THE BALTIMORE GHETTO
AN URBAN HISTORY OF HOUSING AND POLITICS, 1920 – 1968

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presented by

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This research sets out to investigate one of the main causes behind the uproars and riots that affected cities throughout the United States during the 1960s: the ‘ghetto.’ The American ghetto, a segregated space inhabited almost exclusively by blacks, has facilitated the dissemination of racial discrimination and the expansion of urban inequality. In fact, it constitutes an extra-ordinary type space designed to control, exploit and encase ethnic or racial groups perceived to be inferior, unsafe and unclean.

Looking at the case of Baltimore between 1920 and 1968, this investigation unfolds as an urban history of the Baltimore ghetto and an autopsy of its parts that seeks to identify covert as well as explicit schemes responsible for the production and maintenance of ghetto neighborhoods. As opposed to the unapologetic racism of the 1800s and early 1900s, discriminatory spaces dating from the Modern era became well disguised, allowing them to operate in plain sight amid a political climate that sought to put an end to the system of apartheid in America. This realization prompted Malcolm X to compare racism to a Cadillac. As he explained, the car company released new models every year, changing their forms and contours, but the products remained Cadillacs. Using this analogy, Malcolm X warned his audience against the danger of thinking that racism had ended because, much like the Cadillac, the version produced in 1930 looked nothing like the one of the 1960s. In contrast to the existing body of research pertaining to the American ghetto in and beyond Baltimore, this research not only describes well known strategies of ghettoization – from Jim Crow to ‘redlining’ – but also uncharted tactics that have spatialized prejudices, willingly or otherwise.

Discussions concerned with the plight of individuals confined to ghettos generally divide between two camps; those emphasizing the primacy of structural forces and those emphasizing the primacy on cultural forces. Structural forces have included, for example, racism, the underfunding of schools for blacks; restrictive covenants confining African Americans to overcrowded neighborhoods; and laws banning minorities from certain employments sectors. On the other hand, cultural forces refer to the particular sociology that developed within inner city ghetto neighborhoods, including destructive behaviors that negatively affect the life chances of black individuals. This includes, for example, the internalization of the code of violence; and the evolution of particular social values, where imprisonment, unemployment, single parenthood, teenage pregnancy and under-education are perceived as normal rather than exceptional. This research acknowledges the significance of said cultural and structural forces, and describes their origins and effects. More importantly, it introduces a third position that underscores the function of territorial forces. While historical evidence suggests that racial prejudices have precipitated the deployment of structural and cultural pressures that would
eventually lead to the formation of the ghetto, this study posits that the territorialization of racialized spaces has reinforced the significance of prejudices and protracted their legacy. In fact, a probe into archival material and histories confirmed that territorial forces have maintained and accentuated racial inequity even after discriminatory cultural and structural forces slowly started to wither away.

Furthermore, this study reveals empirical evidence suggesting that racialized territorial forces have been particularly capable to conceal new forms of discrimination. Devices central to the perpetuation of the ghetto in Baltimore appear to have also served productive functions for the communities that they confined, allowing the devices to benefit from the support of political leaders, mainstream society, as well as black advocacy groups. Following a well-established pattern in Baltimore, the city's public housing authority planned fully segregated projects from the moment of its inception in 1939 until the inauguration of Lafayette Courts in 1956. As organizations from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to the Urban League demanded for more slums to be replaced by public housing in the Baltimore ghetto, they fully accepted the pattern of segregation that was indeed normal in Maryland. While social scientists have now established strong prima facie evidence of the direct causality between segregation and the concentration of poverty, and between social isolation and disproportionate rates of violence, segregation would hardly ever be mentioned and even less frequently be contested in the 1940s and 1950s, seeing that renewal initiatives offered an alternative to black Baltimoreans longing to escape the ecology of the black ghetto. This failure-point in social and spatial sciences – the misapprehension of the dysfunctional impact of segregation – has allowed the perpetuation of environments that have concentrated poverty, attached stigma, imposed constraint, confined spatially, or institutionally encased black Baltimoreans.
**RÉSUMÉ**

**LE GHETTO DE BALTIMORE**  
**HISTOIRE URBAINE DU LOGEMENT ET DE LA POLITIQUE 1920-1968**

Cette recherche a pour but d’examiner les causes principales derrière les agitations et les émeutes qui ont touché plusieurs villes à travers les États-Unis au cours des années soixante: le «ghetto». Le ghetto américain, un espace soumis à la ségrégation et habité presque exclusivement par les noirs, a facilité la propagation de la discrimination raciale et le développement de l’inégalité urbaine. Le ghetto constitue en fait un type d’espace extraordinaire conçu pour contrôler, exploiter et contenir les groupes ethniques et raciaux perçus comme étant inférieurs, dangereux et malpropres.

En se penchant sur le cas de Baltimore entre 1920 et 1968, cette étude se présente comme une histoire de son ghetto et un examen approfondi de ses composantes qui cherche à identifier les schémas, autant dissimulés que manifestes, qui sont responsables de la production et de la perpétuation des quartiers ghettos. Contrairement au racisme sans remords du 19e siècle et du début du 20e siècle, les espaces discriminatoires datant de l’ère moderne sont devenus bien camouflés, ce qui leur a permis d’exister au grand jour dans un contexte politique où l’on cherchait à mettre un terme au système d’apartheid aux États-Unis. Cette situation a mené Malcolm X à comparer le racisme à une Cadillac. Comme il l’expliquait, chaque année la compagnie mettait de nouvelles automobiles sur le marché, mais malgré leurs formes et contours modifiés, le produit final demeurait une Cadillac. À l’aide de cette analogie, Malcolm X souhaitait avertir son public qu’il était dangereux de croire que le racisme était terminé parce que, comme pour la Cadillac, la version fabriquée en 1930 ne ressemblait en rien à celle de 1960. Contrairement à la recherche existante sur le ghetto américain à Baltimore et ailleurs au pays, cette recherche décrit non seulement les stratégies bien connues de ghettoïsation – de Jim Crow au ‘redlining’ – mais aussi les tactiques inexplorées qui ont spatialisé les préjugés, volontairement ou non.

Les discussions concernant la situation indésirable des individus confinés aux ghettos ont tendance à être divisées en deux camps; celles qui priorisent les *forces structurelles* et ceux qui mettent l’accent sur les *forces culturelles*. Les forces structurelles comprennent, par exemple, le racisme, le manque de financement des écoles afro-américaines; les clauses restrictives confinant les Afro-Américains aux quartiers surpeuplés; et des lois interdisant certains secteurs d’emplois aux minorités. Pour leur part, les forces culturelles se rapportent à la sociologie particulière qui s’est développée dans les quartiers ghettos, y compris les comportements destructifs qui ont une incidence négative sur les chances de réussite des individus afro-américains. Par exemple, l’assimilation d’un code de violence; l’évolution de certaines valeurs sociales où l’emprisonnement, le chômage, la monoparentalité, la grossesse chez les adolescents et le manque d’éducation sont perçus comme étant des phénomènes normaux.
plutôt qu’exceptionnels. Cette recherche reconnaît l’importance des forces culturelles et structurelles et décrit leurs origines et leurs répercussions. Surtout, cette recherche présente une troisième position qui souligne la fonction des forces territoriales. Alors que les données historiques suggèrent que les préjugés raciaux ont précipité le déploiement des pressions structurelles et culturelles qui allaient éventuellement mener à la création du ghetto, cette étude propose que la territorialisation des espaces racialisés ait renforcé l’impact des préjugés et a prolongé leur héritage. En fait, un examen des documents d’archives confirme que les forces territoriales ont maintenu et accentué l’inégalité raciale même après que les forces discriminatoires culturelles et structurelles se soient dissipées.

De plus, cette étude présente des données empiriques suggérant que les forces territoriales racialisées ont été particulièrement aptes à dissimuler de nouvelles formes de discrimination. Certains dispositifs essentiels à la perpétuation du ghetto de Baltimore semblent avoir également rempli des fonctions productives au profit des communautés qu’ils ont confinées, permettant aux dispositifs de bénéficier de l’appui des dirigeants politiques, de la société dominante et des groupes de défense des droits des noirs. Suivant un motif récurrent à Baltimore, l’organisme de logements sociaux de la ville a mis en place des habitations complètement ségrégées dès ses débuts en 1939 jusqu’à l’inauguration des Lafayette Courts en 1956. Alors que des organismes tels que la National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) et la Urban League revendiquaient que les bas quartiers soient remplacés par des logements sociaux dans le ghetto de Baltimore, ces organismes acceptaient complètement ce modèle de ségrégation qui représentait une situation effectivement normale dans l’état du Maryland. Alors que les chercheurs en sciences sociales ont établi des éléments de preuve prima facie du rapport de causalité directe entre la ségrégation et la concentration de la pauvreté, et entre l’isolement sociale et les taux disproportionnés de violence, la ségrégation aurait à peine été soulevée et encore moins été contestée dans les années quarante et cinquante, étant donné que des initiatives de renouvellement offraient une alternative aux résidants noirs de Baltimore souhaitant s’échapper de l’écologie du ghetto noir. Cet échec des sciences sociales et spatiales – l’incapacité de comprendre l’impact dysfonctionnel de la ségrégation – a permis la perpétuation d’environnements de pauvreté concentrée, d’infamie, de contraintes imposées, d’espaces restreints, ou de l’isolement institutionnel des noirs de Baltimore.
THE BALTIMORE GHETTO

An Urban History of Housing and Politics, 1920 – 1968
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The Baltimore-born civil rights activist DeRay Mckesson recently reminded his audience to “Never underestimate the power of the well-told story. The well-told story” Mckesson wrote, “is at the root of revolution.” Created by David Simon in 2002, the HBO series The Wire tells a story of race, place and networks that unfolds largely in the inner city streets of West Baltimore. The Wire re-introduced critical questions regarding social conditions in the American ghetto to public forums throughout the nation; it mainstreamed theoretical notions and public policy matters related to urban inequality via a compelling story that centers on one of the main protagonists responsible for the protests, uproars and riots that took place in 1968 and 2015 in Baltimore: the ghetto.

As Terry Eagleton proposed of Dickens, his “grotesque realism is a stylistic distortion in the service of truth, a kind of astigmatism which allows us to see more accurately.” The content of Simon’s program operates in a similar way. It proposes a particular representation of a place and its networks that is grounded in primary observations, an in-depth knowledge of the city, a stubborn interest in authenticity, as well as particular political views and personal experiences not entirely deprived from prejudices. If the realism of Simon’s The Wire should not be misconstrued for a factual representation of Baltimore, the HBO program displays a complex understanding of the influence that urban ecologies and social structures have on individuals, which mirrors real life social systems. It recognizes that the ghetto is not a normal ecology, but a racialized, segregated territory that acts on its’ with more influence and power than nearly any other kind of civil territory in the United States. As sociologist Loïc Wacquant explains, “The ghetto is not only a concrete means and materialization of ethnoracial domination through the spatial segmentation of the city but also a potent collective identity machine in its own right.” He adds:

First the ghetto sharpens the boundary between the outcast category and the surrounding population by deepening the sociocultural chasm between them: it renders its residents objectively and subjectively more dissimilar from other urban dwellers by submitting them to unique conditionings, so that the patterns of cognition and conduct they fashion have every chance of being perceived by outsiders as singular, exotic, even aberrant, which feeds prejudicial beliefs about them.4

Written from the liberal perspective, *The Wire* explores themes related to urban inequity and systemic urban dysfunction. Each of the series five seasons unfolds in new settings that relate to environments presented in subsequent and previous seasons. *The Wire*’s narrative development draws connections between the various universes it depicts, including: the Baltimore police, criminal gangs, homeless addicts, port workers, political parties, public schools and a local newspaper. The opening season introduces the audience to two of the most significant institutions portrayed in the program: the Baltimore Police and Avon Barksdale’s West Baltimore criminal gang. The focus drifts from inner city criminal organizations in the second season as the plot re-centers on another working class institution – Frank Sabotka’s Local 1514 of the International Brotherhood of Stevedores – as well as a Greek criminal group that uses underemployed stevedores to smuggle illegal and stolen goods, including narcotics. The third season shifts to white-collar corruption as it introduces viewers to the political world of *The Wire*’s Baltimore. This pivotal season demonstrates how urban development and the politics of career advancement in the Baltimore Police and at City Hall influence the microcosm of street gangs and everyday life for decent ghetto residents. It depicts the effects that institutions have on individual behavior and underlines the subjective meaning of territory in the eyes of various actors that include developers, political parties, the police, citizens and gangs. The fourth season places the spotlight on inner city youths and the public school system that fails to educate them. It criticizes the public education system in the Baltimore ghetto and depicts how various forces negatively affect the life chances in young black women and men, indirectly reinforcing their likelihood to become involved in liminal practices. In the fifth and final season, David Simon returns to *The Baltimore Sun*; the newspaper that first allowed him to explore the darker side of his native city as a reporter. *The Wire* presents the inner workings of a once highly respected newspaper undergoing major transformation as it aims to adapt to the reality of 24 hours news cycles and compete with open access online reporting. The HBO program underlines the failure of the press to influence meaningful public discussions and uncover problematic local matters during this problematic era, when watchdog journalism slowly withered away as the news evolved into a source of entertainment rather than a glass door between the public and pivotal local issues. Above all, *The Wire* demonstrates how all of the problematic spheres it depicts are in fact connected.

For film scholar Linda Williams, the subject matter behind *The Wire* pertains primarily to institutional failures and the networked aesthetics of urban social organizations. She writes:

> In the microcosm of one decaying American city, we see the interconnected truths of many institutional failures – rampant drug trade and thus the failure of police and law, declining unions and thus the decrease of the very value of work, a cynical city government and the failure of reform, the poignant waste of schools, and a media that cannot see the truth of what is revealed before its very eyes.\(^5\)

In a 2010 interview published in the *Washington Post*, sociologists William Julius Wilson and Anmol Chaddha explained that *The Wire*’s treatment of complex issues prompted the

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development of a new course at Harvard to complement rigorous academic work on the war on drug, the urban job market and the education system in the inner city. The "HBO series does what these texts can’t," Wilson and Chaddha wrote. "More than simply telling a gripping story, The Wire shows how the deep inequality in inner-city America results from the web of lost jobs, bad schools, drugs, imprisonment, and how the situation feeds on itself." If the Harvard scholars may have been at the forefront of a movement where The Wire would evolve to be treated as a legitimate teaching device in academia, the program has since been endorsed, debated, praised and publicized through many more scholarly works concerned with subject matters ranging from systemic urban inequality to ethics in journalism. The Wire, an alternative to standard academic narratives, disseminates a more accurate image of gang members and their social networks, while pointing at the many ways by which ostensibly respectable individuals contribute to and feed off the dangerous life of black youths in ghetto neighborhoods. The series sets the stage for a reality difficult to understand from the high grounds of academia; from the remoteness of an audience whose everyday experience is by and large divorced from that of the ghetto. Anne-Maria Makhulu, a social anthropologist at Duke University teaching a course on The Wire, "finds that, for many of her largely upper-middle-class students, issues like poverty and urban deindustrialization are remote from their daily lives, and simply reading about them does little to bridge that gap." While the root causes responsible for the development of contemporary urban conditions in the inner city of Baltimore are grounded in historical moments that escape the reach of The Wire, the program points to a scope of contemporary agencies that continue to negatively affect residents of the ghetto and amplify urban inequality.

**Actor-network-theory, The Wire and storytelling**

The Wire describes actions, including those not necessarily done under the full control of consciousness, and traces their effects on other elements in the network, laying bare what Bruno Latour refers to as 'actor-networks.' For Simon, "The Wire is really about the American city, and about how we live together. It’s about how institutions have an effect on individuals, and how ... whether you're a cop, a longshoreman, a drug dealer, a politician, a judge [or] lawyer, actor-network-theory, The Wire and storytelling


7 In 2009, the University of Michigan organized a two-day symposium, 'Heart of the City: Black Urban Life on The Wire'. The event was co-sponsored by eight university institutes and departments. These included Urban and Regional Planning, English language and Literature, History, American Culture, Performance studies, Communication studies, Women studies and Ethnic affairs. Around ten months later, the Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change (ESRC), the University of Manchester, the Open University, the University of York and the Taylor & Francis Journal *Information, Communication & Society* co-organized another conferenced titled ‘The Wire as Social Science Fiction?’, which took place at Leeds Town Hall. The Wire has been the topic of three special issues of peer-review journals (*City*, vol. 14(5); *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 38(1); *Dark Matter*, vol.4) at least one PhD thesis (see Sondano 2008) and countless other academic articles and books (for notable academic books on The Wire, see: Potter & Marshall 2009; Kennedy & Shapiro 2012; Williams 2014). It has also been included in the curriculum at universities such as UC Berkeley, Brown, Duke, Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard Law, Johns Hopkins, Middlebury, University of Texas San Antonio and University of York. See, TM Sondano, “All the Pieces Matter: A Critical Analysis of HBO’s The Wire” (PhD Thesis, Syracuse University, 2008); Liam Kennedy and Stephen Shapiro, eds., *The Wire: Race, Class, and Genre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012); Linda Williams, *On The Wire* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2014); C.W Marshal and Tiffany Potter, *The Wire: Urban Decay and American Television* (New York: Continuum, 2009).


you are ultimately compromised and must contend with whatever institution you’ve
committed to.” The program depicts the influence that institutions have on a particular network
as it develops a narrative that unfolds as an account of actor-network-theory (ANT).10 Latour
writes, “I would define a good [ANT] account as one that traces a network.”11 To achieve this,
he proposes a method where the scientist follows the actors, which can include individuals,
institutions as well as objects, in as long as they influence the development of a network by
transporting, transforming, distorting or modifying connections. The Wire ‘follows the actors
themselves’ (a slogan of ANT); it depicts what makes them act and simulates the transforma-
tion of a network as it continually assembles new entities into collectives.

For Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, the notion of the ‘line’ is used to map the cartography of
social space as a process defined by dynamic elements and actors.12 “As individuals and groups
we are made of lines which are very diverse in nature – we have as many entangled lines
as a hand. What we call with different names – schizoanalysis, micro-politics, pragmatics,
diagrammatics, rhizomatics, cartography – is nothing else but the result of the study of the
lines that we are.”13 Defined as such, these lines correspond to what ANT refers to as ‘social.’
In fact, for ANT, the term ‘sociology’ refers to the ‘tracing of associations;’ the architecture of
collectives.

This way of engaging with the discipline of sociology breaks free with the logic of the
‘theoretical framework’ and pre-defined case studies. With ANT, “actors do the sociology
for the sociologists and sociologists learn from the actors which makes up their set of
associations.”14 Accordingly, ANT’s main tenet, Latour writes, “is that actors themselves make
everything, including their own frames, their own theories, their own contexts, their own
metaphysics, even their own ontologies.”15 Theoretical and spatial limits thereby emerge
from the actors themselves, prompting Latour to gather, “A case study that needs a frame in
addition, well, it is a case study that was badly chosen to begin with!”16

The task of the ANT researcher is to transcribe on paper the travels of the actors; the encoun-
ters that affect his and her path by sticking to description. To Latour, this is the “highest and
rarest achievement.”17 He opposes the dichotomy between description and explanation. “If a
description remains in need of an explanation, it means that is a bad description.”18 ANT for-
bids “free rides to all-terrain entities like Society, Capitalism, Empire, Norms, Individualism,

11 The connection between The Wire and Actor-Network-Theory was first suggested (but not developed) by Patrick Jagoda, see Jagoda, “I Wired.”
15 Latour, Reassembling the Social, 2007, 32.
16 Ibid., 147.
17 Ibid., 143.
18 Ibid., 137.
19 Ibid.
Fields, and so on. Connections should instead be through more description, leaving aside encompassing concepts. The aim is to achieve scientific relevance that escapes the reach of other sociologies by resisting social explanations and to instead return to empiricism.

_In ANT, it is not permitted to say: ‘No one mentions it. I have no proof but I know there is some hidden actor at work here behind the scene.’ This is conspiracy theory, not social theory. The presence of the social has to be demonstrated each time anew; it can never be simply postulated._

_The Wire_ constitutes a remarkable achievement as a typically descriptive ANT account – slow and precise – and more resistant to leapfrogging than most academic text. Partly because of its format, it cannot rely on shortcuts such as ‘capitalism’ or ‘globalization’ to explain the partial disappearance of blue-collar jobs in an American city once renowned for its thriving port and factories. It does not summarize the effect that this has had on working class families by using labels like ‘urban poverty,’ nor through unemployment statistics. It demonstrates the meaning of globalization on the local scale by taking viewers into the everyday life of affected individuals. Through storytelling, it simulates the effect of such economic transformation on families, institutions and places. It recreates a scene where longshoremen are introduced to the use of robotics in the port of Rotterdam to express how the need for labor is slowly disappearing in first world economies; it shows how international technologies and knowledge threaten local jobs. It foregrounds the reliance of foreign narcotic markets through storylines that never directly speak of global interconnections and the primacy of capital gain over people. The impact, instead, is only described through a narrative that never departs from the localism of Baltimore. Capitalism and globalism remain unnamed in the drama, even if their effects transpire throughout much of the program’s sixty episodes.

_The Wire’s_ networked aesthetic makes thousands of invisible plateaus of power and knowledge visible.

_Like ANT, the teleplay supposes that social spaces are formed from a process of assembling, and from dynamic interconnections. One of the program’s strength lays in the “strong emphasis on the unpredictability of patterns of emergence and the difficulties of understanding causality.”_ The unforeseeable killing of Omar Little by a small boy of minor importance, or D’Angelo Barksdale turning on his own family as he is confronted with a vivid moment of humanism underlines the fragility of expected curves of event, and therefore, the significance that resistance and counterforces may have in contradicting patterns predicted by social theory. At the same time, however, _The Wire_ recognizes the existence of major structural and cultural forces in ghetto neighborhoods, where opportunities appear to be few and far between.

Furthermore, the HBO production underlines the dichotomy that sociologist Elijah

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20 Ibid.
21 Ibid., 53.
Anderson has theorized in *The Code of the Street*, where the Yale scholar separates residents of the American ghetto into two conceptual categories: ‘street families’ and ‘decent families.’ As Anderson explains, “Street culture has evolved a ‘code of the street,’ which amounts to a set of informal rules governing interpersonal public behavior, particularly violence.” Decent families, on the other hand, embrace the value and social system of mainstream America. According to Anderson, decent families find pride in taking part in the legal economy in or outside the inner city and embrace the idea of the nuclear family, whereas street families equate participation in mainstream social economies with selling out. Anderson acknowledges the practice of code switching—something demonstrated through many of Simon’s characters—where individuals fluctuate between street and decent demeanors. ‘Code-switching,’ he notes, means that individuals “may at different time exhibit both decent and street orientation, depending on the circumstances.”

*The Wire* depicts this practice by shading its characters with contrasting qualities, instead of presenting gang members as inherently ill-intentioned and unconditionally antisocial. The program’s representation of such characters mirrors the experience of sociologist Sudhir Venkatesh in the South Side of Chicago, where he observed that “Gang members were also schoolchildren, nephews, churchgoers, fathers, husbands, and so on.” “Their identity as gang members,” Venkatesh added, “sometimes conflicted with other identities they held.”

As *The Wire* inadvertently draws on the method of ANT, it recognizes that “it is not the sociologist’s job to decide in the actor’s stead what groups are making up the world and which agencies are making them act. Her job is to build the artificial experiment—a report, a story, a narrative, an account—where this diversity might be deployed to the full.” Following the paths of ANT, where the ‘social’ is not used to explain but instead has to be explained, *The Wire* foregrounds that “things might authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, forbid, and so on” rather than ‘determine’ actions. The program complicates the stereotypical image of individuals on both side of the law by tracing links between changing behaviors and particular circumstances, depicting characters with human complexity rather than easy caricatures. “In many ways, ANT is simply an attempt to allow the members of contemporary society to have as much leeway in defining themselves as that offered by ethnographers.”

In sum, the program presents its actors in a way that allows a wide audience to see individuals respond to ecological conditions and particular life spaces—sometimes defying what is expected of them; it demonstrates the influence that things, people and institutions have on each other in the fictional Baltimore of HBO.

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25 Ibid., 33.
26 Ibid., 35.
28 Ibid.
30 Ibid., 72.
31 Ibid., 41.
The Wire’s multi-sited ethnographic imaginary

The process behind the creation of *The Wire* has played a strong role in setting this program apart from other films or television shows. Three strategies have been particularly important to achieve this: characters are based on existing individuals, the program was filmed on site whenever possible, and most importantly, the plot lines are rooted in primary sources and ethnographic-like research. Together, this triad of elements has allowed *The Wire* to perform as a ‘multi-sited imaginary ethnography,’ a conceptual framework developed by anthropologist George Marcuse.32

The first scene of *The Wire*’s pilot episode opens on the warm corpse of Snot Boogie as the young black man lays face down on a wet pavement in the inner city of Baltimore. Detective Jimmy McNulty observes the scene from a small porch, boarded vacant housings to his back. He listens to the accounts of a mourning eyewitness with sympathy but fails to conceal his disbelief: “Let me understand you. Every Friday night, you and your boys would shoot craps, right? And every Friday night, your boy Snot Boogie ... he’d wait till there was cash on the ground, then grab the money and run away? You let him do that? [...] I gotta ask you ... if every time Snot Boogie would grab the money and run away ... why’d you even let him in the game? [...] If Snot Boogie always stole the money, why’d you let him play?” After a short pause, the young man answers, “Got to. This is America, man.”33 The story of Snot Boogie was real, most of it anyway. It is in fact part of Simon’s 1991 non-fiction novel *Homicide: A Year on the Killing Streets*.34

Simon spent twelve years writing for the *Baltimore Sun*. He was assigned to the police beat from day one in 198335 and later took a year-long leave to carry out research for his novel. As he followed the lives and cases of a homicide unit, Simon gained insights of the department and of the darker side of a murder-ridden city,36 which directly informed *Homicide*, later fictionalized for NBC. *Homicide* had been researched through methods closely related to ethnography; a system of study that “privileges an engaged, contextually rich and nuanced type of qualitative social research, in which fine grained daily interactions constitute the lifeblood of the data produced.”37 As the Director of the Urban Ethnography Project at Yale explains, this type of interpersonal interaction is fruitful to the production of local knowledge and cultures.38 Anderson adds, “The ethnographer tries to apprehend and represent this local knowledge in a form that others can comprehend. No ethnography presents exact truths; all

36 Baltimore has one of the highest homicide rate per capita in the United States, at around 35 homicides per 100,000 citizens yearly (calculated from the average number of homicide between 2010 and 2014). These rates are ahead of those recorded in Johannesburg and Bogota, and over three times as high as those reported for Bangkok, Los Angeles, New York and Mexico City.
accounts of social experience are renderings.”\footnote{Ibid, xvi.} But as Linda Williams points out of *Homicide*, “Simon was not a professional ethnographer” and while his methods of studying the cops “can be described as ethnographic from the very beginning,” his personal involvement with his subjects may have made him “too identified for good ethnography.”\footnote{Williams, “Ethnographic Imaginary: The Genesis and Genius of The Wire,” 212.}

In 1993, Simon spent another year away from the newspaper to team up with Ed Burns, a former Baltimore City homicide detective who he had met to discuss the criminal career of Melvin Williams, which would later become the main inspiration for *The Wire’s* Avon Barksdale. To Simon, “Burns had an encyclopedic knowledge of the Baltimore drug trade, a conviction that he was right about most things, and an autodidact’s intellectualism.”\footnote{Margaret Talbot, “Stealing Life,” *The New Yorker*, October 22, 2007, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/10/22/071022fa_fact_talbot.} Burns, who had by then left the police to become a middle-school teacher, had been involved in wiretap cases similar to those portrayed on *The Wire*.\footnote{Dan Attias, “Straight and True,” DVD, *The Wire* (HBO, 2004). Audio Commentaries by David Simon} As Simon admits, a lot of the program’s first season is in fact rooted in Burns’s experiences and knowledge.\footnote{Ibid.}

Their first collaboration cumulated in the 1997 book *The Corner: A Year in the Life of an Inner-City Neighborhood*, which reads as a prequel to *The Wire*. Although written as a novel, the book recounts actual events and its characters are referred to by the real name of the individuals they portray. Simon and Burns engaged in up-close and personal observation of a poverty-stricken neighborhood in the research phase of their co-authored publication, later turned into a mini-series by HBO:

*For The Corner, Simon and Burns, who had not been given any institutional permission to observe, hung out on the West Fayette Street neighborhood corners practicing what they unpretentiously call ‘stand-around-want-watch-journalism.’ This journalism transmutes into ethnography at the point at which the two men became fixtures on the scene and began to understand its day-to-day rhythms and dramas.*\footnote{Williams, “Ethnographic Imaginary: The Genesis and Genius of The Wire,” 211.}

Their dissociation from their subjects assured a more objective approach than Simon had achieved with *Homicide*. The work, however, remains a ‘single-site’ ethnography, which does not do justice to the larger system as it abstracts micro-worlds (the lived space of cops, gangs, politicians, educators, et cetera) that are instead constructed through other means than ethnography. Anthropologist George Marcus developed ‘multi-sited ethnography’ precisely to address this shortcoming. “The only problem, as Marcus freely admits, is that no single ethnographer has enough knowledge of enough worlds and enough time to show enough
parts to reveal a whole system.” For Marcus, this impossibility for a thorough multi-sited ethnography is solved through what he refers to as the ‘ethnographic imaginary.’

As opposed to _The Corner_, which focuses on the lived spaces of drug addicts in a single community, _The Wire_ comes as a close realization to Marcus’s ‘multi-sited ethnographic imaginary,’ a paradigm useful for cases “where there is very little actual contact or exchange between two sites but where the functioning of one of the sites (the more strategic one?) depends on a very specific imagining of what is going on elsewhere.” For such research, the imaginary is crucial in drawing the lines forming a social cartography. Fieldwork in an initial site, Marcus explains, should aim at identifying the “complex nature of the relation between disjunctive sites, how they are coordinated, if they are,” in order to define where and how connections occur. In this respect, _The Wire_ aligns with Marcus’s project, which he summarizes in these terms:

> I am looking for a different, less stereotyped, and more significant place for the reception of ethnographically produced knowledge in a variety of academic and non-academic forms ... within a multisited research imaginary, tracing and describing the connections and relationships among sites previously thought incommensurate is ethnography’s way of making arguments and providing its own contexts of significance.

_The Wire_’s fiction is informed by ethnographic work and professional experiences as Simon and Burns belonged to three of the institutions central to the show: the Baltimore City Police Department, a Baltimore middle-school and the _Baltimore Sun_. What is more, ‘stand-around-want-watch-journalism’ was undertaken for two micro-worlds covered by _The Wire_: the spaces of inner city drug addicts and the world of homicide detectives. In sum, the method by which the program has been researched places _The Wire_ apart from typical works of fiction, positioning it instead closer to multi-sited ethnographic imaginary, such as defined by Marcus.

For former Baltimore Police Commissioner Frederick H Bealefeld III, the show was a “smear that will take decades to overcome,” a declaration that earned him an articulated response by Simon in the _Baltimore Sun_. His open letter started by praising Commissioner Bealefeld, who “by finally choosing to emphasize the quality, rather than the quantity of arrests – has been able to reduce the homicide rate somewhat in our city.” While this suggests that Baltimore’s

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45 Ibid., 213.
47 Ibid.
49 Frederick H Bealefeld III occupied the post of Police Commissioner in Baltimore between 2007 and 2012.
51 Simon, “Wire’ Creator Responds to Top Cop’s Criticism.”
police department has been reformed since its spectacular representation in *The Wire*, Simon continued by arguing that the show “is an accurate depiction of the Baltimore department for much of the last twenty years, from the late 1980s, when cocaine hit and the drug corners blossomed, until recently, when Mr. O’Malley became governor and the pressure to clear those corners without regard to legality and to make crime disappear on paper finally gave way to some normalcy, and perhaps, some police work.”

As Simon and Nina Noble explain in the DVD audio commentaries of the episode “Time After Time,” the program was shot entirely in Baltimore. Correspondingly, the court scene from “The Target” was filmed in a Baltimore courtroom. Orlando’s strip club is the Ritz Cabaret, a nude dancing joint located in Baltimore’s Fell’s Point. Other spaces were re-created from plans and photographs as exact replicas, such as the *Baltimore Sun*’s newsroom. The rim shop that serves as the closest thing to a base for Marlo Stanfield “is actually there in east Baltimore [...] at the intersection of Gay Street and North Avenue.” As Afaa M Weaver remembers, “The rim shop is also where the drug dealers recently had a strategy of handing out free samples near the end of the month when everyone is low on cash. It was a feeding frenzy, a site that seemed more unreal than anything you might want to imagine as all kinds of people scurried over the area as if they were ant on a sugar cube.”

Simon’s interests with on-site filming did not deter for scenes taking place in Baltimore’s renounced neighborhoods where the open-air drug scene remains poorly disguised. On a day of shooting, Andre Royo – well in character for his role as the sympathetic and resourceful heroin addict, Bubbles – was handed down a real heroine vials by a man unaware of Royo’s involvement in the cinematic production. “You need a fix more than I do,” the man told Bubbles.

Casting for *The Wire* also suggests a predisposition to showcase the real Baltimore. After sending Melvin Williams behind bars for a thirty-four-year sentence, Ed Burns switched hat and hired the ex-convict as an actor on the television program. Williams, the inspiration for Avon Barksdale, plays the part of the Deacon, a community leader interested in supporting ‘street’ individuals. Real-life former Mayor Kurt Schmoke, remembered in part for advocating the decriminalization of drugs in Baltimore, is also casted in *The Wire*, this time as the city’s Health Commissioner.

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54 Johnson, “The Target.”
55 Bowdlen, “The Angriest Man In Television.”
58 Talbot, “Stealing Life.”
Before serving consecutive terms as mayor of Baltimore, Schmoke had been the frontline prosecutor in the war on drugs as state's attorney. He witnessed the effects of this difficult battle, which resulted in the systematic depopulation of the inner city through the imprisonment of thousands of its male residents. One year after being elected as the first black mayor of Baltimore, Schmoke proposed to "consider the question of decriminalization of drugs" in a speech before the 1988 US Conference of Mayors and the National Association of Chiefs of Police.60 The associated press quickly got hold of the story: 'Baltimore mayor proposes legalizing drugs,' the editorial claimed. Talks of 'decriminalization' (i.e. not legalization) were and still are unpopular in US politics, to the point where reviving this topic seriously hinders career advancement. "Though he would be reelected twice as mayor, Schmoke's political aspirations for higher office – governor, the US Senate – were dead."61

Peter Beilenson, the young and eager Public Health Commissioner under Schmoke's administration allowed for the mayor's intentions to partly go forward through a shift in language. He proposed to 'medicalize drugs,' which meant moving scores of "nonviolent addicts into the medical system rather than the criminal justice system."62 This political strategy privileges treatment over imprisonment. For Schmoke to return to public life through The Wire's Public Health Commissioner, a character supporting the insubordinate police commander behind the Hamsterdam project (a special zone where drug use and distribution is tolerated in HBO's Baltimore), is no coincidence. These decisions in casting give credence to Simon and Burns's knowledge of the city for which they write as they present fictional narratives inspired by and formulating plays on the political history of the real Baltimore.

Schmoke's inclusion in The Wire is also notable as it lends support to the contentious and politically charged project. The former mayor guest stars for the first time late in the program's third season, so well after The Wire's ethos had been established as a program clearly intentioned to criticize the war on drugs and discuss subtle forms of white-collar corruption. As a short piece Schmoke wrote for The Guardian points out, The Wire does not reflect the fact that Baltimore is a tale of two cities, where world-renown universities exist side-by-side with outstanding museums, medical institutions and tree-lined residential communities. "What the viewer would see and what The Wire exposes is the reality of the 'other' Baltimore."63

The HBO program has been received with a fair deal of resistance by some Baltimoreans, especially in political spheres, but many more have attested to the show's authentic portrayal of specific institutions. In a Baltimore Sun article titled "Former Baltimore Cop: The Wire was Dead-On," Bill Countess maintains that, "as a former Baltimore police officer for 11 years, [he] can attest to the fact that much of what appears in the HBO series The Wire is a very accurate

61 Ibid., 38.
62 Ibid., 38–9.
depiction of reality both on the street and within the Baltimore Police Department.” Schmoke concurs:

*The characters and the major events on The Wire are composite images reflecting the reality of Baltimore. Long-time residents of the city could provide you with the names of people bearing great resemblance to the politicians, policemen, drug dealers, dock workers, teachers and preachers portrayed in this television drama.*

In the same op-ed piece written for *The Guardian*, the former mayor adds, “it is undeniable that *The Wire* captures the reality of the struggles faced by teachers and students in Baltimore’s middle schools, those schools whose populations are adolescent between the ages of 12 and 14. Drug dealers often try to use children of that age as street-level distributors.”

Sociologist Sudhir Venkatesh developed a nine-part article for the blog freakonmics.com, where he related the opinion that current and former gang members hold towards *The Wire*. Watching the program at Shine’s Harlem apartment, “a 43-year old [...] man who managed a gang for fifteen years before heading to prison for a ten-year drug trafficking sentence,” Venkatesh found that cultural structures and social forces depicted in *The Wire* resonate. A key segment of Venkatesh’s entries relates to the controversial killing of Omar, whose fictional death has been reported in the obituaries of *Newsweek*. According to critics and bloggers, the beloved thug’s inevitable death was denied the grandeur it deserved. In the fifth season, Omar retires from his career as a stick-up artist and leaves Baltimore for Puerto Rico, before returning to avenge the killing of Butchie – his confidant, broker and father figure. Careless and angry, he roams the streets of Baltimore on his own, looking for only one man and robbing his drug corners for spite and attention. After dumping a drug package he has just snatched from Stanfield’s corner boy down a sewer, he walks into a convenient store. Omar heads straight to the counter: “I need a pack of Newport ... soft pack.” The camera moves into the clerk’s booth to focus on Omar from behind the scratched bulletproof window – a common sight in Baltimore. The sound of the shop’s door opening catches his attention. He looks towards the noise and slowly returns his gaze to the clerk when the bang of a gunshot violently interrupts the ambiance music sourced from the store’s radio. Omar Little falls to the ground. The camera shifts to the shooter, Kenard, a 12-, maybe 13-year-old hopper, part of Namond Brice’s ‘Fayette Street Mafia.’ Calm and afraid, he walks towards the fallen local legend laying flat on his back as he keeps his Beretta 92F straight on target. The handgun

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65 Schmoke, “The Wire and the Real Baltimore.”

66 Ibid.


69 It is worth noting that any music that can be heard throughout the five seasons of *The Wire* is sourced from within the scene, rather than added as a post-production score to create or influence the mood of a scene. This strategy contributes to the realism of the show.
looks especially big in the boy’s small hands. Kenard gives the body a push – his way to verify the death – takes a few steps back, drops the piece, walks away.

The killing of the most feared man in The Wire’s Baltimore is credited to a kid whose name very few viewers even know. Venkatesh’s thug friends are less surprised than the disapproving commentators. “It can happen to any of us, just like that. You think you’re going out to buy some chicken and Pepsi, and the next thing, some kid wants to make a name for himself by taking you out.” The refusal to heighten Omar’s death adds to The Wire’s realism at the cost of dramatic effect, while foregrounding the banality of death in the Baltimore ghetto.

Some institutions achieving invaluable community work are surveyed rather rapidly or left out of The Wire altogether. As Marcus points out, a complete multi-sited ethnography is impossible. Nonetheless, the spaces central and covered at length throughout The Wire – those of Baltimore’s underworld and of the darker side of underperforming public institutions – are described with commendable authenticity. The story of witness intimidation by gang members is not undone because Nakeesha Lyles is fictional. Simon comments, “I saw this once, I saw this two-thousand times. In real court rooms.” As Latour writes, “[t]o endow an agency with anonymity gives exactly as much a figure as when it is endowed with a name, a nose, a voice, or a face. It’s just making it ideo- instead of anthropo-morphic.”

**The Wire as transformative entertainment**

Simulation platforms allow research to go further by experimenting with complex adaptive organizations that are impossible to investigate by other means. “The simulation framework by its very nature is able to demonstrate dynamic interactions and to yield empirical outputs.” By using the universe of The Wire as a simulation platform, the show’s operators were able to test speculative developments and identify failure-points that stood between them and their effective realization. As Anthony Giddens argued, “we can envisage alternative futures whose very propagation might help them be realized.” Accordingly, The Wire’s development of speculative scenarios hints at the possibility of overcoming dysfunctional aspects in contemporary urban systems by opening the imagination to potential alternatives. The program’s departures from the real Baltimore emerge from a realist narrative, just like a work of ‘science-fiction,’ as defined by Frederic Jameson, Darko Suvin and other specialist of this particular genre:

> The specific difference between science-fiction and other estranging genres, such as fantasy, is that science-fiction’s displacements must be logically consistent and methodological; in fact,

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70. This is a poignant example supporting ANT’s insistence to include objects as ‘actors.’ The gun allowed (without determining) a young boy to dramatically affect a collective by eliminating one of its actors; the prominent Omar Little.


72. Attias, “Straight and True.”


This feature allows the scenario to develop in a way that mimics reality, while keeping the freedom to overwrite very specific aspects of it with something unreal and perhaps utopian. A clear example of this can be found in The Wire’s pilot episode, which was filmed two months after the attacks of 9/11. Before the FBI announced a shift in priority away from drugs to re-focus on the issue of terrorism, creators of The Wire accurately speculated on that this significant change would come. As McNulty pays a visit to Agent Fitzhugh at the FBI’s office to share some intelligence on an ongoing drug case, the Baltimore Police detective appears surprised to learn about Fitzhugh’s disinterest. While the FBI had not formally announced a withdrawal of its commitment in prosecuting drug-related offences by the time of filming, the fight against controlled substances has in fact become secondary to counter-terrorism ever since the attacks on the Twin Towers. In fact, “[s]hortly after filming the pilot, it was announced that the FBI would be reducing their drug effort.”

Some of The Wire’s detractors such as Peter Dreier and John Atlas contend that the HBO program fails not because the show wasn’t upsetting, but because it portrayed urban life as hopeless. The two scholars overlooked the program’s precious utopian openings and the value of The Wire as a study of failure-points. Stringer Bell’s stance for violence-free gang activities; Major Colvin’s project for the decriminalization of drugs; Frank Sobotka’s dream of a revitalized port in a post-industrial economy; and Detective McNulty’s plan to de-politicize policing, all open up utopian moments by speculating on the possibility of change in Baltimore. The move from representation to simulation is in fact chiefly used to portray the possibility of alternatives and the potential impact of reform.

Utopias are related to the notion of change, to alternative spaces, to critical and hopeful speculation on future forms. As such, they may represent end goals, or spaces necessary to move along the continuum towards a wished (perfected) future. Bertolt Brecht contends, “reality, however incomplete, has to be altered by being turned into art, so that it can be seen to be alterable and treated as such.” His realist theatre allowed him to speculate on potential alternatives, which prepared the mind of his audience for change to come.

Brecht maintained that change always brings ‘the new,’ which can never be retrogressve or degenerative. He developed theatre into an apparatus of dissemination for new ideas, thereby allowing transformative thoughts to travel across a network and potentially scale up. Like Simon, he relied in part on a realist aesthetic to allow his plays to reflect the everyday experience of his audience, wide and varied as it was. His defense for ‘the new’ drew on a similar argument as Hegel’s for the ‘speculative,’ as Jameson explains:

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76 Attias, “Straight and True.”
The way in which the very idea of a concept carries within it its own utopian energy, projects a world ‘equal’ to the concept in question, at the same time as it passes judgment on worlds that have not yet raised themselves to that level.  

Brecht’s insistence on the value of ‘the new’ through speculations is supported further by the work of Giddens. Writing on the concept of ‘utopian realism,’ Giddens noted:

Anticipations of the future become part of the present, thereby rebounding upon how the future actually develops; utopian realism combines the ‘opening of windows’ upon the future with the analysis of ongoing institutional trends whereby political futures are imminent in the present.

As opposed to grand utopias (perfected spaces), utopian realism relies on the novum, much like The Wire’s temporary utopias. The term novum denotes the “historical innovation or novelty in a [science-fiction] text from which the most important distinction between the world of the tale from the world of the reader stems.” By definition, the novum is rational and logically derived. It allows the narrative to unfold through realist events by changing the behavior, character or modalities of one or more actors in a network. As the novum is grounded in a plausible fiction, it offers to narratives the potential to transmit alternative possibilities through rational speculations, testing their feasibility at the same time.

Aligning with the objectives of Brecht and Giddens, The Wire criticizes and speculates through the folding and unfolding of utopian moments. In The Wire, “[u]topian elements are introduced, without fantasy or wish fulfillment, into the construction of the fictive, yet utterly realistic, events.” These utopian elements are generally muted early, however. As the novum is introduced at only one place in the network, utopian openings tremble when faced with actors sticking with the status quo. The Wire does not reinforce the notion that ‘change is impossible.’ It conveys that change in one part of a network does not guarantee the rebalancing of entire systems. Michel de Certeau’s differentiation between tactics and strategies encapsulated the fragility that characterizes singular actions developed without the support of wider institutions. Tactics are not comprehensive acts but timely actions, de Certeau noted, which blow-by-blow take advantage of opportunities. He added, “Lacking its own place, lacking a view of the whole, limited by the blindness (which may lead to perspicacity) resulting from combat at close quarters, limited by the possibilities of the moment, a tactic is determined by the absence of power just as a strategy is organized by the postulation of power.” Also referred to as ‘micropolitics,’ tactics are concerned with the inscription of a being in a place, which is central to the notion of politics such as it has been defined from Plato to Rancière. However,

80 Giddens, The Consequences of Modernity, 177-8.
82 Haglund, “Slavoj Žižek and Fredric Jameson on The Wire.”
84 Ibid.
as *The Wire* demonstrates, such tactics can be absorbed back any time because of the relation of power between tactics and strategies.

*The Wire* explores the reasons behind each decision being taken, politically or otherwise, and as it achieves this, it sketches networks, outlines failure points and recreates their effects on other nodes of the web. As the drug epidemic spiraled out of control in the Baltimore of HBO, Major Colvin proposed an amnesty with street-level drug dealers willing to relocate their illegal activities to deserted areas in East and West Baltimore, away from plain sight and the immediate ecology of decent people. Sergeant Carver explains to a group of street dealers, "[b]eginning today, you can sell drugs in West Baltimore, but only where we say you can."86 The proposition seems appealing. For viewers familiar with 'The Platzspitz,' Zurich's defunct 'Needle Park' – an open drug scene that lasted from the late 1980s until 1992 – the project dubbed as 'Hamsterdam' does not seem far-fetched. The major explains to mid-level dealers, "I want to salvage what's still worth salvaging in my district. And I can't do that with a bunch of young hoppers running around scaring the district."87 For most viewers, Colvin's tactic is logically derived and presumably attractive for the countless corner boys and drug users being constantly hassled by the police. At first sight, Hamsterdam seems to bring a welcome plateau of stability to the otherwise trembling world of dealers and users.

As *The Wire* follows the lines connecting a myriad of actors affected by the Hamsterdam project, reality sets in and the impossibility of Colvin's plan comes into view as the utopian dimension of the scheme can no longer hide. One of Stanfield's dealers protests: "Look, we grind and ya'll gonna try to stop it. That's how we do. Why you gotta go fuck with the program."88 At this point it becomes obvious how street corners themselves have become strong actors in the Baltimore drug scene. They enable dealers to reach specific markets, they grant upon the gangs who run them street credibility – social status in the ghetto – and are thereby worth fighting over. Having the right to sell drugs on a specific corner is meaningful to old school thugs, such as Barksdale and his real-life counterparts. The Hamsterdam project unsettles the network of Baltimore's underground economy. It reduces the value of certain actors – the corners and other 'real estates' – thereby destabilizing the actor-network configuration of the collective in place.89

Eventually and through ruthless tactics, Major Colvin and the Western District Division of the Baltimore Police impose upon dealers their will to relocate drug-dealing to any of the three designated 'free-zones,' thereby clearing out most corners in West Baltimore.90 The

86 Attias, "Straight and True."
87 Ibid.
88 Bianchi, "Time After Time."
89 Gangs refer to each space where they have earned the right to sell drugs as their ‘real estate.’ These rights are of course not legal but granted upon negotiations, contests and violent combat between street gangs. As *The Wire* demonstrates, real estate is precious. Beyond allowing sales points that generate substantial illegal incomes, they are a status item.
90 The delay for high-ranking dealers (such as Avon Barksdale and Stringer Bell) to be informed of the new situation on the street underlines their distance from pawns, and even lieutenants. Much like the Baltimore Police Commissioner and mayor, the transformation is near complete by the time high-ranking officials are notified of this significant change. This again draws parallels between both institutions while underlining the efficacy of Barksdale's crew, which realizes that the street level sales have been completely reorganized much before his counterpart at city hall.
street level drug trade is thus pushed to areas so blighted that no citizen is believed to still live around. Such ghosts blocks exist in *The Wire* as they do in the real city of Baltimore, where well over 16,000 residential dwellings are currently vacant.\(^9\) The Hamsterdam project meets its ultimate demise as Colvin's superior discovers the rogue major's experiment. The reduction of crime in the district and piles of supportive letters by local citizens are brushed aside as Colvin's efforts function against the strategy for the war on drugs. The project is immediately condemned to its end, like Bunny Colvin's career with the Baltimore Police.

Fredric Jameson points out, “[i]f the plot of *The Wire* were to show its success, the representation would imply the Utopian (or revolutionary) transformation and reconstruction of all society itself.”\(^9^2\) By stopping these realizations, *The Wire* pinpoints failure points in the transformative endeavors, where attempts to introduce ‘the new’ are either slowed down or completely stopped by actors who have not embarked on the transformative mission. This highlights the shortcomings of reformist programs that only consider a limited set of sites and actors in the network.

*The Wire*’s cynical conclusion does not necessarily come as a result of the author’s pessimistic views on the future of America’s inner city, as some of the show’s critics have suggested.\(^9^3\) *The Wire*’s downbeat ending implies that Simon does not have the solution; that a hopeful ending could not be defined within the genre of *The Wire*, which is retrospective science-fiction, not fantasy.

**Criticism**

If *The Wire* represents a unique cultural object particularly able in drawing the lines of a given social network, the program could rightfully be criticized for failing to adequately portray the influence of what Anderson has describes as ‘decent families’ in the Baltimore ghetto. For all the way in which the HBO program succeeds, it also provides a disservice to inner city black communities by foregrounding illegal fractions akin to those of the ‘iconic ghetto.’ The notion of the iconic ghetto refers to the way by which the ghetto is generally perceived by those whose opinion is not formed from primary experiences, but secondary accounts instead. This iconic ghetto develops from stereotypes, popular culture and representations in the mass media where portrayals of the ghetto tend to be over simplistic and emphasize negative aspects only. Such one-dimensional depiction, like most stereotypes, “contains elements of truth, but it is for the most part false.”\(^9^4\) It problematically removes all that is good in the ghetto, including decent families who have no involvement with any of the iconic ghetto’s sensational elements, from drug, crime, gang, extreme poverty or violence.

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93 Bowden, “The Angriest Man In Television.”
For Elijah Anderson, *The Wire* resonates, but also felt short in many ways. “It is powerful in its depiction of the codes of the streets, but it is an exaggeration,” he commented. As he explained further in an email exchange:

*I want to reiterate that I do believe The Wire has merit – to be sure, the program has provided a dramatic and, at times, a more sober portrait of the nature of entrenched black poverty in our great cities, but for many Americans, unfortunately, it has simply provided entertainment that is so easily dismissed by them. Of course, these two issues can become utterly conflated, if not confused at times. And this may be the source of some of my own frustration with the program, a program which might be improved with a more holistic rendering of the lives of black people (“decent” as well as “street”) living poor in the urban centers of this country.*

Anderson's criticism is well founded and difficult to debate. While it may be unfair and unproductive to point that Simon felt short of presenting a holistic picture of Baltimore, it is clear that *The Wire's* characterization of the *Baltimore ghetto* over-emphasizes 'street' narrative lines and dysfunctional practices. *The Wire* reinforces the false belief that the every black man in the ghetto is invested in underground activities, or a victim of it. Indeed, as *The Wire* attributes supportive roles at best to decent families in the Baltimore ghetto, it undermines the influence of honest working people in the network and ecology it aims to portray.

As a work of ANT, *The Wire* follows the lines between members of street gangs and a police task force set out for their arrest. As such, the narrative plot naturally introduces actors in liminal positions with regards to the law, which are more likely to be 'street' than 'decent.' Notwithstanding, decent working families residing in this environment do, in fact, affect criminal organizations in other ways than as consumers of the drug trades or witnesses against it. While the role of decent families was portrayed more fairly in *The Corner*, *The Wire* brushed aside many inner city actors as it depicts decent stakeholders almost exclusively as reformed bandits or as policemen. To be sure, while the drug trade directly affects most inhabitants of the Baltimore ghetto in one way or another, only a small minority of its population is addicted to illicit products, and an even smaller proportion is actively involved in drug trafficking.†

Furthermore, the HBO program portrays cultural forces unique to the American ghetto without speaking to the pivotal role that racial discrimination and prejudices have had on the emergence of said cultural forces. *The Wire* simulates ghetto territories with no mention of

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97 If *The Wire* reinforces the image of the black inner city man as a criminal, the white actors included in its narrative are generally painted with the same unflattering brush stroke. For example, the most perturbing crimes simulated in the program – the human trafficking of Eastern-European women, their transport by unventilated containers that eventually led to the death of fourteen, and the enslavement of others who safely reached the shores of Maryland as sex workers – is an entirely white affaire. The program also makes numerous references to unscrupulous white developers, portraying them as a major pitfall affecting the good of the city. When gang leader Stringer Bell appears to branch off into real estate development, police detective Lester Freamon gathers, “Seems like Stringer Bell is worse than a drug dealer. He’s a developer.” The mostly white staff at The Baltimore Sun is hardly portrayed in more positive terms, nor are the dock workers of Frank Sobatka’s union. In the least, this foregrounds Simon’s bias to address whatever is problematic or dysfunctional, irrespectively of race.
their causal origins and without addressing the various ways by which bigotry, discriminatory legal frameworks, government sanctioned housing policies, as well as other tactics and strategies perpetuated by white Americans have spatialized prejudices and participated to the deployment of ghetto ecologies.

In his 2010 book *More than Just Race*, Wilson proposes a reexamination of “the way social scientists discussed two important factors associated with racial inequity: *social structure* and *culture*. “98 As Wilson explains, ‘social structure’ refers “to the ways social positions, social roles, and networks of social relations are arranged in our institutions, such as the economy, polity, education, and organization of the family.”99 According to Wilson, there are two types of structural forces that directly contribute to the evolution of racial inequity: ‘social acts’ and ‘social processes.’ Social acts refer to group practices that exercise a form of power over another group. "Examples of social acts are stereotyping; stigmatization; discrimination in hiring, job promotions, housing, and admission to education institutions [...].”100 Social processes allude to institutional, legal and organizational adaptations that have been established to support social acts. This includes explicit arrangements like Jim Crow, as well as racial profiling, disproportionate sentencing for drugs used predominantly by racial minorities, or ‘redlining.’

Wilson also subdivides *Cultural forces* that may contribute to racial inequity between two categories. The first pertains to ‘national views’ on beliefs and race; the second concerns ‘cultural traits,’ such as “shared outlooks, modes of behavior, traditions, belief systems, styles of self-presentation, etiquette, and linguistic patters – that emerge from patterns of intragroup interaction in settings created by discrimination and segregation and that reflect collective experiences in those settings.”101 Wilson thus expands on the standard conceptualization of cultural forces to include cultural repertoires, such as habits, styles and skills, as well as “micro-level processes of meaning making and decision making.”102 As Anderson documented in *The Code of the Street*, the urban conditions created through segregation have encouraged the development of cultural traits that may negatively affect life chances. For example, while emphasizing manly pride and predatory dispositions may constitute a brand of ‘street smart’ and self-defense in the inner city ghetto, such traits do not provide the same services in mainstream society where hyper masculinity would be likely to arouse suspicion than respect. The incompatibility of the code of the street in mainstream environments is demonstrated throughout Simon’s work, like when D’Angelo Barksdale expresses a sense of alienation when he attempts to enjoy dinner at an upscale downtown restaurants, or when Stringer Bell and Marlo Steinfeld attempt to become part of real estate development deals.

Lacking the benefit of a historical perspective, however, *The Wire* does not depict socio-spatial processes that have led to construction and evolution of the program’s subject matter: the

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99 Ibid., 4.
100 Ibid., 5.
101 Ibid., 15.
102 Ibid., 16.
modern American ghetto, together with its particular culture. While the HBO series succeeds in depicting cultural traits as well as social processes that characterize Baltimore’s segregated inner city, *The Wire* fails to reveal how such spaces have been created; how discriminatory social acts have influenced the development of the cultural forces the program depicts; and, what other forms of pressures have facilitated the evolution of urban inequality between racial groups. As sociologist George Lipsitz observed:

> The Wire is relentlessly on target in exposing the bureaucratic imperatives and dysfunctional contradictions of police work, teaching, and journalism. Yet the firsthand experience that enables the creators of *The Wire* to critique these institutions so effectively does not enable them to step back and see how these institutions are the products of racialized space and possess racial and spatial imaginaries. ... Like the newspaper and the school system, the ghetto is itself an institution, one created and maintained deliberately by systematic residential segregation.\(^{103}\)

These shortcomings – the failure of *The Wire* to ascribe structural and cultural forces to their causal origins – have prompted Lipsitz to articulate a fair but tough commentary where he problematizes *The Wire’s* inadvertent tendency to use cultural forces as explanations:

> Without a systemic analysis of how housing discrimination creates the ghetto, *The Wire* is left with the default positions inscribed in the white spatial imaginary: that people who have problems are problems, that social welfare programs produce only “poverty pimps” and hustlers who take advantage of the poor, and that social disintegration has gone so far it simply cannot be stopped. These values “hail” certain kinds of viewers: knowing cynics who enjoy having their worst fears confirmed, passive voyeurs who think of themselves as noble because they feel sorry for others from the safety of their living rooms, and self-satisfied suburbanites who use portrayals of Black criminality to absolve themselves of any responsibility for the inequalities that provide them with unfair gains and unjust enrichments. ... By evading the structure that created and sustained the ghetto in the first place, *The Wire* leaves us with nothing to do but be disturbed and challenged, yet ultimately numbed by depictions of our own destruction.\(^{104}\)

**The Wire as Method**

This analysis and critical review of *The Wire* has revealed important findings pertinent to future research concerned with the main subject matter of Simon’s most acclaimed HBO program. As Anderson and Lipitz appraisals of *The Wire* point out, the HBO program offers a powerful and well-told story of the Baltimore ghetto, which would have been enhanced through the inclusion of a historical perspective. This probe into Simon’s work has also provided early warning of potential pitfalls for future studies, reports, films or manuscripts concerned with the ecology of the Baltimore ghetto. Major red flags include the description of problematic urban conditions in the ghetto without referring causal origins, and the disputable tendency to represent the ghetto as a one-dimensional socio-spatial territory.


\(^{104}\) Ibid., 112–3.
Furthermore, the deconstruction of *The Wire*’s structure and aesthetics suggested potential uses by which this popular-culture-cum-academic device could inform new ways to conceptualize, research and present social scientific investigations. As this autopsy of *The Wire* revealed, the program’s method is composed as a layered, rhizomatic assemblage; a crossing between categories of sorts that uses fiction to take social science to places where it has rarely travelled. Conceptually, *The Wire* operates as a multi-sited ethnography; methodically, it follows its actors like Bruno Latour’s actor-network-theory; performatively, it aligns with Bertolt Brecht alternative entertainment as it extends a political message by other means. If *The Wire* could be held as an allegory for a new social science, the present research sets out to rely on the original methods that Simon’s program appears to have used instead, including multi-sited ethnography and actor-network-theory.

As Marcus explains, multi-sited ethnography represents a particularly fruitful approach to researchers concerned with the multiplicity of forces at play in the creation and evolution of a specific territory. Following Marcus one step further, multi-sited research should start with fieldwork in an initial site in order to identify disjunctive sites that warrant separate and complementary investigations. The present research started off with fieldwork in the Harlem Park neighborhood, which corresponds to the site of the original ghetto in West Baltimore. Initial fieldwork suggested that crimes much graver than those of the drug trade had been committed in this neighborhood, which manifested throughout the built environment in the form of vacant housings, abandoned parks, the condition of nearby public housing projects, the quasi-total absence of commercial activities, and the particular racial composition, where nearly every inhabitant appeared to be black – something that census data would later confirm to be true.

Acknowledging the significance of race and place in the evolution of the Baltimore ghetto, this research sets out to investigate the materialization of prejudice and discriminatory motifs on a multiplicity of sites. Framed as a historic research, the project followed archival documents, oral histories and other records to describe with ethnographic-like precision how racial matters encouraged the deployment of an apartheid regime in Baltimore. The particular scale and pace of the narrative allowed the story to identify failure points and connect transformative processes to particular institutions, bureaucracies, culture and structures. Like *The Wire*’s structure where the focus shifts to different organizations between each season, this research’s successive chapters unfold in separate physical sites, presenting self-contained histories relevant to a predominant and unspoken theme in Simon’s work: residential segregation. This urban history of the *Baltimore ghetto* – the territorial embodiment of urban inequality and a major cause behind the social and moral crisis of the 1960s – establishes the background story for the systemic failures that *The Wire* courageously exposed to thousands of viewers between 2002 and 2008.

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105 This has been argued and described in, Benjamin Leclair-Paquet, “The Wire as Speculative Research,” *Arq: Architectural Research Quarterly* 18, no. 02 (2014): 135–44.
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The election of John F. Kennedy in 1961, the youngest ever US President, marked the start of a redefining historical period where assumptions, beliefs, notions, codes and standards that had forever existed would be called into question, contested, parried and capsized. As different countercultures became actively invested in democratic life, more individuals came to exercise their freedom of speech, campaign through civil disobedience and more forceful tactics as well, in order to re-write urban spaces to the image of communities that had for long been left behind. The result: a nationwide reassessment of normative social and political views with dramatic effects on racial, ethnic and gender relations, individual freedom and political expectations. Even as the enactment of President Kennedy’s Civil Right Bill “turned the tide against Jim Crow by banning discrimination in public accommodations, services, and labor markets and putting new muscle behind school desegregation,” racial prejudice and inequity continued to clearly exist. But the civil rights movement, with its different shapes and forms, nevertheless influenced a series of cultural changes that were supported further by other rising countercultures, from psychedelic revolution rock to the New Left. While civil rights leaders engaged their audience through public speeches, texts and organized demonstrations, the battles fought by members of the movement also played out in the ultimate public arena: the streets of our cities. As certain civil rights leaders disowned and condemned public demonstrations that steered towards physical force, other members of the movement observed the violent uproars to be productive forces as well.

Between mid-July and Labor Day (7th September) of 1964, riots broke out in nine cities in the Northern United States, sending a clear warning that many individuals could no longer tolerate the status quo. The initial incident that sparked the series of riots can be traced back to New York City, where a police lieutenant fatally shot a 15-year old boy of African American race. According to the police report, the young teenager charged the officer with a knife during a robbery gone wrong. As a result, The Sun paper noted, the shooting culminated “in nation-wide publicity and wild charges of police brutality.”

As a full-scale grand jury investigation involving forty-five witnesses was underway, riots broke out in Harlem (Manhattan) and Bedford-Stuyvesant (Brooklyn), resulting in over 480 arrests over a six-day period, between the 18th and 23rd of July, 1964. When the uproars came to an end in the two boroughs, a separate riot started in Rochester (Upstate New York),

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2 The Sun, “Text of FBI's Analysis of Summer Riots in Northern Cities,” The Sun, September 27, 1964, 6, Baltimore Sun Archives.
and subsequently in New Jersey, Elizabeth, Paterson, Dixmoor, Philadelphia, Seaside and Hampton Beach after that. As opposed to the New York City riots, where the lieutenant would eventually be cleared of any wrongdoing, the disturbances in the other eight Northern cities were each sparked by apparently negligible incidents.

In Philadelphia, the initiating event took place when two patrolmen intervened to help move a stalled car at a busy intersection. The driver who refused to let the officers push off the vehicle was reportedly calm and nonviolent throughout the intervention, but the situation escalated after his passenger became aggressive. A news report wrote, “Two policemen, one a negro, the other white, attempted to arrest a negro woman after, they claimed, she punched one of them when they tried to move her husband’s automobile, which was blocking an intersection.” According to a separate news story, the husband “unsuccessfully urged her to cooperate with the officers” as she continued to resist, scream and curse. Passersby quickly joined in and came to the defense of the 34 year-old woman, Odessa Bradford, as the officers attempted to arrest her on charges of assault and battery. The police lost control of the situation after rumors spread that the agents had killed Mrs. Bradford, leaving an angry group of youth to seek vengeance for a crime that had in fact never been committed. The confrontation would ultimately leave twelve policemen and many more civilians injured. Two-days into the crisis, over 110 persons had been arrested, with about “100 charged with burglary, 4 with robbery, 7 with aggravated assault and battery and 1 with carrying a deadly weapon.”

As the wave of protestation started to move west and then south from New York City during that summer of 1964, Mayor McKeldin in Baltimore initiated preventive actions to refrain the storm to reach his city. The week before Labor Day, when Malcolm X and the Beatles were scheduled to take the stage in Baltimore, the mayor held a special televised conference to address his constituents as well as external agitators:

> The riots provoked in other cities by the advocates of violence have not, and we repeat, have not been civil rights actions. Rather, they have been the outgrowth of the work of hatemongers who attempt to use an admittedly emotional issue to further their program of conflict and destruction. Let it be known to all such destroyers from the outside that the boundaries of Baltimore shall be a firm, impenetrable barrier against their onslaught.

The uproars of 1964 would ultimately stop before reaching Baltimore, to remerge the following summer in Los Angeles, devastating the Watts neighborhood like no other riots in the United States had before. The weeklong turmoil left thirty-four persons dead and $40 millions in

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3 The Sun, “Sporadic Rioting, Looting Continue in Philadelphia,” The Sun, August 30, 1964, 1, Baltimore Sun Archives.
damages, or the equivalent of over $230 millions in current day currency. John A McCone, former Chief of the Atomic Energy Commission and of the CIA, was appointed to analyze the causes behind the Watts Riots by a state commission that year. The commission's 1965 report called the outburst "an explosion – a formless, quite senseless, all but hopeless violent protest." Sowing the winds of the August fury were three distinctive causes, according to the report: the lack of jobs for untrained black workers, a schooling system ill prepared to address the needs of disadvantaged black children, and "a resentment, even hatred, of the police as symbol of authority." The McCone Report warned, "we are seriously concerned that the existing breach, if allowed to persist, could in time split our society irretrievably." Prepared with the help of a staff of forty, the well-researched document suggested that riots were not the result of a single cause, but rather a consequence of poor living conditions for blacks in inner city ghettos.

While other riots broke out during that summer and the next, none would come close to reach the magnitude of the events in Watts, until the 12th Street Riots in Detroit, 1967. Claiming forty-one lives and with damages estimated at $45 millions (over $245 million in current dollars), the Detroit riots remain one of the most devastating event in the country's domestic history. Detroit Mayor Jerome Cavanagh argued that "until Congress begins to deal realistically with the problems of the city, we're not going to have just a continuation of the riots – and it's terrible to contemplate – but we're going to have things far, far worse." The Detroit mayor criticized the priorities of Congress as being misguided, warning his audience about the rising discontentment across industrial cities like his own where major ghettos continued to exist decades after President Roosevelt's New Deal and following the prosperous years of World War II for American industries. Mayor Cavanagh remarked:

All our priorities are out of balance. What will it profit this country if we put a man on the moon and can't walk down Woodward Avenue in this city without fear of violence? We may be able to pacify every village in Vietnam in a few years, but what good is it if we can't pacify the American people – and they're not pacified.

The civil disorders that affected Americans cities throughout the mid-1960s hinted at the importance to bring questions pertaining to the condition of inner city ghettos at the

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8 The Sun, "'67 Riots Report Is Similar to '65 Los Angeles Study," The Sun, March 10, 1968, 4, Baltimore Sun Archives.
9 The value equivalence in current day currency is calculated using the 'Consumer Price Index.' This method is particularly helpful for evaluating the worth of commodities, such as items looted during the riots and the cost of construction material needed for reconstruction. For this reason, it is this author's assessment that this index is more representative than other equally common methods (i.e. GDP deflator, Value of unskilled wage, Nominal GDP per capita, or Relative share of GDP). The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is used throughout this work to calculate current worth of currency.
10 John A McCone, "Violence in the City—An End or a Beginning?: A Report by the Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots, 1965." (Los Angeles, 1965), University of Southern California Online Archives.
12 The original estimates were greatly exaggerated, ranging from $200 to $500 millions. But the riots in Detroit nevertheless represents one of the most costly uprisings in US history.
14 Ibid.
forefront of political and social debates. Intellectuals and civil organizations had alerted their elected representatives of the urgency to address such questions before, but the gravity of the situation remained misunderstood until demonstrations escalated to the extent where ordinary laws would be temporarily replaced by martial law; when private property could be taken away and destroyed at any turn; and when the perception of security, normality and comfort could no longer be taken for granted.

As the living conditions of low-income blacks had also become a cause for concern in the State of Maryland, the Health and Welfare Council of the Baltimore Area published an internal document titled “Letters to Ourselves” in the summer of 1961:

*In a nutshell, this is a letter about a major community problem facing Baltimore – perhaps the major problem. While we are making great gains on almost every front, the social, economic, and political, in short the human problems of our Inner City seem to defy our efforts. The culture of this major part of Baltimore, sometimes called the ‘grey areas,’ involves high crime and unemployment rates, social alienation, low level of communication and language skills, poor nutritional and health standards, and limited access to facilities for self-help. You name it, they have it."

The letter, “a call to arms for the design and implementation of a massive program for human development,” continued by noting that while Baltimore’s urban renewal agency and school systems were being looked at as national models, the city was also being inhabited by large groups of individuals for whom these programs had failed. “Baltimore is a great place to live, work, play,” the letter wrote, “Yet, as we turn our steaks on the barbecue, we remember that other Baltimore, the one we haven’t told our friends about.” Writing about inner city ghetto neighborhoods, “a Baltimore we’d like to forget about,” the authors acknowledged that “people live[d] there because they [had] to, or because they [didn’t] know how to get out. It’s a Baltimore where the American Dream has little chance of fulfillment.” As activists revendicated the right for individuals of all races to be treated on equal terms – demands that the majority culture was finding excessively difficult to deny using rational arguments in the 1960s – the primacy to address issues of race-based inequity soared on paper, but few and far between were those willing to let go of the privileges that their race and economic conditions afforded them. As importantly, individuals actually inclined to take an active role or make sacrifices for the purpose of racial equity were more often than not clueless on how to go about it, seeing that reparative actions and theories were still in the making. But the letter at least recognized the existence and severity of the problem at hand. This acknowledgement alone would, at the very least, allow for the process of recovery to finally begin.

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16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., 2.
18 Ibid., 3.
Figure 1. Martin Luther King, Jr. discussing civil rights issues with President Lyndon Johnson, c.1963.
**Baltimore Community Relations Commission**

As social universes on both coasts of the United States quivered before violent and heated protests, Mayor McKeldin decided to seek the cooperation of specific citizens in order to address the plight of this ‘other Baltimore’ before it would be too late. The mayor sought to organize committees in a number of areas where problems existed. “I want to make clear,” McKeldin said, “that these committees are not intended to be study committees; but rather, are intended to be action groups focusing on the full range of problems in the fields of Housing, Public Accommodations, Employment, Health & Welfare, Police-Community Relations and Education.” 

Aware of the existence of racial inequity, McKeldin expected concrete solutions rather than in-depth studies pertaining to the causes behind discriminatory practices that affected black lives in Baltimore. Mayor McKeldin read a statement to the group he hoped to involve as benevolent leaders of these committees:

> In response to those who might say that we have made significant progress in the field of civil rights, I could say that I agree; but, I would also have to say that there are problems – important problems – which have thus far not been resolved; and I believe that this City can no longer delay meeting its responsibilities, both in the public and private sectors of community life.

> The fact is that while we have moved, we have not moved toward the solution of these problems with the speed and vigor with which we are capable.

> We have not really attempted, as a community, to understand the plight, the unrest, and the feelings of those who have been denied.

> We have not attempted to understand why, even after significant progress, our Negro brethren still insist that all is not right in our community – that there is much to be done.

> As I move around the City – as I read the mail which comes across my desk – I am appalled at the lack of understanding and at the misunderstanding which is prevalent with respect to this question.

> We have asked the Negros to be loyal – that they believe in democracy – that they believe that their lot will be changed.

> And, they have believed in democracy – they have been loyal – they have been patient, and their lot has changed; and yet for great numbers of them, the real impact of the aforementioned progress has not been felt.

> If I were to be asked by a Negro citizen why, after the passage of a civil rights bill, he could not go into certain restaurants, I would have no answer.

> If I were to be asked by a Negro citizen why, if he had the money and presented the proper demeanor, he could not rent an apartment nor buy a house or a parcel of real property, I would have no answer.

> If I were asked by a Negro youngster why he could not be an apprentice in one of the construction trades, even though he possessed the basic qualifications, I would have no answer.

> If I were asked by a citizen why, in this the sixth largest City in the country, why poor housing conditions still exist, I would have no answer.

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But, when I am asked by white brethren, ‘What does the Negro Want?’, I have an answer – he wants everything in the same quantity and to the same degree, as the white man. He wants a proper education for his children. He wants a reasonable opportunity for employment in line with his qualifications. He wants the Government to be as responsive to his needs as it is, generally speaking, to the needs of the broader community. He does not want to be out of place in our culture, but he wants to be in a position to receive the benefits of our culture like everyone else.

As of this moment, he is out of place in many places.

Mayor McKeldin assigned Joseph Purdy as the Chairman of the Baltimore Community Relations Commission, which would formally be established on that evening of 1966. The commission held its first meeting three weeks later, and eventually published a short and undated report titled “Problems, Solutions and Gains.”20 The document presented general findings pertaining to the nature of various problems in the inner city and proposed solutions designed for immediate action. With regard to the question of education, the report noted that over 84 percent of black children attended schools where more than nine out of ten students were also black.21 For matters concerning employment opportunities, the commission established that “the rate of unemployment for Negroes continued to be twice that for white person.”22 The committee in charge of addressing the question of housing noted that low-income blacks “have to pay more per month than low-income white residents; in many instances for inferior housing;” that de facto segregation in public housing remained a fact of life in Baltimore; and that approximately 8,600 of the 10,280 public housing units in the city were occupied by blacks.23 The police-community relations committee presented equally disheartening findings: “Most Negros look upon the policeman as the brutal enforcer of the white man’s laws – laws that have been used for three centuries to keep him down.”24 This constituted a major societal problem that precluded law enforcement officers to benefit from the respect and trust of their constituents – and vice versa.

While the Baltimore Community Relations Commission identified potential problems and fixes to the predicament of its inner city neighborhoods, larger and more comprehensive
commissions were being formed to fulfill similar objectives. President Johnson appointed two separate but thematically related national commissions between 1965 and 1967; the first had been tasked to assess the causes of criminality generally and nationwide; the second sought to discover the motives behind the riots of 1967 specifically.

**The Katzenbach Commission**

The President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, better known as the Katzenbach Commission, sought to address “the urgency of the Nation’s crime problem and the depth of ignorance about it.” The commission was created through a special executive order (no 11236) in July 1965 and submitted its report early in 1967, thus predating the events in Detroit. Published under the title, “The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society,” it described living conditions proper to the American ghetto of the 1960s. The Katzenbach Commission pointed at dysfunctional relations between residents and the justice system, unfair access to education and employment opportunities, and to issues related to social pressures that had the effect of confining blacks to territories of dereliction:

> Poverty and racial discrimination, bad housing and commercial exploitation, the enormous gap between American ideals and American achievements, and the many distressing consequences and implications of these conditions are national failings that are widely recognized. Their effects on young people have been greatly aggravated by the technological revolution of the last two decades, which has greatly reduced the market for unskilled labor.

The commission observed that crime rates were significantly higher in urban areas compared to suburbs and rural territories, and peaked in places the report referred to as ‘slum areas.’ It established a correlation between the location of high crime rates areas and the sites of riots; also noting that affected territories corresponded to those where standard modes of economic subsistence were generally out of reach. While the report observed that criminality and rioting occurred at significantly higher rates in minority areas, it also upset a lingering, albeit unfounded belief, that contended that blacks did not dispose of equal socioeconomic


27 Ibid., 6.

28 Walter B. Miller already noted in 1958 that ‘gang delinquency’ was most influenced by poverty. His study focused on a specific kind of delinquency, namely “law-violating acts committed by members of adolescent street corner groups in low-income areas.” (5) Miller noted that the “cultural system which exerts the most direct influence on behavior is that of the lower class community itself – a long-established, distinctively patterned tradition with an integrity of its own – rather than a so-called ‘delinquent subculture’ which has arisen through conflict with middle class culture and is oriented to the deliberate violation of middle class norms.” (5-6) The author underlines that ‘smartness,’ in the lower-class cultures “involves the capacity to outsmart, outfox, outwit, dupe, ‘take,’ ‘con,’ another or others, and the concomitant capacity to avoid being outwitted, ‘taken,’ or duped oneself.” (9) This indicates the presence of a parallel value system that does not condemn criminality in the same way it would in mainstream society. See, Walter B Miller, “Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency,” *Journal of Social issues* 14, no. 3 (1958): 5–19. Note on terminology: while the report referred to the spatial typologies it studies as ‘slums,’ it should have in fact referred to these territories as ‘ghettos,’ as it will be explained later in this chapter.
Figure 2. Map of buildings that have filed an insurance claim following the 1968 Riots in Baltimore, Based on data recovered from the University of Baltimore Langsdale Library Special Collection. Map by author & Mohammed Ossama, 2015
Figure 3. Map of buildings that have filed an insurance claim following the 1968 Riots in Baltimore, inner city area. Based on data recovered from the University of Baltimore Langsdale Library Special Collection. Map by author & Mohammed Ossama, 2015.
status when compared to whites as a result of individual failures or inferior intelligence. As noted in a study conducted as part of the commission, differences in delinquency rates between white and black individuals were markedly reduced in areas of similar economic status. By isolating these two variables, race and income, the study objectively demonstrated that black communities experienced high rates of criminal offences not as a function of the resident's biological blackness, but rather as a function of being poor. In turn, a separate study conducted for the same commission noted that black families lived in poverty at disproportionate rates because of white prejudice and discrimination, which denied them access to certain jobs and charge them more for certain goods.

The commission noted, “for Negroes, movement out of the inner city and absorption into America’s middle class have been much slower and more difficult than for any other ethnic or racial groups.” It added, “Rigid barriers of residential segregation have prevented them from moving to better neighborhoods as their desire and capacity to do so developed, leading to great population density and to stifling overcrowding of housing, schools and recreation areas.” The high density encountered in inner city ghettos facilitated the anonymity of criminals, according to the report, while overcrowding was identified as a cause for the accelerated deterioration of the environment and its transformation into a territory perceived to not be worth safeguarding.

Furthermore, the educational system in inner city black neighborhoods was “less well equipped than its nonslum counterpart to deal with built-in learning problems of the children who [came] to it.” According to the Katzenbach Commission, school buildings in these neighborhoods were often dilapidated and equipped with the fewest texts and library books, “the least experienced full-time teachers, the least qualified substitute teachers, the most overcrowded classrooms and the least developed counseling and guidance services in the Nation.” The student’s ability to succeed in a post-industrial economy was significantly affected by this two-tier system where other environmental elements further hindered the likelihood for vertical socioeconomic mobility to occur. With a curriculum designed for mainstream society, a society to which many black residents of the inner city ghetto could difficulty access, classroom materials often seemed “light years away from the circumstances and facts of life that surround[ed] [ghetto dwellers] everyday;” an observation made by

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31 Ibid.

32 Ibid., 70.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid., 71.
the commission in 1967 and reiterated in HBO's fourth season of *The Wire* forty years later. The continued segregation of schools years after the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board* aggravated the classroom experience of children growing in places where success at school was infrequent:

*Educational achievement is generally lower among nonwhite lower income students, and so racial and economic segregation in the schools has the circular effect of exposing nonwhite lower income students to inferior examples of educational achievement. There is substantial evidence that the achievements and aspirations of students are strongly related to the educational backgrounds and performances of other students in their school, and that nonwhite lower income students do better when placed in mixed or middle class schools.*

The commission concluded that the lack of expected payouts for scholarly accomplishments was responsible for the student's general disinterest in education. The problem lay “not only in the schools' failure to prepare students adequately for the future, but also in the absence of adequate and equal employment opportunities.”

Studies carried out through the commission observed that labeling and the consequent grouping of students with weaker academic performances had the effect to accelerate the alienation of flagged students. Schools tended to reinforce these students' sense of rejection by assigning them to special classes and excluding them from the normal school environment, thereby further limiting their exposure to positive examples:

*The child, in self-defense, reacts against the school, perhaps openly rebelling against its demands. He and others like him seek each other out. Unable to succeed in being educated, they cannot afford to admit that education is important. Unwilling to accept the school's humiliating evaluation of them, they begin to flaunt its standards and reject its long-range goals in favor of conduct more immediately gratifying.*

The ghetto, in turn, achieved much of the same, only at a different and much larger scale. The misbalance between the white city and its black ghettos became a murky reflection of the legal and political progress for minority groups since the turn of the century, where social norms maintained the status of blacks as second-rate citizens despite significant improvements in race relations. By failing to provide adequate education to youths residing in ghetto neighborhoods, the prospect of a large segment of America's population was systematically undermined; a troubling fact that would eventually widen the gulf that separated the haves from the have not in America.

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35 Ibid., 70.
36 Ibid., 71.
37 Ibid.
Figure 4. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X, two major figures of the civil rights movement assassinated in 1968 and 1965 respectively, 26th March 1964.

Figure 5. Baltimore riots, 1968.

Figure 6. Baltimore riots, 1968.
Figure 7. Baltimore riots, 1968.
Writing on the circumstances of migrants coming from the Deep South, author Claude Brown noted in 1965:

*The children of these disillusioned colored pioneers inherited the total lot of their parents – the disappointments, the anger. To add to their misery, they had little hope of deliverance. For where does one run to when he’s already in the Promised Land?*

Martin Luther King, Jr. had observed much of the same as he delivered a speech in Baltimore eighteen months before his assassination in the spring of 1968. King explored the duality experienced by blacks in the United States, which fuelled the frustration of those stuck in “The Other America,” the title of his speech:

*One America is invested with enrapturing beauty. In it we can find many things that we can think about in noble terms ... This America is inhabited by millions of the fortunate whose dreams of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are poured out in glorious fulfillment ... In this America little boys and little girls grow up in the sunlight of opportunity. [While in the other America], we see something that drains away the beauty that exists ... In this America, thousands of work-starved man walk the streets every day in search for jobs that do not exist ... People find themselves feeling that life is a long and desolate corridor with no exit signs. In this America, hopes unborn have died and radiant dreams of freedom have been deferred.*

King’s speech, in turn, resonated the words of W.E.B. Du Bois written 63 years earlier; “To be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in a land of dollars is the very bottom of hardships.” As the Katzenbach Commission’s report substantiated the positions of these prominent scholars, thinkers and activists, President Johnson 1967 Kerner Commission started to investigate why and how areas affected by such dysfunctional socioeconomic conditions were not only likely to present higher crime rates, but also so much more susceptible to become the stage of uproars, civil disturbances and riots.

