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Public Housing in the United States: Using Sustainable Urbanism to Combat Social Exclusion

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Public Housing in the United States

Using Sustainable Urbanism to Combat Social Exclusion

Jasmine Edo

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a
Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Analysis

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Introduction

Background

As a person of color in the United States of America I never thought about myself as being privileged due to the amount of barriers I face based solely on the color of my skin; but I am privileged. I often do not have to think about where I will lay my head at night, where my next meal will come from, or how clean the air I breathe or water I drink is. These basic needs have been afforded to myself and the population of privileged people in the US through policies that were created long before my time and often purposefully overlook severely disadvantaged citizens. For the disadvantaged, the reality of where how their basic needs will be met is uncertain and often unfairly distributed.

Jonathan Kozol writes in his book, *Amazing Grace*, “So long as the most vulnerable people in our population are consigned to places that the rest of us will always shun and flee and view with fear, I am afraid that educational denial, medical and economic devastation, and aesthetic degradation will be inevitable.” (Kozol, 162) As I reflect on Kozol’s words I cannot help but think that the destruction of vulnerable and disadvantaged people and their chance at living a fair, just life of equality should not be inevitable. We, the entirety of American society the American government, know what is fundamentally required to give access to social participation where previous legislation and social stigmas have prevented such access; so why does the government not work to ensure that every citizen is provided these essential components to equal citizenship?

The United States government has taken steps to assure underprivileged citizens housing in the form of public housing through the Department of Housing and Urban Development, as well as various humanitarian programs in the form of homeless shelters. Yet, all housing is not

equal. Our freedom to choose where we live and what type of house we live in is one revered aspect of life as a United States citizen. We can express our individuality, creativity, and personality through the architectural style of our homes. In this sense it is hard to ask for equal housing. I am suggesting that equality comes from adequate access to social participation, social integration, and power, in other words social inclusion. (Room, 7) Investigating and correcting the causes of social exclusion in order to create social inclusion is necessary in order to ascertain equality of housing in America.

Issue

Sir Winston Churchill once said, “We shape our buildings and afterward our buildings shape us.” (Gieryn, 35) But what happens when you do not have power over the shaping of your own building? Is your building still a reflection of yourself? And if we allow building to include the environment in which your home is located, what if previous use of the land left it degraded? Will the degradation shape you?

The environmental quality and architectural style of urban public housing is particularly interesting because the lack of involvement of the residents over the quality of their homes. In *Amazing Grace* Kozol writes about the many decisions that are made *for* residents of urban public housing projects, such as Mott Haven. One decision was to add a medical waste incinerator to the Mott Haven neighborhood. This decision was made by residents of the upper east side of New York who were socially included enough, those who had access to political voice and choice, unlike the residents of Mott Haven, to have enough political power to keep the incinerator out of their own neighborhood. (Kozol, 35) Mott Haven is not the only urban public housing project that has been subjected to environmental injustices.

Question

My thesis considers the question: does the environmental quality and architectural style of public housing in the United States facilitate the social exclusion of these communities? If so, what best practices can we take away from models that have been successful at combatting social exclusion? By answering these questions I strive to develop a proposal to right this currently unjust situation.

Define variables

So what exactly is social exclusion? For the purposes of this study I will define social exclusion as, "...focus[ing] primarily on relational issues in other words inadequate social participation, lack of social integration and lack of power," (Room, 105), as well as "...[the] failure of certain citizens to enjoy full citizenship rights..." (Marshall and Mullins, 752) Social exclusion can be measured by comparing the social participation, social integration, and power of one group to that of the mainstream group. In this study the degree of social exclusion or inclusion of residents of urban public housing will be compared to that of non-public housing residents, or residents of privately owned housing.

Cases

This study consists of three major parts: the first section presents an overview of the United States' Department of Housing and Urban Development. I highlight five major policy shifts in the Department of Housing and Urban Development has made the department what it is today. I look at the Department of Housing and Urban Developments current mission principles and their formation throughout their history. I use this understanding to connect the historical idea of public housing to its modern day counter parts and to understand where the notions of social exclusion may be stemming from.

The second section highlights the successes and failures of public housing in America using two case studies as a lens. For many years the physical and social conditions of many public housing projects in the United States have been deteriorating, yet instead of intervention at the source of the problem the government's response has been to build more of the same. In Cambridge, Massachusetts the new Trolley Village has been praised for its sustainability efforts and aesthetically pleasing qualities, but Rindge Towers and Jefferson Park, two of the city's oldest housing projects, are in desperate need of repairs. The Pruitt-Igoe housing project in St. Louis, Missouri and Jordan Downs housing project in the neighborhood of Watts in Los Angeles, California are the two chosen case studies for this paper. The histories of these two housing projects provide a rich array success, failures, and challenges to consider. I examine each of the communities architecturally, environmentally, and socially, focusing on the public housing setting.

The third section of this project critically analyzes public housing in the United States. Through this analysis I seek to answer the questions of why and how public housing is in its current position. Additionally, I evaluate the ways in which the state of public housing has maintained the social exclusion of these communities. I show that unless both future and existing public housing projects are (re)modeled, not only architecturally but also taking sustainable urbanism and design principles into account, the unjust social exclusion of these communities will persist. Based on the successes and failures of the previous case studies I create a policy prescription for future public housing projects. The purpose of the policy prescription is to show the importance of evaluating existing and past models to use the evaluations and new sustainable concepts to make a stronger more practically role model.

Importance of the study

This paper is about the importance of fair access to basic needs and rights of citizenship for all Americans. While housing and the environmental health of a community may seem arbitrary to someone who has been privileged enough to not see these issues as having the capacity to shape the way a person or group of people function in society, this is due to ignorance of the conditions of the disadvantaged. Additionally, this paper is about giving voice to groups of people who have been silenced and forced into social exclusion. “There is, without question, much despair in Mott Haven. But there is real struggle and ferment as well. Countless people, unable to wait for the great revolution on which Kozol pins his hopes, are trying to revive their community.” (Stern, "Amazing Grace by Jonathan Kozol « Commentary Magazine.") This critique refers to Mott Haven, a notoriously dangerous New York City neighborhood abundant with public housing projects. Stern believes that Kozol's book, *Amazing Grace*, one that was meant to bring light to the dire situation experienced by residents of Mott Haven actually serves to silence the community members and the great strides that the community has made over the past decades. Watch any local news channel of most metropolitan areas in America and you will notice the media's propensity to show low income communities as a menace rather than broadcasting the full story, including success of any level.

Part I

The History of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the creation of Public Housing in the US

A major question that must be answered to fully understand the effects of the environment and architecture of public housing on the social exclusion of these communities is, how the idea of public housing in America was first generated and what was the mission of the agency charged with overseeing this large task. We will define public housing as publicly financed, “...low-cost housing in the form of publicly-managed and owned multi-family developments.” (Stoloff, 1) Keeping these fundamental questions in mind, what follows is a history of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD. Public housing in America is a direct fabrication of public housing policies, meaning that the state of public housing today can mostly be attributed to the history of the development of this department. This chapter will look at the creation of HUD, its core missions, and the major policy shifts that the department has faced since its beginning. The five core missions of HUD are: to increase homeownership, to assist low-income renters, to improve the physical, social, and economic health of cities, to fight discrimination in the housing markets, and to assist homeless persons with housing and support. (Thompson, 3) For the purpose of this study we will focus on all of the missions except increasing homeownership and the assistance of homeless persons.

The Beginning

As America experienced the largest market crash of the nation's history in 1929 public services were needed more than ever. The housing market was no exception to this time of great need. The building of new homes during this period sharply decreased while countrywide foreclosures were experienced. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was charged with the enormous task of redesigning the way public services were managed in order to keep the nation from falling into further despair.

Missions of HUD

The first core mission of HUD was to increase homeownership was realized with New Deal initiatives. The New Deal Federal Housing Association, FHA, created through the National Housing Act of 1934 was a program aimed at saving the housing market after the Great Depression hit. "The FHA home mortgage insurance program, a key section of the 1934 ACT, was designed to restore stability to the nation's housing markets, boost homebuilding, provide jobs, and increase home purchases by easing mortgage credit." (Thompson, 2) President's Roosevelt's New Deal detailed new and creative ways to address the nation's public service issues. From the very inception of government assistance with the housing industry homeownership and the pursuit of the "American Dream" have been at the core of the U.S. government's involvement. In the mid-1940's President Roosevelt listed "...assistance to agriculture and housing [and] 'help to the under-privileged'..." as some of the greatest

accomplishments of the New Deal. (Polenberg, 24) While social exclusion is not explicitly mentioned in this statement, it does imply the President Roosevelt felt as though the FHA and New Deal had elements that would combat, or help to use Roosevelt's words, social exclusion by integrating the under-privileged into what was considered normal society. This goal of the realization and perpetuation of the "American Dream" remained HUD's sole mission until 1937. HUD administrators soon found that the "American Dream" was not a reality for the entire population, and that there was a great deal of people in need of assistance to secure adequate housing. The realization led to the creation of public assistance of rental properties as a way to house those who were not able to buy or build their own home due to financial constraints.

Assisting low income renters to secure, "decent, safe, and affordable housing" (Thompson, 4) became the second core mission of public housing policy in the United States. This mission was carried out by offering very low-income people subsidies which would be used to lower rents to a more affordable rate based on the income of the applicant. The Public Housing program emerged from the Housing Act of 1937 as the agency charged with carrying out this new vision. By implementing programs to carry out this mission, the New Deal influenced government believed there was potential to strengthen the Depression-weakened economy through job creation. Construction and management of new public housing projects were meant to boost the economy. By 1950, 13 years after the Housing Act of 1937, only 150,000 public housing units had been built not creating the economic boosts that many wanted to see. The need for public housing was still very much present and fueled the next twenty years of rapid growth.

Rapid growth was not only seen with public housing but cities as well. Problems arose as cities expanded quickly and often chaotically. Slums, or overcrowded urban neighborhoods

inhabited by very low-income people, were heavily prevalent. A congregation of low-income people in an urban setting is not inherently bad, but these communities were often overlooked with regards to infrastructure and sanitation due to a lack of political will to serve marginalized people with high quality public services. The overarching problems of urban life for all residents were reflected by the newest mission of American public housing policies: "...to improve the physical, social, and economic health of cities." (Thompson, 6)

President Harry Truman signed the Housing Act of 1949 which addressed the health of cities, not just individual public housing developments. One of the first programs under Title 1 of the Housing Act of 1949 was the slum clearance program. (Collins and Shester, 1) The Public Housing Program was to oversee this program by funding local agencies which would then carry out the demolition and sell the cleared land to private developers for redevelopment. The areas selected for demolition were considered blighted. The fear of blight spreading throughout the city was a motivating factor of this program. "Blight was considered...highly detrimental to the well-being of people living in or near such areas, a growing drain on public services, and both a cause and consequence of middle-class flight and local government fiscal problems." (Collins and Shester, 5) By June of 1966 over 400,000 units were cleared and 300,000 families (mostly minority) were forcibly relocated. The whole process was a slow one and while positive benefits were projected, the drawn out process brought about much frustration. Cities and populations of low-income people were growing, yet the available and affordable housing stock was decreasing.

As public housing began to expand the government saw the need for a financially stable plan that would allow the Public Housing Program to meet public housing demand while being conscious of financial constraints. One of the main goals of the public housing program was to keep rents affordable for the low income population. In 1959 Congress approved HUD

programs that engaged the private real estate sector in public rental housing. Congress agreed that this would quickly create flexibility in the way that public housing was administered. These programs included Section 221 (d)(3) or the Below Market Interest Rate Program and Rent Supplements. (Thompson, 7) In these programs the Public Housing Program was to provide subsidies to keep rents affordable. This allowed for the Public Housing Program to relieve itself from some of the operating costs of developments. Naturally as more programs were developed the budget of the Public Housing Program had to increase. Public housing plans needed a way to continue to expand and keep rents low and found this with rent limits. The government saw the difficulty of having a single program, the Public Housing Program, overseeing such a large and multifaceted problem. In 1965 the Department of Housing and Urban Development Act created the similarly named department, HUD as a cabinet level agency. Finally a much larger budget and much needed attention had been given to public housing programs.

Congress passed the Brooke Amendment in 1969 which limited the rent of public housing tenants to 25% of their income. With a mandated fixed rate HUD was able to ensure that public housing would remain affordable, but the Brooke Amendment did not address the ever increasing operating costs.

