

The HOPE VI Program: What about the Residents?

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Abstract

During the 1990s, the federal government dramatically changed its policy on housing the poor. Under the HOPE VI (Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere) Program, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development intended to address the concentration of troubled low-income households in public housing by moving away from its reliance on project-based assistance and promoting instead the construction of mixed-income housing and the use of housing subsidies.

This article presents important evidence from two systematic, multicity studies on how the original residents of HOPE VI developments have been affected by this radical new approach to public housing. While many residents have clearly benefited, the findings raise critical questions about whether the transformation of public housing will achieve its potential as a powerful force for improving the lives of low-income families.

Keywords: Federal policy; Homeownership; Public housing

Introduction

During the 1990s, the federal government dramatically changed its policy on housing the poor. By the end of the 1980s, public housing was widely viewed as a failure: High-rise projects in many cities had become emblematic of what Blank has termed “the most destructive kind of poverty” (1997, 284). These communities were characterized by elevated rates of crime, unemployment, high school dropouts, and teen parenthood. Under the new approach, embodied in the HOPE VI (Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere) Program, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) intended to address the concentration of troubled low-income households in public housing by moving away from project-based assistance and promoting instead the construction of mixed-income housing and greater reliance

on housing subsidies. There was little solid evidence that these new policies would bring about the desired changes (Popkin et al. 2000a), but rather a sense that a new, radical approach was the only way to address the problems of severely distressed public housing (Popkin et al. 2004).

Only now is evidence emerging about the impact of the dramatic shift in housing policy on developments, neighborhoods, and, especially, residents (National Housing Law Project et al. 2002). In this article, we examine one aspect of HOPE VI: its impact on the lives of those people who resided in the distressed developments targeted by the program. The transformation of public housing offers both the potential to improve the quality of life for low-income households and the risk that an unknown proportion of families may end up as badly off, or even worse off, than they were before. In particular, HOPE VI has the potential to have a major impact—positive or negative—on the lives of the many poor children who live in distressed public housing.

To answer the questions about what happened to the original residents of HOPE VI developments across the nation, Congress commissioned two systematic, multicity studies in 1999: the *HOPE VI Panel Study* and the *HOPE VI Resident Tracking Study*. Both were intended to address the question of how the transformation of public housing has affected the lives of the original residents of HOPE VI developments—those living in the developments before the grant award.¹ The *HOPE VI Panel Study* focuses on five cities and is tracking the living conditions and well-being of residents from five developments who were first surveyed as revitalization began in mid- to late 2001. The *HOPE VI Resident Tracking Study* provides a snapshot of the living conditions and well-being of former residents of eight properties in early 2001—between two and seven years after the respective housing authorities received a HOPE VI grant.

The findings from the first phase of this research raise critical questions about whether the transformation of public housing will achieve its potential as a powerful force for improving the lives of low-income families. In cities such as Chicago and Washington, DC, distressed public housing has been used for decades to warehouse many of the poorest tenants with multiple problems; as these developments are destroyed,

¹ The studies were conducted by the Urban Institute and its partner, Abt Associates Inc. The *HOPE VI Resident Tracking Study* was supported entirely by a grant from HUD. The *HOPE VI Panel Study* is supported by a consortium, including HUD, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Fannie Mae Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Chicago Community Trust.

residents are being displaced and face an uncertain future. The findings from the *Tracking Study* indicate that most of those who have been relocated have experienced real benefits and are living in better housing in safer neighborhoods. However, these new neighborhoods are still extremely poor and racially segregated, and residents continue to report significant problems with crime and drug trafficking. Further, many of the residents who have received vouchers report struggling to find and keep housing in the private market. Only a small proportion of original residents have been able to move to the new mixed-income housing on the HOPE VI site (much of it is not yet complete), while a substantial proportion—about half—have moved to other public housing developments.

Finally, findings from the *Panel Study* baseline indicate that a substantial proportion of tenants awaiting relocation have physical and mental health problems and other serious personal challenges that make them unappealing to landlords. Others live in households whose composition—large numbers of children, elderly or disabled heads of household with young children—makes it nearly impossible for them to find suitable units in the private market. Currently, there are few, if any, places for “hard-to-house” residents in the newly transformed public housing or the private market. Without a concerted effort to address their housing needs, these families will be at risk for homelessness.

We begin this article by reviewing the theoretical underpinnings of the HOPE VI program, especially its relocation component. Drawing primarily from two major studies of the impact of HOPE VI on residents, we next examine the evidence to date on the effects of relocation on residents, as well as the barriers many of them face in making a successful transition. We conclude with suggestions on addressing the complex relocation challenges of many residents, especially those considered hard to house.

Expectations for the transformation of public housing

A central premise of HOPE VI is that it is possible to improve the lives of residents of distressed housing developments either by helping them relocate to better neighborhoods or by creating a new, healthier community on the same site. This premise is based on the belief held by many policy makers and scholars that high concentrations of very low income households in public housing developments lead to negative social and behavioral outcomes. In his book, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*, Wilson (1987) describes the rise of what he calls an “underclass culture” in many inner-city neighborhoods. This culture is characterized by a weak

attachment to the labor force and high rates of welfare receipt, teen pregnancy, single-female-headed households, drug use, and violent crime. He attributes this phenomenon to the increasing isolation of the poor in inner-city communities with limited employment opportunities, inadequate municipal services, and a lack of middle- and working-class residents to serve as role models and to support local institutions such as schools and stores. Structural factors such as racial discrimination and the lack of jobs for unskilled workers both helped create these isolated communities and feed their pathologies. As in the culture of poverty model posited by Oscar Lewis in 1966, Wilson (1987) argued that the underclass was created by structural factors, but that once in place, it was extremely destructive and self-perpetuating.

Many scholars have since examined the evidence on whether—and how—neighborhood environments affect residents' life chances (Ellen and Turner 1997; Jencks and Mayer 1990; Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). The research suggests that access to services such as schools and health care—and the quality of those services—may affect outcomes for children. Peer networks also seem to contribute to outcomes, influencing children in higher-income neighborhoods to perform well in school and influencing children in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty to engage in delinquent behavior. Social norms in higher-income neighborhoods may promote educational achievement and employment, while norms in low-income neighborhoods may favor the acceptance of teen pregnancy and gang involvement. Likewise, residents of higher-income neighborhoods probably have more access to social capital (Briggs 1997), the kind of leverage that might provide information about jobs or recommendations for jobs or scholarships.

