

**DRAG HINGE: “READING” THE SCALES BETWEEN ARCHITECTURE AND URBANISM**

by

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SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ARCHITECTURE STUDIES (URBANISM)

AT THE  
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

June 2019

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**ABSTRACT**

Ballroom is a queer subculture that emerged out of drag performance(s) and is largely comprised of queer people of color (QPOCs) in New York City during the early 1970s. In ballroom, contestants “walk” categories that emulate archetypal traits of another gender, sex, or social class, or battle through dance, commonly known as “voguing.” Most ballroom participants belong to one of a series of groups known as “Houses” which are led by a Mother and/or Father who provides wisdom and guidance to the other members of the House, known as children. In pre-1990s ballroom, known as “Old Way,” both houses and ballroom performance rapidly evolved to provide ever more inclusive safe-spaces for the many young QPOCs disproportionately affected by the economic and social hardships prevalent during the later-half of the twentieth century.

This thesis looks at how Old Way ballroom used the politics of the Image, what Stuart Hall refers to as the contestation and struggle over what is represented in the media, as a means to reclaim collective political agency and compares it against the ways Image is utilized by the various apparatuses and institutions composing mainstream American social order as well as by stakeholders in New York City’s contemporaneous urban development as a biopolitical means of controlling urban space. In so doing, this thesis seeks to position ballroom’s history as an architectural and urban text which offers an urban analysis of New York City from a QPOC perspective as well as a related social critique of its uneven development.

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# *Acknowledgments*

This thesis project would not have been possible without the fruitful conversations, unconditional support, love, and help I received from many people. I want to acknowledge these mentors, friends, colleagues, and loved ones.

First, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude and thanks to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Arindam Dutta. I am grateful for our weekly conversations that afforded me the intellectual space and freedom to explore various avenues to explore while writing this thesis. There were many times when my interest and commitment to black ontology and spatial blackness were tested and proved difficult to situate within architectural frameworks and your support and guidance throughout these moments were invaluable. I want to also thank the other two members of my thesis committee for their support and encouragement. I thank Dr. Delia Wendel for sharing with me her warmth and intelligence. I am indebted to her critical questioning, which helped me ground this work within my own personhood. Her words of kindness were a very much needed form of support that helped me avoid slipping into nihilistic thinking when I often questioned why I was pursuing this line of research within architecture and urbanism. Lastly, I am exceptionally grateful for the emotional, spiritual, and intellectual support and encouragement from Dr. Cornel

West. His course on race and modernity left an indelible impress on my intellect and spirit.

I reached out to several people when searching for a way to approach this thesis, gather archival material, and open myself up to the ballroom community. Of the many, I would like to thank those who went above and beyond, offering their guidance, support, warmth, and time. They include Aaron Betksy, Garnette Cadogan, Dr. Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé, Dr. Jackson Davidow, Jermaine Ellis and the Hetrick-Martin Institute, Dr. Lauren Jacobi, Dr. Erica Caple James, Dr. Kareem Khubchandani, Ken Lustbader and the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project, Caitlin McCarthy and the archives of the The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center, Matthew T. McMorrow, Tavia Nyong'O, Joel Sanders, Susanne Schindler, Paul Soulellis, Yehoshua Talbert and the Kiki Coalition. I was starstruck and deeply humbled when I received a reply-email from Jennie Livingston. Thank you for your willingness and excitement to speak with me about *Paris Is Burning*, New York City, and queer urbanism. I am especially indebted those within the ballroom community who were willing to speak with me about ballroom and its history. A special thank you to Rori Xtravaganza (Rori Grenert), Koppi Mizrahi (Konomi Shishido), Kevin Omni Burrus, Andre Mizrahi, and Leggoh LaBeija. I would to express my sincerest gratitude, love, and appreciation to the person who adopted me into the House of UltraOmni, Syd Baloue.

While at MIT, I developed close relationships with several classmates whose feedback and criticisms helped structure my research and writing: Rabeeya Arif, Hellen Awino, Jaya Eyzaguirre, Sridipta Ghatak, Eliyahu Keller, Kelly Leilani Main, Christopher Moyer, Alina Nazmeeva, Gonzalo Ortega, Ingrid Dobloug Roede, Joseph Swerdlin, Emily Watlington, Nitzan Ziberman.

I want to thank my family, biological and choosen. While I deeply enjoyed my experience at MIT, it often proved a difficult place, space, and culture to be in for a queer person of color. I have nothing but love and deep respect for my fellow MIT QPOCs Lafayette Cruise and Darien Alexander Williams. Thank you for all your love, encouragement, and righteous frustration. I hope we can continue to kiki in the years to come.

Lastly, I want to thank the two most important people in my life, my partner Aaron Tobey and my mother Dr. Cecilia Rio. Aaron, I am truly blessed to have you as not only my life-partner but also my intellectual partner; at time rivals. Thank you for reading all my work, editing, commenting, pushing, and supporting. Mom, thank you for all you have done for me. It was you who first introduced me to *Paris Is Burning*, and I want to dedicate this thesis to you. You were my first teacher and continue to be the source of my intellectual spirit. I love you.







**Figure I.1**  
Rendering of a ballroom. By the author.

# *Introduction*

A house? A house—Let’s see if we can put it down sharply. They’re families. You can say that. They’re families... for a lot of children who don’t have families. But this is a new meaning of family. The hippies had families and no one thought nothing about it. It wasn’t a question of a man and a woman and children, which we grew up knowing as a family. It’s a question of a group of human beings in a mutual bond. You know what a house is. I’ll tell you what a house is. A house is a gay street gang. Now, where street gangs get their rewards from street fights, a gay house street-fights at a ball.<sup>1</sup>

In 2016, the Library of Congress inducted Jennie Livingston’s 1991 documentary, *Paris Is Burning*, into the National Film Registry to be preserved as an emblem of American film history and heritage. *Paris* portrays the lives of homosexual and transgender Black and Latinx—or, queer people of color (QPOC)—New Yorkers in the late-1980’s who are involved with the ballroom subculture Crystal LaBeija began a decade earlier. Livingston directs the world’s gaze towards invented their own systems of kinship, affirmation, and validation in spite of their own systemic oppression through organizing and partici-

pating in balls and joining houses. The film makes visible the fabulousness ingenuity of queer-racial alterity: queers-of-color engaged in subcultural productions of spaces that creatively refused the values and categorical positions society wished to regulate them to. Yet, despite the film's unprecedented commercial success, its cult-like adoration, or its explicit attention to the politics of urban spaces—Houses, ballrooms, parks, piers, streets, and spaces of exclusion predicated on race, class, gender, and sexuality—any reference to Livingston's documentary or acknowledgement of its subject matter are absent within discipline of architecture.

This omission begs the question “how architectural historians and theorists think about radical spatial alterity” and “radical alterity for whom, by whom,” if they cannot provide a framework to address particular stories and experiences like those described in *Paris*. This absence is especially striking given the numerous architectural texts, projects, exhibitions, and critical-practice studios centered on topics such as counter-cultural practices, the politics of resistance, occupation, or radical alterity. Yet, this absence is nonetheless consistent with the broader ideological, pedagogical, and methodological circumscription of problematic bodies and practices from architectural canons and their modes of historical reconciliation; even with the tremendous contributions and efforts from architectural scholars and practitioners like Mabel O. Wilson, Charles L. Davis II, and Mario Gooden, there still remains an extraordinary lack of sexual, racial, gendered, classed, and *Othered* architectural histories. At the core of this absence is a question of the conditions of architecture, as abstract knowledge practices and as physical objects, to delimit and/or give rise to cultural understandings of spatialized and embodied ontologies of blackness?

In writing an architectural history of the subculture queer kinship Livingston's documentary captured, which I distinguish as house-ball culture, this paper seeks to position both ballroom's history and Livingston's *Paris* as proper architectural and urban texts. This racialized thread of queer subculture—as its cores, alternative family and identity

performance—offered QPOC peoples a heterotopia from increasing social, state, and media marginalization and violence—the War on Drugs, the Reagan-Bush culture wars, AIDS, homelessness, cable media caricatures—definitive within New York City’s development out of its 1975 financial crisis. Central to house-ball’s production of safe spaces was its use of “realness,” which reflects the intimate link between identity, its performativity, and urban space. For the QPOC body—embodied with multiple identity categories that must negotiate multiple antagonisms—movement across New York’s urban fabric required constant performative shifts or else risk the violence from a hostile exterior, exposing that the design of identity is simultaneously the design of space, and vice versa.

During a small roundtable discussion with Ph.D. students and faculty at the Yale School of Architecture, Charles L. Davis II echoed a similar concern about the omission of *blackness* in architectural education and practice. He especially noted the problem of searching for “black architecture” within architectural archives. More than often finding records of a formal tectonics or physical building, Davis II stated that “the occupation of space is one of the ways in which blackness is expressed within Architecture’s history.”<sup>2</sup> Similarly, “the absence of a formal architecture is itself a form of architecture.”<sup>3</sup> In searching for and locating the architectures of ballroom and other QPOCs spaces, I follow a similar approach given the lack of archival material and the common marginalization and lack of access to power QPOCs are subjected to by the social order—by social order I refer to “a concept used in sociology, history, and other social sciences. It refers to a set of linked social structures, social institutions, and social practices which conserve, maintain and enforce “normal” ways of relating and behaving.”<sup>4</sup>

It is this common experience of marginalization that birthed ballroom. To quote *Pose*’s Blanca Evangelista, “A ball is a gathering of people who are not welcomed to gather anywhere else. A celebration of a life that the rest of the world *does not* deem worth of celebration. There are categories—people dress up for them, walk. There’s voting, trophies... Better than money. You can actually make a name for yourself by winning a trophy or

two. And in [*the ballroom*] *community*, the glory of your name is everything.”<sup>5</sup> Ballroom is a queer subculture that emerged out of drag performance(s) and is largely comprised of QPOCs in New York City during the early 1970s. In ballroom, contestants “walk” categories that emulate archetypal traits of another gender, sex, or social class, or battle through dance, commonly known as voguing. Most ballroom participants belong to one of a series of groups known as Houses which are led by a Mother and/or Father who provides wisdom and guidance to the other members of the House, known as children. In pre-1990s ballroom, known as old way or old school ballroom, both Houses and ballroom performance rapidly evolved to provide ever more inclusive safe-spaces for the many young QPOCs disproportionately affected by the economic and social hardships prevalent during the later-half of the twentieth century.

This thesis looks at how Old Way ballroom used the politics of the image, what Stuart Hall refers to as “the contestation and struggle over what is represented in the media,” as a means to reclaim collective political agency and compares it against the ways Image is utilized by the various apparatuses and institutions composing mainstream American social order as well as by stakeholders in New York City’s contemporaneous urban development as a biopolitical means of controlling urban space.<sup>6</sup> In so doing, this thesis seeks to position ballroom’s history as an architectural and urban text which offers an urban analysis of New York City from a QPOC perspective as well as a related social critique of its uneven development.

Chapter one begins by addressing how and why the politics of the Image served as a biopolitics in the late seventies and eighties to maintain a particular social or spatial order and engender political, economic, and cultural buy-in for new policies and developments packaged as essential moral and societal reformations, of which marked a cultural shift. I describe the cultural malaise of 1970s in America, namely the economic, energy, and welfare crises, to emphasize why “the image of things” becomes a powerful political and cultural mechanism in the following decade. During this cultural shift “the normaliza-

tion of the physical environment of Modernism is turned toward the normalization of the psychic environment.”<sup>7</sup> This difference in discourses and practices over the socio-cultural environment of the U.S., and to some degree the world at-large—what theorists such as Reinhold Martin and Fredric Jameson refer to as postmodernism—are visually apparent in this juxtaposition of photos taken approximately at the same time: a collapse of social national welfare and a rise of speculative global finance, hence, the local specificity of Pruitt-Igoe’s naming the global generality in the naming of the “world” trade center. The second half of the chapter focuses on the rise of cable television and the consumer electronics market, and how both helped to produce two distinctive and divergent cultural images of America—one of opulent optimism and its Other, complete calamity. From primetime fare such as *Dallas* and *Dynasty* to pervasive media narratives of urban crime and decline as in CBS News’ “48-hours on Crack Street,” the media waves were the terrain in which the mortal conflict over the moral soul of America and its promised “dream” were psychically fought, and fought through Images; Crime, drug abuse, homelessness, poverty, disease—issues that were often represented with a Black face—threatened the liberalist principles of the 1980s necessary for a prosperous America—liberty, meritocracy, justice, *money*.

These divergent realities were uniquely co-existent within New York City: from architectures of the foul—peep show theatres, prostitution hotels, crack dens, queer cursing parks, and graffiti underground—to architectures of fortune—Trump Towers, Park Avenue, Bergdorf Goodman, Indochine, and Wall Street. Describing the city at the time could be done through a long list of excepting conjunctions, to which I begin chapter two, noting the regularity in which these contrary Americas existed within a compact area of 22.8 square miles: the city had recently saved itself from bankruptcy yet the city was experiencing an all-time high rate of crime and murder. Concurrently, the private equity industry boom was occurring on Wall Street even though 46 percent of the city’s population was making under \$15,000. These myriad urban crises serve as a milieu of anxieties

against which Image becomes paramount. Following, the chapter examines at how these social anxieties and their images operated as a biopolitics that governed spaces of the city, of who and what does and does not belong based on visual and other phenomenal markers of selection/deselection.

The first pair of case studies I examine explores how zoning and landmarking were used as a means to police the city's image. An assault against Park Avenue's pristine image occurred in 1984 due to the horrific sight of vegetables; a Korean immigrant had taken over a florist shop and converted it into a 24-hour delicatessen. Residents were deeply bothered by the mere impropriety of the deli's mere existence—it apparent symbolization of commonality and thriftiness—which they believed threatened to jeopardize Park Avenue's property values, "historic" character, social cohesion. Residents protested that the deli would blanket the streets with criminals, literal filth, and rodents—conceivably circumlocutions for other social anxieties, and swiftly organized, lawyers, politicians, architects, engineers, and neighborhood groups, all of which conspired together, "[p]oring over the zoning, building, and landmarks codes as assiduously as they crawled about the deli's unfinished premises"<sup>8</sup> in hopes of terminating the deli and ensuring such a travesty would never happen again. As one resident put it bluntly, "We do not want a food sort of any kind."<sup>9</sup> What residents wanted was their flower shop back. Ironically, the beloved flower shop that had previously been there had been forced to close down two-years prior, after it was discovered that the shop was a front for heroin dealing and after the florists had pleaded guilty to "arrange[ing] to set off bombs at a competing florist's shop five blocks away."<sup>10</sup>

In the second example, I look at a conflict that arose on the Upper West Side when an economically-struggling yeshiva attempted to sell their nondescript mansion to a developer who intended to build a tower-plaza in its stead. Community opposition rose up in response to this proposal, arguing that the tower-plaza was a physical symbol of the ostentatious lifestyle of the East Side. In order to block the tower-plaza's construction,



the opposition petitioned for the mansion to be landmarked, a move which the yeshiva's dean, called "landmarking by ambush" as the mansion had been relatively unknown and unremarked.<sup>11</sup> The *Times* poignantly and wryly noted that, "virtually lost in the turmoil was a discussion of the architectural quality of the Rice Mansion."<sup>12</sup> Both of these cases demonstrate "how...[a] difference in physical geometry is linked with a fear over imminent changes in social geometry," and how landmarking and zoning regulations became one means of policing the city's the image in the 1980s.<sup>13</sup>

Building from the analytical tools developed in these two case studies, the chapter goes on to survey the ways in which image played a crucial role in major efforts at New York City's development and redevelopment. I follow Battery Park City's (BPC) series of transformations, starting off as a unified Modernist utopia of mixed-income housing envisioned by Governor Rockefeller but eventually ending as a disjointed collection of luxury-apartments with a celebrated financial core. This well-known story of BPC's development illustrates the broader shift in NYC's urban thinking from urban renewal through public amenities to private development. I support this an analysis with a reading of the role of image in postmodern architecture as exemplified in BPC's heart, the World Financial Center, and critique its allusion to iconic forms and symbolism as a means to (re) organize both history and space within the social order of the eighties, drawing a connection between the rise of postmodern architecture in New York's Midtown and Financial District the immaterial image of late-capitalism.

Chapter two concludes with the moral reformation of the city's "symbolic soul," Times Square and the city's efforts in the area's social clearance of porn shops, prostitutes, criminal, queers, and drug dealers; what the city considered "bad" users.<sup>14</sup> Through Times Square and the city's strong pressure for its redevelopment into a space that adhered to the social order, like those spaces of Midtown, the Upper West and East Sides, and the Financial District, is the city's state actors and stakeholder put into relation with the city's queer geography—Harlem, Times Square, and Greenwich village.

Chapter three works to distinguish drag from other forms of transvestitism in order to highlight its unique concern with the production of spectacles and image, tracking drag's evolution and how it came to be *the* image of homosexuality; an image that needed to be policed by the social order and simultaneously an image that could be suffocating for drag queens of color. I begin with a jump back in time to the 1967 Miss-All America Camp Beauty contest held at the Town Hall Theatre in Times Square. At the time, drag was solidified as the gay art form, and a serious art form pivotal in establishing homosexuality as a social identity with a claim to a social standing. The Miss-All American Camp Beauty contest is emblematic of the commonly held drag-balls that defined the city's gay nightlife. These events served as mini-societies within queer and bohemian circles and were frequented by many of the city's, and the nation's, creative illuminati. However, this mid-century form of drag was predominantly a white man's practice despite drag's roots in Harlem. Drag queens of color were expected to lighten their skin when painting on their makeup and to conform to European beauty standards, especially in regards to their bodies, an expectation that not only defined serious drag, but also homosexuality as a social identity at large.

Before addressing the issue of race in mid-century drag culture more directly, the chapter jumps further back in time to outline how drag performance came to be associated with queerness in the first place. Acknowledging that there is an even longer and more diverse history of transvestive practice, I consider the Elizabethan era's use of transvestism in the theatre as the origins of drag. It is during this era that crossdressing was used as a means of parody, social critique, and ultimately spectacle, which distinguishes this form of transvestism from other historical forms such as use its use rituals or as a serious identity. From the Elizabethan theatre, the chapter traces drag's evolution in Europe up to nineteenth century until drag crosses the Atlantic into the United States by way of vaudeville shows in New York's Harlem, Times Square, and Greenwich Village. These performances were a common aspect of bohemian culture, were racially integrated,

and were wildly popular affairs. With prohibition, drag performance went underground, with numerous spaces to perform outside of the purview of the law. Simultaneously, these underground spaces allowed for an openness of homosexuality, and gave birth to a new genre of nightlife: the gay bar. Both drag performance and public homosexuality became so rampant in these three boroughs that the era of prohibition was simultaneously known there as the Pansy Craze.

Given the ability to be openly queer during this era, several queer drag queens ditched their feminine attires and rebranded themselves as suited and slick-dressed pansies, keeping the high-camp wit that was a feature in drag performance. Coming out of prohibition, the most public displays of homosexuality had been associated with high-camp wit and gender play, producing a common conception that homosexuals are inherently bitchy, witty, effeminate caricatures embodied, though differently, by both the drag queen and the pansy. Homosexuality also came out of prohibition as more White, with Black anti-vice organizations in Harlem claiming “that white Americans contaminated the black community [ ] not only with homosexuality but other ‘vices.’”<sup>15</sup>

This flat image of what constitutes homosexuality carried into the middle of the century. With the bitchy, effeminate, high-camp entertainment available in a new form, drag evolved to over-emphasize the importance of the illusion of gender inversion, in which a realistic and totalizing embodiment of “the feminine” became just as cardinal. This new form of drag required literal maintenance over one’s own body and mannerism, where access to material wealth became a central aspect. Because comedy was not the goal, this form of drag made serious, ironically, Western patriarchal conception of feminine beauty/value: white/European, young/prepubescent, well proportioned, hairless/smooth, docile/pleasant. Queens of color found themselves unable to sufficiently situate their own racial blackness within the rigid constructs of mid-century drag culture and its narrow image of feminine beauty. By the 1970s, drag queens of color began hosting their own drag-balls specifically for queens of color, starting the what would become ballroom

culture.

In my final chapter, I situate both the QPOC and ballroom within New York City's socio-culture and geography, returning to the anxieties and urban developments addressed in chapters one and two. I then go into my major theoretical argument, demonstrating how the concept of "realness" differs between architectural and urban scales, revealing a hinge between the two. I conclude by addressing criticisms of ballroom and "realness" and contextualize them relative to the images of America brought up at the start of chapter one.

In situating ballroom culture, I begin by addressing how the metaphor of the two Americas in the eighties was a reality for QPOCs and how ballroom's house system provided an alternative, queer form of kinship, that offered not only mental and social support but at times, economic support, temporary shelter, and physical safety. I draw off of the life-stories of Juan Rivera slash Juanito Xtravaganza, Keith Haring's lover during height of Haring's career who was sadly socially alienated by Haring's friends and foundation after Haring's death, Sara, Gigi, and Giovanna, three Latina transwomen that live inside broken down garbage trucks and participate in sex work to support their addiction to crack-cocaine, and Marlon Riggs who's autobiographical film testifies to the racism, homophobia, and marginalization Black gay men experience within ethnic and sexual minority communities.

In situating the spaces of ballroom, I begin by explaining the difficulty in tracing its sites. I clarify that a House is not a literal physical location, but a form of queer kinship that sometimes correlated with physical sites of a House mother and/or father's apartment. Despite the lack of knowledge—at least from an outsider's perspective—the complexes in which Houses were housed, their plan and division of spaces, number of occupants, rental agreements, and their larger network across New York City's geography, what is known is that the majority of Houses were located in Harlem or Brooklyn, possibly due to a variety of factors, namely, existing ethnic-minority communities in which many

ballroom members grew up in and the lower cost of rent compared to Greenwich Village. Through the use of film and photographic documentation, locating and describing the spaces of balls proves somewhat easier. popular venues included the No. 127 Imperial Elks Lodge, the YMCA, the Roller Rock Skating Rink, the Crystal Ballroom, the Uptown Social Club, and the Golden Terrace Ballroom in Harlem, Club Constellation, the Red Zone nightclub, and Hotel Diplomat/Club Sweatz in Midtown and near Times Square, and Tracks NYC Nightclub, the Paradise Garage nightclub, the Marc Ballroom, and the Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center in Greenwich Village. These spaces were typically conventional open floor plans or banquet halls, seemingly ordinary, but easily adaptable and accommodating to large groups and spectacular performances. At first, balls were held in rented halls in Harlem and Brooklyn and were began late at night and ran through to the early morning, allowing participants to arrive in costume under the cloak of night and leave for home before the rest of the city was awake. In an off-record conversation with an old school ballroom legend, this individual pointed out the humor in which a ball would be hosted at a community church at night, then quickly disassembled with everyone scurrying off in the early morning to go home, only to return a few hours later for church as if nothing happened. Later, balls migrated to popular gay bars in Greenwich Village frequented by QPOCs, occurring at more regular hours, taking advantage of the ability to be more openly queer and the attract more participants as balls were also serious commercial endeavors, also with the aim of attracting a broader audience of queer folks.

The chapter relies heavily on comparisons between contemporary and old way ballroom through literature, photography, and film, through which a spatial logic emerges: a ball is not tied to a specific fix spatial typology but practice of spatial organization. Like QPOCs who must constantly and productively adapt to adverse condition forced upon, often creatively distorting these conditions towards a means of social change rather than buckle under them, ballroom reveals a different approach to architectural production.

The need to remain undetected by the social order meant ball productions need to swiftly set up using easily foldable tables and chairs, and then quickly get out and return to the broader world. It is this ability to co-opt any space in order to hold a ball that has likely allowed ballroom to continue to thrive to this day when so many other forms of queer nightlife died off in the 90s. This form of architectural production is not predicated on fixed relations of programming and space—zoning, landmarking—but instead opportunistically transforms what is available into what is necessary.

I give special attention one specific site because of this site's intersection of QPOC spatial production and other histories of Black resistance and excellence. The Imperial Elks Lodge, now the Faith Mission Christian Church, built in 1924, was designed by Vertner Woodson Tandy, the first African American registered architect in the State of New York. The building was home to Harlem's chapter of the Improved Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World, of which W. E. B. Du Bois was a member, an African American variation on the social club originally for minstrel show performers, the Benevolent Protective Order of Elks, that, when excluded from the original order due to race, surreptitiously copyrighted the secret rituals and claimed the authority they had been denied. It is also here that the first African American led labor union to receive a charter in the American Federation of Labor was founded, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

The remainder of the final chapter is dedicated to analyzing Jennie Livingston's 1991 documentary, *Paris Is Burning*, and its double framing of "realness" which exposes a difference between architecture and urbanism from a QPOC perspective. Through this analysis I demonstrate how the politics of the Image is appropriated by QPOCs as a means by which political contestation is manifest and constantly adjudicated. The concept of realness is first introduced in *Paris* under the intertitle "CATEGORIES" where realness serves as the barometer to evaluate a competitor embodiment of another gender, sex, or social class. Realness is later (re)introduced under the intertitle, "REALNESS," and (re) contextualized as creative strategy of resistance and survival. In the ballroom, realness

was the currency that bought you fame and the title of being legendary, but on the streets, realness saved your life, and it is this difference that exposes the hinge between architecture and urbanism. In my analysis of realness, I also address the roles “reading” and “throwing shade” play in policing and adjudicating the boundaries of “realness.” Through this I draw affinities between these practices and those of landmarking, zoning, as well as the aesthetics of architectural postmodernism, claiming in some way that to throw shade is to landmark or dispute over zoning exemptions, all of which deal with image as a biopolitics for governing spaces of the city.

The thesis concludes by addressing some of the criticisms of ballroom culture, namely, claims made by bell hooks and Judith Butler on ballroom’s gross adoration of white wealth culture, Livingston’s identity and role in capturing ballroom, and the notion of “realness” and “real” gender and “real” sex. While I do not entirely agree with hooks’ or Butler’s reads of the film and ballroom culture, both bring up serious considerations of power and agency of representation that were emblematic of numerous vibrant debates provoked by the film’s release. I address these criticisms with the surge of critical New Black, New Queer, and Feminist cinema in the 1990s, in which, as author Daniel T. Contreras notes, issues of race, gender, and queerness aligned in a particularly urgent way with many cultural texts that these films provided visible representations of and were quickly defended and attacked.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 *Paris Is Burning*, directed by Jennie Livingston (1991; Burbank, CA: Miramax Home Entertainment, 2005), DVD.
- 2 Charles L Davis II and Summer Sutton, "YSOA Ph.D. Dialogues: Access, Accountability, Architecture," Lecture, Yale School of Architecture, Yale University, New Haven, November 8, 2018.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Olanike F. Deji, *Gender and Rural Redevelopment: Introduction* (Zurich: Spektrum, 2011), 50
- 5 Emphases added. *Pose*, season 1, episode 1, "Pilot," directed by Ryan Murphy, aired June 3, 2018, on FX, <https://www.netflix.com/watch/81029280>.
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**Figure 1.1**  
Palladium nightclub in New York City, designed by Arata Isozaki.

## *Chapter 1*

# Images of Two Americas

### **~~LOVE~~ MONEY IS THE MESSAGE**

On the evening of December 8, 1980, anyone within earshot of a television was learning that the era of “Free Love” had seemingly come to an end: “We interrupt this program to bring you a special bulletin from NBC News. Former Beatles John Lennon is dead!”<sup>1</sup> The musician, artist, pacifist, activist, and for many across the world, deity, had been shot dead by fanatic-turned-religious-radical Mark David Chapman under the Gothic archways outside Lennon’s New York City apartment, “the Dakota.” His death appeared to also symbolically mark the end of the zeitgeist that defined the American sixties and was partly the cause of the nation’s problems in the seventies, foreshadowing a significant cultural shift in American and across the globe—what critical theorists and architectural criticism such as Jacques Derrida, Fredric Jameson, Charles Jencks, and Reinhold Martin refer to as “postmodernism” or “late-capitalism.” Unlike the two decades the preceded, the eighties brought together entertainment, politics, and unapologetic adoration of capital and interwove them into a culture of nationalistic triumphalism, spectacles of opulence, and technologies of Pop—bursts of bright and buoyant yet brief encounters with bliss. Love was no longer free; it had a cover charge, and it was exorbitant.

Definitive of this cultural shift was the 1981 election of the nation's first actor-turned-politician president, Ronald Wilson Reagan. His defeat of incumbent Democrat Jimmy Carter marked the democracy's dramatic deviation towards conservative liberalism, evangelical moralism, supply-side economics, and an openness for international investment and development. Equally defining the decade were the tremendous financial booms and busts in the private equity industry during the early eighties. Corporate America had learned that it was easier to merge businesses rather than manage them. Parallel to this financial golden age, for some, was the rise of "yuppie" culture: young, college-educated, urban professionals. This new breed of American—notably white, chiefly male, and predominantly heterosexual, if only in terms of public self-expression—nicely aligned with Reagan's fiscal conservatism that encouraged their key characteristic, an idolization for in-the-know exclusive venues, luxury name-brand fashion, ritzy material objects, and superfluous services. For the yuppie and the American state at-large, the "true" value of "things" could be found in their sociocultural and symbolic image, whether material, sensorial, or emotional, and not their literal worth; the general belief in the eighties was that there was truly little to no value in a commodity's *use*, only its *exchange*. Marxist political theorist Fredric Jameson notes this era of late capitalism, as epitomized in the eighties economic theory of "Reaganomics," "'culture' itself ha[d] become a product in its own right; the market ha[d] become a substitute for itself and fully as much a commodity as any of the items it includes within itself."<sup>2</sup> Thus, "the *cultural* and the *economic*, thereby collapse back into one another and sa[id] the same thing."<sup>3</sup> From the televised images of freed American diplomats stepping foot on the tarmac of Houari Boumediene Airport just an hour after Reagan's presidential inauguration—an image that defined into reality President Carter's weakness and President Reagan's strength—to the myriad mergers and acquisitions in corporate finance, or magazine pages idolizing foreign luxury fashion houses such as Yves Saint Laurent and Chanel, *images* made manifest the cultural and economic logic necessary for the condition of possibility of late capitalism; "there is [seemingly] no differentiation between a level of 'appearance' and a level of 'essence.'"<sup>4</sup>

## **CABLE, CAMCORDERS, COMPUTERS, COLD AND CULTURAL WARS**

Just like the yuppie, many everyday Americans had become seduced by the power of *image*. From maintaining appearances of morality to prestige, images were the ultimate currency of the eighties. The power of image was not only symbolic, but materially realized in both private and public spaces. The development of home electronics such as the

Japan Victor Company's (JVC) videocassette recorder, Sony's Betamovie camcorder, Mega-Vision's digital Tessera camera, International Business Machines' (IBM) first Personal Computer (PC), and the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) introduced new ways of transforming domestic life into spectacles in which families could be both subjects, producers, and curators of images. Outside the home on the streets, municipal, juridical, and commercial entities were becoming ever more reliant on the use of video surveillance (CCTV). Criminal simulacrum was as "authentic" as the real with the added benefit of being an effective and cheap mechanism for securing convictions.<sup>5</sup> Criminal surveillance crossed back into domestic space through police procedurals such as NBC's *Hill Street Blues*, *Miami Vice*, and CBS's *Magnum, P.I.*, as well as pervasive cable-news narratives of racial and urban crime and decline, as seen in CBS News' "48-Hours on Crack Street." These new technologies of image production constructed a new class of consumer and citizen, both tethered with new imaginations of private and public behavior and space.

Arguably the most paramount image-technology that helped shift American culture in the eighties was the advent of affordable cable-television subscriptions. Although televisions were already a staple element of American homes, the cable subscription services that became available in the eighties introduced consumers to media choice, liberating small-screens across the U.S. from the stranglehold of the Big Three television networks, the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), and the National Broadcasting Company (NBC). Mirroring Reagan's championing of free choice, American families were now "free to choose" from several new 24-hour, genre-specific stations, including Ted Turner's Cable News Network (CNN) and John Lack's Music Television (MTV). During this decade the percentage of total U.S. households that owned basic cable subscriptions more than doubled—from 22.6 percent in 1980 to 59.0 percent in 1990—making the eighties a true golden age for American television and a staple element of American life.<sup>6</sup> However, cable only brought the illusion of choice important to the cultural-economic logic of late capitalism. Jameson points out the contraction inherent in the political championing of "the free market" during an era of oligopolies and multinationals:

... On its general use, market as a concept rarely has anything to do with choice or freedom, since those are all determined for us in advance, whether we are talking about new model cars, toys, or television programs: we select among those, no doubt, but we can scarcely be to have a say in actually choosing any of them. The homology with freedom is at best a homology with parliamentary democracy of our representative type.


Two television series ruled primetime in the first half of the decade: *Dallas* and *Dynasty*. The first was a melodrama about the struggle and triumphs of two feuding,

oil-rich, Texan families bonded together through an unwelcomed marriage. The latter was a melodrama about two feuding oil-rich families from Colorado laden with inter-family betrayal, such as Steven Daniel Carrington's "refusal to call" doubled by his scurrilous homosexual urges.<sup>7</sup> Both *Dallas* and *Dynasty* were modern day Greek tragedies wrapped in a fantastic, lavish way of life most Americans would have thought preposterous only a few years prior. The economic recession of the early seventies along with the energy and environmental crises in the latter half of the decade had foretold a bleak future for the America state. However, shows like *Dynasty* and *Dallas* ambitiously reimaged mainstream cultural images of American life that had been in desperate need of optimism by dressing them up in big-hair, big-money, and big-status. American television critic Horace Newcomb credits *Dallas*' success and popularity—comparable to that of its rival, *Dynasty*—to the fact that the show “transplated[ed] the old values of the Western into the new worlds of the American West, the world of express highways and stunning skyscrapers... ‘probably without knowing it, the show’s creators pump[ed] nourishment into the audience’s veins.’”<sup>8</sup> Though overt in their utopianism, these shows’ captivating plot twists, nail-biting cliffhangers, petty drama, and exhausting displays of oil-level wealth were emblematic of the images and aspirations the eighties were saturated with.


It is ironic, then, that cable subscription championed itself on liberating television from the immutable programming of the Big Three. Nearly 40 percent of primetime programs, especially among the Big Three networks, were dedicated to shows about the wealthy, signaling an ethos that “if you can’t have it, watch other people with it”—the “it” being money.<sup>9</sup> Although *Dallas* and *Dynasty* were unique in their rating success and cult-like following, their plots were equivalent to other primetime dramas, including *Falcon Crest* and *Berrenger's*, as well as their respective spinoffs, *Knots Landing* and *The Colbys*. Similarly, *Miami Vice*'s creator Anthony Yerkovich was previously a writer and supervising producer on *Hill Street Blues*, in which both shows have strong similarities in their plots and featured crimes, as well as to those in *21 Jump Street* and *Cagney and Lacey*. Jameson points out that unlike Modernism, which is compulsively concerned about “the New,” the cultural-economic logic of late capitalism “looks for breaks, for events rather than new worlds.”<sup>10</sup> Coupled with the surge of new home electronics that allowed American families to chronicle their own interpersonal triumphs and tragedies, the illusory choice of which indistinguishable holographic fantasies to align a form of identification; to watch *Dynasty* was to live *Dynasty*, in some way, a totalizing hallucination. In her book *Watching Dallas*, cultural studies historian Ien Ang skillfully connects these authentic emotional and psychological affiliations television audiences experience despite fully knowing the fictitious absurdities of soap operas like *Dallas* and *Dynasty*:

Wednesday, January 27, 1988 VARIETY 75


# FOR 48 HOURS, YOU CAN FOLLOW DAN RATHER TO PLACES EVEN HE'S SCARED TO GO.




HOUR 1




HOUR 12



HOUR 18



HOUR 24



HOUR 36



HOUR 48

Go to places like the drug world. Where talk is cheap. And life is cheaper. Dan Rather and a team of CBS News correspondents went there for 48 hours straight. Armed with only questions and cameras. Your viewers will see what they saw. Hear what they heard. And feel what they felt.

It was real life over a two-day period on Crack Street.

But that's only one example of the kinds of stories we'll be covering every week. Though many won't be as scary, all will be as compelling.

Because we let the viewer experience the story the way reporters do. As it unfolds before them.

The critics say it's breakthrough television. But then that's not surprising from the people who bring you 60 MINUTES and WEST 57TH.

So call CBS Broadcast International at (212) 975-8585 or telex 662101 CBINNY and see the world in a way you've never seen it before.

Through the eyes of a reporter.

**THE CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED CURRENT EVENTS SERIES.  
48 HOURS.**

Visit us at Monte Carlo, Room 3061

Figure 1.2  
Advertisement for CBS's 48 Hours in *Variety* from January 27, 1988.

The realism of *Dallas* is therefore produced by the construction of a *psychological* reality, and it is not related to its (illusory) fit to an externally perceptible (social) reality. It could even be said that in *Dallas* an ‘inner realism’ is combined with an ‘external unrealism’. The external manifestation of the fictional world of *Dallas* does also contribute to pleasure, not because of its reality value though, but because of its stylization: a bit of show, expensive clothes, beautiful horses... beautiful people, a carefree life, restful surroundings... clothes, make-up, and hair-dos... the splendid house and beautiful landscape.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the glamorous images of *Dallas*, *Dynasty*, and other outlets of eighties culture helped the nation envision that it was truly “Morning in America,” well, at least in part.<sup>12</sup>

Alongside the glitz and glamour were a series of crises similarly sensitive to the power of image. Foremost, the nation’s crime and murder rates were at all-time highs at the start of the decade. Homicide victimization alone was at its highest in U.S. history—a rate of 10.2 per 100,000 residents.<sup>13</sup> Even though the rates were disproportionately higher in both urban and Black communities, which paralleled one-another’s dramatic increase throughout the decade, the media’s dissemination of postmortem images were ubiquitous.<sup>14</sup> In tandem was a growing crack-cocaine epidemic ripping through low-income urban communities. Hypocritically, its higher-purity twin, cocaine, was romanticized throughout the decade as the recreational drug of “choice” for the rich and famous. Yet, victims of crack-cocaine addiction were ceaselessly depicted as Black inner-city criminals, economic failures, and dehumanizing caricatures. Images of “crack babies,” “crack whores,” “welfare queens,” and “welfare cheats” were commonplace in news media cycles. These racially-offensive tropes coupled with the nation’s colossal crime rate confirmed the latent racial and urban anxieties suburban whites had been long-convinced of: “urban” was synonymous with death, disease, decline, and despair. Sensational media coverage aided in generating the necessary political buy-in to invoke a new species of liberalist policies packaged as essential moral and societal reformations—the 1984 Sentencing Reform Act, the 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act, Reagan’s “economic bill of rights”— but which, in truth, had immensely negative consequences for the lower socioeconomic strata of Americans, regardless of race.<sup>15</sup>

Among these lower strata was a burgeoning homelessness population compounded by a shift in official and cultural understandings of homelessness and definition. Characteristic of this new form of homelessness was its change in demographic. In the past, homelessness was perceived as an unfortunate consequence for “alcoholics, drug addicts, and transients,” and was commonly referred to as “skid row” homelessness.<sup>16</sup> However, the effects of the economic stagnation of the early seventies carried well into the new decade, leading to high unemployment and a problematic inflation rate (stagflation). In



addition, the failure of Modern architecture was symbolically materialized with the 1972 demolition of Pruitt Igoe, a failed urban-housing project designed by architect Minoru Yamasaki. Debate on whether Pruitt-Igoe's architectural morphology or its social inequalities were at root of its failure ultimately echoed throughout the seventies with the removal of millions of low-income/affordable housing units. As Reinhold Martin notes in his 2010 *Utopia's Ghost: Architecture and Postmodernism, Again:*

Pruitt-Igoe brings together several important elements: discourses and practices of environmental reform, where the (modern) normalization of the physical environment is turned toward the (post-modern) normalization of the psychic environment; the biopolitical reshaping of the city along new lines of inclusion-exclusion through such mechanisms as "slum clearance"; and the becoming-spectral of a utopian future that, by the time the project was completed, was already identified with the past.<sup>17</sup>

Reagan's hefty budgetary cuts to public assistance programs and his hollowing of mental health facilities further diminished the social safety net.<sup>18</sup> For the first time in America, homelessness was understood as an economically-driven, individual-level problem.<sup>19</sup>

The eighties witnessed considerable rates of homelessness among young adults and racial minorities from the "baby boom" generation, as well as the mentally-ill, women, children, and entire families.<sup>20</sup> Both traditional media—radio, newspapers, magazines, network news—and the flourishing cable media shifted their attention to and definition of homelessness. Prior to 1978, the *New York Times* lacked a categorical index specifically for homelessness with only a few articles on the topic grouped under "vagrant and migrants."<sup>21</sup> However, from 1978 to 1988 *Times* articles on homelessness dramatically grew from four articles in 1978 to twelve articles in 1980, eighty-five articles in 1982, 159 articles in 1984, 290 articles in 1986, and 302 articles 1988.<sup>22</sup> Through the use of images, news and special interest television programs aided in the redefinition of homelessness with constant visual focus on "human suffering and [the] poor shelter conditions" homeless people endured.<sup>23</sup>

Less conspicuous but growing at the peripheries of the eighties was the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The infection was formally recognized by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in 1981. However, little was understood about the infection; initial diagnoses ranged from a few cases of a rare lung infection (*Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia*) in previously healthy gay men on the West coast to a handful of cases of an unusually aggressive cancer (*Kaposi's Sarcoma*) in men on the East coast.<sup>24</sup> Once researchers made the strong connection between rates-of-infection and homosexuality in 1982, the infection was determined to be sexually transmitted and initially named "gay-related immune deficiency" (GRID).

Similar cases of GRID began to appear in hemophiliacs and non-homosexual men in Haiti later in the year, causing the CDC to question “whether th[e] outbreak [in Haiti] is related to similar outbreak among homosexual males.”<sup>25</sup> By the end of the year, the CDC began using the term AIDS, or “acquired immune deficiency syndrome,” to define “a disease, at least moderately predictive of a defect in cell-mediated immunity, occurring in a person with no known causes for diminished resistance to that disease.”<sup>26</sup> With growing rates of AIDS infections growing in hemophiliacs, intravenous drug users, and heterosexuals, health professionals moved to recognize the disease was a “concern to all Americans.”<sup>27</sup> However, the false narrative of AIDS as an exclusively “gay plague”—one-fifth of all reported AIDS cases to the CDC were among heterosexuals—furthered by the overt homophobia rampant within Reagan’s conservative evangelical base, stalled the exigency for government action and diminished widespread urgency and primacy for disease control and prevention within the general public. Reagan’s administration first treated “the epidemic as a joke” when Press Secretary John Doe exclaimed at a White House press briefing, “AIDS? I haven’t got anything on it... I don’t have it. [Press pool laughter.] Do you?” Reagan managed to avoid growing criticism for a response, never publicly uttering the word “AIDS” until 1985 when the rate of AIDS-death dramatically rose.<sup>28</sup>

Yet, within queer communities AIDS was nothing short of a total catastrophe. At the time of its formal recognition by the CDC in 1981, an estimated 151 adults had died from AIDS. By the middle of the decade the total of adult AIDS-deaths was at a staggering 12,436 individuals (1981-1985).<sup>29</sup> However, it was the second half of the decade that was the most calamitous. Yearly rates of AIDS-deaths grew exponentially: 12,016 (1986); 16,194 (1987); 20,922 (1988); 27,680 (1989).<sup>30</sup> By the end of the decade, the total number of adults who died from AIDS surpassed 89,000 and the total number of adult AIDS diagnoses was 148,641.<sup>31</sup> Similar to rates of crime, murder, crack-cocaine abuse, and homelessness, the rate of AIDS infection was dramatically higher in urban areas. A 1982 CDC *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)* found that “almost 80% of reported AIDS cases in the United States were concentrated in six metropolitan areas, predominantly on the east and west coasts of the country.”<sup>32</sup> Further, despite the lack of racial comparisons in early AIDS data collection and the media’s whitewashing portrayal of AIDS victims—the “face” of AIDS was French-Canadian flight attendant Gaëtan Dugas who was vilified as a sociopath and referred to as Patient Zero—it became visually apparent that there were disproportionate rates of AIDS infections between whites and Black.<sup>33</sup>

## IMAGES OF *BLACKNESS*

These divergent images of America—between opulent optimism and complete calamity—symbolically defined the American culture in the eighties. Pervasive media narratives, despite the newly introduced freedom of broadcast choice, constructed these realities of everyday life as existential polarities entangled in a mortal conflict over the moral soul of America and its promised “dream.” Crime, drug abuse, homelessness, poverty, disease—issues that were often represented in the media by a black body or face—were the adverse consequences of a dictatorial democratic safety net. Their very presence threatened the liberalist principles necessary for a prosperous America—liberty, meritocracy, justice. These contrasting representations of eighties America allude to an ontology of blackness that W. E. B. Du Bois raises in his 1903 *The Souls of Black Folk*:

Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, ‘How does it feel to be a problem?’<sup>34</sup>

Subtle in its power, the verb of this bitter yet paramount question—“how does it feel *to be* a problem?”—unveils a peculiar understanding of blackness and the black body. The question does not utilize a possessive verb (*avoir*), which would suggest a condition external from its subject, but rather an existential one (*être*) that alleges an ontological claim: *to be* black is not *to have* problems, but *to be* a problem by its very nature. The embodiment of this ontological claim, then, produces a black body inconsistent with positivist ideals that were the ideological underpinning of the liberalist (re)imagination of the American Dream. Although Du Bois’ 1903 text expressly focuses on the Negro experience in a post-Emancipation America, political and African-American scholar Melissa Harris-Perry has suggested that this definition might be broadened to “imagine that many bodies that are problematic bodies would constitute blackness... disabled bodies... undocumented bodies... queer bodies... are *black* in a way.”<sup>35</sup> But long before Harris-Perry’s suggestion to academics and activists, the media representations circulating through cable networks and broadcast channels, in the national newspapers and on the nightly news had already visually made this ontology of blackness real. Images of Black and gay bodies became synonymous with crime, crack-cocaine addiction, welfare extortion, homelessness, and AIDS; to surmount these problems plaguing America and its opulent potential meant, symbolically and literally, blackness itself had to be surmounted.

Utilizing the Du Boisian framework of black ontology—ways of thinking Subjects that avoids their universalization(s) by acknowledging the formative role of historical and

present-day forms of historical, cultural, spiritual, and physical death—helps contextualize the subject positions queer people of color (QPOCs) were often regulated to by the social order. The singularity of ontology is a misnomer however, and should be pluralized to ontologies in order to reflect the pluralization this ontological framework seeks to open. Black ontology alludes to a shared ontological precondition of humanity whose experience is not universal and challenges static and cohesive constructions of identity grounded in “Either/Or logic” structures. The term black ontology is uncommon but present within critical race discourse. Melissa Harris-Perry references the term in a 2016 lecture at the Maryland Institute College of Art, used to order to clarify both the onto-epistemological claim of the Christ’s “blackness” made by James H. Cone in his 1997 *God of the Oppressed*, as well as previously claims Harris-Perry made about race. Harris-Perry elucidated that Cone’s statement is not (solely) a biological claim but ontological one fostered out of the Christ’s encounters with conflict:

Blackness is constituted by the problems that are caused by black bodies, and here is what I mean by black bodies and black problems... Within the Souls of Black Folk where Du Bois writes ‘Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, ‘How does it feel to be a problem?’... I want to suggest that the human condition is to have problems. All people have problems. No level of privilege will ever keep you from having problems. No amount of whiteness or maleness or cis-ness or wealth or straightness will keep you from having problems, I give to you exhibit A: Steve Jobs is dead. He died young... He was the whitest, cis-ist, straight, richest guy around and even that could not keep him from having problems... So I just want to suggest that the human condition is to have problems. But what Du Bois draws us to is an understanding is that blackness is not just to have problems but to be a problem. That your body when it enters into particular spaces, say an art gallery, becomes a problem through its very existence... we can imagine that many bodies that are problematic bodies would constitute blackness in this broadest sense... that when we talk about disabled bodies, when we talk about undocumented bodies, when we talk about queer bodies, that those bodies are black in a way... When Cone talks about the blackness of the Christ he is making an ontological claim. He’s saying if you are born to an unmarried mamma, and the law is after your, and you’re trying to raise up a social movement, and you only have twelve friends and one of them sells you out, you’re black!<sup>36</sup>

**More directly, Harris-Perry lays out that the ontology of blackness is to cause problems for the positivist Truth-claims:**

The reality is that embodied blackness actually creates problems for abstract American ideals... The thing that we believe about who we are as a country, because we are a free nation [chattel slavery], and we are a nation of citizens [Japanese internment camps], and we are a nation that generates and supports meritocracy [the Birther Movement], and we are governed in a democracy [KKK voter

suppression], and our laws bring justice [acquitted police brutality cases].<sup>37</sup>

The term is also used in the title of Victor Anderson's chapter "Black Ontology and Theology" in *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology*. Similarly, using a similar theoretical framework to Du Bois', Frantz Fanon argues in his 1952 essay "The Fact of Blackness," that ontological claims put forward by Western theorists fail to hold true for the colonized subject, writing that "Ontology—once it is finally admitted as leaving existence by the wayside—does not permit us to understand the being of the black man. For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man."<sup>38</sup> H.L.T. Quan and Tiffany Willoughby-Herard's article in *African Identities* 11, "Black ontology, radical scholarship and freedom," makes a similar critical claim on black consciousness.

## ENDNOTES

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  - 12 "Morning in America" is a 1984 political commercial used as a reelection campaign for the Reagan administration. The ad is composed of montages of Americans happily going to work while the narrator credits the Republican Party and the Reagan administration for improvements in the US. economy, including higher employment and home sales, lower inflation, and an optimistic future. The full text reads: "It's morning again in America. Today more men and women will go to work than ever before in our country's history. With interest rates at about half the record highs of 1980, nearly 2,000 families today will buy new homes, more than at any time in the past four years. This afternoon 6,500 young men and women will be married, and with inflation at less than half of what it was just four years ago, they can look forward with confidence to the future. It's morning again in America, and under the leadership of President Reagan, our country is prouder and stronger and better. Why would we ever want to return to where we were less than four short years ago?"
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**Figure 2.1**

Minoru Yamasaki, "Demolition of Pruitt-Igoe," St. Louis, Missouri, 1971



**Figure 2.2**

Minoru Yamasaki, "Construction of One World Trade Center," New York, New York, ca. 1970-1.

## *Chapter 2*

# An Urbanism of Images

### **AN URBANISM OF CRISES: REDEVELOPING NEW YORK CITY AND ITS IMAGE**

Curiously, these polarities co-existed in New York City, from Battery Park to the Bronx, Wall Street to Harlem, the West Village to Midtown. Architectures of fortune—Trump Towers, Barneys New York, Bergdorf Goodman, Bloomingdale’s, Henri Bendel, Indochine, Le Bernardin—and the foul—peep show theatres, prostitution hotels, crack dens, gay cursing parks, graffiti undergrounds—constructed its urban fabric. Between 1979 and 1980, the city experienced a 14.3 percent spike in reported crimes of murders, robberies, burglaries, and automobile theft, making it the worst year of crime in New York City’s history.<sup>1</sup> Yet, concurrently the city was experiencing a lucrative boom in the private equity industry on Wall Street. Simultaneous to roaring rates of leveraged buyouts and a soaring stock market in 1983, 46 percent of the city’s population was making under \$15,000, roughly \$36,000 less than the national median.<sup>2</sup> That same year, 45 percent of all reported AIDS infections matching the CDC’s current “surveillance” definition were concentrated in the city.<sup>3</sup> The following year the city held “the greatest number of victims of AIDS,” becoming the most traumatically affected city in the U.S. throughout the eighties.<sup>4</sup> The decade was also the city’s most active in building construction with the completion of

over 140 buildings. Yet, this construction boom ironically did little to alleviate housing demands or soaring rents.<sup>5</sup> Real estate value appreciated 152 percent citywide, with the highest rates in Brooklyn, 180 percent, and Manhattan, 155 percent.<sup>6</sup> Prominent ethnic-minority neighborhoods with higher rates of poverty and lower rates of home-ownership experienced the some of the largest increases in property sale value, including East Harlem, Sunset Park, and Fort Greene which grew by 354.5 percent, 265.4 percent, and 257.6 percent respectively.<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Miller's tracking of New York City's residential real estate over the last 100 years reflects the significant transformation the eighties brought: beginning with the post-world war housing boom of the fifties, residential rent averaged at \$60 per month and property sold at an average of \$5 per square foot; in the sixties, the average rent tripled to \$200 per month and the average sale doubled to \$12 per square foot; in the seventies, a decade in which the city narrowly escaped bankruptcy, the average rent continued to rise, though not as significantly, to \$335 per month with average sale at \$45 per square foot; in the eighties, both average rent and average property sales quadrupled, with rent at \$1,700 per month and sale at \$250 per square foot.<sup>8</sup> The city was truly capricious with both images of America defining its schizoid urbanism.

Matters of appearance have long influenced the development of the city's urban fabric; New York's ubiquitous use of building setback in the early twentieth century was just as much about getting more daylight and fresh air to city streets as it was aesthetic. John Lindsay's mayoralty was largely defined by his "aesthetic and formal concerns for the physical city" in order to manage the city's labor issues, racial and civil unrest, and police corruption.<sup>9</sup> Lindsay understood that the city's aesthetic "was as much about changing the way the city looked, as it was about adapting and adjusting the way the city worked... ideas of a New York City that appeared cleaner, safer, and more attractive for middle-class families and corporations."<sup>10</sup> However, in the eighties aesthetic beliefs—the narratives they tell, histories they veil, and futures they foreshadow—coupled with New York's public policy in a very particular way. For one, the visibility of contemporary homelessness proved to be one of the city's biggest aesthetic challenges. Its presence along public streets, in parks, and on church steps interfered with the city's ability to further develop and commodify New York's housing market which was perceived as necessary in redeeming the city's disastrous post-industrial image. Municipal agencies actively worked to suppress information on homelessness in order to embolden future developer investments while juridical edicts meant to abate the problem unfortunately coincided with ulterior desires.<sup>11</sup> The landmark New York Supreme Court case *Callahan v. Carey* settled in 1981 that both City and State are responsible for providing the shelters for the homeless. Although the verdict provided those in need with the right to shelter, it simultaneously offered state, city, and

private actors less concerned with solving homelessness than managing its public appearance a means to ghetto the problem. In 1985 Mayor Koch ordered the police to remove all homeless people, regardless of their will, from public streets and parks when outside temperatures dipped below freezing and place them into the city's shelters. Advocates for the homeless and civil liberties leaders criticized Koch's policy as misguided. Rather than alleviate homelessness, his order forced homeless people into unsafe, overcrowded, inadequate shelters and misdirected public concern and discussion from homelessness' root, the lack of adequate housing in the city:<sup>12</sup>

The Mayor's policy fails to address the inadequacies of the city's patchwork system of temporary shelters. It creates the illusion of providing special assistance to vulnerable people, but it violates the rights of countless homeless people who have competently refused to go to a shelter. Even worse, it inexcusably postpones a much needed public examination of the acute shortage of available low-income housing in the city... the stock of single-room-occupancy housing in New York has shrunk from 127,000 units 10 years ago to 14,000 today. Many homeless people once lived in single-room-occupancy hotels but were displaced by the gentrification of Manhattan.<sup>13</sup>

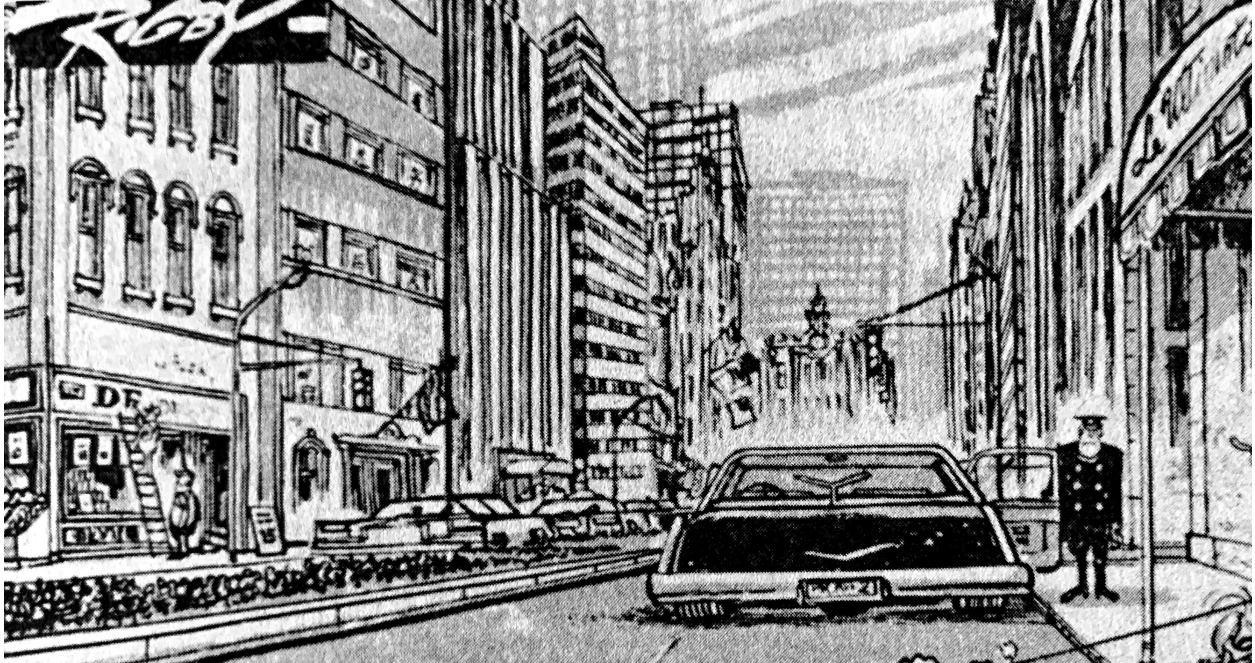
Similar tactics to visually remediate New York City's image were deployed to manage other aesthetic concerns. Legal scholar and historian John Costonis argues in his 1989 text *Icons and Aliens: Law, Aesthetics, and Environmental Change* that "the environment is a visual commons reinforcing the ties we share as members of the various communities to which we belong."<sup>14</sup> Thus, when new visual and physical symbols of different identities or cultures—what Costonis refers to as "symbolic externalities"—enter into certain homogeneous environments, they can produce community distress, mistrust, and contention that cause aesthetics beliefs to couple with legal regimes in order to "prevent or minimize such associational dissonance" spurred by the foreign entity.<sup>15</sup> Put simply, legal aesthetics is an attempt to regulate change in the symbolic environment.

Parallel to the use of legal aesthetics, city developers, architects, and urban planners experimented with architectural styles and building materials in order to match the opulence and prestige the eighties sought after. One of the city's first experiments was the redevelopment of the Villard House on Madison Avenue mansion between 50<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup>.<sup>16</sup> At the end of 1979, developer Harry Helmsley, with aid from architects Emery Roth & Sons, restored the mansion's ostentatious interior of marble, crystal, and gold and repurposed it into the lobby of the luxury New York Palace Hotel. Their message was clear: the legacy of the wealth and lavishness of the past was simply that of a foyer compared the amount of wealth of the eighties. Behind the mansion was a newly constructed tower to house the hotel suites. Helmsley and Roth purposefully mirrored the glitz of the villas interior on the tower's exterior. Rather than use a traditional glass façade, the tower was wrapped in

bronzed-glass which was more fitting to the spectacle of Las Vegas. Architectural critic Ross Miller notes that the use of glitzy surfaces and distinguishable building profiles, tropes of the postmodern movement, “transformed [in the eighties] from a developer’s strategy into a serious urban architecture.”<sup>17</sup> Indicative of the city’s embrace of postmodernism as *the* architectural style of the decade was its stunning explosion of postmodern skyscrapers erected throughout the decade. The city constructed fourteen canonical postmodern works, including Philip Johnson’s Sony Tower (1984) and “Lipstick Building” (1986), Allan Greenberg’s façade for Bergdorf Goodman (1984), Edward Larrabee Barnes’s AXA Equitable Building (1985), Michael Graves’s Domenico Vacca façade (1984), Skidmore, Owings & Merrill’s 461 Fifth Avenue mid-rise (1988), Caesar Pelli’s World Financial Center (1988), Kevin Roche’s 60 Wall Street (1989), Schuman, Lichtenstein, Claman & Efron’s Metropolitan Tower (1987), Buttrick White & Burtis’s Saint Thomas Choir School (1987). The “style” was synonymous with the city’s prominent, high-profiled designers whose clientele “glorif[ied] ownership” and what architectural historian Spiro Kostof states as an urbanism of “one-of-each syndrome... for the sake of prestige and image.”<sup>18</sup> In so doing, architectural concerns gradually shifted from Modernist emphasis on section to elevation—both in surface and profile—becoming “a large social trend [in the eighties], celebrating a society afraid of engagement.”<sup>19</sup>

## LEGAL AESTHETICS IN NEW YORK CITY

Probably the most humorous example of aesthetics and policy coupling together is the vegetable invasion that consumed Park Avenue. A 1984 volume of the *New York Post* featured a mordant caricature of the situation: an elderly Upper East woman leaving her limousine outside Le Ultimate, adorned fine jewels, stiletto heels, a chiffon dress, a mink coat, and a pair of impish toy poodles, suddenly becomes overwhelmed with vertigo at a horrific sight: vegetables. Underneath the *Post*’s sardonic spectacle reads, “Eeeek! I knew the world was going completely mad, but a DELI on Park Avenue?!” The Upper East side had been infected; it had become pedestrian! Kyu-Sung Choi, a 35-year-old Korean immigrant and college graduate, thought it would be a good idea to open a 24-hour delicatessen on the northeast corner of Park Avenue and 75<sup>th</sup> street. His deli would offer a much-needed reprieve to the food-store barren stretch of Park Avenue between 60<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup>. Rather than being received with welcoming arms by Park Avenue residents, Choi precipitously slammed into a wall of affluent hysteria. “Something is wrong in the universe. Someone has offended the Gods!”<sup>20</sup> Park Avenue was no common neighborhood in Manhattan; it was *the* neighborhood. Possessing an address on this boulevard implied that you were a



**Figure 2.3**

Cartoon from a 1984 *New York Post Magazine* dramatizing Park Avenue's upset over Mr. Choi's deli.

prestigious character of either inordinate wealth or immense power. The mere appearance of impropriety—commonality and thriftiness—jeopardized Park Avenue's property values, "historic" character, and social cohesion. The thought of a delicatessen on Park Avenue proved so vulgar that the community's wealthy residents expeditiously marshalled an offensive to rid the neighborhood of plebian produce.

"Do the residents of Park Avenue want to look out the window at vegetables? They most certainly do not." This was the rallying cry of the neighborhood's opposition leader, Mrs. Shirley Bernstein, a resident of Park Avenue since the 1950s, who lived directly across from the delicatessen. Prior to this development, Mrs. Bernstein had never been compelled to engage in the community politics of Park Avenue. However, the image of a delicatessen on Park Avenue led her to believe her beloved oasis of peace and order would soon become colonized by "a generally undesirable type of person that [current residents were] not accustomed to." The symbolic intrusion was so grave that it galvanized her to distribute more than 700 fliers urging fellow rich residents to revolt.<sup>21</sup> Camped in the library of her apartment—the de facto headquarters of the resistance—Ms. Bernstein logged the community's concerns about what the delicatessen foreshadowed, including disturbed sleep due to late night illumination and noise, excessive street litter, increased criminal activity, and, most horrifyingly, rats! There was no evidence ever put forth by the community to validate their beliefs that a delicatessen would ensure such dire consequences, but

the image of Park Avenue brimmed with criminals, filth, and scavengers—conceivably circumlocutions for other anxieties surrounding the eighties—was enough to trigger residents into throwing their money—of which they had a lot—to retain a lawyer to fight any necessary city and court hearings. As Ms. Bernstein stated in a *New York Times* article, “It takes money to fight something like this.”<sup>22</sup> The faction of affluent residents also successfully lobbied city and state officials, including Borough President Andrew J. Stein of Manhattan, who publicly denounced the delicatessen, and East Side Democrat State Assemblyman Mark Alan Siegel, who claimed his office would seek legislation to insure nothing similar to Mr. Choi’s delicatessen would happen again.<sup>23</sup> As a result of Mrs. Bernstein’s swift community organizing, lawyers, politicians, architects, engineers, and neighborhood groups all conspired together “[p]oring over the zoning, building, and landmarks codes as assiduously as they crawled about the deli’s unfinished premises.”<sup>24</sup>

First, the insurgence indicated that Mr. Choi’s coffee urn violated an amendment to the neighborhood’s zoning law that prohibits prepared food and carry-out services. Mr. Choi was ordered to immediately remove his coffee urn to prevent potential unruly congestion! Second, the rebellion lobbied the city to deliver a pair of stop work orders. The first was from the landmark commission, which cited Mr. Choi with a violation for replacing his storefront’s wooden door with a glass one whose transparent materiality not only ruined the character of Park Avenue but also visually contaminated the streets with images of parsimonious produce. The latter was issued by the Department of Buildings, which claimed the use of the delicatessen’s basement for storage was “not covered by a zoning exemption that allow[ed] the premises to be used for commercial purposes.”<sup>25</sup> Though this stop work order resulted in more of an inconvenience for Mr. Choi than a lethal blow, the community hoped to convince their legislators that the zoning exemption “increase[d] the degree of noncompliance.”<sup>26</sup> The reason Park Avenue had been barren of food stores between 60<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> streets was because in 1961 the avenue had been rezoned to be strictly residential. Properties that possessed commercial tenants prior to the amendment were exempt from the rezoning provision and were allowed to remain, in which “Choi’s immediate predecessor had been a florist.”<sup>27</sup> Hoping to catch Mr. Choi in violation of zoning, landmark, or building policies, a coalition of 120 “monitors” known as the Friends of the Upper East Side Historic District surveilled the delicatessen day and night for the slightest infringement.

Mr. Choi was flabbergasted by the community’s animosity over vegetables. He had genuinely believed that opening a delicatessen would be warmly welcomed due to the fact that there were hardly any food stores across the famous thirty-block stretch of Park Avenue. Dumbfounded as to why his business would “spoil the neighborhood” rather than



relieve it of its anorexia, Mr. Choi questioned whether racial prejudice was at the root of Ms. Bernstein's disdain and fear. Ms. Bernstein, for her part clumsily defended herself, claiming that Mr. Choi's "being Korean has nothing to do with [it]. I am not prejudiced. I employ *Chinese* people."<sup>28</sup> When Mr. Choi followed up asking what kind of food store would be welcomed on Park Avenue, Mrs. Bernstein replied, "We do not want a food sort of any kind. Flowers might be alright."<sup>29</sup> Her statement ironically said the quiet part loud, unveiling the duplicity behind an authentic concern for the community's well-being and the politics of image. The beloved flower shop that existed before Mr. Choi's dreadful delicatessen was actually a front for its heroin dealing owners who "held their drug 'meets' out of sight behind the chrysanthemums."<sup>30</sup> The store was forced to close down in 1982 after the florists were arrested and plead guilty to "arrange[ing] to set off bombs at a competing florist's shop five blocks away."<sup>31</sup>

The media was quick to exploit "the spectacle of a posh neighborhood cringing before an onslaught of okra and zucchini" demanding in its stead the return of its "nice little flowershop" that had pedaled heroine and bombed its competitors.<sup>32</sup> Editorialists, cartoonists, reporters, and television personalities mockingly disseminated caricatures of absurd class difference that produced a new image: one of wealthy residents armed with ravenous lawyers and influenced-through-affluence politicians ganging up on a Korean immigrant hoping to start his own small business. The negative politics of this image quickly spurred lawmakers to recant their opposition and paint Mr. Choi's business as the image of "American Free Enterprise."<sup>33</sup> City Comptroller Harrison J. Goldin utilized the delicatessen's media coverage as a campaign to chastise his political opponents, claiming that Mr. Choi's business represented "what [] this country, this city, [is] about if not a place of opportunity where law-abiding, hard-working people can come and make a life for themselves and their families, as so many other *Americans* have done."<sup>34</sup> Community residents also followed suit, suggesting Mr. Choi match Park Avenue's prestige by naming his delicatessen "Designer Veggies and to ask 'Calvin Kline or Yves St. Laurent to get up becoming little sweaters for the produce.'"<sup>35</sup>

The symbolic shifts Mr. Choi and his delicatessen were subjected to—from community-spoiler to American Free Enterprise, Korean-immigrant to American—illustrate the power *image* plays in the social and cultural cohesion of the physical environment. As Costonis notes, "the symbolic environment is not unlike religion, language, or popular culture, where change also disorients and destabilizes... anchors of our identity."<sup>36</sup> For the pecunious residents of Park Avenue the flower shop symbolically represented an "icon," that is, an aesthetic reassurance that reinforced a sense of spatial, cultural, and social order despite the reality that the previous tenants were heroin traffickers. Mr. Choi's

delicatessen, although good intentioned, symbolically represented an “alien.” As such, it aesthetically disrupted Park Avenues symbolic environment, pointing towards change and the end of a particular way of life.

