ROOSEVELT TOWERS:
A CASE STUDY ON ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES IN A PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECT

by

ELMO ORTIZ

Master of Architecture, University of Puerto Rico 1974

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in City Planning at the MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY JUNE 1979

Signature of Author ... Department of Urban Studies and Planning May 1979

Certified by ... Kevin Lynch, Thesis Supervisor

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ABSTRACT  

This thesis seeks to describe, analyze, and evaluate the  
nature of the decision-making process involved in a major envi-  
ronmental change in a Public Housing project: Roosevelt Towers,  
in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The project is comprised of an  
eight-story tower and six low-rise buildings. The Tower expe-  
rienced increasing management and tenant problems over the  
years. By late 1973 the building was vacated and later closed  
after a series of youth disturbances in the project surroundings.  

The thesis examines the process by which three main envi-  
ronmental decisions were made: the decision to reopen the  
Tower, the decision about the future population mix and the  
main design concept decisions. The focus of the thesis is on the  
issue of environmental control; that is, who really decides what  
for whom in a housing rehabilitation process. It discusses the  
degree of control that the tenants achieved and their effective-  
ness relative to that of other participants in the process. The  
nature of the perceived constraints on tenant participation is  
analyzed.  

The case study concludes that because of the lack of socio-  
economic power of public housing tenants, their degree of control  
on their lives and environment will depend on the internal power  
structure and level of organization; the access to resources  
and information; the quality of other participants in the deci-  
sion making process; the organization of and methodologies for  
that process; and on the need for alliances and political support.  
(especially at the government and funding agency levels).
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INTRODUCTION

Background

Authoritarian professional roles in environmental design and planning, as in other professional activities, have been severely questioned since the late 1960's. New conceptions about the roles and interactions of clients, users, and professionals gradually emerged. Their main concern has been to develop responsive environmental decision-making process and products, responding to the needs and aspirations of the ultimate user groups of the environment.

Nowhere has this demand for environmental "responsiveness" been more intensively argued than in the sphere of housing. Responsive housing, to its proponents, implies autonomy in housing, i.e. dwellers having freedom to control the environmental decision-making process underlying their housing activities. This approach to housing production has been researched, from somewhat similar perspectives (but different political ideologies and methodologies), by people like J. F. C. Turner, N. J. Habraken, and C. Alexander. The main premise of these perspectives is well summarized by Turner:

When dwellers control the major decisions and are free to make their own contributions in the design, construction, or management of their housing, both this process and the environment produced stimulate individual and social well-being. When people have no control over nor responsibility for key decisions in the housing process, on the other hand, dwelling environments may instead become a barrier to personal fulfillment and a burden on the economy.
These perspectives emerged, in part, when it was evident that centrally administered housing programs for low-income people were immersed in major social, political, financial, and environmental troubles. The government effort to supply housing for the poor, conceived through a "filing cabinet approach," hierarchical in its organizational nature, gave rise to public housing programs. In the United States (as in other places) the public housing projects became, for most of the general public concerned, "warehouses (like mental hospitals and prisons) where the poor can be stored and ignored." In general, tenants have little control over where they live or what kinds of dwellings and local amenities they have, and no significant control over the ways in which they are managed and maintained.

The dependency situation in which public housing tenants have to live stems, ultimately, from their lack of economic resources and political power, factors that often go along with racial and sex discrimination practices (against minorities and husband-less mothers). Because of their poverty, tenants are constrained to live among other individuals in similar situations, sometimes leading to potentially destructive communities. The monolithic and institutional physical environment which generally characterizes public housing, further reinforces the tenants' social alienation, especially when high-rise buildings for families with children are part of the projects.

Given this socio-physical context, the tenants' strategies for living usually take the form of diverse "strategies for
survival" as the ones analyzed by L. Rainwater in his socio-
logical study of the failure of Pruitt-Igoe Public Housing
Project in St. Louis, Missouri. 7

These problems induced a reevaluation of the Public
Housing Program by government officials during the last decade.
Tenants began to request participation in all the aspects of
the project's life. Attempts to improve the program covered a
wide spectrum of actions, from new design guidelines based on
behavioral criteria to the encouragement of experiments in
tenant management and ownership of housing projects. Many
tenants became unionized to increase their bargaining power
vis-a-vis housing agencies. By 1970, tenants' participation
in the decisions affecting their lives and environment has been
legally recognized in certain areas of projects' administration
and physical improvements.

There are major problems with implementing these concepts
and models of participation within a centralized and hierarchic-
al decision-making context. The new routes opened by government
institutions and tenants' organizations confront difficulties
due to overriding regulations, time and cost constraints, and
the lack of coordination among diverse bureaucracies.

Thesis Objective

This thesis is a case study on one of the routes being
opened through government institutions to allow for tenant
participation in the rehabilitation of part of a Public Housing
Project: The Tower Building at Roosevelt Towers, Cambridge,
Massachusetts. The project, comprised of six three-story buildings and an eight-story tower, was built in the early 1950's under the Massachusetts Veterans Housing Program. Occupied by families with children, the Tower suffered increased management, maintenance, and tenant problems over the years. By late 1973, these problems had grown to such proportions that a joint decision to vacate the Tower building was reached by the Housing Authority and project residents. In these processes, the tenants get organized to deal with security problems and to explore planning alternatives to restore stability to the development. Their main concern became the planning for the future of the Tower building.

The thesis objective is the description, analysis, and evaluation of the environmental decision-making processes in the context of a public housing project, in this case Roosevelt Towers. The problem of the future of the Tower building represents the main environmental issue discussed. Issues related to housing policies, budget, and administrative arrangements are secondary concerns, dealt with to the extent that they relate to the environmental issues of the process. Basically, the thesis is more policy-oriented than research-oriented.

The main assumption underlying the thesis is that no real improvements in the behavior of the public housing tenants can be expected unless they control the decisions concerning their environment and their lives. Thus, the focus of the thesis is on the issue of environmental control, here understood as the issue of who really decides what for whom in the housing
rehabilitation process at Roosevelt Towers. More specifically, the degree of tenant control achieved, its costs, effectiveness, and nature of the constraints perceived are examined.

Methodology

The case study approach was used, in an informal way, as an organizing principle for structuring the diverse data around the thesis issue. No attempt was made to develop a case study with statistical validity. Reliable generalization from the case is limited because the lack of multiple case studies for comparison and because the author's biases (due to strong identification and overfamiliarization with the case situation when working with the architectural staff).

Hypothesis testing was not attempted. There was no intention, early in the project process, to define any explicit hypothesis for future testing. Consequently, the available information and data have been poorly recorded and classified to serve as a basis for testing. Also, the project renovation plans are still in a preliminary design phase. Major changes are still possible. The major decisions may nevertheless be treated as hypotheses in future situations which contain similar elements to the Roosevelt Towers process. In the case of the Tower building, the post-occupancy phase could be viewed as a hypothesis testing situation.

The basic source of data was the author's accumulated experience derived from his participation in the planning/design phases. This personal view of the case was complemented
with available data (periodicals, contract documents, memos, etc.) and new data collected through non-structured interviews with members of the different groups involved: tenants/staff/agencies.

Organization

The thesis is organized in four principal chapters. The first chapter provides a background description on the environmental context of Roosevelt Towers: the physical, socio-economic and institutional characteristics of the project. The second chapter presents a description of the main problems leading to the closing of the Tower. Then, a description of the main activities and participants of the environmental decision-making process gives the context for the analysis of the next chapter.

The third chapter is an "anatomy" of the main decisions reached during the planning and design processes. Three decisions are analyzed in terms of the issue of environmental control: the decision to reopen the Tower, the decision about the future population mix, and the main design concept decisions.

Finally, the fourth chapter summarizes the main lessons from the decision-making process at Roosevelt Towers.
CHAPTER I

THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

THE LOCATION

Roosevelt Towers is located within the so-called "Hampshire Triangle" or Neighborhood 3 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The area is near the western fringe of East Cambridge and is part of the broader Wellington Harrington Neighborhood (See Maps 1, 2).

The "Triangle" was part of the 19th Century Cambridgeport, a geographical area which at that time encompassed the present Neighborhood 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 (the recent Model City Area), the MIT area, Cambridgeport and Riverside.²

The main approach to the project is on the southern side on Cambridge Street. The northern boundary coincides with the Somerville Town Line. Willow and Windsor Streets are the project's eastern and western sides respectively. (See Map 3).

THE ORIGINS

Roosevelt Towers was constructed in 1950 by the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA). It was financed through the Chapter 200 Moderate-Rent Veterans Housing Program, established in 1948 by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This program was tailored to the specific needs of the returning Second World War Veterans and their families.

This State Public Housing Program was created to complement the Federal Public Housing Program in the effort to reduce the
Figure 1
Project Location Within Boston SMSA

BOSTON SMSA
(Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area)

Figure 2
Project Location Within the City of Cambridge
Roosevelt Towers, in legal terms, is not part of the renewal area.

Figure 3
Project Location Within the WHURA
critical housing shortage affecting the low and moderate income families in Massachusetts at the end of the 1940's. The 1929 and 1930's Depression and World War II had left Cambridge with an old and deteriorating housing stock. Most of the city housing was built in early 1900's during the industrialization of the city. By 1943 most of the low-income residential units (12,722 of 14,775 units) were considered substandard in terms of governmental criteria.\(^2\)

This situation was made worse by the fact that in most of the working class neighborhoods, little land was available for the development of new housing. In the geographical area of Roosevelt Towers (the Hampshire Triangle and its surroundings) land was mostly built up and rents were insufficient to support the buying up and leveling of old structures to provide land for new ones.\(^3\)

These conditions, among others, made necessary the intervention of government, which with its broad powers and resources, was the only sector with the capacity to implement a large scale construction program.

First came the Federal housing projects in the years prior to the Second World War: Newtowne Court (294 units) and Washington Elms (324 units) completed in 1939 and 1942 respectively. They were located in 19th C. Cambridgeport, not too far from the Kendall Square Area. They also were the first local examples of the "block-clearance method", a new standard of land use that emerged through wholesale demolition of old,
built-up neighborhoods. To provide the land for these projects:

...nearly 200 buildings were demolished in the city's worst slum area; eight streets were obliterated and fourteen small blocks combined into two large ones.\(^4\)

Clearly, this approach was based on the government power of Eminent Domain and its economic resources.

After the War, the above factors plus the housing demands of the returning Veterans created the need for a housing construction program which was not solely oriented to low-income families. The State Government passed Chapter 200 of the Acts of 1948 creating the State Public Housing Program for moderate income families. One of the first projects developed by the City of Cambridge under this program was Roosevelt Towers. Its construction began in 1949 and it was ready for occupancy in 1950.

THE PHYSICAL SETTING

Roosevelt Towers was designed by the architectural firm of Desmond and Lord of Boston, which during that time had been involved in other public housing design projects for the City of Cambridge.

