

# Campus in a city back yard

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New addition, the Jacob M. Kaplan Building on 12th Street, is set back from the New School's older Alvin Johnson Building (left), which itself made architectural news in 1930 (Architect: Joseph Urban). Below, the new Albert A. List Building on 11th Street completes the "campus" to the south. The ground-floor library faces the street.



Small lounge above the library entrance is one of many places to read or relax.



PHOTOS: © EZRA STOLLER

# Campus in a city back yard

Built around a garden in midblock, Manhattan's New School offers a bright lesson in urban design.

Celebrating its 40th birthday in the forefront of adult education, New York's New School for Social Research has completed a \$2.4 million expansion program that not only fills handsomely its own needs, but also contributes nicely to its city's growing sense of urban design. Next door to the school's first permanent home on West 12th Street, Architects Mayer, Whittlesey & Glass have added a new classroom-office building in a vertical modern mode, setting it back slightly to the enhancement of itself, its predecessor, and older Greenwich Village houses on the street (photo left, above). Behind, they have placed a lower companion building facing 11th Street, which also invites visitors with planting and an open glass ground floor (left). Between these two additions they have created the real core of a miniature campus: a delightful, much-used garden court which brings together all three buildings, and some 6,500 students and faculty a year (photo, opposite).

The scheme works strikingly well. The open, set-back buildings make an alluring break along the street: the garden, a new walk-through and gathering place that did not exist before. Like other plans which look to the back and sides as well as to the public front, this one suggests many possibilities for opening up a tight, dominant city grid with secondary patterns of more human scale: pleasant little gardens, malls, alleys, arcades which zigzag through the basic block pattern, providing new meeting and relaxing places, short cuts, variety, and surprise.

For the New School, the idea is particularly appropriate. As an institution

devoted solely to teaching adults—most of them college graduates in the professions and business—it must first attract them, mainly after working hours and against the stiff competition of New York's other lures.

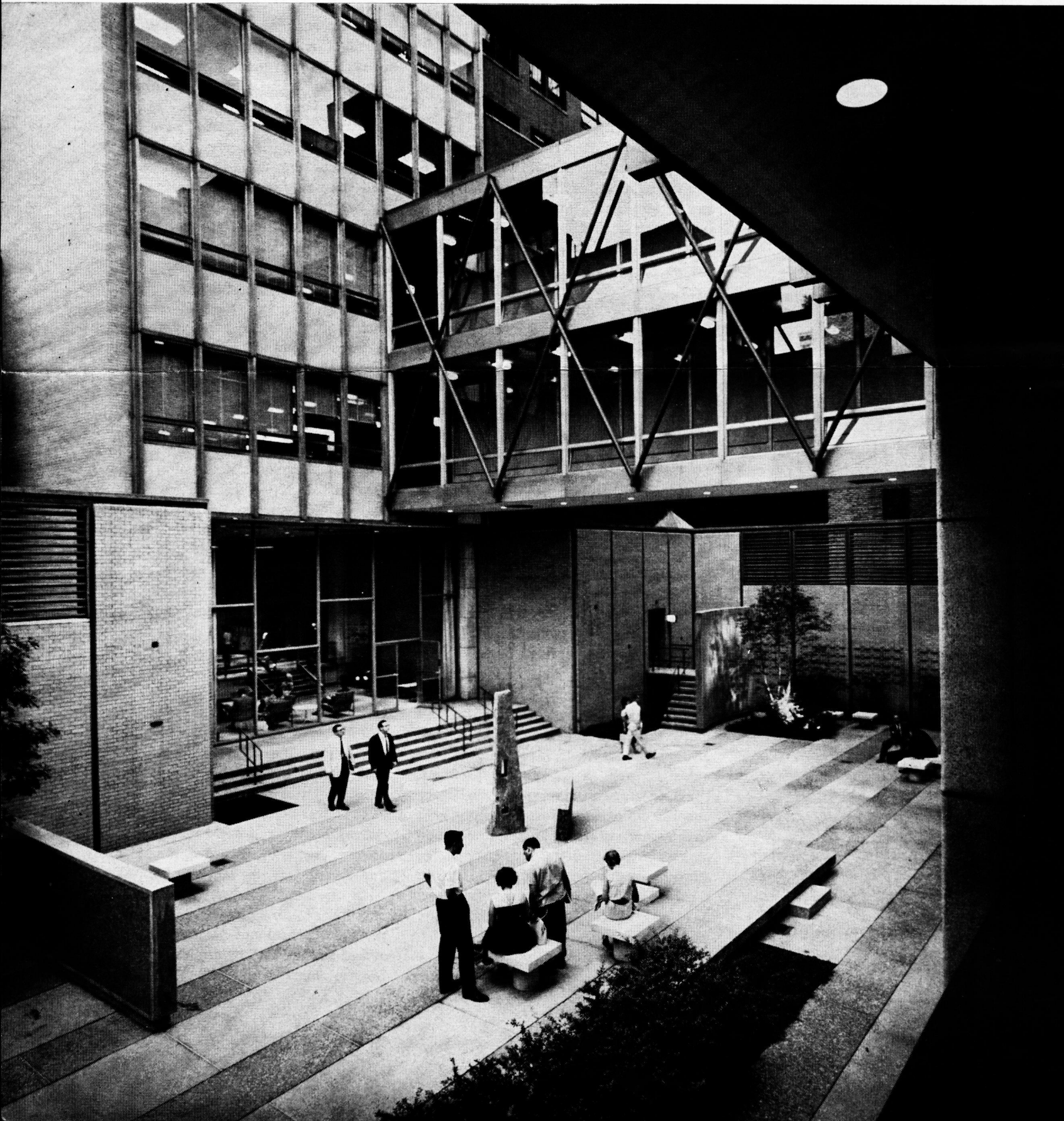
"Adult education here," says Architect and Board Member Albert Mayer, "is not an adjunct as in some colleges and universities, but the *raison d'être*. In contrast with standard-sized college classrooms scattered over a large campus, the New School must have a great variety of room sizes and arrangements, all located compactly on a half-acre site. We use the 550-seat auditorium of the older building for guest lectures of broad community interest. We must also have intermediate spaces for large classes, luncheon and dinner meetings and exhibits, regular classrooms seating 20 or 30, seminar rooms for a dozen. The school never knows how many students it is going to have in each of 800 courses a year. They may audit courses by paying single admissions for the first two or three weeks; when enrollments become definite, rooms often have to be re-scheduled. This makes a wide range and flexibility of spaces doubly important.

