

"Listen, I want't burn rich, believe me. Had to lose school in the sixth form when my mother died. I got to a night school to learn a trade. I wanted to better myself. Gotta break? Let me tell you something. What a Jew before the war wasn't exactly a letter of recommendation.

"I passed signs in the garment center. I don't make that much even now if they tell me I'm middle-income. Two kids in school, a wife who works so we can pay the rent and a heart attack to show for it.

"I got my fingers from East New York. Came to Forest Hills to get away from what's happening to these neighborhoods. What happens? I worked myself up to this neighborhood. Why don't they build the project on Beekman Place?"

—Frank W., resident of 108th St., Forest Hills.

"We and my four kids all live in this one room on Grand St. in Brooklyn. Our apartment was burnt out in a fire last year. My husband, he died before the fire. First they moved us to a welfare hotel. Now we're in this one-room place, you know the kind with a kitchen in back, on Lincoln St.

"The kids are asleep on the floor. I mean the apartment is nice and clean and everything works fine but there's just not enough room for us all. I would like to live in Queens next to my mother. Not in Brownsville or Cypress Hills. Like, the neighborhoods are going down. With kids you need a decent surroundings."

—Bernadette, a black mother and applicant in the interview room of the City Housing Authority.



Photo by Van DeCort.

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dent. There were stores on Pitkin Av., taller shops and department stores. It was the Fifth Av. of Brooklyn. Then they built the Sutter House and other projects. Look at Pitkin Av. today. It's a burnt-out shell.

Whether such decay is indeed directly traceable to low-income projects, a subject to be more fully explored in this series, is a debatable point. But, for people not equipped to make such sophisticated judgments, it seems obvious. Furthermore, few people would dispute that a disproportionate number of street crimes are committed by poor black youths.

Many Forest Hills residents, like Frank W., say they have heard personal experiences of muggings, purse-snatchings, vandalism, and extortion from their school-age children, both in the old neighborhoods and in Forest Hills as well.

"They're scared to death," said Haskell Lamer, the American Jewish Committee's New York Director. "I have never in my life felt a community to be so in terror."

"The neighborhood," says the Committee's one young mother complainant. "It's so bad here now that maybe it doesn't even matter if the project does come in."

Many black youths from Jamaica are presently being housed in Forest Hills—Rago Park schools and are accused by white residents of purse-snatchings, pilfering and extortion from other children. The feeling is that the project will lead to an increase of such incidents.

To placate the community, the city has already increased the number of units in the project to be set aside for the (usually white) elderly remaining 20 to 40 percent. In addition, the Housing Authority has given assurances to the community that tenants, first from Forest Hills and second, from Queens will be given top priority.

"When you consider that the Housing Authority has already received more than 400 applications from Forest Hills residents alone," said Congressman Herman Rubin, a supporter of the project, "you realize that the charge of the community being flooded with outsiders is patently untrue."

"The project has already been severely compromised," agreed HA Chairman Simon Golar, estimating that the final population will be a "good 75 per cent white."

The racial composition of New York City public housing tenants overall is: 47.5 per cent black, 21.5 per cent Puerto Rican, 20.4 other whites and 10.6 per cent nonwhite. Figures supplied by the Housing Authority.

Who disputes the fact that there is a dire need for units to house the poor, thousands of whom are now living in overcrowded, substandard conditions. The city's scatter-site program doesn't come close to filling the need. The city's public housing stock, or about 500,000 people, on the public housing waiting list. Under ideal conditions and without any other opposition, the scatter-site program would make available only about 6,000 units.

But the crucial question is whether or not the needs of the poor, which extend beyond shelter, are being served by housing them in middle-class neighborhoods, as the nationwide ideal of scatter-site envisions. Another question that must be asked is, how many of these people will this social experiment be conducted?

"By giving a poor man a new zip code number," asks Rabbi Joseph Grunblatt, a Forest Hills community leader, "are you giving them the same opportunities they need to make a better life?"

In other words, how much better off will Bernadette be if she becomes Frank W.'s neighbor?

Continued Tomorrow

## SCATTERSITE HOUSING THE BATTLE OF THE FOREST HILLS

ARTICLE I: A Clash of Values. By ANTHONY MANCINI and ROBERTA BRANDES GRATZ

FOR YEARS Forest Hills meant tennis courts to most Americans. The community has come to symbolize another, infinitely more serious, conflict. The name evokes, not only the lush landscaping riches, but of citizens brandishing pistol guns and, sometimes, flaming torches. It has become an arena of conflicting national values.

The issues surrounding the battle of Forest Hills are particular, and the housing concept in general, are now being thrashed out in the courts rather than streets—at least for the time being. While both sides await the decision of an appeals court on whether or not to halt construction, work continues on the project where they have almost completed placing the deep sleepings and are almost ready to pour concrete.

