AFFORDABLE HOUSING DILEMMA: THE PRESERVATION VS. MOBILITY DEBATE

NATIONAL LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION

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Other NLIHC staff members who had a hand in the preparation of this report are Sarah Brundage and Shannon Faulk, who painstakingly transcribed the interviews from audio tape to written form. Research team members Elina Bravve and Lauren Ross assisted with the search of the literature.

**Danilo Pelletiere served as Research Director at the National Low Income Housing Coalition from April 2003 to September 2011, during which time he worked on the research and preparation of this report. He is now an Economist with the Economic Development and Public Finance Division, Office of Policy Development and Research, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The opinions and recommendations expressed are those of the National Low Income Housing Coalition and do not reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development or the U.S. Government.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a broad coalition of advocates for housing justice, the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) has long had to grapple with a fundamental dilemma: should federal housing policy focus on preserving existing public and assisted housing, much of which is located in low income, predominately black neighborhoods, or should policy focus on helping the residents of this housing move to higher income and less racially segregated neighborhoods?

To gain a more complete understanding of this dilemma, NLIHC conducted a review of the history and contemporary contours of the debate in the academic literature. NLIHC also interviewed ten people who have deep knowledge of, but varying perspectives on, the debate. The interviews were analyzed using qualitative research methods and the findings are presented here.

The conclusion drawn from the literature review is that over time the pendulum in the debate and policy has swung back and forth between poverty dispersal and place-based strategies that seek to help poor people in their current neighborhoods. After two decades of a clear bias in both academia and policy toward poverty dispersal, the pendulum has moved today to attempt to balance the approaches. The experience of recent policies to encourage or force poor people to move to better-off communities and the mixed results emerging from a number of policy experiments and studies of such moves and policies have contributed to this shift.

The findings from the interviews show the dominant value among all the participants is choice, that is, policy should not determine where anyone lives, but should facilitate the ability of each household to maximize its own housing choices. At its core, the preservation vs. mobility debate is about race in America, and thus, must be approached with the utmost caution and sensitivity. The following conclusions were adopted by NLIHC based on the findings of the interviews:

- *The shortage of affordable housing must be addressed.* The long term solution to maximizing choice is to increase the resources to such a level that the supply of housing that the lowest income people can afford is no longer constricted.

- *Policy should err on the side of preservation.* For the foreseeable future, public policy should have a preference for preservation and improving existing public and assisted housing in low income communities, with strictly enforced anti-displacement policies.

- *The voucher program should be improved.* Three policy changes that will help vouchers offer more choice should be passed immediately by Congress: prohibition against discrimination in housing based on source of income, regional and state administration of vouchers, and implementation of small area fair market rents (FMRs) nationwide.

• *U.S. housing policy should not be based on the belief that it is problematic for too many poor people or too many people of color to live near one another.* We should continue to strive for a greater measure of racial and economic residential diversity in the United States based on choice, but any and all policy prescriptions that involve involuntary displacement of low income people or people of color should be abandoned.

• *Schools must be equal.* Access to better schools is the primary motivation for mobility programs. We should invest in transforming schools in low income neighborhoods. Improving the opportunities of some poor children by moving them to better schools while reducing the opportunities of the poor children left behind is unacceptable.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING DILEMMA: THE PRESERVATION VS. MOBILITY DEBATE

INTRODUCTION

As a broad coalition of advocates for housing justice, the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) has had to grapple with a fundamental dilemma that is best expressed in this question: should federal housing policy focus on preserving existing public and assisted housing, much of which is located in low income, predominately black neighborhoods, or should policy focus on helping the residents of this housing move to higher income and less racially segregated neighborhoods? The short hand version is the preservation vs. mobility debate.

Some may object to the dichotomy that is created by the way the dilemma is stated, but there are NLIHC members who fervently support each side of the debate (although few people rigidly reject the other position outright). Indeed, the dominant value is choice, that is, public policy should support both preservation and mobility so that each family can make the best choice for its own circumstances. Almost everyone agrees that choice is severely constrained by the lack of resources.

ALMOST EVERYONE AGREES THAT CHOICE IS SEVERELY CONSTRAINED BY THE LACK OF RESOURCES.

NLIHC decided to undertake a more thorough analysis of the debate. The literature on this subject is vast and has been examined many times over. The competing views, moderated by the language of choice, are expressed, but never reconciled.

It was important to review the existing literature again. It was also important to listen directly in a more systematic manner to the people who inform NLIHC's policy positions to try to get beyond the listing of pros and cons of both sides of the issue. To this end, NLIHC staff engaged in the collection and analysis of original qualitative data gleaned via ten partially open-ended interviews with key informants with varying perspectives. The participants were chosen by NLIHC staff.

This report of consists of two parts. The first is the literature review. It is followed by findings and conclusions from the interviews, which should be read as a conversation among the ten participants as interpreted by the researcher.

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The debate over the advantages and disadvantages of dispersing poor households and specifically over whether the government should take an active role to promote or force such moves, the so-called "preservation vs. mobility" debate (see Box 1), has a long history in the United States. What follows is an overview of the debate's origins followed by a discussion of the broad outlines of where it stands today.

Few authors and advocates today would argue for a policy that requires displacement of poor households from high poverty communities. None of the authors reviewed here would place a sole policy focus on addressing poverty within poor neighborhoods and not on providing residents with options to leave. Instead the debate is about priorities. In a constrained funding environment should moving poor people away from poor neighborhoods take precedence over preserving affordable housing units? And how much effort and funding should go into making certain mobility leads to racial desegregation, and the economic and social integration of American neighborhoods?

There is, however, a strand of the literature and advocacy that continues to posit that the existing "ghetto," and low income publicly assisted housing in particular, must be dismantled to achieve equitable outcomes for poor and minority households. Expressed in HOPE VI and public housing policy in general in the 1990s and early 2000s, it is this view that has generated the most controversy among researchers and advocates.

This review concludes that over time the pendulum in the debate and policy has swung back and forth between poverty dispersal and place-based strategies that seek to help poor people within their current neighborhoods. Today, after two decades of a clear bias in both academia and policy toward poverty dispersal, the pendulum has moved to where there is an attempt to balance the approaches. The experience of recent policies to encourage or force poor people to move to better-off communities and the mixed results emerging from a number of policy experiments and studies of such moves and policies have contributed to this shift.

The Origins of the Debate: Removal, Renewal, and Community Development

The origins of the preservation vs. mobility debate are often traced to the Civil Rights movement and in particular events such as the Watts riots of 1965 and the McCone Commission that followed, which focused attention on the lack of jobs and economic opportunity in urban, poor, predominantly minority neighborhoods, or "ghettos," in the terminology of the day. These events launched a discussion of whether it was better to invest in these neighborhoods to provide jobs and improve conditions for those who lived there, or in linking people living in these areas to suburban jobs through transportation and training, or in efforts to move people from poor neighborhoods to neighborhoods where greater opportunities already existed, which were (or would become) economically and racially integrated.

While the current debate is clearly rooted in the seminal events of the 1960s, the focus of reformers on moving households in need away from concentrated poverty actually dates back much further. From the mid-1800s, the focus of many American social reformers became

BOX 1: DEFINING THE TERMS OF THE PRESERVATION VS. MOBILITY DEBATE

A number of related concepts are discussed in the academic and policy literature on the topic of whether or not poor people should move away from neighborhoods with high poverty rates.

There are problems and older solutions to which mobility is often seen as an alternative.

1. **Poverty concentrations** or **high poverty neighborhoods** are areas where the number of poor people is determined to be extraordinarily high and therefore detrimental to residents' health, safety, and economic opportunities. Since the definition of neighborhood is variable, this is most often defined by recent quantitative research as a census tract with a high poverty rate, such as one that has a poverty rate of greater than 40% (Jargowsky, 2003).
2. **Segregation** refers to the legally enforced or informally maintained spatial separation of different groups, most often by race or ethnicity.
3. **Gentrification** is what happens to older, poorer neighborhoods when higher income people move in. Gentrification often results in increased home prices, rents, and property taxes, which serve to displace low income people and prevent their return.
4. **Displacement** occurs when existing, poorer residents must involuntarily leave their homes and neighborhoods to make way for new development that is likely not intended to serve them. The difference between whether a family moves voluntarily or involuntarily, and the reality that poor people and/or people of color are disproportionately those who are displaced, motivates some of the criticism of mobility programs.
5. **Blight removal** and **urban renewal** describe programs that raze poor neighborhoods to "improve" them. These programs often serve gentrification and are associated with significant and sometimes violent displacement.
6. **Community revitalization** and **community development** initially described alternatives to blight removal and urban renewal, which emphasized community participation and the preservation of existing buildings and residents in the neighborhood, rather than demolition and rebuilding. Proponents of mobility are often concerned that this approach also preserves segregation and poverty concentration.

Efforts to increase mobility are described in a variety of ways.

1. **Mobility** or **choice** mean that households with the desire to move from where they currently live have no undue restrictions in doing so and have real housing choices.
2. **Desegregation** is the process of breaking down and eliminating segregation. Desegregation is generally associated with making any requirements that people be separated by race no longer permissible and indeed illegal. In housing, however, desegregation has rarely been required and has instead largely been approached by legally assuring choice and mobility with fair housing laws that prohibit discrimination in all housing transactions on the basis of race and other protected categories.
3. **Integration** is the desired outcome of desegregation, in which people of different racial, ethnic, and/or income groups come in proximity to one another and interact on a regular basis. Economic and racial residential integration is a desired outcome of both mobility programs and mixed income redevelopment.
4. **Poverty deconcentration** or **poverty dispersal** refers to moving poor residents living in areas with high poverty rates to higher income areas or attracting higher income residents into high poverty areas, or both, so that the number of high poverty neighborhoods, if not necessarily the number of poor households, declines.

providing modest and decent homes away from existing urban neighborhoods as a way to improve health. At the time, disease was popularly linked with lack of ventilation and sunlight. It was also believed that owning a home and having to care for it would enhance thrift. Furthermore, this approach was thought to distance families from urban vice and imbue them with American values such as a respect for private property and a desire for upward mobility. Simply moving to better surroundings would improve those who moved (Vale, 2000).

