

DESIGN TRENDS IN PUBLICLY ASSISTED
HOUSING WITH A FOCUS
ON MADISON, WISCONSIN

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Abstract

The design of publicly assisted family housing built in the United States between 1947 and 1981 was influenced by the historical context at the time in which it was built, defined as national legislation, the socio-political climate, and professional thought of the time. This study traces the design trends in publicly assisted family housing and how the design was influenced by the historical context. The focus is on housing built in smaller cities, using Madison, Wisconsin as an example. The study concludes by making suggestions for future planning of publicly assisted family housing.

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INTRODUCTION

The large number of publicly assisted housing projects built since the first major federal housing legislation was passed in 1937 attests to this country's efforts to provide every American with a decent home. This paper traces the design trends in publicly assisted family housing from the post-war era to the present. The focus is on housing built in smaller cities, using Madison, Wisconsin as an example. In this paper publicly assisted family housing is defined as any housing built specifically for low to moderate income families and financed by federal, state and/or local governments.

The time frame of 1947-1981 is discussed in terms of four approximate time periods:

1. Post-war housing and early urban renewal (1947-1954)
2. Later urban-renewal (1954-1968)
3. Scattered site
 - a. Early (1968-1975)
 - b. Current (1976-1981)

The variations in the design of assisted housing from one time period to the next can be attributed to the historical context in which the projects were designed. The historical context for each time period includes federal programs, the socio-political climate and professional thought.

Following the discussion of the historical context of each time period is an analysis of the design characteristics of a specific housing project, in Madison, Wisconsin. Our contention is that design changes in Madison's publicly assisted housing projects are representative of the changes that

occurred in the design of housing projects in many smaller cities across the country.

In undertaking our analysis of design trends, we have drawn on the work of experts in the field of housing design. Two sets of criteria are primarily used. The first is based on the major characteristics of defensible space as defined by Oscar Newman.

1. The capacity of the physical environment to create perceived zones of territorial influence: mechanisms for the subdivision and articulation of areas of the residential environment intended to reinforce inhabitants in their ability to assume territorial attitudes and prerogatives.
2. The capacity of physical design to provide surveillance opportunities for residents and their agents: mechanisms for improving the capacity of residents to casually and continually survey the nonprivate areas of their living environment, indoor and out.
3. The capacity of design to influence the perception of a project's uniqueness, isolation, and stigma: mechanisms which neutralize the symbolic stigma of the form of housing projects, reducing the image of isolation, and the apparent vulnerability of inhabitants.
4. The influence of geographical juxtaposition with "safe zones" on the security of adjacent areas: mechanisms of juxtaposition - the effect of location of a residential environment within a particular urban setting of adjacent to a "safe" or "unsafe" activity area.¹

The second set of criteria was developed by the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, with some additions by Sam Davis.

Requirements for family housing:

1. Community: to organize dwellings and spaces to promote social interaction.
2. Child Supervision: to provide visual and aural contact as well as easy access between play areas and dwelling units.
3. Security: to avoid unseen, inactive areas.
4. Maintenance: to minimize undesignated interior public spaces.

5. Liveability: to provide for individual privacy in dwellings, for alternative views, and for cross ventilation.
6. Responsiveness to context: to acknowledge and respect existing scale, light, views, etc.
7. Display identity of the household.
8. Convenient access to the automobile.
9. Flexibility: all varied use of space for alternate lifestyles.²

Although the critiques of Madison's housing projects depend partially on our interpretation of the work of experts, the observations are subjective and the sole responsibilities of the authors.

The final section of this paper compares the design trends of the Madison assisted housing projects. We offer some suggestions for future planning of publicly assisted family housing based on the conclusions drawn in the body of the paper.

POST-WAR HOUSING AND EARLY URBAN RENEWAL - HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The construction of low income publicly assisted family housing following World War II until the early 1950's was accomplished under various legislation and programs. Meeting the housing shortage for returning veterans and their families became a nationwide priority after World War II. Local governments financed housing for veterans through local bond issues. The federal government provided mortgage insurance for the projects.

The Housing Act of 1949 reaffirmed the intent of the Housing Act of 1937 to:

- qualitatively improve rental housing stock through demolition of substandard units and new construction;
- provide low income families with housing units at rentals within their financial capability.

Many early projects built during the 1950's consisted of one, two, or three story buildings. Lawrence Friedman pointed out that some looked like developments of little houses.³ He said this was especially true of projects in smaller communities during the early years of public housing. This resulted from the use of federal guidelines, nationwide beliefs as to what type of housing was appropriate, and common economic constraints. The projects tended to be spartan. The design of assisted housing projects may have suffered because of the caliber of the architects involved.

Vincent Scully says of these architects:

With some strikingly idealistic exceptions, they tended to be something less than the best qualified in the profession, since the talented man had more than the usual inducements during that period to go out in the traditional way and make a great name on his own.⁴

While the housing constructed by the public and private sectors looked somewhat similar there was a distinction in the thought process involved in the design of each. Svend Riemer makes several points.

The public builder has found himself in a somewhat different boat. Faced with a market that could not be very sensitive, because public residential construction at a subsidy level could not help being an improvement over previous slum dwellings, the public builder had to look beyond the consumer for guidance in the design of residential housing. With consumers failing or unable to respond, the public builder looked for some source of expert authority to appraise his construction activities.⁵

Riemer illustrates a lack of awareness of the value of existing communities. He implies that anything was better than the existing housing. This helps justify minimal amenities in the new projects constructed. The statement also points out that low income persons were not considered important participants in the design of the housing they were to occupy.

Low income housing of the early 1950's was intended for war veterans and working class families. The government assumed that these would be temporary homes for families who would move on to something better when able. The notion that families might spend their lives in public housing and call them home on a long term basis was not considered in the design of the projects.

POST-WAR HOUSING IN MADISON - TRUAX

The major project built in Madison during the postwar era was Truax. Truax was built in 1948 in the northeast corner of the city to house returning veterans and their families. It was funded through local bonds and its mortgage was insured by the Federal Home Administration (FHA). The project consists of ten three-story buildings, each containing twelve two bedroom

apartments. Designed by the Madison architectural firm of Weiler and Strang, the plan was revised extensively during the design stage. The Madison Housing Authority instructed the architects to revise the original plan to meet FHA minimum standards and to minimize costs. For example, the planned central heating system was replaced by a stoker-fired coal burning hot water heating system in each building.⁶ FHA standards allowed Truax to be constructed of painted concrete block, asphalt tile on concrete floors and plastered partitions, instead of the brick veneer of the original plan. The result was the green cinder block, flat roofed buildings which characterized Truax for the next 32 years.⁷

The peripheral northeast location of Truax has two major disadvantages. First, the project is far from stores, medical offices, schools, and other services upon which the residents rely. Second, because the airport is so close, it is unlikely that the surrounding empty fields will be developed as residential areas. The project was isolated from the main areas of the city for years after it was built and is still on the edge of town.

