Comprehensive Security Planning
A Program for William Nickerson Jr.
Gardens, Los Angeles, CA

William Brill Associates, Inc., Annapolis, MD

Prepared for

Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, DC

Dec 77

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Focusing on a large public housing project of 1,110 units in
south central Los Angeles, Calif., this report outlines the
security planning and analysis techniques developed to
prepare a security plan for the project. The social and
physical environments of the project were analyzed to
determine factors that contribute to the vulnerability of
residents either by affecting victimization or their fear of
crime, or that cause them to restrict the use of their
environment because of their concern about crime. The
percentage of crime victims among predominantly black
tenants of the project was higher in most categories than
the national average. The rate of fear was high, with more
than 50 percent of those interviewed anticipating violence
in the year ahead as well as responding to their fears by
curtailing nightly visits to friends or halting evening
shopping trips. Security measures for this troubled project
will affect site improvements, management changes,
organization of residents, and improvements in the delivery
of social and police services. One of the major rec, ...

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COMPREHENSIVE SECURITY PLANNING:
A PROGRAM FOR
WILLIAM NICKERSON JR. GARDENS,
LOS ANGELES, CA.

FINAL DRAFT

This is considered a final
report by the author.

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ACQUISITIONS

WBA WILLIAM BRILL ASSOCIATES, INC.

COMPREHENSIVE SECURITY PLANNING:
A PROGRAM FOR
WILLIAM NICKERSON JR. GARDENS,
LOS ANGELES, CA.

FINAL DRAFT

Prepared for
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Policy Development and Research

Under Contract Number: H-2249

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

This is a summary of the findings and recommendations
of the work undertaken by William Brill Associates, Inc.
(WBA), regarding William Nickerson Jr. Gardens (WGN), a
large public housing project of slightly over a thousand
units in south central Los Angeles. Under its contract
with the Office of Policy Development and Research of
the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD),
WBA was assigned the task of preparing a security plan
for William Nickerson Jr. Gardens which would demonstrate
the security planning and analysis techniques developed
by the firm under previous HUD funding.

WBA's approach has two major steps. First, the social
and physical environment of the project are analyzed to
determine factors that contribute to the vulnerability
of residents either by contributing to their victimiza-
tion, their fear of crime, or causing them to restrict
the use of their environment because of their concern
about crime.

The second step involves the preparation of the plan
based upon this analysis. In the case of Nickerson
Gardens, as elsewhere, the plan is comprehensive in
scope including, as outlined below, recommendations re-
lating to site improvements, management, organization
of residents, and improvement in the delivery of social
and police services. The plan, whenever possible, seeks
to combine the effects of these improvements so that
they reinforce each other. One of the major recommenda-
tions for Nickerson, for example, is that the project
be broken up into clusters or mini-neighborhoods. The
purpose of these neighborhoods would be to encourage
the formations of the close, supporting relationships
that are necessary for a community to resist crime and
to control its own membership. It is recommended that
the definition of these clusters be reinforced both
architecturally and socially. Fencing, hedging, and the
presence of entranceways, would define them architec-
turally. They would be reinforced socially by organizing

residents in each of the clusters, a task made easier because of their physical definition.

Recommendations relating to this concept and a range of other improvements are included in the report and briefly summarized below.

The Residential Vulnerability Analysis

The Residential Vulnerability Analysis has three components: the Household Safety and Security Survey, the Site Security Analysis, and the Social Vulnerability Analysis.

THE HOUSEHOLD SAFETY AND SECURITY SURVEY

This survey measures resident victimization, fear of crime, and altered behavior. It provides baseline data on the crime problem enabling change to be measured over time. It is also useful as a planning tool because it indicates who is being victimized, where the crime is occurring, and which areas on the site are viewed as being most fearful by the residents. It thus provides a basis for deciding which areas on the site need attention.

THE SITE SECURITY ANALYSIS

This component analyzes the features of the site that contribute to the vulnerability of residents. Criteria include the amount of unassigned space, the presence of high risk areas and design conflicts, the penetrability of the site, and the extent to which on-site activities can be casually surveyed by residents, or formally surveyed by police.

THE SOCIAL VULNERABILITY ANALYSIS

This component analyzes the residents' capacity to organize, work together, and support one another. Such issues as the extent of social cohesion, and the effectiveness of resident organizations are analyzed. The effectiveness of social and police services are also assessed.

Findings

HOUSEHOLD SAFETY AND SECURITY SURVEY (HSSS)

VICTIMIZATION

The victimization rate in Nickerson Gardens was found to be high. As indicated in Table 1 Comparison of Crime Rate (Appendix A, p.3), it is higher in most categories than the nation as a whole, Los Angeles in general, and even higher than similar income groups in Los Angeles.

FEAR

Fear was also found to be high. As indicated in Table 14 (Appendix A, p. 36), more than 50% of those interviewed believed there is a 50/50 chance or better of being beaten up in the project in the year ahead. A similar percentage of women estimate the same chances of being sexually assaulted within the same period of time. Fear for children was also found to be high (Table 15, Appendix A, p. 37). More than 50% of the parents were "worried" or "very worried" about their children being beaten, robbed, or forced to pay money either in the project, in school, or on the way to

school. Residents also regarded a wide range of every-
day events and social situations, such as waiting for
a bus, walking across the project, as being dangerous
(Table 16, Appendix A, p. 39-40).

ALTERED BEHAVIOR

The survey also found that many residents, in an
effort to cope with the crime problem, were constrain-
ing their use of the environment. Many residents re-
stricted visits to friends in the project and did not
shop at night because of their concern about crime
(Table 18, Appendix A, p. 43).

SITE SECURITY ANALYSIS

The site was found to have a number of features that
increase the residents' vulnerability. There are large
amounts of unassigned space, and serious design con-
flicts between residential and recreational uses of
space, especially around the central play field, and
at bus stops, which are located close to liquor stores.
The site was also found to be highly penetrable, lack-
ing structured entranceways or circulation paths. Few
environmental cues are given as to how large amounts
of the site should be used. The site lacks definition
and is highly anonymous.

SOCIAL VULNERABILITY ANALYSIS

The social vulnerability analysis found that residents
lacked a high degree of social cohesion. Values are
not widely shared and friendships appear to be few (41%
of those interviewed report that they have no friends
in the project they could turn to in a time of trouble).
The tenant council was not found to be very effective
and social services operating in the project, particu-
larly in the area of drug and alcohol abuse, reported

difficulty in getting people into treatment. Effective
delivery of police services was found to be hampered
by (1) the negative views many residents have of the
police, (2) the difficulty Housing Authority police
have in communicating directly to the Los Angeles
Police Department in a time of emergency, and (3) the
fact that Housing Authority police do not report to
an office within the Authority with direct management
responsibility for the project.

The Comprehensive Security Plan

To counteract the vulnerabilities identified in its
analysis, WBA recommends site improvements and measures
intended to increase resident cohesion and organization,
and to improve delivery of social and police services.
These improvements are intended to counteract features
of the physical environment that contribute to resi-
dents' vulnerability, and to encourage development
of the close, supporting relationships among residents
that are an important part of a community's resistance
to crime.

The improvements are grouped around five objectives, as
discussed below.

ENCOURAGE TERRITORIALITY

To encourage resident involvement in the environment,
as well as the formation of the necessary social rela-
tionships, three sets of improvements are recommended.

SUBDIVIDE NICKERSON GARDENS INTO CLUSTERS OF 24 TO 38 HOUSEHOLDS CONSISTING OF THREE TO FOUR BUILDINGS

These clusters would provide a small social unit for

residents to identify with. They would provide a basis for friendships, resident organization, and the development of helping relationships among residents. These clusters, (Figure 4, Main Report, p. 64) would be defined architecturally through the installation of shrubs, fencing, and formal entrance points, as well as by placement of tot-lots or sitting areas within each cluster.

The social reinforcement of the clusters is also recommended. Residents should be organized on the cluster level, a task which should be made easier because of their architectural definition. For a typical cluster arrangement see Figure 6, Main Report, p. 66.

RESTRUCTURE RESIDENT ORGANIZATIONS

These clusters are to be the main organizing element within the project, and they are intended to provide a grass-roots basis for the Resident Council. Accordingly, clusters should be grouped into council districts (Figure 7, Main Report, p. 69). These districts will elect members to the Resident Council. This would increase participation in council activities and provide the council with a basis of support.

To assure that the council is representative, it is also proposed that persons representing the youth, the women, and the elderly of Nicherson Gardens be appointed to serve on the council.

MAKE SPACE PRIVATE

To further encourage involvement in the environment, front and rear yards would be defined with modest symbolic demarcations, such as shrubs or low decorative fencing so residents will be encouraged to take control of the spaces. This would reduce the amount of un-

assigned, anonymous space and give residents various
kinds of spaces: their own private space, semi-public
space, and project or neighborhood space.

REDISTRIBUTE RECREATIONAL SPACE

Recommendations in this area are intended to reduce
the design conflicts on the site; areas where incom-
patible activities are located next to one another,
or where different groups are forced to compete for
the same space or facilities.

To eliminate these conflicts, the plan proposes the
following:

1. Subdivide outdoor recreation areas into ele-
    mentary school areas, teenage areas, and adult
    areas, and provide for both active and passive
    activities in each of these areas.

2. Place elementary school areas in the vacant
    lots on Parmelee Avenue and 114th Street.

3. Focus teenage activities in the central play-
    field; add basketball and tennis courts as
    shown in Figure 4, Main Report, p. 64.

4. Install shaded sitting areas adjacent to all
    play areas.

IMPROVE SOCIAL SERVICES

To improve resident linkages with social services and
to assure the relevancy of these services to the resi-
dents, a crisis intervention program is proposed.
Under this program, representatives of social service

agencies would come to cluster meetings and provide
training and guidance on how to handle crises in that
agency's area of competence. The program would rein-
force cluster organization, help residents deal with
crises, acquaint residents with longer term solutions
to crises available, and provide participating services
with valuable client input that could be used in the
design and operation of their programs.

IMPROVE POLICE SERVICES

The plan makes three recommendations to improve police
services:

PLACE HOUSING AUTHORITY POLICE UNDER THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR

The Housing Authority Police are currently in the Office
of the Director of Administrative Services. Their
placement under the Executive Deputy Director of
Management would assure that the police could be con-
tinually sensitized to the issues facing management.
It would also make coordination between the manage-
ment staff and the police more feasible, and open up
the possibility of more joint programs.

ESTABLISH A COMMUNICATIONS LINK BETWEEN HOUSING AUTHOR-
ITY POLICE PATROLS AND LOS ANGELES POLICE PATROLS

At present, Housing Authority police patrols cannot
communicate directly with the Los Angeles police patrols.
They must go through the Housing Authority dispatcher
who calls the Los Angeles Police and relays informa-
tion back to these patrols. Such a routine makes
coordination in an emergency difficult, tends to isolate
the Housing Authority police from their city counter-
parts, and limits their information about events that
could be related to a problem in the project.

ESTABLISH A SECURITY PLANNING BOARD

The Security Planning Board recommended is designed
to improve police/community relations and provide a
forum for police, the management staff, and the resi-
dents to interact constructively concerning security
matters. The Board would meet monthly to review the
security situation and agree on measures to improve
it.

CONTROL ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

To reduce penetrability of the site, make it easier
for residents and police to observe on-site activities,
and bring structure and form to the site, a series
of improvements are proposed (Figure 4, Main Report,
p. 64):

1. Add low chain link fences to rear yard areas
    facing perimeter development streets (such
    as Compton and Imperial), limiting site access
    to front areas only.

2. Construct two sidewalk "firelanes" and adjacent
    sitting areas to run through the central play-
    field. These improve north-south pedestrian
    circulation through the site and provide
    police cars with an informal pathway to patrol
    and survey activities on the playfield.

3. Hedge in front yards adjacent to the central
    playfield to establish a symbolic barrier be-
    tween the playfield and these areas.

4. Create gateways to the project by planting
    trees on both sides of the streets that enter
    the project.

5. Locate informal sitting areas in front yard locations adjacent to new pedestrian pathways, enhancing opportunities for resident surveillance of site activities.

IMPROVE SITE LIGHTING

The levels of lighting proposed for Nickerson Gardens are intended to provide lighting appropriate for the designated use of the various types of outdoor spaces, to help define these uses, and to bring variation and form to the site. Lighting is not intended to simply add illumination.

ACCOMMODATE SPECIAL INTERESTS AND NEEDS

The plan includes proposals designed to meet the special needs of the women and elderly on the site.

ESTABLISH A WOMEN'S PROGRAM

The vast majority of households at Nicherson Gardens are headed by single adult females with children. Yet despite their numbers and the common stresses these women must deal with, friendship bonds and supporting relationships were found to be few. Forty-one percent of those interivewed, for example, reported that they had no friends on the site with whom they could talk over personal problems.

There is also reason to believe that some of the social programs are not sufficiently oriented toward the needs of women in the project, or are not particularly effective in meeting some of their needs. This appears to be especially true in the area of alcohol and drug abuse where, compared to men, substantially fewer women are being treated. It seems clear that abuse patterns are

different among women and that women, because of their
responsibilities for children, have special problems
in seeking and staying in treatment.

To meet these needs a women's program should be
organized on the site. Representatives from outside
groups in the area should be asked for assistance in
helping organize women's groups at the cluster and
resident council levels. The focus should be on help-
ing women understand their common needs, how they can
help each other, and how they can work together to
assure that available programs are responsive to their
needs.

ESTABLISH AN ELDERLY COMPLEX

As part of the planning process, WBA analyzed the
feasibility of establishing an elderly complex in a
portion of the site, a proposal the Authority has been
considering for some time.

It was determined that such a complex was feasible if
adequate security was provided and residents were able
to choose their roommates, as the Authority proposed.
A conceptual plan for this complex is presented in
Figure 8, Main Report, p. 80. It provided for con-
trolled access to the complex, an attractive landscape,
and a small community center.

Implementation Costs

The plan includes estimated cost data for all the recom-
mended site improvements. Costs of the recommended
social programs and management initiatives to be under-
taken by the Authority are not estimated because it is
possible that much of this work can be undertaken by

present Authority staff and local social service agencies.
Funds would probably be required for technical assistance
in setting up the crisis intervention and women's pro-
grams. This amount would depend on how much assistance
the Authority could get from public and private agencies
within the Los Angeles community.

The total cost of the site improvements is estimated
at $2,268,090. All of this amount would not be re-
quired at the outset, however. The plan could be imple-
mented in stages, as the improvement program can be
broken down into design modules such as clusters, the
central playfield, the senior center, entranceways
and sitting areas, etc.

A first year budget of $800,000 could have substantial
impact. This sum would fund the improvements for the
senior complex ($620,000), and those recommended for
the central playfield and adjacent units ($180,000).
As funds became available they could be used to improve
the site on a cluster by cluster basis (estimated
cluster improvements total an average of $30,000 per
cluster). If the Authority preferred, the clusters
could be done initially and the senior complex delayed.

INTRODUCTION

This report presents a comprehensive security plan for
William Nickerson Jr. Gardens, an 1,110-unit public
housing project in South Central Los Angeles, California.
The plan and the supporting analysis were prepared by
William Brill Associates, Inc. (WBA) under contract to
the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
(HUD).

WBA's contract with HUD called for the firm to field
test, in two public housing projects, an approach to
security planning and analysis develped by WBA under
previous HUD funding. WBA also prepared a comprehen-
sive security plan for each site based on this approach.*
One of the projects was William Nickerson Jr. Gardens
(WNG), the subject of this report. A plan for the
other project, Arthur Capper Dwellings, Washington,
D.C. is presented separately.**

Approach

The approach used to develop the comprehensive security
plan for William Nickerson Jr. Gardens was based on

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*For an example of WBA's earlier work in security
planning, see: Comprehensive Security Planning: A
Program for Scott/Carver Homes, (Washington, D.C.: U.S.
Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1976), and
Housing Management Technical Memorandum No. 1, (Washing-
ton, D.C.: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Develop-
ment, September, 1975).

**See Comprehensive Security Planning: A Program
for Arthur Capper Dwellings, Washington, D.C., Final
Draft, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Housing
and Urban Development, 1977).

three operating principles.

THE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE VULNERABILITIES OF THE SITE

This component of the planning approach involves identi-
fying the characteristics of the project's physical
and social environment that (1) contribute to the
criminal victimization of residents, (2) contribute
to their fear of crime, or (3) cause them to alter
their behavior to such an extent that they limit their
opportunities for interaction with their environment
and fail to construct the social defenses against crime
commonly found in strong, cohesive neighborhoods.

Projects may be vulnerable on several levels. Physical
characteristics of the site may contribute to crime
or fear of crime, or cause people to avoid interaction
with each other and their environment. Patterns of
interaction among residents may also limit their abili-
ty to work together or look after one another. This
isolation may result in higher victimization in the
project, more resident fear, or both.

Projects may also be vulnerable because of the manner
and extent to which they receive police and other
security-related social services. If these services
are not provided, or are provided in an insensitive
or inefficient manner, residents' vulnerability to
crime may increase.

To analyze the vulnerabilities of a project, WBA uses
its Residential Vulnerability Analysis, a refinement
of a research and planning tool developed under pre-
vious HUD funding.

The Residential Vulnerability Analysis has three parts.
The first is the Household Safety and Security Survey,
administered to a sample of the resident population.
The survey provides data on actual victimization, resi-
dent fear of crime, and resident modification of behavior

due to concern about crime. Unlike police data,
interviews, or hearsay, this survey provides an
accurate, detailed picture of the crime problem at
the site. Because it tells exactly where victimiza-
tions are taking place, and which areas are viewed
most fearfully, improvements can be targeted to the
most vulnerable areas.

The second part of the Residential Vulnerability
Analysis is the Site Security Analysis. This identi-
fies features of the site that contribute to resi-
dents' vulnerability to crime. Criteria used in this
analysis include: (1) the amount and location of
unassigned space - space that no one protects and
which can easily be claimed by intruders; (2) the
penetrability of the site - how it can be entered and
how these entry points are structured and controlled;
(3) the presence of design conflicts, where user groups
are forced to compete for use of the same facility or
space; (4) the presence of features (such as poorly
defined front and rear yards) that discourage exer-
cise of resident territoriality; (5) the extent to
which the site provides opportunities for formal
surveillance, such as that of the police, or infor-
mal surveillance, where neighbors casually and easily
view common areas and (6) the presence of high risk
areas.

The third part of the Residential Vulnerability Ana-
lysis examines the site's social and police services.
The cohesiveness and organizational strength of a
project's social structure are analyzed to determine
the extent to which residents have formed supporting
relationships useful in resisting criminal intrusion
or in controlling the antisocial behavior of other
residents. It also examines how effectively police
and other security-related social services are de-
livered to the project.

THE NEED FOR EVALUATION

The second operating principle that guides the prepara-
tion of a security plan is that the plan must be able

to be evaluated. This requirement can be met by a reapplication of the Residential Vulnerability Analysis, or any of its dimensions, after improvements have been made. The success of the plan can thus be judged on explicit and relevant criteria. A resurvey of the population, for example, can precisely determine what shifts have occurred in resident victimization, resident fear of crime, and the extent to which residents are limiting their use of their environment due to concern about crime. The characteristics of the site and the social structure of the residents can also be analyzed on a before and after basis.

THE NEED FOR A MUTUALLY REINFORCING MIX OF IMPROVEMENTS

The third operating principle of this plan is that any effective security program must present a mutually reinforcing mix of improvements. Experience has shown that many efforts to improve security in housing have failed at least partly because they are one-dimensional approaches to a multi-demensional problem. It is not enough to install any one improvement, be it improved lighting, site improvements, resident organizations or even guards. A coordinated program that involves a mix of reinforcing improvements is necessary.

Scope of This Report

This report applies the principles described above. The findings of the Residential Vulnerability Analysis are first presented, followed by the Comprehensive Security Plan for William Nickerson Jr. Gardens based on this analysis.

The security plan for Nickerson Gardens includes a range of improvements. Physical site improvements are

specified, as well as measures to increase resident
organization and the delivery of police and security-
related social services. The plan structures these
improvements so they will reinforce each other. For
example, one of the major recommendations is that
Nickerson Gardens be broken up into mini-neighborhoods
or clusters. This would deinstitutionalize the
project and provide social units of a size and scale
that residents can identify with. To accomplish this
objective, the plan proposes that architectural ele-
ments, such as fences, hedging, and activity areas,
be used to define social units, and that residents
then be organized within them. Organization will be
easier to accomplish because of the physical defini-
tion of the organizational unit. Architectural
improvements and the organization of residents are
thus mutually reinforcing and bring residents into
supporting, helping relationships. The plan also
recommends a social service delivery system that
recognizes these units as primary elements with which
to work.

The report presents a systematic, comprehensive
approach to security planning. The approach is
systematic because it applies precise research instru-
ments to measure factors relevant to the crime
problem. It is comprehensive because it recommends a
broad range of improvements that, because they are
mutually reinforcing, can be expected to substantially
impact on the crime problem in residential environ-
ments.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AREA: NICKERSON GARDENS

The Neighborhood Setting

Nickerson Gardens contains 1,110 dwelling units in 162 buildings (Figure 1). The site also contains management and maintenance facilities, a community center with a gym and space for classrooms or workshops, and a separate day care facility. The site covers about 15 Los Angeles city blocks.