The prevalence of neighborhood crime and disorder is also a key factor. Social disorganization theory suggests that the high level of crime in poor, isolated neighborhoods is attributable to lower social sanctions for crime, a lower probability of being caught, and high rates of unemployment (Cook and Goss 1996; Reiss 1985; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997). High-crime neighborhoods have particularly adverse consequences for children's well-being. Children growing up in crime-ridden communities will almost certainly be exposed to violence and may become victims themselves (Popkin et al. 2000b). Living with violence severely affects children's cognitive and emotional development (Garbarino, Kostelny, and Dubrow 1991), and parents in poor, dangerous neighborhoods are more likely to use harsh parenting styles that also negatively affect children's development (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2003; McLoyd 1990). Finally, there appears to be a link between high homicide rates and other public health indicators such as low birth weight (Morenoff 2001).

Recent research on welfare reform suggests that residents of public housing tend to be significantly more disadvantaged than other low-income households (Zedlewski 2002)—including those who receive housing vouchers (Lee et al. 2003)—and have very low employment rates. Many residents of public housing face significant barriers to finding or keeping employment, especially health problems and the lack of adequate child care (Loprest 2001; Martinez 2002). Thus, these residents may be particularly at risk for experiencing the negative consequences of living in poverty.

Neighborhood effects and housing policy

Concern over the underclass and arguments about the effects of living in concentrated poverty have also had a profound impact on federal housing policy. The theory behind these policy shifts is that if neighborhood environments can cause bad outcomes, then policies that reduce concentrations of poverty, such as dispersal and mobility strategies and mixed-income housing, should lead to better ones (Popkin et al. 2000a; Schwartz and Tajbakhsh 2001). However, there is little solid evidence to support the assumption that moving very low income families from high-poverty communities—or attracting more affluent residents to poor neighborhoods—has much effect on the life chances of low-income residents, particularly their ability to become self-sufficient. What is clear is that low-income residents benefit in terms of safety and housing quality (Popkin and Cunningham 2002; Popkin, Harris, and Cunningham 2001), which may have longer-term effects on outcomes for families.

The Gautreaux, Moving to Opportunity (MTO), and Yonkers studies all examined the experiences of very low income families that moved from distressed public housing communities to lower-poverty neighborhoods. The Gautreaux research involved comparing outcomes for participants who moved to the predominantly white suburbs of Chicago with those who moved to revitalizing black neighborhoods in the city (Kaufman and Rosenbaum 1992; Popkin, Rosenbaum, and Meaden 1993; Rosenbaum and Popkin 1991; Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum 2000). A follow-up study indicated that suburban movers were more likely to report having had a job after they moved, although they did not work more hours or earn higher wages than city movers (Popkin, Rosenbaum, and Meaden 1993). Findings from a longitudinal study of a small sample of participants indicated that the children of suburban movers were more likely to stay in school, to be employed after graduation, and to go on to four-year colleges or universities (Kaufman and Rosenbaum 1992).

While these results have been widely accepted as strong evidence of the benefits of moving public housing families to higher-income neighborhoods, the Gautreaux program had a number of important limitations, particularly the fact that only 20 percent of the participants moved (Popkin et al. 2000a).

The MTO demonstration was intended to provide more definitive answers about potential neighborhood effects. It involved randomly assigning residents of public housing developments in five different cities to an experimental group (which received Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers that could be used only in neighborhoods with a poverty rate of less than 10 percent) or to one of two control groups (one received regular vouchers and the other remained in public housing) (Goering and Feins 2003; Goering et al. 1999). Early findings from small, preliminary studies of the MTO families suggested that the experimental group experienced some significant benefits, notably positive effects on mental and physical health (Goering and Feins 2003; Katz, Kling, and Liebman 2001; Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2001). (For a complete review of MTO research to date, see Goering and Feins 2003.)

The full MTO interim evaluation (Orr et al. 2003) found evidence that movers were living in better housing in safer neighborhoods and that adults experienced substantial improvements in mental health and less obesity. Results for youth were mixed, with girls in the experimental group experiencing improved mental health and a lower incidence of behavior problems, but boys showing negative trends in mental health and a higher incidence of risky behaviors. Further, there were no indications as yet of the kinds of employment or educational effects seen in Gautreaux.

The Yonkers program involved the construction of scattered-site units for minority tenants in predominantly white areas. Briggs (1997) compared outcomes for movers with those for participants who remained in traditional public housing and found that while the new neighborhoods were clearly safer and less stressful, there was relatively little evidence that movers had significant interaction with their new neighbors, gained access to social capital, or experienced socioeconomic benefits.

The limited research on the social effects of mixed-income housing offers little support for the premise that living with higher-income residents will improve the life chances of low-income households. A study of Chicago's Lake Parc Place (Rosenbaum, Stroh, and Flynn 1998) found that relationships between higher- and lower-income tenants were often superficial, not the intensive interaction envisioned as

necessary for social learning. Further, employment rates actually declined for both groups of tenants during the first year, although the reasons for this change were not clear. Likewise, Brophy and Smith (1997) found that while mixed-income developments provided a good environment, there was little to show that living in these developments brought about desirable socioeconomic outcomes for low-income residents. On the basis of these findings and their own case studies of mixed-income sites, Schwartz and Tajbakhsh (2001) now argue that there is no real evidence that mixed-income housing is a remedy for social ills and that policy makers and researchers ought to view these developments with “diminished expectations” (29).