Four years prior to Mr. Choi’s vegetable invasion of Park Avenue, the West Side was similarly embroiled in a quandary of aesthetics and jurisprudence. The dilemma arose when a yeshiva fell into economic hardship and planned on selling the 1901 mansion that housed them to a developer for \$1.5 to \$2 million. The developer intended to demolish the building and erect a residential thirty-story tower-plaza building that would include new facilities for the yeshiva. Once news of the developer’s intentions got out, the community divided in two: one side hopeful the sale would help alleviate the city’s housing shortage, the other adamant to ensure the tower-plaza would never see the light of day. On the side of the opposition was the largely influential neighborhood organization, the Community Planning Board No. 7. The organization solicited the support of high-profiled celebrities and esteemed citywide associations, including Jackie Onassis, the Municipal Art Society, and the Citizens Union.<sup>37</sup> In the eyes of the opposition the tower-plaza symbolically portrayed an “alien;” residents found it aesthetically repugnant—the tower-plaza was synonymous with ostentatious lifestyle of the East Side—and injurious to the community’s building fabric. Central to opposition’s argument was that a tower-plaza would “block existing views and eliminate the open space around the freestanding mansion.”<sup>38</sup>

In an effort to obstruct the sale Board No. 7 petitioned the city’s Board of Estimates and Landmarks Preservation Commission to legally recognize the mansion as a landmark. The move further polarized the community and resulted in months of heated public debates, flared passions, and what the *New York Times* described as “perhaps the most agonizing landmark fight in Manhattan in some years.”<sup>39</sup> Proponents of the sale questioned the legitimacy of move; both the mansion and its patron, Isaac I. Rice, were unbeknownst; until concerns over the tower-plaza arose, the importance of Isaac I. Rice, both man and manor, were not significant to the community’s identity. The yeshiva’s dean, Rabbi Feigelstock, called the move a “landmarking by ambush” and “was nothing more than a power play to achieve elitist, glossy selfish goals.” The legitimacy of Board No. 7’s appeal grew ever more suspicious when the organization was “tickle[d] pink” by an attempted compromise by the developer to substitute the tower-plaza with a twenty-story building that mirrored the existing 1920s architectural tectonics. However, the appeal was already in motion and in the month of June 1980, the Board of Estimates ultimately approved the landmark designation with a divisive six-to-five vote. Costonis and the *Times* poignantly note that “virtually lost in the turmoil was a discussion of the architectural quality of the Rice Mansion.”<sup>40</sup>

## DEVELOPMENT OF BATTERY PARK CITY

The well-known story of Battery Park City's (BPC) development is the epitome of the divergent Americas prominent in the eighties. It was lionized by the media, politicians, and real estate developers as both an indication of New York's rebirth from the ashes of the Post-war urbanism as well as indicative of the financial success possible through private-public partnerships. For its time, it was "the largest and most expensive real estate venture ever undertaken in New York City."<sup>41</sup> Further, the architectural attitude of BPC was characteristic of the "indifference towards the idea of urbanism, a feeling that individual parts matter a great deal more than wholes."<sup>42</sup> Located along the Hudson River within a perfect waterfront views of the Statue of Liberty—the image of Freedom—BPC "occupies a particular sensitive position."<sup>43</sup> However, as Rosalyn Deutsche argues in her 1996 book, *Evictions*, triumphal narratives and aesthetic descriptions of BPC post-development, as well as dismissals of the site having a history beyond being a 92-acre landfill or construction site were nonetheless necessary tactics for veiling Battery Park's privatization and urban revision:

Ironically, the image bestowed on land that has been *literally* produced figuratively severs the space from the social processes that constituted it. Such conceits inadvertently convert Battery Park City's imaginary landfill into a palpable symbol not of the city's triumph but rather of the mental operation that fetishizes the city as a physical object. The landfill bespeaks the triumph of the technocratic city produced by powers that surpass people.<sup>44</sup>

The image of BPC was first conceived in 1966 by Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller who, in tandem with his younger brother David Rockefeller, had big plans to redevelop Downtown and Lower Manhattan. By the turn of the century, Lower Manhattan was widely perceived as decrepit as a result of the city's continued post-industrial decline. Following David Rockefeller and his Downtown Lower Manhattan Association (DLMA)'s undertakings in the construction, expansion, and redevelopment of several downtown traffic and transit infrastructures, private, city, and state efforts were shifted towards "increasing [the] residential capacities in Lower Manhattan."<sup>45</sup> Governor Rockefeller and his architectural consultant, Wallace K. Harrison, proposed detailed plans to redevelop the 98-acres of public land that had remained vacant since the 1920s along Lower Manhattan's waterfront. In the landfill's stead was a vision of a city within a city; an integration of high, middle, and low income housing units for 45,000 residents—approximately 14,100 units, 47% high-income, 43% middle-income, and 10% subsidized low-income— with complimenting industries, schools, municipal, civic, and cultural sites, and a hotel for visitors.<sup>46</sup> However, due to stubborn intransigence from the city's Mayor who had similar hopes to redevelop Lower Manhattan into residences, but solely for high-income residents,

the city and state were forced into a three year long negotiation. The result was a “compromised” plan of 19,000 residential units with only 6% and 26% allocated for low-income and middle-income families, respectively.<sup>47</sup>

The revised plans sparked public outrage. Many liberal politicians and special interest groups criticized Mayor Lindsay for the “use [of] scarce land resources and public powers to benefit mainly groups and social classes fully capable of meeting their housing needs without public aid.”<sup>48</sup> In order to maintain his political legitimacy, especially with a mayoral election on the horizon, Mayor Lindsay conceded his vision of an exclusive luxury Downtown, stating that “the social benefits... outweigh ‘the financial burden.’”<sup>49</sup> A third iteration of BPC was introduced—the 1969 Master Development Plan—with 14,100 residential units equally divided into high-, middle-, and low-income units.<sup>50</sup> In addition, the plan proposed 5 million square feet of office spaces, a 500,000 square foot shopping center, 275 acres of parks, two schools, a library, a healthcare center, cultural and recreational facilities, and police and fire stations.<sup>51</sup> In true Modernist fashion, the entirety of the project was contained within a single megastructure: modular commercial and residential pods connected together by a seven story high, mile long, enclosed pedestrian walkway blanketed with retail storefronts and community spaces. Futuristic renderings and models of BPC were released to the public, successfully generating public enthusiasm and critical praise. Notable architectural critic Ada Louise Huxtable commended the redevelopment as a successful way to plan a city, while others applauded the project’s ability to capture “new kind of urban life” and “the spirit of the time as a ‘space age’ city of tomorrow.”<sup>52</sup> James Rossant, the principal designer and renderer, later clarified the thinking behind the pod method in a 1992 interview:

We intended that ‘the pedestrian would be King’ in the area, with roads diverted under the main pedestrian squares...We coined the term ‘pods’ for the sites between the squares. These would be huge areas of development, like superblocks... Traffic, parking, access and transfers of level would take place in the base of the pods. The development would take place on the deck on top... We were not really interested in big complexes by a single architect.... We just believed that in high density areas, you have to integrate highways, transit and parking.<sup>53</sup>

At the start of the seventies, the project had a developed design scheme, political consensus between city and state governments, and a newly formed agency, the Battery Park City Authority, ready to raise funds. The Master Lease was approved and efforts were put in place to execute Governor Rockefeller’s vision. However, within the first couple of years, the project began to stall. Multiple building and construction provisions within the Master Lease were perceived as overly “cumbersome” and “time-consuming,” discouraging developers from getting involved due to risky “construction and housing market

conditions.”<sup>54</sup> Eager to incentivize developers, the BPCA requested several significant modifications to the Master Lease that would make conditions more amenable. The modifications saw a substantial reduction in the number of units allocated for low-income housing and eliminated a provision requiring low-, middle-, and high-income units to be integrated, allowing for the virtual ghettoization of low-income housing units. However, these grievous revisions did little abate financial anxieties inflamed by the 1973 recession. The project failed to maintain developer interest or commitment and the project remained to stall throughout the seventies.

By 1979, political support for the project at city and state levels had substantially diminished. The sight of undeveloped and unattractive land combined with the reality of government’s inability to deliver on its promises. Worse, decreased oil output had induced a national financial panic. Concerned that the project would default on its first payment of principal, the Governor’s Office, the Mayor’s Office, the Urban Development Corporation, and the BPC Authority entered into a Memorandum of Understanding. The new agreement transferred legal ownership of the property from the city to the state through an expropriation by the UDC, required a new master plan to be developed, abandoned cumbersome approval processes and regulations, provided decade-long tax-incentives to office developments, and provided \$8 million in loans by the state to guarantee the security of project’s bonds.<sup>55</sup> Deutsche accentuates in her book that the shift in ownership of BPC and the lingering anxieties from economic crises of the late-seventies provided a “solution” for profit-driven private entities to restructure the narrative of BPC in order to justify the privatization of public resources:

In 1979 the ideology of crisis justified such inequitable measures in Battery Park City, aimed at providing the project’s “last chance.” To rescue Battery Park City, a new legal framework, financial scheme, and master design plan were adopted to “make something useful” out of the site. Principally, the goal was to attract private financing. To do so, the new plan provided substantial tax abatements and other financial incentives and relocated Battery Park City’s commercial zone, previously regulated to the landfill’s southern end, to a central location. The plan eliminated all subsidized low-, moderate-, and middle-income housing as well.<sup>56</sup>

The memorandum’s reductions to required regulation and oversight—what would swiftly become the motto of the eighties—meant that developers no longer needed to endure arduous “community board reviews, public hearings, and City Planning Commissions approval[s]” nor comply with public demands.<sup>57</sup> The 1979 Master Plan shifted the redevelopment’s focus away from the much-needed residences towards its commercial core. Under these new provisions, 8 million square feet was allotted to commercial space, of which roughly 6 million square feet was solely dedicated to office space.<sup>58</sup> Flanking the

commercial core were detached, independent north and south luxury communities. The new scheme abandoned the interconnected Modernist megastructure that Rockefeller had envisioned; his amalgamation of mixed-use, mixed-income superblocks had come to be seen as not only inflexible to social, political, and economic changes—namely, the private interests of developers—but also symbolic of the Modernist urban renewal attitude that died with the demolition of Pruitt-Igoe. To further minimize the project complexity Manhattan’s traditional grid was extended to the Hudson River, which substantially lowered infrastructural costs from the 1969 vision. The grid also allowed for incremental development by various stakeholders. Unlike the 1969 megastructure, with individual pods reliant on a central, wholly-integrated circulation network, the grid-extension, with new provisions under the 1979 Master Lease, allowed developers to focus on constructing their own lots and ignore the project’s overall cohesion.

### **BATTERY PARK CITY: A POSTMODERN SUCCESS**

With developers freed from community approval, the ability to develop in incremental stages according to market forces, and the financial backing of new bonds at the highest credit rating possible, residential construction began swiftly in the eighties. Essential to the urban and financial success of BPC would be the development of its commercial core. The anticipated financial gains—after all there was no need for moderate, sensible, or subsidized rents—attracted property development titan Olympia and York Properties to develop the project’s heart, the World Financial Center, situated directly in front of New York’s beloved Twin Towers—also designed by Minoru Yamasaki—thus prominently located within the city’s network of iconic skyscrapers and skyline silhouettes. Forming a suitable match, the celebrity property firm hired celebrity architect Cesar Pelli as the center’s lead designer. Pelli was already prominently known for his postmodern style and play on historic architectural references. He desired to “put the World Trade Center into a scale within the city.”<sup>59</sup> The colossal, homogenous, and bulky volumes of Yamasaki’s twin towers were visually and materially harsh compared against the petite, multi-varied urban fabric of Lower Manhattan’s Hudson edge. To soften the transition from the city’s fluid water edge to its towering, compact financial core, Pelli deployed four similarly-bulky towers in an L-formation stepped in height toward the World Trade Center. His formal strategy helped synthesize the urban edge to its Downtown core, however, it did not resolve the visual bloat created by the buildings’ wide massing. The proliferation of computers and other consumer electronics generated a demand for buildings with larger floor space in order to accommodate the technological bulk.<sup>60</sup> Further, the sweeping use

of air-conditioning and florescent lighting in the eighties freed plans from the antiquated function of windows; it was possible to receive light and air in the middle of the floor. As a result, numerous office towers across New York City became inflated, especially since developers were eager to exhaust the total floor area possible to maximize their returns.

To resolve a growing corpulent city skyline, Pelli deployed two surface tactics definitive of postmodern architecture. The first was his use of setbacks. The BPC 1979 Master Lease did not mandate setbacks to incentive developer commitment. Yet, Pelli utilized setbacks as both a historical reference to the city's legacy of skyscraper construction, but also for its visual dissolution, breaking apart the chunky mass into three-tiers. The second postmodern tactic Pelli applied to his towers' surfaces was a blending of granite and highly-reflective glass. Each tower is based with a four-story golden beige granite volume that provides "a comfortable transition from the street."<sup>61</sup> Whether a comfortable transition from the street to a building's interior is literally the product of four-stories of granite, the symbolic message is clear: opulence! Although granite had been a commonly used material in stone building construction, it still maintained its historic symbolism of high status and power. Further, the granite's light golden beige color is accentuated by the backdrop Lower Manhattan's dark-colored stone, metal, and glass urbanism. As Pelli's towers climb skywards from their granite bases, their facades are decorated with an attenuating orthogonal grid of granite and reflective glass. The granite proportionally decreases with the glass paneling as the building rises and emphasized by buildings' setbacks. At each setback the granite appears to inverses with its glass paneling, creating the illusion that the building is dissipating into thin air and thus further thinning of each tower's bulky mass. This illusion also emphasizes Pelli's desire to transition smoothly from the cities Hudson waterfront to the imposing stark figures of the Twin Towers. The transitions is successfully accomplished through the facades' highly reflective glass, which (re)projects the city's skyline outwards and creates "the illusion of a building within a building," or what postmodern architectural critic Charles Jencks referred to as "the peeling building," to "a thin building trying to get out a fat one."<sup>62</sup>

A common trait in postmodern architecture is the combination of new ideas and technologies with traditional architectural forms. Pelli's biggest postmodern architectural move is to distinguishes each of his four towers through "distinctive hats" made of copper and referential to the past.<sup>63</sup> Perched proudly on each tower of granite and glass is an homage to the great ancient civilizations: a pyramid, a dome, a ziggurat, a mastaba. This formal allusion to the ancient civilizations of the world mythically situates America—a nation unable to (unproblematically) trace its roots back to any of these civilizations—within their legacy. The deployment of these canonic architectural forms, associative of

the strength and brilliance of the Egyptian, Romans, Aztecs, and so on, suggests America as similarly timeless; a final empire that is the culmination of all previous civilizations before. Each copper hat identifies the oligarchy of corporate financiers and media moguls that govern this new empire: the ziggurat for Merrill Lynch, the pyramid for American Express, the dome for the Meredith Corporation and BYN Mellon, the mastaba for the Dow Jones & Company and Fidelity Investments. Pelli's historical reference abstracts these forms from much of their religious contexts and applies to a new American mythology of wealth, so long as they operated in a symbolic of humanistic history rather than religion.

Within a few years of its completion, Pelli's World Financial Center was already considered an architectural success, and to some a "masterpiece."<sup>64</sup> In 1991, the World Financial Center was awarded "Top 10 Bests Works of the Decade" by the American Institute of Architects (AIA). Pelli's deployment of postmodern attributes—historical references, visual illusions, symbolism—became emblematic of the style. Jencks credits Pelli's facades for their production of "a very intelligent, sensuous and creative wallpaper."<sup>65</sup> The project also became an emblem for this city as a whole. A 1985 *New York Times* article hailed the project as "a symbol of change:"

... these four towers, built by a Canadian development company, Olympia & York, and distinctively topped with stylized copper roofs, symbolize the city's growing preeminence as a financial capital, its emergence from a dark decade of fiscal crises and corporate departures, and the muting of the traditional liberal politics over which most of Battery Park City's early battles were fought.<sup>66</sup>

However, lost in the applause for BPC and the World Financial Center were their historical roots in housing equality and the mixing of social classes. "Ultimately, after many years and vast transformation of the project, the as-built BPC [bares] virtually no resemblance [to the plans of Governor Rockefeller]."<sup>67</sup>

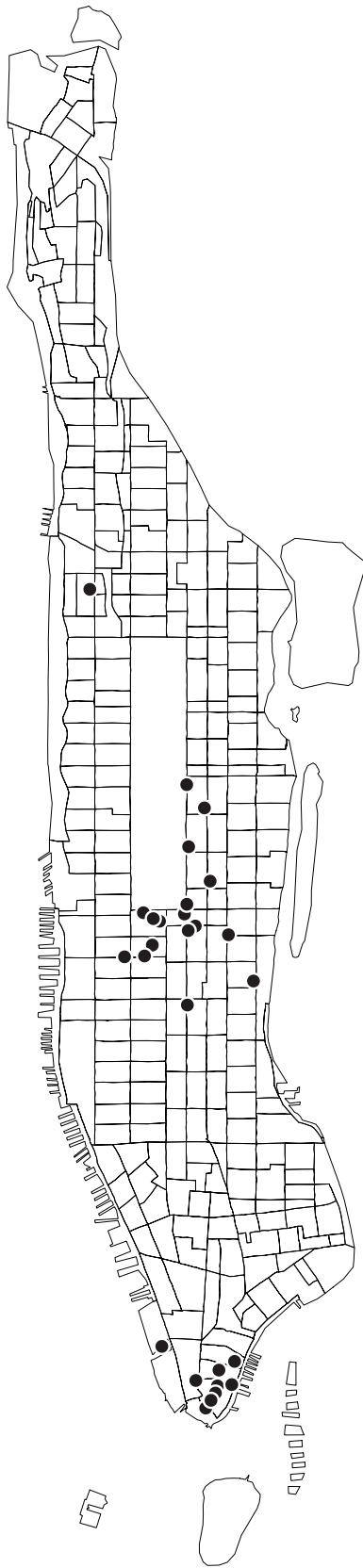
## **POSTMODERN ARCHITECTURE: THE IMAGE OF LATE-CAPITALISM**

Pelli's use of highly-reflective glass to produce a visual illusion is a common trope within postmodern architecture. Architectural historian Reinhold Martin draws parallel between this use in postmodern architecture and the logic of late-capitalism:

The elementary, almost parodic inside-outside game going on here with glass has little to do with that material's purported transparency as celebrated by a previous generation of architects, including Johnson himself in an earlier incarnation. But neither is it merely evidence of the dematerialized "precessions of simulacra," as Jean Baudrillard might have said. It is a material thing that manages in crude and sophisticated ways to seem spectral, both there and not there at once... What we are looking at—or properly, what we are watching—is not the network hiding behind a mirror,



**PROMINENT POSTMODERN SKYSCRAPERS  
BUILT IN THE EIGHTIES**



**Sony Tower**

Philip Johnson & John Burgee,  
1984

**Fifty-Third at Third**

Philip Johnson, 1986

**Bergdorf Goodman's facade**

Allan Greenberg, 1983

**Le Parker Meridien Hotel**

Todd Lee, 1981

**Townhouse for Matt Sabatine**

Diana Argest & Mario Gandelso-  
nas, 1984

**AXA Equitable Building**

Edward Larrabee Barnes, 1985

**Banca Commerciale Italiana**

Gino Valle, 1982-86

**Exterior of Domenico Vacca**

Michael Graves, 1984

**Schermerhorn Hall**

Susana Torre, 1985

**461 Fifth Avenue**

Skidmore, Owings, Merrill, 1988

**World Financial Center**

César Pelli, 1985

**60 Wall Street**

Kevin Roche & John Dinkeloo,  
1989

**St. Thomas Choir School**

Buttrick White & Burtis, 1987

**Metropolitan Tower**

Schuman, Lichtenstein, Claman &  
Efron, 1984-7

**17 State Street**

Emery Roth & Sons, 1988

**Goldman-Sachs Building**

Skidmore, Owings, Merrill, 1983

**Broad Financial Center**

Fox & Fowle, 1986

**National Westminster Bank**

Fox & Fowle, 1983

**750 7th Avenue**

Kevin Roche & John Dinkeloo,  
1989

**1 Financial Square**

Edward Durell Stone, 1987

**One Exchange Plaza**

Fox & Fowle, 1982

**Worldwide Plaza**

Skidmore, Owings, Merrill, 1989

**Figure 2.4**

Mapping of prominent postmodern building built in the 1980s.

but a network of mirrors, unfolding. This is the 'space' of techno-economic globalization. Anything but flat, its folded surfaces perform topological transformations of the highest order: from in to out to back in again.<sup>68</sup>

Whereas Modernism's architectural interest in glass was located in its material transparency—a possible allegory to Western philosophies of Truth—postmodernism's concern is situated in glass's ability to create infinite image variations through reflection. Similarly, Jameson argues that postmodernism's consciousness surmounts “to not much more than theorizing its own condition of possibility, which consists primarily in the sheer enumeration of changes and modifications.”<sup>69</sup> Thus, both architecture and the logic of late-capitalism move closer towards an economy of images, where the spectacle is commodity. Jameson, writing on the important relationship between the market and the media, and the growing structure of a commercial “cultural industry,” notes that with “the gradual disappearance of the physical marketplace... and the tangential identification of the commodity with its image... another, more intimate, symbiosis between the market and the media is effectuated.”<sup>70</sup> Jameson continues to highlight shows like *Dynasty* blur the distinction when their “narrative segment has ended and the commercial has begun.”<sup>71</sup>

In the eighties, New York City experienced a tremendous building boom. Many of these new erections, especially in Midtown and the Financial district, were constructed in the postmodern style. New York City was already saturated with various architectural styles and icons—the Metropolitan Museum (Beaux-Arts, 1874), the Flatiron (Renaissance revival, 1902), the Woolworth Building (Neo-Gothic, 1912), the Chrysler Building (Art Deco, 1930), the Seagram Building (Modern, 1958)—in which new construction needed to vie for attention. The general motto of postmodernism, “the more metaphors, the greater the drama, and the more [ ] suggestive, the greater the mystery,” was a powerful method for domineering a jammed visual landscape.<sup>72</sup> Emerging architects had learned of the power iconic and symbolic signs through the Los Angeles Hot Dog Stand, Henry J Goodwin's *Big Donut Drive-In*, and Robert Venturi's *The Duck versus Decorated Shed*. Jencks notes that the “media-event of Post-Modernism” in New York, such as Johnson and Burgee's *AT&T Building*, became “a wonderful urban landmark when seen from a distance... [and] a welcome[d] change from its repetitive neighbors.”<sup>73</sup>

During this decade alone, New York's Midtown witnessed the construction of more than ten canonical postmodern projects—Buttrick White & Burtis' *St. Thomas Choir School*; Schuman, Lichtenstein, Claman & Efron's *Metropolitan Tower*; Todd Lee's atrium and galleria for the *Le Parker Meridien Hotel*; SOM's *Worldwide Plaza* and *461 Fifth Avenue*

building; Edward Barnes' *AXA Equitable Building*; Roche and Dinkeloo's *750 7th Avenue* building; Johnson and Burgee's *Sony Tower* and *Lipstick Building*; Allan Greenberg's facade for *Bergdorf Goodman*; Michael Graves' facade *Domenico Vacca*; Argest and Gandelsonas' *Townhouse for Matt Sabatine*. This rise mirrored the eccentricity also occurring in eighties corporate culture and media, where opulent displaces of one's prestige and status were not only admired but a barometer of the nation's economic and social health. It is no wonder then that many of the postmodern projects erected in eighties were tied to industries of finance, media, and luxury commerce. Jencks notes the shift in motivation behind an architectural production from the old, private system of production to the modern and postmodern systems.<sup>74</sup> In the old system, Jenck claims the motivation behind an architectural production is aesthetic and ideological for the architect and inhabitation and use for the client/user. These motivating factor shift in the modern system to problem solving and housing, respectively. However, in the postmodern system, the user becomes divorced from the client and both architect and client are motivated by the potential to make money. Jencks further notes that the types of buildings shift from "houses, museums, universities, etc.," in the old system to "housing and infrastructure" in the modern system, and later "shopping centers, hotels, offices, factories, etc." in the postmodern system.<sup>75</sup>

New York City's Financial District also witnessed a moderate boom of postmodern project in the eighties. Most, as Jencks mentioned, were office spaces for financial corporations or commercial banks. One project in particular exemplifies the connection between postmodern architecture, late-capitalism, and image culture: Roche and Dinkeloo's *J.P. Morgan & Company Bank Headquarters*. Their design carefully blends nineteenth and twentieth century architectural forms with "technologically and functionally contemporary" spaces and "state of the art communication systems, energy efficien[cy] and... computerized offices." Its magnificent three-story lobby is fashioned into a stone and mirror iteration of an Egyptian hypostyle with public spaces clustered around indoor trees and framed chunks of earth. Like most postmodern buildings, significant considerations was given to the building's surface. Design within the Greek Revival tradition, a massive tower of alternative mirror and granite sits atop four-story granite podium. Similar to Pelli's World Financial Center, Roche Dinkeloo's tower transitions between mirrored glass and granite in order to materialize "yet another node in the 'global network.'"<sup>76</sup> Martin elucidates:

The tricks with mirrors and other real materials performed by corporate globalization produce the illusion that there is an illusion; the illusion that their materiality is illusory, unreal, derealized. The illusion that there is an illusion—neither a double negative nor a tautology—also describes what a new stage in commodity fetishism might actually look like: the inability simply to look at something directly rather than attempt or see through it. This mode of distraction draws us in even

as it keeps us out.<sup>77</sup>

The image of late-capitalism as immaterial is, of course, a falsehood. As both Jameson and Martin call out, the logic of late-capitalism is unequivocally material, producing real, physical objects at the expenditure of real labor and real material extraction. However, the immaterial images, divorced from products of the market they are advertising, have also become commodities in themselves, returning into the market. As an expression of architecture, the use of mirrors in postmodern architecture shadows the play of economic speculation in late-capitalism. “Thus the mirror returns us to the domain of commodity fetishism. Not because it seems to conceal the inner workings of the late-capitalist machine but because it renders the outer world—the city—invisible at its moment of crisis.”<sup>78</sup>

## **THE MORAL REFORMATION OF THE CITY’S SYMBOLIC SOUL**

Throughout New York City’s history, Times Square has held special significance within the city’s urban fabric. According to Tim Tompkins, President of the Times Square Alliance since 2002, “Times Square’s always been about popular entertainment and always been on the edge of what is socially acceptable.”<sup>79</sup> Ada Huxtable similarly wrote about Times Square, defining it as the city’s unique “testing ground of [its] limits.”<sup>80</sup> Whether a symbol of commercial success or the figure of foulness, “Times Square is not just a place, it’s a backdrop, a colorful, iconic setting that symbolizes the round-the-clock vibrancy of New York City,” or, what real estate scholar Lynne Sagalyn describes as the “symbolic soul of the city.”<sup>81</sup> Further, its multiple moments as a defining destination within the city has “fashioned the symbolism of place” for both Times Square and the city at-large. It is foremost known for its legacy as the city’s “Theatre District,” serving as a home to multiple world-renowned theaters, show stopping productions, and the nation’s pioneering “entrepreneurs of entertainment,” including Oscar Hammerstein I, Florenz Ziegfeld, the Minsky Brothers, and David Belasco.<sup>82</sup> The district’s bright bewitching marquees and colorful carnival signs invented the “commercial aesthetic [that] came to define and dominate not only Times Square but much of American culture in a way few cities in the world could match.”<sup>83</sup> At its core, Times Square defined “Quintessential New York.” In writing about the district’s symbolic importance, Sagalyn emphasizes:

Times Square provided a city image for the nation at large. That image took shape from the experience of being in Times Square and sampling its particular brand of city life—going to the theatre, joining the crowds, vicariously partaking of Broadway’s success. Constant promotion made it part

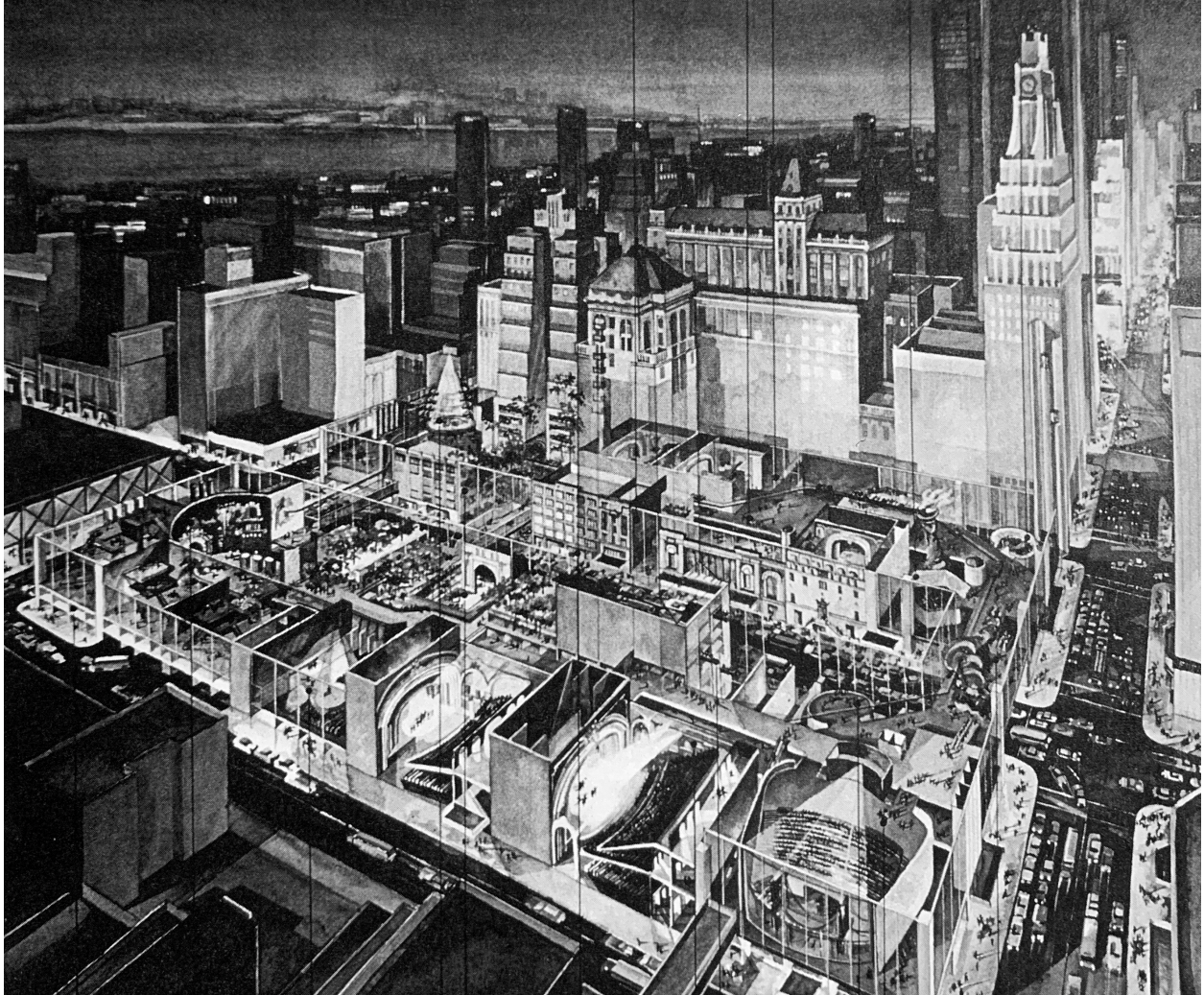
of the national mythology. While the reality of Times Square was changing, especially after the 1930s, Hollywood defined Broadway for America and kept alive the aura of its old image.<sup>84</sup>

By 1980, the district's image had dramatically shifted. Both city and state officials agreed Times Square no longer symbolized the commercial and theatrical glory of its earlier years and needed to clean up its unbridled market of smut and sin. In the early seventies Times Square became heavily saturated with prostitution. The city struggled to constrain the problem through law enforcement, pedestrian malls, and incremental private redevelopment. A 1971 *New York Times* article cited that on an average day, approximately forty prostitutes are arraigned from the area. The area between 49th and 51st Streets on Eighth became so notorious for its concentration of the city's sex trade that the NYC Office of Midtown Planning and Development drafted a Vice Map of Times Square in 1973. A council of police, firefighters, and other unions known as the Council for Public Safety published and distributed a 1975 pamphlet urging visitors to the city not to walk the streets of midtown past 6:00 P.M. The pamphlet was titled "Welcome to Fear City: A Survival Guide for Visitors to the City of New York" and spelled out nine essential safety tips for tourists, including avoiding public transit, especially the subway, not to visit the city's other boroughs, and not to leave valuables in hotel deposit boxes.<sup>85</sup> Heterosexual prostitution eventually shifted to the northwest region and was substituted by male-for-male prostitution and other forms of homosexual activity:

... male "hustling" became pervasive in the area as people exchanged money, illegal drugs, or other forms of payment for sexual favors. Time Square's central location, which once allowed the district to flourish as a prominent locale for high-end entertainment, now facilitated the sex market. The influx of commuters, especially during rush hours, made male prostitution fairly easy and relatively frequent. The flow of human traffic during these periods allowed clients to solicit sex without attracting much attention.<sup>86</sup>

By the beginning of the eighties, Times Square was infamously declared by *Rolling Stones* magazine as "the sleaziest black in America."<sup>87</sup> The same year Mayor Koch announced his commitment to cleanup Times Square through the 42nd Street Development Project (42DP). The redevelopment broadcasted by the city as a much needed moral reform that would re-establish the districts a theater and entertainment capital. Sagalyn notes that "symbolic meanings of place" was central to assembling support for the city's plans for redevelopment:

Symbolic rhetoric dominated the many sets of public hearings on the 42DP during the 1980s. The depth of symbolic significance underscored the objections of civic groups, architectural critics, and cultural commentators who later made strong appeals to preserve Times Square's values, past and present, which they believed were being cast aside in the pursuit of a comprehensive cleanup that



**Figure 2.5**  
Rendering of “The City at 42nd Street” by Chermayeff & Geismar.

would use ‘good’ activities—offices, hotels, restaurants, theaters—to drive out the ‘bad’—drug dealing, prostitution, vagrancy, and homeless congregations.<sup>88</sup>

Unlike BPC, whose land was owned by the government, Times Square’s redevelopment required substantial use—or, what critics such as William J. Stern claim to be “abuse”—of eminent domain since “the public sector did not own the land and did not have the money to buy it.”<sup>89</sup>

New York officials considered their plan for sanitizing West 42nd Street to be more sensitive than indiscriminate razing because it incorporated selective preservation and restoration of the small-scale midblock theaters for legitimate entertainment. Together with four office towers, a merchandise mart, a hotel, and ancillary retail, the program would put in place “good” white-collar professional uses. Social clearance—of the con artists, drug hawkers, thieves, hustlers, and hanger-out—would come about by imposing a high-caliber new economic order inhospitable for the return of the sex

trade, XXX-rated entertainment shops, loitering, and drug trade—the “bad” uses.<sup>90</sup>

As with many big-city public-development projects across the nation in the 1980s, the financial strategy city officials devised relied on techniques designed to make the project self-financing: Advances from private developers would fund the costs of land acquisition, and these, in turn, would be paid back with the incremental gain in property taxes generated by the project as well as other project-specific revenues. In concept, it was a bit like tax-increment financing without the public issuance of bonds and the transparency of fiscal plan and market rigor that come with that formal process.<sup>91</sup>

However, the city’s growing crack-cocaine problem halted the area’s redevelopment throughout the eighties.<sup>92</sup> It was in 1990 that redevelopment truly took root, with the city establishing “The New 42nd Street” cultural nonprofit “responsible for dynamic evolution of 42nd Street.”<sup>93</sup> The organization efforts were focused on 42nd’s stretch between 7th and 8th Avenues, “arguably Times Square’s most dangerous and seedy area,” and “the restoration and long-term oversight of seven historic theatres,” one of which, the Liberty Theatre, was a crucial in developing America’s legacy of drag.<sup>94</sup> Marquee and storefront displays that once read “French Sex, Nympho Sluts, Nasty Orgy,” “Taboo II: The Story of Incest Continues...,” “Live Girls Peek-A-Boo,” and “XXX Video,” were replaced with “AMC 25 Theatre,” generic claims of future commercial real estate, such as “Retail,” “Restaurant” and “Entertainment,” and advertisements of commercial products and media primetime fares.<sup>95</sup>

Lost in Times Square’s redevelopment—due to a mixture of an intentional rebranding by state and city actors as well as the by-product of significant visual, cultural/social, and economic change—was the area’s social coding and memory in which queer identity, queer sex, and drag performance were fundamentally explored, evolved, and a part of the area’s cultural identity. It is in Times Square that the city’s queer history, especially that of drag, connects and overlaps with the tangential histories of New York City.

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**Figure 3.1**  
Engraving of Juliet, from William Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" by Corbould, Kelley, date unknown.

## Chapter 3

# The Spectacle of Crossdressing

### THE IMAGE OF A QUEEN

In 1968, director Frank Simon premiered his first feature film, *The Queen*, at the Cannes Film Festival. Its cold opening frame hazily displays a close-up shot of a bulky earring of lustrous pearls pendulating from a dark silhouette of an ear and neck. Following are short clips of hoydenish bodies gliding and twirling across a stage draped in fabrics of chiffon, fringe, and sequins. After a little under a minute, the film's title appears over the glistening moiré of a sequin gown as the frame pans from a figure's breasts down to its waist and hips, foreshadowing the following hour's devotion to aesthetics, materialism, and posing. Taking from its title, the film is an illustrious documentary on the spectacle of drag. Its subsequent commercial release—definitive of the Situationist theory of the *spectacle*—“made a tremendous splash among the New York film critics.”<sup>1</sup> Renata Adler for *The New York Times* called this film “funny and inspired... extraordinary;” Judith Crist for *New York Magazine* claimed it was a “fundamental exploration of people rather than an exploration of still another of our social sicknesses;” *Cosmopolitan Magazine*'s Liz Smith admired that its “getting [people] to see things today that would have been unheard of only five years ago;” and *Women's Wear Daily* asserted “this movie does not judge [the

contestants]. It judges the spectator.”<sup>2</sup> A similar splash was made on the West Coast where John Wasserman from the *San Francisco Chronicle* hailed it as “a subliminal, even unintentional plea for tolerance, without ever mentioning the word,” and Ray Loynd from *The Hollywood Reporter* concluded, “only the most stupidly virile redneck will fail after the initial unconviction of it all to more often laugh with these drag queens rather than at them.”<sup>3</sup> Altogether, critics found the documentary outrageous, witty, and before its time; as many of these critics noted, the film’s plot overtly centers on homosexuality in an era when the pervasive homophobia in Hollywood increasingly portrayed homosexuals as sexually depraved degenerates, narcissists, and psychopaths.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast, Simon’s documentary captures the labor, conflicts, and sisterhood that goes into producing a national drag ball, specifically, the 1967 Miss-All America Camp Beauty Contest. At the ball and in the film, forty female impersonators from across the United States—many of them regional drag pageant winners in their own cities—converge upon The Town Hall theatre in Times Square to display their feminine prowess in the art of walking and talking while dolled up in bouffant wigs, chic mid-century makeup, and cinched bathing suits and evening gowns. The film’s narrator and feature drag star is queer and trans activist Jack Doroshow, more commonly known within the drag scene, (Mother) Flawless Sabrina. Sabrina is the contest’s mistress of ceremonies, charged with organizing the events logistics, moderating petty quarrels between contestants, and grooming the competing queens to stardom. Her commentary reveals the arduous and often architectural labor necessary for producing a grand spectacle of drag. The most serious of concerns end up being largely architectural. Beyond the pressures of recruiting and promoting the contest, Flawless Sabrina highlights the sobering reality of a spatialized homophobia: “we have three problems—one, finding a hotel with 28 rooms; two, finding a hotel hip enough to let our [gay] guys in there, and three, keeping the guys in.”<sup>5</sup> In between the film’s documentation of the pageant’s rigorous rehearsals, costume fittings, and final performance is idle chit-chat and personal testimonies of social rejection, physical violence, and gender politics. However, not all conversation within the film is so deeply serious. The majority of the film’s banter between contestants is both candid yet witty. Contestants are frank about the realities of homosexuality and transvestism in postwar America, yet nonetheless indulge of fantasies of fame, success, and fairytale-love.

Apart from the film’s interpersonal anecdotes are b-roll clips of drag’s cultural esteem. Jammed inside the theatre alongside the jocular queens are members of New York City’s bohemian aristocracy—Andy Warhol, Edie Sedgwick, Jim Dine, Larry Rivers, George Plimpton, Terry Southern, Jerry Leiber, Bruce Jay Friedman—many of which serve as the pageant’s judges and a testament to the popularity of drag balls as a form of queer culture

and artistic performance. Periodically, the film's camera inverts its directionality from the gaze focused on the performance stage to reveal the gazes of the audience and the vast amassment of awe and wonder behind the lens. These moments of inversion doubly reveal the fascination with drag's spectacle, first exposing the *raison d'être* of the pageant—a commercial event intended to be consumed by an materially present audience—and second, revealing the film's own spectatorship by breaking the film's fourth wall. This acknowledgment of an originary spectatorship flattens the film's own spectation into magnetism towards images of transvestism; a recycling of the visual spectacle of the originary event. Through this cinematic mechanism the film constructs a homology between homosexuality and the absurd spectacle of transvestism, rendering each as a consumable symbolic image of one another but simultaneously, and ironically, flattening the history of this homology of which it was a product. In other words, *The Queen* captures a myopic understanding of transvestism as just image-based gender performance and further something innately queer. Arguably, the acceptance of this form of transvestism—as spectacle, as image—within heteronormative spaces is because such a flat understanding does not inherently challenge the coupling between gender performance and anatomical sex:

... if we shift the example from drag to transsexuality, then it is no longer possible to derive a judgment about stable anatomy from the clothes that cover and articulate the body. That body may be preoperative, transitional, or postoperative; even “seeing” the body may not answer the question: for what are the categories through which one sees? The moment in which one's staid and usual cultural perceptions fail...when one cannot with surety read the body that one sees, is precisely the moment when one is no longer sure whether the body encountered is that of a man or a woman. The vacillation between the categories itself constitutes the experience of the body in question.<sup>6</sup>

This is supported by idle conversation of the depicted queens, in which “there is a distinct lack of interest in physical sex change. One simply likes to be a drag queen, another says that his boyfriend ‘wants a boy, not a girl.’”<sup>7</sup> As such, the drag represented in *The Queen* is distinctive from other acts of transvestism. Drag's thrill is situated in the explicitly known “fact” that the performer's anatomical sex is different than the illusory gender performance. When the performance is over, the performer's gender performance reverts to its normative anatomical sex-gender coupling. Further, as this flat understanding of crossdressing as image becomes ever more equated with queer culture/homosexuality, its transgressive praxis becomes paradoxical. The image of gender inversion and a facet of homosexuality becomes more mobile, but its abstraction into an image limits the totality of what constitutes queerness, homosexuality, gender, and sex. This paradox is an essential aspect towards contextualizing why *The Queen* has such an

explosive ending, abruptly shifting from the film's light-hearted, behind-the-scenes peek into queer life and the spectacle of drag pageantry, to a bitterly poignant argument about race. However, before addressing *The Queen's* conclusion, it is necessary to understand how drag became the most visible elements of queer culture, and how it had come to be distinguish it from other forms of transvestism.

## **EVOLUTION OF DRAG: THE ABSURD SPECTACLE OF CROSS-DRESSING**

The history of humanity presents innumerable passages in which the act of dressing (setting up) in drag, besides being an artistic and political positioning, was a scenic need imposed by the society and the morality of the time. From classical Greece to the present day, men personify the feminine image in different aspects, from the most realistic way to the total stylization of the form. The drag queen went through real metamorphoses both in its aesthetics and in its function but never lost its main objective—the great art of strangeness.<sup>8</sup>

Cross-gender impersonation has been a part of human cultures since at least the moment various cultures possessed an explicit distinction between genders. Jonathan David focuses his 1995 book, *Drag Diaries*, on the important role gender impersonation played in ancient ceremonies of Native American, Ancient Egyptian, South American, and other cultures, and Japanese theatre. Roger Baker's 1994 *Drag: A History of Female Impersonation in the Performing Arts* similarly connects cross-gender performance to ancient civilizations like the Greeks. In some way, shape, or form, cross-gender impersonation has played a significant role in human cultures, from ritual, to entertainment, labor, identity, and critique. Unfortunately, various moral regimes across different cultures have diminished a cohesive critical understanding of travestitivities and its fuller history. Transgender scholar and activist Susan Stryker notes in her seminal 2008 book, *Transgender History*, “most people have great difficulty recognizing the humanity of another person if they cannot recognize that person's gender, the gender-changing person can evoke in others a primordial fear of monstrosity, or loss of humanness.”<sup>9</sup> As a consequence, a great deal of transsexual and queer histories, at least in the American and European context, must be pieced together through juridical records that chronicle its criminalization and prosecution.

Cross-gender impersonation as a form of image spectacle—or in other words, drag, an absurd performance consumed by spectators for amusement—was prominent in Elizabethan theatre, arguably the origin of the contemporary conception of drag performance in the West. English Renaissance theatre was (and is) a staple element of English high culture which captivated larger audiences than previous forms of theatre. This rise of



interest in the theatre during the Elizabethan era saw significant transformations in the profession's socio-economics, narrative style, and architecture; plays became privatized and costly, allowing playwrights to compose narratives curated to their audience's specific cultural tastes, while performances were protected from public view and ridicule through their interiorization within newly designed playhouses. As they were in many facets of Elizabethan life, women were forbidden to perform in theatres such as Shakespeare's Globe Theatre. This required young men to perform female roles and dress in women's clothing. Shakespeare, for instance, was notorious for his use of cross-dressing in his theatrical productions with approximately one fifth of his thirty-eight plays involving transvestism.<sup>10</sup> Going beyond its common use to resolve the lack of women in theatre, Shakespeare further centralized crossdressing as narrative technique in three of plays—*The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*—and doubly cross-dresses his actors as heroine characters disguised as men in two plays—*The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Cymbeline*. Thus, Shakespeare elevates the use of crossdressing from a material condition of costuming and performance tactic to a social critique of gender roles and Elizabethan culture. It is in the theatre culture of Shakespeare—his astute deployment of crossdressing as a spectacular form of costuming as well as a method of social critique—that numerous scholars believe the term “drag” appeared and its associated transgressive politic as parody and critique.

The popular theory is that the term was a reference to the fact that the female costume-dresses worn by male actors in Elizabethan theatre would often drag across the stage floor, thus associating those men who had to dress in female attire as dressing in drag. However, another theory believes drag was an acronym of the Elizabethan stage direction, “Dressed As a Girl.”<sup>11</sup> The word was never officially recognized until it emerged in 1870, amending the existing noun definition of the term, as defined in the Oxford English Dictionary, to include “feminine attire worn by a man; also, a party or dance attended by men wearing feminine attire.”<sup>12</sup> The word had been printed on May 29 in the British periodical, the *Reynolds's Newspaper*, as an invitation: “We shall come in drag, which means men wearing women's costumes.”<sup>13</sup> A few months later the term was printed in the *London Figaro*, a daily paper dedicated to Victorian politics, literature, art, criticism, and satire: “Not quite so low... as going about in ‘drag.’”<sup>14</sup> A year later the term is used as a caption to a pair of illustrations published in the May 20 issue of London's *Day's Doings*. The two drawings depict a well known homosexual figure, Frederick William Park, in both men's and women's attire with the respective captions, “Park in mufti,” and “Park in ‘drag.’”<sup>15</sup> British etymologist Michael Quinion notes that the quotes around drag in this caption “indicate a word the writer felt to be not quite respectable,” and thus he “suspect[s] that the camp



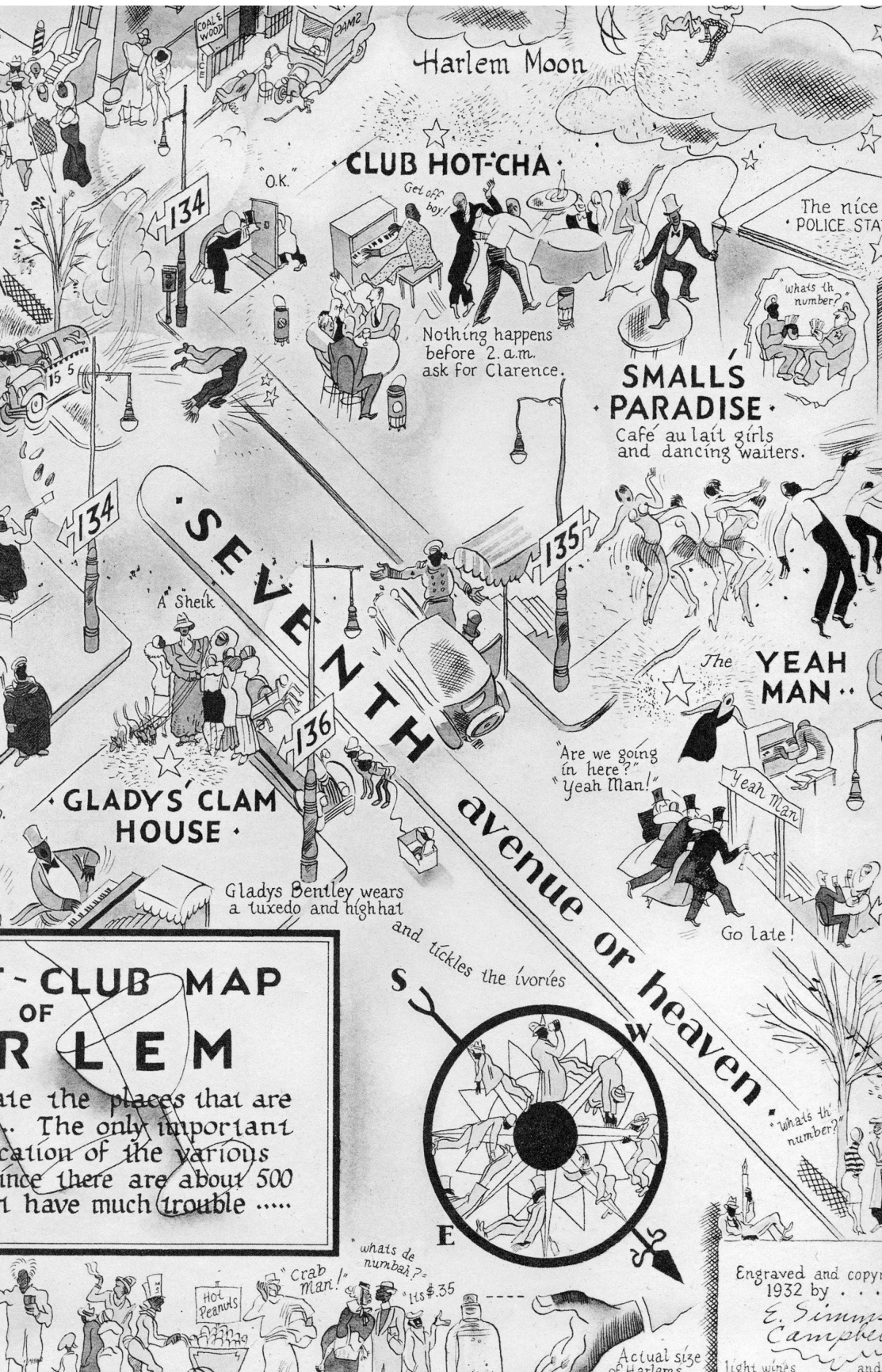


Figure 3.2  
A 1932 Map of Harlem's  
Famous Speakeasies.

associations of drag were present pretty much from the start.”<sup>16</sup> The term was first defined in print in the 1873 edition of John Camden Hotten’s *Dictionary of Modern Slang, Cant, and Vulgar Words*: “Drag, Feminine attire worn by men. A recent notorious impersonation case led to the publication of the word in that sense.”<sup>17</sup> It is presumed that Hotten’s definition is in reference to a court case that followed the arrest of Park and another notable homosexual figure, Ernest Boulton, after the two were caught wearing women’s clothing publicly in London’s Burlington Arcade. Thus, the term “drag” transformed to not only connote the act of dressing in clothing of the opposite sex or gender inversion, but also communicate a social transgression, one which went against a normative understanding of “Nature” and regarded as inherently perverse.

Yet in the 1870s, “drag” was neither fully nor immediately correlated with homosexuality or criminality. Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, members of Victorian high society frequented masquerade balls where attendees dressed in costumes inappropriate to their social class and/or biological sex. Even the more respectable class found it amusing when “men dressed as women, women as men, and these events gave temporary permission to experiment with gender roles.”<sup>18</sup> Park and Boulton’s arrest, however, demonstrate that public display of gender inversion were condemned, whether straight or queer, and at-large needed to be confined to the undergrounds. While Victorian heterosexuals participated in this phenomena of gender inversion, it is speculated that around the latter half of the century drag nonetheless became a distinguishing characteristic of queer subculture. Scholars such as Randolph Trumbach believe that early seventeenth century documentation recording homosexuals crossdressing at parties and balls across Europe is evidence of the public emergence of gay/queer subculture, while scholars like Rictor Norton question whether such subcultures could have been fully realized without the use of subsequent technologies in surveillance and policing that aided in the increased persecution of homosexuals.<sup>19</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century, explicit homosexual adaptations of Victorian high society masquerade balls—drag balls—were being licensed with local governments and hosted at legitimate venues despite, making crossdressing one of, if not the sole, visible element of homosexual culture.<sup>20</sup>

Both crossdressing, the word “drag,” and drag’s spectacle became evermore associated with homosexuality and queer culture throughout the first quarter of the twentieth century. This was in part due to an argot, *Polari*, that many homosexual crossdressers spoke during their performances.<sup>21</sup> *Polari* combined three European parlances—*Cant*, a sixteenth century argot spoken by England’s criminal underground; *Parlyaree*, a pidgin language spoken by members in Italian traveling carnivals; and *Cockney Rhyming Slang*, a nineteenth century back-slang spoken by London’s underclass—into one covert language.

This language allowed late nineteenth century (often) men to publicly talk about homosexual sex and culture without mainstream society having knowledge of such subjects so that they might avoid criminal prosecution or medical castration.<sup>22</sup> At first, *Polari* was spoken by the majority of London's underworld regardless of sexual orientation—sailors, vagrants, carnies, criminals, entertainers, etc. Likely adopted into the argot from theatre culture slang, “drag,” meaning “clothes, especially those worn by women,” was among *Polari*'s glossary of terms.<sup>23</sup> The argot gradually shifted in twentieth century to become more common among homosexuals and female impersonators, used so often in drag performances that it changed the conception of *Polari* from a language of the underworld to solely a homosexual slang, and concurrently “drag.”

By the end of the nineteenth century and start of twentieth century, drag performances were a common aspect of bohemian culture and wildly popular affairs. Drag balls had also made their way from the European hotbeds of London, Berlin, and Paris across the Atlantic into the United States through vaudeville shows in New York's Harlem and Greenwich Village.<sup>24</sup> Both neighborhoods were already enclaves for artists, poets, musicians, and performers whose way of life were outside the mainstream. Scholar A. B. Christa Schwarz points out:

Organized on a larger scale than in New York's white areas, Harlem's popular drag balls stand out as the district's most publicly “gay” form of entertainment. For the usually predominantly male and black participants, masked balls represented the best opportunity to display what many contemporary black newspapers admiringly described as “the most gorgeous of feminine attire,” to compete for prizes, and to receive applause and admiration from thousands of spectators that included Renaissance artists, who usually watched the spectacle from the distance of their boxes.<sup>25</sup>

“Although Greenwich Village's gay enclave was the most famous in the city, even most white gay men thought gay life was livelier and more open in Harlem than in the Village.”<sup>26</sup> Vaudeville, also a cultural import but from Victorian France, naturally aligned with irregular lifestyle of New York City's bohemian and artist communities and artfully combined satire and situational comedy with music, dance, burlesque, and specialty acts by magicians, ventriloquists, acrobats, trained animals, and strongmen. Their paucity of morality and decency—after all, someone had to “put the ‘devil’ in vaudeville—and their exaltation for the absurd made vaudeville one of the top forms of entertainment in America, appropriating the genre from the French as “the heart of American show business.”<sup>27</sup> The genre gave rise to the nation's “first official well-known drag queen,” Julian Eltinge, who won critical acclaim for his 1911 performance in the *Fascinating Widow* on Broadway at the Liberty Theater.<sup>28</sup> However, in order to combat growing associations with crossdressing and homosexuality, Eltinge often publicly presented a hyper-masculine image—staging

bar-fights, entering into prolonged engagements with women that inevitably dissolved, smoking cigars and riding horses—to quell rumors of his sexuality.<sup>29</sup>

By the 1920s, drag performances were unquestionably a visible element of homosexual culture. Victorian masquerade balls, known as drag balls, were referenced within city paper's interchangeably as fag balls, in which the cultural imaginary of Victorian rebellion and debauchery shifted towards rituals of homosexual perversion. A.J. Rosanoff's 1927 *Manual of Psychiatry*, for example, clinically defined "drag" as "an outfit of female dress worn by a homosexual... a social gathering of homosexuals at which some are in female dress;"<sup>30</sup> a clear shift from Hotten's definition of drag as a lewd action towards a signifier of a nefarious existentiality. Growing pressure from moral institutions such as the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice encouraged vice raids on vaudeville theatres and stricter police enforcement of anti-homosexuality statutes and anti-sodomy laws. In 1923, the New York state legislature passed a supplemental law that made it a crime to "frequent or loiter in any public place soliciting men for the purpose of committing a crime against nature or other lewdness."<sup>31</sup> Historian, George Chauncey notes that this amendment's specific regulation of homosexuality was:

[T]he first law in the state's history to verge on specifying male homosexual conduct as a criminal offence. Even statutes against sodomy and the crime against nature, which dated from the colonial era, had criminalized a wide range of nonprocreative sexual behavior between people of the same or different genders, without specifying male homosexual conduct or even recognizing it as a discrete sexual category. The criminalization of male homosexual conduct implicit in the wording of the law was made explicit in its enforcement, for Penal Law 722, Section 8, "degenerate disorderly conduct," was used exclusively against men the police regarded as "degenerates." Although little evidence remains concerning the history of the legislature's decision, its timing surely reflects the degree to which the social-purity societies and the police had identified homosexuality as a distinct social problem during World War I.<sup>32</sup>

To enforce this law, city police sent their "good-looking" officers undercover into gay and queer establishments where they would "strike up a conversation with men, lead them on and arrest them if the victim suggested going home."<sup>33</sup> Community task forces similarly took up anti-vice tactics. Harlem's thriving drag ball scene was confronted with "[t]he circulation of negative images of homosexuality and lesbianism [as a] part of anti-vice propaganda... prominent black Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, for instance, launched a campaign against homosexuality, intending to either alert the black community to the 'problem' or strengthen its rejection of the issue."<sup>34</sup> Constantly featured among Harlem's anti-vice campaigns were negative portrayals of homosexuality, lesbianism, and reports of drag balls in black newspapers. Schwarz comments, however, that in "reports of drag balls, the topic of gender inversion was not always portrayed without sympathy

or amusement, and some reports on social life in Harlem had a distinct camp flavor.”<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, mentions of homosexuality in many media were dominated by negative images and were curiously framed as a racial characteristic; Harlem’s black anti-vice activists “proposed that white Americans contaminated the black community [ ] not only with homosexuality but other ‘vices,’” where, “white men came to have sex with black women [ ] turning them into prostitutes; black men were seduced by white prostitutes working in Harlem; and white gay men and lesbians came to Harlem to ‘convert’ Harlem-ites.”<sup>36</sup> In combination with the escalation of anti-homosexual policing—within the first four months of 1925, a sole city police division had a “tremendously startling” record of 250 arrests for “degenerate disorderly conduct”—both drag performance and homosexual life were suppressed, and forced to retreat into the underworlds of prohibition.<sup>37</sup>

The abundance of speakeasies and other illicit venues that emerged as result of prohibition provided a refuge for drag performances and homosexual culture. Both became so commonplace within the enclaves of prohibition that the era from the late 1920s to prohibition’s repeal in 1933 was also known as the Pansy Craze:

Female impersonation and the history of drag is said to have entwined with gay culture around the 1930s. When the United States entered the Prohibition era, which abolished alcohol production and consumption from 1920 until 1933, gay men used the underground clubs and speakeasies as an opportunity to express and enjoy themselves.<sup>38</sup>

New York’s Times Square, Harlem, and Greenwich Village were popular archipelagos for prohibition’s black market of booze and vice. Their milieus concentrated gay, lesbian, and bisexual urbanites—as well as transgender people, though both the term and its understanding were not commonplace—within their undergrounds where patrons were free to publicly express homosexuality and gender disobedience.<sup>39</sup> Drag performances were similarly widely integrated into the prohibition scene, becoming cultural staples. American studies scholar Chad Heap points out that at a time of widespread homophobia “almost every newspaper article about [drag balls] has a list of 20 to 30 well known people of the day who were in attendance and spectators. It was just a widely integrated part of life in the 1920s and 30s.”<sup>40</sup> He continues that “it’s not just that [homosexuality and drag] were visible, but that popular culture and newspapers at the time remarked on their visibility—everyone knew that they were visible.”<sup>41</sup>

It is at this time that the rise of queer culture—in America, but similarly in Germany, France, and Britain—and drag entwined; drag and its artistry of camp lost their longer history with Elizabethan theatre and Victorian bourgeois culture. Instead public perception of both considered them inherently homosexual. The witty, camp-tongue common



**Figure 3.3**

Poster advertising a pansy performer in Berlin. "Das Lila Lied," or, "The Lavender Song" in English.



in drag performances was adopted into other forms of queer entertainment, separating campiness from the act of drag and coupling it with homosexual mannerism. These new queer forms of entertainment began to “eclipse the drag acts that had been a stage staple for decades” as well as spurring specifically gay, or pansy bars.<sup>42</sup> Gene Malin notably rebranded his entertainment career during this era, transitioning from his drag acts as Imogene Wilson to a tuxedoed MC of Club Abbey on 46th Street and 8th Avenue:

Malin ditched the dresses and reinvented himself as a high-camp, waspish, obviously gay man—and it was this that singled him out. For possibly the first time ever, an entertainer’s entire act revolved around an explicit queerness. “What was novel is that he did not bring a drag act to the club, but instead performed in elegant men’s clothing, and brought with him the camp wit of the gay subculture.”<sup>43</sup>

Other gay entertainers mimicked Malin’s aesthetic, blending masculine attire with campy wit and overt homosexuality. The point here is not to declare that the new forms of queer entertainment that emerged during the Pansy Craze replaced drag performances, rather, the point is to highlight that, during this period of repression, the most public displays of homosexuality were associated with camp, wit, and gender inversion; the most visual representations of homosexual life for a heterosexual and homophobic mainstream were bitchy, witty, effeminate caricatures embodied in both the drag queen, as an archetype of transvestism, and the pansy, which performers like Malin exploited for mass entertainment. The serious enforcement of Hollywood’s 1930 Production Codes—commonly known as the Hays Code—in 1934, furthered this image of homosexuality as effeminate and malicious, of which male homosexuality was the archetypal form:<sup>44</sup>

“Before [the 1930s], the scientific field of sexology was forming and began to talk about the ‘third sex’... discussed as a feminine man or a masculine woman who desires members of the same sex. By the 1930s this scientific conversation had worked its way into the popular culture and linked drag with homosexuality.” This connection marked the switch: drag culture no longer belonged to straight, white men. In this moment, we witness the emergence of the first true drag queens. “Drag queens are not only males who dress and perform as female but also have some connection to a gay scene.”<sup>45</sup>

When prohibition ended, the era’s rise of queer-specific establishments—gay bars and gay clubs—and its reception of queer entertainment continued to grow at the margins of certain neighborhoods—the greatest growth was within the Greenwich Village—albeit despite and in the face of an increase of homophobic state violence and pansy-policing. Drag performance attached itself to this burgeoning outlet of queer culture, becoming not only the most visible image of homosexual life but also an “integral [part] to the[es] new, gay-friendly spaces that began to pop up” post-prohibition.<sup>46</sup> America’s broader cultural

obsession with drag performance, however, diminished with the few representations of cross-dressing in film and television seldom being more than a gimmick, “punchline, or an object of strangeness.”<sup>47</sup> Throughout the 1940s and 50s, drag performance continued to develop within queer-specific spaces, further solidifying itself in the later-half of the twentieth century as *the* queer art form. It also served as a surreptitious means to bypass state laws that “forbade members of the same-sex from dancing together” in public.<sup>48</sup> By the 1960s, “drag queen culture [was] fully crystallized and the understanding of what it took to be a drag queen was known.”<sup>49</sup> Theatre studies professor at the New York University Tisch Drama School, Joe E. Jeffreys, distinguishes this point as a cleavage between the former versions of drag—female impersonation versus the modern day “drag queen.”<sup>50</sup>

Simon’s *The Queen* catches the tail end of drag’s new trend as a queer art form. As his film exhibits, this mid-century incarnation emphasized, to a much larger degree, the visual illusion of drag than the previous generations before it. Although performance remained central to drag’s spectacle, a realistic and totalizing embodiment of “the feminine” was just as cardinal.

Requir[ing] maintenance to one’s own body and mind, and these young homosexual men in the 1960’s embodied the role of queens as professionals... Finding the persona creates the look, and it begins with creating a womanly figure. That can include waist-cinchers, gaffs to tuck genitalia in, shaving, and creating cleavage by pushing their pectorals together and using medical tape around their torso to keep their cleavage in place. Applying makeup is the next step a queen takes, one of the most important because it can transform a masculine face into a feminine one. The use of false eyelashes, eyeliner, bright eyeshadows, lip liner, bronzer, concealer, and mascara are just some of the utensils in creating the queen style makeup. The gown and the wig would come next, and the more expensive than the more realistic and professional. Gowns and wigs also require maintenance in order to prevent them from getting unkempt. Lastly, it’s the persona that a queen has to sell in order to be seen as professional. It requires training of mannerisms, body language, and vocals... Even out of drag, they “walk as though they’re still in high heels.”<sup>51</sup>

Access to material wealth similarly became a central aspect of drag as well. Drag’s aesthetic moved away from camp and more towards glamour grandeur and beauty befitting of a Las Vegas showgirl or debutant. In order to sell these fantasies of feminine divinity, costumes evolved to incorporate lavish ornamentation—feather boas, ostentatious headpieces, showgirl back pieces, oversized, gaudy jewelry. These added demands on appearance spurred a narrowing of definitions of beauty within the drag world, ironically towards an alignment within Western patriarchal conceptions of feminine beauty/value: white/European, young/prepubescent, well proportioned, hairless/smooth, docile/pleasant.