The site layout is characterized by groups of two, three, and four two-story townhouse buildings as shown in Photo 1. They are usually arranged around parking lots and small open spaces. In spite of this grouping, there is a barracks-like sameness and a sprawling openness to the building and site arrangement.

A large rectangular playfield (the "central playfield") is in the middle of the project and sixteen smaller, underutilized play lots are distributed throughout the site. Two additional open spaces have recently been added to the site through demolition.

The street system is a mixture of gridiron and curving street patterns. Rambling pedestrian walkways intersect the streets and provide access to the front and rear doors of houses on the site. A number of small parking lots for approximately thirty cars provide off-street parking; however, many residents park their cars on the street in front of their units.

Major streets bordering the project and providing access are Imperial Highway on the south and Compton Avenue on the east. Imperial Highway is a wide, heavily traveled road, separated from the site by a low chain link fence.
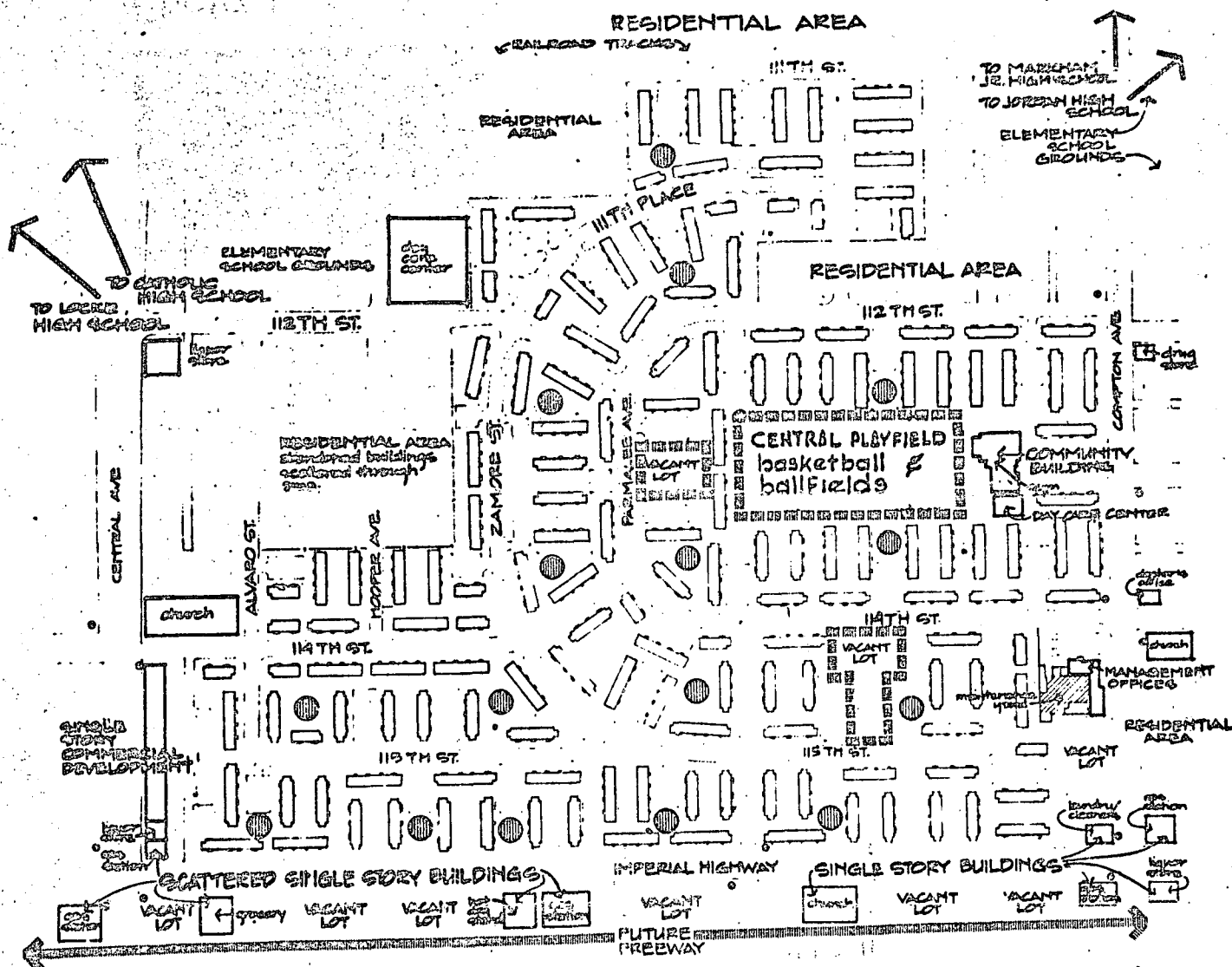
Figure 1:

EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

WBA WILLIAM BRILL ASSOCIATES, INC.

BUS STOP
PLAY AREA
LARGE OPEN SPACES

WILLIAM NICKERSON, JR. GARDENS

Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles

0 50 100 200 300 feet   NORTH

RESIDENTIAL AREA
RAILROAD TRACKS
111TH ST.
RESIDENTIAL AREA
TO MARKHAM JR. HIGH SCHOOL
TO JORDAN HIGH SCHOOL
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GROUNDS
111TH PLACE
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GROUNDS
TO CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL
TO LOCKE HIGH SCHOOL
112TH ST.
RESIDENTIAL AREA
112TH ST.
RESIDENTIAL AREA standard buildings scattered throughout area.
CENTRAL PLAYFIELD basketball & ballfields
COMMUNITY BUILDINGS
DAY CARE CENTER
drug store
CENTRAL AVE
ALVARO ST.
HOOPER AVE
ZAMORE ST.
PALMELEE AVE
COMPTON AVE
VACANT LOT
church
114TH ST.
114TH ST.
VACANT LOT
MANAGEMENT OFFICES
RESIDENTIAL AREA
SINGLE STORY COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT
115TH ST.
115TH ST.
VACANT LOT
SCATTERED SINGLE STORY BUILDINGS
VACANT LOT
grocery
VACANT LOT
VACANT LOT
gas station
IMPERIAL HIGHWAY
VACANT LOT
church
SINGLE STORY BUILDINGS
VACANT LOT
VACANT LOT
laundry cleaners
gas station
FUTURE FREEWAY

Photo 1: View of Nickerson Gardens from Imperial Highway.

The neighborhood contributes little towards making
the site a desirable location with adequate services.
One-story residential dwellings, many of which are
boarded up and abandoned, vacant lots, and several
commercial establishments surround the development.
The commercial establishments include two service
stations, two restaurants, one small grocery store,
a laundromat, a drug store, one doctor's office and
three liquor stores. There are several churches,
schools, and day care facilities near the site; city
bus service is available along Compton, Imperial
and Central Avenues. But there are no large super-
markets, department stores, or other convenient shop-
ping areas in the neighborhood. Commercial services
now existing along Imperial Highway may be demolished
if the proposed east-west highway is built. Land
acquisition and clearance has commenced for this free-
way, and its completion will further deplete available
goods and services in the area.

The Residents

The resident population of Nickerson Gardens does not
vary significantly from that of other public housing
developments in major cities. Almost all are black and
an overwhelming majority of the households are headed
by females. As seen in the following chart, 70.7% of
those households questioned in the Household Safety
and Security Survey consisted of one adult and children.

Table 1--Sample household population at Nickerson Gardens
Spring, 1976

	Number	Percent
Adults living alone	11	6.0
Adult and children	130	70.7
Adults living together	7	3.8
Family (mother, father, children)	36	19.5
TOTAL	184	100.0

The majority of the children are under 12 years of age;
WEA's survey showed 311 of 468 children in the sampled
households in this group. The population is also
highly transient. At the time of the survey, occu-
pancy lists for Nickerson Gardens showed that approxi-
mately 35% of the residents had lived there for less
than one year. New arrivals were usually young women
with small children.

RESIDENTIAL VULNERABILITY ANALYSIS

The Residential Vulnerability Analysis consists of
three related parts: the Household Safety and Security
Survey, the Site Security Analysis, and an analysis of
the project's social structure and the delivery of
police and other security-related social services.

Part I: Household Safety and Security Survey

The Household Safety and Security Survey (HSSS) pro-
vides an important perspective on the security issues
in a housing environment. It measures resident victi-
mization, resident fear of crime, and the extent to
which residents are limiting their activities due to
concern about crime.

The survey has two important uses. First, it provides
baseline data about the crime problem that can be used
to measure change over time. A resurvey of the popu-
lation after improvements have been made will provide
an accurate assessment of their effect on reducing
victimization, fear and altered behavior. The survey
is also used as a planning tool. An analysis of the
data tells where on the site victimizations are
occurring, and which areas and situations are viewed
most fearfully by residents. Thus, improvements can
be directed at the areas and units on the site with
the greatest problems.

The survey data also permit Nickerson Gardens to be
compared with other public housing environments where

the survey has been administered and with other income
groups and geographic areas where data is available.
It thus allows various housing environments to be com-
pared.

THE SAMPLE

A sample of 184 households, proportionally stratified
by the number of bedrooms per unit, was selected from
the households residing at Nickerson Gardens as of
March, 1976. The head of household was interviewed
regarding events that took place during the preceding
twelve months; March, 1975 to March 1976.* Respon-
dents ranged from 19 to 79 years of age; over 91%
were female. Eighty-four percent had been unemployed
during the previous twelve months. The majority of
those employed held full time jobs. Twenty-three
percent of the households had resided at Nickerson
Gardens for less than one year. Their victimization
experience was weighted to account for this length of
residence factor.

GENERAL FINDINGS

General findings of the Household Safety and Security
Analysis are given here. A more detailed discussion
is found in Appendix A.

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*In ten cases another resident adult was substituted
due to the continued unavailability of the head of the
household.

VICTIMIZATION

Overview

As shown in Table 2, of the 184 households surveyed,
104 households (56.5%) experienced one or more criminal
incidents during the year preceding the survey. Forty-
three of the 104 households were victimized once; 61
were victimized more than once. Victimizations against
the household occurred approximately four times as
frequently as victimization against the person (Table
3). Of all the categories, burglary was the most
common crime, affecting 35.9% of the sampled households
and accounting for 36.4% of the total incidents.
Larcenies were also frequent, affecting 19.6% of the
sampled households and accounting for 27.9% of the
total incidents.

Table 2.--Sample households victimized

Frequency of victimization	Number of households victimized	Percentage of sample households (N=184)
Units victimized once	43	23.4
Units victimized more than once	61	33.1
Total units victimized	104	56.5

Table 3.--Summary of victimizations

Crime	Number of households victimized	Percentage of sample households (N=184)	Total number of incidents	Percenta of total incident (N=319)
PERSONAL VICTIMIZATIONS				
Robbery	8	4.3	20	6.3
Purse snatching	13	7.1	17	5.3
Assault	10	5.4	17	5.3
Sexual assault	2	1.1	2	0.6
VICTIMIZATIONS AGAINST THE HOUSEHOLD				
Burglary	66[a]	35.9[a]	116	36.4
Successful	33	17.9	49	15.4
Attempted	42	22.8	67	21.0
Larceny	36	19.6	89	27.9
Vandalism	13	7.1	39	12.2
VICTIMIZATIONS INVOLVING PERSONAL PROPERTY LOSS				
Mailbox break-in[b]	0	0.0	0	0.0
Deliberate car damage	9	4.9	19	5.9

[a]Some households were the victims of both successful and attempted burglary.

[b]Each unit has a mail slot in the door rather than a mailbox.

Of victimizations against the person, robbery was
the most frequent. Eight households had experienced
20 robberies during the previous year; these constitute
35.7% of the 56 crimes against the individual. Most
of the robberies occurred in the afternoon; the
majority of the assailants were males under 17 years
old. Besides these robberies, 13 households experi-
enced 17 purse snatchings.

Seventeen assaults took place against members of ten
households and there were two incidents of sexual
assault; the physical and psychological effects of
these crimes on the victim makes them very serious.
The majority of these assailants were males under 17;
however, three female assailants were involved. Both
sexual assaults were committed by males over age 21.

No mailbox break-ins occurred since each unit has a
mail slot in the front door. A large percentage of
households experienced deliberate car damage, since
73.2% of the respondents do not own cars.

Comparison with Los Angeles and U.S.

The findings for Nickerson Gardens were weighted for
length of residence and compared to Law Enforcement
Assistance Administration (LEAA) findings for Los
Angeles and for the nation as a whole. The comparison
(Table 4) revealed that victimization in Nickerson
Gardens is substantially higher in all categories than
for the nation as a whole and for similar (less than
$7,500/year) income groups. Robbery, for instance,
was almost seven times the national rate for low-
income persons. Findings also revealed that victimi-
zation in Nickerson Gardens is higher in all categories
than that for similar income groups elsewhere in Los
Angeles, and higher than for Los Angeles as a whole.
Residents of Nickerson Gardens experienced almost five
times as many burglaries and larcenies and six times as
many purse snatchings as the average low-income
Los Angeles resident.

Table 4.--Comparison of crime rates

Rate per 1,000 population 12 and older	LEAA				WBA Los Angeles William Nickerson Gardens
	National[a]		Los Angeles[b]		
	All incomes	Income less than $7,500/yr.	All incomes	Income less than $7,000/yr.	
Robbery	6.9	8.9	16.0	24.0	62.2
Purse snatching	3.2	f	7.0	8.4	53.4
Assault	26.0	31.6	35.0	41.8	44.8
Sexual assault	1.0	1.6	2.0	f	6.8
Rate per 1,000 households					
Burglary	92.7	101.9[c]	148.0	146.8[d]	705.8
Successful	72.0	78.5[c]	39.0	110.6[d]	285.3
Attempted	20.7	23.4[c]	109.0	36.2[d]	420.5
Larceny	109.3	102.4	131.0	110.6	552.5

[a]Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, Criminal Victimization in the United States: 1973 Advance Report, Vol. I (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975).

[b]Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, Criminal Victimization Survey in the Nation's Five Largest Cities, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975).

[c]Data obtained in advance of publication. Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, Criminal Victimization in the United States: 1973, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, July 1976).

[d]Data obtained from unpublished tables prepared by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, Washington, D.C.

[e]Weighted rate for all respondents regardless of length of residence.

[f]Data not available.

Comparison with Other Public Housing Projects

Victimization in Nickerson Gardens was also compared
with that of several other public housing projects
where the same survey was administered. These pro-
jects were located in Dade County, Florida, Washington,
D.C., Baltimore, Maryland, and Boston, Massachusetts.

As indicated in Table 5, Nickerson Gardens experienced
higher rates of assault, burglary, larceny, and deliber-
ate car damage than developments in other cities; it
experienced comparable rates for robbery and purse
snatching. Sexual assault was the only category in
which Nickerson Gardens had a lower rate than the
other developments.

FEAR

The survey measured fear on four levels: expectation
of victimization, fear for children, perceived danger-
ousness of the environment, and the need for personal
protection.

Expectation of Victimization

Respondents were asked what they thought the chances
were of being a victim of specific crimes within the
next year. While the crime rate at Nickerson Gardens
is high, the fear of crime is even higher (Table 6).

Burglary and robbery are perceived as having the
highest probability of occurring. More than 80%
estimated that chances of being burglarized while
away from home in the year ahead are greater than
50/50, though the actual chance of successful burglary
was 17.9%. More than 77% felt that their chances of
being robbed are greater than 50/50 while the actual
probability was 4.3%. Though the probability of being
assaulted or sexually assaulted is less than for
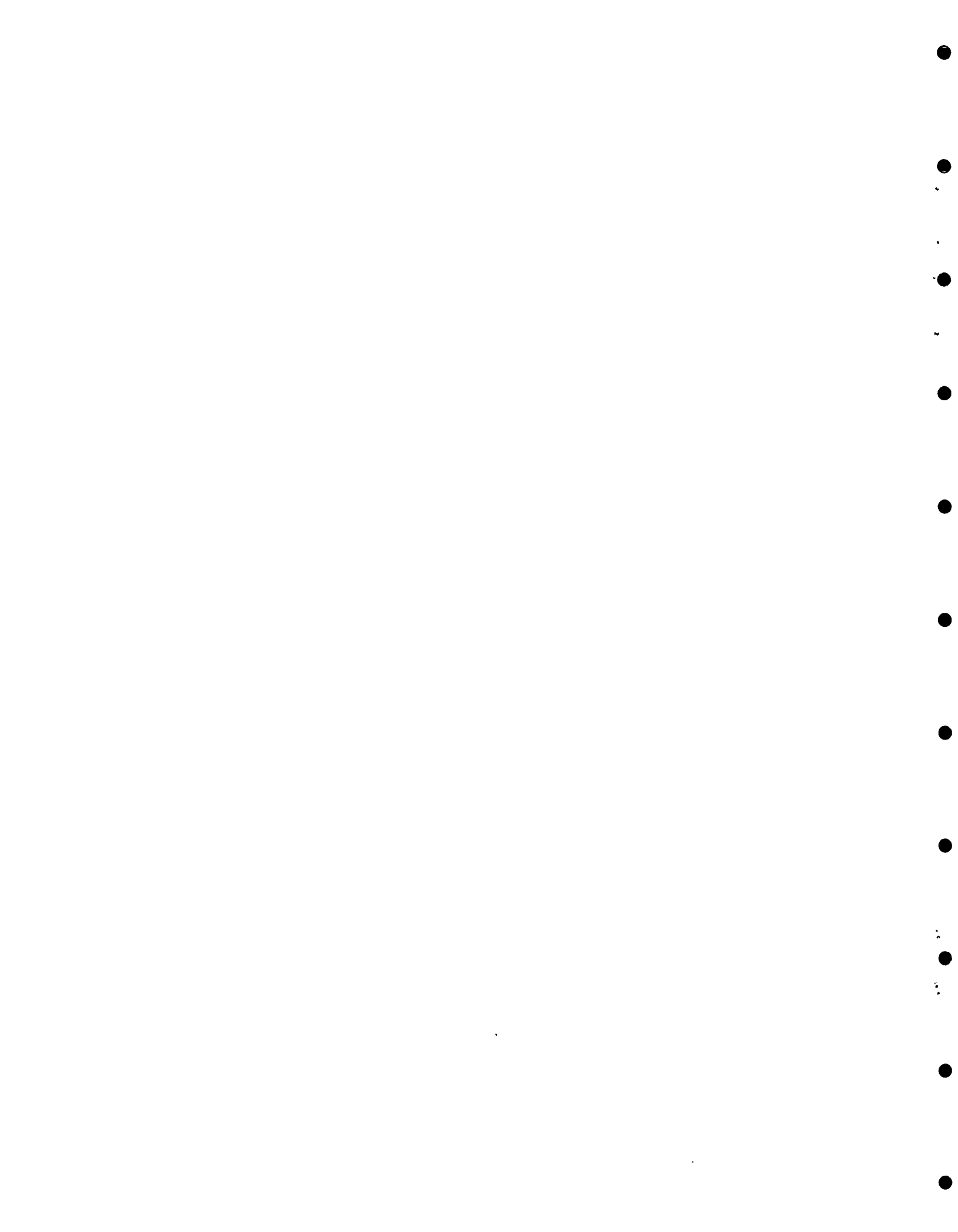
Table 5.--Crime rates compared,
Nickerson Gardens and other
public housing projects[a]

Incidents per 1,000 population 12 and older	Boston Four projects	Dade Co. Scott/ Carver Homes	D.C. Capper Dwellings	Baltimore Murphy Homes	Los Angeles[a] Nickerson Gardens
Robbery	55.7	47.0	48.0	114.1	49.8
Purse snatching	d	d	10.6[b]	36.0[b]	28.0[b]
Assault	23.1	35.4	16.0	33.0	49.8
Sexual assault	5.1	5.2	8.0	18.0	3.1
Incidents per 1,000 households					
Burglary	d	d	500.0	593.1	609.9
Successful	196.1	308.7	95.2	255.2	283.7
Attempted	d	d	404.8	337.9	326.2
Larceny	159.2	278.1[b]	101.2	6.9	524.3
Mailbox break-in	12183.3	161.1	226.2	20.7	0.0
Vandalism	1673.6	1241.6	119.0	103.4	241.1
Deliberate Car damage[c]	d	50.3[b] 100.0	35.7 352.9	20.7 428.6	127.7 450.0

[a]Figures relate only to households resident one year or more, to provide comparability to other projects.

[b]Data relates only to households victimized, not frequency of victimization.

[c]Upper figure: base - all sampled households; lower figure: base - households owning a car.

[d]Data not available.

Table 6:

PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS VICTIMIZED COMPARED WITH RESPONDENTS' FEAR OF VICTIMIZATION

William Nickerson Jr. Gardens
Los Angeles, Ca.

PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS VICTIMIZD BY CRIME

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO FEEL THEY HAVE A 50/50 CHANCE OR MORE OF BEING A VICTIM

[a]Asked of women only
[b]Asked of car owners only

	ROBBERY	SURGLARY	VANDALISM	ASSAULT	SEX ASSAULT[a]	DELIBERATE CAR DAMAGE[b]
	4.3 77.6	17.9 80.4	7.0 73.9	5.4 65.5	1.0 59.3	4.9 71.5

19
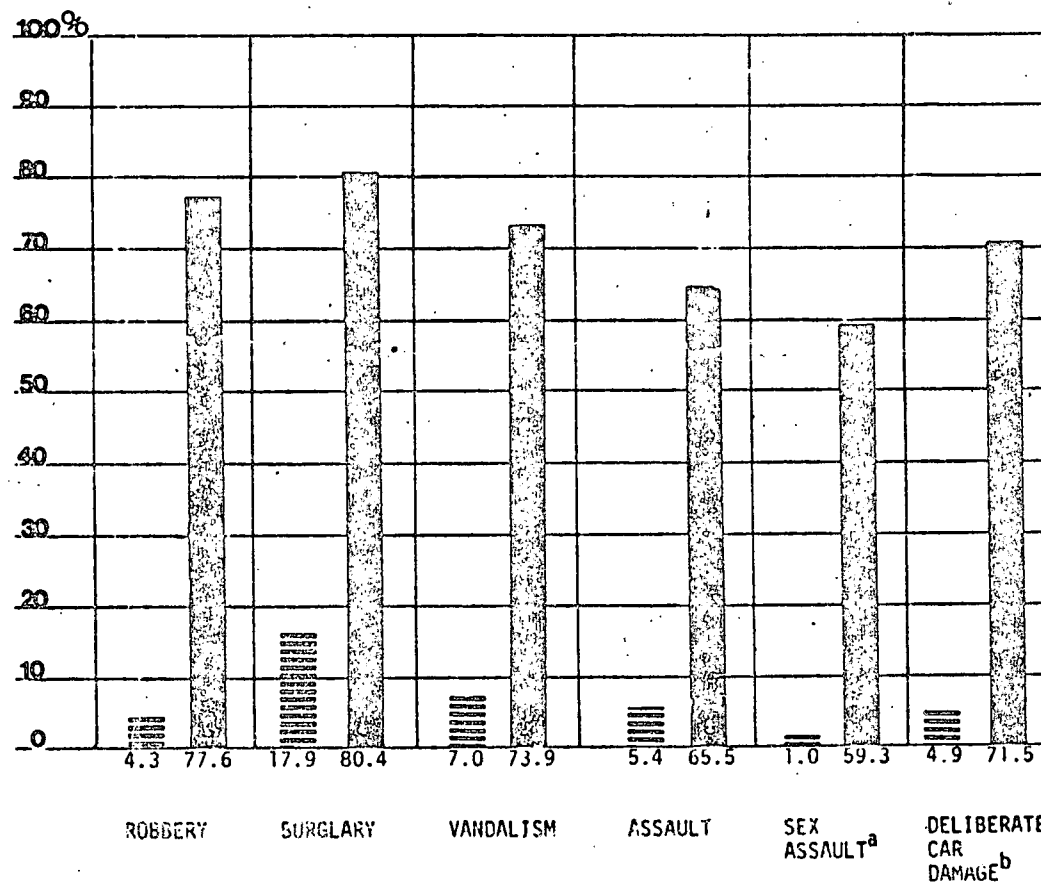
burglary or robbery, the fear of being assaulted
or sexually assaulted is proportionally higher.
Over 65% of the respondents felt that their chances
of being assaulted are greater than 50/50, while 59.3%
felt their chances of being sexually assaulted are
greater than 50/50. Actual victimization in these
categories is considerably lower.

Fear for Children

Respondents were also asked how worried they were
(not worried, worried, very worried) about their
children being beaten, robbed, or forced to pay money
for protection in three situations--in the project,
at school, and going to and from school. For each
threat, respondents were most worried about their
children while in the project and least worried about
them while at school.

Table 7.--Fear for children
mean percent very worried for each situation

In the project	36.6
At school	28.2
Going to and from school	32.3

Respondents were more concerned about their children
being beaten or robbed while in the project than they
were worried about their being forced to pay money for
protection.

Perceived Dangerousness of the Environment

Respondents were asked to rate 20 settings and locations
on a 6-point scale ranging from very safe to very
dangerous. In general, residents seemed to find
situations in which they were visible and somewhat
protected (in daylight, with another person, in their
own home) much less threatening than those in which
they were isolated or not easily visible. Table 8
shows that no nighttime activity was considered safer
than any daytime activity. Waiting for a bus alone
at night was the most fearful situation. Moving
about the site at night was also highly feared. Less
fearful were ones close to home, in open view, or in
daylight.

Personal Protection

To further measure fear, respondents were asked the
projective question, "Do you think people should
carry something to protect themselves?" Those who
said yes were asked what they thought people should
carry.

Seventy-six percent of the respondents felt that some
sort of personal protection should be carried. Almost
half mentioned a handgun as an appropriate means of
protection; five suggested a shotgun.

Table 8.--Mean dangerousness scores, by activity

Activity	Mean Score[a]	
	During the Day	At Night
Alone in your home	1.5	2.5
On your way to shopping	2.0	3.3
Riding a bus alone	b	3.6
Standing at your front door	1.7	2.6
Standing at your back door	1.7	2.9
Waiting for a bus alone	2.2	3.8
Walking across the project	1.8	3.7
Walking along the street	2.0	3.7
Walking from a bus stop to your house	1.8	3.6
Walking from a car to your house	1.5	2.3

Day or Night Not Specified	Mean Score[a]
Talking with a friend in front of your house	1.9

[a]Mean score is based on a computation of responses rated according to very safe (0 rating), safe (1), fairly safe (2), fairly dangerous (3), dangerous (4), very dangerous (5).

[b]Not asked for daytime.

Table 9.--What respondents thought people
should carry to protect themselves

Type of protection	Number responding affirmatively[a]	Percentage of respondents (N=184)
Handgun	85	46.2
Knife	53	28.8
Cane/club	16	8.7
Tear gas/mace	14	7.6
Shotgun/rifle	5	2.7
Other	5	2.7
Total responding positively to idea of carrying some type of protection	140	76.1

[a]Some named more than one item.

ALTERED BEHAVIOR

Altered behavior probably contributes to the vulnerability of the site. It is part of a cycle in which fear of crime causes people to withdraw from the environment and each other; by so doing they surrender the environment to anti-social elements and thus increase the likelihood of victimization.

This was the third dimension of the crime situation surveyed: the extent to which residents were altering or changing their behavior because of their perception

of the crime problem.

Almost 80% of the respondents kept doors locked while
they were at home because of their fear of crime.
Over 73% left lights on or a radio or TV playing when
no one was home to deceive potential robbers. More
than half would not go out alone at night (Table 10),
and many restricted visits to friends and relatives.

Concern about crime caused many respondents to install
security items, especially locks, in their homes.
Many have recently obtained some device such as a gun,
knife, or club to improve their personal protection.
As shown in Table 19, Appendix A, knives were the
favored weapon, with pistols and rifles ranked next.
This contrasts with the respondents's stated belief
(Table 9) that handguns are the best protection, but
cost and licensing problems may account for this dis-
crepancy.

LOCATIONAL ANALYSIS OF VICTIMIZATION

One of the characteristics of the survey instrument
is that it is environmentally specific--it tells
exactly where crimes occurred. Figure 2 presents
these findings. Every reported incident of burglary
(attempted or successful), larceny, mailbox theft
and vandalism is indicated on the site map.

The location of reported incidents of robbery,
assault, rape, purse snatching, and deliberate auto
damage are shown for the last reported incident only.
The data was also analyzed to determine the relationship,
if any, between physical design characteristics of
Nickerson Gardens and the incidence of crime. The
findings of this analysis are presented below:

  1. Units in rows perpendicular to the street
      appeared to experience more burglaries than
      units parallel to the street. For example,

Table 10.--Behavior alterations due to fear of crime

Percentage who:

Take taxis often	(1.1%)
Have recently obtained a firearm	(7.1%)
Keep children in during the day[a]	(7.2%)
Have recently installed a household security item[b]	(15.2%)
Have recently obtained a personal protection device	(15.8)
Restrict visits to friends and relatives in the project	(23.4%)
Don't shop at night	(38.6%)
Don't go out alone at night	(52.2%)
Keep children in at night[a]	(71.0%)
Leave lights, TV, or radio going when no one is home	(73.4%)
Lock front door when at home	(79.9%)

0 . 10 . 20 . 30 . 40 . 50 . 60 . 70 . 80 . 90 . 100

PERCENT

[a]Base = 138 households.

[b]Most of these were new door locks.

25
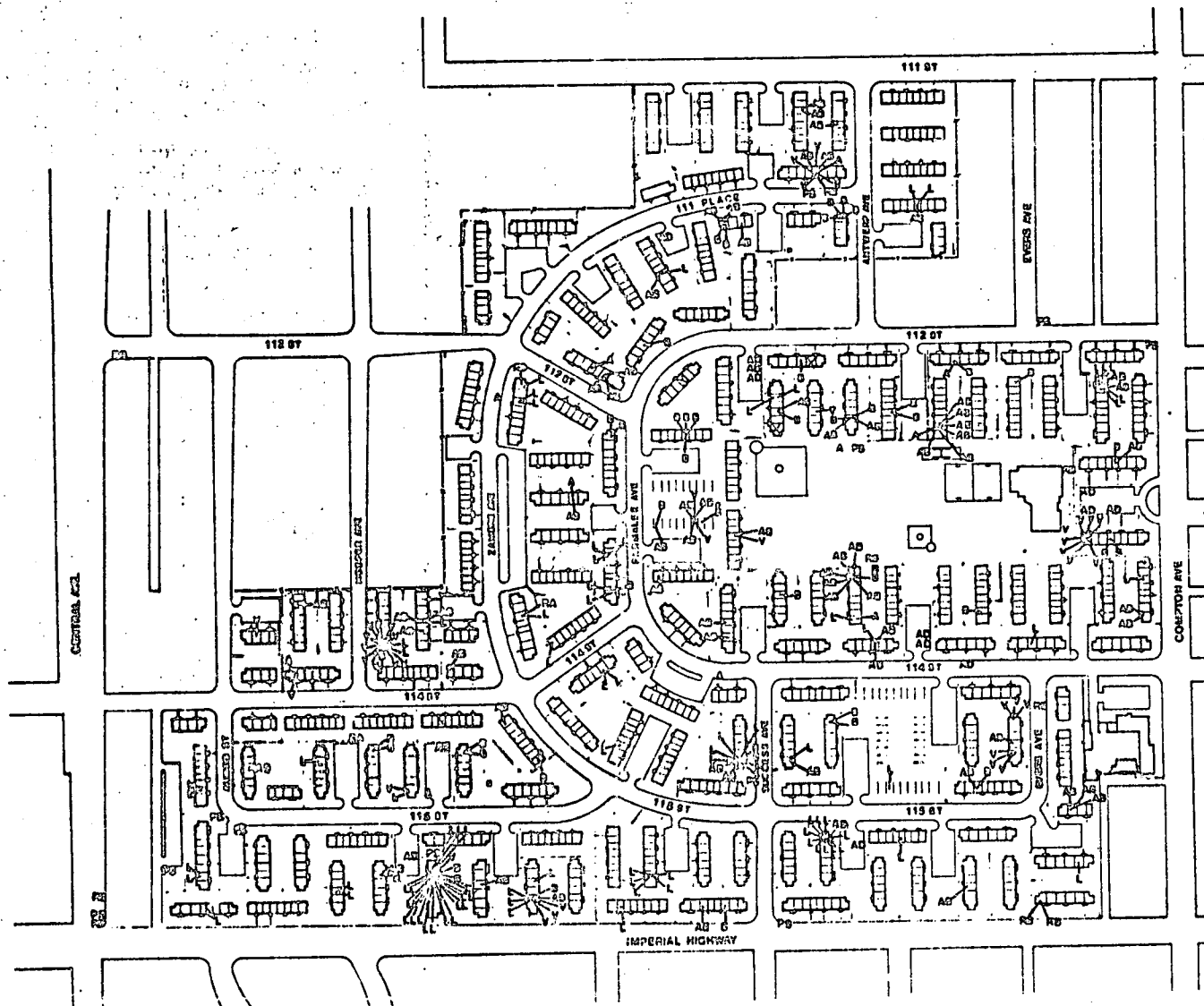
Figure 2:

PATTERNS
OF
VICTIMIZATION

Burglary
Assault
Repo
Larceny
Auto Damage
Vandalism
Robbery
Attempted Burglary
Purse Snatching
Mail Box Theft

194 households surveyed
104 victimizations

victimizations occurred between March 1970 & March 1973

NICKERSON GARDENS

Housing Authority of the
City of Los Angeles

0   50 100   200   300 feet   NORTH

WBA
WILLIAM BRILL ASSOCIATES, INC.

26
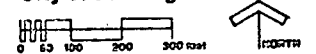
of the units surveyed along Imperial High-
way, one-third (33.3%) were burglarized,
while nearly two-thirds (62.5%) of those in
rows perpendicular to the street were
burglarized.

2. Units in rows surrounding the playfield,
    perpendicular to the street, and partially
    screened from the sidewalk by other build-
    ings, appeared to experience more burglaries
    than others. This may be due to the reduced
    visibility of these areas to people passing
    on the sidwalk.

3. Robbery and purse snatching appeared to be
    concentrated in areas where groups "hang
    out". Areas around the gym and by Central
    Avenue, for example, showed such concentra-
    tions.

4. Robbery and purse snatching also appeared to
    be concentrated in areas where escape by the
    thief is easiest. None of these crimes
    occurred along 114th Street, but many
    occurred along 112th Street, which parallels
    it. The fence and traffic along Imperial
    Highway would impede escape from the first
    area while the private houses and alleys
    along and close to 112th Street may provide
    easy escape since there are no difficult
    barriers to cross.

These findings provided an important basis for the
security plan presented in the final section of this
report. They identified those sections of the site
experiencing the most crime and therefore requiring
the most attention.

SUMMARY

Of the 184 households surveyed, 104 households
(56.5%) experienced one or more criminal incidents
during the year preceding the survey. Forty-three of
the 104 households were victimized once; 61 were victi-
mized more than once.

Comparison of the findings for Nickerson Gardens with
Law Enforcemnt Assistance Administartion findings for
Los Angeles and for the nation as a whole revealed
that victimization in Nickerson Gardens is substantially
higher in all categories than for the nation as a
whole, Los Angeles as a whole or for similar income
groups on Los Angeles. When the findings were com-
pared with that of several other public housing projects
where the same survey was administered it was found
that Nickerson Gardens experienced higher rates of
assault, burglary, larceny and deliberate car damage
than the other projects.

While the crime rate at Nickerson is high, the fear
of crime is even higher. More than 80% of those
interviewed believed there is a 50/50 chance or better
of having their home burglarized while they are away
from home in the year ahead though actual chance of
successful burglary was 17.9%. More than 77% felt that
their chances of being robbed are greater than 50/50
while the actual probability was 4.3%. Fear for child-
ren was also found to be high; more than 50% of the
parents are "worried" or "very worried" about their
children being beaten, robbed, or forced to pay money
either in the project, in school, or on the way to
school.

The survey found that many residents, in an effort to
cope with the crime problem, were constraining their
use of the environment. For example, more than half
the residents don't go out alone at night and many
restrict visits to friends and relatives. Many respon-
dents have installed added security items or have
recently obtained some device such as a gun, knife, or
club to improve their personal protection.

The findings of the survey also show exactly where crimes occurred. For example, units perpendicular to the street appear to experience more burglaries than units paralled to the street. Robbery and purse snatchings appeared to be concentrated in areas where groups "hang out" and where the escape by the thief is easiest.

Part II: Site Security Analysis

The Site Security Analysis identifies the physical characteristics of a site's layout that contribute to crime problems - characteristics that create fearful conditions, expose residents to risk, and inhibit development of the supportive neighborhood relationships that are necessary for residential communities to develop social defenses against crime.

METHODOLOGY

To apply the Site Security Analysis to Nickerson Gardens, WBA staff made a series of walking and observation tours. Photographs were taken and studied. Numerous interviews concerning use of space were held with housing authority staff, management personnel, police, and residents. These findings were translated into a site security map which presents the findings of the analysis (Figure 3). The findings provided the basis for identifying site improvement objectives and making corresponding recommendations.

Figure 3:

SITE
SECURITY
ANALYSIS

WBA WILLIAM BELL ASSOCIATES, INC.
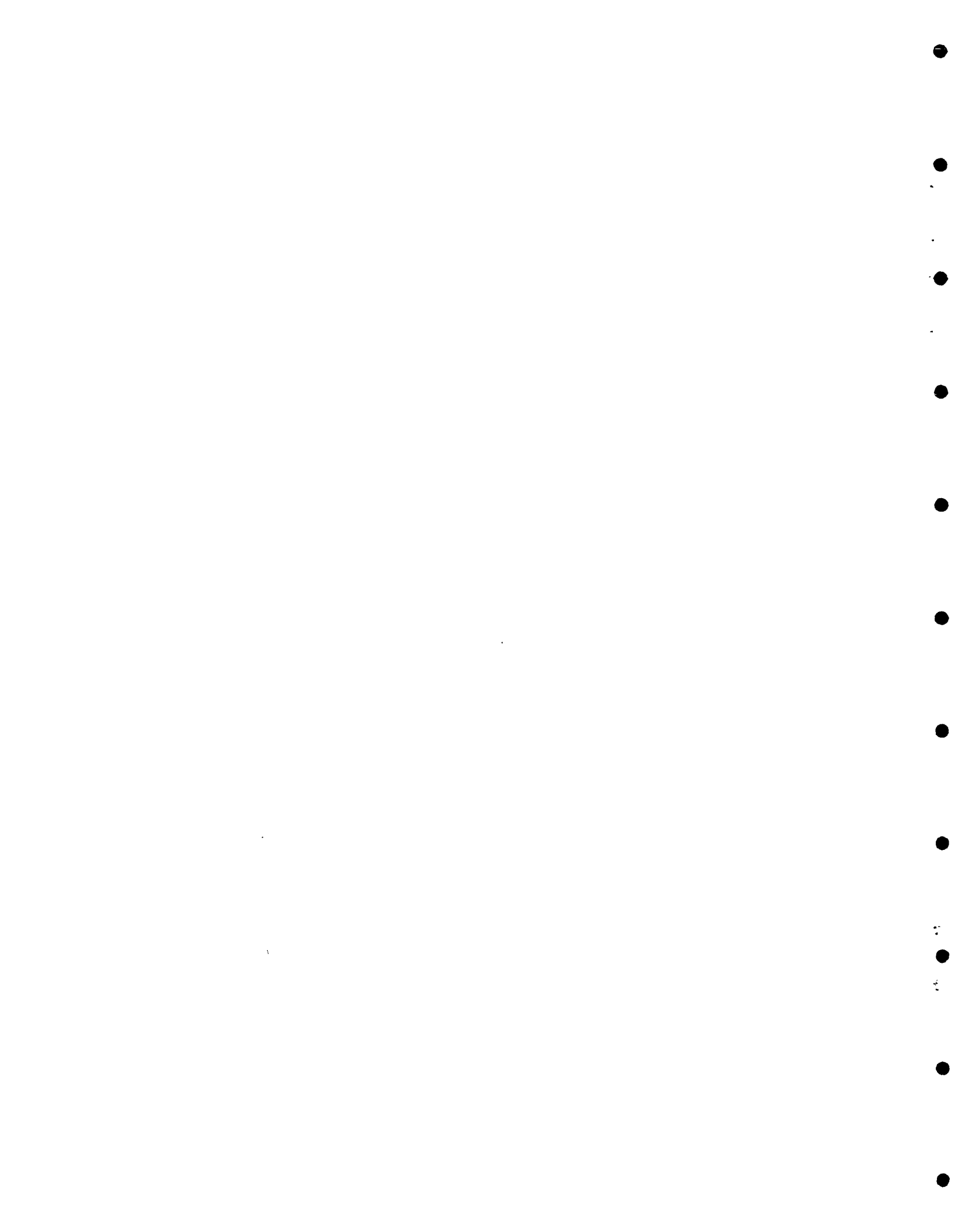
UNASSIGNED
SPACE
•VACANT LOT

PENETRABILITY
•POINT OF ENTRY
INTO SITE
•FENCING

SURVEILLANCE
•VISUALLY
ISOLATED AREA

DESIGN CONFLICTS
•AREA OF
CONFLICTING
ACTIVITIES

HIGH RISK AREAS
•BUS STOP
•RESIDENTIAL
AREA ADJACENT
TO PLAYFIELD

WILLIAM
NICKERSON, JR.
GARDENS

Housing Authority of the
City of Los Angeles

0 50 100 200 300 NORTH

CRITERIA

The following criteria comprise the Site Vulnerability Analysis.

UNASSIGNED OPEN SPACE

Unassigned spaces are those which individuals or groups of residents have not claimed for their own use. They lack environmental cues suggesting how the space is to be used and who should control it. There is generally no formal or informal supervision or control. These spaces may vary in size, location and character. They may be front or rear yards that are unclaimed by tenants for their own use, or larger open spaces.

Large amounts of unassigned space can be a major vulnerability. Because these spaces are unprotected and uncared for, they provide opportunities for residents and outsiders to engage in mischievous and anti-social activities, activities that would not be tolerated if residents controlled and maintained their own territory. Such activities threaten residents and discourage them from developing those spaces as their own.

Good design usually has little unassigned space; it is defined, in a hierarchy of need, as public space, semi-public space, or private space. Space organization clearly indicates who is to use the space and for what purpose. Such design provides a format for organization and control, encouraging residents to lay claim to their environment, and inhibiting intruders from taking control.