Many of these attitudes were carried over into New Deal and post-World War II programs such as the Federal Housing Administration and the Veterans Administration loan guarantee programs, which sought to encourage American families to move out of urban areas and into owned homes (Palen, 1998). But the FHA loan guarantee program, a mobility program for middle class Americans, not only explicitly "redlined" poor and urban neighborhoods, but also neighborhoods with significant black or other racial minority populations (Vale, 2000). Furthermore, there were official and unofficial guidelines that made it difficult for people of color to participate (Seittles, 1996).

Though the American emphasis on non-urban living as a cure for health, economic, and moral afflictions has never really diminished, housing and urban development did move in the direction of urban blight removal, redevelopment, and the building of public housing.

While American towns and cities had long been in the practice of clearing out indigent neighbors, in the modern approach these removal efforts were followed by the public redevelopment of the areas as model housing for needy and "worthy" families. Public housing was often modern apartment blocks surrounded by green space. Over time, the blocks of housing grew larger and public housing became associated with projects of thousands of units with names such as Cabrini-Green in Chicago and Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis. In 1949, as the scope of federal redevelopment programs expanded beyond public housing to broader wholesale blight removal and neighborhood redevelopment, the official term became "urban renewal."

By the 1960s, however, many of the public housing and urban renewal projects were showing their age (though most were less than 30 years old) and the effects of underinvestment (Vale, 2000). Some were also showing the weakness of the assumptions about modern living on which they had been designed and built (Bristol, 1998). These large scale developments began to diminish America's appetite for urban renewal, as neighborhood and historic preservation movements were gaining momentum in opposition to the many top-down housing and transportation projects that had eliminated whole neighborhoods and radically transformed cities since the 1940s. By the late 1960s, this movement began to successfully impede redevelopment and the razing of neighborhoods for any purpose (Lewis, 1997).

Thus, by the time the modern mobility debate gained its current form in the forges of the Civil Rights movement, the major themes of the debate were well in place. On one side, there were reformers who saw urban neighborhoods as inherently unhealthy and morally and economically limiting. A counterpoint to this was a technocratic belief in urban renewal and the ability of architects and builders to provide new opportunities for city residents by tearing down, reorganizing, and replacing outdated physical forms with modern urban neighborhoods. In opposition to both the anti-urban and the urban renewal camps, were the historic and

neighborhood preservation movements, which sought to keep the historic and community fabric of urban places intact in any effort to improve neighborhoods (Fainstein, 1998).

The Civil Rights movement added another perspective to this debate. Throughout the history of the various public housing and urban renewal programs, segregation and disparate racial impacts had been the norm. Indeed, redevelopments seen as successful or desirable were often strictly segregated and resulted in racial minority urban slums being replaced by largely white communities (Vale, 2000). Many of the home-lending programs driving urban disinvestment and suburbanization were largely off limits to racial and ethnic minorities. Civil rights advocates called for both greater investment in poor neighborhoods using a "community development" approach and for equal housing choice for racial and ethnic minorities.

The traditional view demonizing poor neighborhoods as unhealthy had been used by local and federal governments to justify moving people out of poor neighborhoods to make way for large scale redevelopment projects. Therefore, opponents to this view from a variety of perspectives advocated for a bottom-up, neighborhood focused model of development. By relying on advice and participation of the people who lived in the communities in planning for their improvement, perhaps many of the abuses of the past could be avoided and people in communities would be empowered (Sanoff, 1998). Moreover, through a community development approach, what was desirable about these neighborhoods could be retained even as they were improved in important ways such as security, green space, children's programs, schools, and employment opportunities. In reaction to this pressure, the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966 was enacted, which emphasized community participation, preservation, and rehabilitation rather than demolition and renewal in targeted poor neighborhoods. Thus, though formed to a great extent in opposition to federal projects, the community development movement increasingly became associated with federal government programs such as Model Cities, which emerged from the 1966 act, and the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, enacted in 1974 (Fainstein, 1998).

The initial push for equal housing opportunities arising from the Civil Rights movement culminated at the federal level in passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968. Modeled after numerous state provisions (Collins, 2004), the federal bill was passed in the aftermath of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It was in part the result of numerous housing actions such as the Open Housing movement in Chicago that Dr. King had led (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, ND). The bill prohibited discrimination based on race, religion, national origin and gender in the sale, rental and financing of housing.

The Spatial Mismatch Theory and the Rise of "Market Based" Policy

In addition to community development and fair housing, one other defining difference in the debate over whether to invest in poor urban neighborhoods or move people out of them emerged in the 1960s. This was the recognition that with increased use of automobiles, spatial barriers were developing between low-wage workers and economic opportunities. These barriers that had not existed previously when cities were more compact, suburbs had street cars, zoning was less exclusive, and manufacturing and most jobs were within the city limits and close to residential areas. These spatial barriers exacerbated formal and informal discrimination and

abetted white households in choosing housing located at a distance from racial minorities. Not only were there potential physical and moral dangers from living in urban areas of concentrated poverty and the evils of segregation to be overcome, but there was also a spatial separation that needed to be bridged to put low income and minority communities in touch with economic opportunity that was increasingly located well outside the neighborhoods in which they lived.

In the wake of the race riots of the 1960s, the academic and policy communities quickly identified concentrated urban poverty as a significant contributor to the unrest in black neighborhoods and academics began to look closely at the causes of racial, ethnic, and economic concentration and isolation.

The McCone Commission, created to look into the Watts riots, reported on the increasing isolation of people in poorer neighborhoods from employment and other opportunities. It concluded that the "most serious immediate problem that faces the Negro in our community is employment," (Kain 1992, p. 393) and went on to note the low levels of car ownership and access to transportation as a potential cause of this lack of attachment to the labor force. The Kerner Commission (1967), a national commission on unrest in urban, predominately black neighborhoods, noted that new jobs were being created in the suburbs and that providing employment to black Americans required better linkages between workers and job locations. The report noted three ways this linkage could be achieved:

- creating employment centers near the affected black populations,
- opening suburban residential areas to black Americans and encouraging them to move closer to employment, and
- creating better transportation between black communities and employment centers (Kain, 1992).

At the broadest level, there were two choices for policy. Investments could be made to provide employment within existing black neighborhoods or investments could be made to facilitate or require people in these neighborhoods to commute or move to neighborhoods with employment opportunities.

Kain (1992), in identifying the causes of the mismatch, put the emphasis on housing discrimination and the limitations black Americans faced in exercising housing choice that would be near employment. The Kerner Commission rejected any one approach in favor of a combined approach that would invest in current black neighborhoods and encourage integration (Massey & Denton, 1993). As one contemporary observer put it, the Commission intended "simply to provide an honest choice between separation and integration" (Pettigrew, 1971, quoted in Goering, 2005, p. 130).

Importantly, the Kerner Commission's recommendations did not emphasize changing the demographics of the ghetto or redeveloping its housing stock and environs, which had been the redevelopment approach that had shaped earlier attempts to address slums and concentrated poverty.

While a vast number of empirical studies followed to test the validity of what became known as the spatial mismatch hypothesis (Kain, 1992), the concept contributed almost

immediately to the field of housing to further the emphasis on enhancing housing choice, now not just for the social goals of fair housing and greater racial integration, but to address the economic inequities posited by the spatial mismatch hypothesis.

The focus of policy on housing choice for social equity reasons declined substantially with the end of the War on Poverty and the election of President Richard Nixon. But the focus on housing choice remained strong in housing policy due to a growing emphasis by economists inside and outside of Washington on moving toward so-called market-based policies (Olson, 2009).

The move to market-based policies, also called demand-side or consumer-driven policies, was preceded by movement toward the privatization of subsidized housing (Vale, 2000). While the primary model in the U.S. had been public housing, the 1968 Housing Act sought to ramp up federal housing production further by incentivizing the private sector to build low income housing. This was advantageous not only in garnering broader support from developers and investor interests, but also in avoiding what were increasingly being portrayed as the inefficiencies and dysfunctions of public ownership (Garr, 1998). When these programs and the projects themselves also experienced difficulties early on and what appeared to be outsized costs, outgoing U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary George Romney called for a moratorium on new commitments for nearly all federal housing and community development programs, citing an "urgent need for a broad and extensive evaluation of the entire Rube Goldberg structure of our community development statutes and regulations" (Garr, 1998, p. 362).

Shortly thereafter, the National Housing Policy Review Task Force published its report, *Housing in the Seventies* (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1974), which concluded that the existing supply-side subsidies were too costly and inefficient. The Nixon Administration proposed a wholesale move toward tenant-based subsidies for housing and a block grant program for community development. This heralded the rise of tenant-based assistance programs.

By the middle of the decade, there was a full blown right wing assault on place-based social policies. Authors such as Murray (1984) argued that social welfare and community development programs delivered to the ghetto had created a dependency among poor people and poor places that was self-destructive. Breaking this dependency became the overarching theme of conservative social welfare policy proposals and critiques for the next two decades.

