Design and Affordable American Housing

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Abstract

Americans have experimented with new models for affordable housing for more than two centuries. The private sector, public agencies, and nonprofit organizations have all played a role. Architecture and site planning have been crucial elements in these efforts, yet they have received scant attention. In arguing that the design of good housing is neither elusive nor subjective, this article explores some of the best practices—and a few mistakes. The article begins with a historical background of diverse endeavors to provide better, more affordable housing for single women, workers, public housing tenants, immigrants, homeless individuals, and low-income families. It then relates this legacy to recent efforts to integrate housing with community development.

Introduction

Given the U.S. history of housing booms and busts and a penchant for novelty, Americans have experimented for more than two centuries with innovations and reforms that promised to produce less expensive, better quality housing for more people. These promises were sometimes marketing ploys or political rhetoric. Public programs have never provided more than 5 percent of total U.S. housing production, and the poorest citizens have often been left out. Nonetheless, the goal of expanding affordable housing has been resonant in the public and private realms, including the fields of architecture and construction.

Builders have pursued ways to economize since the late 19th century. Private philanthropists constructed "model tenements," hoping to elevate a deplorable building type with simplified designs, public health, and moral uplift. Experiments with neoteric building materials and construction systems sought to reduce production costs. States and municipalities funded cooperatives. The federal government created the first public housing for the unemployed "deserving poor" during the Great Depression—although the main concerns were job creation and support for the private sector.[1]

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[1] A previous federal program was created for shipbuilders during World War I. After an initial effort improved transportation to the shipyards, the U.S. Housing Corporation and Emergency Fleet Corporation committed to build 25,000 units but built only 15,000, then sold them off to private buyers after the armistice.

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The Federal Housing Administration's (FHA's) financial supports for suburbanization joined post-World War II (WWII) shelter magazines in promoting small, visibly modern "economy houses" for suburban working- and middle-class families—if they lived in White neighborhoods (Harris, 2013).[2] Addressing the assisted low-income housing stock, President Lyndon Johnson's 1968 task forces on urban poverty and violence lambasted the shortage of good subsidized housing, yet resolutely condemned modern highrises (NCUP, 1968).

These efforts ground to a halt with President Richard Nixon's 1973 moratorium on housing and community development assistance. When federal funding for housing was reinstated, it focused principally on vouchers for private developers. New assisted housing production never again approached the level of the early 1970s. Design innovations persisted in very local and transgressive ways, however, as religious groups and community design corporations built small-scale "contextual" enclaves. By the 1980s and 1990s, urban activists had formed coalitions based on housing issues as varied as gentrification, job training, and historic preservation.

Architecture is a crucial element in achieving good housing, yet it usually plays at best a minor role in deliberations about cost and value.[3] This contradiction stems in part from fundamental misconceptions. Architecture is not a matter of taste or mere aesthetics. Design quality is crucial to good affordable housing. The skillful organization of interiors, views, public areas, outdoor spaces, and even facades is especially important when budgets and square footage are at a premium (Davis, 2004; Feldman and Koch, 2004; KEA, 2006).

As many practitioners and scholars have documented, good design is not elusive or subjective.[4] Four themes characterize the best practices, whatever the era, scale, aesthetic, or auspices.

1. The direct involvement of residents encourages better design. Diverse groups have asserted their distinctive needs and preferences, sometimes challenging the architects' priorities and the power of cultural norms.

2. Focused research helps designers explore alternative technologies and strategies that lower costs, set design guidelines, increase residents' satisfaction, and spur innovation.

3. Site plans are more significant than architectural styles. They orchestrate the natural environment, of course, but they also affect safety and social life, both planned and serendipitous, for residents of all ages.

4. Good site planning extends from adjacent buildings to the entire metropolitan region. People in affordable housing often need nearby jobs, shopping, transportation, childcare, good public schools, parks, cultural activities, health facilities, counseling, and other supportive services. As Xavier de Souza Briggs puts it, "*Neighborhoods* can matter (as locations) even when *neighbors* do not" (Briggs, Popkin, and Goering, 2010: 20).

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[2] Concerned about potential risks to the financial value of the properties it insured, FHA guidelines opposed racial integration—and modern architecture.

