



*A Moral Duty or A Financial Burden?
Scatter-site Housing in Greenburgh
By: Riley Wentzler & Felicia Barber*



Introduction:

Scatter-site Housing, what is meant by this unusual term? It means “low-income housing.” However, unlike other terms for low-income housing such as “*Section 8*,” or “*The Projects*,” It is ***not*** a euphemism. Low-income housing in Greenburgh has this name because of its unusual, but not entirely unique, pattern in Greenburgh. Thus, instead of a mere euphemism, it’s actually a very specific and practical description.

Scatter-site Housing, what's in a name?

Greenburgh Housing Authority (**GHA**) was created in 1952 (<http://www.greenburghhousing.org/facts-about-us>) with a goal “to provide and develop safe, affordable, and quality housing opportunities for individuals and families” (<http://www.greenburghhousing.org/mission-statement>). Nine years later, it opened up its first public housing in the Fairview Section of town (<http://www.greenburghhousing.org/facts-about-us>). Then in 1973 the second round of public housing was opened. These two sections of public housing differed in two ways.

Firstly, while the 1961 development was funded by the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR), the 1973 development was funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Secondly, while the 1961 development was *only* in the Fairview Section of town, the 1973 development was widely dispersed among six different locations: one in Fairview, two locations in Hartsdale, one in Ardsley, one in Elmsford, and one in Tarrytown, thus giving rise to the other name for low-income housing in Greenburgh: “Scatter-site Housing” (<http://www.greenburghhousing.org/facts-about-us>). Is having low-income housing so close to middle-class and upper-class houses a good idea? That depends on who you ask.

A Fierce Debate:

These last six locations were selected after a public hearing on July 12th 1967 based on a proposal from (**GHA**). While the proposal received full-throated support from Representative Richard L. Ottinger and Urban Renewal Commission Chairwoman Mrs. Greenawalt, (Edmonds 1967 p.1), not everyone was on board. Seven-hundred Greenburgh residents who were at this public hearing loudly objected to the proposed construction, fearing a decline in property values (Melvin 1988 p.722). Three days later a new group, “*The Ardsley Forest Civic Association*,” was formed with the purpose of fighting the rezoning of the sites, particularly the fifteen apartments on Secor Road. 120 of those 700 residents who objected at the hearing attended the first meeting of the new organization. In addition to being concerned about decreased property values, the organization’s members were also concerned about the possibility of rising property taxes (Hastings News August 3 1967 p.3).

Although the objectors often framed their opposition to Scatter- Site Housing in financial terms, supporters of the low-income housing often put it in racial terms. For example, Councilman Barrett G. Kiersberg said, “We have an obligation to keep receiving communities ... to show that blacks and whites can live together” (Donigan 1972 p.17). Another resident said, “It’s our moral duty to accept these people” (Jones 1967 p.40).

Arguments went back and forth, but by August 10 1967, 60% of Greenburgh residents were in favor of the low-income housing (The Hastings News August 10 1967, p.3) and so the public housing units were approved and built in spite of the repeated objections. Later, several large single-family houses collectively known as, the *Kimberly Estates*, were built adjacent to the town's public-housing site in Hartsdale on Secor Road. Naturally, this created tension between the predominately white residents of the Kimberly Estates and the predominately African- American residents of the low-income housing. It was common to hear things like, "Go back to Africa," and/or, "just because he's rich, doesn't mean he's pure." However, the much-feared decline in property values did **not** occur, so tensions eventually subsided (Melvin 1988 p.722).

Conclusion:

In conclusion, today, Greenburgh has housing available for every level of income. In total, Fairview has 176 public housing apartments in it, Tarrytown has fifteen public housing apartments in it, Elmsford has twenty five public housing apartments and fifteen public housing apartments are on Secor Road (<http://www.greenburghhousing.org/public-housing>). The town is well on its way to achieving GHA’s goal where Greenburgh has, “properties and developments are communities where poverty is alleviated, neighborhoods are healthy and safe, and all people can achieve full potential”(<http://www.greenburghhousing.org/mission-statement>). As a result, Greenburgh is a very diverse community: religiously, linguistically, racially and in however else one might define culture.

If you want additional information, it is **not available through a simple google search**. You should go to the Westchester Historical Society, there you will find old issues of: *The Hastings News*, *The Tarrytown Daily News*, and the *Herald Statesman* which cover this topic in depth.



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About the Authors:

We are both Town Historians at Greenburgh Town Hall and we are engaged to be married and are currently looking for permanent employment.

Riley Wentzler:

I was born and raised in a small rural town in central Pennsylvania. In high school, I took every honors course available including four years of Spanish. I received A's in all of them. I graduated third in my class of 146 students. This brought me to Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. Once there, I continued my trend of academic excellence. I graduated summa cum laude in Political Science with a minor in Spanish and a Master's in Communication Studies, with a G.P.A of 3.94. It was also there that I met my lovely fiancée, Felicia Barber. My Master's in Communication has promoted public speaking, teamwork, and customer service. My Political Science degree has developed my research skills using computer-based tools and provided me with experience using the Microsoft Office products. My minor in Spanish has facilitated my bilingual capabilities. During my internship at Greenburgh, I created the petition for the State Roads project using website tools. My diverse education and areas of interest have provided me with a wide range of skills. I look forward to finding a career opportunity in business or government. **To suggest a topic for next week's article, you can contact me at historian@greenburghny.com, or to help me find employment, you can contact me at rjwentzler413@gmail.com.**

Felicia Barber:

I was born in New York City and raised in Hartsdale, New York. I graduated from Ardsley High School. I recently earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Graphic Design at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. It was here that I met my fiancé, Riley Wentzler. As a result of my academic excellence, I won a scholarship every year. I learned and applied many graphic design skills to projects during my summer internships and at school. I am proficient in using Adobe graphic design applications including Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign. For my Identity/branding course at Edinboro, I created logos to appear on the tee-shirts of Physical Education majors. For a veteran's upcoming event, I used a typeface to focus the reader to the soldier in the poster. For the State Roads Legislative Campaign project, I created the embedded graphic-photo that accompanied the petition I am looking for a job to utilize my skills as a Graphic Designer in an agency, print shop, company or government **To suggest a topic for next week's article, you can contact me at historian@greenburghny.com. To learn more about my artwork or to help me find employment you can contact me at feliciadbarber@gmail.com.**

Two Interviews with the authors:

<https://riverjournalonline.com/around-town/a-love-of-history-and-each-other/13708/>

<https://wcbs880.radio.com/articles/news/stories-main-street-couple-cerebral-palsy-brings-manytalents-town-greenburgh>

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