A Renewed Call for a Policy to Disperse Poverty

The academic and political discourse specifically on spatial mismatch and concentrated poverty returned with William Julius Wilson's *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* in 1987.

Similar to the earliest spatial mismatch literature, Wilson's work pointed to the suburbanization of blue-collar employment as a cause of increasing poverty and isolation among black Americans, but he also implicated the more general decline of manufacturing in the United States and the rise of the service sector in the growing dysfunction of black neighborhoods. In particular, he connected the decline in black male employment and the disintegration of the black

family. Wilson also contended that black people who could leave inner-city neighborhoods did, further destabilizing these communities. His was a class as well as a racial and spatial argument.

The work of Massey and Denton (1993) showed that despite nearly two decades since Civil Rights legislation, segregation persisted nationwide. In many cities it was actually worse than it had been prior to the era of Civil Rights. Moreover, the levels of segregation were often worst outside the South in areas that had not been formally segregated. These authors argued that despite an improved formal legal climate, the pattern of segregation intensified in the 1980s as wealthier, mostly white residents continued to leave cities for the suburbs. Not only did many of the high paying jobs move with them to the suburbs (or away from American cities entirely), but the absence of these more well-to-do households and employers further decreased the tax base, leaving urban schools without sufficient resources. This reduced funding for education caused another round of movement towards suburbia among those who could afford to leave, further decreasing the tax base and the quality of education. As a result, the mostly poor and black residents remaining in cities had little opportunity to achieve a good education or gain entry to employment, and were trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty.

While their analysis was similar to that of Wilson, Massey and Denton differed from Wilson by discounting the role that the flight of middle class, black people had on the decline of black communities. They concluded that despite fair housing legislation, nothing in American politics or policy was forcing the integration of households and many formal and informal barriers remained for blacks who wished to live outside of isolated, poor, black neighborhoods. Thus, black people in general, not just the poor and near poor, were isolated in communities with shrinking tax bases and declining educational and employment opportunities. Even middle class and well educated black Americans were trapped. This difference is important because it suggested that simply improving education and employment opportunities in urban neighborhoods was not likely to break down their isolation, alleviate the problems of poverty, or provide real housing choices to black Americans.

Massey and Denton (1993) went further, arguing that in the 1970s and 1980s, Civil Rights leaders had ceded the housing integration plank of the Kerner Commission approach to ending the deprivation of poor black Americans and instead had focused on bringing money into poor communities to be spent on place-based programs that had had little effect. They also singled out U.S. housing policy as a significant cause for the continued and growing housing segregation of black Americans and the spatial concentration of poverty. Public housing in particular was faulted for placing subsidized housing in poor neighborhoods and creating communities that were actually more segregated than their already largely minority surroundings.

This was a criticism that had been building for some time. By the 1970s, it resulted in a number of civil rights legal actions against HUD, public housing authorities, and local jurisdictions (Goering, 2005; Tegeler, 2005). Indeed, the legal case of *Shannon v. HUD*, begun in 1970, won new site and neighborhood standards from HUD that required future projects to affirmatively further fair housing (Tegeler, 2005). Shortly thereafter HUD ceased most of its housing production programs and shifted remaining resources to tenant-based assistance. After the mid-1980s, affordable rental housing production fell largely to the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program of the Treasury Department, which is not governed by HUD rules (Tegeler, 2005).

To Massey and Denton (1993), the patterns and causes of segregation they found in their work suggested the three pronged approach of the Kerner Commission was no longer strong enough medicine. More proactive measures were needed to essentially force integration. To do this, the ghetto would need to be "dismantled" (p. 8). Others (Orfield, 1997; Rusk, 1999) came to the conclusion that traditional community development efforts to revitalize cities had failed, though this was a conclusion mostly based on the continuing problems of urban communities rather than any assessment of the contributions of individual programs (Goetz & Chapple, 2010). Orfield and Rusk argued that that advocates needed to pursue more proactive ways to share affordable housing and integrate poor people throughout metropolitan regions.

Policy and the Mobility Literature

The work of Wilson and Massey and Denton had a tremendous effect on the policy debate and the academic literature. In particular, the intellectual appeal of tenant-based assistance programs (eventually consolidated as the Housing Choice Voucher Program) broadened beyond the market choice and economic efficiency goals of the economists, the original advocates of the voucher program, to advocates of desegregation and poverty dispersal. In the 1990s and 2000s, with this combined support, a number of policies were implemented to further tenant-based assistance and poverty dispersal.

Early in the decade, in the wake of the Gautreaux decision in Chicago,[1] a number of cases, such as *Hollman v. Cisneros* in Minneapolis, were filed that specifically focused on proving that HUD and cities were discriminating in the location of subsidized households and projects (Goetz, 2003). In 1993, with the change in administrations in Washington, the new HUD began negotiating consent decrees with the plaintiffs that contained poverty dispersal strategies that were often considerably broader than the plaintiffs had sought (Goetz, 2003). These decrees required redeveloping public housing as mixed income communities and using the Housing Choice Voucher program to distribute poor households away from the public housing sites.

A number of program changes were also made to enhance the geographic scope in which a tenant could use a voucher, such as improved rules for being able to move using a voucher beyond one's initial public housing agency's boundaries (portability). In addition, fair market rents for areas with concentrations of voucher holders in poor neighborhoods were boosted in 2001.

HUD also began an explicit mobility experiment in 1990, Moving to Opportunity (MTO), in five cities. One set of participants were required to use vouchers to move to low poverty neighborhoods. There were two formal control groups, one consisting of voucher recipients who

1 The Gautreaux Assisted Housing Program resulted from a series of class action law suits filed against the Chicago Housing Authority and HUD in 1966. The suits alleged that the housing authority deliberately segregated black families through its site selection and tenant selection processes, and that the federal government funded these civil rights violations. In 1976, part of the settlement from the lawsuits involved remedying the segregation by offering public housing residents an opportunity to find housing in desegregated areas in the region. Over 7,000 families were placed through 1998, and over half moved to affluent, white-majority suburbs (Pefoff et al, 1979; Polikoff, 2006). Gautreaux Two was implemented in 2002 to give Chicago public housing residents special vouchers to move to neighborhoods that were both racially diverse and low poverty.

faced no such requirement and the second composed of households that remained in public housing (Goering, 2005).

Complementary to the emphasis on choice in tenant-based programs, and in the wake of the 1992 report by the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing that found approximately 86,000 public housing units in the U.S. in need of complete revitalization, the HOPE VI program was developed to create mixed income communities in place of distressed public housing. While much of the recent literature on dispersal focuses on moving low income people to higher income neighborhoods, a similar effect might be achieved by integrating higher income households into lower income neighborhoods. The two approaches are merged to some extent in the HOPE VI program, which came closest to Denton and Massey's (1993) vision of combining mobility and integrated suburbs with a dismantling of the ghetto. As Tegeler (2005) puts it, "in no other HUD program have the competing goals of community revitalization and deconcentration been so explicitly conjoined" (p. 205). That he views these objectives as necessarily competing is telling. The program has had difficulty meeting all three objectives and its implementation falls far short of Massey and Denton's vision.

With the poverty dispersal approach in intellectual and political ascendancy, the literature on housing mobility and poverty throughout the 1990s and 2000s increasingly focused on describing and assessing these various reforms (Goetz & Chapple, 2010). By the middle of the 2000s a sizable literature on the outcomes of these programs, from the location of participants to their well-being, had emerged (Bravve, Pelletiere, & Ross, forthcoming; Levy, McDade, & Dumlao, 2010; NLIHC, 2005).

The Debate Today

Today, there is general consensus in the literature that little good can come to anyone from living in areas with high levels of poverty. The consensus on this topic comes from a raft of empirical literature that shows a very high degree of correlation between these neighborhoods and negative outcomes such as crime, teenage pregnancy, and school dropout rates (Ellen & Turner, 1997; Goetz & Chapple, 2010; Jargowsky, 1996; Jencks & Mayer, 1990). Also in the vein of the spatial mismatch literature, researchers continued to find that there were lower rates of labor force participation in these communities (O'Regan, 1993). There does not appear to be any research to say living in high poverty communities is, all else being equal, good for poor people.

However, after a decade of research into the high poverty neighborhoods and the outcomes of various dispersal programs, there is genuine disagreement about what causes the association between high poverty neighborhoods and negative outcomes for people. Some argue that in identifying the problems within areas of concentrated poverty and the persistence of poverty in some of these neighborhoods despite significant place-based interventions, researchers and policy makers jumped too quickly to the conclusion that the spatial concentration of poverty was itself the problem (Goetz & Chapple, 2010). Just as early environmental policy had been wrong to assume that "the solution to pollution is dilution," the spatial dispersion of poor people is proving not to be an easy solution to dealing with the problems of poverty.

The fundamental logic behind poverty dispersal used today is little changed from the views of the reformers in the 1850s, who felt moving working class households to a more positive environment would remove them from sin and bad ventilation, and provide positive role models to the benefit of these households. In a review of the literature (largely after 2000), Levy, McDade and Dumlao (2010) find that the benefits authors hypothesize from living in mixed-income or high-opportunity communities include things such as "learning from the behavior and lifestyle choices modeled by higher income households" (p. 8) and observing the "higher levels of accountability" (p. 8) to established norms and rules. Poor people are also expected to benefit from higher quality housing, improved safety and less crime.

It is also posited that through proximity and interactions in neighborhoods, schools, and places of worship, members of poorer households will develop social networks that contain valuable leads to employment and other needed resources to improve their resiliency, lower their dependency on assistance, and enable upward mobility (Briggs, 1998). These improved network effects could come from increasing the size, density, and heterogeneity of people, and therefore the sheer quantity of information, within the network. The benefits could also come from including connections with better quality information about the labor market, educational opportunities, and other useful things for upward mobility (Briggs, 1998; Curley, 2009; Kleit, 2010; Wilson, 1987).

