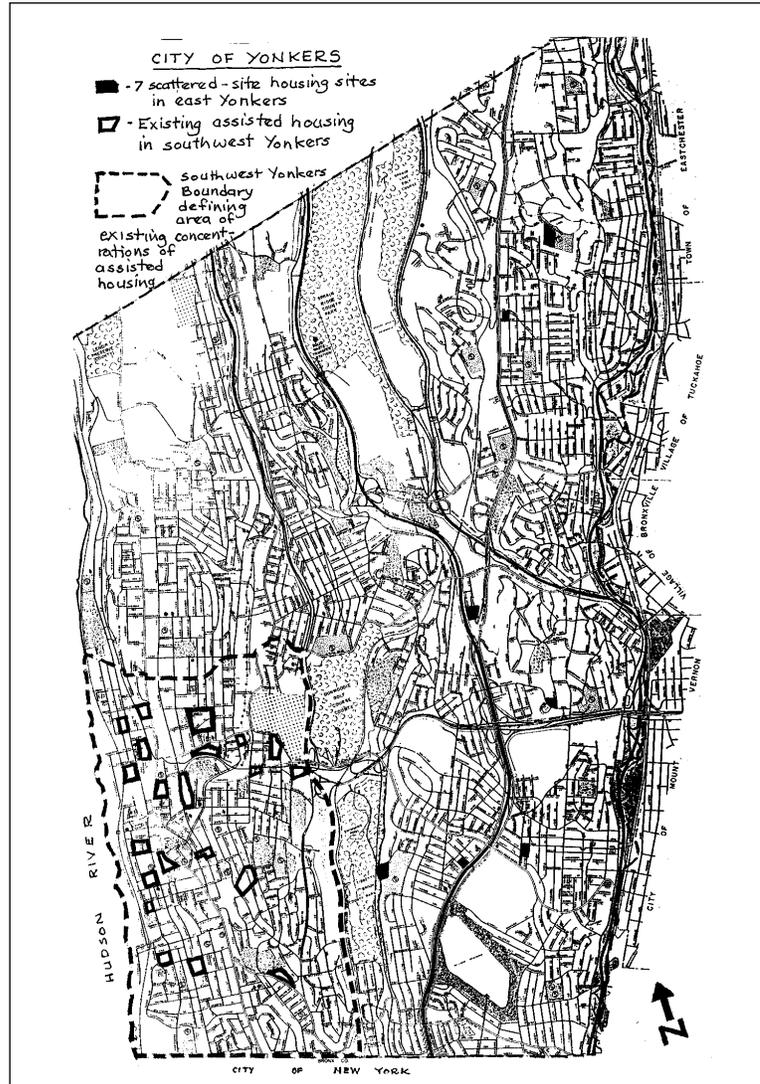


CHAPTER  
**FOUR**

# Dispersed, Scattered-Site Public Housing in Yonkers

In 1985, the city of Yonkers, in a nationally prominent civil rights case, was found guilty by the Federal court (Southern District of New York) of severely segregating its public and assisted housing. Some 6,000 units had been concentrated into the city's older, southwest section—an area one-eighth the size of the entire city. Twenty thousand people lived in this housing; the remaining seven-eighths of the city housed only 80,000 people, or four times as many.

The existing public housing projects had been built as large, high-density highrises and walkups, ranging in size from 278 units to 550 units. They were located only a few blocks away from each other, producing a very high overall concentration of low-income, minority population. The remedy, no more than a token really, required that 200 new units be built in the white, middle-class areas of the city that had previously excluded public housing.



**Figure IV-1:** Map of Yonkers showing the concentration of public and assisted housing in downtown southwest Yonkers and the location of the seven new scattered-site projects.



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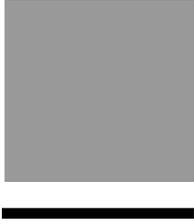
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# Addendum A

## Defensible Space Guidelines Used in Yonkers RFP

*(This edited and shortened version of the original RFP speaks primarily to design guidelines concerning Defensible Space.)*

### ■ Background

This is a request for proposals for the construction of public housing units for families with children, to be built on seven preselected sites in the eastern part of Yonkers. This housing is being built as a remedy to a Federal Court judgment. Both the City of Yonkers and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) have entered into Consent Decrees to further the construction of this housing. The sites have been acquired by the City of Yonkers. The Court has ordered the City to make them available at no cost for use by the turnkey developer selected to develop the public housing units. The selection will be made by the Yonkers Municipal Housing Authority (MHA) and approved by HUD.

Two-story townhouse dwelling units have been chosen as the most appropriate form of housing: (1) to best serve the future residents; and (2) to fit into the single-family residential character of the existing neighborhoods. The advantage of the townhouse design is that each unit is its own entity, belonging to one single family. It has its own front and back yard, and independent entrances serving only that family. The townhouse has no public circulation spaces—no lobbies, stairways, or corridors—which often create problems in low-income developments.

The cost of proposals that exceed HUD's Total Development Cost (TDC) guidelines (as found in Section C) will *not* be rejected by MHA for that reason alone; however, HUD has made no commitment that it will provide funds for any costs in excess of those cost guidelines, and accordingly, has reserved the right to reject any proposals exceeding

them. Sources of funds other than HUD's may be made available to provide for costs in excess of the cost guidelines.

## ■ **Definitions**

### **1. Townhouse Units:**

A townhouse unit is a two-story house serving only one family. It shares common side walls with other townhouse units. Each townhouse will have its own entry front and rear and its own front and rear yard. Refer to the New York State Building Code for the maximum number of townhouse units that can be grouped together under different fire designations.

### **2. Units for the Handicapped:**

A dwelling unit for the handicapped must be located entirely on the first floor level. It must be designed to the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards. HUD requires that 5 percent of all units be provided for the handicapped per site.

### **3. Dwelling Units above Handicapped Units:**

A second floor walkup dwelling unit will be permitted above the handicapped unit, but it must have a separate individual entrance at ground level. That is to say, the family living on the second floor is to have its own entry at street level which leads to a stair to the second floor. In MHA's definition there will be no interior areas common to more than one family.

### **4. Units for the Visually and Hearing Impaired:**

HUD requires that in addition, 2 percent of all units be provided for the visually and hearing impaired. These units are to be designed to comply with the Public Housing Development Accessibility Requirements (Notice PIH 88-34) (attached to this RFP). These dwelling units shall be distributed among the sites as shown.

## ■ Selection of proposals

Proposals will be selected by MHA on the basis of free and open competition. Evaluation will be objectively conducted in accordance with the procedures and criteria set forth in the Proposal Evaluation Criteria, which follow later.

All proposals must comply with the project planning, design and cost criteria detailed in chapters 3, 6, 9, and 10 of the Public Housing Development Handbook and applicable cost containment and modest design requirements of HUD Notice PIH90-16 and Public Housing Cost Guidelines.

