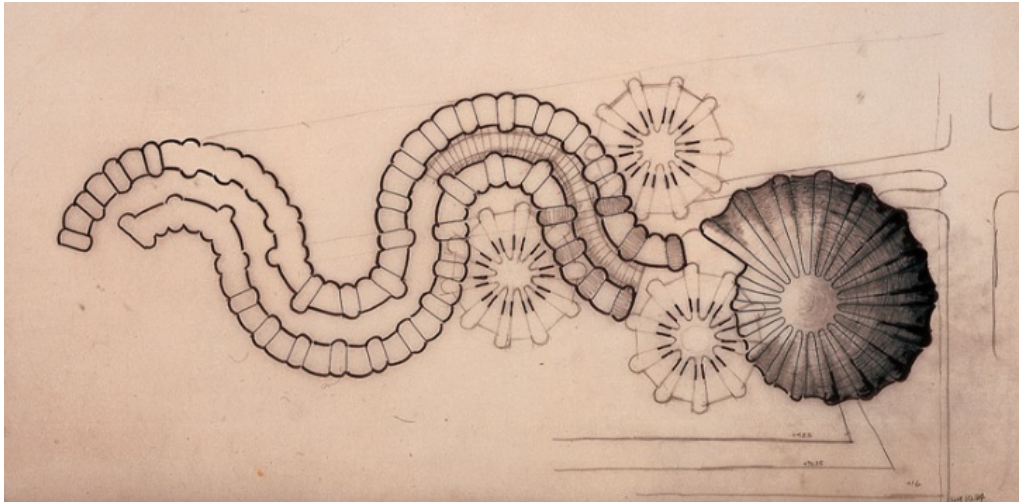
Fig. 31: Skylight on roundabout, entrance to River Road.

Fig. 32: Lobby providing access to commercial platform and to apartments.

Fig. 33.: View of inlet on riverside façade. This façade faces the marina.

Fig. 34.: Secondary entrance, between parking lots, streets, and elevated roads.

All pictures taken by the author.



Top to bottom:

Fig. 11.: River City, transitional conceptual drawing.

Fig. 12: Raymond Hilliard Center (Hilliard Homes), conceptual floor plan.

Bertrand Goldberg Archives,  
Art Institute of Chicago.

## CECILIA RESENDE SANTOS

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### CURRICULUM VITAE

#### EDUCATION

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- 2014-2018  
Current **University of Chicago**, Chicago, IL, USA  
**Bachelor of Arts in Art History**, expected June 2018  
**GPA 3.8/4.00**  
**Honours:** Dean's List: 2014-2017; Gay K. and John R. Stanek Prize, 2016
- 2014 **Institute of Architecture and Urbanism, the University of São Paulo (IAU-USP)**, São Carlos, SP, Brazil  
**Architecture and Urbanism**, February 2014 - July 2014 (interrupted: left to attend the University of Chicago)  
**Coursework completed:** Introduction to Theory and History of Art, Architecture and the City, Visual Languages I, Mathematics for Architecture I, Project (Design) IA, Digital/Computer Lab for Architecture I, Architectural Drawing I (*course titles translated from Portuguese*)

#### EXTENDED EDUCATION

- 2017 **Illinois Institute of Technology**, Chicago, IL, USA  
**IntroARCH**, August 2017  
Summer course designed to prepare students for IIT's graduate architecture programmes. Tasks included drafting, sketching, physical modelling and Photoshop collage and photo editing. I received a UChicago Arts Summer Fellowship to attend this programme.
- 2016 **Art Institute of Chicago**, Chicago, IL, USA  
**Andrew W. Mellon Summer Academy**, July 2016  
Week-long programme providing a comprehensive introduction to curatorial work.

#### HONOURS AND AWARDS

- 2018 **UChicago Arts Student Creativity Grant**  
Awarded for the completion of an oral history and an exhibition about the Kiln House, a building partly designed and built by students in the University of Chicago's first design-build project, initiated in 2015 and completed in February 2018.
- 2017 **PRISM Research Grant**  
Awarded to fund BA thesis research on the mixed-used projects of Chicago architect Bertrand Goldberg.
- 2017 **UChicago Arts Summer Fellowship**  
Awarded to attend a summer introductory architecture studio at the Illinois Institute of Technology.

#### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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- 2017-2018  
Current **Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts**, Chicago, IL, USA  
Archives Assistant, October 2017-present
- Create catalogue entries for about one hundred grantee files, forming the back-end of a searchable public online database as part of an institutional history project,
  - Assist archives director in reviewing and editing existing catalogue entries.
  - Assist programming and installations with various tasks as needed.

