

A REPORT ON THE BOSTON HOUSING AUTHORITY'S  
MANAGEMENT PROGRAM DURING COURT RECEIVERSHIP  
1980-1984

BY

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submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

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Abstract

This report is a general review of the Boston Housing Authority's management initiatives during the period of 1980 through 1984, the first four years of its court receivership. The Authority was placed in receivership because of its inability to remedy its substandard housing conditions.

During that time, the BHA made some notable strides in restoring its management capacity. It embarked upon a new decentralized management effort, increased the efficiency and responsiveness of its central departments and began a comprehensive capital improvements program.

There still exists, numerous housing code violations throughout the Authority's properties and many are concerned that the Authority, once out of receivership, will no longer be capable of its present day, intensive renewal efforts.

Fortunately, these four years of court receivership have served the Authority well. With the continued diligence of BHA's staff and residents, there is little doubt that the the Boston Housing Authority is headed for long term recovery.

As the Authority enters post-receivership, its governing structure and operating practices must not only ensure that the BHA fulfill its mandate to provide safe, decent and sanitary low-rent housing but in so doing, empower tenants to impact the actions of the Authority and other institutions whose services and support shape the lives of public housing families.

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## Introduction

The Boston Housing Authority, (BHA), was established in 1935 to take advantage of federal aid in the construction of low rent public housing. According to the Commonwealth's enabling statute, (MGL 121 B), Boston's housing authority was to provide safe, sanitary and decent housing to families or elderly persons of low income. Subsequent state legislation also provided public housing authorities with the ability to lease units in the private sector for low income renters. Since its formation, the Authority has become the fourth largest public housing agency in the nation, managing over 17,000 units of family and elderly housing and leasing another 5,600 apartments from private owners.

Of Boston's 200,000 low or moderate income residents, nearly one fourth of those persons, or 55,000, live in BHA a operated unit, accounting for nearly one tenth of Boston's entire rental inventory. From 1970 to 1980, the city wide vacancy rate dropped from 7% to its current rate of 2%. (1) Located in fifteen neighborhoods of Boston, today, the BHA manages 31 family developments, 38 elderly projects and operates one community residence, in addition to its extensive leased housing program.

### What Happened?

After nearly a decade of legal controversy centering on the Authority's failures as a housing agency, Boston's public housing residents and their attorneys successfully persuaded the Massachusetts Superior Court to remove BHA from the governance of its quasi-public Board and to consolidate the powers of governance and administration under the auspices of a court appointed Receiver. By placing the Boston Housing Authority in court receivership, the judge concluded that without his unfettered control over the administration and operations of the BHA, the numerous substandard conditions found in public housing could not, in good faith, be substantively addressed.

Historically, Boston's public housing program had been controlled by the city's ruling political interests. Jobs, housing and votes were important brokering chips for which city politicians openly vied. Back when Boston's program first began, public housing communities were for the working poor only. And for white families only. And for the politically connected, only.

During its first twenty years of operations, the city of Boston received important benefits from its public housing program. The physical plants were relatively modern, social order was resolutely maintained by a strong, authoritative and powerful manager and the city's politicians expressed a vested interest in BHA's efficient operation. Everyone seemed to agree that a locally governed

and controlled, public housing program, financed with federal construction and mortgage monies, was a well conceived arrangement. For the city, it seemed that there was little to lose and much to gain from a thriving public housing agency.

Then, in the short span of a barely more than a decade, the bottom fell out, leaving one of the city's most powerful institutions in a state of advancing paralysis. The time was the sixties and Boston, as was the nation, was in the throes of coping with changing attitudes towards the poor, racial and ethnic groups and liberal political ideas.

Civil rights initiatives culminated in a tumultuous local experience centering around the desegregation of Boston's public schools. Coalitions of community groups rallied to stop urban renewal and highway construction plans from leveling their neighborhoods. In 1968, a mayor, who would ultimately run the city's seat of government for an unprecedented sixteen years, was elected. These forces, in combination with a variety of financial factors, would ultimately lead to a political clash between Boston's electoral leaders and public housing tenants.

By the 70's, after years of Great Society federal programing, congressional housing policies began to shift into a conservative direction. Efforts to persuade Congress to provide, then later, increase, sorely needed operating subsidies to public housing authorities, (PHA's), were limited successes. HUD programs continued to emphasize new

construction, and most PHA's, including Boston, limped along with occasional modernization assistance.

Without the ongoing physical upkeep of BHA projects, neighborhood relations grew strained. Some family developments housed a majority of the neighborhood populace, and had a large impact upon local business and residential property values.

The seventies were a time when the Authority's tenant population had uneven levels of registered voters--the elderly were heavily registered, while many low income groups were virtually 100% non-voters. When physical distress combined with less political clout than in BHA's early years, the results were poisonous. The Authority's socio-economic health went rapidly downhill and BHA's city-wide image as a blighting, crime ridden, unwelcomed neighbor began to unfold.

#### BHA Attempts to Restore its Housing Services

Ultimately, it would be years of unprecedented management failure, enormous human suffering and the abandonment of almost a quarter of BHA's housing stock before the Authority would be forced to revamp its administrative and operating strategies. Through the powers of court receivership, public housing officials and residents hoped to begin the process of rebuilding BHA's management program, to renew its social fabric and to revitalize the Authority's fiscal infrastructure.



At the center of this effort is the Housing Manager. According to BHA's Chief of Operations,

"the manager...becomes the key person, the focal point around which the Authority...delivers its services and fulfills its mandate. That tells you a whole lot...about how the organization ought to be structured...if the manager is the focal point, then ...the manager ought to be responsible for, and have a staff to carry out all of the day to day work that has to be done...Our task at the BHA, has been to take a management system, which was basically incapable of delivering its services and make it capable of deliver(y)."

It is, perhaps, the efforts of the manager, that will serve as the fundamental test of whether the Authority can successfully restore its buildings and communities. Court receivership is, a small incubated period of time, in which those challenges can be assessed.

This once powerful housing entity, through receivership, has begun the slow process of reconstructing its crumbling management foundation. At the helm of the ship is the Housing Manager whose role within the field management system has been the gamut: from respected leader and decision-maker to a relatively powerless office manager that was often ill informed about the day to day operations of the his or her local development.

What management model, be it private, tenant or BHA provided, could successfully begin to breath new life into public housing; especially their most distressed family development projects? What were the opportunities which court receivership could generate that would serve the long and difficult process of providing decent, low rent housing to the city's poor and moderate income peoples?

## CHAPTER I

### BHA's Role in Boston's Housing Market

#### Local Benefits:

From the time the city of Boston passed enabling legislation to charter the Boston Housing Authority, the importance of low rent, decent housing, would become increasingly apparent to the city fathers. Newly formed households, returning veterans and their families and the elderly turned to public housing, which was one of the few shelter assistance programs that reached "down the income scale" effectively.(2)

Local businesses and industries looked to public housing communities for potential customers and employees. Because early public housing advocates believed that low rent housing should offer employment as well as housing assistance to eligible families, public housing developments were typically built, on inexpensive public lands, near locally thriving centers of employment.

The city's dock areas such as in Charlestown, Dorchester, South Boston and East Boston, for example, had large family projects constructed in their neighborhoods. Industrial and commercial sectors, (Dudley Station, Blue Hill Avenue corridor, Allston-Brighton etc.), became appealing locations for family projects such as Orchard Park, Faneuil and Fidelis Way. Other sites such as Cathedral, Bromley Heath and the Missions were located near medical and educational institutions.

Local neighborhoods were glad to see the jobs from construction, management and maintenance which accompanied the Authority's expansion. The Authority's development activities were locally controlled in order to more fully assist the process of stimulating the local economy. Prominent business and labor leaders, local realtors and friends of city and state politicians, set policy as Governing Board members appointed to five year terms by the mayor or governor, (1 seat).

With the combination of federal construction monies and local policy makers who understood their community's needs and priorities, it seemed that Boston's public housing agency would make a significant contribution to the city's economic growth.

#### Local Problems Shaping the Authority:

Local communities, of course, could not predict the decade of economic decline which would grip the region in the 1950's and 60's. Due to rising energy and labor costs, an exodus of major employers such as the steel, textiles and shoe industries began. Other industries such as shipping and light manufacturing firms were impacted as well.

As a city, Boston serves as a center of commerce. When the statewide economy began to shift, Boston lost many blue collar jobs. City residents, including public housing wage earners, were hit hard by the steady decline in blue collar job opportunities and entire neighborhoods struggled to overcome the effects of unemployment, business losses and

the slow down of private investment activities.

It seemed at the same time that the employment sector was undergoing periodical shocks and upheavals, the city's housing market was also beginning to feel the strain of its geographical limits. Land prices were rising and housing production could not keep pace with the city's needs. Boston's rigid racial and ethnic prejudices compounded housing problems even more, preventing many citizens from living, and sometimes working, in certain city areas.

By 1954, almost 99% of the Authority's existing family units had been built and as BHA entered the sixties, its family housing production came to a virtual standstill. The city's overall vacancy rate was on the decline and market rents, in general began to take a steep climb. Many poor families could no longer afford to live in private rental housing. Many large families, could not find, less more afford, adequate housing.

BHA housing projects, like most poor communities were vulnerable to the changing economic and political climate. Politicians were the first to begin to react to the city's changing employment market calling for new and innovative economic strategies to alleviate the growing hardship which local businesses and service groups were facing.

Urban renewal was crafted by legislators as a comprehensive means for the nation's cities to prepare and implement broad based economic revitalization efforts. Boston was one of the nation's earliest applicants for urban

renewal dollars and many of their early redevelopment projects served as national models of public-private initiatives.

City fathers made hard choices about who would benefit from the resources of urban renewal and history has shown that very few poor communities were beneficiaries. Unfortunately, the city's public housing agency would not only be excluded from the city's new found progress, it would also become one of its foremost victims.

By the late sixties, next to HUD operated, foreclosed properties, BHA was perhaps the city's biggest landlord. Its founding mandate, to provide decent, low rent housing, was being stretched by a new mandate: to serve as housing of the last resort. Thousands of existing units had been demolished to make way for new government, office and commercial uses. Some subsidized housing was built in place of torn down buildings, but the number of newly built houses, came nowhere near the numbers of homes which were destroyed and never replaced.

The Authority was already a haven for political manipulation and abuse. Tenant selection was already shaped by patronage and racism; jobs with the Authority typically came by way of political connections and a tradition of seeking career advancement by way of political sponsorship, supplanted performance appraisals. There was gross, inappropriate interference in BHA's day to day operations by BHA Board members and like any "extended" city department,

BHA officials could not ignore the demands of the mayor.

According to Ed Logue, the then director of the Boston Redevelopment Authority, (BRA), the architects of the city's urban renewal program, literally, viewed the BHA as an integral component of its relocation program. Despite the obvious decline in the physical conditions of many BHA developments, Boston's urban renewal efforts did not add to the operational capacity of the Authority. "All we cared about", commented Logue at a forum held at MIT in 1983, "was how many units we could get to move our development plans forward and relocate those people." Ironically, while the city rebuilt its downtown districts, it stoked the fires of destruction that would ultimately claim its public housing agency.

Housing Reformers Begin Work to Save the Authority:

When it became apparent that the BHA was entering into an unprecedented period of operational decline, calls came for centralized, top down, reforms in the delivery of BHA's housing services. Management consultants, housing groups and advocates joined with residents of public housing to protest its deplorable conditions and city neglect.

Neighborhood decline had taken its toll on area services and employment sectors. Urban renewal relocation had milked the Authority of its available units leaving tremendous social controversy in its wake. Long time residents of public housing resented the newcomers; most who had not even shared a common neighborhood history. These

newcomers were different, perhaps less caring about local issues; their presence in BHA units was not due to family or political ties, but because the house they used to live in, had been torn down.

In contrast, hundreds of new families felt stranded in between the hopes and promises of returning to their former homes and being "temporary" public housing residents. Instead of getting better housing due the city's renewal projects, now some families were living in apartments that were in deplorable condition. There was little sense of welcome as the buildings and grounds became springboards for vandals and thieves. Some BHA sites had also become polarized by racial tensions between minority and white households.

