

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CAUSES OF THE
HIGH VACANCY PHENOMENON IN PUBLIC HOUSING

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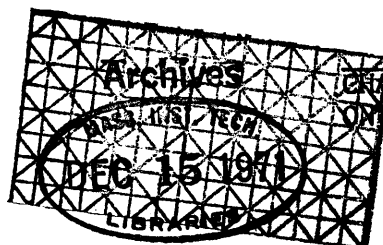
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ABSTRACT

There is a great demand for low-rent housing in the United States, yet many of the families that can avail themselves of the low-rent public housing are refusing to do so. In many cities there are lists of families waiting to get into public housing projects where there are vacancies. The causes of this paradoxical situation are investigated.

A brief history of low-rent public housing is given beginning with the Housing Act of 1937. Salient features of the Act and its amendments which followed are outlined because of the effect they had on the character of the housing program. The nature and principles of operation were given. Statistical data was furnished to document the extent of the problem. The disfunctional nature of several program policies were explained. Hypotheses were generated from these and were tested.

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INTRODUCTION

PROBLEM DEFINITION

The problem is to examine the causes of the high vacancy phenomenon in public housing. In the midst of a housing shortage there are thousands of public housing units left vacant or abandoned. The expenditure of large sums of federal funds for construction and rehabilitation of public housing and the demand for low cost housing warrant an effort to uncover the causes of this paradoxical situation. A compilation of causes will be made to focus on those factors that would aid in the control of this problem.

The low cost public housing being investigated deals only with what is referred to as "conventional public housing" and does not include housing for the elderly and leased housing.

RELEVANCE AND PURPOSE

A situation exists whereby a national housing program was created that does not fulfill the functions for which it was intended.* If the program is to continue as part of a national housing policy insights must be gained for the causes of the program's failure. Even if the notion of public housing is abandoned, there is still a major resource existing today consisting of hundreds of thousands of housing units whose ultimate fate will still have to be decided. In addition, the reasons for the failure of the present housing can serve as one of the guides for its successor.

Vacancy rates act as a visible symbol of the lack of acceptance of the public housing program. Documentation through national statistics will expose the magnitude of the problem. An objective is to present facts and opinions concerning the causes of the program's disfunctional nature which leads to high vacancies.

* The objective was to eliminate slums, and provide decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings for low income families.

METHOD OF IMPLEMENTATION

As an initial step, a background of the national public housing program and policy was used to form a base for understanding its underlying principles and objectives.

Statistical data was employed to determine the magnitude of the problem. The demand and vacancies in low-rent housing was shown. Existing conditions and trends were gathered that included Government publications, interviews, correspondence, research articles and other literature on public housing. Several public housing projects were used to document the general undercurrent of dissatisfaction, pessimism, and failure existing in the program. Comparisons were made between different projects in various stages of failure or success to illustrate the vacancy phenomenon.

Hypotheses were drawn concerning the disfunctional aspects of the program. Each of the hypotheses was followed by a number of statements and interviews to test its viability.

BACKGROUND OF PUBLIC HOUSING

BRIEF HISTORY

The national housing policy as we know it today was created when the Wagner-Steagall Act¹ was signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1937.² At that time the United States Housing Authority was formed. The purpose of this Act³ included seven basic principles. They were to establish:

1. the first permanent federal agency in behalf of low rent⁴ subsidized housing;
2. the principle of federal loans to local housing authorities to finance projects by issuing bonds to lend them up to 90 per cent of the cost of approved projects.⁵

¹United States Housing Act of 1937 [Public Law 412, 75th Congress; 50 Stat. 888; 42 U.S.C. 1401 et seq.].

²National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, 25th Anniversary Issue: United States Housing Act of 1937, Journal of Housing, Oct. 1962, NAHRO, Washington, D. C.

³For a brief description of the forerunners of this act, see Fisher, Robert Moore, 20 Years of Public Housing, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1959.

⁴When used in this Act -- "low-rent housing" means decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings within the financial reach of families of low income, and developed and administered to promote serviceability, efficiency, economy, and stability, and embraces all necessary appurtenances thereto.

⁵The federal government would pay enough money for the interest on the bonds and the amortization of the principal. Operating expenses for the housing projects would come out of current rents. Project rents had to be sufficient to pay operating costs -- maintenance, administration, and payments in lieu of taxes to local government for fire and police protection and other municipal services.

3. the principle of removing one slum⁶ dwelling for every new public housing unit built;⁷
4. the principle of charging rent in relation to income of the tenant, and the tenant's income as a basis for eligibility of occupancy;
5. the principle of annual federal subsidies to make up the difference between what a low-income tenant pays in rent and what it costs to provide the dwelling unit;
6. the policy of local tax exemption as a means of subsidizing low-income families;
7. the principles of local responsibility for planning, building and managing the public housing.

The decentralized structure for developing and administering the public housing program was determined by a federal district court case⁸ in 1935 that held the federal government had no power under the constitution to

⁶The United States Housing Act of 1937 defines the word "slum" as "any area where dwellings predominate which, by reason of dilapidation, faulty arrangement or design, lack of ventilation, light or sanitation facilities, or any combination of these factors, are detrimental to safety, health and morals."

⁷The Wagner-Steagall Act was careful to avoid oversupply of housing by stating that no housing units were to be built without destroying "dwellings. . . substantially equal in number to the number of newly constructed dwellings provided by the project." 50 Stat 891 (1937) as amended, 42 U.S.C. §1410(a).

⁸Friedman, Lawrence M., "Public Housing and the Poor: An Overview," California Law Review, Vol. 54 (1966), p. 647.

clear land and build public housing. However, there was nothing illegal about Washington furnishing money but leaving motive force, title to property, and condemnation rights to the states. The act provided a formula for the use of public power and public money to underwrite a local program.

Political appeal of the Wagner-Stegall Act was enhanced by the backing of the American Association of University Women, the AFL-CIO, the American Association of Social Workers, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Conference of Catholic Charities, and the American Legion.⁹

Subsidized public housing was not without its opponents who consisted mainly of real estate and business groups, builders, suppliers and mortgage lenders. The National Association of Real Estate Boards, the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, the National Association of Home Builders, the National Retail Lumber Dealers Association, the United States Savings and Loan League, and the National Apartment Owners Association were lobbying against the low-cost public housing bill. This was a group primarily concerned that there would be an over-supply of housing. From a philosophical point of view, there was opposition to "socialized" housing and the government being in the real estate business. A factor favorable for the passage of the Act was its potential for creating jobs and housing for a relatively new type of "poor people." In 1937 the country had already suffered through seven years of a severe

⁹ Fisher, Robert Moore, Twenty Years of Public Housing, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1959.

depression. The pool of "pcor people" had grown in numbers by the unemployment of those who were formerly "middle class" or better. They had retained their middle class culture, outlook, articulateness and habit of expressing their desires at the polls.¹⁰ They did not belong to the class of the "problem poor" but were members of a temporarily submerged middle class. Public housing for these people was politically attractive because of their large number and potential at the polls. It was also able to prime the pump by supplying jobs for construction workers and others.^{11,12}

The passage of the Wagner-Steagall Act was quickly followed by a flurry of attempts to tack amendments to it. Nathan Strauss, who was the first United States Housing Act's administrator (1937-1942), managed to hold off these proposals stating that the time to seek amendments to the Act was after an honest attempt was first made to administer it.

¹⁰"Harold Bутtenheim said that candor compelled him [Franklin D. Roosevelt] to state that the impetus for slum clearance and low cost housing came more from a desire to provide jobs than to provide houses." Scott, Mel, American City Planning, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969.

¹¹"The 1937 Act was proposed by its sponsors, Senator Robert F. Wagner, Sr. (New York) and Congressman Harry B. Steagall (Alabama) as a means of relieving unemployment and helping state and local agencies eliminate substandard housing." Fisher, Robert Moore, Twenty Years of Public Housing, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1959.

¹²Section 1412(b) of the Act states, "As soon as practicable the Authority shall sell its federal projects or divest itself of their management through leases." Section 1412(c), "The Authority may sell a Federal project only to a public housing agency [or* to a nonprofit body for use as low-rent housing]."

* Added to the sentence Aug. 10, 1965 (p. 243 U.S.H.A. of 1937).

Two years after the Act was passed, World War II broke out and progress in public housing was interrupted. Private building was halted and housing efforts were revised to provide shelter for the defense workers. A tremendous housing shortage developed and employment escalated. If it were not for strict rent controls and evictions, rental costs would have shot up.¹³

The end of the war brought concern about a possible depression. One way to avoid a depression was to inaugurate a high level of construction. The government responded by doing whatever was necessary to bolster the construction industry with new private housing programs. The major beneficiaries of the new housing programs were the veterans and the middle class generally. Aided by special mortgage arrangements and tax breaks, they were able to own individual homes in the suburbs. It became possible for them to get away from the cities' problems and undesirable neighbors. Public housing was left boxed in the cities while the inexpensive land on the fringes of the metropolitan areas was de facto taken up by developments for the middle class. The formerly "submerged middle class" with their full employment and better wages could no longer remain as tenants in public housing because their earnings were above the maximum allowable. When the public housing units were vacated, they were inherited mainly by a new type of tenant--the permanent poor and the new urban immigrants.¹⁴ This change in the type of public housing

¹³ See generally California Law Review, Vol. 54, p. 649-652.

¹⁴ Taubner and Taubner, Negroes in Cities, 1965.

tenant has continued until the present times.¹⁵ It is not unusual in many cities to have approximately half the tenants on public assistance.¹⁶ With so many of the clientele deriving their income from welfare checks, the projects have changed from their original conception.

" . . . all managers were concerned about the tremendous changes in their projects in recent years, caused by the 'different kind of family they are sending us.' Some implied, or stated outright, that 'there is nothing wrong with public housing except for the kind of people who are moving in.' Since many of these managers started with the BHA in its early days, they still see the purpose of public housing as being to house 'nice' middle-class families who pay their rent promptly and keep their apartments neat. They neither understand nor sympathize with problem-ridden families who have moved into public housing in such numbers in recent years, . . ."¹⁷

The sentiment of the country was beginning to run against public housing. This feeling and shortages of building materials during the years 1946-1948 resulted in fewer than 2000 units being built in 1947-48. There were approximately 170,000 units of public housing built and occupied prior to 1949.¹⁸

¹⁵U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Statistical Yearbook 1967, HAA, Table 26; Statistical Yearbook 1969, HAA, Table 20. These tables, Low-Rent Public Housing Summary of Characteristics of Families Who Moved in During (a) The 12 Month Ended Sept. 20, 1967, and (b) The 12 Month Ended Sept. 30, 1969, show an increase from a 1967 figure of 51 percent receiving assistance or benefits to a 1969 figure of 65 percent.

¹⁶U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Statistical Yearbook 1967, HAA, Table 27.

¹⁷Hipsham, May B., Public Housing at the Crossroads: The Boston Housing Authority, Citizens' Housing and Planning Association of Metropolitan Boston, Boston, 1967.

¹⁸See, generally, Building the American City, House Document No. 91-34, pp. 108-33, 91st Congress, First Session.

Public opinion reversed itself in the election of 1948 and, as a result, the 81st Congress in 1949 passed a major housing act whose objective was "the realization as soon as feasible of the goal of a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family." One of the programs in this act was to provide low rent public housing for the poor. President Truman signed the act and authorization was given to build over 800,000 public housing units by 1955. To this date that goal has not quite been reached, although the population and the number needing low-cost housing has increased. The act included five new elements:¹⁹

1. the authorization for the construction of 810,000 units of public housing over a six year period;
2. the establishment of a new form of subsidy for the clearance of slums, with the land to be used for "redevelopment" by either public or private housing;
3. the changed method of limiting costs on public housing construction from the former per unit cost limitation to a per room cost limitation;
4. the removal of restrictions on disposition of remaining war and veterans housing;
5. the authorization for local authority bonds and notes as a replacement for federal loans to underwrite public housing costs.

¹⁹ National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials Journal of Housing, October 1962; 25th Anniversary Issue: United States Housing Act of 1937.

The act of 1949 also made at least three amendments to the basic law of 1937.²⁰

1. It deleted the requirement that projects receiving Federal annual contributions must also be given a local cash or tax subsidy of at least 20 percent of the Federal contributions. Inserted in its place was a provision that the local projects were to be tax exempt, but that a payment in lieu of taxes of not more than 10 percent of annual shelter rents could be made for each project;
2. It required, as a condition of Federal loans or annual contributions, ". . . that a gap of at least 20 percent has been left between the upper limits of admission to the proposed low-rent housing and the lowest rents at which private enterprise unaided by public subsidy is providing (through new construction and available existing structures) a substantial supply of decent, safe and sanitary housing....,"
3. First priority would be given to those low-income families eligible for public housing who were ". . . displaced by any low-rent housing project or by any public slum clearance or redevelopment project..."

Housing officials generally considered the Act of 1949 as a harbinger of great things to come in the decade of the 1950's. By the end of the first year, only 10,000 units were in construction and of these 3,000 were more than two or three months past ground-breaking. The private

²⁰ Building the American City, House Document No. 91-34, 91st Congress, First Session, p. 110.

interests that could not prevent the legislation from being passed took to an offensive to hamper the program. They provided kits of anti-public housing material.** In an intensive campaign they attempted to blacken the name of the program by equating it with socialism and by scaring voters. According to them, public housing in their communities would be the equivalent of taking money out of their own pockets to pay the rent of "shiftless families".

The war in Korea saw a slackening of housing starts with Congress cutting back on the annual appropriated 135,000 units. In 1951-52 it was cut back to 50,000 and then to 35,000 for the next two years. When the Eisenhower Administration was inaugurated, public housing was in a hostile atmosphere.²¹ President Eisenhower stated that the merits of continuation of the program should be evaluated and in the meantime it would be well to "mark time". In September of 1953, he appointed a 21-man advisory committee to study the entire national housing program to make recommendations on how or if it was to continue.²²

In December 1953 the advisory committee's report was submitted. It recommended the:

1. continuation of public housing;

²¹"The Next President--Where He Stands on Public Housing," Architectural Forum, June 1952. There were only 10,000 units finished in 1951 and in the three years 1952-54 inclusive, 161,000 units were completed. The number of new starts slowed down to:

16,244 in 1954	} HUD Statistical Yearbook 1967, p. 244 table HAA3.
8,568 in 1955	
4,916 in 1956	

²²25th Anniversary Issue: United States Housing Act of 1932, Journal of Housing, October, 1962.

