

A STATUS REPORT:

**The Neighborhood Stabilization Program
of**

The New York City

Commission on Human Rights

A STATUS REPORT:
THE NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION PROGRAM

New York City Commission on Human Rights
52 Duane Street
New York, New York 10007

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NEW YORK CITY COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

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Roger J. Martin, Project Director

Joan M. Thompson, Deputy Project Director

FOREWORD

This report is an attempt to describe the activities and accomplishments of the Commission's Neighborhood Stabilization Program over the past two years.

Issues of fair housing, integration, and neighborhood life are central to the Commission's concern and mandate. As the Chairman of the Commission, I am extremely proud of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program. From my many contacts with community residents at meetings and hearings I know that the program has had an impact. Neighborhoods are not buildings, parks or schools and certainly not lines etched on a planner's map. Neighborhoods are people! And the relationships forged between people of different races, religions and nationalities are the keys to neighborhood strength and vitality.

The program has grown from three offices in 1976 to eight in 1980, including two new offices in Sunset Park in Brooklyn and Jackson Heights/East Elmhurst in Queens which are in the process of being established.

Other communities have requested the Program and the Commission anticipates being able to open up new offices in Astoria, Queens and in the northern tier of Staten Island in 1981.

As a final note, let me add a personal word of thanks not only to the people who labored to produce this report but most especially to the staff of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program whose dedication, zeal and hard work have produced the results and accomplishments which are described in this report.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Isaiah E. Robinson, Jr.", written over a horizontal line.

Isaiah E. Robinson, Jr.
Chairman

INTRODUCTION

"Neighborhood Stabilization" has become a catch phrase, a bandwagon slogan of the late 'seventies that has attracted a wide assortment of standard bearers. Local urban politicians speak of the "stabilization of our neighborhoods" in the same breath as lower taxes, law and order, and better schools. The City of New York Police Department has established special Neighborhood Stabilization Units to walk the beats of the city's middle-class neighborhoods. As we prepare to enter a new decade, the battlefield in the campaign to save our cities has become the middle-class neighborhood. The strategy in that battle has become stabilization. Effective choice of the battlefields and effective use of the strategy was initiated by the New York City Commission on Human Rights in 1975.

The Neighborhood Stabilization Program of the New York City Commission on Human Rights was developed to promote permanent integration in city neighborhoods and to stem the flight of middle-income residents from New York City. By the early 'seventies, the Commission had realized that the greatest challenge to integration in housing involved a combination of attitudinal and social factors. Few individuals would give up their jobs when their work places were integrated, but it was not uncommon for people to change their residences when their neighborhoods were integrated. The phenomena of "white flight" and the subsequent flight of other middle-income people from the

cities, producing huge increases in minority and poor urban populations, made housing integration an elusive and unrealized goal. Only partially susceptible to law enforcement measures, this growing challenge demanded an innovative program of complex social strategies.

In confronting these complexities, the Commission first developed an enforcement program in housing aimed against block-busting and racial steering, two extremely harmful real estate practices that ensured the resegregation of integrated neighborhoods. But eventually it became apparent that intensified legal enforcement was not sufficient. A much more comprehensive approach to the theory and practice of housing integration was needed to address the phenomena of flight and resegregation. Thus the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, the first of its kind in the nation, was born in New York in October 1975.

The basic assumptions of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program were:

- . Flight of middle-income residents deprives cities of the necessary tax base to meet the needs of the remaining residents.
- . Because of historic and present conditions that left minority people disproportionately poor, cities where minorities were disproportionately concentrated would have too few resources to meet their needs.
- . To retain a viable tax base, cities would have to seek ways to encourage their middle-income population of all races and ethnic groups to remain in or return to the

city (without displacing the existing residents) by making urban life a more attractive option.

- . The issue for neighborhoods was not only racial or socioeconomic change, but also the rapidity with which change was occurring. Virtually no neighborhood that was experiencing rapid change, and the physical deterioration and social disorganization that so often accompanied such a change, could be seen as a healthy, stable, and desirable area.
- . Much of the flight of middle-income residents - primarily white, but increasingly minority families - had been generated by fear and a sense of helplessness in the face of what appeared to be insurmountable urban problems.
- . Specific strategies of interventions, chiefly at the neighborhood level, before or very soon after such change had started, could prevent instability, resegregation, and physical decay, and at a fraction of the cost it would have taken to reclaim already deteriorated areas.

To prevent the rapid racial turnover of solid middle- and working-class neighborhoods, and to encourage permanent, viable integration as an alternative to resegregation, the Program relied on two basic strategies: enforcement of the laws against blockbusting, racial steering, and exclusion, and the development and implementation of stabilization techniques such as block,

tenant, and merchant organizing; support of neighborhood promotion and affirmative marketing; and support of community improvement and revitalization projects.

The Neighborhood Stabilization Program, as it operates through its central and field offices today, is essentially a preventive effort, using staff as catalysts for community action and self-help. The Program seeks to preserve neighborhoods before they slide into the cycle of resegregation and deterioration from which even the most extensive and costly government efforts may not be able to retrieve them.

Reflecting the Commission's central concern for maximizing its effectiveness, the Neighborhood Stabilization Program is unprecedented in its attempt to bring management approaches to community organization tasks. Operating on a milestone basis, it identifies specific problems that can realistically be dealt with on a local level, designs specific goals to alleviate these problems, and sets a strict timetable for achieving these goals. Not only does this approach assure well-managed staff efforts, it has a far-reaching effect on community viability: by participating in setting goals, as well as working for and reaching them on target, community residents gain confidence in their own ability to build the health of their neighborhoods, and in their determination to stay instead of flee.

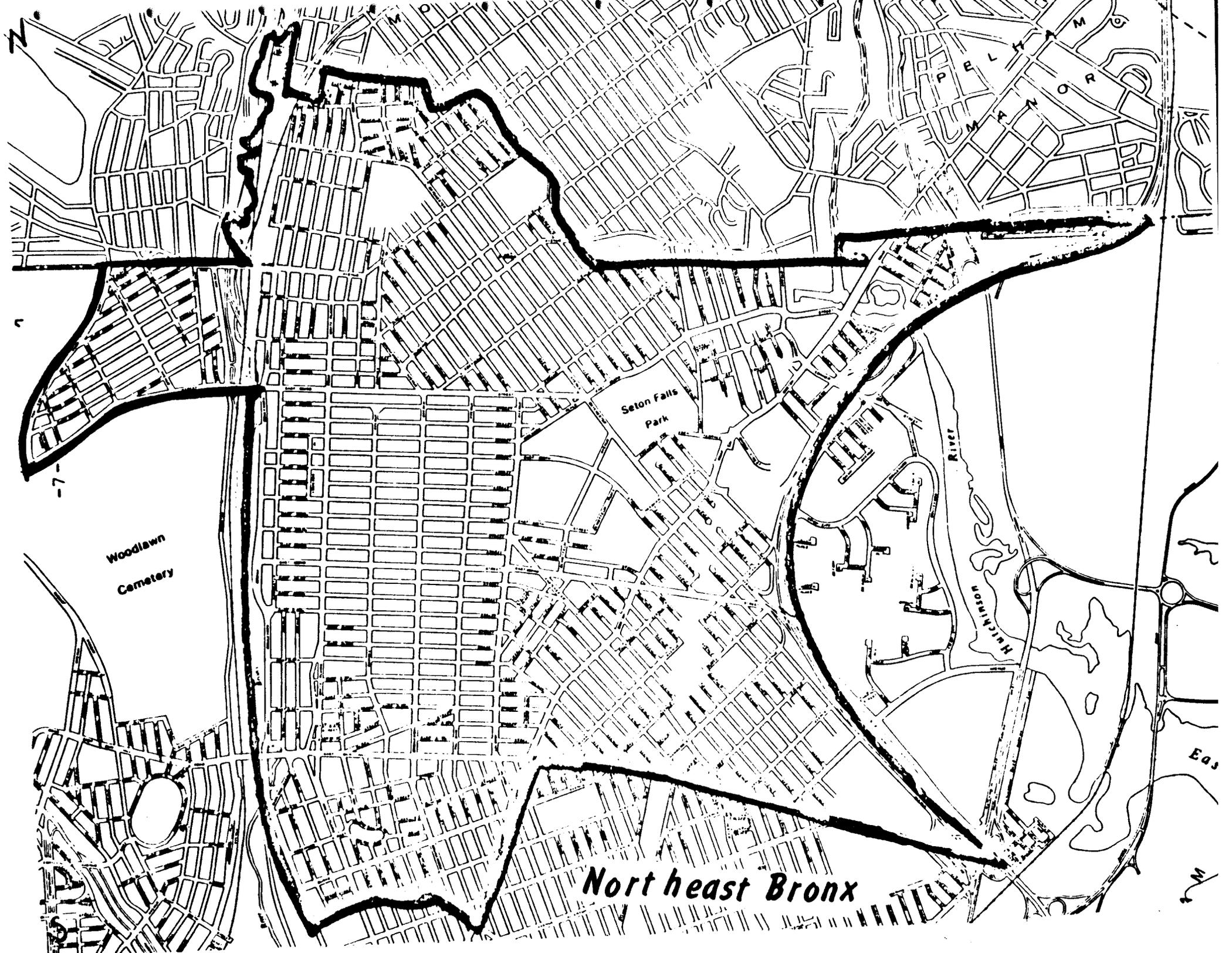
The systemic housing enforcement program against blockbusting, racial steering, and exclusionary practices has two basic goals:

to assure equal opportunity in housing for all home and apartment seekers, and to enable integration to occur naturally and in a peaceful manner.

The community organizing techniques, as the main thrust of the Program, vary from field office to field office. The original communities chosen to participate in the Program in 1975 in Southeast Queens, Northeast Bronx, and Flatbush/E. Flatbush - were targeted specifically because they presented variations in the dynamics of the urban exodus. With the addition of five new offices since 1975 (Lefrak/Corona, Far Rockaway, and Flushing in Queens, an East Bronx office, and East Flatbush in Brooklyn), the Program has been involved in a wide spectrum of problem situations demanding individual and often unique strategies. It is in the development of such strategies and their permutations that the Neighborhood Stabilization Program of the City of New York offers cities everywhere insights into specific preventive measures against urban deterioration, resegregation of neighborhoods, and middle-class flight.

The bulk of this report deals with the strategies of Neighborhood Stabilization as developed and practiced by each of the Program field offices. The report describes the activities employed by the housing enforcement arm of the Program working out of the central office, as well as the efforts of the redlining, and research and evaluation units; but the focus remains on the Program as it functions in the field, in the individual communities that have, with the help of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, begun the renaissance of urban America.

North east Bronx



Woodlawn
Cemetery

Seton Falls
Park

Hutchinson
River

Northeast Bronx

East

West

NORTHEAST BRONX

The Northeast Bronx Neighborhood Stabilization Program began operations in January 1976. The target area is coterminous with Community Board No. 12 and includes the neighborhoods of Woodlawn, Wakefield, Williamsbridge, Edenwald, Thruway, Parkside, Baychester, Fishbay and Olinville. The area consists primarily of one- and two-family homes, with a concentration of apartment buildings along the White Plains Road corridor. There is a tremendous diversity of racial composition, quality of housing stock, problems, and level of community organization in these nine neighborhoods, but the staff has made a concerted effort to demonstrate to all groups that an appropriate strategy can be developed to deal with the unique problems of their neighborhoods. Therefore, NSP staff has a visible presence throughout the district and is working with many groups, both new and old, and on many projects.

During 1978 the Northeast Bronx NSP organized 14 tenant associations and 13 block associations. This block and tenant organizing is essential for our goal of bringing grassroots people together to work on common issues and problems. It is the foundation of NSP work. The experience of mutual cooperation, concern, and effort breaks down barriers of misunderstanding, prejudice and fear.

TENANT ORGANIZING

Housing Profiles

Housing profiles documenting physical and financial conditions were prepared by NSP staff for many of the apartment buildings in the district as an initial task to help set priorities for tenant organizing. Profiles were for over 400 multiple-dwelling buildings including data on tax arrears, building-code violations, owners, mortgage holders, and physical conditions. Site surveys and research of print-outs and records from the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), the City Planning Commission (CPC), and City Records provided the data base. These profiles are updated regularly.

Housing Organizing Clinics

The condition of apartment buildings continues to be one of the most important issues for NSP focus. In an effort to reach more tenants in the densely populated parts of the district and in an effort to develop more tenant leadership to help us organize, Housing Organizing Clinics were set up in 1978. Staff and experienced tenants counsel, train, and organize tenants. Thirty-three different organizations have cosponsored the various clinics, which are publicized in English and Spanish.

Tenant Council

North East Bronx Tenants Council, organized by NSP staff, is the only group that speaks for the large tenant population

in this district. It is the umbrella coalition for all the tenant associations in the area served by Community Board No. 12. It has worked on code enforcement and heat and hot water issues and is the main cosponsor of the housing organizing clinics. Over 12 tenant associations belong to the Council. This will be a key group over the next five years. As the Council develops it will take over NSP's job of tenant organizing, lobbying, and advocating much-needed housing programs and reinvestment in the apartment house stock.

FEDERATIONS

Beyond the basic block and tenant work, NSP is committed to helping build broader-based community groups that can act as umbrellas to the grassroots organizations and remain as permanent structures for community improvement after the Program has gone. In the Northeast Bronx a number of these organizations are in place, including the following.

The Williamsbridge Federation

The Williamsbridge Federation, a coalition of more than 30 organizations, was organized by NSP staff. This group has incorporated, put out its own newsletter, The Williamsbridge Voice, worked on a sanitation project, received funding for a CETA Title VI employee, cosponsored (with the merchants association) and coordinated festivals, parades, and church tours, and has run a number of fundraising projects. Williamsbridge has been the neighborhood that has made the most demands

of staff, especially in requests for organizing block and tenant associations. By assisting the Federation in growing and getting staff, we expect that the neighborhood will be better able to deal independently with the major issues concerning it: security and sanitation, decline in the housing stock, lack of youth facilities, and the need for commercial revitalization on White Plains Road. It will be crucial area for NSP concentration for the duration of the program.