## ■ Zoning

The Federal District Court has ordered that all sites are deemed to be appropriately zoned for the housing called for in this RFP. The guidelines and constraints for the development of the sites are specified in the Design Criteria paragraph and Design Parameters. Developers are specifically asked to refer to the changes in the Yonkers Zoning Code allowed for in this RFP as regards to existing setback requirements and parking ratios.

## ■ Design criteria

### 1. Building Design

All buildings shall have pitched shingle roofs for drainage and aesthetic purposes.

In order to individualize the separate units, the Developer shall endeavor where possible, and in compliance with HUD's Cost Containment Guidelines, to employ visual breaks, changes in plane or roof line, and/or varied architectural expression (e.g. variation in window sizes, color, texture, etc.), especially in the development of the building elevations. The exterior walls shall have a brick veneer at the first story. The second story should be a maintenance free material.

**2. Security:**

Page 1 of HUD's Manual of Acceptable Practices cites two references for site design to achieve security: *Architectural Design for Crime Prevention* (U.S. Government Printing Office) and *Defensible Space* (Macmillan). Since security has become an increasingly important issue for public housing and for the communities that surround them, security should be given very serious consideration in the development of these site plans. The parameters to be used are as follows: The front yards, the fronts of buildings, and the main entries to units shall face existing streets or new driveways so as to facilitate normal patrolling by police cars and police response to residents' request for assistance. This will also enable residents across the street, whose units also face the street, to survey their neighbors front doors.

To the extent that the site will allow, the rear yards serving individual units should be backed onto the rear yards of other units so that a collective grouping of rear yards can be easily fenced off together using a collective 6'0" high fence. This will serve to create a collective private zone (consisting of a grouping of individual rear yards) that is inaccessible from the public street but accessible from the interior of each unit.

The amount of collective fencing needed to enclose the collective groupings of rear yard areas can be minimized through the judicious placement of buildings and rear yards.

**3. Parking:**

All parking areas are to be positioned a minimum distance of 10 feet from any building and should be positioned to facilitate surveillance from the units. Parking may be placed between the side walls of townhouse groupings as long as the nearest automobile space is not closer to the street than the front line of the building. Concrete wheel stops at curbs are to be provided at every parking space.

**4. Walks:**

Walks shall be provided for safe convenient direct access to each unit and for safe pedestrian circulation throughout a development between facilities and locations where major need for pedestrian access can be

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**Addendum A**

anticipated. Walks shall be located so that they are easily surveyed from the interior of units.

**5. Garbage and Refuse Storage:**

Individual, outdoor garbage storage areas are to be provided and positioned to serve each dwelling unit. Inground garbage containers are the preferred solution by MHA and shall be designed to hold two garbage receptacles. The design treatment and construction of garbage and refuse stations and containers should prevent access to them by pests or animals.

**6. Lighting:**

Lighting is to be provided for the entire developed site with concentrations at walks, ramps, parking lots, and entrances to units. The intensity shall be 0.5 foot candles minimum for parking lots and walkways; and 4.0 foot candles for townhouse entrances, ramps, and steps. Parking lighting poles shall have a minimum height of 25'0" and pedestrian walk lighting poles a height of 12'0" to 15'0".

**7. Planting:**

Planting should not be placed so as to screen the doors and windows of dwelling units from the street or from walks leading from the street to dwelling unit entries.

Plant material should be selected and arranged to permit full safe sight distance between approaching vehicles at street intersections. Additional attention is required where driveways enter streets, at crosswalks and especially in areas of concentrated mixed pedestrian and vehicular movement. Planting that hides the pedestrian from the motorist until he steps out on the street should be avoided.

**■ Selection of proposals**

Proposals will be selected by the Municipal Housing Authority on the basis of free and open competition. Proposals will be evaluated objectively in accordance with the procedures and criteria set forth in HUD Handbook 7417.1 Rev. 1, dated October 1980, paragraphs 6–42 and 6–43, *as amended by this RFP*, as well as the following Evaluation Criteria.

In the event that all proposals are determined to be “nonresponsive,” i.e., require major corrections in order to conform to the requirements of the RFP, MHA reserves the right to solicit a second round of proposals. Under this procedure, each developer will be informed of the reasons his/her proposal was determined nonresponsive, and be given an opportunity to submit a redesigned proposal, which may involve a higher price. If all resubmitted proposals are again found nonresponsive, MHA and HUD reserve the right to negotiate with the developer of the proposal considered most desirable to rectify deficiencies, permitting, if necessary, further increases in price.

After MHA has made its official announcement of designation, it will hold a meeting with those respondents who were not selected. This meeting will be held to review the rating, ranking, and selection process.

■ **Proposal evaluation criteria**

Proposals will be evaluated on a point system based on the four criteria below. The developer is asked to follow them as closely as possible.

**A. Developer’s price ..... 20 points max.**

The total developer’s price as a percent of the median price for all responsive turnkey proposals.

**Superior** = below 90 percent of median

**Average** = 90–100 percent of median

**Poor** = more than 100 percent of median

**B. Developer’s qualifications ..... 20 points max.**

Previous experience in successfully developing and completing similar projects, perceived capability in completing this project, and financial viability.

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**Addendum A**

**C. Site development plan ..... 40 points max.**

**(i) Site development layout**

The extent to which the site development plan conforms to the Design Criteria regarding the layout of topography/grading, drainage, utility plan, streets, parking, slope stability, planting design, and open space development.

**Maximum 15 points**

**(ii) Architectural treatment**

The degree to which the exterior design of the dwelling units captures the scale, materials, and character of the neighborhood.

**Maximum 15 points**

**(iii) Unit layout**

The extent to which the dwelling unit floor plans and layout provides functional housing arrangements, allows residents to supervise activities in the streets, and allows the unit front entries and windows to be observed from the street.

**Maximum 10 points**

**D. Design and construction quality ..... 20 points max.**

**(i) Special design features**

The degree to which the design incorporates features that provide for efficient project operations and lower maintenance costs.

**Maximum 5 points**

**(ii) Energy-saving features**

The extent to which the design provides for long-term energy savings by incorporating the use of energy conservation features.

**Maximum 5 points**

**(iii) Material and equipment**

The extent to which durable, low-maintenance, construction material and equipment will be used.

**Maximum 5 points**

**(iv) Security**

The extent to which the rear yards are backed onto other rear yards, so that a collective grouping of rear yards can be fenced off together. This will make the rear yards inaccessible from the public street but accessible from the interior of each dwelling.

**Maximum 5 points**

**Total Maximum..... 100 points max.**

Proposals will be evaluated based on the point system described above. The rating will be a gradation of 100 points spread among the four criteria. Ratings will be, (1) Superior (value 70 percent to 100 percentage points), Average (value 40 percent to 69 percentage points) and (3) Poor (value 0 to 39 percentage points), for each criteria. If only one proposal is submitted, the developer's price criteria will be rated against HUD's latest TDC for townhouse construction in Westchester County.



# Addendum B

## Tenant Training Course Conducted by Housing Education Relocation Enterprise

Tenants were given 2 hours of orientation and 2 hours of counseling in the following five subjects:

### **Tenant relocation**

1. What are leases? Tenant responsibilities; landlord responsibilities?
2. What are the three phases of relocation?
3. What is the relocation schedule/timetable?
4. How do tenants prepare for the move?
5. How do tenants move?
6. How do tenants adapt to their new community?

