

# HOPE VI: the Transition from Blight to Alright

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The Cabrini-Green Housing project in Chicago, IL, was constructed primarily during the “urban renewal” movement of the early 1950s. Urban renewal typically involved demolishing properties within a slum and building new housing on that land. One of the byproducts of urban renewal was the advent of high-rise, high-occupancy housing for low-income persons. Unfortunately, these high-rise dwellings were typically low-quality, amounting to large maintenance costs. As time passed, huge projects like Cabrini-Green, occupied by 15,000 residents, required huge sums to maintain yet still could not consistently fill vacancies. The high concentration of low- and very low-income persons, coupled with building deterioration, led to increased gang activity and, as a result, increased violence and drug use.

The cycle continued throughout the ‘60s, ‘70s, ‘80s, and early ‘90s.<sup>1</sup> In 1989, the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing was established by Congress to fix the issues presented by high-density, very low-income housing projects like Cabrini-Green. The report concluded that 6% of the public housing units in the United States were “severely distressed” to the point where the units were uninhabitable; the results of this deterioration were “increasing levels of poverty, inadequate and fragmented services..., institutional abandonment,” and a high amount of blight.<sup>2</sup> Department of Housing and Urban Development planned the Homeownership and Opportunity for People Everywhere (HOPE VI) Program to remedy the effects of “severely distressed” housing. Thus, HOPE VI became an aggressive initiative designed to accomplish “revitalization of severely distressed developments by investing in people, buildings, and neighborhoods.”<sup>3</sup> In 1993, the first HOPE VI Notice of Funds Availability

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<sup>1</sup> ““Estimating the Public Costs.” Urban Institute. Pg. Short history of “Estimating the Public Costs.” Urban Institute. Pg. Cabrini-Green « west north.” *West North*. <<http://westnorth.com/2003/01/02/short-history-of-cabrini-green/>>.

<sup>2</sup> “HOPE VI Progress and Problems in Revitalizing Distressed Public Housing.” *United States General Accounting Office*. July 1998. Pg. 2.

<sup>3</sup> “Interim Assessment of the HOPE VI Program Cross-Site Report.” *Office of Policy Development and Research, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development*. September 2003. Pg i.

(NOFA) was issued. In 1994, a HOPE VI grant awarded funds to the Chicago Housing Authority explicitly to redevelop Cabrini-Green; although not completed, this revitalization initiative, along with the majority of other HOPE VI grant awardees, has produced mixed-to-positive results.

HOPE VI is a radical departure from the antiquated “urban renewal” philosophy of public housing. Urban renewal was first introduced by the Housing Act of 1949, allowing cities to receive federal funding for housing provided that their local housing agency concentrate funds on clearing slum land and constructing public housing. Most cities focused on maximizing occupancy and minimizing cost such that the “net result of this policy was...reinforcing segregation by tearing down poor neighborhoods and replacing them with high-density housing ‘projects.’”<sup>4</sup> Urban renewal projects, as a result, exacerbated the problem of slums by concentrating poverty in fewer areas. The concentration of poverty caused viable economic opportunities in the area to decrease. With only low-income residents, it is unlikely that a resident of the community will be able to afford opening a new business, leaving businesses to be predominantly owned by persons outside of the community. Chuck Matthei of the Community Land Trust commented on this trend when discussing the gap in ownership found in areas with high concentrations of poverty, “Examine the economy of most low-income communities and you will find far more money flowing than one might suspect. The problem is that what flows in flows right back out.”<sup>5</sup> In effect, the community is facilitating the economic sustainability of the communities where the business owners live. Spending within their own, more affluent communities wherein the land and businesses are more likely to be owned by other community members bolsters the long-term economic sustainability of the community by

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<sup>4</sup> Gillham, Oliver, and Alex S. MacLean. *The limitless city: a primer on the urban sprawl debate*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2002. Print. Pg 136

<sup>5</sup> Cryan, Philip. "The City Belongs to All of Us | On the Commons." *On the Commons*. <<http://onthecommons.org/city-belongs-all-us>>.

increasing the wealth of its members, creating an friendly environment for new businesses that, once relocated, continue to concentrate investment in their neighborhoods while poor communities remain stagnant.