**"Legislative History of Public Housing Traced Through 25 Years", Journal of Housing, October 15, 1962.

2. expansion of the urban renewal program;
3. improvements in public housing such as use of existing buildings, rehabilitated if necessary;
4. use of scattered sites for new dwellings;
5. designs conforming to local patterns;
6. more attention to the low-income aged.

The result of the committee's report was the Housing Act of 1954, which had the positive feature of bringing federal aid to neighborhood conservation in the fight against the slum. There was a provision in the Act which authorized 35,000 units limited to those communities where a slum clearance and redevelopment or urban renewal project was under way. The community had to certify that the housing was needed to relocate families affected by the project.

Public housing continued to have a difficult time in Congress at each session. In 1956 there was the redefinition of "low income family" to include single elderly persons and raising the cost limitation per room of housing for the elderly. There was no major public housing legislation during the 1957-58 period. In 1959 Eisenhower signed a housing bill which he had previously vetoed twice that year. Business leaders, home builders and congressmen on both sides of the political fence criticized the vetoes because it not only destroyed public housing but carried urban renewal and the FHA program along with it. An important policy of the 1959 legislation was the greater autonomy it gave to the

local housing authorities.²³ A basic issue which had troubled public housing was the question of who was to be the decision maker--the government furnishing the funds or the community that builds the houses? (In his 1960 State of the Union message to the nation, President Eisenhower made no mention of public housing).

No important housing legislation was enacted by Congress in Eisenhower's last year as President. After the 1960 elections the new President, John Kennedy, had a substantial majority in both House and Senate. Mayors of the big cities, housing commissioners, city planners, and civic groups concerned with housing began lobbying for passage of housing legislation which was much broader in scope than what had been enacted to date. An idea of what was to happen was given by a speech in which President Kennedy said, "An equal challenge is the tremendous urban growth that lies ahead. Within 15 years our population will rise to 235 million and by the year 2000 to 300 million people. Most of this increase will occur in and around urban areas. We must begin now to lay the foundations for livable, efficient, and attractive communities of the future."²⁴ As a result, a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Banking and Currency began hearings on a number of bills to amend

²³"It is the policy to vest in the local public housing agencies the maximum amount of responsibility in the administration of the low-rent housing program, including responsibility for the establishment of rents and eligibility requirements (subject to the approval of the authority) with due consideration of accomplishing the objective of this act while effecting economies."

²⁴"Our Nation's Housing," Message of the President of the United State, March 9, 1961, Hearings on Housing Legislation of 1961. 87th Congress, 1st Session, p. 7.

the federal housing laws. The Housing Act of 1961, which resulted from these hearings, had an easy time getting through both Houses of Congress. It provided among other things:

1. authorization to spend the balance of the money appropriated in 1949. This meant that about 100,000 new units of public housing could be built;
2. a 5 million dollar authorization to test out new ideas on low-rent housing;
3. authorization to local housing officials to determine admission policies;
4. authorization to permit over-income families to retain their tenancy (provided they could not find private housing and if they paid an equitable rental);
5. combination in a single bill for housing, mass transportation, and open-space land provisions;
6. authorization of the increase of urban renewal grants from two billion dollars to four billion dollars;
7. permitted the inclusion of commercial facilities.

Furthermore, the bill indicated the strength of the historical movement to involve the government into greater participation in urban development.

After the assassination of President Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, in a speech at the University of Michigan made it clear that the Great Society was an urban society. "It will be the task of your generations to make

the American city a place where future generations will come not only to live but to live the good life."²⁵ At the time he made the speech, there were about 35,000,000 Americans living in poverty.²⁶ Johnson's first year in office saw the passage of measures which were interrelated in their effect on cities. They covered equal economic opportunities for all people regardless of color, civil rights, mass transportation, and the Housing Act of 1964.²⁷ The Housing Act authorized an additional \$750,000,000 for urban renewal, the Transportation Act authorized \$375,000,000 for a three-year period to aid urban mass transportation systems. The Housing Act shifted emphasis from large-scale reconstruction of slum areas to rehabilitation of the existing housing. The use of urban renewal funds was permitted to enforce health codes in renewal areas providing the localities involved increased their own expenditures in order to qualify for a grant. Cities that failed to enact satisfactory codes by 1967 could not qualify for federal funds. The law provided low interest, twenty-year loans to finance the repairs or modernization required to meet the health codes. This was intended to produce less destruction of the social fabric of the urban area by calling for more attention to the human problems of slum clearance and housing. For those who fought the Act, there was the provision that no demolition project could be approved until it was determined by the Housing Administration that rehabilitation were not possible.

²⁵"President's Talk at Michigan University," Washington Post, May 23, 1964, p. 6.

²⁶Council of Economic Advisers, Annual Report, Washington, 1964, p. 55.

²⁷Public Law 88-560, September, 1964.

President Johnson, with his large majority in both Houses of Congress, pushed for more amendments to the Housing Act. In his Housing Act of 1965 he proposed rent supplements to bridge the gap between 25 percent of a poor family's income going for rental of housing and the rent it would pay on the private market for it. By 1969 the program was to furnish enough housing to accommodate 375,000 families and remove them from the waiting lists for public housing. Some of the controversial issues involved in public housing would be avoided and it would give low-income families the opportunity to move into the suburbs. The politicians representing the suburban communities saw it as a "plot" to break the "white noose" around the cities and even to allow Negroes into their neighborhoods.²⁸ The President's attempt to get financial backing for the creating of new cities was defeated by the mayors of the large cities who were afraid that they would lose more of their middle class residents. The cities won \$675,000,000 for urban renewal in 1966 and \$750,000,000 for 1967 and 1968. Money for code enforcement in deteriorating areas and the demolishing of dilapidated housing was provided by the Act. Among other provisions were the programs for direct loans for nonprofit housing for the elderly and for leasing 10,000 units annually from private owners and used for low-income families.

In his message to Congress on January 26, 1966, President Johnson made some unusual suggestions for meeting housing and urban development problems. They were the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan

²⁸ Mel Scott, American City Planning, University of California Press, 1969, p. 612.

Development Act of 1966²⁹ and the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968. Robert C. Weaver was appointed Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. One indication of how the new programs were going to be oriented was the appointment of Dr. Leonard Duhl, psychiatrist and Chief of the Office of Planning in the National Institute of Mental Health. One of his functions was to be the reviewer of the social implications of new programs.

The "model cities" program is the term the President preferred to use for the provisions for restoring quality to run-down neighborhoods. "Redevelopment" had a poor connotation for many people. An adequate model neighborhood program was to include a number of features designed to improve life in an urban housing project. It would among other things:

1. reduce crime and delinquency;
2. provide access between home and job;
3. expand the housing program;
4. improve educational facilities;
5. cut down dependence on welfare.

The President had asked for \$40,000,000 for rat control in the cities. Congress treated the request as some sort of joke and rejected the request. "The performance of the majority was one of the most disgraceful ever witnessed on Capitol Hill. It provoked editorial condemnation from

²⁹Demonstration Cities Act of 1966, Message from the President, House Document No. 368, Congressional Record - Senate, January 26, 1966, p. 1102.

coast to coast. Offending Congressmen smarted with shame."³⁰ The proponents of urban legislation gained much needed moral support from this incident.

The Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968 was in a way, the result of the "rat" incident. It set a 10-year timetable for attaining the goal of a decent home and environment for every American. Congress set the goal of replacing 6,000,000 substandard housing units, rehabilitating others to increase the supply to about 26,000,000 housing units. This Act differed from the others with a program of home ownership for families with an annual income between \$3,000 and \$7,000. The program was further broadened to include job training. Concerns situated in the immediate area were to be given preference in any contracts awarded by the government. It was no longer a question of just providing shelter but it was social action aimed at moving the underprivileged up the economic scale. The Act of 1966 required developers to get their funds from private sources; the new Act authorized the developers to issue bonds which were guaranteed by the government. Every planning agency receiving federal funds would be required to develop greater social commitments because housing needs and land use were tied to jobs, transportation, training, rent supplements and possible home ownership. The Act recognized that economic, social and environmental planning must be combined to tackle the problems of the underprivileged. There was an election coming up so liberals and conservatives alike voted for the bill.³¹

³⁰ Mel Scott, American City Planning, University of California Press, 1969, p. 625.

³¹ In 1969 Congress did not authorize the funds for the implementation of this program.

The Housing Act of 1969 increased the public housing annual contributions for 1969 and 1970 by 95 million dollars and also increased room allowances given in the 1937 Act.³² The Act further stated that the maximum rent a tenant pays (25 percent of his income) "shall not apply in any case...so that limiting the rent of any tenant...will result in a reduction in the amount of welfare assistance..."³³ It provided prompt notification to a tenant determined to be ineligible for admission to a project and an opportunity for an informal hearing on such determination. Sec. 404 of the Housing and Urban Act of 1968 was amended to read as follows:

"...the Secretary shall (1) require...feasible opportunities for training and employment (arising in connection with the planning...of any project assisted under any such program) be given to lower income persons residing in the area of such project"³⁴

The Housing and Urban Development Act of 1970 (Public Law 91-609) after much debate and a presidential veto of the original appropriations bill was finally signed by President Nixon on December 31, 1970. The annual contributions available for operating and maintenance expenses were increased from 75 million dollars annually to 150 million dollars. It

³²Public Law 91-152, December 24, 1969, Sec. 212 (b).

³³Ibid. Sec. 213 (b)

³⁴Ibid. 82 Stat 476, 12 U.S.C. 170. d.

substituted a statutory definition³⁵ of income which was fairly liberal for the administratively-determined one as defined in the 1969 Act. This was a useful definition for determining the 25 percent ceiling for rent. Cost limitations for public housing were increased to allow for better design and the greater durability required for economical maintenance. The allowable cost was based on a figure 10 percent above prototype housing.³⁶ The number of services to the tenants were increased to include:³⁷

1. tenant counseling on family budgets;

³⁵ Sec. 208, Public Housing Rent Requirements, 73 Stat. 680 72 U.S.C. 1402. "In determining income for purposes of applying the one-fourth of family income limitation set forth above, the Secretary shall consider income from all sources of each member of the family residing in the household who is at least 18 years of age; except that (A) non-recurring income, as determined by the Secretary, and the income of full-time students shall be excluded; (B) An amount equal to the sum of (i) \$300 for each dependent, (ii) \$300 for each secondary wage earner, (iii) 5 percentum of the family's gross income (10 percentum in the case of elderly families), and (iv) and those medical expenses of the family properly considered extraordinary shall be deducted; and (c) the Secretary may allow further deductions in recognition of unusual circumstances."

³⁶ Sec. 209, Public Housing Cost Limits, 63 Stat. 424; 75 Stat. 164 42 U.S.C. 1415. "...shall not exceed by more than 10 percentum the appropriate prototype cost for the area. Prototype costs shall be determined at least annually by the Secretary on the basis of his estimate of the construction and equipment costs of new dwelling units of various sizes and types in the area suitable for occupancy by persons assisted under this Act. The Secretary...shall take into account the extra durability required for economical maintenance of assisted housing, and the provision of amenities designed to guarantee safe and healthy family life and neighborhood environment...emphasis should be given to encouraging good design...and to producing housing...as to reflect the architectural standards of the neighborhood and community..."

³⁷ Detailed Provisions on Public Housing of Housing and Urban Development Act of 1970, Journal of Housing, January, 1971, p. 20.

2. care and upkeep of property;
3. physical security of residents;
4. counseling on health, education, welfare, and employment;
5. mandatory participation in the running of the low-rent housing projects by tenants.

A salient feature of the Housing Act of 1937 was its obvious effort to create jobs, avoid conflict with the private housing industry. The Housing Act of 1949 was a landmark in that it was the first to authorize action on a large enough scale to make even a modest impact on the shortage of housing. It offered great promise for tackling the housing problems of the low-income segment of the population with its authorization for the construction of 810,000 units in 10 years. As of December 31, 1969, more than three decades later, there were only 784,930 units built.³⁸ Congress was passing the Acts but it was the appropriations Committees that restricted the program through riders on the appropriations.³⁹ Over the past 30 years many of the statutory restrictions and administrative policies have been liberalized. Social policies, transportation, urban problems, as well as housing have been added to the Federal program. It has become possible for private developers and sponsors to contribute their talents for innovation and design.

³⁸ HUD Statistical Yearbook 1969, LRHP Table 8, p. 197. Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands Excluded. All programs included.

³⁹ Of the fiscal year 1971 funds for low-rent public housing (\$942 million) \$192 million dollars have already been frozen. U. S. News and World Report, April 19, 1971, p. 42.

To summarize, there have been 37 different Federal housing programs developed to serve three broad income groups as follows:

1. families below the Federal poverty line;
2. families above the poverty line but who would otherwise have to pay more than 20-25 percent of their gross incomes for standard housing (moderate income);
3. families able to pay the economic costs for standard housing under Federal mortgage insurance or guarantee programs (FHA or VA).

The President's Committee on Urban Housing⁴⁰ made a recommendation that six to eight million subsidized dwellings be built by 1978 for the families of the first two groups. It was from this report that the Congress took their estimates of required housing in the 1968 Act. To date, the Government housing subsidy programs have been inadequate to meet the goals that Congress itself voted and full of statutory and administrative restrictions.

"Low rent public housing has not followed the normal pattern for reform movements in modern countries. Every social experiment starts off as an abstract idea, frequently in an atmosphere of violent theoretical debate. But after it has been tried out for a while, one of two things usually happens. Either it dies out, an acknowledged failure, or it takes and is accepted as an integral part of the ordinary scheme of things. ...But public housing...still drags along in a kind of limbo, continuously controversial, not dead but never more than half alive."⁴¹

⁴⁰ The President's Committee on Urban Housing, Washington, D. C., December 11, 1968, p. 11.

