TERRITORIALITY IN PUBLIC HOUSING

by

Suzanne Marie Barclay

Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of City Planning

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Abstract

The concept of territoriality describes the need to control one's environment, to stake out and defend one's turf. Although originally proposed by ethologists studying animal behavior, theories of territoriality have evolved to encompass human actions as well.

Today, the influence of this concept can be seen in the proposed plans for renovation of four public housing projects in Boston and Cambridge. Proposed site plans for each project include private entrances and private yards, since these are considered the primary physical manifestations of territoriality.

While this concept was acknowledged in the design of the first public housing developments built before World War II, it was not apparent in those built in the early to mid 1950s. Those developments, often consisting of mid-rise and high-rise buildings, may be said to embody site principles antithetical to territoriality. The idea of designing for territoriality has re-emerged in renovation plans for four public housing developments.

Proposed site plans for the renewal of the West Broadway development in South Boston were based, in part, on the goal of designing for territoriality. It is theorized that the proposed physical changes of private outdoor space and others along with management policies will encourage or allow for territorial behavior and thereby improve the livability of the West Broadway development. To the extent that territoriality encourages or allow people to take greater control over their immediate physical environment, it is a profoundly important design principle.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of territoriality describes the need to control one's environment, to stake out and defend one's turf. Although originally proposed by ethologists studying animal behavior, theories of territoriality have been developed to explain human actions as well. Today, it is universally recognized behavior which is exhibited by people in a myriad of ways. A movie patron leaves a sweater in her chair to indicate that she will return to occupy that seat. A student in a lunch line asks another to "save his place" while he runs off momentarily. Teenagers who belong to a gang "claim" a street corner and attempt to punish members of other gangs who trespass on their turf.

Theories about territoriality have evolved to encompass numerous ideas. Two predominate today and are essential in a discussion of claiming or controlling turf in public housing developments. The first is that, human beings, like other vertebrates, defend the physical space they inhabit. Secondly, people are more likely to assume responsibility for that space, if they own or feel a sense of proprietorship over it. As a prerequisite for defense and proprietorship, people need to delineate their territory, to mark the boundaries between themselves and potential intruders. One of the oldest examples of such spatial division is the threshold - a physical element separating a private area (or private property) which its owners will defend from invasion, from a public area which typically they will not protect. In this
country, the fenced yard represents a traditional way of
denoting private space and of making a territorial claim.

Today, the influence of this concept can be seen in the
proposed plans for renovation of four public housing projects
in Boston and Cambridge. The overall goal for these renova-
tions, which represent an investment of over $100 million, is
to improve the 'livability' of these developments. Proposed
site plans for each project include private entrances and
private yards, since these are considered the primary physi-
cal manifestations of territoriality.

While this concept was acknowledged in the design of the
first public housing developments built before World War II,
it was not apparent in those built after the War. Those
developments built in the mid-1950s, such as the infamous
Pruitt-Igoe project in St. Louis, may be described as embody-
ing principles antithetical to territoriality. Thus, terri-
toriality as a site design principle has re-emerged in the
renovation plans for the four housing developments.

The first part of this paper outlines the appearance and
disappearance of this idea in the design of public housing.
The second half focuses on the West Broadway Development, one
of the four developments currently being renovated. The
major events or factors leading to the need for renovation
are briefly noted in order to put the rehabilitation effort
in context. Then specific design and management proposals
for territoriality are presented. Finally, an evaluation of
these proposals is offered in an attempt to answer the
question: will designing for territoriality improve the 'livability' of West Broadway?
I. TERRITORIALITY: A DEFINITION AND HISTORY

What is territoriality? What historical significance have theory and practice held for public housing projects? This chapter seeks to answer these questions. In defining the term, the works of ethologists and psychologists are summarized. Theories which described how one designs for territoriality, developed by environmental behaviorists and designers, are presented. Finally, the primary physical manifestation of territoriality, the private yard, is traced in the design of public housing.

The Theorists

The concept of territoriality as defined by the environmental behaviorists owes much to the ethologists who first postulated it for animals. They define it: "A territory is an area of space, whether of water or earth or air, which an animal or group of animals defends as an exclusive preserve." Discussions of territoriality first appeared as early as the eighteenth century and by 1930, it was an accepted theory of animal behavior. Scientists have observed its occurrence among all of the vertebrates, but manifestations vary according to the species, habitat, social organization, population pressures and food supply, and environmental conditions. In animals, territoriality serves a number of functions, including regulating the food supply, protecting young, providing for security and defense and others.
The works of Konrad Lorenz and Robert Ardrey provided perhaps the most important links between ethology and environmental psychology in defining the term. While they were not the first to describe analogous behavior in people, their writings were influential. In The Territorial Imperative, Ardrey states that people and animals have a genetic trait to claim and defend territory. This behavior is motivated by the basic human needs of identity, stimulation, and security. Suppression of this behavior can have serious, negative consequences.3

Psychologists have expanded the ethologists' definition in ways that directly relate to the practice of designers. Psychologist Robert Sommer wrote, "(Territory) is an area controlled by an individual, family, or other face-to-face collectivity. The emphasis is on physical possession, actual or potential, as well as defense."4 Several years later, he added the idea of personalizing space, that is, changing it to reflect one's personality or taste. L. Pastalan further developed this idea after observing older people and wrote, "A territory is a delimited space which an individual or group uses and defends as an exclusive preserve. It involves psychological identification with the place, symbolized by attitudes of possessiveness and arrangements of objects in the area."5

Other psychologists, such as Harold Proshanksy, have discussed the importance of territoriality in maintaining social organization. They argue that the spatial structures established by territorial behavior, such as turf, promote
social order and reduce aggression. Such behavior also supports the social order by reinforcing roles, since often a role is associated with a specific place, such as a classroom.

