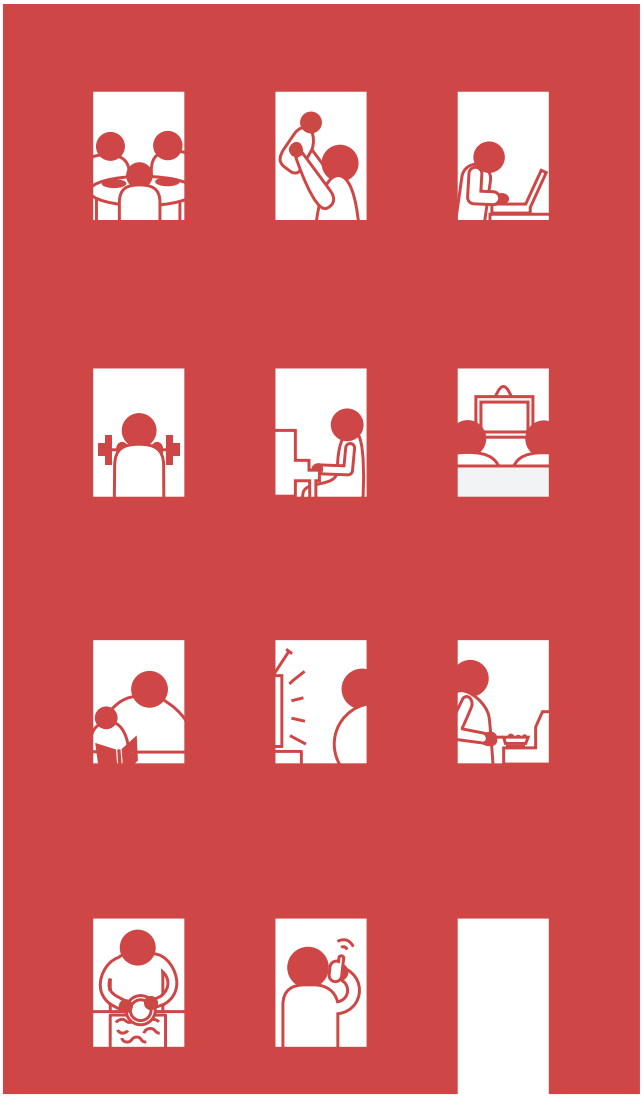
We Call These Projects Home

Solving the Housing Crisis from the Ground Up



A RIGHT TO THE CITY ALLIANCE REPORT ON PUBLIC HOUSING

MAY 2010

About the Authors

This report was a collaborative effort by several grassroots base-building organizations and three resource organizations, which provided research, policy, and writing support for this project. All the participating organizations are members of Right to the City, a national alliance of membership-based organizations and allies organizing to build a united response to gentrification and displacement in our cities.

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Advancement Project is an innovative civil rights law, policy, and communications "action tank" that advances universal opportunity and a just democracy for those left behind in America. Advancement Project believes that sustainable progress can be made when multiple tools – law, policy analysis, strategic communications, technology, and research – are coordinated with grassroots movements.

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The Community Development Project of the Urban Justice Center utilizes a participatory action research model to provide methodological and technical assistance to community organizing groups working in low-income communities of color throughout NYC and beyond.

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Foreword

This is a surprising report. It is, to my knowledge, the first fully-documented account of what the *actual users* of public housing, those who live in it day in and day out and know it from the inside out, think about it, and what suggestions they have for it. It well deserves being listened to.

What do the residents have to say? Not what you'd think, from most accounts. To summarize briefly:

Public housing works. It provides good, substantial housing, at affordable rents, with security for occupancy, for hundreds of thousands of our fellow inhabitants every day. It is housing of good quality they could not get in the private market place (and which the private market place could not be expected to supply). They like it, appreciate it, and want to help make it work.

More public housing is needed. This is documented not only by statistics, but by the lived experience of those needing housing. Some of the stories of the thousands on waiting-lists for public housing, often for years, are hair-raising.

Yet public housing units are regularly being lost. The report raises real questions about programs like HOPE VI, which, in the name of creating mixed housing, reduce the number of units available to those most in need in existing developments today, without adequate protection for those displaced or out in the cold.

The image of public housing projected in the media is unbalanced and often badly out of touch. Public housing residents do indeed have problems, and they suffer from the presence of petty criminals, druggies, some residents with mental problems, some with uncontrollable youngsters. But they do not do so at a rate any greater than many others housed elsewhere in our society, and their problems are rendered more tractable by at least having decent housing in more secure neighborhoods than they would have without public housing. Many outsiders, both in the media and among policy makers, ignore these facts.

Residents are an under-utilized resource for the management and improvement of public housing. Public housing residents are resourceful and knowledgeable about the conditions of the housing in which they live; they have to be, to get by. They have many ideas for improvements in practices and policies, but they are rarely asked. Although official policies, long debated and fought for and refined, require substantial resident participation in housing authority and HUD decisions, those policies are rarely fully implemented. A little bit of encouragement could go a long way to make public housing better, more efficient, better maintained, and better managed. As this report shows, public housing residents are articulate, thoughtful, and experts in what's right and what's wrong with public housing. The writers of this report, having let public housing residents speak for themselves and having done their own research, present their findings, make some recommendations based on what they have found, and draw some conclusions. They deserve close examination, and then action. One of the implications stands out for me:

Public housing, indeed decent housing for all, should be a right of all persons in a civilized democratic society. The private market provides housing when it is profitable to do so; that is the way the private market works, and is accepted in our society. Private providers of housing recognize this. They acknowledge that the market will not meet the needs of those of lower income. Those needs become particularly acute in times of economic recession and high unemployment, but are on-going even in good times. Government exists to fulfill the basic needs of its members that they cannot fulfill for themselves; it is an expression of the fact that we live in social communities in which we need to help each other, in which it is unfair that some disproportionately have the benefits of living in society while others suffer from their lack of those benefits, even when they are necessities of life, such as shelter and decent living environments. This report concludes that housing should be a right. Guaranteeing it is one of the reasons we have government to begin with; public housing, vastly expanded and utilizing the input of its residents, can help meet that right.

I believe this report is persuasive in its findings and conclusions. See if you agree.

Peter Marcuse

A RIGHT TO THE CITY ALLIANCE REPORT ON PUBLIC HOUSING • MAY 2010

Right to the City is a national alliance of membership-based organizations and allies organizing to build a united response to gentrification and displacement in our cities. Our goal is to build a national urban movement for housing, education, health, racial justice, and democracy. Right to the City includes more than forty member organizations and resource allies in seven states and more than a dozen local jurisdictions.

Contents

Executive Summary

In America's cities, community is one of the most valuable resources for low-income people – family, friends, and places of worship provide essential support such as childcare, jobs, transportation, and senior care. Housing that is affordable, safe, and stable is central to ensuring low-income families' right to that community. But for many, the right to remain in their neighborhoods has been in danger. Over the past few decades, the availability of housing that is truly affordable for low-income people has been diminishing at an alarming rate – a trend that has become painfully obvious with the recent housing and economic crises.

The Right to the City (RTTC) Alliance is a grassroots coalition that emerged in 2007 as a unified response to gentrification, calling for a halt to displacement of low-income people (disproportionately people of color, LGBTQ, and youth of color) from their historic neighborhoods. RTTC stands firmly in the conviction that building and maintaining strong communities requires undoing neo-liberal economic policies. These policies promote, among other tenets, deregulation – reducing government regulation of anything that could diminish profits, and privatization – selling government-owned enterprises and services to private investors.

In this report, RTTC is focused on the effects of these policies on public housing and its residents. We chose this focus because public housing represents the most urgent level of need in this country, and because immediate federal action could have a long-term impact in terms of stabilizing the quality of life for low-income communities across the United States. Public housing traditionally has not relied on the private market, making it one of the last sources of stable and permanently affordable housing. But this is precisely why it has been under attack. For public housing, neo-liberalism has fueled policies of disinvestment, demolition, and privatization of government-provided affordable housing. Rather than invest in low-income communities and build opportunity for those that live there, the government has prioritized the deconcentration of poverty and the displacement of low-income people from their communities through programs such as HOPE VI. We Call These Projects Home counters the underlying premise of the deconcentration theory by providing evidence that the problems with public housing are due to lack of resources and services in low-income communities, rather than simply the concentration of low-income people.

This research and the resulting report is a collaborative effort, designed and implemented by organizations across seven cities that participate in RTTC and work to preserve and improve public housing in their communities. Because RTTC believes that solutions to the U.S. housing crisis should come from those with first-hand experience, this report places the voices of public housing residents at the forefront. We Call These Projects Home provides evidence directly from the experience of residents, who argue that public housing is a valuable resource that should be expanded and maintained. In addition, we offer a new vision of housing and call on the federal government to make stable, safe, and permanently affordable housing a universal right. We offer policy recommendations for public housing that are grounded in this vision.

"I found myself in a terrible situation with two minor children by myself and one step from being in a shelter and one step from living out of a car. Public housing rescued my family. Public housing saved me and kept my family together." *-Washington, D.C. Focus Group Participant #14*

Right to the City Vision for Public Housing

Public housing can take various forms: from high rise apartment buildings like those in New York, to low-rise, multi-family homes in Miami and New Orleans, to converted vacant units in condominiums. We believe that public housing that already exists should be fully funded and restored to meet high living standards, and that new public housing should be built or created from existing housing in the private market. The government should think creatively about new public housing and ensure that it is developed in a holistic manner – with strong community services, job creation and training for public housing residents, educational programs, and environmentally focused design and construction. We do not think public housing should be confined to any specific aesthetic, but we do believe that all public housing should include vibrant, healthy, accessible developments that support long-term stability and quality of life for poor and working class families and communities.

Selected Findings

By using a participatory action research process, talking to hundreds of residents, and analyzing an extensive amount of quantitative and qualitative data, Right to the City has reached the following conclusions:

PUBLIC HOUSING IS ONE OF THE ONLY OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO VERY LOW-INCOME PEOPLE FOR SECURE, STABLE, AND PERMANENTLY AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

Millions of low-income people desperately need the safety net that public housing can provide. This research shows that public housing is increasingly important in these uncertain economic times because it is actually affordable and does not depend on fluctuations in the private market.

"I found myself in a terrible situation with two minor children by myself and one step from being in a shelter and one step from living out of a car. Public housing rescued my family. Public housing saved me and kept my family together."
-Washington, D.C. Focus Group Participant #14

POLICIES OF DISINVESTMENT ARE THE ROOT CAUSE OF MANY OF THE CURRENT PROBLEMS IN PUBLIC HOUSING.

Despite the well-documented increase in the need for low-income housing over the last decade, the federal government has continuously disinvested in public housing, one of the best options for housing low-income people.

- Disinvestment causes disrepair and dangerous living conditions for residents.
- Residents are bearing the brunt of disinvestment as rents and fees rise and resident services are cut.
- Disinvestment causes vacancies: Over 1 in 10 units sit vacant in the cities included in this study.

"I had asked them for years to fix the outside of the building. Raw sewage had come up through people's toilets and flooded their houses and apartments. Mine was swollen in between the top and bottom floor and you could smell it."
-Oakland Focus Group Participant #4

RATHER THAN BUILD MORE UNITS OF HOUSING FOR LOW-INCOME PEOPLE, HUD CONTINUES TO DEMOLISH UNITS OF PUBLIC HOUSING WITHOUT ADEQUATELY REPLACING THEM.

As a result of the Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE VI) program, around 104,000 public housing units nationwide have been lost since 1995, without adequate replacement.

- Demolition of public housing results in the displacement of low-income people, the destruction of communities, and hardships in the lives of those displaced.
- The demolition of public housing has created a culture of fear amongst public housing residents around the country.

"It affected my life a lot moving from St Thomas... after they tore it down we moved into the Lafitte housing development. They had us mixed up in a lot of situations...You split up people from all kinds of generations, all kinds of public housing and you made it bad for us to live...." -***New Orleans Focus Group Participant #4***

NEGATIVE IMAGES AND STEREOTYPES DOMINATE THE MEDIA'S COVERAGE OF PUBLIC HOUSING AND PERPETUATE MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT RESIDENTS.

A review of 400 newspaper articles revealed the prevalence of negative images about public housing.

- Guns and poverty are the two most prevalent words found in the articles about public housing.
- Although most reporting on public housing in the mass media focuses on crime and violence, residents see public housing as a vibrant community and a good place to live and raise a family.

"When you hear public housing [in the media] you think gunshots, fires, crimes, and drugs, and murders, and killings. But they also do not tell you that the next-door neighbor is there for you. They got your back. These projects – they are considered a family. We call these projects home. That is what people really need to know. That's the positive side of it."
-***Miami Focus Group Participant #8***

RESIDENTS DO NOT FEEL THAT THEY HAVE ADEQUATE INPUT INTO DECISIONS THAT ARE MADE ABOUT PUBLIC HOUSING AND HAVE DIFFICULTY HOLDING HUD AND PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITIES ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS.

Currently, HUD does not have strong enough mechanisms in place to ensure that residents have a meaningful voice in decision-making and consequently, residents do not feel like they have adequate power in shaping decisions about public housing.

"I'm the one who lives [in public housing]...the people who control the budget at the housing authority, they never lived in the public housing. They don't know what we need in public housing. They don't sit out at night and watch the children play. They don't know what goes on in public housing."
-***New Orleans Focus Group Participant #2***

Selected Recommendations

Based on the findings of this report, it is clear that the federal government must recognize public housing as a critical resource and sensible option for providing housing to low-income people. In order to save our communities, the Right to the City Alliance calls for the United States federal government, including the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Congress, and the Obama Administration to take the following actions to remedy the housing crisis:

PRESERVE AND STRENGTHEN EXISTING PUBLIC HOUSING

- Congress immediately restore full funding to the Public Housing Operating Fund by allocating $5.08 billion in funds in 2011 and provide full funding in subsequent years.
- Congress pass the Together We Care Act to create jobs and increase access to services for public housing residents; alternatively, HUD could create such a program through its Resident Opportunities and Self Sufficiency (ROSS) program.
- HUD allocate adequate amounts of stimulus funds towards Public Housing Operating and Capital Funds.
- Congress oppose the Transforming Rental Assistance program proposed by HUD and keep public housing public by not converting it to a new type of project-based voucher, or by generally fusing funding with the Section 8 voucher program.

STOP DEMOLITION

- Congress enact a moratorium on the demolition on all public housing.
- Congress ensure that the Choice Neighborhood Initiative truly invests in communities by prohibiting funds to be used to demolish public housing and mandating one-for-one replacement of all hard units that have been lost.

ENSURE ALL PUBLIC HOUSING IS COMMUNITY CONTROLLED, FULLY TRANSPARENT, AND FULLY ACCOUNTABLE TO THE RESIDENTS

- HUD restore funds for resident participation and use these funds for resident decision-making activities.
- HUD collect and make publicly available data on public housing in a manner that is consistent and accessible, including Section 3 reporting forms, data from Moving to Work cities, vacancies, and number of people on waitlists.

FILL VACANCIES

- Congress allocate $7.999 billion over five years to rehabilitate all 120,000 vacant units of public housing.
- HUD create and implement streamlined rules and regulations for the management of public housing waitlists so that there is a consistent and effective waitlist process across PHAs.

EXPAND PUBLIC HOUSING

- Congress amend the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act (QHWRA) so that there are no barriers to constructing new public housing units.[1]
- HUD prioritize current public housing residents for jobs associated with new construction by enforcing Section 3.
- HUD and PHAs create and implement plans to convert vacant condominiums and foreclosed properties into public housing.

1 – The Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act includes a provision, § 9g(3), that prohibits PHAs from using money from their capital or operating budgets to create new public housing units if it would increase the number of public housing units of the PHA – essentially an amount that would exceed what was already constructed.

I. Beyond Bricks and Mortar: Introduction

The Crisis of Neo-Liberal Housing Policy

Strong communities are at the crux of a strong society. For low-income people, community often is the most valuable resource – family, friends, and places of worship provide essential support such as child care, jobs, transportation, and senior care. Housing that is affordable, safe, and stable is central to ensuring low-income families' right to community. But for many, the right to remain in their urban neighborhoods has been in danger. The availability of housing that is truly affordable for low-income people has been a growing problem over the past decades, and exploded into the mainstream's consciousness with the current housing crisis.

In order to devise effective solutions to the current housing crisis, we must first identify root causes. Some policymakers and commentators now acknowledge that our present predicament is a consequence of "neo-liberal" economic policies that promote, among other tenets, deregulation – reducing government regulation of anything that could diminish profits and privatization – selling government-owned enterprises and services to private investors.

The Right to the City Alliance, a coalition that emerged in 2007 as a unified response to gentrification and a call to halt the displacement of low-income people, who are disproportionately people of color, LGBTQ, and youth of color from their historic urban neighborhoods, stands firmly in the conviction that building strong communities requires undoing neo-liberal economic policies. To achieve this goal, the Alliance promotes and practices the strengthening of grassroots movements, investing in low-income communities of color and devising new policies from the ground up.

In the context of U.S. housing policy, neo-liberalism has caused policymakers to favor affordable housing programs that employ market-based strategies. Instead of a right to housing, current federal policies are based on the commodification of housing –from something "that provides shelter, protection, privacy, space for personal, and family activities into something that is bought and sold and used to make money."[1] For public housing, neo-liberalism has fueled policies of disinvestment, demolition, and privatization regarding government-provided affordable housing.

What is the Theory of Deconcentration?

Rather than invest in low-income communities and build opportunity for those that live there, over the last few decades, the government has prioritized the deconcentration of poverty and the displacement of low-income people from their communities. Proponents of the deconcentration theory argue that the problem with public housing is that poor people living near each other will create and sustain a culture of poverty that fuels social problems such as crime, drug use, and violence. In order to alleviate poverty, this theory posits, public housing should be dismantled and low-income people should be moved to "better neighborhoods" where they can access opportunities such as jobs, good housing, good schools, and other services. The remedy of deconcentration as applied to the redevelopment of public housing has caused significant suffering with little impact on the underlying problem of poverty. Furthermore, the implementation of policies based on these theories has wreaked havoc on the lives of many public housing residents and other low-income people – predominantly people of color – causing an ongoing crisis in cities across the United States.

This report counters the underlying premise of the deconcentration theory by providing evidence that the problems with public housing are due to lack of resources and services in low-income communities, rather than simply the concentration of low-income people themselves. In doing so, it offers a new vision. Fundamentally, the Right to the City Alliance believes that public housing – and, indeed, all housing – should be a right. We envision our work connected to a broad social justice movement that, over time, will advance demands that address the needs of all sectors of society who need protection of safe, quality, affordable, and stable housing. We have seen in recent years that the commodification of housing and the impacts of speculative investment and finance capital have been devastating not only for poor families, but also for thousands of middle class families and first-time home buyers. Home foreclosures and predatory lending practices have devastated the entire life savings of hard-working people, while bank executives have walked away with a financial killing. We believe that every aspect of the housing market must be addressed in order to realize a universal right to housing.

Why Public Housing?

In this report, Right to the City focuses on the question of public housing and housing for the lowest income families in our cities. Public housing is currently at the highest level of crisis and need in this country, and we believe that immediate federal action could have the greatest long-term impact of stabilizing the quality of life for communities across the United States. Since the very inception of public housing programs, we have seen that public housing is a critically important component to ensuring the long-term stability of low-income families and Black, Latino, Asian, and Pacific Islander communities in our cities. First and foremost, this is because public housing does not rely on the private market and therefore it has consistently provided the most effective and stable safety net for people in need. Public housing is also the barometer, the standard from which we can measure the quality of safe and affordable housing for all sectors of society.

The Right to the City Alliance believes that public housing can take various forms: from high rise apartment buildings like those in New York, to low-rise, multi-family homes in Miami and New Orleans, to converted vacant units in condominiums. We believe that public housing that already exists should be fully funded and restored to meet high living standards, and that new public housing should be built or created from existing housing in the private market. The government should think creatively about new public housing and ensure that it is developed in a holistic manner – with strong community services, job creation and training for public housing residents, educational programs, and environmentally focused design and construction. We do not think public housing should be confined to any specific aesthetic, but we do believe that all public housing should be vibrant, healthy, accessible developments that support long-term stability and quality of life for working class families and communities.

The Alliance believes that solutions to the U.S. housing crisis should come from those with first-hand experience: low-income people – predominantly people of color – in America's cities. This report provides a unique and critical contribution to the affordable housing debate, by placing the voices of public housing residents at the forefront. Public housing has been under attack by modern-day housing policies, and consequently, there has been a severe shortage of public housing (in cities such as New Orleans and Atlanta, the public housing infrastructure has been all but decimated). We raise the voices of its residents because they have too often been dismissed as mere collateral damage of the government's implementation of these policies.

In February 2008, grassroots groups from the seven cities that make up the Right to the City Alliance convened and formed the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Workgroup. We created the HUD Workgroup to recognize the devastating impact that current elements of public housing policy – disinvestment, deregulation, demolition, privatization, and displacement – have had on the members of the grassroots groups throughout these cities. The Workgroup has been dedicated to the development of this report because we identified a gaping hole in the literature and policy papers concerning modern-day U.S. housing policies: the perspective of impacted communities.

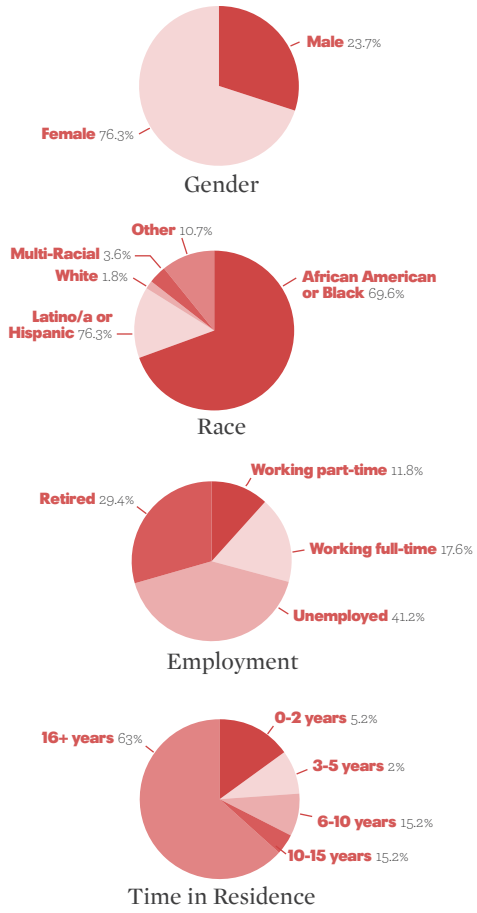
Through this extensive research process, we have found that despite current policies and theories that argue that public housing is a failure and should be done away with or deconcentrated, our research shows that public housing is and always has been a vital and necessary option for low-income communities of color. Overall, residents believe that public housing provides a strong sense of community and want to see public policies that strengthen rather than dismantle it.

II. The Real Experts: A Different Kind of Data

This research project was a joint effort by various organizations across seven cities (New York, Miami, Washington, D.C., San Francisco, Oakland, New Orleans, and Los Angeles) that participate in the HUD Workgroup of the Right to the City Alliance. All participating organizations are working to preserve and improve public housing in their communities. They include ten grassroots, membership-led organizations: Community Voices Heard (NYC), Families United for Racial and Economic Equality (NYC), Good Old Lower East Side (NYC), Friends and Residents of Arthur Cappers and Carrollsburg (DC), Just Cause Oakland (Oakland), Miami Workers Center (Miami), Mothers on the Move (NYC), Picture the Homeless (NYC), POWER (San Francisco), Survivors' Village (New Orleans), and Union de Vecinos (Los Angeles). Participants also include three resource organizations – Advancement Project, DataCenter, and the Urban Justice Center – and several individual academics, legal and policy advocates, and researchers who served as an Advisory Board. The HUD Workgroup embarked on this research project to interject residents' voices into policy discussions about public housing.

Utilizing a Participatory Action Research (PAR) model, the HUD Workgroup employed various research methods to explore the above questions. The PAR model ensures that those being "researched" (in this case, public housing residents) are also actively involved in the design, implementation, and analysis of the research. PAR is used so that those who are directly impacted by an issue or policy can determine how the given issue is studied. The HUD Workgroup developed several mechanisms for direct resident input into this research, including data workshops in each city where researchers and organizers shared with residents the quantitative data collected by the resource organizations and obtained feedback from residents to determine areas for further research. We also worked with residents to develop focus group questions and to analyze data collected through focus groups.

Figure 1. Focus group participant demographics



Average Age **49 years**

Average # of children in household **1.7**

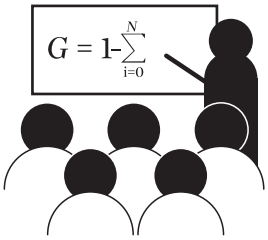
Average # of adults in household **1.9**

The Sample Participants for this research were selected using a purposeful sampling technique. Researchers were looking to find in-depth information from those living in public housing or those on the waiting list in seven cities. The seven cities were selected because they are large urban areas where there is active public housing organizing, and they are an active member in the Right to the City Alliance. Residents participating had to currently be living in public housing or be on a public housing waiting list. The average household size was two adults and two children. Of those who lived in public housing, the majority had lived there for over 16 years (63%). Of those who were on the public housing waitlist, the average time on the waitlist was six years. While this was not intended to be a representative sample, these figures can be compared to the general public housing population: 45% of public housing residents are Black, 23% are Latino, 45% are between 18-61 years old, and 29% have lived in public housing for 10 or more years.[2]

Research Methods

To explore the above research questions, the following research methods were used, within a PAR model:

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS: Eight focus groups were held in six cities[3] (six in English, two in Spanish) with a total of 72 people (see Figure 1 for demographic information). The focus groups were transcribed, translated, and analyzed using the N6 data analysis program and are the source of the quotes used throughout the report. In addition, in depth, one-on-one interviews were conducted in order to develop the resident profiles found throughout the report.



