

HOPE VI: Building the House, (Re) Building the Neighborhood



Source: Goody, Clancy and Associates

Riverview creates a new face for Cleveland's West Side with a crescent of rowhouses and lofts anchored by mid-rise "beacons."

In August 1992, the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing developed a National Action Plan, calling for the revitalization of more than 80,000 of the U.S.'s "severely distressed" public housing units—six percent of the nation's 1.4 million public housing units—by 2000. The estimated cost of this revitalization, in 1992 dollars, was \$7.5 billion.

In response, the U.S. Congress that same year appropriated \$300 million for the Urban Revitalization Demonstration program, now known as HOPE VI (Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere). Since its inception, HOPE VI has continued to be funded by Congress and has distributed nearly \$5 billion in grants to communities nationwide. More than \$4.5 billion of these funds, distributed on a competitive basis, have gone for redevelopment, with the remainder designated for demolition (approximately \$293 million) or for planning (nearly \$15 million).

Over the years HOPE VI has evolved into a significant tool for reinvigorating distressed neighborhoods containing public housing. As of 2002, more than 160 communities have received HOPE VI grants to transform developments that once served as isolated catchments for a uniformly poor population. According to the Housing Research Foundation, by June 2002 nearly 20,000 units of largely mixed-income housing have been produced and another 65,000 units are in the planning stages.

The program has a strong emphasis on funding projects that represent public/private partnerships that will help to further revitalize surrounding neighborhoods. HOPE VI grants have spurred \$7.5 billion in additional public and private investment in housing, parks, commercial development, and other types of community revitalization "as a result of the program's public-private partnership fundamental core," according to the Council for HOPE VI and Mixed Finance.

A significant outcome of HOPE VI is the reintegration of districts back into the social, economic, and civic life of communities. By combining funds for job training and social services with funds for bricks and mortar, HOPE VI embodies an effort to break down economic and social barriers as well as physical ones.

Many regions have come to recognize that they cannot respond to sprawl unless they make inner-city neighborhoods desirable and achieve meaningful urban densities that do not mirror suburban models. HOPE VI redevelopment is a critical element of regional strategies to reassert urban neighborhoods as desirable alternatives to continued sprawl.

Critical Planning Issues

HOPE VI's ambitious scope entails challenges unique to rebuilding housing that addresses neighborhood-wide issues. First, it is critical to engage the larger community, including local elected officials and planning staffs. As stated in HUD's general guidance on community and resident involvement, "(t)he participation of both public housing residents...and the surrounding community is essential to the HOPE VI Program and community building efforts.... Experience has shown that for effective integration and acceptance of public housing and low-income residents into the broader community, the broader community must be involved in developing the HOPE VI proposal."

Also, creating a new neighborhood can be more expensive than building a comparable number of new housing units within an existing neighborhood. New streets, parks, and other public improvements can add 25 percent or more to total development dollars—considerably more than for infill housing. Federal fair-wage hiring practices, together with higher soft costs to address complex planning, design, legal, and marketing challenges, also generate cost premiums. All together, HOPE VI and comparable

redevelopment can cost 15 to 30 percent or more per unit than building new infill housing. One result is that while HOPE VI financing is significant—in the past as much as \$35 million per site and now \$20 million—it is often necessary to tap additional subsidies to pay for public realm and other improvements.

Nevertheless, the communities that have received HOPE VI grants are succeeding in revitalizing urban neighborhoods in very different settings. Notable examples include Elm Haven, next to downtown New Haven, Connecticut; Park DuValle, set amidst older middle-income neighborhoods in Louisville, Kentucky; and the Near North area emerging around the remaining Cabrini-Green towers in Chicago. Despite recurrent concerns, the market-rate housing components of HOPE VI are working, drawing on market segments that economist Laurie Volk describes as having a strong interest in these kinds of revitalized urban neighborhoods. These populations include empty nesters and retirees, nontraditional and some traditional families, minority families seeking better neighborhoods, and younger singles and couples.

Core Principles

A review of successful HOPE VI planning projects suggests nine core principles that are central to transforming public housing and other low-income housing areas into livable neighborhoods.

Maintain responsibility for the welfare of the public housing residents. Regardless of other planning or redevelopment goals, no one who lives in a public housing development before it is redeveloped and is a tenant in good standing should be denied a place in the new community. Residents of all incomes should be fully integrated in new housing. Factors such as density, housing types, and income mix should support the achievement of this principle.

Establish a neighborhood of choice that recognizes the practical implications of creating competitive communities. Attracting mixed-income residents to these new neighborhoods usually requires housing that represents a better value in size, finishes, and other details than similarly priced housing in comparable neighborhoods. The public realm, including parks and streetscape, also must be of higher quality. This brings these amenities also to lower-income residents, allowing them to enjoy the benefits of a neighborhood of choice.