⁴¹ Catherine Bauer, "The Dreary Deadlock of Public Housing", Architectural Forum, May 1957.

NATURE AND PRINCIPLES OF OPERATION

Public housing constitutes a resource that is approximately 1.2 percent⁴² of the total housing supply in the United States. The framework of the program is based on the phrase (for which there is no clearly defined definition)⁴³ "a DECENT home and a SUITABLE living environment for every American."

Public housing is a method of achieving this through subsidized low-rent housing for people who would otherwise be unable to find suitable housing at a price they could afford. This program is one of the welfare efforts advanced by the Federal Government for local community participation. Under the existing system, 1,538⁴⁴ local communities through their housing authorities initiate, own, and operate their projects. The local communities make their own decision whether they want public housing and what its scale should be. The only requirement is for them to have a "workable program." Both public and private housing are built under the Federal and local regulations where they are constructed and are similar in this respect. Where government financing is involved, there are certain Federal regulations that must be followed. However,

⁴²All housing units listed by Advance Report HC(VI)-1 United States 1970 Census of Housing, U. S. Department of Commerce/Bureau of Census were 68,627,842. While the total number of public housing units under management for the continental United States were 781,559. HUD Statistical Yearbook 1969, LRPB Table #8, December 31, 1969.

⁴³Douglas, Paul H. Chairman, Building the American City, 91st Congress 1st Session, House Document 91-34, Washington, D. C. December 1968.

⁴⁴Ibid. p. 112.

whenever private finances are involved, the bankers and other investors supply their own rules. In any given locality rules and regulations may be the same for both classes of housing and may be planned by the same group of architects, engineers, and contractors.

Public housing may consist of any known type from high-rise to row housing as long as the prescribed rules and regulations are followed. The lack of compatibility of the character of a project with its neighbors is not inherent in the rules of the Federal program. Opposition to public housing by important conservative groups has influenced the disposition of the program. Their fear of having public housing equal to what the neighboring taxpayers have affects the projects. "Do you want to pay somebody else's rent?"⁴⁵ It is sometimes the fear of the local authorities "that it be criticized by influential sections of the public"⁴⁶ and the congressional admonition that public housing "...shall not be of elaborate design or material..."⁴⁷ that governs the final resultant.

Admission and continued occupancy in low rent public housing was established for those families whose maximum incomes were below certain levels set by local housing authorities. The inhabitants of public housing are in the lowest segment of the financial scale. The median

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 129.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 128.

⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 128.

income in constant dollars of purchasing power (1957-59 as base years) was \$2,382 in 1956 and \$2,395 in 1966.⁴⁸ Economic headway was made during this decade by most segments of the American families except this group. "Another way of looking at these figures is to conclude that public housing has been reaching further down the economic scale, at least during this 10-year period."⁴⁹

Since 1956 the number of black families living in public housing has increased from 43.6 percent⁵⁰ to 51 percent in 1969.⁵¹ Taking into account the larger average size of black families and add to it other nonwhites, the total nonwhite public housing accounts for about 55 percent of the families and approximately 60 percent of the people. In recent years approximately half the public housing starts have been specifically for the elderly. "If 62 years is taken as a dividing line, they formed 30 percent of the total [people in public housing] in 1966."⁵² These statistics are merely of a quantitative nature and is no attempt to imply a qualitative judgment.

In many of the projects there are so many problem families that the residents of the project and its contiguous areas are fearful of their property and lives. In Providence, Rhode Island, two examples of this

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 115.

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 115.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 114.

⁵¹ HUD Statistical Yearbook 1969, U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D. C., 1969, p. 205.

⁵² Douglas, Paul H. Chairman, Building the American City, 91st Congress 1st Session, House Document 91-34, Washington, D. C. December, 1968 p. 114.

type of situation occurred recently which illustrates the conditions existing in many cities throughout the country. The incident is not typical of all projects but it occurs often enough to be a factor associated with the vacancy phenomenon in public housing.

The Chad Brown Housing Project in Providence has become such a social jungle that a family can be terrorized into permanent flight by a gang of teenagers. A white family of five persons had to be evacuated after their lives were threatened and their home besieged by a crowd of black youths. Cause for the incident was the family's sixteen year old daughter who dared to identify the youths who allegedly raped her after she was assaulted and left unconscious. According to newspaper accounts,⁵³ a group estimated at fifty blacks surrounded the family's row house apartment hurling rocks, smashing all windows, and finally breaking down the door. The family, a mother, her daughter, two teenage sons, and an aunt in her eighties were moved to a new address. While the police were trying to disperse them, the gang set fire to the family's car.

A dangerous situation had grown in the neighborhood with a breakdown of law and order letting the assailants escape without accounting for their actions. "The wrong family was forced out of Chad Brown. The families that should have been held accountable are the families of the youngsters involved in the assault on five terrorized tenants. Those that cannot bring themselves to live in peace with their neighbors ought

⁵³"Pruitt-Igoe R.I.," The Providence Evening Bulletin, editorial, February 18, 1971.

to be forced to leave the project for the peace the neighbors have a right to expect."⁵⁴

According to the housing authority's director in Providence, there is "no policy to evict persons found responsible for assaults or other serious offenses against other residents."⁵⁵

Racial incidents were prevalent at the project. Less than a month later, renewed problems occurred in the same project over different circumstances. A rampage began after police attempted to arrest a youth wanted on a "Family Court" order. Police said they spotted him and chased him into an apartment. When he was removed a cursing crowd attempted to free the sixteen year old from custody. "It seems to be a chain reaction. As soon as somebody is apprehended all hell breaks loose."⁵⁶ One of the members of the group (identified later as a twenty-four year old man) told the others to scatter. The area quieted down, but soon after the police left reports were received of attacks on other tenants inside their homes. Four elderly white women "three of the victims are over seventy-five years old and one an eighty-nine year old"⁵⁷ were attacked. The inability of the races to live with each other has been one of the characteristics making this an undesirable project. This is reflected in its high vacancy ratio. "Police,

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ "Rape Suspect's Sister is Charged in Attack on Alleged Victim's Apartment," The Providence Journal, February 18, 1971.

⁵⁶ Director of the Providence Housing Authority, as quoted by The Providence Evening Bulletin, April 15, 1971.

⁵⁷ "Black Community Scored," The Providence Evening Bulletin, April 15, 1971.

four of whom were assaulted in attempting to quiet the disturbance, said the assaults were definitely racial in character. "The victims," they said, "are all whites, the assailants black."⁵⁸

"I am a nervous wreck," said one Chad Brown resident. "I haven't slept all night. I'm afraid to leave my home, and I'm afraid to stay...I heard them kicking in her door. She was a poor old soul...the nicest person, doesn't bother anyone."⁵⁹ Mrs. C's daughter telephoned asking whether it was safe to return. She spent the night at a friend's house to be away from the disturbances at the project. It was disclosed that it was common practice for some residents to send their children away for the night whenever trouble broke out. Mrs. C said that when she went to the victim's apartment the telephone was off the hook, and the telephone book was opened to a page with the police number. "The rescue squad had come and gone before they [the police] got here. They took twenty minutes to get here."⁶⁰

The public housing act called for the principle of "equivalent elimination." Local participating communities had to remove a number of substandard housing units from its existing housing supply by demolition, condemnation, and rehabilitation equal to the proposed number of housing units. When a project was proposed, those residents who were able to cope with their situation, moved away leaving the helpless--the

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ "Afraid to Leave...and Stay," The Providence Evening Bulletin, April 15, 1971, and subsequent tenant interviews.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

"problem families or the pathological poor"⁶¹ who would be unable to find private housing. Many of the housing projects began to accumulate more and more tenants of this kind, with the result that a project became an institution for this group of people. The remaining self-respecting tenants gradually moved away.⁶²

Approximately 400,000 housing units were demolished under urban renewal (a euphemism for slum clearance)⁶³ but only 20,000 public housing units replaced them. This is about five percent of those removed from the market and one fortieth of the approximately 800,000 units built by 1969.⁶⁴ Although it was originally intended that public housing should acquire the renewal sites, it often was apparent that the area was close to downtown and was valuable for factories, luxury apartments and other uses. Most cities wanted this land for the return of the middle and high income families from the suburbs, clean industry and a revitalized downtown. Rarely a welcome neighbor, the projects could not get into the better areas. Influential neighborhoods managed to keep them out and they could not go into the suburbs because the authorities had no jurisdiction there. In Chicago, for instance, aldermen sought to punish

⁶¹Douglas, Paul H. Chairman, Building the American City, 91st Congress, 1st Session, House Document 91-54, Washington, D. C. December 1968. "Problem families or pathological poor--e.e., the mentally or emotionally subnormal and unstable, broken families headed by a parent incompetent for physical, mental or emotional reasons to cope with his day-to-day problems, and those whose only means of livelihood is illegal or on the shady side of legality."

⁶²Friedman, L. M. "Public Housing and the Poor," California Law Review, Vol. 54, 1966, p. 111.

⁶³Douglas, Paul H. Chairman, Building the American City, p. 152, 91st Congress, 1st Session, House Document 91-34, Washington, D. C.

⁶⁴Ibid. p. 125

their enemies on the city council by voting to locate housing projects in their wards. "Even a Negro alderman opposed a site in his ward, because the middle-class Negroes in his constituency were themselves afraid of being engulfed in the culture of poverty from which they had escaped."⁶⁵

The reluctance to use scarce land, neighborhood hostility, and the pressure for more housing, left the authorities with little choice. As a result, high rise, high density projects were built on marginal vacant land near factories, junkyards, railroad yards, tank farms and similar areas regardless of the effect on the project environment.⁶⁶

Efforts to find housing sites outside the cities' ghettos have been rebuked by the suburbs. Referenda have been consistently voted down when attempts have been made to establish housing authorities to plan for a project. Legal attempts to force the suburbs to accept the projects came to an end when the Supreme Court ruled five to three on April 22, 1971 that the states may allow community residents to reject public housing projects in their communities. The decision approved a 1950 amendment to the California constitution that requires endorsement by a majority of the voters before housing projects need be constructed. Justice Black said that the provision did not aim at a racial minority and insures that all people of the community will have a voice in the

⁶⁵ Freedman, Leonard. Public Housing, the Politics of Poverty, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969, p. 146.

⁶⁶ Gans, Herbert, "The Failure of Urban Renewal: A Critique and Some Proposals," Urban Renewal: People, Policies, and Planning, Bullish and Hausknecht, editors.

decision. "Provisions for referenda demonstrate devotion to democracy, not to bias, discrimination, or prejudice," Black wrote.⁶⁷

The Public Housing Act of 1949 stipulated that the projects must be operated by local authorities.⁶⁸ They usually consist of a five-man board with certain legal and discretionary powers. Appointments made by the local mayor, or some local governing body usually are for four or five year terms. The members generally draw no salary but receive compensation for expenses. They make the policy, hire the staff, assume fiscal responsibility, and provide the leadership for the program and the community. The job is a part-time endeavor by men and women who generally lack professional housing or sociology training. A recent survey⁶⁹ showed that 67 percent of the respondents spent an average of two hours or less per week on housing authority business; only 5 percent reported that they put in an average of ten hours or more. The rationale behind the appointment of part-time laymen representing the "best of the community" is to keep the program "out of politics." However, there is a considerable amount of "power struggle" to gain control of the programs, appoint managers, name architects and engineers and to influence the selection of sites.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ "Court Backs Voter Veto on Housing," Providence Evening Bulletin, April 26, 1971, p. 1.

⁶⁸ In some areas the authorities are called "commissioners." Ibid. p. 19.

⁶⁹ Hartman, C. W. and Carr, G. Housing Authorities Reconsidered, A.I.P. January, 1969, p. 15.

⁷⁰ Why are Public Housing Directors Retiring or Being Fired? Journal of Housing, February, 1971, p. 86.

The authority members and their clientele are at opposite ends of the social and financial scale so that a lack of sympathy on the part of one and frustration on the other exists. In the past, tenants have been asking for participation in running their projects. The latest Government directives make this mandatory, but in a recent survey of housing authorities, 56 percent said "no," 21 percent were not sure and 23 percent voted "yes" to the idea of tenant participation.⁷¹ "It is suggested that the housing authority system currently acts as a barrier to expanded an improved housing programs for the poor."⁷²

The appointment of the right manager to actually run a project is probably one of the most critical acts to influence its success or failure. Management styles can vary greatly because project managers have considerable leeway in administrative matters. Their projects are relatively autonomous and differ from one another in tenant constituency. One can be a huge high-rise ghetto with a high percentage of "problem families," another could be row housing with a mixture of elderly and the "submerged" middle class. The manager to run each project should be selected according to the match between his talent and project but too often the job goes to a political appointee. In Boston, for instance, "The housing authority, like other agencies, has consistently been disrupted by staff recruited on the basis of political favoritism or by castoffs from the city austerity programs or the like. The result of this kind of politics has been a severe neglect of the

⁷¹Hartman, C. W. and Carr, G. Housing Authorities Reconsidered, A.I.P. Journal, January, 1969, p. 17.

⁷²Ibid. p. 17.

tenants, badly undermined programs, and, finally, apathy and anger among the voters."⁷³ Many managers have grown in the program from its beginning and have adapted to changing conditions. The training and qualifications for managers have never been formalized. Tenant "mix" can produce an impossible situation for a manager if it contains too many "problem families" in with the elderly and "deserving" poor. Incompatibility of the tenants tends to drive out the more stable groups and can create a situation where terror and vandalism result in a project which then becomes largely vacant. Most authorities agree that a certain amount of discipline is required to create an orderly environment free of terror.

In New York City the attitude of management toward the eligibility of a prospective tenant is outlined in a set of rules.⁷⁴ He is considered ineligible if he has any of the following:

1. history of recent serious crime activity -- includes cases in which a member of the family who is expected to reside in the household was or is engaged in ----- provided that involvement in such activities shall not be a ground for ineligibility if it occurred more than five years ago;
2. pattern of violent behavior;
3. confirmed drug addiction -- in cases where the confirmed addict is undergoing follow-up treatment by a professional

⁷³"Why are Public Housing Directors Retiring or Being Fired?" Journal of Housing, February, 1971, p. 88.

