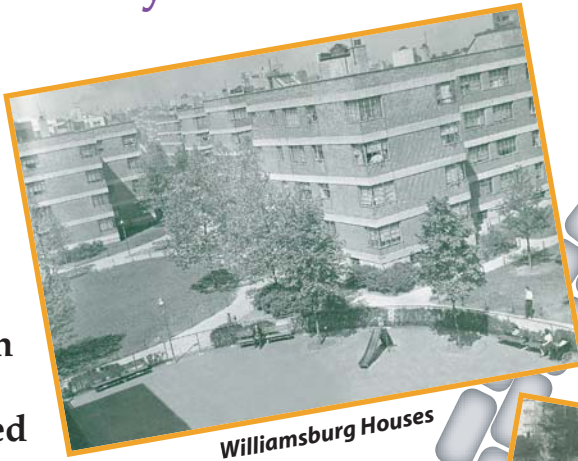


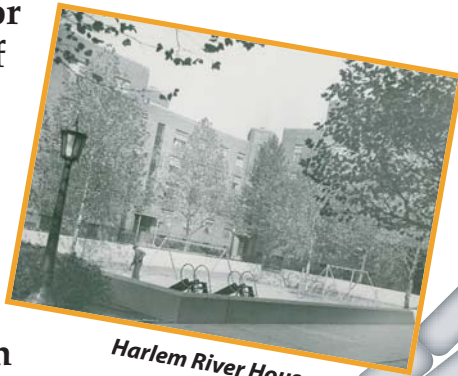
OPEN SPACES

The demand for housing created by the influx of immigrants in the 19th century gave rise to a form of building known as the tenement.

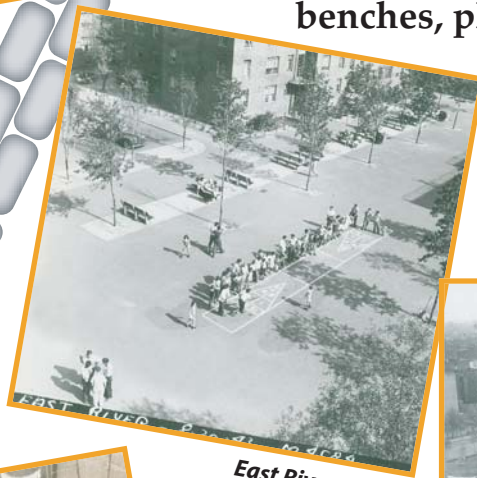
Overcrowded and unhealthful, the only open spaces around the tenement were the building stoop, the sidewalk, the street and the vacant building lot. When the New York City Housing Authority designed its first buildings it incorporated open space planning. Interior courtyards fostered a sense of community. Williamsburg Houses covered only 30 per cent of its 23-acre plot with courtyards in three of the four blocks. Harlem River Houses was designed with a central courtyard with seating and play areas, adorned with sculptures by artists working under the Works Progress Administration.



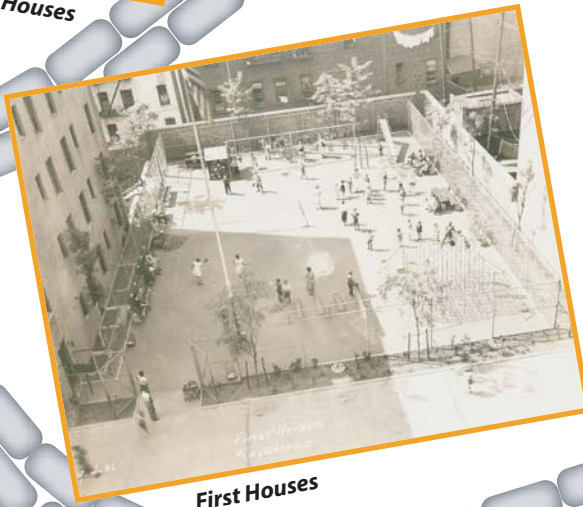
Williamsburg Houses



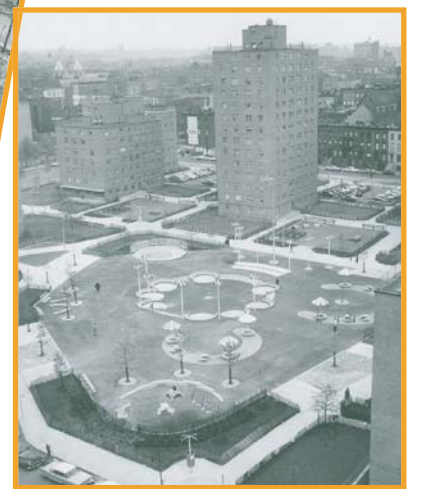
Harlem River Houses



East River Houses



First Houses



Jefferson Houses

1

TOWER IN THE PARK

In the post-World War II period, NYCHA began to build developments of ten to twelve stories in park-like settings with benches, playgrounds, winding paths, large open lawn areas and dense tree plantings.

TOUGH TIMES

2

The fiscal crisis of 1974 in NYC greatly reduced the maintenance of the City's public housing developments.



Fences could not be maintained, and unprotected planted areas were destroyed and paved with asphalt for ease of maintenance. An obvious outcome was increased criminal activity. The open space of the housing development became an extension

of the street, and drug dealing and weapon use crept in. In response, the Authority began to alter the design of public open spaces.

3

AN OPEN SPACE RENAISSANCE

Drawing on Jane Jacobs' book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, NYCHA developed a new Site Design Approach to Creating a Safe Housing Environment. This new approach relied less on tall fences that restricted movement and isolated developments, and

more on site activities and amenities that brought people out of their homes. Play areas with seating for parents, gathering places for teenagers, and pathways encouraged people to walk through the development to take their children to school or go to the grocery store rather than avoiding these routes.



Todt Hill houses



Cassidy - Lafayette Houses



Resident involvement is paramount to the success of a new site improvement design, fostering interaction, an exchange of ideas. It builds community ties and relationships. Red Hook Houses residents were invited to work on the design of an open space to increase safety and security in one of NYCHA's oldest developments. Residents developed models, chose types of pavement, benches and color schemes, and presented them to their neighbors in the community.

Today, there are more than 2,056 acres of open spaces and more than 1,600 play areas within NYCHA developments.