*The Kerner Commission*

Around six months after receiving the report compiled by Nicholas Katzenbach and his team, the riots in Detroit confirmed that marginalized communities would not stand idle in the face of social and economic injuries. President Johnson mandated Governor Otto Kerner to head a special investigation as Chair of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorder. Formed while the riots were still underway in Detroit on July 28th, 1967, this bipartisan commission was asked to answer three basic questions: “What happened?” “Why did it happen?” “What can be done to prevent it from happening again and again?”

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39 Martin Luther King Jr, “The Other America” (Baltimore, 1966).
The Kerner Commission concluded: "Our Nation is moving towards two societies, one black and one white – separate and unequal." It identified the failure "to make good the promise of American democracy to all citizens" as the underlying cause of the disorders. Startling the conservative audience, the report indirectly supported civil rights activist who stood by similar claims. In one carefully worded declaration, the Kerner Commission bemoaned white society, even identifying it as the real culprit behind the wicked condition of living spaces in the American ghetto:

What white Americans have never fully understood – but what the Negro can never forget – is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it.

With this statement, the Kerner Commission established grounds that aligned with the position of civil rights activists as well as the US President, who demanded restitution for decades of discrimination. If the Commission’s words would shock and awaken American society to the causes responsible for the existence of inner city ghettos, the declaration remained somewhat abstract and thus difficult for most to comprehend. At any rate, the conditions observed by both Presidential commissions remained unaddressed in any drastic way in the months that followed, while the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4th, 1968 became grounds for further demonstrations to take place, this time throughout the country, at one and the same time.

As the nation’s population surged in protest of this violent and symbolic act, the police responded to the uproars in significantly less brutal ways than it had in Newark, Detroit and Watts. As per a recommendation of the Kerner Commission, the use of force by law enforcement officers would only become permissible in cases of self-defense or for the protection of other lives. This guideline, a directive endorsed by the International Associate of Chiefs of Police, recognized that it was better to preserve life than property – a position that many Americans would criticize during the post-riot debates and reappraisals.

43 Kerner, “Reports of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders.”
44 Ibid.
45 President Johnson acknowledged that desegregation was not enough, and that restitution would be required in order to achieve equal opportunity between races. In his June 4, 1965 commencement address pronounced before students of Howard University, the President said: “Freedom is not enough. You do not wipe away the scars of centuries by saying: Now you are free to go where you want, and do as you desire, and choose the leaders you please. You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberated him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, ‘you are free to compete with all the other,’ and still justly believe that you have been completely fair. Thus it is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates. This is the next and the more profound state of the battle for civil rights. We seek not just freedom but opportunity.” See, Lyndon B Johnson, “President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Commencement Address at Howard University, ‘To Fulfill These Rights,’” June 4, 1965, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum Online Archives.
46 Richard Sullivan, “Memo to Board of Directors: Civil Disorders at Baltimore - April, 1968” (Criminal Justice Commission, April 29, 1968), Special Collections, University of Baltimore Langsdale Library.
**1968 Riots in Baltimore**

One month before the Baltimore riots of 1968, the March issue of *The Reader's Digest* presented a story titled "How Baltimore Fends Off Riots." The article highlighted the work of Police Commissioner Donald Pomerleau, specifically with regards to the Baltimore City Police Department’s (BPD) involvement providing social services in African American neighborhoods. As noted in the article, one of Pomerleau’s first acts upon taking office in 1966 "was to set up a course in Negro history which every Baltimore police officer [would] eventually take." Pomerleau also invested in the existing Community Relations Department; a division of the BPD mandated to mediate disputes without having to resolve to formal prosecutions. As the commissioner explained, "We opened a chain of storefront service centers in the Negro community, each manned by a uniformed police officer from noon to eight in the evening, seven days a week." Major William Harris, Commanding Officer of the Department of Community Relations and a Morgan State College graduate, explained to the reporter the potential of this program for changing negative opinions of the police within inner city communities:

> We prepared a lecture series on citizenship for the schoolchildren, and when my lecturer first appeared before a class of second- graders, two little girls took one look at his uniform and broke into tears. That reaction convinced me that my men should be in uniform when they operate the service centers. I want the children to become familiar with the uniform, to learn that we are not monsters but men – black men, just like their daddies.

As this special unit entered local communities “not with gun and nightstick but with service,” it aimed to replace the image of the police as the protector of the white man’s laws; the very same system of law that had authorized slavery, sanctioned racial discrimination and enacted a legal framework whereby crimes generally associated with racial minorities would call for especially severe penalties. An officer posted at one of the storefront centers told the reporter that the Department of Community Relations took action in every case in the book, from complaints of junkies loitering on doorsteps of private residences, to protestations

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48 Ibid., 109.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., 110.
51 William Harris, cited in: Ibid., 110.
52 As Douglas Massey observed, “The earliest evidence of racial formation in the United States is from a series of court decisions handed down in colonial Virginia’s legal system. These rulings established the basic tenets of US race relations that would prevail for centuries: that blacks were inherently inferior to whites; that blacks were less than fully human and could be treated as property; and that black inferiority was divinely sanctioned and to be publicly enforced.” (2011, 37-38) In 1669, the Virginia House of Burgesses would hold that the killing of a black slave by a white owner would not constitute murder. (2011, 38) Nearly two centuries later, “any remaining doubt about the legality of slavery under the Constitution was ended by the Supreme Court’s *Dred Scott* decision of 1857, which not only affirmed slavery but articulated an explicit doctrine of black inferiority.” (2011, 39) The Thirteenth Amendment to the US Constitution, which abolished slavery, was not ratified until 1865 in the State of Mississippi. (2011, 40) The use of law to reinforced inequity in post-slavery America will be detailed throughout this work, especially in chapters 2 and 3. For a study of the racial-bias in sentencing, the transformation of vices into crimes and vice-versa, see Doris Marie Provine’s *Unequal Under Law* and Loïc Wacquant’s *Prison of Poverty*. Massey, *The Past & Future of American Civil Rights*; Loïc Wacquant, *Prisons of Poverty*, Expanded edition (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Doris Marie Provin, *Unequal Under Law: Race in the War on Drugs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
pertaining to segregation in bars and restaurants. Harris explained that his team also intervened unsolicited, especially in matters of race-based discriminations as they aimed to defuse tensions before the ‘Black Power boys’ would take matters into their own hands.

The assassination of the leader of the civil rights movement on April 4th 1968 at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee would quickly overshadow these and other signs of progress in Baltimore, however. The shattering news that a sniper had shot and killed Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was conveyed to Baltimoreans in a news report that further exacerbated the prospective of civil disobedience for the rapid advancement of civil rights:

The same broadcast which brought Marylanders the shocking news of Dr. King’s death carried also a news clip of Governor Agnew justifying his action earlier in the day in ordering the arrest of 300 students from Bowie State College, a Negro institution, who had gathered at the State House, peacefully protesting inadequate conditions at their school and demanding a meeting with the governor.53

The timing could have not been worst for the conservative Governor of Maryland. The repression and arrest of peaceful demonstrators – together with the killing of a great defender of civil disobedience for the evolution of civil rights – provided the impetuous for affected communities to respond to these assaults forcefully.

The first sign of turmoil in Baltimore took place at about 00:30 on the morning of April 5, 1968, at Hoffman’s Liquor Store, 4451 Park Heights Avenue, where a homemade fire bomb had been thrown through a window.54 Few other disturbances were reported in the following 24 hours locally, while reports of riots in neighboring cities were rapidly monopolizing the attention of political leaders and American citizens alike.

Disturbances remerged in Baltimore on Saturday, April 6th around Gay Street in the eastern inner city, where a fire bombing, disorderly crowds and a break-in were reported between 17:12 and 17:27.55 As the crowd grew larger and acts of theft, arson and vandalism multiplied, Governor Spiro Agnew signed an emergency proclamation at 19:55, “but termed his proclamation a precautionary measure only.”56 Already on call at that time, the Maryland State Police advised that up to 400 of its men could be in Baltimore within the hour. Later that evening, the National Guard arrived from Pikesville at 22:40, posting 2,000 guardsmen “in the general area of Greenmount Avenue and Calvert Street between North Avenue and 25th Street.”57 By the peak of the uproars, almost 11,000 Regular Army and National Guard troops were posted in Baltimore, according to The Sun.58 Upon the request of Spiro Agnew, the National Guard would have no arrest power; a task that would remain in the hands of the

54 D.D. Pomerleau, “Action Reports, Baltimore Police Department: From 0600 Hours, Friday, April 5 1968 To 0600 Hours, Friday April 12 1968” (Baltimore: Baltimore Police Department, April 13, 1968), 1, Special Collections, University of Baltimore Langsdale Library.
55 Ibid., 6.
57 Pomerleau, “Action Reports, Baltimore Police Department: From 0600 Hours, Friday, April 5 1968 To 0600 Hours, Friday April 12 1968,” 13.
local police throughout the turmoil. A curfew went into effect between 23:00 and 6:00, the sale of alcoholic beverages stopped, and no gasoline was to be delivered "except directly into gasoline tanks of motor vehicles." As Commissioner Pomerleau would later indicate, the curfew constituted one of the most important weapon for the Baltimore police seeing that the authority could "clear the streets with [the police’s] suppressive patrol."

On the first night of uproar in Baltimore, one policeman was injured and three civilians were killed. "Two of the dead were found in a burned building and one was shot by the night manager of a bar." The following day, 1,900 Federal troops arrived at the Mondawmin Shopping Center in West Baltimore. The fourth civilian death was recorded on Monday, April 8th when Officer Bernard E. Hartlove fired in self-defense as William V. Stepter came at him with a knife at 9:50. The Police Commissioner responded to this news with a Teletype addressed to Commanding Officers citywide:

60 Pomerleau, “Action Reports, Baltimore Police Department: From 0600 Hours, Friday, April 5 1968 To 0600 Hours, Friday April 12 1968,” 13.
61 Ibid., 60.
62 Ibid., 15.
63 Ibid., 18–9.
64 Ibid., 23.
You are reminded that the established Firearms Policy remains in force. Police personnel will only shoot in defense of themselves, fellow officers, military personnel, and citizens. Looters will not be shot except in self defense as described in the previous sentence. No warning shots will be fired. No gas will be used without direct authority of the Chief of Patrol, Deputy Commissioner of Operations or the Police Commissioner.65

When the authority of Commissioner Pomerleau was passed to General George Gelston of the Maryland National Guard upon the declaration of the state of emergency, and later to Lieutenant General Robert H York who superseded him, some confusion emerged regarding the curfew rules in the city. Community leaders who had been given special passes to remain in the streets after the curfew in order to pacify the crowds later found that these passes were no longer valid; a number of activists, church and community leaders were arrested as a result.66 Other residents had no knowledge that a curfew had been called into effect in the first place. A report published by the left leaning American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) wrote:

Baltimore’s curfew was all the more punishing to ghetto residents because its very existence was not known to all residents and its definition changed from day to day. Imposition of the curfew and the times covered were announced through the mass media and by sound trucks. There were no posters or placards. An old Negro man, jailed during the disorders, was asked by a cellmate, “Were you picked up on curfew?” and answered, “No, man, I was picked up on Caroline Street.”67

The same report noted that because arrestees were sometimes being released during the curfew hours, some would be re-arrested on their way home from the detention center. Overall, 5,950 arrests were made between 1800 on Saturday April 6th and 1600 on Friday April 12th 1968.68 The vast majority of these arrests would be for curfew violations, eventually earning scores of citizens a criminal record and thereby taking away their right to vote for the period of their incarceration, parole and probation.69

65 Ibid.
67 Ibid., 10.
68 Pomerleau, “Action Reports, Baltimore Police Department: From 0600 Hours, Friday, April 5 1968 To 0600 Hours, Friday April 12 1968,” 54.
69 Around 80% of the people arrested during the riots were charged with curfew violations. (The Maryland Crime Investigating Commission, 24; Sullivan, 3) Because of the extremely large number of arrests, some special measures were adapted during the riots to process offenders. This included trials being held throughout the night on a 24 hours a day basis, which reduced the amount of time that individuals would be held for processing. Also in the interest of speeding up processing, some procedures that would later prove to be highly problematic were adapted by the court. “Attorneys advised their clients to waive the right to hear the testimony of the accuser, to cross-examine opposing witnesses, to present witnesses in their own defense, and to require that complainants prove ownership of allegedly stolen goods. These waivers relieved the prosecution of the need to provide proof of the charge.” (Motz 1968, 20) Attorneys claimed that these recommendations were made in order to assure the defendant’s right to have a speedy trial, while closing a blind eye to their right to hear the proof of the prosecution. Defendants held on curfew violations that refused such extra-ordinary procedures would be given bail (generally $500 for curfew offences). In total 345 curfew defendants rejected immediate trial, but only 99 of these would be released on bail. The other 246 defendants, unable to secure bail because of their poverty or otherwise, would spend considerable time in jail awaiting trial. But the vast majority accepted the speedy-trial procedure on the advice of their layers. Around 60% of those accused of curfew violation were found guilty (between 1,900-2,600 individuals). “Of those found guilty, half were jailed in lieu of paying fines, 35% were released on payment of fines, 5% were given jail sentences and 10% received suspended fines or other sentences.” (Motz 1968, 22) As persons unable to pay fines were generally required to serve out time according to a schedule that required as much as one day of imprisonment for every dollar fined, hundreds of Baltimoreans spent considerable time in detention seeing that curfew violation fines generally ranged between $50 to $100. (ibid) Unable to pay these relatively minor fines, people living in poverty would be more harshly punished for their offences, often leading to the termination of their employment as a result of their extended imprisonment. See, Motz, “A Report on Baltimore Civil Disorders: April 1968”; The Maryland Crime Investigating Commission, “A Report of the Baltimore Civil Disturbance of April 6 to April 11, 1968”; Richard Sullivan, “Memo: Riot Control and Mass Arrests,” May 10, 1968, Special Collections, University of Baltimore Langsdale Library.
In the end, a total of six individuals lost their lives in relation to the uproars, which included one white and five black civilians. In addition, "more than 700 others were injured, more than 1,000 businesses were looted or destroyed," and "insurance agencies were required to pay some $12,000,000 to meet some 1,600 claims from riot victims." The vast majority of damages were contained within an area bounded by Patterson Park Avenue on the east, West Belevedere Avenue and 33rd Street on the north, Hilton Street on the west, and Pratt Street and Washington Boulevard on the south. To be sure, mapping the riots amounted to mapping inner city ghetto neighborhoods, where poverty, segregation and urban blight had become recognized as being the norm rather than the exception. The concentration of the riots in specific neighborhood was partly the result of the security measures in place, where military and police officers cordoned off the downtown area. This same concentration was also the upshot of the general purpose of the riots: to take back territories where Baltimore’s poor black community had been confined, and where white merchants and property owners operated revenue-making ventures while making their lives in further removed neighborhoods.

Most of the properties targeted during the riots were liquor stores, drug stores, taverns and groceries operated by individuals living outside the neighborhood. Many liquor stores were looted and burnt independently of their source of ownership, presumably on the premise that excessive alcohol consumption represented a major problem in inner city ghetto communities. In total, around 500 establishments with liquor licenses out of around 2,300 citywide were directly targeted by the riots. The immediate ‘enemy’ was assailed from within as no serious thrust outside inner city ghetto was reported with regards to liquor stores or otherwise.

As the Maryland Crime Investigating Commission observed, “From all appearances, the Black Militants weren’t trying to start a race riot but trying to establish the machinery whereby the Negroes were to run their own neighborhood stores.” The report continued, “The first phase of the plan was to burn out the white merchants’ [stores],” while their owners and the white population more broadly were never targeted. In fact, the AFSC report remarked, “Ghetto residents showed great restraint in the use of personal violence. Few white civilians visited the ghetto during the riots, and those who were there were usually ignored, instead of being vilified or attacked.”

70 Pomerleau, “Action Reports, Baltimore Police Department: From 0600 Hours, Friday, April 5 1968 To 0600 Hours, Friday April 12 1968,” 44.
73 Residents, social workers and activists had tried in many occasions to limit the number of liquor licenses issued in inner city neighborhoods in the years leading up to the riots. Dr. Campter who “had lived and practice medicine in a ghetto for many years,” later noted that “he had appeared many times before the Liquor Board but had been unsuccessful in his attempts to lessen the number of licenses granted in theses areas.” Other similar attempts were repeatedly reported in the pages of The Sun paper in Baltimore – most of which being unsuccessful. See, “Minutes of Special Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Criminal Justice Commission” (Baltimore Criminal Justice Commission, April 29, 1968), 2, Special Collections, University of Baltimore Langsdale Library.
Underlying causes

According to Walter Lively, Executive Director of the Urban Coalition, the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. was like a mirror held up to all the other horrors; an act characteristic of the unremitting resistance against the black men’s rise as an equal in America. Another 21 year-old man from East Baltimore spoke for many of his peers when he exclaimed, “The fires symbolized something. It’s just to let ‘em know they can’t keep knockin’ our leaders off.” The assassination of minister and activist Malcolm X three years prior was no doubt still fresh in this young man’s mind.

For Lively, the goal of the riots was to pressure for new economic opportunities in black communities, where white owned businesses had by then become a not-so-necessary evil. “We have to even out trade relations. If the people who have been saying stop rioting proposed programs so black people could buy out the businesses – okay. A program like that would cost millions. So would this riot,” he told James Dilts, a reporter for The Sun. Individuals involved in the events pointed out that stores owned by the black community had by and large been spared. “For example, near Patterson Park there wasn’t any looting at the black-owned Jet Store. It’s new, well stocked and on a hill, good for spotting approaching police cars. But it didn’t get hit.” Shops operated by members of the Jewish community were not so lucky despite the congenial relationship that Jews and blacks had established in past years in Baltimore. Rioters were careful to limit the attacks to material devices and avoided confrontations and assaults with individuals the best they could, independently of race or ethnicity. “A minute and a half after we set the fire, we knock on the door and tell ‘em the house is on fire,” a man explained. No assaults were reported between individuals of different races. In the end, “Lots of places burned. And most of them did not reopen.”

In the year of the riots, unemployment rates amongst the country’s black population were twice as high as for whites. In some of Baltimore’s inner city census tracts, the rates hovered just below 30 percent. Such rates correspond to those of the Great Depression but the American economy was stable and even prosperous in 1968. According to the US Department of Labor, African Americans with a high school degree had a greater chance to be unemployed than a white high school dropout at the eve of the riots. The Maryland Crime Investigating Commission noted, “What the rioters appeared to be seeking was fuller participation in the social order and the material benefits enjoyed by the majority of American citizens. Rather than rejecting the American system, they were anxious to obtain a piece for themselves in

78 Dilts, “The Changing City: The Fire This Time.”
79 Walter Lively, in Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
Militants such as Lively and others thereby took it upon themselves to run storeowners that they generally viewed as being exploitative out of the neighborhood, with the hope to create opportunities for local entrepreneurs. “This selectivity in the choice of targets seemed to demonstrate that a prime motive was to get back at merchants known to have humiliated or exploited black people.” The attacks also landed on black owned stores reputed to be exploitative or destructive to the community. Overall, these so-called ‘commodity-riots’ represented an assault on various problematic elements in the inner city ghetto, with a list of grievances that included:

Higher prices and lower quality for foods than in middle-class white neighborhoods, often among stores belonging to the same food chains; exorbitant and deceptive credit practices; inflated prices for liquor and appliances (33% above suburban prices was common); sale of used goods for new; evasion of warranties; raising of prices, for food especially, on the days when welfare recipients receive their monthly checks; dishonesty in computing bills; fees for cashing checks, or demands that a certain high percentage of each check must be spent at the store of the merchant accepting the check; refusal of banks to cash welfare checks; dishonest upping of rents or withholding of rent deposits; failure to make repairs in rental units; lack of proper heat or plumbing facilities; exploitative practices of employment agencies, including illegal assignment of wages and collusion with employers; insulting behavior to black people, including small children.

Counterforces

The police response to the events of April 1968 played a major part in limiting the damages caused during the uproars in Baltimore. As riots started to affect cities in the Northern United States in the mid-1960s, law enforcement officials worked out a plan for handling civil disorders. In Baltimore, ‘Operation Oscar’ built on the findings presented by the Kerner Commission in order to develop a comprehensive strategy that aimed to contain and minimize the effects of mass demonstration, uproars or riots. According to Colonel Robert J Lally, the Baltimore police had held “almost bi-weekly meetings for the past 1 ½ years [in April 1968] in planning action which would be necessary if riots broke out.” The level of coordination between agencies, the use of minimal necessary force exercised by the police, as well as the relatively good reputation of Baltimore’s police played important roles in limiting social and material damages in the city, and augmenting the productive value of the demonstrations. As the State’s Attorney for Baltimore argued, “if guns had been used to fight the rioters, the result

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87 The American Friends Service Committee report written by Jane Motz noted, for example, that a bar known by a local black athlete “was extensively damaged, purportedly because of a reputation for bad treatments of black customers.” Ibid., 36. On the other hand, some white-owned stores that prided themselves for employing locals, including many of black race, were not spared by the demolition that took place during the uproars.
90 Sullivan, “Memo: Riot Control and Mass Arrests.”
would have been black against white.”

Commissioner Pomerleau instigated changes in recruitment policy in order to re-balance the racial assemblage of the BPD, seeing that only 6 percent of his officers were black in 1968, whereas 45 percent of the city was black. In the years that preceded the riots, black officers had represented between 25 and 30 percent of the recruits. This proportion remained largely inadequate, but it nevertheless constituted in a radical shift in the right direction. Despite the deficient demographic composition of the force, “Baltimore’s police [did] not have nearly as bad a reputation for brutality as [did] the police in some other cities,” such as Washington D.C., located roughly 65 kilometers away.

Baltimore’s Democratic Mayor Thomas L.J. D’Alesandro III, elected in office in early 1967, also played a key role in lessening the potential negative impacts of the events as he had been relatively attentive to the problem of inner city communities and acknowledged the continued existence and impact of racial prejudice. On the day following the assassination of Dr. King, Mayor D’Alesandro III proclaimed Sunday, April 7th as a day of prayer and named Monday as an official mourning day, closing off city schools and public offices. He personally met with the crowds during the demonstrations, listened to their grievances and urged for restrain. Together with the General, Mayor D’Alesandro III issued special passes to church figures and local leaders to circulate after the curfew, informally enrolling pillars from the black community to assist him in limiting the damages.

**Criticism: the vilification of revolt**

Outnumbered by rioters, the police reportedly stood by as properties were being looted, leaving critics to denounce the inability of law enforcement to protect goods and buildings during the events. The AFSC Report underlined, “Leaders of merchant groups and certain politicians [such as City Comptroller Hyman Pressman seem[ed] to feel outraged that so few people were shot when so much property was stolen or destroyed.” These detractors disputed the views of other commentators, who commended the police response for

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93 Ibid.
94 The bad reputation that the police in Washington D.C. held in the city’s ghetto neighborhood is detailed in Frydl (2013), where the author alludes to recurrent cases of police brutality and corruption. She writes, “Any number of things could bring a police squad car to the slums of the city’s second precinct [in the 1930s]; practically none involved keeping the neighborhood safe.” (143) She later notes that the Bureau of Narcotics Storage room was commonly being used as a drug supply by corrupted officers reselling to local dealers (149); and that the beginning of police patrol in ghetto areas corresponded to a massive increase in cases of police brutality (154). She indicates that this climate of corruption and brutality reigned over the D.C. police corps well into the time when the police system modernized in the mid 1960s (the end of the police walking beat, the standardization of police cars for patrol, the introduction of police radio, supplying officers with proper equipment, whereas they had to buy their own handcuffs before, etc.). (297, 301, 307) But even then, Frydl notes, around 20% of the cops stationed in the inner city of Washington D.C. were on the take. (320) See, Kathleen Frydl, The Drug Wars in America, 1940 - 1973 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
preserving life over property. Positions pertaining to the legitimacy of the uproars and the police response were highly debated, with conservatives like Hayman Pressman calling for hardline law and order interventions, and Governor Spiro Agnew going as far as to deny the existence of white privilege and prejudices against blacks in the first place.

As martial law was lifted on Thursday the 11th of April 1968 in Baltimore, Agnew invited black leaders to gather, and to whom he would deliver a speech that highlighted his vast misunderstanding of the causes behind the riots. The crowd, which he referred to as the "moderate civil rights leaders," included prominent figures from Baltimore's black community, such as Judge Watts, Judge Cole, Judge Hargrove, Mrs. Juanita Mitchell and Reverend Frank Williams. Agnew's speech started, "Hard on the heels of tragedy comes the assignment of blame and the excuses. I did not invite you here for either purpose." Notwithstanding his early warning, Agnew continued to blame his audience for failing to control the crowds. He then accused figures like Stokely Carmichael for organizing the demonstrations and promoting violence. While a FBI investigation would later deny allegations that the riots were encouraged, planned or organized by any external agitator, Carmichael was even renowned for condemning "any preaching of violence, burning, looting, et cetera," as Reverent Henry J. Offer carefully noted. Agnew continued by highlighting that he would not endorse the Kerner Report, failing to indicate any reason why, and instead concluded by refuting the existence of a racial problems altogether. "The fiction that Negores lack any opportunity in this country is dispelled by the status of those in this room," the Governor gathered, prompting audience members to leave the room in protest.

Agnew, like Pressman before him, argued that the police should have taken a harder stance against protesters and used the full power of their authority to limit the material cost of the uproars, despite the Kerner Report recommendations. Nominee for Vice President during Richard Nixon's 1968 campaign, "Governor Agnew's 'shoot-the-looter' theme [became] a powerful vote-catcher in an emotionally troubled time," a journalist at The Sun observed; a catchphrase that reflected the sociopolitical inclinations of the average Republican electorate then, as well as the contradictions that existed between the predominantly liberal and progressive political climate in Baltimore City in the 1960s compared to the State of Maryland as a whole.

Productive values of the civil disturbances

Besides confirming that racial prejudice remained misunderstood and even denied, the riots also produced, or at least anticipated, important changes for black communities in the United States. For one, Reverent Offer argued, the violence would "make America listen to a

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97 Agnew, cited in: Reverent Henry J. Offer, "Analysis and Evaluation of the Speech by Governor Agnew to the So-called Moderate Civil Rights Leaders on Thursday, April 11th, As I Would See It From the Viewpoint of These Black Leaders" (The Afro-American, The Day Before Easter 1968), Special Collections Online, University of Baltimore Langsdale Library.
98 Ibid.
99 Thomas O’Neill, “Politics and People,” The Sun, August 16, 1968, sec. A, 8, Baltimore Sun Archives. As O’Neill explains, "The phrase [shoot-the-looter] which appeared to have lifted him to the Republican nomination was unveiled a short time prior to the Miami Beach convention in a talk to an organization of Greek youth in New York."
whole lot of moderate [civil rights activist] they would not be listening to had the country not been scared by the uproars of 1968; the greatest wave of social unrest ever experienced in the United States to this day. In Baltimore, city banks reviewed their policy and started to accept welfare checks, which they would cash without charges. A law permitting judges to “hold rents in escrow until required services or repairs are provided was passed before the disorders occurred and went into effect in June,” and the bail system would be reconsidered altogether. More importantly, the uproars aroused a wider awareness to racial inequity, thereby encouraging individuals to get behind the civil rights movement and replace dysfunctional norms by restitutive conventions. As “the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. once again oiled the legislative machinery with a martyr’s blood,” President Johnson eventually presented Congress with a legislation that would ban discrimination in the real estate industry, finally “leading to the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968.”

Writing on the events of April 1968 one week after the end of martial law, The Sun paper suggested, “Perhaps, most middle class whites realize that the ultimate cure for riots is the betterment of ghetto conditions.” This new awareness of the living condition of blacks in and beyond Maryland created opportunities to involve stakeholders that had previously been oblivious to problems proper to their city’s segregated minority areas. In East Baltimore, for example, this sudden change prompted Stanley Santos, a community organizer residing in the ghetto, to organize tours where white middle class Baltimoreans would finally experience walking through inner city neighborhoods, where most of the city’s black population continued to live in involuntary isolation from citizens of other races in 1968.

Counterproductive values of the civil disturbances

While small groups of concerned residents became interested to step in and discover territories that for generations they had been taught to avoid, other residents continued

100. Offer, “Analysis and Evaluation of the Speech by Governor Agnew to the So-Called Moderate Civil Rights Leaders on Thursday, April 11th, As I Would See It From the Viewpoint of These Black Leaders.”
102. Motz, “A Report on Baltimore Civil Disorders: April 1968,” 32–35. It should be noted that no major changes have been realized and that the problems associated with the ‘cash bail system’ are still a contentious issue in 2015 in Maryland. As opposed to Washington D.C., Maryland still operates a cash bail system, which explains why the large majority of individuals currently in the Baltimore Jail are awaiting trial – unable to post bail – and thus imprisoned for extended periods of time without having been formally judged to be guilty of the crime that they allegedly committed.
103. Massey, “The Past & Future of American Civil Rights,” 42. As Douglas Massey explained elsewhere, “it was perfectly legal for real estate agents to deny African Americans access to housing solely on the basis of race” prior to the Housing Act of 1968. Massey noted, however, that “even though racial discrimination in housing was banned in 1968, enforcement of the act over the next two decades was weak, sporadic, and ineffective. The probability of being charged with discrimination was low, and the penalties for conviction were negligible.” This situation remained until 1988, when Congress passed significant amendments to the Fair Housing Act. Douglas S. Massey, “Racial Discrimination in Housing: A Moving Target,” Social Problems 52, no. 2 (2005): 149.
106. As a Baltimore resident explained, the ‘imageability’ of Baltimore was directly and extensively affected by the racial character of neighborhoods. Thomas Carney explains: “The path to the park took us past black streets. Again we did not walk down those streets; we walked past those streets, and those individuals did not greet us, and we did not greet them. Knowing what streets not to go down was handed down much like the secrets of families. It is part of what we do in America. It is part of the unspoken racism rather than the outspoken, blatant racism. As you were leaving the house you were asked where are you going. When you delivered the response, you were asked ‘Do you know how to get there?’ ‘Do you know how to get there?’ was not a question that sought out whether you knew the directions; it sought that you knew the path. And the path was (making your way around) those streets where nonwhites lived and in many cases, non-Catholics. It was passed down in the secret way when you observed behaviors, when you took walks as a child with your parents and you observed the streets that they took, the directions that they took.” See: Linda Shopes, “Thomas Carney: Oral History,” in Baltimore ’68 Riots and Rebirth in an American City, ed. Jessica I Elfenbein, Thomas L Hollowak, and Elizabeth M Nix (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 88.
to vilify blacks and upheld the riots as evidence of the dark man’s unruliness. Responding to the fear and anguish caused by the lack of understanding of the racial other, ‘law and order’ evolved into the primary theme in the political and media oratory of 1968, when this subject matter eventually became the controlling issue for the Presidential election, “even ahead of the Vietnam mess.”

Despite the election of great defenders of punitive policies to the White House in Richard Nixon and his vice-president, Spiro Agnew, uncertainties regarding questions of security, criminality and further civil disturbances continued to linger, leaving distressed residents to join the flight to the suburb at faster rates than they had before. Most relocated to whiter and further removed areas such as Baltimore County in Maryland, where the lack of low-cost housing kept the poor at bay and innovative forms of racial discrimination continued to hamper the black middle class to make their home there. This movement further reduced the tax base in the city proper, while also reinforcing the demographic homogeneity of the inner city of Baltimore.

As alarmed citizens packed their bags, taking their prejudices with them, extensive investigations pertaining to the causes of the uproars confirmed that the blame should largely fall on the back of those who stayed home that week of April 1968, but had exploited blacks since the dawn of American civilization. As one investigation concluded, “the riot in Baltimore must be attributed to two elements – ‘white racism’ and economic oppression of the Negro.” The AFSC Report reached similar conclusions: “regardless of their roles, people knew that [the uproar] was a shared expression of rage, grief and frustration in the face of white dominance and obtuseness.” If the significance of racial prejudices on the economic conditions of blacks was becoming widely acknowledged and better understood, the role of territorial forces in the production and maintenance of inequity remained poorly understood.

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108 While federal programs aiming to combat drug trafficking date back to the early 1900s, President Nixon was the first to declare a ‘War on Drugs’ in the United States in 1970 (something that is usually attributed to President Ronald Reagan), which had a major effect on the prosecution of small time criminals. (Frydl 2013, 1) The drug policy scholar Kathleen Frydl noted that major political actions aiming to attack drug use took place between WWII and 1973, when “the United States transitioned from a regulatory illicit drug regime to a prohibitive and punitive one.” (Ibid) In other words, the country went from regulating drugs through taxation, to punishing through criminal sanctions. Henry Anslinger, the first Commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, led a relentless campaign to craft the image of users as hardcore junkies; as irresponsible men liable to commit violent crimes at any turn. As such, Anslinger attempted to overwrite permissive attitudes towards drugs (Ibid, 28-30; Anslinger 1937). His Bureau “convinced the Hollywood production code authorities to eliminate images of narcotics from films, novels describing illicit drug use, or, for that matter, any open, public discussion of narcotics.” (Frydl 2013, 30) Some forty years later, Nixon’s administration would introduce the country’s first Drug Czar, whose chief role was to address the addiction crisis amongst soldiers returning from Vietnam. While Nixon funded important rehabilitation programs under Jaffe’s advice at the start of his presidency (when it became widely known that addicts were also respectable army men), by his last year in office in 1974, the President “had cut $87 million from Drug Abuse Treatment programs. Even more revealing was the fact that the enforcement side of Nixon’s drug policy was not forced to endure similar budget cuts.” (Ibid, 339) Just the opposite, in fact. Nixon declared a War on Heroin in 1972; the year when he created the Office of Drug Abuse Law Enforcement (ODALE), promising to use his new Office to “disrupt street-level traffic, initiate supply shortages, and drive addicts into treatments.” (Ibid, 363) Nixon also suspended all American economic and military assistance to “countries that contributed, in his judgment, to illicit drug traffic to the United States” as he adapted a hardline stance against drug use, sale and distribution. (Ibid, 387) These various drug-related wars were, to be sure, parts of Nixon’s War on Crime, which he launched and declared during his 1970 State of the Union address. See, Frydl, The Drug Wars in America; Hary J Anslinger, “Remarks to General Federation of Women’s Club,” March 30, 1937, RG 170 NARA Box 3, National Archives: Records of Drug Enforcement Administration.


recognized. Yet, to be sure, spatial devices played central parts in the creation of dysfunctional urban enclaves, where decent jobs remained in short supply, poverty would eventually prevail, schools were underfunded, and where disproportionate policing would eventually become the norm; ultimately evolving into one of the main causes for the overrepresentation of blacks in correctional facilities. As street crime took place most frequently in low-income inner city areas, places almost singularly inhabited by blacks in Baltimore, the police eventually determined that a disproportionate number of its patrol should be dispatched to these specific zones, thereby augmenting the likelihood for criminals operating in the ghetto to be confronted by the police, potentially be abused, accused of a crime, prosecuted and imprisoned. 111 This condition was further amplified with the evolution of the war on drugs, which increasingly targeted street peddlers and low-level criminals. 112

Territorial forces, an unspoken agent responsible for much of the condition that the 1968 riots in Baltimore aimed to overthrow, has in fact confined low-income blacks to zones of dereliction; it castigated their non-compliance to norms defined by the ‘white spatial imaginary,’ 113 and materialized tactics and strategies whereby the middle class could bogart

111 As detailed in a 2000 Human Rights Watch report, “research shows that blacks comprise 62.7 percent and whites 36.7 percent of all drug offenders admitted to state prison, even though federal surveys and other data detailed in [the Human Rights Watch ‘Punishment and Prejudice’] report show clearly that this racial disparity bears scant relation to racial differences in drug offending. There are, for example, five times more white drug users than black.” (Human Rights Watch) Statewide in Maryland in 2003, “African Americans constituted 28 percent of the population, they represent 68 percent of people arrested for a drug offence and 90 percent of people incarcerated for drug offence.” (Schiraldi & Ziedenberg 2003, 2) This condition persisted in the years that followed seeing that in 2010, 89 percent of detainees in the Baltimore Jail were African-American; a city where this racial community only accounts for 64 percent of the population. (Walsh 2010) See, Human Rights Watch, “Punishment and Prejudice: Racial Disparities in the War on Drugs,” 2000; Vincent Schiraldi and Jason Ziedenberg, “Race and Incarceration in Maryland,” Policy Report (Washington D.C.: Justice Policy Institute, 2003), 2; Natassia Walsh and 2010, “Baltimore Behind Bars: How to Reduce the Jail Population, Save Money and Improve Public Safety” (Washington D.C.: Justice Policy Institute, n.d.).

112 Legal scholar Michael Tonry maintains that the parallel between the war on drug and the explosion of imprisonment amongst low-income minorities for non-violent offences is no coincidence. He writes, “They knew that the War on Drugs would be fought mainly in the minority areas of American Cities and that those arrested and imprisoned would disproportionately be young blacks and Hispanics.” (1995, 104) Admittedly, as the percentage of prison inmates serving time for drug-related offences soared from 5 percent in 1960 to around 30 percent in 1995; the proportion of African American in state and federal prison nearly doubled by these years. (Wacquant 1999, 155-6) See, Michael H Tone, Malign Neglect: Race, Crime, and Punishment in America (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 104; Wacquant, Prisons of Poverty, 152-6.

113 The concept of the ‘white spatial imaginary’ was developed in George Lipsitz’s How Racism Takes Place, although no clear definition is attributed to the term. In his work, Lipsitz indicates that the white spatial imaginary represents a dominant social warrant that has “functioned to make racialization of space ideologically legitimate and politically impregnable.” (2011, 123) He notes that the white spatial imaginary obscures reality, denies the existence of unequal economies and of race as a social force. He further indicates that the white spatial imaginary holds up defensive localism, hostile privatism, exclusivity and antidemocratic principles. Lipsitz argues that the concept is “only one part” of what Joe Feagin calls the ‘white racial frame,’ a concept that Feagin defines as “an overarching worldview, one that encompasses important racial ideas, terms, images, emotions, and interpretations” grounded in history and phenomenological spaces, which exert continuing epistemological and ontological influences. (Feagin 2000, 156) While the term ‘spatial imaginary’ is generally used to translate Henrie Lebfevre’s concept of ‘espace vecu,’ Lipsitz’s ‘white spatial imaginary’ is decidedly pejorative and used not to define the subjective espace vecu of white individuals per se, but of racist white individuals only, who deny the existence of white privilege. In this work, the sense attributed to the term ‘white spatial imaginary’ aligns with Lipsitz, while the expression ‘spatial imaginary’ is being used as intended by Lefebvre. Writing on Lefebvre sense of the term, Julie-Anne Boudreau explains, “Spatial imaginaries are mental maps representing a space to which people relate and with which they identify. They are collectively shared internal worlds of thoughts and beliefs that structure everyday life. They are thus different from spatial discourses in that discourses are ‘moments’ in the social process, they are repeated and uttered punctually, but do not necessarily alter deeply held beliefs, fantasies, and desires in the long term. When discourses alter social practices and beliefs, they are ‘translated’ from ‘moments’ to ‘permanences’ in the social process (Harvey 1996, 284). They become, in other words, imaginaries.’ (2007, 2596-7) See: Joe Feagin, Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations (New York: Routledge, 2000); George Lipsitz, How Racism Takes Place (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011); Julie-Anne Bourdrea, “Making New Political Spaces: Mobilizing Spatial Imaginaries, Instrumentalizing Spatial Practices, and Strategically Using Spatial Tools,” Environment and Planning A 39, no. 11 (2007): 2593-2611; Harvey, David, Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference (Cambridge (MA): Blackwell, 1996); Henri Lefebvre, The Production of Space, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, 1991 English Edition (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1974).
the privileges afforded by the modern, predominantly white, American way of life.

As social theorist Joe Feagin pointed out in 1999, housing segregation, and the systemic racism it reveals, is a critical manifestation of the continued existence of white racism. If the civil disturbances that took place in Baltimore following the killing of Freddie Gray in 2015 signaled the persistence of this problematic condition, the subtle mechanisms of oppression that instrumentalize space to perpetuate racial inequality, oppression and prejudice remain in place now, as they were in the spring of 1968.

Research Presentation

This research relates to and compliments an existing body of work pertaining to the politics of space in Baltimore. It enriches the biography of Baltimore by contributing new chapters to the urban history of its inner city, most specifically, its 'ghetto.' Aspects related to the concept of ghetto have been scrutinized by a number of scholars interested in the case of Baltimore. This includes studies conducted from the standpoint of various disciplines to investigate black migration, segregation, local politics, school systems, real estate practices, public housing, community life and inner city architecture. While significant studies have been developed to address these individual themes with regards to the case of Baltimore, none have focused on the development of its ghetto as a spatial device created at the nexus between the politics and culture of racial discrimination.

Statement, aims and limitations

This research seeks to identify covert as well as explicit schemes responsible for the production and maintenance of ghetto neighborhoods in Baltimore. To achieve this, the investigation relies on a multifaceted lens focusing on tactics and strategies proper to urban planning, real estate development, local politics, architecture, grassroots movements and social-psychology.

While discussions concerned with the plight of African Americans tend to divide into two camps – between those emphasizing structural forces on the one hand, and those centering on cultural forces on the other – this research introduces a third position that underscores the function of territorial forces. Acknowledging like William Julius Wilson and Cornel West have that structures and culture are in fact inseparable, this investigation overlooks this


115 Cornel West, Race Matters (New York City: Vintage Books, 1993), 18. See also, William Julius Wilson, More Than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City, Audible Studios (New York City: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010). The main proponents of the social structure paradigm in the social sciences and with regards to the American inner city include Loïc Wacquant and Douglas Massey, while the main proponent of the cultural paradigm include ethnographers Sudhir Venkatesh and Elijah Anderson. It should be noted that while these scholars focus primarily on either the structural or cultural dimensions, they each acknowledge, like West and Wilson do, that cultural forces are shaped – though in no way determined – by social structures external to the communities being studied. And that in turn, culture and structure interact and influence each other. This acknowledgement is much less common in politics, however, with conservatives often blaming the ‘culture’ of the ghetto for the plight of its residents, and liberals addressing ‘structural forces’ that support discrimination without giving even a nod to the significance of culture.
differentiation as it codifies any forces – whether cultural, structural or otherwise – as 'lines' able to affect a network. In turn, the research posits that as lines progress to create physical conditions that mirror their motives, territorial forces emerge, which reinforce the significance of cultural and structural forces, and protract their legacy.

This research puts forth a narrative that details the functioning of well-known strategies of ghettoization, from Jim Crow to ‘redlining,’ and it also lays bare the existence of lesser-known tactics that have spatialized prejudices, willingly or otherwise. In addition, this project also aims to identify failure points responsible for the non-efficacy of measures that honorably strived to integrate the Baltimore ghetto to the rest of the city, but did not succeed.

The investigation is thus designed to answer the two following questions: What have been the mechanics at work in the production and perpetuation of inner city ghettos in Baltimore? And, how have tactical and strategic spatial manipulations created, maintained or counteracted racial inequity in Baltimore?

The research will address these questions by investigating the interplay between political forces and the transformation of residential territories in the Baltimore ghetto, between 1920 and 1968 in Baltimore City.

**Literature Review: Elements of the Baltimore Ghetto**

In *Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City*, the journalist Antero Pietila offers accounts that come closest to answering the research questions central to this work. Written in accordance to a style proper to his own profession, Pietila’s work covers a historical period comprised between 1910 and 2000 to reveal how racial prejudices encouraged spatial segregation via the private housing market. While the manuscript highlights events that are particularly relevant to the present research, his accounts are characteristically sensational and one sided, where the author only develops narrative threads that support his starting hypothesis, that “real estate discrimination toward African American and Jews shaped the cities of the United States in which we live.”

The history he presents is rarely nuanced and the selective inclusion of references makes it difficult to return to original sources. The work nevertheless offers valuable accounts that warrant further investigation, which the present research sets out to accomplish. *Not in My Neighborhood’s* scope as a study of real estate practices falls short of making connection between the private housing market and other spheres that have had a particular influence in shaping Baltimore as a largely segregated city. This limitation is derived from the author’s conscious decision to concentrate on the momentous notion of bigotry in real estate practices, and not on the formation of the ghetto.

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116 “Jim Crow” refers to a system of segregation laws enacted at state and municipal levels in the United States, that was especially common in the solid South (the Confederate States, or Dixie) and, to a lesser extent, in the Southern United States as a whole, which includes the 11 Confederate States and 5 others, namely Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Oklahoma and West Virginia. Loïc Wacquant defined Jim Crow as “the regime of legalized segregation and astringent ostracism prevalent in the Southern states from Emancipation until the civil rights revolution of the 1960s.” Wacquant, *Prisons of Poverty*, 33.

Working at an entirely different scale, Rhonda Y. Williams proposes potent academic research on *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles Against Urban Inequality*; the title of her 2004 book based largely on her 1998 doctoral thesis written at the Faculty of History of the University of Pennsylvania. Contrary to most literature on public housing in the United States, Williams attempts to identify positive elements rather than dysfunctional aspects of public housing. As the author explains, *The Politics of Public Housing* seeks to “recast historical understanding of the relationship among cities, poverty policy, poor people, and activism.” Central to this project lays the claim that public housing served a productive role for the development of political agency in Baltimore. The author argues that public housing provided these black women with an opportunity to develop a new political awareness and hone valuable skills pertaining to community organization and political participation. This is supported through a series of well-documented examples, which could have been further enhanced should the pivotal *Thompson v. HUD* case, had it been decided prior to Williams’s *The Politics of Public Housing’s* 2004 release.

According to Robert Embry, Housing Commissioner of Baltimore City between 1967 and 1977, “HUD and the city had conspired to locate public housing in black neighborhoods, and, as a result, they had an affirmative duty to fix it.” The plaintiffs requested 5,000 rent certificates for people to move out of the city and into non-impacted census tracts in the suburbs of Baltimore. The court’s decision placed the responsibility fully on the federal housing agency as the only party with the power to enact a regional housing plan for Greater Baltimore. The court stated, “it is high time that HUD live up to its statutory mandate to consider the effect of its policies on the racial and socioeconomic composition of the surrounding area and thus consider approaches to promoting fair housing opportunities for African-American public housing residents in the Baltimore Region.” It was the opinion of the court that no blame could be placed on either HABC or the City of Baltimore, “finding that officials in the 1990s had few regional options and could not be faulted for using federal funds to try and improve conditions in poor inner-city neighborhoods – even if this activity was part of the pattern of increasing segregation in the region’s housing.” In 2012, the US District Court of Maryland granted final approval for the settlement in *Thompson v. HUD*, a case initiated 17 years earlier. In total, 4,400 rent vouchers were given to eligible families. Out of the six leading plaintiffs in this suit, five were black women, “veterans of decades of struggle for dignity and decency in public housing.”

While Williams’s study develops around a truly novel and valid framing of the political implication of everyday life in public housing, the empirical discussion centering on black

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122 Ibid.

women’s struggles outweigh her initial intention, “to recast the prevailing view that public housing was an unmitigated failure.” The stories that the author presents largely pertain to women who set out to make their entire adult lives in public housing, whereas public housing in the United States was intended as temporary accommodations. As long-term residences, public housing were inherently unsustainable and diverged public attention from socioeconomic problems that would not naturally resorb or disappear because of state-subsidized housing. The myopic view that high-rise public housing projects such as Lafayette Courts were not an unmitigated failure based on the pivotal experiences of a handful of stakeholders undermines the fact that these projects reinforced the institutional encasement and spatial confinement of thousands of residents in segregated and jobless territories. This shortcoming notwithstanding, Williams’s work skillfully connects actors located in different spheres, from public housing residents to policymakers, to contribute an incredibly rich narrative on the life of decent and well-intentioned women living in public housing in Baltimore. While the present research builds on Williams’s study of everyday life and community politics in public housing for sections pertaining to this subject matter, this investigation adds to her narrative by introducing new primary sources and a different timeline – going from the clearance of sites to their first years of occupation – and by shifting the primary focus to elements beyond the purview of Williams’s manuscript, such as urban and architectural qualities and the politics of site clearing and redevelopment.

Williams’s work was preceded by another study particularly significant to public housing in Baltimore. In “Local Deals and the New Deal State: Implementing Federal Public Housing in Baltimore, 1933-1968,” Peter Henderson analyzes how public offices between Baltimore and Annapolis reshaped federal policies to cater to the city’s urban situation, traditions, as well as its political and market influencers. Henderson’s study of housing policies details ways by which Baltimore’s localism – influenced by racial prejudices and inspired by market privatism – clashed with the objectives of New Deal advocates who sought to directly involve the federal government in the housing market. Similarly, Jo Ann Argersinger’s Toward a New Deal in Baltimore: People and Government in the Great Depression, describes how local actors in Baltimore introduced movements of resistance that sought to keep the federal government out of the housing sector. These scholars also point out how such movements were counteracted by public housing advocates, including influential organizations that emerged from within Baltimore’s black community, to successfully strong-arm their government and ultimately instigate a public housing program in the city.

Architectural historians Mary Ellen Hayward and Charles Belfoure have produced a significant body of work that also concentrates on the transformation of Baltimore, but with regards to the evolution of its architecture, including early working class neighborhoods that would later correspond to the city’s ghetto. Their work on Baltimore’s Alley Houses

124 Williams, The Politics of Public Housing, 8.
126 Mary Ellen Hayward, Baltimore’s Alley Houses: Homes for Working People since the 1780s (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).
and on *The Baltimore Rowhouse* are particularly relevant to this research as it retraces connections between the architecture of inner city housing, the role of builders as agents for urban development, and broader migratory and economic movements that affected the establishment of ethnic enclaves in the city. The two historians pay particular attention to the notion of ethnicity rather than race as an organizing factor, primarily because their studies concentrate on a historical period that predated the Great Migration, where around six million African Americans left the rural Southern United States to migrate north between 1910 and 1970.

Together, these studies have investigated and analyzed a series of events that have played key roles in the construction and maintenance of the Baltimore ghetto. They have described elements and processes that have participated to the transformation of the inner city of Baltimore into a ghetto, which is to say, a race-making institution that unleashes exceptional forces and confines individuals of specific ethnicity or races to live together in involuntary isolation. To be sure, the ghetto is not a passive territory or a neutral receptacle for life to unfold; it constitutes in an active space that is formed at the convergence of various lines guided by the same motives: to confine ethnic or racial group in guarded territories, while keeping its subjects close enough to exploit their labor or finances.

**Historiography of the ghetto**

Loïc Wacquant’s historical analysis of the ghetto lends weight to the importance to differentiate between terms like ghetto, *barrios, banlieu, favelas*, slums, blighted areas and inner cities. Following Wacquant, this research recognizes that the “ghetto is not a ‘natural area’ coterminous with ‘the history of migration’ (as Louis Wirth argued), but a special form of collective violence concretized in urban space.” In order to clarify the particular characteristics of the “wooly and shifting notion” of the ghetto, this section proposes to probe into Wacquant’s appraisal of this peculiar device. As he explains, a theoretical and historical review of this concept can inform the construction of a “relational concept of the ghetto as an instrument of closure and control” that clears up most of the confusion surrounding it and makes it a powerful tool for the social analysis of ethnoracial domination and urban inequity. The development of such concept thereby represents a productive step for studies not only concerned with territories of disenfranchisement or poverty, but rather with socio-spatial urban ecologies enmeshed in politics of power, control, labor extraction and prejudice.

The term ‘ghetto’ first referred to the forced consignment of Jews to special districts in

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130 Wacquant, “Ghetto,” 2.
Jews, who played key roles as moneylenders and tax collectors, were largely perceived by the Christian population as unclean and dangerous beings, and thus occupied a conflicted place in civil society where they served a productive role professionally, while occupying the status of inferior human beings. In 1516, Wacquant explains:

The Senate of Venice ordered all Jews rounded up into the ghetto nuovo, an abandoned foundry on an isolated island enclosed by two high walls whose outer windows and doors were sealed while watchmen stood guard on its two bridges and patrolled the adjacent canals by boat. Jews were henceforth allowed out to pursue their occupations by day, but they had to wear a distinctive garb and return inside the gates before sunset on pain of serious punishment. These measures were designed as an alternative to expulsion to enable the city-state to reap the economic benefits brought by the presence of Jews (including rents, special taxes, and forced levies) while protecting their Christian residents from contaminating contact with bodies perceived as unclean and dangerously sensual, carriers of syphilis and vectors of heresy, in addition to bearing the taint of money-making through usury, which the Catholic Church equated with prostitution.

As Chicago School sociologist Louis Wirth pointed out, the Jewish ghetto contained a social life turned inward that verged on ‘overorganization,’ which reinforced Jewish identity on the one hand, while accentuating isolation on the other. When the Venetian model spread throughout Europe, multiple Jewish ghettos emerged that shared four common constituent elements with those of Venice, namely stigma, constraint, spatial confinement and institutional encasement. Admittedly, the ghetto nuovo constituted a social-organizational device where particular institutional measures could easily be deployed because targeted groups resided in isolation from the rest of society. As the ghetto spatialized prejudices, it allowed public authorities to deploy exceptional measures that guaranteed the isolation of castigated ethnicities, such as the use of watchmen to surveil and control the movement between the ghetto and the outside. If such measures had been developed because ethnic prejudices existed in the first place, the institutional response legitimized ethnic discrimination and reinforced its effects, which in turn accentuated the stigma attached to Jews. As importantly, the ghetto nuovo served a particular function for the society that created it; to maximize “the material profits extracted out of a group deemed defiled and defiling; and to minimize intimate contact with its members so as to avert the threat of symbolic corrosion and contagion they carry.” These observations prompted Wacquant to characterize the ghetto as a particular type space that conjugates “ethno-racial separation with socio-spatial closure.”

131 Ibid.
132 Ibid. See also, Richard Sennett, Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994), 224.
135 Wacquant, “Ghetto,” 2.
According to Wacquant, the African American ghetto of the Fordist metropolis has been reconstituted from the same four constituent elements – stigma, constraint, spatial confinement and institutional encasement – to satisfy the binary rational of “economic exploitation cum social ostracization.”138 These particular functions underline the importance to differentiate between ghettos and slums, seeing that the latter refers exclusively to areas characterized by a destitute built environment. While slums did exist in the ghetto of Baltimore, most of the Baltimore ghetto was not a slum and included decent working and middle class neighborhoods. In contrast to slums where individuals lived primarily because of financial constraints or choices, the ghetto confines its residents through a matrix of social, political and institutional pressures. Like the Katzenbach Commission noted, individuals living in the ghetto in the 1960s rarely did so out of choice, but rather because they had few if any other option. Dwelling units in the ghetto generally rented for higher prices than comparable units in the city, which underlines the triviality of economic arguments to explain why blacks have resided quasi-exclusively in ghetto neighborhoods in Baltimore throughout the historical period covered in this research.

According to Wacquant, the ghetto represents one of a range of ‘peculiar institutions’ in the United States that “have shouldered the task of defining and confining African Americans, alongside slavery, the Jim Crow regime,”139 and most recently, the carceral system.140 After the abolition of slavery, Wacquant explains, Jim Crow emerged as the surrogate regime of racial segregation in the South to curtail social contacts between whites and blacks, maintaining the latter as second-rate citizens while enjoying the fruit of their labor. In this regime, “The economic opportunities of African Americans were severely restricted not only in the cotton fields but also in the emerging mining and industrial towns of the uplands by limiting their employment to the most dirty and dangerous ‘nigger work’.”141

For Wacquant, the ghetto served a similar purpose in the North as Jim Crow did in the South, especially between the years comprised between the Great Migration and the height of the civil rights movement. As the outbreak of World War I coincided with a crisis in cotton agriculture in the South (caused by a major boll weevil infestation and later by mechanization) and a booming demand for manual labor in the steel mills of the North (when immigration from Europe was temporarily cut off), masses of jobless African Americans arrived to cities like Baltimore and Philadelphia, where the positions of black in urban society would be considerably more promising than in the violent and brazenly racist Deep South. Despite the absence of an established Jim Crow regime in Northern Cities, these new migrants had “no

140 While Wacquant’s reading may seem drastic to some, the US Supreme Court agreed that “when racial discrimination herds men into ghettos and makes their ability to buy property turn on the color of their skin, then it too is a relic of slavery.” Earl Warren, Jones et Ux v. Alfred H. Mayer Co. et al, 392 US 409 (US Supreme Court 1968).
choice but to take refuge in the secluded territory of the Black Belt and to try to build in it a self-sustaining nexus of institutions that would shield them from white rule and procure the needs of the castaway community: a ‘Black Metropolis’ lodged in the womb of the white, yet hermetically sealed from it.”

Scholars, including cultural historians W.E.B. Du Bois and psychologist Kenneth Clark, have consistently defined the ghetto as a black city within the white, where they observed black communities to gain significant independence through the development of their own institutions and cultures. As residential segregation expanded, “Blacks responded by creating myriad class-mixed social and religious institutions and a vibrant cultural life, and found acceptance and security there that to some degree countered the hostile discrimination they faced outside their community.” If scholars such as Du Bois and Clark have described the traditional ghetto as well organized, where a distinctively African American culture could collectively flourish, such accounts should not be misconstrued to imply a nostalgic celebration of yesteryear’s ghettos. Wacquant notes that while the traditional ghetto “was organizationally and socially integrated, it was not by choice but under the yoke of total black subjugation and with the threat of racial violence looming never too far in the background.”

Like the ghetto of Venice, the traditional African American ghetto constituted a space inhabited by individuals of a specific racial or ethnic group, which had been stigmatized, confined, constrained and encased by the sociopolitical system of the dominant order.

The ‘Dark Ghetto,’ Clark’s terminology to refer to what is otherwise known as the traditional ghetto of mid-century America, in fact included a full complement of classes, “for the simple reason that even the black bourgeoisie was barred from escaping its cramped and compact perimeter while a majority of adults were gainfully employed in a gamut of occupation.” This again supported the fact that the ghetto was not a “natural area,” created out of financial concerns, nor was it a “manifestation of human nature” that corresponded to the “history of migration,” like Louis Wirth suggested. As Thomas Lee Philpott noted, the founders of the Chicago School of sociology “believed and taught their students to believe that all ethnic neighborhood were – or once had been – ghettos, like the black belt.” Accordingly, Philpott wrote, “They viewed Negroes as just another ethnic group, whose segregation was largely voluntary and would prove to be only temporary.”

These findings have motivated Wacquant to convincingly criticize the re-conceptualization of the concept of ‘ghetto’ “stripped of its ethno-racial referent and denuded of any mention of

group power and oppression.” Wacquant spares no mark as his criticism targets icons from the Chicago School of sociology, his advisor and close collaborator William Julius Wilson, as well as Wilson’s colleagues from Harvard’s Kennedy School, Paul Jargowsky and Mary-Jo Bane. As Wilson’s The Truly Disadvantaged: The Underclass, the Inner City, and Public Policy sets out to “examine the problem of ghetto poverty across the nation empirically,” the work relies on a definition that classifies ‘ghetto neighborhoods’ based on their location in ‘ghetto poverty census tracts,’ defined as such because at least 40 percent of their residents live below the poverty line. The country’s foremost authority on the question of [ghetto poverty],” Wacquant writes, endorses this conceptual alteration citing Jargowsky and Bane’s 1991 study and definition of ‘ghetto neighborhoods.’ According to them, ‘ghetto neighborhoods’ exist wherever there is an advanced concentration of poverty:

We have defined a ghetto as an area in which the overall poverty rate in a census tract is greater than 40 per cent. The ghetto poor are then those poor, of any race or ethnic group, who live in such high-poverty census tracts. ... Visits to various cities confirmed that the 40 per cent criterion came close to identifying areas that looked like ghettos in terms of their housing conditions. Moreover, the areas selected by the 40 per cent criterion corresponded closely with the neighborhoods that city officials and local Census Bureau officials considered ghettos. ... It is important to distinguish our definition of ghetto tracts based on a poverty criterion from a definition based on racial composition. Not all majority black tracts are ghettos under our definition, nor are all ghettos black.

Contradicting Wacquant at nearly every turn, their interpretation of the ghetto defies the historical use of the term and advances a definition situated within a post-racial frame, where the ghetto more or less corresponds to the slum. They rely on arbitrary geographic regions (i.e. census tracts) to establish neighborhood boundaries, and as social scientists from Herbert Gans to Douglass Massey would agree, “there is not a shred of sociological theory or observation to document that 40 per cent (or any other poverty ratio) constitutes a ‘threshold’

153 Wacquant points to the total inadequacy of Jargowsky and Bane’s oft-cited definition of the ‘ghetto,’ of their lack of intellectual rigor, and of their favor in supporting a populist use of the term grounded in prejudiced and superficial opinions. He writes: “The two Harvard scholars first call on the common sense of the term, as codified by the Random House Dictionary: ‘a slum area inhabited predominantly by members of a minority group, often as the result of social and economic restriction.’ But here, in splendid ignorance of three decades of historical research on the black American ghetto, they summarily assert that ‘current usage, however, almost always implies impoverished resident and run-down housing’ (2002, 237) and, inexplicably, pretext such ‘current usage’ for purging ethnорacial restriction and homogeneity from the definition they cite!” Wacquant, “Gutting the Ghetto: Political Censorship and Conceptual Retrenchment in the American Debate on Urban Destitution,” 40. Furthermore, while the two Harvard scholars underline that the concept of ghetto generally exists in relation to questions of race rather than poverty, they make no case that would explain why they selected this particular term as opposed to the more suited concepts of ‘slum.’ In fact, their definition seems entirely grounded in an misunderstanding of the ‘ghetto,’ and align instead with the highly problematic stereotype that Elijah Anderson refers to as the ‘iconic ghetto’, which is discussed prologue of this manuscript. See, Anderson, “The Iconic Ghetto.”
beyond which special social dynamics and patterns take over.” Most importantly, this mistaken appropriation of the concept of the ghetto diffuses its potential as an analytical tool by discounting the etymology of the term and the etiology of the spaces that it came to define. This negligence to acknowledge the causation behind the formation of the ghetto exonerates the white society that created it in the first place and undermines over a century of American studies concerned with the significance of race with regards to the physical and life space of blacks in the United States.95

**Literature review: mapping landmark studies on the American ghetto**

W.E.B. Du Bois’s 1899's *The Philadelphia Negro* is perhaps one of the earliest major study pertaining to the significance of race and prejudice in relation to the production of particular urban ecologies that reinforced inequality between racial groups. Du Bois debunked the belief that black individuals resided in destitute urban environments out of choice and uncovered that stigma and institutional encasement created unequal economic conditions for blacks. Contrary to the eugenics theories of the day in the 1890s, Du Bois “believed that the Negroes’ problem were rooted not in their heredity but rather in their environment and the social conditions that confronted them.”96 His investigation pointed at various ways by which opportunities were being stripped away from black families that resided in the inner city of Philadelphia strictly on the basis of their race. “In the Negro’s mind,” Du Bois explained, “color prejudice in Philadelphia is that widespread feeling of dislike for his blood, which keeps him and his children out of decent employment, from certain public conveniences and amusements, from hiring houses in many sections, and in general, from being recognized as man.”97

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95 The phenomenological concept of ‘life space’ was developed by the social psychologist Kurt Lewin in the 1940s. Lewin believed that like physics, the field of psychology needed to follow the Galilean approach and focus on dynamic changes in human perceptions (Likert, 1947). Following the Gestalt perspective, he aimed to understand the psychological field, or life spaces, as a subjective construct made by a combination of factors, such as memory, personality, culture, drives, and other environmental factors. The life space is thus influenced by internal as well as external factors that include material and immaterial things experienced, and that changes with time. Every factor with demonstrable effects on the individual or group, no matter how distant or unconscious, were considered to be part of the life space (Lewin, 1951). Lewin used the term life space to “represent the psychological field of constantly changing, interdependent, and interacting forces, which ultimately influences the life of an individual within a system” (Hobman & Walker, 2015). He developed ‘field theory’ as an attempt to empirically capture a person or a group’s life space analytically. See, Rensis Likert, “Kurt Lewin: A Pioneer in Human Relation Research.” *Human Relations* 1, no. 1 (1947): 131–47; Elizabeth Hobman and Iain Walker, *Stasis and Change: Social Psychological Insights into Social-Ecological Resilience,” *Ecology and Society* 20, no. 1 (2015): 39; Kurt Lewin, “Defining the ‘Field at a Given Time,’” *Psychological Review* 50, no. 3 (1943): 292–310; Kurt Lewin, *Field Theory in Social Science: Selected Theoretical Papers* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951).


97 The Philadelphia Negro, 322.
Du Bois paved the way for a range of social scientists in the United States, who like him would become invested in matters of race relations. As Elijah Anderson and Douglas Massey have argued, Du Bois’s *Philadelphia Negro* “represented the first true example of American social scientific research, preceding the work of Park and Burgess by at least two decades.” As the University of Pennsylvania refused to capitalize on Du Bois’ seminal work – maintaining his status as ‘assistant in psychology’ rather than granting him faculty appointment, despite doctoral credentials from Harvard and an established record for scientific publication – the University of Chicago rather than the University of Pennsylvania came to dominate the field of urban sociology.

The Chicago School of sociology achieved international recognition for foregrounding the issue of race and developing a far reaching body of work relevant to segregation, ghettos and black urban life more broadly. Ernest Burgess documented patterns of neighborhood successions that led to the development of influential theoretical work. The theory he presented in the ‘concentric model zone’ has influenced the deployment of controversial federal housing policies, such as ‘redlining,’ where neighborhoods inhabited by blacks would automatically be considered as being of lower value. His colleague Edward Franklin Frazier also produce groundbreaking research through a doctoral thesis that he would later became a book, where he analyzed multi-sited forces that influenced the development in black families. Similarly to Du Bois, Frazier documented the ecology of social life in the ghetto, while establishing causality between cultural manifestations and structural pressures. But as Anderson and Massey noted, it was not until 1945 “that the University of Chicago produced a study of the black community matching the depth, rigor, and sophistication achieved nearly fifty years earlier by Du Bois in *The Philadelphia Negro*."

St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton’s, *Black Metropolis, A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*, was indeed a sophisticated exposé that explored a range issues, which had been influential to the development of the life space of blacks in the South Side of Chicago. Like Du Bois did before them, the authors described the structural effects of the color line, which affected the life of black folks in all aspects, from education to politics. The manuscript included descriptions of class and community formation; the role of black institutions; the cultural effects of the Great Migration; and other basic facts of life in Bronzeville; the ‘black city’ that had emerged within Chicago. Drake and Cayton depicted how segregation in Chicago culminated in the creation of a black city within the wider metropolis, where individuals of various economic groups came to co-existed, bounded by their blackness and estrangement from white mainstream society. *Black Metropolis*, an encyclopedic compilation of existing research on the life of black Chicagoans supplemented by primary observations and research, also provided a strong argument that marshaled for drastic changes and uncompromising racial equality.

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159 Ibid., 3-5.
Moving to 1965 and beyond Chicago, Kenneth Clark’s *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power* presented one of the first comprehensive attempts to address the causality between structural inequities and cultural adaptations. Clark documented a series of powerful structural constraints that negatively affected the life chances of blacks residing in Harlem’s inner city ghetto. He described how the combination of economic marginality and racial segregation deprived ghetto residents from the stability normally provided by regular employment, and explained how said discriminatory structures nurtured conditions that encouraged blacks to rely on insecure jobs and the underground economy. Clark then established connections between discriminatory structural forces and the evolution of destructive behaviors in the ghetto. Contrary to a range of neoconservative studies that emerged out of the political ascendency of Reaganism, when it became increasingly common to wrongly ascribe ghetto-specific cultural tendencies strictly to individuals, Clark recognized the presence of unflattering behaviors but traced back their points of origins to dysfunctional structural systems. This emphasis on the interplay between structural forces and their manifestation in culture positioned Kenneth Clark near the top of a historical list of social scientists that like him, also aimed to connect the culture of the ghetto to its causal origins (i.e. structural inequities created from racial prejudices).

In *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago 1950-1960*, historian Arnold Hirsh refocused the debate pertaining to the formation of the ghetto on the politics of segregation. Hirsh instigated a historical analysis that emphasized the transformative significance of housing policies. He argued that the legal framework behind the national urban renewal program, which upheld principles of residential segregation, had been crafted based on concepts and devices pioneered in the South Side of Chicago after the Second Great Migration. His research revealed different ways by which space had been used to pursue the project of American apartheid, reinforce prejudice and further accentuate structural inequalities through the institutionalization of racialized urban development programs. Writing about the post-war ghetto, Hirsh noted, “the contemporary ghetto appeared a dynamic institution that was continually being renewed, reinforced, and reshaped.” He documented

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163 Authors such as Gilder, Maed, Murray and others tended to dwell on the destructive behavior that developed out of the ghetto, without acknowledging their points of origins. This allowed these authors to strictly ‘blame the victim,’ by highlighting how cultural behaviors such as the normalization of violence and making families out of wedlock was harmful to black residents. They usually did so without a shred of evidence, while readily dismissing a rich body of knowledge that explained, for example, how criminality in ghetto areas was the result of the lack of employment opportunity (in turn triggered by substandard public investment in the education system) and the fact that the police seldom entered black enclaves, where citizens had to defend themselves. See, for example: George Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty: A New Edition for the Twenty-First Century*, Second Edition 2012 (New York: Regnyer Publishing, 1981); Lawrence M. Mead, *Beyond Entitlement, 2001 Edition* (Free Press, 1985); Charles Murray, *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950-1980* (Basic Books, 1994).


165 The Second Great Migration began during World War II

the controlled expansion of the South Side ghetto following World War II, presenting strong evidence that government agencies, local businesses and public institutions – including the University of Chicago and the Illinois Institute of Technology – cooperated to expand and direct the development of black segregated territories. His accounts pertaining to the growth of what the author referred to as the ‘second ghetto,’ provided empirical evidence that denied claims stating that the ghetto developed out of ‘natural’ processes.

While Hirsh documented processes of segregation that have certainly been replicated in other cities, including Baltimore, his study also foregrounds the importance of place-specific tensions and inclination. To be sure, the urban history of blacks in the border state of Maryland does not correspond to the one of blacks in the Northern state of Illinois. Located far from Dixieland at the southern tip of Lake Michigan, Chicago did not attract a large black population until late in its history. In contrast to Baltimore, where nearly 16 percent of the population was African American in 1890, Chicago remained almost exclusively all white until the 1920s. By 1950, the black community of Chicago accounted for 14 percent of its total population, rapidly rising to 23 percent in 1960. In comparison, the black community of Baltimore amounted to around 24, 35 and 46 percent of the total population in 1950, 1960 and 1970 respectively. As the black community of Baltimore was already well established by the late 1920s in Baltimore, it benefitted from stronger community organizations, influential churches, and better schools for blacks than almost anywhere else in the country. The Baltimore Afro-American newspaper had been in print since 1892, which provided an influential avenue to discuss and advocate matters of concern particularly relevant to the black community. This translated into stronger political agency, allowing the black community to marshal enough leverage to influence public matters, including urban development and housing policy. Black advocacy groups successfully opposed a highway plan that planned to cross through the inner city; they influenced the development of public housing programs; and represented a large-

167 In Baltimore, a city contained at the border between the South and North (or located in the ‘Deep North,’ as it is sometimes informally referred to in Maryland), Jim Crow and the ghetto overlapped, thereby defying models that dichotomize the United States as being composed between Union (the North) and Confederate (the South) states, and thereby forgetting about the existence of ‘border states’ in the process. ‘Border states’ referred to a geopolitical strip that separated the South from the North, consisting of slave states that had not declared succession from the Union. These included Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri and West Virginia. Other states were also considered as being ‘border states’ at some point in history, but would eventually join the Confederacy before the end of the American Civil War.


169 Blacks accounted for 23.7% and 34.6% of the population of Baltimore, in 1950 and 1960 respectively.

170 As daily transits increased in time and distance, Baltimore sought to introduce its first east-west expressway in 1939. (DiMento and Ellis, 147) The city hired Robert Moses to finalize a proposition for a four lane crosstown expressway. The team Moses headed suggested bulldozing through Howard and Charles Street in the heart of the downtown retail district, taking down many residential areas that the Homeowners Loan Corporation had declared to be obsolete, such as Harlem Park, Rosemount, Fells Point and Federal Hill. Around two hundred city blocks would be put down and nineteen thousand residents relocated, most of them black. “Nothing which we propose to remove will constitute any loss to Baltimore”, Moses assured. (Moses, in Pietila, 219) As most affected residents could not afford to use the freeway, a large resistance movement emerged to stop the highway plan. “The Relocation Action Movement (RAM), the first of several groups that would unite to oppose highway construction in the city, was founded in late 1966 by working-class African Americans from the neighborhoods of Harlem Park and Rosemont.” (DiMento and Ellis, 148) The city attempted to mitigate citizen pressure by amending the original plan, inviting the prominent architectural firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill to spearhead a joint planning venture that also included economists, engineers and sociologists. (Ibid, 151) While the possibility of the city going through with the east-west expressway prompted many homeowners in Harlem Park and Rosemont to stop investing in their properties, turning leaving decent neighborhoods become exactly the kind of blighted neighborhood that the roads were supposed to be eliminating, many dwellings were taking down in the black inner city to make room for the Franklin-Mulberry corridor. (Ibid, 148; Lieb, 52) Notwithstanding such setbacks for groups resisting what was known as the ‘10 D-Plan,’ groups such as RAM and the Movement Against Destruction (MAD) – a similarly intentioned organization that sought to undercut the authority and knowledge of planners – successfully stopped the highway plan in the mid-1970s. See, Joseph F. DiMento and Cliff Ellis, Changing Lanes: Visions and Histories of Urban Freeways (Cambridge (MA): MIT Press, 2013); Emily Lieb, “White Man’s Lane: Hallowing Out the Highway Ghetto in Baltimore,” in Baltimore ‘68 Riots and Rebirth in an American City, ed. Jessica I Ellenbein, Thomas L Hollowak, and Elizabeth M Nix (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011); Pietila, Not in My Neighborhood.
enough market share to benefit from the help of realtors, who supported the transformation of black neighborhoods like Harlem Park into areas too good to become part of slum clearance plans. If some of the same strategies that allowed the expansion of the ‘second ghetto’ of Chicago have also affected Baltimore – from ‘redlining’ to segregation in public housing – the respective histories of cities like Baltimore, Chicago, Harlem or Philadelphia reveal the importance of place-specific lines of influence in the transformation of territories.

The ghetto as an analytical concept

As opposed to terminologies such as slums, inner city or favelas, the ghetto entails specific processes of social subjugation materialized in space and rationalized through racial prejudices. It allows groups in positions of power to enjoy the economic benefits created by a racially defined community, without having to share with it the rights, institutions and conveniences at the service of the dominant group. “The ghetto, in short, operates as an ethnорacial prison: it encages a dishonoured category and severely curtails the life chances of its members in support of the monopolization of ideal and material goods or opportunities by the dominant status group dwelling on its outskirts.”

The ghetto thus constitutes a domestic Bantustans or ‘black state’, a ‘penalized space’ that sets out as a distinctive territory containing a racially homogenous population with little to no choice but to create its own institutions, organizational norms and culture seeing that it exists separately from the group from which ghetto residents have been banished. “This parallel institutional nexus affords the subordinate group a measure of protection, autonomy and dignity, but at the cost of locking it in a relationship of structural subordination and dependency.”

As the ghetto is formed by the power of a dominant group and, in turn, by the human compulsion of the dominated group for safety and autonomy, the ghetto can be interpreted as:

A Janus-faced institution as it serves opposite functions for the two collectives it binds in a relation of asymmetric dependency. For the dominant category, its rational is to confine and control, which translates into what Max Webber calls the ‘exclusionary closure’ of the dominated category. For the latter, however, it is an integrative and protective device insofar as it relieves its members from constant contact with the dominant and fosters consociation and community building within the constricted sphere of intercourse it creates.

While residents of slums and blighted areas are confined within neighborhoods designated as such because of their poverty, ghetto residents live where they do primarily because of their

171 Wacquant, “From Slavery to Mass Incarceration,” 51.
174 Wacquant, “From Slavery to Mass Incarceration,” 50-1.
race. As these observations on the analytical concept of ‘the ghetto’ suggest, it may be more profitable to study this particular type space alongside reservation zones and refugee camps – “as belonging to a broader class of institutions for the forced confinement of disposed and dishonored groups” – rather than in parallel with concepts like the urban slum or informal settlements. This realization constitutes a major challenge to this research, seeing that the terms ‘ghetto’ and ‘slums’ have been used interchangeably in some of the literature and in historical documents. The particular attributes attached to the concept of ghetto can rationalize why public officials and cautious academics have preferred to talk about ‘slums’ or the inner city instead, the latter serving the dual purpose of addressing the condition of segregated black neighborhoods, while steering clear from charged questions pertaining to strategies of racial dominance.

**Segregation: a key constituent of the ghetto**

Segregation represents the central element of the American ghetto. While Jim Crow and its derivatives have played an overarching role in encouraging the formation of segregated enclaves, subtle tactics and strategies have also been developed locally to reinforce what has been termed ‘American Apartheid.’ As Joe Feagin remarked in 1999, “Today, spatial-residential controls are still part of a system of racial oppression.” Admittedly, an extensive body of research has emerged to suggest that residential segregation compromises the position of blacks compared to other groups in American society by limiting access to employment markets, exposing them to greater health risks, higher levels of violence and poverty, providing them with substandard public services, charging them higher taxes, increasing


182 Massey and Fischer, “How Segregation Concentrates Poverty.”

their cost of housing, confining them to areas served by inferior public schools, and augmenting their risk of single parenthood.

As Douglas Massey and Mary Fisher have empirically demonstrated, "segregation interacts with a variety of structural transformations in society to determine the spatial concentration of poverty." While Massey’s earlier studies have demonstrated a correlation between rising rates of poverty and the territorial concentration of poverty in areas defined by high levels of segregation, a later study holds that concentrated poverty "stems from an interaction between residential segregation and any structural shift that affects the distribution of income and the spatial relation of income classes to one another." In other words, even upward shifts in the economy tend to further concentrate poverty in places experiencing high levels of segregation. This observation can partly explain why the economically integrated ‘traditional ghetto’ of the 1930s, 40s and 50s has become increasingly poor and unemployed. These findings have led Massey and Fisher to conclude that "Given this interaction between racial segregation and the changing socio-economic structure of American society, the issue of race cannot easily be set aside to focus on a politics of class, as Wilson, Jargoswsky, Bane and many others would prefer." Massey and Fisher’s observations posit that segregation concentrates poverty continuously and thereby accentuates the economic inequality that separates segregated neighborhoods from the rest of the city.

As the literature on the nature of institutional racism "suggests that evil motives are not necessary to a definition of discrimination," an adequate definition for actions or practices deemed to be ‘discriminatory’ should refer to those "carried out by members of dominant groups, or their representatives, which have a differential and adverse impact on members of subordinate groups." In effect, discrimination can be unintentional and indirect. For example, hiring procedures relying on past employment history constitute a form of unintentional discrimination, where employers have intentionally discriminated against racial groups in


188 Massey, "American Apartheid.”


190 Ibid., 689.

the past, but no longer do.\textsuperscript{192} Similarly, “Direct discrimination against minorities in one area, such as education or training programs, can lead to indirect discrimination in another realm, such as employment.”\textsuperscript{193}

Unscrupulous businesses have intentionally designed new ways to discriminate against blacks using devices that appear as being just and equal on the surface. As legal scholar Alfred Blumrosen noted in 1971, many employers raised qualification standards and developed screening tests with the intent of excluding minority applicants at the very same time as they removed formal discriminatory barriers.\textsuperscript{194} Such transformation and sophistication of discriminatory practices have prompted Malcolm X to famously compare racism to a Cadillac:

\textit{[Malcolm X] explained that the General Motors Company brought out a new model of their car every year, that the 1960 version differed from the one produced in 1950, but both automobiles were still Cadillacs. Similarly, Malcolm X explained, racism also changed its contours and dimensions. The racism of 1964 might not look like the racism of 1954, but it was still racism. He warned his audience against thinking that racism has ended because it looked different, while at the same time cautioning them that they could not defeat today’s racism with yesterday’s slogans and analysis.\textsuperscript{195}}

Realizing that forms of racial discrimination have been under constant processes of transformation, studies pertaining to the formation and perpetuation of the ghetto should seek to uncover the evolving character of various mechanisms of oppression. As this research pays special attention to processes of spatial segregation, particularly housing, it seeks to unravel how racial prejudice have shaped subsequent urban ecologies in the inner city of Baltimore to eventually form and maintain ghetto neighborhoods. The investigation sets out to accomplish this task using a particular research methodology designed to identify forms of hidden racism, document their nature and character, and appraise their direct and indirect influences on other spheres of life comprised within the ecology of Baltimore’s urban environment.

\textsuperscript{192} Ibid., 189.
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid., 187. To be sure, requiring credentials that are not readily accessible to specific racial groups can constitute a form of discrimination where said credentials could not be shown to predict successful job performance. Writing about the US Supreme Court ruling in \textit{Griggs v. Duke Power Co.}, Feagin notes: “The court found that the use of the diploma credential disqualified more black than white applicants and took the position that, whether or not such credentials were intentionally used to discriminate, they were unlawful discrimination if they had not been shown to predict successful job performance. See, Ibid.; Burger, \textit{Griggs v. Duke Power Co.}, 401 US 424 (US Supreme Court 1971).

Research Methods

This investigation unfolds as an archival research on the human and material ecology of the Baltimore ghetto. To achieve this, the study relies on a research system influenced by the ‘multimethod approach’ developed by W.E.B. Du Bois at the University of Pennsylvania in the 1890s and popularized by sociologist at the University of Chicago in the 1920s. This methodology central to American social scientific research builds on beliefs that social relations are spatial relations; that ecological factors shape and constrain social structures; and that the neighborhood consists in the most important structural setting. In contrast to their European counterparts, these early American sociologists emphasized the importance to test theoretical ideas “through a relentless process of empirical investigation that embraced any and all means of data collection.” After a period characterized by “self-defeating debates” that pitted “epistemological positions against one another as if they were mutually exclusive and logically incongruent – quantitative versus qualitative, theoretical versus empirical, survey versus ethnography, (...) a growing number of sociologists recognized the compensating strengths and weaknesses of diverse methodologies, different levels of analysis, and complementary theories and sought to integrate them in the course of their ongoing investigations.” These American social scientists privileged the use of ‘multimethod approaches’ that blended ethnographic findings, statistical analysis, and census data with historical record to reach findings gathered from an unapologetic mix of qualitative and quantitative data.

This research builds on these scientific principles to reconstruct a history of the formation and maintenance of the Baltimore ghetto. It relies on historical documents, recorded observations, qualitative and quantitative scientific studies, unprocessed numerical data, reports, news articles, maps, plans, drawings, photographs and documentary films to re-produce untold chapters belonging to the biography of Baltimore.