## DRAG'S IMAGE PROBLEM

Simon's documentary was conceived as a genuine yet campy behind-the-scene peek into gay life and the fabulous spectacle of drag pageantry. However, the last fifth of *The Queen* is passionately punctuated with bickering over a poignant subject: race. Crystal LaBeija, a drag queen from Harlem and one of the few contestants of color in the 1967 Miss All-American Camp Beauty Contest, upstages the pageant's conclusive crowning when she bitterly sashays off the stage and out the theatre. Crystal placed third runner up and fourth overall in the competition, leading to her infamous acerbic truth-telling—or in queer slang, “reading”—of the pageant's winner, the white and young Rachel Harlow:

CRYSTAL: Monique, would you tell her why you didn't come. Because she knew its fixed for Harlow! She said, “Crystal, darling, don't go—because you're not going to get it!” And that's why all the *true* beauties didn't come.

OTHER CONTESTANT: This is in bad taste and you're showing your colors...

CRYSTAL: Then I am—I am doing it bad. But I got—I have a right to show my *color* darling. I am beautiful, and I know I'm beautiful! Taking the wrong way? Shit! She looks bad! And no way or what you say could do about it. Look at Harlow's outfit!... Don't bother her, don't *bother* her. Harlow—it's not Harlow's fault. It's not her fault... Cause you're beautiful and you're young. You deserve to have the best in life, but you didn't deserve [to win]... Miss thing, I don't say she's not beautiful, but she wasn't looking beautiful tonight! She doesn't equal me! Look at her makeup! It's terrible!<sup>52</sup>

The film's promotional materials and reviews depicted Crystal as a bitter jealous queen unable to accept defeat, a common misconception that lasts to this day. Her righteous anger was not truly directed towards Ms. Harlow or how she choose to paint her makeup but rather the regular “racial prejudice within the pageant system of the 1960s” queens of color had to endure.<sup>53</sup> Although America's drag-roots were firmly grounded in Harlem, its mid-century form was predominantly a white man's practice. Further, drag's emphasis on feminine realism within Western/European notions of beauty limited the variety of drag considered professional and serious. Queens of color were expected to lighten their skin when painting on their makeup and conform to European beauty standards, especially in regards to their bodies. This myopic imagination of what constitutes true femininity and beauty in drag culture is made apparent halfway through *The Queen*; clustered together in a small hotel room the pageant's organizers gossip in front of the camera about Rachel Harlow's “natural beauty wonder,” referred to in the film as the acronym “NBW,” and that the young Harlow had never really worked hard to win past pageants and have never truly experienced pageantry defeat; “The first contest Richard ever entered, he won... Richard

never worked for it—went into a contest, got on stage, was *beautiful*, the crowd cheered, the kid won.”<sup>54</sup> Similar testimony and adoration for Harlow’s youth and slender size are sprinkled throughout the film, foreshadowing his inevitable win and disclosing drag’s ironic similitude to patriarchal expectations of feminine beauty. Simon also captures how these beauty pressures weigh on white queens, though more specifically in issues of body dysmorphia. Miss Billy, the regional winner of Miss Boston, Massachusetts and one of the more embonpoint contestants, refuses to participate in the pageant’s swimsuit category and instead walks only in the evening gown category, which the Flawless Sabrina mock-



**Figure 3.4**

Drag queens competing in the Miss All-America Camp Beauty Pageant at Town Hall.

ingly announces to the snickering of the audience: “Now here’s one of the contestants that did not choose to go in the bathing suit. Rather... [snaps fingers five times] this is very serious business. Rather, she chose only to go in the dress—gown, please forgive me. This is Miss Boston, Massachusetts—Miss Billy.”<sup>55</sup>

Crystal’s fit of rage reveals the limitations the image holds, as images are both ahistorical constructions yet pastiches of historicity. Although drag visually materialized queer culture by the middle of the twentieth century, its own image within the public imaginary

failed to incorporate the multiplicity of identity categories and characteristics that could simultaneously constitute as queer, thus flattening queerness. As the myriad of contestants from across the U.S. and the success of Simon’s documentary on the East and West coasts prove, this specific image of queer culture that drag afforded was pervasive. Performance studies scholar Tavia Nyong’o points out that this reliance on image is an irony; since queerness/homosexuality has no monolithic materiality, it must increasingly rely upon symbols of visual queerness within the public to “make itself as self-apparent as race, ethnicity or even social standing.”<sup>56</sup> This reliance on image was contemporarily discernible in the symbolic markers of queerness in the late-twentieth century movements of Gay Liberation and Gay Rights—the pink triangle, the rainbow flag, doubled gender symbols, S/M paraphernalia—which were crucial in organizing the concept of queerness as a valid, distinguishable, and identifiable social group entitled to human rights and dignity.

### **THE FORMATION OF HOUSE-BALL CULTURE**

Queens of color that found themselves unable to sufficiently situate their own racial blackness within the rigid constructs of mid-century drag culture and its narrow image of feminine beauty began hosting their own events—drag balls specifically for Black queen—in 1962.<sup>57</sup> Following her upset at the 1967 All-American Camp Beauty Contest, Crystal and another Harlem drag queen—only referred to in texts and interviews as Lottie—co-promoted their own drag ball for queens of color at Harlem’s Staircase Bar on West 115th Street and 5th Avenue in 1972.<sup>58</sup> Unlike the earlier drag balls for queens of color, Crystal and Lottie’s 1972 ball established a new era of drag culture. In order to solidify Crystal’s support and effort—Crystal apparently would only agree to sign on to producing the ball “so long as he was a highlight of [it]—Lottie suggested “they should start a group and name it the House of LaBeija, with Crystal’s title as ‘mother.’”<sup>59</sup> Eminent drag queens of color who had already made a name for themselves within the white world of drag quickly followed suit, establishing their own groups, known as “houses,” in which they or a friend served as the group’s leaders, or, “mother” and/or “father:” in 1972, Dorian Corey, another contestant from the 1967 All-American Camp Beauty pageant, established her House of Corey; in 1974 Father Jay established his House of Dior; in 1975 La Duchess Wong and Nicole Wong established the House of Wong, and Paris Dupree and Bruger Dupree established the House of Dupree; in 1977 Andy and Erskine Christian established the Houses of Christian, and Candy, Rhonda, and Rob Plenty establish the House of Plenty; in 1978 Larry Ebony founded the House of Ebony; in 1978 Mother Avis and Father Pendavis founded the House of Pendavis, and Rose Princess established the House of

Princess; in 1979 Mother Kevin and Father Thomas opened the House of Omni.<sup>60</sup> These houses grew into a support network to uplift other queen of color and provide a safe space from not only a racially prejudiced drag culture but also from the overtly homophobic, heteronormative “homes” many performers had been forced to leave. Members of a house were known as “children,” who would take on the houses name—often a reference to “the glamorous fashion houses where glamour and style [was] admired [in the scene]”—as a last name.<sup>61</sup> House mothers and, to lesser extent, fathers produced their own takes on drag balls for queens of color and invited members from other houses to walk/compete in them. As the number of houses grew, their associative balls became a means of validation and valuation amongst this newly formed queer people of color (QPOC) network; “From this point on, contestants battled to win trophies” in honor of their house, both elevating their individual status as well as the status of the house they belong to within the network.<sup>62</sup> House children, mothers, and fathers abetted one another in preparation for balls, typically providing moral and emotional support, but at times offering their expertise, labor—sewing and stitching costumes, brushing hair wigs, helping to paint on fabulous makeup looks—and financial resources:

MOTHER ANGIE XTRAVAGANZA: My name is Angie Xtravaganza and I am the mother of the House of Xtravaganza. When there’s a ball, I’m always doing something for everybody in my house. I do that one’s hair, the other one’s makeup. You know, choose their shoes, their accessories. I always offer advice, you know - as far as what I know and what I’ve been through in gay life, you know. I ran away from my house when I was 14 and I’ve learned all sorts of things, good and bad, and how to survive in the gay world, you know. It’s kind of hard.<sup>63</sup>

**Cultural studies scholar Time Lawrence notes that the rise of these Black self-supporting houses in the 1970s paralleled another, though more illicit, form of communal Black upliftment:**

The establishment of the houses also paralleled the twists and turns of New York’s gangs, which flourished between the mid-1940s and the mid-1960s as the city shifted from an industrial to a post-industrial base while dealing with the upheavals of urban renewal, slum clearances and ethnic migration. As historian Eric Schneider argues, gangs appealed to alienated adolescents who wanted to earn money as well as peer group prestige. They flourished until the mid-1960s, when Mayor John Lindsay introduced gang intervention programmes and placed a greater emphasis on community action, while political radicals and civil rights activists attempted to ‘engage gangs in larger political struggles. But the underlying conditions that led to the rise of the gangs in the first place didn’t go away. Gangs started to multiply again in the early 1970s, especially in the South Bronx, where endemic poverty and an epidemic of arson attacks and heroin addiction overwhelmed the city’s programmes. Meanwhile, black, gay, working-class drag queens found themselves estranged not only from their biological families, which were usually intolerant of their choices, but also the ruling cadre of black nationalist leaders, whose increasingly macho ‘real man’ discourse

was popularised by the gangs that multiplied on neighbourhood streets. With nowhere else to turn, they formed their own self-supporting gangs, which they preferred to call houses.<sup>64</sup>

As these houses evolved throughout the 1970s, they grew to integrate other kinds of queer people of color (QPOC) beyond “working-class drag queens,” including displaced queer youth, transsexuals, individuals who were “not interested in dressing up yet still wanted to hang out, have fun, and enjoy the warmth of an extended community, and those who, in addition, wanted to help other members of [a] house prepare for [a] ball without walking themselves.”<sup>65</sup> The incorporation of various “other” QPOC identities integrated into balls performances in the early 1980s, engendering “a rich taxonomy of gender personas and identities,” known as categories, non-drag queens could compete in.<sup>66</sup>

MOTHER DORIAN COREY: When I first started going to balls, it was all about drag queens and they were interested in looking like Las Vegas showgirls—back pieces, tail pieces, feathers, beads and all that. But as the ‘70s rolled around, the things started changing. It started coming down. They just wanted to look like a gorgeous movie star—like Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor. And now, they’ve went from that to trying to look like models like Iman and Christie Brinkley and Maud Adams and all those children. Everyone couldn’t be a Las Vegas showgirl. Everyone couldn’t put on a stack of feathers and a big headpiece. So they made the categories for everybody. That’s what really made the balls change. So there was more involvement. Everyone that goes to one of these affairs now damn near participates. Eventually, over the course of a year’s balls, they’ve all walked the runway in some category or another. Either you’ve got a nice body, or you are very fashionable, or you’re very pretty, or you’re very real-looking, but there’s always something there for everyone. And that’s what keeps them all coming. And it’s like in nature—I’m such a nature fan—the young ones are always bucking to move the old bulls out of the way. That’s why they change and go through all these mad categories that I never can stay awake for.<sup>67</sup>

However, like drag, performing, or walking, these categories similarly relied on spectacle, exploiting both stereotypic caricature of gender, sexuality, and race purported by a conservative mainstream as well as the aspirational propaganda being cycled through a bustling eighties media in television shows like *Dynasty* and *Dallas*: banjee, ethnic, femme queen, butch queen, model effect, executive, town and country, high fashion evening wear, schoolboy/schoolgirl, military.

MOTHER DORIAN COREY: With the current children, the children that are young, they’ve gone to television, you know? I’ve been through several balls and they’ve actually had categories—*Dynasty*. You know, want you to look like Alexis or Krystle. And I guess that’s just a statement of the times. When I grew up, you wanted to look like Marlene Dietrich, Betty Grable. Unfortunately, I didn’t know that I really wanted to look like Lena Horne.<sup>68</sup>

By the late 1980s, both the production of and performance within balls, and their associated network of queer kinship were thriving, although largely unknown to outsiders.

Both houses and balls were sites for spatial alterity from an ever more conservative American culture where its participants transgressed dominant social norms and regulations. Houses contested conventional forms of kinship based on biological-relation and the preferred socio-economic unit—the family economy—and further spawned what are commonly now known as “safe spaces:” self-secured spaces that ensured the physical and mental safety of LGBT communities from a hostile exterior prone to homophobic and transphobic violence and oppression. Ballrooms, on the other hand provided the means to (re)appropriate one’s identity through performative and linguistic acts of societal analysis and self-reflection; embodying alternative identities provoked by categories participants materialize new images of themselves and their societal worth through its performance. Beyond being spectacles, ballroom performances were fabulous and ingenious means to creatively refuse value, image, and categorical positions mainstream society wished to regulate both Black and queer bodies too. Within spaces of the conventional-turned-outrageous were acts of self-emptying, a soulful kenosis, that fostered and celebrated a race, queerness, gender, sex, and class: a black queer joy.



## ENDNOTES

- 1 Guy Debord succinctly defines the meaning of “the spectacle” in the first and third axioms of chapter one of his 1963 text *The Society of the Spectacle*. 1: “In societies dominated by modern conditions of production, life is presented as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. Everything that was directly lived has receded into a representation;” 3: “The spectacle presents itself simultaneously as society itself, as a part of society, and as a *means of unification*. As a part of society, it is the focal point of all vision and all consciousness. But due to the very fact that this sector is *separate*, it is in reality the domain of delusion and false consciousness: the unification it achieves is nothing but an official language of universal separation.” Emphases in original.  
Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 12; “Reviews,” *The Queen*, Accessed March 25, 2019, <http://www.thequeen1968firstlegaldvd.com/reviews.html>.
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- 3 Ibid.
- 4 For negative representations of homosexuality in twentieth century Hollywood films, see: Daniel Mangin, “College Course File: The History of Lesbians and Gays on Film,” *Journal of Film and Video* 41. No. 3. (1989): 50-66.
- 5 “Reviews,” *The Queen*, Accessed March 25, 2019, <http://www.thequeen1968firstlegaldvd.com/reviews.html>.
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- 11 Michael Quinion, “Drag,” *Port Out, Starboard Home: The Fascinating Stories We Tell About the Words We Use* (New York: Penguin Group, 2004), Bernadette Deron, “The Evolution of the Art of Drag in 33 Stunning, Historical Images,” *Anit*, December 15, 2018, <https://allthatsinteresting.com/history-of-drag-queens>.
- 12 The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) contains two constituent definitions for the word *drag*. It first emerged in the anglophone world as a noun in 1388-9, meaning “something heavy that is used by being by being dragged along the ground or over a surface.”# Approximately half a century later the word emerged as a transitive verb, meaning, “to draw or pull; to haul; hence to draw with force, violence, or roughness; to draw slowly and with difficulty, to trail (anything) along the ground or other surface, where there is friction or resistance.”# It is believed that the drag began to take on a new meaning in the Elizabethan era in its theatre culture, used as a slang term for crossdressing. “Drag, n.,” *OED Online*.
- 13 Quinion, “Drag,” *Port Out*.
- 14 “Drag, n.,” *OED Online*.
- 15 Quinion, “Drag,” *Port Out*.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Lucas Hilderbrand, *Paris Is Burning* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2013), 45.

- 19 Rictor Norton, "The Gay Subculture in Early Eighteenth-Century London," *Homosexuality in Eighteenth-Century England: A Sourcebook Compiled by Rictor Norton*, Accessed March 18, 2019, <http://rictornorton.co.uk/eighteen/molly2.htm>.
- 20 Hilderbrand notes that "normally it was illegal to crossdress in public, but with legal permits and police cooperation, such designated events protected participants from fear of arrest." Hilderbrand, *Paris Is Burning*, 44-45.
- 21 In linguistics, an argot is "the jargon, slang, or peculiar phraseology of a class," especially those who are at risk of prosecution.  
"Argot, n.2," *OED Online*, Accessed March 21, 2019, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/10652>.
- 22 Paul Baker, "A Brief History of Polari: The Curious After-Life of the Dead Language for Gay Men," *The Conversation*, February 8, 2017, <http://theconversation.com/a-brief-history-of-polari-the-curious-after-life-of-the-dead-language-for-gay-men-72599>; also see, Paul Baker, *Polari: The Lost Language of Gay Men* (New York: Routledge, 2003).
- 23 "Polari," *Chris Denning's Website*, Accessed March 22, 2019, <http://chris-d.net/polari/>.
- 24 A 2001 New York University Ph.D. dissertation, written by Annemarie Bean, clarifies that female impersonation truly began in America through blackface minstrelsy around 1840: "Female impersonation in minstrelsy was always intrinsically tied with the performance of blackness... The American popular notions of blackness and femaleness were irreversibly linked in 1840 when the first minstrel female impersonator stood on the stage in blackface drag, silently adorning a song about slave love."  
Annemarie Bean, "Female Impersonation in Nineteenth-Century American Blackface Minstrelsy," (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2001), 1.
- 25 A. B. Christa Schwarz, *Gay Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003), 12.
- 26 "Tongues Untied by Marlon Riggs," *Visual AIDS*, Accessed May 15, 2019, <https://visualaids.org/events/detail/tongues-united>.
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- 33 George Chauncey, "A Gay World, Vibrant and Forgotten," *New York Times*, June 26, 1994, <https://nyti.ms/2FGFI8d>.
- 34 Schwarz, *Gay Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*, 18.
- 35 *Ibid*, 19.
- 36 *Ibid*.
- 37 Hugh Ryan, "Inventing, and Policing, the Homosexual in Early 20th c. NYC," *The Gotham Center for New York City History*, April 4, 2017, <https://www.gothamcenter.org/blog/inventing->

[and-policing-the-homosexual-in-early-20th-c-nyc.](#)

- 38 Bernadette, "The Evolution of the Art of Drag."
- 39 The reason transgender and transexual peoples are missing from this historical account is because their terminologies were not common. It is important to note that transgenderism has long existed in human cultures, such as "two-spirit" people of indigenous North America or "third gendered" people in South East Asian cultures. However, within Western culture, the word "transexual," first emerged in the English language in 1907, but in regards to matters that are applicable or suitable to both sexes: "Existing or occurring between men and women; applicable to or suitable for members of both sexes." The common day meaning of the word was first introduced into the German language as "transsexualismum" in 1923 by German physian and sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld. The term was translated into the English language by David Oliver Cauldwell to "transexualism" and "transexual" in 1949 and 1950. Australian sexologist Norman Haire reported in his 1930 *Encyclopedia of Sexual Knowledge* the first known surgical transexual operation was performed by Hirshfeld in 1921. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the common day use of the term "transgender" did not emerge in the English language until 1969 as "trangenderal." See: Magnus Hirschfeld; "Die intersexuelle Konstitution" in *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* 1923; David O. Cauldwell, "Psychopathia Transexualis," *Sexology* 16 (1949): 274-280;
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- 44 Ryan Roschke, "Sashay Through the History of Drag Queen Culture," *PopSugar Inc.*, August 16, 2018, <https://www.popsugar.com/news/History-Drag-Drag-Queen-Culture-44512387>,
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- 54 Simon, *The Queen* (1968), 00:31:28--00:31:36.
- 55 Ibid, 00:46:40--00:47:07.
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- 57 The first black drag ball is credited to have been started by Marcel Christian (LaBeija). Tim Lawrence, "Listen, and You Will Hear All the Houses That Walked There Before: A History of Drag Balls, Houses, and the Culture of Voguing," *Voguing and the House Ballroom Scene of New York City 1989-92* (London: Soul Jazz Books, 2011), 3,
- 58 The actual name of the establishment varies. Some texts refer to the bar as the Staircase Bar, others have referred to it as "Downstairs Case, Under the Stairs.
- 59 Lawrence, "Listen, and Your Will Hear All the Houses That Walked There Before," 4.
- 60 Like most of house-balls culture, the founding years of each house vary depending on source. The following dates are based on Mother Kevin Omni's historical account. Kevin Omni (Founder of the House of Omni), in discussion with the author, January 30, 2019.
- 61 Lawrence, "Listen, and Your Will Hear All the Houses That Walked There Before," 4.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 *Paris Is Burning*, directed by Jennie Livingston (1991; Burbank, CA: Miramax Home Entertainment, 2005), DVD.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Ibid, 4-5.
- 66 Mother Kevin Omni claims that Paris Dupree's first *Paris Is Burning* ball in 1981 was when categories were first really used and emphasized in house-ball culture. "Categories had always existed but they played a comparatively minor role in earlier balls, so in the 1970s, for instance, contestants who wanted to dress up as men could only compete in one category.
- 67 *Paris Is Burning*, dir. Jennie Livingston (1991).
- 68 Ibid.

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**Figure 4.1**

Venus Xtravaganza walking the S&M Bad Girls category, held up by David Xtravaganza, ca. 1986.

## *Chapter 4*

# “Reading” the Scales Between Architecture and Urbanism

### **LOCATING THE QUEER PERSON OF COLOR (QPOC):**

#### **JUANITO XTRAVAGANZA, SARA, GIGI, GIOVANNA, AND MARLON RIGGS**

Juan Manuel Rivera was born on August 19, 1957 to mother Olga Rivera and father Juan Rivera in New Haven, Connecticut. As his astrological sign, a Leo, suggests, Juan was sensitive, loving, personable, and the star of any party. He was destined to become “a somebody,” and did, though most people have never heard his name or know of his impact on queer art. Juan had been the Pop artist Keith Haring’s boyfriend from 1986 to 1990, a period that proved to be “the most frenetically productive years of [Haring’s] career.”<sup>1</sup> Juan caught Haring’s eye during a disco at the Paradise Garage nightclub, also known as “the Gay-rage,” a popular spot for “black and Latino gay youth, voguing drag queen divas, straight-identified ‘banjee’ boys, and homeless and thrown-away kids,” while also serving as a vital site that connected the subculture of ballroom to New York’s larger queer cultural community.<sup>2</sup> Haring was smitten: “One night, at... the Paradise Garage,... I see this incredibly beautiful boy. I look at him and see that he’s the man of my dreams. I convince myself that should he look at me... then *that’s* going to be *it!* I will have found my new love.”<sup>3</sup> Like Haring, and like the many other ballroom children, Juan came to New York

City in the late seventies/early eighties to escape their conservative small-town homes and homophobic suburban communities in search for “the values of liberation and personal freedom [as] emblemized by the 1960s, chief among them sexual self-expression.” However, like the common experience for many queer people of color and unlike queers similar to Haring—white, cisgender, middle-class—Juan came to New York City as a runaway:

[Juan] had run away from the then homophobic oppressive, small-town environment of his impoverished New Haven Puerto Rican neighborhood, The Hill, which, like so many other inner-city communities all over the United States, had been devastated by the flight of manufacturing from the cities and towards the suburbs and the state’s divestment in inner-city neighborhoods in an attempt to dismantle the legacy of the 1960s and the “welfare state.”<sup>4</sup>

Although not a full-fledged child of the ballroom scene until the nineties, Juan was very close with the children and House of Xtravaganza: “I’d always thought of myself as a child of the *House of Xtravaganza*, ‘cause I’d been there with the legendary children of *Xtravaganza* when the Houses were being formed.”<sup>5</sup> His story of coming to and surviving in New York City in the late seventies and eighties, told by Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé in *Hard Tails: Queer Latino Testimonio, Keith Haring, and Juanito Xtravaganza*, is one of the few (official) allegories that offer an insight to the everyday life of queer people of color during the cultural shift of the eighties. Juan decided to run away from his Puerto Rican community in New Haven the day his parent’s had discovered their teenage son liked other boys.

... when I got [home] my brother was staring at me, and there was more hate in his face than I’d ever seen before. And without saying a word, he just got up and knocked all of my artwork on the floor. And I could tell he’d just found out, that L[ ] had finally told him I was a faggot. And for the first time in my life I got real mad and hit him. And he punched me back, and I fell to the floor. And as I was getting up, he lunged for my back with a kitchen knife... And when my parents came in they started yell at me: “*Tú eres el mayor!* You should know better... You should...!” And as my father raised his hand to strike me I grabbed it in midair, and my mother started shaking and crying, and I ran out... Yeah, it was then I decided to run away to New York.<sup>6</sup>

Upon arriving to the city, Juan was “overwhelmed,” poor, and clueless as to how he would survive in his new city, but thought it completely impossible to return home to his family. For the first two months, Juan lived, as he describes, as a “derelict:”

... after the second day in the City, your stomach starts talking to you, and it’s like it never dawned on you that you had to eat. And so after a while you end up living like a derelict, going through garbage cans to eat. And if I had only known how to steal, it would’ve been different, but I didn’t... So pretty soon I felt like a derelict, I was a derelict. And for about two months I slept in [sic] church benches, in alleyways, in city parks.<sup>7</sup>

With the lack of financial support from home, the inherited “legacy of a deficient educa-

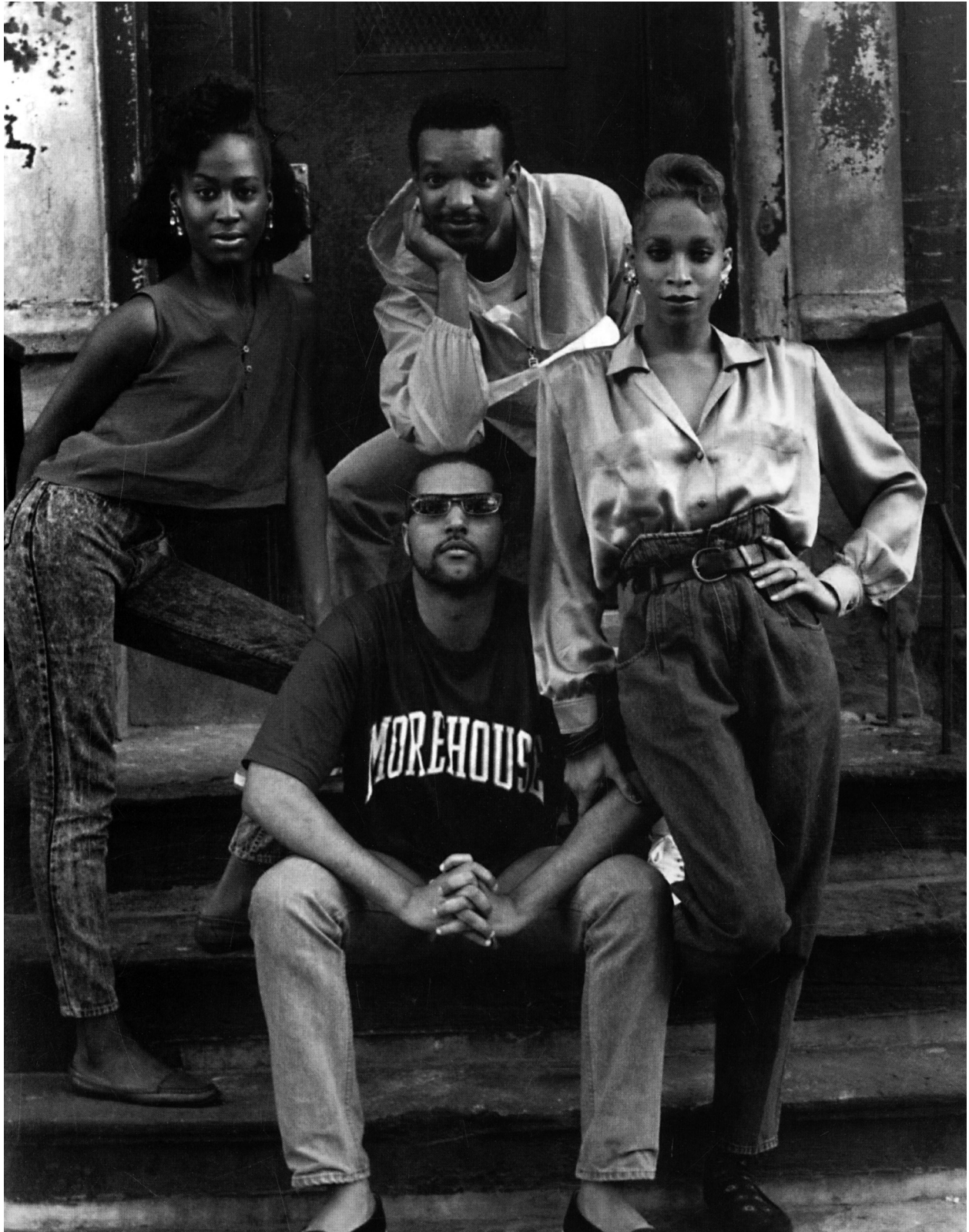


tion” that was commonplace for Black and Latinx people within inner-city and deindustrialized communities, and the demonized phenomenal markers of blackness—race and sexuality—Juan, like many other QPOCs, arrived in New York City “inadvertently trapped in a truly demonic space, the 42nd St. of the late 1970s,” where the informal economies of drugs and sex offered a means of immediate economic subsistence.<sup>8</sup> Juan had never heard of the sex trade on 42nd Street; he was scavenging through garbage cans on 42nd Street “when this john stated flashing ten dollars at [Juan].”<sup>9</sup> As Juan puts it, he went “from being a derelict [and] became a hustler.”<sup>10</sup>

The early-chapter of the life and times of Juanito Xtravaganza illustrates a common reality many queer people of color, especially queer teenagers of color, experienced in the late seventies, eighties, and early nineties.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, one of *Paris Is Burning*’s star performers, Venus Xtravaganza, discloses, though only partially, her participation in the sex trade. This is the most direct correlation made in *Paris* between the ballroom and the City’s sex trade, revealing the kind of labor many transwomen must often undertake as a means of subsistence due to limited employment opportunities. In the film Venus shares her own near-death experiences with a transphobic john as well as her fear of contracting HIV/AIDS which eventually led to her (partial) withdrawal from sex work.<sup>12</sup> Juan too had cruel experiences within the sex trade, beginning with his first time hustling:

[A john] ended up taking me home and doing all kindsa stuff to me. And at one point I was so destroyed, ‘cause I didn’t want to do what he wanted me to do—I didn’t wanna get fucked! And he was trying his damned hardest to fuck me, and I was going, “Stop, Charlie! Charlie, stop! Go to sleep, Charlie! Go to sleep!” but he kept trying all night long. And by the time he was fucking me the second time that night, I was crying, you know, and asking God to give me the strength not to turn around and kill this man, ‘cause I was ready to kill him. So I was crying and praying at the same time that this be over with... Yeah, that was the first time... And after that, I kinda went back, and did it for twenty, thirty dollars, and made enough money to get an apartment and clothes.<sup>13</sup>

These painful testimonies of violence and desperation reveal an underbelly of the eighties, in which the prosperous images that primetime fare like *Dynasty* and *Dallas* projected, were far from realized for many QPOC. Further, their failed attempts at seeking what would be considered legitimate forms of employment—for Juan it was his inability to read and write due to an inadequate education, for Venus it was workplace transphobia—furthered their reliance on informal economies as a means of subsistence. The sense of the city’s triumph over its past flirtation with bankruptcy in 1975 was starkly absent within many of its inner-city neighborhoods, which “remained a devastated war zone of abandoned and burned-out buildings and vacant lots, overrun by the drug trade and patrolled by an unsympathetic police [state]” that conflated racial color, homelessness,



**Figure 4.2**

Members of the House of Saint Laurent, clockwise: Temperance, Terence, Mother Octavia, and Robbie. Photo by Chantal Regnault.

and economic poverty “as the[*root*] cause, rather than the victims,” of the city’s lingering socio-economic problems. These socio-economic issues similarly hit the influx of queer youth whom arrived in New York City in the late-seventies and eighties, many of which were estranged or disowned from their biological families and quickly found themselves apart of the city’s growing form of contemporary homelessness. The rise of homeless queer youth continued to increase throughout the eighties and nineties, correlates with the decrease in the average age at which many teenagers became aware of their sexual identity during these decades. In the seventies the average age “people realized their lesbian or gay identity was between ages 14 to 16, and they then came out after high school when they were between 19 to 24 years old.”<sup>14</sup> However, in the eighties and nineties, “the average age for identity realization dropped between ages 9 and 10, with youth coming out predominately in high school at ages 14 to 16.”<sup>15</sup> Without emotional, economic, and social support from the state—the welfare state was waning in the seventies and became severely undermined in the eighties—or their own biological families, queer communities were left to their own devices to self-organize and support the homeless queer youth. This need to support “one’s own” led Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, the transvestite and trans-activists pivotal in the the Stonewall Inn uprising that set forth the gay liberation movement, to found the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) in 1970, in order to provide shelter, housing, and support to homeless queer youth and sex workers along the Greenwich Village Waterfront.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the Institute for the Protection of Lesbian and Gay Youth (IPLGY) was founded in 1979 by psychiatrist Dr. Emery S. Hetrick and New York University professor Dr. A. Damien Martin to discuss “at-risk LGBT youth in New York City affected by homophobia, physical abuse, homelessness, chronic truancy and school dropout, and involvement in sex work.”<sup>17</sup> Both STAR and IPLGY offer institutional examples of the many ways queer people worked towards helping “their own,” especially in regards to urban homelessness and its “increasing[ ] legibl[ity], that embodied intersecting issues of race, gender, sexuality, disability, cleanliness, and bodily comportment that emerged in tandem with (and as a result of) struggles over housing, neighborhood change, rising economic inequality, deinstitutionalization, and fears of crime during the Reagan Era.”<sup>18</sup>

Ballroom became a similar support mechanism for QPOCs. Although a significant portion of Juan Rivera’s story in the eighties centers on his relationship and the mutual support he received from and gave to Haring, it ends with him returning to the ballroom children and becoming an Xtravaganza. After Keith passed due to AIDS-related complications, Juan, himself infected with AIDS, fell into a deep despair: “I couldn’t get a job, had AIDS, and needed to take care of myself.” With limited employment opportunities, Juan

returned to hustling despite his strong dislike of it.<sup>19</sup> It was also a period marked by myriad deaths of loved ones, including Haring, due to AIDS. Further, the “friends” Juan had come to know and care for during the time of his relationship with Keith had suddenly turn their backs, almost Juan, spreading narratives that “[h]e and *these Puerto Rican gay hustlers* had brought down Keith;” an intentional move to discredit Juan’s romantic relationship with Haring as serious and therefore distance Juan’s impact on Haring’s work and his postmortem Foundation.<sup>20</sup> Deeply alone, Juan contemplated suicide:

... I’d come to the City to try to outgrow poverty and help my parents, and somehow it seemed that every time I’d done well for myself, something would snatch it right back, and I’d always end up finding myself sliding back into *that*... Hustling. And I figured it was like a destiny. And I was thinking I was cursed. ‘Cause they say when we die we go to hell, but I was thinking—*here I’ve been living a hell*... I had this real ugly aura hovering over my head. Till I just got up one morning, it was a perfectly beautiful morning, and I decided to call it quits... And I took some sleeping pills and angel dust and went out, and ended up in the Cathedral of St. John and Divine... So I figured that would be the spot where I’d chill out, but every time I’d get ready to take the sleeping pills and the dust, I’d hear someone walk up and stop right in front of me... So after a while, I decided it just wasn’t gonna happen, and I walked outta the church. And as I was walking outta the church, a cab pulled up, and there was a priest inside, and I walked over to him, ‘cause I was very much in need of something spiritual, of some answer, of help. But he looked at me and acted like I was gonna mug him, and ran to the back of the church—like *he* was being chased... So I sat there looking at those doors thinking how the help I need was behind those doors but I couldn’t get to it, how no matter how much I tried to figure it all out it was always over there, on the other side of me, when my body started shaking, and a voice I couldn’t recognize at first was crying and out of breath... Till I finally started making out some words, and I got up, dusted myself, and left... I went home... and when I got there there were all these legendary faggots from the *House of Xtravaganza* I used to hand out with at the Sound Factory inviting me to go to a ball...<sup>21</sup>

Although unique in many ways—not every person can claim to have been the lover and muse of a famous queer artist—Juan’s story reflects the everyday grappling with catastrophe QPOCs experienced in the eighties.<sup>22</sup> The rise of New Black/Queer/Feminist films in the nineties portrayed similar stories of the QPOC body. Carlos Aparicio and Susana Aikin’s 1990 documentary, *The Salt Mines*, captures the lives of three homeless Latina transgender women—Sara, Gigi, Giovanna—who make homes inside broken-down and discarded city garbage trucks kept at the city’s sanitation department near Little West 12th Street and adjacent to the city’s salt deposit used to melt the winter snow.<sup>23</sup> These women share their experience of immigrating to America, their community of various other homeless people—Little Man, JR, Bobby, Edwin, Ruby, all of whom are colloquially referred to as “the salt people”—and their desires for a better life. Sara, in particular, shares her experience as a gay person in Cuba and the police violence she was often subjected to. I hopes of living openly, Sara fled to the United States, in particular New York City, where

she thought freedom reigned supreme but swiftly and unfortunately discovered that “without money [in the United States], you are nothing”:<sup>24</sup>

I had lost everything... house, lover... So I came to the Salt Mine... I used to think the USA was the most beautiful place in the world where you could have anything you wanted. I couldn't wait to come... But now I'm sorry I came. Because here without money you are nothing—I'd go back to Cuba right now... even to prison... but there I don't have the same freedom, this country is marvelous that way... A gay person can never be happy in Cuba—that is the main reason why I came here, because I was always getting arrested.<sup>25</sup>

The film is one of the first to ever document the lives of transwomen, especially those of color, in which it's subjects “are at the intersections of multiple forms of socio-politically generated vulnerabilit[ies].”<sup>26</sup> What distinguished *The Salt Mines* from other New Queer Cinema of its time is the film's candid and direct address of Sara, Gigi, and Giovanna's addiction to the drug paradigmatic of the eighties War on Drugs—crack-cocaine—as well as their participation in the sex trade to support their addiction. However, the film's candid exhibition of drug-use and prostitution is not intended to reinforce the eighties paranoia over Black/Latinx and queer urban culture that was a common feature in cable news and Reagan policies, but rather challenge its assumptions. Laura Horak critiques the film as an act of translatina world-building that does not portray its subjects as powerless victims but survivors:

... the point of the film is not the spectacularisation of their suffering, evocations of pity, or incitement of donations in the vein of the film *Aizura* critiques; rather, the film presents the world these women have created for themselves. Though their lives are hard, they have autonomy and are recognised and valued as their feminine selves. They have friends and lovers and seem to have a good time together. They don't seem troubled by their identities. They are not ashamed or guilty. The film does not romanticise their hard-scrabble lives, but it does attend to the value of what they have created together.<sup>27</sup>

Darren Arquero similarly comments that, despite living in a landscape of literal waste and chemical dross, “in a culture which appears to arrange always and in every way for the annihilation of queers,’ ... *The Salt Mines* is depicted as a safe haven for outcasts of mainstream society.”<sup>28</sup> It is the need to create/produce a safe haven for such outcasts that is a common everyday experience for QPOCs, at least in New York City during the eighties. Marlon Riggs' 1989 semi-autobiographical documentary, *Tongues Untied*, offers yet another illustration of QPOC life in New York City. However, unlike Juan, Sara, Gigi, and Giovanna's grappling with prostitution, AIDS, and drug use, Riggs' film focuses specifically on the “queer black male experience and embraces authentic and radical notions of black gay identity and [HIV] positivity.”<sup>29</sup> Unique to Riggs' documentary is its specific attention

to homophobia and racism QPOCs endure from fellow Black and queer people, revealing that even within ethnic- and sexuality-minority communities—communities that form in solidarity due to shared experiences of oppression and marginalization by and from the normative social order that —QPOCs find themselves at the margins, experiencing a secondary level of violence and trauma by the very communities meant to support and uplift aspects of their identities:

... a sad, defiant and surprisingly playful reflection on marginalized identity. Throughout this free-form, hourlong personal statement from director Marlon Riggs, the word “silence” persistently re-surfaces—a “shield,” as Riggs puts it, that protects black gay men like him from harm but also suffocates them over time. As the title suggests, “Tongues Untied” is Riggs’s effort to raise his voice and speak about his life, including accounts of his experiences battling the twin prejudices of racism and homophobia and of his yearnings for connection to a subculture that exists in the shadows. Riggs’s verbal and visual poetry defy the conventions of the documentary genre, allowing for moments of raw emotional expression and occasional whimsy, like his breakdown of how to translate different “snaps.”<sup>30</sup>

These common experiences QPOCs witnessed in the latter half of the twentieth century underlaid the rise of ballroom culture and the motivation to join the subculture’s House structure. The above narratives show that at-large in the eighties was an inability to be open and expressive about one’s homosexuality within ethnic-minority communities and a devaluation of Black beauty and joy within queer communities. With limited opportunity to express the fullness of QPOC identity—embodied with multiple identity categories that must negotiate multiple antagonisms—the ballroom became a rare and coveted space that allowed for it: “With us [QPOCs], we can’t be whoever we want to be in the regular world because then we are going to get a lot of ridicule and judgment. But, in our world [ballroom] I can—you can come in one day and be the boy and then the next day you can come in and you can be the girl... you aren’t being judged unless you look a mess but other than that it’s usual.”<sup>31</sup> This narrative is so central to the ballroom scene that contemporary recreations, such as Ryan Murphy’s *Pose*, often begin their storylines with such tales.<sup>32</sup> In *Pose*’s pilot episode, one of the central character’s storyline, Damon Richards, parallels the above histories of Juan Rivera, Sara, Gigi, Giovanna, and Marlon Riggs: a “small-town” Black teenage boy is kicked out of his home for being gay and moves to New York City to pursue a career in dancing only to end up homeless in Union Square park where he is eventually mugged and left without any money or resources. Desperate for food and shelter, Damon begins dancing in Union Square for petty cash but his homeless appearance is dissuading to by-passers expect for an encounter with Blanca, a transwoman who invites Damon to join her House of Evangelista. When Damon asks Blanca what a ball is, she replies:

A ball is a gathering of people who are not welcomed to gather anywhere else. A celebration of a life that the rest of the world *does not* deem worth of celebration. There are categories—people dress up for them, walk. There’s voting, trophies... Better than money. You can actually make a name for yourself by winning a trophy or two. And in *our community*, the glory of your name is everything. [Now] we not gonna be walking the red carpets at the Oscars, but this is *our* moment to become a star.<sup>33</sup>

## **LOCATING SPACES OF THE BALLROOM: UNREMARKABLE SPACES FOR SPECTACULAR PERFORMANCES**

Similar to the search for “black architecture” or “blackness” within architecture, a peculiar problem arises in locating the architecture and spaces of ballroom—the venues that hosted balls and the apartment complexes in which Houses converged: they often lack any formal history and/or an enduring spatial presence. Architectural historian Charles L Davis II notes that the occupation of space is one way in which blackness is architecturally expressed as opposed to the traditional method of a formal tectonics or physical building, and that the absence of “formal architecture” is a form of architecture.<sup>34</sup> Architectural critic, curator, and author of *Queer Space*, Aaron Betsky encountered the same dilemma in writing a historical reconstruction of the environments of disco era New York; spaces that were “essentially ephemeral, with only oral histories and a few grainy photographs [and] films to document what were complex spaces created by a combination of lighting, architectural elements, music, and performance... [without] any descriptions that took full account of the complexities of all of these factors.”<sup>35</sup> The environments of ballroom prove no different and taking into consideration the numerous forms of violence and oppression QPOCs were witnessing in the late-seventies and eighties, its lack of a paper trail comes as no surprise.

The most difficult spaces to locate are the residential spaces in which Houses congregated. Hilderbrand points out that Livingston’s film—and here, I believe so does representations of a House in Murphy’s *Pose*—alludes, strongly, that a House is in residence in which House members cohabit.<sup>36</sup> Although some House mothers and fathers did informally take in children who were either homeless or kicked out of their biological homes, “many ball walkers continue[d] to live with their biological [families].”<sup>37</sup> Cases in which House mothers and/or fathers did shelter other members of their house are circumstantial without an official record, either due its inherent informality or because this practice was not technically legal. More commonplace was House children constantly hanging out or around their House’s mother or father’s house, whether for a few hours, a day, a weekend,

where they would socialize with other QPOCs, talk about queer issues given their inability to do so in other spaces, and prepare for balls:

PEPPER LABELIJA: When someone has rejection from their [biological] mother and father, their family, they—when they get out in the world—they search. They search for someone to fill that void. I know this for experience, because I've had kids come to me and latch hold of me like I'm their mother or like I'm their father, 'cause they can talk to me and I'm gay and they're gay. And that's where a lot of that “ballness” and—and the mother business comes in. Because their real parents give them such a hard way to go, they look up to me to fill that void... But a lot of these kids that I meet now, they come from such sad backgrounds, you know—broken homes or no home at all. And then the few that do have families and the family finds that they're gay, they “X” them completely.<sup>38</sup>

FREDDIE XTRAVAGANZA: My mother is Angie Xtravaganza and my father is David Xtravaganza. The House of Xtravaganza has done a lot. It's made me feel like I have a family. We 're always together. If we're not together, we always speak on the phone.<sup>39</sup>

ANGIE XTRAVAGANZA: My name is Angie Xtravaganza and I am the mother of the House of Xtravaganza. When there's a ball, I'm always doing something for everybody in my House. I do that one's hair, the other one's makeup. You know, choose their shoes, their accessories. I always offer advice, you know - as far as what I know and what I've been through in gay life, you know. I ran away from my House when I was 14 and I've learned all sorts of things—good and bad—and how to survive in gay world [sic], you know. It's kind of hard.<sup>40</sup>

FREDDIE XTRAVAGANZA: My birthday will come and I'll always get a birthday gift from Angie. Won't get one from my real mother. Like when I got thrown out of my house, Angie let me stay with her until I got myself together and I got working. She always fed me. She can be a pain in the ass sometimes, but I wouldn't trade her in for any other mother.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, Houses “indicated a lack of personal domestic space for some... but [ ] also indicated a strong sense of community and kinship;”<sup>42</sup> a queer construction of family that offered solidarity and support against the myriad of urban crises—AIDS, homelessness, sex work, drugs, bigotry—countless QPOCs endured. However, their bond should not be mistaken as a congregation driven by tragedy; rather, it the support and love Houses offer and their ability to remove the proximity of crises from the QPOC's everyday life that is at the root of a House.

Despite the lack of knowledge—at least from an outsider's perspective—the complexes in which Houses were housed, their plan and division of spaces, number of occupants, rental agreements, and their larger network across New York City's geography, what is known is that the majority of Houses were located in Harlem or Brooklyn.<sup>43</sup> This is possibly due to a variety of factors, namely, existing ethnic-minority communities in which





**Figure 4.3**

Children of the House of Xtravaganza getting ready for a ball on a New York City subway, 1986.

many ballroom members grew up in and the lower cost of rent compared to Greenwich Village [see Appendix A: A38-A71].<sup>44</sup> Although locating Houses proves difficult, there were nonetheless key spaces in which balls were frequently produced and hosted. These popular venues included the No. 127 Imperial Elk’s Lodge, the YMCA, the Roller Rock Skating Rink, the Crystal Ballroom, the Uptown Social Club, and the Golden Terrace Ballroom in Harlem, Club Constellation, the Red Zone nightclub, and Hotel Diplomat/Club Sweatz in Midtown and near Times Square, and Tracks NYC Nightclub, the Paradise Garage nightclub, the Marc Ballroom, and the Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center in Greenwich Village.<sup>45</sup> These spaces were typically conventional open floor plans or banquet halls, seemingly ordinary, but easily adaptable and accommodating to large groups and spectacular performances. Unfortunately, many of these venues shut down prior to the new millennia—with the obvious exception of the Harlem YMCA and the Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, the former declared a National Historic Landmark in 1976 and the latter a cultural landmark and pivotal site in the founding of queer activist

groups, including the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLADD), Senior Action in a Gay Environment (SAGE), and the Gender Identity Project—and redeveloped, failing to leave behind accessible plans or documentation of their spaces. Yet, through the handful of photographic and film documentations on house ballroom by Chantal Regnault (*Voguing and the House Ballroom Scene of New York City 1989-92*, photobook 2011), Gerald Gaskin (*Legendary: Inside the House Ballroom Scene*, photobook 2013), Jennie Livingston (*Paris Is Burning*, film 1991), Wolfgang Busch (*How Do I Look NYC*, film 2006), and Sara Jordenö (*Kiki*, film 2016), and the contemporary drama television series *Pose*, a coherent spatial organization emerges; a spatial pattern Marlon M. Bailey attempts to diagrams in his 2014 essay, “Engendering Space: Ballroom Culture and the Spatial Practice of Possibility in Detroit.”<sup>46</sup> Bailey’s “Ballroom culture ground plan” categorizes the essential components of a ball and distributes them within a common ball configuration: a central, long, and narrow runway/performance area perimetered with areas for participants and spectators to its left, right and back, and capped with a panel of judges at its front.<sup>47</sup> Vacillating between the panel of judges and the middle of the runaway area is a commentator(s) who performs just as much as a walker, maintaining the event’s high-energy and moderating between the judges critiques and a walker’s reactions:

Fundamental to the spatial transformation is a “T” formation by which audiences and performances are arranged [ ]. The performer’s runway is a narrow area positioned in between the spaces allocated for the audience on both sides. Runways can be constructed in a variety of ways. They can be configured via an elevated platform, a colorful rug, or a design etched onto the floor. This arrangement is intended to resemble the runway that professional models use, which is elevated and runs throughout the audience so that designers and other onlookers can get a full view of the models in their clothing. In Ballroom, the performances on the runway occur in between audience members on either side of the runway, while other audience members are scattered throughout the room. More often than not the spatial arrangement of the audiences changes at various moments during the ball. Members end up surrounding the runway on three sides with the panel of judges at the front end of the runway. The panel of judges, consisting of no less than six prominent members of the Ballroom scene, is positioned at the front of the runway off to one side and allows the judges to directly face the performers. It is worth noting that judges are selected by the housemother and/or the housefather of the house that organizes the ball. These members are usually well known as successful competitors in the Ballroom scene on local or national levels. The seating for the panel of judges is often elevated slightly to give the judges the best visual perspective. All performances occur in the direction of the judges. There are several categories that require the judges to scrutinize a performer’s lower body; some categories include floor performance. The table for the DJ is positioned just above the panel of judges, either to the right or to the left of it. Contestants and crowd members stand at the back end of the runway, the area directly facing the panel of judges. All of the space outside of the arrangement of the “T” is a general area where members of the crowd stand and sit to view the performances. This is also the area from which participants emerge. The affir-



**Figure 4.4**

Mother Angie or Rachel Xtravaganza walking “Body” at a ball in New York City.



Figure 4.5

Venus Xtravaganza walking at a ball in New York City.



Figure 4.6

Octavia Saint Laurent and Danielle walking at the Revlon Ball in New York City, 1997.

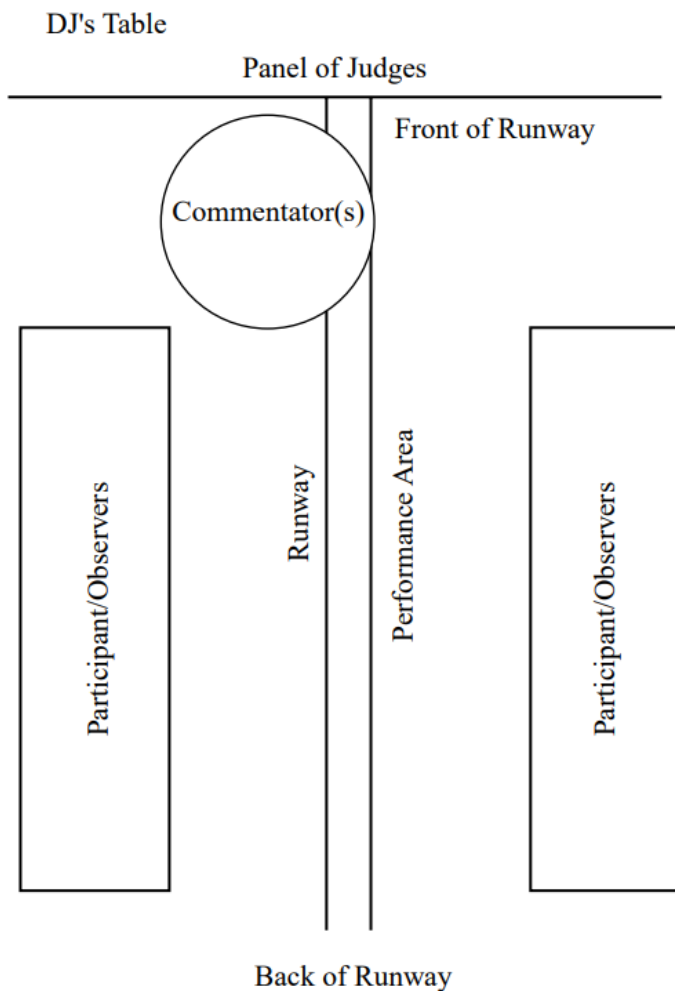
Photo by Gerard H. Gaskin.



**Figure 4.7**

Temperance Saint Laurent winning a trophy at the House of Adonis Ball, 1989.

Photo by Chantal Regnault.



**Figure 4.8**

Ballroom's spatial organization as drawn by Marlon M. Bailey.

mation, the status, and the sense of belonging enjoyed in this communal spatial arrangement at ball events are not typically afforded to house members in the outside world. Although people engage in ritual performances in a variety of locales, Ballroom's spatial organization and the labor involved in creating it directly inform the communal nature of this event. The runway is not only a site where recognition and affirmation are conferred, but it is also the space in which vigorous competition and critique occur in the presence of members of the larger community. The runway is the focal point, the place of spectacle, and the nexus of the interrelationship between the onlookers, participants, the commentator, the judges, and the DJ.<sup>48</sup>

Even though Bailey analysis is derived from his experiences with Detroit's contemporary ballroom scene, the documentary work on late eighties ballroom by Livingston and Regnault relay the configurations Bailey's plan conceives, revealing a consistent spatial logic maintained in ballroom culture likely since its beginnings. Bailey's description of contemporary ballroom's spaces and Livingston and Regnault's documentary work further expose another organizational consistency: the use of easily foldable furniture and simple decorations—

folding chairs and tables, streamers, cutting ribbons, metallic curtains. The use of these furnishings afforded swift set-up and disassembly, allowing any venue to be easily and temporarily co-opted into a site of queer fabulousness and subsequently restored to its original ordinariness; doubtlessly a necessity for bypassing the policing of the (hetero)normative social order; a spatial argot that built on the need for QPOC space that ballroom provided. This theory is supported by the fact that earlier era of house-balls were held late at night: "balls were held late at night because the rent was cheaper and drag queens were safer than on Harlem streets, where black-nationalist militancy had cramped the quasi tolerance of gay culture common in the neighborhood in prior decades."<sup>49</sup> Cloaked under the aphotic and muted milieu between midnight and twilight, participants were free to

commute in their grandiose costumes undetected by the homophobic social order and return home before the rest of the city awoke. These late-hours also accommodated participants’ work—both formal and informal—and life/family schedules; not all ballroom participants were homeless, rejected by their families, or involved in informal labor practices, with some even pursuing doctorate degrees, allowing participants engaged with some fraction of the social order—whether their job, their family, their education—separate from ballroom.

Producing a ball required other measures to abate detection of conflict with the social order. Balls relied heavily on the ability to rent affordable spaces from private vendors and property owners who were more than often heterosexual and concerned with maintaining a certain level of community propriety—“the state or quality of conforming to conventionally accepted standards of behavior or morals.”<sup>50</sup> American cultural critic and historian Tavia Nyong’o points out that House fathers were often the ones responsible for securing ballroom venues, negotiating leases and contracts, and dealing with other “behind the scene roles;”<sup>51</sup> imitating traditional gender roles and expectations, such as men/fathers engage in the legal matters of the household. Eventually, in the middle to late eighties, balls began to frequent nightclubs such as Tacks NYC and the Paradise Garage in Greenwich village. These balls occurred at more normal hours, taking advantage of the ability to be more openly queer which the Village offered, but, because balls were not only spaces of alterity, black joy, and critical self-reflection, but also serious commercial endeavors, also with the aim of attracting a broader audience of LGBTQ folk. Today, balls endure despite the city’s demise of gay nightlife in the nineties under Giuliani’s “quality of life” policies.<sup>52</sup> While many venues were forced to close their doors—Danceteria, Tracks NYC, the Paradise Garage, Better Days, the Sound Factory Bar—ballroom’s ability to co-opt any space in a simple fashion is what likely allowed ballroom to continue to thrive; a ball is not tied to a specific fix spatial typology but practice of spatial organization. Like QPOCs who must constantly and productively adapt to adverse condition forced upon, often creatively distorting these conditions towards a means of social change rather than buckle under them—joyous black laughter—ballroom reveals a different approach to architectural production. This form of architectural production is not predicated on fixed relations of programming and space—zoning, landmarking—but instead opportunistically transforms what is available into what is necessary.

Of the sites balls were hosted one in particular, the Imperial Elks Lodge, deserves special attention because of its intersection between QPOC spatial production and other histories of Black resistance and excellence. One Paris Dupree’s legendary “Paris Is Burning” ball featured in Livingston’s documentary was held at the Imperial Elks Lodge—also

referred to as the Imperial Lodge of Elks and the Imperial Lodge No. 127—in Harlem at 160 West 129th Street. The building was constructed in 1924 and designed by Vertner Woodson Tandy, the first registered African-American architect in the state of New York.<sup>53</sup> His creation was home to the Harlem chapter the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks of the World (IBPOEW), an African-American fraternal order modeled that appropriated the all-white and all-male Benevolent Protective Order of the Elks (BPOE). The BPOE was a fraternal order for minstrel show performers known as “Jolly Corks” and founded by J.M. Norcross in 1868 “in a boarding house at 188 Elm Street on the northwest corner of what is now the intersection of Broome and Lafayette Streets.”<sup>54</sup> This order modeled itself and its secret rituals from the Freemasons, which included strict racial and gender discrimination as outlined in Article VII of the BPOE constitution: “No person shall be accepted as a member of this Order unless he be a white male citizen of the United States of America, of sound mind and body, of good character, not under the age of Twenty-one years, and a believer in God.”<sup>55</sup> These customs forbade B. F. Howard and Arthur J. Riggs, two African-American men, the latter born into slavery, admissions into the BPOE, both of whom had sought to obtain membership. Determined to create a fraternal organization for African Americans that paralleled the BPOE’s sense of brotherhood, Riggs lifted a copy of their secretive rituals and used them to established a black version of the Elks in Cincinnati in 1898.<sup>56</sup> Further, when Howard and Riggs had discovered that the BPOE’s rituals were not copy-written, the pair “consulted the Register of Copyrights of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.. [and] to avoid the possibility of infringement, Riggs had the ritual copyrighted [with him] being the[ir] proprietor.”<sup>57</sup> These actions resulted in a hostile relationship between the African-American appropriation of the Elks and the original Order:

The white Elks heard the rumor that the [Riggs] had “‘borrowed” an Elk ritual from a traveling [member] in a Pullman car and had set up an Afro-American Lodge in Cincinnati, and they were furious. The National Black Monitor gives an account which states: “Riggs was taken from the train on which he was serving as Pullman porter between Cincinnati and New Orleans, when it reached Birmingham, Alabama. He was threatened with lynching unless he told where he had secured the copy of the Elks’ ritual. He agree[d] to bring back the ritual on his next trip; instead he changed places with another porter and never went on that trip again.” In 1899, Arthur Riggs had to leave the area, moving to Springfield, Ohio, under an assumed name. Before leaving Cincinnati, Ohio, Arthur Riggs gave the ritual, all the papers and printed material pertaining to the Elks to B. F. Howard, and Covington Kentucky became the headquarters of the lodge.<sup>58</sup>

Despite these racial threats, the IBPOEW was officially chartered in 1899, an act that symbolically (re)claimed the authority Howard and Riggs had previously been denied by the BPOE.<sup>59</sup> Among the brothers of Harlem’s chapter was W. E. B. Du Bois. Archived letters

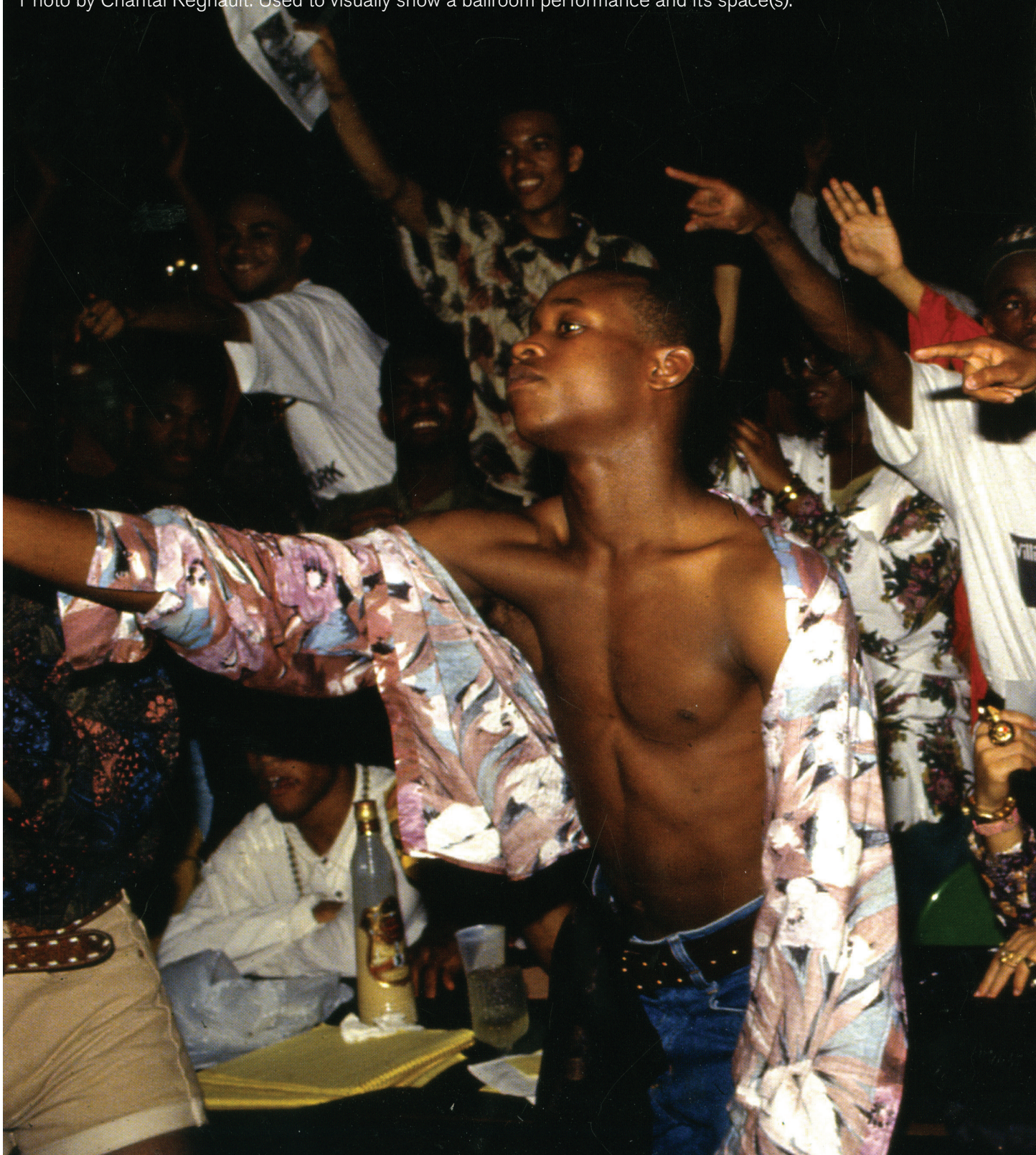




**Figure 4.9**  
Mapping of prominent spaces of QPOCs and Ballroom members in the 1980s and 1990s. By author.

**Figure 4.10**

Kenny Chanel & Bobby Revlon walking at the House of Milan Ball at the NYC Gay Community Center, 1990. Photo by Chantal Regnault. Used to visually show a ballroom performance and its space(s).





between the Imperial Lodge, No. 127 and Du Bois reflect that Du Bois had been an active member for at least nearly two decades, despite his teaching appointment at Atlanta University in Atlanta, Georgia.<sup>60</sup>

The Imperial Elks Lodge, No. 127 did not only serve as a home to the Harlem chapter of the IPOEW, but was also where the first African-American led labor union affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, was organized and established in 1925.<sup>61</sup>

Black Elks allowed for the development of working-class solidarity outside the workplace and outside of traditional labor organizations. Cross-class alliances, male–female solidarity, racial unity, and a willingness to join ideologically mixed coalitions and to engage in multiple forms of struggle, especially militant mass mobilization, distinguish Elk labor activism from that of other fraternal orders during the 1930s and 1940s. Whereas in other multiclass organizations workers' goals were minimized, the 472 V. Green IBPOEW evolved into a multiclass fraternal order in which its working-class membership determined its primary objectives and the allocation of resources. In the years prior to World War I, the black Elks had experienced financial instability, internal schism, and legal attacks on their right to exist by the white Elks. However, they achieved internal unification, accommodation with the white Elks, and tremendous growth in the post-World War I context of black migration, urbanization, proletarianization, and labor upheaval.<sup>62</sup>

Thus, the Imperial Elk's Lodge is a site of historical Black excellence and resistance, though a predominantly masculine/male-centered form of Black excellence. This aspect of gender/masculinity increases an understanding of ballroom's practice of social alterity and critique. In *Paris*, viewers can catch glimpses of a taxidermy elk's head on the lacquered red balconies above the ball's runway, making visually apparent a legacy of Black male excellence within a temporal moment of QPOC occupation/co-option. However, rather than regard ballroom as Other than the site's legacy of Black male excellence, one should this QPOC production of space as within this legacy, as, at the core of ballroom, was the celebration of Black men, Black male (queer) joy.