### **Home maintenance**

1. What do tenants need to know about their new housing units?
2. What do tenants need to know about their utilities?
  - a) Telephone company (NYNEX, MCI, SPRINT)
  - b) Washer/dryer (Manufacturer)
  - c) Heating/air conditioning (CON-EDISON)
  - d) Stove/refrigerator (Manufacturer)
3. What do tenants need to know about trash/garbage removal?

4. What do tenants need to know about parking?
5. What do tenants need to know about outdoor home recreation?

**Interpersonal relations**

1. What constitutes good tenant/landlord relations?
2. What constitutes good tenant/tenant relations?
3. What constitutes good tenant/neighbor relations?
4. What benefits do resident councils provide?
  - a) Methods or organization
  - b) Democratic processes
  - c) Problem solving
  - d) Conflict resolution
  - e) MHA grievance procedure

**Safety/security**

1. What is the MHA evacuation plan?
2. What constitutes good police/community relations?
3. How does a tenant identify and properly utilize public health services?
  - a) Department of public works
  - b) Fire department
  - c) City emergency services
  - d) Ambulance/medical services

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**Addendum B**

- e) Hospitals/clinics
- f) Night/neighborhood watch programs

**Community resources****1. What family services are available to the tenants?**

- a) Youth services
- b) Parks/recreation
- c) Libraries
- d) Cultural services
- e) Shopping centers
- f) Banking services
- g) Postal services
- h) Personal maintenance

**2. Transportation**

- a) Buses
- b) Trains
- c) Cabs/private transportation

**3. Religious services**



**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Office of Policy Development and Research  
Washington, D.C. 20410-6000**

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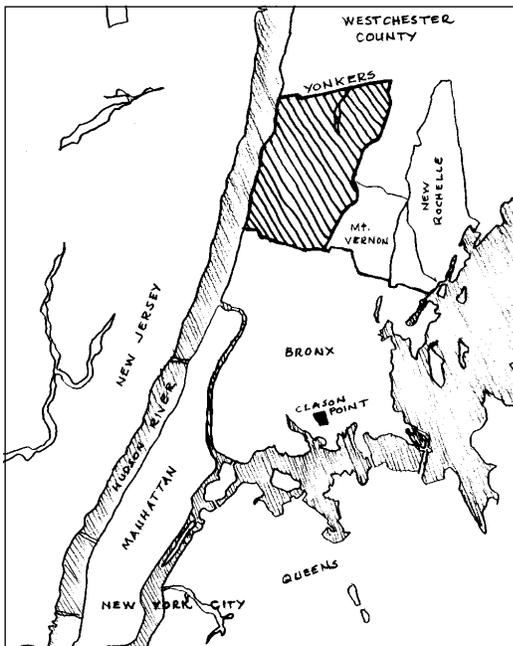
**Official Business  
Penalty for Private Use \$300**

FIRST-CLASS MAIL  
POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
HUD  
Permit No. G-795





**Figure IV-2:**  
*Existing public housing in Yonkers: the School Street project.*



**Figure IV-3:**  
*Map showing the location of Yonkers relative to New York City. Also shown is the location of the Clason Point project in the south Bronx.*

After stalling for much too long, the city was told to appoint an outsider to direct the construction of the mandated housing. I was selected in a process I will describe shortly, and used the occasion to apply the principles I had evolved in the Clason Point project to the construction of the housing.

Yonkers is the first suburb one encounters driving north from

New York City. It dates from the turn of the century when it functioned as a factory town. Its older, urban downtown, situated on the cliffs over the Hudson River, is where the public housing was concentrated. This urban core is surrounded by a mix of suburban areas ranging from modest single-family houses on small lots to large mansions on one-half-acre lots. The entire city is only 6 miles long by 3 miles wide and is interlaced with highways serving the suburbs to the north. Sprinkled along these highways are stretches of old and new, privately owned highrise apartments occupied by white working- and middle-class families.

During the period of the court case, Yonkers' public housing projects, like many throughout the country, were known for housing drug dealers and prostitutes. The projects were also said to be the cause of much of the crime in their surrounding communities. Many of the criminals who lived in the projects were little more than children. Teenagers carried automatic weapons openly and were often

bold enough to screen people who came and went to make sure they were not police.

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## Chapter Four: Dispersed, Scattered-Site Public Housing in Yonkers

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The public housing residents who were to move into these 200 new units were to have the same profile as the existing residents—that is, more than half would have public assistance as their source of income, most of these being AFDC families. The residents of the new housing were to be chosen by lottery on a 50/50 basis from existing public housing tenants who wished to move into the new housing and from a waiting list of potential tenants.



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**Figure IV-4:**  
*Aerial view of east Yonkers showing typical suburban housing and the Catholic housing seminary. The dense public housing of southwest Yonkers can be seen at the back.*

After a 6-year trial and an additional 7 years of the city fighting me every step of the way, the scattered-site housing is now in place without any of the dire consequences predicted by its opponents. It did not introduce crime into the middle-class neighborhoods, it did not reduce property values, and it did not produce white flight. It is a solution that is already becoming a model for cities across the country who wish either to voluntarily desegregate their public housing or are under court order to do so.

Yonkers residents are a mixture of ethnic and religious groups: Irish, Italian, Polish, Jewish, African, and Hispanic Americans—each of whom wears their heritage proudly. This has produced a rich and exciting city with a multitude of churches, social centers, ethnic restaurants, food stores, and bars. Each ethnic group further reinforced its identity and political strength by concentrating itself in its own distinctive geopolitical ward. In



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**Figure IV-5:**  
*Existing public housing in Yonkers: the Schlobohm project.*



**Figure IV-6:**  
*Existing public housing in  
Yonkers: Mulford Gardens.*

the past, this ward structure had proven useful in serving the narrow interests of each ethnic group. However, it proved devastating by preventing the city as a whole from acting in its greater good by quickly responding to the original segregation complaint.

Much of the city's resistance to implementing the 200-unit remedy stemmed from everyone's assumption that it

would be built along the lines of the existing public housing. Two years after the Federal court decision was issued, the city had yet to locate a single site or prepare a single housing plan. At that point, the plaintiffs petitioned the court to inform the city that if it could not act on its own behalf to implement the remedy, it would either face costly daily fines or be required to appoint an outside housing advisor to do the work that no politicians or city employees could allow themselves to do—that is, find the sites and prepare the plans for the housing. Admitting, finally, that it would be political or professional suicide for anyone to do this work, the city, under a deadline from the court, set about finding a housing advisor. They gave me the job, but not for reasons I cared for.