The Truax site plan has some strong points. The buildings form two U-shaped groups. Each group has an interior play area surrounded by parking. This arrangement creates the sort of defensible, private interior space Oscar Newman favors. In addition, children at play can be watched from rear apartment windows (see figure 1, p.8).

The site plan also has shortcomings. Children must go through the parking area to reach the play area, creating a safety hazard. The open ends of the U's detract from the definition of the interior space. The entire project has no boundaries to distinguish it in a positive way as a private housing

development. Its identity comes solely from the identical, unattractive buildings which differ from the surrounding area. Parking at the rear of the buildings detracts further from a positive identity for the project as both residents and visitors are likely to enter the buildings through nondescript rear doors.

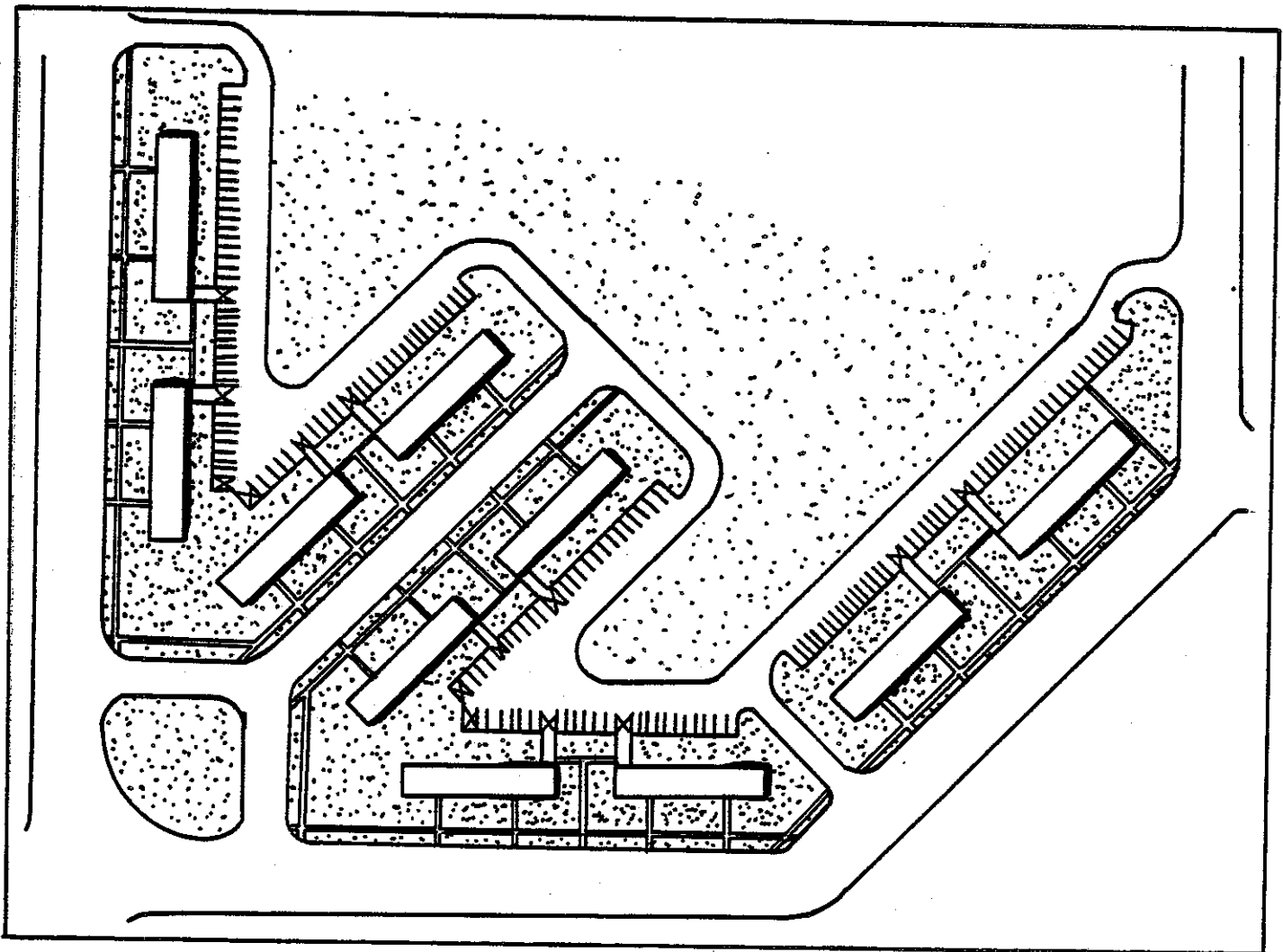
The buildings are the most serious problem at Truax. The identical buildings violate Sam Davis' principle of displaying the identity of the household. There is no community space in the buildings, such as a lobby, to promote social interaction. The absence of such minor conveniences as closet doors, (omitted to save money), make the units that much more unattractive. The facades of green cinder block and flat roofs give an institutional look to the development.

What was built at Truax was influenced by factors operating nationwide in the 1950's. Due to financial limitations and material shortages, cutting costs was paramount. FHA minimum property standards were used as guidelines for the building design. The housing was built for a group of people who would not be using it as permanent homes, with little idea of the change in the kinds of families who might later occupy it. Truax was never meant to be a family's life long "home" and it is not properly designed to fulfill that role. The shortcomings of the Truax design as permanent housing for low-income families are reflective of the national trends observed by Lawrence Friedman when he said:

Changes in public housing design were slow to reflect a major fact of public housing: over the years, the "better class" of the poor have left or been pushed out to be replaced by broken families, dependent families, and welfare families.⁸

The weaknesses of the Truax design have been publicly recognized and the Madison Community Development Authority is now completing a total remodeling in 1981 of the Truax building interiors and exteriors, playgrounds and parking areas. This remodeling will be discussed in a later section of this paper.

Figure 1



Truax--note parking between buildings and open play area; lack of definition of the boundary of the open space.

LATER URBAN RENEWAL - HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Housing Act of 1954 began to change the emphasis of national housing policy from slum clearance and an attitude of demolish and rebuild to rehabilitation and conservation. The 1954 Act initiated the requirement that local governments develop a "workable program" for community improvement in order to be eligible for federal funding assistance for housing for the poor. The workable program, among other things, had to include a master plan, code update, and specify relocation and financial resources.

