

# Back to Scatter-Site

Live long enough in New York and everything reverses itself; ideas, attitudes and policies go up and down like a yo-yo. The Lindsay administration started high on scatter-site housing—the theory that public housing in small doses could be absorbed by neighborhoods without the dislocating impact of large-scale, low-income developments.

Soon, however, scatter-site housing was brought low as one neighborhood after another turned it into a bitter racial and economic issue. "Forest Hills" became a synonym for the kind of dramatically polarized, dead-end confrontation that New Yorkers specialize in when aroused. As skyrocketing costs made small projects inordinately expensive, building economists buried the concept and scatter-site housing seemed dead.

To any true New Yorker, it will come as no surprise to learn that, after all this, scatter-site housing has now been sighted alive and well in the Kingsbridge section of the Bronx. The community has done a notable turnaround for the dedication of a typical unit that has actually reached completion. The unit was welcomed, and it works. A delicate compromise was effected between community wishes and city needs; preference was given to local residents and a controversial percentage set for black tenants. That compromise can be attacked, and probably will be.

But the point of scatter-site housing is that it be absorbed into a community, and reasonable community negotiation can make it acceptable. As it becomes acceptable, arrangements can be less restrictive and fearful.

In another swing, the housing policy of the Beame administration once again stresses scatter-site, or small unit, projects as both environmentally desirable and economically feasible. With neighborhood rehabilitation, it is a humane and sensible approach both to housing and to the quality of the city.