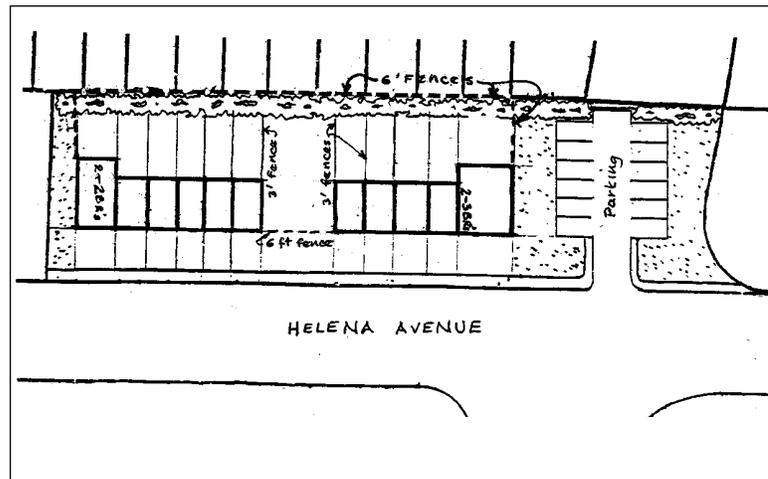
Prior to my appointment as housing advisor, the plaintiffs in the case (the U.S. Justice Department and the Yonkers chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)) had identified two former school sites they wanted used for the public housing. A highrise complex was to be put on the larger of the two sites and a three-story walkup on the other. The city objected, saying that this would be a replication of the physical construct of the existing public housing projects in southwest Yonkers and would serve to destabilize the surrounding neighborhoods. The plaintiffs replied that this was further evidence of the city's racism, and they did not care for the city's notion of what constituted destabilization.

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## Chapter Four: Dispersed, Scattered-Site Public Housing in Yonkers

After interviewing a dozen candidates, the mayor and the city council chose me to do the work because in my planning books, *Defensible Space* and *Community of Interest*, I had advocated an approach to racial and economic integration that would not destabilize the host middle-income community. Otherwise, I had argued, what would be the long-term benefits to the public housing residents? In my interviews with the city I had stated that, on the basis of my past research, I would advocate the use of townhouses in a scattered-site format. That is, I would scatter the units throughout the white, middle-class areas of the city rather than concentrate them in one or two specific sites as was proposed by the plaintiffs.

I had thought that this was why I was selected, but I later learned that the city was secretly hoping that once I became familiar with the crime problems in the existing public housing complexes in southwest Yonkers and then saw the pastoral beauty of the middle-class suburban settings of the rest of Yonkers, I would appeal to the court to modify its ruling. This was, of course, not facing reality—a problem that plagued Yonkers from the beginning of these proceedings. This delusion on the part of the city was surprising, because in my interviews, I had made clear that although I would ensure that the housing would be built using Defensible Space principles, I also felt obligated to ensure that it would, in fact, be built. When it became clear that I was making progress in selecting sites and getting the housing built as promised, the city countered by refusing to pay me. After three months of non-payment, the Federal court decided that I would henceforth work for the court rather than the city, and ordered the city to pay me on threat of contempt.



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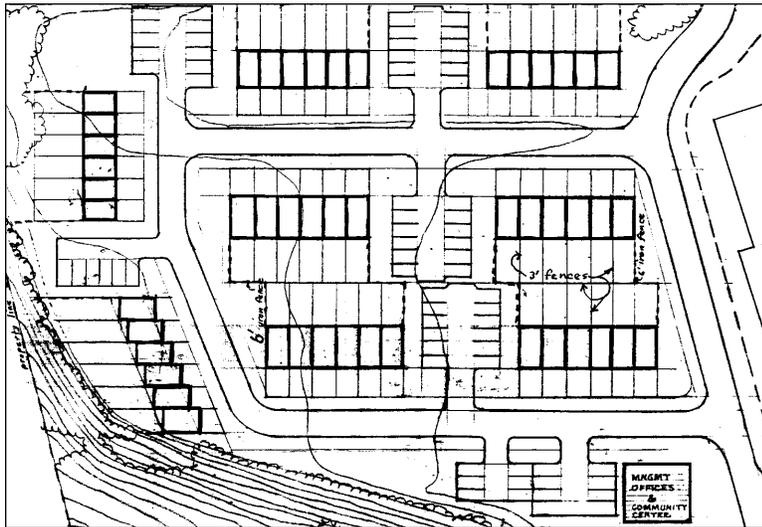
**Figure IV-7:**  
Typical site plan for  
a 12-unit site.



most expensive lawyers available and to lie down in front of the bulldozers himself to stop the housing from being constructed. The city spent more on attorneys' fees to stop the housing than I spent on building it—more than \$20 million. The mayor put on a good show but succeeded in stopping nothing. He was not re-elected.

The city was nevertheless successful in rejecting many of my sites, even to the point of putting undue pressure on the Cardinal of New York to get him to back down from a site I had selected on an outlying portion of the seminary property. In the end, I was left with only seven sites. And because of this, I was forced to put as many as 48 units on 1 site and 44 on another. Their comparatively large size meant that these two sites would have to have their own internal street systems, at increased cost. But more importantly, I would not be able to make them disappear into the fabric of the city's neighborhoods. I was also worried that their isolation from surrounding middle-class housing would allow a criminal subculture to materialize and flourish that the public housing residents, alone, could not control. Strangely, the city preferred that I choose a few large, isolated sites rather than many, small sites that were integrated into the community. That way, argued the city, fewer areas would be contaminated by the contact. They could not understand my argument: the smaller the site and the greater the contact, the more the middle-class neighbors would be able to exert their values and control.

In an endeavor to win communities over to the scattered-site plan I was advocating, I systematically met with community and religious leaders in every affected neighborhood of Yonkers. This led to requests for me to give formal presentations to general meetings of a few hundred residents. Some of these meetings were rowdy, but many were quite civil and allowed for a good exchange of ideas. I explained that I was there to implement the remedy in the best way I could, and was seeking the community's assistance in doing so. But many residents attempted to re-argue the court case in front of me. I told them the case could not be reopened. At one meeting, feelings ran so high, I finally had to say: "Hold it a second. Look!" I walked over to the nearest wall bordering the auditorium stage, raised my fist, and pounded it three times as hard as I could. The noise from the pounding thundered through the auditorium. People went totally silent. I returned to the microphone and, holding my



**Figure IV-9:**  
Typical site plan for a  
48-unit site.

practice to come and disrupt every such community meeting. In some instances, the police had to escort me out for my own protection. I stopped holding them.



**Figure IV-10:**  
Sketch of a group of row-  
house units for Yonkers as  
submitted by one of the  
developers.

than two-story walkups that have interior public areas. This decision involved a major dispute with the regional office of HUD that advocated the use of walkups, if not highrises.

The grounds of each site were to be fully subdivided and assigned to individual units. Each family was to have its own front and rear yard, and the front entry to each unit was to be located directly off the street.

hand in the air with obvious pain, said: “That wall is the Justice Department. And this fist is you. All you are doing with your high-priced lawyers in revisiting the case, is injuring yourselves. It is time to let it go and help me find a remedy that will work to everyone’s benefit.”