The Little Red Schoolhouse

P.S. 15, The Little Red Schoolhouse, is a four-room 100-year old schoolhouse that had been unused for many years. It is located in the northern portion of the district, on a plot that was slated for redevelopment. The community felt there were important local uses for the building, and organized The Little Red Schoolhouse Committee, Inc., to develop it into a community center. To date this group has obtained historical landmark status for the building; gotten a dollar-a-year lease from the City Department of Real Estate; done extensive cleaning and painting inside and made the furnace operational so the building could be used for meetings, classes, events. It has raised more than \$170,000 through contributions, grants, Community Development Block grant (CD) funds and activities such as a country fair, flea market, benefit concert, and raffles. About \$104,000 of this money will be used to complete the rehabilitation of the building; and applied for CETA Title VI

staff lines. The Little Red Schoolhouse will become a major focal point in the Baychester community. It will provide much-needed programs in the arts, culture, and education. From this group will come many of the leaders who will show the way in this neighborhood. We have helped develop the group as a model of what community residents can do to create local resources and facilities for themselves

The Carriage House

The Carriage House Committee was organized by NSP. It is now in the process of developing physical plans and programming for the conversion of the old Carriage House building behind Town Hall on White Plains Road into a Community/Cultural Center. The Committee, Community Board #12, and staff worked to get \$250,000 put back into the Capital Budget for the rehabilitation of both the Carriage House and Town Hall.

The Baychester Coalition

The Baychester Coalition of Civic Organizations was organized in the southeast part of the district. It is composed of 15 organizations and is focusing on issues of security and youth. This group was responsible for a major cleanup in Summer '79.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING WORKSHOPS

Leadership development is a key activity in any community improvement effort. Organizers work with leaders of block and tenant associations to help them function more effectively; from these associations more experienced leaders emerge to develop

and strengthen the community-wide umbrella groups. Because the task of training individual leaders is so time consuming, the Leadership Training Workshops were developed to carry out this activity more efficiently - and with the bonus of establishing communication links among various groups. It is interesting to note that the founders of the Williamsbridge Federation were among the graduates of the first Workshop.

Since developing the Workshops, staff of the Northeast Bronx NSP have run five of the workshops graduating a total of 44 community residents from block, tenant, merchant, and security associations. The six-week course focuses on interpersonal and administrative skills via role playing, discussions, and group exercises. A comprehensive package of training materials has been prepared for the workshops.

A more advanced level of Leadership Training Workshops is being developed for late 1979 - 1980. Shorter introductory sessions for leaders who are just starting out are also being developed.

MERCHANTS

The Wakefield-Williamsbridge Merchants Association was reorganized by NSP in 1976 and developed fully in 1978. This group, now one of the strongest and most visible merchant associations in the Bronx, has received \$14,800 in 3 grants from the Merchant Association Grant Program for Security Systems (Buddy Buzzers) and over-the-sidewalk lights and

store directories. Efforts to attract shoppers have included lengthening time on parking meters and cleaning with a sidewalk vacuum donated by OTB.

The Wakefield-Williamsbridge Merchants Association has realized an increase of 75 member stores during 1978 and has been the Bronx Chamber of Commerce as an affiliate member. During 1978 the merchants also produced three editions of their own newsletter, The White Plains Road Consumer News, and cosponsored three sales weeks and parades. A measure of the group's stability and leadership role is reflected in the numerous contributions it made to a wide diversity of local groups.

In addition, NSP staff has organized merchant associations on Boston Road and Burke Avenue.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

An Economic Development Committee, developed by NSP staff, is made up of the Wakefield-Williamsbridge Merchants Association, the Williamsbridge Federation, the Economic Development Committee of Community Board #12, the Cecil J. Lane Chamber of Commerce and Williamsbridge NAACP, and other public and private agencies. Its first two major projects are development of a comprehensive commercial revitalization plan for CD V funding and setting up a local development corporation (LDC). The plan includes physical improvements, off-street parking facilities, a vest-pocket industrial park, loan packaging, and a promotional brochure to attract new businesses to the area. This group is one of the

keys to the economic viability of the community and NSP has been assisting the group in getting its own staff to follow up on service issues, run promotions, tie in with other local groups, etc.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The NSP office publishes a monthly newsletter, The Stabilization News. A total of 7,000 copies are given out to community residents each month. Articles on organizing and issues such as redlining, self-help, and community resources are included. Many articles are sent in by community residents and plans are being developed for community sponsorship of its own newspaper.

NSP staff in both the Northeast and East Bronx offices have coordinated two Bronx Neighborhood Conferences. A total of 300 people attended the 1978 conference at Fordham University, which was cosponsored by many groups and agencies from across the Bronx. A number of task forces have been set up as a result of the 1978 Bronx Conference and plans are being made for the 1980 Conference.

NSP has organized two civilian security patrols operating in Wakefield and Olinville. A resource library has been set up in the office with information on a number of topics and issues. This library is available for use by the entire community.

The Community Service Directory, first published in 1976 by the Northeast Bronx NSP office, continues to be a "best seller." This guide is a reference book for local residents that shows them how to get help from public and private groups on many issues. A new and expanded edition is now being prepared.

CONCLUSION

Much remains to be done. The Northeast Bronx NSP plans to go forward in establishing a local development corporation in the area to shepherd the commercial revitalization efforts on White Plains Road. Two Model Blocks and a promotional brochure will be produced and a market analysis will be completed. Staff and residents are beginning to develop a long-range promotional plan for the district, including slide shows focusing on specific neighborhoods, photo essays, promotional brochures, and house and neighborhood tours.

The Williamsbridge Federation will be strengthened, increasing membership to at least 50 groups. A house tour and brochure promoting the area are planned.

At P.S. 15, the Commission has been designated as the official city sponsor charged with coordinating CD construction funds that have been allocated. Funds must be obtained for operation and staff expense. This work will be continued and expanded so that the Little Red Schoolhouse Center can

develop to its fullest potential. The success here will hopefully be duplicated by the Carriage House Committee so that these two satellite community centers begin to address the need of district youth, for educational and cultural activities.

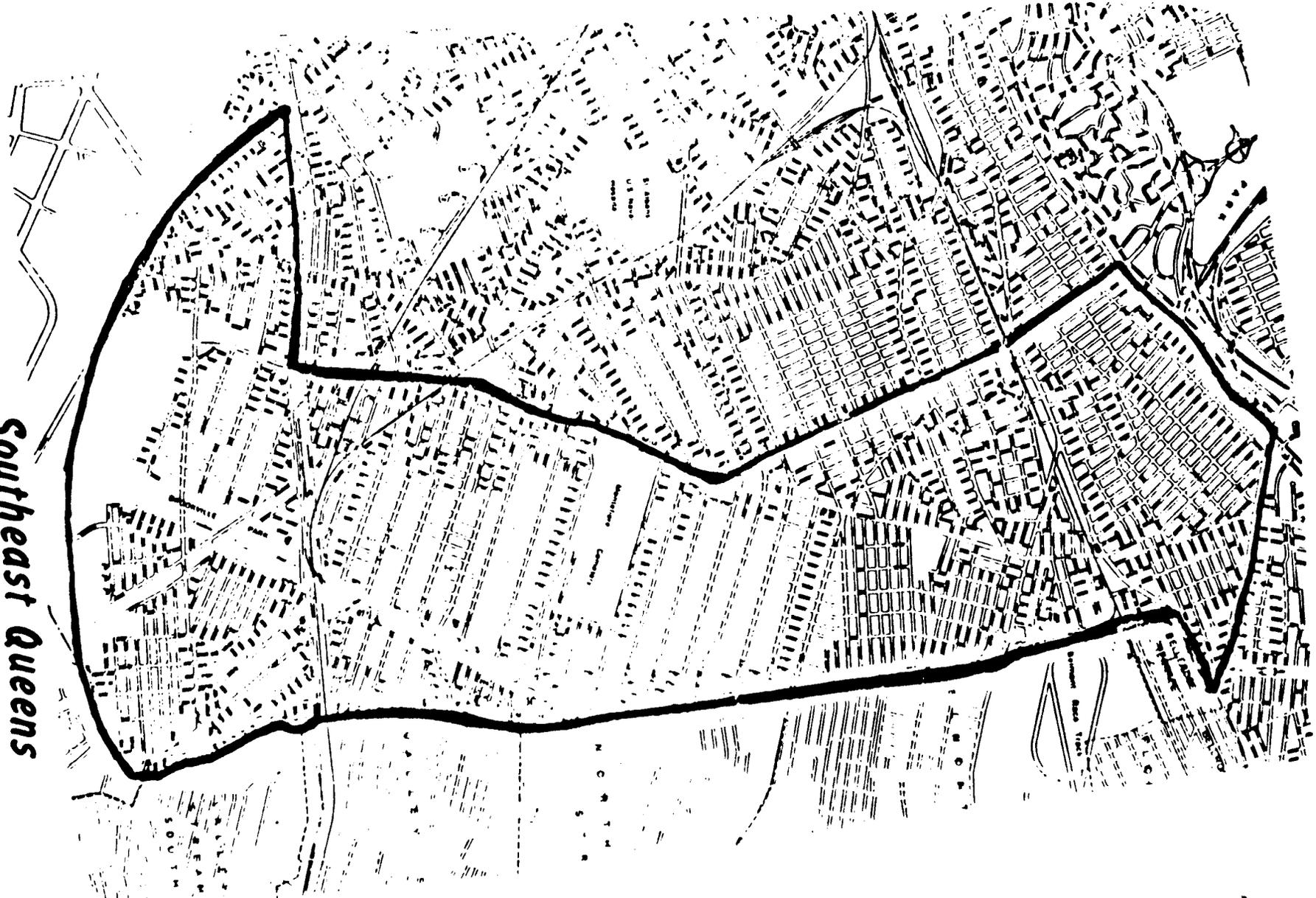
The Tenants' Council will be assisted to grow to at least 40 member groups so that they can staff the Housing Organizing Clinics. The ultimate aim is for the Council to be an authoritative and powerful voice for all the tenants in the district.

Finally, the staff of the Northeast Bronx Neighborhood Stabilization Program, in cooperation with community leaders, agency heads, and the community planning board will prepare a 12-month action plan for the district. Consolidation of efforts and the setting of priorities will be the hallmarks of this plan, so that the district can reach its fullest potential for the residents of its member neighborhoods.

These major projects are all organized around a central theme. As in all our offices, the NSP must reach a point when it has done its work and can move on. If these goals are reached, the responsibility for the effort to stabilize and maintain the community will be taken on by local residents themselves. It is our belief and conviction that they will be ready and prepared to assume this responsibility.

Southeast Queens

South East Queens



SOUTHEAST QUEENS

The Southeast Queens office of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program has been in operation since January, 1976. The target area encompasses two-thirds of Community Planning Board No. 13 and includes the communities of Queens Village, Cambria Heights, Laurelton, Rosedale, Brookville, and Springfield Gardens. The area is almost exclusively comprised of one-family homes with a small sprinkling of garden apartments.

The following are highlights of the office's activities during 1978.

ORGANIZING EFFORTS

Block Organizing

The initial thrust of the Neighborhood Stabilization program in Southeast Queens was the organization of block associations. Emphasis was placed on the formation of a viable network of grassroots groups in each community in order to ensure support for programs and services that the leadership of those communities perceived as vital to stabilization. Seventy-nine block associations were formed in 1978. This increased the total number formed by staff, since early 1976, to more than 200 associations.

In those areas where viable civic associations existed, attempts were made to tie the smaller block associations into the local civic group. In South Queens Village and Brookville this strategy achieved moderate success. Membership in these civic associations has risen; the associations have become more representative and thus more effective in their activist roles for their respective communities. It is the individual block associations, however, that have offered dramatic evidence of the resurrection of community spirit in the Southeast Queens area.

In Queens Village, the Progressive Block Association of 223rd Street set up a junior block association in response to the needs of their youth. The junior block association has become the focal point of coordinated activities for the young people of the block and has sponsored competitions, field trips, and summer recreation programs. The senior association established a scholarship fund in 1978 for members active in the junior association in order to encourage their participatory role.

The Concerned Citizens for a Better Community - a block association in southwest Queens Village - purchased a snow blower for its members. The 111th Avenue United Block Association was successful in securing stop signs for their neighborhood from the Department of Traffic, after an intense campaign.

to coordinate activities aimed at increasing business volume: sales days, street fairs, facade improvements, franchise development, and physical revitalization.

In August 1978 a series of sales days was held in Laurelton, culminating in a street fair at the end of the week. Developed around ceremonies to kick off the City's multimillion dollar revitalization effort along Merrick Blvd., the street fair drew well over 1,000 participants. The Neighborhood Stabilization Program financed promotional efforts such as street banners and flyers, and paid for a newspaper advertising campaign.

Two series of sales days and a street festival were held on 243rd Street in Rosedale in 1978; promotional and organizational assistance from NSP included street banners and newspaper advertising. Most businesses on the strip recorded a dramatic increase in business during these days, averaging almost three times the sales volume of comparable nonsale days.

NSP staff also has been instrumental in formulating and completing marketing surveys and title searches on commercial properties for the purpose of coordinating commercial development. It has and will continue to work with groups such as Laurelton's local development corporation in planning commercial revitalization strategies.

FEDERATIONS

Springfield Gardens Federation of Block Associations

In coordination with Community Board #13 and with the support of NSP, several block associations in Springfield

The 211th Place Block Association began a security patrol in 1978 to protect the property and safety of its resident members. The 211th Street Block Association received a \$100 SNAP award from the Citizens Committee for New York City for a street beautification project.

The block associations' civic enthusiasm and involvement havenot been limited to the boundaries of their own streets. This last Christmas (1978), two separate blocks held fundraising activities for projects involving more than their immediate memberships. The Springfield Boulevard Block Association raised funds for underprivileged youth, and the 110th Monterray Block Association held a fundraiser for the benefit of the entire community's senior citizens.

