

# Coordination of Community Systems and Institutions to Promote Housing and School Integration

*By Philip Tegeler and Micah Herskind*



**PRRAC**

*Poverty & Race  
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## Authors and Acknowledgments

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## Introduction

**S**chool and neighborhood segregation are recognized as pernicious and persistent problems across the United States, originally developed through intentional government policies, and perpetuated today by both public policy and private markets that have adapted to segregated systems of housing, education, and transportation. Housing and school segregation function as mutually-sustaining phenomena that limit perceived housing and school choices, constrain social networks, and curb employment and educational potential. Despite the link between housing and school segregation, however, many initiatives combating segregation tend to focus on one or the other instead of recognizing their inherent connectedness.

In 2016, recognizing the interconnections between the public systems that perpetuate segregation, the Obama Administration released a guidance letter signed by the Secretaries of Housing, Education, and Transportation, urging their corresponding state agencies to work together to promote housing and school integration:

As the Secretaries of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Transportation, we recognize that a growing body of research supports the benefits of socioeconomic and racial diversity in schools and communities, and that such diversity can help establish access points

for opportunity and mobility. We also recognize that children raised in concentrated poverty or in communities segregated by socioeconomic status or race or ethnicity have significantly lower social and economic mobility than those growing up in integrated communities...

Today, our agencies are calling on local education, transportation, and housing leaders to work together on issues at the intersection of our respective missions in helping to guarantee full access of opportunity across the country. Our goals are to identify impediments to accessing opportunity; to coordinate efforts to address these issues and to provide broad-reaching benefits; and to ensure that every child and family is provided with transportation, housing, and education tools that promote economic mobility.<sup>1</sup>

This research brief will highlight innovative programs across the United States that consider school and housing segregation in tandem, representing an array of approaches ranging from grassroots community processes that connect housing and schools, to structural approaches seeking to build integration into community structures, to solutions focusing on access to transportation, and removal of transportation barriers to increased mobility.

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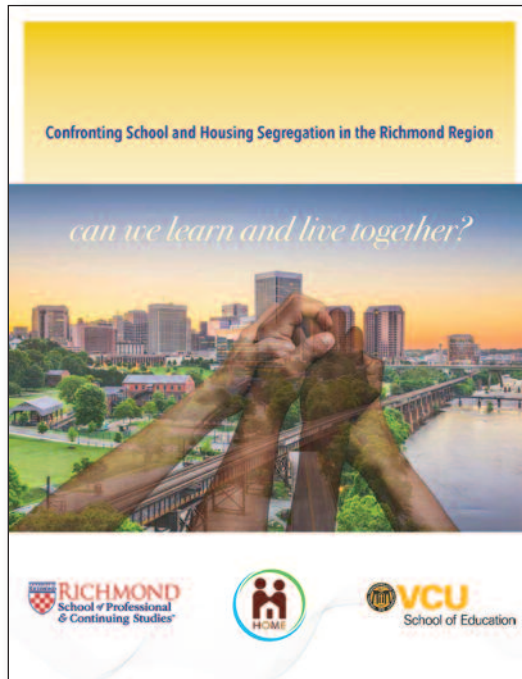
<sup>1</sup> Joint Letter on Diverse Schools and Communities (Secretaries of Housing, Education, and Transportation, June 2016), available at [https://prprac.org/pdf/Joint\\_Letter\\_on\\_Diverse\\_Schools\\_and\\_Communities\\_AFFH.pdf](https://prprac.org/pdf/Joint_Letter_on_Diverse_Schools_and_Communities_AFFH.pdf).



## Richmond, VA: Regional Problem Solving on Housing and Schools

The Richmond, VA region has been a leader in bringing together stakeholders from the housing and education sectors together around a shared housing and school integration policy agenda. In 2014, Housing Virginia (a statewide housing coalition) hosted a symposium focusing on the nexus of housing and schools, bringing together educators, housing and community development professionals, and community leaders “to explore the crucial connection between strengthening neighborhoods and improving educational outcomes.”<sup>2</sup> The symposium addressed the connection between “student success and where and how students live outside the classroom.”<sup>3</sup> As part of this symposium, Professors at the VCU School of Education (including the former Richmond Superintendent), Housing Virginia, and PRRAC hosted a meeting on the nexus of housing and school integration, with key housing representatives from the regional housing authority, school board members from Richmond and its suburbs, the city housing and community development office, and the state housing and education departments. Followup meetings generated a set of principles, and a local working group that produced two publications: – a manual for cities considering undertaking a

similar regional housing-schools process, and a report titled *Confronting School and Housing Segregation in the Richmond Region: Can We Learn and Live Together?*<sup>4</sup> that includes a series of action steps that Richmond is continuing to pursue. Most important, the process eventually led to the development of a the region’s first interdistrict magnet school—“Code RVA.”



### **School and Housing Segregation Report and “Community Conversations” Manual**

The first report coming out of these ongoing meetings in Richmond, “Confronting

School and Housing Segregation: Can We Learn and Live Together?” combines data on Richmond’s history and patterns of housing and school segregation with short- and long-term policy recommendations for pursuing desegregation of schools and neighborhoods in tandem. In addition to recommendations suited for either school or housing desegregation, major policy recommendations that accounted for the two in tandem include the following:

- ◆ Create a new governing agency responsible for bridging the school-housing worlds.

2 Housing Virginia, “Community Conversations: Aligning Local Housing and Schools Policy For Successful Schools in Strong Neighborhoods” (2015). <http://www.housingvirginia.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/HV-Housing-Schools-Guide.pdf>, 13

3 <http://www.housingvirginia.org/housing-schools/>.

4 Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, Brian Koziol, John V. Moeser, Taylor Holden, Thomas J. Shields, “Confronting School and Housing Segregation in the Richmond Region: Can We Learn and Live Together?” University of Richmond School of Professional and Continuing Studies (2017).





Photo Credit: Housing Virginia



Audience Survey/Case Study Presentation: Same Schools, Different Outcomes, VCU CURA

- ◆ Incorporate standardized metrics that track over time the progress in deconcentrating poverty and decreasing residential segregation; annually examine elementary school demographics to track racial isolation and establish goals for school composition at regional and school levels.
- ◆ Target development resources to revitalization of communities surrounding low-performing schools to attract middle-income families to the area.
- ◆ Develop joint planning between housing authorities and schools in redevelopment of older public housing communities.
- ◆ Target state housing resources to redevelopment of older public housing.
- ◆ Create a new state housing tax credit that is tied to schools (such as affordable housing in high-opportunity communities and market rate housing in revitalization areas).

The report also referenced the Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) housing mobility program,

which has offered mobility counseling services since 2014 to address the “spatial concentration of housing choice voucher utilization in the inner-city and to provide access to higher opportunity neighborhoods for households using vouchers.”<sup>5</sup>

The second report, Housing Virginia’s “Community Conversations: Aligning Local Housing and Schools Policy for Successful Schools in Strong Neighborhoods,” describes the community conversation model for coming to sustainable and community-led solutions to school and housing segregation. As the report notes, “We are locked in a mutually reinforcing cycle where poor neighborhoods contribute to poor schools and underperforming schools discourage families from choosing to live in an area where the housing market subsequently declines.”<sup>6</sup> Because access to affordable housing plays such an important role in supporting children’s educational growth, addressing the intersection of schooling and neighborhood poverty and segregation is crucial. Housing Virginia’s Community Conversations model

5 “Confronting School and Housing Segregation”, pg. 30.

6 “Community Conversations”, pg. 5.



Photo Credit: Housing Virginia

2015 Housing & Schools Symposium

accordingly brings together key community stakeholders in a “guided process designed to bring together community leaders usually not found in the same room, defuse divisiveness, and inject fresh thinking into long-standing problems.”<sup>7</sup> The manual provides a comprehensive, step-by-step guide for how to approach community conversations, from the formation of a steering committee to the identification of goals and core issues, and to the format and execution of conversations and beyond. The lack of a one-size-fits-all solution solidifies the importance of such conversations, as community members must come together to innovatively imagine what their community could look like without segregated housing and schools.

