

HOPE VI: Still Hoping in 38126

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Abstract

The objectives for the HOPE VI housing projects in Memphis promised to improve the inadequacies in current public housing and create a good design for community development. The analysis of this study, however, finds that HOPE VI has proven to be less about improving conditions for previous residents of the public housing projects and more about reclaiming urban neighborhoods for middle-income families. The aim to deconcentrate poverty through the use of mixed-income housing fixed some problems while it created new ones. The demolition of old housing was a vast improvement for those who were able to return to their neighborhoods in regard to crime rates, housing quality, urban blight and a general improved sense of safety, but the success of the program was uneven in that it failed to actually improve the quality of life for a majority of residents or promote community development in the areas surrounding the housing developments. Poverty itself was not addressed. Instead poverty was simply displaced along with the residents to surrounding neighborhoods. The number of available public housing units were reduced, and consequently many of the previous residents of public housing were unable to return to enjoy the benefits of the redeveloped units. While HOPE VI has improved the lives of some residents, the goals of HOPE VI in Memphis have not been fully realized for many residents of 38126.

“Prison is the only form of Public Housing that the government has truly invested in over the past 5 decades.”

-Marc Lamont Hill; Professor of African American Studies at Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA

HOPE VI: Still Hoping in 38126

There are more than 10,000 families on the waiting list for only 2,703 public housing units in Memphis, and every day the demand for affordable housing increases. As of right now the waiting list has been closed because the demand exceeds the number of units available. Waiting lists for federal housing assistance have the potential to be a rich source of data on housing need in the United States. They clearly have something to say about the extent of the demand for federally assisted housing. While demand for affordable housing continues to rise, the amount of available public housing units have slowly begun to vanish. The HOPE VI initiative replaced five public housing developments in Memphis with mixed-income redevelopments and in some ways, this outcome resulted in safer and more attractive neighborhoods. Many HOPE VI advocates believed that new housing developments would serve families of all income levels, including some of the former public housing residents from the original sites. They also believed that residents who relocated could gain upward mobility by virtue of living in a mixed income neighborhoods elsewhere. Many public housing residents in Memphis, however, would argue that HOPE VI has failed to achieve many of its goals. The evidence, however, shows that HOPE VI has proven to be less about improving conditions for previous residents and more about reclaiming urban neighborhoods for middle-income families. The new housing has provided few benefits to the residents since, in some cases, less than 4% of

the original residents were able to return to their neighborhoods. Also, among the residents that received Section 8 housing vouchers, most did not gain upward mobility by moving to more middle-income neighborhoods. Studies have shown that most Memphis Housing Authority (MHA) Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) recipients, while they are more dispersed, still live in very poor and predominantly African-American neighborhoods (Freiman, 2013). As will be shown in this analysis, HOPE VI resulted in the reduction of housing options for poor Memphians in need of decent housing and the dispersal of hundreds of families out of their neighborhoods.

The local area most affected by the HOPE VI redevelopment was South Memphis, especially the 38126 zip code. It is one of the oldest areas of Memphis and where three of the five HOPE VI public housing redevelopments occurred. Many famous artists, authors, athletes, politicians, and civic leaders grew up in South Memphis including Benjamin Hooks, the civil rights lawyer and judge who was head of the NAACP from 1977 to 1993. Another family of notable Memphians, Rufus Thomas, a Stax Records blues superstar, educator, D.J., entertainer, and Civil Rights Activist, lived in public housing in the 126 where he was in close proximity to performance spaces on Beale Street. Rufus' wife, Lorene Thomas, was also a civil rights activist who played a significant role in the recruitment of members for the local chapter of the NAACP. While living in the complex, Rufus and Lorene gave birth to two of their three children: Carla Thomas – soon-to-become another Stax Records singer and the “Queen on Memphis Soul” – and Marvell Thomas (Vance Design Team, 2013). This zip code is home to LeMoyne-Owen College and the Stax Museum. The area is rich in culture and history. The Soulsville neighborhood and the historic Vance Avenue neighborhood are also located there and are both sites of important African-American history. The population is 96% African American, crime

rates are high, gang violence is prevalent, and there is tremendous poverty. Before 1996, this area had two large public housing developments, LeMoyne Gardens and Cleaborn Homes. They were both in complete disrepair and home to over a thousand impoverished families. These two public housing developments were demolished and replaced with new mixed-income housing; 815 families were relocated (City of Memphis Housing Authority, 2013). Although Memphis was awarded five grants to rebuild public housing throughout the city, this paper will focus on the extent to which the Memphis Hope VI goals were realized in zip code area 38126. The first section of this paper provides contextual background for understanding the HOPE VI initiative in terms of national and local goals. The second section provides a more detailed description of the MHA's local goals along with a discussion as to which of these goals were actualized in 38126. The final section offers a general critique of the HOPE VI program in Memphis along with recommendations for how our city can better meet the needs of public housing residents.

HOPE VI Background: National and Local Goals

Public housing is a vital national resource that provides affordable housing to over a million families across the country. The rent in public housing units is set at levels that are typically more affordable to the families residing in them. These families tend to have very low incomes and in some cases live in extreme poverty. Public housing developments are often bleak places to live because they are over-populated and crime-ridden (National Housing Law Project, 2002). In 1992, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) created a program that targeted urban revitalization, public housing developments in particular. The federal program was called Homeownership and Opportunity for People Everywhere (HOPE VI) and its goals included:

1. Changing the physical shape of public housing.
2. Establishing positive incentives for resident self-sufficiency and comprehensive services that empower residents.
3. Lessening concentrations of poverty by placing housing in non-poverty neighborhoods and promoting mixed-income communities.
4. Forging partnerships with other agencies, local government, nonprofit organizations, and private businesses to leverage support and resources (The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development).

The multi-billion dollar federal grant program funded the redevelopment of numerous severely distressed public housing developments in cities across the country. Since 1993, over \$4.5 billion in grants have been awarded (National Housing Law Project, 2002). It was envisioned that HOPE VI would provide funds to replace old massive housing projects, which were typically poorly constructed high-rises, with smaller suburban-style units with front yards. Old towers would be replaced with housing that faced the street instead of turning inward toward secluded courtyards. In 1994, the MHA applied and was awarded the first of five revitalization grants and seven demolition grants through HOPE VI (City of Memphis Housing Authority, 2013). MHA identified the most distressed public housing for redevelopment through the program. In the MHA/ HOPE VI Redevelopment Portfolio, the city describes the process as transforming Memphis into a ‘City of Choice’ through renovating public housing. The goals of the program at a local level were similar to the national goals. They included:

1. Recognition of the importance of good design in community development.
2. Address the inadequacies of current public housing.

3. Emphasis on deconcentrating poverty through the use of mixed-income housing developments.
4. More than “brick and mortar” development- social, economic and, cultural development as well.
5. Focus on leveraging private investment to further development opportunities (The City of Memphis, 2012).

These goals were created through close study of the old public housing projects. Each goal represented the transition to a new type of public housing. The idea was that using mixed-income housing would allow the city to deconcentrate poverty in the urban center. The goals specified plans to redevelop not only the housing but also the communities they were in with public and private investments. Goal four identifies this move from merely “brick and mortar” development towards more holistic efforts in the communities surrounding public housing developments that have been located historically in economically struggling urban areas.