New employment opportunities, therefore, arise outside of the poverty-concentrated areas, increasing the transportation costs of the residents. Without new employment opportunities, the area becomes less desirable for mid and high-income families, causing demand for residences to fall, lowering rent prices. Lower rent prices allow for even more low-income persons to inhabit the area, furthering the drain of funds and stifling the possibility of economic growth. The lack of legal employment in the neighborhood increases the demand for illegal employment opportunities: drugs, prostitution, and, resultantly, crime become mainstays. With Cabrini-Green, for example, gangs started to use the project as the hub for their illicit activities. High crime further decreases the area's desirability. Furthermore, without sufficiently high tax revenues, fewer improvements were able to be made to the schools, public spaces, and other infrastructure. The cycle of poverty, with public housing of this type, has no option other than to continue, allowing for greater discrepancies between the "haves" and the "have-nots."

At first, HOPE VI was constructed in a manner similar to that of Urban Renewal in that the projects were to be all public-housing units, but as HOPE VI aged, it became revolutionary. HOPE VI aimed to correct flawed public housing philosophy by incorporating two ideologies: defensible space and New Urbanism. Defensible space was a theory created by Oscar Newman, hypothesizing that large, high-density apartment complexes were fodder for increased crime rates. Newman analyzed low-cost housing projects in New York City and found that, holding all other factors constant, the number of stories in a low-income housing project directly influenced the crime rate in the building's vicinity. His theory of defensible space focused on four aspects

that would engender a reduction in crime rate: image, territoriality, and surveillance.<sup>6</sup> Image is the physical presence of the area; Newman hypothesized that well-kempt buildings and public areas would reduce the stigma of the area and foster a sense of ownership in the residents such that they feel responsible for maintaining its beauty, reducing vandalism and other petty crimes. Tall, high-density buildings, Newman said, limit the frequency and intensity of neighborly relationships, thus, an individual will be unable to feel as if their residence is a home that should be protected against outsiders. Territoriality supposes that smaller buildings with fewer inhabitants will create a community of inhabitants willing to defend their home and their neighbors, allowing for tactile barrier of a building's walls to join with the symbolic barrier of territory. Tall buildings obscure views, and large numbers of tall buildings decrease open spaces; therefore, smaller buildings and more open spaces will reduce the area wherein crime is unobservable to reduce crime frequency and ability to evade legal repercussions for criminal acts. Essentially, Newman's theory of defensible space is that domiciles should be designed such that its inhabitants are connected to the space and invested in its continued protection in contrast to the anonymity that large housing complexes cultivate.

New Urbanism promotes the ideology that quality of life will improve in a neighborhood that emphasizes walkability of a neighborhood, connectivity of street grid, mixed-use development integrating housing and commercial properties, diversity of inhabitant composition in race and income, housing varying in type and size, quality architecture, urban design emphasizing aesthetics, traditional neighborhood structure via a town center, proliferation of public and open spaces, increased density, public transportation, and environmental

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<sup>6</sup> Remy, Melissa. "Ocsar Newman's Theory of Defensible Space." *Florida State University*. <<http://criminology.fsu.edu/crimtheory/newman.htm>>

sustainability.<sup>7</sup> Many of its tenets overlap with or are derived from the theory of defensible space, specifically the necessity of open, public spaces and spawning a sense of community, and resultantly responsibility for the trajectory of the community, in its residents. Compared with Urban Renewal housing conceptions, New Urbanism's important deviation from that philosophy is their belief that communities should be of mixed-income persons, correcting the problem of community divestment and the propagation of crime within areas with high concentrations of poverty. Mixed-use edifices also ensure that individuals live, work, and spend within a small geographic area, promoting long-term sustainability of local business.

