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## CHICAGO PUBLIC HOUSING TRANSFORMATION: A RESEARCH REPORT

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Chicago has been a proving ground in the national movement for public housing reform. Across the city, public housing developments are being demolished and families are being relocated to new homes in new communities. The goals are to transform the lives of public housing residents and to rebuild healthy communities where distressed public housing once stood. The experiences of family relocation and resettlement in Chicago have informed other cities facing similar challenges, making Chicago the national model for large-scale public housing transformation.

Coordinating a housing policy that remakes public housing communities and improves the lives of its residents is a complex undertaking for a public agency. The Chicago Housing Authority's (CHA, hereafter) Plan for Transformation, launched in 1999 seeks to accomplish several goals over a ten-year period. The CHA aims to destroy 18,000 "severely distressed" housing units and help thousands of public housing families become employed, independent citizens. Its relocation efforts promise to integrate them into the wider city; and, its redevelopment strategy promises to rebuild the lands into "mixed-income" tracts suitable for both public housing and private market families. It is a grand vision for a public housing authority and it is a historically novel role for city, state, and federal governments.

Such ambitious housing policy is not new in Chicago. In the postwar era, the city embraced mass production and state-of-the-art rational urban planning techniques to build large, high-rise developments, like Cabrini Green and the Robert Taylor Homes, for poor and working poor families. Pioneering forms of democratic tenant participation grew out of the courageous and spirited struggles of CHA tenants to acquire rights and ensure safe, affordable housing. And, the nation's most famous mobility program—Chicago's "Gautreaux" housing program which helps public housing families move into racially integrated neighborhoods—eventually became the national model for housing mobility.

Chicago's public housing has also become America's symbol of a failed housing program. Thirty years of Housing Authority mismanagement and corruption, the growing poverty and racial segregation of its minority population, and the social isolation of the developments from the wider city sparked criticism and numerous civil protests and legal challenges. The disproportionate number of public housing families, including those who are in the developments and those who have moved to the private market, continue to live in socially isolated, poor neighborhoods. CHA families remain a racially segregated population, walled-off from many of the social institutions in the surrounding city.

Having launched its latest initiative to reform public housing, once again, the nation's eyes have turned to the city. The CHA's Plan has attracted tremendous public scrutiny. Social science research has played an important role both by documenting the CHA's relocation and redevelopment activity and by suggesting necessary modifications and adjustments. The need for an effective social service delivery system that prepares extremely poor families for life in the private-market was an early recommendation by researchers. Ensuring that families have access to all areas of the city and setting realistic timetables for family resettlement are other programmatic suggestions that have arisen from systematic research over the past decade. The capacity to ensure that the City of Chicago in general and the Housing Authority in particular carry out relocation responsibly and effectively is in no small part dependent on active, continuous documentation. In short, research is expected to play a critical role in public housing transformation and researchers have embraced the responsibility to inform the civic community on the progress of the CHA's initiatives.

In 2002, scholars, and political and civic leaders, pointed to flaws in the CHA's Plan. The CHA families leaving public housing were moving overwhelmingly to other high-poverty neighborhoods

comprised predominantly of racial/ethnic minorities. Public housing residents were being shuttled from “vertical ghettos to horizontal ghettos,” to borrow the words of the Independent Monitor assigned to review all CHA relocation activity in that year. The CHA also had failed to provide adequate social services, they were moving too many families in too short a time period, and they did not make efforts to help families move outside of poor, minority neighborhoods—so-called “opportunity” neighborhoods. As in past years, in 2002 the CHA was unable to move its targeted population to the private market. Unable to create adequate supplies of new units, the CHA used other public housing sites as temporary housing facilities for relocating families, until adequate resources could be found to relocate them into the private market. Criticism by scholars and advocates suggested that the CHA’s Plan was a demolition initiative rather than a true opportunity for the poor to change their lives and their living situations.