South Memphis’ 38126 zip code is an area with high poverty rates, low median household incomes, and high proportions of minority populations. Based on 2010-2014 data, the poverty level is around 57.60% while the national level is only 15.59%. Home ownership is extremely low; 58.4% of the homes here are rented, only 10.19% are owned, and 31.41% are vacant (usa.com). In regard to crime, the 38126 zip code has a violent crime rate of 67.26 per 1,000 residents. The chances of becoming a victim of crime in this neighborhood is 1 in 15 (Callahan, 2013). From 2010 to 2014, the per capita income was \$8,164, which is much lower than the national average of \$28,555. The median household income has actually grown by 55.08% since 2000 and is around \$16,646 (usa.com). Health outcomes in the area are less than ideal. The area has high rates of obesity, heart disease, hypertension, diabetes and asthma. The

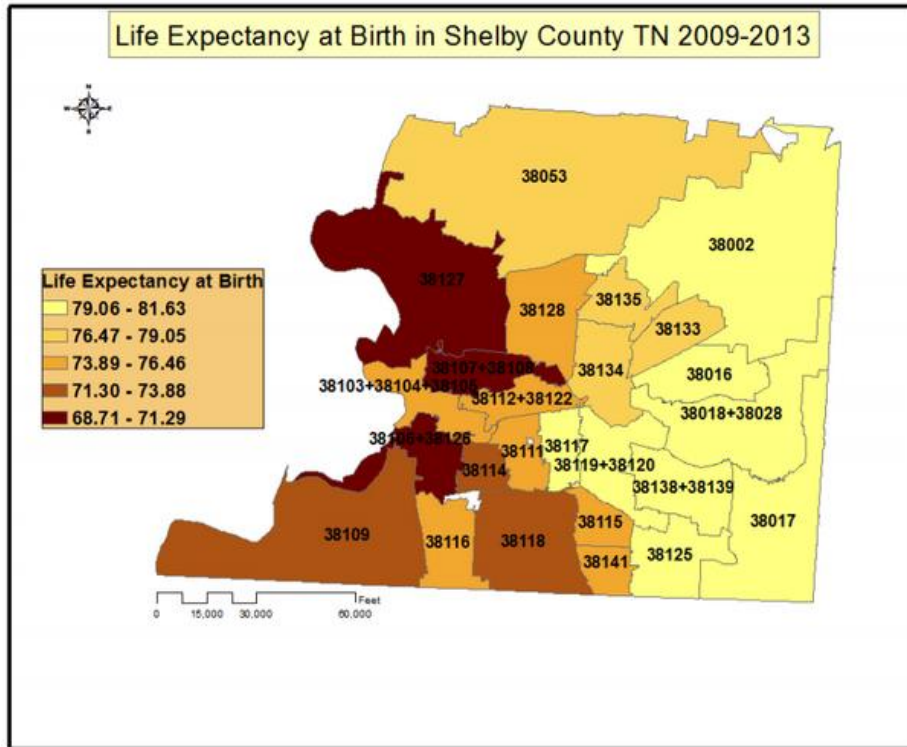


Image 1. Life Expectancy at Birth in Shelby County, TN 2009-2013;

Source: The Shelby County Health Department

average body mass index (BMI) of residents in the area is 31.4 - 34.3. The National Institutes of Health classify a BMI of less than 19 as underweight; 19-24 as normal; 25-29 as overweight; 30-39 as obese; and 40 or more as morbidly obese.

According to the

Tennessee Department of Health, the heart disease mortality rates are between 244.75 and 286.39 per 100,000 people and diabetes mortality rates are between 40.61 and 52.27 per 100,000 people (Ogari, 2016). A recent study done by the Shelby County Health Department in collaboration with the Tennessee Department of Health, found that residents living in 38106 and 38126 combined will die at 68.7 years of age on average, compared with those in Collierville's 38017 who will live to see 81.6 years on average (Ogari, 2016). The data were collected between 2009 and 2013 and included statistics on chronic illnesses like heart disease, hypertension, cancer and diabetes. Without question, there are extreme disparities in health outcomes across zip codes in Memphis. This data helps paint a picture of the neighborhoods in 38126 and the

people who reside there. They also enable outsiders to imagine the social issues that these citizens must contend with on a day-to-day basis.

Because so many residents living in 38126 are extremely poor, there is a tremendous and growing need for public housing. The plans for HOPE VI, however, led to the number of housing units being reduced by 50%. This has contributed to the chronic shortage of affordable housing. The neighborhoods in 38126 were affected by this new public housing initiative since it resulted in the demolition of LeMoyne Gardens and Cleaborn Homes, two of the three public housing developments in 38126. So far, two large public housing developments in 38136 have been demolished with HOPE VI funding. The two developments, LeMoyne Gardens and Cleaborn Homes, were renamed College Park and Cleaborn Pointe.



Image 2. Cleaborn Homes before demolition.

Source: The Memphis Housing Authority



Image 3. Cleaborn Pointe after the redevelopment. Images from Google.



Image 4. LeMoyne Gardens before demolition. Source: The City of Memphis Housing Community and Development Department.



Image 5. College Park after the redevelopment. Source: The City of Memphis Housing Community and Development Department

LeMoyne Gardens was located near Elmwood Cemetery at 990 College Park Drive and originally contained 842 units. College Park only has 411 units. When LeMoyne Gardens was demolished, 403 residents were relocated. According to the MHA/HOPE VI Redevelopment Portfolio, 169 of those residents moved to other public housing developments in the city, 82 got homes on the private market, and 152 were given Section 8 housing vouchers to get housing. The Cleaborn Homes were located in the neighborhood below the FedEx Forum at 440 S. Lauderdale Street and originally contained 460 units. The new Cleaborn Pointe development has 400 units. In 2010, 412 residents had to relocate to new housing. 69 residents stayed in Public Housing, 3

residents were able to get housing through the private market, and 321 took Section 8 housing vouchers (The City of Memphis Housing Authority, 2013).

Importance of Good Design in Community Development

The physical redevelopment of the public housing sites into architecturally appealing and marketable products was one of the first goals for HOPE VI. Not only did the redevelopments

need to be created with good urban planning and design, they also had to attract middle-income families into the community. The growth of the suburbs in the twentieth

century was the factor that led to the relative prosperity of suburban areas and to the disadvantage of urban areas (Pindell, 2003). “White flight” was a major force in the

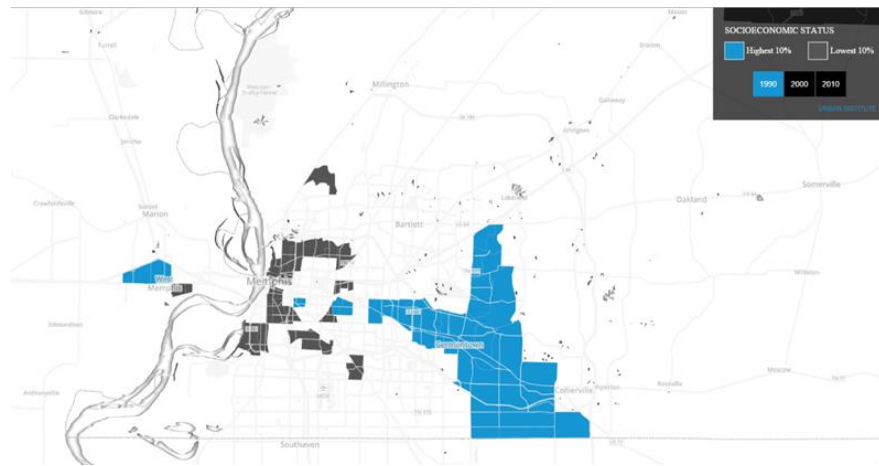


Image 6. Socioeconomic status in Memphis in 1990. Blue signifies Highest 10% and dark grey signifies the Lowest 10%.