Even with financial strains HUD was experiencing, the agency continued to expand the scope and role of the department. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, or the Fair Housing Act, put a legal end to discriminatory practices within the housing market, both public and private. With its enactment the Fair Housing Act ushered in HUD's fourth core mission of fighting discrimination in housing markets. More specifically the Fair Housing Act, "...prohibited discrimination in sales, rentals, brokerage services, and lending on the basis of race, religion, or national origin..." (Thompson, 8) HUD was given a new regulatory role that

extended over the entire housing market, just three years after the department's creation, as the department became responsible for monitoring and reconciling all public and private complaints, but the actual enforcement of the Fair Housing Act still resided with the Justice Department. This new responsibility did not help ease HUD's budget worries.

The concern over the tension being placed upon HUD's budget as programs expanded reached a serious point in 1973 when the number of HUD assisted rental properties (1,389,000 units) became over three times higher than in the 1960's (426,000 units). (Thompson, 6) The Congressionally approved private-sector engagement programs were not relieving financial stress as planned and revisions were deemed necessary. President Richard Nixon refused to provide HUD with additional funds, effectively halting the progress of public housing assistance. The moratorium came as an action plan based on President Nixon's concerns about the management and structure of HUD programs.

President Nixon's moratorium on all HUD programs only lasted for one year but caused some major policy shifts within the department. President Gerald Ford took office and enacted the 1974 Act, which redirected HUD programs into narrower definitions.

The previously mentioned private-owner rental subsidy programs were to be consolidated as many of them overlapped. The new private-public approach to HUD assisted housing was to follow the model of Section 8 of the 1974 Act. Instead of focusing on creating new units, finding housing within the existing public housing stock for tenants was now the focus. (Thompson, 11) Under Section 8, low income tenants were to pay 30% of their annual income, an increase from the previous 25%, as rent directly to the private property owner. HUD's role was to subsidize the remainder, up to a limit. Local housing agencies were to oversee the dealings of Section 8 within their jurisdiction.

The Voucher Program, a branch of Section 8, gave tenants more choice in where they lived. This program used Section 8's model of subsidized housing but took a more personal approach to the distribution of subsidies by, "...attaching the subsidy to the person rather than to the project." (Thompson, 14) Voucher holders could find a private property with a landlord that was willing to participate in the program. The private property must meet some criteria in order to gain approval from HUD. The guidelines included: a landlord willing to participate in the program, the housing must meet basic quality standards, and rent payments must follow a HUD designed schedule. (Bratt, 359) Advocates for the Voucher program stressed the importance of choice for disadvantaged people, while opponents were concerned with access to the housing markets. The thought was that because no new units were being added to the supply, in times of difficult housing markets voucher holders may not be able to find housing with already established developments. (Thompson, 15) To address the valid points on both sides of the argument, President Ronald Reagan created the Commission on Housing in 1981 to assess the state of housing in the nation. The Commission's report, released in 1982, had two main points: the increasing long term costs of project based programs were a concern, and programs like the Voucher Program could relieve HUD from the budget pressures of facility management. In 1983 Congress used the Commission's report as a basis to halt funding for new Section 8 based housing developments and increased funding for agendas similar to the Voucher Program.

The 1974 Act also placed an emphasis on decentralizing the HUD department. Local Public Housing Agencies were now given more authority to tailor programs to their needs. One new initiative was the Community Development Block Grant Program which aimed to improve the health of cities. (Thompson, 17) This program came out of the consolidation of eight separate programs: Open Space, Urban Renewal, Neighborhood Development Program grants,

Historic Preservation grants, Model Cities supplemental grants, Public Facilities loans, Neighborhood Facilities grants, and Water and Sewer grants. The purpose of this program was to create viable urban communities through the provisions of, “Decent housing, a suitable living environment, and expanded economic opportunities.” (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2) The CDBG gave cities the authority to create action plans rather than forced city officials to follow a blanket nation-wide rubric.

Target Population

Public housing was not designed to serve the most disadvantaged members of society; rather it was designed to assist the working class that had been affected by World War II and later the Great Depression. The 1937 Housing Act notes its objective as, “...to alleviate present and recurring unemployment and to remedy the unsafe and insanitary housing conditions and the acute shortage of decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings for families of low income...” (United States Housing Act of 1937) The inclusion of “families of low income” in this objective may lead one to believe that all disadvantaged people were afforded the assistance of this act, but we must consider that at this time discriminatory practices were still practiced. This acted as a form of social exclusion, creating a barrier to assistance. Furthermore, the Housing Act of 1937 provided funds for slum clearance and the creation of low-income housing. At this point in HUD’s history the background of tenants were not heavily scrutinized. “The only directive for income screening of tenants was that their incomes be no higher than five times the rental cost of the unit...” (Stoloff, 3) This working class population used assistance from the FHA to secure low-interest mortgages and buy their own homes. Over time people who initially bought their

homes with HUD assistance were able to obtain full ownership of their homes, leaving the public housing system, and social exclusion, behind.

During the 1940's as the demographic of the inner city changed, public housing came to be seen as a solution to inner-city poverty, isolation, and basic human necessity for the least well off members of society. Public housing was seen as a way to improve the standard of living for "slum-dwellers". Slum-dwellers were originally either immigrants to the U.S., or domestic migrants from the Deep South who mostly consisted of Blacks who gravitated towards job opportunities created by the war industries in the North and West. "Early reformers were appalled by the conditions of the tenements where immigrants lived. They called for the demolition of the tenements, an end to windowless interior rooms, better air circulation and more light." (Stoloff, 2) Ironically advocates for public housing promoted public housing as a necessity for all U.S. citizens yet still allowed discriminatory practices to persist that only allowed white Americans access to subsidized housing markets.

In the 1950's discriminatory practices were allowed under the guise of strict tenant screening. For example, unwed pregnant mothers could be evicted, families only qualified so long as two parents were present, the head of the household needed to be employed, and families had to demonstrate "good house keeping skills". (Stoloff, 8) These were all enforced with home visits by FHA or HUD officials. These discriminatory practices helped to aid a shift in HUD policy. The newly imposed income limits became a tool of social exclusion. In order to continue living within a public housing development one could not increase their income over a certain limit. If this limit was surpassed a resident could be evicted. These policies effectively penalized residents for upward mobility. Of course wealthy families should not be afforded financial assistance to obtain adequate housing as they have the funds to find housing on their

own. Many families are pushed out of assistance once their income starts rising and the income limit often does not take into account the fact that these families usually have been living within the system for quite some time. A grace period for families over the income limit should be applied so that upward mobility can occur. (Bratt, 370) By limiting the parameters to living in a public housing the new aims of HUD were revealed. HUD's intentions of serving the neediest were overshadowed by HUD's interest in not competing with the private sector to house the working class.

The Housing Act of 1949 first introduced subsidized housing programs. These programs encouraged private developers to be involved in developing low income housing. HUD enticed private developers with, "...tax breaks, low-cost mortgages, and rent subsidies to house the poor," (Atlas and Dreier, 6) The prime and most widely known example of subsidized housing programs is the Section 8 program. This marked a shift in HUD policy from a supply model to demand based subsidized private developments.

While the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ended legal racial segregation of HUD housing developments, segregation continued with a wave of "white-flight" as public housing developments became racially integrated. White Americans had access to HUD subsidies for homeownership and rental properties. But due to racial integration of public housing developments many white Americans opted to follow the homeownership path. This created a situation where those who could afford to move out of public housing, white Americans with access to mortgage subsidies did so leaving the more disadvantaged population behind. Additionally preference began to be given to applicants that demonstrated the most need. This combined with previously mentioned the income limits changed the demographics of public housing tenants to mostly severely disadvantaged people (usually of color).

Another instance of HUD disempowering disadvantaged populations came in 1981 with the abolition of rent ceilings. A rent ceiling or rent control is defined as a legally imposed maximum amount a landlord may charge a tenant for rent. (Dev and Dey, 2) This caused tenants with higher incomes to leave public housing as they might be able to find cheaper housing on the private market now that landlords had the power to raise rents as they saw fit. Additionally tenants with incomes over 50% of the city median income had a more difficult time obtaining public housing as the amount of tenants allowed over this income was limited. Another blow to the economic status of public housing residents came as tenants were asked to increase the proportion of their income that would be paid as rent from 25% to 30%. All of these new policies and limitations added to the changing demographic of public housing residents. (Feins, Merrill *et al.*, 4)

Local housing authorities gained more freedom to define tenant preferences in the 1990's. Even with greater freedom to apply public housing policies as best seen for the local jurisdiction the public housing population still reflected a high density, low income, and often politically and socially excluded segment of society. (Stoloff, 12) As we fast forward twenty years into the future and come to rest at the present not much has changed in the criteria for applicants to public housing or the way that HUD markets its public housing developments.

Site Selection

The Housing Act of 1949 put an emphasis on slum clearance and then constructing public housing on the cleared land. This type of public housing management benefited the private housing market by eliminating HUD's demand for new land to build public housing projects. Yet slum clearance did virtually nothing to ease the concentration of poverty in public housing.

(Stoloff, 3) Additionally Title 1 of the Housing Act of 1949 did not require maintenance of 1:1 ratio of cleared housing and replacement housing. In the case of the slum clearance project in the West End of Boston, Massachusetts slums were cleared and then left for quite some time before new construction began, leaving many residents unsure of when their homes would return. (Stoloff 2004)

Initially the selection of sites for public housing was left up to local authorities. Intentional racial segregation of public housing site selection was common practice carried out by local authorities. (Stoloff, 6) An example of racially segregated housing projects are the Williamsburg Houses project in Brooklyn originally built for white Americans and the Harlem River Houses project in Manhattan which was built for Black Americans. The thought behind the construction of the Harlem River Houses project was simply to build housing that would keep access to predominantly white neighborhoods nearby solely for white Americans. (Marcuse, 356) Chicago faced similar problems of segregation, and in the 1960's became infamously known for this practice. The location of public housing in Chicago was controlled by city council members. They often blocked the construction of public housing projects in white neighborhoods. After a series of court cases the Chicago Housing Authority gained the authority to get around the road blocks of the city council. This was done by providing Section 8 certificates for residents (mostly minority residents), much like the Voucher Program, to allow them to move to predominantly white neighborhoods in privately owned properties. (Stoloff, 8) Whether or not this fully challenged the underlying issues of racism is unclear, but it certainly did create a dispersion of minorities throughout Chicago. Keeping the issue of social exclusion in mind, it would not be correct to assume that by placing minorities in predominantly white

neighborhoods social exclusion would have been averted. In fact this may have catalyzed social exclusion by placing minorities in a hostile environment.

HUD responded to the aforementioned issues by creating regulations to racially decentralize public housing sites. But due to the covert connotations of racism in America HUD was unable to guarantee that local authorities followed the new regulations. In fact, some local authorities halted the construction of any new public housing financed by HUD in order to boycott the new regulations. JA Stoloff raises the question, "...was a decline in the number of units being produced preferable to segregated housing?" (Stoloff, 9) This is a difficult question to wrestle with considering the overcrowded state of many public housing projects today. How could social exclusion be combated without first desegregating public housing and physically giving everyone access to the same space for housing?

Design

Recognition of the importance of the design of public housing to the residents is not a notion that is negated. In the earlier days of public housing development, social activists maintained that the health of, "...children and families could not thrive in the squalid environment of tenements where people often lived in interior rooms with no windows or ventilation." (Stoloff, 13) Slums were often characterized as cramped, poorly ventilated, dark, and unsanitary. When redesigning previous slums, attention was primarily paid to light and air due to old slum notions.

The infamous high-rise style of public housing projects were introduced in the 1940's when architects and planners assumed that this style would offer residents a healthier alternative to slums. In addition to the supposed health benefits, high-rise style buildings offered space

efficiency. The density ratio of a high-rise building versus individual homes or smaller two to three story buildings became attractive as the price of land was quite expensive. As many public housing projects were built in the wake of the greatest financial crisis America has ever seen, the Great Depression, and World War II, it is easily understandable that funds were scarce. Architects' visions were often compromised due to the simple fact that funds that were initially thought to available were not. In order to finish the buildings corners were cut often leading to "unpleasant housing and poorly designed common areas." (Stoloff; Bacon, 16)

The tight budget that HUD faced caused more problems than anticipated. Amenities such as parks, aesthetically pleasing architecture, and playgrounds, were limited due to financial constraints and a belief that if amenities were provided the residents of public housing would have no incentive to better themselves. (Stoloff, 17) The Pruitt Igoe projects of St. Louis, Missouri, which will be discussed in a later chapter, lacked green spaces or commons due to a lack of funding. To add insult to injury local housing authorities and Congress made bold statements that accused residents for the poor conditions of the housing projects. Poor design does not only affect the aesthetic quality of these high-rise buildings but also the functionality of said buildings. For example, the design floor plans caused security issues by creating space that was indefensible such as closed off stairways and space that was hidden from the general public's view.