⁷⁴New York City Housing Authority Standards in Admission of Tenants, p. 2.

agency after discharge from an institution, the applicant shall not be considered ineligible;

4. rape or sexual deviation -- exception is permitted in the case of an individual under 16 years of age when he was involved in the offense;
5. grossly insanitary or hazardous housekeeping;
6. record of serious disturbance of neighbors, destruction of property or other disruptive or dangerous behavior.

The New York City Housing Authority issues an information pamphlet to prospective tenants which answers the following questions (along with others):

Are authority tenants subject to more regulations than tenants in private housing?

Why does the authority have its own police force?

What community facilities does the authority provide?

Does the authority encourage tenant programs?

The New York City Housing authorities evidently are making an effort to sell their program. HUD has issued a number of guides for managers to help them follow the latest procedures for running a project. A typical example would be a grievance procedure directive issued by HUD.⁷⁵ It states the purpose, background, and requirements for hearing a tenant's complaints, gives instructions on the administrative expenses involved and also prints a model grievance procedure.

⁷⁵U. S. Dept. of HUD - Renewal and Housing Management, Document No. RHM 7465.9 of February 22, 1971.

Tenant complaints over the years are finally resulting in the elimination of many injustices suffered by them. Until this past year "the tenant has virtually no protection against eviction. His lease is rigged against him, and his tenancy is on a month-to-month basis. On thirty days' notice then, any public housing tenant in the country can lose his rights to his home."⁷⁶ New standard leases have replaced the leases that were so obviously one-sided in favor of the authority.

The housing authorities finance their projects by borrowing money through tax-exempt bonds. With the proceeds they acquire sites, prepare them and then erect the low-cost housing. The properties are owned by the local communities and are tax exempt. The local housing authorities enter into a contract with the Federal Government which agrees to make annual contributions for a stated period of time to pay for interest and amortization of the bonds. Rents which the low-income tenants pay go only to meet all management, operation and maintenance costs. Tenants are required to pay less than 25 percent of their income for rent and 10 percent of that is turned over to the local community in lieu of taxes.

Some communities collect more money in lieu of taxes for a given project site than they previously received in real estate taxes. The table on the next page from Richmond, Virginia, is an example.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Friedman, L. M., "Public Housing and the Poor: An Overview." California Law Review, Vol. 54 (1966) p. 660.

⁷⁷ Letter from Executive Director of the Richmond Redevelopment Housing Authority, April 23, 1971.

**MONEY RECEIVED IN LIEU OF TAXES
VS. REAL ESTATE TAXES FOR A GIVEN SITE**

Annual Collections for Site

	Name of Project	Before Redevelopment	After Redevelopment
1.	Gilpin Court	\$ 2,600	\$ 8,764
2.	Gilpin Court Extension	8,691	11,110
3.	Hillside Court	500	12,930
4.	Creighton Court	1,600	15,095
5.	Whitcomb Court	755	15,001
6.	Fairfield Court	2,513	13,808
7.	Mosby Court	7,253	15,000
8.	Scattered Site Housing	<u>31,043</u>	<u>34,088</u>
	TOTAL	\$54,955	\$125,796

For a deficit-oriented program the statistics indicate that many of the communities are reaping a small windfall from this requirement stipulated in the law. Other communities reported similar experiences. For instance, Chicago wrote,⁷⁸ "Although the Authority does not pay real estate taxes, payment in lieu of taxes by the CHA are more than the amount the private owners of the same sites were billed in real estate taxes for the year before the CHA bought and developed them."

A rent strike could be very disruptive to the management and maintenance of a project when it cuts off the source of funds for these functions because most authorities have small reserves. The money a community

⁷⁸ Letter from Chicago Housing Authority, April 22, 1971, "General Information about the Chicago Housing Authority," February, 1971.

should be receiving in lieu of taxes and on which it depends for paying various municipal services is also curtailed by a strike.

MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM

STATISTICAL OVERVIEW -- CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Based on the criteria that substandard units be removed, the reduction of crowding in standard units, and the increase in the standard vacancies to 5 percent, the housing need at the beginning of 1950 was estimated at nearly 21 million units.⁷⁹ Of the existing housing inventory 17 million units were classified as substandard, another 3 million households in standard units were classified as overcrowded, and the vacancy rate requirement was set at an additional million.

From 1950 to 1960 the average rate of increase of the housing inventory was 1,230,000 units⁸⁰ and from 1960 to 1970 it was 1,030,000⁸¹ or a total increase of approximately 22,500,000 units in twenty years. The number of families increased by 10,000,000 in the decade 1950-1960 and by approximately 8,000,000 from 1960-1970 or a total increase of 18,000,000 families in twenty years.⁸² The net results of overcrowding (families doubling up) is not known, but Kristoff estimated the crowded households in standard units to be 2,682,000 in 1950 and increased to 3,957,000 in

⁷⁹ Kristoff, Frank, Urban Housing Needs Through The 1980's: An Analysis and Projection. The National Commission on Urban Problems, Research Report #10, Washington, D. C. 1968, p. 9.

⁸⁰ 1970 Census of Housing (Advance Report), U. S. Department of Commerce/Bureau of the Census, Washington, D. C., February 1971.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² HUD Statistical Yearbook 1969, U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, GS, Table 14, p. 327, Washington, D. C., 1969.

1960.⁸³ According to these statistics, inroads into the 21 million housing unit shortage of 1950 has been minimal.

Recently two important commissions have called for drastically increasing the housing supply at all levels of the market. In 1968 the Douglas Commission in Recommendation Number 1 -- "Housing Goals" stated:

"The Commission believes that to meet America's housing needs we must build at least 2.0 to 2.25 million housing units a year. Of these at least 500,000 units a year, exclusive of housing for the elderly, should house the poor and moderate-income families who at present costs and incomes cannot afford to rent or buy decent, safe and sanitary housing."⁸⁴

In the same year the Kaiser Commission in its major conclusions called for:

"A 10-year goal of 26 million more new and rehabilitated housing units, including at least 6 million for lower-income families. Attainment of this goal should eliminate the blight of substandard housing from the face of the nation's cities and should provide every American family with an affordable, decent home."⁸⁵

⁸³ Kristoff, Frank, Urban Housing Needs Through The 1980's: An Analysis and Projection. The National Commission on Urban Problems, Research Report #10, Washington, D. C., 1968.

⁸⁴ Douglas, Paul H., Chairman, Building the American City, 91st Congress 1st Session, House Document No. 91-34, Washington, D. C., December 1968, p. 180.

⁸⁵ Kaiser, Edgar F., Chairman, A Decent Home, U. S. President's Committee on Urban Housing, Washington, D. C., December 1968, p. 3.

The massive efforts called for by these reports have not materialized while the need for more dwelling units has increased.

Housing starts for the first quarter of 1971 are running at an annual rate of 1.8 million compared to 1,252,000 starts for the first quarter of 1970.⁸⁶ "The demand is there; vacancy rates are abnormally low. Mortgage rates are still coming down. And government subsidization programs are helping considerably at the low end of the market where rising home prices act as a depressant to sales."⁸⁷ If the housing starts of 1.8 million for 1971 are reached it will still be 800,000 units below the 2.6 million annual rate which the Kaiser Commission recommends.

The scale of low-rent public housing compared to the total housing in the United States is relatively small. With less than 800,000 public housing units in a national total of 68 million dwellings, it constitutes about 1.2 percent of the housing market. There were 5,047,000 families below the poverty line⁸⁸ and 14,500,000 families with an annual income of less than \$5,000.⁸⁹ Approximately 51 percent of this group tended to concentrate in the central cities.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Business Week, "Business Outlook," McGraw-Hill, April 24, 1971, p. 14.

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ Douglas, Paul H., Chairman, Building The American City, 91st Congress 1st Session, House Document No. 91-34, Washington, D. C., December 1968, p. 44.

⁸⁹ HUD Statistical Yearbook 1969, U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D. C., 1969, derived from Tables GS 16, 28, 32.

⁹⁰ Douglas, Paul H., Chairman, Building The American City, 91st Congress 1st Session, House Document No. 91-34, Washington, D. C., December 1968, p. 50.

According to an Urban Research Corporation Report of September 1, 1969, there was a vacancy rate in New York City of 1.23 percent. Boston was short more than 5,000 units of moderate-rental housing and 22,000 units of low income housing. The housing shortage is most critical for the low income families. "About 7.8 million American families--1 in every 8--can not now afford to pay the market price for standard housing that would cost no more than 20 percent of their total incomes."⁹¹

The normal vacancy rate for privately rented apartments is 5 percent.⁹² A vacancy rate of this percentage is required to afford some maneuverability and choice to tenants. Rental vacancies in metropolitan areas were 4.0 percent in 1969, continuing a downward movement since the 7.4 percent rate reported in 1965.⁹³ Rates varied considerably throughout the nation--conditions in the northeast being the worst with a rate of only 2.2 percent. This was extremely low because a relatively high percentage of the vacancy occurs in units lacking some private plumbing facilities.⁹⁴

The combined turnover rate for both owners and renters on a nationwide basis is 20 percent and for tenants in public housing it averages 16.3

⁹¹ Kaiser, Edgar F., Chairman, A Decent Home, U. S. President's Committee on Urban Housing, Washington, D. C., December 1968, p. 7.

⁹² Douglas, Paul H., Chairman, Building The American City, 91st Congress 1st Session, House Document No. 91-34, Washington, D. C., December 1968, p. 118.

⁹³ Housing Vacancies, Annual Statistics 1969, Series H-111, No. 59, U. S. Department of Commerce/Bureau of Census, Washington, D. C., October 1970.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

percent for the 50 largest cities in the country.⁹⁵ This indicates that the occupants of public housing are not as mobile as the general population.

⁹⁵Douglas, Paul H., Chairman, Building The American City, 91st Congress 1st Session, House Document No. 91-34, Washington, D. C., December 1968, p. 118.

THE HOUSING SITUATION

A paradoxical situation exists when in a nation suffering from a shortage of low-rent housing, many publically subsidized low-rent units have become undesirable, vacated, and sometimes abandoned. This housing has been built especially to provide "a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family."

Many housing authorities are in financial difficulties and face possible bankruptcy. In order to sustain a proper level of maintenance and administration, housing authorities must have sufficient income derived from rent payments by the tenants. Rent strikes, vandalism, and vacancies directly affect the income and its disposition. In New York and Chicago tenants' unions are resisting rent increases.⁹⁶ A growing number of state laws are making it easier for tenants to withhold rents, resist eviction, or resort to "repair and deduct" actions. "In Washington, D. C. a circuit court judge has declared that retaliatory evictions cannot be tolerated."⁹⁷

The following is a table⁹⁸ listing vacant units in financially troubled major housing authorities.

⁹⁶"Tenant Rebellion," The Professional Builder, February 1970, p. 85.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Made Available through: Office of Housing Management--HUD--
HUD Office Building, Washington, D. C., April 22, 1971.

VACANT UNITS IN FINANCIALLY TROUBLED MAJOR HOUSING AUTHORITIES

<u>Local Housing Authority</u>	<u>No. Units Avail. for Occupancy</u>	<u>No. Units Vacant</u>	<u>Percent Units Vacant</u>	<u>No. Vacant Units Uninhabitable</u>	<u>No. Buildings 100% Vacant</u>
Kansas City, Missouri	2,626	149	5.6	146	--
Washington, D. C.	10,109	696	6.8	600	8
Providence, Rhode Island	2,972	701	23.6	402	2
New Orleans, Louisiana	13,071	186	1.4	136	--
Newark, New Jersey	12,719	497	3.9	2	--
Chicago, Illinois	38,967	1,059	2.7	---	--
Detroit, Michigan	8,108	398	4.9	350	--
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	25,478	1,078	4.2	600	--
New York City, New York	71,600	127	0.2	---	--
San Francisco, California	6,711	76	1.1	---	--
Boston, Massachusetts	10,851	719	6.6	130	--
Baltimore, Maryland	11,045	35	0.3	---	--
Seattle, Washington	4,956	611	12.3	---	--
Omaha, Nebraska	3,490	44	1.3	---	--
Louisville, Kentucky	5,463	34	0.6	5	--
Columbus, Ohio	4,809	33	0.7	---	--
Jersey City, New Jersey	3,968	109	2.7	51	--
Cleveland, Ohio	10,083	757	7.5	---	--
Camden, New Jersey	2,136	33	1.5	1	--
Oakland, California	3,924	36	0.9	---	--
Durham, North Carolina	1,606	2	0.1	---	--
New Haven, Connecticut	2,320	23	1.0	---	--
Phoenix, Arizona	1,604	0	0.0	---	--
Hartford, Connecticut	2,775	74	2.6	4	--
Denver, Colorado	3,833	13	0.3	---	--
Yonkers, New York	1,915	5	0.3	2	--
Atlanta, Georgia	12,357	51	0.4	---	--
Los Angeles City, California	8,600	119	1.4	---	--
King County, Washington	2,132	13	0.6	---	--
Buffalo, New York	4,722	28	0.6	---	--

VACANT UNITS IN FINANCIALLY TROUBLED MAJOR HOUSING AUTHORITIES (continued)

<u>Local Housing Authority</u>	<u>No. Units Avail. for Occupancy</u>	<u>No. Units Vacant</u>	<u>Percent Units Vacant</u>	<u>No. Vacant Units Uninhabitable</u>	<u>No. Buildings 100% Vacant</u>
Dade County (Miami), Florida	5,841	10	0.2	---	--
Nashville, Tennessee	5,994	51	0.9	---	--
San Antonio, Texas	5,851	309	5.2	227	--
Dallas, Texas	6,935	746	10.7	585	--
Houston, Texas	2,833	51	1.8	51	--
Chester, Pennsylvania	1,386	27	1.9	---	--
Peoria, Illinois	2,047	49	2.3	---	--
Dayton, Ohio	2,843	6	0.2	---	--
St. Paul, Minnesota	4,197	56	1.3	---	--
Minneapolis, Minnesota	5,405	79	1.5	---	--
Allegheny County, Pennsylvania	3,045	77	2.5	---	--
Trenton, New Jersey	1,803	12	0.7	---	--
Hawaii	4,427	24	0.5	---	--
Wilmington, Delaware	1,944	12	0.6	---	--
Puerto Rico	40,000 est.	50	0.1	5	1
Richmond, Virginia	3,852	4	0.1	---	--
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	9,005	181	2.0	31	--
Indianapolis, Indiana	2,119	99	4.6	98	7
Cincinnati, Ohio	6,331	69	1.0	---	--
St. Louis, Missouri	8,054	2,958	36.7	2,258	24
Portsmouth, Virginia	1,907	101	5.3	54	13
Toledo, Ohio	2,360	6	0.2	---	--
Mobile, Alabama	3,487	328	9.4	275	--
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania	1,247	6	0.5	---	--
Birmingham, Alabama	5,861	1	.02	---	--
Winston-Salem, North Carolina	1,668	1	.06	1	--
Columbia, South Carolina	1,612	12	0.7	---	--
Los Angeles County, California	1,505	10	1.7	---	--
Syracuse, New York	2,223	11	0.5	9	--
Elizabeth, New Jersey	1,579	9	0.6	---	--
Bridgeport, Connecticut	2,910	180	6.1	---	--

This listing was made for a hearing before the Housing Subcommittee of the Banking and Currency Committee. An investigation of the financial situation in low-cost public housing was being made prior to appropriation allocations. These hearings were held to avoid the financial fiasco of the Pruitt-Igoe project. "At this time Congress is investigating HUD's operation to prevent an existing financial problem from spreading."⁹⁹

Financial trouble occurs when maintenance (due to vandalism or normal wear and tear) runs beyond the means available to cope with it, when rent strikes cut off the flow of money and when the vacancy ratio is high. Any one or combination of these factors can cause a project to be financially troubled.

