

New York, Old York. Dramatic before-and-after shots pictures show how the Big Apple has changed since 1989

- Photographer Larry Racioppo captured the derelict buildings and vacant lots around New York City from 1989
- He photographed the same spot after they were renovated
- It was part of an ambitious rejuvenation project for the city

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It was one man's job to show New York City at its worst.

He spent years photographing the city's many dilapidated buildings to show the seedy side of New York and how it changed over time.

For 22 years, Larry Racioppo captured on film a collection of derelict buildings seized from bankrupt, unconcerned or criminally negligent landlords as the staff photographer for the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development.



Before and after: Photographer Larry Racioppo took photographs of dilapidated buildings like this one on East 126th Street (left) before it was renovated (right)

His work was part of an ambitious project to renovate and rejuvenate the city by Mayor Edward Irving Koch. The 64-year-old photographer's work has since been exhibited in many museums as a reminder of what used to be. Since his retirement he has launched his own [website](#) to showcase his work.

He told [The New York Times](#): 'We had to be able to photograph what was really there, and not to sugarcoat anything. 'The commissioners never told me to hide anything.'



A reminder of what used to be: An empty building and abandoned block was one of the many spots Mr Racioppo captured on film as a spot that needed renovating



Now: The spot is now unrecognisable after it was rebuilt as part of the ambitious plan to rejuvenate the city

If there were bad conditions, they wanted to be able to change that. If conditions were horrible, they could get resources allocated so my photographs were a wonderful tool.'

What was once considered outdated and ugly is now trendy he said of how the city had changed.

Mr Racioppo said: 'A lot of young people ask "What was so bad? Why was it such a problem?"

'They came here in 2005 when brownstones in Harlem were easily going for more than a million dollars. People don't remember when you couldn't give those places away 20 years ago.'



No sugar coating: As a staff photographer for the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development, Mr Racioppo was told not to hide anything like this unattractive street corner in Lenox Gardens



Useful: Mr Racioppo said his photographs were 'a wonderful tool' for city officials to identify places that needed refurbishment resulting in much more appealing buildings such as the improved block in Lenox Gardens

Growing up in Brooklyn and working as a volunteer with impoverished teenagers in Santa Clara Valley in California, Mr Racioppo saw the darker side of poverty. He said: 'I never held being poor against anybody.

'In any building, all it takes is one or two bad families with serious problems to make it bad for everybody.'



Changing times: This lot had been left vacant for years and was widely viewed as being unusable



Transformation: Two decades on the desolate spot had become prime real estate and now houses the General Colin Powell Apartments