### **Code RVA**

Code RVA is a magnet school that opened its doors in September 2017 as an innovative high school focused on computer science and coding.<sup>8</sup> One of Code RVA’s primary goals is to mirror the diversity of

its participating school districts by employing a weighted lottery admissions process that gives priority to socioeconomic and racial diversity.

According to Code RVA’s original funding proposal, “strategies are in place to build a diverse applicant pool, including targeted outreach into minority segregated, high-poverty middle schools with promotional materials that reflect multiple ethnicities.” Such a strategy makes Code RVA the first regional magnet school in Virginia to explicitly emphasize equity, access, and diversity. In addition to its extensive outreach and weighted-lottery process, Code RVA provides free transportation and wrap-around support to address “issues of equity and opportunity across the region and ultimately, a lack of diversity in the technology workforce.” Importantly, Code RVA draws from students across several school districts with the explicit intent of facilitating racial and economic integration.

<sup>7</sup> “Community Conversations”, pg. 14.

<sup>8</sup> <http://coderva.org/faq/>.



## Nashville, TN: Collaboration Across City Departments

**I**n a partnership between Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) and the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), Nashville coordinates transportation for students in support of its school integration plan.

In November 2012, Nashville's School Board adopted its Diversity Management Plan, which proclaimed diversity as a constructive, compelling interest for the district. The Plan offers implementation guidelines and measures diversity on four metrics: racial and ethnic, income, language, and disability. For racial and ethnic diversity, an MNPS school is considered diverse when either no single racial/ethnic group represents more than 50% of total enrollment, when the school enrolls at least three racial/ethnic groups and each represents at least 15% of total enrollment, or when the school enrolls at least two racial/ethnic groups and each represents at least 30% of total enrollment.

In measuring diversity with regard to income, language, and disability, a school is considered diverse when it meets two of the following criteria: its percentage of students eligible for free or reduced meals is at least two-thirds the average for schools in its tier, its percentage of students eligible for English language service is at least two-thirds the average for schools in its tier, and/or its percentage of students with a disability is at least two-thirds the average for schools in its tier.



According to the plan, schools in the district that do not meet these criteria “will be considered in need of greater diversity.”<sup>9</sup> As part of achieving greater school diversity as a district, MNPS has partnered with the Mayor's Office, the Metro Council, and the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) in a program called StrIDe, through which students are eligible for MTA bus passes for school and other extracurricular activities. Through StrIDe, beginning in 2014, all MNPS high school students (grades 9-12) are granted year-round access to the MTA through their school ID cards, programmed to function as MTA bus passes. The ID cards had already served as school cafeteria and library cards. Further, students in grades 5-8 who attend out-of-zone schools without access to yellow bus service are also eligible for an MTA bus pass, if they receive parental permission.

9 Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, “Diversity Management Plan,” (2012). <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57752cbcd1758e541bdeef6b/t/57927c2b414fb54f6682d70a/1469217835841/Diversity%2BManagement%2BPlan.pdf>, 3.



## Los Angeles: Prioritizing Access to High Performing Schools in the Fair Housing Planning Process

**I**n 2015, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development issued an Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) regulation that requires recipients of HUD block grant funding to assess and take steps to address local fair housing issues. This analysis—the Assessment of Fair Housing—is conducted every five years and informs states’ and localities’ planning processes, such as their Consolidated Plan (for block grant distribution) and Public Housing Authority plan. The regulation provides a framework that explicitly considers the intersection of housing with “opportunity factors,” including both access to high-performing schools and access to quality transportation. Local governments and community organizations that engage in the Assessment of Fair Housing process are to examine federal and local data on school quality, in relation to demographic distribution and affordable housing distribution. They are also encouraged to assess whether local education policies are “contributing factors” to housing segregation and to engage with education agencies and advocates as part of the assessment. This process can yield collaborations between local housing and education agencies, and can guide local planning agencies to consider the reciprocal effect of housing and school policies on integration and to formulate their plans and policies accordingly. While HUD Secretary Carson recently rolled

back the AFFH rule—a decision currently being challenged in court—some localities and cities have continued to comply with the AFFH rule.

For example, the City of Los Angeles’s Housing and Community Development department produced an Assessment of Fair Housing Plan (AFH) that includes as a goal: “Partner with Los Angeles Unified School District to explore ways to expand access to proficient schools through housing and community development programs and activities”<sup>10</sup>. The regulation also encourages program participants to use the Assessment of Fair Housing to inform their education and transportation planning. The AFH Plan was officially approved by the Los Angeles City Council on October 25, 2017. As part of developing the AFH, the city held several community focus group meetings. At Educational Opportunities focus group meetings, a consensus emerged amongst education experts and advocates that a student’s zip code plays a significant role in a student’s access to quality schools.



<sup>10</sup> Los Angeles Housing and Community Investment Department, Assessment of Fair Housing (2017), 298.



# City Garden Montessori School: Maintaining School Diversity in a Gentrifying Urban Neighborhood

City Garden Montessori School was established in 2008 as an intentionally diverse public charter school in a racially and economically diverse neighborhood in southwest St. Louis. In contrast to other charter schools that draw attendance from across the city, City Garden’s attendance is circumscribed by an “attendance boundary,” which includes neighborhoods that were 60% African American, 40% white, and with roughly 60% of households earning below \$40,000 when the school’s doors opened in 2007.<sup>11</sup> But, due in part to the popularity of the school and the local neighborhood revitalization that the school spurred, accelerating gentrification has threatened the school’s diversity goals. As new restaurants and shops opened, the area experienced a reversal in migration, with many families moving from the suburbs to enroll their children—a process that now takes place as a competitive lottery—in the Montessori School. These changing demographics had an impact on the school’s racial composition: in 2012, the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches dropped to 41%, a decrease of 12 percentage points from just three years earlier (51% in 2009).

Recognizing these shifting dynamics and in an effort to preserve its original mission, City Garden’s leadership began to reach out to affordable housing developers to maintain and increase the housing sup-

ply in the neighborhood for low income families. The team produced a report called “The Right to Stay Put: City Garden Montessori School and Neighborhood Change,” which noted “rapid increases in cost-of-living and the resulting displacement of low-income and minority residents.”<sup>12</sup> In 2014, community leaders from the school and other organizations such as Habitat for Humanity Saint Louis formed an



Photo credit: City Garden Montessori School

Affordable Housing Task Force, which partnered with graduate students from Washington University in the spring of 2015 to conduct qualitative interviews with neighborhood residents. Through a community meeting and the collection of survey data,

the report found three main concerns from community members, which primarily related to housing availability: market-based displacement mechanisms, non-market displacement mechanisms, and political and government-based displacement mechanisms.<sup>13</sup> Residents found themselves being pushed out by rising rents as developers were buying up property and housing availability was shrinking. Moreover, as new services arrived in the neighborhood, they were often labeled “high-end” and catered toward the wealthy; one participant in the report’s study lamented this fact: “The new stuff is beautiful, but it’s not for us. We would love a grocery store nearby...but they’re putting in a high-end one. What are we going to do with that?... People would be ecstatic if an affordable grocery store opened around here.”<sup>14</sup>

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- 11 Elisa Crouch, “Charter school’s success boosts city neighborhoods,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch (2013). [https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/education/charter-school-s-success-boosts-city-neighborhoods/article\\_3d11e703-6c04-5943-8807-45ce06ae9e02.html](https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/education/charter-school-s-success-boosts-city-neighborhoods/article_3d11e703-6c04-5943-8807-45ce06ae9e02.html).
  - 12 Janine Bologna, Nava Kantor, Yunqing Liu, Samuel Taylor, “The Right to Stay Put: City Garden Montessori School and Neighborhood Change,” Washington University Center for Social Development Research (2015). <http://www.teamiftstl.com/analysis/the-right-to-stay-put-city-garden-montessori-school-and-neighborhood-change/>, 4
  - 13 “The Right to Stay Put”, p.18.
  - 14 “The Right to Stay Put”, p.18.