In order to achieve scientific objectivity, the research process entailed a systematic investigation of specific archives, including the Baltimore City Archives (BCA), the Afro-American Archives (AAA), the Baltimore Sun Archives (BSA), and the Special Collections at the University of Baltimore’s Langsdale Library (UB). The research encompassed the scrutinization of every document retrieved from specific search results for the two online archives (AAA and BSA), and the sum of all documents relevant to the inner city of Baltimore available at the BCA and UB. In addition to these, documents were also retrieved from other repositories to either complement the information found through the initial archival research, or to substantiate claims that initially appeared to have been misstated.

196 As Anderson and Massey have noted, Du Bois’s “1899 study, The Philadelphia Negro, anticipated in every way the program of theory and search that later became know as the Chicago school. (Anderson and Massey, 4) The Philadelphia Negro combined urban ethnography, social history, maps and statistics. Anderson and Massey, Problem of the Century, 4.

197 Ibid.

198 Ibid., 3.

199 Ibid., 6.
The archival research addresses various ‘sites’ in the ethnographic sense, which have been identified as being particularly important for the historical periods that the work successively covers. The empirical portion of this study is in fact divided between five chapters, which speak to a series of themes and ‘sites’ that include the cultural and architectural development of the historic city (which corresponds to the modern day ghetto in Baltimore) (chapter 2); political negotiations between local communities, municipal and federal governments pertaining to housing schemes in blighted neighborhoods (chapter 3); the deployment of in situ housing initiatives for owner-occupants during the period of urban renewal (chapter 4); the replacement of so-called slum areas by public housing (chapter 5); and, the development of special social and legal devices outside the Baltimore ghetto that directly affected residential options for black families citywide (chapter 6). Together, these accounts enmesh into a multi-sited history that, like Marcus’s multi-sited ethnography, traces lines that lay bare the connection between disjunctive sites, ultimately drawing a network that include various actors involved in the production of the Baltimore ghetto.

The ‘sites’ covered in the five empirical chapters were not decided a priori, but selected based on the findings uncovered in the chapters that preceded each of them. As the research follows its archives like Latour’s actor-network-theory does its actors, the narrative evolves along frames defined by historical events and actions. Like one of Latour’s character laments in Aramis, or the Love of Technology – one of the most convincing rendition of actor-network-theory, next to The Wire – “we sociologists have to drag ourselves around everywhere. Our terrains aren’t territories. They have weird borders. They’re networks, rhizomes.” By the same logic, this study of the Baltimore ghetto includes actors located miles away from the site itself. Following Latour one step further, this study is also interested in attaching humans to nonhumans, and nonhumans to nonhumans. By considering things such as buildings, elevators, parks, stoops, drugs, laws, et cetera as actors, the work constructs a sociotechnical diagram that introduces new threads essential to the network. As the research unfolds as an urban history of the Baltimore ghetto and an autopsy of its parts, this investigation considers evidence irrespective of its geographical origins, species or heartbeat, in as long as its effect on the network can be empirically demonstrated.

Throughout the 1800s, Baltimore persisted as a Southern city, in culture, politics and in law while its proximity to Northern economies encouraged black migration from the rural South. Like many other Southern cities at the time, the lines between racial groups were often razor sharp and continued to be well after the abolition of Jim Crow in the State of Maryland. Racism was considered normal and proliferated undisguised as such, directly impacting the life space of Baltimoreans as a result. It affected economic, legal, political, territorial and cultural spaces too, especially so for blacks, whose access to jobs, neighborhoods, housings, schools and democratic life was limited specifically because of their race. This condition consequently exacted forces that influenced the form and organization of the built environment, perpetrating urban and political ecologies commonly referred to as ghettos in America.

The city’s relative geopolitical location near Union States differentiated Baltimore from other Dixieland cities. The nature of race relations in Baltimore paved the way for a culture that was not typically Southern or Northern, but rather an encapsulation of both that transcended the particular experience of blacks in places like Chicago, Detroit, New York, St. Louis or New Orleans. Much like these metropolises, however, the modern day inner city of Baltimore partly sets out on land originally developed for a white working and middle class population, which has been adapted, rehabilitated, cleared or renewed. Accordingly, the complete history of the present-day ghetto cannot be told without reporting on the construction of what was then middle class areas, but today represent the heart of Baltimore’s impoverished and distressed inner city. Like a fingerprint able to reveal the author of a crime, accounts pertaining to the material transformation of the city provide evidence for the evolution of local cultures and politics, their success and failure points. Ultimately, this urban history lays bare spatial responses that have led to the formation of a black city within the white.

**Historical Background**

Many newly freed people made their way to Baltimore between 1800 and 1810 as “Maryland’s geographical position as a border State made escape [from slavery in the South] relatively easy.” In 1820, the city was home to more than twice as many free blacks than slaves. One decade later, free men constituted 78 percent of the black population in Baltimore. The

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1 Stewart Macaulay, “A Study of the Negro’s Problem: How They Touch All of the City,” The Sun, March 31, 1935, sec. MS, 1, Baltimore Sun Archives.

situation was similar for women, with 3,854 female slaves for 15,334 free black women by 1860. The domestic migration meant readily available skilled and unskilled labor well suited to the needs of Baltimore's expanding industries. While free, many of these women and men lived in poverty, with salaries and housing far less decent than those of their white counterparts. The epidemics that affected entire cities in the 1800s were particularly destructive in black slums as a result of high densities and dysfunctional sanitation systems. A Dr. G. S. Townstead described one such area inhabited by blacks in a letter written in response to the early 19th century yellow fever outbreak:

A nest of houses, tenanted by Negros, and divided by an alley, very appropriately called "Squeeze Gut"! If I maybe allowed to judge from the quantum of excrementitious matter and stench with which it abounds! ... Disease and death have year after year, luxuriously rioted among the miserable and abandoned victims, who have there nestled together.

The availability of workers was further boosted by the continued arrival of migrants from German, Bohemians and Irish descents. Between 1841 and 1871, over 150,000 Germans arrived to the US via the waters of Maryland when the state's total population was around 750,000. In 1868 alone, an estimate of 12,000 German immigrants passed through Baltimore. While the majority of these migrants would go on to head west, the city's 1860s German community was still on the rise as the multiplication of German churches, banks, co-operatives and building associations showed beyond doubt. These physical apparatuses provided culture-specific landmarks that encouraged further migration from native Germans. Bohemians followed in similar footsteps, and by 1870, this ethnic community was already well established around the St. Wenceslaus Church in East Baltimore. Language barriers encouraged the formation of tight communities that allowed for the rapid development of ethnic areas where the culture that had been threatened at home could at last be safeguarded. Irrespectively of their race or ethnic heritage, these migrants like any other Baltimoreans were likely to reside in rowhouses; a housing typology that dominated the residential landscape of the town then like it does in the city today.

The Baltimore rowhouse

Baltimore has always been a city of rowhouses. Already in the 1800s, local builders developed this typology of dwelling to fit a wide range of needs, including those of families earning a

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3 Mary Ellen Hayward, Baltimore’s Alley Houses: Homes for Working People since the 1780s (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 119.
6 Hayward, Baltimore’s Alley Houses, 116–119.
7 Ibid., 156.
living through unskilled trades, to opulent houses designed for the plentiful.10 Rowhouses enabled a certain kind of neighborhood, where families only separated by a party wall lived close to each other on densely built parcels of land. The qualities of this housing typology have facilitated the formation of tightly knit local communities, and high rates of homeownership. Residential properties have for long been set-up as leaseholds in Baltimore. The ground rent system played a strong role in Baltimore’s nationally recognized high rates of home ownerships. This colonial heritage has allowed for cheaply priced residential real estates, as the land on which houses were built and sold remained property of a landlord, which was then leased for about 6 percent of the value of the land annually. “The system had the distinct advantage of allowing more people to buy their own homes, at close to half of what the price would otherwise have been.”11 This arrangement proved especially important in the 1800s before the current mortgage system was widely established and when building & loan associations remained at an experimental stage only. It allowed buyers to become property owners without having to pay the land outright.

As grounds are generally rented to perpetuity, they command a yearly sum that pales in comparison to their costs spread over the length of a standard mortgage. The system proved worthy in the Great Depression, when “mortgages in Baltimore fared better than those elsewhere in the country, largely because so many of the buyers rented the ground on which their houses were built. [...] Most were able to come up with the ground rent money, and builders did not have to take back many houses.”12

This practice also allowed small-scale builders to develop land without the burden of having to pay for the grounds upfront, therefore splitting the risk and encouraging the growth of a local construction industry. Landowners greatly benefited from having their lands developed, yet, they seldom possessed the expertise of builders and generally enjoyed being relieved from the responsibility and investment involved. Often with little to no help from trained architects, speculative builders erected neighborhoods at once; they constructed houses, divided the land and left voids that aligned with the Poppleton street plan drafted in 182314 as they turned lush pasturages into places for communities to grow. In middle class neighborhoods such as Harlem Park in West Baltimore, builders erected Italianate rowhouses, “five and six at a time, with identical exteriors.”15 This area had been laid out and built by only one developer; a common occurrence in Baltimore in the late 1800s when many estates either passed into the hands of local developers or were transformed for the financial benefice of builders and landowners.16

10 Hayward and Belfoure, The Baltimore Rowhouse, 21.
11 Hayward, Baltimore’s Alley Houses, 32.
12 Ibid.
Figure 9. Typical three-story, three-bay rowhouse (top) commonly built on elegant rows facing squares and parks. Typical working-class rowhouse located in alleyways in neighborhoods such as Harlem Park (bottom). Drawings and plans by Chester Design Associates, Gloria Mikolajczyk.
Figure 10. Franklin Square (twin houses), 100 block North Calhoun Street, West Baltimore c.1930s. Photograph by the Historic American Buildings Survey, image available from the US Library of Congress, call number HABS MD, 4-Balt-66.

Figure 11. Typical rowhouse marble steps, Fulton Street, Harlem Park, West Baltimore, 2014. Photograph by author.
Houses on a given street generally had similar layouts, with larger and higher dwellings being located on the main arteries and the smallest houses on back rows and alleyways. Most principal houses were built 18 feet wide or more, three stories high above a full or semi-basement. White marble steps commonly granted passage between the public realm and the front entrance, where ornate doors influenced by Victorian designs graced the front facades. Most houses were finished with bricks, generally varying from two to four room deep, where light shafts or wells would be included in the design of the two windowless rooms. In larger houses, kitchens were generally located in the finished basement and in a semi-closed area behind the house for more modest properties. “All principal rooms had fireplaces, often with marble mantels, and the principal rooms often had inlaid hardwood floors.”

Bathroom and plumbing were still uncommon until well into the 1900s, even in the most handsome homes decorated with cast iron balconies and ornamented plaster ceiling.

In between the 1830 and 1860, a new typology of rowhouse borrowed from Philadelphia emerged in Baltimore. The ‘bandbox house,’ also known as the ‘Father, Son, and Holy Ghost house,’ consisted of three rooms stacked above each other, of only half the depth of a traditional two-bay wide rowhouse. “Located on tiny lots facing extremely narrow streets, they enabled landowners to put a maximum number of rent-paying housing units on any given piece of land.”

As opposed to the English back-to-back house, the bandbox house, which became known in Baltimore as the ‘half-house’ only had one dwelling per plot, leaving the deep backyard un-built where the dwelling could later extend. “Local tradition suggests

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18 Hayward, Baltimore’s Alley Houses, 17.
that such houses were always meant to be finished, that the rear half would be eventually added.” 19 As these were strictly rental housings, tenants had little incentive to invest large sums of money into houses they did not own, however. “The form seems not to have been built after the Civil War, as by then tenement houses had taken up the job of providing cheap housing.” 20 Nevertheless, examples of these early experiences at low-cost homes are still standing today in Federal Hill and Fells Point, two of Baltimore’s historic working-class neighborhoods.

Squares and housing for the upper class

As entire rows were developed and sold throughout the city at once, builders and landowners would contribute to the urban design of Baltimore in no minor ways. Following the Poppleton street plan, which did not include any public squares, builders started paving the roads to increase the value of properties they built. These stood out in Baltimore in the early 1800s as not a single street was paved until 1782. 21 Speculators also aimed to augment the value of residential developments by providing green spaces to the neighborhoods where they built.

James and Samuel Canby offered the two-and-a-half acres of land that became Franklin Square to the City Council for $1 with the provision that it would be kept as a public square forever. 22 The successful speculators thereby increased the value of the land surrounding the square by making it suitable for expansive housings where the highest ground rents could be collected. Other developers adapted the lesson to the scale of their own project, which gave rise to a number of small, medium and large green spaces throughout the city. Harlem Square Park, twice the size of Lafayette and Franklin Squares in West Baltimore, had also been donated in 1868, with the provision that space would be used as a public square forever. 23 Mostly untouched in 1870, two-thirds of the Harlem Park neighborhood had become highly developed by 1876, and fully built up by the turn of the century. 24 As architectural historian Mary Ellen Hayward and Frank Shivers have noted:

In the late 1840s developers of Franklin Square [just south of Harlem Park], on the city’s western edge, offered building lots facing a landscaped common. Londoners knew the practice well. In Baltimore similar park squares, typical for the private use of surrounding homeowner, later appeared as the centerpiece of Union Square, Harlem Park, and Lafayette Square, on the west side of town, and in Johnson, Madison, and Collington Squares on the east side. 25

19 Hayward and Belfoure, The Baltimore Rowhouse, 45.
20 Hayward, Baltimore’s Alley Houses, 17.
22 Hayward and Belfoure, The Baltimore Rowhouse, 60.
23 BURHA, “A Demonstration of Rehabilitation: Harlem Park, Baltimore, MD.” (Baltimore: Baltimore City, 1965), 4, Special Collection, BURHA Series 10, Box 6, University of Baltimore Langsdale Library; Afro-American, “Ask Court Halt Sale of Harlem Pk Area,” Afro-American, April 12, 1958, 5, Afro-American Archives.
The two-story, two-bays wide Italianate rowhouse fashionable from the 1850s onwards quickly became a popular option for Baltimore’s middle class families seeking home ownership for the first time. The later, more expansive, three-bay wide version developed and finished with the exact amount of ornaments and features its buyers could afford were well suited to board Baltimore’s most prestigious squares – like the ones created through James and Samuel Canby’s project. Plots facing these green spaces also became the preferred sites for notable religious buildings as three towering 19th century churches came to anchor Lafayette Square, and two other similar buildings laid their foundations on Harlem Square Park in West Baltimore.

Speculators inadvertently encouraged co-habitation across people of different economic classes and race by adding cheaper dwellings on secondary rows and back streets (alleyways) throughout the 19th century. These modest dwellings referred to as ‘alley houses’ were homes to many working-class black residents that often worked and serviced larger park-front residences.26 Such was the case in Harlem Park, when owners of the opulent houses that surrounded the open space in 1895 depended upon the inexpensive help of mostly African Americans, who lived on these small streets.27

26 Edward Carter, “The Effectiveness of Block Organization as a Method of Eliciting Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal” (Master Thesis, Atlanta University, 1960), see chapter II.
Figure 15. Three-bay wide, three-story rowhouse facing Lafayette Square (center), located at 818 North Carrollton Avenue, Harlem Park, West Baltimore. Lafayette Square Presbyterian Church, now called the St-John’s African Methodist Episcopal Church (left). Photograph by James W. Rosenthal, available from the US Library of Congress, call number HABS MD-1141-17.

Figure 16. Service entrance of a luxurious property facing Franklin Square Park, on North Carey Street, Harlem Park, West Baltimore, undated. Photograph by E.H. Pickering for the Historic American Building Survey, available from the US Library of Congress, call number HABS MD, 4-BALT 85.
Figure 17. Typical alley houses in Baltimore, unidentified street, c.1930s. Photography by Paul Henderson, available at the Maryland Historical Society, Paul Henderson Photograph Collection, call number HEN.00.A1-104.

Figure 18. Map of Harlem Park, showing parcels and property footprints, with opulent residences on main axis and prestigious rows facing parks; and working-class residences on secondary rows and alleyways, Insurance Maps of Baltimore, Maryland Volume 2, Published by the Sanborn Map Co, available from the Baltimore City Archives.
The role of the parks in elevating the value of neighborhoods was un-debated. According to an 1881 article published in *The Sun*, these spaces quickly became a popular summer attraction for ladies and children, “relieving the eye and mind from the strain of contemplating endless piles of brick and mortar.” Reporting on the value of squares, the article noted that thousands frequented such retreats every day during the peak season. While builders initially fenced-off the parks, possibly following examples from London where squares were only accessible to those residing in houses facing the green space, the enclosures were quickly removed and opened to all Baltimoreans:

*Some years ago it was discovered that the great prison-like iron fences which enclosed the squares made them less inviting, and the experiment was tried of removing them, leaving blooming flowers and delicate shrubbery within easy reach of the public, and depending upon the forbearance of visitors for their safety. The success of the plan resulted in the removal of all railings, and it rarely occurs that a tree or flower is touched, tempting as it look.*

**Builders and working-class housing**

By the 1830s, builders had become highly dependent on their reputations as competition became fierce across all segments of the real estate market. “[T]hese builders linked their name in the public mind to well built houses, thus ensuring a competitive market for their product.” This provided a strong incentive for them to offer dwellings that they could stand behind and a name that would commend pride and security for the buyer. More importantly, the high quality and reputation assured quick sales and the rapid turnover on which builders such as Edward J. Gallagher depended upon. “If potential costumers heard that a highly reputable builder like Gallagher had started a row, they might go out to see the new houses on a Sunday,” historians noted.

Gallagher along with other prominent builders responsible for so many of Baltimore’s rowhouses assured the success of their venture by adapting their products for each and every type of homeowner:

*Throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, builders, often immigrants themselves or the sons of immigrants, continued to put up rows of much less expensive, interior-block housing, marketed their products to the newest immigrant group, and often helped potential buyers with loans and financing.*

For offering housings affordable to a lower income clientele turned out to be a significant design issue, Gallagher and his counterparts proved to be inventive in finding solutions

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28 The Sun, “Baltimore City Parks,” The Sun, July 9, 1881, Baltimore Sun Archives.
29 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 121.
32 Hayward, *Baltimore’s Alley Houses*, 3.
that allowed them to open up to this important market. These builders would sometimes hire the service of a trained architect for one house, which later became a prototype for the builder to re-adapt based on his own knowledge of construction methods, available materials and particularities of the site. The solutions behind these low-cost rowhouses encouraged the growth of Baltimore as it allowed large segments of the population to become property owners and thereby escape, for some time, destitute living conditions corresponding to tenement housings elsewhere in the country. This early access to property also placed cities like Baltimore and Philadelphia ahead of other up-and-coming urban centers, which encouraged migration and augmented human capital in return.

Despite Gallagher and his counterpart’s best efforts, however, some remained economically excluded from the market builders had ingeniously developed, especially black migrants from the rural South. These limitations notwithstanding, builders successfully transformed the town of Baltimore into a major American City. They entrusted generations of builders and developers that came after them with a built environment composed of unique architectural qualities despite the limited influence that trained design professionals have had on the aesthetics of Baltimore’s residential inner city neighborhoods.

Soaring Baltimore & the Black Working Class

While the situation for African Americans had gotten significantly better at the turn of the century than in the 1830s and 1840s when starved Irishman would regularly muscle black men out of employment lines, race continued to define ways by which Baltimore’s new prosperity would be experienced in the city. By the time the Civil War broke out in the United States, Baltimore’s free black population outnumbered that of any other city in the country. While most Marylanders would sign up with the Union Army, tens of thousands joined the Confederacy Army, laying bare the existence of political and cultural division within this border state. After the victory of the Union over the South, enslavement would no longer be tolerated but public institutions in and beyond Maryland nonetheless managed to down the country’s black population as segregation remained alive and well. In Maryland, Jim Crow Laws and Southern culture affected all facts of life, from school to homes, hospitals to markets, while local norms continued to evolve between typically Northern and Southern stances in relation to the politics of race.

The rise of colored schools

Few writers have captured the social struggle of black people at the turn of the century as well as prominent scholar W.E.B. Du Bois. In 1903, he wrote, “The opposition of Negro education in the South was at fist bitter, and showed itself in ashes, insult, and blood; for the South believed an educated Negro to be a dangerous Negro.” Du Bois’s contributions covering
the evolution of the struggle of blacks in America have allowed his readers to develop an understanding of a community born into a twoness; “an American, a Negro; two souls; two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.” From the dream of freedom to that of political power, Du Bois underlined the continuity of the struggle half a century following Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862. His work described the battles that followed, including the rise of the next ideal: book-learning. “If, however, the vistas disclosed as yet no goal, no resting-place, little but flattery and criticism, the journey at least gave leisure for reflection and self-examination; it changed the child of Emancipation to the youth with dawning self-consciousness; self-realization, self-respect.”

As opposed to hardline Southern states, Maryland did not object to the education of African Americans per se in the mid-19th century. The state, however, outlawed black organizations as secret societies, making the existence of schools difficult, to say the least. This could be read as a symptom of the massive fears of a black overtaking that prevailed in the 1840s. As a result, everyday needs were to be met without external support. Notwithstanding, Baltimore’s black community commendably succeeded in establishing 15 schools by 1859 despite a repressive environment and the absence of public funding for the so-called colored schools.

Baltimore had by then inaugurated its first colored high school. The Frederick Douglass Institute opened in 1882 in West Baltimore where most of the city’s better-off black population resided. West Baltimore had in fact expanded into the city’s most popular area for African Americans when many residences in Pigtown, the city’s first black ghetto, and other neighboring areas in the southwestern part of the city were demolished for the expansion of the Baltimore & Ohio Railway (B&O). “This elite residential area [in West Baltimore] served as a springboard to launch what would become, by the 1920s and 1930s, the center of the city’s elite black cultural, political and residential life, spread out between Pennsylvania Avenue and Eutaw Place in the northwest section of the city.”

At around the same time in the state capital, Annapolis, public offices had started to distribute public school tax revenues to the colored schools in the same way as it had been customary to do for white schools. Elected representatives in Annapolis determined the portion that should be allocated for white and black schools respectively after consulting with City Hall in Baltimore. In 1888, they settled on the sum of $32,200 for white schools and $4,900 for black schools. Stated differently, they distributed around 13 percent of the public school budget for black institutions, at a time when the black population represented around 15.5 percent

36 Ibid., 8.
37 Hayward, Baltimore’s Alley Houses, 57.
39 Hayward, Baltimore’s Alley Houses, 182.
40 The Sun, “School Fund Distribution,” The Sun, March 17, 1888, Baltimore Sun Archives. The exact numbers being, $32,232 and $4,867 respectively.
of the city’s population; a colossal improvement compared to the previous year when black schools had received no financial help from any governments. The difference, however, is that white school buildings and equipment had been paid by the government, whereas the much inferior facilities of black schools had benefitted from the same support.

Using this budget, the Robert Brown Elliot School opened its door in the Harlem Park neighborhood in 1897. Designed by architect Alfred Mason, the building became historically significant as its notable size and architectural qualities were unusual for a structure built exclusively for the use of blacks. Children from East, South and North Baltimore walked long ways to reach these schools and access institutions that their parents had not. The significance of West Baltimore as the center of a growing black middle class was proven anew when a private college for African-Americans, Morgan College, was inaugurated in 1881. Also located in Harlem Park, it remained on the corner of Fulton and Edmondson until 1918 when it moved to the current day location of Morgan State University.

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41 The percentage for the population of white and black people was calculated based on data presented in Frederick Ludwig Hoffman, Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro, 3rd ed. (New Jersey: The Lawbook Exchange, 1896), 12.


43 Ryon, West Baltimore Neighborhoods, 118.

Figure 22. Morgan College at its original location, Harlem Park, West Baltimore, year unknown. Unknown author, photograph available from the Enoch Pratt Free Library.

Figure 23. Classroom in gymnasium of Morgan College after relocating to Northeast Baltimore, 1955. Photograph by Paul Henderson, available from Maryland Historical Society, Paul Henderson Photograph Collection, call number HEN.06.04-015.
The socio-economic rise of Baltimore’s black population did not only correspond with the establishment of a school system, but also with the urbanization of the country. While only 4.2 percent of black people lived in the city in 1860, the proportion had almost reached 16 percent by 1890. Most migrants from the rural South were arriving to cities with few if any skills that would allow them to readily integrate higher paid positions in urban industries. In contrast, a black middle and professional classes had started to exist in Baltimore, even if very small. As Hayward noted, “During the late 1860s and 1870s this established and fairly well educated class of free blacks had to deal with the influx of a much less privileged class of black citizens, former plantation slaves who had little education and few urban skills.”

These migrants stood out from other working-class blacks, which had by then achieved a certain level of respects across the blue color economy. As Hayward explained:

Next to the distrusted, foreign-speaking Catholics, the city’s free black didn’t look so bad. Many employers preferred to work with reliable free black labor than with the contentious, brawling foreigners who actually had fewer job skills or, often, any real training. The result was that the accomplished, settled free black population of the city gained a measure of local respect in the 1850s it had not possessed earlier.

According to a report by the Urban League, Baltimore’s Negro schools were amongst the best in the country by the mid 1930s. The education of black Americans allowed the country’s largest minority group to gain a thorough awareness of the depth of inequalities they continued to be subjected to after the end of slavery:

But facing of so vast a prejudice could not but bring the inevitable self-questioning, self-disparagement, and lowering of ideals which ever accompany repression and breed in an atmosphere of contempt and hate. Whisperings and portents came borne upon the four winds: Lo! we are diseased and dying, cried the dark hosts; we cannot write, our voting is vain; what need of education since we must always cook and serve? And the Nation echoed and enforced this self-criticism, saying: Be content to be servants, and nothing more; what need of higher culture for half-men? Away with the black man’s ballot, by force or fraud, – and behold the suicide of a race! Nevertheless, out of the evil came something of good, – the more careful adjustment of education to real life, the clearer perception of the Negroes’ social responsibilities, and the sobering realization of the meaning of progress.

When President Theodore Roosevelt publicly supported the appointment of black individuals in offices of Southern states in the early 1900s, unapologetically racist opponents served to remind that equality was still a long way out. According to The Sun paper:

46 Ibid., 201.
47 The Urban League, “The Negro Community of Baltimore” (Baltimore: The Urban League, 1935).
48 Bois, Of the Dawn of Freedom, 10.
The two races, as every reflecting person knows, differ both in mental attainments and in moral standards. It may be, indeed, it is true that there are certain individual blacks who excel like certain individual whites: but it is a mere commonplace to state that an overwhelming majority of the whites are superior to an overwhelming majority of the blacks. A less conservative statement of the situation might fairly be made, but, in justice to the President and to Northern sentiment, we present the case temperately.⁵⁰

**Early reports of urban blight**

With the Panic of 1893, the worst economic depression ever experienced at the time, black and white workers alike were put out of work, with half of the city’s industrial workers becoming unemployed in 1895.⁵⁰ The Baltimore Fire of 1904 did little to help, destroying over 1,500 buildings across 70 blocks.⁵¹ “The buildings built in 1905 and soon after looked like the buildings built in 1903 and before.”⁵² Reconstruction was fast, proving once again the efficiency of Baltimore’s building industry. Only few traces of the major disaster remained two years after the event. The same aesthetic style persisted despite the adoption of a city building code stressing the need to use fireproof materials.⁵³ While many of Baltimore’s prestigious buildings disappeared in the flames, many more substandard ones escaped the heat. Despite the perilous economic situation, people continued to flow into the city, where living conditions worsened faster in black neighborhoods, where densities remained higher, constructions older, and incomes lower.

Janet Kemp’s 1907 report, “Housing Conditions in Baltimore,”⁵⁴ unveiled the slum-like condition a large number of neighborhoods throughout the city. Kemp, a social worker, was designated as a special agent on housing conditions in Baltimore. She drew connections between the state of blighted urban environments with the rapid proliferation of tuberculosis; a major health issue at the time. “The necessity of fresh air, she said, was vital and she drew a pathetic comparison between the opportunity afforded a man of means to recuperate from an attack of tuberculosis and that of a poor man working for but a few dollars a week, a prisoner to his environment, without the means of availing himself of a sanitarium.”⁵⁵ As individuals became aware of the correlation between unsanitary living arrangements and illnesses, the quest to abolish slums gained momentum. At this point, many poor citizens lived in rooms with no windows, or in cellars designed to store coal, wood and other supplies. A 1907 survey of Albermarle Street revealed that “Of some 600 houses, but 9 [had] toilet accommodations

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⁵⁰ Hayward and Belfoure, The Baltimore Rowhouse, 111.
⁵² Hayward and Shivers, The Architecture of Baltimore, 237.
⁵³ Sherry H Olson, Baltimore: The Building of an American City, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 248.
⁵⁴ Janet Kemp, “Housing Conditions in Baltimore: Report of a Special Committee of the Association for the Improvement of the Condition of the Poor” (Baltimore: Charity Organization Society Of Baltimore, 1907).
⁵⁵ The Sun, “Housing Conditions Told: Miss Janet E. Kemp Tell of Some Causes of Tuberculosis,” The Sun, June 29, 1907, Baltimore Sun Archives.
other than yard wells.”⁵⁶ According to The Sun, “What [was] wanted [was] a higher conception of standards of life, comfort, decency and cleanliness.”⁵⁷ On the year that followed the publication of the report in 1908, “City Council enacted a law forbidding building houses on streets less than 40-feet wide.”⁵⁸ This order meant the start of a new era that recognized the serious predicaments of over-densification on public health.

Residential segregation

As the population of Baltimore was rising by around 25 percent per decade from 1860 to 1900, the scarcity of low-cost dwellings for migrants coming from the South represented an issue that aggravated conditions in the neighborhoods documented by Janet Kemp.⁵⁹ Around 24,000 blacks migrated to Baltimore between 1910 and 1920, and 34,000 more in the decade that followed. Meanwhile, the areas of the city where black families could live remained the same, leading to major overcrowding and resulting in the deterioration of dwellings and streetscapes in black enclaves. The general condition of these spaces encouraged those who could afford it to leave the black ghetto and seek housing in white neighborhoods despite Jim Crow laws refraining them to do so. Such decisions were usually welcomed with hostility, unrestrained protests and physical violence.⁶⁰

When John Long moved with his family into a house he had rented on 1805 Druid Hill Avenue in West Baltimore in 1899, “a crowd of boys and young men bombarded the house with stones, bricks and other missiles, breaking all the windows in the rear and causing the inmates to shut themselves in a room.”⁶¹ The attacks were renewed for the two nights that followed. On the second night, “Lang claimed some one [sic] fired a pistol, the bullet going through the front parlor window and into the room.”⁶² At that time, the nearest black family from John Long’s new house on the 1800 block of Druid Hill Avenue was five squares away; a fact that points at the degree of racial homogeneity that existed in the area then.

Segregation was turned into a contentious issue when migration patterns within the city started to confront the race-based territorial organization that had been established. When the School Board of Baltimore proposed to change a school built for white children into an all-black school, local residents organized and strenuously opposed the proposition. Located in a then all-white neighborhood of West Baltimore near the crossing of Lanvale and McCulloh Streets, the local population worried that the transformation of School No. 46 would encourage inter-racial patterns of spatial organization:

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⁵⁶ The Sun, “Baltimore Slums,” The Sun, July 28, 1907, Baltimore Sun Archives.
⁵⁷ Ibid.
⁵⁸ Hayward and Belfoure, The Baltimore Rowhouse, 119.
⁵⁹ The exact population increase between 1860-70 was 25.8%; 1870-80 was 24.3%; 1880-90 was 30.7%; and 1890-1900 was 17.2%.
⁶⁰ The Sun, “Colored Family Scared: Claim That Their House on Druid Hill Avenue Is Bombarded,” The Sun, September 1, 1899, Baltimore Sun Archives.
⁶¹ Ibid.
⁶² Ibid.
The point was made that all public buildings for the use of negroes should be located in one part of the city, so that the negroes would, for the sake of convenience, settle in that locality. This, it is thought, would save the well-to-do parts of the city from negro residents, whose presence always causes a marked and immediate depreciation in the value of properties.\textsuperscript{64}

Discussion pertaining to restrictive laws designed to forbid co-habitation amongst races were placed at the forefront of public discourses in 1904, when according to a supporter of such laws, "the negroes [had] driven the whites from the center of the city," something that this person considered to be "outrageous."\textsuperscript{64} In an op-ed piece printed in The Sun, this resident proposed, "Those who want [black people] for neighbors are welcome to move within their borders."\textsuperscript{65}

Special associations were formed to fight the arrival of black families in some of Baltimore's middle class residential sections. These protective associations worked by defying the transfer of properties to black occupants and regain possession of those properties owned by non-white individuals. The Sun reported on one such property in 1909, a "massive residence" facing Harlem Park that had been acquired by a black lawyer through public auction. "The members of the protective association let it be widely known that they did not intend to permit a negro to move into the house."\textsuperscript{66} After standing empty for two years, with no rent revenues and despite considerable repairs, the house was sold back to a white owner for $200 less than the sum for which it had been acquired.

In the rare occasions where black tenants or homeowners would move into all-white areas, the new occupant could feasibly expect his or her property to be vandalized. In the case of William B. Hamer, a black post-office clerk who moved to 1804 McCulloh Street, such attacks were no deterrent, however. With only three windows left undamaged following the stoning of his newly acquired home, he declared to The Sun, "I won't move out for anybody."\textsuperscript{67} The resistance against the arrival of blacks in white neighborhoods was widespread and strong, and included a wide range of supporters such as members of the clergy:

\begin{quote}
The pastor of a church in one of the neighborhoods in which there are many negroes said that in his opinion a law similar to that of miscegenation, by which whites and negroes are forbidden to inter-marry, should be passed in regard to property. ... He added that a law forbidding the invasion by negroes of neighborhoods occupied by the whites and at the same time forbidding whites to enter blocks or immediate neighborhoods where the colored people live, would be just and equitable.\textsuperscript{68}
\end{quote}

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\textbf{Source} & \textbf{Reference} \\
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The Sun, "Oppose Negro School: Neighbors Adopt Resolutions and Thank The Sun," The Sun, July 23, 1903, Baltimore Sun Archive, 6. & \textsuperscript{65} \\
C.B., "Negroes in White Neighborhoods," The Sun, November 5, 1904, sec. Op-Ed, Baltimore Sun Archives. & \textsuperscript{64} \\
Ibid. & \textsuperscript{65} \\
The Sun, "Feared Negro Influx: White Residents Combined to Keep Them Out of Neighborhood," The Sun, November 1, 1909, Baltimore Sun Archives. & \textsuperscript{66} \\
The Sun, "Negro Homes Stoned." & \textsuperscript{68}
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Discriminatory principles were equally ingrained in City Council politics. In 1911 a bill was proposed calling for the freeze of existing racial housing patterns. Prompted by the arrival of George McMechen and his family on the 1800 block of McCulloh Street, the bill was drafted by one of his neighbor, who like McMechen, was also a lawyer. The adjacent area known as Druid Hill had been converted into a predominantly black area in the early 1910s, but the McCulloh Street house in question was directly east of the boundary line of the so-called "Negro Section." Juveniles attacked the home soon after and a community meeting was promptly organized to petition the Mayor and City Council for an ordinance restricting blacks to move into white areas. Councilman Samuel L. West amended the initial bill so that each block of Baltimore would thereby be designated as either white or black. The bill ordered in its final form that "no negro [could] move into a block in which more than half of the residents are white (...) and no white person can move into a block in which more than half of the residents are colored." The act was signed into law by year's end in 1911. As law professor Garrett Power wrote, "Baltimore's segregation regulation law was the first such law to be aimed at blacks in the United States, but it was not the last."

According to James Henry Hammond, a Baltimore entrepreneur, "the West ordinance [could have been] unnecessary because of the very fact that the negroes themselves would prefer a section devoted only to their own people." However, landowners of plots at the outskirts of the city were unwilling to sell land or properties for the development of an all-black middle class community, where houses comparable to those built in all-white neighborhoods would be erected. As Hammond explained, "Some time ago a colored investor wanted to buy some suburban land to build houses on it for colored people, but all that anybody wanted to sell him was land in the backwoods."

Despite the West ordinance, middle class black families continued to move to all-white areas as sellers offered inducements, while decent houses in all-black areas were few and far between. The Sun continued to refer to this pattern of intra-city migration as a "black invasion;" a strong language that mirrored the impetuosity of those opposed to the co-habitation of people across races:

Incensed at negro families moving in their neighborhood, residents in the vicinity of Myrtle avenue and Lanvale street threatened yesterday to use physical force to eject the unwelcomed tenants. Threats were openly made and several persons said they would take the law in their

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72 Ordinance 692, 1911.
74 The Sun, “Urges a Negro Colony: Colored Business Man Suggests Plan to Stop Invasion,” The Sun, October 9, 1910, Baltimore Sun Archives.
75 Ibid.
own hands if they could find no other way to prevent the invasion.\textsuperscript{76}

Baltimore’s use of government legislation for systematic and citywide racial separation was declared as unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court in 1917 when it struck down the Louisville, Kentucky segregation ordinance in Buchanan \textit{v.} Warley, and by way of legal precedent, nullified similar ordinances through the country.\textsuperscript{77} Chief Justice White’s opinion stated:

\begin{quote}
It is urged that this proposed segregation will promote the public peace by preventing race conflicts. Desirable as this is, and important as is the preservation of the public peace, this aim cannot be accomplished by the laws or ordinances which deny rights created or protected by the Federal Constitution. … We think this attempt to prevent the alienation of the property in question to a person of color was not a legitimate exercise of the police power of the State, and is in direct violation of the fundamental law enacted in the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution preventing state interference with property rights except by due process of law. That being the case, the ordinance cannot stand.\textsuperscript{78}
\end{quote}

The case had built on the efforts of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), including the work of Hawkins who represented a key player in the movement. The past president of NAACP wrote a letter expressing the importance of the case: “Thank God, Segregation is dead.”\textsuperscript{79} Once invalidated by the highest court, however, ingenious developers schemed different ways to apply race-based spatial separation by other means.

Rolland Park, one of the first planned suburban communities in North America, paved the way for segregated planning through self-governance. Designed in part by Frederick Law Olmstead Jr. between 1890-1920, the community was formed based on the notions of exclusivity and homogeneity. “The Rolland Park Company considered the use of deed restrictions to exclude Negroes as early as 1893, but at first decided against it.”\textsuperscript{80} The restrictions were only added in 1910 and lasted until 1948, when the US Supreme Court declared such restrictions unconstitutional as a denial of equal protection in Shelly \textit{v.} Kramer.\textsuperscript{81}

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\textsuperscript{76} The Sun, “White Residents Angry: Declare They Will Drive Negroes from Lanvale Street House,” The Sun, September 6, 1913, Baltimore Sun Archives. \\
\textsuperscript{77} Buchanan \textit{v.} Warley, 245 Chief Justice Edward White (Supreme Court of the United States 1917). \\
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{79} Francis Cardozo, “Correspondence of Dr. Francis N. Cardozo to James Weldon Johnson,” November 16, 1917, Baltimore, 1914-1917, Box 84, Series G, Group 1, Library of Congress. \\
\textsuperscript{80} Garrett Power, “The Residential Segregation of Baltimore’s Jews: Restrictive Covenants or Gentlemen’s Agreement?,” Generations, no. 5 (1994): 5. \\
\textsuperscript{81} Shelly \textit{v.} Kraemer, 334 US. 1 Fred M. Vinson (US Supreme Court 1948).
\end{flushright}
blacks or Orientals.” The model influenced large parts of Baltimore’s first belt of suburbs as the Rolland Park Company held a virtual monopoly over the northern development east of the Jones Falls expressway. The model was further supported by city officials, including Mayor Preston in Baltimore who worked to “find a way to encourage realtors to disseminate the idea of the covenant as a means for ensuring racial segregation.”

The Jewish population of Baltimore, which rose from 7,000 in 1860 to 78,000 in 1960 eventually relocated the heart of its community ten miles from its original core in densely packed Old Town, to northern suburbs west of Jones Fall. They too were unwelcomed in White Anglo-Saxon Protestant developments, such as those of the Rolland Park Company. However, while the restriction of blacks was protected through legal documents, the exclusion of Jews was not written into law. Garrett Power noted that the Jewish community was instead shun away through what he referred to as a ‘Gentlemen’s Agreement,’ where owners and brokers agreed that it would be unethical to sell to someone of Jewish ethnicity. In a separate article titled “Apartheid Baltimore Style,” Power noted that by 1924 the Rolland Park Company claimed 1,500 acres of restricted land, each covered by this kind of restrictions. These included Rolland Park, Guilford (1913), Homeland (1924) and Northwood (1931), where 2,525 families lived in 1928, including 13 Jewish ones, and no black one.

The type of segregationist restrictive covenants crucial to The Roland Park Company’s development strategy inspired other developers and local associations. Citizen organizations emerged throughout Baltimore in an attempt to enact similar clauses to be included in property contracts, even attempting to influence municipal zoning laws once again. In 1921, Arthur Eby encouraged his Maryland Avenue Association, “[w]e have some hope that in the new zoning ordinance a measure protecting purely white neighborhoods from a negro invasion will be incorporated.” Two years later, residents of Harlem Park in West Baltimore were also developing a strategy designed to achieve what had been done in Rolland Park. Incorporated under the name ‘Harlem Park Protective Association,’ the group’s purpose was to “try by every legal means to stem the advancing tide.” As stipulated in their first meeting of March 1923, each owner within the territory was asked to sign an agreement pledging to not sell his property to a black person. Those in default would be subjected to legal actions. Despite these measures, many Harlem Park residents remained preoccupied by the transformation of their all-white residential area into something else despite the covenant. They were resolved to go one step further and seek support from City Hall. In February 1923, the group acted by circulating a petition on Harlem Avenue between Fremont and Arlington Avenues, asking Mayor Broening “his aid in keeping negroes out the neighborhood.”

82 “Leon Sachs: Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project, Oral Histories” (University of Baltimore, October 11, 1979), Special Collections, BHNP, University of Baltimore Langsdale Library.
88 The Sun, “Harlem Park Area in Anti-Negro Move: Property Owners Organize to Prevent Further Encroachments,” The Sun, March 10, 1923, Baltimore Sun Archives.
89 The Sun, “To Petition Mayor on Negro Invasion,” The Sun, February 23, 1923, Baltimore Sun Archives.
Despite these tactics of resistance against integration, the racial landscape started to change along Harlem Avenue, east of Fremont in the early 1920s, when rumors that the Harlem Avenue Christian Church was to be sold to a black congregation. The sale of the church took place, and soon after, “White owners, one after another, have sold out to colored” citizens. Amid this rapid change of racial composition in the area, white-residents west of Fremont sought to restrain any black families to move beyond the border of a territory over which they intended to maintain control. The leader of the protective movement against the so-called “negro invasion” explained, “Thus far there are no negroes west of Fremont avenue and if there is anything we can do to keep them out we are going to do it.” He added, “Every resident of the two blocks to whom I have talked – and I have seen about all of them – is of the same mind.”

In December 1924, a lawsuit was filed asking the court to prohibit black citizens to occupy houses contained within the protected area of Harlem Park. Abraham Williams had been renting out his properties at 808 and 810 North Carey Street to black tenants. While the first tenant had moved out without fighting the suit, tenants from the second property contested the validity of segregationist agreements. “The injunction was refused because a clause of the association's contract made it void unless signed by 100 percent of the property owners of the district.” As a result, the Harlem Park Protective Association agreed to correct this number at 75 percent, as others had been done elsewhere in the city, and ultimately forced the eviction of the second family as well.

As the validity of segregation covenants had become a contentious topic in Baltimore, representatives from seventeen neighborhood associations gathered for an address by two D.C. attorneys specializing in the subject. They affirmed, “the present covenants [could] not be rendered illegal by any clause in the Constitution of the United States.” The covenants were signed by individual members of each association and specified that neither they nor their heirs would sell a property to a black buyer. Builders were by then increasingly focusing on streetcar suburbs and catering to the middle and upper classes, “leaving lower-income groups and blacks to find used housing through neighborhood turnover.” Dwellings suitable for the black middle class being scarce to inexistent, families nevertheless integrated white areas directly adjacent to enclaves that had historically been all black, thereby challenging restrictive covenants and according to the two D.C. attorneys, doing so with the American Constitution pitted against them.

Declared as valid in 1924, restrictive covenants were later judged to be void when the Maryland Court of Appeals reviewed the decision in 1929. According to the court’s opinion, the judgment was not based on legal arguments pertaining to race or discrimination, but rather on the...
public policy favoring the free transfers of land. In other words, 75 percent of a community could not decide how the other 25 percent could dispose, give or sell their private properties. Jim Crow advocates returned to earlier methods to dissuade black families from moving to all-white neighborhoods, using social and physical violence to dissuade blacks from escaping the black ghetto. As a November 1929 article titled “Negro Family Driven Out of White Block” reported, the house at 1632 Aisquith Street was hit by bricks, smashing windows and the front door’s glass panel a few days after Martin Dyer and his wife and son had moved into the East Baltimore dwelling. “Looking the situation over thoroughly they called a moving van and at 10 P.M were on their way to the Eden Street address.” For de jure residential segregation appeared to be over at last, de facto segregation prevailed and continued to define the territorial transformation of Baltimore in clear ways during the 1930s.

Meanwhile, it had become common for landlords to ask for higher rent from black tenants in areas where race-based territorial organization had become difficult to enforce. According to a 1924 news article titled “The confessions of a Baltimore Landlord,” “In Baltimore, the general rule [was] that of higher rent for the negro than for the white person.” The reporter explained that under black tenancy, single-family houses were generally occupied by two or more families, making it easier for owners to charge higher prices. “The rental of $30 a month became $40, $45, $50 or even more. Sometimes it [was] almost double.” The Sun underlined that some exceptions existed as many “landlords ha[d] no sympathy with this sort of profit-making.” But many more seldom hesitated to do everything in their power to turn a house over to black residents, with the primary goal of renting it out at inflated prices to families who had grown accustomed to this practice and expected very little in the way of maintenance from their landlords.

Figure 25. Plats Nos 4A & 5 of Rolland Park, 1923-1927. Created by the Roland Park Company, available from The Sheridan Libraries, Johns Hopkins University, call number G3844.82:296:36Z.

96 The Sun, “Negro Family Driven Out of White Block,” The Sun, November 14, 1929, 30, Baltimore Sun Archives.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
Figure 26. "To Petition Mayor on Negro Invasion," Published in The Sun, 23rd February 1923.

Figure 27. Changing racial composition in Harlem Park, undated. Photograph by Paul Henderson, titled 'Man Pushing Snowball Cart,' available from the Maryland Historical Society, Paul Henderson Photograph Collection, call number HEN.00.A1-105.
Figure 28. Lafayette Square Presbyterian Church, 810 North Carrollton Avenue, Harlem Park, West Baltimore. Like the Harlem Avenue Christian Church, this church was sold to a black congregation and became home to the St John’s African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1929. This Gothic revival structure was originally built between 1878-1879 and designed by Dixon and Carson Architects. Photograph by James W. Rosenthal, c. 1935, available from the US Library of Congress, call number HABS MD-1143.
Segregation in public, commercial and institutional spaces

The preference to separate the living space of African Americans extended to all aspects of life. “Between 1907 and 1910 blacks were made to feel uncomfortable in parks, theatre segregation was stepped up, and more and more hotels excluded blacks.” Jim Crow affected a range of urban spaces, from hospitals, shops, churches, neighborhoods, theaters, schools, and many others. As black Baltimoreans could not make use of many of their city’s amenities, they created neighborhoods within neighborhoods and later, a city within the city.

In 1910, one of Baltimore’s leading department store ordered that blacks could only try on merchandise in the basement. Not long after, most stores in the city prohibited African Americans to try on or return any garments altogether. Soon, hospitals, cemeteries, clubs, even music bands became segregated. Beatrice Hawkins Bailey (born April 6, 1895) explained in an interview recorded as part of the Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project (BNHP) how she experienced segregation following a car accident:

I had an automobile accident when I was working. So anyhow, I had the ambulance came and ... they took me to Union Memorial Hospital. They didn’t take colored people there. ... She came to me [indiscernible] what nationality are you? I said, well, I’m a Negro. So he went back and told her. And she said I have to transfer you to another hospital. ... I said just take me to St. Joseph’s because – it was right where the school is now, Oliver and Caroline Street – it used to be St. Joseph’s Hospital there. ... They didn’t know what I was. Made me mad. But you know they wouldn’t take colored people at Union Memorial at Thirty-Third and Charles.

Mrs. Myrtle Smith remembers segregation in stores:

Even the department stores that’s uptown now, they was segregated there at one time. I remember this lady that I worked for; she used to have a charge account at Stewart’s. Well, then Stewart’s closed out all colored accounts. And then in the later years they opened up for colored people again.

But Hecht Company was the only store that I remember – Hecht Company and Braggers were the only stores that I remember that has catered to colored people all along.

Racial intolerance extended to Jewish people as well, but to a lesser extent. “The more the street became viewed as Jewish, the fewer non-Jewish homebuyers and renters chose to live there.” The two communities being discriminated against – black and Jewish – engaged in social and business interactions in a more convivial fashion with each other. Beatrice

100 Pietila, Not in My Neighborhood, 14.
101 The original collection consists of 234 oral history interviews and visual material collected from 1978 to 1981 for an exhibition. Hard copies occupy 57 linear feet of shelves at the University of Baltimore Langsdale Library and form a unique source of information on life in Baltimore at the turn of the 20th century.
102 This incident occurred at around the time of the Great Depression.
104 “Myrtle Smith: Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project” (University of Baltimore, 1978).
105 Pietila, Not in My Neighborhood, 15.
Hawkins Bailey, Lucy Cox\textsuperscript{106} and Myrtle Smith, like many more young black Baltimoreans in the early 1900s, earned a bit of change each Saturday lighting up the fires for Jewish families on Sabbath:

And of course we used to light their fires and everything. We made extra change like that because the Jews, at that time, most of them were kosher and they didn't light any fires on Saturday. That was their Sunday, so they would always have some of us turn on the gas, light the fire, something like that.\textsuperscript{107}

All three interviewee recalled playing with Jewish kids, especially Mrs. Bailey who remembered having a Jewish girl as one of her closest friend in elementary school. Small businesses owned by members of the Jewish community were also open to offer black Americans the same treatment as other costumers. Mrs. Smith explained, "most of those little Jew stores that were around us, they were glad to give you credit."\textsuperscript{108}

While residential segregation was still going strong one generation after it had been legally abolished, Baltimore's black neighborhood continued to flourish in the years that led to the Great Depression. The Great Black Migration affected Baltimore's racial composition drastically; a historical period that corresponds to the rise of steel mills and factories during World War I when the demand for unskilled and semi-skilled labor led many black Southerners to move to Northern industrial cities as the war had cut off immigration from Europe.\textsuperscript{109} As a result, lower and middle class black neighborhoods expanded quickly in the late 1910 and 1920s.

In West Baltimore, between Druid Hill Park southwards to Franklin Street, and from Madison Avenue westward to Gilmor, the city's largest black neighborhood was by then well established.\textsuperscript{110} The area was crossed through by Pennsylvania Avenue, an important commercial street that The Sun described as "the Charles Street of the Negro."\textsuperscript{111} The neighborhood had hosted a high concentration of black residences since before 1890, when already 60 percent of the population was black in this area.\textsuperscript{112} Following the black working class, a black bourgeoisie arrived in the area, taking over the best houses on the upper end

\textsuperscript{106} "Lucy Cox: Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project" (University of Baltimore, 1978).
\textsuperscript{107} "BNHP," 1978.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 'Shriver's' was a grocery store, selling mostly meat.
\textsuperscript{109} Carole Marks, Farewell, We’re Good and Gone: The Great Black Migration (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).
\textsuperscript{110} Loïc Wacquant remarks that economic factor were influential to the Great Black Migration, but that social conditions in Dixy States was in fact the impetus for this historical migration. He writes, "But economic push and pull factors merely set conditions of possibility: the trigger of the Great Migration that transformed the black community from a landless peasantry to an industrial proletariat, and with it the visage of American society in toto, was the irrepressible will to escape the indignities of caste and its attendant material degradation, truncated life horizon, and rampant violence – the outmigration of blacks was heaviest in those counties of the Deep South where lynching were most frequent (Tolnay and Beck, 1992)." Loic Wacquant, "Deadly Symbiosis: When Ghetto and Prison Meet and Mesh," Punishment & Society 3, no. 1 (2001): 102.
\textsuperscript{111} Henderson, "Local Deals and the New Deal State," 33.
\textsuperscript{113} Paul A. Groves and Edward K. Muller, “The Evolution of Black Residential Areas in Late Nineteenth-Century Cities,” Journal of Historical Geography 1, no. 2 (April 1975): 182.
of Druid Hill Avenue, while the poorest blacks generally continued to occupy alley houses. According to The Sun, by the late 1920s, "In this section a city within a city ha[d] grown up. A community almost self-sufficient live[d] and move[d] and ha[d] its being." The story colorfully described subtleties observed in the area's street scenes. It foregrounded that "the Negro of [1928 was] vastly changed from the Negro of fifty, or even fifteen years ago." The Sun described a mixed community; one part sophisticated, one part fun loving and one part immoral:

The street is a study in contrasts. One passes big black youths, resplendent in blue serge suits, tan shoes, gray spats, light overcoats, and gaudy mufflers, derbies and canes. With them go fur-coated, silk-stockinged [sic] 'brownskin gals,' laughing uproariously at their escorts' slightest sally. On their hells stumbles a drunken old colored man, reeling tipsily from side to side, his pants held up by one uncertain button affixed to old suspenders, his tattered coat flapping open and showing his collarless, unshaven throat.

The article spoke of The Royal, a defunct institution in Baltimore that was then equipped to host some of the country’s finest acts – from theater to music – with the elegance that had previously only been observed in the ‘white folks’ theaters. Before Pennsylvania crosses North Avenue, one could find “Negro markets, many Negro churches and many Negro doctors and lawyers.”

The territory described by The Sun suggested the emergence of a newfound and wider-spread wealth across the black community in Baltimore. “The Avenue was also a center for jazz, drawing black musicians like Duke Ellington and launching the careers of famous black Baltimoreans like Cab Calloway and Billie Holiday.”

As the economy of the entire country was coming to a new low in 1929, the disappearance of employment opportunities affected the black population as it did the white, only in greater intensity for minority groups:

Between February 1929 and February 1930, for example, there was an 8% rise in joblessness among usually gainfully employed black men in Baltimore compared to a 2% rise among white men. Similarly, unemployment among black women in Baltimore climbed 13% compared to 7% among white women in the one-year period.

In other words, the groups most affected at the onset of the recession were black women, followed by black men, white women and finally, white men. As historian Jo Ann Argersinger noted, “Black women even lost the ‘security’ of low-paying service jobs in the early years of

113 The Sun, “Along the ‘Avenoo’ in Baltimore’s Harlem,” 7.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid.
the depression; one employment agency reported in 1934 that only 10 percent of its calls for nursemaids were filled by black women, compared to 65 percent in 1928.” An Urban League report noted that 39.5 percent of black people in cities collected relief during the Depression versus 14.6 percent of whites (nationwide). In Baltimore, the average domestic wages were so low that a number of workers opted to go on relief, where they would earn comparable incomes. While the relief offered was inadequate for everyone, the situation was especially difficult for blacks, for whom relief was lower than for their white counterparts.

Between 1929 and the end of 1930, the production of machinery, petroleum products and clothing plunged by over 20 percent. In 1932, 19 percent of Baltimore’s working force was unemployed. The economic condition was no worse than in other American cities as the Great Depression affected most industries in the United States. While Baltimore’s housing market fared better than most other cities, it was nonetheless affected by the crisis. Few mortgages went into default in Baltimore, but even less new houses were built, creating a long pause in the city’s large building industry. This reduction in the construction of new houses significantly impacted the black community, who depended on secondhand houses at a time when the black population continued to grow despite a failing economy.

Figure 29. Advertisement for Stepin Fetchit’s performance at The Royal, “the highest paid colored artist in the world.” Published in the Afro-American Newspaper, 31st May 1930.

121 Macaulay, “A Study of the Negro’s Problem.”
122 Williams, The Politics of Public Housing, 27.
123 Hayward and Belfoure, The Baltimore Rowhouse, 155.
Discussion & Analysis

While the relatively amiable living condition for free blacks in Baltimore compared to those living in the neighboring solid South encouraged growth and migration from the early 1800s onwards, the city later became conflicted over the evolution of its demographic assemblage. The provision of legal rights, schooling, employment and housing on different grounds based on race played no small part in producing conditions of social, economic and spatial inequity for targeted individuals. Residential, commercial and institutional segregation constructed the physical space of the city to the image of Jim Crow as invisible walls effectively limited movements for blacks in Baltimore. Such spaces of repression performed undisguised under the pretext of the inferiority of one race and the superiority of another. In turn, it effectively worked to facilitate the coming of overpopulated, ill-serviced districts where differences with the Baltimore of White Anglo-Saxon Protestant and Catholic families became conspicuously clear.

Beyond the physical space available for the black community in Baltimore, the networked strategies also quivered the mental space of repressed individuals who soon became fully aware of the nature of their condition as citizens unequal before urban life itself. The reliance on a vocabulary generally proper to geopolitical discourses and international conflicts to describe the residential migration of black Baltimoreans to all-white areas is inscribed in a vaster inventory of evidence supporting the hypothesis of Baltimore as a divided city, at least for the length of the historical period covered in this chapter. Warnings and austerity measures against the so-called “negro invasion,” or invasion by “negro colony” into white residential areas elucidated the presence of a foreign body threatening to enter a territory perceived as being sovereign. The black ghetto was thus not constructed and maintained because a natural and universal desire for people to preserve their peculiar cultural form, but rather from structural forces grounded in political, social and economic institutions. Admittedly, “as a group rather definitely set apart from the remainder of the population, Baltimore’s Negro community live[d] to a very great extent on its own intellectual


and social resources." Unlike the Irish, Germans or Bohemians, blacks could not integrate the residential fabric of Baltimore outside small and overcrowded enclaves developed around urban cores dating back to the days of slavery.

Du Bois pointed to the conflicted disposition of blacks in America as “born in a twoness: an American, a Negro,” and these accounts from Baltimore’s early history lay bare which of these two attributes was most determining to the fate of African Americans for a period that span well over a century. Central to this quest to keep the separation alive was space; the production of which mirrored the evolution of power relations and the stance of political and cultural systems in place. While builders played no small roles in making Baltimore into a “city of homes,” their ingenious craftsmanship and entrepreneurial skills never managed to counteract the hegemony of a discriminatory private housing market and the prejudice culture from which this emerged.

Figure 30. The Royal Theatre, a historically significant venue for the entertainment of African Americans during segregation, 1329 Pennsylvania Avenue, West Baltimore, c.1949. Photograph by Paul Henderson, available from the Maryland Historical Society, Paul Henderson Photograph Collection, call number HEN.00.B1-001.

Figure 31. Pedestrian men walking on Pennsylvania Avenue, West Baltimore, c.1949. Photograph by Paul Henderson, available from the Maryland Historical Society, Paul Henderson Photograph Collection, call number HEN.00.A2-273.

Figure 32. Pedestrians walking on Pennsylvania Avenue, West Baltimore, c.1949. Photograph by Paul Henderson, available from the Maryland Historical Society, Paul Henderson Photograph Collection, call number HEN.00.B1-113.
After 12 years of Republican Presidency and against the backdrop of the Great Depression, the Democratic nomination from New York was elected to the White House in 1932, taking 42 of 48 states. Sworn into office at the peak of the depression, Franklyn Roosevelt’s New Deal Agenda lifted the nation’s spirit. This series of measures aimed to support the working-class and introduced political positions that continue to define modern liberalism in the United States. Roosevelt’s administration quickly developed an interest in city and regional planning. In order to address certain problematics common in urban areas across the US such as the shortage of employment opportunities, the decaying condition of city centers and residential areas, and the need for modern infrastructures, the federal government devised financial tools, policies and objects that aimed to reverse territorial decay nationwide. Beyond affecting the built form, New Deal policies transformed the social and political spaces of cities by providing programs that demonstrated compassion from the government and required community organization that “served to alter the relationship between citizens and the federal government.”

The evolution of these social and political spaces was largely constructed over militancy, negotiations and debates pertaining to the condition of housing and city planning as the definition of urban programs became a primary matter of concern for communities, municipal, regional and national agencies. Under the New Deal, urban planning and architectural projects became the medium for local communities to communicate to their federal government, and vice-versa. Some of its policies, however, instigated processes of spatial organization that would lead up to the institutionalization of the ghetto.

As part of Roosevelt’s New Deal agenda, the US Congress initially passed two acts that have had a profound effect on the architecture of cities: The National Industrial Act in 1933, and the National Housing Act of 1934. From these, three pivotal entities were born: The Home Owner’s Loan Corporation (HOLC), the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works (PWA) and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). Together, they affected the housing market through the introduction of financial schemes, contentious mapping techniques, slum-clearance programs and the introduction of public housing.

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1 Argersinger, Toward a New Deal in Baltimore.
2 Legislation such as the Social Security Act demanded for communities to engage in community participation in order to access public funding. According to scholars like Michael Austin and Neil Better, this was the first time that the expression ‘community participation’ appeared in any Federal statue. See, Neil Betten and Michael Austin, The Roots of Community Organizing, 1917-1939 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990).
4 The agency was renamed as the Public Work Administration in 1939, the name by which it was often referred prior to the change. The official acronym of the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works was FEAPW, but this use was seldom found outside official government publications. Much of the literature on the topic uses PWA to refer to this program, even for those parts that were carried when the agency bore a longer name. In this work, PWA will be used instead of FEAPW to avoid confusion and facilitate the reading.
Harold L. Ickes has been a central figure in the implementation of New Deal strategies. He dedicated his 1935 book, *Back to Work: The Story of PWA* to President Roosevelt, who according to Ickes would be “written down in history not only as the world’s greatest builder,” but also “as the greatest planner” of all time. Roosevelt’s urbanism was guided by good intentions and effectively provided new opportunities to the thousands affected by the economic crisis, but New Deal strategies were also racially packed. These two acts encouraged decentralization, and proved more helpful for the middle class than the urban poor. While the territorial architecture of Baltimore had previously been driven primarily through the work of builders, developers and community groups activated by racial prejudices, the urban history of Baltimore in the 1930s has been shaped first and foremost via the plane of politics. Accordingly, this chapter proposes to shift the focus to federal and municipal politics, with regards to the effects that these spheres have on the spatial network of the mid-century Baltimore ghetto.

Figure 33. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt with George Washington Carver, c.1939. Photograph by Ted Hyman.

Housing & Presidential Planning

The National Conference on City Planning of 1933 was held in Baltimore and structured around a single major theme: “Planning and National Recovery.” Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior and Administrator of the Public Work Administration, was billed as one of the key speakers at the event. Writing for The Sun, the renowned journalist Stewart Macaulay noted:

"Like many other worthy but not entirely essential activity the science of city planning has languished somewhat during the lean years. Recently, however, there has been a striking revival of interest in this field and it is predicted that the National Conference on City Planning, which opens here tomorrow, will prove one of the most significant events in the history of the organization. The reason, of course, is the imminent prospect of release of hundreds of millions of dollars for public works, local and national."  

The conference marked the beginning of city planning as a pivotal field for the modernization of American cities. Ickes's lecture introduced planning guidelines and criterions to access federal funds that would take city and regional planning to scales previously unheard of. The questions hovering over blighted urban areas had occupied a centerpiece in the National Conference on City Planning of 1932 in Pittsburgh, but as Macaulay remarked, "The problems were largely academic at the time for neither private nor public capital was available for the execution of extensive work along these lines." With the New Deal, such issues would finally be integrated in practice as well, as city planning expanded amid an economic environment otherwise smothered by soaring unemployment rates and widespread poverty.

The deteriorating condition of inner city areas started to capture political attention in the years that followed the Panic of 1893. Throughout the United States, working-class families were aclimatized to second-rate living arrangements, African Americans especially. Many remained confined to segregated and overcrowded and ill-maintained quarters; areas that correspond to inner city ghetto neighborhoods today. The problematic black traditional ghettos escalated in the years that followed as excessive crowding and the short supply of adequate housing took a toll on the working poor and black middle class alike. Discussion pertaining to the future of blighted areas could not be detached from other contentious issues, such as the co-habitation of races, the role of the state in urban affairs, the rise of urban poverty and housing solutions provided by other means than the private market.

As noted in a 1919 article titled “Negroes Seeking Space” published by The Sun, it had become "apparent to thinking people that the situation [was] fast becoming intolerable within the confines of a city like Baltimore and that some drastic methods of productive action [had to be] quickly devised.” Six days earlier, the same newspaper had published a story reporting on...

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6 Stewart Macaulay later became Provost at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.
7 Stewart Macaulay, "Recovery and the City Plan," The Sun, October 8, 1933, sec. MS, 13, Baltimore Sun Archives.
8 Ibid.
9 The Sun, "Negroes Seeking Space," The Sun, August 19, 1919, Baltimore Sun Archives.
the disparity in mortality rates between white and black residents, the ratio being nearly twice as high for the minority group. Referring to abnormal death rates in the black population, Dr. Beitler from the Statistical Bureau of the State Board of Health stated, “it is a fact that our statistics show that the negroes in Baltimore are dying off faster than they are being born.” The cause? There are several. Too much crowding together in homes, too little attention to sanitation, underfeeding, lax morals and other reasons.”

The Sun reiterated the role played by environmental factors in a separate piece published less than six months later. It charged the city itself for being responsible for the disparity in living expectancies between races. The article noted, “Poorly constructed houses of bad design and in need of repair, streets and alleys with defective drainage, congested living conditions – these are some of the factors which prevent the negro from attaining the standards of health which the white race reaches without difficulty.” Later surveys of health conditions proved more optimistic, but mortality rates continued to be as much as one third higher for blacks by 1933. Representing only 17 percent of the population of Baltimore City, blacks were victims of over 73 percent of all deaths from venereal diseases and over 47 percent of all deaths from tuberculosis. Overcrowding only worsened in the years that followed as the black population of the city jumped from approximately 140,000 in 1930 to around 225,000 in 1950, with little to no increase in the size of black residential areas. By 1933, the “population per assessed acre in Baltimore generally was 31.8 persons. In areas inhabited by blacks, this figure ranged from 87.3 person per acre to 172 persons per acres.” While poor white citizens also lived in substandard conditions, blacks were at much greater odds to reside in blighted and worsening ghettos than any other racial or ethnic group at that time, especially in a place like Baltimore where migration from the solid South was so important, and where Jim Crow lingered.

In a 1932 meeting sponsored by the Baltimore League of Women Voters, two architects were invited to discuss the problems of slums and urban blight. Questions pertaining to such problems had become particularly relevant to blacks, seeing that large portions of the traditional ghetto were also slums, given the vastly substandard material condition of low-income housings and streetscapes in areas opened to minority groups. The two architects were Charles Dana Loomis and William Wirth Emmart, both former members of the City Plan Commission. The duo referred to slums as ‘fixtures.’ According to Emmart, it was futile to think of wiping out slums “so long as there are plenty of people not earning enough

10 The Sun, “Birth Rate of Whites During War Contradicts Alarming Prophecy,” The Sun, August 13, 1919, 20, Baltimore Sun Archives.
11 A 1935 study of the black population of Baltimore City noted that the average family size for blacks in the city was of 2.8 persons, which was smaller than native or foreign-born whites. Family sizes were significantly larger in the county, with an average of 4.37 persons per black family, which was marginally more than for whites. See, The Urban League, “The Negro Community of Baltimore.”
12 The Sun, “Negroes Seeking Space.”
14 Mortality rates in 1933 were 1,663 per 100,000 blacks in Baltimore City, see: Macaulay, “A Study of the Negro’s Problem,” 1.
15 Groves and Muller, “The Evolution of Black Residential Areas in Late Nineteenth-Century Cities,” 182. The exact number of blacks in the city was 142,106 in 1930 versus 225,099 in 1950.
money to pay for decent housing.”17 Both architects maintained that slums were unavoidable by-products of modern American civilization, to a point where they believed for any city plan aiming to eliminate slums altogether to be faulty. On the topic of public housing, Loomis suggested “not to try to force population groups into definite areas by legislation, nor assume that all people would prefer the same type of environment.”18 This comment preceded the first federally built public housing in America, at a time where planning authorities were increasingly looking at Europe for inspiration, but restricted by depleted municipal coffers and the specific priorities at City Halls.

Notwithstanding Loomis’s warning, the utopia of a slum-less city remained. At the eve of the 1933 National Conference on City Planning, “To remedy this anomalous situation [the decay of the historic city] the city planners suggest drastic remedies. They would tear down these old sections and revamp them completely as modern home developments.” Writing on the latest strategies of local planners, a reporter for The Sun added, “They are willing even to forgo an appeal to aesthetics and to have the merits of their scheme weighted purely as an economic expedient.”19 The Harvard educated architect C.D. Loomis suggested to evaluate the economic cost of such redevelopment processes through ways that were equally drastic. “He point[ed] out that undesirable neighborhoods are expensive; they breed crime and increase the labors of public health authorities and social workers.”20 Accordingly, Loomis proposed to account for the cost of public protection, the courts, maintenance, police work, and so-forth, which constituted a difficult challenge to real estate speculators and public offices, seeing that their respective interests and balance sheets had previously been kept separated.21 The

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18 Ibid.
20 Macaulay, “Recovery and the City Plan.”
21 No figure are available for Baltimore, but a study of Cleveland produced in the 1930s demonstrated the cost of maintaining blighted areas for the public sector. The Cleveland study focused on one section the city, where $225,000 was being collected annually from taxes. The cost to the city for fire and police protection, sewers, street lights and other basic public services within that same section totalled $1,356,000 annually, culminating in a significant lost that would be absorbed via tax revenues collected in better-off areas.
value of properties, current or speculative, depended on direct investment from the city. Modernist urban planners recognized the correlation between the value of property and public upkeep, and as such, they proposed plans that would address the private and public realm in a singular gesture by increasing spending in one to increase the value of the other.

**Early programs for the elimination of slums**

In the years that pre-dated the New Deal like in those that immediately followed it, dialogues pertaining to the future of slums recognized the need to rehouse the poor in theory, but rarely managed to integrate these ideas into plans. As city planning turned a blind eye on a problem that in all evidence would not naturally be resorbed, architects addressed a separate design issue, also valid and directly related: that of urban sprawl and its corollary, the decay of historic city centers.

A few months after the National Conference on City Planning of 1933, a special hearing was held in Annapolis to enact the Maryland Emergency Housing and Park Commission. The commission would become in charge of overseeing the condition of housings statewide and was equipped with the authority necessary to address its primary purpose: to eliminate slums. It was granted the power to condemn parcels for clearance and earmark land land for public housing development, thereby overwriting the influence of speculative builders likely to inflate the price of real estate to take advantage of public redevelopment initiatives. For Baltimore, the creation of the new entity marked the start of a new era where dialogues over the question of slums and the construction of public housing would at last be turned into plans.

Early New Deal programs had allowed the city to pay the rent for those unable to do so, which provided support to impoverished families but also to property owners, whose tenement dwellings had little to no value on the open market. This diminution of property values in the historic city was partly due to the growth of suburbs, which followed the development of rapid and private transportation systems that had been facilitated in the two decades that led up to the Great Depression. Other elements also factored in, not the least of which being the failure of landlords to maintain their properties, which they could nevertheless rent to black tenants who had very limited housing options in Baltimore. As a result, many houses from central districts fell into lower rent brackets. One empirical study noted, "As

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23 Heated debates over the ethics of this practice emerged in 1934 when welfare programs were restructured in Maryland following the reduction of funding made available by the Federal government. The Baltimore Emergency Relief Commission (BERC), which had previously paid the rent for welfare recipients devised a new way to calculate the value of payments in an attempt to correct irregularities. The decision to calculate rent payments on the basis of 7% of the assessed value of the property led to massive contestation by the Real Estate Board, who referred to the policy as being “discriminatory to landlords,” and who subsequently threatened to evict welfare recipients. Liberal New Dealers responded by suggesting that the properties of such landlords, often slumlords, were of no value on the private market and that their political influence should no longer amount to their receiving payments at all for these properties under the pretext of welfarism. See, Argersinger, Toward a New Deal in Baltimore, 37–9.

24 For example, Ward 5, a historic area of Baltimore lost nearly half of its population between 1900 and 1930 (from 20,751 to 11,990), while the city’s overall population augmented from 508,957 to 804,874. See, Frances Morton, “A Social Study of Ward 5 and 10 in Baltimore, Maryland” (Baltimore: Baltimore Council of Social Agencies, April 1937), 6.
white families of higher income groups have moved to the suburbs, they have been partially replaced by Negroes of low income.” 25 Following rapid demographic changes, larger houses were often subdivided, which commonly resulted in windowless rooms, and dwellings with no bath or lavatory. After cycles of unsound architectural adjustments, vast overuse due to the densification of dwellings, and negligent landlords, many houses became unsuited and unwanted by even the poorest citizens. As a result, houses and streets became vacant, subsequently abandoned by their owners and thereby depriving the city from tax revenues. 26 In 1934, around 8,500 houses were left unoccupied in Baltimore, not counting those described as being ‘unfit for occupancy’ but nevertheless occupied. This represented a substantive amount in a city with a total of around 210,000 dwellings in 1936. 27

The first step towards organizing a local public housing program in Baltimore came in October 1933 when Abel Wolman, Head of the Maryland’s State Advisory Committee, appointed a Joint Committee on Housing in Baltimore. 28 Mayor Howard Jackson selected the local architect and foremost authority on city planning in Baltimore as Chairman of the Committee: W. W. Emmart. Born in 1869, Emmart, who had trained as a draftsman at the Maryland Institute before completing an apprenticeship with a leading nineteenth century firm of Joseph Evans Sperry, was by then a senior and respected figure on the local architectural scene. As The Sun explained, “In announcing Mr. Emmart’s appointment, Mayor Jackson made it clear that his purpose was not only to make this a better city both for business and residents but also to recover losses in the taxable basis caused by adverse changes in the character of sections.” 29 As the Joint Committee was primarily concerned with clearing slums to make way for redevelopment initiatives, Emmart agreed that so-called ‘undesirable districts’ should be categorized as either ‘slum areas’ or ‘blighted area’ in order to establish priority sites. 30

‘Slum areas’ were defined as parts of the city in which a large percentage of dwellings were inhabitable by decent people. A ‘blighted area’ is one in which there is a high percentage of delinquent tax property, either occupied or unoccupied, on which repairs had not been made for a long period. 31

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25 Ibid. Morton noted that in 1900, 157 black people lived in Ward 5, and 6,913 by 1930 (See page 7).
26 The decentralization of the housing and industrial market affected Baltimore City in drastic ways when its citizens relocated within the administrative limits of Baltimore County, thereby depriving Mayor Jackson of important tax revenues. As it was widely acknowledged that tax revenues in slum areas were far lower than the cost of providing services in these quarters, the deficit encountered for the provision of services in slums had to be made up by tax levies upon residents of other sections of the city. The trend towards outward growth left Baltimore City’s municipal officials stranded and anxious to regain economic solvency before financial pressures would impel the Mayor to reduce public spending, which would compel more residents to join the flight to the counties, where public services were plenty.
27 William Watmough, “Vacant Houses on Decrease, Survey Shows,” The Sun, December 6, 1936, sec. Real Estate, 3, Baltimore City Archives. According to a survey carried on the following year, when the number of vacant dwellings had reduced to 6,032, including 3,565 rowhouses, as many as 1,277 rowhouses were listed as being unfit for occupancy. This suggests that the real number of vacant unit, including those unfit for occupancy would be around one third higher than the official number reported.
29 The Sun, “To Study City’s Blighted Areas,” The Sun, May 9, 1934, 6, Baltimore Sun Archives.
30 The Sun, “‘Blighted’ Areas in City Discussed: Rehabilitation Committee Decides Baltimore Is Without Slums,” The Sun, October 14, 1933, 5, Baltimore Sun Archives.
31 Quoted in, The Sun, “‘Blighted’ Areas in City Discussed.”, 5.
The definitions were odd, and noticeably non-spatial. The description of ‘slum areas’ relied on the character of residents to define the quality of spaces, instead of the character of the space itself. The inadequate definition offered much leeway to public authorities and other actors with political influence to establish which areas would be identified as a slum. The definition for ‘blighted area’ was hardly more suited, even if it did include elements pertaining to the quality of dwellings.

In order to establish the condition and status of afflicted neighborhoods, Chairman Emmart appointed a subcommittee to study housing conditions in Baltimore, which would serve as the basis of the report requested by the Mayor. Emmart’s studies and plans for Baltimore were reviewed in December 1934. The Subcommittee had “determined that Baltimore was without ‘slum areas’.” Instead, it reported on a ring of ‘blighted areas’ around the central business districts, “in which there is a high percentage of tax delinquent property, either occupied or unoccupied.”

Quoting the architect, The Sun wrote, “Baltimore has a ring of ‘blighted’ or decadent territory between its downtown section and its residential section, an area which could be rehabilitated, through cooperative effort, and provide attractive living quarters for those who now live in outlying suburbs.” In an attempt to compete with the landscape of American suburbia, Emmart proposed grand schemes that captured the zeitgeist of modernist planning, but reinterpreted for the context of Baltimore City. The plan proposed low-rise and mix-used developments, with airy dwellings of different sizes so as to accommodate varying family compositions. Emmart defended his designs for responding to the particularities of Baltimore, such as the lower value of land, the availability of empty plots, a culture of homeownership, and the organization of the city as an assemblage of urban villages. Following local traditions, the architect suggested low-rise dwellings with an adequate supply of local shops to meet everyday needs within walking distance. Provisions to rehouse those displaced were left out of the plan, however.

Emmart’s drastic gestures would erase existing rows as he raised, on paper, alternative layout options each aiming to provide additional natural lighting, ventilation and greenery to private dwellings. The concept consisted of an arrangement of interlocking crosses of five city-blocks each, and multiplied to cover an areas of 48 blocks. At the center of each cross would be an important public place (e.g. a school, church, firehouse, public square, etc.) that would serve the redevelopment area’s 2,000 dwelling units. “The houses would be arranged in pleasing patterns, each with its own garden and each facing upon a court instead of a heavily traveled street. Provision were also for the construction of slightly groups of garages and for such shops as the population would require.”

33 Members, Biographical Data,” n.d., H-2700, Box 206, PHA Projects Files, RG 196, National Archives (USA).
34 The Sun, “City Planner Visualizes New Era Here,” The Sun, December 12, 1934, 25, Baltimore Sun Archives.
35 The Sun, “Low-Priced Homes Plans Revealed,” The Sun, April 19, 1934, 24, Baltimore Sun Archives.
36 Emmart’s plans counted 1,672 daylight houses and 304 corner apartments.
Figure 35. Plans and diagram by W.W. Emmart representing a new vision for the inner city of Baltimore, 1935. Diagrams and plans reproduced in “A Basis for a Baltimore City Plan,” published in The Sun, 6th January 1935.
of topics ranging from car parking, the distribution of gas stations throughout the city, to the urban design of commercial streets. Each element of his scheme aimed to support a central objective: the recentralization of residential, commercial and industrial activities to save the city from bankruptcy.

Emmart’s Committee was composed of representatives from the American Institute of Architects, the Engineering Club of Baltimore, and the Building Trades Congress. Shining by their absence were social workers, black advocacy groups and others who sought solutions to the crises of the inner city from within, instead of planning for the replacement of working-class, predominantly black communities by better-off white families. Identifying blight as the root cause of the problem in Baltimore in the 1930s, the committee devised strategies targeting the physical fabric of the city headfirst, while paying no regard to issues like unemployment, segregation or socioeconomic conditions.

At the very same time that Baltimore City was attempting to devise ways to attract residents and businesses back to the historic city, federal agencies created to support the middle class developed a series of measures that, deliberately or otherwise, encouraged growth in the suburbs. With the New Deal and its offshoots, the built-environment of Baltimore, as well as the relation that the city entertained with its suburbs were drastically re-organized. These transformations were manipulated by a range of actors that played out across organizational scales going from isolated community groups to federal agencies.

**Derogatory mapping & the effect of Federal financial devices**

The Home Owner’s Loan Corporation (HOLC) was designed to prevent foreclosures through the refinancing of home mortgages in default. In 1933, half of all mortgages in the US were behind their scheduled payment. The situation in Baltimore was less dire but nonetheless problematic. The federal program was designed to refinance over $3 billion of mortgages through self-amortizing fifteen-year loans – a familiar concept to Baltimore’s loan associations that was still largely unknown in the rest of the United States. HOLC offices were quickly set-up throughout the nation and began accepting applications for loan insurance in August 1933.

The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) was set up as part of the National Housing Act of 1934 and took over the task to insure mortgage loans, thereby continuing HOLC’s market stabilization efforts. Both programs built upon the history of racial discrimination not unique to Baltimore. “HOLC’s signal innovation was to map racial, religious, and class concentrations in various cities according to criteria that were uniform throughout the nation.” Roosevelt’s administration had thereby initiated a process that accentuated the segregation of Jews and blacks through the creation of maps designed to locate ‘hazardous’ neighborhoods, where

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38 Emmart later invited a sociologist, Dr. Ivan McDougle from Goucher College as the committee’s technical advisor on all matters pertaining to social questions, and an ‘expert’ on race, who advocated the ‘separate but equal’ ethos.

