

After the Towers:  
The Destruction of Public Housing and the Remaking of Chicago

by

Andrea Field

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved March 2017 by the  
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Philip Vandermeer, Chair  
Deirdre Pfeiffer  
Victoria Thompson

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2017

©2017 Andrea Field  
All Rights Reserved

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the history of Cabrini-Green through the lens of placemaking. Cabrini-Green was one of the nation's most notorious public housing developments, known for sensational murders of police officers and children, and broadcast to the nation as a place to be avoided. Understanding Cabrini-Green as a place also requires appreciation for how residents created and defended their community. These two visions—Cabrini-Green as a primary example of a failed public housing program and architecture and Cabrini-Green as a place people called home—clashed throughout the site's history, but came into focus with its planned demolition in the Chicago Housing Authority's Plan for Transformation. Demolition and reconstruction of Cabrini-Green was supposed to create a model for public housing renewal in Chicago. But residents feared that this was simply an effort to remove them from valuable land on Chicago's Near North Side and deprive them of new neighborhood improvements. The imminent destruction of the CHA's high-rises uncovered desires to commemorate the public housing developments like Cabrini-Green and the people who lived there through a variety of public history and public art projects. This dissertation explores place from multiple perspectives including architecture, city planning, neighborhood development, and public and oral history. Understanding how Cabrini-Green became shorthand for failed program design while residents organized and fought to stay in the area provides a glimpse into possible futures of an emerging Chicago neighborhood.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my committee members for their instruction and comments on my coursework and dissertation. Victoria Thompson's space and place class provided the impetus for my research direction by looking at Cabrini-Green as a notorious place. Deirdre Pfeiffer introduced me to aspects of urban planning that dealt with public housing outside of a historical lens. Philip VanderMeer read each chapter draft thoroughly and ensured that this dissertation was the best that it could be.

Other individuals at ASU helped guide this dissertation. Karen Smith, through her history and public policy classes, cemented the role of history in addressing contemporary political debates. Janelle Warren-Findley served as my dissertation advisor before she was taken ill. She provided much needed support and guidance in the early stages of my project. Nancy Dallett and the ASU public history faculty provided valuable experiences in presenting quality history to public audiences.

I received support and direction from people beyond ASU. Brad Hunt, then a professor at Roosevelt University in Chicago, was generous with his time—listening to early ideas for this dissertation and reviewing the original project design. He also introduced me to the National Public Housing Museum and Chicago's continued role in public history efforts around public housing.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their love and support. My sister Leah was my major connection to the Chicago area while I stayed in the sun. My mom provided unwavering support and commitment to the prospect of a completed dissertation. My dad read chapter drafts and asked questions whose answers often found their way into the text. Thank you all for your love and support.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  | Page |
|--|------|
| LIST OF FIGURES .....  | vi   |
| CHAPTER  |      |
| 1 INTRODUCTION .....   | 1    |
| I. Background .....  | 4    |
| II. Themes.....  | 7    |
| III. Project Design .....  | 12   |
| IV. Literature Review .....  | 20   |
| V. Place in the Literature .....   | 29   |
| VI. A Note on Sources .....  | 31   |
| VII. Conclusion.....   | 32   |
| 2 PLACE IN CHICAGO .....   | 34   |
| I. Planning for a Midwest Metropolis.....                                      | 36   |
| II. Chicago Community Areas and Neighborhoods as Places.....                   | 49   |
| III. One Community Area: The Near North Side.....                              | 61   |
| IV. One Neighborhood: Before Cabrini-Green.....                                | 71   |
| V. Conclusion.....   | 75   |
| 3 CREATING PUBLIC HOUSING LANDSCAPES: ARCHITECTURE, PEOPLE,<br>AND PLACE ..... | 77   |
| I. Existing Place and the Promise of Public Housing .....                      | 79   |
| II. Public Housing and a New View of Place.....                                | 90   |
| III. Row Houses and High-Rises: Architecture and Place.....                    | 97   |

| CHAPTER   | Page |
|---|------|
| IV. Public Housing as Paradise .....                            | 108  |
| V. Demographic Shifts and Changing Place .....                  | 113  |
| VI. Modernism Out of Favor .....                                | 118  |
| VII. Conclusion .....   | 128  |
| 4 THE MAKING AND REMAKING OF CABRINI-GREEN .....                | 130  |
| I. Cabrini-Green and the Outside World .....                    | 131  |
| II. View from the Outside .....                                 | 137  |
| III. What Type of Place Should Public Housing Be? .....         | 145  |
| IV. The Department of Housing and Urban Development Takeover .. | 155  |
| V. Return to Local Control .....                                | 166  |
| VI. <i>Plan for Transformation</i> and Cabrini-Green .....      | 173  |
| VII. Art and Public History.....                                | 179  |
| VIII. Conclusion.....   | 182  |
| 5 TWO DECADES OF DEMOLITION .....                               | 184  |
| I. The Slow Death of Cabrini-Green’s High-Rises .....           | 185  |
| II. The Shifting Fate of the Frances Cabrini Homes .....        | 193  |
| III. The Destruction of Home .....                              | 203  |
| IV. Collecting Place Before It Disappears .....                 | 209  |
| V. Project Cabrini-Green .....                                  | 214  |
| VI. Rehousing Cabrini Residents .....                           | 221  |
| VII. Ten Year Project Plus Five Years .....                     | 227  |
| VIII. Conclusion.....   | 234  |

| CHAPTER  | Page |
|--|------|
| 6 BUILDING A NEW PLACE .....   | 236  |
| I. Challenges of a New Neighborhood .....  | 237  |
| II. Cabrini-Green After the <i>Plan</i> .....                                      | 246  |
| III. Cabrini-Green in the Near Future.....   | 255  |
| IV. Neighborhood Renaming.....   | 265  |
| V. Life in the New Neighborhood .....  | 271  |
| VI. Impacts on the Near North Side .....   | 276  |
| VII. The National Public Housing Museum.....                                       | 278  |
| VIII. Conclusion.....  | 287  |
| 7 DOES PUBLIC HOUSING HAVE A FUTURE AS A PLACE? .....                              | 289  |
| I. Removing the Architecture of Poverty .....                                      | 291  |
| II. Near North Side High Rise Living .....   | 295  |
| III. Successful Renovated Public Housing in Chicago .....                          | 303  |
| IV. Beyond Housing .....   | 314  |
| V. Private Investment/Public Interest.....   | 316  |
| VI. Changing Plans .....   | 321  |
| VII. Making Place in a Mixed-Income Neighborhood.....                              | 325  |
| VIII. How Can Public Housing Commemorate the Past in a Redeveloped<br>Place? ..... | 330  |
| IX. Conclusion .....   | 333  |
| 8 CONCLUSION .....   | 336  |
| I. Public Housing as History.....  | 337  |

| CHAPTER                                     | Page |
|---|------|
| II. Cabrini-Green as Public History .....   | 343  |
| III. Neighborhood and Place .....           | 349  |
| IV. Empty Places and Chicago’s Future ..... | 351  |
| V. Final Thoughts.....                      | 355  |
| REFERENCES.....                             | 360  |
| APPENDIX                                    |      |
| A Cabrini-Green Development List .....      | 393  |



## LIST OF FIGURES

| Figure |   | Page |
|--------|---|------|
| 1.     | Census Tracts of Chicago 1930, Negro Population ..... | 62   |
| 2.     | Near North Side Developments .....                    | 107  |

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In 1974 the nation was introduced to life in the projects, as the popular television program *Good Times* followed the Evans family, who lived in a Chicago housing project. While the housing project is never named and the address is the fictional 943 N. Gilbert Ave, the setting was widely understood to be at Cabrini-Green. *Good Times* was created by Eric Monte, a writer who worked on many of Norman Lear's socially consensus sitcoms. Monte based it on his family's experience at Cabrini-Green. He sought to provide a more realistic view of black life—one that recognized hard work and determination while also being conscious of the issues of racism and poverty that shaped their world.<sup>1</sup>

While these stories were fictional, *Good Times* brought some real aspects of Cabrini-Green into America's living rooms every week. The credits open with a bird's eye view of Chicago's Loop, the downtown core, before zooming north to the Cabrini Extension high-rises. Shot in documentary style, *Good Times* ultimately showed men, women, and children congregating on Cabrini's grounds. Combining images of people with the architecture of their surroundings, the message sent to the nation was "all concrete, asphalt, and chain-link, plus Afros and bell-bottoms."<sup>2</sup> But the show had other uses for architecture to discuss the ironically named "good times." The sets focused on the indoor life of public housing residents with enclosed spaces punctuated by small

---

<sup>1</sup> "Q & A: The Legendary Eric Monte," *Soul Train*, January 15, 2014, <http://soultrain.com/2014/01/15/qa-legendary-eric-monte/>, accessed January 25, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Ned Cramer, "Good Times," *Architect's Magazine*, April 28, 2011, [http://www.architectmagazine.com/design/editorial/good-times\\_o](http://www.architectmagazine.com/design/editorial/good-times_o), accessed January 25, 2017.

windows with limited views. For viewers, this design suggested that the American Dream was not a realistic possibility for every American.<sup>3</sup>

*Good Times* would not be the only time Cabrini-Green was broadcast to the nation. While television broadcast Cabrini-Green to the nation's homes as a sitcom; it would appear on their movie screens as horror. Bernard Rose, a British filmmaker described his process for placing his most famous horror film: "I spent some time there and I realized that this was an incredible arena for a horror movie because it was a place of such palpable fear."<sup>4</sup> Set in Cabrini-Green, 1992's *Candyman* relied on people's very real fear about urban public housing and added supernatural scares to explain the feared violence and decay. Cabrini-Green, in many ways, makes the film. One analysis of the film described the appearance of Cabrini-Green, noting it was presented as "a neglected island in an urban sea, a place whose soul-deadening decrepitude looked all the more pronounced thanks to the prosperity surrounding it."<sup>5</sup> The environment projected to viewers was augmented to increase sense of isolation and decay. Set directors added garbage and graffiti to the landscape, creating an even more desolate vision of urban public housing.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Sabrina Greig, "Times Already Changed at Cabrini-Green," *F Newsmagazine*, March 7, 2016, <http://fnewsmagazine.com/2016/03/times-already-changed-at-cabrini-green/>, accessed January 25, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Horrorella, "Horrorella Talks Tolstoy, Beethoven and Candyman with Writer-Director Bernard Rose!" *Ain't It Cool News*, August 12, 2015, [http://www.aintitcool.com/node/72689?utm\\_source=full-feed&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_term=coolnews&utm\\_campaign=1310\\_RSS](http://www.aintitcool.com/node/72689?utm_source=full-feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_term=coolnews&utm_campaign=1310_RSS), accessed January 11, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Keith Phipps, "Apartment Life: *The Apartment*, *The Landlord*, *Candyman*," *A.V. Club*, February 22, 2011, <http://www.avclub.com/article/apartment-life-ithe-apartmenti-ithe-landlordi-ican-52183>, accessed January 21, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Josh Modell, "*Candyman*: Cabrini-Green and the Fear of Public Housing," *A.V. Club*, July 16, 2015, <http://www.avclub.com/video/candyman-cabrini-green-and-fear-public-housing-221851>, accessed January 21, 2016.

For Rose, the fear of Cabrini went beyond the site's features: "Yes, there was crime there, but people were actually afraid of driving past it. And there was such an aura of fear around the place and I thought that was really something interesting to look into because it's sort of a kind of fear that's at the heart of modern cities. And obviously, it's racially motivated, but more than that—it's poverty motivated."<sup>7</sup> The location grounds the fear for viewers, even if many of Candyman's victims are not traditional white-teenage horror victims. Candyman's lair, which our heroine seeks out, is an abandoned apartment at the top of the towers. These same units were known to be gang hangouts. The staircases are treacherous—another feature that outside audiences would have immediately recognized as part of Cabrini's landscape. Originally, Candyman is understood as a myth, a way for residents to understand the violence surrounding their daily lives. Replacing complex issues of racial segregation and poverty concentration with an urban legend created a perfect place for a horror movie. And for many in Chicago and across the nation, that's what Cabrini was—a horror show.

Almost twenty years later a different art installation brought people to the site to view a very different vision of Cabrini-Green. No longer focusing on the boogiemens of public housing, this art display was highlighting Cabrini as peoples' home. The vision presented at Project Cabrini-Green represented the opposite of *Candyman*—a place of fear replaced with one of commemoration and reflection. Every night in April 2011 small groups and individual art lovers gathered to view an artistic light display designed to get viewers thinking about what was being lost forever. The last residents had been removed

---

<sup>7</sup> Horrorella, "Horrorella Talks Tolstoy, Beethoven and Candyman with Writer-Director Bernard Rose!" *Ain't It Cool News*, August 12, 2015.

in December 2010 and all windows and most internal structure had been stripped away, leaving just concrete block. Artists and local children used the structure to present a different view of life here than most viewers thought they knew. Jan Tichy, an artist and instructor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and his students sought to fill the site rather than allow images to be projected on it. An LED light was placed in each of the 134 building units in the final Cabrini high-rise, blinking in pattern with poetry written by local teenagers about the nature of home and the role this neglected building had played in their lives. As the building went down, the lights would vanish—a call to stop and think about the community’s destruction and an effort to memorialize a rapidly disappearing era in Chicago history.

Cabrini-Green was one of the most famous and notorious public housing projects in America. While many public housing communities would be familiar to those in or around them, Cabrini became a national symbol. Cabrini-Green, through debates over public policy and artistic expression about urban living, came to have a life of its own. For decades that name was synonymous with public housing failure, urban crime and decay, poverty concentration, and people who had been robbed of their future by the place they lived. “Cabrini-Green” could be spoken with the assumption that everyone understood what that term meant. But Cabrini-Green was also a real place where people built their lives.

## I. Background

The infamous Cabrini-Green housing project existed as a real environment and cultural landscape for over fifty years. Cut off from the Loop by the West and North

branches of the Chicago River, this neighborhood had been separated from the larger city since the 1871 Great Chicago Fire. This isolation made it attractive when the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) looked for new sites for public housing in the late 1930s. The neighborhood developed in three phases. The Frances Cabrini Homes opened in 1942 with 586 units in fifty-four two and three-story row houses. The first expansion, Cabrini Extension, was completed in 1958, adding 2,056 units in fifteen high-rises. These buildings would become known as the “Reds,” a comment on their red brick infill. The final eight building addition, the William Green Homes, opened in 1962. Known as the “Whites” for their concrete block façade, they added 1,096 units to the neighborhood. This architecture, part of the modern architecture movement that defines much of Chicago’s skyline, became synonymous with poor, overlooked residents warehoused in foreign landscapes, separated from the real city by rivers and expressways.

Before its destruction, Cabrini-Green was criticized as a haven for gangs, crime, and drugs; a horrible reminder of the hubris of modern architecture as well proof of its failed aesthetics; and the ultimate reminder that American public housing policy was doomed to failure by design. The audience for Project Cabrini-Green, like many people in Chicago, would have been instructed not to venture in this area when it was a massive public housing project. Yet, these art viewers described feeling safe in the community and even commented that the building had a form of modernist beauty. How was it possible for one site’s meaning to change so dramatically? What does it say about the role of presentation in the creation of place?

My study of the overlap of placemaking and public policy surrounding Cabrini-Green assesses how the ways that people understand particular locations influence the

way we deal with these spaces and the people who reside there. For decades Chicago public housing has been viewed as some of the nation's worst. Places like Cabrini-Green and Robert Taylor Homes became infamous in the 1980s and 1990s, often used as proof that high-rise public housing was destined for mass scale failure as residents were helpless to prevent the spread of violence, crimes, and drugs. Even modern architecture, once thought to be a way to give the working poor access to the best of urban middle class apartment living, is seen as complicit in public housing's greatest missteps. The concrete block facade with small window openings breaking up a blank wall were mental images for Americans distinguishing between public housing from the rest of the cityscape.

Cabrini-Green is a useful place for study because it is undergoing significant change with a robust debate over what should be built in the wake of massive demolition and who should be served by the new community. Over the past 15 years the CHA has undertaken an ambitious plan to reinvent public housing, known as the *Plan for Transformation*, by tearing down thousands of units in iconic public housing high-rises and replacing them with new, more integrated community developments. In a research review MIT urban planning scholars Lawrence J. Vale and Erin Graves described the totality of the CHA's *Plan for Transformation*:

It entails a transformation of places, a transformation of people, and a transformation of CHA's own practices. At the most visible level, the transformation has dramatically altered the landscapes of Chicago public housing, both by the elimination of landmark projects of high stigma, and by the creation of new communities and rehabilitated structures.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Vale and Graves, "The Chicago Housing Authority's Plan for Transformation," 6.

Cabrini-Green is a good subject for a study of how neighborhoods change because almost everyone—residents, CHA and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) officials, Chicago city government, real estate interests, and local Chicago neighbors—believed it needed to change, but they differed about what these changes would ultimately lead to.

## II. Themes

One theme of this dissertation is meaning and making of place in urban spaces. The area of Cabrini-Green was one of the first settled by Chicago's founders. From the very beginning, arguments erupted over what the land should become. German immigrants argued they should be able to rebuild their wood-frame houses in the wake of the Great Chicago Fire in 1871. Italian immigrants, who supplanted the Germans, resisted efforts to buy their homes to make space for the Frances Cabrini Homes. These arguments only intensified near the end of 20th century and into the twenty-first, because the land had significantly appreciated in value since Cabrini-Green was completed. Transformation offered new questions about the role of public housing—did it make sense to keep public housing on such valuable land when it could be sold and the proceeds used to purchase cheaper land elsewhere? How could residents who spent their lives in Cabrini when it was at its worst benefit from the newly rebuilt neighborhood? What is the best balance between market driven reforms and the goal of serving communities which are often overlooked by that market? These questions were fundamental to redevelopment of public housing. Yet, the answers have not always been the same. These questions changed public housing—who it served, how it was viewed by



insiders and outsiders, what success looked like. The *Plan for Transformation* is one step in the development of public housing—but the complicated history of public housing suggests that it probably will not be the last.

Place and placemaking play a significant role in this dissertation. Cabrini-Green offers a unique challenge to how place has been understood. Yi-Fu Tuan’s quick definition was “place is security,” where basic needs are met.<sup>9</sup> Cabrini-Green often failed at these qualities of place. Yet, Cabrini-Green existed as a knowable place for many in Chicago. For Tuan, space becomes place when the traveler feels she thoroughly understands the space through which she travels.<sup>10</sup> Making place is a process of exploration of space until it becomes familiar. For many others, Cabrini-Green became a place because they were warned to alter their travels through space to avoid this area.

Placemaking has a separate meaning for architects and city planners. Here placemaking results from understanding how architecture cultivates meaningful interactions at the foundation of a “sense of place.”<sup>11</sup> The early decades of the Frances Cabrini Homes offered an example for how careful architecture formed the foundation for successful communities with a clear “sense of place.” This kept them desirable within the Cabrini community even as the high-rises saw their desire decline. The Cabrini Extension and William Green Homes high-rises created a distinct sense of place as architectural decline allowed for gang and drug takeover. It was this sense of place that would ultimately define the entire Cabrini area and the public housing program.

---

<sup>9</sup> Tuan, *Space and Place*, 3-4.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>11</sup> Fleming, *The Art of Placemaking*, 14.

This dissertation argues that Cabrini-Green did exist as a place, even if it was not always in the ways that theorists proposed. The creation of place at Cabrini-Green existed on two levels. The first was created by residents who made Cabrini a place through their daily interactions through space. Recently scholars have labelled this type of activity “black placemaking.” It is a process of changing hostile, oppressive urban environments into sites of pleasure and celebration through collective work.<sup>12</sup> While traditional placemaking focused on stability and security, black placemaking recognized that these features were not always possible, but that individuals and groups could still create place of connection. The second type of place that Cabrini-Green became was a symbolic one. Cabrini-Green was utilized as a shorthand to reference all the negative aspects of public housing—extremely poor families, isolated from their surroundings, trapped in decaying buildings on dying grounds. Cabrini-Green could become this type of place through national news coverage of Cabrini’s infamous instances of violence and its appearances in popular culture.

The meaning of “public” has also changed over the past century. When it was first created in the 1930s, public housing was a government-funded construction project providing decent, affordable homes to working class families. Public housing was expanded by the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, which created Section 8 housing vouchers. Public housing residents could now rent private units using the vouchers, creating a new type of government-subsidized housing which was not the product of area planning. Renting in the private market, in theory, could open new

---

<sup>12</sup> Marcus Anthony Hunter, “Black Placemaking: Celebration, Play, and Poetry,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 33, no. 7-8 (2016): 34.

neighborhoods and introduced a variety of housing forms into the public housing program. HOPE VI, which officially began in 1992, involved another transition for public housing. The goal was to produce housing through public-private partnerships. The underlying theory between public-private partnerships is that while both the government and businesses can create disasters, working together might mitigate the worst impulses of each and create location-based solutions to challenging issues.<sup>13</sup> This shift was more than a change in how public housing was funded; it was a major shift in design. The cost concerns of earlier public housing created simple structures and encouraged higher high-rises to get sufficient units per acre. Now, the designs would be primarily to appeal to market-rate renters and owners. While the idea of what “public” means has shifted, the challenge remains the same: to create safe and affordable housing for low-income families that can be self-sustaining over decades.

The debate over the future of public housing often begins with desolate towers and moves forward to a future of mixed-income, mixed-use developments. Yet, history is of crucial importance in understanding how public housing grew and changed. History can show how changing expectations, altered circumstances, and different conditions appeared and how people responded to those shifts. Dolores Hayden describes the necessity of doing urban history in *The Power of Place*: “Understanding the history of urban cultural landscapes offers citizens and public officials some basis for making political and spatial choices about the future.”<sup>14</sup> Public housing, with its very public

---

<sup>13</sup> Cramer, “Good Times,” *Architect’s Magazine*, April 28, 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Hayden, *The Power of Place*, 43.

failure, is a necessary subject for urban history. The massive redevelopment of public housing in Chicago makes history necessary to understand what had happened and help shape ideas about what successful public housing reform will look like.

Public history is an important aspect of Chicago public housing's development and decline. It also changed during this period, embracing the concept of shared authority—that is recognizing the authority of communities to tell and interpret their own history.<sup>15</sup> Public housing is an apt topic for this type of reconsideration of authority. Historic debates over public housing rarely permitted much participation by people who lived in the neighborhoods. While government agencies, architects, and city planning had statistics and schematics to bring to conversations, residents had stories about their communities and suggestions to improve how their units could be designed to answer their needs. Much of the efforts to celebrate and preserve Cabrini-Green would include former residents as participants, if not directors. As large-scale public housing communities disappeared from Chicago's landscape, the efforts to commemorate the communities gained momentum, culminating in the planned National Public Housing Museum (NPHM).

The desire to document and commemorate supports public history's shift to encompass a wider variety of past landscapes and subjects. Early public history focused on the homes and sites of historic individuals. Public housing, in many ways, is the antithesis of this practice. But recent decades have seen movement toward preserving vernacular architecture and the lives of average people. This version of public history engages with controversial or painful aspects of human history and seeks to contribute to

---

<sup>15</sup> Frisch, *Shared Authority*, xxi.

a dialogue about how these histories can be utilized to develop a better future.<sup>16</sup> One of the first of these examples was the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York City, a museum that interprets the history of immigration through the lives of people who lived at 97 Orchard, the museum's home building. Efforts to build a public history around public housing take a similar approach, using the stories of former residents to tell a story about life in public housing and the meaning of home. These histories often move residents to an authorship role, centering their experience rather than that of housing authorities, planners, or architects.

Public history is another tool of placemaking. Historic preservation and public history can cultivate a unique "sense of place" by highlighting the area's past and defining communities to differentiate the area from more homogenized urban spaces.<sup>17</sup>

### III. Project Design

*After the Towers* examines the history and future of Cabrini-Green through the lenses of placemaking and public history. From the time the area was an immigrant slum until the present day, people from all over the city, including the neighborhood, have been arguing about what this place was and what it should be. For decades, this debate focused on public policy surrounding neighborhood development and housing.

Increasingly, however, issues of public history have come into these discussions.

Whereas policymakers dealt with theory and design, public history provided a means for

---

<sup>16</sup> International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, "About Us," <http://www.sitesofconscience.org/about-us/>, accessed January 27, 2017.

<sup>17</sup> Hurley, *Beyond Preservation*, 2.

public housing residents to participate through their stories. These actions have become increasingly significant because they represent some of the last connections with a rapidly disappearing past. Public history and public art were tools to preserve residents' stories, mark the transitioning neighborhood, and help outsiders develop a deeper understanding of public housing in America.

Chapter one provides the context for the two major topics of the dissertation: Cabrini-Green and the *Plan for Transformation*. To do that, it examines the development of Chicago's identity. As a city, Chicago has two identities—a city of big plans and a city of neighborhoods. The first identity came directly from Daniel Burnham and Edward H. Bennett's *Plan of Chicago* in 1909. Burnham's vision for a complete remaking of the city to announce Chicago as a world-class city provided the foundation for future city planning. The *Plan of Chicago* stands as a landmark in Chicago, as much as any physical location or iconic view.<sup>18</sup> It continues to play an important role in Chicago's self-identity. Celebration around the centennial anniversary included more than 300 community, educational, and cultural organizations involved in the creation of exhibits, green space projects, lectures, tours, school programs, and new bold visions for Chicago.<sup>19</sup> Carl Smith's *The Plan of Chicago*, a history of the Burnham's *Plan* and its impact on the city, was selected for the citywide reading program, One Book One Chicago. The major city plans that came after frequently claimed Burnham's mantle to make great plans to elevate

---

<sup>18</sup> Smith, *Plan of Chicago*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> "The Burnham Plan Centennial," University of Chicago Library, 2009, <http://burnhamplan100.lib.uchicago.edu/>, accessed February 23, 2017.

Chicago's status. In many ways, the *Plan for Transformation* takes the fascination with grand plans and brings it to public housing.

The second identity, a city of neighborhoods, begins the focus on Cabrini-Green. The University of Chicago Sociology Department, founded in 1892, turned Chicago into a laboratory for city developments. Their research, which focused on neighborhoods and daily life, made these topics major areas of study and helped form Chicago's identity as a city of neighborhoods. One significant development was the division of Chicago into 75 "natural" or "community areas," distinct locations separated from the rest of the city by significant boundaries, each with a distinct identity. Community areas transcended academia and became a popular way to define the city. Community area maps often appear in histories of Chicago and are available for sale across the city. The presence of Cabrini-Green has been a unique feature of the Near North Side community area. For over a century, this community area—defined by North Avenue, the Chicago River, and Lake Michigan—represented the extreme wealth and poverty of Chicago. The area attracted both wealthy residents who built homes close to the lake in the Gold Coast and a series of immigrant communities who could not afford housing closer to the city center and settled in the western portion. The disparities in wealth and, over time, race created a tension on the Near North Side that would define much of Cabrini's history.

Chapter two explores the creation of Cabrini-Green through the lenses of architecture, people, and place. Making the argument for public housing in specific locations frequently meant defining that place as one that could only be redeemed through complete destruction and replacement. Public housing depended on Progressive campaigns against slums and advocates' assertions that such housing was needed. The

Chicago Housing Authority embraced a bold vision for public housing. Administrators believed that neighborhood revitalizations would show the success of public housing and garner public support for the program.

Architecture was important to the program's early success. The first projects were built as row houses, made of brick and concrete, which were sold as an improvement over the wooden structures they replaced. From the beginning, public housing authorities embraced modern architecture. The architecture was simple, with limited flourishes, and distinct. Early advocates believed this unique architecture would further demonstrate the value of public housing—the public could see what it had paid for. Budget constraints and the high cost of urban land development created a movement toward high-rise public housing. This created a higher density for neighborhood development and created environments radically different from the single-family home ideal. For Cabrini, this meant two new high-rise developments—the Cabrini Extension in 1958 and the William Green Homes in 1962—were built adjacent to the Frances Cabrini Homes, making it one of the largest public housing communities in the nation.

The early history of public housing is considered the program's pinnacle. Oral histories from residents of early public housing often portray a completely different place than what public housing became known as. They focus on clean, well-kept units and grounds, close-knit family life, and a close connection between the surrounding neighborhood and the projects. These oral histories present a vision of public housing with a mission towards providing working families with needed support. Public housing is presented as a good neighborhood to live in. This is not an accident. They are responding to what public housing became in their adulthood. Many oral histories come



from people who spent their childhoods at public housing. Those who remember living in public housing during the 1940s and 50s often compare what they experienced to what public housing later became. They present their own story as distinct from the negative qualities that defined public housing and its residents in later decades.

Chapter three traces the history of calls to renovate Cabrini-Green, beginning in the 1980s. Reformers like Jane Jacobs argued that the superblock formation broke from the urban street grid system and the high-rises did not provide the type of housing that connected people to their neighborhood. Together, these factors had isolating effects on residents, removing them from the city and removing civic support for them. Cabrini-Green was under additional pressure because of its proximity to the Gold Coast. Over time, the barriers that many believed protected the Gold Coast and Loop from Cabrini-Green appeared weaker, especially as neighborhoods between the disparate communities gentrified and established their own desirable identities. At the same time, Cabrini-Green was marked by a serious outbreak of violence against its most vulnerable—the 1992 murder of seven-year-old Dantrell Davis and the 1997 rape of nine-year-old Girl X—that created a national identity of uncontrollable violence.

The 1980s and 90s were a period of debate and re-evaluation over public policy and architecture. New Urbanism offered a new way of designing communities with an emphasis on walkability, human scale, and variety of housing types and resident mixes. Mixed-income communities also arose as a solution to urban poverty. These developments—designed to attract market-rate, affordable, and public housing residents—were architectural and social solutions for urban neighborhoods. Market-rate residents' example and connections were supposed to guide lower-income residents

towards middle class values. Appealing to these same market-rate residents would encourage developers to provide more attractive units to all renters. Public policy was also undergoing a significant shift with the creation of HOPE VI in 1993. The goal was to develop a new way of building cities that focused on poverty deconcentration, reimagining public housing architecture and design, cultivating resident self-sufficiency, and partnering with private developers, local governments, and non-profits.

Out of this period of public policy transformation, architectural rebirth, and HUD control of the CHA came a plan to revitalize public housing in Chicago. The *Plan for Transformation* was presented as a \$1.5 billion, ten-year plan. The *Plan* would deliver 25,000 new or renovated units, creating better-designed units and neighborhoods while contributing to a net loss of 13,000 public housing units.<sup>20</sup> As part of this process, the CHA told a story about public housing in Chicago, but public historians and activists started to tell a different story. Rather than focusing on the buildings, urban street grid, or notable failures, they highlighted the lives of residents. Using local exhibit spaces and traveling museums, they discussed their experience in public housing and its potential as a community.

Chapter four focuses on the physical destruction of the Cabrini-Green buildings and the neighborhood transformation that followed. Cabrini-Green's high-rise demolition was a slow, 16-year process that started in 1995, and ended with the final high-rise coming down in 2011. Part of the reason why demolition took so long was a concerted effort by Cabrini residents and their Local Advisory Committee filing lawsuits and winning consent decrees to ensure the neighborhood developments lived up to CHA

---

<sup>20</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, *Plan for Transformation*, January 6, 2000, pg. 2.

promises. The long demolition also had consequences for the row houses. When the *Plan for Transformation* began, the row houses were marked for rehabilitation as 100 percent public housing, a break from the mixed-income model. But as the *Plan* was underway, the continued presence of the row houses began to isolate them from the neighborhood even if their design fit with many aspects of New Urbanism.

Cabrini-Green's demolition encouraged residents to publicly reflect on the meaning of this place as both a home and a symbol of failure. The demolition process allowed relocated residents to come back to the area to celebrate with those remaining or to tell their story about what life was like in Cabrini and after it. Many spoke about their connection to buildings or the generations of people who lived in the area. Official efforts at preservation and commemoration also began. Oral history collections appeared to tell the story of public housing from the residents' perspectives. Project Cabrini-Green, a massive art project that brought together Chicago's art world with Cabrini students, turned the final Cabrini high-rise into a multimedia art display. These oral history collections and art displays were a means of bringing a different Cabrini-Green to the public, one that some people will miss even as they sought better housing elsewhere.

Chapter five follows debates over what should replace Cabrini-Green. The *Plan for Transformation* included detailed plans about what should be taken down, but what should be put back in its place was marked by uncertainty. In many ways, Cabrini-Green was a poster child for this development. The high-rises came down and some developments have broken ground, but much of the land remains open fields. Some major developments, including a new Target store and mixed-income mid-rise and high-

rise developments, were constructed. In December 2015, the city put out requests for proposals to develop three significant parcels of the Cabrini-Green site.

Cabrini's history experienced an era of uncertainty. On one hand, preservation efforts, like the campaign to save the "All of Mankind" mural and preserve the Frances Cabrini Homes, demonstrated limitations of trying to keep the past visible in a changing neighborhood. On the other hand, efforts to rebrand Cabrini-Green by private developers largely were unsuccessful. Even though Cabrini had long been synonymous with violence and disorder, it was still how most people identified the area. An effort of commemorating public housing as a city- and nationwide story, the National Public Housing Museum, demonstrated the commitment of Chicago public housing residents to telling their own stories about how public housing fit into the urban narrative including concepts of home and justice.

Chapter six looks at how this history affects the future of public housing. Chicago was home to one of the largest public housing authorities, and the CHA's transformation was to be a model for redevelopment. Even though the *Plan* is still not complete, successes and shortcomings are becoming evident. Cabrini-Green is unique for new public housing developments because of its desirable location within the city. The demolition of Cabrini-Green is complete, but the neighborhood that will replace it is still being built. Public housing residents have moved to better units, but some feel like visitors in the neighborhood as different rules about personal behavior and public spaces mark them as different. Market forces have also made it difficult to bring in sufficient interest in these units at their original prices, causing reconsiderations and changes from

developers. These issues should be addressed going forward to make mixed-income public housing a durable model for the city.

While Cabrini-Green was often used as short-hand for public housing in total, it represents one way forward. Chicago has successful public housing renovation models. The common denominator was that each embraced what made the community work, often by talking to the residents. The unique features of the surrounding community area shaped Cabrini-Green redevelopment. The Near North Side is one of the densest community areas in Chicago, with many wealthy residents living in high-rise apartments and condos. Despite calls for public housing to move away from the high-rise model, Cabrini developers have embraced it as the best way to utilize expensive land in a market model. The concern for resident-led community redevelopment also has consequences for public historians attempting to chronicle public housing in transition. Residents' voices provide a counterpart to stories of violence and collapse, highlighting community endurance in the wake of official neglect.

#### IV. Literature Review

Chicago and its neighborhoods have a major place in the literature going back to sociological studies emerging from University of Chicago in the early 20th century. The Chicago School of Sociology focused on the social ecology of neighborhoods around the city and how they impacted the people who lived there. Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, whose development of human ecology and study of outmigration of groups influenced how sociology developed as a discipline, made Chicago one of the most studied cities of the 20th century. Most significant for this study is Harvey Warren

Zorbaugh's *The Gold Coast and the Slum*, published in 1929. His study focused on the unique spatial divide between the Near North Side, a slum area that was home primarily to Italian Americans and African Americans, and the Gold Coast, a neighborhood for upper-class whites. He found that despite close physical proximity, the economic and social distance based on class and race was too large to create a single neighborhood-based community.<sup>21</sup> The work is significant for this study because it provides a window into two places—the Near North Side and the Gold Coast—that continued to hold their respective positions in Chicago as they grew further apart in terms of race and class.

Public housing policy developed in response to the economic and social upheavals around the Great Depression and the New Deal. The early days of federal housing policy shaped how local authorities like the CHA sought to implement housing and who would live in it. In *Modern Housing for America: Policy Struggles in the New Deal Era*, Gail Radford argues that housing policy originating during the New Deal offered the possibility of a different path for welfare policy rather than the two-tiered system of poverty aid and middle class housing subsidies. Catherine Bauer, inspired by the European mass housing movement, sought to get the federal government to build “modern housing” based on a communitarian ethos that could be made affordable through government subsidies. She saw the 1937 Wagner Public Housing Act as a clear movement towards giving public housing the appearance of poor people’s housing, which meant that the program would always appear limited and fail to develop public support. R. Allen Hays presents ideology (conservative and liberal) as the major driver of housing policy during each presidency since the Great Depression in *The Federal Government*

---

<sup>21</sup> Zorbaugh, *The Gold Coast and the Slum*, xix.

*and Urban Housing*. He argues that since the 1930s the US has established the capacity for successful affordable urban housing. What would hinder the long-term success of public housing was the lack of political will in the nation to support these developments.

Known as one of the major failures in American public housing, the Chicago experience has been well documented by academics and policymakers. Arnold R. Hirsh's *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* traces the history of white efforts to confine African Americans into overcrowded and deteriorating neighborhoods. While his book is not directly about the CHA, Hirsh argues that public housing was a significant factor in solidifying the city's racial ghettos. After the Second Great Migration, public housing became another tool of this process since potential locations for the new high-rises were limited to poor and minority neighborhoods. The decision to include these units in neighborhoods already suffering an acute housing shortage led to high rents for substandard units, exacerbated the slum conditions, and cemented racial segregation. In *The Poorhouse: Subsidized Housing in Chicago* Devereux Bowly, Jr. carefully recounts the construction, design, and community of each site as it was built to argue that a detailed understanding of this history is necessary to avoid similar costly errors moving forward.

The most recent history of Chicago's experience with public housing is D. Bradford Hunt's *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing*. He argues that federal and local policy decisions—shaped by internal decisions on building forms and resident selection as well as external forces that limited CHA options—put Chicago public housing on a path that turned a “paradise” into housing of last resort over the course of a few decades. His book also looks at how demographic trends towards

young people exacerbated problems inherent in the program since the New Deal. Hunt's book ends with the CHA's *Plan for Transformation*, a ten-year plan announced in 1999 that re-imagined the CHA's mission and housing stock. My dissertation focuses on how one neighborhood, Cabrini-Green, was altered by this plan as well as studying the issue of mixed-income housing that Hunt sees with the *Plan for Transformation*.

Lawrence J. Vale's most recent study, *Purging the Poorest: Public Housing and the Design Politics of Twice-Cleared Communities*, compares the histories of Atlanta's Techwood/Clark Howell Homes and Cabrini-Green in Chicago to explore the design politics underlying the creation, destruction, and reconstruction of two iconic public housing complexes. Design politics combines symbolic aspects of neighborhood creation with the process of development and redevelopment. He describes the history of public housing as a triple social experiment: phase one, from 1935-1960, was a targeted focus on the working class that could migrate out of public housing as their fortunes improved; phase two consisted of the increased concentration of the poor in "welfare housing" until 1990; and the final stage is a return to public housing aimed at working poor residents more aligned with program's original principles.<sup>22</sup> His focus on twice-cleared communities allows him to establish a longer pattern than decline narratives that guide many histories of public housing.

Other useful studies of public housing consider the role and function of public housing architecture in the creation of a (un)livable environment. In *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention through Urban Design*, Oscar Newman argues that building design was a major influence on the ways that residents controlled their environment. In high-

---

<sup>22</sup> Vale, *Purging the Poorest*, 6.



rise superblocks, like the ones that made-up Cabrini-Green, no single building community or residential group could claim ownership over a vast, sprawling space. In the absence of a sense of community control, gangs and other criminal enterprises established themselves in the area, leading to the perception that they were in control. While Newman's work has been challenged and revisited, it provides a framework for looking at architecture as evidence for the community that lives there.

Gallery high-rise public housing structures, like the ones at Cabrini-Green, sparked a debate in architecture criticism since the 1970s. Published in 1974, modern architect Peter Blake's polemic *Form Follows Fiasco* highlights the shortcomings of the Modernist ideal for architecture and encourages architects to focus their work on urban realities. He advocates returning design to human scale rather than the massive skyscrapers and superblocks that categorize much of modern design. New Urbanism emerged in the 1980s as a reaction against modernism and suburban sprawl. Arguing for a return to walkable cities with mixed housing, many of the design principles were based on pre-automobile developments. Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck, influential New Urbanism architects and founders of the Congress for the New Urbanism in 1993, argue for a return to traditional planning in *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*. The authors use Cabrini-Green along with St. Louis' Pruitt Igoe as proof of "the arrogance of modernism" concluding their section on urban housing, "Good design may not generate good behavior, but bad design can generate bad behavior."<sup>23</sup> Katharine G. Bristol's article "The Pruitt-Igoe Myth" argues that discussions of Pruitt-Igoe's destruction as proof of modernism

---

<sup>23</sup> Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck, *Suburban Nation*, 238-9.

removes significant attention from the role of economic and political issues surrounding public housing as well as decisions made outside of the architect's control. She asserts that this myth is so popular with architects because it allows them to point to design failures in a project that can only be solved by better design with the structures that replace these structures.<sup>24</sup>

In reaction to narratives of failed community and resident decline several oral histories have been published to introduce the residents' perspectives. J.S. Fuerst, former CHA director of research and statistics, conducted oral history interviews with former residents who lived in public housing between 1940 and 1965, which were published as *When Public Housing was Paradise: Building Community in Chicago*. Through these edited histories, he argues that understanding of public housing that stress inevitable decline overlook the early experience of residents who lived in well-managed, working-class communities. The turning point in this history is the 1970s, when CHA management faltered, tenants were not screened well, and the rapid out-migration of working-class residents left a budget crisis. *Cabrini-Green: In Words and Pictures* documents a community that was rapidly disappearing through oral histories supported by photographs of buildings and residents. This work describes what defined communities at Cabrini-Green and how these attributes steadily disappeared as the neighborhood decayed and was torn down. The oral histories provide a glimpse into what public housing was like as a lived experience that challenges some of the outside analysis by historians, urban planners, and city officials. In the foreword to *High Rise Stories: Voices from Chicago Public Housing*, Alex Kotlowitz acknowledges the challenges

---

<sup>24</sup> Bristol, "The Pruitt-Igoe Myth" in *American Architectural History*, 352.

violence poses to a sense of community. He also describes a larger sense of connection that should not be overlooked: “Tenants in the high rises often felt they belonged to something—they were among family and friends, and they had neighbors to lean on.”<sup>25</sup> Even after violence took over much of their lives, residents demonstrated connections to Cabrini-Green as the place they knew as home.

Chicago public housing has also been the subject of several historical and sociological studies. These stories are valuable because they focus on how Cabrini-Green residents lived every day rather than how policy makers interpreted their community. These texts focus on individuals living in Cabrini-Green and other Chicago high-rise public housing sites over a short period rather than the longer periods covered at the macro level by historians. Two early non-fiction accounts—Alex Kotlowitz’s *There Are No Children Here* and Daniel Coyle’s *Hardball: A Season in the Projects*—focus on children of Cabrini-Green as a lens to examine how this neighborhood impacted young lives. More recently, Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh’s *American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto* challenged common wisdom about the Robert Taylor Homes by documenting local efforts to create a community in the face of gang violence, drugs, and hostile policy decisions. The initial stages of the *Plan for Transformation* and its impact on CHA residents and communities are critiqued by various scholars in *Where are Poor People to Live?: Transforming Public Housing Communities*. Many focus on overlooked risks associated with these reforms, particularly how these reforms can be completed while still fulfilling society’s role in housing those most in need.

---

<sup>25</sup> Kotlowitz, “Foreword” in *High Rise Stories*, 12.

Scholars of rhetoric about public housing often focus on how the residents are depicted. These pieces argue that how actors describe residents can be a form of displacement. In “The Subjects of the Inner City,” a study of redevelopment at Halsted North, David Fleming finds that discussions of public housing residents claim neutrality but in reality, present residents in a manner that shifts the debate in the author’s favor. He looks at how mixed-income plans necessarily define people by their income level, which both stigmatizes the “extremely poor” as warranting special areas and denies the material reality of being poor. The debate over public housing in Chicago often collapses race into class. He also argues that participation by public housing residents in debates about their neighborhoods makes them people with a history and agents in their own futures.

In “Displacement Through Discourse” Deirdre Pfeiffer argues that urban elites rename neighborhoods, denigrate residents, and rely on neoliberal relocation narratives as means of resident displacement and part of their designs to redevelop neighborhoods. Her arguments about elite discourses on residents will be reflected in the discourses surrounding place. Discourse, however, was not limited to elites. Cabrini-Green residents adapted established discourses, particularly the idea that housing was a human right, to effectively argue against efforts to push them out of Cabrini. I address the different ways that policymakers and real estate developers used concepts of place, particularly the idea that Cabrini was a “failed” place, to argue that such neighborhoods could not be renovated; they had to be demolished and rebuilt. I build on the resident discourses and public protests to include how public history was used to introduce visitors to the residents’ perspective on their home and neighborhood.

The CHA's *Plan for Transformation* has become the subject of many studies and monographs. In *Planning Chicago*, D. Bradford Hunt and Jon B. DeVries place the *Plan for Transformation* in a long history of Chicago plan making and neighborhood reconstruction. The authors describe the *Plan for Transformation* as “the boldest, most contentious, and perhaps most important community planning exercise undertaken in Chicago in the past decade.”<sup>26</sup> They argue that in many ways the *Plan* was necessary—the high-rises needed to be replaced with better, safer units—but the ultimate success was undone by a lack of planning. Families were moved into the private market with no sense of when or if they would be able to come back. Many projects were demolished before plans to replace them were in under discussion. The residents also proved more demanding than the CHA expected, slowing down the process of renewal with litigation and protest. They determine that the *Plan* improved in recent years as many of the early impediments had been solved and the CHA learned from early missteps.

Susan J. Popkin's *No Simple Solutions: Transforming Public Housing in Chicago* explores the different ways CHA residents have experienced the *Plan for Transformation*. She finds that many residents who went through the *Plan* live in better units in safer neighborhoods. Those who went through the Family Case Management Demonstration, the CHA's resident services program, also saw increases in employment and financial stability. There were, however, limitations. The hardest to house—those families with drug abuse, mental illness or physical disabilities—still struggle, often ending up in unstable housing situations and unable to qualify for better options because they do not meet the work requirements. Another challenge was the fact that children

---

<sup>26</sup> Hunt and DeVries, *Planning Chicago*, 151.

who moved to better neighborhoods still had increased risks of delinquency, gang activity, and drug use compared to other children.

## V. Place in the Literature

The *Plan for Transformation*'s scope and scale has made it subject to numerous studies, journal articles, and monographs. This dissertation adds to this literature by examining Cabrini-Green in the long-term. While many studies start in the 1990s, when the failure of public housing and the CHA mismanagement reached a nadir, this study goes back to the founding of Chicago. This is because the process of placemaking in Chicago reaches back to this era. Without it, it can be difficult to understand two key features of Chicago identity—a city that makes big plans and one based on neighborhoods. Throughout its history, but especially during the *Plan for Transformation*, Cabrini-Green experienced both forces and the tension between them.

Public debate about the nature of place and the promises of public housing are a significant part of this dissertation. The focus on public discourse brings in stakeholders from a variety of groups that frequently do not appear together in public housing histories. These voices include architects, city planners, politicians, city residents, public housing residents, artists, and historians. They present, often conflicting views, about the purpose, success, and future of public housing and its role in the creation of urban neighborhoods. Cabrini-Green is a valuable lens to view these conversations because its name is closely associated with a specific view of public housing—that of a community seized by violence, betrayed by architecture and city planning, and isolated from the rest of the city. The following analysis seeks to balance between the commonly expressed

views of life at Cabrini-Green with the residents' commitment to the community and hope that they too will benefit from positive changes in the neighborhood.

This dissertation highlights public history efforts around Cabrini-Green and public housing. Cabrini's presence in popular culture and key role in policy debates made it an easily recognizable public housing community. The size and scope of *Plan for Transformation* has been interpreted as an attempt to "bury the failures of its haunted past."<sup>27</sup> Public history, in this context, represents a rejection of the belief this past should be buried. Residents, activists, artists, and public historians have attempted to preserve the past at Cabrini-Green. This work has created exhibits at Cabrini and within the larger city, oral history collections, documentaries, art displays, and an anticipated museum.

The destruction of Cabrini-Green occurred alongside two shifts in historical understanding. The first is the preservation of vernacular architecture. Traditionally, preservation efforts focused on unique architecture or homes of famous Americans. Public housing communities, including the Frances Cabrini Homes, have been accepted to the National Register of Historic Places. Over the past few decades, public history professionals have migrated to a memorial museum model. These museums highlight histories that were not traditionally celebrated by history. The act of telling stories to the broader public was a tool used by public housing residents, housing advocates, and public historians and artists.

These historical shifts are significant as they point to ways forward for public housing that do not fit with the national narrative on public housing decline. One of the major breaks from the proscribed solutions to public housing—its architecture—is not as

---

<sup>27</sup> Hunt and DeVries, *Planning Chicago*, 160.

clear here as it might be other places. Chicago is one of the global centers of modern architecture with high-rise buildings hugging Lake Michigan in the Loop and the Near North Side. Cabrini, too, is unique in this fact. This analysis was not lost on many observers—Chicago’s wealthiest could peer into the homes of its poorest and vice versa because their respective high-rises were so close. These complexities are more than just interesting facts; they will have consequences for what comes after. For example, the combination of Near North Side’s wealth and density means that Cabrini-Green high-rises will most likely be replaced with new modern high-rise apartment buildings. If public housing needs to blend in with the surrounding neighborhood to be successful, it is important to understand the neighborhood in which it is located.

## VI. A Note on Sources

The prominence of the main subjects of this dissertation means that there are a vast number of sources that relate to them. But, of course, the specific focus of this study has determined which are the most relevant and shaped my research. A primary focus of this dissertation is how people publicly presented Cabrini-Green to make their argument about public housing redevelopment, community development, and the future of the Near North Side. Public sources are the best way to capture this debate, and almost all are available publicly and many are on the Internet. The CHA, as part of their status as a government agency and a requirement of participation in the Moving to Work program, releases annual reports, plans, policies, and procedures surrounding the *Plan for Transformation*. They have historically released comparable items to make arguments for specific developments. These were the primary source for the housing-based viewpoints.



Residents have publicly spoken out about their life and hopes for the futures. These recollections appear in oral history collections, newspaper and magazine reporting, and public history initiatives.

Archival research was conducted at the Harold Washington Library in the Municipal Research Collection. This archive is the official repository for the City of Chicago and includes the reports and budgets from every city agency, including the Chicago Housing Authority. This repository provided information on how the CHA decided to present itself to the Chicago, including how they present Cabrini-Green in their advertisements, annual reports, and community analysis. It also includes significant references for the Community Fact Books, published about once a decade through the University of Chicago. These sources address how Chicago quantified itself and how that information was used to help shape CHA neighborhoods, including Cabrini-Green.

Other published studies take the different approaches and make use of some different sources. Readers interested in the overall effectiveness and the operation of the CHA would be well served by D. Bradford Hunt's definitive *Blueprint for Disaster*. While oral history collections are an important part of this study, there are not author-conducted oral histories. Those interested in the experience of planners may want to read Hunt and Jon B. DeVries' *Planning Chicago*. Those interested in resident experience of the *Plan for Transformation* should consult Susan J. Popkin's *No Simple Solutions*.

## VII. Conclusion

*After the Towers* is a story of transformations—in Chicago, in architecture, in housing, in history. For some, these changes were a long time coming. Before it was

demolished, Cabrini-Green had been highlighted as a problem dating back to the 1970s. But not everyone saw the move away from large public housing neighborhoods as a good thing. For some it was a correction to urban space that they had long expected. Michael Donley, co-founder of the People's Institute for Housing Justice, described this view, saying: "I knew where I lived a long time ago was valuable. It wasn't a privilege to be here, but somebody screwed up and put us here. And eventually they're gonna get us up outta here."<sup>28</sup> The tensions between a neighborhood famous for crime and violence and residents' fight to remain in that place, but not in those conditions, are central to this work. How public housing came to the western portion of the Near North Side and what will happen to its former residents and what the area will become is the foundation of this exploration of public housing, place, and neighborhood redevelopment. This long history provides necessary context to what has happened on Chicago's Near North Side and how public housing communities can be better designed, constructed, and managed going forward.

---

<sup>28</sup> Josh Modell, "Candyman: Cabrini-Green and the Fear of Public Housing," *A.V. Club*, July 16, 2015.

## CHAPTER 2

### PLACE IN CHICAGO

Chicago has been an icon of self-making. Emerging from the swampland where Lake Michigan and the Chicago River met, it would become one of the most studied, most written about metropolitan areas in the nation. Settlers sought to define the city in relation to the major cities on America's east coast and as a town that saw itself as a great city and then set about building it. In his history of Chicago, *Nature's Metropolis*, William Cronon asserts "No other city in America had ever grown so large so quickly; none had so rapidly overwhelmed the countryside around it to create so urban a world."<sup>29</sup> The city's development was influenced by twin 19th century revolutions— industrialization and transportation. Bounded to the east by Lake Michigan, the flatness of the terrain to the west promised limitless development outwards as the city's economy grew and connected to regional and national economies. The city got its initial form because land was allotted based on its perceived potential to serve as industrial, commercial, or middle and upper-class residential zones.<sup>30</sup>

Chicago was the model 19th century "instant city." From its founding, Chicago was designed to be urban with speculators investing so heavily in the land for a future city that the region skipped the agricultural stage of development.<sup>31</sup> Over the course of the 19th century, Chicago's population grew at astronomical rates. In the decade between 1830 and 1840 the settlement grew from 100 people to 4,470. By 1890, the population hit

---

<sup>29</sup> Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 9.

<sup>30</sup> Binford, "Multicentered Chicago," in *Chicago Neighborhoods and Suburbs*, 46.

<sup>31</sup> Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 32.

1,099,850, making it the nation's second largest city and the model for every other aspiring town and city in the nation. Located at the center of natural pathways and new rail lines and roadways, Chicago's economy expanded and attracted new settlers who brought their old-world cultures to the West's gateway. This level of growth and the pattern of European migration helped establish Chicago's famous "city of neighborhoods" as national and ethnic groups tended to settle together and created identifiable ethnic communities. The city's 19th century development reflected the rapid growth and organic emergence of neighborhoods, but the 20th century saw a growing concern with managing and planning for its expanding and changing needs.

One of the most self-conscious cities, Chicago was always trying to define itself.<sup>32</sup> Two different, often competing, efforts to make place in Chicago dominated these efforts—central city plans and neighborhoods shaped by the ethnic and racial groups who called them home. In both instances, certain voices came to the forefront to create defining visions of Chicago. With his *Plan of Chicago*, Daniel Burnham helped usher in a planning tradition that centered Chicago in its business district and favored big visions for the central area as potentially transformative for the whole region. At the same time, generations of immigrants settled in neighborhoods defined by their ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic heritage and based on ethnic organizations, support services and churches.<sup>33</sup> These settlement patterns created a civic identity of diverse and lasting ethnic communities. These neighborhoods were experienced as part of daily life and documented and preserved by the sociology department at the University of Chicago.

---

<sup>32</sup> Bennett, *The Third City*, 1.

<sup>33</sup> Binford, "Multicentered Chicago," in *Chicago Neighborhoods and Suburbs*, 50.

Their work popularized the idea of natural community areas that remain a part of Chicago's understanding of its geography and communities to this day. Examining these two histories of placemaking will establish understandings of place in Chicago and how it evolved over time to understand the ways in which individual neighborhoods like Cabrini-Green are created to blend with and be removed from visions of what Chicago should become.

### I. Planning for a Midwest Metropolis

Chicago was a prime example of an “instant city” of the 19th century, growing quickly in population and land area. The city could not keep up with the scale of growth, and went without a formal plan for over seventy years. It was the fabled White City from the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition that fostered a new imperative for an accepted plan. Chicago's business elite of the Commercial Club of Chicago contracted architect Daniel Burnham and his assistant Edward H. Bennett to imagine a way to tame the chaos and dirt that resulted from a city that grew too fast and unregulated for citizens to understand its complete form. The *Plan* presented a progressive elite vision that cities could be better organized and on a grander scale with the proper application of rational planning.<sup>34</sup> The impact of the *Plan of Chicago* went beyond its visions for grand avenues and tree-lined parkways along the lake. It spoke to a vision of Chicago, voiced by the city's elites, that the city was one filled with people who work to achieve the grandest of citywide aspirations.

---

<sup>34</sup> Smith, *Plan of Chicago*, xv, xvii.

Over a period of three years, the architects and businessmen behind the *Plan of Chicago* studied the city to determine the best methods to match physical space with improvement ideals. The *Plan of Chicago* was intentionally released to the public on July 4, 1909, as the Commercial Club along with Burnham and Bennett saw this document as a declaration of independence from uncontrolled development, which threatened the city's present and future prosperity.<sup>35</sup> Through images and text the authors encouraged readers to consider Chicago in a larger historical and regional context to understand how this city fit into a planning tradition. "Chicago, in common with other great cities, realizes that the time has come to bring order out of the chaos incident to rapid growth, and especially to the influx of people of many nationalities without common traditions or habits of life. Among the various instrumentalities designed to accomplish this result, a plan for a well-ordered and convenient city is seen to be indispensable."<sup>36</sup> The architects believed that Chicago's newness allowed for major plans, including street widening and park development, to be accomplished with minimal cost and little disruption to the city's growth potential. The *Plan of Chicago* made six overall recommendations to create a better city out of Chicago: lakefront improvements, a regional highway system connecting Chicago with other cities, improvement of passenger and freight rail systems, an outer ring park system, re-arrangement of streets and avenues to facilitate movement through the city, and development of cultural institutions and governmental presences to give the city a sense of cohesion.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Smith, *Plan of Chicago*, 2.

<sup>36</sup> Burnham and Bennett, *Plan of Chicago*, 1.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 121.

The impact of Burnham's *Plan of Chicago* extended beyond the advocates' ability to turn ideas into physical realities. According to Carl Smith, the *Plan of Chicago* and its architect "have become landmarks in the cityscape, as palpable a presence for any planner or civic leader as Michigan Avenue or Grant Park."<sup>38</sup> The *Plan of Chicago* made Chicago synonymous with grand visions for remaking modern urban life. Burnham's admonition to avoid small plans encouraged bold moves for over a century. City leaders embraced the sense of place about Chicago as a city of big plans. Later city plans that did not pass "the Burnham test" were almost automatically rejected for violating planners and politicians' view of Chicago. The *Plan of Chicago* established a model of partnership between business interests and city government to create and execute these large-scale plans that persists until the present day. Moreover, many of the central area plans that the city would formulate and release in the resulting century positioned themselves in relation to Burnham's grand vision.

Yet, the *Plan of Chicago* also revealed the limitations of such planning visions to impact daily life in the city. In his critique of "baroque planning," with the *Plan of Chicago* as the prime example, Lewis Mumford argued that such plans demonstrate "no concern for the neighborhood as an integral unit, no regard for family housing, no sufficient conception of the ordering of business and industry themselves as a necessary part of any larger achievement of urban order."<sup>39</sup> The tensions between citywide plans that start in the central area and work out from there and Chicago's position as a "city of neighborhoods" would continue to appear throughout the major plans of the 20th century.

---

<sup>38</sup> Smith, *Plan of Chicago*, 154.

<sup>39</sup> Mumford, *The City in History*, 401.

Under the leadership of Mayor Richard J. Daley, the process of city planning in Chicago became more formalized within city government. The Daley administration viewed planning as a significant means to connect the interests of city hall with Chicago's business and cultural elites. The Chicago Central Area Committee (CCAC) was founded in 1956 to provide a unified voice for the "growth coalition"—Loop businesses, investors, and property owners. Most of Daley's outreach to Chicago's elite would be through the CCAC. The mayor was the major impetus for the 1957 creation of the Department of City Planning to bring external planning organizations, such as the Chicago Plan Commission (CPC), under the control of city government. In their 1958 report, the CPC determined that 9.3 square miles of the city was "blighted" and 13.3 square miles were "near-blighted." Neighborhoods were considered blighted if they met four conditions: at least 50 percent residential, over 50 percent of structures built before 1895, over 50 percent of residential units "substandard" (determined to be overcrowded or "unfit for use"), and at least 20 percent of substandard units were "unfit for use" defined as lacking heat and private toilets, inadequate light, and requiring major repairs.<sup>40</sup> For the most part, these neighborhoods formed a ring around the Loop and manufacturing districts. The report was designed to see which neighborhoods required significant renovations to achieve standards of building quality and residential density consistent with the rest of the city. Over 25 percent of Chicago's population resided in these neighborhoods; yet, they accounted for only 15 percent of city's total residential land. This same report defined conservation areas, which were excluded from any forced redevelopment, as neighborhoods where the buildings were expected to last for a

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 30.



generation or more. About two-thirds of Chicago residents lived in neighborhoods to be excluded from forced redevelopment.

Chicago planning efforts reached a peak between 1966 and 1974 as the Department of City Planning released a series of major plans with substantial impact on the city.<sup>41</sup> The first of these was the 1966 “The Comprehensive Plan of Chicago” (the 1966 Plan). In his introduction to the 1966 Plan, Mayor Daley wrote he wanted the new city plan to reach the level of Burnham’s 1909 plan. This would be the first, but by no means the final, Chicago city plan that used Burnham’s warning against small plans as a baseline for all legitimate planning endeavors. The 1966 Plan highlighted four focus areas: quality of life, planning framework, policies plan, and improvement plan. The 1966 Plan also laid out three principles to follow: accessibility between city neighborhoods and with surrounding suburbs; opportunity for citizens in terms of employment, housing, and city services; and concentration of new growth around established city centers.

Unlike many later large-scale plans, housing had a significant place in the 1966 Plan. Planners argued that the city required 1.3 million housing units for its population, but that it had an existing inventory of 1.259 million units. Although seemingly a slight shortfall, this difference prompted a major response. Part of the proscribed changes included the creation of districts that required major improvement and rehabilitation covering 2,500 acres that required 170,000 replacement units and 60-65,000 new units on

---

<sup>41</sup> Hunt and DeVries, *Planning Chicago*, 41.

vacant lands.<sup>42</sup> Another feature distinguishing the 1966 Plan from others before and after was the Chicago Housing Authority's inclusion as part of the efforts to solve the citywide housing needs. The 1966 Plan reported that the CHA had 32,000 low-income units and 3,000 elderly units but needed to add an additional 2,500 units annually in private buildings, building redevelopment, and scattered site buildings. They predicted the total new units would number 35,000 over 15 years.<sup>43</sup> Despite receiving high marks from many planners as a vision for a more inclusive city, the city council did not formally approve the 1966 Plan, claiming that the proposed goals were too vague and theoretical.<sup>44</sup>

In September 1973, the Chicago 21 Corporation, including members of the Chicago Central Area Committee, released “Chicago 21: A Plan for the Central Area Communities” (“Chicago 21”). The Chicago 21 Corporation came out of the efforts of city business leaders—specifically Thomas G. Ayers, President of Commonwealth Edison; Donald M. Graham, CEO of Continental Illinois National Bank and Trust Co.; and Gordon M. Metcalf, CEO of Sears, Roebuck and Co.—to address the loss of manufacturing jobs and the threat of African American encroachment on the Loop. They believed revitalization of the central area would ease the city's broader economic and demographic ills. The main text established goals that neighborhoods throughout the city should work towards fulfilling the promise of the 1966 Plan. “Chicago 21” imagined Chicago for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, focusing on the Loop by strengthening the surrounding

---

<sup>42</sup> Department of Development and Planning, “The Comprehensive Plan of Chicago,” January 1967, 11.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>44</sup> Hunt and DeVries, *Planning Chicago*, 45.

residential neighborhoods. Planners divided community areas into neighborhoods with a goal of creating a dynamic urban experience by fostering the already-developing diversity amongst neighborhoods. The Near North Side was subdivided into eight specific neighborhoods, one of which was Cabrini-Green.

“Chicago 21” not only provided more direct coverage of Cabrini-Green than had any other major city plan; the plan designated the neighborhood as one of five “critical priorities” for the city. Remaking Cabrini-Green would serve as a model for revitalizing public housing in the rest of the city. This belief appears throughout Cabrini’s history. For decades, an important aspect of place at Cabrini-Green for planners was that the space could be remade and serve as a model for other public housing neighborhoods. In “Chicago 21,” the authors focused on citizen engagement as the primary method of revitalizing the neighborhood, not the infamous high-rises: “The greatest opportunity to begin a turnabout in the condition of the area rests with establishment of community identity, pride, and participation.”<sup>45</sup> They called for a jobs program, programs to improve public safety in and around the buildings, and an experimental and voluntary ownership program for units in certain buildings. The only major physical change envisioned to the Cabrini-Green landscape was a call for more playgrounds and schools. Despite minimal recommended changes to the structures, the representation of Cabrini-Green differed substantially from images of other neighborhoods. “Chicago 21” included in central collages for regions an image from each neighborhood discussed in the plan. The image for Cabrini-Green was the Frances Cabrini Homes, which emphasized large trees along the road rather than the building, giving the appearance that it was a park or green space

---

<sup>45</sup> Chicago 21 Corporation, “Chicago 21,” 51.

rather than a massive public housing complex. This differentiated Cabrini-Green from other neighborhoods, which were represented by clear images of unique architectural features, public monuments, people celebrating on the streets, and retail activities.

By 1984, the city's focus shifted again with the "Redraft of the Chicago Central Area Plan." The Redraft was aimed specifically at making State Street a retail core to serve as the foundation for a revitalized Loop. The Chicago Central Area Committee and the City of Chicago placed themselves in the Burnham tradition, arguing that the city needed government and business interests to work together to combat overcrowding, congestion, and formless urban development.<sup>46</sup> Business success was the Redraft's goal and how the city could achieve a more orderly form for residents and visitors to navigate. Housing played a supporting role with planners, who largely relied on market forces to solve housing availability and affordability concerns. According to the authors, "affordable, quality housing could be realized only in a dynamic market able to provide new or restored housing."<sup>47</sup> While stressing connections between neighborhoods, Cabrini-Green was avoided in discussions of potential changes in the Near North Side.

The planning strategy of focusing on the central business district as a means of revitalizing the whole city was challenged during Harold Washington's time as mayor from 1983 to 1987. "Equity planning" emerged out of the turmoil of the 1960s, which saw protests, riots, and calls to address long-term abandonment of poor and minority neighborhoods, to create planning priorities that focused on poor and working class

---

<sup>46</sup> Chicago Central Area Committee and City of Chicago, "Redraft of Chicago Central Area Plan," revised November 13, 1984, 8.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 26.

neighborhoods by shifting economic developments outside of downtown and into neighborhoods and passing redistributive taxes to help pay for these efforts.<sup>48</sup> Within a year of being elected as Chicago's first African-American mayor, Washington's administration released "Chicago Development Plan 1984" (popularly known as "Chicago Works Together"), which departed from earlier plans' reliance on business support in favor of city planners working with community-based development organizations (CBDO's). "Chicago Works Together" criticized earlier plans for ignoring job creation and proposing insufficient neighborhood investments. Its focus also reflected the economic crisis surrounding its release: unemployment of 218,000 residents in 1983 (2/3 of them minorities) and loss of 60,000 housing units through demolition, decay, and arson.<sup>49</sup> To answer the city's dire economic circumstance, "Chicago Works Together" served as Washington's announcement of what his administration would undertake, including specific references to 57 "programs" and 30 "projects." The five major goals were: creating job opportunities for Chicagoans, promoting "balanced growth", working to assist neighborhood development through partnerships and targeted investments, increasing public participation in planning, and working with regional, state, and national assistance in these goals.<sup>50</sup>

The focus on government programs and Chicago residents did not lend itself to the more visual aspects of early plans. The final product included one map and no rendering of parklands or future construction sites that made other city plans such

---

<sup>48</sup> Hunt and DeVries, *Planning Chicago*, 67.

<sup>49</sup> City of Chicago, "'Chicago Works Together': 1984 Chicago Development Plan," 1984, 1-2.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

attractive viewing. Instead, the document described detailed programs with specified targets, agencies and groups responsible for each project and program, price estimates and funding sources, and promises of citizen accountability. The shift in priorities and reliance on CBDO's angered some city alderman and bureaucracies who had been supporters of the Daley machine that Washington and his coalition were seen as dismantling.<sup>51</sup> For many reasons, "Chicago Works Together" is in a precarious position in Chicago planning history, because the plan dealt more with Chicago's people and organizations than its physical landscape. With its rejection of a grand civic vision in favor of specific policy proscriptions and lack of visuals and models, "Chicago Works Together" was largely seen to have failed the Burnham test.<sup>52</sup>

The focus on specific neighborhoods continued to be a substantial part of planning in the 1990s. This effort came to Cabrini-Green in 1997 with the release of "The Near North Tax Increment Redevelopment Plan and Project." Working under the Illinois State Legislature's Tax Increment Allocation Redevelopment Act, the city designated 339.8 acres of 1,438 contiguous tax parcels of land in the Near North Side, including Cabrini-Green and surrounding privately owned properties, as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts—a method of public financing through incentives to private actors—"to facilitate transformation of this area into a healthy, mixed-income community and address blighted conditions throughout the area."<sup>53</sup> This designation was created from the

---

<sup>51</sup> Hunt and DeVries, *Planning Chicago*, 73-4.

<sup>52</sup> Bennett, *The Third City*, 44.

<sup>53</sup> Camiros, LTD., Applied Real Estate Analysis, Inc., and Sonoc/Hutter/Lee, Ltd. "Near North Tax Increment Development Plan and Project," Prepared for City of Chicago, 1997, 2.

belief that private efforts to revitalize struggling neighborhoods would fail without government intervention, noting that the \$4.1 million of new construction in designated areas was about 3% of total building in the Near North Side from 1991 to 1995.<sup>54</sup> The plan's objectives called for redeveloping the neighborhood by increasing private investment, reestablishing a street grid matching the larger neighborhood grid, building new public buildings (police station, library, schools, parks, and public spaces), creating retail developments, training residents for job opportunities, and establishing a stable tax base for the area. But this plan meant that city government would not be responsible for selecting what projects would best suit the community or that it would oversee constructing or maintaining buildings. TIF districts provided government support to struggling neighborhoods, but did not require the city council to approve specific plans.

The inclusion of the Cabrini-Green neighborhood in TIF proposals marked a new type of presence in city plans. Rather than a planned redevelopment or complete exclusion, as the neighborhood appeared in previous plans, it appeared as a land asset ripe for reimagining by private developers. In his analysis of the Near North Redevelopment Initiative, Ed Marciniak, president of Loyola University's Institute of Urban Life and prolific critic of Chicago high-rise public housing, concluded that the Near North Side and Cabrini-Green were "a microcosm of the future of Chicago."<sup>55</sup> The city would facilitate private investment in the neighborhood by rezoning land, changing its tax status, allocating public lands, and relocating residents. The goal was to create

---

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>55</sup> Marciniak, *Reclaiming the Inner City*, 16.

easily identifiable residential and commercial neighborhoods, accessible public spaces, and a new street grid that minimized the impact of superblocks on neighborhood navigation. The Near North Redevelopment Initiative continued an established pattern where Cabrini-Green was approached by the city and the CHA as a problem to be solved from the outside; there was little consideration for what the community identified as problems and possible solutions for their neighborhood or how the Near North Redevelopment Initiative could be utilized to improve their neighborhood.<sup>56</sup>

In 2003, a two-year project from the Chicago Department of Planning and Development working with a 24-person steering committee released “The Chicago Central Area Plan: Preparing the City for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” The writers predicted a future full of growth in terms of population and number of businesses, wealth generation, and interest in the central area. They sought to utilize this growth to build a better Chicago focused on sustainable development, including a commitment to parklands and green spaces; walkability; and high-density, mixed-use developments. Rather than focusing primarily on the Loop with the hope that a prosperous business district transferred to the neighborhoods, the 2003 Plan highlighted seven guiding principles to be accomplished through a series of smaller neighborhood plans. Successful implementation of the plan’s goals included: a westward expansion of the central Loop; the creation of high-density, mixed-use corridors along transit lines; development of neighborhood plans that emphasize diversity; an effort to preserve and celebrate Chicago’s architectural and cultural heritages; the establishment of new industrial and manufacturing hubs; the

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 131.



growth of central area educational institutions; and support for tourist destinations and cultural institutions.<sup>57</sup>

The 2003 Plan divided the central area into three districts, each with a specific set of goals based on local needs based on the overall goals for the city. One, for the Near North district, focused primarily on the Near North Side community area but expanded its western borders to include land west of the Chicago River. The Near North district was presented as the city's premiere destination for shopping and tourism as well as a hospital district. The plan emphasized the adaptive reuse of major buildings around the area, including the redevelopment of Montgomery Ward center on Chicago Avenue near the North Branch of the Chicago River. This effort was designed to serve as a bridge between River North, an emerging restaurant and condo neighborhood, and Cabrini-Green. Despite their location within the Near North Side community area, the lands that used to hold Cabrini-Green were mentioned as adjunct districts. They were not addressed directly because of the continued role of the Near North Redevelopment Initiative and Near North Tax Increment Finance District as guiding principles for neighborhood redevelopment.

The impact of Burnham's *Plan of Chicago* provided a framework with which Chicago could be understood as a grand city that did not shy away from great projects. Since the *Plan* first appeared, its definition of Chicago as a place for big plans and big planners has been repeated throughout city planning to establish legitimacy of new plans by connecting new visions to a storied vision of what the city is and can be. The 2003 Central Area Plan went so far as to begin with (and repeat several times) that, "This is no

---

<sup>57</sup> Chicago Plan Commission, "The Chicago Central Area Plan," Final Draft May 2003, 45.

little plan. This is a plan for urban greatness.”<sup>58</sup> This connection to grand plans and progressive civic visions is a major component of how planners, city government, business interests, and sometimes community organizations created Chicago as a distinct entity separate from other American cities or 19th century boom towns. This top-down vision of Chicago valued the city as an economic and cultural engine first. Yet, Chicago also emerged as a “city of neighborhoods” that defined place within the city by who lived in its neighborhoods and what these neighborhoods represented.

## II. Chicago Community Areas and Neighborhoods as Places

While the history of planning presented Chicago as a place centered on the central business district, the city also developed a sense of place on the neighborhood level. Chicago was famous as a “city of neighborhoods.” This identity emerged from the creation of immigrant neighborhoods as individual ethnic communities that made up the city during its transition to industrial powerhouse. Since its original founding, Chicagoans have sorted themselves into neighborhoods along race, class, and ethnic divisions.<sup>59</sup> Residents of those areas, sociologists and journalists, and the greater Chicago community were primary placemakers for each neighborhood. This neighborhood-centric view of Chicago began in the early 20th century as part of urban social analysis from the University of Chicago’s Department of Sociology. Using Chicago as a laboratory and model, faculty and students produced massive studies of Chicago from a neighborhood perspective. This reality was also brought into fiction writing of the time, further

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>59</sup> Pacyga, “Chicago’s Ethnic Neighborhoods,” in *Ethnic Chicago*, 617.

cementing neighborhood life at the forefront of both scholarly and popular conceptions of the city. Throughout the 20th century, the discussion of Chicago on a neighborhood level played a significant role in how the city was shaped and how it was seen.

Chicago was one of the most studied cities of the 20th century, particularly because of efforts of the University of Chicago sociologists, the first American university sociology department when it opened in 1892. The Chicago School of Sociology was a group of scholars and graduate students who founded a methodology of empirical social science that emphasized collaborative research combining direct observation with theoretical work prominent from 1915 to 1930s.<sup>60</sup> Led by researchers Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, the sociologists studied Chicago to create models for the growth and development of modern cities. They developed a school of sociology that “emphasized science and the importance of understanding social problems in terms of the processes and forces that produce them.”<sup>61</sup> According to sociologist Andrew Abbott, the Chicago School’s theory was that no social fact exists without context in terms of space and time, often described as being located.<sup>62</sup> Many practiced what they called human ecology, borrowing processes and methods from plant ecology and applying them to understand the changing urban form. R.D. McKenzie defined human ecology as “a study of the spatial and temporal relations of human beings as affected by the selective, distributive,

---

<sup>60</sup> Bulmer, *The Chicago School of Sociology*, 7, 31.