Various government agencies such as HUD and the state's office of Community Development chided the BHA for its inefficiency and poor fiscal management practices but very few, if any, critics had solid solutions for BHAs's problems. In fact, only with the declaration of receivership has there been a thorough and systematic effort to both identify and then address the major operational problems which shaped the Authority.

As a background for framing the management issues and subsequent operating strategies implemented during the Receivership, a general history of the BHA's operational decline follows.

## CHAPTER II

### BHA's Operational Decline

#### Rising Costs and Declining Income(s):

Coincidentally, just as many family developments began to suffer from deterioration and a lack of modernization, Many families whose incomes were rising as their employment status improved began to move out of public housing and many newcomers were families who lived on fixed incomes. During that time, most public housing authorities had only their annual rental income from which to pay for routine operating expenses.

In the late sixties, (1969, 1970, 1971), a congressional mandate, called the Brooke amendment, affirmed that the nation's public housing, had to be affordable to low income families. For the first time in the history of the nation's public housing program, rents were set at a maximum of 25% of household income.

Coupled with aging physical plants, a national energy crisis and unprecedented inflation, the initial effect of the Brooke amendment was to limit the overall operating income for public housing authorities. The BHA, like countless other larger housing authorities, fell further into an administrative and financial disorder.

By the mid seventies, BHA's vacancy rate would rise to 23%, representing nearly 5,000 uninhabitable units.(3) Many of its larger developments, such as Columbia Point, Charlestown, Orchard Park, West Broadway and others, began



to suffer from the effects of complete social, physical and political disarray. Between the period of 1971 and 1980, BHA's net annual income went from \$1,563,000 to a deficit of nearly \$14 million.(4) The median capital expenditure during that same period, per unit, was \$25.97.(5)

Ironically, until the mid seventies, BHA policy required that, as household incomes rose above a specified level, the renter was no longer eligible to remain in public housing. As over-income households had to move away, over time, the average income of BHA families steadily declined. The indirect consequence of the Authority's household income limits was just as families could afford higher rents, they moved on, (thus paying market rent to a private landlord and the BHA doesn't compete with the private sector). Between the loss in rents due to the rise in vacancies, the limited rents due to the Brooke amendment and the departure of potentially, higher income households, the Authority's operating income declined.

The Public Housing's Declining Electoral Clout:

One central dilemma for Boston's public housing program has been its dual dependence on federal dollars for building and operating its units and on local government for political support and local services. Needless to say, many active resident leaders were forced to leave public housing at a time when, more than ever, the assistance of the city's powers was needed to revive the BHA's ailing community conditions.

Without that "block of votes", which veterans and their families had used to influence Boston's city government, the mayor with his public and private sector resources, did not provide BHA family developments with any notable public support. Gradually over time, city services to public housing developments actually declined.

As the gap between service costs and operating income widened, BHA's developments went from being important sources of affordable housing throughout Boston's neighborhoods, to being characterized as "breeding grounds" for problems affecting area businesses and homes.(6)

#### Residents Petition Courts to Improve Housing Services:

In 1970, when the effects of BHA's city-wide decline began to reach epidemic proportions, residents of the Authority initiated legal actions to demand that their poor housing conditions be addressed. That year, residents of the West Broadway, (D Street), filed a suit, charging that BHA was in substantial violation of the Commonwealth's state sanitary code, (MGL c111, section 127H). The case was dismissed because, according to the ruling statement, "more effective, albeit less heroic, procedures are available" to residents of BHA to remedy code violations in the city's public housing developments.(7)

In 1974, residents again brought suit against the Authority, this time in the United States District Court. Again, the complaint was dismissed. The federal judge ruled

that the federal court system was not the appropriate jurisdictional forum, asserting that,

"in the last analysis, long range answers...(are) best...provided by the political branches of government (that) have the resources, the duty and the power to make significant changes in the field of (local) housing." (8)

Residents were informed that Boston's Housing Court, was established by state legislation, was better suited to resolve BHA's rampant housing code violations.

In early 1975, Armando Perez and eight other BHA tenants\*, filed a class action suit against the Authority, and nearly five years later, this class action suit would lead the way for the the Boston Housing Authority to become the first, and only, public housing authority in the nation to ever be placed into court receivership.

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\* The tenants joining originally with Perez as class representatives were: Maria Laboy, Alejandrina Montes, Mary Wellings, Margaret Gerkin, Grace O'Leary, Ruby Perkinings, Linda Ferdinand and Delores Culbreath. Two other tenants, Pauline Morgan and Rita Driscoll joined later. Boston's Tenant's Policy Council Inc., was also admitted as an intervening party plaintiff.

## CHAPTER III

### Management Reforms Predating Court Interventions

#### Centralized Maintenance Reforms:

During the early history of the Authority, BHA's field management system had not readily accommodated a strong directive or supportive role from BHA's central office in field management affairs. In many respects, each development had their own policies and practices, which sometimes conflicted with other development management practices. These various local management practices and styles, when combined, often compounded the Authority's already inefficient approach to providing its maintenance and management services.

In 1973, a resident sponsored evaluation report of the Authority's operating performance, severely criticized its decentralized character, (BHA Struggle for Survival:1969-1973). In contrast to the Master's report prepared only a few years later, local managers were described as uncontrolled operators who set local management policy, selected tenants, hired and supervised their local staff and functioned like kings of tiny fiefdoms. Minority families, for instance, were blatantly discriminated against, patronage often influenced tenant selection decisions and BHA's central office got insufficient, or outdated information on routine local activities such as vacancies, expenditures for supplies, labor costs etc.

Over the years, the Authority's excessively

decentralized managerial approach had created inadequate and unclear lines of authority, a lack of budgetary planning and inconsistencies in the Authority's preventive maintenance strategies. All, of which contributed to accelerating the wear of a deteriorating plant.(9)

In response to critics who pointed to examples of waste and inefficiency in BHA's management system, in 1972, the Authority had begun the process of modifying its decentralized management structure into a centralized maintenance system. Centralization was viewed as a means for curtailing the powers of the local manager and as a mechanism for instituting cost saving controls and to coordinate labor pools.

At first, local management programs seemed not to suffer from the central coordination of maintenance services. One consultant to the Authority during the transition period, describes how centralized maintenance had quickly begun to improve BHA's maintenance and management capacity.

"Formerly, the managers of the 55 projects supervised their own work forces. Then these work forces were consolidated into a city-wide decentralized maintenance department. Now the managers have increased influence over maintenance through district crews. Major jobs, such as the replastering of a whole room,...(are) handled by central maintenance.

'This makes coordination quite important'...Because of the improvement in internal communications, (centralized maintenance) is proving to be... highly cost effective."  
(10)

According to the recommendations of BHA's management

consultants, centralized maintenance operations meant that work orders would be centrally processed, work crews would be centrally dispatched and the accounting and data processing system for the Authority's field operations would be centralized. Managers in turn would devote the majority of their time to resident oriented functions such as lease enforcement and office staff supervision.

The tenant selection department had always been a downtown function, although managers had learned to control their local tenant selection process. Budget management and material purchasing became more centrally administered and authority-wide services such as public safety and BHA's former tenant services department were other downtown Authority functions related to field management.

Proponents of using a centralized field maintenance delivery system, saw the "downtown coordinating role" of BHA officials as a way to make local budget decisions, resources and manpower decisions and to make the day to day coordination of personnel functions more efficient.

The centralized maintenance model was a mechanism for improving the quality of management decision-making. No longer would there be a lack of uniform policies and procedures for the allocation of local maintenance service. Problems like these would be curtailed in a centrally orchestrated work order system with dispatched labor crews.

The Role of the Housing Manager in a Central Maintenance System:

One outcome of BHA's efforts to centralize its

maintenance program was the gradual change in the functions of the Housing Manager. While still responsible for the overall conditions of the local development, the duties of the Housing Manager, no longer included tasks such as maintenance staff supervision, making local budget or planning decisions.

According to the original consultant report recommending that the Authority institute central maintenance and management controls, (the Stone and Webster Report, 1970), the manager's job was to, "manage tenants, not buildings". The focus of the manager's role in a centrally administered maintenance program hinges upon the concept that,

"the manager needs very badly to be on the same side as tenants...(when) problems arise in maintenance, as they will...it is best...if both s/he and the tenants "fight" maintenance (together). (Thus), the concept of centralized maintenance implies a view of the role of a project manager as (being) responsible to and allied with the tenants in demanding (the) effective delivery of services to residents of public housing." (11)

It was assumed that as the capacity of maintenance services improved, project managers would, "respond with equal productivity", meaning increased rent collection, improved lease enforcement and the added pursuit of socially oriented improvements for their local development.

The Authority's Maintenance System Continues to Decline:

By the time that the Perez suit called attention to BHA's declining physical and social conditions, the expected improvements of centralized management and maintenance

reforms had not materialized. Work order turnaround, for example, had decreased for a time; then when supplies and staff coordination could not keep pace, the work order system again broke down from inefficiency.

Although the 1972 study conducted by residents and public housing advocates, (A Struggle for Survival, BHA 1969-1973), had argued that the Authority was on the threshold of making significant improvements in its local management capacity, it also reported that deep structural changes were necessary to fully restore BHA operations.

Below the Authority's administrative level, for example, the combination of tenure, union representation and the practice of political sponsorship in employment decisions, had created a workforce of 500 blue collar workers and 230 white collar workers who, for the most part, had no clear sense of what their job responsibilities were.

There was no formal, administrative structure for assessing and evaluating job performance and there was no discernable Authority-wide personnel policy. (12) It was an informal policy of BHA to hire from within the agency, to promote existing employees to higher positions and whenever possible, to offer employment positions to tenants and minorities--subject to accepted practices of political brokering and union membership.

By the late sixties, four unions had been recognized by the Authority, namely the Teamsters, the Building and Trades Union, the Laborers Industrial Union and a small union for



BHA's firemen. Typically, the selection criteria for rating an applicant did not relate to the requirements for the job position because according to the report, union membership was more important.(13)

Each successive collective bargaining agreements governing the Authority's workforce placed more and more restrictions on crafts jurisdictions and job classifications. For a long time, in fact, the Authority did not provide emergency work order service on evenings and weekends, due to the terms in its union agreement. Out of utter frustration and a compelling need, the city-wide tenant organization set up an emergency work order hotline, during evening and weekend hours, to assist BHA residents with emergency maintenance problems.

Centralized maintenance and management reforms had, been heralded as important changes in the Authority's management structure that could help restore its capacity to provide responsive housing services. In the short run, the model seemed to work. Over time, however, centralized maintenance proved to be utterly chaotic...particularly when, the recommended steps outlined by the Stone and Webster report were never fully implemented.

In focusing the responsibilities and authority of the Housing Manager to mostly tenant related activities, (lease ups, income certification, record keeping, evictions etc.), managers were seldom able to significantly affect the quality of work order performance and eventually, even the

number of work orders completed were out of their control. Their credibility amongst residents suffered and the Housing Manager's leadership capacity was impacted as well.

Instead of increasing the opportunities of managers to upgrade local management services, centralized control over local development decisions created adversarial feelings between BHA's central and field employees. The internal communication system between the field and central operations suffered. The image of an isolated and typically uninformed local manager replaced the former image of the powerful, independent BHA manager.

## CHAPTER III

### Court Reforms Predating Receivership

Prior the declaration of court receivership, Judge Garrity, had attempted to restore BHA's operating capacity through other legal measures. The first was through the appointment of a Master, who would serve as an organizational expert and court monitor to the Authority. The second intervening strategy was to implement a Consent Decree agreement.

#### Creating a Master's Office to the Authority:

When Garrity initially agreed to rule on the case, he wrote,

"as indicated by the evidence in this case,...probably the great majority of the ...units...owned and operated by BHA as well as the buildings themselves are not decent, nor are they safe...nor are they in compliance with the State Sanitary code...that physical conditions existing in some, perhaps many apartments are so intolerable that relocation is immediately required, that...(vacant) apartments...constitute a present danger of fire and disease...that serious crime and the fear of (it) makes (BHA) developments intolerably unsafe...(and) the facts...indicate that occupancy by race in BHA developments and leased housing reinforces and exacerbates segregated housing patterns in Boston's neighborhoods." (14)

There was no doubt about the Authority's liability as a landlord but it was also true that BHA had insufficient money and expertise to remedy its ever worsening deterioration.