39 Hayward and Belfoure, *The Baltimore Rowhouse*, 156.

40 Pietila, *Not in My Neighborhood*, 64.
mortgages became unattainable or exorbitant in fees. As it happened, these supposedly
dangerous zones where lending would be considered as high-risk corresponded to
predominantly black or Jewish areas. "A new and ominous real estate and banking term was
coined: redlining." 41

According to William Julius Wilson, this federal program:

\[
\text{Contributed to the early decay of inner city neighborhoods by withholding mortgage capital}
\text{and by making it difficult for urban areas to retain or attract families able to purchase their}
\text{own homes. Spurred on by massive mortgage foreclosures during the Great Depression, the}
\text{federal government in the 1940s began underwriting mortgages in an effort to enable citizens}
\text{to become homeowners. But the mortgage program was selectively administered by the Federal}
\text{Housing Administration (FHA), and urban neighborhoods considered poor risks were redlined – an}
\text{action that excluded virtually all the black neighborhoods and many neighborhoods with}
\text{a considerable number of European immigrants. ... By manipulating market incentives, the}
\text{federal government drew middle-class whites to the suburbs and, in effect, trapped blacks in}
\text{the inner cities.} 42
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HOLC’s 1937 ‘Redlining map of Baltimore’ instigated a ranking system that culminated in
mortgage rates varying based on the racial composition of the neighborhood, which were
clearly favorable in white areas and practically unaffordable in black and Jewish sections. 43
HOLC recognized that Jews and blacks would almost exclusively have access to older houses
and that their presence announced the beginning of cycles of racial and economic succession –
a key indicator for urban conditions that according to HOLC could only worsen. Already in
1922, realtors adopted the view that “not only poor housing conditions but blacks generally,
were a blight on neighboring property.” 44 In that year, the National Association of Real Estate
Brokers published a textbook, stating, “the purchase of property by certain racial types is very
likely to diminish the value of other property.” 45 HOLC would eventually legitimize these
unambiguously discriminatory statements by solidifying the characteristically racist logic of
1920s realtors through policy. The FHA prolonged this bigotry through restrictive covenants,
which forbid blacks and Jews to rent or sell housing units in certain areas. “Until 1949, it was
the official policy of the FHA to refuse to insure housing unit that disrupted ‘community
composition,’ and this agency did not require nondiscriminatory pledges from loan applicants
until 1962.” 46

41 Ibid., 62.
43 It should be stated that HOLC did not lend money to households directly, but guaranteed mortgages issued by the banks.
Local financial institutions were thus instrumentalized to facilitate irregular lending practices, where non-economic factors
such as race determined lending rates (as opposed to solvency, income levels, credit score).
45 National Association of Real Estate Boards, “Principles of Real Estate Boards” (National Association of Real Estate Boards,
1922).
78.
Figure 36. Residential Security Map of Baltimore, Maryland (i.e. Redlining Map), 1937.
Created by HOLC, Division of Research & Statistics, available from The Sheridan Libraries, Johns Hopkins University, call number 2008-03-10T17:06:00Z.
Figure 37. Racial distribution by census tracts demonstrating the correspondence between redlined areas and predominantly African American areas, 1950. Map published in “Housing Market Analysis for Baltimore Community Renewal Program,” available at University of Baltimore, Langsdale Library, Special Collection, Urban Renewal & Housing Authority, SeriesX Box6.
Figure 38. Racial distribution by census tracts demonstrating the correspondence between redlined areas and predominantly African American areas, 1960. Map published in “Housing Market Analysis for Baltimore Community Renewal Program,” available at University of Baltimore, Langsdale Library, Special Collection, Urban Renewal & Housing Authority, Series X Box 6.
The federal government’s manipulation of market incentives accelerated the demise of the inner city by providing economic motives for the white middle class to move to the suburbs, where loans would be noticeably cheaper. This increased the concentration of poverty and racial homogeneity in the historic city, which was facilitated further in the 1950s by “a federal transportation and highway policy, including building of freeway networks through the heart of many cities, mortgages for veterans, mortgage-interest tax exemptions, and the quick, cheap production of massive amounts of tract housing.”47 The unequal treatment of people based on race delivered through so-called welfare measures effectively amplified the ongoing societal discrimination and “hampered African Americans’ attempts to advance and improve their lives in urban communities.”48

Contentious private banking practices in Baltimore further accentuated the housing crisis. By the 1930s, Baltimore’s reputation as a “city of homes”49 had allowed predatory bankers to market and supply high-risk loans to households that could only afford renting. These loans would generally be offered on housing of poor conditions and sold to families unaware of their financial inability to join in other Baltimoreans as homeowners. This became clear in a survey of the city’s housing condition, conducted by local architects and supported by the Maryland Emergency Housing and Park Commission, which concluded that:

Greedy realtors and bankers who ‘exploited’ city residents with the ‘constant campaign to own-your-own-home’ and encouraged the ‘over-selling of ridiculously small equities in jerry-built houses,’ which caused ‘not only a cumulative hardship on these so-called owners, but a tremendous load on mortgages in the writing off of unsafe mortgages.’ 50

Such practices drastically reduced the potential efficacy of the FHA, as the agency refused to backup loans that should have never been issued in the first place. As a result, only 1,665 mortgages had been insured statewide in Maryland by 1937,51 which led critics to publicly decry the federal agency for catering to bankers and business leaders,52 who benefited more from the program than the city’s poor and working-class overall.

Federal government and public housing

Created on June 16th 1933, the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works (PWA) was mandated to develop multifamily housing projects targeting modest income households and other large-scale public projects, including roadwork, the construction of schools, hospitals, sewage, and transport infrastructures. The introduction of this agency corresponded with two major urban problematics: the incessant expansion of blighted areas, and the disappearance

47 Wilson, When Work Disappears, 46.
49 Coyle, The Baltimore Book, 79.
50 Argersinger, Toward a New Deal in Baltimore, 94.
51 “Report of the Associated Architects of Baltimore, Inc., to the Maryland Emergency Housing and Park Commission” (Public Housing Administration, 1938), RG 196, Box 206, National Archives (USA).
52 Argersinger, Toward a New Deal in Baltimore, 94.
of work. The PWA sought to address both items directly by replacing slums with low-cost apartments, and simultaneously creating jobs in the construction industry. Mayoral offices nationwide were pressured to find practical solutions to what had previously been the matter of academic discussions only, as the federal government’s largesse would provide the financial backup that had prevented previous slum clearance ideas to take concrete forms.

According to former Baltimore City Housing Commissioner Robert C. Embry, Jr., the primary goal of the PWA was not to rehouse the poor outright, but instead to create new jobs.\textsuperscript{53} On June 23\textsuperscript{rd} of 1933, Secretary Ickes created a Housing Division at the PWA that would soon oversee the first phase of public housing in the United States. The program mainly targeted the upwardly mobile working-class\textsuperscript{54} as the PWA sought to welcome residents that had managed to keep an address beyond the shoddy quarters of the city, taking in families whose morals and work ethics responded well to the image of the upright citizen out of work amid an unforgiving economic climate.

While PWA low-income housing could only be built on slum-cleared land, relocation benefits for families displaced by the program were far and few. The federal agency made a precise tenant list, taking time to visit each and every applicant in order to assess his or her ability to maintain a respectable home. Those families living in small, crowded and past-prime tenement dwellings that were later demolished via slum-clearance efforts were viewed as unlikely candidates. Equally improbable was the likelihood for working-class black families to live anywhere else than the black ghetto in Baltimore City. According to George Morris, President of the Real Estate Board of Baltimore in 1934, “a large part of our colored population ... seem[ed] content to live under slum conditions,”\textsuperscript{55} a remark that echoed the Real Estate Board’s total disinvestment and blatant misunderstanding of the black housing market and of the external pressures that spatially restrained it from expanding.

Following conventional housing policies, the PWAs strategy aimed to modernize and industrialize dwellings while eradicating irregular housing. The federal initiative also created an impetus for local authorities to create or modernize municipal master plans and community development strategies, as it requested cities to produce concrete plans in order to access PWA financial support.\textsuperscript{56} City governments were divided on aspects of the initiative; some resolved to only access the funds for infrastructure projects, with others being completely open to the President’s involvement in local housing markets.

The Housing Division of the PWA began its activities in June 1933 with the “hope to implement

\textsuperscript{53}Robert C. Embry Jr., Conversation with Robert Embry, interview by Benjamin Leclair-Paquet, August 23, 2013, Baltimore.
\textsuperscript{54}Rhonda Williams noted that a 1933 Joint Committee on Housing of the Maryland State Advisory Board report had identified areas in dire need for affordable and sanitary housing. Like Embry, she argued that “the state advisory board report seemed more concerned with providing jobs, removing blight and disease and, therefore, black nuisances, and preserving white neighbourhoods—not attacking black people’s poor living conditions.” Williams, The Politics of Public Housing, 31–2.
\textsuperscript{56}George Morris, “Real Estate Board Head Sees Flaws in US Plans,” The Sun, January 14, 1934, Baltimore Sun Archives.
a program of loans and grants to local public agencies, but few local housing authorities existed nationwide, and none in Baltimore. Reacting to this institutional shortcoming, the Housing Division quickly extended its support to limited dividend corporations. In Philadelphia, the limited dividend program offered support to Bauhaus-inspired housing projects, like the Mackley Homes designed by International Style architect Oscar Stonorov and equipped with amenities such as a swimming pool, auditoriums and recreation rooms. In Baltimore, the only four projects submitted to the PWA under this scheme were instead envisioned as small time profit-making ventures. Developers such as William L. Geddes attempted to access PWA fund using slum clearance as a pretext, but to built for-profit private apartments in Baltimore. Geddes’s 1934 project proposed to “rid the city of slums in a negro area” and build 168 apartments on the site. The project supported by Ambrose J. Kennedy of the US House of Representative proposed units renting at a tentative figure of $44 per month. In comparison, a similar size unit in Baltimore’s first public housings built 6 years later cost around $15 per month. The proposal was marketed to a white middle class clientele, while the effect of de-housing the urban poor with no relocation strategy went unchecked. Critics from New York to Chicago pointed at the shortcomings of early Housing Division efforts, such as this one:

*The federal program is a disappointment as yet. Obstacles are more serious than were realized a few months ago. Although the Housing Division of the Public Works Administration is bureaucratic, legalistic and inefficient, neither Harold L. Ickes nor his housing chief, Robert D. Kohn, is responsible for the facts that we have no land policy in this country, no planning of cities worth mentioning, no definite ideas about community organization, no proved technique for producing genuinely low-cost housing, and no crystallized public opinion to support any housing program, be it good or bad.*

Amid a climate of inefficacy and uncertainty, the Housing Division replaced the limited dividend program in February 1934 by one of direct federal construction. With this, the federal government became directly involved in the business of clearing slums and constructing low-cost housing in their stead. Notwithstanding this significant re-organization, project submissions to the PWA remained especially slow in Baltimore, where the political climate was hostile toward the state’s involvement in what had previously been the exclusive domain of the private market: housing.

The Joint Committee on Housing in Baltimore headed by Emmart had been set up early on to cooperate with the State Advisory Board of the PWA, but the submission of projects was held back by influential actors whose opposition weighted heavily against the development of federally funded urban projects. According to C.D. Loomis, the city was lagging “about

58 The Sun, “Plans to Rid City of Slums in Negro Area Given to PWA,” The Sun, January 13, 1934, 18, Baltimore Sun Archives.
59 John Millar, “Statement of John H. Millar,” 1934, Demolition, Box 16, RG 69, National Archives (USA). John Millar was the Federal Emergency Relief Administration’s (FERA) Assistant on Special Project.
60 The Joint Committee on Housing in Baltimore marked the first step towards a public housing program in Baltimore and was part of a political network able to submit projects for Baltimore to D.C., thereby following other major American cities in benefitting from the President’s largesse.
a year behind her sister cities" in submitting projects to the PWA. Nearly one year after the establishment of the Maryland State Housing and Park Commissions, which held the "the authority necessary to inaugurate and carry out a broad program for the elimination of slums and the rehabilitation of blighted urban areas," the only completed PWA project in Baltimore City consisted of a sewer expansion, for which the city had received a $9,000 grant. Two other projects were underway by November 1934, for a combined value of $124,400 – a small amount even in the mid 1930s. In terms of employment, PWA projects created work for only 68 men in Baltimore in 1934, while local officials curiously complained of their inability to find suitable workers in a blue-collar city suffering from unemployment rates hovering over the 20 percent mark.

The Maryland State Housing and Park Commission’s attempt to catch up with other major cities in obtaining federal fund for public housing was largely unsuccessful in 1934, when it submitted an application for $31 million for seven projects spread across five sites. The commission had observed that the center of the city "was almost completely girdled with a belt of poverty, which unless rehabilitated, will remain an increasingly serious menace to all properties inside and outside of this ring." Accordingly, the commission intended to address this "ring of blight" immediately through a multi-sited program larger than any previous one in Baltimore. The Housing Division announced its allocation for Baltimore in June 1964, offering Charm City a mere $2 million. The scale of the project would thus have to be dramatically scaled down.

A number of architects who had served on the Joint Committee organized in late 1933 to pursue the housing program of the Maryland Emergency Housing and Park Commission. Seven of Baltimore’s most renowned architectural firms incorporated to form the Associated Architects of Baltimore on the first day of 1934 and elected Loomis as President. “They worked full time over two months, assembling data, evaluating and prioritizing sites, developing preliminary project designs, and then continued to provide technical services throughout 1934 into 1935.”

Supporting the Maryland State Housing and Park Commission, the Associated Architects decided to focus on four projects across two adjacent sites on McCulloh Street, which they selected based on their ‘preferential values,’ such as “benefit of good residential use to the city, purchaseability, low cost of site, present bad condition of buildings, present improper location of population group, loss of population, [and] nearness to a better neighborhood of higher sustained dwelling use.” In this passage taken from a report by the Associated Architects, “improper location of population group” really meant the undesirable proximity of black families to middle class white neighborhoods. Admittedly, the project assured

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62 Ibid.
63 The Sun, “Non-Federal PWA Projects Summarized,” The Sun, November 18, 1934, Baltimore Sun Archives.
64 Argersinger, Toward a New Deal in Baltimore, 60–1.
65 “Report on the Joint Committee on Housing in Baltimore” (Public Housing Administration, 1934), RG 196, Box 206, National Archives (USA).
to perpetrate what legal ordinances no longer could; to reinforce segregation via spatial strategies that did not depend on the rule of law in the 1930s.

The Associated Architects developed a project located in a black area of the city, where they proposed to create two public housings for blacks, and two for whites. The one designed for white tenancy would form a barrier between black neighborhoods and Eutaw Place, the latter representing a place that the architects of this plan hoped to protect against black occupancy. The project did not follow Secretary Ickes's guidelines, a long-time civil rights advocate, as the proposed tenancy did not conform to the racial composition of the site prior to clearance. “With regard to Baltimore, however, federal officials ignored these guidelines as local officials sought deliberately to remove a black population and replace it with a white one.”

Facing financial constraints, the project was later limited to only two housing projects instead of four, keeping project 2A for blacks, and 3A for whites. The solution proved to be an unlikely compromise, however.

[Federal officials] worried whether 3A could be built without 3B. Without the latter project, the white tenants of 3A would be sandwiched between the black project and existing housing populated by blacks. Furthermore, the project would not then serve as a barrier to black encroachment on the Eutaw Place neighborhood.

Furthermore officials noted that the limited funds available would constitute little more than a 'Band-Aid solution' to a much wider issue, comparing the effect of the two housing projects to "treating a small portion of a cancerous growth." The Associated Architects were also skeptical of this compromise, leaving them to speculate on the potential pressures that black groups may cause as the plan proposed to replace existing black communities by white-only housing projects.

Beside local pressures, this proposal also clashed with other federal guidelines, where it sought to acquire land for as little as 60 percent of the assessed property values. The Federal insisted on following the established protocol and offer the full value of municipal assessments rather than to acquire properties at prices significantly deflated as a result of the ongoing economic depression. Local officials would eventually decide to proceed with the project designed for black tenancy on McCulloh Street, and sought an alternative site for a white tenancy project in the Waverly neighborhood; an area outside the blighted ring that surrounded downtown Baltimore.

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70 Ibid., 108.
71 The Sun, “PWA Approves Slum Riddance Plan for City,” The Sun, May 1, 1935, Baltimore Sun Archive.
72 “Minutes, Meeting of Housing Division, Maryland Emergency Housing and Parks Commission, and Associated Architects,” August 30, 1934, H-2700, Box 206, PHA Project Files, RG 196, National Archives (USA).
Figure 39. Sketch locating the public housing projects proposed by the Associated Architects in relation to the racial composition on the site prior to redevelopment, c. 1935. Drawing by Peter Henderson, reproduced in Local Deals and the New Deal State, page 107.
PWAs housing division announced its approval for Baltimore’s first two slum-clearance projects on the 30th of April 1935. Mayor Jackson’s administration appeared attentive to the demand of black activists like Carl and George Murphy whose voices were commonly amplified through the pages of the Baltimore *Afro-American* newspaper, and who had built a strong following backed up by the Urban League and other citizen organizations that effectively lobbied for slum legislations.73 But as these projects would only be turned into a concrete plan after the acquisition of at least sixty percent of the land,74 and the subsequent official endorsement of the federal committee on allotment,75 much work lied ahead for the Murphy brothers and those for whom they provided a political voice.

By the spring of 1935, the nature and location of these projects finally became public knowledge. Before that, “neither proponents nor opponents of the program had sufficient knowledge to develop either a strategy or an organization that could represent those for or against the program.” With the new information at hand, the Real Estate Board of Baltimore started to lead a movement opposing public housing. “Some realtors were adept at using to their advantage of rumors that created a climate of confusion allowing brokers to leverage the fears of neighborhood residents.” Other tactics were based on facts, and together they worked to gather public support, include that of Mayor Jackson whose administration would not facilitate Baltimore’s cooperation with the New Deal administration.78 Tactics designed to block public housing projects included circulating information pertaining to the cost of public housing, where the rent sought would be unaffordable for poor citizens. Realtors also asserted that they had historically been successful in providing housing in the city, and that the problem had never been real estate but rather the unemployment and the lack of quality in black quarters only.79 Building on this argument, the realtors accused the public housing program to compete with the private market instead of addressing the demand of very poor white families and black citizens.

As president of the Real Estate Board of Baltimore George Morris proposed in an article he authored and *The Sun* printed, “If we are really ready to wipe out the festering sore of slum housing from our midst and pay the huge cost, let’s do it in a sane and practical way, and not by proceeding to build more houses of the same type and rental value as the already large surplus we now have on hand.” Morris supported the construction of housings within

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73 For a partial list of organizations pushing for slum legislations and the development of PWA housing projects in Baltimore, see Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing*, 32.
74 *The Sun*, “PWA Approves Slum Riddance Plan for City,” 22.
77 Ibid.
78 As Jo Ann Argersinger noted, “in 1935 the FERA allowed Baltimore to combine all construction project into one PWA project, giving the city added financial flexibility and complete authority over both engineering design and construction work. Finally, the national administration also permitted Baltimore to combine PWA and Works Progress Administration [WPA] funds for large construction projects—the only such arrangement allowed a major city in the nation.” Argersinger, *Toward a New Deal in Baltimore*, 61.
reach for slum dwellers, and any programs attacking the problematic of inadequate wages in theory. With the same fervor, he defended the interest of Baltimore’s "owners of more than 100,000 individual homes, the 200,000 thrifty citizens whose savings of a lifetime are invested in mortgages secured only by the value of these homes and other property and the small minority who invested their money in real estate instead of hiding it in their cellars." Morris assumed that the construction of public housing would lower the value of all real estate properties in Baltimore, rather than only affecting units with rental values comparable to public housing apartments, which in reality targeted the lower middle class.

As further information became available regarding public housing programs realtors adjusted their arguments to capitalize on different aspects of these projects that remained unclear. Building on the city's deeply rooted fear of racial integration at that time, opponents of public housing spread rumors that a predominantly white slum would be replaced by a project built for black tenancy, thereby breaking the racial composition of the neighborhood – a claim with no foundation. Realtors also protested specific project conceived for blacks occupancy, warning that these would greatly depreciate the value of entire neighborhoods, and that it would become "dangerous for white school children and white persons going to and from work to pass through the area." Writing on the movement that formed against the Armistead Garden public housing project in Area D, New Deal scholar Peter Henderson noted:

They passed out flyers that proclaimed the “vile diseases, tuberculosis, juvenile delinquency, and mental ailments,” as well as the “stigma” and “depreciation of property values,” that “seven hundred families from Baltimore’s slums” would bring to their neighborhood.

As the Federal Government could not join in Baltimore’s ground rent system by law, the process called for the acquisition of the land and buildings separately. Land and buildings were often vested in different individuals; the acquisition of sites needed twice the efforts, thereby slowing down the processes against a political and social background calling for quick results. The slowness of the processes ultimately led to the project’s downfall as it provided a wider window for the opposition to mount and ultimately, resist.

The Maryland League of Building Associations organized to meet soon after the announcement of the PWA scheme in Baltimore, leading them to adopt a resolution opposing the two housing projects in May 1935. Speaking before the assembly, the attorney Maurice Skinner argued, "They contemplate a charge of about $7.50 per month, per unit," amounting to around $35-40 per month for an entire house. "This means that people now living in those areas who do not pay this much for rent will move out when the Federal project is begun and will not return. They will go elsewhere and create new slums."

81 Ibid.
82 “Minutes, Meeting of Housing Division, Maryland Emergency Housing and Parks Commission, and Associated Architects.”
in condemning the project on such grounds, thereby using a pro-poor argument to stop the PWA to enter in competition with the private market via its public housing program.86

Speaking at the same meeting, Philip Pitt, Secretary of the Real Estate Board of Baltimore then, stressed the fact that he “was not opposed to the tearing down of slums and the erection of houses that would rent for the same figures as the slums did. The construction of higher rent houses, however, would serve only to increase the surplus” of middle class dwellings in the city, he argued.87 Even proponents of government-built housing would agree, as “the program was not benefitting the poor as it should.”88 Divided on the question of public housing, the parties for and against this federal effort united behind the important observation that in 1934, both private and publicly built housings were unsuited for the poor who inhabited areas that the authorities hoped to replace with subsidized housings.

Harold Ickes noted that the first public housing projects were no panacea to urban ills since they remained inaccessible to the poorest citizens. In a 1935 article, the man who had become known as ‘Honest Harold’ argued for the need to address “the unsightly objectionable districts we have permitted men and women to call their homes.”89 He demanded more from the PWA for those who “cannot be lifted bodily out of their present economic status at one stroke.” He argued for the need to “improve their general condition [by ending] such housing conditions and replacing them with decent public housing.”90 Ickes was visibly dissatisfied with the existing procedures nationwide, which precluded those citizens most in need to find their place in public housing apartments. He added that slums cost money, bringing in far less revenue in taxes than what they cost in municipal services, provoking him to gather that a slum is “a city's most expensive luxury.”91 While the problem of slums had been a recurring part of planning discourses for some years, its progression from a sociological problem into a financial problem earned slum clearance projects some renewed attention.92

In that same year, the PWA published Edith Elmer Wood’s 1935 *Slums and Blighted Areas in the United States*. Wood stated that around one third of Americans were living in substandard condition. Her report covered a number of major American cities. According to her, less than 10 percent of Baltimore City’s housing was in ‘good’ condition, around 25 percent in an ‘indifferent’ condition, and over 65 percent in ‘bad’ condition.93 The preponderance

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86 The Sun, “Realtors Renew Attack on Housing Proposals,” The Sun, November 22, 1938, 6, Baltimore City Archives.
87 The Sun, “Slum-Clearing Project Here Is Denounced,” 20.
90 Ibid., 115.
91 Ibid., 110. The cost of slums on taxpayers was only documented later, in 1954 by *The Evening Sun*. It noted that for homeowners of a property evaluated at $9,500 and paying $220.27 in property taxes annually, around $80 of these dollars would go towards maintaining public health, safety, education and other services in the city’s poorest section. See, *The Evening Sun*, “Slums Cost City’s Taxpayers Cold Cash,” *The Evening Sun*, September 14, 1954, sec. The Family Section, 21, Albert Greenfield Papers, Maryland Historical Society.
of unsatisfactory dwellings across working-class neighborhoods incited some skeptics to question slum-clearance projects as areas designated as such occupied most of the inner city in places like Baltimore, Philadelphia, Chicago or New Orleans. But with no alternative in place, slum clearance continued to be revered as the way out of the situation Wood carefully described in 1935. While the prevalent strategy remained vulnerable to the will of local politicians, its efficacy to address the housing crisis for the very poor was still unproven. The resistance against New Deal slum clearance projects was renewed and intensified by local residents threatened to be displaced for public housing projects, in which they would not qualify to live as tenants.

**Legal pressures against PWA public housing**

Tenement dwellers rarely had the legal or social resources to resist forced displacement, yet, some owner-occupants refused to stand idle as their homes were being acquired and slated for demolition. Edward J. Gernert became the central figure in a 1935 class action suit, United States v. Certain Lands in Louisville, where a Federal District Court assessed the right of the President to exercise his power of eminent domain to carry out slum clearance. The case rested primarily on whether slum-clearance for the construction of low-cost housing constituted a valid public use. As a court opinion by Judge Dawson explained, the power of the national government “to condemn property for purposes such as the one involved here [was] a new question, and the proper solution of it call[ed] for an examination of the inherent nature of the power of eminent domain.”

Judge Dawson described the two main schools of thoughts that existed with respect to the meaning and scope of the expression ‘public use’ in relation to the exercise of eminent domain. One view held that public use was synonymous with ‘public benefit,’ ‘public advantage,’ and ‘general welfare.’ The other understood public use as referring to those specific uses reserved for the government itself (e.g. public offices, post offices, et cetera), or available for all parts of the public. For Judge Dawson, the former understanding was viewed as ‘entirely untenable.’ According to this theory, the judge explained, “the property of every citizen in this country would be subjected to the whims and theories of any temporary majority represented in the legislative branch of the government.” Basing his reasoning on Supreme Court decisions, he explained that so broad a definition for ‘public use’ would mean total reliance on the court to enact into law the prevalent popular feeling regarding adequate spatial responses to welfare strategies.

The case was later moved to the Circuit Court of Appeals before Judge Moorman and Judge Allen. Outlining the claim of the appellees, Judge Moorman summarized the argument of the United States Government: “The contention of the government is that the property here sought to be condemned is to be devoted to a public use because, first, the construction of

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95 Ibid.

96 Ibid.
the project will relieve unemployment during the period of construction, and, secondly, the leasing or selling of the new buildings at reasonable prices will give to persons of low incomes an opportunity to improve their living conditions.\textsuperscript{97} As stated by the legal defense of the United States Government, the production of low-cost housing in early public housing programs was only secondary to the main objective, to create jobs. “Using public housing to create jobs had a particular appeal in 1933, since 30 percent of the nation’s unemployed were in the building trades.”\textsuperscript{98} The federal government was thus bidding on trickle down economics to truly relieve the problem of slums.

Notwithstanding the national economic emergency at hand, Judge Dawson concluded that, “Surely it [was] not a governmental function to construct buildings in a state for the purpose of selling or leasing them to private citizens for occupancy as homes.”\textsuperscript{99} Judge Moorman agreed with the opinion. He pointed to other irregularities in the legislation, namely the lack of definitions for terms like ‘slums’, ‘low-cost house’ and ‘housing project’, leaving unfettered discretion to the President to interpret where and what could be demolished and built.\textsuperscript{100}

Judge Moorman and Judge Dawson both ruled against the United States Government, but in their ruling, the judges suggested alternative legal solutions that would allow for publicly funded slum clearance and housing programs to carry on by other means. Judge Dawson alluded to ways by which the law might allow local governments to carry on the work of the President:

\begin{quote}
No support can be found for the power here sought to be exercised in the well-recognized power of the states to condemn and destroy property found to be a menace to public health or safety. This is an exercise of the police power, not of the power of eminent domain; and the national government is not clothed with any such police power within the states.\textsuperscript{101}
\end{quote}

While the first judge had hinted at ways by which the government could use its police power to raze down slums, Judge Moorman’s opinion suggested ways by which the federal government could continue to fund these efforts:

\begin{quote}
It may be that the constitutional power of Congress goes far enough to justify donations of federal tax funds to a state, bureau, or other agency to use for the purposes which are said to be those of this proceeding. That question is not before us, and we, of course, do not undertake to decide it.\textsuperscript{102}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{98} Henderson, “Local Deals and the New Deal State,” 112.
\textsuperscript{99} United States v. Certain Lands in City of Louisville, Jefferson County, KY. 9 F.Supp District Judge Dawson 137, 141 (District Court, W. D. Kentucky 1935).
\textsuperscript{100} United States v. Certain Lands in City of Louisville, Jefferson County, KY., 78 F.2d Circuit Judge Moorman 684, 686 (Circuit Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit 1935).
\textsuperscript{101} United States v. Certain Lands in City of Louisville, Jefferson County, KY. 9 F.Supp District Judge Dawson 137, 142 (District Court, W. D. Kentucky 1935). The emphases are those of the judge, as typed in his official opinion.
\textsuperscript{102} United States v. Certain Lands in City of Louisville, Jefferson County, KY., 78 F.2d Circuit Judge Moorman 684, 686 (Circuit Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit 1935).
“Thousands of PWA Plans [were] Junked” as a result of this legal decision, as the title of a news article printed in *The Sun* stated in late 1935. Amongst those were Baltimore’s McCulloh Street and Waverly projects, dropped by the Housing Division as the agency could no longer legally acquire the land.

As history would tell, Judge Moorman was not wrong. Congress soon created new governing devices that would allow the federal government to re-shape the slum clearance and public housing program, this time through projects administered via state and local agencies and still funded by the federal government. This shift was designed to allow local authorities to clear sites through the police power. The influence of the PWA was slowly diluted thereafter when the Work Progress Administration (WPA) reabsorbed important parts of the PWA budget. The process would take time, however, and the Maryland Commission decided to look for vacant sites instead of existing slums for public housing ventures in the short-term. They decided on two locations where between 1,300 – 1,400 housing units could be built. As Peter Henderson summarizes:

> Since land assembly for the Baltimore sites had been moving slowly, the Housing Division had already begun to look for two vacant land sites as early as May [1935]. They located a proposed site for blacks in southwest Baltimore. They found another in east Baltimore for whites. Now, following the court’s decision, they considered these sites more earnestly. The Maryland Commission itself was lukewarm about the idea of vacant land projects but they found no other alternative for salvaging the program. They ultimately sanctioned, though, only the white site in east Baltimore.

When the PWA demanded reduced property taxes for the East Baltimore public housing project, Mayor Jackson exploited this prerequisite to block the project. The mayor reasoned that if the problem of the inner city pertained to blight, the city would need to maximize its municipal revenues derived from taxes rather than offer plots to the PWA at a reduced cost. Jackson was strictly opposed to the federal government program as it competed against private enterprises on terms that he considered as being unfair. The mayor rationalized his position as being necessary to assure market stability, laying his colors bare as a defender of conservative policies and the head of a pro-business, fiscally centered administration. The conservative Democratic Mayor of Baltimore’s position against public housing reflected

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104 It was renamed as the ‘Work Projects Administration,’ in 1939.

105 *The Sun,* “$26,332,190 Allotted to State by PWA,” *The Sun,* October 18, 1935, 26, Baltimore Sun Archives.


108 Writing on Baltimore’s first two slum-clearance project, *The Sun* noted that 30% of the cost of these projects would be covered via Federal grants, with the remaining 70% amortized over a period of 45 years, with interest rates set at 3%. See, *The Sun,* “PWA Approves Slum Riddance Plan for City.”


110 Argersinger, *Toward a New Deal in Baltimore,* 95.
the stance of political allies, including the Real Estate Board of Baltimore. Guy Hollyday, President of the Real Estate Board of Baltimore in 1935 had also argued that since public housing were being built on vacant land, the government "should come in on the same basis as other developers of vacant land."

The Real Estate board stood behind Jackson while Maryland's National Emergency Director, Arthur Hungerford, criticized the Baltimore mayor as cities nationwide were fighting for PWA funding. One day after the Mayor Jackson's announcement, the PWA abandoned the Baltimore project, "one of only three dropped nationwide due to local non-cooperation." Jackson rebutted his critics:

_The government simply wanted something for nothing. I could not permit myself to do an injustice to the real estate owners and to those who are now paying taxes on property by allowing the government to enter into competition with them._

Citizen groups petitioned Jackson's position, but the mayor refused to budge and continued to press the federal program for a service charge equal in value to property taxes. "Consequently the Housing Division quietly shelved its construction plans for Baltimore, thereby relieving the fears of area realtors but reviving the protest of slum-clearance supporters." Nationwide, the PWA built a total of 58 housing projects: 7 by limited dividend and 51 involving direct construction by the federal government. "The list included all of the large cities in the Northeast and Midwest except for Baltimore, Pittsburgh, and Saint Louis."

While the modernization of blighted areas was once again kept on hold by political red tape, Emmart reiterated the primacy of housing in renewal activities. In late 1935, the architect referred to the rehabilitation of slum areas as "the foremost problem confronting those interested in the welfare and progress of the city," marking an important shift in discourse as he had previously concluded that Baltimore was without slums. Emmart noted that "Building strictly for slum dwellers seem[ed] possible only with the aid of some forms of subsidy, but the restoration of a broken obsolescent section [was] a different matter." Despite his 1932 warning against the futility to attempt to wipe out slums forthright "so long as there are plenty

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116 Argersinger, Toward a New Deal in Baltimore, 97.
118 The Sun, "Slum Clearance Held Biggest Task," The Sun, December 20, 1935, Baltimore Sun Archives.
119 W.W. Emmart, in Ibid.
of people not earning enough money to pay for decent housing,“ Emmart followed the attitude of Baltimore’s ruling political class, and treated these issues as unrelated. Meanwhile, Baltimore’s PWA office closed its doors when all PWA projects from Maine to Maryland felt under the supervision of the New York office in late 1937. The Louisville court ruling catalyzed the creation of a new federal institution, which in turn called for the creation of local housing authorities that would eventually give Baltimore its first public housing project.

The City as Developer

Reacting to the court’s far-reaching decision in Louisville, Congress rapidly passed the Housing Act of 1937, also known as the Wagner-Steagall Act. With this, the United States Housing Authority (USHA) was created; an agency tasked to finance (through loans and grants) slum clearance and public housing projects developed by local authorities, thereby carrying on the work of the PWA through new mechanisms. The scale of its operations quickly became paramount as the USHA eventually supported the construction of over 170,000 dwelling units nationwide across 260 communities; 89 percent of them on slum cleared sites. USHA addressed some of the PWA’s shortcomings, including the introduction of efforts to rehouse the poor.

USHA was determined to tackle the problem of slums head-on. It ran campaigns proclaiming that "slums breed crime" and worked to eliminate both crime and slums through a single gesture. Middle class reformers defended public housing as an environmental solution to social issues and "a social locus wherein the pathologies generated by poverty would dissipate." Soon after the establishment of this agency, wartime production along with efforts initiated through New Deal programs worked together to strengthen the national economy. By June 1938, the US was finally out of recession. Urban centers continued to expand, in many cases at greater speed than ever before, and blighted areas continued to grow just as working class quarters increased in density. While many citizens out of work in 1933 were gainfully employed, particularly during wartime, the living conditions in major cities like Baltimore effectively worsened for the working class and for blacks overall.

In spite of the continued existence of legal and social fences, more African American families moved into previously all-white neighborhood as their economic status could sometimes meet those of their white counterparts. Forward-thinking individuals had started to accept the Democrat’s 1899 slogan “This is a White Man’s City” as a thing of the past in Baltimore, yet The Sun, with other vocal supporters of segregation laws, stimulated public debates over what very much remained a prevailing issue: the co-habitation of race and the fright of the rise of

120 The Sun, “Architects Call Slum Fixtures,” 11.
122 Vale, Purging the Poorest, 11.
the black population.

In Baltimore, public interest groups formally organized to demand that their Mayor make full use of the President’s financial support, and finally build the city’s first public housings. Such groups were often supported by black advocacy movements and provided a voice for a body of citizens whose demand for decent housing far exceeded the offer. As these tactics eventually proved successful, public housings were built and subsequently transformed the political and physical spaces of Baltimore’s ghetto neighborhoods.

Figure 40. Interior Secretary, Harold LeClair Ickes, discussing the Wagner Act projects with Dr. Howard A. Gray, head of the PWA Housing Administration, 1937. Photograph by Harris & Ewing, 20 September 1937, available from the US Library of Congress, call number LC-H22-D-2383 (P&P).
Figure 41. 'Cross Out Slums,' lithography created by Lester Beall for USHA, 1941. Available from MoMA online store, call number 89.1944.
Figure 42. ‘Slums Breed Crime,’ lithograph created by Lester Beall for USHA, 1941. Available from MoMA online store, call number 111.1968.

Figure 43. Advertisement for the ‘Democratic Platform,’ with the caption in small print: “We regard the Reconstruction Acts (so called) of Congress as usurpations, and unconstitutional, revolutionary, and void.” Published in Harpers Weekly, New York City, 5th September 1868.
The birth of city-built housing

The Housing Act of 1937 altered the political environment for housing policy by "stirring the interest of local social and labor organizations who made housing policy a public debate rather than a private deal." Neighborhood citizen groups worked towards the establishment of effective tactics to achieve their objective, which culminated in the formation of many public advocacy groups, including the Baltimore Citizens Housing Committee (BCHC) formed in March 1937. While the PWA never managed to build public housings in Baltimore, it enabled the foundation of something much more lasting for the housing sector by encouraging the formation of public advocacy groups in the city. BCHC hosted well-publicized meetings, and invited architects and planners to advice them on tactics that could ultimately bring public housing to their city. One particular architect, C.D. Loomis urged the group to generate wider public support, warning the audience, "you are not going to get anything done in city planning until the public learns what other cities have done and begins to demand that Baltimore move in the same direction." Roosevelt himself had called for a return to the "old principle of the local community" and for citizens to meet their duties as active participants and contributors to New Deal commitments. As Henderson noted, "the black community, though only beginning to grasp political might in the 1930s Baltimore, added its voice to the chorus, particularly through the Urban League."

BCHC followed Loomis' s advices and organized a strong movement petitioning the elected mayor to review his initial stance resisting the federal government's involvement in the local housing market. The movement left Jackson no choice but to at least reconsider his opposition to House Bill No. 69, which proposed the establishment of city housing authorities. The mayor noted that he was not opposed to the establishment of a local housing authority per se, but would nevertheless not approve the bill as it granted disproportional power to the housing agency, leading him to request a redraft. Chief amongst his concern was the independence of the proposed Housing Authority from City Hall, effectively superseding local planning measures, with the power to determine the limits of, and eliminate slums without having to construct new homes for the evicted tenants. Again, Jackson argued for the poor as he resisted public housing. But as The Sun paper remarked, "Some of the fears of what the Housing Authority might do are, no doubt, exaggerated," as the bill "followed generally the housing acts that have been passed in other States without apprehension of embarrassing consequences."

125 This is a central theme to Argersinger, Toward a New Deal in Baltimore. This theme is again reiterated in Henderson, “Local Deals and the New Deal State,” especially in chapters 3 and 4. For example, Henderson noted that the Housing Division of the PWA urged the Maryland Commission to appoint a committee of African Americans to advise them on the needs and priorities of minority groups in 1935, when pressures from the Real Estate Board suggested that the program may be dropped as a result of their political influence. See, ibid., 116.
126 The Sun, “Sey Housing Here Depends on Public,” The Sun, March 23, 1937, 6, Baltimore Sun Archives.
129 The Sun, “32 Groups Favor Housing Authority,” The Sun, October 29, 1937, 13, Baltimore Sun Archives.
130 The Sun, “Housing Authority,” The Sun, March 24, 1937, 12, Baltimore Sun Archives.
Jackson eventually responded to the mounting public pressures by creating the Committee for the Rehabilitation of Blighted Areas, and assigned it the task to develop a plan for slum clearance citywide. Prominent among the thirty-four committee members he selected were, of course, realtors and builders – the most outspoken critics of public housing and also four black individuals (two realtors, one attorney-realtor, and one banker). He also enrolled architects and members from the Commission on City Plan, a group that had historically supported public housing programs. According to Henderson, the committee was nothing more than a smoke screen designed to calm agitators who were growing widespread and louder. Others considered the move “transparently political” as Jackson continued to advocate for private enterprise, but this time with a little water in his wine (with elections around the corner) as he acknowledged that the federal government might be able to help through the provision of either administrative or financial assistance. This decision aligned with his earlier position, where the mayor maintained that city planning decisions should be kept at City Hall rather than transferred to either State or Federal offices. "Despite the participation of men who had served under the Maryland Commission and would later play a role under the Housing Authority, the committee never accomplished much," Henderson gathered. This observation prompted him to conclude that this was “probably because its real mandate was to prevent anything from changing.”

Daniel Ellison, “a long time champion of liberal causes and the city council’s lone Republican member” took action on November 1937 and formally introduced legislation authorizing Baltimore’s first municipal housing authority – a necessary entity to access USHA funds. In an unexpected turn, the mayor, cornered, announced his support for the agency two days after and “unaccustomed to any city council initiative, Jackson simply ignored Ellison’s bill and drafted his own.” City Council adopted the resolution on November 29, 1937. Within a few days only, The Sun paper was announcing the potential allotments of $5,000,000 by USHA for slum clearance and low-cost dwellings in Baltimore. The Baltimore Housing Authority (BHA), which later changed name to become the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) was officially formed by December 1937 and legally equipped to access funds made available via the newly devised federal agency, USHA.

Using the power vested in the city’s police to destroy or condemn property deemed to be a menace to health and safety, Baltimore’s public authorities could now continue the efforts

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131 The Committee for the Rehabilitation of Blighted Areas was formed in May 1937.
132 Argersinger, Toward a New Deal in Baltimore, 98.
134 See, Argersinger, Toward a New Deal in Baltimore, 98-99.
137 Argersinger, Toward a New Deal in Baltimore, 99. Daniel Ellison had introduced a legislation to create a housing authority on October 25 1937, two days before Roosevelt officially signed the legislation that created the USHA.
138 Ibid.
139 The Sun, "$5,000,000 For City Housing Is Likely,” The Sun, December 11, 1937, 22, Baltimore Sun Archives.
initiated by the federal government to replace slums by public housing. Mayor Jackson appointed five men to form the Board of Commissioners of the newly devised BHA. Jackson insisted in having at least one black man in the board of commissioners. “Although the City Council rejected a resolution calling for the appointment of one African American to the commission, the mayor [nonetheless] chose a member of one of Baltimore’s most prominent African American families in naming George Murphy, a retired school principal and Vice Chairman of the Urban League.”

Former members of the Associated Architects reaped the dividends of their earlier work under the hospice of the new housing agency. Mayor Jackson appointed James R. Edmunds as Chairman of the BHA; a partner at the renowned firm of Joseph E. Sperry and Associates who had also served on the Joint Committee on Housing of Baltimore before joining the Associated Architects. Within a month, the BHA selected C.D. Loomis for the position of Technical Director. Other members of the Associated Architects benefitted through design contracts, including Emmart, a partner at William D. Lamdin and Associates, who would eventually be contracted to design the Latrobe Homes and the Fairfield Homes. Other public housing projects, including the Frederick Douglass Homes, Armistrad Gardens, Westport Homes and Brooklyn Project were also designed by former members of the Associated Architects.

Working with limited and imprecise data, Loomis decided to create his own by mapping individual characteristics of the urban environment in order to identify priority areas. “This involved mapping the physical, social, and financial data on Baltimore’s housing stock.” The picture established “definite factual proof of slum conditions,” on precise sites as each layer of analysis located dysfunctional conditions in the same locations—a methodology that was carried on for decades in Baltimore’s recurring ‘Inventory of Residential Blight’ (see chapter 4).

The Housing authority requested that Loomis selects specific sites amongst the most problematic ones he had identified, as the preponderance of urban slums called for the elaboration of a public housing programs in phases. As a matter of fact, nearly 40 percent of the city resided in blighted areas in 1945, including nearly 93 percent of Baltimore’s black population. “The Authority hoped to minimize land costs to keep rents low by seeking areas with high tax delinquencies and foreclosures, low neighborhood tax yields, and rents of less than $14 per month.” The analysis took a financial turn when Loomis included other

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140 The Federal Agency had been responsible for a number of public work projects in Baltimore, but no public housing per se. In Baltimore, the PWA can be credited for building the Eastern High School for Girls between 1936-38, which closed down in 1986 (now occupied by Johns Hopkins Hospital); the Baltimore National Cemetery; the Hilton Parkway Bridges (1938); the Twenty-Ninth Street Bridge (1938) and improvement work on the US Custom House of Baltimore.


144 Commission on City Plan, Redevelopment of Blighted Residential Areas in Baltimore: Conditions of Blight, Some Remedies and Their Relative Costs (Baltimore, 1945), 20. The exact proportion of non-whites living in blighted area was 92.4%

elements to the mapping assignment as identifying the location of properties held by the city for taxes, the location of utility lines, and the price of land. After triangulating these maps, the housing authority agreed on specific sites.

Figure 44. Location of HABC public housings, proposed and actual in 1940. Diagram by Peter Henderson, reproduced in ‘Local Deals and New Deal State,’ page 160.

Around three-quarters of the residents living in the areas that Loomis’s team had identified as being blighted were black. As Jim Crow persisted in Maryland, large parts of the black community and almost all of its working-class were confined to overpopulated and poorly serviced areas that the Evening Sun was christening “Baltimore’s Negro Archipelagos” in 1943. In fact, in “1940 African-Americans made up one in five residents in the city; because of segregation, though, they crowded together in only one-fiftieth of the city’s total land area.” With this information at hand, the agency attributed 55 percent of the public housing it planned for black tenancy.

As HAB submitted its project to be approved by USHA, the documentation declared that over 1,800 black families would be displaced as part of the proposed project while only 1,125 new

146 The Evening Sun, July 30th 1943, in Pietila, Not in My Neighborhood, 60.
147 Hayward and Belfoure, The Baltimore Rowhouse, 171.
dwellings would be built for black occupancy. George Murphy nevertheless perceived the project as a positive development for blacks in Baltimore. Quoting the only black board member of the BHA, the Afro-American wrote, “I don’t know of anything which is going to do more towards bettering our economic status in Baltimore than these projects.” He maintained that public housing would ultimately be able to decrease juvenile delinquency, crime and health problems in the community. In early 1938, the USHA approved five public housing projects in Baltimore. The plan called for the demolition of nearly 2,300 buildings, mostly rowhouses, and the construction of a little over 2,500 dwelling units.

At that time, the only city accessing more USHA fund than Baltimore’s housing authority was New York City, where the population was nine times larger. Nathan Straus, national chairman of USHA, called Baltimore’s public housing plan “one of the best-rounded programs of all,” and within a short time the federal housing authority raised the city’s initial $5 million allotment to $18 million.

Liberal politics were by then well in-line with the spirit of modernism and aimed to marry two contrasting logics: those of maximum quantity and maximum balance. Modern politics turned to modern architecture for answers. Modernist plans were generally designed with no halfway measures, where brazen clashes with existing urban tissues were frequent and untamed. It embraced the tabula rasa approach, with its erasure of the historical physical and social fabric. As Andrea Branzi noted, under modernism the role of architecture “was not to offer a mediation between the extreme forms of logic of the system [capitalism and working-classism], but to represent them as clearly as possible.” He added, “This line of thinking revolved around the hypothesis of a new role to be given to architecture; it was not the role of modern reformism, but consisted in a kind of direct representation of power mechanism, social division, and castes.” For Baltimore and myriad other major cities in the US, this movement hastened the development of large-scale housing projects that were closed off, segregated and socioeconomically homologous.

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148 HABC, “Application of the HABC to the USHA,” May 1939, S1, RG48, Section 415, Baltimore City Archives.
149 Afro-American, “BHA Member Cites Housing Benefits,” Baltimore Afro-American, Undated newspaper clipping, Scrapbook 2, Box 1, S14D, RG48, Baltimore City Archives.
150 HABC, “Annual Report.”
151 Gerald Griffin, “City Gets Loan of $4,975,000 for Housing,” The Sun, September 8, 1938, 20, Baltimore Sun Archives.
By September 8 of 1938, Baltimore had successfully secured $21,591,000 in USHA loans. By that same date, USHA had funded projects across 43 cities, at the total cost of $202,807,000.
152 This is based on US Census data from 1940. Baltimore City’s population was 859,100 and New York City was 7,454,995 that year.
153 Argersinger, Toward a New Deal in Baltimore, 101. Roosevelt’s administration authorized a loan to HABC of $16,616,000 and the HABC issued bonds for $1,846,000, bringing the total value of the program at $18,462,400.
155 Ibid., 145.
156 Ibid.
The Poe Homes

The city’s first public housing project finally opened its doors in September 1940. The Poe Homes was the smallest of the five projects from the city’s initial public housing program, and estimated to cost only $1,123,000. Located on a seven-and-a-half acre site administratively known as Area H and bounded by Saratoga Street, Lexington Street, Fremont Avenue and Amity Street in West Baltimore, it surrounded the house where Edgar Allan Poe had lived, earning it its name. Like all of Baltimore’s early public housing projects, the Poe Homes was not racially integrated, with this particular venture being built exclusively for African Americans.

According to the public housing authority, only 2 of the 317 dwellings demolished to make room for the Poe Homes were of ‘standard’ quality or better. These dwellings were divided across 258 titles, which the Authority acquired for the sum of $475,000. In total, 385 families were displaced through the slum clearance of Area H, including 367 black families and 18 white ones.

Clark Hobbs, a journalist for The Sun and later, Chairman of the Baltimore Redevelopment Commission, described the site as “a particularly ramshackle neighborhood built up largely on tiny streets and alleys.” For the BHA, the area was a “slum of the most virulent type,” where decay would not stop “unless a better population [could] be attracted to it.” The project meant to replace slum dwellings by 298 red brick apartments, built with concrete floors and flat concrete slap roofs, supported by steel joists. The Poe Homes was constituted of 26 buildings; all three-story garden apartments, arranged as a series of rows of approximately 150 feet each in length, most of which facing an open court of around 60 feet wide. While the layout was notably different than with any other neighborhood in Baltimore, the building themselves were clearly influenced by the rowhouses. Commentators described the intended improvements that such housing would provide:

Some of the tenants have only hard of or seen in others’ home the modern built-in kitchen cupboards, electric ice boxes, medicine cabinets and other compact arrangements they will now have in their own homes. For the first time many will enjoy such elements of modern group housing as a community hall, with its auditorium, a central heating plant and incineration system and a terraced court yard with recreational and amusement facilities for old and young.

157 The Sun, “Poe Housing Project Bid Is Approved,” The Sun, September 23, 1939, Baltimore Sun Archives. The actual construction cost was $1,830,000 – around $445,000 of which was paid in wages, thereby putting construction workers back to work. Around 860 onsite workers were hired for the Poe Homes, including 200-300 who were black. Around 320 workers were also put to work off-site through the production and transportation of materials. See, Afro-American, “860 Workers on Poe Homes Paid $445,000,” Baltimore Afro-American, Undated, Scrapbook 2, Box 1, S14D, RG48, Baltimore City Archives; Afro-American, “Builders of Poe Projects Keep Many at Work,” Baltimore Afro-American, Undated, Scrapbook 2, Box 1, S14D, RG48, Baltimore City Archives.


159 Clark Hobbs, “The Geography of Blight,” The Evening Sun, April 12, 1939.

160 HABC, “Application of the HABC to the USHA,” section 334.

161 Harry Haller, “Baltimore’s Housing Making Progresses,” The Sun, June 16, 1940, 60, Baltimore Sun Archives.
The public housing apartments were in stark contrast with the average dwellings where its first residents had lived. The city’s working-class blacks were well accustomed to dwellings with no indoor bath, toilets, central heating and separate bedrooms; amenities that would all be included in the Poe Homes. For most, if not all, this would be the first time to live into a new construction as black people usually didn’t “get a chance to move into houses until they [were] pretty old and broken down,” one pioneer resident explained.

Following examples that had been set elsewhere in the United States, BHA had decided on a slum site to locate its first public housing project, with clearance work beginning in May 1939. Despite the humanist intention guiding slum clearance projects, as well as Clark Hobbs’s and the BHA’s assessments, a coalition of homeowners initially resisted the clearing of Area H. They were determined that their home could be reconditioned instead of destroyed, and refused their neighborhood to be labeled as a slum as well as the demolition that ensued. A 1939 article printed in The Sun opened, “Tears and threats to fight in the courts for their homes were the chief reactions yesterday of residents whose dwellings will be razed when the Baltimore Housing Authority begins its first slum-clearance project in the city.” Upset by the forced sale of their houses at what was felt to be unfairly low prices, around 30 residents resisted the housing authority. Mrs. Minnie Smith, a 70-year-old long time resident of North Poppleton Street was identified as the leader of the movement. She advocated for the dwellings to be reconditioned, but not destroyed. Mrs. Smith commented:

_Abrupt young men from the housing agency pester us to sell at a quarter their value the homes we cherish and love. ... When we protest they say the buildings will be condemned anyhow._

Sam Gordon, another resident of North Poppleton Street for thirty-five years, complained that moving would loose him his customers as a shoemaker. As many other small entrepreneurs living in poor and segregated areas of the city would have at the time, Mr. Gordon operated his small business informally. Such ventures would often transform the place of residence as a work-live space, or all its operators to earn a living by offering their services going door-to-door. These businesses, decidedly local, depended on established networks and word of mouth that existed as a function of this area being the community that it was; tightly knit and deeply rooted. Together this small group of resident undertook legal actions against the city, vowing not to leave their homes “because someone far away in Washington thinks it’s a slum.” The public authority would not, however, reconsider its contentious plan for Area H. The voices of residents, most of which black and poor, did not travel well in the sociopolitical context of Baltimore in the late 1930s, unless very well organized, which Area H residents were not.

162 Estelle Finks, in Baltimore Evening Sun, “Filling of Last Three McCulloh Units Slated,” Baltimore Evening Sun, October 29, 1941.
163 The Sun, “Slum Clearance Starts Tomorrow: Mayor Jackson Will Knock Down First Wall in Federal Project,” The Sun, April 30, 1939, 3, Baltimore Sun Archives.
164 Hayward and Belfoure, _The Baltimore Rowhouse_, 172.
165 The Sun, “Tears and Threats,” The Sun, March 18, 1939, 22, Baltimore Sun Archives.
166 Minnie Smith, in Ibid.
167 The Sun, “Tears and Threats.”
The Sun paper noted that difficulties were encountered during relocation processes, especially for elderlies who had not moved in years, sometimes decades. One such couple “had no idea of how to move what chattels they had,” the article noted. It added, “They didn’t even have a suitcase.” Despite this resistance movement, the breaking of the ground for the construction of the new site took place as scheduled, with high-ranking officials from USHA and Baltimore’s Mayor Jackson attending the event on October 4th, 1939. In the end, archival documents show, the number of families that expressed pleasure over the prospect of occupying one of the Poe Homes modern dwelling vastly exceeded the number and strength of the resistance movement.

Regarding the selection of prospective families, The Sun explained that “Families forced to vacate houses in slum-clearance areas to make way for the erection of the new low rental family units [were] in preferred positions, since the prime requisite [was] that the tenant must come from a so-called sub-standard house.” The housing authority defined ‘sub-standard houses’ as “one which needs major repairs, or is without running water in the dwelling unit, or without private kitchen and bath for each family, or with windowless bedrooms, or in other ways is a menace to the public health and safety.” Generally, applicants needed to prove that their wages were below the maximum of five times the amount of rent to be paid, and that they were currently living in sub-standard dwellings. Most residents would be employed, seeing that in “December 1940, only 21 families out of the 298 that lived in Poe Homes received relief.” Single persons were not allowed as tenants, nor were families too large to for the Poe Homes’ most spacious apartments, three-bedroom big. According to real estate operators, the price of a unit in public housing was around half of what the same unit would cost on the private market. The Executive Director of the Housing Authority in Baltimore, Yewell Dillehunt stated, “the majority [of residents] were domestics, helpers, laborers, chauffeurs and teachers.” Presumably because of the long list of prerequisites and lack of knowledge about it, less than half of the families that applied for a unit in the Poe Homes met the requirements set by the city:

Of 596 family heads interviewed to late, “apparently” 236 are eligible to become tenants in the Edgar Allan Poe Homes of the Baltimore Housing Authority, scheduled to be ready for occupancy on September 1, it was announced yesterday.

168 Ibid., 22.
169 The Sun, “To Break Ground at Slum Project,” The Sun, October 3, 1939, 11, Baltimore Sun Archives.
170 The Sun, “236 Family Heads Accepted as Eligible for Poe Homes,” The Sun, July 12, 1940, 5, Baltimore Sun Archives.
172 Williams, The Politics of Public Housing, 38.
173 Rent for a 3 and a half room apartment was set at $16.75 per month; $17.25 for a 4 and a half room apartment; and $17.75 for a 5 and a half room apartment. See, The Sun, “List of Rentals to Negroes in Housing Plan,” 26.
175 The Sun, “236 Family Heads Accepted as Eligible for Poe Homes,” 5.
The subsequent selection stages included fact checking, as well as home visits in order to assess the condition of current places of residence. The evaluation also studied the tenant’s ability to pay, based on their current employment situation and expected incomes. Black families eligible for public housing, but not chosen for the Poe Homes – partly because other applicants were living in worst off dwellings – were placed on a waiting list for one of the city's other public housing project, including the McCulloh Homes in Area B and the Gilmor Homes in Area I.\textsuperscript{176} The two other projects also under construction then would be off limit and reserved for white residents instead.

A study by the Citizens’ Housing Council (CHC) showed that more than half of the over 3,000 people displaced for the Poe Homes were paying higher rent in their temporary housing, with no improvement on living conditions.\textsuperscript{177} Displaced residents were given special consideration amongst the applicants for a residence in forthcoming housing projects, but contrary to what \textit{The Sun} reported,\textsuperscript{178} very few of those removed of their houses for the Poe Homes returned to live in Area H:

\textit{Despite the intention of the CHC, the Baltimore Housing Authority allowed only 111 of the former residents to be among the 1,300 interviewed for the project, and of those, only 47 were actually placed in the Poe homes when they opened in September 1940. The subsidized apartments, the BHA and CHC conceded, still remained well beyond the financial reach of most of the city’s poor, especially those on relief.}\textsuperscript{179}

Public housing did not cater to the unemployed. The Poe Homes were in fact designed to attract citizens of higher economic status to the neighborhood and thereby create economic diversity within this area of West Baltimore. Like the McCulloh Homes and Gilmor Homes, the Poe Homes were planned to bring back working-class and lower middle class black families to the ghetto of West Baltimore.

Around eighteen months after the last family vacated Area H, the first residents moved into the Poe Homes, with nearly 150 families moving in on the last day of September, 1940. "The Roes felt so good about moving into the Edgar Allan Poe Homes that they brought a new three-piece living room suite for which they will lay out $1 a week."\textsuperscript{180} Other families were equally high-spirited, clearly satisfied with the modern facilities of their new dwellings. Meetings pertaining to the residents’ obligations and the special features\textsuperscript{181} of the project were held soon after as the BHA supplemented residents with light educational programs aimed to promote social harmony.\textsuperscript{182}

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\textsuperscript{176} The Sun, "List of Rentals to Negroes in Housing Plan," 26.
\textsuperscript{177} Quoted in: Argersinger, Toward a New Deal in Baltimore, 102.
\textsuperscript{178} The Sun, “Poe Homes Come to Life With Rush,” \textit{The Sun}, October 1, 1940, 24, Baltimore Sun Archives.
\textsuperscript{179} Argersinger, Toward a New Deal in Baltimore, 103.
\textsuperscript{180} The Sun, “Poe Homes Come to Life With Rush,” 24.
\textsuperscript{181} For example, cooking and sewing classes were organized in the basement of the Poe Homes, where a carpentry space was also located and available for everyone's use.
\textsuperscript{182} The Sun, “Poe Home Residents To Learn Obligations,” \textit{The Sun}, October 13, 1940, 17, Baltimore Sun Archives.
\end{flushright}
The Poe Homes were part of a larger scheme that initially comprised five public housing projects within Baltimore City, later extending to seven. When the agency forecasted savings from around 8 percent on the initial projects, they requested to the USHA the right to use these savings to finance an eight project, which was approved before the Poe Homes even opened its doors. Each of the eight public housing projects was scheduled for completion by 1942. Despite the scale of HAB’s first program – designed to rehouse as much as 4,000 inhabitants at an estimated cost of $26,390,000 – only 10 percent of the city’s slum and blighted areas was eliminated through the scheme.

Clearing slums for the establishment of public housing came at a significant cost for the federal government. USHA provided low-interest and long-term loans to finance up to 90 percent of the cost of housing projects. The remaining cost was to be covered by local housing authorities. In addition to that, USHA initially offered further annual contributions dispensed as subsidies amounting up to 3.75 percent of the total cost of the project. “This annual subsidy [was] intended to make possible rental rates which slum dwellers can afford,” The Sun explained. Local authorities were meant to augment this subsidy to assure the affordability and proper maintenance of public housing developed after 1937. But as history would tell, the cost of maintenance for public housing projects exceeded the original assessment, leaving housing units in projects like the Poe Homes to age faster than expected. Notwithstanding this shortcoming and others, the construction of the Poe Homes exclusively for the use of African Americans represented a victory in and of itself. Admittedly, the Poe Homes signified the beginning of a political system able to respond to demand of ordinary citizens, including minority groups that had been kept at the margin not only of politics, but of society as a whole. However, the particular form of the public housing program – offering segregated accommodations within segregated neighborhoods – reinforced the invisible walls of the ghetto by perpetuating the separation of people in space based on race, while providing incentive for those who had broken those walls to return.

183 The Sun, “Eight USHA Housing Project Is Approved for Baltimore,” The Sun, August 8, 1940, 7, Baltimore Sun Archives.
184 With the exception of the Perkins Homes (opened in March 1942) and the Gilmor Homes (opened in June 1942), every other projects of this first phase of public housing in Baltimore was built and tenanted by the end of 1941.
185 Haller, “Baltimore’s Housing Making Progresses,” 60.
186 Interest rates were not to exceed 3.25% per annum and the loans could be repaid over 60 years.
187 Griffin, “City Gets Loan of $4,975,000 For Housing,” 20.
188 Ibid.
Figure 45. Poe Homes, ‘Colored,’ 1930s. The original building stock of the site prior to the construction of the Poe Homes is visible on the background. Insurance Maps of Baltimore, Maryland Volume 2, Published by the Sanborn Map Co, available from the Baltimore City Archives.
Figure 46. Construction site of the Poe Homes, 1940. Standalone photograph published in The Sun, 29th January 1940.

Figure 47. Site plan, Poe Homes. Available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S14 Box29.
Figure 48. Map of the Poe Homes and adjacent areas. Insurance Maps of Baltimore, Maryland Volume 2, Published by the Sanborn Map Co, available from the Baltimore City Archives.

Figure 49. Birds-eye-view of the Poe Homes. Google Earth, 2013.
Figure 50. Poe Homes, 1943. Photograph available from the Afro-American Newspaper Archives, West Baltimore Memories Exhibit, item #429.

Figure 51. Poe Homes, 901-905 West Saratoga Street, 1975. Photograph by William H. Potts, available from the University of Baltimore, Langsdale Library, Special Collections, GBC Collection, Series XII, Box 4.
Figure 52. Poe Homes, open-house viewings, 1940. Photograph available from the Afro-American Newspaper Archives, West Baltimore Memories Exhibit, item #397.

Figure 53. Poe Homes, pioneer families moving in, c. 1940. Photograph available from the Afro-American Newspaper Archives, West Baltimore Memories Exhibit, item #396.
Figure 54. Poe Homes, pioneer resident Renee Greene with baby, c.1940. Photograph available from the Afro-American Newspaper Archives, West Baltimore Memories Exhibit, item #399.

Figure 55. Poe Homes, pioneer residents sitting in living room, c.1940. Photograph available from the Afro-American Newspaper Archives, West Baltimore Memories Exhibit, Item #395.
The French philosopher Jacques Rancière conceptualized “democratic practice as the inscription of the part of those who have no part – which does not mean the ‘excluded’ but anybody whover.” Similarly, Guy Bonsiepe noted, “To be politically active, you have to de-politicize, since the political space is occupied by politicians and legitimized by parties.”

This contradiction exposes the paradox of the system of democratic governance: “democracy is threatened by nothing other than democratic life.”

Building on the writing of Plato, Rancière argues that “Politics[…] consists in transforming this space of ‘moving along’, of circulation, into a space for the appearance of a subject: the people, the workers, the citizens.” He refers to “the putting of two worlds in one and the same world” as embodying an act of ‘dissensus,’ maintaining that such act would positively disrupt. For the political theorist Chantal Mouffe, “In a democratic polity, conflicts and confrontations, far from being a sign of imperfection, indicate that democracy is alive and inhabited by pluralism.” Based on this premise, she argues that contrasting views should pollinate each other, which can be achieved when divergent parties are in a position of agonism (adversaries) as opposed to being antagonistic (enemies).

The above probes of Chapter 3 into federal and municipal archives exposed particular moments in political history where marginalized groups sought their inscription in space through dissensus, which simultaneously marked the start of democratic life not only for black individuals in Baltimore, but for all minority groups. Large-scale public housing strategies underlined the rise of public efforts aiming to provide for those who had been left behind. The arrival of public housing implied a right to decent living conditions in the United States as “The state became landlord, paternal authority, guarantor of decency, and provider of rights.” The coming of such politically significant buildings via public pressures by local communities and other groups also signified a newfound role for the common women and men, who suddenly gained the power to influence the architecture of their territories in no minor way. This, in turn, theoretically shifted the accountability for architects and urban planners, who no longer had to only satisfy the political elite, but also those for who they built, designed and planned. While powerful developers and organized realtors were well familiar with the importance of resistance and advocacy tactics to influence political decisions pertaining to city forms, the introduction of local communities in this process created the

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190 Guy Bonsiepe, Civic City Cahier 2: Design and Democracy (London: Bedford Press, 2010), 60.
192 Rancière, Dissensus, 37.
193 Ibid., 59.
195 Ibid., 13.
foundation of a new culture grounded in modern democratic political principles.

This diffusion of power pertaining to the making of territory created spaces of resistance, negotiation and creation, which remained misbalanced as certain actors were better equipped to navigate and influence the politics of space in Baltimore’s 1930s and 40s. The lasting influence of color lines on all aspects of life in Baltimore played its role in maintaining dysfunctional conditions as the effects of racial discrimination on the formation and maintenance of ghettos remained (and remains) fertile ground for contestations. The influence of color lines extended to public housing policies, and thereby reinforced rather than counteracted racial segregation; ultimately achieving what Branzi referred to as an architecture that directly represented power mechanisms, social division, and castes. Admittedly, whereas the evolving social system created potent conditions for professional fields to reconsider their orientations, the most important architectural movement of the time defended the belief that buildings should express contemporary culture, or convey the philosophy of their society. Whether or not these greater pursuits would interfere with the traditional role of architecture, to provide comfortable, pleasant and functional places for human activities to unfold, remained to be seen.

Reporting on Frances Morton’s study of Baltimore, Clark Hobbs of The Sun defended the view that "dilapidation, substandard conveniences and crowding” were the result of poverty and unemployment.197 His editors at The Sun disagreed, and offered an alternative reading, suggesting, “it would be just as logical to argue that the people now living there produced the slum.”198 As the title of their The Sun’s articles suggested, it would “Better Go Deeper” to correctly identify the root causes behind the creation of slums, to consequently design spatial responses that address the problem at its source. These debates, however, gained little public attention amid a political climate that sought rapid responses to mass unemployment, and a population content at the prospect of inhabiting new housings where slum dwellings had previously been the norm.

While intellectual and political positions varied between two broad positions – the first suggesting that individual failures created slums, the second contending that slums resulted from poverty – few and far between were those who sought to understand why individuals supposedly failed, what led to poverty, and why black people were affected by such life problems at disproportionate rates, as they were. The hypothesis maintaining that the condition of Baltimore’s inner city was a function of two-speed social systems and public policies driven by racial and ethnic prejudices was never seriously considered, seeing that New Deal welfare strategies perpetuated racialized responses. The provision of welfare aid took place on different bases for whites and blacks, with the former receiving support to finance private housings in suburban territories and the latter being housed in rented public housing units surrounded by a decaying inner city. Moreover, “Public housing was seen as a

government ‘handout’ in ways that federal mortgage loan guarantees were not.” The views of Rabbi Edward L. Israel, who believed that “society had created the problem of poverty, and therefore the slums, by failing to provide a decent living for all,” held little traction as the President’s recovery programs sought fast solutions to the significant problem of urban sprawl, and the consequent decay of historical (inner) cities.

As ‘invisibles’ became ‘visible’, different interpretations of the causalities responsible for the condition of slums could finally co-exist and threaten the hegemony of systems of beliefs that uncritically accepted unfounded convictions, namely that blacks were not worthy of equal treatment and opportunities. Finally inscribed in local democratic politics, black communities, intellectuals and their supporters could at last effectively contest their unequal social positions within the American landscape and introduce facts and histories that contradicted the established belief that marginalized races and ethnic groups lived where they did because of individual failures. At a more fundamental level, this newly earned political recognition provided prejudiced groups with the authority to call into question the political and intellectual basis for their unequal treatment and hold out for adequate democratic representation. As uninvited actors forcefully entered and influenced pivotal political discussions, previously discounted groups of people evolved into transformative stakeholders, prompting major civic advances as democratic governments would finally become threatened by democratic life in a way that it seldom had been before in the United States.

199 Williams, The Politics of Public Housing, 37.
As public housing started to reshape the landscape of West Baltimore, other urban renewal programs were introduced to address the condition of blighted residential spaces within the inner city ghetto. In contrast to the land cleared for public housings where some of the city's worst-off dwellings had existed, urban rehabilitation programs generally set out in neighborhoods where most dwellings were being considered as being substandard, but could be brought back to life through minor and major renovations. The rehabilitation movement enlisted a wide array of actors that ranged from property owners, to the real estate lobby, to municipal offices and local builders. If most of these actors had co-existed and been involved in the real estate market before, their relations would significantly change in the 1940s as public offices became actively implicated in providing better dwellings.

Working class housing in the United States was indeed in conditions that left little to envy in the 1940s. While public officials referred to worst-off areas as slums and dwellings merely in need of repairs as being blighted, both categories generally existed side-by-side. Where the concentration of slum housing was too small to rationalize the clearance of a site and the subsequent development of a public housing project on that location, urban rehabilitation efforts were generally deployed instead. Seeing that public housing represented a major threat to many industries in Baltimore – from small times builders to landlords and developers – a wide ranger of actors became suddenly invested in bettering the material ecology of blighted neighborhoods in order to avoid said sites to become eligible for slum-clearance cum public housing development. These actors thereby rallied to support the housing condition of inner city neighborhoods, where all of Baltimore's black ghetto were concentrated and where urban conditions had been deteriorating at an accelerate pace following important migration waves from the South and the subsequent densification of black segregated neighborhoods.

When a government official from the Union of South Africa visited a West Baltimore slum in 1948, he commented: "I have never seen anything anywhere quite so shockingly bad as what I saw this morning," adding that even "darkest Africa" was not quite like this. Indeed, nearly half of Baltimoreans lived in conditions that no longer held up to the day's standards in the late 1940s. Around one third of the city had been designated as blighted in 1945, amounting to a territory where nearly 40 percent of the city's population resided. According to The Sun paper, many dwellings still relied on illegal outdoor privies in crowded backyards, with

1 The Sun, “Slums in City Called Worse than Those in South Africa,” The Sun, June 27, 1948, 18, Baltimore Sun Archives.
upstairs apartments of even larger houses equipped with wooden fire escapes! Describing this type of neighborhood, the newspaper added, “almost without exception the original houses, of brick constructions, at some time have been enlarged by a one-story addition that is ripe for collapse.”

While few and far between were those that would openly object to the sensitive aspirations to eliminate blight forthright, a large fraction of the population contested to the means rather than the end of renewal initiatives. In The Federal Bulldozer: A critical Analysis of Urban Renewal, 1949-1962, Martin Anderson who later became a domestic policy advisor for the Reagan Administration wrote, “the federal urban renewal program is very costly, destructive of personal liberty, and is not capable of achieving the goals put forth by Congress.” His analysis mirrored that of other pro-market advocates, who like him believed that “the federal urban renewal program will not achieve its goals as rapidly and effectively as the means employed by the free enterprise – if at all.” Other critics attacked renewal programs and strategies in similar terms but rarely addressed the form of modernist architecture; a domain over which political commentators probably recognized their lack of knowledge and authority. The object of their criticism did not so much refute the mode of delivery either – centralized and heteronomous – nor the final product, but rather the nature of the developer as a public rather than private entity.

After nearly a decade of experiments with slum clearance and low-cost housing in Baltimore in the 1940s, efforts to rehouse the poor branched off into two different approaches. The first continued to propose new housings delivered as turnkey projects via public housing; the second followed a non-conventional approach in housing policy where improvements on the built environment would aim to keep existing communities in place by upgrading existing dwellings instead of replacing them altogether. These two arms of urban renewal were developed simultaneously and broadened the fields of architecture and urban planning.

The project known as the ‘Baltimore Plan’ embodied one of the earliest recorded examples of non-conventional housing policy targeting the urban poor in the United States. Originally labeled as a code enforcement program, it quickly evolved to inform an approach popularized nationwide and marketed under a new label: ‘rehabilitation.’ Supported by institutions mandated by the state, the Baltimore Plan cemented collaborations between citizen-driven efforts, local business interests, the Housing Bureau of the Health Department of the City of Baltimore, and the authority of the court. This plan involved unlikely partnerships, including alliances between parties with divergent interests, yet, united by a common objective: to develop an alternative to the prevalent strategy pertaining to rehousing the urban poor. While the Baltimore Plan sprung up to a point where it would eventually influence national housing policies by the mid 1950s, it also paved the way for local experimental initiatives such as the

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.
4 BURHA, “It’s Happening in Baltimore!” (BURHA, 1957), RG48 S2 Box 6, Baltimore City Archives.
‘Harlem Park Redevelopment Project.’ Rather than seeking a solution to common urban ills through the complete replacement of the built-environment, these experimental projects adapted an approach that aimed to redress neighborhoods through the multiplication of small interventions – many of which to be carried by property-owners and tenants themselves.

As the Baltimore Plan, and later, the Harlem Park project sought to improve the quality of inner city spaces by other means than slum clearance and mass housing, these early experiences with in situ redevelopment brought forward methods of particular importance for blighted neighborhoods with more life left to them than rock-bottom slums. And as such, they created concrete precedents embedded with the potential to inform and substantiated a shaky body of architectural and planning theory in the 1950s, which would eventually solidify to become a serious alternative to the modernist paradigm in urban theory.

**The Baltimore Plan**

Responding to a report condemning the appearance of blight in Baltimore, Lucien Gaudreau, rent director for the Baltimore Defense Rental Area, pointed at the failure of landlords to keep their properties in good repair. Many dwellings in inner city ghettos suffered from decaying structural elements, windowless rooms and rampant vermin infestations, where a lack of sanitation infrastructures affected most working class residences built before the 19th century. The Baltimore City Council responded to this condition by passing the Hygiene of Housing Ordinance in 1941, which “made it clear that slum conditions were in violation of city law.” The ordinance described minimum housing standards and supported the application of these benchmarks through legal provisions. As such, the 1941 Ordinance revived the century old practice to protect housing standards and stocks through the legal system, at a time when landlords and poor owner-occupants had grown increasingly negligent.

This new measure laid at the center of the Baltimore Plan, which constituted the first major rehabilitation program focusing on an entire neighborhood in the United States. The relative success of this experimental plan was due in part to the Hygiene of Housing Ordinance, but also to the program’s other pillars such as the creation of the nation’s first court concerned exclusively with housing code violations, as well as the establishment of public and private institutions aiming to provide social and financial support to a low-income, predominantly black community.

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7 The Sun, “Slum Outlook Is Called Bad: Rent Director Says Conditions Will Get More Serious as War Goes on,” The Sun, October 31, 1942, 13, Baltimore Sun Archives.
Hygiene of Housing Ordinance

The recorded history of housing regulation began around 4,000 years ago in Babylon with the Code of Hammurabi. According to the late scholar Robert Francis Harper, King Hammurabi "codified the exiting laws [of Babylon circa 2,500 B.C.] that the strong might not oppress the weak, that they should give justice to orphan and widow, and for righting the wrong." The Code, drastic as it was, abided by the law of retaliation:

§229. If a builder build a house for a man and do not make his construction firm, and the house which he has built collapse and cause the death of the owner of the house, that builder shall be put to death.

§233. If a builder build a house for a man and do not make its construction meet the requirements and a wall fall in, that builder shall strengthen that wall at his own expense.

While the principle of ‘an eye for an eye’ was better suited to the Babylonian Dynasty than the Modernist period in America, the underlining ethos of the Code of Hammurabi carried with it a system of belief that still ring true today; buildings have the potential to cause bodily harm, and as such, those responsible for their construction and maintenance are accountable to the occupants. With the Hygiene of Housing Ordinance, Baltimore City aimed to reinstate this long lost conviction and impose legal penalties to those keeping buildings in disrepair, even if nobody but the owner himself occupied the structure in question.

The Hygiene of Housing Ordinance added to existing but seldom enforced nuisance abatement laws that dated back to the colonial era in Baltimore. The City Commission of Baltimore legislated a resolution in 1770 forbidding the abandonment of dead animals in back yards. Similar laws were successively passed, such as Ordinance No. 15 of 1797, which required households to maintain clean properties and the sidewalks directly outside of them. In 1871, another ordinance provided that an Inspector of Building should prevent conditions that "might be dangerous to persons or property," while in 1886 a separate ordinance was passed that regulated the size of dwellings as well as their ventilation, roofing and number of occupants. As opposed to these earlier and scattered measures, the Hygiene of Housing Ordinance provided a comprehensive set of minimum modern standards encompassing a wide range of aspects pertaining to dwellings and their immediate outdoor environments. "With related ordinances, it constituted the nucleus of the so-called City Housing Code."

13 Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Agency (BURHA), "Field Work Orientation Manual" (Baltimore City, September 1967), Baltimore City Archives.
The 1941 Ordinance represented the backbone of the Baltimore Plan, and provided the legal impetuous for a system whereby city-blocks would be inspected one after another and brought up to the new standards as a result of a combined efforts between municipal departments and with citizen participation. The local government provided the taskforce in charge of administering the law – inspecting each structure, providing lists of necessary repairs, and administering fines to non-compliant individuals – while the private market (owner-occupants, landlords and tenants) was required the carry out adequate maintenance and renovation work.

The Health Commissioner of Baltimore assigned a young man eager to make his mark at only 29 years of age as the Chief of Housing and Law Enforcement within the Health Department. G. Yates Cook designated specific blocks squatted throughout the inner city for rehabilitation and made it his primary task to enforce the 1941 Ordinance. He encouraged city departments to canvass the area looking for violations, and was directly active in structuring the enforcement program within the Health Department. Cook enlisted the City Planning Department as soon as it was created in 1943,15 such as he had done with every other municipal departments relevant to the built environment before that.

By 1950, 100 blighted blocks totaling 403 dwellings16 had been rehabilitated at a cost of $200,000 for the city, which included the salaries of the Sanitation Squad – a division of the Baltimore Police trained to enforce housing laws. Over 2,000 blocks remained blighted, however, and those rehabilitated were generally quick to fall back into a state of disrepair after inspectors moved their efforts to other target areas.17

Lacking the oversights of a cross-departmental authority as well as any sort of strategic plan aiming at bringing citizens into the process, the enforcement of the Ordinance was marked by overlaps and the development of a punitive approach that proved inefficient. The Sun paper noted in 1951, "What progress ha[d] been made ha[d] been only a fraction of the program's potentiality."18 According to The Evening Sun, the six-year effort had only managed to "clean" 6 percent of the slum blocks in Baltimore.19 The conspicuous lack of coordination between municipal agencies culminated in wasted efforts, "and sometimes to extreme confusion, as, for instance, when one municipal agency ordered a slum property torn down and another ordered that the same property be repaired."20 Admittedly, the Fire Department, the Health Department and the City Planning Department were three of many other municipal offices tasked to implement portions of the Hygiene of Housing Ordinance and granted the power to

16 Nicholas Bloom, Merchant of Illusion: James Rouse, American’s Salesman of the Businessman’s Utopia (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004), 69.
18 The Sun, “The Law Spelling Out The ‘Baltimore Plan,'” The Sun, February 7, 1951, 12, Baltimore Sun Archives.
issue code violations with no overarching oversight. Other issues arose, such as the difficulty to prosecute offenders. By 1950, nearly a decade after the start of the housing standards implementation program, no measures had been developed to address these shortcomings, with one important exception.

This exception came in the form of a Housing Court, the first such institution nationwide. As legal cases pertaining to the maintenance of residential properties were commonly deferred seeing that judges prioritized violent crimes over housing violations, hearings regarding non-compliance to the Hygiene of Housing Ordinance were commonly deferred or treated as unimportant. The delay for the court to pass judgment was exacerbated further as a result of the general unfamiliarity of criminal judges with housing laws,

21 thereby bringing the Baltimore Plan to a bottleneck. Created by the executive order of the Governor of Maryland in 1947,

22 the Housing Court would at last enact the legal devices of the Baltimore Plan; make minimum housing standards a legal requirement enforceable under the criminal code.

**Housing Bureau of the Department of Health**

As local public officials recognized other defects in the experimental rehabilitation program that remained unaddressed in 1950, the City Council proposed institutional restructurings that would help the Baltimore Plan tap into its full potential. The City Council “responded to that plea by passing Ordinance No. 2527, which established a new Housing Bureau within the Department of Health.”

23 Its purpose was to centralize the enforcement of the 1941 Hygiene Ordinance with the hope to eliminate conflicts and overlaps between municipal authorities concerned by fire hazards, structural defects, rodent control, and health code violations respectively. Mayor Thomas D’Alesandro selected Mr. G. Yates Cook to become director of the Bureau in that same year.

24 The choice seemed logical as Cook was by and large seen as the father of the rehabilitation program in Baltimore and this institutional change really consisted in upgrading Cook’s office to the status of bureau. “His instruction were to coordinate the housing law enforcement work of all city agencies, and to call in the schools, churches, citizens’ groups and social agencies to help rehabilitate the people as well as the houses.”

25 As Bureau Director, Cook benefitted from greater autonomy seeing that his previous position had allowed him to do little more than designate blocks for rehabilitation, and personally enforce violations pertaining to the Department of Health. As opposed to earlier strategies, Cook’s Housing Bureau formed and assigned inspection teams to each dwelling that would cover all matters pertaining to the built environment enforceable under the Hygiene of

21 The Citizens Planning and Housing Association later noted, “it takes years for a judge of Housing court to become familiar with the many intricate regulations and laws under which violators are persecuted.” See, spokesperson of the Citizens Planning and Housing Association, quoted in, Frank Somerville, “Landlords Oppose Shift of Housing Court Judge,” The Sun, June 22, 1962, 9, Baltimore Sun Archives.
26 Millspaugh and Breckenfeld, The Human Side of Urban Renewal, 4.
Housing Ordinance. Following inspections, property owners were handed a single report detailing ways by which their dwellings failed to meet the minimum standards set by the city, irrespectively of whether the offenses pertained to the health code, the housing code, the fire code, the zoning code or otherwise. Owners were given 30 days to execute repairs, with the possibility for extensions in extenuating circumstances, and swift legal prosecutions in cases of non-compliance, thanks to the Housing Court.

**Housing Court**

The Housing Court differed from other criminal courts on one major aspect; the crimes continued to be perpetrated throughout trial and after the judgment, suggesting that defendants either misunderstood their legal requirements in the modernizing city, or were indifferent to the repercussions. Recognizing the social circumstances of many offenders, especially tenants and owner-occupants, many of which recent migrant from the rural South, the Housing Court attempted to provide an educational service from within the courthouse. The magistrate scheduled all cases to be heard at the same time of the day, generally early mornings, forcing every defendant to sit through numerous trials and become familiar with the offences of others, and thereby familiar with the law. As one Citizens Planning and Housing Association report noted, Housing Court judges “viewed their function as more to induce compliance than to impose punishment.” And as such, judges were generally lenient towards first offenders, and especially so when they believed that code violations were the result of ignorance rather than negligence.

As the Housing Court began to attribute pedagogical elements to its operational structure, the Baltimore Plan nuanced its original punitive disposition with the introduction of an educational agenda. It offered information to offenders on the importance to keep neighborhoods in decent conditions, and on the negative effects of certain practices, common as they were, which citizens then viewed as normal and acceptable. These included, for example, the improper disposal of refuse, the pathological effects associated with antiquated sanitation infrastructures or windowless rooms. Each year and on a rotary basis, a single judge was assigned to preside over the Housing Court, allowing him or her to became well familiar with the Hygiene of Housing Code and to differentiate repeated offenders who acted out of negligence, from tenants and owner-occupants unfamiliar with the modern code or limited by their lean incomes. Judge Robert Sweeny who was appointed as magistrate of the Housing Court in May 1959, remarked:

> Many persons violated the laws regarding sanitation, health, and fire hazards not through intent, but because they had never been properly advised as to how to live in an urban setting. Many were newcomers from rural areas who were able to function quite properly in that setting, but who had failed to adjust to metropolitan living. Also, many long-time residents, because of socioeconomic problems, had never had the opportunity to learn how to achieve cleanliness and order in a substandard environment.