<sup>61</sup> Qtd in Bulmer, *The Chicago School of Sociology*, 89.

<sup>62</sup> Abbott, *Department and Discipline*, 196-7.

and accommodative forces of the environment.”<sup>63</sup> Human ecology focused on how spatial distribution of populations reflected underlying social and ecological processes.

An important and influential element of this approach developed by Chicago scholars was the concentric city model, which came out of studying urban expansion in a circular pattern. At the center was the Loop (Zone I), the central business district. Next was the Zone of Transition (Zone II), which includes a subdivision of light manufacturing and businesses migrating out of the Loop. The Zone of Workingmen’s Homes (Zone III) included homes for workers’ families who did not want to live in the squalor of Zone II, but who needed to live close to their employment in the “factory zone.” Zone IV was a Residential Zone of upper class apartment buildings and single-family homes. The Commuter Zone (Zone V) was marked for those living thirty to sixty minutes away from the Loop.<sup>64</sup> They were able to live far from the central city but are still intimately connected to it.

Because this was a dynamic model allowing for expansion, the land covered by each zone shifted as the city grew, in a process called succession. But the order of the zones remained the same no matter how large the city got. The area just outside of the central business district, which in some models is referred to as the “zone of deterioration,” was home to the city’s slums and “bad lands” (or vice areas). These slum areas were positioned close to immigrant colonies, which were considered the regenerating forces of these areas of disorganization. In an illustration of the concentric

---

<sup>63</sup> McKenzie, “The Ecological Approach to the Study of the Human Community,” in *The City*, 63-4.

<sup>64</sup> Burgess, “The Growth of the City,” in *The City*, 50-1.

model to demonstrate its ability to explain Chicago's development, the Near North Side was in Zone II. Little Sicily and the Roomers' districts were listed by name as part of the Zone of Transition just outside the Loop in the larger slum neighborhood.<sup>65</sup> The process of succession was thought to end with neighborhood stability. For immigrant communities, this stabilization process included a cultural shift from ethnic traditions to mainstream American culture. The continued prevalence of immigrant neighborhoods and the slum areas in the Near North Side up to the 1940s when the Chicago School did much of its breakthrough analysis on city growth and neighborhood life challenged the idea that succession was a natural process with a clear end.

The university's Local Community Research Committee and Chicago's Department of Public Health were interested in finding a way to divide the city in order to study the city and its residents. The result of this effort was the creation of 75 "natural areas."<sup>66</sup> The idea behind "natural areas" (also called "community areas") was that the city was most efficiently divided by physical barriers, such as waterways, major roads, and railroads. These were considered natural boundaries. University sociologists argued that community areas were superior metrics to study the city across time without being affected by changing census tract boundaries. Sociologists saw each natural area as producing similar social conditions regardless of what ethnic or racial group lived there at any given time and creating a distinct history of neighborhood transition.<sup>67</sup> For

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>66</sup> Chicago's community areas have largely remained constant since they were first created. Two additional areas (representing O'Hare and a separation of Uptown and Edgewater) were added.

<sup>67</sup> Seligman, "What are Community Areas?" in *Chicago Neighborhoods and Suburbs*, 90.

Chicagoans, the true impact of these divisions occurred when residents adapted the community area names and boundaries when discussing their community and its relationship to the rest of the city. They were also significant in how the city continued to be studied and measured. The most significant was the Local Community Fact Book, which was published after every census since 1930. These fact books discussed Chicago on a neighborhood level using the community area names and numbers as stable dividers.

Despite the continued usage of community areas in dividing the city, various critics pointed out weaknesses in this model. In his 1976 introduction to *The Gold Coast and the Slum*, Howard P. Chudacoff noted that there was never a single, formal definition for community area that all sociologists agreed upon. Some sociologists treated “neighborhoods” and “natural areas” as synonyms while others treated neighborhoods as subunits of natural areas.<sup>68</sup> While the community areas in Chicago were widely recognized, it was difficult to apply a clear community area distinction to other cities with the same level of agreement that the Chicago School sociologists generated. The concept of community area was subject to the charge that by remaining constant, community area distinctions missed aspects of community life that changed over time. One example of major community area changes was that several ended up being divided by major expressways after they were established.

While many Chicago School studies concentrated on single community areas or ethnic/racial groups, the connection to the larger urban whole was always significant to the analysis. In fact, Ernest W. Burgess argued in his piece on scientific study of

---

<sup>68</sup> Chudacoff, “Introduction,” in *The Gold Coast and the Slum*, xi.

neighborhood units that, “To think of the neighborhood or the community in isolation from the city is to disregard the biggest fact about the neighborhood.”<sup>69</sup> This connection between neighborhood level and city even transcended the study of Chicago School sociologists. The connections between individual neighborhoods and the whole of Chicago often reflected the social and economic inequalities of the city as some neighborhoods get a larger say in what happened within them while others had minimal influence over proposed neighborhood changes.

The Chicago School is frequently dated until 1934, when Robert Park departed, but a new group of scholars and instructors soon emerged to keep many of the major methodologies and concerns alive.<sup>70</sup> Gerald Suttles was brought in as the primary ethnographic instructor in the 1960s. His work added to the study of communities by differentiating between community types. He proposed three differentiated community forms as part of his effort to demonstrate community areas were not “natural” and relied on a false identity of residential solidarity that existed outside of cultural forces. A *defended neighborhood* was a residential community that “seals itself off through the efforts of delinquent gangs, by restrictive covenants, by sharp boundaries, or by a forbidding reputation.”<sup>71</sup> Residents joined together in united reputation, plight, and fate, whether residents saw themselves as united or not. Suttles put the work of Park and Burgess in the tradition of studying defended communities. The second type, the limited liability community, defined communities with limited or partial community

---

<sup>69</sup> Burgess, “Can Neighborhood Work Have a Scientific Basis?” in *The City*, 148.

<sup>70</sup> Abbott, *Department and Discipline*, 7.

<sup>71</sup> Suttles, *The Social Construction of Communities*, 21.

participation. In these instances, external advocates and adversaries were necessary for community identity, including names and boundaries. Finally, the contrived community was a product of a limited number of private and government actors whose interests limited future development. Large-scale developers owned, individually or combined, major land holdings in the neighborhood and could therefore determine neighborhood future development. These organizations could be private (hospitals or universities), public (CHA), or a combination of the two. Because these organizations held such a large swath of land within the neighborhood, residents often begin to view them as a single entity responsible for community development.

Suttles was one of the few theorists to recognize that public housing neighborhoods did not necessarily fit the community models defined by Chicago School sociologists. Researchers, looking for loyalty among residents as a defining neighborhood feature, were unable to deal with public housing neighborhoods where residents had little loyalty to one another but were very homogenous. He concluded, “Whether or not residents identify with their neighborhood or feel very positive about it, it is something with which they must live.”<sup>72</sup> Public housing appeared in his discussion of defended communities. He argued that a racially and economically homogenous community, like public housing, could be divided. In his example, building color—reds and whites—might be arbitrary, but it provided a difference for unique community groups based on physical landscape and gang control. This, he concluded, was proof that outside actors, like planners and designers, could create defended communities by the introduction of

---

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 12.



difference.<sup>73</sup> Public housing also appeared in his section on contrived communities. Using the Douglas Park community area as the model, he described the Chicago Housing Authority as a major landowner that limited the possibility for future development.<sup>74</sup> He argued that the creation of public housing neighborhoods made it unlikely that private developers would develop adjacent land areas, almost ensuring that the only development would be an expansion of public housing.

In the 1970s new scholars in the Chicago School critiqued earlier works and redefined theory and method. Albert Hunter's *Symbolic Communities* sought to formalize the study of ecological, cultural, and social dimensions of community through use of census data and special surveys to determine how residents view their neighborhood and position in the city. Hunter was interested in how "increase in scale"—whether increases in population or the experience of mass culture—impacted how individuals situate themselves in communities and the ways neighborhoods connect to the urban whole. His analysis focused on variables relating to economic, family, and racial-ethnic status. Using these three factors, Hunter found four patterns of neighborhood change to generalize movements from high to low or low to high status in economic and family circumstances.

Hunter identifies two symbols of community—names and boundaries. His symbolic communities were defined by spatial geography or they could be a product of a "we feeling" that united people into a community even if it defied outside limits. Neighborhood names became important symbols not just for neighborhood residents to

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>74</sup> Douglas Park was the subject of St. Clair Drake and Horace Caton's landmark study *Black Metropolis*.

define their community, but as an external statement about how the neighborhood fit within Chicago's larger framework. Names generally connote a certain minimum size since very small areas did not have recognizable names. The original naming process often reflected the people who lived in that area in terms of racial-ethnic status, economic status, or lifestyle. Hunter discussed the significance of community names in determining their identities:

“Little Sicily” and “Gold Coast” do connote “Italian” and “wealthy,” but they also have explicit territorial referents and are unique. Otherwise “Italian” and “wealthy” may refer to a number of areas, or even to individuals. The name, then, is a symbol of communication that is a shared collective representation about the community itself.<sup>75</sup>

Names were significant because they could be borrowed from surrounding areas to present the desired image of an emerging neighborhood. For example, developing neighborhoods might select the name of more established communities to announce their new identity. In a similar way, neighborhood boundaries were frequently not recognized officially and were subject to change based on residential ideas about how neighborhoods fit in the larger city. Hunter showed some weakness in the “natural boundaries” used by Chicago School sociologists by arguing that residents did not use them to describe their own neighborhoods or navigate the city.

Recent scholarship has returned to study Chicago neighborhoods as a means of understanding how humans live in cities. Arguing against ideas of placelessness due to the rise of digital communities, Robert J. Sampson argued

---

<sup>75</sup> Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 68.

that neighborhood effects, which he described as “spatially inscribed social differences,” were evident across a wide range of measurable social phenomenon and that these differences are as much a part of city life as they were decades ago.<sup>76</sup> Sampson’s work was part of the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN), which ran from 1994 to 2001. PHDCN collected data on individuals and their neighborhoods to determine the link between place on a neighborhood level and social outcomes, including individual outcomes, social structures, organizational and civic participation, and interpersonal networks. Building off the disorganization theory, Sampson proposed a concept of “collective efficacy” that he defined as “social cohesion combined with shared expectations for social control.”<sup>77</sup> The ability and willingness of individuals in a neighborhood to participate in community life was one measure of collective efficacy that impacted neighborhood effects. Evaluating neighborhood effects demonstrated that residents experience higher rates of disorder based on their neighborhood over time even when controlling for the impacts of poverty and racial segregation. Variables such as crime, infant mortality and childhood health, home foreclosures, immigration, civic and community engagement, leadership development, and collective efficacy were organized spatially in the city. His goal was to show how neighborhoods were not just spaces where individual action occurred, but were important factors in the quality of human life within neighborhoods. He argued that at the turn of the

---

<sup>76</sup> Sampson, *Great American City*, 6.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 27.

twenty-first century, the neighborhood is as important now as it was when the Chicago School first went out to study Chicago.

Fiction writers helped bring conceptions of Chicago as a city of clearly defined neighborhoods to a broad public audience. Of the works looking at Chicago from a neighborhood level, perhaps the most notable was James T. Farrell's *Studs Lonigan* trilogy. Details about Chicago, focusing on major markers—the Loop, the Back of the Yards—and more localized markers of communities—individual blocks and the youth gangs that patrolled them appeared throughout the text, giving a sense of daily life in the city from 1916 to 1931. Writing at the same time as many of the Chicago sociologists, whose theories about neighborhoods influenced his work, Farrell saw the city as a collection of “little worlds” unique from their neighbors along racial, ethnic, class, and cultural traditions.<sup>78</sup> Farrell represented the neighborhood of his well-off grandparents, having the world of Studs and his gang centered on a half-mile square along 58<sup>th</sup> Street between Prairie and Indiana Avenues. This allowed him to discuss how social disorganization could also be seen in these better-off neighborhoods and their residents rather than just a product of the slums as documented in major works of Chicago sociology. According to Carla Cappetti, *Studs Lonigan* “both purged Farrell’s memory of the neighborhood and rescued that same neighborhood from oblivion.”<sup>79</sup> Studs’ gang life was a major marker of his story and understanding of neighborhood as place, as each gang patrolled a certain area and based their membership on community identity.

---

<sup>78</sup> Cappetti, *Writing Chicago*, 121.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, 122.

Farrell challenged the Chicago School's ideas about neighborhood change and resident life. He twisted Burgess's concentric model, questioning the inevitability of positive neighborhood change. Combining Burgess' model with his own experiences on the South Side and life during the Great Depression, with Marxist thought, he replaced the succession model of upward mobility with a downward spiral that culminated in Studs' failure to completely escape his birth community defined by dogmas of the American Dream and rigid Catholicism.<sup>80</sup> Farrell used microscopic details about Studs' daily life and his neighborhood travels to subject white middle-class neighborhoods to similar scrutiny that the Chicago School gave to poorer or non-white neighborhoods.

The focus on neighborhood-level developments stood in contrast to the bird's eye view assumed by the city's planners. Sometimes citywide plans considered how individual community identities came together to define Chicago as a city. But more frequently the vision for the central area was treated as more imperative for the city's future than the reality of daily neighborhood life. When neighborhood concerns did make it into plans, ward leaders and city council rejected these plans as being too meddlesome or unfocused. This was not planning to stir men's blood. The tension between neighborhood identity on a local level and national and international visions for Chicago defined the city's history and development. The city of neighborhoods valued big visions and big plans, but it also made space for unique local communities to attempt to define themselves as distinct places.

---

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 138.

### III. One Community Area: The Near North Side

One of the lasting impacts of the Chicago School of Sociology was the adaptation of the natural community area as a popular method of dividing the city for Chicago residents and visitors. Community areas were not only used to explain location, they often became shorthand for residents' social, political, and cultural status. The community area as a place combines its unique history with its connection to the city's urban region. The Near North Side was community area 8 in Chicago Sociology neighborhood maps (see Figure 1). The Near North Side's position in the city demonstrated some key features that would form the foundation for Cabrini-Green. The tension between being very close to the Loop while simultaneously being isolated because of the difficulty of crossing the Chicago River defined the community area from the beginning. This relative isolation would be attractive for Chicago's cultural and economic elite and generations of immigrant communities, creating the proximity of wealth and poverty that made the area unique within the city.

The Near North Side has been called "Chicago's birthplace," because Jean Baptiste Point du Sable built the first cabin on the North Branch of the Chicago River. The Near North Side is one of the few community areas to be divided by mostly "natural" dividers—the Chicago River on the south and west and Lake Michigan on the east. North Avenue, the only street boundary, was the city's original northern boundary. Despite the "naturalness" of its division from the rest of the city, the history of the natural community area has been defined primarily by the extremes of economic of wealth and poverty and Chicago's insiders along with its fringe residents. This history helped create the foundations for economic and social spatial isolation that allowed Cabrini-Green to be

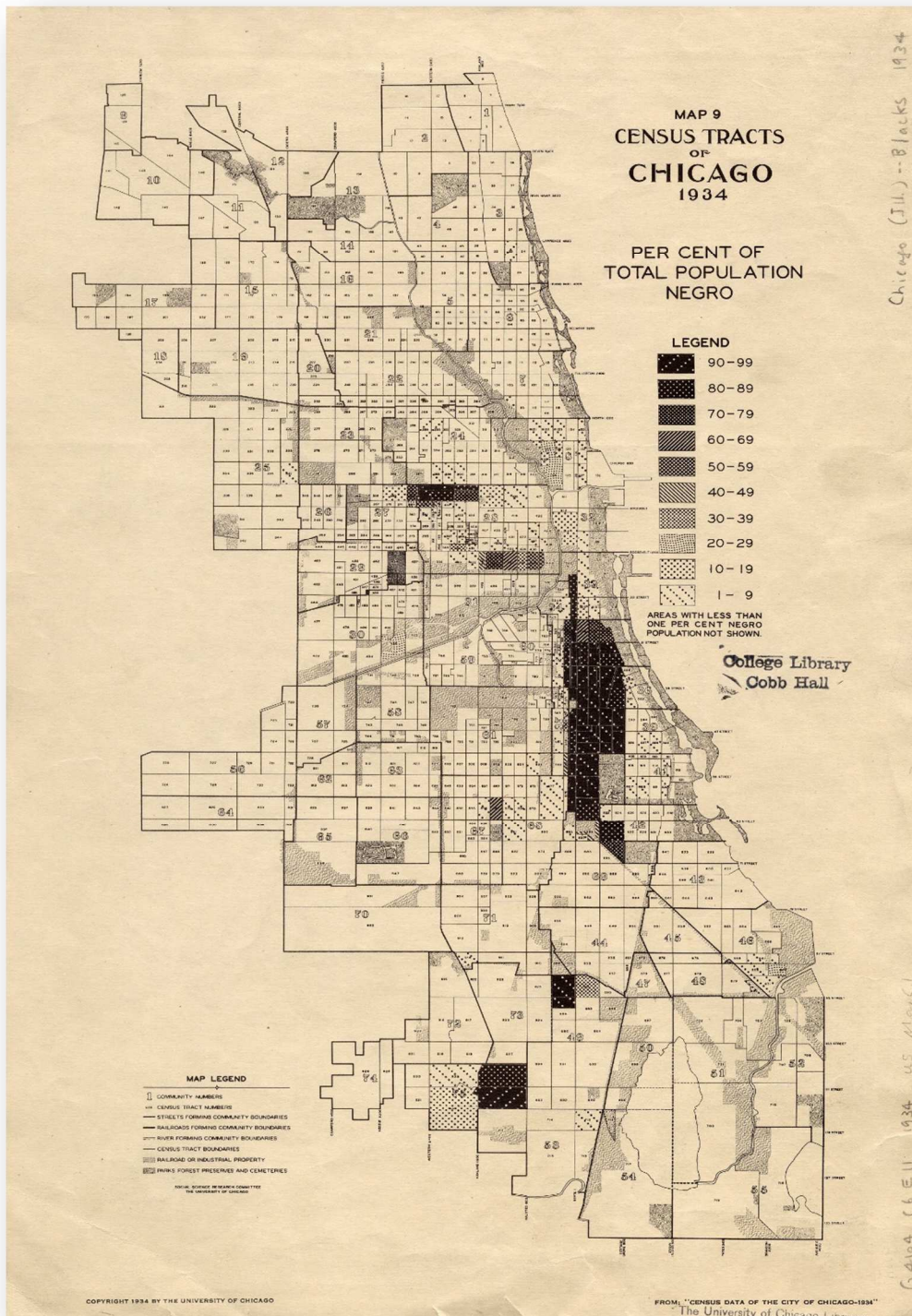


Figure 1: Census Tracts of Chicago, Negro Population. This map shows the overlap of census tracts and community areas. The Near North Side is community area 8, south of North Ave and north and east of the Chicago River. Courtesy of the University of Chicago Library's Map Collection.

built so close to the wealth and social capital originating in the Gold Coast, which, in turn, migrated toward Cabrini-Green toward the end of the 20th century.

The area began to grow after the 1830 platting and development of the Chicago River into a harbor at Lake Michigan. The region grew quickly from two frame houses in 1832, John Kinzie's house purchased from du Sable and a tavern, into a developing manufacturing district with meatpacking plant, soap factory, tannery, and brickyard opening along the north side of the Chicago River. Development faltered in the 1840s as the river proved a barrier to connecting with major growth to the south and west. In 1847 the Galena and Chicago Union, the city's first railroad, ran down Kinzie Street. The Near North Side finally established a permanent, accessible connection with the rest of Chicago in 1856 with the completion of a bridge at Rush Street and in 1857 with two at Erie Street and Grand Avenue.

Many areas of the Near North Side were home to successive waves of immigrant communities. The Germans were the first group to settle in large numbers. One of the areas they settled became known as "Old Town." The German settlers tended to be wealthier than other immigrant groups. The Irish settled around the docks and manufacturing areas, in an area referred to as "the Patch." Irish squatters also lived in a landmass in the Chicago River that would get the name "Goose Island" because they raised geese alongside their homesteads. "Swede Town" developed in the 1850s between Orleans Street, Erie Street, Grand Avenue, and the Chicago River. By 1860, the population of this multiethnic area was 29,922.

The Great Chicago Fire devastated the Near North Side. The only major structure that remained standing was the Water Tower. For a year, no building occurred partly



because of a citywide debate over the creation of fire limits, which required all buildings within the boundary to be constructed without wood. City elites favored these limits to surround the city, while poorer immigrant communities, led by Near North Side Germans, fought to rebuild with wood. While many city elites argued that rebuilding in stone and brick would prevent another disaster, working communities—who could not afford to build with fireproof materials—saw this as an attempt to undermine their position in the city. An October 1871 article in *Illinois Staats-Zeitung* defined the stakes: “[T]he preservation of Chicago as a city where the German element has the same power and social standing as one of native birth depends upon the reconstruction of the North Side.”<sup>81</sup> Ultimately, the 1872 fire limits plan divided the Near North Side with areas to the west of La Salle Street and north of Chicago Avenue allowed to build with wood and those to the east and south required to build with stone. The Near North Side’s pattern of self-reliant immigrant communities reemerged once construction was allowed. In a history of the Near North Side, Dominic A. Pacyga and Ellen Skerrett described the impact of the fire and rebuilding, writing, “The aftermath of the city’s first complete urban renewal program was almost as disastrous as the fire itself.”<sup>82</sup> The lasting damage was in the hundreds of wooden shanties built in the area between Wells Street and the western branch of the Chicago River. These were considered temporary, yet some of them remained for decades. The land that would become Cabrini-Green was outside the fire limits and saw quick construction of wooden buildings in slum conditions.

---

<sup>81</sup> Qtd in Sawislak, *Smoldering City*, 142.

<sup>82</sup> Pacyga and Skerrett, *Chicago*, 42.

The founding of the Gold Coast was credited to merchant Potter Palmer who built a million-dollar home in the swampy area along Lake Michigan in the 1880s. Before this, wealthy families had been settling along the city's southern border. Within a few years of Palmer's construction, major families followed his lead and began building in the area along the lake. The pull of the Gold Coast also changed the layout of the Near North Side. The substantial homes constructed between LaSalle Street and Rush Street were abandoned by their owner occupants and transformed into rooming houses for single workers employed in the Loop. Clark Street also declined as a residential area while the area west of Wells further slid into the slum. Within a decade, the land values in the Gold Coast increased by 400 percent.<sup>83</sup> The construction of Lake Shore Drive in 1900 solidified Gold Coast's status within the city. According to the 1938 Local Community Fact Book, "The glitter of the Gold Coast outshone the other sections" of the Near North Side and the city at large.<sup>84</sup>

The Near North Side was not solely a home for Chicago's elite. Another portion of the area would house a new group of settlers, unwelcome by Gold Coast residents. In 1886 Captain George Wellington Streeter navigated his storm-beaten craft into the Chicago River where he ran aground near St. Clair Street. He declared a 186-acre plot the "Free District of Lake Michigan" by squatter's rights, claiming his boat created this new land outside of the State of Illinois, and encouraged residents to infill around his boat. His

---

<sup>83</sup> DeVault, "Near North Side," *Local Community Fact Book: Chicago Metropolitan Area: Based on 1970 and 1980 Census*, edited by Chicago Fact Book Consortium, 21.

<sup>84</sup> "Near North Side," *Local Community Fact Book for Chicago 1950*, edited by Hauser and Kitagawa, 38.

settlement reinvigorated conflicts between squatters and vice district proprietors who settled “The Sands,” a sand bar created by river runoff, and lakefront property owners. He sold land to other squatters and encouraged settlement. He was successful in holding off police efforts to retake the land until 1918. Lawsuits continued to keep the land’s ownership in court during the 1920s. Streeterville now covers the section of Near North Side from Lake Shore Drive to Michigan Avenue just north of the Chicago River.

By 1920, the area’s population reached 83,936.<sup>85</sup> The opening of Michigan Boulevard Link Bridge in 1920 started a period of rapid expansion as some Loop businesses began to migrate up Michigan Avenue. Over the following decades, Michigan Avenue emerged as one of the preeminent shopping districts in America. On the western fringe, industry and manufacturing began to migrate into the Near North Side over the river, overtaking some of the slum neighborhoods and forcing residents north and east to get away from the industrial pollution. The first attempt to rehabilitate the blighted area in the Near North Side’s western area occurred in 1928 with the completion of the Marshall Field Garden Apartments at Hudson and Sedgwick. The project failed to have much impact, because the rents were priced beyond the means of area residents.<sup>86</sup>

In 1929, Chicago sociologist Harvey Warren Zorbaugh published *The Gold Coast and The Slum: A Sociological Study of Chicago’s Near North Side*, establishing the neighborhood identity defined by extremes of wealth and poverty. His vision of the slum and the Gold Coast shapes understandings of Near North Side as a place until the present

---

<sup>85</sup> “Near North Side,” *Local Community Fact Book for Chicago 1950*, 38.

<sup>86</sup> “Near North Side,” *Local Community Fact Book: Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1960*, edited by Kitagawa and Taeuber, 30.

day. “The Near North Side has the highest residential land values in the city, and among the lowest; it has more professional men, more politicians, more suicides, more persons in Who’s Who, than any other ‘community’ in Chicago.”<sup>87</sup> “North Town,” another name Zorbaugh used in his study, was separated by State Street—to the East is the Gold Coast, to the West was “a nondescript area of furnished rooms”, “Clark Street, the Rialto of the half-world,” and the slum area of Little Sicily.<sup>88</sup> One consequence of this diversity was social distance where people who lived in the same geographic region did not understand one another and could not communicate in any meaningful way about political, economic, or social existence.

By 1930, the residential patterns were largely set and would not change significantly over the course of the 20th century. The Near North Side would be home to some of the grandest private residences in the city and many units designated for redevelopment. This conflict translated into decreasing populations, as the Near North Side saw its population peak in the 1940s. Business development, on the other hand, remained brisk. Industry continued to develop and grow in the southwest corner. In 1930 the Montgomery Ward & Co. administration building and the Merchandise Mart opened. Both were along the Chicago River and helped turn Chicago Avenue into a business district across the river from the Loop. The string of businesses and warehouses became a second barrier, along with the Chicago River, separating the poorest residents of the Near North Side from the rest of the city.

---

<sup>87</sup> Zorbaugh, *The Gold Coast and the Slum*, 6.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

Mid-century saw major urban renewal and neighborhood redevelopment efforts throughout the Near North Side. In 1956 the Chicago Land Clearance Commission designated land for the “North-LaSalle” urban renewal project that would become the Carl Sandburg Village, displacing a Puerto Rican slum on the Gold Coast’s periphery. Standing at the old dividing line between the Gold Coast and the rest of the Near North Side, the high-rise apartment buildings were priced beyond the means of the displaced residents but below Gold Coast rents. This attracted a new group of young professionals to the neighborhood. The rest of the community area was also viewed as requiring urban renewal. A 1962 Department of City Planning report marked the community area with the third largest number of units for demolition in the city.<sup>89</sup>

In the 1960s and 1970s the major construction projects in the Near North Side were substantial apartment complexes in the heart of the Gold Coast and the gentrifying neighborhoods around it. This construction made the Near North Side one of the few community areas that saw a significant increase in the housing stock.<sup>90</sup> During this period, manufacturing jobs began to disappear from the community area. Non-manufacturing jobs increased in the Gold Coast, but declined in the western neighborhoods. The John Hancock Center and the Water Tower Place-Ritz Carlton Hotel Complex completed the transition of the surrounding area from artistic community to

---

<sup>89</sup> “Near North Side,” *Local Community Fact Book: Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1960*, 30.

<sup>90</sup> DeVault, “Near North Side,” *Local Community Fact Book: Chicago Metropolitan Area: Based on 1970 and 1980 Census*, 21.

commercial development. By 1990, annual retail sales on the Magnificent Mile reached \$840 million, further cementing its reputation for luxury shopping.<sup>91</sup>

Over the 20th century, the extremes that Zorbaugh chronicled and many subsequent scholars used to explain the unique character of the community area hardened along race and class lines. The 1980 census found almost all the African Americans in the Near North Side lived west of LaSalle while only four percent of the community areas' white population did.<sup>92</sup> This geographic segregation was also evident in the income and wealth of families across the community. In 1990, the median white family income was \$84,277 while that of African American families was \$19,482. The average owner-occupied home along the lakeshore was worth over \$500,000 while there were no owner-occupied dwellings reported in the western portion.<sup>93</sup>

Today the Near North Side consists of eight distinct neighborhoods: Cabrini-Green/North Town, Gold Coast, Goose Island, Magnificent Mile, Near North, Old Town, River North, and Streeterville. The early 20th century pattern of the Gold Coast concentrating the community area's wealth has moderated, with the urban renewal and neighborhood revitalization encouraging upscale developments and wealthy residents further into the western areas. This migration did not come without opposition as many poorer residents, including those at Cabrini-Green, continued to assert their claim to the land and the fruits of its rehabilitation.

---

<sup>91</sup> DeVault and Reichler, "Near North Side," *Local Community Factbook: Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1990*, 57.

<sup>92</sup> DeVault, "Near North Side," *Local Community Fact Book: Chicago Metropolitan Area: Based on 1970 and 1980 Census*, 21.

<sup>93</sup> DeVault and Reichler, "Near North Side," *Local Community Factbook: Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1990*, 57.

The Near North Side emerged as a place defined by divisions. The two major ones were the Gold Coast and the slum area that would become Cabrini-Green. While the community area had some of the clearest natural boundaries—Lake Michigan and the Chicago River—it served as an example of how these boundaries did not guarantee a unified community. While using physical characteristics to define community areas could provide clear boundaries and avoid confusion over location, for the original authors to present a unified view of natural barriers as the most relative divisions in the city consciously downplayed the presence of diversity of race and class within natural community areas. Place identity in the Near North Side became about who to include and who to overlook. The construction of Near North Side identity demonstrated possible ways for residents or business interests to separate desirable areas from undesirable ones. The name “Near North” has been used historically in many ways to cover different areas within the Near North Side community area. A hotel and shopping brochure for the Near North from the 1970s presented the area’s boundaries as North to Lincoln Park, South to the Chicago River, and West to LaSalle Street.<sup>94</sup> This was the Near North hotel and shopping districts. It excluded the areas where most community area residents lived. This separation was not possible for all neighborhoods. While it was possible for the Gold Coast to present an identity separate from Cabrini-Green, Cabrini-Green was almost always discussed in connection to the Gold Coast. Highlighting decades of uncertainty, the proximity of the Gold Coast was a lingering threat for generations of public housing residents that their homes would be taken away. It was also a promise for many outside

---

<sup>94</sup> “Chicago’s Near North: Where Chicago Lives,” Brochure, Chicago Public Library Chicago Municipal Reference Library, acquired December 6, 1976.

of Cabrini-Green that this neighborhood could be improved through demographics and architectural upgrades to fully integrate with Chicago's most desirable neighborhood.

#### IV. One Neighborhood: Before Cabrini-Green

Community areas play an important role in dividing Chicago, but they are not the only meaningful subdivisions. While community areas are sometimes synonyms for neighborhoods, this is not the case in the Near North Side. Chicago neighborhoods are often understood as being stable, but in fact, neighborhoods were frequently home to more than one ethnic group at a time and experience a pattern of succession as new groups replaced communities migrating to other parts of the city.<sup>95</sup> The land area that would become Cabrini-Green existed as its own entity within the Near North Side. Defined from its beginning by poverty and manufacturing, it stood as an anomalous concentration of immigrant and minority communities amid some of the city's greatest affluence. Despite efforts to reclaim the "slum," this neighborhood remained outside of successful renovation efforts until the Frances Cabrini Homes were opened.

The southwest corner of the Near North Side served as an immigrant community for most of its history, "welcoming" the newest immigrant community trying to establish themselves in America. As a result, the area was defined by "new cultures brandishing foreign languages, poverty with up-and-out mobility, houses within walking distance of factories, long hours at low wages in labor-intensive industry, as well as residential instability and changing institutions."<sup>96</sup> The appearance of poverty and disorganization

---

<sup>95</sup> Pacyga, "Chicago's Ethnic Neighborhoods," in *Ethnic Chicago*, 607.

<sup>96</sup> Marciniak, *Reclaiming the Inner City*, 17.



went back to the neighborhood's founding. The first slum in the Near North Side emerged in the form of the Irish squatter settlement called "Kilgubbin" or "The Patch" during the 1840s.<sup>97</sup> The neighborhood received the distinction of "Little Hell" for the smoke created by the gas plant at Crosby and Hobbie. This nickname would also be associated with the gang activity that flourished in the conflict between the Irish and Swedish communities. These confrontations often led to front-page headlines, reinforcing a reputation for crime and violence. Sicilians moved into the area during the 1880s. The Italians began to move north when light industry "invaded" the riverfront area. In turn, their migration pushed German settlers across North Avenue and outside the community area.<sup>98</sup> The neighborhood's reputation continued with the new groups. The infamous "Death Corner" was so feared that even the police would not go there and did not investigate over 100 unsolved murders, many believed to be connected with the Italian "Black Hands" gang, from the 1880s to 1930. World War I saw an influx of African Americans, who settled in southern part of Little Italy, an area with the oldest and most poorly maintained dwellings in the Near North Side. The buildings these successive generations of immigrants lived in were older, poorly maintained wooden structures dating back to the rebuilding of the Near North Side after the Great Chicago Fire. What seemed like a victory for local buildings after the fire would become key components of CHA arguments that this was a slum area that required complete demolition and reconstruction as public housing.

---

<sup>97</sup> Philip M. Hauser and Evelyn M. Kitagawa, eds, *Local Community Fact Book for Chicago 1950*, 38.

<sup>98</sup> "Near North Side," *Local Community Fact Book: Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1960*, edited by Kitagawa and Taeuber, 30.

When the CHA began to look for slum sites to clear for the new public housing developments, the community was primarily Italian with about 20 percent of the population newly arrived African Americans. The area was an attractive site for redevelopment because of a long history of health problems, crime, and substandard buildings.<sup>99</sup> In their initial surveys, the CHA overstated the amount of deteriorated housing and slum conditions in the area. Homeownership was an important part of the Italian community in Chicago, with foreign-born residents owning their home at a 40 percent rate when native-born whites across the city had a 21.7 percent rate.<sup>100</sup> When they originally looked at the neighborhood, CHA officials did not see the homeownership rate and the willingness of Italian homeowners to resist CHA efforts to acquire their land in the courts.<sup>101</sup> The legal challenges led to an increase in costs beyond early projections. The increasing costs and the drawn-out process pushed the CHA to look at different types of neighborhoods for later developments. The Frances Cabrini Homes were the first and last time the CHA cleared land in a predominantly “white” neighborhood.

Historically the neighborhood area torn down and rebuilt as Cabrini-Green was part of the Near North Side. The designated blocks were defined as a place not only by those who live there, but by those who lived in the surrounding community area and larger city. Zorbaugh argued that for residents of the Gold Coast, State Street was a barrier that could only be penetrated by newspaper accounts of the slums. More troubling

---

<sup>99</sup> Metropolitan Housing Council, “The Chicago Housing Authority: Manager and Builder of Low-Rent Communities,” 1940, 12.

<sup>100</sup> Guglielmo, *White on Arrival*, 147.

<sup>101</sup> Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 42.

for Zorbaugh, the newspaper accounts rarely included favorable attributes, painting the area “as a bizarre world of gang wars, of exploding stills, of radical plots, of “lost” girls, of suicides, of bombing, of murder.”<sup>102</sup> He argued that sensational stories, as the only way the rich viewed the poor, led to an inability to see any value in slum areas and created the belief that the best solution was complete clearance. The distance from other parts of Chicago, specifically the city’s wealthiest neighborhoods of the Gold Coast and the Loop, continued to reappear in the neighborhood’s sense of place. Outsiders did not experience Cabrini-Green on the ground; they looked at it from a safe distance while prescribing methods to change it. A 1995 proposal for the North Town Community Partnership’s “Project Hope” relied on Cabrini-Green’s appearance from a distance as a reason why a major redevelopment was necessary. According to the authors, “Seen from 40 floors up in a luxury tower across town, Cabrini-Green’s apartment slabs brood like tombstones on quarantined turf. You don’t see there at all.”<sup>103</sup> While they also presented the localized view of the neighborhood as full of life, they accepted that the neighborhood’s death-like appearance from afar as a key aspect of what defined Cabrini-Green as a place. Viewing the neighborhood from a distance would go hand in hand with Cabrini’s history as something to be solved or improved by outside actors rather than revitalized from within.

Contemporary accounts are often very aware of the role of history in constructing the understanding of this area. The issue of adequate housing was a common theme going

---

<sup>102</sup> Zorbaugh, *The Gold Coast and the Slum*, 14.

<sup>103</sup> North Town Community Partnership, “Project Hope: Commitment to Community Change,” 1995, 1.

back to the Irish shanties. One defining feature of Zorbaugh's slum was the overwhelming amount of inadequate and dilapidated housing that reformers saw requiring progressive intervention to correct. A history and guidebook published in 1986 asserted that the Cabrini-Green high rises were "the modern version of the 'relief shanties' which plagued Little Sicily in the half century after the Chicago Fire."<sup>104</sup> Connections to history went beyond the physical realities of the built environment to the actions that occurred within them and on the streets. Zorbaugh noted high numbers of single mothers with children along with high rates of illegitimacy, infant mortality, and gang participation in a deteriorating physical environment as a "common denominator" for the slum.<sup>105</sup> These characteristics continued to appear in writings about Cabrini-Green for the length of his existence. Perhaps no one factor of life got as much attention as crime. In the 1990 Local Community Factbook, the authors connect Cabrini-Green's current condition with its history because it had one of the highest homicide rates in the city "as it did when Irish and Italians lived there."<sup>106</sup>

## V. Conclusion

Place in Chicago exists on two levels. The first is captured by an elite-driven desire to create a civic identity based in the central business district—the Loop—and spreading outward to create a grand city. Their expression is most often presented in city

---

<sup>104</sup> Pacyga and Skerrett, *Chicago*, 53.

<sup>105</sup> Zorbaugh, *The Gold Coast and the Slum*, 9.

<sup>106</sup> DeVault and Reichler, "Near North Side," *Local Community Factbook: Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1990*, 57.

plans. The second level—the neighborhood—is a creature of resident construction and outsiders’ visions. Residents create an understanding of place based on their daily interactions in the urban environment. Some places are known primarily to residents. Cabrini-Green, however, would have multiple senses of places as residents competed with the rest of the city to define the neighborhood.

It would be wrong, however, to completely separate these two concepts of place in Chicago. Neighborhoods are a vital part of the city and Chicagoans understand many neighborhoods in the context of what role they play in creating the greater city identity. The birth, life, and death of Cabrini-Green was intimately connected with historical changes in the Near North Side, Chicago’s continuous efforts to rebuild itself closer to Burnham’s city of grand plans, and the federal government’s efforts to reimagine public housing communities. These larger shifts took physical form in local neighborhoods. From the neighborhood level, residents sought a seat at the negotiating table by staking their own claim to Cabrini-Green as a unique place—their home.

## CHAPTER 3

### CREATING PUBLIC HOUSING LANDSCAPES: ARCHITECTURE, PEOPLE, AND PLACE

Before 1930, the federal government played no role in housing the nation's poorest citizens. Progressive reformers, however, argued for a connection between degraded living conditions and the physical and moral well-being of the residents as a threat to them and the larger city. Tenement reformers sought legislation to improve the building and neighborhood conditions to improve the health and safety of residents. Minor efforts were made at a housing program for veterans during World War I, but the real impetus for the government's participation in the housing market was the Great Depression. During the 1930s, the collapse of housing industries and the need to provide employment added to pre-existing concerns about slum conditions to generate support for federal assistance with housing. Mortgage guarantees, loans for home repair, and subsidies for builders were initial steps. The Public Works Administration (PWA) constructed some model public housing. The lingering depression finally propelled the federal government to create a federal system of publicly owned housing for the poor with the passage of the Wagner-Steagall Housing Act of 1937.

This legislation required local governments to positively affirm their desire for public housing by creating local housing authorities, and the Illinois legislature responded by establishing the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA). While a welcome answer to problems of housing in the Great Depression, the original legislation created new political problems since it did not establish a clear chain of command between city government and the CHA nor did it set out a clear mission. Where public housing would

be located and what type of place public housing communities should be was considered by many in the CHA to be their decision. The ward politicians and city hall, however, proved to be powerful actors in Chicago public housing, limiting the CHA's more idealistic goals of a citywide program that could serve social justice calls for racial and class integration.

Placemaking was an important aspect of public housing from the beginning. To argue successfully for their vision of publicly-owned buildings serving the needs of the one-third of urban dwellers believed to be ill-housed, public housing advocates defined the areas that needed to be replaced as well as what would replace them. Public housing was championed as a force that would transform city slums, scourges from their founding and targets of progressive reformers, into viable, desirable communities. But they were not alone in defining public housing. Not everyone involved in city life viewed public housing as a positive. Opponents to public housing or those who believed that the government had no business in the housing market created a narrative that public housing would, by definition, be a place of evitable decay and disaster because it interfered with natural evolution of city form and housing development.

Since it became official government policy in 1937, public housing debates highlight three areas of contention: architecture, city planning, and residents. Early reformers used all three to create a vision of a community of well-constructed houses to temporarily house needy families in communities that followed established residential patterns. As public housing shifted from an ideal of housing reformers to a reality controlled by those who envisioned a limited role for it, public housing became a specific place whose chief markers were a distinctive architecture interpreted as cheap and

monotonous and a permanent population of poor residents whose life from employment to family differed significantly from the rest of the city. The transformation of public housing as a place where the private market failed to a postwar launch point for mobile, working class families to a warehouse for the city's poorest residents was driven by changing ideas about poverty and the role of the federal government in American cities.

### I. Existing Place and the Promise of Public Housing

The 19th century saw a major transformation in American cities. Overlapping forces of industrialization, immigration, and urbanization inspired mass migration that frequently overwhelmed the urban built environment, culminating in dense, poorly planned slums. Progressive reformers and social scientists focused on the slums, documenting resident's daily lives and the neighborhood's physical deterioration to create practical solutions. While major legislation attempted to make the tenements and their neighborhoods better places, these efforts stopped short of public ownership of buildings. The focus on the poorest neighborhoods as a place for intervention, however, helped shape the early efforts of public-housing advocates. The quest to define slums as areas where the private housing market failed and a site where federal intervention into housing was the only possible solution formed the foundation for defining public housing as a need and a new type of place.

Population growth in cities in the early 20th century continued to overrun the physical environment in American cities. Catherine Bauer, an influential housing reformer, defined this new problem as "housing." Relying on surveys of American cities, she determined that one-third of the nation's housing supply was substandard based on



physical condition (building construction, structural safety, and access to sanitation) before the consideration of overcrowding.<sup>107</sup> The lack of adequate supply of good homes caused rents to rise and forced families into substandard units in overcrowded neighborhoods. These conditions ultimately cost the city money in terms of public health. These areas saw high rates of tuberculosis and other infectious diseases, infant mortality and juvenile delinquency, and experienced crime and fires. She argued that since the problems of dilapidated housing and poor neighborhoods were too large to be blamed on individual owners or renters, housing had become “a complicated economic, technical and civic problem, and in large part a *public* responsibility.”<sup>108</sup> As the housing market stood, she saw it as a luxury product that only the wealthy could afford. To solve the housing problem required government intervention in the market for middle class and less fortunate residents. From the beginning, Chicago was a city where the need for housing often outpaced the available units. The Chicago Housing Authority would pull on this fact to argue for the necessity of a public housing program. In 1949, the CHA released a study that found there were just 906,000 “standard units” available in the city while 1,178,000 families required housing.<sup>109</sup>

Despite calls for a large-scale program that targeted a sizable population, public housing in the United States remained a limited prospect in the early days of the Great Depression. Passed in 1933, the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) included provisions to institute a program of construction and repair of low-income housing and

---

<sup>107</sup> Bauer, “A Citizen’s Guide to Public Housing,” 15-6.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>109</sup> Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 29-30.

slum clearance. To meet this requirement, the Interior Secretary created the Public Works Administration Housing Division. The PWA was a substantial break from the private market housing model that dominated American homebuilding before the Great Depression weakened these interests and that would reemerge later in the 1930s as the construction market rebounded.<sup>110</sup> Reformers had high hopes that this program would create a new urban dwelling unit that could be constructed for low cost that would also appeal to a wide variety of income levels. In Chicago, the PWA oversaw the construction of Jane Addams Homes, Julia Lathrop Homes, and Trumbull Park Homes, all completed in 1938. Each was a project of two to four-story buildings arranged in large neighborhood environments with accessible public space. The PWA projects were constructed from better plans and more quality materials than would become standard for later public housing projects. They served as a public demonstration of the success the federal government could achieve in housing construction and management, but the project costs were frequently too high to make the rent affordable for the target population of the new public housing.<sup>111</sup>

Housing reformers often tapped into the earlier understanding of the connection between good homes and good citizens to make their argument for the necessity of public housing and its ability to remake the city and its residents. The CHA often labeled areas that it saw as potential areas for public housing as “slums.” Expanding the Progressive Era emphasis on cleaning up the city’s “bad areas,” the CHA released studies about the potential for private renovation to turn around slum neighborhoods. For the most part

---

<sup>110</sup> Radford, *Modern Housing for America*, 88-9.

<sup>111</sup> Wood and Ogg, “The Homes the Public Builds,” 9-10.

these studies found that while renovation was possible through efforts of building owners, private modernization efforts would result in rents too high for most of the population, leading to displacement upwards of 40 percent, and continued poor land use that defined these neighborhoods.<sup>112</sup> The focus on neighborhoods with a reputation for blight and decay ensured that the Near North Side would appear early on the list of possible renovations. Its reputation for poverty, deteriorating housing conditions, crime, juvenile delinquency, and gang activity had persisted since the city's founding even as the local population shifted with waves of immigrant communities. In the early 20th century, new social science tools appeared to confirm what many in the city already knew: the area was defined by a badly deteriorated physical landscape and population living in poverty.

One major policy debate at the foundation of public housing was a discussion over using vacant land or clearing established slum areas to get the land necessary for these major construction projects. On one side, progressives had been documenting the problem of urban slums and the impact of living in these areas on immigrants and poor individuals. Edith Elmer Wood provided a market-failure framework for progressive advocates of slum clearance and public housing. Slums were described as places where normal market functions failed to provide safe and healthy housing options at affordable prices for current residents. Another group of reformers focused on vacant land sites. Catherine Bauer, with her interest in “the housing question,” suggested that slum clearance would only financially reward slum landlords rather than provide quality homes for neighborhood residents. She proposed building on vacant lands as the best

---

<sup>112</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, “The Slum...Is Rehabilitation Possible?,” 1946 Pamphlet, 25.

method of replicating the large-scale Bauhaus projects built around several German cities in the 1920s. These complexes were designed with an eye toward building form and land layout. They represented a successful effort at housing a sizable number of people in better quality facilities while providing access to public resources at lower costs.

In their official reports, the CHA created a complex relationship between slum areas, vacant land, and new housing. They argued that vacant land could be used to create the first round of new housing. This housing would be open to those who lived in slums areas. Once slum residents moved to the new affordable housing, their old units could be torn down without causing mass displacement. Then the slum could be torn down and this new vacant land could be used to supply more new housing or to make room for new industrial and commercial developments.<sup>113</sup>

For the CHA, debates over vacant sites and slum clearance moved from academic discussions about the best way to organize urban environments to political matches over the city's development. The debate between slum clearance and vacant land building resulted from the CHA's unique political situation in city government. After the passage of the 1949 Housing Act, expanding local options for public housing, the Chicago City Council feared that the CHA would select sites based on its progressive leaders' agenda of housing integration. To limit this, the Illinois state law that authorized the CHA gave the City Council veto over site selection (this restriction was placed on no other housing authority in Illinois). For a project to get the City Council approval, the ward's alderman had to approve it. Public housing supporters were unhappy with this restriction since they believed the alderman would delay action to determine public reaction before approving

---

<sup>113</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, "Chicago Can Build," 1950, 22.

developments. This process would produce the weakest implementation of the program that city politics would allow.<sup>114</sup> The politics of the City Council ensured that no site would be approved that threatened Chicago's established racial segregation patterns. When the City Council refused to locate any public housing in a white majority neighborhoods during 1955 or 1956 it was clear that these sites were not a part of Chicago's public housing strategy.<sup>115</sup>

Site selection was a source of concern because of its potential ability to overturn a carefully maintained, racially segregated neighborhood system. The focus on race and public housing dated back to the PWA. Most of the vacant tracts suitable for large-scale construction projects were in the city's South Side in impoverished and working-class white communities. But many residents in slum housing were African American. As a result, support for the Ida B. Wells Homes, which would provide 1,662 units for Black Belt residents, was universal amongst black political and religious leaders and community organizations. The PWA housing projects ended up supporting the racial makeup of the neighborhoods: Ida B. Wells housed only black families; housing projects in white neighborhoods, Lathrop and Trumbull Park Homes, excluded black families; and Jane Addams Homes stood as the only integrated project, mirroring its community.<sup>116</sup> While the PWA projects maintained the overall segregated neighborhood pattern, the

---

<sup>114</sup> Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 175.

<sup>115</sup> "Public Housing and Urban Policy: *Gautreaux v. Chicago Housing Authority*," *The Yale Law Journal*, 79, no. 4 (March 1970): 715

<sup>116</sup> Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 14.

threat that housing projects could serve as a means to transform neighborhoods continued to concern opponents of the later public housing program.

Recognizing the limited possibilities of getting approval to build solely on vacant land, the CHA began advocating for slum clearance as key to the program that would benefit residents and the city as a whole. Slum clearance also allowed advocates to position public housing as a public health program. In its 1950 book brochure “Chicago Can Build,” the CHA urged the city to obtain money through the 1949 Housing Act by pointing to the disparity between slums and non-slums in residential fires (3 to 1), tuberculosis mortality (12 to 1), violent crimes (12 to 1), and juvenile delinquency (20 to 1).<sup>117</sup> The CHA advocated a plan for rapid expansion, where vacant land would be turned into new housing, which could house people whose homes were destroyed as slum areas were cleared in order to create spaces for new industry or new residential units. The CHA determined that building in slums would be politically and publicly popular because these areas were universally offensive to people who had to look at them as well as those who had to live there. They also recognized that many people outside of these neighborhoods would embrace slum clearance and rehousing since they already believed that the people there should be kept out of more desirable neighborhoods.<sup>118</sup>

Before each site was selected, the CHA completed a study of the land to be cleared to show neighborhood conditions and the possibility for improvement through public housing. A 1940 Metropolitan Housing Council report described the area bounded

---

<sup>117</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, “Chicago Can Build,” 1950, 1.

<sup>118</sup> Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 164.

by Chicago Avenue, Division, Larrabee, and Sedgwick Streets as “a slum with a scandalous crime and health history.”<sup>119</sup> This history was seen as a reason why the government could come in and improve conditions. In fact, this site and its history had already been considered for earlier redevelopment efforts. In 1934, the PWA proposed a housing development known as the “Blackhawk Project” to address failures in physical deterioration of buildings, street pollution, and general area decay. Property owners organized against the project and the resulting land acquisition problems forced the PWA to abandon the project. The CHA returned to the area—then known as Illinois 2-2—in 1940. The plan for Illinois 2-2 called for the construction of 1,242 units (870 houses with 4.5 rooms and 372 houses with 5.5 rooms) with a project cost of \$8.29 million (including \$1.92 million land and \$5.3 construction costs). The rents were to be “shelter rents”—the minimal cost for unit set by the CHA—with gas, electricity, and heat extra. For Illinois 2-2 this was estimated to be \$12 per month with an annual income cap of \$900.<sup>120</sup>

The CHA’s report on local communities and clear plans to build did not guarantee a seamless process. In Illinois 2-2, the CHA misrepresented the neighborhood by underestimating the number of owner-occupants in the land to be cleared and over-reporting residential building deterioration. “Little Hell,” as the neighborhood was popularly known, was reportedly one of the worst slums in the city, but it was also a tight-knit Italian American community joined together by a shared culture and language as well as connections to local institutions, including schools and churches. These

---

<sup>119</sup> Metropolitan Housing Council, “Chicago Housing Authority: Manager and Builder of Low-Rent Communities,” January 1, 1940, 12.

<sup>120</sup> Metropolitan Housing Council, “Chicago Housing Authority: Manager and Builder of Low-Rent Communities,” January 1, 1940, 16, 22.

residents, like Italian Americans across the city, owned their homes or rented from local landlords. Across Chicago, nearly 40 percent of Italian Americans owned their home compared with 22 percent of native whites.<sup>121</sup> Rather than negotiating with distant landowners, they had to negotiate with the community whose homes they sought to demolish. Further complicating discussions about the public housing in the community, this area was undergoing significant changes as African Americans began to move into the neighborhood. By 1940, they were 20 percent of the population. This sizable population could be reflected in the number of units held for African Americans, risking turning an Italian American housing project into an integrated one. The Italian American community, concerned about their changing status and future in the Near North Side, carried out tough negotiations with the CHA, holding onto their property and driving up costs for land acquisition.

Reflecting on the experience dealing with Italian American homeowners in the Near North Side, the CHA identified “a very strong community spirit, supported by ties of kinship and common language—all resulting in an attitude on the part of the owners which rendered the conduct of negotiations extremely difficult.”<sup>122</sup> The difficulty getting the Italian community to sell their homes altered the project, forcing it to shrink the revision of the original Illinois 2-2 (1,242 units that had already be revised down to 920 units) to the final 586 units on sixteen acres as the northern and western boundaries were adjusted inward.<sup>123</sup> CHA negotiations with Italian American homeowners on the Near

---

<sup>121</sup> Guglielmo, *White on Arrival*, 147.

<sup>122</sup> Qtd. in Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 42.

<sup>123</sup> Bowly, *The Poorhouse*, 31.



North Side occurred alongside more successful efforts to buy property in black neighborhoods. Absentee landlords, with no direct connection to these areas and little loyalty to one another, owned most land in these neighborhoods. Consequently, many of them were happy to sell their property. This situation allowed the CHA to avoid the collective bargaining that occurred in the Near North Side, which drove up the cost of land and prolonged the process of demolition and new construction. The experience with the Frances Cabrini Homes was the last time the CHA would attempt to clear slums in a majority white neighborhood.

The pressure from the local community, however, could not overcome the need for wartime housing. Construction began three days after the attack at Pearl Harbor. The Frances Cabrini Homes were built in less than ten months after the federal government approved the location, opening as Chicago's first project dedicated to war housing. The project was designed for 600 war workers making less than \$2,100 per year and their families. At the dedication, Mayor Edward Kelly provided a rationale for public housing that went beyond the current crisis: "These homes, built by the Chicago Housing Authority, symbolize the Chicago that is to be. We cannot continue as a nation, half slum and half palace. The project sets an example for the wide reconstruction of substandard areas which will come after the war."<sup>124</sup> Cabrini was presented as a model for what could be in Chicago from its founding. It would not be the final time Cabrini-Green was placed as the model for what public housing was or could be.

During the 1940s, wartime migration helped the Near North Side's population increase by 47 percent with no significant private residential construction to meet the

---

<sup>124</sup> "Built in Ten Months," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 30, 1942.

demand.<sup>125</sup> This unmet demand made the Near North Side attractive for expanded public housing construction. Once again, the CHA made its public case through a 1951 booklet, *Cabrini-Extension Area: Portrait of a Chicago Slum*. The proposed area covered 25 blocks around the established Frances Cabrini Homes. Here surveyors found a Sicilian community on its last legs as older individuals owned homes and an emerging African-American community was culturally transitioning from Southern rural living to urban communities. These two groups lived alongside each other without much physical integration or social interaction, apart from small children playing together between them. The CHA found 554 residential buildings in the area (out of a total 687) were substandard. All but 19 had been constructed during the 19th century. Originally designed for 1,609 units, these buildings now contained 2,358, with most of the new unit divisions taking place in the 1940s.<sup>126</sup> These structures were soot-covered wooden structures jammed two to a lot with sidewalks raised five to six feet above lot levels, which constituted a risk to pedestrians. The neighborhood was deteriorating extremely quickly, with the CHA's survey finding 68 percent of residential buildings being dilapidated compared with 43 percent in the 1939 Land Use Survey.<sup>127</sup> The survey credited this change to rapid population growth, wartime shortages of labor and resources, and unwillingness of private owners to pay for the necessary repairs.

The emphasis of the negative impacts of slum conditions on the whole city and the need to eliminate slums to provide decent housing allowed the CHA to position its

---

<sup>125</sup> Bowly, *The Poorhouse*, 103.

<sup>126</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, "Cabrini Extension Area: Portrait of a Chicago Slum," 1951, 16.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

public housing proposal to a longer tradition of 19th century housing reformers. Progressive reformers and journalists had worked to define slums in the popular imagination to support their arguments for standards and renovations. Public housing advocates used public views of the slum to obtain support for their housing policies. The CHA studied communities and defined them as “slums,” as they did to the Near North Side in a 1951 published report, to establish the need for intervention and to make an argument that public housing could provide safe and stable affordable housing to residents within the neighborhood. After the problem of the slums had been adequately established, public housing advocates had to create a new vision of place based on how public housing could change the physical neighborhood and provide the foundation for new civic activities and populations.

## II. Public Housing and a New View of Place

Progressive era housing reformers succeeded at defining specific areas of the city as slums and proposed massive renovations to improve the moral and economic climate residents lived in. To evolve these efforts into a federally owned and managed housing program required a new vision for what these neighborhoods should be. Both proponents and opponents sought to communicate the uniqueness of these environments. Early public housing advocates sought a new model for urban living that they believed would become a non-partisan role for government as more citizens saw the value of public housing. Powerful opposing forces, including the US Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Real Estate Boards, organized against a broad program, arguing that the private market already provided better homes than the government could. Public

housing was not discussed as part of a citywide plan for housing across income or ethnic groups or as part of a plan to foster and develop communities in an urban environment.<sup>128</sup> New public housing also became subject to debates over what type of community should be developed in these neighborhoods.

Many American housing reformers looked to European examples as possible paths for the United States to pursue. Most notably, Catherine Bauer used her 1934 work *Modern Housing* to argue that while Americans had left their real estate development to speculation, Europeans replaced the speculative model with a planned effort to provide homes for lower and middle class residents. “Modern housing,” as Bauer defined it came after a chaotic 19th century of housing speculation and reform efforts. The destruction of World War I and rising costs of land and construction materials created a desperate need for mass scale housing projects for lower and middle class families. Governments, especially in England and Germany, took the opportunity to create a new, better standard of urban housing for a significant population of their cities. They were guided by standards including the belief that the government should build as many new houses at low rents as possible with minimum long-term government cost, the real estate market would be revolutionized as past behaviors had led to poor houses and poorly planned cities, dwellings needed to be removed from the speculative market, a new method and standard for housing needed to be sustainable beyond periods of emergency, and building good houses now would be cheaper long-term than building poor ones.<sup>129</sup> For Bauer, the prospect of government ownership insured that these neighborhoods could not become

---

<sup>128</sup> Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 25.

<sup>129</sup> Bauer, *Modern Housing*, 153.

slums and the housing standards would not be pushed down for cost considerations as they had been in the past.

Reformers often envisioned a complete transformation of the idea of housing, moving safe and sanitary homes from a luxury to a necessity. Edith Elmer Wood, a progressive economist and housing advocate, argued for housing to be managed as a public utility, like water and electricity, to give the government control of quantity and quality of housing nationwide.<sup>130</sup> Government financing and ownership of buildings allowed them to be constructed without the constant push for profits that undermined housing standards in the private market. Because these buildings were supposed to last, they should also be built with an eye towards keeping long-term repairs and maintenance costs down, allowing for the continuation of low rents.<sup>131</sup> Bauer also saw potential in the public utility model for housing. She argued that modern housing policies in Europe had introduced housing into the “national minima”—the basic rights guaranteed to citizens including access to security, sanitation, medical care, and social insurance.<sup>132</sup> As a public utility, housing in a well-planned, well-built environment would be accessible to a wider range of the population than under the 19th century speculative market. Treating housing as a public utility provided the easiest methods of ensuring that residents experience

---

<sup>130</sup> National Register of Historic Places, “Public Housing in the United States, 1933-1949” Department of the Interior, National Park Service, NPS Form 10-900b. Continuation Sheet Section E, 2002, pg 10. <https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/guidance/Public%20Housing%20in%20the%20United%20States%20MPS.pdf>, accessed 13 December 2016.

<sup>131</sup> National Housing Agency and Federal Public Housing Authority, “Public Housing Design: A Review of Experience in Low-Rent Housing,” June 1946, pg. 1.

<sup>132</sup> Bauer, *Modern Housing*, 129.

certain standards of living: access to clean air and sunlight, adequate space for families of various sizes, and access to secure facilities.

The work of early advocates, like Wood and Bauer, created a wide-ranging vision for what public housing could accomplish in America. By the time the federal government put a policy in place, the vision became narrower. The target population would be low-income families already living in slum housing. For the National Housing Agency, the program offered double benefits. On the one hand, it created healthy, safe, and civically engaged communities for low-income residents who were failed by private housing efforts. On the other, the process of construction removed the slums, a liability that cost the whole city based on the increased rates of city services, including police, fire, and social services, utilized in these areas.<sup>133</sup> The type of place envisioned for public housing was a decent environment for the working poor. According to a CHA brochure from 1952, “CHA low-rent apartments are intended for families for whom private enterprise has not been able to provide decent, safe and sanitary dwellings at prices within low-income budgets.”<sup>134</sup> The program was a support for people who the market could not adequately serve, not an effort designed to eliminate deep poverty or to radically alter American patterns of living.

Advocates presented public housing not as a challenge to values of hard work and homeownership, but as a means of supporting the population in areas where those values could not flourish due to poor housing conditions and limited opportunity to move out

---

<sup>133</sup> National Housing Agency, “Public Housing: The Work of the Federal Public Housing Authority,” 1946, 37.

<sup>134</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, “Low-Rent Apartments: Good Living on a Small Budget,” 1952.

due to higher rents in better neighborhoods. The Metropolitan Housing Council presented new public housing communities as the solution to poor neighborhoods, especially deteriorating construction and overcrowded conditions. The Metropolitan Housing Council's introductory brochure on the Chicago Housing Authority, described public housing communities as

the very spearhead of any beginning movement in neighborhood reclamation within any city, offering a solid foundation on which to plan any real estate recovery program of this nature. When you stop to think about it, public housing communities—supplying as they do a whole new heart to the deeply decayed neighborhoods in which they are developed—are so far the only really positive major accomplishment in this so-much-talked-about field.<sup>135</sup>

While these early reports discussed improving land use and building stability, they present the people living there as people with “neat lawns, immaculate curtains at the windows, bebies of adequately, even jauntily dressed children.” Adding, “You will get an immediate and strong sense of general good housekeeping, of plain but certainly respectable living.”<sup>136</sup> The writers argued that good housekeeping skills were evident through the slum conditions, but were often smothered by deteriorating buildings and overcrowded streets. Public housing, then, was justified as a way of matching good housekeepers with good homes, not rewarding people lacking in American values of family, homeownership, thrift, and hard work.

Opposition forces worked hard to define public housing as a program that undermined fundamental American virtues including hard work, thrift, self-sufficiency,

---

<sup>135</sup> Metropolitan Housing Council, “Chicago Housing Authority: Manager and Builder of Low-Rent Communities,” January 1, 1940, 34.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid*, 25.

private property, and free enterprise.<sup>137</sup> In responding to these concerns advocates inadvertently promoted ideas and regulations that would undermine the economic integrity and community cohesion of public housing neighborhoods. To limit the perceived socialism inherent in public housing, Congress passed a cost limitation in the 1949 Housing Act that capped per unit cost at \$5,000.<sup>138</sup> These restrictions led to limitations on project design that favored regimented developments over more experimental forms. Public housing also suffered from a historical apathy of the American public towards programs that were aimed primarily at the poor, believing they rewarded immoral behavior or individual bad decisions. To combat this distaste, advocates presented public housing as a temporary stop for the worthy poor by implementing strict social standards for employed, stable two-parent households. Those whose economic or family position meant they could meet these standards often were considered too poor or unworthy of public housing.<sup>139</sup>

Critics portrayed public housing as a threat to the city's health. Opponents argued it would be a drain on the city. Payment of property taxes, in particular, became an issue for public debate. This issue was two-fold: as government property, public housing land was not subject to property taxes at the same time the population of poor people was seen as a drain on public coffers. During the site selection process, Alderman John J. Duffy argued "we need some public housing, but we shouldn't have so much of it that Chicago

---

<sup>137</sup> Freedman, *Public Housing*, 161.

<sup>138</sup> Radford, "The Federal Government and Housing During the Depression," in *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes*, 111,

<sup>139</sup> Vale, *From the Puritans to the Projects*, 9



becomes a public housing town with no one left to pay the taxes.”<sup>140</sup> CHA Chairman, Robert Taylor, countered claims like these by arguing that the city had to decide if it wanted public housing to succeed at its mission. Either it needed to provide housing to the city’s needy families, who could not pay full value of taxes, or it needed to demand full tax payment with the knowledge that it would restrict lower income families to their current slums.<sup>141</sup> To deal with this concern, the CHA agreed to pay an annual “voluntary payment” in lieu of taxes.

Despite the critics, public housing was sold as a net positive for the city. City leaders and business interests valued public housing when it helped halt the spread of slums and worked as part of a program to lure working class families back to the cities from the suburbs.<sup>142</sup> Public agreement to the benefits of public housing, however, did not mean the program had the wide breadth advocates hoped for. Early housing advocates were inspired by the possibility for public housing to remake the cities. Many of them believed that public housing should be part of an increased government intervention to deal with larger issues of race and class that informed American housing policy. CHA’s early progressive leadership saw integration as a valued impact of a geographically broad program. At the Frances Cabrini Homes, the CHA made a concerted effort to include white and black residents in proportion to the changing neighborhood. Increased black migration and the collapse of private construction of apartment housing encouraged

---

<sup>140</sup> Qtd in Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 196.

<sup>141</sup> Robert R. Taylor, “Voice of the People: Housing Tenants’ Income,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 13 1943.

<sup>142</sup> Bauman, “Introduction,” in *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes*, 13.

housing advocates to argue for increased representation for black residents in public housing, both to ameliorate the housing crisis and to help integrate the city.<sup>143</sup> Political realities, however, forced the CHA into positions that reinforced established segregation in the city. Of seven sites submitted by the CHA in 1950, the city only approved two—an extension of the Frances Cabrini Homes and the Robert Brooks Homes.<sup>144</sup> All the other sites had been on vacant land near the city periphery or in poor neighborhoods that did not already have public housing. In 1958 a new CHA director explained the agency’s position, “We are not going to use public housing as a wedge to integrate all white neighborhoods. Our role must be one of a friend to the community.”<sup>145</sup> Chicago public housing would become a “monument to social engineering”—conclusive proof that the city had an impressive ability to use public resources to support established patterns of racial and economic segregation.<sup>146</sup>

### III. Row Houses and High-Rises: Architecture and Place

Part of the creation of place at public housing neighborhoods would be a simple, unifying architecture, modeled on middle class apartment complexes. Selling the new program, the CHA promised “every effort will be made to design the buildings as

---

<sup>143</sup> Carl Wiegman, “Story of the City’s Big Problem: Negro Housing,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 30, 1949.

<sup>144</sup> Thomas Buck, “Approve Two, Reject Five Housing Sites,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 2, 1950.

<sup>145</sup> Freedman, *Public Housing*, 147.

<sup>146</sup> Biles, “Public Housing and the Postwar Urban Renaissance,” in *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes*, 149.

economically and simply as possible to furnish shelter that is safe and sanitary.”<sup>147</sup> Public housing advocates sought a design aesthetic that would appeal to both prospective residents and neighbors. Their early belief reflected not only a desire to win support, but also was a school of architectural thought that the proper building could positively shape the lives of its residents. While the architecture would be simple, early models demonstrated the ways in which these buildings could function as the basis for community. Efforts to continue this vision as the program grew were stymied, however, because of restrictions on cost and location that defined the physical landscape. This architectural idealism could not survive building failure due to poor construction, misuse and vandalism, delayed maintenance, and policy changes. More than any other feature, the architecture of public housing worked to establish a unique identity set apart from the larger urban environment.

Public housing architecture emerged in the early 20th century, particularly the 1920s, from the modernism movement. The term “modern” was frequently assigned any artistic work in the later 19th and early 20th century. While coming from many different fields, the defining criteria for modernism was a faith in the new over the familiar and the untested experiment over the traditional way.<sup>148</sup> In architecture, modernism represented in broadest terms all the buildings of the early 20th century, but it also was applied to buildings and architects conscious of their place in modernity and in pursuit of large-scale social change.<sup>149</sup> In response to the squalor and congestion of the newly modern

---

<sup>147</sup> Metropolitan Housing Council, “Chicago Housing Authority: Manager and Builder of Low-Rent Communities,” January 1, 1940, 13.

<sup>148</sup> Gay, *Modernism*, 2.

city, it sought order and consistency through universal standards of building form, residential space, and zoning. Technological advances in building design and construction with new materials of steel, iron, and glass created new possibilities for urban design. More than just social and technological change, modern architecture pursued a better way to create and operate structures than the capitalist and fascist models had offered. Particularly in a Europe devastated by war, modern architecture often served as an answer to the housing crisis, providing a new model for urban living. The 1920s saw the height of the movement for “Utopian Modernism,” the belief that good design had the potential to improve humanity and its environment.<sup>150</sup>

Modern architecture has a unique relationship with the city of Chicago. The relationship was forged in the late 19th and early 20th century as Chicago sought dominance in manufacturing and civic power. With most of its buildings destroyed by the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, the city was a largely blank canvas for architects and planners to bring order and efficiency to unruly patterns of manufacturing and city planning. Within a decade of the fire, the Chicago School, as the collective of prominent architects and their work came to be known, had pioneered balloon frame steel construction and developed the office building, multi-story hotel, and apartment block.<sup>151</sup> Louis Sullivan provided the famous dictate “form follows function” to emphasize the belief that the building form should respond to its purpose. In Chicago, “function” became synonymous with organic architecture, which was the understanding that organic

---

<sup>149</sup> Colquhoun, *Modern Architecture*, 9.

<sup>150</sup> Radford, *Modern Housing for America*, 60.

<sup>151</sup> Condit, *The Chicago School of Architecture*, 11.

structures arose from technical problems of building construction and the cultural values, ideas, and aspirations of the time.<sup>152</sup> The designs eliminated unnecessary ornamentation to provide a sleek look that emphasized the structural elements of the design. This Chicago School “commercial style” became an early part of American modern architecture. The city would remain closely connected with modern architecture for much of the 20th century, although many of these architects would not be from the city. For a century after the Great Chicago Fire, Chicago architecture followed and shaped the myth of modernism with the belief ingrained in the city that the future will exceed the past if it is planned and built by pragmatic, visionary individuals.<sup>153</sup> From its dominant grid layout to the concrete, steel, and glass curtains along the lakeshore and throughout the business district, Chicago is one of the cities most impacted and shaped by modernist architecture.

Public housing architecture had two major goals: the buildings were built to be “visibly permanent” displays of major taxpayer projects while the units were designed to be sparse, emphasizing the desire that these spaces be temporary stops for each family on their way to private housing or homeownership.<sup>154</sup> The CHA described their units as “comfortable homes, designed and built on a community plans.”<sup>155</sup> They also sold their communities as including play areas, gardens, and recreation spaces for community meeting or parties. To accommodate the size of the buildings and amenities, plans for new public housing neighborhoods relied on superblocks, massive spaces of open land

---

<sup>152</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>153</sup> Waldheim and Roy, “Chicago is History,” in *Chicago Architecture*, xiii.

<sup>154</sup> Wright, *Building the Dream*, 218.

<sup>155</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, “Low-Rent Apartments,” brochure, 1952.

created by eliminating small side streets. This was supposed to separate pedestrian and car travel to make the former safer and the latter faster. They also had allowed planners to break the rigid grid pattern of city streets by placing major buildings in areas where they would work best for the community.

To supporters, public housing was a way of fulfilling a central goal of providing a decent home for every Chicago family. Progressives working at the Chicago Housing Authority saw their agency as a means to save the poor from the slums without threatening the private housing market and already happily housed Chicago residents. The CHA hoped to transform visible neighborhoods to demonstrate the value of public housing to local communities and the city as a whole. Like many Chicago visionaries before them, this was to be accomplished through large-scale plans that re-imagined the city. In a 1945 speech, Elizabeth Wood argued that planning for public housing “must be bold and comprehensive—or it is useless and wasted. If it is not bold, the result will be a series of small projects, islands in a wilderness of slums beaten down by smoke, noise, and fumes.”<sup>156</sup> The CHA wanted to create better neighborhood layouts and higher standards for building construction and maintenance to create a new model for underserved areas.

The row houses of the Frances Cabrini Homes were the original model for public housing in Chicago. The row houses were positioned close together along tree-lined streets to give the appearance of a “humble, urban village” (the success of this model was still evident seventy years after it was constructed).<sup>157</sup> During the 1940s, the CHA

---

<sup>156</sup> Qtd in Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 156.

<sup>157</sup> Whitaker, *Cabrini-Green in Words and Pictures*, 10.

believed that row houses were the best option for public housing communities because they served the needs of two-parent households, public housing's first clients, best by putting the interior space close to street life. The Frances Cabrini Homes held 586 families in 54 buildings with two or three stories. The row houses were cinderblock construction making them an improvement over the neighborhood's wooden structures. The average unit had over four rooms, making individual units larger than at many other public housing communities. First floor units were modeled on garden apartments with small, private yards that were used as play areas or to hang laundry. The goal of this type of housing was to "provide healthful conditions for the growth and development of family life and, especially, children."<sup>158</sup> The CHA believed that row houses represented the best way to expand public housing in the city, but in Chicago and elsewhere across the country, increased land and construction costs along with federal cost and density requirements pushed housing authorities into developing massive high-rise communities.

These new restrictions appeared to match with the new trend in architecture—modernism. The most visible symbol of modernism was the skyscraper.<sup>159</sup> These designs often highlighted structural elements while presenting the glass facades as a screen for the building. High-rise buildings were valued for more than their physical form. They represented the promise of modernism, namely efficiency in production and design and social order.<sup>160</sup> Chicago's clear connection to the founding of modernism and the

---

<sup>158</sup> National Housing Agency and Federal Public Housing Authority, "Public Housing Design," June 1946, pg. 2.

<sup>159</sup> Blake, *Form Follows Fiasco*, 69.

<sup>160</sup> National Register of Historic Places, "Public Housing in the United States, 1933-1949," Continuation Sheet, Section E, pg 66.

beginning of skyscrapers originated with the Home Insurance Building in 1885 while the firm of Adler and Sullivan firmly located Chicago at the forefront of this design form. The architectural history of the Loop remains firmly rooted in modern skyscrapers. At mid-century Mies van der Rohe's 860 Lake Shore Drive furthered the position of the International Style in Chicago, creating a glass and steel curtain design that came to define developments along Lake Shore Drive. To this day, Chicago's lakefront and posh neighborhoods like the Gold Coast are covered with high-rise residential developments housing condos valued at over a million dollars.