HOPE VI, although seemingly a marked improvement from previous housing philosophies, still contained flaws. Many critics opined that HOPE VI's onus on taxpayers far outweighed the palpable benefits of the program. Most analyses of the effects of HOPE VI are incomplete as the program is too recent to be able to draw substantive meaning from its long-term results. Preliminary data, coupled with criticisms from organizations like the National Low Income Housing Coalition, showed that, while HOPE VI exuded promise, it did not fully deliver. The flaws of HOPE VI were such that its funding ceased after the fiscal year 2010 such that it could be replaced by the Choice Neighborhoods Program. The Choice Neighborhoods Program incorporating many of HOPE VI's premises, including the central credo that "mixed-income, economically integrated neighborhoods improve the lives of residents and aid the surrounding community."<sup>8</sup> In order to gauge the efficacy of HOPE VI, the program must be evaluated by its progress on its stated goals: "(1) transform public housing communities from islands of despair

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<sup>7</sup> "New Urbanism." *New Urbanism*. <<http://www.newurbanism.org/>>.

<sup>8</sup> "Evidence Matters| Transforming Knowledge Into Housing and Community Policy Development Winter 2011" *Office of Policy Development and Research, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development*. Winter 2011.

and poverty into vital and integral parts of larger neighborhoods and (2) create environments that encourage and support the movement of individuals and families toward self-sufficiency.”<sup>9</sup>

The first goal necessitates that HOPE VI grants be dispersed in a quick and efficient manner such that on-site improvements may begin. There are four types of HOPE VI grants: demolition, revitalization, Main Street, and planning. Demolition grants, awarded from 1996 through 2003, went toward the demolition of over 57,000 “severely distressed” public housing units for a grand total of \$395 billion.<sup>10</sup> Revitalization grants, operating from 1993 to the end of the program in 2010, funded public housing development and modernization; 262 grants were given to municipal housing authorities, amounting to \$6.2 billion over the duration of the program.<sup>11</sup> Revitalization grants also include Section 8 vouchers, literacy programs, and other improvements made underneath the second tenet of HOPE VI. Main Street grants funded initiatives that preserved the “traditional and historic character” of the neighborhoods affected by HOPE VI; Main Street grants were still awarded for FY 2012 despite the end of the HOPE VI.<sup>12</sup> Planning grants, conferred between 1993 and 1995, were the primitive form of Demolition grants; demolition grants widened the scope of the activities permitted under planning grants. Capital costs, as a requirement of the HOPE VI NOFA, must account for at least 80% of HOPE VI funds while social services may not account for greater than 20% of grant funds.

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<sup>9</sup> Gayle Epp, “Emerging Strategies for Revitalizing Public Housing Communities,” *Housing Policy Debate*, Vol 7, No. 3 (1996), pp. 563-88.

<sup>10</sup> “Demolition Grants - HOPE VI.” *HUD/U.S.*. Web. <[http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/ph/hope6/grants/demolition](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph/hope6/grants/demolition)>

<sup>11</sup> “HOPE VI REVITALIZATION GRANTS As Originally Awarded.” *Department of Housing and Urban Development*. <[http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=DOC\\_10014.pdf](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=DOC_10014.pdf)>

<sup>12</sup> “Main Street Grants - HOPE VI.” *HUD/U.S.*. Web. 2011. <[http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/ph/hope6/grants/mainstreet](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph/hope6/grants/mainstreet)>

HOPE VI allocated more dollars-per-unit to public housing than in the past. A larger allocation means that taxpayer dollars created fewer units, but those units will last for endure and be attractive housing for longer periods of time than typical public housing, incurring lower maintenance costs. Still, it proved difficult for many HOPE VI grants to reach the construction phase in a timely manner. For the first two fiscal years of HOPE VI's authorization, no grants allocated to the municipal housing authorities had been dispersed as planning a large scale upheaval of a dilapidated housing project consumes a significant amount of time. As such, in March 1998, only 27% of the grants made during the first three fiscal years of the program had been dispersed.<sup>13</sup> But, as the program aged, the expenditures became timelier: by September 2002, 44% of HOPE VI funds granted had been dispersed.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, by 2003, only 43% of the planned units deriving funding from grants bestowed between 1993 and 1997 had been completed.<sup>15</sup> Many, including President Bush and his Secretary of HUD Mel Martinez, harangued that the length of time between award and development, although an improvement from the preliminary years of the program, were nevertheless too great to warrant future Congressional authorization of funds. To address slow progress, the FY 2002 NOFA required project readiness to be a factor in determining funding allocation.