So, as a start, Judge Garrity ordered BHA to prepare plans and recommendations in operational areas of "immediate concern". Those tasks included identifying vacant apartments, unfit occupied apartments, planning for major

grounds clean-up efforts, and addressing vandalism, crime and racial desegregation within Authority's housing communities.

The judge believed that BHA needed, "expert assistance" and appointed a Master to fulfill a technical and monitoring function. The most important task of the Master was to prepare interim and long range plans for the maintenance and rehabilitation of BHA's substandard properties. (15) BHA was also ordered to fully cooperate with the court appointed Master, so that these goals could be met. Without the willing and competent leadership on the part of BHA's five member Board, Judge Garrity knew that the Master's efforts would be fruitless.

The Master's Findings:

Fourteen months later, on July 1, 1976, the Master filed a five volume report which was accepted by the Judge. (Having retired from the Housing Court in October of 1975 to accept an appointment to the Massachusetts Supreme Court, it was agreed that the Perez case would follow Garrity to his new job.) The Master's report found that, "BHA was on the edge of bankruptcy", because it had failed to bring expenses into line with its income and subsidies.

Due to BHA's failure to monitor the activities of its Security Department, public safety services had serious deficiencies. The Authority was criticized for Board policies which, "prohibited managers from participating in decisions affecting their developments" and that BHA's

maintenance operations was an, "impenetrable morass".

The Authority's modernization efforts were, "grossly inefficient" resulting in major, unjustifiable delays in capital improvements and development planning unduly focused upon new construction at the expense of renovating existing developments. The Master also found that resident participation in the administration and allocation of maintenance and modernization funds was severely hampered by, "inadequate information, poor administration and management by BHA, HUD and the state's Department of Community Affairs, (DCA)." (16)

According to the Master's report, the internal administration of BHA was based upon a, "tradition of employing persons on the basis of political sponsorship and nepotism" and that these practices had adversely impacted the quality of work performed by BHA employees. Because Governing Board members had authority over hiring and promotions, the loyalties of the Authority's workforce was divided between an employee's political sponsor and one's obligation to perform those job duties, if there was a clearly stated job function in the first place.

In short, the Master concluded that major administrative and operating problems were caused by the inability of BHA officials to capably, "communicate, implement and administer major policy decisions and programs within the agency". BHA officials, stated the Master, were contributing to the dismal performance of the city's housing

agency because they failed to, "see the extent and seriousness of the deficiencies in the traffic of information", within the institution. One result was that BHA officials were unable to direct or to delegate authority or to even determine the capacity of, "some BHA employees to get the job done." (17)

The Court Moves to Implement a Consent Decree:

When the Master's first report was reviewed, Judge Garrity concluded that another strategy, "short of receivership" was necessary to propel the Authority forward in its operating capacity. So, Judge Garrity reappointed the Master with stronger powers over the hiring and promotion of top echelon BHA personnel and ordered the Master to oversee BHA's operational reorganization.

The judge was particularly concerned with controlling the divisive, counterproductive and scandalous influence of BHA Board members over BHA's day to day operations. Towards that effort, the Judge personally sat down with BHA staff, attorneys for the plaintiffs, residents and the Master and drew up a Consent Decree--a document which took over a year to complete.

With the enhanced authority of the court Master and a legally binding, statement of goals, tasks and objectives, Garrity hoped to bring the Authority and its Governing Board to the bargaining table to establish their administrative obligations to remedy BHA's substandard conditions. The Consent Decree became the blueprint for the administrative

reorganization required for BHA to improve the delivery of its services.

The Consent Decree:

At the forefront of the Consent Decree provisions was the desire to restore the Authority's capacity to competently perform all of its operational functions and to enable BHA to conduct substantive financial planning. (18)

The Consent Decree was to remain effective for three years, starting from June 1, 1977 when it was signed, until June 1980, unless any party could demonstrate that the Decree's,

"further functioning...will...be so unworkable that...(the purposes of the Decree provisions) will not (be) substantially achieved." (19)

Unfortunately, almost nine months would pass, after signing the Decree agreement, before the Governing Board actually hired an Administrator, (March 1978). Until his employment, there was no chief administrator charged with directing the efforts of the Authority to fulfill BHA's provisions under the Decree.

Barely six months later, on October 13, 1978, the new Administrator, without prior notice, resigned, (effectively immediately), and the potential success of the Consent Decree began to rapidly decline. (20) Within weeks after the resignation of the newly appointed Administrator, both the Master and attorneys for the plaintiffs began to file notices of "Substantial Non-Compliance" with BHA staff and Board members, for failing to meet the specific requirements

of the Consent Decree.

Vacating the Consent Decree:

BHA provisions during the first eighteen months of the Decree included at least 154 requirements in thirteen departments. The departments referred to in the Decree provisions were central administration, personnel, financial planning, purchasing, central project stores, management, maintenance, data processing, modernization, security, tenant selection, evictions and the legal department. (21)

Within weeks after the resignation of the BHA's Administer, both the plaintiff's attorneys and the Master began to file letters of complaint charging the Authority and its Board with failing to comply with the provisions of the Consent Decree which were in effect. Over fifty letters were sent from the Perez attorneys and the Master submitted at least twenty-six notices of substantial non-compliance to BHA's Commissioners. (22) Both the Master and the plaintiffs requested that the Judge convene a hearing to review their testimony and petition to vacate the Consent Decree.

Thirty-five days of hearings followed. The Board contended that its had used the Consent Decree as an opportunity to bring about administrative and management changes which,

"can and will lead to a restoration (of) decent, safe and sanitary conditions in public housing throughout Boston." (23)

In disagreement, the plaintiffs argued that the Consent Decree did not provide the structure for resolving the



Authority's larger, more pressing problems of deterioration and poorly administered operations. To effectively remedy the BHA's inability to reform itself, the Perez plaintiffs petitioned for the appointment of a Receiver/Administrator.

From June 1, 1977 until June 1980, when the plaintiffs petitioned the court to place BHA in receivership, a Consent Decree, had been in effect. This comprehensive legal document had been prepared as a working guideline for BHA to begin the process of bringing its housing into compliance with the State Sanitation Code. Due to the Authority's inability to significantly adhere to the Decree Provisions, the Consent Decree was vacated and BHA was placed in court receivership.

#### The Accomplishments of the Consent Decree:

BHA officials contended that a total of 138 provisions were actually completed, or 90% of the total required, during the period.(24) However, of those incomplete provisions, 26% related to maintenance provisions, 17% were related to security while the remaining incomplete provisions were spread out amongst other BHA departments.

Upon closer examination, critics pointed out that, despite the claims of the Governing Board, BHA had done poorly during the first leg of the Consent Decree. Apparently, nearly half of those departmental improvements spelled out in the Decree had at least one outstanding provision which remained uncompleted by the first eighteen month deadline.

During the hearing, residents testified that basic services such as heat and hot water, electricity, emergency maintenance, public safety and extermination services still had not improved. In its defense, the Governing Board cited that a number of highly qualified individuals had been hired, that new personnel procedures for hiring and promotions and affirmative action goals had been adopted. The Department of Occupancy had been reorganized and included a new plan for tenant selection and transfers.

Their biggest achievement, according to the Board, was the extensive reorganization, again, of the field management program. During the period of the Decree, BHA's 27 family developments along with their 38 elderly sites were put into seven divisions with a District Director for each. Maintenance activities remained centralized, however, and the focus of the reorganization effort was not clearly outlined in the Board's assertions that it could better deliver its routine or emergency housing services. in BHA's statement of defense.

During the Consent Decree's first reporting period, BHA had also rewrote its standard lease with its residents, in conjunction with the Tenant's Policy Council, (TPC), and had attracted \$37.45 to \$41.45 million in funds during that fiscal period for physical and management improvements earmarked for family developments. (25)

The evidence presented during the proceedings suggest that, in many respects, the Governing Board had little

direct participation in efforts to ensure that BHA achieve any progress under the egress of the Consent Decree. During the court proceedings to determine the merits of vacating the Decree, the judge had interviewed several board members. In his findings, he describes his disappointment in the lack of progress made during the first eighteen months of the Consent Decree.

In his summary statement, Judge Garrity wrote,

The Board's incompetence and indifference to those obligations, (of the Consent Decree), has directly and substantially contributed not only to BHA's failure to implement important provisions of the Consent Decree but also to the unprecedented deterioration of the Authority's developments and the widespread violations of the Sanitary Code. Throughout the four year history of this case, the Board has shown itself to be capable of nothing more than gross mismanagement. The unabated mis- and non-feasance of the Board necessitates the extraordinary action of appointing a Receiver in this case. (26)

The judge was finally convinced that the court's past approaches to force the Authority to bring its housing into compliance with the State Sanitary Code and to address its management, maintenance crisis had not only failed but, overall, housing conditions in the BHA had gotten worse.

The appointment of a Receiver was the only hope for ever reversing Boston's public housing conditions.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Goals of Receivership

The goals of Receivership are basically the same goals as those described in the Consent Decree, with added imperative and capacity to achieve those objectives. The Receiver is mandated to:

1. halt the Authority's physical deterioration,
2. to bring every housing unit and building up to state code,
3. to implement successful management programs based upon local development needs,
4. to end racial discrimination trends in public housing and,
5. to renew neighborhood linkage strategies which provide for the betterment of the city's public and private housing climate.

By combining the authority of the chief executive with the powers of the Governing Board, the Receiver/Administrator has absolute control over BHA's administrative decisions, policies and operational practices. Agency leadership is unified, the authority to implement operational reforms is consolidated. The Receiver/Administrator reports directly to the judge who, in turn, delegates any or all decision-making powers necessary for the Receiver to fulfill the mandates of court receivership.

A statement prepared by the Authority, provides a description of the mandates of court receivership:

"The Boston Housing Authority, (BHA), was established in 1935 to take advantage of federal aid available for the construction of low-rent public housing. Presently, the BHA is the fourth largest housing authority in the country with almost 18,000 units in 68 developments across the city.

Currently, approximately 10% of the population of the city of Boston is served by the Authority.

In February 1980, after extended tenant-initiated class action litigation, (the Ferez case), and operation under a Consent Decree, the BHA was ordered into Receivership by Massachusetts Superior Court Judge Paul G. Garrity. The BHA is presently run by a Receiver/Administrator under the direct supervision of the court. The Receivership will remain in effect until the Court concludes that the BHA has taken any and all actions necessary, desirable and appropriate to bring conditions in all BHA housing units into substantial compliance with the provisions of the Massachusetts State Sanitary Code.

The top priority of the BHA under receivership is to employ all means necessary to bring its units into compliance with the State Sanitary Code. Major renovations and the rehabilitation of vacant units are the primary means being directed towards this end. Other goals of Receivership include: promoting strong desegregation and open housing efforts; strengthening the relationship between BHA developments and their surrounding communities; developing and implementing management and information systems which evaluate and monitor BHA progress; and ensuring inasmuch as possible that all BHA operations continue to maintain compliance with all applicable laws during and after the transition to the post-Receivership period." (27)

These goals may seem ambitious, in light of the many years of neglect and social isolation which many public housing communities have had to endure. The goals of receivership, however, are fairly basic and fundamental priorities which any good housing authority must incorporate into their operations. In fact, the provision of safe and sanitary housing is but a first step in the renewal of the BHA's long term viability. It is the sustained growth in community esteem and neighborhood linkages, that are the most far reaching goals for the Authority.

## CHAPTER V

### Receivership Initiatives to Renew BHA's Physical and Social Conditions

The central means for BHA to successfully provide housing services to its residents is through a responsive and capable management and maintenance program. One of the first tasks which the Receiver/Administrator completed during the first six months of receivership was to determine the overall state of the Authority's housing environments. What became apparent during that process was that no single management strategy could be used to meet the needs of a majority of developments.

#### The State of the Property upon Receivership:

In order to appreciate the scope of BHA's property conditions, one is reminded of the broad range of physical and design features which characterize Boston's public housing communities. Not only are there ten story, brick towers congregated in superblocks to be found, but also semi-detached garden type apartments with private parking spaces, as well.