The project was developed on a semi-quadrangular site of approximately 4.2 acres of flat land which originally comprised two typical neighborhood blocks dedicated to residential (mainly detached single family housing) and industrial uses. One residential street perpendicular to Cambridge St., dividing the site in two halves, was eliminated following the "block clearance approach."
The location of the project in one of the city's poorest ethnic neighborhoods was in accordance with the City Plan of the time. It reflected the policy of avoiding the centers of power in Cambridge. For example, areas surrounding MIT and Harvard were not chosen, not only because they owned most of the land adjoining those institutions, but because they also constituted a substantial part of the "establishment." 5

In general, the project is accessible to shopping, work and community facilities (See Maps No. 4, 5, 6). A rich diversity of services can be found along Cambridge Street. Within the immediate reach of the project there is an elementary school (Harrington School, which includes a library branch and health facility) and the area's major outdoor recreational space, Donnelly Field. Retail food stores, restaurants, drugstores, gas station, etc. are available at a walking distance. Industrial and manufacturing facilities delimit the west and north sides of the project. Inman Square, a major commercial focus of the area, is only ¼ mile away. Other city-wide commercial and community service centers (e.g., Harvard Square, Central Square, Lechmere Square and Kendall Square) are all within 3/4 mile to a mile distance from the project.

But access to these city-wide centers and to other cities like Boston, using public transportation, is difficult because the area is poorly served by rapid transit; the nearest station is 3/4 mile away (Central Station). The area also suffers from deficiencies in bus service which affect the eastern part of Cambridge in general and especially infrequent evening and
Figure 4

Commercial Services

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Figure 5
Public Services
20
Figure 6
Recreational Facilities
21
weekend service. Two bus stops are located at the front of the project, serving the route along Cambridge St. from Harvard Station to Lechmere Station. Because approximately 70% of the project households do not have private cars, their dependence on some sort of public transportation is a vital one. Thus, these public transportation problems reduce the actual and potential mobility of most tenants.

In terms of building types, the project consists of six three-story buildings and one eight-story elevator building, both with exterior masonry walls. When it was built it seemed to represent an innovative solution to the multi-family housing problem, at least in the area of Cambridgeport. The Cambridge Historical Commission said that the project "illustrates the trend toward high rise elevator buildings as a solution to the problem of increasing land costs." 6

Today, Roosevelt Towers, with Jefferson Park (another state public housing project located in North Cambridge, also built in the early 1950's) contain the only non-elderly elevator buildings operated by the Cambridge Housing Authority.

A total of 228 family dwelling units were constructed; two- and three-bedroom units being distributed as follows:

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<th>2 BR</th>
<th>3 BR</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<td>Low Rise Buildings:</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tower Building:</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals:</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>228</td>
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</table>
The low-rise buildings contain 75% of the total 3BR units in the project and the tower includes 59% of all the 2BR units. The average apartment size for 2BR units approximates 700 sq. ft. with 860 sq. ft. being the average for the 3BR units.

Veteran housing units were apparently designed on the premise that Veteran families would tend to move to better quarters at the first available opportunity. The small size of the units and their lack of amenities give credence to this assumption.

The generalized image of public housing is repeated at Roosevelt Towers: brick apartment buildings distributed within a large tract of land rather than arranged along a street grid as is the surrounding neighborhood housing. (See Figures No. 7, 8).

The site plan is a symmetrical one, strongly formal in character. A central axial space runs from Cambridge Street to the Tower building at the back of the site. Along that space, four low rise "U" shaped buildings are symmetrically located, defining open spaces between them and within them. For the rest, two small low rise buildings are located at both sides of the Tower, in a somewhat isolated way, but still reinforcing the general formality of the project plan.

Nearly 38% of the total site area is covered by the seven buildings of the project. The remaining semi-public open space is used for parking, laundry drying, green areas and for general pedestrian circulation, playing, etc. Originally, the landscaped
Figure 7
Roosevelt Towers:
Site Plan--Existing Conditions
Figure 8. Roosevelt Towers: Photographic Survey
(See Figure 7 for Photo Orientation)
green area comprised more than 65% of the total site open area. Over the years, this figure has been reduced to approximately 15%, with the vast majority of the remaining area going to asphalt paving. Most of the remaining green areas are fenced.

The main accesses to the low-rise buildings are by 22 doorways, each leading to a stairwell servicing six apartments. The Tower has two doorways to each elevator core, each core area giving access to 48 apartments.

Parking and laundry drying areas are located within the open space defined the "U" shape buildings. Direct access from these areas to the buildings, once possible at the basement level, was closed after security problems arose. These basements included storage space, electrical rooms, incinerator rooms, laundry and child care areas. (These two last areas were eliminated due to security problems.)

A large parking area located behind the Tower building marks the end of the project site along the Somerville City Line and serves as a through way between the two adjacent streets (Willow and Windsor).

No vehicular traffic is allowed inside the project. Only emergency access for fire, ambulance, and maintenance services are permitted.

The Tower Building

The double cruciform Tower building is divided into two separate apartment buildings by a fire wall which extends the full height of the building. (See Figure 9.) Thus, the Tower operates as two independent buildings. In the original design,
half plan of typical 2 & 3 bedroom units
2nd to 8th floor

Figure 9

Tower Building Original Floor Plan

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each half had six apartment units per floor, six 2BR units on
the first floor and a combination of four 2BR units and two
3BR units on the remaining seven floors.

For each half of the Tower, two outside entrances lead to
a service core. This includes two small back-to-back elevators,
an enclosed "scissor" stairs and access to the incinerator shaft
doors. A "doughnut" type of corridor allowed circulation around
the core and provided access to the apartment units organized
in the cruciform layout. There was no corridor connecting the
two halves of the Tower.

The Tower's basement floor, aside from containing facilities
similar to those of the low rise building basements, includes a
boiler room serving the total project needs.

The main symbolic elements of the project are the two light
towers located on the Tower's roof above the elevator machine
rooms. The original design of the project was apparently so
dull that a need for some symbol was recognized after the com-
pletion of most of the construction drawings, for these "items"
were introduced as late design changes. Access to them by the
community is prohibited for security reasons, but during the time
that they were lighted, they served as a landmark for the neigh-
borhood and as an identifying element for the project tenants.
Years ago, they were vandalized, which has prevented their use.
The tenants would like to see them restored.

The Tower never was an attractive alternative for the public
housing market. Its design failures, from small uncomfortable
apartments to dangerous hallways, explain in part why the building was never fully occupied. Its location at the back part of the project site gave it a remoteness which reduced the sense of security of prospective tenants.

In contrast with general tenant acceptance of the low-rise buildings, the Tower remained the last resort for families without other alternatives within the Cambridge public housing market. The low-rise buildings were considered better suited for family living, especially for families with small children.

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SETTING

Until the mid-fifties, Roosevelt Towers, like most of the rest of the public housing in Cambridge, enjoyed what could be considered its "Golden Age". This period was a relatively stable one compared with later years. Tenants developed good relationships among themselves, with management, and with the surrounding community. In part, this atmosphere was based on the homogeneous socio-economic characteristics of the project population: moderate-income Veterans' families, mostly white in their racial composition. Also, the nearly unlimited discretionary power of management authorities was crucial for the maintenance of that atmosphere. 7

Moderate income families of Veterans were, by law, the target group for this state public housing program. Their ability to pay higher rents balanced the shallower subsidies provided by the state program. Bigger subsidies, allowing for lower rents, were provided by the Federal housing program, which
was oriented to low-income families. This fact was very important in terms of the public image communicated by a housing project. In Cambridge, state projects the size of Roosevelt Towers enjoyed a better status among their respective neighborhoods than Federal projects of similar size. This difference was due, in large part, to the higher income population characterizing the state projects.

The basically white population of the project was consistent with the discriminatory practices of the City Council and Housing Authority Officials at that time (1950's, 1960's). Prior to the construction of Putnam Gardens Public Housing Project in 1954, all projects were occupied by white families and constructed in white neighborhoods. Roosevelt Towers (1950), located in a predominantly white ethnic working class neighborhood, reflected this ethnic and racial composition.

By 1955, the State Chapter 200 Law was modified to allow the housing of other than Veterans' families. Lower income and welfare recipients (among them many minority families) were then eligible for these projects. But discriminatory management practices, low vacancy rates, high minimum rent levels, and white tenants opposition kept projects like Roosevelt Towers insulated from drastic changes in their racial/ethnic composition, at least until the end of the 60's, although the number of welfare families increased. The gradual change of those limiting factors, plus the legal impact of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (in part aiming at the racial integration of housing) opened the eligibility system to an increasing number of
minorities. The percentage of minorities in Cambridge public housing increased from 8% in 1957 to 22% in 1975. By this year the proportion of minority applicants to family housing developments of the Cambridge Housing Authority (41%) was larger than the proportion of eligible minority households in the general Cambridge population (9.8%).

These socio-economic changes over the last 20 years, in the case of Roosevelt Towers, implied an increasing number of welfare families and some diversification of the ethnic/racial structure. The delicate balance between the neighborhood and the project population was affected. Some of the results of this transformation and other demographic aspects are discussed below, taking into consideration their spatial dimension wherever appropriate. Data from the years 1975-1978 were used.

The Population Profile

The total population of the project, distributed among the low-rise buildings (the Tower has been closed since 1973), was 381 persons by early 1978. The age curve (see Figure 10) is notably unbalanced with about half of the population under the age of 18 years; teenagers form the major age group. Approximately 7.2% of the population is elderly (over 65 years).

Nearly 60% of the project population is female. There are 126 households with an average of 3.4 members. About 70% of the heads of households are women (single parent households). This is explained, in part, by the high number of welfare recipients in the project, as discussed below.
Figure 10
Age Group/Population Curve - 1978
(Averages)

Figure 11
Population Pyramid - 1975
The population pyramid shown in Figure 11 graphically expresses these facts for the year 1975. It is interesting to note the drastic reduction of the younger population after it reaches adolescence. They leave the project for a variety of reasons (marriage, work opportunities, study, army, etc.). This reduction is double for males in comparison to females, resulting in an age structure among the higher age bracket which is predominantly female. Legalities of the welfare system undoubtedly contribute to this imbalance.

The spatial distribution of the population, in terms of individual buildings, is shown in Figure 12. This diagram calls attention to the low number of young adults and the absence of elderly people in the small buildings at the back of the project.

The average residency in Roosevelt Towers low-rise buildings was 9.1 years early in 1978. The vacancy rate in 1977 was 3.6%, slightly higher than the 3% maximum considered appropriate by state housing agencies. The mapping of the average residential stability per doorway, shown in Figure 13, indicates that the only areas where that average is below the total project average are the ones forming the back part of the project (doorways 10 thru 18). This fact reflects the general unattractiveness of these areas compared with the rest of the project, which in part explains the spatial distribution mentioned above.

Racial-Ethnic Background

The racial-ethnic composition of Roosevelt Towers reflects to some extent the multi-ethnic character of the surrounding
Figure 12

Population Distribution per Building - 1978
(Age-group Averages)
Average Residency for Roosevelt Towers: 9.1 yrs.

Figure 13
Average Residential Stability Per Building Entrance - 1978

35
neighborhood. Most of the project residents are white with an Italian or Irish ethnic background (see Figure 14). Minority families had a relative increase from 10.4% in 1975 to 20% in 1978. Black families are the "major" minority group (13.4% of the total population) but the proportion of Hispanic families has been increasing during recent years. Of the four large family developments in Cambridge, Roosevelt Towers has the lowest percentage of minorities (see Figure 15), although this percentage exceeds the proportion of minority residents in the project's immediate neighborhood (2.6% Black in 1970). Portuguese families, not considered a minority group in Cambridge statistics, are nearly absent from the project population, although they comprise 16% of the surrounding neighborhood.10

The doubling of the percentage of minorities in the project has been the direct result of recent attempts of the Cambridge Housing Authority to comply with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Before 1975, the CHA had been one of the housing authorities not yet in compliance with the racial integration goals of that Act.