Effects of HOPE VI

This limited evidence on the potential effects of mixed-income and dispersal strategies, however, offers minimal insight into what to expect from HOPE VI and the transformation of public housing. It seems likely that many former residents will experience improvements in housing and neighborhood quality that could affect their overall quality of life. It is less clear that involuntary relocation will bring about the same kinds of benefits experienced by the volunteer participants in the Gautreaux program or even the MTO and Yonkers demonstrations. HOPE VI affects the *entire* population of distressed public housing developments, including those with no desire to move. Vale (1997) argues that many residents of public housing developments marked by crime and other problems are profoundly ambivalent; they fear leaving as much as they do remaining in place. Long-term residents, many of whom are older or have serious health problems, may not adjust easily to new housing. Without special support or assistance, many residents might end up in neighborhoods that are not much different from their original public housing developments.

Although the HOPE VI program began in the early 1990s, we know relatively little about how families have fared as public housing has been transformed. Since 1995, HUD has sponsored research on the effects of HOPE VI, but the focus of this ongoing research (Holin et al. 2003) is on the physical, social, and economic changes that have occurred at the sites and in the surrounding neighborhoods. This research has documented many positive changes at HOPE VI sites. Other research suggests that HOPE VI has benefited the neighborhoods around the original developments by reducing large concentrations of poverty (Popkin et al. 2004; Zielenbach 2002).

Critics of HOPE VI, however, argue that the program has actually made things worse for residents of public housing (National Housing Law Project et al. 2002). These critics claim that the program has targeted developments that were not truly distressed, that it has substantially reduced the amount of affordable housing in many cities, and that screening criteria have excluded many former residents from new mixed-income developments. Further, these critics note that there is minimal information available to assess program performance, particularly data that would indicate how residents have fared during the transformation of public housing.

Moreover, even if better data were available, the debate about resident outcomes would be difficult, because there is no consensus on how to define success. Critics of HOPE VI have pointed to the small numbers of returning tenants as evidence that the program is another form of urban renewal that is displacing poor households from gentrifying neighborhoods (Keating 2000; Wexler 2000; Zielenbach 2002). Defenders of the program counter that many HOPE VI sites are only partially reconstructed and that even fewer are reoccupied, so the number of original residents who will ultimately return is unknown. Further, they argue that high resident turnover is typical of public housing and that not all tenants wanted to return. Finally, they stress that housing assistance is a limited resource and that some of the original tenants—or members of their households—were making conditions miserable for other residents. Having violated the rules, these tenants were not entitled to replacement housing, and HOPE VI should not be judged by what has happened to them. (See Popkin et al. 2004 for a complete discussion of this debate.)

The evidence does indicate relatively small numbers of returning tenants. In their study of HOPE VI sites, Holin and her colleagues (2003) found wide variation in the number of returning tenants, depending on the characteristics of the new development. Developments that remained 100 percent public housing, not surprisingly, had larger numbers of returning tenants, while the number of residents returning to developments that had become mixed income were substantially smaller. A recent U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) study (2003) using data from 165 applications suggests that rates of return will continue to vary considerably and generally will remain below 50 percent. The study found that on average, grantees expected 46 percent of residents to return. At the extremes, 40 sites expected less than 25 percent of the original residents to return, while 31 sites expected 75 percent or more (GAO 2003).

Rates of return provide only one indicator of how the original residents have fared. Not returning to the site does not automatically mean that residents are worse off—indeed, they may well have chosen a voucher so they could move to a better neighborhood. An analysis of HUD administrative data for HOPE VI sites suggests that residents may have ended up in at least somewhat better neighborhoods; the average census tract poverty rate for HOPE VI residents who received vouchers dropped from 61 percent to 27 percent (Kingsley, Johnson, and Pettit, 2003).^{2,3} But the study found less evidence of improvements in racial segregation, with the majority of households still living in tracts that were predominantly minority. Similarly, studies of relocation in Chicago (Fischer 2003; Popkin and Cunningham 2002) found that nearly all of the original residents who moved with vouchers ended up in neighborhoods that were at least 90 percent black.

Still, studies of individual HOPE VI sites suggest that many former residents perceive real improvement in their neighborhood conditions, particularly in terms of less crime. One Chicago relocation study (Popkin and Cunningham 2002) documented almost immediate improvement in respondents' mental health, likely a result of living in a safer neighborhood. An evaluation of relocation in Seattle also found that residents were generally satisfied with their new situations, particularly the safer neighborhoods, services, and amenities (Kleit and Manzo 2003). Likewise, a study of HOPE VI–like relocation in Fort Worth found that most former residents felt their new neighborhoods had less crime, although they were concerned about the lack of access to transportation and about busy traffic on nearby streets (Barrett, Geisel, and Johnston 2003). A study of Philadelphia residents (Clampet-Lundquist 2003) found that while former residents reported less crime, they felt uncertain about being able to protect themselves and their children in an unfamiliar community. Finally, a study of residents relocated under the Hollman decree in Minneapolis found mixed results: Former residents reported much less crime and were more satisfied with grocery stores and parks, but less satisfied with schools, transportation, and health care (Goetz 2003).⁴

² This analysis of HUD administrative data included former residents at 73 HOPE VI sites in 48 cities.

³ HUD is working on an analysis of the locations of all voucher holders nationwide.

⁴ Studies of public and assisted housing residents relocated with vouchers find similar results. For example, the MTO interim evaluation (Orr et al. 2003)

However, other research sees reason for concern over how original residents have fared. In a focus group-based study of relocation at four HOPE VI sites, Smith (2002) found that those who relocate sometimes make choices without having enough information about Housing Choice Vouchers, HOPE VI move-back criteria, and availability of relocation services. Further, many of the study participants fear moving to unfamiliar areas, and those who do look elsewhere often report discrimination or difficulty finding affordable units.

An early assessment of the revitalization of the Henry Horner Homes in Chicago (Popkin et al. 1998, 2000a) raised concerns about potential outcomes for original residents. After a year, staff reported that some Horner residents living in the new development were having difficulty complying with the terms of their lease. Even more of a concern, few of the original tenants had even tried to return to the development; many had been declared ineligible or left on their own without assistance. A case study of the HOPE VI process at Atlanta's Techwood Homes (Keating 2000) documented many similar problems. Because of political pressures and decisions by the housing authority, many of the original tenants were gone by the time HOPE VI revitalization began. As a result, only about half received the official relocation assistance to which they were entitled. The much-lauded Centennial Place development, which replaced Techwood, includes a smaller number of public housing units, and few original residents have been able to benefit from the new housing.