Property and community conditions were so diverse that the Authority established three general categories to describe management and social conditions. The best housing conditions were found in developments where a history of preventive maintenance and capable management services existed. Public housing sites found in this category had few, if any, major code violations, the tenant population

expressed satisfaction with their management services and not surprisingly, many of these projects were recently built or modernized. These public housing developments were almost exclusively elderly complexes. A few, large but stable family projects such as Fairmont, Mary Ellen McCormack and Gallivan Boulevard, also fell into this category, although all of these housing projects were in need of some major modernization work.

Overall, BHA's family developments were by far, in the worst social and physical conditions. Management and maintenance services were at best, poor, if non-existent. Due to a backlog of workorders, insufficient local budgets for major repairs and poor employee performance, physical deterioration was so advanced that large numbers of units and buildings had serious code violations. Public safety and city police services were typically absent and the result was an increase in crime and vandalism. The most straightforward indicator of these deplorable conditions was the number of vacant units which, in some sites, totalled nearly fifty percent of the apartments.

Developments which were suffering from extreme conditions such as vacant buildings, fell into this category include Columbia Point, Bromley Heath, West Broadway, Fidelis Way, Franklin Field, Orchard Park, Mission Main and Extension, Cathedral and Charlestown. These projects required a level of intervention that amounted to the complete redevelopment of the property.

In effect, short of completely demolishing the buildings, the Authority's most distressed family projects would have to be rebuilt from the ground up, in order to restore the buildings and social fabric of the community.

For sites like like Cathedral, the Missions, Columbia Point, D Street, Orchard Park or Charlestown, who had enormous economic impact upon their surrounding areas, the substance of their neighborhood relations is summed up by the widespread civic belief that unless the BHA moved to restore physical and social order in their communities, the private sector would be forced to abandon the local area.

Other developments such as Maverick, Franklin Hill, Old Colony and Orient Heights were in equally deplorable condition but were not categorized as having the same intensity of social and managerial disorder. The Authority categorized these sites as places where "stabilization" strategies had to implemented and from there, "redevelopment" efforts would follow.

#### Setting Priorities:

The top priority of the BHA over the first four years of receivership was to bring its developments into compliance with the Massachusetts State Sanitary Code. Major renovations and the rehabilitation of vacant units have been the primary methods by which the BHA has tried to achieve these goals. Other goals include increasing the safety and liveability of local developments, strengthening resident participation in decisions affecting their housing services



and to achieve long term fiscal stability.

Vacant Unit Control:

Projects within blocks of one another were found to be in physical and social contrast. D Street was crime ridden and plagued by vacant apartments, substandard building conditions and poor rent collection. Old Colony, only a few miles away, while suffering from serious physical deterioration, had evidence of a viable management presence. It had a 1980 vacancy rate of less than 9% of its 873 units, although vacancies were on the rise--up from 3.1% in 1977, 5.7% in 1978 to 9% in 1979.(28)

Although the average, overall vacancy rate for BHA in 1980 was 23%, twice that of any other major housing authority in the nation, the local vacancy rate in family developments represented a broad range which posed a general problem in how to organize the the Authority's resources during the initial stages of receivership. Local vacancy rates, for example, ranged from 3% to 50%. (BHA's oldest property goes back to 1938, with 1,016 as-built units, yet it was considered one of the few family projects with relatively few management problems and a near zero vacancy rate.)

Across the city, the Authority had to begin the job of securing hundreds of vacant units, cleaning out basements and performing massive grounds cleaning to remove broken glass, years of junkpiling and abandoned cars. In countless

numbers of buildings, conditions were beyond description, many lacking entry doors, mailboxes and sanitation due to burned trash and debris left in common area stairwells and rooftop passages.

Since 1980, when receivership was declared, the Authority has managed to stabilize all but a few of its family developments. After boarding up vacant buildings, the BHA embarked upon a broad based vacancy rehab program. Crews hired by the Authority completed rehabs which did not require extensive renovation while modernization contracts, either as a redevelopment item or as a capital improvements item, were completed by subcontractors.

While the special vacancy rehab program has been fairly successful halting the alarming rise in the number of vacant, uninhabitable units, even today, many, many occupied units have largely gone without significant improvements. (Except in developments where major redevelopment has occurred which also necessitates that the unit be vacated, temporarily, at least).

Once past the general stabilization process, whereby the BHA simply moved to "restore order" and to provide at least a minimum managerial presence, the ensuing management effort had to establish a means for addressing BHA's poor living unit conditions.

First Step Interventions-- Matching Need with Opportunity:

Of the family projects in need of immediate stabilization and major redevelopment, most were built

during the fifties--coming to barely twenty years of age when the Perez suit was filed. When in 1979 when the Authority began the process of tallying the number of vacant units, city wide, vacant units came to at least 1,872 uninhabitable apartments. Of the severely distressed sites, Cathedral had the lowest vacancy rate of 26.2% with Bromley Park and Heath Street representing the upper range of the vacancy range with respective rates of 56% and 62% of their as-built number of units being abandoned.

Located in at least ten different city neighborhoods, BHA properties are included in nearly twenty electoral wards, abutting areas ranging in character from single family residences to two and three decker wood frames to brick rowhouses that are rapidly being converted into condominiums. (In 1983, the Authority added a 350 bed, community residence, the Pine Street Inn, to its roster of housing units operated by BHA.)

During the first six months of receivership, the Authority centered its efforts on how to best organize and allocate its existing resources. The Receiver describes his working strategy as an effort to "balance opportunity with need". This approach was a way to create important public momentum during the first months of receivership as well as to impact the largest area of need possible.

Because the Authority's housing units were located in a diverse spectrum of neighborhoods, included a range of physical designs and reflected social conditions which went

from decent to distressed descriptions, it was insufficient to try and formulate a singular, comprehensive restoration strategy.

Needless to say, it was a major task to try and figure out how to appropriately balance the input of central and field staff during the process of developing management intervention strategies. The one area of general consensus, however, was that management and maintenance reforms had to be a centerpiece in the overall development of methods to improve BHA's housing conditions.

In order for the on-site management services to be properly administered, the Receiver/Administrator and his staff believed that decisions affecting local management should be shaped by those who bear the most responsibility in providing those services. The Housing Manager, ultimately, bears the most responsibility for the ongoing operations of their development.

In order to facilitate the manager's ability to guide the on-site delivery of housing services, all local management functions had to be complemented by centrally organized BHA resources. Although the final authority over decisions affecting the field management process rests with the Area Director, a senior staff person of BHA Operations, the process for deciding how services needed to be provided would become decentrally organized.

The Decentralized Management Model:

According to the Receiver/Administrator, the concept of

managerial and maintenance decentralization focuses broad responsibility at the local development level. In the Receiver/Administrator's, First Semi-Annual Report to the Court, he writes,

"If we (are) to get satisfactory delivery of services and property maintenance, the Housing Manager('s) responsibilities ... (becomes) the common denominator for all service delivery... The restoration of managerial authority... (therefore) is a principle of Receivership. function of the field operation (by) decentralizing administrative and managerial functions. (29)

Implicit in this approach is the goal of enriching the potential resources for the Housing Manager, be it through increased autonomy in decision-making, added dollars for improvements and repairs or special management training and assistance services.

In an institution the size and with the reputation of the BHA, to implement a decentralized management program is a delicate proposition. In order to avoid past mistakes and to creatively work within existing constraints, such as the BHA's various binding collective bargaining agreements, the process of preparing for decentralized maintenance and management initiatives was time consuming.

Roughly some 500 people, work in the Authority's Division of Operations which includes field management, construction management, central maintenance, security, tenant selection and indirectly, some supportive services. It is an awesome task to relate job functions, employee performance and operational policy in a manner that achieves the goals of good management. In the short run, training for

employees, clear job descriptions and other measures of accountability are created in order to provide the basic building blocks upon which decentralized decision making depends.

In acknowledging the Authority's commitment to use its own staff and operating resources to provide the major portion of its housing management services, the Receiver/Administrator comments,

"Some might argue that the existing public system of service delivery ought simply to be dismantled and replaced with private, contracted services. But there is no evidence to support the notion that such a large enterprise can be dissolved, even with Receivership; (and) there is little evidence that the private sector has much more expertise or capacity in managing subsidized family housing. Clearly the level of competence required in planning, construction and management to achieve the majority of the goals of Receivership are unprecedented, not only for the BHA but for most public organizations as well. (30)

In addition to modifying the organizational character of the Authority, an initiative to decentralize management decisions implies that resident participation in management services is proper and essential. Each development has its own character and neighborhood history and resident participation in major management reforms is a fundamental prerequisite for implementing a responsive and effective management program.

Even with a decentralized approach to preparing maintenance and groundskeeping services, annual operating budgets or for monitoring BHA's public safety services, the comprehensive coordination, planning and necessary administration required to remedy the wide range of housing

code violations goes beyond local management capacity. There are limited capital resources, the personnel constellation remained subject to the BHA's collective bargaining agreements and in most public housing areas, city services were almost totally lacking.

## CHAPTER VI

### The Management Models during Receivership:

In those projects where substandard conditions were widespread, management reforms were even more critical to the comprehensive process of physical and social recovery. When the Receiver/Administrator began his tenure, residents felt powerless to protect themselves from thieves and muggers, drug traffic was widespread, unemployment was overwhelming and a lack of community and recreation space isolated families on one side of the development from the other.

Most important to the efforts of receivership, however, was the need to generate a management capacity capable of responding to the Authority's massive numbers of major code violations. Work orders for apartment repairs had ceased and basic services such as groundskeeping, extermination and replacing broken windows were sporadically provided. Entire building systems were deteriorated.

Fidelis Way, for instance, had pinhole leaks throughout its entire plumbing system; Cathedral's electrical system was antiquated and every time a few households simultaneously turned on their t.v.'s, washer or dryers, the building experienced an electrical outage. In short, routine and preventive maintenance efforts wouldn't scratch the surface of what was ultimately needed.

Judging from the advanced physical and social decline of the majority of BHA's family developments, the initial



prospects of the BHA bringing its housing into compliance with the State Sanitary Code were poor, at best, maybe nonexistent. The money and human resources necessary to make a dent in the Authority's substandard conditions seemed insurmountable; particularly in 1980, a time when federal cutbacks in public housing operating and modernization funds were near an all time high.

What management approach, regardless of its potential, could impact conditions such as uncontrolled crime, buildings standing in near total abandonment and occupied apartments that were in such poor condition? What maintenance interventions would at least start the process of bringing apartments and buildings into compliance with the State's sanitation codes, given that the routine work order system could never adequately alter the more serious housing code violations?

The Authority's Private Management Model:

The typical private management firm working with the BHA manages, modernized small family developments, (ie, 28 just built Highland Park units, scattered sites managed by ETC of the South End), or elderly housing projects. In cases where private management was brought in to manage a large, distressed BHA property, the development has been slated for major improvements and comprehensive social supports and services. Some of the reason for this contracting tendency is that the monies for paying a private management firm could be included in the redevelopment financing plans and proposal. All but a few family developments were managed,

therefore, under the auspices of the BHA's field management department.

Using private management firms within distressed family developments was possible because the Authority could incorporate the costs and the management model into its redevelopment plans just as any conventional developer. (The BHA is one of the few, if not the only, housing development entity in the city's public sector). Because the financing mechanism for the substantial rehab of a BHA property was based upon a turn-key formula, this development technique allowed for the BHA to turn over its property, temporarily, to a private developer then buy back the complex, post renovation at a fixed price.

Through the turn-key mechanism, the Authority was also able to incorporate private management services to administer management services during both the redevelopment and postdevelopment phases of the reconstruction process. With the combination of future improvements in the physical and social environment plus the monies earned as a subcontractor with the Authority, several private firms responded to requests for proposals from the BHA, despite the physically poor conditions which the management firm had to address.

Another condition which enabled the Authority to attract capable private management firms to manage several of its most distressed family projects was that not only were the buildings slated for renovation but in some cases,

(not including D Street), a significant percentage of the resident population, would ultimately be "brand new" tenants who were willing to buy into strict, tenant endorsed management policies.

With the risks of management "losses" at a minimum, or at least more approximate to the private sector experience, firms could apply most, if not all, of their private management methods to their management location. For redevelopment sites such as Fidelis Way, their housing conditions would dramatically improved as management services became more effective. Soon, the privately managed BHA family complex would be the exception, not the rule of housing conditions found in most BHA family developments.