Until recently, minority families were spatially segregated within the project limits. The low vacancy rates of the low-rise buildings contributed to the fact that the Tower building, with its less desirable units, received most new minority residents. After 1973, when the Tower itself was abandoned, the small low-rise buildings to both sides of the Tower replaced it as the focus of the minority presence. But during recent years, the CHA has implemented the policy of distributing minority
Figure 14
Racial Breakdown of Households - 1978

Figure 15
Racial Breakdown of Households of the Four Large Family Public Housing Projects in Cambridge - Aug. 1975
* 1 vacancy
** 2 vacancies
*** 3 vacancies

W = WHITE head of household
M = MINORITY head of household

Figure 16
Racial Distribution per Building Entrance - 1978
households randomly among the buildings of the development. Figure 16 shows this distribution for the year 1978.

Income Distribution and Source

The median family income for Roosevelt Towers was approximately $3,800 per year in 1978, considerably below the city-wide median of $11,344 in 1975 and the neighborhood median of $8,572 in 1970.11

Nearly 54% of the project families had incomes below the poverty level ($3,745 for a family of four) compared to 12.8% for Cambridge and 15% for the surrounding neighborhood. (See Figure 17 for income distribution data among the project population.)

The main source of income for approximately 48% of the population is through welfare payments and other government assistance programs. About 25% of the households receive social security payments. Households with a salaried income represent about 27% of the total project number. Approximately 8% of the working heads of households are women. No data were available on the kinds and locations of jobs held by Roosevelt Towers working people, but a long-time resident believes that most of them work outside of the immediate area.

Though the financial situation of these families is relatively better than that of poor families paying more than 25% of their income on rent, they must live on very tight budgets. The rent charged to welfare recipients, as for the rest of tenants of public housing, is limited to no more than 25% of their adjusted income.
Figure 17

Family Income Distribution - 1978
(Income accounts for reported amounts only, welfare payments included)
Data on educational background was not available. A social worker from the project estimated that approximately 20% of the adults have secondary education and less than 5% have some sort of college education.

THE INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

Many different institutions, agencies and programs regulate the living conditions at Roosevelt Towers. The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) are the principal ones affecting management decisions. After 1970, with the efforts to implement Federal and State Modernization Programs, new organizations, such as the Massachusetts Union of Public Housing Tenants ("Mass Union") and the Roosevelt Towers Tenant Council (RTTC) came to have important roles also.

During the last five years the state modernization program has been a key element in the relations between these organizations with respect to Roosevelt Towers. The program was intended to upgrade the physical quality and the management of public housing. The funds allowed to local housing authorities are contingent on efforts to improve management practices, and particularly by an effort to increase tenant participation. The physical improvements to be made are left to negotiation between tenants and management on the local level, before final approval by the supervising agency (DCA). At least that is the spirit of the law.12

A brief description of the four organizations mentioned above follows:
The Department of Community Affairs

DCA is the state department responsible for supervising local public housing authorities and for the administration of the state public housing. It provides the state funds for public housing construction and for the annual debt service and operating subsidies of the projects.

Within DCA, the Bureau of Housing Development oversees public housing in general and the Bureau of Modernization administers the state modernization program.

Areas covered by DCA regulation include eligibility for public housing, tenant selection, rent determination, tenant participation, and lease and grievance procedures. Most of these had been developed in response to the militant organizing and negotiating abilities of the Massachusetts Union of Public Housing Tenants over the years.

The Cambridge Housing Authority

CHA is the agency charged with providing "decent, safe, and sanitary" housing in Cambridge to families and individuals of low income. It was established in 1937 under state enabling legislation.

In the strict sense, the Authority is the five-member Board of Commissioners who set policy for the Executive Director and his staff. The Board is appointed for staggered terms. Four members are appointed by the City Manager, subject to confirmation by the City Council, and one is appointed by the Governor, generally upon the recommendation of the Secretary of DCA. Due
to this appointment mechanism, the CHA has played a balancing role between the two main groups in City Politics: the establishment liberals (characterized by rule-making, reformist idealism) and ethnic conservatives (characterized by patronage and ward "politicking").

The political liberals, wealthy "good government" voters, students and young people, minority voters, etc. have shown continuous support for the public housing program, whenever they controlled city politics. On the other hand, whenever the conservatives, formed by the property owners, working class, poor ethnic residents, conservative voters, etc. have predominated, the commitment to the program has been weak. This lack of support implied low maintenance budgets; patronage in contracts, tenant selection, and hiring; and racial discrimination.

By 1977 the CHA was operating 19 low-rent family housing projects, 9 elderly ones and 875 units of leased housing in privately owned and managed buildings. Approximately 10% of the total Cambridge population (10,000 persons) are public housing tenants, an important population in the political base of the City.

The Massachusetts Union of Public Housing Tenants

"Mass. Union", formerly the Mass. Alliance of Public Housing Tenants, was founded in 1970 by a small group of public housing tenants. It came to being as a part of a broader housing reform movement taking place in Boston since 1967. Two of the main issues around which the Union developed were the struggle to
implement the Federal Modernization Program, a movement to create a similar but broader modernization program for the state public housing projects. These last were excluded from participation in the Federal program. The strategy developed included both constant pressure on local housing authorities and state agencies (DCA), and the organization of tenants across Massachusetts. One of the major stated purposes for organizing was to push for a strong tenant participation role in the modernization programs.

By February 1970, DCA agreed to recognize the Mass. Alliance as the official bargaining agent for all state public housing tenants. In early 1971, after a leadership division in Mass. Alliance, a faction later known as the Massachusetts Union of Public Housing Tenants or "Mass. Union" split off. It continued increasing its militancy and presently represents 55 affiliates (10 organizations). It is governed by a Policy Board composed of elected representatives of public housing tenants across the state. The Board is instrumental in setting policies, on a state level, for the affiliates.

Roosevelt Towers Tenant Council

The RTTC is the formal organization representing the tenant population of the project. It is constituted of all heads of households and their spouses.

It was founded in late 1973, after a crisis in the project's stability during the summer and fall of that year. To achieve better living conditions and to overcome the crisis, the tenants organized the RTTC. The modernization program provided the
rationale for the creation of the councils, as in other projects across the state.

A Task Force is elected by the Council Membership, consisting of four officers (chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, and treasurer) and seven members at large. The Task Force’s primary duties are to manage the daily affairs of the Council, to appoint all necessary committees for particular tasks, to employ staff as needed, and to develop policies and programs for the Council.

The Council is recognized as the Official Tenant Representative Organization for Roosevelt Towers by both DCA and the CHA. It is also a member of Mass. Union, Housing Assistance Plan Task Force of Cambridge, and the Tenant Senate of the CHA, which includes all the public housing tenant councils of the city.

During the month of December 1977, the Council was incorporated as a legal entity. Incorporation allows the tenant's council to act as a legal body in negotiating with CHA on matters affecting Roosevelt Towers. Also, it allows the Council to seek a non-profit tax exemption from the Internal Revenue Service, which opens the possibility of taking advantage of private foundation grants.

Under the Massachusetts regulations concerning tenant participation in public housing, recognized tenant councils (such as the one in Roosevelt Towers) are allotted at least $3 yearly per unit of public housing whose occupants they represent. Other financial funding may be obtained from sources like the Community Development Block Grant Program, CETA, etc.
Since its initiation five years ago, the Task Force has been increasingly involved in the management function of the project. In some cases, as in the modernization program allocations, the tenants exercise almost sole decision-making responsibility. In others, such as budgetary matters, they are beginning to exercise joint responsibility with the project manager.

Other organizations, not discussed here, take care of different aspects and needs at Roosevelt Towers. Functions such as utilities, garbage collection, security, welfare, etc. have different control groups who create, maintain, or regulate particular activities. But the four organizations presented above can be considered the crucial ones in the environmental decision-making processes of recent years.
CHAPTER II

THE ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESS:
A DESCRIPTION

THE PROBLEM

Roosevelt Towers became the center of a public controversy in Cambridge during the year of 1973. A series of disturbances in the project served as catalyst for a massive exodus of the tenants living in the Tower building. Even though the incidents were indirectly related to the Tower itself, this building rapidly became the symbol of the crisis affecting the project.

The first major disturbance, known as the "Largey Incident", happened during the summer of 1973. Lawrence Largey and Thomas Doyles, two teenagers from the neighborhood, were arrested by the police officials called for a disturbance at Roosevelt Towers. They were charged with drunkenness, after allegedly breaking a window in Windsor Street (west edge of the project). One day after the arrests, Largey was found dead in his prison cell. The incident touched off several days of disorders and demonstrations against the police. The Roosevelt Towers area became a battleground.

These tensions among teens from the neighborhood were aggravated by the parallel racial problems, especially within the project. Pent-up tensions between white ethnic families and Black families of the project were brought to a high level by September of 1973. During a fight among teenagers, a black youth was knifed. His family lived in the Tower building.
The project, the neighborhood, and the overall Cambridge community were alarmed. The local media developed a hysterical campaign requesting immediate solutions from City politicians, the CHA, and the DCA.

The public controversy focused on the problems of the Tower building. The tenants, who feared living in the building, began to leave or were requesting a transfer to smaller projects in Cambridge.¹

The Tower, the dominant building in the project, became a symbol of instability, perhaps because it housed most of the Black families of the project. But the identification of the building with the minority community (in the context of a predominantly white project and neighborhood population) was not the only reason for its controversial nature.

The Tower came to reflect, in a concentrated form, the main issues confronting the system of public housing as an institution. The system can be represented as a composite of four aspects: the tenants' socio-economic characteristics, the management organization, the physical structure, and the financial base of the project.²

The project's problems, and those of the Tower in particular, reflected in part the changing nature of the tenants' socio-economic structure since the 1960's (see Chapter I, page 29). The influx of new tenants, the "undeserving poor" (welfare families, minorities...) meant more broken families, more female-headed households with more children and youth in need of recreation areas and services. Delinquency, vandalism, and
security problems increased over the years giving rise to bigger administrative and legal problems. The "new poor" came from lower income levels; thus lower rents and greater rent delinquency were the consequences.

In general, the influx of new tenants represented lesser commitment to a social setting. Differences in class and race caused greater conflicts among the tenants themselves, with the staff, and with the neighborhood. In spite of the fact that a more open and equitable distribution of population decreases discriminatory practices, "these class/race conflicts eroded the natural ties of kinship, friendship, community and neighborhood origin that had previously woven public housing into social communities."\(^3\)

Aside from these problems, there were other issues mostly related to the physical structure of the project. The Tower, in particular, was not appropriate for raising children.\(^4\) Its design did not allow young children to move independently between their dwelling unit and exterior play areas while remaining within the visual and auditory range of a responsible adult. To gain access to the outdoors, children depended on elevator service unless they were expected to climb more than two flights of stairs. As a consequence of accessibility problems, elevators, and inadequate nearby play areas, small children ended up playing in hallways. Such unplanned use of the halls often led to excessive noise, cleaning and maintenance problems. These problems were augmented by the increase in child density within the project due to the lack of larger apartment units for growing
families in the Cambridge public housing stock. The presence of teenagers in the building using the halls as gathering places exacerbated the problem of elevator vandalism, which was frequently the work of non-residents. The tremendous inconveniences caused by elevator breakdowns were a major reason residents vacated the building.