More recent findings from Chicago public housing (Popkin and Cunningham 2000, 2002; Popkin, Cunningham, and Godfrey 2001; Turner, Popkin, and Cunningham 2000) point to problems with the relocation process.⁵ During the first phase, less than half of the residents were able to make successful moves using Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers. Those who did move reported living in better housing in safer neighborhoods, but most moved to poor black communities not far from their original public housing developments. Counseling

found that residents who moved to lower-poverty communities reported less crime, better housing, and better amenities. Likewise, Varady and Walker (2003) found that Alameda County residents who used vouchers to move to suburban areas reported better conditions than those who remained in traditional inner-city, high-poverty neighborhoods did.

⁵ The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) is in the process of transforming all of its high-rise family developments under its *Plan for Transformation*. The CHA has received more HOPE VI dollars than any other city and is also using a combination of other federal, state, and local funds to support its \$1.5 billion effort.

services were inadequate, and administrative—and political—problems undermined the relocation effort (Popkin and Cunningham 2002; Venkatesh et al. 2004). Further, most of the residents faced the kind of barriers that make them particularly hard to house, such as lack of experience with private market housing, large family size, physical disabilities, and complex personal problems—substance abuse, depression, domestic violence, and gang affiliation (Popkin, Cunningham, and Woodley 2003).

Venkatesh's (2002) study of former Robert Taylor residents in Chicago highlighted the kinds of challenges many former residents face once they leave public housing, particularly in the form of domestic violence and conflict with off-the-lease household members, who are often returning offenders formally barred from assisted housing. Likewise, a recent study of former public housing residents in Philadelphia found that many describe the loss of important social ties and difficulty in forming connections in their new communities (Clampet-Lundquist 2003).

In sum, the existing single-site research raises more questions than it answers about how original residents have been affected by the dramatic transformation of public housing. There are suggestions that former residents who received vouchers are living in better housing in neighborhoods that are at least somewhat better than their original communities. At the same time, a substantial proportion of former residents appear to be experiencing hardship, living in neighborhoods that are still very poor and have problems with crime. In particular, evidence from studies in Chicago implies that a subgroup of residents—those with the most complex personal problems or family situations—may have great difficulty making a successful transition to either the private market or to revitalized developments and even more trouble becoming self-sufficient. For these residents, a change in neighborhood environment may not be enough to bring about a meaningful change in life chances.

How are original Hope VI residents faring?

As the HOPE VI program neared the end of its 10-year authorization, advocates began to raise serious concerns about the way the program had been implemented, particularly the loss of public housing units and the small number of residents returning to HOPE VI sites (National Housing Law Project et al. 2002). This attention to the

impact of HOPE VI highlighted the importance of knowing how the original residents had fared—and the lack of systematic information available to help inform the debate.⁶

The *HOPE VI Resident Tracking Study* (Burton et al. 2002) and the *HOPE VI Panel Study* (Popkin et al. 2002) are the first systematic, multicity studies of how original residents have been affected by the transformation of public housing. The Tracking Study provides a snapshot of the living conditions and well-being of former residents from eight HOPE VI sites where redevelopment activities began between 1994 and 1998—two to seven years after the housing authority was awarded a HOPE VI grant.⁷ The study involved surveys and in-depth interviews with 818 residents (approximately 100 per site), focusing on the type and quality of housing now occupied by the original HOPE VI residents; their current neighborhood and social environments; and their employment, material hardship, and health. (For a full description of the study and research methods, see Burton et al. 2002.) Table 1 provides a summary of the status of the eight sites in January 2001.⁸

The *HOPE VI Panel Study* builds on the *Tracking Study*, focusing on the longer-term location, neighborhood conditions, physical and mental health, and socioeconomic outcomes for 887 original residents of five HOPE VI developments where redevelopment activities began in

⁶ As of this writing, the future of the HOPE VI program remained in doubt. The Bush administration had proposed eliminating funding for the program in its fiscal year (FY) 2004 budget. However, there was still considerable support for the program in Congress and the program was reauthorized, although at a substantially lower level (\$50 million). The administration has again proposed eliminating the HOPE VI program in its FY 2005 budget.

⁷ The *Tracking Study* has some significant limitations. Because it is retrospective, there is no information on resident perceptions of their living conditions or economic struggles before HOPE VI, so we cannot compare their pre-HOPE VI perceptions with their current reports. Further, because of the retrospective design, the sample underrepresents unsubsidized tenants and others who were more difficult to locate. In general, those who are difficult to find are those who move frequently, double-up with another family, are homeless, or have moved out of the area. These former residents are likely to have experienced more problems than those we were able to survey.

⁸ The eight sites included in the study were purposely selected to represent a range of HOPE VI programs, but were not expected to be representative of all 165 sites awarded HOPE VI implementation grants. In selecting the sites, Burton et al. (2002) sought to include an even distribution of sites across census regions; a mix of developments in mid-size and large cities; a range of housing authorities in terms of size and HUD management scores; and a combination of early and more recent awardees. The sites were Quigg-Newton Homes, Denver, CO; John Hay Homes, Springfield, IL; Archbishop Walsh Homes, Newark, NJ; Hayes Valley, San Francisco, CA; Edwin Corning Homes, Albany, NY; Christopher Columbus Homes, Paterson, NJ; Cotter and Lang Homes, Louisville, KY; and Connie Chambers Homes, Tucson, AZ.

Table 1. HOPE IV Tracking Study Sites

Development	Award Year	Total Original Units	Year Relocation Completed	On-Site Reoccupancy as of January 2001			When Completely Reoccupied?
				None	Partial	Complete	
Quigg Newton Homes, Denver, CO	1994	400	1995			✓	2000
Archbishop Walsh Homes, Newark, NJ	1994	630	1996		✓		In litigation—estimate unavailable
John Hay Homes, Springfield, IL	1994	599	1997		✓		2001 (estimated)
Hayes Valley, San Francisco, CA	1995	294	1996			✓	1999
Cotter and Lang Homes, Louisville, KY	1996	1,116	1997		✓		2003 (estimated)
Connie Chambers Homes, Tucson, AZ	1996	200	1999		✓		2002 (estimated)
Christopher Columbus Homes, Paterson, NJ	1997	498	1999	✓			2002 (estimated)
Edwin Corning Homes, Albany, NY	1998	292	1999	✓			2002 (estimated)

Source: Housing authority staff interviews (December 2000 to February 2001).