Another plus was that, in the case where a private management company was contracted for services, residents were enthusiastic supporters of the concept.

In many cases where a private management company was contracted by the Authority, residents were active lobbyist for the model. In Fidelis Way, for example, the president of the Commonwealth Tenants Association, Bart McDonnough, said that residents were concerned that after having fought for and finally receiving, the funds to fully modernize their development, they did not want BHA's, "incompetent management system to come in and mess things up."

Residents perceived that the Authority would not enforce its lease provisions, would fail to maintain the grounds and buildings and would be incapable of creating neighborhood linkages and enthusiasm for Fidelis Way's new

community. Somehow, due to the powerful incentives of keeping operating expenses in line with its operating income, residents felt more confident about the terms of "accountability" which governs private management behavior: insufficient operating performance, no profit--no success.

Lease enforcement would be consistent, cost saving techniques would be routine management habits and pride in the development's appearance and reputation would be automatically enhanced by a no-nonsense, management expert whose flow of income was determined by their operating results.

In the case of Fidelis Way, for instance, residents urged the Authority to seek out a private management company, rather than use BHA managers whom residents believed would be unable to establish a strong management presence.

In the Fidelis Way example, the BHA insisted that the private management firm encourage full tenant participation in the preparation and implementation of management rules and practices. With the sanctions of the Authority itself, a tenant-manager partnership period was structured into the redevelopment process. By the construction stage of the development project, both the private management firm and its tenant organization held a common and vested interest in the long term success of the renovated housing complex.

The only exception to the private management model being located in a modernized development has been the BHA's

tenant management model, which is provided by the Bromley Heath Tenant Management Association, (BHTMC).

The Authority's Tenant Management Model (TMC):

The Bromley Heath TMC, was formed in the late sixties in order for Bromley residents to take part in a pilot TMC program sponsored by the department of HUD. Since that time, Bromley Heath's TMC program has worked in conjunction with the Authority as a private management contractor. Through the TMC's governing board, residents of Bromley Heath control management policy.

In general, the BHTMC abides by the same management policies and practices as other BHA family developments, although job descriptions, maintenance and repair strategies may differ in accordance to TMC board decisions. Like any private management firm, the TMC must function within its margin of income. With management services provided by the TMC, the BHA has focused its attention on upgrading Bromley's physical conditions. That effort has been coordinated by the BHA's Planning and Redevelopment department with the TMC playing an active role in all decisions affecting the development(s).

The TMC is not obligated to pay union wages nor to abide by the craft and jurisdictional agreements with the Authority's four unions. By the same token, BHA wide personnel or operating policies such as the work order dispatch system or Living Unit inspections goals are not automatically included in the TMC management approach unless the TMC Board so rules, or the Authority so specifies in

their TMC contract.

Like the conventional private management firm, the TMC can allocate its labor amongst a variety of job classes and tasks. Like any private company, costs are an important force in organizing staffing and managerial services. Unlike private management, however, TMCs are legally accountable to their residents who control the company's board. In addition to making enough profits to meet expenses, the tenant management firm considers social and political benefits to be important operating goals.

Thus, the TMC model becomes a loose combination of the private management concept, which seeks to increase potential profits and the public management model whose mandate is to provide safe, decent and affordable housing to low income families.

In addition to the flexibility which the private management model exercises over its on-site staff and managerial resources, there has been a highly collaborative feature to the Authority's private management model, be it a TMC or a conventional firm. In every case, BHA residents have acquired an exceptional amount of input and participation in the decision making process. Through their resident organizations, BHA tenants have created or shaped design, management and redevelopment policies.

In the BHA's privately managed sites, circumstances have allowed residents to exercise more influence over the character of their local management structure. Because of

the unique level of modernization and resident input into management efforts, it is not clear how the private management model will work in other, more distressed family properties of the Authority.

The Authority's fair housing goals involve tough and sensitive housing issues, the BHA's new tenant selection and transfer policy is equally controversial. How will the private management model take on these issues, use the most cost effective managerial principles and maintain a close working relationship with residents? Many of those issues have yet to be fully examined in either a private management model or the decentralized management model.

The Authority's newly instituted decentralized field management program, has been administered by the Authority thorough its Operations department. This management model is organized around four administrative field supervisors or Area Directors, who are empowered to delegate significant authority and decision making discretion to local managers under their jurisdiction.

#### Implementing the Decentralized Management Model:

One of the first organizational changes which the BHA had to make to decentralize its management model was to reduce the number of middle management supervisors, who were then referred to a District Directors, (D.D.). There were seven administrative districts, each headed by a D.D. The BHA, in examining its organizational lines of accountability, found that their District Directors did not interface with local managers in the most productive,

consistent or coherent fashion.

To streamline the central administrative structure of the field management department, the number of management supervisors went from seven to four, each taking a regionally defined area, (east, west, north and south), and each Area Director, now being fully accountable for all management issues and needs within their jurisdiction. Area Directors report directly to the Chief of Operations, one of the highest ranking administrators within the BHA.

Each Area Director has worked closely with their field managers to prepare local budgets, capital improvement plans and to make local operating decisions. Depending upon the experience and expertise of the local manager, the Area Director can delegate full authority for purchasing local supplies, doing local budget management, making field staffing decisions and conducting performance appraisals to a local manager. The Area Director is ultimately responsible for the delivery of management services through the BHA's onsite management team, but short of most major decisions or a crisis, the Area Director does not have to be intimately involved in day to day operating activities.

On the average, the local onsite management work force consists of the local manager, a maintenance supervisor who reports to the manager, a clerk or clerk/typist, a secretary and several groundspersons such as a laborer, (entry level title), janitor/groundskeeper and perhaps a work order clerk.



Crafts people are still dispatched centrally although sites where extensive craft related work is in progress do have craftspeople assigned full time to the development. Glaziers and carpenters are common examples of a locally "assigned craftsman" who may be at a given development, onsite, full time. Except for a few general tasks, until recently most work orders were completed by craftspeople whose job assignments were highly regulated by the BHA's collective bargaining agreement with the Trades union. Thus, the local work order system was directly dependent upon the ability of the Area Director to help a local manager maintain a delicate balance between getting the right crafts person onsite, at the right time, in a timely manner.

The major argument for continuing the centrally dispatched crafts and tradesperson system is that Area Directors can "gang" assign special tradespeople to a given site with advanced planning. Rather than leave a carpenter or a steamfitter at one place, unconditionally, the centrally coordinated system of assigning specialized workers, enables Area Directors to consistently use their trades people more efficiently.

The biggest onsite management team includes no more than twenty to twenty five persons working at a local development. There are constraints which affect supervision of the groundspeople when the management office and maintenance facilities are widely separated, say across the development from one another, but in most cases, the manager and maintenance supervisor work in close daily coordination.

Typically local management supplies and the BHA fleet service are also centrally located, requiring that the manager maintain steady communications with designated contacts in purchasing, budget, legal and personnel departments.

The other major element in the manager's onsite role is to interact with their residents. All administrative functions as well as resident oriented communications, ranging from lease enforcement to tenant selection, (its a tenant interview really, final decisions on resident assignments are made downtown), are managerial tasks. Administering special programs such as a Fair Housing Subplan, or preparing a project based budget with residents or overseeing local security services and projects, also fall under the local manager's duties. These functions have been longstanding duties for the BHA manager, predating the Authority's recent modifications of the Housing Manager's job description.

In addition to reorganizing the decision-making structure of the Authority's proposed decentralized management program, there would have to be massive doses of capital, highly orchestrated administrative strategies and policy initiatives which could serve to enhance the long term capacity of the Authority to deliver its housing services. The general reorganization process, therefore, tried to facilitate improvements in three major areas of concern: modifying the role of the Housing Manager,

reviewing the Authority's policies and practices to assist the management process and fixing up local property conditions.

#### Redefining the Role of the Housing Manager:

The current job description of the Housing Manager is in negotiation with the Teamsters, the collective bargaining group for Housing Manager, Maintenance Supervisors and all Clerical and Office Workers. The basic features of the Authority's proposed job description includes the authority to supervise all maintenance personnel, including a role in the hiring and terminating of local employees. The present job description for the Manager includes the direct supervision of the maintenance supervisor but the Housing Manger is not authorized to fire an employee.

As mentioned, managers are responsible for the preparation of local operating budgets, they participate in the process of preparing a local capital improvements plan and performs or delegates all field related recordkeeping and all tenant services functions such as income certification, enforcing BHA's lease provisions, and working with resident and community groups.

The most controversial area of expanded responsibility has been the Housing Manager's role in hiring, evaluating and the termination process of an unsatisfactory employee. Applicants are screened by the central personnel office, on an ongoing basis. When a manager needs a worker, prospective candidates are forwarded to managers who interviews and selects the job finalist in collaberation with the Area

Director. The manager can determine the conditions of an employees probationary period, as well.

In addition to participating in the hiring process, the manager is now asked to make recommendations on promotions or even, demotions for all onsite personnel. The majority of BHA managers have expressed great satisfaction with their expanded role and job duties within the BHA's field operations. There is greater performance competition amongst managers and respect for the job, within the Authority, has grown. The revised job description of a Housing Manager has been central for the improved delivery of management services although the expanded role of the field manager has been problematic for the Housing Manager's union negotiators.

#### Union Membership Problems:

Managers, maintenance supervisors and all clerical personnel are members of the the Teamsters, which in the days prior to the BHA's decentralized management system, did not create major conflicts of interests as it does today.

The Massachusetts's State and Civil Service Employees Act, (General Law, Chapter 150 Section E), regulates the rights of public employees to form unions and to negotiate collective bargaining agreements with their employers.

The act defines who public employees are, (150 E, section 2), spells out craft and employer units, (150 A, section 5) and addresses aspects of representation, such as rights to grieve a personnel decision. The law also

established that the maximum term of a collective bargaining agreement was three years and fully describes the authority and purpose of the state's Labor Relations Board.

Since around 1968, when the Teamsters began representing Managers, Maintenance Supervisors and Clerical Workers, the authority to hire and fire field management employees rested with manager supervisors, (now referred to as Area Directors), who are not authorized members of the collective bargaining unit under Chapter 150 E. (They are considered management, who by definition, are engaged in policy making activities). Within this arrangement, managers functioned as line staff and remained within the jurisdictional bounds of the state and civil service defined collective bargaining unit.

While the Authority, in principle, has delegated hiring and firing responsibility to the Housing Manager, as well as performance appraisal, it has been unable to formally incorporate those duties into the job description of the Housing Manager without risking the union status of the Housing Manager. As an employee designated to make hiring and firing decisions, the manager, by definition of organizational authority becomes a "manager"/ administrator, a job classification which is not eligible to be included in the Teamster's current collective bargaining unit.

In addition to the controversy over the expanded job duties of the Housing Manager, given the present union construct, managers report that it has been a complicated task to actually terminate or reprimand--or sometimes to

objectively promote, fellow union members.

Although laborers are not in the same union, (they are in the International Brotherhood of Laborers), with the Housing Manager, virtually every other on-site field employee is. Regardless of the management style or grounds for reprimand, in cases of dismissal or demotion, unions in their responsibilities to protect the work rights of their members usually must act to grieve a management decision.

Given the expanded role of the field manager to participate in local hiring and firing decisions, union grievances are, in essence, being filed by one union member, against another, (managers are co-defendants, so to speak, with Area Directors who retain the final right to hire and fire field management employees.) In most cases of poor work performance by a local maintenance worker, managers have sufficient documentation to resolve poor performance disputes although grievances must still be settled by the Labor Relations board, if a worker so requests.

In the ideal situation, unions never face such conflict within their midst because the "rank and file" is always distinguished from the organization's management ranks. In this less than ideal situation, managers report that resolving performance problems with fellow union members is one of the most difficult aspects of their expanded roles.

(31)

There is a future of uncertainty ahead with the end of court receivership and the prospects of Housing Managers

rejecting their union in lieu of their revised job description is unlikely. Managers do, however, embrace their new job description and hope for a reasonable compromise between the union and Authority during this next collective bargaining agreement.