One modernist model would become especially influential for public housing history—Le Corbusier's Radiant City. Le Corbusier imagined a city of skyscraper developments set in park-like open spaces. He saw the skyscraper as answer to a design conundrum of how to combine the need for high densities in urban areas with people's natural desire to access nature.<sup>161</sup> In his plan, high-rise buildings served as centralized locations for housing, industry, and government bureaucracy. Because these land uses were so centralized, open park lands could be maintained around every structure, giving everyone easy access to it. Evidence that these buildings could work for housing was already evident in European and American apartment buildings. Public housing would replicate residential high-rise developments favored by the wealthy and middle class, but it failed to grasp that continual investment in building maintenance and security allowed these forms to operate successfully.

High-rise construction was seen as a cost-effective manner to provide adequate amounts of housing to replace units destroyed during slum clearance and handle the

---

<sup>161</sup> Fishman, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century*, 192.



growing waiting lists for new units. High-rise construction allowed housing authorities to take advantage of the cost efficiencies of new construction techniques and materials. Even with this cost saving, however, construction costs were too high for local political support so the CHA used cheaper materials that had shorter lifespans than the original materials and required more maintenance. The CHA accepted design was inadequate for the requirements of its needy population, specifically the number of waitlisted African American families with five or more children. The CHA sought an exemption from the federal government for the unit cost restrictions to build low-rise communities to accommodate larger families, but this request was denied in the late 1950s.

Cost became an increasingly powerful force in determining the appearance and layout of the neighborhood. With the Chicago City Council unwilling to allow the CHA to buy land in the less expensive vacant areas close to white neighborhoods, projects were slated for communities that would require slum clearance, a more expensive process and requiring time before construction began. Underestimating the cost of land acquisition for many projects, the CHA needed to change designs to keep projects within the proscribed budgets. These constructions made high-rises more attractive for planners, since new floors could be added without sacrificing public space outside or require more land purchases. For the Cabrini Extension, this meant fewer, taller buildings. A project of seven-, nine-, and sixteen story buildings were transformed into seven-, ten-, and nineteen-story buildings in order to maintain a similar number of units while bringing the total development cost per unit below federal limits. This shift increased residential density from 51 to 54 units per acre.<sup>162</sup>

---

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, 308.

Changing ideas about what architectural forms public housing should take began to impact the Frances Cabrini Homes in the 1950s. This shift was the product of the City Council's limitation of CHA's expansion projects to neighborhoods that already contained public housing. The first expansion, the Cabrini Extension North and South, completed in 1957, expanded the number of units by 1,952 apartments in fifteen buildings. The buildings were made of exposed concrete frames with a red brick infill, leading to their popular nickname the "Reds." CHA plans remapped the area, replacing small blocks with European-style superblocks. This design gave the CHA flexibility in where to locate buildings relative to major avenues and each other. Superblock design isolated Cabrini from the street grid design of the rest of the city. Using less than 16 percent of the land cleared, landscaping was a significant feature of the site with the CHA providing trees, shrubs, and flowerbeds along with play areas for children and general courtyards. Despite the size of the Cabrini Extension, the project ultimately caused a net loss of 400 units from the area at a time the neighborhood experienced a significant population increase, exacerbating the neighborhood housing shortage.<sup>163</sup>

The final additional was the William Green Homes, completed in 1962. This project included eight-, fifteen-, and sixteen-story buildings, adding 1,096 units to Cabrini (and inspired a new name for the neighborhood: Cabrini-Green). This final piece created a public housing neighborhood of 3,600 units that housed 15,000 people at its peak, making it the nation's second largest public housing development. More than earlier projects, the design and materials separated this development from the community. Each building was a rectangular concrete structure with windows on the long

---

<sup>163</sup> Bowly, *The Poorhouse*, 102-3.

sides and one central window on each end. The concrete façade gave the buildings the nickname, the “Whites.” The buildings were positioned so that the long side faced the surrounding avenue, creating a barrier that prevented people on the street from seeing the courtyards and open space. The total effect indicated to people on the street or outside the property that this space was not for them. The combination of building form and design layout established the William Green Homes as the “White Wall” (See Figure 2).

Massive projects were used by housing authorities because they helped spread the high land costs over many units, offered efficient management and maintenance, and allowed for the planners to incorporate neighborhood assets in the plan, including schools, parks, sports facilities, and public gardens.<sup>164</sup> The decision to build a large-scale project, however, did not translate into universal approval. Because it was so different from what it replaced in terms of architectural form and community design, Cabrini’s architecture caused serious debate over the nature of what was being built. The basis for this debate was concern over what public housing would mean for its neighbors, specifically for their property values and community standards. Some residents noted the uniformity of public housing buildings made them distinct from the neighborhood architecture while providing visual clues that it was public housing.

As the CHA built high-rise projects, some within the organization believed that the authority was on the wrong path, trading the human scale of row houses with the massive scale of high rises. Many wondered how public housing residents, who were already viewed as alienated and detached from mainstream society, would establish a functional community in these environments. High-rise public housing was considered

---

<sup>164</sup> Bauer, “A Citizen’s Guide to Public Housing,” 30.

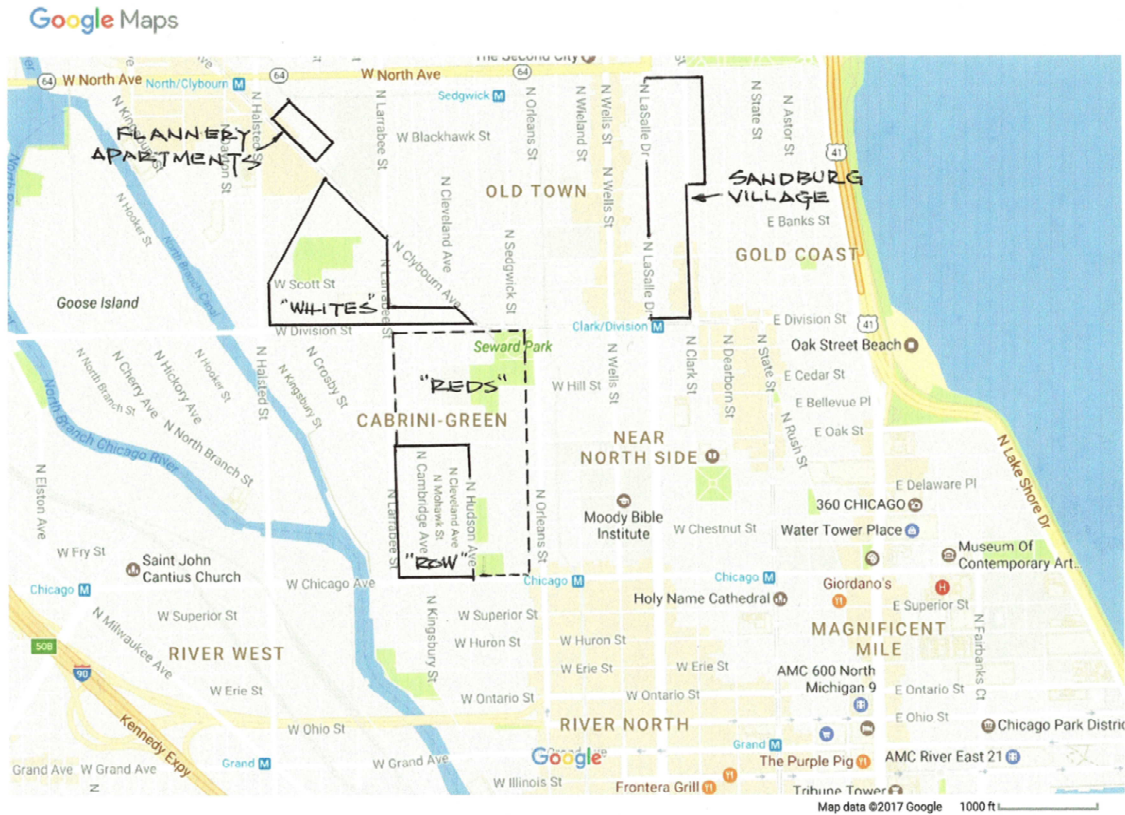


Figure 2: Map of the Near North Side. Cabrini-Green appears in three parts: Frances Cabrini Homes (“row”), Cabrini Extension (“Reds”), and William Green Homes (“Whites”). CHA senior housing, Flannery Apartments, and private development, Sandburg Village, were also included. Courtesy of Google Maps.

the wrong type of housing for its tenants. Elizabeth Wood, writing for the Citizen Housing and Planning Council of New York after her time at the CHA, argued that “the basic evil of high rise apartments for families” was the position it put parents in: keep your child inside or allow them to play outside without your direct supervision.<sup>165</sup> Often, children went unsupervised in public spaces or inside the buildings, which led to concerns of vandalism and broken elevators. For the most part, the CHA did not have

<sup>165</sup> Wood, “Housing Design,” 9 (no page numbers, by count).

sufficient funds to repair all the damages, causing them to build up over time and add to the appearance of disrepair that would come to define public housing.

#### IV. Public Housing as Paradise

While early debates over public housing focused on site location and building form, the demographic makeup of the residents also significantly shaped what type of place public housing would be. To placate real estate brokers, builders, city government, and assorted interests against public housing, legislation placed income ceilings for potential public housing residents. While limitations were placed on who could live in public housing, the impact of World War II and a belief from the Great Depression that the government should play a role in helping people experiencing hard times created what looked to be a positive start for the program. Success of early public housing projects was attributed to three distinct features—efficient management, careful tenant selection, and the belief that public housing was a worthwhile government program.<sup>166</sup>

Early public housing programs envisioned residents who were working-class or low-income families that aspired to middle-class status and virtues.<sup>167</sup> To achieve this goal the CHA instituted a detailed system for tenant selection, favoring two parent households with at least one working family member. The original authorization by the federal government establishing public housing set rents at a level affordable for an employed worker with a small family. Rents for Frances Cabrini Homes started at \$11 per month for a couple making \$780 annually in 1942. These units were seen by renters

---

<sup>166</sup> Franklin, “Forward,” in *When Public Housing Was Paradise*, xiii.

<sup>167</sup> Friedman, *Government and Slum Housing*, 131.

as superior to many on the private market. And they were willing to pay for it. Some families saw their rents increased by 50 to 100 percent.<sup>168</sup> From unit design to community layout, the design answered residents' needs. One early resident of the Frances Cabrini Homes described her memory of the quality of her family's first unit,

The townhouses were built so that the housewife could look out of the kitchen window to the front. We had our own little yard in front, and that's where everyone had a jungle gym or a sandbox. It was small, but it had everything: a bathroom, hot and cold running water. If anything went wrong with the plumbing, the repairmen were right there. It was very well run. It was one of the best apartments I'd ever lived in. Altogether, it was darling.<sup>169</sup>

Other oral histories tell of people who saw units in the Cabrini row houses as a substantial step-up in their housing, just as the early designers intended. The individual yards outside of each two-story row house and the tree-lined avenues were frequently mentioned as high points. While the units served as a benefit for the individual family, the outdoor environment was a connection to the community.

More than moving to a new home, they were moving to carefully cultivated communities. Chicago residents were invited to witness these communities for themselves: "Visit a CHA community and you will see neat lawns, immaculate curtains at the windows, bebies of adequately, even jauntily dressed children. You will get an immediate and strong sense of general good housekeeping, of plain but certainly respectable living."<sup>170</sup> The CHA worked to ensure this sense of place met reality. In the first two decades, the CHA ran sports leagues, organized community clubs, and

---

<sup>168</sup> Meehan, *The Quality of Federal Policymaking*, 59.

<sup>169</sup> Fuerst, *When Public Housing Was Paradise*, 119.

<sup>170</sup> Metropolitan Housing Council, "Chicago Housing Authority: Manager and Builder of Low-Rent Communities," January 1, 1940, pg. 25.

sponsored parades. Residents also found connections with neighborhood churches, schools, and community centers. In the 1940s and 50s, stores and restaurants remained from the earlier neighborhood since the footprint of the public housing community was not as large as it would become. This allowed people to acquire necessary goods and services from the local neighborhood without traveling into the Loop. Above all else, residents described a connection to the people around them. An early resident of Frances Cabrini Homes remembered, “When I moved over here [in 1952], it was like family, like one big family.”<sup>171</sup> Children could be easily monitored by their parents while playing in the yards or in parks. Residents also got together in public to add to the sense of community. Early residents of the row houses recalled block club parties where the streets would be closed off to allow for dancing in the streets.

Community was a feeling in the property but there was also an active management presence. Management started before residents ever moved in with checks of police records, family income, and a home visit by a social worker. In comparison with the later history of Cabrini-Green, the CHA was actively monitoring people, their homes, and the surrounding lands. The CHA checked in on families to ensure they treated their homes and community appropriately. Residents were told that orderly appearance was an important responsibility to selling these communities to the city. A resident handbook told potential renters: “Thousands of people see our buildings everyday. Your reputation and ours depends on the appearance of grounds.”<sup>172</sup> Despite the extra work it required

---

<sup>171</sup> Whitaker, *Cabrini-Green in Words and Pictures*, 14.

<sup>172</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, “Your House, Your Home: Handbook for Residents of Chicago Housing Authority Apartments,” CHA Booklet, 1972, pg. 12.

from residents, many appreciated how this work improved their community. One resident yearned for this consistent presence after it disappeared with changing CHA funding and policy: “When you threw paper on the ground or garbage and stuff, they’d charge you for it, but now you can throw all the garbage out there you want and they won’t charge you nothin’.”<sup>173</sup> Many residents reported a positive view of the CHA and its adherence to its own rules. Residents who did not live by CHA standards were evicted. Careful screening before being allowed to move in and clear rules for residents helped create a community of working class people who fit with the original design of housing meant for upwardly mobile families in need of temporary support.

Even as residents remembered a solid start for Cabrini-Green, issues of race were present from the beginning. Conflict between African Americans and Italian Americans had been growing in the neighborhood since the 1920s. For the Italian Americans, public housing represented one of the last opportunities to preserve their community by isolating African Americans in certain locations within the community. Before the Frances Cabrini Homes opened, the CHA determined through the neighborhood composition rule that 20 percent of units would be for African American families with the rest for white families. Many in the neighborhood hoped that the buildings would be segregated to limit the race mixing. The Near North Side Property Owners’ Association requested that segregation be preserved at the row houses with blacks living in buildings on Larrabee Street close to Chicago Avenue. One of the biggest signs of the community’s rejection of integration at Cabrini was units designated for African Americans were full with a significant waiting list while the CHA has difficulty filling all the units reserved for white families. At the

---

<sup>173</sup> Whitaker, *Cabrini-Green in Words and Pictures*, 18.



time, CHA Executive Secretary Elizabeth Wood stated, “We have been repeatedly told that families would move in [to Cabrini] if the Negroes were segregated, but they would not if they were not segregated.”<sup>174</sup> But many at the CHA, including Wood, wanted to ensure that public housing was designed with a concern for integrated developments. White families were increasingly disinterested in moving into the neighborhood as time went on. After 1943, the CHA opened units originally set aside for white residents to African Americans, marking the first in a series of shifts away from a white majority to an African American majority at Cabrini-Green.

Public housing advocates were aware of the value in tenant selection in getting program support. They created another feature of place for these communities—permanent structures designed to be a temporary stop for upwardly mobile families. The positive contribution of residents to community success was a common feature of CHA documents. “The people in public housing projects work together on tenant councils which they themselves organize. They garden together. They work with service agencies of the community.”<sup>175</sup> These activities were familiar to those in the private market. This was by design. Public housing was supposed to be a short stop on a family’s path into the private market. As the program developed in the 1960s and 1970s, the units became less a transitional home for families looking to move to the private market or buy single-family homes and more a long-term answer for many of the city’s poorest residents’ housing needs.

---

<sup>174</sup> Qtd in Guglielmo, *White on Arrival*, 158.

<sup>175</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, “Chicago Can Build,” 1950, pg. 14.

## V. Demographic Shifts and Changing Place

Residents would continue to define public housing as both a government program and a neighborhood. During the Great Depression and World War II living in public housing was not considered a signal of lower status. CHA advertisements focused on the ways their residents were positive assets to community development. One CHA brochure from 1960 advertised: “Within all public housing communities, residents are working together in a spirit of GOOD NEIGHBORILESS to improve their homes, their communities and THEIR CHICAGO.”<sup>176</sup> In the early decades, the idea that residents were good neighbors and good Chicago citizens was an accepted aspect of public housing’s sense of place. By the 1970s, however, public housing was symbolic of “low income” with increasing representations of civic disorder and violence. Public housing communities ceased being places where decent housing was available and its residents were too different and isolated to be productive citizens. Cabrini-Green and other public housing communities were widely considered “warehouses for the poor.” This concept inspired opponents to press for significant changes while advocates were forced into the untenable position of seeking change with minimal resources or popular support.

During the site selection process neighborhood residents began to express concerns about who would be allowed to move into public housing and what that would mean for current neighborhood residents. Residents in established neighborhoods often saw people who would want to live in public housing communities as fundamentally different from themselves. Public housing residents were often believed to have higher

---

<sup>176</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, “The Inside Story of Public Housing in Chicago,” brochure, 1960, pg. 2.

rates of criminality and juvenile delinquency, had little desire to keep their homes or neighborhood orderly, and had different customs and ideas about acceptable public behavior.<sup>177</sup> These concerns combined ideas of race and class to create a delinquent group of potential residents. A leader of a local improvement association recorded his objections, saying, “You know, a lot of people say it’s the colored we don’t want, but the kind of whites who live in public housing are just as bad. It’s not the colored alone. It’s the whole class of people who live like that.”<sup>178</sup> Generally people in Chicago selected their neighborhood for its physical proximity to homes, people, and civic culture they wanted and did not look kindly on the prospect of new public housing neighbors.

Racial composition also became an issue of concern for the maintenance of place and program identity. Residents often felt that public housing was a means to introduce unwanted integration into established neighborhoods. Many in the early CHA leadership favored integration, but City Council approval made this almost impossible. A big concern for CHA officials became the “tipping point”—the population distribution inside a public housing neighborhood after which only minority families would move in while white families abandoned the property. When making an argument for the Cabrini Extension, the CHA included survey results that the Frances Cabrini Homes slowed down neighborhood racial transition that was underway before the site was selected.<sup>179</sup> By 1954, Cabrini was split equally between white and black. Once a community became majority minority, the CHA made very little effort to maintain it as integrated. In the

---

<sup>177</sup> Freedman, *Public Housing*, 113.

<sup>178</sup> Qtd in Meyerson and Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest*, 110.

<sup>179</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, “Cabrini Extension Area: Portrait of a Chicago Slum,” 1951, 3.

1960s, the white population at Cabrini-Green dropped below 10 percent. Increasingly, public housing was associated with African Americans and other racial minorities.<sup>180</sup>

Changes in the physical conditions of the buildings and policy shifts regarding the relationship between income and rents began to drive out residents who aspired to the middle class. The CHA rent structure set individual family rents based on the family income, meaning that as family incomes increased so did rents. This trend specifically hurt working class public housing residents because they paid more than impoverished residents for the same size units in the same buildings. This reality led to a migration of working class families out of public housing and into the private marketplace. A survey of Chicago public housing residents in 1986 reported that 17 percent were employed, 66 percent were unemployed, and 13 percent were disabled.<sup>181</sup>

Initially residents on welfare were not desired or typical residents. The connection between public housing and welfare was complicated as welfare agencies lowered monthly payments for public housing residents since their rents were so low, which led to public housing agencies further lowering rents to reflect lower monthly income.<sup>182</sup> Target rents and resident populations were shaped by changes outside of the local community. In 1969, the Brooke Amendment to that year's Housing Act limited rents to 25 percent of tenant's monthly income, pushing the resources available to housing authorities below annual survival needs without allowing for necessary funds for regular maintenance.<sup>183</sup>

---

<sup>180</sup> Freedman, *Public Housing*, 141.

<sup>181</sup> Metropolitan Planning Council Task Force on CHA "Untapped Potentials: The Capacities, Needs, and Views of Chicago's Highrise Public Housing Residents," September 1986, pg. 16.

<sup>182</sup> Meehan, *The Quality of Federal Policymaking*, 60.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid*, 106.

Federal response to this revenue loss was to direct local housing authorities to focus on massive cost reduction. The cost reduction led to changes in architecture and building materials, and when combined with the inability to maintain these structures, these changes created neighborhoods that gave the appearance of disaster and further isolated these communities from the rest of the city.

Public housing was increasingly seen as distinct places for reasons beyond the distinct appearance of the buildings and landscape coverage. Major shifts in who lived in public housing—from their employment status to family structure—supported visions of public housing as an unfamiliar landscape for most city residents. First generation residents were considered “deserving poor”—people whose economic conditions placed them in poverty but who possessed the will and ability to work themselves out of poverty and into private housing. The original target population was two-parent families with children, although young couples without children could also find units.<sup>184</sup> While many people recognize that the nation has a commitment to assist the poor, anti-poverty programs have not had much success unless they also have positive impacts for higher income Americans at the same time.<sup>185</sup> The origins of American public housing saw such public support. The PWA housing, a precursor to public housing, was not a means tested program and saw support from middle class residents who moved into 58 projects around the country.<sup>186</sup>

---

<sup>184</sup> Chicago Housing Authority: Low-Rent Apartments: Good Living on a Small Budget,” brochure, 1952.

<sup>185</sup> Freedman, *Public Housing*, 7.

<sup>186</sup> Radford, “The Federal Government and Housing During the Depression,” in *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes*, 105.

After World War II, public housing began to be seen less as a tool for assisting the deserving and more as permanent aid to those who did not deserve it. The “undeserving poor” were more difficult to understand as the general population had little sympathy for those who would not work to provide themselves a home in the private market.<sup>187</sup> This change in ideas about what people were “the poor” corresponded with an increased belief that social welfare programs were the root cause of increased taxes on a federal and local level. In Chicago, this shift came rather quickly. In a 1947 *Chicago Daily Tribune* series on public housing, the program was presented as giving public housing residents better homes than taxpayers at better rents while requiring massive amounts of subsidies at a time when an unleashed private market could provide millions of profits.<sup>188</sup> Public housing was seen as a drain on two levels—it forced people to live amongst the “undeserving,” which drove down their property values, and it heightened their sense that they were not getting the help public housing residents did.

By 1988 the CHA housed a population very different from the rest of the city. Female-headed households represented 68 percent of resident families. Due in part to the isolated locations and the city’s history of residential segregation, around 95 percent of residents were black. The CHA remained focused solely on housing the “poorest of the poor” even as other urban housing authorities promoted economic diversity. The median family income for CHA residents was \$4,650 (the eligibility limit for a family of four

---

<sup>187</sup> Freedman, *Public Housing*, 8.

<sup>188</sup> Kirkpatrick, Clayton, “City at Housing Crossroads; It’s Pay or Be Paid!,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 8, 1947, pg. 12.

was \$19,600).<sup>189</sup> These facts made public housing appear to be “warehouses for the poor” that did not serve their residents, putting them amongst gangs and drugs with little hope for help, and failed the surrounding neighborhoods by limiting property values and hurting efforts to revitalize the private market. Even as public housing received greater criticism from outside interests and residents, almost five percent of the city’s population called these units home.<sup>190</sup>

The deterioration of public housing was often studied as an independent phenomenon, but wider trends in urban living during the 1960s and 1970s should be included in these discussions. Federal intervention in cities often worked against itself. The federal government made significant investments in the urban core through urban renewal and slum clearance programs. At the same time, federal support for the suburban development through mortgage programs for single-family suburban homes and increased ease of travel with the interstate highway program assisted mass migration out of cities.<sup>191</sup> This migration translated into a smaller tax base for cities and led to the deterioration of many inner-city neighborhoods, not just those with public housing.

## VI. Modernism Out of Favor

Early public housing advocates proposed a clear architecture for public housing to demonstrate to city residents how their tax money was spent while ensuring that

---

<sup>189</sup> Metropolitan Planning Council, “Not a World Apart: Increasing the Viability of Chicago’s Public Housing Highrises and Large Developments,” November 1988, 6-7.

<sup>190</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, “The New Chicago Housing Authority: Transforming Public Housing: General Information,” brochure, 1996.

<sup>191</sup> Joseph Heathcott, “The Strange Career of Public Housing,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 78, no. 4 (Autumn 2012): 373.

construction stayed within the tight federal budget constraints. Yet, almost as soon as they appeared, high-rise public housing with its minimal modern décor would be popularly viewed as a failed architectural ideology responsible for public housing's physical and moral decay. The public's perception of public housing became defined as poorly maintained concrete slabs surrounded by empty fields whose mere presence made the neighborhood unappealing. Such a vision, unwelcome in almost every neighborhood, made the program appear incapable of adding to a neighborhood, let alone being a successful place where desirable neighbors could live.

By the 1970s, architects and planners were starting to view modern architecture as a failure. Modern architecture started with a promise of quality housing for all people due to the implementation of design standards. Yet, these standards became solely connected with housing for the poorest citizens, because such characteristics were rejected as sparse and lacking unique features. Rather than a guarantee of universal quality housing, modern architecture placed a stigma of poverty and required government support for the people who lived there.<sup>192</sup> In the background of this intellectual transition was the reality that the central urban core was losing out to the suburbs in attracting middle class families. Planning for attractive, high-density urban living had eluded both public and private developers in the postwar years.<sup>193</sup>

Because they were designed according to the principles of modernist architecture, the high-rise structures were a prime target of criticism. Beginning in the 1970s, high rises became architectural villains, recipients of the criticism from architects, planners,

---

<sup>192</sup> Rowe, *Modernity and Housing*, 62.

<sup>193</sup> Wood, "Housing Design," 2.



and residents regarding overall design philosophy and public housing policy more broadly. These criticisms elevated architecture, presenting it as the cause of public housing's greatest ills and as a potential savior for urban housing because good design could replace the bad.<sup>194</sup> A common theme in public housing advocacy was that placing poorer residents in row houses and apartment buildings, designed to be less expensive versions of middle class housing, could encourage residents to develop middle class values of hard work, homeownership, and family living. Many of the design and planning decisions made to support middle class values did not work as promised, with residents using the site as it fit their daily lives rather than how it was proscribed to be used. In turn, the buildings would become connected with the lack of economic opportunity and criminality that made the headlines. According to Janet L. Smith, high-rise public housing came to represent "a menace that socially isolates the poor and prevents families from being exposed to the cultural norms and mores that induce the middle class to work and be responsible members of society."<sup>195</sup> The image of high-rises as "architectural villains" and public housing residents as "architectural victims" became a powerful tool in arguing for the destruction of high-rise family housing like Cabrini-Green.

Public housing was an integral part of the larger backlash against modern architecture, in part, due to its ideological relationship and physical similarities to Le Corbusier's "Tower in the Park" model. These buildings were not just seen as ugly or poorly constructed; they were often viewed as actively hurting the city and its residents. In his critique of modernism as a failed vision that created structures falling down around

---

<sup>194</sup> Bristol, "The Pruitt-Igoe Myth," in *American Architectural History*, 362.

<sup>195</sup> Smith "Diminishing High Rise Public Housing" in *Chicago Architecture*, 298.

humanity, architect Peter Blake described the history and fate of American public housing as “the finest public housing projects to be found anywhere in the world, and designed according to the noblest precepts, are turning into enclaves of murder, rape, mugging, and dope addiction, with the only way out a charge of dynamite to reduce those noble precepts to rubble—literally.”<sup>196</sup> The architecture of public housing was a popular target because it allowed for criticism of the program’s shortcomings without addressing underlying issues of poverty, unemployment, and the exodus of working class families that were not products of design or construction.

Even within a city with a strong, tradition of modern architecture for commercial and residential high-rises, public housing buildings like the Cabrini Extension and the William Green Homes served as visual reminders of the hubris of modern architecture to provide all residents with quality housing in the city and its aesthetic failure to create beautiful, livable spaces. The CHA high-rises were imposing, symbolic of places that few Chicagoans wanted to go. They were easily identified as lesser housing that stigmatized both the community and the residents who lived in them.<sup>197</sup> This conclusion was uniquely devastating because the CHA and other agencies often knew the shortcomings of high-rise communities, but was prevented from changing the model by cost and density requirements. There was very little that housing authorities could do besides watch the buildings slowly fall apart and the communities established in low-rise developments gradually fracture.

---

<sup>196</sup> Blake, *Form Follows Fiasco*, 11.

<sup>197</sup> Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 141.

In 1973, Oscar Newman released *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention Through Urban Design*, a critique of public housing architecture as being too conducive to criminality and resident victimization. The Defensible Space model was designed to combat crime by creating physical expressions of community control that in turn could be the basis to create a safe living environment.<sup>198</sup> Design, Newman argued, was a crucial tool to demonstrate community control over areas. Public housing communities were a product of a drive for greater residential densities on expensive urban lands that had no concern for how families use space. Newman observed that public housing neighborhoods that relied on walkup buildings no higher than three stories had lower rates of crime, delinquency, and drug use than projects of high-rises even when controlling for all other risk factors for these behaviors. According to Newman's analysis, their physical environment uniquely influenced public housing residents.<sup>199</sup> While middle class urban residents could adapt to live in high-rise apartment buildings, the same was not possible for public housing residents.

The Cabrini-Green high-rises were viewed as failures in many of the ways critics mentioned. The buildings were designed with open, accessible lobbies to show that public housing belonged to the "public."<sup>200</sup> The open design meant that anyone could enter the building, matching Newman's concern that this construction made it difficult for residents to exert control over internal spaces by surveillance and territorial claim.

---

<sup>198</sup> Newman, *Defensible Space*, 3.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid*, 191.

<sup>200</sup> Metropolitan Planning Council, "Not a World Apart: Increasing the Viability of Chicago's Public Housing Highrises and Large Developments," November 1988, 13.

The inability to separate legitimate residents from unwelcome intruders, in turn, facilitated gang takeover of public spaces like hallways and abandoned units and allowed for vandalism to damage areas like mailboxes. These failures of building design and maintenance were not seen solely as the product of poor construction, they became symbolic of a larger failure in public housing policy. According to historian Carl Condit, the Cabrini Extension “proved a fertile ground for breeding every ill of poverty and discrimination, and the resulting violence of daily life eventually reached a fury that focused the attention of the entire world on the horrors of the American city.”<sup>201</sup> Rather than remaining a black eye within the city, Cabrini-Green and other major public housing complexes along South State Street became national embarrassments for Chicago.

The need for communities to have physical signs of community control and safety was evident in experimental programs to modify established architecture, especially the High-Impact Program (HIP) that ran from 1974 to 1978. Partnering with the Department of Human Services with financial support from the Illinois Law Enforcement Commission, the CHA selected four buildings—two high-rises and two mid-rises—to get architectural improvements such as enclosing lobbies with a 24-hour security detail, installing cameras in elevators and around exterior doors, improving lighting to give residents a better sense of who was around them, placing public restrooms on the ground floor to allow children playing outside access to facilities, installing security doors that would only permit residents with IDs or their guests to enter, and placing fencing and new landscaping to improve senses of ownership. The program’s goal was to lower the crime rates in and around the target buildings and to increase the desire of current

---

<sup>201</sup> Condit, *Chicago, 1930-70*, 158.

residents and non-residents to live in these buildings. Evaluations found a decrease in homicide, rape, robbery, and theft. Residents felt safer with cameras in the elevators and hallways and security personnel in lobbies and on patrol. Almost 87 percent of residents felt safer in the new lobbies and protected elevators, which was attributed to the physical changes in building form and surveillance.<sup>202</sup> At the same time, the larger Cabrini-Green area saw a decrease in robberies, assaults, and thefts but an increase in murder and rape. The success of many HIP programs encouraged the CHA to continue the program and expand it to other buildings on property, but the lack of a funding source meant they could only pursue minimal changes.

Despite efforts to upgrade the buildings to improve people's view of them, the buildings themselves continued to have poor reputations for quality. A particular area of focus was the elevator. The elevators were "infamous", sometimes described as "the most dangerous public transportation in Chicago."<sup>203</sup> The elevators were subjected to abuse as children rode them as part of their play activities and targets of the most expensive vandalism. When the buildings were first constructed cost saving efforts included foregoing highest quality building materials and no insulation, making elevators vulnerable to breaking down. Yet repair was often delayed as the residents' rents, designated for building maintenance and repair, did not provide sufficient funds due to the residents' low income. A 1986 survey found that 92 percent of residents believed that

---

<sup>202</sup> Arthur Young & Company, memo, "Second-Year Evaluation Report Cabrini-Green High Impact Program," August 1978, xiii.

<sup>203</sup> Metropolitan Planning Council, "Not a World Apart: Increasing the Viability of Chicago's Public Housing Highrises and Large Developments," November 1988, 15.

the CHA needed to improve maintenance and elevator services.<sup>204</sup> When elevators broke down, it effectively turned high-rise buildings into walkups, making the top floors all but inaccessible to residents and perfect for gangs to patrol the streets from above.

Building form had the potential to shape resident's view of their home. The Frances Cabrini Homes maintained their status as quality housing, at least within the Cabrini-Green neighborhood, even as the high-rises declined, starting in the 1970s. In Cabrini-Green resident surveys as part of HIP, half of all residents who thought about moving desired to live in the row houses. Both row house residents and the overall Cabrini-Green population rated the row houses as the most attractive housing option and the best places to raise children. The physical form was a significant part of positive opinions as the low-rise structures and smaller unit size designed for smaller families made the interiors preferable while the small personal lawn and garden areas made residents feel a greater connection to outdoor life.<sup>205</sup>

Resident relationships to high-rise units were often complicated. By the 1980s, many public housing residents viewed their home in public housing as permanent, with many living in their units for an average of 8 years. They were connected to their units and neighborhoods, but remained ambivalent about the high-rise building form. A 1986 Metropolitan Planning Council survey of residents at three communities including Cabrini-Green found that 50 percent would relocate to live in low-rise communities while

---

<sup>204</sup> Metropolitan Planning Council, "Untapped Potentials: The Capacities, Needs, and Views of Chicago's High-Rise Public Housing Residents." September 1986, 46.

<sup>205</sup> Arthur Young & Company, memo, "Second-Year Evaluation Report Cabrini-Green High Impact Program," August 1978, xii-xiii.

41 percent preferred high-rises.<sup>206</sup> If the original purpose of public housing was to assist families, the high-rises were seen as failures at this mission. While many residents listed issues like gang presence and drug use as concerns, the physical building form as it impacted daily life also appeared. The high-rises were seen to house too many children in a building design that placed their designated play areas too far away from their units and parents' supervision. Many played inside, turning elevators, stairways, and public spaces into makeshift play areas, and contributing to building disrepair.

As the troubles in the high-rises compounded, vacancy rates began to climb. A 1988 Metropolitan Planning Council task force on the CHA found a citywide high 40 percent vacancy rate at the Cabrini Extension.<sup>207</sup> This same report found that the top five to eight floors of each of the six Cabrini Extension buildings studied were completely vacant because the broken elevators did not allow potential residents to get to these floors. By 1990, Cabrini-Green high-rises had vacancies rates ranging from 40 to 70 percent.<sup>208</sup> Empty Cabrini units were infamous for being taken over by gangs and squatters, contributing to the sense that no one could control these buildings. Efforts by the High Impact Program had demonstrated that buildings where people felt safe could reverse their population loss and improve their vacancies rates and stabilize their buildings.<sup>209</sup> But such efforts were expensive. By 1980s the combination of high crime

---

<sup>206</sup> Metropolitan Planning Council, "Untapped Potentials: The Capacities, Needs, and Views of Chicago's High-Rise Public Housing Residents." September 1986, 3.

<sup>207</sup> Metropolitan Planning Council, "Not a World Apart: Increasing the Viability of Chicago's Public Housing Highrises and Large Developments," November 1988, 1.

<sup>208</sup> Institute of Urban Life, "Is There a Better Way?" 1989, pg. 9.

<sup>209</sup> Department of Planning, City and Community Development, "Final Report: Cabrini-Green, High Impact Program, 1975-1978," January 1979, pgs. 12, 61.

and high vacancy rates created a terrible environment for many residents: “Law-abiding families live side by side with those who skulk in the shadow world of drugs, gangs, and violent crimes...the solid citizens who still live in public housing feel helpless, constantly terrorized by lawless invaders, gang desperadoes, and drug peddlers.”<sup>210</sup>

The vision of public housing as ugly high-rises whose deterioration was symbolic of program failure became problematic for the CHA at the same time the agency was required by court rulings to build new public housing in white neighborhoods. Knowing that by the 1970s public housing had become synonymous with high-rises, efforts to expand and shift public housing came with explicit promises that new public housing would not mean high rises throughout the city. In a 1971 media kit, the CHA asserted that they would move forward with four separate housing forms: two-story row houses with a limit of 15-20 units per site to maintain low-density, single-family homes occupied by people with the resources to maintain them, three-story apartment buildings to replace high-rises in future developments, and two-family duplexes spread across the city.<sup>211</sup> The CHA emphasized that the new buildings would not be built in the distinctive modernist style, but would reflect the established architecture in the neighborhoods. Public housing was no longer to look like modernist public housing, but instead would fit into the surrounding neighborhood so well that it would effectively be invisible. The invisibility of public housing would be important moving forward as the CHA was directed by the courts to spread public housing developments beyond the slum sites of the past.

---

<sup>210</sup> Institute of Urban Life, “Is There a Better Way?” 1989, pg. 7.

<sup>211</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, “Facts About the New Look in Public Housing,” May 1971.



## VII. Conclusion

Public housing evolved substantially from the 1940s to 1980s as evidenced by Cabrini-Green. Changing ideas about what to do with residents unable to house themselves and about the clientele for public housing combined with shifting ideals about architecture and city planning to influence how people inside and outside of the projects understood their place in the city. What began as a paradise for families aspiring to join the middle class decayed into ruins that warehoused impoverished female-headed minority families. This transition was only the beginning of changes Cabrini-Green would undergo. The 1980s brought new interest to the community from the same forces that had previously written the area off as too impoverished and too deteriorated. Middle and upper class families, real estate developers, and city hall began to see the possibility for the neighborhood where public housing took a back seat to new commercial and residential developments.

The success of private initiatives around Cabrini-Green increased the value of land and encouraged redevelopment in the area. As early as the 1980s, developers were looking at Cabrini-Green with new eyes. The head of development for Evergreen-Sedgwick Corporation predicted big things for the neighborhood, saying, “When people decide to invest in a neighborhood, they don’t care about the public housing.”<sup>212</sup> Such shifts did not go unnoticed at Cabrini-Green. Many residents had long suspected that they would be subject to a “land grab” within the city as the proximity to the Gold Coast and Lincoln Park made the land more valuable than the developments on it.<sup>213</sup> Cabrini-Green

---

<sup>212</sup> Stevenson Swanson, “Cabrini-Green Takes Steps to Overcome Its Bad Image,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 12, 1981.

would continue to possess its infamous reputation even as the land areas around it became more marketable. Most felt that it was only a matter of time before one of these places overcame the other.

---

<sup>213</sup> Wright, with Wheelock and Steele, “The Case of Cabrini-Green” in *Where Are Poor People to Live?*, 168.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE MAKING AND REMAKING OF CABRINI-GREEN

The early history of Cabrini-Green demonstrated both the potential for public housing communities and signs of its downfall. A 1980 security analysis determined that Cabrini-Green “functioned well” from the construction of the Frances Cabrini Homes to the opening of the William Green Homes. But in the 1970s, a nationwide crime wave—personified in Cabrini by the 1970 sniper murders of two patrolmen—ignited a fear of central cities in general and public housing in particular.<sup>214</sup> This fear of public housing gained momentum in the 1980s, and became even more negative during the 1990s, a critical time for the future of public housing in Chicago and for Cabrini-Green. Cabrini-Green became synonymous with events like the 1992 murder of seven-year-old Dantrell Davis and the 1997 rape of nine-year-old Girl X in the stairwell of one of the Cabrini Extension. One analysis described the depth of the fall: “In a twist of fate, Cabrini-Green was named for an American saint, Mother Frances Cabrini, and for a longtime leader of organized labor, William Green. Neither, probably could have imagined such a place, much less tolerated such a situation.”<sup>215</sup> The battle over what Cabrini-Green would become depended on the accepted narrative of what had gone wrong and the analysis of what changes were necessary to fix it.

Cabrini-Green emerged from this period as one of the more famous examples of public housing collapse. As such, it became a symbol of the many failures of midcentury

---

<sup>214</sup> Chicago Department of Planning, “Cabrini-Green: A Model Project for Public Housing Security,” Final Report, June 16, 1980.

<sup>215</sup> North Town Community Partnership, “Project Hope,” 1995, pg. v.

public housing. Splashed across the pages of major papers, Cabrini-Green was the site of horrific shootings and brazen criminal activity that seemed beyond saving. At the same time, national and local housing officials turned to principles of New Urbanism to heal the architectural wounds of modernist architecture and city planning created by high-rise buildings. The failure of the high-rises at Cabrini-Green and the promises of New Urbanism to revive neighborhoods appeared to offer a new way forward. That effort to connect public housing to the rest of the city meant a new understanding of what type of place public housing should be.

### I. Cabrini-Green and the Outside World

Cabrini-Green had become a unique place recognizable to the rest of Chicago by the early 1970s. Set apart by high-rise architecture, superblock planning, and population defined by poor, African-American families predominantly headed by women, there were few qualities that reflected Chicago's self-image. While the place of public housing focused primarily on issues of city planning, architecture, and resident population, Cabrini-Green had an additional feature in its place—the surrounding neighborhood. Cabrini-Green had replaced the “slum” in Zorbaugh's *The Gold Coast and The Slum*. Eliminating the slum did not permanently solve the neighborhood's troubles. By the 1990s, Cabrini was a “lost mile for many Chicagoans.”<sup>216</sup> Aside from being an international symbol of failure for Chicago, the specter of Cabrini-Green also limited the expansion of renewal in the Near North Side. Starting in the 1960s, the modest buffer areas that separated the extreme wealth and extreme poverty in the area began changing

---

<sup>216</sup> North Town Community Partnership, “Project Hope,” 1995, pg. 1.

into more respectable, highly sought communities. Over the course of two decades these changes reached the boundary of Cabrini-Green, making residents and developers question how much longer Cabrini-Green could last in its current form.

The superblock formation within public housing communities fell from favor almost as soon as the neighborhoods were created. Removing public housing from the street grid was supposed to give planners the freedom to locate buildings in the most desirable location in the site and create an abundance of open parkland to connect residents with nature. In a city like Chicago, where strict adherence to the citywide grid helped residents and visitors navigate with relative ease, superblocks were obstacles to integration with city street life. Removing the buildings and surrounding land from the city grid gave the impression that these areas were not to be entered. The disappearance of the grid led to feelings of vulnerability because a pedestrian walking on much of Cabrini's land area could not see or be seen by passing cars or other pedestrian traffic. The distinctiveness of the building form and their layout increased the sense that these were alien locations, fundamentally different from the community around them.

The intellectual foundations of modern city planning and public housing developments had also been severely challenged by a formidable and popular critic, Jane Jacobs. In her seminal *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jacobs spent an entire chapter addressing the challenge of public housing communities. She argued that projects needed to be converted from isolated liabilities into assets for residents and the city at large. In her view, public housing would be successful if it could compete for people who had other housing options.<sup>217</sup> Such appeals recognized the potential of public

---

<sup>217</sup> Jacobs, *The Death and Life of the Great American Cities*, 521-2.

housing, but overlooked the fact that construction and real estate interests pressured legislatures and city councils to ensure that public housing would be designed specifically not to appeal to city residents with a choice. She argued for building improvements, especially elevators and corridors, and for street level developments to reintegrate these communities back into the surrounding city. She recommended a shift toward higher income individuals who could afford more rent to support the buildings' maintenance and redevelopment. The goal was to have "cultural and civic islands" to encourage movement between the islands and the rest of the city to allow for changes in use and population of the projects.<sup>218</sup> The ultimate change to the projects would occur when they stopped being seen as projects and were instead viewed as a vital part of the city.

Changing views of Cabrini-Green—or at least its potential—started with a new vision of its physical location in relation to the Near North Side. One of the original values of the Cabrini-Green site was its physical separation from the rest of the city. The buildings were separated from Lincoln Park on the north by a neighborhood of working class homes, the El tracks split the area from the Gold Coast to the east, the Chicago River and a commercial district along Chicago Avenue to the South kept the Loop safe, and the manufacturing district on the west isolated it from western residential developments. These barriers appeared sufficient to keep Cabrini residents out of more affluent neighborhoods until the 1970s. Major developments occurred in neighborhoods like Old Town and River North, the new name for the Chicago River manufacturing corridor as it became a restaurant, nightclub, and gallery hot spot. As these neighborhoods went from working class to up-and-coming neighborhoods, the sense of

---

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 525-6.

separation between the Gold Coast and Cabrini-Green did not appear as firm as it once had. Once it no longer was seen as fundamentally isolated from the rest of Chicago, the proximity to the Gold Coast and the Loop encouraged many to look at Cabrini-Green's location with new interest.

Despite the diminution of physical barriers, Cabrini was still isolated. As part of their 1990 redevelopment plan, the Near North Development Corporation explained the dire situation of Cabrini-Green residents, writing,

Real social, economic, racial, and physical barriers isolate them from the city and leave them seemingly trapped in a fortress-like encampment within their own North Town Community. Development in the community swirls around them as if there were an invisible and impenetrable wall separating them *from* the community and the rest of Chicago.<sup>219</sup>

Nothing demonstrated this difference as much as the community demographics. While the Near North Side was one of the wealthiest community areas in the city, 77 percent of Cabrini families lived on less than \$8,000 per year and 43 percent made less than \$4,000 annually.<sup>220</sup> Family form also differed with 87 percent of CHA families headed by single women.<sup>221</sup> Cabrini-Green was almost 100 percent African-American, further setting it apart from the more diverse Near North Side. Despite the proximity to the most affluent communities in the city, by 1990 demand for units at Cabrini-Green high-rises was practically zero.<sup>222</sup>

---

<sup>219</sup> Near North Development Corporation, "North Town Community Redevelopment Plan Phase I," September 1990, 50.

<sup>220</sup> Nathalie P. Voorhees for Center for Neighborhood and Community Improvement, "The Plan to Voucher Out Public Housing," May 1997, 37.

<sup>221</sup> Metropolitan Planning Council Task Force on CHA, "Untapped Potentials," September 1986, 14.

<sup>222</sup> Report from Institute of Urban Life, "Is There a Better Way?" 1989, 10.

The first area to see change was the buffer zone between Cabrini-Green and the Gold Coast. In 1968 the Chicago Department of Urban Renewal declared land between Wells Street and the El tracks “a slum and blighted area” and knocked down all the buildings as part of “Project Chicago-Orleans.” For over a decade the land remained vacant, until four church congregations under the leadership of the LaSalle Street Church, bought the land for a few dollars per acre to construct a housing development, Atrium Village. They constructed mid-rise buildings with one and two bedroom apartments and garden low-rises with two or three bedrooms, a total of 307 units. The builder reported that Atrium Village answered concerns about marketing new construction within eyesight of Cabrini-Green. The experience with the local community was largely positive, with advocates reporting, “The Cabrini residents have been good neighbors.”<sup>223</sup> Atrium Village did not have significant trouble keeping capacity rentals, but the proximity to Cabrini-Green still was a concern to those in charge of filling vacancies.

The churches believed that Atrium Village could serve as a bridge community, linking Cabrini-Green with its affluent Gold Coast neighbors. Church leadership and housing advocates saw Atrium Village as a radical project—creating an architecture of community that made residents outward looking. As they saw it, both Cabrini-Green and the Gold Coast were populated by high rises that fostered individual privacy and isolation over community.<sup>224</sup> Developers sought to keep Atrium Village inclusive along racial and class grounds. Atrium Village residents sought integrated living and fought to prevent the

---

<sup>223</sup> Steven Morris, “Developers in Heated Contest for Near North Renewal Tract,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 9, 1984.

<sup>224</sup> Marciniak, *Reclaiming the Inner City*, 126.



development from becoming all poor and black, like Cabrini-Green, or all white and rich, like the Gold Coast.<sup>225</sup> Despite a federal lawsuit over racial quotas and two changing neighborhoods on either side, Atrium Village managed to keep a diverse population that followed their founding ideals of inclusion. Roughly half of the apartments were rented using federal rent subsidies and half at full market price. It would be the first example of architecture stressing the value of community and a belief in mixed-income neighborhoods as a desirable, viable living arrangement.

Other developments in the 1970s and 80s added to the sense of change in the Near North Side. In 1977, the Evergreen-Sedgwick Apartments became the first private housing development designed specifically for moderate-income families to be built in the Near North Side since the 1930s. Built by the Near North Development Corporation, a non-profit, self-help organization, it would grow to house 268 units on ten acres. In the northern area, closest to Lincoln Park, Seton Medical Center and New City YMCA brought services familiar to the rest of the city into the neighborhood. The River North neighborhood south of Cabrini-Green also saw transition in the 1980s as the empty warehouses and factories, which had served as “skid row” to many of Chicago’s homeless, were rehabilitated and revitalized into an up-and-coming loft and restaurant district, renamed River North. Neighborhoods to the east of Cabrini-Green expressed a desire to expand west to provide additional housing for middle and upper class individuals and families thereby improving the neighborhood. Pressure for community growth surrounded Cabrini-Green.

---

<sup>225</sup> “A Wrong-Way Crusade on Integration,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 1, 1988.

## II. View from the Outside

An important force in shaping the understanding of Cabrini-Green's history was the news media. Drawn to sensationalized violence, building decay, and gang and drug problems, Chicago and national media made Cabrini-Green an infamous place far beyond its neighborhood boundaries and the city of Chicago. Examination of media presentations of Cabrini-Green uncovers a clear emphasis on what has been referred to as the "notorious public housing" narrative. Almost every article or representation showed an area foreign to the rest of the city. The individual pieces of representation come together to create the common opinion that places like Cabrini-Green could only be dealt with by its destruction and redevelopment as a community no longer focused on public housing.<sup>226</sup>

The perception of Cabrini-Green as an extremely violent place was traced by residents to the 1970 sniper murder of two patrolmen walking in an open field around the development. These men were participating in a volunteer walk and talk program, which had patrol teams walking around Cabrini, easily accessible to residents to gain trust. Subsequent newspaper coverage presented a bleak story, but the police reaction was a little more nuanced. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, the cops called Cabrini "Combat Alley" to explain the daily experience of murders, rapes, and robberies that characterized the "bleak, violence-ridden" community.<sup>227</sup> The police interviewed, however, saw the neighborhood's problems as those of a typical poor neighborhood—too few jobs and opportunities for too many young men whose boredom often turned to crime. They noticed that Cabrini suffered from a lack of policing to control the daily crimes. Some

---

<sup>226</sup> Bloom, Umbach, and Vale, "Introduction" in *Public Housing Myths*, 13.

<sup>227</sup> Arthur Siddon, "The Police—Looking in from the Outside," *Chicago Tribune*, August 16, 1970.

took heart from the fact that residents were willing to provide police with all the information they had and that the walk and talk program would continue after the officer's deaths.<sup>228</sup> But the newspaper reports of the murders dominated public perception, and Cabrini began to cement its reputation as a place of sensational violence—a vision that would grow unchecked in the 1980s and 1990s.

In March 1981, Mayor Jane Byrne announced that she and her husband would move into Cabrini-Green to bring attention to the neighborhood. In articles announcing this move Cabrini was referred to as depressing and crime-ridden.<sup>229</sup> Undeterred by these perceptions, she declared, “The Green is going to become the elite place in town.” Byrne's plan forced the city to briefly improve the situation at Cabrini with increased police patrols, regular garbage collection, building and elevator repairs, and tenants were monitored more closely for rent and behavior compliance.<sup>230</sup> Byrne and her husband only lived at Cabrini for three weeks. While her goal of elevating Cabrini-Green to an elite Chicago destination did not happen, the improvements she brought had real impacts on residents. People reported a more peaceful environment, even if CHA maintenance remained insufficient. Byrne boasted that there were no murders at Cabrini from the day she moved in until the day she left office, two years later. This record led to the quip that if all of Chicago's officials moved into public housing, not only would the CHA have the

---

<sup>228</sup> Bob Cromie, “Sniper Slayings Spark Questions,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 20, 1970.

<sup>229</sup> Joan Beck, “Symbolism of Politics is Jolted by Jane Byrne,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 27, 1981.

<sup>230</sup> Anne Keegan, “All Agree: Life is Better Now at Cabrini,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 27, 1981.

resources it needed to run well-maintained communities, city officials would have a better grasp of what these neighborhoods were really like.<sup>231</sup>

In the 1990s, the violence was so sensational that it drew readers from across the city and neighborhoods. The housing project was injected into national news coverage when the violence at Cabrini impacted the neighborhood's children. The single most defining incident was the 1992 murder of Dantrell Davis, a seven-year-old boy shot on his way to school by a sniper from the 10<sup>th</sup> floor of a high-rise. His murder was so shocking because it challenged every previous notion of how to provide safety for residents: his mother, as part of a parent patrol program, was escorting the boy to his elementary school down the street that was guarded by two police officers with teachers outside to welcome students. Yet, none of the adults actively working to improve children's safety could protect the boy from a Cabrini sniper.

The immediate reaction focused on the insanity of expecting people, especially children, to live in chaos, but develop into healthy, productive adults.<sup>232</sup> Soon a more site-specific concern appeared. The CHA did not control many of the buildings at Cabrini and a turf war had broken out over the high-rises. A week after Davis' death, CHA Chairman Vincent Lane argued that Cabrini-Green might be best served if the National Guard was sent in. He told reporters, "Public housing as we know it in Chicago does not work."<sup>233</sup> Lane hoped to use the national press around the murder—and Chicago's increasing

---

<sup>231</sup> Clarence Page, "Public Housing for Chicago's Public Officials?" *Chicago Tribune*, April 8, 1987.

<sup>232</sup> "Not Just Another Murder," *Chicago Tribune*, October 15, 1992.

<sup>233</sup> Patrick T. Reardon and Robert Davis, "CHA Called 'Worst in the World', Lane Presses Call to Bring in the Guard," *Chicago Tribune*, October 17, 1992.

murder rate—to bring attention to the neighborhood, which many in the city preferred to ignore, in hopes of making necessary improvements.<sup>234</sup> The Davis murder would loom large in Cabrini history, frequently appearing in stories as a way of identifying the neighborhood in the public’s memory.

The Davis murder inspired a series of stories on the fate of Cabrini’s children. The violent death of a seven-year-old boy in his schoolyard caused readers to question daily life in Cabrini-Green. One national story presented Cabrini as a neighborhood where mothers had to teach their children to stay alive by demonstrating how to avoid windows or open spaces when they heard gunfire. A local man who mentored Cabrini children argued that despite efforts to teach and protect the children, “It can be difficult to duck a bullet at Cabrini.”<sup>235</sup> The two primary villains for children, as well as adults, were drugs and gangs. Youth gangs had been associated with public housing communities going back to the late 1950s, when the high density of young men encouraged them to hang around public spaces. These groups were often blamed for vandalism that plagued these communities. By the 1960s, Chicago’s notorious street gangs began to infiltrate public housing and found them to be fertile ground.<sup>236</sup> Violence, like the shot that killed Davis, resulted from gangs’ desires to control turf and drug distribution. Gangs were so prevalent that even small children were viewed through the lens of gang affiliation. Another article noted that the rules at Cabrini-Green were different from other

---

<sup>234</sup> Jennifer Leinhart and John O’Brien, “‘We’re Crying for Help’ Cabrini, the Day After,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 15, 1992.

<sup>235</sup> Sharon Cohen, “Children Learn How to Duck in Projects,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, November 6, 1992.

<sup>236</sup> Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 156-7.

neighborhoods, signaling that the tilt of an infant's cap is seen as a sign of his father's gang affiliation.<sup>237</sup> While the violence around Cabrini was what pulled in newspaper readers, the writers included stories of how individuals worked to protect their families and provide safe spaces for children so that they could reach their full potential free from gangs, drugs, and violence.

The second Daley administration's response to Davis' murder kept the neighborhood in the press. In an October 1992 article announcing Mayor Richard M. Daley's plan to tear down four buildings at Cabrini along with more policing and weapons searches in the high-rises in response to the Davis killing, high-rises were categorized as a problem because gangs used low-occupancy buildings to stash guns and drugs, the upper floors were used for gang members to fire on one another, and high-rises were difficult for police to patrol and investigate crimes. Daley went so far as to label the situation at Cabrini as a "war" where the city needed to send police resources into the area to go after the gangs and drug dealers "the same way they go after innocent people."<sup>238</sup> Daley toured the neighborhood four days after the plan was announced. *Chicago Tribune* reporters labeled the neighborhood "gang-ridden" and noted that the mayor got a cool reception because residents were hiding behind doors and windows, too scared to come outside to meet the mayor.<sup>239</sup>

---

<sup>237</sup> Teresa Wiltz and Jerry Thomas, "Amid Violence, Families Survive," *Chicago Tribune*, October 18, 1992.

<sup>238</sup> John Kass, "Compromise Cabrini Plan," *Chicago Tribune*, October 20, 1992.

<sup>239</sup> Mary Hill and John Kass, "At Cabrini, Daley Hears Lot of Quiet," *Chicago Tribune*, October 24, 1992.

Even safety could be controversial at Cabrini-Green. In the weeks after Davis was killed, residents saw increased police patrols and changing safety requirements, including wearing identification badges and having to sign in all guests at the front desk. While many residents acknowledged the efforts to improve the physical safety of public housing aided their daily lives, specifically the lack of gunshots, many reported that the means of these improvements created a “prison mentality” even among long-term, law-abiding residents.<sup>240</sup> This highlighted another contradiction that seemed to isolate Cabrini from the rest of the city—too much security risked damaging the sense of community and the willingness of residents to work together to improve their neighborhood, but too little security often led residents to hide in their homes, afraid that any presence outside could lead to fatalities or serious injury.

Cabrini returned to the national headlines again in 1997 when a nine-year-old girl—called “Girl X” to protect her identity—was raped and left for dead with gang symbols written on her stomach. The innocence of Girl X was frequently contrasted with the danger she faced at Cabrini—especially the fact that she lived in the same building as her attacker. Girl X’s friends were interviewed to provide memories of sleepovers and play dates they shared at the same time her daily struggles after the attack were discussed. Girl X’s mother and siblings were moved out of the building to scattered site housing, but her grandmother remained in her unit. The event was rendered more terrifying because it happened on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor landing, called the ramp, where many children in the building played. Chicago papers presented her anonymity and the popularity of her play area as

---

<sup>240</sup> Sarah Nordgren, “Uneasy Calm Prevails at Troubled Project,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, November 17, 1992.

proof that she could have been anyone's child to hammer home the horror at Cabrini. At the same time, the uniqueness of Cabrini required responses from their parents that other families in Chicago did not have to consider. Parents prohibited Cabrini children from walking alone or taking the elevator, for fear of being attacked. Some of Girl X's friends explained that they carried steak knives with them and were prepared to stab any man who approached them.<sup>241</sup> Girl X's rape, like Dantrell Davis' murder before, confirmed that Cabrini-Green was not part of any neighborhood. Proximity to other affluent neighborhoods did not mean it was connected to them—a true island in the city.<sup>242</sup>

The Davis murder and Girl X case provided the foundations for national and local visions of Cabrini-Green as a place of incredible violence. These news stories presented a view of Cabrini that appeared complete as a neighborhood of indiscriminate violence against innocent children as well as gang warfare. According to historian Lawrence Vale, “Cabrini-Green has long been as much a media creation as an actual neighborhood, gaining national exposure both for its tragedies and for the daily struggles of its residents.”<sup>243</sup> As a result, Cabrini-Green often appeared in the media as an amalgamation of every issue that makes for an undesirable neighborhood. These references often appeared in stories like one in 1992 when fears of a new subdivision in South Holland—with houses starting at \$200,000—would bring “undesirables” to the neighborhood and risk turning it into a “glorified Cabrini-Green.”<sup>244</sup> In another article, the writer argued that

---

<sup>241</sup> Dahleen Glanton, “The Tragic World of Girl X, Joy of Childhood Torn Away Horrifying Ideal of ‘Anybody’s Child’ Reverberates Far,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 6, 1997.

<sup>242</sup> Mary Schlich, “Neighborhood Remote as an Island, Close Enough to Touch,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 7, 1997.

<sup>243</sup> Vale, *Purging the Poorest*, 240.



for whites in Chicago, Cabrini-Green was the local word for hell.<sup>245</sup> No one who had any other option would agree to go to Cabrini, let alone live there.

The presentation of places like Cabrini-Green in some of the most read newspapers was crucial in shaping broad understandings of public housing. Rather than presenting the Cabrini-Green high rises as one type of public housing—modernist, high density, family buildings—the name “Cabrini” came to symbolize a failed program. In this case, it convinced almost all observers that public housing failed to improve the neighborhoods where it was located and did not create good environments for the people who lived there. In debates over public housing, the “worst cases” were often used as stand-ins for the entirety of the public housing program. Visions of deteriorating buildings, abandoned landscapes, and isolated populations created a political environment where massive changes seemed to be the only way forward. HUD presented the stigmatized vision of violence, crime, vandalism, disorder, and deterioration of the most infamous projects to support President Clinton’s call to “end public housing as we know it” and replace it with a more market friendly version.<sup>246</sup> This popular vision, never subject to nuanced assessment of local conditions and problems, became the primary rationale for the complete destruction of multi-unit public housing communities using the argument that it was better both for the residents, the neighborhood, and the future of the public housing program.

---

<sup>244</sup> Laurie Goering and Donna Kiesling, “Residents’ Fears Cross Color Lines,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 17, 1992.

<sup>245</sup> Mary Schmich, “As Change Moves In, Cabrini No Longer Seems a World Apart,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 28, 2000.

<sup>246</sup> US Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Public Housing That Works: The Transformation of America’s Public Housing*. Washington, DC: 1996, 39.

### III. What Type of Place Should Public Housing Be?

In the background of Cabrini-Green's continued deterioration was a national debate on the public housing's future. National and local policymakers saw the failure of places including Chicago's Cabrini-Green and Robert Taylor Homes and St. Louis' Pruitt-Igoe as proof that modern high-rise buildings in superblocks could not succeed as public housing. Public housing was famous as both the oldest, largest federal housing subsidy program and the source of pessimistic visions of urban living—inescapable poverty, dying neighborhoods, constant crime, and trapped populations.<sup>247</sup> But the proscription for public housing's future went beyond the physical form of destroyed buildings. It required a new vision for the program and for cities. In an effort to avoid past failures, public housing policymakers coalesced around the New Urbanist model for community development, including new building forms, street layout, and income mixing. This shift involved latest ideas about how public housing should look, how many units of public housing could a neighborhood support, and who these residents would be.

The federal policy was set in a 1992 budget, but was appropriated and formalized with the passage of 1993 Urban Revitalization Demonstration Program, which came to be known as HOPE VI (the acronym is frequently referred to as “Housing and Opportunity for People Everywhere”).<sup>248</sup> The policy recommendations originated in a report published by the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing, which determined

---

<sup>247</sup> Schwartz, *Housing Policy in the United States*, 125.

<sup>248</sup> HOPE VI follows HOPE I-III—three HUD programs supporting homeownership from 1990. Hope for Elderly Independence (HOPE IV) is an effort to help independent, poor elderly residents through a combination of rental assistance and case management to keep them out of nursing homes. Youthbuild (HOPE V) is an educational program for at risk youths from 16 to 24 to help them learn construction skills that they could use to build affordable housing in their neighborhoods.

that public housing facilities were deteriorating at increasing rates and that public housing needed to be re-imagined to survive. According to Henry Cisneros, Housing and Urban Development Secretary in the Clinton administration, “HOPE VI sharpened the vision of what urban neighborhoods and cities could be.”<sup>249</sup> The people behind HOPE VI viewed their program as a means of demonstrating that cities were not areas of concentrated poverty, but could be centers of opportunity and growth. Public housing once again became a tool for remaking cities. HOPE VI’s major goals included: breaking up poverty concentration in urban neighborhoods, changing the physical form of public housing architecture and city planning, encouraging resident self-sufficiency through incentive programs and social services, and partnering with local governments, private developers, and nonprofits to supplement program goals.<sup>250</sup>

The program was designed to replace distressed public housing with mixed-income communities. This represented a new step in public housing, with a focus on revitalizing whole neighborhoods rather than fixing existing structures. Analyzing his work with HOPE VI after leaving HUD, Cisneros described a new vision for the program that better met with successful public housing requirements: “Simple replacement of units on the same sites, framed by the same concepts, and governed by the same regulations would certainly result in the same failures.”<sup>251</sup> A significant step for this vision was the legislative decision to overturn the replacement rule (a requirement that

---

<sup>249</sup> Cisneros, “A New Moment for People and Cities,” in *From Despair to Hope*, 11.

<sup>250</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, “About HOPE VI,” [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/ph/hope6/about](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph/hope6/about), accessed May 16, 2015.

<sup>251</sup> Cisneros, “A New Moment for People and Cities,” in *From Despair to Hope*, 7.

any plan to destroy public housing unit must replace with the construction of a new unit so there was no net loss). HOPE VI destroyed more units than it built even while many of those units were held for market-rate buyers, leaving a net unit loss.<sup>252</sup> Accomplishing the plan's goals required intellectual support from sociology and architecture to show that these changes would adequately address public housing's past failures.

This new paradigm combined two shifts in thinking about urban environments and the people who lived there. The first was based on the analysis in one of the most influential and controversial studies of urban poverty, William Julius Wilson's *The Truly Disadvantaged*. Wilson argued that social organization evident in poor urban communities in the early 20th century disintegrated by the mid-1970s as rates of female-headed households, teenage and out-of-wedlock births, and joblessness reached "catastrophic proportions."<sup>253</sup> Through his travels in Chicago's underdeveloped black neighborhoods, Wilson identified two substantial changes that explained the increasing rates of physical and cultural decline: first was the mass exodus of jobs to the suburbs and the collapse of low-skill urban jobs, and second was the migration of middle-class blacks out of the worst communities. Those left behind differed from those who had departed, and over time became increasingly isolated from the city at large. Wilson labeled the constraints of living without access to jobs, suitable marriage partners, or role models "concentration effects." The focus on concentration effects in creating a population of socially disadvantaged people would form the foundation of public housing reforms

---

<sup>252</sup> Alexandra M. Curley, "Theories of Urban Poverty and Implications for Public Housing Policy," *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 32, no. 2 (June 2005): 108.

<sup>253</sup> Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, 3.

focused on decreasing poverty concentration and importing more affluent families to promote economic diversity in public housing communities.

Wilson's argument for improving urban poverty relied on black working- and middle-class returning to the cities to serve as community pillars and act as a means of poverty deconcentration. By those actions, they served as a social buffer, protecting the community from economic downturns by providing an economic foundation for the community that was not subject to a collapse of low-skilled jobs or migration of employment that had created the urban underclass. According to Wilson, "the presence of stable working- and middle-class families in the ghetto provides mainstream role models that reinforce mainstream values pertaining to employment, education, and family structure."<sup>254</sup> One of the major selling points of mixed-income public housing was that market rate residents would demonstrate through their daily lives middle-class values of work and civic connections, modeling these behaviors for the public housing residents. Middle-class families were also portrayed as having the knowledge and social support to demand neighborhood upkeep and security that public housing residents were unable to get for their neighborhoods.

Concerns over a culture of poverty, including many of the issues raised by Wilson, were the foundation for arguments against the state of Chicago public housing. One analysis in 1989 argued "The CHA now manages institutionalized housing which concentrates fractured families, teen-age mothers, grandmothers at age 35 and the elderly poor."<sup>255</sup> Housing reformers viewed mixed-income communities as the answer to poverty

---

<sup>254</sup> Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, 144.

<sup>255</sup> Institute of Urban Life, "Is There a Better Way?" 1989, pg. 7.

concentration and the best way to improve the environment of public housing residents. Anticipated benefits of transitioning to mixed-income included: improvement to resident behavior and increased patterning of cultural norms with a higher quality neighborhood, decreased crime since higher income families are able to command more public resources, increased access to networks of employment through employment connections of higher income residents, and more community resources—schools, safety, and public services—that allow residents to improve their standing in the world.<sup>256</sup> Including market rate units in new developments forced real estate development and management companies to compete with developments in the private market that early public housing had been prevented from doing by legislative and agency decisions. Many early mixed-income neighborhoods saw marked increases in building form and community design. Location was paramount in drawing people to new neighborhoods. People in private housing responded to developments with clear boundaries separating the new neighborhood from established communities that might be below standards they normally live in and close proximity to growth regions in the city. Careful tenant selection and a clear and firm set of rules for them to follow also were part of the necessary requirements for private market renters to join the community and create a shared culture.<sup>257</sup>

The new vision for public housing was not without critics. Over the first decade of mixed-income communities, criticisms emerged that the move to these communities as official policy was based more on negative reactions to public housing's recent past, and not a careful consideration of how residents lived their daily lives and created networks

---

<sup>256</sup> Brophy and Smith, "Mixed-Income Housing: Factors for Success," *Cityscape* 3 no. 2 (1997): 6.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

of support with each other and local institutions to survive.<sup>258</sup> No standard definition for mixed-income was ever established and it was difficult to determine what a successful community would look like. One touted benefit of mixed-income communities was that public housing residents would gain by viewing market rate residents as role models and bridges to the wider economy. When presented with this purpose for new developments, public housing residents were often insulted by the idea that they needed personal improvement or required role models.<sup>259</sup> Advocates for mixed-income communities hoped that interactions would allow public housing residents access to social networks that they could leverage for employment opportunities. Aside from a few individual stories, researchers in Chicago found little evidence to support social networks providing tangible benefits to public housing residents.<sup>260</sup> For their part, most market rate residents listed location and building design as the primary draw of these neighborhoods rather than any social interaction with their neighbors.<sup>261</sup> Proximity and changes in community layout were supposed to provide opportunities to interact as part of daily life that would not appear intrusive as the initial idea. Yet, national trends saw a marked decrease in meaningful interaction amongst neighbors, especially renters, regardless of income

---

<sup>258</sup> Joseph, Chaskin, and Webber, "The Theoretical Basis for Addressing Poverty Through Mixed-Income Development," *Urban Affairs Review* 42, no. 3 (January 2007): 372.

<sup>259</sup> Curley, "Theories of Urban Poverty and Implications for Public Housing Policy," *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 32, no 2 (June 2005): 113.

<sup>260</sup> Joseph and Chaskin, "Living in a Mixed-Income Development," *Urban Studies* 47, no 11 (October 2010): 2359.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid*, 2355.

levels. This pattern made it difficult to see how changing architecture would have a significant impact on community engagement.<sup>262</sup>

The emergence of New Urbanism as a reaction to the failures of modern architecture and city planning and to the deterioration of urban communities would have a significant impact on the theory behind the new public housing designs. New Urbanist reformers argued that the principles of modern architecture behind high-rise public housing meant that “viable albeit poor neighborhoods” were replaced with theoretical experiments without any solid grounding in how people want to live that poor families people were funneled into.<sup>263</sup> These experiments largely focused on using high-rise apartment buildings to house low-income residents. The framework of modern architecture included a unified style where local details were removed in favor of a flat surface, resulting in many buildings looking exactly the same. High-rise apartments were not new to American cities, but many were for middle- or upper-class families who could afford vacations to take them out of these environments for periods. Never had it been used for people who were little able to leave their neighborhood. New Urbanist practitioners Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck describe the failures of places like Cabrini-Green as a flawed design producing less than desirable results: “if one builds cities based upon untested theories of flawed science, they are likely to fail. Good design may not generate good behavior, but bad design can generate bad behavior.”<sup>264</sup> In their book *Suburban Nation*, the New Urbanism’s architects presented

---

<sup>262</sup> Brophy and Smith, “Mixed-Income Housing: Factors for Success,” *Cityscape* 3 no. 2 (1997): 8.

<sup>263</sup> Duany et al, *Suburban Nation*, 239.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 238-9.



Cabrini-Green's patterns of physical and social decay as proof of the failed modernist theory that must be rectified for the sake of urban form and residents' health and safety.

The concept of isolated space also appeared in New Urbanist views of the city: public housing created environments where physical isolation of massive buildings in unused spaces limited people's ability to connect with one another. *Chicago Tribune* architecture critic Blair Kamin argued that over time the Tower-in-the-Park model began to mimic suburban shopping malls—another target of New Urbanism—as the “Park” became an abandoned lot surrounding a crumbling building when deferred maintenance undermined the original vision.<sup>265</sup> People responded best to environments with the understanding that community could be cultivated through design choices. Reformers in Chicago would take the model of integrating isolated spaces in neighborhood settings through choices that mirror New Urbanist tenets and the historical nature of Chicago neighborhoods. During the HUD takeover of the CHA, Executive Director Joseph Shuldiner argued in response to the problem of Cabrini-Green: “Enough of this segregating and isolating poor people. We're not talking about building public housing. We're talking about building housing where 30 percent will be set aside for public housing tenants. It's critical.”<sup>266</sup>

New Urbanism offered a clear vision of how affordable housing should be placed in urban environments. The authors of *Suburban Nation* presented two rules for successful affordable housing: first, experiment with housing for those who can move out

---

<sup>265</sup> Blair Kamin, “Urban Mosaic's Lost Piece: Creative Planners Have Discarded ‘Tower-in-the-Park’ Model that Disconnected Public Housing from Its Surroundings,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 19, 1995.

<sup>266</sup> Don Terry, “Chicagoans Split on Housing Plan,” *New York Times*, June 29, 1996.

and not the poor who cannot afford to; second, place affordable housing “as sparsely as possible” amongst market rate housing to avoid creating blighted neighborhoods.<sup>267</sup> They argued that neighborhoods could absorb a one-to-ten ratio of affordable to market rate units. This marked a change from public housing communities, which had been sized to most efficiently clear and replace slums. The dispersal of affordable housing units would allow for a more diverse population than older public housing neighborhoods. The public housing residents should not be stigmatized in unique architecture that isolates them from the rest of the community. The unit design for public housing would not look significantly different from other units, cutting down on the stigma of easily identifiable building design like the high-rises. According to New Urbanists, this model of urban design would ensure poor families have sufficient role models for responsible living while those in market-rate units will be inoculated against negative stereotypes about public and affordable housing residents because they will be neighbors.

The combination of mixed-income communities with New Urban architecture and city planning represented a new vision of what public housing should look like even as the original mission of helping the working poor returned. In 1997 testimony before Congress, HUD Secretary Andrew M. Cuomo presented a new vision for public housing: “Public housing must not be a world apart. It can be, must be, a proud and productive part of the community. It must become a place of promise, a place to nurture and grow seeds of citizenship, a place to build opportunity for a better life and a commitment to a better

---

<sup>267</sup> Duany et al, *Suburban Nation*, 53.

country.”<sup>268</sup> Both mixed-income and New Urban ideals answered the need to recommit public housing to the surrounding city. The question remained, however, how to reintegrate public housing residents with the surrounding neighborhood. Successful public housing reforms could not just be based on changing architecture forms; it required investments in social service agencies, job training and placement programs, and maintenance to prevent high-rise ghettos from turning into low rise ones.<sup>269</sup>

The popular theme of bringing new ideas to Cabrini-Green was epitomized in the *Chicago Tribune*'s 1992 competition to redesign the neighborhood. The winning design was based on establishing Cabrini-Green as a “regular neighborhood” by removing signs of public housing neighborhoods—empty lots, spaces between buildings, burglar bars, and abandoned cars—and developing a neighborhood on a traditional Chicago model—rowhouses, public spaces, schools, churches and street front stores. Underlying this model was the idea that public housing should not be a recognizable architecture, but blend in with the rest of the city. Vincent Lane, CHA Director, embraced the “traditional” model, telling the *Tribune* that low-income residents “are just not into spaceships.”<sup>270</sup>

Questions about who benefits most from the renovation of public housing continue to haunt the renovations. At the root of this concern was a dual reality that more units would be destroyed than were being built, and that of those being reserved for public housing are often based on assumptions about the minimal number of poor

---

<sup>268</sup> US Department of Housing and Urban Development. “Statement of HUD Secretary Andrew M. Cuomo before the Senate Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity.” April 19, 1997. [archives.hud.gov/testimony/1997/49mackte.cfm](http://archives.hud.gov/testimony/1997/49mackte.cfm). accessed May 20, 2015.