#### **“WHAT I LEARNED IN THE EIGHTIES”:**

##### ***PARIS IS BURNING AND ITS IMAGE PRODUCTION***

Jennie Livingston opens her seminal 1991 documentary, *Paris Is Burning*, with a black and white title card: “New York 1987.” It is “a statement of time and place... presented matter-of-factly before any other *images* or even the film's [own] title.”<sup>63</sup> Following this card is a minute-long city symphony of distant urban spaces across New York City at night—Times Square, Harlem, the Christopher Street Piers, the West Village—where Black and brown

bodies are cluttered, chattering, dancing, or walking along littered streets.<sup>64</sup> Within this short urban portrait, which is largely focused on the city’s lively street-nightlife against a backdrop of urban blight, is a peculiar juxtaposition that foreshadows the film’s poignant tone; a three-second shot of Times Square centered on a digital marquee that reads, “white supremacist church begins national conference...(emphasis added)”<sup>65</sup> A few second later, the camera pans down to reveal that the Black and brown men who were previously captured walking and chattering in the streets and on the piers are affectionately holding hands or embracing, revealing that these Black men are “not” what the audience would assume as the typical sort. Both moves covertly introduce the film’s subject matter, bigotry and marginalization, and the film’s subjects, Black gay men, though this will later grow to include queer people of color (QPOC) more broadly. The innuendos of these visual cues are made explicit by the film’s first instance of interview commentary, in which a disembodied and unattributed voice speaks over continued images of Black gay affection and joy as well as the film’s first onscreen depiction of transwomen of color:

I remember my dad used to say, “You have three strikes against you in this world. Every black man has two, that they’re just Black and they’re male. But you’re Black, and you’re a male, and you’re gay—You’re gonna have a hard fucking time.” Then he said, “If you’re gonna do this, you’re gonna have to be stronger than you ever *imagined*.”<sup>66</sup>

Within this cardinal minute of the film, Livingston establishes the socio-political *mise en scène* of New York City and the nation at-large in the late-eighties; a landscape still grappling with the social and economic effects of deindustrialization as well as continued racial and ethnic violence and oppression nearly two decades after the civil rights movement.<sup>67</sup> The film’s effectiveness in communicating these complex and intersectional social struggles almost solely through images—the latter commentary only corroborates what was already visually laden—substantiates this disembodied voice’s implied problematization of identity-as-image; the audience remains uninformed as to whether the disembodied voice belongs to one of the Black men simultaneously being depicted on-screen or not. The point *is*, is that it does not matter—to affect human understanding and behavior, or, akin to the early understandings of the axiom Ludwig Wittgenstien affords to pictures in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, “the proposition is a picture of reality.”<sup>68</sup> The aim of Livingston’s introduction is to convince the audience that the images before them *are* New York City in 1987: alive “with the sound of radios, chatter, buzzing neon, and taxi horns,” immersed in “the city’s primary olfactory signature,” garbage, and with nighttime streets filled with jovial black and brown people who are “part of communities, conversations, and kinships” and absent of whiteness.<sup>69</sup>

The film next abruptly cuts to footage of a drag queen, Pepper LaBeija, engulfed in a billowy golden ensemble of sequin and lamé walking up a Harlem street to the front doors of the Imperial Elk's Lodge. As the doors open, the film transitions to another title card, this time with the addition of red text, that introduces the film's title, "Paris Is Burning." Queer film critic Lucas Hilderbrand notes the intentionality of these editorial decisions:

These intersections, this struggle and tension between the "reality" of the street—presented in the opening shots—and the "fantasy" of the ballroom are articulated immediately afterwards through footage of Pepper Labeija walking across the threshold of the Imperial Elk's Lodge in Harlem and onto the floor at the "Paris Is Burning" ball. So precisely does this brief sequence crystallize the film's tension that the title appears on screen as an interjection between the opening location shot and Pepper's gold lamé entrance. There are no other opening credits, drawing the audience immediately into the film.<sup>70</sup>

Hilderbrand's attention to the film's editing is not only cinematographic, but also extremely architectural. The film's title frame—a rupture between Pepper and the film audience's existence within the "real" world of New York City's streets and their crossing into the "fantasy" world of the ballroom—is a metaphorical hinge between architecture and urbanism. Outside the walls of the Imperial Elks Lodge exists the complex, intersectional social tensions briefly introduced in the film's cold opening; inside the Lodge exists an intimate, tribal, and queer, in its most literal sense, spectacle of which the film's audience has yet to learn.

*Paris* most closely resembles the *cinéma vérité*—meaning "film truth"—style of documentary filmmaking. It is a style "which avoid[s] artificiality and artistic effect... generally made with simple equipment" that emerged in the 1960s in order to "shift documentaries from didactic voice-of-God presentations to more immediate and subjective portraits of the contemporary world."<sup>71</sup> Hilderbrand notes that historical framing is often absent within this style of documentary, and *Paris* similarly "refuse[s] to articulate a history by focusing on the present through documentation of events and interviews." In so doing, two effects occur. First, drag's comprehensive history, stemming back to the Elizabethan theatre, is disassociated from House-Ball culture, albeit despite a sprinkling of Dorian Corey's recountments of drag balls in the late-sixties; after all Livingston is concerned with the production of images which must simultaneously be ahistorical constructions yet pastiches of historicity. Second, it purports a truth-telling in images, in which "the ball children's statements during interviews thus serve as the only explicit narration and primary source for context," veiling the reality that *Paris* is an compendium assembled together through editorial decisions. Accepting this mythology of photographic and cinematic media's "witnessing"—a similar mythology that occurs in eighties cable television—the film's plot

can be divided into three major acts—life inside the world of ballroom, life outside the world of ballroom, and life post-ballroom’s discovery/mainstreaming—each of which further pixelate into episodic narratives distinguished by their associative intertitles cards introducing major performers, cultural topics, or ballroom keywords. In the first-third of *Paris*, ballroom children and mothers converse with the film’s interlocutor, Livingston herself, introducing three fundamental elements of House-Ball culture, beginning with the spectacle of ballroom—announced by its intertitle card “BALLS”—in which the reason and purpose of this subculture is made apparent, and ending with their associative queer-forms of kinship—announced by the intertitle card “HOUSE”—in which the film’s subjects divulge personal testimonies of their own difficulties growing up Black, Latinx, homosexual, or transsexual, and their need for alternative families. Bridging these two elements—distinctly directed on their architectural scales; a *ballroom*, a *House*—is discussion, though truly serious, on the political, social, and cultural importance of and anxieties around identity appearance and performance, or, the role of the image. This bridge is made especially prominent by the film’s double-address of the topic albeit a variance in architectural scale; first, concentrating on the subculture’s creation and continued development of numerous performative identity archetypes—marked by the intertitle “CATEGORIES”—that ballroom children, mothers, and fathers compete, or walk in as a means of establishing personal and tribal prestige. The performance of these identity archetypes are resituated within the broader socio-political urbanism of New York City—marked by the intertitle “REALNESS”—in which QPOC must perform specific identity archetypes in distinct spaces outside ballrooms and Houses to avoid physical and emotional violence and oppression.

By parsing this bridge into two—between realness in the ballroom and realness in the street—Livingston exposes a hinge between architecture and urbanism. Inside the fabulous walls of the ballroom and houses (architecture), realness is the currency that purchases glory, fame, and status through self-reflexive distortions of reality—a performative fantasy—that seek social change. Outside those walls however, on New York’s streets and within its urban spaces, laden with the complex social-political struggles introduced in *Paris*’s first minute, realness was a strategy of resistance and survival. In his 1991 book, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*, performance studies theorist Jose Esteban Muñoz rationalizes the use of assimilationist identity performance:

Instead of buckling under the pressures of dominant ideology or attempting to break free of its inescapable sphere, this ‘working on and against’ is a strategy that tries to transform a cultural logic from within, always laboring to enact permanent structural change, while at the same time valuing the importance of local or everyday struggles of resistance.<sup>72</sup>

Muñoz also expands on the use of the spectacle through performance to regain social agency:

... *the act of performing and theatricalizing queerness in public* takes on every multiplying significance... The importance of such public and semipublic enactments of the hybrid self cannot be undervalued in relation to the formation of counterpublics that contest the hegemonic supremacy of majoritarian sphere. Spectacles such as those that Gomez presents offer the minoritarian subject a space to situate itself in history and thus seize social agency.<sup>73</sup>

## **DRAG HINGE: REALNESS BETWEEN ARCHITECTURE AND URBANISM**

I understand the labor (and it is often, if not always, *work*) of making identity as a process that takes place at the point of collision of perspectives that some critics and theorists have understood as essentialist and constructivist. This collision is precisely the moment of negotiation when hybrid, racially predicated, and deviantly gendered identities arrive at representation. In doing so, a representational contract is broken; the queen and the colored come into perception and the social order receives a jolt that may reverberate loudly and widely, or in less dramatic, yet locally indispensable, ways.<sup>74</sup>

The concept of realness is first introduced—though, not explicitly stated as such—to *Paris's* audience through its use within the walls of ballroom performance. Realness serves as the barometer in which ballroom judges evaluate the degree to which a competitor convincingly embodies the archetypal traits of another gender, sex, or social class. These identity archetypes are referred to within the ballroom as a category—High Fashion Women's Sportswear, Executive Realness, Town and Country, Banji Boy/Girl—admitting some categories such as Miss Cheesecake/Luscious Body and Face that sentimentalize a walker's physical features. It is through convincing acts of realness, in which the performer's illusion of *being* another gender, sex, or social class is indistinguishable from the *real* thing, that ballroom's spectacle is achieved. Yet, the emphasis on realness is a paradoxical; it is a legacy of the mid-century drag culture Crystal Labeija revolted against. However, within ballroom's subculture, achieving realness is pivotal in deriving self-worth, notoriety/prestige, and community value. Drag's narrowness in the sixties limited what kinds of bodies/peoples could participate in drag performance as well as achieve professional success. As witnessed in Simon's *The Queen*, drag queens of color were required to adhere to a monolithic standard of European beauty that proved fundamentally disadvantageous. Similarly, the desire for *authentic* illusions in mid-century drag—where the audience *knows* the performer before them is biologically male but simultaneously *cannot know* this fact from the performer's visual appearance and mannerism—produced transphobic sentiments within drag culture:





**Figure 4.11**

On-lookers cheering at the House of Dupree Ball, 1990. Photo by Chantal Regnault.

So central was the fact of cross-dressing that adherence to original biological sex was enforced for some drag performers; in the 1960s, for example, the 82 Club on the Lower East Side in New York fired Harlem-based black performer Angie Stardust for taking female hormones because management didn't want actual women performing; they wanted the wonder of men performing in drag.<sup>75</sup>

At root of this transphobia is mid-century drag's politics of spectacle which required “a concrete inversion of life” and defaulted to a (hetero)normative understanding and coupling of biology and social relations, or, a gender-to-sex relationship.<sup>76</sup>

The images detached from every aspect of life merge into a common stream in which the unity of that life can no longer be recovered. *Fragmended* views of reality regroup themselves into a new unity as a *separate pseudoworld* that can only be looked at. The specialization of images of the world evolves into a world of autonomized images where even the deceivers are deceived. The spectacle is a concrete inversion of life, an autonomous movement of the nonliving.<sup>77</sup>

Like the image-culture analyzed by Debord, mid-century drag's image-production of a “real” gender-sex inversion is predicated on a faith in the existence of an authentic, or real, gender-to-sex relationship. Thus, drag's image-inversion, while truly radical in many ways, is also stable within homophobic and heteronormative understandings of biology and

social relationships. The spectacle created from a realistic *crossing* between gender and sex relies on the simultaneous knowledge that both sex and gender remain properly in place in the “real” world, while only the image of this crossing is detached from social-life. The spectacle of the transsexual drag queen, then, does not divorce its image from a (hetero)normative coupling of biology and social relations and thus problematizes the static position sex-to-gender holds; for the transsexual drag queen, their gender-crossing is not solely a parody but also a serious endeavor. However, this does not suggest that drag performance is *always* problematic and absent of radical critique. It is a nuanced issue that queer-feminist theorist Judith Butler felt needed to be directly addressed in a revised preface to her 1990 *Gender Trouble*:

The discussion of drag that *Gender Trouble* offers to explain the constructed and performative dimension of gender is not precisely an example of subversion. It would be a mistake to take it as the paradigm of subversive action or, indeed, as a model for political agency. The point is rather different. If one thinks that one sees a man dressed as a woman or a woman dressed as a man, then one takes the first term of each of those perceptions as the “reality” of gender: the gender that is introduced through the simile lacks “reality,” and is taken to constitute an illusory appearance. In such perceptions in which an ostensible reality is coupled with an unreality, we think we know what the reality is, and take the secondary appearance of gender to be mere artifice, play, falsehood, and illusion. But what is the sense of “gender reality” that founds this perception in this way? Perhaps we think we know what the anatomy of the person is (sometimes we do not, and we certainly have not appreciated the variation that exists at the level of anatomical description). Or we derive that knowledge from the clothes that the person wears, or how the clothes are worn. This is naturalized knowledge, even though it is based on a series of cultural inferences, some of which are highly erroneous. Indeed, if we shift the example from drag to transsexuality, then it is no longer possible to derive a judgment about stable anatomy from the clothes that cover and articulate the body. That body may be preoperative, transitional, or postoperative; even “seeing” the body may not answer the question: *for what are the categories through which one sees?* The moment in which one’s staid and usual cultural perceptions fail, when one cannot with surety read the body that one sees, is precisely the moment when one is no longer sure whether the body encountered is that of a man or a woman. The vacillation between the categories itself constitutes the experience of the body in question.<sup>78</sup>

The limit of mid-century drag’s spectacle, then, can be seen to parallel the architectural, political, and urban thinking that led to Battery Park City’s redevelopment in the eighties, where the economic and environmental issues that underlaid the city and the nation’s difficulties in the seventies were not structurally challenged and redeveloped, but imagined anew through imagistic spectacle. Like the drag queen’s reliance on normative couplings between biology and social relations, Pelli’s historical reference to ancient civilizations through his recycling of classical forms defaults on a specific Eurocentric framing of history in order to make a claim about Battery Park City and the nation’s emerging

financial and political greatness. Postmodernism’s larger aesthetic trend to remix cultural images—whether through formal or material references—similarly relies on stable categories, histories, and faiths that it then purports to subvert; a cunning double action.

The desire for realness within drag’s spectacle is carried into the subculture of ballroom although, in a uniquely pluralistic manner. Whereas the understanding and imagination of realness in earlier drag could be described as monolithic, the creation of ballroom categories and its continuous incorporation of diverse identity archetypes—alternating between various masculine/feminine, privileged/non-privileged, traditional/bizarre cultural types—offers an intersectional understanding and realness and the QPOC subject. Simultaneously, the *practice* of realness—authentically walking/performing both offensive racial, cultural, and sexual stereotypes as well as the identity archetypes venerated by mainstream society—denaturalizes and trivializes the majoritarian structural homology between image and socio-cultural position; exposing the *always-already* constructed-ness of race, class, gender/sex, and sexuality.<sup>79</sup> In other words, ballroom’s practice of realness calls out the normative assumption that there is an inherent link between *essence* and image as precisely that, an assumption:

DORIAN COREY: In real life, you can’t get a job as an executive unless you have the educational background and the opportunity. Now, the fact that you are not an executive is merely because of the social standing of life. That is just [the] pure thing. Black people have a hard time getting anywhere. And those that do are usually straight. *In a ballroom, you can be anything you want.* You’re not really an executive, but you’re looking like an executive—And therefore, you’re showing the straight world that, “I can be an executive!” If I had the opportunity, I could be one, because *I can look like one.* And that is, like, a fulfillment. Your peers, your friends are telling you, “*Oh, you’d make a wonderful executive!*” (emphases added).<sup>80</sup>

This approach to “realness” pushes the term from an inert, normative qualifier—“the fact or quality of being real; reality, truth”—into speech and performative acts through which political contestation is manifested and in which the adjudication of what constitutes *realness* becomes a means of navigating complex and often conflicting social relationships.<sup>81</sup> In Butler’s reading of *Paris* and the ballroom’s production of realness, she writes, “‘realness’... is a standard that is used to judge any given performance within the established categories. And yet what determines the effects of realness is the ability to compel belief, to produce the naturalized effect... which no performance fully approximates.”<sup>82</sup> In other words, “realness is not a tangible or specific category in itself but rather a slippery and self-contradictory ideal: Realness has been achieved when someone passes so effectively that it is no longer legible as ‘realness.’”<sup>83</sup> *Paris*’ audience gains this latter understanding through featured quarrel between a ball walker, David Xtravaganza, and a



**Figure 4.12**

Tina Montana walking at the Avis Pendavis Ball at the Red Zone, 1990. Photo by Chantal Regnault.

fact that the American coach had stepped onto the floor, and that was a disqualification for the contestant. Just as picky as a ball.

{INTERTITLE: SHADE}

COMMENTARY: So the little flaws like that, that's because that's a part of shade—that's the idea—knock 'em out if you can! Get 'em anyway—hit 'em below the belt.<sup>84</sup>

This feud transitions to a minor episode within the film where methods of verbal play are introduced to the *Paris'* audience, in which this linguistic “art form of insult” adju-

ball's MC, Junior LaBeija, in the film's second act, exposing that realness is not a fixed system but rather in constant arbitration:

JUNIOR LABELIJA: Now—I'll cut the music. Now, I said... I said, “men's garment.”

COMMENTARY: He *looked* like he had on a man's fox coat.

JUNIOR: Tell this child, “Where are the *men's* garments?”

DAVID XTRAVAGANZA: I paid for it, mother-fucker—A *man* bought it! It buttons on the right side!

JUNIOR: The judges say...

DAVID: It buttons on the *right* side!

COMMENTARY: Someone came up and told the MC...

DAVID: Are you a judge? (to Junior LaBeija)

COMMENTARY: ... that it was a woman's coat. I thought it was *silly* to nitpick.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Oh they're shady! They're throwing shade at him—I can't believe this!

DORIAN COREY: Wait a minute—wait a minute—wait a minute! Wait a minute now. Let's not get loud. Now—David—David—David!

COMMENTARY: That's the one thing I find faulty with the balls—after they've laid down these little categories, then they try to become a stickler for exact interpretation. Merely a point to discredit the contestant. Like, in the Olympics, where the Russian judge brought to the

dicates the definition and image of realness inside and outside the ballroom; a cultural rhetoric within ballroom known as “reading” and “throwing shade.” Both are social mechanisms of policing other bodies and operate within varying degrees of playfulness and seriousness. To “read” someone is to “set them ‘straight,’ to put them in their place, or reveal a secret [or flaw] about someone in front of others.”<sup>85</sup> “Throwing shade” is an indirect way of “reading,” in which someone “ignore[s] a person altogether, even if the person is in immediate proximity” or only acknowledges that person through cattish mannerisms—rolling one’s eyes, smacking or pressing one’s lips, glaring, scoffing.<sup>86</sup> Both signifying acts are commonly misunderstood as trivial pettiness or aggression birthed out of personal insecurities or deep-seeded internalizations of homophobia, racism, or classism.<sup>87</sup> However, this black and queer verbal practice of insult and shaming, though malicious at times, is genuinely a strategy for marginalized subjects to (re)claim their political agency. Performance studies scholar E. Patrick Johnson explains that “shade has always been subversive,” with “roots in slave culture.”<sup>88</sup>

The threat of being beaten or mutilated was always there if you were to look at a slave master directly in his eye, or if you were to sass, so African-Americans developed these covert ways of communication, which, over time, have morphed into the traditional ways that they interact with one another.<sup>89</sup>

Considering the fact the individuals who construct ballroom’s subculture frequently occupied multiple marginalized subject positions—Black/Latinx, homosexual, transgender/femme, low-income/poverty, homeless, urban—it is easy to see why this element within African-American vernacular thrived; “shade was refined by some of the most marginalized people in American society... each of whom had to find socially acceptable ways to communicate humor *and* aggression (emphasis added).”<sup>90</sup> Cultural rhetoric scholar Seth E. Davis makes similar claims regarding this speech act’s survival and liberatory practice, referring to shade and reading as “fierce literacies.” Davis argues that these literacies “refashion language, gender performance, sexual identity and appearance, often to subvert meaning, for fun, survival and to subversively communicate in the presence of interlopers.”<sup>91</sup> Further, they challenge “static ideas of language and literacy... in order to navigate a system that regularly oppresses, silences, and erases their knowledge(s), histories, and lived experiences.”<sup>92</sup>

Dorian Corey explicitly states that this cultural rhetoric cannot *cross* into the (hetero) normative world during a “metasemantic discussion” with the film’s interlocutor:<sup>93</sup>

You get in a smart crack and everyone laughs and “kikis” because you found a flaw and exaggerated it—then you’ve got a good “read” going... If it is happening between

the gay world and the straight world, it's not really a "read." It's more of an insult—a vicious slur fight... But it's how [QPOCs] develop a sense of how "to read" ... [Heterosexuals] may call you "a faggot," or "a drag queen." You find something to call them. But then, when you are *all of the same thing*, then you have to go to the fine point. In other words, if I'm a Black queen and you're a Black queen, we can't call each other "Black queens," 'cause we're both Black queens. That's not a "read." That's just a *fact*. So then we talk about your ridiculous shape, your saggy face, your tacky clothes... Then reading became a developed form where it became "shade." "Shade" is, "I don't tell you you're ugly, but I don't *have* to tell you because *you know* you're ugly." And that's "shade."<sup>94</sup>

It is an important discernment—whether verbal slurs are flung between majoritarian-minoritarian or minoritarian-minoritarian subjects pairs—because it discloses how language and its control over image differ between oppressive and liberatory. It is in the context of ballroom's subculture, where realness is in continuous and pluralized adjudication, where Butler's liberatory accreditation to drag's performance—and here, drag can be broadened to include all of ballroom's performative categories—is most evident:

As much as drag creates a unified picture of "woman" (what its critics often oppose), it also reveals the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence. *In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency.* Indeed, part of the pleasure, the giddiness of the performance is in the recognition of a radical contingency in the relation between sex and gender in the face of cultural configurations of causal unities that are regularly assumed to be natural and necessary. In the place of the law of heterosexual coherence, we see sex and gender denaturalized by means of a performance which avows their distinctness and dramatizes the cultural mechanism of their fabricated unity.<sup>95</sup>

The adoption of ostensibly derogatory and heteronormative stereotypes of sexuality, gender/sex, and race as a means to claim political agency is also present within mainstream queer culture. As I pointed out in chapter 2, the mainstream queer culture in New York City in the eighties and nineties—criticized for its lack of intersectionality and assimilation to the market economy—relied on the deployment of queer-symbolic visibility in order to make itself as apparent as the epidermis of race and ethnicity. In a similar fashion to "throwing shade" and "reading" in ballroom's subculture, these queer-symbols included offensive, stereotypical caricatures purported by the (hetero)normative social order. In *Fierce Pleasures*, Nyon'o recounts his ethnographic study of Christopher Street in the early-nineties, which spurred feeling of unease and confusion when he encountered white gay men wearing t-shirts that read "Warning Brothers: White Man with Big Dick," het-

erosexual allies in “defensively-donned shirt[s] that read ‘Filthy Hetero,’” and numerous window displays showcasing S/M leather gear and kink/fetish paraphernalia. These tropes, especially the latter, play directly into (hetero)normative social order’s characterizations of Black men, queer spite, and sexual perversion.<sup>96</sup>

Although the practice of realness and its associative cultural rhetoric differ in its practice between majoritarian and minoritarian subjects, parallels can nonetheless be seen with New York City’s development in the eighties. Similar to the constant adjudication of realness that exposes the always-already constructed-ness of race, class, gender/sex, and sexuality, so too did the zoning and landmarking practices of the eighties reveal the constant adjudication and always-already construction nature of history. Costonis points out that the *image* of the West Side as a collection of “solid, low-rise, low-key, family-type building[s]” in which the erection of an East Side architectural species, the tower-plaza, would bollix is indeed a historical “construction.”<sup>97</sup>

The city’s zoning code was modified in 1961 to discourage squat buildings uniformly set out to the street line—until then, the prevalent building format. Desired instead were towers set back from the street by plazas, an alternative that would encourage architectural diversity and allow light and air to flood in at street level. The East Side real estate market was then booming, and developers demolished scores of the squat, pre-1961 corde buildings in the rush to build tower-plaza high rises. The established family unit, a disappearing species on the East Side, became a dwindling share of the market. Its place was taken by lawyers, advertising executives, teachers, and other young professionals who flocked to the efficient and one-bedroom apartments that filled the towers and who gamboled in the bars, boutiques, and quiche-and-Perrier ambience portrayed in *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* and other films of the period. Snug in their comfortably shabby buildings and family-centered life on the other side of town, West Siders sniffed at their neighbors to the east. Over time, telltale signs of East Side-ism began to appear... [These] fears of spreading contagion intensified with the 1979 unveiling of the tower-plaza building proposed for the All Angels’ site.<sup>98</sup>

What Costonis points out is that “the mansion battle demonstrates how, in a particular neighborhood’s perception, difference in physical geometry can become linked with fear over imminent changes in social geometry.”<sup>99</sup> Similar to the policing of identity “reading” establishes, Board No. 7’s move to landmark the Isaac L. Rice manor was a means to adjudicate what constitutes the “real” West Side. It is no wonder, then, that “virtually lost in the turmoil was a discussion of the architectural quality of the Rice Mansion.”<sup>100</sup> At the core of this case for aesthetic coherence was a calculated construction of the West Side’s history which promised a phantasmatic rescue from the social anxieties plaguing New York City in the eighties.

Major zoning modifications might only occur approximately once in a generation, but always present is “the rule of exemption,” in which the right to and use of property is in

constant negotiation. At the heart of the dispute over Mr. Choi's delicatessen was the ability to pass, or, to present as "real." The residents of Park Avenue were not truly upset about the property's commercial zoning exemption, but rather the delicatessen inability to perform their version of "Park Avenue" which revealed the exemption in a way that the florist store before it had not. Like a rival drag mother at the ball, the coalition of 120 "monitor" surveilled the delicatessen day and night for the slightest infringement of "realness." "The rules that regulate and legitimate realness," in this case, zoning and landmarking, "constitute the mechanism by which certain sanctioned fantasies, sanctioned imaginaries, are insidiously elevated as parameters of realness."<sup>101</sup> There is a comic parallel between drag's illusion of gender/sex and Park Avenue's beloved flower shop that served as a front for its "real" commercial practice, dealing heroine. If only the delicatessen had placed flowers in its window display rather than hideous baseborn produce! Both situations "dramatize how buildings or neighborhoods function as blotters sopping up varied associations... because their associations engage thought and feeling, both shaping and confirming the selfhood of those who fought against change."<sup>102</sup>

It is important to note that the practice and adjudication of realness within ballroom is heterotopic. Michel Foucault notes in his *The Order of Things*, that unlike utopias, heterotopias undermine language, shatter or tangle common names, and destroy in advance the syntaxes which constructs sentences and holds together words and things: "heterotopias... desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences."<sup>103</sup> As such, the specific practice of realness referred to above exists only at architectural scales—within the ballroom, within the House, and within momentary occupations of public spaces like the Christopher Street Piers, Washington Square Park, within queer nightclubs like Better Days or Paradise Garage, or on the streets like those of Times Square at night in *Paris*' cold open. However, since the understanding of realness within ballroom and its constant, plural adjudication relies on realness' relationship with the outside (hetero) normative social order, *Paris* reintroduces and reworks realness at an urban scale, brandishing the hinge in which the QPOC body passes from architecture to urbanism.

### **DRAG HINGE: REALNESS AS AN URBAN GEOGRAPHY**

Livingston artfully introduces the latter part of the first act's bridge, "REALNESS," with Cheryl Lynn's 1978 track, "Got to be Real."<sup>104</sup> Lynn's ardent vocals "*what you find-ah, what you feel now, what you know-ah, to be real*" repeats over cinematic vignettes of urban spaces populated by the (hetero)normative social order—"working girls" approaching the



front doors of their Midtown jobs, business executives eating lunch on-the-go in the Financial District, a well-dressed man and woman pondering over a city periodical in a fast-moving sea of shoulder-padded young urban professionals. It is a cinematographic move that suggests “realness” is not a sub-cultural *sui generis* but rather a ubiquitous condition of social life.

This series of urban vignettes end on a pair of Black individuals joyously chit-chatting outside a gilded window display; they are fittingly (professionally) dressed yet noticeably stand out from the surrounding mass of white urban professionals. Their sexualities are never explicitly stated but it assumed that the Black pair are, while racially different, are sexually homologous (heterosexual) to their white professional “peers.” This assumption is substantiated by the immediate following cut back into the ballroom and overlaid with interview commentary:

JUNIOR LABELIJA: When you’re a [heterosexual] man and a [heterosexual] woman, you can do anything. You can—you can almost have sex on the streets if you want to! The most somebody’s gonna say is, “Hey, get a hump for me,” you know. But when you’re gay, you monitor everything you do. You monitor how you look, how you dress, how you talk, how you act: “Do they see me? What do they think of me?”<sup>105</sup>

This transition reminds the film’s audience that social, cultural, historical, and physical forms of discrimination and violence are not homogeneous experiences but intersectionally situated; although the pair of African-Americans stand out for their surroundings, racially, they are still able to assimilate in some manner whether by their proper attire



**Figure 4.13**  
Cesar Valentino voguing at the Copacabana, 1990.  
Photo by Chantal Regnault.

or alluded sexual orientations. The abrupt cut from sunny vignettes of Midtown and the Financial District to dimly lit interior of the ballroom visually reinforces the notion of a spatial difference in which realness operates. Though seemingly cheerful, bright, and normal, the juxtaposition is a reminder that ballroom’s architectural heterotopia is a space to protect its members from that specific sunny urban exterior layered with hostile, homophobic, transphobic, racist, and classed behaviors.

These urban realities for the QPOC are succinctly made by Dorian’s commentary that couples realness with “the outside.” Voiced over footage of a young, petite, prepubescent-looking yet maturely dressed transwoman, Venus Xtravaganza—one of the two most-featured transwomen in the film, both of which are decorated as highly “real”—brushing her blonde hair and putting on makeup, Dorian’s words are underlaid with an eerie foreshadow:

“When they’re undetectable and they can walk out of that ballroom into the sunlight and onto the subway and get home, and still have all their clothes and no blood running off their bodies... those are the femme realness queens... and usually it’s a category for young queens.”<sup>106</sup> This cautioning is made legitimate later in the film when the audience learns of Venus’ murder; her corpse was found under a bed in the Duchess Hotel four days after being strangled death.<sup>107</sup> It is a point in the film that exploits the serious reality transwomen



**Figure 4.14**

Mother Paris Dupree performing in royal regalia at a ball held at the Escualita in NYC, 1990. Photo by Chantal Regnault.



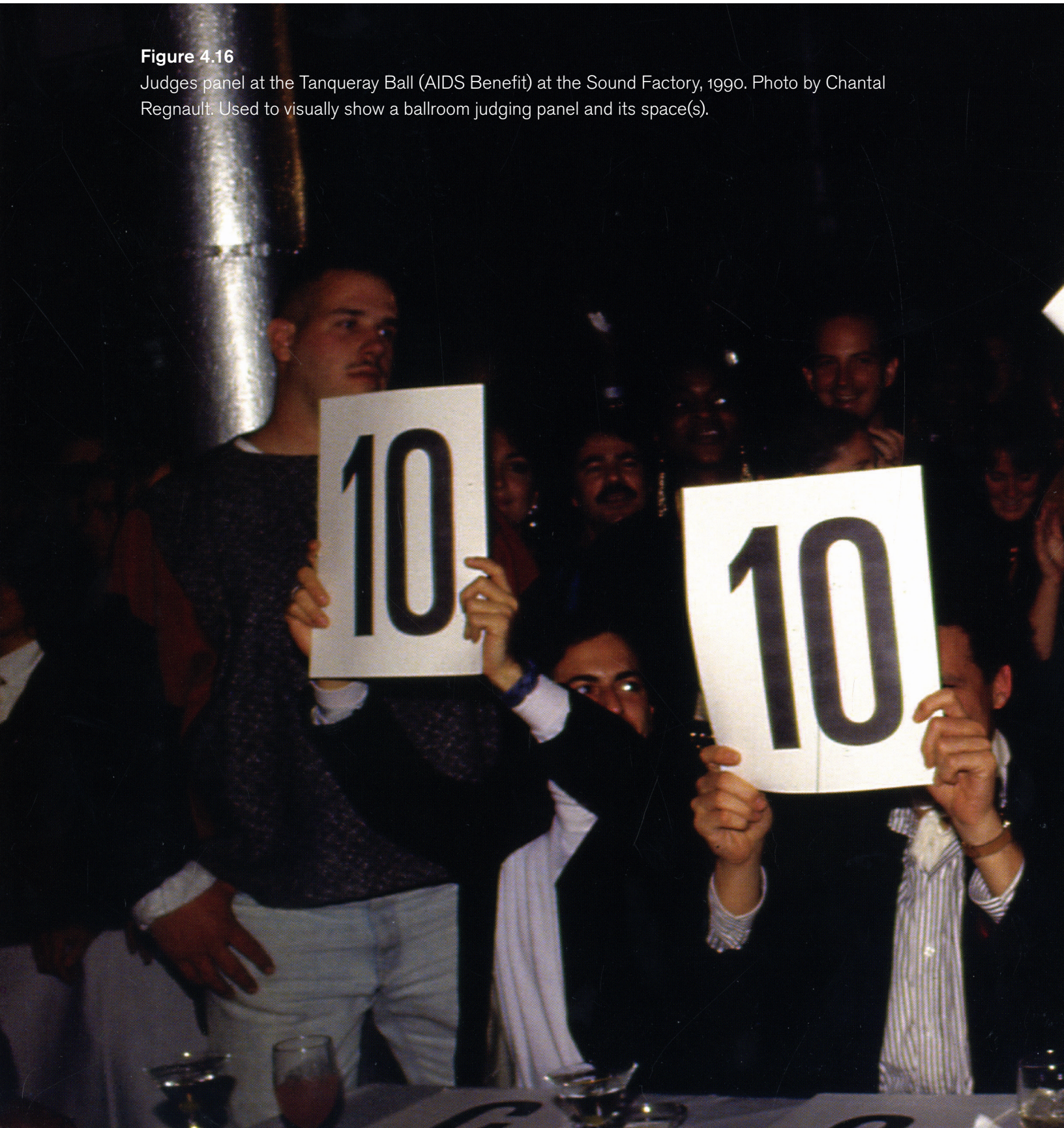
**Figure 4.15**

The family of the House of Xtravagnaza at the Legends Ball, 1997. Photo by Gerard H. Gaskin.

of color experience to make it evident that “realness” is not solely a theoretical fantasy used to determine the value of ballroom performance, but a “is a necessary strategy and a creative response to the dangers of the convergent forms of race, class, gender, and sexual violence.”<sup>108</sup> What is simultaneously made evident is the self-reflexivity of systematic oppression and cultural heritage embedded within the categories. One of the few academic voices on ballroom culture, Marlon M. Bailey, notes that “the most common group of realness [ ] includes “thug realness” [or Banji]... executive realness, schoolboy [or school girl] realness, femme queen realness, butch realness, and butch queens up in drags realness.”<sup>109</sup>

**Figure 4.16**

Judges panel at the Tanqueray Ball (AIDS Benefit) at the Sound Factory, 1990. Photo by Chantal Regnault. Used to visually show a ballroom judging panel and its space(s).





## ENDNOTES

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- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Emphasis in original. John Gruen, *Keith Haring: The Authorized Biography* (New York: Firside, 1991), 138-39.
- 4 Cruz-Malavé, *Hard Tails*, 5.
- 5 Ibid, 55.
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- 8 Photographer Larry Clark documents his own experience working as a teenage hustler in Times Square in his autobiographical book *Teenage Lust*. Ibid.
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- 12 Although Venus Xtravaganza claims in the film that she no longer participates in sex work, she does allude continuing to work as an escort in the film. Her murder during the filming of *Paris Is Burning* was suspected to have been a result of a transphobic john who strangled her to death upon learning that Venus was a transwoman.
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- 19 Cruz-Malavé, *Hard Tails*, 51.
- 20 Ibid, 53.
- 21 Ibid, 54.
- 22 Lucas Hilderbrand notes that there is a sudden rise in "notable" films within New Queer (*Poison, My Own Private Idaho, Swoon, The Living End, Looking for Langston, Edward II, Hours and Times, Paris Is Burning, Tongues Untied, The Salt Mines*), New Black (*Do the Right Thing, New Jack City, Boyz n the Hood*), and Feminist Cinema in the nineties. These films were essential to the emergence of post-structuralist and post-colonial theories within academic spaces, offering a medium for "audiences to question innateness of normality of their identities and ideologies." Hilderbrand, *Paris Is Burning*, 112-118.

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- 24 *The Salt Mines*, directed by Carlos Aparicio and Susana Aikin (1990; San Francisco, CA: Frameline, 200-?) DVD.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Laura Horak, “Visibility and Vulnerability Translatina World-Making in *The Salt Mines* and *Wildness*,” in *The Power of Vulnerability: Mobilising Affect In Feminist, Queer and Anti-Racist Media Cultures*, eds. Anu Koivunen, Katariina Kyrölä and Ingrid Ryberg (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 101.
- 27 Ibid.
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- 36 Hilderbrand, *Paris Is Burning*, 60.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 *Paris Is Burning* (1991), 00:23:20---00:24:30.
- 39 Ibid, 00:28:04---00:28:20.
- 40 Ibid, 00:28:20---00:
- 41 Ibid, 00:29:30---00:30:01.
- 42 Hilderbrand, *Paris Is Burning*, 61.
- 43 Rori Xtravaganza, interviews with the author, New York, NY, January 15, 2019; Chantal Regnault, *Voguing and the House Ballroom Scene of New York City 1989-1992* (London: Soul Jazz Books, 2011), 208.
- 44 Here I am making the assumption that ballroom members would want to live in or approximate to the city’s central queer community based on informal and formal interviews with ballroom members.
- 45 This list was compiled from Kevin (UltraOmni) Burrus’s “Harlem Ballroom Historic Timeline” document and credited photo locations of Chantal Regnault’s photography of ballroom culture from 1989 to 1992. Regnault, *Voguing and the House Ballroom Scene of New York City 1989-1992*, 208; Kevin Omni Burrus, “Harlem Ballroom Historic Timeline,” Accessed May 16, 2019, <http://harlemballroomhistorictimeline.blogspot.com>.
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- 48 Ibid, 499-500.
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- 71 "cinéma vérité, n. and adj.," *Oxford English Dictionary (OED) Online*, Accessed April 10, 2019, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/33094>; Hilderbrand, *Paris Is Burning*, 40.
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- 93 James Slotta, "Slang and the Semantic Sense of Identity," *Texas Linguistic Forum* 59 (2016): 125.
- 94 A "kiki" [kee-kee] is a queer slang term from the 1930s that referred to a social gathering of queer people where everyone gossips and speaks loosely or plainly given the absence of heteronormative customs and homophobic regulations. *Paris Is Burning*, dir. Livingston (1991).
- 95 Emphasis in original. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 175.
- 96 Nyong'o, *Fierce Pleasures*, 23-4.
- 97 Costonis, *Icons and Aliens*, 6.
- 98 Ibid, 6-7.
- 99 Ibid, 6.
- 100 Clyde Haberman, "Yeshiva Tries to Void Status as Landmark; Landmark Designation Pits Yeshiva Against Neighbors Mansion Built in 1901 Statements Labeled as Unfair Viewed as Test of Law," *New York Times*, May 30, 1980, <https://nyti.ms/2Vy0Jtj>.
- 101 Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 89.
- 102 Costonis, *Icons and Aliens*, 17-8.
- 103 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 1966), xix.
- 104 For the full transition in the film, see: *Paris Is Burning*, 00:17:22--00:18:07.
- 105 *Paris Is Burning*.
- 106 *Paris Is Burning*.
- 107 It is widely believed that Venus, who worked as an escort, was murdered by a john who became violent after discovering Venus was a transwoman. Her murder has never been identified or brought to justice.
- 108 Marlon M. Bailey, "Gender/Racial Realness: Theorizing the Gender System in Ballroom Culture," *Feminist Studies* 37 (2011): 380.
- 109 Ibid, 378.

## IMAGE SOURCES

- 4.1 Venus Xtravaganza's Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/SpoiledRichWhiteGirl/photos/a.221871624643408/964750433688853/?type=3&theater>.
- 4.2 Chantal Regnault, *Voguing: Voguing and the House Ballroom Scene of New York City 1989-92* (London: Soul Jazz Books, 2011), 143.
- 4.3 Tempe Nakiska, "The Legacy of Venus Xtravaganza," *Dazed*, November 20, 2013, <https://www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/article/17921/1/the-legacy-of-venus-xtravaganza>.
- 4.4 Angie Xtravaganza's Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/AngieXtravaganza/photos/a.1208040812543098/1484711714876005/?type=3&theater>.
- 4.5 Venus Xtravaganza's Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/SpoiledRichWhiteGirl/photos/a.264868170343753/385049364992299/?type=3&theater>.
- 4.6 Gerard H. Gaskin, *Legendary: Inside the House Ballroom Scene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 12.
- 4.7 Regnault, *Voguing*, 184.
- 4.8 Marlon M. Bailey in "Engendering Space: Ballroom Culture and the Spatial Practice of Possibility in Detroit," *Gender Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 21(2014): 500.
- 4.9 By author.
- 4.10 Ibid, 18-19.
- 4.11 Ibid, 58-59.
- 4.12 Ibid, 14.
- 4.13 Ibid, 174.
- 4.14 Ibid, 165.
- 4.15 Gaskin, *Legendary*, 67.
- 4.16 Regnault, *Voguing*, 35-36.



**Figure C.1**  
Rendering of a ballroom. By the author.

# Conclusion

## **AN IMAGE VISIBLE TO THE MARKET ECONOMY: CRITICISMS OF BALLROOM**

JUNIOR LABELJA: This is white America. Any other nationality that is not of the white set knows this and accepts this till the day they die. That is everybody's dream and ambition as a minority: to live and look as well as a white person is pictured as being in America. Every media you have; from TV, to magazines, to movies, to films. I mean, the biggest thing that minority watches is [sic] what? *Dynasty* and the *Colbys*. And *All My Children*. The soap operas. Everybody have [sic] a million-dollar bracket. When they showing you a commercial from Honey Graham to Crest or Lestoil or Pine-Sol, everybody's in their own home. The little kids for Fisher-Price Toys; they're not in no concrete playground. They're riding around the lawn. The pool is in the back. This is white America. And when it come to the minorities, especially black, we as a people, for the past 400 years, is the greatest example of behavior modification in the history of civilization. We have had everything taken away from us and yet we have all learned how to survive. That is why, in the ballroom circuit, it is so obvious that if you have captured the great white way of living, or looking, or dressing or speaking... you is [sic] a marvel.<sup>1</sup>

Since its release, *Paris* has been the subject of lively and sometimes hostile debate within queer and academic communities. Its medium—a film—has been of particular criticism focused on issues of cross-racial representation, audience receptions, and narra-

tive exploitation. African-American feminist and cultural critic bell hooks, offers one of the most damning critiques of the film:

The whiteness celebrated in *Paris is Burning* is not just any old brand of whiteness but rather that brutal imperial ruling-class capitalist patriarchal whiteness... Jennie Livingston approaches her subject matter as an outsider looking in. Since her presence as white woman/lesbian filmmaker is “absent” from *Paris is Burning* it is easy for viewers to imagine that they are watching an ethnographic film documenting the life of black gay “natives” and not recognize that they are watching a work shaped and formed by a perspective... [Livingston] is represented both in interviews and reviews as the tender-hearted, mild-mannered, virtuous white woman daring to venture into a contemporary “heart of darkness” to bring back knowledge of the natives... Just as white cultural imperialism informed the countries and cultures of “dark others,” [Paris] allows white audiences to applaud representations of black culture, if they are satisfied with the images and habits of being represented.<sup>2</sup>

Judith Butler, like hooks, found a similar in ballroom’s implication of a “real” gender. Both Butler and hooks’ criticism is a flavor of numerous vibrant debates provoked by the film’s release. It is important to note, as Hilderbrand does in their film analysis, that *Paris* was released simultaneous to a surge of critical New Black, New Queer, and Feminist cinema. Author Daniel T. Contreras similarly comments that during these first couple years of the nineties, “issues of race, gender, and queerness aligned in a particularly urgent way with many cultural texts, and *Paris Is Burning* provided visible representations of these cultural questions.”<sup>3</sup> This made *Paris* a prime text to be either swiftly defended or attacked within academic and critical discourse.

While I do not entirely agree with hooks’ read of the film, her comments do bring up serious considerations of Power and its relation to image and representation; after all, *Paris* is itself a product of the eighties in which the politics of the image were paramount. The film does focus heavily on ballroom’s adoration of eighties white, wealth culture, punctuated with testimonies such as Venus Xtravaganza’s; “I want to be a spoiled rich white girl... I don’t want to have to struggle for finances... I want a car. I want to be with a man I love. I want a nice home away from New York. I want my sex change.”<sup>4</sup> This focus on whiteness and wealth, whether the product of Livingston’s editing or not, should not be so readily dismissed as an assimilation of QPOCs to Eurocentrism or the social order of white patriarchy. Hilderbrand beautifully calls this out, stating that “[hooks] does not seem to recognize in [the film] the potential for the kinds of identification and pleasure—even ambivalent forms of either—that she herself describes in her important essay ‘The Oppositional Gaze.’”<sup>5</sup> Further, and possibly the most tragic, “by seeing the film’s subject as simply tragic and oppressed, hooks does not afford them joy, community, or agency.”<sup>6</sup> I too agree with Hilderbrand’s read of hooks’ reductive criticism of the

film's subject, however, agree with hooks concern over the film's editing. Members of the ballroom community similarly found Livingston's portrayal as unbalanced. Kevin Omni Burrus, father and founder of the House of Ultra Omni commented that "people may not understand the hurt that was caused by *Paris is Burning*. Not all of us were drug addicts, thieves, or prostitutes. There were people with Ph.D.'s and master's degrees in the ballroom world. But [Livingston] just wanted to tell the broken part of the story. That's what she built that film on."<sup>7</sup> These sentiments inspired Kevin Omni to co-produce and co-direct a different ballroom documentary, *How Do I Look*, directed by Wolfgang Busch (Wolfgang UltraOmni). It is a documentary that helps expand an outsiders understanding of ballroom.

Rather than discard *Paris Is Burning*, I believe the film must be watched in tandem with other, non-commercial successful New Black, New Queer, and Feminist films of the decade, like that of Aparicio and Aikin's 1990 documentary *The Salt Mines* or Marlon Riggs' 1989 semi-documentary, *Tongues Untied*. Both reinforced the eighties sense of white panic about the dangers of black and queer urban culture for a growing neo-conservative Evangelical mainstream, as well as ethnographic evidence for emerging critical theory. These films provide a more holistic picture of urban life and the everyday forms of systematic oppression QPOCs witnessed, at least in New York, which does not center on a desire for *whiteness* or entry into the market economy, but rather perseverance in the face of racial and economic exhaustion.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The span on one semester is certainly not enough to properly give the theoretical topics addressed in the thesis justice. As I rushed to gather source materials, contextualize my thinking within architectural and urbanistic frameworks, and struggle to coherently write over the span of a few months, many topics, revelations, and criticism were inevitably omitted from this thesis. I would like to conclude by addressing my own gaps and omissions and suggest that this work must continue and be refined for years to come.

The first is the stark line I made in chapter four—to which I thank Dr. Lauren Jacobi for pointing out—between the interiority and exteriority of "realness" double register. The manner in which realness exposes the hinge between architecture and urbanism should not be so reductive as inside and outside. Rather, the two readings of "realness" act more as a gradient, in which New York's urbanism can be read as fragmentary. Outside the walls of balls and Houses were numerous public urban spaces in which semblances

of queerness, blackness, or both are permitted and in which the stability of these identity categories are in flux and negotiated. These spaces included the Christopher Street Piers, Union Square Park, queer nightclubs, and public areas around social housing. Similarly, spaces of exclusion, or, spaces more aligned with the social order are not absent of both forms of realness. Presented in Livingston's film are B-roll vignettes of these seemingly homogenous, white, heterosexual spaces—high end department stores, suburbia, Wall Street, corporate offices, Upper East Side apartments, country clubs. These sites may have proved largely problematic for the embodied blackness of QPOCs—their race, class, gender-presentation, sexuality, or a combination—because of the degree in which social tensions in which abstract ideals of normative American society—equality, freedom, meritocracy, inclusiveness, justice, prosperity—were present. In these spaces I argued that “realness” comes into play to repress/oppress or veil the QPOC's subjecthood else face physical and juridical exclusion or violence. At the same time, subjecthoods aligned with the normative social order were similarly regulating their own “realness.” My intention is to position “realness” double register as an urban analysis that offers insight from a QPOC-perspective into myriad urban identities that composed New York at the time and its tethering to place/space, as well as the violence or exclusion that occurs when “proper” identity-space formulations are transgressed.

Second, I would like to briefly make more clear the relationship between ballroom and postmodern architecture. In conversations with Dr. Arindam Dutta, Garnette Cadogan, and others, it became clear that postmodernism has a drag quality to it. Postmodernism's revolt against Modernist axioms like “less is more” and “form follows function” produced an architectural style not unlike a drag queen; there was an inability to read a building's interiority from the facade alone. With drag, especially drag that is regarded as “real,” the subject's biological sex, gender, and social class become indistinguishable from its presentation/facade. In this sense, the subculture of ballroom is not so much a marginal practice but the *modus operandi* of American culture in the eighties. Whether “true” to the space that laid behind it or not, the semiology of the postmodern facade was its “real” self.

Third, in writing this thesis in such a short period of time there were many darlings I had to kill. One of which was the role in which utopian theories come into play when addressing the architecture of ballroom. Utopia is a contentious term that continues to be the subject of hostile and acerbic criticism. Commonly perceived as a frivolous thought-experiment that can only result in an impossibilism—a perspective that certain radical ideas or policies of alterity, especially ambitions for grand social reform, are impractical, irrelevant, immature, unrealizable, and even counterproductive—numerous disciplines including sociology, architecture, and political theory sought to distance their contem-



porary knowledge-practices from their utopian pasts. This disassociation was most evident in mid-twentieth century, in which the world witnessed that the West's pursuit of Progress, a utopian imperative in its own right, was simultaneously a death-drive: the splitting of the atom resulted in the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, mass-production brought about mass-alienation, and mechanization resulted in industrial-scale murder in German labor camps.<sup>8</sup> Following this catastrophic wake of the second world war, utopia became synonymous with regimes of authoritarian socialism and totalitarianism that “neglected human frailty and original sin, and betrayed a will to uniformity and the ideal purity of a perfect system that always [needed] to be imposed by force on its imperfect and reluctant subjects.”<sup>9</sup> Further, heightened by Cold War anxieties of the ever-present and irrational possibility of individual and global death, the political culture of Western libertarian and capitalist nations became, on their surface, deeply anti-utopian. Friedrich August von Hayek's 1944 text, *The Road to Serfdom*, and Karl Popper's 1945 text, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, and his later lecture ‘Utopia and Violence,’ established these anti-utopian sentiments, arguing “that all state intervention leads inexorably down the slippery slope to dictatorship.”<sup>10</sup> Their claims were furthered by other proponents of utopia, which include Hannah Arendt, Isaiah Berlin, Norman Cohn, Ralf Dahrendorf, Leszek Kolakowski, Judith Shklar, and Jacob Talmon, who reinforced the notion that utopianism brings about totalitarian coercion, individual oppression, and inevitable violence. However, this explicit anti-utopianism belied the utopianism latent in capitalism and liberal democracy that had defined the Western nations, to which it was the repressive tell.

Despite the predominance of the anti-utopian position in politics and intellectual disciplines, there are been numerous appraisals in favor of utopia, including those by André Gorz, Lyman Tower Sargent, George Kateb, Keith Taylor, Barbara Goodwin, Russell Jacoby, and Fredric Jameson. The texts of two key figures, Karl Mannheim and Ernst Bloch, were critical to understanding utopia as a political act of revolutionary alterity. Mannheim's 1929 *Ideology and Utopia* shifted consideration of utopia as a blueprint for the perfect space and thus a ‘no place’ to an intellectual an act of socio-political distortion and protest. Similarly, Bloch's 1918 *Spirit of Utopia* and his seminal three-volume book *The Principle of Hope* positioned utopias as not only as an act of radical alterity but also a ubiquitous impulse found throughout all human cultures, and thus an essential condition of human consciousness. Bloc argued that utopia also calls attention to “that which cannot be entirely covered over by ideological formation,” which leave a utopian “residue” or “surplus.”<sup>11</sup>

For Bloch, the problem of ideology “is broached from the side of the problem of cultural inheritance, of the problem as to how works of the superstructure progressively reproduce themselves in cultural consciousness even after disappearance of their social bases.” Such notions contain a cultural surplus that lives on and provides a utopian function whereby the ideal can still be translated into a reality and thus be fully realized for the first time... the cultural surplus preserves unsatisfied desires and human wishes for a better world and because these wishes are usually not fulfilled they contain contents which remain relevant to a future society which may be able to satisfy these wishes and needs. In other words, ideology contains hints as to what human beings desire and need which can be used to criticize failures to satisfy these needs and to realize these desires in the current society.<sup>12</sup>

Ruth Levitas argues in her book, *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society*, that utopias provide sociologists a critical understanding of current-day political, economic, and ecological limitations, echoing H. G. Wells’ 1906 statement that “the creation of Utopias—and their exhaustive criticism—is the proper distinctive method of sociology.”<sup>13</sup> Rather than regard utopia as desires of wishful thinking, Levitas defends utopia as willful purposive acts at transforming the world through explicitly hypothetical narratives. By emphasizing utopias reflexivity, provisionality, and its explicit hypothetical and dialogic character, Levitas asserts utopia as a method of social critique, both hermetic and holistic, offering visions of potential alterity through embedded fragmentary criticism of present and prefigured futures. Supporting her argument of utopia as method, which she names the Imaginary Reconstitution of Society (IROS) method, Levitas maps out three underling modes: an analytical *archaeological* mode, which interrogates embedded or absent elements of ‘the good society’ in political, literary, and artistic utopian accounts; an *ontological* mode, which addresses the subjects and agents of utopia, who not only inhabit it but are also interpellated within in it; and a constructive *architectural* mode.<sup>14</sup> Levitas argues that architecture provides literary utopias their sociological character by “imagining a reconstructed world and describing its social institutions,” by imagining alternative spatial, physical, and institutional arrangements and relationships.<sup>15</sup> Further, “...utopia as architecture is a particular kind of scenario-building that not only combines existential and institutional levels, but maintains a double standpoint between present and future.”<sup>16</sup> Both Hayek and Popper were paramount in establishing contemporary neoliberalism, a political and economic fantasy that motivates the majority of contemporary economic and political policy and whose architectural manifestation takes a form in the utopian promise of the Smart City.<sup>17</sup> Ultimately, Levitas argues that utopia is a continuous reinvention of future-making that is an education of *desire*. Embodying the spirit of Bloch, she positions utopia as a means to “bring[] our desires to consciousness and thus into question.”<sup>18</sup>

In specific regards to race and racial politics, Edward K. Chan's questions the limits of envisioning racial and embodied alterity in twentieth-century American utopian literature in his book, *The Racial Horizon of Utopia*. Chan similarly defends utopia's importance as a purposive act at critical world-building. He argues that utopia stages an *encounter* with figurations of difference and Otherness, echoing Viktor Shlovsky's "*ostranenie*"—the creative method of de-familiarizing common objects/subjects through uncanny representations that reflexively arguments perceptions of the familiar—and what Bertolt Brecht regarded as "the 'alienation effect to produce 'a strange newness, a *novum*.'"<sup>19</sup> Chan further clarifies Mannheim's distinction between ideology and utopia, writing that while "both ideology and utopia reflect the unconscious ability of both dominant and oppressed groups to distort reality by not seeing certain facts in the 'real condition of society'... 'ideology' is the distortion that pushes towards social stasis, while 'utopia' is the distortion that seeks social change."<sup>20</sup> For Chan, the racial horizon of American literary utopias is constructed by the tensions between corporeality and American democracy's abstract citizen as manifested in race, gender, sexuality, and ability. Chan argues that abstraction results in a remainder, "an excess or byproduct that must somehow be dealt with: repressed, ignored, scarified to history."<sup>21</sup> The abstract citizen, or more precisely, the Subject of Liberal Democracy, creates a failure of embodied theory, and thus is unable to resolve the imbalance between difference and equality. Further, Chan argues that America is a utopia that requires racial erasure, further complicating the Nation's ability to think beyond contemporary race issues. He writes:

America is literally a utopia: a place full of 'untouched' natural resources where—once the indigenous population had been contained or relocated—certain sectors of the Old World population could institute the liberal notions of government articulated by John Locke and the *Second Treatise of Government*.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, missing from the American project and its utopian desire for Liberal Democracy is the consideration of an 'embodied subject.' This failure to account for an embodied subject is emulated in most of American utopian literature, which has historically structured its literary characters. For Chan, this requires utopian literature not to (re)think democracy, but rather "'unthink' the future of race by mapping it in [the] present."<sup>23</sup>

Sir Thomas More coined the term *utopia* in his 1516 publication, compounding Greek *ou* (not) and with Greek *topos* (place), to quite literally mean "no-place." Some scholars argue that More *utopia* puns on Greek *eutopia* (good or happy), a "good-place."<sup>24</sup> His text depicts a crescent shaped island that is home to an idealized commonwealth. Yet, less remembered about More's *Utopia* is its repetitive and explicit flaws and contradictions

and the text's unusual construction. George M. Logan points out that *Utopia*, which was written as two books, was composed in an inverted sequence, suggesting that More either “split open a complete unified book to insert a dialogue that... doesn't really belong with the original material,” or “the More had second thoughts about the account of Utopia and saw a need to insert a new section that would be in effect and introduction to it.”<sup>25</sup> The odd composition of *Utopia* and its explicit spatial organization of utopia predicated on contradictions, the reconciliations of which were materially unrealizable—a good place that is no place, encircled by a river without water, and narrated by a wise man, Hythloday, whose name means “expert in nonsense”—begs the questions as to why More created a paradoxical and inconsistent account of utopia. A philosopher of alterity, More's text address two prominent issues of his time: the problem of theft and its proper punishment and the problem of advising a corrupt sovereign. In Book I of *Utopia*, More states his belief that the problem of theft lies in the creation of private property and the greed of the aristocratic class:

... wherever you have private property, and money is the measure of all things, it is hardly ever possible for a commonwealth to be just or prosperous—unless you think justice can exist where all the best things are held by the worst citizens, or suppose happiness can be found where the good things of life are divided among very few, where even those few are always uneasy, and where the rest are utterly wretched... Thus I am wholly convinced that unless private property is entirely abolished, there can be no fair or just distribution of goods, nor can the business of mortals be conducted happily. As long as private property remains, by far the largest and best part of the human race will be oppressed by a distress and inescapable burden of poverty and anxieties.<sup>26</sup>

Here More demonstrates the act of envisioning alterity. At a time of despotic monarchical rule under King Henry VIII, More theorized a future commonwealth freed from his current-day limitations. Yet, utopia as an intellectual and political project of alterity stem as far back as Plato's *Republic*, but in their Modern manifestations have become emblematic of the death-denying philosophies of Modern Analytical thought—monotheistic and objective Truth, democratic universalism, and the abhorrence of the centrality of death and catastrophe as an ontological prerequisite. These philosophies influenced theorists as diverse as Ledoux, Boullée, Fourier, von Schwalbach, Bentham, Owens, and Howard, whose architectural interests helped shape the discipline of architecture. With the becoming apparent of utopia's material impossibility in the Late-Modern period accompanied by the common mistranslation of utopia as *literal* blueprints for perfected and formally-static (platonian) worlds paralleling post-Modernism's death of metanarratives (itself, a metanarrative), utopianism fell out of favor within the disciplines of architecture

and politics, but only explicitly. Still underlying the discipline of architecture, both then and now, is the specter of Modernity, a Hegelian desire for a fixed equipoised logo on which utopian imaginations were predicated and that continues to haunt the discipline in colloquial references to its being “lost” within recursive productions of multiple modernisms and their near utopian promises—Modernism, Postmodernism, Deconstructionism, Minimalism, Parametricism, Resiliency. These modernisms represent ironically historical attempts to materially realize anew the Hegelian “end of history” and in the process remedy the political, social, and environmental inequalities the previous “modernism” manifested. As such, Utopias are inherently political and endemic to any vision of futurity articulated within the Western political/philosophical tradition. Their study, both politically and architecturally, therefore offers a textual and formal language that references a particular social dreaming of a “better” future, which has become more apparent in today’s political climate of xenophobia, closing borders, and attempts to keep nation-states pure and sovereign in an economic era of neoliberal globalization.

Today’s definition of an architectural utopia, then, must be regarded as a distortion of reality that seeks alterity or social change through a production of space shaped by desire. Rather than a specific architectural style (Claude Nicolas Ledoux), typology (Étienne-Louis Boullée), or social-urban planning (Thomas More), architectural utopias are spatial productions of protest that (re)arrange institutionalized relationships, both physical and social, that materially realize alterity. I had hopes to argue in this thesis that New York’s house-ball culture in the late twentieth century was a form of architectural utopia; that topics of “realness” and the (re)definition of “family” with the House were examples of purposeful acts of alterity in response to the HIV/AIDs crisis, the War on Drugs, homophobia, transphobia, racism, and joblessness and homelessness, which was materially realized through embodied performances and the production of ballroom and house spaces. I ultimately shifted away from using utopian theory, but still feel strongly that ballroom gives Architecture a contemporary example of utopic space.

Lastly, I would like to address the need for the discipline of architecture and urbanism to acquire new languages and tools for talking about, writing about, and thinking about space, especially *blackness* in space. An experience during my first semester at MIT left an indelible imprint on my memory. In the first semester studio, I read aloud a quote by James Baldwin in a review for my compulsory urban studio. The quote, which of lifted from Baldwin’s “My Dungeon Shook: Letter to My Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation,” was meant to spark thought on the intersection of Western Truth, Man’s faith in the post-Enlightened rush toward Progress, Climate Resiliency, and historical racial injustice in the Chelsea, MA region. However, rather than being greeted

with any form of reflection, let alone constructive criticism of my method, I was embraced with ad hominem by one of my professors who accused my tone as being “acerbic,” my language as “too alienating,” and my motivation in studio as essentially “making diatribes against white people.”

Architecture, as it is taught and practiced in America at the very least, has a race problem, specifically a Black and African-American race problem, which I personally find of particular importance when considering what bodies and experience literally “built” the American nation its earliest years. Although many architectural schools are already attuned to this issue—almost any AIA or NAAB annual report will call out the need for more minorities and women professional practice and academic positions—it is an issue that is often addressed numerically, building off the theory that feeding a pipeline of young Black and female talent into the two towers of the discipline, practice and academia, will mythically resolve these complex socio-cultural issues. However, this aesthetic solution does little to remedy the ideological hegemony present within the discipline pedagogy. It further fails to prepare *all* students with an appreciation for diverse thought in favor of diverse appearance. In short, aggressive minority recruitment campaigns do not necessarily resolve the underlying mental dissonance between what students of color and other marginalized identities may desire to learn, design, and contribute to the world, nor choose a tone, language or quote the canon of architecture finds to be of value.