To combat these dynamics, the school has worked through its Affordable Housing Task Force to bring housing services providers into the school to assist parents, and formed the Coalition for Neighborhood Diversity and Housing Justice, which seeks to be responsive to the socio-economic needs of residents including affordable housing, diversity, and meaningful and inclusive community events. The coalition includes both homeowners and renters in the school community, committed to maintaining an economically and racially diverse neighborhood. In February 2018, the Coalition hosted a "Housing Resource Fair," an event that connected City Garden's residents with a range of service providers including representatives from financial institutions, the City of St. Louis, home repair programs, utility assistance, and more. City

Gardens has also incorporated anti-racism training into its staff and organizational development, as well as in its parent organization, to help ensure equity, inclusion, and accountability.



Photo credit: City Garden Montessori School

Most recently, City Garden was successful in advocating for the passage of a bill that allows the school to give preference to those who qualify for free or reduced price lunches (a weighted lottery). Whereas the school

was originally required to give equal preference to all students residing within its attendance boundary, the recently-passed legislation—projected to take effect in the 2019-2020 school year—will allow City Garden to continue on its mission to be a school that prioritizes low-income students and diversity.



Photo credit: City Garden Montessori School



## Working With Realtors to Market a Diverse School District

### Pasadena, CA

For years, many realtors in the Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD) had advised prospective homeowners to avoid PUSD schools and instead send their children to private schools. The Pasadena Educational Foundation (PEF)<sup>15</sup> recognized that these impressions were based on a combination of perceived “lower rankings” of schools based on socioeconomic diversity, implicit bias based on student demographics (the public school population is predominantly black, Latino, and low-income),<sup>16</sup> and lack of basic information about what was happening in schools.

PUSD and PEF sought to re-inspire confidence in PUSD schools, with a combination of new school programs and an alliance with local realtors. First, within the school district, PUSD worked to provide competitive district-wide and school-based initiatives such as dual language immersion programs (in Spanish, Mandarin, and French), new magnet programs that offer opportunities in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and visual and performing arts, and International Baccalaureate program that offers global learning, and various College and Career Academies in high schools to offer specialized courses of study.<sup>17</sup>

Second, to combat these negative perceptions and transform the marketing of homes in PUSD, the

Pasadena Education Foundation developed an innovative “Realtor Initiative” that gives real estate brokers in the city information about the school district that they can use with their clients, and brings realtors into the school to get a first-hand impression of the high standards pursued in the district. The goals of the program include: “to help realtors now and in the future see our public schools as they really are; to equip realtors with current information about our schools; and to encourage realtors to be active ambassadors for PEF, PEN [Pasadena Education Network], and especially, the PUSD.”<sup>18</sup>

In crafting the Realtor Initiative, PEF Board Members met with leaders at nine real estate companies, asking each firm to appoint one or two “Realtor Initiative Liaisons” who act as PUSD ambassadors and provide up to date information about PUSD to their colleagues. Through regular meetings with Realtor Liaisons, PUSD and PEF representatives share up-to-date developments and are available for questions. This partnership further led to the publication of a newsletter called “Realtor Connect,” prompting a monthly email to realtors with PUSD school updates, student stories, and school tour schedules, with the goal that realtors share this information with clients.<sup>19</sup>

15 The Pasadena Educational Foundation is a private fundraising organization for the Pasadena Unified School District, raising between \$12 to \$15 million dollars per year from government grants, foundation grants, and individual and corporate donations.

16 Adolfo Guzman Lopez, “This School District Asked Real Estate Agents To Help Rekindle Its Reputation,” NPR (2017). <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/08/06/531986360/this-school-district-asked-real-estate-agents-to-help-rekindle-its-reputation>.

17 Jennifer Miyake-Trapp, “Changing the Perception of Pasadena Unified School District Through an Innovative Realtor Outreach Program,” (PRRAC 2018). <http://school-diversity.org/pdf/PasadenaRealtorFieldReport.pdf>, 3.

18 “Changing the Perception”, p. 5.

19 “Changing the Perception”, p. 5.



Photo Credit: James O'Keefe



Lisa Ashworth, Realtor at Pacific Union International, reading to students at Longfellow Elementary as part of Realtors Read Across PASadena on Dr. Seuss Read Across America Day.

Additionally, the Realtor Initiative includes a program called "Realtors Read Across PASadena," through which realtors are invited to read to children in classrooms at all PUSD elementary schools and learn more about the schools. This collaboration has led to, for example, a 2nd Grade Summer Book Drive sponsored by realtors, and has been influential in changing perceptions of PUSD schools. Moreover, this growing partnership has resulted in an invitation for PEF Board members to present "15 Things You Need to Know about PUSD" at various realty agency meetings, empowering realtors to share about PUSD schools in greater depth with their clients. Last, PUSD's Superintendent, Brian McDonald, has opened his doors to realtors over lunch in order to strengthen PUSD's relationship with realtors and answer questions.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Iowa and Illinois***

The Quad City Area Realtor Association (QCARA), which crosses state lines to include communities and school districts in Iowa and Illinois, has recently embarked on an effort to gather comprehensive school information centralized on a forthcoming website to counter common misperceptions about schools and equalize information about each school district in the region. Realtors will be able direct clients to this website, which will feature a "top ten list" for each school, provided by the school superintendents from the 23 school districts covered by QCARA.

This initiative emerged out of a meeting between QCARA representatives as well as school superintendents, real estate brokers, and employers, with the intent to discuss realtors' role in residential

<sup>20</sup> <http://school-diversity.org/pdf/PasadenaRealtorFieldReport.pdf>, 6.





Photo Credit: Pasadena Educational Foundation



Realtors, civic leaders, school staff and students participating in Realtors Read Across PASadena on Dr. Seuss Read Across America Day at Don Benito Fundamental School.

steering based on perceived quality of the school district. This meeting revealed that although realtors often bear the blame for residential steering, realtors are frequently asked by large regional employers to steer new employees toward two main school districts, Bettendorf and Pleasant Valley. In the wake of this meeting, QCARA applied for a grant from the National Association of Realtors to assemble an informational website that would provide comprehensive information on schools within QCARA's region and empower incoming families with more information about school districts. Though Bettendorf and Pleasant Valley are often thought to have the best schools, QCARA's forthcoming website will serve as a resource to match students with the best school for their individual needs. By soliciting each school's "top ten list," parents and students will be able to select the best school and neighborhoods according to children's needs. For example, while families are often

steered toward Bettendorf and Pleasant Valley, those whose child is interested in farming may find a better fit at emerging Future Farmers programming offered in other districts.

The QCARA website will be available as a tool for realtors to use with clients and for community use more broadly; for example, the group of mayors present at the initial stakeholder meeting plans on using the website to approach employers and, by highlighting the diversity of school options, encourage them to stop steering incoming employees to particular districts. By gathering each school's top ten list, QCARA's efforts have the potential to significantly impact housing and school decisions, and evenly distribute incoming families among districts and neighborhoods.



## Teacher Housing Development in Segregated School Districts

In 2012, the Newark-based RBH group, a real estate development firm, began a pioneering approach to connecting housing and school policy, focusing on constructing and advertising housing for teachers in strategic cities that face severe income and racial segregation. The process began with the Teachers Village Development in Newark, was replicated with the Teachers Corner in Hartford, and has recently been initiated in Chicago's Teachers Square. As a 2017 report from the Donnell-Kay Foundation found, educators' salaries have not kept pace with housing prices, meaning that teachers often take on second jobs, move further away from their school

location, or leave the profession altogether.<sup>21</sup> Housing designed for teachers brings teachers closer to the communities where they work, and can also help diversify city neighborhoods, both racially and economically.

### *Teachers Village, Newark*

Newark is New Jersey's largest school district. Highly segregated, Newark's school district is at a competitive disadvantage for teaching talent with surrounding school districts, and has a downtown desperately in need of revitalization and increased residential development. As a May 2018 report from

Photo Credit: RBH



Teachers Village Building 1: 35 Maiden Lane, Newark, NJ, Residential with Retail Property, completed September 2014.