There has also been some activity in the Legislature, where the State Senate last week passed another bill designed to kill or cripple the project. The bill follows similar action in the Assembly but political insiders are taking neither bill seriously, suggesting that they were designed for symbolic rather than in any spirit of legislative reform. They are given little chance of approval in the Legislature or, it seems to that, on Gov. Rockefeller's desk.

The issues in the controversy are as major as the road-hour traffic on the Long Island Expressway, adjoining the site of the project.

There is also, especially in New York, a cloud of semantic confusion over just what the term scatter-site means, mostly when it comes to size and architectural considerations. From a sociological standpoint, there is a general agreement that the aim is to disperse, or "scatter," lower-income people out of the ghetto, thereby freeing them from the trap of slums.

Untangling the issues is no easy task but it must be done. For, when and if they finally get around to building the \$20,000,000, 860-unit complex—some compromise therefor—one project is in the borough of Queens, but for the entire national housing policy.

There are neighborhood and environmental issues, say city and federal officials who see the project as, among other things, a proving ground for social experiments designed to uplift the poor by opening up housing opportunities for them in middle-income areas.

Community control is the central theme, say opponents of the project. Blacks

of Forest Hills who, having adopted the rhetoric of the protest movement, fame that the project is being refused under their throats without their approval.

No, assert HA officials, racism is at the core of much of the opposition to the project on Grand St. in Brooklyn. One black and Puerto Rican families own a neighborhood which is now predominantly white, overwhelmingly Jewish and substantially middle-class.

There is also the fear that the project would not "break" the "Jewish character" of the neighborhood. "From the previous history of Jewish concentration in this good location to be here," said Dr. Alvin M. Lashinsky of the Queens Jewish Community Council, "that this central area of Queens will be transformed from a middle-class, contrasting area dependent on federal, state and city money, Jewish institutions, synagogues, and Jewish schools would then be abandoned at a frightful cost again to the Jewish community."

Not the least persuasive argument for scatter-site is the inescapable reality that local government cannot qualify for federal funds for public housing unless the projects are built in areas "outside of major concentrations."

All these elements are set off against the backdrop of an urban society traumatized by epidemic drug use, griped by racial strife and terrified by a rising crime rate. Namely, though, the problem is that Frank W. does not want Bernadette H. for a neighbor.

It's not so much because she's black but because she's poor. Forest Hills—as will future scatter-site projects—provides a habitat for a class of whites.

Rep. Edward Koch (D-Man.) a foe of the project but not of the scatter-site concept, expressed it this way: "Two traditions are in conflict. The first is an old, very American tradition: You get a right to the opportunity for a better neighborhood, give your children better schools, have a better life. You work hard, be thrifty and you'll be rewarded."

"The second tradition is that everyone has a right to the opportunity for a better life and some people, because of historical circumstances beyond their control, can't get it. The better life the government assists them, literally picks them up and moves them there."

"It is the third social appeal built into the project," said Dr. Thomas Matthew, Executive Director of the Economic Growth and Reconstruction Corporation (EGRC), "that blacks spokesman opposed to the scatter-

Forest Hills...ready by the concrete.

site concept. "By working hard and moving to a better neighborhood, you are realizing the American dream. But if you live in a neighborhood with a number of blacks, even if they are all Ralph Bunches or Jackie Robinson, the average white American doesn't get the glow and good feeling he's supposed to get when he's 'bettered himself.'"

Contributed to this situation are feelings of resentment, justifiable or not, over the fact that some "segments of our society" (and the blacks) are getting something for nothing, whereas working-class whites have had to struggle for every square they've advanced on the checkerboard of the American status game.

There is also the sentiment among working-class whites that few politicians or urban spokesmen of any stature are building careers on advocacy of the very real needs of the lower-middle class—who see themselves, not without some justification, as society's stepchildren.

Lindsay's withdrawal from the presidential race has raised few hopes of a compromise. In fact, with the pressure off from his advisors who may have feared his embarrassment by heifers, he is now in a firmer position to make a stand on principle, observers noted.

"Politics play a role," said Marvin Schick, Lindsay's special assistant for intergroup relations, "but not presidential politics. The factors that inhibit compromise, like cost, court decisions, what the community and politicians will accept, are independent of presidential candidates."

One local politician hoped the withdrawal would give Lindsay more time to work out a reasonable compromise "without heat and dissension."

Many of the people living in the vicinity of the project (which is on the perimeter of Forest Hills and a good distance from the Forest Hills) have had first-hand experiences with adjoining neighborhoods and rising crime. They moved there specifically to escape the problems of crime, sanitation and holdover residents that exist in some of the deteriorating neighborhoods of the city. It is the minds of most of such "refugees" the disintegration of the old neighborhood could be directly traced to the influx of poor blacks and Puerto Blacks, often after a low-income people who.

"When we first moved to East New York on the corner of Brownsville it was a beautiful, thriving community," Frank W., resident 1923-71, said.

"People had berries, grapes and gar-