Proshansky also contributed the idea that territoriality can promote privacy. He contends that, "Psychological privacy serves to maximize freedom of choice to permit the individual to feel free to behave in a particular manner or to increase his range of options by removing certain classes of social constraints." Crowding is not to be understood in terms of absolute numbers but instead, as the degree to which the presence of others prevents a person from doing something and thereby limits his or her freedom of choice. Privacy facilitates personal autonomy and allows the individual a sense of control. He suggests that "the inner determinant of territorial behavior is (the) desire to maintain or achieve privacy."

Psychologists Lyman and Scott are among those who have developed a taxonomy to describe territorial areas. They posit four regions:

Public territories - areas most people can use, although some may not be able to use them due to discrimination.

Home territories - areas that permit a wide range of behaviors yet incude or promote a sense of control and intimacy.

Interactional territories - areas where social groups can meet.

Body territory - the body and the area surrounding it - what Robert Sommer labels "personal space."
In summary, the ethologists noted that human beings exhibit territorial behavior that is analogous to that exhibited by certain animals. Psychologists have identified the major needs associated with this behavior as defense, identity and personalization, possession, and freedom of choice and privacy.

Although numerous studies of territoriality exist, information is limited; formal definitions have not been established; theories are general. Environmental behaviorists have supplemented theoretical studies with empirical research, observing groups of people institutionalized in hospitals, nursing homes and camps. Typically, these studies test hypotheses and describe behavior. They are not prescriptive, however, and leave a gap for practitioners who wish to acknowledge territoriality as they plan and design the physical environment.

Some designers, architectural critics and environmental behaviorists have made a bridge between theory and practice. Serge Chermayeff and Christopher Alexander are notable in this group. They contend that a hierarchy of space must be established in order to design for community and privacy, the fundamental goals of architectural design. In their work, Community and Privacy, they explain, "Hierarchical organization is an important feature of any complex form, whether natural or technical, and is, therefore, germane to the urban problems of the modern world." 9

In a manner similar to Lyman and Scott, they divide the
environment into six domains which range from the most public space to the most private:

   Urban public - those places and facilities under public ownership which are open and available to everyone. Examples are parks, civic centers, and streets.

   Urban semi-public - places owned by the public but controlled by institutions or governments, such as government offices, schools and hospitals.

   Group private - places under private or public management for specific tenants or occupants: pathways, roads, lobbies, stairways and building laundries fall into this category.

   Family private - areas within and around the home that are communal, such as the kitchen and private front or back yards.

   Individual private - the most private place is a person's own room. 10

In a case study of the Pruitt-Igoe public housing development in St. Louis, environmental behaviorist, Y. L. Yancey discovered that informal social networks were not formed among residents. Thus, residents did not exercise informal social control over noisy or disruptive teenagers and children. Instead of resolving conflicts among themselves, residents relied on project authorities or on the police. And, since the police could not always be there to intervene, residents retreated to their apartments out of fear. Yancey attributes this reaction to a lack of "semi-public space and facilities around which smaller identifiable units of residence can organize their sense of turf." 11 He exhorts designers to minimize space that belongs to no one and to maximize the informal control over space that separates one
dwelling from another.

Architect and planner, Oscar Newman conducted a study of crime in New York City public housing developments and found a positive correlation between building height and layout, and crime rate. He contends that the architectural design of a building can create defensible space, "... an environment in which latent territoriality and sense of community in the inhabitants can be translated into responsibility for ensuring a safe, productive and well-maintained living space." He argues that the need for defensible space has long been recognized and designed for. For example, in middle income high rise apartment buildings, responsibility for security is assigned to paid personnel, such as doormen and superintendents.

According to Newman, an attempt to design for territoriality must begin with the overall site plan in which the building/ground relationship is paramount. Like Chermayeff and Alexander, Newman posits that a hierarchy of space must established. The apartment or house represents the private zone; the area immediately surrounding the threshold is semi-private; and areas further away become increasingly public. Such well-defined visions of space encourage residents to behave territorially.

Zones or domains can be established by using either real barriers such as high walls or fences or symbolic barriers, such as a change in grade, a low fence, steps and so forth. In either case, these barriers provide cues to a person that
he or she is passing from a public space "where one's presence
is not questioned through a barrier to a space which is pri-
ivate and where one's presence requires justification." 13
Locating activity areas, such as playgrounds, within the
appropriate zones, and thereby relating them to specific resi-
dents reinforces the ability of tenants to control those
spaces. He further suggests that the ability of residents to
recognize each other as such, instead of as strangers, is
primarily a function of the number of people in a building.
Obviously, the lower the number sharing an entrance, the
easier it is for residents to learn who lives in their build-
ing and to adopt a proprietary attitude toward it.

Newman states three other design principles that he con-
siders essential to the creation of defensible space:

- Windows must be located to allow residents easy
  surveillance of outdoor space. Lobbies
  and other semi-public areas must be ob-
  servable by residents.

- Public housing building types should not be
  easily recognizable as such.

- Public housing developments should be sited in
  areas that are supportive and compatible
  with residential activity, not threatening
to it. 14

Combining concepts of territoriality offered by psycholo-
gists with those introduced by designers produces the follow-
ing definition: territoriality refers to behavior related to
the physical environment. The division of space into a
hierarchy of zones through the use of real or symbolic bar-
riers is a prerequisite for this behavior. Such divisions
allow or encourage proprietary and responsible attitudes of the residents or users of that space. Residents who identify with an area, either because of real or "felt" possession, will defend it from those perceived to be intruders. They may personalize the space through physical signs and displays. Because zones are established in which only certain behaviors are acceptable, territoriality encourages or allows the residents a certain degree of privacy and the freedom to choose what activities occur in that space. Underlying these different aspects of territoriality is the idea of control. People behave territorially in order to control their physical environment.

A Brief History of Territoriality in the Design of Public Housing

This section traces attitudes towards territoriality held by housing authority officials and architects as seen in the design of public housing.