It has also been hypothesized that the network could be improved because the poor person is removed from "draining ties" in the process of moving. While the belief that poor neighborhoods are full of bad actors who can drag worthy poor people down or lead them astray dates back to the earliest reformers, draining ties specifically refers to those acquaintances that have a claim on an individual's time and resources even though they do not or cannot provide reciprocal assistance (Curley, 2009; Kleit, 2010). Curley identified draining ties as being particularly important in her study of women affected by the Maverick HOPE VI redevelopment in Dallas. She concluded that some women in her study who did not necessarily benefit from an expansion of the range or the quality of new positive ties still often benefitted from being able to sever old draining ties.

Advocates for dispersal also point to more concrete benefits of moving away from high poverty neighborhoods taken from the spatial mismatch literature. Higher income households attract or are able to move to places with higher quality services, particularly education. Regardless of whom they know or meet when they get there, poor or minority households who move to higher income areas should be able to take advantage of these same public services. In particular, many of the benefits of moving to low poverty communities are expected to flow to children (Kaufman & Rosenbaum, 1992; Levy, McDade, & Dumlao, 2010), perhaps because they have not already been formed by growing up in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty and therefore have the best chance of breaking out of the cycle of poverty (Goering, 2005).

In recent years, poverty dispersal and integration advocates have also argued that putting a focus on improving community schools in low income areas not only has a poor track record for improving education, it is clearly not working to integrate schools. Therefore, pursuing this policy without a corresponding focus on mobility, desegregation, and integration is tantamount to attempting to prove the efficacy of separate but equal (McCain, 2008; Orfield & Eaton, 1996).

Through these various channels, advocates today expect poverty dispersal to not only relieve some of the worst effects of poverty, but to actually lead to a reduction in poverty itself, a conclusion authors reach to varying extents (Goetz & Chapple, 2010).

By the mid-2000s, many advocates for proactive mobility policies were using the language of choice. Goering (2005), for example, is clear that mobility programs should "not require families to move" (p. 139) and Briggs (2005) defines the threshold question as "whether wider housing choices exist for people who *want* to use them" (p. 25).

Similarly, while the criticism of mobility programs and their logic has grown since the middle of last decade, particularly as empirical studies of their efficacy have returned mixed results, few academics or advocates argue with the desirability of increasing low income and particularly minority households' residential choices or with the very real possibility of improved outcomes from living in better neighborhoods for those who make that choice (Bravve, Pelletiere, & Ross, forthcoming; Goetz & Chapple, 2010; NLIHC, 2005).

Instead the debate is over how universal the benefits of moving are likely to be, the nature of the choice to move (or lack thereof) that affected residents, and the impact that specific dispersal or integration programs have had in poor neighborhoods, their participants, and the neighborhoods where they move.

In particular the prescription to dismantle the ghetto, which has been carried out in a limited fashion through HOPE VI, has been controversial (Crowley, 2009). But as one author put it, the controversy tends not to be over the "rather clean logic" of poverty dispersal but its "messy reality" as policy (Goetz, 2003, p. 18).

Many authors find that there are positive attributes to poor neighborhoods and that the negatives from living in poor communities are often overstated. The social network literature has been at the forefront, finding that poor households that move do not appear to improve their networks in the expected ways (see discussion of Curley's "draining ties" above) and often remain isolated in their new neighborhoods or continue to rely on old neighborhood networks. Moreover, many of these who move to new neighborhoods have positive associations with their old neighborhoods and the place-based programs offered there (Crowley, 2009; Curley, 2009; Kleit, 2010). Coulton, Theodos, and Turner (2009), found that while three of ten movers were "up and out" movers, voluntarily exercising their option for mobility, a similar proportion of the study population remained in the neighborhoods and felt connected and positive about their future. Some authors conclude that involuntary moves that result from programs such as HOPE VI are not merely disruptive or unhelpful, but traumatic, and in some cases fatal (Cohen & Wardrip, 2011; Crowley, 2009; Fullilove, 2000).

Another concern is that mobility programs may be "creaming" poor communities, leaving behind the most vulnerable families with the most complex problems (Popkin, Cunningham, & Burt, 2005), *a la* Wilson's (1987) argument about the black middle class leaving urban neighborhoods in the 1980s. Within the community development field, there is a related concern that if families move because they have benefited from community development efforts targeted at high poverty neighborhoods, there may be two unfortunate outcomes (Coulton, Theodos, &

THUS, THE MOBILITY DEBATE TODAY IS ABOUT... HOW STRONGLY POLICY SHOULD INSIST ON MOVING POOR PEOPLE OUT OF POOR COMMUNITIES.

Turner, 2009). First, those left behind in the community and the place itself will not benefit from the investment in these households, and second, since the evidence of the success of the community development program embodied in these households is no longer in the neighborhood when the successful family leaves, the community development programs will not get credit for this success. Successful programs will lose funding, and remaining and new poor residents will be denied access to their benefits.

Thus, the mobility debate today is not about whether poor people should be able to move, or on whether assisted housing should remain segregated and in poor communities, but how strongly policy should insist on moving poor people out of poor communities. On the one side are those who, in keeping with Massey and Denton (1993), say the bias should be strongly in the direction of integration, primarily from poor neighborhoods to already better off communities. On the other are those who feel the implementation of programs such as HOPE VI, like urban renewal before it, destroys supportive communities and is as likely to replace the isolation that poor and minority households experienced as an entire community, with the isolation of individual households, little integrated into the majority culture. A third strand in the debate that has recently opened up is the degree to which pre- and post-move counseling and other supportive services can increase the likelihood that the expected positive results of moving to opportunity will be realized (Cunningham & Sawyer, 2005; Engdahl, 2009).

The Resource Constraint

One of the biggest constraints to mobility for poor people in general, and to any effort to move a dispersal program to scale (Goering, 2005) in particular, is the lack of affordable housing in a range of neighborhoods, including higher income communities. The concentration of the low cost housing market and publicly assisted housing in poor neighborhoods reduces the mobility of voucher holders and appears to be a factor in the concentration of voucher holders in poor communities (Bravve, Pelletiere, & Ross, forthcoming; Oakley, 2009).

McClure (2011) found there are only 260,000 rental homes in 2,100 high opportunity Census tracts having rents and utilities below the Fair Market Rent, the upper threshold used in the administering the voucher program. If every voucher holder were required or chose to live in these areas *and* even if every affordable unit were vacant, there would still be nearly two million currently assisted households unable to find an apartment. McClure's high opportunity neighborhoods have a low poverty rate that is not increasing, relatively few assisted households, low unemployment, short commutes, low dropout rates, and are less than 20% racial minorities.

This in turn raises the clearest reason for disagreement in the mobility debate, which after all takes place largely among academics and policy makers who are seeking to improve the living conditions of low income households. Implicitly or explicitly there is a fiscal trade-off that debate participants are considering. Money devoted to vouchers is not available to public housing. While there is money for redevelopment in HOPE VI, there is insufficient funding to support one-for-one replacement of the deeply targeted public housing units, on-site or elsewhere. Funding is also lacking for a well run mobility program that tracks and assists tenants who do not return to the site. This trade-off generates the most heat in the policy debate, and leads to advocates with even a slight bias toward one type of policy or the other to square off.

Most participants in the debate would like to preserve and invest in public and assisted housing and at the same time provide additional housing elsewhere, either directly or through tenant-based assistance and enhanced enforcement of fair housing laws, to give the lowest income residents more and better housing choices across a wide range of neighborhoods and clear information about what those choices might mean for their families.

With so little money for assistance, should we invest in improving and preserving the housing we have or should we abandon (at least some) of that housing and invest the money in helping people move away from it? In an environment where little funding is available to even pay lip service to doing both, the choice seems stark to those with a bias in one way or the other. Which approach will provide more households with affordable housing, and which will provide the best outcomes for those who are assisted? The choices of those who are being assisted appear less relevant.

The report now turns to part two, the Conversation.

THE CONVERSATION

In order to gain a more grounded and nuanced understanding of the preservation vs. mobility debate, NLIHC reached out to ten people whose perspectives would enhance the discussion. Five interviews were with middle income people who have a professional interest in the debate, but have varying positions. Four are white and one is black. Five more interviews were with low income people who live and work (for pay or as volunteers) in low income communities. All of the low income people are black and all held basically the same pro-preservation view.

The findings from the interviews cannot be said to represent anything other than the opinions of the ten participants. There are other perspectives that could have been included had there been more time and resources. The findings are not generalizable, but with descriptive depth, readers may find them transferable to their own experiences or "tentative(ly) applicable to other contexts" (Rodwell & Byers, 1997). (See Appendix A for details on methodology.)

The report on the analysis of the interviews is organized in three parts. The first is about the values expressed by the participants. The second section describes the nuts and bolts of the preservation vs. mobility debate itself and then takes a deeper dive into understanding the human consequences of displacement and the meaning of social networks. Finally, the report moves to schools, which may be what the real debate is all about. Statements in quotation marks are verbatim comments from participants that are included to illustrate a particular point.

The metaphor for the report is a conversation, on which the reader is eavesdropping. Each viewpoint is honored. A perspective is valid whether it is held by one or many participants. How the elements of the conversation are constructed is the design of the researcher. Just as in any conversation, themes recur in the exploration of different topics. Because all perspectives hold equal value, the report provides identifying information about who holds a perspective only where the researcher determines that the information enhances understanding of a particular viewpoint.