During the 1960's, the federal government initiated several financing programs to break the pattern of government ownership of publicly assisted housing. HUD programs such as Section 202 authorized direct low-interest mortgage loans to nonprofit private corporations for multi-family housing for the elderly and handicapped. In the early 1960's, the Section 221 (d) (3) Below Market Interest Rate Program extended low interest mortgage loans to limited profit as well as nonprofit corporations who would construct multi-family housing for families. In the late 1960's, Section 236 also provided a subsidized mortgage interest rate for family units. The FHA was made responsible for subsidizing the mortgage interest rate and setting minimum property standards which served as design standards.

These FHA financing programs were used to encourage nonprofit and limited-profit corporations to become involved in construction and managing rental assisted housing. Although privately owned, many such projects were constructed on land the government cleared in deteriorated areas of central cities. The assisted housing projects of this period have been remembered primarily as large concentrated complexes of high-rise structures found in some of the larger American central cities, but the same programs were used

in smaller cities on a smaller scale. Urban renewal era housing projects have been characterized as cheaply designed and constructed and large in scale with few amenities, although many small scale townhouse developments were constructed for low and moderate income families during the same years.

The limitation on project amenities was due largely to guidelines set by HUD on maximum per dwelling unit cost for newly constructed units. During the 1960's, urban renewal lived up to its reputation as a slum clearance tool by removing 1.4 million housing units from the total stock through Federal programs.⁹ If two thirds of those demolitions affected households in need of housing assistance, then Federal programs destroyed as much low and moderate income housing as they produced during the 1960's.¹⁰

The HUD guidelines and regulations for the new assisted housing were detailed in requiring compliance with minimum property standards and with local governing bodies. Citizen participation was also required but was often lacking. As Sam Davis points out, "The large-scale urban renewal projects of the previous decades - although well intentioned - lacked the involvement of those who had to live there."¹¹

During the early urban renewal years it was widely believed that the deterioration of neighborhoods could be slowed only by demolishing all the buildings in the worst neighborhoods and starting over again. Any positive community feeling which existed in a neighborhood before renewal was largely ignored. In later urban renewal projects (post 1954), conservation and rehabilitation of some features of existing neighborhoods was included. Large scale concentrated projects, poor design, central city location, and management of tenant income limits continued to characterize many projects. Renewal neighborhoods often were stigmatized and negative attitudes towards residents

persisted. The practice of building publicly assisted housing projects in central cities rather than throughout metropolitan areas perpetuated the concentration of minority residents. This was true in both large and small cities.

LATER URBAN RENEWAL IN MADISON-BAYVIEW

The Madison Common Council approved an Urban Renewal Plan in 1961 for a triangular area bounded by West Washington Avenue, Regent Street and South Park Street, and a small area west of Park Street. Early decisions to remove all structures within the Triangle were considered the best way to conserve the neighborhood as a whole, although neighborhood residents were dispersed throughout Madison when the buildings were demolished. For example, the plan states that, "the area's potential can be realized only if a positive program of renewal action is undertaken to reverse the downward trend... if present trends are allowed to persist, blighting influences at work in the area will spread to adjoining areas."¹²

The Triangle had been a neighborhood of 1890's era houses, commercial buildings and community services inhabited by Italians, Blacks, and Jews. The Madison Redevelopment Authority established the project area boundaries, acquired all the land within those boundaries, removed all the buildings, and was responsible for all site improvements. The neighborhood was completely demolished between 1961 and 1964 but construction of the family townhouses didn't begin until May, 1970. Eventually newly constructed publicly assisted housing consisted of 307 elderly units, 111 family units and 20 handicapped units. A small supermarket and two medical office buildings were also built.

The focus of this critique is Bayview, the family housing constructed on the Triangle. The developer of Bayview was the non-profit Bayview Foundation.

In the early design phases the Foundation used the Section 221(d) (3) program but switched to the Section 236 low-interest mortgage loan program and an FHA insured mortgage by the time of construction. The Foundation's design criteria committee worked with architect Ron Bowen, the Madison Housing Authority, and HUD guidelines to develop an acceptable design. The original design was more costly than FHA per unit maximum costs allowed, so amenities were cut. Minimum property standards became maximum standards.¹³

As in other parts of the country, a main reason for the selection of the Triangle as an urban renewal site was its central city location. The Urban Renewal Plan stated that "despite the fact that the area has for the past few decades been in decline, locational factors give it a strong potential for providing the amenities that make up an attractive and desirable living environment."¹⁴ The Triangle is close to downtown, the University, and General Hospital. However, few employment opportunities and shopping facilities for low income families were provided at these sites. The Triangle is surrounded by three major busy streets which separate it from any adjoining neighborhood. This physical barrier and the large scale of development within the Triangle as compared to nearby areas discourage any connection to a neighborhood of non-assisted housing.

The Bayview family townhouses are located at the northeast tip of the Triangle, sited as five U-shaped modules of 2-story townhouses. Four of the modules are loosely grouped around a main parking lot, with the fifth structure facing a smaller parking lot with a separate street entrance. The main parking lot is not identified with any specific housing units, which discourages surveillance by the residents. Maintenance and vandalism are problems with many lights broken out of parking lot light standards, visible

trash dumpsters with loose piled up garbage, non-operable automobiles and graffiti on nearby unit walls (see fig. 2 p. 15).

Private outdoor space for individual units is not separated from community space. Many entryways to units are not visible from the parking lot, street, or module courtyards. Courtyards with hidden entries are not used as play or common areas but just as a way of moving from one corner of the structure to another, evidenced by the paths which have worn away the grass. No identity or sense of territoriality has been created for personal space belonging to individual units or clusters of units. This makes it hard to define who does and doesn't belong in the development. Surveillance opportunities for residents are low.

These design elements lead to perceptions by residents and outsiders that Bayview is a fearful, unsafe place. There are no statistics on violent crimes to prove or disprove the contention that Bayview is an unsafe place but the important point is that the design has worked to perpetuate perceived inadequate safety within the development. Oscar Newman suggests these design-resident links are the downfall of many urban renewal era assisted housing developments. Although he emphasized high-rise structures, his criticisms are applicable also to low-rise housing where design contributes to fear rather than safety. A cycle of perceived fear perpetuates itself as residents feel insecure in their environment, do not maintain it, and feel little responsibility or attachment to it.¹⁵

The location of the two playlots inhibits surveillance. Opportunities for supervision of children at the playlots is difficult because of the

distance of housing units from playlots. The larger playlot with several pieces of play apparatus is located at the outer edge of one unit cluster near the driveway entry to the main parking lot. This playlot has benches for people to watch children but the play equipment isn't visible from any of the housing. When the evergreen trees which separate the playlot from the townhouses get bigger, the playlot will be further separated from the townhouses. A smaller playlot is near two clusters of townhouses but has little relation to either cluster.