The physical isolation of tenants living in the same building, caused by the continuous firewall which separates the two building cores, lessened the possibility of developing a sense of community among the Tower residents.

Other physical problems were related to the orientation of the apartment units. Half of these units were oriented toward the rear of the building, facing north, and thus lacking direct sunlight. The view afforded these units was of vacant land used for illegal dumping and unsightly heavy industry. These units experienced higher turnover rates, according to the former tenants and the CHA.

The virtual nonexistence of building security, dangerous "doughnut" circulation providing hiding space, the small size and location of the elevator cabs (impeding furniture movement) and lack of community spaces were among other physical conditions frustrating tenants.

These problems and the lack of effective maintenance increased the physical deterioration of the Tower, which, because of its age, was in need of extraordinary repairs. Logically, the results were lower occupancy, higher turnover.
rates and more vandalism requiring more administrative and social remedies.

The financial structure of the public housing system could not generate sufficient funds to match the increasing cost of running the project. Operating subsidies were not enough to balance the added costs resulting from the above problems, from inflation, and the energy crisis. The project and the Tower became more dependent on programs like modernization that, aside from bringing insufficient funds, further augmented the political dependence of the tenants on government bureaucracies.

Finally, the combined effect of the above mentioned aspects of the institution of public housing weakened the management structure of the project, in turn making the crisis unmanageable. Lack of concensus about the legitimate role of authority at the project level plus the increasing class and racial differences between staff and new tenants were factors impeding solution of those problems.

This qualitative presentation of some aspects of the problems of the Tower building indicates the complexity of the issues involved. A narrow-minded approach to alleviate those problems was clearly unrealistic. For this reason, the environmental decision-making process in Roosevelt Towers has been characterized by its multidimensional approach: the "Tower problem" was not a physical problem alone; it involved consideration of all the above factors which are at the root of the crisis of the institution of public housing in the nation.
Notwithstanding the basic continuity of the decision-making process, two major phases can be differentiated in terms of the progressive definition of the problem, the degree of formality of the process, and the level of commitment of the groups involved.

A first phase, an "exploratory" one, ran from the fall of 1973 through the fall of 1976. Following this, a "planning" phase took place from the winter of 1976 through the year of 1978. Their main activities, aims, and participants are described below. Figure 18 illustrates the chronology of events.

THE EXPLORATORY PHASE

The exploratory phase was comprised of a series of attempts to clarify the problems of Roosevelt Towers. Two main areas of concern predominated: the need to provide a reasonable sense of security to the residents of the project, and the search for possible solutions to the issues of the Tower building.

The "explorations" passed through different periods over the three years before a more formal approach (the planning phase) was initiated.

A first period (August 1973-November 1973) included the months following the violent incidents at the project. Security measures were taken by the joint action of CHA and DCA. The tenants, induced by DCA pressure, organized a Tenant Council and participated in the overall decision-making process. Finally, an attempt to rehabilitate the Tower building through an incremental approach simultaneous with a transfer plan for its tenants, ended in a decision to vacate the Tower, instead.
Figure 18

ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AT ROOSEVELT TOWERS
CHRONOLOGY OF MAIN ACTIVITIES
Conflicting views among the groups participating in the process made difficult a coherent strategy during this period.

A second period (December 1973-December 1975) covered the relocation of the remaining Tower tenants preparatory to closing it. Simultaneously, as a remnant from the attempt to rehabilitate the Tower, part of the first floor of the building was gradually converted to community facilities to serve the social needs of the tenants. Further increase in security was achieved through the Modernization Program in different physical aspects of the project (exterior lights, security screens, etc.), and the implementation of a police vigilance program. An attempt by CHA officials to develop renovation plans without tenant participation in the planning failed after the opposition of the tenants and DCA. During this period the CHA became the focus of the housing reformers' struggle, resulting in a "takeover" of the Board by liberals in the fall of 1974.

The last period (January 1975-September 1976) coincided with the first year of a new, reform-oriented administration for the CHA (a logical consequence of the preceeding reform of the Board). New opportunities were opened to deal with the issues of the Tower. The first one was the CHA request for a study from a class group in the MIT Department of Urban Studies. The group, after a series of meetings with tenants and CHA staff, came up with a set of possible options for the future reopening of the Tower. Based on these recommendations, the new CHA leadership looked ahead for ways to develop a feasible financial
strategy. Also during this period, the tenants further developed and expanded the community services located in the first floor of the Tower.

Different groups and personalities participated in the exploratory phase. The main interest groups were formed by the tenants, the CHA, and the DCA. At the time of the disturbances in the project, these groups lacked the necessary strength and confidence in each other to develop a coordinated strategy. Three key persons became crucial for communication among these groups: Clorae Evereteze, a project resident; Allan Isbits, Modernization Coordinator for the CHA; and Brian Opert, DCA Director of Housing Administration.

Clorae Evereteze, a project tenant since its origin, was a natural leader not only within the project but also in the Boston area. After directing three nursery schools in Boston until 1968, she became Director of the Civic Unity Committee at the Cambridge City Hall. This committee was created to improve the relations among different ethnic, religious, and community groups in general.

"Clorae" (as she was commonly called) a Black woman, understood the need to work in the political environment if the goals of racial justice were to be achieved. Aside from her position at City Hall, which gave her some influence in decisions taken at that level, she was involved in many community organizations and corporations. She was a member of these organizations, among others: Cambridge Community Services, Wellington Harrington Citizens Committee and Development Corporation, Mass. Union,
Cambridge Housing Association, Community Development Grant Committees, etc. Clorae's natural leadership was complemented by a powerful intuitive sense of politics, which made her an influential person in Cambridge over the last ten years. After a long illness, she died in July of 1977.

Allan Isbits was a young planner hired by the CHA in the fall of 1973 to coordinate the Modernization Program. He entered CHA after a rich experience dealing with housing and community planning issues in Cambridge. He was considered an excellent negotiator, well suited to manage complex and difficult crises involving conflicting interests. His planning philosophy, with its primary basis in the advocacy movements of the late '60's, was accompanied by a sophisticated understanding of the role of politics in Cambridge. He stayed with the CHA until the summer of 1975, when he shifted to a Modernization Department position at DCA.

Isbits was well connected to Brian Opert, DCA Director of Housing Administration during 1973-74. Opert had previously been in charge of the modernization program of the Boston Housing Authority in 1970. He had pro-tenant views, particularly in relation to public housing management issues. In fact, the CHA was "pushed" by him to hire a modernization coordinator (the position filled by Isbits) as part of DCA's effort to control the management irregularities of the Authority.

These three persons were instrumental in the creation of a Task Force, early in September 1973, to initiate a coordinated approach to the problems of the project. The Task Force
included members of the CHA Board, the City Council, the Health Department, and HUD. One of the first objectives of this group was to elicit the participation of the tenants in arriving at solutions to their problems. The tenants, notwithstanding their attempts to join the Mass. Union during the summer of 1973, were still disorganized. An initial tenant meeting with the Task Force and agency officials took place in September 18, 1973.

During that meeting, Thomas Atkins, DCA's Secretary, clearly stated his department's position on the problems of the project:

"There's plenty of money to do all that is needed at Roosevelt Towers; but I do not intend to authorize another dollar of state money until the tenants show some pride in their homes and take steps to aid in the restoration of order and the improvements of conditions there."

Confronted with DCA's "ultimatum", the tenants organized a 14-member steering committee (a "task force") as the first step towards the development of a Tenant Council. Mrs. Clorae Evereteze was chosen as chairwoman.

As mentioned above, the exploratory phase occurred in three periods corresponding to the entrance of new participants. The Tenants' Task Force, Clorae and Isbits worked in close collaboration throughout the first period. During the second period, they were joined by Mrs. Edna Skelly, the newly appointed manager for the project. Mrs. Skelly had just won a sex discrimination case against the CHA and was sent to the project in November 1973 as a "punishment duty". She became the first woman filling a managerial position in the CHA. Accepting the challenge, Mrs. Skelly gradually developed an effective working
relationship with tenants and an intimate friendship with Clorae. Mrs. Skelly's philosophy views public housing as a business that must be managed in a professional way. She feels that tenants, because of their low-income situation and lack of education, are not the best group to manage the project, but she believes in the need for a strong leadership (like Clorae) to serve as an example and focus for the rest of the project population.

The third period of the exploratory phase began with the activities initiated by the new reform-oriented leadership of the CHA: Harry Spence, the new Executive Director; Howard Cohen, General Counselor; and Dan Wuenschel, Director of Planning and Development.

**Harry Spence**, a lawyer with a broad experience in housing management and labor relations issues, was highly respected as a well-intentioned reformer. He worked in the Boston Housing Authority in 1970 and later with DCA (1972-73). During these years he kept contact with the housing reform movement of the Boston area. In 1973, he was named Executive Director of the Somerville Housing Authority, where he acquired a reputation of openness and sensitivity in his relationship with the tenants. His attempts to eliminate patronage and inefficiency in the Authority ended in a confrontation with the City Mayor and Board Members, resulting in his resignation by March of 1974.

Spence believes that poor families reject public housing because of their fear of disorder and because the lack of a sense of control. The need to create a sense of new order, equitable, non-authoritarian, and based on tenant participation,
was his main goal until he left the CHA in 1977. Spence selected Dan Wuenschel as Director of Planning and Development. Prior to coming to Cambridge, he had been a community organizer in a housing code enforcement program; Director of Operations with the Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation; Executive Director of the New Hampshire Housing Development Corporation; and a non-profit housing developer. After Spence resigned in 1977, he was appointed Executive Director of the CHA.

Howard Cohen, a lawyer, was selected for general counselor. He had been involved in the housing reform struggles of the early 70's in the Boston area, mainly working with the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute. Also, he was the legal counselor of the Mass. Union and during the last few years has been working as a general counsel for the Mass. Housing Finance Agency of Boston.

The CHA, with this new leadership, began to tackle the problems of Roosevelt Towers, among other things. In February 1975, Langley Keyes, professor at the MIT Department of Urban Studies, offered to Spence the services of a Housing Policy Class that he was conducting with Professor Lisa Peattie. Spence asked the MIT group to study the problems of Roosevelt Towers and Jefferson Park (which had similar issues). The group, after meeting with tenants and CHA staff (including Isbits) came out with alternative strategies by June of 1975. Based on those strategies, the CHA dedicated itself to the search of funding opportunities. By that time, Isbits had left the CHA and had gone to work for DCA, in charge of the Modernization Program. It took nearly one year to devise some sort of financial strategy.
After the first commitment of funds (Block grant from the City of Cambridge) was secured, the CHA decided to hire a Tenant Management Coordinator/Planner to work at the project level. In this way the exploratory phase culminated with a clear desire to reopen the Tower building and to develop a planning phase with the participation of the tenants. The person hired after a selection process (September 1976) in which tenants and CHA staff had participated, was Jack Plunkett.