Findings

Values

Values are relatively persistent beliefs that guide our decisions about means and ends. They are higher order concepts that are always in operation, but not applied to trivial matters. Rather, they are used to help make decisions of a profound and meaningful nature. Although values are often thought of as being positive, what is positive depends on the vantage point of the person holding the value. Thus, truth is a value and racism is a value. Values are held by individuals, but are learned and exercised socially. Value systems can be held by institutions, governments, and communities, and influence the values of individuals who make up these social and legal constructs. The dominant values that emerged from the interviews are choice, equality, race in America, and protection of children.

Choice.

A core value expressed by most participants is individual choice. When asked whether they prefer mobility or preservation, most participants want public policy to support both. They want each low income family to be able to make its own choice. Low income people have diverse needs and interests and public policy makers should not assume that they know what is best. "I don't think that we need a housing policy where there is only one choice."

One participant says that "revitalization and desegregation do not compete" and can be done simultaneously. Another believes that public policy should not dictate what low income people should do nor impede their ability to make the best decision. "You should not do anything to necessarily encourage me to either move out or stay. Just make it possible for me to do either." Indeed, choice is essential to preservation and improvement of low income neighborhoods, because "a community that (residents) believe in and care about" must be one from which people have the "right or the ability to leave," as well as the right and ability to stay.

Making it possible to do either requires that low income people have sufficient knowledge with which to make an informed choice. This means access to the counseling and other services to help them make the best possible choice. It also requires public policy that protects civil rights and protects tenants from exploitive landlords and developers. Choice cannot be exercised under conditions of discrimination and disadvantage. And choice cannot be exercised in the absence of a sufficient supply of affordable housing in every community. One low income participant does not want to be part of "some sort of social experiment" that limits his choices.

Equality.

The value of choice is expressed in the language of greater equality. "Ending poverty is the only choice." Equality means living wage jobs, the same police protection for every neighborhood, high quality public transportation for every community, high quality housing for everyone, and the best possible school for every child. "Quality education is a human right."

The low income participants in the study each in his or her way revealed a strong measure of self-efficacy, which is integral to their commitment to equality. Some describe solid upbringings. Others describe opportunities that have given them a bit of a leg up. One made the decision when she was a young woman to move to city that was more welcoming for black people. They have no doubts that all people deserve the chance to improve themselves and it is the responsibility of government to assure that all are treated fairly and have equal opportunities.

Race in America.

Choice and equality may be what participants prefer when asked, but they also recognize how social, political, and policy constraints severely limit both. The preservation vs. mobility debate is embedded in America's troubled history and attitudes about race. Although racial dynamics are central to the entire investigation, it is important to focus on the most overt expressions of race before delving deeper into the preservation vs. mobility data.

The debate centers on the use of federal housing resources that provide rental housing assistance. Rent assistance programs operated by HUD subsidize slightly over five million units of housing in which approximately 9.6 million people reside. By definition, all are low income.

Yet, the debate is often discussed in racial terms. Approximately 41% of residents of public and assisted housing are white, 39% are black, 17% are Hispanic, and 3% other races (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2008). Black people make up 13% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), and thus are overrepresented among those who receive federal housing assistance.

Sorting out the intersection between race and income is complicated; the participants vary on which they think is primary. Some see income as the most important consideration with a goal of breaking up concentrations of poverty regardless of race. "If African Americans and whites earned the same and had the same amount of wealth, I don't think we'd be so concerned about racial integration. We'd be worried about class integration."

Some think race is harder to deal with than poverty in the U.S. Thus, HUD policies that seek to deconcentrate poverty are more politically palatable than policy that seeks to reduce residential segregation by race. Yet advocates of mobility argue its merits from a fair housing perspective and "whether or not low income people of color have the same level of opportunity to move to high opportunity areas as low income white people."

THE GREATER CONCENTRATION OF BLACK AMERICANS IN POOR COMMUNITIES HAS HEIGHTENED A "SENSE OF (THEIR) OTHERNESS" AND "INTENSIFIED RACIAL PREJUDICE IN WHITE AMERICA IN A BIG WAY."

Mobility advocates stress the importance of HUD fulfilling its civil rights obligations and using low income housing resources to redress past government actions that led to communities that are racially segregated with high levels of concentrated poverty. Although current HUD officials agree that policy should support both preservation and mobility, one participant asserts that "HUD is continuing to concentrate those resources in a way that perpetuates and increases segregation." Another takes the language of concentration even further and refers to public housing developments as "concentration camps." The greater concentration of black Americans in poor communities has heightened a "sense of (their) otherness" and "intensified racial prejudice in white America in a big way."

The emotionally charged intersection between choice and race is expressed by one participant, who is black, in how he explains his understanding of what deconcentration advocates think. "'Well, you're poor, because you live around all poor people and if you just come and move into a different kind of neighborhood, I can turn you white, and so I'm not going to let

you live in a community where you are comfortable and know people.'" He goes on to equate deconcentration policy with past policies that removed poor children from their parents and sent them to orphanages or boarding schools, places to "teach them to be white," because that is the "standard of success."

Another participant, also black, understands desegregation efforts as meaning that "black folks need to be moved to white folks' neighborhoods" and sees "the whole push as a serious insult to low income people and to African American people." A white participant thinks that if black people want to live in neighborhoods where "more of the people are the same ethnicity or race as themselves, they should have that choice."

The complexities of the racial dimensions of the preservation vs. mobility debate show up in the opinion of one participant who asserts that "many (low income) resident leaders believe in an integrated society and recognize how white privilege in exclusionary white communities is part of what is pulling their communities down." Contrast this view with that of another participant who thinks that "integration is the best thing since sliced bread," but has "come to realize that there are some people who self-segregate…and as long as it is not forced onto them…it should be their right."

Protecting Children.

An important finding that emerged from the analysis is that the primary concern about racial and economic segregation is its impact on children. Mobility advocates have a strong sense of urgency that families with children at least must be offered the option to move to neighborhoods with better schools. Thus, this means that the preservation vs. mobility debate is also about age and family status. While 31% of the residents of public and assisted housing are 62 years of age and over (47% are over 50) and 18% are people with disabilities (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2008), "the issue of desegregation is simply not as pressing for the elderly and disabled from a societal or individual perspective."

Mobility programs are primarily meant for families with children. "Low income families are the real people we care about the most because of the kids." Children will grow up before their existing neighborhoods can be improved. They must be offered better opportunities before it is too late. The report will return to this theme in the section on schools.

"'WELL, YOU'RE POOR, BECAUSE YOU LIVE AROUND ALL POOR PEOPLE AND IF YOU JUST COME AND MOVE INTO A DIFFERENT KIND OF NEIGHBORHOOD, I CAN TURN YOU WHITE, AND SO I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU LIVE IN A COMMUNITY WHERE YOU ARE COMFORTABLE AND KNOW PEOPLE.'"

The Debate

In this section, the core arguments for and against each side of the debate are offered. The mobility side is presented first.

Mobility.

Mobility, again defined as helping residents of public and assisted housing in low income, racially segregated neighborhoods move to higher income, more racially integrated neighborhoods, is "helping people move to high opportunity areas." Indeed, one HUD mobility program was called Moving to Opportunity (MTO). A high opportunity neighborhood ideally has not only affordable and decent housing, but also has high performing public schools, good paying jobs, good public transportation, amenities like recreation facilities and libraries, access to grocery stores and health care, and it is safe.

The empirical evidence on whether low income people who move to high income communities are better off than if they had stayed in low income communities is mixed at best. Moving to opportunity does not guarantee that all members of a family will be more successful than if they had not moved. Some families are better able to take advantage of opportunities; they have the wherewithal to "pick up and go to another community and survive." Some families are more willing to take the risk because they want to broaden their children's horizons.

A critique of mobility programs is that they deplete low income neighborhoods of some of their most capable members who have the most to offer their existing communities. Why is opportunity promised elsewhere and not here? The response from a mobility proponent is that leaders in low income communities are likely not those who will want to leave, but they should not interfere with the ability of others to do so. Generally, mobility programs are about movement away from inner cities toward the suburbs. Another critique is that cities are where most jobs are, so moving too far away may be counterproductive.

Mobility requires housing policy that does one or both of two things. One is to give public or assisted housing residents housing vouchers that allow them to move to higher income communities. The other is to build more housing that low income people can afford in higher income communities. Neither is easily done. The voucher option is examined first.

Vouchers. Mobility is a primary goal of the housing voucher program today. HUD currently funds about two million vouchers, though the number could drop with budget cuts to federal discretionary programs. A sizable increase in the number of vouchers would "allow people better chances to live where they want to and have more decent, safe, and affordable housing."

But vouchers have limitations and do not offer unfettered choice. They are not of sufficient value to allow access to higher income neighborhoods. Public housing residents who get vouchers often find that renting with vouchers is more expensive than living in public housing. One participant, who was able to get a voucher, could not find a place to rent that was large enough for her family and opted to turn the voucher in and stay in public housing. Even if people want to live in racially integrated neighborhoods, it is unaffordability that is "keeping them from venturing in that direction."

In most places, landlords can discriminate freely against voucher holders and choose not to rent to them. It may be outright objections to the people who have vouchers themselves or just not wanting the hassle of dealing with the public housing agencies (PHAs) that manage the voucher program. Local prohibitions against refusing to accept vouchers as a source of rent payment "might not make every apartment available to someone with a voucher, but still increases the opportunity to move to certain areas…that we have found in the past to be off limits."