This analysis examines the site from this perspective. The site is carefully observed at various times of day and night, over a period of weeks. The uses of

space are recorded and studied. Areas whose design
and placement do not provide cues as to use, and
those which residents clearly do not control, are
noted and mapped.

PENETRABILITY

This component of the analysis examines how access
to the site is structured and controlled. In many
public housing projects a security problem is created
because access is uncontrolled. That is, no environ-
mental cues suggest how the site should be entered
or how traffic should move through it: people enter
and move through the site without crossing barriers
that suggest they are entering someone's environment.

EASE OF SURVEILLANCE

Good site design usually provides numerous opportuni-
ties for casual and informal surveillance of activities
and space. Space should be arranged, for example, so
children can be watched by mothers from inside their
houses; walkways and bus stops should be located so
people waiting can be seen by others. Such features
have important security implications because they
provide "eyes and ears" that can see or hear if help
is needed; these features also deter criminal or anti-
social behavior because, in many instances, people
will not commit such acts if they can be observed
by others.

It is important that more formal surveillance, such as
that of the police, also be possible. Police should
have a clear view of the site when they patrol and
should have quick access to all parts of the site.

The site analysis examines the extent to which these
kinds of surveillance opportunities exist.

DESIGN CONFLICTS

Design conflicts occur when two incompatible areas of activity (such as a tot-lot and a basketball court) are located next to one another or when two groups are forced to compete for the same space or facility.

Such design frequently results in conflict between residents, or in one group's needs not being met because it is forced to withdraw. Good site design minimizes such conflicts and encourages an orderly and harmonious use of space and facilities.

HIGH RISK AREAS

The analysis also involves identifying places where a number of factors have combined to make an area particularly dangerous. These can be poorly lit pathways that force residents to walk amid design conflicts, or across unassigned spaces, a dark and isolated bus stop, or one next to a bar. They are areas that place the resident in special risk or are regarded by them as being especially dangerous. They usually possess more than one design feature generally associated with crime or fear of crime.

ANALYSIS FINDINGS

UNASSIGNED SPACE

A dominant characteristic of Nickerson Gradens is its vastness. Its very size, approximately 15 city blocks, and the similarities in the designed arrangement of the buildings all give it a project-like atmosphere. There is an absence of space definition or assignment. As shown in Photo 2, there are few environmental cues in the form of plantings or special treatments of front or rear yards to set one space off from another. Al-
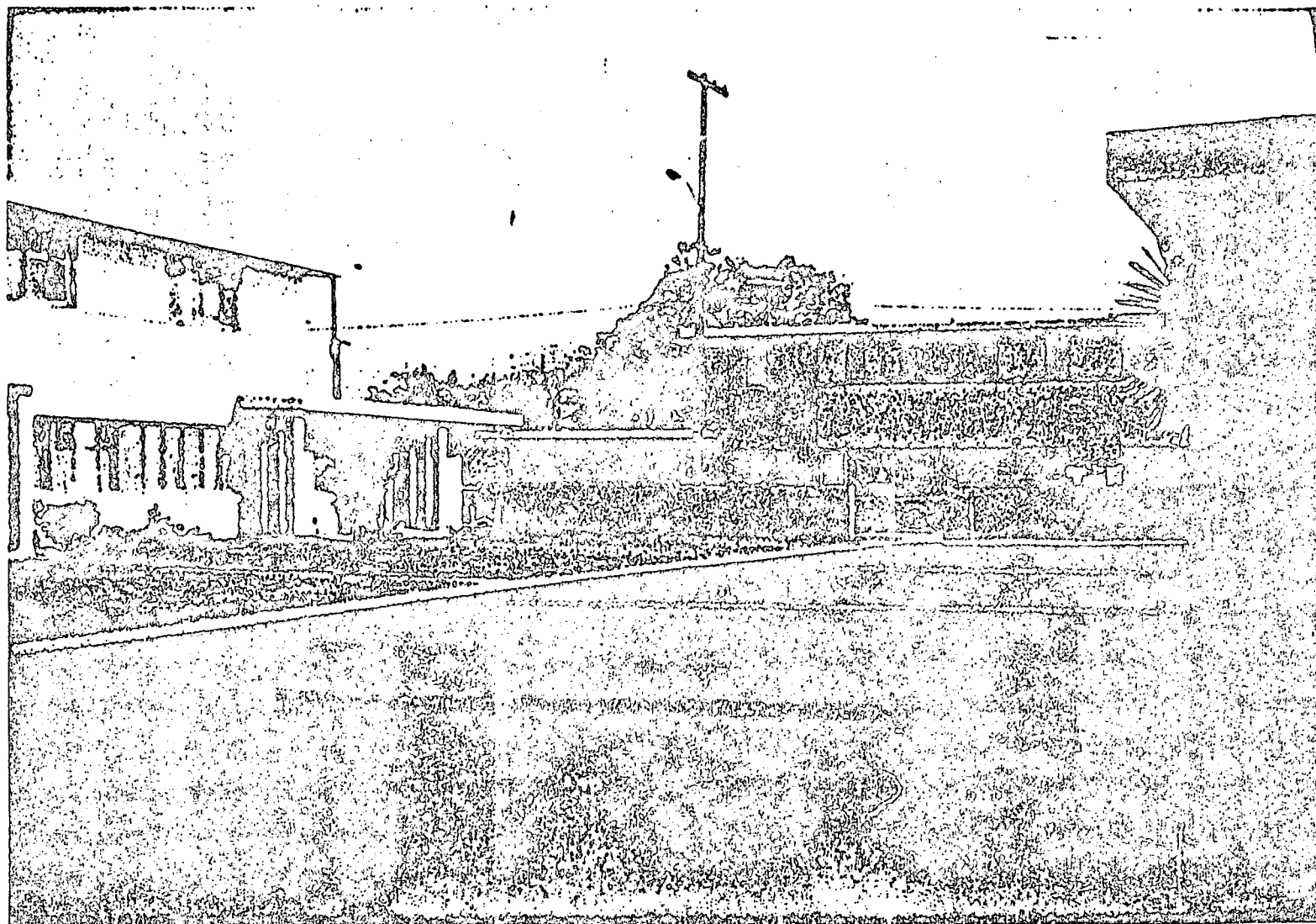
Photo 2: Front yard areas with no subdivision for individual homes.

though the grounds are relatively well maintained,
there is no clear hierarchy of space. Areas are not
marked as private, semi-private, or public.

Except for two vacant lots where buildings have been
removed, large amounts of open, untreated space do
not exist. Most is cared for by the Housing Authority
staff. The problem is that there is little spacial
differentiation: most of the space is "project space",
not private or semi-private space (Photo 3). There is
not a great deal of unassigned space; most is assigned.
But it is assigned to the project in a vague, un-
differentiated way; it is not assigned to individuals
or groups of residents.

Playgrounds

Many of the sixteen playground areas on the site have
over time, become unassigned space. Some are located
in the larger rear yards or next to parking lots in
some of the front yard spaces. Many of these areas
now have worn out and broken equipment (Photo 4). They
do not provide recreation opportunities for preschool
children nor do they provide opportunities for parents
to sit together and visit while supervising activities.
These areas are thus underutilized by the children
they were designed for and do not provide, as they
might, passive recreational areas where adults could
meet and form closer ties with each other. The decay
of these areas is a serious deficiency of the site
and perhaps contributes to the concern parents reported
(in the Household Safety and Security Survey) over the
safety of their children. A great number reported
being very worried about their children while in the
project. Developing recreational areas, as recommended
in the following plan, could do much to counteract
these anxieties.

PENETRABILITY

Nickerson Gardens is typical of many low-rise public

Photo 3: Semi-private yard areas spill into larger public spaces.

Photo 4: A typical small playground area.

housing developments in that it can be penetrated at nearly any point along its entire perimeter. This observation is graphically represented in the Site Security Analysis Map (Figure 3).

Entranceways

One of the features of the site that contributes to its penetrability is the absence of symbolic gateways that would define formal entrances. No structure or direction is given as to how people should move into and off of the site. This is also true within the site. It does not, for example, have sitting areas around entrance points where residents visually control these areas, and no design elements, such as lighting, serve to distinguish front and rear yard walkways or public spaces from semi-public spaces. Residents and non-residents alike can enter the site through either front or rear yard areas, roadways, or, more informally, through holes cut into the perimeter fence around the north section of the site. In short, no environmental cues help identify formal site access points and help residents control site usage. The site is wide open to intruders.

Sidewalks

The rambling walkway system of the site also contributes to the site's penetrability. It is labyrinthine and confusing, and does not provide clear routes for moving safely and quickly across the site. According to local police, the sidewalk network also provided criminals with a number of ways of moving unobserved across the site.

SURVEILLANCE

Opportunities for informal or casual surveillance of

the site by residents are limited in many areas. The
rambling walkway system makes it difficult for resi-
dents to select routes they know are observed by
other residents and therefore provide a measure of
protection. The absence of sitting areas and defined
rear yards also limits opportunities for informal site
surveillance by residents.

These characteristics also make formal police sur-
veillance difficult. The curving street and walkway
system and the many buildings clustered together limit
sight lines and provide criminals with a variety of
routes through the site. Observing and controlling
the large central playfield is particularly difficult.
No street goes near it and casual surveillance of the
field by nearby residents is impossible because
houses are at right angles to it.

Problems of surveillance, both formal and informal,
clearly contribute to the vulnerability of Nickerson
Gardens to crime. Sixty percent of the burglaries
occur during daylight; this indicates that residents
do not observe closely who is moving through the site
and approaching a neighbor's dwelling. Purse snatchers
reportedly victimize persons on the street near the
project and then run into the project to make their
escape; this indicates the ease with which surveillance
within the site can be avoided.

DESIGN CONFLICTS

Two major design conflicts contribute to the vulnera-
bility of the site.

Liquor Stores

As shown in Photo 5, the liquor stores on the perimeter
of the site are in some conflict with adjacent bus
stops and the residential purpose of the site. Men
loiter next to the bus stops and move across to the
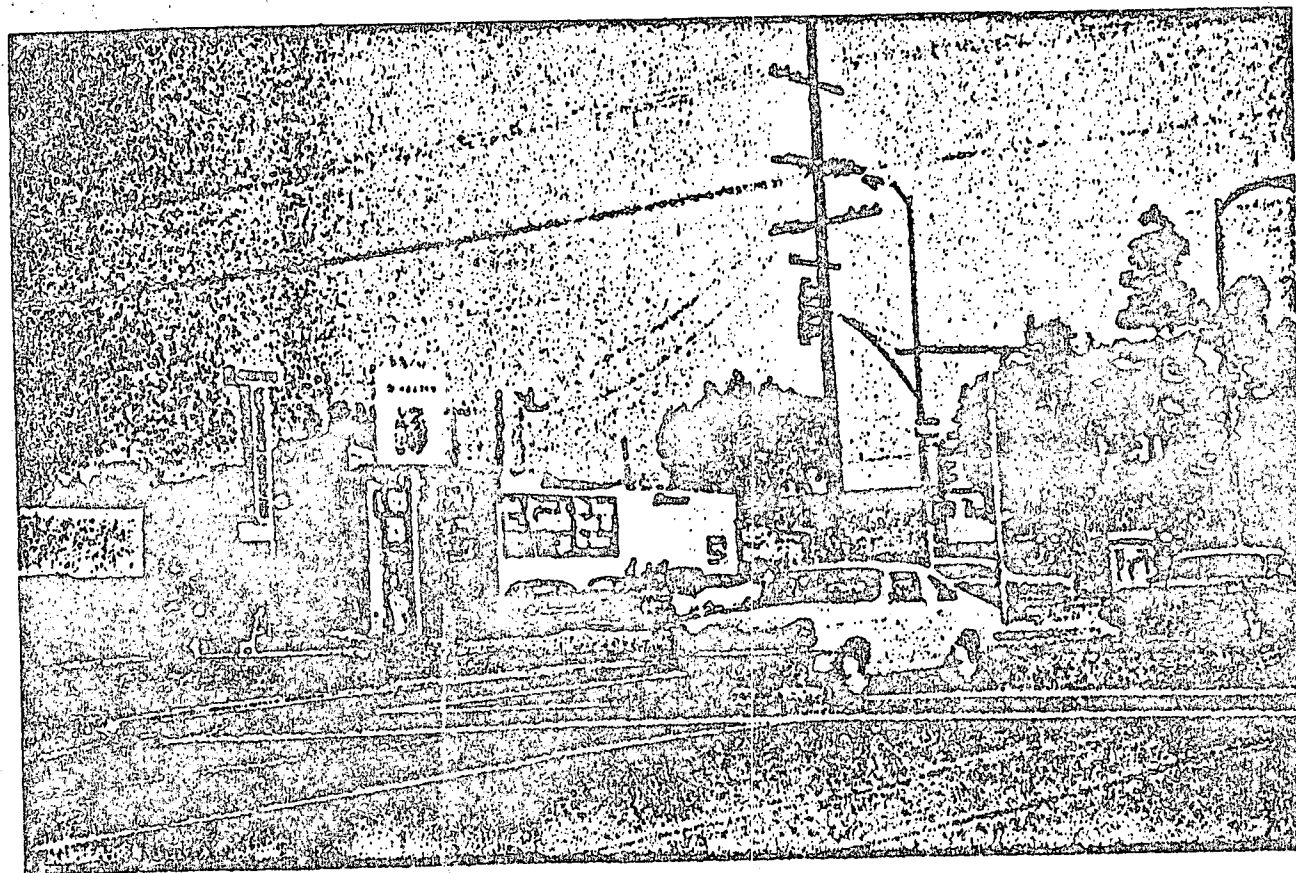
Photo 5: Liquor store conflicts with bus stops.

site. This conflict probably contributes to the
apparent concentration of robberies and purse snatch-
ings in these areas determined by the Household
Safety and Security Survey, as well as the fear
residents reported about waiting at a bus stop at
night.

The Central Playfield

Although the large, centrally located playfield has
a baseball diamond and two basketball courts, its
overall design, like the smaller playgrounds, does
not define specific areas for various age groups to
use. It thus encourages conflicts among user groups;
this may explain why the playfield is often under-
utilized and surrendered to loiterers, unoccupied
youths, and other non-residents. This absence of
definition makes it an attractive area for mischievous
and anti-social activities. Further, since this
anonymous and undifferentiated area cannot be seen
from surrounding streets, gambling, narcotics use, and
other anti-social activities have been reported there.
The layout of the playfield and particularly its
lack of formal access points also places it in conflict
with the residential nature of the surrounding area.
At present, the field is frequently entered from across
the front and rear yards of surrounding units. This
conflicts with the establishment of territorial claims
by the households on the playfield's border. The
open access system makes it difficult for these house-
holds to claim their yards for their own use since they
must compete with teenagers and strangers who continu-
ally circulate through the territory.

HIGH RISK AREAS

The Household Safety and Security Survey indicated that
respondents found a number of everyday social settings
highly threatening, especially at night. As discussed
below, these include dark and shadowy areas on the site,
bus stops, and the residential area on the perimeter
of the playfield.

Poorly Lit Areas

The present site lighting creates a checkerboard of
dark and shadowy areas between buildings; this con-
tributes to overall site vulnerability by providing
criminals with additional nighttime options for
unobserved movement. The Household Safety and Securi-
ty Survey found that any nighttime activity on the
site was viewed with apprehension by the residents; a
common suggestion (made by 24.5%) for improving
security was improved lighting.

The Central Playfield

The buildings around the perimeter of the field are
also high risk areas as indicated on the Site Security
Analysis Map (Figure 3). They are open, lack the formal
design controls of front and rear yards, and numerous
pathways lead away from the area (See Photos 6 & 7).
Thus they have suffered a disproportionately high
rate of victimization. The buildings at right angles
to the field and visually buffered from the surround-
ing streets had particularly high rates of successful
and attempted burglaries.

Bus Stops

Residents reported that they considered waiting for a
bus at night a particularly dangerous situation. This
response is undoubtedly shaped by the low level of
lighting at these areas, the frequent presence of
loitering individuals, and the shadowy, labyrinthine
path that must be followed to the bus stop. This
anxiety is important for more than its own sake; it
also means that residents will withdraw from moving
about their city and their environment.
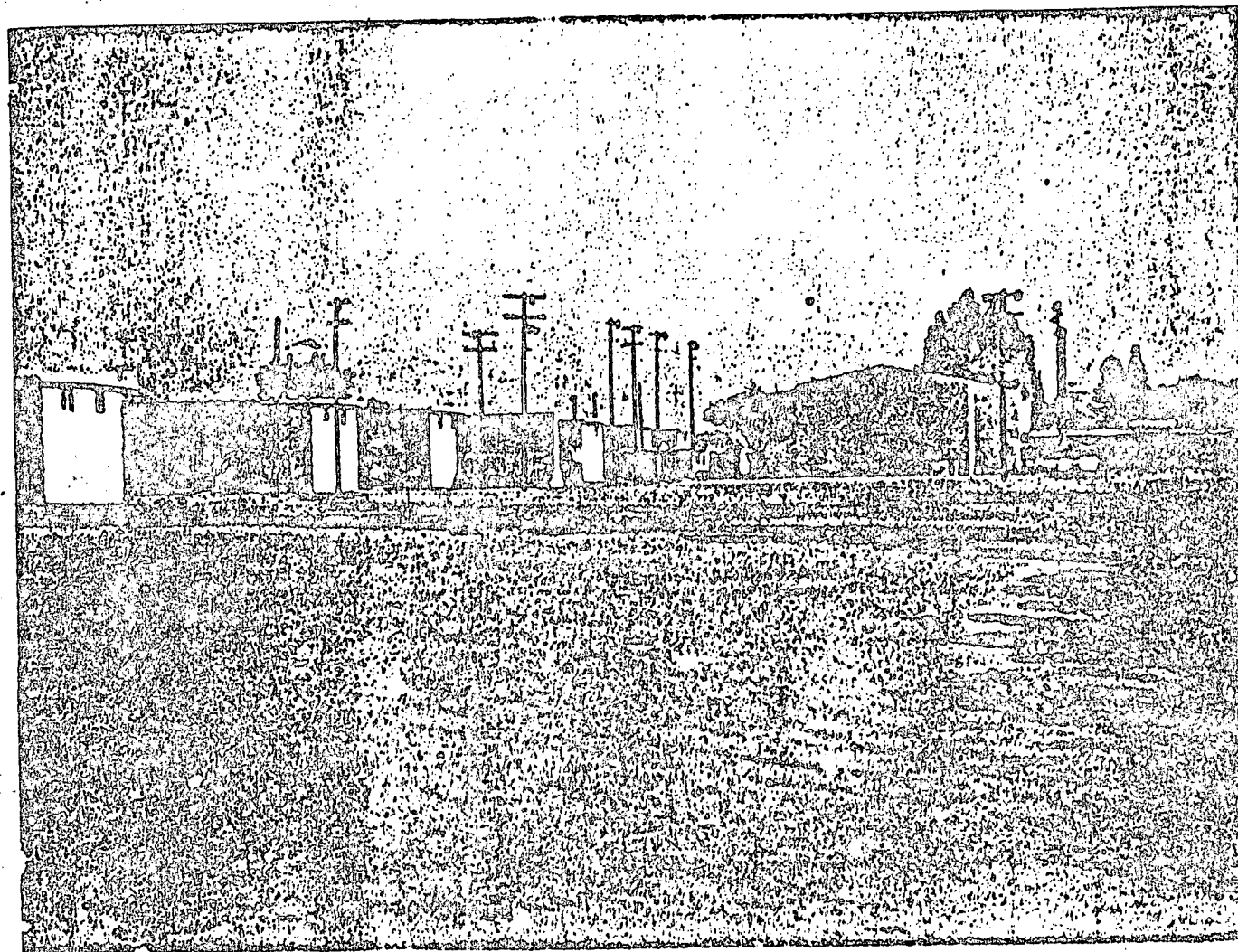
Photo 6: Central playfield looking toward Community Center.
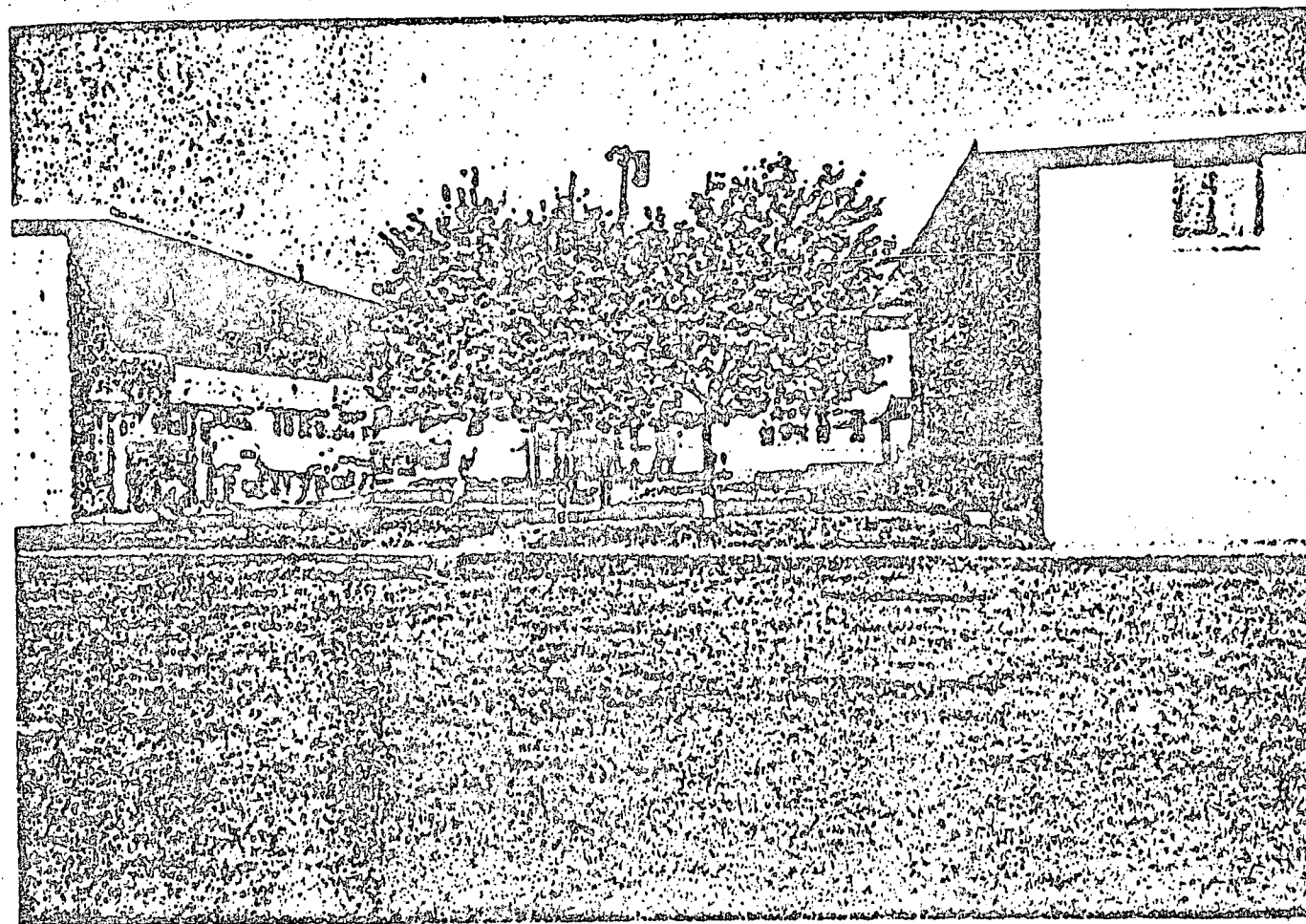
Photo 7: Central playfield in foreground is not divided from private rear yard areas.