<sup>269</sup> Blair Kamin, “Urban Mosaic’s Lost Piece,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 19, 1995.

<sup>270</sup> “The Winner: A Regular Neighborhood,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 20, 1993.

families a community could support. One school of thought on mixed-income housing was that it is an effect strategy for urban renewal, allowing cities to redevelop distressed urban communities in a way that added to greater economic and political strength in the central cities.<sup>271</sup> For some public housing advocates, the needs of the hardest to house—families that made up the majority of those left at the high rises’ end—were not adequately accounted for, and minimal thought was given to how these families would fare in the private real estate market.

The use of mixed-income and New Urban strategies would continue regardless of criticism. The daily reality of public housing in the 1990s supported the belief that only major renovations of public housing communities, from building design to the definition of what public it was to serve, could allow the program to survive. Cabrini-Green served as an example of what went wrong with massive scale public housing, and then, as how public housing could go forward by embracing the tenants of New Urbanism to create new communities. Unlike many public housing communities in Chicago, Cabrini-Green was surrounded by established neighborhoods that could be easily connected by changing street design and building form.<sup>272</sup>

#### IV. The Department of Housing and Urban Development Takeover

In the 1990s, it was not only Chicago’s public housing neighborhoods that needed reimagining. For almost two decades, the CHA was infamous for its organizational

---

<sup>271</sup> Joseph, Chaskin, and Webber, “The Theoretical Basis for Addressing Poverty Through Mixed-Income Development,” *Urban Affairs Review* 42, no. 3 (January 2007): 370.

<sup>272</sup> Blair Kamin, “Pragmatism Demolishes Outdated Notions of Housing Chicagoland’s Poor,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 24, 1995.

disorder and management failures at many of its public housing communities. The decline of public housing in Chicago dated back to Richard J. Daley's administration, which ended the expansive era of public housing in Chicago in 1966 in response to the *Gautreaux* case's requirement that new public housing construction be placed in community areas that did not already have significant units. From 1969 to 1980, the CHA only built 114 new units. Fourteen of the city's fifty wards contained no public housing, including the Loop, Lincoln Park, and the home wards of the Vrdolyak and Daley political machines.<sup>273</sup> After the *Gautreaux* decision, the CHA administration stopped functioning as a provider of new, well-built units and as a source of well-maintained units in established projects. Maintenance and tenant screening functions faltered under financial cutbacks and the physical inventory and surrounding neighborhoods of its largest housing projects, including Cabrini-Green, rapidly deteriorated.<sup>274</sup>

This agency decline did not go unnoticed. In 1979, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development created a list of troubled public housing agencies. The CHA would be on this list from its implementation until the federal government put the CHA under receivership in 1995. At the news conference announcing the federal takeover, HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros declared: "the national system of public housing is on trial in Chicago."<sup>275</sup> The goal was a complete transformation of public housing with an eye towards how people who lived in the worst buildings lived. In a

---

<sup>273</sup> Robert A. Slayton, "Chicago Public Housing Crisis: Causes and Solutions," Report for the Chicago Urban League (June 1988): 49-50.

<sup>274</sup> Bennett, "Do We Really Wish to Live in a Communitarian City?" *Journal of Urban Affairs* 20, no. 2 (1998): 107.

<sup>275</sup> Brent Watters, "HUD Plans to Improve Chicago Public Housing," *Chicago Citizen*, June 11, 1995.

congressional hearing about the HUD-takeover of the CHA, Chairperson Christopher Shays (R-CT) opened that the government was called by the voices of CHA residents. These residents “are saying we cannot continue to entomb generations of Americans in isolated public housing developments and not expect to pay a tragic price as a society for the death of their dignity and hope.”<sup>276</sup> The CHA’s problems were described as “staggering”—ranging from concentrated poverty, poorly designed and located housing, dangerous conditions, and dysfunctional management.<sup>277</sup> With the takeover of the CHA, Chicago became a model for what the new national shift in public housing policy.

When HUD assumed leadership of CHA, Director Vincent Lane was involved in tense negotiations over redeveloping Cabrini-Green. Lane, a successful local developer of subsidized housing, saw Cabrini-Green as an anomaly in the CHA stock because private developers were interested in the location due to its proximity to the Loop and prominent residential neighborhoods. Lane pursued a policy named Mixed-Income New Communities Strategy (MINCS), based on the idea that overconcentration of poverty was a primary driver of public housing decline. His vision was to turn CHA buildings into “normal neighborhoods” that would appeal to working class residents. The model would be realized at Lake Parc Place, a set of 15-story buildings near South Lake Shore Drive, which opened in 1991. It was remarkable for its happy working class residents and well-maintained public areas. Notably, the point of comparison was Cabrini-Green, since Lake

---

<sup>276</sup> U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, *HUD’s Takeover of the Chicago Housing Authority: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Human Resources and Intergovernmental Relations*, 140<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1st Sess, 1995, pg. 1-2.

<sup>277</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, “CHA: One Year After the Federal Takeover by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, May 1995-1996,” 1996, pg. 1.

Parc Place was seen as a break from the poverty architecture and crime-ridden environment. The buildings looked “a lot more like a Gold Coast residential tower than Cabrini-Green.”<sup>278</sup> Possibilities for changing the purpose, appearance, and resident populations influenced HUD plans for the entirety of public housing in Chicago.

Although the introduction of new ideas for public housing was positively received, the problems of mismanagement and insufficient financing remained at the CHA. In the 1980s, HUD’s budget for public housing fell 76 percent. The CHA budget collapsed by 87 percent.<sup>279</sup> With a limited budget, the high rises towers became a significant source of tension. In 1990, Lane argued the high rises should remain, saying, “People are living in severely substandard housing other than the CHA. We have a waiting list of 100,000 families who want to get into the CHA bad as it is—and it is bad.” But his defense of high-rises was weak, noting that they isolated the city’s very poor—who were heavily African-American—from the rest of the city and exacerbated problems of crime and dependency it was supposed to ameliorate.<sup>280</sup> During the 1990s, despite rising homelessness and a severe affordable housing crisis in city, the CHA’s population fell 16 percent. Cabrini-Green, which frequently had one of the highest vacancy rates, spiked at 31 percent vacant after the Davis murders.<sup>281</sup> Moreover, efforts to control violence in the towers took money away from critical services like maintenance, which

---

<sup>278</sup> Patrick T. Reardon, “Model Homes,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 20, 1992.

<sup>279</sup> Brian J. Miller, “The Struggle over Redevelopment at Cabrini-Green, 1989-2004,” *Journal of Urban History* 34, no. 6 (September 2008): 948.

<sup>280</sup> Patrick T. Reardon, “CHA Chief: High-Rises Should Stay,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 16, 1990.

<sup>281</sup> Patrick T. Reardon, “CHA Reeling from Years of Maintenance Neglect,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 2, 1992.

was frequently delayed and led to increased rates of building deterioration.

Mismanagement, however, was not limited to Cabrini-Green. The CHA had issues with poor maintenance and increased violence at housing projects throughout the city.

HUD was reluctant to assume control of local agencies, but the managerial and financial issues that plagued the CHA forced their hand. The physical infrastructure had deteriorated to such an extent that the CHA estimated it would cost more than one billion dollars to keep up with maintenance, more than HUD's national budget for such repairs. At the same time, HUD was undergoing its own crisis as the Republicans, fresh off their victory in the 1994 elections, promised to cut a cabinet department, and HUD seemed like a viable candidate. In this political environment, public housing that was poorly maintained and served as a warehouse for the poorest was seen as a waste of taxpayer money.<sup>282</sup> More than any other housing authority, the CHA, with its nationally infamous projects including Cabrini-Green, seemed to represent the almost total failure of the federal public housing program. The CHA takeover was the largest in HUD's history, and the stakes were high. Success in Chicago would be a significant achievement that could prevent the replacement of HUD with a smaller department.

The Clinton administration framed the origins of public housing as a pathway for millions of families to join the economic mainstream, providing "a home in which to raise their children, an opportunity to hold down a steady job, and the ability to save for the future so they can ultimately move into a home of their own."<sup>283</sup> This view of public

---

<sup>282</sup> Blair Kamin and Flynn McRoberts, "All Eyes on Facelift at Cabrini, Horner: HUD Success at CHA Could Prove Pivotal," *Chicago Tribune*, December 18, 1995.

<sup>283</sup> Bill Clinton, "Introductory Letter," *Public Housing That Works: The Transformation of America's Public Housing*. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Washington, DC: 1996.



housing encouraged a focus on resident success as much as well-designed neighborhoods and well-maintained buildings. Henry Cisneros, the HUD secretary from 1993 to 1997, answered Clinton's desires for urban policy that combined a focus on entrepreneurial efforts and pragmatic politics.<sup>284</sup> The Clinton administration followed a strategy for public housing that relied on private investment directed towards public ends. The HUD takeover encouraged a change in mission for the CHA. No longer the manager of buildings and neighborhoods, they would work to ensure affordable housing opportunities for families using any viable options including private developers, housing vouchers, and turning over daily management to real estate management companies.<sup>285</sup>

HUD featured Cabrini-Green prominently in their reports on the new vision for public housing. According to *Public Housing That Works*, HUD's 1996 report, neighborhoods like Cabrini-Green and Robert Taylor Homes "haunt the American imagination."<sup>286</sup> These places were identified as problematic, in part, because they tarnished the entire public housing program as a failure while quality public housing was largely invisible. They represented the breakdown of public housing policy. But the first two priorities for the HUD-led CHA would be Cabrini and Henry Horner Homes, a public housing community located blocks from the United Center, which would play host to the 1996 Democratic National Convention. These projects demanded immediate action because they were so close to the city's wealth and prestige or would soon be broadcast

---

<sup>284</sup> Biles, *The Fate of Cities*, 320.

<sup>285</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, "The New Chicago Housing Authority," CHA Brochure, 1996.

<sup>286</sup> US Department of Housing and Urban Development. *Public Housing That Works: The Transformation of America's Public Housing*. Washington, DC: 1996, 1.

across the nation as signs of Chicago's progress. Cabrini-Green had the added impetus of being one of the most infamous public housing projects in the country. Public housing developments away from the spotlight did not get a firm timeline for renovation.<sup>287</sup>

In Chicago, the ability to renovate Cabrini-Green was viewed not just as a chance to change the neighborhood, but as a model for how private developers could work with public agencies to rebuild public housing. Cabrini, however, was the place to start because it had value that few other public housing communities could match. The 1996 Metropolitan Planning Council report highlighted what made Cabrini-Green attractive for experimentation: "Close to downtown Chicago and the residential neighborhoods of the Gold Coast and Lincoln Park, Cabrini-Green has long been considered a close-to-optimum location for testing revitalization on a large scale."<sup>288</sup> The proximity to downtown would appear in almost every call to redevelop Cabrini-Green. This reflected a new undercurrent of market forces in the development of public housing. Whereas earlier public housing sites in Chicago had been selected based on their limited interest to real estate interests, the new public housing construction would rely on developers. Access to the Loop and the rest of the Near North Side served as an additional incentive for private real estate developers to build the new community. This made Cabrini more attractive for redevelopment than many of the city's other large-scale family housing projects, predominately located in poor communities with limited development potential. HUD and CHA officials argued that for public housing to be revitalized with significant private money, the new mixed-income neighborhoods needed to be in areas where private

---

<sup>287</sup> Don Terry, "New Federal Landlord Takes Charge in Chicago," *New York Times*, June 1, 1995.

<sup>288</sup> Metropolitan Planning Council, "Changing the Paradigm," October 1996, 13.

industry would invest.<sup>289</sup> The potential to reconnect this area with the rest of the Near North Side pushed Cabrini-Green to the top of the redevelopment list.

The HUD takeover offered an opportunity to jumpstart renovations at Cabrini-Green. The most influential pre-HUD plan was the 1991 North Town Redevelopment Advisory Council's plan. The project's key goals were to remake the neighborhood by replacing select high-rise buildings with a low-density mixed income community, supporting nonprofit agencies to improve social services, connecting the neighborhood to the rest of the city by improving transit options, and the creation of a town square to make public space more purposeful than the empty fields around the high-rises. One significant aspect of this plan was the promise that no residents would be displaced to create a new, viable neighborhood. Better housing design as well as conscious efforts to bring in middle class and working class residents into housing could meet the goals of neighborhood transition without total community replacement. In their vision, "North Town can be maintained as a community which provides a home for diversity of neighbors, of all economic and racial groups. Resident displacement must be prevented."<sup>290</sup> Despite the ambitious goal, continual debate about what should happen in the neighborhood over the next several years prevented any significant changes. At the end, the only plan that remained was Lane's plan to tear down three of the most rundown buildings and move remaining residents to vacant units on the property. Even this plan had been delayed when HUD did not supply funding for the tear down.

---

<sup>289</sup> Edward Walsh, "Chicago Tries to Replace 'Castle' with Community," *Washington Post*, October 28, 1995.

<sup>290</sup> Near North Development Corporation, "North Town Community Redevelopment Plan Phase I," September 1990, 11.

In 1994, before it took over the CHA, HUD finally agreed to a \$50 million HOPE VI Revitalization Grant to renovate Cabrini-Green. The agreed plan was to start with the demolition of 398 units in two rundown high-rises, but what would replace them inspired considerable debate. The Habitat Corp., a private company experienced in building affordable housing in Chicago, was brought in to be the site's development manager. As the developer, it solicited proposals from ten architecture firms to design the minimum number of units or could expand to as much of the site as they deemed ideal that remained within budget. The CHA set a framework for the 9.3 acres cleared for redevelopment within Cabrini that included the demolition of 660 units to be replaced by 493 mixed-income units organized in a low-density setting. Most developers, however, proposed larger projects. The most ambitious—and prominent—plan would demolish 21 of the 23 high-rises, destroying 3,200 units housing 7,300 people. The plan would include mostly market-rate units with 450 public housing units, less than the CHA wanted. While city hall quietly supported the plan, other politicians saw it as too costly in terms of money and resident relocation. CHA Executive Director Joseph Shuldiner reacted to the proposal: “Cabrini-Green may be a mess, but that land is a public trust that should not be used to provide housing for people who make more than \$100,000 a year.”<sup>291</sup>

As they had before and would many times later, Cabrini-Green residents saw this effort to remove them from their homes and give improved neighborhoods to the same population that was renovating much of the Near North Side. Many felt that they had earned their claim to the land because they had lived there for years under the worst

---

<sup>291</sup> Betsy Wangenstein, “Bold Cabrini Plans Stir Dreams, Foes,” *Crain's Chicago Business*, February 10, 1996, <http://www.chicagobusiness.com/article/19960210/ISSUE01/10007900/bold-cabrini-plan-stirs-dreams-foes-cha-salvation-or-carte-blanche-for-developer>, accessed January 16, 2016.

physical and economic conditions.<sup>292</sup> Residents often argued in public meetings that their neighborhood was being stigmatized as unstable or chaotic. They felt this categorization did not adequately recognize their efforts to build a supportive community despite their dismal physical conditions and safety concerns. They feared that the developers wanted the land, not them.<sup>293</sup> Resident activists argued that new construction should focus on building enough public housing units to satisfy the desire of public housing residents to remain in their neighborhood while physical buildings and neighborhood safety were improved. The first choice for almost all residents given housing vouchers was to live in a neighborhood close to Cabrini. Many, however, were told that there were no units available for them, and they concluded that the CHA felt they were no longer “good enough” for their community.<sup>294</sup> Residents, used to decades of broken promises from local and federal officials, felt their only option was vigilance. Referring to the rush of developers, a long-time Cabrini resident said, “Why should we be run[ning] from Cabrini-Green, when other people are running to get into the area.”<sup>295</sup>

More than a fear of missing the significant upgrades on the valuable land they lived on, Cabrini residents expressed a fear for the loss of community. Discussing plans to demolish three buildings, one resident described the situation: “There’s a lot of hurt, a lot of pain. You have to remember that Cabrini is a city within a city. I’ve known people

---

<sup>292</sup> Bennett, “Do We Really Wish to Live in a Communitarian City?” 112.

<sup>293</sup> Cornelia Grumman, “Redrawing Cabrini’s Future,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 30, 1996.

<sup>294</sup> Nathalie P. Voorhees for Center for Neighborhood and Community Improvement, “The Plan to Voucher Out Public Housing,” May 1997, 21.

<sup>295</sup> Jerry Thornton, “Protests Greet Cabrini-Green Plan Residents Have Redevelopment Ideas, Demands of Own,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 10, 1993.

who have lived in Cabrini and died in Cabrini and never went to the Lakefront.”<sup>296</sup> The idea that Cabrini was a community, not just the site of infamous violence, eluded many policymakers and members of the public. But it was this connection to community that inspired additional action to increase their leverage. Cabrini residents sought to increase their input on neighborhood developments through litigation, suing the CHA for a greater number of units and more equitable distribution across the developments.

Because of Cabrini’s national notoriety and HUD’s promise to free local housing agencies from the bureaucratic red tape that hindered the program before, Cabrini renovations were one of the most watched actions on housing policy taken by the Clinton administration.<sup>297</sup> This careful attention did not translate into tangible results. Habitat Corp. determined that of the ten proposals they solicited only three met the requirements for quantity of new units and recognition of cost restrictions. Disputes over jurisdiction challenged the project, as the city wanted more renovation than the CHA and HUD had bargained for, and residents sought a greater voice in the final project design. Habitat Corp. had previously announced that they could accept a whole plan or combine plans to create the best fit. None of this was sufficient as a consensus could not be reached for any of these options. Ultimately, all proscribed changes to this area of Cabrini would be contained in the City of Chicago’s comprehensive redevelopment of the Near North Side, the Near North Redevelopment Plan.<sup>298</sup> Ninety acres were subject to redevelopment with

---

<sup>296</sup> Edward Walsh, “Chicago Tries to Replace ‘Castle’ with Community,” *Washington Post*, October 28, 1995.

<sup>297</sup> Flynn McRoberts and Blair Kamin, “Developers Peek at Cabrini’s Future,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 21, 1995.

<sup>298</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, “CHA: One Year After the Federal Takeover by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, May 1995-1996,” Chicago, IL; 1996, pg. 4.

a target of 2,300 new housing units. The plan also included the creation of a new high school, redevelopment and improvements of parklands, the establishment of a new library, police station, and community center, and the establishment of a shopping district including a grocery store.

Cabrini-Green would not be visibly altered by the policy changes put forth in the 1980s and early 1990s. But the prominence of Cabrini-Green in national coverage of public housing and the value of the land it sat upon ensured it was in the mind of politicians and housing officials. Public housing in America was about to undergo a generational shift, addressing both architecture and community demographics, which would take it from isolated neighborhoods to a newly connected site of urban transformation. By that time, Cabrini had already been positioned as a place full of potential assets that would make it a valuable place to connect with the rest of Chicago through major reforms.

## V. Return to Local Control

The HUD takeover of the CHA was always designed to be a temporary measure, but the CHA needed to prove it could run itself. The CHA and city hall worked diligently to prove to HUD that local authorities had a plan to move forward with better management and plans for public housing. The announcement of the *Plan for Transformation* was the last step in returning local control to the Chicago Housing Authority as well as an effort to follow requirements of Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 (QHWRA) for five-year plans for all PHAs. The *Plan* was a major overhaul of public housing throughout Chicago. A ten-year, \$1.5 billion plan

would demolish 18,000 obsolete units and rebuild or rehabilitate 25,000 distressed units with an expectant loss of 13,000 units. Despite the loss of affordable units in a city many felt was already in an affordable housing crisis, the CHA was clear that “there is no alternative” to the *Plan for Transformation*.<sup>299</sup>

The return to local control of the CHA happened alongside several major changes in national policy around public housing. First, the Clinton administration revitalized HOPE VI as a supporter of public-private partnerships to create public and affordable housing. The Clinton administration favored developments that relied on public-private funding and gave local authorities significant leeway in constructing these agreements as long as they followed minimal regulations. Second, Congress in 1998 repealed the “one-to-one” replacement requirement, meaning that for every unit of public housing destroyed another had to be built.<sup>300</sup> The congressional repeal was designed to give localities the ability to demolish expansive public housing complexes and experiment with types of units and target populations that replaced them. This freedom allowed a new model of public housing to be implemented—mixed-income communities. Both changes represented a major shift in public housing policy, embracing more market driven solutions that considered public housing residents as one of many constituents for the program. By embracing national shifts in public housing, the Daley administration and the CHA secured HUD approval. This was significant because the city did not have

---

<sup>299</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, *Plan for Transformation*, January 6, 2000, 2.

<sup>300</sup> Hunt and DeVries, *Planning Chicago*, 155.



enough financing to complete the project. They needed a secure, ten-year line of federal financing to attempt the substantial program of demolition and reconstruction.<sup>301</sup>

As part of the transition back for federal receivership, the CHA was selected as one of 30 public housing authorities to take part in Moving to Work (MTW), a federal demonstration program. It had three statutory goals: to reduce costs and improve cost effectiveness, to provide employment incentives and self-sufficiency for families with children, and to expand housing options for low-income families.<sup>302</sup> The legislation allowed local public housing authorities (PHAs) to apply for waivers from the 1937 Housing Act and, significantly, changed the ways they were funded. Three major funding sources support public housing—public housing capital funds, public housing operating funds, and Housing Choice Vouchers. Traditionally, PHA must keep these funds separate. Moving to Work allowed selected PHAs to pool this money in a single General Fund and use it to best fulfill the Standard Agreement between the PHA and HUD. Participating in MTW gave the CHA flexibility in financing to help achieve the *Plan for Transformation*.

The *Plan for Transformation* marked a significant re-imagining of CHA’s role in Chicago. Mayor Daley’s office was an important force in designing and implementing the *Plan*. Historically, the CHA largely operated independent from the City of Chicago. The *Plan* changed this with the mayor’s office and city government taking a larger role in decision-making. They helped create a new role for the CHA from a direct provider of

---

<sup>301</sup> “CHA’s Future in Cuomo’s Hands,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 14, 2000.

<sup>302</sup> Government Accountability Office, “Moving to Work Demonstration,” Report to Congressional Requesters, Washington, DC: April 2012, [www.gao.gov/assets/600/590226.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/assets/600/590226.pdf), accessed January 24, 2016.

public housing units to a facilitator, connecting low-income Chicagoans to privately owned rental units. To the extent that they would support new units, they would be part of mixed-income communities. Still required by federal law to provide low-income residents with housing and sensitive to the Central Advisory Council and supportive federal lawmakers like Representative Bobby Rush's complaints, the CHA decided to rebuild and renovate 25,000 units to fulfill the promise to rehouse residents still living at CHA properties. The CHA decided on this number because only 24,490 of the CHA's 38,776 units were occupied in 2000.<sup>303</sup> Upon CHA's approval, the chairperson of the board of commissioners said, "We are confident of our ability to transform Chicago's public housing from a burden to an asset for its residents and the entire city."<sup>304</sup>

Federal and city policy changes occurred at a significant time for the city, as Chicago was undergoing a downtown revival. The 1990s saw the opening of the museum campus, a 57-acre park that surrounds three major museums along Lake Michigan; a major expansion of McCormick Place Convention Center; and the construction of the United Center, a sports arena for the city's hockey and basketball teams and the site of the 1996 Democratic Convention. These projects were designed to encourage tourism and attract businesses to the city. Complimenting these major new destinations, private developers created new, desirable residential communities by redeveloping abandoned industrial sites and constructing townhomes and lofts in formerly run-down neighborhoods. One such project, River North, established a neighborhood of art

---

<sup>303</sup> Center for Tax and Budget Accountability, "A Fiscal Review of the Chicago Housing Authority," July 30, 2014, 2.

<sup>304</sup> Melita Marie Garza, "CHA Gives Go-Ahead to \$1.5 Billion Overhaul of Public Housing," *Chicago Tribune*, January 7, 2000.

galleries, restaurants, and loft living out of the abandoned warehouses in an adjacent area to Cabrini. These renovations were part of an effort to bring middle- and upper-class individuals and families back to the city they largely abandoned during the 1960s. The growth in development exacerbated an affordable housing crisis. During the 1990s, the population of suburban Cook County grew 3.2 percent, but available affordable apartments declined by 5.7 percent, leaving an estimated gap of 238,600 units.<sup>305</sup> The CHA was planning a massive renovation of public housing across the city at a time when it was unclear how many affordable housing units existed and a market that was making it less economically feasible to maintain significant amounts of these units.

Under the *Plan for Transformation*, architecture and street design in public housing neighborhoods would get a significant overhaul. These changes were based on many of the tenets of New Urbanism. *Chicago Tribune* architecture critic Blair Kamin described this transformation as a triumph of “architecture of normalcy”—rather than standing out as unique architecture, public housing would blend into the surrounding neighborhoods by embracing common urban architecture like front doors on brick row houses, front stoops, and sidewalks lined with wrought-iron fences.<sup>306</sup> For many, the most significant change was the reestablishment of the city grid. Cabrini was unique in the Near North Side because it was placed on a superblock to give planners freedom to place buildings in relations to one another. Changing the architecture and bringing back the

---

<sup>305</sup> Maria T. Galo, “High-Rent District with Apartment Supply Tight, Affordable Units Hard to Come By,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 1, 2000.

<sup>306</sup> Blair Kamin, “Out of Housing, Into Homes,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 31, 1998.

traditional Chicago grid marked a concerted effort to make the new Cabrini part of the city instead of a distant neighborhood within the Near North Side.

The CHA embraced many national efforts to re-imagine public housing. Terry Peterson, CEO of the Chicago Housing Authority in 2005, wrote,

To call the CHA's *Plan for Transformation* extraordinary is an understatement. It is an ambitious effort to significantly change the way people think about and, more importantly, live in public housing. If successful, it will eliminate substandard living conditions and replace dilapidated high-rise buildings with new low-rise communities and economic opportunities for the poor. We're working hard every day to ensure that our goals are fulfilled. For us and the rest of Chicago, failure is not an option.<sup>307</sup>

Neighborhood boundaries became a significant factor in defining a mixed-income community. Cabrini-Green was an undisputed area of concentrated poverty. But when the neighborhood boundaries were expanded to the Near North Side, the relocation of public housing residents removed them from one of the wealthiest areas in the city.<sup>308</sup> Almost any community area residents from Cabrini moved into would almost necessarily enter a higher poverty rate area than the one they left.

The *Plan for Transformation* considered who the new residents of public housing would be and what programs were necessary to ensure that they were self-reliant. The *Plan* described public housing residents as citizens who must be allowed access to all benefits from the city, state, and federal governments. At the announcement of HUD's approval, Mayor Daley promised a new direction for Chicago public housing, saying the plan "will end the isolation of CHA residents from the rest of the city and make them full

---

<sup>307</sup> Terry Peterson, "A Vision for Change," *Economic Development Journal*, 4, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 34.

<sup>308</sup> Vale, "Mixed-Income Redevelopment is the Only Way to Fix Failed Public Housing," in *Public Housing Myths*, 143.

citizens of Chicago—in every sense of the word—by enhancing access to all services. We will end the failed policies of the past that have led to the desperate and unacceptable conditions of public housing today.”<sup>309</sup> Each project would receive an annual CHA contribution of \$7.1 million to establish service connectors whose job was to assist residents in finding and applying for aid or programs to improve their educational or employment opportunities. The *Plan*’s success would be measured by how many people accessed these services and were able to improve their lives.<sup>310</sup>

The *Plan* addressed role of residents in possible misuses of buildings and contributions to the lack of community safety. To goal was to provide better quality housing that would support a better standard of living and increased economic opportunities for their residents.<sup>311</sup> To help achieve this new mission, the CHA would return to careful screening of tenants that created resident diversity in the earlier years of family public housing. New procedures looked for ability to pay rent and other fees on time, use common areas and avoid damage to public and private spaces, be respectful of others and their property, refrain from any activities that could constitute health or safety concerns, and follow all rules and regulations of the community. Part of the renovation of Chicago public housing was the necessity of supporting families beyond the poorest of the poor. Tenant screening was part of efforts to demonstrate a new age in public housing that could serve the needs of residents and the local community by ensuring only those

---

<sup>309</sup> “HUD Approves CHA’s Transformation Plan,” *Chicago Defender*, February 19, 2000.

<sup>310</sup> Joe Ruklick, “Progress at CHA,” *Chicago Defender*, December 10, 2001.

<sup>311</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, “Building New Communities, Building New Lives,” *Plan for Transformation* brochure, 2002.

willing and capable of being good neighbors could reside in public housing. To better reflect the variety of families that had been relying on public housing, the CHA began to recognize kinship relationships and allowed for families where the primary caregiver was not a relative or guardian of the children or other persons living there.<sup>312</sup>

The *Plan for Transformation* marked a major shift in Chicago's public housing policy and a turning point for the city. A history of Chicago planning found that the *Plan for Transformation* represented "the boldest, most contentious, and perhaps most important community planning exercise in Chicago in the past decade."<sup>313</sup> The CHA housed an estimated five percent of Chicago's population, so any plan that targeted the entire housing stock promised a significant change in urban housing. The *Plan's* designers sought to revitalize public housing by remaking its architecture and design and create communities where public housing residents lived alongside those in affordable and market rate units as a means of introducing them to middle class cultural norms. It built on ideas of New Urbanism and poverty deconcentration to change public housing from "warehouses of the poor" to desirable mixed-income neighborhoods that provided a sustainable future for public housing residents even as it brought in residents who never considered living so close to the earlier public housing communities.

## VI. *Plan for Transformation* at Cabrini-Green

As in every major plan for public housing in Chicago, Cabrini-Green had a prominent place in the *Plan for Transformation*. The *Plan* called for an almost complete

---

<sup>312</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, *Plan for Transformation*, January 6, 2000, 31-2.

<sup>313</sup> Hunt and DeVries, *Planning Chicago*, 151.

overhaul of Cabrini-Green. Re-imagined as a New Urban neighborhood, the changes would fundamentally alter Cabrini-Green from street layout to building form to community design to population. Cabrini-Green was, according to CHA CEO Terry Peterson, the “best example” for public housing transformation where “public and private investments have created new housing for people of every income level, as well as a library, park, police station, and shopping center with a grocery store.” Cabrini was a “melting pot” of people living and working together—a model for the next step with the *Plan for Transformation*.<sup>314</sup>

Cabrini-Green was the predominant example of why public housing needed significant reform and how relying on the attributes of a place helped overcome public housing’s past. In an article in *Economic Development Journal*, Peterson described the infamous legacy of Cabrini-Green by writing, “Although many public housing projects were associated with criminal activity, Cabrini Green was particularly high-profile given its close proximity to downtown and other affluent neighborhoods.”<sup>315</sup> The attraction of making major changes in Cabrini-Green often came down to those two features—proximity to highly sought after neighborhoods and its “notorious” reputation. Cabrini-Green had failed to bring about the area’s potential because it did not provide good housing and ignored the possible market value of its area.

Opponents of the *Plan for Transformation* also used Cabrini-Green to make their arguments. Cabrini-Green, according to activists, was the model the CHA wanted to

---

<sup>314</sup> Joe Ruklick, “New CHA Boss Promises Flourishing Public Housing,” *Chicago Defender*, July 25, 2000.

<sup>315</sup> Peterson, “A Vision for Change,” 33.

spread to the city—transfer land from public housing neighborhoods to private developers to transform for a mix of affordable and market-rate housing.<sup>316</sup> One of the most obvious problems with using Cabrini-Green as a model was that its unique location meant it was unlikely to be replicated in other communities. What made Cabrini-Green so valuable—the ease at which it could be reintegrated with its desired neighborhood—was predicated on the fact that there was an existing, established, and desirable community right outside of Cabrini-Green’s boundaries. No other family public housing project in Chicago could boast similar location strength.

Because of Cabrini-Green’s heavy reliance on high-rises to house its population, the *Plan for Transformation* included the demolition of a significant number of units. All 1,699 units of the Cabrini Extension South and the William Green Homes were scheduled for destruction without a clear plan for replacement units.<sup>317</sup> Cabrini Extension North was being renovated under a \$59 million HOPE VI grant, which would demolish all the buildings and replace them with 2,300 units, including 700 public housing units.<sup>318</sup> When promoting the proposed redevelopment program, the CHA represented Cabrini-Green as an untouched island in a neighborhood that already saw significant numbers of new mixed-income communities.<sup>319</sup> Despite the neighborhood renovations, demolition and rebuilding at Cabrini was constantly behind schedule as legal and political fights delayed

---

<sup>316</sup> Joe Ruklick, “Housing Advocates Demand Answers from CHA,” *Chicago Defender*, October 22, 2002.

<sup>317</sup> Of the units slated for demolition, 1,130 were occupied when the *Plan* was announced.

<sup>318</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, *Plan for Transformation*, January 6, 2000, 17.

<sup>319</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, “Building New Communities, Building New Lives,” *Plan for Transformation Brochure*, 2002.



action. The high-rises of Cabrini remained features of the Near North Side long after high-rise public housing had disappeared from the rest of the city.

Cabrini residents continued to push for a larger say in the process of remaking their neighborhood. In August 2000, four years of litigation between residents and the CHA was settled with a consent decree. The CHA was ordered to create an additional 700 units of replacement housing in a lower density, mixed-income community on site and 270 affordable units. It also called for the destruction of three abandoned high-rise buildings. According to CHA CEO Terry Peterson, “This historic opportunity allows us to not only rebuild, but to chart a new future for an entire Chicago community.”<sup>320</sup> This decision, however, would not be enough to rebuild Cabrini-Green. Habitat Corp. filed a restraining order against this consent decree since they had not been consulted in the settlement but were to be subject to its terms.

In the original *Plan from Transformation*, the Frances Cabrini Homes were spared from demolition. Since the time of their initial construction, the Cabrini row houses had been presented as examples of what public housing could be. Within the community of Cabrini-Green, the row houses were the most desirable location for residents and did not have vacancy rates anywhere near the level of the high-rises. When the *Plan* was announced, 466 out of 586 units in the row houses were occupied.<sup>321</sup> Design was a key reason why the row houses succeeded where the other structures failed. Many of their features matched the tenets of New Urbanism. They existed on a human scale and provided green space that had clear ownership with small fences surrounding front lawns.

---

<sup>320</sup> Chinta Strausberg, “Mixed Income Units for Cabrini-Green,” *Chicago Defender*, August 16, 2000.

<sup>321</sup> CHA, *Plan for Transformation*, January 6, 2000, 17.

When the high-rises became a black eye on the community area and the public housing program, advocates pointed to the row houses as proof that public housing which was designed and managed correctly and which had the respect of its residents could be sustained long-term. The buildings themselves were generally well maintained and units could be renovated internally rather than torn down.

Part of initiatives like the *Plan for Transformation* involved a re-imagining of what kinds of tenants were supposed to be beneficiaries of public housing policy. Mixing incomes had many roles in the new public housing plans, but none quite as important as stabilizing the overall community. Under poverty concentration theories, inner-city communities really began to deteriorate with national economic changes in the 1970s. As blue collar manufacturing opportunities moved out of the cities, poor communities that relied on these jobs went into free fall. By allocating the greatest number of units going to individuals and families with incomes able to pay market rates, the community was considered diverse enough in employment to weather economic downturns without an explosion of poverty. The changes in population served to replace a very distressed, fragile community with one more able to survive economic shocks.<sup>322</sup>

Adding to the new mixture of tenant populations was a new focus on who made up the public housing portion of the community. In many ways returning to the original model of public housing for upwardly mobile poor, emphasis was placed on finding tenants with a history of employment. New mixed-income communities often came with promises that former residents of the public housing communities would be given a right

---

<sup>322</sup> Lawrence J. Vale, "Housing Chicago: From Cabrini-Green to Parkside of Old Town" *Places*, February 2012, <https://placesjournal.org/article/housing-chicago-cabrini-green-to-parkside-of-old-town/> accessed May 23, 2015.

of return. The CHA did not plan on most of the residents coming back because added qualifications meant only a minority would be eligible. To be considered for a new unit, residents had to be “lease compliant”—with a documented history of paying rent for any time in public housing or part of a rent repayment agreement to come up to date with finances. They were then subjected to a screening process proving they met development requirements, including the abilities to: pay rent and fees, care for common areas and their own units, use facilities safely and create no health or security problems, call for maintenance to fix issues, respect other residents and their property, avoid illegal activities or any actions that take away from general community safety and enjoyment, and follow all community rules and safety codes.<sup>323</sup>

The universal consensus of government officials and public housing policymakers did not translate into broad resident support. Conscious of the fact that they were on valuable land close to some of the city’s best neighborhoods and the CHA’s previous pattern of not keeping its word, the residents feared a land grab—rather than becoming a public housing neighborhood, their homes would be demolished to make way for an expansion of the Gold Coast. In fact, their experience mirrored the Italian community’s history in the 1940s. Many public housing residents believed that the new units would be reserved for current residents. Only when they learned that new units were meant for market rate families or public housing families that met strict economic and social conditions did they begin to understand the extent of their neighborhood’s transformation. In a parallel with the first efforts to revitalize the area using public housing in the 1940s, many residents thought that long-term residents should get priority

---

<sup>323</sup> CHA, *Plan for Transformation*, January 6, 2000, 31.

from the benefits of a new community. The *Plan*, however, raised questions about who should benefit from public housing as wealthier residents were a significant part of the new future.<sup>324</sup> Perhaps as a surprise to officials who saw Cabrini as a failed project, many Cabrini residents, especially those who had been active in tenant government, were vocal in their opposition to efforts to remove them and their voices from the community.

## VII. Art and Public History

As Cabrini-Green began to undergo major change in the 1990s, artists and public historians challenged what the public thought it knew about public housing. They focused on both the narrative of public housing and its value to residents as a means to add scrutiny to many arguments made by government officials and housing advocates for the future of public housing. These works highlighted concepts of home and community, two qualities often absent from most coverage of Cabrini-Green. These concepts were rarely present in popular narratives and required careful introduction and evidence that many in the public were not familiar with. These exhibitions celebrated program accomplishments in a way that was lacking from other discussions of public housing. These presentations created a sense of place around public housing that went beyond the stories of violence and destroyed buildings to highlight the local population as the primary storytellers.

One way of connecting public history to public housing communities was physically locating exhibits within those spaces, making it easy for families to take advantage of a project. In Chicago, the Peace Museum frequently created traveling museum pieces to assist students and their families in building peace for their community

---

<sup>324</sup> Vale, "Housing Chicago: From Cabrini-Green to Parkside of Old Town" *Places*.

through interactive exhibits. For many exhibits, the goal was to get children to think about peace and nonviolence as an alternative to the violence that defined their neighborhood. The 1994 “Drive By Peace” exhibit, located in the Cabrini Green Housing Project Peace Museum, provided toys and games to help children understand how non-violence could solve conflict when complicated situations arise in everyday life. This project allowed children and parents to visualize ways of dealing with daily possibilities of violence that gave them agency to change their environment. According to museum director Diane Gram, “The primary goal of our project is to engage these students in a creative challenge that involves thinking about peace rather than violence and gang warfare.”<sup>325</sup> The thinking behind this display was to change urban environments by reaching out to children in order to get them to value peace over violence and give them a skill set to act out this mission in their daily lives. Museum staff offered educational opportunities and art projects to connect with local school children to enrich their experiences. Because residents were the key participants, the program recognized Cabrini-Green as a home that individuals and families could shape through their everyday living patterns and decisions.

Studies of Cabrini were not limited to the physical location. Other institutions in Chicago also marked the shifts in public housing. Roosevelt University arranged a photographic exhibit in their Michigan Avenue gallery space called “The Promise of Public Housing, 1936-1983.” Relying on 88 black and white photographs from the archives of the CHA and Chicago Historical Society, the exhibit presented the early days

---

<sup>325</sup> Deborah A. Bayliss, “‘Drive By Peace’: A Symbol of Hope,” *Chicago Weekend*, June 19, 1994, pg. 2.

of CHA projects as a way to discuss the original goals for housing, early successes, and ultimate struggles. The CHA had hired photographers during the agency's early years to demonstrate the success of public housing in removing slums and improving residents' lives. According to D. Bradford Hunt, a Roosevelt professor who organized the exhibit and wrote the companion text, the images were "part documentary and part public relations effort, with both focused on justifying the CHA's mission of ridding the city of slums and building in their place vast new complexes of modern urban housing."<sup>326</sup> The major focus of these images was the people who lived there. Groups of individuals were shown using public amenities and lawns while families were photographed in their homes. The photographs included signs of the ultimate downfall of these communities, showing communities divided by race and the challenges of creating community.<sup>327</sup>

Exhibits on public history—told from inside and outside of these neighborhoods—challenged popular narratives about public housing's past and raised questions about its future. While they did not overlook the failures of these neighborhoods in terms of racism and violence, they included discussions about the promise of public housing and the struggles involved in any program involving mass clearance of land and communities in order to achieve better urban communities. During the 1990s, when the failures of public housing in Chicago seemed obvious to everyone,

---

<sup>326</sup> Roosevelt University and Chicago Historical Society, "The Promise of Public Housing, 1936-1983: Photographs from the Archives of the Chicago Housing Authority and the Chicago Historical Society." Companion booklet. Text by D. Bradford Hunt. Chicago, IL: 2005.

<sup>327</sup> Gage Gallery, "The Promise of Public Housing," Roosevelt University, Chicago, IL: Spring 2005 <http://www.roosevelt.edu/GageGallery/PreviousExhibitions/Promise.aspx>, accessed September 27, 2015.

public history offered a means to introduce the history of sites like Cabrini-Green into discussions about what would come next with public housing.

## VIII. Conclusion

By the end of the 20th century, Cabrini-Green was marked for destruction. Both as a physical reality and a conceptual framework for public housing neighborhoods, Cabrini-Green was deemed a failure. The widespread popular and policy belief that Cabrini-Green had failed and that public housing could not work in high-rise developments had been broadcast for decades. Cabrini-Green was a symbol of a larger failure, a representation of the mid-20th century public housing paradigm. The Metropolitan Planning Council, by 1996, determined this model needed replacement: “The old paradigm of separation and isolation does not work and results in the growth of costly social pathologies. The challenge, therefore, is to create a new paradigm of diversity and inclusion.”<sup>328</sup>

Despite consensus that it needed replacement, Cabrini-Green also proved to be a challenge to eliminate. Although most residents and policymakers saw Cabrini-Green in need of substantial redevelopment going back to the late 1970s, efforts to remake the neighborhood were often stymied by competing visions of what a successful Cabrini-Green would be like. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, plans were created that envisioned mixed-income developments that capitalized on Cabrini-Green’s proximity to the city’s most desirable neighborhoods to improve housing options and community safety. But real changes only occurred around the margins. The *Plan for Transformation*

---

<sup>328</sup> Metropolitan Planning Council, “Changing the Paradigm,” October 1996, pg. 2.

would mark a substantial shift for public housing in Chicago. Yet, Cabrini-Green's reputation for surviving past transformation efforts would continue during this new era.



## CHAPTER 5

### TWO DECADES OF DEMOLITION

By the time the *Plan for Transformation* was implemented, Cabrini-Green had already survived several decades of plans to remake the neighborhood more in the image of its Near North Side neighbors. The *Plan for Transformation*, however, succeeded where previous Chicago's efforts to rebuild Cabrini failed. This success was due, in part, to a larger civic program to make the central city more appealing to suburbanites. These renewal efforts made the land under Cabrini more valuable than ever while the *Plan for Transformation* labeled Chicago's high-rise family housing as beyond salvaging. This massive \$1.5 billion citywide public housing renovation represented a significant shift in public housing policy and offered the opportunity to remake the city of Chicago.

The *Plan for Transformation* represented the largest change to Chicago's landscape since 1960s urban renewal. Comparing the two underscored a linguistic shift which reflects a change in political perspective: under the first Mayor Daley such grand plans were called urban renewal, under the second Mayor Daley it was a transformation.<sup>329</sup> But this history stood as a caution for the future of the *Plan* and the neighborhoods it would remake. Critics of urban renewal argued that it hurt many of those it was supposed to assist, because projects demolished more units than were constructed and efforts to rehouse displaced residents in better conditions failed. Ultimately, urban renewal projects could not demonstrate material improvement in the lives of African-American and Hispanic city residents.<sup>330</sup> The *Plan for Transformation*

---

<sup>329</sup> Harold Henderson, "Is Mixed Income the Way?" *Chicago Reader*, December 15, 2006, pg. A26.

<sup>330</sup> Conn, *Americans Against the City*, 167.

explicitly called for less physical replacement of public housing units. The hope, however, was that new mixed-income neighborhoods would improve the daily lives of residents and change the popular opinion of public housing to a successful method of housing low-income families.

In this environment, Cabrini continued to be a site of public debate about the purpose of public housing, the nature of community, and the role of citizens in remaking the modern city. Cabrini residents knew the land they lived on was valuable, and many had experienced Cabrini's history of neighborhood revitalization that they saw favoring wealthier outsiders with little concern for residents like them. Yet, they were steadfast in their belief that those who lived in the community deserved a place in the newer Cabrini. Everyone recognized that Cabrini-Green would be significantly altered with demolition of high-rises and new construction of apartment, condos, and townhouses in mixed-income neighborhoods, public housing residents, the city, real estate interests, and new residents differed about what this community should be and how it should be managed. To help stake their claim on the future, Cabrini-Green public housing residents presented their history of a community abandoned that should be recognized during the act of demolition and construction of a new neighborhood.

### I. The Slow Death of Cabrini-Green's High Rises

One unique feature of the demolition of Cabrini-Green was how long it took: the first high-rise buildings were removed in 1995 with the final 134-unit, 15-story building came down in 2011. While other Chicago public housing projects were quickly and quietly demolished, Cabrini remained largely survived for years. The primary reason was

an active resident population who used the courts and public presentations to present housing as a human rights issue to keep their voices in the redevelopment process. Many resident activists fought to make the CHA live up to its promises and publicly challenged CHA's proposal for the area. They saw their neighborhood not as a failure of architecture or community,<sup>331</sup> but as a misunderstood community. One resident described their vision of the community, saying, "Cabrini is about people."<sup>332</sup>

Operating with a \$50 million HUD HOPE VI grant from 1994—focused on Cabrini Extension North—the city proposed demolishing three high-rises, replacing them with a mixed-income community, and renovating the remaining "Red" buildings. Demolition became a reality at Cabrini in 1995 when the HUD-run CHA ordered the demolition of 1117-19 and 1157-59 N. Cleveland Avenue and the planned demolition at 1150-1160 N. Sedgwick Street. Setting a pattern that would dominate Cabrini history for the next two decades, the destruction of physical buildings never came without a debate about the future of the neighborhood. CHA officials along with HUD and the city of Chicago presented mixed-income neighborhoods as the only way to save public housing by incorporating it into middle class neighborhoods. To help revitalize the neighborhood, the city built a new police station, a branch of the Chicago Public Library, a public park,

---

<sup>331</sup> While the term may be controversial for an area like Cabrini-Green, "community" is often used by residents and local activists to describe everything from the feeling between neighbors to the support networks between residents and neighboring organizations like schools and churches. It will be used here to provide resident efforts to argue that Cabrini had something of value to offer that was not being recognized by the city and CHA.

<sup>332</sup> Whitaker, *Cabrini-Green in Words and Pictures*, 204.

and two new schools. Resident advocates viewed every appeal to market rate renters and owners as one less unit available for Cabrini residents to remain in their community.<sup>333</sup>

The resistance brought the federal courts into the decision-making about Cabrini-Green in the 1990s. Some residents were suspicious of renewal as a maneuver to cash in on the neighborhood's location and improve amenities by tearing down public housing and replacing it with market rate housing. One resident told papers, "I don't care what [Mayor Daley] says he's going to do. They're trying to kick us to the curb. Cabrini Green is not for sale."<sup>334</sup> The Cabrini-Green Local Advisory Council (LAC) challenged the CHA's right to tear down high-rises without first guaranteeing all residents equivalent or better housing. The lawsuit, filed in 1996, interpreted the CHA's Cabrini plan as part of a 30-year history of official neglect. Demolition halted after two buildings were taken down to allow the case to work through the courts.

The HUD-controlled CHA and the Cabrini-Green LAC signed a consent decree in 1998 that would give the Cabrini-Green LAC a 51 percent interest in overseeing any future redevelopment of the area. Six high-rises would be demolished in two phases, with the second phase not cleared to begin until 300 public housing units had been built.<sup>335</sup> The share of public housing units in the proposed 2,310 mixed-income units went from 300-350 up to 900 units. When combined with affordable housing units, subsidized units would be roughly half the total. The Habitat Corp., the court appointed developer

---

<sup>333</sup> Joel Kaplin, "CHA Still Pushing Cabrini Plans, U.S. Officials Wary of Lane's Vision," *Chicago Tribune*, June 13, 1995.

<sup>334</sup> Sunya Walls, "Cabrini Green Residents Protest Demolition," *Chicago Weekend*, July 7, 1996, pg. 1.

<sup>335</sup> Flynn McRoberts and J. Linn Allen, "When Two Worlds Collide at Cabrini," *Chicago Tribune*, July 30, 1998.

overseeing all new public housing construction, filed an injunction soon after the agreement was announced to stop the consent decree because they had not been consulted in the negotiations. Habitat's rejection sent the CHA and Cabrini leaders back to the negotiating table to agree on the site's future.

The CHA and the Cabrini-Green LAC signed another consent decree in 2000. This decree allowed for the demolition of the same six high-rises. New construction would include 2,100 units with 700 set aside for public housing units in the area confined by North Avenue, Orleans Street, Chicago Avenue, and the Chicago River. The result was a net decrease in density as fewer units than the 1998 consent decree would be placed in a larger area. Despite this shift, some saw the second consent decree as a positive for the community. According to the LAC president, "We got a good settlement. We want to live right here on the same land we've been living on all the time. We want a decent, sanitary place to live. Our goal has been accomplished."<sup>336</sup> Commentators saw the deal as proof that public housing residents would not stand by as public housing and affordable housing were eliminated.<sup>337</sup> The 2000 consent decree altered the previous decree in meaningful ways. Significantly, it changed the ownership requirement for the residents' council from 51 percent to up to 50 percent with developers making the final decision. It also lowered the residential density of the area.<sup>338</sup> The courts were still monitoring the 2000 consent decree in 2011 when the court found CHA at risk of

---

<sup>336</sup> Robert Sharoff, "In Chicago, An Attempt to Upgrade a Neighborhood," *New York Times*, September 10, 2000.

<sup>337</sup> Memorie Knox, "Cabrini Housing Agreement Dispels Displacement, Ensures Resident Input," *Chicago Weekend*, August 24, 2000, pg. 1.

<sup>338</sup> Mickey Ciokajlo, "New Cabrini Agreement May End Residents' Suit," *Chicago Tribune*, August 16, 2000.

violating it. CHA had failed to acquire 11 acres from Chicago Public Schools that was to hold 382 new homes with a third of units set aside for public housing residents.<sup>339</sup>

The *Plan for Transformation* called for the demolition of all remaining high-rise buildings at Cabrini-Green. Even as they succeeded in eliminating the physical structures, they did not have approved plans to replace these units. Rather, they had basic parameters for the site—that it be 30 percent public housing, 20 percent affordable or subsidized units, and 50 percent market rate—and solicited proposals from private developers to complete neighborhood designs. This process required public meetings to debate requests for proposals and developer proposals. The time-intensive project created a significant gap between emptying buildings, demolishing them, and opening new ones for occupancy. The destruction of Cabrini-Green created an almost unheard of commodity on the crowded northern part of Chicago—open land.

In the mid-2000s, evictions became a more common tool to clear buildings for demolition. In 2004, the CHA distributed a 180-day notice to vacate 15 buildings—7 in Cabrini Extension South and 8 in Frances Cabrini Homes—that had been determined unsafe for human habitation and slated for demolition. Residents, however, were not sure that the decision to move forward with building demolition was in their best interest. The Cabrini-Green LAC held open housing forums to let residents vocalize their feelings about staying in the neighborhood and the Section 8 vouchers being offered to residents. The answer to these complaints was litigation. In 2004, 385 families in the seven remaining Cabrini-Green high-rises challenged the eviction notices in court, arguing that the CHA violated its contract with residents. They also alleged violations of their human

---

<sup>339</sup> Antonio Olivo. “CHA Gets Own House in Order,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 29, 2011.

rights as well as illegal activities, because the CHA did not have a plan for them to get temporary housing or to return to their neighborhood. The CHA responded that they were not evicting anyone, but were attempting to empty buildings with substantial infrastructure problems that cost \$5 million per year to maintain.<sup>340</sup>

Individuals who wanted to stay in Cabrini questioned why buildings could not be demolished one at a time, allowing residents to move into vacant units in remaining buildings to maintain their connections to the community. According to the Cabrini residents' lawyer Richard Wheelock, "The tragedy here is that this threatened disruption [of resident's lives] is entirely unnecessary. The entire site will not be redeveloped in one fell swoop. There is therefore no justification for depopulating it in one fell swoop either."<sup>341</sup> Residents would benefit from slower demolition because their social networks were built around their physical neighborhoods and local businesses, churches, and social organizations. Keeping people in their community made organizing them and presenting their view to the CHA easier for activists since it would not require anyone traveling to Cabrini from relocated neighborhoods.

Resident activism shifted during this period. Activists began to connect their protests with international movements. They protested using the idea that "housing is a human right." In March 2005, residents associated with the Coalition to Protect Public Housing sought a larger audience and appeared in front of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to offer evidence that the United States failed to provide

---

<sup>340</sup> Antonio Olivo, "Cabrini Residents Sue Over Eviction," *Chicago Tribune*, June 4, 2004.

<sup>341</sup> Beauty Turner, "You Have Been Served," *Residents' Journal*, We the People Media, August 19, 2004, <http://wethepeoplemedia.org/you-have-been-served/>, accessed October 24, 2015.

adequate housing for low-income individuals and families. They hoped to use an international audience to pressure housing agencies to improve low-income housing. Cabrini advocates made their case by highlighting the CHA's desire to tear down the buildings before all other considerations. According to one advocate about a month before this hearing, "CHA doesn't have a plan to build at Cabrini, but it does have a plan to demolish Cabrini. People who live here want to stay here, but they don't want to live in the conditions that they're being forced to live in."<sup>342</sup> In April 2005, residents brought worldwide attention to Cabrini-Green by giving a tour of their community to Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing to the UN Commission on Human Rights Miloon Kothari. He offered a statement of solidarity that Chicago represented an international trend of low-income housing being replaced by market units—an action, he said, in violation of international human rights.<sup>343</sup>

These protests efforts aimed to announce their struggle to the world and get support in their actions to play a role in the future of Cabrini-Green. What the residents sought was a guaranteed right of return for all Cabrini-Green families. This represented a fundamental challenge to CHA plans, for each one included a reduction in public housing population in the neighborhood. The CHA counted on rehousing many residents with vouchers and therefore did not have enough public housing units to bring all current residents back to the Cabrini area.

---

<sup>342</sup> Karen E. Pride, "Doll Draws Attention to Public Housing Debate," *Chicago Defender*, February 8, 2005.

<sup>343</sup> Deirdre Pfeiffer, "Displacement Through Discourse: Implementing and Contesting Public Housing Redevelopment in Cabrini Green," *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 63-4.



Residents fought eviction and relocation because they believed their continued presence was their best chance to remain in the neighborhood long-term and secured units in the new developments. This action both kept them together as a group to be organized and maintained their visibility to their physical neighbors and the CHA. One resident described her feelings: “The city wants to move us so they can forget about us. They want us to disappear.”<sup>344</sup> In January 2005, a federal judge agreed with the residents that the CHA’s promises could be easily broken, pointing to, in part, the fact that the CHA only had a plan for a partial redevelopment of the site.

The pattern of lawsuits and settlements altered the landscape at Cabrini-Green by creating distance between the time buildings were vacated and when they could legally be demolished. As late as 2007, the William Green Homes—once eight buildings with over 1,000 units on 19 acres—was relegated to three buildings with 187 official families and an uncounted number of squatters waiting for the CHA to determine the fate of their families and their homes. This situation was disconcerting to residents. Families who had lived in buildings for years were combined with those who had been moved when their previous buildings were demolished. This created an environment where few knew their neighbors. On top of this, the buildings were not well maintained and subject to a host of unwanted people from squatters to drug dealers who turned empty spaces into their private domains. At the same time, neighborhood changes were clear from their windows. This increased their desire to remain in the neighborhood even as their willingness to stay in their buildings rapidly waned. A lawyer for the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago told reporters, “The only leverage the residents have

---

<sup>344</sup> PJ Huffstutter, “It’s Bleak but It’s Home,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 1, 2005.

is to say we're going to stay here until you build stuff."<sup>345</sup> Court cases over eviction notices slowed the process of demolition. This pattern of remaining in buildings until the courts ordered evictions lasted until the final two families were ordered to move within 10 days of settlement from 1230 N. Burling, the final high-rise at Cabrini, in 2010.<sup>346</sup>

The legal battles between the CHA and Cabrini-Green LAC over the neighborhood's future lasted from the first demolition plans until the final decision on the Frances Cabrini Homes. Resident committees and organizations used the courts to demand a say in the future of their neighborhood, attempting to get the greatest presence of public and subsidized units possible. They slowed building demolition, but that also prevented quick construction of replacement units while the final counts were negotiated.

## II. The Shifting Fate of the Frances Cabrini Homes

The CHA's physical stock had been controversial going back to the 1970s. For decades architecture took the primary blame for decaying public housing units. When first released the *Plan for Transformation* hinted at the impact that changing architecture could have in changing the future of communities. At the center of this transformation was the demolition of high-rise family public housing. This architecture form held a unique position in the understanding of public housing as a place. According to Janet L. Smith, "High-rise public housing made poverty both visible and invisible in Chicago."<sup>347</sup> Even the staunchest advocate of traditional public housing could not support having

---

<sup>345</sup> Susan Saulny, "At Housing Project, Both Fear and Renewal," *New York Times*, March 18, 2007.

<sup>346</sup> Andy Grimm, "2 Cabrini Families Get Ultimatum," *Chicago Tribune*, December 2, 2010.

<sup>347</sup> Janet L. Smith, "Diminishing High-Rise Public Housing," in *Chicago Architecture*, 300.

people continue to live in Cabrini's decaying high-rises. Yet, attitudes of successful architecture are not static. Cabrini proved this with the row houses, which went from envied location within the Cabrini-Green community to too shabby and barren for the new neighborhood. Despite their history as one of the high points of Chicago's early period of public housing, the changing Near North Side made this community lose favor with CHA officials, housing developers, and new residents.

From the beginning, the Frances Cabrini Homes played a special role in the Cabrini community. Residents often started their discussion of Cabrini with the row houses, not the high-rises. These were the most prized units, offering a close-knit community that did not suffer from the same challenges as the high-rises. Many described a solid community supported by architectural form and street design. The row houses, which were two and three stories high, created a street-oriented community. The stoops became important communal sites, as neighbors checked in on one another and watched children in public places. Alderman Walter Burnett, 27<sup>th</sup> Ward, grew up in the row houses and described his childhood saying, "Sometimes our mom wouldn't let us kids leave the front porch so she could keep an eye on us. So even now you go to the [CHA] row houses and you see a lot of people on front porches. That's just what we do. That's how we grew up."<sup>348</sup> Row houses provided small lawns divided by low fences, allowing people to design a personal yard. Their building design and community layout matched many qualities that New Urbanism advocated in mixed-income communities.

---

<sup>348</sup> John McCarron, "Closing the Condo-Cabrini Chasm," *LISC Chicago*, November 29, 2011. qtd in *Cabrini-Green: The Transformation of a Neighborhood* available at <http://cabrini-green.com/>

In 1992, HUD and the CHA started efforts to get early Chicago public housing projects on the National Register of Historic Places. Frances Cabrini Homes and five other row house developments built between 1938 and 1945 were deemed eligible by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. The historical analysis marked these six developments as crucial early examples of federal and local government efforts to develop housing and city planning on a mass scale. For the row houses, the historian's analysis pointed to larger social trends and architectural details for urban living:

The Chicago Housing Authority's efforts at Cabrini served both the earlier demands for slum clearance, job creation, and affordable housing and the growing demands for America's military preparedness program. The individual units at Cabrini reflect a significant attempt to provide substantial housing and outdoor living space to each tenant within the confines of a dense urban development area.<sup>349</sup>

Frances Cabrini Homes were determined to be eligible under Community Development and Planning and Social History subsections of National Register Criteria A. This agreement came with promises of careful treatment of the communities with a focus on preserving architectural exteriors. The agreement allowed for a variety of repairs to the interior of the buildings, including basements, halls, lobbies, community rooms, utility infrastructure, and dwellings units, without further consultation.<sup>350</sup>

The original *Plan for Transformation* did not call for the demolition of the row houses. For years after the *Plan* was first announced, the CHA placed the row houses on

---

<sup>349</sup> Paul R. Lusignan, "Chicago Housing Authority Properties," report for the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, July 30, 1994, pg. 1, 3.

<sup>350</sup> "Exhibit A: Specific Activities, Relating to Life-Safety, that May Proceed Without Further Consultation" in Programmatic Agreement Among the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation for the Administration of the Comprehensive Grant Program in Chicago Illinois, 1994.

a list to be rehabilitated. In FY 2008 Moving to Work Annual Plan, the CHA laid out a six-year rehabilitation schedule with 100 units delivered annually for five years and the remaining 86 units slated for 2013.<sup>351</sup> But little work was completed on the row houses. CHA managed to rehabilitate 146 units in FY 2009, completing 100 of the units slated from the previous year's stock and 46 units from the planned 100 for that year.<sup>352</sup> After these 146 units were open for occupancy, however, rehabilitation halted. The halt was not a product of limited financing. CHA budgets show positive variances for the row house project with construction lagging the amount budgeted for the project. As a result, the remaining 440 units were allowed to deteriorate without any effort at redevelopment. These units further deteriorated because they remained vacant since their residents had been moved out in preparation for the rehabilitation. Only 33 families lived in the nonrehabbed units, creating a vacancy rate of 92 percent.<sup>353</sup>

Without much public debate, the row houses' fate was left in a limbo. As they had been for decades with the high-rises, row house residents feared that the land their homes occupied was too valuable to remain as public housing for much longer. In 2011, the CHA fenced off the non-renovated row houses, and they were left to deteriorate.<sup>354</sup> The families in the 146 rehabbed units and 33 nonrehabbed units watched as drug dealers and squatters took over boarded up units no longer maintained by the CHA. In the FY 2012

---

<sup>351</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, "FY2008 Moving to Work Annual Plan" *Plan of Transformation Year 9*, December 28, 2007, pg. 42.

<sup>352</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, "FY2009 Moving to Work Annual Report (Revised)," *Plan for Transformation Year 10*, March 31, 2010, pg. 29.

<sup>353</sup> Wendell Hunt, "'White Folks Forcing Us Out,' Say CHA Residents," *New York Beacon*, September 15, 2011.

<sup>354</sup> Dawn Rhodes, "Go-Ahead for Public Housing," *Chicago Tribune*, September 14, 2013.

Annual Report, the CHA announced that it could not support keeping row houses as 100 percent public housing moving forward. Instead, they would include the 65 acres of row house land in their Request for Qualifications for the larger Cabrini-Green area.<sup>355</sup> They had determined that it would be a better use of money to tear down the buildings rather than rehabilitate them. This would also allow the CHA to develop a complete mixed-income neighborhood in Cabrini-Green's footprint rather than have a traditional public housing neighborhood sit in the middle of new developments.

Cabrini-Green's LAC filed suit in 2013 to preserve the Frances Cabrini Homes as a solely public housing development, as had been laid out in the *Plan for Transformation*. As the *Plan* was pursued in the Near North Side, the row houses went from a site of rehabilitation to one of demolition to provide additional acreage for mixed-income developments. The suit alleged that the proposed mixed-income neighborhood would push poorer residents out of a new neighborhood with improved schools, public facilities, transit, and grocery stores. Residents claimed that they had been moved out of the row houses with promises that they would be allowed back in their units when they were renovated. But once they had moved out the CHA halted renovations. In order to settle these residents in a cost-effective manner, the suit argued, that the CHA would have to purchase or build units in areas that already had higher poverty rates than the area surrounding the row houses.<sup>356</sup>

---

<sup>355</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, "Amended FY2012 Moving to Work Annual Plan," *Plan for Transformation Year 13*, March 27, 2012, pg. 18.

<sup>356</sup> Dawn Rhodes, "Go-Ahead for Public Housing," *Chicago Tribune*, September 14, 2013.

In fall 2015, the CHA and Cabrini-Green LAC agreed on a settlement agreement on the fate of the row houses. Two years before, LAC had filed a suit in federal court arguing that the destruction of the row houses violated the original plan that all 586 units would be rehabilitated and preserved as 100 percent public housing. Residents saw this plan as a promise that public housing would have a clear role in the new neighborhood. With the agreement, the CHA was given permission to demolish the 440 empty row house units and redevelop the land as a mixed-income community. The LAC received a different demographic breakdown for the replacement development than the established mixed-income percentages. The new project would have no less than 40 percent public housing units and 15 percent affordable housing, making it a majority subsidized neighborhood. The CHA was required to provide at least 1,800 subsidized units of various sizes by 2022 to the area bounded by North and Chicago Avenues and State and Halsted Streets. The 146 renovated units were to be subject to “meet and consult” with LAC before the CHA took any action.<sup>357</sup>

The marked demolition of the Frances Cabrini Homes undermined much of the residents’ understanding of these buildings. While much of the public discussion of reforming public housing centered on the failure of the high-rises, row houses were successes, as evidence that human scale developments with defensible space could provide desirable housing for public housing residents. Row house residents, who for decades had described them as the premier area of Cabrini-Green, saw their neighborhood change when they became a refuge for people who lost homes in the high

---

<sup>357</sup> John Seidel, “Judge OKs Deal to Bring More Public Housing to Near North Side,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, September 17, 2015, <http://chicago.suntimes.com/news/7/71/968082/cabrini-green-public-housing-settlement>, accessed December 1, 2015.

rises. This migration created a neighborhood of strangers, susceptible to the same gang activity that helped condemn the high rises.<sup>358</sup> Fencing off the row houses represented yet another CHA move that residents saw as a broken promise that revealed the *Plan for Transformation*'s true nature. It represented another instance of the CHA choosing new developments over preserving public housing communities as part of their renovations.

The row houses had an advantage to many Cabrini residents—they were slated to solely house public housing residents. As the neighborhood vanished, the Frances Cabrini Homes became the symbol for a neighborhood undergoing rapid changes. Here they could develop a community with people in similar economic position who shared a culture of using public spaces as shared community. Filmmaker Ronit Bezael said during the high-rise demolition, “What’s important for people to know is that Cabrini is still here, the rowhouses are still here.”<sup>359</sup> Formal efforts were made to preserve the Frances Cabrini Homes as the public housing neighborhood, including a federal suit filed by Cabrini-Green’s LAC. A new round of investments could restore the row houses to the public housing success they had once been.

For many new residents and developers, however, the row houses were the final reminder of the neighborhood’s past, described by one as “the last spots of dirt to wash away from the neighborhood.” The row houses were white cinderblock arranged in open courtyard designs. Even at their best, they had a barrack-like appearance, which fit in well with its original role as wartime and veterans housing. Next to the 21<sup>st</sup> century red

---

<sup>358</sup> Mary Schmich, “Cabrini May Vanish—But Not Ex-Tenants,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 29, 2012.

<sup>359</sup> Karen Hawkins, “Last Cabrini Public Housing High-Rise Came Down,” *Chicago Defender*, April 6-12, 2011.



brick condos and townhomes, their cinderblock construction appeared drab, dirty, and unappealing. The grass areas and public spaces did not seem well maintained, which also presented them as remnants from a less wealthy past. The new population, brought into the neighborhood by new mixed-income developments and expanding business opportunities, did not have the connection to the row houses as a source of neighborhood pride. A newly established local businessman described the row houses as “a waste of land right now,” adding “at least (they should) make them look nice.”<sup>360</sup>

The planned destruction of the row houses brought back residents’ fear that the *Plan for Transformation* was designed to remove public housing residents from valuable land and replace them with wealthier people. One of the residents left in the nonrehabbed units presented her understanding of changes, saying, “Developers want this land so they can build condos. The whites that live around here are tired of looking at us and are pressuring the city to get us the hell out. They along with whites are tired of waiting and want us out.”<sup>361</sup> Another resident, who had lived in multiple buildings in Cabrini-Green and saw each one allowed to deteriorate, was fearful that officials were content to let problem elements migrate from the boarded-up row houses to the rehabilitated ones, making it easier to remove all the remaining row houses.<sup>362</sup>

Others viewed the remaining row houses as a continuing obstacle to the creation of a new community. The CHA’s promise that the rehabilitated row houses would remain

---

<sup>360</sup> Alexandra Chachkevitch, “Door Shuts on Cabrini’s Promise,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 16, 2012.

<sup>361</sup> Wendell Hunt, “‘White Folks Forcing Us Out,’ Say CHA Residents,” *New York Beacon*, September 15, 2011.

<sup>362</sup> Mary Schmich, “Cabrini May Vanish—But Not Ex-Tenants,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 29, 2012.

100 percent public housing made it distinct from the neighboring mixed-income communities that had no more than 30 percent public housing residents. These concerns were how a community set for a massive transition could succeed with an area that would not change substantially. According to one of the architects of the *Plan for Transformation*, “Pockets of poverty on the perimeter of the mixed-income make it that much harder to create new norms, to create new communities. It diminishes the potential of what we’re trying to achieve.”<sup>363</sup> The planners believed the presence of a traditional public housing community alongside the mixed-income developments might hinder the formation of a sense of unity across the various developments on a neighborhood level. The buildings and community design risked keeping the row houses as a separate entity. The cinderblock construction was a physical reminder of the cost limitations of traditional public housing construction. The new development, on the other hand, used red brick to make the neighborhood visually attractive to potential buyers and renters. An older development might further dampen the real estate market.

Not everyone was so quick to give up on the Frances Cabrini Homes. Critics often focused on how significant the row houses were to achieving the goals of the whole *Plan for Transformation*. In a “Voices of the People” letter, the Cabrini-Green LAC president and the Legal Assistance Foundation supervisory attorney argued that the CHA’s desire to tear down the row houses and replace them with mixed-income developments would cause a net loss of approximately 400 hard units and cause the CHA to fail its promise of building or rehabbing 25,000 units in the *Plan for Transformation*.<sup>364</sup> Other critiques

---

<sup>363</sup> Ben Austen, “The Last Tower,” *Harper’s Magazine* (May 2012): 45.

<sup>364</sup> Carol Steele and Elizabeth Rosenthal, “Voice of the People,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 4, 2014.

presented the row houses as fitting with the mission of the new neighborhoods even if they did not follow the residential economic mix of the new communities. In another letter to the editor, this time to the *Chicago Sun-Times*, supervisory attorney Elizabeth Rosenthal argued that the new requirements for tenants—specifically the 30 hour work requirement and the income ceiling of \$57,900 for a family of four—could allow the row houses to function as a mixed-income community even while staying 100 percent public housing.<sup>365</sup> Revitalized row houses, then, provided an additional model for public housing that recognized the virtues of economic diversity even as it was directed solely at families who met requirements for public housing communities.

The decision to demolish the row houses became almost as symbolic as the destruction of the high-rises, but for different reasons. Rather than marking the failure of public housing, the row houses were the site of the most successful, stable community at Cabrini-Green. Many activists and community members realized that closing the row houses would mean that a significant number of African American families who remained on the Near North Side would be pushed into segregated neighborhoods on the south and west sides that had a higher poverty rate than the revitalized Near North Side.<sup>366</sup> This helped fuel distrust that the demolition of Cabrini-Green was a program to replace a poor, African-American community with a more affluent, whiter one that fit more with the recent evolution of the Near North Side.

---

<sup>365</sup> “Reader Feedback: More Public Housing on the Near North Side, Not Less,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, January 26, 2014.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*

The Frances Cabrini Homes' recent history demonstrated how larger social, economic, and cultural frameworks impact the understanding of architecture. For most of their lives, the row houses represented a higher standard in terms of building form and resident happiness for Chicago public housing. Surviving the original *Plan for Transformation* demolition list, their position within the neighborhood changed as the new buildings went up around them and the resident community broke down, with the increased relocation of high-rise families. While the CHA wanted to create mixed-income communities, residents held out hope that the Frances Cabrini Homes' promise could be restored through rehabilitation. Once again, public housing residents felt that their needs were subordinated to build a new Near North Side. One with a very limited place for those residents who lived in the neighborhood when no one from the Loop would dare venture near. Northwestern University sociology professor Mary Pattillo describes how the story of the row houses fit with the larger pattern of lack of trust between the residents and the CHA. According to her, "There is an ongoing history of broken promises. Better off not making promises to begin with."<sup>367</sup>

### III. The Destruction of Home

Demolition of individual high-rises around Cabrini-Green began in 1995, when several buildings were taken down in response to the Dantrell Davis murder. But the *Plan for Transformation* significantly increased the rate of demolition, adversely affecting residents by breaking up building-based support networks and relocating residents into unfamiliar buildings and demolishing the neighborhood by leaving large empty lots

---

<sup>367</sup> Alexandra Chechkevitch, "Door Shut on Cabrini's Promise," *Chicago Tribune*, February 16, 2012.

without immediate plans for new construction. In March 2011, 1230 N. Burling, the final high-rise at Cabrini-Green, was torn down. For many, the destruction of this building marked the end of community in the neighborhood. Former residents acknowledged the problems with the buildings and some of their fellow residents, but argued that the community they cultivated deserved more consideration in planning the site's future. One former resident described witnessing Cabrini's demolition, saying, "It was a city within a city. That's what we called it. There were drug dealers, gangbangers, but it was mostly a family. Generations of families grew up here."<sup>368</sup> Many residents described a community shaped by the negative aspects of Cabrini, but which also was the source of good memories of unity, caring, and support.

Activists attempted to bring attention to monumental shifts on the ground over the extended period of demolition. Creative protests were utilized to get continued attention to the neighborhood and the residents' experiences. One such protest involved the unveiling of "Little Miss Public Housing," an 18-inch doll designed to represent the children of public housing. But Little Miss Public Housing had a larger purpose. Many advocates had long argued that the fate of public housing could not be separated from the race of people who lived there. A representative for the Coalition to Protect Public Housing described the situation for children: "The children here have concerns about being displaced from their homes, their schools and their neighborhoods." She went on, "If any other racial group was shifted around like this, there would be advisors telling parents to take their children to counselors because of the instability they experience."<sup>369</sup>

---

<sup>368</sup> "Truly a Sad Sight," *Chicago Tribune*, March 31, 2011.