As early as 1940, just three years after the Public Housing Act was passed, Catherine Bauer wrote in *A Citizen's Guide to Public Housing* of the need for a "feeling of individual and community responsibility and active participation on the part of the tenants."¹⁵ She suggested tenant-maintained halls and grounds to encourage responsibility and participation as well as to save money on janitorial services. According to Bauer, almost 90% of the public housing built in this three-year period was made up of one and two story houses with private gardens."¹⁶
Although Bauer alluded to needs associated with territoriality, that people needed private outdoor space was an assumption held and unquestioned by the Federal Housing Authority. A comparison of public housing projects around the country was published by the Federal Housing Authority in 1946. Numerous examples of private yards are cited, as are common yards meant for all the families in a specific building or complex. The attitude of the F.H.A. is best explained by a passage from the publication:

In a project of low or moderate density, in a neighborhood where at least some part of the people have a tradition of private yards, the assignment of land to tenant families for their exclusive use is the surest foundation for success of the land use policy... The arguments in favor of the provision of yards need not be pointed out; the manner of including them in the plan, their size and relation to the dwellings themselves, and the method of giving them boundaries and separation barriers, are all matters of local custom and preference. 17

This is not to imply that a concern for territoriality was the only or even the main factor to be considered in site planning. Overall appearance of the grounds, maintenance costs, and provision of recreation opportunities were all to be weighed. The study also indicated that the type of dwelling would determine who was responsible for maintenance of outdoor space. Apartments would allow for minimum tenant maintenance. Flats, which are two story buildings with units placed over each other, would allow for some maintenance by tenants, but generally it was to be handled by the project staff. Townhouses and rowhouses permitted private yards.
Although it is difficult to say whether tradition or lowered maintenance costs accounted for private yards, the existence of private space did allow for territoriality.

During World War II, public housing was built only for defense workers, by federal order. Typically row housing, it often included private yards.

After the war, public housing projects were built for the returning veterans and their families. These developments were usually three-story walkups with common entrances, and mid-rises. With the use of the three story walkup, both the private entrance and private yard disappeared. Outdoor space was to be shared. Although this building type predominated in large cities, the importance of the private yard was still recognized by the F.H.A. in 1950. A publication printed by the F.H.A. that year stated:

All types of two story flats, when assembled into rows containing more than four units, have the difficult problem of assigning land to each tenant, and while many efforts have been made by aggressive housing managers to find a happy solution, both for the tenants and themselves, the problem is not solved to the satisfaction of either, the grounds, in the end, being project maintained. As a result the tenant gets less use of the land than if he lives in a two story row house, and management carries an excessive and costly burden. 18

From approximately 1952 until the early 1960s, the layout and density of public housing changed dramatically. Projects constructed at this time were characterized by more mid-rise and high-rise elevator buildings sited in open space meant to be totally public - that is, for project tenants and
residents of the surrounding neighborhood.

Some people attribute the change in the physical form of public housing to the influence of LeCorbusier and his model city, La Ville Radieuse. According to Kenneth Frampton, LeCorbusier tried to incorporate a number of social ideals in his plan. Partly due to ideals of a classless society and a fascination with the ideas of mass production and the efficiency of the machine, LeCorbusier attempted to standardize housing. He also wanted to eliminate congestion in the center of the city and so proposed high-rise residential towers which would allow for high density and open space. Because vehicular and pedestrian traffic were to be located on separate levels, the pedestrian level could be designed as park land. Private yards were omitted and were superfluous anyway, given the large amounts of open space. Thus, LeCorbusier designed the form of the city of the future to embody what he believed to be the essential architectural elements: sky, space and verdure.¹⁹

Ignored in this concept was a recognition of the need for territoriality. As one critic commented, "The 'ville radieuse' gives light and air, to be sure, but forgets that man craves protection, enclosure, intimacy, and informal proximity with his neighbors."²⁰

LeCorbusier's influence can definitely be seen in the layout of a number of public housing projects built in the mid 1950s. Such projects illustrate a discernible shift in attitude away from the concept of territoriality. The grounds
were apparently designed to highlight the buildings, but not relate specifically to any particular building. One finds no or little hierarchy of space; the grounds were treated as public property. Buildings often did not have a distinguishable 'front' and 'back' nor did they necessarily face onto streets. Although the streets were often closed to traffic in order to create superblocks, the pedestrian path continued through the site to allow public access. The overall concept embodied the idea of the site as communal park space and the building type virtually necessitated it. With typical densities of fifty dwelling units per acre, private outdoor space for tenants was simply not feasible, nor does it seem that a need for this space was recognized by architects and planners.

During the early 1950s, the question of whether to build low-rise or high-rise was debated among housers, architects and planners. The debate centered on the high cost of urban land---not the livability of high-rises for families since it was generally agreed that low-rises were preferable. Catherine Bauer, an advocate of low-rise buildings, argued that high-rise development increased overall maintenance costs (since tenants would not maintain their own yards), added another layer of management, and hence, decreased tenants' autonomy. Other proponents of the low-rise discussed the benefits of the private yard for child rearing and adult "role-playing." Dorothy Schoell Montgomery, in a speech before a N.A.H.O. Regional Conference in 1952, cited the following reasons as evidence of the need for private yards:
- A private yard allows a child to come and go with limited supervision, which helps a child to develop independence from parents;

- The apartment which lacks a yard does not give "father" any role at home except as breadwinner. In single family homes, on the other hand, fathers often have maintenance, yard work or gardening responsibilities. 23

While the concept of territoriality was not explicitly discussed, people still seemed to agree that the private yard, a physical manifestation of it, was important.