The recent discourse on Confederate monuments and other architectural forms of colonial symbolism originated outside of the normative educational and intellectual spaces of the architectural discipline and were instead spearheaded by Black and civil rights activists and scholars can be seen as an unfortunately expectable disciplinary failure. I attempted to find a language within Black ontological thought, hoping it would offer a young scholar of architectural theory a literary and philosophical tradition of lived experiences that problematizes and (re)contextualizes the Modernist Liberal Subject present in the historical frameworks most architectural curriculums continue to deploy. Although I found affinities within Black ontology, there were still massive gaps in communication, and further, in my ability to converse with members of the ballroom community when searching for answers to architectural questions. The discipline of architecture must do better to (re)consider its role, value, and purpose in the design, use, and experience of everyday spaces, architectural forms, and the manner in which these are complicit in systems of oppression and domination, even if innocently so. James Baldwin makes a direct connection between the architectural form of the cathedral, a typology often celebrated within the discipline for its formal complexity, its rational yet expressive structure, and its dominion over the post-colonial body in *Notes of a Native Son*, stating:

It is important to understand that this cathedral says something to me which it cannot say to them. Perhaps they are struck by the power of the spires, the glory of the windows; but they have known God, after all, longer than I have known him, and in a different way, and I am terrified by the slippery bottomless well to be found in the crypt, down which heretics were hurled to death, and by the obscene, inescapable gargoyles jutting out of the stone and seeming to say that God and the devil can never be divorced. I doubt that the villagers think of the devil when they face a cathedral because they have never been identified with the devil. But I must accept the status which myth, if nothing else, gives me in the West before I can hope to change the myth.<sup>27</sup>

## ENDNOTES

- 1 *Paris Is Burning*, directed by Jennie Livingston (1991; Burbank, CA: Miramax Home Video).
- 2 bell hooks, "Is Paris Burning?," *Black Looks* (New York: Routledge 2015), 149, 151, 154.
- 3 Daniel T. Contreras, "New Queer Cinema: Spectacle, Race, Utopia," *New Queer Cinema: A Critical Reader*, edited by Michele Aaron (New Brunswick: New Jersey, 2004), 121.
- 4 *Paris Is Burning*.
- 5 Lucas Hilderbrand, *Paris Is Burning* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2013), 125.
- 6 Ibid, 127.
- 7 Mary Emily O'Hara, "Why Are LGBT People of Color Protesting the Screening of This Cult Film Classic?," *The Daily Dot*, May 13, 2015, <https://www.dailydot.com/irl/paris-is-burning-face-book-lgbtq-controversy/>.
- 8 I regard the Western pursuit of Progress as an imperative to better the human condition through the extension of knowledge and the Laws abstracted from it. Ideologically framed within an historicized evangelical monotheism, the onto-epistemic structure of this pursuit was dependent on the repudiation of other competing forms of knowledge and being that would otherwise, by their very existence, undermine monotheistic Truth. This pursuit can be seen in America's Manifest Destiny, the *mission civilisatrice* of the French, Dutch, and Portuguese, and in the universalization of scientific cosmology, which underwrote the development of phrenology, eugenics, and other biopolitics.  
Sigfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History* (New York: University of Oxford Press, 1948).
- 9 Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (New York: Verso, 2007) xi-xii.
- 10 Ruth Levitas, *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 7.
- 11 Edward K. Chan, *The Racial Horizon of Utopia: Unthinking the Future of Race in Late Twentieth-Century American Utopian Novels* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2016), 8.
- 12 Douglas Kellner, "Ernst Bloch, Utopia and Ideology Critique," *Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, UCLA*, accessed October 21, 2018, <https://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/essays/ernstblochutopiaideologycritique.pdf>.
- 13 Levitas, *Utopia as Method*, xi.
- 14 Ibid, xvii, 153-220.
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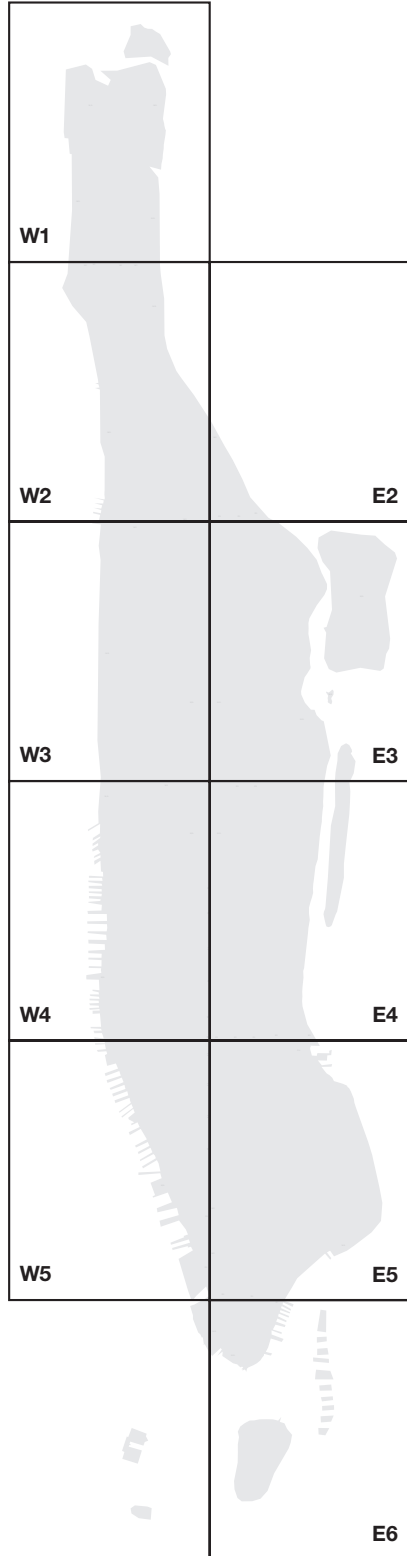
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# “READING” NEW YORK CITY

VISUALIZING THE CITY’S RACE, RENT,  
AND POPULATION SIZE FROM 1970 TO 1990

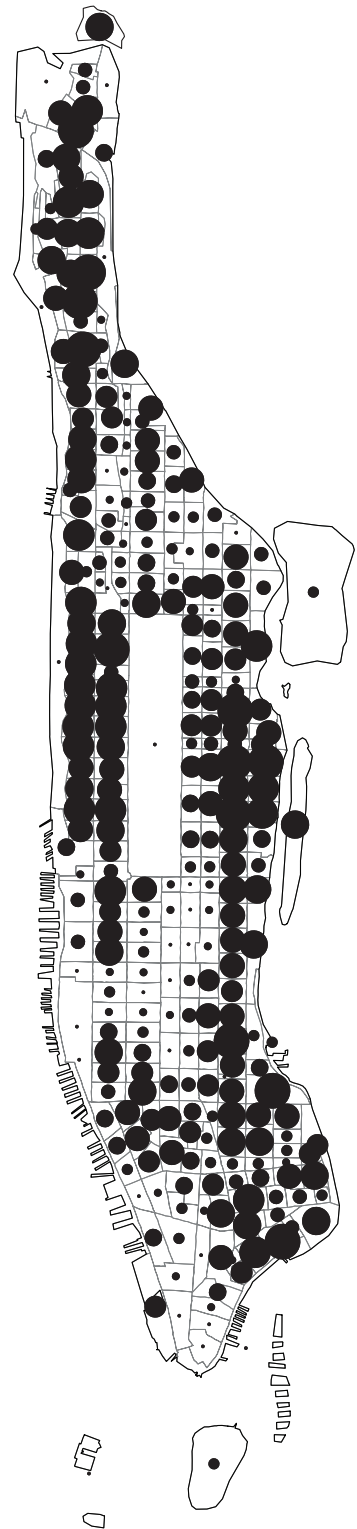
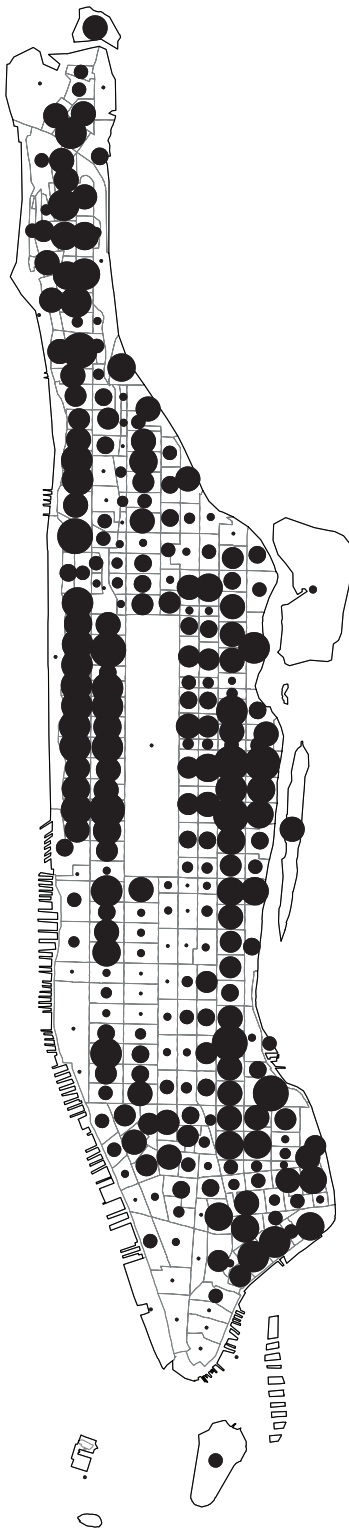
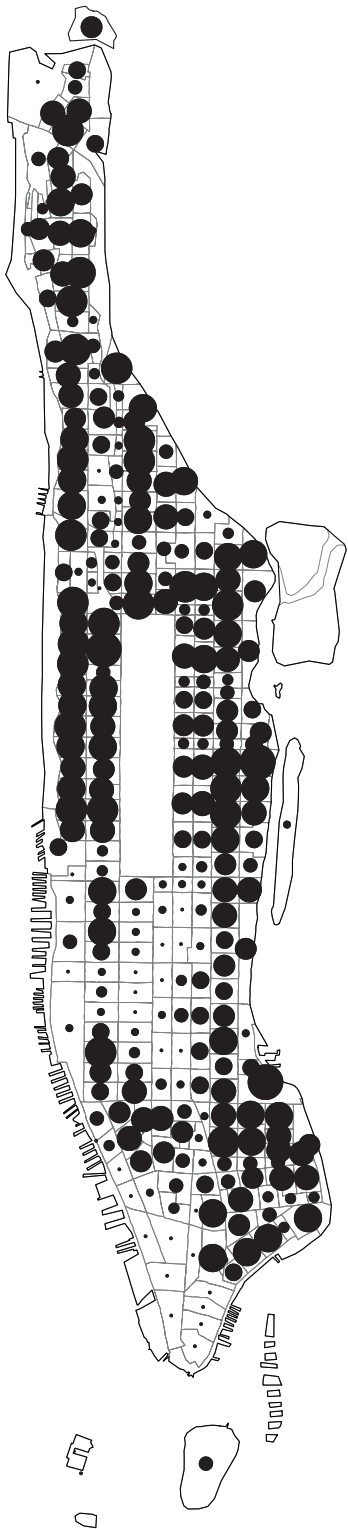


<b>Population and Race .....</b>	<b>168</b>
<b>Gross Rent .....</b>	<b>198</b>
<b>Year Structure Built .....</b>	<b>232</b>

1970

1980

1990

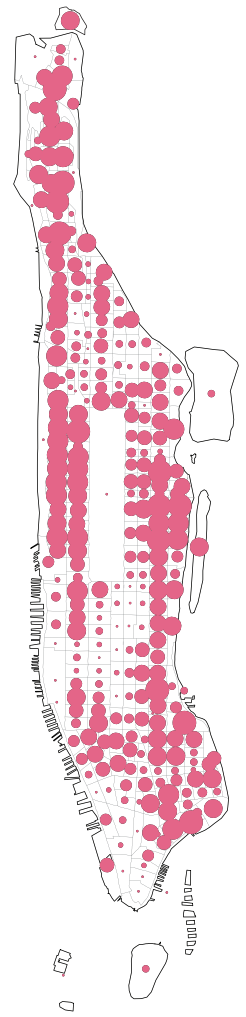
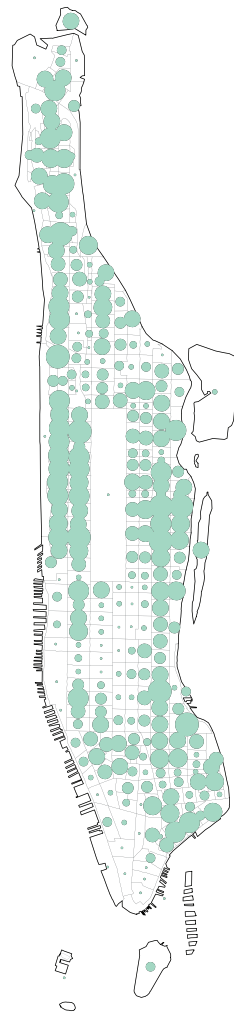
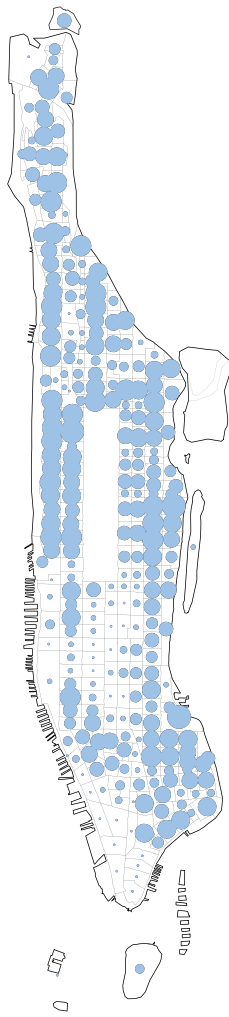
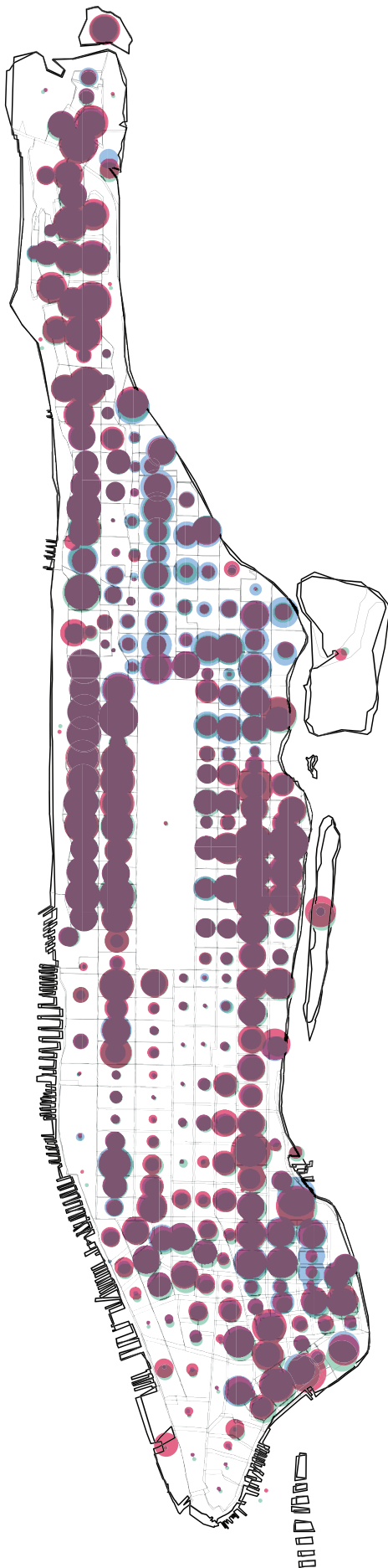


**TOTAL POPULATION BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT FROM 1970 TO 1990**  
**POPULATION 16 YEARS AND OVER**

● ● ●  
 POPULATION SIZE

— 1 MILE





## TOTAL POPULATION BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT COMPARISON BETWEEN THREE DECADES

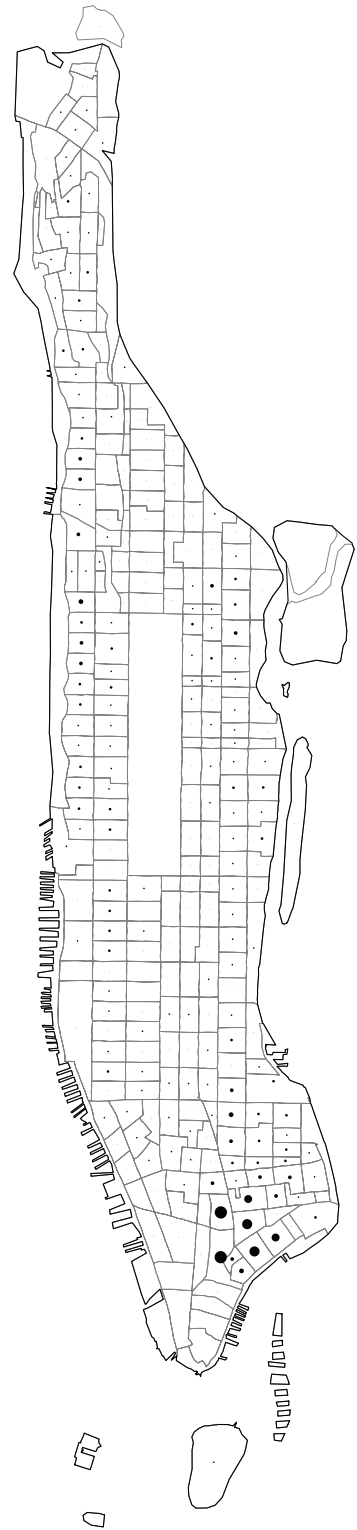
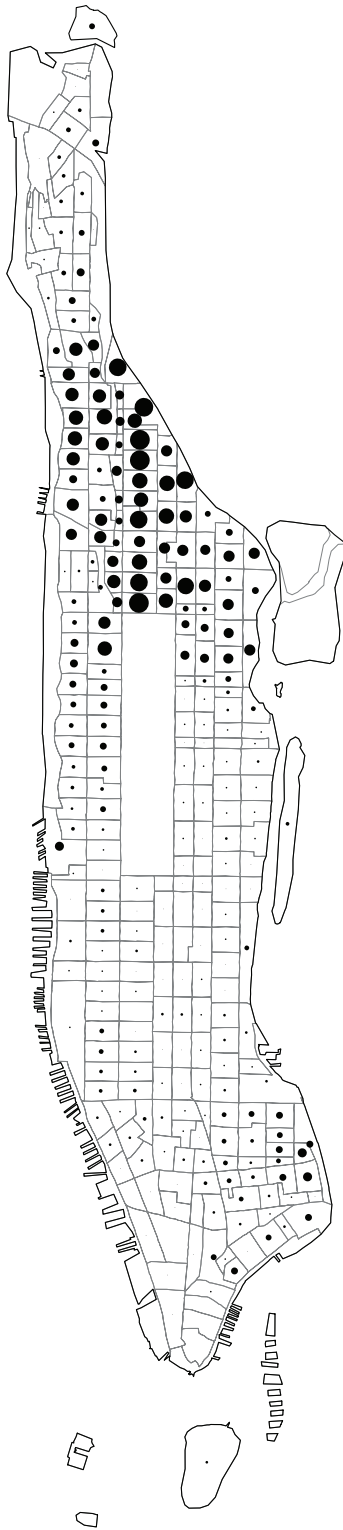
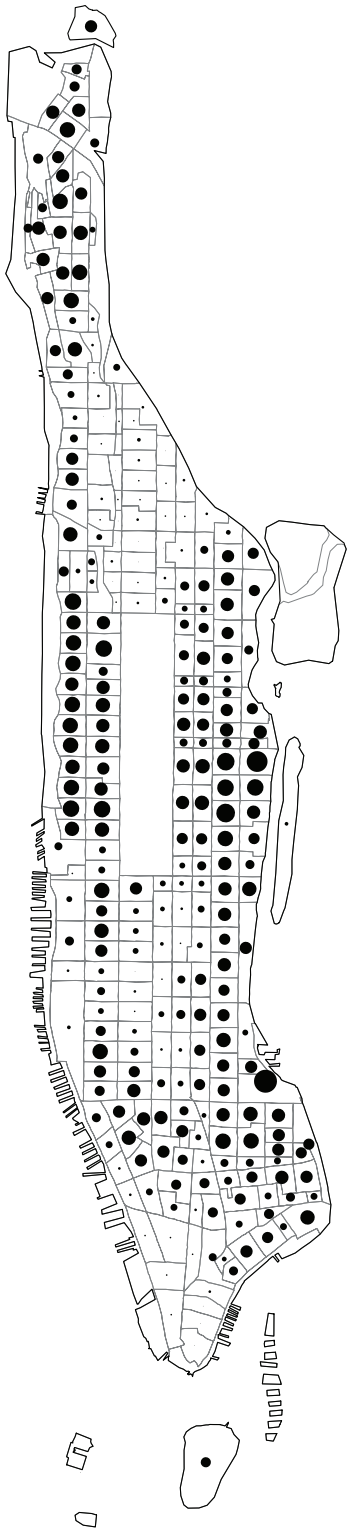
- 1970
- 1980
- 1990



**WHITE**

**BLACK**

**OTHER**



**POPULATION BY RACE BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1970)**

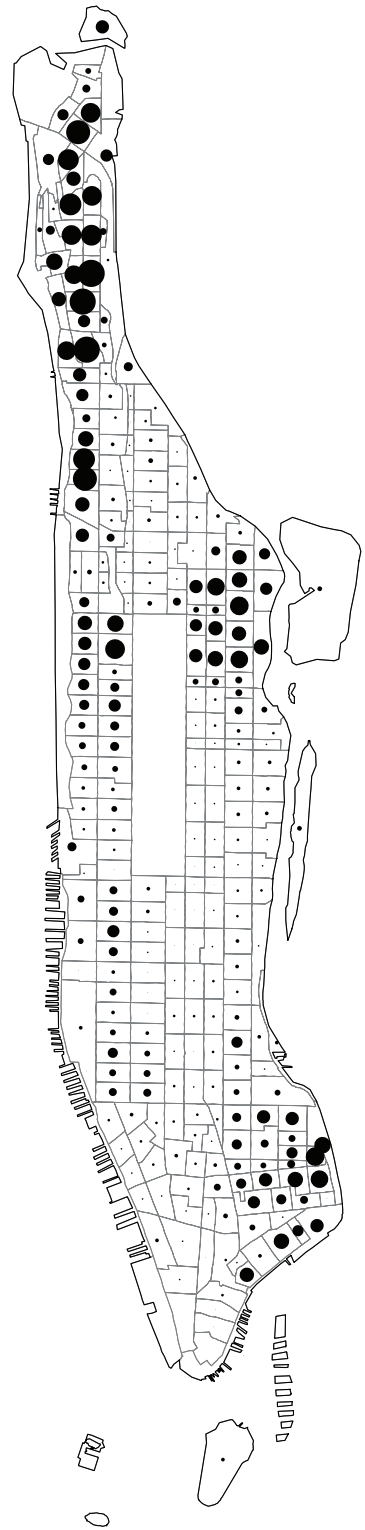
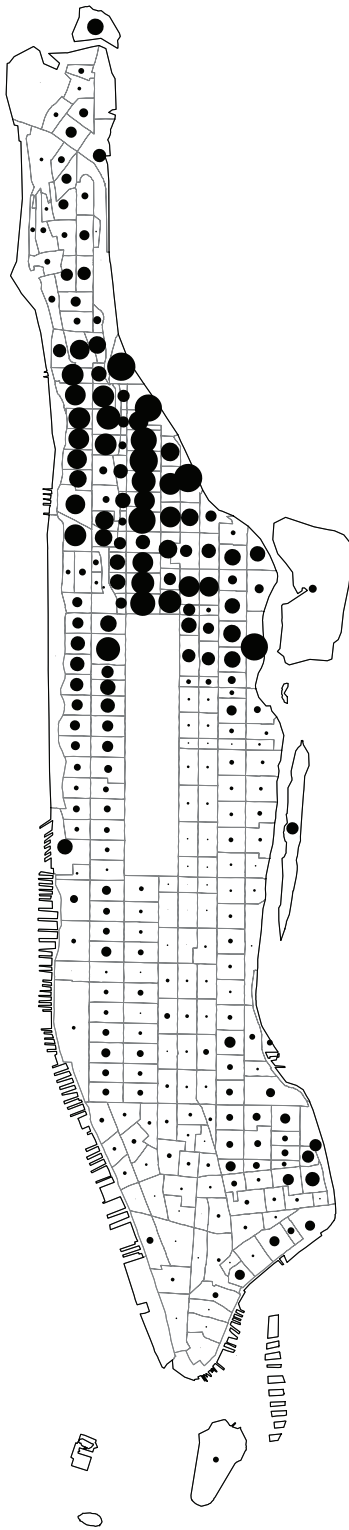
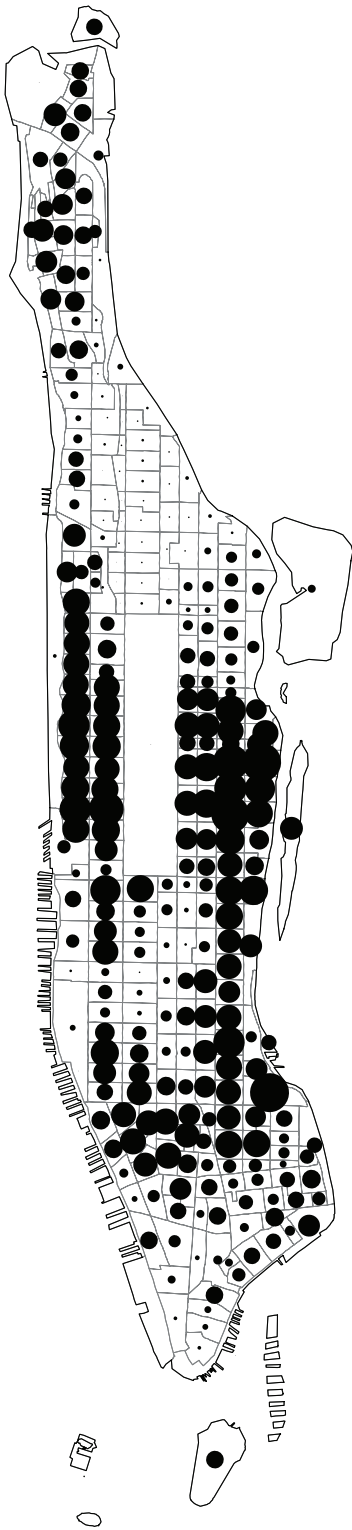
POPULATION 16 YEARS AND OVER; WHITE, BLACK, AND OTHER ONLY



**WHITE**

**BLACK**

**OTHER**



**POPULATION BY RACE BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1980)**

POPULATION 16 YEARS AND OVER; WHITE, BLACK, AND OTHER ONLY

● ● ●  
POPULATION SIZE

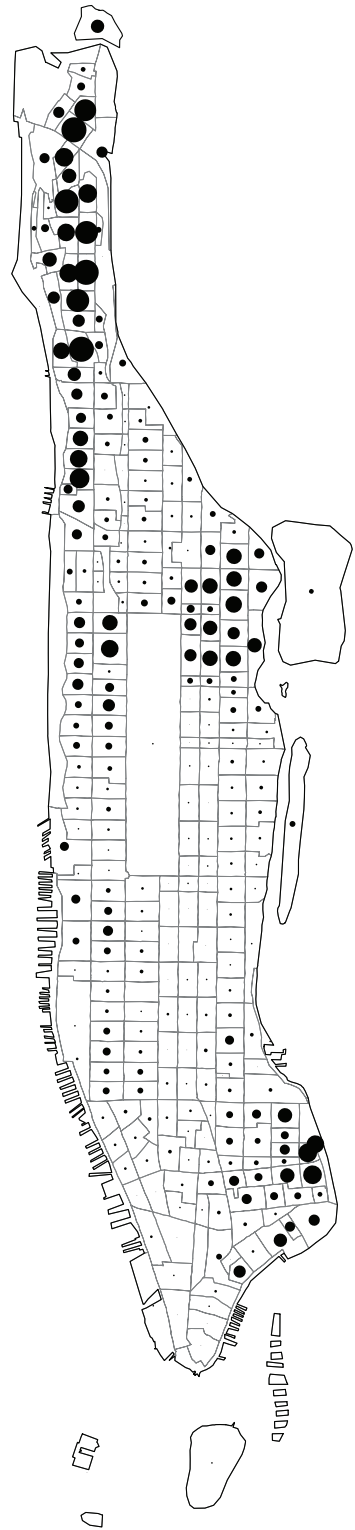
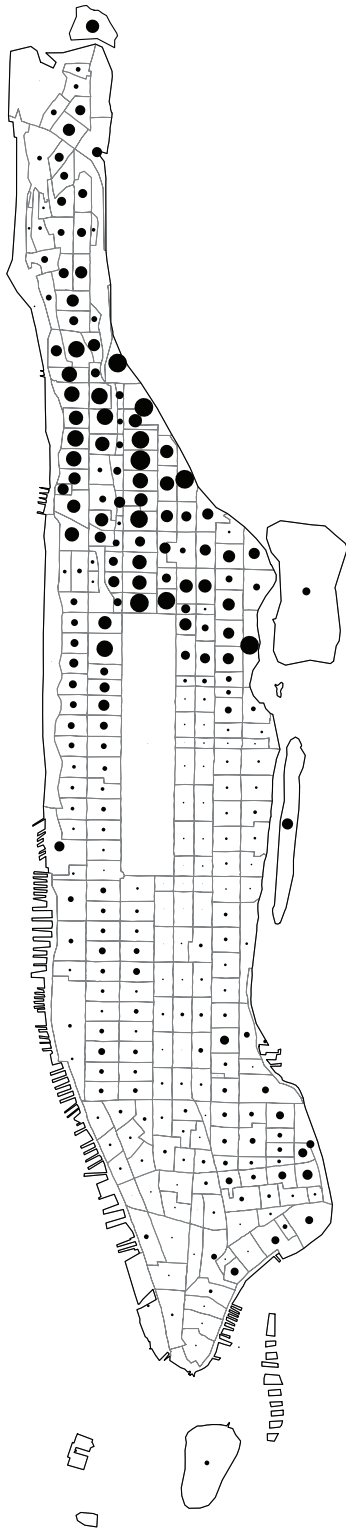
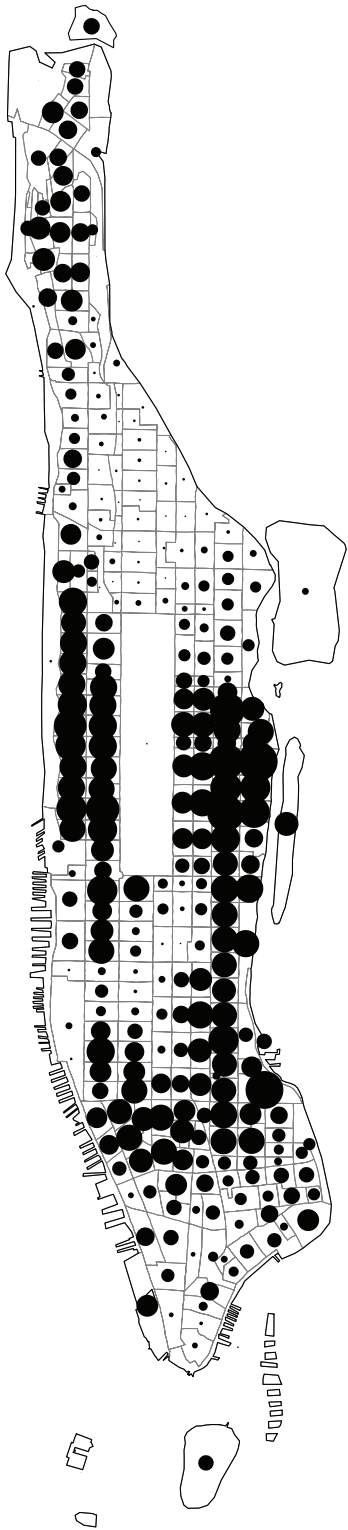
— 1 MILE



**WHITE**

**BLACK**

**OTHER**



**POPULATION BY RACE BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1990)**

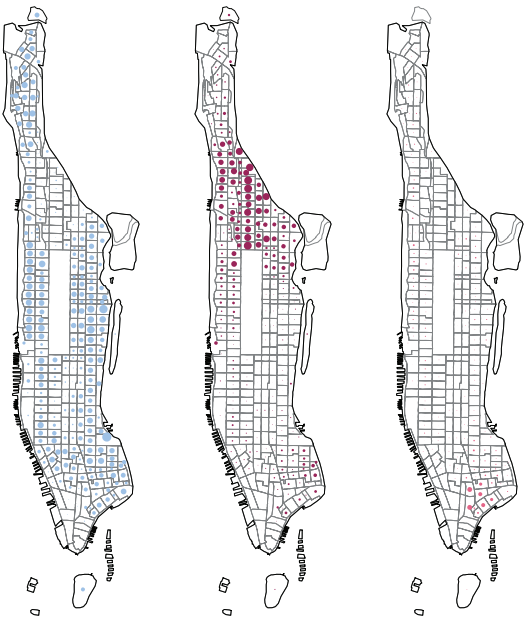
POPULATION 16 YEARS AND OVER; WHITE, BLACK, AND OTHER ONLY



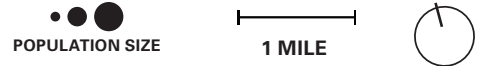
# POPULATION BY RACE BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT FROM 1970 TO 1990

POPULATION 16 YEARS AND OVER; ALL RACES.

1970

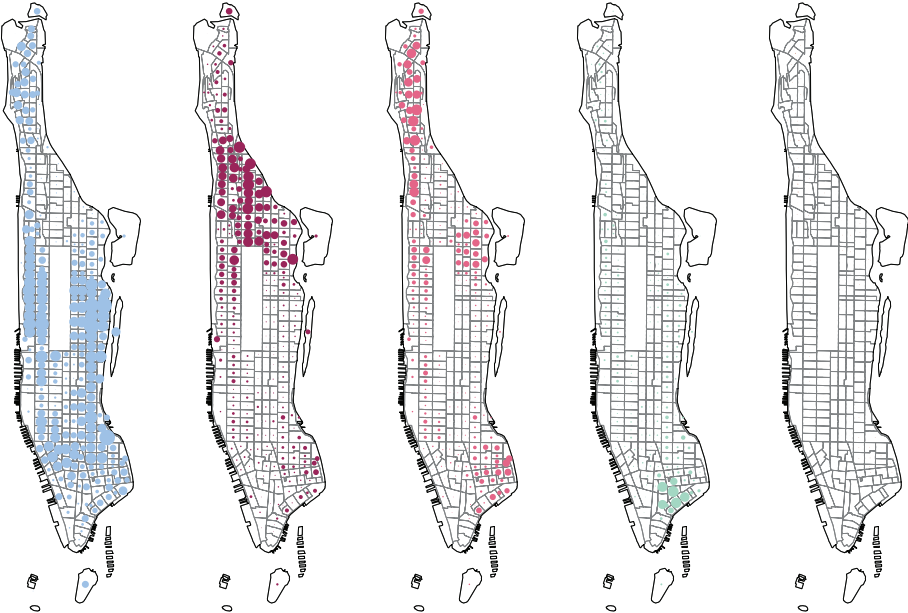


N/A N/A

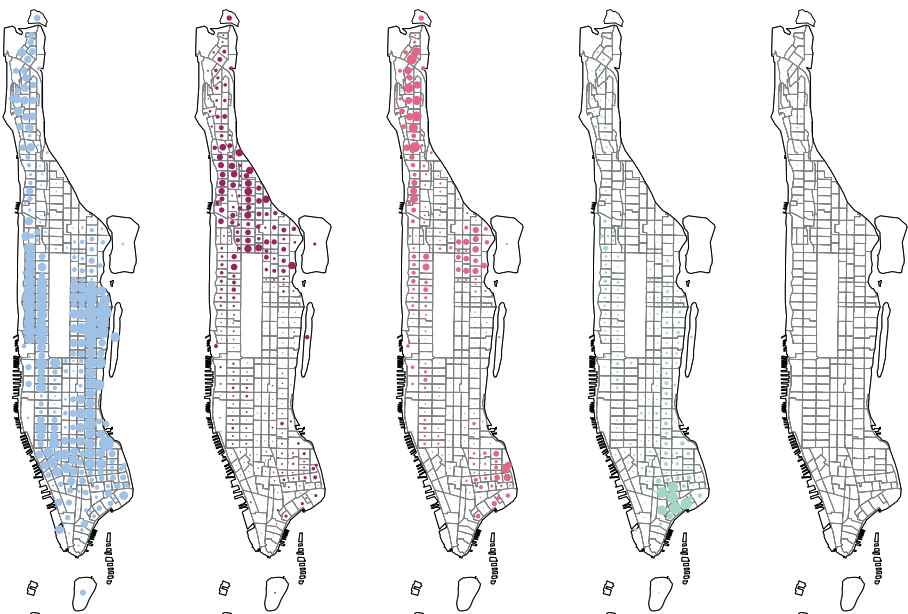


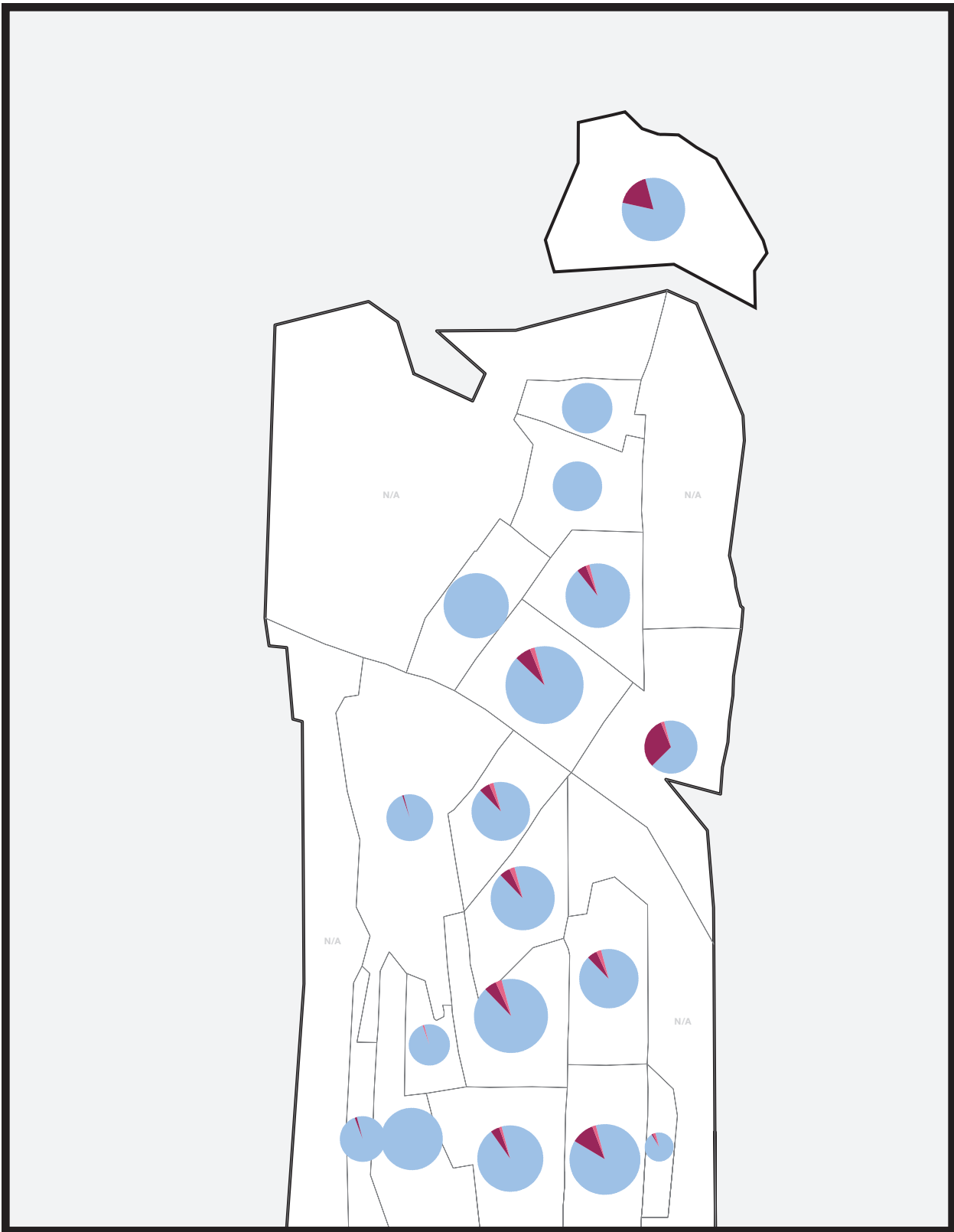
- WHITE
- BLACK
- OTHER RACE
- ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER
- AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT

1980



1990



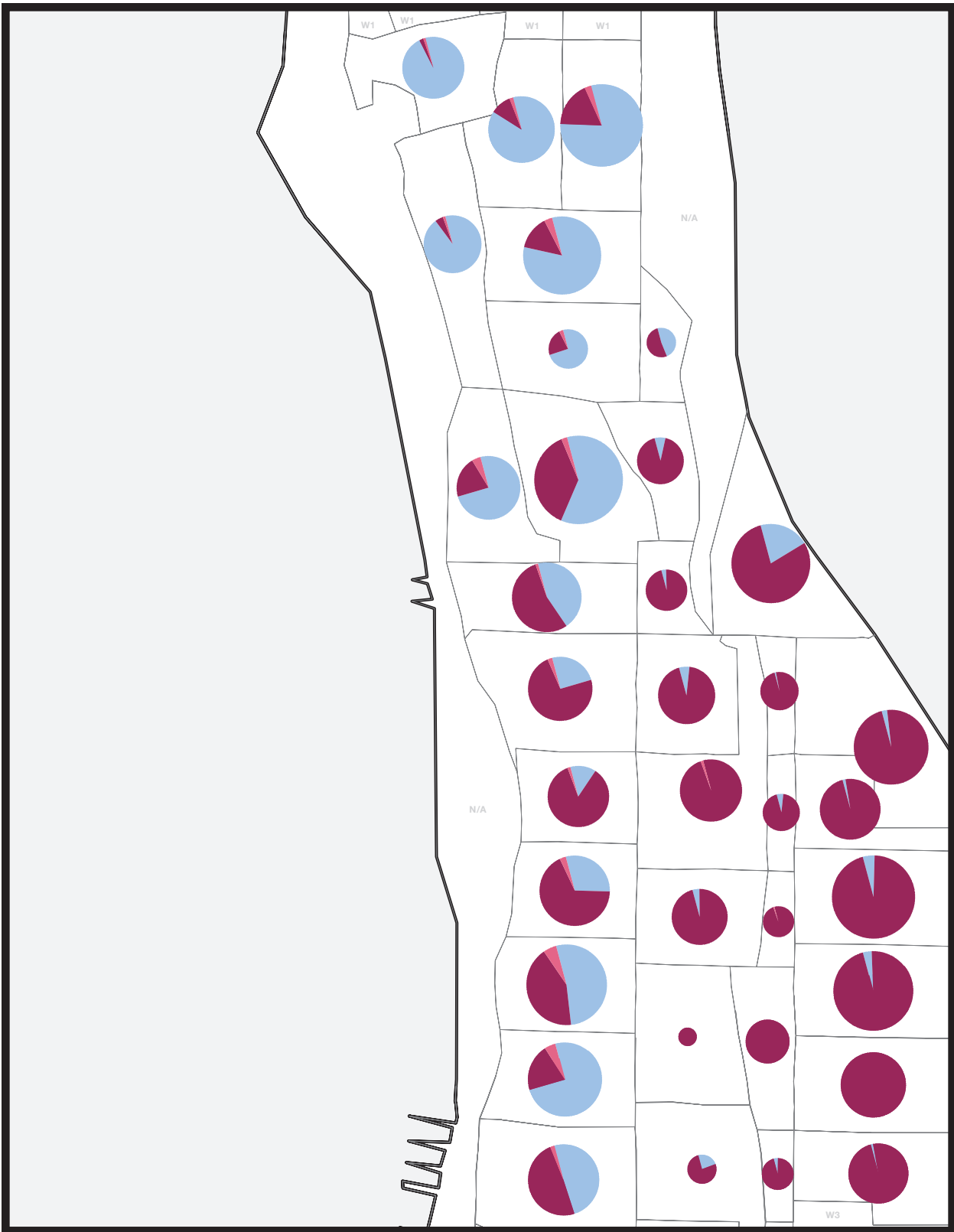


**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1970)**  
**INWOOD, FORT GEOGRE, WASHINGTON HEIGHTS**

WHITE	ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	POPULATION SIZE	0.25 MILE	
BLACK	AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT			
OTHER RACE	N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE	W2 SEE OTHER PANEL		

W1



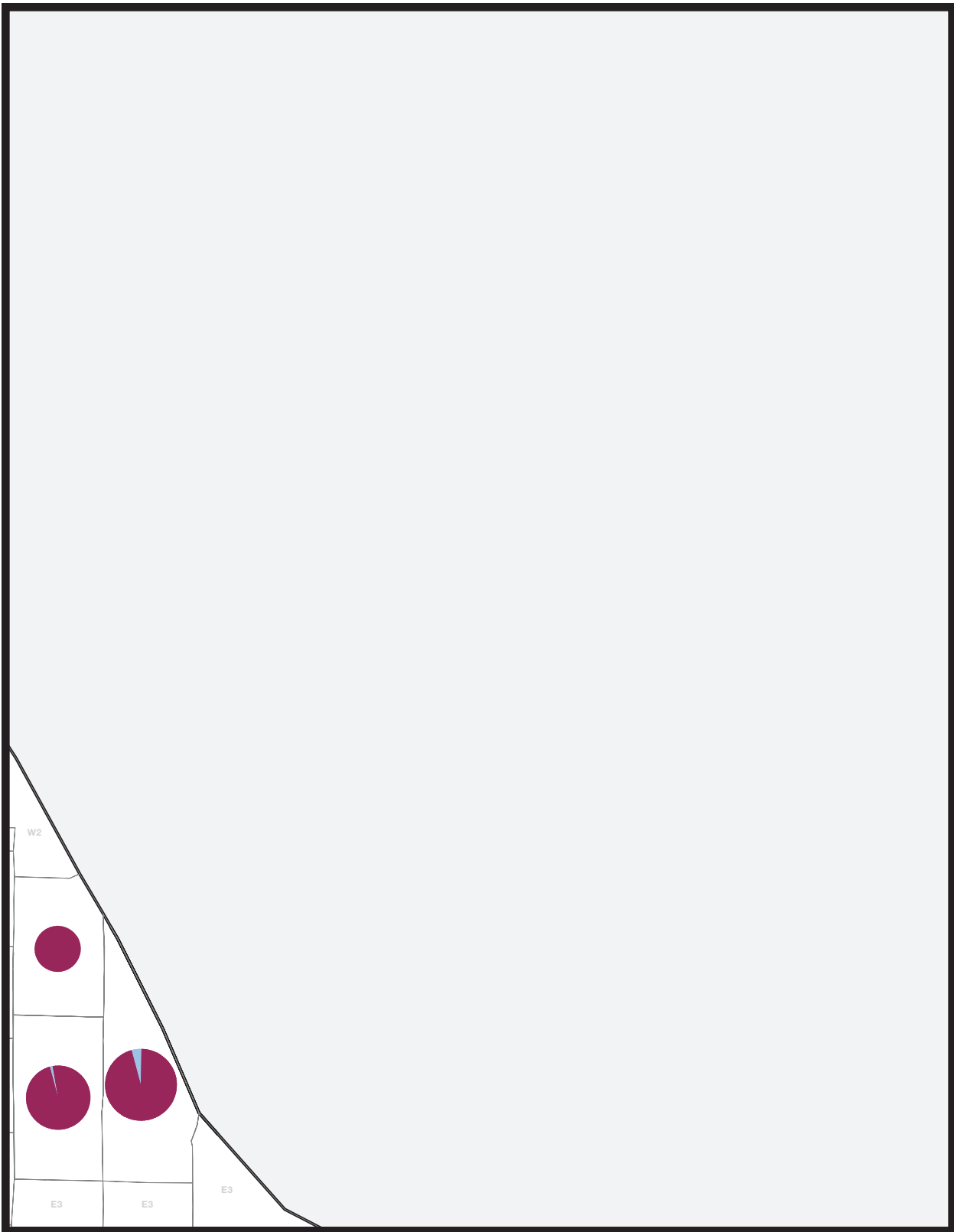


**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1970)**  
 WASHINGTON HEIGHTS, HAMILTON HEIGHTS, HARLEM



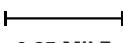





WHITE	ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	POPULATION SIZE	0.25 MILE	
BLACK	AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT			
OTHER RACE	N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE	W2 SEE OTHER PANEL		



W2

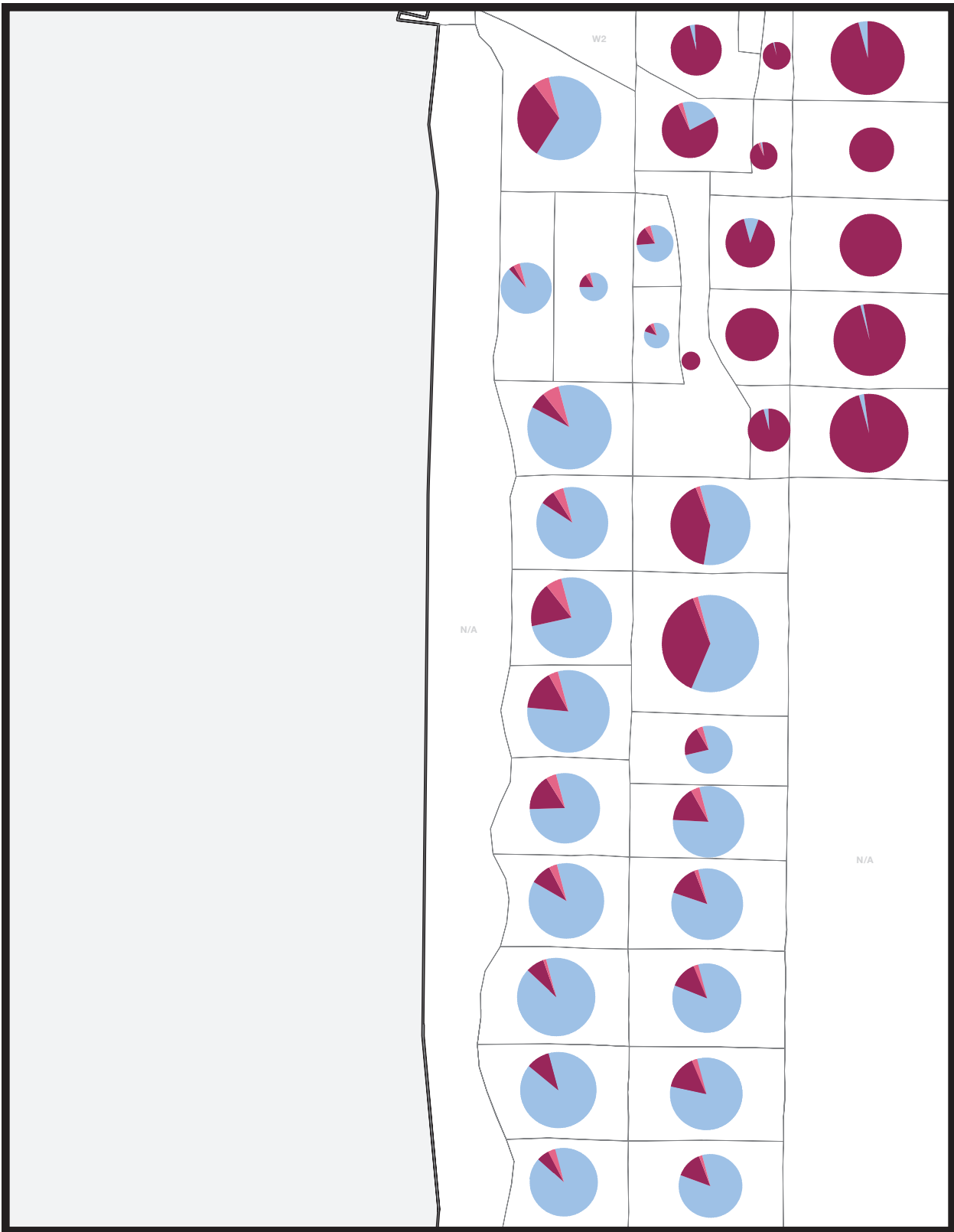


**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1970)**  
**HARLEM, EAST HARLEM**




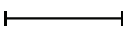




 WHITE	 ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	 POPULATION SIZE	 0.25 MILE	
 BLACK	 AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT			
 OTHER RACE	 N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE	 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL		

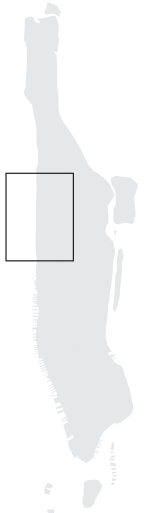


E2



**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1970)**  
 HARLEM, MORNINGSID HEIGHTS, UPPER WEST SIDE

 WHITE	 ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	 POPULATION SIZE	 0.25 MILE	
 BLACK	 AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT			
 OTHER RACE	N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE	W2 SEE OTHER PANEL		



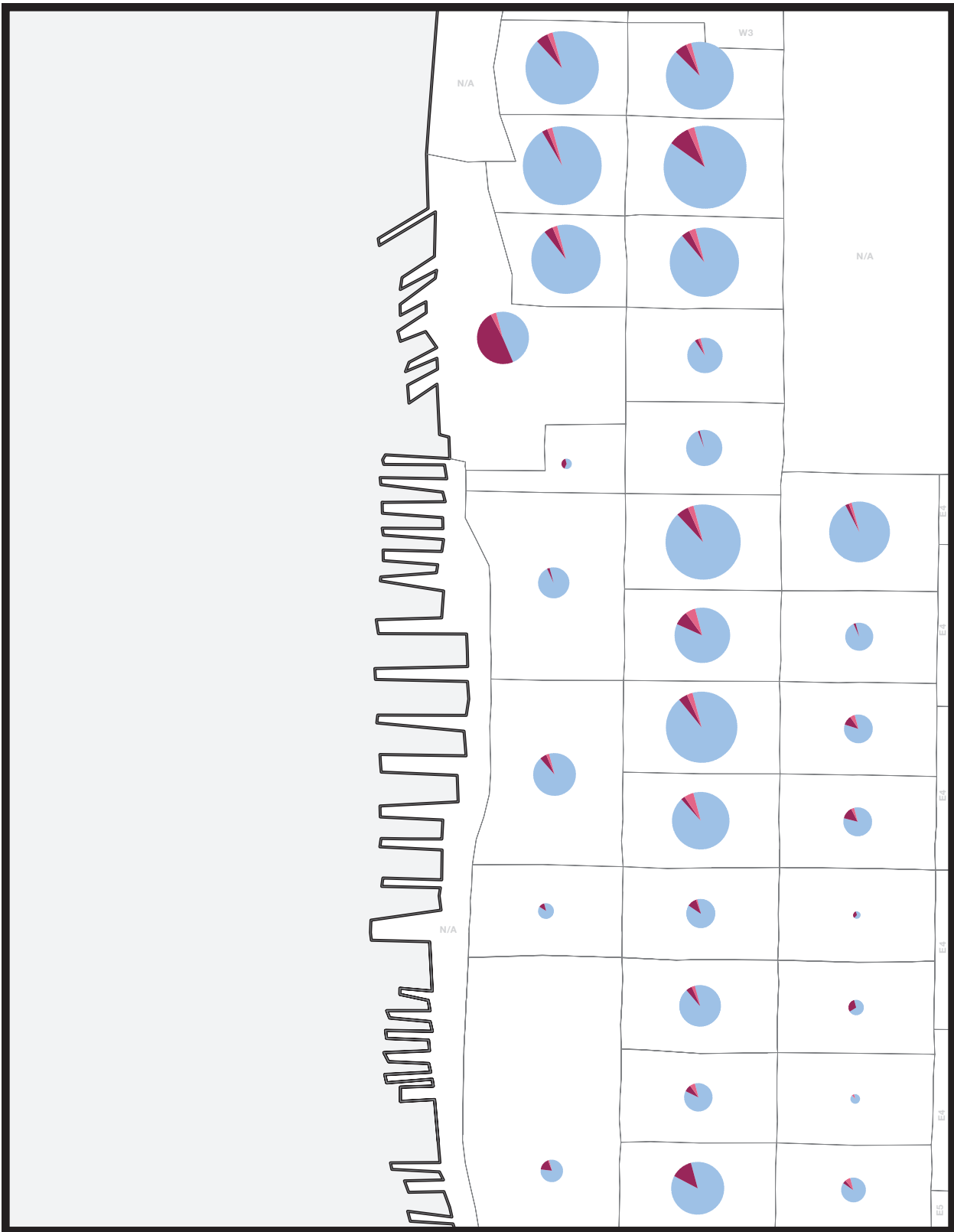
W3






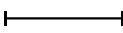




**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1970)**  
 HARLEM, EAST HARLEM, YORKVILLE, UPPER EAST SIDE, LENOX HILL

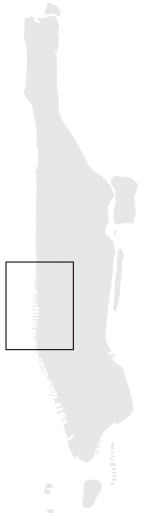
WHITE	ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	POPULATION SIZE	0.25 MILE	
BLACK	AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT			
OTHER RACE	N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE	W2 SEE OTHER PANEL		



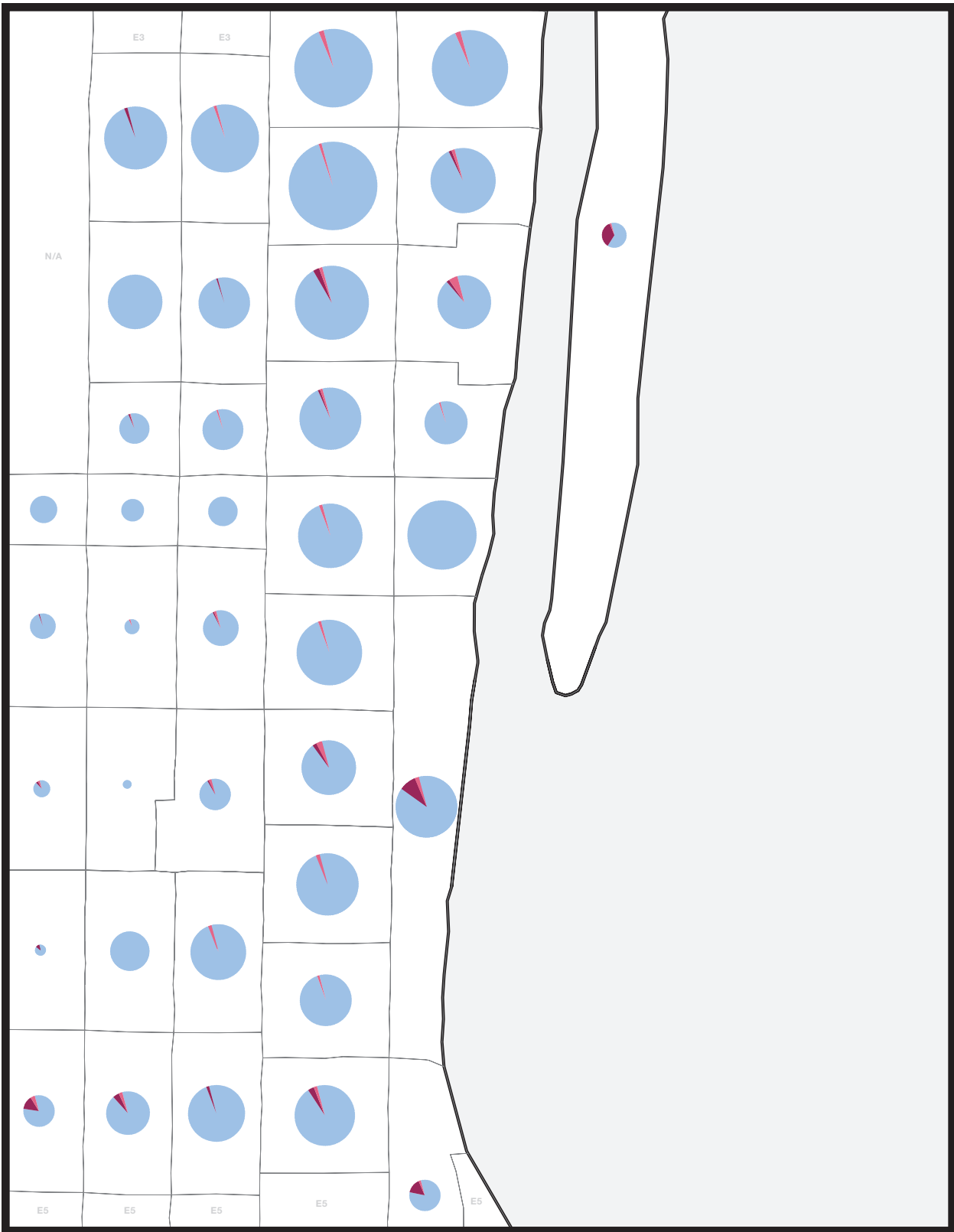


**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1970)**  
 UPPER WEST SIDE, HELL'S KITCHEN, MIDTOWN

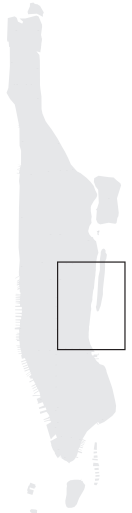
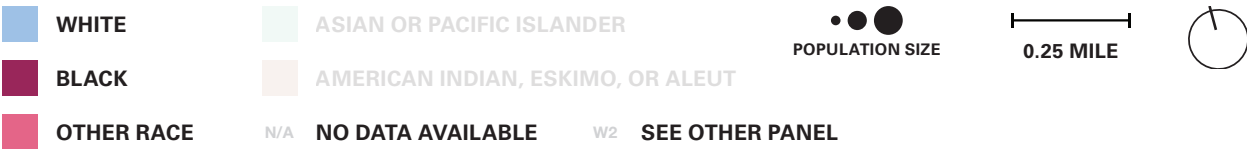
 WHITE	 ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	 POPULATION SIZE	 0.25 MILE	
 BLACK	 AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT			
 OTHER RACE	N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE	W2 SEE OTHER PANEL		

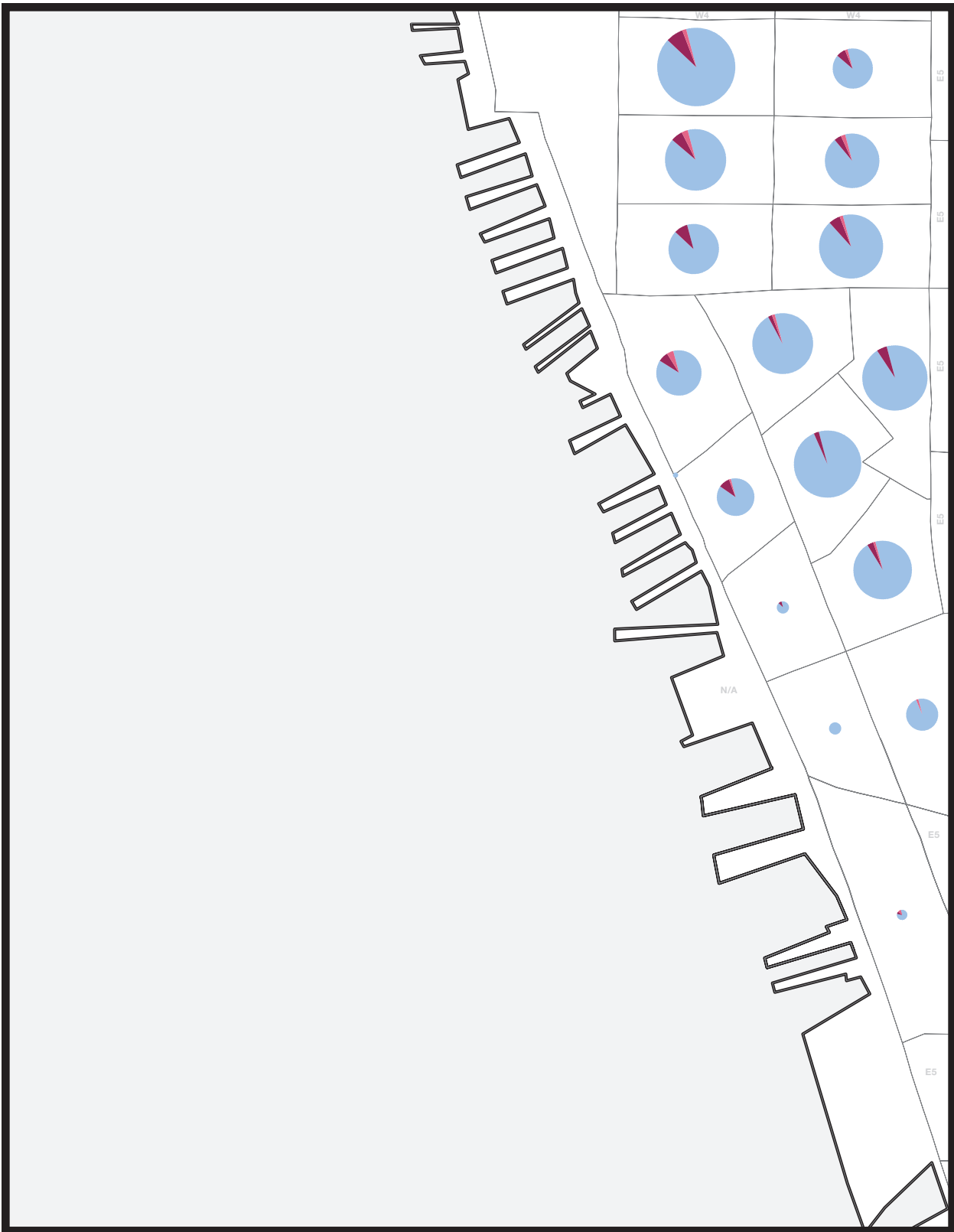


W4



**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1970)**  
 LENOX HILL, ROOSEVELT ISLAND, MIDTOWN, MURRAY HILL, KIPS BAY





**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1970)**  
**CHELSEA, WEST VILLAGE, TRIBECA**

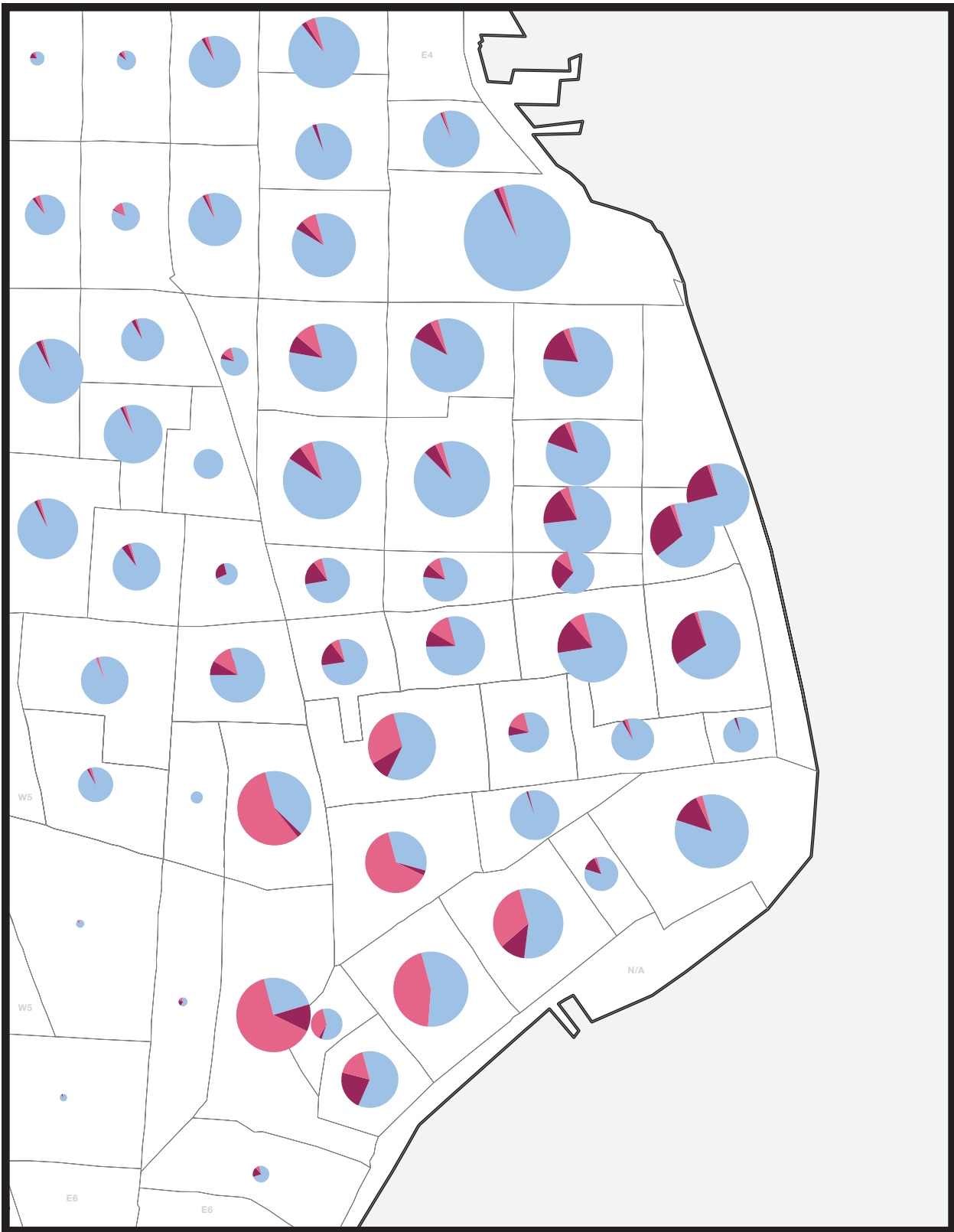
- WHITE
- BLACK
- OTHER RACE
- ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER
- AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT
- N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE
- W2 SEE OTHER PANEL

POPULATION SIZE

0.25 MILE



**W5**

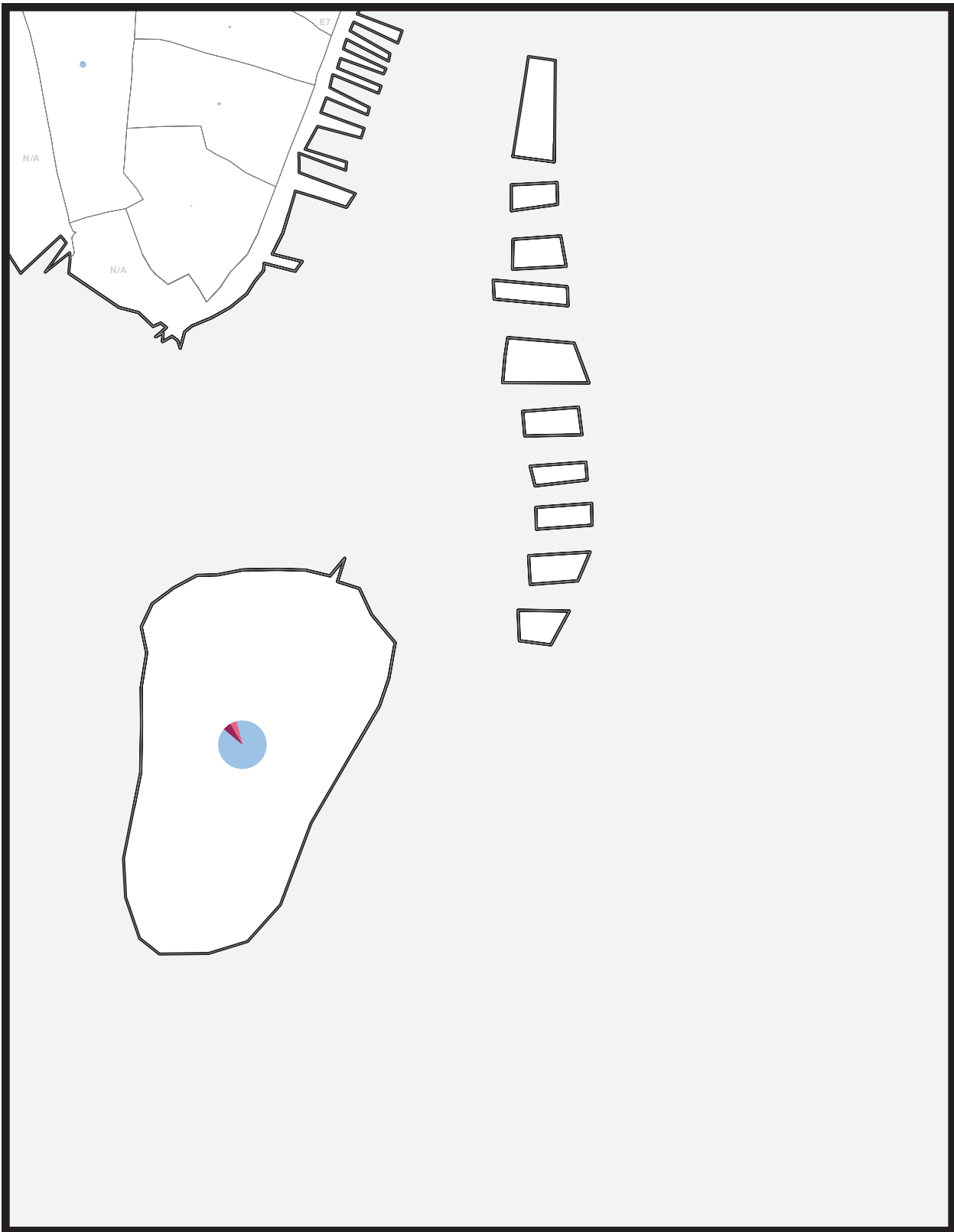


**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1970)**  
 FLATIRON, GREENWICH, EAST VILLAGE, SOHO, LOWER EAST SIDE