Expansion of local and state laws that offer protection against discrimination in the rental housing market based on source of income is a key policy objective, as is enactment of a federal protection. The other policy intervention that will help make vouchers a more useful mobility tool will be the change from region-wide FMRs to small area FMRs. The region-wide FMRs have caused the overpricing of units rented with vouchers in low income neighborhoods. The small area FMR will "push down rents in poor neighborhoods" and save money. Going to small area FMRs would cause "such a redistribution of poor people over time in metro areas, because there's so many rental units that would be accessible all of a sudden that aren't accessible now."[2]

Another necessary reform that would make vouchers more useful mobility tools would be regional or state administration of vouchers, so that applicants and landlords only have to work with one administering agency. Currently most vouchers are administered by jurisdiction-based PHAs, even though housing markets are regional in nature.

A caution on the implications of using vouchers under current policy to advance mobility was expressed by one participant is that we "really just push poverty to the inner suburbs" and "will probably see that in 2020 that people are going to be living in neighborhoods just as impoverished as those in 1980 in public housing high-rises." Another participant thinks we need to stabilize the inner suburbs now before this happens.

HUD also "needs to do a better job" of helping voucher holders move to higher income neighborhoods. HUD should put more money toward "investing in desegregation," including more robust mobility programs with better counseling, assistance with security deposits, application fees, and perhaps supplemental rent assistance. However, mobility counseling and better information are not enough if there is a scarce supply of rental housing in higher opportunity neighborhoods.

More Housing in Better Neighborhoods. The shortage of rental housing stock that low income people can afford sharply curtails their choices, but would an infusion of investment in housing production expand their choices? Only if it is directed to housing production in low poverty, high opportunity neighborhoods, say mobility advocates. Affordable housing development in these neighborhoods would help with desegregation and there are plenty of low income people of color who want to move away from concentrated poverty. However, expanding affordable housing supply in poor neighborhoods may get more low income people into better homes, but it will not give them better choices. Moreover, new affordable rental housing added to high opportunity neighborhoods would likely to be quickly occupied by the low income people who are already live there.

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2 For more information on HUD Small Area FMR demonstration program, go to: www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/fmr/fmr2011f/SAFMR_Demo_FRN_Posted.pdf.

Participants identify many impediments to adding more affordable housing in higher income communities, not the least of which is the stigma that is attached to it. Affordable housing is associated with inner city problems and perceived as bad for property values and neighborhood quality of life. It is not the housing per se that is objectionable, but rather the people who will live there, who are expected to be poor and black or another racial minority. One participant asserts that some cities and counties have made zoning decisions that limit the development of affordable housing "so that people of color can't move in." To expand the supply of affordable rental housing in higher income areas requires more inclusive zoning practices by local governments.

The federal government also needs to spend its housing money differently. The way "HUD spends its money is still the biggest influence on residential patterns of… poor people… in this country." After vouchers, the next highest level of HUD subsidies goes to public housing, little of which is located in the suburbs. Most HUD programs give maximum discretion to local governments on where housing funds are spent. Unless and until HUD affirmatively redirects a substantial portion of its resources outside of areas where poor, black people are concentrated, HUD will continue to "replicate segregation." Continuing to spend on "place-based" programs is "madness," doing the same thing over and over again and expecting something other than the same poor result.

While the concentration of low income housing in inner cities cannot be rebalanced "overnight," more incentives are needed for community development corporations (CDCs) and other developers to build in higher income neighborhoods. These organizations may resist the use of HUD funding for mobility programs, because they "will take money away from their projects or threaten their bottom line," although some think this fear is overblown. One participant laments the lack of "visionaries" in the housing industry and thinks most PHA and CDC staff are protecting the status quo.

One participant thinks that HUD should require local jurisdictions to use the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to build more rental housing in higher income neighborhoods. Another option, modeling supportive housing, is that HUD should require or incentivize the use of HUD funds to rent a small number of units in larger market rate apartment complexes and rent them to lower income families.

One participant thinks that adding more Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) subsidized units in the suburbs will not advance mobility out of poor neighborhoods because LIHTC rents are too high. Another notes that LIHTC property owners are required by federal law to accept vouchers. She would also like states to do more to assure the siting of LIHTC units in diverse neighborhoods.

The use of foreclosed properties to expand housing choice beyond low income neighborhoods was raised by some participants. PHAs or other organizations could and should acquire foreclosed houses and rent them to low income families. There are no zoning or other land use restrictions on renting single family homes, so local governments and neighborhood groups will be less able to interfere. HUD needs to be figure out a way to use the foreclosure crisis to expand low income rental housing, but has not yet done so.

Indeed, HUD is faulted for failing to use the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP), the program intended to stabilize neighborhoods damaged by the foreclosure crisis, to create more affordable rental housing in higher income areas. One participant cited evidence that the foreclosed properties acquired under NSP to be used for rental housing are in poorer neighborhoods, while foreclosed properties in higher income neighborhoods are being used for home ownership, and not available to voucher holders. Another thought that HUD was allowing too much demolition under NSP.

Transportation. Before turning to the preservation side of the debate, the participants were asked to comment on public transportation as a component of achieving greater mobility for low income families. While public transit is seen as fundamental for low income people to get to jobs anywhere, no mention was made of it as a means for greater school integration, the core concern of mobility advocates. Further, cutbacks in local bus service in some communities have left low income people stranded, limiting access to better jobs.

Alternatives to public transportation do exist. In one community, the university's bus service did a good job of transporting its employees to and from work, while people who work for other employers have to rely on more limited public buses. In another community, seniors in public housing have to schedule private van services to get to grocery stores and medical appointments. In a third, where public transportation is very limited, the predominant transportation mode of low income people is cars. Even where there is more developed public transportation, the fares are too high for low income people to use regularly.

While several participants called for greater investment in public transportation to better connect people in low income neighborhoods to the surrounding communities and more opportunity, two cautions were expressed. The first is that it is hard to accurately predict where job growth will be in metropolitan areas in order to know best where to direct rail-based transit. Second is that redevelopment and gentrification follow new transit options. Without a careful preservation strategy, bringing better public transportation to low income neighborhoods is likely to mean displacement of the existing residents. Displacement will be examined in more detail later in the report.

Preservation.

The report on the findings now turns to the arguments in favor of preserving and improving existing public and assisted housing, and the neighborhoods in which this housing is located. This section also includes discussion of the redevelopment of these neighborhoods and whether or not existing residents benefit from new investments.

All of the low income participants are firmly in the preservation camp of the preservation vs. mobility debate. Under circumstances of scarce resources, they believe federal funds should be used to improve the communities in which low income people already live. Opportunity should be brought to their neighborhoods; no one should have to move to opportunity. One participant is suspicious of the language of opportunity, wondering if it really about giving higher income households the opportunity to crowd her out of her neighborhood. Another wants the beauty of older, inner city neighborhoods preserved so that others will come back to live there. Some people have chosen to stay in their neighborhoods despite disinvestment and intend to stay to see them rebuilt.

Of note is that no one advocates preservation at all costs. Some low income housing and neighborhoods may be too far gone to save. Given resource constraints, housing and neighborhoods that offer the best potential should be the focus of preservation programs. Indeed, cities would be wise to concentrate their resources in neighborhoods where they can do the most good, rather than spend smaller amounts in more places with little lasting impact.

Other participants who choose preservation over mobility base their preferences on what they had learned from residents of low income neighborhoods and public and assisted housing with whom they had worked. "What I have heard from low income families…is that the… neighborhoods that they're comfortable living in… are often those central city neighborhoods that we have deemed to be disadvantaged and problematic." However, the choice should be up to the residents in every case.

Part of the preservation argument points to how necessary public and assisted housing is in many communities. Before they moved to public housing, some people lived in substandard conditions and public housing is the "best housing they have ever had." Public housing is often the only place to find units with enough bedrooms for large families. And the gap between market rate rents and public housing rents is so wide that even higher income public housing residents cannot afford to move out.

Another argument in favor of preservation is the limitations of mobility programs to date. "When I first started to study this… I actually did not have a position on it. But by the time I finished the study, it became clear to me that preservation is probably the… way to go… out of a greater appreciation for the difficulties and fallibility of the deconcentration model."

Rather than disinvest in public housing, as is happening now, more funds should go to maintaining public housing in good condition and upgrading the neighborhoods around it. The existing buildings serve as a base upon which to build. If this housing is preserved, places that "have not been opportunity areas" can "become opportunity areas." To maintain racial and economic diversity as neighborhoods are redeveloped, the existing affordable housing stock must be preserved.

Redevelopment. The preservation and improvement of existing low income housing and neighborhoods often comes with the risk of redevelopment. Many residents of these neighborhoods know that redevelopment is fraught with peril. One participant who fights tenaciously to protect public housing in her community knows from experience that when developers show up, it is likely to mean the loss of affordable housing and displacement of residents.

Too often redevelopment involves developers who are interested in profit, with an emphasis on the place and not the people. They will not include new affordable housing in their plans unless they are required to do so. Because redevelopment is harder to do with existing residents still in place, public policy must require that residents be protected and officials must enforce anti-displacement policies. "Vouchering out" of public housing in any form is considered risky. Are residents going to have a say over what happens to their communities or are back room deals going to be cut with residents being told after the fact?

Two participants reported on the proximity of public housing in their communities to major and expanding universities. In one case, the public housing was lost and the new housing that it replaced is not affordable to the residents who used to live there. In the other case, residents are organized to keep a watchful eye on what the university is up to.