CONCLUSIONS

Nickerson Gardens scored high on all the vulnerability criteria used to assess the site. The site was found to have substantial amounts of unassigned space or space that was assigned only to the "project" rather than to individuals or groups. The site is also highly penetrable, with access uncontrolled and movement throughout the site relatively unstructured. A number of design conflicts were also identified, as were several high risk areas.

The Comprehensive Security Plan presents recommendations designed to counteract these site deficiencies.

Part III: Social Vulnerability Analysis

A key element in a community's resistance to crime is the capacity of its members to work together, look after one another, and organize to obtain common objectives. These capacities form the most important line of defense against crime: security is not just the result of good site design, it is also the result of people forming themselves into a community that resists penetration and controls the anti-social behavior of its members.

This component of the vulnerability analysis examines the social strengths of the residents, that is, the extent to which they form a community with its attendant strengths. It also examines the effectiveness of security-related social services and police services and the effect these services have on the development of a community in Nickerson Gardens.

CRITERIA

The following criteria were used for the analysis.

SOCIAL COHESION

This is the tendency of residents to stick together to
feel a part of the community. When residents are
socially cohesive, there is a natural, almost uncon-
scious, site surveillance. Residents are likely to
report suspicious activities, and intruders are quick
to sense this. An easier and more natural supervision
of children takes place.

When interviewing residents to measure the level of
social cohesion, WBA attempted to identify the values,
attitudes, and interests that divide or unite residents.

RESIDENT ORGANIZATION

The extent to which residents are organized is an
important indicator of the community's capacity to
resist criminal penetration and to control deviant
behavior of its own members. Resident organization
expresses the group's social cohesion and is a measure
of its capcity to deal with common problems. Highly
organized communities or projects are usually better
able to cope with stress than unorganized ones.
Further, they are usually more successful at getting
their fair share of society's resources. In analyzing
a community's vulnerability to crime, it is therefore
important to know the extent to which residents are
organized, the character of their organization, and
the issues addressed by residents.

SOCIAL AND POLICE SERVICES

The extent to which residents are receiving adequate
police and social services can substantially impact
a project's vulnerability to crime. If police pro-
tection is not being provided, or provided in an
ineffective manner, probabilities of victimization,
fear, and altered behavior may increase. If services
relating to problems such as alcoholism and drug abuse
are not available, the community's ability to work
together can be seriously impaired. Negative effects
may also result if services relating to health needs
and child care are not provided.

In assessing Nickerson Gardens from this standpoint,
WBA tried to determine the availability and effective-
ness of these kinds of services.

METHODOLOGY

This analysis of Nickerson Gardens relied on data
gathered from interviews and discussions with residents,
talks with management personnel, and talks with the
staffs of organizations providing social and police
services. Relevant literature and data from the House-
hold Safety and Security Survey were also considered.

ANALYSIS FINDINGS

SOCIAL COHESION

Several factors tend to restrain the development of
high levels of social cohesion at Nickerson Gardens.

Attitudes Toward Other Residents

One indicator of social cohesion is the extent to which

residents view their neighbors positively, and regard
their own values as being shared by them. To measure
this dimension, residents were asked, as a part of the
Household Safety and Security Survey, whether they
agreed or disagreed with the following statements.

Table 11.--Extent of social cohesion

Statement	Agree	Disagree
People here try to make this development a better place to live.	60.1	39.9
I do feel comfortable with other people who live in this development.	65.2	34.8
Most people in this development are friendly towards one another.	61.4	38.6
Most of your neighbors in this development have the same beliefs about what is right or wrong that you yourself have.	54.1	45.9

In interpreting these findings, it is important to note
that a majority of the respondents had a positive feel-
ing about their neighbors. But a striking fact is
that this is a slender majority. To be sure, 60.1%
agreed with the statement that "people try to make this
development a better place to live", but unhappily,
39.9% disagreed with this statement. In a quasi-
institutional environment, where people live so close
to one another, this is a large minority to come to
terms with. It is unlikely that any community could
be viewed as cohesive when 45.9% of its members feel
that their neighbors do not share their beliefs about
what is right or wrong, and where 40% of its members
believe their neighbors do not try to make the project

a better place to live.

Friendship Patterns

One factor which is both a cause and an indicator of
the apparent lack of social cohesion is the small
number of friendships residents report among each other.
As indicated in the following table, 41.3% of the 184
respondents reported having no friends in the project
with whom they could talk over personal problems. The
percentage was even higher among residents living in
the project less than one year.

Table 12.--Number of friends in development
with whom respondent could talk over
personal problems

Number of Friends	Respondents	
	Number	Percentage
0	76	41.3
1-3	78	42.4
Over 4	30	16.3

This finding would be disturbing in any environment
since it indicates that people feel alone and isolated
from nearby support. But it is particularly distressing
in a public housing environment where people do not
have high mobility or jobs that provide them with a
social network and close friends, and are therefore
more dependent on their immediate environment than
higher income, more mobile groups.

Their needs for emotional support are also high.
Most of Nickerson's households are female-headed,
and many heads of households are young mothers with
children. Their problems in coping with the stress
of their environment and their situation are con-
siderable; the absence of close friends and the
feeling that a substantial majority of residents do not
share their values must surely contribute to their
difficulty.

Female-Headed Households

A preponderance of the households are female-headed.
This means that the need for social support is height-
ened; yet it may also serve to retard the development
of close neighboring relationships because men-friends
come from outside the project and do not, at least
formally, live there. The women are pulled outward,
residents do not interact with one another as conven-
tional couples do. It also means that the men, because
of their informal living status, do not have any vested
interest in the housing environment. The woman is
thus further isolated: she likely has few friends in
the project and she lacks a partner to work with in
forming friends in entering into a social life there.

Teenagers

The large number of teenagers also tends to inhibit the
development of social cohesion. They have a value
system somewhat separate from older residents and are
likely to be more influenced by peer groups than by
their elders. They are also prone to mishcievous be-
havior; this further isolates them. Many residents,
moreover, are clearly afraid of the teenagers. The
Household Safety and Security Survey found that 88% of
the residents interviewed believed gangs to be a
"serious problem", with 41.8% of those considering
it a "very serious problem." According to police,
these perceptions were not inaccurate. For several
years, gangs had been a problem in the area, although

the problem had abated in early 1977.

Conclusion

The social structure of Nickerson Gardens is not a cohesive one, and residents, in general, do not have many friends there, do not believe that a substantial majority of other residents share their values, or are working to improve their environment. Further, most families are female-headed and are forced to look outside the project for significant relationships with men. This interferes with the development of high levels of social cohesion, as does the number of teen-agers and residents' concern about gangs.

This absence of cohesion, the clear need residents have for social and emotional support, and the stress which accompanies their living situation, constitutes a major vulnerability of the environment. It means that the underpinning of cooperative relationships, in which people look after and protect one another, is absent.

RESIDENT ORGANIZATION

There is a tenant council at Nickerson Gardens, but as in many public housing projects, resident partici-pation is low and generally limited to a few of the older residents. Only 25 to 75 residents attend meetings, for example, including the annual meeting that elects council members. This low attendance occurs though flyers are distributed before each meeting.

Several factors contribute to the low level of participation:

    1. There is a lack of social cohesion among
        residents, and residents are not confident

that their values are shared by others.
This means they are reluctant to speak out,
and given the stress of living in the pro-
ject, tend to insulate themselves.

2. Residents, particularly the younger ones,
    do not have much experience in working in
    organizations; they probably do not under-
    stand how organizations operate and what
    they can do.

3. Residents do not seem to believe that the
    council has been, or can be, effective in
    improving conditions in the project.

4. There are few continuing issues the council
    can use to mobilize interest. Its main
    function has been to provide suggestions
    and make comments on the modernization
    program.

5. Since the council is not involved in shaping
    any of the delivery of services to the pro-
    ject it is further removed from the everyday
    concerns of residents.

6. No young people participate in the formal
    workings of the council; this tends to limit
    the participation of those who need to be
    most involved, the youth and the newly
    arrived.

Like so many tenant councils in public housing, the
one at Nickerson Gardens is dominated by a few of the
older, established residents who continually try to
work with management on the project's problems to
improve their environment. But participation is so
low that it is hard for the council to be an effective
force, especially since its membership does not in-
clude a cross section of the resident population.
Nor is it involved in any of the social service programs

serving the project.

The plan presented in the following section includes
a series of recommendations designed to expand the role
of tenant organization. It is proposed that the pro-
ject be broken up into smaller, architecturally defined
neighborhoods, and that residents be organized on this
level, not on a project-wide basis. These organizations
will also play a role in the delivery of services to
the project.

SOCIAL AND POLICE SERVICES

Security Related Social Services

Almost all social services can impact on a community's
well-being and thus affect its resistance to crime.
Those relating to drug and alcohol abuse, and crisis
intervention are of particular importance. Drug and
alcohol abuse substantially affect the quality of
interpersonal relationships, and they are often
associated with destructive and violent behavior. It
is difficult for a community to form supporting,
helpful relationships if high levels of substance
abuse are present.

Crisis intervention services are also extremely
important because residents frequently live on the
edge of a series of crises. What is for a middle
class individual an annoyance is frequently a major
crisis for a public housing resident because project
life is stressful and financial resources are limited.
Further, residents cannot turn to routine sources of
help. The middle class individual, for example,
guards his health with frequent medical check-ups; the
poor person is more likely to wait until the problem
is serious and then seek out a hospital's emergency
room.

Crisis intervention services are thus of critical importance to a community like Nickerson Gardens. Not only do they fill an important need in terms of services, but they frequently introduce a resident to more long-range help.

This part of the vulnerability analysis focuses on the problem of drug and alcohol abuse in Nickerson Gardens and the availability to residents of social services addressing these problems. It also discusses the available crisis intervention services. These services and amelioration of the problems they are designed to correct critically impact on a community's vulnerability to crime.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse

No formal survey relating to drug abuse was taken at Nickerson Gardens. Ten program directors who administer drug and alcohol abuse programs, as well as related social service programs in the Watts area, were interviewed to learn their assessment of the problem at Nickerson and the scope of the treatment available.

All those interviewed reported that drug and alcohol abuse was a serious problem. The use of drugs was described as extreme, with at least 60% of the users on hard drugs. Mixed addiction of both alcohol and drugs was estimated to be as high as 50%.

Most of the drug users being treated are males in their twenties and early thirties, and most were referred for treatment by the court system; entrance was not purely voluntary.

The relatively small numbers of females and young people in treatment is particularly unfortunate for Nickerson Gardens. Use is estimated high in these groups, who make up much of the population in the project.

Two programs do make a special effort to reach the
female user. At the Minni Tolstead House, which
treats only female users, most users walk in; a few
are court referrals. The King Drew Place is reportedly
making a special effort to reach female alcoholics.

Staff from both these facilities reported special
difficulties in bringing women into treatment. The
female user is more isolated; she does not interact
with formal settings, such as a work environment, as
much as a male. Thus there are fewer pressures on
her to change and fewer immediate drastic consequences.
In some cases, a woman can be a secret, isolated
drinker for years without any reaction from her
environment and no corresponding pressure to enter
treatment such as that exerted upon a working male.
In a public housing situation, a woman is often the
head-of-household; she is frequently alone with
several children. If she enters a live-in treatment
program for a time or requires detoxification - which
can take several weeks, arrangements must be made
for child care. Children may be sent to foster homes,
and the mother not only loses the children, at least
for a time, but also welfare payments.

A clear need exists for treatment programs addressed
specifically to the female user in public housing.
These programs should emphasize outreach to make con-
tact with the female user and they should be community-
based so the user's family can remain intact whenever
possible. These programs should also be sensitive to
the unique problems the female in public housing faces.

Difficulty was also reported in bringing young
people into treatment. This is a particularly im-
portant group: 31% of the population of greater Watts
is under 15 years of age and 39% is under 19; per-
centages are even higher in Nickerson Gardens. The
same solution recommended for attracting women addicts,
increased outreach activities, can be used. These
activities require that programs have the resources
and the ability to penetrate the social structure of
a project like Nickerson.

Crisis Intervention Services

No comprehensive or integrated crisis intervention
program provides Nickerson Gardens with a centralized
source of referral information for residents. Some
of the treatment programs operating in the Watts
area are available to Nickerson residents and can
handle crisis situations, however, and there are also
"hotline" numbers in the greater Los Angeles area
that residents can use.

The proposed Comprehensive Security Plan includes a
crisis intervention program for Nickerson Gardens.

Police Services

Police services in Nickerson Gardens are provided
by the Housing Patrol Division of the Housing Author-
ity and by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD).

The Housing Authority Police

The Housing Authority Police Housing Patrol Division
is under the jurisdiction and supervision of the
Director of Administrative Services for the Housing
Authority (Table 13). As of March, 1976, the Division
was comprised of 47 officers, fifteen of whose salaries
come from a Target Projects Program (TPP) sponsored by HUD.
Police officers can carry guns and have arrest power
on Housing Authority property.

Ten of the 47 men on the Housing Patrol Division force,
as part of the TPP program, are assigned to Nickerson
Gardens. This allocation was made because Nickerson
is the largest public housing development in the city
and is considered by the Authority to experience high
levels of crime.

Two teams of two men each are assigned to patrol the
development each day. On Thursday, Friday, and Satur-
day the development has Housing Police protection from
8:30 a.m. until midnight. All other days Housing Police

Table 13.--Organizational chart
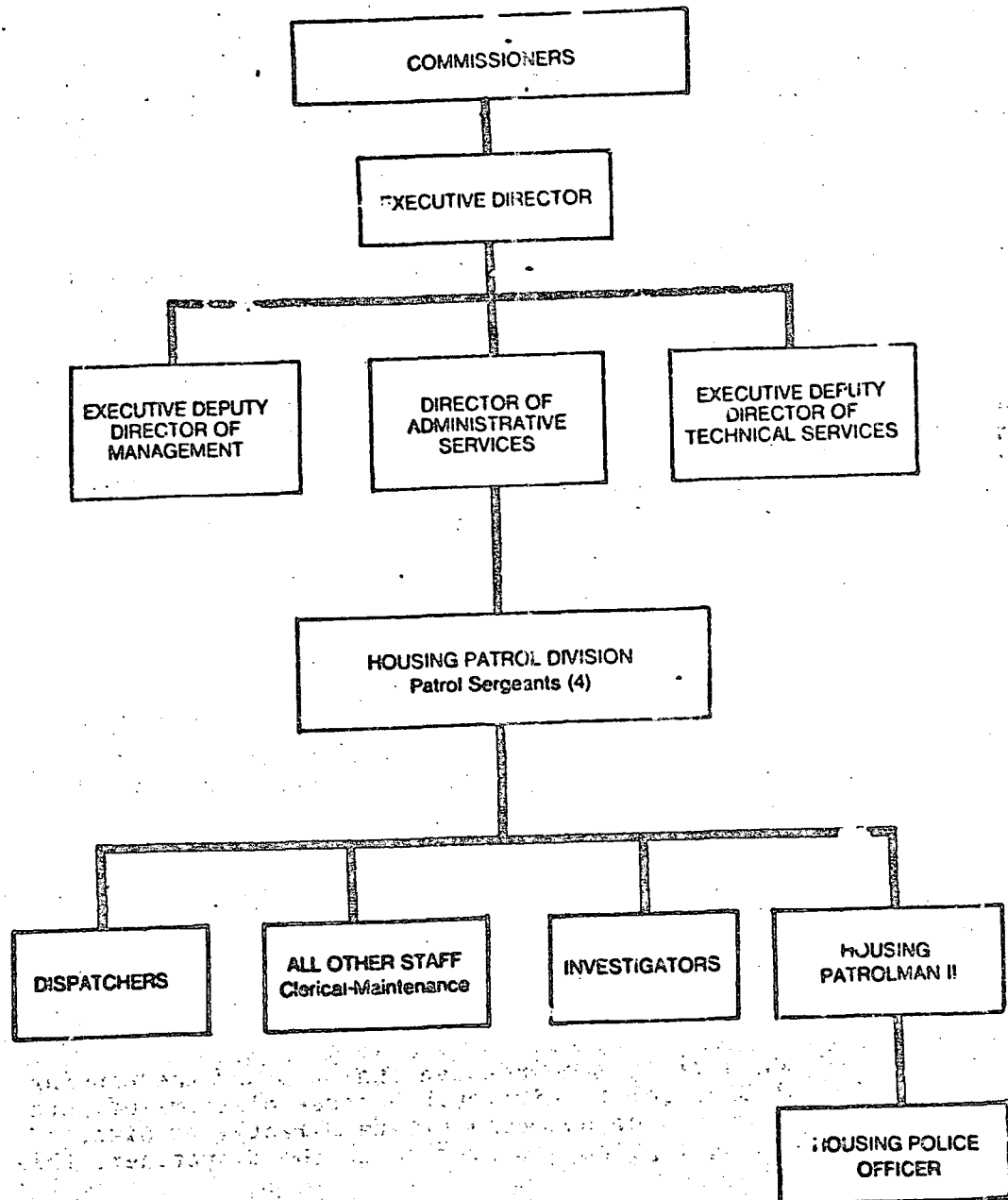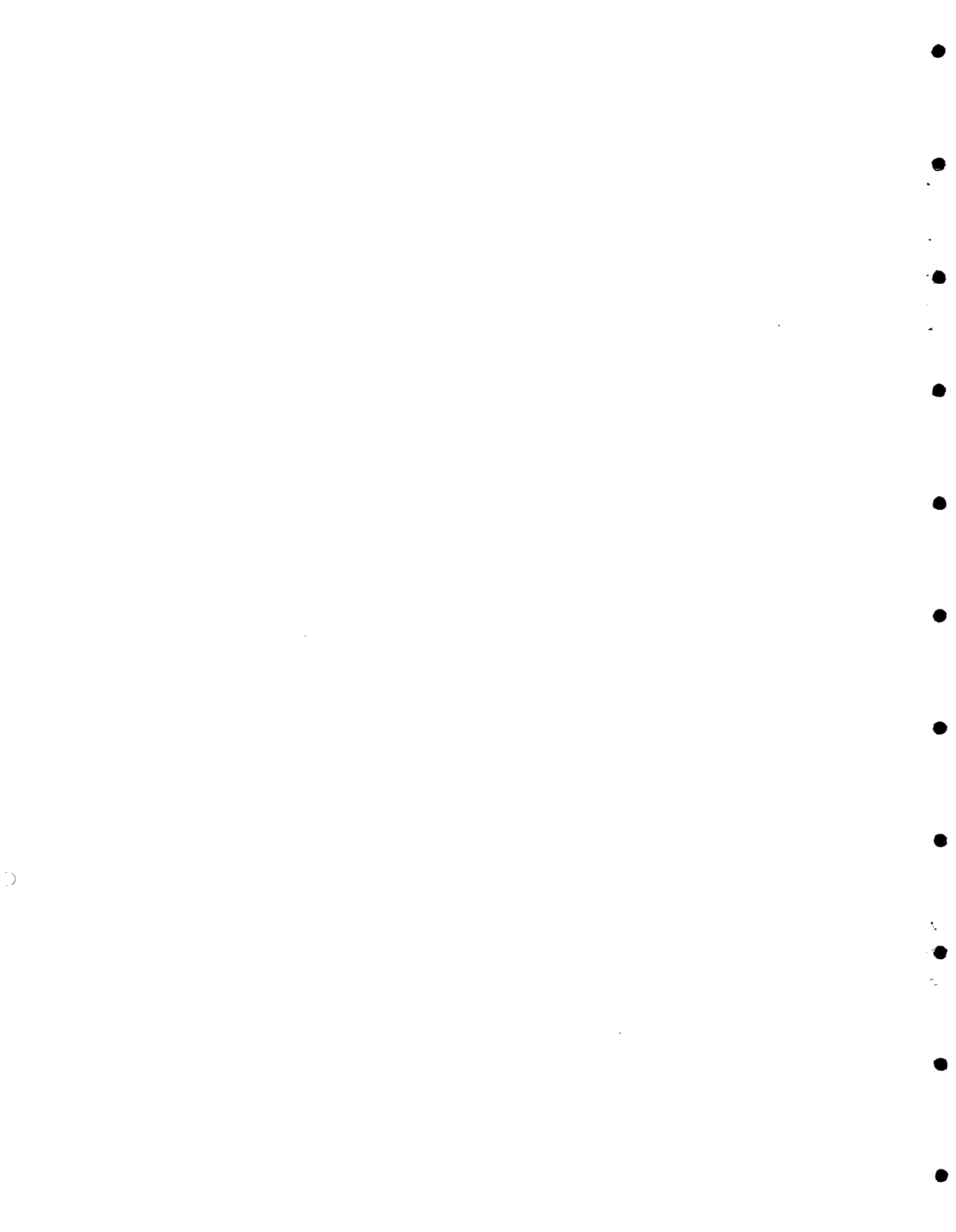
patrol from 8:30 a.m. until 10:00 p.m.; one team patrols
from 8:30 a.m. until 6:30 p.m., the other from 12 noon
until 10:00 p.m. Each team receives a two-hour work
break.