[3] One study estimated that planning and design affect 70 percent of the cost of a new building (Davis, 1995).

[4] The Affordable Housing Design Advisor website (http://www.designadvisor.org) helps nonprofit organizations set goals and strategies. The website is jointly sponsored by HUD and the New Jersey Institute of Technology.

These positive attributes have often confronted three negative tendencies that disguise and dispar-age the need for affordability.

1. Builders and consumers indulge in architectural extravagance as if it can express individuality, ensure autonomy, and increase property values. Post-Civil War Victorian dwellings first professed these values, belying the widespread use of mass-produced ornament. The supersized McMansions festooned with supersized decor that first appeared in the 1980s continue this tradition.

2. Many Americans mythologize the market and look down on those who need assistance as failures. In this scenario, the middle class resents "entitlements" or "handouts" as special benefits for poor citizens. It condemns public housing in particular as a path to a welfare state and the worst of modern design.[5] This sentiment persists despite the fact that tax deductions provide far more support for middle-income and upper income homeownership than assisted housing investments provide for poor and working-class citizens.[6]

3. Homeownership has been depicted as the ideal affordable housing strategy for low-income households, even though mortgage financing terms have always been risky for those with moderate incomes (Mason, 2004). Renting often provides more flexibility, more mobility, and reduced costs; yet government agencies and the White House have focused intently, sometimes exclusively, on homeownership, especially since the first GI bill of rights at the end of WWII (for example, Bush, 2002; HUD, 1991, 1984). In fact, major developers and financial institutions have been the principal, albeit not the only, beneficiaries of these neoliberal programs (Hays, 2012).

Together, these trends perpetuate two cultural beliefs about design and housing: (1) that it is sim-ply a matter of aesthetic preferences, and (2) that the benefits of good design should be reserved for those who can afford them. All too often, these attitudes have resulted in assisted housing that is cheaply built and banal, even depressing (Bauer, 1957; Schwartz, 2006). Given the frustrations, many professionals eschew this kind of work, although talented and dedicated architects have designed outstanding low-income housing. The originality and quality of their assisted housing are often superior to those of market-rate housing.

This article provides vignettes in the evolution of American affordable housing design and con-struction as produced by the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. I focus on the role of design—a topic that receives scant attention, except among architects and planners—in contributing to specific advances, but I avoid claims that design can definitively solve complex problems. As an optimist and a historian, I want to understand mistakes in the past but also to take heart from a legacy of ingenuity and innovations that sought to improve America's housing.

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[5] The 1968 National Commission on Urban Problems blamed urban riots and the problems of public housing highrises on Le Corbusier and his theories of "towers in a park" (NCUP, 1968: 123), a sentiment echoed in the President's Committee on Urban Housing (Kaiser Committee, 1969). The National Public Housing Museum, which recently opened in Chicago, gives a favorable counter-narrative of the ambitions and achievements of tenants who went on to become successful.

[6] Mortgage interest and property tax deductions represented more than $181 billion in fiscal year 2009—more than four times the amount that went to low-income rental housing. Because homeowner tax deductions are based on the financial value of dwellings, the greatest benefits go to middle-class and wealthy households.

Residents' Needs

The structure of the article follows the four themes regarding design's role in affordable housing. To examine design as a strategy for realizing residents' and community needs, I begin with brief histories of two groups that generated niche markets for moderate-cost housing.

Affordable Housing for Women

By 1910, nearly one-third of the nation's female urban population lived alone or with other women, "adrift" to some observers, "self-sufficient" to others (Meyerowitz, 1988). Because their wages were much less than those of men, most independent women wanted housing that was affordable, efficient, and conducive to sharing a congenial social life. Apartment hotels for the elite and boarding houses for working women provided two approaches (Groth, 1994). In an article for *Cosmopolitan*—then a very different magazine for women—the feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman praised the centralized cooking, dining, housecleaning, childcare, and other domestic tasks (Gilman, 1972).