In January 2003, public interest lawyers, some of whom led the original Gautreaux litigation, filed a lawsuit that accused the CHA of violating federal laws by using government funds to re-segregate public housing families. In that same year, reports by the scholars at Columbia University, The Urban Institute, and Lake Forest College, as well as studies by Chicago’s civic organizations like Metropolitan Planning Council, called for significant changes to the CHA’s relocation and social service delivery programs. The lawsuit remains in litigation, but the CHA publicly promised several important changes, including relocating fewer families to poor, racially segregated areas, realigning service delivery to ensure families could access support during their transition, and holding subcontracting agencies to performance-based goals. 2003 would test the CHA’s resolve and commitment to carry out effective, safe relocation. The relocation activity during that year was intended to improve competence at both CHA and the agencies assigned to carry out relocation and service delivery; moreover, given that the CHA must track families and ensure that they are given the right to return to the mixed-income sites, 2003 became a year for the Housing Authority to build capacity and ensure that these goals are met. This report seeks to answer the question: *Has the Housing Authority improved its capacity to relocate families and offer them opportunities to improve their lives?* It falls directly in line with the ongoing effort of the research community to provide timely feedback to the CHA regarding the progress of its relocation and redevelopment activity. The findings in the study are intended to inform the Housing Authority, the City of Chicago, the contracted agencies working for the CHA, and the wider civic community that is involved in the transformation efforts.

This report provides a comprehensive examination of the relocation of public housing families from the CHA developments during 2003. It is based on a longitudinal study of public housing transformation directed by researchers at Columbia University’s Center for Urban Research and Policy. The research team includes a groundbreaking collaboration of University researchers and public housing tenants trained in social science research. The use of tenants as fieldworkers combined with the Principal Investigator’s ten-year experience studying Chicago public housing provided access into the relocation process unavailable to other researchers and advocates. This partnership enabled the research team to observe many aspects of the relocation process and to draw on several sources of information. Data on the outcomes of all CHA families is combined with observation of on-site behavior, such as extortion by property managers and the practices of squatters and street gang members inside buildings. Information in the report includes: system-wide data on all families relocating from CHA developments in 2003; an in-depth observation of the administrative agencies directing relocation and implementing social service programs to families; a study of the experiences of families leaving the Robert Taylor Homes development.

This report describes the social and geographic outcomes of all CHA families leaving public housing in 2003 and analyzes the process of relocation in order to determine the factors affecting family outcomes. In addition, the study presents data from the ongoing tracking of families from one public housing development, the Robert Taylor Homes, in order to assess their challenges integrating into new homes and new communities.

A central finding of this report is that CHA families relocating from public housing in 2003 continued to move to predominantly African-American, poor communities in Chicago. Our analysis of family moves into the private market shows that, in 2003:

- 97% of all CHA families who relocated to the private market moved to a neighborhood with poverty levels greater than 23.49% poverty or African-American population greater than 30%. These communities are in direct violation of the CHA's own standards for effective relocation sites.

These poverty and race/ethnic thresholds correspond to designations provided in the Relocation Rights Contract, the legal document specifying both the rights of CHA families and the obligations of the CHA in the relocation process. An "opportunity" neighborhood is defined as a census tract with less than 23.50% poverty and less than 30% African-American population.

In terms of geographic outcomes for CHA families, relocation during 2003 did not prove to be a marked improvement over previous years. Families who moved to non-"opportunity" areas did move to areas with lower poverty and crime rates than the CHA housing developments. However, these benefits are offset by their continued need to face the challenges that arise from living in segregated, poor communities of Chicago that lack institutional resources and social/economic opportunities.

There are many factors affecting family relocation from public housing:

↳ **Tenant preferences for African-American communities:** The overwhelming majority of CHA families express a desire to live among other African-American families. Tenants exercise a preference for the city's African-American neighborhoods in general, and in particular, the majority wishes to live in Chicago's middle-class African-American communities. When relocation activity began in Spring 2003, families expressed an interest in non-poverty neighborhoods culturally similar to their own neighborhoods. Over the course of relocation activity during summer 2003, family preferences shifted: leaseholders perceived a lower likelihood of moving to "opportunity" areas and so turned their attention toward available housing in poor, racially segregated communities.

↳ **Relocation counseling agencies used pressure tactics:** Relocation counseling agencies assigned to help families find private-market units did little to help families move outside of poor, segregated areas. One counselor said, "There's no way, in a summer with hundreds of people that we can really try to stay on top of each family. We just really try and get them what they need quickly and so they can leave." In some cases, they pressured families to accept housing in poor, minority neighborhoods.

↳ **Families had little exposure to the city's middle class, ethnically diverse communities:** Families did not receive sufficient exposure to "opportunity" areas during the relocation process. Families reported receiving little information on resources in "opportunity" areas from relocation specialists that would assuage fears regarding high commercial and apartment rental prices.