The officers patrol the entire development, usually in
radio-equipped cars, but also on foot, though irreg-
ularly. No specific patrolling patterns are followed
so a potential or known criminal cannot predict police
movement.

A dispatcher receives all incoming calls from officers
in the field; he is the link between the patrolling
officer and the rest of the Patrol Division, and also
between a calling resident and the officers. He
controls, monitors, and logs all calls. When a resi-
dent calls for assistance or reports a problem the
dispatcher assigns officers, via walkie-talkies, to
handle the problem. The Housing Patrol Division has
arrest powers and can book suspects but must then turn
them over to the Los Angeles Police Department.

Los Angeles Police Department

Members of the Los Angeles Police Department, 77th
Division, also patrol the site and provide backup
assistance to Housing Police when requested. They
also provide special units that concentrate on drugs,
gangs, and other problems.

Factors Affecting Police Effectiveness

Coordination

On site linkage between the LAPD and the Housing
Patrol Division is difficult because officers of both
organizations cannot communicate directly on site.
Everything must be routed through the dispatcher; this

can waste valuable time in an emergency.

Police-Community Relations

Police-community relations, as in many public
housing projects, are somewhat strained. Residents
frequently reported being treated contemptuously by
the Los Angeles Police Department. Negative feelings
were generalized to the Housing Patrol Division
because many residents did not know that a separate
Housing Authority police force existed.

The police see their job as difficult and dangerous.
Gangs have been a continuous problem on the site for
years, and officers have been ambushed. Many officers
understandably feel that residents could do more to
help the police and to control their own environment.
The police and the community need to interact more
positively.

Management

The Housing Authority police are presently super-
vised by the Office of the Director of Administrative
Services. This office is primarily responsible for
providing accounting, fiscal, and general administra-
tive support to the Housing Authority. It is not
involved in the actual management of projects. The
police are thus placed under an office with no line
responsibility. This means that the police are not
automatically made sensitive to management issues and
how the police might help. It also means that a
coordination step is required if those responsible for
management and the police are to work together.

CONCLUSIONS

The social environment of Nickerson Gardens has several

features contributing to the vulnerability of residents.
The resident population was not found to be cohesive.
Values are not truly shared; there is only limited
confidence that others want to improve the environ-
ment; friendships among project residents are few.

Resident organization was limited. The resident
council, a site-wide organization, has only limited
effectiveness and participation, and there are few
issues it can address.

Social services, an important factor in developing a
sense of community, were found to be limited because
strong outreach programs were difficult to establish.
This was particularly true for drug and alcohol abuse
where users must get treatment. Crisis intervention
services are absent. No programs are built around the
needs of women on the site; this is also a serious
problem.

Police services are limited because Housing Authority
patrols and Los Angeles Police Department patrols
cannot communicate directly in an emergency. Locating
the Housing Authority police in the Office of the
Director of Adminstrative Services, not in a line
office concerned with the problems of management, and
poor police-community relations also contribute to
limited police service.

The Comprehensive Security Plan presented next is
directed at reducing these limitations.

THE COMPREHENSIVE SECURITY PLAN

Part I: Overview

The recommendations presented below are grouped
around four objectives. These objectives are opera-
tional statements that respond to the vulnerabilities
of the Nickerson Gardens environment as identified in
the preceding analysis. These objectives, and the
measures recommended to achieve them, form a compre-
hensive security plan for Nickerson. The plan includes
a reinforcing mix of social and physical improvements
directed at reducing resident victimization, resident
fear of crime, and the extent to which residents are
limiting use of their environment or other aspects of
their lives due to concern about crime.

The operational objectives of the plan are as follows:

1. Encourage Territoriality

    One recommended measure is to break up the
    project into mini-neighborhoods residents
    can identify with. These mini-neighborhoods
    will be reinforced architecturally through
    the installation of symbolic barriers, and
    socially by organizing residents within the
    mini-neighborhoods. The plan also calls for
    a restructuring of recreation areas within
    the site.

2. Improve Delivery of Social Services

    Recommendations include the formation of a
    crisis intervention program to aid effective
    operation of needed social services in the
    community.

3. Improve Police Services

    Recommendations include (1) reassigning the
    Housing Authority police to the Executive
    Deputy Director of Management; this assures
    police responsiveness to management needs
    and aids communication between management
    and police; (2) establishing a Security
    Planning Board composed of residents,
    Nickerson management staff, officers from
    the Los Angeles Police Department and the
    Housing Authority Police; (3) providing a
    means by which Housing Authority patrols
    can communicate directly with LAPD patrols.

4. Control Access and Circulation

    Recommendations are intended to reduce
    penetrability and to provide a more orderly
    pedestrian circulation system through the
    site. This should increase opportunities for
    informal and formal surveillance of resi-
    dent activities, and avoid channelling resi-
    dents into dangerous areas. The recommenda-
    tions are also intended to reduce design
    conflicts and to increase resident contact
    and recognition.

5. Accommodate Special Interests and Needs

    The plan includes recommendations designed to
    meet the special needs of women and the
    elderly. The concept of an elderly complex
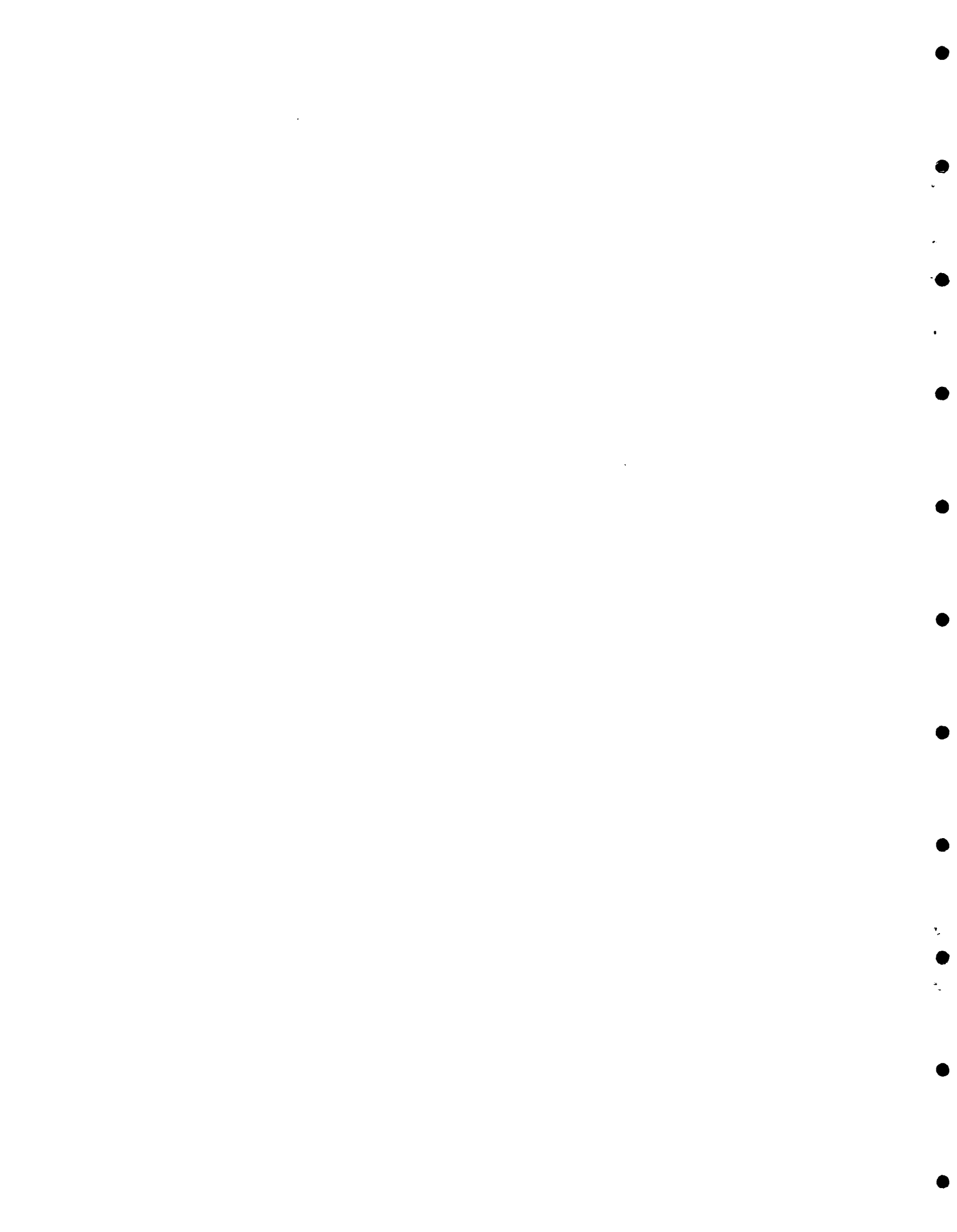   is advised.

Part II: Recommendations

ENCOURAGE TERRITORIALITY

One of the most important lines of defense against crime
and its related consequences, fear and changed behavior,
is to have residents working together and looking after
one another. If a community is to control mischievous
or anti-social elements within, and resist penetration
from without, a high level of social cohesion is re-
quired. People must identify with their neighbors
and their environment.

The foundation of these supporting relationships,
as noted above, is made more difficult by the size and
anonymous nature of Nickerson Gardens, and the large
amount of unassigned space. The project must be
reduced to a more human scale and its arrangement must
encourage people to identify with each other, to work
together, and to take control of their environment.
These changes will encourge neighboring relationships.
Figure 4 shows the proposed site plan and Figure 5 is
a perspective view of some of the proposed improvements.

SUBDIVIDE NICKERSON GARDENS INTO SOCIAL CLUSTERS

To encourage the necessary supporting relationships,
WBA proposes that the project be divided into small
social clusters of from 24 to 38 households, comprising
two or three buildings, depending on the configuration.
These clusters would be defined architecturally by
shrubs and fencing, and the placement of tot lots or
sitting areas within each cluster. (For a typical
cluster arrangement, see Figure 6.) Clusters should
be reinforced socially by organizing residents by
cluster, a task made easier because of their physical
definition. These clusters will be the main organiza-
tional element in the project. They will provide the
basis for tenant participation in the project, a
connecting link to social services, and a social unit

Figure 4:

PROPOSED
SITE
PLAN

WBA WILLIAM DRILL ASSOCIATES, INC.

Symbol	Description
SHRUBS AND LOW CHAIN LINK FENCE DEFINING CLUSTERS	
BUILDING WITH FRONT YARDS DEFINED BY PLANTING OR LOW WALLS	
TOT LOT AND SITTING AREA LOCATED WITHIN "CLUSTER"	
PLAYGROUND AND PARK AREA	
WIDER FRONT SIDEWALKS	
TREES ACCENTING ENTRANCE POINTS AND PLAYGROUNDS	
INFORMAL SITTING AREAS AT PEDESTRIAN ACCESS POINTS	
PROPOSED ELDERLY SECTION	

WILLIAM
NICKERSON, JR.
GARDENS

Housing Authority of the
City of Los Angeles

NEW ACCESS TO CENTRAL PLAY-FIELD

NEW BASKETBALL/TENNIS COURTS

SITTING AREA

OPEN FIELD SPORTS

SENIOR CENTER

Figure 5: Perspective View of Proposed Improvements
William Nickerson Jr. Gardens

PEDESTRIAN "PIRGLANDS" THROUGH CENTRAL PLAYFIELD
INCANDESCENT LIGHTING POLES
SITTING AREAS

PLAYFIELD

SHRUBS DEFINING CLUSTERS
CURBING & SHRUBS DEFINING FRONT YARDS
WIDENED FRONT SIDEWALK
INCANDESCENT LIGHTING POLES
CLUSTER SITTING AREA AND TOT PLAY AREA
SEMI-PUBLIC SITTING AREA

65
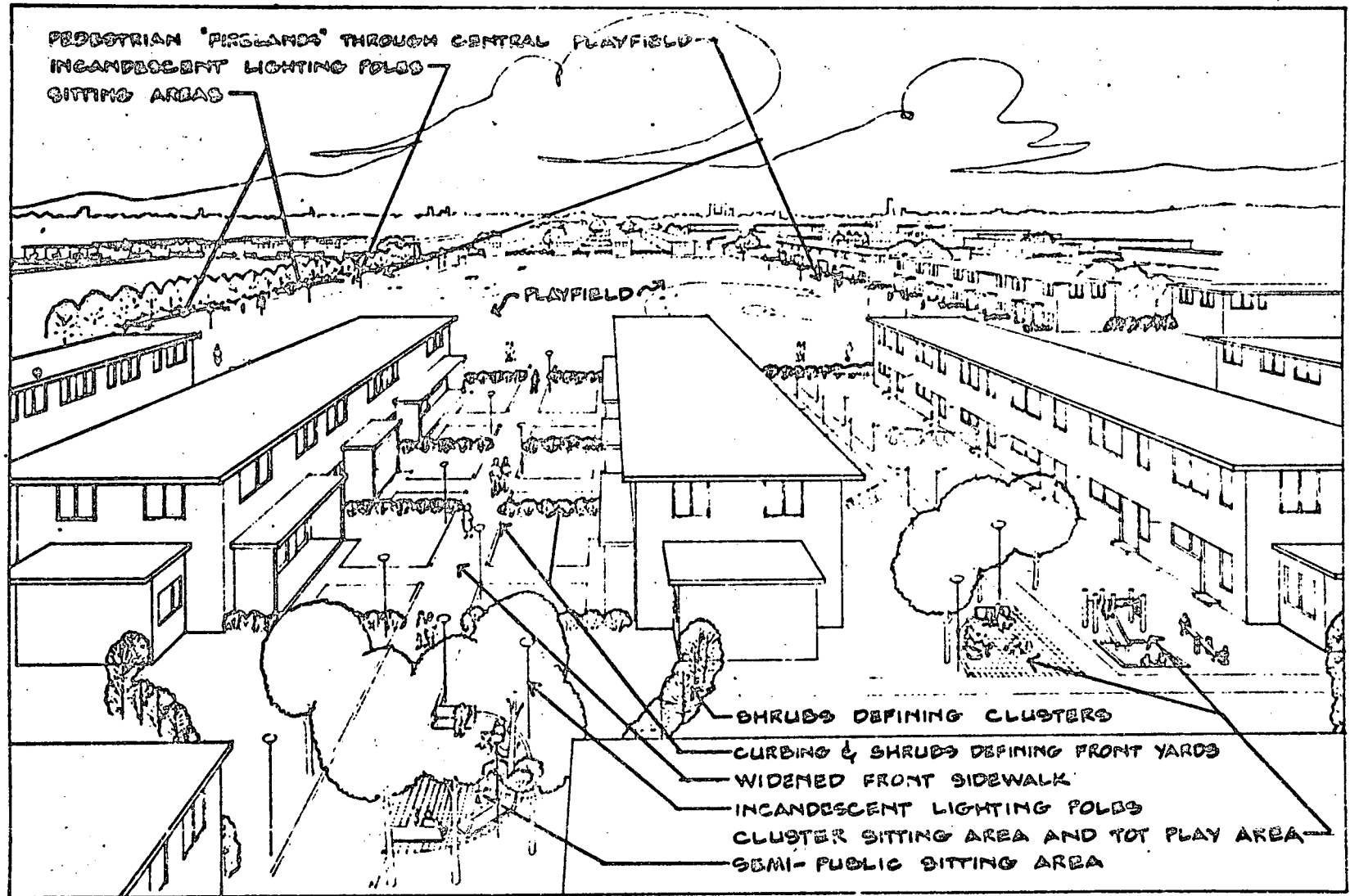
Figure 6:

SITE PLAN COMPONENTS

WBA WILLIAM ERILL ASSOCIATES

1. TYPICAL CLUSTER ARRANGEMENT
2. SHRUBS AND CURBING DIFFERENTIATING FRONT YARDS
3. TYPICAL FRONT WALKWAY SITTING AREA
4. TYPICAL CLUSTER TOT-PLAY AREA AND SITTING AREA
5. SHRUBS DEFINING REAR YARD AREAS
6. WIDENED FRONT YARD SIDEWALK
7. MAJOR ACCESS "FIRELANE" INTO CENTRAL PLAYFIELD
8. TYPICAL "FIRELANE" SITTING AREA
9. CENTRAL PLAYFIELD

99
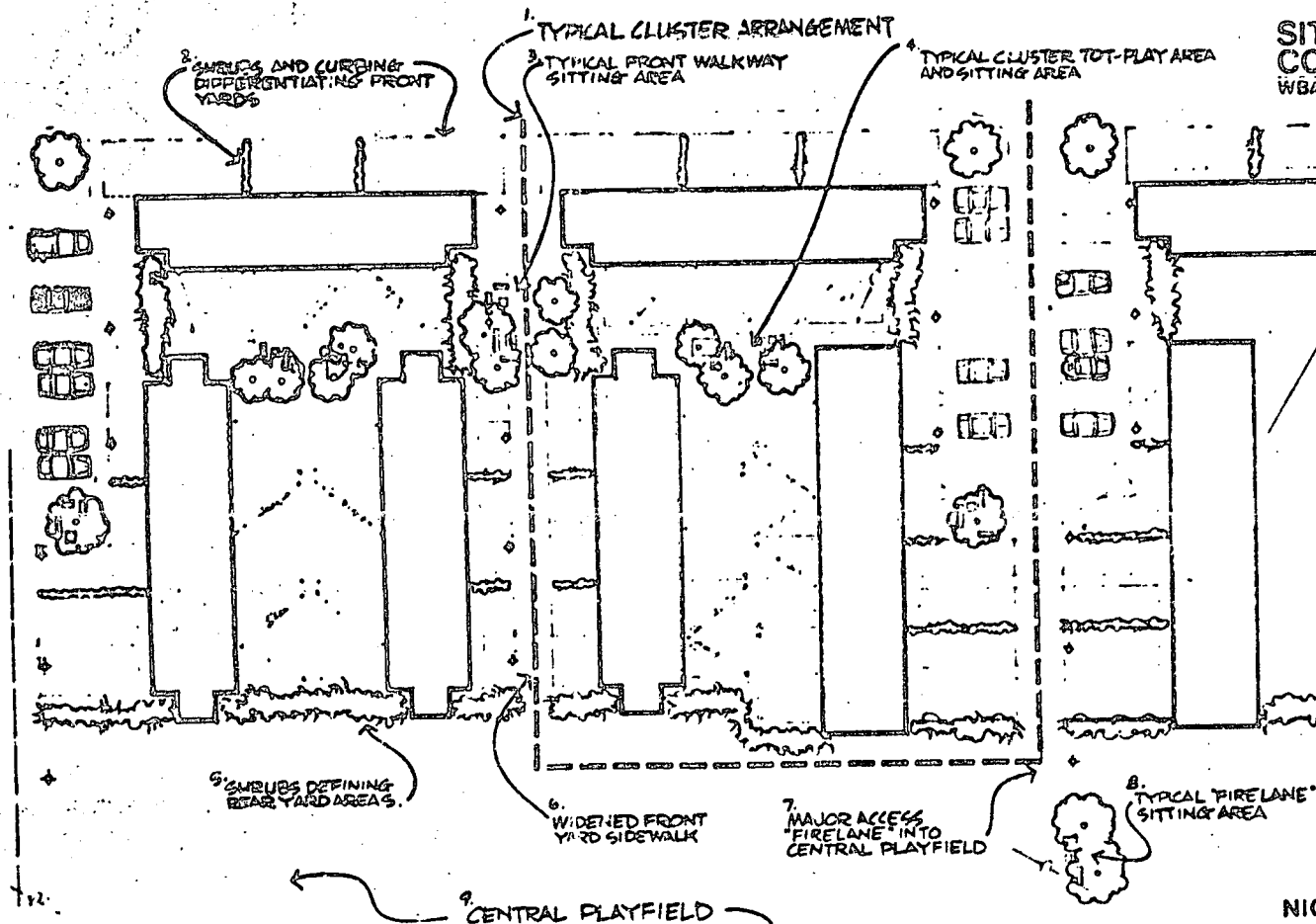
NICKERSON GARDENS

Housing Authority of the
City of Los Angeles
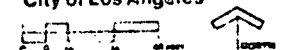
to encourage friendships and supporting relationships.