Merchant Organizing

The major emphasis in the strategy of stabilizing neighborhoods was developed after the program was established in the targeted areas. It soon was recognized that grassroots organizing that excluded the commercial sector in any community was a partial and therefore ultimately ineffective measure. The staff found that most of the major commercial strips had merchant associations that had atrophied from lack of any impetus from membership. Therefore, they set about reorganizing these dormant associations as well as organizing new associations on the smaller strips.

Once a viable merchant association has been introduced (or reintroduced) on a strip, NSP staff work with the merchants

Gardens moved toward federation in late 1978. Led by the President of the 144th Terrace Block Association and working with the area coordinator of the local community board, these block association presidents recognized a need for a viable and responsible umbrella group for their activities.

In the summer of 1979 the Federation secured Youth Board monies to operate a summer program. By the end of the year the Federation had received \$50,00 from the State Division for Youth to set up a year-round youth program.

Cambria Heights Leadership Coalition

Initially formed by NSP in 1977, to bring together the many active civic groups in the community, the Cambria Heights Coalition continued its coordinating role in 1978. The Coalition served as the basis for an ad hoc committee to oppose the closing of Chase Manhattan Bank branches in Laurelton and Cambria Heights; the closing of these institutions was viewed by the community as a symbol of withdrawal of their commitment to servicing the community. Sponsoring meetings, demonstrations, and media releases, the coalition brought the struggle to the attention of the entire city of New York. Cooperative activities such as the Chase Manhattan episode emphasized the value and need for the Leadership Coalition in Cambria Heights if its member organizations are ever able to be totally effective in the service of the entire community.

DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Local development corporations provide communities with the kind of umbrella organization currently available that can legally receive large-scale public and private funding for community improvement. NSP secured outside legal counsel for the Federation of Laurelton Block Associations in their effort to establish a local development corporation for the community. Presently, the corporation is involved in the following two vital projects that will impact on the community.

Foreclosure Retrieval Program

The Foreclosure Retrieval program will be effected through HUD. It involves FHA-insured foreclosed homes in both Laurelton and South Queens Village. Because of the high concentration of viable block associations under one umbrella group in these communities HUD has favorably received a plan to establish the Laurelton Development Corporation as managing agent and broker for all FHA foreclosures in the two communities. A successful operation of such a pilot project can break a vicious foreclosure cycle that increases turnover and poorly maintained homes, and begin a return to a fully occupied, viable housing stock in both communities.

Coordination of Commercial Revitalization Efforts

The Development Corporation, with assistance from NSP staff, has begun the coordination, with the steadily strengthening Merrick Boulevard Merchants Association, of the physical

revitalization of the commercial strip along Merrick Boulevard. The Corporation has begun actively soliciting the movement of new businesses to the strip in order to anchor the growing commercial stability and provide the community with a neighborhood merchant community that is capable of profitably meeting its own needs.

ST. CLARE'S YOUTH CENTER

In early summer of 1978, the Rosedale area of Southeast Queens was experiencing a buildup of racial tensions, especially among the youth. An emergency meeting of top-echelon city officials was convened at St. Clare's Church by Community Board 13 and NSP, and St. Clare's Youth Center was established as the focus of a coordinated effort to reach out to local teenagers.

NSP helped develop a proposal for the Center's continuing and expanded operation, and lobbied in the Center's behalf with the New York City Youth Board to secure the funding. A boxing program was set up. NSP helped obtain boxing equipment and persuaded the Police Athletic league to make available coaches, staff, and other technical assistance equal to a contribution of \$15,000.

Since the infusion of city monies and support, the Center has expanded its activities to embrace both the Rosedale and Laurelton communities, serving both black and white youth. The staff of the Center also was integrated after its expansion.

St. Clare's Youth Center has since then, and especially in the summer of 1978, played a pivotal role in keeping racial tensions below the breaking point.

RACE-RELATIONS TEAM

Having dealt with several racial incidents in the Southeast Queens Neighborhood Stabilization area, primarily involving young people, NSP staff introduced the concept of a race-relations "strike team". Consisting of a black and a white community organizer, this team investigates and offers suggestions toward conciliation of specific racial incidents within the area. Since its establishment early in 1978, the team has gained credibility and respect among law-enforcement agencies, school officials, community leaders, and the local youth.

In its investigations of incidents in local schools, and in follow-up efforts with school staff and administration as well as the Board of Education, the team was able to promote the establishment of a peer-relations seminar at a local high school. Students were involved on a peer level to work out their fears, angers, and frustrations in a controlled atmosphere. This resulted in a lessening of tensions among those students which had a ripple effect on the feeder schools in the area.

The race-relations team has followed up its investigations with vigorous support and monitoring of the apprehension and prosecution of the perpetrators of violent acts of racism. This method of ongoing support for the victims and the community

as a whole has itself had a positive impact on community confidence and security.

SOUTHEAST QUEENS COALITION AGAINST REDLINING

Redlining is the refusal by financial institutions - such as banks, savings and loan associations, and insurance companies - to invest in certain urban neighborhoods. This creates a situation in which it is difficult and costly, if not impossible, for homeowners, apartment building owners, and small-business people in such areas to obtain mortgages, refinancing of existing mortgages, business loans, home improvement loans, and insurance. Redlining, or disinvestment, is harmful to the community as a whole as well as to individuals, because owners are often unable to maintain or improve their properties without such financing, and homes and buildings deteriorate.

One mechanism communities have available to combat disinvestment is to challenge, through the State Banking Department, requests by a bank to open or close an office.

The Southeast Queens Coalition against Redlining (SCAR) was established in 1978 to challenge an extension of Dime Savings into Suffolk County on the basis of that bank's disinvestment history. This NSP-sponsored coalition has expanded its efforts to investigate all banking patterns and practices in the district. The coalition has acquired the services of a full-time staff person from the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG).

Presently based in the Southeast Queens Neighborhood Stabilization Program Office, the Coalition staff will carry out research on bank practices, do investigations, and attempt to achieve conciliation agreements from the banking community for the benefit of the local neighborhoods.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The network of block associations formed since 1976, existing federations and civic associations, and the highly organized merchant groups have taken strong leadership roles in special projects initiated by the Southeast Queens Neighborhood Stabilization office. These projects have been aimed at fostering stabilization, revitalization, and a sense of community in the neighborhoods of Southeast Queens. Ongoing activities generated from these projects, and projects actually begun in 1978, contributed significantly to the strengthening of the southeast Queens community this past year.

Leadership Training Workshops

Conducted in the spring and fall of 1978, the Leadership Training Workshops were a series of six sessions designed for grassroots leaders and potential leaders within the community. The workshops consist of specific training in the mechanics of grassroots leadership, ranging from such basics as how to run a good meeting and how to use agendas, newsletters, etc. to more complex issues such as negotiating, group development and so on. A total of 27 community residents have received certificates of completion to date. A third Leadership Training Workshop

is planned for the fall of 1979. It is anticipated that such workshops will build a cadre of new and supportive leadership in the southeast Queens communities.

Volunteer Park Projects

In October and November 1977, nearly 150 residents from the Brookville section of Rosedale participated in park cleaning and planting projects in both Brookville and Springfield Parks. Cosponsored by Community Board #13, NSP, and the Parks Council, the projects achieved their specific aims of community mobilization and park beautification. In the spring of 1978, after the record snows had given up possession of the parks and playfields, local communities began to experience the fruits of their cooperative labors. In Springfield Park and Brookville Park, tulips planted by volunteers bloomed along bicycle paths and woodland trails. The garbage that had littered the grassy knolls and stands of trees the previous autumn was gone. The parks had become a source of community pride: pride in their newly adorned appearance, pride in the community efforts that brought about these changes.

Historic Plaque in Rosedale

In July 1978, a bronze plaque in memory of Derek Amberman - a Revolutionary War patriot and martyr - was dedicated in Brookville Park. Cosponsored by the Rosedale block associations, the Rosedale Civic Association, and the New York City Commission on Human Rights, the plaque symbolized the pride of a community with a history of distinctive service to the county and the city. Recognition was also given to the work of Louis Polovsky, town

historian and past president of the Rosedale Civic Association, for his efforts on behalf of Rosedale and his initiative in spearheading the project to acquire the plaque for the community.

"History of Rosedale" for Local Schools

Louis Polovsky's 1976 publication, "History of Rosedale," was perceived by the Neighborhood Stabilization Program to be a valuable tool in the education of local school children. As Mr. Polovsky noted shortly before his death, the children of Rosedale would then have access to the story of their own very rich patriotic heritage. The Neighborhood Stabilization Program purchased 250 copies for distribution to local libraries and schools. The proceeds of the sales were donated by Mr. Polovsky to the Rosedale Senior Citizen Center.

Community Homefinders

The Southeast Queens Neighborhood Stabilization Program funds certain promotional efforts of Community Homefinders of Laurelton. As an affirmative-action, volunteer, nonprofit home-brokering group, Community Homefinders coordinated its efforts last year with Fund for an Open Society, a nonprofit, pro-integration organization based in Philadelphia. Through nonfee referrals and low percentage mortgage packages, the group has placed more than 30 families, both black and white, in the Laurelton community. The families have contributed to the integrated character of the community, and many have themselves become leaders in the community grassroots activism that has won Laurelton national recognition and praise.

Section 312 Loans

The Section 312 Loan Program, sponsored by the Department of Housing, Preservation and Development in New York City, has existed in South Queens Village on a pilot project basis since November of 1978. Aimed at the correction of building code violations and the general improvement of residential dwellings, the Program makes low-percentage, long-term loans available to qualified homeowners. Thanks to initial survey work by NSP staff in 1977, HPD's subsequent familiarity with the neighborhood, local community board sponsorship, and support from the Borough President's office, the community of Queens Village, south of Jamaica Avenue, was designated one of the first eligible neighborhoods in Queens.

Default Counseling

A rise in mortgage foreclosures in communities like South Queens Village and Laurelton has resulted partially from the fact that many homeowners do not understand how to approach and work with lending institutions when those homeowners fall behind in mortgage payments. Two of the Southeast Queens Neighborhood Stabilization staff are HUD-trained professionals in default counseling. This office has been able to successfully negotiate a repayment schedule of mortgages - thus avoiding foreclosure - in more than half the cases that come to NSP for help.

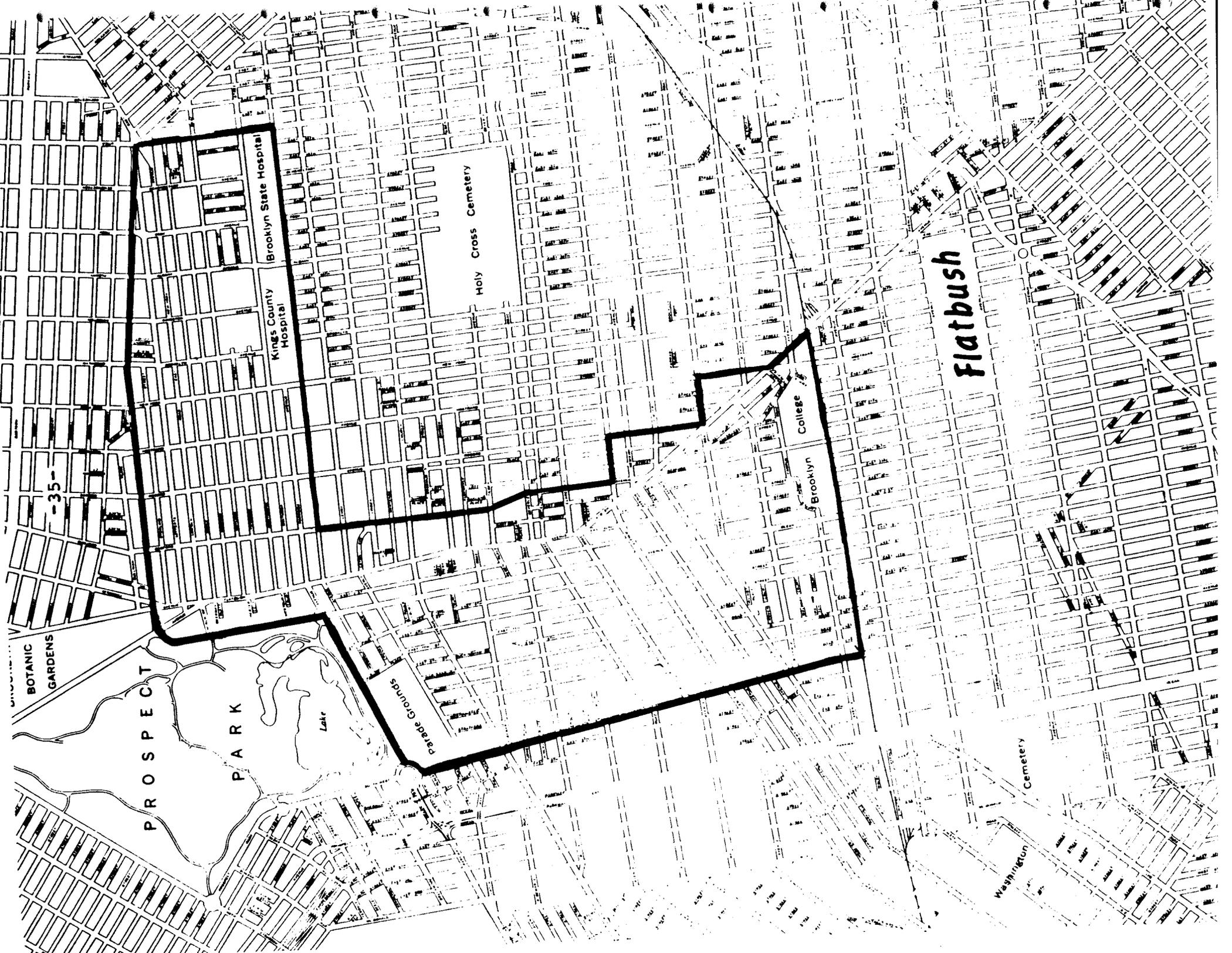
CONCLUSION

The grassroots network of associations is nearly completed in Southeast Queens. Programs and funds have been attracted from the public and private sectors. Independent developers and investors are beginning the return to these middle-class communities that have established a bulwark against deterioration. And yet the battle for stabilization continues.