↳ **Pacing of relocation exceeded CHA capacities:** The pacing of relocation moved too quickly for CHA families to weigh different housing options. 60% of the families moved either three weeks before the school year began, or immediately afterwards. They had little time to form an adequate understanding of available housing in different Chicago neighborhoods. Faced with little time to settle into new communities and prepare children for schools, families ended up choosing the first available housing unit, which was often in a poor, segregated community. One resident of the Robert Taylor Homes said, "Its hard, when you are trying to find a new place, you don't have a car, things are

far away, and you have to get the kids in school right away. We could've done it better if we had more time, but everyone just said we had to get out of the building right away."

↳ **Social services reaching self-motivated families only:** The CHA's Service Connector program is a voluntary referral-based system in which tenants can visit on-site facilities to receive information about available assistance and support for a variety of human service needs. This report found that the Service Connector proved effective for approximately 15-20% of CHA families. These families were self-directed, motivated, and used Service Connector personnel to find social services and make a transition to a new neighborhood. For those with personal hardships, large family sizes, and mental and physical health problems, the Service Connector provided little assistance or support during relocation. In some cases families did not engage in the process and so did not seek out services. In other cases, Service Connector staff reported high caseloads and the lack of expertise with low-income populations requiring extensive social support.

One staff member of the city's Service Connector program said, "By August, we just really give up on the ones who have a lot of problems. By that time, we just can't do nothing for them. I mean, we can't even find them! So, how can we serve them? It's sad, really, because they're the ones who are left."

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Families leaving the Robert Taylor Homes development in 2002 faced many challenges in the one-year period of resettlement into new homes and new communities. They faced several recurrent problems including inability to pay rent and utility bills, non-leaseholders living in their home, and rat and roach infestation. Most families moved into the private market with a Housing Choice Voucher (formerly "Section 8"). Such moves require considerable time because families must proceed through various tests of eligibility (e.g., demonstrate good housekeeping, have no unpaid utility bills) and the units can take several weeks to pass inspection. Many families moved several times in one year because their units failed mandatory inspections.

Families continue to rely on their social networks in public housing for support and friendship. They also remain closely wed to their public housing communities. Roughly ¼ of families continue to enroll their children in schools near the Robert Taylor Homes, even after moving several miles away. Nearly 40% of families go back to the area around Robert Taylor Homes everyday to work, send children to school, acquire resources, and visit friends. The reliance on other public housing families and their old public housing neighborhoods speaks to the strength of the public housing community. It also makes quick transition to new communities difficult for poor households reliant on these connections to make ends meet.

This study of squatters leaving the Robert Taylor Homes reveals that the CHA housing is a *de facto* transitional housing facility for the city's squatters. ½ the squatters experienced homelessness in the year after leaving the Robert Taylor Homes. 81% have lived in public housing for more than 10 years and approximately 80% moved to another public housing development after building closure. Most moved into another building by making relationships with existing squatters at those sites. In over 1/3 of the cases, the squatters reported paying property managers illegally to live in the unit.

The study also followed the street gangs who occupied three State Street Corridor public housing developments: the Robert Taylor Homes, Stateway Gardens, Dearborn Homes. Street gang members' movements will be similar to those of the general public housing population because the young people in gangs are also children, relatives, and partners of the leaseholding community.

The street gangs left public housing and influenced gang activity around the city. The most common points of entry for street gangs include South Shore, Greater Grand Crossing, Roseland, South Chicago, Chatham, Englewood, and several south suburban communities. Half of the gangs leaving the State Street housing developments aligned themselves with young people in the private market.

They helped the youth in the private-market to form new gangs or to transform their existing gang organizations into entrepreneurial outfits that sold narcotics and other illegal goods and services.

Despite the expansion of gang activity, the relocation period offered opportunities for at-risk youth intervention. In the period immediately after departure from public housing, approximately 40% of gang members exit the gang. This creates an opportunity for public policies aimed at gang prevention and intervention. In the eighteen months after leaving public housing, only 26% return to become active gang members.