Architects and builders also experimented with small bungalows, often grouping them together around a courtyard to encourage social life and downplay the diminutive size of the dwellings. A new arrangement appeared in the 1920s, also called bungalow courts but consisting of small-scale apartment buildings around internal courtyards (Polyzoides, Sherwood, and Tice, 1992). Behind fanciful historicist facades were small one-bedroom units and novel "efficiency studios" with kitchenettes. Variations of both housing types proliferated throughout California, the Pacific Northwest, and the Midwest. This tradition is a precedent for the microunits (or "millennial housing") now appearing in New York and California.

By the 1970s, the divorce rate had doubled and one-third of divorced women did not remarry. More than one-half of the country's married women worked outside the home, including those with young children. Meanwhile, the size and cost of new single-family houses had increased dramatically. These demographic and architectural changes encouraged a shift to clusters of lowrise, high-density townhouses (Montgomery, 1977). The term "multifamily" now encompassed multiple kinds of living arrangements.

The proverbial "typical household" accounted for only 15 percent of the population in 1980, and officials were especially concerned that the number of single mothers had increased dramatically. Racial prejudice intensified the opprobrium, because the upsurge was greatest among African-American mothers.[7] *Housing Our Families*, a 1980 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) study, lamented what it called "broken families" but acknowledged how little was known about them (Smull, 1980). Thus, single-family homes remained a sanctified ideal, protected by strict zoning regulations, popular media, and government agencies.

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[7] Daniel Patrick Moynihan published his controversial book, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, in 1965. A prominent sociologist and Assistant Secretary of Labor, Moynihan contended that high unemployment and the rise in African-American single-parent families (then about one-fourth of the total) was caused in part by social attitudes and social welfare policies that discouraged young African-American men from a sense of responsibility as fathers (Moynihan, 1965). Vilified as a racist tract at the time, the Moynihan Report now seems prescient. The Urban Institute published *The Moynihan Report Revisited* in 2013. The current number of White single mothers is approximately the same as the number of African-American single mothers in 1965; the number of African-American single mothers has tripled (Acs et al., 2013).

The 1980s saw feminists emphasize the need for transitional housing with temporary social services for women who were abused, homeless, or at risk (Birch, 1985; Sprague, 1991). The shelters were intentionally traditional in appearance to emphasize continuities. Denver, Boston, and other cities endorsed such "bridge housing," but communities were often resistant, fighting changes in local zoning regulations. This variety of spaces is a reminder that the United States has always had many kinds of domestic architecture and living arrangements, but market fears and social stigmas still limit the range of alternatives, despite ever greater social diversity (Coontz, 1992).[8]

Workforce Housing

Housing costs rose rapidly after World War I. Milwaukee, Philadelphia, and the state of New York, concerned that workers could no longer afford to live in their cities, passed legislation that encouraged nonprofit cooperatives to build moderate-cost group housing (Sazama, 2000). The quality of construction had a special appeal for labor unions, which appreciated artisanal skill. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America in New York City built two projects in the late 1920s that featured handsome brickwork. Most future residents petitioned for childcare facilities and activity rooms. Local 3 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers added a convivial bowling alley to its group housing development, Electchester, in Queens, New York, in the early 1950s.

New Deal agencies helped American unions sponsor significant projects. A highlight was the Carl Mackley Houses in northeast Philadelphia, completed for the American Federation of Hosiery Workers in 1935 under the Public Works Administration (PWA). The recent immigrant Oskar Stonorov developed an initial model based on German modernist *Zeilenbau*, or rigid diagonal slabs, but never showed it to the union officials, realizing they would find it too severe. Stonorov and his partners shifted to irregular, three-story blocks that rise and fall with the gently sloping site, punctuated by passageways, balconies, and small recessed spaces around stair landings. Even the color softened with inexpensive industrial tiles in rich autumnal hues, evoking Philadelphia's brick rowhouse vernacular. Although the unit sizes were small in all PWA projects, generous public amenities included playgrounds, auditoriums, meeting rooms, nursery schools, rooftop laundries, underground garages, and swimming pools.