Whichever reasons explain it, the fact remains that the overall appearance of public housing changed significantly in the 1950s and in the process, physical forms of territoriality disappeared. By the late 1950s, architects, planners, sociologists, housers and others severely criticized high-rise developments. A spokesperson for the East Harlem Project group which advocated major physical change of public housing, typified this criticism when he stated,

Present-day public housing practice disregards the social structure of city neighborhoods. The projects are designed for a kind of sophisticated family individualism, which is beyond the range of social opportunities and the financial resources of their tenants, and which is the opposite of the highly communal and cooperative society that exists among families in the old slums. Moreover, the projects exclude the constant, informal social control needed by every society ... they fail to observe the vital difference between privacy and isolation; they sacrifice the constant human contacts which provided not only the controls but also the avenues to opportunity in the old slum. Only the most artificial institutional, and impersonal substitutes have been supplied instead. 24

Although housing authorities were slow to respond to
criticism, generally, projects in the early 1960s were smaller both in number of units and in acreage. Rowhouses and private outdoor space were reintroduced. In 1968, the Federal Housing Act declared that future residential urban renewal projects would have to include subsidized housing and that family high-rise buildings would be prohibited. In 1976, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development funded a study of security planning which was an application and further expansion of Oscar Newman's ideas as well as others. Developed by William Brill Associates, this manual describes the need to design for territoriality and even recommends specific shrubs that allow for surveillance. The acceptance of designing for territoriality is such today that this concept is a site design principle for the site renovations of four public housing developments in Boston and Cambridge.
Footnotes


8. Edney, p. 197.


10. Chermayeff, p. 121.


21. Planner Matthew Thall rejects the high-cost-of-urban land argument. He contends that high-rise buildings were built because the original social reform ideal of "upward mobility through public housing" was replaced by a concern on the part of the Federal Housing Authority with efficiency. For elaboration of this argument see: Matthew Thall. Design Visions and New Missions: The Origins of High-Rise Public Housing in the U.S. Master of City Planning, Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1975.


25. Thall, p. 110.

II. THE TRANSLATION OF TERRITORIALITY INTO PHYSICAL FORM: THE WEST BROADWAY DEVELOPMENT

The West Broadway public housing development in South Boston is one of four developments presently being rehabilitated to make it livable again. Although renewal plans for all four developments have incorporated ideas of territoriality, West Broadway was chosen for analysis because of the thorough documentation of its design process.

This chapter serves three purposes. First, it attempts to summarize the major events that have, over time, lead to the present day need and decision to spend large amounts of limited federal money on the renovation of the four projects. Then, in reference to West Broadway specifically, the design goals and principles of site renovation are presented. The physical and managerial changes that are proposed to carry out these goals and principles follow.

An Outline of Major Events in Boston Public Housing

All four developments were built between 1948 and 1952 to house the returning veterans and their families after World War II. It is commonly held that public housing worked for these people, at this time. In other words, public housing provided a clean, decent living environment for a low enough rent that allowed tenants to save the down payment on a private house. The housers' original ideal of upward mobility via public housing was realized by these tenants.

Those who eventually replaced the veterans were generally from a lower economic class. These tenants were often
poorer, and were often members of minority groups. In the mid 1950s, many came from the rural south and had difficulty adjusting to urban life, especially in high-rise projects. Others entered public housing as a result of being displaced by urban renewal construction or highway building. Matthew Thall contends that the majority of people so displaced did not accept the assistance of they reloction efforts but found private housing on their own. Those who chose public housing had the fewest personal and financial resources. For these people public housing represented housing of 'last resort.'

In the late 1950s, the effects of the Federal Housing Authority policy that tied operating funds to the amount of rent collected began to surface. Inflation and gradually diminishing rents (from poorer tenants, more and more of whom received general relief) meant that the funds available for routine maintenance and repair decreased substantially. As housing authorities were less able to maintain the buildings and provide basic services, those tenants who had other housing options left, leaving those who had no alternative.

Management by the Boston Housing Authority (B.H.A.) changed during this period as Lewis H. Spence, court-appointed administrator of the B.H.A., explains:

Public housing developments were for a period of years maintained by a system of benevolent or malevolent despotism. The authority of the housing manager was absolute. If it was wisely and beneficially used in support of the needs of the community, it was a blessing. If it was malevolently abused, it was a cruel tyranny. In either event, it bore all of the
hallmarks of unlimited authority and it was subject to constant individual, class, and, most of all, racial abuse. 4

Impetus provided by the Civil Rights Movement and encouragement from community organizers lead tenants to demand basic services from public housing management. They organized rent strikes and demanded a voice in management. In the face of this opposition, the B.H.A. retreated: it abdicated its responsibilities and essentially failed to manage its property. Evictions occurred less frequently and admission became much less difficult. Adding to the pervasive sense of lawlessness which characterized many developments, was the violence that accompanied court-ordered busing and attempts at integration within certain projects. Public housing in Boston was a system out of control in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Finally, tenants from the Mission Hill development in Boston brought suit against the B.H.A. for failure to provide decent living conditions. The eventual outcome was that the B.H.A. went into receivership in 1977. Lewis H. Spence, the court-appointed administrator, was given a mandate to restructure the B.H.A. and to resume its management responsibilities to public housing tenants. Today, the B.H.A. is still managed under this arrangement.

In three of the four developments being renovated, state modernization funds were applied for and awarded in the late 1970s for window repairs and bathroom and kitchen renovations. These awards were not sufficient to make all of the necessary repairs, and consequently H.U.D. Section 8 Substantial
Rehabilitation funds were requested. It is this money which is funding the renewal effort.

What is significant about these renovations is that they indicate a definite shift in attitude by the B.H.A. and the Cambridge Housing Authority (C.H.A.). Behind the goal of improving the livability of these developments is the idea that it is now acceptable for public housing tenants to be comfortable and to have more than the minimum of light, air, space, etc. Hence, apartments are being enlarged either by physical means or by reclassifying them for fewer tenants.

Another change in attitude concerns a recognition on the part of the B.H.A. and the C.H.A. of the importance of tenant involvement. In three of the four projects, tenants' organizations assisted in applying for modernization or Section 8 funds, in setting program goals and in reviewing specific design proposals.