MAKE SPACE PRIVATE

To further involve residents with their environment, front and rear yards should be defined with modest, symbolic demarcations so residents will be encouraged to take control of these yards. These improvements, coupled with the others included in this plan, should reduce the amount of unassigned, anonymous space and suggest a hierarchy of space similar to that found in middle-class housing. Residents would have interior space, private open space - such as yards, semi-public space (in this case, the cluster), and finally, project or neighborhood space.

RESTRUCTURE RESIDENT ORGANIZATIONS

The vulnerability analysis found that residents are not highly organized. Meetings of the tenant council are poorly attended; there is a lack of confidence that the tenant council is effective in improving the environment.

Several factors contribute to this: (1) little social cohesion among residents - people are not close and supportive; the degree of shared values is low; (2) an absence of issues to address; (3) a tenant council that is not truly representative - most members are older, more established residents; significant population groups (the elderly, youth) are not represented, special problem areas (those facing women) are not considered; and (4) no grass roots organization underpinning the council which is site-wide and the only organization.

To increase resident involvement in the tenant council and to give it the opportunity to play a meaningful role, the council should be restructured. The site, for

representation purposes, should be divided into 17
districts (Figure 7) which would include from two to
four clusters. Each such district would elect one
member to the council. In addition, special councils
would be set up which would elect one member to the
tenant council. These councils, as indicated in Figure
7 would represent special constituencies or problems.
There should be a youth council, a women's council, and
a senior citizens' council as shown in Table 14.