DATA WORKSHOPS: In April of 2009, the RTTC HUD Workgroup held community data workshops in NYC, Washington, D.C., San Francisco, Oakland, Miami, Los Angeles, and New Orleans. Each workshop brought together public housing residents to discuss and analyze the public housing data that the project's researchers collected, and to identify additional information to explore. Popular education methods were used to share and gather feedback on the data.

LITERATURE REVIEW: In order to understand the history, legal framework, benefits, potential downsides, and current practices of the public housing system, researchers reviewed and analyzed an extensive number of articles, essays, and books by academics, lawyers, policy analysts, and advocates. Members of the Advisory Board assisted in referring researchers to pertinent literature. Researchers also reviewed legislation focusing on public housing and the most recent Annual Plan for each of the Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) in the seven cities being studied.

MEDIA REVIEW: Researchers reviewed and analyzed 400 articles from eight cities (50 per city). At the time, the eight cities were all cities where grassroots organizations were participating in the research project. The articles reviewed have appeared in major newspapers over the last three years, were randomly selected using Westlaw media search, and were analyzed using N6, a qualitative data analysis program. Researchers looked for the most prevalent themes in each city and nationally, while also identifying what issues were not mentioned in the coverage of public housing.

$$G = 1-\sum_{i=0}^{N}$$

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS: Researchers completed a comparison analysis of HUD Resident Characteristic Reports (RCRs) in five cities from 2009 and data from "A Picture of Subsidized Households" from 2000.[4] In addition, an analysis of rent and income data from the "American Community Survey" was completed for all seven cities. Additional data was collected through conversations with representatives from Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) in the participating cities for information on vacancies and waiting lists, and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests submitted to the same PHAs for RCRs to obtain the following information: units, income, total tenant payment, race/ethnicity, household, and length of stay.

III. Roots of the Current Crisis: A Brief Background of Public Housing

What is Public Housing?

"Public housing" is a term specifically associated with a government program that started over 70 years ago. Presently, there are 1.16 million public housing units located in about 14,000 developments in every state and several territories.[5] About 1.04 million units are currently occupied housing 2.3 million people."[6] For the purpose of this report, public housing will be distinguished from the more general "affordable housing" category, which can take many forms (including public housing) and serves both renters and homeowners on a spectrum of income levels.[7] Unlike many affordable housing programs, public housing does not rely upon the private market and serves only low-income renters. Public housing is distinct from affordable housing programs such as "tenant-based" Section 8 housing vouchers, which help tenants rent units in the private market, and "project-based" Section 8 and other federal programs that directly subsidize low-income people to live in affordable housing in the private market. Historically, several federal programs that have relied on the private market have seen affordable units with restricted rents return to market rate when the rent and occupancy restrictions expire, and as real estate inflation has made other uses of the property more profitable. By not relying on the private market, the millions of poor people of color in public housing are better safeguarded from these fluctuations of the private market.

Public Housing *is housing that is owned and operated by the government.*

1.16 million *units of public housing provide homes for* **2.3 million** *people*

A Brief History of Public Housing

Initially public housing was created as a response to the economic crisis of the Great Depression. It was created relatively late in the New Deal period by the Wagner-Steagall Housing Act of 1937 and was to be built and run by local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs). Through this legislation, policymakers sought to adopt a housing and employment program that would quell unrest during an economically unstable time and "head off any great outburst of protest or revolt" by the "multitudes left unemployed, impoverished, and often homeless."[8]

From the beginning, though, the public housing system failed to receive adequate investment from the federal government. Because public housing units were first created at the start of World War II,[9] war needs diverted materials from housing construction, and public housing was predominately used as temporary housing for war industry workers, rather than for the poor.[10] After the war, construction of both permanent and emergency housing for "upwardly mobile" veterans became the priority – housing for the poor and people of color was not.[11] The Housing Act of 1949 authorized the construction of 810,000 public housing units (though they were not completed until the 1970s),[12] but also provided federal subsidies for land through "urban renewal."[13] At this point, "public housing was built with more haste than care, and with a limited realization of (or concern with) what meeting its prospective residents' housing needs would actually have meant."[14]

Simultaneously, the Act created an incentive for housing authorities to evict higher-income tenants.[15] This, coupled with Federal Housing Administration loans being doled out primarily to the White middle class,[16] caused the growth of working and middle class White suburbs on

1937 *Wagner-Steagall Housing Act*

Wagner

Steagall

The Housing Act of **1949**

Truman

one side and working class and poor Black urban areas on the other – a shift which helped shape the racial composition of public housing. For example, examining the racial make-up of residents of housing under the New York City Housing Authority in the 1950s reveals that by 1969, the White population was only 27.9%. This is in comparison to 1954 when the White population was 74.9% in federal-funded developments, 73.6% and 87% in city-funded developments,[17] and over 53.5% in state developments.

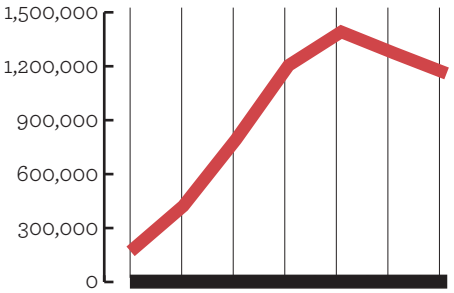
Coincidentally, or perhaps purposefully, as the demographics of public housing changed, federal disinvestment grew. Indeed, the 1970s brought the advent of programs that attempted to use the private market to meet the need for affordable housing. In 1973, then-President Nixon froze federal funds for all housing programs and instituted a moratorium on the creation of additional public housing.[18] That same year, Congress enacted Section 8 of the 1937 Housing Act, which created project- and tenant-based vouchers to generate a private market system for affordable housing,[19] leaving public housing as the sole housing option that would remain unaffected by the ever-fluctuating market.

In the 1980s, an era marked by the aggressive implementation of neo-liberal economic policies in the United States, the Reagan Administration "turned bureaucratic stinginess into deliberate curtailment of funds and support."[20] Decreasing spending on public housing was part of the massive budget cuts for social safety nets,[21] rendering the construction of public housing during this period almost nonexistent. Funding for the maintenance of existing public housing stock was slashed, which caused many units to fall into disrepair. Most of the HUD funds that were left were diverted to the Section 8 voucher program.[22] The Reagan Administration also created the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program (LIHTC) through the Tax Reform Act of 1986, which represents another program reliant on the private market system to generate affordable housing. Since then, no funds have been provided to build new public housing since the mid-1990s (with the exception of HOPE VI[23]), and nearly all public housing developments have been built before 1985.[24] It also marked a period when the federal government's support of PHAs began to dwindle.

The 1990s initiated yet another stage in public housing: decentralization and deregulation. The National Affordable Housing Act of 1990 looked like it would result in "decentralization of control, with a greater freedom of action of local authorities."[25] But once again, budget allocations did not correspond to policy – by 1991, HUD's budget had been reduced by $54.6 billion from the amount authorized at the beginning of the 1980s.[26]

1973 *Nixon declares moratorium on public housing construction*

Figure 2. Total Number of Public Housing Units in the United States 1949-2010



Resident Organizing and Public Housing Resident Participation

1936 *First resident organization at First Houses*

Throughout all of these phases, there has always been resident organizing in public housing. Resident organizing began with the construction of the nation's first development – First Houses of New York City – in 1936. While a resident association formed at First Houses in that same year, its primary concern was with organizing social functions, not impacting public housing policy.[27] But in the 1940s, WWII-veteran organizing pressured housing authorities for more housing and stronger resident control.[28]

During the urban unrest of the 1960s, resident participation in policy became established in federal law. In 1967, it became a requirement for PHAs to consult with residents on modernization projects within the Comprehensive Improvement and Assistance Program (CIAP).[29] In 1969, the rent strike of three St. Louis public housing developments led to negotiations with the St. Louis Housing Authority where residents won representation on the PHA's Board of Commissioners and resident involvement in management of all developments.[30] These local victories would impact early federal policymaking around resident participation.

Boston Housing Authority staff and tenants sign a Bromley-Heath Tenant Management Corporation contract in 1980.[35]

The 1970 Housing Act held that tenant programs and services included "the development and maintenance of tenant organizations which participate in the management of low-income housing projects" and "the training of tenants to manage and operate such projects."[31] The Act also encouraged PHAs to include residents on their governing boards.[32] In 1971, the first resident management corporation formed in the Bromley-Heath public housing development in Boston.[33] The poor building conditions found at these developments led to the formation of bottom-up, grassroots organizations by residents for the purposes of gaining control over their living situations.

1990s *Flowering of tenant organizing groups in public housing*

This history has influenced various organizations both locally and nationally, including the groups that participated in this report's research – Community Voices Heard, Families United for Racial and Economic Equality, Friends and Residents of Arthur Cappers and Carrollsburg, Good Old Lower East Side, Just Cause Oakland, Miami Workers Center, Mothers on the Move, Picture the Homeless, POWER, Survivors' Village, and Union de Vecinos – that have organized public housing residents to win improvements to public housing.[34] They have been fighting to prevent budget cuts to public housing, to ensure one-for-one replacement of demolished units of public housing, and to stop the loss of public housing units through privatization and demolition.

Deconcentration, Privatization, and Deregulation of Public Housing

As noted in the introduction, neo-liberal policies have limited the potential of public housing since its inception. This problem has only worsened over the last decade, as cities across the country have sought to privatize public housing in various ways and as federal housing policies and funding priorities continue to favor market-based programs over public housing. With decades of privatization, we now have more than enough information to conclude that the implementation of housing policies based solely on market solutions can detrimentally impact the lives of many low-income people. Unfortunately, these policies continue to be implemented. This report will explore some of the reasons why and how public housing is a better option than market-based housing to meet the needs of low-income people of color.

Neo-liberal housing policies have taken various forms. For instance, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) is currently considering selling off portions of its unused

property to private developers, including parking lots and "air rights," or the space above or adjacent to its property.[36] In New Orleans, the housing authority plans to replace over 4,500 demolished public housing units with predominantly private market housing. Privatization is part of a larger federal housing policy and programs such as HOPE VI, the new Choice Neighborhood Initiative, Moving to Work (MTW), and Transforming Rental Assistance. Along with ensuring that public housing will be forever lost to the market, it has meant that the public funds that are spent on affordable housing programs are less subject to public accountability and oversight. Furthermore, privatization means that low-income people are displaced from their housing and do not receive the same protections in terms of rent caps and eviction protection. Privatization also means a lack of federal regulation in areas such as resident participation in decision-making and rent increases.

Along with privatization, another prevailing neo-liberal trend in public housing policy has been deregulation – the elimination of federal rules and monitoring of PHAs. Several recent policies exemplify this trend, including MTW and asset management.[37] Without adequate protections from the federal government, local housing authorities are free to implement policies and practices that have catastrophic effects for the residents involved.

Shifts in Funding Priorities: The Move Towards the Market

In past decades, the federal government has shifted spending away from the public housing system and towards market-based subsidized housing programs, such as voucher programs. There are a number of reasons why vouchers fail to be effective substitutes for extremely low-income households. First, vouchers require residents to search and find their own housing within a limited period of time. If the resident is unsuccessful, he or she loses the subsidy. Second, the voucher program gives considerable power to landlords. For example, a Section 8 landlord can evict a resident who has rented for more than one year without having to give a reason. Also, the program allows landlords to impose their own screening and deposit criteria. A normal market rate deposit can often be several thousand dollars, a fortune for a family whose rent might be $50 a month. Third, there is no Section 8 manager on-site to answer questions; vouchers separate residents from the supportive networks of public housing communities, including project managers, who play a crucial role in placing new residents. Lastly, residents can get kicked off a voucher program very easily – simply missing a letter from the PHA can result in a missed appointment that is grounds for taking away a voucher, as is not being able to pay a utility bill. Add to all this the fact that vouchers are not even necessarily cost-effective – the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities reports that it is typically more cost-effective to preserve existing public housing than to provide vouchers for displaced public housing tenants,[38] and that a large-scale plan to replace public housing with vouchers would increase federal costs significantly.[39] Notably, adequate funding to preserve public housing would cost $6,520 per unit per year, while the annual cost of a replacement voucher, including transition costs, comes to $7,080 per unit per unit.[40] Still, policymakers continue to promote and prioritize these market-based programs. Despite the fact that preserving public housing is a cost-effective way to stabilize low-income people, neo-liberal ideology has taken precedent over practical policymaking, and ultimately has had a detrimental impact on the lives of many low-income families.

Figure 3. A comparison of Section 8 vouchers and traditional public housing from the perspective of a tenant

Moving to Work Demonstration Program

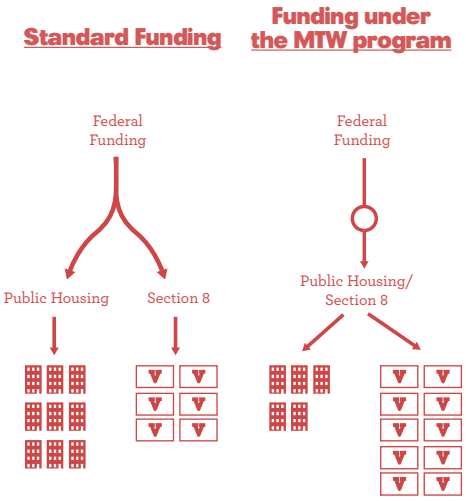
The Moving to Work Demonstration Program (MTW) was created in 1996 under the Omnibus Consolidated Recessions and Appropriations Act in Section 204. It was designed to provide PHAs and HUD with more flexibility in providing housing assistance for low-income people. Specifically, the goals of MTW were to:

- Reduce cost and achieve greater effectiveness in federal expenditures
- Give incentives to families with children in which the head of household is working, looking for work or preparing for work by participating in job training, educational programs, or other programs that assist people in securing employment and becoming economically self-sufficient
- Increase housing choices for low-income families

In order to accomplish these goals, PHAs receive waivers that make them exempt from most of the existing statutes and regulations traditionally governing public housing and Section 8 vouchers, and are allowed to combine funds for public housing and vouchers (i.e. they do not have to keep them separate). MTW PHAs also face fewer reporting requirements than non-MTW agencies. According to HUD, in 2009, there were 39 PHAs authorized for MTW.

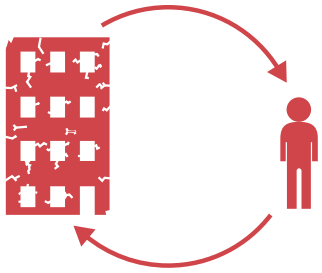
Overall, MTW has been detrimental to residents. In many locations, residents have faced unaffordable rents, strict work requirements, and time limits to receiving housing assistance.[41] For those on vouchers, many experienced greater difficulty using them in some housing. Evidence also indicates that MTW has harmed the lowest-income residents and potential residents.[42] Significant problems to the physical and financial futures of some MTW PHAs have also been reported. For example, two reports – one conducted by the Urban Institute and the other by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) – expressed concern about the effectiveness of MTW, citing a lack of HUD oversight, too few resources available to effectively run MTW sites and an inability of PHAs to develop clear objectives on their own as problematic.[43] Ultimately, the relaxed requirements have meant less accountability in how PHAs plan, report, and use funds, and have made it more difficult to access information to evaluate the MTW program.

Figure 4. When vouchers allow local housing authorities to combine funding streams, it can lead to the permanent loss of public housing, as funding initially earmarked for a public housing development can be used instead for Section 8 vouchers.

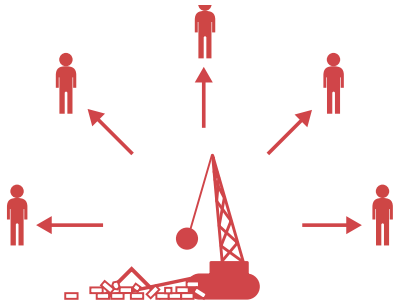


TWO THEORIES ABOUT POVERTY

The Deconcentration of Poverty Theory

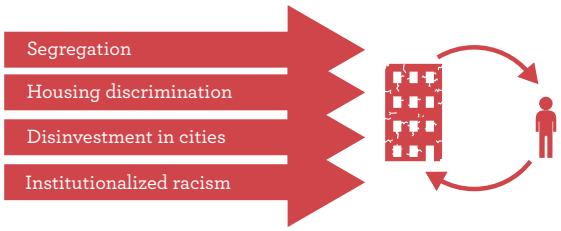


Poverty is contagious. Too many poor people living together is one of the most important causes of poverty.

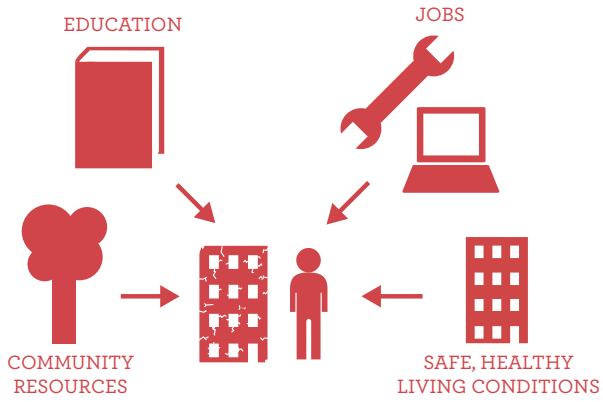


Poor communities should be dispersed so that poor individuals can live near wealthier people and more resources.

The Right to the City Theory



Concentrated poverty is the end result of decades of bad policy.



The root causes of poverty should be addressed by investing resources in low-income communities.

Deconcentration Theory Fuels Current Public Housing Policy

Privatization and deregulated HUD programs such as HOPE VI and Moving to Work are based on the theory of the deconcentration of poverty, an approach that wrongly prioritizes the dispersion of low-income people over the investment of resources into poor neighborhoods. Deconcentration emerges out of the idea that poverty is contagious and the conditions associated with poverty such as crime and violence are a result of poor people living in close proximity to one another rather than deeply rooted causes such as racism and government disinvestment.

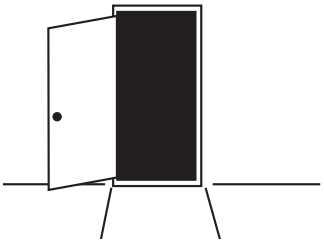
While these programs aim to move public housing families to "better neighborhoods," they are based on faulty assumptions about public housing residents and therefore often fail to improve conditions for low-income residents[44] and address the root causes of poverty. Furthermore, research does not support the notion that economic integration results in more successful lives for low-income people. In this report, we aim to disprove the theory of deconcentration by sharing the experiences of public housing residents and laying out the Right to the City's counter theory for the eradication of poverty.

The Right to the City Theory

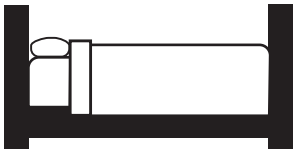
Right to the City believes that poverty is not contagious or created by poor people, but is caused by systems of oppression such as racism, classism, gender discrimination and homophobia. We believe that these systems have influenced decades of bad government policy such as disinvestment in and demolition of public housing. In turn, these policies cause many of the current problems facing public housing residents. We believe that poverty and the problems associated with it will be solved by investing in communities rather than dispersing them. Government should invest resources and services in low-income communities, improve the physical conditions of public housing, and bolster community programs. As this report will explain, this can be done through expanding public housing, fully funding existing public housing, and investing in job creation and training for residents. Beyond improving housing conditions, these policies will build strong families, a strong sense of community, and improved health and well-being for residents.

The Right to the City Alliance's Vision for Public Housing

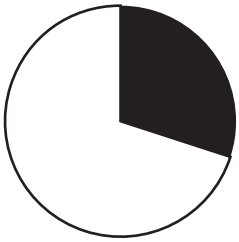
Right to the City believes that public housing is a critically important component to ensuring that low-income people of color have a right to stay in their cities. First and foremost, this is because public housing does not rely on the private market and therefore provides a safety net for people in need. We believe that instead of pursuing failed market-based solutions, the government should think creatively about new public housing and ensure that it is developed in a holistic manner – with strong community services, job creation and training for public housing residents, educational programs, and environmentally focused design and construction. We do not think public housing should be confined to any specific aesthetic, but we DO believe that ALL public housing should meet the following criteria (many of which are the current requirements of public housing):



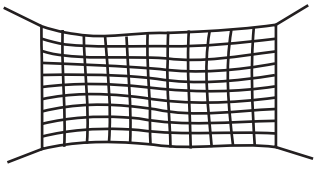
PUBLIC All units will be owned, regulated, and managed by the government and will not rely on the private market.



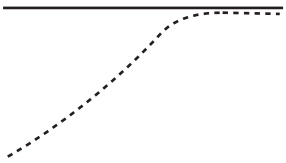
QUALITY LIVING CONDITIONS All units will meet a minimum quality standard regulated by HUD.



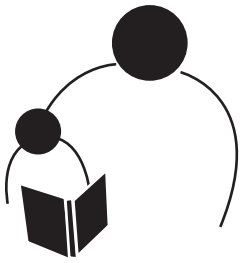
RENT CAPS Public housing residents should not be required to pay more than 30% of their income for rent and utilities.



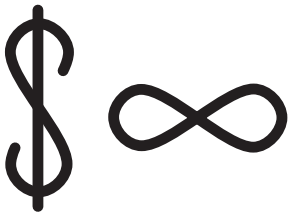
SAFETY NET PHAs will adjust tenants' rent requirements if they lose their job or incur a reduction in their income.



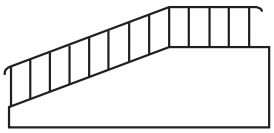
INCOME LIMITS Families must be "low-income" (i.e. their income may not exceed 80% of the local median income) to be eligible for public housing. At least 40% of the new families admitted each year must be "extremely low-income" (i.e. their incomes are at or below 30% of the local median).



CULTURALLY RELEVANT COMMUNITY SERVICES The PHA will provide a variety of culturally relevant community services for professional and personal development such as job training and childcare, and will ensure that policies guarantee the expression of cultural identity and diversity.

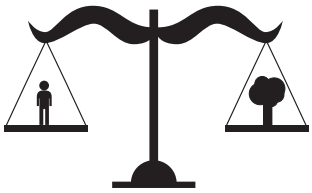


PERMANANTLY AFFORDABLE In order for units to be permanently, not temporarily, affordable to low-income people, for housing to have a long-term stabilizing effect on local communities, and for buildings to remain in good condition, the federal government will provide operating subsidies, at the full level needed, to all PHAs.



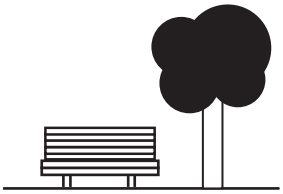
ACCESSIBLE All persons qualifying for public housing will be given housing regardless of their race, color, ethnicity, gender, abilities, religion, nationality, place of origin, citizenship status, sexual orientation, or non-serious/non-violent criminal background.

EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT
When additional development or redevelopment is absolutely necessary, only a phased development model will be used to minimize the impact on residents, and all residents will have the right to return to redeveloped housing.



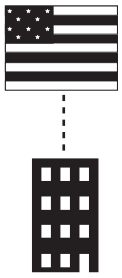
ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE
All public housing will be built, managed, and maintained in such a way as to limit impacts on the environment and to ensure building and housing sustainability.

FREEDOM FROM HARASSMENT AND EVICTION
Residents will never be harassed by police or other security officers and will be protected from unwarranted eviction.

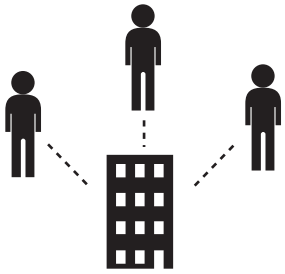


COMMUNITY SPACES
The PHA will provide indoor and outdoor space, including green, open spaces for community events and development.

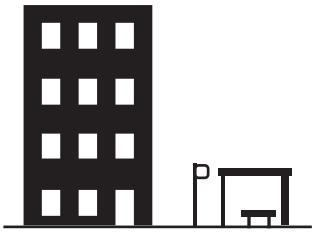
LANGUAGE ACCESS
All community services, public documents, and communication with residents must be available in the residents' native language.



GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT
The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will continue to be responsible for overseeing public housing, with the more than 3,100 individual PHAs managing smaller regions.



RESIDENT CONTROLLED[45]
Federal regulations will require HUD to establish effective systems that place residents as the primary decision-makers, maximizing resident control and participation.



SAFE LOCATION WITH ACCESS TO GOOD TRANSPORTATION & OTHER SERVICES Housing will not be built on polluted sites, or in immediate proximity to sources that threaten the right to health of inhabitants. Housing will be built in a location that allows access to employment options, health-care services, schools, child-care centers, and other social facilities.