In conclusion, these renovations are the result of a long series of events. One wonders why these renovations are happening now. One explanation is that while all four projects have buildings which are delapidated and in need of repair, they are structurally sound. And the need to bring these buildings up to code and to make vacant units available is becoming increasingly important in a very tight rental market in the Boston metropolitan area. However, what may be the real reason is less often heard. As Lewis Spence stated, "Distressed public housing developments in Boston today are neither owned nor governed in any real sense by either the
B.H.A. or any other legitimate governmental arm." The popularity of the idea of designing for territoriality is, in part, a reaction to this disorder.

Overview of the West Broadway Development

The West Broadway development, constructed in 1949 for veterans and their families, with 972 units is the largest state-assisted project in Massachusetts. Located in South Boston, the current population of about 2,000 people is, as one would expect in this area, predominantly white and of Irish descent. Approximately 45% of the households are made up of one and two people which is unusually high for a family development. Its tenant organization, the West Broadway Task Force (W.B.T.F.), is the oldest in the city.

As late as 1969, the number of vacant units was negligible. Today, due to a number of problems including inadequate B.H.A. maintenance, drug traffic, arson, vandalism and racial strife, the vacancy rate is about 27%. This vacancy rate means that 156 units have been boarded up or "mothballed" and an additional 94 are vacant but have not been physically sealed.

West Broadway has been the recipient of state modernization funds in the past. In 1980, after studies of the physical plant indicated a need for more than modernization, the State awarded West Broadway $20 million for comprehensive renewal. A joint venture of two architectural firms, Lane/Frenchman Inc. and Goody, Clancy & Associates, was chosen
through a proposal process to develop the master plan for renewal. The architectural team, known as the West Broadway Team (W.B.T.), met numerous times with the W.B.T.F. and the B.H.A. to develop a problem statement, design principles, program options and the final program, all of which have been well documented and published. A master plan was submitted to the W.B.T.F., the B.H.A., and the State Executive Office of Communities and Development and approved in October, 1981. Four major decisions provided the basis for the master plan: the decision to renovate for current residents using selective demolition; to improve the sites of demolished buildings; to bring all currently occupied units to contemporary 'livability' standards; and to concentrate money in areas instead of spreading it out across the site.

Context

West Broadway is located in the lower end of South Boston on a 27 acre site. Although it is commonly believed that public housing has a negative impact on the surrounding neighborhood, in this case the opposite is claimed to be true. Industry, which has expanded in recent years, surrounds the project on three sides. Major truck routes and an abandoned railroad right-of-way to the north reinforce the industrial edge. A district of marginal commercial activities along West Broadway Street south of the project has been designated a Commercial Area Revitalization District which may help to stabilize those businesses. Housing south of the project is badly deteriorated and is interspersed with vacant
lots and abandoned buildings. A number of community facil-
ties which serve West Broadway tenants are located in the
area: a church, a girl's high school, a police and fire
station, and a playfield. The Condon Community School occu-
pies one block of the eight block site and has provided com-
munity programs in the past. Two subway stops and two fre-
quent bus routes makes public transit convenient.

Original Site Design

The design of West Broadway, as shown in the following
plan, was typical of other three story public housing devel-
opments in Boston. There was no attempt to assign private
outdoor space to tenants. Rather, tenants were to share
virtually all exterior space: building entrances, drying
yards, play areas, parking lots and recreation space.

Site Layout

West Broadway is laid out on a gridded superblock pat-
tern. Three streets which originally ran from north to south
through the site were closed off and made into interior loops
which serve the two parking lots. The parking lots are rare-
ly used as such by tenants because their distance from most
units makes it difficult for tenants to see their cars from
the units. Superblocks are typically introduced in a design
for two reasons: to prevent or to slow down through-traffic
to make the site safe for children's play, and to allow the
interior of the site to be used for recreation. At one time
the street layout may have discouraged through-traffic. It
no longer does, however, and people literally drive over the
entire site. And, since the revised streets were only blocked off, it appears that little recreation area was gained, except along Joyce Hayes Way.

Although the street pattern and naming system were changed, the buildings conform to the grid because of the location of underground utilities. As seen in the site plan from 1949, each block contains two pairs of identical buildings which, over time, have become a social and administrative unit known as a 'village.' A plan of a typical village shows that an interior courtyard is formed by each pair of "L" shaped buildings. Both physically and visually accessible from the street, the courtyard is not private. Each courtyard is divided into paved drying yards, small sitting areas and a playing area in the middle. Today, the pavement in the courtyards is in poor condition due to heavy use, a lack of upkeep, and the fact that until recently, people parked there. Drying poles and benches are also in disrepair.

All buildings have three entrances which are used by twelve families each. Located in the front and back, these paired entries allow for shortcutting and 'hanging out' by teenagers, thus making maintenance and security difficult for tenants. Each building entrance is designated by a paved court and seating area. Originally brick, these entry courts have been paved over with asphalt, as has much of the site.

Along Joyce Hayes Way (a continuation of "C" Street which bisects the site from east to west), are the two parking lots, two recreation areas, a multi-service center and
the management office. The remainder of the site was originally fenced lawn, but is largely asphalt now.

Evidence of tenant maintenance and a number of tenant-painted wall murals at building entrances indicate that a number of West Broadway residents identify with and care for their development.

Design Goals, Principles and Objectives Relating to Territoriality

While the idea of designing to encourage territorial behavior was not explicitly stated in reports produced by the W.B.T., references to it are made. In describing the existing site conditions, the W.B.T. maintained, "The vast extent of the project has proven to be unmanageable. Un-supervised open spaces have invited crime and vandalism..."?

Problems related specifically to villages were characterized as:

Lack of claim by residents - who now have a difficult time establishing and defending turf, even within their own courtyard. Under current conditions, there is no opportunity for residents to take responsibility for improving, maintaining, or securing the spaces which surround their building. The addition of walls and fences to create private spaces associated with addresses would help to alleviate this problem.

Lack of amenities - which define appropriate types of behavior and where certain activities should occur... 8

The West Broadway Team (W.B.T.) developed a set of program goals to guide the planning and design process. One of the eight goals concerning image dealt with the concept of
territoriality: "The end product of renewal should change -- in whatever ways are feasible with the available budget -- the existing stereotype and repetitive image of public housing."\(^9\) Presumably the image change was not to be an end in itself, but a way to encourage tenants to identify more with their village, as well as make the project less identifiable as public housing to outsiders.