The cost of urban living has again created a need to provide affordable housing for many kinds of workers. Universities, schools, and hospitals took up the initiative decades ago. Municipalities throughout the country now sponsor mixed-income, mixed-use housing, often as infill in gentrifying historic areas (Brennan and Lipman, 2007; Rosan and Thoerig, 2012). Private and nonprofit developers receive abatements and bonuses when part of a site (20 to 50 percent) is set aside for moderate-income households. Good design is a key tool for making these investments attractive to occupants with diverse incomes. Distinctions among the different kinds of units are not immediately visible from the hallways. Street facades now tend to feature striking modern surfaces rather than neotraditionalism. The quality and amenities of common areas are especially important. Design interventions also extend beyond housing into community development. For example, adaptive reuse can sustain existing businesses while adding new retail and light industry to expand the local job base.

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[8] Anthropologist George Murdock coined the term "nuclear family" in 1949 (Boudreaux, 2011).

In sum, innovative design strategies have partially filled the housing needs of single women, workers, and other groups. Some successes have relied on governmental officials and more anomalous groups working closely with residents. The early successes predated strict zoning regulations about traditional norms of family life and conventional housing finance—an openness that is again necessary.

Research and Affordability

American research in affordable housing has taken two directions: (1) experiments about construction systems and building materials, and (2) social-science studies about the residents' attitudes toward their surroundings.

Prefabrication

Factory production of all or part of housing construction has enjoyed a cult status among Americans who hope that standardization and rationalization can reduce prices by producing houses like cars. Sears, Roebuck, & Company shipped plans and precut materials for nearly 100,000 "kit houses" between 1908 and 1940. Frank Lloyd Wright used the same principles to create much more elegant mail-order houses for the American System-Built Company in Milwaukee between 1915 and 1917.[9] Meanwhile, Grosvenor Atterbury developed a pioneering system of concrete panels for workers' housing in Forest Hills, New York. He then covered the facades with neo-Tudor ornament so the attached houses would look more homelike (Bergdoll and Christensen, 2008).

Universities conducted research on industrialized housing in the 1920s, as did *Architectural Record* magazine. Government housing for war workers then explored fast-track construction, new materials, engaging site plans, and onsite services like childcare and health clinics (Wright, 2008). Postwar architects, builders, and industries used this legacy in collaborating on the design and production of affordable dwellings now prized as "mid-century modern." They investigated plastics, aluminum, plywood, steel, and other atypical materials. If square footages were small, the open plans gave a sense of spaciousness, often extending to an outdoor patio or balcony.

Two new magazines endorsed affordable housing. *Arts and Architecture* in southern California created its Case Study House Program to highlight prefabrication's design potential. A 1949 house by Charles and Ray Eames was an exuberant juxtaposition of different inexpensive, off-the-shelf materials. High-end design trumped feasible models, however (Smith, 1989). *House and Home*, launched in 1952, addressed home builders. Articles urged hiring—or simply borrowing from—high-quality site planners and architects like Frank Lloyd Wright for moderate-cost housing (Anonymous, 1953). The editors also advised readers to eschew narrow FHA standards for design and livability.

George Romney became Secretary of HUD in 1969. The former American Motors Corporation executive vowed to industrialize American housing within a decade. The result, Operation Breakthrough, produced only 25,000 units on 22 demonstration sites, all under management experts

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[9] Two decades earlier, in 1895, Wright designed two low-income housing projects in Chicago, Francisco Terrace and the Waller Apartments, for the developer-philanthropist Edward Waller.

and engineers (some from the Department of Defense) rather than designers. Largely completed in 1974, the program was considered a failure in the 1976 evaluation (GAO, 1976). Prefabrication nonetheless continues to be promoted as a means to achieve affordable housing today.

Social Scientists Evaluate Affordable Housing

Social scientists had taken on a new role by mid-century: that of explaining why certain housing was successful—or not. The first studies of the 1950s condemned the destruction and displacement, or "urban renewal," explaining that social communities can be meaningful even when the area is not physically appealing to outsiders.[10]

Then came diatribes against highrise public housing—with Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis, Missouri, as the totemic example. Catherine Bauer, who helped write the original United States Housing Authority legislation in 1937, lambasted the slipshod construction standards, barren and frightening sites, urban policies that isolated and warehoused poor citizens, and the lack of innovative or attractive design (Bauer, 1957). "The Pruitt-Igoe Myth," Chad Freidrichs' recent film, showed that residents had first been delighted with the great improvements from their previous homes but grew angry about the deplorable lack of security and maintenance (Bristol, 1991; Freidrichs, 2011).