Road Map to the Report

This report is organized into seven sections, including the introduction and conclusion, with each section further divided into **Background**, **Findings**, and **Summary and Related Recommendations**. The third section, Research Findings, is broken into five chapters, each addressing a different component of the public housing system. Each chapter concludes with a summary along with one or more policy recommendations that correspond to the chapter. Following the Research Findings is a section on the political and budgetary context for public housing. The final section is a more detailed set of recommendations for HUD, Congress, PHAs, and policymakers on how to improve and sustain public housing now and in the future. These recommendations are divided into immediate, intermediate, and long-term solutions for public housing.

1

Three-and-a-Half Million Homeless … and Counting

The Desperate Need for Public Housing

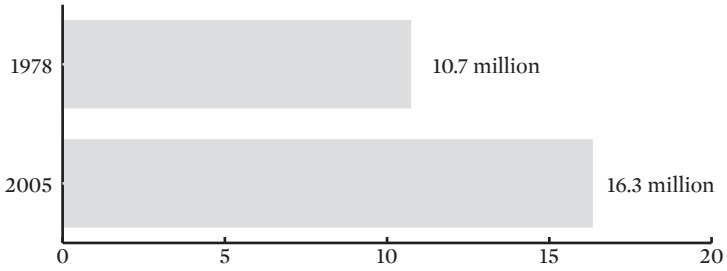
"The best thing about [public housing] is having a stable roof over your head. You can rely on it and you know the price won't go sky high."

- Miami Focus Group Participant #9

Background

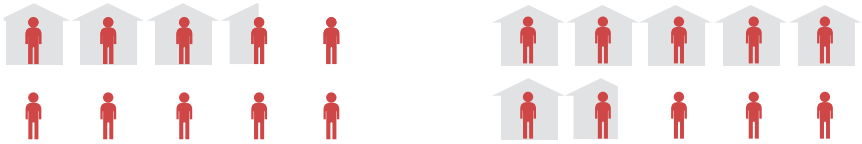
Millions of low-income people of color desperately need the safety net that public housing can provide. Although the severity of the housing crisis has dominated recent news coverage, the problem is not new. As Figure 6 shows, the population of "very low-income" renters has grown over the last 25 years, partly due to population growth, but also as a result of stagnating or declining wages and benefits.[46] In addition, in 2005, households with "worst case needs," i.e. very low-income unassisted renters who either pay half or more of their income for housing or who are living in severely substandard housing, rose to six million, a 16% increase from 2003.[47] As demand has grown, the supply of housing for low-income people has shrunk, intensifying the crisis. This is seen in the substantial declines in the actual number of affordable, available, and physically adequate rental units accessible to households with worst case needs. As Figure 7 shows, there is an extreme shortage of affordable housing units. The National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) reports a gap of 6 million units for extremely low-income renters, and a shortage of 5 million units for low-income renters across the country.[48]

Figure 6. Change in Low-Income Renter Population (1978-2005)



This crisis has hit low-income people of color the hardest. At the start of the recession, 33% of the Black middle class was already in danger of falling to a lower economic level.[49] According to United for a Fair Economy, from 1998 to 2006, Blacks lost $71 billion to $93 billion in home-value wealth from subprime loans. This was called the "greatest loss of wealth in recent history for people of color."[50]

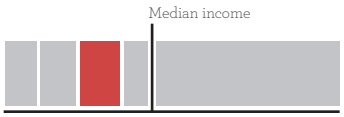
Figure 7. Shortage of Affordable, Available, and Physically Adequate Rental Units (2005)



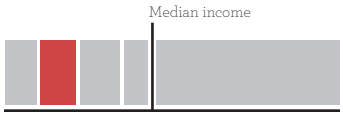
For every 10 Extremely Low-Income Renters there are only 3.5 units available.

For every 10 Very Low-Income Renters there are only 6.8 units available.

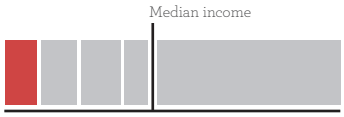
Figure 5. The federal government defines income categories as percentages of the local area median. This creates categories that adjust depending on the income range of a given area.



Low-Income: Income between 51% and 80% of area median



Very Low-Income: Income between 31% and 50% of area median



Extremely Low-Income: Income at or below 30% of area median

The Impact of the Economic Crisis on People of Color

While it is clear that the economic and housing crisis affects all low-income people, the effect on low-income people of color has been disproportionately dire. Black unemployment is now at 15.1%, compared with 8.9% for Whites; in 2008, the typical Black family had only a dime for every dollar of wealth possessed by the typical White family.[51] Thirty percent of Black renters and 27% of Latino renters spend half or more of their income on housing. Foreclosure rates are three times greater in mostly minority neighborhoods, and 85% of worst-hit neighborhoods – where the foreclosure rate is double the regional average – have majority Black and Latino homeowners.[52] According to a study on foreclosures in New England, the foreclosure rate on a per unit basis was more than five times higher in largely non-White, poor neighborhoods than in largely White, low poverty neighborhoods.[53]

Today an estimated 12 million renters and homeowner households pay more than 50% of their annual incomes for housing.[53] Overall, 16.4 million renter households face unaffordable housing costs, with rent and basic utilities costing more than 30% of their income.[54] Nearly all households in this latter group have "low-incomes," nine out of ten have "very low-incomes" and two out of three have "extremely low-incomes."[55] Table 1 documents these divisions for the six cities analyzed in this report.

Table 1. Low-Income Families that Spend 50% or More of Income on Rent[57]

	Extremely Low-Income	Very Low-Income
Chicago	89.1%	10.0%
Los Angeles	68.1%	24.7%
Miami	53.3%	35.9%
New Orleans	73.1%	21.2%
New York City	72.0%	22.2%
Oakland	81.4%	16.7%
San Francisco	84.6%	10.9%
Washington, D.C.	90.2%	7.3%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2005-2007. Adjusted for family size.

Additional indicators of the desperate need for public housing are the numbers of people sitting on waiting lists for public housing and the homeless who are living in shelters, on the streets, or with family and friends. Table 2 reports some of these indicators. While these figures are striking, they reflect only a fraction of the need for public housing. Waiting list procedures vary from city to city. In some areas they are always open; in others, they are open for a brief period every few years. Thus, waiting lists provide only a minimum assessment of the need. This combined with a lack of accurate data on homelessness, as well as the startling statistics in Table 2, suggests that the true numbers for those seeking public housing in many cities have been dramatically underreported.

Figure 8. Extremely Low-Income Renters[57]

Table 2. Public Housing Waitlists and Sheltered and Unsheltered Homeless Population by City

	Applicants on PH Waitlist[59]	Homeless Sheltered[60]	Homeless Unsheltered[61]
Chicago	27,134	4,346	1,633
Los Angeles	12,174	11,442	57,166
Miami	59,003	3,227	1,347
New Orleans	17,276	990	629
New York City	131,077	46,955	3,306
Oakland	11,314	2,342	2,496
San Francisco	24,609	2,400	2,771
Washington, D.C.	11,417	5,666	378
Total	253,145	77,368	69,726

"If it wasn't for public housing I'd probably be homeless, cause you know I don't make enough money to live outside public housing."

-New York City Focus Group Participant #10

This problem will only intensify as the economic crisis continues to unfold, as unemployment rates climb to new heights,[61] and as former homeowners continue to be displaced by foreclosures. In this context, it becomes increasingly clear that public housing is needed to help alleviate the crisis and provide housing for those most in need.

Findings

Public Housing is one of the only options available to very low-income people of color for secure, stable, and permanently affordable housing.

1. PUBLIC HOUSING PROVIDES LOW-INCOME PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY PEOPLE OF COLOR, WITH A TRULY AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTION. This research shows that public housing is increasingly important in these uncertain economic times because it is actually affordable. In 1969, the Brooke Amendment provided a cap on the percentage of income that a public housing tenant could be required to pay.[62] Initially, rent could not exceed 25% of an individual's income, but the 1981 Housing and Community Development Amendments increased that percentage to 30%.[63] With a few exceptions, only the Section 8 Housing Choice voucher program and public housing provide families housing with this type of protection. Given the limitations of the Section 8 program, particularly for extremely low-income households, public housing provides the lowest-income families with one of the only available housing options truly affordable to them. This is especially important for low-income people living in urban areas, where rents in the private market and other cost of living expenses are often very high. Focus group participants, many of whom are currently on the waiting list for public housing, expressed it was their only option to stay afloat financially.

> "The good thing I see about [public housing] as a renter in the private market is that you pay according to your income. In the private market you pay according to what the landlord wants. My rent has been going up tremendously and it's getting to be beyond my income. So, I'm trying to get into public housing to balance it out with my income." ***-Miami Focus Group Participant #4***

As seen in Table 3, in the cities studied, those living in housing in the private market without any public subsidy paid an average of $993 per month on rent.[64] Those living in public housing, by contrast, only paid an average of $348 per month.[65] Families living in public housing, therefore, are saving an average of $645 per month that can be used towards the cost of necessities such as food, transportation, and childcare.[66] Focus group participants noted this extra money is essential to help them pay for basic needs. A participant in Washington, D.C. noted why she needs the money she saves by living in public housing:

"The extra money...I may be young but I still got debt so that is where most of it goes. Either to paying that off and saving towards moving into my own little place."
-Washington, D.C. Focus Group Participant #9

Another resident in Oakland credited her ability to pay for her medical bills due to the money she saves paying low monthly rent she pays in public housing:

"I have a great deal of medical expenses. So really, to have to pay fifteen or sixteen or twenty-two hundred dollars a month in rent anywhere else... I couldn't afford it. I would be homeless." ***-Oakland Focus Group Participant #2***

Table 3. *Tenant Payment for Public Housing vs. Private Market (per household) (2009)*[67]

	Average Tenant Payment in Public Housing	*Census-Median Gross Rent*	*Difference PH Rent and Gross Median Rent*
Chicago	*$268*	*$863*	*$595*
Los Angeles	*$419*	*$1056*	*$637*
Miami	*$245*	*$826*	*$579*
New Orleans	*$283*	*$908*	*$621*
New York City	*$544*	*$1044*	*$498*
Oakland	*Data Not Made Available*	*$1036*	*N/A*
San Francisco	*$327*	*$1262*	*$937*
Washington, DC	*Data Not Made Available*	*$1011*	*N/A*
Total Average	*$348*	*$993*	*$645*
National Average	*$313*	*$824*	*$511*

Additionally, some PHAs do not require public housing residents to pay for utilities such as gas and electricity, which does away with the need for deposits and credit checks inherent in private utilities, as well as making the housing more affordable. Several focus group participants listed this among the advantages of living in public housing:

"Another thing about living in public housing at this moment – the utility bills. You don't have to pay utility bills in public housing. That takes the whole burden off of some of the poor families that are living in public housing."
-New Orleans Focus Group Participant #1

"I have a great deal of medical expenses. So really, to have to pay fifteen or sixteen or twenty-two hundred dollars a month in rent anywhere else… I couldn't afford it. I would be homeless."

-Oakland Focus Group Participant #2

2. PUBLIC HOUSING PROVIDES LOW-INCOME PEOPLE OF COLOR WITH A PERMANENTLY AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTION AND IS A SAFEGUARD AGAINST EVICTION, HOMELESSNESS, AND DISPLACEMENT. As noted above, the Brooke Amendment ensures that public housing residents will have permanent, low-cost housing that is unaffected by trends in the private market or by a sudden change in family fortune. Focus group participants remarked on the safety net that public housing provides them:

"The good thing about living in public housing is, God forbid anybody gets sick or a loved one passes away and there is only one income coming in – they lower your rent. If you lose your job and you have zero income you don't have to pay rent until you can find your job." *-Washington, D.C. Focus Group Participant #11*

Public housing offers an important protection against eviction and displacement, especially for low-income people living in gentrifying neighborhoods. These protections, in turn, allow residents the ability to continue living in their homes for long periods of time, regardless of a sudden decrease in family income or increase in surrounding market value. Of the cities included in a study conducted by the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, 21% of public housing residents lived in their homes for over 20 years. By comparison, only 2% of residents living in the market-based Section 8 program have lived in their homes for over 20 years.[68] Additionally, of those residents that participated in our focus groups, 63% reported having lived in public housing for over 16 years. This longevity is good for residents and the community because it provides stability and allows people to establish roots and networks in their neighborhoods. The permanent affordability of public housing, and the protections provided against eviction and displacement, helps explain this longevity. Several focus group participants noted the important role public housing played in providing a secure home for their families:

"I found myself in a terrible situation with two minor children by myself and one step from being in a shelter and one step from living out of a car. Public housing rescued my family. Public housing saved me and kept my family together."
-Washington, D.C. Focus Group Participant #14

"If I wasn't living in public housing I would probably be homeless; begging on the streets for the rest of my money to pay the rest of my bills."
-Miami Focus Group Participant #2

"[Without public housing] I would have probably been struggling with the children. They might have been taken away from me. I would have never been able to take care of my grandchildren and it would have just been a terrible thing for me."
-Washington, D.C. Focus Group Participant #7

"The good thing about living in public housing is, God forbid anybody gets sick or a loved one passes away and there is only one income coming in — they lower your rent. If you lose your job and you have zero income you don't have to pay rent until you can find your job."

-Washington, D.C. Focus Group Participant #11

Summary & Recommendations

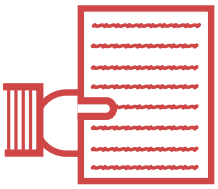
Public housing is desperately needed to counteract the market's inability to produce of safe and stable housing that is affordable to the lowest-income families. As shown above, while other subsidized housing programs are also important, public housing provides a crucial safety net for many people. It is often the only option for permanent affordable housing for low-income residents. Despite a worsening housing crisis and an increasingly unavailable stock of truly affordable housing for low-income people, the government continues to implement housing policies and practices that fail to address the needs of the lowest-income families, most often families of color.

In order to alleviate the shortage of housing for low-income people, Right to the City is calling on the federal government to enact the following solutions:

1. BUILD MORE PUBLIC HOUSING

Due to the severe shortage of housing for low-income people and the inadequacy of the private market to address the housing crisis, it is clear that more public housing is needed. In addition to preserving and protecting current public housing, the Right to the City Alliance is calling on Congress to amend the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act so that there are no barriers to constructing new public housing units, and to use the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (the stimulus bill) to build additional public housing.

2. PASS A "RIGHT TO HOUSING" BILL THAT SECURES HOUSING FOR EVERY PERSON LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES



In order to address the severe housing crisis facing the United States, the federal government must ensure that housing is a right rather than a privilege. As such, Right to the City Alliance recommends that Congress pass a "Right to Housing Act" that ensures housing security for everyone and includes requirements that keep public housing as a permanent resource.

2

They Run it Down to Tear it Down

Government Disinvestment in Public Housing

"[The] housing authority was not responding to the problems that were happening to the building. Someone broke in the window and I asked them to fix it but they never fixed the window."

-San Francisco Focus Group Participant #2

Background

Despite the well-documented increase in the need for low-income housing over the last decade, the federal government has continuously disinvested in public housing, one of the best residency options for low-income people. As a result, PHAs nationwide only receive 89% of the funding that they need and many housing projects are falling into disrepair. Of the cities in our study, there is a collective operating deficit of $206 million (see Table 4). The overall federal operating deficit for FY 2009 is $848 million.[69] The FY10 Federal Budget as enacted allocates about $7.3 billion for the Public Housing Capital and Operating Funds.[70] Because federal law mandates that housing agencies maintain rents that are affordable to low-income people, tenant payments do not cover operating or capital costs for public housing. To fill this gap, the Public Housing Operating Fund and Public Housing Capital Fund were created by the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act in 1998.[71] However, these federal dollars have not filled the gap and housing authorities are left without the funds needed to maintain housing for millions of people. In fact, due to federal underfunding, it is estimated that from 2002 to 2008 public housing lost nearly $3 billion nationally in operating subsidizes alone.[72] Below are the operating deficits for selected PHAs for 2009.

Table 4. PHA Operating Deficits

	Operating Budget Deficits	*Total Budget*	*Deficit as a Percentage of Budget*
Chicago	*$27,800,000*[74]	*$881,928,660*[75]	*3%*
Los Angeles	*$8,000,000*[76]	*$850,000,000*[77]	*1%*
Miami	*$7,500,000*[78]	*$259,590,000*[79]	*3%*
New Orleans	*$3,500,000*[80]	*$224,055,059*[81]	*2%*
New York City	*$127,000,000*[82]	*$2,742,000,000*[83]	*5%*
Oakland	*$8,470,000*[84]	*$192,696,749*[85]	*1%*
San Francisco	*$2,300,000*[86]	*$218,000,000*[87]	*1%*
Washington, D.C.	*$11,550,000*[88]	*$289,499,061*[89]	*4%*
Total	*$206,000,000*	*$5,657,769,529*	*4%*

The FY09 Federal Budget as enacted allocated about $6.9 billion for the Public Housing Capital and Operating Funds.[89] This was clearly not enough. The Administration tried to buttress this funding with the stimulus bill, which provided a one-time allocation of $4 billion for public housing capital repair needs. The stimulus, however, will likely only be used to try and start to cover the enormous backlog of repairs and as a result, is certainly not enough to assist with any capital repairs that arise during the year.[90] As of February 2010, President Obama had requested $4.829 billion for the Operating Fund and $2.044 billion for the Capital Fund.[91] The Administration claims that this request means they are fully funding the Operating Fund – which based on the current formula, they are – but according to industry leaders, including

Figure 9. Housing Authority Budgets

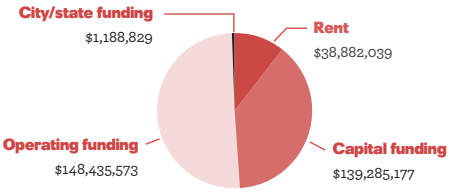
Local housing authority budgets Although each local housing authority determines its exact funding structure differently, most housing authorities have the following:

Rents (tenants in public housing pay 30% of their income in rent) Rent can make up anywhere from 5% -35% of a housing authority's budget.

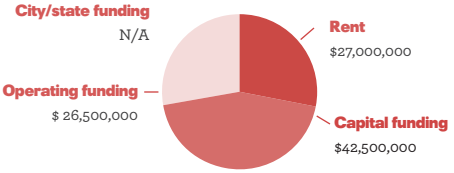
Federal capital funding This funding comes from the federal government and is used by a local housing authority for physical repairs and construction ONLY.

Federal operating funds This is federal money that is used for maintenance, staff, and operating expenses like heat and hot water.

City/State funding Most housing authorities do not receive city or state funding, but a few receive minimal subsidies. This funding is almost always used just for operating expenses.



Chicago (FY2010)

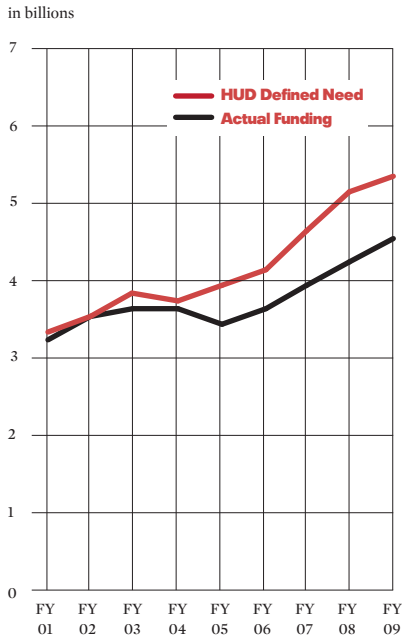


Los Angeles (FY2010)

the Public Housing Authorities Directors Association, to truly provide sufficient funds for public housing in 2011, Congress would need to appropriate $5.08 billion for the Operating Fund and $22 billion for the Capital Fund.[92] Therefore, the Administration's proposal is actually $250 million short for the Operating Fund and $456 million short for the Capital Fund. Proposed funding for the Capital Fund, in fact, is lower than it has been in the last five years.[93]

As noted above, a lack of adequate funding and active disinvestment in public housing has been a problem for public housing since its advent, but has recently culminated in a fiscal crisis. Many PHAs have been forced to cut back on maintenance for public housing units – leading to the deterioration, and ultimately demolition, of tens of thousands of units[94] – and have had to raise rents and cuts services for tenants. The constant dearth of federal funding has truly had an impact on people's lives: only one in four low-income households eligible for federal housing assistance actually receives it.[95] Thus, disinvestment has a significant impact on both public housing stock and the residents that live there.

Figure 10. Federal Operating Fund Shortfalls (2000-2009)



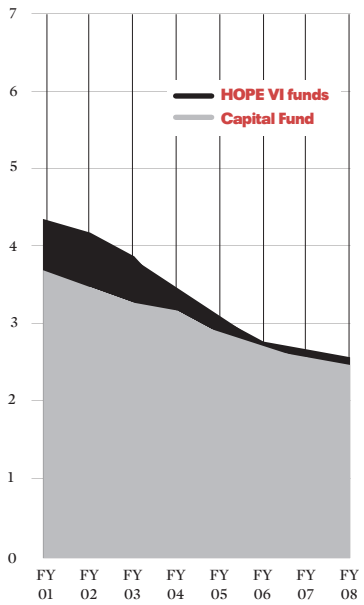
Findings

Policies of disinvestment are the root cause of many of the current problems in public housing, including disrepair, dangerous conditions, vacant units, increased rent burden, and reduction of services for low-income residents.

1. DISINVESTMENT IN PUBLIC HOUSING CAUSES DISREPAIR AND DANGEROUS LIVING CONDITIONS FOR RESIDENTS.

Without adequate federal support, public housing authorities across the country have neglected to carry out basic repairs for many of the nation's ageing housing developments, and much of the country's housing stock has fallen into disrepair. Lack of repairs causes dilapidated conditions in public housing, which in turn leads to dangerous living conditions for residents and their children. In New York City, for example, the total amount of federal capital funds committed to public housing shrunk from over $4 billion in 2001 to $2.5 billion by 2008, producing a $137 million operating deficit.[96] The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) has also not had the appropriate funding needed to maintain its 3,338 elevators, causing them to frequently malfunction. Since 2001, residents and employees of NYCHA have reported 300 injuries due to the faulty elevators. One of these incidences resulted in the death of a young boy who was killed while attempting to escape from a stalled elevator. Focus group participants discussed the lack of basic repairs and the burden that new fees for repairs create for them. Oftentimes residents cannot afford these fees so repairs go undone. A resident in Oakland described his situation:

Figure 11. Federal Disinvestment in Capital Funding (2001-2008)



"I had asked them for years to fix the outside of the building. Raw sewage had come up through people's toilets and flooded their houses and apartments. Mine was swollen in between the top and bottom floor and you could smell it."
-Oakland Focus Group Participant #4

2. RESIDENTS BEAR THE BRUNT OF DISINVESTMENT AS RENTS AND FEES RISE AND RESIDENTIAL SERVICES ARE CUT.

Despite the decline in living conditions, the budgets of PHAs are being balanced on the backs of low-income residents. Without full government funding, many PHAs have attempted to close budget gaps by raising rents, imposing fees, and cutting services for public housing residents. Along with data from focus groups, a review of annual plans from PHAs in our seven cities indicates the direct correlation between federal disinvestment and increased burdens on tenants. For example, the 2009 annual plan from the Miami-Dade Public Housing Authority cites examples of various policy changes that will be made in order to fill the budget deficit. These include, among other things, rent increases and limiting the ability of residents to move:

"MDHA may make discretionary policy revisions...to cover any shortfall in federal funding, including but not limited to, limiting moves, increasing minimum rent, reducing payment standards, implementing revised occupancy standards, and termination of assistance..."[97]

Such detrimental policy changes are not unique to Miami. For instance, in 2008, due to federal funding shortages, NYCHA was forced to close dozens of community centers meant to provide services for residents.[98] Table 5 documents all the cities in this study where PHAs have explicitly implemented policies of raising rents and cutting services according to their annual plans. In addition, many focus group participants have recently had their rent increased. One New York City resident explained:

"The rent that I pay now is overwhelming. I pay $1000 so I think I deserve to get the treatment and services that are provided for that amount of money."
-New York City Focus Group Participant #5

Between 2000 and 2009, rents for public housing in the cities studied increased an average of $91, or 35%, as federal funding continued to decrease.[99] In certain cities this increase has been more pronounced. In New York City, for example, rents were raised by 55%.

Many PHAs have also begun seeking out higher-income tenants over the last decade as a way to help bridge their funding gaps. In New Orleans, residents making over $15,000 increased from 8% to 28% of the total housing population. In New York City, the average income increased by 20%. This means there are fewer units available for those most in need of public housing.