I do not know how useful these meetings were. After a while, the vociferous elements in the city made it a

The second Defensible Space design directive I used was to insist that the housing have no indoor or outdoor areas that were public. All areas of each unit and site would be assigned for the specific, private use of individual families. This is why I chose two-story row houses as our building type rather

Each family's rear yard was to be defined by a small fence, and small clusters of rear yards were to be collectively fenced-off from the surrounding streets by a taller, 6-foot fence.

It is interesting that when the judge I was working for visited the housing when it was completed, but not yet occupied, he looked at the fenced-off rear yards and said, "They look like pig sties; is it really necessary to have the fencing?" I explained that the rear yards would take on a very different character once they were occupied. For the first time in their lives, residents would have a place immediately outside their dwellings they could call their own: their own place in the sun where they could leave a young child to play by itself without fear of it being harmed. Once they realized that, they would begin to customize and manicure the yards. And they would become rich with flowers and objects that reflected their personalities. The judge looked at the myriad of fencing again, shook his head and said, "I hope you know what you're doing."

With this design, of course, I primarily hoped to eliminate all the troublesome, crime-ridden areas typical of multifamily public housing projects. There were no nebulous public grounds for gangs and drug dealers to roam. There were to be no public lobbies, no corridors, no fire stairs, no elevators. There were none of the spaces that typically characterized not only highrise public housing, but row-house developments as well (see discussion of Defensible Space concepts in chapter I).

The principle used throughout is that residents will jealously guard and maintain that which is theirs—even when they are renters rather than owners. The second principle is that by dividing and assigning spaces to individual families and to small collectives of families, we limit the operating turf of the criminal element that may be living among the residents.

Developing this principle further, I decided to do away with the collective garbage dumpsters that normally serve large groups of residents in



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**Figure IV-11:**  
*The fencing-off of the rear yards in the Yonkers scattered-site housing. Individual yard fences are 3 feet high. The 6-foot fences defining the collective rear yard area can be seen in the foreground and at rear.*



**Figure IV-12**  
*Typical garbage dumpster serving public housing.*



**Figure IV-13:**  
*Individual garbage cans along the walks leading up to each unit in Yonkers' scattered sites.*

public housing projects. These would be replaced with individual garbage cans, serving each unit. Every family would have its own garbage cans, and they would be placed in concrete pits in the ground along the front walks leading up to the entry door to their own house. That way the garbage cans too would be within the territorial domain of each family, and their maintenance would reflect on that family.

The large dumpsters that serve as garbage collectors for most public housing projects are located in public areas where no one identifies with them. They are always overflowing with garbage and attract rats and roaches. Various stratagems have been devised to make them function better, but in the scattered-site housing in Yonkers, I simply refused to allow them to exist.

I have explained the garbage can decision as if it were made by me, alone at my desk. But as with most of my design decisions in Yonkers, everyone became involved and there was a big hullabaloo about it. The city objected vehemently that this would put an undue strain on its sanitation department. I pointed out that we were asking no more for the public residents than the city provided to occupants of single-family houses. The city backed down after it was agreed that each family would be responsible for bringing its garbage to the curb on the morning of garbage day.

The HUD regional office objected to our garbage can decision on two counts: one, that individual cans buried in concrete sleeves for each

household would be far costlier than providing a collective dumpster; and two, that the residents would be unable to look after their own garbage cans. HUD argued that these individual cans would have to be pulled out eventually, at great cost, and replaced by dumpsters.

The housing authority's consulting architect was also nervous about my placing the garbage cans along the front walks. He suggested that maybe the individual garbage cans could be stored in the back yards of the unit and then brought out on garbage day. But to do this meant that the garbage cans would have to be stored in the already small rear yards, and, furthermore, they would have to be brought through the house on garbage day. The housing authority architect suggested that we could avoid the latter by providing a walk between the individual rear yards that led to a gate that opened onto the street. A collective place would then be provided at the street for all the garbage cans to be positioned for pick up by the garbage trucks. I explained that this proposed solution introduced three problems: (1) it meant introducing a public walk into the rear yard areas which were now fully private; (2) it would compromise the security of the rear yard areas by introducing gates that opened to the public streets (we had learned from our Clason Point experiment that it took only one family to decide to leave this gate open for everyone's security to be affected); and (3) having all the garbage cans grouped in a designated "public" spot, even if only on garbage day, would be creating the same kind of problem produced by dumpsters. The operating rule was no public spaces, and we would have to stick by it.

This dispute was settled by Pete Smith, the housing authority director and my salvation in this entire effort. He said that he saw potential problems with each proposal, but because we were gambling on the validity of the Defensible Space hypothesis, we should be consistent throughout, and go with what I had proposed. This was his polite way of also saying that it would be on my head if it went wrong. I accepted that, appreciating that these are the risks one must take to test the value of one's convictions.

I went on to spell out that the design of each unit was to carefully echo the style and materials of the surrounding middle-class single-family houses. Brick, peaked roofs, bay windows, and staggered facades were to be used to emphasize the individual units within a row-house cluster.



**Figure IV-14:**  
*Completed scattered-site units in Yonkers (foreground). Existing, privately owned, single-family housing can be seen in the background. The new units seek to capture the look and feel of the private housing.*

All of this was accomplished within HUD's cost guidelines by using factory-built housing.

The use of factory-built housing minimized onsite protests and potential vandalism by opponents of the housing by limiting the onsite construction time. The housing units arrived 95 percent complete from factories approximately 100 miles away and were placed on foundations (that had been prepared earlier)

during the course of a day. The ability of the local residents and politicians to complicate construction by influencing the unions was also minimized by having most of the work done in communities distant from Yonkers.

### ■ Problems in controlling the design process

The decisions to scatter the 200 units over 7 sites rather than concentrate them on 2, to use row houses rather than highrises or walkups, and to use Defensible Space principles in laying out the grounds may sound rational, given the history of the case, but the process of getting these decisions accepted by HUD and the plaintiffs proved difficult.

Much of the reason the Yonkers community bitterly resisted the court order was their expectation that the new housing would be large, highrise developments that would devastate their surrounding areas. Even though I, as an officer of the Federal court, had promised to build row houses on small sites scattered throughout the city, the community did not believe me. My promise might be sincere, but neither HUD nor the housing authority was able to inspire much trust among the local residents. When trying to obtain housing sites, it is normal practice for housing authorities to tell communities that they will only be putting up a small number of units. But once a site is acquired and approved for the use of public housing—a difficult process in itself—the number of units somehow doubles or quadruples. It is not that housing authorities, or

HUD, are being intentionally deceptive, it is just that it is so difficult to acquire a site, that once it is in place more money can usually be found by HUD for additional units. Housing authorities are then unable to resist increasing the number, even if it means constructing high-density walkups or even highrises. Of course the price for such a breach of faith is that the next site becomes even harder to find and get approved.

The New York City region is a very dense area. The HUD regional Office in New York City, therefore, had very little history of building anything but highrises and walkups. The notion that we would be proposing the construction of row houses in Yonkers was an anathema to them.