Any redevelopment plan must include resources to improve the existing housing for current residents, but, according to mobility advocates, should not add more housing that would bring more poor people to the neighborhood. The central question of redevelopment policy is how to assure that not only do low income people stay in their homes, but that they actually benefit from redevelopment. One participant supports "inclusive gentrification," in which existing low income, minority neighborhoods are made more attractive for higher income (presumably non-minority) people to move there while preserving the homes of the existing residents. Moreover, the benefits to existing residents should be more than simply not being displaced. They should benefit as well from whatever other amenities that attracts the higher income people there.

Displacement. A deeply felt and fully justified fear of people in low income communities is the specter of displacement and forced relocation. U.S. history is replete with the experiences of low income and people of color losing their homes and communities to larger more powerful interests, even if it was ostensibly for their own good. The preservation vs. mobility debate cannot be disentangled from these experiences.

Any relocation that is involuntary causes trauma or "root shock," the term coined by psychiatrist Mindy Fullilove (2005). One participant likened the effects on some people as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Attachment to place is both emotional and cultural. One participant spoke of his lost neighborhood as one that "had a culture and beat all its own."

Sometimes people are forced to move when disinvestment and neglect cause their neighborhoods to fall into disrepair and living conditions become too intolerable. More often it is the result of direct government action. The most recent example is HOPE VI, the HUD program that had both deconcentration of poverty and public housing redevelopment as its goals. Under HOPE VI, tens of thousands of public housing residents have been displaced. Old public housing has been replaced with mixed income neighborhoods with far fewer units that are affordable to the original residents. Most have not been able to return (Crowley, 2009). Some have moved to better housing, but many have not.

One of the most serious criticisms of HOPE VI has been the way many residents of the public housing that was to be redeveloped have been treated. First, they had to endure years of poor quality housing and often dangerous communities. Then developers came in with big promises to build new homes and communities with lots of services and amenities that most of the residents will never see. "They are forced to live in public housing that is underfunded… neglected by local officials, and then when we decide we really want to clean up these communities, those folks are actually displaced and moved elsewhere into other highly segregated neighborhoods and never actually get the benefit of the redevelopment itself."

Moreover, many existing residents were engaged in the HOPE VI planning process, a requirement for successful applications for HOPE VI funding. "They were told to envision what

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they want their community to look like without ever being told they had about a one in six change of actually staying in it." "The involuntary and significant disruption in their lives" is made even worse by the broken promises.

One participant said that HOPE VI had done "a great deal of harm done to the fair housing project...We all know that when HOPE VI was implemented poorly, people didn't get to go back to the redeveloped site, they didn't get to go to a better neighborhood, they just lost their housing. I think HOPE VI really has given housing mobility and the whole desegregation project a bad rap and people associate the concept of mobility and integration (with it)." It will take a lot to overcome the distrust and ill will that HOPE VI has caused. More dialogue between public and assisted housing residents and civil rights advocates is needed to repair the relationship.

Social Networks. One of the arguments for preserving public and assisted housing is that the residents who live there have support systems and networks that help them cope and provide meaning in their lives. These networks are particularly important for those who are the least able to move. These support systems can be family-based or neighbor-to-neighbor or based in institutions. Churches in particular were cited by participants.

The pull of these social networks can be powerful even for people who have moved out. For better or for worse, their roots are in the communities they know. Again, connections to houses of worship can bring people back regularly. One participant knows people who have moved to other neighborhoods, "but run back over here to be in their community." They have not found new social networks to go along with their new homes.

Resident leaders in public housing and assisted housing are important resources for other residents, both as advocates and as service providers. One participant reports that part of what keeps her in public housing is that she has been able to be a voice for the residents and negotiate on their behalf for community improvements. For example, she prevailed in getting city officials to develop a more robust Section 3 program to open up job opportunities for public housing residents. Another participant organizes residents to help one another so they do not have to depend on the public housing agency, which is often unresponsive to resident concerns. Keeping an eye on and assisting seniors and people with disabilities is a key function of resident associations.

The importance of social networks in low income communities is not a convincing argument against deconcentration strategies for some participants. First, social networks in low income neighborhoods may indeed be helpful to people who are poor, but they do not offer a way out of poverty. Second, there is no guarantee that social networks are always helpful. Sometimes people can demand too much of others; sometimes relationships can be co-dependent. "Some harm, some help, and some could care less." Finally, decrying the "loss of community" should not be a reason to "confine children to failing schools for the next generation." It is a question of what is more important.

One of the arguments for deconcentration and redevelopment of low income neighborhoods, particularly public housing, is that the new mixed income housing will be more racially, as well as economically, integrated. The assumption may be that the residents will form new and maybe better social networks. Some participants report that just because people live near one another does not mean they even know, much less, help one another. One participant who lives in a gentrifying neighborhood says "the neighborhood is diverse, but we don't mingle, we don't associate." Another who lives in a redeveloped public housing building that is surrounded by more expensive housing reports significant mutual aid among the residents in the building, but no interaction with their more affluent neighbors.

HUD and PHAs are faulted for focusing too heavily on the "bricks and mortar" of redevelopment and not on the social outcomes. Citing one HOPE VI project, a participant said "there wasn't a lot of thought about having residents come together across race and class lines." More funding needs to be directed to deliberate strategies that will facilitate integration and reduce the potential for tension and conflict. Day care centers and community gardens were suggested.

Schools

Participants were asked to comment on the intersection between housing and other elements of community life including jobs, health care, transportation, and schools. The subject of schools produced the richest response. Indeed, stable housing, which for poor families means subsidized housing, is essential for children to achieve in school.

As reported earlier, a key finding of this analysis is that the particular target of mobility programs are children. The primary goal of mobility programs is to improve their educational opportunities. From this perspective, housing has become the vehicle to get children of color to better schools, because school busing as the means to integration did not succeed. But as in all facets of the preservation vs. mobility debate, the participants have divergent views on the subject.

Two participants felt that parents have the ultimate choice about what school their child should attend, but no one sees the answer as that simple. There is a strong voice for getting kids out of poor performing schools. If the school has a "98% poverty profile (and is) completely racially isolated,… you're going to continue to have unequal resources, unequal teaching staff, unequal outcomes, and the peer effects of kids going to school with so many other kids from poverty." Indeed, high performing schools are the primary determinant of high opportunity areas. Schools in the suburbs are perceived as better than city schools.

One argument for moving families to communities with better schools is that it reduces social isolation. Many poor families in segregated neighborhoods have little interaction with people beyond their immediate geography. Parents are afraid for their children to venture too far from what they know. Even if the adults do not want to leave their existing neighborhoods, they should do what is best for their children and move to better school districts. It is the responsibility of community leaders to help families with children to see other possibilities for their children and not to condone continued isolation.

One low income participant reported that when it was time for his son to go to high school, they moved to another jurisdiction that offered better educational opportunities. When his son graduated from high school, the family moved back to the old neighborhood.

Disinvestment, as well as redevelopment, have taken a toll on inner city schools. As low income people have been dispersed, enrollment in the schools in their old neighborhoods has declined. Many schools have closed as a result.

Sometimes parents argue to keep poor performing neighborhood schools open, despite lower numbers. One participant thinks this is irrational. He asks if it is racist to shut down a failing school with a crumbling physical plant even if the parents want it to stay open. His answer is: "I don't think so. There's a whole generation of kids in that school and if you move them to a better school, they'll be better off in the long run, and if you keep them [in the neighborhood school], you're going to lose a lot of them." He thinks that these parents' energy would be better spent getting involved in their children's new and improved schools.

"THERE'S A WHOLE GENERATION OF KIDS IN THAT SCHOOL AND IF YOU MOVE THEM TO A BETTER SCHOOL, THEY'LL BE BETTER OFF IN THE LONG RUN..."

Several participants felt just as strongly that the preferred public policy was to invest in city schools to bring them up to higher standards. People will stay in declining neighborhoods if it means helping their schools. The cycle of poverty is not broken by moving some people away, but by improving local schools for the benefit of every child. Even people without children want the children in their local schools to succeed. Members of church and alumni groups are active at mentoring children in one inner city school. Residents of a public housing development have established a drop-out prevention program.

The question that remains unanswered is what happens to the children left behind in poor performing, high poverty schools. Mobility programs can actually make inner city, segregated schools worse, as the higher functioning families leave, and in some cases, limited resources

follow them. Sending some kids to better schools does not help the kids who remain. Some participants want school policies and educational professionals committed to turning around poor performing schools. Programs that address disparities in scores on standardized tests and other measures of school performance are what is needed.

Rather than moving poor children of color out to better schools, some participants advocate for investing in city schools to attract higher income, white families into urban neighborhoods. City schools would perform better if everyone sent their children to public schools. School reform in one city has had a positive effect on student performance, but has not changed the racial composition of the school population. Magnet schools and schools segregated by gender in that city are still all black.

Most white middle class parents are not willing to send their children to schools where they will be in the racial and economic minority. Many white gentrifiers send their children to high performing private schools in cities, some of which may be located in low income neighborhoods. One participant speculated that some middle class families may no longer be able to afford private school tuition because of the downturn in the economy. Will they now send their children to city public schools or will they move to other school districts?

CONCLUSIONS

Perhaps it was too much to hope for that this research would yield some new insight into resolving the dilemma. Alas, no such insight emerged. While all points of view are valid, the feelings that the debate evokes are too powerful for NLIHC to simply take the position to respect both perspectives. Each person is free to follow his or her own conscience, but that does not help set a policy direction. What follows are policy and program conclusions that are based on the findings of this research.

1. *The shortage of affordable housing must be addressed*. The scarcity of resources is central to the preservation vs. mobility debate. Competing demands for ever-dwindling low income housing resources have pushed people to dichotomize. The long-term solution is to increase the resources to such a level that the supply of housing that the lowest income people can afford is no longer constricted.

