"I believe you have more poor people who believe in beauty than middle-class or wealthy people," said Lawrence McCard, an officer who has been the police for 16 years. "Some of these areas include the East Lake Housing project and the Kirkwood neighborhood, and both areas are regarded as among the roughest in the city.

Although he feels that as a policeman he has much in common with the inhabitants of his beat, McCard said he does not understand "why some of the people around here have such a negative attitude toward police."

"They might hate the police today," he said, "but they'll like the police tomorrow because they need them."

"It's only when they're not around that the police are respected," he said.

"You really can't trust them too much," a member of the residents of the Gilbert Gardens housing project on Gilbert Road in southeast Atlanta said recently. "I feel they should work a little harder," a neighbor who lives in the project added. "I went out every day, and police take their time getting there. Most of them, they scared to come to here."

Gilbert Gardens is located in the "war zone." Other housing projects in Zone Three include Jordan's North and South, East Lake Housing, Capital Homes, Eaglewood Manor, Thomasville Heights and Lark Valley.

While Zone One, made up of the northeast quadrant of the city, is the largest in area, Zone Three is the most densely populated area of Atlanta. There are also some officers patrolling Zone Three than there are in any other area.

In the four other projects, violent crimes were down from the record levels of 1979, but in Zone Three they increased.

"It's the Police Chief's strategy," McCard said. "I'm in command of all the city's uniformed officers, and that there may never be a time when police are welcomed with open arms in the southern part of the city which contains some poor people living or below the poverty line than any other section of Atlanta."

"Keep in mind that a whole lot of their problems are not police problems. They're problems that can be solved by the greatest amount of the government."

"But the lack of attention to these problems," he said, eventually lead to situations where the police are needed.

FRIDAY IN THE ATLANTA CONSTITUTION: Schools and the poor.