Table 14.--Recommended resident
council structure

```
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│   SITE-WIDE RESIDENT COUNCIL     │
│      20 elected members          │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
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Resident Council Districts	17 Representatives

1 Representative	Youth Council
1 Representative	Women's Council
1 Representative	Senior Citizens' Council
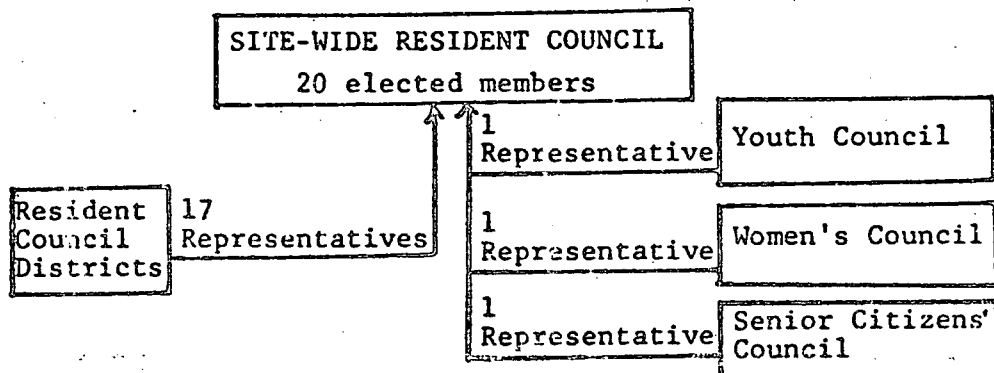
Definitions:

Site-Wide Resident Council - A council composed of
twenty elected members with voting powers, organized
to represent differing tenant interests; to estab-
lish self-help capacities; and to develop a sense
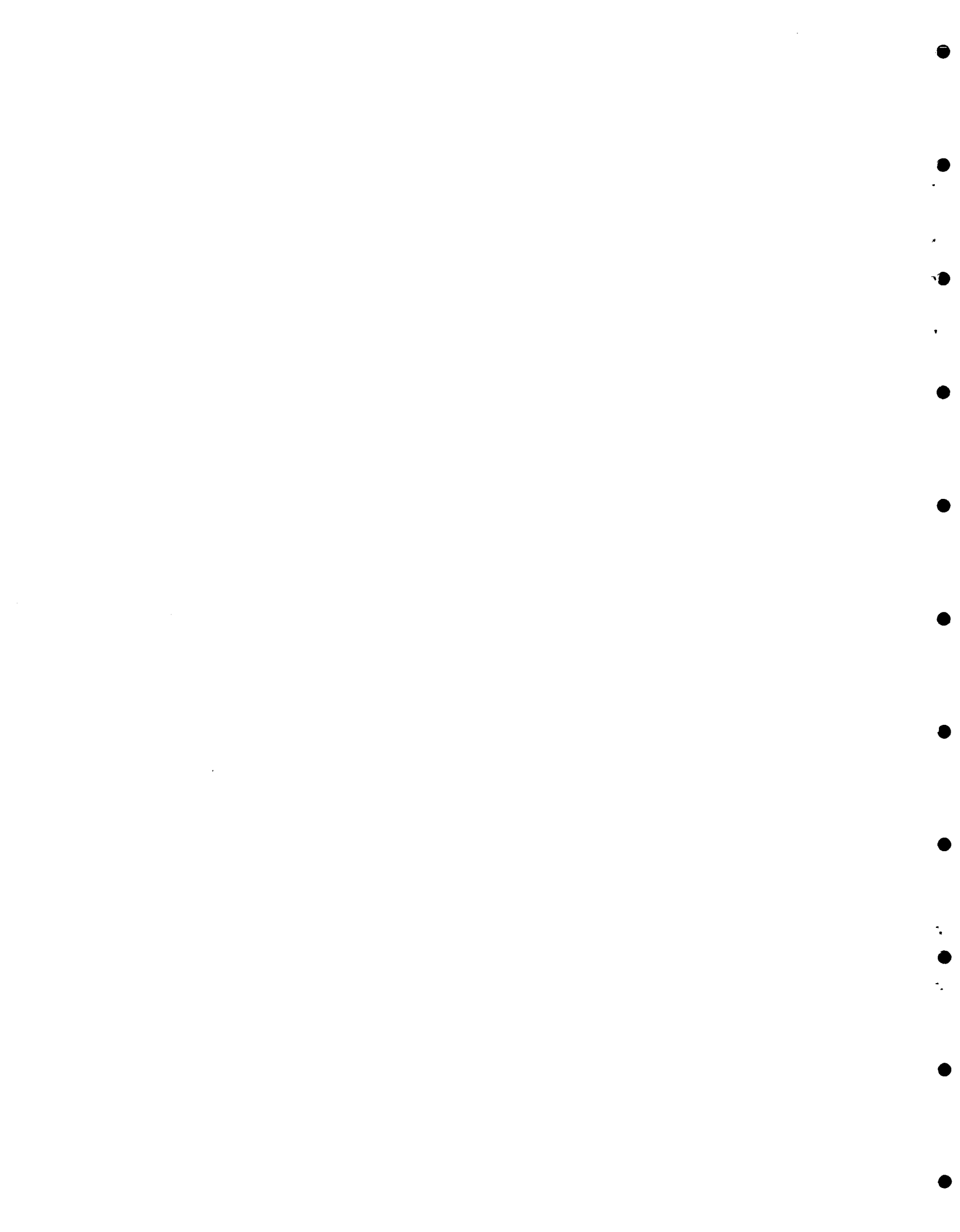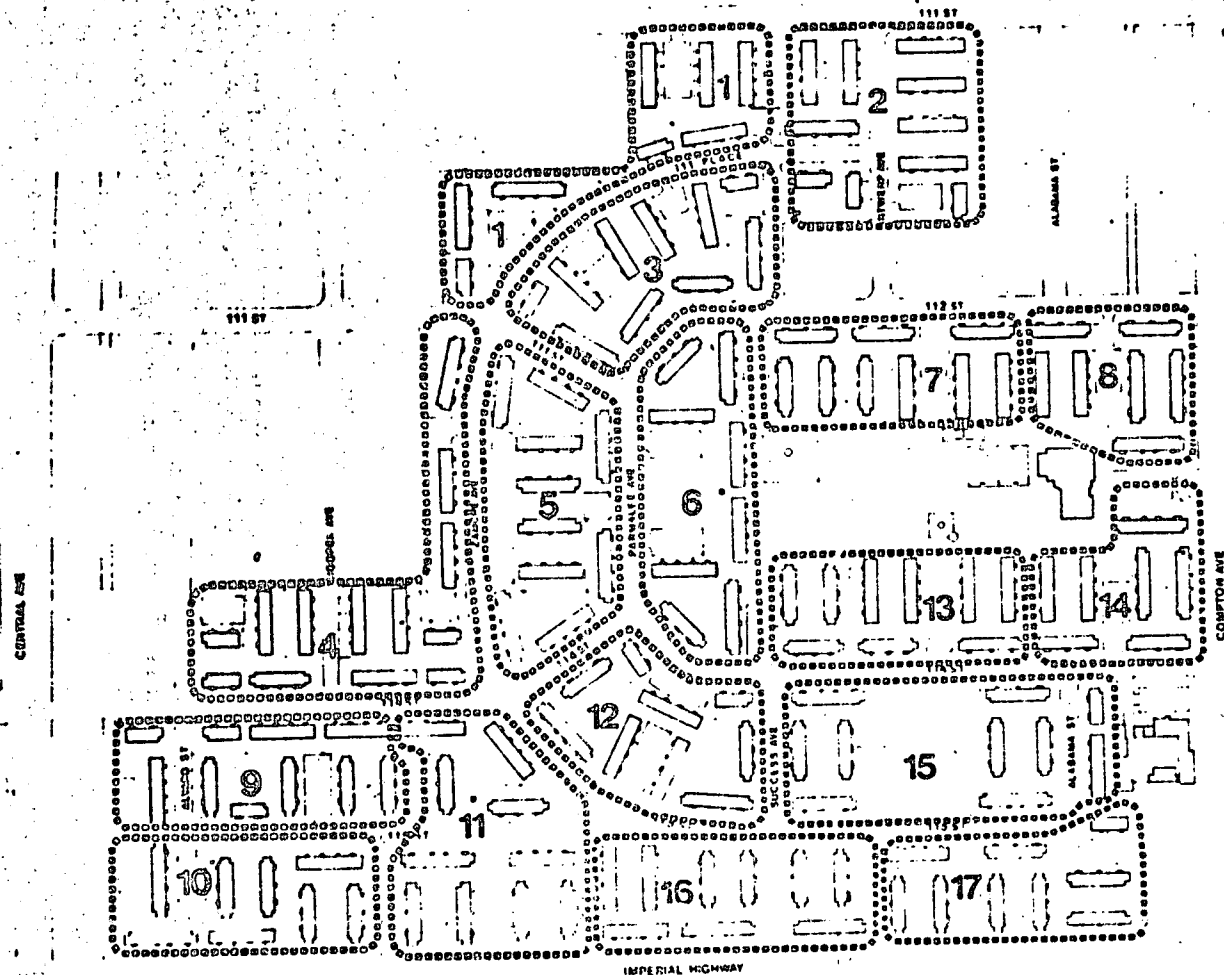of community on a site-wide basis.

Figure 7:
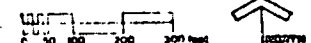
RESIDENT COUNCIL DISTRICTS

WBA WILLIAM BRILL ASSOCIATES

Each district is marked by a number.

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Resident Council Districts - A specific area of
the site comprised of two to four social clusters.
Each district representative articulates the needs
and problems of that specific area of the site to
the overall Resident Council. Each of the 17
resident council districts elects one voting
district representative to the Resident Council.

Special Interest Councils - These councils
would be organized on a site-wide basis to address
the needs of special groups such as youth, senior
citizens, women. Their purpose would be to
bring the needs of these groups to the attention
of the site-wide Resident Council.

The restructuring proposed here could be expected to
increase interest in the tenant council and encourage
broader represenation. The clusters and districts
should provide the council with a grass roots organ-
izational structure of representation, and the special
councils should provide a means of representation for
special groups and views. This restructuring should
enable the council to help bring residents together
and shape management of the project. It should also
assist in the delivery of social services, particu-
larly outreach activities, because staffs of social
service agencies will be able to identify and work
with leadership groups. The crisis intervention pro-
gram recommended below is linked closely to this
structure.

REDISTRIBUTE SEMI-PUBLIC RECREATION AREAS

An important way to encourage resident involvement
in the environment is to reduce conflicts over use of
facilities and space. Further, spaces should be
organized so they are used as intended. The vulnerability
analysis noted that Nickerson Gardens has a number of
design conflicts, e.g., situations where incompatible
activities are located next to one another or where
groups are forced to compete for the same space or
facility.

To eliminate these conflicts outdoor recreation areas
should be subdivided into elementary school areas, teen-
age areas, and adult areas for both active and passive
activities. Elementary school play areas should be
in the vacant lots on Parmelee Avenue and 114th Street.
Basketball and tennis courts should be added to focus
teenage activities in the central playfield. Finally,
shaded sitting areas should be built adjacent to all
play areas.

These improvements shown in Figure 4 will offer resi-
dents increased opportunities to use the various open
spaces, to form new relationships within the confines
of the site and to claim the recreation areas for their
own use. Assigning specific recreation areas for
various groups will reduce the potential for conflicts;
these often result when teenagers and elementary school
children must compete for the same space.

IMPROVE SOCIAL SERVICES BY ESTABLISHING A CRISIS INTERVENTION PROGRAM

The vulnerability analysis determined that residents
have a tremendous need for social services. Their
lives are stressful, friendships seem to be few, they
are extremely dependent on their immediate environment.
Alcohol and drug abuse were thought to be major problems
by local social service agencies.

Linkage between social service agencies and the resi-
dents needs to be improved. Far too often in public
housing environments like Nickerson Gardens residents
do not fully utilize programs, and the programs them-
selves are not sufficiently tailored to meet the needs
of housing residents.

The Crisis Intervention Program described here is
intended to assist residents in coping with crises
and to heighten their awareness of available social
services. This program also provides a mechanism
through which residents can help shape some of these

programs. Further, because it operates on the cluster
level, it can be expected to strengthen the cluster's
sense of identity. This requires that a member of the
housing authority staff bring representatives of social
service agencies to cluster meetings or to meetings of
the tenant council. The social worker offers crisis
management information and training to residents through
a lecture or workshop. A representative from an alco-
holic treatment program could talk about how to handle
a drunk safely, or one from a drug abuse program could
lecture on how to handle an overdose or how to tell if
someone is on "uppers" or "downers," and appropriate
treatment. A speaker from a child care agency could
give instruction on recognizing symptoms of illness in
children. Presentations would include information on
the services offered by each agency. Thus a family that
began by learning how to handle a drunk might decide
to seek counseling and long-term treatment for the
alcoholic.

This program would require careful planning. Agencies
must be contacted, programs prepared, and crisis issues
identified. Residents should play a key role in each
of these steps.

The program should increase linkage between residents
and the social service agencies. The outreach format
and crisis orientation would assure contact and relevancy
and the workshops would help residents in managing
crises. Contact with residents might also suggest ways
social service can be improved.

IMPROVE POLICE SERVICES

The vulnerability analysis identified three factors
that limit delivery of police services: (1) the place-
ment of the Housing Authority police under the Director
of Administrative Services instead of an office with
line responsibility, such as the Executive Deputy
Director of Management; (2) the lack of communication
between Housing Authority police on the site and city
police in the area; and (3) the absence of a mechanism

allowing residents and police to interact, plan, and exchange ideas in a non-crisis environment.

To overcome these limitations WBA makes the following recommendations:

PLACE HOUSING AUTHORITY POLICE UNDER THE EXECUTIVE DEPUTY OF MANAGEMENT

At present, Housing Authority Police are part of the Office of the Director of Administrative Services, though police protection is but slightly related to other responsibilities of that office. This placement may also tend to remove the police from the essence of the Authority's operation, which is managing housing. If police reported to the Executive Deputy Director of Management they could be continuously sensitized to issues facing management; comprehensive programs and approaches could then be designed. At present, coordinating police and management activities is difficult because of the organization's structure. Further, staff tend to view delivery of police services as a separate and distinct service from others provided by the Authority. Police services should be an integral part of the management approach taken by the Authority; making police services a responsibility of the Executive Deputy Director of Management would better ensure this. This is so because the Executive Deputy Director of Management helps frame management policies and supervises the Assistant Directors of Management. These persons have line responsibility, on a geographical basis, for the management of the Authority's housing projects. The Executive Deputy Director of Management also interacts with a range of city agencies; he is a logical candidate to coordinate delivery of Housing Authority and city police services to the project.

ESTABLISH A COMMUNICATIONS LINK BETWEEN HOUSING AUTHORITY PATROLS AND LOS ANGELES POLICE

At present, Housing Authority patrols cannot communicate

directly with the Los Angeles police. They must call
the Housing Authority dispatcher who, in turn, calls
the Los Angeles police and then relays information
back to the patrols. Such a routine makes coordination
in an emergency difficult, isolates the Housing
Authority police from their city counterparts, and
can limit the information they receive about a problem
in the project.

ESTABLISH A SECURITY PLANNING BOARD

Clearly, police-community relations at Nickerson
Gardens must be improved; stereotypes and misimpressions
between residents and police should be corrected.
Residents, the local Housing Authority management
staff, and the police must come together to exchange
views and impressions, to jointly review the security
problems, and to plan approaches for improving
security.

A security planning board for Nickerson Gardens is thus
proposed. The board should consist of representatives
of the resident council, the management staff, the Hous-
ing Authority staff, and the Los Angeles police. The
board should meet monthly to discuss issues relating
to security and make plans for improvements. Police
organizations must present data on victimization,
calls and arrests, and problems encountered in the last
month in working in the community. Residents and
management would give their assessment of the situation.
This exchange involves residents and management in
police work and provides a basis for assessing police
performance and planning new approaches.

CONTROL ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

The vulnerability analysis identified several design
features contributing to resident vulnerability. The
site was found to be highly penetrable; it could be
entered from almost all angles and there were few, if

any, physical or psychological barriers to impede or channel access. Major portions of the interior of the site were equally loose and unstructured. Further, the site is deficient in the extent to which it encourages or makes easy casual police surveillance. A number of design conflicts also exist.

To correct these deficiencies, the following improvements are proposed:

1. Widen front yard sidewalks to reflect their status as major pedestrian entrance points to the site.

2. Add low chain link fences to rear yard areas facing perimeter development streets, such as Compton and Imperial, limiting site access to front areas only.

3. Construct two sidewalk "firelanes" through the central playfield, with adjacent sitting areas. These improve north-south pedestrian circulation through the site and provide police cars with an informal pathway to patrol and survey playfield activities.

4. Plant hedges in front yard areas adjacent to the central playfield to establish a symbolic barrier between the playfield and front yards. This emphasizes "firelanes" as principal entrance points to the central playfield and reduces conflicts between yards and the ballfield.

5. Plant trees on both sides of the streets that enter the project at the project entrance; this creates a symbolic gateway effect.

6. Locate informal sitting areas in front yards adjacent to new pedestrian pathways; these

give residents opportunities to survey
site activities.

IMPROVE SITE LIGHTING

The lighting improvements suggested are intended to
support other improvements in bringing definition
and structure to the site. Lighting does not merely
add illumination, for overlighting a site can be as
unrewarding as underlighting it. The recommended
lighting is approporiate for the designated uses of
the various types of outdoor space; it is intended to
help define these uses.

Front yard walkways and sitting areas should have
low-scale incandescent lighting, distinct from front
porch lighting. Active recreation areas, such as
the proposed tennis courts, should get high intensity
lighting, as should the bus stops and major streets
leading into the project.

ACCOMMODATE SPECIAL INTERESTS AND NEEDS

Two groups on the site have special interests and
needs that should be addressed. The first is the
women on the site whose special yet common diffi-
culties require particular attention. The second is
the elderly. Although there are few in the project
at present, if new elderly residents were drawn in
from the surrounding community they could form a
significant group. This may well occur if the Author-
ity chooses to create an elderly enclave within the
project.

ESTABLISH WOMEN'S PROGRAMS

The vast majority of Nickerson's households are headed

by single adult females with children. Yet despite
their numbers and the common stresses these women deal
with, friendship bonds and supporting relationships
were few. Forty-one percent of those interviewed, for
example, said they had no friends in the project.

There is also reason to believe that some of the
social programs are not sufficiently oriented toward
the needs of women in the project, and thus are not
particularly effective. This appears to be especially
true in the areas of alcohol and drug abuse where
substantially fewer women are being treated than men.
It seems clear that men and women have different abuse
patterns and that women, because of their responsibili-
ties for children, have special problems in seeking
and staying in treatment programs.

To help women recognize their common problems and
become more supportive of one another, a women's pro-
gram is needed. The program should provide a means,
along with the crisis intervention center, for women
on the site to relate more directly to some of the
social service programs; this would make programs more
responsive to the needs of women in the project.

The program might be developed in this way:

1. First, an outside women's group should be
   invited to work with Authority staff in or-
   ganizing female residents and designing the
   program.

2. Groups should be organized at the cluster
   level to discuss common problems and assess
   available alternatives. Trained "facilitators"
   from the outside group should, at least
   initially, organize and chair these meetings.

3. A women's center might be established in the
   existing on-site community center building.
   The center could provide information on

women's programs and available assistance in
the wider community, and space for meetings
and discussion groups. The center could also
sponsor programs; a "welcome program" for new
residents, for example, could support and
orient young newcomers. The center could be
managed by the women's council which, as dis-
cussed earlier, would relate directly to the
tenant council.

A successful women's program on the site would fill
an important need. Further, it could significantly
impact security of the environment by encouraging the
supporting relationships among community residents
that help a community to resist crime.

ESTABLISH AN ELDERLY COMPLEX

One of the proposals under active consideration by the
Authority has been the creation of an elderly complex
in a portion of Nickerson Gardens. Such a complex would,
it is said, reduce density and crowding on the site and
meet a latent and manifest demand for low-income elder-
ly housing in the Watts areas.

A staff member of the Housing Authority and a member of
WBA's staff studied this proposal. The researchers
looked at the demand for senior citizen public housing
in the Watts areas, the availability of supporting
social services, the role of security in such a pro-
gram, and the feasibility of having unrelated persons
share two-bedroom apartments. This was an important
component of the Authority's proposal, because the
increased revenue resulting from such an arrangement
could be used to provide more on-site management and
social services.
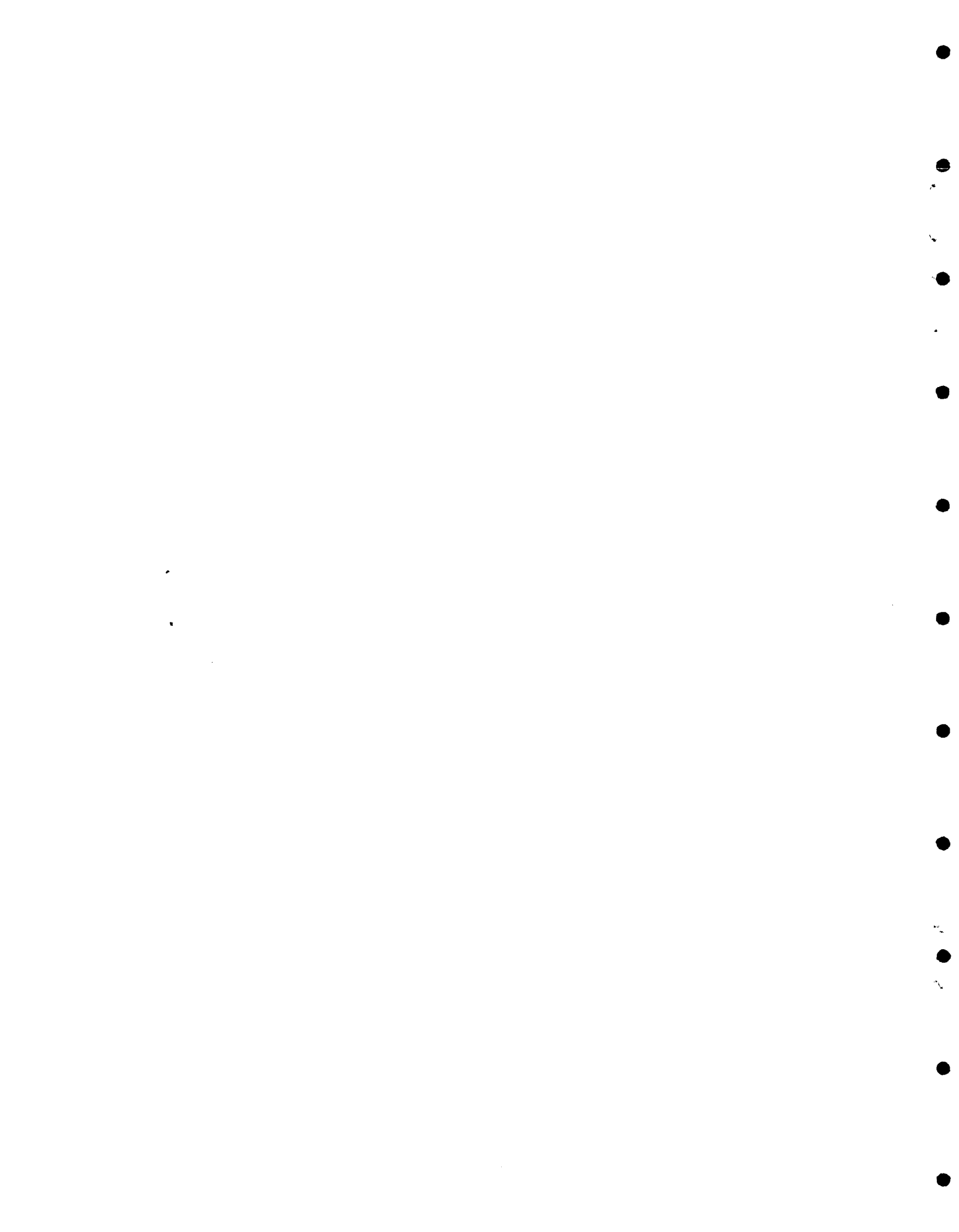
The report* concluded that sufficient demand existed
for the number of units proposed (120 to 130), and that
adequate social and supporting services did exist.
Little resistance was found to the idea of sharing a
two-bedroom apartment if residents could choose their
roommates.

The study noted that the lack of a community shopping
center could affect demand and might give Nickerson a
negative image to prospective residents. Proper securi-
ty is essential if the project is to be attractive to
residents and in any way feasible. To meet this require-
ment, as well as the need for an attractive complex,
that part of the project bordering Imperial Highway and
114th Street should be set aside for this complex. As
indicated in Figure 8, vehicular traffic could enter
at only two places. Most of the perimeter would be
attractively fenced, with only pedestrian entrances
available. A small community center would replace two
buildings, and sitting areas would be built for the
interior of the site.

The complex would, thus, have controlled entrance and
exit points, easily covered by police, and an attrac-
tively developed interior. It would provide a safe,
supportive environment for the elderly on a scale that
would not overwhelm them or discourage interaction
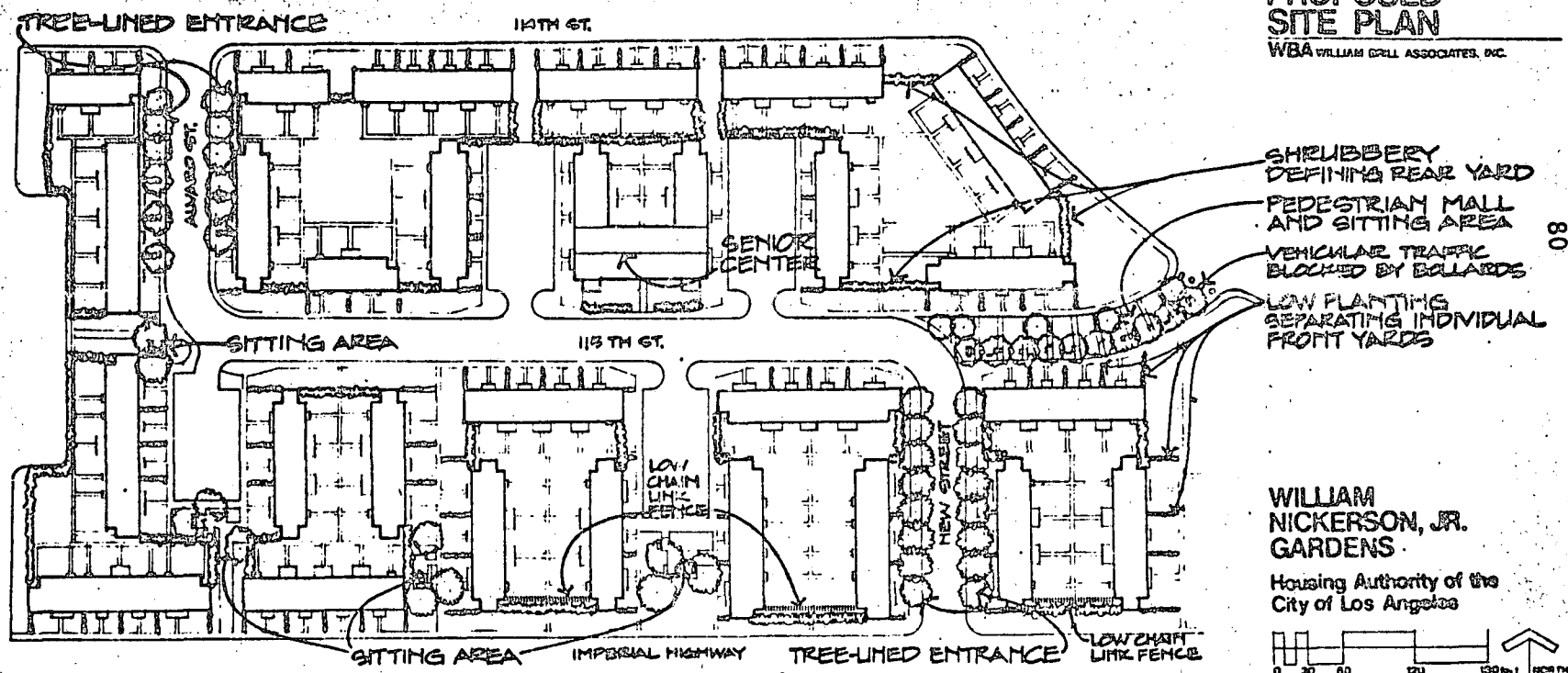with other age groups in the project.

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*"The Feasibility of Converting a Portion of William
Nickerson Gardens into an Elderly Community," Los Angeles
Housing Authority, June 1976.

Figure 8:

Elderly Section
**PROPOSED
SITE PLAN**
WBA WILLIAM GILL ASSOCIATES, INC.

TREE-LINED ENTRANCE

110TH ST.

AMAR ST.

SENIOR CENTER

SITTING AREA

115 TH ST.

LOW CHAIN LINK FENCE

NEW STREET

SITTING AREA

IMPERIAL HIGHWAY

TREE-LINED ENTRANCE

LOW CHAIN LINK FENCE

SHRUBBERY DEFINING REAR YARD

PEDESTRIAN MALL AND SITTING AREA

VEHICULAR TRAFFIC BLOCKED BY BOLLARDS

LOW PLANTING SEPARATING INDIVIDUAL FRONT YARDS

**WILLIAM
NICKERSON, JR.
GARDENS**

Housing Authority of the
City of Los Angeles

0   30   60   120   180 ft.   NORTH

80

Part III: Implementation Costs

This estimate presents the costs involved in the con-
struction of the recommended site improvements shown
in Figure 4 and the construction of the Senior Complex
as shown in Figure 8.

Costs for the various items and areas are estimated
figures as of September, 1977. These estimates are
for budget purposes only and are subject to slight ad-
justment when more detailed estimates are completed
during final design.

PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

TYPICAL CLUSTER	SMALL CLUSTER	LARGE CLUSTER
Front sidewalks and curbing, entry walks and pads	$ 5,300	$ 6,800
Post lighting	4,000	5,000
Front walkway sitting area	4,600	4,600
Rear walkway sitting area	1,400	3,750
New clothes poles	1,300	1,450
Rear yard sitting area	2,700	2,700
Rear yard tot play area	1,800	1,800
Shrubs defining front and rear yard	3,000	5,000
Shade trees	2,100	3,900
	$26,200	$35,000
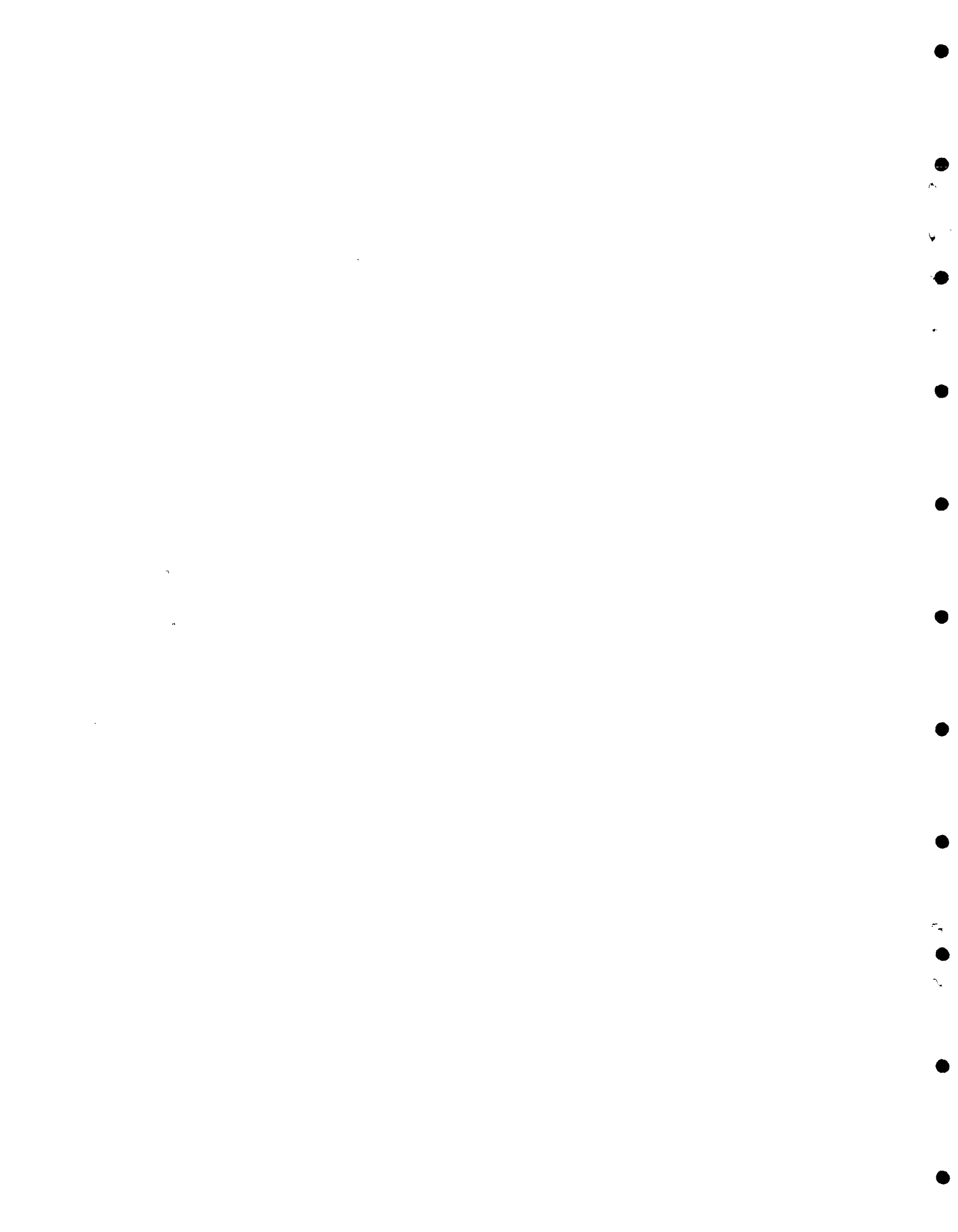
SUMMARY CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT COSTS

27 Small clusters	$707,400	
12 Large clusters	420,000	
TOTAL CLUSTER COSTS	$1,127,400	

PARK AND PLAYGROUND AREAS

1. At Parmalee Avenue

Swings	$1,500	
Play structure	11,000	
Benches	1,500	
Tree plantings	2,500	
	$16,500	

2. Between 114th and 115th Streets

Play structure	$11,000	
Sitting area	4,500	
Basketball court	4,000	
Tree plantings	2,500	
	$22,000	

3. Access ways through central playfield

Roadway development	$20,000	
Sitting areas (3)	30,000	
Tree plantings	5,000	
Post lighting along firelanes	10,000	
	$65,000	$103,500.00
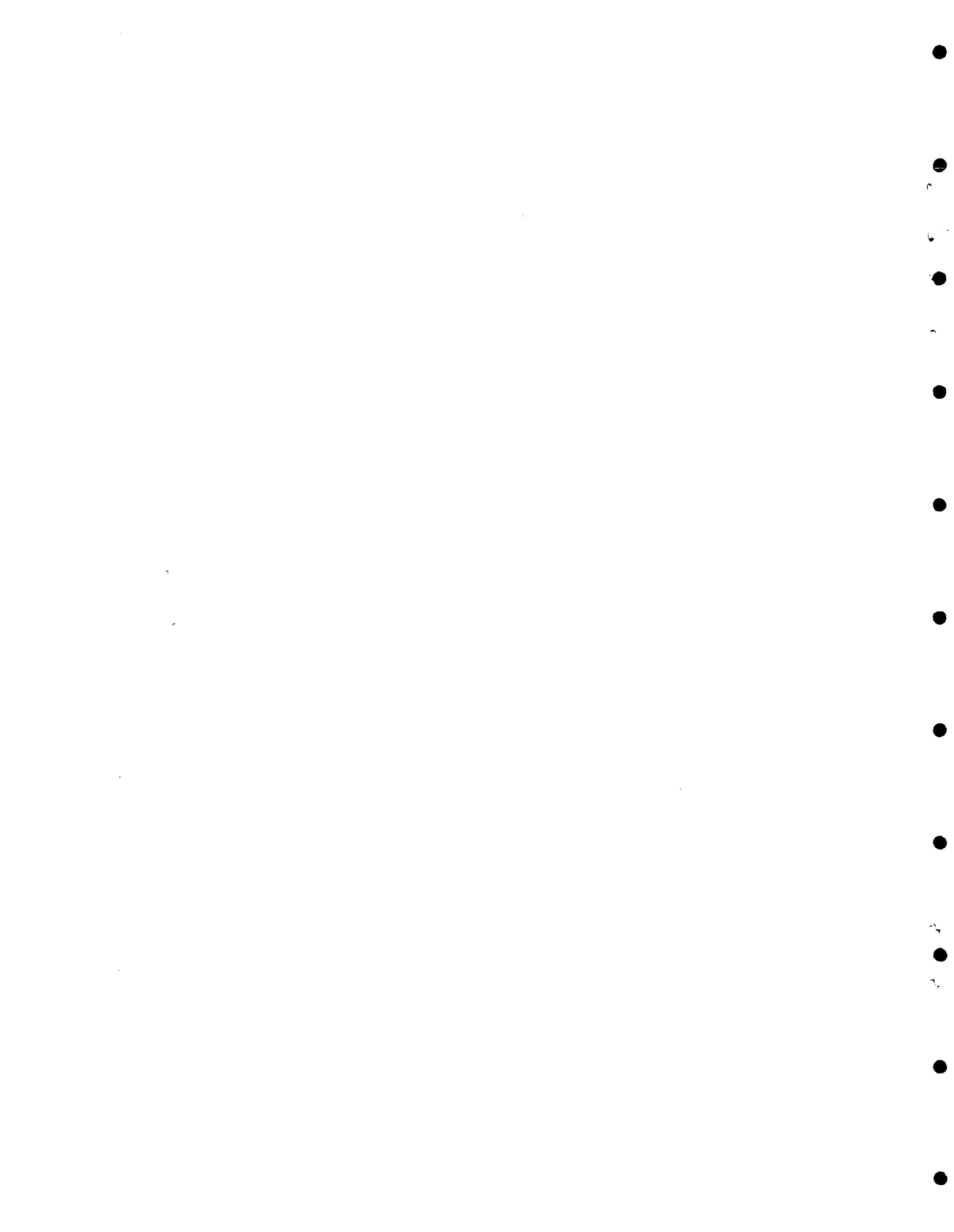
CENTRAL PLAYFIELD

      Ball fields (2) $40,000

      Tennis courts (2)   40,000

      Basketball courts (2)   8,000

                          $88,000

LANDSCAPING OF ENTRY ROADWAYS

                      $32,000

COMMUNITY LEVEL LIGHTING

                    $148,000

      SUBTOTAL $1,498,900

      CONTINGENCIES   149,890

         TOTAL $1,648,790

SENIOR COMPLEX

      Nine residential clusters @
        $26,200 $ 234,000

      New roadway   13,000

      Entry gates (2 entrances)   15,000

      Senior center   250,000

      Community level lighting   51,000

      SUBTOTAL   563,000

      CONTINGENCIES   56,300 $ 619,300

SUMMARY

Total Multi-family Complex	$1,648,790
Total Senior Complex	619,300
TOTAL	$2,268,090

SOCIAL IMPROVEMENTS

The cost of the recommended social programs and
management initiatives to be undertaken by the Author-
ity cannot be estimated at this time because it is
anticipated that much of this work can be undertaken
by present Authority staff and local social service
agencies. Funds would be required only for technical
assistance in setting up the crisis intervention and
women's programs. This amount would depend on how
much assistance the Authority could get from public
and private agencies within the Los Angeles community.

END

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