"They've come in my apartment maybe three or four times and they never give me new floors even though there's lots of problems. They [management] don't do much for us, everything they give us they charge us now. If I had extra money, I'd put in a new floor for myself."
-New York City Focus Group Participant #4

Table 5. *Rent Increases, Service Reduction, and Funding Changes*[100]

	Rent Increases	*Reduction in Services*	*Increase in # of Vouchers/Decrease in money for public housing*
Chicago	X		X
Los Angeles	X	X	X
Miami	X		X
New Orleans		X	X
New York City	X	X	X
Oakland	X		X
San Francisco			X
Washington, D.C.		X	

3. DISINVESTMENT CAUSES VACANCIES: OVER 1 IN 10 UNITS SIT VACANT IN THE CITIES INCLUDED IN THIS STUDY.

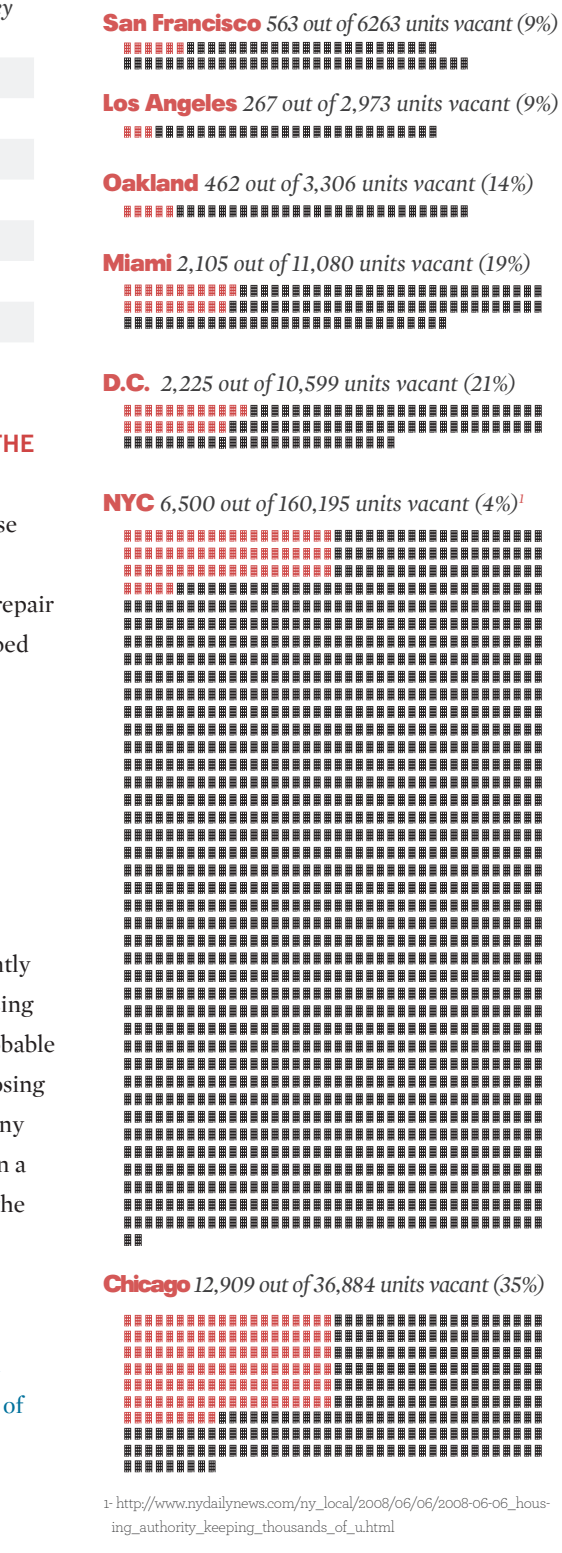
Without proper funding to maintain developments, many housing authorities warehouse empty units deemed unsafe for tenant occupancy. Rather than invest a small amount to restore these units, PHAs leave them vacant, allowing units to fall even further into disrepair ultimately denying housing to people. A public housing resident in New Orleans described this practice:

> "They run down the property so they can tear down most of the housing, displace people and put up less dense housing. It's happening not just here, but all over the country. They don't want no poor people here, especially our color."
> *-New Orleans Focus Group Participant #3*

In the PHAs examined, 27,410 public housing units (12% of the total stock) are currently unoccupied.[101] Nationally, 120,000 units sit vacant (10% of the total national public housing stock).[102] Often, housing authorities underreport the number of vacant units, so it is probable that far more units sit vacant in these cities. By keeping these units vacant, PHAs are losing crucial revenue that could be used to conduct repairs and provide resident services. Many residents also fear that once a housing authority begins to warehouse apartments within a development, demolition and displacement will soon follow. One resident spoke about the unsettling feeling caused by warehoused units:

> "The landscaping deteriorated to the point where it was almost unlivable... So it was really very scary. You know... boarded up place next door to me, boarded up place in front of me...it was very uncomfortable. It was almost as if they were saying the rest of you guys – the ones that are left – need to hurry up and get out."
> *-Oakland Focus Group Participant #2*

Figure 12. Vacancies and total units in select cities:



1- http://www.nydailynews.com/ny_local/2008/06/06/2008-06-06_housing_authority_keeping_thousands_of_u.html

Resident Snapshot

"This was a scary time for me... I am on a fixed income."

Anne Washington

Anne Washington was born in Trinidad, but has lived in New York City since 1970. She has been a resident of Grant Housing in Harlem since 1978. She is an active member of Community Voices Heard (CVH) and believes that being involved with CVH has changed her life in many positive ways. It has made her feel that she is involved in something important that will make real differences in her life and in her community.

Recently, the NYCHA raised Anne's rent.

"It was devastating because my rent went up like $400 and I am on a fixed income. I had to talk with Housing a lot and walk them through the whole thing with all of the details for so long. It took four months before they finally adjusted my rent to the appropriate level... A lot of people have had their rents raised for reasons like the ones I described."

Anne has had problems getting NYCHA to do basic repairs.

"I had a gas leak in my apartment. My carbon dioxide alarm kept going off. Me and my daughter were getting headaches and my daughter was feeling like she couldn't breathe very well. I called the housing repair line twice. Two separate times the housing repair guy came to my apartment and said that they couldn't find a leak... So I called the Fire Department. They sent someone over who came, did a test and found the leak... Even to this day the repair they did on my stove wasn't good enough. I don't have a leak, but the stove is still defective. I have found that when I am dealing with Housing I have to be extremely forceful in order to get a simple repair."

Summary & Recommendations

Even with additional stimulus funds, many PHAs are struggling to meet costs due to systematic federal disinvestment over the past several years. This has caused the deterioration of the current public housing stock and dangerous living conditions for residents. As a result, the budgets of PHAs are being balanced on the backs of public housing residents, with increases in fees and rent and decreases in services and repairs. Minimal stimulus funds have been channeled to repair public housing, but these are insufficient to even cover the backlog of repairs that need to be done. Accordingly, the federal government must fully fund public housing to begin to address the issues caused by years of disinvestment.

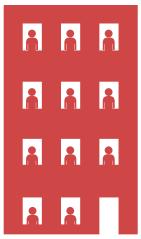
In order to address the problem of federal disinvestment in public housing, Right to the City is calling on the federal government to enact the following solutions:

1. PRESERVE AND STRENGTHEN EXISTING PUBLIC HOUSING

Due to the trend of disinvestment over the last two decades, PHAs nationwide are experiencing operating deficits and residents are suffering from rent increases, lack of services, and delays on basic repairs. Additionally, capital repair needs continue to go unmet. As a result, the nation's public housing stock is in disrepair and thousands of units sit vacant. In order to remedy this and ensure that public housing can continue to be a resource to millions of low-income people, particularly people of color, HUD and Congress must fully fund public housing.

2. FILL ALL VACANCIES IN PUBLIC HOUSING

Due to disinvestment, 120,000 public housing units sit vacant across the country.[103] These units are a valuable and desperately-needed resource for low-income people. However, as they sit vacant, they are subject to further deterioration and create a culture of fear amongst residents. Moreover, millions of people wait to get into public housing. In order to alleviate these problems, Congress should allocate $7.999 billion over five years to rehabilitate all 120,000 vacant units of public housing.[104] In addition, all public housing authorities should open waiting lists permanently and work with HUD to assist in identifying need for public housing.



3

Lost in the Fray

The Demolition of Public Housing and Displacement of Residents

"I think their main goal is to build condominiums and put two, three or four families there… I am really scared that it's going to happen because I don't know if we are going to lose our apartment. They do whatever they want and probably will leave us on the streets. I don't want to go back to a shelter."

- San Francisco Focus Group Participant #6

Background

Along with continual disinvestment, since 1995 at least 104,000 public housing units nationwide have been lost without replacement, a practice that has displaced thousands of low-income people.[105] Instead of building new units of public housing, renovating vacant units, or restoring developments that have fallen into disrepair, HUD has chosen to demolish thousands of units of public housing without adequately replacing them. The demolition of public housing has mainly been fueled by the Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE VI) program.

The foundation for HOPE VI was laid in 1989 when Congress established the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing, which was charged with identifying and eradicating severely distressed public housing and devising a plan to eradicate this stock. The Commission found that 86,000 units – 6% of the public housing stock – were severely distressed, and urged Congress to create a revitalization plan for these units.[106] Congress' plan, HOPE VI, was aimed at transforming "severely distressed" public housing into "mixed-income" housing developments.[107] To do this, public housing units would be either rehabilitated or demolished. Originally, however, if demolition was proposed, units had to be replaced on a one-for-one basis.[108] HOPE VI as initially devised and designed was not created to diminish the number of units in the public housing system.

But two years later, a law reauthorizing funding for HOPE VI eliminated this one-for-one replacement requirement.[109] Even though no funding was taken away from HOPE VI, recipients of HOPE VI grants now were free to demolish units without replacing them with hard units.[110] Furthermore, despite the designation of only 72,000 severely distressed units, HOPE VI funded the demolition of 155,000 units, more than double the number designated (see Figure 13).[111] The elimination of the one-for-one replacement requirement and the HOPE VI program generally has been hugely detrimental to people's lives and has greatly diminished the amount of public housing stock available to those who truly need it.

Figure 13. Condition of destroyed public housing units through HOPE VI (1992)

83,000 habitable

72,000 distressed

Public Housing Demolitions

- Between 1995 and 2008, about 200,000 public housing units have been demolished altogether.[112]
- Since 2006, another 230,000 units have been slated for demolition.[113]
- Only about 50,000 units demolished through HOPE VI have been or plan to be replaced with new public housing units[114] and as of late 2007, only 32,000 replacement units have been built.[115]
- About 57,000 former public housing families were given vouchers instead of public housing replacement.[116]
- Between 1994 and 2004, 45,539 households (81%) did not return to redeveloped HOPE VI sites (see Figure 15).[117]
- Almost 50,000 units of non-public housing that serve income groups higher than the displaced households are included in HOPE VI redevelopments.[118]

Figure 14. Net loss of units through HOPE VI

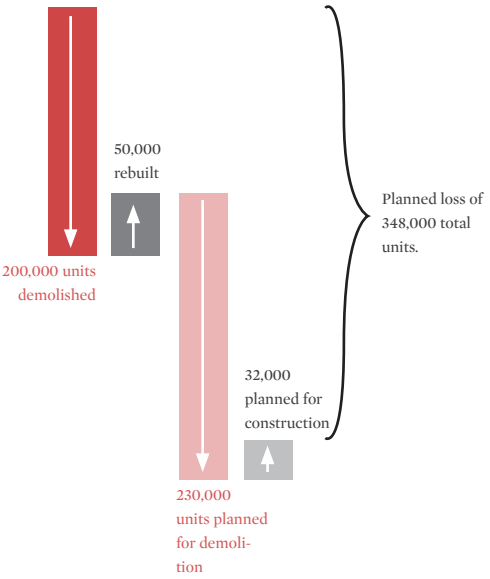
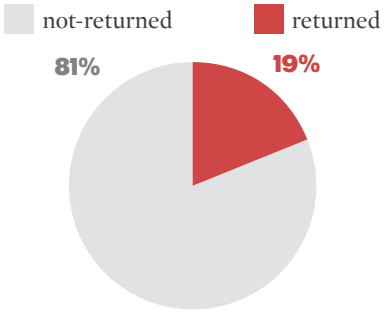


Figure 15. Only 19% of residents who were displaced by a HOPE VI development have returned to their HOPE VI sites (1994-2004)

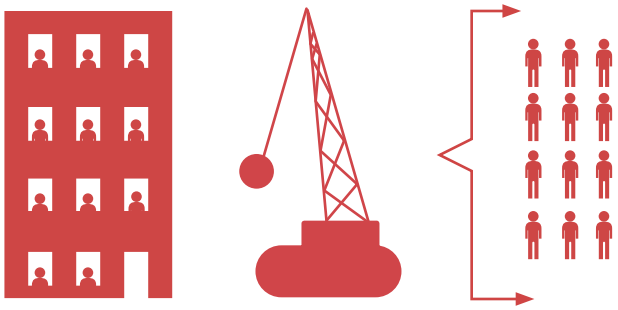


In some cities the replacement statistics are even bleaker. For instance, the HOPE VI-funded redevelopment at the Scott Homes/Carver Homes in Miami, as originally approved by HUD, only planned to replace 9% of the original units. In New Orleans, the redevelopment plan for St. Thomas only calls for 12% replacement of affordable housing units.[119] HOPE VI-fueled demolition has displaced thousands of low-income people and created a culture of fear, including in cities where public housing has not yet been demolished.

Meanwhile, HUD has had no long-term relocation assistance plan for all of the residents that have been displaced by the HOPE VI program. Because most residents do not have the means to rent market rate housing, and because available public housing units are scarce, they must either rely on support from family and friends or utilize the voucher system. While also an important source of affordable housing, relying solely on vouchers as a replacement to public housing can be problematic because the program has many barriers for residents to access affordable housing.

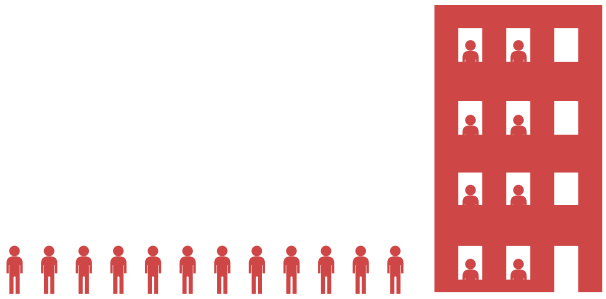
The effects of HOPE VI and demolition generally have had a significant negative impact on the health of cities and the wellbeing of communities. To describe the impact of displacement on the individual and local community level, Dr. Mindy Thompson Fullilove has coined the term root shock: "the traumatic stress reaction to the destruction of all or part of one's ecosystem."[120] Indeed, decades of research demonstrate that displacement has significant impacts on well-being and housing stability.[121] Among the most notable effect is the "disruption of the community ties and place attachments that are at the foundation of well-functioning communities."[122]

WHAT HAPPENS TO RESIDENTS UNDER HOPE VI?



When a development enters the Hope VI program, the buildings are slated for demolition and/or renovation . . .

and the residents are relocated.



If there are vacancies in another development, residents can be relocated within the housing authority. (But in most public housing systems, vacancies are rare. In New York the waiting list for a vacant apartment is over eight years.)

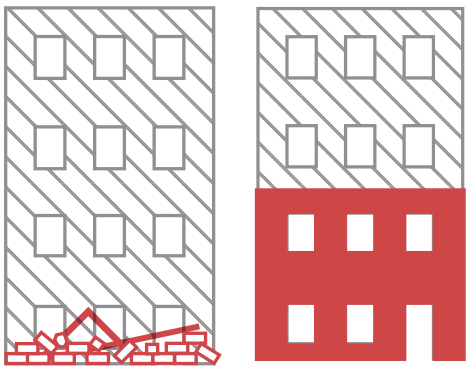
Those that cannot be moved to another development will be given vouchers, but these vouchers can only be used with housing that meets particular rent criteria - so this housing tends to be in low-income neighborhoods - often lower-income than the neighborhood the displaced residents are coming from. It's also common for landlords to descriminate against voucher holders (even though it's illegal).

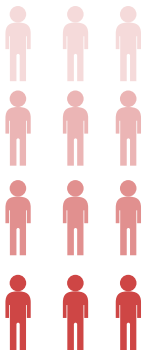
Those that do find housing with vouchers will have new expenses such as security deposits and utilities.

AND find that the support networks that had sustained them in the past have been scattered to the wind.

MEANWHILE . . .

If the building is completed (thus far only 65% of Hope VI projects that have begun have been completed) the new building is likely to have fewer units of public housing available than in the original development.





MOST RESIDENTS WON'T MAKE IT BACK

The housing authority will have lost touch with many of them . . .

Several more will be denied right of return due to problems with their paperwork . . .

and a small group of families will return to rebuild their lives in their old neighborhood.

New Orleans: Disaster Fuels Unwarranted Demolitions

Perhaps there is no better example of demolition and the displacement that inevitably follows than in post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans. Two years after the storm, on September 21, 2007, HUD approved the demolition of most of New Orleans' public housing – most of which were either not damaged at all by the storm or sustained minimal damage – and a replacement of far fewer public housing units. Thereafter, approximately 4,500 public housing units in New Orleans, more than 70% of the city's public housing stock, were demolished. It seemed as if this demolition was almost planned to rid the city of "certain populations." For example, former New Orleans City Council President Oliver Thomas acknowledged that he was addressing Blacks when he said that New Orleans did not need "soap opera watchers" to return to the city.[124] And the then-Secretary of HUD, who is charged with providing affordable housing to and promoting economic development for disadvantaged communities, stated that New Orleans "is not going to be as Black as it was for a long time, if ever again."[125]

Indeed, without the construction of stable, deeply affordable housing, there have been few other options for displaced public housing families, namely Black residents, in New Orleans. The most recent data available shows that in Orleans Parish, 38,000 affordable housing units sustained severe or major damage from Hurricane Katrina, but as of August 2008, only 37% of this stock had been replaced.[126] At the same time, the current location of many residents whose homes were demolished and who are now displaced is simply not known.[127] Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) officials admitted that after Hurricane Katrina, they did not systematically keep track of the location of public housing residents.[128] Moreover, it is also unlikely that residents were ever asked in a broad or systematic way about their desire or intent to return to New Orleans public housing.[129] In light of HANO's poor tracking system, and because public housing residents have been scattered and forced into unstable living conditions since the storm, any housing opportunities that arise in redeveloped public housing sites will likely pass by displaced residents. This is particularly of concern given strategies like those devised by the St. Bernard developers where they kept the waiting list for public housing on the phase one redevelopment open for only 23 days.[130] These tactics, if unchecked, foretell a reality of permanent displacement for New Orleans' public housing residents.

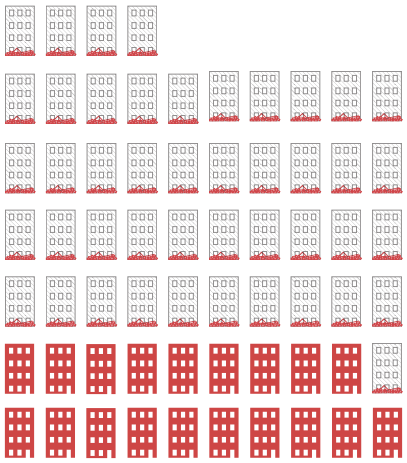


Figure 16. After Hurricane Katrina, approximately **4,500** units of public housing were demolished in New Orleans (more than **70%** of the city's housing stock)

Findings

Rather than build more units of housing for low-income people, HUD continues to demolish units of public housing without adequately replacing them.

1. PUBLIC HOUSING CONTINUES TO BE LOST IN CITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

Of the cities included in this study, New Orleans has lost 6,090 units of public housing between the years of 2000 and 2009; Washington, D.C. has lost 1,576 units over the same period, Miami has lost 1,564 units, and Los Angeles has lost 968 units.[131] Some of the public housing developments that have been rebuilt, moreover, are restricted in occupancy to certain populations, such as senior citizens and people with disabilities. While low-income housing should continue to be made available to these groups, without building more housing, restrictions placed on replacement units of public housing limit options for other low-income families, often families of color. As an example, Figure 17 shows the number of units that PHAs report have been demolished or sold to the private market in the last year in Los Angeles.

Figure 17. Public Housing Units Lost in Los Angeles[132]

13,811 Original Units **382** Units Demolished **6,421** Units Sold **7,008** Units Left

2. DEMOLITION OF PUBLIC HOUSING RESULTS IN THE DISPLACEMENT OF LOW-INCOME PEOPLE (PREDOMINATELY PEOPLE OF COLOR), THE DESTRUCTION OF COMMUNITIES, AND HARDSHIPS IN THE LIVES OF THOSE DISPLACED.

Demolition of public housing displaces low-income people and destroys communities that have existed for generations, causing excessive problems for those affected. In fact, 21.4% of our focus group participants reported being displaced, with 23.1% of those residents still not back in any type of subsidized housing an average of four years later. A participant from New Orleans who was displaced from the St. Thomas housing development and moved to the Lafitte housing development talked about the difficulty of this transition:

> "It affected my life a lot moving from St Thomas... after they tore it down we moved into the Lafitte housing development. They had us mixed up in a lot of situations. It was hard living in this place...You split up people from all kinds of generations, all kinds of public housing and you made it bad for us to live... it is very stressful, it is hard for us. Especially young Black women." -***New Orleans Focus Group Participant #4***

"I had a good friend that lived in Scott Carver… she told me when she had to move out it was like leaving a piece of her behind because for 26 years that was all she knew. Talking to her about that, you could understand, you could feel the anger; you could feel the hurt in her voice."

-Miami Focus Group Participant #7

One participant in San Francisco was notified three years ago that her development was going to be demolished and rebuilt with new housing. Below, she discusses some of her fears related to these demolition plans:

"It takes a year or two [to rebuild] and where are you going to stay all that time? It's horrible to hear the news, especially if you are a single mother. I've been worried since they told me three years ago, even if they just say that good things are going to happen. I'd rather live in my house the way it is now. I have two bedrooms for each of my kids and I sleep in the living room but I at least have stability. But I'm very nervous; I don't know what I am going to do when the time comes. They are saying good things, like they are going to help us with the move or that they are going to reimburse the money we spent moving and that we could move to another place there, but I don't understand how they are going to do it because we are a lot people. So I am really worried." -***San Francisco Focus Group Participant #6***

Others discussed the stress created by having to suddenly move to a different place:

"Because me for one, my family we were kind of derailed by the new neighborhood." -***Miami Focus Group Participant #2***

3. THE DEMOLITION OF PUBLIC HOUSING HAS CAUSED A CULTURE OF FEAR AMONGST PUBLIC HOUSING RESIDENTS.

As public housing is demolished around the country, those that still live in public housing watch anxiously as they await a similar fate. Focus group participants articulated the fear that they could be next:

"They have lied so much to me, until I just don't want to hear them no more. I don't want to go to the meeting no more when they come because I know that it is going to change within a certain amount of time. And they are going to be saying something different. But when they want us to get out they'll be having us get out in a hurry and force us out. We'll be forced out." -***San Francisco Focus Group Participant #2***

"I did hear about other housing being demolished for HOPE VI. They were being renovated but many people couldn't come back to their homes and they ended up in shelters. I couldn't do that again, I really don't know what I would do if I lost my home." -***San Francisco Focus Group Participant #8***

"They have lied so much to me, until I just don't want to hear them no more. I don't want to go to the meeting no more when they come because I know that it is going to change within a certain amount of time. And they are going to be saying something different. But when they want us to get out they'll be having us get out in a hurry and force us out. We'll be forced out."

-San Francisco Focus Group Participant #2

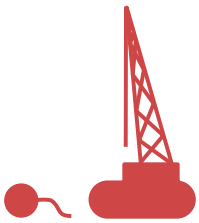
Summary and Recommendations

Despite the high need for affordable housing, PHAs across the country have continued to demolish public housing units. As focus group participants reported, the demolition of public housing displaces residents, destroys communities, and creates additional hardships for displaced residents. Furthermore, in cities where demolition has not yet happened, a sense of fear looms for public housing residents. HUD policies like HOPE VI allow for this demolition without one-for-one replacement of hard units. Demolition and displacement were not the intent or charge of the HOPE VI program, but have become its legacy.

In order to address the demolition of public housing and displacement of residents, the Right to the City is calling on the federal government to enact the following solutions:

INSTITUTE A MORATORIUM ON DEMOLITION OF PUBLIC HOUSING AND REQUIRE ONE-FOR-ONE REPLACEMENT OF ALREADY DEMOLISHED HARD UNITS.

To alleviate the devastating consequences that policies of demolition and the resulting displacement have had on people's lives, Right to the City believes the federal government should institute a moratorium on demolition of public housing. The federal government must also require one-for-one replacement of all hard units of public housing that have already been lost due to demolition.



Resident Snapshot

"In D.C., gentrification and displacement are tearing apart families, communities, and neighborhoods."


Debra Frasier

Debra Frasier is 56 years old and has lived in Washington, D.C. for most of her life, and in public housing for 15 years. She is a leader with Friends & Residents of Arthur Capers Carrollsburg, a resident-driven community organizing group that is fighting for resident participation, resident-led policies, and one-for-one replacement of demolished homes. In 2001, Friends & Residents became the first resident group in the country to win the guarantee of one-for-one replacement of public housing units demolished in a D.C. public housing development under the federal program, HOPE VI.

Debra was displaced from her home due to HOPE VI redevelopment.

> "The housing authority sends you to places where a dog wouldn't want to live. They sent me and my daughter on a bus to look at a few places. These places were just awful. Screens were hanging out of windows; the backyard was like a jungle. Just a mess. These places were much worse than the public housing."

When she was relocated, she felt alienated and disconnected in her new neighborhood.