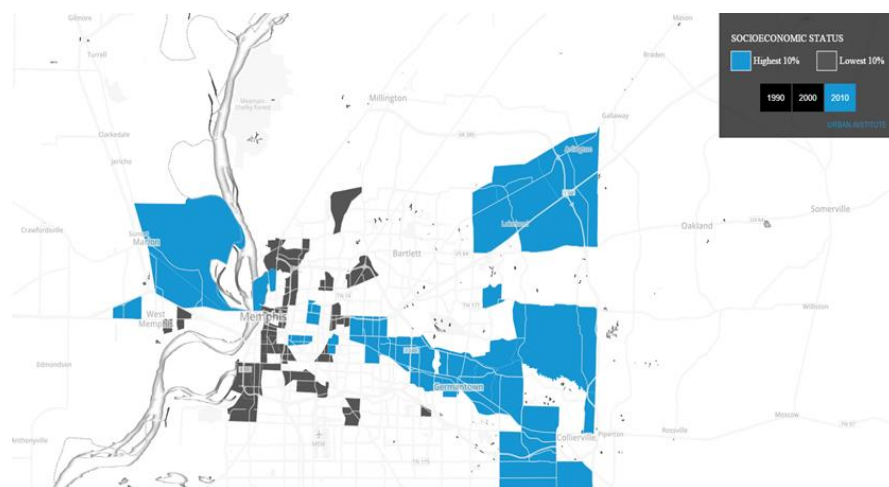


Image 7. Socioeconomic status in Memphis in 2010. Maps by Urban Institute.

outward expansion of Memphis. This phenomenon occurs when white city-dwellers move to the suburbs to escape the large population of minorities, which leave inner cities impoverished while the suburbs have the greatest concentration of wealth. Images 6 and 7 show the gradual expansion outward of families with high socio-economic status to areas outside the inner-city. HOPE VI tried to reverse white flight by creating mixed-income housing to bring middle-income families back into the inner city. New Urbanism is the use of mixed income communities to create sustainable communities that reduce the social, economic and spatial isolation of public housing residents (Kleit, 2005). In order to use good design in community development, HOPE VI endeavored to create diverse living communities that provided housing for a range of socio-economic classes. The notion is that if public housing residents live close to middle-income families, this will reduce the concentration of poverty and the social issues that arise from it

The old public housing buildings were poorly constructed and contributed to the isolation of their residents. The horrible reputation of the housing led to the stigmatization of government housing making them unattractive to even the lower middle class (Atlas, 1994). Architect and city planner Oscar Newman did research on crime prevention and neighborhood safety. His research found that in New York the difference between high-rise and low-rise projects was a much more significant explanation for high crime rates than was the ratio of welfare families. The study showed that the number of robberies in a housing project rose proportionately with its height (Atlas, 1994). The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development used Newman's Defensible space theory in the creating of HOPE VI. The goal to use good design in community development focused on restructuring the physical layout of communities to allow residents to control the areas around their home (Newman, 1996). The study explains that shared space is important in living areas but the more people that share a space, the less ownership an individual

feels for it. This in turn diminishes responsibility for the space and its upkeep. The lower the number of individuals that share a space the more individuals feel rights to it and can come to agreements on acceptable usage of the space (whether it be a room, a hallway, or a yard). In the old Cleaborn Homes and LeMoyne Gardens complexes, all the grounds were communal and residents could not identify with them because they felt like they had less rights over the grounds. This led to destruction of the property and an increase in crime. The complexes also faced inward towards main quads instead of towards surrounding streets. This lessened residents' ability to exert control over their neighborhood and better monitor for crime (Newman, 1996).

The new buildings created by HOPE VI in 38126 made an effort to put Newman's Defensible space theory to use. The redevelopment would include single-family detached homes and townhomes with private spaces for each unit. The residents would have control over their own streets, and the community would be safe from crime. HOPE VI did succeed in creating the new homes in a way that contributed to a safer and healthier quality of life. When comparing crime data from 2010 to 2014, there has been a significant decline in personal and property crimes (Jamerson, 2013). Charts 1 and 2 show the improvement over the years. This decline in crime cannot be attributed to HOPE VI alone since other factors could be at play, but it does show a positive change of direction for the neighborhood around Cleaborn Homes.

Chart 1: Personal Crimes 2010-2014

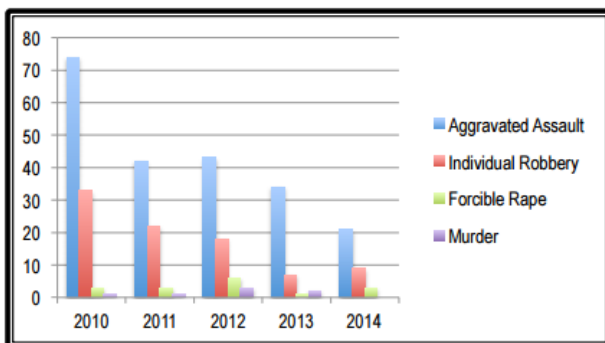


Chart 1. Personal Crimes from 2010-2014. Source: Cleaborn Homes HOPE VI 3 Year Evaluation

Chart 2: Property Crimes 2010-2014

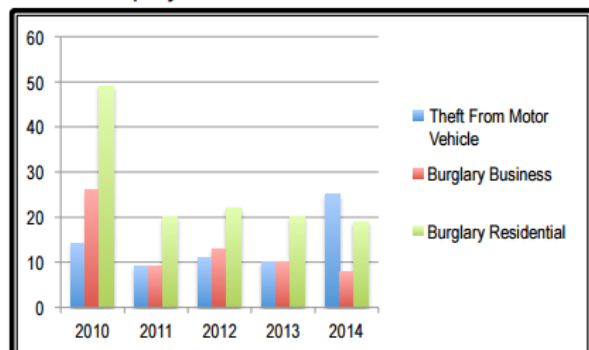


Chart 2. Property Crimes from 2010-2014. Source: Cleaborn Homes HOPE VI 3 Year Evaluation

HOPE VI may have successfully reduced crime in 38126 but the goal to address the inadequacies of current public housing through the use of the physical environment fell short because it did not take the residents into account. In the guide to creating defensible space on the HUD website it says that, “Over the past 25 years, our institute has been using Defensible Space technology to enable residents to take control of their neighborhoods, to reduce crime, and to stimulate private reinvestment. We have been able to do this while maintaining racial and economic integration.” The last sentence stands out since many factors led to the loss of the original public housing residents that made up the original community. The program failed in maintaining racial integration. Rigorous tenant screening procedures in the new developments kept out many of the past residents and continues to restrict which people can live in the area. This has devastated all hope for community development that includes not only different races but also wealthy, middle-class and poor residents.

HOPE VI has been described as the “only program that addressed the comprehensive issues facing these neighborhoods and the people living in them (The City of Memphis, 2012).” However, HOPE VI did hardly anything for the people originally living in the developments. It only served to beautify the city but did not create more diverse communities or assist the original public housing residents. This is because once the new mixed-income housing went up most of the previous residents did not or were not able to move back in to enjoy the benefits. In 2013, the MHA tried to demolish Foote Homes, the last public housing complex in Memphis which also happens to be located in the 38126 zip code. Residents of Foote Homes and the historic Vance Avenue neighborhood took to the streets in protest. The people in the community wanted to see Foote Homes preserved and improved rather than demolished. Memphians brought up the fact

that a significant number of Foote Home residents depended on jobs within downtown's thriving hospitality, tourism and arts sectors and that recently completed HOPE VI projects (like Cleaborn Pointe) only had a small number of former tenants move back in. In an interview done with the protestors, James Smith, a local resident and active member of the Vance Avenue Choice Neighborhood Management Team, asserted that "In the coming years, hundreds of millions of local, state, and federal funds are going to be spent on economic and community development projects in our district. Current and future residents must be among those who benefit from these expenditures. Our plan seeks to ensure this outcome (Reardon, 2013)." The concern for the residents of this area was that the culture and history of the area would be destroyed and that they would be relocated out and not be able to access any of the benefits from the redevelopment. This was the reality for residents of Cleaborn Homes and LeMoyne Gardens so they expected it would be the same for them.

At Cleaborn Pointe only about 4% of the new development is occupied by former Cleaborn Home residents (Jamerson, 2013). Fewer units and strict tenant screening standards employed after redevelopment made it difficult, if not impossible, for families to return to their neighborhoods. Stern criminal background screening were designed to exclude residents with criminal histories from moving back into the area. In turn, more middle-class residents would find these neighborhoods more desirable. Another criterion to live in the new developments was that all 18-62 year old residents needed to be employed, in school, and/or actively working with a CSS case manager and not many residents were able to meet these requirements (Jamerson, 2013). The low return rate could have also been attributed to the fact that residents moved out of the Cleaborn development in 2010, and it was 5 years before the first new unit was available.