In April 1978 a meeting was called at the 105th Precinct by concerned residents of north Queens Village. There was concern that racial steering and blockbusting were being perpetrated by local real estate brokers. The Neighborhood Stabilization Program promised and immediately initiated investigations into the practices of four local brokers. Two cases are still pending; one case was dismissed. A fourth case, involving a well-known Bellerose broker, was brought to conciliation by the City Commission on Human Rights. Racial steering was proved against this broker and further steps are now being taken against him.

The Neighborhood Stabilization Program will continue to investigate any and all brokers that presume to upset the stability of the middle-class neighborhoods in southeast Queens. The Program will continue to cooperate with all civic groups, block associations, and interested public agencies - present and future - to ensure the stability, revitalization, and preservation of the integrated middle-income communities in southeast Queens.

Flatbush



Flatbush

PROSPECT

PARK

Lake

Grange Grounds

Brooklyn State Hospital

Kings County Hospital

Holy Cross Cemetery

College

Brooklyn

Cemetery

Washington

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BOTANIC GARDENS

FLATBUSH

The Flatbush Office of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program began operations in March, 1976. When NSP was first established in Brooklyn, the communities of Flatbush and East Flatbush, including parts of community planning boards 9, 14 and 17, were served by the same office and staff. In September 1977 two separate offices were established: one to serve Flatbush and one East Flatbush. The Flatbush office also provided assistance to an area on its northern boundary known as Prospect Lefferts Gardens.

Flatbush is a key area for all of Brooklyn. The effort to bring all the diverse racial and economic populations together in a strong grassroots organization network has been the thrust of Neighborhood Stabilization Program activities. Recent developments such as the designations of the community as a Neighborhood Strategy Area and as an area eligible for anti-poverty program funding open up new opportunities for involvement and support.

TENANT ORGANIZING

During 1978 the office concentrated most of its activities in the area of tenant organizing. Because tenant organizing is often a slow and difficult process, the total of 57 buildings' tenancies organized by staff was remarkable. Tenant associations organized in previous years also were supported in their ongoing

struggles. The organization and support of all these associations by the Neighborhood Stabilization staff has had an important positive impact on the stability of the Flatbush neighborhood. A growing spirit of neighborhood identity and pride is emanating from the tenants of the community - residents who had often been accused of apathy because they had been perceived by others as having no real stake in Flatbush.

The Neighborhood Stabilization staff, recognizing the importance of establishing a working relationship between tenant and landlord, aided associations in establishing cooperative dialogues. Successful resolutions of problems were often achieved, as typified in 1978 by the buildings on 52 and 58 Argyle Road. An intensive effort was made to form a tenants' association in these two four-story walkups owned by a common landlord, and to work with tenants in attempting to upgrade conditions in the buildings. A strong core group of tenants, with NSP help, succeeded in getting the landlord to: install new lightweight lobby and vestibule doors in both buildings, replacing the old heavy steel doors which were unlocked and otherwise defective; install new vault-type mailboxes to replace old ones which were constantly being broken into; paint the lobbies and hallways, the fire escapes, the outside window frames, and individual apartments; install a new intercom system in each building; install window guards in public areas and individual apartments with children; replace broken marble in hallways; and make other repairs in the public areas of the

building. Much progress has been made in getting repairs in individual apartments. The landlord is more accessible and cooperative than before. Tenants' awareness of their rights and responsibilities have increased.

In many other instances the NSP staff has found landlords to be unresponsive to tenant needs and legitimate demands. In such cases secondary strategies have to be employed. Often this means contacting the holder of the building's mortgage to put pressure on an unresponsive landlord. In still other cases action in housing court, or an organized rent strike leading to housing court, may be necessary. These actions, much more difficult and tedious than a cooperative effort, have been employed successfully by the staff. For example, working with the tenants at 39 and 45 Argyle Road, NSP brought pressure to bear on the landlord to improve services. First a landlord/tenant meeting was held, and later, with the aid of the Flatbush Mortgage Committee, a meeting was held with the Greater New York Savings Bank, which holds the mortgage on the buildings, the landlord, tenants from other buildings the landlord owns, and the tenant association. The bank agreed with the tenants' specific requests for repairs and improvements, and threatened to call in the remainder of the mortgage under their "good repair" clause if improvements were not made.

Repairs have begun in individual apartments. The super-intendant, who was the focus for many of the tenants' complaints,

has improved his performance. The tenant leadership is now focusing on getting all the tenants to live up to their end of the responsibility for seeing that the building is kept up.

In support of tenant organizing activities, the following special projects have been initiated by NSP staff to provide technical assistance and information to the growing network of community associations. The effectiveness of these projects and the impact on the neighborhood through association participation, strengthened Flatbush as a stabilized community.

ORGANIZING MANUAL

A manual, How to Organize Your Building: A Step-by-Step Guide for Tenants," prepared by staff, has served as a course outline for tenant organizing workshops (see below) as well as serving as a guide for tenant groups and individuals wishing to organize their buildings. This is used in conjunction with Tenant Rights, a booklet produced by NSP and the Prospect-Lefferts Gardens Neighborhood Association in 1977. Together these two Commission publications provide tenants with the full range of information needed to organize and sustain their activities.

ORGANIZING WORKSHOPS

Tenant organizing workshops have been conducted in conjunction with the Flatbush Development Corporation. Over 200

persons have participated in these sessions. Subjects covered include: structuring tenant associations, running meetings, code enforcement, negotiating with landlords, rent strikes, housing court, contracts, research, security patrols, redlining, leases, and the history of rent legislation.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Arson and Fire-Prevention Forum

A catastrophic blight in many urban neighborhoods is arson in multiple family dwellings. As early as 1976 Flatbush was experiencing arson at an alarming rate. NSP staff have monitored key buildings and landlords and maintain a close working relationship with New York City's fire marshals. In 1978, NSP organized a forum on arson and fire prevention which drew 40 people and ultimately created a new body in the form of the Arson Task Force. This Committee has been responsible for sealing up several buildings on Flatbush Avenue and is now involved in fire-hydrant inspections throughout the community.

Summer Youth Employment

In the Prospect-Lefferts Gardens area NSP has participated in the development of projects that provide employment for youth and administrative personnel under the Summer Youth Employment Program, the Youth Community Conservation and Improvement Program, and the Police Athletic League. In 1978, for example, 235 youth and administrative jobs were provided. In addition, 102 younger

children participated in the recreational and nutritional service provided in conjunction with the Summer Food Program.

CONCLUSION

Although the NSP office closed in 1979, local Flatbush groups continue to build on what was accomplished over several years: The formation of the Flatbush Avenue Task Force, Flatbush Avenue Merchant Association, the development of a Model Block and Mural Project on Flatbush Avenue, support of promotional materials and events such as house tours and festivals organized to draw attention to Flatbush and Prospect Lefferts Gardens and attract new residents. As the organizing efforts shift from Flatbush to East Flatbush, we are confident that the network of activist groups formed by the NSP will continue to serve as a model of creativity, efficiency, and effectiveness in the renaissance of New York City neighborhoods.

East Flatbush



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BROOKLYN
STANIC
GARDENS

Brooklyn State Hospital
Kings County Hospital

Holy Cross Cemetery

East Flatbush

College Brooklyn

EAST FLATBUSH

The East Flatbush office of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program began operating separately from the original Flatbush office in September 1977, although the area had been served by NSP under its Flatbush office since March 1976.

ORGANIZING STRATEGIES

Since 1977 NSP has formed, assisted, or worked with more than 200 block associations throughout East Flatbush. Specific organizations and their successes will be discussed later, as will the many tenant associations formed by NSP. These groups have developed community gardens, sponsored block parties, clean-ups, and other projects that have served to bring homeowners, both black and white, into a close working relationship, thus reducing the level of racial fears and mistrust.

Merchant Organizing

In 1978 NSP began organizing merchants all along Church Avenue. This was done in three stages. Merchants were brought together around the three major intersections of Nostrand Avenue, Utica Avenue, and Rockaway Parkway. These associations are all functioning and efforts are under way to link them into one structure to speak for the entire Church Avenue strip as it runs through East Flatbush.

In 1979, both the Church Avenue Merchants and the Utica Avenue Merchants received \$5,000 grants from the Citizens

Committee of New York for "buddy buzzer" systems. More than 70 merchants in each area participated in this project. The Utica Avenue Merchants' Association received additional funding from Citibank for the buzzer system, and won a \$400 SNAP award from the Citizens Committee for a sanitation project.

For all types of organizing, the East Flatbush office's main efforts have been concentrated in four sections of the East Flatbush community: Vanderveer Estates, Northeast, Farragut, and Northwest.

VANDERVEER ESTATES

Vanderveer Estates is a privately owned apartment complex of 59 buildings and nearly 2,500 apartments. Vanderveer Estates originally housed a middle- to low-income white population when it was built in 1950. Middle-class black families began moving in the 1960's and were soon followed by lower income minorities. The white families began to flee the development in increasing numbers during this period and at present the complex is almost 100% minority. Paralleling this racial change, services provided by the management began to deteriorate. Vanderveer's location, adjacent to a subway stop, made these demographic and physical changes particularly visible to the largely white community surrounding the complex.

The NSP succeeded in reorganizing and strengthening a preexisting tenant group. Through NSP and tenant efforts, 33 of the 59 buildings were rewired for intercom and buzzer systems. All locks in these 33 buildings were also repaired. Elevators

in 20 buildings were upgraded and adjusted to avoid the basements between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. The problem of opened and vandalized mailboxes was alleviated by the establishment of a centralized mailroom. The total cost for these projects is estimated to be around \$546,000.

Two of the most blighted outdoor areas in Vanderveer have been the sites of improvements. A total of 660 feet of chain link fence was replaced, and dilapidated sidewalks were repaved on Foster Avenue between Nostrand and New York Avenues. These improvements, combined with self-help gardens, made significant aesthetic changes in this section of the neighborhood.

NSP staff assisted the Tenant Association in acquiring a community center, which is utilized by the tenants as a meeting place and as an office for CETA employees. During the summer the center serves as headquarters for the Tenant Association's youth program. Staff and equipment were provided through the funding of two proposals written by NSP staff. In the summer of 1978, the \$10,000 program ran for eight weeks and accommodated over 200 young people, who participated in trips, intramural sports, and arts and crafts.

A Summer Festival was held at Vanderveer in 1978 to improve its image and to establish contacts between residents of the complex and the homeowners in the surrounding blocks. The NSP office was instrumental in bringing all the racial and ethnic groups in the area together to work on the festival. There were a live band, disco music, stage acts, international food booths and rides.

THE NORTHEAST AREA

Northeast Coalition Development Corporation

In the northeastern section of Community Board 17, the staff was instrumental in organizing the Northeast Coalition Development Corporation (NCDC). Working with this organization, NSP assisted in organizing a meeting between area landlords and HPD officials to discuss HPD loan programs. A CETA proposal to obtain a full-time staff person for NCDC was written by NSP staff, and was granted. We further assisted the Corporation by helping secure a commitment of office space and supplies from Brookdale Hospital.

Since 1978, NCDC backed a \$4 million Section 8 "gut rehab" project at 9502 Kings Highway, and played an important role in obtaining this funding. Groundbreaking took place in March 1980.

In 1979 NCDC applied to the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal for funding under the Neighborhood Preservation Companies Act. This proposal, if funded, will bring \$60,000 into the community for a variety of housing activities.

Tenant Workshops

A series of six tenant workshops to develop and support leadership in the Northeast community was conducted in 1978. Attended by about 100 persons from 16 buildings, these workshops covered organizing techniques, landlord negotiations, housing court, code enforcement procedures, and leases. A second

series, cosponsored by a local community association, began in early 1980.

Tenant Associations

The Program's involvement in specific buildings with specific tenant groups has led to some satisfying successes. In some buildings the tenants and landlords have recognized the advantages of cooperation in areas of mutual concern. At 305 Linden Boulevard a tenants' association was organized in 1978. Since the association's inception, and at its urging, the landlord has modernized elevator facades, and made extensive repairs. The association also sponsored a Youth Day for the complex, and published several issues of a newsletter.

Another tenants' association - organized at 9302 Kings Highway - was supported by NSP in the development of a community urban garden on an adjoining vacant lot. This same association was also successful in its attempts to convince the landlord to remove building code violations at that address.

At times it is not feasible to elicit cooperation from a landlord. Although it is most desirable to develop mutual support between tenants and landlords in dealing with building problems, each association must always be prepared to assume the responsibility on its own shoulders alone. The tenants' association organized at 475 Linden Boulevard found it necessary to assume just such a responsibility. Lack of landlord cooperation forced the association to implement a rent strike and obtain legal counsel. With the assistance of South

Brooklyn Legal Services, the association petitioned the court to appoint a 7A administrator for a six-month period.

The 7A procedure is one that the courts are naturally reluctant to implement, for it means that a landlord must give over the management of his building, for a specified period, to an outside administrator. Although the landlord retains ownership of the building, the 7A administrator (who may be a tenant, community resident, or other individual trained in building management by HPD) collects all rents and applies them to cleaning up the problems and violations of the building, as well as to day-to-day operations. Clearly, a building must be in demonstrably poor condition, often with innumerable violations, to be assigned a 7A administrator.

The tenants' association at 475 Linden Boulevard succeeded in its petition. When the building was returned to the landlord's control at the end of six months, the boiler had been repaired, violations had been cleared in individual apartments, public areas received repairs, and public and private areas had been painted. Most importantly, however, vacant apartments, which had been unrentable, were put back into rental condition and rented. The landlord has now resumed management with nearly full occupancy.