28 Sweeney, “Baltimore’s Slum Housing Clinic,” 693.
While the Housing Court provided an essential pillar to Cook as he spearheaded the Baltimore Plan, many more problems were still awaiting their solutions. For one, first time homeowners were sometimes unable to afford the repairs necessary to meet modern standards. Whether because of irresponsible banking practices, unscrupulous sales contracts, or otherwise, the cost of mortgages alone was already taking a toll on many working class property owners who could seldom cover the cost of major home improvements. Moreover, some houses were deemed unfit for rehabilitation as their advanced states of decay gave little options to housing inspectors other than to recommend their demolition.

The destruction of such buildings was unavoidable and perhaps traumatic for those who could not afford living elsewhere in Baltimore, whether because of their race or income. These limitations were expressly important for black individuals, who remained confined to specific areas of the city in the Baltimore of the 1950s. Those residing in such houses did so out of necessity as the market for decent rental properties at decent prices and opened to black tenancy was unarguably smaller than the demand. A 1951 United States Public Health Service study concluded that in one area targeted by the Baltimore Plan, blacks rented units that were subject to 20 percent more code violations under the Hygiene of Housing Ordinance than whites, yet, paid an average of $10 more per month in rent; a substantial sum as the median cost of a monthly lease in that same study area was a little over $36. In other words, blacks paid approximately 32 percent more for housing with 20 percent more code infractions.

Other setbacks pertained to exploitative contractors who were quick to take advantage of uninformed owner-occupants with little to no experience dealing with the construction sector. It was common for builders to overcharge for work that would even fall short of bringing houses up to standard despite having been hired specifically for that purpose. As The Evening Sun reported in 1954, "unsatisfactory work include[d] temporary cardboard partitions, plastering over loose paper, cheap five-and-dime store electric extension cords instead of cables, taped leaks in water pipes, sand-softened concrete."

James Rouse, a prominent mortgage banker and developer, projected a significant influence over Cook as he occupied the post of Chairman of the Housing Bureau’s Advisory Council. Especially savvy in politics for a businessman, Rouse advocated for a public-private sector approach to address urban issues. Notwithstanding his allegiance with the private sector, he agreed with the New Deal objective to provide better houses for the poor, but opposed big government programs. Rouse believed that private contractors should be able to earn an honest pay day building and renovating low-cost housings, and like many more Baltimoreans, he took a dim view of contractors and bankers that further exacerbated the hard knock life of Baltimore’s urban poor. Described as an “honest businessman, a philanthropist of note,

and a truly decent human being” by scholar Nicholas Dagen Bloom, Rouse believed that the private sector could legitimately do more for marginalized groups than an inefficient political machine constantly held back by administrative red tape and delivered by individuals with no proven ability in the business world.

Rouse was discontent with a prevalent belief of the time; that upgrading physical spaces would automatically mean upgrading the people. He proposed that the rehabilitation of physical structures be accompanied by the rehabilitation of “the spirit and attitude of the people who live and own property there.” He outlined that public offices should make use of tools at their dispositions to “work with [the people’s] spirit as well as their houses. Education and recreation are perhaps the most obvious,” he noted. He believed that the circumstances of impoverished and marginalized residents would only be alleviated if housing improvements would be paired with educational programs, and that buildings alone were not up to the task.

This ethos together with his political influence triggered new efforts to introduce social and economic programs designed to support the Baltimore Plan. Rouse arranged for Cook to speak with colleagues at the Baltimore Real Estate Board, its Chair in 1951, Guy Hollyday. Concerned by the failings of the promising anti-blight program, “Mr. Hollyday called together a committee of interested realtors, mortgagers, bankers and business men, seeking a constructive approach to the problems facing the owner-occupant who, by reason of small income, casualty or existing commitments, could not cope with the money problem and the extensive requirements of a city violation notice.” Out of this group came the suggestion to establish Fight-Blight Fund Inc.; an entity designed to provide financial support and guidance pertaining to the world of banking and construction. Together with Rouse, Hollyday officially launched the program in 1951, naming William Andrews as Director.

Andrews, a realtor and attorney, was charged with the broad task to iron out the problems of families unable to make home improvements, and set-up an office on the site of the Baltimore Plan Pilot area to that effect. By the time that Fight-Blight Fund became operational, Cook had agreed to abandon the scattered block-by-block strategy in favor of a neighborhood-wide approach that Rouse had for long defended. Whereas the block-by-block program had suffered from the negative impact of being surrounded by untouched blighted areas, taking the rehabilitation program to a larger scale was seen as a pivotal move that would allow for the provision of localized services, and benefit from the requalification of an entire

31 Dagen Bloom, Merchant of Illusion, xx. Dagen Bloom wrote the biography of Rouse’s professional achievements. It is by far the most comprehensive study of Rouse’s contribution as a planner, developer and political figure.
32 Rouse’s involvement in a project such as the Baltimore Plan was grounded in his own professional interest to maintain and develop working class housings, seeing that letting neighborhoods fall into a stage of advanced disrepair provided City Hall with the impetuous to recommend the site for slum clearance, thereby freeing up land for public housing. Public housing was by and large seen as direct and unfair competition by most mortgage bankers, realtors and local developers.
33 James Rouse, in “The Baltimore Plan of Housing Law Enforcement” (The Housing Bureau, Baltimore City Health Department, May 1952), 16, RG9 Box 263 S 23, Baltimore City Archives.
area rather than isolated patches throughout the city. The Pilot Area, a 27 block territory\textsuperscript{36} bounded by Caroline, Chester, Chase and Preston streets in East Baltimore, was a ‘changing neighborhood’ of about 4,000 inhabitants,\textsuperscript{37} where what had been an all white neighborhood was well on its way of becoming all black. The year before the program had started in 1951, census showed that roughly 80 percent of the population was black in the Pilot Area where few if any African Americans had lived in the 1930s. Each of the 1,042 dwelling units contained within the site\textsuperscript{38} dated back from the previous century and displayed clear signs of decay.\textsuperscript{39}

The Fight-Blight Fund on-site office offered specialized services to families affected by the Baltimore Plan within the Pilot Area. There, Andrews reviewed cases one-by-one and aimed to find solutions that would preferably not require owner-occupants to borrow from the Fight-

\textsuperscript{36} The Pilot Area is most often defined as being comprised of 27 blocks, although this number varies in certain publications. Millspaugh and Breckenfeld (1960) refer to a 14-block area, while other studies speak of 25 adjacent blocks. Every study agrees on the parameter of the territory, framed by Caroline, Chase, Preston and Chester Streets, but seem to differ on what constitutes a ‘block.’ See, Ralph J. Johnson and Roy McCaldin, “Enforcement of Housing Laws and Housing Rehabilitation,” Public Health Reports 70, no. 2 (1955): 1247–48.

\textsuperscript{37} Durr, “The Conscience of a City,” 384.

\textsuperscript{38} There are again variations on this number, which Millspaugh and Breckenfeld (1960) estimate to be 750. The number cited, 1,024 seems more accurate as it was taken from a rigorous scientific study published in Ralph Johnson, Huntington Williams, and Roy McCaldin, “The Quality of Housing ‘Before’ and ‘After’ Rehabilitation,” American Journal of Public Health 45, no. 2 (1955): 191.

\textsuperscript{39} Millspaugh and Breckenfeld, The Human Side of Urban Renewal, 4.
Blight Fund’s $10,000 available for loans. He identified citations that could readily be tackled by the owners, such as clearing out backyards from heaps of rubbish or scraping off peeling layers of paint. He provided lists of recommended contractors, helped tenants in obtaining estimates, and advised them on drafting contracts where payments would only be due after a satisfactory inspection of the work by the Housing Bureau. Furthermore, he built on his knowledge of the banking system to study financial arrangements and he identified ways by which repairs could be paid through refinancing or transfers of dept. Andrews ability to sort through the paper-legal-banking maze allowed him to find financial solutions that regularly made it possible for owner-occupants to pay for renovations and achieve savings on mortgage payments, seeing that residents of the expanding black ghetto were often subject of unlawful financial exploitation.40 “Although the Fight-Blight Fund had $10,000 at its disposal, it soon became apparent that even the poorest Pilot Area families needed advice and education far more than money.”41 In a few rare cases, the Fight-Blight Fund put up its own money to provide last-resort loans to families unable to access low-interest loans in other lending institutions despite their potential ability to repay.42 “If a home owner is obviously trying to carry an impossible financial load,” however, “Fight Blight would not help, on the theory that it is better for such an owner to get out from under fast.”43

**Hearing Board**

Andrews’s efforts were supported further when the Housing Bureau inaugurated a special Hearing Board; an independent panel tasked to decide whether a non-compliant owner-occupant should be taken to court. The Hearing Board proved especially useful in supporting families willing to correct housing violations but unable to do so within the prescribed 30-day period. Like Andrews, the Hearing Board examined the financial situation of struggling families, albeit for a different purpose, where they also discovered new ways to alleviate residents from the economic burden created by hefty renovation bills:

> In one case, the Hearing Board discovered that a seller had been deducting *an annual ground rent of $69* from the buyer’s payments, although no legal ground rent existed. On the same contract, it was later charged in court, excessive sums had been applied to interest, and although the weekly payments were supposed to cover all expenses, the year’s taxes had not been paid and were accruing penalties.44

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40 In one reported case, Andrews had managed to obtain a quote of $512.00 on behalf of an elderly couple for repairs including rewiring a cellar, ‘ratproofing’ the entire house, replacing windows and plastering two rooms. The couple had previously been quoted at $1,525.00. Andrews then consolidated the $300 still owed on the house with the $512 for repairs into a new mortgage over 5 years, while 3 years remained on the previous mortgage. With this arrangement, extending the life of the house by well over 2 years, Andrews advices had brought down the elderly couple’s monthly payment from $27 to $17, giving them an almost 10% increase in usable income. See, ibid., 31.

41 Ibid., 32.

42 Durr notes that over the first six years of operation, the Fight-Blight Fund directly granted only 51 loans, totalling $19,194. During the same period, Andrews was able to resolve 275 of the 309 cases he received through counselling. See, Durr, “The Conscience of a City,” 425–6.


As working class blacks seldom had the finances to pay for a property outright, nor did they typically hold the racial standing necessary to become eligible for standard bank-issued mortgages, realtors often drafted installment sales contracts. A news report on such arrangement held that “dealers in the field acknowledge[d] with great frankness that they [did] not sell houses under contracts of sale at their fair market value.” Realtors, the article noted, argued that they had no option but to demand from $1,000 to $3,000 in excess of the open-market price to make up for the ‘hazard of the business.’ The hazards were not as grave as realtors suggested, however, since non-payment resulted in the immediate loss of property for borrowers who did not possess the titles of their homes until payment in full. Furthermore, the same so-called hazards were also offset by high interest rates and long repayment terms that reduced the likelihood for such families to ever have the house transferred to their name, or for the house to still be worth anything after having been completely paid off.

Community-Based Programs

Alongside these new services policing over exploitative practices and providing advices of financial nature, community-based programs were also introduced in the Pilot Area of the Baltimore Plan. Some communities of interests had developed naturally when it became apparent that the Baltimore Plan would raise the social and economic value within the Pilot Area, while other community groups were triggered with the help of municipal social services. Being trisected by two major roads, the affected territory “had had no name before its designation as the Pilot Area.” The area had in fact been oddly selected as the Pilot Area counted parcels that had previously been part of three established neighborhoods. As the site had never been an urban village or a closely-knit community, the work of community organizations took a paramount importance and aimed to cultivate a sense of place.

Tenants unable to maintain their property to a level established by the new ordinance were sometimes offered help by neighbors via a program arranged by designated block captains. As *The Evening Sun* reported in 1954, “Miss Biddison, combining a wide knowledge of the subtle currents in City Hall with a militant indignation at the plight of slum dwellers, became an ubiquitous and almost legendary figure to the residents.” Together with other leaders like Mrs. Viola Jackson, Chairman of a newly formed Neighborhood Committee (as well as principal of a near-by school), these women “spent hundreds of evening hours trouble-shooting the complaints of residents who were receiving the painful notices from law-enforcement agencies.” The Neighborhood Committee had been developed to interpret...

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46 For a study of the value of property as a form of investment (property as capital that gain value) in black communities, see *How Racism Takes Place* chapters 1 and 2 where Lipsitz explains how public disinvestment, the concentration of poverty, unfair interest rates and other factors coincide to seriously limits the potential of properties to gain any value in the ghetto. See, George Lipsitz, *How Racism Takes Place* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).
48 Ibid., 402.
49 The Neighborhood Committee was formed by the Advisory Council, together with an Education Committee, a Social Services Committee and a Law Enforcement Committee.
the Baltimore Plan program to residents, "enlist community support and make suggestions to those in charge." Their organizing members "mediated the inevitable disputes between eager inspectors and suspicious home owners." These groups played an instrumental part in stimulating the interest of citizens to upgrade their homes and to the establishment of vocational schools and local associations, which together earned the Baltimore Plan wider acceptance.

Their work was supported further through organizations such as the First Church of the Brethren. When a tiny and dilapidated house at 1214 North Durham Street became available, a member of the congregation persuaded Yates G. Cook to support the Church in purchasing the property, which would then be used to train volunteer handymen and builders. With financial support from the Maryland Home Builders Association, the group purchased and rehabilitated the house, quickly turning it into a "command post where neighborhood people could talk over their problems and where representative of Cooks' Baltimore Housing Bureau could hold interviews." Mayor D'Alesandro, Jr. presented the keys to Mrs. Jackson upon completion of the work, prompting her to declare, "this house is more than a building, it reflects a new spirit."

Selling the Baltimore Plan

The Baltimore Plan achieved national recognition as an alternative to slum-clearance-come-public-housing programs, which by the late-1950s were facing frequent and well-substantiated criticisms. According to one newspaper article, "the Baltimore Plan of slum rehabilitation had reached what must be close to the zenith of nationwide publicity in the nonentertainment field." Admittedly, the Plan had been written up in laudatory terms by several national magazines in a single week of January 1953, including Life and the Saturday Evening Post. Realizing that the efforts to rehabilitate the Pilot Area should be packed and marketed via a catchy name to assure dissemination and publicity, Guy Hollyday had in fact coined the term 'Baltimore Plan' himself; a public relation scheme that evidently yielded dividend.

As news and rumors about the Baltimore Plan travelled, its essence and purpose became distorted, leaving mayors of other important American cities to believe that the great city at the shore of the Patapsco River had abandoned its conventional public housing program

52 For example, the First Church of Brethren whose congregation purchased a fixer upper for $1,200 in the early 1950s and proceeded to renovating it, would later use the property as a community center known as the Brotherhood Pilot House. The Mayor later presented the keys to local community leader, schoolmaster and community chairwoman, Viola Jackson, on June 15 1951. See, Durr, "The Conscience of a City," 385–8.
53 Ibid., 386.
54 Violet Jackson, quoted in: Morning Sun, 13 Nov 1951.
56 “Oral History Interview, Mrs. Frances Morton Froelicher,” Unknown, 7, Oral History, Maryland Historical Society.
altogether. Politicians swarmed Mayor D’Alesandro, Jr. in Baltimore with information requests. The mayor reiterated that the Baltimore Plan was complimentary to public housing in personal communications with officials from Dallas to Los Angeles, as well as in national public forums where he was increasingly being asked to speak.

Realtors avidly regarded the program as a powerful device that legitimized the efficacy of public-private partnerships, which held a precious place in their tactical agenda designed to keep big government out of the housing sector. To strengthen its effects, Fight-Blight Fund decided to bring the Baltimore experiment deeper into the mainstream via a short documentary film scheduled to be distributed by Encyclopedia Britannica Films. The Baltimore Mortgage Bankers Association and the Home Builders Association of Baltimore raised $15,000 to finance half of the venture, with the University of Chicago covering the remaining of the cost.57

The film opens on the Pilot Area in East Baltimore, where ramshackle dwellings presented urban conditions at par with those of slums in countries where industrialization had yet to take root. As Dagen Bloom observed, “The notion that America had to be held to a certain standard [drove] the film’s narration.”58

> Here is the shame of our American Cities. Here is the face of our cities we hide. Endless blocks of houses scarred beyond belief, overcrowded firetraps, tenements, shacks, human dwellings unfit for human being to live in. In Baltimore as in all our cities, such conditions went untouched for years. Then a new approach. A young social worker just out of school went into a blighted area to report on the work of social agencies. She was shocked by the housing conditions she saw. Her report – an indictment of Baltimore’s indifference – interested three people: the director of public welfare, the commissioner of health and a newspaper editor. The newspaper hit hard. To the people of Baltimore, such conditions were impossible. But there they were, as common as the daily paper.59

Despite this quasi apocalyptic description, and indeed, the sluggish condition of the Baltimore Plan Pilot Area prior to its rehabilitation, the site “was not a rock-bottom slum, but it had every variety of blight and deterioration.”60 Around 42 percent of the properties were landlord owned, leaving 38 percent in the hand of owner-occupants; that is to say, not the city’s worst off.61 The documentary film spoke eloquently of the Baltimore Plan’s success stories while it did not point at any the failures or shortcomings, such as the difficulty to involve absentee landlords in the rehabilitation process. Following the release of the film, the Baltimore Plan was often talked about as a miracle solution, where overstatements and misrepresentations continued to befuddle public opinion.

58 Bloom, Merchant of Illusion, 66.
60 Millspaugh and Breckenfeld, The Human Side of Urban Renewal, 4.
61 The Evening Sun, “5,400 Blighted Homes Razed in 15 Years, More than 50,000 Are Still Occupied,” 35. The exact proportion of landlord-owned property was 41.5% in May 1951, a number that remained unchanged in October 1952 when most the Pilot Area had been rehabilitated. See, Johnson, Williams, and McCalin, “The Quality of Housing ‘Before’ and ‘After’ Rehabilitation,” 195.
Figure 57. Still frame from documentary film, Baltimore Plan. Produced and Directed by John Barnes, 1953.
Shortcomings notwithstanding, the Baltimore Plan had offered invaluable lessons to the discipline of urban planning in the 1950s. Its contribution to in situ redevelopment played an important role in supporting an alternative to the preferred mode of development during the New Deal where tabula rasa had been the prevalent remedy to urban blight and slum areas. According to a before and after study of the Pilot Area published in 1955, in only 18 months “the average scores for facilities and maintenance [had been] statistically significant.” The study further noted that the median income of families had not changed significantly after the rehabilitation, suggesting that the enforcement efforts had not forced even the lowest income families of the area to relocate to un-rehabilitated neighborhoods. “While a substandard area was not changed into a beautiful residential neighborhood, the residents developed a new pride of occupancy.” Surely, “this is an important intangible benefit of housing rehabilitation.”

**Criticisms**

As documentary film failed to speak to the defects, struggles and limitations of the Baltimore Plan, it obscured the reasons behind the success or failure of this worthy experiment. Like Peter Henderson observed, one of the real estate industry’s “tactics was to trumpet the success of the Baltimore Plan in local political arenas nation-wide, contending it was an alternative to public housing.” Seeing how real estate interested had funded large parts of the documentary film, it was no surprise that its tone was skewed to serve the agenda of Baltimore’s real estate lobby. “Exaggerated claims” for some, “powerful propaganda” according to others, Mayor Frank Zeidler of Milwaukee described the Baltimore Plan as little more than a matter of first aid medicine after having visited the site. Mayor Oscar Holcombe of Houston was equally unimpressed. When visiting a cleaned-up block in the Sharp Street neighborhood with G. Yates Cook, he reportedly told his guide, “In Houston we’d still call this a slum.” Dagen Bloom noted that the front façades of many houses were significantly improved but what remained hidden from street views often stayed untouched. Other improvements were made to barely fool housing inspectors, as dwellings were reportedly quick to fall below standards again soon after successfully passing housing inspections.

Important flaws in the Housing Court also went unreported. To be sure, the documentary’s description of the special court left one important point out: housing code violation fines were often being considered as the cost of doing business in Baltimore by absentee landlords.

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63 Ibid.
65 Ibid., 330.
66 Bloom, Merchant of Illusion, 68.
67 The Sun, “The Plan: For People, Not Just For Houses,” The Sun, September 5, 1953, 8, Baltimore Sun Archives. It is worth noting that The Sun paper described the Milwaukee mayor as a strong believer of slum clearance and public housing programs, and that his 2-hour visit of the Pilot Area did not allow him to observe changes in attitudes in the people affected by the project.
68 Oscar Holcombe, in The Sun, “Houston Mayor Visits Slums,” The Sun, February 15, 1950, Baltimore Sun Archives.
69 The Sun, “The Plan: For People, Not Just For Houses.”
70 Citizens Planning and Housing Association, “Housing Court – No Bark, No Bite,” 6.
Some landlords found it cheaper to pay Housing Court fines than to do carry out repairs. The *Evening Sun* reported in 1954 on a case where the landlord was fined $75 for failing to make repairs, while the work would have cost him $1,000 - $2,000. The documentary film had rightly stated that judges could fine offenders for each day of non-compliance as a separate offence, but the use of this law, or of the judge’s rights to impose a jail sentence, was rarely if ever imposed even on the most flagrant offenders.71

Planning the Plan

As this description of the Baltimore Plan lays bare, this alternative approach to public housing was more of an attitude towards urban rehabilitation than a strategi plan. Its multiple components, such as the Hygiene of Housing Ordinance (1941), the Housing Court (1947), the Fight-Blight Fund (1951), the establishment of vocational schools or the introduction of community-driven activities were deployed in a piecemeal manner under no formal institutional umbrella. The program publicized as the Baltimore Plan effectively amassed all efforts aiming at rehabilitation of the Pilot Area, irrespectively of authorship. These efforts were deployed by various actors and sometime for contrasting reasons that ranged from developing alternatives to public housing in order to protect the local real estate industry, to better the housing conditions for blacks residing in slums or blighted areas in the Baltimore ghetto.

When the Pilot Area of the Baltimore Plan neared completion in 1952, the Advisory Council urged Mayor D’Alesandro, Jr. to augment Cook’s authority once again so as to grant him with the necessary power to co-ordinate the multiple undertakings that constituted the Baltimore Plan. As the project had expanded into other fields, such as recreation, education and financial services, it became apparent that the Baltimore Plan was no longer limited to the enforcement of Hygienic of Housing regulations. As per Rouse’s early vision, the project equally consisted in educating the neighborhood and changing its space through physical as well as social and financial programs. Still Chairman of the Advisory Council in 1951, Rouse formally recommended for the Baltimore Plan to be moved out of the Health Department and to be handled on an interdepartmental basis by an independent “Commission on Blight.”73 This independent institution would be comparable in scope to the Redevelopment Commission and the Housing Authority.74

71 The Evening Sun, “5,400 Blighted Homes Razed in 15 Years, More than 50,000 Are Still Occupied,” 35. This was not an isolated case, nor was this rather light approach to sentencing characteristic of this judge only. A journalist assigned to the Housing Court in 1964 noted that on a typical December Wednesday that year, several defendants were granted additional time to comply, while only one monetary fine was given for a value of $54. See, The Sun, “Man Fined $50 in Housing Court,” The Sun, December 23, 1964, 10, Baltimore Sun Archives.

72 Citizens Planning and Housing Association, “Housing Court – No Bark, No Bite,” 7. The Evening Sun, “5,400 Blighted Homes Razed in 15 Years, More than 50,000 Are Still Occupied,” 35.

73 The Sun, “New Status For Baltimore Plan Urged to Cut Red Tape,” The Sun, April 7, 1952, 7, Baltimore Sun Archives.

74 James Rouse confessed to this frustration in an op-ed piece he wrote for the *Sun* paper, where he added: “It is illogical and unreasonable to expect any health commissioner to maintain a vigorous initiative in the many fields of activity which are outside the regular scope of interest and responsibility of the Health Department. … This organization conflict many produce personality clashes here and there, as bad organization almost always does.” See, James Rouse, “Organizational Problem,” The Sun, May 8, 1952, 8, Baltimore Sun Archives.
Conflicts of social philosophy had emerged early into the years of the Housing Bureau, when the “young, restless, dynamic and aggressive” G. Yates Cook, “no respecter of protocol, bureaucratic divisions of responsibilities or precedents,” had aroused the anxiety of his older and more conservative superior at the Health Department. Cook, with the support of his Advisory Council “composed of seventeen Baltimoreans of substantial reputation,” defended the Baltimore Plan as being much more than an enforcement program of the minimum health and sanitation standards for housing. The Advisory Council defended this position in a strongly worded letter addressed to the mayor, where it presented the Baltimore Plan as a program that aimed to “rehabilitate not only the houses in an area, but, working with and through other appropriate agencies, to ‘rehabilitate’ as well the attitudes, the hopes and the habits of both tenants and home owners.” The Advisory Council noted that the program had in fact evolved into a vast inter-departmental effort largely exceeding the purview of the Health Department:

The Baltimore Plan now directly involves the work of the Fire Department, Police Department, Bureau of Buildings, the Zoning Enforcement Office, the Bureau of Highways, the Bureau of Sanitation, the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Department of Education, the Department of Public Welfare, the Council of Social Agencies, the CPHA, the Women’s Civic League, the Home Builders Association of Maryland, the Real Estate board, Brethren Volunteer Service, and three non-profit corporations formed by Baltimore groups specifically to deal with the Baltimore Plan, namely, Brotherhood Service, Inc., Fight Blight, Inc. and the Fight Blight Fund.

The Housing Bureau Advisory Council’s 1952 report explained why it considered the current institutional structure totally inadequate to deal with this complex assemblage of efforts. The report stated that the Housing Bureau as well as its Advisory Council had been tasked to study the progress of the Baltimore Plan, but did not hold the authority to negotiate with whatever agency should be involved in addressing shortcomings. “Despite the fact that the matter at hand may have little or no direct relationship with the work of the Health Department, the Housing Bureau must proceed through the Commissioner of Health rather than through the Advisory Council to reach the department involved.” This structure, burdened by a layer of authority with no expert knowledge of the problems at play, moved ineffectively, according to the report, and demanded “an inordinate length of time and an extravagant quantity of letters, memoranda, and conferences to produce simple, worthwhile results which should be accomplished quickly, easily and directly.” The Advisory Council concluded that the Baltimore Plan should fall under the administration and direction of a non-paid, five men ‘Commission on Blight’ at once.

76 Ibid.
77 The Housing Bureau Advisory Council wrote this in around March. Cited in, Ibid.
79 Ibid., 3.
As Mayor D’Alesandro, Jr. had been unable to agree to such organizational re-structurings, G. Yates Cook resigned from his post as Director of the Housing Bureau in February 1953. Following Cook’s resignation, Dr. Huntington Williams, Director of the Health Department communicated his intention to continue to provide a home to the Housing Bureau within his department, and to limit the Baltimore Plan to a public health endeavor despite the recommendations of Rouse, the protests of Cook, and the relative success of the Plan as a multifaceted program acclaimed nationwide.

Only 43 years old in 1953, the former Housing Bureau Director was quickly recruited by the National Association of Home Builders, where he would head the Department of Urban Redevelopment later that same year. Rouse “resigned as chairman of the Mayor’s Advisory Committee on cleaning up slums in protest to restrictions on Mr. Cook.” Cook’s colleagues and Pilot Area residents extolled the young public servant at a reception, referring to him as “a champion of the less privileged,” one of Baltimore’s “most valuable public servants,” and other similarly intentioned comments that equally supported his position as a highly regarded and influential figure. His ambition, however, cost him job and office.

With Cook in Washington D.C., Rouse moved his efforts to Annapolis where he proposed Senate Bill 449, “an enabling act which would authorize independent Baltimore Plan agencies throughout Maryland.” The Senate gave the act a favorable vote, but specifically eliminated Baltimore City from the bill. Rouse’s new Housing Committee included four former members

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81 Edward Burks, “Cook Resigns as Housing Bureau Head,” The Sun, February 5, 1953, 32, Baltimore Sun Archives.
82 Burks, “Cook Resigns as Housing Bureau Head.”
83 The Sun, “Cook to Head Nation-Wide Slum Drive,” The Sun, March 8, 1953, 34, Baltimore Sun Archives.
84 The Sun, “Cook, Retiring ‘Baltimore Plan’ Director, Extolled at Reception,” The Sun, March 28, 1953, 15, Baltimore Sun Archives.
85 James Rouse, and William Gardner (Supervisor of Housing Inspectors for the City), cited in: The Sun, “Cook, Retiring ‘Baltimore Plan’ Director, Extolled at Reception.”
86 The Sun, “Rouse Announces Formation of New Housing Committee,” The Sun, April 1, 1953, 18, Baltimore Sun Archives.
of the Advisory Committee, and important figures such as Guy Hollyday, John Ramsay Jr., (Vice-President of the Urban League) and Harry Kruger (Magistrate of the Housing Court). For them, the explicit elimination of Baltimore from the bill turned the favorable vote into a major lost as most of the blight to be found in Maryland remained precisely in the historic city. As Rouse observed, over 10,000 code violations had been corrected in two years under the Baltimore Plan. “This is good,” he wrote, “but at this rate it will take 300 years to cover Baltimore’s 2,100 blocks of blight.”

**Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Authority (BURHA)**

After Mayor D’Alesandro, Jr. commissioned an Urban Renewal Board composed of national experts to assess the urban condition in Baltimore following Cook’s resignation, the panel presented results showing that Rouse’s provocative estimates were actually not too far off. The expert panel presented the mayor with a critical report in 1956 detailing the extent of urban blight in his city:

> Baltimore’s goal should be the elimination of its present slums and blighted areas within 20 years. Such a program will require a three-fold increase in present renewal activities. It will require the clearance of about 65,000 substandard dwellings. An additional 80,000 dwellings will require conservation, rehabilitation, or code enforcement. In all, 45 percent of Baltimore’s dwellings must be cleared or improved in 20 years.

At the going rate of 1,000 dwellings per two years, such as what had been possible with the staff of 40 employees at the disposition of the Housing Bureau for the Pilot Area in 1952, 80,000 dwellings would have effectively taken roughly 160 years to rehabilitate! Admitting the impossibility of the task under the current institutional set-up, the Urban Renewal Board recommended the creation of a new renewal and housing agency, and assigned it the task of “developing affirmative programs to encourage private investment in rehabilitation areas and to conserve investments in sound neighborhoods which might otherwise decline.” The mayor and City Council gave this recommendation almost immediate approval, and on the last day of 1956, the Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Authority (BURHA) was created.

The creation of BURHA coincided with the end of important public offices in Baltimore as the staff and functions of the Baltimore Redevelopment Commission and the Housing Bureau of the Department of Health were transferred to the new agency. Moreover, the responsibilities of two other offices also came to BURHA, namely the Area Projects that had previously been part of the Department of Public Welfare, and the Neighborhood Planning Functions of the Department of Planning. While this important change did no reflect the exact institutional

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87 Ibid.
arrangement proposed by Rouse and Cook, it did remove the Baltimore Plan from under the
Hygiene Department, while creating an agency with wider authority. At BURHA, the purpose
of urban renewal was:

*To extend the neighborhood’s useful life for another 40 to 50 years, placing maximum emphasis
on rehabilitation of existing structures. Clearance is undertaken only when necessary to
eliminate structures which are too far gone to be saved or which are incompatible with the
residential neighborhood, or when clearance is necessary to make space for needed public
facilities, such as schools, playgrounds, or fire houses.*

The Baltimore Plan was by then being directed by Franz Vidor, a professional planner
previously from the Baltimore County government. It was at last being administered by an
independent agency that recognized that social rehabilitation could not be achieved as the
result of physical improvements alone. But as much time had elapsed between the departure
of Cook and the creation of BURHA, public interest in the Baltimore Plan had by and large
faded away and responsibilities for code enforcement returned to the confused state that had
define the experimental project in its earliest days.* After years of scattered enforcement
spread across myriad blighted areas and undertaken by a range of municipal agencies under
Vidor, the responsibility for inspections was eventually placed in a single department in
1962: the Bureau of Building Inspection.* At that time, the Baltimore Plan had returned to
the block-by-block approach, thereby repeating the mistakes that Cook had identified and
corrected more than a decade before.

**Towards non-conventional housing policies**

As ‘conventional housing policies’ and its derivative, public housing, were being increasingly
criticized for being slow, costly and the subject of debates related to the role of government
in the housing market, a ‘non-conventional housing paradigm’ slowly emerged as a valuable
alternative. With this, the government would support beneficiary occupants with technical,
financial and legal frames, which would enable people to build their own housing or hire
private builders to lend them support.* Such approach was largely theoretical then as few if
any attempts to experiment with this paradigm had been carefully documented and studied
in the United States, besides the Baltimore Plan. Facing urban conditions that called for fast
and drastic changes in federal housing policies, the Baltimore Plan influenced the deployment
of policy changes on the national stage, culminating in the amendment of Title 1 programs
under the Housing Act of 1954. This amendment introduced a section titled “Rehabilitation

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91 BURHA, “Rehabilitation Procedures in Urban Renewal Areas,” January 24, 1963, Special Collections, URF Series 1, Box 1,
Folder 33, University of Baltimore Langsdale Library.
92 The Sun, “Rats and The ‘Plan,’” The Sun, March 6, 1958, Baltimore Sun Archives.
93 Frank Somerville, “Renewal Unit Cites Lack of Inspectors,” The Sun, November 20, 1961, 42, Baltimore Sun Archives;
94 The contrast between ‘conventional housing policy’ and ‘non-conventional housing policy’ is borrowed from the teaching
of Jorge Fiori at the Development Planning Unit, UCL, and reflected in some of the literature on public housing low-income
economies, such as Patrick Wakely, “Urban Public Housing Strategies in Developing Countries: Whence and Whither
2014), 13.
and Neighborhood Conservation Housing Insurance," which introduced institutional devices that supported rehabilitation efforts similar to those developed through the Baltimore Plan.\textsuperscript{95}

While the concept promoted as the Baltimore Plan primarily advocated the positive value of the private sector in urban renewal efforts, and the potential of affected communities as a rich resource, the precedent created through this case also stimulated a new conceptualization of the nature of urban planning. As one commentator noted, "the point that is often so hard to get across visitors is that the Baltimore ‘plan’ on paper is only the enforcement of the simple nuisance law but in reality is a program of developing community self-interest in the eradication of slum conditions."\textsuperscript{96} The Baltimore Plan, a plan without a plan produced as a fluid device capable to adapt to unforeseeable drawbacks, came to represent an alternative to classical master planning as the lines that formed this experimental program in East Baltimore have been drawn with more pens than one.

**Harlem Park**

The Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Agency (BURHA) was quick to turn the page on the Baltimore Plan, but not on the lessons that the experiment had yielded. The city’s first laboratory for urban rehabilitation had been messy and complicated from the perspective of a the new Agency; multifaceted efforts undertaken by a range of stakeholders, closed-off communication lines, the lack of an overarching coordinating institution, and the absence of meaningful financial investments from the public sector incited BURHA to relegate the Baltimore Plan to its archives. The newly formed BURHA concentrated instead on a new project, one over which it could claim ownership and that would be designed to inform subsequent rehabilitation programs not only in Baltimore, but also throughout the nation.\textsuperscript{97}

While the Baltimore Plan remained a precious experiment in its own right, BURHA’s first urban renewal project was supported by an institutional set-up, new federal policies and financial tools that allowed the new agency to approach inner city rehabilitation on different and more ambitious terms. Up until the 1950s, federal programs supporting the elimination of urban blight facilitated a single approach: site clearance and redevelopment. As stated in a brochure developed by BURHA in the late 1950s, “the time had come for courage – the particular kind of courage necessary to recognize the limitations of programs into which years of effort and hope had been poured.”\textsuperscript{98} While slum clearance remained a preferred strategy for neighborhoods initially built for the working class, where dwellings had never been designed to withstand well over half a century of occupation, handsome areas originally

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\textsuperscript{95} Housing Act of 1954, Title 1 - Federal Housing Administration, 1954.

\textsuperscript{96} Jones, "Aid from the Real Estate Crowd," 12.

\textsuperscript{97} According to the Housing and Home Finance Administrator Robert C. Weaver, the Harlem area served as “pilot project, and what we learn will be applied everywhere in the nation.” See, Frank Somerville, “US Help Is Set in Harlem Area,” The Sun, November 2, 1961, 46, Baltimore Sun Archives. For other references of Harlem Park as a national experience, see The Sun, "Harlem Park Project Changed," The Sun, February 28, 1965, sec. D, 14, Baltimore Sun Archives.

\textsuperscript{98} BURHA, “It’s Happening in Baltimore,” 2.
built for a white middle class offered dwellings that could renovated and given second lives.

Harlem Park represented the perfect example for such neighborhoods in Baltimore. Most properties in the area showed signs of ageing and even the untrained eye would recognize that certain structures had sustained too much decay to be salvageable. But for most dwellings, underneath the peeling paint, unhinged fences, poor electric wiring and even poorer plumbing, stood many solid structures that could be rehabilitated for the fraction of the cost of building new houses. However, "blight, in the form of apathy and disillusionment and the disappearance of community pride, was attacking Harlem Park’s 14,000 residents as well as the roofs and the window frames of the porch steps," as a journalist at The Sun noted.99 Prior to 1954, leveling and rebuilding would have come as the easy answer to such area, but "planners realized that there were 20 ‘Harlem Parks’ in Baltimore, not rock-bottom slums, but depressed or ‘gray’ areas which sheltered one third of the city’s population."100

The Housing Act of 1954 legislated a housing policy that aligned with what became known as the support paradigm. This paradigm called for non-conventional housing policies where public resources would be allocated to enable people to organize their own housing; regulate and support local builders; and link housing to broader urban systems of employment and production.101 It introduced new sets of actors to the housing sector, including families, community groups, nongovernmental organizations, small contractors, voluntary organizations, and more. While New Dealers and Republicans had clashed repeatedly over urban policies throughout the 1930s and 40s, the Housing Act of 1954 transcended the acrimonious divide between liberals and conservatives by taking advantage of an important nuance; that conservatives did not object to low-cost housing per se, in as long as housing projects would not be delivered as finished products handed out by the government.102

Building on theories grounded in the support paradigm, the Housing Act of 1954 offered a policy framework “for the conservation and rehabilitation of housing and neighborhoods threatened with deterioration,”103 instead of resolving to the replacement of such dwellings by public housings. This satisfied the Democratic Party’s agenda to support the urban poor and create jobs in the construction sector, as well as the Republican Party’s belief that the private market was best suited to carry out the work. Commentators were careful to warn their audience that such legislations would introduce new challenges to the housing industry, and that builders, developers and speculators should not aim to achieve “excessive profit” if they were to succeed in creating a market accessible to the poor.104 The “failure to meet this challenge could open the door to alternatives unwelcomed to the industry and others,”105 namely the abolishment of the program and the expansion of conventional public housing programs.

100 Ibid.
101 Ibid., 28.
102 Ibid., 26-7.
104 Ibid., 172.
105 Ibid.
Figure 59. Age of housing in predominantly residential areas, 1964. Published in "Analysis of Community Needs" in 1965 by BURHA, available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S2 Box10.
Figure 60. Rating of structural conditions in Baltimore, 1964. Published in "Inventory of Residential Blight" in 1964 by BURHA, available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S2 Box10.
Figure 61. Rating of conditions of private outdoor areas in Baltimore, 1964. Published in "Inventory of Residential Blight" in 1964 by BURHA, available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S2 Box10.
Figure 62. Rating of conditions of block use in Baltimore, 1964. Published in "Inventory of Residential Blight" in 1964 by BURHA, available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S2 Box10.
Figure 63. Rating of conditions of community facilities in Baltimore, 1964. Published in “Inventory of Residential Blight” in 1964 by BURHA, available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S2 Box10.
CONCENTRATIONS OF BLIGHT CONDITIONS

By Community Renewal Statistical Area

- major concentrations
- moderate concentrations
- little or no concentrations

Figure 64. Concentrations of blight conditions in Baltimore, 1964. Published in "Inventory of Residential Blight" in 1964 by BURHA, available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S2 Box10.
Figure 65. Mapping of substandard properties in Harlem Park, 1955. Unpublished document available from the University of Baltimore, Langsdale Library, Special Collection, Baltimore Urban Renewal & Housing Authority, Series X Box6.
The block in the Harlem Park Area bounded by Calhoun and Carey Streets, Edmondson and Harlem Avenues, was selected as the proving ground for residential rehabilitation methods.

The small houses, sheds, and garages that lined the interior of the block have been razed, and the cleared land has been combined with portions of the long back yards to make an interior park. Most of the properties in the block have been brought up to the standards of the City’s health, safety, and building codes, which, with five additional requirements, serve as the base of rehabilitation. Thirteen houses, of which four are completed, are being remodeled beyond the legal requirements. An evaluation of this experiment is now in progress.
Figure 67. ‘5 Steps to a Good Neighborhood’ brochure, created for and distributed to the residents of Harlem Park, undated. Document available from the University of Baltimore, Langsdale Library, Special Collection, Baltimore Urban Renewal & Housing Authority, Series X Box6.
In order to restrict the autonomy of the private sector in matters of residential rehabilitation, the 1954 housing policy included provisions where the federal government would only offer financial support to projects developed in collaboration with community members. It required loans and grants applicants to design what became known as ‘workable programs.’ The Housing and Home Finance Agency published a circular to explain the steps necessary for a community to create a so-called workable program: the establishment of an adequate housing code; a comprehensive plan for community development; an analysis of the current condition in the community; the establishment of a sound administrative organization; the assessment of financial capacities; an adequate relocation strategy for displaced families, and; full-fledged citizen participation. The emphasis on community rehabilitation as well as active citizen participation constituted the most innovative features of the program. This framework made it clear that the Housing Act of 1954 would not support individuals living in communities that showed no interest in organizing for the purpose of rehabilitation; a stipulation that practically eliminated communities of renters from the program seeing that highly mobile tenants seldom invested time and money to improve houses that did not belong to them.

Encouraged by the new federal policy, BURHA wasted no time to devise a workable program for the nation’s first laboratory of a federally funded residential rehabilitation project. The agency selected a site in West Baltimore’s inner city and delineated a project area of a little over 152 acres known to its residents as the Harlem Park neighborhood, which roughly corresponded to Baltimore’s first black ghetto. The neighborhood’s name derived from the large green space that anchored it, Harlem Square Park, and included another major park in its northeast corner in Lafayette Square. The project area included over 2,380 structures for a total of 4,564 dwelling units spread across 32 blocks. Despite the many similarities with Cook’s Baltimore Plan dating from a decade before, the numerous variances included in the new scheme carried with them uncertainties that rationalized BURHA’s decision to start off by testing its approach on a single block became known as the Demonstration Block.

**Historic context of the site**

Built as a white middle class area between 1870 and 1900, the Harlem Park neighborhood drew a rapidly increasing number of African American families after World War I. While Harlem Park’s early settlers started selling their properties to black families, the area “remained chiefly a community of one-family houses,” with most dwellings occupied by their owners until World War II. The popularization of suburban life that coincided with the rapid transformation of West Baltimore as the center of black life in all of Maryland further encouraged the ongoing demographic changes in Harlem Park. With the war breaking in 1939 and the massive migration of Southerners seeking jobs in war production factories in the years that followed, the demand for housing in Baltimore’s black enclaves cumulated in the

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Figure 68. Workers Changing Shift, Bethlehem-Fairfield Shipyard, Sparrow Point, Baltimore, 1943. Photograph by Arthur S. Siegel, available from the US Library of Congress, call number LC-USW3-023648-D [P&P].
conversion of many houses into tenements or rooming houses.

This demographic change was counterbalanced by the withdrawal of would-be soldiers from the city. But even so, the population of Baltimore soared by 75,000 in only one year as war efforts peaked to reach 931,000 inhabitants by March 1943.\textsuperscript{109} With the introduction of cyclical work shifts (and corresponding living arrangements), the city occupied a world stage in many industries. Blue-collar work opportunities arrived to Baltimore in great number, relieving the city from high rates of unemployment. For instance, the 122 plants essential to war efforts employed 164,200 workers in April 1942 and 229,400 workers by December 1943.\textsuperscript{110}

In the neighborhood of Sandtown-Winchester located directly north of Harlem Park, the population rose from 20,000 before WW I to 35,000 during WW II without any significant increase in the building stock.\textsuperscript{111} The migration patterns south of Harlem Park were no different. A middle class neighborhood between the two World Wars, the area eventually gave in to the unyielding demand of war worker housings and many of the area’s first black families relocated to further removed grounds; often older suburbs that had become too close to West Baltimore’s original ghetto for the comfort of most white residents.

**Establishing the Neighborhood Council**

The Housing Act of 1954 turned a conviction shared by advocates of the grassroots movement into a federal housing program requirement; that efforts aiming at the rehabilitation of working class neighborhoods should necessitate the active support and participation of organized citizens.\textsuperscript{112} Defenders of the grassroots movement agreed that community participation was necessary early on in the elaboration of planning programs, and that participation should be continued throughout the execution of the project. Some also maintained that participation by local stakeholders needed to be sustained after the realization of the project (in its physical form) for rehabilitation projects to be successful.\textsuperscript{113} This approach also recognized that citizens occupied a better position than any other party to identify problems and priorities. This belief was mirrored in the writing of Joseph Logan who maintained, “You can’t be intelligent for people. If you persuade people to accept your intelligence they develop none of their own, and with the loss of their intelligence departs the willingness even to be intelligently served.”\textsuperscript{114}

While the call to inscribe citizens in planning programs appeared to be a mark of progress in 1954, the mechanics of grassroots program remained poorly understood by public officials.

\textsuperscript{109} Data from the US Bureau of Census.
\textsuperscript{110} Commission on City Plan, Redevelopment of Blighted Residential Areas in Baltimore, 9.
\textsuperscript{111} Ryon, West Baltimore Neighborhoods, 124.
Eager to achieve the requirements set out by the latest Housing Act, the mayor of Baltimore appointed two residents of Harlem Park to form the area’s first Neighborhood Council in 1955. Together, the duo was meant to represent the interests of all residents in Harlem Park. Inexperienced in the field of social work or grassroots development, the pair achieved little between the time that the Neighborhood Council was formed and 1957, when BURHA inaugurated its Community Organization Division. The new division immediately designated a Community Organization Advisor to the Harlem Park area. Her task consisted primarily of supporting the Neighborhood Council to become organized and self-sufficient.

The purpose of the Neighborhood Advisor became more complex with time as the Harlem Park Neighborhood Council would later become an “organization of organizations” that oversaw various neighborhood committees, as well as smaller clubs and organizations such as church groups and block organizations. The advisor played a role in setting-up each of these clubs, groups and organizations; in voicing recommendations pertaining to their internal structures, as well as suggesting hierarchies between each group. Ultimately, Neighborhood Advisors attempted to work towards their incremental redundancy as they aimed for local communities to become fully autonomous.

_Harlem Park Renewal Area (Project I), MD R-3_

The rehabilitation of the Harlem Park neighborhood started off with the program’s single largest project that consisted in the establishment of two schools. As the project took place in a setting with limited open spaces and high building densities, public officials had no choice but to suggest a site for the new schools where residences, small shops and light factories were still operating in 1957. The decision to kick off the nation’s residential rehabilitation efforts with a project that essentially followed the modus operandi of previous redevelopment approaches – clear and rebuild – was welcomed with much resistance as local stakeholders recognized an all to familiar strategy being called by an another name.

The decision to erect an elementary and junior high school in Harlem Park steamed from findings presented in a 1957 study, where BURHA evaluated the existing conditions of the neighborhood; a study required for all workable programs as per federal guidelines. Recognizing the urgent need for more public schools in the neighborhood, the Agency

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118 The committees included: The Home and Neighborhood Conservation Committee (zoning, sanitation, law enforcement, education and financing matters), The Health and Welfare Committee (physical and mental health matters), The Public Relation Committee (liaison between BURHA and residents), The Member Committee (overseeing block organizations and small clubs), and, The Executive Committee (overseeing all matters not delegated to other existing committees.) See, Joseph Smith, “A Study of the Relationship of Block Leadership to Citizen Participation in Harlem Park” (Master Thesis, Atlanta University, 1961), 26–7.
120 BURHA, “Harlem Park, Its People and Their Homes” (Baltimore: BURHA, 1957), Special Collection, BURHA Series 10, Box 6, University of Baltimore Langsdale Library.
selected a site that called for the complete clearance of four city blocks as well as the rezoning of half of Harlem Square Park. The Neighborhood Council supported the site that planners had selected for the school from the very beginning, despite some 300 families objecting to have their houses demolished. If practically no one would contest the invaluable investment that such institutions would constitute for Harlem Park’s black working class community, few and far between were those willing to sacrifice their homes for the greater good. BURHA responded to these protestations by proposing different versions for its plan. Ultimately, two components proved especially influential for the selection of the final site: community acceptance and the law.

The inclusion of half of Harlem Square Park in the school site presented an important problem to BURHA as the late Dr. Thomas Edmondson had deeded this land to the city upon the condition that it remained a public square forever. "Relying on this condition of the Edmondson gift and the acceptance by the mayor and City Council of Baltimore in 1868, the Harlem Park Home Owner Association and 96 residents of the area filed suit in Circuit Court" to block the project. The city had in fact attempted to locate a school at this very location once before, before the City Solicitor nullified the plan as its program would be in violation of the Edmondson gift’s conditions. Unless the court would revoke the conditions agreed upon in 1868, heirs of the late Edmondson could have rightfully sued to have the entire square reverted to them; an eventuality that had carried enough weight to mark the end of the earlier school project.

Resistance against the selected site was further exacerbated as the plans called for the demolition of properties facing the square on a two-block stretch. "Vigorous protests were raised by the property owners affected, who contended that the school authorities wanted to take some of the most valuable property of the community." The allegations were not unfounded, as houses lining public squares had historically been built to higher standards than those of side streets. Mrs. Lily Jackson, president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) insisted on the importance to seek alternative site options as she believed that it would be a "colossal waste to tear down good homes along the square when in the same neighborhood there [were] slums which should be cleared."

121 The Sun, “School Site Plea Sent to Council,” The Sun, January 20, 1958, 21, Baltimore Sun Archives.
123 Afro-American, “Ask Court Halt Sale of Harlem Pk Area,” 5.
124 Ibid.
125 Smith, “Harlem Park School-Site Plan Blocked,” 32.
126 Lily Jackson, cited in Smith, “Harlem Park School-Site Plan Blocked.” According to the Ordinance No. 1416 approved by the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore in May 1958, whereby the plan for the two schools were effectively approved, 164 of the area’s 194 structures were in need of major repairs. The assessment had been carried out by the Harlem Park Planning Office. The area also included two light manufacturing plants and two auto repair shops, which conflicted with the image that BURHA associated with successful residential rehabilitation as light industries and residences were not to mix. (See, BURHA, “Urban Renewal Plan: Harlem Park Renewal Area (Project I): MD, R-3,” 6.) While the findings this field survey nuance the image presented through Mrs. Jackson’s views, it is unlikely that any of the houses facing Harlem Square Park were any worst than other houses as park-front dwellings have historically been constructed to significantly higher standards and inhabited by the wealthiest of a neighborhood’s families. (See chapter 1)
Not every member of the organization Jackson represented shared her views, however, as the positions of NAACP members were varied; a condition that brought confusion among public officials intending to do right by the black community. Councillmen Leon Rubenstein, William Schaefer\textsuperscript{127} and Michael Hankin, all members of the delegation “which voiced disapproval of the Harlem Park site,” quoted Jackson’s position as a major reason for standing against the BURHA plan.\textsuperscript{128} When the three Councillmen were informed that Jackson’s “stand did not represent the views of the association’s membership” during a community meeting in Harlem Park, they noted how they remained open-minded and sought to uncover the position of other NAACP members before returning on their earlier position. As it quickly became apparent that members viewed the issue differently, Schaefer emphasized the importance to reach a consensus locally. Schaefer explained to stakeholders that he did not believe in a plan “just because the Urban Renewal group and the School Board pushes it in our face.”\textsuperscript{129} The Councillman also disapproved of the idea to have an elementary school and a junior high school side-by-side, which according to him was a bad idea, but above all, a violation of city regulations. Before all else, Schaefer wanted his vote to represent his constituency: “If you can make the majority of the people down there in the Harlem Park area say that they want their homes taken then that will be the voice of the people and I will change my vote,” he told The Sun paper in February of 1958.\textsuperscript{130}

\textsuperscript{127} William Donald Schaefer later became Mayor of Baltimore, from 1971 to 1987 before becoming the 58th Governor of Maryland immediately after; a position he held until 1995. He is still active with the Democratic Party at the time of writing.

\textsuperscript{128} The Sun, “N.A.A.C.P. Said to Favor Harlem Park School Site,” The Sun, February 7, 1958, 26, Baltimore Sun Archives.

\textsuperscript{129} William Schaefer, cited in: The Sun, “N.A.A.C.P. Said to Favor Harlem Park School Site.”

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
BURHA amended its original plan to address some of the criticism and legal restrictions, but the final site was nevertheless seen as a victory for the Agency. One block further removed from the square was spared, leaving one third of the residences facing Harlem Square Park to be cleared. The final plan included half of the square as originally intended, but the program had been changed so that the land would become a playground for the school, thereby steering clear from potential legal claims by the Edmondson estate. Ultimately, the ordinance was approved by a voice vote in the spring of 1958, with Schaefer asking to be recorded as passing. The plan included the provision of an elementary school with capacity for approximately 1,000 pupils, and a junior high school able to receive another 2,000 students.

**The Demonstration Block**

BURHA’s plans for the residential rehabilitation of Harlem Park became “reputed to be the farthest advanced of its kind in the entire country” in that same year of 1958. By the month of July, the Urban Renewal Administration (URA) in Washington, D.C. officially allocated a grant of $1,639,349 to the Baltimore Agency to support its ongoing experimental program. After finalizing the plans for the two schools and entering the construction phase later that same year, BURHA began working on the Demonstration Block in May of 1959. A typical subsample of the Harlem Park neighborhood in terms of its architectural form, demographic composition and general social and physical condition, the Demonstration Block served as a testing ground and a showcase for what awaited twenty-nine other city blocks in the neighborhood.

The Demonstration Block was chiefly populated with buildings being used to residential ends. The block was bounded by Harlem and Edmondson Avenue to the north and south respectively, and Carey Street to the east. Calhoun Street separated the designated block from Harlem Square Park on the western edge of the site. Half of the block’s fourteen commercial properties were located on Edmondson Avenue, where zoning laws allowed for such activity, with the remaining seven commercial or mix properties scattered between residential properties. Despite their operating within areas zoned as residential, these non-conforming properties were nevertheless tolerated since each business had been established before the 1931 zoning law.

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131 Odell Smith, “Renewal Fight Won by Council: Harlem Park Plan Tentatively O.K.’d Over Protests,” The Sun, April 29, 1958, 32, Baltimore Sun Archives. The voice vote was for Ordinance No. 1416, which presented the final plans for the Harlem Park Urban Renewal Area (Project I), MD, R-3.


133 The Sun, “US Approves $1,638,349 for Chief Harlem Park Plan,” The Sun, July 2, 1958, 43, Baltimore Sun Archives.


135 According to a site survey dating from early 1957, the Demonstration Block counted 72 structures, of these 58 were residential and were either 14 commercial or mixed (commercial and residential).

136 BURHA, "A Demonstration of Rehabilitation," 5.
Figure 70. Harlem Park Urban Renewal Area, 1955. Document available from the University of Baltimore, Langsdale Library, Special Collection, Baltimore Urban Renewal & Housing Authority, Series X Box6.
Figure 71. Existing land use on the Demonstration Block of Harlem Park prior to rehabilitation. Map published in "A Demonstration of Rehabilitation: Harlem Park, Baltimore," page 7.
Figure 72. Typical row house on a perimeter street before rehabilitation in Harlem Park, Demonstration Block, c.1957. Photograph published in “A Demonstration of Rehabilitation: Harlem Park, Baltimore,” page 6.

Figure 73. Mixed residential and commercial use on Edmondson street, before rehabilitation in Harlem Park, c.1957. Photograph published in “A Demonstration of Rehabilitation: Harlem Park, Baltimore,” page 6.

Figure 74. Mixed residential and commercial use, exact location unknown, Harlem Park. Photograph available at the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S2 Box10.
Figure 75. Alley house in the Demonstration Block of Harlem Park, before rehabilitation, c.1957. Photograph published in "A Demonstration of Rehabilitation: Harlem Park, Baltimore," page 6.

Figure 76. Distribution of household sizes in Harlem Park, 1956-7. Histogram published in "Harlem Park, It's People and their Homes," page 3.
Just like every other block in the Harlem Park neighborhood, an alleyway crossed through the center of the Demonstration Block where smaller and sometimes feeble structures existed as garages and very low-cost dwellings.\textsuperscript{137} Houses located on the main street were definitely sturdier, and around one quarter of the fifty-eight residential properties were still owner-occupied, including four houses inhabited by single families in 1957.\textsuperscript{138} Most properties had by then been divided many times over as these structures included as many as 185 occupied dwelling units, six occupied rooming units, and another thirty-seven vacant dwellings where 481 individuals lived.\textsuperscript{139} In one exceptional case, a single structure included as many as ten units, but the most frequent pattern was the three-unit house, with one apartment on each of the three floors.\textsuperscript{140} “In the four acres which constitute the area of the block, the density rate was 55.5 dwelling units, or 120 persons per acre,” a high rate by modern standards, yet significantly lower than an average slum.\textsuperscript{141} Despite the abuse that most buildings on the block had been subjected to throughout the years, the majority of houses were reported as being structurally sound, while makeshift subdivisions dramatically affected elements like electric wiring, plumbing, lighting, ventilation and fireproofing.

The 1957 survey revealed that owner-occupants tended to be wealthier than renters, with tenants residing in alley houses averaging the lowest income. The differences between these three groups were significant as owners averaged yearly incomes of $4,250\textsuperscript{142} and tenant families, around $3,000. Tenants residing in alley houses averaged significantly lower yearly incomes estimated at only $1,200.\textsuperscript{143}

A separate survey of the entire Harlem Park neighborhood revealed that household sizes varied between one and eighteen inhabitants per dwelling units, with a little over 50 percent being occupied by two to three persons.\textsuperscript{144} The same study noted that around 89 percent of structures served as residences, with another 7 percent of buildings being used commercially on the ground floors and for residential ends on the upper levels. The study further noted that the population of the site was “almost 100% Negro,” and provided income data that closely corresponded to those observed on the Demonstration Block.\textsuperscript{145} Based on a comparison made between these two surveys from 1957, the demographic composition of the demonstration area appeared representative of Harlem Park as a whole, with the exception of vacancy rates which

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\item \textsuperscript{138} By the time that the rehabilitation processes for these houses started in 1959, only 56 properties remained, 14 of which were owner-occupied.

\item \textsuperscript{139} The term “rooming unit” was used where houses were not divided into separate units per say, but where rooms of a single house were rented to different families. The “rooming unit” is thus distinguished from the “dwelling unit” in that it lacks a private kitchen and bath.

\item \textsuperscript{140} BURHA, “\textit{A Demonstration of Rehabilitation},” 34.

\item \textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 5. The recorded density of Harlem Park in 1957 corresponded more or less to the current density of Delhi and Chennai.

\item \textsuperscript{142} This amounts to $35,805 in 2014 dollar after adjusting for inflation.

\item \textsuperscript{143} BURHA, “\textit{A Demonstration of Rehabilitation},” 7. This amounts to $10,110 in 2014 dollar after adjusting for inflation.

\item \textsuperscript{144} BURHA, “Harlem Park, Its People and Their Homes,” 3.

\item \textsuperscript{145} BURHA, “Harlem Park, Its People and Their Homes.”
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were significantly higher on the Demonstration Block compared to the full neighborhood.

**Elements of the Demonstration Block Program**

BURHA’s plan for the rehabilitation of Harlem Park, starting with the Demonstration Block, was formulated around a fourfold strategy. Firstly, the plan proposed to eliminate all alleyways (also referred to as ‘interior streets’ in the literature) and replace them by ‘inner-block parks’ in twenty-nine of the neighborhood’s thirty-two blocks. Secondly, the Agency intended to rigorously canvas the area for housing codes violations so as to replicate a strategy that had been central to the Baltimore Plan. The third strategy consisted in developing various counseling services covering matters including finances, designs, renovations and community organization. Lastly, the plan allowed BURHA to acquire a set of properties to be auctioned off, where developers would be given a chance to rehabilitate old homes as low-cost private market rental apartments.

Figure 77. Location of inner-block parks and land disposition areas in the Harlem Park Area. Unpublished map, available from the University of Baltimore, Langsdale Library, Special Collection, Baltimore Urban Renewal & Housing Authority, Series X Box6.

With Harlem Square Park occupying two blocks and Lafayette Square another block, this strategy thereby proposed a park in every block of the rehabilitation area.
A. Inner-Block Parks

As the name suggests, ‘inner-block parks’ consisted of small open spaces located at the center of city blocks, where alleyways had traditionally been located. The replacement of alleyways by parks constituted a major element in BURHA’s rehabilitation plan. The clearance of these interior streets led to the demolition of sheds, improvised garages and tenement housings; structures that projected an image diametrically opposed to that of progress and modernity. These buildings were generally the most deteriorated ones to still stand in the area. Garages and tool sheds were in worst-off conditions, while scattered interior street tenements tended to appear somewhat sturdier, albeit clearly below modern standards. The Agency concluded that the clearance of alleyways would help satisfy its objectives: to eliminate properties with little to no potential for rehabilitation; to reduce the population density; and provide additional green spaces. And as importantly, the inner-block parks provided a clear symbol for the new approach that BURHA was set to pioneer.

The interior street of the Demonstration Blocks included ten small structures, half of which were being used to residential ends. Following the mayor’s approval of the plan for the Demonstration Block, City Council swiftly passed an ordinance whereby BURHA gained the authority to begin implementing the work, which included provisions for the acquisition of properties and land. With the benefice of this new authority, the Agency proceeded to acquire each of the ten alleyway buildings; they relocated tenants to nearby vacant units and offered financial compensations to affected property owners.

BURHA’s plan called for the procurement of more land than just the area covered by interior street properties seeing that this land alone would have been too narrow for the type of park that the Agency envisioned. Planners thus decided to redraw property lines so as to reduce the backyard space of houses scheduled for rehabilitation on the four main streets framing the block, thereby enlarging the width of the park. “Ultimately, [BURHA] decided that the park space would utilize about one-half of the rear yards of the houses on the periphery of the block.”

The acquisition of private land for the purpose of an inner-block park proved to be a problematic issue that carried with it significant practical, legal and financial problems. BURHA’s plan for the construction of inner-block parks in the Demonstration Block involved land acquisition on a total of thirty-one parcels. The Agency proceeded by searching for property titles when it discovered that around one-third of the plots were still subject to ground rents. “The next steps were appraisal of the lots to be acquired, authorization of negotiating prices and then negotiation with the owners for the purchase of their properties – procedures which necessarily consumed many months.” Some complications were caused by a number of factors, such as the difficulty to locate owners of ground rents, troubles establishing fair purchasing prices, negotiations with property owners over the amount by

147 BURHA, “A Demonstration of Rehabilitation,” 11.
148 Ibid., 21.
149 Ibid., 22.
which their payments of ground rent should be reduced as a result of the reduction of their plot, and as to who would compensate landowners for the lost incurred. Furthermore, “old ground rents [were] often owned jointly by several persons who in some cases live[d] far from Baltimore,” which further exacerbated negotiation processes.\(^\text{150}\) The reduction of property sizes introduced another problem where the existing floor area ratio\(^\text{151}\) of certain buildings would no longer fall within the limits prescribed under the zoning law. The sum of these problems was solved through tedious negotiations often including a minimum of three parties. These solutions required the legislation of special provisions pertaining to land use in Harlem Park, and the introduction of new urban renewal measures within the BURHA plan itself concerning the acquisition of deeded properties.

Crossing alleyways off the map also introduced other practical issues as some buildings had been designed to make use of interior streets for household utilities. Three of the block’s houses had water connections in the rear of the house, which would no longer be accessible with the clearing of Woodyard Street, the name given to the soon-to-be demolished alleyway of the Demonstration Block. In another case, an owner noted that the storage tank for his heating fuel was at the back of the house, and that carrying out the fuel through the front would be impossible.\(^\text{152}\) Since the tank could not be moved, the Agency entered in agreement with the fuel company, who accepted to deliver the oil in a small size truck through the inner-block park for an extra cost that BURHA would cover on behalf of the owner. Plug-in solutions such as these were conceived one-by-one as similar problems arose, and ultimately, BURHA was successful in navigating through the maze of obstacles that stood before the eventual construction of the neighborhood’s first of twenty-nine inner-block parks.

The Harlem Park Neighborhood Council established the 314 Block Association,\(^\text{153}\) which ensured a liaison between residents of the Demonstration Block and the Harlem Park Neighborhood Council. Almost immediately after being inaugurated, the 314 Block Association formed its first operative group: the Inner-Park Committee, which would oversee all matters pertaining to the construction and maintenance of its inner-block park.

Upon the recommendation of the Community Organization Advisor, the Inner-Park Committee gathered all citizens for a public discussion pertaining to the design of the park.\(^\text{154}\) The Advisor invited a representative from the Department of Recreation and Parks along with other public officials to answer questions and present broad ideas pertaining to possible programs and designs for small parks. The Department of Recreation and Parks told residents that it would be incapable to maintain interior-block parks on a long-term basis, and thus emphasized the importance to consider park designs that the residents themselves

\(^{150}\) Ibid., 25.

\(^{151}\) The term ‘floor area ratio’ (FAR) refers to the ratio of a building’s total floor area in relation to the area of the property (the land) on which it is built.

\(^{152}\) BURHA, “A Demonstration of Rehabilitation,” 27.

\(^{153}\) The Association took its name from Section 314 of the Housing Act, which provided grants for experimental urban projects.

\(^{154}\) BURHA, “A Demonstration of Rehabilitation,” 25.
Figure 78. Redrawing property lines for the establishment of the inner-block park, Demonstration Block, Harlem Park. Map published in "A Demonstration of Rehabilitation: Harlem Park, Baltimore," page 11.
Figure 80. Demonstration Block park, site before the construction. Photograph available at the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S2 Box10.

Figure 81. Demonstration Block park, after the construction. Photograph available at the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S2 Box10.
would be able to maintain. Although it appeared unlikely that residents could, with little to no external help, maintain a park, BURHA ultimately settled for this unusual strategy seeing that it had no other option. The Agency proposed to provide support to block associations at first, before passing on full responsibilities to residents. The official planning guidelines for the Harlem Park Rehabilitation project detailed its unique maintenance strategy:

D.4.b. (4) It will be the duty of the proper Agency personnel to encourage resident and non-resident owners to develop a consciousness of the importance of taking on the responsibility for maintenance and the supervision. Thus the assumption of that responsibility will be a gradual one, related to the readiness of a group to assume it. In the case of those blocks where this objective is not achieved, the Agency will reconsider the design and development of these inner block open spaces.

While acknowledging the potentiality to have to revert to a contingency plan, the final planning document approved by Ordinance No. 419 in July of 1960 did not provide a sense of what this alternative maintenance strategy might look like. With the matter of proprietorship and maintenance settled for the time being, the Community Organization Advisor proposed that the Inner-Park Committee begin identifying elements to include in the design brief for the park. After initial public meetings and informative exchanges with municipal experts, the Inner-Park Committee took a poll amongst residents of the block with the results pointing at fifteen items of particularly interest. These included: park benches, grass, flowers and shrubbery, trees, playground equipment, drinking fountains and a basketball court, amongst other things. The Inner-Park Committee conveyed behind closed doors and proceeded to reduce the list by eliminating items deemed inadequate. Citing maintenance costs, it struck flowers and shrubbery off the list and eliminated other items for being redundant or for menacing peace and quiet.

Having established a final list of items they wished to include, the Inner-Park Committee arranged to meet with an architect that the Agency had selected to turn their brief into a design. The architect returned with a plan some weeks later, which was immediately reviewed by the technical staff at BURHA. Like the Inner-Park Committee had initially done some time before, the technical staff suggested to eliminate other items based on technical and practical considerations. They identified elements that would be included in the forthcoming school playground located on the adjacent Harlem Square Park and suggested the elimination of

155 The lack of alternative options was caused by factors that included the Police Department inability to extend its services to a privately leased space, and the Department of Recreation and Parks’ refusal to assume the task of maintaining twenty-nine new parks because of budget limitations. The idea that the residents themselves would maintain the park was first suggested by the Block Associations once they were told that the city would not assume the responsibility. BURHA capitalized on the resident’s offer and shifted its position, arguing that this development represented a sign of support for the project that would encourage locals to take ownership over inner-block parks. See, BURHA, “A Demonstration of Rehabilitation,” 29.


157 The group eliminated items such as water fountains seeing that users’ homes were so near. The basketball court was also voted off, as it likely to attract an older crowd that the Committee wished to avoid, while also being a notable source of noise likely to annoy the peace that many senior residents found in silence.
other items based on budgetary constraints. “Picnic tables and playground equipment, originally given consideration, were items which the Agency felt could run the initial cost unnecessarily high,” a BURHA report noted.98 The final decision was left in the hand of the Inner-Park Committee, who ultimately decided to eliminate all items that the technical staff had identified as problematic. With new instructions at hand, the architect returned to the drawing board to draft a final plan that included a paved walkway that lined the outer limits of the park, a chain link fence forty-two inches high surrounding the park’s space, a “black-topped area for hopscotch or roller skating,” chains blocking vehicular entrance at each ends of the park, a pavilion for adult games such as checkers, park benches, “a certain amount of grass area,” and lastly, a play space for tots.99 In sum, park benches, grass, a sheltered area for adult games and the play space for tots were the only items that figured in both the initial list drafted by tenants and the final plan. The Board of Estimates opened the bids for the construction of the park on June 22nd of 1958, accepting the lowest of three offers for $41,930. The ground was broken in September of that same year, and the project completed by December.100

B. Housing Code Enforcement

The enforcement of housing code regulations constituted the second pillar of the Agency’s plan for Harlem Park, and the foremost element for the rehabilitation or privately owned dwellings. Each structure located on the Demonstration Block was directly affected by the housing code as no property fully satisfied the existing code and ordinance requirements in 1958. The potential effect of rehabilitation through code enforcement was further intensified as BURHA required property owners in Harlem Park to meet five additional standards to the ones established for the rest of the city. The Agency built on the methods of the Baltimore Plan to carry out this aspect of its rehabilitation program, this time benefitting from the availability of a well-structured agency and incentivizing federal loan programs for repairs.

BURHA’s five additional requirements to the existing housing code standards were primarily amendments on current guidelines. For example, whereas the Hygiene of Housing Ordinance noted that residential dwellings needed to “supply heating equipment” for each habitable unit, one of the five regulations written specifically for Harlem Park asked that this equipment be strong enough to “maintain a 70-degree temperature in all major rooms from October 1 to May 1 unless the outside temperature is over 60 degrees.”101 The second provision required that each room have a minimum of two electrical outlets so as to eliminate tangled extension cords and the fire hazards that they represented. The third standard addressed the condition of windows in basement apartments so as to augment sunlight and ventilation, and discourage landlords from replacing broken windows by wood paneling.102 It also restricted landlords from renting dingy basements that had been built for storage and utility rather than human

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98 Ibid., 26.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid., 29.
101 Ibid., 13. A temperature of 70 degree Fahrenheit equals 21.1 degree Celsius.
102 Ibid., 14.
habitation. The fourth and rather broad standard pertained to the quality of renovation work and requested that repairs reflect "good workmanship." This provision would allow housing inspectors to deem certain repairs as unsatisfactory when it was evident that items would unavoidably fall below standards again within an unreasonably short timeframe. The last element addressed the question of maintenance, especially with regards to keeping surfaces properly painted, whereas the housing code had only required for flaking paint to be peeled off. The Agency noted, "the existing code does not require maintenance of painted surfaces because the present powers of the Health Department do not specifically include legal authorization for it." While unpainted surfaces did not represent a health issue per se, such practices affected the health of buildings by reducing the lifespan of untreated surfaces, as well as the life of houses as marketable commodities.

The first step taken in the rehabilitation process of residential properties was to inspect the block's fifty-six buildings thoroughly. In order to smoothen the process of inspection that was initiated in the fall of 1959, the Community Organization Advisor proceeded to visit each tenant and resident-owner in order to explain the purpose of the inspection. An interdepartmental team that included a member from BURHA's Inspection and Code Enforcement Section, a representative from the Bureau of Building Inspection, as well as the Housing Renewal Estimator carried out the inspections together. Following the completion of an inspection report, the team invited each owner to meet at the Demonstration Office where they would be handed a violation notice. As over 1,700 violations were recorded between the Demonstration Block's fifty-six properties, notices were generally long despite their format, which called for abridged explanations, making notices rather unclear even to the initiated property owner. These face-to-face meetings aimed to eliminate misunderstandings and share information about carrying out and financing repairs. "For example, 'Repair Plumbing' had little meaning until it was verbally interpreted as 'Fix broken drain pipe in kitchen sink'.” Like the Baltimore Plan, non-complying owners would be summoned to appear before the Housing Court.

Together with counseling services, the introduction of new financial services available to residents of Harlem Park reduced the likelihood of a case to be dealt with through the punitive arm of the law. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) Section 220 mortgage insurance program offered residents of certified urban renewal areas the possibility to apply for low-interest, long-term loans with terms extending to thirty years. These loans offered to cover 90 percent of the projected value of a property after its rehabilitation and that of surrounding properties. The program marked the start of collaboration between the FHA and the Federal Renewal Agency; both being part of the US Housing Administration. “This [was] a cooperative effort to give owners of used homes the same kind of one-stop service

163 Ibid.
164 While this team faced some difficulties in gaining access to many properties in the beginning of the project, the Community Organization Advisor quickly ratified the situation by scheduling precise appointments for inspections on behalf of the Agency with each household. The inspection team adapted to the schedule of locals who customarily worked long hours and proceeded with late evening appointments. See, Ibid., 32.
165 Ibid., 34.
166 Ibid., 54.
under this rehabilitation program that new-home owners have been receiving from lending institutions in applying for FHA mortgages insurance everywhere in the nation.”\(^{168}\) The new measure essentially stopped the redlining of urban renewal areas within the inner city, while continuing to refuse financing to households located outside designated renewal areas.

The Harlem Park Demonstration Block was the first area certified as being eligible for these loans nationwide in the fall of 1959. As the Housing and Home Finance Administrator noted, “It will be a pilot project, and what we learn here will be applied everywhere in the nation.”\(^{169}\) The FHA Section 220 mortgage insurance introduced new sets of questions that sponsoring lending institutions (i.e. local banks) and BURHA did not have immediate answers to, however. This included questions pertaining to the relaxation that should be made in assessing a borrower’s eligibility for mortgage credit compared to non-FHA backed borrowers, the minimum standards that an old building should be raised to so as to assure that its potential lifespan would at least match the term of the mortgage, methods to determine the future value of a building after replacement costs, and what “drawings and other exhibits should be required to accompany a rehabilitation application.”\(^{170}\)

Determined to make FHA financing a workable tool, BURHA together with the FHA aimed to clarify federal regulations, but the processes proved slow and difficult. BURHA Director Richard Steiner explained the problems his agency was facing in a letter addressed to Neil Hardy, Commissioner of the FHA in 1962. Besides burdening institutional procedures, Steiner pointed that early experiments in Baltimore showed that the cost of meeting FHA requirements was approximately double than that of complying with the Harlem Plan standards, which were already higher than Baltimore’s housing standards.\(^{171}\) Hardy replied within days: “As you know, I am determined to spare no reasonable effort in making a successful demonstration in the application of Section 220 to rehabilitation financing.” The Commissioner continued, “Accordingly, I am willing on an experimental basis to select a few properties in Harlem Park and see if FHA requirements can be satisfied by acceptance of your mandatory standards.”\(^{172}\) Hardy suggested that BURHA pre-select suitable properties in Harlem Park, where the FHA Commissioner would deploy a task force for their inspection and “develop specifications with [BURHA] staff and [the FHA] Baltimore Office based upon [BURHA’s] urban renewal plan standards.”\(^{173}\)

As the Agency recognized, “It was not easy to find solutions, and, of the first 15 applications submitted for conditional commitments, only two were resubmitted for firm commitments and finally resulted in insured mortgages by August, 1962.”\(^{174}\) Each of the two loan provided financing for the rehabilitation of three properties that included nineteen dwelling units.

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\(^{168}\) Robert C. Weaver, quoted in: The Sun, “Harlem Park Fuss,” The Sun, April 22, 1961, 12, Baltimore Sun Archives.

\(^{169}\) Robert C. Weaver, quoted in: Somerville, “US Help Is Set in Harlem Area.”

\(^{170}\) BURHA, “A Demonstration of Rehabilitation,” 56.

\(^{171}\) Frank Somerville, “FHA Promises to Ease Harlem Park Financing,” The Sun, June 2, 1962, 48, Baltimore Sun Archives.

\(^{172}\) Neil J. Hardy, “Letter of Neil Hard to Richard Steiner,” June 1, 1962, Special Collection, BURHA Series 10, Box 6, University of Baltimore Langsdale Library.

\(^{173}\) Ibid.

\(^{174}\) BURHA, “A Demonstration of Rehabilitation,” 56.
in total. The two and a half years that had passed between inspection and the approval of these two loans presented a wide window for residents to become skeptical and disinterested with BURHA, however. By and large, the negative experience of those whose application had been turned down overshadowed the positive outcomes for the two successful parties. The procedures were thick, slow and complex; never designed for the average landlord, and even less for the typical owner-occupant of a black working-class neighborhood in the Baltimore ghetto. Writing on the process of FHA loan applications, *The Sun* noted, “The routine remains cumbersome, with a 2-inch pile of documents required for a relatively simple home-repair loan.”\(^{175}\) Findings by BURHA were no different:

> The closing procedures for a commitment issued on July 25, 1961, for rehabilitation mortgage insurance of $65,000 required six and one-half hours and 33 documents which took 30 days to assemble. As far as can be ascertained, this procedure and these documents were the same that would be required for a multi-million dollar project or for one as small as $5,000.\(^{176}\)

Despite the insurance provided by the federal government, many banks continued to discriminate against Harlem Park property owners “because the area was not the type in which [banks] desired to invest its mortgage funds.”\(^{177}\) Repairs for the remaining properties of the Harlem Square Demonstration Blocks\(^ {178}\) were ultimately funded through other avenues than Section 220 loans.


\(^{176}\) BURHA, “A Demonstration of Rehabilitation,” 57.

\(^{177}\) Ibid., 59.

\(^{178}\) This excludes the 10 properties that were acquired by the city to resell to developers, which will be discussed later in this chapter.
Figure 83. Rowhouse after rehabilitation at 1616 Harlem Avenue (block 98), front façade. Photograph available at the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S2 Box10.
Figure 84. Rowhouse before rehabilitation at 1616 Harlem Avenue (block 98), back facade. Photograph available at the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 52 Box10.
Figure 85. Rowhouse after rehabilitation at 1616 Harlem Avenue (block 98), back façade. Photograph available at the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S2 Box10.
C. Counseling services and community participation
The lessons learnt from the Baltimore Plan provided a strong case for the primacy of counseling services and the importance to encourage community participation for the rehabilitation of working class neighborhoods. External guidance came in the form of financial advising, design and renovation guidance, and recommendations for the development of community organizations. But counseling also came from within; from members of the Harlem Park Neighborhood Council to Block Leaders who acted as social first responders.

Local community organizers played an important role that included informing worried residents about the ongoing rehabilitation program and guiding residents towards appropriate external agencies when the services they sought could not be provided from within. They also served as liaison between local residents and BURHA. Block organizers were commonly asked questions such as “What are they going to do with my house?,” “Will I have to sell?,” “Where will I get the money to make repairs?,” and “When are they going to clean up the area?” As local community organizers interpreted the renewal program for residents and referred them to the right people at BURHA for answers, they were able to quickly diffuse the worries of locals or direct them towards people that could.

The Demonstration Office invited a Housing Renewal Estimator to support the rehabilitation project, who would provide services that mirrored those of the Hearing Board and Fight Blight Fund had offered through the Baltimore Plan. The Housing Renewal Estimator “cautioned owners to get at least three estimates on work to be done,” he “urged them to let him review any contracts they contemplated signing,” and even “conferred with many owners to sketch possible changes in room layouts that would achieve the desired improvements.” After basic research, but with no formal training in architecture or related fields, the Estimator suggested “new or improved materials for floor and wall coverings, exterior finishes or heating equipment that might do a better job for less money.” After describing the design services offered by the Estimator in an extensive 1965 report covering all aspects of the Demonstration Block experiment, BURHA explained that it “did not provide for an architectural or color consultant” because “it was the opinion of the Agency that property owners should be allowed – as far as possible – to express their own preferences.” The Agency’s decision to proceed without architects is defended elsewhere in the report using similar grounds, which also presume that the purpose of architects was limited to assigning aesthetically coherent forms and tones to buildings and parks.

The Estimator in Harlem Park further extended the reach of his services by facilitating arrangements between hard-pressed resident-owners and charitable volunteers, or devised ways to lower the cost of repairs by coordinating the timing and sequence of different trades (plumbers, electricians, et cetera) so that the cost of repairs would diminish by a sum equal to

181 Ibid.
182 Ibid., 16.
the profit margin of a contractor. In one case, the repair on a house were "estimated at $3,000 but Brethren volunteered labor and donated supplies cut it down to $344." Like Andrews had often done as the Director of the Fight Blight Fund, the Estimator also supported residents in filing loan applications and calculated the difference between various refinancing options. Partly as a result of these efforts, rehabilitation had been completed in the vast majority of properties not acquired by the City by the end of the summer of 1962, including twenty-seven cases where owners obtained conventional bank loans and twenty more cases where repairs had been carried out using cash on hand.\textsuperscript{184}

Besides financial matters, other factors stood between existing code violations and their subsequent corrections, and the task of removing such barriers rested largely in the hand of the Community Organization Advisor. The Advisor assigned to Harlem Park had by then become well familiar with the area’s church communities where she had volunteered. She was equally familiar with important theories in social work; a field she had studied before becoming a medical social worker at the Johns Hopkins Hospital. Her constant presence in Harlem Park facilitated her acceptance by local residents, who nevertheless continued to mistrust the Agency she worked for.\textsuperscript{185} Her first major accomplishment had been the formation of the 314 Association, and the subsequent establishment of three key committees: Municipal Services, Neighborhood Problems and most importantly, Inner-Parks. She proposed institutional structures for grassroots organizations and suggested models for the selection of chairmen and committee members. By involving the community in all aspect of the rehabilitation program, she aimed to institute a sense of ownership among residents and bequest community organizations able to promote the general welfare of the Harlem

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure86.png}
\caption{Sources of financing for rehabilitation of properties. Pie chart published in “A Demonstration of Rehabilitation: Harlem Park, Baltimore.”}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{183} Anson, “Harlem Park – 9 Years Later.”
\textsuperscript{184} Of the 27 cases of conventional bank loans, 2 had borrowed against life insurance policies, 5 had obtained conventional mortgages (3 of which being remortgages), and 3 others had successfully applied for short-term home improvement loans.
\textsuperscript{185} BURHA, “A Demonstration of Rehabilitation,” 69.
Park area. She spent time talking about the benefits of BURHA's additional five housing code requirements, whereas many owners, especially landlords, had complained of the extra cost that these repairs entailed as being unfair. Accounts pertaining to the Demonstration Block suggest that the Advisor was particularly helpful in bridging the gap between City Hall and the residents of Harlem Park; she provided a human dimension to the Agency and supported locals by explaining complicated aspects of the plan, pointed them towards existing services able to address their various needs, and reported to BURHA on the obstacles the community encountered. Quickly, however, the Block organization became dependent on her leadership as chairmen and committee members continuously sought the opinion and operative abilities of their Community Organization Advisor who was apparently failing to become expandable.