In an attempt to separate the design of public housing projects and the surrounding neighborhoods, often slums, these buildings were designed using very different styles. Figure 4 of the Pruitt Igoe projects a prime example of this very distinctive style of architecture. The behemoth superblock buildings stand in absolute contrast to the surrounding environment of much smaller and traditional single and multi-family houses. The Pruitt Igoe projects are not

aligned with the street grid, but rather positioned on a diagonal giving them an even more pronounced and distinctive presence. The lack of diversity amongst the architectural style of the housing project gave the buildings an institutional and cold feel. Figure 4 shows an aerial view of Pruitt Igoe allowing us to see the island effect of the design of this housing project. Pruitt Igoe is a lone and isolated development in a sea of traditional housing. It would not be such a giant leap to suggest that this effect was projected onto the residents of Pruitt Igoe resulting in stigmatization and isolation. The Pruitt Igoe projects were demolished in 1972 after the failure of the housing project was accepted. Many critics blame the poor design of the Pruitt Igoe projects for its failure.

There is a common misconception that all public housing developments were built as high-rises yet the break down of architectural styles shows variety in styles. “The largest proportion of the [public] housing stock was built before 1970 and consists of: 27% high-rises, 32% garden apartments, 16% low-rise walk-ups, and 25% single-family homes or townhouses.” (Stoloff, 17) This misconception is upheld because of the fact that a large portion of public housing projects are indeed built in the high-rise style, the blatant visibility of this style, the social problems that come along with having such massive and isolating congregations of low-income populations.

Present

HUD has an impressive and comprehensive list of accomplishments to date. This department has truly shaped the way the United States government thinks about and reacts to problems specific to an urban setting. The specificity of this department has enabled it to look at the urban setting from many different angles.

The current mission statement of HUD:

“HUD’s mission is to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all. HUD is working to strengthen the housing market to bolster the economy and protect consumers; meet the need for quality affordable rental homes: utilize housing as a platform for improving quality of life; build inclusive and sustainable communities free from discrimination; and transform the way HUD does business.” (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development)

An overarching trend of the past and current U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is a progression towards a more inclusive policy strategy. With new programs such as HOPE VI the department is now trying to tackle the problems that the old system created.

The HOPE VI program was created in 1992 as the Urban Revitalization Demonstration Program. The goal of this program is to positively redevelop the most distressed public housing.

The six major goals of HOPE VI include:

- “1. Lessening the concentration of very poor residents and creating mixed income communities...
2. Creating partnerships to leverage additional resources
3. Implementing cost-effective plans
4. Providing opportunities for family economic self-sufficiency, particularly for persons enrolled in welfare-to-work programs
5. Building sustainable communities that include a physical design that blends into and enriches the urban landscape
6. Ensuring that affected residents and members of the communities have full and meaningful involvement in the planning and implementation of the revitalization effort” (Salama, 97)

The importance of this program is monumental, for the first time in over 60 years the physical condition of public housing developments is being considered as the root of the social and economic issues that these communities face and actions are being taken to correct these wrongs.

Currently 135 of 2,600 Public Housing Authorities have received grants from HOPE VI and 18 of 165 projects have been completed. (H.R. Rep. No. 108-165)

Issues with HOPE VI are now revealing themselves. HOPE VI put emphasis on creating mixed-income communities as a major part of the redevelopment plan. Opponents to HOPE VI worry about the complicated implications of the displacement of low-income tenants in the name of revitalization. Another concern arises from the urban focus of the HOPE VI program. The most distressed public housing developments in urban settings are very large and under the jurisdiction of large Public Housing Authorities. These large PHA's receive most of the grant money from HOPE VI. Smaller public housing communities face similar problems as larger ones yet because of the scaled back proportion of people that are affected in smaller communities their needs are often overlooked. Additional concern has been raised over what types of communities are eligible to receive HOPE VI grants. Currently small low-income communities that do not have any public housing developments in their boundaries yet face some of the same debilitating issues that distressed public housing communities do are not eligible to receive funding for redevelopment. These concerns have called for reform of the new program. H.R. 1614 works to ensure that all of these concerns are addressed. (H.R. Rep. No. 108-165) This fosters hope for the future of HOPE VI and HUD in general as it shows that the department isn't afraid to re-evaluate and reform.

HUD is ushering in new era of revision that has been necessary for many years. The largest proportion of the public housing stock, 5.3 million units (Thompson, 16), was quickly and often poorly built before 1970. (Stoloff, 17) It is unfortunate that the fundamental structural problems of public housing have gone so long without redevelopment. These structural problems most certainly have contributed to the growing social problems that public housing developments face today.

Part II

Case Studies in Public Housing

Pruitt-Igoe: A Failed Project

Americans living above the poverty line often do not have to think about their living conditions. One could say that those Americans take the ability to control the conditions of their shelter for granted. Extravagant mansions are an example of this. While mansion owners are usually conscious of every detail of their homes, they may not be aware that the money used to install their marble floors could instead be used for a multitude of things that would better society, rather than promote living unsustainably. While we must understand that luxury is a privilege, the privileged must also understand this and use constraint for all of our sakes. Public housing in America has largely been controlled by the privileged. The privileged few have made decisions about the location, quality, and availability of public housing that has shaped it into what it is today. Although public housing is a government run institution, the intentions of public housing have not always been to the benefit of the people. The goal of public housing in America has not always been to keep generally underprivileged in a position of social exclusion, but the institutions now in place all work together to make this a reality. All of America's public housing units are not inherently bad, but decisions about the length of tenancy, design of units, and the location of units has made it very difficult to live in public housing. A simple mixture of continual poverty, isolation, and inadequate housing are the key ingredients to keeping disenfranchised people in a position of social exclusion. We will explore the past, present, and future of public housing to reveal the continuity of said social exclusion.

Rather than beginning at the New Deal Era, when “public housing” initiatives were taken, we must look back at how America in the past dealt with the poor and how they saw the government's role in intervening with the public's lives. From the very beginning of America,

and arguably currently, the poor were seen as people who had some sort of moral failing that led them to be poor. There was no accountability for the institutions that had been set in place that led to the dichotomy of rich and poor. While people did not recognize the complexity of being poor they did recognize that the government had an obligation to take care of those who needed assistance if no one else could support or help them. (Vale, 24) The single family home was a very important indicator of status and became very important to American culture. Think about the “American Dream” in which a healthy home was the true back bone. The 1920’s marked an era when the “American Dream” became an obsession in American culture, which still largely persists. Figure one is an image from a 1922 pamphlet from the National Association of Real Estate Boards that depicted a man with his back to the viewer, staring at his home with his arms folded across his chest. Above his home is the image of a castle. The picture reads, “His Castle’ Home Owning Breeds *Real* Men It is what puts the MAN back in MANHOOD” Figure two is another image from the same pamphlet that reads, “Does Brown own his home? No, he rents. Haven’t you seen him scratching matches on the wall paper?” The two figures show Americans feelings towards home owners and renters. Home owners were revered while renters were shunned. Furthermore, multi-family homes were often associated with institutions where people who did not contribute to society were kept.

The Great Depression of 1929 was an immense blow to America’s economy. In order to combat the ever growing population of homeless people the government built 21,800 units for low income families. By 1949 the New Deal Program had been replaced with a more comprehensive program and under the Housing Act of 1937 302,000 more units were built. (Bickford and Massey, 20) Public housing is managed by individual Public Housing Authorities. Local governments were given the right to chose whether or not they would

establish public housing on their land. Public housing is only available in cities or towns that make a conscious decision to establish programs. Participating towns or cities also had control over the location for public housing within the city. The ability of each local government to choose whether or not they should have public housing at all has produced racial and class based segregation. As a result 61% of public housing is located in central cities. And over 50% of all public housing is located in areas with poverty rates of 30% or higher. (Schwartz, 115) This is a consequence of prejudice on the parts of the public rather than the government. Developers and planners did not want to establish public housing in these deteriorating neighborhoods but often were met with great resistance from the white residents of particular neighborhoods. Furthermore, the building of public housing coincided with the movement of whites to the suburbs and urban decay. This motivated the government to implement urban renewal programs. The pairing of urban renewal programs and the construction of public housing was a way for local elites to clear “undesirable” neighborhoods, those containing minorities, and move them elsewhere, away from business centers and important institutional buildings. (Bickford and Massey, 15) This pairing also incurred more expenses for building public housing, a problem we will discuss later.

Public structures were built in many styles, high-rise and low-rise apartments, single family homes, and townhouses to name a few. No matter what the type of structure it is fair to say that public housing facilities are easily recognizable. They are known for the plain architecture that follows the BBB-model: Big, bland, and boring. In addition to being uninspiring, “Many public housing developments were designed to be as Spartan as possible-to be the antithesis of luxurious.” (Schwartz, 110) The lackluster architecture is partly due to a lack of funding. In 1937 legislation set a maximum development cost, tightening the budget for

public housing. And as previously mentioned more legislation in 1937 linked urban renewal with the building of public housing. For every public housing unit built a slum unit was to be demolished, gaining more expenses. (Schwartz, 125) Using cheap materials and poor construction were ways that developers stayed within budget. This in turn created more expenses, for currently the buildings need to be constantly repaired.

Examining the current average household living within public housing will expose the great poverty within the system. Additionally we will begin to see that we can assume the poverty within the public housing system has not changed very much since the implementation of public housing. Public housing was created to assist those who had an economic need for assistance. The average annual income is \$10,398. 43% of all public housing households contain children, yet 45% of all public housing is a one person household. And 55% of public housing residents rely on some form of social security or pension as their income. This depiction of an average public housing household shows the instability of the household. Social security and pension are unreliable sources of income, adding to the need of government assistance. Although there is a significant amount of families living in public housing, almost one third of the units are one bedroom and another third are two bedrooms. Seeing as poorer families often have many children we can quickly see how these units become over crowded. This profile of the average public housing household also reveals the type of people who move into and remain in these dwellings. Jacobs describes these residents as, "...people with the least choice, forced by poverty or discrimination to overcrowd, are coming to an unpopular area." (Jacobs, 360) This is description seems to be aligned with the averages that we found. The median income for residents of public housing shows us that they have little choice about where they live considering rent or mortgages that are not obtainable with such a small salary.

William Yancey conducted a case study on the Pruitt-Igoe Housing Project in St. Louis, Missouri. (Figure 3) Yancey used interviews and general observations to argue that “...the physical environment in which families live, in particular the design and condition of dwelling units, has an effect on the manner in which they live.” (Yancey , 3) The study found that informal networks that help low income residents of public housing cope with poverty are dependent on the availability of semi-public spaces. Pruitt-Igoe housing project lacks “semi-private space” that is necessary to build community. The designers of the building did not want any “wasted space-space within buildings that is outside of individual units.” (Yancey, 8) The lack of what the developers call “wasted space” and the buildings high-rise structure has made it impossible for the residents to call any part of the building their own. One of the mothers in the building noted that it was nearly impossible to let her children out and know who they were playing with because there wasn’t a place that you could see, from the 5th floor, what was going on below. Public space allows the residents to have an area outside of their homes to share with each other and to show their neighbors a bit of their lives that they would not normally be able to see, thus fostering community. The lack of community within this housing project has also led to lack of respect for the shared spaces, such as elevators, laundry rooms, and stairwells. Many of the residents express fear of these places. In addition Yancey noted the strong smell of urine within all of said areas. The lack of respect for these areas stems from the lack of ownership over the buildings public spaces. The Pruitt-Igoe housing project is a good example of what most high-rise public housing turns lacking in “wasted space” in to over time. Architects wishing to avoid this should examine case studies such as this one in order to avoid these failings.

The future of public housing relies on our ability to see the need for change. “Conventional planning approaches to slums and slum dwellers are thoroughly paternalistic. The trouble with paternalists is that they want to make impossibly profound changes, and they choose impossibly superficial means for doing so. To overcome slums, we must regard slum dwellers as people capable of understanding and acting upon their own self-interests...”(Jacobs, 354) Although Jacobs speaking about slums, the governance and management of slums and public housing is very similar. This paternalistic view is another means of social exclusion. This tells the residents of public housing that they *need* to be taken care of. This takes away the residents agency and ability to be independent of the government. Unless it is absolutely necessary, no one should be completely reliant on the government for one of their basic needs. Most people living in public housing, if given the opportunity and the education would not choose to live there. Because they are treated with paternalism, an internalization of dependence occurs. This feeling of dependence also lends to the long length of tenancy in public housing. Different consequences of poverty, like teen pregnancy, lack of education, and low economic status additionally aids many generations of a family living in public housing. The government did not create the public housing system as a transitioning system. Rather public housing was constructed to gather low income families into one area, instead of being visible on the streets. This has been very damaging to low income families. They do not aspire for the “American Dream” like the average American does, because truthfully it is not a reality. Poor housing standards, like that of public housing, have made this not a reality.