One obvious option is to form a separate union for Housing Managers. This is not a likely option, particularly under the circumstances of removing the Authority out of court receivership; managers do not want to lose their new found capacity to direct local operations but they are also equally concerned about keeping their jobs should the city fail to monitor the influence of patronage in employment or promotions. The separation of the Housing Manager, into a distinct bargaining entity, however, is a pressing matter and warrants long range assessment and analysis.

In comparing the Authority's decentralized management model with private management or tenant management models, neither private management model is faced with the same kind of union controversy. None of their private management firms, (Corcoran, OKM, Emergency Tenants Council, Roxbury Action), nor their tenant management corporation, (TMC), counterparts are unionized.

Thus in many respects, the private management model tends to avoid conflicts due to jurisdictional restrictions and does not create internal conflicts within the BHA's management structure. By the same token, it is not clear nor evident that private management firms, despite their added flexibility in using their human and capital resources

are capable or interested in managing typical, physically aged BHA family housing developments.

Obviously, the management model which can use its labor and resident resources most efficiently is most desirable. Private management, in the absence of a union, for example, has far more freedom in allocating its resources. These management models have yet to be tested in the waters of major BHA policy initiatives which go beyond addressing a specific development's needs and or circumstance.

The root of the Authority's most deep seated problems related to its overall inability to properly service its housing communities. New policy initiatives, complementary administrative goals and improved contract practices, be it a collective bargaining agreement or a service contract, speak to issues which go beyond the local management model.

#### Improving the Authority's Collective Bargaining Agreements:

Since receivership was declared, the Authority has negotiated collective bargaining agreements with all four of its union groups. According to the BHA's personnel director, each agreement has ultimately enhanced the management capacity of the Authority. The first Teamsters contract, was signed in 1982. A new contract is in negotiation now. The Building and Trades Council, representing 350 crafts workers employed by the BHA, closed their latest collective bargaining agreement in September of 1983 and the Laborer's International just completed an agreement in March of 1984.

The most notable example of management improvements



achieved through the collective bargaining process was the recently signed Boston Building and Trades Council labor agreement. The contract specifies 35 neutral tasks of which any craftsman, regardless of job classification or trade, can perform. With this set of "neutral tasks", a carpenter can now start and complete many assignments which, under former labor agreements, would have required several tradespersons to complete various semiskilled tasks. With this new work agreements, the Authority has cleared the way for making major improvements in its work order system.

The Authority's Living Unit Inspection project, for example, will form the foundation for a work order system that will allow the Authority to link its apartment and building maintenance schedule to a systematic inspection process involving all BHA apartments. In order to eliminate its numerous housing code violations, the BHA must have a comprehensive inventory of their housing problems.

The BHA's Living Unit Inspection Program followed the union agreement because features of the new contract made such a program viable and feasible. With an improved work order system, the BHA can also enhance its preventive maintenance and repair services.

The other feature of the new Trades Council agreement was the creation of twenty generic maintenance jobs which involved, fairly unskilled tasks, (changing soap dishes, towel racks, switch plates, locks etc.). For the sake of efficiency and labor costs, the Authority argued that it

should not pay an electrician or plumber an average of \$15 dollars per hour to perform such tasks, especially given that their skills are needed elsewhere.

Through gradual improvements in their collective bargaining covenants, the Authority has tried to convey its operational priorities in a manner that enables its unions to work in concert with larger organizational needs. If a decentralized management model is going to succeed, the BHA must establish a firm sense of its management needs, improve its ability to improve its physical conditions and establish a supervisory mechanism which provides each worker with objective information about their job performance. In turn, good job performance can be rewarded.

#### Interfacing with Planning and Construction Departments:

One area of contention is the undefined role which managers have in the planning and physical improvements process, two critical activities which are centrally coordinated. Take an example from Mission Main, as an illustration of one local management issue. It is clear that the existing boilers need repairs and the replacement of some parts. During the budget planning process, the manager and area director, prepared a capital improvement budget that included new boilers. Central planning, budgeting or the construction management department, each have a follow up role in implementing Mission Main's request for upgraded, new or repaired boilers.

When, or if, the boiler system will be slated for replacement or repairs, is unknown to the manager until most

of the specific details are finalized. Ideally, having an input into the material or product selection process as well as the proposed scheduling process would increase the manager's ability to address on-site problems which are related to the poor conditions of the boilers.

Other policy and operational practices are often lost in the logjam between field and central activities and continued efforts are in progress to improve problems where possible. Recently, the Authority published a three volume operations manual which is intended to alleviate some of these types of operating problems. It is an important step in formalizing operating procedures, although most managers looked at the huge volumes and shook their heads in silence.

#### The Infusion of Capital Resources:

One major component of the Authority's overall field management approach has been to implement a capital improvement program involving \$5.9 million dollars in special vacancy rehab monies and to initiate six major redevelopment projects totalling over \$81.6 million dollars as of fiscal year 1983.

Preparing physical rescue plans for several of the big developments was, and remains, complicated by the fact that typically, modernization assistance depended upon the type of public subsidy used in the original construction of the development. Federal developments were not able to use state funds for renovations, except by special legislative approval, while state financed projects were ineligible for

certain federal modernization monies.

The short of the story is that regardless of how bad physical conditions had gotten, "available" sources of financial aid were not readily interchangeable. In effect, once the Authority determined the modernization needs of a given development, the next prerequisites involved matching state or federal sources of funds. (or using a creative financing solution such as at Franklin Field which involved swapping section 8 subsidies with state programmed monies etc.)

As mentioned, the Authority has attracted and properly managed an enormous sum of money to complete capital improvements and to redevelop Fidelis Way, West Broadway, Franklin Field, Columbia Point, Cathedral, Mission Main and Bromley Heath projects. The management programs at these redevelopment sites have included formal agreements with the local task forces which included a role in the developer selection process, relocation and supportive services agreements and post redevelopment management strategies.

One trend which has emerged from the overall redevelopment process has been a total reduction in the number of as-built units, which has been a matter of concern for both residents and BHA officials. Certain density and design features have tended to compound management and maintenance problems. Residents working with the Authority's planning staff have examined and debated many of these issues and amongst tenants with creative solutions being implemented. (Take Fidelis Way, for example, where residents

factored in a public car repair lot to deal with fixing cars on the premises, minus the eyesore and security problems).

One of the biggest drawbacks, so to speak, in the overall experience with complete redevelopment has been the overall reduction in apartment units. In order to achieve the private space qualities or adequate unit sizes, to facilitate better pedestrian circulation or to allocate monies for other uses, the trade-off has been to reduce the number of original units after redevelopment.

One additional feature of the Authority's capital repair programs, be it total redevelopment or modernization, has been the collaborative experience of residents and BHA staff during planning and construction management periods.

Typically, indepth post-development management plans are prepared during the redevelopment planning process with full resident participation in establishing post occupancy management rules, final design characteristics and community space uses. Across the board, residents have been an important driving force behind the local development process, although the priorities of residents have differed from development to development. The common outcome, however, is that the manager, central BHA employees and residents have had to work hard over time, to establish the teamwork, trust and a mutual confidence necessary to make the capital repair program a success.

#### Improved Financial Management and Planning Performance:

Since receivership, the Authority has also reduced the

amount of operating funds allocated for central office overhead expenses and increased its funding allocated for on-site management and maintenance . When the first fiscal year of receivership began, the Authority had a residual deficit of approximately \$1.5 million dollars and was required by HUD to prepare a financial workout plan that HUD approved and monitored. As of the end of fiscal year 1983, BHA had eliminated its residual deficit and achieved a net increase of \$6.9 million in its operating reserve, (although this amount is still below the HUD defined minimum operating reserve level).

From a fiscal standpoint, the Authority is in far better shape than anyone ever imagined, including the biggest optimist, namely the Receiver/Administrator Harry Spence, himself. Back in January of 1984, Spence recalled a conversation which he had with Judge Garrity during the first six months of court receivership.

He told his listeners that Judge Garrity had asked him to estimate how much it would cost to bring the Authority's properties up to code, never mind where the money would come from. "In that case," responded the Receiver/Administrator, "at least \$200 million--if not a quarter of a billion dollars". (32)

The figure was not too surprising, but the subsequent success of the Receiver in attracting nearly that amount of money in the four year period following the conversation has been an unexpected achievement. Equally surprising, has been the Authority's ability to manage and efficiently allocate

those monies.

The BHA has also gotten tough on its intentions to rigorously enforce their minority vendors and affirmative action policies in contracting and subcontracting, and in so doing, has aided the larger community effort, to counteract the city's longstanding endorsement of discriminatory contracting practices.

#### Providing Improved Central Department Supports:

The Authority altered its view of how central departments interface with field operations, reorganized various central departments such as legal, personnel, tenant selection, civil rights and planning. The Authority also created new departments such as construction management which completes modernization work under through a Force Account crew, prepares contracting bids and monitors the Authority's construction contractors.

BHA's energy management, rapid reoccupancy program and public safety services are central activities which are closely coordinated with the local management program. These department and program efforts are a few useful examples of how BHA has tried to strengthen the ability of centrally administrated activities to assist field management functions, despite their varying levels of success. The ability to assist the delivery of management services is one of the main considerations when departments are charged with coordinating departmental resources.

#### Appeals for Public and Private Resources:

Over the past few years, the BHA has attempted to establish a constellation of special service programs in education, job training and employment, recreation and public safety and to sponsor various in-service training events for employees. An intensive, management internship program has also been developed and serves as an important vehicle for increasing the Authority's appeal to perspective, high caliber employees. The Authority also coordinated several sources of private and public resources to assist resident organizing and training efforts.

Perhaps the change in the role of the Housing Manager and the infusion of capital resources to upgrade physical conditions found in various family developments are the two most important features of BHA's management strategy under court receivership. To increase the autonomy of local managers to direct field affairs has required that the BHA establish more concise measures of accountability for local management performance. The most important tool of management reform, however, has been the Receiver's ability to capture adequate funds for basic operating costs and ongoing capital improvements projects.



## CHAPTER VII

### Policy and Training Initiatives to Improve Housing Services

The BHA's tenure in receivership has begun the important process of bringing many of the Authority's substandard units up to code. To this day, however, there remains innumerable apartments and buildings that are affected by serious housing code violations. There remains an enormous task to successfully bring all of the Authority's properties into compliance with the State Sanitary Code. Through resident and management training, its housing policies and community resources, the Authority has attempted to improve its housing services.

#### Manager Training Activities:

Management training has also been stressed, both for newly hired manager interns and for experienced managers. In-service training topics include project based budgeting, capital planning skills, preventive maintenance practices and the like. Perhaps the most exciting training venture has been the Authority's management intern program which is a year long, intensive field and academic management training curriculum which has been the subject of lots of praise from management interns in particular.

According to Terry Lane, a consultant from Abt Associates of Cambridge, and the coordinator of the Authority's first management training cycle, (1982-1983), the management training program includes five major study areas. Organized as an intensive combination of field work

and classroom studies, six management interns take classes in human behavior, community dynamics, maintenance and management principles and a weekly seminar which is designed to integrate the field and classroom activities of BHA's management interns.

Courses are taught at the Boston University School of Social Work by their faculty or consultants while field placements are with experienced senior managers, (managers are ranked by experience from 1 to 3, with level 3 managers being assistants to senior managers--level 1).

One feature of the management intern program is that all trainees spend time in every department within the Authority in order to gain first hand information about the workings of the department. Field placements are also tailored so that a variety of management styles can be observed as well as a range of local management conditions.

The goals of the management intern training program are described as,

"providing managers with a sense of the real job that they will one day face. We want to give managers the skills and knowledge to carry out management functions by teaching them to be problem solvers in a changing world-- in a changing (housing) authority and system. To be effective (as a BHA manager) is dependent upon your ability to adjust, to be opportunity oriented and know how of the larger institution (and its workings). Our fundamental message to management interns is that the job of the Housing Manager is to serve tenants, to create a community and to keep track of the basics, like materials and worker performance, which characterizes a local management operation." (33)

There is a perspective which is integrated into the manager intern training program; it is thematically linked to a notion that BHA's Housing Manager, not a distant, downtown

authority figure, will be the symbol of the city's public housing agency.

#### Management Relations with Tenant Organizations:

There is a the catch-22 problem in spelling out the specific the role which residents have within the local decision making process but there is little doubt that local managers must find a way to include legitimate resident input in their planning and assessment activities.