The tenants' association at 417 East 52nd Street carried on a rent strike for more than 12 months, assisted by South Brooklyn Legal Services. They committed more than \$25,000 in rent monies to repairs in the building. The courts have

allowed dollar-for-dollar credit for rent in light dispossession cases. HPD has agreed to implement 7A proceedings.

The buildings we have just described in the Northeast area of East Flatbush demonstrate an important element of NSP's operation: the attempt to work in cooperation with other agencies in the area to provide better support to grassroots organizations. In the cases noted, we feel the effectiveness of NSP, Legal Services, and HPD, and of the tenant associations themselves, was maximized by this cooperation.

FARRAGUT

The Farragut Association was formed with NSP's assistance in the summer of 1976. A primary goal was to address the issue of racial change occurring in the neighborhood by presenting pro-integration programs and encouraging blacks and whites to work together for neighborhood improvement. Since its inception, it has developed a co-operative and integrated core of leadership and has undertaken several successful neighborhood projects with the assistance and support of NSP staff.

House Tour

An annual house tour was begun in 1977 and has continued to the present to promote the area among community residents and to attract potential homeowners. During this tour a 12-minute slide and narrative program is shown. This program was developed with the assistance of the Brooklyn Union Gas Company and NSP, and

also has been shown at Brooklyn Union's Annual House Tour Convention. It shows the area's history, housing stock, and community activities. Afterward, participants meet with local residents and tour the area's loveliest homes.

Revitalization of Avenue D

With the rejuvenation of the Farragut Association, Avenue D, the shopping strip became the next target of neighborhood concern.

Working in tandem, N.S.P. and the Farragut Association strove to revive the local association by a door to door campaign to increase membership.

Once this was accomplished, the Merchant Association then developed a revitalization plan for Avenue D.

These efforts bore fruit when Avenue D received \$150,000 from New York City's Office of Economic Development enabling them to hire staff and begin implementing their plans for street and facade improvements.

The Farragut Association together with the Merchant Association then organized and sponsored a community-wide spring festival.

The Avenue D Festival and House Tour is now an annual event consisting of a parade with marching band, flea markets, dance contests, on-stage entertainment, and competitive sports activities for youngsters. Such events result in neighbors not only getting to know each other but having positive feelings about their community as well.

Home and Community Improvement Workshop and Handivan

In the spring of 1978 a one-day workshop on home and community improvement was held in a local parochial school. Twelve "how-to" workshops on plumbing, electrical repair, gardening, furniture repair, and block organizing techniques were presented by community volunteers. Approximately 75 people attended this workshop. The event, in the best tradition of neighbors helping neighborhoods, culminated in an afternoon social and pot-luck supper.

The popularity of this workshop indicated a need for such programs, thus response has been sizable throughout East Flatbush (and all NSP areas as well) to the Handivan. Handivan is a project of the Cornell Cooperative Extension Program, funded by Citibank. A van equipped with models and tools staffed by three experts in home repair, visits block and tenant associations throughout the city to give instruction and "hands-on" experience in various home maintenance skills. NSP provides publicity and schedules visits in our areas.

The Community Coalition

The Farragut Association took a leadership role in initiating a coalition of three community groups: the Hyde Park Civic Association, the College Glen Community Association, and the Vanderveer Estates Tenant Association. This Community Coalition has been a prime mover in maintaining a high degree of grassroots activism in the community. The Coalition publishes a quarterly community newsletter, The Community Voice, 8,000

copies of which are distributed door to door by volunteers from the local block associations.

FLATBUSH EAST DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The member organizations of the Community Coalition, having also gained the input and support of local merchants and the business and financial community at large, organized the Flatbush East Development Corporation through the efforts of the NSP staff. In 1978 the Corporation received \$150,000 to hire staff and provide assistance to the Avenue D merchants. Plans are underway to provide for storefront renovations and the development of a uniform facade motif. In addition, the project director will coordinate physical improvements that will include lighting, trees, street furniture, curbing and enlargement of sidewalks.

Friends of Paerdegat Park

Paerdegat Park had been the scene of increasing vandalism and very heavy drug activities. With the assistance of the Development Corporation and NSP, the Friends of Paerdegat Park Committee was formed to address the drug problem and to work for the physical redevelopment of the park. Architects from Pratt Institute worked with community residents to develop plans to reflect the needs of the area's youngsters. These efforts led to a grant of \$100,000 for physical improvement in the park and a proposal for an additional \$300,000 in federal grants.

THE ERASMUS NEIGHBORHOOD FEDERATION

The Erasmus Neighborhood Federation of block associations was formed in 1978 in the Northwest section of East Flatbush. To date it has held Summer Youth Olympics, received a SNAP award to purchase street sweepers, is planning to involve area youth in sanitation projects and cleanups, and is working to improve conditions at the subway station at Nostrand and Church Avenues.

In 1979 ENF submitted a \$60,000 proposal for a Neighborhood Preservation company grant from the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal. A variety of housing activities are planned if the grant is received.

CONCLUSION

As noted in the section on NSP activities in Flatbush, the East Flatbush office has become the focus of program efforts and will continue to be in the future. Increased civic awareness, pride, and activism - for which the office has acted as a catalyst - have brought the community to a point of sophistication necessary before real changes can be seen. The staff of the East Flatbush Neighborhood Stabilization Program looks forward to 1980 as a year of fruition for the seeds planted in past years. Physical improvements will continue to be seen on the commercial strips, as well as increased security and merchant participation. As the number of block and tenant organizations increase, as membership in grassroots organizations grows, the

East Flatbush community will enter upon a period of renaissance unparalleled in its rich civic history.

Corona



CORONA

Lutheran Cemetery

Cemetery

St. John's

Lutheran Cemetery

Juniper Valley Park

Oliver

William A. Stead Memorial Stadium

FLUSHING

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CORONA

The Corona office of the Neighborhood Stabilization program was established in the spring of 1977. A study by the New York City Commission on Human Rights in 1976 had shown that racial transition and physical deterioration in the Lefrak City complex in Corona were major contributing factors to the growing instability of the neighborhood. Thus, funding for an NSP office was included in a CD II (Community Development Block Grant) budget amendment.

In addition to CD monies, a grant for \$48,000 was received from the Federal Urban Reinvestment Task Force. Of this grant, \$18,000 was designated by the Task Force for two consultants: Advisory Services for Better Housing, Inc. (ASBH) and Cornell University's Tenant Orientation Program. (ASBH is a private, nonprofit organization providing technical assistance to landlords in the areas of finance and building management. Cornell's Tenant Orientation Program works to develop better tenant-landlord relations.) The remainder of the funds was to be used by the Neighborhood Stabilization Program for the hiring of additional professional staff.

The target area of the Corona Neighborhood Stabilization Program included more than half of Community Board # 4 in Queens. NSP understood that it would be important to change the perceptions of the largely white homeowner community concerning Lefrak City's housing conditions and its tenancy.

Of primary importance, however, was the changing of Lefrak tenants' perception of themselves and their immediate environment. If the tenants could begin to view the entire development as a community, as an extension of their home, then an important start could be made in upgrading the physical appearance of Lefrak City. Equally crucial, of course, was management's cooperation - a commitment to work in concert with the Lefrak City Tenant Association to bring about meaningful changes in the development.

This report summarizes the Neighborhood Stabilization Program's activities in (1) Lefrak City, (2) Sherwood Village, an adjacent apartment development, (3) the surrounding commercial strips, and (4) the homeowner community.

LEFRAK CITY

Lefrak City is one of the largest tenant complexes in the world. Tucked into the southeast corner of Corona along the Long Island Expressway, the development is composed of 20 18 story high-rise buildings. There are approximately 4,700 dwelling units in the entire complex.

Tenant Organizing

A major problem initially hampered involvement of staff in Lefrak City and affected NSP impact. A preexisting tenant association would not allow staff to organize in the development. In the spring of 1978, however, a new group of tenant leaders emerged after annual elections. Communication was quickly

established, and after a few false starts the organizing effort was launched.

NSP's organizing efforts for the Lefrak City Tenants Association (LCTA) concentrated on developing floor captains who, in turn, would solicit membership from the tenants on their floor. Because floor captains play such a major role in the organization strategy, staff immediately began the process of leadership training one day a week, beginning as soon as a floor-captain network was established throughout a particular building. The entire network was completely organized by the end of June, 1979.

Tenant-Management Relations

NSP played a vital role in bringing management and tenants together in meaningful dialog and cooperation. During the fall of 1978, NSP helped establish a regularly scheduled series of meetings and tours of the complex. Problems were dealt with, tenants were able to present their problems, and channels of communication were opened.

Management made significant changes in the way it operated the project. Senior staff met monthly to exchange ideas and report on their various activities. Maintenance staff were given work schedules and were monitored closely. Screening of applicants was firmly and judiciously applied; rent collection improved and the incidence of "skips" diminished. A demonstrable effort was made on Lefrak's part to reach out

and communicate with tenants. A written agreement detailing cooperation between the management and the LCTA was signed. Physical improvements were slower in coming, but some have begun, with others scheduled.

Advisory Services for Better Housing Inc., under contract with the Urban Reinvestment Task Force, completed a financial and managerial analysis of Lefrak City in 1978. Many of the suggestions incorporated in that analysis have been adopted by Lefrak Management. Cornell University staff developed a Tenant Handbook that is being used to orient new tenants to Lefrak City and has also conducted training sessions for management staff, which has enabled Lefrak's own employees to interact more effectively with each other and with the tenants.

Youth Council

One of the major problems confronting Lefrak City, the adjacent commercial shopping strips, and the surrounding community is a large youth population with virtually no recreational facilities or organizations. In response to this need, NSP and LCTA organized a Youth Council. The activities in which the Youth Council has participated include (1) a visit to the African Poetry Theatre in Jamaica, Queens, to learn about the African harvest celebration of Kwanza; (2) their own celebration of Kwanza; (3) a tutorial program involving students from Queens College; and (4) a cultural history class. In addition, the NSP office refers employment information to the Council.

NSP assisted the Youth Council in preparation of a \$70,000 proposal, which was funded by the Youth Board, New York Community Trust, and Exxon Corporation, to run its youth programs.

Newsletters

In 1978 NSP began publishing Corona News, a community newsletter. Aimed at publicizing special events and assistance information for the local Corona community, the News incorporates articles contributed by members of the community as well. Distributed on quarterly basis, the News has enjoyed great success as an interesting and useful tool for Corona residents.

NSP also provides partial financial support for the Lefrak City Tenants Association newsletter, which functions for the Lefrak City resident much as Corona News functions for the rest of the community. In addition, the LCTA newsletter acts as a communication mechanism from LCTA leadership to its members, further strengthening organizational viability.

SHERWOOD VILLAGE

Sherwood Village is an apartment development of approximately 1,156 units. It is comprised of 17 six-story buildings. Seven are managed by Kalikow Management and owned by Rego Associated. Three additional buildings are in the process of coming under receivership by HUD, and there are seven cooperative buildings. The apartment complex borders Lefrak City on 57th Avenue and 99th Street and houses a population of approximately 4,624 people.

The seven Kalikow-managed buildings are in fairly good repair, in that there are none of the structural problems, such as leaking roofs and cracked walls, that exist in Lefrak City. They have basically cosmetic problems, such as old and worn lobby rugs, lack of maintenance in public areas in some buildings, and burned elevator buttons in other buildings. Some buildings appear to be in a better state of repair than others; there also appears to be a relationship between the presence of a resident superintendent and the degree of cleanliness in a building. The concern in Sherwood Village, as it is in Lefrak City, is that the deterioration will continue, thereby forcing out a rather good and stable tenancy as physical conditions decline.

NSP has formed tenants associations in the seven rental Sherwood Village buildings, each with a full compliment of floor captains. Through this organizational network the following has been accomplished:

- . The establishment of a tenants patrol in two of the buildings.
- . Successful mediation of a dispute between rent-withholding tenants and management.
- . Technical assistance in the acquisition of a \$300 SNAP Award for the establishment of an Activities Center at Sherwood.
- . Acquisition of additional grants for the Activities Center from A&S Department Store and European American Bank.
- . Formation of a Federation of all Sherwood Village Tenant Associations as the major umbrella group to deal with management.

MERCHANT ORGANIZING

During 1978, the NSP staff formed the United Merchants Association (UMA) by bringing together three separate merchant groups surrounding Lefrak City.

All NSP efforts on the merchant strips were designed to make those strips more attractive and safer for shoppers, and to make them generally more competitive with the larger stores and malls on Queens Boulevard. Strategies were developed to attract shoppers to the strips through emphasis on the local merchants' accessibility; personal concern for the individual shopper and the neighborhood itself; and specific spot sales.

During 1978 the Neighborhood Stabilization Program was instrumental in helping the merchants realize specific accomplishments achieved through the framework of the viable United Merchants Association. The following are only a few examples of those achievements.

- . Sales days and a street festival were organized, attracting a total of well over 1,000 participants on the final day.
- . In conjunction with the festival, NSP designed and printed notices with advertisements for the UMA.
- . A system of advertising sales circulars was developed and implemented reaching throughout the local community with 10,000 copies published and distributed.
- . Christmas lights and decorations were put up on all local commercial strips.
- . Meetings were held between the 110th Police Precinct and the UMA to deal with youth loitering in front of stores, shoplifting, and the general appearance of the merchant strips.

- . A foot patrolman was secured for one of the strips.
- . OTB litter baskets were obtained for the sidewalks in front of each store on two of the strips.
- . NSP and the LCTA cooperated to set up a sweep program whereby youth from the community would sweep one of the commercial strips twice a week, empty receptacles, and place new plastic bags in them, and would be paid \$25 a week apiece by the merchants.
- . A shoppers' survey was developed and administered to elicit consumer feedback on needs.

CORONA HOMEOWNERS AREA

The single-family homeowner community adjoining Lefrak and Sherwood on the east was the focus of a continuing organizing effort by NSP staff in 1978. Between April and October of that year, 12 block associations were formed, as well as a federation of block associations spanning 40 blocks in the area. It was anticipated by the NSP office that a solid network of grassroots associations must be established in order to interact constructively with the newly cohesive organizations at Lefrak City and Sherwood Village. In addition to this NSP helped the residents achieve some specific activities.