“‘We haven’t been fair,’ says Harvard professor David Elwood in speaking of the way we treat and talk about poor women and their children, ‘and we still don’t understand what we have done to them.’ It’s a beautifully quiet statement; but I’m just not sure that we don’t

understand. Many poor people think we understand these things extremely well but acquiesce in them without much personal discomfort. In other words, they don't see innocence in our behavior. They do not think what is being done to them is a mistake.” (Kozol, 182) This quote from Jonathan Kozol's *Amazing Grace* sums up the way that America has dealt with its public housing issue. Those who do not have to live with it are oblivious to what happens, and those who do live within the public housing system blame others for their indifference. This cycle does not promote progression; instead it encourages the status quo. Moving away from this cycle will allow progression to take place. Those who are not poor need to recognize their part in keeping poor people poor. For example, previously I discussed the way that the locations for public housing were made. Local governments were able to make the decisions on whether they wanted public housing in their neighborhoods. The more affluent communities generally objected to building public housing, believing that it would somehow deteriorate their communities. More affluent communities generally do not have a much crime as poverty stricken ones. Cramming more and more poor people into already poverty stricken communities is not the choice of poor people. Rather it is a consequence of the decisions of those with political power. The politically powerful chose to not have public housing in their communities, employing a NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) attitude, and therefore limiting the space that public housing could occupy. A simple solution to this problem would be to open the available areas in more affluent communities to public housing and to provide adequate funding. In doing so, public housing residents will receive access to the same privileges that the socially included are afforded.

Government officials who made decisions about public housing lacked concern and care for the currently 4-5 million people who would be inhabiting public housing. Policies made in

the 1930s-40s were made with both prejudice and class consciousness. Why else would local governments be given the right to choose where public housing resides? In doing so, future residents of public housing have been stripped of their right to choose where they live. They are limited to what the government has deemed “fit”. There is a huge problem here that has arguably been overlooked. With growing urban congestion it is time that the government revises its public housing policies. If the government were to make public housing mandatory in every town and city a lot of unused land would have a new importance and relief of urban overcrowding would ensue.

Louis Kahn wrote in his manifesto *Order is* “The nature of space reflects what it wants to be”. This is more than relevant when speaking about public housing. If public housing was meant to be a space where people lived, rather than a place where people survived we would see productivity within the projects. Instead we find high crime rates and poor health. Most fault remains with the government during the early stages of public housing programs. The government reinforced racism and classism that were both already very pronounced with policy. These policies still exist today, and are doing a grave disservice to the progression of America. It is so often that we discuss and hear tales about the deplorable conditions of third-world countries, but we never talk about the conditions in our own government regulated housing. These issues raise the question about public health which is inextricably linked to environmental justice. Moving towards a greener society requires that we refit our existing structures to benefit the environment and public health overall.

Jordan Downs: Visualizing Social Inclusion

The South Central Los Angeles neighborhood of Watts' most notorious claim to fame has been its longstanding battle with poverty and the infamously unsuccessful Jordan Downs housing project. The combination of economic, social, racial, and environmental problems that have faced the neighborhood are not new, rather they are the product of poor management and decisions on the part of the government.

Understanding the past, present, and future of Jordan Downs is crucial to understanding what role architectural style and the environmental health of the community have played in the social exclusion of the Jordan Downs community. In this chapter we look at the existing conditions, past, and future redevelopment plans of the Jordan Downs neighborhood in the Watts District of Los Angeles County.

Existing Conditions

Physical Space and Design

Figure 5 shows an aerial view of Jordan Downs and figure 6 gives a closer look at one of the units. Jordan Downs' boundaries are 97th Street on the North end, 103rd Street on the South end, South Alameda Street on the East, and Grape Street on the West side. The only entrances or exits to the neighborhood are located on the western boundary of the neighborhood. The Jordan Downs neighborhood additionally contains the David Starr Jordan High School and Mudtown Farms. Currently the neighborhood is primarily residential without much commerce.

The Jordan Downs public housing development consists of 700 units: 81 one-bedroom units, 257 two-bedroom units, 276 three-bedroom units, 62 four-bedroom units, and 24 five-

bedroom units. The first 400 units in the northern portion of the community located between 97th Street and 99th Street were built in 1943 and converted to public housing units in the 1950's. The next 300 units located in the southern portion of Jordan Downs between 101st Street and 103rd Street were built in 1954.

The style of the residential buildings of Jordan Downs are attached townhouses. All of the units are two stories high, made of concrete blocks, and painted cream with red trims. The front and backs of each building are indecipherable due to the position of the buildings on the street grid. The residential sections are laid out in giant superblocks. This layout consists of green or open spaces between each building, walkways that connect building to building, but little else. It is difficult to cross the neighborhood on foot, leading to an increased dependency on either automobiles or public transportation.

The drab architecture and awkward placement of the units give the impression that the residents should be upset with the physical condition of their homes. Figure 7 shows the results from a HACLA administered survey. Overall residents were happy with the Jordan Downs public housing development, but disliked the physical qualities of the development. When asked what was specifically "good" about Jordan Downs the top responses were (in ranked order): affordability of Jordan Downs unit, proximity to family members, convenient location of Jordan Downs, good relationship with neighbors, and close to public transportation.

Population

Currently there are 677 households and 2,304 living within Jordan Downs. Of the 2,304 individuals 65% identify as Hispanic, 34% identify as Black, and 1% identify as either Asian or

Caucasian. The female to male ratio of Jordan Downs is 60 to 40. This demographic breakdown is not unlike most South Central Los Angeles neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are composed primarily of minorities and females.

Income and Employment

The average annual household income in Jordan Downs, for the 38% of residents that are employed, is \$15,670 compared to the Greater Watts area where the average income is \$39,400 and the City of Los Angeles with an average income of \$48,690. For Jordan Downs only 54.5% of the average annual income comes from employment income. This suggests that the rest of the income is made up by state, federal, or non-governmental financial assistance. In fact, 16% of Jordan Downs residents receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children. Another 12% receive Social Security Insurance and 4% receive financial assistance from Social Security.

The unemployment rate in Jordan Downs in 2009 was 62%, an alarmingly high percentage. The current unemployment rate for the entire United States was only 9.4% as of May 2009. The residents of Jordan Downs were aware of certain barriers to employment. The top five barriers were a lack of adequate transportation (17%), small children at home who are not enrolled in daycare or school (15%), health problems (14%), and a lack of skills that are in demand (11%).

Community Services

Currently Jordan Downs does not have any community services that are specific to the neighborhood. The Greater Watts area has access to over 100 public and private human service providers. These services are all located within a three mile radius of Jordan Downs. The services that are available include: the Maxine Waters Employment Preparation Center (LAUSD), the Watts Healthcare Corporation, and the City of Los Angeles Youth Opportunities Movement. The EJP Consulting Firm, one of the main consultants for the Jordan Downs redevelopment plan, asked some of the available service providers if they were willing to target Jordan Downs. All of the service providers expressed interest in doing so but explained, "...the dollars simply do not allow programs to serve everyone that seeks services." (*Jordan Downs: Existing Conditions and Summary of Findings*, 7) Residents also felt that the outreach efforts of the existing service providers were lacking. Jordan Downs was not specifically targeted and therefore their use of community services was limited. While many of the residents were aware that the programs existed they were unsure of how the programs functioned or how they could participate in the programs. A focus group of Jordan Downs residents was asked how to increase participation by Jordan Downs residents and the suggestions reflected the need for more information on the programs within the community. Monthly meetings to create interest in and spread information about the programs were suggested. Jordan Downs residents want to use the services provided and see value within these programs but are excluded from engagement due to a lack of information sharing.

Crime and Safety

Crime has been a tough issue for the Greater Watts and Jordan Downs community to combat for many years. According to the Advancement Project there are 14 known gangs operating in the Greater Watts area. The gangs are responsible for many of the violent and non-violent crimes within the community. According to a survey administered by the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, 86% of Jordan Downs residents feel that crime is a problem in their neighborhood. Additionally 25% feel unsafe everywhere in Jordan Downs, 15% feel unsafe walking through Jordan Downs, and 18% feel unsafe in their own units. Feeling a threat to one's own safety within the community or even within one's own home is troublesome. A report on the existing conditions of Jordan Downs by EJP Consulting cites fear, stress, and poor mental health as indirect effects of crime in one's neighborhood. How can a resident be expected to be invested in or participate in the dealings of their community when they never fully feel at rest?

History

The history of how Jordan Downs came to be is a very interesting one, as the public housing development was not originally built for general residential purposes. We must discuss the history of Jordan Downs to understand how and why the development is in its current state and in need of redevelopment.

America's participation in World War II stimulated the need for the basic instruments for the war, such as ships and weapons. Business along the Southern Alameda Railroad corridor boomed. In 1943 the surging war-industry called for more workers and consequently more

housing. Barrack like buildings were quickly built to accommodate the influx of temporary war workers.

The end of World War II in 1945 effectively stopped the need for the industries along the Southern Alameda Railroad corridor. Such a rapid halt to the main source of employment in the area took a toll on the economic stability of the community. Many community members now found themselves without a source of income looked to their government for assistance. The United States government responded by converting the housing that had previously been used to accommodate war workers into a public housing project, Jordan Downs. This transformation reflected the manner in which the US government perceived public housing at the time, as solely shelter. Kenyon Johnson, a 22-year old resident of Jordan Downs, noted that, "[Jordan Downs] looks like bunkers. It has the feel that there's war going on." (Bloomekatz and Garrison, 1) The transformation of Jordan Downs to a public housing community did not include a change of style to reflect its new tenants. Jordan Downs consisted of oversized super blocks of autonomous buildings on a bland and bleak landscape. No thought was given towards creating an interactive community.

Over the years Jordan Downs has continued to be challenged by poverty, violence, and a lack of government intervention or prevention. The poverty rate has been consistently high, keeping private sector interest and economic growth low. Social and racial tensions has left the Jordan Downs community with high crime and gang involvement rates, pushing the government to install the quick fix of surveillance cameras rather than spending the time to get to the root of the problems plaguing Jordan Downs. The 1965 Watts Riots were a result of the communities growing unrest with the way that their government had been dealing with the high poverty rates

and low standards of education in the area. (The Civil Rights Digital Library of the University System of Georgia System)

Redevelopment

Residents of public housing are the most at risk of experiencing social exclusion due to the sheer, and often intentional, tendency of public housing to congregate many impoverished families in one place (Marsh and Mullins, 756) and the redevelopment plans were introduced by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's 5-Year, \$5 Billion Housing Plan for Los Angeles' Families, called "Housing that Works", which launched in 2008. Mayor Villaraigosa tasked the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, HACLA, to rectify this issue. The new mixed-income, transit orientated, green, and architecturally diverse Jordan Downs will cater to a varied group of investors and residents. (WRT Planning & Design and Daniel Solomon Design Partners, 6)

The plans for redevelopment of Jordan Downs started with plans for community building within this neighborhood under the leadership of Rudolf C. Montiel, President and CEO of the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles and Congresswoman Maxine Waters. In order to make sure that the community of Jordan Downs had a strong voice within the planning and implementation phases, the Jordan Downs Community Advisory Committee was created. The JDCAC was created to serve as a liaison between the community and the HACLA.

The goal of this project is to create a revitalized community where previously there was just a housing development. (WRT Planning & Design and Daniel Solomon Design Partner, 6) The issues that Jordan Downs have faced in the past are multifaceted, including poor education, lack of jobs, poor housing, and a substandard living experience. To combat these issues the

HACLA has created some development principles that will address all of these issues leading to the vibrant urban neighborhood its residents need and want.

The first development principle, in no particular order, we will discuss is the one to one replacement of the existing 700 housing units in Jordan Downs. One of the first approaches to redeveloping urban neighborhoods in 1949 was the slum clearance program. This program cleared slums in order to prevent the spread of “blight” or urban decay. Unfortunately this program rarely replaced all of the housing units that were cleared. The HACLA does not want to follow in the precedent of this program, and has assured the residents of Jordan Downs that this will not be the case. The purchase of an additional 21.08 acres of land will help ensure that all the previous housing units will be replaced and increase the amount of housing units in general.

Another development principle is to avoid the displacement of existing residents and the increased acreage of Jordan Downs should mitigate this issue.

The failure of many public housing developments has been the oversight of long-term sustainability of the communities that are created. It is not merely enough to create a housing development and then call it a community. The residents and local economy must be taken into account in order to encourage the upward progress of a community. The HACLA plans to create a mixed-income resident base. This will alleviate issues that previous housing developments and Jordan Down faced with the high concentration of very low-income populations in a confined space. Diversity within the income levels of the residents will create different levels of demand within the community allowing for a progression of the local economy. The increased size of the resident base and the new mixed income community will lead to the necessity of services and amenities. Currently Watts and Jordan Downs face a situation where the closest grocery store and shopping center are about a mile distance away. (Figure 8) By creating a mixed-use

community it is possible to stimulate the local economy and generate revenue for HACLA as stores and shops would pay rent on units located within HACLA boundaries.