College Park took nine years before the first unit was available. During this lengthy period, original residents had already been moved into new housing.

Cleaborn Homes was torn down and over a four year period replaced with townhomes and flats with yard space and private entrances. The new mixed-income housing, which opened in 2015, consists of suburban-style twin units with brick facades and white trimming. These suburban style homes in the middle of downtown Memphis were extremely spaced out and while they worked in lessening the over-crowding problem associated with public housing developments, they led to less units available for those in need of affordable housing. Fewer new units contributed to less residents being able to return. In many cases redevelopment reduced the amount of public housing by 50%. At Cleaborn, the number of units decreased from 460 to 400; 127 are public housing units. At College Park the decrease was more dramatic, LeMoyne Gardens had 842 units, the new development only has 411 and only 107 of them are low income units. Currently, all of the public housing units at these two developments are occupied, and the waiting list is so long that they had to close it to hopeful residents. Below is the MHA notice telling residents that the waitlist for many of the public housing locations is currently closed.



**MEMPHIS HOUSING AUTHORITY
APPLICATION PROCESS**

**NOTICE OF CHANGE
EFFECTIVE: AUGUST 1, 2015**

**TO BETTER SERVE YOU PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT
THE APPLICATION PROCESS HAS CHANGED**

- YOU WILL NO LONGER APPLY AT 700 ADAMS AVENUE
- YOU CAN PICK UP AN APPLICATION AT THE FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENTS
ON TUESDAY & THURSDAY FROM 8:30 - 2:00 ONLY
- YOU CAN CHECK YOUR STATUS AT THE FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENTS
ON WEDNESDAY & FRIDAY FROM 8:30 - 2:00 ONLY
- YOU CAN UPDATE YOUR STATUS AT THE FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENTS

Jefferson Square	741 Adams Avenue	901 505-0275
Berry Towers	251 N. Lauderdale Street	901 505-0328
Paul Borda Towers	21 Neely Street	901 505-0802
Dr. R. L. Vernon Center	489 Beale Street	901 505-0836
Indefavor Terrace	7520 Robinson Cove	901 636-5883
Fonte Homes	521 Vance Park Place	901 505-0824
Montgomery Plaza/Adew Place	1395 Permon Avenue Street	901 505-0834
G. E. Patterson Pointe	886 Latham	901 505-0820
Adew Place	1395 Permon Avenue Street	901 505-0834

***The waitlist is currently closed.**

Thank you for your cooperation and patience
as we do our best to better serve you!

Image 8. Memphis Housing Authority Public Housing Application Flyer. Source: Memphis Housing Authority

In addition, the HOPE VI redevelopment led to central city real estate values going up. In the City's presentation for the HOPE VI revitalization program, they state that one of the HOPE VI outcomes and benefits was "increased tax revenues for the city" (The City of Memphis, 2012). Since so few residents were able to move back into the new housing developments, one is left to wonder how the HOPE VI initiative in Memphis actually helped the previous public housing residents. Just as James Smith, a local resident and member of the Vance Avenue Choice Neighborhood Management Team, stated in his interview with *The Commercial Appeal*, hundreds of millions of local, state, and federal funds were invested into the redevelopment of the area. But unfortunately, current and future residents may not be among those benefiting from these expenditures.

HOPE VI in Memphis missed the mark in creating good design for community development and addressing the inadequacies of current public housing. By not working harder to include past public housing residents in the redevelopment of their communities they effectively removed the poorer populations (Bohl, 2010). Many issues facing the communities in which the redevelopments took place were not addressed. In the Vance Avenue Collaborative (VAC) Preliminary Planning Framework, many residents expressed that their needs for more quality services for the community were more important than new housing. This included better access to fresh food, a well-maintained park, healthcare, neighborhood oriented retail shopping and after-school programs (The University of Memphis, 2012). The creation of The Choice Neighborhoods Program by HUD was an effort to correct the mistakes in the HOPE VI program and move towards more holistic redevelopment initiatives that not only addressed housing but also look into the communities in which they reside through the expansion of supportive services and educational opportunities for residents (Saija, 2013).

Deconcentration of Poverty Through the use of Mixed-Income Housing

One of the goals for HOPE VI was to deconcentrate poverty through the use of mixed-income housing developments. Research has shown that America's urban areas are experiencing increased concentrations of poverty which has in turn led to increased social pathologies such as violent crime (Kneebone, 2014). The 1990 census showed that around eight million people lived in neighborhoods where more than 40 percent of the population lived below the poverty level (Goetz, 2004). HOPE VI tried to address poverty concentration by dispersing the populations of poor people throughout the city and by replacing the old housing projects with new mixed-income housing.

A factor that led to the decision to “deconcentrate poverty” was the uproar during the 1970s surrounding the increase in drugs and violent crime in cities across the nation. Laws were created to get tough on crime and the war against drugs led to increased sentences and an expansion of criminal justice activities in poor neighborhoods (Goetz, 2004). The federal “Weed and Seed” program was one of the various community-based policing initiatives that the federal government funded to “weed” out criminal elements in the poorest sections of inner-cities. The program led to increased policing in poorer neighborhoods and an increase in incarceration rates of poor residents. From 1973- 2009, the state and federal prison populations rose from about 200,000 to 1.5 million before beginning to decline slightly in the following years (National Research Council, 2014). The National Research Council published a book entitled, *The Growth of Incarceration in the United States*, which addresses the increased incarceration of minority populations. A quote from the book explains this inequality,

“Those [that] are incarcerated in U.S. prisons come largely from the most disadvantaged segments of the population. They comprise mainly [of] minority men under age 40, poorly educated, and often carrying additional deficits of drug and alcohol addiction, mental and physical illness, and a lack of work preparation or experience. Their criminal responsibility is real, but it is embedded in a context of social and economic disadvantage. More than half the prison population is black or Hispanic. In 2010, blacks were incarcerated at six times and Hispanics at three times the rate for non-Hispanic whites.”

This supports the argument that the government failed to recognize or address the social issues that were leading to increased crime rates in the urban core, like poverty.

Instead of addressing the socio-economic factors that caused crime, in the 1990s, President Clinton established the legal foundation for the “Three Strikes and You’re Out” mentality to be changed to “One Strike and You’re Out” sentencing (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1997). This especially affected residents in public housing because the policy ensured that public housing residents who “engaged in illegal drug use or other criminal activities on or off public housing property” would face eviction (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1997). The layout of the old public housing projects was a breeding ground for gang and drug activity. This is because, as explained earlier, prior public housing projects incorporated courtyards and buildings that were set apart from the street. Over time, these super blocks began to contribute to the isolation of its residents and the decline of the property (Goetz, 2011). The buildings were often in poor physical condition with deteriorating social conditions. Dispersing poor public housing families seemed like the best way to deal with the criminal activity found in the old public housing developments.

The plan for HOPE VI was to give displaced public housing residents Section 8 housing vouchers so that they could move into low-poverty neighborhoods. The thought was that residents would move into these better areas and experience “upward mobility” on the socio-economic ladder. Studies on this subject indicate that neighborhood resources (such as libraries, recreation facilities, parks, grocery stores, and social services) followed by place attachment and feelings of safety, lead to greater social capital and upward mobility than neighborhood socioeconomic mix (Curley, 2010). This means that people are able to achieve greater social and economic upward mobility in neighborhoods where they have access to resources, have social support and are surrounded by people with similar values and norms. Being surrounded by mixed income families alone does not do much for upward mobility. But when an individual has increased place attachment and social network they do far better (Curley, 2010).

Problems with Deconcentrating Poverty

The idea of “deconcentrating” poverty is problematic because it is grounded in patriarchal ideology. Deconcentrating poverty does lessen the number of obvious “eyesores” in Memphis communities and leads to a decrease in public concern. Meanwhile, hundreds or thousands are still in need and living in abject poverty. When cities attempt to address eyesores (i.e., poverty) by simply tearing down the housing complexes, they leave the underlying issues of systemic poverty unresolved. Replacing the old housing projects with newer homes that do not cater to the poorest and most vulnerable populations but instead to middle class families and some of the working poor may indeed raise a city’s aesthetic profile, but further marginalizes those most in need. Poverty is simply been displaced to another area rather than eradicated. In essence, we treat the symptom rather than the disease.