21 Paula Davis, "Affordable Housing Solutions for Educators," Donnell-Kay Foundation (2017). [http://dkfoundation.org/assets/img/DK-021-Affordable-Housing-Solutions-for-Educators\\_FA.pdf](http://dkfoundation.org/assets/img/DK-021-Affordable-Housing-Solutions-for-Educators_FA.pdf), 4.



the Center for Diversity and Equality in Education reveals, Newark is made up of “apartheid” (less than 1 percent white) and “intensely segregated” (less than 10% white) schools.<sup>22</sup> An October 2013 report found similarly, revealing that in the 2010-2011 school year, 84 percent of Newark’s schools were “intensely segregated.”<sup>23</sup>

In recognition of these challenges long facing Newark, the RBH group acquired 77 different land parcels along blighted city blocks and, with financial backing from a variety of private and public sources, began plans for Teachers Village. After breaking ground in 2012, the school phase of the project was finished one year later. Importantly, the project received one of the largest residential Urban Transit Hub Tax Credit allocations in the State of New Jersey. In total, the collaboration brought together \$150 million in order to complete the project, spread across eight buildings.

Teachers Village is a mixed-use community in downtown Newark that consists of three charter schools, a daycare facility, residential rental housing, and 65,000 square feet of retail space with over twenty different businesses. Formerly an array of parking lots, Teachers Village has revitalized this section of Newark, attracted investment, and created a thriving arts and education district.

The “Teachers Village” concept helps to provide a positive incentive for experienced teachers to remain in the city school district, and also brings a group of young middle class professionals back into cities that desperately need additional economic diversity. For higher cost, rapidly gentrifying cities, the Teachers Village concept is also a way of helping retain educators who might otherwise be forced out of the city—in fact, 70 percent of housing units in Teachers

Village are reserved for teachers, and are available at a price 10-15 percent lower than market rate. The remaining units (there are 204 in total) are rented on a first-come first-serve basis to any interested party. As media coverage has recently shown, Teachers Village is beginning to revitalize the area, bringing businesses, jobs, and most importantly, teachers.



Photo Credit: RBH

Teachers Corner, Hartford, CN

### **Teachers Corner, Hartford**

Hartford, Connecticut faces challenges similar to those faced by Newark: retention of quality teachers, and severe racial and economic segregation. In the wake of what was deemed a successful Teachers Village in Newark, the RBH group sought to replicate its effort in Hartford through a new development, Teachers Corner. Located in a renovated and repurposed downtown commercial building, Teachers Corner represents another public-private partnership innovation to develop housing and revitalize urban areas. Teachers Corner features 60 units in total, 30 percent of which will be affordable housing (with two-thirds of the affordable housing units leased at 50 percent Area Median Income [AMI], and the

22 Paul Tractenberg and Ryan Coughlan, *The New Promise of School Integration and the Old Problem of Extreme Segregation*. (Center for Diversity and Equality in Education, May 2018) p.16-18, available at [www.centerfordiversityandequalityineducation.com](http://www.centerfordiversityandequalityineducation.com) See also <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/new-jerseys-segregated-schools-trends-and-paths-forward/New-Jersey-report-final-110917.pdf>, 20.

23 Paul Tractenberg, Gary Orfield, Greg Flaxman, “New Jersey’s Apartheid and Intensely Segregated Urban Schools: Powerful Evidence of an Inefficient and Unconstitutional State Education System,” Rutgers Center on Law, Inequality, & Metropolitan Equity (2013). <http://www.clime.newark.rutgers.edu/sites/CLiME/files/IELP%20final%20report%20on%20apartheid%20schools-%20101013.pdf>, 8.



remaining third leased at 100 percent AMI). The building's units will be primarily marketed to teachers; with easy access to public transportation, restaurants, and retail spaces and in walking distance to concert and sporting venues, Teachers Corner seeks to meld education, lifestyle, and entertainment.

### Teachers Square, Chicago

The RBH Group's latest Teachers Village-inspired project is situated in the East Humboldt Park neighborhood of Chicago. Though still in the early stages of development, Teachers Square Chicago plans to renovate a former elementary school building to provide roughly 85 rental units (with rental preference for teachers) alongside nonprofit office space and collaborative educational spaces. Of the newly-constructed apartments, 28 percent will be reserved as affordable housing (50% of AMI), 24 percent will be reserved as middle-income housing (80-120% of AMI), and the remaining 48 percent will be leased at market rate. While the proposed breakdown originally allotted a greater percentage of the apartments to market-rate prices, pushback from the community prompted a renewed proposal with revised numbers from RBH Group. The project is tentatively projected to be completed by August 2019.

Photo Credit: RBH



Teachers Square, Chicago, IL

### Model Replication

Beyond the RBH Group, the model of providing affordable housing to attract and retain teachers is catching on across the nation. In 2017, the Donnell-Kay Foundation produced a report called "Affordable

Housing Solutions for Educators," which provides a helpful survey of existing programs. As the report reveals, two principal forms of affordable educator housing have appeared: developer-driven and district-led. The former consists of "developers with the desire to have positive social impact...taking initiative to help provide affordable housing for teachers without direct involvement of school districts." The latter, district-led, can involve the sale or leasing of district property to developers that in turn build teacher housing, or the use of district-owned buildings and land for teacher housing development.<sup>24</sup>

For example, in September 2017, faced with continual churn of teachers leaving the area, the city of San Francisco allocated a plot of land and \$44 million in public funds for affordable housing targeted reserved for teachers. The project is slated to be completed by 2022, and will create between 100-120 apartments.

Further, in Baltimore, three programs—Miller's Court, Union Mill, and Teacher Props—have also sought to provide affordable housing for teachers. Miller's Court and Union Mill, both operated by the Seawall Development Company, feature housing and office space for teachers and non-profits, respectively, and offer a \$300 discount to K-12 teachers in the Baltimore area with the goal of attracting quality educators that will contribute positively to the Baltimore community. And in 2017 in Indianapolis, Near East Area Renewal (NEAR) began its "Educators' Village" project, using it as "an opportunity to improve both student life and teacher retention by providing affordable housing to [Indiana Public Schools] educators."

The UC-Berkeley Center for Cities and Schools also recently published a report for the Berkeley Unified School District, *To Live in the Community You Serve: School District Employee Housing in California*, that discusses several of these initiatives and includes descriptions of several additional teacher housing models across the United States.<sup>25</sup>

24 "Affordable Housing Solutions for Educators", pg. 4-5.

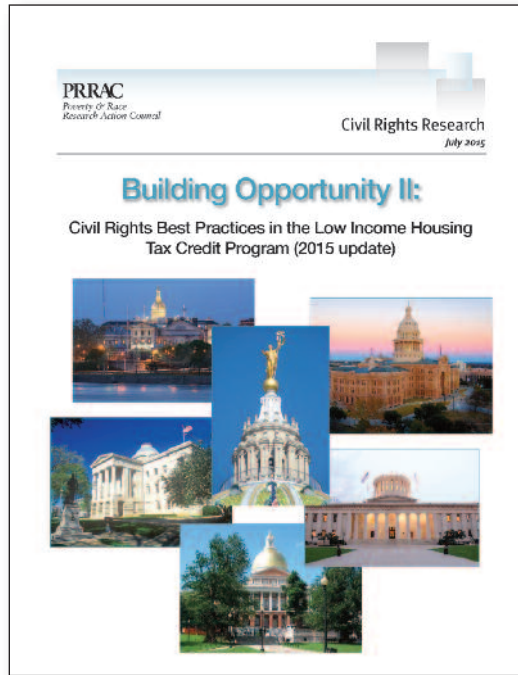
25 Sean Doocy, *To Live in the Community You Serve: School District Employee Housing in California* (Center for Cities and Schools, 2018), available at <https://berkeley.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=98cafae879aaafc540d5cacd2&id=9d6417fb79&e=230397c593>.



# Targeting High Performing Schools in Siting New Low Income Housing Developments

A number of states now use school performance ratings as a factor in the siting of low income housing through the federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit program, the largest federal program supporting place-based, affordable rental housing in the United States.<sup>26</sup> Each state housing finance agency manages its annual competitive funding round through a “Qualified Allocation Plan” (QAP), which includes points for project features that further state or federal policy goals. A recent study of state QAPs found that Massachusetts and Indiana had particularly strong incentives for citing near high performing elementary schools. Since school rating systems are based largely on overall test score performance, and test scores are primarily related to student demographics, these siting criteria have a natural tendency to promote racial and economic integration. It is important to note, however, that although a state may have incentives for siting LIHTC units near high-performing schools, it may have other incentives that counteract such placement.

