

COMMENTARY

AVALONBAY'S HUNTINGTON STATION PLAN WAS EXACTLY WHAT WE NEEDED

The release of 2010 census data points to problems affecting Long Island's future. If the Island is to continue its modest economic growth, communities and governments must work toward bringing skilled workers to our towns and helping them find a stake on Long Island.

Patchogue officials recently approved a master plan for the village's downtown hub aimed at attracting young families to apartment rentals located near public transportation. A similar plan offered for Huntington Station never got off the ground. AvalonBay at Huntington Station was shelved amid debates that generated heat and little else at times. It is now slated for a second review. One false argument against this development should be rejected. The claim was affordable housing mixes built into the plan would lead to increased crime in the area. Opinions like that shouldn't be left unchallenged.

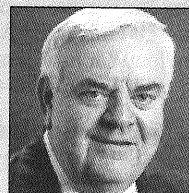
I learned early on in my years as Suffolk County police commissioner that analyzing factors such as the when, where and how of crimes goes a long way toward effective policing. I also realized there was another essential component: assessing the community where criminal and police activity interact. A community built around a population that

reflects a region's positive economic trends is always a better locale for efficient policing because it offers a good base for low crime rates.

Police commanders are obliged to look at the total environment surrounding their areas of responsibility. Experience leaves them well aware of the link between low crime and neighborhoods planned to attract people with good job prospects who meet changing demands for education and specific technological training in our new service-oriented economy.

It may come as a surprise that police officials would be concerned about who can afford to live in the districts they patrol. The evidence is clear, however, that some of our largest urban police departments succeeded in reducing crime by interacting with communities that welcomed and held onto technically skilled professionals. We need to reach out to talented young men and women. Government has to pay attention to two of their prime needs – work-force housing and easy access to urban magnet centers such as New York City via efficient public transportation.

William Bratton headed two of the largest police departments in the nation – New York's and Los Angeles'. He is recog-



**John C.
GALLAGHER**

nized as a superb strategist in controlling crime. In his book "Turnaround," Bratton traces his successive careers as a police supervisor and describes his involvement in a 1970s effort known as the Boston-Fenway Plan. The plan resulted in reduced crime in one section of Boston by creating an economically diverse community that interacted with the police to ensure its own safety.

Studies published by national organizations such as the Police Executive Research Forum bear out what Bratton learned over the years: Crime rates decline when you create the kind of community as was envisioned for Huntington Station.

Mix all of the above together, add in good property management, attract young singles and families, and you have the recipe for low neighborhood crime.

Gallagher is a former Suffolk County police commissioner.