Note: Projected reoccupancy reported as of the interview date.

mid- to late 2001. The sites are Shore Park/Shore Terrace (Atlantic City, NJ); Ida B. Wells Homes/Wells Extension/Clarence Darrow Homes/Madden Park Homes (Chicago, IL); Few Gardens (Durham, NC); Easter Hill (Richmond, CA); and East Capitol Dwellings (Washington, DC). The specific issues the study addresses are housing and neighborhood outcomes, social integration, health outcomes, child education and behavior outcomes, socioeconomic outcomes, and experiences with relocation and supportive services. The study involves three waves of surveys and in-depth interviews with residents from five HOPE VI sites, with the first wave occurring before redevelopment activities began.⁹

⁹ The first wave (baseline) was administered in person to a sample of 887 heads of households across the five sites during summer 2001. In the two largest sites, Chicago and Washington, DC, a stratified random sample of approximately 200 respondents per site was selected. At the other three sites, research staff conducted a census of the entire development. The survey asked specific questions about up to two randomly selected focal children per household, one under age 6 and one between the ages of 6

As table 2 shows, the five sites are quite diverse, with two very large sites in large central cities (Wells and East Capitol); two mid-size sites in moderate-size cities in large metropolitan areas (Few Gardens and Easter Hill); and one relatively small development in a small city (Shore Park). Wells and East Capitol were both located in cities with historically badly managed housing authorities that had been taken over by outside agencies in 1995 (HUD in Chicago and a federal receiver in the District). Both cities had received several HOPE VI grants by 2000 and were demolishing and replacing most of their family public housing developments. The other three sites were implementing their first HOPE VI award. With the exception of Shore Park, the sites were in very poor physical condition, and all five were considered very high crime areas.

Table 3 provides an overview of respondent characteristics for both studies. The two samples are similar in terms of age, employment, and welfare use. However, because the *Tracking Study* includes two sites with large Hispanic populations—Hayes Valley and Quigg-Newton

Table 2. *HOPE VI Panel Study Sites*

	Shore Park/ Shore Terrace Atlantic City, NJ	Wells/Madden Chicago, IL	Few Gardens Durham, NC	Easter Hill Richmond, CA	East Capitol Dwellings/ Capitol Plaza Washington, DC
Year built	1970s	1941, 1955, 1961, 1970	1953	1954	1955, 1971
Original number of units (entire site)	212	3,200	240	273	717
Development type	Family	Family	Family	Family	Family, senior
Building description	Row houses	High-rise, mid-rise, row houses	Row houses	Row houses	Row houses, high-rise

Note: The Wells/Madden site consists of four developments: Ida B. Wells, Wells Extension, Clarence Darrow Homes, and Madden Park Homes. The East Capitol site also includes a vacant Federal Housing Authority high-rise, which is being demolished, and Capitol View Townhomes, which are being revitalized, bringing the total number of units to 1,199. Shore Park also includes a senior high-rise; however, it is not part of the HOPE VI grant and is not included in this study.

and 14. Finally, to complement the surveys, in-depth interviews were conducted with a small sample of parent and child dyads (eight per site) in August and September 2001. Follow-up surveys and interviews will occur 24 and 48 months after baseline.

Table 3. Respondent Characteristics for the HOPE VI Tracking Study and Panel Study

	<i>Tracking Study (%)</i>	<i>Panel Study (%)</i>
Head of household aged 62 or older	10	11
Households with children less than 18 years old	57	72
Black	66	89
Hispanic	29	10
In public housing for five years or more	36	72
Head of households employed full-time or part-time	49	41
Household income less than \$10,000	78	66
Receiving welfare assistance (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	27	32

Homes—the sample has a higher proportion of Hispanic respondents. There are fewer households with children in the *Tracking Study* sample for two reasons: (1) Two sites—Archbishop Walsh Homes in Newark (NJ) and Quigg-Newton Homes in Denver—have large populations of older residents, and (2) we oversampled households with children in both of the *Panel Study* sites with large numbers of older residents. In addition, the *Panel Study* has a substantially larger proportion of long-term public housing residents. This difference is also likely due to the particular sites included in the two studies: Chicago's Ida B. Wells Homes has a very large proportion of long-term residents. However, comparison with HUD administrative data indicates that these respondents are similar to residents of other HOPE VI developments (Buron et al. 2002; Kingsley, Johnson, and Pettit 2003; Popkin et al. 2002).

Although not shown in table 3, analysis from the *Tracking Study* indicates that household characteristics play some role in determining the housing option that residents selected. HOPE VI returnees and those who relocated to other public housing units tend to be older and less well educated and to have fewer children than voucher users or unsubsidized households. Unsubsidized renters tend to have slightly higher incomes and are more likely to be employed and to be married than other residents. The *Panel Study* will explore in more depth how household and respondent characteristics affect relocation outcomes, particularly how physical and mental health challenges and other barriers may influence residents' choices.

Housing and neighborhoods

Panel Study. The findings from the *Panel Study* baseline (Popkin et al. 2002) clearly indicate that conditions in many HOPE VI sites before

redevelopment were terrible—worse than those experienced by other poor renters nationwide. Respondents described problems that placed their health and safety at risk. Approximately one-third said that their unit was so cold during the past winter that it caused discomfort, 42 percent reported water leaks, and 25 percent had broken toilets. Plumbing problems included hazards such as overflowing toilets, water damage from leaks in neighboring units, stopped-up plumbing, and backed-up sewer systems.¹⁰ About one-third of the respondents reported peeling paint or plaster in their units (problems that can lead to lead poisoning), approximately one quarter reported cockroach infestations and excessive mold in their units, and another 16 percent reported problems with rats and mice. Underscoring the severity of their situations, about one-third reported two or three housing problems (e.g., peeling paint and water leaks), and one-fifth reported more than three problems.¹¹ The comments of a grandmother from Chicago's Ida B. Wells Homes vividly illustrate the price of living in substandard housing:

Now, I have one that's a little slow. That's my baby here, because they had lead, all of them, all of them had lead, and overdoses from living [in another housing development]....[My grandson] will have to go into special education classes. And the little girl, she slobbers all the time. And she's five, and she shouldn't be doing that.