Today in the United States, there is a well documented shortage of housing that people with the lowest incomes can afford (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2012; Pelletiere, 2010). Minimally, the supply of housing that can be afforded by families with incomes at or below 30% of the area median (extremely low income) should be expanded by 3.5 million units.

What would it take to expand the supply by this much? In a word, money: $30 billion a year for ten years. Some would be new units, some would be rehabilitated units, and some would be existing units with deeper subsidies. This is the goal of the National Housing Trust Fund campaign.

If landlords and developers had to compete for tenants, instead of the other way around, low income people would have more freedom to choose where they want to live (although discrimination would still exist). Closing this gap should be the principle goal of housing advocacy and policy. Closing the gap should be where advocates are putting their energy and philanthropists are putting their money.

2. *Policy should err on the side of preservation*. Closing the gap will not happen overnight. For the foreseeable future, then, public policy should err on the side of preservation and improving existing public and assisted housing in low income communities, with strictly enforced anti-displacement policies. Public and assisted housing should be clean, safe, energy efficient, up-to-date, and rich with programs and services. This requires fully funding these programs, including investment to bring all properties up to contemporary standards.

3. *The voucher program should be improved*. The voucher program is an essential component of federal housing policy that can and should be improved. The three policy changes suggested by participants should be passed immediately by Congress. They are: prohibition against discrimination in housing based on source of income, regional and state administration of vouchers, and implementation of small area FMRs nationwide. There is opposition to all three, but none will cost significant new money and some may even save money. These changes will make vouchers a better tool for maximizing housing choice.

4. *U.S. housing policy should not be based on the belief that it is problematic for too many poor people or too many people of color to live near one another.* At its core, the preservation vs. mobility debate is about race in America, and consequently arouses powerful emotions. Precisely because the debate is about race, it must be approached with the utmost caution and sensitivity.

Mobility proponents are often civil rights advocates, who want to correct the profound injustices of government created and enforced racial segregation in the United States, the vestiges of which linger in poor, black neighborhoods across the country. But preservation proponents are often low income, black people who object to the characterization of their communities as inferior and dysfunctional by people of any race who do not live there. The sins of segregation should not be replicated by the sins of deconcentration. Both fail to respect the agency of the human beings who are most affected.

Of course, we should continue to strive for a greater measure of racial and economic residential diversity in the United States based on choice. But any and all policy prescriptions that involve involuntary displacement of low income people or people of color should be abandoned.

An important implication of this recommendation is the need for greater dialogue among fair housing advocates and low income people of color who want to preserve their homes and their communities. The kind of alliance that could emerge from such a process would be a powerful force for change.

5. *Schools must be equal*. It is access to better schools that is the primary motivation of mobility advocates. The educational opportunities of low income children of color, or lack thereof, are the most immediate problem. It is long past time to invest in transforming schools in low income neighborhoods, because it is the only solution that does not simply abandon a lot of poor children. Improving the opportunities of some poor children by moving them to better schools while reducing the opportunities of other poor children is unacceptable.

The preservation vs. mobility debate is thorny and emotionally charged. People of good will, all of whom believe in social justice, can have very different perspectives on the dimensions of the debate and what the answers are. This paper offers another opportunity for this debate to be aired. Hopefully, in the process, a little more light has been shed on what remains a central challenge to achieving socially just housing policy in the United States.

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

The report is of a study conducted using qualitative research methods. The purpose of the research was to gain a more thorough and sophisticated understanding of the preservation vs. mobility debate among housing advocates.

Data collection consisted of interviews with people whose perspective could inform the debate. Sampling was a convenience sample of people with whom NLIHC staff has a relationship, with the intention of interviewing equal numbers of low income people who are affected by policy, and people who have studied or advocated for the policies in question. Ten interviews were completed, five conducted by NLIHC President Sheila Crowley and five by NLIHC Research Director Danilo Pelletiere. NLIHC staff attempted to interview three other people in the later category, but were unable to schedule interviews within the time frame of the study.

The five low income people are current or former members of the NLIHC Board of Directors. (NLIHC by-laws require that 25% of board members are low income.) The five others are members of NLIHC and/or people whose work was known to NLIHC.

Among the five low income people, all of whom are black, are three women and two men. Three currently live in public housing. The two others have lived in public housing as well as project based Section 8 housing. One was a voucher holder before moving to a coop. Another now lives in an LIHTC property. All are middle aged or older and four of the five have children, though none have school age children now. Four live in major cities, and the fifth lives in a small city. All hold leadership positions in their communities.

The five other participants are four white men and one black woman. Two are in academia with published research on the subject matter. Two are civil rights attorneys. The fifth person works in a community-based housing counseling organization in a large city that has undergone a significant amount of public housing redevelopment and displacement of the tenants who used to live there.

Interviews were conducted in person whenever possible and otherwise were conducted via telephone. The interviews took place between November 2010 and March 2011. Questions were prepared to guide the interviews, but each interview was conducted as an open-ended conversation. The interviewers used the answers to initial questions to probe for deeper meaning. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

The analysis was conducted by Sheila Crowley. The first step of the analysis was to read all transcripts through in one seating to assess the overall tone and look for unusual or unexpected content. Notes were taken about themes and issues that emerged from this first round of analysis.

Next the transcripts were cleaned by deleting extraneous words that did not add meaning. Then each transcript was unitized, a process in which the words are examined in relation to one another and divided into segments that are best described as “chunks of meaning” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 345). With unitizing, the data are decontextualized such that each unit has meaning that can stand alone. A unit can be a few words or a whole page. Each unit was coded

so as to be able to trace it back to its origin and then was placed on a separate card. This process yielded 427 units.

Once unitized, the data were analyzed via the method of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). One unit after another was compared to the last, and they were grouped together conceptually, called lumping and sorting. The first round of inductive analysis yielded categories that were given codes that were noted on each unit. The categories were then used for lumping and sorting to higher levels of abstraction. The elements of the report emerged after repeated and prolonged movement up and down levels of abstraction before settling on a satisfactory framework for writing the report. In the process, some units that were strictly biographical were discarded.

The report, written by Crowley, offers a rich or "thick description" (Geertz, 1973, p. 6) of the findings. Thick means of enough detail and depth so that the reader can compare the findings with his or her experiences. Direct quotes are used to punctuate assertions made in the narrative.

The final step of the process was to circulate the draft report to the participants and ask them to warrant that their perspectives are accurately reflected. Nine of the ten participants responded to the request. All replied that they found their viewpoints accurately expressed in the narrative. Three raised concerns. One participant said that one statement that she thought was hers was not accurate. It did come from her. The statement in the paper was modified to reflect her concern. Another thought one issue of his needed further elaboration, so a qualifying phrase was added. A third participant objected to four assertions made in the paper, but none of them were made by him. He was reminded that the paper is supposed to reflect all voices and he was not expected to agree with everything that others had said. However, each of his criticisms were reviewed and the language was modified slightly to make clear the statements were not universally supported.

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ABOUT NLIHC

The National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) is dedicated solely to achieving socially just public policy that assures people with the lowest incomes in the United States have affordable and decent homes.

Founded in 1974 by Cushing N. Dolbeare, NLIHC educates, organizes and advocates to ensure decent, affordable housing within healthy neighborhoods for everyone. Since its inception, NLIHC has been a leader in the effort to address the housing needs of those with the lowest incomes. Our goals are to preserve existing federally assisted homes and housing resources, expand the supply of low income housing, and establish housing stability as the primary purpose of federal low income housing policy.

While numerous organizations concentrate on federal housing policy, NLIHC is unique because of our sole focus on the needs of extremely low income people, the only population experiencing an absolute shortage of affordable housing. Today NLIHC has hundreds of members across the county. Combined with incisive research and policy analysis, NLIHC is a respected voice in Washington, D.C. that has helped produce policies impacting the lives of millions.

Learn more about the National Low Income Housing Coalition at www.nlihc.org.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Sheila Crowley

Sheila Crowley has been the president and CEO of the National Low Income Housing Coalition since December 1998. Dr. Crowley came to NLIHC after two decades in Richmond, Virginia in organizational leadership, direct service, policy advocacy, and scholarship. She has worked in staff, board, and consulting roles with organizations that focus on homeless services, family housing, AIDS housing, housing for people with disabilities, senior housing, and services to battered women and victims of rape.

Dr. Crowley is a social worker with a bachelor's (1976), master's (1978), and Ph.D. (1998) from the School of Social Work at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). She is an adjunct faculty member for the VCU School of Social Work and for George Mason University Department of Social Work, teaching social policy, social justice, policy advocacy, and community and organizational practice.

She currently serves on the Boards of the National Housing Trust, Enterprise Community Partners, the Technical Assistance Collaborative, and the Coalition on Human Needs.

In 2010, Dr. Crowley received a Rockefeller Foundation sponsored residence at the Bellagio Center in Italy to engage in research on how to reform the mortgage interest deduction. She was the 1996-97 Social Work Congressional Fellow, where she served on the Democratic staff of the Housing Subcommittee of the United States Senate Banking Committee.

From 1984-1992, she was the Executive Director of The Daily Planet, a multipurpose homeless service and advocacy organization in Richmond. She was the founding director in 1979 of the YWCA Women's Advocacy Program in Richmond, the shelter and service program for battered women and their children. She is a founding member of the Virginians Against Domestic Violence, the Greater Richmond Coalition for the Homeless, and the Richmond Better Housing Coalition.

Danilo Pelletiere

Danilo Pelletiere was the Research Director of the National Low Income Housing Coalition for nearly nine years and he participated in this research during his tenure.

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