Elizabeth Wood, who was ousted as director of the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), joined the Citizens' Housing and Planning Council of New York in 1956 and still espoused a sense of possibility for highrise public housing. Wood called for site designs that provided "richness and imagination"—plus tenant management.[11] Her astute observations noted teenagers' need for places to loiter and young mothers' desire for social contacts. Anticipating recent research, she contended that, although a few "problem families" do cause most of the difficulties, housing administrators should give them extra support (Wood, 1961, 1959).

Clare Cooper Marcus, now professor emeritus in the Departments of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley, studied "user needs" in subsidized housing, with an emphasis on site plans and what came to be called "identity." Her interviews established a hierarchy of needs among the residents: shelter, social life, comfort, and self-expression. This research generated an extensive compendium of design guidelines (Cooper Marcus, 1975; Cooper Marcus and Sarkissian, 1986). Franklin Becker, a Cornell University sociologist, documented the widespread preference for lowrise housing with varied massing, balconies, and distinctive roofs. The New York State Urban Development Corporation used Becker's field research as a tool—or perhaps simply a validation—for more than 100 affordable housing projects across the state (Becker, 1974; Buscada, 2005; IAUS/UDC, 1973).[12]

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[10] See, in particular, Davies (1966), Gans (1962), Jacobs (1961), and Rainwater (1970).

[11] Wood's 1961 book is especially compelling because, as the first director of CHA, she had previously endorsed superblocks of modern highrises, convinced that large-scale enclaves would help residents avoid "contamination" by the poverty of their surroundings. Wood was forced to leave CHA when she insisted that the authority integrate all its housing.

[12] Founded in 1968, the New York State Urban Development Corporation (UDC) was charged with building subsidized housing to stem urban decay, especially in New York City's outer boroughs. Free of many restrictions, major architects designed highrises and cluster developments. Despite the good intentions, many of the projects unfortunately had a devastating effect on mixed-income communities. In 1975, facing bankruptcy, UDC reorganized and switched to economic projects like Battery Park City, Roosevelt Island, and the Javits Convention Center. In 1995, seeking to put its negative history behind it, it was renamed the Empire State Development Corporation.

Oscar Newman's 1972 book, *Defensible Space*, offered a facile analysis, insisting on a causal correlation between building height and criminal activity (Newman, 1972). Newman's ideas presumed suspicion and territorial control in addition to more legitimate needs for residents' surveillance—what Jane Jacobs had previously called "eyes on the street" (Jacobs, 1961). Although simplistic, Newman's theory became extremely popular.[13] In sum, this collective body of work influenced designers' thinking about residents' needs in assisted housing facilities, sometimes in contradictory ways. If some architects resented popular preferences and elaborate guidelines, they also learned to question their own presumptions about what people need and want.

Site Plans

St. Francis Square in San Francisco, completed in 1964, exemplifies the benefits of good site planning. The International Longshoremen's Union sponsored this cooperative, the first affordable housing in the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency's Western Addition Redevelopment Project Area (Cooper, 1971). The architects, Marquis & Stoller, softened the simple wooden facades of three-story family units by working with landscape architect Lawrence Halprin to create three generous courtyards, further differentiated into seven groups. The irregularities of the site give a varied cadence up and down hillsides, and balconies provide opportunities for families to personalize their units. St. Francis Square immediately began to win design accolades, becoming a prototype for market-rate and social housing throughout the country. Subsequent observers were concerned, however, that this "garden housing" did not engage the street. Focusing inward on courtyards, residents are cut off from nearby neighbors, and passers-by, unable to see in, feel disconnected.

Villa Victoria in Boston's South End provides a more open and complex site plan. Success took more than two decades, accentuating the perseverance of the Puerto Rican residents who were first threatened with eviction because of urban renewal plans in 1960. "Victorious Dwellings" finally broke ground in 1970, continuing in six stages through 1982 under the architect John Sharratt. Various HUD programs funded mixed-income housing (a highrise for elderly people, new and renovated duplex townhouses, and a midrise building), commerce, parks, and a public plaza that evokes Puerto Rican design. The streets keep through traffic to a minimum, allowing for a pedestrian spine that connects the plaza to a playground (Rowe, 1993).