- . The block associations, merchants, and Sanitation Department engaged in a cooperative effort in the clean-up of a local commercial strip. NSP assisted by providing the necessary information and contacts to coordinate the campaign.
- . With NSP advisory and resource support, the Corona Federation of Block Associations was successful in its campaign to close down an illegal tire repair shop.
- . In a cooperative effort led by the Corona Heights Block Association of 52nd Avenue, a local house of prostitution was closed.

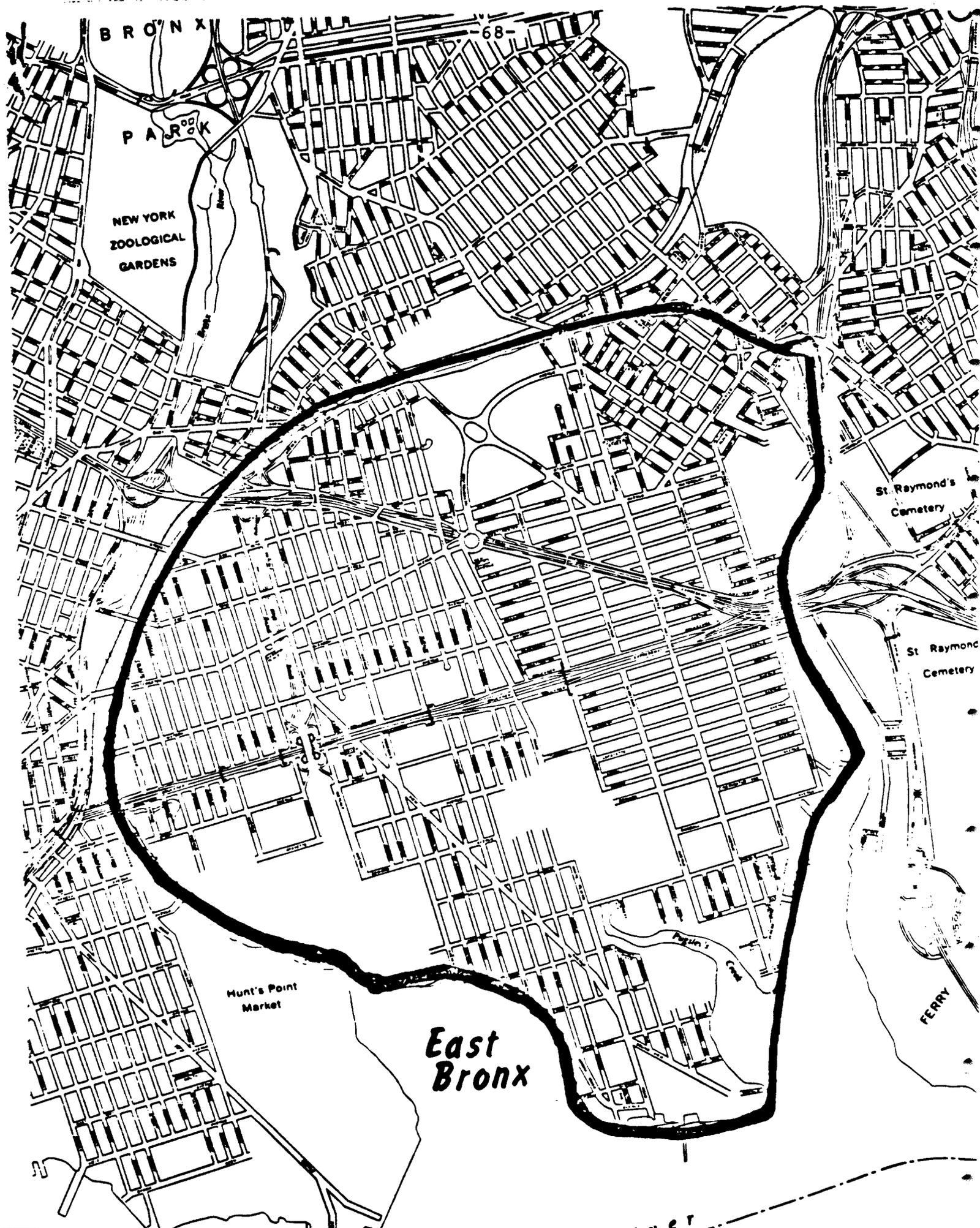
- . The Martense Avenue Block Association, together with block associations from Granger, Waldron St., and 52nd Avenue, participated in a public hearing that led to the establishment of one-way street designation for Martense Avenue.
- . Potholes on 96th Street, 57th Avenue, and 53rd Avenue were filled by a private contractor through sponsorship of local block association members.

CONCLUSION

The major thrust of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program in 1979 was, therefore, a gradual winding down of involvement while preparing the neighborhood groups in the homeowner area, as well as in the multiple dwellings, to anticipate independent and cooperative functioning in the betterment of the entire Corona community. The office closed August 31, 1979.

It was the opinion of NSP early in 1979 that many of its organizing goals had been accomplished in Lefrak, in Sherwood, and in the surrounding area. Many organizational structures were in place, and capable leadership was available to carry on the work.

East Bronx



BRONX

68-

PARK

NEW YORK
ZOOLOGICAL
GARDENS

St. Raymond's
Cemetery

St. Raymond
Cemetery

Hunt's Point
Market

East
Bronx

FERRY

EAST BRONX

The East Bronx Neighborhood Stabilization Program was begun in January 1978 with a staff of two organizers and an office director. The target area was designated as the northern half of Bronx Community Board #9. Initial efforts in the first month of 1978 focused on comprehensive surveys of the area. Many of the area's many multiple dwellings already had experienced severe problems of deterioration. It became apparent, upon the compilation and analysis of data, that the office's first priority should be the organization of tenants to deal with building conditions in the multiples. At that time the only organized tenant groups dealing with problems of building conditions in the target area were associations in Parkchester and the Mitchell Lama complexes. These particular instances appeared isolated; there was no indication of a trend toward self-organized tenant groups in the area. Therefore, in the second month of 1978, the East Bronx NSP tenant-organizing effort began.

Given limited resources, three areas were selected for immediate focus. They were Bronx River, Zerega, and Stratton Park. By the end of 1978, with the addition to staff of one professional organizer, two CETA workers, a student intern, and a VISTA volunteer, 38 tenant associations have been organized.

BRONX RIVER

In the Bronx River area initial efforts were concentrated along Boynton Avenue. The street was viewed by both staff and community residents as the center of a storm that was building throughout Bronx River and, if left unchecked, would leave behind a deserted neighborhood of mass abandonment. The block has 14 five-story walk-ups, four of which had been abandoned by 1978. Several of the other buildings had less than 50% occupancy, while others were nothing more than a hangout for stray dogs and junkies.

As the staff set about to contact and survey the multiples on Boynton Avenue it became apparent that this was one organizing strategy that could expect resistance, obstacles, and danger. During initial contacts the organizers were verbally harassed and faced physical confrontation; as they went into one building, the roof was set on fire. In spite of the odds against success, organizing efforts have had an impact.

Two buildings that were being milked by absentee landlords changed ownership. Pressure brought to bear by the organized action of the two newly formed tenant associations resulted in the purchase of their buildings by responsive landlords who have begun working with the tenants' associations toward improved conditions. For the first time in many years some of the Boynton Avenue buildings have securely locked doors and operable intercoms.

In others, tenant associations are beginning to take control over their own destinies through negotiations with landlords - all the way up to organized court action when necessary. The major difference, after nearly two years on Boynton Avenue, is that tenants are beginning to believe that they can have an impact on their environment, specifically within the buildings where they live.

Other associations in the Bronx River neighborhood have enjoyed similar successes. At 1311 Harrod Avenue, a five-family house, tenants were without heat during the winter of 1978. Through the efforts of the tenants' group and their organizer from the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, a fuel-oil contract was signed with the city guaranteeing the tenancy heat for the remainder of the winter. Subsequent organizing efforts led to intervention by the bank that held the mortgage to guarantee minimal living conditions within the dwelling.

Of all the multiples organized by NSP staff in Bronx River, 1184 Evergreen Avenue is most indicative of what can be accomplished by an organized and active tenancy. The building itself, although sound, was plagued by a number of problems that made it almost unlivable. When the first meeting of tenants was organized, there had been no heat in the building for three weeks. The lobby, elevator, and stairwells were being used by junkies as "shooting galleries." The apartments were in desperate need of repairs, and the landlord was nowhere to be seen.

The initial meeting was a no-nonsense determined session with a core of tenants dedicated to taking control of their own lives within the building. These tenants brought out more tenants to a subsequent meeting, where officers of the tenants' association were elected and a plan of attack was decided upon. A cellar-to-roof inspection by the city's Office of Code Enforcement was arranged. The Emergency Repair Program (ERP) of the city's Housing Preservation and Development Agency was called on to deal with the building's boiler.

The landlord, on learning of ERP's imminent involvement with his building, repaired the boiler himself. However, he made no move to correct violations or to address the lack of security in the building. The tenants in turn initiated a "show cause" order against him in Housing Court. As a result of the court action, the landlord promised many repairs; some were completed. The HPD litigation lawyer assigned to the case followed up the tenant action with a comprehensive action against the landlord to clear violations.

The tenants set up a lobby patrol to keep junkies out, and secured an agreement from the landlord to prosecute any junkies they caught loitering in the building. Although a residue of caution and fear remain with the tenants, the actual security of the building has been maintained.

Because the building was ultimately taken over by the city for lack of payment of back taxes, the tenants prepared themselves for self-management under the Interim Lease Program. The president of the tenants associations has completed HPD's 7A Administrative Management classes and is preparing to manage the building along with the association.

ZEREGA

In the Zerega community similar successes have been gained. An example of the type of organizing work done and particular success achieved can be seen in the brief history of the tenants' association at 2525 Frisby Avenue.

The building had been abandoned by its landlord. Public-area lights and the gas boiler had been turned off by Con Edison because the bills had not been paid. A tenant called the NSP office to request help in organizing because of these specific circumstances. The building was canvassed by staff and fliers were distributed announcing an initial meeting of tenants. The 2525 Frisby Avenue Tenants Association was formed and officers elected.

As the first order of business, the NSP organizer and leaders from the association petitioned the Emergency Repair Program for relief. The ERP concurred with the tenants' assessment of the situation and made agreements with the tenants' association to restore essential building services.

As a result, the tenants are now receiving those services. The tenants then hired a superintendent and asked HPD to initiate a 7A Administrator proceeding (see p. 49). One of the tenant leaders was a professional managing agent, and was qualified to be a 7A Administrator. While the case was pending, the tenants continued to manage the building (cleaning, operating the boiler, etc.).

The tenants and the NSP office were in touch with the Empire Savings Bank, which held the primary mortgage, and kept the bank informed of the tenant action. With this information, the bank began and completed a foreclosure procedure against the landlord who had abandoned the building, and subsequently sold the building to a new owner. The tenants' association then began negotiations with the new landlord, who complied with all their repair requests. The tenants are satisfied with their new landlord, but are monitoring repairs and services to ensure that the landlord does not repeat the problems they had experienced before.

STRATTON PARK

As a result of discussions in 1978 on the needs of Stratton Park, held with community leaders and clergy, it was determined that two streets in particular could use NSP's attention. These two streets were the site of most of the multiple dwellings in Stratton Park.

In order to reach out to tenants living in this area, the Stratton Park Housing Organizing Clinic was developed. The clinic, sponsored by St. Anthony's Church and the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, was established to aid tenants in resolving individual and building-wide problems by assisting them in developing tenant organizations. A secondary goal of the clinic was to create dialogue and exchange of information between the residents of the various buildings in Stratton Park. The results of the Housing Clinic were so successful that clinics were later formed in Zerega and Bronx River.

During 1978, 17 tenant associations were formed in Stratton Park. At the end of the year, representatives from the various tenant associations, who continuously attended the Clinic to swap ideas and discuss community-wide tenant issues, voted to create a Stratton Park Tenants Council that would take over the operation of the Clinic, encourage new tenant associations, and, in addition, begin to address neighborhood problems. The Tenants Council has set up subcommittees for sanitation, fundraising, and street olympics (a successful spring program); it is developing a housing company for Interim Lease Buildings and a senior citizens' Project Lifeline. The Council has received \$500 from the Citizens Committee for New York for a typewriter and has a commitment from Chemical Bank to assist in publishing a newsletter in Stratton Park.

A special word about Project Lifeline. This program will include a buddy-buzzer system, store discounts, and home-safety volunteers for seniors. It will take a good deal of funding; a subcommittee has submitted proposals for this project and has received \$500 in seed money from the Citizens Committee. Another committee has been working on the possibility of a Neighborhood Preservation Grant to fund future housing and organizing work of the council.

MERCHANT ORGANIZING

The East Bronx Neighborhood Stabilization Program also has been engaged in the revitalization and development of merchant organizations. At the end of 1978, the program began working with the merchants at Bruckner Plaza, along Westchester Avenue between Bronx River Avenue and Harrod Avenue, and along Castle Hill Avenue between the Cross-Bronx Expressway and Starling Avenue. During 1979 the office has worked at revitalizing the Castle Hill and Westchester strip by developing small, easily attainable projects such as sale days, late-night openings, and street-cleaning projects. In November 1979 the Westchester Avenue Businessmen's Association held a fundraiser for such promotional events and netted about \$2000. Part of the money will be used to run a spring festival, and part will go into an emergency fund.

In June 1979 a fire on Westchester Avenue ruined 12 stores. The Westchester Avenue Businessmen's Association, in a cooperative effort with NSP and Community Board No. 9, sought, and

in late summer obtained, a disaster designation from the Federal Government. The Government committed funds for low-interest loans to merchants that enabled them to restock their stores to their status before the fire.

At the Bruckner Plaza Shopping Center, the office arranged meetings between Citibank, mortgage holder of the properties, and merchants and community leaders in order to develop plans for full rental of the empty stores and to resolve other merchant problems.