This substandard housing was located in neighborhoods with very high rates of poverty and crime. In the census tracts where the *Panel Study* developments were located, poverty rates exceeded 40 percent.¹² Overall, about three-quarters of the respondents reported serious problems with drug trafficking and substance abuse in their neighborhoods, and about two-thirds reported equally severe problems with shootings and violence. The high levels of violent crime, drug trafficking, and gang activity meant that residents were at risk for becoming victims of or witnesses to the violence that surrounded them. Living with constant fear and anxiety from crime can have negative health and developmental consequences for both adults and children (Garbarino, Kostelny, and Dubrow 1991; Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000; Morenoff 2001). This

¹⁰ HUD administrative data supported residents' reports—all five of the developments in our study had what HUD called "life-threatening health and safety hazards" (Popkin et al. 2002, 3–1).

¹¹ The level of reported problems was substantially higher than that reported by poor renters nationwide in the American Housing Survey. See Popkin et al. 2002 for a discussion of these issues.

¹² High concentrations of very low income households in housing developments have been associated with negative social and behavioral outcomes for residents (Wilson 1987).

strain was evident in the words of *Panel Study* respondents, many of whom have developed coping strategies that severely constrain their lives. These women talked about how they manage:

You mind your business. You try to make it through. If they [drug dealers] come into your little territory, then you kind of have some say...I know my boundaries. I know my limits. Because, you know, some of these people have guns and they will shoot you, you know? And they are not afraid to shoot you. So you have your boundaries where they know they can go this far with you, and you can go this far with them.

People get killed around here. Like when I first moved around here there was a man over there dead. They've also found bodies over there dead. That's the reason why I don't let my kids go out. If they do go out, we go out of the neighborhood and we'll be back by dark.

A mother from the Ida B. Wells Homes described living with constant anxiety:

It's like a lot of times, you be in the house, your kid's outside and you hear gunshots and you drop everything and you run to make sure it's not your child.

The comments from children were particularly poignant, with some recounting harrowing incidents of bullets coming into their rooms or friends who narrowly escaped being shot. These boys who lived in Durham, NC's Few Gardens described the kinds of incidents that had left them afraid even inside their own homes:

[One] time I got shocked cause there was a man standing by the fence and they was shooting at him, and then the fence was blocking him 'cause they was in a fight and the man got shot in the leg. So that's why I got scared.

They was shooting one night...and they shot into our door and my little brother, he was by the door but he didn't get shot.

Tracking Study. By contrast, the *Tracking Study* surveys of residents who had been relocated indicate that most of them are now living in better housing in neighborhoods that are less poor and have less crime than their original HOPE VI development. Of the households surveyed, some 19 percent were living in a revitalized HOPE VI development, 29 percent were living in other public housing, 33 percent were using housing vouchers to rent units, and 18 percent had left assisted housing altogether. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (63 percent) described their current housing as being in good or excellent condition, and most (85 percent) said that their current unit is in the same condition as

their previous public housing unit (or better). Respondents who had moved to revitalized developments reported the best housing conditions, while those who had moved to the private market with vouchers were more likely to report problems (Buron et al. 2002).

These residents were also living in neighborhoods that were considerably less poor than their original public housing developments. It is striking that about 40 percent of those who *did not return* to the original HOPE VI site now live in census tracts with poverty rates of less than 20 percent. However, a similar number still live in neighborhoods that are less poor than their original development, but still have poverty rates over 30 percent. Further, there has been less change in terms of racial segregation, with the majority still living in predominantly minority census tracts.

Tracking Study respondents who had been relocated perceived less crime in their communities than those still living in developments awaiting revitalization did. While the majority of *Panel Study* respondents reported serious problems with crime and drug trafficking, less than half of relocated residents (about 40 percent) reported major problems. Clearly, this number is still high, but represents a substantial improvement over the conditions most lived in before relocating.

Barriers to new housing—and self-sufficiency

Although the evidence shows that a significant proportion of former residents have benefited from relocating from their distressed public housing developments, it also indicates that many residents will not be as fortunate. Many HOPE VI families waiting to relocate have members with serious physical and mental health issues, histories of domestic violence, or substance abuse problems that create severe barriers to a successful housing transition—or steady employment.

Researchers have documented that living in high-poverty neighborhoods can have serious health consequences because of a process called “weathering,” in which the constant stress of living in danger and being exposed to the hazards of substandard housing exact a major toll on physical and mental well-being (Ellen, Mijanovich, and Dillman 2001; Geronimus 1992). Rates for low birth weight and infant mortality are high in these communities, as are rates for ailments such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and arthritis. Residents of poor neighborhoods are also more likely to be disabled by these illnesses. An assessment of the Jobs-Plus program, targeted at residents of public housing, found that these types of health problems were the most consistent barrier to participation in the labor market (Martinez 2002).

The *Panel Study* shows that many current HOPE VI residents have serious physical health concerns. More than a third of the adult respondents in the *Panel Study* reported having a chronic illness or health condition such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or arthritis, and more than 20 percent have asthma. The situation for older adults is particularly severe, with just 10 percent reporting good or excellent health, compared with 39 percent for all adults over 65 nationally. Further, HOPE VI children are also in worse health than other children their age. One in five children aged 6 to 14 has asthma; the figure for younger children is one in four, more than three times the national average. (For a full discussion of health problems and barriers for the *HOPE VI Panel Study* sample, see Popkin et al. 2002.)

The high incidence of asthma among HOPE VI respondents may be related to the substandard housing conditions in which they live. It may also reflect the location of these distressed developments in central cities, which often have significant air quality problems.¹³ Some respondents from Easter Hill in Richmond (CA) volunteered that they thought there was a connection between their environment and their health problems. Easter Hill is located near an oil refinery and a major highway. One resident said:

I never had this problem [asthma] before, but once I came here. After two years of being here, they told me that I had asthma. But I've never suffered from that before.