Make civic connections to surrounding neighborhoods. In the past, low-income housing was often located on isolated sites. Forging new connections begins with a street network that links to existing streets in existing neighborhoods. Crime reduction considerations may preclude extending through-traffic; pedestrian malls or traffic calming can be used to discourage through-traffic. These new streets should be fronted with housing and other uses that have continuity of character and scale with adjacent blocks. Longstanding barriers should be removed. Cleveland is eliminating two lanes from a six-lane street that separates a HOPE VI site from the adjacent neighborhood, thereby creating a more pedestrian-friendly environment.

Foster a mix of uses. Main Streets that host a blend of mixed uses can be key to a desirable, vibrant neighborhood. The first step is to plan for and attract customers with sufficient disposable income to support new or enhanced shops and services. Recent analysis by Boston-based real estate consultant Pam McKinney indicates that 1,000 to 2,000 market-rate and affordable-housing units are needed to support one block of new Main Street businesses—preferably within a one-quarter-mile walking distance. Because low-income

households often have less disposable income, the number of housing units required rises as average income falls. Given increasingly fragmented buying habits, almost no neighborhood in the U.S. can fully support creation of a new Main Street on its own; any new or existing commercial activity must be visible to and accessible by the larger community.

Design a compelling sense of place. America's memorable neighborhoods—particularly those that have held on through (or revived in spite of) periods of urban decline—often embody a unique sense of place. Well-known examples include Boston's Back Bay and its landscaped Commonwealth Avenue, Savannah, Georgia, and its urban squares, and Columbus, Ohio's, German Village and its distinctive architecture. Public-realm elements that can be used to draw people to new mixed-income neighborhoods include well-designed streets, distinctive public parks and other spaces, and signage.

Build in the basics of livability. Essential elements of livability that many people take for granted require more concerted effort for these new neighborhoods. Providing many opportunities for "eyes on the street," where housing and other uses overlook public spaces, promotes safety. Also, family-sized housing units need yards, terraces, or other private outdoor spaces.

Narrow streets, generally no wider than needed to accommodate two passing cars and curbside parking, are more pedestrian friendly and will slow traffic. Curbside parking contributes to a sense of security by encouraging street use when people come and go from parked cars, provides a buffer between pedestrians and moving vehicles, and serves to calm traffic. Wherever possible, primary parking spaces should be located within sight of and close to the associated housing unit, organized as individual spaces belonging to specific housing units.

All housing units, whether free-standing or in a high-rise tower, should have an address on a public neighborhood street; individual entries are greatly preferred to shared entries, which historically have been a focus for crime. Even mid- and high-rise buildings can have townhouse units at their base, such as Boston's Tent City and Langham Court developments. Every housing unit should enjoy a sense of transition from fully public streets to fully private interiors. This sense of transition occurs naturally in traditional neighborhoods in which houses have front yards and porches.

Redevelop to appropriate densities. For new neighborhoods to accommodate a diversity of incomes, ages, and families, they should include a range of housing types and densities. Many redevelopment sites lie within or close to the regional core and represent rare opportunities to accommodate significant growth in the urban core if redeveloped at appropriate densities. In considering density goals, therefore, several issues should be addressed. To support commercial development, often 10 to 20 units per acre or more of housing are needed to be within a quarter-mile of a retail street. Also, introducing a mix of incomes into an area formerly concentrated with low-income residents requires a sufficient number of units to house both returning low-income residents and their new neighbors. It is often necessary to increase the density on a HOPE VI site to achieve the desired income mix.

Incorporate social and supportive services. Returning public-housing residents often require social services and other supportive services. HOPE VI includes funds to expand skills training, childcare, health, community centers, and similar services. These programs should become an integral part of a new neighborhood, housed in convenient and visible locations.

"Make no little plans," create critical mass. Creating new neighborhoods often requires reshaping perceptions of entire urban districts. A small or timid first phase can be doomed to failure—as can a full-scale redevelopment proposal. In many

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TABLE 1: HOUSING TYPES

Housing Types	Typical Density Range (units per acre, including streets)	Parking	Relative construction costs per unit**
Single-family detached (generally 1-2 story)	4-10	Curbside* and on-site surface or garages	Low
Single-family row houses (2-3 story)	8-25	Curbside and on-site surface or garages	Low
3- to 6-family houses (3-4 story)	8-25	Curbside and on-site surface or garages	Low to moderate
Multifamily row houses (3-4 story)	25-40	Curbside and on-site surface or garages	Low to moderate
Low rise multifamily (2-5 story)	15-50	Curbside, on-site, structured parking at higher densities	Low to moderate
Lofts	25-40	Curbside, on-site, and structured parking.	Moderate (if under 5 stories)
Mid-rise multifamily (5-10 story)	40-80	Curbside and structured parking	Moderate to high
High-rise multifamily	60-200+	Curbside and structured parking	High

*Curbside parking may be appropriate as guest or primary parking based on local standards.

