

more than bricks and mortar

PROGRAMS FOR RESIDENTS

From its beginning,

NYCHA's challenge has been to balance its "real estate" mission with a commitment to social services.



When, in 1937, the first residents of Williamsburg Houses started using "carriage rooms" intended for storage as havens for parents who needed a safe public space for their children, NYCHA quickly saw



this new aspect of its mission. The carriage room has evolved into the community center, which is often the anchor for an entire neighborhood surrounding the NYCHA development.



The first few NYCHA developments all included nursery schools and health stations for residents and their neighbors, but the concept of the full-fledged "Community Centers" took hold in the 1940s. The new community centers in Queensbridge, Red Hook and Elliott Houses offered activities such as crafts, dance, Boy Scout troops, and language classes. NYCHA partnered with the then city Youth Board and the Board of Education to start recreation and education programs at places like Brownsville, East River, and South Jamaica.



As more public housing developments were built, NYCHA recognized that more comprehensive programs were needed for a growing population of young people. In the 1950s, NYCHA's Department of Social and Community Services was established with the challenge of building hundreds of centers for pre-school and school age residents, seniors, and child health stations.



In the 1970s, the Authority began a number of citywide programs: gardening, talent shows, fishing contests and athletics to supplement programs at the centers.



Over the last few decades, these programs have expanded even further to include summer lunch and year-round feeding programs, Partners In Reading, the Youth Chorus and the Harborview Arts Center.

By the 1990s, many of the early Community Centers were in need of renovation, and a multi-million dollar rebuilding program began. There is an emphasis not only on the delivery of services, but on the standards to maintain and operate the new infrastructure.



Today, there are 557 community facilities, hundreds of direct and sponsored senior centers, 104 sponsored day-care centers, and 115 youth community facilities.