Many considered the demolition of individual high-rise buildings the major transition point in their own history. Former residents returned to watch their former homes come down. Starting in 2003, former Cabrini-Green residents began holding community reunions, called Old School Mondays. Former residents met in Seward Park for a neighborhood reunion even as the high-rises were coming down. What started as a small gathering grew into a larger, recurring party through resident word of mouth. Part of meeting was a commitment to themselves and the larger Chicago public that Cabrini-Green had, in fact, been a community. People there had developed an attachment to place and community. One resident expressed confidence in the potential of these reunions, saying, “They always be kicking folks out of Cabrini, but we keep coming back.”<sup>370</sup> One of the purposes of black placemaking is to recover agency that is frequently lost in conventional narratives.<sup>371</sup> Returning to Cabrini, especially when the popular narrative was that the site was leaving public housing behind, reclaimed the space for former residents as a place of community. While many of their efforts to force special consideration for the community they made, Old School Mondays provided the opportunity to celebrate together.

Other former residents came back to watch the building demolition. This act encouraged many to reminisce about the centrality of Cabrini-Green in their lives. Watching the demolition of the final high-rise, a former resident remarked, “Some people

---

<sup>369</sup> Karen E. Pride, “Doll Draws Attention to Public Housing Debate,” *Chicago Defender*, February 8, 2005.

<sup>370</sup> Ben Javorsky, “Good Times at Cabrini,” *Chicago Reader*, September 23, 2004.

<sup>371</sup> Hunter et al., “Black Placemaking,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 33, no. 7-8 (2016): 35.

probably felt it was a bad environment. But for others, it was home. And for some people, that was all they had.”<sup>372</sup> Cabrini residents frequently couched their memories of Cabrini-Green within the larger narrative of failure that the rest of the city understood. They pushed further, however, presenting Cabrini-Green as a flawed environment that nevertheless represented the only home that many residents had known.

Residents who stopped to talk with reporters and who protested the demolition discussed the neighborhood as a significant factor in their individual development and sense of community. These connections were evident in public gathering and parties that sprang up in Cabrini’s open spaces. A resident, who moved out in 1997 but came back for local resident reunions, explained his connection:

But I ain’t never really left. And no matter where I go, where I live, or what I do, I won’t ever really leave. It’s really the only place I ever lived. My old building came down not long after I moved. I watched it come down. They blocked off the area and bulldozed the Rock. It was like cutting in my heart when I saw that building into the ground. I was born here. I lived here. I became a man here. My friends died here. You call it the projects, but to me it was holy ground.<sup>373</sup>

The experience of living at Cabrini impacted residents even after they moved away. One resident described making her children do volunteer work at Cabrini to demonstrate their commitment to the neighborhood and recognition of its role in shaping their character.<sup>374</sup> The Cabrini label, however, could have negative consequences in the outside world since Cabrini residents were stereotyped as violent criminals, lazy, rude, or uneducated.

---

<sup>372</sup> “‘Truly a Sad Sight’” *Chicago Tribune*, March 31, 2011.

<sup>373</sup> Ben Jovarsky, “Good Times at Cabrini,” *Chicago Reader*, September 23, 2004.

<sup>374</sup> Whitaker, *Cabrini-Green in Words and Pictures*, 127.

At its heart, the discussion about Cabrini's past was about a community that—while valuable for some of its residents—could not overcome the larger forces of city revitalization and neighborhood change. The main source of loss, however, predated the physical demolition of the buildings. Within Cabrini-Green, what community you belonged to related to which buildings—row houses, “Reds,” or “Whites”—your family lived in. Communities also developed within individual buildings as residents came to depend on one another for daily support. Once buildings were vacated in preparation for demolition, new residents were placed into empty units in remaining buildings. These moves disrupted established communities and created an environment where people no longer recognized or could rely on their neighbors. This disconnect from community only grew as individual families moved to new neighborhoods or public housing developments. One of the final residents of Cabrini-Green mourned the past, saying, “We knew everybody. And everybody knew us.”<sup>375</sup> Like the larger Cabrini identity, building connection existed even after people had left. Long-time residents who remained on site could identify returning residents as being from the “Whites” and the “Reds” for years after the corresponding buildings had been taken down, in part based on the area of the cities these residents moved to.<sup>376</sup>

While Cabrini residents mourned the destruction of their homes, few outside the neighborhood saw these buildings as more than a failed building and neighborhood plan. Cabrini-Green remained symbolic of the failure of public housing on a mass scale. For many reformers, the destruction of the buildings could not come fast enough since they

---

<sup>375</sup> Douglas Belkin, “Housing Project Goes Dark,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 9, 2010.

<sup>376</sup> Mary Schmich, “A Lens on Cabrini-Green’s Past,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 16, 2015.



were the major impediments to a new community waiting to be realized. In 2006, Rita Fry, the CHA's independent monitor, called Cabrini-Green the "800 pound gorilla in the room" with regards to the *Plan for Transformation*. Rather than seeing new developments or even empty lots, boarded up buildings became symbols for the CHA's efforts. She categorized her position, saying, "I say tear them down. Then there are others that say we don't want them tore down until CHA demonstrates that they're going to build comparable housing on the site. But I think it's important to the overall community, meaning the city of Chicago, that people see some progress other than boarded up buildings."<sup>377</sup> Community was always to be an important measure of success for the *Plan for Transformation*, but in this case the community was the entire city rather than local residents, business owners, or community interests.

Some observers recognized that the demolition of Cabrini-Green could both potentially aid and hinder Cabrini residents. Demolishing a sizable physical environment and rebuilding it for a broader community was going to cause significant disruption. A developer of Park Side of Old Town admitted, "It's bittersweet because you've got residents in there whose lives are going to be thrown into turmoil." But it was not all bad as "our CHA families are trying to move on with their lives, and the high rises still, unfortunately represent what they are trying to get away from."<sup>378</sup> While many observers admitted that public housing residents carried most of the burden of the disruption, it was

---

<sup>377</sup> "Cabrini Green Monitor Wants Disused Buildings Demolished," *WBEZ 91.5*, October 6, 2006, <http://www.wbez.org/story/news/local/cabrini-green-monitor-wants-disused-buildings-demolished>, accessed October 24, 2015.

<sup>378</sup> Alby Gallun, "Cabrini's Green," *Crain's Chicago Business*, May 16, 2005, pg. 3.

in the process of improving the daily life of all parties. The loss of Cabrini as a home for the decreasing population of Cabrini-Green as a public housing neighborhood could be bittersweet for many, but it was a necessary part of improving public housing and creating the mixed-income neighborhoods.

#### IV. Collecting Place Before It Disappears

For many residents and observers, the *Plan for Transformation* promised to destroy Cabrini-Green as a daily reality. The substitution of mixed-income developments for large-scale public housing ones threatened to remove traces of the complicated legacy of Cabrini-Green. A *Chicago Tribune* reporter summed up the complications, writing, “Cabrini-Green will be forgotten before it’s ever fully understood by people who didn’t live there, or even by those who did.”<sup>379</sup> While few would argue that the buildings or physical environment were worth preserving, many community members believed that their community deserved commemoration and went about collecting these stories.

Cabrini-Green, as one of the CHA’s most infamous developments whose demolition was one of the most contentious, was a prime site for people interested in documenting public housing. Not only was it famous beyond Chicago, it had residents who protested to save their community and were willing to discuss Cabrini’s role in their lives.

One of the most prominent ways to preserve the past was through oral history collections. Oral histories had the additional benefit of being a way to make historical narrative more complex by bringing in nuance.<sup>380</sup> In these histories, residents’ voices

---

<sup>379</sup> Mary Schmich, “Lights Blink, History Fades at Cabrini,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 30, 2011.

<sup>380</sup> Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 13.

frequently served as a counterweight to narratives presented by the media and outside interests in which public housing was an unmitigated failure. The first collections, represented by J.S. Fuerst edited oral history collection *When Public Housing was Paradise*, involved taking residents back to the early era of public housing to recount their stories. Fuerst was the Director of Research and Statistics for the CHA from 1946 to 1953, a period central to the collection. This framework allowed the editor and oral history participants to present public housing as a step in their personal growth with sections focused on leadership development and steps toward the “American Dream.” Fuerst’s purpose was to refute the belief that public housing was a failure by presenting stories from the era when public housing supported working-class families. According to the editor, “Public housing—wisely implemented and supportive of citizen aspirations in its early years—facilitated the building of community and the achievement of the American Dream.”<sup>381</sup> Focusing on an era when public housing was well-funded and enjoyed political and public support with the New Deal, the residents discussed public housing as a good program that helped people. The ultimate suggestion was that public housing could revive this status again with sufficient political will. Fuerst’ work positioned public housing in the early years as evidence that government policy could play a major positive role in American society, not just the indirect efforts at the margins he saw modern government pursuing.

The second type of oral history collection involved public housing residents who remained in traditional public housing until it was closed for demolition. Their memories did not overlook the violence, crime, and drugs, but these collections located the more

---

<sup>381</sup> Fuerst, *When Public Housing was Paradise*, xvi.

well-known negative aspects of Cabrini's history in a less familiar story about a community that grew together in part because no one else could fully understand what it was like to live there. These are stories of a defiant community determined to show city officials and outsiders that they valued their homes and community. Oral history was a productive tool for these goals as well because it is a collective method of linking the past with the present through the sharing of individual memories.<sup>382</sup>

When it first appeared that Cabrini would be torn down in the late 1990s, David T. Whitaker combined the words of Cabrini-Green residents with black and white photos to provide a document of a vanishing place, *Cabrini-Green in Words and Pictures*. Whitaker's purpose for this collection was to explore "the true legend of Cabrini-Green, aiming to capture a firsthand perspective of its lasting identity before it goes the way of so many other communities that once claimed this harried plot of land."<sup>383</sup> The interview subjects include long-term residents who remembered the neighborhood when it still had sizeable Italian and Irish communities and stretched up to contemporary teenagers who never experienced a community that was not besieged by violence. Most of the residents interviewed were exceedingly aware of the image of Cabrini that the media presented and framed their stories in reaction to these stories.

Audrey Petty, associate professor of English at the University of Illinois, compiled the stories of twelve residents who lived at Cabrini-Green, Robert Taylor, ALBA Homes, and Rockwell Gardens. The resulting *High Rise Stories* presented these individuals as storytellers engaging the audience with their wide-ranging experiences in

---

<sup>382</sup> Hamilton and Shopes, ed., "Introduction," *Oral History and Public Memories*, viii.

<sup>383</sup> Whitaker, *Cabrini-Green in Words and Pictures*, 4

public housing. She was working in the background of the *Plan for Transformation*, after the buildings were gone and little had come up to replace them. Petty was inspired to work on this collection while driving around the city and witnessing the empty lots that used to hold high-rises: “I felt this loss that was hard for me to articulate and there was something in seeing the buildings coming down that activated this question about these places being more than buildings.”<sup>384</sup> Fascinated with the “over there” that public housing represents for most Chicagoans, Petty wanted to know where the people who had been “over there” went and what their lives were like before and after. The purpose of the stories Petty collected was to explain how individuals made their homes in public housing and how, despite structural and physical violence, they maintained a sense of themselves and refused to be limited or deterred by their external circumstances.<sup>385</sup>

Filmmaker Ronit Bezael documented changes to Cabrini-Green from the first major reconstruction efforts in the mid-1990s until the most recent high-rise destruction. From 1995 until 1999, Bezael documented the changes at Cabrini-Green from the perspective of residents, activists, and business owners for her 1999 documentary “Voices of Cabrini: Remaking Chicago’s Public Housing.” She profiled the residents’ fear that they were not as valuable to the city as the land they occupied and their efforts to get a voice in renovations, even when the city and CHA did not appear to welcome their input. Residents argued that they understood that several buildings at Cabrini were not fit

---

<sup>384</sup> Dawn Turner Trice, “New Views of City’s Old Public Housing High-Rises,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 21, 2013.

<sup>385</sup> Petty, *High Rise Stories*, 23-4.

to be lived in, but that the state of the CHA buildings was not a reason why they should have to be relocated from the neighborhood.<sup>386</sup>

YouTube emerged as a repository of professional and amateur documentaries about Cabrini. Most of these videos were made in response to the *Plan for Transformation*. Demolition and community took a center role in much of these works. These pieces focused on community as a way of going beyond the stories of violence. Residents of all ages expressed affection towards their community and fear that they would be cast out into the world without community support. Many of these stories were designed to challenge the most famous narrative that public housing trapped the poor African-Americans in buildings and communities that actively hurt residents even as the buildings became eyesores or sites of violence and disorder. Remembering public housing as a challenging environment that could foster a sense of community went along with the residents' experience in the courts and let public history serve as a tool for people to frame their own experiences in meaningful ways.

Those documenting Cabrini-Green, in concert with many who lived there, were convinced that without an active process of collecting the story of the place and the people who lived there it would be easy to forget that these buildings ever existed. When discussing her film on the final years of Cabrini-Green, "70 Acres in Chicago," Ronit Bezalel described the necessity of these works: "If the film doesn't get out now, the story will be lost. It will recede too far into people's memories."<sup>387</sup> The story told by these oral

---

<sup>386</sup> Ronit Bezalel, "Voices of Cabrini: Remaking Chicago's Public Housing." Available at <http://ronitfilms.com/films/voicesofcabrini.html>

<sup>387</sup> Mary Schmich, "A Lens into Cabrini-Green's Past," *Chicago Tribune*, August 16, 2015.

historians and documentarians challenged conceptions of public housing as a failure. To do this, they needed residents to tell their stories. Cabrini was an excellent place to document the various phases of public housing. Not only was it one of the most infamous projects, it had one of the most vocal community organizations. Whereas other major CHA developments were demolished with little fanfare, Cabrini residents pushed back, interjecting their view of a community too often ignored by the rest of the city except when sensational violence so associated with the name brought it to public discussion.

## V. Project Cabrini-Green

One of the largest, most visible efforts to remember Cabrini-Green took place before and during the demolition of the last high-rise. More than efforts to collect place through image and words, Project Cabrini-Green relied on the building's physical form and place in the skyline to commemorate the Cabrini-Green community and its home in the high-rises. Together professional artists and local school children invited the community and city at large to reconsider what Cabrini-Green meant to those who lived there and what its legacy meant for the city. In touting the need for this art program, the *Chicago Tribune* noted, "the [Project Cabrini-Green's] lights are a unique incentive to pause and look and learn before it's over."<sup>388</sup>

Creating art to express place requires the piece to speak to the site's history and people. Dolores Hayden describes good projects, writing, "The kind of public art that truly contributes to a sense of place needs to start with a new kind of relationship to the

---

<sup>388</sup> Mary Schmich, "Lights Blink, History Fades at Cabrini," *Chicago Tribune*, March 30, 2011.

people whose history is being represented.”<sup>389</sup> Operating under the belief that people from outside the neighborhood could not create a display that would adequately represent the neighborhood, Jan Tichy, artist and instructor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) and his partner, social worker Efrat Appel, designed a high-concept art piece based on the personal poetry of teenagers in Cabrini-Green. Over two hundred people from the SAIC, Cabrini Connections, Marwen Foundation, After School Matters, and ThaBrigade Stamps Cabrini-Green Marching Band participated in the project. Workshops encouraged local students to discuss their feelings about concepts of home, community, and public housing as a way to process their thoughts about Cabrini-Green. Each student wrote and recorded a poem describing their experiences that were converted into blinking light patterns displayed in the windows.

From March 28, 2011 to April 24, 2011, Tichy placed LED lights each of the 134 apartments of the last remaining high-rise at 1230 N. Burling Street. Project Cabrini-Green took advantage of the lengthy demolition period highlighting the continued existence of buildings so long maligned even as the community was relocated. This building had a unique life for a Cabrini-Green high-rise. Residents had managed 1230 N. Burling, which led many within the building to believe that high-rise public housing could succeed with proper funding and resident involvement in day-to-day operations. *Chicago Tribune* architecture critic Blair Kamin had pointed to the building and its residents’ management as a model of viable public housing that argued against the necessity of demolition.<sup>390</sup> Despite its storied history, the building was slated for

---

<sup>389</sup> Hayden, *The Power of Place*, 76.

<sup>390</sup> Blair Kamin, “Myth Must be Exploded,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 22, 1995.



demolition and its final residents had moved out in December 2010. The building was then stripped of all windows and most internal structures, leaving a bare concrete block. Yet the purpose of the piece was to mark the community, not just the building. Tichy and his students determined that the building needed to be filled rather than just serving as a site where images could be projected. The flickering of lights placed in each apartment was intended to give the viewers a false sense that there were still people in the complex. The blinking signified the conversations that happened between individuals in these apartments when the building was a home and not a ruin. Tichy told reporters that the project's purpose was a "chance for us to listen to what the kids have to say. A way to say, 'Let's stop and think about home.'"<sup>391</sup>

Every night LED lights marked the sky to claim a place within a city. As the building came down, spaces that the night before had been illuminated to represent the children who lived in those apartments went dark. The lights tracked the destruction of a community along with the physical destruction of the building that housed—but did not define—it. A student involved with the project stressed the importance of Cabrini voices in this project: "I didn't want to go at it from an outsider's point of view. We know all about the violence and the things the media talked about. But I wanted to get it from the peoples' opinions and what they thought about the destruction of the buildings and what Cabrini-Green actually was to them."<sup>392</sup> While most of public housing developments came down with little notice outside the community, Project Cabrini-Green ensured that

---

<sup>391</sup> Brian Costello, "As the Walls Came Down," *Chicago Reader*, March 24, 2011 <http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/cabrini-green-led-art-project/Content?oid=3475071>, accessed December 7, 2015.

<sup>392</sup> Brian Costello, "As the Walls Come Down," *Chicago Reader*, March 24, 2011.

1230 N. Burling made a statement. It marked another transition—albeit a brief one—of place in Cabrini-Green. ArtSlant called this project “the beginning of the last building’s transformation from neglected high-rise to high-art to rubble.”<sup>393</sup>

The nightly display brought people interested in taking part in the artistic experience to Cabrini-Green. Newspaper accounts hinted that those visiting the neighborhood frequently knew more about Project Cabrini-Green than people who had lived there. The reactions to the project revealed the difficulty of place-making. The lights brought out individuals who would have never visited the neighborhood when it was a housing project. The artistic display made the neighborhood into a safe space where individuals interested in high art could meet with residents to reflect on the meaning of place. Even the building form got a warm response from some viewers. One observer told a reporter, “I like the building. Its very modern, simple.”<sup>394</sup> But other visitors did not have such a positive reaction to the building or the lights. Some observers told Tichy that the lights reminded them of gunfire, perhaps pulling on the site’s history to contextualize the scene more than the artists intended.<sup>395</sup> As it was disappearing the physical form that had made Cabrini-Green a notorious place was redefined once again. No longer a landmark of policy failures, it was high-art and architectural achievement.

A simulcast of the lights was broadcast at Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago for the entire month the lights came down with the building. These viewers did not need

---

<sup>393</sup> Robert Farrell Roulo, “Poetics of Light,” ArtSlant, April 17, 2011, <http://www.artslant.com/chi/articles/show/22811?print=1>, accessed December 7, 2015.

<sup>394</sup> Mary Schmich, “Lights Blink, History Fades at Cabrini,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 30, 2011.

<sup>395</sup> Ruth Lopez, “The Lights Go Out on Cabrini-Green,” *Art Newspaper*, May 2011, pg. 4.

to travel to the neighborhood to see the display, which completed the transition in understanding of the Cabrini-Green high-rises from architectural space to artistic rendering. Artistic display, both at Cabrini-Green and the Museum of Contemporary Art, created a unique kind of memorial—one that could only attract reflection and reconsideration of place and form months after the last residents had moved out and as the final structure came down. From that distance the building’s shell, filled by light and poetry, served as the physical manifestation of the hope and disappointment associated with high-rise public housing. Cabrini was only seen as high art when it had largely been relegated to the past.

To preserve students and artists’ work after the final apartment was demolished Project Cabrini-Green continues as a webpage. The transition from physical structures to digital site once again refigured ideas about space that surround Cabrini-Green. Elizabeth Grosz argues that digital technologies have redefined modern living, writing, “Perhaps the most striking transformation effected by these technologies is the change in our perceptions of materiality, space, and information, which is bound directly or indirectly to affect how we understand architecture, habitation, and the built environment.”<sup>396</sup> Representing a world defined by three dimensions into a virtual world can obscure the boundaries between the two worlds.<sup>397</sup>

The viewer entered this representation of Cabrini-Green through a screen. This had significant consequences for how space could be represented. Screens, necessarily, took the multidimensionality of the physical world and flatten it with physical dimensions

---

<sup>396</sup> Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside*, 76.

<sup>397</sup> Mitchell, *City of Bits*, 20.

shifting from three to two. The building's image covered up entire screen. Creating an image that filled the screen allowed visitors to concentrate on the entire building, suspending disbelief about the difference between their space and the space represented on screen.<sup>398</sup> The screen also removed Cabrini-Green from its surrounding neighborhood. While onsite viewers received a false sense of place because it was the final high-rise at the time, internet viewers are not shown a building in an urban environment at all. In life, Cabrini-Green had been criticized for violating the human scale of desirable urban living. The buildings dominated the community's skyline. They could be overwhelming to view, as one former resident lamented that before the high-rises it was possible to see the sky.<sup>399</sup> The computer screen, however, changed the value of spatial dominance. The building's image dominated the computer screen, but because it did not command the same space a physical building could, this domination was not overwhelming to viewers.

As it existed on the web, Project Cabrini-Green relied on a duplication of the artistic display at 1230 N. Burling. The homepage presented a computer-generated image of the building covered with a blackness used to represent the night with select apartments blinking with the aid of computerized LED lights. As with the actual display, viewers remained outside the building. Online visitors could not control how close they get to the buildings, similar to viewers who were kept from the building by construction barricades. Unlike the real space nothing was shown outside of the physical building. The rest of the city existed somewhere else, but not here. The representation was an abstraction, not a building in a real environment.

---

<sup>398</sup> Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 96.

<sup>399</sup> Fuerst, *When Public Housing was Paradise*, 167.

Cabrini-Green's relationship to the city was changed in another way. Even if the building was no longer portrayed as part of urban space, the viewer was. Digital space could only exist within a range of other real spaces.<sup>400</sup> The building on Burling Street was confined to the screen, as was all the action within it. The viewer was at no risk for most of what insiders and outsiders have used to define Cabrini-Green—the violence, chaos, drugs, and gangs that took over the buildings. This was a pure place of memory. The conversation that Tichy and his students sought to inspire remains intact. But even that was misleading, as the building did not blink with students' poems, but with the website's repeating algorithm.

Project Cabrini-Green as an expansion of access to place exceeded the official place of high-rise buildings and the local community. The web provided people a representation of a landmark that no longer existed. This unlimited access to space was part of the Internet's power. William J. Mitchell argued that the Internet reconstitutes an individual's relation to space, writing, "structures of access and exclusion are reconstructed in entirely nonarchitectural terms (if we continue to define architecture as materially constructed form), and you enter and exit places not by physical travel, but by simply establishing and breaking logical linkages."<sup>401</sup> As the actual art display opened Cabrini-Green to people who would have never visited before, the Internet created access not limited by time of day, fears for personal safety, or other reasons that kept them at home. It reconstituted Cabrini-Green as a place of memory, somewhere to go no matter what is built over the public housing high-rises' former place in the city.

---

<sup>400</sup> Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside*, 24.

<sup>401</sup> Mitchell, *City of Bits*, 21.

Many observers considered Project Cabrini-Green a success at providing a sense of reflection on Cabrini-Green's role in people's lives that was missing from the official plans. A resident of the row houses reflected on the meaning of Project Cabrini-Green, saying, "I just think with this building and the children giving the whole community closure—which it hasn't had—when a building is scheduled for demolition is a wonderful thing."<sup>402</sup> She argued that this was even more important to this resident because it was the buildings, not the community, that was disappearing. Public art and public history were important tools for residents and the community to come to terms with place at Cabrini, with its history of violence and history of allowing residents to improve their lives, as it was being taken down. The belief was that there would not be another place like Cabrini-Green, but to make that happen many people needed a clearer understanding of what it had been.

## VI. Rehousing Cabrini Residents

When the *Plan for Transformation* was announced, Cabrini was operating at half capacity, housing around 1,800 families. A crucial part of redeveloping the neighborhood involved relocating residents—either temporarily or permanently—to allow for building demolition and new neighborhood construction. This process proved to be complicated. Developers involved with the 1995 redevelopment plans understood that residents would

---

<sup>402</sup> Quintana Woodridge, "Cabrini-Green Residents Say Goodbye," *Resident' Journal*, We the People Media, March 31, 2011, <http://wethepeoplemedia.org/cabrini-green-residents-say-goodbye>, accessed October 24, 2015.

not fully buy into efforts to renovate public housing until they saw their neighbors moving into better units and neighborhoods.<sup>403</sup>

Many who mourned the loss of public housing communities focused on the close relationships between tenants. According to one former public housing resident, “Poor people help poor people. They have no one else, so they know how to help each other get by.”<sup>404</sup> Significantly, many of the valuable connections for public housing residents involved interpersonal networks with private businesses and local charities and churches. These institutions were part of informal support networks that included credit arrangements with local businesses, personal relationships with teachers and administrators to support their children, and access to additional food and job supports. A 2004 study found that around 54 percent of public housing residents returned to their former communities to remain connected to their church, school, and business and personal relationships.<sup>405</sup>

Relocation was always going to be a primary metric to judge the success of the *Plan for Transformation*. The *Plan* aimed to improve the public housing stock and to place residents in buildings and neighborhoods that were better, less impoverished, and more connected to the rest of the city. In a multi-year study, researchers at the Urban Institute found that over the course of the *Plan* the number of public housing residents living in extremely distressed units with multiple hazards dropped from 75 percent in

---

<sup>403</sup> Flynn McRoberts, “High-Rise Plan May Be Tough Sell for Cabrini Residents,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 22, 1995.

<sup>404</sup> Sudhir Venkatesh and Isil Celimli, “Tearing Down the Community,” *Shelterforce Online*, Issue 138, November/December 2004. <http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/138.chicago.html>. accessed October 23, 2015.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

2001 to 25 percent in 2011.<sup>406</sup> The census tracts many residents moved to frequently had less poverty than the ones they left. Despite housing improvements, serious problems remained. A 2013 study found 31 percent of voucher users and 42 percent of people no longer receiving housing subsidies reported housing problems, compared with 6 percent for mixed-income housing and 17 percent for traditional public housing.<sup>407</sup> In addition, residents in the private housing market, either with or without vouchers, were hesitant to report issues for fear of eviction and lose of their housing support.

Some critics argued that most relocated residents had simply traded vertical ghettos for horizontal ones. These critics received a boost by the CHA's own metrics of success. The CHA designated areas with less than 23.5 percent poverty and less than 30 percent African-American as "opportunity areas" and provided mobility counselors to encourage families using housing vouchers to move to these areas.<sup>408</sup> A 2003 survey found that 97 percent of CHA families who moved to the private housing market using vouchers moved to areas with poverty levels and African-American residency percentages that did not qualify as opportunity areas.<sup>409</sup> The CHA wanted residents to move to more affluent, less African-American neighborhoods as part of their theory that placing public housing residents in communities with access to more public services would improve their outcomes. Despite official preference, many CHA residents

---

<sup>406</sup> Susan J. Popkin et al, "CHA Residents and the Plan for Transformation," Urban Institute, January 2013, pg. 3.

<sup>407</sup> Larry Byron et al, "An Improved Living Environment, But..." Urban Institute, January 2013, pg. 3.

<sup>408</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, "Revised CHA Leaseholder Housing Choice and Relocation Rights Contract," October 1, 1999, pg 21.

<sup>409</sup> Sudhir Venkatesh et al. "Chicago Public Housing Transformation: A Research Report" Center for Urban Research and Policy Working Paper, February 2004, pg. iii.



expressed a desire to live in middle-class African-American neighborhoods. However, since middle-class neighborhoods had limited vacancies, many public housing residents moved to African-American neighborhoods with high rates of poverty. This trend troubled many observers and in 2003 a combination of social agencies sued the CHA for re-segregating the city using vouchers.

Even if residents could not find significantly better housing, the conditions at public housing buildings were so bad that many considered any private unit a better alternative. Alexander Polikoff, a lawyer on the landmark *Gautreaux v. CHA*, argued that relocation and demolition should continue even if efforts to improve the relocation program failed. He did “not view even homelessness as a clearly greater evil” than living in Chicago public housing.<sup>410</sup> Getting people out of these buildings was so important that all other considerations were secondary. The *Plan for Transformation* seemed to support this view, as building demolition occurred before concrete plans for new construction were approved. The history of Chicago’s public housing appeared to demonstrate that the only way to fix the program was by doing the opposite of what had been done before.

The need to move into new units quickly to stay ahead of demolition proved stressful for many residents. According to one study, 62 percent of residents using a voucher left public housing after August 1, while 50 percent ended up moving after school started.<sup>411</sup> For those in family housing this disrupted their children’s education in addition to their home life. One woman reported that her move was so chaotic, she had to

---

<sup>410</sup> Harold Henderson, “Is Mixed-Income the Way?” *Chicago Reader*, December 15, 2006, pg. A26.

<sup>411</sup> Sudhir Venkatesh et al. “Chicago Public Housing Transformation: A Research Report” Center for Urban Research and Policy Working Paper, February 2004, pg. 14.

leave many personal items at a building scheduled to be demolished. She did not have enough time or money to rent a moving truck that could take all her possessions to her new unit. Amongst the things left behind was her wedding album, which the building manager allowed her to go back to locate after the building closed.<sup>412</sup>

Residents from units to be demolished were provided several options, they could move to another traditional public housing community, take a voucher to use in the private rental market, or exercise the right to return to available units in new mixed-income communities built in the footprint of their old community. One of the largest concerns with the right to return was the CHA's program to keep track of residents, which was complicated by the fact that many residents themselves did not know if they met all the qualifications. To qualify for right to return, residents had to be lease-compliant and in occupancy on October 1, 1999, and to maintain their residency through vouchers or occupancy in another public housing unit.

Residents frequently could not control when the CHA decided to clear their buildings. The schedule of demolition for individual buildings was announced to residents with a 120-day notice to vacate buildings on their front door. In the early days of the *Plan*, residents had to move quickly without access to resources since CHA relocation case managers had hundreds of families to help relocate. Residents could request specific public housing communities, but there was no guarantee that those communities would accept new resident applications. Adding to the problem of relocation, the CHA did not have a sufficient system in place to track residents, because the focus was on quick relocations. According to one advocate group leader,

---

<sup>412</sup> Petty, *High Rise Stories*, 39-41.

CHA has a history of vacating buildings first and figuring the rest out later, of demolishing first and figuring the rest out later. Once you move people away, and promise them they can come back, you will inevitably lose families. To relocate people years in advance of having a (financed) plan for what you are going to do poses unnecessary obstacles on them.<sup>413</sup>

Accompanying this sentiment was the fear that making public housing residents invisible by sending them to new communities would negatively impact their ability to return.

Cabrini-Green residents had first-hand experience that advocating for themselves with the CHA made it possible for them to get more public housing units and impact the distribution of units within the community. Without their voices, redevelopment would look different than what the CHA had agreed to in court.

As of 2010, 1,059 out of 1,770 families with rights to return to Cabrini still lived in CHA housing. Of that number, 45 percent used vouchers to rent in the private market, 35 percent lived in mixed-income public housing neighborhoods, and 20 percent resided in traditional CHA units. The CHA identified 444 original families living in mixed-income replacement housing where Cabrini Extension North had been located or in the row houses.<sup>414</sup> The right to return was not guaranteed. It could be revoked if residents violated the terms while living in other public housing communities or in the private market with vouchers. According to a 2011 CHA resident's update, 26 percent of former Cabrini residents had lost their right to return due to eviction, death, or not responding to CHA's efforts to maintain contact.<sup>415</sup> The larger question of necessary units and waitlist

---

<sup>413</sup> Lolly Bowean, "Waiting to Go Back Home," *Chicago Tribune*, September 19, 2013.

<sup>414</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, "The Plan for Transformation: An Update on Relocation," April 2011, pg. 16.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

became a source of controversy. In 2013, the CHA required every one of the almost 90,000 people on the waitlist to reconfirm their information. Over 47,000 people were dropped from the list when they did not respond to CHA's outreach. The CHA argued that shrinking the waitlist reduced costs associated with maintaining an extensive waitlist. Critics, however, noted that the outreach was done by phone and internet, and did not reach households that did not have constant access by these methods.<sup>416</sup>

The process of leaving Cabrini-Green and settling somewhere else in the neighborhood or in the city could be stressful for residents. One resident, who was able to find a home in the Cabrini row houses after an extended period of uncertainty and stress, described her ordeal: "I wouldn't wish this experience on no one, because it was very hard and it still is hard because I'm not where I want to be. But I'm still safe and I'm ok with it. But I wouldn't put this on my worst enemy."<sup>417</sup> The stress of finding a new unit, possibly in a new neighborhood, impacted people's relationship with public housing. While many found good solutions for their families, others were left waiting for the promised *Plan for Transformation* to be completed or disappeared off the CHA's radar.

## VII. Ten Year Project Plus Five Years

The *Plan for Transformation* represented nothing less than a complete reimagining of public housing in Chicago and a total reconstruction of neighborhoods

---

<sup>416</sup> Dennis Rodkin, "Why the CHA Dropped 47,000 Names from its Waiting List," *Chicago Magazine*, September 18, 2013, [www.chicagomag.com/Radar/Deal-Estate/September-2013/CHA-Drops-47000-Names-from-its-waiting-list/](http://www.chicagomag.com/Radar/Deal-Estate/September-2013/CHA-Drops-47000-Names-from-its-waiting-list/) accessed January 28, 2016.

<sup>417</sup> Muriel Clair, "The End of Cabrini Green," *McClatchy—Tribune Business News*, January 11, 2011, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/docview/835091121?pq-origsite=summon>, accessed December 1, 2015.

throughout the city. While successful at demolishing buildings, it was significantly less so at building new ones or rehabilitating designated ones. Every year the CHA revised down the number of completed units and subtly extended the necessary time frame to complete the *Plan*. The CHA pointed to dwindling federal funds, rising construction costs, and increasing numbers of private and public partners to manage as the primary causes of delay. In 2007, the CHA's CEO said, "If I could get my hands on a quick \$2 billion we could get this done in three or four years."<sup>418</sup> That year the CHA announced, seven years into the *Plan*, they had completed 2,270 public housing units. The need for units significantly outpaced this number since 15,000 families had permanent relocation rights and another were on waiting lists of 90,000 Chicago residents. The CHA requested and was granted an extension for the *Plan*, putting the new end date at 2015.

The new vision of public housing required significant interest and investment from the private market. To attract sufficient private developers, a project had to be profitable based on development design, unit size, and resident mixture. But the profit motive made developers sensitive to the overall market conditions. If they could not sell market-rate units at a price that made the overall project work, they would not bid on projects. Since developers frequently had to list market-rate units below comparable units in other Chicago neighborhoods to attract individuals and families to the neighborhood, these margins can be tight. The challenge is particularly acute in economic downturns when the need for affordable and public housing units rises while the demand for ownership of market-rate units fell. Without sufficient demand for market-rate units, the rest of the project was seldom attractive to developers.

---

<sup>418</sup> Susan Sualny, "At Housing Project, Both Fear and Renewal," *New York Times*, March 18, 2007.

Economic slowdown in the mid-2000s and the 2008 housing crash halted market rate construction that provided the basis for construction of affordable and public housing units. This trend supported observers' suggestions that CHA would require an additional 10 years beyond the 2015 deadline to fully reach the original goal of the *Plan for Transformation*.<sup>419</sup> Empty lots littered Chicago in the footprints of buildings torn down but where private developers expressed little interest in building or stopped construction in the wake of a weak housing market. These delays meant that residents had to wait longer for public housing units and the projects did not generate returns attractive enough for more developers to get into the mixed-income market. The housing crisis also impacted the rental market for affordable housing with 40 percent of families who lost their homes during the recession becoming renters.<sup>420</sup>

The delay in public housing units happened at the same time Chicago and the larger region saw a nearly 70 percent increase in new renters with households that made less than 50 percent of the area median income. In 2007, demand for affordable units outpaced supply by 109,617 units. By 2011, that number expanded to 118,334. Suburban Cook County also saw its deficiency between need and supply increase by 25 percent.<sup>421</sup> One of the major critiques of relying on the private housing market to supply public housing units was that the private market would not serve as a countercyclical corrective

---

<sup>419</sup> Lolly Bowean, "At Lathrop Homes, CHA's Talk of Transformation Brings Worry," *Chicago Tribune*, January 8, 2012.

<sup>420</sup> Ben Austen, "The Death and Life of Chicago," *The New York Times Magazine*, May 29, 2013, [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/02/magazine/how-chicagos-housing-crisis-ignited-a-new-form-of-activism.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/02/magazine/how-chicagos-housing-crisis-ignited-a-new-form-of-activism.html?_r=0). accessed November 14, 2015.

<sup>421</sup> Institute for Housing Studies, "The State of Rental Housing in Cook County," DePaul University, 2013, pgs. 11, 17.

to the market. The original public housing projects had been constructed during the Great Depression. The Great Recession, however, did not witness the same effort to build housing for low-income families, and it is unlikely that future economic downturns will lead to increases in the public housing stock.

One of the major areas of contention with the right to return were the requirements put on public housing residents living in mixed-income neighborhoods. The Minimum Tenant Selection Plan required residents to be current in rent and utilities, no bankruptcy or debt to public housing for two years, 30 hours of work per week for every family member over 18, three year criminal and drug violation background check, and educational enrollment for all children ages 6 to 16.<sup>422</sup> These requirements were designed to return public housing to its original model—serving as a step up for low-income families already in the process of improving their economic and social position. These requirements would also select public housing tenants who were closer to middle class norms that these communities sought to promote.

The shift toward providing housing for upwardly mobile families also carried the risk of an increased burden on the families who were provided housing as the CHA expanded its mission in the 1970s and 1980s. Known as the “hardest to house,” these residents were frequently too poor, too large, or unable to achieve sufficient independence to find adequate housing in the private market even with vouchers. Housing advocates saw their exclusion as a potential pitfall of the new approach to public housing. Critics feared the new regulations were too strict and would force those families

---

<sup>422</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, “Minimum Tenant Selection Plan for Mixed-Income/Mixed Finance Communities (MTSP).” Available at [www.thecha.org/about/plans-reports-and-policies](http://www.thecha.org/about/plans-reports-and-policies)

who were the hardest to house—and, by definition, the ones that the private market would not provide adequate housing—to fend for themselves. Studies in 2003 and 2005 found that these families and individuals were frequently unable to relocate and continued to live in public housing buildings that continued to deteriorate under their feet as any maintenance efforts had ceased years prior.<sup>423</sup>

The right to return was not solely a matter of meeting the requirements, it was shaped by the ways residents felt about their neighborhood's future. While many former Cabrini-Green residents wanted to remain in their community, others were unhappy with how their neighborhood had changed. Some reported that they felt like guests in their own neighborhood when living in a mixed-income development.<sup>424</sup> The idea that the demolition of Cabrini was a land grab by wealthy, white Chicago with CHA's help shifted into a belief that market rate owners and renters would push for neighborhood changes, making it impossible for public housing residents to live there long-term.

Perhaps no one factor has influenced residents' feelings about their likelihood of return more than time. As late as 2015, some areas of Cabrini only had tentative plans announced for future construction, let alone occupation. Alderman Walter Burnett described the impact of the extended timeframe, saying, "Nineteen years. A lot of people have been living in limbo. They never thought they'd be gone for that long."<sup>425</sup> Many residents simply could not wait for public housing units to be built and needed to recreate

---

<sup>423</sup> Susan J. Popkin et al, "CHA Residents and the Plan for Transformation," Urban Institute, January 2013, pg. 2.

<sup>424</sup> Angela Caputo, "Rootless," *Chicago Reporter*, November 1, 2012 [chicagoreporter.com/rootless](http://chicagoreporter.com/rootless) accessed December 19, 2016.

<sup>425</sup> Mary Schmich, "Plausible Plan for Cabrini-Green," *Chicago Tribune*, April 24, 2015.



their lives in other neighborhoods or other cities. Others feared that the longer the redevelopment process took, the more likely that the CHA would lose residents. Elizabeth Rosenthal, a lawyer who represented the Cabrini LAC, argued that the CHA did not have a solid handle on who lived in the row houses to adequately offer available units: “They’ve been losing track of people really regularly. It’s concerning. Their numbers are shockingly low.”<sup>426</sup> Critics argued that people were pushed off lists for the right to return because of technicalities that had not been adequately explained to tenants. They also accused the CHA of pressuring people to accept housing in new communities either with vouchers or by their own initiative. By 2013, the CHA listed the outstanding need for right to return at 1,248. The CHA said that 7,200—almost half their 2007 list—were removed due to death, eviction, or voluntary exit.<sup>427</sup>

For residents who could relocate inside Cabrini’s former boundaries, tensions between market-rate residents and public housing residents became a factor of daily life. One resident described their decision not to live in a mixed-income neighborhood, “They have all these rules and regulations and stuff, so you’re like on pins and needles with everything.”<sup>428</sup> Public housing residents were subject to strict guidelines for behavior and home maintenance. Some complained that they would be reported for minor problems like parties at their homes while market rate residents were not subjected to the same

---

<sup>426</sup> Mina Bloom, “Future of Cabrini-Green Rowhouses May Be Settled After 19 Years in Limbo,” *DNAInfo Chicago*, September 11, 2015, <http://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20150911/old-town/future-of-cabrini-green-rowhouses-may-be-settled-after-19-years-limbo> accessed December 1, 2015.

<sup>427</sup> Lolly Bowean, “Waiting to Go Back Home,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 19, 2013.

<sup>428</sup> University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration and Case Western Reserve University Mandel School of Applied Social Science, “Why Do So Few Residents Return to Mixed-Income Developments?” Mixed-Income Development Study, Brief #6, February 2012, pg. 5.

limitations on noise or alcohol consumption. Being subjected to extra rules in the community heightened divisions, making public housing residents a different class of resident, even as the purpose of mixed-income housing was to create a unified community that transcended issues like class and race.

Efforts to establish a unified community developed over time. The Near North Unity Program (NNUP) was founded in 2010 to crossing racial and economic divisions with the goal of creating a more united neighborhood. Alderman Walter Burnett initially approached Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Chicago and the MacArthur Foundation in hopes of decreasing tensions between long-term residents who were finding their neighborhood “discovered” by a new collection of urban homebuyers and residents who had their own ideas of what the neighborhood should be, including how residents should act.<sup>429</sup> The key to solving this disconnect was to facilitate communication across racial, economic, and generational divides. To accomplish this, NNUP organized monthly community meetings and fostered projects based on volunteerism and building up the community’s resources. The group’s purpose was to create projects that connect local existing sub-communities into a resilient community.<sup>430</sup>

Despite the reduction in limited physical public housing stock managed by the CHA, demand for public housing units and vouchers remains strong in Chicago. Over 282,000 families entered their names in the CHA’s lottery to be added to the waitlists for vouchers and hard units during the four weeks it was open in 2015. That number

---

<sup>429</sup> John McCarron, “Near North Unity Soars...For Now,” LISC Chicago, November 7, 2013 <http://www.lisc-chicago.org/news/2544>, accessed November 30, 2015.

<sup>430</sup> coNNect, “About the New North Unity Program,” <http://www.connectnearth.org/About-Us6/About-the-Near-North-Unity-Project.html>, accessed November 30, 2015.

represented an estimated half of the city's low-income population. The CHA had also made a concerted effort to get the homeless population to register, receiving applications from 15,900 individuals.<sup>431</sup> The need, however, remained overwhelming and the resources limited, as these entries were for the wait list lottery, not the units themselves.

## VIII. Conclusion

The period of demolition brought residents' voices to the forefront of discussions about Cabrini's history and its meaning. This was in part a sense that the neighborhood was passing into history and should be marked in some way. But it was also a product of Cabrini-Green activists demanding a say in how their community was remembered and a place at the table to design the neighborhood's future. Their stories balanced the negative aspects of daily life, so frequently splashed on the front page of Chicago papers, with a necessary corrective that Cabrini was a home to many individuals and families. It was the source of their community and their understanding of how the world worked. Michael McClarin, representative of Cabrini-Green's Local Advisory Council, recited a poem at the demolition of the last high-rise: "Cabrini, down, but not out./ It's not just a building. It's not a place. It's a feeling./ Now that's just the way I feel. It taught me what was real.../"<sup>432</sup> With their homes at Cabrini demolished, these residents required new homes, and many hoped they would be in the neighborhood they knew so well.

---

<sup>431</sup> CHA Press Release. "CHA Waitlist Lottery Officially Closes as More than 282,000 Households Register for Affordable Housing," November 25, 2014. [www.thecha.org](http://www.thecha.org), accessed November 12, 2015.

<sup>432</sup> Maudlyne Ihejirika, "Cabrini Green's Last Stand," *Chicago Sun-Times*, October 24, 2010. <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/resources/doc/nb/news/13310E5435621B70?p=AWNB>, accessed December 2, 2015.

Even with the efforts to commemorate Cabrini, the *Plan for Transformation* marked a new age in the Near North Side. As of the summer of 2015, the only evidence remaining from the high rises are the empty lots that broke up the Near North Side. As one of the most desirable and dense areas of the city, it was difficult to conceive of vacant land that was not a product of mass demolition of undesirable public housing.<sup>433</sup> The key to success for the *Plan for Transformation* and its future as a model for public housing nationwide would not solely be measured in buildings torn down. What mattered was the CHA's ability to replace these units with mixed-income neighborhoods that instilled and rewarded a middle-class ethic. But when the buildings came down many of the plans about what came next had not been created. This next step was crucial for all parties.

---

<sup>433</sup> Tara Garcia Mathewson, "The Search for Affordable Housing in Chicago," *Equal Voice*, April 29, 2015. <http://www.equalvoiceforfamilies.org/the-search-for-affordable-housing-in-chicago>. accessed October 22, 2015.

## CHAPTER 6

### BUILDING A NEW PLACE

The *Plan for Transformation* was one of the largest civic overhauls in a city famous for them. Part of the *Plan* involved understanding public housing's past failures. The causes of these failures were numerous—architectural and neighborhood design, racial and economic segregation, and tenant management and screening. In their book on early mixed-income public housing, Robert J. Chaskin and Mark L. Joseph described recent Chicago history: “The story of the *Plan for Transformation* is fundamentally the story of a city coming to grips with a legacy of urban exclusion and inequality that had reached an unsustainable level.”<sup>434</sup> The new communities prioritized economic integration through a diverse neighborhood population and spatial integration by breaking apart superblocks to return them to the Chicago's street grid. While the primary emphasis was on income diversity, it also included racial integration. During their final decade, Chicago high-rises had a population that was almost completely African American. The mixed-income neighborhoods would not be so homogeneous. If successful, the total economic, racial, and spatial integration would mark a change in the history of Chicago's neighborhoods, which were famous for strict divisions between them.

The *Plan for Transformation* established broad neighborhood criteria leaving detailed plans to be completed as parcels of land were allotted to private development companies. This process encouraged continued interest from various actors in Cabrini-Green's future. Real estate developers and potential renters and buyers envisioned a future neighborhood that connected better with the Near North Side based on

---

<sup>434</sup> Chaskin and Joseph, *Integrating the Inner City*, 71.

architectural design, access to the Loop and neighborhood amenities, and appealing restaurants and retail spaces. CHA residents, housing advocates, and community service organizations pushed for future developments that included as many public housing units as possible to ensure the neighborhood's long-term residents benefitted from new neighborhood investment. These goals were not inherently in conflict, but disagreements about the neighborhood's future continued to emerge as each new plan was announced. At the heart of tensions over Cabrini was how much of a break from the neighborhood's past, including its former residents, to seek and how much emphasis should be placed on preserving a space for public housing and its residents' voices.

### I. Challenges of a New Neighborhood

The demolition of Cabrini-Green's high-rises provided a blank template upon which to build the future. Approximately 70 acres of Cabrini land plus additional lots along the periphery offered a unique opportunity to create a wholly new, massive neighborhood. In making the decision about mixed-income housing added to debate as not all stakeholders agreed on what demographic balance would make new developments successful. The CHA's mixed-income communities shifted the authority's mission away from providing public housing to a broader goal of supporting economically and racially diverse communities. Mixed-income housing developments were as much about urban revitalization as they were about poverty deconcentration.<sup>435</sup> Debates about what Cabrini should be and who it should serve marked the development for most of the 2010s.

---

<sup>435</sup> Chaskin and Joseph, *Integrating the Inner City*, 23.

At the heart of the debate about what type of neighborhoods CHA areas should become was the city's political environment. The first decision, to tear down the buildings, was a reaction to national politics that did not support the program in its current form and city residents who did not want these units to define their city. A reporter focusing on public housing described the political pressure behind the demolition of CHA high-rises: "half the people in the city wanting to tear the buildings down because they thought the residents were welfare queens living in high-rise palaces, and the other half of the city wanting to tear the buildings down because they felt the residents were incarcerated victims oppressed by a cruel government bureaucracy."<sup>436</sup> But the same consensus that allowed the CHA to demolish 18,000 units citywide in the first decade of the *Plan* was not matched in the incentives to build new ones. By 2015, sixteen years after it started—and six years after the first end date and one after the extended deadline—the CHA has completed 22,874 units with an additional 1,028 scheduled for 2016, bringing the total to 96 percent of the original 25,000 units.<sup>437</sup>

Part of the challenge in selling the CHA's plan to residents was the reality that many who stayed at Cabrini-Green until the final high-rise came down did not think it was a complete failure. Even though the process had taken almost a decade, they felt a connection to the neighborhood and to the people who lived in Cabrini. A father who saw his responsibility to young residents as changing their perception of Cabrini, said, "I lived in Cabrini-Green. Was it good and bad? Yes, but I'm what's good that came out of it."

---

<sup>436</sup> Ethan Michaeli on "Chicago Newsroom," *CAN TV*, September 27, 2012, <http://chicagonewsroom.org/2012/09/28/cn-september-27-2012/>, accessed March 12, 2016.

<sup>437</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, "Proposed FY2016 Moving to Work Annual Plan," October 16, 2015, pg. 7.

Can you take Cabrini from the people? No, because it was already built inside them.”<sup>438</sup> Cabrini residents were famous for organizing to put forth their own plans and challenge the CHA’s plan for their community. This organizing would not stop after the *Plan* was announced. While they were familiar with many of the major issues the *Plan* detailed—physical decay, crime and drugs, and community decline—they were resistant to many of the CHA’s solutions. They feared that the consequences of displacement and relocation could cause them further harm. Decades of dealing with CHA decision-making did not encourage them to see the CHA as a tool to mitigate these potential harms.<sup>439</sup> The belief that residents had to be advocates for themselves and their community encouraged many to remain aware of CHA plans to ensure they could push for more public housing and greater input in their communities.

One of the major sticking points was the fact that renovations included fewer hard units, which translated into less public housing units, than the neighborhood had previously supported. As of 2015, the ten-year plan for Cabrini reimagined the neighborhood with between 2,330 and 2,830 new housing units spread over 49.5 acres. At its most expansive, Cabrini-Green contained 3,607 public housing units that housed 15,000 people. This transition to fewer hard units in the same area matched the *Plan for Transformation*, as the CHA plan purposely demolished more units than it would rehab or replace. The CHA maintained that it would build enough units to accommodate leaseholders and that the lesser number of units was required to ensure that public housing

---

<sup>438</sup> Meg Anderson, “Searching for Cabrini-Green,” *Social Justice News Nexus*, May 28, 2015, <http://sjnnchicago.org/searching-for-cabrini-green/>, accessed February 8, 2016.

<sup>439</sup> Goetz, *New Deal Ruins*, 87.



standards would not deteriorate in the future.<sup>440</sup> Concern about the number of units was often tied to the fact that the CHA had a considerable wait list. For critics, the fewer public housing units risked exacerbating the already substantial need for such units.

The early rebuilding process at Cabrini-Green established some of the long-term challenges projects like this face. Not only were developers attempting to build new homes, they wanted to create a new community. A developer described the process of building a mixed-income community, saying, “We’re really trying to build a brand-new community here, and it’s more than just bricks and mortar. We’re putting a lot of energy into the people part.”<sup>441</sup> This represented the major challenge of the *Plan for Transformation*. At its heart, the “people part” involved creating a sense of connection and community between groups of people divided by classic Chicago divisions like race and class, but also by the rules they had to live by and the way their groups used public spaces and organized their home life.

One of the *Plan*’s key assumptions was that good building and community design could positively impact residents’ daily lives. This belief developed, in part, from the success of New Urbanism in shifting views on how neighborhoods should be designed with a focus on walkability and human scale. Historian Lawrence Vale described the application of New Urbanism as a two-part social experiment defined by a “nostalgia-riddled effort that mimicked a pre-modernist urbanism.”<sup>442</sup> Few critics denied that the

---

<sup>440</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, *Plan for Transformation*, 2.

<sup>441</sup> Robert Sharoff, “In Chicago, An Attempt to Upgrade a Neighborhood,” *New York Times*, September 10, 2000.

<sup>442</sup> Vale, “Public Housing in the United States,” in *Policy, Planning, and People*, 285.

physical structures would improve; they worried that communities could not be created from this template. Could a close-knit community emerge despite significant variations in income, race, age, and family size? Research on ten early mixed-income developments in Chicago reported improvement to physical environment and building design but often found that these improvements failed to translate into increased neighbor interaction that led to tangible benefits or feelings of community.<sup>443</sup>

A second concern, raised by housing advocates, was what happened to public housing or affordable housing residents in the long-term. Agreements between the CHA and building developers often had time limits attached to subsidized units. But it was unclear if units subsidized could be successful enough to remain in the community once the established time expired. Jewish Council on Urban Affairs Executive Director Jane Ramsey claimed: “There is not one successful example of public housing mixed with affluent communities as city policy, only a policy of creating mixed-income communities where a portion of lower-income housing has been converted.”<sup>444</sup> The long-term future of mixed-income neighborhoods was especially a concern because the city was placing so much reliance on using mixed-income housing as a means to bring middle-class families to the city to increase its tax base.

Despite these concerns, the CHA espoused a mixed-income housing plan and selected a resident mix for developments based on what sounded like a good metric to achieve their goal of poverty deconstruction. The target proportions, frequently referred

---

<sup>443</sup> Joseph and Chaskin, “Living in a Mixed-Income Development,” *Urban Studies* 47, no 11 (October 2010): 2360.

<sup>444</sup> Joe Ruklick, “Housing Advocates Demand Answers from CHA,” *Chicago Defender*, October 22, 2002.

to as 1/3-1/3-1/3 model, perhaps had a simple, intuitive sense, but they were not selected because of substantial social science research on the matter. Rather, the division was a “giant experiment” in real time about what could work. Nor were the proportions strictly enforced; they were a general guideline. A 2012 investigation found that the CHA was not achieving this proscribed mixture at many sites. At many locations, the divisions leaned towards one income level while in others certain income levels were missing entirely.<sup>445</sup> The CHA argued that the variation was intentional and represented careful observation of community needs. Critics responded that variations made it harder to deliver the mix of units promised in the *Plan for Transformation*. The fear in that was that subsidized housing would be sacrificed in order to create marketable communities.

The major concern for long-term success with many mixed-income neighborhoods was market-rate housing. In areas like Cabrini-Green, where the surrounding real estate market was already strong, the fear of many residents and CHA critics was that market rate developers and buyers would pressure the CHA to tilt the neighborhood’s balance towards the market, over time turning affordable and public housing units into market ones. Those skeptical of mixed-income housing often saw developers as overly concerned with market units, constructing high value units in favor of more modest units that current neighborhood residents could afford. A critical activist with the African American Contractors Association, described the struggles of mixed-income housing, saying, “Mixed income housing is not working in the city of Chicago because these five and seven and eight hundred thousand dollar condos, they’re just not

---

<sup>445</sup> Natalie Moore, “CHA Not Living Up to Promises of Mixed-Income Housing,” *WBEZ 91.5*, September 21, 2012, <https://www.wbez.org/shows/wbez-news/cha-not-living-up-to-promises-of-mixedincome-housing/f57e9a04-c140-48c6-b85b-44a3d1aef9fe>, accessed March 12, 2016.

worth that.”<sup>446</sup> To these critics, too much emphasis was placed on how much money could be made from market rate units and not enough concern for current residents’ fears of displacement. In addition, critics highlighted the assumption of these mixed-income developments, namely that they could attract people who could afford expensive condos and had options of where to live around the city. Profit motive caused developers to aim for high-value units even if there was no evidence that the community could support them. Living close to residents in poverty was not an experience traditionally associated with high property values. It was unclear why market-rate units would grow in value in mixed-income neighborhoods without demographic shifts.

According to another model, mixed-income housing areas should not include market rate housing. In this “narrow mix” version, most of these units would be offered to traditional public housing residents with remaining units serving as affordable housing for working poor residents. The reason for this mix was that less variation in income and social status would allow a viable community to be established in ways traditional mixed income would not. Lawrence Vale explained the critique of mixed-income neighborhoods within the “narrow mix” version: “We’ve lumped all of these mixed income experiments together without asking the tougher question. What kind of financial mix is needed to attract developers? What kind of social mix will create viable communities? What mix is politically necessary to satisfy all the constituencies that have to buy into these places?”<sup>447</sup> Cabrini-Green has a wide constituency because demand

---

<sup>446</sup> Caroline O’Donovan, “Target Replaces and Remakes Old Chicago Housing Project,” *Marketplace*, October 19, 2012, <http://www.marketplace.org/2012/10/19/wealth-poverty/target-replaces-and-remakes-old-chicago-housing-project>, accessed March 4, 2016.

<sup>447</sup> Blair Kamin, “Open Housing Questions Dog Lathrop Rehab,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 21, 2016.

existed with the private market and public housing residents, but it was unclear how both could be satisfied.

Besides the emphasis on mixed-income communities and New Urbanist design, the *Plan Forward* in 2013 added that public housing should be sustainable. The City of Chicago had made sustainable development a significant part of city planning in 2011 with the “Adding Green to Urban Design” plan that used various metrics to incorporate the best use of natural resources in building construction. For public housing buildings, the metric was Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. For Cabrini-Green, the CHA sought to create a neighborhood that achieved LEED for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) status. This standard “emphasizes the creation of compact, walkable, vibrant, mixed-use neighborhoods with good connections to nearby communities.”<sup>448</sup> The CHA adapted the certification’s language, using terms like “walkable,” “connected,” and “vibrant,” in the resulting planning efforts.<sup>449</sup>

The debate surrounding what should be built at Cabrini and who should determine its success continues into 2016, even as many buildings have been constructed and new plans have been released. These plans often followed models for high-rise development in other Chicago neighborhoods or low-rise developments designed specifically to avoid the failures of public housing. But underneath the public plans was the possibility that

---

<sup>448</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, “Cabrini-Green Development Zone Plan Update,” CHA Brochure, April 2015.

<sup>449</sup> City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development on Behalf of Chicago Housing Authority, “Request for Proposals (“RFP”) for Three Cabrini-Green Development Parcels,” December 31, 2015, pg. 10.

these developments might not be as successful long-term as designers and planners hoped. An editorial in *Architect* presented the future of places like Cabrini-Green as,

The new Cabrini-Green plan follows the received wisdom for remediation of American cities these days: complex public-private partnerships instead of top-down government-led initiatives, a restored street grid instead of Corbusian megablocks, and proximity to parks and transit instead of isolation behind the barricade of an interstate highway. Add to all that a careful mix of densities, uses, and incomes, Social scientists continue to debate the merits of this planning strategy, but time will tell on the ground. Build the place, let it set for a decade or two, and we might just have ourselves a sustainable neighborhood.<sup>450</sup>

This concern mirrored the hopes and fears of midcentury housing advocates when public high-rise neighborhoods first went up. Then as now, architectural theory appeared to support the desires of policymakers to create a distinct environment to answer specific housing needs. The need for a new plan for public housing and the popular government incentive to bring middle class residents to the city ensured that mixed-income communities would be part of Cabrini's near future. Everyone from developers to public housing residents, however, hoped that these models would prove more successful and be a greater asset for the neighborhood than public housing had been.

The most important—and perhaps difficult—questions in the debate around Cabrini-Green were fundamental questions about what makes a neighborhood and who determines what makes it successful. All the actors at Cabrini—from the city and the CHA to real estate developers and new residents to public housing residents—had a different definition of what actions and projects would make the new Cabrini work. Some of the criteria were easily agreed upon: clean, safe housing and accessible amenities. The most controversial aspect of these plans remained who the neighborhood should serve.

---

<sup>450</sup> Ned Cramer, "A Different Kind of Hero, *Architect*, July 14, 2015, [http://www.architectmagazine.com/design/editorial/a-different-kind-of-hero\\_o](http://www.architectmagazine.com/design/editorial/a-different-kind-of-hero_o), accessed March 7, 2016.

As the demolition faded into the past, old questions about land values and development potential competed with public and affordable housing advocates, CHA plans, and federal court orders. Since the CHA was committed to mixed-income housing and public-private developments, conflict over the speed and nature of rebuilding continued to be a significant part of life at Cabrini.

## II. Cabrini-Green After the *Plan*

New developments began appearing on Cabrini-Green's periphery in the mid-1990s, as developers saw the expansion of the Gold Coast and Lincoln Park as opportunities to draw more people to the Near North Side. This transformation advanced when the CHA issued the *Plan for Transformation*. At this point, the goal went beyond improving housing options to creating an entire neighborhood, almost from scratch. A Department of Planning and Zoning official describes this process, "It's not just about housing—it's about creating a neighborhood, with parks, schools, police, and fire. You have to have those elements in place first."<sup>451</sup>

One of the first signs of revitalization occurred in the lands around Cabrini-Green. For many developers, the land at Cabrini-Green represented the last readily available land to develop around the Loop. Major developments predate the elimination of the towers. The first mixed-income neighborhood opened in 1996. Mohawk North, built on city-owned land, included single-family homes, townhomes, condos, and apartments. Totaling

---

<sup>451</sup> Alison Rice, "Chicago Hope," *Builder*, June 5, 2003, [http://www.builderonline.com/land/development/chicago-hope\\_o](http://www.builderonline.com/land/development/chicago-hope_o), accessed March 7, 2016.

92 units, 20 percent were reserved for CHA housing.<sup>452</sup> In the early 2000s, new developments—North Town Village, Parkside of Old Town, Renaissance North, Old Town Square, Domain Lofts, Orchard Park, Old Town Village East and West, and River Village North, South, and Point—opened the neighborhood to more housing units. The development sizes ranged from 54 to almost 400 units with a variety of housing options, including apartments, townhomes, condos, and single-family homes.

To attract market rate residents, developments needed to have attractive facilities and amenities—a similar strategy employed by suburban developers to encourage residents to buy in their community. Architecture was an important way developments tried to set themselves apart. North Town Village, a seven-acre site with 261 housing units, was praised for its design during construction in 2000. Each building was designed to mirror the neighborhood’s historic architecture rather than the bare aesthetics of public housing. The buildings, capped at seven stories, would have limestone accents on the façade and were topped with turrets for architectural diversity.<sup>453</sup> Other complexes presented the natural environment as a selling point. River Village’s three communities—North, South, and Point—boasted of a new river walk to go with landscaped yards and private roof decks.<sup>454</sup>

The early mixed-income developments frequently had unique features that set them apart from CHA public housing and later developments. Continued developer

---

<sup>452</sup> Metropolitan Planning Council Report, “Mixed-Income Communities in Chicago,” Written by Robin Snyderman, May 25, 2004, [www.metroplanning.org/news/3209/Mixed-Income-Communities-in-Chicago-New-Attractive-Housing-in-Great-Locations](http://www.metroplanning.org/news/3209/Mixed-Income-Communities-in-Chicago-New-Attractive-Housing-in-Great-Locations), accessed January 22, 2016.

<sup>453</sup> John Handley, “Moving to Cabrini,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 12, 2000.

<sup>454</sup> Metropolitan Planning Council Report, “Mixed-Income Communities in Chicago,” May 25, 2004.



ownership provided available units while ensuring active management maintained these units and properties. MCL, which first entered the Cabrini market with Mohawk North, maintained ownership of their mixed-income communities so that they could select the public housing tenants in their developments. The company was proud that they guaranteed 20 percent of units to public housing residents before the CHA required separate allotments, but managers felt that the CHA had not proven itself to be a good tenant manager and reserves that role for the company.<sup>455</sup>

For many real estate developers and local officials, the hope was that mixed-income housing could demonstrate the community's value. Some placed these new developments in relation to the history of the Near North Side. The area of Cabrini-Green was infamous for a quick variety of immigrant communities before it became a housing project. Commissioner of Housing praised the mixed-income model, saying, "People are not afraid to move into a mixed area. The North Side always was a melting pot with different nationalities."<sup>456</sup> Early results at Mohawk North encouraged city officials and real estate developers that the Cabrini area could succeed. Mohawk North was labeled a success within a year, because the market rate units were selling at a profit.<sup>457</sup>

The construction process was underway during a change of leadership in city hall with the 2011 election of Mayor Rahm Emanuel. In 2013, the CHA officially moved on from the *Plan for Transformation* with the *Plan Forward: Communities That Work*. This

---

<sup>455</sup> Alison Rice, "Chicago Hope," *Builder*, June 5, 2003.

<sup>456</sup> John Handley, "Moving to Cabrini," *Chicago Tribune*, August 12, 2000.

<sup>457</sup> Steve Kerch, "Best of Chicago Needs Diverse Eye for Full Expression," *Chicago Tribune*, June 6, 1999.

new plan came from the mayor's new leadership team that created a new vision for the CHA that stressed the need for housing to be interconnected to other services in order for residents to be successful in improving their daily lives. The mission was "to leverage the power of affordable, decent, safe, and stable housing to help communities thrive and low-income families increase their potential for long-term economic success and a sustained quality of life."<sup>458</sup> *Plan Forward* had three goals: to reimagine the final phase of the *Plan for Transformation*, to ensure all CHA housing is safe, decent, and sustainable, and to extend targeted services to more residents at critical times.

Construction accelerated as the towers came down. A 2014 survey found at least 571 new residences under construction in the approximately 10 square blocks bounded by Chicago Avenue, Franklin Street, Hobbie Street, and the Chicago River.<sup>459</sup> This count did not include much of the Cabrini's land, since the CHA had not put out requests for proposals. Construction continued while the CHA finalized their redevelopment plans. The CHA reported in 2015 that 434 new mixed-income public housing units were occupied since the *Plan* started and an additional 62 were scheduled to be available by the end of 2015 (out of the minimum 700 units mandated in the Consent Decree from 2000). For affordable housing, those numbers were 180 completed and occupied and an additional 62 to be completed by year's end (out of 270 minimum).<sup>460</sup> According to the

---

<sup>458</sup> Urban Works Ltd, "Cabrini-Green Community Redevelopment Planning Open House #1," CHA, February 3, 2014, pg. 4 [http://www.thecha.org/assets/1/6/Cabrini\\_Community\\_House\\_booklet\\_02.03.14\\_reprint.pdf](http://www.thecha.org/assets/1/6/Cabrini_Community_House_booklet_02.03.14_reprint.pdf), accessed March 3, 2016.

<sup>459</sup> Micah Maidenberg, "Seeking Room to Build, Developers Push Close to Cabrini-Green," *Crain's Chicago Business*, October 11, 2014, <http://www.chicagobusiness.com/article/20141011/ISSUE01/310119983/seeking-room-to-build-developers-push-close-to-cabrini-green>, accessed February 12, 2016.

<sup>460</sup> City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development on Behalf of Chicago Housing Authority, "Request for Proposals ("RFP") for Three Cabrini-Green Development Parcels," December 31, 2015, pg. 8.

CHA, 15 properties on the Near North Side had units for CHA residents. Four of them—Frances Cabrini Homes, Larrabee, Old Town Village West, and Parkside of Old Town—were in the Cabrini-Green footprint. Two developments had open registration while the rest were closed. Both open developments targeted senior citizens.<sup>461</sup>

The destruction of Cabrini-Green provided an opportunity to create developments that would appeal to people who would previously never have considered the area. In selling these buildings, developers and property managers stressed the neighborhood's possibilities. Holsten, a major developer at Cabrini and in the city, advertised their building, Larrabee Place at Parkside of Old Town, as giving residents the ability to “enjoy the comforts and convenience of living in one of the city’s most popular neighborhoods.”<sup>462</sup> In another, North Town Village, they offer residents the ability to be in “the center of everything” and list proximity to shopping, restaurants, theaters, parks, and easy access to the Loop via the Red Line as incentives.<sup>463</sup> NewCity, a 19-story apartment tower with 360,000 square feet of retail and commercial space on the lower floors, represented an effort at mixed-use development. Located at the intersection of Halsted Street and Clybourn Avenue, the 199 units were aimed at professional singles

---

<sup>461</sup> “CHA Properties Near North Side,” Chicago Housing Authority, [www.thecha.org/residents/public-housing/find-public-housing/?cid=8](http://www.thecha.org/residents/public-housing/find-public-housing/?cid=8), accessed January 22, 2016.

<sup>462</sup> Holsten Real Estate Development Corp./Holsten Management Corp., “Larrabee Place at Parkside of Old Town,” [www.holstenchicago.com/holstenproperties/larrabeeplace/index.htm](http://www.holstenchicago.com/holstenproperties/larrabeeplace/index.htm), accessed January 22, 2016.

<sup>463</sup> Holsten Real Estate Development Corp./Holsten Management Corp., “North Town Village,” [www.holstenchicago.com/holstenproperties/ntvsite/index.htm](http://www.holstenchicago.com/holstenproperties/ntvsite/index.htm), accessed January 22, 2016.

and couples who wanted access to “upscale, urban lifestyles” that include local shopping, dining, and entertainment options.<sup>464</sup>

Lack of retail in the surrounding neighborhood had been an issue at Cabrini-Green for decades. With the high-rises and the troublesome population gone, this was quickly solved. In fall 2012, Target broke ground on a 15,000-square foot superstore at the northwest corner of Division and Larrabee, the prior site of three Cabrini-Green high-rises—1230 N. Larrabee, 624 W. Division, and 666 W. Division. Target agreed to a land swap with the CHA to acquire the plot they wanted. In exchange for the more valuable lot at Division and Larrabee, Target gave the original store site—Clybourn and Larrabee—to the CHA for development and \$8.8 million to pay for the bigger, better-located lot.<sup>465</sup> As part of the deal, Target had to guarantee that 75 of the expected 200 jobs would go to Cabrini residents. The deal was controversial, as many CHA residents believed that CHA land should be reserved for housing units. They feared that this was a sign of things to come—that profits would trump people at Cabrini.<sup>466</sup> Others were concerned that the jobs agreement for did not include demolition or construction. Local officials were more supportive. They saw a Target store as evidence that Cabrini renewal was underway. Supporters saw the store as the start of economic and retail development that was as significant to neighborhood redevelopment as new housing units.

---

<sup>464</sup> Pamela Dittmeier McKuen, “NewCity Offers Urban, Upscale Lifestyles,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 27, 2015.

<sup>465</sup> Ian Spula, “Targeting Cabrini,” *Curbed Chicago*, January 25, 2012, <http://chicago.curbed.com/2012/1/25/10403260/targeting-cabrini-1>, accessed March 4, 2016.

<sup>466</sup> Caroline O’Donovan, “Target Replaces Cabrini-Green Projects,” *WBEZ 91.5*, October 20, 2012, <https://www.wbez.org/shows/wbez-news/target-replaces-cabrini-green-projects/28e995b7-61e2-4e54-ad27-b85eb5d3b795>, accessed March 4, 2016.

The Cabrini-Green site benefitted from the southward spread of the Clybourn Corridor retail district. This shopping area, located in Lincoln Park close to the Cabrini neighborhood, included more than 2.6 million square feet of retail. This was second only to the Magnificent Mile's 3.1 million square feet. Retailers hoped to provide shopping to affluent residents in Lincoln Park, Old Town, and Bucktown, and increasingly to the new Cabrini area residents.<sup>467</sup> The possibility for retail and restaurant spaces was an important part of the *Plan for Transformation*. The new Target was part of the Clybourn retail district and an opportunity to develop the Cabrini neighborhood. At the Target superstore grand opening in 2013, both Mayor Emanuel and CHA CEO Charles Woodyard described the store as the neighborhood's "anchor" and a pull for other businesses to access the growing neighborhood.<sup>468</sup>

Community amenities were an important step in the creation and marketing of the new neighborhood. Early public amenities came through partnership with other Chicago government agencies. The Chicago Park District and Jesse White Foundation partnered to build a \$12.8 million field house. The almost 30,000 square foot building, located on Chicago Avenue, included a gymnasium, gymnastic center, multi-purpose fitness room, meeting rooms, and a Computer and Learning Area Room.<sup>469</sup> The field house offered

---

<sup>467</sup> Ryan Ori, "Clybourn Corridor Closing the Gap with Mag Mile," *Chicago Real Estate Daily in Crain's Chicago Business*, January 25, 2016, <http://www.chicagobusiness.com/realestate/20160125/CRED02/160129917/clybourn-corridor-closing-the-gap-with-mag-mile>, accessed March 10, 2016.

<sup>468</sup> Darryl Holliday, "New Target Store Unveiled as Anchor Near Old Cabrini-Green," *DNAINfo Chicago*, October 8, 2013, <https://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20131008/old-town/new-target-store-unveiled-as-anchor-near-old-cabrini-green>, accessed March 4, 2016.

<sup>469</sup> Chicago Park District, "Jesse White Community Center and Field House," <http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/parks/jesse-white-community-center-and-fieldhouse/#0bzrlfjfdq>, accessed March 4, 2016.

programs for area youth and serve as the home of the Jesse White Tumblers, a gymnastic group White founded to give young Chicagoans an alternative to gangs or crime.

Public parks and green spaces were designed to serve the needs of families for safe outdoor space and with the added hopes of creating community engagement for residents.<sup>470</sup> Cabrini had public parks back in 1908 when the Lincoln Park Commission created Seward and Stanton Parks. Seward Park, a 7.3-acre park at the corner of Division and Orleans Streets, was created with a concern for providing green spaces and playgrounds for densely populated neighborhoods. Modern-day indoor/outdoor facilities include two gyms, a dance studio, six meeting rooms, a boxing ring, outdoor playground, soccer and softball fields, and outdoor basketball court. According to the Chicago Park District, Seward Park “offers the right mix of athletic programming, family special events for residents in this emerging neighborhood.”<sup>471</sup> Stanton Park, along Evergreen Avenue, covers over 6.5 acres just north of the new Target Store. The facility included an indoor pool, basketball courts, and football or soccer fields, and playground. Since 1962, the Chicago Park District ran the site in partnership with the adjacent Friedrich von Schiller Elementary School. A 2014 report on Cabrini and surrounding areas found that the site included approximately 15 acres of green space for the neighborhood’s estimated 9,100 residents. To reach the city’s recommendation of 2 acres of park for every 1,000 residents, the neighborhood required an additional 5 acres.<sup>472</sup>

---

<sup>470</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, “Cabrini-Green Development Zone Plan Update,” CHA Brochure, April 2015.

<sup>471</sup> Chicago Park District, “Seward Park,” <http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/parks/Seward-Park/> accessed March 5, 2016.

<sup>472</sup> Urban Works Ltd, “Cabrini-Green Community Redevelopment Planning Open House #1,” pg. 12.