Mental health problems are also widespread among HOPE VI residents, with nearly one in three respondents (29 percent) reporting poor mental health. This figure is almost 50 percent higher than the national average. Moreover, nearly one in six adults reported experiencing a major depressive episode in the past 12 months.

Respondents talked about the enormous stresses in their lives, stresses that clearly have consequences for their mental health. Many, like these women from Washington, DC's East Capitol Dwellings and Richmond, CA's Easter Hill, said that the violent crime in their developments left them in a state of constant fear and anxiety:

It's worrying that somebody's going to kick my door through at night. That's the only problem I have. I think about that all [the] time. I wake up sometimes in the middle of the night checking the door three times. Then if you're in the bed asleep and you hear gunshots, you want to jump up and check all the kids and then I lay

¹³ Other factors such as substandard medical care and the higher incidence of smoking among low-income individuals may also exacerbate these problems (Giovino et al. 1994; Kiefe et al. 2001).

back down. But that's the only pressure I have right now....I don't sleep at all since I moved here.

I mean, from day to day, you don't never know what's gonna happen. I mean, they up here shootin' and if it's not one thing, it's something else. All the time....All that shootin' and stuff. It's got my nerves so bad. I mean, you could be sittin' up in here...and all of a sudden [somebody] just drives in and starts shootin'. What are you supposed to do? My son, he was scared half to death. He was all down on the floor. That's not good. That part right there is the biggest part that really keeps my nerves on edge all the time.

In addition to living with fear and anxiety because of the dangers that surrounded them, most of these HOPE VI residents were very low income women with children, facing stresses from complex personal situations and having to make ends meet with almost no money. One woman from Durham, NC's Few Gardens said that she had ended up in the development after fleeing an abusive husband:

I had just left my children's father and I was going to leave after a short period of time, but after I got the apartment I began to like it. I didn't go back because I was in a battered situation and the children got so they enjoyed it, so I made the best out of it.

Many HOPE VI residents were coping with multiple physical and mental health problems that often left them overwhelmed and thus less able to cope with the stresses of relocation. For example, respondents who reported having asthma also reported worse overall health and were more likely to report having a chronic health problem. Moreover, there was a strong relationship between depression and reported health status. Among respondents who scored as depressed, just 21 percent reported excellent or very good health, compared with 38 percent of the overall sample. Nearly a quarter of respondents who reported a chronic health problem (23 percent) were depressed, compared with just 9 percent of those who did not have chronic health concerns. The experiences of this family from Chicago's Ida B. Wells Homes reflect the kinds of extreme challenges reported by respondents from all five sites. The grandmother in this family had custody of her granddaughter because the child's mother (her daughter) had serious substance abuse and mental health problems and the child's father, also an addict, had been imprisoned for raping a 13-year-old girl. In addition, her adult son had slight mental retardation. Although she was only in her early 50s, she had serious health problems and could no longer work:

My daughter, she got on drugs, so I put her in a drug rehab for like two years....I know, the oldest one, you know, she lost everything, like rights and everything....So now we going to court for her baby. And I don't know, they might let her go back, but, see, my daughter

been there, you know, with the drugs and all that, she be having, like, mental, like, let's just say a chemical imbalance, so I don't know if they going to give her back to her....She's staying clean, you know. We went to see her yesterday. She's doing real good, just gaining too much weight. She's 32....I had a stroke about two years ago, so I'm on SSI [supplemental security income]....I been back to the hospital. I'm diabetic again.

These complex personal situations threaten residents' ability to cope with the stresses of relocation. Further, they mean that many residents may not be able to meet screening criteria for new mixed-income housing or succeed in navigating the challenges of using a voucher to find housing in the private market. Indeed, as housing authorities step up lease enforcement and institute new requirements, families like this one may no longer even qualify for traditional public housing.

Impact on children

Children in these households also faced stresses from the dangerous environment, substandard housing, and often chaotic family situations. In addition, HOPE VI children were attending low-achieving and racially and economically segregated schools.¹⁴ Both parents and children complained of problems such as inadequate physical environments, ineffective teachers, lack of school supplies, chaotic social environments, unsafe conditions, and racial conflict. Safety was a particular concern, with many respondents describing fights, gang activity (especially in Chicago and Durham, NC), and shootings. Parental reports of children's behavior suggest that stresses in the children's lives may be causing mental health problems. About two-thirds of older children (aged 6 to 14) have one or more reported behavior problems; about half have two or more.¹⁵ A mother from Easter Hill described the toll that the dangerous school environment had on her son:

He's been stressed out, having headaches and chest pains, and he started having asthma, having like panic attacks, so we had to take him out of school, and he's seeing a therapist.

¹⁴ The study incorporated national administrative data to paint a broad picture of the school districts and individual schools the children in the HOPE VI panel study attend. See chapter 6 in Popkin et al. (2002) for a full discussion.

¹⁵ The behavior problems index includes six specific measures: having trouble getting along with teachers; being disobedient in school; hanging around with kids who get in trouble; bullying; being restless or overly active; and being unhappy or depressed. Children's mental health is an issue we plan to explore in greater depth in subsequent waves of the *Panel Study*.

If children and their families relocate to safer neighborhoods and better and safer schools, relocation could lead to improvements in mental health, behavior, and school performance.

HOPE VI relocation, however, could also threaten children's school performance.¹⁶ Other research has shown that frequent school transfers have major implications for children's educational outcomes, with the risk of falling behind increasing with each move (Hartman 2002). Children in the *Panel Study*, many of whom were still in elementary school, were already highly mobile, with one in five having attended three or more schools. Another potential indication of problems is that even some very young children have already been placed in special education classes: 11 percent of parents report that their young children (five and under) are receiving services for learning problems, and 9 percent say they are receiving services for behavior problems. The proportion of older children (ages 6 to 14) who are in special education classes is considerably higher: 23 percent and 12 percent are in special classes for learning and behavior problems, respectively.¹⁷ Given that many of these children already have a high risk for problems, a very real concern is that, rather than helping them attain self-sufficiency, the stress of relocation may make them even more vulnerable.