"The crossroads of the school is the garden, which serves as a place for meeting, talking, reading, relaxing. Its intimate size, about 4,000 square feet, epitomizes the close-contact aspects of the school, the vital discussions that take place casually before and after class. Coffee is served in the garden for two hours before the major evening classes begin, and we have tried outdoor concerts of recorded music with fine results. It is this garden, along with the many other lounges, halls, and indoor meeting places, that make the New School not so much a school as an intellectual-artistic-social center for the community."

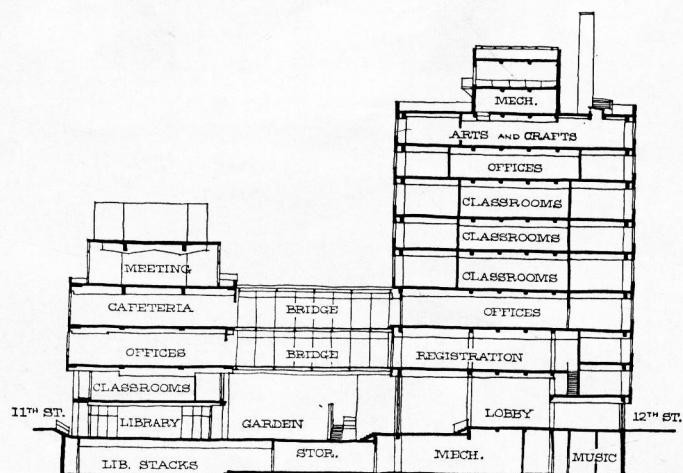
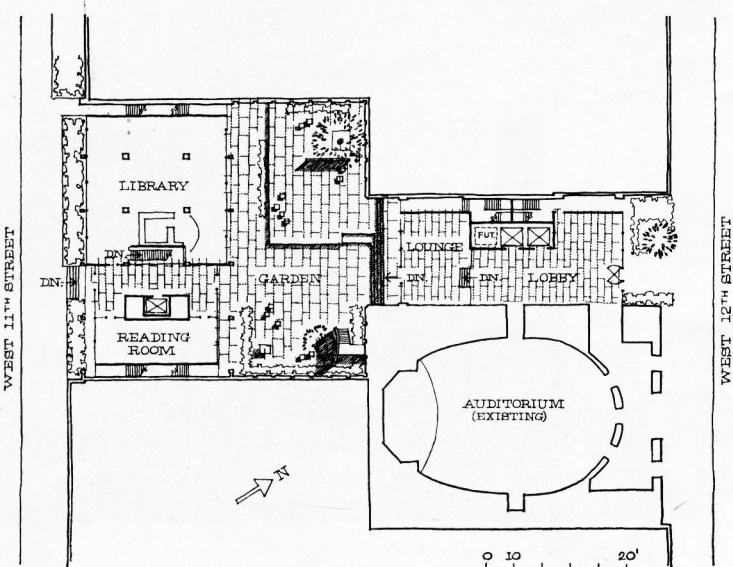


ARCHITECTS: Mayer, Whittlesey & Glass (W. J. Conklin, associate partner in charge of design). ENGINEERS: Charles Mayer (structural), Cosentini Associates (mechanical, electrical). ACOUSTICAL CONSULTANT: H. V. Munchhausen. GRAPHICS: Charles Forberg. GENERAL CONTRACTORS: H.R.H. Construction Co. (Jacob M. Kaplan Building) and Shepard-Pollak, Inc. (Albert A. List Building).

