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Yonkers seeks ideas on how to improve Cottage Place Gardens

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YONKERS - Public housing officials can expect an earful on Saturday when they attend a neighborhood forum on the future of Cottage Place Gardens. **If you go**

"Security is number one," said Bettye Hayford, president of the tenants association at Cottage Place Gardens. "I'm not going to lie to you. We have drugs in here so bad."

What: community meeting, held by the Yonkers Public Housing Authority, on the future of Cottage Place Gardens **When:** 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday **Where:** community room at Building 8 **Information:** call Groundwork Yonkers at 914-375-2151

Besides seeking residents' suggestions for how to expel criminals from their midst, the Municipal Housing Authority wants ideas on improving the appearance and quality of life in Cottage Place Gardens.

"I'm hoping we'll come out of it with a vision for what should be in the development that isn't there now," said Joseph Shuldiner, executive director of the city's Public Housing Authority.

Hayford said the complex needed a makeover. Opened in 1942, the 256-unit low-rise lies between North Broadway and Warburton Avenue.

Groundwork Yonkers, a nonprofit that has worked on beautification projects at Cottage Place Gardens, will run the Saturday forum. The group's work at the development includes planting trees, painting two murals and installing a rain garden, mosaics and new playground equipment.

Rick Magder, Groundwork Yonkers' executive director, said his staff had noticed a recent decline in security at Cottage Place Gardens.

"There is a certain level of intimidation there that we didn't feel before," said Magder, who wants residents' ideas about the basketball courts in the complex's center.

Hayford said the courts have become a marketplace for drug dealers.

The forum at Cottage Place Gardens is part of a series of meetings that housing officials have had with residents of the Schlobohm and Calcagno complexes. These public-housing complexes are the housing authority's biggest residences and suffer from an aging infrastructure and crime.

Shuldiner said the housing authority would bring suggested changes as quickly as possible.

"If everything they want costs \$10,000, they might see it in a week," Shuldiner said. "People might want some significant changes that cost significant bucks, so we might only be able to do it a bit at a time."