Housing after HOPE VI

Where residents ultimately relocate is influenced by a number of variables: their own preferences, the effectiveness of relocation services, local housing options, private market constraints on those using vouchers, and the confidence that relocating residents have in the housing authority. Most *Panel Study* respondents (70 percent) said that their initial preference was to return to the rebuilt HOPE VI site. They cited a variety of reasons, including strong social ties to the community and fears about the voucher program. Their comments also indicated widespread confusion about the relocation process and a lack of confidence

¹⁶ The issue of children's school performance will be explored in much greater detail in subsequent waves of the *Panel Study*.

¹⁷ To evaluate HOPE VI *Panel Study* children in relation to children from other, similar populations, we compared our sample with children in the MTO baseline sample. Like the HOPE VI children, MTO children were living in public housing in high-poverty neighborhoods at baseline. Our comparison indicates that children in the HOPE VI sample were somewhat more likely to be in special education classes for learning problems than the MTO children were (23 percent and 17 percent, respectively) and slightly more likely to be in classes for behavior problems than the MTO children were (12 percent and 10 percent, respectively).

in the housing authority. (For a full discussion of relocation preferences, see chapter 8 in Popkin et al. 2002 and see Holin et al. 2003.)

In actuality, as the findings from the *Tracking Study* and other studies of HOPE VI indicate (Keating 2000; Kingsley, Johnson, and Pettit 2003; Kleit and Manzo 2003; Wexler 2000), a relatively small number of the original residents are likely to return. Few housing authorities are building enough new public housing on site to accommodate all—or even most—of the original residents. Also, many current residents will be unable to meet screening criteria for new mixed-income developments or vouchers; indeed, as discussed earlier, some may no longer even be eligible for traditional public housing. Finally, former residents may opt not to return for more positive reasons—successful movers may find that they like their new public housing or private market unit and may choose not to uproot their families a second time.

However, even successful movers may face risks in the private market. About half of the *Tracking Study* respondents (51 percent) were living in the private market, either with vouchers or on their own, and a substantial proportion were struggling to meet basic needs that had been covered in public housing. A majority of voucher users (59 percent) said that they have had difficulty paying rent or utilities in the past year, as did 52 percent of households that receive no housing assistance. Further, unsubsidized households were more likely than residents of public housing or voucher users to report doubling-up with other families (13 percent versus 4 percent, respectively) and moving multiple times since relocating.

Finally, as discussed earlier, the *Tracking Study* indicates that many former residents are now living in neighborhoods with considerably lower poverty rates than their original HOPE VI developments. However, in cities with tight rental markets or sites where demolition has far outpaced the production of new units, residents have not been as lucky. Many respondents—about 40 percent—have ended up in other distressed, high-poverty communities.

The future for residents

With its emphasis on redeveloping distressed public housing and offering services to residents, the HOPE VI program offers the promise of a better life. At the same time, because it involves such a major dislocation, the program creates the risk that some residents may end up as badly off, or even worse off, than they were before. Our research shows that thus far the effects have been mixed, with some former residents

clearly better off, others experiencing substantial hardship, and still others at risk for not being able to make a successful transition out of public housing. The follow-up waves of the *Panel Study* will follow these residents as they experience relocation and document the challenges they face in making a successful transition.

However, the HOPE VI experience thus far illustrates the consequences of society's reluctance to deal with such difficult problems as racial segregation, the damage inflicted on families from the unintended consequences of federal policies and programs, and housing for the homeless. In many cities, the poorest and least desirable tenants have been warehoused in the worst public housing developments for decades; as these developments are destroyed, tenants are being displaced and face an uncertain future. Without serious attention to the issues raised in this article, the transformation of public housing is unlikely to realize its potential as a powerful force for improving the lives of low-income families.

Within the context of the HOPE VI program, the findings from our research highlight the need for interim measures that will help bring about better outcomes for families affected by the program. First, supportive services created as part of HOPE VI plans must be comprehensive and include effective case management. Service packages that emphasize only employment will not meet the special needs of residents with physical and mental health conditions, disabilities, or such complex problems as domestic violence and substance abuse. Further, housing authorities must pay special attention during relocation to older adults, particularly custodial grandparents or those living in multigenerational households; many of these residents are frail, disabled, or dependent on other residents for their care.

Second, vouchers offer residents a choice, but place some at risk for hardship and frequent, disruptive moves. In particular, former residents who have weak credit histories or complex family problems are at a disadvantage in the private market, where landlords' rules may be more restrictive than public housing rules. Housing authorities should help families make choices that will work for their households. For example, large households are unlikely to find private market apartments large enough to meet their needs. These families should be counseled to explore other available options such as other public housing developments. Housing authorities should also ensure that there are effective case management and follow-up services for former residents, especially those with multiple risk factors. Further, given the problems with rent and utility payments, all residents should receive realistic premove counseling on the types of costs they are likely to face in

private market housing, as well as credit counseling and budget management services. Finally, to prevent former residents from becoming clustered in poor communities, housing authorities—particularly those in tight rental markets—should work with landlords to dispel myths about both the voucher program and its participants. They should also offer clients information about a range of neighborhoods where they can look for housing and assistance in searching for housing in non-traditional (predominantly white, low-poverty) areas that may offer greater opportunity.

Third, these findings indicate that rather than offering new opportunities for those who have suffered the consequences of failed federal programs, the transformation of public housing may make things worse for at least one subgroup of residents: People with multiple, complex problems may not be able to make the transition to either private market or new mixed-income housing. Policy makers need to consider more comprehensive approaches, such as supportive or transitional housing, for these hard-to-house families.

For the past two decades, public housing—particularly the dangerous and decayed developments targeted by HOPE VI—has served as the housing of last resort for America's poorest. A substantial proportion of those still living in these distressed developments are literally one step away from becoming homeless and may become so if relocated to the private market. Without a fundamental refocusing of federal policy and a commitment to addressing the needs of our most vulnerable families, the transformation of public housing offers these residents little hope for a better life.

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