D. Rehabilitation through the private market

BURHA's plan for the rehabilitation of Harlem Park contended that private developers could contribute valuable inputs that would assure the success of the program. According to developer Samuel Gorn, with the proper FHA financing, "a developer [could] get a fair return on his investment, though not the kind of return which the slum landlords who milked these properties into ruin used to get." The Housing Act of 1954 had in fact developed measures that encouraged the private market to participate in the complex quest to rehouse the poor. This new approach presented new sets of questions pertaining to the potential interest and profitability that residential rehabilitation for the working class might arouse in the private market. The Federal government once again turned to Harlem Park for answers and authorized BURHA to acquire up to sixteen properties to resell to private developers willing to rehabilitate them.

BURHA proceeded to identify potential properties with the intention to acquire structures that would illustrate a broad variety of rehabilitation work in terms of structural problems, general condition, size and layout. Its aim was to establish the most suitable type of property for major rehabilitations, which could only be afforded by developer, whereas repairs carried out by owners were generally more modest. The Agency decided to only acquire ten properties and purchased houses from owners willing to sell, thereby avoiding the use of condemnation proceedings.

The disposition of properties for rehabilitation was another area with no precedent. BURHA together with the City's Law Department and the Urban Renewal Administration in Washington, D.C. established guidelines on bidding processes, they defined standards for rehabilitations and established restrictions on plans, rent costs and timelines for the execution of the work. New legal templates and procedures were gradually hammered out and on December 22, 1959, the Agency began advertising the first property it had acquired for resale. The Carey Street house was three-story high and included a separate dwelling on each

The Sun, “Harlem Park Fuss,” 12.

The available data for 26 properties renovated by the owners within the Demonstration Block show that 84% of these properties were rehabilitated for $1,000 – $4,999. Most of the houses (30%) were rehabilitated for $2,000 – $2,999. The exact number of dwelling units within these 26 properties is unknown, but the Demonstration Blocks a whole had an average of 4.1 dwelling units per property.
floor, despite its original floor plan designed for a single family. Pleased with the response that the advertisement was receiving, the Agency was confident that its program was off to a good start.\textsuperscript{188} Interested parties were given roughly one month to submit their offers, which were required to submit “a certified check for 10 percent of the amount bid, a preliminary sketch plan of proposed rehabilitation, general specifications, and an estimate of the total cost of the work done on the property.”\textsuperscript{189}

Bids opened on the 25\textsuperscript{th} of January 1960. To BURHA’s disappointment, only three offers were submitted. The first for $500 (plus $19,500 for repairs) had come from a building contractor; a speculative property investor specializing in rehabilitation submitted the second bid for $1,500 (plus $13,000 for repairs); and the third bid for $2,200 (plus $13,640 for repairs) had been offered by a local developer renowned for erecting new homes in white middle class neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{190} Bids for two more houses opened in the weeks that followed, with the only offer for each house coming from the same developer who had been awarded the first. “One of the unsuccessful bidders on the first property expressed a feeling that none of the other dealers could compete with a large-scale developer such as Gorn Brothers who had been awarded the first three houses.”\textsuperscript{191} The total cash value of the Gorn Brothers’s bid had not outweighed all other bidders in dollar value as their main advantage steamed from their proven track record, and most importantly, from the company’s size where plans and budgets sheets had been drafted by staff members trained exclusively for these tasks.

As the Gorn Brothers developed practically identical schemes for the three houses they purchased from BURHA in Harlem Park, the Agency decided to introduce a new selection criteria for the fourth house, where the successful bidder would “depend largely on the efficiency and uniqueness of the designs submitted for the rehabilitation of the property.”\textsuperscript{192} The absence of competing bids for the second and third houses had made it impossible for BURHA to select anybody but the Gorn Brothers, and with this new criteria the Agency hoped to stimulate wider interest from parties whose strength laid not in their organizational structures but rather in creative ideas. The winning bid was ultimately awarded to the owner of the property adjacent to the house for sale, who offered $4,000 for the building and an additional $25,000 for rehabilitation. His plan proposed to combine the two structures into one, producing seven dwelling units out what had historically been two separate three-story houses.\textsuperscript{193}

The fifth, sixth and seventh property went up for auction soon after; each receiving a single bid, once again from the Gorn Brothers who up until that point had made an offer on every property offered by the city in Harlem Park. The Agency accepted two of the bids, turning down the third for a house on Calhoun Street facing Harlem Square Park. Their offer at $1,380

\textsuperscript{188} The Agency noted that “inquiries were numerous,” with approximately 30 developers “sufficiently interested to get the packet of prospectus material.” See, BURHA, “A Demonstration of Rehabilitation,” 42.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid., 43.
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid., 44.
was far too low and “further objection came from the Architectural Advisory Committee; three members of the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects, who had been appointed to serve as consultants on the Demonstration Project.” The architects noted that the Gorn Brothers had essentially been submitting the same plans for each house and that very little would be learnt from assigning them another project, which had not already been taught through the experiences of their work on the properties they had already acquired.

The Gorn Brothers believed that the best approach consisted in stripping down houses of their interiors – including walls, floors and stairways – and rebuilding by keeping only the exterior shell of the building. The designs all included laundry tubs and storage bins in the basement, as well as a large club room for the joint use of all tenants. Each of the three apartments occupied an entire floor and stood out from other rehabilitated properties as electric wires and water pipes were hidden behind walls, and bathrooms and kitchens resembled those advertised by the Gorn Brothers in further removed neighborhoods and middle class suburbs. On the outside, formerly dark red brick walls were painted in bright pastel colors, and traditional wood frame windows were replaced by aluminum sliding. As the builder imported elements generally reserved for new houses blacks could seldom live in, local residents became excited at the prospect of inhabiting one of the modern units.

When the dwellings were finally ready to be shown to the public in November of 1960, the Mayor of Baltimore hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony and on the first day alone, “between 300 and 400 person streamed through the furnished model apartment on the first floor and the empty ones on the upper floors.”

There was much excitement over the project, including extensive newspaper coverage by The Sun paper:

“A formula which may halt the cancer of neighborhood blight has been discovered in a three-story brick row house in West Baltimore. The 80-year-old house at 642 North Carey Street might have seemed an unlikely laboratory for what the city’s renewal officials regard as the most important experiment. ... The house, which steamed in the summer and froze its pipes in the winter, now has thermostats in each apartment which control individual heating and air conditioning. Where a fourth family once buddled in a dark basement apartment, the officials now will find a large play room for the children, a laundry area and individual storage bins for each family.”

The enthusiastic and laudatory reporter noted that the building had been one of the worst off in Harlem Park. He interviewed Samuel Gorn, president of the firm responsible for the rehabilitation of the Carey Street property. “If it works here, it will work anywhere,” the newspaper quoted Gorn saying. As printed in a separate article written for The Sun that also

194 Ibid.
195 Ibid., 95.
196 Ibid., 46.
197 Anthony Lukas, “First Finished House Offers Harlem Rehabilitation Test,” The Sun, November 20, 1960, 40, Baltimore Sun Archives.
198 Ibid.
reported on the work of Gorn Brothers, “demand for decent housing in the inner city [was] such that they [had] a waiting list of prospective tenants at rents that [would] return a profit.”

When the eight and ninth houses went up for auction, the Gorn Brothers submitted the winning bid once again. The concerns brought up by the Architectural Advisory Committee had apparently already been forgotten. Despite significant efforts in gathering more offers for its remaining properties, the Agency failed once again to attract any other bidders than the Gorn Brothers. Ultimately, seven of the ten properties were sold to a single developer, one property sold to a local resident, and two properties remained unsold for years to come.

Figure 87. First property rehabilitated by the Gorn Brothers in Harlem Park, c.1964. Photograph published in “A Demonstration of Rehabilitation: Harlem Park, Baltimore,” page 47.

199 The Sun, “Renewal’s Bright Image,” The Sun, November 21, 1960, 14, Baltimore Sun Archives.
Figure 88. Bathroom in the Gorn house before rehabilitation. Photograph published in "A Demonstration of Rehabilitation: Harlem Park, Baltimore," page 47.

Figure 89. Bathroom in the Gorn house after rehabilitation. Photograph published in "A Demonstration of Rehabilitation: Harlem Park, Baltimore," page 47.

Figure 90. Kitchen in the Gorn house before rehabilitation. Photograph published in "A Demonstration of Rehabilitation: Harlem Park, Baltimore," page 48.

Other houses were sold directly by their owners to outside corporations who purchased properties to showcase their products. The Reynolds Aluminum Services acquired three rowhouses at 1303, 1305 and 1307 Harlem Avenue in early 1960 with the firm belief that these houses could be successfully rehabilitated using FHA Section 220 mortgage insurance, and that profits could be further increased if contractors were able to work on a large number of contiguous units simultaneously, preferably using aluminum products. Reynolds hoped to catch the attention of speculative developers by demonstrating profitability, while also showcasing new building products manufactured by the aluminum giant. The Reynolds company used aluminum everywhere it could; it replaced brick facades with aluminum sidings, it guttered wood and plaster ceilings to introduce corrugated aluminum panels, it ripped away brick garages to make room for aluminum balconies; it displayed uses for this material on windows, rooftops and doors. As Reynolds aimed to encourage renovation and rehabilitation using aluminum, it included these model homes in their marketing arsenal otherwise driven chiefly by door-to-door sales; an industry tactic well depicted in Tin Men, Barry Levinson's 1987 film setting in Baltimore's early 1960s.\textsuperscript{200} The company documented the rehabilitation process of their Harlem Avenue houses carefully so as to identify obstacle and potentially showcase the viability to invest in older buildings. Their findings indicated that FHA Section 220 applications were difficult to successfully complete; that once granted, the incremental allocation of the funds by the FHA to Reynolds resulted in slower building processes as subcontractors refused to work when payments were delayed; that FHA regulations would almost only be satisfied in plans proposing complete renovation jobs; and that rehabilitation required sets of skills from builders that did not always correspond to those needed for erecting a house from the ground up.\textsuperscript{201} Just like the Gorn Brothers had figured out from the very beginning, Reynolds Corporation "learned one significant factor, which [they] believed would have wide applicability; namely, that it [was] easier and cheaper in the long run to rip out everything but the exterior walls and start from scratch rather than attempt to patch up and make improvements on a piecemeal basis."\textsuperscript{202} The Sears Company concluded that rehabilitation of residential structures in blighted neighborhoods could be a sound investment, especially with aluminum materials and support from the FHA. Together with the Gorn Brothers, the aluminum giant became the first two entities to successfully obtain FHA Section 220 support.\textsuperscript{203} In other words, no private household successfully accessed the FHA loan that had supposedly been designed for owner-occupants and landlords. As The Sun’s Frank Somerville interviewed Richard Steiner for a story reporting on the Harlem Park project, the BURHA Director remarked, "For Baltimoreans in the city's older neighborhoods, this means it is now financially possible to rehabilitate homes without the burden of high mortgage payments,"\textsuperscript{204} a luxury that the white

\textsuperscript{200} See, Barry Levinson, Tin Men (Touchstone Pictures, 1987).
\textsuperscript{201} BURHA, "A Demonstration of Rehabilitation," 67.
\textsuperscript{202} Untitled report by the Reynolds Corporation, cited in: Ibid., 65.
\textsuperscript{203} Somerville, "Rehabilitation Gets FHA Help," 40.
\textsuperscript{204} Somerville, "Rehabilitation Gets FHA Help," 40.
middle class had been affording for decades. This statement, however, was surely misleading considering the gap that stood between the stated intention of Section 220 loans and their accessibility in real life.

The Reynolds Company eventually concluded the work in 1962 and welcomed its first tenants in February of that year. “There were more than 60 applications for initial occupancy, and after almost a year’s experience, operating expenses and maintenance were considerably below the original FHA estimates.” The cost of rent was set at $23 per week for a two-bedroom unit, and $25 for a three-bedroom, making the Reynolds apartments among the most expansive units in the Demonstration Block. Such costs were still affordable to some families that had rented a house in Harlem Park prior to 1957, but certainly not to most. At $25 per week, payments for a three-bedroom unit amounted to 40 percent of the average income of tenant families in Harlem Park that year.

BURHA was careful to record and analyze changes in rent paid in the Demonstration Block area as it made it a priority to assure that original tenants would not be displaced as a result of rehabilitation. As Steiner told *The Sun* in 1961, “the acid test of rehabilitation is not whether you can do a Georgetown job, with the rich pushing out the poor. The idea is to end up with people of the same income level in vastly improved surroundings.” Steiner recognized that some families would eventually relocate to un-rehabilitated areas or public housing projects, as no modern dwelling could be built or renovated for the same cost as the area’s worst off dwellings where weekly rent could be as low as $5. Steiner was also awake to the possibility that the more luxurious rehabilitated houses might attract outsiders back to the neighborhood, but regarded such cases to be exceptions rather than the rule.

Between 1957 and 1962, around 45 percent of rehabilitated units in the Demonstration Block of Harlem Park continued to rent for the same price or for less than $1 more per week; rent was increased by $1 per week in 11 percent of the units; by $2 per week in 9 percent of the cases; by $3 per week in 7 percent of the units; and by $4 in 3 units. In addition to these, eight other units showed major increases ranging between more than $4 and up to $11 per week. On the other hand, rent decreased on sixteen units where repairs had been kept to a bare minimum, making the apartments unappealing to local residents who compared these dwellings with those that could be afforded for a few dollars more right next door. Overall, the price of rent in the majority of units was raised by $1 or less per week, while the occupancy rate had become higher, especially for completely rehabilitated houses where turnover was exceptionally low.

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206 Only 1% of the units had rented for over $19 per week before the rehabilitation project, and 14.3% after. Most units rented for $10 to $13 per week before and after the renewal project.
208 Richard Steiner, quoted in: Anson, “Harlem Park – 9 Years Later.”
209 BURHA, “A Demonstration of Rehabilitation,” 53. It is unclear whether these data were adjusted for inflation.
BURHA’s experience in carrying out an urban rehabilitation project in the Demonstration Block of Harlem Park was perceived by the Agency as largely successful, not despite but precisely because of the setbacks that this real-life laboratory had been able to reveal. As the market had carried most of the cost of rehabilitating this block of Harlem Park, costing BURHA the pale sum of $512 per rehabilitated dwelling in administrative cost, this approach gained significant grounds in the years that followed while traditional public housing remained the only option for the very poor.

Harlem Park Project II

The Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Agency decided to go forward with the rehabilitation of the Harlem Park neighborhood months before the completion of the Demonstration Block project. As thousands of housing units in inner city ghetto neighborhoods were either dilapidated, lacking basic plumbing facilities or rapidly deteriorating, officials at City Hall decided to act rapidly instead of waiting for the results of longitudinal studies. BURHA started to acquire properties in early 1961, correcting many flaws that had been uncovered via the experimental Demonstration Block, but many shortcomings were left unaddressed.

The Harlem Park Urban Renewal Areal (Project II) included every block between Lafayette and North Fremont Avenues, and Monroe and Franklin Streets, with the exception of the school site described earlier. As per the Demonstration Block, the project called for the acquisition of structures and parcels for the construction of twenty-nine inner-block parks and the resale of housing to private parties willing to rehabilitate and lease out dwellings as relatively low-cost units. While the acquisition and clearance processes only affected a minority of property owners, the reduction of privately owned land from ninety-four acres to seventy-one acres was nevertheless sizeable. The enforcement of housing code violations also affected the total number of dwelling units, which declined from 4,564 to 3,752, thus amounting to a reduction of almost 18 percent.

210 Ash, “Residential Rehabilitation in the USA,” 35.
211 According to a review of the housing condition in Baltimore submitted by Mayor McKeldin to the United States Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA) in 1964, the city contained 290,115 housing units. Of these 51,909 were qualified as being substandard or deficient (17.9 percent of the city’s housing). The complete breakdown indicated that these included 9,114 dilapidated units, 37,795 deteriorating units and 5,000 units lacking plumbing facilities. See, Theodore R McKeldin, “A Review of Progress Under the Workable Program For Community Improvement for the Elimination and Prevention of Slums and Blight in Baltimore, Maryland” (HHFA Form H-1082, October 21, 1964), RG48 S12 Box 2, Baltimore City Archives.
212 The school site was instead part of the Harlem Park Urban Renewal Area (Project I).
213 BURHA’s plans called for the acquisition of around 22 acres for the construction of the inner-block parks, 0.25 acres for the construction of a shopping center and 0.78 acre for the rehabilitation of housings by the private market. The vast majority of the 152 acres site, or 94 net acres after accounting for the public realm, would remain in the hands of the current owners then. See, The ACTION Council for Better Cities, “An Evaluation of the Harlem Park Neighborhood Redevelopment,” 15.
214 Ibid.
As the FHA and BURHA collaborated to relax application procedures for Section 220 loans in 1962, the federal loans finally became accessible to a larger audience. As one representative from the James W. Rouse Company noted, the time to process a FHA loan was reduced from 6 months to 90 days, and the paper work cut by half. This significant improvement encouraged property owners to correct housing code violations and as of April 1965, over 88 percent of the dwelling units in the area had been successfully rehabilitated. A study conducted by the ACTION Council for Better Cities based on a sample of 834 properties, nearly half of all Harlem Park, suggested that around 9 percent of all properties had been rehabilitated using either FHA Section 220 home mortgages (57 cases) or FHA Title 1 Home Improvement Loans (in 19 cases). The remaining properties had been rehabilitated through conventional home mortgages (265 cases), conventional mortgages (215 cases), or with cash on hand (278 cases).

The Agency was generally satisfied with the results, where over 1,750 houses had been rehabilitated for an estimated total administrative cost to BURHA of only $1,700,000. As the population of Harlem Park was estimated at around 13,000 in May of 1960, the cost incurred by the city for the rehabilitation of this neighborhood was of approximately 180$ per inhabitant, after adjusting for the reduction in population caused by clearance and the proportion of non-compliant dwellings.

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215 The James W. Rouse Company specialized in speculative real estate investments and urban redevelopment. The company carried the name of its founder; one of the protagonist of the Baltimore Plan.

216 Frank Somerville, "Project Praised in Harlem Park," The Sun, December 29, 1962, Baltimore Sun Archives.


218 Ibid.

219 This amounts to around $12,775,000 in 2014 dollar, after adjusting for inflation.

Figure 93. Model presented by the architect for the inner-block park of the Demonstration Block, Harlem Park. Photograph published in “A Demonstration of Rehabilitation: Harlem Park, Baltimore,” page 25.

Figure 94. Inner-Block Park (block 103), designed as a play area rather than an adult sitting area. Photogram available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S8 Box2.
Figure 95. Plans for inner-block park (block 86), designed as a play area rather than an adult sitting area. Diagram from community group newsletter, available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S12 Box2.

Figure 96. “This is our park, won’t you pledge your help?” Document from community groups newsletter, block 86, available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S12 Box2.
The replacement of antiquated dwellings by modern units through complete rehabilitation via the private market encouraged families that had left Harlem Park for wealthier areas to return to the neighborhood. As one landlord noted in 1962, that two of the three apartments he had completely renovated using a FHA-insured mortgage were being occupied by “families returning to the older neighborhood from the Ashburton” neighborhood. The owner “had no trouble attracting tenants willing to pay the higher rents,” as costs remained relatively low compared to dwellings of similar quality located in other areas open to blacks in Baltimore. As Frank Somerville explained for The Sun, the former Ashburton residents had rented the largest of the three apartments contained in a three-story rowhouse, which occupied the basement and ground floor. The unit contained a living room, a kitchen-dinning area, one bathroom and four bedrooms. It rented for $29 per week whereas the largest unit of this building prior to rehabilitation had rented for $22 per week, but contained 2-bedrooms.

The generally favorable reviews of the Harlem Park projects became nuanced as time ran its course. Members of the community started to believe that they should have been involved much earlier on in the process of rehabilitation as BURHA’s plan for Harlem Park had been imposed on them. Interviews carried out by ACTION revealed that neighborhood leaders in Harlem Park identified the “failure to concern people in planning” and the “failure to complete parks on schedule” as two of the most important shortcomings of the Harlem Park project. Absentee property-owners also pointed to the park when asked about the program’s single biggest mistake, referring to these spaces as “a vast waste of money.” For BURHA officials, the “idea that people would maintain the park themselves” as well as “not involving the people in planning” was regarded as the project’s most significant flaws. Admittedly, element of the plan such as the replacement of alleyways by inner-block parks constituted in one of many decisions that had been taken by BURHA rather than the population. Local residents selected programs for spaces that others had planned for to exist and the elements that local stakeholders proposed to include in the inner-block parks rarely made it to the final plans. Furthermore, the elements that did make it were generally standard items, like grass and benches, which can be found in parks around the globe.

**Lessons in park design**

The decision to include a park in every block of the Harlem Park neighborhood had not been the result of participatory exercises, but rather the product of an urban analysis undertaken by the Agency. Professional planners found that inner-block parks would address a number of conditions that they had identified as being problematic, such as high density, the existence of poor quality structures in alleyways, and the lack of green spaces in the area. As the Staff Director for Baltimore’s Community Relation Commission observed, “From the heart of the West Baltimore ghetto to the nearest ball field of the Department of Recreation and Parks

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221 Somerville, “Project Praised in Harlem Park,” 24.
222 Ibid.
223 Ibid.
[was] a 36 block walk.” He added that this area included none of the city’s 13 major parks, and possessed a dramatically small portion of Baltimore’s playgrounds.225

Few would contest these assessments as Harlem Park residents would indeed benefit from the additional open spaces, where houses were generally crowded and backyards too small for the comfortable use of the many tenants that shared them. But as BURHA quickly realized, the first inner-block park built in the neighborhood was of little use to locals and its design was in no small part responsible for its lack of success. As the list of desired activities drawn-up by residents was repeatedly edited down, a compromised brief replaced the one originally conceived, which did not reflect local needs and interests.

The lessons afforded through in the Demonstration Block provided invaluable insights for processes of site acquisition, but the construction of inner-block parks still remained generally slow, with only two parks completed in 1963. The press brought aspects of BURHA’s rehabilitation program under close scrutiny. According to Somerville, “the first and more expansive landscaping effort [was] little-used and poorly maintained, but the second ha[d] been described as successful.”226 For another writer, the two parks were “something less than unqualified successes, despite the money and professional advices which were poured into them.”227 Somerville, one of the better-versed reporter at The Sun for matters concerning everyday life in ghetto neighborhoods, further noted that the first park had been designed primarily as an “adult sitting area” and was perhaps closer to a public garden than a park, where no real play space existed besides a sandbox.

As Mayor D’Alesandro, Jr. gathered, parks were rarely “being used for picnicking, strolling and frolicking as in days gone by” in 1964.228 The most successful parks measured by the extensiveness of their use were without a doubt open-spaces that offered specific activities, like baseball fields and playgrounds (jungle gym, swing set, seesaw, merry-go-round, et cetera). Built for the total sum of $41,930 in 1961, the Demonstration Block park emboldened some public officials to believe that better results could be achieved through a contrasting and admittedly less costly approach. Public discussions about the form of inner-block parks prompted The Sun to discuss the meaning ‘good design’ as it pertained to low-income areas:

Good design is something we want more of, in all municipal projects. But when it comes to opening up the interior of crowded blocks to introduce greenery and play space, intended for the pleasure and use of surrounding families, good design in the formal sense is of no greater importance than an understanding of the people involved, their desires and limitations, their customs and their resistance to imported ideas.229

225 Ibid.
229 The Sun, “Inner-Block Play,” 20.
The notion that site-specific spatial interventions were of greater importance than the intervention's adherence to any given aesthetic style represented an especially valid point. After all, as Somerville observed during the 1962 Conference on Esthetics in New York City, while there existed a consensus amongst architects on what ugliness looked like, twenty-five authorities on aesthetics had failed to agree on what was considered as beautiful. For Jo Mielziner, a stage designer who spoke at the event in 1962, "usefulness [was] innate beauty," a remark that validated the assessment of design based on context rather than form alone.

As The Sun article also suggested that professional landscapers should be "saved for more formal municipal undertakings," and that the "renewalists [should] rely more on a commonsense application of day-to-day observations in blighted areas," the newspaper defended the use of a two-tier system where landscape designers would only be involved in system where aesthetics ruled over function. The work of landscape architects was admittedly perceived as being of little value in Harlem Park, which became clear when "the Board of Estimates gagged on the renewal agency's request to pay $33,480 in fees to landscape architects to obtain designs for eleven inner-block parks." As the Board of Estimates refused to approve the fees, the Harlem Park community reacted in protest on the following day.

Sidney Brower, Chief of Comprehensive Planning for the City of Baltimore in 1974, noted that quite little was required from the architects hired to redesign the inner-blocks in Harlem Park. "The design program did not require that the designer analyze or make recommendations for recreational use of spaces other than parks. ... Nor was he required to show that his facility would be unsuitable for behaviors that are incompatible with recreational use." The design also purposely avoided the topic of crime, delinquency and anti-social behavior as the argument was made that adapting "one's designs to the inadequacies of present-day society would have been to deny a responsibility to build for future, less troubled generations." Violations of social contracts were instead believed to be the responsibility of sociologists and community organizers, rather than park designers.

Brower's spatial analysis of the Harlem Park neighborhood in the early 1970s supported a hypothesis that had previously never been considered: that inner-block parks did not constitute a suitable use of space in this specific neighborhood. He noted, "Because of their convenience, it is likely that spaces in the immediate facility of the home, no matter how unsuitable they may seem as recreational facilities (sidewalks and alleyways for example), will be used in preference to a park that is out of hearing and sight from home." He observed that most outdoor activities were ‘home-based,’ in that they took place immediately outside.

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231 Jo Mielziner, quoted in: Somerville, "Esthetics Experts Hit US Ugliness."
235 Ibid.
236 Ibid., 157–8.
the house. Brower noted that even after the construction of inner-block parks, most adults continued to use street-fronts for the vast majority of their free time where neighbors casually hung out on house steps and chairs drawn out onto the sidewalk. “The most frequent reasons given for sitting out front were habit, custom, that it was where one met one’s friends and where the action was.” Upon further investigation, the seasoned urban planner identified additional reasons for this preference, including the residents’ concern with defending their homes, as well as proximity to the inside of the house where residents might be carrying out parallel tasks like cooking or keeping an eye on a napping child.

The front steps also allowed parents to mark the extended territory of their homes, to engage in neighborly social encounters, watch their kids playing on the sidewalk, while maintaining instant access to the inside of the house. “When it came to public places, residents felt most comfortable in their own neighborhood, and particularly on the sidewalk in front of their house, where, they felt, they had special territorial rights,” Bower noted. Territorial rights were communicated in all kinds of ways, including sweeping the sidewalks, flower planting and most importantly, by their very presence on the iconic white marble front steps proper to the Baltimore rowhouse. Moreover, “residents recognize[d] the presence of additional security features that [were] not present in the inner-block: people, patrolling policemen, and, at night, street lights and the lights of passing cars.” This was no minor feature, as crime was becoming a serious issue in Harlem Park.

The noble efforts that aimed to create liveliness in inner-block parks were mitigated in part by design, where parks were first conceptualized as replacements of street fronts instead of spaces complementary to them. While some parks were surely successful in Harlem Park, many others followed flawed designs principles in that they did not reflect the neighborhood’s reality and fixed conditions. The approach to park design changed with time, in one specific occasion creating something that was “less a park and more of a playground, with an assortment of slides, jungle gyms and other energy absorbing equipment.” Community Advisors supported the establishment of activities able to capture the interest of residents, such as the establishment of an arts and crafts class dedicated to young children. The Advisor supported such initiatives by providing the material necessary and through moral encouragement. But as “there appeared to be no initiative on the part of the residents to take over the film series,” this program was terminated as the guidelines from BURHA stated that schemes such as these were, after some time, to be administered by local residents.

237 Ibid., 158.
238 Ibid., 160.
239 Ibid., 161.
242 “When we established as our guideline that we would assist residents but not run any programs ourselves, we had intended that project staff work primarily behind the scenes, leaving the limelight for resident leaders. This was, however, not the role that residents had in mind for us, and we soon began to realize that our presence was expected at all meetings and activities, not necessarily to help, but simply to see what was being done. Our encouragement and approval were powerful reinforcers.” See, Ibid., 281.
As the Agency struggled to keep inner-block parks in good conditions, the Board of Estimates attempted to reverse the original plan and cancel the construction of eleven inner-block parks. It cited insufficient fund as an excuse, but residents refused to accept the official statement.\textsuperscript{244} Locals worked through their various organizations and pressured City Hall to reverse the decision. Charles Curtis Sr., President of the Harlem Park Neighborhood Council wrote to City Hall:

\textit{The City of Baltimore would do a great disservice to the residents of Harlem Park if it continues to be recalcitrant in its inner-park program ...or if there is further delay in this much wanted and greatly needed phase of an expensive urban renewal program in this area.}\textsuperscript{244}

Curtis reminded his elected representative that many properties had been demolished to make way for these parks, which were included in the planning program signed into law in July of 1960.\textsuperscript{245} Pressed by protests and contestations of a well-organized group, the Board of Estimates ultimately returned on its decision as the federal government allocated additional funds to cover the difference between earlier estimates and the real cost of inner-block parks. The first twenty-eight of twenty-nine inner-block parks were ultimately built for the total sum of \$1,523,500 – which included construction cost, advertising fees, as well as the architects’ fees, which amounted to 6 percent of the total sum.\textsuperscript{246}

The BURHA plan stipulated that it would initially assume duties related to the upkeeps of the parks, and that this workload would gradually be passed on to the residents. As the ACTION report noted in 1965, “It is doubtful that citizens, however well organized, can assume full responsibility for either maintenance or supervision, although it is appropriate, in light of the city’s special effort to provide the neighborhood with parks, for them to undertake to keep the parks free of litter and to mow grass areas.”\textsuperscript{247} While it is extremely unlikely that the authors of this report had to mow the grass of parks in their neighborhoods, they correctly pointed out that the Agency had settled for a sketchy maintenance strategy that could not be sustained.

The task at hand was indeed time consuming and costly, and clearly exceeded the capacity of even the most willing communities while carelessness by community members further exacerbated the problem.\textsuperscript{248} The Department of Recreation and Parks had in fact refused to

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\item[243] Lyle, “The Role of Neighborhood Organizations in Urban Renewal,” 34.
\item[244] Charles R. Curtis Sr., quoted in: Somerville, “Harlem Park Renewal Hit."
\item[245] This refers to Ordinance 419 proposed by BURHA and adapted by the City Council on July 6, 1960.
\item[246] Richard Steiner, “Memorandum: Amendatory Contracts for Madison-Park North, Madison-Park South, and Harlem Park II,” August 4, 1967, RG48 S37 Box 8, Baltimore City Archives. This amounts to around \$11,500,000 in 2014, after adjusting for inflation.
\item[248] For a news report pertaining to the effect of careless residents, see, The Sun, “Harlem Park Block Group Plans Clean-Up Campaign,” The Sun, October 14, 1965, sec. C, 8, Baltimore Sun Archives.
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take on the twenty-nine new spaces for these specific reasons. The Inner-Park Committees collected dues from all owners for the maintenance of the parks and hired help to support local volunteers. But the task at hand was simply too large, until the Department of Recreation and Parks finally took over when its operating budget was increased in 1966 with the specific condition that it provide the services it offered to the rest of the city to the Harlem Park community as well.

In 1969, the Department of Recreation and Parks spent around $15,000 for the maintenance of each inner-block park (not including replacement costs), and estimated that it would require more than double that amount to do an adequate job. Such cost represented a tremendous spending for a black working class area such as Harlem Park, which would have been impossible for them to cover. Residents in their primes commonly worked long hours with the occasional day off, leaving volunteers little to no time for steady commitments, while seniors were unlikely to be physically able to carry out the work, where life expectancy for black men in America was below 60 years of age in 1960. Residents volunteered when they could, but many of the tasks needed more time, strength and skills than could be mustered by the Inner-Park Committee.

**Turnkey housing**

With problems pertaining to the maintenance of the inner-block park at least temporarily resolved, BURHA could finally focus on another great affliction in Harlem Park: vacant plots and non-rehabilitated houses. As Schaefer noted soon after being elected as President of the City Council in late 1967, many ‘raze-or rehabilitate’ notices “were either not followed up or, if they were, resulted only in a series of scattered empty lots that marred otherwise good city blocks.” Harlem Park benefited from the significant financial and social support that BURHA provided, but some homes were decidedly too degraded to bring up to standards, and others were owned by individuals too poor to afford the repairs. Even houses owned by the Agency were left vacant as BURHA found it increasingly difficult to find builders willing to fully rehabilitate dwellings in the neighborhood. As three houses purchased by the city for $13,000 in 1959 were still unsold by the spring of 1964, BURHA eventually let go the properties for a mere $150. The Agency noted that the buyer’s “sketch plans [were] not what we would like to see,” but agreed to the sell nonetheless as it conceded to “sacrifice design to get things done.”

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249 The Sun newspaper noted that the Department of Recreation and Park had not been asked to reconsider its position to reject responsibility in Harlem Park until 1965. The Sun, “Harlem Park Faults Aired,” The Sun, November 12, 1965, sec. C, 8, Baltimore Sun Archives; Frank Somerville, “Park Board Gets Budget,” The Sun, February 16, 1966, sec. A, 7, Baltimore Sun Archives.

250 Somerville, “Park Board Gets Budget,” 7.

251 This cost was significantly more than what the Department of Recreation and Parks had estimated in 1966; the estimate being $60,000 per year for all 21 parks. Only 11 of the parks had been built at the time the estimate was made, which partly accounts for its vast inaccuracy. See, Ibid.


254 Frank Somerville, “City Plans To Sell 3 Homes In Renewal Area For $150,” The Sun, May 19, 1964, 46, The Sun. The houses were located at 603 North Carey Street, 1311 and 1313 Harlem Avenue.
When HUD announced the inauguration of a program where municipal governments would become able to acquire privately owned dwellings to be operated as public housing in 1966, BURHA advertised its interest to finalize the rehabilitation of Harlem Park by taking advantage of the new initiative. The Turnkey I program stipulated that private builders could buy parcels of land, construct dwellings to public housing specifications, and sell them back to local public housing agencies upon prior agreement over plans and costs. As the name suggested, builders would then turn the key over to housing agencies as the dwellings became ready for occupation. Turnkey I promised to “provide speed and volume – unquestionably prime considerations in its adoption by HUD and by the President.” The program was expected to yield other significant advantages, which included lowering construction costs and disperse low-income families instead of grouping them in large-scale projects.

Figure 97. 1311 - 1313 Harlem Avenues, three properties sold for $150 in 1964, Demonstration Block, Harlem Park. Photograph available at the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S2 Box10.

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258 The premises that the private market would build faster housing for cheaper became evident early-on as independent contractors were not subjected to the same regulations as those hired directly by the public sector. Joseph Burstein (Ibid, 532) explains that that companies hired by the public sector were likely to increase their costs to offset the risks to pay penalty, as contracts with City Hall included (by law) clauses requiring financial compensation for delays and damages. Costs were also reduced from not having to go through processes of competitive bidding, which was timely and required advertising. As a result, Turnkey I reduced the cost by a ratio of 10 to 15 percent (Ibid, 534). While Turnkey I would eventually grow to a point where it came to replace standard procedures for the construction of large public housing estates altogether, its first implementation in cities like Philadelphia and Baltimore focused on rowhouses exclusively. Burstein, “New Techniques in Public Housing”; Afro-American, “Weaver Names Three Cities for HUD Plan,” Afro-American, September 9, 1967, 15, Afro-American Archives.
259 See, The Sun, “Instant Housing,” The Sun, February 23, 1967, sec. A, 12, Baltimore Sun Archives, where it was argued that one of the main advantages of this approach was to locate public housing units in an established neighborhood, “rather than set apart as a public-housing island.”
HUD offered to fund 100 dwelling units under the Turnkey I program in Baltimore within months of the new policy being approved by Congress.\textsuperscript{260} BURHA invited local builders to submit plans for properties in the all-but-completed neighborhood of Harlem Park. The Turnkey procedure mandated that interested developer start by submitting general outline information for their project, which the city could formally agree to by issuing a “Letter Designating Turnkey Developer.”\textsuperscript{261} Upon successfully passing this first step, the developer would be invited to present preliminary drawings and specifications to be reviewed by BURHA’s Design Advisory Panel.

The first Turnkey submission reaching the Design Advisory Panel had come from a local builder, Marvin Shapiro, who offered to construct a two-story prefabricated house in Harlem Park, which BURHA quickly accepted.\textsuperscript{262} The second proposal was much more ambitious as Albert Duke attempted to build Turnkey housing on practically every parcels still vacant in Harlem Park in 1967. The Design Advisory Panel invited Duke to present his plans for a meeting held in August of 1967, when no other builders had expressed interest in becoming involved.\textsuperscript{263} The proposal consisted in traditional 2-story rowhouses, with basement, and selling for the low price of $12,000; practically half of what the Gorn Brothers had spent renovating 3-story properties in the Demonstration Block. The developer presented the plans for one property, which he proposed to replicate with minor adjustments for the construction of around eighty houses in Harlem Park.

The drawings reflected the builder’s primary preoccupation: cost. Ceilings were kept low but legal at 7 feet 9 inches, and the facades built primarily with stock material resulted in the unusual positioning of doors and windows. The front elevation presented a mixture of exposed aggregated panels, masonry and cast concrete lintels; a combination that bothered the Design Advisory Panel. They responded to Duke’s plans by suggesting that he hires an architect, but the developer viewed the idea unfavorably. According to the minutes kept of their meeting, Duke perceived architectural fees as an added cost he could not afford, even as the design was to be repeated for so many houses.\textsuperscript{264} The Panel concluded that “the basic problem [was] that Mr. Duke designed [the house] as a builder; that is, he selected stock material to fit certain areas. The Panel agree[d] that what Mr. Duke ha[d] done so far [was] well done from a construction standpoint, but that the aesthetics [were] missing.”\textsuperscript{265} They suggested to meet again in order to give Duke the opportunity to amend the plans himself or consider consulting an architect.

\textsuperscript{260} The Sun, “City to Redo More Houses,” The Sun, March 6, 1968, sec. A, 9, Baltimore Sun Archives.
\textsuperscript{261} HUD, “Low-Rent Housing Manual” (HUD, 1966), § 221.1.
\textsuperscript{262} BURHA, “BURHA: Summary of Commission-Staff Discussion, July 11 1967,” July 11, 1967, 3, Special Collection, BURHA Series 10, Box 6, University of Baltimore Langsdale Library.
\textsuperscript{263} BURHA, “BURHA: Meeting of the Design Advisory Panel, August 24 1967,” August 24, 1967, Special Collection, BURHA Series 10, Box 6, University of Baltimore Langsdale Library.
\textsuperscript{264} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{265} Ibid.
They reconvened with the builder one month later, where it was immediately apparent that only the most minor of modifications had been made to the plans, and that these had been made by no one else than Duke himself. The developer did not pretend otherwise. He quickly shrugged their concerns and countered by proposing to start work on the first house immediately, where he would demonstrate that the finishing appearance of his houses would be fine indeed. He was used to work this way, designing on the go with little in the way of plans and no help at all from design professionals.

The developer proposed to start work on a parcel along Lafayette Square, opposite the Gothic Revival St-James Episcopal Church, the first black Episcopal Church to exist in a slave state in the United States. Panel members reminded the developer that he had not submitted a site plan for this lot, and that the significance of the one he was proposing made it unsuitable for such an experiment. They noted that “the type of structure Mr. Duke had proposed for Lot 4 [was] entirely unacceptable,” as his two-story, low ceiling structure would be around half the height as the adjacent three-story properties, and an unlikely neighbor for any of the three churches located around Lafayette Square.

As an experienced builder, Duke was familiar with methods that were proven and tested. He viewed the requests and notes of the panel as unimportant; something that became clear as he included practically none of its recommendations in the last plans he would submit to the Agency. As a result of Duke’s “stated inability to engage an architect or to make such changes as have been deemed necessary by the Panel,” its members “arrived at the conclusion that further exploration along present lines [were] rather pointless.”

While the minutes reporting on the meetings between the Design Advisory Panel and Duke implied that the builder refused to hire architects to avoid having to pay their professional fees, this presumption was rather unlikely. The fact that many architects remained primarily preoccupied with their role to express contemporary culture and the philosophy of their society through buildings, pursuing originality and professional relevance before all else, had in fact earned the profession a reputation that difficultly aligned with the reality of the layman and urban poor, or the budget for jobs undertaken by builders such as Duke. In all likelihood, the builder brushed off the recommendation to hire professional help because he knew well that few if any architects in Baltimore would design houses that could be built and sold for $12,000 in the 1960s.

266 Hayward and Shivers, The Architecture of Baltimore, 54.
268 Ibid.
269 Herbert Gans, the renowned sociologist and planner who had spent over 25 years working with architects in 1977 described the reputation of architects at the eve of the 1960s in similar terms. He highlighted that builders rejected architects for these very reasons. While Gans drew a picture of professional architects as being peer-oriented and favoring high culture, he was careful to note that, “it is wrong to think of architecture or any other profession in the singular, for no profession can or ought to be homogeneous.” Furthermore, he also highlighted that “young architects seemed to have played a proportionally larger role in the radical movements of the 1960s than young members of other professions,” yet, he attributed this socially significant turn to their own ‘Fountainhead syndrome,’ referring to the Ayn Rand 1943 novel and the discipline’s professional imperialism. See, Gans, “Toward a Human Architecture: A Sociologist’s View of the Profession,” 26-7.
Turnkey I projects were later attributed to other builders, but never reached the scale initially envisioned for Harlem Park. By March of the following year, nineteen Turnkey I projects were either ongoing or had been completed in the neighborhood, with twenty-one more under consideration.279 Many of these dwellings were eventually built after being successfully reviewed by the Design Advisory Panel, but never by prospect residents. Good design, as it were, continued to be judge against an aesthetic system unproven to be of interest for individuals residing in the traditional ghetto of West Baltimore.

Discussion & Analysis

These accounts pertaining to early experiments with \textit{in situ} rehabilitation in Baltimore show that notions of democratic governance were integrated into the momentous universe of urban planning in the 1940s. Participation in matters concerning the transformation of the built environment was central to the Baltimore Plan – an informally structured project conceived in collaboration between the private and public sector – and later in Harlem Park, where the federal government’s original self-help program was tested for the first time in the United States. Citizen participation pre-dated these two initiatives, however, as individuals had been self-helping themselves long before business interests and the political class of Baltimore became interested in the predicament of blighted neighborhoods, slums or ghettos. Paradoxically, the central feature of both early self-help programs, the establishment and enforcement of housing standards, aimed in large parts to rectify, overhaul or eradicate things that residents had created to help themselves. This included the subdivision of large expansive housings into smaller affordable ones, the partitioning of double bedrooms, the extension of power supplies to rooms created from this partitioning, the expansion of overcrowded dwellings through annexes, the creation of workspaces in backyard via sheds and garages, the transformation of basement storages into dwellings for the very poor, et cetera. The modernization of the city would offer valuable advantages to the urban poor of Baltimore, no doubt, but not without yielding collateral damages worth careful evaluation seeing that modernization also represented an attack on the tactics of those living on the margins.

Disciplinary shortcomings

BURHA missed an important opportunity by not requiring the architects it hired to embrace the full potential of their discipline, or to even consider the social condition where they built. Already in 1933, Baltimore architect William Gordon Beecher271 was proposing to rehabilitate neighborhoods through piecemeal architectural interventions that privileged qualitative relationships between individuals and dwellings, over their material worth or relevance to the aesthetic system. He noted how obsolescent housings that permeated the Baltimore inner city often concealed sound structures that could be

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271 Beecher was also a member of the Regional Advisory Board for the Public Works Administration (PWA) in Washington D.C.
“remodeled” and brought back to life.\textsuperscript{272} Identifying overcrowding as the primary cause responsible for the demise of dwellings in changing neighborhoods, Beecher suggested, “much of the blight might be removed simply by thinning out the existing solid blocks of houses by tearing down, for example, every third house in a row.”\textsuperscript{273} The architect and PWA advisor indicated that such strategy would give each dwelling access to light and air on three sides instead of two. Acknowledging that many of these dwellings initially built as single-family houses were by then being used as multi-family houses, Beecher envisioned exterior staircases between the pairs of houses, which would grant direct access to upper floor apartments, thus assuring a certain level of privacy in tenement units while augmenting the floor area in each abode by eliminating indoor staircases. “They would not be beautiful, perhaps, but they would serve, temporarily at least, to halt the downward movement of property values and social standards along the blighted fringe.”\textsuperscript{274}

This schematic concept never developed into plans. His drawing of such ideas was nevertheless noteworthy for it spoke loudly of the potential of the discipline in 1933, when architects like Beecher were willing to suspend the primacy of stylistic considerations, defy housing standards that limited creative opportunities, and design for the wellbeing of the client – whereas public officials limited the input of architects by asking them for little more than aesthetics advices. This reflected a binary shortcoming grounded in disciplinary misunderstandings; first that beauty in cities is not the same as beauty in the arts;\textsuperscript{275} and second, that the business of architects “is not Architecture, but Built Environment;”\textsuperscript{276} the latter involving the study of forces acting upon space, which includes things, and also people. In this sense, these experiences suggest that architecture failed in not making itself known as a discipline with more to offer than what was being asked from it from the public, in the same was that Cook, Rouse and the Gorn Brothers had raised the bar for public servants, developers and builders.

\textit{Deconstructing housing standards}

As opposed to Beecher who developed designs that prioritized usefulness before municipal standards, the strategies behind the two projects discussed in this chapter functioned by moving ghetto communities closer to a way of life defined by the spatial imaginary of the mainstream. Both projects enforced standards developed by the dominating class that would mostly be applied in poor neighborhoods.

Within the domain of theory, the questioning of prescriptive standards in housing is associated with a critical framework that was inexistent when the Baltimore Plan

\textsuperscript{272} Macaulay, “Baltimore Moves to Eradicates Its Slums,” 3.
\textsuperscript{273} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{274} Beecher, quoted in: Ibid.
\textsuperscript{275} Habraken, The Urban International Press, 38.
was inaugurated, and that gradually gained importance by the time the Harlem Park Demonstration Block was fully implemented. This framework largely builds on the writing of architect and theorist John Habraken, who believed that the problem behind the so-called housing crisis of the 1960s was grounded in dysfunctional relationships between forces acting upon housing. Habraken argued against the production of dwellings as consumer articles and defended the importance for users to be intensely involved in the housing process at an existential and practical level. He viewed environments that abstracted the individuality of users (and the unpredictability of their future needs) with the same contempt that Rancière might have felt towards a democracy that would not recognize democratic life.

Habraken does not stand alone as a radical critic of the provider paradigm. Another theorist and architect, John Turner, has been equally deluded with the prevalent modus operandi, and while his views on the role of architects in relation to the housing crisis did not align with those of Habraken – together they provided the impetus for the inception of an alternative framework in housing theory: the support paradigm.

In contrast to provider programs, where housing projects were to be evaluated in quantitative terms only, the support paradigm complicated the terrain by attributing importance to something decidedly harder to evaluate: the quality of relationships between individuals and their residential spaces. Writing on the shortcoming of provider programs, Turner noted that projects designed to satisfy quantitative principles failed “to distinguish between what things are, materially speaking, and what they do in people’s lives.”

Turner recognized that “standards of course have their uses,” but he maintained, “it is entirely improper to use them as measures of human value.” Modernism’s narrow interest with the dwelling as an object – or housing as a noun – turned a blind eye to the pre-eminent process of housing, or as Turner would have it, of the term ‘housing’ being used as a verb. The prioritization of objects over processes prompted the unwarranted evaluation of housing performance based on standards alone; a method that could be disputed on other grounds, seeing that material standards had been defined by protagonists outside communities principally affected by housing standards. To be sure, wealthier neighborhoods in Baltimore like elsewhere in the US were rarely if ever visited by housing inspectors. For Nabeel Hamdi, this condition transforms housing standards into an expression of cultural dominance.

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277 Habraken, The Urban International Press, 6.
278 For a full exploration of the influence of Habraken and Turner on the theories of practice of the support paradigm, see: Hamdi, Housing without Houses.
281 Turner, John F. C., “Housing as a Verb.”
282 Hamdi, Housing without Houses, 13.
As the sociologist and urban planner Herbert Gans noted, physical standards failed to recognize the distinction between 'slums' and 'low-rent' districts, where the former would be defined “as those which are proven to be physically, socially, or emotionally harmful to their residents or the community at large.”

In contrast, low-rent areas and dwellings provide “housing and the necessary facilities which are not harmful, to people who want, or for economic reason must maintain, low rental payments and are willing to accept lack of modernity, high density, lack of privacy, stair climbing, and other inconveniences as alternative costs.”

While it may be true that people lived in places such as Harlem Park because rents there were more affordable than in middle class ghetto neighborhoods, the larger truth is that residents in this area of West Baltimore could have often bore the cost of decent accommodations in neighboring white enclaves, where rents were statistically lower for housing units of equal sizes and better quality. In fact, the significance of racism at a place and time where integration of a black family in a white neighborhood would normally result in hostility or violence, warrants the distinction between slums, low-rent districts and a third category, 'the ghetto,' where people lived in overpriced and under-maintained dwellings sometimes because of economic pressures, and always because of their race.

While these particular self-help programs did lead to the improvement of housing conditions for thousands of black Baltimoreans, they also constituted in a discriminatory initiatives as projects such as Harlem Park reinforced segregation. It lowered the pressure exercised by blacks to break through racial barriers in order to reside in decent neighborhood, it provided subpar public services for its parks and it completely failed to recognize the spatial confinement of blacks as a primary reason for poor, overcrowded living arrangements. Both programs simultaneously reinforced the clustering of blacks while imposing upon them standards selected, enacted and enforced by their historical oppressor. It presented the initiative as a welfare program, which would eventually earn it large support from within the black community seeking short-term improvements amid an unlivable urban ecology. The Harlem Park project defined solutions within a conflicted social framework, which had for effect to legitimize the confinement of blacks in segregated enclaves and manipulate its inhabitant into believing that viable solutions could be devised within an apartheid society. If it is surely true that housing and public spaces in the ghetto neighborhood of Harlem Park were drastically improved between 1950 and 1960 as a result of this program, these advancements do not diffuse the fact that Harlem Park remained a ghetto.

Transitioning between paradigms

While the imposition of housing standards is generally associated with provider programs, neither Harlem Park nor the Baltimore Plan were typical examples of this

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284 Ibid.
paradigm. As a matter of fact, these in situ programs could more readily be associated with the support paradigm seeing that they were indeed the product of non-conventional housing policies, in which local residents actively participated. Both programs aimed to rebalance the relationships between primary stakeholders by widening the network that could influence housing in the Baltimore ghetto. Strangely, however, the Baltimore Plan and Harlem Park also attempted to meet all the objectives of provider programs.

Eugene Feinblatt, Chairman of the Urban Renewal Commission, commented in 1964, “the striking thing about Harlem Park is the extent to which the residents of the community have become involved in the ongoing life of the neighborhood.”

The Chairman suggested, “this, in the long run, might be the most important thing that could be accomplished.” Feinblatt’s comment came as a response to critics who evaluated the projects in terms of whether the cost of improvements was reflected dollar-for-dollar in property values. The Chairman’s comment echoed the thinking of William Slayton, Commissioner of the Federal Urban Renewal Administration, who had been quoted in the same newspaper one day before: “The program presents the opportunity to begin the job of comprehensive reconstruction of the city and of urban life, to couple the tools of physical rebuilding with those of social reconstruction.”

While the public administration continued to evaluate the Harlem Park project in quantitative terms and using local housing standards as benchmarks, the acknowledgement of qualitative relationships represented a movement forward for American housing policies. Harlem Park – and the Baltimore Plan before it – enabled policy makers to re-conceptualize best practice in residential rehabilitation by acknowledging at last the significance of qualitative standards in spatial transformations. This rebalancing would partially suspend the authority of exploitative landlords, who had grown accustomed to extract high rents from black tenants amid a legal environment that had failed to condemn slumlord practices. As the Harlem Park program aimed to enable working class families to become homeowners, it transferred upon them a level of control over their housing condition that blue collar African Americans had seldom if ever possessed before.


286 Skeptics noted that the city was not recuperating its investment from increases in municipal taxes in the area, and accordingly attempted to discredit the project on such grounds. Few of the detractors that relied on such sketchy economic sheets to support their argument against the value of Harlem Park ever bothered to include a longitudinal dimension to their equation. They did not consider the revenues generated in Harlem Park for the construction industry outside the neighborhood, or for the advantageous opportunity-cost of the program when compared to public housing. Unable to account for even the most obvious quantitative items such as these, these critics certainly would not attempt to place a dollar value to what Chairman Feinblatt was talking about: the development of a sense of belonging and place, of pride and ownership. Besides, the point that the city would not recuperate its investment through property tax revenues was a given seeing that City Hall had agreed not to raise taxes in Harlem Park in order to prevent the displacement of residents in the first place. See, Somerville, “Study Planned on Harlem Park”; Frank Somerville, “Harlem Park Group Rapped,” The Sun, December 6, 1964, Baltimore Sun Archives.

Misconceiving participatory planning

As one of the earliest recorded example foregrounding the potential for in situ rehabilitation, the success for the Harlem Park project depended on methodological procedures that were only starting to be theorized and that remained largely unexplored in practice. While these projects provided empirical material to deconstruct and multiply the meaning of housing standards, the two projects certainly remained imperfect. Besides attributing too much importance to the materiality of housing and failing to address segregation, both schemes followed a framework where participatory processes were faulty or underdeveloped. This resulted in deceptive practices, where local authorities successfully managed to enroll a black community to support a program that would, in fact, reinforce constitutive elements of the ghetto such as spatial confinement and institutional encasement.

As Sherry Arnstein argued in her pivotal 1969 article “A Ladder of Citizen Participation,” the term ‘citizen participation’ refers to the “redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic process, to be deliberately included in the future.” She noted that there exist significant gradations of citizen participation, ranging from the full delegation of power to the citizens at one end of the spectrum, to a manipulative use of participation at the other end of spectrum. In the latter case, citizen participation becomes an empty ritual where citizens would be informed of ongoing plans, sometimes asked for their opinions, albeit no weight would be given to them, while individuals in positions of power would reap the most benefits as they became able to claim that all sides had been heard and considered.

This study of the Baltimore Plan and Harlem Park projects found that individuals were never at the center of the planning process, that plans were by and large generated without the involvement of local stakeholders whatsoever, and that residents were included at very late stages – chiefly to sustain rather than create spaces planned and designed by BURHA. This is especially true in regards to the inner-block parks, where participation in the planning phases appeared to be an empty gesture, thereby placing the kind of participation that occurred in Harlem Park towards the problematic end of Arnstein’s ladder.

Participatory processes pertaining to the upgrading of residential dwellings proved more convincing in both Harlem Park and the Baltimore Plan, but problems existed nonetheless. The tight deadline of 30 days to effectuate repairs upon receiving a housing code violation notice aligned with the institutional fetishism of speed, a characteristic of modernist planning, but prevented owner-occupants to update their dwellings using their free time, and that of close friends and family, thereby forcing their hand in hiring professional help for pricey upgrades they could not always afford, or considered as being a priority. As Frank Somerville noted, the so-called “hardship cases” where citizens did not have the resources to finance renovations were relatively frequent with over 100...
unresolved cases in 1965 in Harlem Park.\textsuperscript{289} For them, like for those who had to increase the proportion of their income spent on housing, external conditions imposed economic behavior potentially contrary to their interests;\textsuperscript{290} in some cases, it also urged economic practices that would ultimately prove to be unsustainable.\textsuperscript{290} More importantly, the standards by which they had to oblige had been decided without their participation and often against the best interests of owner-occupants.

Overall, both projects primarily intended to solve the condition of blight outright and rapidly, and while participation did generate relationships between local communities and a municipal agency, these relationships were means to an end, rather than an end in itself. This notable nuance may justify the overall power structure of the project, where BURHA instrumentalized participative processes specifically to have local residents believe that they were the ones in control of the rehabilitation process. The authority of local residents was much narrower than perceived, however. It was in fact limited in the power to say ‘no,’ (as they did when City Hall temporarily decided to stop the construction of inner-block parks), and to maintain (or not) what had been designed, standardized and provided.

\textsuperscript{289} Frank Somerville, “City Criticized on Harlem Park,” The Sun, October 6, 1965, sec. C, 28, Baltimore Sun Archives.

\textsuperscript{290} This is a point that Turner makes in discussing the comparative advantages between one family residing in a free, well located shack compared to another one relocated to a new dwelling built to modern standards. See, Turner, Housing by People, 59.

Traveling South on Madison Avenue in 1964, “a passer-by [was] struck first by the number of freshly painted exteriors of private dwelling, and then, a minute or so later, by the rather shabby appearance of the McCulloh Homes.” The manicured neighborhood described in this news article was part of the Mount Royal Urban Renewal Area, where BURHA had recently enforced the municipal housing code. The McCulloh Homes, tucked between Harlem Park and downtown Baltimore, was a low-rise public housing project, roughly two decades old then. As The Sun’s description of both sites suggested, BURHA seemed to require that private parties maintain their properties to higher standards than the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) would keep up their own in the early 1960s.\(^1\)

Public housing, once perceived as life improving places, went through important changes in the United States. These changes affected the symbolic meaning associated with public housing, as well as everyday life conditions for individuals living in these buildings. The life cycle of public housing projects started off with the acquisition of a site, the selection of architects, the presentation of design proposals, followed by the eventual construction of buildings, their occupation by residents, the incremental appropriation of what had been provided, and in some cases, demolition. Looking at two specific housing projects in Baltimore, this chapter sequentially describes moments particular to each of these phases, from the acquisition of sites, to the occupation of public housing.\(^1\)

As opposed to earlier public housing programs in the United States, the housing projects of the 1950s and 60s welcomed families of very low income that could not afford to become either tenants or homeowners in neighborhoods such as Harlem Park, without being offered the same support that had been available in Harlem Park. The problem was that this level of support would never be offered again in Baltimore, with perhaps the exception of one neighborhood in East Baltimore. Given the scale of the housing problem then, as well as the relative slowness and mitigated success of neighborhood rehabilitation programs, rehousing slum dwellers into government-operated housing seemed like a promising course of action. Public offices naturally accepted an architecture “professing to be scientific;” an “instrument of philanthropy and liberalism”\(^4\) supposedly able to address social and health issues though

\(^1\) The Sun, “Contrast,” The Sun, January 20, 1963, 12, Baltimore Sun Archives.  
\(^2\) Already in 1944, John Kervick from the National Housing Agency maintained that 90% of the property managed by HABC was suffering from poor maintenance. See, Williams, The Politics of Public Housing, 82.  
\(^3\) The phase representing the death of the building by its physical demolition is left out as no public housing projects in Baltimore were demolished during the historical period being covered in this work.  
the construction of residential buildings. Modern Architecture and the International Style in the US married well with the Federal Housing Authority’s (FHA) guidelines, as architecture, along with urban planning, became considered as problem-solving fields.¹

As with most public housing projects in Baltimore, the McCulloh Homes Extension was built on land occupied by homes that the city deemed to be substandard.² This strategy served the twofold political agenda to eliminate slum dwellings outright, while augmenting the stock of low-cost decent housing. Between 1951 and 1965, an estimated 9,000 families were moved out of homes that stood in the paths of redevelopment projects in Baltimore.³ The authorities started to acquire properties on a site adjacent to the McCulloh Homes in order to extend this project in 1964, when over 46,000 Baltimoreans already lived in public housing citywide.⁴ Drawing on the case of the McCulloh Homes Extension, this chapter begins by examining how a typical slum clearance program was developed and carried out late into the history of public housing in Baltimore. By then, notions of civil and human rights had become significantly more developed, compared to the late 1930s when the site for the Poe Home had been cleared as rapidly as dissidents had been shut down. The civil rights movements increasingly affected political operations and the meaning of due process evolved to consider the rights of minorities on more equal grounds. Accordingly, this inquiry into the early history of the McCulloh Homes Extension also aims to uncover the claims and tactics of resistance movements that developed from the grassroots initiatives that contested slum clearance.

² As of 1960, 10 of the city’s 16 public housing projects had been built on slum-cleared land that covered a total of 146.6 acres.
³ Frank Somerville, “Renewal Moved 9,000 Families,” The Sun, June 24, 1965, 56, Baltimore Sun Archives.
The historical period that surrounded the construction of the McCulloh Homes Extension was characterized by a complete stop in the development of public housing projects, but continued efforts towards slum clearance. As The Sun paper noted in late 1969, “Baltimore ha[d] not completed a new low-income project since 1963 and ha[d] provided 1,667 new units in the past ten years.” The article added that during the same decade, “urban renewal clearance programs have uprooted more than 7,060 households, many of them poor families, and untold others have been ousted by expressways, schools and other public enterprises, often with no choice but to crowd into housing no better than what was torn down.” As the opening of the McCulloh Homes Extension marked the end of this hiatus, it came to symbolize triumph over roadblock and red tape for the Housing Authority. This project is also historically significant seeing that the McCulloh Homes Extension was the last high-rise public housing project built in Baltimore, with the exception of those erected exclusively for seniors.

At the other end of this timeline, the six high-rise buildings included in Lafayette Courts had been the first of their kind in Baltimore when this 1954 public housing project opened its doors. This chapter proposes to turn to Lafayette Courts to investigate the deployment of subsequent phases in the life of public housing projects. Starting with the design of the building and covering the first fifteen years of occupation, the presentation of this second case covers the coming to life of a typology of residential building that has been replicated time and time again. This inquiry into Lafayette Courts reports on the design phase, accounts pertaining to role of architects, a review of scientific studies designed to evaluate living conditions in this particular public housing project, as well as findings pertaining to the reasons behind the demise of Lafayette Courts as a desirable place to live. Through these two cases, this chapter aims to describe the quintessential life story of public housing buildings in Baltimore between 1954 and 1968.

The McCulloh Homes Extension

The selection of slum clearance sites has depended on factors other than the quality of properties in a given area, or of the land's position with regards to potential transportation corridors when urban renewal programs brought highways to many important American cities. As a matter of fact, slum clearance sites were also selected based on a given area's potential to become a buffer between poor inner city neighborhoods and territories inhabited by individuals or businesses wishing to maintain a distance from places where most of Baltimore's black working class lived. As architectural historians Mary Ellen Hayward & Charles Belfoure have underlined, “one of the hidden agendas of slum clearance was the prevention of black encroachment into white neighborhoods, the sites chosen for black public housing simply reinforced existing segregation patterns.”9

10 Hayward and Belfoure, The Baltimore Rowhouse, 173.
Marisela Gomez made a similar point when she argued that the thirty-nine acres Broadway Redevelopment Project that displaced 1,100 families in the 1950s allowed for the extension of Johns Hopkins; a project financed by Hopkins, local, state and federal governments.11 The site eventually provided land to house slightly more than 200 white staff members from the Johns Hopkins Hospital.12 As the deterioration of the neighborhood surrounding the Johns Hopkins Medical Institute in East Baltimore started to affect the safety and image of the hospital, the Hopkins-Broadway project redeveloped a blighted area to its own image. This process was nothing new in Baltimore, as sites selected for public housing commonly served a multilayered agenda. Already in the early 1940s, the McCulloh Homes in West Baltimore were planned to create “a splendid barrier against the encroachment of coloreds”13 on the adjacent and predominantly white neighborhood of Bolton Hill. These projects like many others eventually displaced families for intentions that included but were not limited to replacing slums by better housings, thereby providing strong grounds for contestation.

Figure 99. McCulloh Homes (right) and demarcated site for the McCulloh Homes Extension (left). Map collage using Insurance Maps of Baltimore, Maryland Volume 2, Published by the Sanborn Map Co, available from the Baltimore City Archives, and an unpublished map titled ‘McCulloh Homes Extension: preliminary property line maps,’ available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S37 Box6.

12 Jane L Keidel, “Baltimore’s Poor: City’s Attempt to Erase Slums,” The Sun, October 1, 1967, sec. F, 1, Baltimore Sun Archives. According to Keidel’s source, the number of black individuals displaced for the project was closer to 1,200.
Figure 100. McCulloh Homes during construction, c.1940. Photograph available from the Afro-American Newspaper Archives, West Baltimore Memories Exhibit, item #449. (top)

Figure 101. McCulloh Homes during construction, c.1940. Photograph available from the Afro-American Newspaper Archives, West Baltimore Memories Exhibit, item #449.

Figure 102. Family moving into the McCulloh Homes, c.1942. Photograph available from the Afro-American Newspaper Archives, West Baltimore Memories Exhibit, item #450.
Founders of New Deal programs defended the potential of public housings to augment the value of surrounding properties. "We were assured then, in the early and mid-thirties, that a subsidized housing development would have a great effect on the area surrounding it," The Sun paper wrote. Such rhetoric felt under closer scrutiny in the decades that followed when it became apparent that "nothing of the sort ha[d] happened." In fact, social scientists noted early on that the grouping of poverty-stricken families in segregated public housings reinforced ghettoization and limited opportunities for social mobility. When the city started looking for sites for new public housing units in 1961, it nevertheless decided to focus on land located directly adjacent to existing housing projects, closing a blind eye to the effect that such grouping might have in reinforcing inequity in Baltimore. Public authorities ultimately decided to place Project MD 2-23 right next to one of the city’s oldest public housing project, the McCulloh Homes.

Project MD 2-23

In December 1964, the Housing Authority of Baltimore City submitted the development program for project number MD 2-23, a 516 dwelling units project that would later be known as the McCulloh Homes Extension estimated at a cost of $10,080,620. As the City Council President called the provision of subsidized low-income housings the "No. 1 problem in the housing field in Baltimore," the McCulloh Homes Extension constituted a central element in a broader program aiming to accelerate slum clearance and public housing programs locally. The site located directly adjacent to the McCulloh Homes felt within the Mount Royal-Fremont Urban Renewal Area; a territory of 925 acres that would include slum clearance, the private development of offices (the Baltimore Life Insurance company), luxury apartments (Sutton Place), the establishment of an elementary school, as well as conservation

14 The Sun, “An Abandoned Hope,” The Sun, May 1, 1957, 16, Baltimore Sun Archives.
15 Ibid.
16 Oscar Lewis’s 1959 theory on the ‘culture of poverty’ described processes whereby the isolation of poverty-stricken families diminished individual aspiration for social and economic progress. This work influenced the pivotal 1965 study by sociologist (and later, US Senator) Patrick Moynihan, The Negro Family: A Case for National Action. Moynihan’s research used cultural and structural explanations to address the plight of low-income blacks in American cities as racism persisted. It pointed at the negative social effect of broken families in areas of concentrated poverty, claiming that the lack of nuclear family made it increasingly difficult to merge the gap between ghetto residents and the white middle class. In turn, it noted that the disproportionate preponderance of broken families in black low-income areas was a product of ghetto culture, which was in turn caused by structural inequity. These findings informed further studies associated with detrimental effects of concentrating poverty, leading to the historical Gautreaux v. HUD case, where the court decided that the clustering of public housing in racially segregated and poverty-stricken areas represented an unlawful practice for it placed residents at a social and economic disadvantage. See, Oscar Lewis, Five Families: Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty (Basic Books, 1959); Patrick Moynihan, “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action” (Washington, D. C.: US Office of Policy Planning and Research, 1965); Alexander Polikoff, Housing the Poor: The Case for Heroism (Cambridge (MA): Ballinger Publishing, 1977); Alexander Polikoff, “Gautreaux and Institutional Litigation,” Chicago-Kent Law Review 64 (1988): 451–78; John Kain and Joseph Persky, “Alternatives to the ‘Gilded Ghetto,’” National Affairs 14, no. Winter (1969): 74–87.
17 See Somerville, where he noted that most of the sites considered by the City were adjacent to exiting housing projects. Frank Somerville, “Housing Unit Sites Needed,” The Sun, May 22, 1961, 23, Baltimore Sun Archives.
18 The original McCulloh Homes Project began in 1940, it included 434 family dwelling units and was assessed to cost $2,343,290, which roughly corresponds to $5,400 per dwelling unit. See, The Sun, “Razing to Start for New Projects,” The Sun, May 8, 1940, 6, Baltimore Sun Archives.
projects. As opposed to BURHA’s earlier urban renewal project in Harlem Park, the Mount Royal-Freemont area would not include a comprehensive rehabilitation scheme, but only housing code enforcement. Families displaced for the redevelopment of this territory would instead be rehoused through conventional public housing, or asked to relocate to alternative private market properties.

For project MD 2-23, BURHA proposed to clear all structures on one side of the site for major traffic improvements and to “eliminate deteriorated structures as well as incompatible land uses.” The development program detailed the proximity of the site to employment centers, shopping malls, schools, outdoor recreation facilities, churches, welfare and child services, while also noting the feasibility to designate plots for future private housing in the hope to ‘stabilize’ the entire area. The program noted that the only facility missing in the area would be a library, suggesting that the neighborhood was otherwise well serviced.

HABC described the site selected for the McCulloh Homes Extension as a slum, with nearly all dwellings built prior to 1920, and a “field survey indicated that the housing was 100% substandard.” The term ‘substandard housing’ referred to dwellings that did not meet each of the following conditions in 1967: “a solid structure with cement basement, one window opening directly on the out-of-doors in each room, plumbing in good working condition, hot and cold running water, adequate heat for every room, safe wiring, two separate means of exit.” Other items included “well-ventilated kitchen with range, sink and plenty of storage space for cooking and utensils and food, and inside, well-ventilated bathroom and sufficient rooms to provide your family with privacy and avoid overcrowding.” To be sure, many dwellings constructed at the turn of the century failed to satisfy this list in one way or another. As Jane Keidel noted for The Sun, what constituted good housing changed quite rapidly: “what was adequate in 1950 was considered poor in 1960.”

The site for the McCulloh Homes Extension contained 323 dwellings, twenty-three commercial buildings and one church on Dolphin Street; the only structure considered as being in ‘standard condition’ according to the same site survey. The program noted:

>This site is considered to be a slum within the meaning of the Housing Act of 1949. A field survey by the Housing Authority showed that practically all of the existing dwelling units are sub-standard. The existence of deterioration, obsolescence, high density, and lack of open space make those sites an undesirable place to live."

Reporting on Mayor McKeldin’s visit of the neighborhood in 1965, The Sun’s description of Oxford Street reminded readers of the darker passages of Peter Ackroyd’s macabre description of London at the eve of the Great Plague:

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22 Housing Authority of Baltimore City, “Development Program: Project No. MD 2-23.”
23 Ibid.
26 Housing Authority of Baltimore City, “Development Program: Project No. MD 2-23.”
Figure 103. Baltimore’s areas of urban renewal. Map published in ‘Outline of Urban Renewal in Baltimore, 1961,’ available from the University of Baltimore, Langsdale Library, Special Collection, Baltimore Urban Renewal & Housing Authority.
Mayor McKeldin got a full dose of Baltimore slums at their worst: soggy litter, rats, crumbling floors and ceilings, houses milked dry of profits and left to the destructive forces of nature and the vandals, and other houses still occupied but in constant danger of falling as common walls sag with the weight of long neglect. Poverty and despair are a birthmark on Oxford street, where living conditions are ‘intolerable’ to the Mayor but where life nevertheless continues to exist.27

Other reporters at the same newspaper described individuals living within the Mount Royal Project Area in similar terms. “Generally speaking, with plenty of room for individual exceptions, they are rootless, unskilled, primitive urbanites with features as blighted as the housing they occupy.”28 Other reporters presented slum residents in more human terms, relying on interviews and conversations rather than stereotypes and sketchy data.29 Jane Keidel’s gave a voice to some residents, including a West Baltimore man who commented, “White people drive by our homes and think we don’t mind living this way because we don’t know anything better. They’re wrong.”30 Her series of report on the conditions of slums in Baltimore underlined the destitute living conditions of the poor, and also recognized that blacks generally lived this way not by choice but for lack of better options. She noted:

People who live on Bond Street, in the East Baltimore ghetto, or on Stricker Street, in the West Baltimore ghetto, live in a ‘good’ house if the doors and windows still fit tightly enough to let in only a minimum of draft in mid-February. The houses are heated either by potbellied coal stoves, considered the best way to get warmth in these decaying buildings, or by gas space heaters, which are the most expensive form of heat for tenants, but cheapest for landlords to install.31

While the jury was still out on who was to blame for the living environment in the ghetto of the 1960s, journalists and researchers like Keidel who invested time speaking with residents captured information that commonly escaped some of her colleagues. For one, a major difference existed between tenements and owner-occupied buildings, with landlords lusting for profit widening the gap between good dwellings and awful ones.

Beginning of acquisition procedures

Determined that this neighborhood should be cleared, the city initiated site acquisition proceedings in that same year of 1961. The first step consisted in a "door-to-door survey to

29 Many of the information presented as facts in Edgar Jones’s article would turn out to be wrong. For one, whereas he cited that the site was 60% black, BURHA’s door-to-door survey noted that the area was 100% black. Jones also reported that between 4,000 and 6,000 persons would be displaced by the project, which constituted in a vast overstatement as the site was home to 280 families only, and families in Baltimore were vert far from averaging 14 to 21 members.
30 Keidel, “Baltimore’s Poor: City’s Attempt to Erase Slums,” 1.
31 Ibid.
ascertain each family's size and income, and any other information that would affect its housing needs. BURHA established that all 280 families residing on the site were African American, with around 60 percent eligible for public housing. As HABC contended that "the housing market situation for Negro families [was] quite favorable with many areas now open to Negro occupancy outside of the rundown sections of the city," it suggested that this urban renewal endeavor would not be especially taxing for the 112 displaced families ineligible for public housing.

The program planned for a relocation office to be setup within the site for the convenience of residents, as required by federal regulations. Information booklets were formally distributed to each occupant and provided details on acquisition processes and relocation services available. The local relocation authority would also assume temporary management of the site, providing "minimum maintenance and health safety and collect rents weekly at the door." As city agents collected rent, they would also discuss relocation problems with each family face-to-face. They estimated that all properties occupying these 11.5 acres of land could be acquired within 24 months, with "no particular difficulties anticipated." According to them, "This area was one of the most blighted neighborhoods in the City of Baltimore, and included within it the infamous 'lung block,' so named because of the high rate of tuberculosis." BURHA and the HABC thus believed that the redevelopment of the area would not arise complaints or indignation.

The NAACP lawsuit

This assessment would prove to be inaccurate, however. The first recorded indication of resistance to reach BURHA surfaced when the City Real Estate Department notified the Housing Agency of its incapacity to acquire three properties owned by the family of Junita Mitchell Jackson, President of the State Conference of NAACP and a renowned activist and lawyer in West Baltimore. As reported in a memo addressed to BURHA Director Richard L Steiner, Mrs. Jackson and her family were requesting significantly more money than what the city was offering for one property she co-owned together with her mother, as well as two other properties on Druid Hill Avenue registered to her aunt and uncle. The author of the memo, Francis W Kuchta, Assistant Director for Development at BURHA, concluded, "Since her asking prices are so far away from our appraised prices, it appears we will have no alternative but to go to condemnation." Aware of Mrs. Jackson's influence, Kuchta prudenty added, "Before doing so, however, I thought that you should know of the situation."

Much like Mrs. Jackson's family, many other residents objected the compensation offered by

32 The Sun, "Housing Project Extended," The Sun, January 2, 1966, 94, Baltimore Sun Archives.
33 Housing Authority of Baltimore City, "Development Program: Project No. MD 2-23."
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 Francis Kuchta, "529 Dolphin Street – 1134-1136 Druid Hill Avenue, McCulloh Homes Extension (MD 2-23)" (HABC, April 10, 1966), RG48 S38 Box 10, Baltimore City Archives.
the city. The NAACP filed a complaint with the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development on behalf of five families affected by the site clearance for the McCulloh Home Extension. They were all owner-occupants and ineligible for public housing. The complainants claimed that the Agency had failed to meet federal regulations on more than one count. It developed a legal defense that aimed to defund Baltimore’s public housing program for failing to comply with federal guidelines, and as a result save the homes of each resident.38

The NAACP legal team pointed at various ways by which federal regulations were being violated as (1) BURHA failed to produce lists of available sale or rental units; (2) it regularly informed complainants of the scarcity of suitable dwellings available and nevertheless proceeded with its plan with no provision for relocation; (3) and repeatedly referred complainants to housing costing more than the families’ capacity to pay (more than 25 percent of the family’s monthly income, which corresponded to the limit prescribed by federal guideline).39 As indicated in the federal law, the “public housing administrator shall not make any contract for loans or annual contributions unless the local public housing agency has demonstrated that [the families could be relocated to] decent, safe and sanitary dwellings equal in number to the number and available to such individuals and families and reasonably accessible to their places of employment.”40

This last requirement had earned Baltimore City some reprimand from the federal in the past, when HABC cited the percentage of vacant housing in Baltimore to support its claim that displaced people could easily be relocated, despite the fact that the large majority of

39 Afro-American, “BURHA Seen Not Living Up to Law.”
40 Cited in: Ibid.
these were located in neighborhoods that still refused to rent to blacks or houses unfit for habitation. This problem had even prompted the Administrator of the Federal Housing and Home Finance Agency to travel to Baltimore and publicly speak to the importance of adequate relocation procedures. He declared, “urban renewal cannot placidly accept the movement of those it displaces to other slums – or even to areas that soon will become slums.” Robert Weaver really raised the stakes in his concluding remark: “if sufficient standards housing is not available in a community, [the Federal Housing Agency] has the obligation to hold up its operation until that housing is made available.” If some critics viewed Weaver’s position as too radical to be applied in practice, the NAACP had every intention to hold him to his words.

The NAACP lawsuit represented John Christian, who had been unable to find an adequate property to relocate with the $1,750 he had been offered for his ten rooms home located at 1010 Druid Hill Avenue. Rehabilitated properties in Harlem Park were clearly above budget, while houses in other neighborhoods threatened to be cleared for not meeting the city’s housing code standards would also sell for more than this amount. John Christian commented, “I have not received any meaningful assistance from Urban Renewal authorities in finding a home I can afford.”

Geneva and O.W. Lenitz, other complainants included in the NAACP lawsuit, detailed the ineffectiveness of relocation officials in assisting their family to find a new dwelling. They were offered $2,925 for their home by the City Department of Real Estate, which they did not accept “because it [was] substantially below the value assigned by the City for purposes of property taxation.” According to the Executive Secretary of the Property Owners Association in Baltimore, the assessed value of residential properties for tax purposes was “supposed to be 60 percent of the true market value.” In other words, the general view contended that residential properties were worth significantly more than their municipal assessment, not less.

Blanche McRae was also offered a much smaller sum for her property than the value assigned by the City Tax Department. McRae, a 70 years old retired schoolteacher represented by the NAACP lawsuit, supplemented her pension and social security payments by renting three of the four apartments contained within her house. According to her accounts, she had been unable to find anything comparable to her property on the private market with the $6,100 the city had offered. Jerome Jones, Coordinator of the Area Relocation Services had made considerable efforts on this specific case. A document noted that he had found a $6,000 dwelling (ground rent excluded, however) located at 509 Mosher Street for a structure

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1 Stuart Smith, “Capital Gets Racial Plea,” The Sun, October 31, 1962, 12, Baltimore Sun Archives.
containing three apartments.47 The dwelling was within ten minutes walking distance from her current home, with apartments counting three, five and six rooms respectively, all with a bath. As the ground rent was not included, this property was more costly than what Mrs. McRae could afford with the $6,100 offered for her home by the city, while also counting one less apartment.

Jerome Jones’s description of Mrs. McRae’s dwelling did not suggest for the retired schoolteacher’s home to be beyond repair. His report noted, “Hardwood floors are throughout the house, a fire escape to the third floor, burglar proof windows, a fire alarm system and in the basement can be found a circulatory hot water system with several burglar, moth, and fire proof closets.”48 Jones’s report also detailed a series of other additions to the dwelling, including new rooms built on new foundations, built-in bookcases, a bar and new kitchen – all of which constructing an image distinctively different than that of a slum dwelling. For Mrs. McRae, the house was worth around $13,500 – the sum for which she was willing to settle the case out of court.49 If the amount requested by Blanche McRae seemed far off from what was being offered, she nevertheless appeared to be more cooperative than her late husband, who in 1938 “stated that no amount the Housing Authority would pay could make him feel justified in giving up his home and place of medical practice.”50

An inspection report retrieved from the Department of Housing and Community Development archives indicated that Dr. Jay McRae from the City Health Department had owned the Druid Hill Avenue property before crossing the great divide. According to the report, the “house [was] too expansively built for the neighborhood,”51 perhaps because the McRae residence had been fully renovated in the weeks that preceded this inspection in 1938. The two appraisers evaluated the house at $5,059, roughly 20 percent more than the municipal assessment for property taxes that year as they already contemplated the neighborhood to be cleared in the late 1930s.52

In a letter addressed to Senator Joseph Lydings and quoted below, Mrs. McRae described the effects of the demolition work surrounding her house on her dwelling:

> My house has been included in the Urban Renewal Program in Baltimore and condemnation proceedings have been instituted over ten months ago. All but six houses in the block have been taken and boarded up and promptly vandalized. At the moment the bulldozers are demolishing the houses in the rear, creating a dust bowl. My house was ransacked and

49 Jerome Jones, “Memorandum, Mrs Blanche McRae - 1126 Druid Hill Avenue - McCulloh Homes Extension,” May 3, 1967, RG48 S37 Box 6, Baltimore City Archives.
51 USHA, “Property Assessment: 1126 Druid Hill Avenue” (USHA, November 7, 1938), 8–10, BRG48 39 28 (Microfilm), Baltimore City Archives.
52 USHA, “Property Assessment: 1126 Druid Hill Avenue.”
robbed March 11\textsuperscript{th} at about 10:30 A.M. I am losing forty-two dollars a week from tenants who have recently moved out. The Urban Renewal has offered me less than the house is assessed for. I have lived here forty-two years and had worked toward being a self-sufficient citizen in my advancing age.\textsuperscript{16}

One month after redacting this plea for reasonableness, Mrs. McRae wrote a second letter to her Senator, thanking him for acknowledging her previous correspondence and taking the opportunity to update her representative on the continuing downfall of her neighborhood:

_Since I wrote there was a hold-up and murder at the corner pharmacy in addition to a burglary of a beauty parlor. As you can imagine, I am living alone, a widow, in constant fear._\textsuperscript{17}

Warren Weaver, Chief of Relocation Services, attempted to alleviate the hardships caused by vandals and burglars by requesting the demolition of the remaining properties already acquired by the City on Etting Street. “In razing these houses, person or the police can see anyone attempting to enter the rear of any house on Druid Hill Avenue,” he noted.\textsuperscript{18} Weaver’s subordinate, Jerome Jones, responded to the many complaints concerning rats by securing ‘rat bombs’ from the exterminating squad. He concluded that “from all indication,” the operation had “been a temporary success as this nuisance ha[d been] abated.” He suggested that demolition areas should from there on be baited weekly to avoid such occurrences.\textsuperscript{19}

Meanwhile, the rapid deterioration of the site of the forthcoming McCulloh Homes Extension had convinced other complainants to re-engage in negotiations with the City, which continued to lowball proprietors like the Skinners and the Lentz. While residents resisted their community being labeled as a slum at the start of the displacement and relocation efforts, it had become decidedly hardly to defend the place as a strong neighborhood by the end of 1967 when houses stood between cleared plots, rat bombs and rubbles.