**Low costs based on wood frame construction; moderate adds costs for more expensive structural systems and potential need for elevators and/or structured parking; higher adds additional costs for still more expensive structure and fireproofing.

TABLE 2: STREETS AND PEDESTRIAN WAYS

Street Type	Lanes	Street Width (in feet)	Sidewalk (in feet)**	Curbside Parking
Alleys	1 - 2	12 - 24	—	no
Neighborhood residential	2 plus parking	38 - 42	5 - 8	For convenience, safety, traffic calming
Neighborhood commercial	2 plus parking	40 - 44	8 - 12	Essential to support retail
Major city	2 - 4 plus parking	42 - 68	8 - 16+	For safety and traffic calming
Pedestrian ways*	—	8 - 16	—	

*Generally better accommodated as public sidewalks; may be desirable for important connections where streets are inappropriate.

**Does not include planting strips, often 6 to 12 feet wide.

TABLE 3: PUBLIC REALM SPACES

Public Realm Elements	Planning Issues and Design Issues	Dimensional Issues
Neighborhood parks	Located prominently within a 10- to 15-minute walk of every housing unit; extensive areas for play and ball games; provide seating.	Can be as small as an acre in highly urban areas to several acres in areas dominated by single-family houses.
Tot lots and small parks	Located within a 5- to 10-minute walk of every housing unit; highly visible; provided with seating and play areas.	From as low as 1,000 square feet in dense urban areas to a quarter-acre or more in single-family neighborhoods.
Streets and blocks	Connect to existing "grid." Reproduce scale of nearby blocks; avoid superblocks (more than 400-500 feet wide or long). A variety of streets and blocks can convey special character. Street trees are highly desirable. High streetscape, paving, lighting standards convey sense of desirable neighborhood.	Where possible provide a minimum of 8 feet of sidewalks and planting strip to accommodate street trees.
Front yards and porches	Reflect patterns in nearby neighborhoods.	Minimum yard depth 8 feet.
Private yards	Provide for family-oriented housing units and other units as possible.	Minimum yard depth 20 feet.

TABLE 4: DESIGN GUIDELINES

Introduce variety to the public realm	Take advantage of special views, connections to adjacent blocks, local urban design traditions (e.g. landscaped malls or small parks), and other cues to provide a range of special characters across the public realm.
Plan at human scale	Create small blocks; relate houses and other buildings to public sidewalks and spaces (and avoid blank walls), introduce public parks and spaces sized and located to encourage frequent use.
Design for livability	Focus on elements that promote livability (and make best use of tight budgets) such as bay windows, porches, dormers, etc., rather on purely ornamental features to create architectural character and identity.

cases, creating an initial phase as part of a larger vision establishes a strong sense of place and neighborhood, and reduces financial and other risks. Also, new amenities meant to be supported by full redevelopment often require visibility at the first phase. It is often more effective, and feasible, to start with the largest possible initial phase to create a new sense of place (and market perception).

Key physical and social building blocks

Physical planning focuses around four basic components, each of which presents a wide range of options (see tables):

- Select housing types that meet user needs and support larger planning goals.
- Introduce a hierarchy of streets and pedestrian ways.
- Define a hierarchy of public realm spaces.
- Establish design guidelines that foster a neighborhood people will value.

Case Studies

The following case studies represent three different planning contexts and approaches to creating and expanding new neighborhoods. Each of the projects involved a mix of HOPE VI grants, city, state, and/or housing authority funds, and revenues from sales and mortgages of affordable housing units. All are anticipated to be constructed during 2003–2004.

Quinnipiac Terrace, Fair Haven, (New Haven), Connecticut

Context: Like the Fairhaven neighborhood of which it is a part, Quinnipiac Terrace, a 15-acre site facing the Quinnipiac River, is a primarily African-American and Latino mixed-income neighborhood. First developed in the 18th century as an "oyster village," it was largely built out in the early 20th century. Today it includes a wide range of ages and family types.

Program: 226 units (170 low- and moderate-income, 56 market-rate). Studios through four bedroom units in single-family row houses, multifamily row houses, and apartments will replace essentially the same number of public housing units. Many former residents will be housed in a related off-side development.

Client: Housing Authority of New Haven
Developer: Trinity Financial, Boston

Strategy: By redeveloping the most troubled part of Fairhaven, this neighborhood will be poised to emerge as a healthy, stable, predominantly low- to middle-income community. New tree-lined streets looking

toward the river and housing that reflects the character of nearby 18th to early 20th century blocks will replace the superblocks. The income mix, street connections, density, and architectural qualities planned for the site are all intended to emphasize a continuity strategy that integrates it into the larger neighborhood and extends the best elements of the larger neighborhood's character onto the site. A new waterfront park will invite the larger neighborhood across the site to reach the river. Supported by a partnership among the housing authority, city, parks department, and developer, the project has the essential financing, land swaps, and interagency agreements in place.