Employment of the residents of the community has always been an issue in Jordan Downs. Earlier in this chapter we discussed how many of the previous jobs in this neighborhood were created during World War II to meet demands for ships, weapons, etc. needed for war. After WWII these industries moved to the suburbs leaving the population in Jordan Downs and Watts with a huge deficit of jobs. Currently the employment situation is not favorable; a report on the existing conditions of Jordan Downs by EJP Consulting Group, reported that, “Sixty-two percent of heads of household who responded to the survey are unemployed.” (EJP, 6) As a part of the HACLA’s Human Capital plan for the revitalized community economic development programs will be implemented to help with employment and income issues. The construction surrounding the redevelopment of Jordan Downs will create short-term jobs, and these are not to be relied on yet are worth noting. If the HACLA implements its previous development principle of creating a mixed-use community this principle of addressing employment issues within the community should follow through the creation of jobs by the creation of services and amenities.

The nation is coming to recognize that environmental concerns are integral to the well being and health of communities, neighborhoods, cities, states, and the nation at large. The green movement is beginning to sweep all industries; even Wal-Mart is catching on. The HACLA has marked environmental sustainability as one of its development goals. “In all aspects of the development, environmental considerations should be paramount.” (ULI, 26) The Urban Land Institute recommended that HACLA use green practices and infrastructure within the community. These green efforts include, “... energy efficiency, water conservation measures within individual units, evaluation of the feasibility of solar energy, xeriscaping, rainwater reuse

on site, use of pervious paving, and meeting LEED building construction standards.” (ULI, 26) Additionally, to achieve this goal the HACLA plans to meet the standards laid out by the U.S. Green Building Council under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for neighborhood development, or LEED-ND.

LEED-ND is a rating system for neighborhood planning and development that is based on principles of smart growth, New Urbanism, and green infrastructure and buildings. The rating system came out a partnership of three non-profit organizations: the U.S. Green Building Council, the Congress for New Urbanism, and the Natural Resources Defense Council. The goal this partnership is, “...to establish a national leadership standard for assessing and rewarding environmentally superior green neighborhood development practices within the framework of the LEED Green Building Rating System™” (USGBC, 14) Credits are given out based on performance in location, neighborhood pattern and design, green infrastructure and buildings, innovation and design process, and a bonus category of regional priority. LEED-ND differs from LEED in that emphasis is placed upon site selection and design and how the neighborhood relates to its landscape, locally and regionally. (USGBC, 14)

The safety and security of the residents of Jordan Downs has been a concern of the community for many years. The infamous Grape Street Crips and other gangs have brought violence and drug trade to the community. The problem has been ongoing for many years, but has been decreasing recently. In 2006, the Los Angeles Police Depart installed 12 security cameras around the Jordan Downs and assigned 10 police officers to monitor the live-feeds from the cameras and respond if need be. (Doan, 1) During April of 2010, HUD released a publication stating that crime had dropped by 40% within Jordan Downs one year after installation. (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1) The HACLA plans to

use community engagement as a means to ensure safety and combat crime. Additionally, the availability and accessibility of high quality community facilities, amenities, and open space will be used to fight crime and foster community.

Sustainable Urban Design Principles

The redevelopment plans of Jordan Downs intend to incorporate sustainable urban design principles to create a new socially productive urban village. The use of sustainable urban design in the redevelopment of the area comes from the plan's modeling of the HOPE VI program which has made one of its main goals to, “[Build] sustainable communities that include a physical design that blends into and enriches the urban landscape,” (Salama, 97) Community engagement in the redevelopment planning stages also yielded results that asked for the space to be transformed into a green, sustainable, and vibrant urban village. (Public Comment) Sustainable urban principles incorporate green concepts, street styles, architecture, and community to create a more sustainable and stable community. The key sustainable urbanism concepts that are followed within the redevelopment plans are:

- A permeable network of urban blocks, connected to the surrounding neighborhood
- A mixed use, mixed income reconstruction program
- Transportation choice, with access to transit – both bus and nearby metro rail
- Buildings and streets scaled to each other: smaller buildings on smaller streets and bigger buildings facing bigger streets and open spaces
- Sustainable approaches to energy, transportation, stormwater management, and building technology
- A network of tree-lined sidewalks and pedestrian routes
- A comprehensive network of open spaces that provide environmental benefits such as improvements in air, water, and habitat quality

- Promoting health through open spaces access as being vital to the social, psychological, and economic wellbeing of residents (WRT Planning & Design and Daniel Solomon Design Partners, 12)

Street Styles

The plans call for four different street styles: park-edge, Century Boulevard, Typical or Residential Streets, and Mid-block lanes. Building heights on either side of the street are proportional to the street type. Buildings on either side of park-edge streets will have 50 ft. to 60 ft. limits. Typical or Residential streets will have buildings no more than 35 ft. to 50 ft. Mid-Block streets will have buildings heights no taller than 35 ft. Regulations on the heights of buildings along streets help to create a pedestrian friendly landscape where the street size and style compliment the building heights and architectural style.

In addition to streets that are utilized by automobiles, trucks, motorcycles, and bikes, the plan incorporates networks of pedestrian pathways. These pathways weave in and out of the interiors of blocks as well as connect to the larger street grid. Pedestrians will now be provided with a variety of streetscape experiences and given options of how to get from point A to point B.

Building Types

Currently there is virtually no diversity among the building types of Jordan Downs. All of the buildings currently utilize the same two-story attached townhouses style. The redevelopment plans call for eight different styles grouped into three categories. Figure 9 shows the proposed dispersion of architectural styles throughout the residential sections and Table 1

lays out the eight different styles. Figure 10 also shows the variety of building types and land uses in the redevelopment plan. The five main architectural goals are meant to serve as an overarching guideline for all building types, residential and retail, to give the community a cohesive style.

The first architectural design guideline goal – to relate the scale of new buildings to the existing scale of Watts – is necessary to move away from the isolating nature of previous public housing styles. (Urban Studio, Kaliski, Leitner, and Rodas-Corado, 5) In the past public housing developments were specifically styled to look different from the rest of the neighborhood. In order to create a visual community the buildings should be in harmony with the style of Watts' housing. Houses in Watts are usually no more than two stories high with shallow front yards. Watts' housing also follows the regional architectural style of Southern California. The Mediterranean influence of Southern California should carry over to the new Jordan Downs to create a, "...sense of common identity for all residents..." (Urban Studio, Kaliski, Leitner, and Rodas-Corado, 7)

The next architectural guideline goal – to create pedestrian oriented buildings – works to address many issues of the previous automobile dependent Jordan Downs. (Urban Studio, Kaliski, Leitner, and Rodas-Corado, 5) By creating safe spaces for pedestrians to travel upon walking is encouraged. Walking can help to facilitate meaningful interactions within the community.

A range of unit types will create aesthetic variety as well as allow for the accommodation of a variety of households. (Urban Studio, Kaliski, Leitner, and Rodas-Corado, 6) Individuals, families, and seniors will all have housing that is practical to their needs. Additionally, the new Jordan Downs will consist of public, workforce, and market-rate units upholding the mixed-

income value of the plans. (Urban Studio, Kaliski, Leitner, and Rodas-Corado, 7) Creating one community where housing for different income levels are indistinguishable from one another, there will be no hierarchy of residents.

The JDCAC, current residents, and community stakeholders participated in meetings to discuss what building types should be implemented. These meetings concluded that residents prefer townhouses with individual garages and private front and back yards. Residential buildings should be low scale and density to avoid high density high-rises due to concerns of safety.

Green Concepts

The plans for redeveloping Jordan Downs use green concepts to further enhance the sustainability of the community. Mia Lehrer + Associates, a landscape architecture firm, was consulted to create landscape architecture and open space design for the redevelopment plans. Most of the green concepts for this plan lie within landscape architecture and open space design. The three categories that the redevelopment plan focuses on are: open communal spaces, irrigation and drainage, and incorporation of urban principles.

One of the main goals is to give Jordan Downs the convenience and sustainability of an urban setting. Urban street styles that have large sidewalks, space for café seating, benches, lighting, and trash receptacles will be utilized for streets that incorporate commercial and retail shops. These streets are pedestrian friendly with parking adjacent to shops. (Mia Lehrer + Associates, 4)

Earlier we discussed the key sustainable urbanism principles that have guided the redevelopment plans, a few of these call for open spaces to promote the general wellbeing of the residents of Jordan Down. Parks and greenways within the new neighborhood should attract passive and active recreation opportunities, such as reading, biking, walking, sports, etc. The parks are placed so that all residents of Jordan Downs will have to walk a maximum of five minutes to access them. The central park is created as the focal point of the neighborhood to encourage exercise and movement within the community. Within these parks disease resistant and drought tolerant native plant species will be utilized. Trees will be utilized to provide shade for adjacent buildings and pathways. Additionally green roofs are encouraged on school, community, and commercial buildings. (Mia Lehrer + Associates, 3-16) Currently Mudtown Farms is the community garden that is seldom used. The redevelopment plans call for additional community gardens to create local and freshly grown food for the community. Residents of Jordan Downs and the greater Watts area should have access to these community gardens to promote education for all. (Mia Lehrer + Associates, 14)

Irrigation and drainage systems are easy to overlook, but provide a lot of services for the community. The redevelopment plans call for irrigation systems that are designed for maximum water conservation and eliminate irrigation waste water. Additionally reclaimed water should be utilized for landscapes consisting of non-edible plants. This will allow for a reduction in cost associated with water loss and the conservation of water. (Mia Lehrer + Associates, 15) Stormwater and urban runoff have been seen as a nuisance in the past. The redevelopment plans call for a change in thinking, as is common in sustainable urban planning; stormwater and urban runoff should be considered a resource to be harvested. Stormwater and urban runoff can be used to recharge groundwater, alleviating some of the water pressures that plague Southern

California. Rain gardens, infiltration planters, and bioswales, “a vegetated (preferably with native plant material) conveyance ditch designed to allow for the detention and infiltration of stormwater and urban runoff,” can be used to deter rainwater from entering the sewer system in favor of groundwater recharge. (Mia Lehrer + Associates, 23) Urban landscapes in general have a lot of “hardscape”, or areas that are paved. Some hardscape areas such as parking lots or pathways, or areas that do not receive heavy and consistent automobile traffic, can be paved using permeable or pervious paving material that allows water to drain through.

Conclusion

While Jordan Downs has faced a myriad of problems since its creation in 1950 hope for a brighter future may still be a possibility. The redevelopment of Jordan Downs is an ambitious project yet with the full support of the government the community may have a fighting chance. This make-over is not only a cosmetic procedure, the human capital plans, architectural readjustment, and environmental justice qualities are all important and necessary to combating social justice in this region.

Jordan Downs no longer needs quick-fix solutions to its issues. Instead with novel plans of redevelopment the US government is now working towards treating the source problems such as poverty, lack of environmental health, and substandard housing. The community of Jordan Downs has been aware of these problems for some time, but due to lack of understanding of the political process due to the lack of understanding of the political processes that could have changed the situation in Watts the problems went unattended for many years and escalated to a

sort of crisis situation. This lack of understanding can only be attributed to the social exclusion that Jordan Down has experienced.

The years of community development that have been lost due to lack of government management and intervention in one of its own project can never be recovered. The history of Watts and Jordan Downs will forever be with the community. This is not to say that the community will never be able to break free of its past, rather this history will serve as a reminder of how far the community has come since its inception. The social exclusion that has occurred as a result of the community's issues can and has already been seen as a platform for the community to have its opinions, beliefs, and concerns voiced.

Redevelopment using the best practice of community engagement is the best option for a social inclusion program in Jordan Downs. The community has been crying for a very long time and with the human capital plans of the redevelopment master plan the community now has a forum to be heard. With the formation of JDCAC the HACLA hopes to encourage community engagement, yet the system seems to be a one way street. The JDCAC meets with community leaders and relays messages back and forth from the community to the HACLA, but in the end the HACLA will be making the decisions, hopefully taking the community's demands into consideration, but this is not guaranteed. Redevelopment is not the magical fix that will make all of the problems of Jordan Downs disappear overnight. Instead redevelopment will remove the hostile atmosphere that surrounds Jordan Downs and replace it with one of hope. This hope signifies the government's faith in the community of Jordan Downs to one day be a self-sufficient, socially active, and sustainable community. (Figure 11)

Part III

Where Do We Go From Here?