The different uses within the Triangle do not relate well to each other. The elderly housing is oriented toward the street, away from the family housing. The two uses are also separated by a fence and shrubs. In spite of this, elderly residents complain about the children in Bayview. The medical buildings do not relate to either residential area.

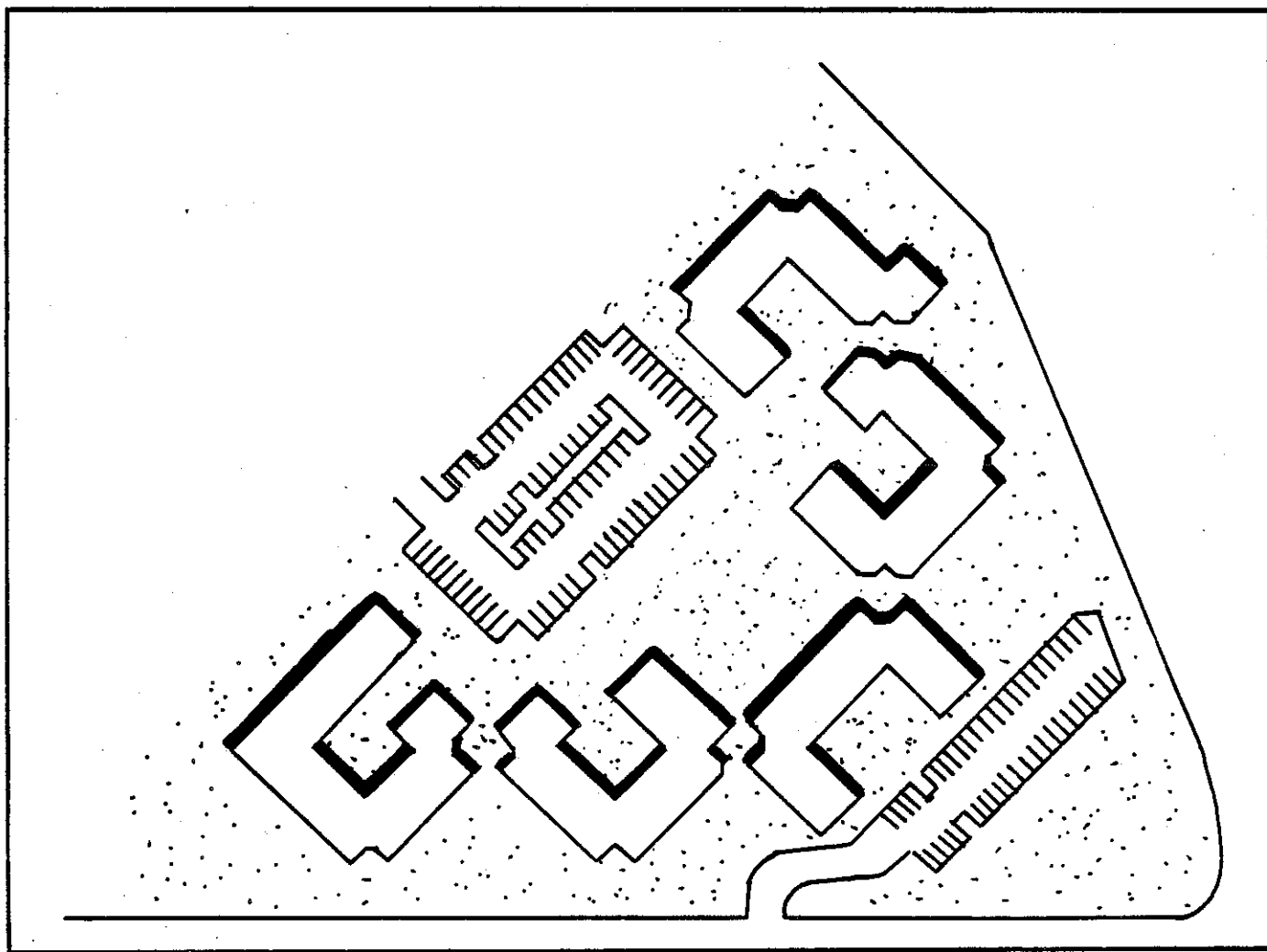
In the Mid-1960s, Dorn McGrath, then head of project planning and engineering for URA stated:

Federal review of local urban renewal plans does not judge quality or suitability; it is concerned with legal compliance. There...are no design criteria... (U)rban renewal is not much more than the power of eminent domain. It acquires and clears the land. It plans and builds nothing. That is the local responsibility.¹⁶

Madison's experience with Bayview indicates that local authority to determine what will be built is not as great as Dorn McGrath suggests. The Bayview Foundation was heavily influenced by FHA minimum requirements. These minimum requirements became the maximum standards. For example, early design plans included a community center which was deleted from final plans because FHA minimum property standards made no provisions for community centers or recreation facilities.¹⁷ Lack of integration of

the new housing with the surrounding neighborhood again is found in urban renewal projects in many cities. In Madison, it appears that publicly assisted housing was designed more to conform to a national norm than to any purely local desires.

Figure 2



Bayview--the large play area is to the upper left, as is the elderly housing.

EARLY AND CURRENT SCATTERED SITE - HISTORICAL CONTEXT

By the mid-1960s there was a general attitude of frustration concerning assisted family housing in the United States. The social and physical problems of slums and blight had not been solved. In fact, urban renewal efforts had resulted in new problems. The late 1960s produced a major shift in the development and administration of assisted housing programs. This shift was towards family rent subsidies rather than specific unit subsidies, and increased use of scattered site housing.

Implementation of the Housing Act of 1965 initiated rent supplements. Tenants would pay 25% of their income in rent with the federal government making up the difference between that and the market rate rent. The creation of the Department of Housing and Urban Development led to changes in policy. HUD wanted to use the rent supplement program to promote integration. This was one reason implementation of the 1965 Act was slow.¹⁸

The Housing Act of 1968 directly affected the design of assisted family housing. The movement toward rent subsidies in private buildings was strengthened. The role of private developers was increased, with a corresponding decrease in the role of local housing authorities. Specific design provisions were incorporated into the act, with an eye toward alleviating some of the problems leading to the riots of the mid-1960s. One such provision was the prohibition of high-rise building for families with children unless no other alternatives were available.

In the early 1970s, regional fair share housing plans were developed by agencies such as the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission in the

Dayton, Ohio area, the Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities, Minnesota, the San Bernadino County, California Planning Commission and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. These regional fair share housing plans were policy statements supporting HUD's goal of expanding assisted family housing opportunities in the suburbs. 1971 HUD site location criteria specified that a concentration of subsidized housing in any one section of a metropolitan area or municipality should be avoided and minority families should have a choice of locations in which to reside.