Jesse Reed, one of the original plaintiffs had accepted the might of the authority who he no longer wished to face-off. “The Reeds said the city offered them $3,337 for their home before the condemnation suit was brought against them.”\textsuperscript{20} Upon the re-appraisal of their property, the price had gone up but remained below the market rates of any dwellings that would meet city standards. Like the Skinners, Jesse and Mary Reed eventually agreed to move after the city marginally increased its original offer:

_Having been offered $ 3,800.00 for my home which was refused, I would like to make a settlement with the City for my property. This decision has been caused by vandalism, rats, and other unpleasant factors arising from demolition in the area._\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{16} Blanche McRae, “To the Honorable Senator Joseph Lydings,” June 7, 1967, RG48 S37 Box 6, Baltimore City Archives.
\textsuperscript{17} Blanche McRae, “Letter to Honorable Joseph Lydings,” July 8, 1967, RG48 S37 Box 6, Baltimore City Archives.
\textsuperscript{18} Warren W. Weaver, “Mo[norandum: Report on Home Owners – McCulloh Homes Extensions” (BURHA, July 18, 1967), RG48 S37 Box 6, Baltimore City Archives.
\textsuperscript{19} Jerome Jones, “Memorandum: Rats – 1100 Block of Druid Hill Avenue” (BURHA, December 11, 1967), RG48 S37 Box 6, Baltimore City Archives.
\textsuperscript{21} Jesse Reed, “Letter to Edgar M Ewing, October 9, 1967,” October 9, 1967, RG48 S37 Box 6, Baltimore City Archives.
The legal defense of Jesse Reed contended that his client had never been shown listings for properties within his client's ability to pay. "According to the Reeds's affidavit, a representative of the renewal agency told them that the agency's relocation office was 'handicapped in obtaining rental relocation housing because landlords charge excessive rentals to the families leaving the McCulloh Homes Extension area.'"  

59 Somerville, "Relocation Fault Found."
Figure 106. McRae residence and medical offices, 1938. Photograph digitalized from microfilm, microfilm available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number BRG48-61-2-5.
Figure 107. Letter by Blanche McRae to Senator Joseph Lydings, 8th July 1967. Document available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S37 Box6.
1110 Druid Hill Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21217
October 2, 1967

Mr. Richard L. Steiner
Executive Director
Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Agency
10 W. Calvert Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Dear Sir:

I am one of the residents of the McDowell Homes Extension Housing Project whose home is in condemnation.

Having been offered $2,950.00 for my home which was refused, I would like to make a settlement with the City for my property. This decision has been caused by vandalism, rats and other unpleasant factors arising from demolition in the area.

In view of the above, the writer wishes to settle with your Agency for five thousand dollars ($5,000.00).

Kindly advise me of any disposition in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

C. W. LENTZ

Figure 108. Letter from C.W. Lentz addressed to Richard L. Steiner, Executive Director of the Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Authority, 2nd October 1967. Document available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 537 Box6.


Taking the protest to the streets

As reported in the pages of *The Sun*, the Oxford Street Improvement Association and the Baltimore National Association for the Advancement of Colored People launched a protest and picketed against the McCulloh Homes Extension program on June 20th, 1966. Demonstrators, most of them elders, "charged that the agency was offering prices from $1,100 to $3,000 lower than the valuation placed on the homes in the 1963 city assessment." 60 Assistant Director of the Urban Renewal Rehabilitation for BURHA, Ross Sanderson Jr., stated that this was not unusual. *The Sun* quoted him, "They're being offered the fair market value in accordance with the normal city procedure for acquisition of properties in clearance areas." 61

As rumors for the next slum clearance sites started to circulate, "some homeowners fled and landlords let building fall into disrepair because of the fear of possible slum clearance projects, according to the protesters." 62 Residents thus objected to this appraisal system, where properties would be acquired at a price diluted as a result of such rumors, which was caused by slum clearance programs themselves.

Despite the eminent threat of demolition in the period leading to the announcement of the project, some owners like Mrs. McRae continued to invest in their homes, often their only significant material asset. Around five years prior to the announcement of Project MD 2-23, BURHA "encouraged homeowners to make repairs on buildings [that by 1966 were] scheduled for demolition", which added fuel to fire. 63 In all likelihood, this encouragement had come in the form of housing inspections and the subsequent enforcement of the housing code. Mildred Jones of 531 Dolphin Street had for one invested over $4,000 into her home over the 17 years she had owned it, in addition to the $6,500 paid for the property in 1949. 64 Assessed at $4,120 by the city in 1963, she was offered a total of $2,700 by the Agency two years later. She and other homeowners complained that city appraisers "didn't even enter the house," a strong argument in their charge against unfair compensations.

Meeting notes of the Oxford Street Improvement Association revealed that such cases were the norm rather than exceptions. Mr. Christian of 1010 Druid Hill Avenue was offered $1,300 for a property he had paid $3,300 and improved since the acquisition. 65 Mr. Holms had paid $900 for the ground plus another $3,500 for the house at 1104 Division Street. He was offered one half of his investment by the Department of Real Estate. Mrs. Poag of 1028 Druid Hill Avenue had spent good money in the years leading up to 1965 upgrading her house and was left with a mortgage higher than what the city offered. 66 Mrs. Skinner was caught in a similar,

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61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
64 Oxford Street Improvement Association, "Oxford Street Improvement Association: Minutes of Special Meeting," February 1, 1966, RG48 S38 Box 10, Baltimore City Archives; The Sun, "Appraisal Plan to Be Studied."
65 The Sun, "Appraisal Plan to Be Studied."
66 Oxford Street Improvement Association, "Oxford Street Improvement Association: Minutes of Special Meeting."
67 Ibid.
albeit less drastic, situation as she had been offered $1,500 for her house at 546 W. Hoffman Street on which she still owed $1,500. She had purchased the property for $3,950. But more to the point, she had rebuilt the front of the house and re-wired the entire dwelling in 1957 "at the order of BURHA for $1,080." 68

Housing evaluation processes under scrutiny

After attempting to answer complaints that purchase prices were less than reasonable, the "city's urban renewal agency reluctantly agreed to consider the possibility of re-appraising some of those properties scheduled for demolition in the McCulloh Homes renewal project." 69

By week's end, Robert Moyer, Associated Director of BURHA, sided with the tenants and voiced his disappointment with the work of evaluators hired by the Agency who had clearly been instructed to enter each home they were required to appraise. 70 These agents had been subcontracted by the city, and were not trained or career appraisers, but rather hired as "independent real estate men who went through the houses and set prices." 71

The individual failure of housing inspectors, together with the framework for financial compensation of displaced owner-residents, also troubled people high up at BURHA. In a memorandum addressed to Richard Steiner in the summer of 1966, Francis Kuchta expressed major concerns that pertained to dysfunctional compensation procedures, which had for effect to accentuate the hardship of owner-occupants that the Agency had been set out to support. Kuchta wrote:

Facts relating to repairs to the properties made by the owners and complaints that appraisers have not inspected the properties will be fully investigated. But, I am afraid that these actions will not result in solutions satisfactory to the owner-occupants. Actually I can not see a solution satisfactory to the owner-occupants within existing laws and procedures, particularly when we admit that the cheapest house for sale, meeting our requirements for safe, sanitary living conditions is $5,000 and we are offering some of these people from $2,000 to $3,000. But more important than this, is the inability of these people to pay for legal counsel and thereby go to court to contest the price being offered. 72

Having identified two major failure-points in compensation proceedings for displaced families in slum clearance and public housing development programs, Kuchta noted that it was standard procedure to compensate small businesses displaced by urban renewal projects by the fix amount of $2,500 in addition to moving expenses and real estates. "It is a payment to offset the hardships of displacement and to compensate the business for the loss of profit.

68 Ibid.
69 The Sun, "Appraisal Plan to Be Studied."
70 The Sun, "Reassessing of McCulloh Sites Backed," The Sun, June 26, 1966, sec. 28, Baltimore Sun Archives.
71 Oxford Street Improvement Association, "Oxford Street Improvement Association: Minutes of Special Meeting."
72 Francis Kuchta, "Memorandum from Francis W. Kuchta to Richard L. Steiner: Residential Displacement Payment" (HABC, July 12, 1966), RG48 S38 Box 10, Baltimore City Archives.
caused by acquisition." He added that as opposed to landlord properties, owner-occupied dwellings were generally kept in good repair, and that the values of well-kept houses were generally "being penalized in value by the environment in which the property [was] located."

Kuchta drew parallels between small businesses affected by displacement and owner-occupants affected by the neighborhood environment defined by slumlord properties and neglect at City Hall to conclude, "owner-occupants should be compensated in some way for the depreciation of value of his property due to the environment in which it is located. My initial thought," he explained, "is to have a fixed payment much like the Small Business Displacement Payment, which would be paid 100 percent by the HUD."

Steiner defended the importance to reformulate the legal procedures for acquisition processes before a Senate hearing pertaining to The Uniform Act passed by Congress in 1970. For Steiner, the "most significant feature of the extensive displacement of families ... is that for the families, it is involuntary." Still Director of BURHA in 1965, Steiner continued:

Families are being forced to move from their residence, uproot themselves from established neighborhood and cultural associations, and relocate in other accommodations at a time and under circumstances not of their choice. This they are required to do to further the common good.

While such sacrifices may have been easy to accept for families eligible for public housing and renting overpriced slum dwellings at the time, the pill was harder to swallow for families being stripped of their decent homes for financial compensations that were unmistakably unfair. These residents did not constitute the majority of people displaced, but they were no rarities either. For the McCulloh Home Extension project, they represented 40 percent of the cases.

In October of 1966, Baltimore’s renewal Chairman, Eugne M. Feinblatt, publicly spoke against the existing procedure and called for reform. He noted, "property acquisition for redevelopment has hurt home owners."

The Chairman explained that the current evaluation procedures in 1966 consisted in placing prices on property based on the recent sale prices of similar properties, and replacement costs minus depreciation. Frank Somerville detailed failure-points specific to this mechanism:

These methods of payment favor slum landlords who milk their properties while discriminating against the very homeowners who are trying to resist encroaching blight. The reason being that the sum a landlord receives for a deteriorated house is likely to be in direct proportion to

73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Frank Somerville, “City Admits Harm in Relocation,” The Sun, October 5, 1966, sec. A, 9, Baltimore Sun Archives.
the number of tenants he has crammed into it. The owner of a house in a bad neighborhood, on
the other hand, suffers because it is the location rather than the condition of the structure that
determines 'fair market value.'

Picket signs summarized well the range of complaints against the clearance program for
the McCulloh Homes Extension: 'BUHRA Will Take Our Homes for Nothing', 'We Want
Progress, but Progress with Justice', or 'We want to Live in Dignity, Not on Welfare.' Or as
one community leader recommended, it "should be necessary to rectify the urban renewal
practice of dumping residents from one slum to another."

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78 Ibid.
80 Juanita Jackson Mitchell, in The Sun, "Reassessing of McCulloh Sites Backed."
While most absentee owners remained unseen in the relocation process, around forty property owners actively resisted having their homes cleared with enough efficiency to change site acquisition and relocation procedures. Most of them were elderly, and all of them black. BURHA eventually requested for houses to be re-inspected, it encouraged owners to present bills of repairs and instructed the Department of Real Estate to take these into consideration in their reappraisals. The victories would be small for owner-occupants, however, as BURHA continued to routinely offer less than the cost of the cheapest houses available in Baltimore that satisfied the city's minimum housing standards. Families like the Skinners were eventually offered $2,200 for their properties, but the $200 increase was a pale compensation for the owners who had invested over $2,000 in home improvement (structural) in late 1959. Mrs. McRae's property was also condemned for a much lesser sum than desired. The dwelling was re-assessed for over $1,000 more than the original offer, but the evaluation of the property's land was lowered by a significant amount seeing that the neighborhood had lost in value.

From homeowner to tenant

Overall, owner-occupants were still offered amounts generally ranging from $2,000 – $3,000 for their properties. This sum would not allow residents to relocate to other housings safe from the threat of demolition, as Kutcha had rightly pointed out. For retired individuals, of which there were plenty on the site of MD 2-23, the money would also be too little for private rental housing. As a report redacted by the Research Division at BURHA in November 1966 revealed, the cost for the lowest rent standard private housing ranged between $88 for a one-bedroom, to $120 for a four-bedroom, in Baltimore. Individuals retired at the time of relocation or near retirement age, such as Mr. Christian, Mr. Young, Mrs. McRae, Mr. Roosevelt, Mrs. Lee, Mr. Skinner, Mr. Hollins and countless others would not be able to afford such prices for much more than two or three years with the payouts offered by the City.

The lack of decent affordable housing also disproved earlier claims made by real estate interests groups that asserted that the private market would respond to the local housing demand; and the corollary claim, that the government should not encroach on the housing business. While collaborations between public and private sector groups proved to be relatively successful in Harlem Park, private developers were of little help for families not poor enough for public housing, but still too poor for even the cheapest middle class developments.

In August 1969, HABC awarded a contract for the construction of the McCulloh Home Extension to the Baltimorean company Ames-Ennis, Inc. On the very same day, under the

81 Oxford Street Improvement Association, “Oxford Street Improvement Association: Minutes of Special Meeting.”
83 Francis Kuchta, “Memorandum: McCulloh Homes Extension (MD-2-23) – Letters to Mr. Robert Weaver” (BURHA, January 20, 1967), RG48 S37 Box 6, Baltimore City Archives.
84 The Sun, “Public Housing Contract Given,” The Sun, August 20, 1969, sec. C, 12, Baltimore Sun Archives.
leadership of Housing Commissioner Robert C. Embry, Jr., the City also rectified the grievance procedures for families dissatisfied with the housing agency’s relocation division. “Mr. Embry, who said the agency presently has no specially defined policy on grievance problems, said the new procedure would allow families to appeal staff-level decisions to the director of relocation, then to a specially appointed committee and then to Mr. Embry.”

Starting in 1968, Embry’s political decisions directly affected individuals affected by public housing programs for the best. The Commissioner took advantage of the 1968 Federal Housing Act, signed into law by the President in August of that year to offer slum dwellers displaced by public projects financial help in buying or renting homes in middle class county suburbs. For example, “A family with a $5,400-a-year income could buy a $12,000 house and make monthly payments of $90 – 20 percent of the family’s income – and a Federal subsidy of $9.66 would pay the remainder of the mortgage.”

Recognizing the negative effects associated with the concentration of poverty, and the rock solid segregation in ghetto neighborhoods and just outside the City in Baltimore County – where only 3 percent of the population was black in 1960 – Embry initiated procedures that eventually opened new territories for African Americans in Baltimore.

By the time that the McCulloh Homes Extension opened in May of 1971, much damage had already been done for owner-occupants displaced by urban renewal. As The Sun noted in 1961, “The bulldozer that clears the path for new apartment towers and eight-lane expressways also destroys the homes of thousands of the city’s most underprivileged families.”

Recurrent offers from the city to purchase properties below the municipal evaluation seemed difficult to rationalize, while the effect of demolition on driving down property values also appeared counterintuitive to efforts of poverty alleviation. While rehousing Baltimore’s tenement dwellers, low-income property owners were stripped of their houses; a major asset for people of any means. This forced many working-class property owners to re-enter the market as tenants or public housing residents. Fortunately for them, the McCulloh Homes Extension provided many dwellings for others like them who had also been evicted of their neighborhoods and sought residential opportunities in public housing. With its new extension, the McCulloh Homes became the largest public housing project in Baltimore with

85 Ibid.
86 The Sun, “City to Help Slum People Go to County,” The Sun, August 8, 1968, sec. C, 18, Baltimore Sun Archives.
87 Ibid., 19.
88 The extension to the McCulloh Homes would include a new, flexible space for community meetings and provisions for the elderly, which had all been left out or were deemed inadequate in the original McCulloh Homes. Dwellings ranged between 0 to 5 bedrooms, designed to accommodate small and large families in units ranging between 360 and 1320 square feet, including the last high-rise public housings still standing in Baltimore today, aside those built exclusively for senior citizens. See, Housing Authority of Baltimore City, “Development Program: Project No. MD 2-23”: The Sun, “516 Units of Public Housing Opened at McCulloh Homes,” The Sun, May 11, 1971, sec. A, Baltimore Sun Archives. The Sun, “Public Housing,” The Sun, November 10, 1971, 16. The project’s schematic design can be attributed to Mileto Architects, but the final designs are attributed to the Baltimore firm Gaudreau, Inc., which had been selected for a national award for its work with the McCulloh Homes Extension before the project even opened. See, Design Advisory Panel, “Design Advisory Panel: MD 2-23 McCulloh Homes Extension,” 24 1967, University of Baltimore Langsdale Library; The Sun, “Architect Award to Flack,” The Sun, April 27, 1969, sec. F, 7, Baltimore Sun Archives.
950 dwelling units, demoting Lafayette Courts to second place.³⁸


**Lafayette Courts**

Much like the McCulloh Homes Extension, the clearing of the site for Lafayette Courts was punctuated by setbacks, causing delays in the construction schedule. In 1952, the Virginia-based ABCD Corporation was awarded the demolition contract for 897 buildings and structures across 12 heavily built-up blocks that would become one of the largest public housing sites in the United States. Around one year after Lafayette Courts’s official opening in late 1954, the Virginia enterprise filed a suit for over $93,000 against the Housing Authority of Baltimore City.³⁹ The plaintiffs maintained that HABC did not make the dwellings available for wrecking at the time agreed, and that the "Housing Authority failed to place watchmen at the site and took no steps to prevent the fixtures from vandalism," which ABCD should have


³⁹ ABCD Corporation, Bill of Complaint C.A. No. 8684: Claim for $93,676.79 For Breach of Contract (n.d.).
been able to salvage and resell as partial compensation for their work.\footnote{The Sun, “Wreckers Suing Housing Agency,” The Sun, January 18, 1956, 39, Baltimore Sun Archives.}

According to the Bill of Complaint, HABC had mislead the contractor by asserting that the City would be able to acquire all properties affected by the demolition contract on this 21.5 acres site, with no resistance and with ease:

\begin{quote}
The bidders were informed by the defendant that the buildings encumbering said 102 lots would be immediately available for demolition at the time notice to proceed was given. As to the remaining 795 buildings and structures for demolition at the date of award, defendant alone well knew, misrepresented and withheld from the bidders the fact that it was experiencing major difficulties in acquiring title and possession thereto and vacancy thereof, and that it would be many months after the contract completion date before it could possibly succeed in acquiring title to and possession of all of said buildings, – all contrary to the assurances given by defendant to plaintiff just prior to signing of the contract.\footnote{ABCD Corporation, Bill of Complaint C.A. No. 8684: Claim for $93,676.79 For Breach of Contract, 5 (n.d.).}
\end{quote}

Demolition work commenced on December 6th, 1952, less than two weeks after the contract was awarded. Initially agreeing to complete the work in 120 days, the wrecking company soon realized that HABC only held property rights for around 12 percent of the buildings and structures at that time. The Housing Agency expected ABCD to take down dwellings located next to or between occupied structures, failing to acknowledge the extra precautions required for this piecemeal approach. If this method would entail significant delays for the demolition of detached dwellings, the approach would be entirely untenable for rowhouses, where party walls would need to be reinforced for the remaining units to be structurally safe.

Relying heavily on the power of eminent domain, the expedient political machine in place was ultimately successful in gaining possession of the remaining structures. ABCD ultimately fulfilled its contract within 384 days, more than three times longer than originally planned, but nevertheless relatively rapidly given the scale of the task at stake. In fact, this timeline suggests that HABC had been able to acquire nearly 800 contiguous properties in less than one year. One thing is sure, if hostility towards slum clearance existed since the days of the first public housing project in Baltimore, the potency of resistance movement dramatically increased during the decade that separated the construction of Lafayette Courts and the extension of the McCulloh Homes.

Lafayette Courts became one of the most significant public housing projects in Baltimore for reasons that included its scale, social and typological significance. Located next to the 1941-built Douglass Homes\footnote{The Douglass Homes is the second oldest public housing project in Baltimore.} and the 11.3 acres construction site for Flag House, a public housing project that opened weeks after Lafayette Courts, these three adjacent estates occupied a 43.3 acres site – the equivalent of nearly 25 FIFA regulation soccer pitches, or 36 American Football fields – where more than 9,000 Baltimoreans would eventually live in 1956, amounting to
roughly 1 percent of Baltimore City’s total population at the time. Lafayette Courts would also be the first high-rise public housing projects in Baltimore, as well as the first project opened to individuals of all races. If this public housing project could be read as the materialization of social and technological advancements in the mid 1950s, few Baltimoreans would associate Lafayette Courts with the notion of progress today.

As the Baltimore-based journalist and author Rafael Alvarez noted, “The [Lexington] Terrace and the Murphy Homes – called the Murder Homes by long-suffering residents – were twenty-four-hour drug markets beyond the capacity of the city to police. The Eastside high-rises – Lafayette Courts and Flag House – were equally impenetrable.” Depicted as dystopian drug-dens in the local press, pop literature and the widely watched HBO program The Wire, high-rise public housings in Baltimore have indeed been the host of significant problems. Lafayette Courts’s residents have regularly been confronted to living conditions imposed upon them by street individuals, who normalized violence, criminality, drugs sale and drug use. These conflicted agents problematized social relations in Lafayette Courts; a place that had once been perceived as heterotopic, seeing that public housing initially offered a plateau of stability to its residents amid a poor inner city where antiquated ways of life prevailed for the poor, especially so in black neighborhoods.

Figure 111. Site of Lafayette Courts after clearing, 1954. Standalone photograph published in The Sun, 8th October 1954, page 36.

95 BURHA Research Division, “Fact Sheet on Public Housing, Baltimore, Maryland, January 1, 1965” (BURHA, January 1, 1965), Special Collection, BNI Series 6, Box 1, University of Baltimore Langsdale Library. The BURHA factsheets indicated that 9,168 individuals lived in these 3 housing projects in 1965, and that the total number of units corresponded to the number of units in 1956, suggesting that the total population remained practically unchanged seeing that family size dictated the eligibility for specific unit sizes.

Figure 112. Site plan diagram, Lafayette Courts, undated. Unpublished plan available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S14 Box22.
Figure 113. Lafayette Courts during construction, looking southeast from Lexington and Asquith Streets, 15th August 1954. Photograph available from the Afro-American Newspaper Archives, East Baltimore Memories Exhibit, item #316.

Figure 114. Map of Lafayette Courts and neighboring public housing projects, 1955. Published in The Evening Sun, cover, 2nd June 1955, available at Maryland Historical Society, call number B370.
Design and construction

Lafayette Courts was designed by the Baltimore-based firm of Fisher, Williams, Nes & Campbell. This studio was a successor of the office of Edward L. Palmer, Jr., the architect for the Roland Park Company in the 1910s and 1920s who designed upscale segregated neighborhoods in the northern part of the Baltimore. Under the name Fisher, Williams, Nes & Campbell, the office produced major projects such as the current building of the Department of Geography and Environmental Engineering of the Johns Hopkins University (Ames Hall, built in 1957). The firm is also responsible for the addition to the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Building (1966), three separate schools in Maryland, and the current School of Architecture building at Princeton University (1963). Lafayette Courts, with its 816 dwelling units spread across seven two-story buildings, ten three-story buildings and six eleven-story buildings, totaling 3,898 rooms, would expectedly be the firm’s largest undertaking.

Fisher, Williams, Nes & Campbell designed what the HABC asked of them for Lafayette Courts; a mix of low and high buildings that would quickly capture the attention of residents and the media alike. As The Sun paper proclaimed, “Changing East Baltimore’s skyline, six eleven-story buildings that dwarf the adjacent Belair Market and surrounding structures are taking final shape in the $7,592,728 slum-clearance project known as Lafayette Courts.”

The site for project MD 2-15, or Lafayette Courts, occupied a rectangular parameter of four blocks by three blocks, where only twenty-three buildings were to be built. The eastward portion of the site was occupied by two and three-story dwellings (building units Type D and E respectively) that resembled the Douglass Homes located directly across the street. These were laid out to frame courtyard spaces rather than to relate with the street. This large block would also be the chosen location for a newly built central heating plan engineered to power the two new public housing projects in the area as well as surrounding properties.

At the center of the site, the plan included an oversize block with one three-story building, two two-story buildings and one eleven-story building aligned to form a U-shape framing Lafayette Courts’s widest play field (play area number 5). This arrangement closely resembled ’the pit’ from HBO’s The Wire, where D’Angelo Barksdale was regularly seen resting on an abandoned orange sofa, eyes peeled on the drug operations he oversaw. Directly north of the field: a community building was erected where the HABC administration would also hold offices.

97 Hall’s Cross Roads Elementary School, Harford County in 1957; Edgewood Junior-Junior High School in Harford County in 1957; and Edgewood High School in Baltimore County in 1955.
100 HABC, “Project Physical Characteristics: Lafayette Courts” (HABC, June 1953), RG48 S14 Box 23, Baltimore City Archives.
101 The Sun, “11-Story Slum Clearance Building Near Completion.”
In the spirit of the time, when it was customary for architects to design bespoke furniture for particular architectural projects, Fisher, Williams, Nes & Campbell engaged in the meticulous task to draw-up each element to be included in the open play area. Architectural plans for the playground included construction drawings for benches and game tables, a concrete airplane, a tunnel slide, and a pipe tunnel. It identified the location for the two basketball courts, the paddle tennis table, a wading pool, horseshoe courts, playground swings and catwalks climbers.

The west-most portion of the site was by far the densest area of the estate. It included a mix of residential structures, low and high, as well as small and medium size play areas. There stood a single mega block of roughly 400 by 200 meters, instead of three separate city-blocks that had existed at that very location prior to 1952. As with the rest of the site, the building footprints seemed neither influenced by the structures or the streets it had replaced, nor by the new streets created for Lafayette Courts. Structures were instead aligned to frame open-spaces as Lafayette Courts stood in a typical ghetto neighborhood in East Baltimore, poor in parks and play areas.

The low-rise structures were designed with the quintessential Baltimore rowhouse in mind, but included major variations that separated these public housing units from their private market counterparts. The two and three-story buildings in Lafayette Courts were organized in a way that encouraged social interactions to happen in open-spaces rather than on the front stoop. While each dwelling unit was designed with its own entrance, these were located on all four sides of the building, thereby complicating the hierarchy between the front and back facade. As a result, some structures such as building Unit-D, with twelve individuals apartments, would have eight entrances on what appeared to be the front facade, one entrance on each side, and two units with entrances on the back facade. This layout required residents to reach the dwellings by going around the building, walking through narrow passages and eventually enter their homes via accesses facing dark spaces devoid of automobile traffic and most other types of natural surveillance generally offered to street-front properties. This design satisfied other objectives, however, such as maintaining cost to a low and maximizing the spaces of each dwelling unit by reducing the use of interior corridors. The private entrance also supported privacy, thereby reducing opportunities for conflict between neighbors to arise.

The architects also developed unexpected entrance designs for the high-rise buildings at Lafayette Courts. Half of the six tall structures were facing a street, one building was located with its back to the street, and the remaining two were located in the middle of a block, with no apparent relation to the world existing outside their walls. Each high-rise building was designed with a clear front facade, but entrances would be at the back, independently of the building’s orientation. Residents and visitors could walk through a passage accessible from the front of the building to reach the back of the structure, and follow an outdoor circulation corridor that would lead to staircases and elevators.
Each dwelling units located in Lafayette Courts’s towers were the width of the building, allowing for cross ventilation and maximizing the polyvalence of space by having circulation corridors double as balconies. The balcony-corridors were closed off by metal fences, which created a distinctive appearance from the more polished front facade. As *The Sun* paper explained to its readers, “The design is such that each floor comprises a group of row houses, looking out on an open corridor – the equivalent of a sidewalk.” As opposed to rowhouses, however, the apartments of Lafayette Courts’s high buildings would unfold as single floor units. They would vary between one and two bedrooms, all matched with a common living-dining space, and a separate kitchen and toilet.

Built of concrete frames filled with cement blocks, Lafayette Courts offered little protection from the relatively cold Baltimore winters to its residents. The designs for the pre-cast concrete floor slabs did not include any insulation barrier whatsoever, nor were any added by Standard Construction, the Washington company hired to build what the architects had drawn. This construction details made it particularly easy for the cold to transfer from the balcony-corridor and into the dwelling, as the outdoor and indoor floors were really made of the same uninterrupted concrete slab. This design flaw exacerbated the heating costs for the Housing Authority; it decreased the comfort of residents and increased the workload of project manager, who would constantly have to answer to complaints regarding the heating of dwelling units, or apparent lack thereof. Beyond faulty architectural details, the poor construction quality further exacerbated problems related to maintenance and upkeeps.

Other design features proved more successful, like the tot-lot play areas that were included on each floor of the high-rise buildings. Centrally located, these would be visible from each apartment, allowing parents to keep an eye on their young from the balcony-corridor. This mirrored the relation that the street had played for families used to live in rowhouses, where parents could watch on the young’uns while carrying out domestic choirs. The tot-lot were initially designed for the use of “children who [were] not able to operate automatic elevators,” and could thus not reach the much more expansive play spaces that separated each building on the grounds of Lafayette Courts.

Reporters and pioneer residents generally described the site and building in laudatory terms. Journalists used different words and headlines to highlight the grandiose ‘penthouse view’ that residents of the upper floor units would have in the high-rise buildings. HABC brochures publicized the modern amenities, fully equipped kitchens and modern bathrooms located within each unit. It highlighted building facilities, including the two elevators that would serve each building as well as the coin-operated washing machines and dryers located

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103 Lafayette Courts contained 110 1-bedroom units; 412 2-bedrooms units; 252 3-bedrooms units; and 42 4-bedroom units. See, Daniel M. Wilner et al., *The Housing Environment and Family Life: A Longitudinal Study of the Effects of Housing on Morbidity and Mental Health* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), 37.


105 *The Sun,* “2 Elevator-Type Housing Projects Described,” 1.

throughout the project. These apparent banal devices were then a luxury that only few of Lafayette Courts's first residents had possessed in their previous dwellings. The towers that afforded “$50-a-week laborers a penthouse view of the harbor and the downtown area” offered desirable accommodations, even if these were only intended as stepping-stones apartments for tenants working their way to private market dwellings.

Figure 115. Blueprint, playground layout and details for Lafayette Courts, 5th May 1953. Plans created by Fisher, Williams, Nes & Campbell Architects, microfilm available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number BRG48-61-4-4.
Figure 116. Site plan, Lafayette Courts. Available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S14 Box22.
Figure 117. Blueprint, utility and topographic map for Lafayette Courts, showing the planned buildings and the existing buildings and streets before clearance, 1st January 1953. Map created by the Housing Authority of Baltimore City, microfilm available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number BRG48-61-4-4.
Figure 118. Blueprint, elevations building types D and E, 5th May 1953. Plans created by Fisher, Williams, Nes & Campbell Architects, microfilm available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number BRG48-61-4-4.
Figure 119. Blueprint, floor plans buildings type D and E, 5th May 1953. Plans created by Fisher, Williams, Nes & Campbell Architects, microfilm available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number BRG48-61-4-4.

Figure 120. Blueprint, typical plan for building type Y, Lafayette Courts, 5th May 1953. Plans created by Fisher, Williams, Nes & Campbell Architects, microfilm available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number BRG48-61-4-4.
West Lily of Building X-X

Sections Thru Counter

Details of Business Counter - Administration & Tenant
Figure 121. Blueprint, elevation building type X, Lafayette Courts, 5th May 1953. Plans created by Fisher, Williams, Nes & Campbell Architects, microfilm available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number BRG48-61-4-4.
Figure 122. Lafayette Courts high-rise building, front facade, undated. Photograph available from the Afro-American Newspaper Archives, East Baltimore Memories Exhibit, item #317.

Figure 123. Lafayette Courts high-rise building, back facade. Photograph available from archplanbaltimore.blogspot.com
Figure 124. Blueprint, typical wall sections building types X and Y, Lafayette Courts, 5th May 1953. Plans created by Fisher, Williams, Nes & Campbell Architects, microfilm available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number BRG48-61-4-4.
Figure 125. Peeling paint and window isolation reinforced with newspaper on an eleventh floor unit in Lafayette Courts, seven years after project completion, 1963. Photograph available from the Afro-American Newspaper Archives, East Baltimore Memories Exhibit, item #323.

Figure 126. High-Rises at Lafayette Courts, pending the installation of heating systems before official opening. Photograph published in the Afro-American Newspaper, 12th February 1955.

Figure 127. "Rooms with a View," 1955. Published in The Sun, 3rd April 1955.
Figure 128. Photograph of Lafayette Courts by Richard Stacks for The Sun. This photograph has been used many times by the newspaper, including for an article titled 'The Changing City: The Organizers,' published on 14th July 1970.

Figure 129. Lafayette Courts at the eve of the official opening, c.1954.
**Initial occupation: demographic composition**

In 1955, *The Sun* reported, “The Housing Authority of Baltimore City yesterday began interviews with applicants for the newly-opened Lafayette Courts and by mid-afternoon, three of the five families interviewed, all Negro, were in the process of moving into their new homes.”\(^{108}\) All three families had been living in a temporary war housing project of Freemont Avenue that had by then become a slum clearance site of its own. When East and West Baltimoreans interviewed to become tenants in Lafayette Courts, housing manager Van Story Branch described to prospective residents what would be “their obligation to the people of Baltimore, their responsibilities as citizens and the rules and regulations of the project.”\(^{109}\) The main themes discussed pertained to housekeeping, the discipline of children and eligibility rules for public housing. Interviews continued for weeks after as the housing authority had over 2,200 applications on file for around one third as many units.\(^{110}\) Priority would be given to the “500 families who lived in the slum neighborhood which was cleared away for the new construction.”\(^{111}\)

As the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling of May 1954 marked the end of an era for segregationist states; HABC adjusted its racial policies and designated Lafayette Courts as the city’s first desegregated public housing. “These apartments [were] the first newly opened since desegregation was announced,”\(^{112}\) and the “first one of its kind to open locally on an interracial basis,”\(^{113}\) *The Sun* highlighted. HABC later received the Sidney Hollander Foundation Award for supporting social progress through its efforts in Lafayette Courts, with the trustees citing the “removal of barriers among neighbors through voluntary and effective integration in public housing occupancy” as the achievement worthy of the award.\(^{114}\) If HABC had indeed lifted the institutional barriers preventing integration, cultural roadblocks grounded in racial prejudices remained alive and well.

The national conversation pertaining to the desegregation of public housing was largely influenced by the *Banks v. San Francisco Housing Authority* case,\(^{115}\) where the Court of Appeal of California ruled that it was “illegal for the Housing Authority to apply any policy in which race or color played part, thereby, by implication at the very least, condemning the practice of ‘separation of races’.”\(^{116}\) When the Supreme Court refused to review the ruling, the action was widely considered as signifying that the highest federal court in the United States supported

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109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
111 Ibid.
112 *The Sun*, “Tenants Soon in High Homes.”
113 Ibid.
115 *The Sun*, “New Housing Unit Nears Completion,” 18.
118 Eugene Feinblatt, “Housing Authority of Baltimore City: Segregation in Public Housing.” A Report to the Commissioners of the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (Baltimore: HABC, 1954), 1, RG48 S13 Box 5, Baltimore Sun Archives.
the California decision. As Eugene M. Feinblatt noted, “Without question, the decision in the Banks case made law, which, to date, anyway, the decision of the Supreme Court do not require.” As the Brown v. Board case had been decidedly based solely on sociological and psychological studies that demonstrated that segregation was detrimental to education opportunities, Feinblatt perceived the ruling in Banks as indicating that the courts would reach similar conclusions for cases relating to housing. While the California decision would only become law within the state, Feinblatt noted that it was a matter of time before similar conclusions would be reached in other states:

Even if it be assumed that segregated projects are in and of themselves legal, the present policy applicable to the admission and assignment to units of applicants is certainly discriminatory and illegal. This policy is a direct result of reserving certain projects in their entirety for Negroes and certain projects for whites.

As examples of mixed blocks and neighborhoods were slowly emerging around Baltimore, and much more rapidly in neighboring Northern States, HABC with its segregationist policy could “certainly no longer be consider itself as being in the van of social progress in the community.” Because of this legal precedent and Baltimore’s established concern to closely follow Northern States with regards to racial policies, HABC adopted a new policy on 25th 1954 that reflected the concerns and recommendations presented in Feinblatt’s report.

According to Dwight Warren, a resident at Lafayette Courts, there were white families amongst the pioneer tenants at Lafayette, but they quickly moved out, as they felt racially overwhelmed. A report published in the same week as HABC announced the end of segregation noted that each of the 816 units available in Lafayette Courts was occupied by black tenants.

Roughly ten years later, a decade after the official end of segregation in public housing, Lafayette Courts had one unit occupied by a white family, and 800 occupied by blacks.

117 Eugene Feinblatt was a notable counselor in Baltimore. He served as the legal advisor for generations of mayors in Baltimore, from the early 1950s until the end of William Donald Schaefer’s administration in 1987.

118 Feinblatt, “Housing Authority of Baltimore City: Segregation in Public Housing.”

119 Ibid., 8.

120 Ibid.

121 The interest of Baltimore’s public programs to not drag to far behind in matters of racial equity was demonstrated in the Board of Education’s decision to desegregate schools following the Brown v. Board ruling and before the official Supreme Court opinion on this case, which was scheduled for the fall of 1954. See, Oliver Winston, “Report on the Racial Occupancy Policies of the Housing Authority of Baltimore City” (Baltimore: HABC, June 24, 1954), 4, RG48 S13 Box 5, Baltimore City Archives. The Commissioners of the Housing Authority of Baltimore City unanimously adopted a resolution in favor of desegregation on June 29, 1954; and the new policy took effect on June 30, 1954. See, Background Notes on Desegregation Policy for Use in Planning and Executing Training Program to Be Conducted as Part of Applying Policy (Baltimore: HABC, 1954), 1, RG48 S13 Box 5, Baltimore City Archives.


124 HABC, “Project Tabulations: Project Occupancy at June 30, 1964” (HABC, June 30, 1964), RG48 S13 Box 5, Baltimore City Archives. The remaining 15 units were unoccupied at the time of the survey. Data is also available for the year 1963 for Lafayette Courts and the Douglass Homes combined, with 1,195 units marked as being occupied by black families and 2 units by whites. See, Steiner, Richard, “Project Tenant Selection Policy,” May 3, 1963, RG48 S13 Box 5, Baltimore City Archives.
The Housing Authority of Baltimore City has examined the effects and implications of recent legal decisions affecting segregation upon the operation of the Authority’s low-rent projects. Note also has been taken of the significant decisions reached in educational and religious fields in Baltimore and other communities abandoning former practices of segregation.

The Authority has concluded that its present racial occupancy policies cannot be administered to satisfy legal requirements and still be workable, acceptable, and practical. Nor is the present policy compatible with the trends that are taking place in other fields.

Accordingly, the Authority has decided to revise its policy so as to eliminate race as one of the factors governing the admission of families to the low-rent projects it owns and operates. Administrative arrangements are being undertaken to effectuate this change of policy.
Figure 131. Racial composition of Lafayette Courts prior to desegregation, referring to Lafayette Courts as a ‘Negro Project,’ June 1954. Unpublished document available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S13 Box5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>White Families</th>
<th>Black Families</th>
<th>Total Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lafayette</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pershing</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flag House</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vest Port</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>429</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Families in Lafayette Projects as of Sept. 26, 1962: 2,499

Figure 133. Racial composition of Lafayette Courts, exactly ten years after desegregation, June 1964. Unpublished document available from the Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S13 Box5.
If racial integration in public housing would prove to be a difficult policy to apply in practice, Lafayette Courts succeeded in many other respects and persisted as an attractive option for low-income families. Three months after the inauguration of the housing project, a field inspection report indicated vandalism to be the most significant problem in Lafayette Courts; a relatively minor nuisance.\textsuperscript{125} The Housing Authority dispatched an inspector to assess the physical condition of the site at around the same time. The inspection report noted, “The projects feels that at least fifty percent of the area in front of Building E-9 should be hard surfaced so that children could use it to skate and ride bicycles.” It continued, “They also feel that the same kind of an area should be installed between Buildings Y-1 and X-2. The children are using the walkways at present time but have damaged the lawn area adjacent to the walkways to some extent.”\textsuperscript{126} These recommendations would be the only ones that the report would make. The play areas of the Lafayette Courts offered too much lawn and too little paved play space for the sort of games its young residents were accustomed to.

The low apartments, which opened months before the high-rises, played their parts in reducing the extensive waiting list for larger families unable to find housing they could afford on the private market.\textsuperscript{127} These structures included apartments on two levels in the two-story structures (building unit Type D) and superimposed two-level units above single level units in the three-story structures (building unit Type E).\textsuperscript{128} The two-story structures were equipped with four-bedrooms apartments. These allowed larger families to benefit from public housing, whereas such households had previously been bigger than the maximum size allowed for three-bedrooms apartments; the largest that the Housing Agency previously offered.

The particular size of apartments available in Lafayette Courts affected the demographic composition of this public housing project, which was significantly different than in older projects, such as the Poe Homes or the original McCulloh Homes. One study conducted by the Research Division at BURHA in 1962 differentiated between five types of families: standard, broken, adult, elderly and single-person family.\textsuperscript{129} According to the data, almost half of the apartments in the Poe Homes and McCulloh Homes were occupied by elderly couples and single-person families.\textsuperscript{130} In contrast, only 8 percent of the units in Lafayette Courts corresponded to these two categories. On the other hand, whereas roughly 45 percent of the units in the two older housing projects included children (standard and broken family dwellings), the proportion in Lafayette Courts was closer to 90 percent.\textsuperscript{130} Moreover, while

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{127} The Sun, “2 Elevator-Type Housing Projects Described,” 1.
\textsuperscript{128} In Buildings Type E, the one-level apartments had 2 bedrooms, and the two-levels apartment had 3-bedrooms.
\textsuperscript{129} The study noted that for the “elderly” category was reserved for two-people dwellings, whereas a single elderly person would be considered as a “single-person family.”
\textsuperscript{130} The data is for 1961. The exact data being, 48.9% for the Poe Homes and 43.9% for the McCulloh Homes, BURHA Research Division, “Types of Families Living in Baltimore’s Low-Rent Projects, 1951-1961” (Baltimore: BURHA, September 1962), Maryland Collection, Enoch Pratt Free Library.
\textsuperscript{131} The exact data being, 43.9% for the Poe Homes, 47.8% for the McCulloh Homes and 88.6% for Lafayette Courts. In all three projects, the split between standard and broken families was relatively stable, with roughly as many standard families as broken families.
the number of broken families in many of Baltimore's older projects such as the Poe Homes, McCulloh Homes and the Douglass Homes was declining, the inverse phenomenon was being recorded in Lafayette Courts. Between 1957 and 1961, the percentage of broken families in this particular project augmented from 35.6 to 43.5 percent, the latter corresponding to 356 dwelling units.\footnote{132}

In 1954, the HABC commissioned an internal research report written for the purpose of assisting the Housing Agency to select suitable black families as first tenants in integrated, formerly all-white public housings. The authors suggested selection criteria that discriminated against broken families. The report noted, “the family should consist of parents with young children, or an adult family consisting of a young couple, or a stable group of adults.” It concluded, “broken families should be avoided.”\footnote{133} As the general tone of the guideline made it clear that selected families should contribute towards breaking negative racial stereotype by fitting in, showing no sign of adversity and no history of difficulties, the discrimination against broken families indicated that HABC recognized in 1954 that single parent families were at a disadvantage. Nevertheless, HABC decided to concentrate broken families as well as large families in new public housing projects, such as Lafayette Courts.

\footnote{132} Ibid.  
\footnote{133} Morton Hoffman, “Selecting Families for Transfer in Desegregation Program” (Research and Statistic Division, Baltimore City, September 21, 1954), RG48 S13 Box 5, Baltimore City Archives.
Initial occupation: morbidity and social health

In the mid 1950s, the Johns Hopkins University hosted an interdisciplinary research group that undertook a major research project designed to assess the effects of housing on morbidity and mental health. The $500,000 longitudinal study followed 400 test families (2,000 individuals) from their place of residence in “slum locations” through their new environments in Lafayette Courts. The study asked, “Is the range of variation of the housing quality that prevails significantly related to medical and social pathology?” For comparative purposes, 600 control families were also included in the study, which would not be rehoused in public housing and “occupied deteriorated dwellings characteristic of the slums.” Between 1955 and 1958, the researchers documented environmental impacts through a range of indicators by testing each family every ten weeks, six months before the move and eighteen months after. Overall, the study spanned over a three-year period, it originally included approximately 1,000 families (5,000 person), and each of them was African American.

The Johns Hopkins team started by reviewing existing research pertaining to the relationship between housing and health. Looking at 40 specifically pertinent research projects, the investigators observed that most of the work reviewed demonstrated a direct correlation between the quality of dwellings and health, and an inverse correlation between quality dwellings and social maladjustments. The team noted, however, that these studies failed to isolate significant variables, which made it difficult to prove causality between housing and health conditions. They noted, “in many instances, an equally plausible relationship could very likely be demonstrated between health and many correlates of housing quality, such as education, income, or general cultural level.” Public housing therefore represented an unprecedented opportunity to further the state of research in this field, as residents in places like the Lafayette Courts were generally equal to individuals living in slum areas in terms of socioeconomic, political and cultural capital. Moreover, the substantial size of the test and control groups allowed the scientists at Hopkins to achieve convincing results embedded with the capacity to inform subsequent urban and housing policy countrywide.

As expected by the research team, the sample was reduced by around 13 percent as a result of loosing track of subjects who moved especially frequently in the control group. Unexpectedly, however, many families from the control groups were eventually relocated to public housings or moved into decent private housing during the course of the study. The final sample group was thus reduced to 300 test families (1,341 persons) and 300 control families (1,349 person), “well-matched on a number of demographic, initial health and initial adjustment

134 The project team included Daniel Wilner (School of Public Health, UCLA), Rosabelle Price Walkley (School of Public Health, UCLA), Thomas Pinkerton (Department of Biophysics, The Johns Hopkins University), and Matthew Tayback (Baltimore City Health Department and school of Hygiene and Public Health, The Johns Hopkins University).
136 Wilner et al., The Housing Environment and Family Life, 23.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid., 241.
139 Ibid., 241.
The results the team presented were based on these adjusted samples. They pertained to three separate topics: morbidity, social health and education.

On the topic of morbidity, the study observed improvements for families relocated to Lafayette Courts, with “males under 20 years of age as a group appearing to show the greatest effects ... both in rates of episodes and days of disability.” The study also demonstrated that “accidents were one-third lower in the housing project as contrasted with the slum.” This data indicated that the living environment in Lafayette Courts's low and high-rise apartments were safer for children by an order of magnitude. The data for persons 35-59 of age proved less convincing as they felt to confirm the general hypothesis, that relocated individuals would fare better than those living in slums. It appeared that with age, individuals had learnt to cope with the nuisance of the slum. But overall, “tests persons of all ages tended to be freer of illness than control persons, more so for males than for females.”

The study’s results pertaining to social health were reported on six different areas that covered questions ranging from the appreciation of residential spaces, the quality of social interactions, to psychological states. The data confirmed many of the researchers’ expectations. The investigators noted:

“\[A\] larger proportion of test than control women liked their apartments, were satisfied with the safety of their children’s play area, felt they were getting their money’s worth in rent, found more chance of personal privacy and reported less friction and dissension directly related to space.”

The Hopkins team explained that their hypothesis had been based on a number of spatial factors that they considered as being conducive to the formation of relationships. They noted that the dwelling floor plans provided many opportunities for daily contact, possibly referring to the presence of a common room in each dwelling, which served as a living-dining space. They noted that the sufficient area within the domestic space and “the existence of facilities used in common and under non-competitive circumstances,” further reduced the opportunities for conflict to arise. As a result of these improvements on personal spaces, the researchers rightly predicted that rehoused families would become more likely to engage in social interaction and welcome exchanges of the supportive variety, “such as helping out with household activities, with children, and in time of illness.” Overall, to the question “How do you like your apartment?” 13.9 percent of families answered ‘a lot’ before moving, compared

140 Ibid., 242.
141 Ibid., 244.
142 Ibid., 242.
143 Ibid., 246.
144 Jones, “Environment Impact Studied in City By Hopkins to Determine Effect of Housing on Health.”
145 Wilner et al., The Housing Environment and Family Life, 248.
146 Ibid., 249.
to 69.2 percent after moving to Lafayette Courts.\textsuperscript{147} Only 2.4 percent of the test group felt that places where children played were 'not safe,' in comparison to 42.2 percent of the control group.

For matters concerning attitudes and behavioral changes towards the neighborhood and the community, the study reported findings that revealed mild test-control differences. Relocated residents "showed more pride in their immediate neighborhoods than did control respondents, reported more activities devoted to keeping up the neighborhood, and gave far more favorable views regarding its adequacy as a place to live and to raise children."\textsuperscript{148} The differences between both groups were relatively minor, however, suggesting that good design only had a minimal effect on behavior and attitude.\textsuperscript{149}

The researchers had also hypothesized that test families would perceive to have achieved an upward movement in social status as a result of moving to Lafayette Courts; a psychological transformation generally associated with altered occupations and income. This proposition was partially confirmed as respondents indicated that they felt that their position in life had improved, and "reported themselves as rising in the world."\textsuperscript{150} The test group also recorded slight improvement on psychological health, with data indicating Lafayette Courts residents to be less nervous, more committed to self-help, more optimistic and more satisfied with personal states of affairs.\textsuperscript{151}

The last matrix pertained to the social health of pioneer residents in Lafayette Courts with regards to the school performance of children. As the authors of the study explained, the housing variable expected to most directly affect school results was the density of dwelling units. Being lower for the test children, the Hopkins team expected their environment to "provide greater opportunity to study and to do homework unhindered by interruptions from other family members."\textsuperscript{152} To a lesser extent, the researchers also felt that test children would be guided by higher morals, increased life aspirations and better attendance rates, the latter resulting from taking fewer days of medical leave. They selected a sample of around 300 test children and 300 control children, who had scored similarly in three aptitude tests designed to evaluate intelligence, arithmetic skills and reading achievements.\textsuperscript{153} The mean test scores showed that children at similar grade levels achieved similar results after two school years, independently of their places of residence. After closer examination of the results, the team realized that Lafayette Courts pupils were more likely to be promoted at a normal pace than

\textsuperscript{148} Wilner et al., The Housing Environment and Family Life, 250.
\textsuperscript{149} It is uncertain whether these improvements should be attributed to better designs or the additional space (lower density) in Lafayette Courts compared to slum residences, as these variables were not isolated in the study.
\textsuperscript{150} Wilner et al., The Housing Environment and Family Life, 250.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 203–9.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 251.
\textsuperscript{153} The exact size of the sample was 293 test children against 287 control children. The tests were the Kuhlmann-Anderson and Otis test to evaluate intelligence; the Metropolitan and Stanford test to evaluate arithmetic skills; and the Iowa, Metropolitan, and Stanford tests for reading achievements.
their counterparts from the control group, thus confirming the original hypothesis. In effect, whereas 82 percent of test children were being promoted at the normal pace, only 68 percent of children in Baltimore’s inner city slums were moving on at the expected rate.\footnote{Wilner et al., The Housing Environment and Family Life, 235.}

Overall, the results of this study suggested that families relocated to Lafayette Courts – a large scale public housing project with disproportionate rates of broken families, with no racial or economic diversity to speak of, and constructed as a mix of low and high-rise buildings arranged as an enclave turning its back to surrounding neighborhoods – offered a better environment than slum neighborhoods in public health, psychological and social terms. As the study concluded, “when test families moved into the housing development, the quality of housing improved markedly for them; former deficiencies such as lack of hot water, sharing of facilities, crowding, lack of central heating, and infestation were wiped out.”\footnote{Wilner et al., “Housing as an Environmental Factor in Mental Health: The Johns Hopkins Longitudinal Study,” 56.} If some of the initial promises of this symbolic public housing project were not borne out in the Hopkins investigation, this longitudinal study suggested that the negative effects associated with moving to Lafayette Courts were few and far in between, and largely overshadowed by the positive effects. According to these findings, individuals displaced from their inner city homes for slum clearance projects, and eligible for public housing appeared to benefit from this particular urban renewal initiative in the early 1960s. Contradicting this conclusion, however, pioneer residents of Lafayette Courts had become increasingly likely to file requests for transfers out of this high-rise public housing project by the time that Daniel Wilner and his team published the full results of their research in 1962.\footnote{While requests for transfers became increasingly common from 1973 onwards, documents conserved in the Baltimore City Archives suggest that the phenomenon was initiated within the historical period covered in this work, namely the late 1960s.}

Figure 135. Living-dining space in Lafayette Courts, c.1956. Photograph available from the Afro-American Newspaper Archives, East Baltimore Memories Exhibit, item #326.
Figure 136. Social event at Lafayette Courts, c.1956. Photograph available from the Afro-American Newspaper Archives, East Baltimore Memories Exhibit, item #319.

Figure 137. Children standing in the balcony-corridor at Lafayette Courts, c.1960. Photograph available from the Afro-American Newspaper Archives, East Baltimore Memories Exhibit, item #339.
Deterioration

Requests to transfer away from Lafayette Courts commonly alluded to basic problems pertaining to security, maintenance, social disorder and un-neighborly behaviors. The growing dissatisfaction with public housing in Baltimore has been documented and conserved in the Baltimore City Archives and the Baltimore Sun Archives. These archives hold documents that point at some of the specific reasons behind the desire to leave Lafayette Courts; a place that one of the brightest interdisciplinary research team in the country had just recently reported as being socially and physically supportive.

Two days after Christmas of 1959, The Sun published a short report on the rape of a teenager in the 200 block of North Aisquith Street. The 15-year old girl “said she stepped into the elevator of the big apartment building and was accosted by a Negro at 3:30 A.M. He forced the young Negro girl to ride with him to the sixth floor, shoved her out and committed his rape,” in the hallway of a Lafayette Courts high-rise building.\textsuperscript{157}

On January 4\textsuperscript{th}, 1963, another Lafayette Courts resident, Mrs. Shirley Spencer, wrote to her mayor:

> I would like to transfer from 1364 E Fayette St. Projects to any were else in the city, as I can't afford a house of high rent, and this neighborhood is affecting me and my children physically and mentally. She added, Mr. Goodman I like the projects alright but not this neighborhood.\textsuperscript{158}

Her request was denied. According to the HABC Director, Richard L. Steiner, “The Lafayette Courts neighborhood [was] not different from the neighborhoods in which all of our projects are located.”\textsuperscript{159} As Mrs. Spencer failed to substantiate her claim with examples, Steiner was quick to dismiss her demand. Letters from other residents, such as William Simmons proved more helpful in depicting some of the major obstacles one could face in this public housing project. In his request for a transfer to a public housing other than Lafayette Courts, he wrote:

> I have been having trouble in this unit with the neighbors since June of 1962 when the neighbor and his sons and daughter beat up my brother and his wife and the neighbor has been threatening to do me bodily harm up until August the 14\textsuperscript{th} when I had him called to court the judge dismissed the case because I did not have any witness. ... on the evening of July 29\textsuperscript{th} this neighbor had threatened to send his gang in my house...\textsuperscript{160}

The 1960s represented an important historical period of social transformation countrywide in the United States, with strong implications with regards to the evolution of delinquent groups. If, as Manuel Castells pointed out, the police has been very quick in labeling any groups of young minority men hanging out on corners as ‘gangs’ in the years leading up to

\textsuperscript{157} The Sun, “Girl, 15, Tells Police of Being Raped,” The Sun, December 27, 1959, sec. 20, Baltimore Sun Archives.


civil rights movement, proper criminal gangs did become increasingly present during this period. As opposed to contemporary mega-gangs for whom it is common to have a hold on all aspects of the underground and criminal economy, street gangs in the 1960s tended to be smaller and specialize in a single trade, thereby limiting the opportunities for conflict to arise between underground organizations. Gangs increasingly dealt with narcotics as the heroin trade rapidly expanded in rich and poor neighborhoods alike, but disproportionately affected ghetto residents as a result of biased policing. As the drug policy scholar Kathleen Frydl noted, “imprisonment bore a relation to different enforcement strategies and not to illicit drug use per se.” The testimony of Judge Jonah Goldstein in 1956 supported this point specifically:

_In the 24 years of my judicial service I have never had a rich narcotic user brought before me, nor have I heard of a rich narcotic user brought into the criminal court before any other judge. Yet there is no doubt in my mind that there are rich users._

The judge’s assessment has since been proven correct. Drug addiction not only affected soldiers returning from the Korean War and jobless inner city men, but housewives, upstanding citizens, and high profile political figures as well. The availability and purity of heroin in Korea and later in Vietnam had been reported as being highly problematic for the US army as drug use affected many soldiers during their deployment overseas, and affected their life back in the United States upon their return from duty. A soldier from the 24th Infantry active in Korea and Japan noted that solders appreciated extremely cheap drugs for their use in Kobe, Japan. He estimated in 1951 that 30% of the army personnel from the 24th Infantry Regiment became addicted to drugs during their military service.

The evolution of gangs, no doubt a phenomenon influenced by race-based structural inequalities, played a part in fuelling another divide, which separated inner city residents between those invested with the virtues of mainstream society (i.e. usually but not exclusively a white, middle class society), and those accepting to be excluded from it. This separation of what urban sociologist Elijah Anderson has conceptualized as a dichotomy between ‘decent

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161 Manuel Castells, _The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements_ (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 134. Castells refers to groups of individuals having dropped-out of school and that appear to be unable to invest their energy constructively, but does not describe them as engaging in any criminally organized behavior. The individuals he describes, and criticizes the police for labeling as ‘gangs’ by noting that they were “hastily” designated as such, seems to correspond to a group of “hoodlums,” such as defined by Elijah Anderson, rather than a gang. See, Elijah Anderson, _A Place on the Corner_ (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).


164 The Sun paper emphasized how widespread the drug problem had been in Baltimore, particularly in relation to heroin. See _The Sun, “Doctor’s Son Stole from Kin to Support His Dope Habit,” The Sun, October 26, 1966, sec. CC, 12, Baltimore City Archives; Nicholas Shuman, “American Tragedy,” The Sun, My 1952, sec. TM, 12, Baltimore City Archives._

families’ and ‘street families’ unsettled social relationships in public housing and in ghetto neighborhoods, where the projects were almost exclusively being located. The expansion of street gangs coincided with dramatic increases in criminal homicide in Baltimore City starting in the mid 1960s. The yearly homicide count augmented from 141 in 1965 to 187 in 1966, with the rate of unsolved cases rising from 9 percent to 22 percent, suggesting that offenders had become increasingly professional. Of those arrested between 1960 and 1964, 502 had been black and 124 white. Around one-third of homicides committed during this same period were motivated by “altercation of relatively trivial origin, insult, curse, jostling, etc.”

The nature of everyday life in places most directly affected by gangs was further exacerbated by a series of other factors, which concerned topics ranging from the maintenance of buildings, the concentration and intensification of poverty, and broader socio-political dimensions as well. This matrix of negative forces effectively stigmatized public housing together with the individuals living in them. By removing the people’s pride to live in Lafayette Courts and the Housing Authority’s pride to have created them in the first place, public housing embarked on downward spiral that started before the McCulloh Homes Extension even opened its doors. In 1966, Mrs. Phyllis Patillo wrote to former Lafayette Courts Manager, Van Story Branch, who had overseen this project from the moment of its inception:

It is a disgrace the way the buildings are kept here. The only place that gets scrubbed is the first floor lobby and that is not very often. The elevator lobbies on the other floors are filthy and they stay that way. ... When you were our manager at least we did not have to be ashamed to live in the projects, now the people who live here do nothing to keep it up and the maintenance do less yet. ... We still have decent people that have to live in the projects and I wish every one would understand this.

Mrs. Patillo received a response in the weeks that followed. According to its unnamed author, “The spillage of garbage in the aforementioned areas has always been a problem, and, though we clean these areas at least once a day, there are always those who, because of their indifference and lack of concern for others, create an unwholesome situation.” Many residents wrote to inquire about malfunctioning elevators, which would become particularly problematic for top floors residents as paramedics refused to climb up ten levels for patients in need. The problem steered in part from the fact that the income generated by public housing rents was lower than operating costs. As the cost of rent varied in accordance to the income of a unit’s residents, the preponderance of very low income families versus lower-

168 Ibid., 17.
169 Ibid., 49.
170 Goldstein, “Traffic In and Control of Narcotics, Barbiturates, and Amphetamines,” 529.
middle class families in Baltimore’s public housing starting in the 1960s meant that buildings would deteriorate at a quicker rate than the city could afford to fix them. As Van Story Branch explained, Management Director for the Department of Housing and Community Development in 1969:

Since the authority’s income is based on rent, insufficient funds are available to meet rising costs of maintenance. Unless operating subsidies are provided, services and upkeep will be threatened with serious deterioration.\(^{173}\)

Besides the rise of problems related to the material condition of buildings, social issues also expanded to become common and graver. For example, some residents presented written complaints pertaining to armed attacks between neighbors:

At approximately 7:00 P.M. on September 16, 1970, David Nickelson was shot three times with a 38 caliber automatic [weapon]. The shooting was allegedly done by a person whose nickname is 'Stump'. This same person, 'Stump' allegedly lives at 1035 Orleans Street, Apartment 2-K [in Lafayette Courts].\(^{174}\)

As a report redacted by the housing manager regarding this incident noted, the shooting resulted from the escalation of a fight between the sister of David Nickelson, Charlista, and 'Stump's daughter, LaJuan Jacobs. It noted that Charlista's mother sent her older daughter Deborah to stop the fight, at which point Stump began to hit both young ladies. David Nickelson intervened, reportedly asking Stump to stop hitting and choking his older sister, Deborah. Both parties walked off, seemingly agreeing that the fight was over and called the quarrel settled. For Stump, however, the matter still needed resolving. As David Nickelson was standing by the project's fence chatting with friends that evening, Stump reappeared to fire seven shots at the man:

Following the firing of the shots 'Mogg Daddy' driving a white car with Stump with him attempted to catch Mrs. Nickelson's youngest daughter, Jo Ann. They were not successful. She ran up Aisquith Street to Latrobe and escaped the two men.\(^{175}\)

This incident demonstrates ways by which banal situations could become climactic in environments where juvenile quarrels could quickly take a turn for the worst. Another memorandum from 1967 reported on the rape of a teenage girl by her neighbors, four teenage boys, leaving the victim badly swollen with two eyes blacken and nearly shut closed. Violence between children, including attacks on babies, had for effect to reinforce sentiments of insecurity in this public housing project:


\(^{175}\) Ibid.
My sister has had to take [her children] to the hospital because of children fighting on them. Her son Donnell will carry scars on his face for the rest of his life, (which won’t be long if you don’t get them out of there). Because some boys from another floor kicked him in the face. Her little girl Donna had to be taken to the hospital in June because of internal bleeding from her vagina. She is only 5 years old. ... The boys down there are very bad and nasty they have even beaten up the baby Angel and she is only two years old.176

The projects remained a decent place to get started according to some residents, thus arguably serving their purposes as public housings in the United States were always meant to be temporary living arrangements; stepping stones between slum dwellings and low-cost private market apartments. Lafayette Courts continued to satisfy residents like Glenn Jackson, 21, who appreciated that public housing allowed him and his wife to share a house; a luxury that the young couple could otherwise not afford. Recently discharged from serving in Vietnam in 1967, he perceived life in public housing as a temporary arrangement and an unlikely place to raise a family. “This is a pretty nice place to get started at. I like the apartment itself, you know. If you could take the apartment and put it someplace else, it would be pretty nice (he laughs).”177 The Sun journalist had walked up nine flights of stairs to reach Mr. Jackson for this interview as “a few young women and 9,000 children waited for two elevators that never came” on that hot summer night.178

Shirley Evans, also 21 year-old, presented herself as being positive despite the many shortcomings and a fair deal of serious problems in Lafayette Courts. In a profile piece for The Sun, she was quoted describing the improvements that public housing have had on her life:

This is a fine place to live because you have your lighting, you have heat, you have hot water, it’s an easy place to keep clean. And for instance if you live in the slums ... I lived on Caroline Street. And we had a wood stove. And now I don’t have to be bothered about goin’ to the store and gettin’ wood. The house was too cold. You could see the cold comin’ through the walls.179

Notwithstanding her favorable views on the opportunity to inhabit a modern dwelling fitted with matching amenities at a cost she could afford, Shirley Evans was clear on her preference for low-rise housing. As with other Lafayette Courts residents, she described the elevators and staircases in troubling terms. The danger associated with these spaces turned entering and exiting the project into an undesirable and stressful ritual, especially for women:

I was getting’ on the elevators (she laughs), a man was getting’ on behind me and he tried, you know, to grab me on the elevator. It’s very unsafe here for the women that’s stayin’ alone. I walk the steps most of the time, but it’s no different. You can get grabbed on the steps. There

178 Ibid., 4.
179 Shirley Evans, in Dilts, “Housing Project Life in Baltimore.”
was a lot of loiterin' on the steps, people goin' to sleep on the steps. ... All kinds of drunks and everybody else come in there, sleep and drink, so they took the doors off thinkin' that when the wind hit 'em a couple of times, they would leave (she laughs).

Amid the deteriorating climate of Lafayette Courts, many residents remained involved in community life and invested time they sometimes had not for changing their environment for the best. In October 1968, the Organization for Social and Technical Innovation (OSTI), a non-profit "engaged in the design and implementation of strategies for social change," chose Lafayette Courts to pilot a program aiming to empower residents. As one community organizer explained, “My job is to organize people around things they want. Where they start controlling pieces of the operation – I call that a tenant management operation.”

Lafayette Courts had been identified to have rent and juvenile delinquency problems. The non-profit had hoped that ownership over managing operations by the tenant as well as programs targeting kids and teenagers could help address such issues as well as other malfunctioning aspects of the housing project. Lafayette Courts's population was then estimated at nearly 3,600 persons, including over 2,550 minors. Around 75 percent of the families were headed by women, 68 percent were on welfare, with yearly income per family averaging $2,963 according to the U.S Census of 1970, the equivalence of $18,000 today.

By the late 1960s, the notion that public housing represented a temporary solution was not widely accepted. As the OSTI initiative suggests, residents would stay in Lafayette Courts for long enough to become invested in transforming the project, become involved in its management and so forth. Stephen Bennett wrote in 1965, "Public housing, once mainly a temporary refuge for the poor, has become a permanent institution in Baltimore for a growing number of people with few chances to 'graduate'."

If crime was not confined to the wall of public housing, criminal and liminal practices appeared to have had a stronger effect in the projects where the stigma never left. As Rafael Alvarez noted for The Sun, it is true that high-rise projects were particularly hard to police, especially from the late 1970s onwards when gangs became more influential. A potential explanation as to why high-rise public housing increasingly became associated with crime and violence may be attributed to the density of offences that occurred in singular buildings, irrelevantly of whether the number and gravity of unlawful acts in proportion to the resident population was greater than in surrounding areas.

Dear Mr. Branch,

I am writing you in reference to the conditions of the apartments where I live. I live in the Lafayette Court Buildings, on the ninth floor. We have garbage in the inductor lobby that has been there since last Tuesday. It is a disgrace the way the buildings are kept here. The only place that gets scrubbed in the first floor lobby and that is not very often. The elevators upstairs on the other floors are filthy and they stay that way.

I don't know who is suppose to be keeping the building clean, but if the manager would tell the men working here to stay out of the apartments on this floor, maybe a little more time could be devoted to their jobs. I have complained to Mr. Mitchell and the Maintenance Shop about the trash and filth, each time they have someone to clean it up, but I do not see why tenants have to wait five or six days and complain before anything is done.

I realize that every manager does things differently. When you were our manager at least we did not have to be ashamed to live in the projects, now the people who live here do nothing to keep it up and the maintenance do less yet. I realize the garbage should never be put down in the lobby, but for the people who do not care about living in filth they should be reminded by a knock on their door or through meetings. We still have decent people that have to live in the projects and I wish everyone would understand this.

Knowing that you will do everything in your power to correct this situation, I am thanking you. I do wish that my name be held in your confidence because I have to live here.

Sincerely,

Phyllis Patillo

Receipt

FEB 15 1966

Baltimore City Archives, call number RG48 S14 Box23.
A recent Baltimore study of mobility decisions identified unique coping mechanisms that ghetto residents developed to make their life spaces appear more manageable. The researchers noted, "More than 40 percent of the [participants of the 'Moving to Opportunity' program] broke down their neighborhoods by blocks when talking about safety, and most did not make connections between crime in the larger neighborhood and that on their single block." This practice that the researchers referred to as 'telescoping' led residents to phenomenologically distance places that in reality were very near, especially when these places are perceived as being dangerous. Describing her neighborhood in West Baltimore, a resident commented:

"For the most part, this block seems to be kind of quiet. Now, the blocks up the street...when you get on those blocks up there, that's when you get a lot of drug activity and stuff like that. It's like, when you leave this block, you go into a whole other somethin'."

Whether telescoping also takes place in situations where crimes are being committed above or below one's dwelling remains unanswered. In all likelihood, the fact that the media rarely differentiated between the several buildings that formed public housing projects further contributed to the stigma attached to names like 'Lafayette Courts,' 'Lexington Terraces,' the 'Murphy Homes,' and others. This stigma, in turn, expectedly problematized telescoping practices for public housing residents and the public at large, who eventually developed the perception that crime represented a graver problem in public housings than in neighborhoods where these projects were located. Whether this belief reflected reality or not, this perception alone accelerated the propagation of prejudices.

Discussion & Analysis

As sociologist Loïc Wacquant points out, assembling "in one place a population homogeneous in its dispossession also has the effect of accentuating dispossession." If this observation can be corroborated through this historical overview of Lafayette Courts, accounts pertaining to the McCulloh Homes Extension have demonstrated that processes of dispossession were set in motion before public housing projects were even built. In fact, the annals presented in this chapter have shown that public housing in Baltimore has alienated residents from the idealized American way of life in three distinctive ways: firstly by removing residents from their homes; secondly, by grouping individuals of similarly low socioeconomic status together; and thirdly, by creating residential enclaves that were not integrated with inner city neighborhoods, where public housing projects have been located almost exclusively prior to 1969.

184 The 'Moving to Opportunity' program was a social experiment funded by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development that invited families eligible for public housing to receive rent vouchers that they could use in privately owned units throughout their city. These could even be used beyond the administrative limits of the city in neighboring suburbs. This demonstration program was developed in the 1990s and administered by local housing authorities in Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles and New York City.

185 Peter Rosenblatt and Stefanie DeLuca, "'We Don't Live Outside, We Live in Here': Neighborhood and Residential Mobility Decisions Among Low-Income Families," City & Community 11, no. 3 (2012): 271.


If the initial success of public housing reported in the Johns Hopkins study confirmed the hypothesis that modern dwellings were indeed healthier than slum dwellings, the short-lived success of Lafayette Courts suggests that providing housing alone would only offer short-term effects. Even as public housing residents gained access to modern dwellings, their economic life and social status as racial minorities remained unquestionably sub-standard.

De-housing and ownership

The experimental project in Harlem Park was grounded in the belief that homeownership was central to the construction of strong neighborhoods. Diametrically opposed to this approach, the deployment of slum clearance and public housing programs in Baltimore reduced the number of owner-occupants throughout ghetto neighborhoods. As the City regularly offered petty payouts to individuals whose dwellings lay on the path of forthcoming public housing project, many of the families displaced were forced to relocate to neighborhoods in which they had no ties, and where they would not become homeowners again. This practice had the effect of lowering the sense of belonging for thousands of residents, which reduced their likelihood to be involved in community life. This strategy has had another major negative aftermath as it economically crippled working-class residents by refusing them the opportunity to create revenue from the sale of their houses; the asset in which much of their surplus incomes had been pored over the course of their lives. By turning property owners into tenants, BURHA created a situation where many working-class families came to depend on their government to satisfy their housing needs, whereas they had been able to fend for themselves in the past.

As Herbert Gans observed during his study of development and relocation programs in Boston during the 1950s, American redevelopment planning “proceeded on the assumption that relocation [was] secondary to redevelopment.” Accordingly, Gans argued, great pains were taken to devise ways to clear land and design subsequent urban environments, “but plans for the present occupants of the site [were] treated as by-products of the redevelopment proposal.”

This myopic attitude towards the elimination of blight inadvertently had working-class families subsidize the redevelopment of the inner city through involuntary payments in the form of property sales below fair prices, psychological costs, time costs, as well as social costs occurred from dissolution of local networks.

Concentration poverty

While the relocation of ex-homeowners to public housings introduced socioeconomic diversity to the projects, the majority of tenants remained unified by their low social and economic status and their race, especially for projects built from the 1950s onwards. Changes in the demographic composition of public housing population corresponded with the introduction

of high-rise public housings in Baltimore. As Lafayette Courts included apartments with larger floor plans, the ratio of children to adults increased drastically compared to older projects. As a result, this shift also turned Lafayette Courts into an unlikely place for seniors to live – loud and crowded with children and adolescents – which would eventually deprive this public housing community from important social pillars and figureheads. If the introduction of larger units created invaluable opportunities for many larger families, the concentration of four-bedrooms apartments into specific projects proved to be detrimental to their social construct.189

Seeing that ratio of potential bread earners to dependents was being reduced by a factor of around 50 percent in single-parent families compared to nuclear families, the likelihood for poverty increased. As Oscar Lewis had already theorized in 1959, living in poverty has the effect to diminish individual aspirations for social and economic progress.189 Other studies have since demonstrated that clustering individuals unified by their low economic status and race limits the likelihood for vertical socioeconomic mobility to occur.190 These significant findings have justified the United States Supreme Court ruling in the pivotal Gautreaux v. HUD case, which declared it illegal to cluster public housing projects in low-income and racially segregated areas.191 To be sure, such concentration reinforced existing structural pressures that also played a part in distancing poor minority residents from the spatial imaginary of mainstream society.

Other policies participated to the socioeconomic isolation of public housing residents, such as the eviction of tenants whose income increased above a certain level, or the relocation of seniors to projects built exclusively for the elderlies. The particular selection criteria for Lafayette Courts tenants encouraged uniformity rather than diversity. As Habraken pointed out, “uniformity will always mean an emphasis on the greatest common factor,”192 which in this particular project included, poverty, race and family structure. This triad of common traits fuelled the transformation of traditional ghetto culture into the culture of the hyperghetto, where the goals and aspirations of an increasing number of individuals no longer align with those of society at large.193

Separating public housings from the inner city

The physical form of public housing projects like Lafayette Courts limited the opportunity for interactions between HABC tenants and other inner city residents. If the Gautreaux case convincingly demonstrated that public housing projects had been deliberately located

189 There were 1,542 families already residing in public housing and awaiting to be transferred to larger units in 1965. See, Bennett, “Public Housing More and More a Way of Life,” 33.
190 Lewis, Five Families.
192 Pollikoff, “Gautreaux and Institutional Litigation.”
194 For a discussion regarding the differences between the aspirations of ‘street families’ versus ‘decent families,’ see Anderson, Code of the Street.
in marginalized neighborhoods in Chicago (a similar class action suit was filed and won in Baltimore years later, in Thompson v. HUD), the architectural language of Lafayette eventually reduced the likelihood for projects residents to interact with their slightly less poor neighbors living around public housings. As the inner city of Baltimore was depleted of open spaces and large parks in the 1950s, the Housing Authority decided to design Lafayette Courts and other similar projects with plenty of green areas. Admittedly, only twenty-four buildings were included on the 21.5 acres of Lafayette Courts, leaving a major portion of the land to be designated for recreational programming. As these areas were contained between public housing buildings, they remained closed off and uninviting to neighborhood residents residing outside the project. The vast land would have been large enough to accommodate various public parks, opened to all Baltimoreans, which residents of surrounding neighborhoods could have also enjoyed. However, the desire to create modern places where domestic as well as recreational life could unfold in a desirable manner inadvertently subdivided the broader inner city community into two: those living in public housing projects and those that were not. Public housings effectively defined new edges in Baltimore, which later served the unforeseen purpose of marking the limits of territories within which distinctive criminal fractions would operate.

As most advocates of the support paradigm would agree, “It is very questionable whether society can permit the responsibility for housing to be taken out of the hands of the individual,” with the exception of situations of emergency. According to Habraken, “the opposite of mass housing should be our aim,” “people should be given all possible help in the execution of their task, but it is decidedly wrong to relieve them of it altogether.” This philosophy is grounded in the belief that housing should not be heteronomous, and that poor people have little to no interest in living in housing typologies specific to low-income groups. As Nabeel Hamdi noted, “most poor people spend most of their lives being special in slums, shanties, or public housing projects; what they really want is to be ordinary.” By easing the phenomenological association between public housing dwellings, poverty, race and dysfunction, the iconic high-rises of Lafayette Courts accentuated the negative effects created by these unintended relationships. Meanwhile, as the body of estranged public housing residents expanded amid shrinking federal and local budgets for social security, the prospective of having to provide housing through subsequent government offices unprepared to honor New Deal ambitions went unchecked.

196 Habraken, The Urban International Press, 48.
197 Ibid., 49.
198 Hamdi, Housing without Houses, 85.
In 1956, BURHA developed a survey designed to shed some light over some of the main reasons why eligible families were willingly leaving public housing in Baltimore. The study was published the following year. It revealed that more than half of the families in two of the first all-white projects to open to blacks did not want to live with African Americans. In public housing like in the privately owned residential areas, racial and economic prejudice discouraged Baltimore’s white residents to embrace racial co-habitation as a desirable living condition. As national and local conversations regarding the viability of the ‘separate but equal’ doctrine evolved into a contentious and heated debate, white Baltimoreans were eventually enlisted in one of two camps: those resisting integration, and those resisting segregation.

The majority of Baltimore County residents believed that racial integration was to be avoided at all cost. Under the political influence of Dale Anderson, Baltimore County effectively closed as many doors as it could to black citizens. As Baltimore County formed a horseshoe around Baltimore City, the politics of housing in this administrative territory significantly affected the living condition of blacks within the city by closing off neighborhoods to the expanding African American population in the region.

At the other end of the spectrum, inner city black Baltimoreans vigorously resisted segregation and race-based social inequity more broadly when they took the street in April of 1968 following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. Somewhere along this continuum between diligent integrationists and diehard segregationists stood various communities and interest groups, including speculators and real estate men that aimed to monetize racial prejudices using sales tactics known as blockbusting; tactics that would later be criminalized.

Using cases specific to various forms and degrees of resistance pertaining to the question of racial integration, this chapter aims to illustrate co-existing social conditions especially relevant to the question of housing for blacks in Baltimore’s late 1950s and 1960s. Whereas the three previous chapters centered on the politics of residential spaces in the inner city ghetto neighborhoods, this chapter provides an overview of residential choices for blacks elsewhere in the Baltimore Metropolitan Region in order to understand what other options existed outside established African American enclaves.

1 BURHA, Why Eligible Families Leave Public Housing, Baltimore, Maryland (Baltimore: BURHA, 1957), CPHA Series 1, Box 22, University of Baltimore Langsdale Library.
The private market and the rise of a black middle class

Studies pertaining to the housing conditions for blacks in Baltimore in the 1950 and 1960s suggested that racial integration would be imminent given the expanding demand for housing by blacks. A housing market analysis dating from 1965 found that over 24 percent of blacks renters resided in overcrowded housing, as opposed to around 9 percent of whites. According to the same study, major race-based discrepancies also existed in the owner-occupied market, with 13 percent of blacks living in overcrowded conditions, against just under 4 percent of whites.

Moreover, renter-occupied units were nearly three times more likely to be in substandard conditions for blacks, and two and half times more likely to be deficient in one way or another. Public housing played a major part in reducing the statistical disparity between white and nonwhite living conditions seeing that around 10 percent of rental units occupied by black families were in city-owned housing projects. Operated by local governments, these dwellings would be neither overcrowded or in substandard conditions, albeit, public housing had problems of their own.

If more and more black families would become owner-occupants between the 1950s and 1960s, the construction industry nevertheless perpetuated a tradition of housing discrimination by neglecting the demand for minority groups. The percentage of owner-occupied housing units for blacks augmented from 24 percent in 1950 to just over 34 percent in 1960, but of the new dwellings constructed during this decade, few targeted this fast growing market. To be sure, the higher socioeconomic standing of middle class blacks meant that many more members of the African American community could afford decent housing in Baltimore, while developers uncritically held to the conviction that blacks were pleased with second-hand housing. This misguided belief cost developers some major profits as the black population increased at a much faster rate than the white population during this period, with the black middle class making notable progress. Admittedly, between 1940 and 1960, the black population of Baltimore City increased by 97 percent, while the white population decreased by 12 percent.

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2 The study defined ‘overcrowded housing’ as units containing more than one person per room. The study noted that overcrowding tended to increase the median income per dwelling seeing that overcrowded units were generally inhabited by more than one family. Nevertheless, nonwhite dwellings spent a much higher ratio of their income on rent, with 38.8% spending more than 35% of their income versus 22.1% of white households spending more than 35% of their income on rent. The study used the term nonwhite and blacks interchangeably, seeing that 99.1% of nonwhites in Baltimore were black in 1960, when this survey was conducted.

3 The exact proportions being 24.4% and 9.4% respectively.

4 The exact number of whites living in overcrowded conditions was reported to be 3.8%. Morton Hoffman and Company, Urban and Economic Consultants, "Housing Market Analysis for Baltimore Community Renewal Program: Monograph IV: Housing for Nonwhite Families, Baltimore City," BURHA Commissioned (Baltimore: BURHA, August 1965), 3.

5 Percentage of substandard dwelling units for blacks was 14.7% versus 5.6% for whites. Percentage of deficient dwelling units for blacks was 41.1% versus 16.3% for whites. See, Ibid.

6 BURHA, Quarterly Statistical Bulletin, 4th Quarter, 1959 (Baltimore: BURHA, 1959), Baltimore City Archives.

7 The size of the market was even greater seeing that the total number of blacks in Baltimore increased during this decade at a much larger rate than the white population. To be sure, the 24% market share represented 12,525 households in 1950, while the 34.3% figure represented 27,628 units in 1960. See, Morton Hoffman and Company, Urban and Economic Consultants, "Housing Market Analysis for Baltimore Community Renewal Program: Monograph IV: Housing for Nonwhite Families, Baltimore City," 12.