Public Housing Dilemmas

Social Exclusion

We have discussed the history of the institution that implemented public housing in the U.S. and have reviewed two housing projects that have failed. I argue that the architecture and environmental health of public housing developments combine to produce public housing communities with socially excluded residents. In this study social exclusion is understood as the denial of social citizenship, or ability and freedom to participate in the economy, society, or politics to certain groups due to, "...processes of stigmatisation and restrictive or oppressive legislation and law enforcement, and forms or institutional discrimination." (Somerville, 762)

The way social exclusion is interpreted depends on which approach(es) to social exclusion we apply to our issue. For this critique the best-fitting approach is the "structural approach". In this methodology the source of social exclusion is seen as, "...lying in the structured inequality which disadvantages particular groups in society..." (Somerville, 766) The structural inequality that I wish to critique is the physical condition of public housing. There has been a failure, on the government's part, to provide and maintain sufficient housing for those who need public assistance to secure housing, and consequently the tenants have been destabilized. Social exclusion in this case has been fueled by institutional policies such as income limits and site selection.

In addition to institutionally created social exclusion, public housing communities also face social exclusion created by members of society that are considered to follow the societal "norm". This population of society normally consists of individuals that, "...have the

opportunity and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social, and cultural activities which are considered the societal norm,” (Boushey, 1), or the socially included.

Access to adequate housing and freedom to choose where one lives are societal norms, therefore forcing public housing to fill the role of a “last resort” choice. Gaining the choice to live where one wants left those without as much choice, usually those with less income, with the housing that no one else wanted: “...of poor design and quality, expensive to heat, in bleak environments, [and] often isolated on the edge of towns and cities.” (Taylor, 820) Additionally these unwanted areas often lack attractive amenities, leaving the area without much activity at all. Jordan Downs exemplifies this as there are no shopping centers or even grocery stores within walking distance. Categorizing public housing as a “last resort” measure has started a vicious cycle of social exclusion. (Figure 11)

The cycle of social exclusion begins with the widely accepted, by both those living within public housing and outside beliefs, stigma that it is the only remaining option for those who can not afford market-rate housing. Those who follow societal norms, or the socially included, prefer not to live near or in public housing as they have the capital to not do so. The most extravagant homes are built far away from public housing, usually in the suburbs, creating physical distance and consequently an economically and architecturally segregated space; segregation is a specific form of social exclusion. (Fremstad, 5) Jordan Downs currently does not have a single tenant living in the development that pays market-rate rent. This is an indicator that the economically stable, and often – but not always – socially included, both *choose* and at the same time are *forced* to stay out of neighborhoods with public housing. They are forced to stay out of the actual public housing development by HUD imposed income limits. At the same time the socially included choose to stay away from neighborhoods with public housing

developments by stigmatizing both the actual developments and the tenants living within them. “Americans tend to attribute poverty to individual characteristics – such as lack of a work ethic;” (Fremstad, 2) This idea that economic, political, and societal success can be achieved through hard work and determination is completely ignorant to the effects of social exclusion.

The next step in the cycle of social exclusion – the internalization of the previous negative image of public housing – happens when the tenants of public housing begin to accept the stigma. (Taylor, 821) The consequence is an internalized lack of confidence in the social capital of the members of the public housing community. Next the outside communities, again those who are, for the most part, following societal norms reinforce the negative image of public housing. (Taylor, 821) The media often only portrays public housing with this negative image in mind. Stories that the media releases on public housing follow a topic trend of crime, violence, and general disparity.

Finally, those who are, with time, able to leave public housing get out of the system. Lil’ Wayne, a rapper from New Orleans who grew up in public housing developments, talks about the “get out of the hood” mentality that many public housing residents hold in his song *Tie My Hands*, “Yes I know the process is so much stress/But it's the progress that feels the best/'Cause I came from the projects straight to success and you're next”. This mentality, which is common, provides motivation for changing public housing policies. Even as those who are currently living in distress make their way out of public housing there are many more that will fill their place, starting the cycle all over again. How can we break the cycle and create public housing developments that do not lock their residents in a cycle of trepidation?

Ideas for Building Sustainable Public Housing Communities

The resolution to the previously stated question lies with the engagement of a community in all social aspects. Engagement within a community can be facilitated through planning of space. By designing public places so that they are attractive and practical for a wide variety of people, the spaces will attract varying people to use the space. Additionally urban neighborhoods are generally compact, with multiple housing units per street, which leads to interactions based on the increased chance of running into a neighbor on the street. By giving residents a chance to interact with the members of their community they are more likely to participate in local policy making, as well as be socially engaged. (Gieryn, 477) The Pruitt Igoe public housing development failed to create engagement within the community by not creating enough open spaces where residents would interact, and this is characteristic of other public housing developments. What rules or principles should be followed to facilitate the social engagement of public housing communities? The principles of sustainable urbanism provide an alternative to the current structure of distressed public housing developments that address both structural and policy issues.

So what exactly is sustainable urbanism? Sustainable urbanism has grown out of three late 20th century movements: smart growth, new urbanism, and green building movements. The smart growth movement came as a response to urban growth and consequent urban sprawl. The legislation that came out of the smart growth movement aimed at creating a sustainable way to regulate land use using guidelines that included: creating a range of housing opportunities and choices, encouraging community and stakeholder collaboration, mixed land uses, preserving open space, and diversifying transportation options. (Farr, 30) At the core the new urbanism movement viewed, "...disinvestment in central cities, the spread of placeless sprawl, increasing separation by race and income, environmental deterioration, loss of agricultural lands and

wilderness, and the erosion of society's built heritage," as issues that could be reconciled with excellence in design and regional planning. (Farr, 32) The green building movement was initiated by the United States Green Building Council. The USGBC first focused on creating individual buildings that are energy efficient and use natural processes to carry out the necessary functions of a building, such as using solar energy to heat or provide electricity for a building. The USGBC has now branched out from only looking at buildings to considering a collection of buildings or neighborhoods. Sustainable urbanism combines the core values of the three previously mentioned movements to create, "...walkable and transit-served [communities] integrated with high-performance buildings and high-performance infrastructure," while keeping density and human access to nature in mind. (Farr, 42) When applied to public housing neighborhoods or communities these principles address the current issues that public housing faces.

Density

The United States views neighborhoods that are perceived to be high density as dirty, noisy, traffic ridden, and lacking open space. These neighborhoods are automatically labeled as undesirable regardless of the actual density of the community and public housing communities are often viewed in this manner. Those who follow societal norms are then encouraged to not engage with these communities as they are perceived to be aesthetically and functionally displeasing. To mitigate perceived density developers can use aesthetically pleasing and functional streetscapes, public spaces, and amenities. Additionally, choosing a mix of housing types provides aesthetic variety and a way to allow for high tenant density without upsetting perceived density. In doing so engagement both ways, in and out of the public housing community can be facilitated.

Mixed-Use Developments

The homogeneity of current public housing developments, in all aspects, truly undermines sustainability and livability. Public housing developments are currently solely residential. This creates a community where people must travel, often using an automobile, outside of their community to carry out simple daily tasks such as, going to work, buying groceries, or accessing health care. The residents of public housing developments may consequently be less engaged with their own community due to a lack of amenities in their own neighborhoods. The lack of amenities also contributes to the social exclusion of public housing developments as outside communities have no reason, unless they have a previous personal relationship with a group of residents, to socially or economically engage with public housing neighborhoods.

A mixed-use neighborhood incorporates residential, office space, and retail business into either one building, usually along a main street or neighborhood center, or all three in fairly close proximity to one another. Mixed-use communities represent a transition back to the design of traditional towns before the introduction of the automobile. This creates a community that is no longer solely dependent on the automobile for transportation purposes. Some of the types of retail businesses that should be included are, "...grocery stores, hardware stores, drug stores, cleaners, child care centers, places of worship, medical dental offices, fitness centers..." (Wheeler, 199)

When applying mixed-use neighborhoods to public housing, we must be keenly aware of establishing retail business that the surrounding community can support. For example, building a Gucci store in a public housing neighborhood would be ill advised; a better option might be an inexpensive organic food store that accepts food stamps. By creating mixed-use developments that are specific to the demographic that they are serving we can increase the

success rate of the retail sector and possibly create a variety of jobs available very close to the residential neighborhood. By keeping jobs closer to ones home we can create a “zero-commute housing” neighborhood where alternative transportation options are present.

Pedestrian Friendly Streetscapes

Most people are willing to walk about one-quarter of a mile before deciding to drive, ride a bike, or return to their destination. (Farr, 128) This decision is often due to poorly constructed streets that are very wide, busy, and lack appropriately sized sidewalks. The conditions on these streets do not offer a place for community members to engage with one another as they act as an incentive to use a car as a mode of transportation or stay indoors.

Smaller blocks and better connectivity neighborhood blocks encourage people to walk, stay outdoors, and engage with the community. Smaller blocks create a shorter distance between each landmark and milestone, creating a feeling that one has accomplished more walking without feeling fatigue. The redevelopment plans for Jordan Downs propose to incorporate pedestrian friendly streetscapes for precisely this reason. Encouraging social interactions can create a vibrant neighborhood that can draw in populations from surrounding neighborhoods thus fighting social exclusion.

Open Space

The Tragedy of the Commons refers to the misuse or abuse of local communal resources when the resources are left to be governed by no one and everyone at the same time. When thinking about open space in urban settings this is often the case. While open space should be structured and governed by the government, parks, gardens, and open space are often created but left without development to create a functional space. “In a conservative era dominated by free-market philosophies, there has been little political interest in recognizing that someone, usually

the public sector, must stand up for the common good.” (Wheeler, 10) Investing in the common good of open space creates a space outside of community centers, residential buildings, and retail sectors for people to interact with one another and nature.

Open spaces include parks, gardens, trails, and greenways that can be used by a wide variety of people to interact with one another and build social capital. It is not enough to create a park or greenway, but someone must undertake the task of creating events that draw people to productively use the space provided. In regards to public housing, meticulously planned open spaces can reduce crime by keeping a variety of people outside at various hours, deterring criminals. Additionally open spaces facilitate interactions, building the social capital of a community.

Reflection

“The perceived contrast between a place and its surrounding unidentified spaces may be achieved through continuity...or through uniqueness...” (Gieryn, 472) The redevelopment of Jordan Downs works towards creating a community through continuity, unlike the Jordan Downs of the past. This creates a Jordan Downs that *belongs* with its surrounding neighborhood of Watts. The Jordan Downs of the past, just as many public housing developments still do today, took the uniqueness route. Gieryn continues on to explain that the uniqueness route should be set aside for landmarks to stand out from the rest of the community. Breaking the homogeneity of the residential neighborhood shouts, “Look at me!”, but public housing developments often do this in a way that creates a spectacle of the low-income residents rather than creating a new socially acceptable standard.

Conclusion

Architecture and environment health of public housing contribute to social exclusion, but may not be the main factors only because they have been recognized as being a fundamental part of the problem. Programs such as HUD's HOPE VI are moving towards fixing the physical conditions of the most severely distressed public housing developments, but the social aspect has not been put into conversation. "Whether conducted in the name of social exclusion or not, it is essential that policy interventions are based on better understanding of the processes which result in disadvantage." (Marsh and Mullins, 758)

The state of the nation's most severely distressed public housing communities has been understood for over a decade. The National Commission on Severly Distressed Public Housing released their full report on the issue in 1992, yet tangible progress has yet to be seen. In this report the commission concluded that, "Severly distressed public housing is not simply a matter of deteriorating physical conditions; it is more importantly one of a deteriorating – severely distressed – population in need of a multitude of services and immediate attention." (National Commission 1992, 46) While, I agree that the issues can not be purely blamed on physical conditions, I argue that action on the critique of larger system needs to be implemented. There are feedback loops in progress concerning the physical condition of public housing, public housing policy, and the population that inhabits these communities that *need* to be addressed. Populations and public housing do not simply deteriorate without neglect. The people who live within public housing are among the most vulnerable in the nation. They are economically, socially, and politically disempowered by isolation and a lack of voice and choice. The neglect that the most vulnerable experience can not be overlooked. Unfortunately to work against said neglect the nation will be forced to revise not only its public housing policies that deal with

disadvantaged people, but also human capacity building, economic, and political inclusion policies. The immense amount of change necessary to rectify this situation has proven to be an insurpassible road block for the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Sustainable Urbanism provides systematic changes that can shake the fundamental roots of the nation's public housing system.

Rather than solely critiquing the non-action or lack of policy making on the part of the U.S. government, namely HUD, I offer recommendations based upon the principles of sustainable urbanism. The principles of these new planning methods speak to the needs of public housing communities, and urban communities in general. These communities need to be liveable places where people are allowed to thrive regardless of their economic standings. Application these very basic and blatant principles will automatically fight social exclusion without much provocation.