Many communities scattered housing projects in a variety of locations in the early 1970s. The family housing tended to be one and two story town houses and garden apartments. These new developments brought new problems. In spite of the low-rise nature of the buildings, the developments were often perceived as a threat by residents of surrounding neighborhoods. This might be because the developments were of a higher density than the surrounding area or because of the large number of units in some of the projects. The families residing in the assisted housing also found problems with the scattered locations. Basic services such as shopping, medical care, and social services were often difficult to get to without a car.

In the mid- to late- 1970s scattered site housing came to mean scattering units in small developments throughout all neighborhoods in a city. Family developments would range in size from one to fifty units. The rationale for the new approach was that objections about excessive negative impacts

in some neighborhoods of a community would be decreased by putting a small number of units in every neighborhood.

Communities are presently implementing the new scattered site concept. Site and building design criteria are being developed. Quality construction and materials are recognized as essential to community acceptance of the assisted family housing units. Efforts are being made to reconcile the need for high quality with the economic constraints of local government. It is hoped that these new developments will provide quality housing in a variety of locations.

EARLY SCATTERED SITE - IN MADISON - WEXFORD RIDGE

Several assisted family housing projects were built in Madison in the early 1970s. Most are owned and operated by private non-profit or for-profit corporations. The developments consist of two story townhouses in complexes of 246, 140, 104, and 93 units. The generally low density of residential areas in Madison meant that while new assisted family housing was scattered city wide, it did create concentrations in certain neighborhoods, particularly in the northeastern part of the city.

Wexford Ridge is a privately constructed and managed development on the far west side of town. It was built in 1974 under the Section 8 new construction program. It is the largest assisted family housing project in Madison with 246 units.

Wexford Ridge's location in a middle to upper-middle class residential area has succeeded in integrating racial and economic groups to some degree. The location has also caused some difficulties for Wexford Ridge residents. When the development was built it was not close to bus routes, stores, doctors, jobs, or social services. Although the surrounding neighborhood also had these locational problems, low-income families rely more on public transit and were greatly inconvenienced. Later building in the area has reduced inconveniences somewhat.

The size of Wexford Ridge has been a problem in two respects. First, the large number of units has limited the interaction of Wexford Ridge residents with non-residents. For example, with over 500 children in Wexford Ridge there is little incentive for the kids to go to the surrounding

neighborhood to find friends.¹⁹ Second, the large number of units was perceived as a threat by the developer of an adjacent high priced condominium development. He built a substantial fence between the two developments to "protect" his development.²⁰

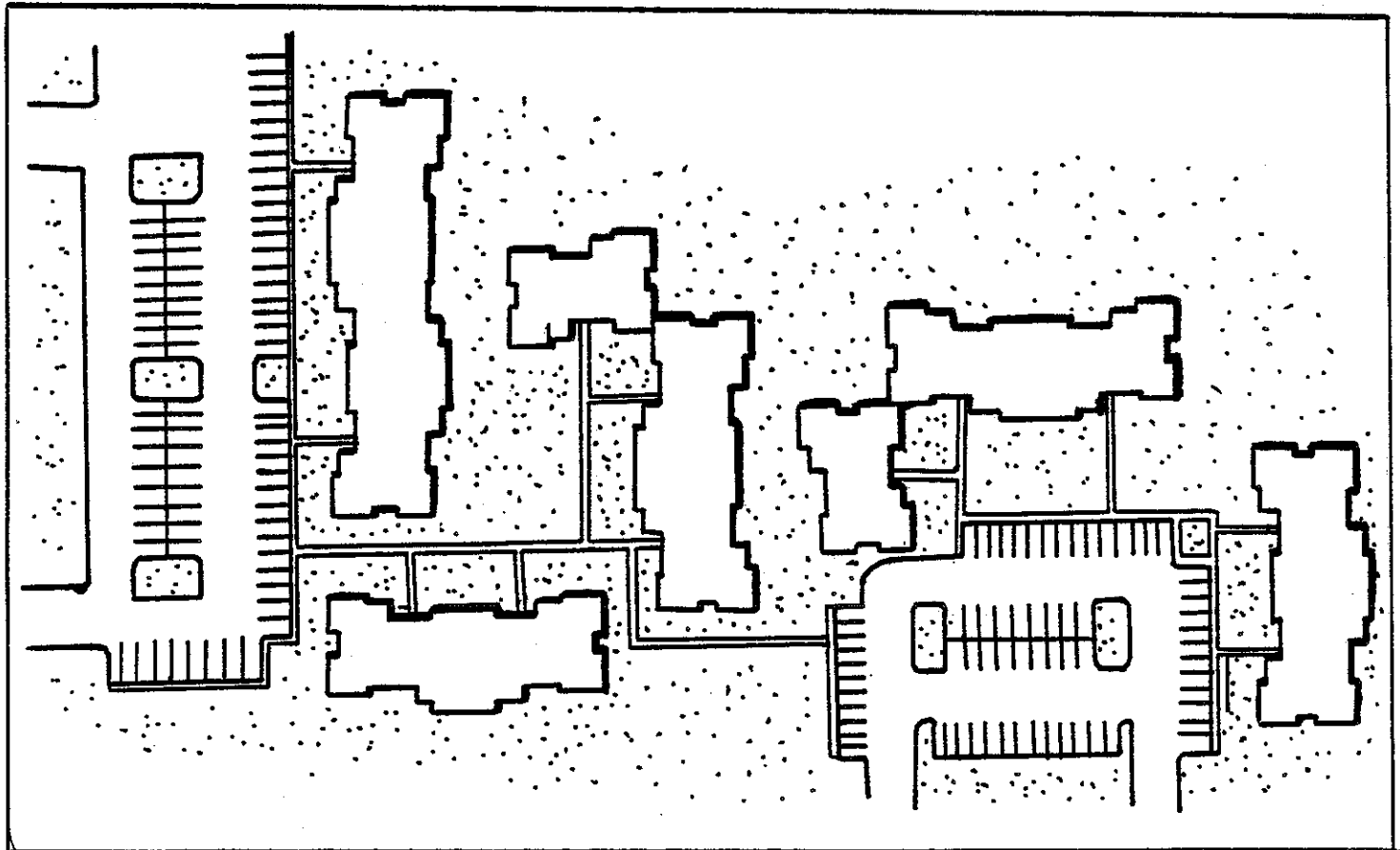
The building and site design of Wexford Ridge incorporate elements suggested by Sam Davis and Oscar Newman. Exterior materials are attractive and building facades are broken up by stepping some units back. Casual surveillance of unit entrances and development grounds is possible from the units. Some units are focused on courtyards, creating a sense of defensible space. Landscaping is adequate and softens the project (see figure 3 p. 21).