The plaintiffs in the case, the Justice Department and the Yonkers chapter of the NAACP, also had problems with our decision to limit ourselves to row houses. The Justice Department attorney in the case wanted to put 200 units in 2 highrise towers on the largest site. Her idea was to make these an equal mix of public housing, moderate-income, and market-rate units. That site would then serve 67 public housing units. I pointed out to the plaintiffs that the history of such mixed-income developments (particularly in Yonkers) was that they became fully occupied by low-income families in a short period of time. This is because it is difficult to keep market-rate tenants living among public housing residents when they have other options. When management is then unable to attract new market-rate tenants to replace the old, they have no option but to accept low-income tenants with Section 8 certificates (Section 8 is HUD's rent subsidy program) to fill the vacant units.

The end result would be a 200-unit low-income, highrise project located within a middle-income community composed of single-family houses. This would virtually guarantee destabilization. In fact, it would replicate the situation in southwest Yonkers that led to the case to begin with. The entire rationale for the court decision would then be undermined. For what would be the purpose of enabling low-income families to enjoy the benefits of living in a middle-income community if that community then quickly turned into a low-income community?

The attorney for the Justice Department said that my argument was fallacious: The issue was not the nature of the host community but the exclusion of public housing residents from an area that should have been open to them. The NAACP attorney said that my arguments reflected the racist

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attitudes of Yonkers residents—attitudes that had produced the case in the first place. He, for one, had no problem with the entire 200 units turning into a low-income project, and if the surrounding community then wished to leave, so be it. The Justice Department attorney reasoned that the decline of the community would just make available additional lower cost housing for his client group.

The argument for the mixed-income development presented by the Justice Department attorney was that it would guarantee a mix of income groups, rather than a concentration of low-income families. My counter to that was that the community surrounding the new public housing was already middle-income and stable, so there was no need to create an artificial mix within the new project—particularly if we could not sustain that mix. If the proposed large, mixed-income development became all low-income, the result could destabilize the surrounding middle-income community. In informal discussions with all parties, the court accepted my reasoning.

The next problem I encountered was getting the HUD regional office to accept row houses as the building type rather than walkups. HUD preferred walkups because it thought they would be less costly to build. Regarding my Defensible Space rationale, HUD said that, as an agency, they had never accepted it. I prepared a long memo to HUD and all the parties in the case, pointing out the following, with documented references:

- HUD’s manual for the construction of public housing had only two books referenced in it: *Defensible Space* and *Design Guidelines for Achieving Defensible Space*, both written by me. The second book had been published jointly by HUD and Justice.
- The history of walkup public housing throughout the country was not much better than that of highrises, and walkups were being torn down everywhere as frequently as highrises.
- When calculating the cost of walkups versus row houses, HUD was only using the initial construction costs, whereas the big savings in the use of row housing was in the consequent reduction in maintenance, vandalism, and security costs. HUD spends millions of dollars per project every few years repairing the destruction wrought by

the residents in the public areas of highrise and walkup buildings:  
Our housing would have no such public areas.

- Finally, the New York State Building Code allowed two-story row houses to be built of wood, without a second fire stair, and without the multitude of fire walls required of walkups. These additional requirements actually made walkups more costly than row houses.

City officials in Yonkers, who would have preferred that no housing be built at all, certainly preferred row houses over walkups. They allowed their building department to prepare its own memo supporting my position. These arguments were heard before the judge in the case, and he reminded HUD (a defendant in the case) of the importance of getting the remedy done right, that we had an opportunity to demonstrate that public housing could be built to everyone's benefit in middle-income communities.

The next obstacle we had to face grew out of the method the housing authority and HUD would have to use in soliciting bids for the work. There were two ways open to obtaining bids: the conventional route and the turnkey route. In the conventional route, the housing authority would have its architect prepare detailed construction drawings for the housing on each site and then request bids on them. The problem with this method is that New York State has the Wicks Law, which allows separate subcontractors to submit bids for small portions of the work. These bids must be considered by the housing authority along with bids by general contractors for the entire job. The housing authority would then have to serve as the general coordinator in evaluating and accepting these small bidders. Such projects have not only proven to be more costly, they are difficult to administer and frequently stall in irreconcilable disputes between subcontractors.

The turnkey route allows the housing authority simply to issue a request for proposal (RFP) from developers in which only the sites and the number of units per site are identified. The RFP also spells out HUD's basic standards for construction and site development. The use of the turnkey method thus allows the authority to avoid the requirements of the Wicks Law.

With the conventional route the housing authority specifies exactly what it wants in terms of design, but with the turnkey method it leaves all that

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to the discretion of the developer. The purpose of the turnkey process is to allow the developer to build what he knows how to do best and to turn over the finished housing to the authority when it is ready for occupancy.

The housing authority and HUD both preferred the turnkey method, but how could we be assured of getting the housing designs and site plans we wanted? The authority and I proposed to HUD that we include a set of written design guidelines in the RFP, along with schematic site plans that illustrated how to produce Defensible Space plans for each of the seven sites. The regional office of HUD objected, stating that this would severely restrain the developer by keeping him from using his own approach and finding the least expensive and, hence, the best solution.

After much argument, HUD agreed to allow a set of Defensible Space guidelines to be introduced into the RFP, but totally vetoed the inclusion of any schematic site plans. The Defensible Space design guidelines issued in the RFP appear in addendum A, which also contains the criteria to evaluate the responses from developers. These criteria place important weight on incorporating Defensible Space principles.

The designs submitted by developers in response to the first issuance of the RFP proved unacceptable. The housing authority chose not to make any award. The developers and their architects did not seem to grasp what we were after. The written design guidelines, alone, were not enough to evoke either the image of the buildings or the site plan layouts we desired. It was clear that the developers and their architects had to be shown illustrations of what we wanted. Again, we asked HUD to allow us to include schematic site plans and building sketches, with the explanation that they were there for the developers' enlightenment only, and that they need not be followed. But HUD replied that the developers were not fools, they would soon guess that if they did not follow the schematics, they would not win the award. HUD nixed the inclusion of the schematics in the RFP once again.

The housing authority and I realized that we could not go on issuing RFPs and turning the developers' submissions down, or we would alienate the few developers we could attract. As it was, we were only getting bids from 2 out of 10 developers who had paid \$100 for the bid package. I had heard from local developers, many of whom I had gone out of my

way to attract, that because their names had been made public, they were receiving calls from important people in the community, advising them not to bid. The only bids we did, in fact, receive were from developers whose operations were well away from Yonkers, whereas most of the people who had picked up the bid package were experienced local builders.

We decided to employ the following strategy in this second round: When the developers came to pick up their packages, they would find a pile of schematic site plans next to the pile of packages. It was explained to them that they could either pick up the site plans with their bid packages or not. Most of them did. This time we got back three proposals that came very close to giving us what we wanted.

### ■ **Selection of residents**

The public housing residents who would move into the new units were expected to have the same socio-economic profile as those who lived in the old highrises. This is because 50 percent would come from the existing public housing projects and 50 percent from the housing authority's waiting list. The 200 families would be chosen by lottery from a list of 2,000 applicants. A comparison of the profile of the new tenants and those living in the large projects shows that they are identical.