HOPE VI was far less nuanced and progressive in its concepts about site plans and community engagement. The program originated in 1992 as HUD's effort to demolish what it deemed severely distressed public housing. Officials drew on Newman's *Defensible Space* theories to condemn *all* highrises (Cisneros, 2009, 1995). New Urbanism provided an architectural model of privately owned, small-scale, neotraditional row houses.

Design is relevant to several criticisms of HOPE VI. In particular, the combination of mixed incomes and low densities has meant a substantial net loss in subsidized housing units, especially

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[13] HUD took up these ideas under Secretary Henry Cisneros. *Defensible Space: Deterring Crime and Building Community* was published in 1995.

for those most in need.[14] Many architects castigate New Urbanism's suburban mythology as excessively nostalgic, insisting on the need for shared public spaces and higher densities in cities. HUD has also been accused of instituting vague standards, lacking data about the results of HOPE VI projects, and awarding grants based on an area's ability to generate market-rate income rather than the actual state of the project in question (Gilderbloom, 2008; NHLP, 2002). HUD's Choice Neighborhoods program, which essentially replaced HOPE VI, is in part a response to these issues. It goes beyond housing to improve education, health care, and the public transportation that gets residents to jobs.

Next Door and Beyond

Housing is always part of a broad geographical and social setting. The context of affordable housing also responds to the complex histories of the entities that have produced it. This responsiveness to context is certainly true of the rise of nonprofit Community Development Corporations (CDCs) as affordable housing advocates. CDCs emerged during the turmoil of the 1960s, in response to a broad set of social ills (Pierce and Steinbach, 1987). Their numbers increased with the Community Development Block Grant, or CDBG, program of 1974 and backing from the Ford Foundation. Mayors and governors lent support in the mid-1980s, realizing that Washington would never build the affordable housing they needed. CDCs have become more numerous and more active in national legislation like the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, or LIHTC, Program (Erickson, 2009; Vidal, 1992). By 2010, 4,600 CDCs produced an annual average of 96,000 housing units, 7.41 million square feet of commercial space, and 75,000 jobs (Democracy Collaborative, 2013).

Today's CDCs often work as a consortium, aware that multiple factors are necessary to sustain strong neighborhoods. They increasingly turn to design interventions as critical supports that connect affordable housing with other issues such as employment, urban revitalization, education, historic preservation, and health care. This section looks at contemporary affordable housing built by nonprofit organizations that focus on design's role across a variety of community issues.

First, design can help address community concerns regarding jobs and economic development. Space for various kinds of retail mix—with small-scale workshops, job training, youth programs, and opportunities for startups—have been physically and socially integrated into residential space. Farmers' markets and small grocery stores provide healthy food and ethnic products. Michael Pyatok's Hismen Hin-Nu Terrace in Oakland, California, combines these elements (Jones, Pettus, and Pyatok, 1997). Such examples occur despite governmental regulations that often restrict the amount of nonresidential use on a housing site and prohibit home-based businesses.

Urban blight is another community concern that design can address. Sites for low-income housing are often abandoned or rundown urban areas where rehabilitation has a positive effect on foot traffic and community aesthetics. For example, Daniel Solomon's systems of alleys, walkways, and paths connect with the surroundings in his Los Angeles Vermont Village Plaza project, for

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[14] During its 15 years, HOPE VI demolished more than 96,000 units of public housing and built only 56,000 units affordable to the lowest income households. Slightly more than 10 percent of the public housing tenants have returned to HOPE VI projects.

which his design firm received an American Institute of Architects (AIA)/HUD Secretary's Award for Mixed-Use, Mixed-Income Housing in 2000. Koning Eizenberg Architects (KEA) received an AIA/HUD award for the Waterloo (2002) in Los Angeles. KEA likens the intriguing pattern of its courtyards and connectors to a Sudoko puzzle (KEA, 2006).

Improving educational access and attainment is certainly a key priority of many low-income housing developers. Childcare services, provided on site in many housing developments, often include other children in the neighborhood to strengthen ties. Educational programs for young adults seek to encourage concentration and emphasize ties to a larger youth culture. David Burney, former head of design for the New York City Housing Authority, commissioned an inspired set of libraries and other community buildings to facilitate such services. Each building's uniqueness enriches both pride and connection.