There are also flaws in the design of Wexford Ridge. Play areas were not originally provided for the children. A long strip of open slope creates a natural barrier dividing the project in two. A large parking lot has become a gathering spot for teenagers. No other area has been provided for them. The lack of a main entrance to the development has encouraged entry by non-resident teenagers, a situation which has led to some vandalism and is of concern to Wexford Ridge residents.²¹ Initial insulation in the buildings was inadequate. Maintenance has often been a problem.

In general Wexford Ridge is a well designed family development. However, when an assisted family housing development is built in an area dominated by much more expensive houses, it must be of an even higher quality than Wexford Ridge if it is to be integrated into the surrounding area. This is particularly true if the development is large in size. As

a result, Wexford Ridge has a clear identity as a lower class, lower quality development. It has not been able to overcome the assisted housing stigma.

Figure 3



Wexford Ridge--This is one of the better designed sections. Note parking lot surveillance and defensible open spaces.

CURRENT SCATTERED SITE IN MADISON - SOUTHRIDGE VILLAGE

In the late 1970s, Madison began to follow a trend toward provision of assisted family housing in scattered sites in much smaller sizes than the developments built in the early 1970s. The Madison Housing Authority and Common Council adopted "Criteria for Developing Scattered Site Family Housing under the Low-Income Public Housing Program" in January and February of 1979. The criteria stated:

"Scattered site development can achieve several significant social objectives including spatial deconcentration of low-income families and assisted housing, greater range of housing choices and opportunities for low-income families, and greater community acceptance of assisted-family housing."²²

Criteria for scattered site housing were drawn mainly from HUD regulations.

The policy to scatter public housing sites throughout Madison has been difficult to implement. In early 1980, the Common Council rejected a proposed 30-unit family housing development in Northeast Madison after area residents complained about the concentration of publicly assisted housing in their part of town. Shortly after, a Fair-Share Housing Plan Task Force was appointed by the Common Council and has put together a fair-share assisted housing allocation plan for the city which was approved by the Common Council in March, 1981. This is similar to the fair share plans of the early 1970s but at the city rather than regional level.

Madison's Housing Assistance Plans for 1976-79 and 1979-82 set up the framework to scatter units throughout the city in sites with less than 50 units each. Southridge Village, a 40 unit family housing development, and an adjacent 50 unit building for the elderly, were completed in late 1980 in accordance with the section 8 new construction program. A 40 unit development on the East Side was approved after being reduced from 50 unit.

The scattered sites have mostly been found on the East and South Sides, although the earlier constructed Wexford Ridge concentrates assisted units in a West Side location. Barriers to scattered site development on the West Side most often mentioned are the scarcity of properly zoned land, its expensive cost, and the nature of the West Side with its many single-family homes not lending itself to multi-family development as easily as the older, more densely zoned East Side.²³

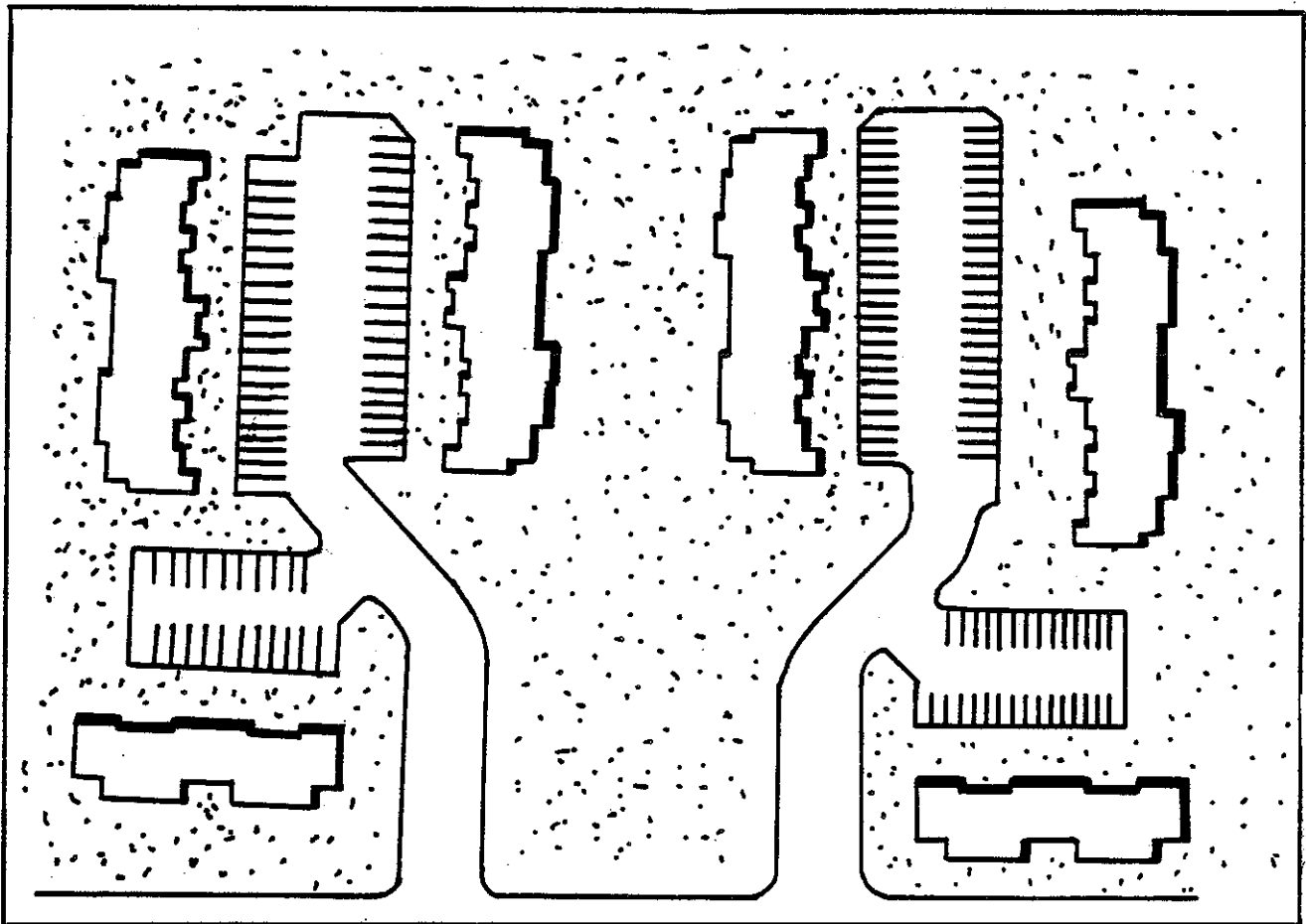
Southridge Village is located at the south edge of town in an area of recently constructed suburban-type apartments, townhouses, and quad-plexes. The surrounding dwellings are in a moderate rental and purchase price range, and look similar in physical quality to Southridge Village. There is a neighborhood shopping area within one quarter mile, with a grocery store and many supporting shops. Current bus service is limited south of the city's beltline freeway after 6 p.m.. This is a disadvantage for now but may improve when more people move into the area, as happened around Wexford Ridge.