The inclusion of Steward and Stanton Parks in a neighborhood under transition highlighted some of the challenges associated with renovating the area. Access to public green spaces and athletic facilities was a chief selling point for new residents. New CHA planning documents expressed a commitment to providing green spaces as a source of relaxation, community connection, and wellness. In 2014, the CHA announced new plans to rearrange the parks: a new park, New North Field, was to add 4.42 acres to the area, Seward Park would expand to 7.78 acres, Durso Park expanded to 2.02 acres, the Jesse White Center added less than 1 acre, and Stanton Park was decreased to 5.02 acres. Combined these sites raised the green space to 20 acres.<sup>473</sup> Not everyone was happy. Near North Unity Project (NNUP) Executive Director explained that:

We're not here to tell the CHA how to create the plan. We're here to provide a platform for engagement to take place...It's not good enough just for CHA to reveal Seward Park plans and that's it. We want people to understand that plan and provide substantial feedback to CHA.<sup>474</sup>

More than that, however, many long-term residents and new neighbors attended CHA open houses and NNUP meetings, reported not understanding the CHA park plan. Resident activists were concerned that green space would come at the expense of affordable or public housing units. Alderman Walter Burnett, Jr., argued, "To create more green space was not the goal of tearing down the buildings."<sup>475</sup>

Residents continued to vocalize their hope for the future. Most acknowledged the change that had already come, but expressed a continued desire that public housing play a

---

<sup>473</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>474</sup> Gordon Walek, "Report of NNUP Meeting to Discuss CHA Plan," *coNNeCt*, February 24, 2014, <http://www.connectnearth.org/news/7296>, accessed February 12, 2016.

<sup>475</sup> Biasco, "Cabrini-Green Redevelopment Plan Includes Over 2,300 Homes," *DNAInfo Chicago*, April 23, 2015.

significant role in the neighborhood. One resident who remained throughout the twenty-year renovation explained that, “I’m not against change. A lot of good things have come of it, but they are still trying to minimize us. They are not trying to bring us back.”<sup>476</sup> In many ways, the changing neighborhood increased a desire to return. Cabrini public housing advocates wanted residents to be able to enjoy the neighborhood upgrades and new opportunity for employment and retail.

Cabrini-Green would be unique in the remaking of Chicago’s public housing. Before the infamous high-rises came down, the location and proximity to desired Near North Side residencies encouraged developers to take a chance on the neighborhood. The *Plan for Transformation* increased the pace of this development. The hope that Cabrini could be a model for other CHA sites was limited, as other neighborhoods did not sit on such favorable land.

### III. Cabrini-Green in the Near Future

The year 2015 was pivotal for future development at Cabrini-Green. Major decisions about what to keep in the neighborhood and what to remove were finally made. In addition, the neighborhood started to benefit from development trends in Near North Side, especially the River North area. Once that neighborhood was deemed “finished,” the land at Cabrini-Green became even more valuable since it was the Near North Side’s final open space. The previous few years saw more extensive developments announced, several in high-rise form. One developer described the rapid pace of change: “The

---

<sup>476</sup> Paul Biasco, “Cabrini-Green Redevelopment Plan Includes Over 2,300 Homes,” *DNAInfo Chicago*, April 23, 2015, <https://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20150423/old-town/cabrini-green-redevelopment-plans-include-over-2300-homes>, accessed February 9, 2016.



skyline's going to change really quickly over here."<sup>477</sup> The only remaining questions are the scope of these developments and who will be able to live in the new Cabrini.

As the renovations sped up, public housing residents shifted from demanding a greater role in determining the future of their neighborhood to asking for the original promises to be fulfilled. This debate focused on the Frances Cabrini Homes, originally scheduled to be renovated as a public housing community, that was mostly empty surrounded by chain-link fence. They recognized the value of the changing neighborhood—especially in expanded housing, shopping and restaurants—and the pressures mounting to fully transition it to the market. They wanted to ensure that the new neighborhood was accessible to as many former Cabrini residents as possible. One resident activist discussed her reaction to CHA and city decision-making in the neighborhood, saying, “We have an abundance of stores. We want what was promised.”<sup>478</sup> Watching the new restaurants and shopping open with limited public housing units opened was a cause for concern. For all the building, much of the public housing land remained empty fields or behind fences.

Many decisions on what to build are accompanied by debate about what this site should be. For example, density became a chief concern for many of people watching the redevelopment process. Representatives for public housing often wanted higher densities since it would accommodate more units for public housing residents. They pointed to the

---

<sup>477</sup> Alby Gallun and Micah Maidenburg, “Around Cabrini-Green, the Future Looks Bright,” *Crain's Chicago Business*, July 19, 2014, <http://www.chicagobusiness.com/article/20140719/ISSUE01/307199972/around-cabrini-green-the-future-looks-bright>, accessed February 13, 2016.

<sup>478</sup> Natalie Moore, “Cabrini-Green Ready for Its Final Phase of Redevelopment,” *WBEZ 91.5*, January 30, 2014 <http://www.wbez.org/sections/work/cabrini-green-ready-final-phase-redevelopment-109609>, accessed February 9, 2016.

higher densities Cabrini-Green used to support. After all, the Near North Side was already one of the city's densest areas and had been successful for decades. Planners, however, felt that the variety of lot sizes allowed for one neighborhood to support a variety of architectures and densities. A 2014 neighborhood redevelopment study laid out four different density markers for the neighborhood from high to low densities based on lot size and preferred building form. The large lots left from high-rise demolition allowed developers to create a unique market product—individual homes with personal green spaces.<sup>479</sup> CHA representatives told concerned residents that the 2015 plan for the neighborhood was “the best plan for the community” and would attract families who would be desired open spaces as much as new architecture.<sup>480</sup>

The role of the past in the new community also came under debate. Some new residents and developers felt that too many references to Cabrini would limit the neighborhood's potential. But others, many public housing residents and historic preservationists, saw saving community features as a way to establish a unique place in Chicago. One such debate surrounded William Walker's “All of Mankind” at the Northside Stranger's Home Missionary Baptist Church. The church, at the corner of Larrabee Street and Clybourn Avenue, was built in the 1920s for the neighborhood's Italian Catholic population. By 1970, the church had been ceded by the Catholic pastor to a Baptist church that better reflected Cabrini-Green's African American population. Walker, known as the father of the urban arts movement, created an outdoor mural

---

<sup>479</sup> Urban Works Ltd, “Cabrini-Green Community Redevelopment Planning Open House #1,” pg. 13.

<sup>480</sup> Daniel Schell, “CHA Removes Shroud from Cabrini-Green Redevelopment Plans,” *Chicago Architecture Blog*, April 23, 2015, <http://www.chicagoarchitecture.org/2015/04/23/cha-removes-shroud-from-cabrini-green-redevelopment-plans/>, accessed March 4, 2016.

inspired by the era's social revolutions in 1972. Using the church architecture, he framed an image of four figures, two men and two women, from different races holding hands to create a faux stained glass window. At the bottom, a black and white person shared a meal. Walker painted names of people throughout history lost to violence—from Jesus and Anne Frank to Dr. King and Malcolm X to local Black Panther Party members Fred Hampton and Mark Clark—under the banner “Why Were They Crucified” placed directly below the church's cross. According to the executive director of the Chicago Public Art Group, “This was a public performance of people proclaiming what was important about the place they lived...claiming connection and pride in the time of great separation.”<sup>481</sup> The mural attracted attention among public art supporters and community leaders for its message of peace and unity between people of all races.

The mural was universally considered an important work for Walker and worthy of preservation. Alderman Burnett expressed hope for preservation, “While it is satisfying to see the city and the neighborhood transformed, I believe it is also important to retain a memory of the history that brought us to this place.” Adding, “The mural, All of Mankind, inspired myself and others to understand our common humanity—a task not yet complete in the world.”<sup>482</sup> To aid preservation efforts, a new coat of paint was applied to restore the original color in 2012. The major issue, however, was money for continued upkeep. The congregation was small, and it was difficult to get public funds to preserve

---

<sup>481</sup> Mary Schmich, “Chicago Church Mural Needs an Angel Before It's Forgotten,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 15, 2014.

<sup>482</sup> “Save the ‘All of Mankind’ Mural,” *Chicago Public Art Group*, <http://www.chicagopublicartgroup.org/all-of-mankind/>, accessed February 25, 2016.

it.<sup>483</sup> Preservationists hoped that they could turn it into a community center, allowing the church and its mural to play a role in the new neighborhood. But as the neighborhood changed, the church lost most of its congregation, and opted to sell its building. Even with a reduction in the \$1.7 million asking price, it was too expensive to purchase. The efforts to save “All of Mankind” ultimately failed. In December 2015, a team of painters whitewashed the facade. The building’s new owner wanted to use the land to create a single-family home, although no concrete plans existed when the mural was painted over. For community leaders and preservationists, the mural’s destruction was a sad day for public art that spoke to the neighborhood, both what it had been and the possibilities for the future.<sup>484</sup>

The conflict between preserving Cabrini’s history and clearing the way for a new future also played out at the row houses. In 1994, the National Park Service (NPS) had determined that the Frances Cabrini Homes were eligible for listing on the National Register for Historic Properties. A historic preservationist at a CHA open house for Cabrini redevelopment, described the possibility for recognition: “The row houses in Cabrini-Green could qualify for historic status because of their contribution to social progress.”<sup>485</sup> From 2006 to 2010, the CHA rehabilitated 17 out of the 55 row house buildings following the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic

---

<sup>483</sup> Alison Cuddy, “A New Effort Begins to Save Famous Chicago Mural,” *WBEZ 91.5*, June 5, 2012, <http://www.wbez.org/blogs/alison-cuddy/2012-06/new-effort-begins-save-famous-chicago-mural-99797>, accessed February 25, 2016.

<sup>484</sup> Mary Schmich, “Why the Whitewash of a Historic Church?” *Chicago Tribune*, December 20, 2015.

<sup>485</sup> Bill Motchan, “A First Look at the Final Chapter in Burying Cabrini- Green’s Past,” *Chicago Architecture Blog*, February 5, 2014, <http://www.chicagoarchitecture.org/2014/02/05/a-first-look-at-the-final-chapter-in-burying-cabrini-greens-past/>, accessed February 4, 2016.

Properties.<sup>486</sup> Thereafter, efforts to restore the row houses stalled, particularly because planners, real estate developers, and many non-public housing residents favored demolition because it allowed for almost total reconnection with the city's street grid pattern and offered the opportunity for more attractive architecture to be added.

Concerns about the fate of Cabrini's remaining public housing residents represented a continual challenge for designers. In 2015, the final lawsuit filed by the Cabrini-Green LAC against the CHA was settled. According to the settlement, "Completion of the Cabrini Redevelopment, with public housing integrated into a racially and economically diverse area, will provide relief to plaintiff class families."<sup>487</sup> The agreement was a compromise between the CHA, which wanted maximum freedom to create mixed-income communities, and the LAC, which wanted to force the CHA to keep its commitment to rehab all units and preserve the row houses as solely public housing. The settlement determined that the row houses' future redevelopment would be as a mixed-income community, including at least 40 percent public housing (no less than 176 units) and 15 percent affordable housing. The 146 rehabbed units would remain public housing. The settlement had ramifications for the rest of the Cabrini area. The CHA agreed to a total of 1,800 low-income units as part of the complete area redevelopment. The minimum public housing units for mixed-income communities was increased from 30-33 percent to 40 percent.

When the high-rises came down, the consensus was this building form was not a good model for public housing. The sparse exteriors and the broken interiors appeared as

---

<sup>486</sup> Urban Works Ltd, "Cabrini-Green Community Redevelopment Planning Open House #1," pg. 11.

<sup>487</sup> Dawn Rhodes, "Go-Ahead for Public Housing," *Chicago Tribune*, September 14, 2015.

the physical embodiment of policy failures. But this perspective did not reflect a complete rejection of high-rise apartment living. The land was too valuable and the location too centralized to permanently eliminate this type of land use from the Cabrini-Green area. Along the site's periphery, multiple developers presented high-rise designs that favored the glass wall more connected with luxury residences in the Loop than in Cabrini-Green. Announcing the ground breaking on the 28-story NEXT tower, the architect said,

This concrete and glass residential tower promises new life to an under utilized location in Chicago's burgeoning River North area. Height limits in the district allowed the optimization of residential space and the streamlining of the building envelope without compromising style. The tower's sleek, curved façade and setback penthouse, provide a graceful continuation of the developing architectural landscape within this established neighborhood.<sup>488</sup>

Announcements for new developers were careful to place high-rise living in the context of the history of living of the Near North Side. The Gold Coast was home to some of the earliest luxury apartment buildings in the nation and continued to house a significant proportion of residents there. Like the earlier mixed-income developments, these new developments stress the way their architecture will positively contribute to the neighborhood atmosphere.

The building trends at Cabrini-Green were part of a larger trend in Chicago living. Apartment living was expanding in the wake of the city in the housing crisis that began in 2008. In 2015, 3,000 new apartments would be added to the city's rental market. This was a city record, but would be short-lived. Over 5,000 were scheduled for 2016 opening.

---

<sup>488</sup> Editor, "New Cabrini Green Tower Construction Now Underway," *Chicago Architecture Blog*, April 16, 2015, <http://www.chicagoarchitecture.org/2015/04/16/new-cabrini-green-tower-construction-now-underway/>, accessed March 4, 2016.

The rapid expansion of the city's rental market was credited to the increase of tech workers and millennials. Both groups sought close access to the Loop, for work or business, and an urban lifestyle they could not afford to buy. Not only were the number of rental units increasing, the cost to rent these units continued to rise. The market for townhomes and luxury units was even greater, as developers reported selling their inventory before it was ready for occupancy.<sup>489</sup>

Not all neighborhood changes were for housing. In April 2014, Chicago Public School officials announced a new selective-enrollment high school, Barack Obama Preparatory High School. The high school, expected to open for the 2017-18 academic year, would enroll 1,200 students when full. Approximately 70 percent of students will be selected by CPS' selective-enrollment admissions process, with the remaining seats for neighborhood students. The targeted land is Chicago Park District property at North Clybourn Avenue and North Larrabee Street. When this school opens, it will join Jenner Academy of the Arts and Skinner North Classical School, both PreK-8 schools, located near the neighborhood's two major parks.

Despite all the neighborhood changes, empty spaces were abundant. The CHA was the biggest source of empty lots around Cabrini. These areas remain as grass fields in an otherwise dense Near North Side. According to real estate analysis, by 2016, "it's clear that Cabrini's 65 acres is the next frontier for transformative North Side

---

<sup>489</sup> Mary Ellen Podmolik, "Record Number of Downtown Apartments to Arrive This Year," *Chicago Tribune*, February 11, 2015, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-downtown-development-0211-biz-20150210-story.html>, accessed February 23, 2016.

development.”<sup>490</sup> This focus was so intense that some observers argued that it might be best for the CHA to sell Cabrini-Green land to private developers without any restrictions on future development and take the money to buy cheaper land on the south side for public housing. Despite this pressure, the CHA, bound by the ongoing legal battles over public housing inclusion, held off on major development. By 2015, changes in the political reality fostered a clear plan to develop new units on CHA land: the final federal suit against the CHA was settled, the city’s real estate market had rebounded from the 2008 crash, and the CHA was under increased pressure to finally deliver the units promised in the 2000 *Plan for Transformation*.

Major movement on the redevelopment of Cabrini-Green’s land began in April 2015 with the announcement of an update to the Development Zone Plan (DZP). The DZP started in 2011 as a project to study the physical environment at and around Cabrini after the final towers were demolished. The DZP included goals for job creation and development of commercial spaces, housing diversity to answer the needs of a variety of family sizes, partnerships between businesses and community organizations to improve community amenities and resources, and development of environmentally sustainable neighborhoods. The plan sought to decrease the divisions between Cabrini-Green and the surrounding city by changing street patterns and encouraging public housing residents to adopt work and civic participation habits of the rest of the city. The DZP also included a three-phase plan with an additional phase added for the row houses. Construction was

---

<sup>490</sup> Curbed Staff, “What Will the Cabrini-Green of the Future Look Like?” *Curbed Chicago*, January 7, 2016, <http://chicago.curbed.com/archives/2016/01/07/what-will-the-cabrinigreen-of-the-future-look-like.php>, accessed February 10, 2016.



scheduled to begin in 2016 and finish in 2022, with delivery dates starting in 2017 and going to 2025.<sup>491</sup>

In December 2015, the first phase started with the release of the City of Chicago's Request for Proposals (RPF) for three parcels covering 14 acres on Cabrini property. The three parcels included the former Near North High School, eight acres bounded by Clybourn Avenue, Larrabee Street, former Blackhawk Street, and Clybourn Medical Center. The second site included seven acres surrounded by Halsted, Division, former Scott Street and the Target store. The third site covered 1.6 acres between Larrabee, Oak Street, Cambridge Avenue, and residencies to the south. The first and third location were covered by the 2000 Consent Decree, requiring unit division of no more than 50 percent market rate, no more than 20 percent affordable units, and between 33 and 40 percent public housing. The second land plot was on land not covered by the Consent Decree. The area requirement was between 33 and 40 percent public housing units with the remaining as a mix between affordable and market rate units.<sup>492</sup>

Cabrini-Green is currently a land of plans. Despite the extended time frame to complete renovations, many took heart in what had already been completed. Alderman Burnett described Cabrini's current state, "Many feared that the take-down of the old high-rises would be bad for the community, but the opposite has occurred. Our community has changed for the better."<sup>493</sup> With interest from developers, potential

---

<sup>491</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, "Cabrini-Green Development Zone Plan Update," CHA Brochure, April 2015.

<sup>492</sup> City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development on Behalf of Chicago Housing Authority, "Request for Proposals ("RFP") for Three Cabrini-Green Development Parcels," December 31, 2015, pg. 8.

<sup>493</sup> Alby Gallun, "City Courting Developers for Cabrini-Green Land," *Crain's Chicago Business*, January 6, 2016.

buyers, and public housing residents, Cabrini's future looked much brighter than it appeared a few decades earlier. But the site's recent history offered a warning that completing this future would not be as easy as it sounds.

#### IV. Neighborhood Renaming

Naming is a significant aspect of establishing a "place." In Chicago, this had a special meaning as it had a long history as a city of neighborhoods. Neighborhood names became shorthand not only for physical location, but also for the type of place that area represented. Chicago sociologist, Albert Hunter included names as one aspect of symbolic communities that established a "we feeling" that turned geographic spaces into distinct places.<sup>494</sup> For decades, Cabrini-Green was a neighborhood synonymous with crime, violence, and disorder. It was famous throughout Chicago and beyond as a place to avoid at all costs. The destruction of the high-rises and the announcement of new developments offered a chance to rebrand the neighborhood to reflect its future rather than its past. One developer framed the situation, "Cabrini wasn't the neighborhood, it was the housing development."<sup>495</sup> But some established public housing residents did not want to rebrand the neighborhood. Cabrini-Green marked the neighborhood in ways that a new name would not.

Renaming the area around Cabrini-Green emerged as part of efforts to remake the community in the 1990s. In 1995, "Project Hope"—a joint project of DePaul University,

---

<sup>494</sup> Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 68.

<sup>495</sup> Mary Ellen Podmolik, "Developers Hoping 'NoCa,' 'River South' Catch On," *Chicago Tribune*, May 13, 2015.

the New City YMCA, MCL/ASDLIC, and the North Town Community Congress—aimed at a massive renewal of Cabrini-Green. They argued: “The goal is clear: heal a wounded community by making it more like the rest of the city—a good place to raise a family; a good place to live and work and build the future.”<sup>496</sup> As part of the transition, they suggested a new name—North Town. This name followed Chicago neighborhood placemaking tradition, as it had roots in the Near North Side’s history. In *The Gold Coast and the Slum*, Harvey Warren Zorbaugh mentioned that North Town was another name sometimes used for the Near North Side.<sup>497</sup> The name had It had the additional benefit of moving away from the negative connotations of Cabrini-Green while still being located within the Near North Side. The use of “North” in name ideas was a common way to avoid the Cabrini-Green label but maintain the geographic connection to the community area. In 2010, the Near North Unity Program launched. The Near North had a larger footprint than Cabrini-Green. This was purposeful as the group’s goal was to get people who lived in the area to consider themselves part of a single community rather than the old Cabrini-Green and its changing neighborhood. Near North directly referenced the community area name as a marker of a distinct location that was part of a larger whole.

Real estate developers initiated the new drive for a new name. One developer described the efforts to rename the neighborhood, “It is important to brand neighborhoods. We live in the Twitter-blog-Instagram-Facebook age. To keep people’s attention, you need something catchy. We live in a world where everything is

---

<sup>496</sup> North Town Community Partnership, “Project Hope: Commitment to Community Change,” 1995, pg. 4.

<sup>497</sup> Zorbaugh, *The Gold Coast and the Slum*, 4.

branded.”<sup>498</sup> New names emerging from large-scale developments had some precedents in Chicago history: the Illinois Central Railroad yards became Lakeshore East, Fulton Market was formerly part of the West Loop, and University Village emerged from Little Italy. Not every name change succeeded. In the 1980s, developers sensed an opportunity for development in a neighborhood of two-flats and taverns around Lincoln Park. Bucktown, named for 19th century residents who raised goats and sheep on their yards, was seen as lacking the necessary appeal to potential buyers. They attempted names West DePaul and North Wicker Park. But the Bucktown name remained, even as trendy restaurants and million-dollar homes became the neighborhood norm.<sup>499</sup>

Many people’s first instinct was to connect the neighborhood with the prosperous neighborhoods to the east and north. According to a major developer in Chicago, “We’ve seen the power of the Lincoln Park name act as a lightning rod for those first seeking a neighborhood and then quality housing.”<sup>500</sup> Old Town was another popular connection to established neighborhoods. One of the first developments opened around Cabrini was the multi-part condo and townhome development, Parkside of Old Town. One writer noted that Parkside of Old Town hinted at “a white-washing of the area’s connection with the CHA.” This interpretation was particularly striking because the project was a mixed-income development with 36 units for public housing, 27 for affordable housing, and 43

---

<sup>498</sup> Mary Ellen Podmolik, “Developers Hoping ‘NoCa,’ ‘River South’ Catch On,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 13, 2015.

<sup>499</sup> “Name This Neighborhood, Please,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 30, 2015.

<sup>500</sup> Genevieve Buck, “Where Do You Live?” *Chicago Tribune*, October 21, 2001.

for market rate renters.<sup>501</sup> Another development of single-family homes and townhomes adapted the name Old Town Village West.

Other developers saw the connection to River North, which had been experiencing a renaissance since 2000, as a potential source of interest for new residents. Commercial growth, primarily in the restaurant sector, during the 1990s brought about a housing boom. River North became one of the trendiest city neighborhoods. The top boundary was the business strip along Chicago Avenue, which was Cabrini's southern boundary. The connection to River North worked both ways. Early in its development, the proximity to Cabrini-Green influenced the perception of River North as an infamous slum made it less attractive to many upwardly mobile Chicagoans. The changing community area shifted this view in the past few years. One new resident explained his decision to move to the neighborhood: "I knew it would be a good location because more restaurants were opening and Cabrini-Green was going away."<sup>502</sup> In fact, the demolition of Cabrini-Green high-rises happened alongside a major rush from loft developments to luxury apartment towers and condo developments in River North.

Yet many developers did not want to connect to an established neighborhood, preferring to brand the neighborhood with new names associated with their developments. One of the first was NoCA, an abbreviation of "North of Chicago Avenue." The Fifield Companies, as part of development for their 300-apartment tower, proposed this name for the neighborhood and as part of their buildings' name, NEXT at

---

<sup>501</sup> Curbed Staff, "What Will the Cabrini-Green of the Future Look Like?" *Curbed Chicago*, January 7, 2016.

<sup>502</sup> Susan Diesenhaus, "From Gritty Roots to Urban Chic," *Chicago Tribune*, July 11, 2008.

NoCA. As they saw it, “NoCA” would include the Cabrini-Green area and parts of Near North, Old Town, and the Gold Coast. The name was controversial, however, because it struck many in the city as “too New York.” A Chicago real estate website hosted an online vote on the name with the most common response questioning why it could not remain Cabrini-Green. Another popular suggestion was to expand River North’s area to include Cabrini.<sup>503</sup> The pushback not only prevented the name from being connected with Cabrini, Fifield Companies dropped the name from the building.

Real estate developers favored new names for the area in order to sell units to buyers who would never considered living at Cabrini-Green, but who could be lured by the central location and amenities. Not everyone, however, followed this pattern. Gerding Edlen, a Portland-based developer experienced with affordable projects, decided to name their rental building Xavier, after Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini, the original namesake of the Frances Cabrini Homes. In a 2015 press release announcing the name, the company director noted, “With Xavier we had an opportunity to be part of the continued story of this neighborhood. We are particularly conscious of this neighborhood’s rich and long standing history, and feel the project will have positive long-term effects on the area.”<sup>504</sup> Of all the new developers, Xavier received the most praise for its name, reflecting Chicago’s sense of place on a community level as neighborhood names historically reflected community demographics and local culture.

---

<sup>503</sup> “Poll: What Should the Former Cabrini-Green Area Be Called?” *Curbed Chicago*, June 3, 2015, <http://chicago.curbed.com/archives/2015/06/03/whats-in-a-name-1.php>, accessed February 4, 2016.

<sup>504</sup> David Matthews, “Developer Names Cabrini-Green 18-Story Apartment Tower: Xavier,” *DNAInfo Chicago*, August 4, 2015, <https://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20150804/river-north/developer-names-cabrini-green-18-story-apartment-tower-xavier>, accessed February 23, 2016.

The renovation of Cabrini-Green also allowed for the creation of new streets and thus, the opportunity for new names. One new street, Frontier Avenue, came from the MCL development in the triangle of Division, Crosby, and Howe Streets. This location was home to several Cabrini Extension (“the Reds”) high-rises, a power substation, and dilapidated one-story residences. During creating Old Town Village West, itself named for a popular neighboring community, Frontier Avenue was established. The street and the name did not exist when the developer received the property. But few could deny that development stood at the frontier of development on the Near North Side. The street name was interpreted as a clear-eyed approach to the neighborhood—lots of possibilities but not clear from risk.<sup>505</sup>

Despite concerted efforts, the name Cabrini-Green continued to be used by many to describe the neighborhood. For the most part, this recognized that the neighborhood had been known as Cabrini-Green since the 1960s. Popular usage of “Cabrini-Green” immediately calls to mind a specific location within the city. Popular usage like this would not disappear overnight. When the *Chicago Tribune* asked readers to send in name suggestions, “Cabrini” was by far the winner. Not only would that pay tribute to the community that had been, it also commemorates the first US citizen to be named a saint.<sup>506</sup> Neighborhood names were expressed by government agencies as a way of formally demarking areas. Cabrini remained part of official government documents. In their 2009 update to the “Central Area Plan,” the northwest quarter of the Near North

---

<sup>505</sup> Joe Zekas, “Chicago’s Aptly-Named Frontier Ave,” *Yo Chicago*, October 6, 2014, <http://yochicago.com/chicagos-aptly-named-frontier-ave/36655/>, accessed February 22, 2016.

<sup>506</sup> “What’s in a Name?” *Chicago Tribune*, June 4, 2015.

Side was named the Cabrini Area. This definition expanded the Cabrini name west to Halsted Street and north to North Avenue. The expansion included two major redevelopment projects—the Cabrini-Green site and the Montgomery Ward campus along the Chicago River. The 2015 RFPs also included the Cabrini-Green name, even though the plan was to remake select parcels on the site.

A *Chicago Tribune* editorial, while open to new names, wanted the name to follow Chicago tradition—that was, being based on the site’s history and ethnic and cultural diversity. For the most part these names originated organically with the local population. According to a neighborhood expert, “What people start calling an area, that’s what it is.”<sup>507</sup> Developers who sought to rebrand Cabrini were responding to the fact that “Cabrini-Green” had a very distinct meaning for Chicagoans. For them, Cabrini-Green was synonymous with violence, drugs, and gangs. In short, a place one did not go without good reason. This distinction was not appealing to developers investing significant money here. The desire for a new name and the continued resistance of “Cabrini” was symptomatic of the success of resident placemaking. For decades, the area was Cabrini-Green and for decades before that, Cabrini. An established place identity with that history would not disappear in a matter of years.

## V. Life in the New Neighborhood

While the rest of the Near North Side saw population growth in the 1990s, Cabrini-Green lost population. The *Plan for Transformation* and private efforts around the periphery during the 2000s offered the chance to alter the trajectory. From 2000 to

---

<sup>507</sup> “Name This Neighborhood, Please,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 30, 2015.



2007, the larger Cabrini area grew by an estimated 1,686 households and 2,712 residents.<sup>508</sup> The possibilities for future development excited developers and prospective residents. The 2015 settlement, which would bring more public housing units to the area, represented a positive step for developers and potential non-public housing residents. To meet the public housing units, even at 30 to 33 percent of new developments, required the creation of more market units than originally planned.<sup>509</sup> In addition, the row houses would no longer be an island of public housing in a sea of mixed-income communities. The entire neighborhood would become mixed-income.

Public housing residents had been concerned that major renovations at Cabrini-Green would represent a physical and psychological upheaval of community residents. Going back to the 1980s plans to remake Cabrini frequently prompted residents' fear of a "land grab." This fear was two-part: fear that their community would be driven from their land and that they would miss out on the resulting public and private investment to improve the area. The demolition of the high-rises marked a new level of concern for residents about their futures in the Near North Side. No longer able to save the physical structures or public housing community, activists now focused on having a voice in deciding the neighborhood's trajectory future development. A lifelong resident described her feelings about the neighborhood's future: "I'm not against redevelopment, but we want to make sure regular people can stay. Cabrini had more good than anything else."<sup>510</sup>

---

<sup>508</sup> City of Chicago, "Central Area Action Plan," August 20, 2009, pg. 4-4.

<sup>509</sup> Farren Washington, "The Future of Housing in the Old Cabrini-Green Site," *Chicago Agent Magazine*, October 7, 2015, <https://chicagoagentmagazine.com/2015/10/07/the-future-of-housing-in-the-old-cabrini-green-site/>, accessed March 8, 2016.

<sup>510</sup> Meg Anderson, "Searching for Cabrini-Green," *Social Justice News Nexus*, May 28, 2015.

Advocates did not reject new developments or retail opportunities. They wanted Cabrini residents benefited as much as possible from these improvements.

New residents who moved in expressed a desire to participate in the new neighborhood: “We’re actually concerned about the area. We moved in to transform it.”<sup>511</sup> But along with hope and opportunity, new settlers also brought risk. They were wealthier than long-term residents, and this disparity could prevent genuine community from emerging, despite intentions and changes to the physical landscape.<sup>512</sup> Unspoken tension categorized many meetings of the Near North Unity Program. Former Cabrini residents believed that they were not given sufficient say in the community’s future considering their connections with its past. New residents felt they have put too much of their economic resources into transforming the neighborhood to tolerate behavior that could undermine their investment.<sup>513</sup>

Part of the fears for future demographic shifts surrounded the announcement of pricing for new buildings. In February 2016, Xavier began taking applications for apartments with studios starting at \$1,825 per month, \$2,300 for a one bedroom, and \$3,275 for two bedrooms. The increasing housing prices were a challenge not just to Cabrini; they reflected a citywide trend. One reporter described this tension in regards Xavier’s announcement: “With Chicago in the midst of a housing crisis we can’t help but see the promises of these luxury developments coinciding with the displacement of Chicago’s working class and the hastening demise of its affordability for anyone making

---

<sup>511</sup> Bennett, *The Third City*, 173.

<sup>512</sup> Ibid, 174.

<sup>513</sup> John McCarron, “Closing the Condo-Cabrini Chasm,” *LISC Chicago*, November 29, 2011.

less than \$72,000 a year.”<sup>514</sup> Xavier would have 10 percent of units reserved for public housing and 10 percent for affordable housing. Because the developers at Xavier voluntarily included these units in their building plan, their threshold requirements were lower than other area developments.<sup>515</sup>

The continued turmoil at the CHA added to the stress of redevelopment. Given its history, few residents trusted the CHA to come through on its promises. For decades, residents had suspected that people wanted their land on the Near North Side, and they did not trust the CHA to defend their right to the neighborhood. Instead, the CHA seemed likely to make a deal to move them out to other areas and then flip the neighborhood. A new concern emerged in the mixed-income communities. CHA residents lived by one set of rules that many found overly restrictive, while market rate residents had much more freedom. One public housing resident described her feeling “I just want to do what I want, like homeowners and condo [owners] do.”<sup>516</sup> In her opinion, the separate rules for public housing residents mischaracterized low-income residents as low intelligent ones. Another CHA resident described living in fear of eviction. She was nervous about the unit check-ups and had almost been evicted when her son used her address during an arrest for drug related activity. In response to her eviction process, she remarked,

---

<sup>514</sup> Rachel Cromidas, “2 Bedrooms in Cabrini-Green’s New High Rise Start at \$3,200 a Month,” *Chicagoist*, February 8, 2016, [http://chicagoist.com/2016/02/08/2\\_bedrooms\\_in\\_cabrini-greens\\_new\\_hi.php](http://chicagoist.com/2016/02/08/2_bedrooms_in_cabrini-greens_new_hi.php), accessed February 23, 2016.

<sup>515</sup> Farren Washington, “The Future of Housing in the Old Cabrini-Green Site,” *Chicago Agent Magazine*, October 7, 2015.

<sup>516</sup> Annie B. Stubenfield, *Out of the Loop*, “Public Housing Tour,” Vernacular Architecture Forum, Chicago, June 4, 2015.

“Parkside bullets come under the door in the form of a letter.”<sup>517</sup> The separate rule system could impede the creation of a unified sense of community across racial and class lines.

The demographic change was not total, as residents who previously lived in the neighborhood would return to stay connected to their social networks or for less desirable purposes. The alderman described this reality: “Everyone who used to live in the neighborhood feels this is still their home, so they come back. They’re more comfortable selling drugs here than where they live now. All the felony guys are the ones selling drugs.”<sup>518</sup> Even though public housing residents in the new mixed-income communities were screened for felony arrests, the continued presence of illegal activity in the area threatened to undermine the public’s view of the public residents who lived there. Arrests for minor crimes became an issue in the neighborhood. A 2013 *Chicago Reporter* investigation found that the Cabrini row houses had the second highest arrest rates in the city with 440 trespassing stops in a three-year period. Almost all stops led to arrest.<sup>519</sup> Many residents arrested had lived in public housing and were used to congregating in these areas. Many advocates for public housing were concerned that the lingering vision of public housing residents as prone to crime could damage the efforts to get more public housing and could have long-term ramifications for the neighborhood cohesion.

---

<sup>517</sup> Bob Spoerl, “Mixed Stories of Parkside,” Parkside of Old Town: An Experiment in Public Housing, June 11, 2011 <https://parksidehousing.wordpress.com/parkside-story/>, accessed March 9, 2016.

<sup>518</sup> Mary Schmich, “Spared School Gets Chance to Reshape Neighborhood,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 24, 2013.

<sup>519</sup> Angela Caputo, “Trespassing Arrests are Sky High in the Footprint of the Former Cabrini-Green Community,” *Chicago Reporter*, November 13, 2013, <http://chicagoreporter.com/trespassing-arrests-are-sky-high-footprint-former-cabrini-green-community/>, accessed March 4, 2016.

## VI. Impact on the Near North Side

The destruction of the Cabrini-Green housing project impacted place more generally on the Near North Side. For those outside the area, Cabrini-Green was a symbolic place that contained everything that could go wrong with urban planning and public housing. Now its destruction serves as a benchmark for the development of a new neighborhood. Beginning with the destruction of the final tower in 2011, Cabrini transitioned to something it had never been before—a competitive real estate market that could positively impact adjoining neighborhoods.

The connection to the rest of the Near North Side was not new—it had been critical to shaping Cabrini-Green as a physical reality and as an idea. The neighborhood had long been under pressure from its richer neighbors. The fear that the more affluent areas of the Near North Side would overtake the public housing community and force public housing residents to less desirable parts of the city was a resident fear going back to the 1970s.<sup>520</sup> Chicago's war on blight focused on Cabrini-Green, in part, to protect the concerns of neighboring Lincoln Park and Gold Coast.<sup>521</sup> The external pressure created doubt about the stability of place in the long run. Starting with Harvey Zorbaugh's discussion of a place that lacked a unifying community, outsiders often challenged notions that Cabrini-Green could develop a strong, supportive community that was necessary for a sense of place to develop.

---

<sup>520</sup> Wright with Wheelock and Steele, "The Case of Cabrini-Green" in *Where Are the Poor People to Live?*, 168.

<sup>521</sup> Marciniak, *Reclaiming the Inner City*, 35.

The new understanding that the Cabrini area could be a positive asset to the rest of the Near North Side added significance to decisions made about the land. In response to the 2015 court decision to increase the number of public housing units in the area, *Chicago Magazine* covered the ramifications for the real estate market. The author concluded that any minor shift in population could be handled, since “Old Town was Old Town and Gold Coast was definitely Gold Coast during the years when Cabrini was in the national spotlight for crime and violence.”<sup>522</sup> This reality caused concern about new developments. While the established neighborhoods of the Near North Side already had their own identities and draw, the area around Cabrini had yet to build this constituency. The Gold Coast and Old Town had survived without Cabrini before and could do it again. But part of the appeal of the Cabrini site was its connection to the rest of the Near North Side and the Loop.

The CHA presented the transformation of areas like Cabrini-Green as a possible model for future public housing renovations nation-wide. With its proximity to the Loop and other desirable and expensive neighborhoods, Cabrini appeared to be a good site for another redevelopment project. In the final years of Mayor Richard M. Daley’s tenure, his administration invested in efforts, from Loop revitalization to neighborhood development, to bring the middle class back to the city. The design for these neighborhoods, much like the public housing renovation, was for vibrant, diverse, and safe neighborhoods with quality housing, schools, and retail. Cabrini was one of the most successful examples of these renovations. The *Chicago Tribune* described the scope of

---

<sup>522</sup> Ian Spula, “How Will the Market React to the Cabrini-Green Settlement,” *Chicago Magazine*, September 30, 2015, <http://www.chicagomag.com/real-estate/September-2015/What-Will-Be-the-Market-Fallout-From-the-Cabrini-Settlement/>, accessed January 22, 2015.

transformation: “Synonymous for decades with urban despair, the community has been transformed to a bustling center of urban chic, even before the CHA began demolishing the last high-rise.”<sup>523</sup> The prime location and access to the city’s amenities, housing aimed for the middle and upper class was not abandoned by developers or homeowners during the 2008 housing collapse as they did in other communities around Chicago.

## VII. The National Public Housing Museum

The massive transformation in public housing neighborhoods across the city significantly altered its landscape and architecture. Cabrini-Green was unique among many public housing neighborhoods, as residents, community organizations, public artists, and historic preservationists pushed for the inclusion of historic buildings and public spaces into the construction of a new neighborhood. Its fame made it a major local and national story. For many, especially along the South Side corridor, buildings came down with little to mark them but the empty spaces they left in the urban fabric. Not everyone was content to let these projects fade from Chicago memory. Instead, they set about creating a new museum, the National Public Housing Museum (NPHM), which would tell the story of public housing from the resident’s perspective.

Many who witnessed the demolition of public housing projects believed that mass-scale projects would be a forgotten remnant of the city’s past. Residents of Cabrini-Green had a history of telling their story through public history. Demolition increased this drive, as many buildings that defined the community would be physically destroyed. One student described watching her neighborhood being demolished, saying, “I’ll never have

---

<sup>523</sup> Antonio Olivo, “Keeping a Vibrant Middle Class,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 4, 2011.

a place to go back to and show my children and say, ‘I grew up there.’ I feel like they’re erasing my history.”<sup>524</sup> History and art were ways to claim a lasting place in Cabrini. Efforts at preservation for the Frances Cabrini Homes and the “For All Mankind” murals were opportunities to continue physical presence in a rapidly changing neighborhood. Project Cabrini-Green, a light display during the demolition of 1230 N. Burling, offered the space for residents, artists, and visitors to think about concepts of loss of home. Presenting their history was a way of telling the city that they were here and had worked hard to build their community.

The National Public Housing Museum had roots in similar memory efforts. Several residents, including former CHA commissioner Deverra Beverly, began efforts to preserve a physical building, in hopes of telling the story of public housing in the 1990s, when the city was clearing neighborhoods of public housing. The original audience was other public housing residents. But interest in the project encouraged organizers to look beyond people who had direct experience in public housing to an extended audience who did not. One former resident described the aim of creating a museum about public housing: “It’s good for people to get to know the whole story [of public housing], not just the bad side.”<sup>525</sup> The resident creators wanted to tell their stories about public housing to provide perspectives of daily life in public housing that were missing from public discourse and to create a celebration of their communities. They lobbied the CHA to leave standing a building from ABLA Homes, a public housing neighborhood containing

---

<sup>524</sup> Sharon Cohen, “Teens Say Goodbye to Chicago’s Cabrini Green with Poems,” *Daily Herald*, April 24, 2011, <http://www.dailyherald.com/article/20110424/news/704249903/>, accessed November 22, 2016.

<sup>525</sup> Cassandra West, “All Sides of Public Housing Under 1 Roof,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 24, 2009.



four separate public housing projects (Jane Addams Homes, Robert Brooks Homes, Loomis Courts, and Grace Abbott Homes) in Chicago's Near West Side, as a way for visitors to learn about public housing and its impact on its residents and the city.<sup>526</sup> The CHA agreed to donate the last remaining building from the Jane Addams Homes to the museum to serve as their major structure in August 2008.<sup>527</sup> This method fit with growing focus on the overlap of place and memory. Memory places establish the belief that the past has a specific relationship with a distinct place that is home to major historical events, buildings, or communities that is distinct from surrounding undistinguishable space.<sup>528</sup> In examples like the NPHM, the major focus is a historical object that serves both as a symbol of collective identity and an invitation for visitors to reconsider the relationship between the past and the present. NPHM uses the final remaining Jane Addams structures to create a memory place that invites visitors to come to a building in a neighborhood that many would have avoided before its demolition to experience what lives of people who lived there.

The vision expanded from commemorating life at ABLA to a museum that would address the entirety of public housing in American history, culminating in the National Public Housing Museum. Starting in 2010, NPHM put up a series of exhibits on public housing and concepts of home around the city, including the Chicago Tourism Center and Roosevelt University. These exhibits presented the vision of the finished project, even

---

<sup>526</sup> Stephanie Lulay, "Public Housing Museum Plans to Break Ground in Former ABLA Building in 2016," *DNAInfo Chicago*, August 14, 2015, <https://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20150814/little-italy/public-housing-museum-plans-break-ground-former-abla-building-2016>, accessed March 5, 2016.

<sup>527</sup> This donation was contingent on NPHM meeting fundraising and development goals. As of January 2016, the museum director was seeking final approval from the CHA to move forward with development.

<sup>528</sup> Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, "Introduction," *Places of Public Memory*, 25-6.

though the main site has not been significantly developed. Their mission statement communicated a commitment to use history as a tool in the present:

The National Public Housing Museum is a place of stories that mine the vastly complex history of public and publicly subsidized housing in America. The Museum creates a living cultural experience on social justice and human rights that creatively re-imagine the future of our community, our society, and our spaces. NPHM is not just about the preservation of stories; it is about helping to preserve society's highest ideals.<sup>529</sup>

At the center of the museum were two primary concepts—story and place. The NPHM had been collecting stories from current and former residents of public housing. They started a #tellit campaign to spread stories from Vivian Carter Homes, a senior apartment complex in Englewood, to get people interested in the stories of public housing.

Contemporary memorial efforts frequently focus on the cultivation of specific memories and emotions from a specific group of people in a historic settle to challenge cultural narratives.<sup>530</sup> Here, the mission is to recover aspects of public housing that residents saw a worthwhile based on their stories to add to more popular narratives of decay.

The museum was based on the “power of place” model. This model moved beyond traditional focus on great men and buildings of history to tell stories of everyday people and their built environments. It brought in stories that had been overlooked to buildings that previously had not been considered worthy of commemoration. The power of place asked historians, communities, and visitors to expand their view of what stories should be preserved and what landscapes. The goal was to elevate vernacular architecture to recognize the struggles and accomplishments of historical overlooked populations of

---

<sup>529</sup> The National Public Housing Museum, <http://www.nphm.org>, accessed March 6, 2016.

<sup>530</sup> Doss, *Memorial Mania*, 59.

African Americans, Latinos, immigrants, women, and other marginalized groups.<sup>531</sup> By bringing visitors to public housing structure, the NPHM hoped to use challenge their views of what public housing was and what a home should be.

One example of “power of place” model in practice could be seen at the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience. The organization included over 150 member institutions in 47 countries that use historical sites as a means of connecting past injustices to the present to encourage action. Their mission statement reads, “We are sites, individuals, and initiatives activating the power of places of memory to engage the public in connecting past and present in order to envision and shape a more just and humane future.”<sup>532</sup> The coalition sites often engaged with challenging histories that many in those communities would rather forget, making it a fitting model for public housing in Chicago. The connection of the past to the present would be at the forefront of the NPHM’s exhibits and programming as well as its physical site. In 2015, the final building of the Jane Addams Homes remained alone in an empty field. This field was supposed to provide the foundation for a mixed-income community, but the market had not recovered sufficiently to encourage market interest. If this community develops, an example of Chicago’s public housing past will sit among it. But if it does not, it will serve as a reminder of the challenge associated with fostering successful housing programs.

The NPHM was also inspired by the success of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, the original impetus for the creation of International Coalition of Sites of

---

<sup>531</sup> Hurley, *Beyond Preservation*, 40-1.

<sup>532</sup> International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, “About Us,” <http://www.sitesofconscience.org/about-us/>, accessed March 5, 2016.

Conscience. The Tenement Museum tells the story of 97 Orchard Street, home to nearly 7,000 immigrants over its history. Their mission was to tell the story of immigration in New York City, provide emotional connections between visitors and the past through stories of individual families, present an architectural history through the presentation of a variety of living patterns over generations, and enhance visitors' appreciation for the role immigration continues to play in the national story.<sup>533</sup> The Tenement museum is a storytelling museum. The only way to experience this museum is to schedule a tour with a docent trained in facilitation, a process of generating debate between visitors that encourages nuance and reflection on complicated subjects.<sup>534</sup> The museum combines detailed stories about the people who lived in 97 Orchard with the facilitated discussions about topics of immigration, discrimination, and what it means to be American. Aside from providing tours of 97 Orchard and the larger Lower East Side, the Tenement Museum sponsors Tenement Talks, that provide space for the public to engage in discussions about the myriad of historical and social issues inspired by the museum.

The NPHM aimed to own the concept of home and housing similar to how the Tenement Museum owned the story of American immigration.<sup>535</sup> Both museum spaces placed their central themes—immigration and public housing—as a significant part of the American experience. President and CEO Keith Magee described the NPHM: “The greatest thing is for people to realize that [public housing] is an American experience and

---

<sup>533</sup> Lower Estate Side Tenement Museum, <https://www.tenement.org>, accessed March 5, 2016.

<sup>534</sup> Miriam Bader, “Practicing Facilitation: Lessons from the Tenement Museum,” *Broadsides*, American Association of State and Local History, February 17, 2017, <http://blogs.aaslh.org/practicing-facilitation-lessons-from-the-tenement-museum/>, accessed February 22, 2017.

<sup>535</sup> D. Bradford Hunt, “Public Housing Tour,” Vernacular Architecture Forum, Chicago, June 4, 2015.

that these walls will talk. They will tell the story of every group that has ever lived here.”<sup>536</sup> The stories museum workers collect will work in concert with the physical structure as a whole outside and individual units inside to provide a complete museum experience.

The museum’s largest object will be its home, giving visitors an opportunity to explore the inside and grounds of a former public housing building. The museum will be located at 1322-24 West Taylor Street in Little Italy. Opened in 1938, the building was part of the first federal housing project in Chicago. The building was a red brick building in a U shape with a courtyard in the middle. Since the building is only three stories tall, it offers the opportunity to explain public housing was not always the high-rises that CHA was infamous for. The only remaining building from the Jane Addams Homes, it sits at the corner of a larger empty lot as development demand in the neighborhood remains limited. Chicago’s famous skyline is visible from the upper levels and roof, highlighting the close physical proximity many of these developments had even as they were isolated.

Each unit contained one bedroom, living room, bathroom, kitchen, and closets. The structure was last officially occupied in 2002. The demands of the building, however, were challenges for development. While the building remained officially unoccupied, homeless people lived there, breaking holes in walls between units to better travel the interior. Many of the units remain in disrepair, with missing appliances and lights, dirt spread across the units, and man-made holes in the walls that served as alternate travel routes for squatters. Beneath the surface dirt, it is possible to view the layout and small details like the original tile and wall color. These demands pushed the museum’s

---

<sup>536</sup> Cassandra West, “All Sides of Public Housing Under 1 Roof,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 24, 2009.

construction budget to an estimated \$5 million by 2013. Early community outreach also included the building, bringing volunteers to help clean the interior and to “green the grounds” by planting a garden outside.

The main permanent exhibit will involve recreating displays in several restored units from various eras in the history of public housing. The goal for this presentation is to move public housing beyond the story of African American residents, with which many visitors will be familiar, to discuss the variety of ethnic and racial groups who lived in public housing. Magee described the vision for layout: “We’ll start with the Jewish family that moved in on moving day, May 1, 1938, and end with the African American family that left in 1974. Of course, the Italian family is in the middle. [The Italian family] is vital to the museum, because we rest in the heart of Little Italy.”<sup>537</sup> In 2015, the plan was to renovate four individual units to represent change in public housing demographics and how use of units changed with each generation. The museum hopes to use heirlooms provided by descendants of ABLA residents to furnish these apartments.

The museum was designed to occupy about a third of the physical building. To fulfill its mission of social justice, the NPHM planned to use the rest of the structure as a business incubator or library for public housing residents. They have been reaching out to the broader community through programming that approached themes of housing, social justice, and community through traveling displays and public discussion. In 2016, they announced a program called “The Public Good,” a partnership with NPHM, University of

---

<sup>537</sup> Igor Studenkov, “National Public Housing Museum Construction Set to Begin in Early 2013,” *Chicago Journal*, October 31, 2012, [http://www.chicagojournal.com/news/10-31-2012/National\\_Public\\_Housing\\_Museum\\_construction\\_set\\_to\\_begin\\_in\\_early\\_2013](http://www.chicagojournal.com/news/10-31-2012/National_Public_Housing_Museum_construction_set_to_begin_in_early_2013), accessed February 15, 2016.

Illinois-Chicago Great Cities Program, the Institute for Public Architecture, and the Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture at Columbia University. The Public Good will facilitate dialogue between subject area experts and the public about what is the meaning and value of the public good and how government can fulfill this need.<sup>538</sup>

Public history, as places like the National Museum of Public Housing would employ it, could serve as a foundation for political action. By focusing on issues of how communities create and use urban space, public history offered a way of challenging public understandings of places like public housing, emphasizing the stories that many Chicagoans did not hear when these buildings were dominant parts of the sky. This action represented a new way of looking at Chicago, one that centered the daily experience of its residents both past and present. In *The Power of Place* Dolores Hayden wrote, “Restoring significant shared meanings for many neglected urban places first involves claiming the entire urban cultural landscape as an important part of American history, not just its architectural monuments.”<sup>539</sup> The National Public Housing Museum does not want to simply preserve a living environment that supported generations of Chicagoans, they want to inspire a discussion about how present-day issues surrounding affordable housing and urban living have roots in the past. This understanding of the past could inspire new ideas about how to create a more just city. The NPHM’s vision remained rooted in the

---

<sup>538</sup> “The Public Good,” National Public Housing Museum, <http://www.nphm.org/the-public-good/>, accessed March 6, 2016.

<sup>539</sup> Hayden, *The Power of Place*, 11.

original residents and activists' goal to create a monument to the communities across the city and nation.<sup>540</sup>

## VIII. Conclusion

The first decade of the 2000s was a period of intense change at Cabrini-Green. The high-rise buildings, which for so long had defined the neighborhood even to people who had never seen it, were torn down. Most of those buildings' residents were moved to other Chicago neighborhoods with the promise that they would come back along with new residents. These physical changes raised the possibility that a new understanding of the place would emerge. The name Cabrini-Green was slowly being erased on official reports. Despite the transformation of space that occurred with the destruction of over twenty buildings, Cabrini-Green received no mention in "The Chicago Central Area Plan." Instead, the city of Chicago's plan focused on the Near North Redevelopment Initiative, the official designation for the neighborhood.<sup>541</sup> Even rebranded as the Near North, Cabrini-Green was noted only as an adjacent district to areas of major revitalization. Increases in both public investment in the form of new library, police station, and local schools and private development with a retail mall were noted as steps along this development.<sup>542</sup>

---

<sup>540</sup> *Out of the Loop*, "Public Housing Tour," Vernacular Architecture Forum, Chicago, June 4, 2015.

<sup>541</sup> Bennett, *The Third City*, 48.

<sup>542</sup> City of Chicago, "The Chicago Central Area Plan," 123.



Public housing was never a high priority for the city of Chicago until it was being demolished and replaced with mixed-income neighborhoods.<sup>543</sup> Cabrini-Green was a prime example of why public housing was a priority for the Richard M. Daley and Rahm Emanuel administrations. Located close to the city's most desired neighborhoods, development began at Cabrini before all the high-rises were demolished even as many other CHA sites sit empty. Developers clamored for land and proposed developments that both rejected and embraced the site's history.

---

<sup>543</sup> Goetz, *New Deal Ruins*, 88.

## CHAPTER 7

### DOES PUBLIC HOUSING HAVE A FUTURE AS A PLACE?

By the second decade of the twenty-first century, the 20th century model of public housing was largely abandoned, and whatever success it had achieved at its high point, the consensus was that it was not a viable means of providing decent housing. Across the nation, hundreds of public housing communities were torn down and replaced with mixed-income and scattered site developments. As many had predicted, the trends in Chicago were a critical part of this trend. According to Edward G. Goetz, “If public housing is dead, it is Chicago that killed it.”<sup>544</sup> Chicago had some of the most rundown, infamous public housing projects in the nation, including Cabrini-Green. But the *Plan for Transformation* offered the hope that Chicago could also lead the way in new models of public housing. As part of what the CHA declared “the largest, most-ambitious redevelopment effort of public housing in the United States,” 25,000 units were to be renovated or reconstructed as part of new neighborhoods.<sup>545</sup> This goal represented their entire stock of project-based family housing.

If the *Plan for Transformation* improved Chicago public housing, many believed it would create new models that could be nationalized. Replacing problematic modernist architecture with more approachable New Urbanist design offered the prospect of avoiding past problems and creating a community to accomplish public housing’s original goal of decent, affordable housing for upwardly mobile working class families

---

<sup>544</sup> Goetz, *New Deal Ruins*, 75.

<sup>545</sup> Chicago Housing Authority. “Plan for Transformation.” <http://www.thecha.org/about/plan-for-transformation/>, accessed January 12, 2017.

from nearly a century before. One of the key innovations in the new approach was the attempt to use market forces to assist in the creation of these new communities. The private market would take a larger role in public housing as the CHA transitioned to vouchers and private developments. By the end of the *Plan*, the CHA hoped to be an asset manager that subcontracted with private developers to build and manage the developments.

But while this new model of public housing has promising elements, important questions remained. In particular, how many public housing residents would this new program serve and how to advocate for their interests as market pressures shift to those who paid full price. Market forces often created new tensions. Earlier public housing had been placed on undesirable locations so they did not compete with private housing. This made the land cheap to purchase originally, but increased the difficulty in getting sufficient private interest to rebuild these areas as mixed-income communities now. Private developer profit motive could also be a hindrance during market downturns, such as the 2008 financial crash.

Cabrini-Green played a unique role in discussions of public housing's new life in Chicago. Although it had symbolic importance as one of the most notorious projects in the nation, and it had significant value including most valuable land in Chicago, the site actually represents only a small fraction of the new public housing in the city. Chicago's West and South Sides will be home to ninety percent of family public housing rebuilt in the *Plan for Transformation*.<sup>546</sup> It was, then, Cabrini-Green's symbolic and land values that gave it such an outsized role in discussions of public housing and the potential for

---

<sup>546</sup> John Handley, "Redeveloping Public Housing," *Chicago Tribune*, August 22, 2004.

success in transformation ensured that the neighborhood would continue to be front and center in public housing's future.

### I. Removing the Architecture of Poverty

Architecture was a chief cause of criticism about public housing. As pictures of new buildings and families were used to gain support for the program in the 1950s, so was the physical decay of the buildings by the 1990s used to win support for demolition. The desolate brick high-rises in empty fields became symbolic of public housing and were recognized as a place in the city that no one wanted to visit, let alone live in. Part of the rationale behind the *Plan for Transformation* was that public housing could be saved only if achieved a quality architectural standard to attract market rate owners and avoid once again becoming a center of poverty concentration.<sup>547</sup> Eliminating the crumbling public housing projects that became places the rest of the city feared could improve overall feelings about public housing and people's willingness to live near these developments. But transitioning public housing into mixed-income developments had risks. Some critics argued that the main impact of the new public housing program is accelerating gentrification in already desirable neighborhoods and creating a relationship with developers that would succeed in boom times and fail in real estate downturns.<sup>548</sup>

Recent scholarship found that public housing in the 2000s has come full circle from where the program began. Each era began with blighted area of the city being

---

<sup>547</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, *Plan for Transformation*, 2.

<sup>548</sup> Matthew Blake, "Transforming the Plan for Transformation," *Progress Illinois*, February 27, 2012, <http://progressillinois.com/posts/content/2012/02/27/transforming-plan-transformation>, accessed October 11, 2016.

framed as uninhabitable and in need of complete demolition and rebuild to serve the city's citizens. In the 1950s, housing advocates and CHA administrators viewed the 19th-century wooden structures as irredeemable slums and demolished them in favor of modern high-rises. Four decades later, the high-rises were seen as beyond saving and needed to be torn down in favor of neighborhoods inspired by demolished 19th-century buildings and neighborhoods.<sup>549</sup> During this time, public housing was viewed as a targeted program for distinct populations. Historian Lawrence J. Vale describes public housing as a three-part experiment: one for the top of the “bottom third”, two as a welfare program, and three, a reclamation project for the worthy poor.<sup>550</sup> In other words, when public housing first emerged it was to be quality housing for the rising poor. Due to changes in federal policy that focused on poorer residents and limited budgets due to weakening rents, it evolved into warehouses for extreme poverty that the surrounding community avoided at all costs. Now it would be a designed community that favored a variety of residents and uses that fit with the neighborhood's upward trajectory. Public housing was no longer a unique place; it would fit invisibly into the city's fabric.

When public housing communities were originally constructed, architects and planners hoped that the unique architecture of public housing would let the public see what their tax dollars built and, therefore, create public support for the program. The program's history revealed the opposite. The unique architecture became symbolic of an isolated wasteland of extreme poverty, gangs, drugs, and violence. Allowed to decay, the unique architecture became a foreign environment—a place for all city residents to avoid

---

<sup>549</sup> Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 286.

<sup>550</sup> Vale, *Purging the Poorest*, 7-25.

at all costs. The people who lived in the communities became stigmatized by the place they lived, shocking people in the rest of the city that anyone could survive in a place as unlivable as Cabrini-Green.<sup>551</sup> At the same time, critics argued that the government did not help hard working Americans with their rents.

The recent literature was correct that the desire to transform public housing by changing its architecture was not new. Even in the early day of high-rises, some CHA officials, including Elizabeth Wood, questioned the ability of high-rises to provide quality of life for public housing families. This critique really picked up in the 1990s as decades of delayed maintenance cumulated in decaying buildings and the belief that residents were trapped in those buildings. *Chicago Tribune* architecture critic Blair Kamin wrote in 1995 about the need for new public housing to break with the past model: “Unlike the modernist straitjacket that confined public housing after World War II, the new designs are tailored to their regions and the people who live in them.”<sup>552</sup> The idea of a universal public housing architecture moved to one that mimicked the surrounding communities. Public housing should blend in, not stand out.

Spaces like Cabrini-Green had taken on the appearance of European spaces— institutionalized buildings with no decoration or architectural detail on bleak grass areas with little private spaces.<sup>553</sup> The new public housing would banish this model. This new stage of public housing was designed “to move away from monolithic centralized public housing towers isolated by acres of empty space and instead embrace a more granular

---

<sup>551</sup> Whitaker, *Cabrini-Green in Words and Pictures*.

<sup>552</sup> Blair Kamin, “Housing that Works,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 18, 1995.

<sup>553</sup> Witold Rybczynski, “Bauhaus Blunders,” *The Public Interest* 113 (Fall 1993): 82.

approach to integrating low-income and market-rate housing into the surrounding area.”<sup>554</sup> The emphasis on smaller scale buildings placed on a street grid stands in stark contrast to the high-rises. But the new architecture also contrasted with the remaining Frances Cabrini Homes. Across the street from the remaining row houses was 544 Oak at Parkside of Old Town, a new, red brick, mid-rise apartment complex. Even with similar building form, the difference was striking. The physical appearance and amenities were designed to appeal to people who had choices of where to live. The 544 Oak building was red brick with white cement and purple metal accents around windows and doorways. The building’s side was covered with personal balconies. Developers advertised a “green roof” to connect with growing concerns about the environment in urban living. The unique details and colors of 544 Oak highlight how simple the row houses were and how poorly they aged, even if they still had advantages of human scale and some walkability.

Creating an architecture and community design that matched the surrounding areas was supposed to connect public housing with the larger city. But it ran the risk of rendering the need for public housing invisible, and many residents were concerned that without visibility they would no longer be a priority for funding or support services. Invisible public housing could also be a problem if public housing was no longer considered as part of the city’s housing strategy. Recent city plans appeared to confirm this fear. In 2014 the city released a five-year housing plan entitled “Bouncing Back.”

---

<sup>554</sup> Curbed Staff, “What Will Cabrini-Green of the Future Look Like?” *Curbed Chicago*, January 7, 2016, <http://chicago.curbed.com/2016/1/7/10848958/what-will-the-cabrini-green-of-the-future-look-like>, accessed October 16, 2016.

Many noticed that despite a sizable surplus in CHA funds and a growing list of people who needed public housing, the CHA barely fits into the plan at all.<sup>555</sup>

Cabrini-Green was a unique space for many reasons. The two most obvious features were related—desirable location pushed redevelopment towards specific architectural forms. Some Cabrini developments have embraced the form of townhomes and condo, but much of it is scheduled to be mid- and high-rise buildings. The new public housing in Cabrini would break the mold for renovated public housing in many ways—it is mostly one and two bedroom units in high-rises in the middle of some of the most valuable new developments in Chicago.

## II. Near North Side High Rise Living

Architectural theories of the public housing collapse focused on the failure of the high-rise building form and its inability to support public housing families. Catherine Bauer described the impact of architecture on residents: “Life in the usual public housing project just is not the way most American families want to live.”<sup>556</sup> Over time, the families in public housing shifted towards single parents even as they increased in size. This created an environment where children under 18 significantly outnumbered adults. These children, often in units far from the ground and away from adult eyes, turned the high-rises into playgrounds, exacerbating building breakdown. At first glance, Cabrini-Green appeared to be proof of this theory. But the new public housing in Cabrini would

---

<sup>555</sup> Whet Moser, “Where’s the CHA in Chicago’s New Housing Plan?” *Chicago Magazine*, January 24, 2014, <http://www.chicagomag.com/city-life/January-2014/Chicagos-New-Housing-Plan-Is-Broad-and-Data-Driven-But-Wheres-the-CHA/>, accessed September 22, 2016.

<sup>556</sup> Qtd. in Witold Rybczynski, “Bauhaus Blunders,” 83.



not overhaul the architecture type. It sought to create high-rises that will be places that people want to live.

Common visions of “derelict towers” came to define public housing as a place of disorder and criminality more than a place of housing.<sup>557</sup> Public housing towers were distinct from the way many city residents lived in ways the more common, but less concerning forms, of public housing—garden apartments, walk-ups, and single-family homes—did not. The Cabrini Extension and William Green Homes typified what people believed about public housing even if they did not typify public housing as a program.<sup>558</sup> Despite the negative experiences of Cabrini-Green high-rises, some in the CHA continued to defend their use. One reason was that people continued to want to live in them. In a 1994 editorial CHA chairman Vincent Lane wrote, “It should not be a surprise to learn that some public housing residents, like Chicagoans anywhere else, prefer living in high-rises. We cannot assume that viable choices preclude high-rises if, as we have proven at Lake Parc Place, the housing is attractive and safe and the neighborhood provides adequate resources, services and role models to foster community change.”<sup>559</sup> Another reason high-rises continued to remain in favor was due to the nature of Chicago living in certain neighborhoods. In many neighborhoods, notably the Near North Side and the Loop, high-rise living was the norm. This pattern resulted from the high cost of land, which made density the best answer to addressing cost in developments. But it also was a

---

<sup>557</sup> Bloom et al., *Public Housing Myths*, 1.

<sup>558</sup> David Maddon, “Five Myths About Public Housing,” *Washington Post*, September 11, 2015.

<sup>559</sup> Vincent Lane, “High-Rise Part of Strategy in Housing,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 7, 1994.

product of their target clients. Favoring single people, young families, or retirees, they did not need to worry about children's impact on building life.

High-rise living has an established history on the Near North Side. One of the most prominent developments in the Near North Side was Sandburg Village, built in the 1960s. While not the first instance of urban renewal in Chicago, it would become one of the most influential instances of renewal. The location—so close to downtown and the Gold Coast—was seen as the crucial test for Chicago's ability and willingness to rescue itself from blight and decay.<sup>560</sup> The project would be massive—2,600 units in nine high-rise buildings and surrounding townhouses covering 16 acres. Ultimately, it attracted around 8,000 working class residents to the neighborhood, which in turn boosted property values in the surrounding neighborhood.

The impetus behind Sandburg Village was the belief that the central city needed to be saved from the decaying buildings and concentrated poverty. In 1953, Ted Aschman and John Cordwell, Chicago Plan Commission's executive director and director, respectively, discussed the continued struggles of Chicago neighborhoods after decades of depression and blight. The two planners were concerned that the Frances Cabrini Homes had done very little to improve the Near North Side. They believed the Gold Coast and North Michigan Avenue required protection from threats of blight from the west. Inspired by other cities that had used major developments to recreate neighborhoods, they sought a large-scale development whose success would transform the surrounding areas. Basing their city planning on military strategy, two designers

---

<sup>560</sup> J. Linn Allen, "Chicago's Sandburg Village," *Chicago Tribune*, April 19, 1963, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/politics/chi-chicagodays-sandburgvillage-story-story.html>, accessed May 9, 2016.

proposed a stronghold in the neighborhood from which they could launch a campaign of invading, occupying, and fortifying decaying neighborhoods before expanding again.<sup>561</sup>

The project proceeded under the oversight of the Chicago Land Clearance Commission (CLCC). Created after the Illinois legislature passed the Blighted Area Redevelopment Act of 1947, the CLCC was tasked with acquiring slum properties and demolishing them using public authority and funds. Planners Cordwell and Aschman argued that the Near North Side suffered from significant blight between North, Division, LaSalle, and Clark. They had support. The North Michigan Avenue Association, a group of North Michigan Avenue businessmen, wanted the CLCC to remove the blight. Their leader, Arthur Rubloff, a real estate broker, along with investment banker George H. Dovenmuehle and architect Louis R. Solomon, won the bid to redevelop the site.

According to one of the original architects, speed and scale were paramount to success: “It was the most important thing we did, to build it on that scale, because two blocks away we had the biggest negative we had to overcome in Cabrini Green. There were no awards for Sandburg, but it stabilized the whole North Side despite Cabrini.”<sup>562</sup> Famously, 60 percent of the construction at Sandburg Village was completed in 11 months. Sandburg Village was designed as an “instant neighborhood” with shops, recreation, and green spaces all on site. An early architectural review of the site found that the “new mediocrity of other monolithic developments” was not present at Carl

---

<sup>561</sup> Denise DeClue, “The Siege of Sandburg Village,” *Chicago Reader*, January 20, 1978, <http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/the-siege-of-sandburg-village/Content?oid=3295234>, accessed May 5, 2016.

<sup>562</sup> Steve Kerch, “Sandburg Village: Winning a Battle in Urban Renewal,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 14, 1986.

Sandburg Village. Instead, the community reflected the “gregarious, active, and informal atmosphere” of the Near North Side.<sup>563</sup>

The impact was felt immediately on the Near North Side. Many discussions focused on how Sandburg Village positively impacted the neighborhood by preventing Cabrini Green from spreading and further decaying the neighborhood. A 1978 profile of Sandburg Village described the impact: “There are those who say that without Sandburg Village Chicago would be like Detroit today, a dreary, dying city, surrounded by frightened suburbs.” But the description went on to note that “there are those who say that the people who built Sandburg Village stole the homes of poor people and build (sic) homes for the wealthy in their place.”<sup>564</sup> Sandburg Village was designed with a similar mandate as the major public housing developments of the previous decade. An expanded development provided a double motivation: it cleared a lot of undesirable buildings and offered an opportunity to transform the neighborhood wholesale rather than relying on smaller developments to succeed.

Sandburg Village was one of the most successful efforts at middle-class urban renewal in the nation. The architect of Sandburg Village argued that it was the development’s scale that allowed it to succeed long-term. He said, “To be successful, you have to go into an area with a big enough development to change the environment around it, too. The failure of urban renewal, in my opinion, is that people build single buildings

---

<sup>563</sup> Stanley L. Goodfriend, “Carl Sandburg Village: The Study of Urban Renewal,” *Journal of Property Management* 29, no. 2 (Winter 1963): 3.

<sup>564</sup> DeClue, “The Siege of Sandburg Village.”

in rundown areas and expected them to renew the entire area.”<sup>565</sup> The large scale was meant to establish a quick foothold in the area to begin a neighborhood transformation. Not only is the footprint large, but the buildings dominate the street. This would provide a sufficient resident base to transform community demographics.

Sandburg Village had some important similarities to public housing design, and while some were also criticized—and changed—others were simply viewed differently. From the street, Sandburg Village feels unapproachable. One of the critiques of public housing was that the building form and superblock layout were frightening to outsiders and led to further isolation. Sandburg Village was purposeful isolation to avoid having outsiders loiter. Instead of being too open, it was closed off like a fortress with high walls dividing the sidewalk from the property. The high-rise design was in between Cabrini high-rises and the more ornate Gold Coast high-rises and glass towers of the Loop. These buildings are concrete cinderblock, giving them a flat grey appearance. While public housing design was maligned as barren and unfriendly, Sandburg Village demonstrates how close private design could be to public high-rises and still be viewed with different lenses. The architecture—which was described as “intelligent, comfortable, and even congenial”—was affordable for people who could not live in more expensive neighborhoods.<sup>566</sup> Sandburg Village had similar issues with security when it opened. The original site spent a minimal amount on security, only to find that residents buzz people in without checking that they belong in the building. One of the original architects noted

---

<sup>565</sup> Catherine Collins, “Neighborhood: Key to Success of Urban Developments,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 6, 1985.

<sup>566</sup> Ibid.

that there were minimal social places for residents to gather. Even in private developments, architects believe more attention to how people use buildings and how they live can improve community life.<sup>567</sup>

While Sandburg Village served as an example of successful private high-rise development, examples of effective public housing also exist on the Near North Side. The Thomas Flannery Apartments, a housing project for seniors, existed in the neighborhood since 1965 (see Figure 2). This location was within blocks of Cabrini-Green, on North Clybourn. The original development consisted of two 16-story high-rise red brick buildings. Units were primarily designed as single bedroom and studio. The promise of well-maintained lawns and garden spaces, which the residents highlight as a source of pride, also drew people to the location.<sup>568</sup> Community organizations and clubs are encouraged to bring residents together.

The success of public housing for seniors had roots in the program's history. Starting in 1956, Congress supplied special funding for public housing for the elderly on the understanding that these developments required special features for architecture and grounds to meet residents' needs. Higher construction costs allowed for building design with unique additions, including clinics and gardens, and offered the opportunity for more aesthetically pleasing building design. These developments could be located in better neighborhoods than family housing because they were more attractive, residents were not seen as neighborhood problems, and they had greater support from government

---

<sup>567</sup> Steve Kerch, "Sandburg Village: Winning a Battle in Urban Renewal," *Chicago Tribune*, September 14, 1986.

<sup>568</sup> Alan B. Minerbrook, "Flannery Homes Update," *We the People Media*, June 17, 1997, <http://wethepeoplemedia.org/flannery-homes-update-2/#more-4237>, accessed October 31, 2016.

and the public.<sup>569</sup> They benefitted from the fact that residents did not cause as much physical wear on the buildings as those in family housing.

In the *Plan for Transformation*, senior housing, including Flannery, was its own category. In 2001, CHA had an estimated 9,480 units dedicated to seniors in 58 high-rise buildings. They allocated \$350 million for building repair, unit upgrades, and landscaping renovation.<sup>570</sup> Flannery had already undergone significant changes in 1998, with repairs were needed for significant damage from a fireball caused by construction crews hitting a natural gas line. The *Plan* allocated \$16 million for renovations, including a rework of the floor plan to create 125 residential units, site and façade improvements, new interior upgrades to mechanical systems, and the creation of 504 units compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Renovations in public spaces included a new solarium, vegetable and flower gardens, recreation room, laundry facilities every third floor, increased security cameras, and accessible kitchens and bathrooms.<sup>571</sup> The completion of Flannery Apartments under the *Plan for Transformation* also marked the announcement that the two buildings were at complete occupancy. CHA estimates that Flannery has an estimated wait time of 1-2 years, a standard wait time for senior housing across the city.<sup>572</sup> Maintenance continued in recent years. For 2017, the CHA included

---

<sup>569</sup> Wright, *Building the Dream*, 239.

<sup>570</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, “Plan for Transformation: Year 2: MTW Annual Report FY2001.” December 1, 2000.

<sup>571</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, “CHA Senior Housing Overcomes Devastating Fire,” Press Release, July 22, 2009, [http://www.thecha.org/assets/1/16/Flannery\\_press\\_release\\_7\\_21\\_09.pdf](http://www.thecha.org/assets/1/16/Flannery_press_release_7_21_09.pdf), accessed November 10, 2016.

<sup>572</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, “Senior Housing Locations,” October 26, 2016, [http://www.thecha.org/assets/1/6/Senior\\_Sites\\_Average\\_Wait\\_Time\\_-\\_October\\_26\\_2016\\_\(FINAL\)\\_PDF.pdf](http://www.thecha.org/assets/1/6/Senior_Sites_Average_Wait_Time_-_October_26_2016_(FINAL)_PDF.pdf), accessed October 30, 2016.

Flannery in a \$52 million program to upgrade mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and envelope improvements for senior housing.<sup>573</sup>

The Near North Side included a mixture of high-rises and townhomes. To fully integrate into the neighborhood, public housing projects—both older ones like Flannery and the new projects—must include a mix of townhomes, mid-rises, and high-rises. Right now, the most popular appearance is the red brick facade that connects with the high value architecture around Chicago even as it was the texture of Cabrini’s “Reds.” The next phase will involve more glass high-rises, connecting the neighborhood with the high-rises near Lake Michigan, in the Loop, and in the Gold Coast. Architecture is connecting the Cabrini-Green footprint to the rest of the city, but it is not always the architecture that the new stage of public housing publicly touted.

### III. Successful Renovated Public Housing in Chicago

The *Plan for Transformation* presented mass scale demolition as the only way forward for Chicago public housing. Demolition of most of CHA’s high-rise developments pushed forward on the belief that private developers would move in to claim open land for new mixed-income developments. Cabrini-Green was the prime exhibit for why public housing high-rises should be completely removed. But this focus overlooked some of the successful models for public housing renewal in Chicago that kept the community and, in many places, the buildings intact while making significant changes to the architecture to improve daily life.