Majora Carter, an environmental justice activist wrote, "When we use our gifts to solve the more complex problems of poverty and environment, we unlock the keys to more powerful solutions. It is the time as never before to stop building tributes to our collective failures and start creating living monuments to hope and possibility around every comer and above every rooftop..." I strongly agree with her. We should recognize that programs were instated in the past that didn't necessarily work then, and that do not work now. Reworking past structures doesn't make our nation look bad, but the inability to see the need for change does. Ignoring our problems is not the correct path to promoting innovation and equality. Hopefully our nation's leaders will see the need for reform of the public housing system to finally begin to combat social exclusion.

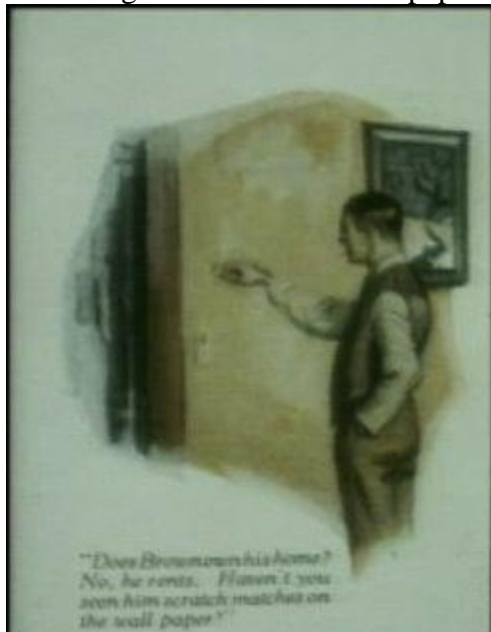
Figures

Figure 1 Caption Reads: "His Castle" Home Owning Breeds *Real Men* It is what puts the MAN back in MANHOOD.



Source: Folsom, H. W. National Association of Real Estate Boards, 1922.

Figure 2 Caption Reads: Does Brown own his home? No, he rents. Haven't you seen him scratching matches on the wall paper?



Source: Folsom, H. W. National Association of Real Estate Boards, 1922.

Figure 3 Pruitt-Igoe Housing Projects



Source: *View of Pruitt-Igoe Housing Project, St. Louis, MO, Hellmuth, Leinweber, and Yamasaki, Architects*. Digital image. Courtesy of the Frances Loeb Library, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University.

Figure 4 Pruitt-Igoe Aerial View



Source: *Saint Louis: Pruitt-Igoe Housing Project: Aerial View*. 1956. Photograph. ARTstor Slide Gallery, Missouri. Comp. Data From: University of California, San Diego.

Figure 5: Aerial view of Jordan Downs



Source: "Jordan Downs." Map. Google Maps. Google, 2011. Web. Oct. 2011.

Figure 6: Street level view of Jordan Downs



Source: Friedman, Gary. *Jordan Downs*. 2009. Photograph. L.A. Times, Los Angeles.

Figure 7: Results from HACLA administered survey

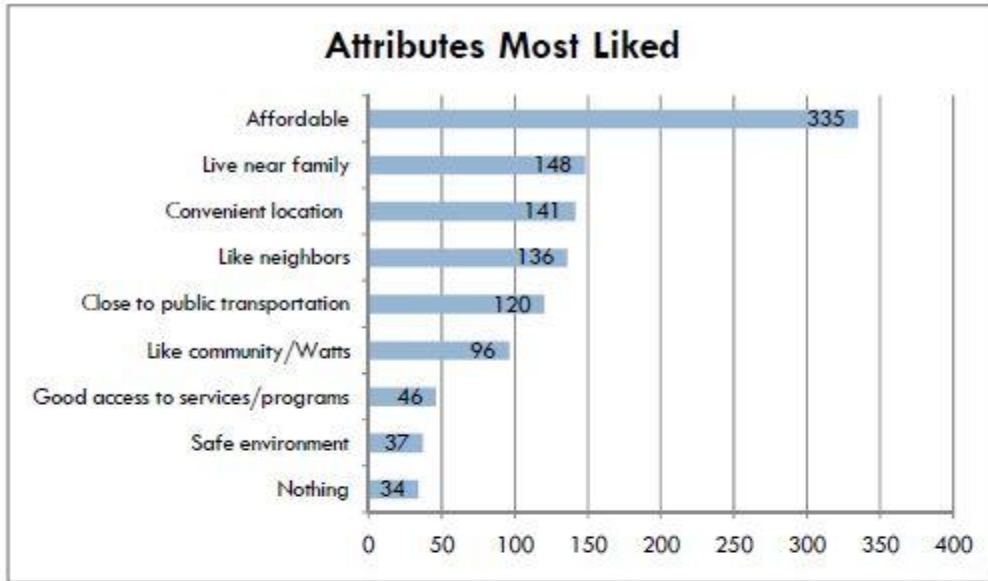


FIGURE 8: ATTRIBUTES MOST LIKED, RESIDENT SURVEY, APRIL 2009

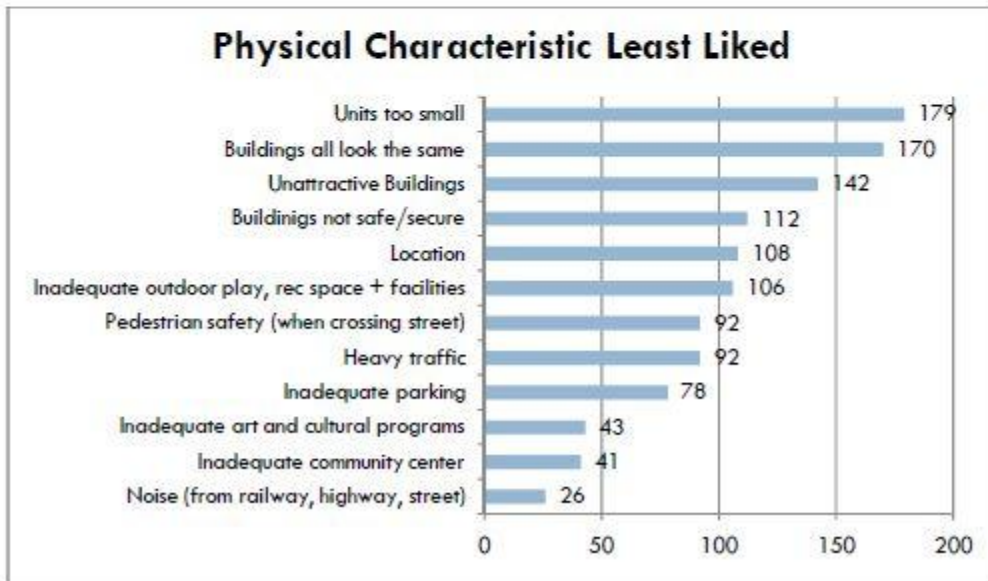
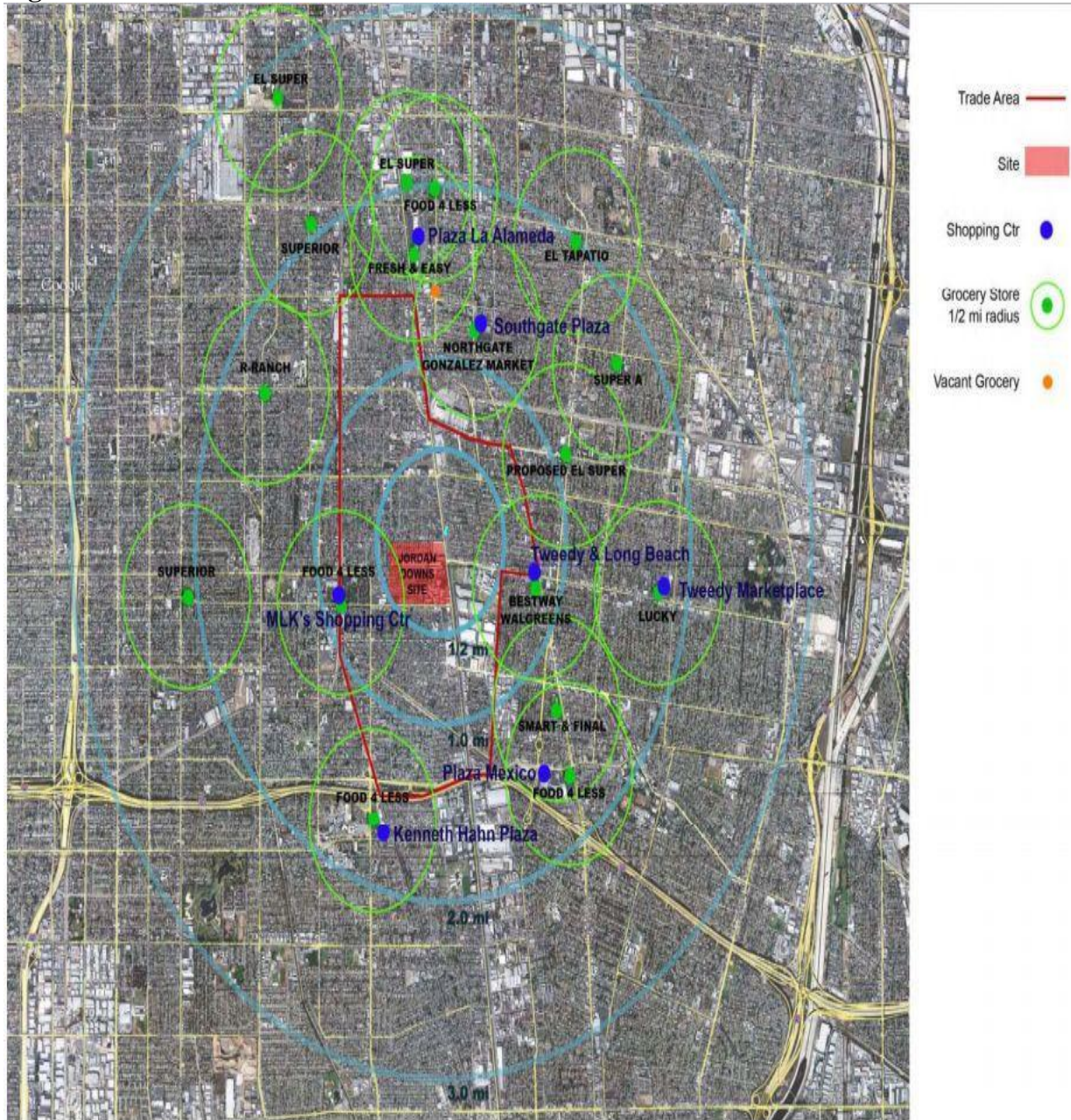


FIGURE 9: PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTIC LEAST LIKED, RESIDENT SURVEY, APRIL 2009

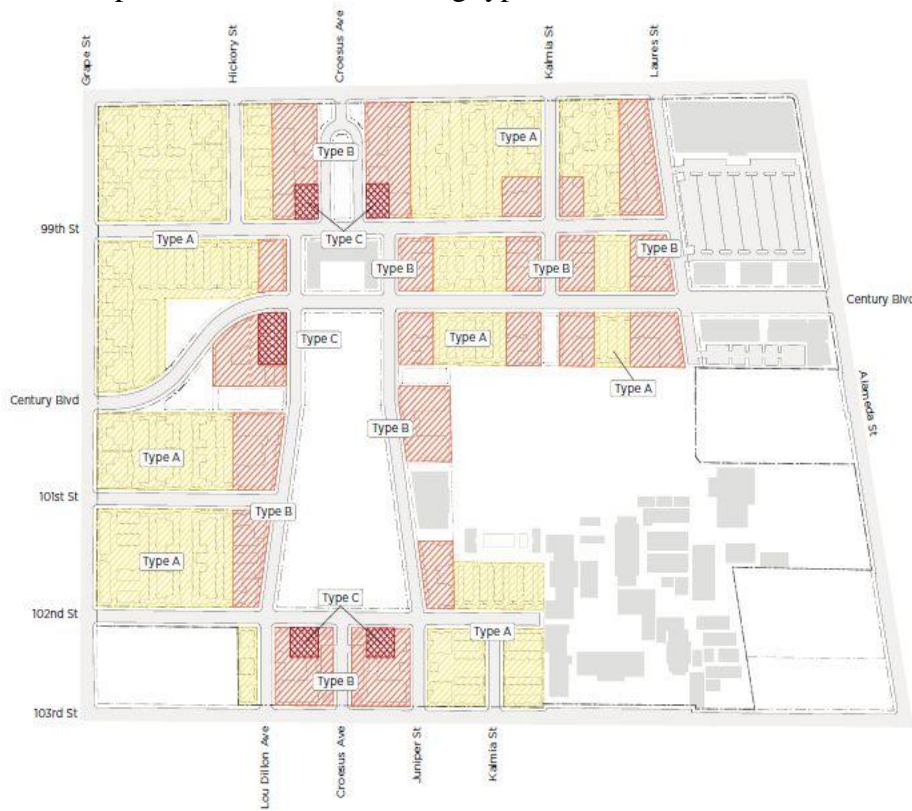
Source: *Human Capital Plan: Existing Conditions and Summary of Findings*. Rep. Los Angeles, CA: EJP Consulting Group and Marva Smith, 2009.