Dispersal programs also incorrectly assume that poor people can relocate to new areas as easily as middle and upper-income families can (Venkatesh, 2004). Lack of resources keeps poor people from being able to voluntarily uproot their lives. Many of the families living in public housing developments have been there for years and would prefer to stay because moving to new and unfamiliar areas of the city presents new challenges. For example, in an interview done by The Commercial Appeal in 2014, many Foote Home residents shared their perspectives. Lashonda Rayford was one of the interviewees. She has lived in Foote Homes on and off for most of her life. In 2005, Rayford lost her father so she dropped out of school to take care of her mother, who died shortly afterward. “I spiraled down after they passed,” Rayford said. But, she says, her neighbors became like family. They watched out for her and supported her. “This little ‘L’ that we live in, I became close to everyone here,” she says. “I was born an only child so this is like my family. If I move, I have no one. I wouldn’t have no family.” Rayford wants to stay in Foote Homes: “Everywhere is not perfect; everything is not going to be perfect; but it (Foote Homes) is perfect for me.” The uncertainty over the future of the housing project elicits a mixed reaction from the residents. Some want to leave and others do not. But there are many who like Rayford, want to stay. “I wouldn’t know the first place to look for someplace to stay without having any income,” she says. “It would be like throwing me out on the street. I wouldn’t know what to do. I would be like a newborn coming into the world (Vest, 2014).” Rayford’s story illustrates the mindset of many public housing residents who grew up in these communities and have strong connections with their neighbors.

This may explain why many of the residents who were relocated using Section 8 housing vouchers remained in the neighborhoods surrounding their old public housing developments instead of moving to middle-income neighborhoods further away. In a 2013 study done by the

U.S Department of Health and Human Services and the Urban Institute, it was found that the majority of public housing residents did not move out of their original neighborhoods at all. This meant that the relocated residents of 38126 public housing were still living in areas with high crime and with few opportunities for upward mobility (Freiman, 2013). Some remained because they had no other choice and some remained because they wanted to remain in the neighborhoods in which they were familiar and has supported by their social networks. Carrie Yancy is an example of a Cleaborn resident who remained in the same area instead of moving to a low-poverty neighborhood further away. She first arrived at Cleaborn in 1966 and raised five daughters there. She stayed until just before demolition began in April 2011. "I miss it dearly," said Yancy. "I came up here from Fayette County and it became home. I just loved it once I got here, but it came time that it had to go down." Instead of moving into another neighborhood, she simply moved across the street to Foote Homes, even though she had the means to move elsewhere. "I'm here by choice," she said. "It's just home (Maki, 2012)." Images 8, 9, and 10 show the distribution of HOPE VI relocatee households across Memphis. These maps show that the vast majority of relocated residents stayed in the downtown area, and those that did move further away still remained mostly in neighborhoods with similar poverty levels and demographics.

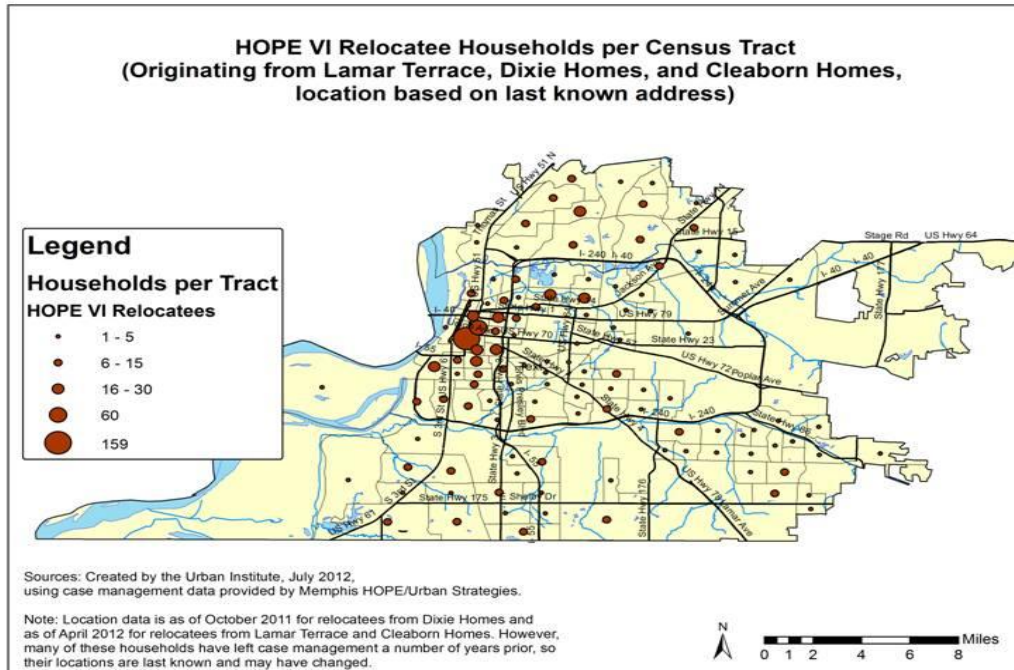


Image 9. The distribution of HOPE VI relocatees across the city of Memphis. The map shows that most of the relocated households remained closed to downtown and the original redevelopment sites. Source: The Urban Institute

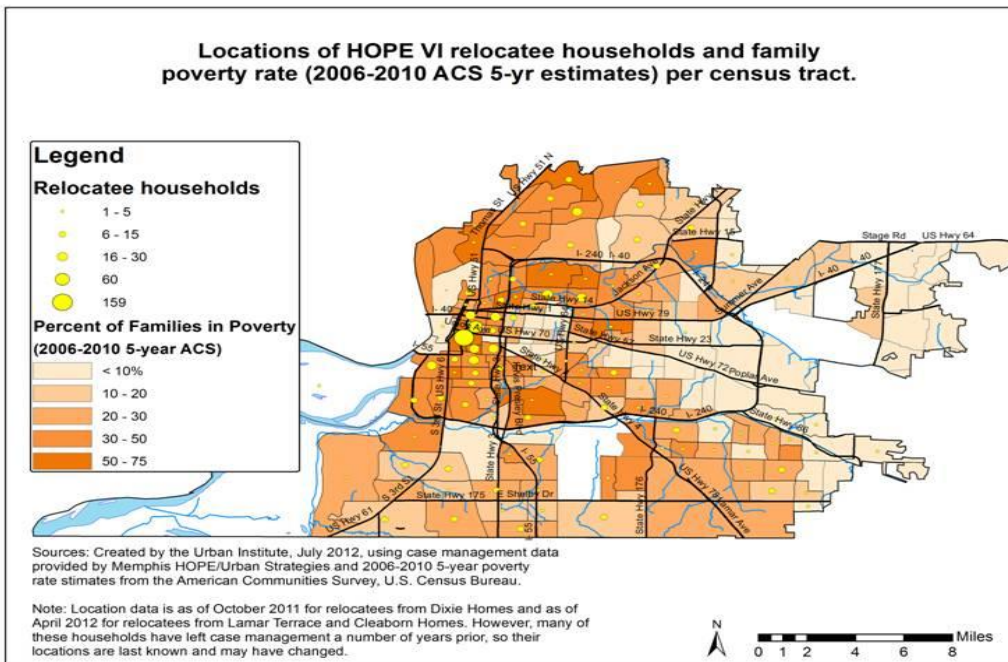


Image 10. The distribution of HOPE VI relocated households across Memphis along with the family poverty rates in the city by census tract. This shows that almost all of the relocated families moved to areas with similar poverty rates as their original neighborhoods. Source: The Urban Institute.