---

<sup>573</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, “CHA Proposed FY2017 Annual Plan for Public Comment,” Draft for Public Comment August 1-31, 2016, 23.



One model of public housing renovation came from Wentworth Gardens. The Federal Housing Authority constructed Wentworth in 1945 for war workers. After the war, the CHA transitioned the site to low-income rental housing. Wentworth covered a four-block-area on the city's south side. It housed 422 units in 37 buildings, making it one of the least dense developments of that time. A group of three-story apartment buildings were surrounded by two-story row houses laid out in a grid pattern. The architecture was simple. One historian described the design as a "disappointing repetition of earlier public housing in Chicago."<sup>574</sup> Yet despite its architectural shortcomings, residents were attached to their homes and would mobilize to protect them against outside pressure.

The neighborhood came under threat in the 1980s when the Chicago White Sox built a new stadium on West 35<sup>th</sup> Street. By that time, Wentworth had deteriorated under decades of CHA neglect and mismanagement. At first, it appeared that Wentworth Gardens would be torn down to make way for a stadium parking lot. But the residents organized and saved their community. To soften the residents' concerns about what a new baseball stadium would mean for their community, the Sox players and employees constructed a playground and baseball diamond on property, donated money to community programs, and provided \$120,000 a year for a public housing Little League.<sup>575</sup> Another close call for the development came in the mid-1990s when HUD determined to tear down decrepit units across the country.

---

<sup>574</sup> Bowly, Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 47

<sup>575</sup> John Bebow, "It's U.S. Insular Field," *Chicago Tribune*, October 3, 2005.

Wentworth residents were successful in organizing because they were organizing for concrete purposes: to save their homes and neighborhood. The president of the Local Advisory Council, at the opening of the remodeled field house, took credit on behalf of the residents for the improvements, “We just had faith that this was coming and we continued to work until it was here.”<sup>576</sup> She considered that day to be the best of her life, for it represented a new birth for her community. Their collective vision for the community was inspired by memories of what Wentworth had been when they first called it home and a continuing love of the community.<sup>577</sup>

The *Plan for Transformation* allotted \$18 million to renovate the interior of each Wentworth unit and to provide more landscaping and green spaces for children to play. The new interiors came with updated kitchens and bathrooms. The *Plan* would alter the community in subtle ways. The *Plan* would trim the 378 units of the original community—about 150 were occupied at the time of renovation—to 350 units. The trimmed area would be used for parking and making the community ADA compliant. The community also has a new gate surrounding the community, designed to let police cars to drive onto the green spaces in case of emergency.

The last family to leave Cabrini-Green was relocated to Wentworth Gardens. The *Chicago Tribune* reporter described it as “a rehabbed public housing complex.”<sup>578</sup> Yet Wentworth’s renovations had its costs. New residents, unfamiliar with the history of

---

<sup>576</sup> Karen E. Pride, “New Field House Blooms at Wentworth Gardens,” *Chicago Defender*, December 14, 2004.

<sup>577</sup> Sheila Radford-Hill, “Foreword,” in Feldman and Stall, *The Dignity of Resistance*, xiii.

<sup>578</sup> Mary Schmich, “Closing the Door on Infamous Era,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 10, 2010.

resident activism amongst Wentworth's women, were skeptical of this type of activism and had trouble joining in on these efforts. The older residents are proud of what they have, but know that they do not have all the benefits they organized and worked for.<sup>579</sup>

The mixed history of Wentworth Gardens suggests that communities do not just happen. They develop over time as people come together to work on common interests or interact in public spaces. The CHA sought to develop community in its early plans by including public spaces, including gardens, parks, pools, and by supporting social organizations that met onsite. Budget constraints, however, limited these efforts and the residents had to build community on their own. Wentworth Garden residents were successful in organizing to save and improve their community because they knew one another and shared common goals. But creating a sense of community does not guarantee that this will persist. CHA renovations led to many people moving out and new people without the same sense of community moving in. Residents who remained try to keep the sense of community going, but they are challenged.

Another example of public housing renewal highlighted the role of site management. Raymond Hilliard Homes, located from 22<sup>nd</sup> and State to 21<sup>st</sup> and Clark Street, was part of the State Street corridor, a collection of five major projects that stretched for 34 blocks and housed almost 30 percent of CHA residents.<sup>580</sup> Designed by famed architecture Bertrand Goldberg, it was the most modern, well-constructed CHA developments when it opened in 1966. Goldberg's vision was that public housing had an

---

<sup>579</sup> D. Bradford Hunt, *Out of the Loop*, "Public Housing Tour," Vernacular Architecture Forum, Chicago, June 4, 2015.

<sup>580</sup> Bowly, Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 115.

important relationship to the people who lived there. It should “recognize them, not simply store them.”<sup>581</sup> The site contained two 22-story arched buildings on the north end and two 16-story circular buildings. The two taller building would foreshadow Goldberg’s River City, completed in 1986, and the two circular ones recalled Marina City, opened in 1964.<sup>582</sup> Despite this architectural prestige, within a few years residents said the building was “crumbling beneath our feet,” citing leaky roofs, cracking walls, and damp and cold apartments.<sup>583</sup> In response to their concerns about how the building was being run, the Goldberg firm remained involved with the day-to-day operations. They effectively advocated for the development, because their reputation gave them more clout than other resident organizations.

Hilliard was one of the first *Plan for Transformation* projects to break ground. Upon announcing the start of renovations in 2002, CHA CEO Terry Peterson said, “By beginning this exciting rehabilitation project, we’re breaking with the sad legacy of public housing in Chicago. In its place, we’re offering concrete proof that we can reverse the history of failed public housing policy in this city and build a new future of hope.”<sup>584</sup> The \$100 million plan to renovate Hilliard, would take it from 710 senior and family units to 654. At the time of redevelopment, only 263 households lived on site. They remained on the property during redevelopment, but were consolidated into two

---

<sup>581</sup> Matthew Messner, “How Developers Are Rebuilding Affordable Units 20 Years After Chicago Began to Dismantle Its Public Housing,” *Architect’s Newspaper*, September 8, 2016, <http://archpaper.com/2016/09/chicago-affordable-units-public-housing/#gallery-0-slide-0>, accessed October 12, 2016.

<sup>582</sup> Jeanette Almada, “Mixing It Up: Hilliard Homes Is Latest CHA Project to be Approved for a Makeover,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 22, 2000.

<sup>583</sup> “Poor Conditions at Hilliard Homes,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, January 23, 1968.

<sup>584</sup> Chinta Strausberg, “CHA Begins Hilliard Rehab,” *Chicago Defender*, November 14, 2002.

buildings.<sup>585</sup> The Holsten Real Estate Development Corp—a prominent developer working with the CHA, including North Town Village near Cabrini-Green—was selected to renovate. The plan called for Holsten to buy the buildings and sign a 99-year lease for the land. The CHA would provide \$33 million, with the remaining funds coming from three outside sources including TIF and historic development tax breaks.

The community represented a different model for a mixed-income neighborhood. The design placed two different groups in one community—the first time the CHA combined senior and family high-rise housing.<sup>586</sup> The circular buildings were designated for the seniors and the arched ones held the families, a model that continued after the renovations. The 2002 renovations were geared to creating a community that was approximately half public housing and half affordable housing units. New market-rate condos were part of a combined living and retail development called Pointe 1900, located just to the north of Hilliard.<sup>587</sup>

Hilliard Homes are appreciated as a positive contribution to Chicago architecture. Hilliard is viewed as a significant part of Bertrand Goldberg’s legacy alongside Marina City.<sup>588</sup> It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1997. The distinct architectural features were one of the key attributes that encouraged the 2002 renovations. Hilliard not only had unique buildings, its location—within a 13-acre park—contributed to the site’s allure. The developer said they “understood the architectural and

---

<sup>585</sup> Evan Osnos, “CHA Panel OKs Preservation of Hilliard Homes,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 14, 2000.

<sup>586</sup> Ibid.

<sup>587</sup> John Handley, “Rehab in Store for CHA Landmark,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 24, 2002.

<sup>588</sup> Rahm Emanuel, “Tear Down Prentice,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 31, 2012.

historical significance of these buildings, and wanted to keep their historic properties. We felt that would be a great marketing advantage to some other redeveloping under way around Hilliard.”<sup>589</sup> The historic nature of the building meant that historic preservation tax credits from the federal government could be used in addition to more traditional public housing funds to assist with the renovations. Hilliard was one of the only family high-rise communities to survive into the twenty-first century.

Another method for revitalizing communities involves making impactful changes to architecture. Archer Courts was one of the most successful models for this method. Originally built in 1951, the 147 units in two mid-rise buildings were designed for families displaced by highway construction. By the 1990s, Archer Courts had been allowed to deteriorate with residents reporting major problems with security, heating and cooling systems, broken mechanical systems, rat infestation, and crack dens in the stairwell. In 1997, the Chicago Community Development Corporation, a company that saved 2,000 apartments for low-income families in Chicago, used new federal renovation programs to salvage Archer Courts. They bought the CHA’s two mid-rise buildings for \$650,000. Their renovation plan was less expensive than tearing down the buildings and could be accomplished without forcing any family to permanently relocate from the site.

The redesign involved both the buildings’ exteriors and their unit interiors. One of the most dramatic changes was erecting a glass wall to cover the building’s facade. The building had been constructed with open corridors that had a chain-link fence that could keep people and animals out but did little to protect residents from Chicago’s snow and rain. The addition of the glass facade was dramatic both inside and out of the building.

---

<sup>589</sup> Jeanette Almada, “Mixing It Up,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 22, 2000.

The glass curtain allowed hallways to be secure from weather and provided new, useable space for residents. It also gave the exterior a more contemporary feel. According to the president of the Archer Courts Tenant Association, “Nobody thought the idea of putting glass over the sides of the buildings would really work, but it changed everything. You couldn’t help but see a rosier day.”<sup>590</sup> The glass was a mix of plain and frosted glass panels to break up the large wall. Doors to units were painted primary colors, viewed through the glass, which gives the project a multi-dimensional appearance from the street and provides bright corridors on the inside.

Archer Courts residents included a mix of African American families and retired Chinese American residents. The African American families occupied the larger units (12 three-bedrooms and 29 two-bedrooms) while the Chinese residents occupied most of the 106 one-bedroom units. The family units were located on the ground level so parents could watch children in outdoor spaces and the community’s playground. This arrangement also meant that the community’s children had little excuse to use the elevators. The mid-rise building housed the Chinese residents. This residential breakdown was significant in the remodel. Peter Landon, the architect, visited all 147 units to study how residents used their space and gather suggestions about how units could be better designed. According to Landon, this interaction was important to the project’s success: “It gives them a sense of ownership and empowerment. Nobody understood the actual plans, but by the time the renovation happened, they’d seen all the materials.”<sup>591</sup> Some changes were specific to resident requests. African American

---

<sup>590</sup> Gwenda Blair, “Redesign Transforms a Slum,” *Toronto Star*, January 19, 2003.

<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.*

families requested moving light switches lower and adding electrical outlets. Based on how Chinese residents used their space, he lowered the kitchen cabinets. Public spaces were created inside the building, including a computer room, community areas with attached kitchens, and a wellness center. The goal for these spaces was to foster a sense of community between the elderly Chinese residents and African American families.

The second phase of renovation involved the construction of 43 new townhomes on 1.1 acres of vacant land to the immediate west of Archer Courts. Thirty-four townhomes were sold at market rate, five were designated for affordable housing, and four belong to the CHA in exchange for the land. Whereas the original buildings included strategic uses of blue to break up the scale, the townhomes were yellow with green window accents. The new structures paired well with the established buildings creating a unique, architecturally stimulating, and cohesive community. But the connection between the success of the first phase and the possibility of the second was clear. The deputy commissioner of the Chicago Department of Housing described these changes: “When you turn an average-looking building into something that looks good, that creates a domino effect. You never would have had folks willing to pay up to \$350,000 for townhouses in the shadow of Archer Courts if it wasn’t renovated.”<sup>592</sup>

The townhomes were connected to the two mid-rises by common green space and pathways. The development’s central areas took on a Chinese appearance with two structures, based on pagoda designs, serving as communal outdoor space. The communal space, however, just had hints of Chinese architecture so the African American families

---

<sup>592</sup> Ibid.



would still feel welcome in these spaces. These buildings were created as a celebration of the new construction at Archer Courts and new community life in Chinatown.<sup>593</sup> This project answered the need for housing in Chinatown and provided more public housing for larger families. Chinatown Chamber of Commerce served as the community sponsor, getting community input into construction and holding a lottery for affordable units.

The remodel was well received by residents, the CHA, local community members, and architecture groups. Archer Courts became the rare public housing community to win architecture awards in the 2000s. The redesign won an American Institute of Architects Distinguished Building Citation of Merit and the Driehaus Award for Excellence in Architecture in Community Design from the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation, a Chicago foundation focused on supporting historic preservation, encouraging quality architecture and landscape, and conserving open space. One member of Driehaus Foundation defined the project's success, saying, "It's not the image of public housing at all."<sup>594</sup> Archer Courts followed public housing models of having distinct spaces—the entire property was surrounded by rod-iron fences and has security guards—but the physical appearance of the buildings and the arrangement of public spaces made it look like a small community, not a mass-scale project.

---

<sup>593</sup> "Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Award for Architectural Excellence, 2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Landon Bone Baker Architects, for Archer Courts Townhouses," Chicago Neighborhood Development Awards, 2005 <http://www.lisc-cnda.org/Past-winners/11th-Annual-CNDA-Winners-2005/Richard-H-Driehaus-Foundation-Award-for-Architectural-Excellence-2nd-Place-Landon-Bone-Baker-Architects-for-Archer-Courts-Townhouses.html>, accessed May 5, 2016.

<sup>594</sup> Dawn Turner Trice, "Reflecting on How Buildings Shape Lives," *Chicago Tribune*, December 30, 2013.

The success of Archer Courts was founded on resident input on design, good management, maintained community space, and attractive architectural updates.<sup>595</sup> It also highlighted the role of a small community population and footprint in fostering a stable community. Before renovation, Archer Courts was overlooked 147-unit community near Chinatown. The decision to take over the project and renew the physical buildings and add useful community spaces for adults and children transformed the project. The decision to put larger units on the ground floor meant that children had immediate access to play spaces and did not have a reason to venture into the mid-rise with its smaller units, generally for elderly residents. It was a successful mix of racial groups and family organizations in a single community. The design, especially the use of color and the glass wall, make the buildings attractive and more appealing than traditional public housing. Picking local references, like the Chinese influence on public spaces, creates a sense of place that connects the mixed-income community with the larger neighborhood.

The *Plan for Transformation* focused primarily on demolition and construction of replacement mixed-income communities. This strategy overlooked some successful public housing renovation that the CHA has already had. What has worked are solutions designed for specific sites with special focus on architecture and community building. They also were efforts that rebuilt public housing to primarily serve its current clientele, low-income city residents. But diversity was still able to flourish in terms of racial groups and family lifecycles. It is possible to rebuild public housing. But it requires a more direct

---

<sup>595</sup> Hunt, *Out of the Loop*, "Public Housing Tour," Vernacular Architecture Forum, Chicago, June 4, 2015.

focus on the community itself and, frequently, significant help from community organizations beyond the CHA.

#### IV. Beyond Housing

From the onset, the *Plan for Transformation* it was clear that remaking public housing required more than replacing substandard units with new, improved ones. According to one critic, “Housing that works is concerned with more than housing. It must rebuild people as well as cities, provide social services to troubled families and link homes to neighborhoods that have stores, banks and jobs.”<sup>596</sup> Supportive services, including counseling and job training, were included in the *Plan for Transformation* as a program to provide further assistance to public housing residents in transition. Early mistakes in implementation left many residents without access to promised services. As a result, this aspect of the *Plan for Transformation* was considered a weakness of the early reform era.<sup>597</sup> Starting around 2008, a new team came in to improve the delivery of social services, which, in turn, boosted results.

The impact of social services on the most vulnerable supported the thesis that CHA reforms of public housing programs should move beyond housing. The Urban Institute conducted a decade-long study of public housing residents as they transitioned. It concluded that the greatest improvements came in residents’ overall housing quality and increased employment and improved mental health. One group included the most

---

<sup>596</sup> Blair Kamin, “Housing that Works,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 18, 1995.

<sup>597</sup> Business and Professional People for the Public Interest, “The Third Side: A Mid-Course Report on Chicago’s Transformation of Public Housing,” September 2009, pg. 6.

vulnerable and hardest to house who received intensive supportive services to improve their mental health and self-sufficiency. In 2011, 51 percent residents reported having a job and 70 percent reported having had one in the past year, increases of 18 percent and 25 percent, respectively, since 2007.<sup>598</sup> Researchers also found that those who received supportive services reported improved mental and physical health. Residents who reported their health as fair or poor health fell from 50 percent to 38 percent while those not in the program increased their reported poor health from 36 percent to 48 percent over the same period.<sup>599</sup> Many of the improvements were most dramatic in individuals or families who moved to traditional public housing communities.

The importance of providing services, not just housing, was recognized by public housing authorities and was a vital change in policy. A housing expert with the Metropolitan Planning Council argued, “Housing programs alone, particularly when serving a historically disenfranchised population, have not been able to achieve long-term family self-sufficiency. It is hard to overemphasize the strain that comes with living in chronically violent environments.”<sup>600</sup> Young people, in particular, appeared susceptible to the effects of living in violence and showed little impact from being aided with supportive services. One-third of teenagers studied had been suspended from school and one-fifth of teenagers and one-fourth of young adults had run-ins with the police.<sup>601</sup>

---

<sup>598</sup> Susan J. Popkin et al. “CHA Residents and the Plan for Transformation,” *Urban Institute*, January 11, 2013, pg. 3.

<sup>599</sup> Ibid.

<sup>600</sup> Megan Cottrell, “Did Chicago’s Plan for Transformation Succeed?” *Chicago Muckrakers*, March 25, 2013, <http://www.chicagonow.com/chicago-muckrakers/2013/03/did-chicagos-plan-for-transformation-succeed/>, accessed October 4, 2016.

<sup>601</sup> Popkin, “CHA Residents and the Plan for Transformation,” pg. 4.

From a human side, the major purpose of the *Plan for Transformation* was to assist the families who lived through the worst days of Chicago's public housing to achieve self-sufficiency. By design, this *Plan* required moving thousands of families from desolate conditions. Providing services to assist on their efforts to find employment, continue their education, and access city services was a crucial part of creating successful mixed-income communities. This aspect was easy to overlook because it did not involve brick and concrete, but residents were significant to build community.

#### V. Private Investment/Public Interest

The *Plan for Transformation*, like any major plan, was based on assumptions about future conditions. The market crash of 2008 radically altered many of these assumptions. Part of the major overhaul of the CHA in the *Plan for Transformation* was to transition the agency from builder and manager to facilitator of public housing. To achieve that goal, CHA needed sufficient buy-in from private developers and managers. A crash in the housing market in Chicago challenged the ability for these developers to make a profit. Chicago was hit hard by the recession. Sixteen percent of all homes in the city went into foreclosure from 2009 to 2012.<sup>602</sup> During a condo-building boom, an increasing number sat empty. Demand remained weak for years. As of 2016, average home prices in the city were 18 percent below their high point in March 2007.<sup>603</sup> All of

---

<sup>602</sup> Chicago Rehab Network, "City of Chicago: Housing Fact Sheet," July 2013, [www.chicagorehab.org/resources/docs/policy/fiveyearplan/fact\\_book\\_2013/crn\\_chicago\\_housing\\_fact\\_sheet\\_july2013.pdf](http://www.chicagorehab.org/resources/docs/policy/fiveyearplan/fact_book_2013/crn_chicago_housing_fact_sheet_july2013.pdf), accessed January 15, 2017.

<sup>603</sup> Will Racke, "Chicago's Housing Market Predicted to be Worst in America Next Year," *Chicago Business Journal*, December 1, 2016, <http://www.bizjournals.com/chicago/news/2016/12/01/chicago-housing-market-predicted-to-be-worst-in-us.html>, accessed January 15, 2017.

this complicated the already challenging work of getting private developers to work with the CHA to provide the number of units they needed to achieve the *Plan's* goals.

One area where the market crash impacted public housing residents was in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program. In this program, residents received vouchers to rent privately owned and managed units. Despite efforts to encourage voucher users to move to prosperous neighborhoods, most the almost 44,000 voucher holders in 2016 live in high poverty areas on the city's south and west sides. These areas were hit hard by the market crash since many of the African American residents were relying on subprime mortgages to finance their homes. For some property managers, this collapse was an opportunity. Some bought foreclosed buildings while larger ones bought entire blocks to develop with Section 8 voucher renters as the primary targets. Despite transitioning from public housing to private, residents dealt with similar issues. A 2016 study found that around 40 percent of public housing residents in privately owned buildings lived in units that had at least one code violation in the previous five years. Many of these violations came when public housing residents were in those units.<sup>604</sup> Problems included minor issues like misfiled paperwork to major ones including no heat, rodent infestation, and structural issues. Some property managers offered numbers for residents to file complaints, but many did not. The CHA did not have a system in place where they were made aware of building code violations in Section 8 units to provide resident assistance. Residents selected units in these neighborhoods due to a variety of factors: they were familiar with the neighborhoods and may have known people living

---

<sup>604</sup> Chris Fusco et al, "Cashing In on the CHA," *Chicago Sun-Times*, April 23, 2016.

there, their voucher amount went further in these areas than wealthier ones, and landlords in wealthier areas did not have an incentive to rent to them.<sup>605</sup>

A second way the market crash impacted the *Plan* was in the creation of new units. Chicago's public housing demolition confirmed the importance of location in the real estate market. Developers were eager to work in Cabrini-Green to cash in on the development of surrounding areas of Gold Coast, Old Town, River North, and Goose Island. But while Cabrini-Green drew interest from private developers, many other CHA developments remained empty fields after the buildings were torn down. This evidence suggests that Cabrini may not be the model that could be used for the rest of the city. People want to live on the Near North Side. Demand for the area emerged before Cabrini-Green high-rises were torn down. In comparison, the State Street Corridor beyond Hilliard remained empty fields because there was not sufficient demand to support a market-driven housing plan. This fact challenged those who want Cabrini to be a model of public housing reform. Without the benefit of a desirable location for development it becomes difficult to get private developers—the primary builders of new public housing units—interested in building on CHA land or abiding by the mixed-income model.

Even in areas where interest existed, like Cabrini-Green, experienced troubles with market conditions. Developers that were already involved in mixed-income construction before the 2008 crash saw their properties lose value, which limited their ability to continue these projects. Holston reports that it did not make any money on the first phase of Parkside of Old Town, after having to cut the price of condos by 40 percent

---

<sup>605</sup> Lolly Bowean, "Struggles Continue for Many CHA Voucher Holders," *Chicago Tribune*, September 25, 2014.

to sell them.<sup>606</sup> These price cuts also affected earlier market-rate buyers, since the drop in price destroyed their equity.<sup>607</sup> Developers and buyers often saw themselves as participating in neighborhood redevelopment rather than a strictly real-estate transaction. This vision and some helpful financing might make mixed-income able to withstand some short-term economic troubles. But for the new public housing to succeed long-term, it needs sustained market success to continue to bring in developers and buyers.

CHA's focus on bringing in private housing developers into projects with the promise of new market-rate units favors new construction. It is not clear to all that this model is the best for a project large enough to address Chicago's housing needs. The *Plan* still has not delivered all the 25,000 units it promised. The affordable housing incentives have not provided many units as developers opted to pay into the Chicago Low-Income Housing Trust Fund<sup>608</sup> rather than build units in their developments. This fact encouraged some critics to return to proposals the CHA rejected before the *Plan* was passed. Unit rehabilitation, which was part of the original *Plan* but has been pushed to the periphery by a desire for new communities, offers another means of getting more units available to residents faster and cheaper. Leah Levinger, Chicago Housing Initiative executive director, described overlooked successes:

---

<sup>606</sup> Zach Mortice, "When Public Housing Goes Private," *Curbed Chicago*, September 28, 2016, <http://chicago.curbed.com/2016/9/28/13063710/chicago-public-housing-cha>, accessed November 10, 2016.

<sup>607</sup> Mary Ellen Podmolik, "Plan for Transformation a Tough Sell in Weak Market," *Chicago Tribune*, June 10, 2011.

<sup>608</sup> The Chicago Low-Income Housing Trust Fund was created by the Chicago City Council in 1989 with the goal of providing affordable housing through construction financing and rental subsidies. The Fund originally financed by developers of Presidential Towers hoping to buy good will of housing advocates after tearing down low-income housing to build their complex. They paid \$5 million to make-up for not having any affordable housing onsite.



One of the points we've been trying to make with CHA leadership, and now with City Council, is the way we see the CHA reaching its goal is if it moves away from a demolition/new construction model, which is extremely costly and extremely slow, and moves towards a rehabilitation model. If you look at the CHA's unit-delivery over the course of the plan for transformation, 74 percent of the units they've brought back online have been through rehab, and only 12 percent have been through new construction.<sup>609</sup>

Renovations took advantage of the physical stock available and the fact that the CHA is one of the largest landowners in the city. The decision to tear down many of the major projects in the city before there were approved plans to remake the site limited the CHA's ability to move towards renovation of empty units. The Frances Cabrini Homes, which as of December 2016, remain standing. They could, in theory, be renovated. In fact, the original *Plan for Transformation* was supposed to renovate these units and keep them as 100 percent public housing. Despite the need for units, within the last few years the decision has been made that these too will be demolished and replaced with mixed-used, mixed-income housing.

At the *Plan's* onset, critics felt that the CHA was rushing to demolish old units and replace them with mixed-income communities without stopping to answer fundamental questions about the projects goals and how they fit with the needs of public housing residents and other needy city residents. Over fifteen years after the *Plan* was announced and after several developments in Cabrini have been opened, many issues remain unaddressed. Peter Landon, head of Landon Bone Baker Architects and responsible for many desirable mixed-income and low-income communities, sees issues inherent in the *Plan for Transformation*. He says, "Is it the right thing to do for public

---

<sup>609</sup> Qtd in Moser, "Where's the CHA in Chicago's New Housing Plan?" *Chicago Magazine*, January 24, 2014.

housing? I don't know. Trying to get back those units is tough. Do I think it's good to do what we do? Yeah. Are there problems? There are huge problems."<sup>610</sup> The rebuilding of Cabrini-Green will continue as the market supports private development. But questions of how these communities answer the need for affordable and public housing need careful considerations lest these efforts become closer to urban renewal than mixed-income.

## VI. Changing Plans

The unanticipated market conditions and expanded timeframe were challenges to the CHA. The *Plan for Transformation* had laid out a bold vision—one that was provided more difficult to implement than to design. A staple of the *Plan for Transformation* was CHA's subtle adjustment to the way the *Plan* would develop—from timeframe to community design to resident services. The changing nature of the *Plan* added to resident uncertainty and bolstered criticism about the *Plan*'s ultimate goals and impact.

One of the hallmarks of the *Plan for Transformation* was the fact that plans for individual locations changed over time. Julia Lathrop Homes, covering 35 acres on Lincoln Park's western edge, was one example of how transition developed. One of the earliest CHA developments, Lathrop Homes became a model housing development recognized on the National Register of Historic Places in 2012. Lathrop was known for its diversity, including African-Americans, whites, and Latino immigrants, who created a tight-knit community dating back to the 1970s. As part of the *Plan for Transformation*, the CHA stopped accepting residents for vacant units in 2000, because of scheduled renovations. Yet no redevelopment occurred. By 2006, it was scheduled to become a

---

<sup>610</sup> Mortice, "When Public Housing Goes Private," *Curbed Chicago*, September 28, 2016.

mixed-income community. The plan drew criticism, as it would eliminate public housing units in a city that had so much need. Over this period, through a combination of CHA convincing and coercion, families moved out with no new residents allowed back. In 2000, 747 of the original 925 units were occupied. In 2014, that number was 140. Many residents who accepted Section 8 vouchers expected to return by 2010, when the rehabilitation was scheduled for completion. They are still waiting, as the building remain standing but devoid of people. A 2014 report by the Chicago Housing Initiative uncovered that the CHA continued to receive operating subsidies for each empty unit, totaling more than \$7 million annually for Lathrop.<sup>611</sup>

One of the factors behind renovations was what to do with vacant units. Vacancies were rampant in CHA stock by the 1990s. They were a measure of project success in the *Plan for Transformation*. Developments over 300 units with a vacancy rate above 10 percent and with units that would cost more to renovate than to provide a housing voucher were scheduled for demolition.<sup>612</sup> Despite this focus on vacancies, they remained problematic in CHA stock. A 2012 report found that nearly one in five CHA units were being held offline despite a sizable waiting list. The CHA argued that the empty units could not be given to residents for two reasons: the units would not meet federal occupancy standards and the units were part of developments that were awaiting redevelopment. Such answers did not sit well with activists and residents who saw 282,000

---

<sup>611</sup> Maya Dukmasova, "The Fight to Preserve a Model Public Housing Project," *Chicago Reader*, June 12, 2014, <http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/public-housing-authority-lathrop-homes-community-partners/Content?oid=13902268>, accessed September 23, 2016.

<sup>612</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, *Plan for Transformation*, 14.

Chicago households apply for 40,000 spots on the CHA waitlists in 2014. They saw something more behind the vacancies—namely, a decision to turn away from public housing. One tenant leader commented, “The issue is not just vacancies. The issue is that the CHA is trying to get out of the public housing business.”<sup>613</sup>

The CHA’s vacant units were significant beyond impacting how residents related to the agency; they impacted the CHA’s finances. A 2014 analysis of CHA finances found that although HUD provided funding for vouchers for all demolished units, the CHA only allotted vouchers to residents that lived in their units when the *Plan* began rather than the full number allotted. Rather than using federal dollars to supply the maximum number of housing choice vouchers possible to deal with their waitlist and wait time, the CHA transferred the money to non-cash outlays. From FY 2004 to FY 2012, the CHA ran an annual surplus of around \$90 million. For every one dollar of debt, the CHA has \$5.23 in cash reserves.<sup>614</sup> Rather than increase the number of vouchers and risk residents attempting to gain access to neighborhoods that had not had public housing before, which could cause a costly backlash, the CHA paid off almost all their debt, overfunded their pension system, and grew their reserves. A study found from 2008 to 2012 the CHA supplied 13,500 fewer vouchers per year than HUD supplied funding for. The CHA argued that their strong financial position—it had the highest credit rating of any housing authority in the nation—should be praised as responsible government.<sup>615</sup>

---

<sup>613</sup> Qtd in Angela Caputo, “Home Evasion,” *Chicago Reporter*, July 2, 2012, <http://chicagoreporter.com/home-evasion/>, accessed September 23, 2016.

<sup>614</sup> Center for Tax and Budget Accountability, “A Fiscal Review of the Chicago Housing Authority,” July 30, 2014, pg. 1.

<sup>615</sup> Jason Grotto, “Chicago Housing Authority Stockpiles Cash, Pays Debts as Families Languish on Waiting List,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 13, 2017.

Concerns about residents' fate continued to play into CHA decision-making. Residents continued file suit to ensure that their voices continued to be heard in the planning process. This concern was based, in part, on the fact that the *Plan* included a net loss of 13,000 hard units across the city.<sup>616</sup> When they started the *Plan for Transformation*, the CHA had around 18,000 households in their buildings. The plans for mixed-income communities would include around 8,000. Analysis of CHA's efforts regarding the *Plan for Transformation* found that most of the long-term benefits for mixed-income neighborhoods would go to new residents rather than those families who were still in traditional public housing when it was demolished.<sup>617</sup> The amount of time it was taking to get replacement units available for those with a right to return was the main reason why so few of them were expected to benefit from new developments. The use of vouchers, which had been a source of criticism, improved. In 2014 and 2015, under pressure from a new HUD rule, the CHA achieved 89 percent voucher utilization rate with a goal of reaching 90 percent.<sup>618</sup> It is unclear if these efforts will continue as the CHA's incentives changed. The CHA's MTW agreement was extended to 2028 and they no longer had to prove they were effectively using funds to get it.

One of the original strengths of the *Plan for Transformation* was the way it brought in other city departments, social agencies, and private developers. This was not

---

<sup>616</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, *Plan for Transformation*, January 6, 2000, 2.

<sup>617</sup> Lawrence J. Vale and Erin Graves. "The Chicago Housing Authority's Plan for Transformation: What Does the Research Show So Far?" June 8, 2010, pg. 25.

<sup>618</sup> Center for Tax and Budget Accountability, "Seeing Improvements, Questioning Priorities: Updating 'A Fiscal Review of the Chicago Housing Authority,'" January 13, 2017, <https://budgetblog.ctbaonline.org/https-budgetblog-ctbaonline-org-seeing-improvements-questioning-priorities-a5c67ea3e4c6#.za36dhbdk>, accessed January 16, 2017.

the CHA's project alone.<sup>619</sup> But in the later years, the role of the CHA in the future of affordable housing in Chicago has come into question. Chicago's most recent housing plan did not include the CHA as a major source for housing in the city. The plan's authors described "Bouncing Back" as "a citywide plan that builds on market forces."<sup>620</sup> The goal was to unleash market forces in neighborhoods that are growing or stable and to provide supportive services to jumpstart development in weak or transitional neighborhoods. The CHA was noticeably unaddressed in the plan, although the CHA's *Plan Forward* was included as an additional plan addressing economic development and neighborhood issues. A summary of the *Plan Forward* appears in *Bouncing Back's* appendix, although there is no clear explanation how the CHA's work fits in the larger plan. The limited presence of the CHA in Chicago's housing plans should not be interpreted as a lack of need. A 2016 survey of Chicago homeowners and renters found that almost half of them could not afford where they lived, based on the standard of 30 percent of income for affordable housing.<sup>621</sup>

## VII. Making Place in a Mixed-Income Neighborhood

Many studies of mixed-income or integrated neighborhoods discuss the use of space. For many observers, going back to the HUD takeover, the chief goal of Chicago's public housing renovation should reconnect public housing developments with the rest of

---

<sup>619</sup> Business and Professional People for the Public Interest, "The Third Side," 6.

<sup>620</sup> City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development, "Bouncing Back: Five Year Housing Plan, 2014-2018 (Draft)," December 2013, pg. 7.

<sup>621</sup> Gail MarksJarvis, "Nearly Half of Chicago Residents Can't Afford Where They Live, Study Says," *Chicago Tribune*, June 16, 2016.

the city through new architectural and policy frameworks.<sup>622</sup> From this view, changing the physical design and eliminating physical and social barriers could lessen the residents' political and social isolation. This ideal was framework for redevelopment. Policymakers, real estate developers, former residents, and prospective residents debated how these ideals should be implemented in new mixed-income developments. At the center of these debates are two questions: what is the correct way to use public and private spaces and who should decide what that use is.

The CHA's *Plan for Transformation* required specific behaviors from residents to qualify and remain eligible for public housing. Therefore, the types of regulation become significant for people who want to live in these communities. Basic requirements included active employment or education, no criminal convictions, and compliance with earlier rent and CHA requirements. But many of the new developments had specific requirements that further pushed middle class ideals of homeownership and community participation. This was designed to select public housing residents who fit in with community norms established by market buyers. Mary Pattillo described this pattern as "tyranny of the middle class"<sup>623</sup> Some studies found that these requirements made it difficult for mixed-income communities to attract public housing residents, even those who meet the additional requirements were deterred from moving in.<sup>624</sup>

---

<sup>622</sup> Blair Kamin, "Listening is the First Step," *Chicago Tribune*, June 23, 1995.

<sup>623</sup> Mary Pattillo. "Gentrification: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly." Panel Remarks. February 5, 2008. A segment of In the K/Now, a series presented by the Chicago History Museum. <http://www.wbez.org/episodes-segments/gentrification-good-bad-and-ugly>, accessed December 19, 2016.

<sup>624</sup> Vale and Graves, "The Chicago Housing Authority's Plan for Transformation," 21.

While the use of architecture was supposed to make it difficult for outsiders to distinguish public and market rate housing, community rules frequently divided residents along those lines. Public housing residents were subject to rules about behavior and housing decoration that market-rate residents were not. This meant that everyone in the community could identify where residents fall on social economic lines by viewing their units or the rules they are subject to. Market-rate residents frequently blamed public housing residents for poor behavior in the building, whether they were the cause or not. Developer Peter Holston described market-rate residents as “buying the location.” In prioritizing the location over the type of community, Holston worried that market-rate renters and owners might not be approaching the community in the right way.<sup>625</sup> Market rate residents also must adapt to the larger social mission of these projects to help them achieve all the various goals attached to them.

Mixed-income communities, ideally, allowed residents to interact across class lines and hopefully encouraged public housing residents to model themselves on the market-rate residents. This belief assumed that residents would mix across racial and class lines as part of their daily lives. Tensions in early mixed income neighborhoods appeared quickly after development opened. Some feared that such sharing would not take place. Administrators reported that early public housing residents were not incentivized to make friends because they already knew people from Cabrini-Green.<sup>626</sup> For their part, many public housing residents felt that the new residents were not as friendly or community oriented as the old public housing residents. According to one

---

<sup>625</sup> Mortice, “When Public Housing Goes Private,” *Curbed Chicago*, September 28, 2016.

<sup>626</sup> John Handley, “Redeveloping Public Housing,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 22, 2004.



resident, the new project was clearly better than public housing, but it was missing something. She described her dilemma, saying, “I think we all just want to be accepted for who we are. Not looked at and treated as low-class people.”<sup>627</sup>

Many of the program’s administrators and designers put the onus for success on the public housing residents. The work and education requirements and community rules meant that many of the residents who were in the old public housing would not make it in the new model. Even with the restrictions on who may live in public housing, the stigma of public housing residents—that they did not care about their homes or community, that they took part in dangerous or illegal activity—remains. Failure was guaranteed, according to one housing development manager, “if you have residents who tear units up and allow gang activities from their dwellings.”<sup>628</sup> Some of the earliest new residents agreed that the behavior of some public housing residents continued to be a problem. One recent resident described her view: “It would be a mistake to think some [former public housing residents] can or want to change their circumstances in life.”<sup>629</sup> But even these complaints were tempered by the acknowledgement that most residents were friendly and wanted a good neighborhood. Observers argued that mixed-income neighborhoods should be treated as an experiment of urban living. As an experiment, perfect results should not be expected the first time and the city and the CHA should be ready to provide mechanisms to address ongoing challenges in these communities.<sup>630</sup>

---

<sup>627</sup> Ray Quintanilla, “New Neighbors Draw the Line at Cabrini,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 31, 2003, [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2003-07-31/news/0307310274\\_1\\_cabrini-public-housing-chicago-housing-authority](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2003-07-31/news/0307310274_1_cabrini-public-housing-chicago-housing-authority), accessed October 29, 2016.

<sup>628</sup> Joe Ruklick, “Low-Income Housing Stock to Expand,” *Chicago Defender*, August 9, 2001.

<sup>629</sup> Quintanilla, “New Neighbors Draw the Line at Cabrini.”

If the success of the neighborhoods will be measured by how the rest of the city viewed it, Cabrini was off to a good start. In spring 2016, *Chicago* magazine selected Cabrini-Green as one of the city's best neighborhoods, labeling it "a pedestrian's dream." According to the authors, "You knew the gentrification train was rolling in when, in 2011, the demise of one of Chicago's most notorious housing projects was turned into an art project...Now the boom is officially underway with the development of glossy towers, with let's-forget-the-past names such as Next and Parkside of Old Town, expected by 2017."<sup>631</sup> Cabrini was considered a "well-kept secret" even though it still lacked the commercial development and high-ranking schools of the city's most desirable established neighborhoods.

Mixed-income communities represented a new stage of Chicago living. Neighborhoods were being created that has class, racial, and demographic diversity as their central identity for the first time in the city's history.<sup>632</sup> One of the key markers of this transition was how people began to talk about Cabrini-Green. The neighborhood was being sold as "quiet," a distinct break from how Cabrini residents experienced the space.<sup>633</sup> It broke with how the rest of the city thought about Cabrini-Green. The place in Chicago most famous for violence, drug, and disorder was now a quiet neighborhood on

---

<sup>630</sup> Bennett and Reed, "The New Faces of Urban Renewal," in *Without Justice for All*, 211.

<sup>631</sup> "Cabrini Green," *Chicago Magazine*, April 2016, <http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/April-2016/chicago-neighborhoods/Cabrini-Green/>, accessed October 16, 2016.

<sup>632</sup> Matthew Messner, "How Developers Are Rebuilding Affordable Units 20 Years After Chicago Began to Dismantle Its Public Housing," *Architect's Newspaper*, September 8, 2016.

<sup>633</sup> Keith Reid-Cleveland, "The Gentrification at Chicago's Cabrini-Green Projects Could Happen Anywhere," *Black Youth Project*, April 9, 2016, <http://blackyouthproject.com/the-gentrification-at-chicagos-cabrini-green-projects-could-happen-anywhere/>, accessed October 16, 2016.

the verge. A place that most Chicagoans would not venture ten years ago was becoming one of the most desirable neighborhoods in the city for people looking to be in a neighborhood with a mixture of housing and leisure activities.

#### VIII. How Can Public History Commemorate the Past in a Redeveloped Place?

Efforts to commemorate Cabrini-Green were a staple of life during demolition. Major art installations like Project Cabrini-Green introduced neighborhood and the Art Institute of Chicago visitors to the sense of community that was being lost. Photographers and videographers captured images with the hope that the buildings, but more importantly, the people and their lives would not disappear.<sup>634</sup> These projects were efforts at black placemaking that sought to celebrate what Cabrini-Green and other sites like it had meant to the experience of being black in Chicago for decades.<sup>635</sup> With most of the buildings gone and the rest surrounded by construction fences, it is an open question if remembering the past will continue in the new Cabrini.

Cabrini is an interesting case for the value of public history in transitioning communities. The widespread belief among observers on all sides is that residents moving into the Cabrini neighborhood will have no memory or understanding of what happened in this place. History is not always wanted in every location. Many planners, architects, and residents want the Cabrini name and the stigma attached to it to disappear, viewing it only as a negative. Efforts have been made to relegate Cabrini-Green to the past and introduce new names and landmarks to define the neighborhood.

---

<sup>634</sup> Mary Schmich, "Preserving Cabrini-Green's Images," *Chicago Tribune*, April 27, 2014.

<sup>635</sup> Hunter et al., "Black Placemaking," *Theory, Culture and Society* 33, no. 7-8 (2016): 32.

They are, however, residents and public historians who continue to want to preserve Cabrini's memory on site. In many ways, this vision was political—aimed at continuing to make public housing visible in historical and present-day Chicago. The most common idea involves building preservation. According to one historian, “The best way to preserve a building is to keep it in proper use.”<sup>636</sup> For over a decade, it appeared possible that the Frances Cabrini Homes could serve this purpose. The row houses were already deemed eligible for the National Register of Historic Places along with the other original Chicago projects in the 1990s. The original *Plan for Transformation* called for all the buildings to be redeveloped based on the belief that these structures fulfilled most of the tenets of New Urbanism that the plan was trying to foster.

The row houses have the added benefit of keeping people with a memory of Cabrini as public housing active in the new community. The original *Plan for Transformation* had the development remaining 100 percent public housing. These residents have first-hand knowledge about life in Cabrini and the neighborhood transformation. Their stories add context to demographic changes and shifting residential patterns. They also would provide the flipside to the *Plan* social goal of having public housing residents interact with market-rate residents to expand their horizons. Here would be a development of public housing that could serve as an introduction to people who never had first-hand experience with public housing.

A long-time resident described the situation: “The neighborhood can’t contain its stories.”<sup>637</sup> But many of these stories are traumas that many others might not want to

---

<sup>636</sup> Kevin Starr quoted in Hayden, *The Power of Place*, 198.

<sup>637</sup> Mary Schmich, “Dantrell Davis Shouldn’t Be Forgotten,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 12, 2012.

transfer to the new neighborhood. One of most Cabrini's most heartbreaking memories was the murder of Dantrell Davis. In the aftermath of his 1992 death by gang-related gunfire, a street sign for Dantrell Davis Way was added to North Cleveland Avenue to honor him. While many public housing residents continued to pay tribute to him, this type of history was not the kind that helps sell condos. Tensions between how to commemorate Davis and the violence surrounding his death in an emerging neighborhood remained. In 2008 a reporter found that the sign had vanished; city officials only said they would investigate the matter.<sup>638</sup>

The community memory of Cabrini-Green will probably shift as the physical presence of public housing declines further. Right now, in the middle of the site sits the Frances Cabrini Homes. The fate of these buildings was debated for years, but they remain standing. Surrounded by chain-link fence, the community appears desolate with empty buildings, overgrown lawns, and abandoned public spaces creating a stark contrast with the well-maintained buildings and lawns. It is not hard to remember that this is an area with a history of public housing. But this thought, along with the buildings themselves, might not last long. The CHA approved a Development Zone Plan for the 440 offline units that include new housing, retail, open spaces, and alternative uses. In 2017 Moving to Work update reports that the CHA is ready to select developers to place the plan in action. They also include that the 440 units in the proposed demolition plan in case the developers determine the need to knock the buildings down.<sup>639</sup>

---

<sup>638</sup> Sara Olkon, "I See That Danny Died in Vain," *Chicago Tribune*, September 7, 2008.

<sup>639</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, "CHA Proposed FY2017 Annual Plan for Public Comment," Draft for Public Comment, August 1-31, 2016, 15.

While the residents' stories will quickly become the only remaining link between what the neighborhood was and what the neighborhood is, many of these residents have been moved out. This movement caused some observers to conclude that the people, much like the buildings themselves, would soon be forgotten as the neighborhood focuses on its future.<sup>640</sup> This transition makes public history necessary. Public housing residents could grow further isolated from the new communities as the memory of public housing communities that brought them to the area fade. New residents may be buying location, but they will be living in a place designed to be more than a location to live in. Without understanding what happened in Cabrini-Green and why mixed-income neighborhoods are being established now offers the possibility that the new neighborhoods will not achieve many of the social goals they were constructed with. This puts additional stress on mixed-income communities as residents who purchased units may feel more entitled to the place by virtue of ownership while public housing residents grow to seem more out of place in an otherwise upper class Chicago neighborhood.

## IX. Conclusion

If public housing died in Chicago, its resurrection has been incomplete. While tearing down buildings was generally a success, creating new neighborhoods has been more challenging. Sixteen years after the *Plan for Transformation*, CHA, public housing residents, and the city of Chicago are still waiting to see what these places will be and if immediate interest in areas like Cabrini-Green can turn into healthy, sustainable neighborhoods. In late 2016, the CHA and its residents have found, at best, imperfect

---

<sup>640</sup> Mary Schmich, "Closing the Door on Infamous Era," *Chicago Tribune*, December 10, 2010.

solutions, to the problem of housing low-income residents in affordable, attractive housing.<sup>641</sup> The solutions are working in some areas, particularly architecture, but struggling in others, like community.

The future of Cabrini-Green both embraces and challenges the vision for public housing. On one hand, the new architecture fits in with the surrounding neighborhood, serving more as an expansion of surrounding neighborhoods than the creation of a new one. No longer would public housing exist as a separate place in the city to be avoided and isolated. The challenge for public housing residents is to remain visible to policy makers and housing authorities even as their homes become more like everyone else's. Their visibility is important to achieve their larger policy goals, for, as studies have shown supportive services improve resident outcomes.

The transformation of public housing goes beyond changing the environment. Resident success is often listed as the underlying purpose. CHA's chief executive, Terry Peterson, noted in 2004 that "The goal is to break the cycle of poverty. Improved public housing will be a measure of success."<sup>642</sup> The successes on this front remain the most challenging to fully determine. Those who remain in Cabrini have concerns about their place in the community, but are adamant that the architecture and neighborhood are significantly better.

On the other hand, few things about Cabrini's redevelopment appear replicable. Cabrini long had the benefit of existing close to some of Chicago's most desired real estate. Over the past three decades, it became surrounded by several up-and-coming

---

<sup>641</sup> Mortice, "When Public Housing Goes Private," *Curbed Chicago*, September 28, 2016.

<sup>642</sup> John Handley, "Redeveloping Public Housing," *Chicago Tribune*, August 22, 2004.

neighborhoods. In turn, this made Cabrini-Green the last piece of developable real estate on the Near North Side. The new Cabrini embraced the neighborhood form of the mid and high rises. What is being built matches the real estate trends of today—glass and steel. Cabrini-Green will most likely blend into the neighborhood. But whether it can provide stable homes that help the working poor improve their lives remains to be seen.



## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

In less than a century, Cabrini-Green went from being a neighborhood that almost everyone in Chicago—and many beyond—knew to avoid at all costs to being one of Chicago’s best places to live.<sup>643</sup> This change was not a steady evolution, but rather occurred in different stages. It began by turning an immigrant slum into a 16-acre public housing row house development. Two distinct high-rise communities were added on the periphery, bringing the total to over 3,600 units, and making it the CHA’s largest public housing community.<sup>644</sup> The next decades saw an accelerating collapse, thanks to accumulated wear on buildings, lack of long-term financial planning, and instances of violence and gang activity dominating daily life. This history, from immigrant housing to public housing, created “Cabrini-Green”—a place known for displacement, danger, and neglect.<sup>645</sup> But the recent developments represent a significant course shift. First, the high-rises demolition created open land in a community area starving for it. The current stage, redevelopment, offers the opportunity to take lessons from the past to build a sustainable neighborhood in place of a dysfunctional one.

This path was not predestined. The history of Cabrini-Green is marked by constant debate over the nature and future of place. From its inception, ideas about what

---

<sup>643</sup> “Cabrini-Green: A Pedestrian’s Dream,” *Chicago Magazine*, April 2016, <http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/April-2016/chicago-neighborhoods/Cabrini-Green/>, accessed January 27, 2017.

<sup>644</sup> Bowly, Jr., *The Poorhouse*, 102.

<sup>645</sup> Matthew Messner, “How Developers are Rebuilding Affordable Housing Units 20 Years after Chicago Began to Dismantle its Public Housing,” *Architect’s Newspaper*, September 8, 2016, <https://archpaper.com/2016/09/chicago-affordable-units-public-housing/#gallery-0-slide-0>, accessed January 27, 2017.

these spaces should be like, how they should function, and who they should serve shaped public perceptions and political debates over public housing. These debates included planners, architects, private developers, politicians, public housing residents, city dwellers, and home buyers. But the debate about Cabrini-Green was always larger than one public housing neighborhood. They touched on Chicago's self-image as a product of grand plans and distinct neighborhoods; issues of the meaning of home and community; and the requirements for public housing to be successful in the long-term.

The stage of this debate was the public, and Cabrini-Green played a unique role. Cabrini-Green appeared in popular culture and news coverage, often as a stand-in for public housing in its broadest sense as much as an individual neighborhood. Images and stories, most of which highlighted indiscriminate violence and its victims, sent a narrative of urban collapse to a nationwide audience. Isolated, ugly architecture and the impoverished people trapped in their units by the chaos outside dominated these stories. But this was not the only story to tell about Cabrini-Green. Residents told a story that acknowledged the negative aspects of Cabrini, but asked that their experiences and their efforts, partly successful, to create community be included in the debates over what should replace the failed form of public housing. Here, public history efforts, specifically preservation and oral histories, created nuanced discussions about the failings of public housing and encourage rediscovery of what public housing had done well in the past.

## I. Public Housing as History

History is a valuable tool for addressing a problem like Cabrini-Green. Many who looked at Cabrini or who approached it as a lost mile in Chicago where one should not go

focused on the present conditions. But Cabrini-Green was the product of a myriad of decisions on the federal, city, and neighborhood level that accumulated over time. History is a method to step beyond current conditions to trace their emergence. It also makes it possible to discuss how Cabrini-Green began to emerge in the public's imagination as the name for an urban environment much more threatening and hostile than the ones they called home.

Public housing was the product of historical processes and is often judged by what it became with little public discussion of why it evolved as it did. Many critiques of public housing, whether of building design or neighborhood composition, focus on the final stage of public housing without considering the prior decisions and how they shaped current conditions. Cabrini-Green was a good example of how a place was so defined that it actually obscured the complications on-site. Few, for example, considered the variation in housing form. Cabrini-Green was symbolic of undifferentiated high-rises, warehousing Chicago's poorest. Few considered that it started out as a row house community that followed many of the principles of urban design that were considered as crucial part of solving public housing's problem.

Understanding the original hopes of public housing designers provides context to today's critiques of public housing communities and the efforts to remake them. The initial goal was not to house the poorest of the poor, but to assist the lowest one-third of city residents, who could not afford private housing. These people, often two-parent working class families with young children, were considered upwardly mobile. Public housing would be one stop on their path to private homeownership. But public housing could also improve the lives of cities, replacing slum conditions with well-maintained,

healthy neighborhoods. Early advocates held a wide view of public housing, believing that it would improve not just the lives of people, but the health of American cities:

Public housing is first and foremost a measure of public health in the widest sense of the word. Slums are centers of infection, the effects of which spread far beyond their own borders—centers of moral and political corruption as well as physical disease...Slum clearance is also a necessary part of replanning a city and correcting the results of the community's own lack of foresight in the past.<sup>646</sup>

The belief that particular environments are bad for residents' health appears throughout the history of public housing. In its first incarnation, public housing was expected to be the cure for slum housing and slum neighborhoods. In the second, later versions, mixed-income housing would be the solution for ills brought about by public housing. The history of public housing reflects the belief that an outsider—government or private developer—could transform a neighborhood by replacing what was there and building a new community based on up-to-date theories of how people live and use space.

Dedicated public housing advocates always dealt not just with their hopes but also with political realities. Public housing was rarely approached as an end in itself; it was never the biggest part of federal or local housing policy, and it often reflected the leftover funding for private housing in the form of mortgage interest deductions and FHA loans.<sup>647</sup> The relationship between the private real estate market and public housing had long-range implications for the life and death of public housing developments like Cabrini-Green. Cities like Chicago, frequently with the support of local real estate interests, selected locations for public housing that would remove it from competition

---

<sup>646</sup> Edith Elmer Wood and Elizabeth Ogg, "The Homes the Public Build," 29.

<sup>647</sup> Joseph Heathcott, "The Strange Career of Public Housing," *Journal of American Planning Association* vol. 78, 4 (Autumn 2012): 373.

with the private market. The combination of real estate interests and city hall worked to limit public housing in Chicago to community areas that were already poor and minority. Public housing was often challenged by a lack of funds. To meet the per-unit cost, buildings were built with cheaper materials than market-rate apartments. Once built, they lacked significant resources for maintenance, leading to expedited building breakdown. Limited funding also meant that buildings could not be modernize to keep up with new developments in market-rate apartment living. Placed in isolated locations with limited funds, they became places separate from the rest of the city. The same rules of market that called for updated buildings and grounds to attractive residents did not apply here as the buildings decayed and the grass died but the people remained.

Public housing also must address the appropriate resident mix and the suitability of their environment to handle the desired mix of incomes, ages, family types, and lifestyle. At various times in its history public housing has been a support system for upwardly mobile working poor and an isolated urban island for the extremely poor. One justification for the recent transformation of public housing is that it represents a return to the original mission of public housing—assisting upwardly mobile residents on their way up—from the thirty-year shift towards the hardest to house.<sup>648</sup> But the history of public housing is more than just the residents it was aimed at; it is how they lived in those situations. In many instances, the history of public housing demonstrates that people behave differently than policymakers prescribe. Most recently, the hope for Section 8 vouchers was that residents would select opportunity areas with lower markers of poverty

---

<sup>648</sup> Vale, *Purging the Poorest*, 6.

and disorder. Instead, a majority selected majority African-American neighborhoods with high poverty concentration.

The migration to public-private partnerships has offered new life to public housing, but this arrangement came with its own pitfalls. For Chicago, a city that as of 2016 has not fully recovered from the 2008 housing crash, market-rate demand for these units lagged even as demand for affordable and public housing units increased. Without market demand, more direct government support may be required to meet the need for affordable units. A common refrain throughout the debate over public housing is how frequently surface solutions are proposed for deeper issues. The story of public housing failure includes significant focus on crime, drugs, gangs, and indiscriminate violence. But these important problems have never been limited to high-rise public housing; they are often products of poverty, segregation, and isolation of city neighborhoods where many poor African Americans live.<sup>649</sup>

Attention to the history of 20th century public housing warns of the dangers of trying to solve complicated, interrelated, social and cultural issues by relying solely on design. Public housing began with a focus on the different social aspects that went along with creating a community. But the shift in focus towards poverty housing and the subsequent lack of public support moved the program away from these efforts. Robert Chaskin describes the underlying issues for public housing: “It’s about addressing the problems created by concentrated urban poverty but it’s purely a spatial and housing solution to what is a much more complex set of social and economic problems. It doesn’t

---

<sup>649</sup> Joseph Heathcott, “Pruitt-Igoe and the Critique of Public Housing,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* vol. 78, 4 (September 2012): 450.

really address poverty at all.”<sup>650</sup> Mixed-income housing is one suggestion to deal with this shortcoming. Bringing in market-rate renters and owners, advocates hope, will inspire the adoption of middle class values and norms by public housing residents. Rather than relying on housing to provide support for upwardly mobile poor, this new model provides behavioral role models who may have connections to employment or educational opportunities. The *Plan for Transformation* has evolved to include more social services to aid in this transition.

The history of public housing is significant as a means of determining how places like Cabrini-Green deteriorate over time. Cabrini ran well for over 20 years, but the decline, normally dated as starting around the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968, occurred quickly. Public housing, like many aspects of urban life, often falls into the trap that past failures are evidence of future concerns. In his history of the Great Migration, *The Promised Land*, Nicholas Lemann concludes that the persistence of racial ghettos in the United States should not be seen as proof that government intervention cannot work, just that what has tried and failed in the past did not work.<sup>651</sup> Indeed, the story of public housing includes successes that future developments should adopt. Places like Archer Courts and Wentworth Gardens demonstrate the importance of community-specific changes to architecture and careful guidance of community development in making neighborhoods work.

---

<sup>650</sup> Tara Garcia Mathewson, “Where Did Chicago Families from Cabrini-Green Go?” *Equal Voice News*, April 30, 2015, <http://www.equalvoiceforfamilies.org/chicagos-cabrini-green-housing-then-and-now/>, accessed December 28, 2016.

<sup>651</sup> Lemann, *The Promised Land*, 344.

## II. Cabrini-Green as Public History

History exists in different forms and for different audiences. While the story of public housing in Chicago relates to broad questions of city development and urban policy, history is also important and relevant at a community and personal level. The preservation of memories and places are two ways of doing public history for Cabrini-Green. The *Plan for Transformation* and the demolition of Cabrini-Green spurred an effort to collect stories and photos to commemorate this site. On one hand, it can be difficult to understand the desire to preserve Cabrini's memory. It is frequently noted that the current removal of poor residents and their condemned homes has roots in the Near North Side's history, that parallels what happened earlier to the Italian residents to make way for the Frances Cabrini Homes.<sup>652</sup> But the efforts to commemorate Cabrini-Green represent new developments in public history. Over the past few decades, public history has taken a road of shared authority, redefining intellectual authority by including residents as partners with and leaders of public history efforts.<sup>653</sup> Public history has also embraced a role in discussing how present circumstances emerged as places with challenging histories, and what those histories could instruct visitors about how to interact in their own lives.

Residents tell their stories to provide listeners with an idea about what life was like. Often, these stories are correctives. Speakers will acknowledge the issues with public housing—namely the violence and gangs—but ask that the efforts they made to

---

<sup>652</sup> Maya Dukmasova, "Documenting the Rise and Fall of Chicago's Cabrini-Green Public Housing Projects," *In These Times*, November 16, 2015, <http://inthesetimes.com/article/18606/70-acres-cabrini-green-documentary-chicago-housing-authority>, accessed January 11, 2017.

<sup>653</sup> Frisch, *A Shared Authority*, xx.



build community and generate supportive relationships also be recognized in public housing's story. But others are more direct in their rationale—they want to challenge the now-established truths about public housing. These histories cover the earliest era of public housing to remind readers that at one point public housing was well-managed by the CHA and well-cared for by residents. It was not seen as a trap for African-American and poor Chicagoans, it was a means to improve residents' lives.<sup>654</sup> These efforts cast public housing in a different light—one that centers resident experience.

Historic preservation efforts in the Cabrini area have been less successful. Demolition had been a fact of life at Cabrini since the mid-1990s, when the reaction to Dantrell Davis' murder called for demolishing three of the "Reds." But the *Plan for Transformation* established more urgency to mass demolition. This urgency was based on the understanding that CHA high-rises could not be salvaged. Part of the original explanation for the *Plan for Transformation*'s necessity was that 14,000 units failed the demolition test, meaning it was less expensive to provide a housing voucher than to renovate the units and maintain the property.<sup>655</sup> Every remaining Cabrini high-rise was marked for demolition under this standard. Even residents agreed that these buildings could not be supported, even as they denied that the communities within those buildings should be removed from the Near North Side. Rather, they argued for a vision of the Cabrini area where public housing residents would be crucial parts of the community. From a public history perspective, Cabrini residents could serve as a source of neighborhood memory, standing as reminders of the neighborhood's past as the buildings

---

<sup>654</sup> Fuerst, *When Public Housing Was Paradise*, 3.

<sup>655</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, *Plan for Transformation*, 14.

were erased from the landscape. But this vision did not come to pass as many moved out of the neighborhood through Section 8 vouchers or relocation to other housing projects. It appeared that Cabrini would become, like Little Hell and Little Sicily before it, relegated to the past with little physical impact or commemoration on site.<sup>656</sup>

The Frances Cabrini Homes remain as the final direct connection between the neighborhood's past and present. In the original *Plan for Transformation*, they were not marked for demolition despite only 466 of 586 units being occupied.<sup>657</sup> They were spared because many of the tenets of New Urbanism appear in the design. While some were renovated, many languished as the CHA failed to meet annual goals for renovated units and ultimately canceled the redevelopment process in 2011. The 2015 settlement agreement, stemming from a 2013 resident lawsuit, between the CHA and the Cabrini-Green Local Advisory Council preserved 146 renovated row houses as public housing. Approximately 440 units will be added to the site with at least 40 percent guaranteed as public housing and an additional 15 percent as affordable housing. This plan is scheduled to be completed by December 2022. Even though they will remain, they will be part of a neighborhood that has fundamentally changed. In 2016, the row houses remained behind chain-link fence separating them from the rest of the neighborhood and making it appear like the other construction sites in the neighborhood.

In certain circumstances developers and current residents have made a conscious effort to connect present communities with the neighborhood's past. Generally, the

---

<sup>656</sup> Matthew Messner, "How Developers Are Rebuilding Affordable Units 20 Years After Chicago Began to Dismantle its Public Housing," *Architect's Newspaper*, September 8, 2016, <https://archpaper.com/2016/09/chicago-affordable-units-public-housing/#gallery-0-slide-0>, accessed January 18, 2017.

<sup>657</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, *Plan for Transformation*, 17.

success of these efforts is connected to the ability to add a sense of place, differentiating a development from other urban developments, to create an incentive to buy. One notable example was NEWCITY, a mixed-income development at the intersection of North Halsted Street and North Clybourn Avenue. The site was previously occupied by a YMCA building known for its colorfully painted brick façade. The facility had served Cabrini-Green families along with wealthier Lincoln Park residents, but when Cabrini was cleared for demolition, most of the clientele were gone. The YMCA sold the site in 2007 for \$54 million. The developers sought to create a vibrant atmosphere to establish an identity as a desirable, fashionable place to live, shop, and eat. The site history could serve as a vehicle to separate NEWCITY from the other mixed-use developments appearing around the city. Media Objectives, an experimental design studio, was brought in to create art spaces that would provide visual interest to the pedestrian areas connecting the three structures and to serve as a reminder of what had come before. They salvaged painted bricks to create the NEWCITY Heritage Installation. The bricks are configured in columns with typography representing the meaning of the YMCA to the Near North Side appear behind them on the building's walls.<sup>658</sup> In NEWCITY the past survives, in part, because it adds architectural value to what came next.

Cabrini-Green's notoriety generated interest in its destruction in ways few other public housing communities could boast. When it was demolished, *Time* magazine ran a photo history of Cabrini to commemorate the major shifts in the neighborhood, focusing

---

<sup>658</sup> Editor, "The Demolished New City YMCA Lives on at the NEWCITY," *Chicago Architecture*, August 11, 2016, <http://www.chicagoarchitecture.org/2016/08/11/the-demolished-new-city-ymca-lives-on-at-the-new-newcity/>, accessed January 8, 2017.

on popular perceptions of architectural failure, violence, and ultimate destruction.<sup>659</sup> But the story went beyond those perceptions to trace how a housing project became the universally feared urban environment. Starting with an image of Mayor Jane Byrne moving in during 1981, the photo essay focused on tensions between a decaying neighborhood and Chicago's central city and between the people who lived there and the Chicago police. Although the article shows people more than the physical environment, the people are mostly shown as white police officers and black hands in handcuffs.

Cabrini-Green's most lasting legacy might be its symbolic role as a stand-in for public housing's failure. From popular culture to government documents to scholarly analysis, Cabrini-Green appeared as the notorious failure that defined the public housing program to the public. In some ways, using Cabrini-Green as a common example of public housing was misleading. The 1992 National Commission on Severely Distressed Housing found only 6 percent of the national stock to be distressed like Cabrini.<sup>660</sup> Despite this, Cabrini was many peoples' vision of public housing, and many officials and reporters first example. Cabrini's prominent role in discussions of public housing translated into making its destruction national news. Cabrini's closing was covered as "the end of an infamous era."<sup>661</sup> It was documented and preserved extensively where other high-rises around the city closed with little fanfare. The public's perceptions made Cabrini-Green notable in life and death.

---

<sup>659</sup> "The End of Cabrini Green," *Time Magazine*, [http://content.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,2034317\\_2215128,00.html](http://content.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,2034317_2215128,00.html), accessed January 8, 2017.

<sup>660</sup>National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing, "Final Report of the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing," Report to Congress and the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (August 1992): 2.

<sup>661</sup> Mary Schmich, "Closing the Door on an Infamous Era," *Chicago Tribune*, December 10, 2010.

Beyond the Cabrini-Green case, public history has proven generally successful in reaching the larger Chicago community. Public history programs, though varied in audience and method, aimed to challenge city residents to reconsider their views of what public history was like as a home and to nuance understandings of places like Cabrini-Green. The most promising instance of this is National Public Housing Museum. Combining a focus on storytelling and cultural landscapes, the NPHM seeks both to tell the history of public housing from a residents' perspective and to participate in a conversation about the future of housing, community, and national ideals. In September 2016, the CHA approved a long-term annual lease of \$1 for the museum, clearing the way for the museum to open in 2018. CHA CEO Eugene Jones, Jr. said his agency considers the museum "important to the CHA, our residents, the community, and the city as a whole because it will highlight the role that public housing has played in the lives of Chicagoans, while preserving and rehabilitating a historic building and transforming it into a vibrant community asset."<sup>662</sup> The NPHM is planning to have a preview exhibit for the Chicago Architecture Biennial in October 2017.

Public history is a significant part of the demolition and rebirth of Cabrini-Green. Residents responded to the decades-long threat of demolition by claiming their place in the neighborhood through public history. Oral histories have provided additional context to the history of public housing by centering the residents and eras of public housing history that are not part of current debates. They have been important collaborators in museum exhibits, from Cabrini Green Housing Project Peace Museum to the National

---

<sup>662</sup> "Chicago Housing Authority Board Approves Lease Agreement for NPHM," National Public Housing Museum, September 20, 2016, <http://www.nphm.org/whats-new/2016/9/19/chicago-housing-authority-board-approves-lease-agreement-for-nphm>, accessed January 18, 2016.

Public Housing Museum. Cabrini residents—supported by public artists, public historians, and cultural institution—worked for years to have their presence truly recognized, not as victims of public housing but as members of a community that developed in some of the harshest conditions.

### III. Neighborhood and Place

Cabrini-Green's history highlights the importance of how locations are viewed. Harvey Warren Zorbaugh's *The Gold Coast and the Slum* established the proximity of the Gold Coast and Cabrini-Green as an anomaly of the Near North Side. The Cabrini area slum and the Gold Coast were evidence of a unique form of housing segregation in Chicago: one that could have the poor and rich separated by mere blocks but living in different worlds. This tension made each side, at different eras, fearful that the other would overrun it. The construction of Sandburg Village in the 1960s was supposed to prevent Cabrini from expanding. Starting in the 1980s, Cabrini residents expressed fear that the proximity of their homes to the Gold Coast made the land more valuable than they were. Following the destruction of the high-rise towers, the name "Cabrini-Green" began moving away from its long-held association with violence and civic decay. It is still used to talk about this part of the Near North Side, possibly because Chicagoans still recognize this area by its historic name.

The name was so well known that it stayed not just with the physical area; but it also became symbolic for a type of place where a certain type of people lived—people who were poor and black and whose neighborhood and lifestyle failed them. This identity remained with people long after they left the development. Former residents tell stories

about the reactions of people learning that they used to live in Cabrini-Green. The questioners mostly expressed curiosity about knowing someone from such a place, but some were more than curious. One woman described the shock of a Texas neighbor that she did not match the stereotypes of drugs, violence, extreme poverty, and ethnicity. “That’s the way it was in Cabrini-Green projects. It was all black people living in poverty.”<sup>663</sup> As long as former tenants of Cabrini-Green remain, this might be the most tangible legacy of this neighborhood. Whether they outwardly appear to challenge or vindicate the common perception of Cabrini, they are still connected to the sense of place that developed around this part of Chicago. Through its residents, Cabrini-Green has become a distinct place that moves with them.

A new neighborhood is slowly beginning to emerge with the completion of additional mixed-income and mixed-use developments. In May 2016, Parkside of Old Town welcomed back former Cabrini-Green residents. Like many new buildings near Cabrini, it offered an opportunity to discuss the major changes in the area. Alderman Walter Burnett, representing the 27<sup>th</sup> Ward, remarked at the opening: “It has changed the character of the neighborhood and it has raised the bar for where people of public housing should live in the city of Chicago.”<sup>664</sup> Public housing residents own 49 percent of the building. The opening brought the total neighborhood public housing units to 470. Both the development’s name and its presentation on local news show Parkside as being

---

<sup>663</sup> Sandra Johnson, “The Real Story of Living in Cabrini-Green Projects,” *Austin Weekly News*, April 8, 2014 <http://www.austinweeklynews.com/News/Articles/4-8-2014/The-real-story-of-living-in-Cabrini-Green-projects/>, accessed January 9, 2017.

<sup>664</sup> Leah Hope, “Former Cabrini Green Residents Welcomed into New Mixed-Income Housing Complex in Old Town,” May 4, 2016, *ABC News*, <http://abc7chicago.com/realestate/former-cabrini-green-residents-welcomed-into-new-complex/1323031/>, accessed January 8, 2017.

in Old Town. In reality, it was the first development built on the former site of the Cabrini Extension North. The development's name, Parkside of Old Town, was strategic to connect with a desirable Near North Side neighborhood instead of the still taboo Cabrini-Green.

One long-term Cabrini resident described the *Plan*'s impact, saying, "We knew gentrification was coming." This concern had been long espoused by Cabrini residents. The fear of a land grab was also a fear of community displacement. The resident echoed this conclusion: "They took a community and moved it someplace else."<sup>665</sup> Cabrini residents understood that their land was more valuable than their community. Their hope was that rehabilitation could be designed so that they would benefit from the changes.

#### IV. Empty Places and Chicago's Future

The *Plan for Transformation* represented not only a major overhaul of public housing, it was a major remaking of the city of Chicago. Going back to the 1950s, the CHA has been the largest landowner in Chicago with a total of 40,000 units. This translated into a significant portion of the city's land. When the high-rises came down around the city, it created significant empty spaces within the city. In 2016, the CHA owned around 321 acres of vacant land in the city. The year before, the CHA had sold 21.7 acres for \$9.5 million.<sup>666</sup>

---

<sup>665</sup> Brett Chase et al "CHA's Transformation Reshaped a City," Better Government Association/*Chicago Sun-Times*, June 25, 2016.

<sup>666</sup> Harry Huggins, "What to do with Chicago's Vacant Public Housing Land," *Chicago Mosaic*, <http://chicago-mosaic.medill.northwestern.edu/chicago-housing-authority-vacant-land/>, accessed January 28, 2017.



When the Cabrini Extension and William Green Homes were standing, they were a prominent example of Kevin Lynch's landmarks concepts.<sup>667</sup> These buildings, frequently appearing in images alongside stories of violence, represented the area and its people to the nation. Removing the buildings was supposed to remove the stigma associated with public housing. For one final time the buildings, when empty, appeared symbolic of a program that had cleared people out as part of remaking neighborhoods. The ruins of Cabrini held, for a brief moment, the attention of the city. Empty buildings stood as testament to the size of the program and the size of its fall. But others saw not just empty buildings and a symbol of failure, but as discarded homes, places where people used to live before they were sent elsewhere. Once they were cleared of people, it was possible to get outsiders to come into the neighborhood and consider that people here had been forced from their homes by forces beyond their control. Some residents hoped that these structures and the remnants left in the units would prove "that not everybody in those projects was some kind of monster, the way they're portrayed to be in movies and culture."<sup>668</sup> The purpose of commemorative projects, like Project Cabrini-Green and exhibits at the city's many cultural institutions, was to get viewers to see beyond the building's façade to empathize with the people who used to live there and think about the world from their perspective.

Tearing down the buildings did not the end the process, it was just a phase. The goal was to replace disorganized, isolation pockets in the city with newly integrated,

---

<sup>667</sup> Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 78.

<sup>668</sup> Mae Rice, "Photos: Inside the Demolition of the Notorious Cabrini-Green Projects," *Chicagoist*, September 29, 2015. [http://chicagoist.com/2015/09/29/photos\\_inside\\_the\\_demolition\\_of\\_the.php#photo-1](http://chicagoist.com/2015/09/29/photos_inside_the_demolition_of_the.php#photo-1), accessed January 10, 2017.

desirable neighborhoods that included residential and commercial areas. This was a massive project, and dependent on changes in government policy, market conditions, and citizens' organizing efforts. At the end of 2016, the Cabrini-Green footprint included some open developments, some very close to opening, and acres of open land waiting to be built on. Most new developments were adjacent to CHA land. In 2015, the CHA put out requests for proposals for 17 of 65 acres in the neighborhood. This first phase would bring 900 mixed-income units, with between 33 and 40 percent reserved for public housing. The total goal, with an indeterminate end date, was for 2,830 units for the entire area.<sup>669</sup> Bidders were encouraged to integrate new retail and commercial spaces. This aspect was to address weaknesses in public housing neighborhoods, as many were isolated from both fresh food and employment opportunities. The new neighborhoods are designed to correct the weaknesses that developed in public housing even if, as in the case of Cabrini, the architecture will be a similar mix of high-rises and row houses. Right now, however, this vision remains potential and hopes waiting for more homes, restaurants, and businesses to complete it.