WHITE	ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	POPULATION SIZE	0.25 MILE	
BLACK	AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT			
OTHER RACE	N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE	W2 SEE OTHER PANEL		

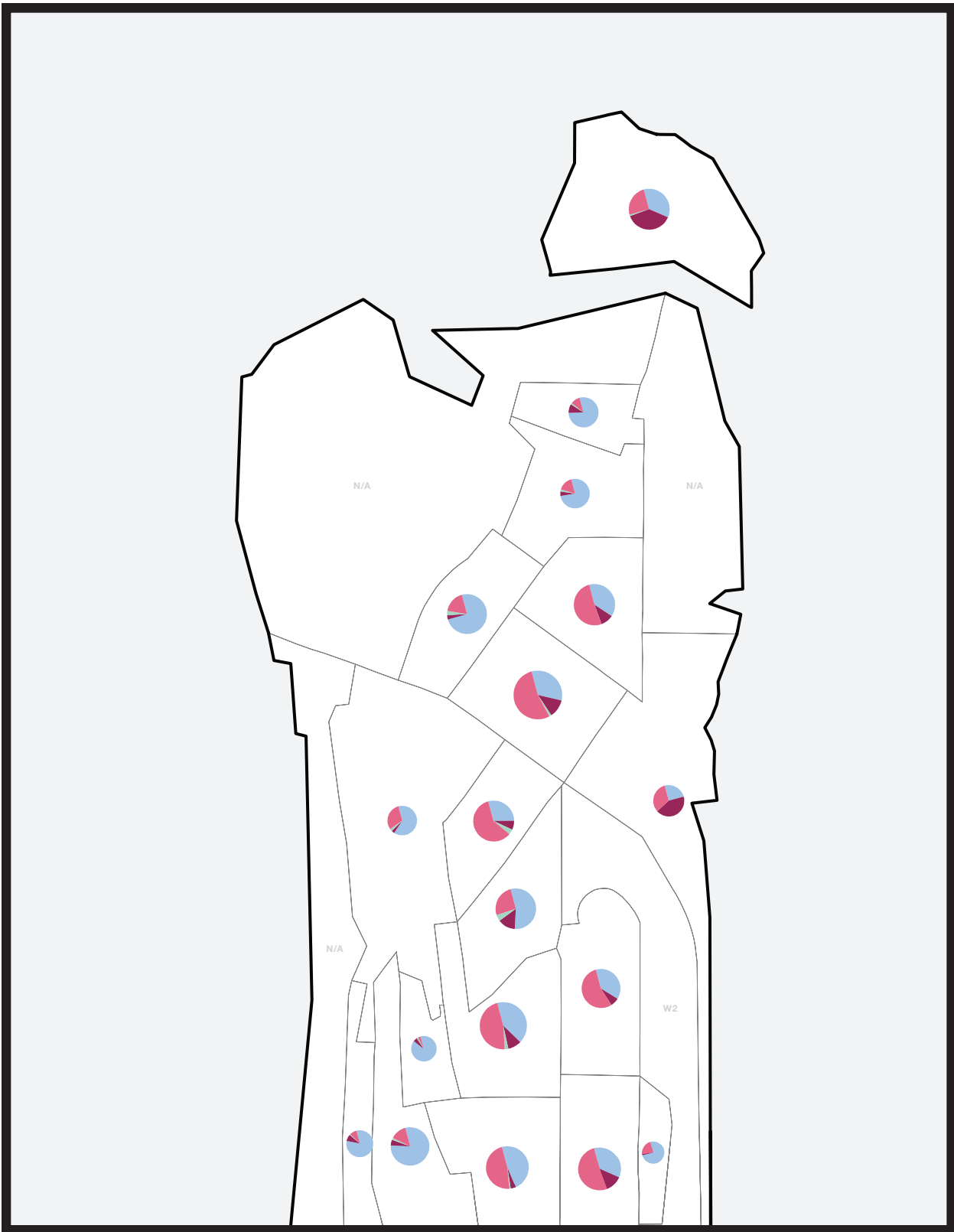






**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1970)**  
 FINANCIAL DISTRICT, BATTERY PARK CITY, GOVERNORS ISLAND

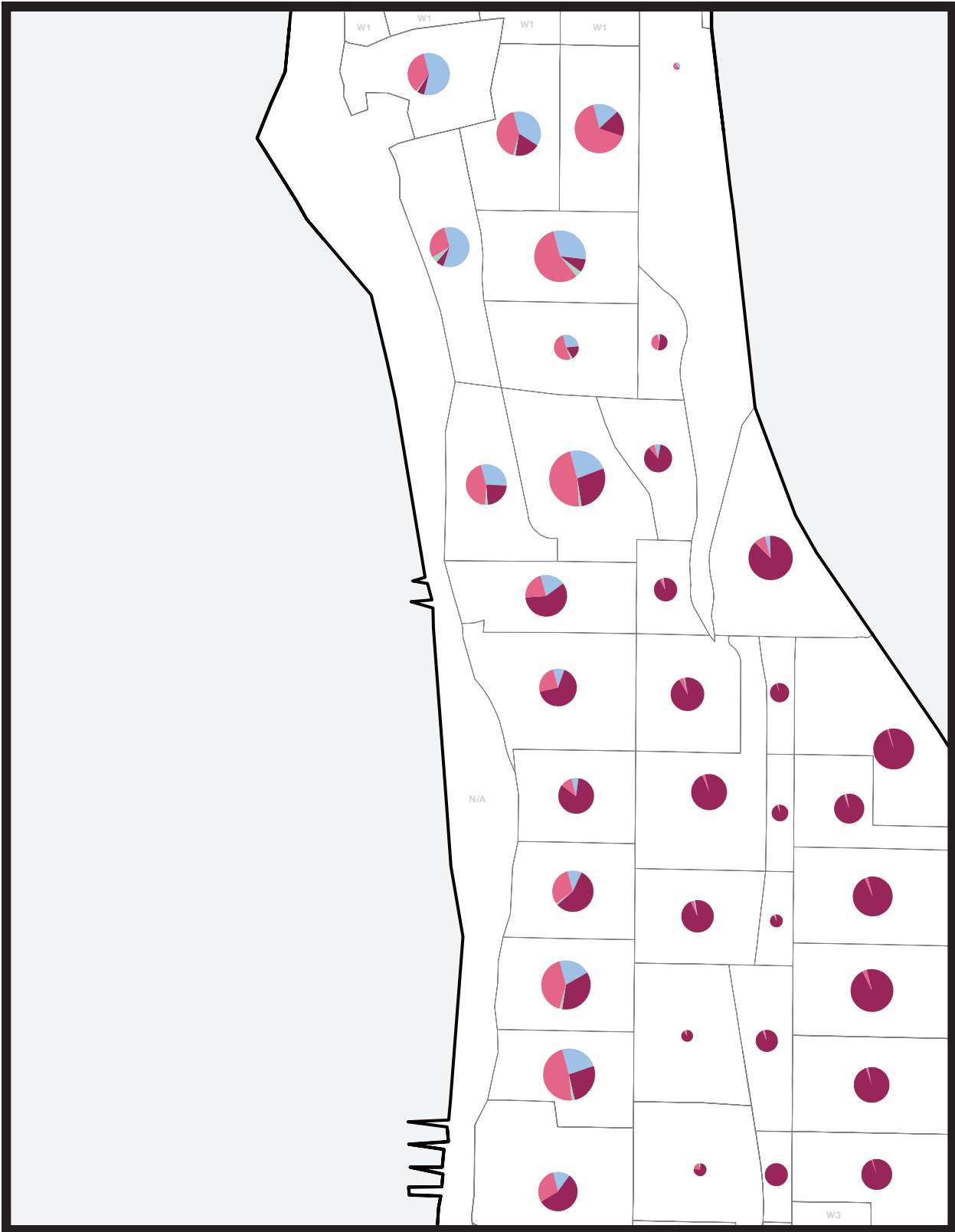




**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1980)**  
**INWOOD, FORT GEOGRE, WASHINGTON HEIGHTS**

WHITE	ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	POPULATION SIZE	0.25 MILE	
BLACK	AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT			
OTHER RACE	N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE	W2 SEE OTHER PANEL		

W1

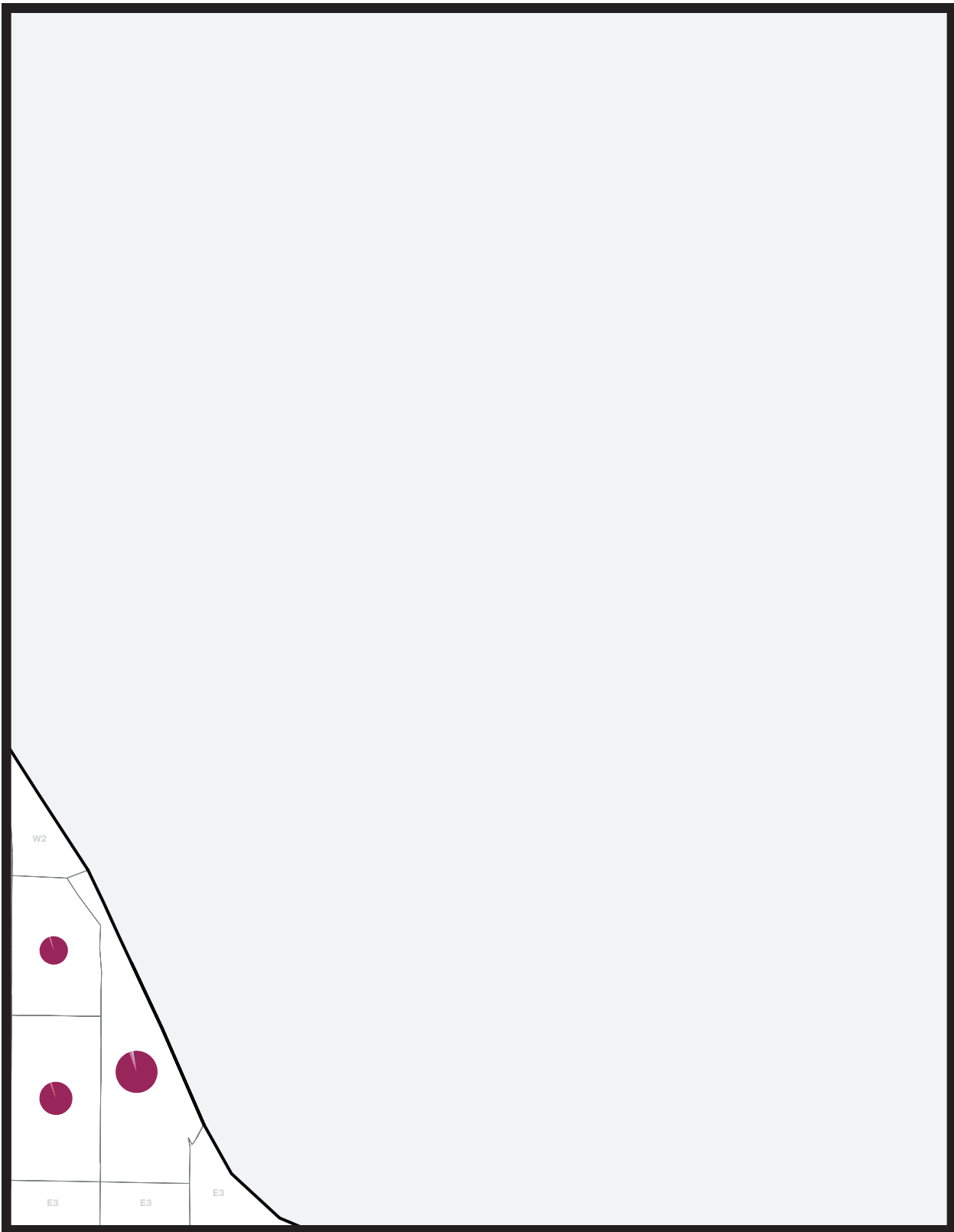


**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1980)**  
 WASHINGTON HEIGHTS, HAMILTON HEIGHTS, HARLEM




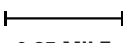






WHITE	ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	POPULATION SIZE	0.25 MILE	
BLACK	AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT			
OTHER RACE	N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE	W2 SEE OTHER PANEL		



W2

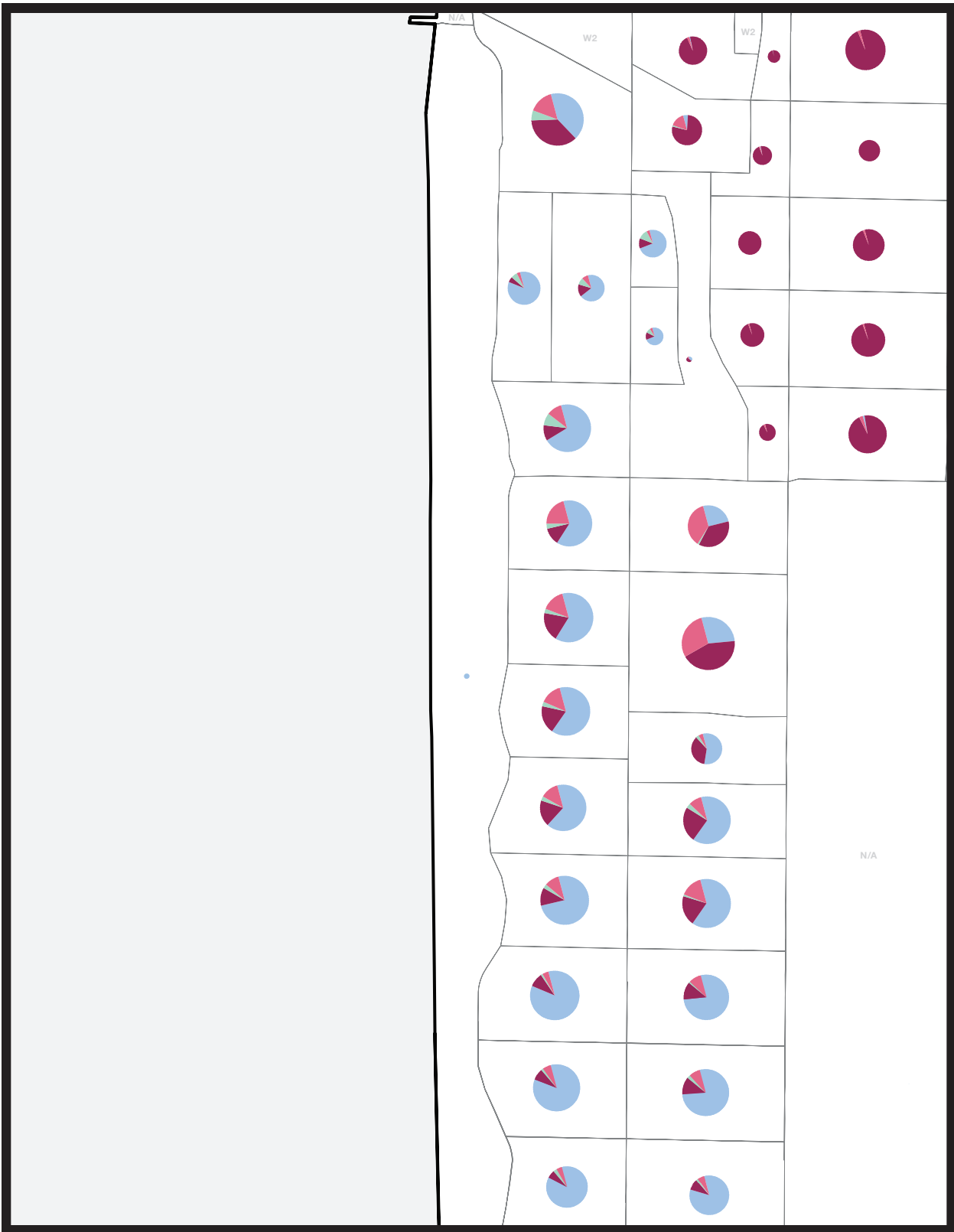


**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1980)**  
**HARLEM, EAST HARLEM**




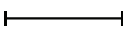




 WHITE	 ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	 POPULATION SIZE	 0.25 MILE	
 BLACK	 AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT			
 OTHER RACE	 N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE	 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL		

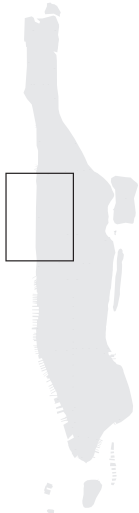


E2

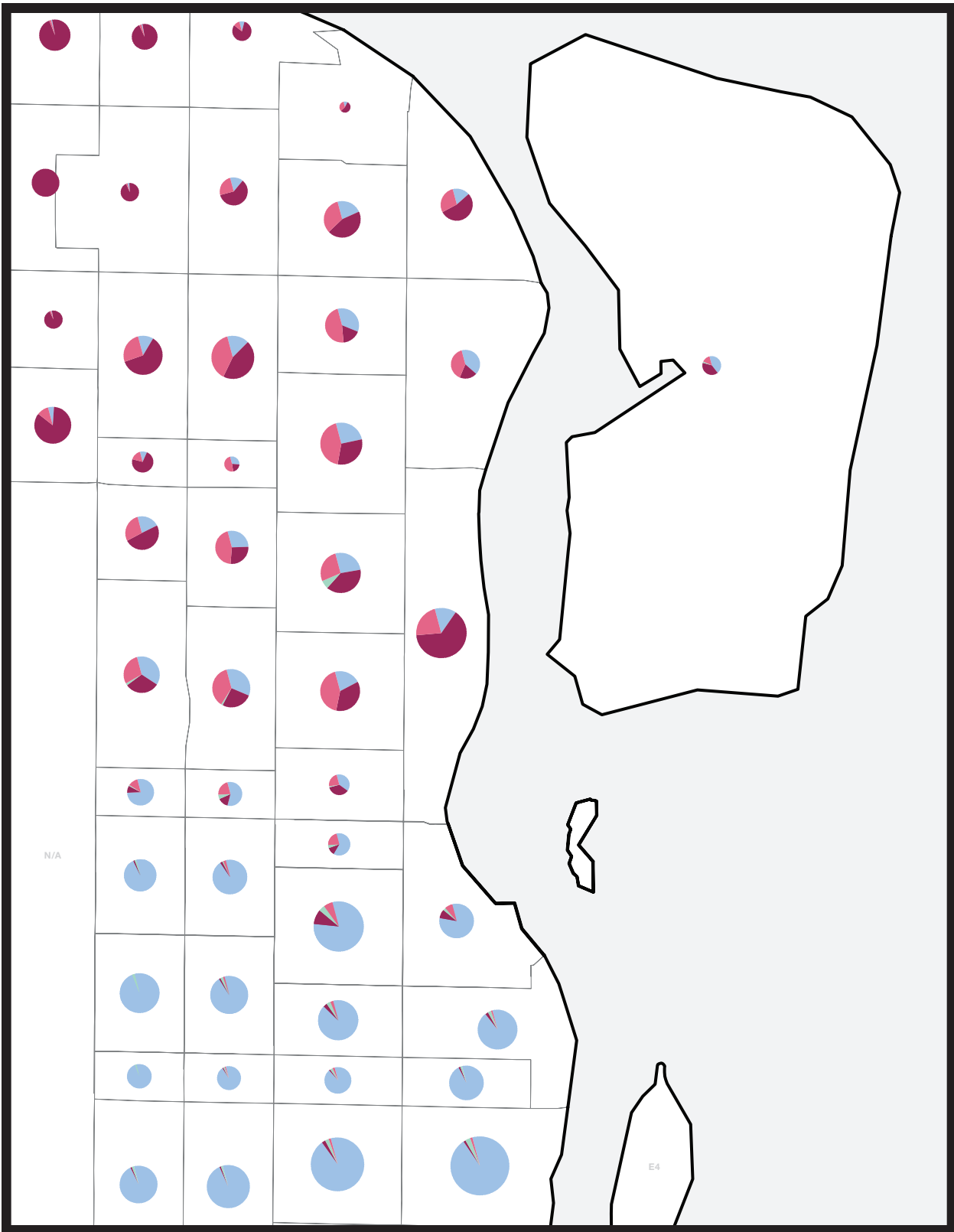


**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1980)**  
 HARLEM, MORNINGSID HEIGHTS, UPPER WEST SIDE




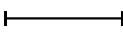






 WHITE	 ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	 POPULATION SIZE	 0.25 MILE	
 BLACK	 AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT			
 OTHER RACE	N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE	W2 SEE OTHER PANEL		



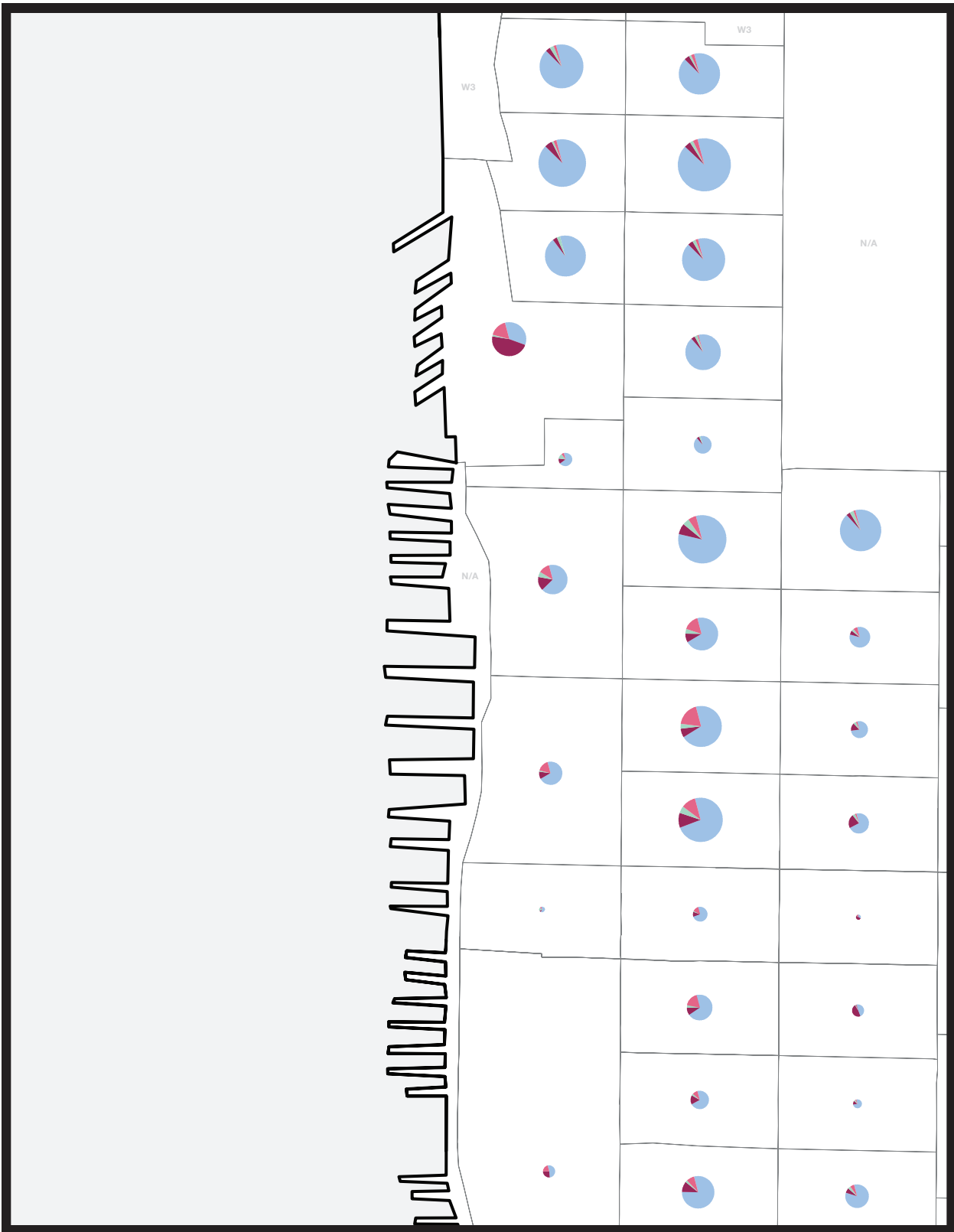
W3






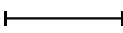




**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1980)**  
 HARLEM, EAST HARLEM, YORKVILLE, UPPER EAST SIDE, LENOX HILL

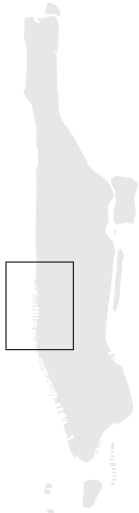
 WHITE	 ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	 POPULATION SIZE	 0.25 MILE	
 BLACK	 AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT			
 OTHER RACE	 N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE	 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL		



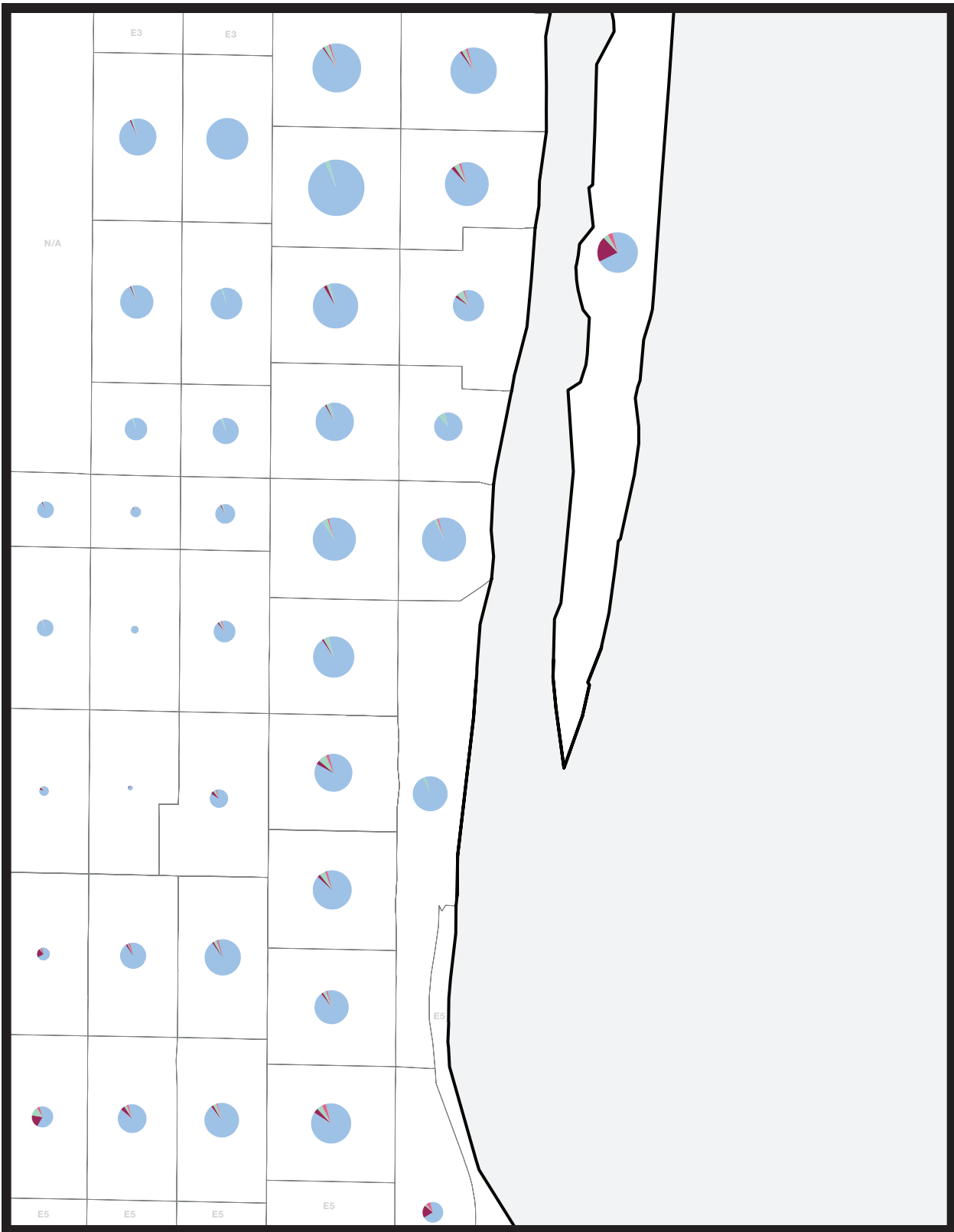


**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1980)**  
 UPPER WEST SIDE, HELL'S KITCHEN, MIDTOWN

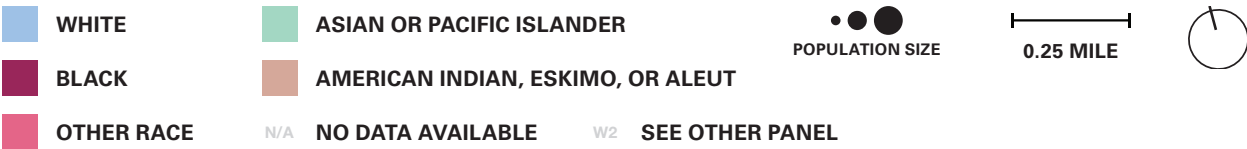
 WHITE	 ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	 POPULATION SIZE	 0.25 MILE	
 BLACK	 AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT			
 OTHER RACE	N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE	W2 SEE OTHER PANEL		



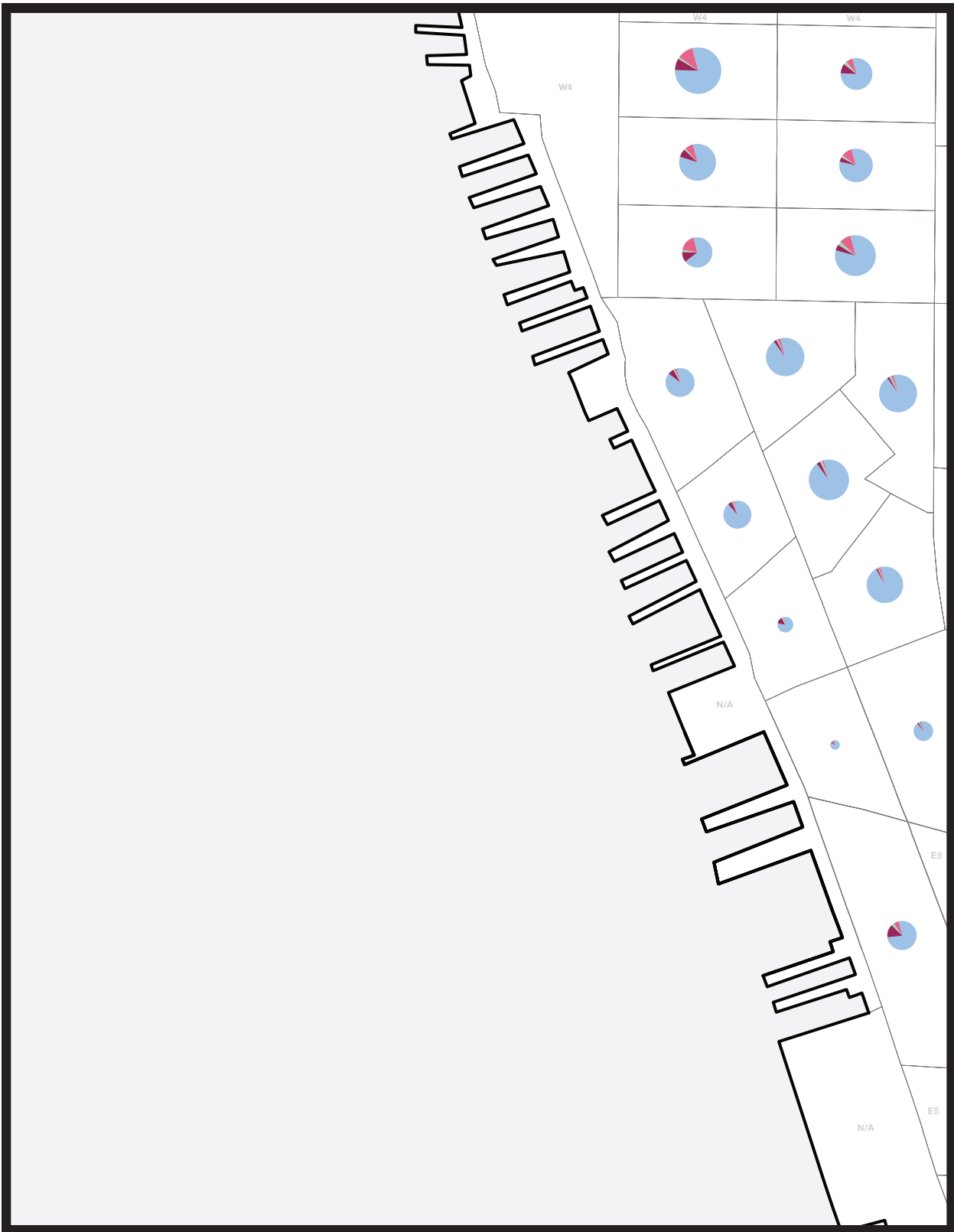
W4



**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1980)**  
 LENOX HILL, ROOSEVELT ISLAND, MIDTOWN, MURRAY HILL, KIPS BAY







**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1980)**  
 CHELSEA, WEST VILLAGE, TRIBECA

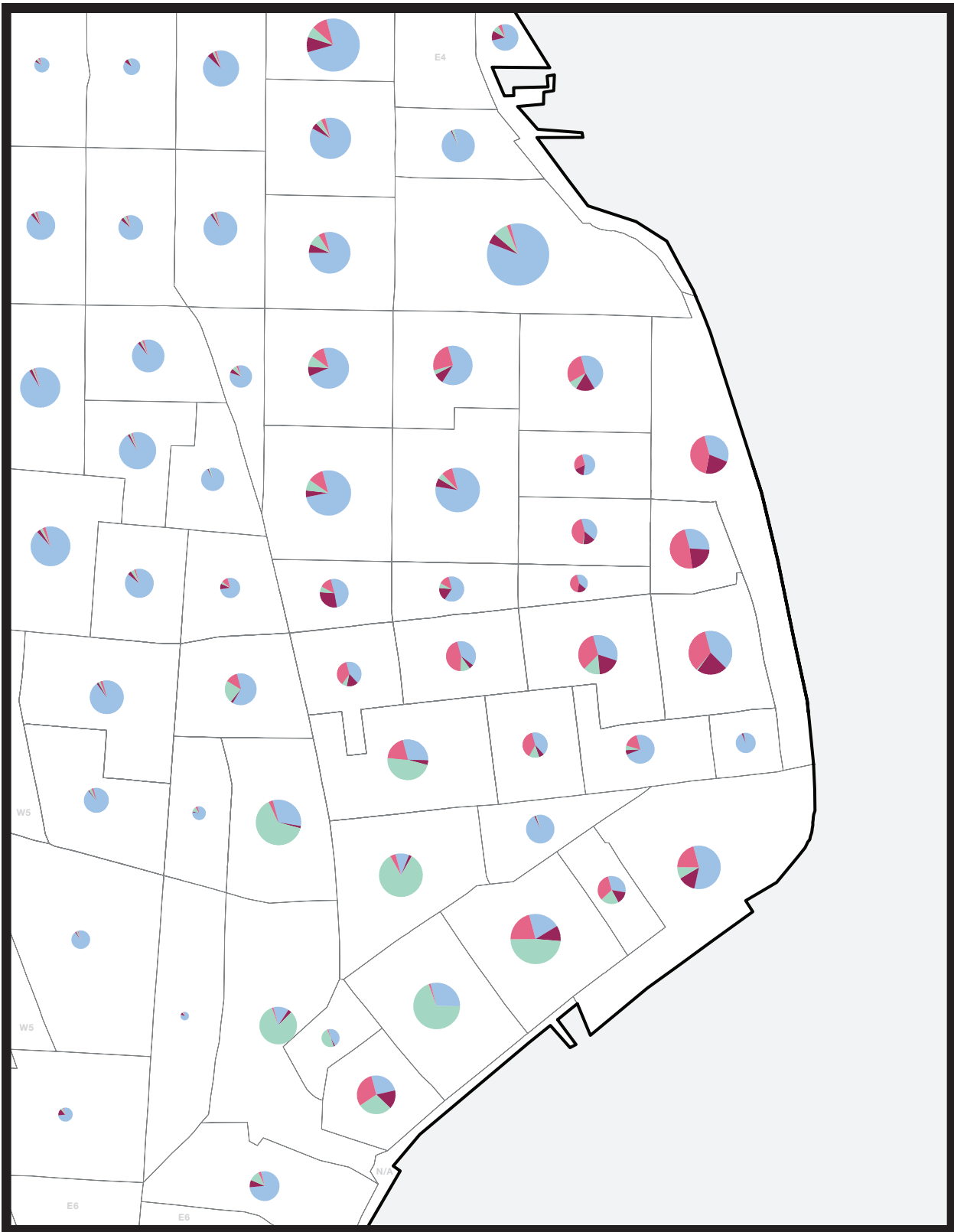
- WHITE
- BLACK
- OTHER RACE
- ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER
- AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT
- N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE
- W2 SEE OTHER PANEL

POPULATION SIZE

0.25 MILE



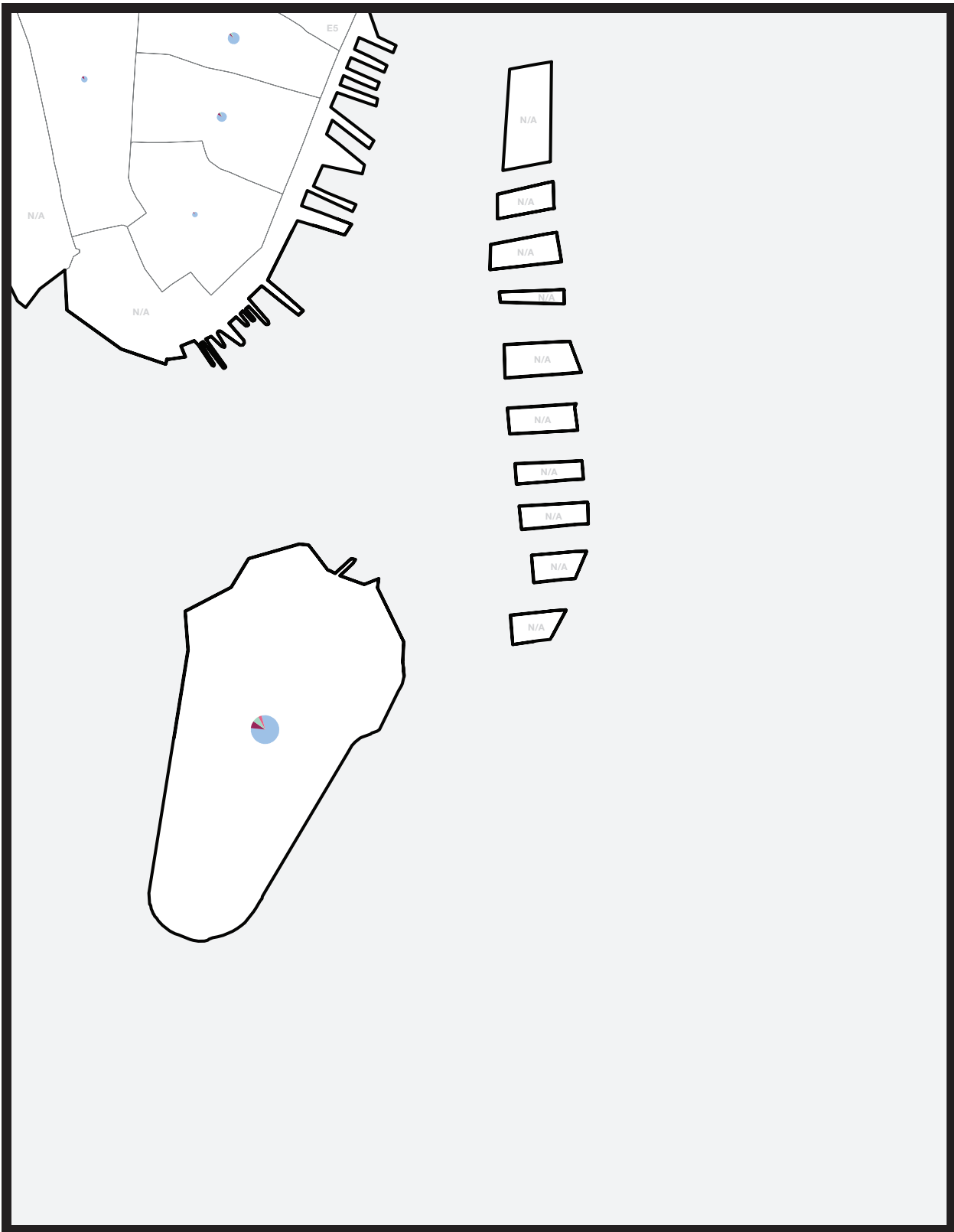
W5



**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1980)**  
 FLATIRON, GREENWICH, EAST VILLAGE, SOHO, LOWER EAST SIDE

WHITE	ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	POPULATION SIZE	0.25 MILE	
BLACK	AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT			
OTHER RACE	N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE	W2 SEE OTHER PANEL		





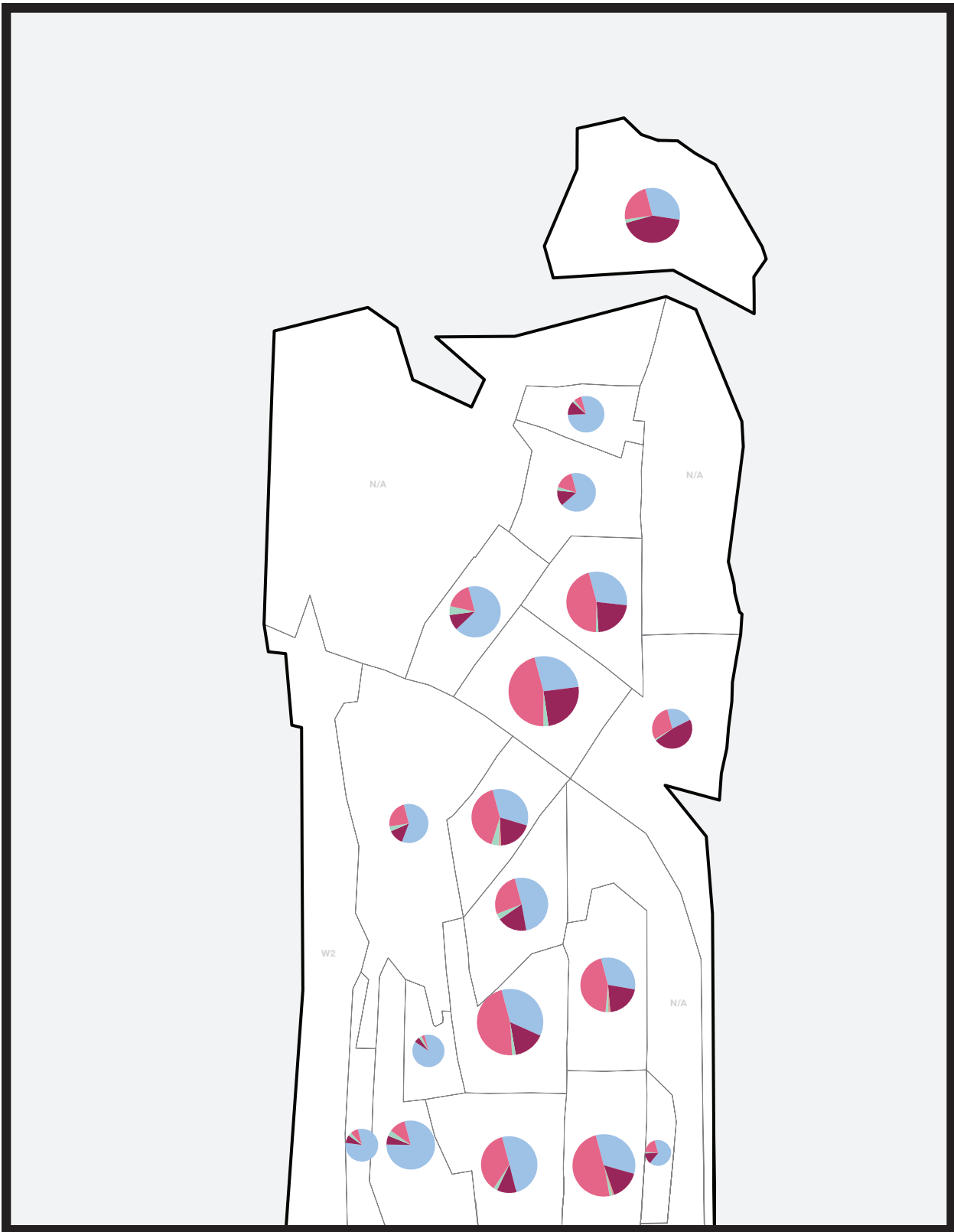
**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1980)**  
 FINANCIAL DISTRICT, BATTERY PARK CITY, GOVERNORS ISLAND

- WHITE
- BLACK
- OTHER RACE
- ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER
- AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT
- N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE
- W2 SEE OTHER PANEL

POPULATION SIZE

0.25 MILE

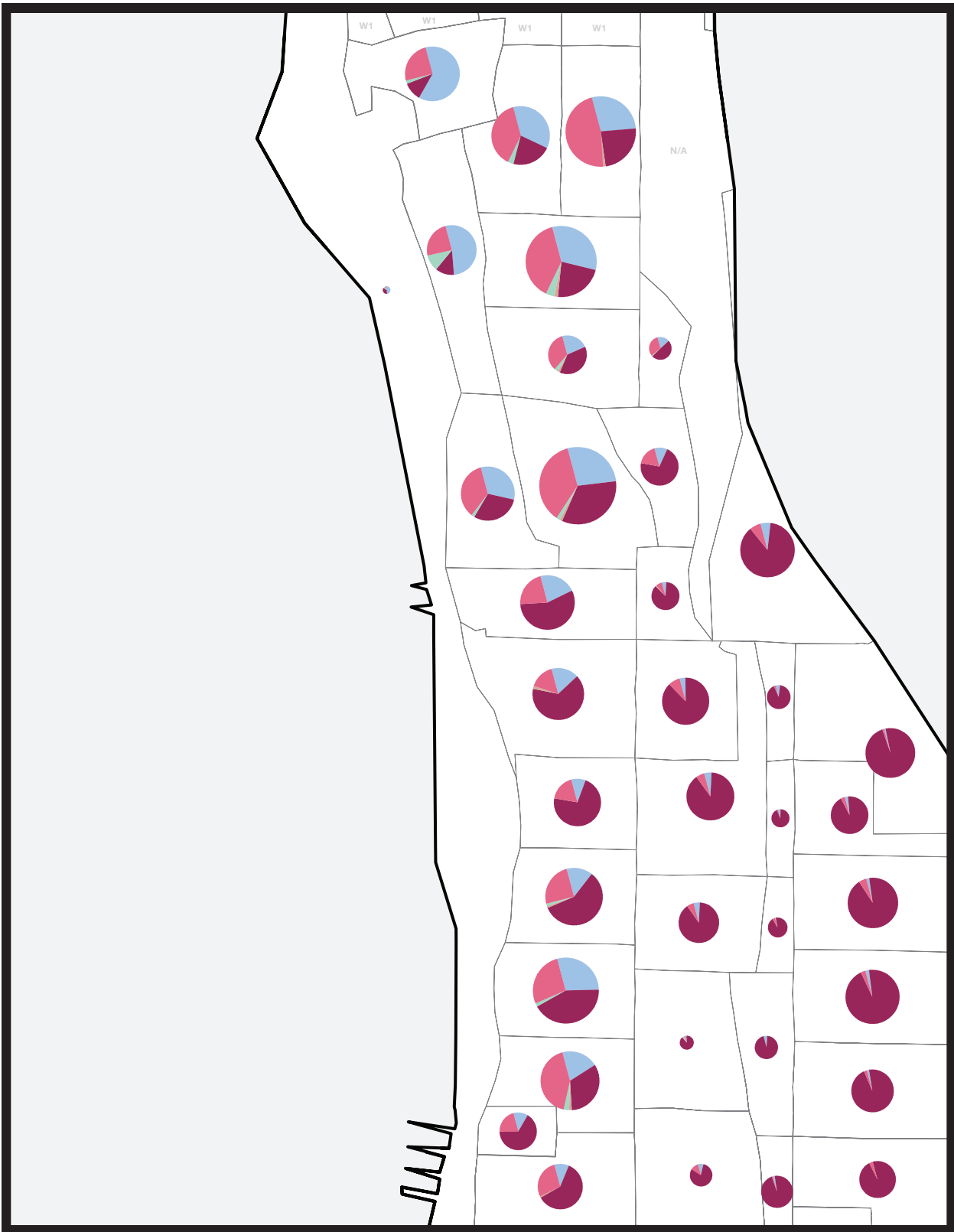




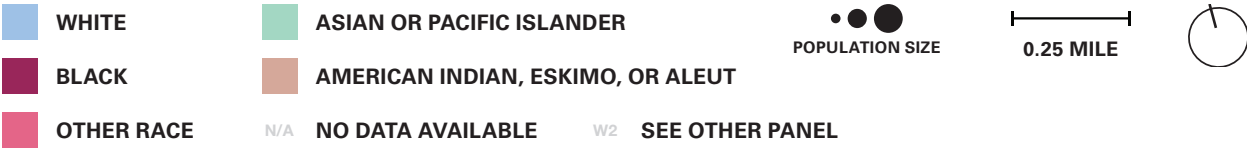
**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1990)**  
**INWOOD, FORT GEOGRE, WASHINGTON HEIGHTS**

WHITE	ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	POPULATION SIZE	0.25 MILE	
BLACK	AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT			
OTHER RACE	N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE	W2 SEE OTHER PANEL		

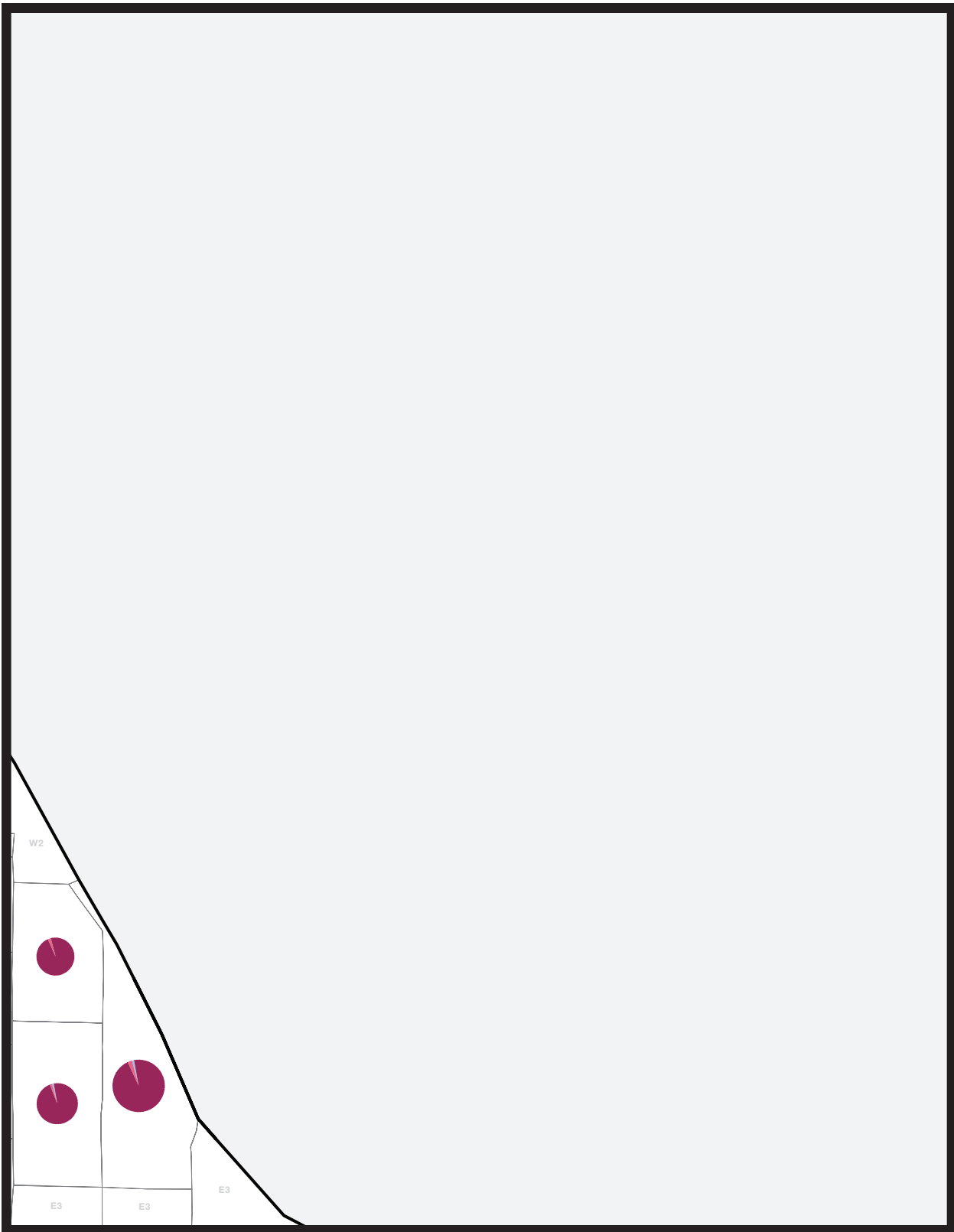
W1



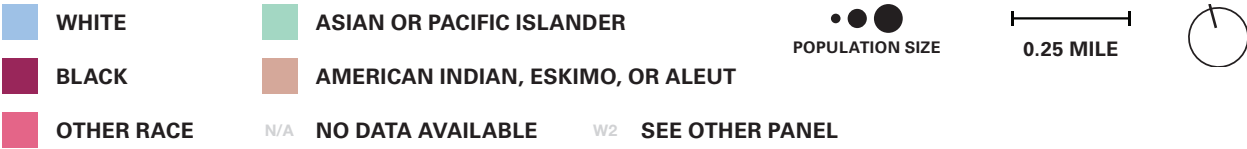
**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1990)**  
 WASHINGTON HEIGHTS, HAMILTON HEIGHTS, HARLEM



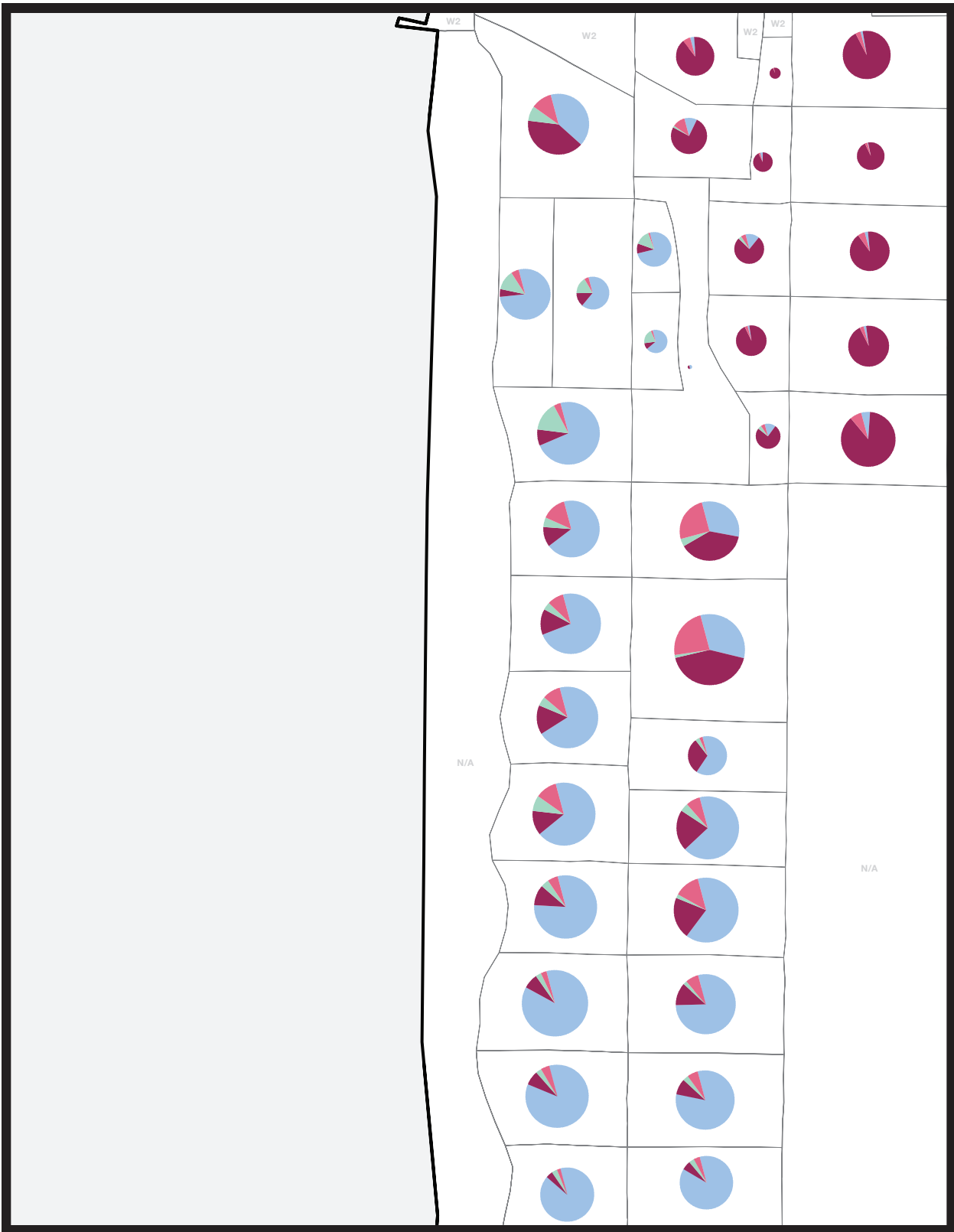
W2






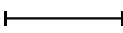






**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1990)**  
**HARLEM, EAST HARLEM**

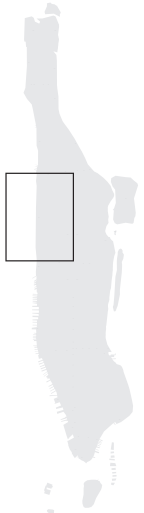


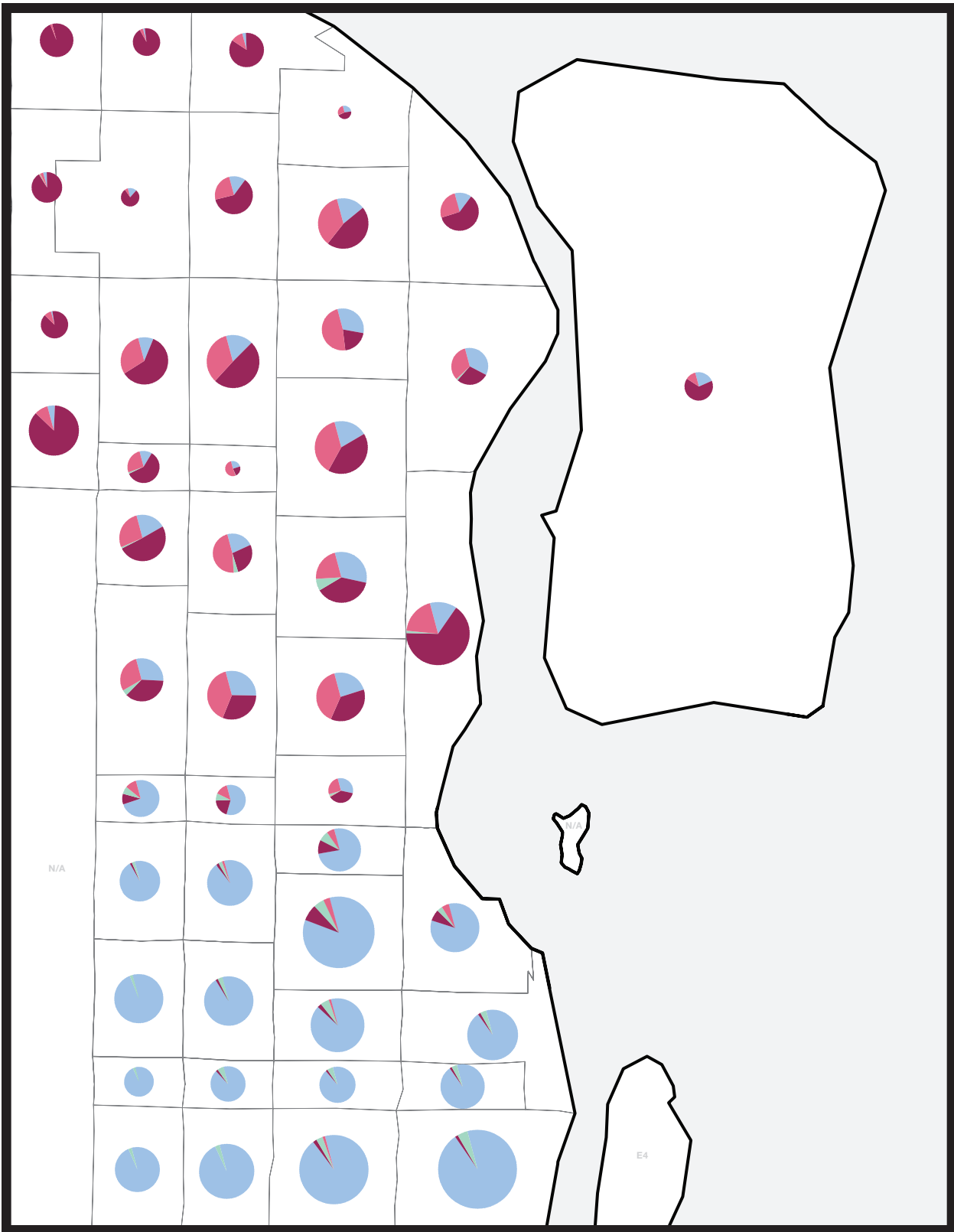
E2



**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1990)**  
 HARLEM, MORNINGSID HEIGHTS, UPPER WEST SIDE

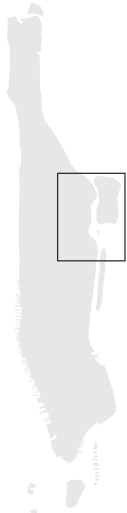
 WHITE	 ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	 POPULATION SIZE	 0.25 MILE	
 BLACK	 AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT			
 OTHER RACE	 N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE	 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL		



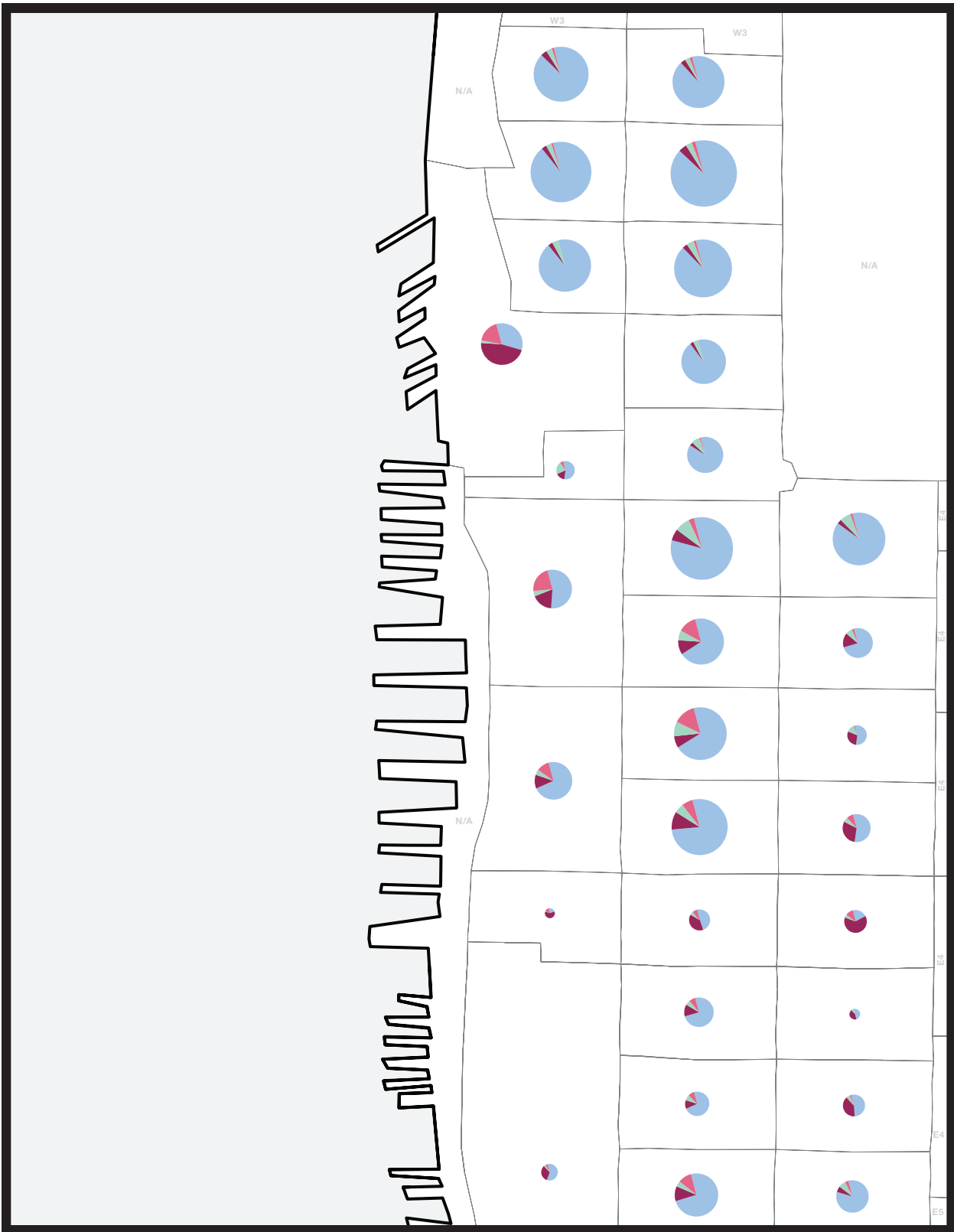


**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1990)**  
 HARLEM, EAST HARLEM, YORKVILLE, UPPER EAST SIDE, LENOX HILL




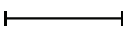






WHITE	ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	POPULATION SIZE	0.25 MILE	
BLACK	AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT			
OTHER RACE	N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE	W2 SEE OTHER PANEL		