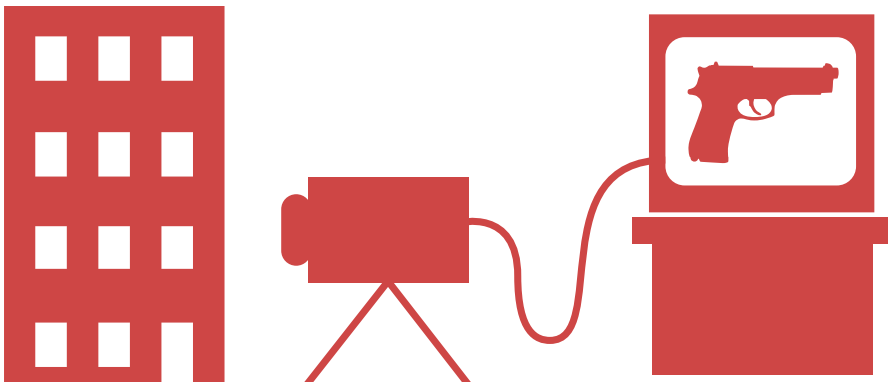
> "You don't know where the bus is, where to go, you get on the wrong bus, you're stressed and disoriented. Your life is totally new and confusing. Once we moved to this neighborhood, I became an outsider. Most people in this area have lived here for years; it's a well established community. When I walk outside, sometimes some of the neighbors wave, sometimes they don't. Some never do. In public housing, everyone was friendly. I could count on folks to watch out for my children."

Many residents experience similar problems with relocation.

> "It's creating more problems then there were before. First, is that residents are getting lost in the fray. The housing authority doesn't keep up with the residents that are going to be relocated. Once people move, they can't find them and there's no follow up. Some of our elderly and disabled are suffering the most. I know people who were displaced and forced to move to places where they knew no one. All of us were dispersed so we have no friends where we end up. There's no one to check on you."

4

The Myth of the High-rise Hell Holes



Media Misrepresentations of Public Housing

"They put the negativity of public housing in the newspapers, like crime. Put the positive in there. Why can't we get mentioned as positive people? Mention how nice the neighbors are. Mention how the yard is still clean." *-Miami Focus Group Participant #12*

Background

For many people, the term public housing conjures up negative images of "high-rise hell holes" filled with drug dealers, guns, and violence. These stereotypes reflect racial biases that are deeply embedded in the American psyche and perpetuated by the mainstream media. As with many stereotypes, these images of public housing are rooted in some half-truths: public housing residents in America's big cities do deal with a fair share of crime and violence. However, there are many other significant issues facing public housing residents, including disinvestment of government resources, gentrification and displacement of residents, lack of access to social services, and failing schools in low-income neighborhoods, to name a few. These issues are the root causes of the crime, violence, and poverty that exist in public housing, yet they are often missing entirely from media coverage about public housing. The images favored by the media also omit the positive aspects of public housing such as family ties and a strong sense of community amongst residents. Beyond simply misinforming the public, these stereotypes also fuel the proponents of the deconcentration theory, providing them with faulty evidence that the problem with public housing is the residents, poor people of color, rather than the root causes of poverty. These stereotypes are significant because they shape how the general population and decision-makers view public housing and in turn, influence policymaking about public housing.

As part of this project, we reviewed and analyzed 400 articles from major newspapers over the last three years in the eight cities included in this study (50 per city). We randomly selected the articles using Westlaw media search ("public housing" as the keyword) and subsequently analyzed them using N6, a qualitative data analysis program. Researchers looked for the most prevalent keywords and then categorized these words into themes for each city and the nation as a whole. We also identified which issues were not mentioned in the articles.

Figure 17. Most common words found in media review (400 articles)

GUN
444

POVERTY
389

CRIME
324

GANG
233

DRUG
207

Findings

The primary theme that appears in news articles about public housing is the prevalence of social problems such as poverty, drugs, violence, and gang activity. This is true across cities and news sources. Few stories, in fact, exclude one of these themes. In the articles analyzed, the reporter frequently cites public housing as the source of social problems. This leads to a near universal consensus in the articles analyzed that the current public housing program is a failure.

1. GUNS AND POVERTY ARE THE TWO MOST PREVALENT WORDS FOUND IN THE ARTICLES.

Below are two figures (Figures 18 and 19) that organize the media review data by city and keyword, with totals for each word at the bottom. By far the most common word in articles from all the cities was "gun," appearing a total of 444 times. In San Francisco alone, it was mentioned 238 times and in Washington, D.C. over 100 times. Nationally, "poverty" was the second most common word mentioned, appearing 389 times with fairly equal distribution among the cities. Not surprisingly, "demolition" was the most common word in articles from New Orleans, appearing a total of 110 times. And in Los Angeles, the word "gangs" was mentioned in connection with public housing almost 100 times.

Figure 18. Frequency of most used words (400 articles)

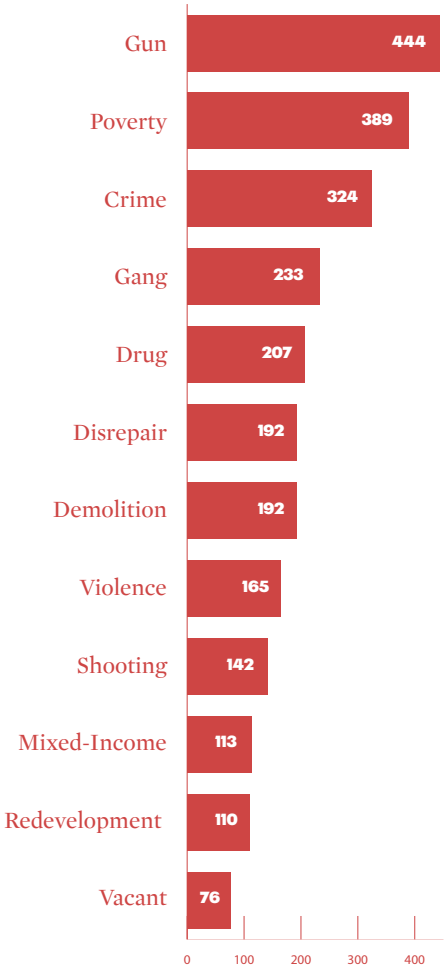
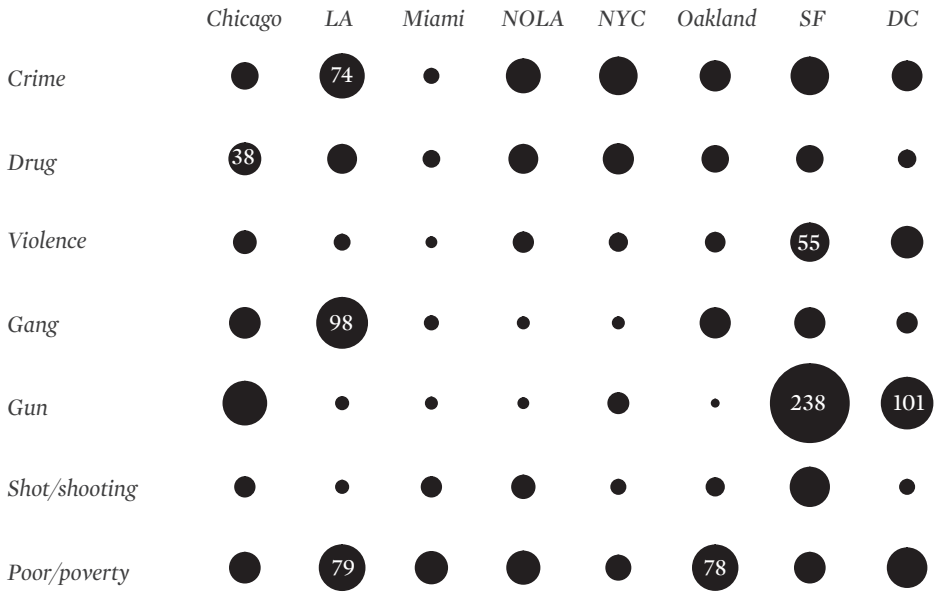


Figure 19. Frequency of Most Used Words by City (50 Articles Per City)



In the articles analyzed, the most prevalent answer to fixing the social problems associated with public housing was to demolish the buildings and replace them with mixed-income developments. In many of the articles, the assumption was made that concentrating low-income people in one area sustains their poverty and provides an environment friendly to crime, drugs, and violence. An excerpt from one of the articles reviewed exemplifies this type of reporting:

> "I think the romanticism that goes with the 'good old days of public housing' belies the harsh realities of crime and social malaise that had been created as a result of a concentration of low, low income folks," said Michael P. Kelly, who directed the troubled Housing Authority of New Orleans from 1995 to 2000...Women that would put their babies in bathtubs at the sound of gunfire, that was a reality; coming home from your job and having to walk through young people participating in drug trades."
> *-New York Times, December 26, 2006*

Mixed-income developments are portrayed as superior, as they break up these so-called pockets of poverty and the social problems associated with them. This media portrayal is in line with the underlying premises of the deconcentration theory.

2. THERE IS A LACK OF REPORTING ON ROOT CAUSES OF PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE PUBLIC HOUSING.

Given the perceived failure of public housing that is reported, little discussion has focused on ways to improve the current public housing program. In addition, while the articles report on social problems such as violence, drug use, and poverty, they do not provide further analysis of whether or why these problems are more prevalent or concentrated in public housing than in other spaces. It is as if it is dangerous simply because it is public housing:

> "(Public housing) always seemed so dangerous. And it was: In the late 1980s and early 1990s, police arrested residents for mob violence, racial harassment, drug dealing. At one point, they raided a crack house in the complex, arresting 10 Los Angeles-based gang members." -***Los Angeles Times, September 18, 2006***

The articles neither make connections to the root causes of problems in public housing units (federal disinvestment in public housing and other social programs, joblessness, or lack of services in communities), nor do they suggest solutions to these issues.

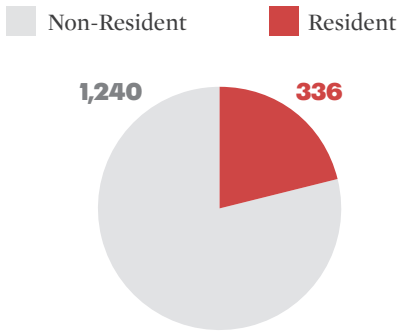
The media also lacks an analysis of the negative effects of mixed-income housing programs such as HOPE VI, focusing only on the few positive results it has had on former public housing residents. The articles fail to mention the significant number of low-income housing units that are lost when a public housing site is converted into a "mixed-income" development. Moreover, they omit any analysis of what happens to families after they are displaced. Instead the articles cast programs such as HOPE VI, which displaced hundreds of thousands of public housing residents, as purely positive:

> "HOPE VI has changed the way we think. I can't say this enough: Our whole way of developing public housing has changed...Without exaggeration, (HOPE VI) has been truly the most effective and the most powerful economic development program we have ever undertaken in America." -***San Francisco Chronicle, February 23, 2006***

While some articles include quotes from policymakers and experts, any thorough, proper critique of mixed-income housing programs would require input from public housing residents. In the articles we reviewed, non-residents were 3.5 times more likely to be quoted than residents (See Figure 20). Furthermore when residents were quoted, it was often solely due to community organizing efforts of grassroots organizations to push resident voices to the forefront of the discussion.

Public housing residents, those most directly impacted by policy changes favoring the creation of "mixed-income" developments, lack a clear voice in the articles analyzed. Coverage instead seeks out only the opinions of policymakers and experts, which subsequently adds to the negative stereotypes surrounding public housing and its residents. The stories

Figure 20. In the articles we analyzed, public housing non-residents are quoted nearly four times as often as public housing residents.



that residents could tell – such as the impact of disinvestment and displacement – are not reported at all. Further, the portrayal of public housing in the media is often starkly different from how residents themselves perceive their homes and communities.

3. ALTHOUGH MOST REPORTING ON PUBLIC HOUSING IN THE MASS MEDIA FOCUSES ON CRIME AND VIOLENCE, RESIDENTS SEE PUBLIC HOUSING AS A VIBRANT COMMUNITY AND A GOOD PLACE TO LIVE AND RAISE A FAMILY.

"If I ran into somebody who asked me about public housing, I would mostly talk about my own personal experience. I would let them know that my mama had eight girls and one boy. She did a good job and she's been in public housing all her life. I'd let them know that my mama never been on drugs a day in her life. She never smoked cigarettes. I'd let them know I was raised in a house with a mama and a daddy. I'd let them know what a good girl I am and how all her daughters are falling straight in her footsteps." *-New Orleans Focus Group Participant #2*

"They don't like public housing because 'oh they have food stamps and this that and the other and we sit on our butts all day'. Not all of us sit on our butts all day. I work for a living, just like everyone else in this apartment complex. They work for a living, so why judge us?"

-New Orleans Focus Group Participant #3

Media stories that focus on public housing often exclude what residents cite as the most positive aspects of public housing. While residents recognize that some aspects need to be changed, they also believe that the media focuses exclusively on negative coverage, rarely analyzing the root causes of the problems or any positive aspects of the program. Residents who participated in our focus groups commented on this trend in the media:

"What [the media] shows of public housing... is drugs, crime, and prostitution. But it is not like that in public housing, from what I've seen of public housing they only have working class citizens in public housing."*-New Orleans Focus Group Participant #1*

"[The public] should know that we are the ones working hard. They don't know that; what they know is what they hear in the news; that we are thieves that we are in gangs that we are drug addicts, but that is not true." *-San Francisco Focus Group Participant #8*

Residents also noted how the media rarely portrays the vibrant sense of community present in many public housing developments:

"When you hear public housing [in the media] you think gunshots, fires, crimes, and drugs, and murders, and killings. But they also do not tell you that the next-door neighbor is there for you. They got your back. These projects – they are considered a family. We call these projects home. That is what people really need to know. That's the positive side of it." They are a family when they don't have nothing. When you have an older lady 60 or 70 living alone, these projects are their home. Cause they say they got that person bringing them bottle water. Bringing them food, doing things for them...[T]aking these kids and taking them off the streets...they got somewhere. They got a home. They can say 'I may live in the projects but I got a home and I'm not under a bridge.'" *-Miami Focus Group Participant #8*

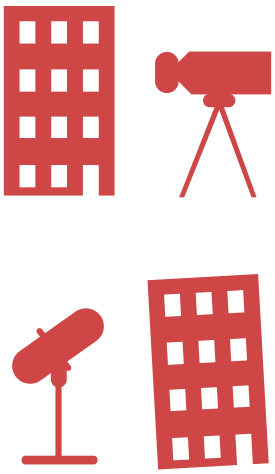
Summary and Recommendations

Our review revealed that the media disproportionately focuses on social problems in public housing, often by repeatedly using loaded words like “gun” or “gangs.” By contrast, many residents focus on the tight knit communities in public housing, reporting that it is a good place to raise a family. Furthermore, articles about public housing rarely provide the residents’ perspectives or identify the root causes of the problems in public housing, fueling support for deconcentration theory and perpetuating racial stereotypes. Lastly, solutions for improving the current system are rarely offered, and if they are, they simply praise methods that demolish projects, such as HOPE VI.

In order to combat the negative framing around public housing in the media, the Right to the City Alliance is calling on the media to enact the following solutions:

1. ASSIGN REPORTERS TO COVER ALL HOUSING.

Local media in particular need to have reporters on staff that cover housing, including public housing. Such coverage should be part of overall reporting on the U.S. economic crisis and recovery, and should cover housing not as an industry, but as a public good.

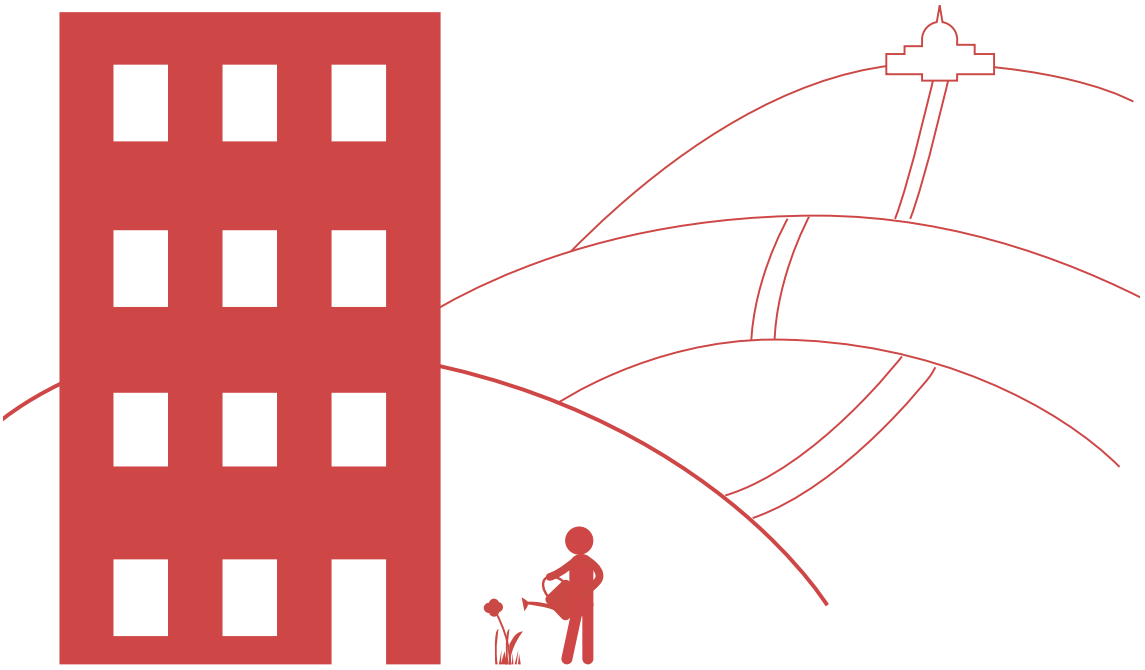


2. GIVE FULL AND BALANCED REPORTING BY ACTIVELY AND PROMINENTLY INCLUDING THE VOICES OF RESIDENTS.

To provide the public with a more balanced and accurate portrayal of public housing, the Right to the City believes media outlets must actively seek to include residents’ voices and perspective in reporting. Since the media greatly affects how everyone, including policymakers, view public housing, the media has a significant responsibility to go out of its way to ensure that residents’ lived experiences and viewpoints are represented in local, regional, and national coverage.

5

It's Our Community



Lack of Real Resident Input and Housing Authority Accountability

"This is our community, and who best will know what is right for the community than the people who live here. It's our community and we should have the right." *-New York City Focus Group Participant #6*

Background[133]

In theory, resident participation is built into the governance and history of public housing. The Housing and Community Development Act of 1987 established resident councils, but the structure has existed informally since the 1970s.[134] HUD's regulations, which govern tenant participation, give public housing residents "a right to organize and elect a resident council to represent their interests" as a means to provide "input into housing authority policy making."[135] The regulations allow residents to participate at two levels: through resident councils, which provide a vehicle for public housing residents to engage in the decision-making process in their own buildings and/or development, and through jurisdiction-wide resident bodies which allow them to participate in decisions across developments, throughout their towns, and across cities and/or counties.

In 1986, HUD published regulations on resident participation that were later revised in 1988 with additional provisions on resident management.[136] However, in 1994, new regulations removed many of these provisions and established the current guidelines for resident participation. Part 964 of Title 24 in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), commonly referred to as the "964 regs," allow residents to organize at both the development and jurisdiction levels (i.e. city/county) and places responsibilities on PHAs to ensure that the resident participation system is functional.

Part 964 of Title 24 in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), is commonly referred to as the "**964 regs**," and allows residents to organize at both the development and jurisdiction levels (i.e. city/county) and places responsibilities on **PHAs** to **ensure** that the **resident participation system is functional.**

In 1998, the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act required PHAs to develop one-year and five-year plans in consultation with resident advisory boards (RABs). If a jurisdiction-wide resident body in compliance with the "964 regs" did not already exist, PHAs were required to help establish the resident advisory boards (RABs). In addition to meeting with the RAB to develop their annual plans, PHAs must hold public hearings for the general resident population to comment on draft annual plans before they are submitted to HUD for approval. These annual plans are central to policymaking since they include all of the major policy changes and plans of a PHA in any given year.

Another milestone in resident participation policy came in 2001 when it became mandatory for PHAs to fund resident participation through Tenant Participation Activities (TPA) funds. PHAs must distribute these funds at $25 per housing unit, with $10 (or 40%) going to the PHA for the administration of such activities.[137]

While all of these measures aim to include residents in policy decisions, the current resident participation platforms are void of real power. In practice, residents have very little decision-making power since resident councils are limited to an advisory role. This lack of power and input makes it nearly impossible for residents to hold PHAs accountable for their actions.

In addition, despite the requirement that local PHAs fund TPA, those funds are often redirected to other uses. The massive mismatch in technical expertise between a well-funded public housing authority staff[138] and extremely poor public housing residents balancing jobs and childcare often makes meaningful participation impossible. Indeed, it often breeds a

cynicism which can lead some resident leadership to simply rubber stamp management policies in return for personal recognition and other favors. HUD simply does not have strong enough mechanisms in place to overcome these inequities and ensure that residents have a meaningful voice in decision-making. Consequently, residents do not feel like they have adequate power in shaping decisions about public housing.

Findings

1. RESIDENTS DO NOT FEEL THAT THEY HAVE ADEQUATE INPUT INTO DECISIONS THAT ARE MADE ABOUT PUBLIC HOUSING AND HAVE DIFFICULTY HOLDING HUD AND PHAS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS.

Public housing residents feel current means for resident participation are superficial and fail to provide any accountability. Focus group participants described why residents should have more input in public housing policy:

"I don't think they are helping out. I think we should be the ones kind of surveying our own community, because we would know our residents more than they do, we interact more."

-New York City Focus Group Participant #14

"I'm the one who lives [in public housing]...the people who control the budget at the housing authority, they never lived in the public housing. They don't know what we need in public housing. They don't sit out at night and watch the children play. They don't know what goes on in public housing."-***New Orleans Focus Group Participant #2***

"I think that poor people should know how that money is being spent because at the end of the day it is our money, not their money, it is ours. So we should have the right to decide how to spend that money and also decide who is going to receive that money." -***San Francisco Focus Group Participant #8***

Many residents also feel PHAs do not effectively communicate with residents about public housing policy, commenting on the lack of information provided to residents by housing authorities:

"And they don't put flyers around saying there is a meeting in HANO [the Housing Authority of New Orleans]. We have to go to the top officials to get a notice on a meeting, which is ludicrous." -***New Orleans Focus Group Participant #3***

"We know there is money for housing, but the question is what are they doing with it. Public housing has been there for years and years, but the conditions are still bad. It would be good to include the community and let them know how the money is being spent." -***San Francisco Focus Group Participant #6***

Public Housing Waiting Lists

Lack of PHA accountability has also caused a colossal problem with public housing waiting lists. Thousands of low-income people are waiting to access public housing all across the country. These low-income applicants on average will wait years to obtain public housing. In the PHAs included in this study, people on the waiting list wait an average of 22 months to obtain housing. Our focus group participants fared even worse, waiting an average of 72 months. While these numbers are high, they only show a fraction of the need for public housing, as waitlist data is inaccurate and incomplete. The waitlists also exemplify the problems of mismanagement and ineffectiveness of PHAs due to deregulation and lack of oversight by HUD. HUD provides little direction for local PHAs to follow in maintaining waitlists. Some PHAs maintain an open waitlist policy and track the number of applicants seeking entry into public housing. Other authorities close their lists for months and sometimes years, leaving no mechanism for tracking the demand for public housing in these cities. Cities such as Miami, meanwhile, purge all names on their waitlist every several years, forcing people to reapply every time they wish to be considered for a public housing unit. Such inconsistencies create significant hardship for low-income public housing residents and make it difficult to track the true need for public housing.

"I've had to reapply again, and again, and again. For 15 years I've been on a waiting list."

-Miami Focus Group Participant #8

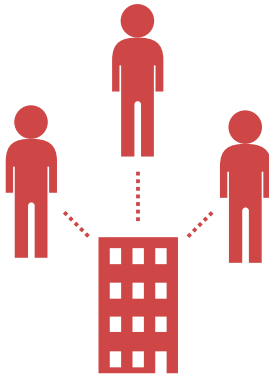
Summary & Recommendations

Current public housing resident participation platforms do not give residents sufficient decision-making power, a fact echoed by focus group participants. Residents want to have more input into PHA policies, budgets, and practices. Furthermore, without increased resident participation power, residents will be unable to hold local PHAs accountable for their decisions and actions.

In order to address the demolition of public housing and displacement of residents, Right to the City is calling on the federal government to enact the following solutions:

1. ENSURE THAT ALL PUBLIC HOUSING IS COMMUNITY CONTROLLED, FULLY TRANSPARENT, AND FULLY ACCOUNTABLE TO RESIDENTS.

Due to trends in deregulation and decentralization, PHAs across the country are becoming less and less accountable to residents. In order to ensure transparency of public housing authorities and increased accountability for public housing residents, Right to the City believes that the federal government should impose stricter oversight and accountability mechanisms on public housing. This means stringent monitoring of compliance with resident participation requirements and proactive efforts by HUD to promulgate regulations concerning the maintenance of public housing waiting lists.



Resident Snapshot

"It's wrong the way they treat people; seems like they don't care."