The inability to produce units in a timely fashion was exacerbated by the inadequacies of the participating municipal housing authorities. At least 70% of grants awarded between 1993 and 1999 did not submit their overall plans on time; most grantees missed their construction deadlines.<sup>16</sup> Cabrini-Green's new construction was delayed for years as a result of the Chicago Housing Authority's inability to suitably create and implement plans. Chicago Housing

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<sup>13</sup> "HOPE VI Progress and Problems" GAO. Pg 6.

<sup>14</sup> "HOPE VI Program Cross-Site Report" HUD. Pg ii

<sup>15</sup> "HOPE VI Program Cross-Site Report" HUD. Pg 21

<sup>16</sup> "HOPE VI Progress and Problems" GAO. Pg 9.



Authority was not the only municipal housing authority to have issues; not coincidentally, the properties with the utmost amount of blight, the ones addressed first by the program and the earliest grantees, were under the dominion of “agencies with histories of management problems.”<sup>17</sup>

Poor management before HOPE VI resulted in the deterioration of public housing. Realizing this, only a handful of municipal housing authorities have all of the management responsibility during the HOPE VI process; most are partially or entirely managed by private firms. This change in management was a result of the Mixed-Finance rule of 1996, allowing municipal housing authorities to use HOPE VI and other HUD grants to leverage private and public funds and further allowed a third party to receive public housing capital funds from the housing authorities.<sup>18</sup> The deregulation of public housing by the federal government resulted in “a more entrepreneurial, market-driven culture in public housing management” with “substantial emphasis on developing public/private partnerships among housing authorities, private sector developers, and management firms.”<sup>19</sup> Whereas early in HOPE VI’s trajectory, the goal was to alleviate simply the site of the blighted housing, after the 1996 rule, HOPE VI changed its breadth to include overall community redevelopment, specifically through creating mix-income communities. The private investors in these mixed-income communities advocated for more amenities such that they could command a higher market-rate; for the public housing in those communities, the quality increased without a significant increase in HOPE VI grants. These private-public initiatives allowed for construction to continue predominantly uninterrupted despite the duress of annual ebb-and-flow of HOPE VI allocation funds. As the program aged, its

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<sup>17</sup> “HOPE VI Program Cross-Site Report” HUD. Pg vii.

<sup>18</sup> “A Decade of HOPE VI: Research Findings and Policy Challenges.” *Urban Institute*. May 2004. Pg 24.

<sup>19</sup> “A Decade” *Urban Institute*. Pg 16.

ability to leverage funds increased: 1997 grantees were able to leverage 22% of its funds from non-HOPE VI sources while 2001 grantees leveraged 59%. In 2002, 79% of leveraged funds were from other federal sources, calling into doubt the real ability of HOPE VI to leverage funds from the private sector; alternatively, each year of HOPE VI amounted in a greater amount of leveraged funds from other sources per dollar of HOPE VI funding, reaching \$2.63 additional leverage dollars in the private sector per HOPE VI dollar for 2001 grantees.<sup>20</sup>

Despite increases in leveraged funds, an argument can be made that HOPE VI is not an efficient use of taxpayer dollars; after all, less units were constructed for more dollars. Conversely, HOPE VI costs taxpayers less than were the dilapidated developments left standing: per year, demolition of a blighted property to create mixed-income housing reduces housing subsidy costs by \$3.9 million while simultaneously increasing the expected local property tax revenues of the neighboring area by \$492,000.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, HOPE VI results in a decrease of 60% in the annual per-unit capital costs.<sup>22</sup> Unlike Urban Renewal programs that operated partially for “negro removal” for the purposes of concentrating African-Americans in one place, HOPE VI has successfully made areas typically redlined by financial institutions attractive to lenders because of the reduction of risk for investment ventures in HOPE VI areas.<sup>23</sup>

A consequence of increased investor interest is an unambiguous increase in land values near HOPE VI sites such that a reduction in affordable housing occurs. HOPE VI’s mixed-income housing initiatives results in chosen revitalization sites that will be able to yield a

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<sup>20</sup> “PUBLIC HOUSING Information on the Financing, Oversight, and Effects of the HOPE VI Program.” *United States General Accounting Office*. June 2007. Pg 6.