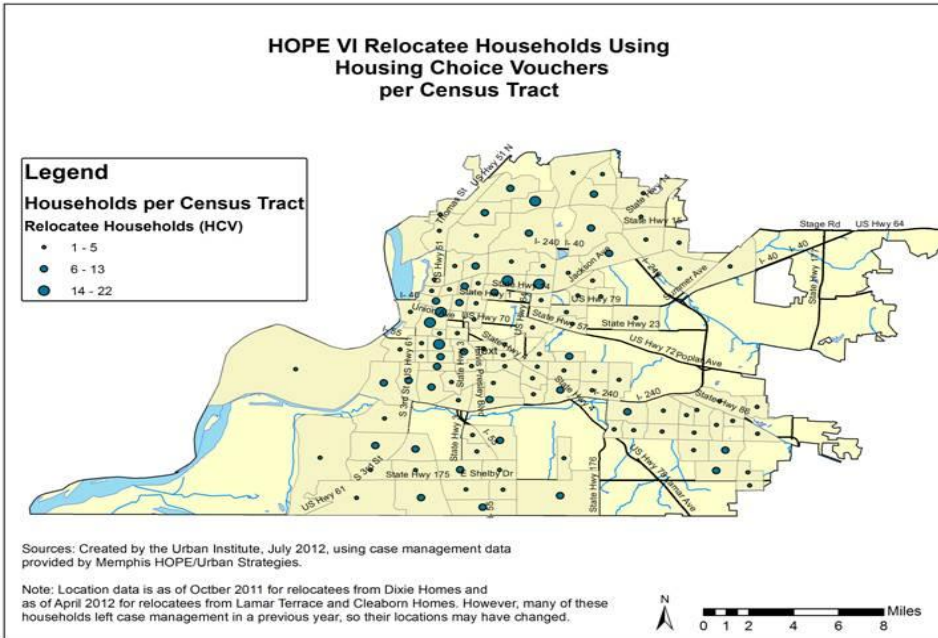


Image 11. Distribution of Hope VI relocates that used Housing Choice Vouchers. The map shows that the public housing residents using HCVs moved to many areas across the city although a large percentage stayed in the downtown Memphis area. Source: The Urban Institute.

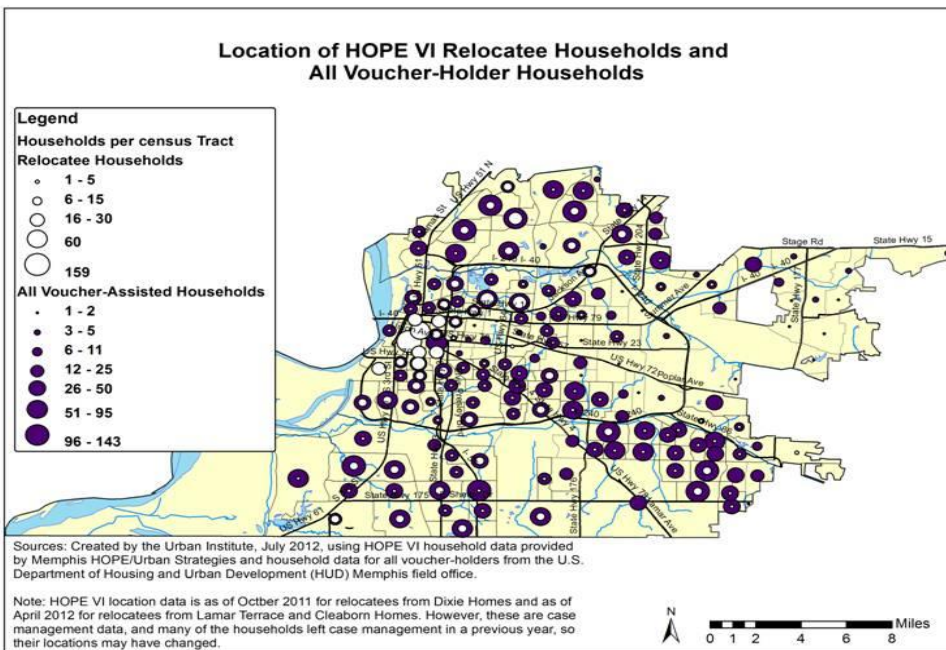


Image 12. Location of HOPE VI relocated households and the location of all voucher-assisted households in Memphis. This compares the distribution of the HOPE VI households and other families in Memphis receiving HCVs. It shows that HOPE VI families are mostly concentrated in the redevelopment areas and are not as distributed across the city as all voucher-assisted households are. Source: The Urban Institute.

The graphs show that the HOPE VI goal to “deconcentrate” poverty resulted in the relocation and displacement of poverty into nearby neighborhoods. Instead of dispersing poor residents into middle class communities, residents were moving from high-poverty and high-minorities neighborhoods to the similar high-poverty, high-minority areas. Although redevelopment did succeed in reducing poverty at the redevelopment sites themselves, it did not actually solve the issue of concentrated poverty. The displaced public housing families reconcentrated in other poor neighborhoods nearby usually because these neighborhoods were the only places where they could find Section 8 housing and landlords who were willing to rent to them (Goetz, 2004). The Urban Institute in a 2002 study on housing choice for HOPE VI relocatees found that availability of housing and time constraints were the main influences on housing choice, not neighborhood location or characteristics (Smith, 2002).

Dispersal programs like HOPE VI do not actually make a dent on concentrated poverty for a number of reasons. One problem is that the dispersal is not voluntary. Residents were forced out of their homes and they were given little time to prepare. Cleaborn residents were given notice to move a year before demolition began. Also, although Section 8 Housing units are located all over the city, there are less of them in low-poverty areas. Another serious barrier to residents moving to low-poverty areas is that the people residing in these neighborhoods are not thrilled to receive large numbers of poor, public housing families. This type of resistance has caused there to be less Section 8 housing voucher homes in areas with residents in higher socio-economic brackets. Image 12 shows the family poverty rates in Memphis by zip code and Image 13 shows the distribution of Memphis households receiving housing voucher assistance per census tract. Looking at them both shows the overlap in where these residents are and the higher

percent of families below the poverty line in those areas. The areas with family poverty rates of less than 10 percent have fewer vouchered households per tract.

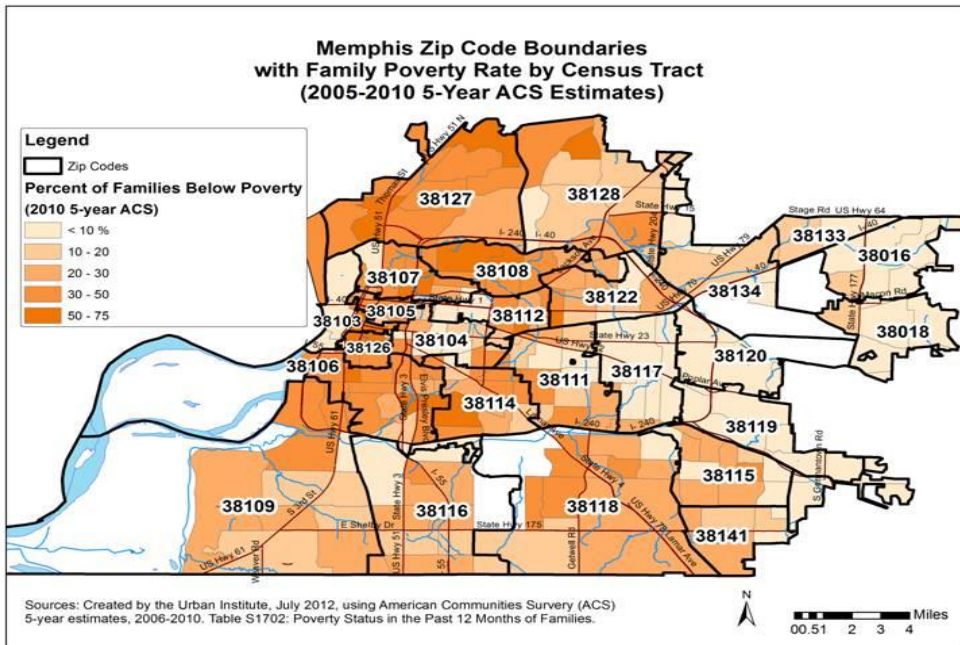


Image 13. Family poverty rate in Memphis by zip code. In the 38126 zip code, 50-75% of families are below the poverty line. Source: The Urban Institute.