Two reports shed light on the potential of strategically-framed QAPs to promote school and neighborhood integration. First, a 2015 PRRAC report (updated in 2018) analyzed each state’s (plus Chicago and New York City’s) QAP from 2014<sup>27</sup>; second, a 2015 HUD report from the Furman Center at New York University compared a selection of states’ QAPs from 2002 and 2010, and looked correspondingly at which states whose LIHTC programs are functioning particularly well (i.e.; moving families and children into higher opportunity areas with better schools). While these two reports do not compare QAPs from the same period, taken in tandem they reveal how LIHTC success compares with QAP incentives.



As the Furman Center’s report puts it, “QAPs matter.” The report found “statistically significant relationships between changes in QAPs and the locations of tax credit allocations,” finding that states that prioritized siting in higher opportunity areas featured increases in the number of tax credit units built in low poverty areas.<sup>28</sup> A number of states have

26 Ingrid Gould Ellen, Keren Horn, Yiwen Kuai, Roman Pazuniak, Michael David Williams, “Effect of QAP Incentives on the Location of LIHTC Properties,” U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research, (2015). [https://www.novoco.com/sites/default/files/atoms/files/pdr\\_qap\\_incentive\\_location\\_lihtc\\_properties\\_050615.pdf](https://www.novoco.com/sites/default/files/atoms/files/pdr_qap_incentive_location_lihtc_properties_050615.pdf), 1.

27 Ingrid Gould Ellen, Keren Horn, “Housing and Educational Opportunity: Characteristics of Local Schools Near Families with Federal Housing Assistance,” NYU Furman Center and PRRAC (2018).

28 “Effect of QAP Incentives”, p. 16.



featured particularly notable changes in the success of their LIHTC programs, driven in part by their prioritization of schools.

For example, in Massachusetts, the number of tax units in neighborhoods with a poverty rate above 30 percent fell by over 18 percent from the 2003-2005 period to the 2011-2013 period.<sup>29</sup> This drop coincided with changes in Massachusetts' QAP, which significantly shifted its priorities toward siting LIHTC units in high opportunity neighborhoods from its 2002 to 2010 QAP.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Massachusetts featured a marginally statistically significant (at the 15 percent level) association between increases in the prioritization of opportunity neighborhoods and increases in the share of tax credits that were built in neighborhoods with less than 10 percent poverty.<sup>31</sup> While these results are certainly caused by multiple factors in Massachusetts QAP, it is important to note, as PRRAC's analysis of Massachusetts' 2014 QAP reveals, that Massachusetts had recently prioritized (and has continued to prioritize with its 2018-2019 QAP) siting LIHTC units near high-performing

schools, allocating up to 8 points for areas with strong public school systems.<sup>32</sup> Massachusetts' QAP defines high quality schools in its QAP according to the percentage of 10th grade students that score in the Advanced or Proficient categories using an average of the three MCAS tests (English Language Arts, Math, and Science/Technology Engineering).<sup>33</sup> In short, Massachusetts has successfully marshalled its QAP to direct LIHTC units toward high-opportunity neighborhoods, focusing even more specifically in the recent past on the connection between high-performing schools and neighborhoods.

PRRAC's 2015 review found several additional states including Arizona, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Texas, and Utah feature weak to moderate preferences for siting developments near high-quality schools.<sup>34</sup> Many of these states also featured shifts in their QAPs from 2002 to 2010 that led to modest declines in the number of LIHTC units in high poverty areas, with more significant declines in New Jersey and Texas.<sup>35</sup>

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29 "Effect of QAP Incentives", pg. 23.

30 "Effect of QAP Incentives", pg. 22.

31 "Effect of QAP Incentives", pg. 14-15.

32 "Building Opportunity II", pg. 7.

33 "Building Opportunity II", pg. 7.

34 "Building Opportunity II", pg. 12.

35 "Effect of QAP Incentives", pg. 23.



## Baltimore and Dallas: Regional Housing Mobility Programs with a Focus on High Performing Schools

**R**egional housing mobility programs operating in a number of U.S. metro areas work with low income families who receive portable federal Housing Choice Vouchers (also known as “Section 8” vouchers) to help to expand their housing search to “areas of opportunity.” Most maps of regional opportunity take into account school rankings along with other factors like access to employment, low poverty, and crime rates. Some mobility programs, like the larger programs in Dallas and Baltimore, have had significant success helping children transition from high poverty, low performing schools, to high performing and low poverty schools.

### **Baltimore, MD**

The Baltimore Mobility Program (BMP) is a specialized regional voucher program that operates explicitly to expand fair housing choices and empower voucher-holders to move to high-opportunity areas, particularly in suburban neighborhoods. The program emerged as a partial settlement from *Thompson v. HUD*, a public housing desegregation case filed in 1995, and was fully operational in 2003. In addition to traditional housing vouchers, the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program provides intensive housing counseling services to help families access private market housing in low poverty and majority-white neighborhoods.

Counseling services are broken into three programs: pre-move counseling, housing search assistance, and post-move counseling. In the pre-move phase, participants undergo a workshop series and a one-on-one session with a counselor. The workshops offered are: Going for your Goals, Credit Education, Banking and Budgeting, Home Maintenance, Landlord-Tenant Relations, and Conducting a Successful Housing Search. In the second phase, new and existing voucher holders can attend additional



Photo credit: Baltimore Mobility Program



workshops, are provided with transportation to view units, and can request that a counselor attend a meeting with the voucher holder and the prospective landlord. Last, in the post-move counseling phase, which lasts two years, participants continue to receive support with routine check-ins, conflict mediation assistance, and other ongoing support. Participants also receive employment and transportation assistance to enable access to suburban jobs and resources, which may otherwise be unavailable in light of Baltimore's relatively weak public transportation infrastructure. Additionally, if participants elect to move again, they can attend new workshops and receive further assistance.

The Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership provides resources on its website for participants, and specifically provides resources related to schools, including a school locator service which allows participants to find out which school their new home is zoned for, and information on test scores, attendance rates, teacher qualifications, and special services for each school. It also directs participants to the Great Schools website, which profiles pre K-12 schools, offering reviews from parents, teachers, and students.

In a 2011 analysis of the Baltimore Mobility Program (BMP), Stefanie DeLuca and Peter Rosenblatt assessed data from 1,830 families who relocated through BMP between 2002 and 2010. Most families who participated in the program were African American and female-headed, with two children. On average, families moved from racially segregated neighborhoods (percent white = 17%) with a poverty rate of 30 percent and an unemployment rate of 16%, which is twice as high as average rates for Central Maryland. Through BMP, families moved to significantly-lower poverty neighborhoods that were far more racially integrated and with

median household incomes twice those in families' original neighborhoods.<sup>36</sup>

DeLuca and Rosenblatt's analysis showed particularly encouraging results for school opportunity, and therefore for the potential of education-oriented housing practices to converge with positive educational outcomes. The study found that moving through BMP "brought dramatic changes in average academic performance at the local school," with the percentage of students achieving proficient or higher scores on statewide tests increasing by over 20 percent in reading, and 25 percent in math. Similarly, poverty rates of the schools children are eligible to attend post-move were 50 percent lower than those of their original schools. Children's new schools showed significant improvements in the quality of teacher, and comprised significantly fewer children eligible for free or reduced price meals in elementary schools.<sup>37</sup>

Beyond these tangible educational outcomes, subsequent research has also BMP's vast potential to shape the *preferences* of program participants. In 2014, a study published by Jennifer Darrah and Stefanie DeLuca analyzed qualitative data from interviews with BMP participants to assess how residential preferences change over time as a "function of living in higher opportunity neighborhoods".<sup>38</sup> The authors note that in addition to improved opportunity outcomes through mobility counseling, BMP's programming is also intended in part to "encourage program applicants to think about the benefits that living in higher opportunity areas can bring to their children and families".<sup>39</sup> The authors assess shifts in participants' "residential choice frameworks," defined as "general and abstract preferences that may be relatively enduring...[in addition to] more specific criteria that people rank and weight when evaluating various attributes of housing, neighborhoods, and spatial location while seeking a home".<sup>40</sup>

36 "Finding Common Ground: Coordinating Housing and Education Policy to Promote Integration," Poverty & Race Research Action Council (2011), 37.