The Housing Authority of Providence, Rhode Island is facing financial difficulties. The rent delinquency varies from 5 dollars to almost 1,000 dollars. The table below shows how the delinquency rate has increased with time.¹⁰⁰

RENT DELINQUENCY OF TENANTS IN VARIOUS PROJECTS

Project Number	Percent of tenants delinquent (over one month)		
	Sept. 1968	June 1970	Sept. 1970
1-1, 1-A	50	58	50
1-2	51	85	99
1-3	56	59	96
1-4, 1-6	29	67	60
1-5	39	54	64

⁹⁹ Interview with official at Office of Housing Management--HUD-- HUD Office Building, Washington, D. C., April 20, 1971.

¹⁰⁰ HUD Forms 52295, "Analysis of Tenant Accounts Receivable."

The Housing Authority of Woonsocket, Rhode Island reversed the trend toward high delinquency rate. In 1967, when the present executive took over, there were 95 vacancies out of 600 units and no waiting list of prospective tenants. The rent delinquency rate was approximately 25 percent. At the present time, there are no vacancies, no rent delinquencies and the waiting list has climbed to almost 300 applicants.

In an interview with the executive director, he stated that he changed the public image of the projects by convincing the local newspaper and radio station not to identify news items with the names of the projects but to use street addresses. His idea was to integrate the project tenants with the community. Open houses were held to show model apartments along with those of some of the tenants. A tenants' council was formed long before it was mandatory. To remove the delinquency problem, he informed the tenants at a meeting how their rent was needed to maintain the project properly. He needed their cooperation in maintenance and groundwork to avoid raising the rents. Tenants responded by reducing littering, and doing some work on the grounds themselves.

"I run this like any other business. Any tenant not paying his rent gets evicted, but legally. The problem is rotten management. These people get a job in a project and then go into semi-retirement. Every worker on my projects gets a work sheet which tells him what we expect daily."

"You must have had considerable business experience."

"No, I was a salesman and then served on the City Council: I was appointed by a good, competent mayor."

To indicate the tenancy condition of the low rent public housing in the 50 largest cities, statistics from two tables¹⁰¹ were combined to illustrate the percentage of housing vacancy, magnitude of the waiting list, and turnover ratios (see following pages).

The table demonstrates that the 50 largest cities in the United States had almost half¹⁰² of all the low-rent public housing. Even in this group certain cities stand out because of the low number of these units in comparison to their population and needs.

Forced integration, especially in the South, has led to reductions of waiting lists and an increase of vacancies in low-rent public housing. At the same time, the demand for low-rent housing has increased but it is also selective. Important aspects of the demand are location in a city, type of project, type of occupant, and race of tenant.

In a letter¹⁰³ from the Housing Authority of the City of Houston, Texas (population 1,232,802), the Assistant Executive Director stated that the waiting list dropped from 1,079 on December 31, 1967 to 536 on December 31, 1970. He gave the reason that "both the vacancy rate and the decimation of the waiting list were caused by an ill-considered, but mandatory tenant-assignment plan which was intended by federal

¹⁰¹Douglas, Paul H., Chairman, Building The American City, 91st Congress 1st Session, House Document No. 91-34, Washington, D. C., December 1968, p. 131. Tables 11 and 12.

¹⁰²HUD Statistical Yearbook 1967, HAA, Table 10, p. 247.

¹⁰³Letter from Assistant Executive Director, Houston Housing Authority, April 21, 1971.

VACANCY RATES, WAITING LIST, AND ANNUAL PERCENTAGE TURNOVER RATES IN
PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECTS IN THE 50 LARGEST CITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

<u>City (by population)</u>	<u>Total Public Housing Units Under Management (9/30/67)</u>	<u>Number of Units Vacant (9/30/67)</u>	<u>Percent of Housing Units Vacant</u>	<u>Number of Requests (11/30/67)</u>	<u>Number of Units Vacated During Year 1966-67</u>	<u>Percent Turnover of Housing Units in Year 1966-67</u>
New York, N. Y.	64,157	117	0.2	89,200	3,682	5.7
Chicago, Ill.	32,431	173	.5	21,826	3,198	9.9
Los Angeles, Calif.	9,198	334	3.6	1,496	3,593	39.1
Philadelphia, Pa.	15,223	218	1.4	6,631	2,516	16.5
Detroit, Mich.	8,180	75	.9	1,641	1,181	14.4
Baltimore, Md.	10,314	205	2.0	2,616	1,777	17.2
Houston, Tex.	2,562	110	4.3	1,060	698	27.2
Cleveland, Ohio	7,458	160	2.1	2,109	1,169	15.7
Washington, D. C.	9,773	129	1.3	3,148	1,466	15.0
St. Louis, Mo.	7,014	910	13.0	946	1,107	15.8
Milwaukee, Wis.	3,066	140	4.6	279	403	13.1
San Francisco, Calif.	5,808	65	1.1	3,478	1,329	22.9
Boston, Mass.	10,857	571	5.3	6,600	1,438	13.2
Dallas, Tex.	6,372	763	12.0	1,015	1,832	28.8
New Orleans, La.	12,270	87	.7	6,569	2,052	16.7
Pittsburgh, Pa.	9,213	531	5.8	6,017	1,097	11.9
San Antonio, Tex.	5,353	175	3.3	1,161	1,800	33.6
San Diego, Calif. ¹	--	---	--	--	--	--
Seattle, Wash.	3,520	46	1.3	1,634	1,048	29.8
Buffalo, N. Y.	4,367	126	2.9	640	801	18.3
Cincinnati, Ohio	6,118	143	2.3	585	1,149	18.8
Memphis, Tenn.	5,045	3	.1	1,021	874	17.3
Denver, Colo.	3,346	32	1.0	794	1,063	31.8
Atlanta, Ga.	8,979	79	.9	2,065	1,727	19.2
Minneapolis, Minn.	3,258	12	.4	2,883	650	20.0
Indianapolis, Ind.	748	---	--	1,013	199	26.6

VACANCY RATES, WAITING LIST, AND ANNUAL PERCENTAGE TURNOVER RATES IN PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECTS
IN THE 50 LARGEST CITIES IN THE UNITED STATES (continued)

<u>City (by population)</u>	<u>Total Public Housing Units Under Management (9/30/67)</u>	<u>Number of Units Vacant (9/30/67)</u>	<u>Percent of Housing Units Vacant</u>	<u>Number of Requests (11/30/67)</u>	<u>Number of Units Vacated During Year 1966-67</u>	<u>Percent Turnover of Housing Units in Year 1966-67</u>
Kansas City, Mo.	2,379	332	14.0	56	751	31.6
Columbus, Ohio	2,854	17	.6	1,013	581	20.4
Phoenix, Ariz.	1,604	42	2.6	229	734	45.8
Newark, N. J.	10,766	240	2.2	5,195	1,340	12.4
Louisville, Ky.	4,992	100	2.0	1,366	915	18.3
Portland, Oreg.	1,337	3	.2	1,049	339	24.6
Oakland, Calif.	1,907	10	.5	1,204	263	13.8
Fort Worth, Tex.	1,074	177	16.5	109	266	24.8
Long Beach, Calif. ²	--	20	--	66	365	--
Birmingham, Ala.	5,523	39	.7	590	1,071	19.4
Oklahoma City, Okla.	771	10	1.3	1,029	283	36.7
Rochester, N. Y.	136	36	26.5	1,029	--	--
Toledo, Ohio	1,789	6	.3	1,029	307	17.2
St. Paul, Minn.	2,333	17	.7	1,581	554	23.7
Norfolk, Va.	3,720	10	.3	755	620	16.7
Omaha, Nebr.	2,441	83	3.4	937	748	30.6
Honolulu, Hawaii	2,299	60	2.6	1,042	525	22.8
Miami, Fla.	4,258	59	1.4	4,386	653	15.3
Akron, Ohio	550	15	2.7	498	198	36.0
El Paso, Tex.	1,650	81	4.9	89	313	19.0
Jersey City, N. J.	3,804	226	5.9	875	1,466	38.5
Tampa, Fla.	3,692	71	1.9	590	953	25.8
Dayton, Ohio	2,334	1	0	1,626	435	18.6
Tulsa, Okla. ³	--	---	--	222	--	--
Total:	315,883	6,864	2.2	193,072	51,529	16.3

¹No program. ²Used reports for North Long Beach. ³No units occupied until Oct. 16, 1967.

authorities (HUD) to force racial integration by eliminating choice of sites for applicants. We learned people prefer slum living in neighborhoods of their own choice to standard housing in neighborhoods chosen by bureaucrats.

"We are convinced, though, that 10,000 additional units, properly designed and located, would be filled quickly. The accurate figure is probably higher, but philosophical confrontations (and political ones) over site selection remains the number one road block in the way of meeting low income housing needs. . . . We know a good deal about the need for public housing--there are nearly 70,000 families occupying substandard housing in Houston.

". . . We know there are in excess of 50,000 families in Houston whose incomes are in the poverty level according to United States government standards."

There are only 34,319 dwelling as listed in the 1970 Census of Housing in the total housing inventory renting below \$59 per month in Houston.

Houston, Texas is one of the cities listed by HUD as facing financial troubles. Although there appears to be a substantial shortage of low-rent housing, demand for tenancy in public housing has dropped by about 50 percent. HUD officials have stated that financial difficulties arise in a project when there is an inordinate amount of vandalism, rent delinquencies, and vacancies.

New Orleans (593,471) with approximately half the population, has almost 5 times as many (12,270) public housing units as Houston. Although the

vacancy rate is very low, it has doubled in the last three years, and the waiting list has gone down from 25,000 in 1965 to 4,019 in 1970.¹⁰⁴ An examination of the computer printout of HUD form 52295¹⁰⁵ "Analysis of Tenant Accounts Receivable" indicated that all the housing projects were at close to 100 percent occupancy. A listing of the projects taken from this follows.

HOUSING PROJECT OCCUPANCY - 1965 and 1970

<u>Project Number</u>	<u>Dwelling Units Under Management</u>	<u>Occupancy</u>	
		<u>1965</u>	<u>1970</u>
1-1	970	930	957
1-2	721	721	721
1-3	858	832	852
1-4	500	363	477
1-5	894	893	894
1-7	688	688	686
1-8	744	743	733
1-9	536	520	532
1-10	678	680*	677
1-11	224	220	230*
1-12	860	860	858
1-13	717	715	708
1-14	1,850	1,845	1,800
1-15	993	992	993
TOTAL	11,233	11,002	11,118

* No explanation was available.

¹⁰⁴ Letter from Executive Director, Housing Authority of New Orleans, April 22, 1971.

¹⁰⁵ Made available for perusal at the HUD Office of Management, HUD Office Building, Washington, D. C., April 20, 1971.

Yet, with this record of occupancy, New Orleans is on the HUD list of housing authorities in financial difficulty.

Knoxville, Tennessee (population 174,587) is a community with a housing inventory of 60,802 and only 2,387 units vacant or about a 3.9 percent vacancy ratio.¹⁰⁶ The city has 2,404 units¹⁰⁷ with some or all plumbing facilities lacking. In public housing, the vacancy rate is large, as indicated by the table below:¹⁰⁸

HOUSING PROJECT OCCUPANCY - 1965 and 1970

Project Number	Dwelling Units Under Management	Occupancy			Percent Vacant 1971
		1965	1970	1971	
3-1	244	240	233	174	28.8
3-2	320	315	316	316	1.0
3-3	200	188	193	193	3.5
3-4	444	431	397	397	10.6
3-5	300	298	269	202	32.5
3-6	129	127	126	126	2.3
TOTAL:	1637	1609	1534	1408	14

Knoxville is not on HUD's listing of financially troubled housing authorities, although its percentage of vacancies is higher than 59 out of the 61 cities on the list. Coupled with the high percentage of vacancies is

¹⁰⁶ 1970 Census of Housing (advance report), U. S. Department of Commerce/Bureau of the Census, Washington, D. C., February 1971.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ HUD forms 52295, "Analysis of Tenant Accounts Receivable."

a large and growing waiting list for public housing. In 1967 there were 839 applicants and 1,313 applicants in 1971.¹⁰⁹

The dichotomy was explained as being due to the rejection by prospective tenants of certain projects. Their objection was based on the location of the housing unit offered. They would rather live in a substandard house than be forced into a neighborhood and people with whom they did not wish to be associated. After refusing three opportunities to move into a dwelling they would be reassigned a new priority position on the list.¹¹⁰

One of the highest vacancy rates (23.6 percent) exists in Providence, Rhode Island. There is a waiting list which, on examination, shows that the prospective tenants are waiting for housing units suitable for large families. The housing authorities call for four or five bedrooms for these families but many of the vacancies are in the one and two bedroom type. However, in the existing projects 938 units out of 2,531 (excluding elderly) have three or more bedrooms. The Douglas report states, ". . . very few units of three or more bedrooms have been built at all, so that a huge housing gap for the large, poor family exists not only in the larger cities, but nearly everywhere."¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹Conversation with official, Knoxville Housing Authority, May 4, 1971.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Douglas, Paul H., Chairman, Building The American City, 91st Congress 1st Session, House Document No. 91-34, Washington, D. C., December 1968, p. 67.