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This report concludes by offering several general guidelines to actors invested with the responsibility for formulating policies and programs for relocating public housing families. Several findings from the report should be taken into consideration for public policy formation. These include:

- Helping families learn about available housing outside of poor, predominantly African-American neighborhoods.
- Setting a realistic pace of relocation activity that can move families in a non-hurried manner in order to ensure stable transition to new communities.
- Instituting a program of social service delivery and relocation counseling that builds on expert understanding of the social dynamics of poor families who bring with them enormous personal hardships, household poverty, and physical and mental health challenges.
- Providing adequate transitional housing to a non-leaseholding population that has become a recognized member of the public housing population.
- Devising gang intervention strategies to help youth exit from street gangs and make an effective transition to new communities.

## INTRODUCTION

This research report examines the relocation of public housing residents from Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) developments during 2003. The report analyzes the experiences of families moving out of public housing as a result of the CHA's Plan for Transformation. The CHA Plan is an ambitious ten-year initiative that seeks to raze distressed public housing units, relocate residents into new neighborhoods, and rebuild the areas with mixed-income communities for public housing and private-market families. This report focuses on the relocation component of the CHA's Plan. It documents the neighborhoods to which families moved, the factors affecting their move, and their challenges resettling into new homes and communities.

The research design employs a unique methodology to analyze the outcomes of relocation and its social impacts on families and communities. The research team involves researchers from Columbia University working with public housing tenants. We the People Media, a not-for-profit organization empowering Chicago's public housing families, has been working with the researchers to create a training curriculum for tenants interested in journalism, outreach, and social science research.<sup>1</sup> Public housing tenants have been participating in this study since 1997, when the research team began tracking families leaving Chicago's Robert Taylor Homes (RTH, hereafter) housing development. Tenants have been involved in all phases of research, including research design, data collection, and analysis and reporting. They also participate in the management of the research and the training of new tenants interested in obtaining practical skills, such as interviewing, word processing, data entry, and reporting.

The report is organized in several sections. A review of public housing transformation is presented below. A methodology section, then, describes the data and analytic techniques used in this study. Following conventional social science practice and human subjects protections, all names of individual informants—including CHA tenants—participating in this study have been altered to protect their anonymity. The section entitles "2003 CHA Relocation Activity (Phase III)" presents a review of system-wide family relocation under the CHA's Plan for Transformation in the preceding year. The next part, "Robert Taylor Homes Relocation Study," focuses on the challenges of public housing tenants in the one-year period after they leave the Robert Taylor community. This section includes the analyses of non-leaseholding population and street gangs migrating to new areas.

The information in the study comes from several sources (1) a dataset that records the geographic outcomes all public housing families who relocated during 2003 (2) in-depth observation with, and interviews of, families who relocated from the Robert Taylor Homes in 2002 (3) observation of the administrative agencies directing relocation including, the CHA, Chicago Department of Human Services (CDHS), relocation counseling agencies, and social service providers belonging to the Service Connector program (4) a study of the relocation movements of squatters and street gang members who occupied Southside Chicago public housing developments (i.e., Robert Taylor Homes, Stateway Gardens, and Ida B. Wells). This study must be seen in the context of not only the CHA's efforts to help families relocate but also numerous studies and investigative reports documenting CHA families experiences—Professor Sudhir Venkatesh, the Principal Investigator of this study, has been researching Chicago's public housing families for over a decade.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.wethepeoplemedia.org>

## PUBLIC HOUSING TRANSFORMATION IN CHICAGO

The relocation of Chicago's public housing is a complex activity that involves city, state, and federal government agencies, along with private-sector actors and civic organizations. Much of the 2003 relocation has occurred under the auspices of the federal government's HOPE VI legislation ("Housing and Opportunities for People Everywhere). HOPE VI was created in 1992 in order to restructure America's public housing program. The initial goals of HOPE VI included the revitalization of severely distressed public housing tracts, creating opportunities for public housing families to move to non poverty neighborhoods, and generating resources to help turn public housing residents into employed, independent adults.

Today, HOPE VI remains the primary government-financed redevelopment initiative available to most cities. HOPE VI legislation encourages local housing authorities to use the awards not only for demolition, but also for supportive services to residents during relocation and resettlement. However, there are no statutory requirements that public housing authorities devote money in any particular way.