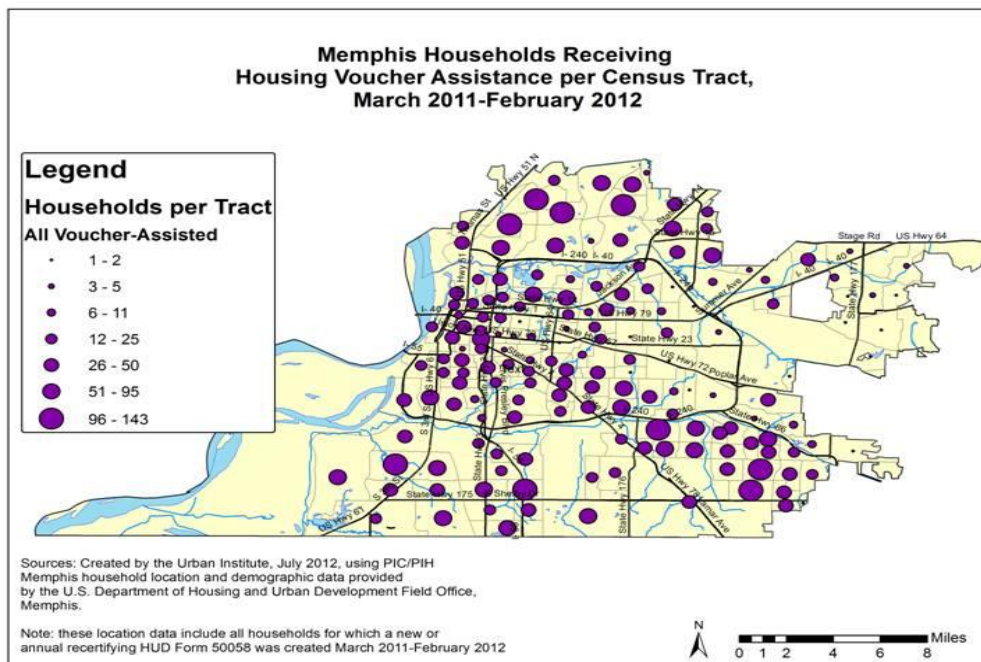


Image 14. Memphis households receiving housing voucher assistance per census tract. Source: The Urban Institute.

When HOPE VI relocated hundreds of public housing residents not all received housing vouchers. Some residents relocated to other public housing developments for varying reasons. These reasons included not qualifying for Section 8, wanting to stay in public housing, language barriers or other issues that made it difficult to leave (Smith, 2002). The “Housing Choice for HOPE VI Relocates” study interviewed public housing residents from various states on their decision to remain in public housing. Some of the responses included:

Louisville relocatee: “I wasn’t qualified for much else but to move to one of the other properties. I wasn’t really physically or mentally ready to do too much of working it out, you know, trying to move anywhere else.”

Baltimore relocatee: “They [Section 8 landlords] would do background checks and all that and that you had to have a really good record.”

Louisville relocatee: “The really good ones [housing options], the ones I really wanted, those were the ones I couldn’t get in because they wanted good credit (Smith, 2002).”

For those that had hoped to move to a new location, many encountered barriers that caused them to not be able to leave public housing, including feelings of being rushed, not being about to pass background checks, or not having good credit.

Poverty and Public Housing Go Hand-in-Hand

The mindset that drove policy makers to relocate poor residents is grounded in a “bootstrap” mentality. This is basically the idea that if individuals work hard enough they will be able to “pick themselves up by their bootstraps” and ascend the economic ladder. This is a part of the American Dream and the myth that economic success is available to all who work hard

enough. In Jennifer Hochschild's book entitled, *Facing up to the American Dream*, she says, "Hard work and virtue combined with scarce resources produce a few spectacular winners and many dismissible losers." Research shows that if you are born wealthy, you are more likely to stay wealthy, and if you are born into poverty, you are more likely to stay poor (Summers, 2014). America is definitely a land of opportunity, but it is not a land of equal opportunity starting at birth. Policy makers believed that if public housing residents were moved to nicer neighborhoods they would somehow be able to lift themselves out of poverty and become self-sufficient. According to research conducted by the Urban Institute, only about five percent of residents have left housing assistance (Raskin, 2012). Just moving people into nicer neighborhoods does nothing to address the less tractable issues that influence poverty. We will never be able to move the needle on poverty without addressing inequality and injustice first.

More than "Brick and Mortar": Leveraging Private Investment to Further Development Opportunities

HOPE VI's efforts to forge partnerships with private businesses to leverage support and resources

In the Memphis Housing Authority's HOPE VI Redevelopment Portfolio, the report stated that the HOPE VI initiative had several effects on communities. The first part states that "by rebuilding public housing as mixed-income sites, [we are helping] to rebuild the lives of public housing residents." Secondly, it stated that it would also "create jobs, enhance self-esteem of inner city residents, enhance minority economic development, rebuild neighborhoods and contribute to the significant investment in downtown Memphis." This quote states that HOPE VI had an effect on the lives of previous residents, on minority economic development,

and on the neighborhoods of downtown Memphis but these things did not actually happen. Goal four and five of the HOPE VI program state a move from only ‘brick and mortar’ development to social, economic and cultural development as well. HOPE VI was not extremely successful in helping the original public housing residents rebuild their lives. It did have the effect of increasing land value and tax revenues for the city but ‘minority economic development’ was very slim. Part of HOPE VI funds was invested into providing case management for residents. The case management was supposed to provide services to residents to help them find and keep new jobs and to locate programs and agencies specific to their needs. The goal was to assist the residents towards economic self-sufficiency. The MHA gathered support from numerous community agencies to assist the residents. These included FedEx, Methodist-LeBonheur hospital, and literacy programs among others. Comprehensive case management to address economic self-sufficiency and poverty is not a simple thing, but it is critical that it is implemented and maintained in order to help families transition out of systemic poverty. This, however, was not the case for HOPE VI. The initial case management services were ineffective and inconsistent. The Cleaborn Homes HOPE VI 3 Year Evaluation Report, done by Dr. Heather Jamerson at Rhodes College, states that “data from previous Cleaborn HOPE VI evaluators indicate that only about 25% of the original Cleaborn Home’s head of households were receiving substantive referrals towards self-sufficiency during the first 3 years of the HOPE VI grant period (Jamerson, 2013).” It goes on to say that from 2010 to 2013, interviews were conducted with the case management company, and they confirmed that the outreach efforts outlined in the case management plan were never fully implemented. Thus, case management was occurring with a very small percentage of residents. Many residents had not received case management referrals at all and were consequently unaware of the services that could have been offered to

them. Many residents did not even know who their case manager was. The ineffectiveness of the HOPE VI community partners for case management occurred because of budget cuts, staff changes, loss of interest in partnering, changes in priority and lack of real commitment (Harris, 2009).

In some ways HOPE VI was able to provide new jobs for the small percentage of residents that did receive case management services. Urban Strategies; an organization based out of St. Louis that provides technical assistance to a number of HOPE VI sites across the country, the Memphis Housing Authority, and the Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis, worked together during the summer of 2006 to create Memphis HOPE. Memphis HOPE was a non-profit created to be responsible for the case management of HOPE VI residents (Harris, 2009).

Memphis HOPE worked closely with some of the individuals in their caseload with the goal of assisting them in finding and keeping employment. Some barriers kept many residents from being able to get jobs or keep them. These included:

1. Lack of education and low literacy rates
2. Undiagnosed health issues that did not meet federal guidelines as "disabilities"
3. And no access to transportation (Harris, 2009).