The failure of producing enough multi-bedroom units is further illustrated by a study of housing in seven large cities.¹¹² In these cities, there were 103,000 large families having incomes so low that they were presumed to be unable to obtain standard housing in the private market. Less than 20,000 public housing or other subsidized dwellings with enough bedrooms to accommodate these families are available. A deficit is indicated of 83,000 units. "In the seven cities, the available inventory falls short by between 71 to 85 percent of the need. This is what is meant by the 'large poor family housing gap.'¹¹³ However, approximately 34 percent of the units in the seven cities had consisted of three or more bedrooms.¹¹⁴

Ten large projects in Boston were selected to test the relationship between bedroom count and vacancy. The following table illustrates the statistics.

¹¹² Washington, D. C., Philadelphia, New Orleans, St. Louis, Richmond, Denver, and San Francisco.
Smart, Walter, The Large Poor Family--A Housing Gap, The National Commission on Urban Problems, Research Report No. 4, Washington, D. C., 1968.

¹¹³ Ibid. p. 1.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 16 and 17. Computed from total number of units in those cities and Consolidated Development Directory, Report S-11A, HUD, June 30, 1970.

VACANCIES AND SIZE OF APARTMENTS AVAILABLE
 Boston, Massachusetts. Last Quarter of 1970¹¹⁵

Project Name	Units Under Management	Units Vacant	Bedroom Type Vacant				Moves	
			1	2	3	4	Out	In
Mission Hill	1,010	135	76	47	6	2	22	7
Mission Hill Extension	581	70	22	28	21	0	4	0
Heath Street	389	106	51	38	15	2	1	0
Bromley Park	716	115	25	68	22	1	3	1
Columbia Point	1,397	109	35	38	33	3	2	0
Orient Heights	348	8	2	3	3	0	0	0
McCormack	1,015	9	3	5	1	0	0	0
Orchard Park	783	41	25	9	4	2	1	1
South End	506	24	7	12	3	0	5	2
Broadway	955	17	10	5	2	2	4	0

In Pawtucket, Rhode Island, there are a number of vacancies and a substantial waiting list. A charge was made by the Pawtucket Board of Tenants Affairs that 32 vacant units in one project were being withheld from the market. At a hearing¹¹⁶ it was disclosed that the vacant units occurred in the one and two bedroom type and the prospective tenants required the larger units. However, the particular project in question

¹¹⁵ HUD Forms 52295, "Analysis of Tenant Accounts Receivable."

¹¹⁶ Providence Journal, February 24, 1971.

had 310 units of which 75 had three bedrooms or more. In an interview, the executive director stated that he was reluctant to use the one and two bedroom apartments for the elderly because he feared that they would be terrorized just as they had been in the Chad Brown and Roger Williams projects in Providence. He was awaiting funds from HUD to remodel some of the one and two bedroom units into dwellings suitable for large families.

PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECTS WITH SPECIAL VACANCY AND ABANDONMENT PROBLEMS

It is interesting to note that some of the projects that have had special vacancy and abandonment problems such as Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis and part of the Hartford Park in Providence are unusual in scale for their communities. Hartford Park was the largest and first high rise apartment complex in Providence. It was a huge concentration, a sort of gathering place for only low income people. Although it was of a smaller scale than Pruitt-Igoe many of the faults, troubles, and problems listed by Lee Rainwater¹¹⁷ for that project are also common to Hartford Park.

A Pruitt-Igoe syndrome has evolved from a compilation of factors associated with the failure of that project. These symptoms are appearing in other projects and are causing great concern at HUD.

A broad outline of what happened at Pruitt-Igoe includes a high vacancy rate, non-payment of rent, rent strikes, poor maintenance leading to mounting deteriorated conditions, vandalism, immoral behavior, lack of security, curtailment of services, poor management, and the isolation of the project from the community.

Rainwater classifies danger into two categories--human and nonhuman.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Rainwater, U. C., "Fear and the House--As Haven in the Lower Class," American Institute of Planners Journal, January 1966;
 "The Lessons of Pruitt-Igoe," The Public Interest, Summer 1967;
 "Pruitt Igoe: Survival in a Concrete Ghetto," Social Work, Oct. 1967;
 Bailey, James, "The Case History of a Failure," The Architectural Forum, December 1965.

¹¹⁸ Rainwater, Lee, "Fear and House in The Lower Class," American Institute of Planners Journal, January 1966.

The nonhuman dangers such as rats, vermin, freezing, poor plumbing, dangerous wiring and other aspects of deteriorated buildings tenants could escape by moving into a project, but human violence was another problem; the acts of violence of one person against another--rape, assaults, robbery in apartment, laundry room, elevator and corridor occurred in both projects. People dropping things from windows which could kill were reported in both projects. Verbal shaming and exploitation by caretakers and managers was part of the system to control and direct the activities of tenants. When the tenants discovered they had no security against human dangers and the other dangers began to materialize because of poor maintenance, they began to move out. Some of the tenants held back their rents and others banded together into groups or unions and went on rent strikes. This combination cut the rent income to such a point that deterioration and, in turn, the vacancy rate accelerated.

The symptoms which were indicative of the disaster to Pruitt-Igoe and Hartford Park are appearing in many of the projects of the Housing Authorities of the 61 cities listed by HUD as having financial difficulties. Upon examination of one of the authorities in difficulty (Providence), the row-housing projects were in just as much trouble as the high-rise. The table below lists the projects and their vacancies.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ HUD Forms 52295 "Analysis of Tenant Accounts Receivable."

VACANCY PERCENTAGES IN VARIOUS HOUSING PROJECTS - 1965 and 1970

Providence, Rhode Island

<u>Project Name</u>	<u>Project Number</u>	<u>Dwelling Units</u>	<u>Percent Vacant</u>	
			1965	1970
Chad Brown	1-1,1-1A	590	4.4	14.2
Roger Williams	1-2	744	22.0	29.5
Hartford Park	1-3,1-4	752	3.2	36.5*
Manton Heights	1-5	330	1.8	9.7
Codding Court	1-6	116	0	1.0

* One section is entirely vacant.

The problems are not exclusive to high-rise projects. Row-house dwellings at Chad Brown and Roger Williams have recently been the subject of harrowing newspaper accounts of violence and are beginning to develop a Pruitt-Igoe syndrome.

"We have projects here in Washington that are abandoned [Eight buildings 100% vacant]. The same thing that happened to Pruitt-Igoe. Nonpayment of rents, high crime rate and vandalism are doing it."¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Interview with administrative aide, Housing Subcommittee, Banking and Currency Committee, Washington, D. C., April 20, 1971.

IMPLICATIONS FROM PUBLIC HOUSING INVESTIGATION

HYPOTHESES, DISFUNCTIONAL NATURE, AND TESTING

The average tenant moving into public housing gains advantages, such as low rent, heat, adequate space, and all plumbing facilities. The private housing which many of these people can afford may not have all the facilities offered by public housing. Their preference when given the choice runs most often to private housing. The level of subsidization of the public housing projects should make them the more desirable option.

On the private housing market there are principal and interest costs to be met and a profit to be gained for the owner. Public housing has a great advantage because it is deficit oriented with much of the cost being met by the federal government. Even with this head start, there is resistance to moving into public housing.

A paradoxical situation in low-rent public housing exists because ostensibly it should be desirable, yet there is much antipathy toward its program. A number of elements in the program do not perform their intended function.

A series of hypotheses concerning the disfunctional nature of public housing is stated. They were drawn from researched literature, statistics, historical background of the program, and interviews with public housing authorities. Each hypothesis was then tested for its viability by additional research in the literature of known housing authorities, statistics, and by interviews held with tenants in the projects, former tenants, and people eligible for tenancy through redevelopment.

HYPOTHESIS:

Families in a housing project are identified as being in the lowest income-group and social status. Many eligible low-income families do not wish to be associated with them.

The implication that public housing fails to meet the desires and demands of many of the people it is intended to serve is stated by Catherine Bauer, one of the drafters of the 1937 Housing Act. She writes in "The Dreary Deadlock of Public Housing"¹²¹ that only a small percentage of the people eligible for occupancy actually apply for the low-rent dwellings. "And of those who do, most appear to be desperate for shelter of any kind: minority families about to be thrown on the street by clearance operations, problem families sent by welfare agencies, and so on."

Forced relocation by urban renewal activity afforded an opportunity to investigate housing preferences made by the displaced low-income residents. Chester Hartman, in a study¹²² of 500 families relocated from Boston's West End, revealed "that the overwhelming majority refused to consider the possibility of living in a housing project for reasons consistent with their preference for the residential patterns and life-styles prevalent in their former neighborhood."¹²³

¹²¹Bauer, Catherine, "The Dreary Deadlock of Public Housing," Architectural Forum, May 1957.

¹²²Hartman, Chester, "The Limitations of Public Housing," American Institute of Planners Journal, November 1963.

¹²³Ibid.

An extremely negative attitude towards the image of public housing was held by those families displaced. About one-third of the families specifically mentioned the social undesirability of housing projects. They attached importance to the social aspects of housing status as well as sociability features which were more important than the financial and physical advantages offered by public housing.

In private housing a mixture of low and modest income groups makes it practically impossible to focus attention on the poor and, in this way, most escape the stigma attached to the lowest income group. "In Boston, as well as nationally, the trend has been for public projects to house an increasing proportion of the extremely disadvantaged: families with very low incomes, families with one parent, with many children, welfare recipients, chronic and multi-problem cases. This kind of selectivity results in widespread behavior problems, as well as the stigmatization of projects as places where only the riff-raff live."¹²⁴ Their presence in large numbers differentiates a housing project from an average residential neighborhood. The way public housing is structured, it fails to meld into the rest of the community.

Beatrice K., an unwed mother of three and a part-time house worker, has recently been displaced when the structure in which she was living was condemned and razed. With her low income (Aid to Dependent Children and housework money) she was encouraged by her case worker to go into the Roger Williams Housing Project. She resisted all attempts to be

¹²⁴ Ibid. p. 286.

relocated in the project until she found a flat over a paint shop. She had to contend with drafty rooms heated with a space heater, traffic noises, no running hot water and peeling paint. In comparison, she would have had a clean apartment in a fireproof building, central heat and hot water. Her rent would have been the same because welfare would have paid the rent in either case. She rejected the project. "I wouldn't let my sons go over there to play never mind me going. The place is full of pushers, hustlers and junkies. Nice people don't live there."

Mr. and Mrs. P. and their three children were project tenants for four years. He was incapacitated by a stroke a number of years ago and could not work. He claimed that he tried to get out and into any half-way decent flat from the day he moved into the project. No one would rent to him because he was now a project tenant. "When they [the prospective landlord] found out where we lived our goose was cooked. They wouldn't rent us the flat. We were lucky to get out because my cousin knew about a family moving out of a tenement in his block. He got it for us before they even moved out." They talked about their loneliness while in the project. Their former friends did not visit them and they had a feeling of being ostracized because they were "project people." "There was a bad smell about the neighbors. We couldn't take it."

Mrs. J., a mother of five children (present marital status unknown), expressed delight with her apartment when she was interviewed. All the physical conveniences were fine and she was happy to be in the project, except for a few things. She did not care for most of her neighbors. They were too noisy, although her own television set was adding to it.

Her main concern was her children, aged three to fourteen. She did not care to have them associating with "all them bastards in the yard. They don't respect anybody." If she could get out of the project she would like to go into the suburbs away from the noise and where people have "respect" for each other.

The viability of the hypothesis is reinforced by the various respondents interviewed and by the statements of Bauer and Hartman.

HYPOTHESIS:

Dangers associated with many housing projects create an atmosphere incompatible with a suitable living environment.

Tenants in many of the low-rent housing projects, especially those with a high vacancy ratio, claim they have little security against violence in its many forms. According to the Housing Act, they were to be given "A decent home and suitable living environment." This has not been provided by much of the low rent public housing. In the projects they are subjected to assaults in their homes, rape, stonings from hostile gangs, and destruction of their property. No place of shelter seems to be available to them. Private property, such as bicycles or baby carriages, cannot be left unguarded for just a few minutes without having them stolen. The verbal abuse some of the tenants have to take from the managers and some of their peers is seldom matched in the outside world. The teenagers in the project form gangs that fight with each other and terrorize the community. Services outside of the mail delivery are nonexistent. Even the mailboxes are broken into and vandalized.

Police are reluctant to go into some of the housing projects because even when they are stoned it is difficult for them to fight back without being accused of police brutality. Broken glass scattered all over the grounds, and dangerous debris make the outside areas dangerous for children. "Housing as an element of material culture has as its prime purpose the provision of shelter, which is protection from potentially damaging or unpleasant trauma or other stimuli. The most primitive level of evaluation of housing, therefore, has to do with the question of how adequately it shelters the individuals who abide in it from threats in their environment."¹²⁵

Mr. P. was taunted by a group of juveniles whenever he sat outside in his wheelchair to get some sun. To enjoy this small luxury, he had to wait until everybody was in school before Mrs. P. would dare to leave him alone. "He nearly had another stroke when they raced him around and left him in the street. I complained to one boy's mother and she let me have it with the awfulest language in the world. I never heard anything like it before in my life." She claimed that the wheelchair, the baby carriage, and the boys' bikes would be stolen if they were left out for one minute. The gangs played so roughly she worried whenever her boys were outside that they would come in with cracked heads. She was especially frightened when the boys talked about taking some cars for a ride.