Emma Harris

Emma is a 57-year-old woman who has lived in San Francisco her whole life. She has been active in People Organized to Win Employment Rights (POWER) since it was founded almost 13 years ago. After spending many years on the waiting list, Emma finally got into public housing in 2008. Currently Emma is a leader in POWER's Bayview Organizing Project fighting for environmental justice and accountable development in the community of Bayview Hunters Point.

Emma spent two years trying to get on the waitlist for public housing.

> "I wanted better housing; I wanted to have my own place. So I thought that would be a good idea; to put my name on the [public housing] list...First time I tried to get on the list, they [San Francisco Housing Authority (SFHA)] had a lottery. That was 1998 and I didn't get picked for that one, so they sent me a card, 'sorry try again later.' And then [in 1999] I called the housing authority, to give my information... but I had to wait several months [till 2000] to get on the list."

SFHA told Emma she would only have to wait two or three years for public housing, but she spent seven years on the waitlist.

> "When I first got on, they [SFHA] didn't tell me where I was on the list. They didn't tell me anything about it. So I waited. Finally, I kept calling and calling, and then the lady gave me an appointment to come down, and then they told me where I was on the list. I called a lot to see where I was and how long it would take. But it seemed like they [SFHA] would give you the run around. They'd tell you, 'you can't call at this certain time,' and they'd tell you they'll let you know, or to call your worker and give you the number to call. But a lot of the time she wasn't there or told you to call back; seemed like they didn't want to tell you anything."

Emma's health suffered because she was forced to live a rundown single occupancy hotel.

> "You have to share a bathroom and you don't have a kitchen...The bathroom would be so bad you didn't want to go in there... It's not healthy when you are not clean. I got colds a lot there, I was sick a lot... I got depressed. I stayed in my room and I wouldn't come out for nothing."

In 2007 Emma finally got into public housing.

> "I did, last year [2008], my first thanksgiving dinner there. It felt good because I hadn't cooked in so long, because of the whole thing. Now it's good to be able to do that. And eat better, because I couldn't do that at the other place... Eat my vegetables and stuff that I need to eat. But I feel good there; it's like home now."

V. Bailouts, Budgets, & Bills: Current Political Climate

The findings in this report paint a clear picture of the public housing crisis. As public housing residents have testified here, current problems in public housing are due to HUD's failure to address root causes and its efforts to create policies to deconcentrate poverty, including disinvestment, displacement, and privatization of public housing. Current policies take isolated and disconnected approaches to public housing and thus prevent public housing from reaching its full potential (resulting, for instance, in the demolition of units without replacement).

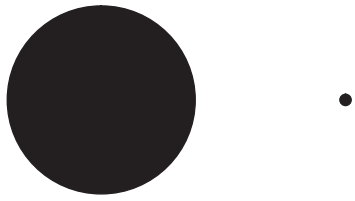
As the country continues to suffer from the worst recession in decades, the housing crisis has hit a breaking point and poor people of color are suffering. The time to act is now – under the leadership of President Obama and Congress, Shaun Donovan and HUD have the opportunity to drastically change current policies to correct these missteps and address root causes. The voices in this report, as well as current grassroots movements across the country, indicate the urgency with which public housing residents want and need these comprehensive policy changes.

Bailout, Budget, and Funding

The economic downturn has affected all people living in the U.S., but it has hit low-income people, particularly those of color, very hard. Unfortunately, the government's response to the economic crisis exemplifies the inequity in U.S. policies. As we know, the economic crisis began with the failure of several corporations, the resulting downward spiral of stocks, and the loss of thousands of jobs. Congress and the Bush and Obama Administrations responded by bailing out various banks and corporations, including Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, AIG, and Bank of America for a total of $1.1 trillion,[139] while virtually ignoring low-income people. Public housing, which has been in a severe crisis for many years, only received $4 billion from the stimulus package. Further, much of these funds are not actually reaching the communities most in need of this federal investment because certain funds have only been allocated to "high-performance" PHAs, a distinction that excludes most large PHAs like those in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles.[140] The funding gap between federal investment in banks and public housing exemplifies the economic injustice of current policies and reflects the concerns of residents about the budget and policy priorities of HUD and local PHAs, including their lack of transparency and accountability.

Disproportionate funding is also a problem in regular appropriations made by Congress. Indeed, Congress has already underfunded HUD's operating budget for five consecutive years.[141] As we mentioned earlier, to fully fund public housing in 2011, Congress needs to appropriate $5.08 billion for the Operating Fund and $22 billion for the Capital Fund.[142] At this point, President Obama has only requested $4.829 billion for the Operating Fund and $2.044 billion for the Capital Fund.[143] Current Operating Fund allocations, if adopted, would result in full funding this year; however, proposed funding for the Public Housing Capital Fund is the lower than it has been in the last five years.[144] In addition, even if there was full funding of both funds according to current formulas, many advocates and experts believe that the current formula, as it stands, does not provide PHAs with sufficient funds to cover operating costs. Moreover, the formulas fail to account for the country's economic crisis and make proper adjustments – a particular problem given the high cost of market-rate housing,

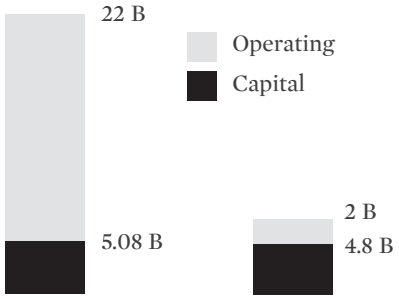
Figure 21. Government support in comparison



Bank bailouts
1.1 Trillion

Stimulus funds for public housing
4 Billion

Figure 22. Funds for public housing needed vs. proposed



Amount **needed** to fully fund public housing

Amount **presently proposed** by congress (2011)

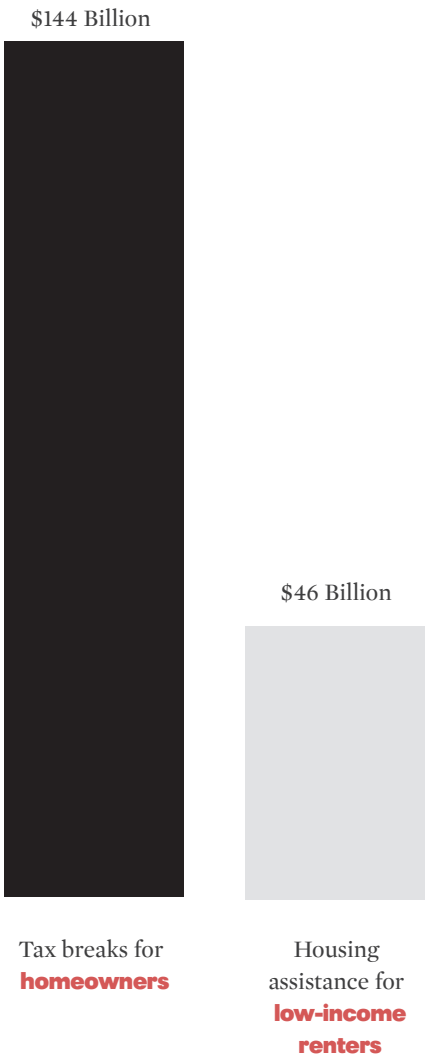
and the rapid rate of disinvestment across all sectors. We know that systematic disinvestment in public housing directly impacts the effectiveness of local PHAs – who become forced to cut critical services and raise rents to make up for the deficit – and unfortunately, the proposed 2011 budget does not appear to fulfill this gap.

Meanwhile, the Administration has proposed $350 million for "Transforming Rental Assistance" (TRA), a multiphase initiative that will turn public housing into a new type of project-based voucher "akin to the [current] project-based voucher program."[145] It will also combine 13 different funding sources into one streamlined funding source. The details of the initiative are still being fleshed out, but HUD expects to convert 300,000 units during the first phase. We believe, however, that this initiative attacks traditional public housing with further deregulation and privatization and moves public housing more towards the voucher program, which as discussed above, is not a sufficient substitute for the permanent affordability of traditional public housing and will create a variety of problems for residents. The new reliance on the private market will not provide residents with all of the protections and benefits that public housing provides, e.g. resident participation, permanent public ownership, and public oversight, among others, and as recent history has shown that, ultimately, residents will be displaced and community networks will be broken. Furthermore, TRA fails to recognize a critical piece of information, which is demonstrated in this report – the fact that many residents want to live in public housing as it is.

As the Administration chips away at public housing, federal subsidies for homeowners,[146] which tend to benefit higher-income households, have been growing.[147] In 2008, the federal government spent three times more on tax breaks for homeowners than on housing assistance for low-income renters, even when combining multiple affordable housing programs. In total, these efforts cost the government $144 billion.[148] During this same time, the federal government allocated only about $46 billion for housing assistance for low-income renters.[149] This is particularly troubling given that the majority of home mortgage tax deductions, the largest of the homeowner subsidies, benefit households with incomes between $100,000 and $500,000.[150] The National Housing Trust Fund, which is targeted at low-income families and was recently adopted by Congress, is an excellent first step in shifting these inequities, but it has yet to be funded and its impact remains uncertain.

Overall, the government's priorities remain in the wrong place – it continues to spend the majority of its housing subsidies on those who need it least. This represents a major shift in the government's historical role when it comes to housing, and it is time to make the pendulum swing back in the direction for providing for those who need help.

Figure 23. Federal spending on housing in comparison



Political and Legislative Movement

In the past year or so, the Administration and HUD have started to make efforts to shift federal funds to make up for Congress' disproportionate funding and refocus the priorities of low-income housing, but some substantial concerns remain.

CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE: The Administration has sought additional funding to rename and reform HOPE VI by announcing the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) in Spring 2009, which aims to comprehensively reform ten of the poorest and "most challenged" urban areas in the country.[151] Recognizing the important role that infrastructure plays in community development, CNI intends to take a more holistic approach to neighborhood revitalization by transforming schools, transportation systems, and businesses within local communities. While the initiative's comprehensive approach is an important step, some concerns remain. A majority of the $250 million[152] budget for CNI will be used for housing reform efforts that are similar to the objectives of HOPE VI – a program that has largely failed our lowest-income residents. Indeed, HUD Secretary Donovan has claimed, "We all see Choice Neighborhoods as a celebration of HOPE VI."[153] Unfortunately, CNI fails to correct the flawed aspects of HOPE VI. For example, CNI does not require one-for-one replacement of hard units that have been demolished,[154] a necessary provision to avoid past HOPE VI mistakes and prevent the displacement of hundreds of families. Unlike HOPE VI, but problematic nonetheless, CNI also allows for-profit private developers[155] to apply for federal funding, allowing for lapses in oversight and accountability to residents.

SECTION EIGHT VOUCHER REFORM ACT: In June 2009, the latest version of the Section Eight Voucher Reform Act (SEVRA) (H.R. 3045) was introduced, expanding the current Moving to Work program and renaming it the Housing Innovation Program (HIP). Exempting local PHAs from various federal rules and regulations, this program continues the current policies of deregulation, presenting significant risks to residents and potentially exposing 750,000 low-income people to rent increases.[156] Sadly, as shown through this research, local PHAs have already instituted dramatic increases in tenant rents to make up for recent federal underfunding, so any additional increases as a result of HIP would be devastating for many residents.

SECTION 3 OF THE HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1968: In October 2009, HUD informed PHAs that it is mandatory to submit the reporting form documenting compliance with Section 3 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968. Section 3 is a law that creates jobs, contracting, and training opportunities for certain residents and businesses in areas that receive funding from HUD. The resident beneficiaries of Section 3 are low- and very low-income people, including public housing residents. All HUD funds received by PHAs are subject to Section 3. This means that PHAs must ensure that at least 30% of all employees newly hired for public housing administrative, modernization, or construction jobs are Section 3 residents. The law's appendix provides forty-two examples of how PHAs can offer training and employment opportunities to Section 3 residents, as well as examples of efforts to award contracts to Section 3 businesses. Specifically, the October notice stated: "Each

year...[HUD] awards billions of federal dollars for the rebuilding of distressed communities, administration of Public Housing Authorities, development of affordable housing units, and removal of dangerous hazards in homes...[T]he completion of these projects typically result in numerous employment and contracting opportunities that fuel local economies across the country and create a multiplier effect for HUD financial assistance. Section 3...represents the Department's policy for promoting...[these] opportunities...to low- and very low-income residents (regardless of race and gender) in the communities where HUD funds are spent..."[157] This notice was a significant signal that HUD, under the new Administration, was going to start ensuring Section 3 compliance so that contract, job, and training opportunities would in fact go to public housing and other low-income residents.

TOGETHER WE CARE ACT: In December 2009, Representatives Barney Frank, Nydia Velazquez, and Maxine Waters introduced the "Together We Care Act," a bill to establish a national pilot program to train and certify public housing residents as home care aides. The bill also provides for home care assistance to Medicaid-eligible recipients of federal housing assistance (including public housing residents). The legislation is a great example of how measures related to public housing can go beyond bricks and mortar and toward impacting residents as individuals and as members of a community. The job training will give public housing residents the opportunity to have well-paying, stable careers in the vastly expanding healthcare sector, while the home care assistance will re-establish the notion that services can and should be an element to public housing.

TRANSFORMING RENTAL ASSISTANCE In early 2010, the HUD unveiled its draft proposal, Transforming Rental Assistance (TRA), which would convert all of the HUD housing programs for the lowest-income families, including public housing, to a single program with a single funding stream. While the details are still being fleshed out, TRA immediately raises some red flags. It appears to make public housing more akin to a project-based voucher and will expose public housing to the instability and pitfalls of the private market by making public housing subject to a mortgage. While the length of the use restriction for that mortgage is still being figured out, the whole idea threatens the stability of public housing being permanently affordable. In addition, there does not appear to be enough protection if there is a default related to the mortgage. There are many questions with TRA, but as it stands, we are most concerned that it appears to steer public housing out of the public domain and into the throes of the private market.

In the midst of the economic turmoil, the recent attempts of Congress, HUD, and the Obama Administration to reform public housing have opened a narrow window for important change and improvement. New and bold approaches to policy are crucial to effectively reinvest in public housing communities and help them reach their full potential. Especially in light of the recent economic crisis, public housing policy reforms are urgently needed to ensure the preservation of public housing as a stable resource for low-income people of color.

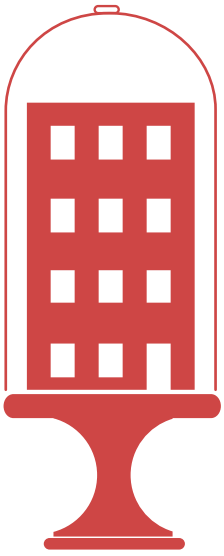
VI. Recommendations: Toward a Right to Public Housing

Based on the findings of this report, it is clear that there is a desperate need for the federal government to address the shortage of low-income housing in the United States. This report also shows that public housing is a critical resource for low-income people, particularly people of color. While Right to the City believes that the government should ultimately be responsible for addressing the housing crisis, we recognize that a multi-faceted, multi-sectored approach is critical to truly solving this crisis. For example, the media must exemplify and encourage responsible and thorough reporting, and the philanthropic community must support public housing organizing.

In terms of the scope of this report, however, the Right to the City Alliance calls on the United States federal government, including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Congress, and the Obama Administration, as well as local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs), to take the following immediate, intermediate, and long-term actions to remedy the housing crisis.

Immediate Solutions: Preservation

1. PRESERVE AND STRENGTHEN EXISTING PUBLIC HOUSING



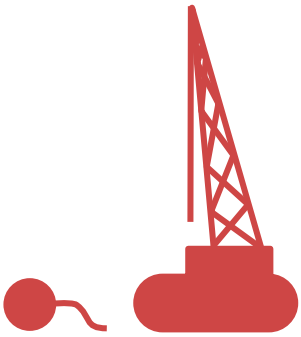
> "The government should pay more attention to public housing and actually put money into public housing so the repairs, and anything public housing needs, will be taken care of. Right now, the government isn't putting money into public housing. That's why a lot of buildings are really breaking down – people's windows, people's ceilings – everything is really breaking down because there is no money to repair."
> *-New York City Focus Group Participant #10*

Due to the trend of disinvestment over the last two decades, PHAs nationwide are experiencing operating deficits and residents are suffering from lack of services and delays on basic repairs. Additionally, capital repair needs continue to go unmet. As a result, the nation's public housing stock is in disrepair, thousands of units sit vacant, residents lack access to quality services, and programs such as job training are rarely available. In order to remedy this and ensure that public housing can continue to be a resource to millions of low-income people, Right to the City recommends that:

- Congress immediately restore full funding to the Public Housing Operating Fund by allocating $5.08 billion in funds in 2011 and provide full funding in subsequent years.
- Congress allocate $22 billion to fund unmet capital needs in public housing developments.[158]
- Congress pass the Together We Care Act to create jobs and increase access to services for public housing residents; alternatively, HUD create such a program through its Resident Opportunities and Self Sufficiency (ROSS) program.
- HUD allocate adequate amounts of stimulus funds towards Public Housing Operating and Capital Funds.

- PHAs use capital funding to invest in green jobs programs to make public housing more energy efficient.
- PHAs invest in full rehabilitation of all existing public housing units.
- HUD prohibit PHAs from fusing funding for the Section 8 and public housing programs.
- Congress oppose the Transforming Rental Assistance program proposed by HUD and keep public housing public by not converting it to a new type of project-based voucher, or by generally fusing funding with the Section 8 voucher program.

2. INSTITUTE A MORATORIUM ON DEMOLITION OF PUBLIC HOUSING AND ENSURE ONE-FOR-ONE REPLACEMENT OF ALREADY DEMOLISHED HARD UNITS

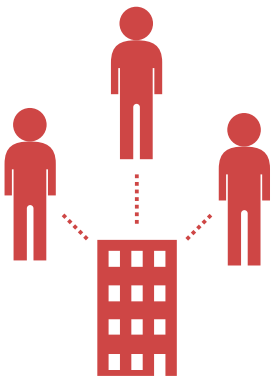


"They need to...build us bigger and better housing. Stop tearing them down. If you tear them down...build more. Out here you have a lot of homeless people. You have people coming out of foreclosures. Those people are going to be homeless."
-Miami Focus Group Participant #3

This report shows the devastating consequences that policies of demolition and the resulting displacement have had on people's lives. Too many residents are being stripped of their housing. Accordingly, we recommend that:

- Congress enact a moratorium on the demolition on all public housing.
- Congress ensure that the Choice Neighborhood Initiative truly invests in community by prohibiting funds to be used to demolish public housing and mandating one-for-one replacement of hard units that have been lost.

3. ENSURE THAT ALL PUBLIC HOUSING IS COMMUNITY CONTROLLED, FULLY TRANSPARENT, AND FULLY ACCOUNTABLE TO THE RESIDENTS



"I think that the residents should have more input. Because if we had more input, they wouldn't be putting up fences around the Lafitte development."
-New Orleans Focus Group Participant #2

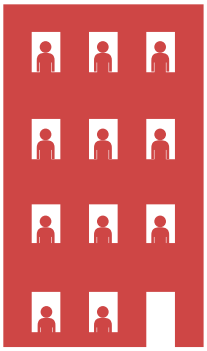
Due to trends in deregulation and decentralization, PHAs across the country are becoming less and less accountable to residents. In order to ensure PHA transparency and to increase the accountability to public housing residents, Right to the City believes that the federal government should impose stricter oversight and accountability mechanisms on public housing. To do this, we recommend that:

- HUD require the ownership of public housing to be permanently public.
- HUD fully fund resident participation and direct these funds toward resident decision-making activities.

- HUD fully fund tenants' associations without interference from PHAs.
- Congress convert the 964 Regulations into federal law and adjust the regulations so that they provide resident bodies with the power to veto PHAs on particular policy decisions such as those that allow for the demolition of public housing or govern the allocation of funds in PHA budgets, and establish a clear grievance procedure that allows residents to hold HUD and PHAs legally accountable.
- HUD collect and make publicly available data on public housing in a manner that is consistent and accessible, including Section 3 reporting forms, data from Moving to Work cities, vacancies, and number of people on waitlists.
- HUD discontinue the Moving to Work program.

Intermediate Solutions: Expansion

4. FILL ALL VACANCIES IN PUBLIC HOUSING

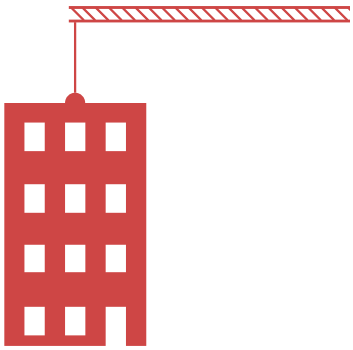


"I'm from the Ingersoll Housing, and they got 500 empty apartments in there. I would try to fill those empty apartments." *-New York City Focus Group Participant #14*

Currently, 120,000 public housing units sit vacant across the country.[159] These units are a valuable and desperately-needed resource for low-income people. While we know the need exists, the true level of need for public housing is often unknown due to disorganized and disjointed waitlist processes. Regardless, as units sit vacant, they are subject to further deterioration and create a culture of fear among residents. Filling vacancies will neither empty waitlists for public housing nor provide housing for all those who need it, but it will provide desperately needed additional units. In order to alleviate these problems, we recommend that:

- Congress allocate $7.999 billion over five years to rehabilitate all 120,000 vacant units of public housing.[160]
- HUD create and implement streamlined rules and regulations for the management of public housing waitlists so that there is a consistent and effective waitlist process across PHAs.
- PHAs work directly with HUD to accurately track and document the need for public housing.

5. EXPAND PUBLIC HOUSING



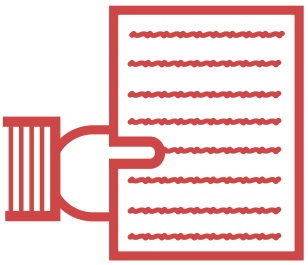
"There should be more of public housing because people are doubling up because they can't pay the rent out there and families are either doubled or tripled up in the complex [they] are in now." ***-New York City Focus Group Participant #5***

Due to the severe shortage of housing for low-income people and the inadequacy of the private market to address the housing crisis, it is clear that more public housing is needed. In addition to preserving current public housing, the Right to the City Alliance calls on the federal government to build more public housing so that no one will have to wait for public housing. We recommend that:

- Congress amend the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act (QHWRA) so that there are no barriers to constructing new public housing units.[161]
- Congress use additional funds, including stimulus funds, to expand public housing by creating 200,000 more units of public housing.
- HUD prioritize current public housing residents for jobs associated with new construction by enforcing Section 3.
- HUD mandate the use of green technology for all new public housing to ensure energy efficiency and sustainability.
- HUD provide opportunities for public housing residents to be trained for green jobs associated with projects to "green" public housing.
- HUD eliminate any time limits or work requirements associated with public housing that restrict people's access to permanent housing.
- HUD and PHAs create and implement plans to convert vacant condominiums and foreclosed properties into public housing.

Long Term Solutions: Right to Housing

6. CREATE A RIGHT TO HOUSING IN THE UNITED STATES

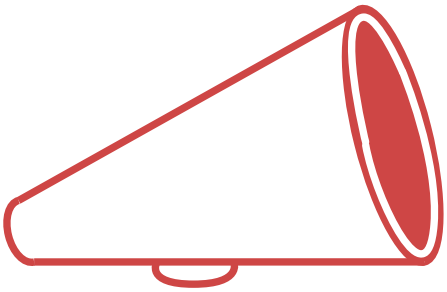


"I don't think there is enough housing for all, because if we had enough then you wouldn't have so many homeless people on the streets. If they had housing available they wouldn't be living under a bridge. ***-San Francisco Focus Group Participant #6***

In order to address the severe housing crisis facing the United States, Right to the City believes that the federal government must ensure that housing is a right rather than a privilege. As such, we recommend that:

- Congress pass a "Right to Housing" bill that secures housing for every person living in the United States and includes requirements that maintain public housing as a permanent resource.
- Congress ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).[162]

VII. Conclusion: A Call to Action



This report highlights the perspective of those who have been dismissed as mere collateral damage of U.S. modern-day housing policies – public housing residents. These residents came from the cities that make up the Right to the City Alliance. Our objective was to give a human face to the effects of neo-liberalism and deconcentration theory in contemporary housing policy, which repeatedly fail low-income people and people of color, and have a catastrophic effect on low-income communities where public housing serves as an essential network and support system. The consequences of current housing policies have exploded into the mainstream consciousness as the country continues to grapple with the housing crisis plaguing virtually every U.S. neighborhood. As this report illustrated, this crisis is rooted in misguided, systematic decision-making executed for decades. We conclude with conviction and confidence that, as a nation, we can no longer afford displacement, insecurity, and destruction of communities as good housing policy.

Public housing is at the most urgent level of crisis and need in this country, and immediate federal action could have the greatest long-term impact of stabilizing the quality of life for communities across the United States. Public housing does not rely on the private market, making it one of the last sources of stable and permanently affordable housing in the United States. But this is precisely why it has been under attack – and consequently, why it has been virtually decimated – by modern-day housing policies. When we set out to draft the content of this report, we were aware that this represented a challenging fight in the current political climate. But as shown by the recent melt-downs of our financial institutions, housing market, and overall economy, the status quo is not working for the majority of people in the United States, particularly for people of color. It is time for a new direction.