Jack Plunkett came to Roosevelt Towers after an intense participation in the struggle to reform the public housing program in Massachusetts. A newspaper reporter until 1967, he then became assistant director of the Citizens Housing and Planning Association (the catalyst organization of the reform movement). This association, in conjunction with the Mass. Conference of Human Rights, the Mass. Legal Reform Institute, and other organizations, got involved in different reform activities, including lobbying for changes in the Federal and State regulations concerning rent payments (Brooke amendments), operating subsidies, tenant participation, and the fight to create the State Modernization Program. In 1970, Plunkett went to work as Communications Director of the Boston Housing Authority. There he came in contact with Harry Spence and Brian Opert. He continued his reform activities, mainly through the organization of Mass. Union, becoming its executive director from 1973 to 1975. During the summer of 1973 (when the disturbances at Roosevelt Towers occurred) Plunkett met Clorae and offered to help in the organization of the tenants. They developed a mutually respectful relationship.
Plunkett, a democratic socialist, was considered an excellent organizer, "a person that could put things together" in the words of Howard Cohen. In a sense, he was, aside from Clorae, the crucial person needed for the next phase of the decision-making process at Roosevelt Towers.

THE PLANNING PHASE

The planning phase at Roosevelt Towers covers the period from the winter of 1976 through 1978, in which a more formal and committed attempt was made to deal with the issues of the Tower building and the project in general. This phase was organized, in part, in response to the perceived requirements of a potential funding source represented by DCA's Pilot Modernization Program. The purpose of the program was:

"...to bring about significant, comprehensive improvements in a few of the Commonwealth's troubled state-aided family (Chapter 200) housing developments, to develop management systems for insuring that these improvements will be maintained in the future, and to lay the ground work for the transfer of successful procedures and techniques to other troubled projects with similar problems."

Building up towards that purpose, the planning phase was based on a framework of activities organized in three closely-linked parts by Jack Plunkett, the tenant management coordinator. A first part focused on tenant organization and management training. A second part dealt with the physical rehabilitation issues, especially of the Tower. Finally, a third part related to the integration of the development in a neighborhood-wide improvement program. Below is a summary of the main activities,
and participants for each of these parts:

Tenant Organization and Management Training

The Tenant Organization, at Plunkett's arrival, was a very informal one, dependent for its function on one person (Clorae) and lacking opportunities to develop new leadership. The organization's credibility rested on its capacity to provide services and to keep the project's stability. The members of the Task Force liked and trusted the project manager (Mrs. Skelly); consequently, they had little interest in checking her functions or participating in management without her consent and support.

The first job for Plunkett, then, was to create a more formal tenant organization in terms of representation, discussion and democratic decision-making, equipped for on-going work in physical, social, and management improvement. This was done by an organizational training program, given in part by Mass. Union (under a service contract with the CHA), by which the Task Force acquired the basic tools and methods of a formal organization. The training was organized around actual practice in decision-making in relation to services programs like Tenant Services (counseling, children and teens activities, social services, delivery) and the programs relating to the physical improvements of the project. Also, the formalization of the Tenant Council and its Task Force was sought through the development of by-laws for their own governance and finally through their incorporation, to gain more independence from the CHA and to seek a tax-exempt status.
After some months of training, by June 1977 the Task Force was divided in two committees to monitor the different activities of the planning phase. The Social Planning Committee\(^8\) was responsible for supervising the work of the Tenant Services Program and to study the need for other social services and determine which should be included as part of the Tower rehabilitation. The Physical Planning Committee\(^9\) was in charge of all the aspects related to the modernization program and the Tower physical planning.

The organizational training was followed by a management training (winter 1977 through 1978). In Plunkett's terms, the objective of this training was to create a model for tenant management of public housing projects similar to Roosevelt Towers:

The training aims at flexibility. At the end of the process, there will exist a tenant board which has been elected by the tenants at large and which has been trained to make relatively sophisticated judgments about management. At the same time, there will be tenants who have been trained as staff in management finance and social services available within the project. The Task Force, at the end of the process, may choose to form a management board to supervise management (which is the present intent of the Task Force) either for the Tower building alone or for the entire project. The Task Force, on the other hand, may by agreement with the authority (CHA), choose to take effective control of planning with a manager paid by the Authority. Or, they may elect to control some aspects of management and leave others for the time being, to the Authority. The aim is to bring tenants to a point at which there is a real choice.\(^10\)

Plunkett knew about the reluctance of the tenants to challenge Mrs. Skelly's role as project manager. To deal with
this situation, he proposed a tenant management model different from the two major models in the nation, the St. Louis one in Missouri, and Bromley-Heath in Boston:

Both examples share a similar characteristic: a fairly sharp break with the traditional modes of management and with the housing authority. What is needed, particularly for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, is yet another model, one which does not imply such a sharp break, but which builds on the work of tenants, housing authorities, and DCA in implementing a policy of tenant participation in management.11

In this model, tenant management is seen as "one of many points in a continuum of participation or control" which ranges from advising on one end to ownership on the other. The tenants are seen free to advance along the continuum at their own pace, stopping where it suits them, theoretically.

Participants in these activities, besides Plunkett and the Task Force, included Mass. Union representatives: John Kaynes (Executive Director) worked in the organization and management training; Run Haddad focused on social service planning; and Marcia Peters worked on legal issues. Staff members of the Tenant Services component--Barbara Warren (director) and Kay Palazzi (social worker and project tenant)--participated during most of the process. Finally, Susan Pedro (project tenant until recently), staff member for Plunkett and the Task Force, did much of coordination work, edited a newsletter, and got training in budgeting and management issues.

Physical Rehabilitation

The physical improvements of the development were considered by Plunkett as the "hard center" of the planning program around
which management and social improvements necessarily clustered. Two objectives were pursued: the rehabilitation of the Tower, and the renovation of the low-rise buildings through the modernization program expenditures.

The modernization program, in Plunkett's view, is a proven organization tool. For the tenants, it is an important program because it delivers improvements, creates jobs, provides a means of learning about management and enables them to participate in the setting of priorities. But the program's bureaucratic nature has sometimes led to tenant frustration, particularly in terms of the slow provision of services, or in the control of the final quality of the products. Consequently, the Task Force's credibility is jeopardized.

The main focus of the planning phase was on the issues of the Tower building rehabilitation. A first step in that direction was to hire an architect. The CHA and the tenants went through a selection process which involved interviewing five architectural firms of the Boston area and visiting examples of their work. By January 1977 the tenants had selected R. D. Fanning Architects, Inc. from Boston because of their experience working with community groups and housing rehabilitation. Clorae's prior experience working with Fanning in a Wellington Harrington Development Corporation project (Lynwood Court housing rehabilitation) was decisive. Notwithstanding the CHA preference for another architect, Clorae's non-negotiable position in favor of Fanning eventually led them to approve of the tenant's selection.
Contract negotiations continued through the following months. Two main components of the architectural contract were defined, one related to the Tower building, including some site work for the whole project. As part of this component, a market analysis and schematic plans for the Pilot Program proposal were requested. The other component referred to supervision, and to consultation work required for the modernization work planned for the low-rise buildings (kitchen renovations, window replacements, etc.). To allow for greater tenant involvement in the process, an architect's site office was opened on the first floor of the Tower.

Following the organization of the Task Force in two planning committees (June 1977), work on the market analysis, programming, and design took place more or less simultaneously. The main decisions were made during the summer and fall of 1977. The planning work was scheduled to follow the Pilot Program's requirements. By April 1978 a feasibility report was submitted to DCA and three months later, the project was selected for funding from a group of competitors. A design review phase followed after September, leading to final contract signing at the end of 1978.

Aside from the Task Force, their staff, and the architect, other participants in these activities included DCA's Pilot Program staff, CHA officials, and Mass. Union consultants.

DCA's Pilot Program staff was under the direction of Allan Isbits, who was in charge of the Modernization Program in general. Bernie Steward coordinated most of the Pilot Program activities.
and Steve Demos was in charge of the design review phase after September 1978. Demos, in particular, had been involved in the project's problems as early as 1974, when with a group of his Harvard architectural students, he developed alternative plans for the community facilities floor of the Tower Building. This work was done in close coordination with the Task Force and Isbits (who was working in the project during that time).

The CHA staff participating was basically the same as in the exploratory phase. The personnel of the Modernization Improvement Office, Frederick Putnam (Manager), and Ken Slaley (Architect) were in charge of monitoring Fanning's contract and resulting decisions. Jack Plunkett, who was under contract with CHA, responded directly to the Executive Director of the CHA but reported to Mr. Putnam.

Mass. Union representatives mainly worked in conjunction with the social planning committee on the program needs definition, with particular reference to the community facilities to be provided for the project.

Neighborhood Relations

In the expectation of large-scale improvements in Roosevelt Towers, and considering the nature of the project's neighborhood relations, two main problems needed consideration. First, it was essential that the reaction in the neighborhood to those improvements be positive, avoiding a view that the major resources devoted to the project were gifts to the "undeserving" poor at the expense of the neighborhood taxpayer and renter. The
second area of concern was the racial attitudes of the neighborhood and their impact in the proposed reopening of the Tower as an opportunity to fully integrate the project racially.

Aside from these problems, it was clear to Plunkett that the neighborhoods, as well as the project, had physical and social needs, and the work of rehabilitation in the project was an opportunity to address those needs, linking the neighborhood closer to the development in a positive way. A "neighborhood stabilization program" was proposed.

This program was modelled on the American Jewish Committee Work in Forest Hills, Queens, N.Y., where the development of public housing sparked racial controversy in the neighborhood. Based on observations gained at a visit to this program by Howard Cohen and Plunkett during January of 1977, a similar program was organized for Roosevelt Towers with the following goal:

Essentially, it is a program to organize the neighborhood around its needs, to solve its own problems, using the improvements of the project as a means to an end. It will be in that process that questions of race will be confronted, so that the neighborhood can arrive at constructive solutions to its racial problems along with solutions to other problems.\(^{12}\)

In terms of organization, the task force, in conjunction with the Wellington Harrington Citizens Committee, formed a Greater Neighborhood Board. The formation of this Board (at the end of 1977), drawing from both groups and attracting others in the neighborhood, will allow the neighborhood to act on such issues as security, commercial revitalization, health facilities, and youth employment, among other things. Also, it provides
the opportunity to the Task Force to exercise its skills in community relations, which is being taught as a management function in the management training program.

The funding for this part of the program will come from the Ford Foundation, which has pledged $50,000 for two years and matching funds from the city's Block Grants.
CHAPTER III

THE CONTROL OF ENVIRONMENTAL DECISIONS: AN ANALYSIS

THE DECISION TO REOPEN THE TOWER

In non-autonomous environments such as public housing projects, decisions concerning extraordinary physical rehabilitation normally depend on the commitment and priorities of housing management agencies and on the accessibility of financial resources. Implementation, in turn, is conditioned, not only by the prevailing national and state housing policies and programs, but especially by local political processes. In this sense, the decision-making process concerning the future of the tower building was closely linked to the evolving politics of public housing in Cambridge since 1973.