<sup>21</sup> “Estimating the Public Costs and Benefits of HOPE VI Investments: Methodological Report.” *Urban Institute*. June 2007. Pg. 2

<sup>22</sup> “Estimating the Public Costs.” *Urban Institute*. Pg. 29

<sup>23</sup> Sink, Todd. “Assessment and Impact of Gentrified Public Housing Neighborhoods in the United States” *Indiana State University*. August 2011. Pg 15.

sufficient demand for the private, higher-rent units. Critics of HOPE VI pronounce this to be an unequivocal indication of the intent of the government to gentrify inner cities. Whereas HOPE VI is intended to be a program to ease the burden for low- and very-low income persons, opponents argue that it consequently “reduces housing for poor people while creating more housing for wealthier people.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, it is contended that HOPE VI’s impact on the poor, a predominately minority class, is as detrimental to the racist policies of Urban Renewal. Other critics maintain that HOPE VI mixed-income developments, because of their abundant amenities targeted at increasing its attractiveness to those above the lowest income echelon, will not reduce the per-unit subsidy of low-income units.<sup>25</sup>

Studies have hypothesized that mixed-income communities “spur larger benefits for the surrounding neighborhood, bringing better public services, more shopping opportunities, and, in a few instances, new schools.”<sup>26</sup> The ambit to which that corollary applies to HOPE VI is uncertain; many developments have not had ample time to mature to the point where long-term benefits are palpable. Yet, in the certain earlier HOPE VI sites, community infrastructure has undergone a conspicuous increase. An Atlanta site previously referred to as “The Void” is now the home to a new aquarium and multiple new market-rate condominium projects; a Charlotte community has been a bastion of new real estate development. In these two locations, the neighborhood’s poverty level dropped sharply; Atlanta saw a decrease from 72% to 44% while Charlotte experienced a reduction from 54% to 38%.<sup>27</sup> The developer of a HOPE VI site in St. Louis, along with a real estate firm, St. Louis public schools, and a community development housing corporation built a state-of-the-art school complete with an Adult Computer Training

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<sup>24</sup> Sink, Todd. “Assessment.” Pg 3.

<sup>25</sup> “A Decade” *Urban Institute*. Pg 23.

<sup>26</sup> “A Decade” *Urban Institute*. Pg 23.

<sup>27</sup> “HOPE VI Program Cross-Site Report” HUD. Pgs xi-xii.

Lab for parents.<sup>28</sup> Other sites have not experienced such improvement: a Camden site's social and economic stress has not been ameliorated under the program, retaining its previous commercial enterprises of liquor, fast food, and convenience stores. In a sample of four HOPE VI mixed income developments, all reported an increase in median household income at a rate "significantly faster than elsewhere in the city or region," greater workforce participation, a lower unemployment rate, greater number of investments, and that "HOPE VI redevelopments are responsible for the positive economic spillover to surrounding neighborhoods."<sup>29</sup> Still, sum economic improvements from HOPE VI are hard to assess as the Great Recession of 2007 greatly affected almost every sector of the economy and because economic improvement is highly dependent on local market conditions. Furthermore, as HOPE VI projects vary from site to site, it is difficult to measure the improvements solely from HOPE VI versus improvements from the specific nuances of the HOPE VI site.

One area where HOPE VI has achieved is in the effort to deconcentrate poverty. Of 11 of the earliest projects, about 65% of residents have a household income below 30% of the area median income; mixed income sites have lower rates of very-low income residents but higher numbers of working adults.<sup>30</sup> In the instances where a former occupant of a "severely distressed" unit did not enter HOPE VI housing after construction, the program's voucher aspect financed their relocation into better areas than prior.<sup>31</sup> For new and returning inhabitants of HOPE VI sites, of both public-only and mixed-income character, the median income after revitalization was about 40% higher than the median income at the blighted sites. Discrepancies between new and returning residents were distinct in mixed-income housing: their new public housing

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<sup>28</sup> "A Decade" *Urban Institute*. Pg 42.

<sup>29</sup> "Evidence Matters." *HUD PD&R*. Pg 3.