A set of principles and objectives concerning territoriality was formulated to guide the specific design proposals. Many objectives may serve two or more principles but are listed under the primary one they serve.\(^10\)

**Principle:** Assign a use and a user for every square foot.

**Objectives:** Outdoor spaces should be designed to serve the needs of the village.

Each address should have access to at least two outside areas, one in front and one in back.

In common stairways, it is desirable to have at least one apartment entry per floor for maintenance, responsibility, and supervision of the hallway.

If new buildings are constructed for site-wide purposes, they should be located along the central spine and sited to reduce the scale of this space and to make use of existing unclaimed spaces.

**Principle:** Develop a hierarchy of spaces for privacy and security at the level of the apartment, address, building, courtyard and village.

**Objectives:** Private entrances, to the extent possible, should have private yards, or terraces, or stoops associated with that entry.
Every address should have a clearly defined front and back door. The front should be accessible to the public; the back and associated areas should be restricted to or defined for use of building occupants.

Spaces which are used by the general public should not directly abut apartment windows and doors. Private yards or buffer spaces should be provided if and where possible.

Public pedestrian traffic through buildings by those who do not live there should be eliminated.

Casual pedestrian traffic through rear courtyards should be eliminated.

Principle: Locate public space so it is observable from private and semi-private areas.

Objectives: Parking for each address should be close to front doors, where possible, to allow tenants to survey their own cars from their units.

Common entries should be limited to as few users as possible, with front doors clearly visible from public ways.

All public ways within villages should be observable from apartments and adjacent semi-private spaces.

Principle: Change the existing stereotype and repetitive image of public housing.

Objectives: Private entries should have addresses and principal entries from the existing street address system.

Where possible, demolition should be used to alter the form and character of repetitive structures.

Variations between villages should be emphasized by architectural or site design characteristics.
Design Proposals

The design proposals, which were derived from the principles and objectives, were approved by the West Broadway Task Force (W.B.T.F.), the B.H.A. and the State Executive Office of Communities and Development. They are presented below according to the principle they address.

Assign a Use and a User - The majority of the site has been divided into areas which have a specific use (or uses) and specific users associated with them. As shown in the recommended plan for one of the courtyards, very little space exists that is not clearly related to a building and those tenants by means of an entrance or doorway. In the original site plan, the area along the front of buildings belonged to no one, except for the common entry plazas. In the revised plan, this space has been turned into private space for specific apartments. What was once leftover space between pairs of buildings is typically proposed as parking lots. There will still be lawn areas, although fewer and smaller than in the original plan, meant only for viewing which belong to no one.

Develop a Hierarchy of Spaces - A very clear hierarchy of space has been defined through the use of fencing, plantings, walls and seatwalls, and changes in grade and paving. In general, the building represents the most private space, and as one moves away from it, space becomes more public.
RECOMMENDED SITE PLAN
Approximately 35% of the apartments will have private entrances defined by a separate walkway which leads to a small, raised landing protected by a canopy. A front lawn which serves as a buffer between the unit and the sidewalk is typically provided. A limited number of family units will have private rear yards made private by walls or iron fencing.

A shared entry which serves an address -- from five to twelve units -- represents the next zone or level of privacy which is semi-private space, and will be designated by its location on the outside corners of buildings. A raised brick plaza bordered by shrubbery or a seatwall marks this kind of entrance. In the courtyard, a patio will serve all of the residents at one address and may be separated from adjacent semi-private patios by plantings or seatwalls. Thus, if a resident lives in an apartment served by a shared entry, he or she will also use a shared patio. No space has been designed exclusively for use by building residents (residents from six or more addresses).

Space in the middle of the courtyard, designated semi-private but more public than a shared patio, is to be used by all residents of the two buildings that form the courtyard. Since the courtyard is fenced off, car access has been eliminated and pedestrian access is limited. This common area will be at a slightly lower elevation than the shared patios and private yards. If desired by the village panel, it will contain shade trees, grass, tot lots, community gardens or drying yards.
Space has been designed for use by all of the residents within a village. Meant to serve as an outdoor extension of the village center building, this area is an entry plaza on the street side and an enclosed patio on the courtyard side. A paved game area located between the pairs of buildings within a village will supplement recreation space for all of the six to eleven year olds in the village.

Common open space to be used by all residents of West Broadway is limited to a landscaped sidewalk along Joyce Hayes Way. Community facilities sited along this re-opened street will reinforce the public nature of the street.

Public Space Should Be Observable - The South Boston street grid will be reestablished, opening up the dead-end streets to through-traffic and thereby allowing most units to front onto a public street. Parking has been located in small lots within each village between courtyards and along the new streets. Thus, more residents will be able to see their cards from their apartments. These changes, seen on the recommended site plan, will also help reduce the 'project' look of West Broadway.

As previously mentioned, the only truly public space occurs along the re-designed Joyce Hayes Way which will be visible from apartment windows.11

Change the Existing Image of West Broadway - The overall image of West Broadway will change due to the demolition
of a number of addresses (or portions of buildings), and the third floors of selected buildings. Pitched roofs added to some buildings will add variety as will painting the facades of selected buildings. Introducing individual doorways and walks will reduce the institutional appearance. Also, the village courtyards and village center 'greens' will differ as will the shared entry plazas due to different plantings.

Management Proposals Relating to Territoriality

In its original proposal to the B.H.A., the West Broadway Team argued that resident involvement in the design process "... should encourage a sense of territoriality and ownership toward the village environment which might result in less vandalism and destructive behavior." Resident involvement in site maintenance was also suggested in the proposal and in the master plan. A training effort and tool lending program were suggestions for encouraging participation. As of this writing, however, specific management policies relating to tenants' use of private space have not been determined.