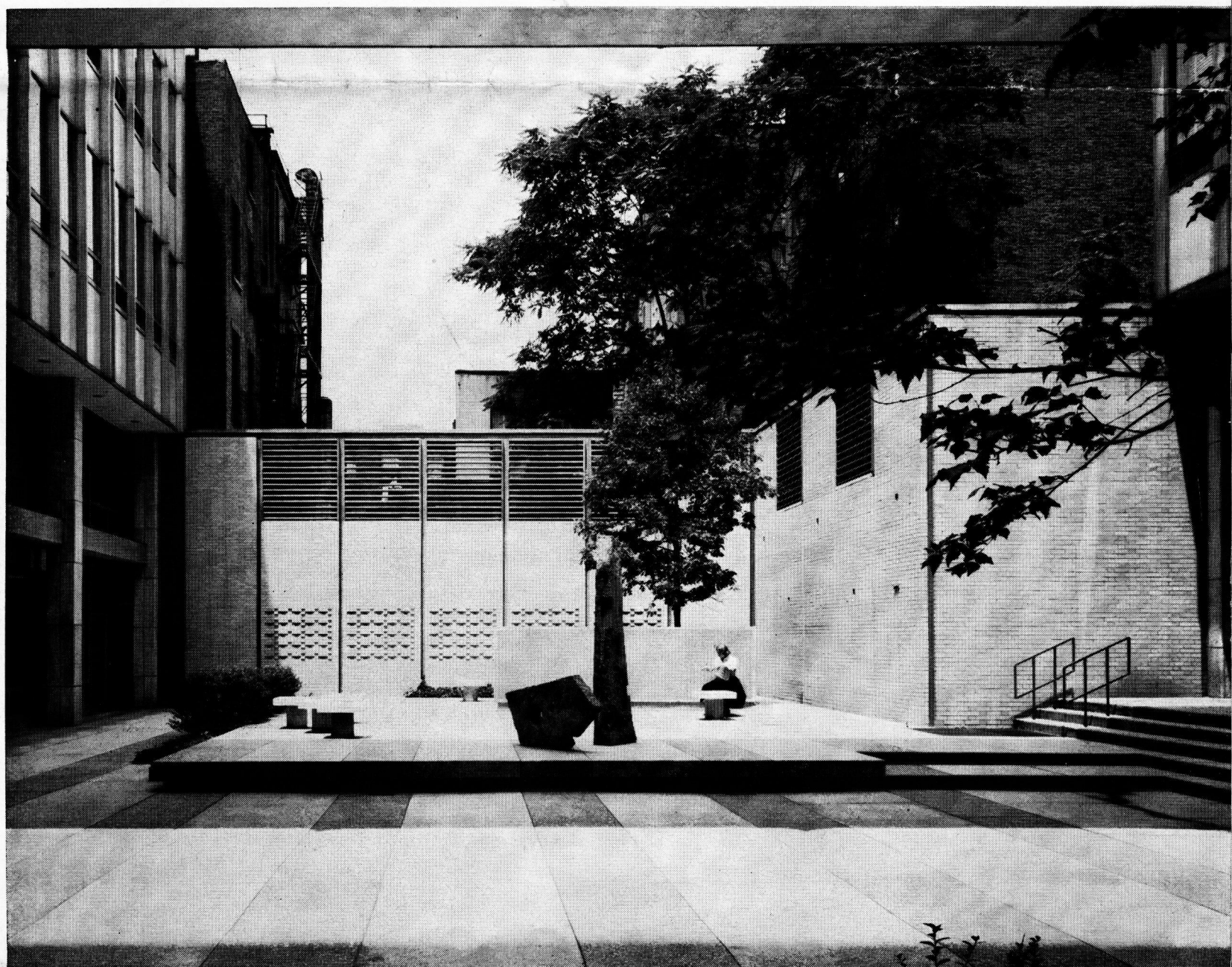
*The court: a double bridge, carried by welded pipe-trusses, links the two new buildings. Exhibit panels screen neighboring back yards.*







*Garden is walled off from adjoining yards; a low platform defines sitting areas furnished with seats, planting, and granite sculpture by Isamu Noguchi.*







**Reading room** overlooks the garden to the rear. Across the hall is a smaller room where readers may smoke, or where informal meetings may be held (see plan).

**Lounge** leads down from the school's main lobby to the garden court. Across the court is the library, and the lobby through to 11th Street (seen at left).



**Meeting room** on the fourth floor has a metal acoustical ceiling, movable chairs, and a serving pantry. It is used for lectures, art exhibits, and dinner groups.

PHOTOS: (BELOW) RICHARD SAUNDERS; (OTHERS) © EZRA STOLLER