8 BURHA Research Division, "Negro Housing Movement in the Past 20 Years in Baltimore City" (BURHA, November 27, 1961), Special Collections, Baltimore Neighborhoods Integrated Collection (BNI), Series VI, Box 1, University of Baltimore Langsdale Library.
As the market nevertheless continued to concentrate on the housing needs of whites almost exclusively, few of the housing built in the 1950s were opened to blacks. Out of the 39,000 new dwellings built in Baltimore City between 1950 and 1960, blacks occupied only 4,733 of these at the time of the 1960 Census. This included a total of over 3,000 rental units, over 96 percent of which being located in public housing projects. In other words, around 12 percent of the units built throughout this decade were occupied by blacks in 1960; with only 4.7 percent living in privately built units, and 7.4 percent in public housings. Overall, blacks represented roughly one third of the population in Baltimore City.

As sociologist Karl Tauber noted in his study of residential segregation in cities, three principle causes could explain why blacks lived separately from whites: choice, poverty and discrimination. This chapter centers on what Tauber identified to be the strongest of these factors, discrimination, and reports on the mechanics at work in maintaining race-based prejudice that indirectly affected the housing options for inner city residents.

**Blockbusting and its Discontent**

In 1959, the *Saturday Evening Post* published an article titled “When a Negro Moves Next Door.” The piece reported on the small community of Ashburton in northwestern Baltimore, which had fallen prey to realtors and speculators particularly involved in the unscrupulous practice of blockbusting. The news story described how broader economic rules embedded in a discriminatory culture, as well as scare-tactics from real estate men colluded to work against racial integration. Ellsworth E. Rosen, a white Ashburton resident commented:

*The color of my neighbor’s skin does not bother me at all. His income and behavior are just about the same as mine. But the economic threat his presence has created for me, and for the entire community, is disturbing. A lot of people who live somewhere else have assumed that our pleasant, middle-class neighborhood is headed for all-Negro occupancy and rapid deterioration as properties pass from financially strong hands to less responsible ownership. ... ‘The dark cloud,’ we were told, ‘had descended.’*

Rosen was skeptical of this warning against the presumed negative effect that racial changes would have on his neighborhood. Speaking on the behalf of his community, he maintained: “a mixture of white and Negro families is both inevitable and compatible with good living, and

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12. Melvin J. Sykes described Ashburton as a “suburban-type neighborhood only fifteen minutes drive from downtown. Tall trees line the streets. The houses, built twenty to twenty-five years ago, are almost all single-family, detached dwellings, well kept, with ample land and gardens.” See, Ibid.
we have succeeded, after quite a struggle, in proving our point to date.”

Notwithstanding, Rosen recognized that blockbusters were successful in achieving their goals to incite fear in white homeowners, who would then sell their houses as fast as they would hear that their neighborhood was becoming bi-racial. The result was the eventual transformation of all white neighborhoods into all black neighborhoods.

**Fear, prejudice and blockbusting**

While early blockbusters took advantage of situations where black buyers would move into all white blocks, more scrupulous ones planted black families in white areas to alter property prices before encouraging other black families to join in as legitimate buyers. By the late 1950s, the term ‘blockbusting’ became more readily associated with this second category. In Rosen’s words, “Block-busting, incidentally, in its simplest form consists of placing on a street a family whose class or race excites fear or prejudice in the neighbors, and then deliberately exploiting this prejudice to create panic and to depress real estate values.” Speculators would thus earn a substantial profit by buying houses from a white population eager to liquidate because of the threat of a ‘black invasion,’ before selling these houses back to black buyers at stabilized and higher prices. “In fact, blacks were willing to pay the highest prices not when a neighborhood was being broken but when other blacks had moved in. Amid hostility there was safety in numbers.”

The first black resident to have moved to Ashburton was a high-school principal. The year was 1956. “He was followed, not only by more Negroes, who were engaged in a legitimate quest for better housing, but also by real estate men.”

Despite only representing five percent of the neighborhood’s population, “by normal Baltimore patterns a complete change-over [was expected to] be only a question of two to five years more.” By 1957, the panic had set and many hurried to move to further removed suburbs within and outside Baltimore City. As Rosen recalled, “As soon as one house on a block was sold to a Negro, swarms of agents went on a house-to-house campaign, spreading the news and warning residents to put their houses for sale ‘while you can still get the price’.”

“The ads in the real estate section of the newspapers openly proclaimed, ‘Ashburton – Colored’ – even though [the] neighborhood was still more than 95 percent white.”

The propagation of fear grounded in speculative

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14 Ibid., 32.
15 Ibid., 139. The term ‘blockbusting’ has been similarly defined in a joint report of the Maryland Commission on Interracial Problems and Relations and the Baltimore Commission on Human Relations as “The deliberate creation or exploitation by a real estate broker, dealer, speculator or owner, of prejudice, fear, ignorance or panic designed to induce a rapid change of a block’s population from white to colored.” Cited in: The Sun, “Blockbusting,” The Sun, November 17, 1958, 16, Baltimore Sun Archives. The term should clearly be differentiated from the warranted practice of “blockbreaking,” which included “the legitimate purchase by a Negro of a home in a new neighborhood,” meaning a neighborhood that was previously all white. See, Anthony Lukas, “Bill Seeks to Eliminate Blockbusting,” The Sun, April 4, 1960, 21, Baltimore Sun Archives.
16 Pietila, Not in My Neighborhood, 145.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
financial loss was indeed central to blockbusting strategies.

If blockbusting itself would not be punishable by law then, some of the tactics used by realtors would later be judged as being illegal. When a series of State Real Estate Commission cases revolving around blockbusting charges were heard before a Baltimore City Court in 1959, the code of ethics of local realtors came under close scrutiny as accusations related to misleading and dishonest sales tactics proved to be well substantiated. In addition to tactics that Rosen alluded to, realtors also orchestrated illegitimate sales and pretended that houses were sold when they were not. Complainants from the Ashburton neighborhood claimed that the Manning-Shaw real estate company "erected sold sign on a property when it was not sold in order to cause panic and force home owners to flee." Seeing that Manning-Shaw was widely known for "specializing in Negro sales," the 'sold' sign alone suggested that blacks were moving in. As one witness called to testify on this trial explained, the company placed sold signs on properties even as the agents "knew the financing arrangements would not be approved by any lending agency." Another witness referred to the planting of multiple large low-income families in specific houses, which as Rosen explained, had the effect of giving neighbors the impression that the area was losing in value seeing that single-families homes appeared to be operated as tenements. As a result of these actions, the court found Manuel Bernstein and Warren Shaw guilty of violating the real estate status against misrepresentation, bad faith and fraudulent advertising, resulting in a three-month suspension from the State Real Estate Commission. The suspensions would be the "first ever handed down by the Commission for violations related to 'blockbusting.'"

Resisting segregation

Some activists such as Hollander Jr. promoted the breaking of racially homogenous blocks as the only tactic capable to prevent the coming of a 'black city' with 'white counties.' He advocated for integration in Baltimore and "urged blacks to ask whites to stay in changing neighborhoods" ... and "ask[ed] white families to buy into black areas; and ask[ed] black families to serve as pilot residents by moving to unbroken white neighborhoods." Ashburton residents decided to seek a solution grounded in principles of integration instead of reacting to blockbusting tactics, thereby resisting prejudice and segregation. "The most

21 The Sun, "Compliments Mark Hearing Into Blockbusting Charges," The Sun, February 5, 1959, 24, Baltimore Sun Archives.
24 Some agents also acted as speculators by buying single family houses and operating them as tenements. These speculators generated profit by stuffing many families into single family dwellings, seeing that rent revenues raised almost proportionally with the number of families living in one house (the price to rent one-room being significantly more than 50 percent of the cost of a two-room rental). These speculators would then allow the house "to deteriorate so badly that the neighborhood becomes ripe for urban renewal and the government paid the speculator back his original investment." Connah Jr., "Blockbusting in Baltimore: Less Blatant and Rapacious," 2.
25 The judgment was pronounced on April 22, 1959. The ruling noted that the decision was not based on any racial claims, but on whether or not there had been a sale. At the time, blockbusting per se was not yet illegal.
26 The Sun, "3-Month Realty Suspension Linked to 'Blockbusting,'" The Sun, July 21, 1960, 32, Baltimore Sun Archives.
27 Pietila, Not in My Neighborhood, 184.
28 Pietila, Not in My Neighborhood, 184. A 'broken neighborhood' referred to areas where racial homogeneity had been breached through the arrival of individuals belonging to a race different than the one prevalent in the neighborhood.
heartening support for our acceptance of racial integration has come from the Greater Baltimore Committee [(G.B.C.)], a group of nearly 100 of the city’s business leaders,” Rosen explained. He acknowledged that his community’s position vis-à-vis integration was far from mainstream, remarking, “We do not think for a moment that all of the members of G.B.C., or even a majority of Baltimore citizens, presently share our personal biracial views.” With support from the G.B.C., residents organized the Ashburton Area Organization, the first local association open to blacks and whites in Baltimore, according to The Evening Sun. The organization quickly enrolled 400 members. The meetings were confined to small groups, generally organized block by block, in a way not so different than in Harlem Park. Describing one of these assemblies, Rosen reported:

We had a typical evening gathering just a few months ago only two streets from my house. About twenty men and women met in the large living room of our block leader’s home. They were a fair cross section of any substantial middle-class neighborhood. Two of the men were doctors; one was a lawyer. One of the businessmen was reputed to be a millionaire. Most had school-age children. There was a widow in her early fifties.

Otho P. Pinkett was the only black man in attendance that evening. He reportedly spoke eloquently of possible solutions for so-called changing neighborhoods. The tactics he recommended were no different than those proposed by Hollander, Jr.:

If you want to protect your home and your way of life, a simple solution lies open to you. You don’t have to join the Army and face death on foreign soil. You don’t have to risk bodily injury. All you have to do is to continue living in your home.

The measure was conveniently simple. Pinkett suggested that escaping the problem by moving out of the city would never be a viable solution. “Even if you move far out in the suburbs, I can virtually guarantee that by the time you finish paying off your next mortgage – and it will be a lot higher than the one you have now, you’ll face the same situation. There will be Negroes living near you. As a matter of fact,” he added smiling, “if this area turns all Negro, I plan to move out to the suburbs with you!” After the meeting, two families reconsidered their decision to move out, for the time being anyway.

In addition to these meetings, the Ashburton Area Association also tried to counteract the work of blockbusters by finding white buyers for properties that pioneer residents desired to sell despite Pinkett’s warnings. “Ashburton approached the problem of encouraging new white buyers by running advertisements which stress the advantages of the neighborhood, its

29 Ibid.
30 Rosen and Nicholson, “When a Negro Moves Next Door.”
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
large homes, uncrowded schools and nearness to the center of the city.” This complemented the work of H.A. Sachs, whose full time job had been to act as a broker between sellers and potential white buyers, careful to explain the character of the area to potential buyers while stimulating interest in the neighborhood.

Ashburton residents’ view regarding integration was generally progressive but short of being post-racial. Referring to Pinkett’s speech, Rosen remarked, “The speaker was a Negro. Intelligent, soft-spoken, articulate, but a Negro, and the only one in the group.” While residents respected Pinkett’s opinions and agreed with his projections, Rosen’s emphasis on Otho Pinkett’s race suggested a continued divide despite the acceptance the man as a peer. Pinkett’s nearness to the white middle class audience facilitated the annulment of negative stereotypes seeing that he was indeed perceived to be equal in all aspects, except for race. Rosen who qualified Pinkett as the ‘big gun’ in his neighborhood’s arsenal to alter attitudes towards changing neighborhoods concluded:

It is a shock treatment, as a rule, when a Negro walks into a supposedly all-white meeting – and the shock, in turn, heightens the subsequent realization that Mr. Pinkett’s intelligence, sense of values, desires and plans for the community are no different from those of others in the room.

Ashburton residents recognized that blockbusters represented the main threat against their neighborhood, not black people. This realization challenged the assumption that African Americans were the ones to keep out. As Rosen told a reporter at the Evening Sun, “neighborhoods do not have to deteriorate when Negros move in – if panic does not take hold.” Speaking at an Ashburton resident association where the theme of changing neighborhoods was discussed, the renowned urban renewal expert James Rouse advised residents: “The root of the problem is fear – and experience is the only effective deterrent.” If individuals like Otho Pinkett helped to replace prejudice by offering his white neighbors first-hand interactions with an African American they could associate with, many all black and dilapidated neighborhoods projected images of advanced dysfunction apparently too potent to be readily dismissed. According to another Ashburton resident, L.E. Larsen:

Acceptance of Negro families would be much easier for the people, if we had less commuting to and from work by car. You have to drive through deteriorated districts where the residents are one hundred percent Negro. This sorry picture is hard to shake, even though the family a few doors down the street has no relation to it, other than the color of their skin.

34 “Summary of Parlor Meetings On Changing Neighborhoods” (Baltimore: Temple Oheb Shalom, n.d.), 10, Special Collections, Baltimore Neighborhoods Integrated Collection (BNI), Series VI, Box 1, University of Baltimore Langsdale Library.
36 Ibid., 32.
37 Ibid., 141.
38 James Rouse, in Ibid., 142.
39 L.E Larsen, in Ibid.
Skin color connected black residents in Ashburton to ghetto neighborhood families in perhaps more ways than Larsen could perceive. While middle and upper-middle class black Baltimoreans were being discriminated against less harshly than their working-class counterparts, all African Americans remained treated as outsiders, whose articulate speech would continue to surprise even the likes of Ellsworth Rosen. Through the work of Otho Pinkett and likeminded residents, the panic eventually subsided in Ashburton in the mid 1960s. But as Melvin J. Skyes explained, a lawyer and resident of Ashburton from 1954 to 1965, other urban pressures followed the blockbusters to eventually finish up their work:

\[\textit{Commercial land use increased; schools became overcrowded and fell victim to de facto segregation; people with children moved away, leaving large houses ripe for multi-family occupancy.}\]  

As per many other neighborhoods in northwestern Baltimore, very few white residents remained in Ashburton by the 1980s. According to the latest census, the neighborhood was over 96 percent black in 2010, with more than one out of ten households living in poverty, and one out of four families being headed by single parents. Despite the lamentable level of racial integration, Ashburton can at least be considered as being socioeconomically integrated today.

**Criminalizing blockbusting**

As the aftereffects of blockbusting were growing in importance, particularly in the northwestern section of the city, political figures and activist groups teamed up to introduce a bill that aimed to turn blockbusting into a misdemeanor. Blockbusting had by then grown widespread and directly affected a number of neighborhoods that included Arlington, Ashburton, Edmondson Village, Fairmount, Forest Park, Gwynn Oak, Howard Park, Irvington, Montebello, Pimlico and Windsor Hills. The first such anti-blockbusting bill in Baltimore was introduced by Councilman Solomon Liss late in 1958 and proposed to make it a crime for realtors to “misrepresent the character and type of residents in a neighborhood for the purpose of inducing public panic for profit.” The bill would only be approved sixteen months later, when it was re-introduced jointly by Liss and Councilman William D. Schaefer, lending it bi-partisan support from parties “rarely on the same side of a controversial issue.”

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41 The data was collected for the Ashburton/Dorchester Area. The exact percentage of families living in poverty was reported to be 11.8 while 24.4% of the families were single-parent households, and a total of 96.5% of families were black and 1.5% white. The data was taken from the 2010 US Census, reported in: Baltimore City Health Department, Baltimore City: 2011 Neighborhood Health Profile: Dorchester/Ashburton (Baltimore: Baltimore City Health Department, December 2011), http://health.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/13%20Dorchester.pdf.
42 Current Baltimore Mayor in 2015, Stephanie Rawlings-Blake as well as former Mayor Kurt Schmoke reside in this neighborhood located around one mile west of Mondawmin Mall; a site that particularly known outside Baltimore as a result of the upheaval of April 2015.
43 “Summary of Parlor Meetings On Changing Neighborhoods,” 1; Edward Orser, Blockbusting in Baltimore: The Edmondson Village Story (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994). These neighborhoods were all over 90% black in 2010, with the exception of Pimlico and Irvington, where black residents constituted around 80% of the local population.
44 Odell Smith, “Blockbusting Measure Due to Be Revised,” The Sun, December 9, 1958, 40, Baltimore Sun Archives.
Given the popular support in favor for the bill, including endorsement by the Citizens Planning and Housing Association, the West Baltimore Steering Committee and “almost a dozen improvement associations, mostly in West Baltimore,” the bill passed in April 1960.46 As Otho Pinkett commented, “the bill was designed to help preserve neighborhoods with substantial Negro homeowners as well as all-white neighborhoods.”47

Seven years later, only one person had ever been indicted under the anti-blockbusting ordinance, however. Protesting the validity of this ordinance before a court of law, the first “indictment was dismissed when the ordinance was held invalid in Baltimore Criminal Court in 1967.”48 Just as judges and prosecutors did not enjoy spending time hearing housing code violation offences before the creation of the Housing Court in Baltimore, anti-blockbusting offenders would not be a priority to law enforcement. Writing on the court decision not to prosecute known offenders in the late 1960s, the journalist Douglas Connah Jr. suggested:

A more likely explanation is probably that the blockbuster was not prosecuted because he was regarded as a ‘businessman,’ not a criminal, and the state’s attorney’s office has its hands full handling real criminal cases. This is a familiar point of view in cases involving landlord and loan sharks and other persons who deal with the poor.49

While enforcement remained an open question, City Councilman Robert Embry, Jr. played his part by re-introducing the anti-blockbusting statue soon after Judge James A. Perrott had struck down the ordinance.50 Embry “expected full-scale opposition from the real estate industry although he had received many letters and calls of support from the public.”51 Significant opposition notwithstanding, Embry and his co-sponsors were probably surprise to hear Robert Bollinger support the bill: “We Realtors will have to sacrifice part of our cherished way of doing business for the greater good of the people,” the man noted before an audience of over 50 people at the public hearing.52 The bill would eventually passed in the months that followed.

Whereas political figures and the communities they represented worked to counteract the influence of blockbusters by the enactment of legal devices, the underling fact that blockbusting tactics relied exclusively on the financial and cultural fear of racial co-habitation remained unspoken. If blockbusting was expedited by a range of outside forces, starting with basic prejudice and including the self-fulfilling belief that blacks lowered property values, other facts of life invigorated the effects of these scare tactics. These included the common

47 Other Pinkett quoted in: Ibid., 39.
49 Ibid.
knowledge that the arrival of blacks in a neighborhood meant the disappearance of whites; the fact that housing scarcity for blacks commonly resulted in the overcrowding of houses open to non-whites; and, the widespread association of black life with the withering condition of the inner city and poverty itself.

While blockbusters would indeed open neighborhoods to blacks and thereby widen the housing stock available to racial minorities, they did so at a cost that Baltimore citizens were growing increasingly reluctant to pay. Blockbusters overcharged black homeowners; they perpetuated slumlord practices; they turned integrated middle class neighborhoods such as Ashburton into all-black areas. As the black middle class slowly migrated to such neighborhoods, more houses opened up within the inner city where poor and working-class blacks lived quasi-exclusively. Overall, blockbusting had the dual effect to improve housing options by extending on the established black enclave in Baltimore, while further concentrating poverty within its historic center as middle class blacks migrated to better-off ghetto neighborhoods.

![Figure 139. Map of neighborhoods significantly affected by blockbusting in Northwestern Baltimore. Map created by author.](image)

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At the time of writing, the neighborhood was 96.5% black. The median housing income in 2011 was $40,148 thus, roughly 20% below the national average. The poverty rate in Ashburton is above 10%, yet below the poverty rate of Baltimore City. Other neighborhoods in Northwest Baltimore were turned into low-income areas as a result of blockbusting, however.
Baltimore County and the Resistance of Inclusion

Surrounded by Baltimore County on every landlocked administrative border, residential options for African Americans in Baltimore City were greatly influenced by cultural and political predispositions in neighboring administrative territories, where nonwhites remained largely unwelcome well into the 1970s. Admittedly, a series of racially charged policies negatively affected the possibility for African Americans to live in Baltimore County, thereby limiting housing options for minority groups throughout the Metropolitan region and near growing employment centers.54

Politician Dale Anderson shaped Baltimore County from 1958 until his conviction for thirty-two counts of extortion, tax evasion, and conspiracy in 1974.55 He accepted bribes, committed fraud against the government he served and he “struck a deal with voters – he kept blacks and poor whites out of the county and voters kept reelecting him.”56 As the civil rights activists vocalized their discontentment with Baltimore County’s discriminatory policies more forcefully in the 1960, Dale Anderson swallowed the bait. He responded to his critics:

Baltimore County has neither an immigration quota nor a Berlin Wall which prevents inner-city Negro families from moving into the suburbs. Anyone with enough money can move into Baltimore County.57

Notwithstanding the absence of an actual wall, the protestations spoken by Anderson’s foes were, in fact, well founded.

Dale Anderson Convicted

It is a sad day that brings the conviction of Dale Anderson, the Baltimore county executive, on 32 counts of extortion and income tax evasion. It is sad first of all for county voters who elected him to office and entrusted him with the most important of their public affairs. It is sad also for Mr. Anderson, who for years had labored and listened that trust in exchange for kickbacks from private citizens employed by his administration. From a rising star in Maryland’s Democratic party, he has fallen suddenly and completely. It has an all-righteous ring, too, since first John T. Agnew and then Samuel Green photographed below last.

Mr. Anderson was part of a pattern, according to federal prosecutors, that had developed and grown in high county offices. If indeed a pattern of kickbacks exists, we believe and hope that it is led by the grand of only a motivation and related few. Had wherever it exists, it must be exposed and the earlier the better. Mr. Anderson, who made no immediate announcement of his plans following the reading of the jury’s verdict, did insist on turning over to the public all the secrets he believed to be the property of the government.

Not in My Neighborhood

Baltimore County has neither an immigration quota nor a Berlin Wall which prevents inner-city Negro families from moving into the suburbs. Anyone with enough money can move into Baltimore County.


54 The black population in other counties included in the Baltimore Metropolitan Area was also very small during the 1960s. The black population in Arundel, Baltimore and Howard Counties combined was 50,810 in 1960. In comparison, the white population within these same three counties was 683,008 that year. See, Dickens Warfield and George B. Laurent, A Study of the Economic Potential of Baltimore Black Families for Living in the Suburban Baltimore Area (Baltimore: Baltimore Neighborhoods, Inc., June 1972), 2, Baltimore Neighborhoods Integrated Collection (BNI), Series VI, Box 1, University of Baltimore Langsdale Library.


56 Pietila, Not in My Neighborhood, 223.

“The Negro is vanishing from Baltimore County”

Out of a population of nearly half of million inhabitants in 1960, only 17,054 were black, leaving Baltimore County 96.5 percent white. This amounted to roughly 1,500 fewer black residents than in 1950, and roughly 12,000 less than in 1860. The Sun observed, “The Negro [was] vanishing from Baltimore County.” The same article continued, “Forced out of homes in traditional Negro enclaves by governmental and private development and prevented from relocating in ‘white only’ suburbias, Negroes are moving into Baltimore City.”

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total black population</td>
<td>17,054</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total white population</td>
<td>474,028</td>
<td>96.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total housing units occupied by blacks</td>
<td>3,979</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total housing units occupied by whites</td>
<td>138,972</td>
<td>97.2%</td>
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</tbody>
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Anderson was born in Metropolis in 1916. There were many ‘sundown towns’ in this area of Southern Illinois where residential segregation was most strict. In 1863, the year President Lincoln ordered the Emancipation Proclamation, black residents began to be expelled and their presence would no longer be tolerated after dusk in many areas of the state:

One such nearby town was Anna, whose residents said the name stood for ‘Ain’t No Niggers Allowed.’ (Until the 1970s, highway signs warned Nigger, Don’t Let the Sun Go Down on You in Anna-Jonesboro.)

Native of an environment where racial discrimination was fully normalized, Anderson left Illinois for Baltimore in the 1930s following floods of historical proportions in his hometown. His political career took off in 1958 when he became a Baltimore County Councilman, before being promoted to County Executive in 1966; the highest elected official in Baltimore County. Anderson “did everything except standing at the school house door to preserve his county as a white-only suburban enclave,” The Sun once editorialized. Baltimore County was indeed

58 The exact population of Baltimore County was 481,225 according to US Census Data. The number of blacks was reported in: BURHA Research Division, “Negro Housing Movement in the Past 20 Years in Baltimore City.”
59 There were 29,911 free blacks in Baltimore County in 1860 and 18,951 in 1960. Census data cited in: David C Goeller, “Negro Enclaves Slowly ‘Dying Out’ in the County,” The Sun, January 14, 1968, 26, Baltimore Sun Archives. In contrast, the population in Baltimore City was approximately 50% black in 1960.
60 Ibid.
61 Pietila, Not in My Neighborhood, 225.
slow to accept desegregation as the new law of the land. One year after the passing of Brown v. Board, Baltimore County schools “had only 205 Negroes in thirteen desegregated schools, as contrasted with a total school population of 28,883,” while “seven schools remained with all-colored student bodies totaling 2,235.” Some schools remained segregated until 1967, like the all-black institution at Turner Station in the Dundalk enclave.

Blacks were also vastly underrepresented in the public sector, with the first African American being appointed to the Baltimore County Police Department in the summer of 1951. In the fourteen years that followed, only 5 more black policemen were hired. They patrolled black neighborhoods exclusively. “The Negro policemen have told [the Secretary of the Baltimore County Human Relations Commission] that they cannot even cross the street into a white community to make an arrest.” There would be no black firefighter in Baltimore County until January 14th, 1966. Like every other fireman in the County, the first black graduate from the firefighter course was assigned a position at the station closest to his home. He was the only one of his race in a 500-man department. Black teachers also found it difficult to land positions in Baltimore County, partly because very few affordable and open housing existed near the schools, and also because their applications were regularly filtered out. According to the Baltimore County Human Relations Commission, “Segregated communities inhibit[ed] prospective teachers from their applying for employment or from accepting employment in the county.” Of those that did apply, 90 to 93 percent were rejected in 1964; a year when Baltimore County’s School Commission complained about a teacher shortage.

Racial favoritism and zoning

Along with six fellow Councilmen, Dale Anderson was in charge of every rezoning request in the County. “Each councilman single-handedly decided what requests should be approved or rejected in his district, and the rest of the councilmen automatically supported one another’s decision.” This system confined upon a small group of individuals the power to guide (sub)urban development with authoritarian precision. Zoning quickly became Anderson’s tool of predilection to achieve his political agenda, which partly consisted in keeping non-whites and poor people beyond the administrative limits over which he exercised control.

MIT Professor Yale Rabin coined the term ‘expulsive zoning’ to describe Baltimore County’s
government actions. According to him, the control of development activities throughout the 1960s "functioned to substantially reduce housing opportunities in the county for low-income, predominantly (but not exclusively) Black households." Rabin detected patterns where black residential areas were increasingly being rezoned for commercial and industrial activities, while neighboring white areas were left untouched. According to Rabin, this resulted in the demolition "of over 350 homes occupied by low-income Black families" between 1960 and 1970, with their local government providing no relocation assistance. Rabin concluded:

> As a result of restrictions on growth imposed in large measure by county development-control activities, at least 13 of the existing Black communities, containing over 15% of the total Black population of Baltimore County, have been steadily dwindling in size. Unless affirmative steps are taken, these communities, with a population of over 3,000 predominantly low-income persons, are likely to be entirely eliminated.

Besides displacing low-income communities through rezoning, the local government also limited the possibly for the construction of future affordable housing by creating regulations where most of the land available for residential purposes would have to be built at a low-density. As Rabin explained, "of the residually-zoned land yet to be developed [in 1970], 90% is zoned for one house to the acre." This ratio made it practically impossible to erect low-cost housings seeing that the value of the land alone could hardly be afforded by families of small means.

A study of requests for zoning changes between 1965 and 1970 also revealed that Anderson's administration was most inflexible for applications asking for residential densities to be augmented, especially in areas that experienced the largest growth in employment. These were located north of the beltway between Cromwell Bridge road and the Reisterstown Road corridor, where modern transportation routes encouraged the establishments of commercial and industrial activities. This same period was in fact characterized by the decentralization of industries in the region, when as many as thirty-five industrial firms moved from Baltimore City to Baltimore County between 1963 and 1968, with only one firm migrating in the opposite direction. As the blue-collar sector started to increase significantly faster in the County

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71 Development activities included "the construction of roads, utilities, and public facilities to the levying of property taxes, the designation of permitted uses, the establishment of standards for the character and quality of development, and condemnation." Yale Rabin, "The Effects of Development Control on Housing Opportunities for Black Households in Baltimore County, Maryland" (Washington, D. C.: US Commission on Civil Rights, 1970), 1, Special Collections, Baltimore Neighborhoods Integrated Collection (BNI), Series VI, Box 1, University of Baltimore Langsdale Library.
72 Ibid., 2.
73 Ibid., 3.
74 Ibid., 28.
75 Ibid., 3.
76 Ibid., 7.
compared to the City in the 1960s, the lack of working-class housing opened to blacks or people of limited means more broadly, made it difficult for workers to reach booming employment areas. This situation had become increasingly problematic when in 1960 over 23 percent of Baltimore City residents lived below the poverty line, against only 7 percent in Baltimore County. Houses that were opened to blacks were generally located in poorly connected neighborhoods that also corresponded to areas where the modernization of public services lagged behind paler neighborhoods. As Rabin noted, blacks generally lived in isolation and remained cut-off from the rest of the county because of discontinuous street patterns. Moreover, “Many Black residential areas [were] characterized by unpaved streets and a generally low level of public improvements.” These attributes together with the absence of any affirmative local programs for low-cost housing encouraged the small black population of Baltimore County to move against the predominant migratory movement at the time, and seek housing within Baltimore City’s public housing programs, inner city neighborhoods and blockbusting areas.

Middle class professionals would also find it difficult to find adequate housing in Baltimore County, despite federal measures making open occupancy mandatory for specific properties located across thirteen neighborhoods in Baltimore County during Kennedy’s presidency. According to Eugene L. King Sr., the Secretary of the Human Relations Commission in Baltimore County and a school teacher there, the county had “no Negro lawyers because nonwhite professional men [had] such a hard time buying homes there.” As King noted during a commission discussion, he had personally experienced great pain in purchasing a house and been largely ignored by local realtors during open house visits in 1963. Reporting on his experience viewing new homes in the Deerfield and Westview developments, King explained that the sales personnel were reluctant to consider him as a potential buyer. “After looking at some model homes at Deerfield for about 30 minutes, he was asked if he were lost,” he told The Sun.

Decentralization of subsidized housing

When the Federal Housing Act of 1968 was signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, Robert Embry Jr. immediately took advantage of the new regulation by arranging mortgage and rent supplements for low-income families to relocate from blighted areas to middle class county

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78 As the Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Baltimore discovered, 40,000 new jobs were created in Baltimore County between 1963 and 1967, versus 26,400 in the City. The increase for manufacturing jobs during this same period were numbered at 10,000 and 4,300 respectively. See, The Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Baltimore, Growth Patterns, Metropolitan Baltimore, 1963-1967 (Baltimore: The Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Baltimore, February 1968), 7–9.
79 US Census 1960, n.d. The exact numbers being 23.19% for Baltimore City and 7.29% for Baltimore County.
80 Rabin, “The Effects of Development Control on Housing Opportunities for Black Households in Baltimore County, Maryland,” 4.
81 HABC recorded 29 applications for the first six months of 1970 from families then residing in Baltimore County.
82 The Sun, “Group Discusses Open Occupancy,” The Sun, September 18, 1963, 19, Baltimore Sun Archives; The Sun, “Racial Units Sets Housing ‘Alert,’” The Sun, September 26, 1963, 12, Baltimore Sun Archives.
83 The Sun, “Group Discusses Open Occupancy,” 19.
84 Ibid.
suburbs. While the primary goal of such program was to counteract racial segregation and move families closer to employment centers, this residential mobility program also brought low-income minority families to economically balanced areas. Studies conducted on families affected by similar programs in Chicago would later conclude that "ethnic integration brings economic integration, but economic integration does not bring ethnic integration;" a significant finding in the quest to re-balance between families of different races. As Embry explained to a reporter at The Sun, “It makes sense, when we have to relocate people, to make it possible for them to move nearer to the source of jobs. The home ownership and rent assistance programs, as I see it, are going to make this possible.” As opposed to earlier relocation programs, the 1968 initiative would allow places like Baltimore City to relocate its residents to housing in surrounding administrative territories, including Baltimore County. County Executive Dale Anderson reacted to the new program, “I don’t see the people of this County objecting as long as it’s the law.” He paused, then added, “Of course, [my constituents] might want to change the law.”

As an assertive man with questionable ethics, he often realized his goals to stubbornly keep federal public housing and relocation assistance initiatives away from his county. He cut the funds of people who stood in his path, threatened those that contested his authority and almost unquestionably supported the projects of other likeminded pro-market entrepreneurs:

Civil rights activists, reformers and newspaper editorial writers blasted Anderson for years as a Chicago-style political boss who lapped up political contributions from special interest groups, catered to the prejudices of his constituents and turned a deaf hear to the needs of the black and the poor.

In August 1983, Baltimore County followed what Baltimore City had achieved forty-five years earlier when its City Council approved the Executive’s request to create a public housing agency. In that same year, and seven years after his release from jail, voters elected Dale Anderson to the Maryland House of Delegates – sending at best a mix message with regards to Baltimore County’s residents’ willingness to accept rather than resist racial and economic integration.

Discussion & Analysis

As Baltimore County forms a horseshoe around Baltimore City, resistance against integration in this territory has had a direct effect on individuals whose housing options were already limited in the city proper. Closer to the historic core of Baltimore in neighborhoods such as

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86 Robert Embry Jr., quoted in: The Sun, “City to Help Slum People Go to County,” 18.
87 Dale Anderson, quoted in: Ibid.
Ashburton, blockbusters opened new housing for African Americans. However, this would come at a significant cost, literally and figuratively. Blockbusters conspired to depreciate the value of homes occupied by white middle class residents, they overcharged blacks, and reinforced the stigma attached to black life in the white spatial imaginary as a result.

Legal devices were instrumentalised in Baltimore City to achieve the objectives of racial integration, but largely failed. More territories opened-up to blacks, but bi-racial neighborhoods mainly existed for short periods of time when areas progressively shifted from being almost exclusively white to being almost exclusively black. If the use of law and regulations constituted a valuable strategy to promote political changes with regards to racial equality, history has demonstrated that these devices alone would not make any significant dent on the culture of racism that constituted the proverbial root of the problem in Baltimore.

The desegregation of schools in Baltimore City in 1954 was received rather positively considering the existing culture of resistance that persisted in Maryland with regard to racial integration. Questions pertaining to desegregation in public and private housing alike would prove more complicated, however. A concerned residents observed in 1955:

> School kids of both races are under the constant influence of teachers who, whatever their personal beliefs, must now act as agents of the City and the Supreme Court in teaching desegregation to the younger generations. But in the summertime, the kids revert to the full time influence of their parents, who have not yet learned these lessons themselves and are still teaching prejudice.\(^90\)

This remark was printed in a letter addressed to the Housing Authority after its author witnessed a mob of white kids stone a black child that had recently moved to the desegregated Latrobe Homes; a project that had been reserved for whites only weeks before the redaction of this letter. The author noted, “The poor kid had to hide behind a car parked on Ensor Street for self protection to avoid being injured. All of the white children’s parents were out in the court at the time and were doing nothing to stop their children from committing this mob of violence.”\(^91\) Throughout the four-page long correspondence, the author and public housing resident noted that as a white man understanding the need to end race-based prejudices, he did not “want desegregation by police state method.” He highlighted the importance to foster a culture of acceptance before all else and formulated a somewhat strange, albeit well articulated argument, that contended that desegregation of public housing should have happened in the winter rather than the summer in order to ease racial tensions.

The concerned resident started by pointing out that social conflicts are more likely to escalate into verbal and physical aggressions in the warmer months of the year, something that remains true today judging by the existing data reporting on the murder rates by months. Writing on the rising tension during the ‘dog days’ of the Baltimore summer, he noted:

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\(^91\) Ibid., 2.
This kind of weather coming at a time when the new Negro residents have to strain themselves to the utmost diplomacy and bend over backwards, taking initial insults in their stride, until they become a part of the community and when the white residents have to forget generations of prejudice, fear and tensions and learn to live with their new neighbors, is very unfortunate and possibly disastrous.92

He argued that the lessons of prejudice thought by fearful parents during the summer months might ultimately undo the learning achieved at school, seeing that the education system in Baltimore City had been desegregated one year before only. As the author was of the opinion that the teaching of desegregation would be passed on from teachers to students, and then from students to parents, he noted that public housings and schools should have followed the same timeline with regards to integration. Having failed to do this, he recommended pushing it back to the following winter so that post-racial thoughts could become more entrenched in the young children's minds, thus more resistant to the bad influence of their elders.

His letter continued by underling other problems with summertime integration. It pointed out that residents spent the most time outside in the warmer months, thus offering a large number of occasions for cross-racial encounters. As Baltimore counted few places where blacks and whites would mingle in the 1950s and 1960s, the author was wary that a sudden and drastic increase in cross-racial encounters could become overwhelming.

He completed his argument by noting that “color, the only thing in racial prejudice, which distinguishes one person from other, without any logical reasons,” would be more problematic in the summer when more skin was exposed. As individuals were more likely to dress lightly in the July heat, he believed it to be wise to make integration wait until the new residents could fool the ocular of their white neighbors by covering their dark arms, legs and necks in layers of clothes, thus reducing the impact of their blackness as a signifier of status:

[In the summer, blacks] will be resented by their very appearance on the lawns and steps at all hours, but they certainly cannot be asked to stay inside. Whereas in winter, they would be inside most of the time anyway and would become regular residents and be accepted as neighbors before the appearance of their skin became a major issue. Moving Negros in the mid-summer seems about as sensible to me as correcting anti-Semitism in Hitler’s Germany by holding the High Holy Days ceremonies in the Sports Palast in Berlin. ... This is a democracy, and we cannot ask the people to be friendly with those they considered their 'natural enemies' overnight, as the Russians did with the Germans during the Hitler-Stalin Pact. We must educate the people first. This cannot be done by propaganda and court ruling alone. It must be done by actual experience and by living together, but gradually, not all at once.93

If the argument presented in this letter appeared somewhat awkward, the logic behind some of the author's reasoning was relatively consistent with an extending body of theory of racial discrimination and group formation in the 1950s and 1960s.

92 Ibid., 3.
93 Ibid., 4.
Prejudice, ethnicity & racial theory

In Baltimore City, where blacks represented roughly one resident in three and where white residents had significantly more opportunities to cross path with members of other races, prejudices were being increasingly subdued as a result of first hand experiences with members of the other race, laws condemning racial discrimination, a better awareness of black history, the transformation of phenomenological spaces and evolving cultural norms. As political, legal and spatial advancements strongly contributed to the development of 'life spaces' permisssive of racial integration, basic human contact between racial groups would also contribute to the advancement of social conditions in the post-apartheid city. Contact between races, as it happened, represented a dynamic force field embedded with the potential to curb prejudices dramatically.

Social psychologist Gordon Allport suggested in 1954 that contact between members of different 'groups' could reduce prejudices when human exchanges unfolded under specific circumstances. With the 'contact hypothesis,' Allport listed four conditions necessary for contact between groups to be optimal: "equal group status within the situation, common goals, intergroup cooperation and authority support." Building on this work and that of others also influenced by Allport's seminal *The Nature of Prejudice*, Thomas F. Pettigrew suggested a fifth productive contact situation, namely, the potential for friendship to develop. Considering that contacts between groups would become increasingly effective in dissolving prejudices in situations where each of these conditions would be satisfied, positive effects would also be felt in situations where only some of the conditions applied.

Empirical evidence supporting the theory was demonstrated in a study particularly relevant to the present work as it pertained to racial perceptions in public housing. The Deutsch-Collins study compared how white public housing residents perceived black people in two housing projects, one integrated (in New York City), and the other segregated (in Newark). They asked the following question: "Are the negro people living in the project pretty much the same as the white people who live here or are they different?" While 80 percent of residents in

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94 See Chapter 2, page 25.
95 Allport examined many criteria that influenced the formation of groups, including gender, citizenships, occupation, religious beliefs, alma matters, race, etc. He underlined that individuals generally belonged to more than one group, and that groups varied in scales and importance. As he recognized that some of the groups were subjectively constructed, he observed that social processes could influence the groups in which individuals wished to belong and how the groups themselves were defined. His research on what he called 'in-group' and 'out-group' formations noted that majority groups (e.g. White Anglo-Saxon Protestant in America) were particularly influential in establishing norms, values and prejudices that minority groups would also adhere too. He observed this to be the case with regards to perceptions of race seeing that different groups tended to accept and deny the same ethnic groups (in the United States for example, "most people, whoever they are, found the English and Canadians acceptable as citizens, as neighbors, as social equals, and as kinsmen. ... At the other extreme come Hindus, Turks, Negroes. ... The conformity, however, rarely extends to the point of repudiating his own in-group."). See, Gordon Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1954), 39.
96 Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*.
97 The 'contact hypothesis' is sometimes referred to as 'intergroup contact theory.'
99 Ibid., 80.
the integrated project indicated that blacks were essentially the same, only 57 percent of those living in segregation agreed. Writing on the Deutsch-Collins study in 1950, Allport noted:

> When [interviewee] mentioned the chief faults they thought Negro people had, white living in segregated units tended to name aggressive traits: trouble-making, rowdy, dangerous. Those living in the closer association of integrated units mentioned predominantly an entirely different type of trait, namely, feelings of inferiority or over sensitiveness to prejudice.

Individuals living in integrated public housing seemed to have successfully replaced prejudices through first-hand experiences, where they observed for blacks to not be any more amoral than the average white man. Overall, housewives living in desegregated public housing projects favored interracial housing in 75 percent of the cases, as opposed to only 25 percent in segregated projects, supporting the hypothesis that human contacts reduced prejudice, especially in places where integration was legally and culturally normalized.

Similarly, later studies also found that living in desegregation had a positive effect on black resident's perception of white families.

As opposed to banal, impersonal, short, and consequently minimally effective exchanges, integrated housing projects and neighborhoods constituted environments susceptible to satisfy many conditions from Allport's list. The first productive condition he described, "equal group status," was partly met by the fact that individuals lived in equal housing. If residents might have continued to perceive themselves as superior or inferior because of their race, they at least recognized that they belonged to equal economic groups, living in materially equal conditions. To be sure, the question of equal rights for blacks was still on the line then, and blacks had by no mean equal status to whites in all facts of life, but the river that separated different groups was at last being recognized as unjust and unwarranted in political, and some social spheres.

With regards to "common goals," the second of Allport's condition for optimal intergroup contact, peaceful cohabitation and maintaining a desirable residential environment potentially represented a unifying objective. If such common goals were perhaps less bonding than those in the armed forces and sports team, it nevertheless facilitated meaningful interactions. This became increasingly clear in Ashburton where the likes of Otho Pinkett bonded with neighbors to counteract blockbusting, satisfying Allport's third condition by the same token, "intergroup cooperation." Lastly, community activists and political actors

102 Deutsch and Collins, Interracial Housing: A Psychological Evaluation of a Social Experiment.
104 The Robbers Cave Experiment conducted by Sherif et al. demonstrated that contact in and of itself was ineffective in reducing attitude. The experiment conducted over a three weeks period only is often referenced to highlight the importance of specific conditions (the four conditions presented in Allport, 1954) for the 'contact hypothesis' to be realized, whereas the erroneous notion that any kind of contact will produce change still persist. See, Muzafer Sherif, In Common Predicament: Social Psychology of Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966).
provided the impetus for the fourth condition to take roots in Baltimore City, which called for the “support of authorities, law, or custom.” Like Pettigrew noted before, “With explicit social sanction, intergroup contact is more readily accepted and has more positive effects. Authority support established norms of acceptance.” Whether public housing promoted the formation of friendships, the ultimate criteria according to Pettigrew, remains unsure. But integrated neighborhoods in general proved to promote the creation of close bonds between children of different races. As three black women born in the early 1900s noted in separate interviews conducted as part of the Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project, each remembered playing with Jewish girls as kids, with one interviewee recalling being best friend with a Jewish neighbor during elementary school.

Other influential researchers also posited human contact as an important step to navigate towards more productive relations between individuals of different races. Chicago School sociologist Robert Park’s ‘race-relation cycle’ “understood its subject as moving through four stages – contact, conflict, accommodation, and assimilation.” Largely influenced by Booker T. Washington for who he had been a publicist and ghostwriter, Park believed for assimilation to be the end goal; a position widely debated then and today. Notwithstanding the diverging philosophies with regards to the aim of desegregation, thinkers associated with different schools of thoughts generally agreed for human contact to be productive for the gradual overcoming of prejudice.

“Success is the greatest liar”

As Fritz Heider’s work on social perception pointed out, people’s interpretation of causality is generally anthropomorphic; individuals ordinarily attribute causes to themselves or other individuals rather than to complex environments where pressure is really exercised by things, people and networks. Heider noted, “Changes in the environment are almost always caused by acts of persons in combination with other factors.” But yet, “the tendency exists to ascribe the changes entirely to persons.” This observation prompted the Austrian psychologist to deduce that Nietzsche before him understood that error in attribution was common, hence,

108 The position of Booker T Washington was largely contrasted by those of another highly influential black intellectual, the liberal W.E.B. Du Bois, a proponent of the right-based protest. Du Bois underlined the importance for black identity to remain distinct rather than the same as those of the mainstream, predominantly white culture. At age 92 in 1960, Du Bois wrote: “What we must now ask ourselves is when we become equal American citizens what will be our aims and ideas and what we will have to do with selecting these aims and ideals. Are we to assume that we simply adopt the ideals of Americans and become what they are or want to be and that we will have in this process no ideas of our own? That would mean that we would cease to be Negroes as such and become white in action if not completely in color. We would take on the culture of white Americans doing as they do and thinking as they think. Manifestly this would not be satisfactory.” See, W. E. B. Du Bois, “Whither Now and Why,” in The Education of Black People: Ten Critiques 1906-1960 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973), 149–50.
110 Ibid.
“Success is the greatest liar.” Stimulated by this research, Gordon Allport referred to Heider’s ‘attribution theory’ in order to explain why “in deteriorated residential districts we are far more likely to see the Negro who lives there as disfiguring the district, than to perceive the district as disfiguring the Negro.”

As the Ashburton resident L.E. Larsen noted, prejudice of black people would more readily resorb were it not from daily communies to and from work, where white middle class observers were exposed to all black ghetto communities living in what appeared to the outsider as inhuman conditions. According to Heider, “one of the features of the organization of the social field is the attribution of a change to a perceptual unit.” The tendency to simplify causal attribution by pointing at specific agencies, that is to say, at individuals, satisfied human nature and the desire to attribute change to something more palpable and readily understandable.

Social psychologist interested in phenomenological questions such as these noted early on that social perceptions could become especially skewed in cases where there had been a negative outcome. The sociologist Paul Fauconnet, for example, noted that because a criminal violates society, society feels that his acts must be annihilated, but it cannot, as there are faits accomplis. As a result, “substitute has to be found, a symbol of the crime whose destruction replaces the destruction of the crime, and the beings which are taken as substitute are considered responsible for the crime.” This substitution conflates the act and the perpetrator and the perpetrator himself, so as to “reinstate an equilibrium even when otherwise irreversible changes have disturbed it.” Heider explained:

Persons, as absolute causal origins, transform irreversible changes into reversible ones. We understand now why the need for revenge, a special case of a need for the reinstatement of an equilibrium, requires a person as object: because of the simplicity of organization, the person can represent the disturbing change in its entirety.

The perception that a crime belongs to a person and that attacking that person amounts to attacking his crime is largely influenced by the life space of the observer, that is, his or her psychological field. In environments where racism had been deeply institutionalized in history, culture, law and politics, the life space of individuals was increasingly likely to be tarnished by prejudice, and as a result, to attribute fault where it was most suitable, irrespectively of hard facts. As Heider pointed out, individuals “with bad reputations are accused and convicted on the basis of evidence which one would consider insufficient if an unfavorable prejudice did not related them to the crime in advance.”

114 Ibid., 360.
115 Ibid., 361.
116 Ibid.
117 Ibid., 363.
notion of ‘character reference’ hinges on this specific observation. Just like the appreciation of the "evaluation of artistic products depends on the prestige of the person to whom they are attributed,” the color of a skin that had been perceived as being inferior polluted the perception and phenomenological experience of people in major ways despite the end of de jure segregation in Baltimore City – a condition that desegregation hoped to address.

Coda

The work of Gordon Allport demonstrated that prejudices are not merely a value judgment but a compound with ingredients that include – but are not limited to – the historical context, cultural norms, laws, and phenomenological fields (also known as life spaces). In turn, direct human contacts as well as subconscious associations have an impact on the subjective construction of life spaces, so on the construction of prejudice. Having identified some of the mechanics behind the construction of prejudice, Allport’s theories contributed significant insights pertaining to the replacement of prejudices via specific forms of direct human contact.

In places where these contacts would not take place and where legal, political and cultural spaces continued to uphold race as a valid criteria for social division, prejudices are likely to be reinforced rather than overwritten. As Heider’s influential attribution theory postulated, individuals living in such environments readily ascribed blame to identifiable agencies as they remain unable to define the actual causal origins of things created by complex and multifaceted processes.

The knowledge afforded by these two separate theories supports the significance of residential spaces for processes aiming to overcome racial prejudices. These theories also underscore the importance to unpack and demystify the causality between the conditions of black inner city neighborhoods and their inhabitants, to convincingly demonstrate how historical factors, events, cultural conditions and extraordinary individuals created, maintained, or counteracted the construction of the Baltimore ghetto, which would be violently contested at last in 1968.

118 Ibid., 364.
Contrary to later forms of racial discrimination, the straightforward racism of the Deep South prior to the emancipation of slaves was easy to discern and common to dispute, and as a result, simple to subvert. Aware that slavery would not be permitted in territories of the North, slaves built on their understanding of space to escape the fate of their lot. In Richmond, Virginia, for example, Henry ‘Box’ Brown mailed himself by Adams Package Express to Philadelphia, traveling some twenty-seven hours in a box three feet long and two feet deep before reaching the promised land. This imaginative escape had been possible thanks to Brown’s elementary appreciation of physical and social spatial relations, which motivated him to trade-off relative safety and accept intense discomfort for a little more than a day, to potentially earn freedom for life. Other antebellum fugitives found that they could escape their masters by hiding in plain sight. As George Lipsitz noted, “In the Deep South especially, where large plantations were plentiful, escapees made their way north by moving from plantation to plantation.” They secured food in the slave quarters at night and worked the field during the day before moving on further north as soon as an opportunity came along. “Although they could be seen, they remained unnoticed by the masters and overseers on large plantations who often could not really distinguish one slave from another.” These fugitives understood a particular aspect of the white spatial imaginary on the plantation – that slaves constituted a source of anonymous labor for their operators, – a finding that these exploited men and women would use to undercut the biopolitics of slavery in the United States.

Like the slaves who built on their understanding of space to subvert the system of confinement and subjugation in which they lived, this autopsy of the Baltimore ghetto has offered insights potent enough to disrupt the conditions that the riots of 1968 sought to protest, which in all appearance still exist today. As opposed to the unapologetic racism of the 1800s and early 1900s, discriminatory spaces dating from the Modern era became well disguised, allowing them to operate in plain sight amid a political climate that sought to put an end to the system of apartheid in America. These racialized devices were central to the perpetuation of the ghetto in Baltimore, yet, they also served short-term productive functions for the communities that they confined, allowing the devices to benefit from the support of political leaders, mainstream society, as well as black advocacy groups.

As this study described obvious and hidden spaces that reinforced segregation, concentrated poverty, attached stigma, imposed constraint, confined spatially, or institutionally encased black Baltimoreans, it reaffirmed the Kerner Commission's finding, that white society created and maintained the ghetto. The investigation has exposed the natures, characteristics and functioning of discriminatory spaces while documenting various ways by which actors from all spheres of life participated to their formation and evolution via housing and politics. Moreover, this investigation has also revealed that the Baltimore ghetto was not only created via strategies that intended to treat blacks as second-class citizens, but also through the actions of well-intentioned parties that inadvertently participated to the production of dysfunctional spatial conditions by undermining the negative function of segregation.

**Formation of the ghetto**

The accounts presented in chapter two describe ways by which racial prejudices and discrimination would eventually lead to the creation of ghetto neighborhoods in Baltimore. The narrative foregrounds overarching cultural and political dispositions with regards to minority groups, to figuratively position the city at the crossing between the Deep South and Northern states.

Baltimore's urban history reveals that the end of slavery in Maryland has corresponded with the start of residential segregation, which would be imposed on blacks using institutional measures and social pressures. Public institutions enrolled in the segregationist project in Baltimore have included entities ranging from City Hall to the church. Having outlawed black organizations as secret societies in the mid-1800s and refusing to provide public support for African American associations as a result, the state of Maryland would later reconsider its position and offer financial contributions for the establishment and operation of black schools starting in 1888. Some years later when a relatively large black community had started to settle in West Baltimore, the local government suggested relocating all public buildings catering to blacks near this neighborhood, "so that the negroes would, for the sake of convenience, settle in that locality."

"The relocation of public institutions to specific areas of Baltimore instigated a racialized system of territorial organization designed to concentrate blacks in established neighborhoods, whereas African Americans had been able to live contiguously to white residences in Baltimore prior to emancipation."

As white Baltimoreans living adjacent to the newly formed ghettos aimed to guard their areas against the potential arrival of black families in the early 1900s, they established different protective measures that would be implemented via the legal justice system. ‘Protective associations’ represented one of the earliest embodiments of such measures, which operated by denying the transfer of properties to black occupants and invalidated transactions that had disturbed racial compositions. Protective associations were supported by the clergy, with

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4 This point was made by the School Board of Baltimore and reported in, *The Sun*, "Oppose Negro School: Neighbors Adopt Resolutions and Thank The Sun," *The Sun*, July 23, 1903, Baltimore Sun Archives.
records noting how a West Baltimore pastor recommended for the state to approach racial co-habitation in the same way as it dealt with miscegenation in 1910, the latter being illegal in seventeen Southern states (including Maryland) until the 1967 Supreme Court ruling in 'Loving v. Virginia.' Residential segregation would eventually become formally institutionalized in 1911, when Councilman Samuel L. West passed a bill that stipulated that Baltimoreans could no longer move into city blocks where more than half of the residents were of a different skin color than their own. This law would thus guarantee the re-segregation of integrated areas. When this bill was eventually overturned based on constitutional rights in 1917, ‘restrictive covenants’ styled after those of Rolland Park were adapted in many neighborhoods to enforce segregation once again. Such covenants were declared invalid in 1929, not based on claims pertaining to racial discrimination, but rather because they interfered with the right to freely transfer land. Upon this ruling, white residents assumed the task of keeping Baltimore segregated by intimidating black families that attempted to move in predominantly white areas, stoning their houses, threatening their safety and speaking of their arrival through a language that elucidated the presence of a foreign body menacing the sanctity of a sovereign land. The ‘negro invasion,’ as it were, represented a threat to be stopped.

Despite the deployment of measures aiming to confine blacks to small enclaves in the city, some property owners effectively enlarged the black ghetto by selling and renting dwellings to blacks in areas located just outside minority enclaves. They generally did so either out of fear to reside in close proximity to the ghetto, or for reasons related to economic exploitation. As African American neighborhoods suffered from overcrowding, with densities between three and six times higher than the city as whole in 1935 – where dwellings were commonly equipped with antiquated sanitation infrastructures – residents experienced abnormal occurrences of venereal diseases, tuberculosis, child mortality, adult mortality and airborne infections. Such areas thus came to be perceived as the host of vile ecologies; menacing spaces believed to be able to spread diseases and shorten lives. As the housing market opened to blacks was far smaller than the demand, property dealers took financial advantage of African Americans by offering them dwellings at vastly inflated prices while providing tenants with the fewest services and barest of upkeeps.

Rather than attributing blame to racially skewed social, economic, political and legal structures, as well as greed and bigotry, prejudiced observers held the inhabitants of the ghetto responsible for the condition of the ghetto, thereby reinforcing a belief system that would eventually lead to complete segregation via Jim Crow in Baltimore. This system encompassed public and private places alike, from traditional neighborhoods to public housing projects, shops to restaurants, and theaters to hospitals.

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5 Earl Warren, Richard Perry Loving, Mildred Jeter Loving v. Virginia (US Supreme Court 1967). Like Maryland had done in Brown v. Board in 1954, it repealed the racially charged law at the start of the legal proceedings rather than waiting for the court’s judgment to pass. The 17 states that still had anti-miscegenation laws at the start of 1967 were all former slave state, with the exception of Oklahoma.

Starting in the 1930s, spaces of oppression began to evolve along more subtle lines that could sometimes make it difficult to ascertain that specific housing strategies were racially charged and discriminatory. Spatial devices acted on prejudices in different ways, sometimes by providing services exclusively in parts of the city where blacks did not live, other times by developing programs that served the stated objective to improve the ecology of inner city ghettos, while also fulfilling the implied desire to curb the impulse of middle class blacks to seek housing in white neighborhoods. In fact, as the professional class in the black community of Baltimore started to experience significant growth, the traditional ghetto was transformed to include many more middle class residential options and matching facilities, to the point where a quasi-autonomous 'black city' emerged within the wider metropolis. These spaces were created and counteracted by stakeholders who interfered with the network of the Baltimore ghetto, affecting its residents in ways that did not always reflect their original intentions.

When the Home Owner’s Loan Corporation (HOLC) published the 1937 ‘Redlining map of Baltimore,’ the federal government formally established an assessment system that would provide predominantly white neighborhoods with services that would not be offered in blacks and Jewish areas. As half of the country’s residential mortgages were in default in 1933, HOLC attempted to prevent foreclosures through a refinancing program that offered manageable repayment terms and interest rates. The program assessed risk partly based on the location of properties, declaring every dwelling in predominantly black and Jewish areas as being high risk. The accessibility of this initiative for the black population was further reduced seeing that many houses owned by minority families outside the ghetto had been purchased through loans that should never have been issued in the first place. Admittedly, as greedy realtors frequently encouraged working class families to purchase jerrybuilt houses with surprisingly small equity, swindling bankers wrote off unsafe mortgages that no responsible fiscal program would insure or backup.

While the federal government was supporting the middle class through HOLC’s well-priced mortgages in areas further removed from the inner city, it intended to assist the working class by other means. New Dealers devised a public housing program promising to stimulate the construction industry by replacing slums with modern subsidized rental housing. The various plans proposed in Baltimore made it clear that the sites for public housings were often chosen to create barriers that would stop the expansion of black enclaves into white middle class areas. If the mayor, together with a well-organized real estate lobby initially fought to keep such federal programs out of Baltimore, their objections were by and large grounded in financial arguments as public housing was seen as unfair competition for property owners and dealers. This eight years long resistance inadvertently prevented the displacement of many black Baltimoreans seeing that early public housing projects commonly razed down black neighborhoods, sometimes for the creation of white-only public housing projects even as this kind of demographic ‘replacement’ went against federal guidelines. As importantly,
those displaced would have rarely been rehoused seeing that early public housing programs did not welcome very poor families or offer dwellings for prices comparable to low-rent districts.

As the demand for public housing mushroomed in the late 1930s, when organized black advocacy groups and public officials in the state capital pressured the local government for more affordable housing, the mayor finally backed down and accepted the largesse offered by Washington, D.C. Following a well established pattern in Baltimore, the city’s public housing authority planned fully segregated projects from the moment of its inception in 1939 until the inauguration of Lafayette Courts in 1956. Organizations from NAACP to the Urban League demanded for more slums to be replaced by public housing in the Baltimore ghetto, fully accepting the pattern of segregation that was indeed normal in Maryland. This aspect of the program – segregation – would hardly ever be mentioned and even less frequently be contested seeing that public housing offered an alternative to black Baltimorians longing to escape the unforgiving condition of cheap tenements, and the exploitative prices of dwellings available to them. Moreover, the ghetto was also perceived as a comforting place for many, where residents lived amongst equals and freely embraced the ‘soul culture’ characteristic of African American neighborhoods. In the ghetto, locals could enjoy quality time with friends, neighbors and families without having to apologize for their blackness, nor would they have to think twice about their right to frequent certain institutions or places of business.

But the security that the ghetto provided to the black spatial imaginary was constantly undermined by other realities. With mortality rates twice as high in black enclaves than in white neighborhoods, records showing that ghetto residents were being charged higher rents for units in worst off conditions, and the fact that few blacks had ever had the opportunity to reside in a new modern housing unit in Baltimore, the ghetto remained flawed, oppressive and unfair in its own ways. Facing such problematic circumstances, the fact that public housing would be segregated appeared to be a nonissue until the 1966 class action filed under the name of Dorothy Gautreaux in Chicago, which would later be followed by similar cases throughout the country, such as ‘Thomson v. HUD’ in Baltimore. The original case charged that the Chicago Housing Authority along with United States Department of Housing and Development were engaging in racial discrimination by locating public housing exclusively in black neighborhoods, thereby violating the fourteenth amendment of the US Constitution.

While public housing programs faced no substantial opposition for being segregated in the early 1940s, the situation had indeed become problematic by the 1960s when urban renewal authorities cited slum clearance to tare down the last neighborhoods affordable to the black working class in Baltimore. As local planners failed to differentiate ‘slums’ from ‘low-rent districts’ and ‘ghettos,’ urban renewal programs such as the one that cleared the way for the construction of the McCulloh Home Extension in West Baltimore proposed to

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7 The value of the ghetto as home can be read in many ethnographic work that have focused on social units living in ghetto areas. In A Place on the Corner, where Elijah Anderson presented the finding of his study of a Chicago corner bar conducted between 1970 and 1973, the author notes that individuals remain in the neighborhood because of their status in the inner city, which does not transfer outside their primary network. Their ‘credit’ and ‘reputation’ is in fact only good within specific places, which constitutes a fundamental reason as to why people remain and return to these places. See, Elijah Anderson, A Place on the Corner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 32–35.
demolish decent and valuable housings. Furthermore, it exploited homeowners by acquiring properties at unfair and un-agreeable prices. In fact, most owner-occupants were being offered payouts inferior to the sum for which their dwelling had been evaluated in the latest municipal property assessment then. These payouts would be too small to cover the cost of even the cheapest properties of ‘standard’ quality available in Baltimore. In the case of the McCulloh Home Extension, the clearance of low-rent homes had the effect of turning homeowners into tenants. The sum offered for owner-occupied properties were so small that residents would often have no other choice than moving to public housing projects, forcing families that had been able to fend for themselves to become dependent on the state for shelter. Recognizing these flaws in the city’s public housing program, NAACP instigated a lawsuit that attempted to defund the same institution that the black community of Baltimore together with other stakeholders had labored to create – the Housing Authority of Baltimore City – as its discriminatory component could no longer hide.

Beyond confining low-income blacks to inner city ghettos, public housing also reinforced the stigma attached to low-income black neighborhoods. When the Housing Authority turned to high-rise buildings to accommodate more tenants, it inadvertently introduced an architectural type that quickly became a symbol of poverty, estrangement and vice. Admittedly, as a city built of rowhouses, the tall buildings of Lafayette Courts became distinctive landmarks that many Baltimoreans would eventually equate with crime and indigence; a reputation that had previously been associated with low-rent districts located inside the segregated inner city. These high-density estates were presented as unified ensembles, accommodating thousands of residents and thereby augmenting the statistical probability for crime to occur on a specific territorial area. As observers, from surrounding neighborhoods to the mass media, referred to the twenty-three buildings of Lafayette Courts as if it were one, the name Lafayette Courts became synonymous with lawlessness. Vertical public housing complexes were admittedly harder to police and in many cases, affected by criminal and nefarious practices more severely than neighboring rowhouse areas. But the labeling of the project’s 816 dwelling units as if it were a single address, earned Lafayette Courts a reputation significantly worse than the one it deserved.

Like every other public housing project in Baltimore, Lafayette Courts also concentrated poverty and race despite being the first desegregated estate in the city seeing that by 1966, only one unit was registered to a white family. This arrangement facilitated the concentration of poverty; it limited opportunities for economic integration; and it reinforced ethnic and racial division; three conditions that each have the effect of reducing the likelihood for socioeconomic mobility to occur.

As public housing threatened the autonomy of the housing market on the one hand, and could not rehouse each and every residents living in sub-standard dwellings on the other, different actors intervened to provide an alternative to Baltimoreans residing in ghetto neighborhoods. G Yates Cook attempted to devise new ways to improve damaged dwellings rather than tearing them down in East Baltimore, who would later be supported by realtors who provided
funds and programs that the city would not. These realtors did not support working and middle class inner city families out of charity or social concern, but rather to limit the land available for slum clearance and public housing in Baltimore. In fact, their involvement in the Baltimore Plan consisted in an attempt to counter public housing by developing a real life alternative to it, thereby extending the parameters of traditional lobbying.

As the Baltimore Plan evolved into a national phenomenon with incredible promise for homeowners in decaying inner cities, the program informed a new federal housing policy that would also be piloted in Baltimore. In contrast to conventional public housing strategies, the Baltimore Plan and later, the Harlem Park Project were institutionally de-centralized, architecturally responsive to the local context, and welcomed interventions from actors from all spheres of life. This flexible structure allowed its champions to address various failure-points in a timely manner. The Baltimore Plan, for example, evolved to introduce a Housing Court whereas judges in standard municipal courts were quick to dismiss housing code violations as being unimportant; it reorganized the various agencies involved in housing code enforcement under a single umbrella when it became apparent that public offices offered contradictory inspection reports; it introduced an educational agenda to court proceedings when judges realized that violations were often caused by ignorance rather than negligence; it shifted from a block-by-block approach to a neighborhood-by-neighborhood approach after Cook became aware of the advantages that this change in scale would entail; it set-up an office that would provide practical and legal services in order to avoid further negative experiences with dishonest contractors; it made small loans available to residents when operators realized that solvable families were being assessed unfairly by standard financial institutions; and it allowed flexibility in the window of time allocated to carry out repairs for families that demonstrated good will but remained unable to meet the mandated renovation schedule. Overall, the Baltimore Plan represented a framework where various actor could intervene and support a loosely defined project in whichever way they could and irrespectively of their primary interests, in as long as their interventions would have positive effects on residents living in the Baltimore Plan project area.

The Harlem Park Demonstration program developed around similar premises but under a formal structure that responded to new federal guidelines then, which had been created largely based on the lessons offered by the Baltimore Plan. Like the Baltimore Plan in East Baltimore, the Harlem Park Project in West Baltimore attempted to correct failure-points in real time, thereby increasing the likelihood for the program to succeed. The pilot project provided fertile grounds that allowed local authorities to recommend specific changes in federal regulations, eventually allowing Harlem Park to achieve its purpose: to develop a method whereby a vast neighborhood in the heart of the ghetto could be rehabilitated. It created conditions where the built environment of a working class neighborhood would become noticeably better, saving the area from the threat of urban renewal bulldozers seeing that Harlem Park’s rehabilitated dwellings would exceed the city’s housing standards, thereby making it impossible to declare the area as a slum to be razed.
The Harlem Park project inadvertently served a parallel purpose, however. It created spatial conditions that lowered the propensity of residents to seek housing outside black enclaves; it incentivized those who had left the ghetto to return; and it mitigated pressures to open up non-ghetto neighborhoods to blacks. Admittedly, Harlem Park did not represent a solution that sought to bring down the ghetto in Baltimore. Instead, it made life in it more bearable, reducing the boiling demands for spatial equity and drastic spatial re-organization down to a simmer. Furthermore, the urban conditions created through the Baltimore Plan and Harlem Park were not any more conducive for cross-racial interactions to occur than in Lafayette Courts, nor did these projects provide any significant opportunities for contacts between people of various socioeconomic classes to take place. It offered an environment where people could temporarily live in better housing, while the long-term effects of economic and racial encasement remained unchecked.

As architects, planners and renewalists increased the material quality of space in ghetto neighborhoods, Baltimore persisted as a segregated city besieged by racial prejudices. Black communities in neighboring counties were increasingly being displaced, oppressed, then suppressed – through the demolition of small ghetto enclaves and the deployment of exclusionary urban planning measures – forcing Baltimore County’s few black families to seek accommodations in the already overcrowded inner city ghetto. While the rehabilitation of Harlem Park encouraged people to return to the traditional ghetto in Baltimore, other black families showed no interest in going back to segregated enclaves and crusaded for their rights to reside in predominantly white neighborhoods, such as Ashburton. These pioneers were supported by a minority of white residents, who like them, also advocated for integration in the late 1950s, but primarily for economic reasons. In this neighborhood and many more just like it, blockbusters exploited racial prejudices to turn an all white area into an all black area, generating significant profit in the process. These realtors purchased dwellings at deflated prices by planting black families and thereby inciting panic, seeing that the arrival of minorities signaled the depreciation of a neighborhood’s value in Baltimore. Blockbusters would then sell these properties back to African American buyers at profitable prices as blacks generally paid more for housing. This practice reinforced the stigma of race in the eyes of white owners who attributed their financial loss to blacks rather than their own prejudices. The integration of individuals of different races in Ashburton also offered spatial conditions whereby prejudices could be replaced by primary contacts with likeminded individuals, such as Otho Pinkett, however.

Blockbusters extended the ghetto and thereby introduced new residential options to Baltimore’s black middle class. If it is true that Ashburton’s first nonwhite buyers have been coerced to purchase their homes for more than their fair market value, blockbusters also subverted the white spatial imaginary by exploiting the self-fulfilling beliefs that black lowered property values. In fact, rather than fearing blacks and racial integration, this urban history points at the economic peril of segregation and prejudice – for blacks and whites alike.
Figure 142. Vacant Housing, Harlem Park Block 92, West Baltimore, 2014. Photograph by author.
Figure 143. Front rowhouse facade (left), vacant rowhouse (center) and occupied rowhouse, Harlem Park Block 104, West Baltimore, 2014. Photograph by author.
Figure 144. Back rowhouse facade, Harlem Park Block 121, West Baltimore, 2014. Photographed from the Inner-block Park, by author.

Figure 145. Remnants of rowhouses, Harlem Park Block 104, West Baltimore, 2014. Photographed by author.

Figure 146. Vacant and gutted rowhouses, Harlem Park Block 110, West Baltimore, 2014. Photographed by author.
Figure 147. Inner-block Park, Harlem Park Demonstration Block (Block 112), West Baltimore, 2014. Photographed by author.

Figure 148. Inner-block Park, Harlem Park Block 86, West Baltimore, 2014. Photograph by author.
Figure 149. Inner-block Park, Harlem Park Block 122, West Baltimore, 2014. Photograph by author.

Figure 150. Inner-block Park, Harlem Park Block 112, West Baltimore, 2014. Photograph by author.

Figure 151. Inner-block Park, Harlem Park Block 97, West Baltimore, 2014. Photograph by author.
Segregation and the production of dysfunctional space

In 1927, W.I. Thomas observed that the "environment is no longer regarded as a scene of action for the person, but as a material out of which the personality itself is built." If the discipline of sociology had indeed recognized early on that physical environments play an important role on the development of the self, it would take nearly half a century more for scientists to realize that confining blacks into ghettos results in extremely unhealthy urban ecologies. This failure point in social and spatial sciences has allowed the perpetuation of environments that facilitated the stigmatization and institutional encasement of an entire race in Baltimore. To be sure, undermining the significance of segregation has encouraged the estrangement, exploitation and oppression of blacks via a particular form of territorial organization. Segregation, the primal characteristic of the ghetto, has allowed employers uninterested in hiring blacks to relocate to areas out of reach for most African Americans; it facilitated the production of a two-tier public education system; it encouraged the deployment of practices of disproportionate policing; it supported the production of distinct social and cultural norms, which in turn further increased the broadening river that separates Baltimore's black inner city community to white mainstream society. As William Julius Wilson pointed out, "The tendency of some liberals to deny the very existence of culturally destructive behavior and attitudes in the inner city is again to diminish the importance of the environment in determining the outcomes and life chances of individuals." If culturally destructive systems surely exist in the Baltimore ghetto, their development is largely indebted to segregation, as well as other devices that have spatialized prejudices.

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2 As the stigma of the ghetto extends to all blacks, and not only those residing within segregated neighborhoods, this system of segregation directly affects each and every black individual in the United States, from university professors to street hustlers. This is supported by the opening narrative of Cornel West seminal Racer Matters and described in detail in Elijah Anderson's The Cosmopolitan Canopy. West, a Harvard Professor, uses personal narrative to explain how stigma affects him too, nothing for example how taxi drivers in New York City commonly stop for white professional individuals meters away from while, while refusing to consider him as a potential client. Writing about the concept of the 'iconic ghetto,' Anderson notes: "This icon is by definition a figment of the imagination of those with little or no direct experience with the ghetto, and yet, when a black person navigates spaces outside the ghetto, those he encounters very often make reference to this residential area in order to make sense of him, although their interpretation is often erroneous." (29) He notes that the "nigger moment" is always one step away for blacks in America, where any African American man can be made to feel discriminated against on the basis of race. (249-273) See, Elijah Anderson, The Cosmopolitan Canopy: Race and Civility in Everyday Life (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011); Cornel West, Race Matters (New York City: Vintage Books, 1993).
3 As large fractions of the middle class relocated to the counties in the two decades that followed the riots of 1968, public schools in Baltimore City became underfunded as the city lost a significant tax base. In 1984, "the city was ranked next to last among the nation’s fifteen largest cities in the proportion of twenty – to twenty-four-year olds who had completed high schools." (Harvey, 140). By 1990, only 15.5% of Baltimore City's population above the age of 25 held a 4-year plus college degree, in comparison to 26.1% for the counties immediately surrounding Baltimore. Despite an important national shift toward the tertiary economy, municipal spending on education in Baltimore between 1974 and 1982 decreased by 15%. (Harvey, 140) By the 1990s, public school expenditure per student in Baltimore was the lowest among the Frost-Belt’s fourteen largest cities, spending $4,824 per head in 1992-3, nearly $1000 less than Detroit. (The Economic State of Milwaukee report) These discrepancies in spending culminated in vastly inferior school results in Baltimore City, with around 13-15% of students obtaining satisfactory results on a standardized testing (the MSAPAP Test) in Baltimore City between 1994 and 1999, versus 41-48% in Baltimore County. Today, Baltimore City has some of the highest dropout rates in the country, with fewer than 30% of the students who entered ninth grade graduating high school, according to Peter L. Beilenson, Baltimore’s former Public Health Commissioner. (102) See, Peter L. Beilenson and Patrick A. McGuire, Tapping into The Wire: The Real Urban Crisis (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012); David Harvey, Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography (New York: Routledge, 2001); Center for and Economic Development, “The Economic State of Milwaukee: The City and the Region” (Wisconsin-Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Economic Development, 1998), http://www4.uwm.edu/ced/publications/milw98.cfm.
According to Douglas Massey, "high rates of crime are structurally built into the experience of blacks by virtue of their residential segregation because, during periods of economic dislocation, segregation concentrates poverty and anything associated with it." In a separate empirical study, Ruth Peterson and Lauren Krivo have noted, "social isolation, rather than social deprivation, is the mechanism by which segregation leads to higher levels of homicide among African Americans." These scholars have established strong prima facie evidence of a direct causality between black segregation, high rates of poverty, and criminality. Such findings justify the deployment of the ‘code of the street’ in ghetto neighborhoods, which constitutes in a “code of conduct regulated by the threat of violence” that develops in order to deflect everyday threats. As Massey argues, “Asking residents of poor, racially isolated neighborhoods to ‘choose’ a less violent path or to say ‘no’ to the temptation of the streets is absurd, given the threatening character of the niche in which they live.” He adds, “To survive on the streets of segregated, inner-city America, one must learn, and to a significant extent internalize, the code of violence.” This social adaptation to one's environment is evermore problematic as it affects even honest and well-intentioned individuals, who embrace decent and irreproachable principles inside their homes, but must revert to the code of the street to shield off the hazards of ghetto ecologies.

Implication for urban theory, policy and future research

The segregated territories that Anderson, Krivio, Massey and Peterson have described and analyzed correspond to what Wacquant refers to as the ‘hyperghetto,’ which according to him has replaced the traditional ghetto in around 1968. In contrast to the mid-century traditional black ghettos (the black city within the white), the hyperghetto is a “racially and culturally monotonous universe characterized by low organization density and state penetration (and therefore high physical and social insecurity).” Wacquant notes that four main characteristics separate the traditional ghetto from the hyperghetto, including the disappearance of a compliment of classes, the loss of positive economic function, the replacement of communal institutions by state institutions of social control, and lastly, the loss of the ‘buffering function’

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14 The Peterson & Krivo study complemented findings from earlier studies, such as Franco Ferracuti and Marvin Wolfgang’s The Subculture of Violence (1967), where the authors established that higher rates of violence among low-income blacks could be explained based on the fact that such subculture had become more permissive of violence. Similarly, Howard Erlanger found that racially and economically segregated men were more likely to engage in violence than white, middle class men. (1974, 285) This reflected the 1957 findings by Walter Miller who noted, “In the case of ‘gang’ delinquency, the cultural system which exerts the most direct influence on behavior is that of the lower class community itself – a long-established, distinctively patterned tradition with an integrity of its own – rather than a so-called ‘delinquent subculture’ which has arisen through conflict with middle class culture and is oriented to the deliberate violation of middle class norms.” (5) See, Howard S. Erlanger, “The Empirical Status of the Subculture of Violence Thesis,” Social Problems 22, no. 2 (1974): 280–92; Walter B. Miller, “Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency,” Journal of Social Issues 14, no. 3 (Ju1958): 5–19; Peterson and Krivo, “Racial Segregation and Black Urban Homicide.”
together with the de-pacification of everyday life. This particular type space corresponds to the rendition of the ghetto presented by Simon in *The Wire*, where the inner city ghetto is no longer presented as being socioeconomically varied and complex, but rather portrayed as universally perilous.

As the empirical assessment presented in this research demonstrates, the distinctive features of the ghetto have significantly evolved over time, much like the particular methods by which the ghetto has been maintained. As this research explored a multiplicity of sites of particular importance to the Baltimore ghetto, including the city’s first black communities, municipal offices, federal policies, low-rise public housings, working class ghetto neighborhoods, high-rise public housings, a middle class ghetto neighborhood, and lastly, county ghetto neighborhoods, it provided evidence pointing at the far-reaching influence of racial prejudices and the downward spiral that is segregation. Prejudices against blacks have in fact been so influential that they facilitated the deployment of similar spatial practices across a multiplicity of sites, sometimes without formal overarching coordination. Prejudice, a structural force identified as a social act, has catalyzed social processes – legal frameworks that support social acts – which in turn enabled the evolution of particular cultural forces, including national views on race. As demonstrated in this work, racial prejudices originated with the enslavement of blacks – their dishonored societal footing as commodities rather than human beings – which has affected African Americans even after the end of slavery, depriving them from rights, access and equal status. Starting with emancipation in Maryland, racially motivated forces of the cultural and structural kinds have instrumentalized space to protract the domination of blacks, which had previously been afforded via invidious legal frames and social contracts. Segregation thereby unfolded as a type of territorial force that has mirrored the intentions of bondage, eluded the purposes of equal right reforms, and protracted racial dominance.

As the empirical discussion from chapter six suggests, the economic implications of residential segregation have justified why individuals have been willing to act on prejudices, even when they no longer believed said prejudice to be valid. The actor-network configuration of places like Ashburton in the late 1950s initially supported theories from the field of social-psychology, which suggested that direct personal contacts with members of other races would facilitate the dissolution of prejudices and enable to emergence of a post-racial frame. However, the near complete racial turnover of Ashburton by the 1970s, together with the transformation of the traditional ghetto into the hyperghetto, has frustrated the expectation of a post-racial city in Baltimore. The socioeconomic conditions and stigmatization of individuals inhabiting areas such as Harlem Park today actually suggests that the opposite phenomenon has taken place, despite convincing and widespread scientific evidence negating the validity of any of the rational behind racial prejudices. These observations suggest that the territorialization of

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19 As described in chapter six, direct contacts between conflicted groups facilitated the dissolution of prejudices under specific conditions seeing that not all types of encounters would have beneficial effects.
prejudices has overpowered its root causes – racially bias views – as a life space determinant. To be sure, the stigma of race appears to be largely indebted to the stigma of the ghetto and the sociocultural limits that this space imposes. This is not to deny the fact that ‘traditional’ racism still clearly exist in border states such as Maryland, but rather to posit that the territorialization of racism, which culminated in the formation of the ghetto, has become the single-most important cause for the perpetuation of racial inequity and discrimination. While the ghetto would likely continue to exist, repress and stigmatize its (black) residents even within a post-racial society, it is less certain that racism would persist on the long run without the ghetto – a race making type space that creates socioeconomic inequity, imposes stigma and legitimates exceptional institutional measures, ultimately gratifying the self-fulfilling belief that race and not ecology is responsible for ethnoracial differences.

This finding has direct implication on social and housing policy as it suggests that the de-spatialization of the ghetto via racial integration is likely to have far-reaching social, economic and cultural impacts. While the significance of de-segregation has been recognized as a powerful strategy to achieve socioeconomic mobility for ghetto families since the Moving to Opportunity demonstration program, this research puts forward preliminary evidence that suggest that breaking up the ghetto would not only offer socioeconomic equity, but eventually expunge racial prejudices at last. As the work has described the evolution of discriminatory spatial practices, including racialized strategies whose discriminatory nature has for long gone unnoticed, it also suggests that territorial forces may very well take new forms after the eventual disintegration of the ghetto, which could perpetuate its effects by means that are still in the making.

This conclusion suggests a need for future empirical research designed to evaluate the correlation between segregation and racial prejudices, and spatial processes leading to the dissolution of the latter thereof. More specifically, this calls for research pertaining to the economics of desegregation, the effectiveness of particular incentives, the nature of cultural caveats, the role of architecture in encouraging economic residential integration, and financial studies designed to evaluate the long-term costs of territorial fragmentation. Finally, the theoretical propositions but forth in this would also benefit from future comparative researches intended to evaluate the strength and influence of racial prejudices against degrees of racial isolation in separate American metropolitan areas.

In conclusion

The production of a segregated urban ecology has also meant the production of a violent environment, inherently unequal and increasingly impoverished. Notwithstanding significant policy improvements aiming to desegregate the ghetto between 1968 and today – from HUD’s Section 8 low-rent certificates to the $1 Home Program in Baltimore – the city remains by and large a segregated territory, where problematic socioeconomic conditions continue to disproportionally affect black neighborhoods. This biography of the Baltimore ghetto has pointed at various ways by which racialized spaces have irrefutably assailed and transgressed
the black community, while systematically condoning the vices of the poor more severely than those of slumlords, prejudiced laws and discriminatory institutions. To be sure, only few of the practices central to the maintenance of the ghetto in Baltimore have been deemed to be criminal to this day. Yet, the culture that emerged from the systematic oppression of blacks via extra-ordinary spatial devices is now, more than ever, subject to reprehension and stigmatization.

Instead of addressing the spaces responsible for the production of dysfunctional social behaviors and economic circumstances, civil society readily ascribes fault to persons or groups. It charges criminals for their acts, thereby punishing the causal origin of the violation rather than the violation itself. Meanwhile, the ghetto – the causal origin behind disproportionate rates of criminal behaviors, socioeconomic isolation and widespread poverty for inner city blacks – continues to be treated as a non-violent offender, reformed through piecemeal interventions and rehabilitated via underfunded treatment programs.
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