This meant that initial referrals had to be made to GED programs and literacy programs before residents could obtain jobs. Some adults were not able to participate in these programs or were too embarrassed to attend the literacy classes. For those that had the minimum level of education needed to apply and obtain a job, some got employment in construction jobs and attended carpentry training programs at night to increase their job skills. Others got jobs working at hospitals like LeBonheur and corporations like FedEx. While some residents were able to get

employment, the total number who were helped in finding jobs was very low. For instance, as of early 2012, the number of job placements that resulted from managed cases was 49; however, only 24 people were still employed in those jobs (Jamerson, 2012). 42% of Cleaborn residents interviewed during 2012, indicated that they were unaware of the employment and non-employment related referrals that were available to them (Jamerson, 2012). In the initial Needs Assessment done by Dr. Jamerson and her research team, there was a huge loss of community

Table 23: CSS Work Plan Community Partners (2010)

Service Provider	Services	Number	Target Area
Tennessee Division of Rehabilitation Services	Disability Services Education: SSI regulations (employment)		Health
TN Dept of Human Services	Families First/CSS		TANF/CSS
Fed Ex	Employment	10	*Work
Le Bonheur	Employment	25-50	*Work
Workforce Investment Network (WIN)	Memphis Area Career Center System.* employment and training	42 CH youth (14-19) 75 CH adults (19-64)	*Work
Goodwill Industries of Greater Memphis	Employment for Mildly Disabled	10-15 disabled adults	*Work (disabled)
Memphis Biotech Foundation (MBF)	Vocational Training @ Southwestern Community College	10	*Training
RISE Foundation	Economic Education (Save UP), Savings Program (IDA)	60 Families	*Education and Financial Training
Uptown Alliance	Training: hospitality, construction, financial literacy and mentoring		*Training
Memphis Housing Resource Center	Homebuyer education	5	Financial Literacy/Home ownership
Shelby County Head Start	Early childhood education	45: HS (3-5) 30: EHS (0-3)	*ECE
Emmanuel Center	Early childhood education (0-3)	54: (0-3)	*ECE
Boys and Girls Club	Education and Rec Services Tutoring	30: (6-18)	*Childhood Education/Youth
BRIDGES	Life Skills Program (GED, parental support)	15: (16-18)	Youth
Girls, Inc	Keeping Healthy Keeping Safe	25: (9-17)	Youth
Memphis Academy of Science and Engineering	Charter School	20: (10-17)	Youth
Midtown Mental Health Center	Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Behavior/Learning Issues and Domestic Violence	20	Mental Health
Whitehaven Southwest Mental Health Center, Inc	Mental health, Substance Abuse, Behavior/Learning Issues and Domestic Violence	20	Mental Health
MIFA	Emergency Services, Meals and Senior Companions		Senior
Rhodes College	Senior Researcher 30 Student Research Assistants/30 CSS Student Interns		Evaluation/Interns

Image 15. Community partners and the services they provide.

Source: Rhodes College; Cleaborn HOPE VI Year 1 Baseline

partners to run programs for Cleaborn residents in need of certain services. Additionally, the community partnerships that they could acquire did not fully meet the amount of need because each community partner could only provide resources to a certain number of people. The table below is from Jamerson’s report and shows how many people each program would take and the amount of remaining need for each

service. The table shows that in 2012 there were only 4 partners offering work, it also shows that there was not one service in which the total amount of persons in need received assistance. In many cases there was need that was never met because there were no partner commitments to address them. One example of this is in Image 15, in which 400 people expressed the need for health services and none of this need was met because there were no community partnerships forged to provide this service.

Table 24: Client Needs and Proposed Community Partners in CSS Work Plan

Service Need	Estimated # Needed	Partner Commitments	Total	Remaining Need
Employment	200	Fed Ex (10) Le Bonheur (25-50)	145	75
Job Training		WIN (75) Memphis Biotech Foundation (10) Uptown Alliance (?)		
Adult Mentoring	15	None	0	15
Adult Education	130	None	0	130
Health	400	None	0	400
Computers and Tech	410	Memphis Academy of Science and Engineering (youth: 20)	20	390
Financial Management	122	RISE Foundation: (60 HH)	60	62
Homeownership Readiness	40	Memphis Housing Resource Center: (5 HH)	5	35
Educational Support (Y)	175	Boys and Girls Club: 30 (6-18) Bridges: 15 (16-18) Girls, Inc: 25 (9-17) MASE: 20 (10-17)	60	216
After School Rec (Y)	101			
Early Childhood Education (Y)	157	Shelby Co. Head Start (3-5): 45 Early Head Start (0-3): 30 Emmanuel Center (0-3): 54	129	28
Employment for Disabled	25	Goodwill Industries (10-15)	15	10
Preventative Health	31 (?)	None	0	31
Senior Support	Not specified	MIFA (senior support)	?	?
Mental Health	Unknown	Midtown Mental Health Center: 20 Whitehaven Southwestern Mental Health Center: 20	40	?

Image 16. Client need and proposed community partnerships to address need. Source: Rhodes College; Cleaborn HOPE VI Year 1 Baseline

These tables show that although work was done to help previous residents achieve economic self-sufficiency, this portion of the initiative was inadequate. Only a fraction of the residents actually received case management services, and of those residents, only a small number were actually able to acquire and keep employment.

Conclusion

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, had a huge goal with HOPE VI to improve public housing throughout the country. They demolished and rebuilt buildings across the country in an effort to fix issues surrounding the old public housing model. New housing models were developed and mixed-income housing was used as a method to deconcentrate poverty, assist public housing residents in finding jobs, and provide community development. In many ways HOPE VI was successful. It created new homes in the place of the old decrepit housing, created a better quality life and lowered crime rates in these inner-city neighborhoods. But the question we can ask is: Are residents better off because of the shift to mixed-income housing? The benefits experienced with HOPE VI are not very different from the effects of simply rehabbing old housing units (Raskin, 2012). Developing a more holistic approach to public housing may have brought about more change for the communities surrounding the redevelopments and for the previous public housing residents. One of the HOPE VI goals for the MHA was to be more than just a “brick and mortar” development. They wanted to see social, economic, and cultural development as well but not much neighborhood revitalization occurred. The MHA did apply for a Choice Neighborhoods grant to do more neighborhood revitalization along with the public housing redevelopments but they were not awarded the money and so this part of the goal was not fully achieved. Future efforts to improve public housing need to seriously consider the added importance of investing into the residents in

the neighborhoods and the neighborhoods themselves. Instead of displacing poverty to other impoverished areas, we need to look into working with these communities and ensuring that they are able to enjoy the benefits that come from the redevelopments. If more public housing residents were able to move back into the community they would be able to enjoy the effects of reduced poverty, reduced crime, increased investment in the area, and improved housing quality. We have to look at education in these areas and at other kinds of amenities like transportation and occupation. Redeveloping the existing distressed public housing is not enough. A larger percentage of the money should be incorporated into case management and into addressing the city's overall needs. We need to recognize the importance of public housing and not move completely to mixed-income housing alone. Neither the old mega-buildings filled with urban blight nor the pretty new suburban townhomes that ignore the neighborhoods around them are the solution to the urgent public housing dilemma. The way that HOPE VI went about dispersing the inner-city poor was not effective and many do not realize the effects this had on this particularly vulnerable population. Some residents moved into better accommodations while others did not see much change in the quality of their living spaces.

More efforts should be geared toward keeping working and middle class families from moving out of core central neighborhoods instead of simply relocating the poor. Specifically in Memphis, efforts need to be taken to control the outward expansion of the city and continued annexation of more lands and focus more on the center instead of the periphery. Once inner-city Memphis is redeveloped and more middle-income families are encouraged to move back into the inner-city, we will start to see progress. Instead of focusing on community development and mixed neighborhoods, we have only allowed the affluent to sequester themselves behind walls and gates and to use exclusionary zoning to keep low-income families out. If we are able to

change the way we look at housing in our cities, then we will finally be able to progress towards a Memphis in which everyone has access to decent housing. Until then, public housing residents like those living in 38126 are still hoping for more holistic policies that bring about more lasting positive change.

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