Chicago, Illinois is the proving ground not only for the nation's HOPE VI program, but it is also the barometer for public housing transformation throughout the country. Chicago has received the greatest number of HOPE VI development grants, both in number and proportion with respect to other US cities.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, as in the past, Chicago shows innovation in private-sector funding (e.g., bonds, intergovernmental partnerships) as well as public-private sector partnerships. The lessons learned in Chicago continue to inform the processes of relocation and public housing redevelopment in other cities.

The federal government's HOPE VI program was reauthorized recently, although reduced in scale substantially from its original designation.<sup>3</sup> A number of critical reports on the nation's HOPE VI program have emerged in the last few years to question the contribution of HOPE VI to inner city revitalization and the improvement of the lives of public housing residents.<sup>4</sup> The criticisms have focused on the lack of new housing construction in HOPE VI sites relative to the units demolished, the inadequate roles for tenants in the relocation and redevelopment process, and the failure to provide resources that might promote HOPE VI's goals of building the human and social capital of tenants.

Several research studies and documentation projects have focused specifically on Chicago's public housing program. They have offered critical appraisals not only of the city's HOPE VI initiatives, but the overall progress of the CHA's Plan for Transformation of public housing. The majority of reports and published analyses stem from social scientists, working in academic settings and private research institutions (e.g., the Urban Institute, ABT Associates). However, community-based organizations and advocates also have contributed to public awareness of housing-related changes in Chicago—e.g., Metropolitan Planning Council, the Coalition to Protect Public Housing, and the Chicago Rehab

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<sup>2</sup> As of FY 2002, HUD has awarded 446 grants totaling as much as almost \$5.4 billion. While approximately \$5 billion was awarded for revitalization grants, \$336 million was granted only for demolition. The Chicago Housing Authority has received 8 revitalization grants (the highest number of grants received by a Public Housing Authority) amounting to \$257,918,550; and 29 demolition grants (\$78,534,374) for the demolition of 11,817 public housing units.

<sup>3</sup> HOPE VI is reauthorized through September 30, 2006 (P.L. 108-186, 12/16/2003). For FY2004, \$195 million was approved for the HOPE VI program, which is \$379 million less than what was approved the year before (Washington Business Journal, 9/15/2003).

<sup>4</sup> U.S. General Accounting Office. 2002. "Public Housing: HOPE VI Leveraging Has Increased, but HUD Has Not Met Annual Reporting Requirement." Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Housing and Transportation, Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, U.S. Senate; Wexler, Harry J. 2001. "HOPE VI: Market Means/Public Ends - The Goals, Strategies, and Midterm Lessons of HUD's Urban Revitalization Demonstration Program." *Journal of Affordable Housing* 10:195-233.; National Housing Law Project. 2002. "False HOPE: A Critical Assessment of the HOPE VI Public Housing Redevelopment Program."

Network.<sup>5</sup> In 2002, the CHA appointed an “Independent Monitor” to provide a comprehensive examination of relocation activity during that year. The Monitor issued several reports to the CHA, the Central Advisory Council (an elected body representing public housing tenants), and counsel for both parties.<sup>6</sup>

The number of researchers and civic actors observing CHA transformation have declined in the last year. This report will likely provide the only comprehensive examination of 2003 relocation activity available to the public. The Independent Monitor observed CHA relocation activity during 2003, but public release of information is not mandated. Further research is needed in order to form a complete understanding of Chicago’s public housing program. CHA families are racially/ethnically diverse and they live in various forms of subsidized housing—e.g., senior housing, Section 8/Housing Choice Voucher homes, public housing developments, and transitional housing. The diversity of their experiences not only brings about new challenges for the CHA, but the realignment of public housing is altering the character of poverty and social marginality in Chicago. Understanding these trends and their implications for Chicago communities will require careful documentation and long-term study.

This report builds on previously published studies of Chicago public housing transformation. The questions that guide this report have been raised by many previous research studies and civic reports on CHA activity. The remainder of this section reviews current knowledge about CHA relocation and outlines the questions that frame the presentation of data and analysis that follows.