Initial attempts to devise a coherent and coordinated strategy to save the tower failed early in the exploratory phase, in part because of the conflicting politics of the CHA and DCA. During 1973-74, an aspect of this conflict prompted the direct intervention of DCA in management of the CHA budgetary functions for the state subsidize housing programs in Cambridge. (1) The controversy also involved the lack of CHA interest in tenant participation in the modernization program and the misuse of this program's funds.
While these difficulties increasingly blocked communication between the "structures of influence" relevant to Roosevelt Towers (CHA, DCA), political mechanisms intervened to induce closure between the formal and informal aspects of these structures. City Hall officials, concerned about the problems of the project, their political repercussions, and the incapability of the CHA to deal effectively with the situation, urged largely by the local press, assumed a mediating role. The City Manager was able to secure the negotiating abilities of his friend Allan Isbits and introduced him to Clorae Evereteze (who was employed at City Hall). Weeks later, Isbits was employed by the CHA to direct the Modernization Program, a strategic position created in part by Brian Opert's (DCA) pressure in the Authority. Thus, a new informal network was created within the existing formal structures of influence, opening in this way better opportunities for bargaining and cooperation with regard to Roosevelt Towers' problems. (2)

This informal network (along with other interest groups such as The Health Department, City Council, Police, etc.) formed the nucleus for the development of two initial plans that addressed the problem of the tower: 1) to completely vacate the tower with the intent to demolish it
in the future; and 2) to rehabilitate the building incrementally, in combination with a transfer plan for those tenants wishing to leave. The first approach was encouraged by the various City Council, CHA Board and Health Department officials because they considered the building "unfit for human habitation". The second plan was advocated by Isbits (although he worked for the CHA) and Opert with other DCA officials, based on the notion that the tower was a structurally sound building and an asset in the context of the low-income housing needs of Cambridge. Also it represented an opportunity for using existing community human resources and for developing new ones.

Isbit's incremented rehabilitation approach, after much discussion, was finally recommended to the tenant population in a meeting on September 19, 1973, in conjunction with a transfer plan proposed for the tenants wishing to leave the building.

The tenants, in general, preferred to leave the tower(3). But Isbits apparently succeeded in convincing Cloare of the justice of his approach, a crucial step in gaining support (or at least reducing opposition) of the tenants to the proposals. The main results of this meeting, then, were the acceptance by the tenants of the rehabilitation plans and the organization of a Tenant Task Force under Cloare's leadership.(4)
Isbit's rehabilitation plan included the integration of several mechanisms (physical, social, and to a lesser extent economic):

1) the conversion of the first floor units into community facilities (offices, elderly and day-care centers as well as a mini-employment center).

2) major repairs to existing units without altering the floor plan.

3) providing employment opportunities for tenants and local youth in rehabilitation work.

The whole approach was based in the assumption that the tenants would prefer to stay in the tower if these kinds of mechanisms were implemented. However, the realities confronting the tenants were much more complex. The declining occupancy of the tower diminished the support of the remaining tenants and further increased their desire to leave. The desire of the tenants, and the pressure of some City Council officials and the media, forced the CHA to unilaterally decide to close the tower in late October 1973 without consulting either its own employee, Isbits, or the Task Force members.

Notwithstanding CHA's decision to close the tower, Isbits maintained part of the rehabilitation plans by requesting from DCA support to open community facilities on the first floor. In this manner, he hoped, the momentum to rehabilitate the tower at some future date would not be lost. By the end of November 1973, Opert gave authorization
for the conversion requested by Isbits, and pointed out DCA's expectation:

"The Department is concerned that the initial conversion take place immediately, and that the vacant first floor units be effectively utilized as soon as possible. The drain on heat for vacant units is a luxury that cannot be afforded at this time. Further, this dramatic conversion and revitalization must be used as a mechanism to fill the entire building". (5)

Opert also authorized the "contracting with an architect to plan this and the long range conversion, funds for which may be drawn from operating reserves" and requested the participation of the tenant council in the process and the signing of the contract.

Based on DCA's authorization in January 1974, the CHA selected an architect to develop such plans. Tenants were not consulted, notwithstanding Isbits pressures to convince the CHA leadership about the need to do so. Clorae protested to DCA and Opert in turn disallowed the use of modernization funds unless tenants were directly involved. The CHA opted to drop the proposal.

This series of incidents pointed out to Isbits and Clorae the need to use political influence and pressure in their dealings with the CHA's formal bureaucratic processes. The strategy through 1974 thus became to work for the reform of the CHA Board of Commissioners, as well as continued development of the community facilities in the first floor of the tower.

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The series of events that transpired among DCA, CHA and the Tenant Council, and the frequent breakdown of formal communications links, seemed to strengthen informal relationships and in many instances was the major impetus that led to reopening the tower.

An example of this occurred in the summer of 1974 when architectural students from Harvard (under the direction of Steve Demos) went to the project after an invitation from Isbits. They became involved with the tenants in the development of a design for the conversion of the first floors of the tower into community facilities. The interactions of the tenants with the students led to increased tenant interest in the future of the building, but many remained skeptical.

As a result of these workshops, the CHA leadership renewed their interest in the tower's future, and submitted a new proposal to DCA for the redesign of the first floor and construction of a new lobby and entrance "to control the vandalism and rowdyism that has plagued the area". (6) But this proposal was done during the height of the conflicting relations between DCA-CHA (on the issue of deficit spending) and months later the CHA leadership had resigned as a consequence of changes in the CHA Board during 1974.

Three new liberal members (7) of the CHA Board of
Commissioners were elected in 1974, partly as a result of the activities of the housing reformers in the area (including Isbits and Clorae). These members were committed to both the reform of the CHA and the Public Housing Program.

In early December 1975, the liberal dominated CHA Board elected well known reformer Lewis H. Spence as Executive Director, opening new possibilities for the problems of Roosevelt Towers. Spence secured the assistance of the MIT Planning Students group in the preparation of alternative plans for the problems of the tower (also they studied similar issues at Jefferson Park Public Housing Project). The students, under the direction of Langley Keyes and Lisa Peattlie, considered a wide range of issues, including maintenance, management, role of central office, social services, tenant mix issues and design possibilities. They had weekly meetings with tenants, manager, and CHA officials.

Nearly two thirds of the way through the process, the strongest idea in the mind of the tenants was to demolish the tower. Apparently, the participatory approach was leading to a difficult conclusion. The CHA was informed about the "dead-end".

Spence attributed the tenant's negative position to their perception that the project stability attained
during the years before, was due to the closing of the
tower (9). The students reported:

"The building's physical location, size, and
history as a focal point of security problems
make it (the tower) a symbol for project residents
of all that is bad in public housing. A sense
of hopelessness and despair is reflected in the
tenants attitudes toward the building. In the
view of many, the most reasonable action would
be to demolish it, at least to the height of the
other building in the project."

"...The CHA, on the other hand, concerned with a
city-wide need for low-income housing, was unwilling
to demolish structurally sound housing units. It
has confidence that better management can solve
many of the problems in the elevator building.
The tenants are more concerned with the impact of
the building on the rest of the project and based
on past performance have less confidence in mana-
gerial solutions." (10)

Spence tried to convince the tenants of the need
to consider the issue of the tower in a broader context.
With a housing shortage affecting the low income families
in Cambridge, these buildings (at Jefferson Park and
Roosevelt Towers) took on a particular importance. They
had almost 10% of the family units in the Cambridge Public
Housing Stock by 1975. These units were critical at a
time when the CHA had over 1000 families on the waiting
list.

After discussing the CHA points of view, the tenants
reconsidered their position. Especially Cloare; who
according to Spence remained skeptical about the idea
of demolition, came to recognize the community needs in
relation to the reoccupancy of the tower. A middle position, that of demolishing only half of the building (keeping community services at the first floor), was considered appropriate by Cloare and the Task Force.

The MIT report was submitted at the end of the spring to the CHA with the following recommendation:

"...that the elevator building be re-occupied at eight stories if adequate funds can be obtained to extensively rehabilitate the building, particularly the public areas, and if supporting programs for tenant selection, security, maintenance, and social services, can be developed. If it becomes apparent that such funding is not forthcoming, the Authority should consider demolishing the building to four stories. Any program for the future of the building must also consider project-wide problems such as security if it is to be successful."

The report recommendation was accepted by the CHA as a realistic beginning in the process of reoccupation of the tower. Spence, knowing Cloare's and the tenants skepticism towards a rehabilitation of the complete building, realized the "need of going piece by piece" with the whole strategy.

DCA reacted negatively to the proposition of demolishing half of the buildings eight floors. They considered the tower a basically sound structure which could be rehabilitated for the benefit of the community. This alternative, then, was put aside.

Apparently, a concensus was reached concerning the
decision to reopen the tower. But the real test to overcome next was to transform that decision into one which would be economically feasible. Considering the special nature of the problem, the existing financial programs weren't enough, as noted by Cloare, Isbits and Spence in meetings with the DCA. A program for large scale investments was needed. The Pilot Program filled this need, and was molded in great part by Isbits' knowledge of the project's problems.
DECISION ON THE FUTURE POPULATION-MIX OF THE TOWER

Troubled environments can be improved through different change strategies, depending on which aspect of the space/time/people environmental interaction is emphasized. In some cases, introducing changes in the spacial organization of a setting, or in its function, can improve its congruence with users’ needs and desires. The management of activities overtime can sometimes avoid unnecessary conflicts arising from competing groups or lack of physical resources. Finally, changes in the user population or in its attitudes can be a viable strategy in certain contexts.

A combination of these or other change strategies is necessary in most real situations, as happened in Roosevelt Towers. The decision to reopen the tower involved changing the building (design modifications of the apartment floors) and its use (partial conversion of apartment units to community facilities); changing management practices (tenant management proposal); and changing the users (population-mix issue).

The Task Force realized that the population-mix variable was the fundamental one to control, especially after they agreed, obliged in part by external considerations, to support the reopening of the tower. Conse-
quently, the decision on the future user population (age group, household unit, racial characteristics, etc.) became a controversial one, at times serving as a testing ground for the degree of power of the tenants vs. the CHA.

The first attempts to rehabilitate the tower, early in the exploratory phase (1973), assumed that a family population was to be maintained, as it had been since the origin of the project. The first questioning of this assumption was posed by Clorae Evereteze, who according to Allan Isbits, developed some reservations about the social feasibility of retaining families with children in the building. As an alternative concept, she proposed the housing of "empty-nesters" (families whose children have grown up and left home), a concept that had evolved from her previous participation in developing non-profit housing for the Wellington Harrington Urban Renewal Area (11). But no follow-up was given to this proposal until the MIT planning group reopened the discussion of these issues in early 1975.

Recognizing the difficulties of child-rearing in an elevator building and perceiving that the tenants, especially Clorae, distrusted the idea of reoccupating the tower with a family population, the MIT Report concluded:
"A balance must be maintained between policies and actions which seem to best meet the housing needs of low income families in Cambridge and those necessary to insure the successful re-occupancy of the elevator building. It is in the long term best interest of residents of the building and project to carefully enforce tenant selection criteria in this building although it may create short term problems and pressures for the CHA." (12)

To reach a balance among the interests of the groups involved, the report proposed the following re-occupancy criteria for the residential zone (second through eight floors) of a rehabilitated tower:

1. place families with children on the second and third floors only.
2. occupy one-bedroom units (after re-design) above third floor with single adults and couples.
3. occupy two and three bedroom units above the third floors according to these priorities:
   a) related adults under 65.
   b) families with children over 18.
   c) unrelated adults under 65 sharing a unit
   d) unrelated elderly sharing a unit.