Right to the City has offered a new vision of housing, grounded in the experiences of public housing residents who participated in the research for this report: a vision of stable, safe and permanently affordable housing as a universal right. We have offered immediate, intermediate and long-term policy recommendations for public housing that are informed by this vision. Our report is part of a larger campaign to shift the terms of the debate and win policy changes for communities in desperate need of a revamped public housing system.

We can no longer afford to wait for change.

VIII. Appendix

Appendix 1: Advisory Board

The advisory board consisted of researchers, policy advocates, and academics with specific expertise in public housing. The advisors provided guidance and feedback on literature review, quantitative research, and report content and structure. While the advisory board played a critical role in reviewing and providing feedback for this report from the research design through the writing phase, their role was limited to suggestions and recommendations. They did not serve as the final decision-making body for the content of the report. Accordingly, the content of the report does not necessarily reflect the positions or priorities of the advisors or their respective organizations.

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JANET SMITH Co-Director, Nathalie P. Voorhees Center; Associate Professor and Urban Planning and Policy Program, University of Illinois at Chicago

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NIK THEODORE Director of the Center for Urban Economic Development and Assistant Professor in the Urban Planning and Policy Program, University of Illinois at Chicago

J. PHILLIP THOMPSON III Associate Professor of Urban Politics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Appendix 2: Organizing Efforts of Base-building Advisory Team Members

Community Voices Heard – New York City, New York

Community Voices Heard's (CVH) public housing campaign has been fighting to save and improve public housing in New York City since 2006. The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) is in a state of financial crisis – currently operating with a $137 million deficit – and NYCHA is attempting to balance its budget on the backs of its residents through increases in rents and fees as well as cuts in services for residents. CVH's public housing campaign has been focusing on securing funds from our elected officials at all levels – city, state, and federal – to ensure the stability of NYCHA for its low to moderate income residents. Leaders in the public housing campaign helped fight to secure $120 million from New York City in the 2006 budget, and fought to secure an additional $3.5 million from New York State in the 2007 budget, which was the first year since 1998 that the State has given public housing any operating funds. CVH has also helped fight off NYCHA's application for the Moving to Work federal waiver, which other housing authorities have used to limit lengths of stay for public housing residents, impose tough work requirements, and privatize or demolish public housing stock all together. The campaign has primarily employed a direct action strategy by mobilizing public housing residents to put pressure on elected officials in City Hall, Albany, and Washington, D.C. to fund NYCHA. CVH uses a variety of other strategies to further the goals of the campaign, including base-building, lobbying, media work, and coalition-building.

Miami Workers Center – Miami, Florida

Miami Workers Center (MWC) focuses its public housing organizing efforts on the preservation of public housing. Much of their work has been on the historic fight for justice for residents who were displaced from their homes in the Scott/Carver development. In 1999, HOPE VI hit Scott/Carver and as a result, in 2004, 850 units were demolished and over 1000 people displaced. For the next few years, plagued by corruption and mismanagement, no public housing was built to replace these units. This represented one of the worst HOPE VI cases ever. Because of active organizing by MWC and its members, MWC won a historic agreement with the mayor and the Miami-Dade Housing Authority in 2007. Both agreed to MWC's five demands: one-for-one replacement of demolished units that would be located within the community; the right to return for former residents; a community-led control process; jobs for people in the community; and eco-friendly, green development. This policy victory, unfortunately, was short-lived, and ended abruptly when HUD took over the local housing agency and negated everything in the agreement between the local government and the community. Despite this, MWC continued to organize locally and by the end of 2008, the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) passed a resolution directing the mayor to re-build the lost units and safeguard all residents' right to return.

While successful at securing another policy victory, MWC and residents have not yet seen those units built. This year, builders are planning to construct 355 low-income units, of which only 177 will be public housing. Falling far short of the 850 units supported by the BCC, MWC is no longer satisfied with policies promised on paper and is reinvigorating their efforts to demand that local officials gain the political will to make policies a reality and produce tangible results. Because of MWC and resident organizing, there has been some indication that vacant units will be opened to former residents who are homeless, not in public housing currently, or on waitlists. MWC will continue to push forward until every former Scott/Carver resident has had their right to return upheld. 2010 also finds MWC actively exploring more ways to bring former Scott/Carver residents together to rebuild that community that has now been dispersed and torn apart.

POWER– San Francisco, California

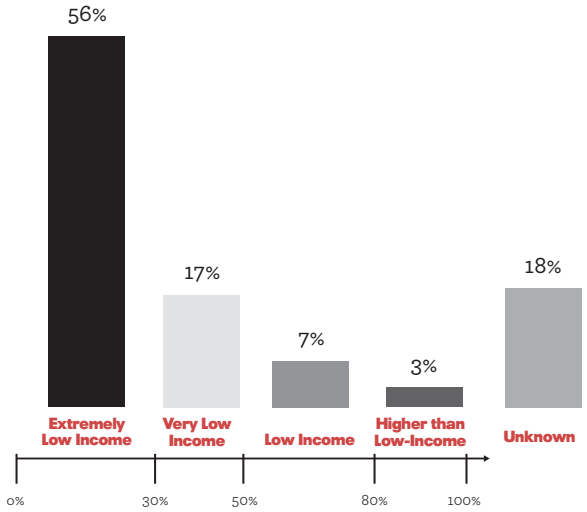
POWER is organizing in the neighborhood of Bayview Hunters Point, where 80% of the San Francisco's public housing is concentrated. POWER believes that it is precisely this high concentration of public and subsidized housing that has stabilized the neighborhood for several decades as the city's largest working class multi-racial neighborhood, with the highest concentration of families and children. Therefore, one of its biggest priorities is protecting, improving, and expanding public and subsidized housing in Bayview and across San Francisco. Over the last five years, POWER members have also led many mini-campaigns to improve conditions in the complexes where they live. Some of their victories include: replacing broken sewage lines, improving exterior lighting, expediting mold and mildew remediation, and winning disability access improvements.

Appendix 3:
Snapshot of Who Lives in Public Housing Now

The following figures provide a statistical breakdown of demographics, socioeconomics, and other data of public housing residents in the United States. Some significant facts include:

- **2.3 million** people live in public housing
- **Over half** of the residents are considered extremely low-income.
- Almost **50%** stay in public housing – the only viable option – for over **five years.**
- Over **70%** of residents are people of color.

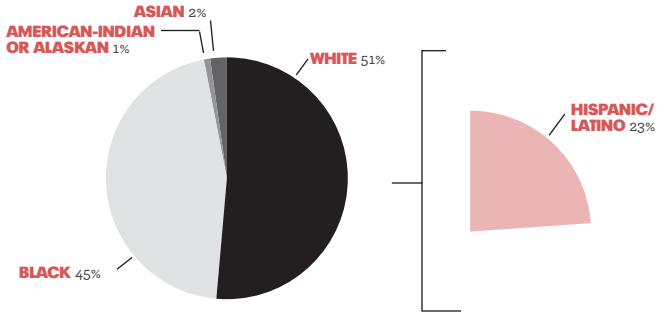
INCOME



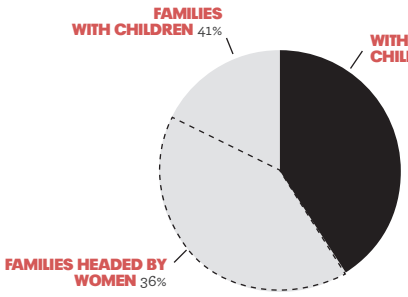
Average Annual Income $13,318

Average Monthly Rent payed by Tenant $313

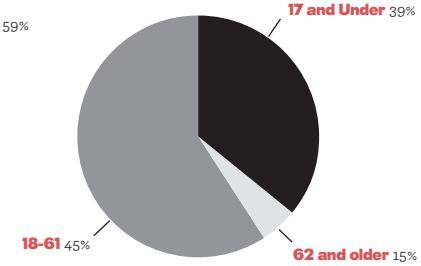
RACE & ETHNICITY



HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

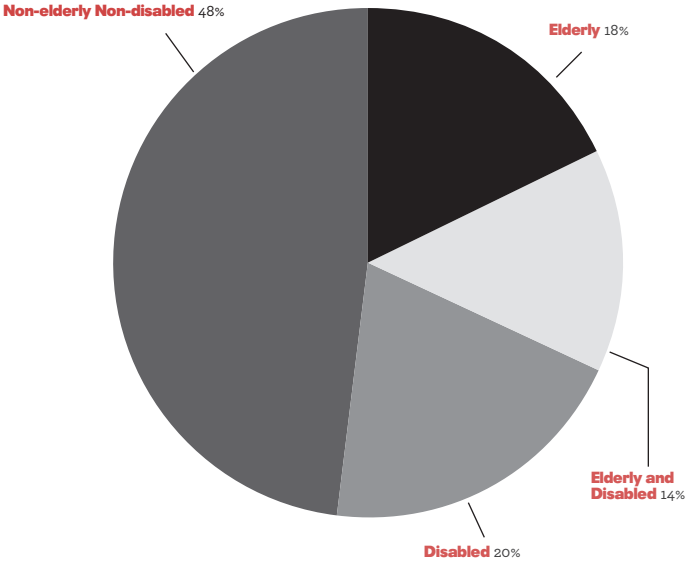


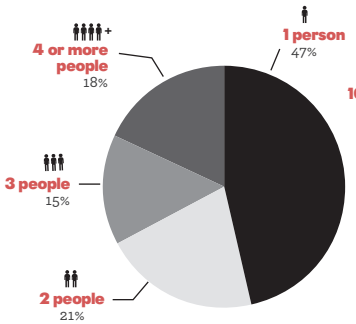
Household type



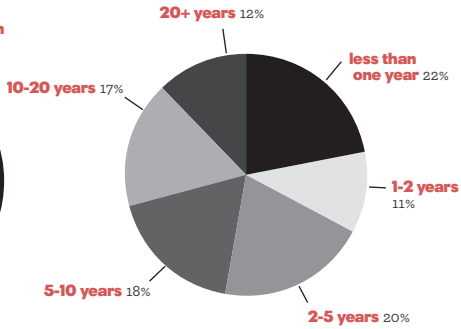
Age

FAMILY TYPE BY HOUSEHOLD HEAD





Household size



Time in Residence

Source: Resident Characteristics Report- last viewed October 6, 2009

Appendix 4:
Index of Key Public Housing Legislation

1937 As a part of the New Deal, the Wagner-Steagall Housing Act created public housing and directed local public housing authorities to manage the developments. The Act aimed to reduce unemployment and eliminate unsafe and unsanitary housing conditions.

1949 While the Housing Act authorized the construction of 810,000 public housing units, it also created federal subsidies to clear public land (slum clearance) through "urban renewal" and sold that land to private developers – one of the first steps towards privatization.

1968 The Fair Housing Act created 26 million new public housing units to be built within 10 years and forbade discrimination in housing.

1969 Amending the Housing Act of 1937, the Brooke Amendment ensured that no public housing resident would have to pay more than 25% of an individual's income, making housing attainable and more affordable for the lowest-income people, and gave subsidies to housing authorities to cover deficits.

1973 By enacting Section 8 of the 1937 Housing Act, Congress attempted to utilize the private market to create affordable housing by using vouchers. Tenant-based vouchers enabled low-income residents to choose where they lived, but this was based on the wrongful assumption that a landlord would always be willing to rent a unit at the price set by the local housing authority.

1981 The Housing and Community Development Amendments increased the rent cap so that residents would not pay more than 30% of their income on rent, creating an increased burden on residents.

1986 Created through the Tax Reform Act of 1986, the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program (LIHTC) gave tax credits to developers and businesses for constructing affordable housing, though not all of the new units had to be affordable – some could be market rate units – limiting the number of units accessible to the lowest-income people.

1990 The National Affordable Housing Act decentralized HUD control, giving greater freedom to local housing authorities, but also encouraged the involvement of tenant- and community-based organizations.

1992 The Housing Opportunity for People Everywhere (HOPE VI) program authorized demolishing "severely distressed" public housing and allowed federal funds to go to private developers to build "mixed-income" developments – developments that are not required to serve only those residents who need affordable housing the most.

1998 The Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act (QWHRA) established the Public Housing Operating Fund and Public Housing Capital Fund. With these new funding sources, PHAs are prohibited from using money from either source to create new public housing units

if it would increase the number of public housing units of the PHA – essentially an amount that would exceed what was already constructed. This is a huge barrier to building new units. The QHWRA also established the Community Service and Self-Sufficiency Requirement, which forces all public housing residents (except those who are elderly, disabled or working at least 30 hours a week) to contribute eight hours per month of community service or participate in an economic self-sufficiency program or risk not having their lease renewed. To make PHAs enforce this rule, HUD has the ability to sanction PHAs.

2002 In March 2002, the Supreme Court of the United States unanimously upheld the "One-Strike Rule," in the case *HUD v. Rucker*, which was brought by four California residents. The One-Strike Rule which was originally first adopted by the Housing Act of 1937 via §1437d(l)(6), unreasonably allows public housing authorities to evict residents if any member of his or her household, or a guest, is caught using illegal drugs or is involved in drug-related criminal activity on or near the premises, even if the resident was unaware of the activity.

2008 Establishing permanent funding from Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae, the National Affordable Housing Trust Fund provides for long-term investment in affordable rental housing for low-income people, but fails to provide support for public housing residents. This fund has been severely impacted during the economic downturn.

2009 Commonly referred to as the stimulus package, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) invested billions of dollars into the U.S. economy but provided only $4 billion for capital improvements and repairs for public housing, compared to $475 billion for homeowners.

2009 If passed, the Section Eight Voucher Reform Act (SEVRA) aims to streamline polices to more effectively and efficiently serve low-income people. It also expands the Moving to Work program (MTW) that exempts many local PHAs from federal regulations, potentially exposing 750,000 low-income families to rent increases. The bill has already been voted out of the House committee.

2009 An Obama Administration proposal, the Choice Neighborhood Initiative (CNI) holistically approaches revitalizing communities and the surrounding infrastructure, including public transportation, schools, and businesses. Unfortunately, the bulk of the funding will be used for housing reform efforts that parallel the problematic HOPE VI.

2010 Transforming Rental Assistance is a new initiative HUD is proposing that will convert all of the HUD housing programs for the lowest-income families (including public housing) to a single program with a single funding stream. While the details are still being fleshed out, this will make public housing more akin to a project-based voucher and will expose public housing to the instability and pitfalls of the private market.

Appendix 5: Limitations of Research

The research team faced various challenges in accessing and using HUD data as thoroughly as we would have liked. Specifically, initially the Resident Characteristic Report (RCR) database required a password and login that we were unable to obtain and therefore unable to access the information. We submitted FOIA requests to individual agencies but the turnaround time was long, and the process cumbersome. The data did not become accessible online until late in the research process.

Another limitation of the RCR reports is that PHAs that receive federal Moving to Work (MTW) waivers do not have to report on their residents. Consequently, there were significant gaps in data for Oakland and Washington, D.C., both of which are MTW cities. Furthermore, many PHAs are only required to report on a fraction of their residents which means that the full picture of what is happening in those cities is not made public. Finally, within the HUD data in general, there were inaccuracies. Often city level data would differ from public housing agency level data though they covered the same area in the 2009 reports. We had to use the best of our knowledge and experience of the public housing programs in the cities to sift through the inconsistencies and exclude data as needed.

Additionally, we faced other limitations in trying to compare data over time. HUD's data from 2000 and HUD's data for 2009 used different variables and were not easily comparable. Because analysis over time is critical to understanding the impact public housing policies have had on residents, it is important to be able to do comparative analysis. With that limitation, we did find a limited set of variables that were the same in both datasets to be able to such an analysis. However, this analysis was not as extensive as we would have liked. Additionally, the RCR limitations we refer to above (such as no reports for MTW cities and incomplete reporting) affected the comparative analyses as well.

Our research was also impacted by shortfalls in the organizational infrastructure in specific cities such as Chicago and Los Angeles. While we began the project with the intention of employing all the above research methods in eight cities, organizations in Chicago and Los Angeles did not have the capacity to carry out all of the research components. Consequently, we were unable to collect qualitative data in those cities.

IX. Endnotes/Works Reviewed

Works Reviewed

American Enterprise Institute. (2008, December). Rethinking federal housing policy. Washington, DC: Glaeser, E. & Gyourko, J.
An American Enterprise Institute book published in December of 2008 that outlines a conservative perspective on low-income housing policies.

Andrews, E. L. (2009, March 4). U. S. sets big incentives to head off foreclosures. New York Times, p. A1.
This discusses the incentives created by the Obama Administration to assist homeowners. The incentives are intended to wave off additional foreclosures.

Bennett, S. (2000). The possibility of a beloved place: Residents and placemaking in public housing communities, St. Louis University Public Law Review, 19, 257.
An article discussing the role of residents and the idea of place and community in public housing.

Bernstine, N. & Saraf, I.B. (2003, Summer). New rental production and the National Housing Trust fund campaign. Journal of Affordable Housing, 12(4), 389.
An article discussing in depth the National Housing Trust's campaign to fund rental production of low income housing.

Bratt, R. G., Stone, M. E., & Hartman, C. (Eds.). (2006). A right to housing: Foundation for a new social agenda. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
This book discusses the state of housing and housing policy and establishes the idea of a human right to housing.

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (CBPP). (2009, February 24). Decade of neglect has weakened federal low-income housing programs. Washington, DC: Rice, D. & Sard, B. Retrieved March 10, 2009, from http://www.cbpp.org/files/2-24-09hous.pdf
A report documenting and analyzing how a lack of proper funding and care has affected federal low-income housing programs.

CBPP. (2008, October 8). Preserving safe, high quality public housing should be a priority of federal housing policy. Washington, DC: Sard, B. & Fischer, W. Retrieved May 6, 2009, from http://www.cbpp.org/files/9-18-08hous.pdf
A report that examines the state of public housing and the lack of funding given to it, ultimately recommending full funding.

Citizens Housing & Planning Council. (2009, February 6). The 2008 federal housing budget. Retrieved May 5, 2009, from http://www.chpcny.org/pubs/2008_FederalBudget.pdf
Citizens Housing & Planning Council two-page report on the 2008 HUD budget. Part of a series of CHPC briefings examining current issues of importance to the NYC housing and community development industries. Gives a good breakdown of federal spending on each program.

Ehrenhalt, A. (2008, August 13). Trading Places. The New Republic, p. 19-22.
An article discussing "middle class" influx into Chicago.

Ehrenreich, B. (2009, September 12). The recession's racial divide. [Opinion-Editorial]. New York Times. Retrieved October 1, 2009, from http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/13/opinion/13ehrenreich.html?pagewanted=3&_r=1
An article discussing the economic crisis' continued impact on people of color.

Elliott, J. R., Gotham, K.F., & Milligan, M. J. (2004, December). Framing the urban: Struggles over HOPE VI and new urbanism in a historic city. City and Community, 3, 373-94. Retrieved May 5, 2009, from http://www.tulane.edu/~jre/C_C_04a.pdf
Argues that the HOPE VI program's formal alignment with New Urbanism created a political opportunity for competing actors to adopt and espouse selective new urbanist themes and imagery to construct and advance divergent visions of what urban space ought to be.

Glasheen, M. & Pealer C. (2005, Fall). Continuing the conversation with policymakers: Review of Brookings Institution report on HOPE VI. Journal of Affordable Housing, 15(1), 104.
An article analyzing and critiquing data and analysis cited in a report by the Brookings Institution.

Fernandez, M. & Rivera, R. (2009, March 17). Records show a high cost for faulty elevators. New York Times. Retrieved November 30, 2009, from http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/18/nyregion/18elevators.html
An article discussing elevator breakdowns.

Fernandez, M. (2008, November 16). Behind the elevator doors: The great unknown. New York Times, p. A39.
An article discussing elevator breakdowns at the Wagner Houses in East Harlem.

Fullilove, M. T. (2004). Root shock: How tearing up city neighborhoods hurts America, and what we can do about it. New York: Random House, Inc.
A book whose author coined the term, "root shock," as the traumatic stress reaction to the loss of some or all of one's emotional ecosystem that can follow natural disaster, development-induced displacement, war, and other changes that play out slowly such as those that accompany gentrification.

Hays, R. A. (1995). The federal government and urban housing: Ideology and change in public policy. New York: State University of New York Press.
A book describing major changes in national urban policy, including how those policies are related to leadership and change in attitude and climate.

Hoffman, A. V. (2000). A study in contradictions: The origins and legacy of the Housing Act of 1949. Housing Policy Debate, 11(2), 299-324.
This article discusses the Housing Act of 1949. Through its public housing program, the act provided housing for low-income families; through its urban redevelopment program, it cleared slums and destroyed affordable housing units. Its vision to revitalize American cities and provide a decent home for every American family remains undimmed.

Hunt, D. B. (2005). Was the 1937 U.S. Housing Act a pyrrhic victory? Journal of Planning History, 4, 195-221.
Historians have wrongly portrayed the 1937 Housing Act, which established a permanent public housing program in the United States, as hopelessly compromised by amendments originating from real estate and conservative interests. With a close analysis of the legislative record and archival material, this article argues that most of these amendments originated from divisions among Progressives or from Senator David I. Walsh (D-MA), who wanted to serve the poor and clear slums [Publication Abstract].

Institute for Women's Policy Research. (2008). Doubly displaced: Women and public housing after Katrina. [Powerpoint]. New Brunswick, NJ: Henrici, J. Retrieved March, 9, 2009 from http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/DoublyDisplacedppt.pdf
PowerPoint presentation created by the Institute for Women's Policy Research which provides detailed information about construction and post-Katrina financing of the Big 4 public housing projects.

Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation. (2002, October). Mixed-income housing developments: Promise and reality. Cambridge, MA: Smith, A. Retrieved May 6, 2009, from http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/W02-10_Smith.pdf
This paper examines the rationale for mixed-income approaches to affordable housing development, as well as the record of such developments in meeting their objectives, from the perspective of housing developers and those responsible for designing housing programs and policies. The drivers of the recent renewed emphasis on mixed-income housing projects are also examined and analyzed. The potential benefits this mixed-income approaches are summarized based on existing literature and interviews with key informants [publication abstract].

Joseph, M. L., Chaskin, R.J., & Webber, H.S. (2007, January). The theoretical basis for addressing poverty through mixed-income development. Urban Affairs Review, 42, 369-409.
This article examines the theoretical foundations upon which the rationale for mixed-income development as a strategy to confront urban poverty is built. The authors focus on four propositions that draw from theories on social networks, social control, culture and behavior, and the political economy of place.

Judith Goldiner, Legal Aide Society. (2009, June 23). [Testimony on the NYCHA Annual and 5 Year Plan]. (on file with authors).
Testimony by a local lawyer on the New York City Housing Authority's plans.

Kleit, R. G. and Manzo, L.C. (2006). To move or not to move: Relationships to place and relocation. Housing Policy Debate, 17, 271-308.
As the HOPE VI (Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere) program redevelops public housing, residents must relocate. Survey interviews with 200 residents of Seattle's High Point HOPE VI project provide the data to address four questions about such moves. First, what factors predict residents' initial choice to stay on site during redevelopment or to move permanently away? Second, how does the initial choice predict actual behavior? Third, what is the role of place attachment and place dependence on residents' relocation choices? Fourth, what is the role of other trade-offs in decision making? Findings suggest that family situations and place-dependent considerations shape initial relocation preferences of public housing residents and that their family situations may be a more important influence on the actual move [publication abstract].

Lee, T. (2008, December 22). Families with children in city shelters soar to record level. New York Times, p. A27.
An article discussing the high rates of homelessness in New York, particularly among families and children.

Lerner, J. (2006, Summer). Let the people decide: Transforming community development through participatory budgeting in Canada. SHELTERFORCE. Retrieved May 5, 2009, from http://www.shelterforce.org/article/765/let_the_people_decide/
An article outlining the history and process of a participatory budgeting process.

Levitt, J. Stepping up to the housing crisis: State of housing 2006. In Pat Brown Institute (Publisher). Los Angeles 2007: State of the city report. (pp. 10-16). Retrieved May 5, 2009, from http://www.patbrown-institute.org/documents/publications/StateoftheCityReport2007.pdf
An article discussing affordable housing in Los Angeles.

Manzo, L. C. (2008, October). Why mix incomes? Examining assumptions & assessing outcomes through research. Paper presented at the AIA Conference on Innovations in Affordable Housing, Phoenix, AZ.
This examines the purposes of, and assumptions behind, mixed-income housing policy.

Manzo, L. C., Kleit, R.G., & Couch, D. (2008). Moving three times is like having your house on fire once. Urban Studies Journal Limited, 45, 1855-1878. Retrieved February 10, 2009, from http://usj.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/45/9/1855
The HOPE VI programme in the US displaces tens of thousands of low-income households to disperse pockets of poverty and transform sites of 'severely distressed' public housing into mixed-income housing. A complete evaluation of this programme's impacts on residents must examine the meanings and functions of these communities before they are dismantled. Therefore, this paper examines residents' lived experiences of place in one site before redevelopment. This socially well-functioning community allowed residents to lay down roots, form place attachments and create bonds of mutual support with neighbors, contrary to typical depictions of severely distressed housing. Implications for US public housing policy and parallels with the discourse on social housing and social inclusion in western Europe illuminate overarching trends in housing policy for the poor [publication abstract].