Southridge Village is small in size compared to other assisted housing developments in Madison and the surrounding market-rate housing developments. The small size of the development is an advantage in that it does not overwhelm the neighborhood. City officials and developers have stated that having a resident manager in complexes under 50 units in size is not very economical so the smaller size of Southridge Village could be a disadvantage in that respect.²⁴ However, the fact that the elderly units are next to the family housing helps balance this out, and maintenance could cover both complexes together.

The buildings, which are eight-plexes and four unit townhouses, are divided into two clusters of three buildings each. The eight-plexes have four

units upstairs and four downstairs. Each cluster of units has its own parking area with its own entrance driveway, and every unit has a private entrance. A play area with play apparatus is located between the two clusters with some open space but the units backing onto it have no rear access to it. The residents will be able to observe the play area from the rear of their units but have no rear doorways onto the area. The parking lot is well lit and all parking is easily visible from dwelling units. This is a strong design feature, fulfilling the design criteria of surveillance, security, and easy access to the automobile (see figure 4).

Figure 4



Southridge Village--the play area is between the two middle buildings.

Note the great variation in the building facades.

The building and site design is equal or better in construction quality to the surrounding neighborhood. This is because of HUD and city regulations that private developers must follow now. This compatibility with the area will be another advantage for neighborhood acceptance of the development. The development is not fenced off from the neighborhood because its small scale does not threaten the area. In this case blending into the surrounding neighborhood may be advantageous.

People have lived in the development for less than a year so the way the design "ages" can not be analyzed at this time. The physical design is sturdier than some of the nearby housing and there are no obvious indications that Southridge Village is a low-income housing development. The residents of surrounding market housing and Southridge Village are moving into their homes at the same time. This may facilitate mutual acceptance as the assisted housing is not being constructed in an established neighborhood.

CONCLUSION

In looking at Madison's public housing over the period 1948-1981, certain trends can be seen. In this section the projects previously described will be compared and some summarizing conclusions drawn.

Publicly assisted family housing is now being designed specifically to meet the long term needs of its residents. This was not always the case. At the time Truax was built, it was assumed relatively secure families would occupy the housing for short periods of time. At the time Bayview was built, the construction of family housing was subordinate to a larger economic revitalization effort. Improvements at Wexford Ridge and Southridge Village over earlier housing reflect recent emphasis on good family housing.

The trend in Madison has been erratic concerning project size. The earliest projects, Truax and Bayview, were fairly small, although Bayview was one element of a larger project. Wexford Ridge is quite large. However, the most recent public housing construction, Southridge Village, is on a small scale.

Building quality has steadily improved, culminating in Southridge Village. This improvement reflects the realization that cheap buildings are not economically efficient in the long run (as the recent additional insulation at Wexford Ridge and remodelling at Truax illustrate). The higher quality of buildings is also part of an effort to make the publicly assisted housing blend in better with neighboring market housing. New city requirements for publicly assisted housing specify materials and construction at least comparable to minimum standards for market-rate housing.

Serious efforts are being made to locate assisted housing properly.

The varying locations of Madison's public assisted housing reflect these efforts. Projects have been located in central locations (Bayview) and suburban locations (Wexford Ridge). The current scattered site policy, as exemplified by Southridge Village, is based on past experiences. It is located in an area which hopefully will provide the right mix of integration with market housing and concentration of public housing so that the residents are not isolated and the development can be efficiently managed.

Publicly assisted family housing has historically had a poor image, as Truax and Bayview evidence. As a result, better developments, such as Wexford Ridge, never had a fair chance. As more developments like Southridge Village are built--small in scale and well constructed--publicly assisted family housing's image may improve.

Most of the projects have maintenance problems. Three factors are involved: poor original construction, residents who are hard on the buildings and grounds, and poor resident/management relations. Newer projects should avoid the first factor. Special efforts will have to be made to improve the other two.

Support services, such as community centers and daycare, are an asset to a development. No Madison project was built with such facilities permanently provided. Some projects, such as Wexford Ridge and Bayview, have occasionally had such services. Residents would like to see these services available regularly.

The remodeling of Truax exemplifies current thinking concerning public housing. The buildings are being facelifted outside. The new exteriors are similar in appearance to many recent market housing developments. The interiors are being modernized to facilitate family living. The site is being redesigned so that parking is in front of the buildings, improving surveillance and removing a safety hazard in the children's play area. Landscaping and a walkway system will define public and semipublic spaces. This should lend to a sense of territoriality, hopefully encouraging a sense of community. New balconies for each unit will provide a private outdoor space. All of these improvements reflect the knowledge gained by the City of Madison through its various housing projects as to what is necessary to make publicly assisted housing a decent home.

Presented below are a number of suggestions and points to be considered in planning future publicly assisted family housing. These suggestions are based on our analysis of past housing, ideas expressed by housing experts, and the comments of those living in and working with housing projects.

1. Projects should be designed to promote a sense of community. Two major factors involved in developing a sense of community are a strong positive identity and resident interaction. Following some of Oscar Newman's guidelines for creating territoriality, and creating an attractive appearance, can go along way to developing a positive identity. Designs which make casual contact between neighbors easy can increase resident interaction. Examples might be a central bank of

mailboxes, clustering units around a common outdoor recreation area, or providing a main entrance with an inviting lobby area.

2. Units should be individualized where possible. Families spending significant periods of time in publicly assisted housing should be able to make their unit feel like their home. Simple modifications such as putting names in addition to numbers on apartment doors, allowing residents to paint the interiors a color of their choice, and giving residents responsibility for landscaping immediately outside their doors could help.

3. Higher density multiple-family developments need not be ruled out for families if compensating amenities are provided. Many middle and upper class families are increasingly choosing to live at higher densities. These families can compensate for the higher density in several ways. They periodically escape it by going on vacations and sending the kids to camp. They can make the interiors of their homes more pleasant. Their developments can have exterior amenities such as heavy landscaping and swimming pools. Residents of publicly assisted family housing can't compensate in these ways. However, changes can be made which would help. Landscaping could be increased. Summer programs for kids are needed. Community centers can provide some of the entertainment equipment wealthier people have in their homes.