These reoccupancy criteria represented a compromise between the tenants and the CHA. On the tenant's side they preferred the adult population to assure the security of the tower, while the CHA felt pressed to provide additional family housing since the most recently constructed units in Cambridge were for the elderly.

The above recommendations were partially based on a preliminary market study made by the students which indicated a clear demand for large family and elderly apartment
units in Cambridge. However, the demand for single, non-related, adult units was limited and more selective, although the absence of such units in CHA projects suggested a potential demand (13). Thus, the recommendations regarding units for adults were not totally consistent with the findings of the market study.

The tenant's main concern with regard to the recommended mixture of adult population was that the inclusion of "unrelated adults under 65 sharing a unit" might be conducive to "wild parties". They also suggested the inclusion of the partially disabled, as a category to be considered different from the elderly.

Aside from the issues of household units and age groups, the other controversial aspect of the population mix decision became the one of racial integration. The tenants, in general, were reluctant to increase the number of minorities in the project, fearing a return to the situation which conduced to the closing of the tower. The CHA, under Harry Spence's direction was committed to the notion of integration, in part to comply with DCA Regulations on Tenant Selection. Responding to this conflict interest, the MIT Report suggested that the reoccupancy of the tower not be used as the mechanism to balance the project racially. Instead, they recommended that the ratio of minority to non-minority residents of the tower should not exceed the
stipulated ratio for the entire project.

Based on the series of compromises worked out with the tenants and mediated by the MIT Planning Group, the CHA concluded in June, 1975 that the tower was to be reoccupied according to a family/adult community split. But at the outset of the planning phase (November 1976), Jack Plunkett perceived among the tenants "an uneasiness about the idea of allowing families in the back building". To the CHA leadership, however, the possibility of an adult community did not seem fully viable due to a presumed inadequate housing demand within CHA income limits for admission. To ascertain this demand, the CHA commissioned a market analysis as part of the architectural contract.

However, given these uncertainties, Plunkett insisted on renewing discussions about the population-mix issue within the context of the planning process prepared by him. (See Chapter 2, p.61). This was done during July and August of 1977, simultaneously with the preparation of the Market Analysis by R.D. Fanning Architects Inc. Although everyone agreed on the need to wait for the outcomes of that analysis, several key judgements took shape during early discussions in the planning committees:
1) Children and elevators are a dangerous mixture; hence, it was important to restrict the tower to adult households to avoid potential problems and improve its marketability. Limiting the tower to adults would also help to reduce the overall project population density and balance the age curve (children constituted around 50% of the population of the low rise buildings), thus reducing the pressure on the limited outdoor facilities.

2) The need for large family units was not critical at Roosevelt Towers, where little overcrowding (under housing) existed by 1977 and there was a trend toward smaller families. Enlargements of individual units undertaken during renewals of other city projects had satisfied much of the local need for large family apartments.

3) The location of large family units in the lower floor, separated from access to the elevators serving the adult community in the upper floors, was considered necessary for reasons of security, yet was made difficult and costly by the physical characteristics of the tower.

4) A potential housing need among adults 45 to 65 years old was seen unanswered in Cambridge. Also the tenants persisted with the idea of housing non-elderly, handicapped people, a group which relied mainly on public housing for the elderly for low-rent housing.

The last judgement was corroborated by the preliminary results of the Market Analysis. Based on its data, the architect concluded that "there was a childless market of sufficient size to successfully accomplish the task of tenant selection and re-occupancy of a rehabilitated tower building."(14)
Based on these judgements and the Market Analysis outcomes, the Physical Planning Committee first (July 28, 1977) and the Task Force later (August 27, 1977) voted unanimously in favor of housing an adult community in the tower only. The CHA questioned this decision. Spence, the CHA executive director had concerns about the extent of the market among childless adults, notwithstanding the preliminary results of the Market Analysis. Dan Wuenschel, in charge of planning and development felt that the Tenants had unilaterally changed the original agreement with the CHA, which visualized part of the tower as a resource for the overcrowded families of the project and other applicants. Thus, he saw the need to "clearly establish a procedure with the Task Force for negotiating this change" (15).

To "negotiate" this difference Wuenschel met with the Task Force and staff members on September 6, 1977. At this meeting, a resolution to the dilemma of overcrowded families at Roosevelt Towers was proposed by the architects. The suggestion that large family units be contained in the low-rise structures proved appealing to both Wuenschel and the tenants. However, the tenants placed the burden of proof for demand of large family units on the CHA, by requesting an assessment of overhousing in all public housing projects in Cambridge. The CHA did not have this information nor was it able to gather it for a subsequent
meeting with the Task Force.

This final meeting (September 13, 1977) proved to be a crucial test for the degree of control allowed to the tenants over the population-mix decision. Given the lack of information about the extent of overhousing in Cambridge housing projects, the CHA was in a weak position to make a case for the need of housing families in the tower. The Task Force pointed out that the architect's market study showed the existing demand for adult housing and that adequate large family units could be provided in the low-rise structures; thus there was no compelling need to locate families in the tower. Moreover, the chairman of the Task Force, Clorae, threatened to withdraw all her support from the rehabilitation plan.

Spence, recognizing that the support of the tenants was a key factor in the success of the rehabilitation of the tower, conceded to their demands. Thus, the decision on the population-mix reflected in part the interests of the tenants but also their degree of power vs. the CHA positions.
THE DECISION ON THE DESIGN CONCEPT

Environments can be defined in terms of power, not merely in terms of form. From this perspective, the main issue becomes who is making decisions in terms of what; i.e., the issue of environmental control. In this section, the scope of this control is narrowed to the decisions affecting the design aspects of the Tower rehabilitation.

The main changes in the original spatial organization of the Tower were decided early in the exploratory phase. The notion of the Tower as a community facilities/housing split has been a constant over the past years. Harvard students helped in defining first floor plans for community spaces; MIT students focused on the design implications of their population-mix criteria and the resulting security issues (access to elevator, etc.). Neither had the time to study the relation between these areas and the relation of the Tower with the rest of the project (in its design aspects). The only attempt to do this "comprehensive" study was realized by Clorae's son, in a thesis for a degree in architecture in 1975. But his design concept assumed that the Tower was to be reduced to four floors, as the rest of the project's buildings.

The design decisions taken during the planning phase build upon this previous work. The design strategy was
a simple one; generating a limited set of alternatives from which a few were chosen, after evaluation by the tenants, for further development. These were then presented to the CHA and DCA officials for comment, followed by a new cycle through the tenants. Design criteria evolved from different methods: informal discussion of project problems, needs and desires among tenants and staff in the planning committees, visits to other projects rehabilitated in the recent past, surveys, the architects' direct observation of behavior settings at the project level, Pilot Program requirements, and market research.

Several limitations of the participatory approach (in the case of Roosevelt Towers) surfaced early in the design process. First, in spite of the advantages of having an organized group of tenants before the process' taking-off, the potential problem of limiting design decisions to the values of this group always creates tensions. In Roosevelt Towers, the Task Force (controlled by older women) controlled these decisions, often in open contradiction with other groups' desires (for instance, the project's teen population). Second, reaching agreement on a common strategy and methodology was difficult among the technical staff members (planners, architects, social workers), partly because of the differences in educational background and conceptual languages. Finally, the bureau-
Cratic timing of the diverse housing agencies created a mis-match between the rhythm of the participatory process and the rhythm of funding deadlines, submittance, etc., sometimes leading to tenant and staff frustrations.

Notwithstanding the limits of the participatory approach, programming and conceptual design activities evolved more or less simultaneously, due to the nature of the physical limitations of the Tower. The main design decisions discussed here (apartment floors, community facilities floor, and site plan concepts) passed through two main phases. From July, 1977 through April, 1978, a first set of design concepts were submitted as part of the Pilot Program Feasibility Study. During this period, design evaluation differences emerged, mainly from the CHA leadership. After the project's selection for funding under the Pilot Program, a design review phase took place during the Fall of 1978, under the direction of Steve Demos from DCA. During this review many issues were raised on the behavioral criteria underlying the design decisions.

The apartment floor design concept evolved through different stages. In Figure 19, schemes "A" through "D" represent basic plan variations studied for the Pilot Program Proposal. Scheme "E" was the last one developed, after the design review phase. Figures 20 and 21 show the schemes in greater detail.
Figure 19

Tower Building Design Concept Schemes:
Apartment Unit Floors

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Figure 20
Tower Building: Proposed Typical Apartment Unit Floor Scheme
2nd-7th Floors
Figure 21

Tower Building: Proposed Apartment Unit Scheme
8th Floor
The design criteria for the apartment floors, defined by the Task Force\textsuperscript{(16)} and staff members, included:

- The building should be unified by breaking through the firewall, so that the community identification of tenants could be encouraged.

- Corridors should run along the rear of the building (facing north), so that apartments face the courtyard (south) for a better view and maximum sun exposure, rather than the industrial area in Somerville.

- Replace at least two of the four elevators with a large one for the easy movement of furniture, handicapped people, equipment, etc.

- At least 10 two-bedroom units should be located in the building. The rest of the apartments should be one-bedroom, and approximately 16\% of all units will be for the handicapped.

- A laundry room and sitting area should be located on the last floor at an equal distance from the two elevator cores.

- The apartments should contain amenities found in comparable subsidized housing in the area, including modern kitchens and baths, carpeting and especially rooms of sufficient size to relieve the cramped quarters found in the original design.

- Reduce to the necessary minimum the number of units facing north.

Based on these criteria, schemes "A" and "B" were eliminated early in the process. Schemes "C" and "D" were presented for the design review. The tenants, the CHA and DCA preferred scheme "C" because it maximized sun exposure (in the central zone units) and provided access to the larger elevator on each floor. This scheme allowed for 76 apartment units, compared to the 30 units of the other scheme. But Steve Demos questioned the
notion of the corridor on each floor because the connection of the elevators has a statistical chance of "higher security problems". The goal of this design feature, in his view, was contrary to research data, since friendships and encounters in households without children are made around the entry and elevators, not along corridors.

Scheme "E", then, was developed to include this and other criticisms (e.g., the need for mechanical ventilation in central zone apartments). The design change cost DCA the price of another elevator in order to attain the above design criteria. With this constraint eliminated, new possibilities were opened to the designers, including opening the service core to natural light and ventilation, and simplifying the corridor design to an "L" shape instead of the "U" shape characterizing past alternatives.

Only one connecting corridor appeared, that on the top floor, to serve the laundry room and to allow for the unification of the Tower at two levels (the other level was on the first floor). Tenants, CHA and DCA agreed in the selection of this alternative.

The decision on the design concept for the first floor (and basement) community facilities was also controversial. Figure 22 illustrates the various concepts discussed. Schemes "A" and "B" proposed multiple entrances to the first floor, trying to improve the accessibility from the back parking area. These were rejected.
Figure 22

Tower Building Design Concept Schemes:
Social Services and Basement Floor
in favor of a plan with only a central access to the proposed new lobby entrance, but with an allowance for a future access by the back if security improved in the project. Access to the basement was limited to a multi-purpose room (at that level because of code requirements on structural loading). Figures 23 and 24 show the specific design features of the approved scheme. Perspective views of the areas can be seen in Figures 25 and 26.