Marcuse, P. (2008, Winter). The housing change we need. SHELTERFORCE. Retrieved May 5, 2009, from http://www.shelterforce.com/article/1239/the_housing_change_we_need/
"The foreclosure crisis has pushed the envelope so far, it's left an opening where we can start building a real national housing policy." Peter Marcuse, a Professor at the School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at Columbia University, discusses the misguided system of providing one of life's necessities: housing.

Marcuse, P. (1994). Mainstreaming public housing: For a comprehensive approach to housing policy. In W.F.E. Preiser, D. Varady, & F. Russell (Eds.), Future Visions of Urban Public Housing (pp.45-58). Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati, College of Design.
An article discussing why public housing should be expanded and mainstreamed.

Marcuse, P. (1995). Interpreting public housing history. Journal of Architectural and Planning Research, 12(3), 240-258.
An article discussing the history of public housing, as divided by its 'seven lives.'

Marquis, G. P. & Ghosh, S. (2008). Housing opportunities for people everywhere. The Social Science Journal, 45, 401-418.
Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere, or commonly known as HOPE VI, under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), has a mission to rebuild severely distressed public housing. In general the goals of HOPE VI projects are to improve severely distressed public housing and to improve the lives of its residents. While evidences around the country either lend support to these goals, or find anomalies, we find severe contradictions in a specific mid-south HOPE VI project. The question investigated is whether one particular HOPE VI project was efficacious in accomplishing these goals or was it deleterious to the residents and to what extent. The study began with straightforward comparisons of the original residents and the residents selected for resettlement in a HOPE VI reconstruction project. The investigation continued with a regression analysis of the factors that were significant in determining if a head of household was accepted for resettlement. The results of this analysis clearly demonstrate that there is a bias in the selection of those individuals accepted for resettlement [Publication abstract].

Meehan, E. J. (1985). The evolution of public housing policy. In J. Paul Mitchell (Ed.), Federal Housing Policy and Programs: Past and Present (pp. 287-318). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, Center for Urban Policy Research.
An article discussing the history and changes surrounding public housing policy.

Milbank Memorial Fund & the Council of Large Public Housing Authorities. (2006). Public housing and supportive services for the frail elderly: A guide for housing authorities and their collaborators. Retrieved May 5, 2009, from http://www.milbank.org/reports/0609publichousing/0609publichousing.pdf
A report providing an overview of supportive housing for housing authorities who are adopting new approaches in order to meet the needs of elderly tenants.

Miller, B. J. (2008, May 30). The struggle over redevelopment at Cabrini-Green, 1989-2004. Journal of Urban History, 34, 944-60. Retrieved February 10, 2009, from http://juh.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/34/6/944
Over the past three decades, American public housing authorities have advocated the demolition of high-rise public housing projects. Since the late 1980s, governments and local groups have developed plans to tear down the Cabrini-Green public housing project located in the Near North neighborhood in Chicago. The plans call for the demolition of the Cabrini high-rises and replacing them with mixed income neighborhoods. The new communities are intended to help the public housing residents by reducing their social and economic isolation. Some of the Cabrini residents have fought the redevelopment plans in court because they argue that the new communities are not adequate for the number of displaced residents. Due to court injunctions, the redevelopment has been a slow process: while some of the high rises have been torn down and several mixed-income developments have been built near Cabrini, a number of high-rises remain. Questions surrounding the resistance at Cabrini-Green and implications for the future of public housing policy are briefly considered [Publication abstract].

Mitchell, J. P. (Ed.). (1993). Federal housing policy & programs: Past & present. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Center for Urban Policy Research.
A book discussing federal housing policy and its evolution.

Narducci, C. (2008, November 17). NYCHA propels new development process. City Limits Weekly, 664. Retrieved May 5, 2009, from http://www.citylimits.org/content/articles/viewarticle.cfm?articlenumber=3654
An article about selling of public housing land to private developers in NYC.

National Low Income Housing Coalition. (NLIHC). (n.d.). 2009 Housing Advocates Guide to housing and community development policy. Washington, DC. Retrieved September 12, 2009, from http://www.nlihc.org/doc/AdvocacyGuide2009-web.pdf
A report providing information on various affordable housing policies and practices.

NLIHC. (2008, February 15). Asset management and public housing: A comprehensive summary. Washington, DC. Retrieved August 10, 2009, from http://www.nlihc.org/doc/Asset-Management-A-Comprehensive-Summary-Feb15.pdf
A description of the new management and funding structure.

NLIHC. (2009, February 6). Examples of affordable multifamily rental projects in the development pipeline. Washington, DC: Wardrip, K. Retrieved May 5, 2009, from http://www.nlihc.org/doc/All-Pipeline-Projects-Jan%2030.pdf
Tables and graphs giving state and city examples of data on affordability, cost, and availability surrounding public housing.

NLIHC. (2008, October). Housing assistance for low-income households: States do not fill the gap. Washington, DC: Pelletiere, D., Canizio, M., Hargrave, M. & Crowley, S. Retrieved May 6, 2009, from http://www.nlihc.org/doc/PATCHWORK.pdf
A report discussing how states have provided uneven and inadequate help to low-income families and are unlikely to be able to increase that help in this economy.

NLIHC. (2008, February). Housing at the half: A mid-decade progress report from the 2005 American Community Survey. Washington, DC: Pelletiere, D. & Wardrip, K. Retrieved November 20, 2009, from http://www.nlihc.org/doc/Mid-DecadeReport_2-19-08.pdf
A report updating the latest demographics and survey results for the nation's residents, specifically focusing on housing.

NLIHC. (2008, November 13). Letter to Obama-Biden Transition Team. [Letter}. Washington, DC: Crowley, S. Retrieved May 5, 2009, from http://www.endlongtermhomelessness.org/downloads/news/Obama-Biden-Transition-letter-NHTC.pdf
National Low Income Housing Coalition Memo to Obama Transition Team about the Economic Stimulus Plan.

NLIHC. (2009, May 6). National Housing Trust Fund. Washington, DC: White, G. Retrieved November 30, 2009, from http://www.nlihc.org/detail/article.cfm?article_id=6030&id=46
A brief outlining the legislation that created the National Housing Trust Fund.

NLIHC. (2009). Out of reach 2007-08. Washington, DC. Retrieved October 30, 2009, from http://www.nlihc.org/oor/oor2008/introduction.pdf
A brief giving national and state data on expenses, housing costs, wages, and people's ability to afford housing.

NLIHC. (2009, May 6). Public housing: Asset management. Washington, DC: Fischer, D. Retrieved October 20 2009, from http://www.nlihc.org/detail/article.cfm?article_id=6067&id=46
A brief describing the new management and funding structure by HUD.

NLIHC. (2007, December). Putting the Housing Wage to the test. [Research Note 07-03]. Washington, DC: Pelletiere, D. & Wardrip, K. Retrieved September 12, 2009, from http://www.nlihc.org/doc/ResearchNote_12-07.pdf
A brief discussing NLIHC's well-known housing wage calculation.

NLIHC. (2008, December). Renters in foreclosure: Defining the problem, identifying solutions. Washington, DC: Pelletiere, D. Retrieved October 4, 2009, from http://www.nlihc.org/doc/renters-in-foreclosure.pdf
A report outlining the foreclosure crisis.

NLIHC. (2008, February 1). Resident participation in federally subsidized housing. Washington, DC: Yentel, D. Retrieved May 5, 2009, from https://www2398.ssldomain.com/nlihc/detail/article.cfm?article_id=5247&id=46
An article outlining the ways in which residents can participate in federally subsidized housing management and processes.

NLIHC. (2008, February 1). Section 3 job training and employment. Washington, DC: Bishop, C. Retrieved May 6, 2009, from https://www2398.ssldomain.com/nlihc/detail/article.cfm?article_id=5249&id=23
An article discussing Section 3's requirements and recent advocacy efforts aimed to improve Section 3.

NLIHC. (2009, February 6). What we mean by housing: An open letter to Congress and the Administration on the Economic Recovery Bill. [Letter]. Retrieved May 6, 2009, from https://www2398.ssldomain.com/nlihc/detail/article.cfm?article_id=5793&id=28
A letter from forty-two national organizations to Congress and administration urging them to focus on the unmet need for decent, affordable homes for households with the lowest incomes when developing the economic recovery package.

Pindell, N. Is there any hope for HOPE VI?: Community economic development and localism. (2003). Connecticut Law Review, 35, 385.
An article extensively discussing HOPE VI.

PolicyLink. (2008). A long way home: The state of housing recovery in Louisiana 2008. Washington, DC: Retrieved August 14, 2009, from http://www.policylink.org/threeyearslater/equityatlas.pdf
A report outlining the housing crisis in post-Katrina New Orleans.

Polikoff, A. (2006). Waiting for Gautreaux: A story of segregation, housing, and the Black Ghetto. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
A book telling the story of the Gautreaux housing complex and the lawsuit surrounding it by the primary lawyer in the suit.

Popkin, S. (2006). No simple solutions: Housing CHA's most vulnerable families. Northwestern Journal of Law & Social Policy, 1, 148.
This article reviews the Chicago Housing Authority's relocation efforts since the demise of most buildings and the focus on mixed-income, with a specific emphasis on "hard to house" residents and provides recommendations for improving assistance those families most in need.

Powell, M. & Roberts, J. (2009, May 16). Minorities affected most as foreclosures rise. New York Times. Retrieved September 5, 2009, from http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/16/nyregion/16foreclose.html
An article describing the economic crisis' impact on people of color.

Rappaport Institute. (2004, October). Can social capital last? Lessons from Boston's Villa Victoria Housing Complex (Policy Brief Vol. 1, No. 1). Boston: Small, M. Retrieved May 6, 2009, from http://www.hks.harvard.edu/rappaport/downloads/policybriefs/villa_victoria.pdf
This report discusses the grassroots political activism and changing identities and perspectives of residents that emerged from changes in Boston's public housing complex.

Rivoli, D. (2009, September 12). For cash-strapped NYCHA, solution is close to home.
Retrieved November 30, 2009, from http://www.cityhallnews.com/newyork/article-420-for-cash-strapped-nycha-solution-is-close-to-home.html
This article discusses the gap in funding for NYCHA and the idea of privatizing and selling off land to help cut that gap.

Smith, J. The space of local control in the devolution of US public housing policy. (2000). Geografiska Annaler: Human Geography B, 82(4), 221-233.
This paper explores the problematic nature of de- centralization as it has been conceptualized in policy discourse, focusing on the underlying assumptions about the benefits of in- creasing local control in the implementation of national policy. As this paper describes, this conceived space of local control does not take into account the spatial features that have historically shaped where and how low income families live in the US, including racism and classism and a general aversion by the market to produce affordable rental units and mixed-income developments. As a result, this conceived space of local control places the burden on low-income residents to make transformation a success [Publication abstract].

The Bipartisan Millennial Housing Commission Appointed by the Congress of the United States. (2002). Meeting our nation's housing challenges. Retrieved May 6, 2009, from http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/mhc/MHCReport.pdf
A report that produces recommendations for reform led by the vision that " we must produce and preserve more sustainable, affordable housing in healthy communities to help American families progress up the ladder of economic opportunity."

The National Center on Family Homelessness. (2009). America's Youngest Outcasts. Washington, DC. Retrieved May 6, 2009, from http://www.homelesschildrenamerica.org/pdf/rc_full_report.pdf
A report providing comprehensive information on homeless children and creating recommendations for reform.

The Urban Institute. (2006, April). After Katrina: Rebuilding opportunity and equity into the new New Orleans. Washington, DC: Turner, M. & Zedlewski, S. (Eds.). Retrieved May 6, 2009, from http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311406_after_katrina.pdf
This essay is from an Urban Institute collection that addresses employment, affordable housing, public schools, young children's needs, health care, arts and culture, and vulnerable populations. All these essays assess the challenges facing New Orleans today and for years to come and recommend tested models for making the city's social infrastructure stronger and more equitable than it was before Katrina.

The Urban Institute. (2007, January). Are HOPE VI families at greater risk of homelessness? [Brief No. 7]. Washington, DC: McInnis, D., Buron, L. & Popkin, S. Retrieved November 30, 2009, from http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311490_HOPEVI_Homeless.pdf
A brief examining data to determine HOPE VI's relationship to homelessness.

The Urban Institute. (2007, June). Housing choice vouchers: How HOPE VI families fared in the private market. (Brief No. 3). Washington, DC: Buron, L., Levy, D. & Gallagher, M. Retrieved November 30, 2009, from http://www.urban.org/publications/311487.html
A brief examining how people displaced by HOPE VI have managed in the private housing market.

Toronto Community Housing. (n.d.). Community planning: Participatory budgeting. [Web site]. Retrieved May 5, 2009, from http://www.torontohousing.ca/key_initiatives/community_planning
A webpage describing the participatory budgeting process in housing in which residents work together to identify priorities and decide on the distribution of funds to these priorities.

United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2007, May). Affordable housing needs 2005: Report to Congress. Retrieved May 5, 2009, from http://www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/AffHsgNeeds.pdf
This report is the tenth in a series of Worst Case Needs reports to Congress and overall, it reports that the unmet needs for decent, affordable housing have increased from 2003-2005.

United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2009, February). Community planning & development: Affordable housing. [Web site]. Retrieved May 5, 2009, from http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/affordablehousing/
A webpage discussing HUD's three separate programs that are designed to address the nationwide shortage in affordable housing.

United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2009, March 9). Homes and Communities. http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/ph/hope6/about/
A webpage describing HOPE VI.

United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. (n.d.). Project-Based Oversight/Performance Assessment. Retrieved September 20, 2009, from http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/ph/am/oversight.cfm
HUD's description of the new management and funding structure.

United States Government Accountability Office. (2007, May 25). Leveraging federal funds for housing, community, and economic development [Letter to Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity]. Retrieved May 5, 2009, http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07768r.pdf
The objectives of this report were to (1) examine the perspectives of stakeholders on the use, implications and measurement of leveraging in housing and community and economic development programs and (2) describe the type of data the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) collects that could be used to determine the extent of leveraging in the Section 108 Loan Guarantee (Section 108) program.

United States Government Accountability Office. (2007, June 20). Public housing: Information on the financing, oversight, and effects of the HOPE VI program. [Testimony by David G. Wood before the Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation, and Community Development, Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, U.S. Senate]. Retrieved May 5, 2009, from http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d071025t.pdf
Testimony before the Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation, and Community Development, Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs. According to HUD data, approximately 50% of the almost 49,000 residents that had been relocated as of June 30, 2003, had been relocated to other public housing; about 31% had used vouchers to rent housing in the private market; approximately 6% had been evicted; and about 14% had moved without giving notice or vacated for other reasons.

United States Government Accountability Office. (2006, February 15). Public housing: Information on the roles of HUD, public housing agencies, capital markets, and service organizations. Retrieved May 5, 2009, from http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06419t.pdf
This includes challenges that agencies face in carrying out their responsibilities, including difficulty with HUD's data systems and lack of resources for hiring and training staff. Contains appropriations for the Public Housing Program for Fiscal Years 2002-2006.

von Hoffman, A. (2000). A study in contradictions: The origins and legacy of the Housing Act of 1949. Housing Policy Debate, 11(2), 299.
An article dissecting the Housing Act of 1949.

Weiss, M. D. & Thanheiser, L. (1997, Winter). Helter shelter: The [dis]organization of public housing policy. Washington University Journal of Urban & Contemporary Law, 51, 189.
An article critiquing HUD's lack of attention and reform on housing management and providing recommendations for fixing management issues.

Williams, S. L. (2003). From HOPE VI to HOPE SICK? Dollar & Sense. Retrieved May 5, 2009, from http://www.dollarsandsense.org/archives/2003/0703williams.html
An article critiquing HOPE VI, emphasizing its' displacement of residents.

When Hope Falls Short: HOPE VI, Accountability, and the Privatization of Public Housing. [Note]. (2003). Harvard Law Review, 116(5), 1477-1499.
This article examines how public accountability and the voices of residents have been lost during HOPE VI.

Wolfson, Arthur M. (2005). Lost in the rubble: How the destruction of public housing fails to account for the loss of community. Chapman Law Review, 9, 51.
This article discusses post Katrina New Orleans and whether there is a right to return for displaced, low-income Black residents.

Endnotes

1 Marcuse, P. (2008, December 22). The housing change we need. SHELTERFORCE. Retrieved November 10, 2009, from http://www.shelterforce.com/article/1239/the_housing_change_we_need/.

2 HUD. (2009). Resident characteristics report. Retrieved October 13, 2009, from https://pic.hud.gov/pic/RCRPublic/rcrmain.asp.

3 Los Angeles was unable to conduct a focus group.

4 Data for Oakland and Washington, D.C. was not available

5 Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (CBPP). (2009, February 24). Decade of neglect has weakened federal low-income housing programs, 3. Washington, DC: Rice, D. & Sard, B. Retrieved March 10, 2009, from http://www.cbpp.org/files/2-24-09hous.pdf.

6 CBPP. (2008, October 8). Preserving safe, high quality public housing should be a priority of federal housing policy, 4. Washington, DC: Sard, B. & Fischer, W. Retrieved May 6, 2009, from http://www.cbpp.org/files/9-18-08hous.pdf.

7 Thirty percent of income is the standard established by the Housing and Urban-Rural Recovery Act of 1983 for all rental housing assistance programs.

8 Marcuse, P. (1995, August.). Interpreting public housing history. Journal of Architectural and Planning Research, 12(3), 240-258. (on file with authors).

9 Hays, R. A. (1995, March). The federal government and urban housing: Ideology and change in public policy, 91. New York: State University of New York Press.

10 Id.; Marcuse, P. (1995, August), 12.

11 Id.

12 Pub. L. No. 81-171, 63 Stat. 413 (1949) (currently codified at 42 U.S.C. § 1452(b) (Supp. V 1987)).

13 See Fullilove, M. T. (2004). Root shock: How tearing up city neighborhoods hurts America, and what we can do about it, 58. New York: One World Ballantine.

14 Mitchell, J. P. (Ed.). (1993). Federal housing policy & programs: Past & present, 195. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Center for Urban Policy Research. (quote is ordered differently).

15 Bloom, N. D. (2008). Public housing that worked: New York in the twentieth century, 170. Philadelphia: University 0f Pennsylvania Press.

16 Wilson, W.J. (1996). When work disappears: The world of the new urban poor. London: Vintage Publishing.

17 Bloom, N. D. (2008), 169, 174. As discussed by Bloom, in New York City, there are public housing developments that were built by the city and state as well. There are two statistics given for city developments because the first refers to five small city-subsidized public housing developments constructed in 1953 and the second refers to 20 large developments that belonged to an "unsubsidized" city program launched after WWII.

18 Marcuse, P. (1995, August), 14.

19 Weiss, M. D. & Thanheiser, L. (1997, Winter). Helter shelter: The [dis]organization of public housing policy. Washington University Journal of Urban & Contemporary Law, 51, 189, 204-207. One type of voucher is "project-based" vouchers, which allow developers to build new or rehabilitate existing private housing with help from the federal government in exchange for renting the units to poor families. Hays, R. A. (1995, March), 53, 148-149. The other is "tenant-based" vouchers, which allow tenants to take their voucher to any landlord willing to rent to them at the price set by the local housing authority. Id. For other "affordable" housing programs, see Id. at 88-91, 106, 223 (discussing innovations including Section 221(d)(3), which tried to lead the FHA back into urban rental markets,; Section 23, which worked like a Section 8 program; and low-income homeownership programs).

20 Marcuse, P. (1995, August), 14.

21 Hays, R. A. (1995, March), 233-236.

22 Id. at 238-241.

23 CBPP. (2009, February 24), 4. HOPE VI will be discussed later in the report, under the privatization section.

24 Id.

25 Id. at 15.

26 The Bipartisan Millennial Housing Commission Appointed by the Congress of the United States. (2002). Meeting our nation s housing challenges, 101. Retrieved May 6, 2009, from http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/mhc/MHCReport.pdf.

27 Bloom, N. D. (2008). Public housing that worked: New York in the twentieth century, 105. Philadelphia: University 0f Pennsylvania Press.

28 Parsons, D. (2005). Making a better world: Public housing, the Red Scare and the direction of modern Los Angeles, 87. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

29 National Housing Law Project. (NHLP). (2004). HUD housing programs: Tenants rights, chapter 12. [Manual]. (on file with authors).

30 Theodore, C. & Cavell, M. S. (1995, October). Tenant organizations in public housing projects: A report on Senate Resolution No. 347, 1. Retrieved January 10, 2010, from http://www.vchr.vt.edu/pdfreports/phtext2.pdf.

31 NHLP. (2004). chapter 12.

32 Id.

33 Theodore, C. & Cavell, M. S. (1995, October), 1.

34 See Appendix 2 for highlights of public housing organizing efforts of the 3 base-building advisory team members.

35 Image accessed from http://www.massmemories.net/PublicHousing.php.

36 Rivoli, D. (2009, September 12). For cash-strapped NYCHA, solution is close to home. Retrieved November 30, 2009, from http://www.cityhallnews.com/newyork/article-420-for-cash-strapped-nycha-solution-is-close-to-home.html.

37 Asset management is a new way to fund and manage public housing, so that it is run more like multifamily housing. It involves having PHAs deal with each project individually and operating subsidies deal with expenses and income for a given project. For more information on asset management, go to http://www2398.ssldomain.com/nlihc/detail/article.cfm?article_id=6067&id=46.

38 CBPP. (2009, February 24), 20.

39 CBPP. (2008, October 8), 17.

40 Id.

41 National Low Income Housing Coalition. (NLIHC). (2009, May 6). Public housing: Moving to Work/Innovation Program. Washington, DC: Couch, L. Retrieved January 11, 2010, from http://www.nlihc.org/detail/article.cfm?article_id=6070&id=23.

42 Id.

43 CBPP. (2006, July 13). Inspector General reports on HUD s Moving to Work Demonstration raises serious questions. Washington, DC: Fischer, W. & Sard, B. Retrieved January 4, 2010, from http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=486; The Urban Institute. (2009, October 21). A summary assessment of HUD s "Moving to Work Demonstration." Washington, DC: Abravanel, M., Smith, R. Turner, M., Cove. E., Harris, L. & Manjarrez, C. Retrieved January 5, 2010, from http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311009_TestingPublicHousingDeregulation.pdf.

44 According to HUD data, approximately 50% of the almost 49,000 residents that had been relocated as of June 30, 2003, were relocated to other public housing; about 31% used vouchers to rent housing in the private market; approximately 6% were evicted and about 14 % moved without giving notice or vacated for other reasons.
Government Accountability Office. (GAO). (2003, November). HOPE VI resident Issues and changes in neighborhoods surrounding grant sites, 4. [Report No. GAO-04-109]. Retrieved February 22, 2010, from http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d04109.pdf.

45 While the terms "residents" and "tenants" do not mean the same thing, we use them fairly interchangeably throughout this report. "Tenants" is more of a legal term that aligns persons living in public housing with other renters. The term "residents" implies a greater sense of community and implies a more permanent population.

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58 Housing cost burden data are based on our tabulations from the 2005-2007 American Community Survey, administered by the U.S. Census Bureau. The income groupings were based on the Department of Housing and Urban Development defined income limits for each metropolitan area. Extremely low-income families earned 30% of the median income and very low-income families earned 31%-50% of the median income for that area. The median incomes are an average of 2005-2007 limits and were adjusted for family size.

59 "Applicants" does not necessarily equal individual people; "applicants" sometimes refers to families on the waiting list. All waitlist information is from PHAs (via their most recent annual plan, website, or phone call). Additionally, some applicants waiting for public housing may also be included in the "homeless" population counts.

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61 Id. These numbers are based on point-in-time counts, where HUD picks a random night to count the number of homeless people on the streets, potentially causing drastic miscalculations. While this method provides a fairly accurate count of homeless populations in shelters, it is insufficient to truly count the total number of homeless persons.

62 This is according to October 8, 2009, data from the U.S. Department of Labor Statistics.

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64 42 U.S.C. § 5301 (2008).

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162 For background, the human right to housing was first written into international law in Article 25 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Since the UDHR is a declaration it is considered "soft international law." Thus, two treaties were drafted in 1966 in order to make these human rights provisions binding. These treaties were: 1) the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and 2) the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Both of these treaties contain housing rights, but the ICESCR's Article 11 is the generic article of the right to adequate housing. President Jimmy Carter signed the ICESCR in 1977 which in and of itself already creates some basic obligations according to international law.

ORGANIZATIONS THAT PARTICIPATED IN THIS REPORT:

GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS

Community Voices Heard (regional coordinator, NYC)

Families United for Racial and Economic Equality

Friends and Residents of Arthur Cappers and Carrollsburg (regional coordinator, DC)

Good Old Lower East Side/Public Housing Residents of the Lower East Side

Just Cause Oakland (regional coordinator, Oakland)

Make the Road NY

Miami Workers Center (regional coordinator, Miami)

Mothers on the Move

Picture the Homeless

POWER (regional coordinator, San Francisco)

Survivors' Village (regional coordinator, New Orleans)

Union de Vecinos

RESOURCE ORGANIZATIONS

Advancement Project

DataCenter

Community Development Project of the Urban Justice Center

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Right to the City is a national alliance of membership-based organizations and allies organizing to build a united response to gentrification and displacement in our cities. Our goal is to buhild a national urban movement for housing, education, health, racial justice, and democracy. Right to the City includes more than forty member organizations and resource allies in seven states and more than a dozen local jurisdictions.

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