Historic preservation of local cultural assets has recently become a major strategy for affordable housing. It also promotes sustainability and enhances community life (Rypkema, 2002). For example, rather than demolish Archer Courts, a dilapidated 1951 CHA project in Chicago's Chinatown, a local CDC hired Landon Bone Baker Architects. Renovations focused on the interiors and elevators, an open-air corridor was replaced with a glass curtain wall, and extensive landscaping included pavilions for meditation and Tai Chi. Each design intervention improved services and respected the residents' cultural lives. New York's Common Ground Community H.D.F.C., Inc., recently rehabilitated the Andrews Hotel on the Bowery for men at risk of becoming homeless. Like flophouses a century ago, it provides temporary, inexpensive places to live, now combined with supportive services.

Design and preservation can even help integrate mental health supportive services into housing. Many cities have followed San Francisco in protecting their stock of single-room occupancy (SRO) hotels, now recognizing that the wholesale destruction of SROs during the 1970s aggravated the massive increase in homelessness (Rosen and Sullivan, 2012). Community and mental health services are also more effective if they are based locally (Achtenberg, 2002). The Housing Act of 1990[15] focused on special needs populations such as elderly people, disabled people, and people with acquired immune deficiency syndrome, or AIDS. Recent studies show that local supportive services can radically decrease hospital stays and in-patient mental health treatment, particularly when these services are near residential sites (Proscio, 2000). The facilities are most effective if they are easily accessible but also discrete, rather than labeling people in terms of their problems. Conscious of this connection, many CDCs are integrating services seamlessly in development layouts.

Health and natural environments have become recent themes in affordable housing design, too (Burlinghouse, 2009; Meck, 2003; Wells et al., 2007). When New York City sponsored a competition to design and develop affordable housing on a former brownfield site in the South Bronx, the winner was Via Verde ("The Green Way") (Kimmelman, 2011). Prospective residents told the architects they wanted a healthy place to live. A fitness center and medical clinic on the ground floor encourage this goal, cross-ventilation discourages air-conditioning, stairways with windows get people walking, gardens grow fruits and vegetables, and green roofs provide abundant sunshine

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[15] *The Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act*, Public Law 101-625.

and fresh air. The materials used, like ceramics and bamboo, are renewable and do not add noxious compounds to the air. Even the pattern of balconies, sunshades, and rain screens provides visual delight in addition to protection from the elements.

Finally, residential amalgams are becoming increasingly complex and nuanced. In 2008, Hamlin Ventures LLC invited Common Ground founder Rosanne Haggerty to collaborate in developing a downtown block. The Schermerhorn—a homeless shelter that includes the Brooklyn Ballet School—stands alongside 13 luxury townhouses (and subsequently 9 more) that quickly sold. Good design and planning can enhance value for multiple kinds of side-by-side housing.

Conclusion

Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Shaun Donovan was head of New York's Department of Housing Preservation and Development when Via Verde was selected. Donovan has said he wants this prototype to help expand the criteria for affordable housing with a new place-conscious federal policy that defines sustainable neighborhoods in terms of good transportation services, healthy and safe environments, social and economic diversity, and easy access to supportive services (Donovan, 2010). These ambitious goals usually mean doing more with less—then doing it with verve. Past practice has shown that, even when costs are higher than the norm, ambitious non-profit sponsors and their architects respond to constraints with innovations and variations. The private market rarely allows for such experimentation. The accomplishments often reverberate, eventually affecting market-rate housing.

The impressive social and architectural innovations this article addresses take us back to Catherine Bauer. Her pointed critiques of the poor standards in public housing in the 1950s extended to a broad-based vision of affordable urban and suburban housing. Her focus was international in scope, but Bauer saw a risk in architecture that imitated European prototypes. She advised policymakers and architects to move between two somewhat contradictory trajectories in American culture, both of which should play a role in affordable housing: "the line of rational investigation" and "the whole broad history of mass emotion and popular desire" (Bauer, 1934: 253). Today, 80 years later, we still need that mix.

Acknowledgments

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