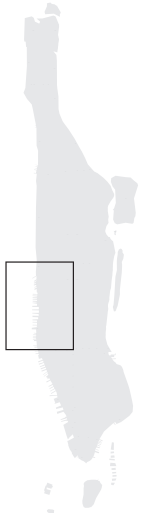




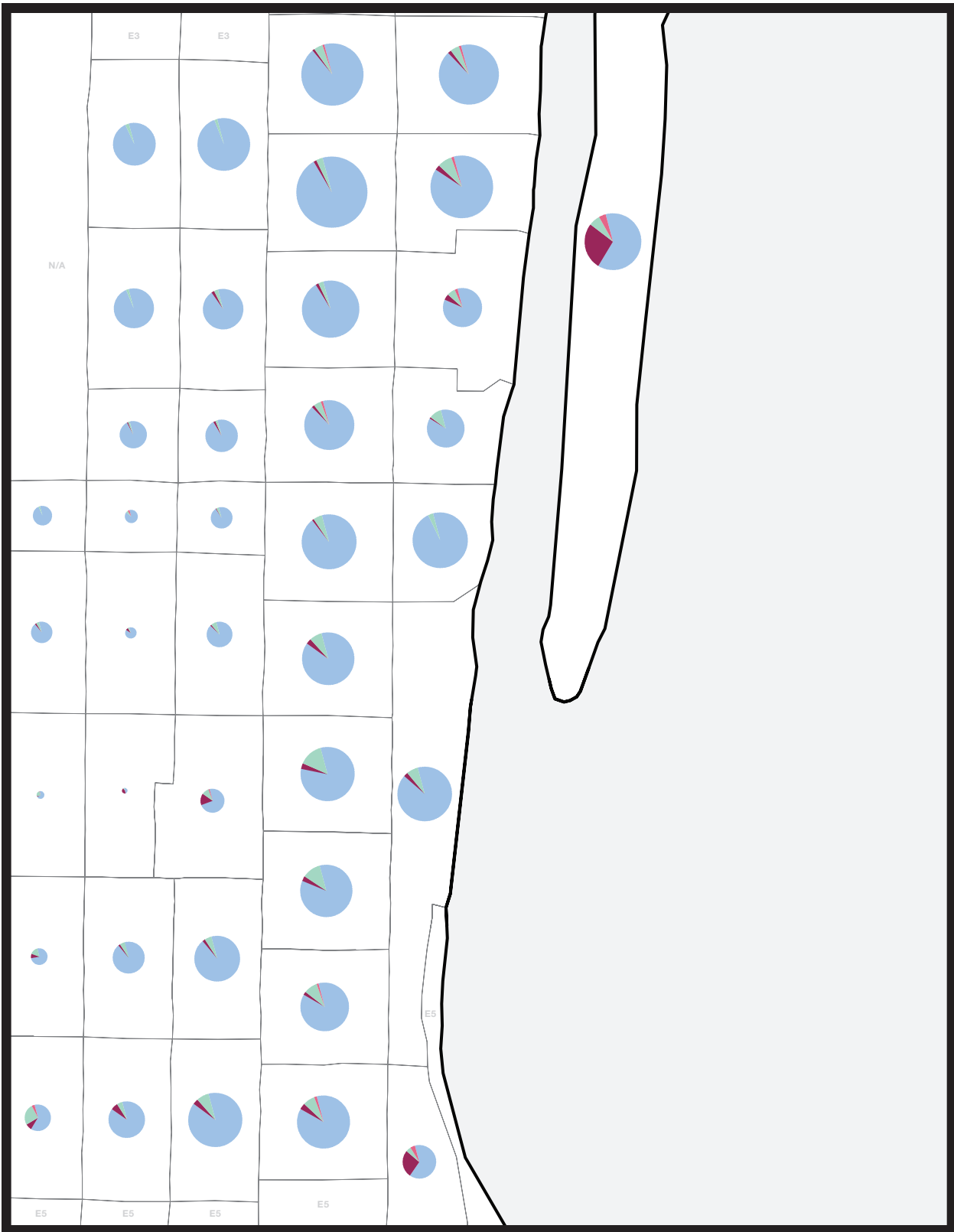


**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1990)**  
 UPPER WEST SIDE, HELL'S KITCHEN, MIDTOWN

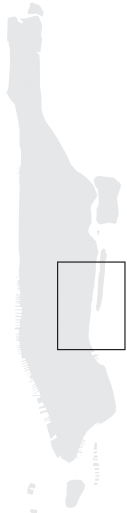
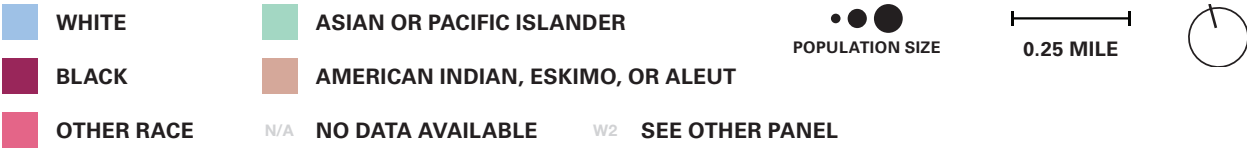
 WHITE	 ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	 POPULATION SIZE	 0.25 MILE	
 BLACK	 AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT			
 OTHER RACE	 N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE	 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL		

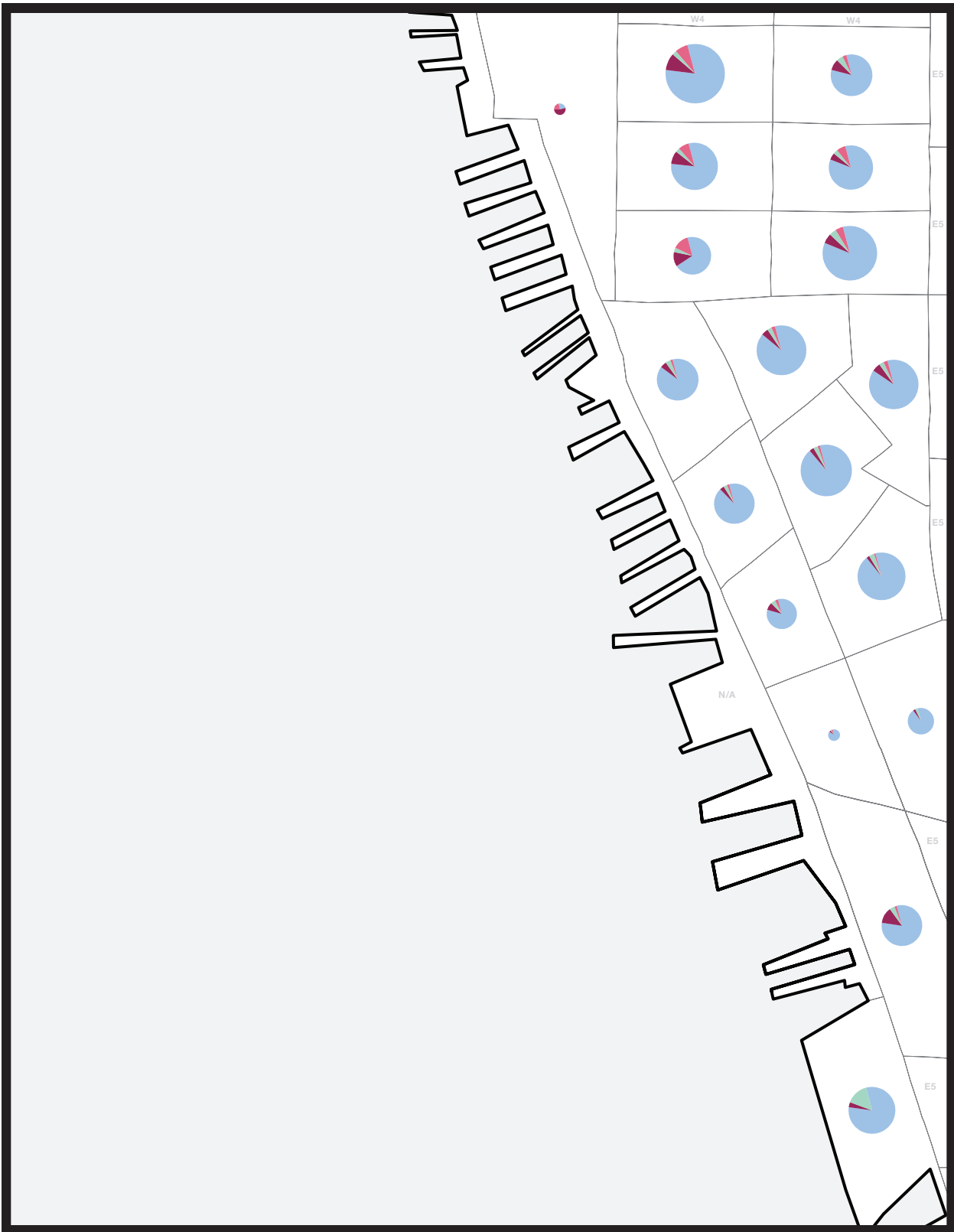


W4



**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1990)**  
 LENOX HILL, ROOSEVELT ISLAND, MIDTOWN, MURRAY HILL, KIPS BAY



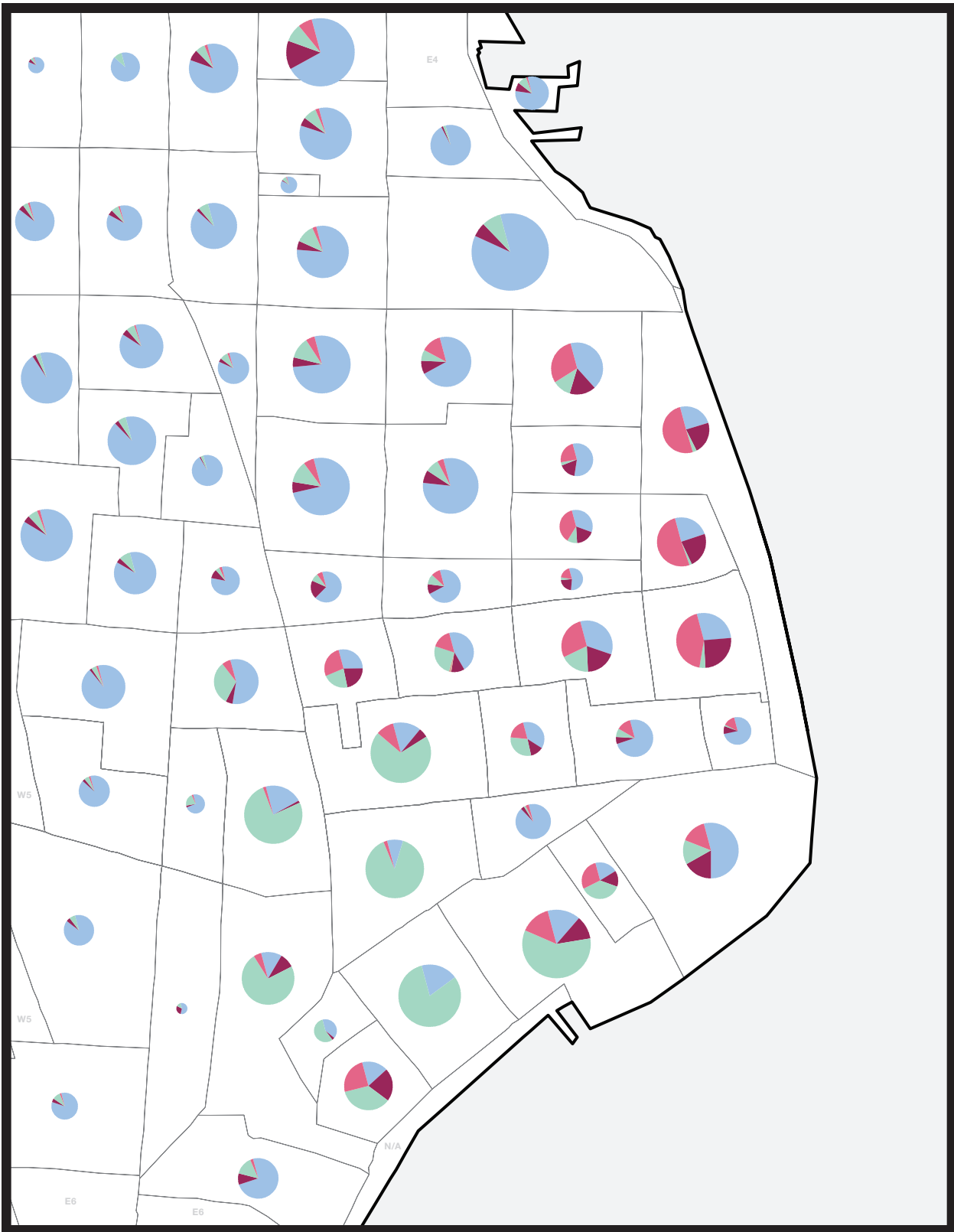


**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1990)**  
**CHELSEA, WEST VILLAGE, TRIBECA**




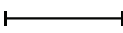




WHITE	ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	POPULATION SIZE	0.25 MILE	
BLACK	AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT			
OTHER RACE	N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE	W2 SEE OTHER PANEL		



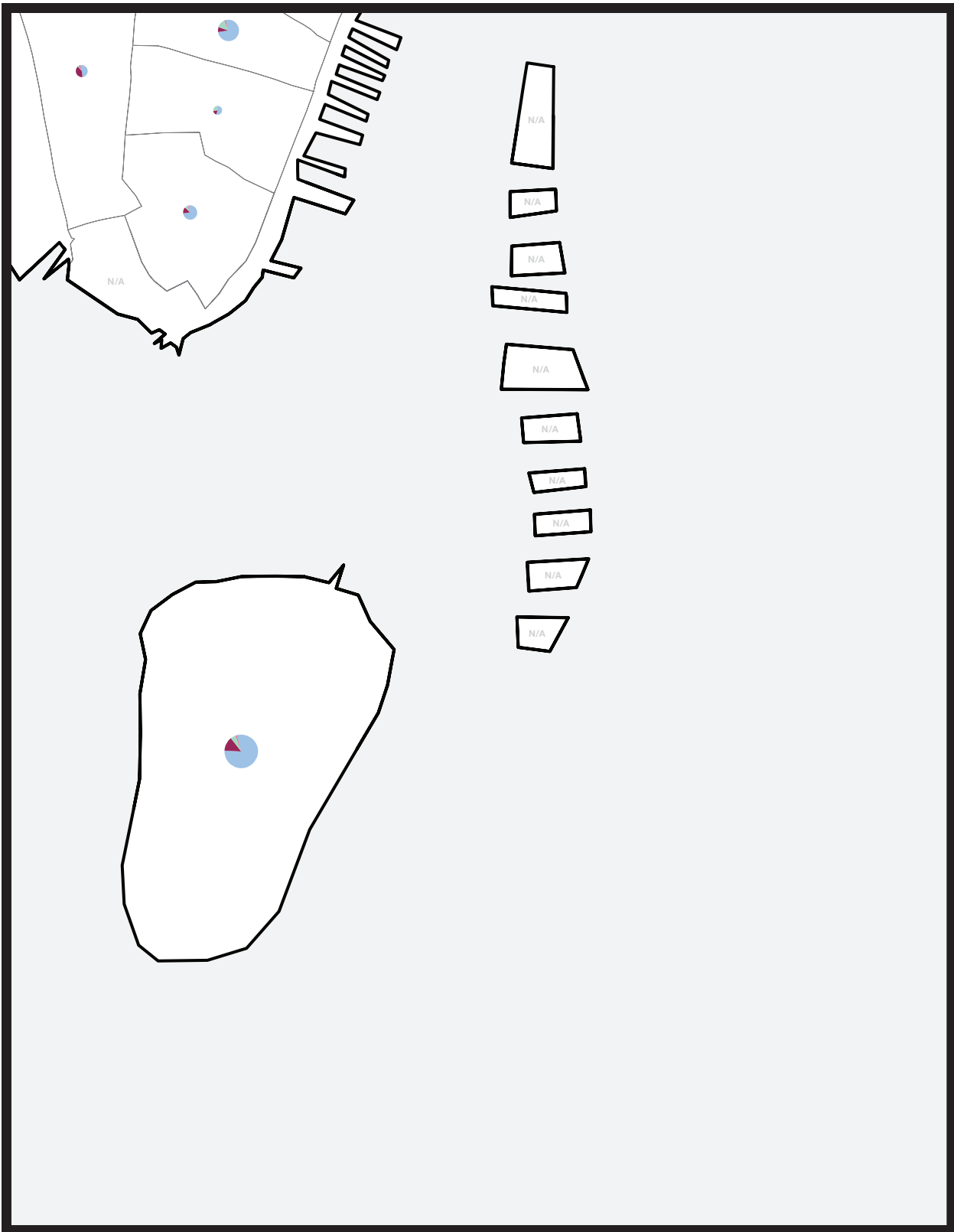
W5



**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1990)**  
 FLATIRON, GREENWICH, EAST VILLAGE, SOHO, LOWER EAST SIDE

 WHITE	 ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	 POPULATION SIZE	 0.25 MILE	
 BLACK	 AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT			
 OTHER RACE	N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE	W2 SEE OTHER PANEL		





**RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1990)**  
 FINANCIAL DISTRICT, BATTERY PARK CITY, GOVERNORS ISLAND

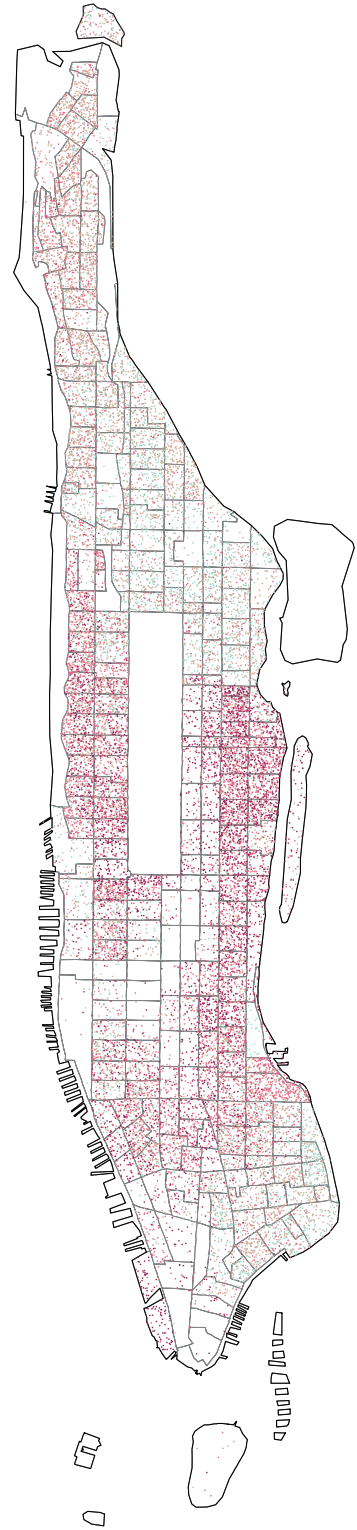
WHITE	ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	POPULATION SIZE	0.25 MILE	
BLACK	AMERICAN INDIAN, ESKIMO, OR ALEUT			
OTHER RACE	N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE	W2 SEE OTHER PANEL		



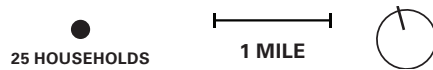
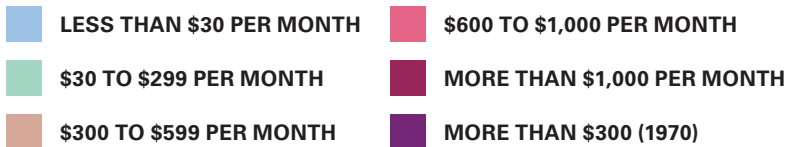
1970

1980

1990



**EQUALIZED\* GROSS RENT IN MANHATTAN BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT**  
 DIAGRAMMATIC MAPS; NOT TRUE VALUE.

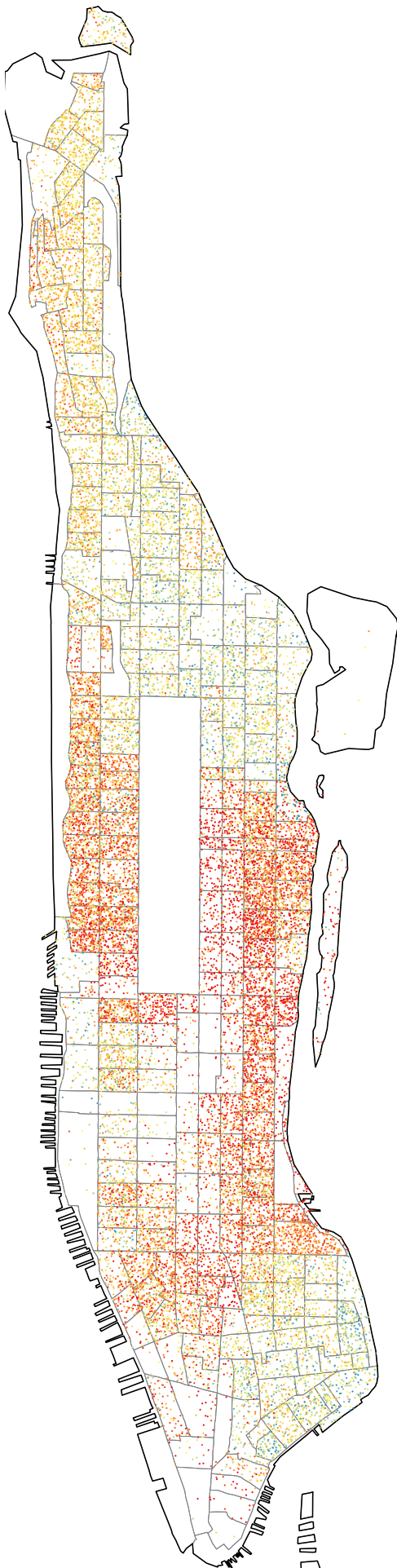


\*These maps are diagrammatic, meant to show a comparison between gross rent statistics between 1970, 1980, and 1990. These maps do not account for inflation between this time, which is why these three census' jump in gross rent metrics. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics consumer price index, prices in 1990 are 236.86% higher than average prices throughout 1970. In other words, \$100 in 1970 is equivalent in purchasing power to about \$336.86 in 1990, a difference of \$236.86 over 20 years.



# GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1980)

## HOUSING UNITS WITH CASH RENT IN 1980 DOLLARS



●  
25 HOUSEHOLDS

—  
1 MILE

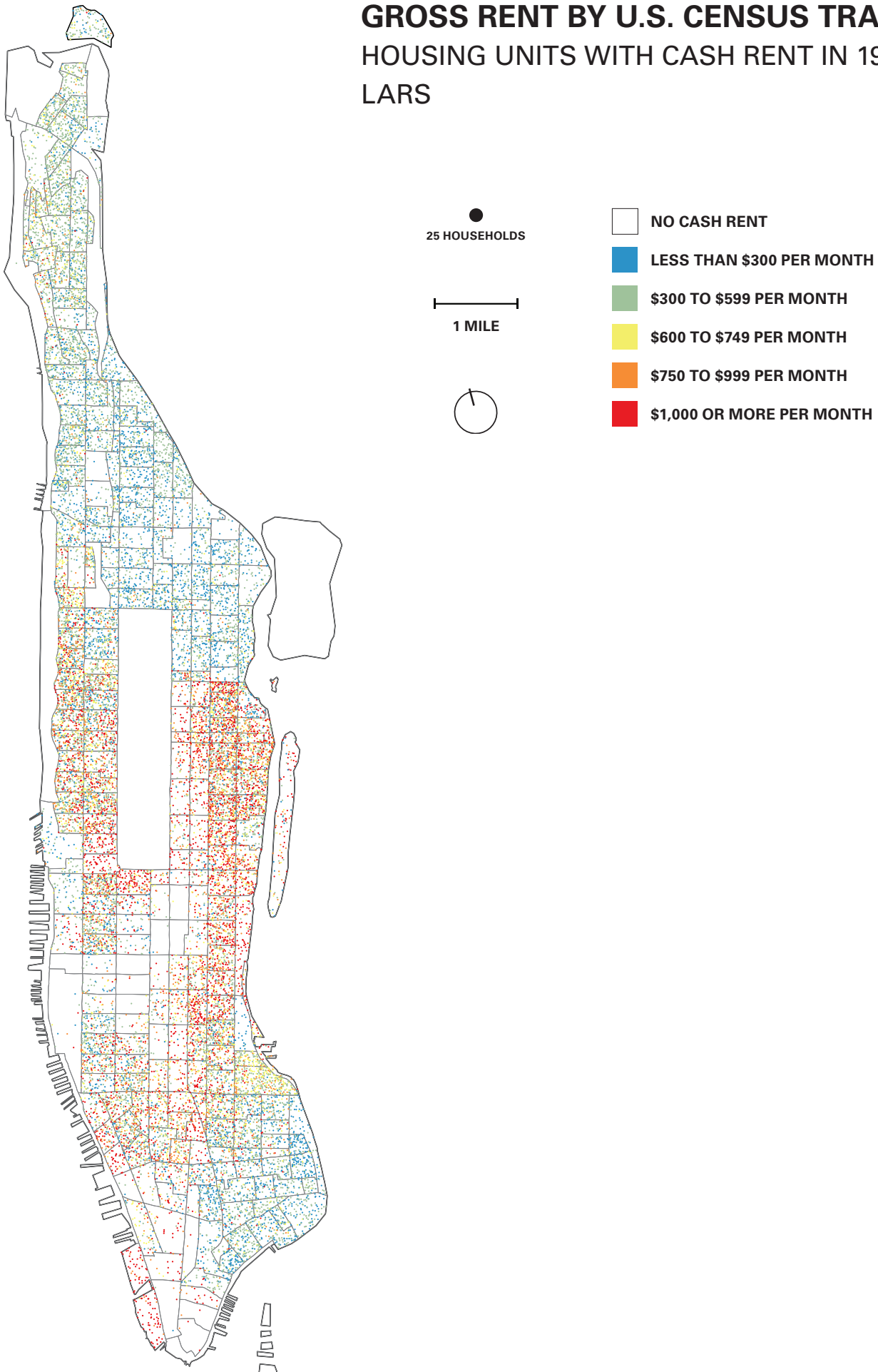


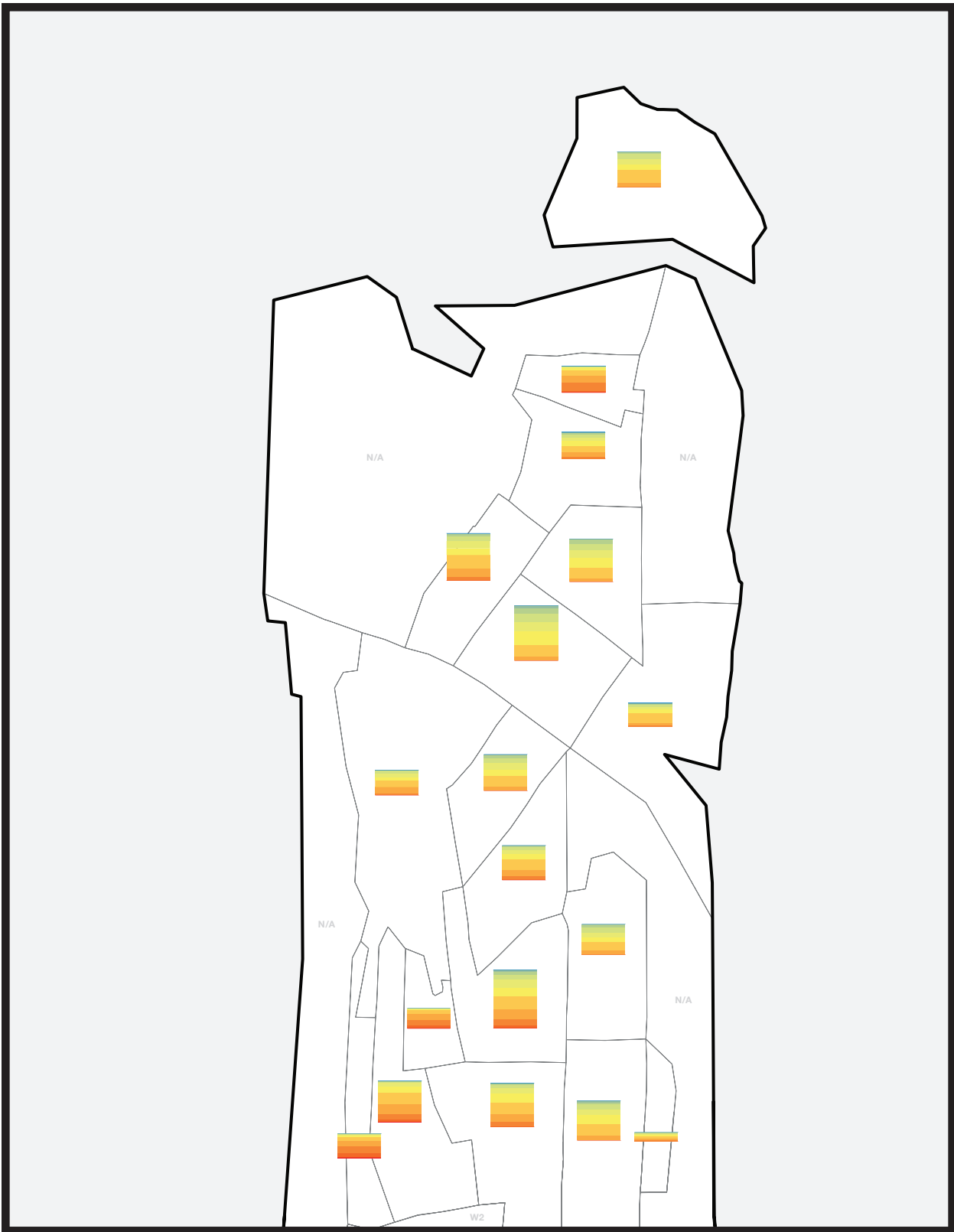
- NO CASH RENT
- LESS THAN \$60 PER MONTH
- \$60 TO \$79 PER MONTH
- \$80 TO \$99 PER MONTH
- \$100 TO \$119 PER MONTH
- \$120 TO \$149 PER MONTH
- \$150 TO \$169 PER MONTH
- \$170 TO \$199 PER MONTH
- \$200 TO \$249 PER MONTH
- \$250 TO \$299 PER MONTH
- \$300 TO \$349 PER MONTH
- \$350 TO \$399 PER MONTH
- \$400 TO \$499 PER MONTH
- \$500 OR MORE PER MONTH



# GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1990)

## HOUSING UNITS WITH CASH RENT IN 1990 DOLLARS





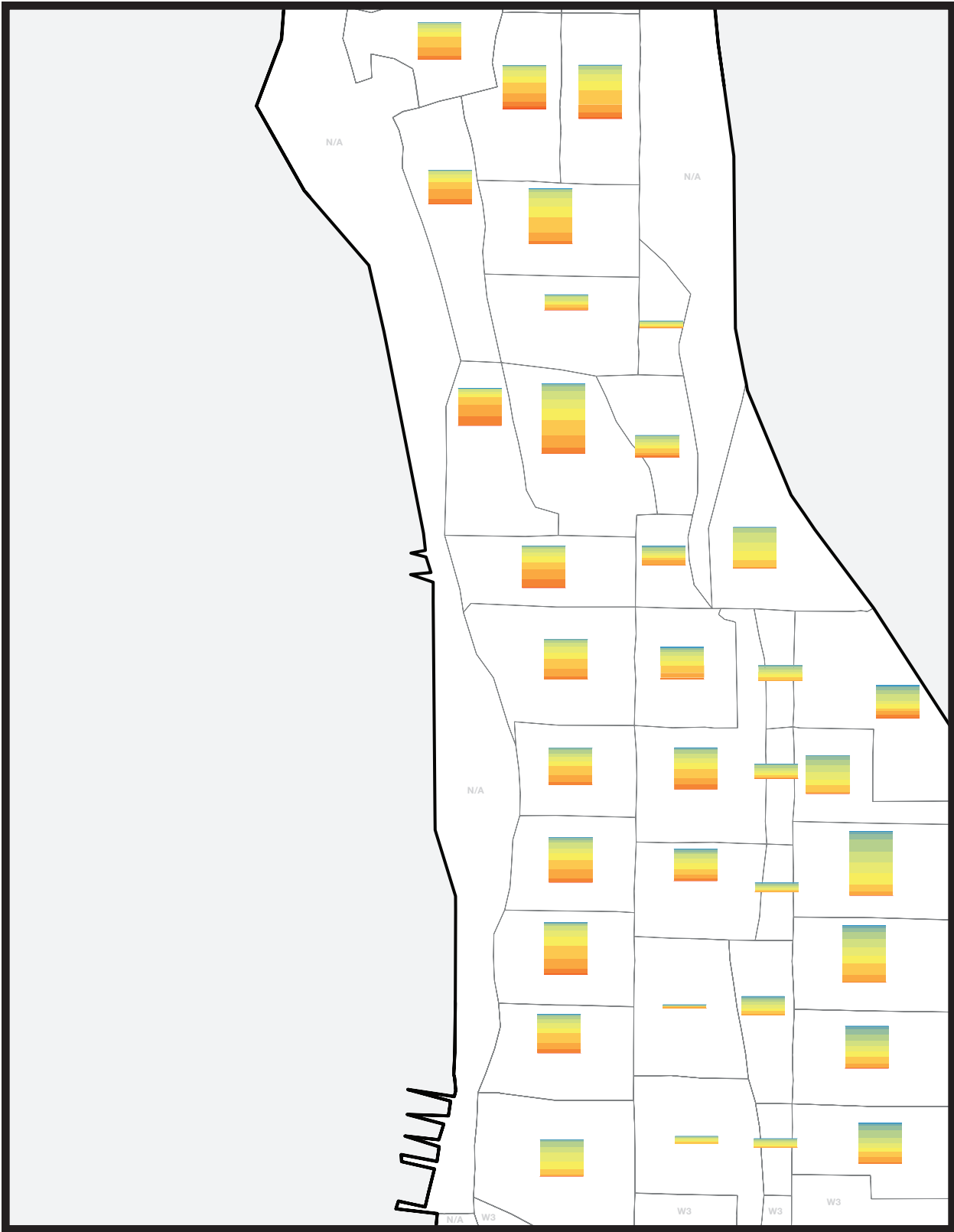
**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1970)**  
**INWOOD, FORT GEOGRE, WASHINGTON HEIGHTS**



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL



W1

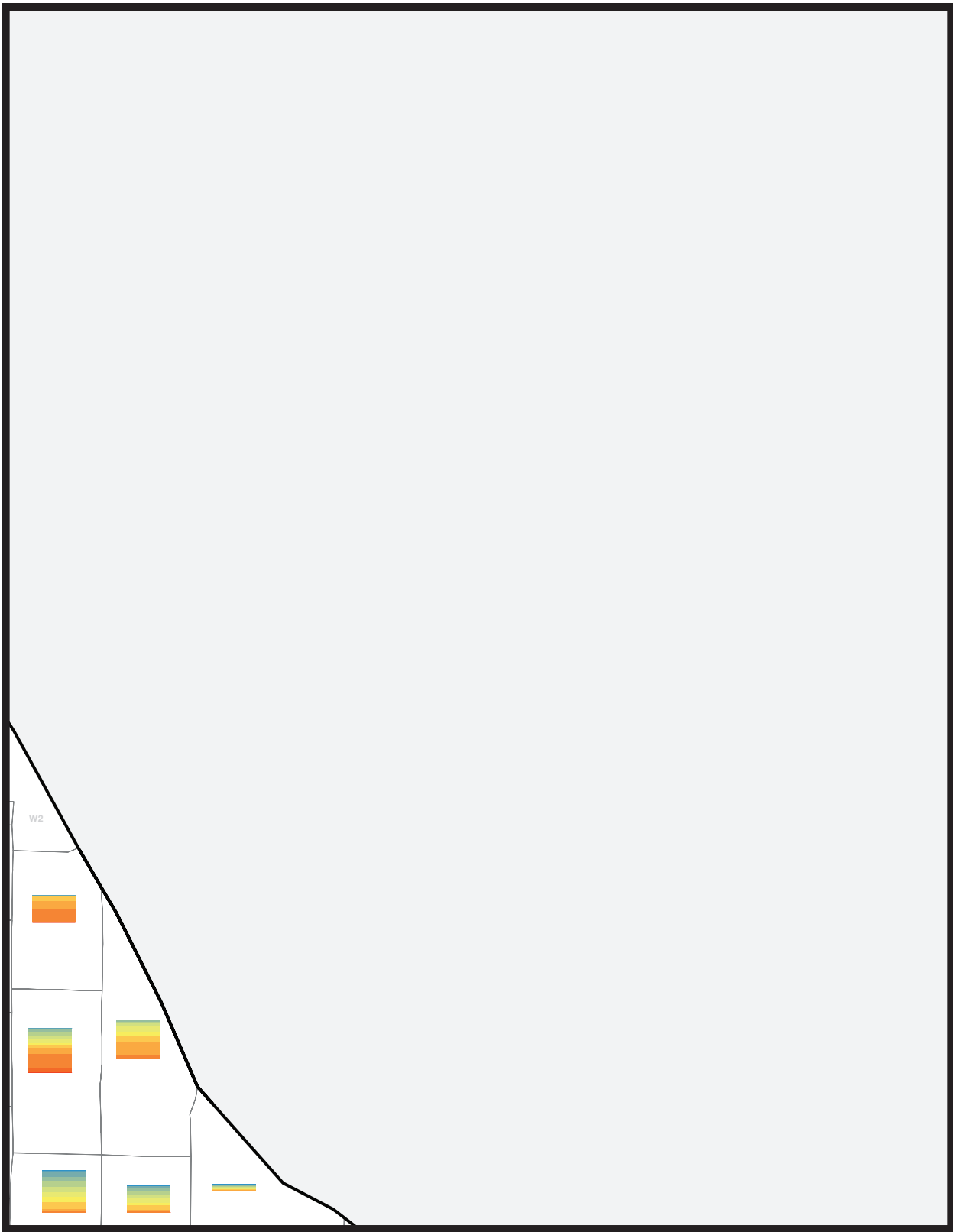


**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1970)**  
 WASHINGTON HEIGHTS, HAMILTON HEIGHTS, HARLEM



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL

W2



**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1970)  
HARLEM, EAST HARLEM**



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
W2 SEE OTHER PANEL

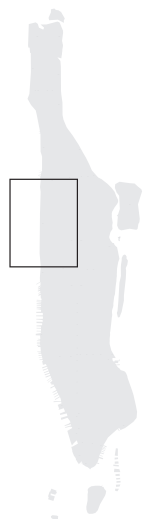




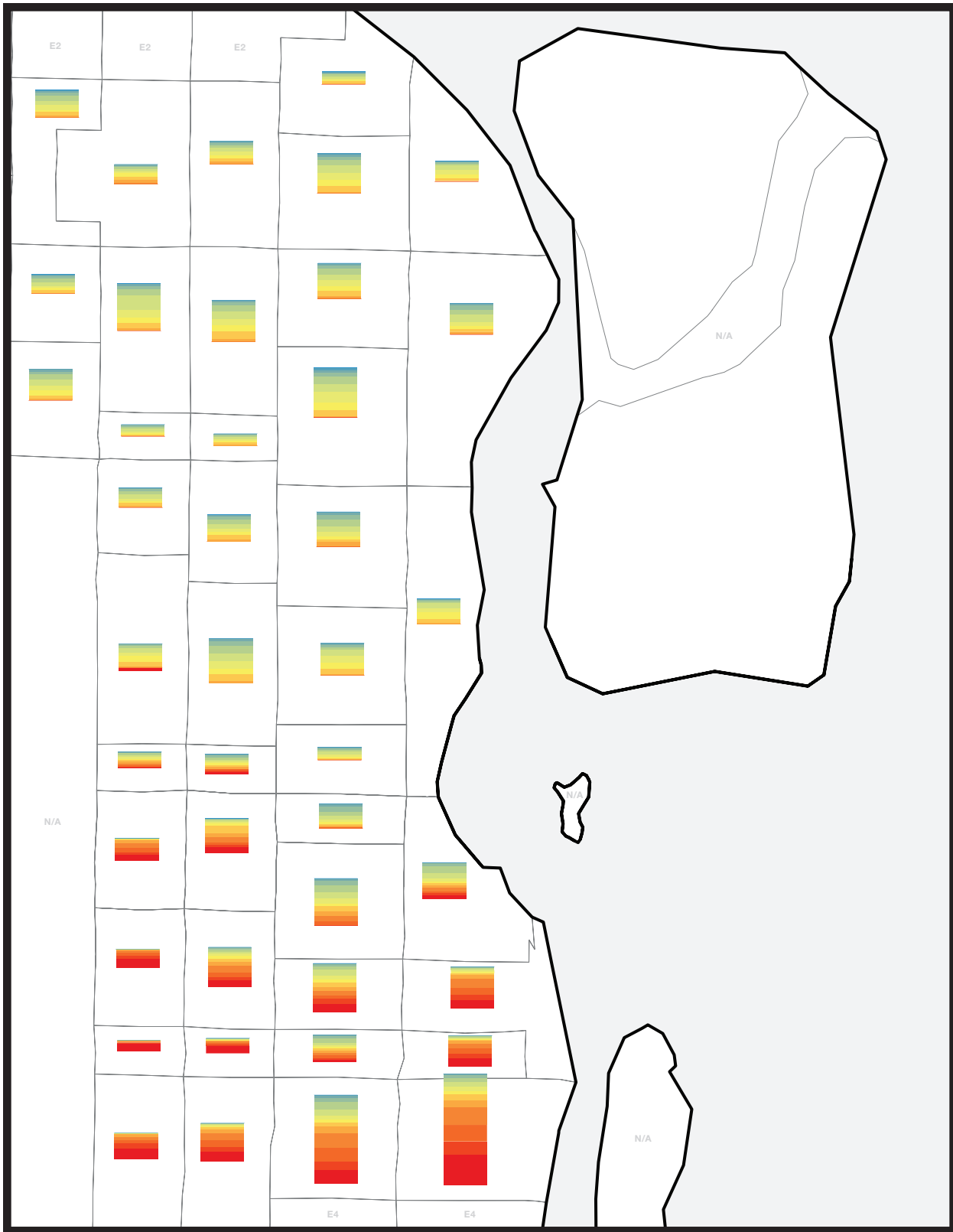
**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1970)**  
**HARLEM, MORNINGSID E HEIGHTS, UPPER WEST SIDE**



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL



W3

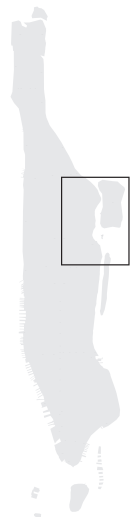


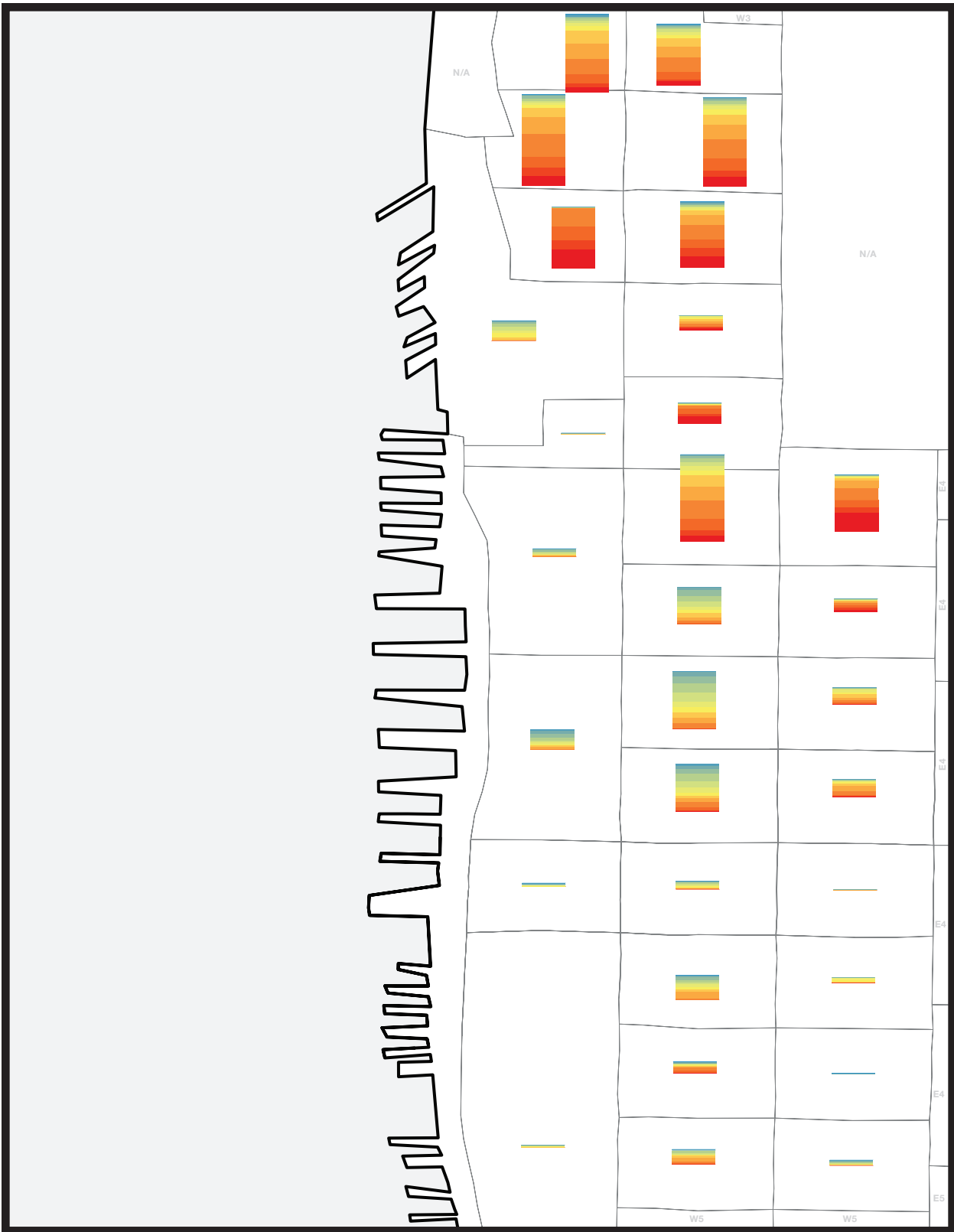
**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1970)**  
 HARLEM, EAST HARLEM, YORKVILLE, UPPER EAST SIDE, LENOX HILL



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE

W2 SEE OTHER PANEL

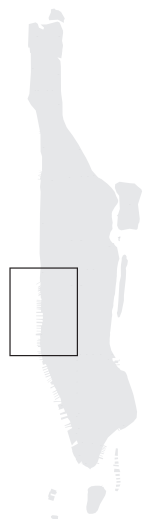




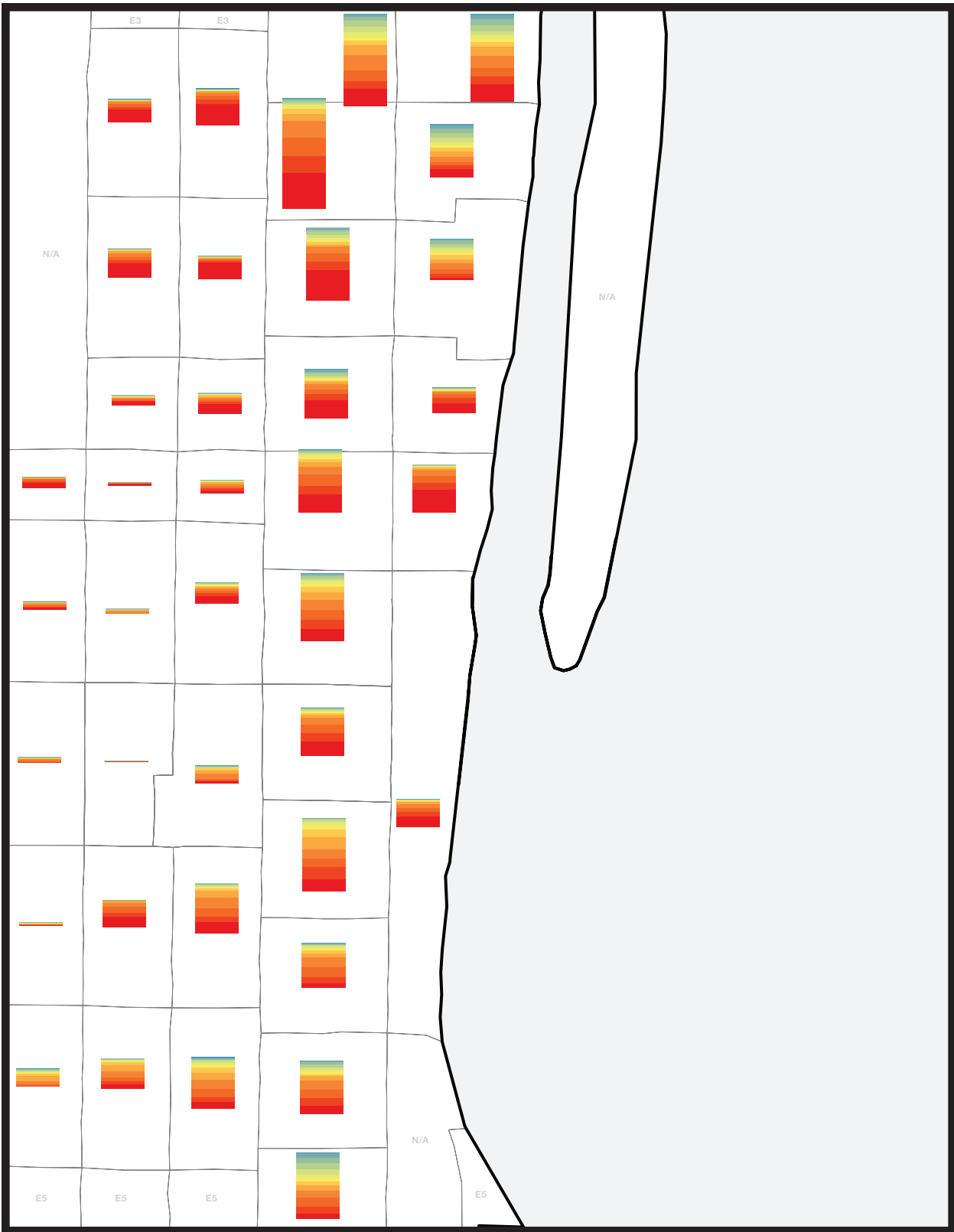
**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1970)**  
 UPPER WEST SIDE, HELL'S KITCHEN, MIDTOWN



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL



W4



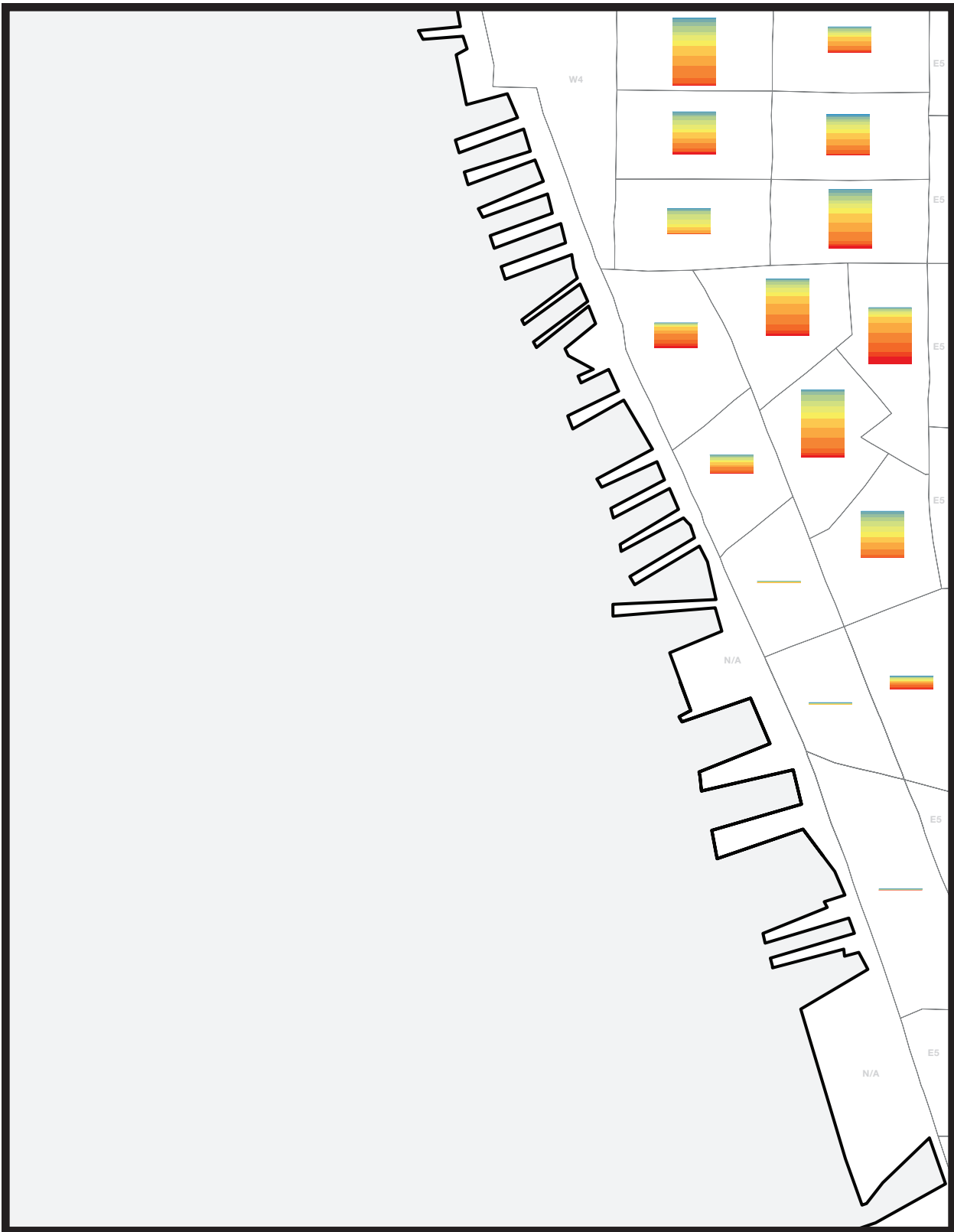
**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1970)**  
 LENOX HILL, ROOSEVELT ISLAND, MIDTOWN, MURRAY HILL, KIPS BAY



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL







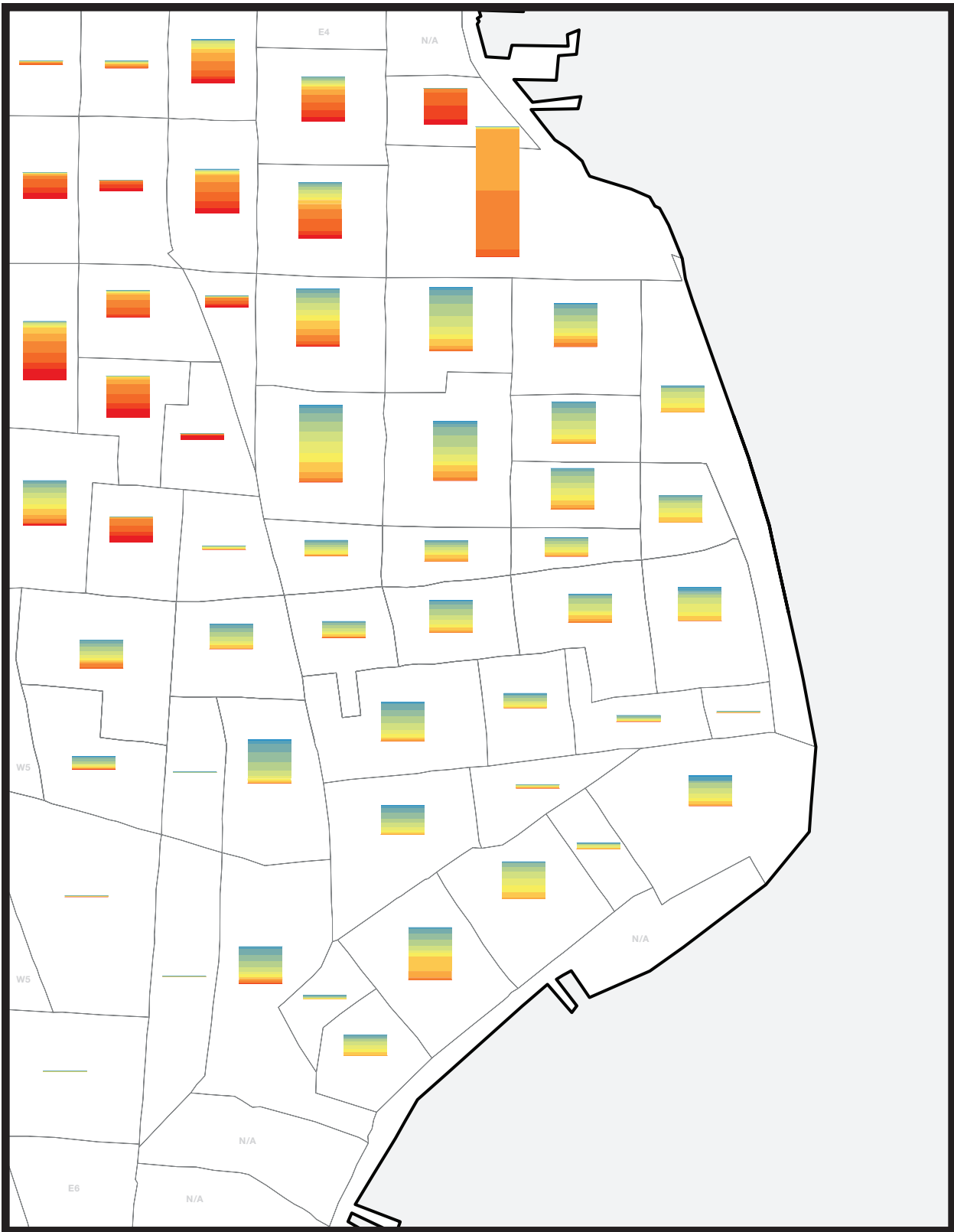
**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1970)**  
**CHELSEA, WEST VILLAGE, TRIBECA**



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL



W5

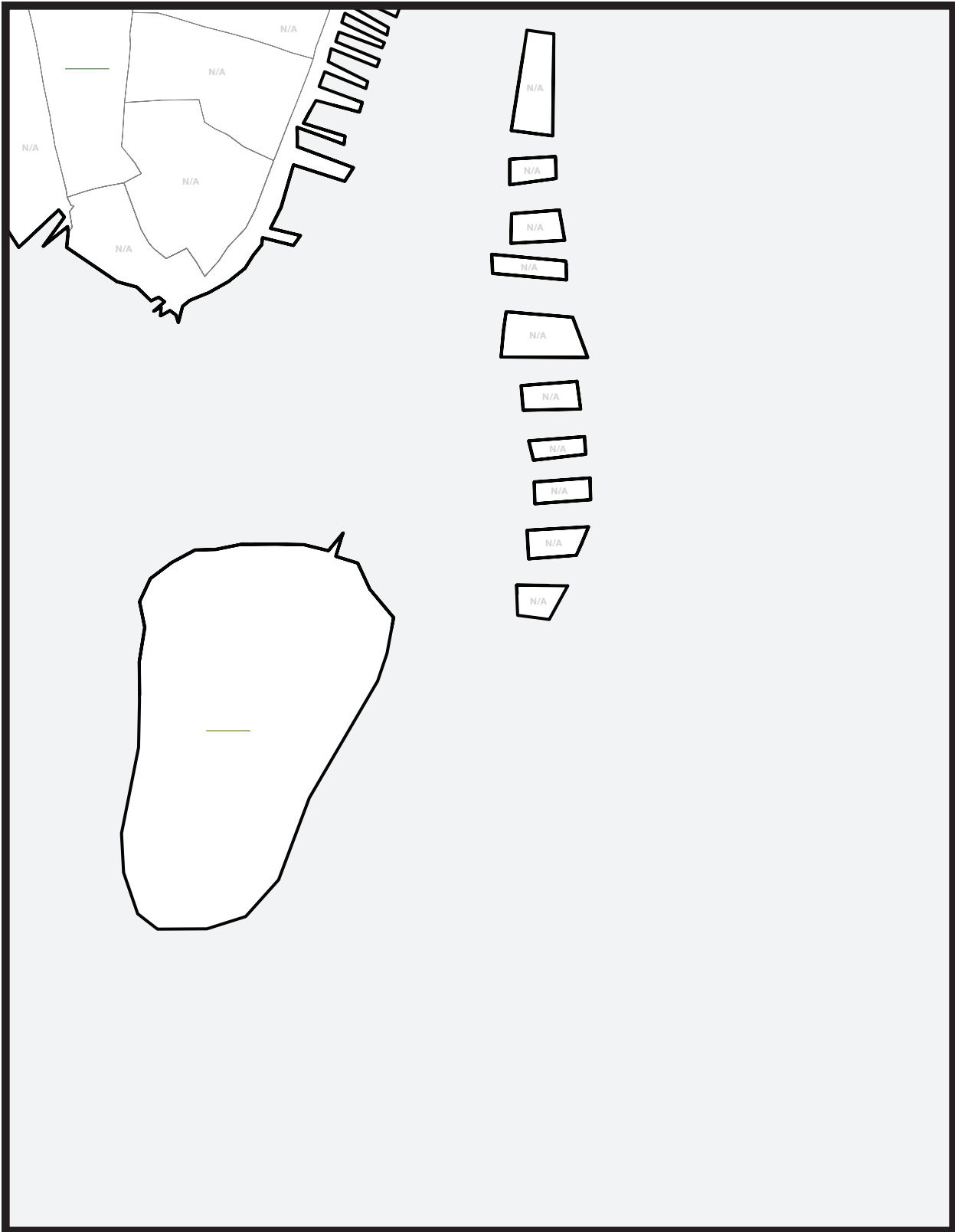


**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1970)**  
 FLATIRON, GREENWICH, EAST VILLAGE, SOHO, LOWER EAST SIDE



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL



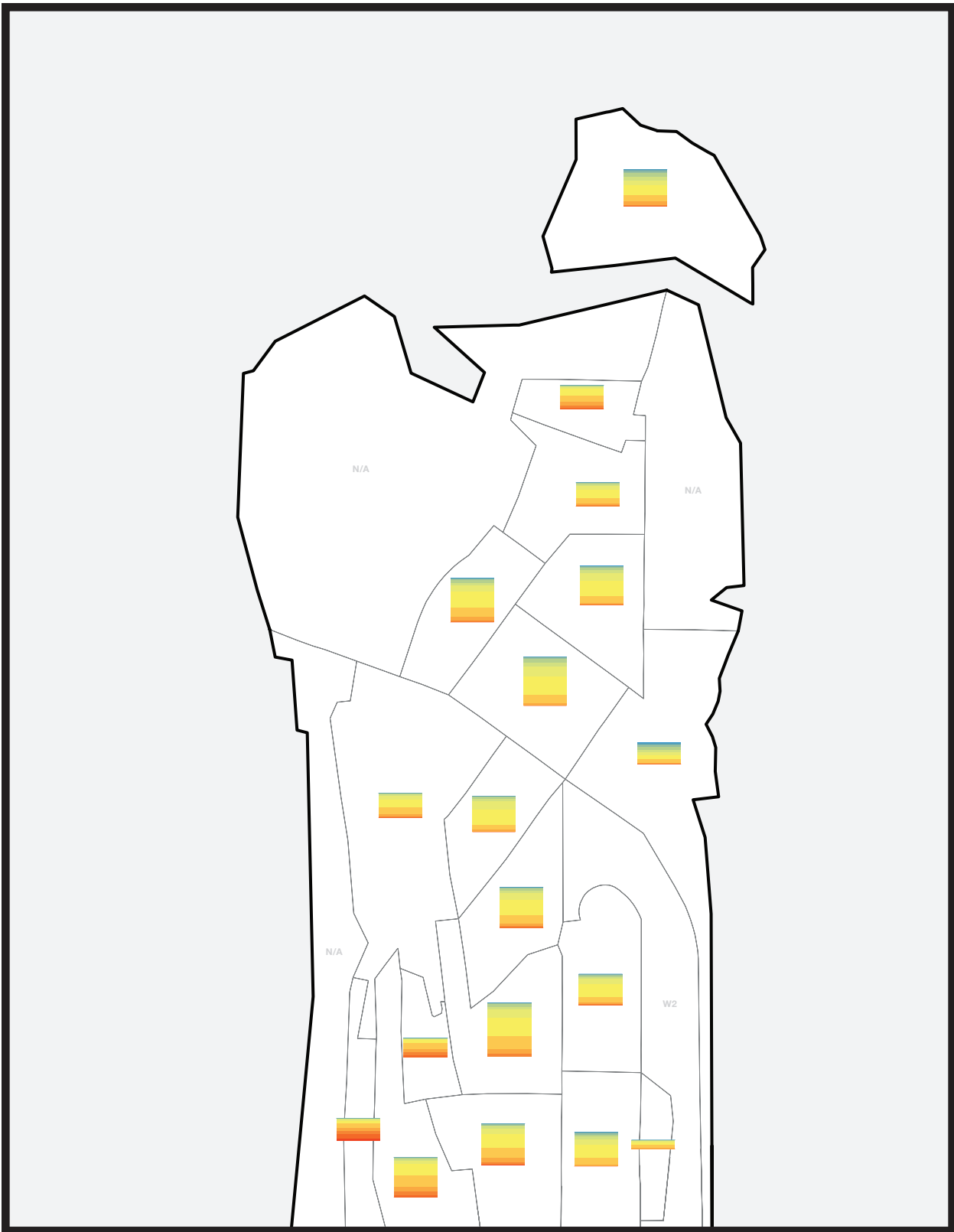


**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1970)**  
 FINANCIAL DISTRICT, BATTERY PARK CITY, GOVERNORS ISLAND



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL





**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1980)**  
**INWOOD, FORT GEOGRE, WASHINGTON HEIGHTS**



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL

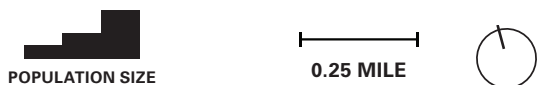
W1



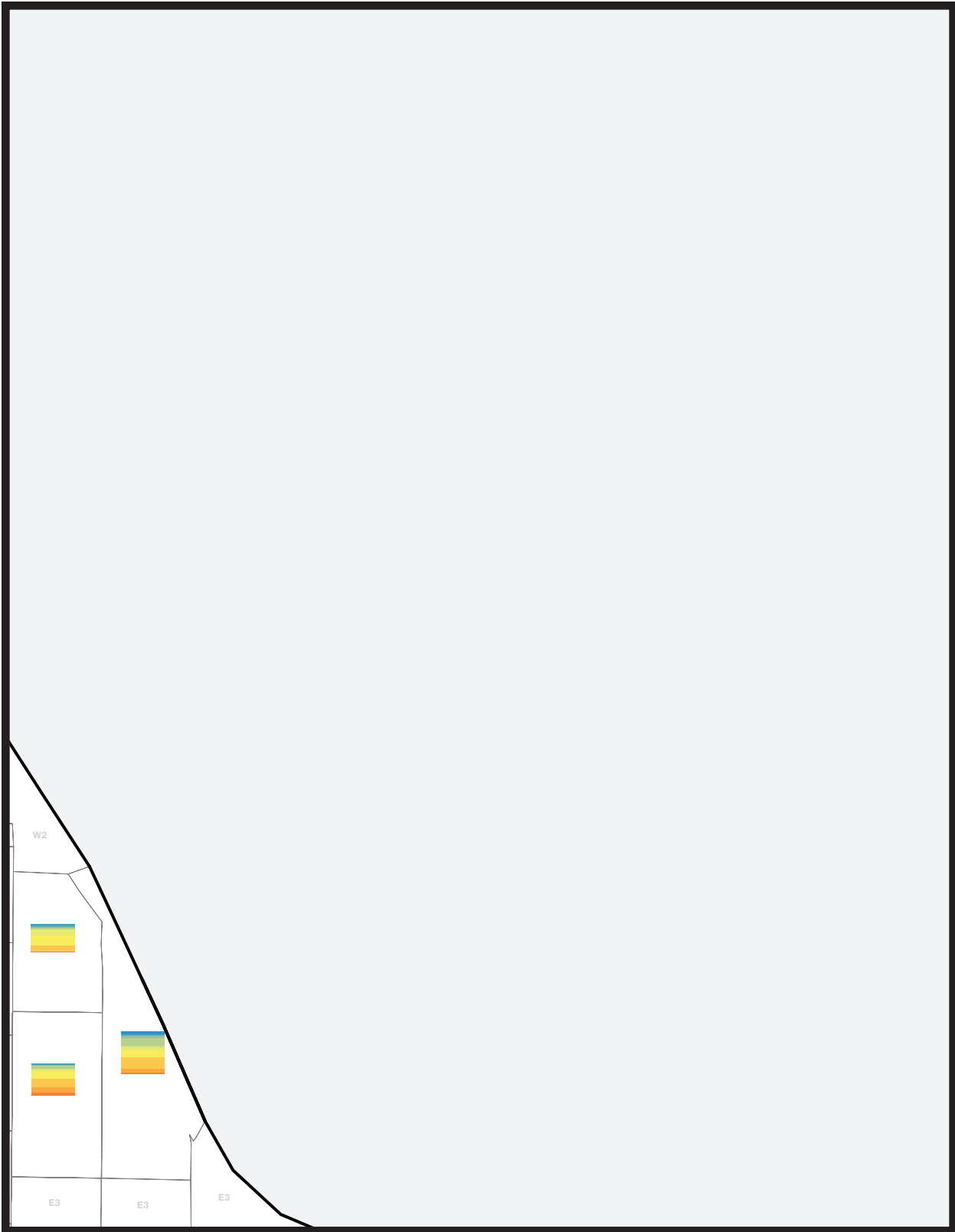
**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1980)**  
 WASHINGTON HEIGHTS, HAMILTON HEIGHTS, HARLEM