<sup>30</sup> "HOPE VI Program Cross-Site Report" HUD. Pg 33.

<sup>31</sup> "A Decade" *Urban Institute*. Pg 14.

residents had incomes more than \$3,000 greater per year than returning residents, a pattern not seen in public-only housing HOPE VI sites. A partial explanation is that 56% of those persons previously residing at the project versus 36% of new residents of the sites residents were over the age of 50 and, resultantly, had a household income less than that of younger-headed households.<sup>32</sup> This reduction in poverty concentration is most evident in mixed-income sites wherein “non-public housing units” account for an average of 28% of all units; still, some occupants of non-public units receive Low Income Housing Tax Credits or other federal subsidies to acquire their domiciles.<sup>33</sup>

Surprisingly, the change in income has not change the racial composition of HOPE VI sites dramatically. As the Urban Institute noted, “the net effect was that HOPE VI revitalization efforts almost exclusively affected minority residents and communities” because minority residents were those that “suffered the effects of living in the worst public housing, and the same residents later experienced the consequences – good and bad – of the changes HOPE VI brought about.”<sup>34</sup> The racial composition of HOPE VI sites varied based on location and ability to attract mixed-income residents; nevertheless, 88% of persons living in the neighborhoods surrounding the sites were minorities. The percentage of white persons living in HOPE VI doubled from an average of 2% to 4% between 1990 and 2000 and from 4% to 7% between 2000 and 2007, but whites still do not account or a significant percentage of the population of the overall neighborhood.<sup>35</sup> The upward trend is promising, though; it shows potential for HOPE VI to, over time, increase the racial diversity in the development with the potential for a significant effect in the overall community over time.

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<sup>32</sup> “HOPE VI Program Cross-Site Report” HUD. Pg 38.

<sup>33</sup> “HOPE VI Program Cross-Site Report” HUD. Pg 40.

<sup>34</sup> “A Decade” *Urban Institute*. Pg 8

<sup>35</sup> Sink, Todd. “Assessment.” Pg 65.

Nevertheless, it is irrefutable that HOPE VI projects are a perceptible physical improvement over the blighted projects of yesteryear regardless of whether the housing was new construction or rehabilitation, mixed-income or public housing only. In the new construction areas, principles of New Urbanism were able to be implemented with greater efficacy than at rehabilitation sites. A Ford Foundation Innovations grant was bestowed to the entire HOPE VI program in 2006 in recognition of their novel design schemes; individual HOPE VI sites have also received awards.<sup>36</sup> Coincidentally, the most successful projects in terms of conferring benefits to the community were those incorporating New Urbanism principles, specifically the mixed-income locales.<sup>37</sup> Improvements were not merely perceived by award distributors: 58% of all HOPE VI residents were “very satisfied” with their housing while 34% were “satisfied.”<sup>38</sup>

All sites underwent physical changes of a reduction in density, grander interplay of sidewalks and street grids, and increased incorporation of designs that double as safety measures (like large bay windows, private entrances). Crime reduction was one of the most important aspects of HOPE V as many of the areas demolished for new HOPE VI developments were formerly perforated by crime and drugs. Defensible space ideology’s incorporation into the planning process, coupled with other measures, dramatically reduced the crime rate. In survey of residents in pre-HOPE VI revitalization locations, almost 75% of respondents stated that there were “major problems with drug trafficking and drug sales in their developments” while 66% reported “shootings and violence were also big problems” and 50% confessed that “they did not feel safe outside their own buildings.”<sup>39</sup> HOPE VI developments, as indicated by preliminary studies, range from 9 to 41 crimes per 100 residents with mixed-income units having the lowest

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<sup>36</sup> “A Decade” *Urban Institute*. Pg 20

<sup>37</sup> “HOPE VI Program Cross-Site Report” HUD. Pg 71.

<sup>38</sup> “HOPE VI Program Cross-Site Report” HUD. Pg 74.