Michael Jacobs, redevelopment director at the B.H.A. for West Broadway, stated that a major emphasis of the redevelopment is the establishment of new standards of behavior for both tenants and the B.H.A. management. Rules specific to West Broadway may be added to the revised B.H.A. lease which would spell out tenant responsibilities. The new lease will be negotiated by the West Broadway Task Force, the management
at West Broadway and Mr. Jacobs. Enforcement of such standards may be difficult, Mr. Jacobs predicted. Thus far, the B.H.A. has not evicted anyone for failing to maintain an apartment at a certain level and Mr. Jacobs does not expect this to change. If someone does not maintain his or her 'property', for example by not mowing the lawn, the B.H.A. might perform the task and then charge the tenant. He reiterated the possibility of an equipment lending program. Such a program would depend on available funding and approval by the B.H.A. union.¹³
Footnotes

1. The other public housing developments are: Franklin Field in Dorchester; Commonwealth in the Allston-Brighton area of Boston; and Jefferson Park in Cambridge.


5. Spence, p. 486.

6. Background information on the West Broadway Development is from:

West Broadway Team, Phase 1 and 2 Report - West Broadway Comprehensive Renewal Program. May 29, 1981, and;


8. West Broadway Team, Master Plan, p. 2-12.

9. West Broadway Team, Master Plan, p. 3-1.

10. West Broadway Team, Master Plan, p. 3-2 - 3-4.

11. Although Oscar Newman discusses surveillance in terms of the location of apartment and lobby windows, since this renovation does not include major window changes, it is not discussed here.


13. Discussion with Michael Jacobs.
III. EVALUATION

Given that territorial behavior has been acknowledged in the proposals for West Broadway, the question arises: will it improve the livability of West Broadway? Will physical design changes and revised management policy encourage territorial behavior on the part of tenants? Ideally, a preconstruction baseline study would have been conducted to determine tenants' patterns of behavior and attitudes regarding their housing. Then, the results of a post-occupancy study could be compared to the first to note changes in behavior and attitude. One can still evaluate the design proposals although it must necessarily be speculative in nature.

Proposals can be examined in light of whether or not they support territorial behavior, that is, whether they encourage, promote or allow for: security; identity and personalization; possession (responsibility and maintenance); freedom of choice and privacy. Because specific management policies have not yet been established but are implied in every design proposal, the implications are noted.

Assumptions

The following assumptions are implicit in the design proposals:

- Territorial behavior is desirable. There is little discussion of instances in which claiming turf might be considered antisocial or harmful for the community at large as in the case of warring teenage gangs. There is an attempt in the master plan to separate groups who claim turf - namely, the elderly
and teenagers - and who might therefore be in conflict.

- Private exterior space is desirable.

- All large families want private yards and are willing to take care of them. It is more important for large families to have yards than for any other group.

Evaluation

Security - Will the hierarchy of spaces represented by public sidewalks, buffer strips of lawn, private yards and the rest encourage tenants to behave defensively toward their environment? Except in the case of doors and lockable gates, these divisions are made by symbolic barriers: changes in grade, low hedges, fencing, and shrubs. Newman argues that success of these barriers depends on three conditions:

- the visitor's ability to read these symbols;
- the residents' ability to challenge visitors; and,
- the capacity of the space to require that the visitor make known his or her intentions which means that the use of the space must be obvious.1

The visitor's ability to perceive these clues does not pose a problem since the means for establishing a hierarchy of space at West Broadway are commonly used in the city and suburbia to denote public and private property. A problem does arise in visitors who are fully aware of such clues, but who choose not to recognize them. Burglars are one example. Symbolic barriers will not, after a point, restrict their behavior. These barriers are not meant to be used alone,
but as a supplement to formal means of control, such as tenants patrols and the police.

The residents' ability to take the risk of challenging strangers within the development is more difficult to predict. The literal division of space by fencing and walls will help since it will presumably be easier to ask someone, "What are you doing in my yard?" than "What are you doing on this development property?" - which everyone recognizes as public property. The extent to which a resident feels that such questioning is acceptable and supported by neighbors, and the extent to which he or she is accustomed to defending personal rights will determine whether this, in fact, happens. Also, the number of people who share an entrance may affect a resident's willingness to question a visitor. If a resident recognizes most of his or her neighbors, it may be easier to quiz someone not known than if the reverse is true. Common entrances which serve twelve units will still be used by about one fifth of the families so it may be more difficult for those residents to 'know' their neighbors. Finally, physical characteristics and age may influence behavior, too. A frail, elderly man or woman may be much less likely to engage in a debate with a robust teenager than perhaps would a middle-aged person.

Newman asserts that the use of a particular space must be obvious to people. Benches and play equipment provide clues in certain spaces but the intended activities of others are not obvious. It may not be that a use must be apparent but
rather that tenants know what is and what is not acceptable behavior in a given area.

Once boarded up buildings and apartments are renovated and inhabited again, there will be few hangouts for people engaged in criminal activity. In the master plan, there is virtually no place that is not either surrounded by apartments or by a building that hosts day and evening activities, such as the Condon Community School. Presumably, West Broadway will be less hospitable to outside criminals, making tenants' defensible behavior possibly easier.

Management policy could help reinforce defensible behavior. As Jim Stockard commented in a recent public housing conference in Boston, the B.H.A. can not make too much information available to tenants. If tenants know the rationale behind the site designs and of the behavior expected on their part, they may be more willing to act defensively.

Identity and Personalization - Will the physical changes slated for West Broadway encourage or promote tenant's sense of identification with the development? Discussed earlier was the design goal to make West Broadway look less like public housing. The introduction of individual front doors and private yards, which many people associate with private, single family homes, may make the project less distinct from its residential surroundings along D Street. To the extent that the new West Broadway looks less like the old West Broadway, tenants may relate more strongly with it.

A component of identification with a place has to do
with a person's ability to alter the physical environment to reflect his or her personality or taste. In fact, residents have shown identification with West Broadway by painting murals at the entrances to buildings.