It would be wrong, however, to conclude that just because their profiles were the same, that they were, in fact, identical. Although they had been selected at random, they had first to select themselves as candidates for the new housing. This is hardly random selection. It is self-selection toward the adoption of a new opportunity and lifestyle. And this may not be a desire that is universally held by all public housing residents.

### ■ **Training of residents**

Pete Smith, the housing authority director, believed that tenant training was a critical ingredient to the success of the program: The residents had to be prepared for the move. There were many things they did not know about living in a single family house with its own heat and hot-water system, and they were fearful. This move meant so much to them, they were very anxious to get it right. Smith was overwhelmed by questions. He suggested we bring in a professional trainer: someone who had done

this before. He knew Bob Mayhawk of the Housing Education Relocation Enterprise (H.E.R.E.) who had conducted training programs for a public housing relocation program in Greenburgh, a community north of Yonkers. He had a great deal of credibility within the African-American community and even ran his own radio station. The training program should be intensive, involve four or five sessions, include working with maintenance people in the new units and meeting with the community and the police, and provide the opportunity of going through various procedures that would be followed in case of the need for major repairs or other emergency responses. The training program would cost a bit, and Smith wanted to ask HUD to pay for it.

HUD objected and asked my opinion. I thought that Smith's housing staff might be able to handle the counseling, including his own maintenance people. I was concerned about going overboard in what we were asking HUD to do. But Smith disagreed: The tenants needed someone from outside the housing authority they could trust and feel comfortable with to provide a buffer between them and the complicated world they were entering. They needed an advocate they could ask seemingly dumb questions without feeling humiliated; someone to whom they could open up about their fears and reservations; someone with authority in the community who had been through this sort of thing in his own life. Smith decided he would find the money for Mayhawk's services from the housing authority's own budget.

A five-session program was given to all potential candidates for the housing. The sessions dealt with relocation, home maintenance, interpersonal relations, safety and security, and community resources. (An outline of these sessions appears in addendum B.) Mayhawk proved to be a very effective educator. He understood what the future tenants were worried about, knew what they were ignorant of, and knew how to explain things to them simply and to lead them slowly to an understanding and self-confidence. He said, "It was up to the tenants to make the program work and up to me to train the tenants to do that." Residents still keep in touch with him, and refer to him at meetings. He spoke with different leaders of the opposition in Yonkers and reached out to them. He even hired some of them to help in the training, involving them in the process of acclimatizing the tenants and the neighboring community to each

other. These former opposition leaders became liaisons in the community for the first 3 critical months. It was not by accident that the residents received flowers and baskets of fruits when they first moved in. After the tenants moved in, these trainers went door-to-door to help orient them.

Mayhawk also held meetings among tenants, business people, and community institutions: the latter including Sarah Lawrence College and Yonkers Raceway. He introduced residents to business people who might hire them. These meetings were closed, with only selected members of the public present. Truly open meetings would have deteriorated because the opposition groups would have descended on them, en masse, and disrupted them. The local media were intentionally kept away from both the training sessions and the tenant/community orientation sessions because inflammatory rhetoric had categorized much of their coverage of the case.

Police were also present at these orientation sessions and meetings with the community. Mayhawk emphasized that the housing authority and the police would be on top of everything going on, watching the community, watching the tenants. It was made clear that any tenants involved in illegal activities would be evicted. There were many subsequent turndowns by residents. Of the initial 2,000 applicants for the 200 available units, about one-third dropped out of the process. Residents knew they were moving into a fish bowl and would be under continual informal surveillance. Those involved in drugs or other unsavory activities bowed out. The teenage children of many applicants did not care for the move because the dislocation meant some of their friendships and peer group activity would end. The new developments were an hour bus ride away from the concentration of projects in southwest Yonkers. Many of the families who dropped out said they did so because of their teenagers' objections.

## ■ Results

Although none of the residents had any previous experience living in row houses with private front and rear yards, to the surprise of the middle-income residents of Yonkers the new residents quickly adopted the behavior patterns of their suburban neighbors. They planted flowers, further defined their grounds with low picket fences, and installed barbecues. They became



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**Figure IV-15:**  
*Residents' initial  
improvements to their  
front yards.*

fences and took on the further responsibility of maintaining these yards as well. It must be admitted that these picket fences and, initially, some of the flowers, were made of inexpensive plastic, but the spirit was there, and with time they were replaced by the real thing.

The police found no increase in crime in the neighborhoods surrounding the scattered-site units and no evidence that the gang or drug activity that was

prevalent in the old projects had transferred to the new. In an evaluation of adjacent housing, the local newspaper found that there was no decline in property values and no white flight. The Yonkers school board says there is no decline in the quality and performance of children in the schools. Residents of the scattered-site units are now making requests of the housing authority to avail themselves of HUD programs that would allow them to buy their units.



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**Figure IV-16:**  
*Residents' later  
improvements to their  
front yards.*

**■ Evaluation**

The following are excerpts from my interviews with Bob Olson, the chief of police, during the time the housing was put in and for 2 years thereafter, and Pete Smith, the executive director of the housing authority during the entire period up to the present. In their own words:

**Bob Olson, former chief of police, Yonkers:**

I was not part of the community mindset when I first came to Yonkers to be chief of police. The remedy order had already been issued, and I actually saw it as my job to change that mindset.

I attended some of the orientation sessions for the future tenants of the scattered-site projects—and their first meetings with small groups from the surrounding community. I was at the lottery. I saw how much they wanted to move in and do better for themselves. They were good people. I remember how excited they got when they learned they had been selected by the lottery.

My job was to convince the white community that their world wasn't coming to an end. I went to speak to community groups all over the east side, adjoining every site. I let them vent about what they feared would happen, then reassured them I wouldn't let any of it occur. Extra patrols would be put in initially—and on an as needed basis—I promised. The surrounding community was made up of people who had moved into Yonkers 2 decades ago and had bought their houses for \$60,000 and \$70,000; now they were worth \$250,000. Their houses were everything they owned. They were worried that prices would plummet when the public housing residents moved in. They knew about the drug

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**Figure IV-17:**  
*Residents' later improvements to their rear yards.*

scene and the prostitutes in the projects in the southwest—you only had to drive by to see them hustling on the street corners.

My concern was to make sure that that wasn't transplanted with the residents. My presence, or the presence of my precinct captains, at every orientation session and meeting with surrounding residents and businessmen must have done a lot to show everyone we were not going to tolerate any nonsense from either side. During the move-in and immediately thereafter we provided extra police presence—you know that, you specifically asked for it.

The doomsday scenario never materialized. The stories that were circulating before the moves took place were that the real bad folks would get into the units and create gangs, peddle drugs, women, etc. Then the neighborhood people would react by screaming and yelling, and possibly demonstrating. The newspapers would hype it all up as usual—accusing both sides of what they themselves were doing. The politicians would then jump on the bandwagon, and we would be national headlines again.