This study assesses whether, in 2003, the CHA helped families to resettle into so-called “opportunity” areas, i.e., neighborhoods that were ethnically diverse and not concentrated poverty.<sup>7</sup> The analysis is a continuation of an earlier report by Paul Fischer of the settlement patterns of public housing families who moved to the private market between 1995 and 2003. Fischer’s two relocation reports have provided information on the geographic placement of CHA public housing families relocating since 1995. His work documented the racial and economic segregation of public housing families: in brief, he argued that they were relocating to predominantly minority (largely African-American) and low-income neighborhoods in Chicago. He argued that public housing families continued to experience difficulties during their search for housing in non-poor, racially integrated areas of the city. His analysis revealed that 86.3% of relocated families moved to census tracts that were 80 to 100% African-American makeup. 67% moved to census tracts above 23.49% poverty. In other words, families disproportionately moved to high poverty, African-American neighborhoods, leading Fischer to conclude that, while families may have experienced relative declines in poverty compared to public housing developments, “overall all [CHA] developments sent families to areas that were disproportionately low income and poor.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, they were not finding housing in “opportunity” neighborhoods.

Fisher’s study formed the basis of a legal challenge of the CHA based on violations of various federal guarantees protecting the civil rights of families participating in government-administered housing programs.<sup>9</sup> The case, filed by several public interest legal organizations, has contended that the CHA

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<sup>5</sup> The studies conducted by these organizations can be found from their respective websites: [www.metroplanning.org](http://www.metroplanning.org), [www.chicagorehab.org](http://www.chicagorehab.org).

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.viewfromtheground.com/view.cfm/stories/sullivanreports.html> to view the reports of the Independent Monitor.

<sup>7</sup> So-called “opportunity” areas are defined by the Relocation Rights Contract (RRC) as neighborhoods with no more than 30% African-American population and a poverty level no more than 23.49%. A neighborhood failing to meet either threshold is commonly referred to as non-“opportunity.” We adopt the RRC and its thresholds for “opportunity” v. non-“opportunity” areas.

<sup>8</sup> Fischer, Paul. 2003. “Where are the Public Housing Families Going? An Update.” Report Commissioned by the Howard Landau Initiative for Affordable Housing and Economic Opportunity of the National Center on Poverty Law; Fischer, Paul. 2001. “Section 8 and the Public Housing Revolution: Where will the Families Go?” Chicago: The Woods Fund of Chicago.

<sup>9</sup> “Diane Link Wallace, Catherine “Coco” Means, Lisa Taylor, Mary E. Sistrunk, Pandora Meadors, Annie R. Smith and Nichelle Hart, on Behalf of Themselves and All Others Similarly Situated, Plaintiffs, vs. The Chicago Housing Authority (“CHA”), an Illinois Municipal Corporation, and Terry Peterson, in His Official Capacity as

used public monies to re-segregate Chicago's public housing families.<sup>10</sup> The case is currently in litigation. Fischer's studies have also raised broader awareness of the need to conduct system-wide analysis of public housing transformation: researchers now analyze public housing families in a regional context that includes Chicago as well as outlying suburban communities that disproportionately house poor and minority populations.

A body of research has focused on the *process* of relocation in order to gauge whether CHA families are receiving sufficient support in their transition to new communities. The Urban Institute's reports have shed light on the important role of relocation counseling agencies who show families prospective units and who motivate them to consider moving outside of low-income, racially segregated neighborhoods.<sup>11</sup> The reports raised numerous concerns regarding the effectiveness of agencies contracted by the CHA to provide families relocation support and social services; in the past, many relocation agencies did not have the expertise to find families housing in non-poor, non-African American communities. In other words, relocation agencies had great difficulty in moving families into "opportunity" areas. Our study considers whether relocation counseling improved in 2003, i.e. whether Relocation Counselors helped CHA families to find housing outside of the poorest, racially segregated Chicago communities.

Another Urban Institute study based at the Ida B. Wells development provides a census of the Wells population and points to the impact of relocation on Well's non-leaseholding population<sup>12</sup>—their methods were informed by our project's use of public housing tenant fieldworkers and a Columbia University census of the Robert Taylor Development.<sup>13</sup> Primarily, as a response to the Ida B. Wells study, in 2003 the CHA promised to dedicate additional resources to transitional housing programs. The agency promised to create 75 units for non-leaseholders. The discussion below of squatters complements The Urban Institute's ongoing research.