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL



W2



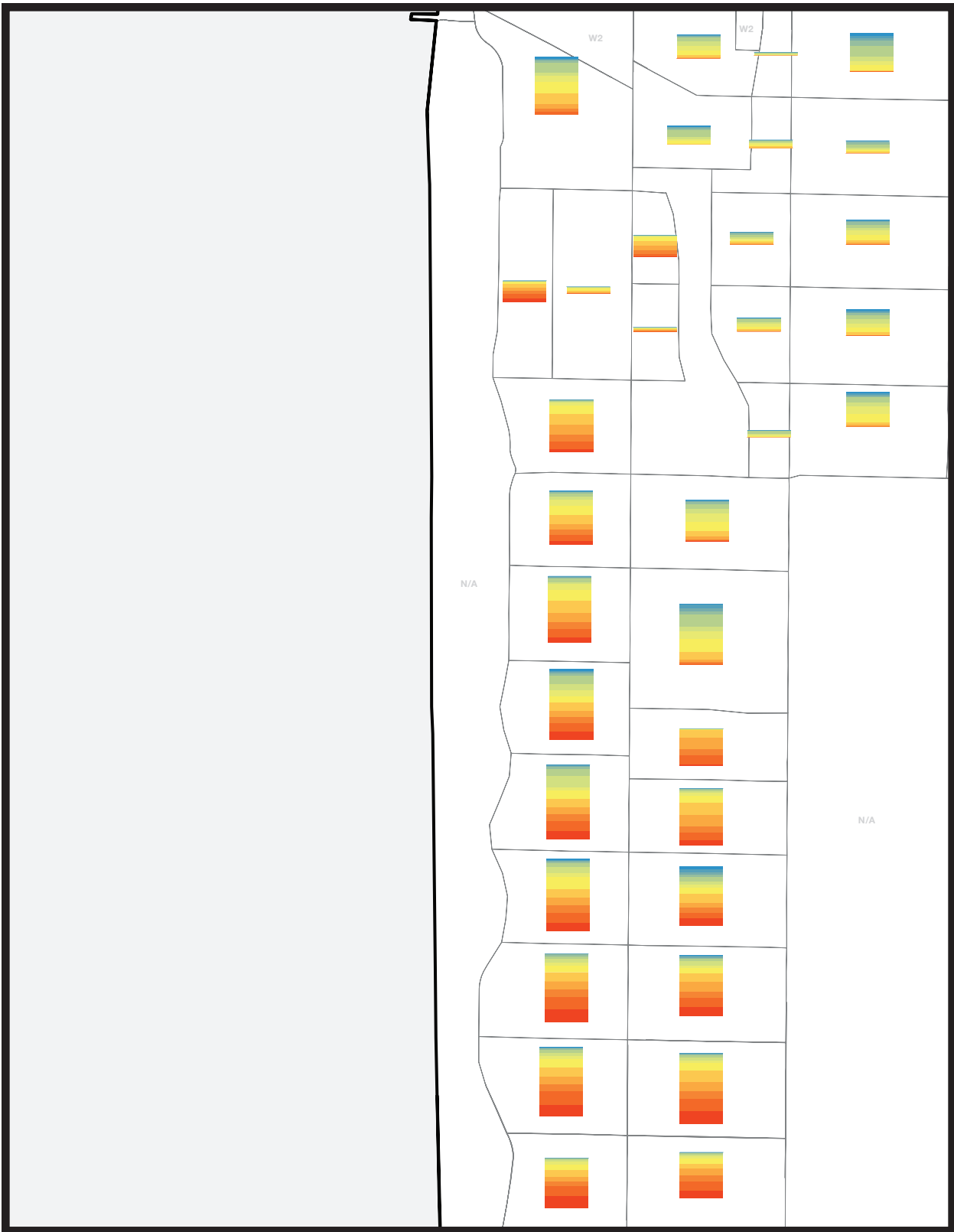
**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1980)  
HARLEM, EAST HARLEM**



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
W2 SEE OTHER PANEL



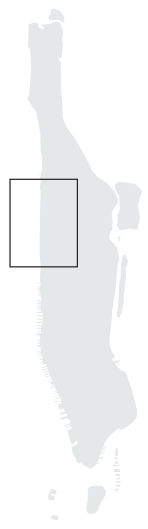
E2

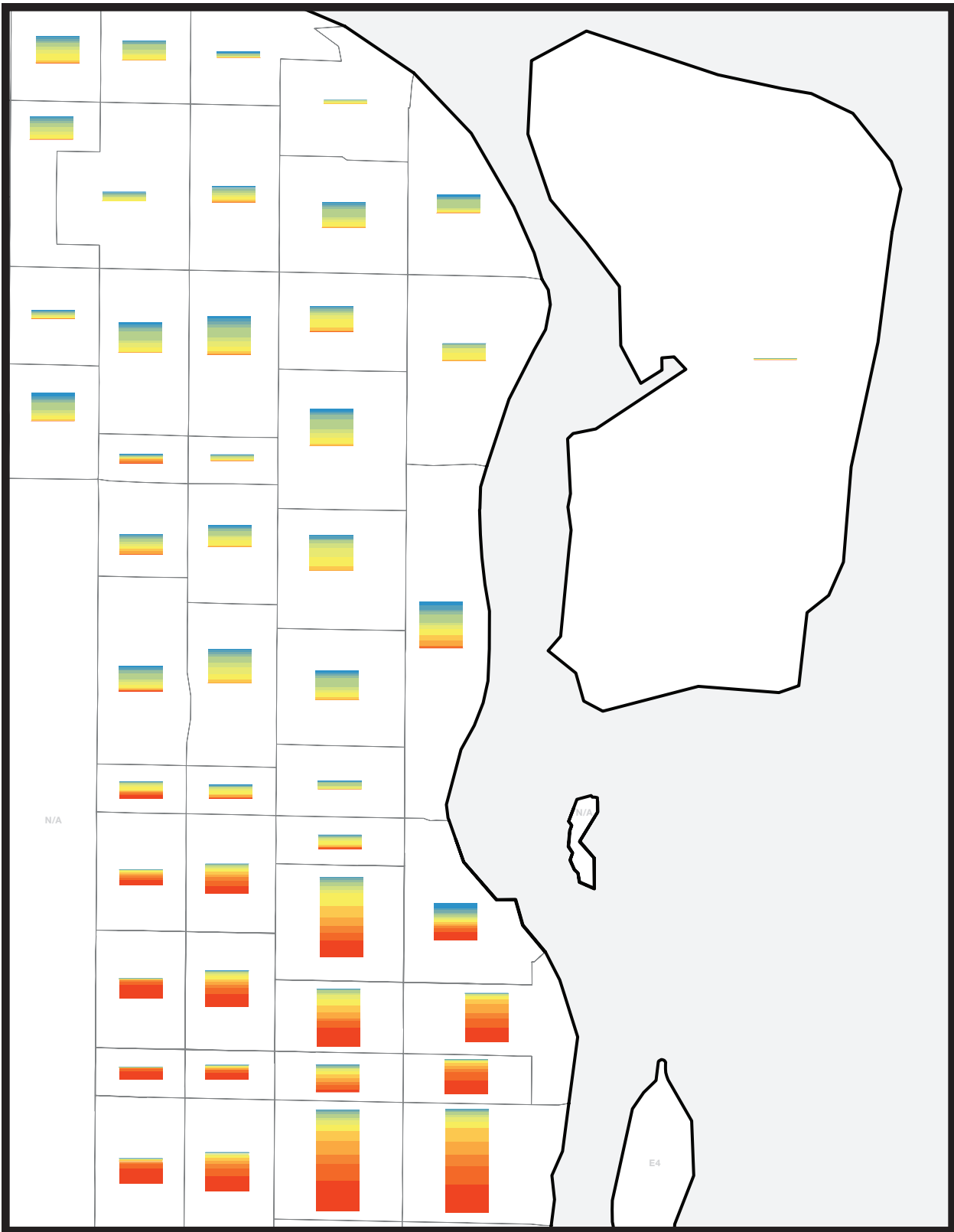


**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1980)**  
**HARLEM, MORNINGSID HEIGHTS, UPPER WEST SIDE**



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL

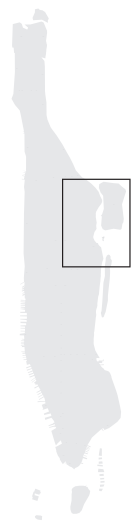




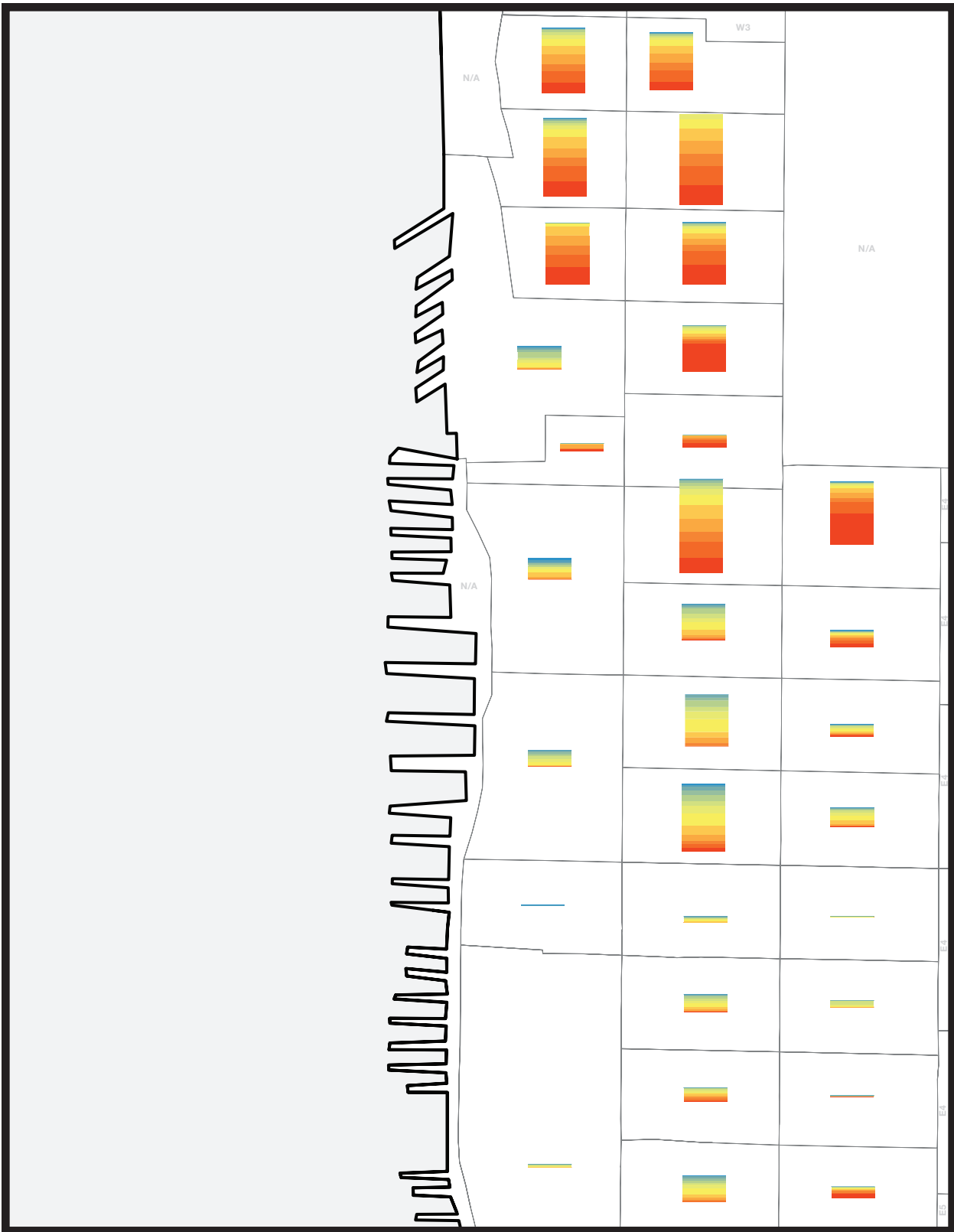
**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1980)**  
 HARLEM, EAST HARLEM, YORKVILLE, UPPER EAST SIDE, LENOX HILL



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL



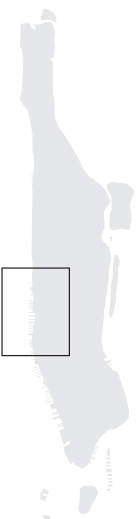




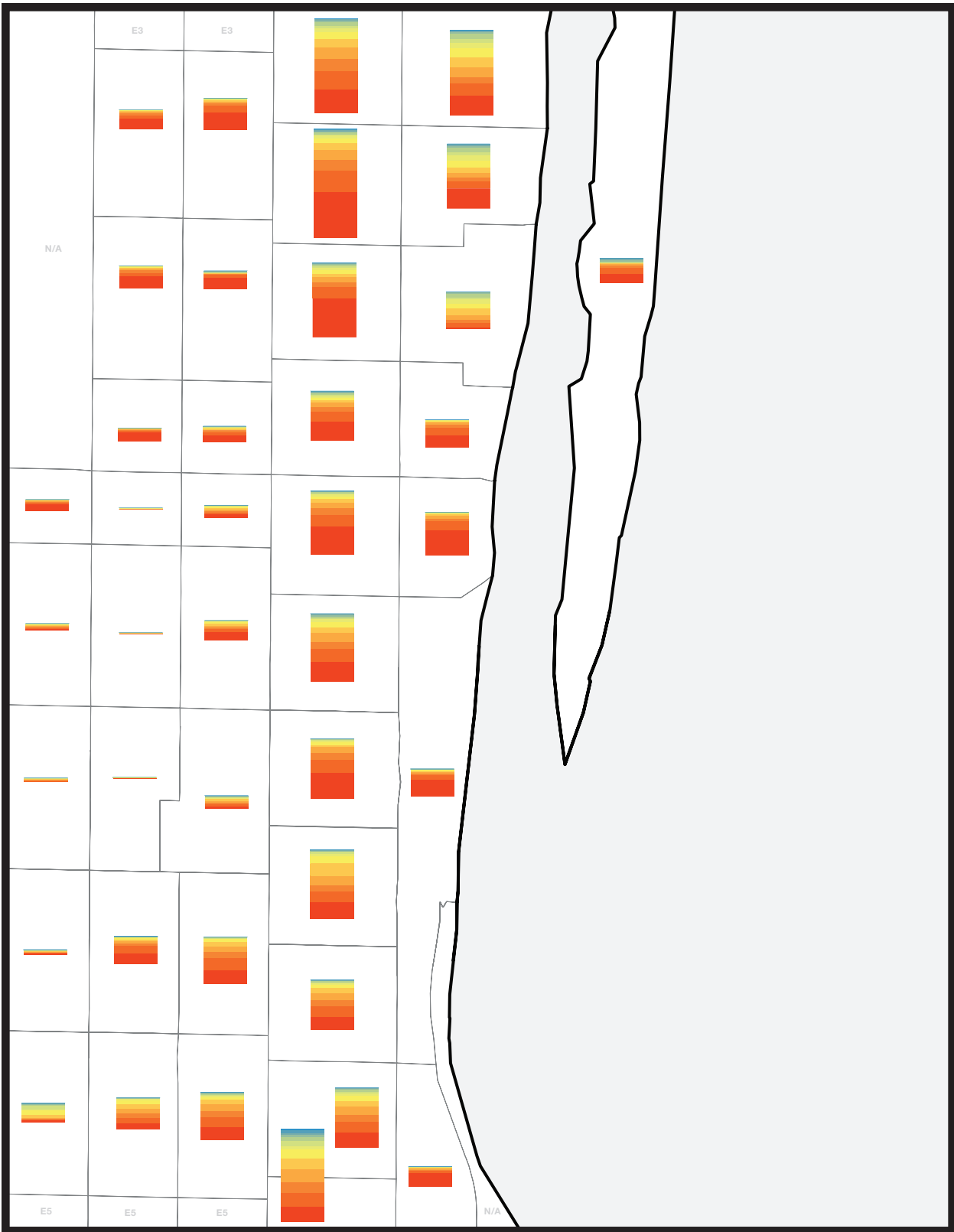
**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1980)**  
 UPPER WEST SIDE, HELL'S KITCHEN, MIDTOWN



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL



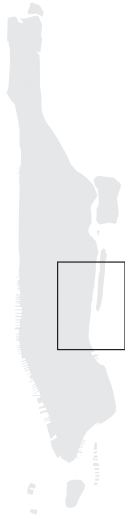
W4



**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1980)**  
 LENOX HILL, ROOSEVELT ISLAND, MIDTOWN, MURRAY HILL, KIPS BAY



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL





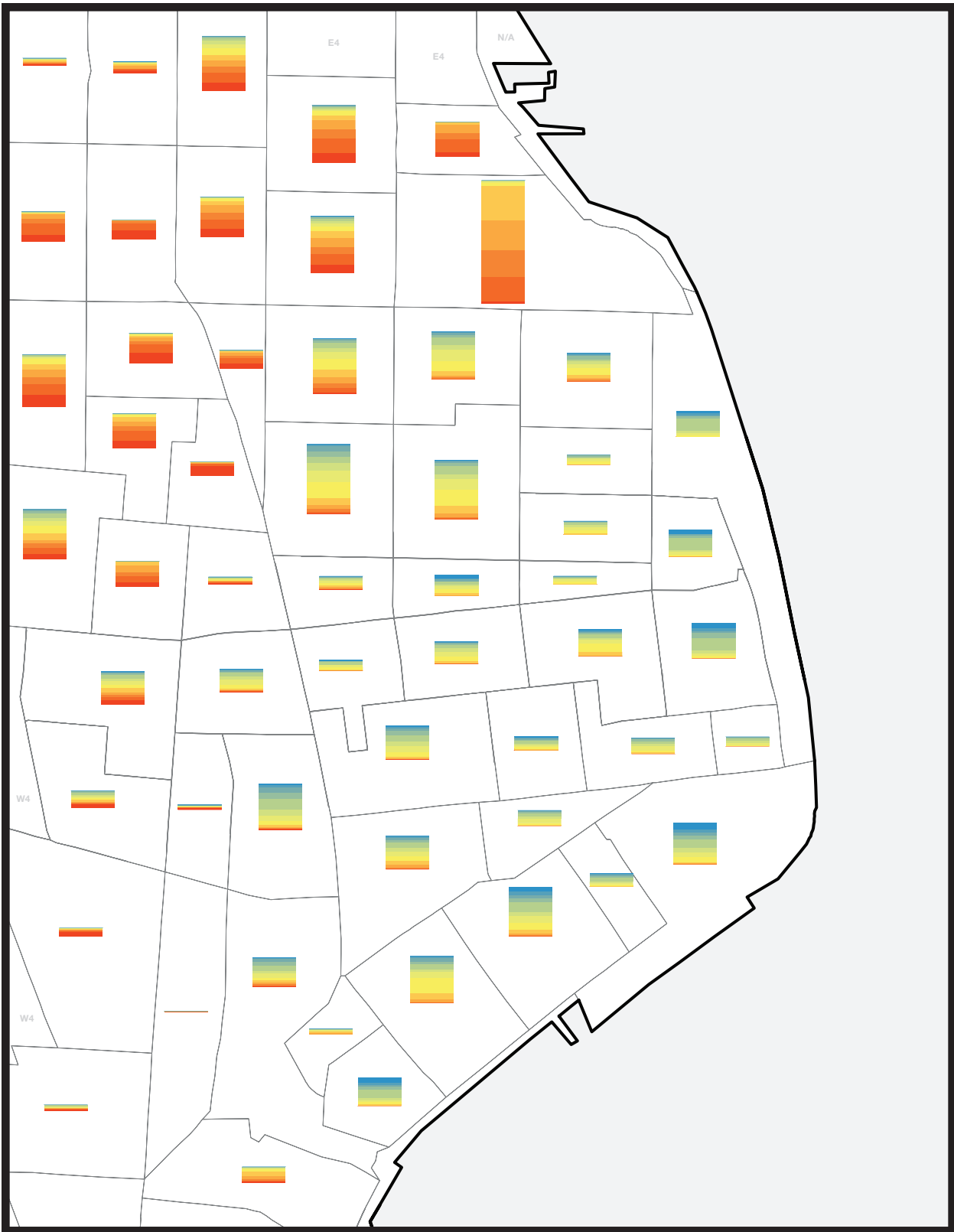
**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1980)**  
**CHELSEA, WEST VILLAGE, TRIBECA**



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL



W5

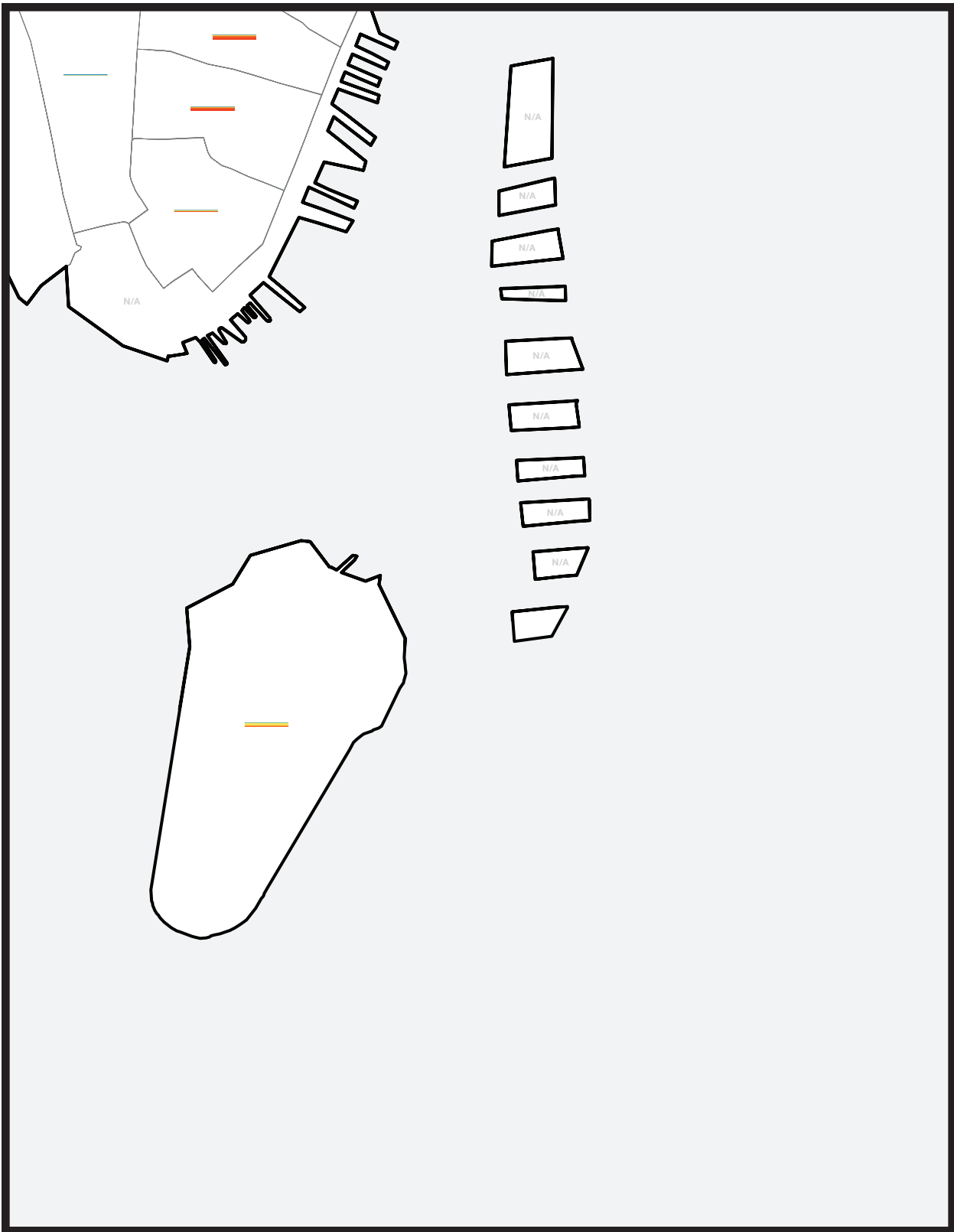


**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1980)**  
 FLATIRON, GREENWICH, EAST VILLAGE, SOHO, LOWER EAST SIDE



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL

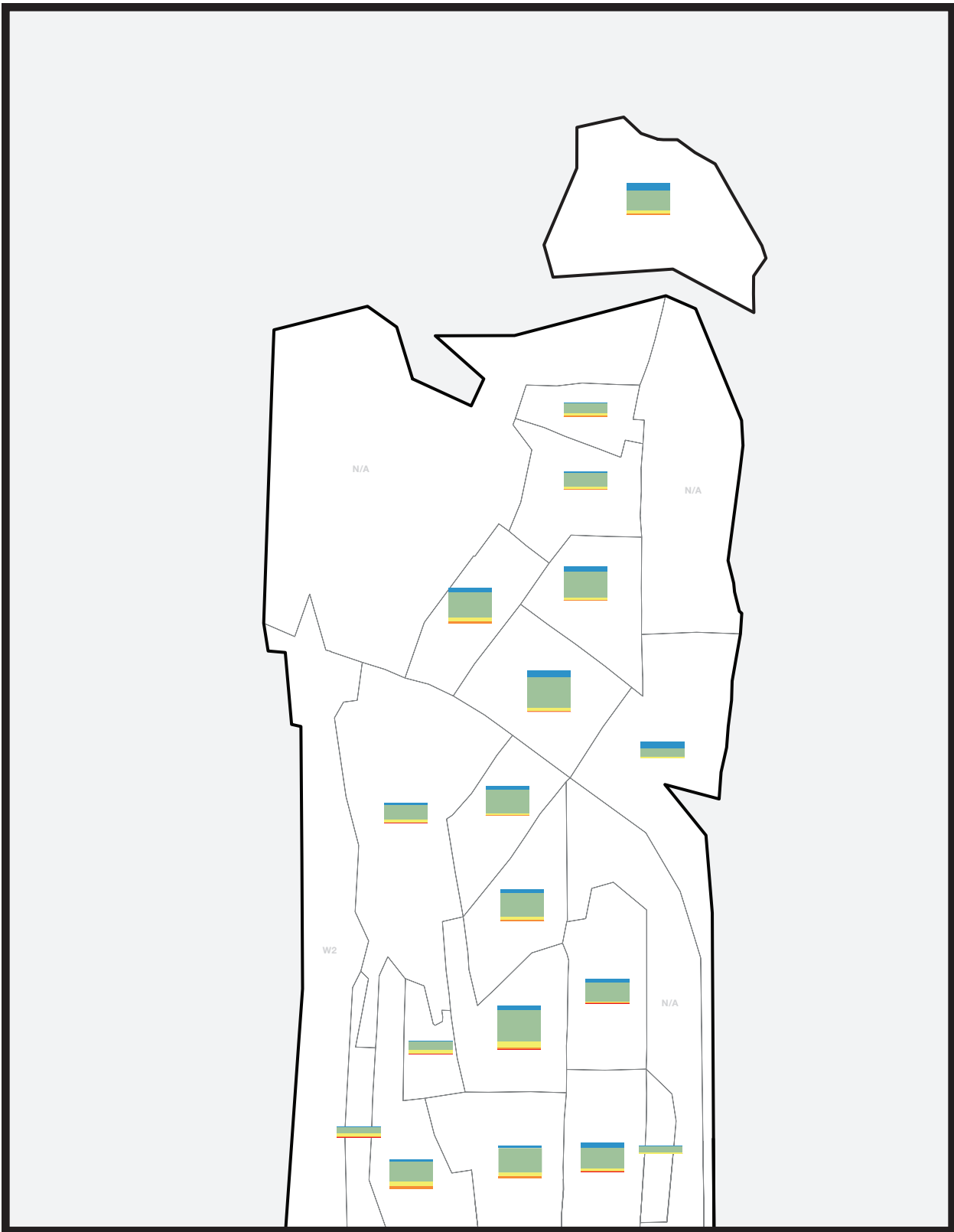




**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1980)**  
**FINANCIAL DISTRICT, BATTERY PARK CITY, GOVERNORS ISLAND**



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL



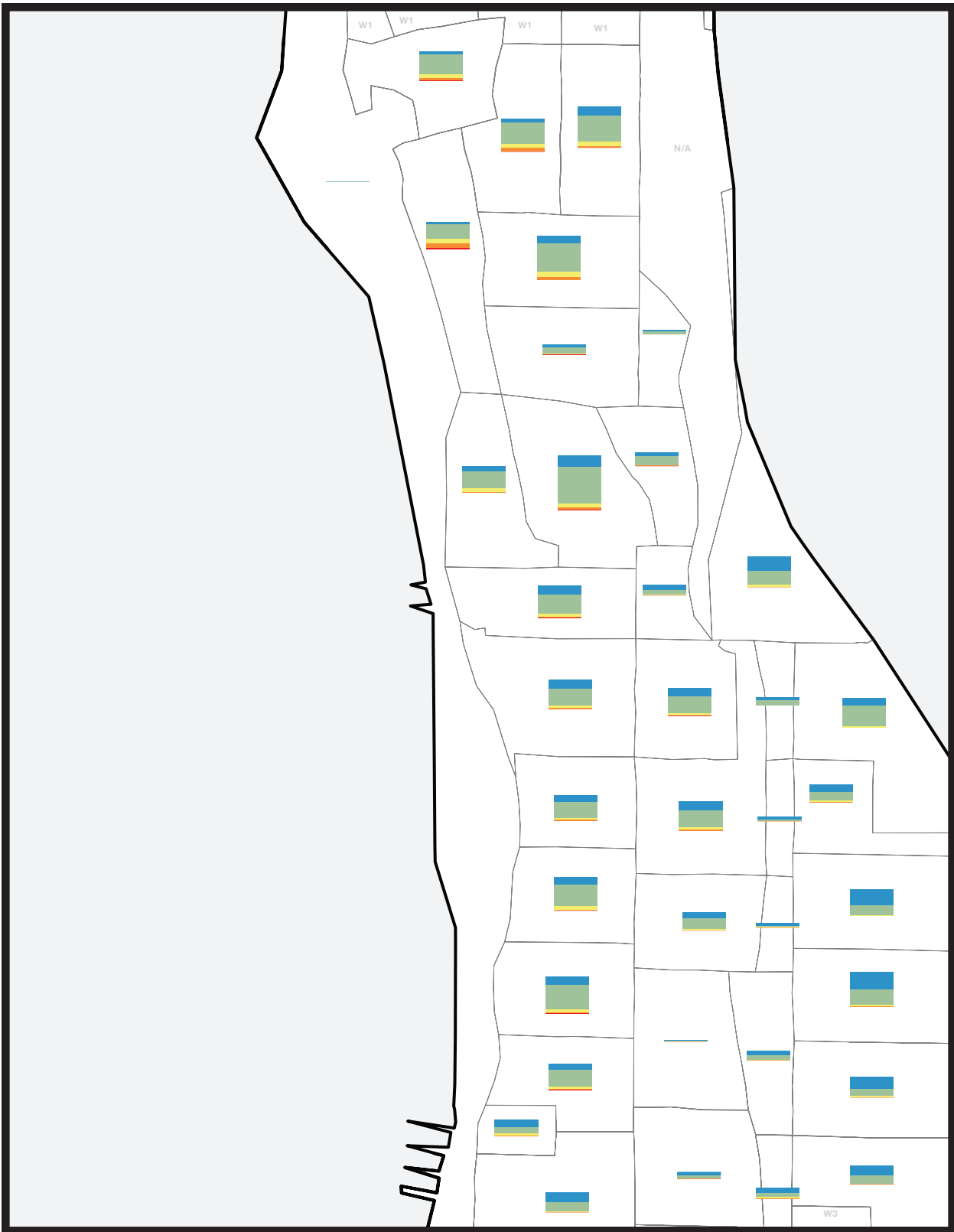
**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1990)  
INWOOD, FORT GEOGRE, WASHINGTON HEIGHTS**



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
W2 SEE OTHER PANEL



W1



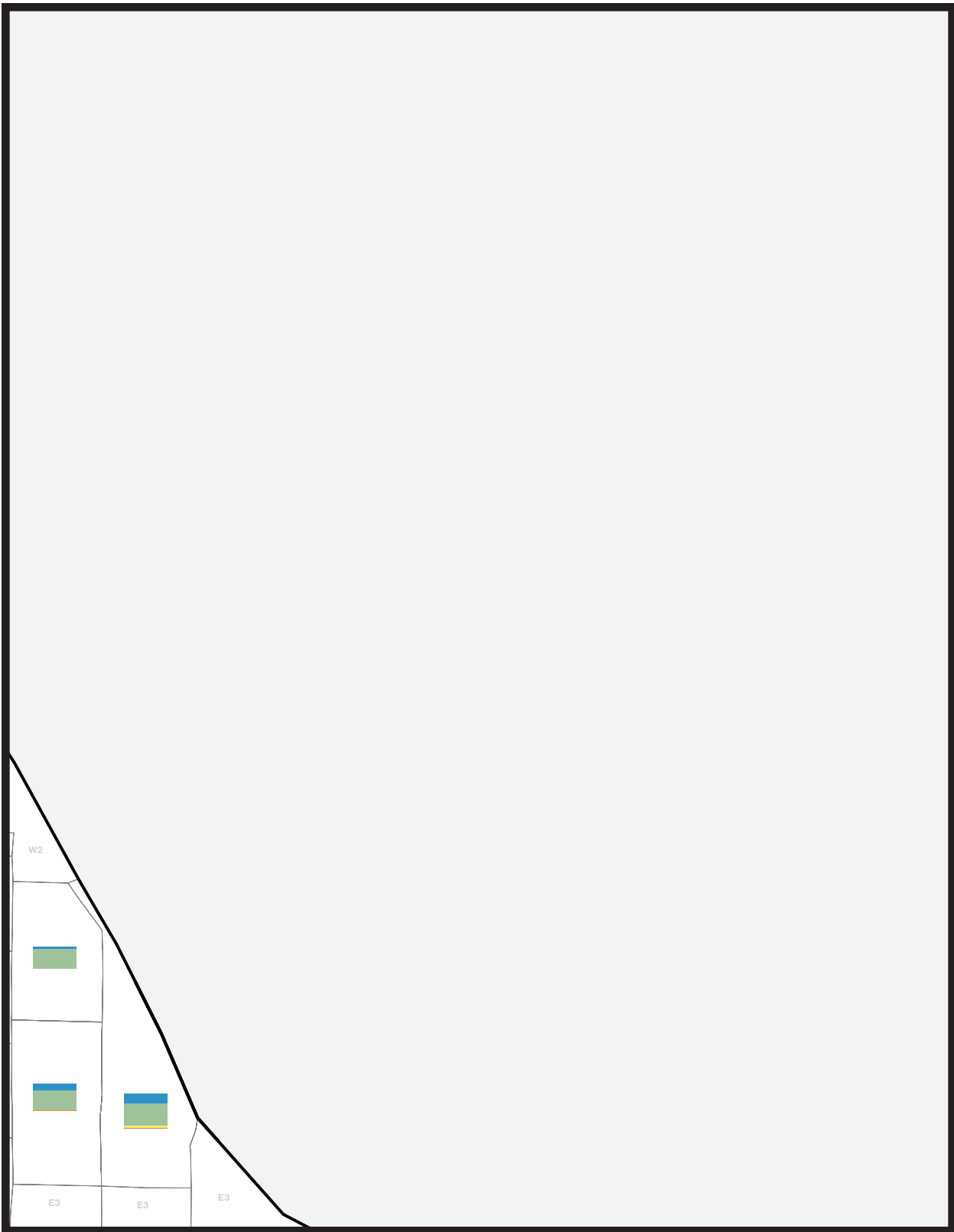
**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1990)**  
 WASHINGTON HEIGHTS, HAMILTON HEIGHTS, HARLEM



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL



W2



**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1990)  
HARLEM, EAST HARLEM**



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
W2 SEE OTHER PANEL



POPULATION SIZE

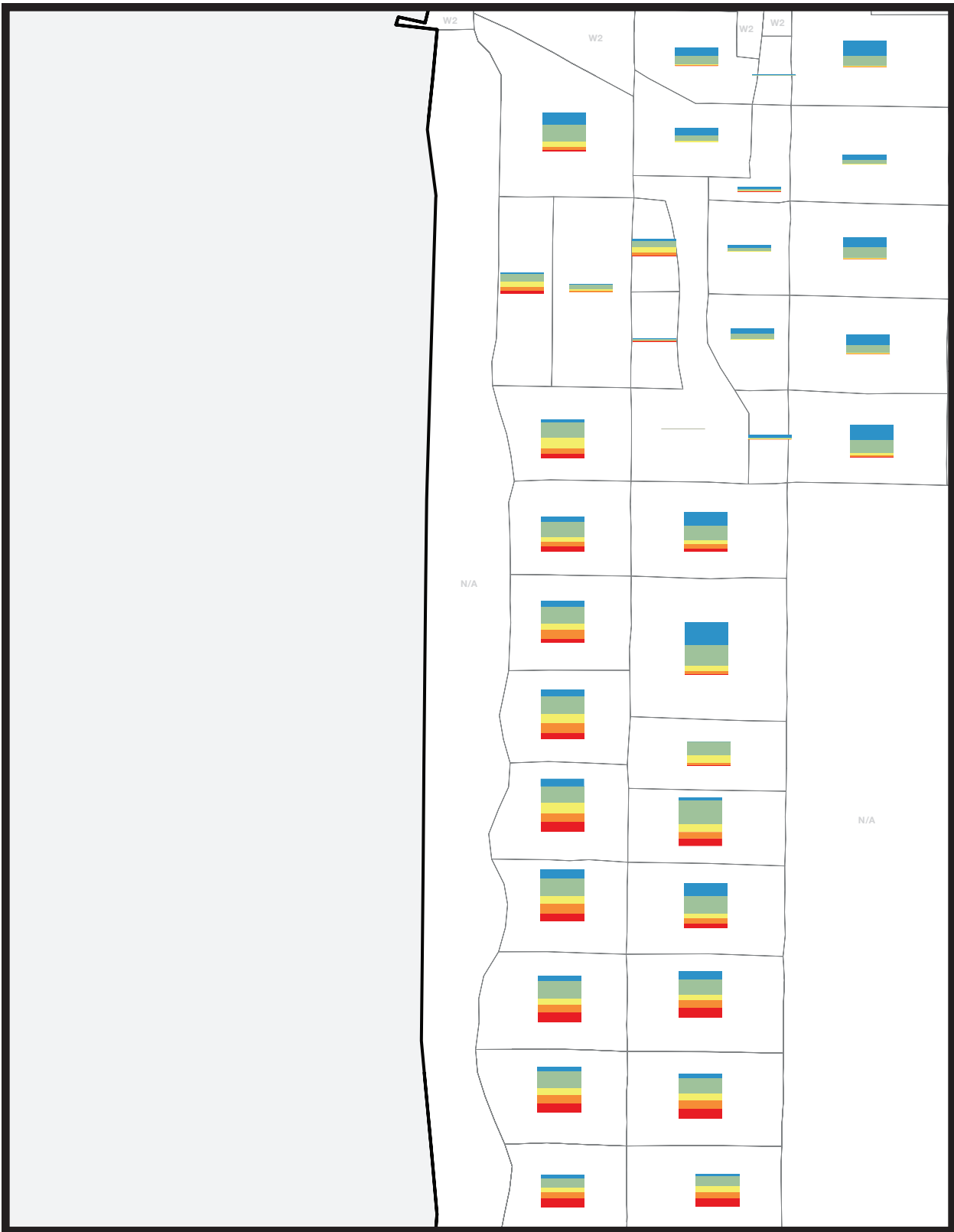


0.25 MILE



E2

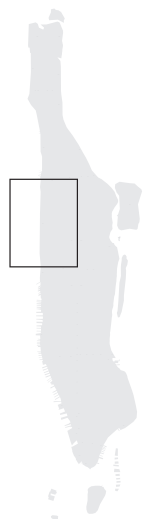


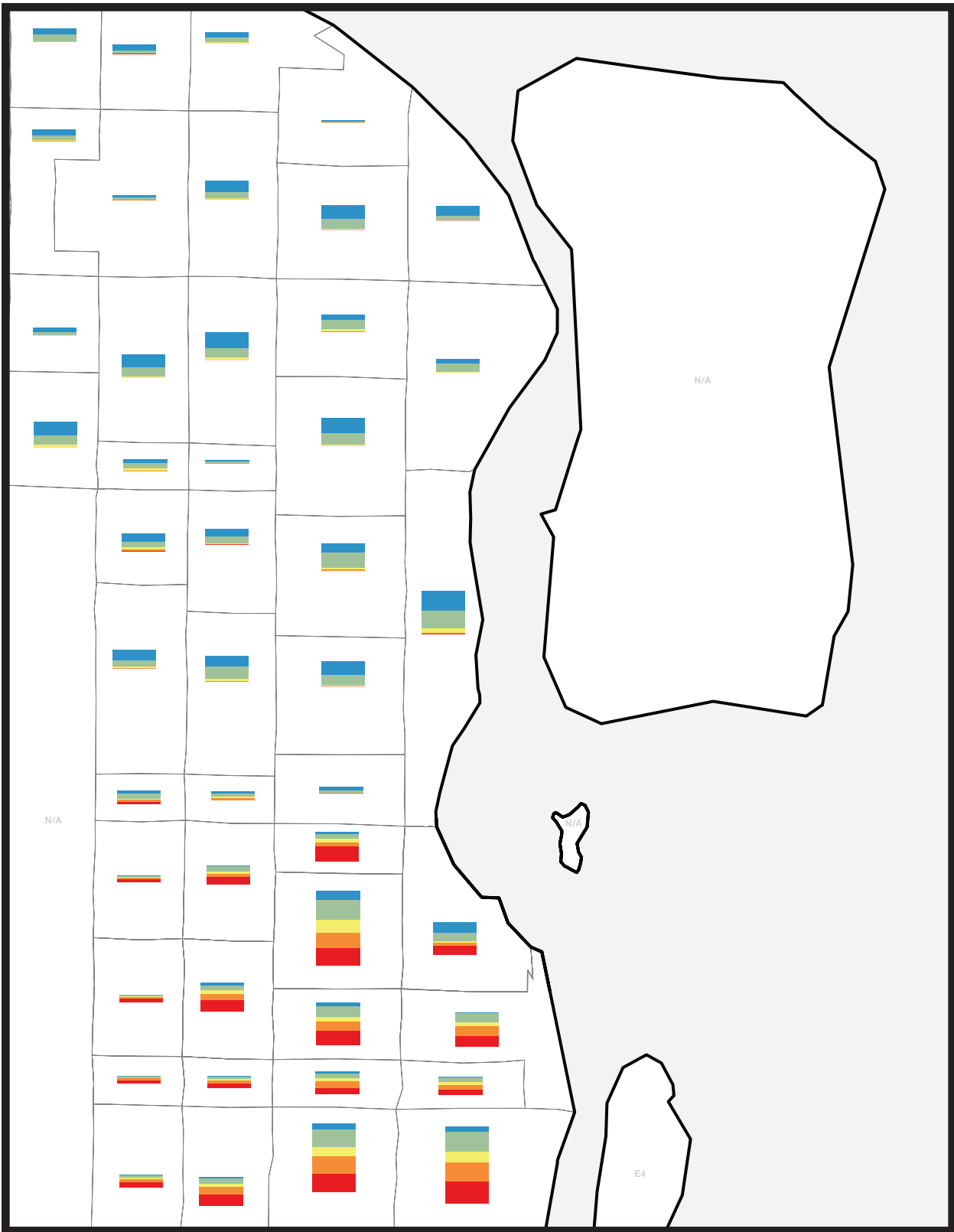


**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1990)**  
**HARLEM, MORNINGSID E HEIGHTS, UPPER WEST SIDE**



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
W2 SEE OTHER PANEL

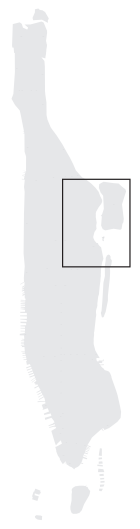


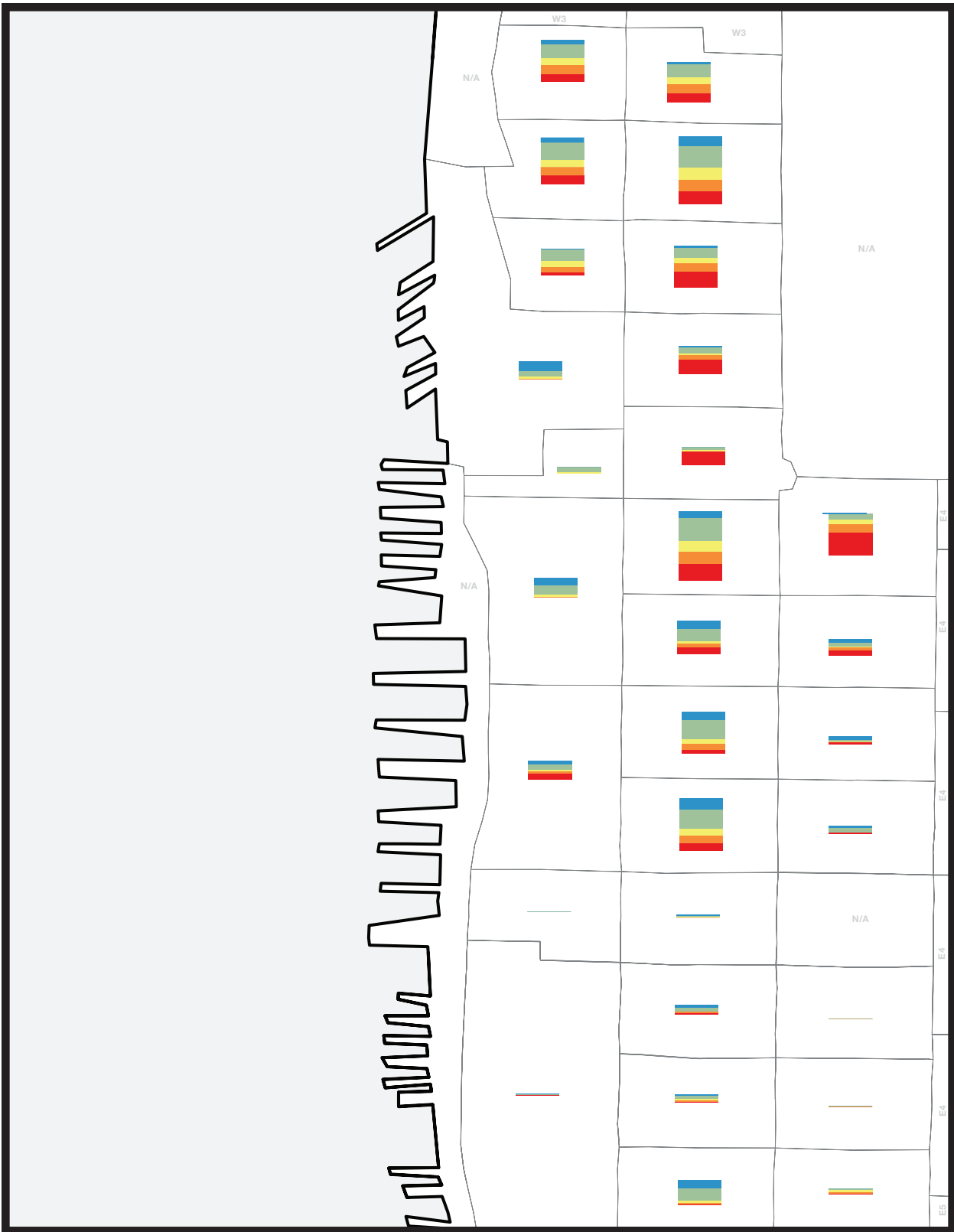


**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1990)**  
 HARLEM, EAST HARLEM, YORKVILLE, UPPER EAST SIDE, LENOX HILL



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL

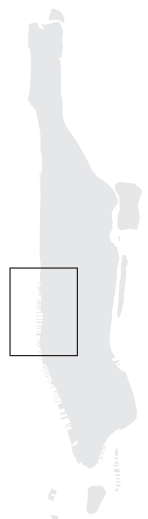




**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1990)**  
 UPPER WEST SIDE, HELL'S KITCHEN, MIDTOWN

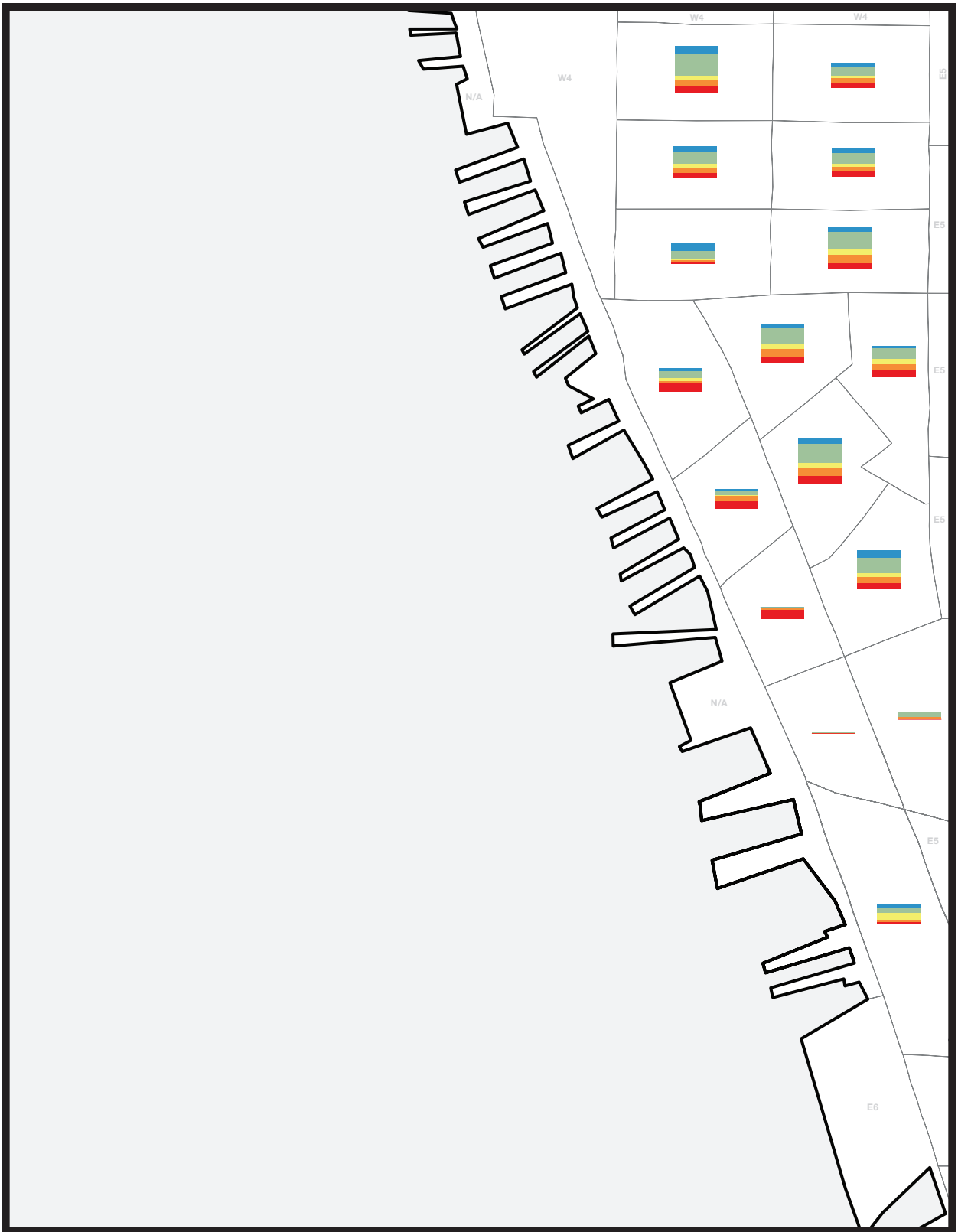


N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL



W4





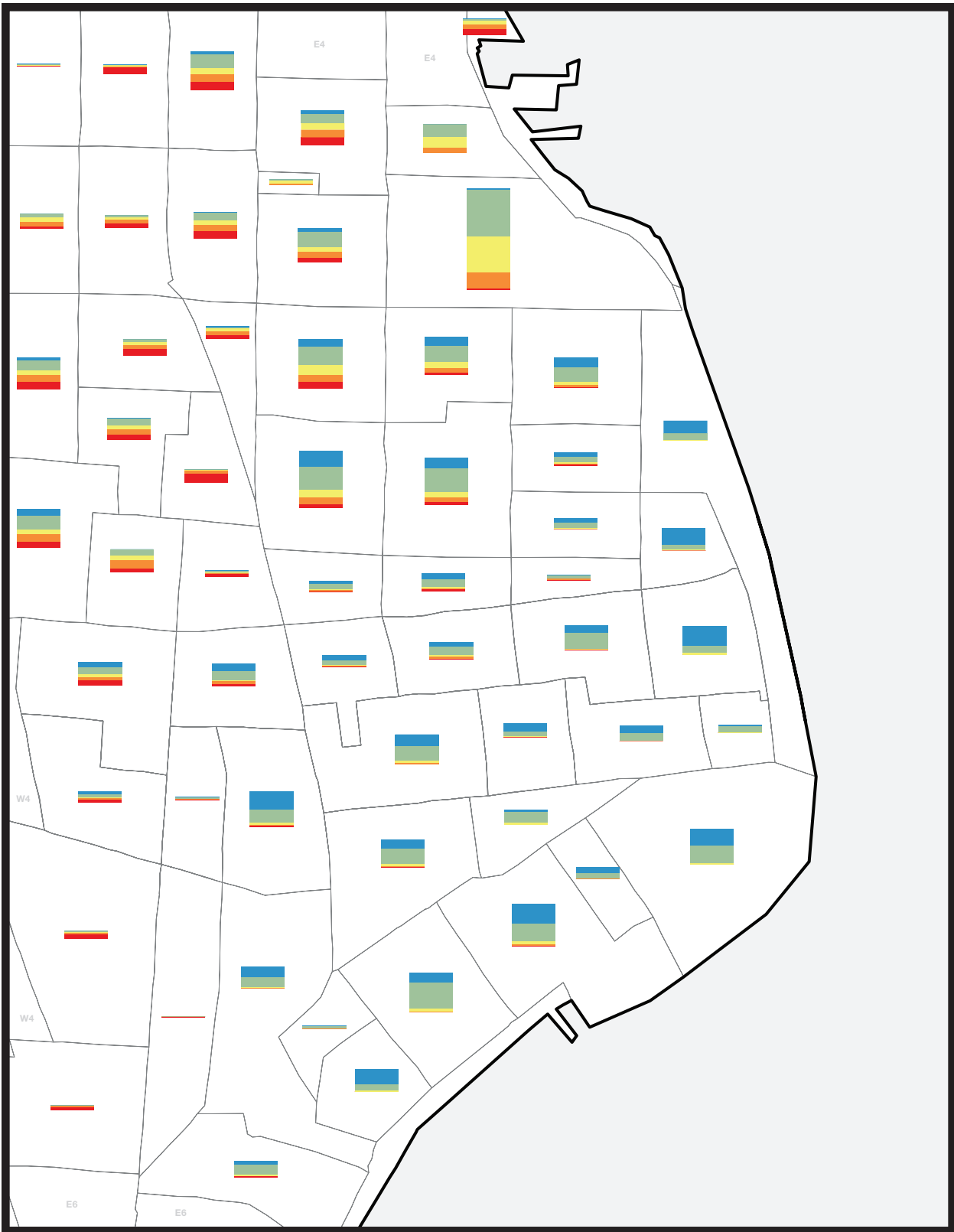
**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1990)**  
**CHELSEA, WEST VILLAGE, TRIBECA**



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL



W5

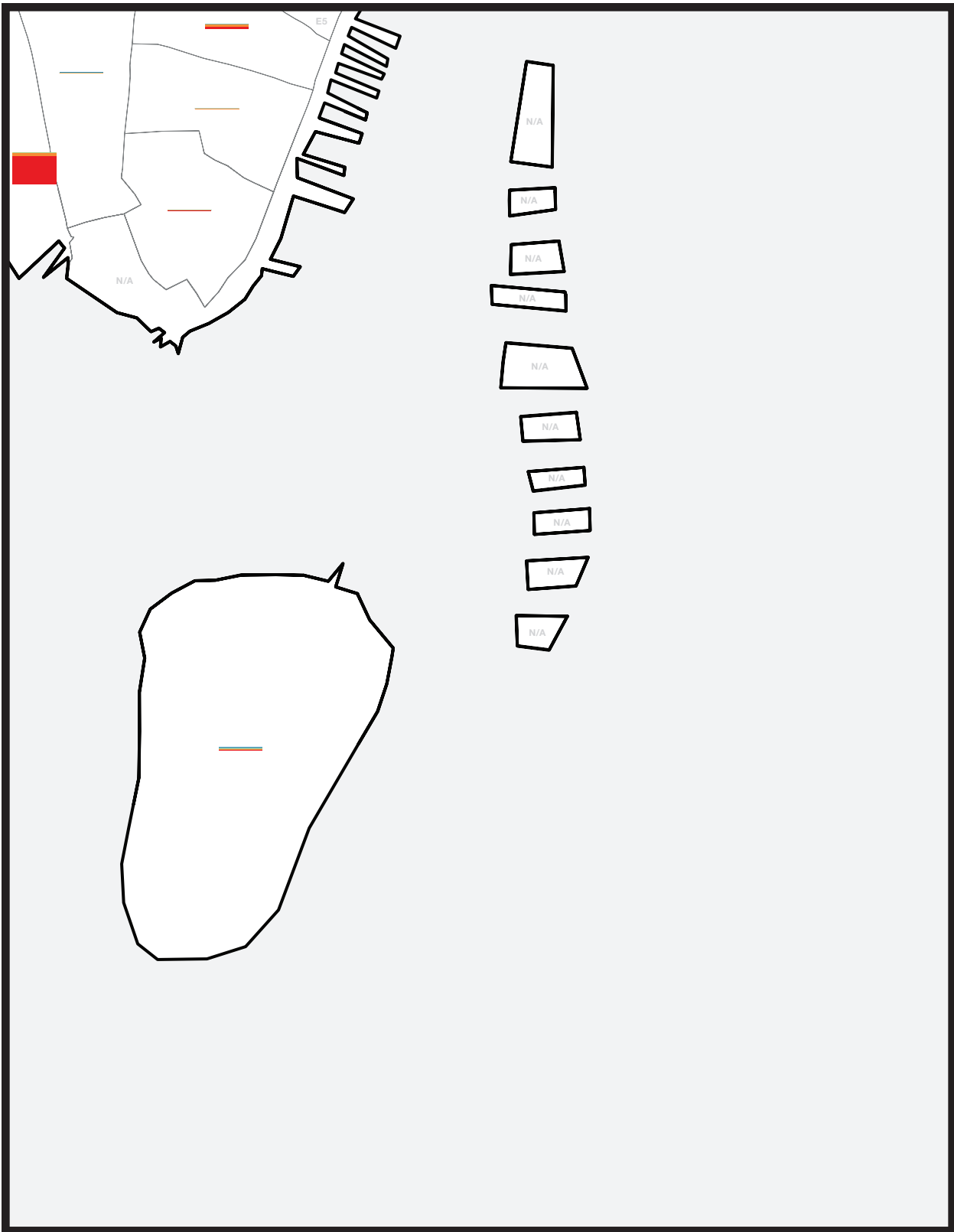


**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1990)**  
 FLATIRON, GREENWICH, EAST VILLAGE, SOHO, LOWER EAST SIDE



N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL





**HOUSING UNIT GROSS RENT BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT (1990)**  
**FINANCIAL DISTRICT, BATTERY PARK CITY, GOVERNORS ISLAND**



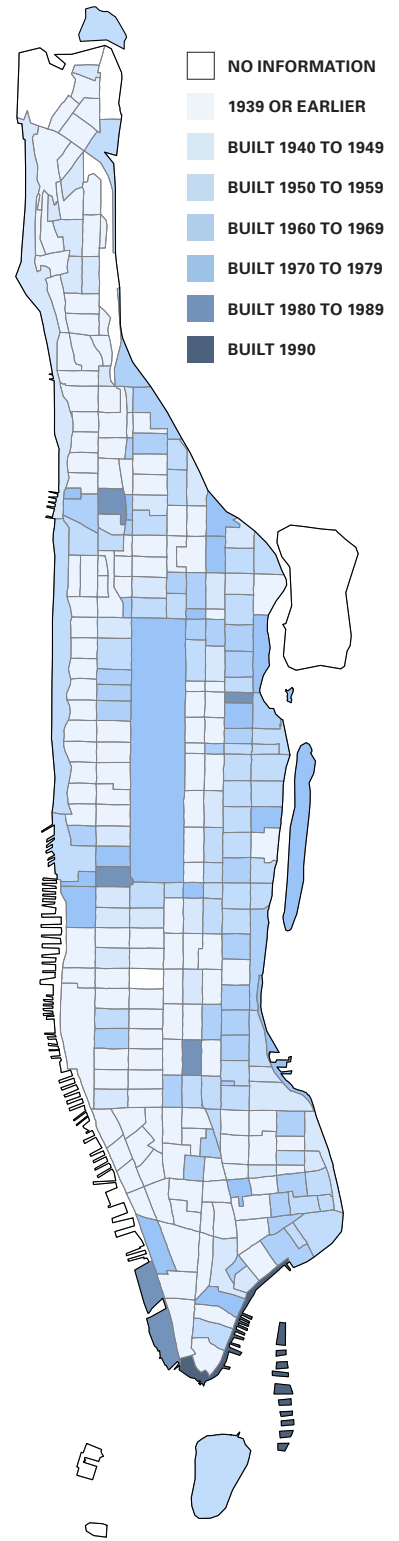
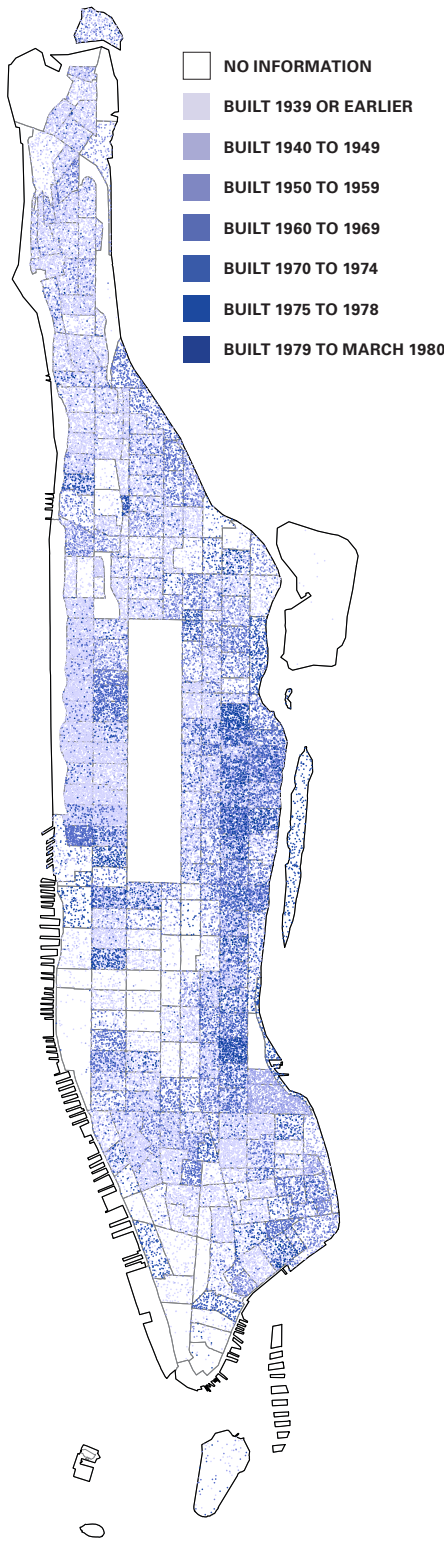
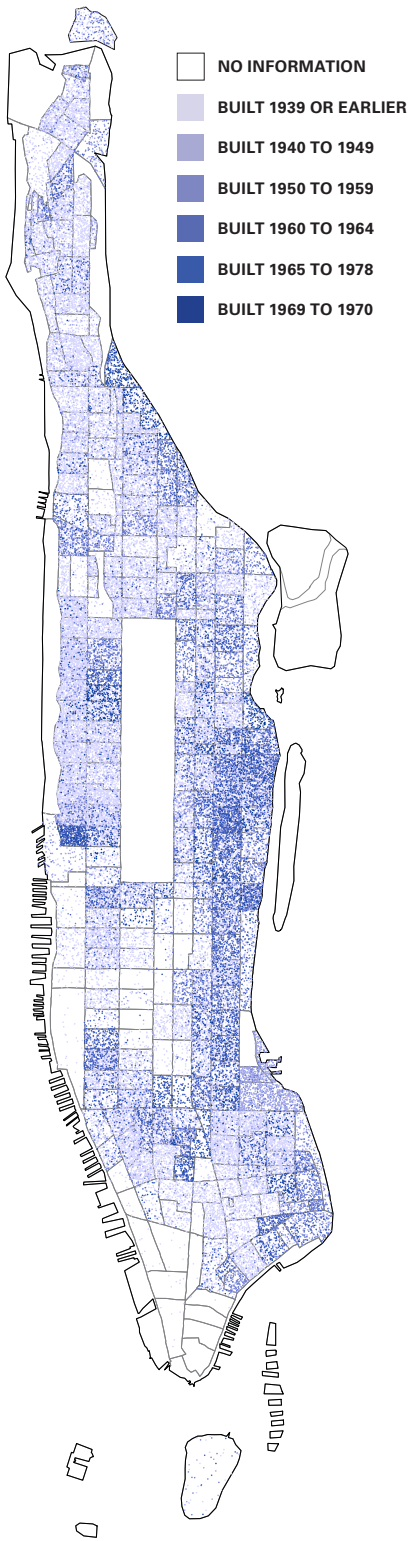
N/A NO DATA AVAILABLE  
 W2 SEE OTHER PANEL



1970

1980

1990\*



**YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT IN MANHATTAN BY U.S. CENSUS TRACT**  
 1970 AND 1980: YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT; \*1990: MEDIAN YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT.