<sup>39</sup> “Estimating the Public Costs.” *Urban Institute*. Pg. 27.

incidences of crime. After HOPE VI, 74% of residents reporting feeling safe outside their homes; additionally, in most HOPE VI sites, the crime rate decrease at a greater magnitude than comparable areas with the city. In all HOPE VI sites, crime rates decreased after revitalization.<sup>40</sup> HOPE VI sites employed differing methods to curb crime: resident involvement in security, enlisting the services of local law enforcement, providing free or reduced rent for police officers living on site, private security services, and increasing proximity to a police station.<sup>41</sup>

Although heralded for design, replacing high-occupancy towers with low-density complexes had some dire consequences. The elimination of the “one-for-one” replacement law for public housing, requiring one new unit to be built in place of one destroyed unit, benefited less monetarily endowed municipal housing authorities by enabling them to replace their decrepit housing within their fiscal constraints. Without the “one-for-one” requirement, HOPE VI was able to pursue New Urbanism concepts in a way unfeasible in the past; however, the decrease in population density coupled with emphasis on open spaces and lower building heights caused many of the occupants of the “severely distressed” housing to be displaced. HOPE VI’s mixed-income initiatives cut the stock of units heavily subsidized for low incomes in half after revitalization; however, at least 1/3 of those units were vacant prior to the revitalization process such that 78% the number of units for very low income tenants occupied prior were replaced with HOPE VI.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, HOPE VI’s general failure to transition from planning to demolition to construction in a timely manner also resulted in an unanticipated long-term displacement for previous residents. A large share of displaced residents accepted another form of HUD vouchers or subsidies while reconstruction proceeded; most relocated to lower poverty

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<sup>40</sup> “Estimating the Public Costs.” *Urban Institute*. Pg. 204

<sup>41</sup> “HOPE VI Program Cross-Site Report” HUD. Pg 100

<sup>42</sup> “A Decade” *Urban Institute*. Pg 21

neighborhoods with the assistance of vouchers. Almost all original residents, as the aftermath of their removal from “severely distressed” projects, relocated to a better community with safer, more sanitary units than before; about 40% of displaced residents not returning to the HOPE VI site relocated to areas with less than 20% poverty rates.<sup>43</sup> Only 46% of HOPE VI public housing inhabitants at the time of the site’s opening lived on-site prior to revitalization; 41% of all inhabitants, non-public housing and public housing households, lived on-site prior to revitalization.<sup>44</sup> As a large percentage of former residents indicated their desire to live in HOPE VI housing, the low retention rate of former inhabitants could be a consequence of fewer housing units or an inability to meet HOPE VI’s enhanced screening criteria.<sup>45</sup> By 2011, 84% of families in five of the original HOPE VI sites had relocated elsewhere.<sup>46</sup> It should be noted, though, that high turnover rates are typical for public housing; however, HOPE VI aimed at reducing turnover such that the “community” element of New Urbanism and defensible space could be achieved.

The second part of HOPE VI’s mission, to “create environments that encourage and support the movement of individuals and families toward self-sufficiency,” is difficult to quantify yet, especially since the character of development residents changed during the transition from blight to HOPE VI. Emphasizing the immense bearing that support services have on the trajectory of a community, the Congress of New Urbanism stated that New Urbanism designs and planning cannot ameliorate the social and economic problems of neighborhood residents and public housing tenants alone as sufficient services are needed to ensure long-term viability and self-sufficiency. HOPE VI was innovative with its provision to provide support

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<sup>43</sup> “A Decade” *Urban Institute*. Pg 29

<sup>44</sup> “HOPE VI Program Cross-Site Report” HUD. Pg 34

<sup>45</sup> “A Decade” *Urban Institute*. Pg 29

<sup>46</sup> “Evidence Matters.” *HUD PD&R*. Pg 5



services to improve the quality of life of its residents, accounting for a maximum 20% of grant funds. Without a set of standards, the number and comprehensiveness of afforded support services were determined at the discretion of the municipal housing authorities; moreover, this can have a wholly positive effect whence municipal housing authorities tailor services to meet the specific needs of the community. Unfortunately, other housing authorities, like the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), have been notoriously inept at informing its residents about services and performing the services at an acceptable level. When the CHA was faced with relocating the residents of Cabrini-Green, among other “severely distressed” projects, they offered displaced residents brief clinics to educate about housing choices instead of individualized attention that would have ensured the best possible outcome for the counselee.<sup>47</sup> Counterintuitively, the mixed-income sites had more support services than public-only developments despite having less overall need: their use of outside funding fosters the ability to, for example, construct a community center that provides day-care services.