In 2003, the Independent Monitor released several investigative reports on the administration of relocation programs by the CHA and affiliated agencies (e.g., the Chicago Department of Human Services [CDHS] manages the main social service program for CHA families; the so-called Service Connector program does not offer direct services, but instead provides referrals of assistance to relocating families). Based on a comprehensive study of 2002 CHA relocation activity, the Independent Monitor offered observations and recommendations for improved relocation and social service programs. Among other findings, the Monitor pointed to: the inability of families to obtain sufficient relocation and social services, misinformation provided to families as a result of poor bureaucratic coordination among, and negligence on the part of, participating agencies; and, the inability of families to move out effectively due to the lack of integration of social services in the relocation process. A system-wide consumer-satisfaction study by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) focused on tenant perceptions of the administrative process; findings from the NORC survey suggested mixed and inconsistent tenant appraisals, thereby raising concern that families did not adequately understand the relocation process.<sup>14</sup>

This study of 2003 activity builds on the Independent Monitor's reports by documenting whether the CHA's changes to the management of family relocation—which includes redefining its relationship with subcontracting agencies supporting relocation and supportive services—led to improved outcomes for 2003 relocating families.

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Chief Executive Officer of the CHA, Defendants." United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois Eastern Division, 2003.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.bpichicago.org>

<sup>11</sup> Popkin, Susan J. and Mary K. Cunningham. 2002. "CHA Relocation Counseling Assessment." Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

<sup>12</sup> Popkin, Susan J, Mary K. Cunningham, and William T. Woodley. 2003. "Residents at Risk: A Profile of Ida B. Wells and Madden Park." Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

<sup>13</sup> Venkatesh, Sudhir Alladi. 2002. "The Robert Taylor Homes Relocation Study." New York: Columbia University. [http://www.sociology.columbia.edu/downloads/other/sv185/robert\\_taylor.pdf](http://www.sociology.columbia.edu/downloads/other/sv185/robert_taylor.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> National Organization for Research at the University of Chicago. 2003. "Resident Relocation Survey Methodology and Results." Chicago: NORC.

While this report focuses on relocation activity occurring under the direction of the CHA, it should be noted that we do not offer a direct assessment of the HOPE VI program in Chicago. Our results from should be used cautiously when assessing the impact of HOPE VI transformation and the overall organization of the HOPE VI program. Relocation is supported by numerous funding streams, one of which is a HOPE VI grant.<sup>15</sup>

We also note that there are other programs in Chicago through which CHA residents can leave public housing and find new homes, in new communities. The “Moving to Opportunity” program (MTO) offers families the chance to live in non-poverty neighborhoods; Chicago is one of five cities participating in the program.<sup>16</sup> Authorized in 1992, MTO is a voluntary rental assistance program enabling low-income families living in concentrated poverty neighborhoods to move into neighborhoods with low concentrations of poverty.<sup>17</sup> The MTO study has been systematically reviewed in a recent book edited by John Goering and Judith Feins and there appear to be some benefits for families who participate.<sup>18</sup>

The MTO demonstration seeks to offer public housing residents and their families an opportunity for social mobility via housing voucher subsidies. This type of mobility program, coupling the goals of racial and class integration, has a long history in Chicago. Its roots lie in the “Gautreaux” case in which public housing residents “charged that by concentrating more than 10,000 public housing units in isolated African-American neighborhoods, CHA and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development had violated the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees all citizens equal protection of the laws, and the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which outlaws racial discrimination in programs that receive federal funding.”<sup>19</sup> As a result of the case, the so-called “Gautreaux” program arose, in which public housing families were given opportunities to use rent subsidies to integrate into racially diverse non-poverty areas. The Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities administered the voluntary program and helped 25,000 families move throughout the Chicagoland region.<sup>20</sup>

Today, the Leadership Council administers another voluntary Gautreaux-style program for families who wish to move into “opportunity” neighborhoods, which are defined as census tracts less than 24.39% percent poverty and 30% African-American makeup. The so-called “Gautreaux II” program is currently being evaluated and this study offers no assessment of that program. However, an initial research report on the Leadership Council’s “Gautreaux II” program is instructive because of the parallels between that voluntary effort to help families and the CHA’s general relocation program.<sup>21</sup> Early findings suggest that the staff implementing Gautreaux II have not been able to move many families into “opportunity” areas. In fact, in some cases, families who find “opportunity” housing are making subsequent moves and returning to poor, predominantly minority neighborhoods. The researchers have noted several obstacles in the program: families experience discrimination on the part of landlords who refuse to accept the HCV vouchers; families often cannot find units in desired areas; and most striking, unlike the CHA’s own program, Gautreaux II Counselors do not bring families to prospective units, but instead rely on the low-income families to devote time and energy canvassing the

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<sup>15</sup> For instance, while in the estimated budget of the CHA for FY 2004 total sources amount to \$942,472,000, the HOPE VI grants comprise only 6.9% of the budget with a total of \$64,997,000.