37 "Finding Common Ground", 38-39.

38 Jennifer Darrah, Stefanie DeLuca, "Living Here Has Changed My Whole Perspective': How Escaping Inner-City Poverty Shapes Neighborhood and Housing Choice," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* (2014). <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/pam.21758>, 350.

39 'Living Here Has Changed My Whole Perspective', p. 358.

39 'Living Here Has Changed My Whole Perspective', p. 355.





This analysis revealed key insights. Participants who moved to suburban areas through BMP featured a shift in residential choice frameworks, showing value shifts on three key metrics: school preferences, “quiet” neighborhoods, and expectations for diversity. For example, whereas school zone was originally less important for many families, after witnessing their children’s experiences in higher-performing schools, school quality became significantly more important for families. Similarly, families came to gain greater appreciation for “peace and quiet,” a phrase that respondents often linked to feelings of safety from urban-based violence. Last, BMP participants reported a greater appreciation for and valuation of diversity, often centering diversity as an important factor in future living circumstances<sup>41</sup>.

As a control group, the authors also interviewed families who also qualified for BMP but had not yet moved; the authors found that these families were more negative toward the idea of moving out of the city, and “showed relatively low neighborhood and school expectations, as well as a tendency to discount the problems of neighborhood safety”<sup>42</sup>. In short, the authors found that moving to a high-opportunity neighborhood through BMP significantly shaped participants’ preferences, leading to higher expectations of their children’s schools, neighborhood, standards of diversity, and safety.

The Baltimore Mobility Program has successfully merged housing and school considerations to provide families and children with higher opportunity neighborhoods and increased access to high-performing schools. In the process, BMP has also measurably impacted participants’ preferences, centering quality schooling as a key consideration when families seek new housing.

### **Dallas, TX**

The City of Dallas’s Inclusive Communities Project (ICP) grew out of a 1990 Consent Decree in *Walker*

*v. HUD*, a housing desegregation case that promoted fair housing. Originally known as The Walker Project, Inc. (WPI), ICP was officially established in 2004 and “engages in educational, research, and advocacy activities that promote and support the policies underlying the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968.”<sup>43</sup>

ICP offers a Mobility Assistance Program (MAP), established in 2005, which serves low income families participating in the Dallas Housing Authority’s Housing Choice Voucher Program. Similar to Baltimore’s program, MAP works to provide voucher recipients with knowledge and access to high quality rental housing in low poverty, high opportunity areas in and around Dallas, including Dallas, Collin, Denton, Tarrant, Rockwall, Ellis and Kaufman counties. MAP’s programming provides an average of 350 families per year with a range of services, including housing search assistance and counseling designed to ensure access to quality schools, safe neighborhoods, employment, and healthy environments.<sup>44</sup>

MAP staff attends briefings given by the Dallas Housing Authority to ensure that attendees are aware of their rights, choices, and options throughout the housing process. MAP identifies itself as a fair housing organization, and offers assistance with the housing search, school information, application assistance, landlord negotiation, and individualized housing mobility counseling. At briefings, attendees have the option of signing up for MAP’s services, in which case they begin a relationship with one of MAP’s mobility counselors. According to MAP staff, education, employment, and safety are often at the top of clients’ lists. A common refrain from clients is “I’m a single mother, I have young children, and I want them to attend the best school possible.” Others emphasize finding an area with access to better jobs and less crime. To assist clients, MAP staff maintains close relationships with many landlords in the Dallas area, who will contact MAP when they

41 ‘Living Here Has Changed My Whole Perspective’, pp. 358, 355, 365-366, 367-368, 371-372.

42 ‘Living Here Has Changed My Whole Perspective’, p, 373

43 Inclusive Communities Project, “About Us.” <https://www.inclusivecommunities.net/about-icp/>.

44 Inclusive Communities Project. “Ten Years and Counting: Housing Mobility, Engagement and Advocacy: a Journey Towards Fair Housing in the Dallas Area.” [http://www.inclusivecommunities.net/documents/ICP\\_10\\_years\\_and\\_counting.pdf](http://www.inclusivecommunities.net/documents/ICP_10_years_and_counting.pdf).



have available units. After families are moved in to their new unit, MAP follows up within 45-60 days; however, according to MAP staff, clients are often in touch before then with updates on how they are settling in and how their children are finding their new schools.

MAP's work has produced positive results; for example, one Dallas mother utilized mobility counseling to move her family from a neighborhood where over 24 percent of residents were living in poverty to a neighborhood where less than 3 percent of the population lives in poverty. As a result, her children now live in areas zoned with high performing schools, with high schools featuring four-year graduation rates of about 90 percent.

As a 2012 ICP report analyzing the program's results stated, "The pattern is clear: more mobility assistance leads to a lower percentage of Black [Housing Choice Voucher (HCV)] holders in high distress neighborhoods and a higher percentage of Black HCV holders in low distress neighborhoods." This explicitly accounts for school quality; for example, the report notes ICP's policy that, in identifying an area as a high opportunity area for a family with children, "the unit must be located in the attendance zone of an elementary school that is ranked as a high performing school." By adjusting its policies and practices to account for the interconnectedness of school and housing integration, ICP is a model of success for mobility counseling programs working at the nexus of school and housing segregation.

Photo credit: Inclusive Communities Project





## Baltimore, MD: Providing Access to Cars to Support Housing Mobility

**D**in Baltimore, the Abell Foundation supports families participating in the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program with access to reliable, low cost automobiles and driver's education classes through Vehicles for Change. The Baltimore Housing Mobility Program prioritizes low poverty communities, with generally high performing schools.

Vehicles for Change originated in 1999, seeking to provide families with financial challenges to achieve economic and personal independence through car ownership and technical training. VFC receives car donations from the public, repairs the cars, and then sells them to eligible families for as little as \$850, guaranteeing low-interest car loans and providing an orientation course to prepare families for car ownership.

Since 1999, VFC has awarded over 6,000 cars to low-income families, impacting over 21,000 people (many of who also participated in the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program). A 2011 study found that 75 percent of VFC families got better jobs or increased earnings—averaging a \$7,000 increase in annual earnings—and missed fewer days of work. Access to a car—and therefore, a shorter commute due to the limitations of public transit—allows parents to spend more time with their children. This is particularly valuable for parental involvement in schools. For example, VFC's 2011 study found that 100 percent of VFC families took children to after-school activities and 87 percent took children to athletics, art, or music activities.

A 2015 study by Pendall et al. found an important connection between access to a car and outcomes in housing mobility programs, concluding that “automobiles increase the likelihood that voucher participants will live and remain in high-opportunity neighborhoods.”<sup>45</sup> The study found that access to a car is strongly associated with “access to better neighborhood locations on most dimensions... stronger housing markets, lower poverty rates, and higher social status.”<sup>46</sup> A similar study confirmed these results, finding that access to a vehicle has a direct and positive association with exposure to low-poverty neighborhoods, and noting that transportation services are an important component of poverty deconcentration strategies.<sup>47</sup>



Photo credit: Vehicles for Change

45 Rolf Pendall, Christopher Hayes, Arthur George, Casey Dawkins, Jae Sik Jeon, Elijah Knaap, Evelyn Blumenberg, Gregory Pierce, Michael Smart. “Driving to Opportunities: Voucher Users, Cars, and Movement to Sustainable Neighborhoods.” <https://www.jstor-org.ezproxy.princeton.edu/stable/pdf/26326940.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A40874-77634665413a0902eefd93186f7>, p. 58.

46 “Driving to Opportunities”, p. 71.