A crucial aspect of the community service floors was the location of the teen and child care centers. The two were located at opposite ends of the Tower, with exterior access only (for handicapped users the access was through secondary entrances from the interior spaces of the Tower). The teen center location caused the most controversy with the tenants. Finally, it was located at basement level, to protect the residential area from excessive noise. The central lobby enclosure (a type of greenhouse) was proposed to increase the visibility of this critical area. CHA officials questioned this decision, in terms of its fragile quality, but the tenants preferred to take the risk.

The site plan design decision was based on the image of the original plan of the project (but not the specific geometry). Figure 27 illustrates the basic concept proposed. Criteria for this decision included the desire
Figure 23

Tower Building: Proposed Social Services
First Floor Scheme
Figure 24

Tower Building:
Proposed Basement Floor Scheme
Figure 25
Perspective

Figure 26
Perspective
Figure 27

Roosevelt Towers: Proposed Site Plan Scheme

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of the tenants for more green areas (to increase the privacy of the low rise apartments and to "embellish" the project grounds). Parking was increased considerably (including a proposal to use a piece of city land at Willow Street for visitor parking). The site plan as proposed basically organized the exterior spaces (now an undifferentiated continuum) into a series of semi-public courtyards. Boundaries were marked and access defined more strongly than under the present conditions.

Demos questioned the behavioral basis of the scheme especially in relation to parking location. He thought that "there is strong research evidence about the importance of the car and the feasibility of success for any feature that depends on policing". The real problem was that the money promised for rehabilitation was mainly oriented for the improvement of the Tower Building. From the beginning of the process, the site improvements were expected to be minor (such as landscaping, reshaping the paths, etc.). Any major change in the location of areas, like the present parking, involved trade-offs with other aspects of the site, something that tenants were not willing to accept. Also, the funds were scarce for this type of structural change.

In general, the tenants controlled the basic design criteria defining the range of alternative designs generated. Notwithstanding the lack of sociological research to
base these criteria on, the planners believed that the tenants' needs were equivalent to their desires, and that there was no conflict between the two.

The entire design process at Roosevelt Towers was based on the assumption that the stigma of public housing can be removed gradually through tenants' involvement in determining their environmental conditions. This contrasts with the alternative view of project improvements as described by Jane Jacobs:

"One of the unsuitable ideas behind projects is the very notion that they are projects, abstracted out of the ordinary city and set apart. To think of salvaging or improving projects, as projects, is to repeat this root mistake. The aim should be to get that project, that patch upon the city, rewoven back into the fabric - and in the process of doing so, strengthen the surrounding fabric too." (17)

Only the future will tell which approach has more validity for the population of Roosevelt Towers.
CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSIONS

Who decides and who provides what for whom is essentially a political issue of authority and power. What can be done to a place depends on who controls it. Therefore, the pattern of decision-making processes should be considered an important aspect of an environment (time-places); as Lynch asserts:

"The final quality of a setting may be due as much as to the pattern of decision process as to the pattern of spatial form: to the timing and clarity of decision, who participates in it, how criteria are evoked, how decisions are communicated and revised, or the continuity and responsiveness of management."
"...environments and institutions, both of them patterns of long life, have strategic effects on the whole quality of human life and these effects are magnified if they are coordinated. Planning for the concurrent modification of these two patterns is a powerful social lever."(1)

In a broad sense, the decision-making process at Roosevelt towers can be interpreted as an attempt to modify the patterns of environment and institutions. The basic aim has been to increase the tenants' degree of control over their place and lives. The search for solutions to the issue of the Tower building, among others, was seen as an opportunity to decentralize decision power in the context of public housing institutions.
In order to be effective, in the context of these institutions, tenant's place-control requires a broad front of interlocking elements. Dickson (2), gives some of the main ones:

1) clear, specific enabling legislation
2) clear, identifiable constituency, target goals.
3) collective material resources for distribution in regard to organized participation
4) material resources for staff and operating
5) wide dissemination of information and technical assistance
6) legal representation
7) a network of alliances and political support, especially in the state government

All these elements, in different degrees, were present in Roosevelt Towers, as was shown in this case study. Other elements in this case involved the internal power structure of the tenant population (i.e., which persons, groups or sectors of the project are in control of tenant organizations), and the role of physical means to allocate and secure tenant control (as with the notion of defensible space) which conform with shared social conventions.

Two of the above elements, in particular, were crucial through the process: first, the existence of a strong tenant leadership (Clorai Evereteze) with a working knowledge of politics and housing issues in Cambridge; second, the connections made by the tenant leadership with a broad network of housing activists, reformers, planners, bureaucrats, etc., at City and State government levels.
The interaction of these factors increased the tenants' leverage on decisions concerning the Tower building and facilitated access to technical, material and financial resources (in a quantity and quality never seen before at the project level).

The tenant's degree of control varied according to the decisions at hand. The decision to reopen the tower was somewhat forced on them by the realities of the housing needs of other low-income families in Cambridge. The CHA, in this decision, came to represent the interests of this "voiceless" population, a legitimate role to the extent that public housing should serve not only the interests of present tenants, but also potential ones. This tension between the CHA-present tenants reappeared in the decision on the future population-mix of the tower. In an attempt to control the consequences of reopening the building, the tenants successfully confronted the CHA's desire to house some child-rearing families there, and decided upon a population-mix congruent with the physical characteristics of the tower (childless families, non-elderly handicaps).

Finally, the tenant's representatives' control of the design concept decisions was greater with respect to the general criteria than the specific generation of alternative proposals. But this criteria reflected the partial views of the leadership, not necessarily reflecting the values of future users (absent during the decision process) or the
values of other sectors and age groups of the project population (teenagers, younger children, men, minorities etc.).

Epilogue

Certainly, the tenants Task Force has developed a deeper understanding of their patterns of environment and institutions over the past years. However, their future role in future decisions in the implementation of the Pilot Program is uncertain at the moment. Personal and value conflicts among the tenants, staff and management officials lead to the discontinuation of the Tenant Management Training, after the Task Force requested the funding sources to make a move in the program by the end of March, 1979. With the ending of this component of Jack Plunkett's original planning program, his presence also was disposed of along with other staff members. In what seems to be a generational split, a younger sector of the tenants succeeded in creating the necessary conditions for the voluntary resignation of the Task Force (composed mostly of older tenants) by May 17, 1979.

The causes and consequences of these recent actions are difficult to assess in detail at this early point. One thing is evident: a power struggle gradually emerged over the last year, especially after Clorae died (June, 1978). This should not be surprising in view of the strong central
role and organizational influence that she represented. Only the next months' events will tell if the tenants have not reached a dead-end in their route towards more control on their lives and environment.

The attempt to decentralize power within public housing projects as Roosevelt Towers, does not necessarily imply or lead to the "liberation" of the tenants, i.e., to greater personal autonomy. Because their lack of socio-economic power, public housing tenants depend on centralized and hierarchical institutions for their housing activities. Only deeper changes in the allocation of society's resources could increase the tenant population's freedoms and make projects capable of holding people through choice. (3) The decision-making process at Roosevelt Towers, seen in this perspective, is only a first step in the struggle to redistribute power in society.
INTRODUCTION

4. See Christopher Alexander, et. al.; A Pattern Language.
5. Turner; op. cit.; p. 241.
6. Lawrence M. Friedman; Public Housing and the Poor; in Pynos/Schafer/Hartman, ed.; Housing Urban America; p. 457.

CHAPTER I

1. Cambridge Department of Planning and Development; Neighborhood 3; p.l.
2. John J. Moran; Survey of Low Income Housing Needs: Cambridge, Massachusetts; Work Progress Administration Study; 1943.
3. Cambridge Historical Commission; Survey of Architectural History in Cambridge: Cambridgeport; p. 31.
4. Ibid; p. 34.
5. J.E. Shister: The Strategy of Tenant Selection in Cambridge Public Housing; gives an explanation of these practices.
6. Cambridge Historical Commission; op. cit.; p. 44.
7. Interview with Harry Spence, CHA Executive Director; March 27, 1978.
8. Shister, op. cit.
11. Ibid.

12. S.A. Cervantes; Modernization of State-Aided Public Housing: Program Goals and Policies in Conflict presents a detailed account of the creation and early phases of the Modernization Program.

13. Shister; op. cit.

CHAPTER II


2. The framework used to analyze the problem is based on the paper by Lisa Peattie: Public Housing as an Institution.

3. Lewis H. Spence; Progress and Problems in Housing Low-Income People.

4. The physical problems discussed are based in part on the findings of the M.I.T. report to the C.H.A. concerning The Future Use of the Elevator Buildings at Jefferson Park and Roosevelt Towers.

5. Ibid.


7. Department of Community Affairs; Preliminary Guidelines for Feasibility Studies and Reports; p. 1.

8. The Social Planning Committee was composed by: Alice Pedro, June Miele, Pat Goodrich, Kay Palazzi and Shiela Sciarappa. Staff representatives like Run Haddad, Barbara Warren, Susan Pedro and Jack Plunkett were also non-voting members of the Committee.

9. The Physical Planning Committee was composed by: Mary Kenney, Clara Frangos, Emily Gomes, Rose Pozerycki, Bridget Power, and Clorae Everetze. Staff representatives like Jack Plunkett, Susan Pedro and R.D. Fanning Architects, Inc. were also non-voting members of the Committee.

11. Ibid.


CHAPTER III

1. The CHA was accused by DCA of irresponsible deficit spending, which was mainly the result of a 20% vacancy state affecting state-operated apartment units (as in Roosevelt Towers) that represented a loss of $7,170 per month. Other charges referred to the patronage in selecting CHA employees: non-compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in hiring employees and in tenant selection. See Editorial, "New CHA Era?", Cambridge Chronicle; August 8, 1974.

2. This early dynamics in the Roosevelt Towers process is described here in terms of the information obtained through an interview with Alan Isbits, DCA's Modernization Program Director; March 17, 1978.


7. The three liberal members, forming a liberal majority in the CHA, were: Norman Watson, Gerard Clark, and James Stockard.

8. Mac Herrling: "Lewis H. Spence to be CHA Director"; Cambridge Chronicle; December 5, 1974.

9. Interview with Harry Spence, CHA Executive Director; March 27, 1978.

11. The Wellington Harrington Development Corporation is a non-profit entity which has sponsored/developed low and moderate income housing projects for the Wellington Harrington Urban Renewal Area. Clorae, as a Board member of this corporation was involved in the planning phase for the conversion of a mill building (the Will Scientific) into apartment units for low and moderate income individuals, between 45 and 65 years old.

12. Austin, et. al.: op. cit.; p. 3.

13. In order to assure that there would be a real demand for adult units, the MIT Report further recommended several strategies: raising income limits and raising household income eligibility to allow for separate consideration of adult incomes, as well as a more in-depth market study.

14. Although not limited to the 45-61 age group, the Market Analysis emphasized the adult (or "empty-nester") market, since within that bracket was the potential long term tenants which would hopefully provide project stability. The research was done over the spring and summer of 1977, covering the areas of Cambridge, Somerville and Boston. See R.D. Fanning Architects, Inc.; Childless Market Analysis.


16. Summaries of design criteria were done from diverse memos and reports on the Tower Building design process.

CHAPTER IV


2. Donald E. Dickson: Tenant Participation in Public Housing; p. 335.

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