Management and resident relations during receivership have primarily been structured within a collaborative model. BHA's assumptions are that residents and local managers have common, if not the same, housing and community interests. It has been an explicit goal of both the Judge and the Receiver/Administrator to encourage the "empowerment of public housing residents" to impact the actions of the Authority and other institutions whose services and support shape the lives of public housing families.

One of the most central concerns about the viability of decentralized decision-making is how to frame the participatory role of residents within the process. If there is one area of management reforms which has been difficult to structure, it has been the Authority's effort to achieve an appropriate means of seeking resident input versus control over local management decisions.

There is an important distinction between management reforms which promote resident participation and reforms that enhance the ability of residents, through their organizations, to to attain a partnership role in resource

allocation. During receivership, there has been a lot of talk about resident empowerment but that has been difficult for either tenants of the Receiver/Administrator to define and pursue. Experience to date has been more akin to encouraging tenant input, rather than control over their local management program.

There is a distinction to be made between resident participation in management decision making and having solid evidence of being able to exercise control over how local management resources are allocated or assessed. Since the late sixties, when public housing residents formed local chapters and a city wide organization to advocate their housing needs, the general experience of resident organizations has fallen into two political categories.

One is being closely identified with the interests of management and therefore a cooperative model of working together is preferred. The other is being closely identified with the interests of residents and therefore, any method for pursuing the interests of residents will be used, including confrontation tactics.

In the first category, the tenant organization often gets used to assist or to justify management decisions which many residents do not support or are adversely affected by. When a tenant organization and its leaders elect to work exclusively through a collaborative mechanism, the need to avoid conflict with the Authority can become restrictive in selecting strategies to advocate resident interests and

perhaps, even compromise their basic goals as a group.

Take for instance, an issue in which a BHA policy is the cause of a specific resident problem. Unless the Authority can be persuaded to modify its position, the resident organization's options to use confrontational tactics to force the BHA to compromise its position on the issue is diminished. Confrontation is a less desirable strategy to the resident group because the importance of cooperating with BHA staff outweighs the potential gains of being adversarial.

There are of course, important benefits to being able to work closely with management, visa the representative tenant organization. The internal characteristics of the resident organization, however, can be influenced by the role of its leaders and the manner in which the group establishes its priorities. The past tendency of BHA tenant leaders who worked closely with BHA staff and policy makers is that those representatives, over time, stopped feeling obligated to represent residents who disagreed with their leadership ideas.

To protect themselves, some of these leaders began to avoid group decisionmaking activities and often actively discouraged democratic review of issues. The housing authority's staff tends to prefer to work with representatives of tenants rather than large groups of people and typically, treat resident leaders with enormous credibility, irrespective of the internal decisionmaking practices of the organization. The combination of these

factors can add up to a lack of influence over public housing services for a majority of BHA residents.

For the most part, field managers have not shared control over onsite management decisions with their resident organizations unless there has been a contractual agreement or understanding which formerly spells out the management functions or service under discussion. Resident input and participation in the process of decisionmaking, however, is fairly common. Many BHA managers tend to seek out resident input on local matters but are less willing to provide a controlling interest to tenants in the decision making process.

This is in part, due to the fact, that when a management decision is made, the process includes not only review and analysis but actions must follow. Decisions must incorporate clear accountability for the results of a given decision and typically some followup is required as well. Most management decisions entail money, or manpower or both, and it is not surprising that often, because the BHA controls the purse strings, the Authority's needs have the most influence over the final outcome. Thus, one good indicator of the level of resident control over local management activities is to look to formal and informal agreement between the resident organization and management.

In looking at the role of resident participation in the field management activities of the BHA during receivership, there is a sense that local histories and the level of BHA's

capital resources have become variables in the tenant-management dialogue. There is some genuine confusion or uncertainty in the minds of both residents and BHA staff as to what constitutes "empowerment" when contrasted with notion of resident participation in the local decision making process.

Resident relocation agreements, for example, define the responsibilities of the resident organization and the manager in the process of relocating families during a redevelopment effort. The fair housing subplan, on the other hand, involves resident participation in setting goals, but BHA remains responsible for marketing the development to perspective tenants, (except by agreement, such as at Orient Heights, when residents performed some marketing tasks). The role of residents and their organizations are fairly distinguishable in these two examples because resources are involved, a formal agreement and an informal agreement are evident and both management issues require cooperation between managers and tenants in order to achieve the specific goal.

Undoubtably, since receivership, there has been an attempt on the part of many BHA managers to create opportunities for resident groups to become active, and even influential, forces in the the local management program. With the end of receivership approaching, for those projects where major housing code violations still exists, the stakes are even higher if residents loose their ability to work towards improved housing services. It is also clear that the

subject of resident organizational development and tenant empowerment are inseparable.

In general, most BHA managers have an investment in working with resident groups, because they are aware of the important role which tenants play in making management services more responsive to the needs of residents. Typically, BHA staff people expect to work with BHA tenants within a collaborative model. Within a collaborative model however, there are important strategies which the resident organization must rely upon to maintain their credibility and power. Decisions must be made openly and democratically and a large membership base are fundamental survival tools if the organization is to achieve its goals.

The ongoing potential for sustaining BHA's field management reforms depend upon the ability of residents to influence control over their housing services. In turn, the capacity of resident groups to address the needs of public housing tenants depends upon the representative capacity of resident organizations. Tenant leaders must be accountable to their membership and that in turn best assures that the interests of residents are carefully integrated within BHA's field management practices.

#### Policy Initiatives to Assist Housing Management:

BHA also made a range of efforts to tailor its organizational policies to assist the Authority's long term revitalization. Some of these policies are aimed at



upgrading tenant services, others are intended to modify the population who live in public housing. Others are to enhance lease enforcement. Combined, these major policy reforms have suggested that the Authority is serious about charting a new direction as a low rent housing agency.

Lease enforcement, for example, got a major boost when the Authority successfully petitioned the legislature to establish an emergency procedure for speeding up the cause eviction process involving serious crimes.

Tenant selection practices were also modified to include screening of public housing applicants to determine their history in rent payment and tenancy. Those applicants with poor records are no longer accepted in public housing, which is a major contrast to BHA's prior tenant selection practices where it was rare that a prospective tenant was rejected because of a poor track record as a renter.

Perhaps the most controversial policy affecting public housing tenant selection has been the Authority's recently instituted income-tiering or Broad Range of Income policy. In brief, the Authority intends to treat working households who have applied for apartments differently than those applicants on fixed incomes.

Until the Authority wide percentage of working households reaches 50%, according to the Authority's Tenant Selection, Assignment and Transfer Plan, public housing residents who are employed will be admitted at a higher ratio than unemployed applicants. The current maximum income limits for acceptance into state or federal developments

range from \$12,180 for a single person to \$21,750 for a family of 8 persons. (Applicants may have assets of up to 1 and a half times of the maximum income limits).

Those who are most affected by this policy are the poorest families and individuals who have no alternatives other than make-shift shelter. As a public housing resource, the BHA has in effect elected to limit at least half of its 13,000 units to the working poor, rather than to all poor. It is ironic that many longtime residents of public housing, would today be less able to compete for a BHA unit. Only through the prolonged efforts of the city's poorest, had the Authority been brought to public scrutiny.

There is just cause for concern about the Authority's fate as an institution which serves only the poorest; but there is an equally compelling need to fill such a role until real, accessible means of providing affordable shelter to the needy household can be demonstrated.

Some of the rationale for the Broad Range of Income policy stems from the fact that public housing communities have been areas of extreme poverty and unemployment. The ensuing social conditions are common subjects of debate, but few if any insightful conclusions can be drawn. Voter registration, community employment initiatives and expanded educational and economic opportunities are all important ingredients for assisting poor communities. Thus, if the Broad Income Policy is to have any basis as a means of enhancing the social fabric of a local development, then

employment and education, training and placement assistance must be incorporated into the Authority's management and community priorities.

In weighing the merits of the Broad Income Policy with the management needs of many local developments, there is little evidence that poor families cause management costs to rise...its more often the case, that poor households pay such low rent, that the Authority could never operate on its rental income. There may be some increased income benefits for a housing agency with a minimum of half of its households capable of paying rents that approximate the market value of the unit. There is little specific evidence that poor households necessarily cause management costs to rise, as illustrated in elderly housing. However, there are social costs which are related to unemployment, poor education and employment resources. The rising percentages of single female, head of household wage earners, whose incomes, on average are less than their male counterpart, are indications that poverty in public housing will not be seriously reduced. that poverty will be significantly reduced in costs seem to be a factor in public housing developments where unemployment is high, when educational and employment resources are scarce.

Neighborhood linkages are often more difficult to establish when public housing communities become economically segregated at the lowest end of the poverty scale. For years, many family development projects were shunned by their neighbors and served as convenient

scapegoats for area decline. Through income mixing, the Authority seems to believe that opportunities for social and economic interreaction between public housing residents and the larger community are increased, or perhaps less limited.

#### Supportive Services and Community Resources

Having described the major features of the Authority's management strategy, there is one common thread which holds these elements together and that is the functions of the field management program depend largely upon the the quality of BHA's personnel and policies. The Authority's Supportive Services program, is probably one of the few BHA program areas where resident organizations are expected to develop, direct and to basically operate a public housing service.

These community oriented services are indications of the Authority's efforts to acknowledge the linkages between its management efforts and community resources. In the process of restructuring the delivery of its services, the Authority became an active participant in the process of linking services and community resources to its resident population. In light of BHA's evolving image as housing for the working poor, facilitating educational and employment services to its residents is not that different from many of its administrative or operating responsibilities. Residents, however, are the exclusive focus.

For obvious reasons, therefore, it is the residents of

public housing who have to guide the process of making the Authority's supportive services program a viable endeavor. As is the case of any service oriented effort, the process of coordinating the delivery of services to public housing residents has not been easy to structure. BHA's supportive services efforts however are useful indicators of what building blocks are necessary for the Authority to successfully assist its physical restoration efforts with social revitalization.

In summary, the general approach of the Authority to in efforts to reestablish its management capacity has been to try strategies, such as decentralized management, which incorporate "bottom up" inputs. The Authority is trying to enhance the quality of resident participation in decision making and increased operational efficiency and performance. The strides which the Authority has made in addressing its poor housing conditions have also depended upon attracting huge sums of monies for capital repairs and improvements.

One last ingredient which the BHA has pursued with dedication has been to improve the quality and quantity of city services which are available to public housing communities. Through developing neighborhood ties and linkages to community services, the Authority has also led efforts to improve the ability of individuals in public housing to get an education, job training or employment assistance in order to better pursue their goals.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Reviewing BHA's Management Performance

For the Boston Housing Authority, court receivership has been an important period of institutional recovery. The Receiver/Administrator's management reforms do not extend as far as the need, but management capacity has been enhanced. In moving towards a decentralized management system, what did the Authority achieve and most importantly, how will those efforts relate to the continued progress of the Authority in fulfilling its housing mandates?

As the Authority prepares itself for the closure of court receivership, there is real concern that appropriate measures be developed that can be used to safeguard the progress which has begun. These measures will also serve the system by affording it more lead time to design strategies for improving its housing performance. In addition to day to day operating improvements, homes which have and continue to be affected by housing code violations will be relieved of their shoddy conditions.

#### Performance Standards:

In general, there are two approaches to structuring management performance standards for the purpose of monitoring and improving the local management program. The most agreed upon measures include vacancy turnaround time, maintenance work order turnaround time, rent collection, evidence of increased public safety and property security, physical improvements, a decrease in wasteful utility

consumption and better financial and materials controls. In some respects, improved record keeping is an implicit performance standard as well.

These measures have quantitative values and are the most common examples of improved housing conditions. In contrast to quantitative measures of housing services, there are less tangible, long term measures that unfold as other, more quantitative efforts are achieved. The Authority, for example, has a management goal which is to decentralize the delivery of its day to day services, and the configuration of that structure has everything to do with the final outcome, or quality, of the service. Strides in the collective bargaining contracts for laborers, clerical workers, craftspeople are ultimately measures of how well the construct of decentralized managerial accountability will work.