47 Casey Dawkins, Jae Sik Jeon, and Rolf Pendall, “Vehicle Access and Exposure to Neighborhood Poverty: Evidence from the Moving to Opportunity Program,” *Journal of Regional Science*, Vol 55, No 5, 2015, 692-706.



Photo credit: Vehicles for Change



In recognition of the barriers to employment posed by Baltimore's poor public transportation—and the fact that higher-paying jobs tend to be located outside of the city, and thus harder to reach—the Abell Foundation began supporting VFC in 1999 as part of its Workforce Development portfolio. In 2002, Abell began specifically supporting the partnership between VFC and Baltimore's Housing Mobility Program, allowing for a number of VFC vehicles to be earmarked specifically for those participating in the Housing Mobility Program.

Since its inception and with the Abell Foundation's funding, VFC has expanded beyond providing cars to also providing driver's education courses as well as subsidizing some of the costs associated with owning a car, as well as securing low-interest financing for participants to pay their share of the car cost.<sup>48</sup>

48 Interview with Terry Staudenmaier, The Abell Foundation, 7/10/2018.



## Removing Transportation Barriers to Integration

In the 1950s and 1960s, the United States underwent a wave of suburbanization and white flight facilitated by the large-scale construction of highways. As historian Raymond Mohl has written, changes in the decades after World War II brought about “the massive deconcentration of central city population, the shift of economic activities to the suburban periphery, the deindustrialization or redistribution of metropolitan manufacturing, and a racial turnover of population that left many of the largest American cities with a majority black population well before the end of the twentieth century.”<sup>49</sup> The construction of highways was not a neutral player in this process; instead, highways often cut through low-income and disproportionately black neighborhoods, reconfiguring American cities, displacing families, and “demolishing 37,000 urban housing units each year” as urban renewal meant the elimination of

low-income housing units.<sup>50</sup> In short, highway construction across the country “ultimately helped produce the much larger, more spatially isolated, and more intensely segregated second ghettos characteristic of the late twentieth century.”<sup>51</sup>

At least one American city has begun to rethink the segregative legacy of its interstate highways. As detailed in a May 2018 PRRAC report by Make Communities, members of the Syracuse community have been organizing for the transformation of the existing Interstate 81, a highway with crumbling infrastructure that divides the city and “decimated a primarily Black and Jewish neighborhood” upon its construction.<sup>52</sup> In recent years, a combination of state and local actors has examined the highway to determine the best solution forward. Competing views have emerged, represented most clearly

Photo Credit: Sally Santangelo, CNY Fair Housing



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School, Syracuse, NY

49 Raymond Mohl, “Urban Expressways and the Central Cities In Postwar America,” Poverty and Race Research Action Council Civil Rights Research Brief (PRRAC: 2002), <https://www.prrac.org/pdf/mohl.pdf>, 1.

50 “Urban Expressways”, 2.

51 “Urban Expressways”, 27.

52 Anthony Armstrong and Make Communities, “Deconstructing Segregation in Syracuse? The fate of I-81 and the future of one of New York State’s highest poverty communities,” Poverty & Race Research Action Council (2018). [http://prrac.org/pdf/Syracuse\\_I-81\\_FieldReport.pdf](http://prrac.org/pdf/Syracuse_I-81_FieldReport.pdf), 4.



through two coalitions: Save81 and ReThink81. The former is a group of predominantly white and suburban community stakeholders seeking to preserve business flow to the suburbs while eliding mention of historic and ongoing racial and economic segregation, while the latter supports a boulevard solution that disburses traffic over a restored street grid and reroutes through traffic on the existing Interstate 481.<sup>53</sup>

Advocates seeking to promote racial and economic integration have developed a redevelopment platform for the I81 focusing on equity-based principles, with proposals including: 1) Affected residents' right to return to the area after redevelopment; 2) The development of mixed-income and affordable housing; 3) *The implementation of an integration-focused school assignment policy for Syracuse and neighboring areas, accounting for construction-related displacement and migration patterns*; 4) Investment in an integrated public transportation that connects the greater Syracuse metropolitan area; 5) An agreement between Syracuse and the NYS Department of Transportation to prioritize construction-related employment for women, minorities, and local residents; and 6) Environmental justice-focused solutions to mitigate construction period issues like noise and air pollution. As the third goal stated above highlights, segregation created by highways also contributes to school segregation; in turn, the transformation and redevelopment of highways can be an opportunity to combat neighborhood and school segregation in tandem.<sup>54</sup>

Confronting structural sources of segregation in the form of highways has been the topic of community conversations in other locations as well. In the South Bronx, the Southern Bronx River Watershed Alliance (SBRWA) has mobilized around the removal of the

Sheridan Expressway, or I-895, which currently blocks community access to the Bronx River waterfront. According to a New York City report, the Sheridan Expressway originally displaced thousands of residents, creating a "vicious cycle of decay." In March 2017, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced \$1.8 billion for the removal of the Sheridan Expressway. Despite encouraging movement to transform the Expressway, however, there is disagreement about how exactly to redirect traffic. For example, SBRWA has noted that the State's concurrent plan to build new ramps in the Hunts Point neighborhood in the South Bronx could have hazardous environmental effects for surrounding communities and further block access to the waterfront and local parks, disrupt community unity, and impact access to a nearby elementary school. If New York does not proceed thoughtfully and in full engagement with directly-impacted communities, it is likely to reproduce the very problems it seeks to solve.

A movement in Buffalo has also pursued the removal of highways such as the Scajaquada Highway and the Kensington Highway, both of which divide the city, with the latter in particular impacting low-income communities of color. More generally, Buffalo's highways reflected national trends in that they enabled white flight, and as a recent Partnership for the Public Good report states, allowed the tax base to decline, infrastructure to erode, and poverty to become concentrated. This impacted schools in particular, which "could not compensate for the socioeconomic desolation of [Buffalo's] urban culture."<sup>55</sup> Though Buffalo's community activism has been pushed in part by those more heavily concerned with Olmsted Park reunification, the removal of these divisive highways has the potential to reunify Buffalo and revitalize its schools.

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53 "Deconstructing Segregation", 12.

54 "Deconstructing Segregation", 13.

55 Daniel Cadzow, "Urban Expressway Removal in Buffalo: The Historical Context," Partnership for the Public Good (2018). [https://ppgbuffalo.org/files/documents/environment/transit/urban\\_expressway\\_removal\\_in\\_buffalo\\_the\\_historical\\_context\\_2018.pdf](https://ppgbuffalo.org/files/documents/environment/transit/urban_expressway_removal_in_buffalo_the_historical_context_2018.pdf), 4.



## Oak Park Housing Center: Structural Approaches to Integration

**T**he Oak Park Housing Center and the City of Oak Park, IL recognize that a factor regarding integration in Oak Park is the connection between housing and schools. The boundaries of the elementary districts were redrawn with integration in mind which dramatically reduced the influence of schools on housing choices. All of the new boundaries included at least modest integration. The middle schools were also set up to promote integration in a pattern that corrects small segregation patterns that might occur at the elementary level. Through its work, the Housing Center improves understanding about school quality and eliminate schools as a factor in the housing choice process. In turn, the schools play a role in educating the community regarding its

integration strategy. In collaboration with the Housing Center, presentations about how Oak Park works intentionally to promote diversity and integration ensure that the next generation will understand the effort required to sustain the community's core values.

The Oak Park Housing Center was created in the early 1970s, and has since remained an important institution in the Oak Park Community pushing for integration of neighborhoods and schools. Housing Center staff realized that a primary reason for residential segregation was the lack of information on housing opportunities outside of communities in which a searcher is part of the racial majority. This



Photo Credit:

Downtown Oakpark, Illinois



was exacerbated by the fact that social networks—often an important source in looking for housing—tend to be segregated. Consequently, the Oak Park Housing Center decided to intervene in the housing search process to provide more accurate information on communities.

The Housing Center's work coincided with (and members of the Housing Center drove) the redistricting of schools in Oak Park in the service of integration. In the mid-1970s, two of Oak Park's ten existing K-8 elementary schools were converted to 5-8 middle schools, with the remaining eight elementary schools converting to K-5 schools. In this process, the districts were redrawn to produce integrated schools, an effort that has remained successful today with the exception of one school, which has the least rental housing and is a traditionally Jewish area.