Seattle’s “New Holly” HOPE VI site is exemplar in providing services that unequivocally influence the ambit of future self-sustainability. They have built a public library, garden space, community classrooms, family center, and parks while offering “community building activities intended to...serve the larger community.”<sup>48</sup> Other sites have leveraged funds to build magnet and charter schools to educate the youth, a crucial expansion as quality education is the foremost indicator of future self-sustainability. GED support programs may have helped contribute to the increase of percentage of high school diploma holders for most HOPE VI sites. Furthermore, preliminary results show that “neighborhoods in which HOPE VI sites are located had experienced positive changes in income, employment, community investment, and crime

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<sup>47</sup> “A Decade” *Urban Institute*. Pg 37

<sup>48</sup> “A Decade” *Urban Institute*. Pg 38

indicators.”<sup>49</sup> Likewise, another study showed an increase of 71% on average in per capita income for HOPE VI neighborhoods whereas cities in which the tested sites were located experienced a 14.5% increase during the same time frame (1989 to 1999).<sup>50</sup>

In other areas, the picture of HOPE VI’s impact on self-sufficiency is not nearly as optimistic. One of the largest failures of HOPE VI, by the admission of a HUD report, is “its inability to address multi-faceted problems in residents’ lives, such as health issues and employment.”<sup>51</sup> Over 30% of respondents to a HOPE VI Panel study indicated being afflicted with a chronic illness, 29% reported poor mental health, over 60% of older children had at least one reported instance of a behavioral problem, and a sixth experienced a depressive episode.<sup>52</sup> Obviously, it is almost impossible to attain or maintain viable employment if an individual is saddled with myriad of health issues or has family with such a burden. Job training programs are unquestionably invaluable in the plight for self-sufficiency; however, few HOPE VI sites had programs aimed at quelling the health problems of the residents.

Some HOPE VI sites’ selective criterion for residents further impeded the move toward “self-sufficiently” by establishing eligibility rules including provisions on employment, criminal background, and substance abuse among others. By eliminating the “hard to house” from the benefits conferred by the HOPE VI program, the only families able to use the program to facilitate their march toward self-sufficiency those without large obstacles, like a history of substance abuse, blocking their path. HOPE VI, because of the number of “hard-to-house” previously located at the blighted sites, needed a program to address the displacement of this specific group of people. As “finding landlords in good neighborhoods has been one of the most

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<sup>49</sup> “PUBLIC HOUSING” GAO. 2007. Pg, 11

<sup>50</sup> “PUBLIC HOUSING” GAO. 2007. Pg, 12

<sup>51</sup> “Evidence Matters.” HUD PD&R. Pg 6

<sup>52</sup> “A Decade” Urban Institute. Pg 34

persistent barriers” to housing for all displaced persons,<sup>53</sup> the process is far more difficult and tenuous for the “hard-to-house.” Data on homelessness of this population as a consequence of housing displacement is unknown, but it is certain that a number of those persons are without any semblance of stable housing.

Choice Neighborhoods is the answer to the question of “what-went-wrong” with HOPE VI. Although some will point to the high per-unit cost of HOPE VI or the possibility of gentrification as significant detractors to the program, the most important issues were located in the more social aspects of the program. Whereas HOPE VI succeeded in its primary goal of reducing blight, its supportive services were not sufficient, and it left far too many of the previous residents without the reparations they deserved for receiving dangerous, sub-par housing for countless years. The principles of New Urbanism and defensible space, at least within the limited data on returns to HOPE VI, are certainly effective in improving many aspects of the life of an individual in the community and fostering innovation; however, they do not address the prevailing issue of poor health for poor people. Choice Neighborhoods aims to leverage more private funds than HOPE VI, further reducing taxpayer onus, and providing an extensive network of services. The improvements in Choice Neighborhoods, it would appear, address the major shortcomings of HOPE VI, an ambitious and idealistic but flawed initiative.

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<sup>53</sup> “A Decade” *Urban Institute*. Pg 35