- 2017 **Art Institute of Chicago, Department of Architecture and Design**, Chicago, IL, USA  
Curatorial Intern, April-June 2017.
- Conducted research for collection exhibition on the use of colour in modern architecture and design;
  - Helped finalise exhibition checklist from museum's archives;
  - Wrote research summaries about thirty-five objects and artists, used as reference for object labels and wall text in the exhibition.
- 2016-2017 **Art Institute of Chicago, Department of Modern and Contemporary Art**, Chicago, IL, USA  
Curatorial Intern, September 2016-April 2017.
- Assisted with research for monographic exhibition on Brazilian artist Tarsila do Amaral;
  - Worked with research assistant on provenance research for over forty paintings and drawings, and preparation of documents for immunity from seizure application;
  - Translated research material from Portuguese to English;
  - Collaborated with curator and research assistant to interpret documents related to the artist's career.
- 2016 **The University of Chicago Visual Resources Centre**, Chicago, IL, USA  
Intern (tech staff), January – August 2016.
- Digitised and edited images from multiple media (print, photography, drawing, painting, film) by request of faculty and students.

## **EXTRACURRICULAR AND VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE**

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### **STUDENT ORGANISATIONS**

- 2017-  
Current **University of Chicago Architecture Interest Group**, Chicago, IL, USA  
Founder and co-president, March 2017– present.
- Coordinated meetings and events for a group of undergraduate students interested in the built environment;
  - Arranged architecture office visits and talks with architects, planners and professionals;
  - Currently organising a symposium for BA thesis presentations on the built environment.
- 2015-  
Current **Kitchen Sink** (organisation for the arts at the University of Chicago), Chicago, IL, USA  
Co-president, January 2015 – present.
- Help staff and supply weekly open painting sessions;
  - Conceive, promote, and execute quarterly projects, including three pop-up museums (Winter and Spring 2016; Winter 2017) and numerous collaborations with other groups;
  - Communicate with facilities managers, building and business owners for quarterly events, and with on-campus institutions and student organisations for collaborative projects.
- 2015-2017 **The University of Chicago French Club**, Chicago, IL, USA  
Social Media and Visuals manager, Vice-President, October 2015 – June 2017.
- Managed the Club's Facebook page and e-mail newsletter (700+ subscribers each);
  - Created physical and digital campaigns for the Club's weekly meetings, fundraisers and quarterly events.

### **OTHER VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE**

- 2017-2018 **Chicago Architecture Biennial**, Chicago, IL, USA  
Installation and events volunteer, August 2017 – January 2018
- Assisted with exhibition installation at the Chicago Cultural Center before opening of the Biennial;

- Received guests and staffed three special events associated with the Biennial.

2016-  
Current

**Robie House, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust, Chicago, IL, USA**

Interpreter (docent), March 2016 – present.

- Developed personal remarks following the Trust’s general guidelines;
- Guided hour-long tours for up to twenty guests at the Robie House (48 hours per year).

2015-  
Current

**UChicago Arts, Chicago, IL, USA**

Arts Liaison, November 2015-present.

- Helped choose and secure Arts Pass events with partner institutions in Chicago;
- Promoted awareness of Arts Pass partnerships and events among students via Facebook, email, and in meetings;
- Staffed up to three UChicago Arts events per quarter.

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**INDEPENDENT PROJECTS AND RESEARCH**

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2017-2018

**Architecture for Urbanism: River City and Urban Revitalisation in Chicago, 1970-1980 - Thesis for completion of Bachelor of Arts in Art History, The University of Chicago**

In progress (due April 2018)

- A thesis investigating River City (1968-1986; built 1983-1986), a mixed-use project by Chicago architect Bertrand Goldberg (1913-1997), in the context of urban planning and cultural attitudes toward the city in the period of the building’s design and construction. I received a PRISM research grant to conduct research on Goldberg’s buildings over the summer of 2017.

2017-2018

**Kiln House History Project** (exhibition and oral history)

Organiser

In progress (completion predicted for May 2018)

- A documentation project conceived as an oral and material history of the design and construction of a building for electric kilns by students at the University of Chicago between 2013 and 2017. Final products will include at least four interviews, recorded and transcribed; an exhibition; and a publication. I have been awarded a Student Creativity Grant from the University of Chicago and a grant from the Logan Centre’s discretionary funds to complete this project.

2018

**First Inter-Collegiate Art History Symposium: UChicago and SAIC**

Symposium organiser

Upcoming, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018

- Organised the first inter-institutional undergraduate art history symposium between the two universities, for graduating students to present original thesis research;
- Secured departmental support, arranged location and catering for a reception.

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**SKILLS**

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**Languages**

Fluent (native) in Portuguese; fluent in French; proficient in Spanish

**Software**

Proficient in Microsoft Office suite (Word, PowerPoint, Excel), Adobe Creative suite (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign), Microsoft Publisher, SketchUP; MailChimp; and social media (Facebook, Instagram); experience with CAD software Rhinoceros.

**Other**

Basic woodworking and metalworking skills; intermediary architectural drafting and model-making.