Jim C., a university student majoring in sociology, spent a summer living in the Roger Williams Housing Project in Providence. He stated that the project tenants had a set of moral values that offended us, but suited

¹²⁵Rainwater, Lee, "Fear and the House as Haven in the Lower Class," American Institute of Planners Journal, January 1966, p. 23.

them. The men did not want to work like "Whitey" does for two dollars or so an hour. He needs more money for his type of living so he becomes a hustler, pusher or something we might consider immoral. After C's radio was stolen from his apartment, he discovered that there was an underground network of thieves from whom he could buy back his radio. They used the vacant apartments for "storing the stuff" and other illicit purposes. He went out of his way to befriend them so that he could get information and they returned his radio. An interesting racket described by C was the solicitation of "Whitey" into the project with the promise of a girl. They would bring the victim into an apartment which was shortly thereafter the scene of the return of the "irate, angry husband." "Whitey" would then be shaken down for all he had in money and valuables. The police would practically never go into the project. If you wanted to hide out, the project was the place to do it.

It was shown that dangers existing in many housing projects affect their livability qualities to such an extent that they no longer afford safe shelter for tenants. The examples of violence, crime, and verbal abuse suffered by the tenants confirm the hypothesis.

HYPOTHESIS:

Several policies instituted by the Federal Government in low rent public housing do not function to accomplish their goals.

Controls on low rent public housing placed by the Federal Government have often hampered the program. Low-rent public housing was tied to urban renewal by the process of "equivalent elimination." The idea was not to

add materially to the total number of housing units, but only to improve the quality within a relatively fixed supply. "American cities had accomplished the destruction of 383,000 dwelling units, almost all of which had been occupied by low income families. During the same period, on the land thus cleared, only 107,000 new housing units were constructed, of which only about 10,000 were low income apartments. The net affect was the loss of over 350,000 homes for the low-income people."¹²⁶

The scale of public housing is so small (1.2% of the total housing supply) that it cannot have a significant effect on the private housing market. If the program is only large enough to house problem families, there appears to be no clear cut way to test the proposed benefits for a substantial segment of the low-income families requiring housing. A sizeable output of low rent housing could have had a stabilizing effect on the private housing market. It could introduce enough competition into the private market to keep rents in substandard and low rent dwellings at a tolerable level. Because of pressures from the real-estate lobby, the number of units were to be kept constant but actually ground has been lost.

Originally, most of the housing projects worked better^{*} with a mixture of elderly tenants who occupied many of the one and two bedroom units. After the elderly housing program was inaugurated, many of these units became vacant. Large families on the waiting list for housing could not

¹²⁶Ryan, William, Blaming The Victim, Pantheon Books, New York, 1971.

*"work better" is meant to infer that there were fewer units vacant, they were more desirable, and their association with vandalism and crime was less pronounced.

fill them. In many cities, the vacancies in housing occur in only the one and two bedroom units.

An executive director of a housing authority in southern New England stated in an interview: "When the Housing for the Elderly was built the small units in the housing projects became vacant because the old folks moved out and into the new quarters. There they have special facilities and companionship of their friends. Now we have these small apartments vacant. We can't put large families in them. I don't blame the old folks for not wanting to come back. Sure we have more problems now but that's due to the change in the times."

The Douglas Commission reports that there has been a comparative disregard of the needs of large families because most apartments have two bedrooms or less. It was previously shown that approximately one-third of the units in seven large cities had three or more bedrooms. The practicality of building a greater percentage of large apartments is questioned. Concentrations of large families in a project could increase the appearance of crowding. Also, large families among this group may not be as common in the future as it is today.

A deficit-oriented program should not be expected to return to the city by means of the "10 percent of the rent income collected" more money than was previously realized by real estate taxes for the project area. Tenants feel a right to withhold their rent payments if municipal services are inferior and are below the standards in the rest of the community.

In a recent confrontation with a tenant association, the Housing Authority representatives in Providence had to reject a proposition to withhold the portion of rent which goes to the city in lieu of taxes. The tenants complained of a lack of police protection. The Authority director did not side with the tenants. He probably could not do this because his job is dependent on the mayor's support. Previously, it was shown that police action was late in responding to calls for help. One tenant explained that the police think that many calls coming from the project are made by cranks.

Before the Housing Act of 1961, commercial facilities such as a supermarket or drug store could not be incorporated within a project. Some of these projects with over 2,000 families had to depend on neighboring communities for their shopping. In turn, outsiders had no reason to come into the project except for occasional service operations. This had a tendency to isolate the project tenants from the rest of the community. Generally, the size and appearance of the project was similar to an institution that most people wanted to avoid.

Beatrice K. remarked that many of the tenants were familiar with jails. They had relatives and friends who saw the inside of jails in a very intimate way. To her, the people in the project were prisoners and the place a jail.

Jim C's remarks were that the project looked distinctly different than anything around it. Also, it faced inward and there was no life surrounding it on the outside.

Mrs. R., with two small children, complained it was hard to get away to do any shopping. Decent neighborhood shopping was nonexistent and cabs would not answer any calls from the project. If, somehow, she managed to get to a store, she doubted whether a cab would take her back to the project. Bus service, for which you had to have exact change, was too difficult, especially with kids and bundles. She had nobody at the project with whom she could leave her children.

Integration is the law of the land and there is no argument about its justification morally. Most reports indicate that the elderly, both black and white, can live together peacefully. In many cities integration has created a problem for the housing authorities. White families have shown great reluctance to move into black projects and forced integration tends to drive many of them out of public housing without benefiting the blacks particularly.¹²⁷

In letters from housing authorities in the South, the high vacancy rate in some of their projects was attributed to the mandatory plan of the United States Government to force racial integration. The lists of prospective tenants was still considerable, but they were waiting for apartments in specific projects. In a conversation with an authority representative of a southern city, it was disclosed that a very long list of prospective tenants and a high vacancy ratio existed because of the mandatory integration policy.

¹²⁷ Friedman, L. M., "Public Housing and the Poor," California Law Review, Vol. 54, Berkeley, 1966, p. 659.

In the North, Mr. and Mrs. P. felt strongly that they were terrorized in the project because they were white in a mostly black enclave.

Government policies such as equivalent elimination, lack of large apartments, required financial solvency of housing authorities, restrictions on commercial facilities, and the institutional character of the projects all contribute to the malfunctioning of the program as stated in the hypothesis.

HYPOTHESIS:

Residents in low-rent public housing projects are not given the same degree of privacy afforded other citizens.

Privacy in personal affairs is a prime concern of most people. When project dwellers have "trouble" professionals descend on them to record the happening and its ramifications. Advice and counseling of a specialized nature is theirs, many times without a request for it. Then, thin walls and crowded conditions offer no barrier to the dissemination of the news to the neighbors.

To satisfy the public curiosity about the life in a project, the mass media--newspapers, television, and radio--generally play up the "troubles" as project news. Crimes committed by project people become project crimes, and victims' names are frequently divulged. Recently, in Providence, when a gang of juveniles terrorized a family and raped the daughter, this incident was treated by the news media as though it was a common project occurrence.

Public housing is a commodity often treated as a form of welfare and, therefore, the public feels that it has the right to know where and how its money is spent. In a community, as a whole, income is generally a matter between a worker, his employer and the Internal Revenue Service. However, when a family becomes a tenant in a project, their financial status is automatically public business and they are labelled with the caste of poverty. It is true that the salary ranges of school teachers and government employees are available to those who wish to take the trouble to uncover them. Corporations, also, divulge salaries of executives in certain reports, but the caste-mark of poverty is not there.

Recently, at a visit made to a HUD office which was followed by an interview to check the vacancy ratio in various projects, the means available for this task was a listing of "Tenant Accounts Receivable." It listed all the occupied units, the tenant names, the rental (which is a known proportion of his income), and the amount of back rent due. The Authority representative, Chief of Management and Tenant Operations, felt that, as taxpayers, the public had a right to know where its tax money went. "We are supporting these people with our taxes." When the high delinquency figures were discussed, the representative remarked that the Authority should get tough with their evictions just as a landlord would in private housing. She felt that paying for a tenant's rent once was enough. To her, these people were public wards whose activities should be public knowledge. Theoretically, it would be possible for any tenant to find out what his neighbor was paying for rent and how much he owed.

Mrs. J. remarked that people around the project were noseey and asked too many questions. Neighbors were questioning her children about "things that was none of their damn business."

Beatrice K. gave as one of the reasons she would not become a project tenant, "Everybody knows your business."

The incident, in which the "Tenant Accounts Receivable" was treated as an open book available to anyone, serves to illustrate the lack of privacy afforded project tenants. Embarrassing personal affairs such as the identification of a rape victim becomes project news to be exploited by the mass media. No purpose is served by it other than satisfying public curiosity about the project. Privacy between neighbors is difficult to accomplish. This supports the hypothesis that residents in low-rent public housing projects are not given the privacy due them.

HYPOTHESIS:

Management, which generally is made up of political appointees, is faced with a conflict between running their projects financially solvent as intended by Congress or as a deficit-oriented social program.

When the Public Housing Act was first promulgated it was considered by many to be in the group of statutes called social legislation. It was a "breakthrough" to wipe out the slums as well as provide the proper housing for low-income people. Although the housing program has fulfilled some of its function, the lack of success in others may be due

to its indeterminate nature. A housing manager is specifically instructed to run his project financially solvent in a deficit-oriented program. If he does this the social aspects of the project may be jeopardized.

Many exasperated housing officials complain about the vandalism and housekeeping of their tenants. To them, tenants appear ungrateful and undeserving of the subsidized housing which the taxpayers are giving them. The right of every American citizen to have adequate housing is viewed not as a right but as a form of charity like welfare. Many managers are political appointees, whose decisions are sometimes made in areas where there is a conflict between the tenants' welfare and political expediency. The latest amendments to the Housing Act have removed any bars to tenants serving on the board of directors of local housing authorities. Furthermore, it is mandatory that managers have their tenants take part in influencing events in their projects. This is an opportunity for project people to participate in the daily organization of their lives. However, a poll, previously mentioned, disclosed that a majority of the authorities were opposed to such action.

A problem or a grievance that arises can often be solved if the administrator did not attempt to abstract a project-wide solution, but instead handled it on an individual basis which affected a particular group. Grievance procedures, as formalized by HUD¹²⁸ should be familiar to all tenants to apprise them of their rights. It should not be left to the good-will of a manager or authority to act on his own accord. A tenant is entitled by law to an opportunity to present his side of the argument or dispute.

¹²⁸ HUD Document RHM 7465.9, February 22, 1971.

Maintenance can fall behind if rents are not paid. Many managers have this problem compounded when a project has been vandalized, been given poor maintenance and is now in the throes of a rent strike. A manager must be very capable to be able to avoid a rent strike simply by telling his tenants that maintenance and rents are tied together. This was accomplished by the director of the Authority in Woonsocket, Rhode Island. By "legal" evictions, tenant guidance and specific work assignments to maintenance crews, he was able to turn his vandal-prone and vacancy-ridden project around to full occupancy and freedom from vandalism. The problems of the evicted tenants were not his concern. To some project managers the efficiency of his real estate operation comes before the social welfare of the tenants. A high degree of solvency is a criterion of a successful operation.

The lights on the grounds of a project in Providence were recently turned off every evening at 9 P.M. Under this condition it was dangerous for the tenants to go out at night and it was a possible source of danger for the whole neighborhood. For days the tenants tried to reach management. They phoned the police who advised them to call the project manager who was never available. Subsequently, they tried the electric company and the Department of Public Works. Each time, they were shunted to the project authorities who were "never in." The complaint finally got to a neighborhood group which also included the project. An interview with the corresponding secretary disclosed how the lights were turned on again. She was enough of a trouble-maker to reach the mayor's office and get her point across.

"I am known as such a trouble-maker that my husband [presently unemployed] couldn't get a job with the city."

The conflict between a social operation and a business operation is often difficult to settle in any given project. We are asking political appointees who have no business, social, or housing training to resolve the conflict. The tactics that make a project financially solvent are often not in the best interest of the tenant. The dichotomy stated in the hypothesis, social program--solvency, is a substantial problem confronting management.

SUMMARY

A paradoxical situation exists in low rent housing where there is a great demand and a substantial shortage while at the same time there is a growing vacancy rate in public housing. Investigations were made of the causes of this phenomenon.

To understand the housing program a brief history of its development was given. It explains the reasons why the program did not produce the number of housing units projected nor add to the total housing inventory. For instance, when the Housing Act of 1937 was enacted, it was an attempt to kill two birds with one stone. On one hand, it tried to live up to its image as a piece of social legislation and on the other, to appease the real estate interests with its "equivalent elimination" clause in which no housing could be added to the existing supply. The idea was to build housing but not enough to upset the private market. Over the years Congress voted authorizations that ran into the hundreds of thousands of units. What actually was built after cuts by the Appropriations Committee resulted in dribs and drabs of bare shelter grudgingly given. It took more than thirty years to reach the goal of the first ten.

The Act also established the principle of federal loans to local authorities who had the responsibility for initiating, planning, building and managing the projects. The various amendments to the Act show how the program evolved from a concern for simple shelter to social requirements of the tenants. Tenant counseling, mandatory participation by tenants in running their own projects, lease reforms, and grievance procedures

were some of the additions to the program. Philosophizing that public housing should be considered a welfare commodity and its tenants need not have all the conveniences resulted in the ban on commercial facilities until 1961. Also, commercial facilities would have been competitive with the private real estate interests.

The Act and its amendments describe how the program is financed and the part rent payments play in the everyday maintenance of the projects. Monetary benefits to the cities depend on the rent collections and thus the occupancy rate.

