

Allowing people to live where they work

Work-force housing affordable oasis in pricey cities

By **ROBERT GAVIN**
Staff writer

The words Saratoga Springs and affordable housing likely don't surface too often as summer tourists sip wine after a day at the racetrack. But at the city's hotels and restau-

rants, it's perhaps no small concern to workers pouring those drinks.

Finding a home isn't easy in a city where real estate prices continue to move higher — despite a buyers' market across the country.

And that's why Saratoga Springs is one of many cities offering

so-called work-force housing, residences for employees earning too much for low-income housing but not wealthy enough for the higher costs of their company town.

"The same people that are being forced out of the city are the same people we need to serve your coffee or make your bed ... they can't afford to live here," said Edward Spychalski, executive director of the Saratoga Springs Housing Authority. "You should be able to live in the town that you work."

Last month, Spychalski heralded the city's Allen Drive purchase: 28 affordable and energy-efficient homes acquired on the West Side. Some residents get Section 8 federal assistance for units there; others pay \$700 for a two-bedroom apartment, which Spychalski said is hundreds less than some rents in town. To be eligible, tenants cannot earn above certain income levels.

The need for the housing arose as prices surged for rentals during track season and when Skidmore College is in session. Spychalski said relocating to a nearby town isn't a great solution for lower-wage employees, since it only increases their gasoline bill.

"Four dollars a gallon, when you're making minimum wage, doesn't go very far," he said.

Some 70 miles south, the city of Hudson, a growing mecca for tourists, is thinking similarly. It now features Crosswinds at Hudson, a 70-unit complex designed to provide affordable housing in the heart of Columbia County.

Mayor Richard Scalera said Hudson's once readily available housing had been increasingly purchased by New York City investors. Properties were either leased out and left vacant, or rented at exorbitant rates, he said,

which "squeezed out" prospective local residents.

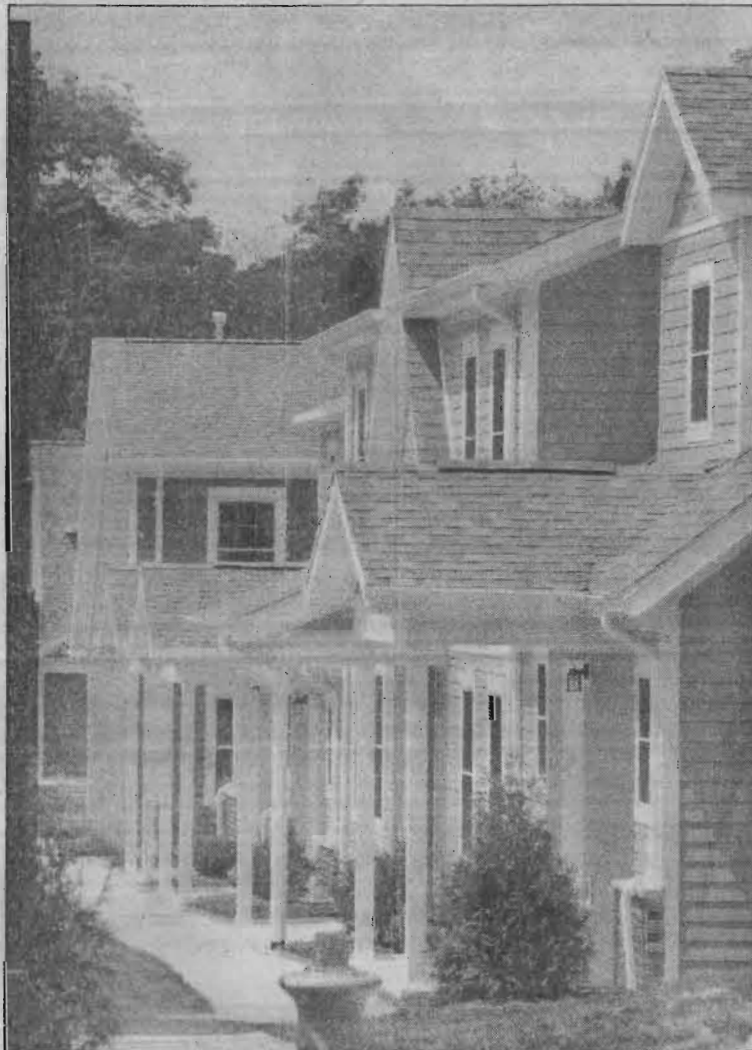
"The individuals who are making between \$10 and \$14 an hour were having a difficult time finding affordable units," Scalera said.

At Crosswinds, located on the residential Harry Howard Avenue, rents range from \$550 for one bedroom to \$750 for three bedrooms, fully furnished, he said.

"Once more and more people

come down and see what was developed here, I think you're going to see more of the same developed across the state," Scalera said.

State officials say more money Please see **AFFORDABLE CQ24** ▶



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A ROW of houses at Crosswinds, an apartment complex in Hudson.

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