Today, the fate of the Cabrini-Green neighborhood has been determined. The last high-rise was demolished almost six years ago and the number of the remaining row houses has been cut to 146. Yet much of the neighborhood remains undeveloped. With new CHA renovation plans continuing through 2016, residents continued their efforts to protest the loss of units and neighborhood transformations that appear to leave public

---

<sup>669</sup> Mina Bloom, "Cabrini-Green Redevelopment Underway as Developers Begin Bidding Process," *DNAInfo*, January 6, 2016, <https://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20160106/river-north/cabrini-green-redevelopment-underway-as-developers-begin-bidding-process>, accessed January 29, 2017.

housing resident in the past.<sup>670</sup> A 2016 report found that 3,200 families were in subsidized housing in the Near North Side, a drop of 599 since the *Plan for Transformation* began. At the same time, the white population of the community area surged by 10,000 people.<sup>671</sup>

Not every public housing community has experienced this transition. For many public housing developments, it was much easier to knock down buildings than to rebuild according to the market-driven, New Urbanism model. The empty lots spread around the city, particularly on the south side, serve as their own reminder of public housing. Buildings that once defined the skyline are now missing. But if everything goes according to plan, buildings and people will ultimately replace these empty spaces, the makings of a new neighborhood. Careful reading of history in urban spaces requires viewers be conscious of the interplay between the present physical reality and an imagined place of memory.<sup>672</sup> For the moment, the empty lots and missing skylines are the best reminder of the scope of public housing in the physical landscape.

When the *Plan for Transformation* was announced, the CHA promised many communities that new housing would be built on the same properties, allowing people to return to their neighborhoods. In the recent years, with the growing acreage of open land, it sold some property to private companies, including an upscale supermarket and tennis

---

<sup>670</sup> AJ Latrace, “Lathrop Homes Residents to Protest Chicago Housing Authority Next Week,” *Curbed Chicago*, June 17, 2016, <http://chicago.curbed.com/2016/6/17/11961904/lathrop-homes-protest-chicago-housing-authority>, accessed January 8, 2017.

<sup>671</sup> Brett Chase et al “CHA’s Transformation Reshaped a City,” *Better Government Association/Chicago Sun-Times*, June 25, 2016, <http://www.bettergov.org/news/chas-transformation-reshaped-a-city>, accessed January 17, 2017.

<sup>672</sup> Williams, *Memorial Museums*, 86.

training facility. The CHA argues that this is a good use of the land because it provides additional money for vouchers. But some feel that this deviates from the CHA's original promise in the *Plan for Transformation*. One community leader described watching the land get sold: "They want to build these things up so that we forget. That's not how it's supposed to happen. That's not what they sold the community on when they first wanted to do this 16 years ago. That land was supposed to go to housing for people who are the most vulnerable in our community. That's what's missing."<sup>673</sup> For years, Cabrini resident distrust of CHA fostered a sense that the agency would support a land grab. Now, the empty lots are viewed as evidence that public housing is purposefully being forgotten in the pursuit of a new Chicago, geared toward the city's wealthier residents.

For many reasons it should not be surprising that Chicago, the CHA, and new neighborhood residents want to move beyond the old Cabrini-Green with few reminders of the era of traditional public housing. Market conditions have not always been on the side of this goal. While the CHA had valuable land, like Cabrini-Green, much of it was located in poorer neighborhoods with less hope of private development. The CHA is over 90 percent of the way to providing the 25,000 new or renovated units designated in the *Plan for Transformation*, but it still has considerable land holdings that are less desirable.

## V. Final Thoughts

One of the challenging aspects of writing history is selecting when the narrative begins and when it ends. This dissertation starts with the founding of Chicago, situating the Near North Side in the city's long history. It ends in December 2016. At this point,

---

<sup>673</sup> Huggins, "What to do with Chicago's Vacant Public Housing Land," *Chicago Mosaic*.

Cabrini-Green is still in transition. All the high-rises and much of the row houses have been demolished, but much of the redevelopment remains in the planning stages. What Cabrini-Green will ultimately become, and how quickly it can get there, is still undetermined. The same could be said for the *Plan for Transformation*, which sixteen years after it was announced, is still short of the 25,000 new and renovated units.

A major focus of this work was the dual nature of place in Chicago. On one hand, Chicago is a city that creates itself on a citywide level going back to Burnham's *Plan of Chicago*. This model generally started with the Loop and spread out, with varying degrees of success, to the neighborhoods. This is the Chicago of bold visions and grand plans. But place in Chicago also exists on a neighborhood level. This sense of place, too, has an important history. Starting with the University of Chicago sociology department, Chicago neighborhoods established neighborhood identity based on local demographics, history, and culture. The local level offers more opportunities for change as block transformations are continually occurring while the major boundaries of the city are static. Cities may hold their shape in the abstract, but on a street level they exist in continual phases, changing with people and architecture.<sup>674</sup> These two senses of place have complimented each other, but sometimes, they clash. Sometimes the disconnect comes when city planners and government leaders give too much attention to the Loop at the expense of the neighborhoods. But in the case of Cabrini-Green, the neighborhood level identity does not fit in with the version of place presented by the community area or the city.

---

<sup>674</sup> Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 2.

Another way of dividing Chicago's sense of place is by macro and micro levels. It is possible to look at Cabrini-Green through a similar lens. On a macro level, Cabrini-Green was an unmitigated failure. Not only did it not provide a safe neighborhood for residents on a quick path to private homeownership, it failed to live up to the potential of its land. City government, Near North Side residents, and public housing residents knew that Cabrini-Green was worth less than the land it sat on for decades. In the early days of Cabrini-Green it appeared possible that the Near North Side would be all poor or all wealthy. After Cabrini-Green became the "notorious Cabrini-Green" and the surrounding areas began to gentrify, it was clear that Cabrini would most likely be integrated into the affluent Near North Side rather than the other way around.

At the micro level, Cabrini-Green's story is more complicated. While many residents have acknowledged going back into the 1970s that Cabrini-Green had its issues, they acted to create and defend their community. Residents expressed desires to work together to deal with issues of building security and maintenance.<sup>675</sup> Once the buildings were scheduled to be demolished, residents pushed to secure their right to this part of the city through community meetings and lawsuits. During demolition resident activists were concerned that Cabrini-Green public housing residents would not have the same ability to organize together. The new developments would have homeowners' associations, but it's unclear that these organizations will advance the interests of public housing residents like the old LACs. Cabrini-Green residents were so effective in advocating for themselves because they joined together to defend their community. Will public housing residents

---

<sup>675</sup> Chicago Department of Planning. "Cabrini-Green: A Model Project for Public Housing Security." Final Report, June 16, 1980.

find their needs adequately addressed by HOAs or will they found their own groups?  
How will this impact issues of community solidarity?

Yet, the continuing success of public housing remains an open question. Public housing's longevity was credited to the fact that was publicly owned.<sup>676</sup> But public ownership ultimately translated into lack of ready capital to preserve and upgrade the buildings, amenities, and grounds to make the projects appealing to outsiders. Can public housing overcome the weaknesses of the past that resulted from public funding while maintaining the extended presence of these buildings as homes for lower-income Americans? No one in the *Plan for Transformation* assumed that the need for such housing would go away. Due to the 2008 housing crash, the need has only grown. Can the private housing market provide answers to questions of safe, affordable housing for those traditional isolated from that market? Cabrini-Green has had success attracting developers to their prime location. Will the market ever extend to such an extent that former public housing areas in less desirable areas see their neighborhoods renovated by these efforts?

The final aspect of this story is the role of public history in capturing these memories and creating more nuanced narratives for controversial places like Cabrini-Green. Residents utilized public history techniques of oral histories, public exhibits, and public art displays to recount their experiences at public housing and critique the narratives of decline, which they felt did not adequately took their own history into account. Public housing efforts have also involved professionals. Historians and public artists worked with residents to present exhibits that could be viewed by residents beyond

---

<sup>676</sup> Schwartz, *Housing Policy in the United States*, 154.

the site. Now these efforts are based on creating a sense of place at specific locations that were connected to the larger program. Public commemoration efforts at Cabrini-Green have not achieved what proponents hoped. Efforts at site memorial have been subtle—buildings names and artistic representations—but they remain all the same. Will the place of Cabrini-Green survive further into the neighborhood transition?

For decades, Cabrini-Green was one of Chicago's defining places, even if most city residents would never venture there for any reason. It represented the multiple failures of public housing—unattractive architecture, neighborhood breakdown, violence and disorder. If Chicago became synonymous with public housing than Cabrini-Green was synonymous with Chicago public housing. But Cabrini-Green was always more than its buildings, and that should have an influence on its identity. One definition of place, focusing on the practice of making place through architecture, described it as combination between what is on a site and what has happened at that site.<sup>677</sup> Cabrini residents worked to create community and to remain in the neighborhood when it was clear massive transformations were immanent. Their efforts should be remembered as a defining feature of the place, as much as the buildings or violence.

---

<sup>677</sup> Fleming, *The Art of Placemaking*, 14.



## REFERENCES

### Primary Sources

#### *CHA Plan for Transformation*

Chicago Housing Authority. "FY2008 Moving to Work Annual Plan." *Plan for Transformation Year 9*. December 28, 2007.

Chicago Housing Authority. "FY2009 Moving to Work Annual Report (Revised)." *Plan for Transformation Year 10*. March 31, 2010.

Chicago Housing Authority. "Amended FY2012 Moving to Work Annual Plan." *Plan for Transformation Year 13*. March 27, 2012.

Chicago Housing Authority. "CHA Proposed FY2017 Annual Plan for Public Comment." Draft for Public Comment. August 1-31, 2016.

Chicago Housing Authority. *Plan for Transformation*. January 6, 2000.

Chicago Housing Authority. "Plan for Transformation."  
<http://www.thecha.org/about/plan-for-transformation/>, accessed January 12, 2017.

Chicago Housing Authority. "The Plan for Transformation: An Update on Relocation." April 2011.

Chicago Housing Authority. "Plan for Transformation: Year 2: MTW Annual Report FY2001." December 1, 2000.

Chicago Housing Authority. "Proposed FY2016 Moving to Work Annual Plan." October 16, 2015.

#### CHA Reports and Documents

Arthur Young & Company. "Second-Year Evaluation Report: Cabrini-Green High Impact Program." Memo. August 1978. Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection.

Chicago Department of Planning. "Cabrini-Green: A Model Project for Public Housing Security." Final Report, June 16, 1980. Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection.

“CHA Properties Near North Side.” Chicago Housing Authority, [www.thecha.org/residents/public-housing/find-public-housing/?cid=8](http://www.thecha.org/residents/public-housing/find-public-housing/?cid=8), accessed January 22, 2016.

Chicago Housing Authority. “Cabrini Extension Area: Portrait of a Chicago Slum.” Chicago, IL: 1951.

Chicago Housing Authority. “CHA: One Year After the Federal Takeover by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.” Chicago, IL: 1996.

Chicago Housing Authority. “CHA Senior Housing Overcomes Devastating Fire.” Press Release. July 22, 2009. [http://www.thecha.org/assets/1/16/Flannery\\_press\\_release\\_7\\_21\\_09.pdf](http://www.thecha.org/assets/1/16/Flannery_press_release_7_21_09.pdf), accessed November 10, 2016.

Chicago Housing Authority. “CHA Waitlist Lottery Officially Closes as More than 282,000 Households Register for Affordable Housing.” November 25, 2014. [www.thecha.org](http://www.thecha.org), accessed November 12, 2015.

Chicago Housing Authority. “Chicago Can Build.” Chicago, IL: 1950. Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection.

Chicago Housing Authority. “Facts About the New Look in Public Housing.” May 1971. Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection.

Chicago Housing Authority. “Minimum Tenant Selection Plan for Mixed-Income/Mixed Finance Communities (MTSP).” Available at <http://www.thecha.org/about/plans-reports-and-policies/>

Chicago Housing Authority. “Revised CHA Leaseholder Housing Choice and Relocation Rights Contract.” October 1, 1999.

Chicago Housing Authority. “Senior Housing Locations.” October 26, 2016. [http://www.thecha.org/assets/1/6/Senior\\_Sites\\_Average\\_Wait\\_Time\\_-\\_October\\_26\\_2016\\_\(FINAL\)\\_PDF.pdf](http://www.thecha.org/assets/1/6/Senior_Sites_Average_Wait_Time_-_October_26_2016_(FINAL)_PDF.pdf), accessed October 30, 2016.

Chicago Housing Authority. “Steps into the Seventies: CHA’s Social Program for Housing.” Chicago, IL: undated. Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection.

Chicago Housing Authority. “The Slum...Is Rehabilitation Possible?” Pamphlet. Chicago, IL: 1946. Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection.

City of Chicago Department of Planning, City and Community Development. “Final Report: Cabrini-Green High Impact Program, 1975-1978.” Chicago, IL: January 1979. Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection.

City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development on Behalf of Chicago Housing Authority. "Request for Proposals ("RFP") for Three Cabrini-Green Development Parcels." December 31, 2015.

Reports on the CHA and *Plan for Transformation*

Blake, Matthew. "Transforming the Plan for Transformation." *Progress Illinois*, February 27, 2012. <http://progressillinois.com/posts/content/2012/02/27/transforming-plan-transformation>, accessed October 11, 2016.

Business and Professional People for the Public Interest. "The Third Side: A Mid-Course Report on Chicago's Transformation of Public Housing." September 2009.

Byron, Larry et al. "An Improved Living Environment, But..." Urban Institute, January 2013.

Center for Tax and Budget Accountability. "A Fiscal Review of the Chicago Housing Authority." July 30, 2014.

Center for Tax and Budget Accountability. "Seeing Improvements, Questioning Priorities: Updating 'A Fiscal Review of the Chicago Housing Authority.'" January 13, 2017. <https://budgetblog.ctbaonline.org/https-budgetblog-ctbaonline-org-seeing-improvements-questioning-priorities-a5c67ea3e4c6#.za36dhbdk>, accessed January 16, 2017.

Chase, Brett et al. "CHA's Transformation Reshaped a City." Better Government Association/*Chicago Sun-Times*, June 25, 2016, <http://www.bettergov.org/news/chas-transformation-reshaped-a-city>, accessed January 17, 2017.

Chicago Rehab Network. "City of Chicago: Housing Fact Sheet." July 2013, [http://www.chicagorehab.org/resources/docs/policy/fiveyearplan/fact\\_book\\_2013/crn\\_chicago\\_fact\\_sheet\\_july2013.pdf](http://www.chicagorehab.org/resources/docs/policy/fiveyearplan/fact_book_2013/crn_chicago_fact_sheet_july2013.pdf) accessed January 15, 2017.

Institute for Housing Studies. "The State of Rental Housing in Cook County." DePaul University, 2013.

Institute of Urban Life. "Is There a Better Way? Housing Options in Chicago and Its Suburbs for Chicago Housing Authority Tenant." 1989. Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection.

Metropolitan Housing Council. "Changing the Paradigm: A Call for New Approaches to Public Housing in the Chicago Metropolitan Area." October 1996. Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection.

Metropolitan Housing Council. "The Chicago Housing Authority: Manager and Builder of Low-Rent Communities." 1940. Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection.

Metropolitan Housing Council. "Mixed-Income Communities in Chicago." Report by Robin Snyderman. May 25, 2014. [www.metropolitanplanning.org/news/3209/Mixed-Income-Communities-in-Chicago-New-Attractive-Housing-in-Great-Locations](http://www.metropolitanplanning.org/news/3209/Mixed-Income-Communities-in-Chicago-New-Attractive-Housing-in-Great-Locations) accessed January 22, 2016.

Metropolitan Planning Council. "Changing the Paradigm: A Call for New Approaches to Public Housing in the Chicago Metropolitan Region." October 1996. Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection.

Metropolitan Planning Council. "Not a World Apart: Increasing the Viability of Chicago's Public Housing Highrises and Large Developments." November 1988. Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection.

Metropolitan Planning Council. "Untapped Potentials: The Capacities, Needs, and Views of Chicago's High-Rise Public Housing Residents." September 1986. Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection.

North Town Community Partnership. "Project Hope: Commitment to Community Change." 1995. Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection.

Popkin, Susan J. et al. "CHA Residents and the Plan for Transformation." Urban Institute, January 2013.

Popkin, Susan J. et al. "Public Housing and Crime." Urban Institute, April 2012.

Slayton, Robert A. "Chicago Public Housing Crisis: Causes and Solutions." Report for the Chicago Urban League. June 1988.

University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration and Case Western Reserve Mandel School of Applied Social Science, "Why Do So Few Residents Return to Mixed-Income Development?" Mixed-Income Development Study, Research Brief #6, February 2012.

Vale, Lawrence J., and Erin Graves. "The Chicago Housing Authority's Plan for Transformation: What Does the Research Show So Far?" June 8, 2010.

Venkatesh, Sudhir et al. "Chicago Public Housing Transformation: A Research Report." Center for Urban Research and Policy Working Papers, February 2004.

Venkatesh, Sudhir, and Isil Celimli. "Tearing Down the Community." *Shelterforce Online*. Issue 138. November/December 2004.  
<http://www.nhi.org/online/issue/138.chicago.html>, accessed October 23, 2015.

Voorhes, Nathalie P. "The Plan to Voucher Out Public Housing." Written for Center for Neighborhood and Community Improvement. May 1997.

Walek, Gordon. "Report of NNUP Meeting to Discuss CHA Plan." *coNNeCT*, February 24, 2014. <http://www.connectnearth.org/news/7296> accessed February 12, 2016.

### CHA Brochures

Chicago Housing Authority. "Building New Communities, Building New Lives." *Plan for Transformation* brochure. 2002. Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection.

Chicago Housing Authority. "Cabrini-Green Development Zone Plan Update." CHA Brochure, April 2015.

Chicago Housing Authority. "The Inside Story of Public Housing in Chicago." CHA Brochure, 1960. Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection.

Chicago Housing Authority. "Low-Rent Apartments: Good Living on a Small Budget." Brochure, 1952. Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection.

Chicago Housing Authority. "The New Chicago Housing Authority: Transforming Public Housing: General Information." Brochure, 1996. Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection.

Chicago Housing Authority, "Your House, Your Home: Handbook for Residents of Chicago Housing Authority Apartments." Booklet, 1972. Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection.

"Chicago's Near North: Where Chicago Lives." Brochure. Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection. Acquired December 6, 1976.

### Chicago City and Neighborhood Plans

Burnham, Daniel, and Edward Bennett. *Plan of Chicago*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1993.

Camiros, Ltd., Applied Real Estate Analysis, Inc., and Sonoc/Hutter/Lee Ltd. "Near North Tax Increment Redevelopment Plan and Project." Prepared for the City of Chicago, June 1997.

Chicago 21 Corporation. "Chicago 21: A Plan for the Central Area Communities." Chicago, IL, 1973.

Chicago Central Area Committee and the City of Chicago. "Redraft of Chicago Central Area Plan." Chicago, IL, November 1984

Chicago Park District. "Jesse White Community Center and Field House." <http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/parks/jesse-white-community-center-and-fieldhouse/#0bzrlfjfdq>, accessed March 4, 2016.

Chicago Park District. "Seward Park." <http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/parks/Seward-Park>, accessed March 5, 2016.

Chicago Plan Commission. "The Chicago Central Area Plan: Preparing the Central City for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." Chicago, IL, May 2003.

City of Chicago. "'Chicago Works Together': 1984 Chicago Development Plan." Chicago, IL, 1984.

City of Chicago. "Central Area Action Plan." Chicago, IL: August 20, 2009.

City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development. "Bouncing Back: Five Year Housing Plan, 2014-2018 (Draft)." Chicago, IL: December 2013.

Department of Development and Planning. "The Comprehensive Plan of Chicago." Chicago, IL, January 1967.

Near North Development Corporation. "North Town Community Redevelopment Plan Phase I." Chicago, IL, September 1990.

Urban Works, Ltd. "Cabrini-Green Community Redevelopment Planning Open House #1." Chicago Housing Authority, February 3, 2014. [http://thecha.org/assets/1/6/Cabrini\\_Community\\_House\\_booklet\\_02.03.14\\_reprint.pdf](http://thecha.org/assets/1/6/Cabrini_Community_House_booklet_02.03.14_reprint.pdf), accessed March 3, 2016.

### Chicago Fact Books

Chicago Fact Book Consortium, eds. *Local Community Fact Book: Chicago Metropolitan Area: Based on the 1970 and 1980 Censuses*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1984.

Chicago Fact Book Consortium, eds. *Local Community Fact Book: Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1990*. Chicago: University of Illinois at Chicago, 1995.

Hauser, Philip M., and Evelyn M. Kitagawa, eds. *Local Community Fact Book for Chicago, 1950*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953.

Kitagawa, Evelyn M., and Karl E. Taeuber, eds. *Local Community Fact Book: Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1960*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963.

Wirth, Louis, and Eleanor H. Bernert, eds. *Local Community Fact Book of Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949.

### Oral History Collections and Interviews

Fuerst, J.S. *When Public Housing was Paradise; Building Community in Chicago*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005.

Horrorella, “Horrorella Talks Tolstoy, Beethoven and Candyman with Writer-Director Bernard Rose!” *Ain’t It Cool News*, August 12, 2015, [http://www.aintitcool.com/node/72689?utm\\_source=fullfeed&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_term=coolnews&utm\\_campaign=1310\\_RSS](http://www.aintitcool.com/node/72689?utm_source=fullfeed&utm_medium=feed&utm_term=coolnews&utm_campaign=1310_RSS), accessed January 11, 2017.

Petty, Audrey, ed. *High Rise Stories: Voices from Chicago Public Housing*. San Francisco, CA: McSweeney’s and Voice of Witness, 2013.

Whitaker, David T. *Cabrini-Green in Words and Pictures*. Chicago: W3 Chicago, 2000.  
“Q & A: The Legendary Eric Monte,” *Soul Train*, January 15, 2014, <http://soultrain.com/2014/01/15/qa-legendary-eric-monte/>, accessed January 25, 2017.

### Public History Documents and Websites

Bader, Miriam. “Practicing Facilitation: Lessons from the Tenement Museum,” *Broadside*, American Association for State and Local History, February 17, 2017, <http://blogs.aaslh.org/practicing-facilitation-lessons-from-the-tenement-museum/>, accessed February 22, 2017.

“The Burnham Plan Centennial,” University of Chicago Library, 2009, <http://burnhamplan100.lib.uchicago.edu/>, accessed February 23, 2017.

“Chicago Housing Authority Board Approves Lease Agreement for NPHM,” National Public Housing Museum, September 20, 2016, <http://www.nphm.org/whats-new/2016/9/19/chicago-housing-authority-board-approves-lease-agreement-for-nphm>, accessed January 18, 2016.

“The End of Cabrini Green,” *Time Magazine*, [http://content.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,2034317\\_2215128,00.html](http://content.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,2034317_2215128,00.html), accessed January 8, 2017

“Exhibit A: Specific Activities, Relating to Lift-Safety, that May Proceed Without Further Consultation.” Programmatic Agreement Among the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation for the Administration of the Comprehensive Grant Program in Chicago, Illinois. 1994.

Gage Gallery. “The Promise of Public Housing.” Roosevelt University. Chicago, IL: Spring 2005. <http://www.roosevelt.edu/GageGallery/PreviousExhibitions/Promise.aspx> accessed September 27, 2015.

International Coalition of Sites of Conscience. “About Us.” <http://www.sitesofconscience.org/about-us/>, accessed March 5, 2016.

Lower East Side Tenement Museum. <https://www.tenement.org>, accessed March 5, 2016.

Lusignan, Paul R. “Chicago Housing Authority Properties.” Report for the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. July 30, 1994.

National Museum of Public Housing. <http://www.nphm.org>, accessed March 6, 2016.

National Register of Historic Places. “Public Housing in the United States, 1933-1949.” Department of the Interior, National Park Service. NPS Form 10-900b. August 2002. <https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/guidance/Public%20Housing%20in%20the%20United%20States%20MPS.pdf>, accessed 13 December 2016.

Project Cabrini-Green. <http://www.projectcabrinigreen.org>, accessed December 19, 2016.

Roosevelt University and Chicago Historical Society. “The Promise of Public Housing, 1936-1983: Photographs from the Archives of the Chicago Housing Authority and the Chicago Historical Society.” Companion Booklet. Text by D. Bradford Hunt. Chicago, IL: 2005.

“Save the ‘All of Mankind’ Mural,” *Chicago Public Art Group*, <http://www.chicagopublicartgroup.org/all-of-mankind>, accessed February 25, 2016.

Vernacular Architecture Forum. “Public Housing Tour.” *Out of the Loop*. VAF 2015 Conference. Roosevelt University, June 4, 2015.



## Mid-20th Century Public Housing Analysis

Bauer, Catherine. "A Citizen's Guide to Public Housing." Poughkeepsie, NY: Vassar College, 1940.

Bauer, Catherine. *Modern Housing*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1934.

National Housing Agency. "Public Housing: The Works of the Federal Public Housing Authority." 1946.

National Housing Agency and Federal Public Housing Authority. "Public Housing Design: A Review of Experience in Low-Rent Housing." Washington, DC: June 1946.

Wood, Edith Elmer, and Elizabeth Ogg. "The Homes the Public Builds." New York: Public Affairs Committee, Inc., 1940.

Wood, Elizabeth. *Housing Design: A Social Theory*. New York: Citizens' Housing and Planning Council of New York, 1961.

## Federal Government Sources

Government Accountability Office. "Moving to Work Demonstration." Report to Congressional Requesters. Washington, DC: April 2012.  
[www.gao.gov/assets/600/590226.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/assets/600/590226.pdf), accessed January 24, 2016.

National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing, "Final Report of the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing," Report to Congress and the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. August 1992.

U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, *HUD's Takeover of the Chicago Housing Authority: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Human Resources and Intergovernmental Relations*. 140<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess, September 5, 1995.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. "About HOPE VI." [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/ph/hope6/about](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph/hope6/about). accessed May 16, 2015.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. *Public Housing That Works: The Transformation of America's Public Housing*. Washington DC. 1996.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. "Statement of HUD Secretary Andrew M. Cuomo Before the Senate Subcommittee on Housing and Community

Opportunity.” April 17, 1997. Accessed from <https://archives.hud.gov/testimony/1997/49mackte.cfm>. accessed May 20, 2015.

#### Newspaper and Magazine Articles

Allen, J. Linn. “Chicago’s Sandburg Village.” *Chicago Tribune*, April 19, 1963. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/politics/chi-chicagodays-sandburgvillage-story-story.html>, accessed May 9, 2016.

Almada, Jeanette. “Mixing It Up: Hilliard Homes Is Latest CHA Project to be Approved for a Makeover.” *Chicago Tribune*, October 22, 2000.

Anderson, Meg. “Searching for Cabrini-Green.” *Social Justice News Nexus*, May 28, 2015. <http://sjnnchicago.org/searching-for-cabrini-green/>, accessed February 8, 2015.

Bayliss, Deborah A. “‘Drive By Peace’: A Symbol of Hope.” *Chicago Weekend*, June 19, 1994.

Bebow, John. “It’s U.S. Insular Field.” *Chicago Tribune*, October 3, 2005.

Beck, Joan. “Symbolism of Politics is Jolted by Jane Byrne.” *Chicago Tribune*, March 27, 1981.

Belkin, Douglas. “Housing Project Goes Dark.” *Wall Street Journal*, December 9, 2010.

Biasco, Paul. “Cabrini-Green Redevelopment Plan Includes Over 2,300 Homes.” *DNAInfo Chicago*, April 23, 2015. <https://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20150423/old-town/cabrini-green-redevelopment-plans-include-over-2300-homes>, accessed February 9, 2016.

Blair, Gwenda. “Redesign Transforms a Slum.” *Toronto Star*, January 19, 2003.

Bloom, Mina. “Cabrini-Green Redevelopment Underway as Developers Begin Bidding Process,” *DNAInfo*, January 6, 2016, <https://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20160106/river-north/cabrini-green-redevelopment-underway-as-developers-begin-bidding-process>, accessed January 29, 2017.

Bloom, Mina. “Future of Cabrini-Green Rowhouses May Be Settled After 19 Years in Limbo.” *DNAInfo Chicago*, September 11, 2015. <http://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20150911/old-town/future-of-cabrini-green-rowhouses-may-be-settled-after-19-years-limbo>, accessed December 1, 2015.

Bowean, Lolly. “At Lathrop Homes, CHA’s Talk of Transformation Brings Worry.” *Chicago Tribune*, January 8, 2012.

Bowean, Lolly. "Struggles Continue for Many CHA Voucher Holders." *Chicago Tribune*, September 28, 2016.

Bowean, Lolly. "Waiting to Go Back Home." *Chicago Tribune*, September 19, 2013.

Buck, Genevieve. "Where Do You Live?" *Chicago Tribune*, October 21, 2001.

Buck, Thomas. "Approve Two, Reject Five Housing Sites." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 2, 1950.

"Built in Ten Months." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 30, 1942.

"Cabrini Green: A Pedestrian's Dream." *Chicago Magazine*, April 2016. <http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/April-2016/chicago-neighborhood-cabrini-green>, accessed October 16, 2016.

Caputo, Angela. "Home Evasion." *Chicago Reporter*, July 2, 2012. <http://chicagoreporter.com/home-evasion>, accessed September 23, 2016.

Caputo, Angela. "Rootless." *Chicago Reporter*, November 1, 2012. [chicagoreporter.com/rootless](http://chicagoreporter.com/rootless), accessed December 19, 2016.

Caputo, Angela. "Trespassing Arrests are Sky High in the Footprint of the Former Cabrini-Green Community." *Chicago Reporter*, November 13, 2013. <http://chicagoreporter.com/trespassing-arrests-are-sky-high-footprint-former-cabrini-green-community/>, accessed March 4, 2016.

"CHA's Future in Cuomo's Hands." *Chicago Tribune*, January 14, 2000.

Chachkevitch, Alexandra. "Door Shuts on Cabrini's Promise." *Chicago Tribune*, February 16, 2012.

Chase, Brett et al. "CHA's Transformation Reshaped a City," Better Government Association/*Chicago Sun-Times*, June 25, 2016.

Ciokajlo, Mickey. "New Cabrini Agreement May End Residents' Suit." *Chicago Tribune*, August 16, 2000.

Cohen, Sharon. "Teens Say Goodbye to Chicago's Cabrini Green with Poems." *Daily Herald*, April 24, 2011. <http://www.dailyherald.com/articles/20110424/news/704249903/> accessed November 22, 2016.

Cohen, Sharon. "Children Learn How to Duck in Projects." *Philadelphia Tribune*, November 6, 1992.

Collins, Catherine. "Neighborhood: Key to Success of Urban Developments." *Chicago Tribune*, January 6, 1985.

Cottrell, Megan. "Did Chicago's Plan for Transformation Succeed?" *Chicago Muckrakers*, March 25, 2013. <http://www.chicagonow.com/chicago-muckrakers/2013/03/did-chicago-plan-for-transformation-succeed>, accessed October 4, 2016.

Costello, Brian. "As the Walls Came Down." *Chicago Reader*, March 24, 2011. <http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/cabrini-green-led-art-project/Content?oid=3475071>, accessed December 7, 2015.

Clair, Muriel. "The End of Cabrini Green." *McClatchy—Tribune Business News*, January 11, 2011. <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.asu.edu/docview/835091121?pq-origsite=summon>, accessed December 1, 2015.

Cramer, Ned. "A Different Kind of Hero." *Architect*, July 14, 2015. [http://www.architectmagazine.com/design/editorial/a-different-kind-of-hero\\_o](http://www.architectmagazine.com/design/editorial/a-different-kind-of-hero_o), accessed March 7, 2016.

Cramer, Ned. "Good Times," *Architect's Magazine*, April 28, 2011, [http://www.architectmagazine.com/design/editorial/good-times\\_o](http://www.architectmagazine.com/design/editorial/good-times_o), accessed January 25, 2017

Cromidas, Rachel. "2 Bedrooms in Cabrini-Green's New High Rise Start at \$3,200 a Month." *Chicagoist*, February 8, 2016. [http://chicagoist.com/2016/02/08/2\\_bedrooms\\_in\\_cabrini-greens\\_new\\_hi.php](http://chicagoist.com/2016/02/08/2_bedrooms_in_cabrini-greens_new_hi.php), accessed February 23, 2016.

Cromie, Bob. "Sniper Slayings Spark Questions." *Chicago Tribune*, July 20, 1970.

Curbed Staff. "What Will the Cabrini-Green of the Future Look Like?" *Curbed Chicago*, January 7, 2016. <http://chicago.curbed.com/archives/2016/01/07/what-will-the-cabrinigreen-of-the-future-look-like.php>, accessed February 10, 2016.

DeClue, Denise. "The Siege of Sandburg Village." *Chicago Reader*, January 20, 1978. <http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/the-siege-of-sandburg-village/Content?oid=3295234> Accessed May 5, 2016.

Diesenhous, Susan. "From Gritty Roots to Urban Chic." *Chicago Tribune*, July 11, 2008.

Dukmasova, Maya. "Documenting the Rise and Fall of Chicago's Cabrini-Green Public Housing Projects," *In These Times*, November 16, 2015, <http://inthesetimes.com/article/18606/70-acres-cabrini-green-documentary-chicago-housing-authority>, accessed January 11, 2017.

Dukmasova, Maya. "The Fight to Preserve a Model Public Housing Project." *Chicago Reader*, June 12, 2014. <http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/public-housing-authority-lathrop-homes-community-partners/Content?oid=13902268>, accessed September 23, 2016.

Dukmasova, Maya. "What Will a Ben Carson-led HUD Mean for the CHA?" *Chicago Reader*, January 4, 2017, <http://www.chicagoreader.com/Bleader/archives/2017/01/04/what-will-a-ben-carson-led-hud-mean-for-the-cha>, accessed January 17, 2017.

Editor, "The Demolished New City YMCA Lives on at the NEWCITY," *Chicago Architecture*, August 11, 2016, <http://www.chicagoarchitecture.org/2016/08/11/the-demolished-new-city-ymca-lives-on-at-the-new-newcity/> accessed January 8, 2017.

Editor. "New Cabrini Green Tower Construction Now Underway." *Chicago Architecture Blog*, April 16, 2015. <http://www.chicagoarchitecture.org/2015/04/16/new-cabrini-green-tower-construction-now-underway>, accessed March 4, 2016.

Emanuel, Rahm. "Tear Down Prentice." *Chicago Tribune*, October 31, 2012.

Fusco, Chris, et al. "Cashing In on the CHA." *Chicago Sun-Times*, April 23, 2016.

Gallun, Alby. "Cabrini's Lights." *Crain's Chicago Business*, May 16, 2005.

Gallun, Alby. "City Courting Developers for Cabrini-Green Land." *Crain's Chicago Business*, January 6, 2016. <http://www.chicagobusiness.com/realestate/20160106/CRED03/1601099912/city-courting-developers-for-cabrini-green-land>, accessed March 2, 2016.

Gallun, Alby, and Micah Maidenberg. "Around Cabrini-Green, the Future Looks Bright." *Crain's Chicago Business*, July 19, 2014, <http://www.chicagobusiness.com/article/20140719/ISSUE01/307199972/around-cabrini-green-the-future-look-bright>, accessed February 13, 2016.

Galo, Maria T. "High-Rent District with Apartment Supply Tight, Affordable Units Hard to Come By." *Chicago Tribune*, January 1, 2000.

Garza, Melita Marie. "CHA Gives Go-Ahead to \$1.5 Billion Overhaul of Public Housing." *Chicago Tribune*, January 7, 2000.

Glanton, Dahleen. "The Tragic World of Girl X, Joy of Childhood Torn Away Horrifying Ideal of 'Anybody's Child' Reverberates Far." *Chicago Tribune*, April 6, 1997.

Goering, Laurie, and Donna Kiesling. "Resident's Fears Cross Color Lines." *Chicago Tribune*, December 17, 1992.

Greig, Sabrina. "Times Already Changed at Cabrini-Green," *F Newsmagazine*, March 7, 2016, <http://fnewsmagazine.com/2016/03/times-already-changed-at-cabrini-green/>, accessed January 25, 2017.

Grimm, Andy. "2 Cabrini Families Get Ultimatum." *Chicago Tribune*, December 2, 2010.

Grotto, Jason. "Chicago Housing Authority Stockpiles Cash, Pays Debts as Families Languish on Waiting List." *Chicago Tribune*, January 13, 2017.

Grumman, Cornelia. "Redrawing Cabrini's Future." *Chicago Tribune*, March 30, 1996.

Handley, John. "Moving to Cabrini." *Chicago Tribune*, August 12, 2000.

Handley, John. "Redeveloping Public Housing." *Chicago Tribune*, August 22, 2004.

Handley, John. "Rehab in Store for CHA Landmark." *Chicago Tribune*, February 24, 2002.

Hawkins, Karen. "Last Cabrini Public Housing High-Rise Came Down." *Chicago Defender*, April 6-12, 2011.

Henderson, Harold. "Is Mixed Income the Way?" *Chicago Reader*, December 15, 2006.

Hill, Mary, and John Kass. "At Cabrini, Daley Hears Lot of Quiet." *Chicago Tribune*, October 24, 1992.

Holliday, Darryl. "New Target Store Unveiled as Anchor Near Old Cabrini-Green." *DNAInfo Chicago*, October 8, 2013. <https://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20131008/old-town/new-target-store-unveiled-as-anchor-near-old-cabrini-green> accessed March 4, 2016.

"HUD Approves CHA's Transformation Plan." *Chicago Defender*, February 19, 2000.

Huffstutter, PJ. "It's Bleak but It's Home." *Los Angeles Times*, March 1, 2005.

Hunt, Wendell. "'White Folks Forcing Us Out': Say CHA Residents." *New York Beacon*, September 15, 2011.

Ihejirika, Maudlyne. "Cabrini Green's Last Stand." *Chicago Sun-Times*, October 24, 2010 <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/resources/doc/nb/news/13310E5435621B70?p=AWNB>, accessed December 2, 2015.

Johnson, Sandra. "The Real Story of Living in Cabrini-Green Projects." *Austin Weekly News*, April 8, 2014 <http://www.austinweeklynews.com/News/Articles/4-8-2014/The-real-story-of-living-in-Cabrini-Green-projects/> accessed January 9, 2017.

Jovarsky, Ben. "Good Times at Cabrini." *Chicago Reader*, September 23, 2004.

Kamin, Blair. "Housing that Works." *Chicago Tribune*, June 18, 1995.

Kamin, Blair. "Listening is the First Step." *Chicago Tribune*, June 23, 1995.

Kamin, Blair. "Myth Must be Exploded." *Chicago Tribune*, June 22, 1995.

Kamin, Blair. "Open Housing Questions Dog Lathrop Rehab." *Chicago Tribune*, February 21, 2016.

Kamin, Blair. "Out of Housing into Homes." *Chicago Tribune*, March 31, 1998.

Kamin, Blair. "Pragmatism Demolishes Outdated Notions of Housing Chicagoland's Poor." *Chicago Tribune*, December 24, 1995.

Kamin, Blair. "Urban Mosaic's Lost Piece: Creative Planners Have Discarded 'Tower-in-the-Park' Model that Disconnected Public Housing from Its Surroundings." *Chicago Tribune*, June 19, 1995.

Kamin, Blair, and Flynn McRoberts. "All Eyes on Facelift at Cabrini, Horner: HUD Success at CHA Could Prove Pivotal." *Chicago Tribune*, December 18, 1995.

Kaplin, Joel. "CHA Still Pushing Cabrini Plans, U.S. Officials Wary of Lane's Vision." *Chicago Tribune*, June 13, 1995.

Kass, John. "Compromise Cabrini Plan." *Chicago Tribune*, October 20, 1992.

Keegan, Anne. "All Agree: Life is Better Now at Cabrini." *Chicago Tribune*, July 27, 1981.

Kerch, Steve. "Best of Chicago Needs Diverse Eye for Full Expression." *Chicago Tribune*, June 6, 1999.

Kerch, Steve. "Sandburg Village: Winning a Battle in Urban Renewal." *Chicago Tribune*, September 14, 1986.

Kirkpatrick, Clayton. "City at Housing Crossroads: It's Pay or Be Paid." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 8, 1947.

Knox, Memorie. "Cabrini Housing Agreement Disperses Displacement, Ensures Resident Input." *Chicago Weekend*, August 24, 2000.

Lane, Vincent. "High-Rise Part of Strategy in Housing." *Chicago Tribune*, January 7, 1994.

Latrace, AJ. "Lathrop Homes Residents to Protest Chicago Housing Authority Next Week." *Curbed Chicago*, June 17, 2016, <http://chicago.curbed.com/2016/6/17/11961904/lathrop-homes-protest-chicago-housing-authority>, accessed January 8, 2017.

Leinhart, Jennifer, and John O'Brien. "'We're Crying for Help' Cabrini, the Day After." *Chicago Tribune*, October 15, 1992.

Lopez, Ruth. "The Lights Go Out on Cabrini-Green." *Art Newspaper*, May 2011.

Lulay, Stephanie. "Public Housing Museum Plans to Break Ground in Former ABLA Building in 2016." *DNAInfo Chicago*, August 14, 2015. <https://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20150814/little-italy/public-housing-museum-plans-break-ground-former-abla-building-2016>, accessed March 5, 2016.

Maddon, David. "Five Myths About Public Housing." *Washington Post*, September 11, 2015.

Maidenberg, Micah. "Seeking Room to Build, Developers Push Close to Cabrini-Green." *Crain's Chicago Business*, October 11, 2014. <http://www.chicagobusiness.com/article/20141011/ISSUE01/310119983/seeking-room-to-build-developers-push-close-to-cabrini-green>, accessed February 12, 2016.

MarksJarvis, Gail. "Nearly Half of Chicago Residents Can't Afford Where They Live, Study Says." *Chicago Tribune*, June 16, 2016.

Mathewson, Tara Garcia. "The Search for Affordable Housing in Chicago." *Equal Voice*, April 29, 2015. <http://www.equalvoiceforfamilies.org/the-search-for-affordable-housing-in-chicago/>, accessed October 22, 2015.

Mathewson, Tara Garcia. "Where Did Chicago Families from Cabrini-Green Go?" *Equal Voice News*, April 30, 2015, <http://www.equalvoiceforfamilies.org/chicagos-cabrini-green-housing-then-and-now/>, accessed December 28, 2016.

Matthews, David. "Developer Names Cabrini-Green 18-Story Apartment Tower: Xavier." *DNAInfo Chicago*, August 4, 2015. <https://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20150804/river-north/developer-names-cabrini-green-18-story-apartment-tower-xavier> accessed February 23, 2016.



Messner, Matthew. "How Developers Are Rebuilding Affordable Units 20 Years After Chicago Began to Dismantle Its Public Housing." *Architect's Newspaper*, September 8, 2016. <http://archpaper.com/2016/09/chicago-affordable-units-public-housing/#gallery-0-slide-0>, accessed October 12, 2016.

McKuen, Pamela Dittmeier. "NewCity Offers Urban, Upscale Lifestyles." *Chicago Tribune*, December 27, 2015.

McRobert, Flynn. "High-Rise Plan May Be Tough Sell for Cabrini Residents." *Chicago Tribune*, December 22, 1995.

McRoberts, Flynn, and Blair Kamin. "Developers Peek at Cabrini's Future." *Chicago Tribune*, December 21, 1995.

McRoberts, Flynn, and J. Linn Allen. "When Two Worlds Collide at Cabrini." *Chicago Tribune*, July 30, 1998.

Messner, Matthew. "How Developers are Rebuilding Affordable Housing Units 20 Years after Chicago Began to Dismantle its Public Housing." *Architect's Newspaper*, September 8, 2016. <https://archpaper.com/2016/09/chicago-affordable-units-public-housing/#gallery-0-slide-0>, accessed January 27, 2017.

Minerbrook, Alan B. "Flannery Homes Update." *We the People Media*, June 1997. <http://wethepeoplemedia.org/flannery-homes-update-2/#more-4237>, accessed October 31, 2016.

Morice, Zach. "When Public Housing Goes Private." *Curbed Chicago*, September 28, 2016. <http://chicago.curbed.com/2016/9/28/13063710/chicago-public-housing-cha>, accessed November 10, 2016.

Morris, Steven. "Developers in Heated Contest for Near North Renewal Tract." *Chicago Tribune*, June 9, 1984.

Moser, Whet. "Where's the CHA in Chicago's New Housing Plan?" *Chicago Magazine*, January 24, 2014. <http://www.chicagomag.com/city-life/January-2014/Chicagos-New-Housing-Plan-Is-Broad-and-Data-Driven-But-Wheres-the-CHA/>, accessed September 22, 2016.

Motchan, Bill. "A First Look at the Final Chapter in Burying Cabrini-Green's Past." *Chicago Architecture Blog*, February 5, 2014. <http://www.chicagoarchitecture.org/2014/02/05/a-first-look-at-the-final-chapter-in-burying-cabrini-greens-past>, accessed February 4, 2016.

"Name This Neighborhood, Please." *Chicago Tribune*, May 30, 2015.

Nordgren, Sarah. "Uneasy Calm Prevails at Troubled Project." *Philadelphia Tribune*, November 17, 1992.

"Not Just Another Murder." *Chicago Tribune*, October 15, 1992.

O'Donnell, Caroline. "Target Replaces and Remakes Old Chicago Housing Project." *Marketplace*, October 19, 2012 <http://www.marketplace.org/2012/10/19/wealth-poverty/target-replaces-and-remakes-old-chicago-housing-project>, accessed March 4, 2016.

Olivo, Antonio. "Cabrini Residents Sue Over Eviction." *Chicago Tribune*, June 4, 2000.

Olivo, Antonio. "CHA Gets Own House in Order." *Chicago Tribune*, August 29, 2011.

Olivo, Antonio. "Keeping a Vibrant Middle Class." *Chicago Tribune*, January 4, 2011.

Olkon, Sara. "I See That Danny Died in Vain." *Chicago Tribune*, September 7, 2008.

Ori, Ryan. "Clybourn Corridor Closing the Gap with Mag Mile." *Chicago Real Estate Daily in Crain's Chicago Business*, January 25, 2016. <http://www.chicagobusiness.com/realestate/20160125/CRED02/160129917/clybourn-corridor-closing-the-gap-with-mag-mile>, accessed March 10, 2016.

Osnos, Evan. "CHA Panel OKs Preservation of Hilliard Homes." *Chicago Tribune*, September 14, 2000.

Page, Clarence. "Public Housing for Chicago's Public Officials?" *Chicago Tribune*, April 8, 1987.

Peterson, Terry. "A Vision for Change." *Economic Development Journal* 4, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 30-34.

Podmolik, Mary Ellen. "Developers Hoping 'NoCa,' 'River South' Catch On." *Chicago Tribune*, May 13, 2015.

Podmolik, Mary Ellen. "Plan for Transformation a Tough Sell in Weak Market." *Chicago Tribune*, June 10, 2011.

Podmolik, Mary Ellen. "Record Number of Downtown Apartments to Arrive This Year." *Chicago Tribune*, February 11, 2015. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-downtown-development-0211-biz-20150210-story.html>, accessed February 23, 2016.

"Poll: What Should the Former Cabrini-Green Area Be Called?" *Curbed Chicago*, June 3, 2015. <http://chicago.curbed.com/archives/2015/06/03/whats-in-a-name-1.php>, accessed February 4, 2016.

“Poor Conditions at Hilliard Homes.” *Chicago Daily Defender*, January 23, 1968.

Popkin, Susan J. “What Chicago Learned from Privatizing Some Affordable Housing.” *Crain’s Chicago Business*, January 4, 2017, <http://www.chicagobusiness.com/article/20170104/OPINION/161229908/what-chicago-learned-from-privatizing-some-affordable-housing>, accessed January 17, 2017.

Pride, Karen E. “Doll Draws Attention to Public Housing Debate.” *Chicago Defender*, February 8, 2015.

Pride, Karen E. “New Field House Blooms at Wentworth Gardens.” *Chicago Defender*, December 14, 2004.

Quintanilla, Ray. “New Neighbors Draw the Line at Cabrini.” *Chicago Tribune*, July 31, 2003. [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2003-07-31/news/0307310274\\_1\\_cabrini-public-housing-chicago-housing-authority](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2003-07-31/news/0307310274_1_cabrini-public-housing-chicago-housing-authority), accessed October 29, 2016.

Racke, Will. “Chicago’s Housing Market Predicted to be Worst in America Next Year.” *Chicago Business Journal*, December 1, 2016, <http://www.bizjournals.com/chicago/news/2016/12/01/chicago-housing-market-predicted-to-be-worst-in-us.html>, accessed January 15, 2017.

“Reader Feedback: More Public Housing on the Near North Side, Not Less.” *Chicago Sun-Times*, January 26, 2014.

Reardon, Patrick T. “CHA Chief: High-Rises Should Stay.” *Chicago Tribune*, February 16, 1990.

Reardon, Patrick T. “CHA Reeling from Years of Maintenance Neglect.” *Chicago Tribune*, November 2, 1992.

Reardon, Patrick T. “Model Homes.” *Chicago Tribune*, October 20, 1992.

Reardon, Patrick T., and Robert Davis. “CHA Called ‘Worst in the World’, Lane Presses Call to Bring in the Guard.” *Chicago Tribune*, October 17, 1992.

Rhodes, Dawn. “Go-Ahead for Public Housing.” *Chicago Tribune*, September 14, 2013.

Rice, Alison. “Chicago Hope.” *Builder*, June 5, 2003. [http://www.builderonline.com/land/development/chicago-hope\\_o](http://www.builderonline.com/land/development/chicago-hope_o), accessed March 7, 2016.

Rice, Mae. “Photos: Inside the Demolition of the Notorious Cabrini-Green Projects.” *Chicagoist*, September 29, 2015. [http://chicagoist.com/2015/09/29/photos\\_inside\\_the\\_demolition\\_of\\_the.php#photo-1](http://chicagoist.com/2015/09/29/photos_inside_the_demolition_of_the.php#photo-1), accessed January 10, 2017.

Rodkin, Dennis. "Why the CHA Dropped 47,000 Names from its Waiting List." *Chicago Magazine*, September 18, 2013. <http://www.chicagomag.com/Radar/Deal-Estate/September-2013/CHA-Drops-47000-Names-from-Its-Waiting-List/>, accessed January 28, 2016.

Ruklick, Joe. "Housing Advocates Demand Answers from CHA." *Chicago Defender*, October 22, 2002.

Ruklick, Joe. "Low-Income Housing Stock to Expand." *Chicago Defender*, August 9, 2001.

Ruklick, Joe. "New CHA Boos Promises Flourishing Public Housing." *Chicago Defender*, July 25, 2000.

Ruklick, Joe. "Progress at CHA." *Chicago Defender*, December 10, 2001.

Ruolo, Robert Farrell. "Poetics of Light." *ArtSlant*, April 17, 2011. <http://www.artslant.com/chi/articles/show/22811?print=1>. accessed December 7, 2015.

Saulny, Susan. "At Housing Project, Both Fear and Renewal." *New York Times*, March 18, 2007.

Schell, Daniel. "CHA Removes Shroud from Cabrini-Green Redevelopment Plans." *Chicago Architecture Blog*, April 23, 2015. <http://www.chicagoarchitecture.org/2015/04/23/cha-removes-shroud-from-cabrini-green-redevelopment-plans>, accessed March 4, 2016.

Schmich, Mary. "As Change Moves In, Cabrini No Longer Seems a World Apart." *Chicago Tribune*, May 28, 2000.

Schmich, Mary. "Cabrini May Vanish—But Not Ex-Tenants." *Chicago Tribune*, February 29, 2012.

Schmich, Mary. "Chicago Church Mural Needs an Angel Before It's Forgotten." *Chicago Tribune*, August 15, 2014.

Schmich, Mary. "Closing the Door on Infamous Era." *Chicago Tribune*, December 10, 2010.

Schmich, Mary. "Dantrell Davis Shouldn't Be Forgotten." *Chicago Tribune*, October 12, 2012.

Schmich, Mary. "A Lens on Cabrini-Green's Past." *Chicago Tribune*, August 16, 2015.

- Schmich, Mary. "Lights Blink, History Fades at Cabrini." *Chicago Tribune*, March 30, 2011.
- Schmich, Mary. "Neighborhood Remote as an Island, Close Enough to Touch." *Chicago Tribune*, March 7, 1997.
- Schmich, Mary. "Plausible Plan for Cabrini-Green." *Chicago Tribune*, April 24, 2015.
- Schmich, Mary. "Preserving Cabrini-Green's Images." *Chicago Tribune*, April 27, 2014.
- Schmich, Mary. "Spared School Gets Chance to Reshape Neighborhood." *Chicago Tribune*, May 24, 2013.
- Schmich, Mary. "Why the Whitewash of a Historic Church?" *Chicago Tribune*, December 20, 2015.
- Seidel, John. "Judge OKs Deal to Bring More Public Housing to Near North Side." *Chicago Sun-Times*, September 17, 2015. <http://chicago.suntimes.com/news/7/71/968082/cabrini-green-public-housing-settlement>, accessed December 1, 2015.
- Sharoff, Robert. "In Chicago, An Attempt to Upgrade a Neighborhood." *New York Times*, September 10, 2000.
- Siddon, Arthur. "The Police—Looking in From the Outside." *Chicago Tribune*, August 16, 1970.
- Spula, Ian. "How Will the Market React to the Cabrini-Green Settlement." *Chicago Magazine*, September 30, 2015. <http://www.chicagomag.com/real-estate/September-2015/What-Will-Be-the-Market-Fallout-From-the-Cabrini-Settlement/>, accessed January 22, 2015.
- Spula, Ian. "Targeting Cabrini." *Curbed Chicago*, January 25, 2012. <http://chicago.curbed.com/2012/1/25/10403260/targeting-cabrini-1>, accessed March 4, 2016.
- Steele, Carol, and Elizabeth Rosenthal. "Voice of the People." *Chicago Tribune*, May 4, 2014.
- Strausberg, Chinta. "CHA Begins Hilliard Rehab." *Chicago Defender*, November 14, 2002.
- Strausberg, Chinta. "Mixed-Income Units for Cabrini-Green." *Chicago Defender*, August 16, 2000.

Studenkov, Igor. "National Public Housing Museum Construction Set to Begin in Early 2013." *Chicago Journal*, October 31, 2012. [http://www.chicagojournal.com/news/10-31-2012/National\\_Public\\_Housing\\_Museum\\_construction\\_set\\_to\\_begin\\_in\\_early\\_2013](http://www.chicagojournal.com/news/10-31-2012/National_Public_Housing_Museum_construction_set_to_begin_in_early_2013), accessed February 15, 2016.

Swanson, Stevenson. "Cabrini-Green Takes Steps to Overcome Its Bad Image." *Chicago Tribune*, March 12, 1981.

Taylor, Robert R. "Voice of the People: Housing Tenants' Income." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 13, 1943.

Terry, Don. "Chicagoans Split on Housing Plan." *New York Times*, June 29, 1996.

Terry, Don. "New Federal Landlord Takes Charge in Chicago." *New York Times*, June 1, 1995.

Thornton, Jerry. "Protests Greet Cabrini-Green Plan: Residents Have Redevelopment Ideas, Demands of Own." *Chicago Tribune*, December 10, 1993.

Trice, Dawn Turner. "New Views of City's Old Public Housing High-Rises." *Chicago Tribune*, October 21, 2013.

Trice, Dawn Turner. "Reflecting on How Buildings Shape Lives." *Chicago Tribune*, December 30, 2013.

"Truly a Sad Sight." *Chicago Tribune*, March 31, 2011.

"The Truth About CHA's Rebuilding Plan Looks Disastrous." *Chicago Defender*, February 13, 2003.

Turner, Beauty. "You Have Been Served." *Residents' Journal*. We the People Media. August 19, 2004. <http://wethepeoplemedia.org/you-have-been-served/>, accessed October 24, 2015.

Wangensteen, Betsy. "Bold Cabrini Plans Stir Dreams, Foes." *Crain's Chicago Business*, February 10, 1996. <http://www.chicagobusiness.com/article/19960210/ISSUE01/10007900/bold-cabrini-plan-stirs-dream-foes-cha-salvation-or-carte-blanche-for-developer>, accessed January 16, 2016.

Walls, Sunya. "Cabrini Green Residents Protest Demolition." *Chicago Weekend*, July 7, 1996.

Walsh, Edward. "Chicago Tries to Replace 'Castle' with Community." *Washington Post*, October 28, 1995.

Washington, Farren. "The Future of Housing in the Old Cabrini-Green Site." *Chicago Agent Magazine*, October 7, 2015. <https://chicagoagentmagazine.com/2015/10/07/the-future-of-housing-in-the-old-cabrini-green-site/>, accessed March 8, 2016.

Watters, Brent. "HUD Plans to Improve Chicago Public Housing." *Chicago Citizen*, June 11, 1995.

West, Cassandra. "All Sides of Public Housing Under 1 Roof." *Chicago Tribune*, June 24, 2009.

"What's in a Name?" *Chicago Tribune*, June 4, 2015.

Wiegman, Carl. "Story of the City's Big Problems: Negro Housing." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 30, 1949.

Wiltz, Teresa, and Jerry Thomas. "Amid Violence, Families Survive." *Chicago Tribune*, October 18, 1992.

"The Winner: A Regular Neighborhood." *Chicago Tribune*, June 20, 1993.

Woodridge, Quintana. "Cabrini-Green Residents Say Goodbye." *Resident's Journal*. We the People Media. March 31, 2011. <http://wethepeoplemedia.org/cabrini-green-residents-say-goodbye>, accessed October 24, 2015.

"A Wrong-Way Crusade on Integration." *Chicago Tribune*, January 1, 1988.

Zekas, Joe. "Chicago's Aptly-Named Frontier Avenue." *Yo Chicago*, October 6, 2014. <http://yochicago.com/chicago-aptly-named-frontier-ave/36655>, accessed February 22, 2016.

### Neighborhood and Development Organizations

coNNect. "About the Near North Unity Program." <http://www.connectnearth.org/About-Us6/About-the-Near-North-Unity-Project.html>, accessed November 30, 2015.

Holsten Real Estate Development Corporation/Holsten Management Corporation. Chicago, IL. <http://holstenchicago.com>

McCarron, John. "Closing the Condo-Cabrini Chasm." LISC Chicago, November 29, 2011. Quoted in *Cabrini-Green: The Transformation of a Neighborhood*. Available at <http://cabrini-green.com>

McCarron, John. "Near North Unity Soars...For Now." LISC Chicago, November 7, 2013. <http://www.lisc-chicago.org/news/2544>, accessed November 30, 2015.

Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Award for Architectural Excellence. 2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Landon Bone Baker Architects, for Archer Court Townhouses. Chicago Neighborhood Development Awards, 2005. <http://www.lisc-cnda.org/Past-winners/11th-Annual-CNDA-Winners-2005/Richard-H-Driehaus-Foundation-Award-for-Architectural-Excellence-2nd-Place-Landon-Bone-Baker-Architects-for-Archer-Courts-Townhouses.html>, accessed May 5, 2016.

#### Movies/TV/Radio/Blogs

Bezalel, Ronit. "Voices of Cabrini: Remaking Chicago's Public Housing." Available at <http://ronitfilms.com/films/voicesofcabrini.html>, accessed December 19, 2016.

"Cabrini Green Monitor Wants Disused Buildings Demolished." *WBEZ 91.5*, October 6, 2006. <http://www.wbez.org/story/news/local/cabrini-green-monitor-wants-disused-buildings-demolished>, accessed October 24, 2015.

Cuddy, Alison. "A New Effort Begins to Save Famous Chicago Mural." *WBEZ 91.5*, June 5, 2012. <http://www.wbez.org/blogs/alison-cuddy/2012-06/new-effort-begins-save-famous-chicago-mural-99797>, accessed February 25, 2016.

Hope, Leah. "Former Cabrini Green Residents Welcomed into New Mixed-Income Housing Complex in Old Town," May 4, 2016, *ABC News*, <http://abc7chicago.com/realestate/former-cabrini-green-residents-welcomed-into-new-complex/1323031/>, accessed January 8, 2017.

Huggins, Harry. "What to do with Chicago's Vacant Public Housing Land," *Chicago Mosaic*, <http://chicago-mosaic.medill.northwestern.edu/chicago-housing-authority-vacant-land/>, accessed January 28, 2017.

Michaeli, Ethan. "Chicago Newsroom." *CAN TV*, September 27, 2012. <http://chicagonewsroom.org/2012/09/28/cn-september-27-2012/>, accessed March 12, 2016.

Modell, Josh. "*Candyman*: Cabrini-Green and the Fear of Public Housing," *A.V. Club*, July 16, 2015, <http://www.avclub.com/video/candyman-cabrini-green-and-fear-public-housing-221851>, accessed January 21, 2016.

Moore, Natalie. "Cabrini-Green Ready for Its Final Phase of Redevelopment." *WBEZ 91.5*, January 30, 2014. <https://www.wbez.org/shows/wbez-news/cabrinigreen-ready-for-final-phase-of-redevelopment/5293acc2-c711-4507-90c9-0cd1d9304639>, accessed February 9, 2016.



Moore, Natalie. "CHA Not Living Up to Promises of Mixed-Income Housing." *WBEZ 91.5*, September 21, 2012. <https://www.wbez.org/shows/wbez-news/cha-not-living-up-to-promises-of-mixed-income-housing/f57e9a04-c140-48c6-b85b-44a3d1aef9fe>, accessed March 12, 2016.

O'Donnell, Caroline. "Target Replaces Cabrini-Green Projects." *WBEZ 91.5*, October 20, 2012. <https://www.wbez.org/shows/wbez-news/target-replaces-cabrini-green-projects/28e995b7-61e2-4e54-ad27-b85eb5d3b795>, accessed March 4, 2016.

Pattillo, Mary. "Gentrification: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly." Panel Remarks. February 5, 2008. A segment of *In the K/Now*, a series presented by the Chicago History Museum. <http://www.wbez.org/episodes-segments/gentrification-good-bad-and-ugly>, accessed December 19, 2016.

Phipps, Keith Phipps. "Apartment Life: *The Apartment, The Landlord, Candyman*," A.V. Club, February 22, 2011, <http://www.avclub.com/article/apartment-life-ithe-apartmenti-the-landlordi-ican-52183>, accessed January 21, 2016.

Reid-Cleveland, Keith. "The Gentrification at Chicago's Cabrini-Green Projects Could Happen Anywhere." *Black Youth Project*, April 9, 2016. <http://blackyouthproject.com/the-gentrification-at-chicagos-cabrini-green-projects-could-happen-anywhere>, accessed October 16, 2016.

Spoel, Bob. "Mixed Stories of Parkside." *Parkside of Old Town: An Experiment in Public Housing*, June 11, 2011. <https://parksidehousing.wordpress.com/parkside-story>, accessed March 9, 2016.

## Secondary Sources

### Books

Abbott, Andrew. *Department and Discipline: Chicago Sociology at One Hundred*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

Bauman, John F., Roger Biles, and Kristin M. Szylvian, eds. *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes: In Search of an Urban Housing Policy in Twentieth-Century America*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000.

Bennett, Larry. *The Third City: Chicago and American Urbanism*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Bennett, Larry, Janet L. Smith, and Patricia A. Wright, eds. *Where Are Poor People to Live?: Transforming Public Housing Communities*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006.

Biles, Roger. *The Fate of Cities: Urban America and the Federal Government, 1945-2000*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011.

Blake, Peter. *Form Follows Fiasco: Why Modern Architecture Hasn't Worked*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974.

Bloom, Nicholas Dagen. *Public Housing that Worked: New York in the Twentieth Century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2008.

Bloom, Nicholas Dagen, Fritz Umbach, and Lawrence J. Vale, eds. *Public Housing Myths: Perception, Reality, and Social Policy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015.

Bowly, Jr., Devereux. *The Poorhouse: Subsidized Housing in Chicago*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 2012.

Bristol, Katharine G. "The Pruitt-Igoe Myth." in *American Architectural History: A Contemporary Reader*, edited by Keith L. Eggener. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Bulmer, Martin. *The Chicago School of Sociology: Institutionalization, Diversity, and the Rise of Sociological Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Cappetti, Carla. *Writing Chicago: Modernism, Ethnography, and the Novel*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Carmon, Naomi, and Susan S. Fainstein, eds. *Policy, Planning, and People: Promoting Justice in Urban Development*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.

Chaskin, Robert J., and Mark L. Joseph. *Integrating the Inner City: The Promise and Perils of Mixed-Income Public Housing Transformation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015.

Cisneros, Henry G. and Lora Engdahl, eds. *From Despair to Hope: HOPE VI and the New Promise of Public Housing in America's Cities*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2009.

Colquhoun, Alan. *Modern Architecture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Condit, Carl W. *Chicago, 1930-70: Building, Planning, and Urban Technology*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

Condit, Carl W. *The Chicago School of Architecture: A History of Commercial and Public Building in the Chicago Area, 1875-1925*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964.

Conn, Steven. *Americans Against the City: Anti-Urbanism in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Coyle, Daniel. *Hardball: A Season in the Projects*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1994.

Cronon, William. *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991.

Dickinson, Greg, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Ott, eds. *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010.

Doss, Erika. *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Drake, St. Clair, and Horace R. Cayton. *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*. Revised and Enlarged Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.

Duany, Andres, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck. *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*. 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary ed. New York: North Point Press, 2010.

Farrell, James T. *Studs Lonigan*. Introduction by Ann Douglas. New York: Penguin Books, 2001.

Feldman, Roberta M., and Susan Stall. *The Dignity of Resistance: Women Residents' Activism in Chicago Public Housing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Fine, Gary Alan, ed. *A Second Chicago School? The Development of a Postwar American Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Fishman, Robert. *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century: Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991.

Fleming, Ronald Lee. *The Art of Placemaking: Interpreting Community Through Public Art and Urban Design*. London: Merrell, 2007.

Freedman, Leonard. *Public Housing: The Politics of Poverty*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1969.

Friedman, Lawrence M. *Government and Slum Housing: A Century of Frustration*. Chicago: Rand McNally Co., 1968.

- Frisch, Michael. *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990.
- Gay, Peter. *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2008.
- Goetz, Edward G. *Clearing the Way: Deconcentrating the Poor in Urban America*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press, 2003.
- . *New Deal Ruins: Race, Economic Justice, and Public Housing Policy*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013.
- Grossman, James R. *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001.
- Guglielmo, Thomas A. *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Hamilton, Paula, and Linda Shopes, eds. *Oral History and Public Memories*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008.
- Hayden, Dolores. *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995.
- Hirsch, Arnold R. *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*. 1983 New Forward. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Holli, Melvin G., and Peter d'A. Jones, eds. *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait*. 1977. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995.
- Hudson, John C. *Chicago: A Geography of the City and its Region*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.
- Hunt, D. Bradford. *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- Hunt, D. Bradford, and Jon B. DeVries. *Planning Chicago*. Chicago: American Planners Association Planners Press, 2013.
- Hunter, Albert. *Symbolic Communities: The Persistence and Change of Chicago's Local Communities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

- Hurley, Andrew. *Beyond Preservation: Using Public History to Revitalize Inner Cities*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010.
- Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary ed. New York: Modern Library, 2011.
- Keating, Ann Durkin, ed. *Chicago Neighborhoods and Suburbs: A Historical Guide*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Kotlowitz, Alex. *There Are No Children Here: The Story of Two Boys Growing Up in the Other America*. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Lemann, Nicholas. *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America*. New York: Vintage, 1991.
- Low, Setha M. *On the Plaza: The Politics of Public Space and Culture*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000.
- Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960.
- Lynch, Kevin. *What Time is this Place?* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972.
- Manovich, Lev. *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.
- Marciniak, Ed. *Reclaiming the Inner City: Chicago's Near North Revitalization Confronts Cabrini-Green*. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs, 1986.
- Meehan, Eugene J. *The Quality of Federal Policymaking: Programmed Failure in Public Housing*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1979.
- Meinig, D.W., ed. *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographic Essays*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Meyerson, Martin, and Edward C. Banfield. *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest: The Case of Public Housing in Chicago*. London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964.
- Mitchell, William J. *City of Bits: Space, Place, and the Infobahn*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996.
- Mumford, Lewis. *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*. 1961. San Diego, CA: Harcourt, Inc., 1989.
- Newman, Oscar. *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention Through Urban Design*. New York: Collier Books, 1973.

Oberlander, H. Peter, and Eva Newbrun. *Houser: The Life and Work of Catherine Bauer*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999.

Pacyga, Dominic A. *Chicago: A Biography*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Pacyga, Dominic A., and Ellen Skerrett. *Chicago: City of Neighborhoods: Histories and Tours*. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1987.

Park, Robert E., and Ernest W. Burgess. *The City: Suggestions for Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment*. 1925 reprint. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Polikoff, Alexander. *Waiting for Gautreaux: A Story of Segregation, Housing, and the Black Ghetto*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2006.

Popkin, Susan J. *No Simple Solutions: Transforming Public Housing in Chicago*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016.

Radford, Gail. *Modern Housing for America: Policy Struggles in the New Deal Era*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Ritchie, Donald A. *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Rowe, Peter G. *Modernity and Housing*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995.

Sampson, Robert J. *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2012.

Sawislak, Karen. *Smoldering City: Chicagoans and the Great Fire, 1871-1874*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Schwartz, Alex F. *Housing Policy in the United States*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Smith, Carl. *The Plan for Chicago: Daniel Burnham and the Remaking of the American City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Sugrue, Thomas J. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. 1996 reprint. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Suttles, Gerald D. *The Social Construction of Communities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.

Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977.

Vale, Lawrence J. *From the Puritans to the Projects: Public Housing and Public Neighbors*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.

———. *Purging the Poorest: Public Housing and the Design Politics of Twice-Cleared Communities*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 2013.

Venkatesh, Sudhir Alladi. *American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Waldheim, Charles, and Katerina Ruedi Ray, eds. *Chicago Architecture: Histories, Revisions, Alternatives*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Williams, Paul. *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities*. Oxford: Berg, 2007.

Williams, Rhonda Y. *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggle Against Urban Inequality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Wilson, William Julius. *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.

Wright, Gwendolyn. *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981.

Zorbaugh, Harvey Warren. *The Gold Coast and the Slum: A Sociological Study of Chicago's Near North Side*. 1929 reprint. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

#### Book Chapters

Bennett, Larry, and Adolph Reed Jr. "The New Face of Urban Renewal: The Near North Redevelopment Initiative and the Cabrini-Green Neighborhood." in *Without Justice for All: The New Liberalism and Our Retreat from Racial Equality*, edited by Adolph Reed Jr. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999.

Bristol, Katherine. "The Pruitt-Igoe Myth." in *American Architectural History: A Contemporary Reader*, edited by Keith L. Eggener. London: Routledge, 2004.

Fleming, David. "Subjects of the Inner City: Writing the People of Cabrini-Green." in *Towards a Rhetoric of Everyday Life: New Directions in Research on Writing, Text, and*

*Discourse*, edited by Martin Nystrand and John Duffy. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003.

#### Journal Articles

Al-Kodmany, Kheir. "Placemaking with Tall Buildings." *Urban Design International* 16, no. 4 (2011): 252-269.

Austen, Ben. "The Death and Life of Chicago." *The New York Times Magazine*, May 29, 2013. [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/02/magazine/how-chicago-housing-crisis-ignited-a-new-form-of-activism.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/02/magazine/how-chicago-housing-crisis-ignited-a-new-form-of-activism.html?_r=0). accessed November 14, 2015.

Austen, Ben. "The Last Tower." *Harper's Magazine* (May 2012): 42-50.

Bennett, Larry. "Do We Really Wish to Live in a Communitarian City?: Communitarian Thinking and the Redevelopment of Chicago's Cabrini-Green Public Housing Complex." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 20, no. 2 (1998): 99-116.

Brophy, Paul C., and Rhonda N. Smith. "Mixed-Income Housing: Factors for Success." *Cityscape* 3, no. 2 (1997): 3-31.

Curley, Alexandra M. "Theories of Urban Poverty and Implications for Public Housing Policy." *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 32, no. 2 (June 2005) *Opposing Viewpoints in Context*, link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A133774840/OVIC?u=asuniv&xid=7df92647. accessed 16 Dec. 2016.

Goetz, Edward. "Gentrification in Black and White: The Racial Impact of Public Housing Demolition in American Cities." *Urban Studies* 48, no. 8 (June 2011): 1581-1604.

Heathcott, Joseph. "Pruitt-Igoe and the Critique of Public Housing." *Journal of American Planning*. vol. 78, 4 (September 2012): 450.

Heathcott, Joseph. "The Strange Career of Public Housing." *Journal of American Planning Association*. vol. 78, 4 (Autumn 2012): 360-375.

Hunter, Marcus Anthony, et al. "Black Placemaking: Celebration, Play, and Poetry." *Theory, Culture and Society* 33, no. 7-8 (2016): 31-56.

Joseph, Mark L., and Robert J. Chaskin. "Living in a Mixed-Income Development: Resident Perceptions of the Benefits and Disadvantages of Two Developments in Chicago." *Urban Studies* 47, no. 11 (October 2010): 2347-2366.

Joseph, Mark L., Robert J. Chaskin, and Henry S. Webber. "The Theoretical Basis for Addressing Poverty Through Mixed-Income Development." *Urban Affairs Review* 42, no. 3 (January 2007): 369-409.



Miller, Brian J. "The Struggle over Redevelopment of Cabrini-Green, 1989-2004." *Journal of Urban History* 34, no. 6 (September 2008): 944-960.

Pfeiffer, Deirdre. "Displacement Through Discourse: Implementing and Contesting Public Housing Redevelopment in Cabrini Green." *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 35, no. 1 (Spring): 39-74.

"Public Housing and Urban Policy: *Gautreaux v. Chicago Housing Authority*." *The Yale Law Journal* 79, no. 4 (March 1970): 712-729.

Rybczynski, Witold. "Bauhaus Blunders: Architecture and Public Housing." *The Public Interest* 113 (Fall 1993): 82-90.

Taylor, Ralph B., Stephen D. Gottfredson, and Sidney Bower. "Neighborhood Naming as an Index of Attachment to Place." *Population and Environment* 7, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 103-125.

Vale, Lawrence J. "Housing Chicago: From Cabrini-Green to Parkside of Old Town." *Places*, February 2012. <https://placesjournal.org/article/housing-chicago-cabrini-green-to-parkside-of-old-town/>, accessed May 23, 2015.

APPENDIX A  
CABRINI-GREEN DEVELOPMENT LIST

Frances Cabrini Homes, opened 1942

Location: Chicago Ave., Larrabee St., Division St., and Hudson Ave.

Architects: Ernest Grunsfeld Jr., L.R. Solomon, G.M. Jones, K.M. Vitzhum, I.S.

Loewenberg, and Frank McNally

Units: 586 in fifty-five two and three story buildings

Demolished: marked for demolition 2015, 17 still standing.

Cabrini Extension (“the Reds”), opened 1958

Location: Larrabee St., Cleveland St., Sedgwick St., and Chicago Ave.

Architects: A. Epstein and Sons

Units: 1,952 units in seven, ten, and nineteen story red brick high-rises

North (8 Buildings):

1015 N. Larrabee (2007)

1121 N. Larrabee (2003)

1159 N. Larrabee (1995)

500 W. Oak (2011)

1117 N. Cleveland (1995)

1157 N. Cleveland (1995)

1158 N. Cleveland (2000)

1150 N. Sedgwick (1997)

South (7 Buildings):

364 W. Oak (2010)

365 W. Oak (2010)

911 N. Hudson (2008)

929 N. Hudson (2008)

412 W. Chicago (2009)

862 N. Sedgwick (2008)

911 N. Sedgwick (2008)

William Green Homes (“the Whites”), opened 1962

Location: north of Division St., north and west of Cabrini Extension

Architects: Pace Associates

Units: 1,096 in fifteen and sixteen story concrete frame high-rises

534 W. Division (2006)

624 W. Division (2007)

660 W. Division (2009)

714 W. Division (2005)

1230 N. Larrabee (2010)

1340 N. Larrabee (2005)

630 W. Evergreen (2005)

1230 N. Burling (2011—final Cabrini high-rise torn down)