4. Support services are important to the success of a project. Community workers to help organize resident activities, ombudsmen to improve resident/management relations, youth workers for the children, and job programs for teenagers were all considered important by residents. Just putting people in a different housing situation is not going to enable them to overcome all their difficulties. Without support programs the benefits of improved housing are certainly decreased.

5. Maintenance problems must be overcome. The image of publicly assisted housing has been characterized by poor maintenance. This carries over to the wider community's image of the housing residents. Therefore, good maintenance is very important. Better quality construction and improved relations between management and residents would help. Another possibility is to hire some of the older children of the development to assist in maintenance. This would have the benefits of providing an inexpensive labor force, giving the kids some work experience, and helping them to develop a sense of pride in their homes, perhaps discouraging some potential maintenance problems.

6. Planners of publicly assisted housing should adopt some of the attitudes of prospective residents. There may be some features of the housing presently occupied by lower income families which they would like to have incorporated into the new housing. An example which occurred with some regularity in the Madison examples is the presence of old, non-functioning automobiles in assisted housing parking lots. To the average middle class planner these cars are an eyesore to be gotten rid of. However, to the residents, working on an old car is a form of recreation. In many poorer neighborhoods these cars sit in backyards. Some space should be allocated for them in publicly assisted housing developments. This is just one example of design considerations which are often overlooked due to the perspective of the planner.

7. Potential residents should be consulted in the early stages of project design. During the early, and sometimes not so early days of public housing, it was believed that low-income persons could not contribute anything of value to the planning process. More recent efforts,

such as a resident participation program in the remodelling of Truax, have proved this idea wrong. When asked what improvements they would make in public housing, residents there gave pragmatic answers such as more insulation, better maintenance and doors on closets.²⁵

8. Sites which integrate lower income families with those of middle and upper incomes, and also allow lower income families easy access to jobs, services, and recreation should be sought for future publicly assisted family housing. Housing located in suburban areas often has the advantages of better schools, more open space, and the opportunity to mix with people other than those of low income. Therefore, it should be encouraged. However, the housing should be located on or near buslines and near services relied on by the residents. This makes potential sites few in number, but is a goal that should be maintained.

9. Efforts should be made to improve the relationship between assisted housing residents and the residents of nearby market housing. Involvement of both the residents of the surrounding area and the prospective residents of the assisted housing in project development might help. The efforts of groups such as the Fair Share Task Force are a step in the right direction. After a project is in existence a committee with representative of both groups might work to diffuse conflicts.

10. Older publicly assisted family housing can be improved. The work going on at Truax is an example. Most of the above suggestions can be applied to existing development.

This article has looked at publicly assisted family housing built between 1947 and 1981. We have divided this length of time into four

periods based on the historical context of each period. We have concluded that the historical context, defined as national legislation, the socio-political climate, and professional thought of the time, significantly influenced the design of projects built in each period. This conclusion has been illustrated with an example of a specific housing project built in Madison, Wisconsin during each time period.

It is our belief that publicly assisted family housing has improved over time. The needs of residents are better understood today and the design of housing reflects a desire to meet these needs. We have made several suggestions for further improvements. These suggestions are presented in the belief that providing a decent home for every American remains as worthwhile a goal now as in the past.

FOOTNOTES

1. Oscar Newman, Defensible Space (New York: Macmillan Co., 1972), p.2.
2. Sam Davis, ed., The Form of Housing (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1977), p. 1.
3. Lawrence Friedman, Government and Slum Housing: A Century of Frustration (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1968), p. 119.
4. Vincent Scully, American Architecture and Urbanism (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1967), p. 7.
5. Svend Riemer in Robert E. Merton, ed., Social Policy and Social Research in Housing (New York: Association Press, 1951), p. 6.
6. Minimum Property Requirements for Properties of Three or More Living Units. Federal Housing Administration, August, 1948.
7. Madison Housing Authority, Minutes of meetings from November 11, 1947 to July 12, 1948.
8. Friedman, p. 121.
9. Karen Nattrass and Bonnie Maas Morrison, ed., Human Needs in Housing: An Ecological Approach (RF Publishing Inc. for Michigan State University, 1975), p. 220.
10. Ibid., p. 220.
11. Davis, p. xiii.
12. Redevelopment Authority of Madison, Triangle Urban Renewal Plan, August 24, 1961.
13. Sol Levin, telephone interview, July 8, 1981, and Gene Gangstead, personal interview, July 24, 1981.
14. Ibid.
15. Newman, p. 2.
16. Friedman, p. 119.
17. Sol Levin interview, and Minimum Property Standards for Low Cost Housing: A HUD Handbook. December, 1968.

FOOTNOTES (cont.)

18. Friedman, p. 121.
19. Margaret Vanderpool, personal interview, December 6, 1980.
20. Elaine Goff, personal interview, July 1, 1981.
21. Margaret Vanderpool interview.
22. Madison Housing Authority, Criteria for Developing Scattered Site Family Housing under the Low-Income Public Housing Program, December, 1978, adopted January 11, 1979.
23. " 'Scattered' public housing: East Side 32, West Side 1," Wisconsin State Journal (Madison, Wisc.) November 24, 1980.
24. Elaine Goff interview.
25. Alicia Ashman, personal interview, December 5, 1980.

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Interviewees and Meetings Attended

Alicia Ashman, former Alderperson and Chairperson, City Plan Commission,
Madison, WI, December 5, 1980.

Eugene Ganstead, Housing Development Coordinator, Madison, WI, July 24, 1981.

Elaine Goff, Housing Operations Manager, Madison, WI, July 1, 1981.

Bill Kellman, former Assistant Director of Community Services, City of
Madison, July 7, 1981.

Sol Levin, former Director of Madison Housing Authority, July 8, 1981.

Margaret Vanderpool, former President, Wexford Ridge Residents Association,
December 6, 1980.

Fair Share Assisted Housing Task Force, October 8, 15, 29, 1980.

PREVIOUS OCCASIONAL PAPERS

1. Impact of Tax Base Equalization on Local Development Planning.
Dr. Jack R. Huddleston, October 1979.
2. Adaptive Reuse of Closed School Buildings in Madison, Wisconsin.
Debra Allen and Thomas Hartz, January 1980.
3. An Ethical Perspective on the Land Planning Urgency.
Jerome L. Kaufman, September 1980.
4. The Size and Variation of Development Subsidies Under Wisconsin Tax
Incremental Financing.
Dr. Jack R. Huddleston, September 1980.