Riverview, Cleveland, Ohio

Context: A predominantly Caucasian neighborhood, Riverview consists of 13 buildable acres at the edge of the Ohio City neighborhood, overlooking downtown Cleveland across the Cuyahoga River and the neighboring Flats, an industrial valley. It has two elderly low-income housing towers on the site, which have predominantly African-American residents. Most of Ohio City has witnessed significant revitalization, along with a portion of West 25th Street next to the site, which is rebounding as a lively Main Street.

Program: 573 units (122 low- and moderate-income, 451 market-rate). Studios through four bedroom units in single-family row houses, multifamily row houses, lofts, and mid-rise apartments will replace 149 public housing units. In the two elderly housing towers on the site, 501 units will remain.

Client: Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority

Developer: Telesys, Washington, D.C.; and LR, Chicago

Strategy: The plan conveys the rebirth of the site and Ohio City by creating a striking crescent of buildings, anchored at either end with beacon mid-rises and clearly visible from downtown (see figure on page 1). The landmark massing, together with lofts over retail facing West 25th Street and a dramatic esplanade overlooking downtown are intended to convey the "make no little plans" strategy, to ensure that the site plays a leadership role in drawing people to live in Ohio City and nearby neighborhoods. An equal part of this strategy is the decision to more than triple the number of units on the site, in order to accommodate a large number of affordable and market-rate units without displacing public housing residents. Local streets extend into the site, all public spaces are open to the larger community, and West 25th Street is being narrowed. The city is making a significant financial contribution to the public realm, in part because Riverview is seen as a new gateway to the city's West Side.

Near North Neighborhood, Decatur, Illinois

Context: Near North is a 120-acre site, located three blocks from downtown in an area of mostly African-American and Caucasian neighborhoods. It will constitute Decatur's first new urban neighborhood in roughly half a century; the area had been cleared by city action around the 20-acre public housing site.

Program: 530 units (265 low- and moderate-income, 265 market-rate). Studios through four bedroom units in single-family and multifamily houses and apartments will replace approximately 185 occupied public housing units.

Client: Decatur Housing Authority and City of Decatur

Developer: Eastlake Development Corporation, Chicago

Strategy: In contrast to the other two examples, this HOPE VI project literally rebuilds a neighborhood. Six times the acreage of the public housing site, the neighborhood will integrate public housing residents with affordable and market-rate ownership and

rental housing, taking an important step in the city's strategy to revitalize its entire core. There is a strong focus on creating a compelling sense of place, financed with city investment in new streets and a network of parks and signature public spaces that build on the city's tradition of using the public realm to convey a strong neighborhood identity. The public realm also plays a strong marketability role—no house is more than one block from a park. Consciously intended as a low- to middle-income neighborhood, the plans include a 20-acre social-service campus. A large number of the housing units are geared to families, with yards and onsite parking. A neighborhood center will include shops, restaurants, social services, childcare, and similar facilities, and will be located on a busy arterial street. To create sufficient critical mass, the density is roughly 50 percent more than the existing public housing and nearby abandoned houses. The first phase, to be constructed in 2003 to 2004, was doubled to 300 units to provide an initial sense of a cohesive neighborhood, boost the marketability and feasibility of the project, and pay for expensive site improvements.

Next Challenges

In many respects the vision for HOPE VI is as inarguable as it is ambitious and complex. Measures of success must include the quality of the new housing and the way that housing is leveraged to forge and sustain networks of relationships. HOPE VI efforts also encompass a panoply of planning challenges that is remarkable in its range and variety. This kind of initiative must be built on a collaborative platform that accommodates the viewpoints of the current residents, the roles of the developer and various city and environmental agencies, and the views of the surrounding communities—residential and commercial—and their institutions. Building such a platform includes numerous interviews with all the stakeholder groups, educational workshops, and community charrettes. There are true opportunities inherent in rebuilding America's public housing to create newly invigorated neighborhoods that offer a dramatically transformed sense of place and quality of life.

Selected Resources

"The Council for HOPE VI and Mixed Finance." Report to the Millennial Housing Commission. www.mhc.gov/responses/152001.doc.

Historical and Baseline Assessment of HOPE VI. www.huduser.org/publications/pubasst/hopevi.html.

HUD HOPE VI guidelines. www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/ph/hope6/css/guidance.cfm

Housing Research Foundation. www.housingresearch.org.

National Housing and Rehabilitation Association www.housingonline.com.



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