Some people were worried about how the police would react. My men were all Yonkers residents, and some came from families that were in Yonkers for two and three generations. There is no question that their views reflected the sentiment of the white community. But they were a very professional bunch, reflecting solid police values. Even if their personal sentiments went the other way, I knew that when push came to shove, they would do the right thing. Most of them liked things quiet around Yonkers. They didn't want a community in turmoil. They did not want to see the level of risk increase for anyone. They viewed the whole discrimination case as another pain in the butt—people feuding and fighting. They used to say of the politicians: those dumb SOBs could have been rid of this whole thing in the 1980s, if they had only agreed to put 80 public housing units on the east side.

We have had virtually no crime or crime problems from the scattered-site units. After 2 1/2 years of occupancy, the only complaints we have been getting are loud noise and music, someone's car broken into who lived in one of the sites, and kids from the units taking shortcuts to ballfields across their neighbors' property. When the neighbors came out and screamed at them, the kids retaliated by coming back with M80s. That needed some quick fence mending, schmoozing with the kids and the neighbors, asking each to give more than was expected of them in the way of politeness and tolerance. It worked.

You can't blame the neighbors for being upset: six or seven African-American kids with pants hanging below their butts, baseball caps turned backwards, walking across their lawn. We talked to the kids, asked them not to cuss, and not to tangle or argue with the neighbors. I said: "Even if they insult you, surprise them with politeness. That'll defuse them real good." And we asked the neighbors to remember that as tough as they looked, these were just kids. And if they yelled at kids, the kids would yell back—and more. Most of the complaints we get now are over an occasional wild party, and these complaints come from the other housing residents just as frequently as from the surrounding neighbors.

The lesson I learned from all this is that highrises shouldn't be used for anyone but elderly, and that elderly and kids don't mix. The other thing is don't put the poor African Americans in large concentrations. Boyfriends of welfare women come into town from Detroit, or wherever, and set up their women in their own apartments doing drugs and prostitution. And in a highrise, that contaminates the whole building, sometimes the whole highrise project. You have to be able to evict these people, quickly and easily. HUD's procedures take too long and go nowhere.

I like the idea of using women tenants as part of an in-house security force. The housing authority should be allowed to pay them five bucks an hour without HUD expecting to deduct that amount from the rent subsidy they get.

**Pete Smith, Director of the Yonkers Housing Authority:**

I don't have to tell you the whole thing is a resounding success. None of the anticipated nasty things happened. There was no transfer of crime from the projects—in fact, there is no crime at all in either the scattered sites or in the surrounding housing. There is no decline in property values in neighboring housing—as our newspaper's own analysis found out—and there is no white flight. Boy, did that newspaper want it to be different. People in Yonkers expected a complete failure. Expectations were so low, we couldn't lose. Ironically, the local newspaper helped us there. They were constantly saying that the scattered-site units would introduce crime, reduce property values, and send everybody running. When none of that happened, the presence of low-income African Americans in their neighborhoods didn't seem all that important.

Actually, we began winning when the community saw the buildings go up and the quality of the designs. They couldn't believe it—couldn't believe that we and HUD had actually kept our word. Then, when they saw the attitudes of residents who moved in—their concern for their grounds, their own policing of each other, their deference to their neighbors—the nightmare simply vanished.

There is still very little one-on-one social interaction between tenants and surrounding residents at most of the sites, but then we expected that. There are occasional community picnics when they do interact, but that's not what I mean. But they know that each of them is there, and behave with respect accordingly, and that's what's important.

There isn't even minor theft among residents on the sites, and you know what it can be like in public housing: people stealing each others' curtains. The residents now store their outdoor things openly in their individual back yards: bicycles, barbecues, lawn chairs, tents. These yards are only separated from each other by low 3-foot fences. Yet nothing disappears. That's because everyone knows it would have to be an inside job. You can't get into the collective rear yard area from the outside

because of the high 6-foot fencing that encloses the collective of individual rear yards.

Peer group pressure among the residents was the key. We set up tenants to be leaders on each site. They were chosen at the orientation program by the tenants themselves. This was such an opportunity for all the residents; they knew they had to make it work. After they moved in, community meetings continued to play an important part in the acclimatization process. Residents kept encountering things they were not prepared for. They wanted to know how far they could go in assuming control of the grounds. There were complaints about neighbors misbehaving, parking on neighboring streets, police not responding quickly enough, [and] paint washing off the interior walls when they cleaned them. These community meetings were held in parking lots, peoples' apartments, and community rooms. Each of the seven sites had four or five meetings a year for the first 2 years: until things settled down. Now the meetings are fewer, and the big subject for them is, "When will we be able to buy our units?"

If drug dealing goes on in the scattered sites, it is not evident. It is not in-your-face as it is in the large projects in the southwest. A basic requirement of drug dealers is being able to blend in with the scenery, so the dealers can spot a cop before the cop spots them. There is no anonymity in the scattered-site projects and the bordering streets. If a resident chooses to sell drugs from his apartment, he becomes very vulnerable. If his neighbors see too much traffic to his house, they catch on. And he never knows who is going to drop a dime on him.

With the residents doing such a good job of maintaining their own grounds, upkeep of the nonprivate areas of the scattered sites becomes critically important. We can't do less of a job than they do. That's why it was important that we select a good maintenance man, one who would be conscientious and flexible. We are all learning our way in this thing.

The only thing I'd do differently is not design any of the sites with more than 20 to 24 units. I know we didn't have a choice:

God knows we struggled to get the seven sites we did. And at one time we did have 10 sites and so could have put fewer units on each. But the 2 big sites, with 48 units on 1 and 44 on the other, will come back to haunt us. They're too isolated from their surrounding communities. They are so big, they form their own place. They're not totally integrated into an overall community, not supervised by the surrounding middle-class residents. Down the road, I think we're going to see a difference in the way the big sites perform and in the kids that come out of them.

It was your modifications to the Clason Point public housing project that sold me on Defensible Space. It's not that the concept didn't make sense intuitively, but seeing how the residents there reacted to the opportunity, that's what convinced me. You know, for me the best test of the Defensible Space theory was not the way the residents took over their own grounds and then began to defend the entire project, I kind of expected that, but it is the way they take care of their garbage cans next to their front walks. I, frankly, didn't think that would work. Making garbage disposal an individual thing, and making it clear to the whole world that if there was a mess on their front yard, it was the tenants' own doing, brought something out of the tenants that showed the whole world how badly they had been prejudged.

I bump into residents on occasion when shopping. They are finding jobs in local stores. They don't always report that they are working though, they're afraid they'll have to pay more rent. A lot of people now have jobs in the local businesses and institutions—some admit it, some don't. The residents' self-esteem really went up. I can't quantify it, but there is something special there, an amazing difference in their self-image. They seem so much more sure of themselves. Their kids share in that; they will do much better because of it.

When we held the lottery, only one-third of our existing tenants put their names on the list, that is 2,000 of our 6,000 households. There was apprehension in not knowing what sort of reception they would receive from their white suburban neighbors. But everybody in the authority has been following this closely, tenants and management, and if another lottery were held tomorrow, I know for a fact that 60 percent of our households would put their names on the list.