Figure 8: Location of retail in Jordan Downs area



Source: Retail Market Analysis 9901 S. Alameda Street In Los Angeles, Ca 90002. Rep. Beverly Hills, CA: Primestor, 2010.

Figure 9: Redeveloped Jordan Downs building types



LEGEND

- Type A: Courtyard Houses, Townhouses, and Alley Townhouses
- Type B: Stacked Flat Apartment Buildings
- Type C: Limited Residential Mid-Rise Tower Opportunities



Figure 4-1
Residential Type Guidelines

Source: Urban Studio, John Kaliski, Martin Leitner, and Wilson Rodas-Corado. "Jordan Downs Redevelopment Plan Building Types." Chart. *Jordan Downs Community-Based Redevelopment Architectural Design Guidelines*. Los Angeles, CA: Urban Studios, 2010. 15-23.

Table 1: Types of residential building styles

		Style							
		Courtyard House with Open Air Parking Court	Courtyard House with Semi-Subterranean Parking	Townhouses with Rear Tuck-under Parking	Alley Townhouses with Front Loaded Parking and Rear Yards	Townhouses over Flats with Rear-loaded Alley Parking	Stacked Flat Apartments with Ground Floor Stoop Accessed Units or Ground Floor Retail	Stacked Flat Apartments over Townhouses or Ground Floor Retail with Wrapped or Below-grade Parking	Mid-Rise Stacked Flat Apartments with Below Ground Parking
Style		Townhouses	Townhouses	Townhouses	Townhouses	Townhouses over apartments	Apartments	Apartments over townhouses	Apartments over townhouses
Stories		2 to 3	2 to 3	2 to 3	2 to 3	3 story: 2 story townhouse, ground floor apartments	3, 4, or 5 story	3, 4, or 5 story	Up to 8 stories
Open Space		Common courtyard	Common courtyard visible from surrounding public streets	Small semi-private front yards	Private rear yard or roof deck	Semi-private front yards	Common courtyard	Common courtyard	Common courtyard
Position		Around common courtyard	Around common courtyard	Along an alley	Along private alley	Facing public street with rear alley	Around common courtyard	Around courtyard	Around courtyard
Entrance		From public streets or sidewalks	From courtyard	From public streets or sidewalks	From private alley	From public street or sidewalk	Shared lobby	Shared lobbies facing courtyard or public street	Shared lobbies facing courtyard or public street
Parking		Each unit has access to private garage from shared courtyard	Common parking lot below the units	Private parking tucked under units	Private garages facing private alley	In rear alley	Common garage	Shared subterranean parking garage	Shared subterranean parking garage
Ground Floor Usage		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Apartments	Retail or Apartments	Townhouses or Retail	Possibly Retail

Source: Urban Studio, John Kaliski, Martin Leitner, and Wilson Rodas-Corado. "Jordan Downs Redevelopment Plan Building Types." Chart. *Jordan Downs Community-Based Redevelopment Architectural Design Guidelines*. Los Angeles, CA: Urban Studios, 2010. 15-23.

Figure 10: Land uses of the redeveloped Jordan Downs



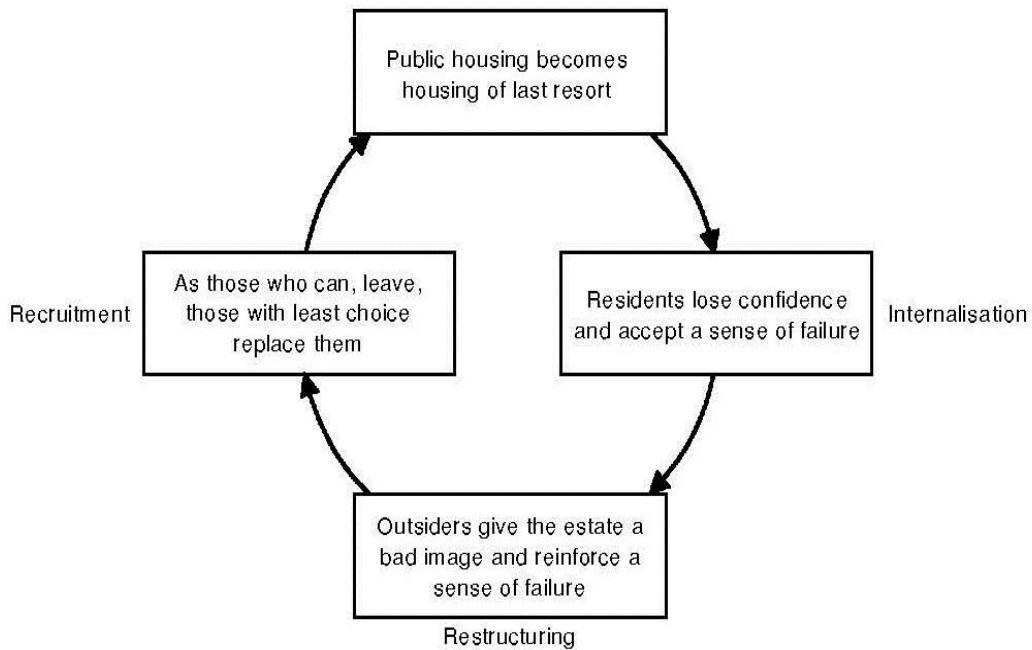
Source: WRT Planning & Design and Daniel Solomon Design Partners. Envision Watts: Envision Jordan Downs: Community-Based Master Plan for Jordan Downs. Los Angeles: Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, 2010.

Figure 11: Aerial view of redeveloped Jordan Downs



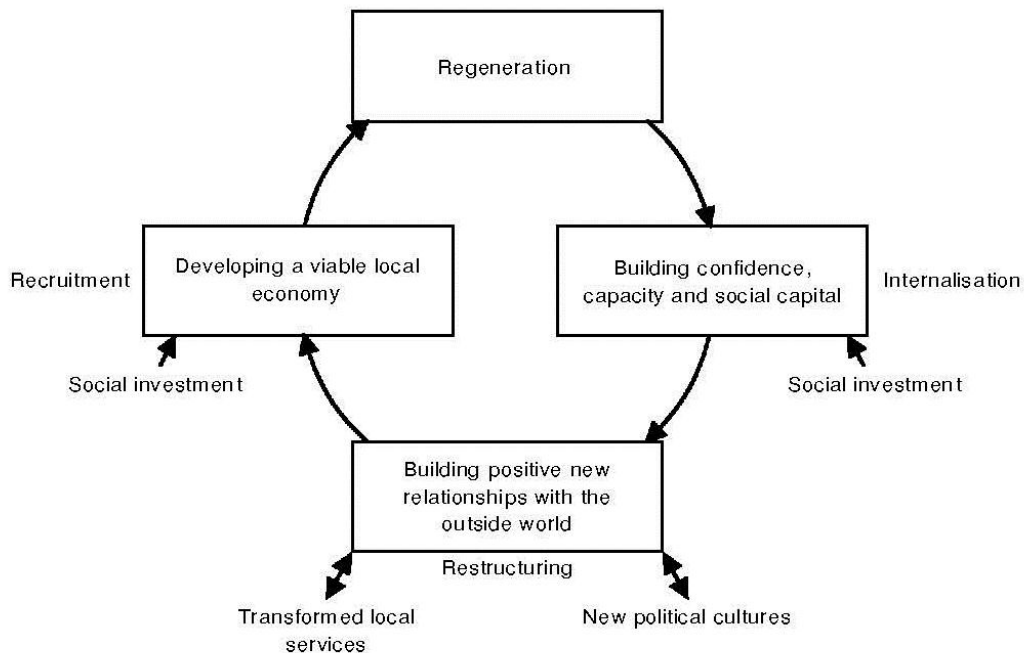
Source: WRT Planning & Design and Daniel Solomon Design Partners. Envision Watts: Envision Jordan Downs: Community-Based Master Plan for Jordan Downs. Los Angeles: Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, 2010.

Figure 12: The cycle of social exclusion



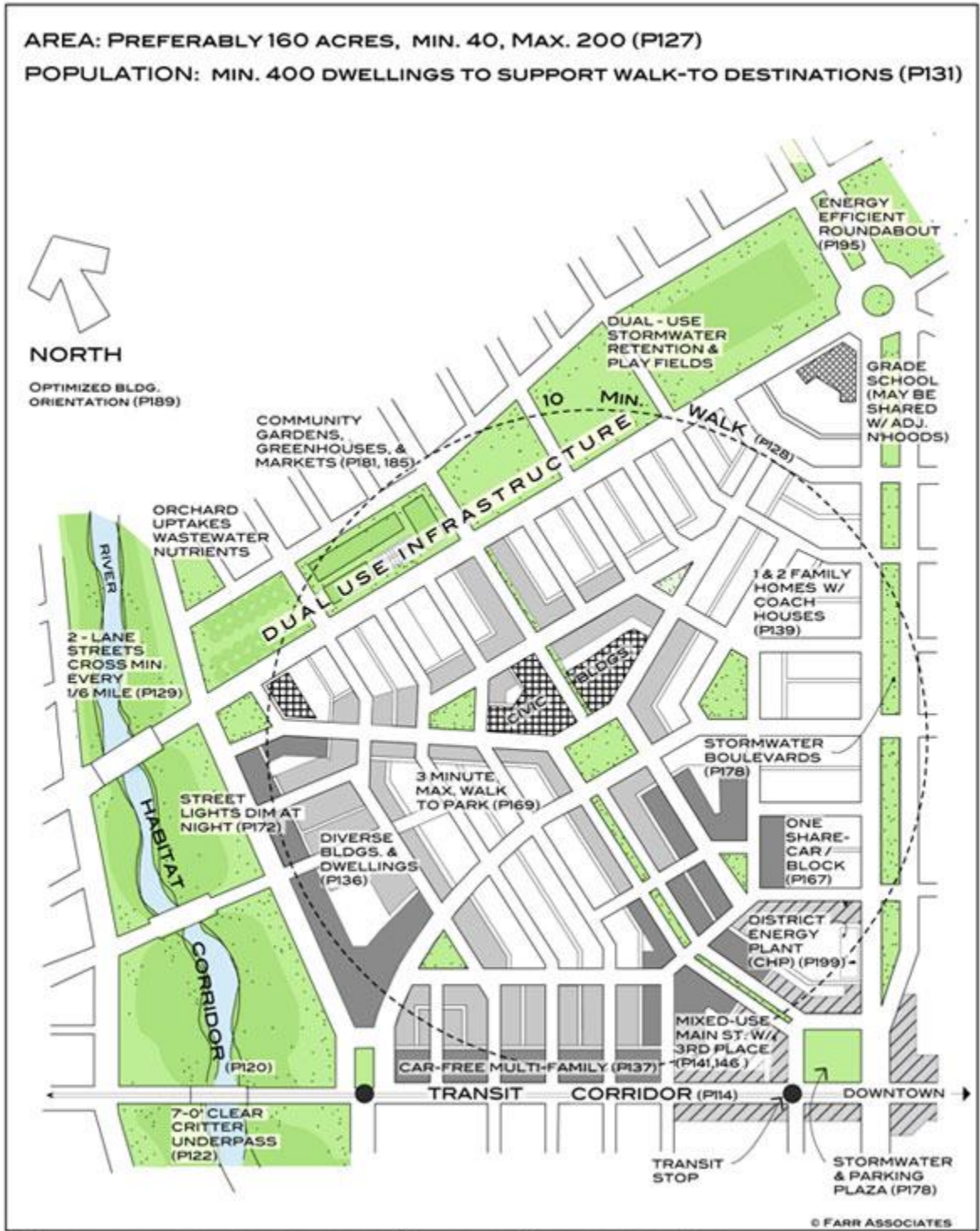
Source: Taylor, Marilyn. "Combating the Social Exclusion of Housing Estates." *Housing Studies* 13.6 (1998): 819-32.

Figure 13: Reversing social exclusion



Source: Taylor, Marilyn. "Combating the Social Exclusion of Housing Estates." *Housing Studies* 13.6 (1998): 819-32.

Figure 14: Updated neighborhood unit



A SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBORHOOD (BUILDING BLOCKS OF A SUSTAINABLE CORRIDOR) VI.1

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