Moral justification is clearly evident when rents in public housing are charged in proportion to the tenants' income. This policy resulted in the stratification of tenants into a low income group. Tests were required of prospective tenants to prove that their income was low enough to get into housing and low enough to stay. In other words, the outside world knew that project families were at the bottom of the income scale. Many of the first tenants during the depression years of the late 1930's and early 1940's were in the temporarily submerged middle class. It was intended that they would stay until their incomes improved and then they would move out. As the depression passed the income of most of this group rose and they were no longer eligible to remain in public housing. Jobs became plentiful especially during the war years. The prospect of jobs attracted groups of urban immigrants who were the first to be laid off after the war and thus became eligible for public housing. People with marginal jobs, the unemployed, welfare recipients, and problem families were shunted into the projects for want of any other place to go.

Most project tenants were now also at the bottom of the social scale.

The new tenants were difficult to handle, yet Housing Authorities were run by public-spirited part-time commissioners who generally had no training to deal with them. Managers, often political appointees, had to wrestle with the indeterminate goals of the projects in their care. It took a rare manager who could run his housing as a financially solvent entity and at the same time deal with all the social problems humanely. The problem families are presently left to the mercy of the managers.

The federal policies enacted tended to create a malfunctioning of the program which, in turn, lead to the vacancy phenomenon.

Statistics were compiled to show that the average rate of the housing inventory-increase was far below recommended levels. A great demand for low rent housing existed. On the private market there was a low vacancy rate while at the same time a greater than average vacancy rate was prevalent in many housing projects. The data showed that a project's tenants and location affected its desirability and occupancy rate. Other factors affecting the vacancy rate include the number of bedrooms in a unit, vandalism, maintenance, and reputation.

In a theoretically deficit-oriented program statistics indicate that many communities receive more money in lieu of taxes than was collected previously for the project area by normal real estate taxes. Tenants, understanding this, are now demanding more services from the city with threats of rent strikes.

A few years ago a massive failure of a large public housing project in St. Louis (Pruitt-Igoe) attracted considerable attention. It stood out because it was not capable of attracting housing, and holding its population through choice. Many people consider Pruitt-Igoe and a few other high-rise projects to be isolated examples of housing that did not function for its intended goals. The situation that existed in St. Louis occurs in many types of low-rent public housing. Row houses and garden-type apartments are not exempt. Few tenants are in the housing by choice and many are simply there because there is no other place to go.

Certain symptoms--vandalism, crime, poor management and maintenance, rent strikes, and above-average vacancies--which appear are synonymous with Pruitt-Igoe. This group of symptoms form what is described in this paper as the Pruitt-Igoe syndrome. The housing authorities in 61 cities (St. Louis is one of them), having approximately one-half the nation's public housing units, are now beginning to show many of these symptoms and are also in financial difficulty facing possible bankruptcy.

A compilation of the factors associated with the vacancy phenomenon are stated in the form of a series of hypotheses. They were drawn from research literature, statistics, historical background of the program, and interviews with housing authorities. Each hypothesis was tested for its viability by additional research in the literature of known housing authorities and by interviews with tenants in the projects, former tenants, and people eligible for tenancy through redevelopment.

The hypotheses dealt with the stigma attached to families living in public housing, the lack of a suitable living environment, the policies instituted by the Federal Government that do not function to accomplish their goals, the lack of privacy afforded public housing residents, the politics involved with the program's implementation, and the conflict in the goals of the program.

APPENDIX

Additional interviews were held to confirm the statements made by the respondents previously mentioned in this paper.

Three categories of interviews were held. In the first group the purpose was to obtain interviews with people who administer the program, act as consultants, and independent outside observers. The second group of respondents was comprised of tenants and former tenants. Included in this group is a resident tenant commissioner who was selected from a group of thirty people elected by the tenants of all the housing projects in the city to represent them. From this group of thirty only three were chosen by the mayor to be tenant commissioners. Two tenant association members who were in the original group of thirty were also interviewed. People who were eligible for public housing but refused to consider it as a housing option comprised the third group. Twenty-four interviews covered the three categories.

A chain of events which started with a visit to the regional office of HUD in Boston led, in part, to the selection of respondents to be interviewed. Specific people, in the required categories, were sought for interviews. HUD furnished the names of the housing authority personnel, tenant commissioners, and members of different tenant associations. The tenant offices at the various projects supplied listings of their tenants. A selection was made at random of tenants with telephones. The telephone was a necessary instrument for the initial contact and interview arrangements.

The names of former tenants were furnished by the project offices. Subsequently arrangements were made for interviews at their present homes.

A university student who was working on his own "thing" and had spent a summer living in one of the troubled housing projects was recommended by a friend as another possible respondent. He turned out to be knowledgeable about the project in which he lived.

Another group consisted of people recently displaced by redevelopment in their areas. They were assumed to be eligible for tenancy in public housing because of their probable incomes. Their names were supplied by a social worker and a redevelopment office.

The name of a pediatrician, who was also a child psychiatrist and worked in a public housing health-care center, was obtained through one of the tenant respondents. A telephone conversation with the doctor resulted in an invitation to spend a morning at the health center. He arranged in advance to have interviews with patients who were project residents and also spent a considerable amount of time as a respondent.

The questions posed during the interviews covered time, place, circumstances, and the role played by the respondent. An effort was made to conduct the interview in a way that made the respondent feel free to express opinions not specifically part of the questions and encourage him to offer information on his own initiative.

① Dr. H. B. was an elderly man, possibly in his late sixties, who had spent almost forty years working in pediatrics and with problem children. In

his interview it was discovered that he was one of the national consultants for the Head Start program. He stated that public housing was no place for sensitive people or children. Often when children go to school a teacher may hurt the pupil with remarks about the project. The fact that a child may act and look tough does not mean he is not affected by thoughtless statements of where he lives or what his parents are. The reaction that takes place or "the way the kid fights his frustrations often results in senseless mischief like breaking windows in his own house, destroying trees, or writing on walls. School and project property become victims of his anger." The doctor saw the residents of the project, especially the mothers, as victims of hard luck and the circumstances of their environment. Many of them were the second generation of problem families whom he claimed should not have been placed in the projects, but should have been directed to private housing regardless of its quality. The reason given was the stigma attached to living in public housing where they have no chance of outgrowing their environment. "Private housing is one step up the social ladder."

When asked what the good features of public housing were, he replied that they had a few good functions. When a family runs into trouble and a home is required for them and private housing is not always available, there are generally enough vacancies in the projects to accommodate them, at least on a temporary basis. While the projects are not recommended for sensitive families, there are still some families relatively insensitive to their surroundings and would take project living "without complaint." Families with children get the benefit of adequate heating in

a fire-safe building and plumbing facilities are generally better than what they would find in private housing within their means.

A brief background of some of the respondents in the upcoming interviews was furnished. They were going to bring in their children for him to examine. He stated that these mothers were just as concerned about their children "or even more so" than his private patients.

② The mother of one of the patients, Mrs. C., was in her early twenties. She came to the health center to have stitches removed from her four-year old daughter's knee cap. She was concerned with the dangerous condition of the project's play areas which were covered with broken glass and other debris. Her conversation was mostly about getting out of the project into a place that had a safe play area for her child. There was nothing good about the project in her estimation, only that her mother was living in another unit in the same complex. Her reason for going to the project in the first place was that it was the only place available to her.

③ A more interesting interview was with a white mother with two black children. Dr. H. B. thought that she might be one of the insensitive tenants. Her history revealed that she had always lived in a project and knew no other type of residence. The reason for leaving her mother's unit was that after she became pregnant for the second time the project manager said that the whole family would have to move unless she got out. She moved into another unit so that her mother could stay. She complained that the manager let other mothers stay with their families even

though they had two children. She reasoned that the action in her particular case was due to the manager's race prejudice because the father was black. (The manager happens to be black.) When asked why she didn't take her case before a grievance committee (as stated in the HUD regulations) she replied there was none in Providence. (This was later confirmed by the Housing Authority.) She was satisfied with the project environment. When asked where she would like to live she talked about a cottage with green grass, trees, and flowers; all the good features missing in the project.

① Dr. H. B. had mentioned that he could wander through the project without fear of being molested. Everyone knew him and the work he was doing. About three years ago, in broad daylight, he was held up by a man with a knife. His medical bag and money were taken. Since then a bodyguard system has been instituted for getting personnel in and out of the health center. The change in conditions was attributed to the new type of project tenant.

④ A tenant commissioner, who was slated to become the manager in the project in which he was living, was interviewed in a temporary office set up for him. He was a resident in the project for over ten years. His employment status during this time is unknown but evidently his income was low enough to qualify him for residency in the project. When questioned about his qualifications for the new job, he stated that he was a tenant commissioner for several years. His original decision to move into the project was based on the fact that his wife was already a resident when he married her. He was very noncommittal about the qualities

of the project. A clue to his true sentiments was revealed when he stated he would no longer continue to live in the project when he would become manager. He said that the new job warranted a better place to live, and that too many tenants would bother him if he stayed in the project.

5 An interview was held in a twelve-unit row house in which nine units were vacant. The tenant to be interviewed had a friend from a neighboring block join her. The two tenants expressed conflicting views on the topics discussed. Both had husbands who were working but evidently held poor-paying jobs. Mrs. M., in whose apartment the interview was held, found the vacant apartments surrounding her to be dangerous. She complained "kids break in every night and raise hell. I called the police. When they came they knocked on the door. No one answered so they went away. Anybody could hear that the kids were still in there." She said the police no longer respond when this happens. Kids have turned on the gas stoves forcing evacuation of the building. Another complaint was that dangerous looking characters were using the vacant apartments at night. She could not buy anything for her children to put in the yard without having it become community property. At this point her friend interjected "I put a big, big, big pool in my front yard and it was there all summer."

"But could you call it your own?"

"If you live in a project you got to remember that you've got to share. You can't keep everyone else's kids away from your kids' things if it's

in the yard. I know my kids go all over the neighborhood to play."

The discussion of the physical appearance of the project brought out Mrs. M.'s objection to the writing on the walls. Her neighbor, Mrs. F., replied that she wrote on the walls when she was young. "I wrote on the walls but not the kind of stuff they write today."

A question was asked about any "happening" that impressed them most while they were living in the project. Mrs. M. described her son's science project at school. His partner lived in a tenement a few blocks away and when they worked on the project it was always at the tenement. One day her son asked his partner to come to the housing project to work. The other boy's mother refused to let him go because she was afraid it was a dangerous neighborhood. This was considered a blow to her through her son.

The event that impressed Mrs. F. the most was a fight just a few days ago. She treated it as a bit of entertainment. Two neighbors were involved in a brawl in which one came at the other with a knife. The other used a broom to defend herself. No police were called and the fight ended with neither contestant being hurt.

Mrs. F. extended an invitation to visit her apartment of which she was quite proud. She seemed content with everything about project life. Several times she had moved out of the project but found life outside too complicated. It was much better from her point of view to have all utilities and heat covered by a single bill. Before parting she expressed the hope that her children would find something better than project living.

⑥ Ethel C., a mother of three children, was on the tenant association board.

She held a very negative attitude toward the project and hated every day of the six years she spent there. Her reason for entering the project was the cheap rent and free utilities. Several attempts were made to get out of the project and into private housing but in each case the landlord turned her down. The reasons she gave for this were that she was a welfare recipient and a project tenant. Gang fights between project boys and those from the neighboring areas were described as always having their origin in the project. The local councilman threatened to have a tall wire fence built around the project to keep the project boys in their place. Ethel C. considered this to be a slur on her own children. What seemed to bother her most was the fact that she witnessed crimes committed by various neighbors and was willing to testify for the police. Other neighbors were also willing to testify but were never called. The only reason a family can be evicted (according to her) is for nonpayment of rent. Most of the tenants were on welfare so that eviction for nonpayment of rent meant that any money the tenant owed the project would never be collected. If the tenants were evicted for the offenses she witnessed back rent could be collected from welfare. This reflected bad management and the loss of funds for needed maintenance.

⑦ Marilyn W., the mother of a large family, had a history of several evictions from various projects for nonpayment of rent. In her previous tenancy she had missed rent payments for seven months before she was evicted. She could not understand why rent was demanded from her while some of her neighbors managed to avoid it. Favoritism on the part of

the manager was the reason she gave. "My social worker pays the rent for me now." Another example of favoritism was the refusal of the manager to let her keep a dog while other tenants had them. There is a restriction against keeping pets which she feels is not universally enforced. She liked the rest of the project and was happy to live there. She commented that the project could be dangerous, especially at night.

⑧ Evelyn B. was recently displaced by the redevelopment in her neighborhood. She refused to move into a public housing project. Her knowledge of project life was derived from two brothers and a daughter who were project tenants. She spoke of many incidents of violence and vandalism in them. All the details of the latest rapes and riots were familiar to her through the newspaper accounts and television. She even knew how a widely publicized "flim-flam" operation worked against naive project tenants. "How could anybody be so stupid giving money to strangers to go buy food stamps for you? How could they be so dumb to give strangers money to deliver furniture to them?" Her brother, an epileptic, could not get a cab to take him home after certain hours. There were no advantages to living in public housing for her even though what she lived in now was bad.

⑨ Mr. M. S., manager of a large housing project with a high vacancy rate, doubted very much that anything could be done to improve the project. He prophesized that conditions would get much worse unless a solution could be found for handling problem families and teen-age vandals. He had been at the project for over twenty years starting as part of a maintenance crew. The change in the character of the tenants concerned him. The

authority recently had new refrigerators placed in the vacant units to make them more attractive and within a week they were all vandalized. When asked why he did not board up the apartments after the first day's vandalism, he replied that he could not requisition the carpenters in time. He pointed to the health-care center and tenant associations as improvements in project life which should be recognized.

Project tenants are predominantly the poorly educated and should not be expected to express a wide range of value positions. In most cases, they talked about subjects of immediate interest to them. The project's dangerous conditions, in its many forms, were the most commonly discussed topics. It was apparent that it was a major contributor to the tenants' dissatisfaction with housing and the high vacancy rate. The physical aspects of public housing did not appear to be a major cause of the dissatisfaction. However, the everyday social problems of living with troubled families contributed more to a tenant's negative orientation towards public housing.

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