There are numerous other examples of less measureable performance standards which residents and staff alike share. The most compelling example is the total elimination of the Authority's housing code violations. Their Living Unit Inspection Program is an initial start; there are financial and coordination problems that must be addressed before a broad based, improvement program can begin. It is time for the Authority to prepare an occupied units improvements policy because resident and a range of departmental inputs are required.

Other management objectives are akin to performance indicators such as efforts to build neighborhood ties, and

to improve the city's police, fire, transportation and trash services. (Better Boston schools will have dramatic impact upon children who live in public housing; BFS's biggest constituent group). Ending racial discrimination and tensions are other objectives which the management program has to address. Creating a sense of community, is perhaps the most crucial indicator of the Authority's housing qualities, but only a few basic elements of that process rests in the hands of field managers and residents.

Ultimately, it is the blending, interacting and occasional clashes between performance measures that will illustrate the capacity and stability of the Authority's management skills. Reoccupancy goals must reflect Fair Housing Subplans; preferential treatment of the working poor calls for rigorous enforcement of the Authority's tenant employment policy; and its scarce supportive services must be efficiently provided.

Quantitative performance standards have been widely adopted by the Authority and measures of their management performance using these indicators lend potent support to the progress which the BHA has made over these past four years. Basic housing functions are linked to these standards of performance and as such, they are critical base line references from which to build more responsive, qualitative management services from.

The BHA has identified for itself the following goals which are reasonable and achievable objectives. Both the



plaintiffs and the city-wide resident organization are in agreement that these goals must be met. There is, however, the need to be cautious and not interchange goals with performance quality. In addition, there is the woeful influence of time and money, of which there always seems to be either too much of one and not enough of the other.

#### BHA Performance Goals:

If the BHA adheres to its current goals, which residents through their newly formed citywide organization, have endorsed, it will continue to build upon the progress of court receivership by increasing occupancy, (by 399 units in 1984) and maintaining a high level of rent collection, (95% by December 1984); by improving maintenance through workorder inspections, (10% of all workorders performed), and by inspecting 100% of its units, (11,500 occupied units by December 1984), to determine living and vacant unit conditions.

A commitment to continue to seek funds for substantial repairs and sufficient operating income will require qualitative and aggressive performance from central office employees, otherwise the long term future and expanded development functions of the Authority will never reach fruition. In short, the present goals which the Authority has set for itself, seem enlightened and attainable. That optimism, however, can easily pale in the light of its long journey to full recovery, which has just barely begun.

#### Major Findings:

In the short space of a report, (albeit lengthy), it is

not possible to adequately address the overall achievements and remaining tasks which the Authority has before it. There are, however, some major areas of concern and accomplishment which deserve attention in looking at the overall management performance of the Authority during receivership:

\*\*The ongoing effort to restore the physical and social character of BHA's family developments has reaped significant results. Family developments which have received buildings, apartments and grounds improvements have seen a visible resurgence in community optimism. There remains, however, a serious gap between improvements which are enjoyed by long time public housing residents and newcomers. An equal inequity exists between developments where little, if any physical restoration has occurred and the need exists.

In both examples, the Authority must fashion a process of allocation that links management with capital repairs, including the establishment of a policy or program to service occupied units. The Living Unit Inspection Program is one concrete example of such an effort. Virtually none,

\*\* While there remains a degree of uncertainty about how, and what role, residents will play in the decentralized management model, there is sufficient evidence to support such a management context. From the perspective of most management and administrative supervisors, there is enhanced field management capacity. The motivation of management personnel and the supports from central office have made the

benefits of local management reforms feasible.

\*\* One important accomplishment of the BHA has been its improved management information system which has been relatively reliable in providing the BHA with base line data on its management systems. This base will be broadened with the Living Unit Inspection program and will, with the potentially improved work order system, aid the Authority in efforts to systematically identify and eliminate its remaining housing code violations.

\*\*The supportive relationship between field and central operations continues to function properly; managers feel more professional respect and recognition for the local contributions and headaches but efforts to build supports between managers themselves has been fragmented.

The union status of the entire office staff, excluding laborers, may need to be openly assessed in order to compare options. The role of the Housing Manager goes beyond the occupational constraints of a job description and local decision-making autonomy must be treated as a long term priority.

\*\*There are serious policy questions yet to be resolved about the tenant selection program, occupied unit repairs, tenant employment practices, fair housing plans and or lack of plans and more attention should be directed towards establishing a new lease for postreceivership uses. The lease, in and of itself, will serve as a weathervane for tenants to determine what benefits they have derived from court receivership.

\*\*Much of the social and physical progress associated with receivership has occurred in peaks and valleys over time. The Authority has to prepare a comprehensive approach, an outlook, if need be, to systematically guide its social and physical development.

Of the major accomplishments of court receivership, it is the stabilization of its family developments which has created the opportunity for managers, BHA staff and residents to chart a different course for its public housing communities. The hard work has really just begun.

Now in the midst of moving beyond the crisis management stage of servicing its housing communities, the BHA has to not only restore its vacant units but also its occupied apartments and buildings. Policies must enhance the well being BHA communities and properties, assist the maximum number of eligible low-rent housing residents, increase political accountability to public housing families. The Authority must be sensitive to the needs of long time public housing residents.

Residents must share in the process of revitalization but the BHA must bear the major burden for establishing goals and operating policies which bring all BHA apartments into compliance with the State's sanitary code.

## CHAPTER IX

### Looking Towards Post Receivership

#### Some Issues and Recommendations:

According to the declaration of court receivership, the most essential task of the Receiver/Administrator was to restore the Authority's ability to direct its operations and resources in a manner that facilitates the long term viability of the agency and the physical maintenance of its properties. The court is also concerned that the BHA address its racially segregated occupancy trends by promoting strong desegregation and open housing efforts.

Public housing residents share these same concerns and are especially interested in determining how assurances can be established which restore and safeguard the sanitary, safe and decent conditions of their homes and communities. There is support from the courts, BHA staff and officials for the long term goal of residents to fully participate in the political and institutional governance of the Authority.

Over the past twenty years, residents have been pushing for reforms of all kinds ranging from tenant membership, control over BHA's Board of Governors to petitioning the courts to remove the Authority from the auspices of city hall control. All of these tactics have been aimed at empowering public housing tenants with enough influence to protect their homes and communities.

The present day configuration of BHA's management structure is an important first step for restoring the quality of housing services to residents. With decentralized

input into management operations, managers have been empowered to direct day to day operations. The next step in the overall process of stabilizing the configuration of local management programs is to prevent the return of political patronage or sponsorship, once receivership is ended.

In general, the post receivership goals of the court, the BHA and public housing tenants are the same. It is to establish a firm mechanism for sustaining efforts in progress that have upgraded the BHA's basic services. In order to continue as a housing resource for low income people, the Authority can not loose sight of its obligation to the city's poorest and the homeless. Nor can BHA employees be subject to the compromises of political patronage and insensitive political tampering by Governing Board members or the mayor.

For managers, in particular, the responsibility of maintenance and management can not become subject to non-professional influences. Without even completing the BHA's Living Unit Inspection project, it is no secret that a major effort is pending if the Authority is to bring its buildings and units into compliance with the state's sanitation code within the decade.

Neighborhood linkages and community services to public housing developments continue to be fragile and in some areas, virtually non-existent, despite the need. To date, the Authority has barely moved beyond the skeletal stages of

halting the widespread deterioration of its properties, even in light of its successful vacancy rehab program. After years of extreme neglect, many family developments are still suffering from the blight.

In the next years, the Authority must not only bring its family projects up to full occupancy but also enter into a solid partnership with residents and their organization(s).

With the physical renewal of buildings and apartments, the predevelopment housing community is often shaken out by relocation/displacement forces, (even with carefully worded guarantees, there has been mixed results in every eligible resident getting a new apartment.) Every effort must be made to preserve public housing for its current resident populace and to not shut out its poorest applicants. These two goals are basic prerequisites for assuring that long time BHA residents benefit from the Authority's recent gains.

By the same token, there are real concerns that relate to the slow progress which the BHA has made in its racial desegregation efforts; not unlike those which have been expressed about its Broad Income Range Policy. There are no simple strategies for protecting the rights of all eligible applicants of public housing, be they minority or fixed income applicants. However, because public housing is such a prominent force in the city's rental housing market, the Authority must weight its policy and administrative mandates with serious regard for how those mandates may

impact the housing market, in general.

There are serious concerns about governance which, once out of court receivership, the Authority can not ignore any longer. BHA's statutory, governing structure, has inherent pitfalls in its character. Political accountability must be significantly enhanced, through electoral means or other representative mechanism. If BHA's past experience is a reason for caution, then there must be a strict separation of Authority's administrative and policy making body.

Tenant participation from the local development level to the Board level is not a panacea for residents or their organization(s). As members of the governing board, it is difficult to maintain the necessary balance between confrontational and collaborative options which tenants must have to assure that their priorities are addressed. Without a majority vote, residents as representatives of the Governing Board may find themselves in the same boat that former resident board members faced in that their influence was relegated to a minority vote.

Rather than continue to list other, equally important post receivership issues of concern, perhaps this list of concerns will illustrate the many tasks, both policy oriented and operationally directed, which will have to be addressed as the BHA prepares itself for the end of receivership, be it next year or soon thereafter. The timing of post receivership is less a factor than the conditions of post receivership; clearly there are institutional goals and



objectives which deserve attention at this juncture of BHA's revitalization effort.

## Conclusion

The goals of receivership were to significantly realign the Boston Housing Authority's organizational and political character. Clearly, that process has begun and in the area of field management the progress has been important for restoring the confidence and capacity of Authority to fulfill its mandate.

The work of physical and social rebuilding has just begun; a blueprint for reprogramming BHA's operations has been drafted. Like any project of such magnitude, however, the distance between the groundbreaking stage and the completed structure is precarious, albeit exciting.

It is the finding of this report that the configuration of a decentralized management program is a well conceived arrangement for providing routine management services. There is a general perception from managers and residents that the worst consequences of BHA's former management strategy have been abated: patronage has been rejected, structured systems of information have been established, performance and accountability measures have been proposed, if not, fully tested over time. An emphasize on the value of training and staff support for field managers has emerged and seem to be well received.

There continues to be a need for decentralized management efforts to be more efficiently and strategically linked with the centralized planning process. Project based budgeting is a start, while central departmental supports have, indeed, been supportive to the field effort. Still,

there is a missing element between the field effort and central planning efforts, some of more concern than others.

Again, the central role which money plays in upgrading BHA's apartment and building conditions must be mentioned. There are many, many code violations which have not been even recorded, less more resolved, since receivership was declared. Places that have been put into the redevelopment pipe lines are like luxury condominiums compared to many of their non-redevelopment counterparts. It has always been clear that resources could never be allocated on the basis of need only, nor priority, for that matter. Conditions of financing, location and neighborhood, resident activism and organization, were all factors in the actual allocation process.

If there is a super priority, it is getting the money to fix up every substandard housing condition. The BHA should continue to lean on its public representatives for modernization aid and voter registration is a basic necessity. It will require the balance of the near, quarter of a billion dollar price tag that the Receiver spoke of, to finish the code violations alone. What about the landscaping, parking improvements, recreation and energy improvements?

In conclusion, in looking at the Authority's management system we found that with dedicated staff and tenant effort, coupled with major sources of financial assistance and a new approach to local field management, the Authority has

managed to raise itself out of a sinking hole. The damage, physically and socially was enormous; perhaps incalculable.

For the city of Boston, its public housing program has represented a major portion of its rental stock and impacts almost every neighborhood. The quality of city services that are provided to public housing communities is an important indicator of how well the Authority is doing to bridge its isolation from the political mainstream.

The BHA must also continue its efforts to hold the city's private institutions to their obligations to low income communities, be it to provide jobs and educational supports or other services to the Authority's elderly and family projects.

In the future, the Authority must look towards the continued resolution of issues such as building and strengthening its city-wide tenant organization and expanding its supply of family housing, (I think an abandoned housing initiative is a perfect point to start from).

Finally, there can never be the return of the patronage that divided the dedication of BHA's employees. When the Authority has successfully eliminated its deplorable social conditions and massive numbers of housing code violations, then the BHA can turn its full attention to regaining its former image as a public institution that served its residents well.

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