To keep the two middle schools integrated, Oak Park uses a checkerboard pattern of feeding the middle schools, wherein those from the whitest elementary school feed into the middle school that receives children from more heavily black areas. While bussing is generally not necessary in Oak Park, some bussing is required to maintain middle school integration. According to the former executive director of the Housing Center, Rob Breymaier, the key to Oak Park's success is that integration is baked into the system, such that allowing segregation to creep back in has become unthinkable. For example, in 2018, Oak Park's School Board brought in a consultant to consider reducing the school transportation budget (currently \$.5 million per year); one potential solution was to end the checkerboard pattern feeding middle schools, thereby reducing bussing costs. However, such a solution was unthinkable; every member of the school board voted against this recommendation because of Oak Park's fundamental commitment to integration. Further, the Housing Center stresses the financial benefits of integration. According to Breymaier, while integration may produce some additional costs, it reduces costs in the long run by creating higher-achieving communities and reducing the need for supportive services. By integrating com-

munities, Oak Park has turned diversity into an asset; because no section of the community is designated as comprising a certain race, there are fewer fluctuations in property values, meaning that Oak Park consistently has strong and stable property values, and African Americans are able to get the same benefits of wealth generation in the community as whites.

Despite this systemic progress in support of school integration, negative and ignorant perceptions of areas of Oak Park nonetheless persist. In response to these inaccurate perceptions, Oak Park Housing Center works to break down existing stereotypes within Oak Park and allow residents in search of new housing to move beyond their preexisting notions of communities within Oak Park. For example, according to Breymaier, many Housing Center clients will initially start the housing search process with a simple proclamation: "I need to move west of Ridgeland," often for racially- and class-informed perceptions of the East Side of Oak Park (African Americans are more heavily concentrated in the east of Oak Park).<sup>56</sup> In response, the Housing Center counters these perceptions with data on all the East Side offers, and takes prospective renters on tours of units throughout Oak Park. According to Breymaier, prospective renters most often prize three things: Oak Park's reputation as a progressive community, its good schools, and its convenient location. Consequently, the Housing Center prioritizes demonstrating that these things can be found throughout Oak Park, encouraging integration by proactively marketing housing to people of all races, assisting building owners in maintaining buildings as appealing and marketable, providing free apartment referrals, and conducting training, education, research, and advocacy around Fair Housing.

By reconfiguring the city's school districts to facilitate integration and continuing efforts to dispel misconceptions about areas of Oak Park in the housing search process, Oak Park serves as an important example of the potential to be found in working simultaneously for housing and education integration.

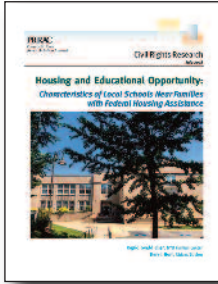
<sup>56</sup> Interview with Rob Breymaier, Oak Park Housing Center, 7/6/2018.







# Other PRRAC Publications on the Intersection of Housing and School Policy



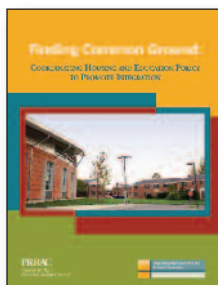
**Housing and Educational Opportunity: Characteristics of Local Schools Near Families with Federal Housing Assistance**  
(Ingrid Gould Ellen and Keren Horn, July 2018)

**Deconstructing Segregation in Syracuse?**  
(PRRAC, May 2018)



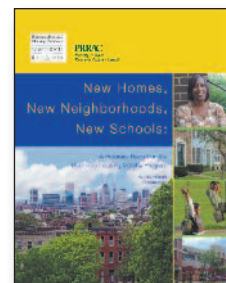
**Changing the Perception of Pasadena Unified School District Through an Innovative Realtor Outreach Program**  
(PRRAC, May 2018)

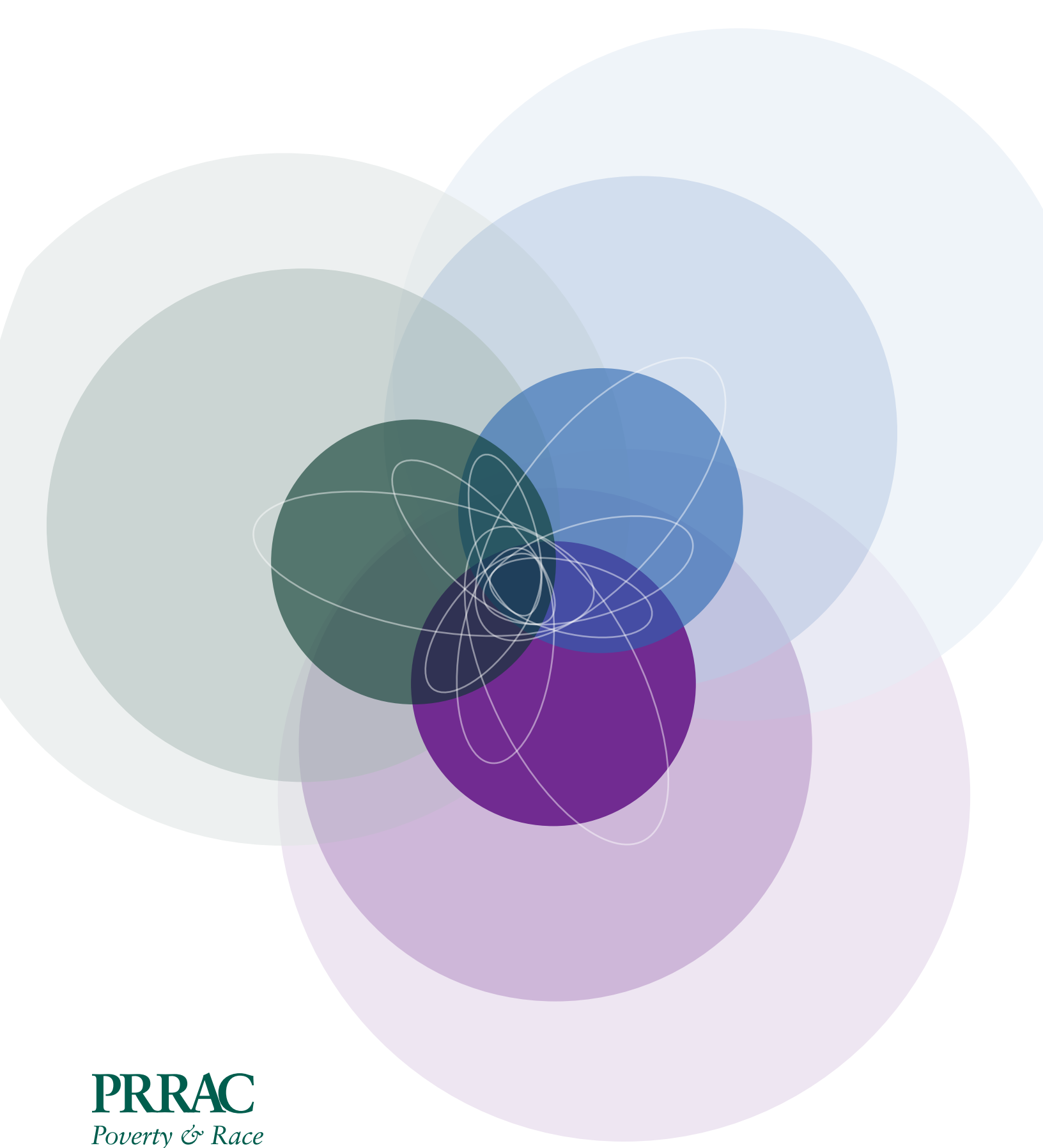
**Disrupting the Reciprocal Relationship between Housing and School Segregation**  
(Joint Center for Housing Studies, November 2017)



**Finding Common Ground: Coordinating Housing and Education Policy to Promote Integration**  
(PRRAC/NCSD, October 2011)

**New Homes, New Neighborhoods, New Schools: A Progress Report on the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program**  
(PRRAC and the Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign, October 2009)





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