SERVICE DIRECTORY

The office is currently developing a service directory, which will provide the residents of Community Board #9 with information on where to go or whom to call for specific problems or needs. The first edition will be available early in 1980.

EAST BRONX COMMUNITY PAGE

The office publishes a community newsletter, which is distributed to 4,000 area residents. It presents articles on the program's activities, housing laws, and other community organization activities. During late 1979 and 1980 the office will be attempting to assist communities in developing special editions which will highlight their neighborhood activities and plans.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Staff of the East Bronx Office were involved in the development of the original leadership training workshops (see pp. 11). This office has revised the original program, streamlining it into a four-session workshop instead of the original six sessions, and focusing on key issues. Two Workshops have been completed, along with a comprehensive evaluation of their effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

The NSP is changing, becoming a program dealing with some of the larger economic issues of the community. The office plan for the coming year includes turning over some of the grassroots organizing to neighborhood groups to free staff for other activities such as strengthening of commercial strips. A primary goal will be to increase private investment in the community by developing strategies to encourage banks and landlords to reinvest in commercial and residential locations.

The East Bronx Office is already working with its stronger neighborhood associations to prepare them to operate independently. This effort will continue as the staff begins moving into other areas of its district.

Far Rockaway



FAR ROCKAWAY

The Far Rockaway office of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program began operations in January 1978. The target area includes the entire downtown area of Far Rockaway; it contains a commercial shopping district, many multiple dwellings, and several sections consisting of one- and two-family homes.

The NSP office works very closely with Queens Community Board 14 in establishing programs, setting goals, and developing projects. A subcommittee of the Board (the Outreach Committee) meets monthly with NSP staff to coordinate activities. Contact with the Board's District Manager is maintained on a daily basis.

The following stand out as major projects undertaken by the Far Rockaway NSP.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The Far Rockaway Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization Corporation (a nonprofit community development corporation) was formed by NSP in the fall of 1978. Members of the board of the corporation represent all the major community groups in the area, and the corporation has the full support and backing of the planning board. This corporation will be able to sponsor rehabilitation efforts, work with HPD's programs in city owned buildings, aid in commercial revitalization efforts, and promote the Far Rockaway area.

MERCHANTS

Far Rockaway Merchants Security Program has been organized by NSP staff in cooperation with the Hartman "Y" and the merchants on Central and Mott Avenues. The program employs a Pinkerton guard, who patrols the area in a marked car equipped with radio communication. Thirty-eight merchants contribute to this effort, at a cost of \$540 each per year. Citibank extended a loan to the Merchant Association in order to guarantee the program's operation for the first year.

Shopping area promotions have been sponsored by NSP. Advertisements have been placed regularly in local newspapers, urging people to shop locally. This has increased local business and encouraged the merchants to remain in the area. Most recently, about 35 merchants cooperated on a holiday promotional newsletter circulated to some 40,000 residents.

A merchant survey was begun through NSP's efforts. The Borough President of Queens made available a staff person from his office to conduct this survey to determine the needs of the area merchants and what programs might be of benefit to the area.

A Youth Employment Program was developed by NSP and operated during the summer of 1978. Young people worked with the Merchant Association in maintaining the attractiveness of the shopping area. The streets and sidewalks were swept, vacant lots were cleaned out, and the exteriors of some of the vacant stores were painted.

NEWSLETTER

The Neighborhood Stabilization Newsletter is published every two months, serving as a vehicle of communication within the community. Local residents contribute articles describing the efforts and accomplishments of their block or tenant associations.

REDLINING

An anti-redlining committee was formed by staff to deal with the problem of disinvestment. The committee consists of 10 local residents who are developing strategies to increase the level of mortgage commitments to the Rockaways. NSP has researched and published its findings on the mortgage investment records of both the Jamaica Savings Bank and the Columbia Savings and Loan Association.

MULTIPLE DWELLINGS

Much of the work of the Far Rockaway Neighborhood Stabilization Program has been concentrated on the problem of deterioration in the multiple dwellings in the area. Staff have served as liaisons between the Department of Housing Preservation and Development and the local community.

Approximately 300 units of Section 8 have been allocated to the area, and NSP has been attempting to work with developers,

banks, and HPD in an effort to begin the rehab process.

HPD requested that the Community Board develop and approve a proposal for the rehabilitation of apartment buildings in the Greenport Road area. HPD desired to use such a proposal or plan as their "blueprint" for action. The Outreach Committee of the Planning Board with NSP staff assistance developed such a plan. This proposal was presented to the full Board and approved at their June 1979 meeting.

During 1978 Far Rockaway was designated as a REMIC* area to aid in the effort to rehabilitate housing in the community. NSP had pressed for this designation.

During 1978 NSP organized nine tenant associations and 11 block associations. The tenant groups have been working with their landlords to upgrade their buildings. Several of the block associations have been involved with the 101st Precinct's anticrime program and have also run block parties during the summers.

NSP staff, working with the Emergency Repair Program, has been instrumental in having heating systems repaired and oil delivered to buildings without heat in the area.

A number of buildings were in such bad physical condition that the only recourse was to try to secure better housing for the tenants in other buildings.

* REMIC is a city mortgage insurance corporation. By insuring 50% of the value of a mortgage, REMIC makes mortgage money easier to obtain.

NSP has assisted over 100 families to relocate after vacate orders were placed on their buildings by HPD.

Housing Profiles

Housing profiles have been prepared by NSP staff for all the multiple dwellings in the area, making immediately available in one place data on tax arrears, ownership, code violations, mortgages, physical conditions, welfare population, number of units, etc.

CONCLUSION

The Far Rockaway Neighborhood Stabilization Program anticipates a continuation of emphasis on a comprehensive housing plan developed by the community . The importance of this project cannot be overemphasized. At the same time, the basic philosophy of neighborhood stabilization activity - the critical importance of organizing individual tenant and block associations to form a grassroots network to support community action - will become a major focus.

Coupled with office reorganization and stronger supportive involvement from the central staff the Far Rockaway office will undertake a concentrated effort of organizing in the community by late 1979. Leadership Training Workshops and Tenant Clinics - as developed by the other NSP offices - will be implemented by the Far Rockaway office.

The extreme concentration of diverse economic, racial, and religious groups offers the community unparalleled potential for chaotic dissolution or spectacular growth and revitalization. It is the prime concern of the Program that this potential for growth be completely realized. Efforts to show groups that they not only can but must - for everyone's benefit - work with groups of different ethnic and religious composition will not only continue but will be amplified.

Flushing



FLUSHING

MEADOWS-CORONA

Mt. Hebron Cemetery

Queens College

KISSENA

CORRIDOR

PARK

KISSENA

PARK

Flushing Cemetery

A Shea Stadium

Flushing Airport

Flushing

FLUSHING

In November 1978 a director was hired for the newest NSP office, located in downtown Flushing. In January 1979 the staff was hired and the office began operations.

Unlike most NSP offices, which have target areas coterminous with a community board's boundaries, the Flushing office focuses on a small portion of Community Board 7 in Queens (See map). This area has a high concentration of multiple dwellings, some of which were experiencing some physical deterioration, as well as many one- and two-family homes. A number of the buildings, especially the multiples, were showing signs of physical deterioration; thus one primary goal of the office was to bring residents together in tenant associations to work on building problems.

Ethnic changes were taking place in Flushing, providing an exciting diversity of population. A major priority for NSP, then, was to reach out to these new groups, bring old and new groups together, provide technical assistance to all on housing and other issues, and create greater awareness in the community at large of the cultural benefits in this diversity.

The various techniques and strategies the staff has employed in Flushing are described in the following sections.

TENANT ASSISTANCE

During 1979 the Flushing NSP office organized or assisted more than 45 tenant associations, which have addressed issues such as physical deterioration ignored by landlords, security

problems, and chronic heat and hot water complaints.

In certain buildings we have worked cooperatively with Advisory Services for Better Housing (see p. 61) to improve conditions. One such building is 140-71 Ash Avenue. This older brick building had suffered serious distress from the landlord's indifference to maintenance and lack of tenant screening. Several threatening situations had occurred coupled with alleged drug trafficking. The building's distress caused much concern to tenants of nearby buildings as well as to area residents. Most of this building's residents are Hispanic. A Spanish-speaking staff member was able to communicate with them to bring to light many of the problems in the building. Advisory Services for Better Housing persuaded the lending institution that held the mortgage on the building to advise the landlord that it was prepared to foreclose if he did not respond to the building's needs. Since then the landlord has made repairs to remove many of the code violations and has convinced some tenants, reputed to be drug dealers, to move out.

Greater Flushing Tenant Council

Before our office opened in Flushing, tenants with housing problems were assisted by the Greater Flushing Tenant Council. The Council still provides this assistance, but our presence

has given them the opportunity to become involved in issues of larger dimensions. We are assisting the Council in revising their by-laws and becoming incorporated. We have supported their efforts by providing office space, duplicating materials, and a location for the tenant counseling sessions they hold each spring. We encourage all the new tenant associations we organize to become members of GFTC, which can serve as an "umbrella" organization on larger tenant issues such as legislative changes or city housing policies. We expect that GFTC will be a housing resource center for all area tenants when our office is no longer in Flushing.

Housing Seminar

In January and February 1980 NSP, Tenants Council, ran a six-session seminar on housing, which covered the rights of tenants and responsibilities of landlords, and a variety of specific tenant strategies and options. The seminar brought together staff experts and speakers from outside the Program to address issues of concern to all tenants and to emphasize the value of tenant organizations.

BLOCK AND CIVIC GROUPS

In addition to the GFTC, we encourage organizations to join a local civic association in their area. For example, when the Harold Towers Tenant Association and the Summit Tenant

Association were formed, the organizer encouraged them to join the Flushing Resident Civic Association. The civic or block associations we have assisted include: Flushing Residents Civic Association; Botanical Gardens Civic Association; 137th Street Block Association; Friends of Maple Park; 145th Street Block Association; and Mitchell Hill Community Association.

We have assisted these groups in various ways. We introduced the Handi-van repair program (see p. 52), arranged a fundraiser, had a vacant lot cleaned and flowers planted, organized a block clean-up, and requested a signal light survey. In addition the staff was involved with the Flushing Fantastic 1980 Street Fair.

The "137th Street Study"

137th Street was called "Flushing's Tobacco Road - The Street New York Forgot" by the Flushing Tribune, in a March 1978 article. The image of broken, shack-like houses, peeling paint, stripped cars, and poor people is a strange reality set in the prosperity of North-East Queens.

Some of the single-story frame houses on 137th Street may be the worst individual housing in North Queens. Compounding the substandard housing are badly deteriorating sidewalks and a street that is prone to flooding. Some startling contrasts alongside the deteriorated houses on the west side of the street

are a number of well-kept, owner-occupied homes with neat lawns and aluminum siding, as well as attractive middle-income housing developments and rows of single and two-family homes along nearby streets.

A staff organizer made 137th Street one of his priorities. Extensive research provided a profile of conditions of the street and a set of recommendations. These were presented to the head of the City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development, who committed his staff to further research and development of a plan for the street.

Recommendations included the involvement of the community board and several City agencies in the rehabilitation of deteriorated houses, including obtaining eligibility for the Federal 312 Housing Rehab Loan Program, a sweat equity project for in-rem houses, and small-scale demolition of the worst houses, with subsidized low-rise replacement to enable the original tenants to afford the new housing.

THE FLUSHING MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION

The future of any residential neighborhood depends to a large extent on the vitality of its commercial areas. Flushing's commercial areas have the same exciting diversity in its stores that is found in the residents, with relatively new Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Indian businesses alongside the longer established stores.

There has been a merchant organization in existence since

1932, and over the years they have had many successful promotions. However, because of the transition in store ownership, membership in the association is approximately 25 percent of the 570 businesses in the downtown area. The area, though alive and well, is not without problems. Security is a key concern to all the merchants; peddlers are a problem, as is sanitation. More than 100,000 people daily enter or exit the subway in downtown Flushing, many also using one of the 18 bus lines that service the area.

NSP has assisted the Association in a number of ways, including promotion of new membership. Staff has done exhaustive research and collating of information for the Shoppers' Guide, which locates every store in the downtown area by address, type of business, and physical location, all keyed to a color-coded map.

In September of 1979 the Flushing Merchants Association sponsored a successful Art Show in conjunction with a major street festival, Flushing Fantastic. NSP assisted by printing the Art Show posters. Believing that the Art Show is a wonderful way to reach out to the community, we wrote up the details of this project and submitted it to the Citizens Committee of New York, to be included in its new Self-Help Directory.

The Flushing Merchants Association had received a grant for \$5,000 for a Buddy Buzzer system for some of the merchants. We assisted the Association by preparing a proposal for an

additional \$5,000, which was granted. We further assisted in identifying and selecting 124 additional merchants who will benefit from the second grant.

We also have worked closely with the Downtown Flushing Development corporation to develop a store-by-store survey to determine how many new merchants there are, what type of business, for whom do they provide service, the appearance of the storefront, and whether they have future plans for expansion. Additionally, we funded a brochure produced by the DFDC to encourage new membership in the FMA.

Possibly the most important contribution to the Flushing Merchant Association is to outline a new Holiday program. In past years a Holiday Parade and Christmas lighting program absorbed a major portion of the association's annual budget. NSP presented a series of proposals for banners, concerts, balloons, and community outreach, which will produce a holiday atmosphere at far less expense.

CULTURAL PROGRAMS

A major priority for our office has been to reach out to our new neighbors, both to involve them in the larger community and to make all the various groups aware of what the others have to offer.

Approximately 13,000 Indian people reside in Flushing, and there are many Indian professional, business, merchant, and religious groups. We are presently trying to create a Flushing

Council of Indian Associations so that the numerous Indian groups can have a forum to discuss common concerns. In order to reach out to the surrounding community, we have written a proposal for a Yoga and Meditation Center to be established in one of our local Hindu temples. The classes would be provided free and would offer the others in our community a chance to share some of the culture of our Indian residents. In October 1979 we sponsored a celebration of Dewali (Indian New Year), one of the most important holidays in the Indian culture, with an evening of traditional dance, food, and worship.