Clare Cooper Marcus theorizes that after the primary need for shelter is met, housing represents security from physical threat and social and economic pressures of the outside world. Low income people, who typically have unstable incomes and uncertain economic futures, regard housing as a haven. As income increases, or becomes more predictable, housing needs change from fulfilling needs for security to comfort, convenience, socialization, self expression, and finally, aesthetics. If and when residents feel less threatened by their immediate environment, they may be more inclined to personalize their homes. Of course, the design proposals will not change residents' economic situations, but evidently some are stable enough already that they can invest energy this way.

Management policy can help or hinder personalization. From discussion with Michael Jacobs, it seems that tenants will have substantial freedom in how they use and change their private yards. The more freedom tenants have, and the less overt is B.H.A. management, the more those tenants may be able to identify with West Broadway.

Tenant involvement in the design process and in the development of a maintenance policy may also strengthen tenants' commitment to West Broadway.
Problems may arise in this area, because even with the new site plan, there are still few chances for people to express their individuality in the development. Undoubtedly, given the limited number of yards, there will be some tenants who want them but do not have them and some who do not want them but have them. Those who would use a yard to show off gardening skills may become very resentful of those with private space who do not use it, and "don't appreciate it." These conflicts might be alleviated by allowing those without outdoor space to care for some other space within the development, such as the entrance plazas.

Possession (Responsibility and Maintenance) - Will individual entries or shared courtyards meant for specific people encourage them to feel possessive of something they do not own? Possession in and of itself is not the issue here, but rather the often consequent desire to maintain that which one is possessive towards. In this country, homeowners are distinguished from renters by an assumed attitude towards maintenance of property. Since a renter does not earn equity, it is presumed that he or she will not spend money or time to improve or maintain an apartment. If this is true, why should public housing tenants, who typically have less disposable income than most in the first place, be expected to spend it on non-essentials such as garden tools, fertilizer, and the like? Although in theory West Broadway residents should not take care of development property, some do. They may do so because they see West Broadway as their permanent
home and hence are more willing to invest time, money and labor. Presumably, positive evidence of B.H.A.'s willingness to better maintain its property will motivate those tenants to continue doing so and others to start.

The West Broadway Task Force has been involved with the renewal effort for more than four years. Tenants who have participated in this process have a large stake in the renewal and will probably want to see the development maintained once it is renovated.

Nevertheless, there are bound to be some tenants who have neither the time, money nor desire to mow grass and pull weeds. They should be given a choice of whether or not they have a yard. If they want one but can not maintain it to the agreed upon standard, some arrangement might be made for B.H.A. maintenance. The maintenance policy which is yet to be drafted must clearly describe the standard of maintenance expected of tenants and the B.H.A. and sanctions for breaches of the standard.

Freedom of Choice and Privacy - Psychologists assert that a person's freedom of choice is dependent upon the amount of privacy that he or she enjoys. In order to achieve privacy, a person must be able to control what goes on in his or her immediate environment. Individual entrances and private yards will increase a number of residents' privacy. For example, a mother with small children will probably have more mobility and freedom if her children are able to play in a fenced yard which she can see from
inside her apartment than if she must stay outside with them in a public playground. In the common entrances where the number of families using them have decreased (80% of the units), those tenants will gain privacy by virtue of the fact that with fewer people, forced social encounters with neighbors will be fewer.

Conclusions

The physical changes proposed for West Broadway are surely the easier ones to bring about. Although construction has been delayed, it will begin: private entrances will be added, shrubs will be planted, fencing will be installed. And, as noted earlier, tenants have already begun to act territorially by personalizing common entrances with murals. The physical symbols of territoriality can definitely help people assert a claim over turf, but they, alone, are not sufficient.

Management policies must support and reinforce tenants' efforts to control their yards, hallways and courtyards or the physical changes will be ineffective. If the management policy does not allow tenants to exercise more control over their homes, then the physical attempts to create zones and the like are futile. Management policies will play a major role in fostering or thwarting territorial attitudes.

In the final analysis, the tenants represent the most important variable. If they do not want to take on more responsibility, clear domains and well-articulated policies
will not matter. Their participation in what was a very long design process, and the continued existence of the West Broadway Task Force provides evidence that, in fact, they are willing to do so.
Footnotes


SUMMARY

The four housing developments which provided the focus for this paper have received much publicity and have been the subject of a day-long conference. They will continue to be in the spotlight as housers, planners and others interested in public housing watch for the results of comprehensive renewal. Among other questions, these people want to know to what extent efforts to encourage territoriality have been successful. If other local housing authorities receive similar funding for major renovation, should they adopt goals comparable to those of West Broadway?

What is important to recognize is the limit of designing for territoriality. Employment opportunities, the quality of public education, the availability of mass transportation and so forth are all major factors in the lives of public housing tenants which are not addressed or even hinted at by this concept. The goal of designing for territoriality is in a way, more immediate: to enable people to control their own physical environment. One architect who worked on renewal plans for one of the developments clarified the importance of this idea stating, "It's necessary, but not sufficient."¹

Designing for territoriality should not be asen as a kind of site planning panacea. In fact, it has limited applicability to sites with a majority of high rise buildings. And, as pointed out previously, physical moves on the ground may be useless if not accompanied by agreement on the part of tenants and management that the idea is important.
To the extent that territoriality encourages, promotes, or allows for people to take greater control over their surroundings and over their lives, it is profoundly important. As William Ryan commented on the solution to the problem of public housing, "The major change required is to provide the opportunity to act like a human being -- that is, to take part and to influence the events and decisions that affects one's home ..."²
Footnotes

1. Discussion with architect David Battat of Tise/Wilhelm & Associates, Boston, Massachusetts.

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West Broadway Team. Master Plan - West Broadway Comprehensive Renewal Program. Prepared for the Boston Housing Authority in cooperation with the Massachusetts Department of Community Affairs and the West Broadway Task Force, October 30, 1981.