Through our efforts the Chinatown Planning Council has cooperated with the educational ethnic gardening program at the Queens Botanical Gardens. The program is a children's workshop, which introduces them to the planting and growing of fruits and vegetables consumed by different ethnic groups. It is a way for children to learn about their new neighbors and share their experiences.

In August 1979 the Chinese Association of Queens was established in Flushing, Their function is to assist immigrants in adjusting to their new environment. NSP has assisted them in developing an English as a Second Language program, in selecting textbooks, teacher and student recruitment, program budgeting, program promotion, tuition, and classroom space.

In February of 1980 we supported this organization's Chinese New Year celebration, which drew 800 people.

With the Korean Community Service Society, we have helped organize a primarily Korean-speaking tenant association.

We have translated or sponsored translations of numerous NSP publications. Notably, our introductory tenant association materials are available in Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Hindi.

Flushing Council on Culture and the Arts

Many people in the Flushing community were keenly aware of the rich resources available in the sphere of arts and culture. A group met in our office in June 1979; born of this meeting was The Flushing Council on Culture and the Arts.

The Council produces a bimonthly calendar, distributed free to the community, listing all cultural happenings in the Flushing area. It also sponsors its own musical and cultural events, among them, the following.

In September 1979 a concert of chamber music by the Seoul Chamber Ensemble was hosted at the Free Synagogue of Flushing. This Chamber Ensemble is comprised of professional musicians from Korea who are Flushing residents. The concert was a tremendous success, with every seat (over 350) filled.

In November the Council, the Flushing Merchants Association, and NSP sponsored an outdoor concert of holiday music by the

Oratorio Society of Flushing and the Queens Symphony CETA Brass Quintet to inaugurate the holiday shopping season. The Council and NSP jointly sponsored musical performances and caroling at different locations throughout December. Participating groups were the Voices of Spirit, a black gospel chorus in Flushing; The Oratorio Society of Flushing; and the Queens Symphony CETA Brass Quintet.

Another Council project is the establishment of a Model Block in the downtown area. The block will be cleaned up and decorated with hanging plants, and house a permanent visual arts display in one of the store windows. A "culture wall" display will be developed in the Lippmann Arcade, promoting Flushing's cultural institutions and events.

A major concert is planned for the late spring at the Queens Botanical Gardens. This will bring together choirs from all the churches, temples, and synagogues in Flushing, promoting the theme of brotherhood.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Publications

Flushing Community Service Directory, a manual that informs people how and where to find city agencies and other community resources and services. We are working on a Flushing Neighborhood Stabilization Newsletter, a monthly newsletter to be distributed to all tenant, civic, and block associations as well as

all other concerned community leaders and organizations. It will provide reports on projects, funding sources, new block and tenant associations, and issues pertinent to the community.

The Flushing Neighborhood Stabilization Program office acts as a community resource center for any community group or resident who needs information on housing issues, ethnic programs, funding proposals, etc. We maintain a resource library of multilingual brochures, pamphlets, books, and local laws pertaining to housing as well as applications for various award programs. In addition someone is always available to provide assistance with lease interpretations, or problems, or to help fill out forms for the Conciliation and Appeals Board.

Youth Programs

We were able to assist P.A.Y. 7 (Positive Approachs to Youth in Community Board 7) in securing some funding for their pilot program that was held in the Spring of 1979. We helped the Flushing Boys Club arrange for the Cornell Extension Handi-Van to demonstrate and teach "hands on" basic skills to a group of preadolescents. Fundamental skills in electricity and house painting were taught, and program of more complex skills was provided to the older members of the Boys Club. As mentioned before in this report, the Neighborhood Stabilization Program has worked closely with the Queens Botanical Gardens in their children's workshop on growing and recognizing the fruits and vegetables that are important to our new ethnic neighbors.

Flushing Town Meeting and Workshop

In cooperation with Community Board 7's Revitalization Committee, we will be planning and organizing a major community conference to be held at Flushing High School in the spring of 1980. The goal of the conference will be to bring together people and issues concerned with the future of Flushing. Included will be planning sessions and workshops on housing, crime and safety, transportation, and the environment.

Photographic Essay

Our photographic essay and slide presentation will be updated and expanded. It is a promotional package that offers a view of the community and its people, and the quality of life that exists in Flushing. It is available to any group or organization that wishes to see it.

CONCLUSION

The staff of the Flushing NSP office will continue its efforts to bring together members of the various populations in productive, creative activities for the Flushing community. We will continue our housing activities, tenant and block organizing, and work with the merchants' association.

But ultimately we do not carry out the revitalization of this community; the people and organizations do this themselves. It is our goal to assist in these efforts for as long as we are here, and to leave behind a stronger community that can resolve its own problems.

Support Units

THE SUPPORT UNITS

SYSTEMIC HOUSING ENFORCEMENT UNIT

The Systemic Housing Enforcement Unit of the Commission's Neighborhood Stabilization Program is charged with enforcing the laws on fair housing. The Commission draws its power from the Administrative Code of the City of New York.

As explained in the introduction to this report, this aspect of the NSP is critical. The very term neighborhood stabilization can mean different things to different people. For some, neighborhood stabilization means an effort to improve the quality of life in a neighborhood; for others, unfortunately the term may stand for exclusion of minority persons from an area. The NSP stands for inclusion. Our aim is to see to it that all members of the community both new and old, black and white, can work together. The NSP defends the right of any person to live wherever he or she chooses. The goal of the systemic housing unit is to open up opportunity for housing for minority people in areas from which they are excluded. Simultaneously, the unit investigates brokers who are steering whites away from integrated neighborhoods.

The following examples give a sense of the process that occurs during these investigations and the procedures that ensue.

A nicely dressed man in his mid 20's walked into a Bronx real estate office and informed the salesman that he was interested in buying a two-family house in the Throgs Neck section. He said he could afford to spend around \$60,000. The salesman showed him two houses, one for \$56,000, the other for \$61,000.

On the same day another nicely dressed man walked into the same realtor's office, spoke to the same salesman, and expressed interest in purchasing a two-family house in Throgs Neck. He said he was willing to spend up to \$65,000. The salesman told him to come back the next day; when he returned the salesman said he was sorry, only one house was available, selling for more than \$65,000.

The first man was white; the second, black. Both were employed as "testers" or "checkers" by NSP's Systemic Housing Enforcement Unit.

Racial exclusion, the practice of denying houses or apartments to minority members while offering those homes to white people, is only one type of illegal practice investigated by the Unit. Other practices are blockbusting and racial steering. Blockbusting entails deliberately fanning irrational racial fears of white homeowners, pressuring them to sell out cheaply, and selling their former homes at considerably higher cost to minority families. Racial steering, which ultimately has the same effect, is

the practice of directing whites to one neighborhood or area, and blacks and Hispanics to another.

Steering is typified by the following experiences of two NSP checkers in a Brooklyn real estate office.

The first checker, a white man in his early 30's, requested a one-family house in Flatbush, in the mid-\$40,000 range. He claimed to have a family income of \$22,000, and offered a down payment of \$9,000. The realtor showed him three houses, all in white neighborhoods. On the same day, a black man in his early 30's requested the same size house in Flatbush for the same price, offering a combined family income of \$24,000 and a down payment of \$10,000. He was also shown three houses -- two in areas that were almost entirely black, and the third in an area that was undergoing rapid white flight (i.e., an area soon to be resegregated).

The testing process may take from three months to a year or more. When sufficient evidence is gathered by a series of tests on a single realtor, it is submitted to the Commission's Legal Division for processing. Much of the legal effort is designed to secure a written agreement, signed by the realtor, calling for compliance with the fair housing laws and periodic reporting to the Commission. When realtors refuse to sign such an agreement or if they violate a signed agreement, they may be brought to an administrative hearing -- a trial -- at the Commission itself. If found guilty by an impartial hearing officer, the Commission may

enforce compliance through the courts.

In compliance the realtors are required to submit detailed records to the Commission regarding home seekers who have sought homes from them and on homes shown, sold, or rented. They know the Commission will be monitoring their activities for a specified period of time. Such monitoring consists of three components: technical assistance on education of the realtor's staff and on report preparation; evaluation of submitted reports (which reveal evolving racial demographic patterns); and additional testing.

The Unit works closely with other agencies concerned with fair housing. If necessary, the Commission or one of these agencies will take steps to penalize a realtor through further court or administrative processes if the illegal activity is not stopped.

REDLINING

One of the most critical issues dealt with by the Commission's Neighborhood Stabilization Program is the practice commonly called "redlining," by which lending institutions and insurance companies write off or disinvest in certain neighborhoods. This makes it impossible or extremely difficult for owners of private homes, apartment houses, and businesses to obtain mortgages, improvement loans, and insurance. It was apparent that healthy, stable

communities as well as deteriorated areas were undergoing disinvestment, and that redlining itself could undermine their health and make decline inevitable. Yet there was too little public recognition of the role neighborhood disinvestment was playing in the urban crisis. Alarmed at the implications of widespread disinvestment for community stability and for the stability of entire cities, the Commission set a priority on dealing with the problem.

The Neighborhood Stabilization Program's involvement in the redlining issue began in November 1976 with a series of four citywide hearings on disinvestment, attended by representatives of neighborhood associations, tenant and homeowner councils, public interest and consumer groups, landlords and the financial industry. Following the hearings the Commission issued a major report, Economic Investment and the Future of Neighborhoods, summarizing the testimony and offering recommendations for community action, municipal administration and state legislation. The Commission then hosted a series of meetings bringing together various organizations involved with the issue. The groups eventually established an independent, loosely knit Coalition Against Redlining.

In 1978, redlining studies were published on the Dollar Savings Bank, the Jamaica Savings Bank, and the Columbia Savings and Loan Association. The studies analyzed the investment records of these banks in various communities

and are now used by the Commission's Neighborhood Stabilization Program field offices to organize groups and to spearhead action to stem redlining. Before 1978 the unit had issued a study of the Dime Savings Bank's disinvestment record in Southeast Queens.

Workshops for local planning boards, community groups, merchants, college students, and the general public have been conducted by NSP staff. Workshops are both technical (e.g., how to use disclosure laws, how to develop strategies in negotiations with banks), and general (what redlining is, how it affects housing, etc.).

Challenges have been prepared to oppose bank applications to open new branches when the lending policies of the bank in question reflect a pattern of disinvestment and when the location of the proposed new branch (e.g., Nassau or Suffolk counties) is anticipated to continue to syphon funds out of city neighborhoods. Challenges are submitted to the State Banking Department and the FDIC. The Commission has prepared challenges to branch applications of the Dime, Harlem, and Williamsburgh Savings Banks and to Dollar and Eastern Savings Banks, and has endorsed challenges to Greater New York and Northside Savings Banks.

CCHR has developed anti-redlining legislative concepts with community groups regarding mandatory investment via a state-administered mortgage pool, a prohibition on geographic

discrimination, and affirmative lending. CCHR also prepared an amendment to the City Human Rights Law, outlawing discrimination based on ethnic composition of neighborhoods and developed a critique of state legislation introduced in the 1978 session.

Neighborhood coalitions against redlining have been organized in Southeast Queens, Far Rockaway, and neighborhoods in the Bronx. These community groups assisted by NSP staff, are in dialogue with local banks in an attempt to increase the amounts of mortgage money available to the local communities, and revise mortgage terms to meet the specific needs of area residents.

In addition to these major activities, the redlining staff has monitored city, state, and nationwide developments (laws, studies, actions, programs, etc.) in redlining and related issues such as reinvestment and displacement, testified at hearings before panels evaluating state and federal legislation, published a brochure for community use on the new Consumer Cooperative Bank, and issued several information bulletins (fact sheets) to community groups.

Neighborhoods cannot remain stable, viable communities if disinvestment goes unchecked and unchallenged. Neighborhoods do not deteriorate because they become integrated. Deterioration occurs when policies and practices such as redlining make it virtually impossible for local residents to maintain their properties and preserve their neighborhoods.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Until 1977 the Commission was unable to undertake an in-depth evaluation of the impact of the NSP because of budgetary restrictions. Although financial considerations still limit the scope of such an evaluation, a full-time NSP director of research and evaluation was hired in 1978, and a second staff person in 1979. This unit works under the general supervision of the Commission's research director.

During 1978 the unit developed an overall plan for an ongoing program of research and evaluation, which is being implemented in small, low-budget components and combines the tasks of need assessment and formative evaluation. Among the projects completed are the following.

In 1978 in-depth interviews were carried out with 40 leaders of block, tenant, and civic associations in the North Bronx to identify their perceptions of their community and to obtain their assessment of the NSP office that served the community. Responses were overwhelmingly positive in terms of the assistance the NSP staff had provided and the impact the office had had on the area. Among the most critical needs for the area expressed by these leaders was the development of facilities for youth; the office since has undertaken a number of activities geared to meet this need.

In 1979 randomly selected residents in the Stratton Park areas of the East Bronx were interviewed using a similar

instrument to that used for group leaders but focusing on residents' views of neighborhood needs. These findings were presented to the NSP staff, along with demographic data. The findings were used by the staff and the Stratton Park Tenants' Council in proposals aimed at meeting the needs of the elderly in that community and to address local housing issues.

During 1979 the unit evaluated a key NSP program, the leadership training workshop being offered in several NSP areas. This evaluation, using multiple observation and assessment instruments, produced a number of recommendations for improvements in this program.

In 1978 the Research and Evaluation Unit developed guidelines and criteria for the housing enforcement program and made recommendations for improving the testing program. Currently a new form is being developed that will help the testers report data more accurately and more consistently in terms of needs of the legal department.

Technical assistance has been provided to staff on numerous research projects in their field areas, including development of mechanisms to assess the current strength of organizations; gaining community input into improvement of an office newsletter; identifying racial steering in a community; and assessing the needs of communities in order to plan office strategies.