<sup>16</sup> The other cities participating in this HUD-funded program are Baltimore, Boston, Los Angeles and New York.

<sup>17</sup> Areas with high concentrations of poverty are those census tracts where more than 40% of the residents are poor, and areas with low concentrations of poverty are census tracts where less than 10% of the residents are poor (Goering and Feins 2003).

<sup>18</sup> Goering, John, and Judith D. Feins (Eds.). 2003. *Choosing a Better Life*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.bpichicago.org/pht/gautreaux.html>

<sup>20</sup> A review of the Gautreaux program can be found in *Crossing the Class and Color Lines: From Public Housing to White Suburbia* by Leonard S. Rubinowitz and James E. Rosenbaum (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000)

<sup>21</sup> Pashup, Jennifer, Kathryn Edin, Greg J. Duncan, and Karen Burke. 2004. "Residential Mobility Program take up from the Client's Perspective: Participation in the Gautreaux Two Housing Mobility Program." Chicago: Northwestern University, Institute for Policy Research.

city to find units and understand the complexity of “opportunity” area designations and other legal terminology built into the program. Some families volunteering for Gautreaux II have clearly benefited from being able to leave concentrated poverty neighborhoods. However, given the problems the families face, the small percentage of families actually able to benefit from the program, and the organizational obstacles the program presents to potential CHA families, we cannot view the Gautreaux II families as having overcome the general relocation and resettlement challenges outlined in this report.

The context for this report also includes the CHA’s own responses to information produced on the relocation and resettlement of CHA families. From January-May 2003, the CHA responded not only to critical feedback from advocates and researchers, but also ongoing litigation, by reorganizing relocation and social service delivery to families. Several aspects of their realignment should be noted:

1. Before 2002, the relocation and social service delivery were not well integrated; families were devoting too much time trying to acquire support. Many were unable to manage the process of finding new homes while trying to use the service delivery system, called “Service Connector,” to acquire referrals to human service providers. In 2003, the CHA promised to integrate the delivery of social services with the relocation of families into new communities, thereby making the process more effective and user-friendly. This included (a) the sharing of information among CHA staff, property managers, Relocation Counselors, and Service Connector personnel (b) a “Joint Review” whereby each family could be pre-screened and assessed before relocation began. The “Joint Review” *cum* needs assessment was to be shared with all involved organizations to ensure monitoring and safe, effective relocation.
2. Contractual incentives were built into contracts so that the relocation counseling agencies were motivated to locate housing for CHA families outside of poor, predominantly African-American communities.
3. Families would be given greater exposure to “opportunity” areas. Relocation Counselors would provide more information on ethnically diverse, non-poverty areas and they would show families units in such places to encourage them to consider an “opportunity” move.
4. Families must demonstrate eligibility before they can move through the relocation process effectively. This is broadly referred to as becoming “lease compliant.”<sup>22</sup> In the past, high utility bills prevented families from utilizing their Housing Choice Vouchers and establishing residence; some faced eviction from the public housing program and the loss of the “right to return” to newly developed communities. The CHA promised to organize the certification process more effectively to ensure that families had every opportunity to become lease compliant. This included working with families over rent delinquency problems and helping families cope with high utility bills that threatened their eligibility.
5. The CHA and the Chicago Department of Human Services (CDHS) restructured their service delivery apparatus to so that households could acquire services that addressed their specific needs. They differentiated between “relocating” households, “potentially returning households,” “non-moving” households and existing “Section 8” households. Each was to be given a set of social services that depended on their threshold of need.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> According to the Relocation Rights Contract, in order to be lease compliant a public housing tenant should: 1) be current with rent or be in a payment agreement, 2) have no utility balance with the CHA or be in a payment agreement, 3) be in compliance with the CHA lease, 4) have a good housekeeping record.

<sup>23</sup> “Proposed Restructuring of Delivery Efforts,” Presentation by Chicago Housing Authority and Chicago Department of Human Services, March 20, 2003.

This report assesses the effectiveness of the CHA's changes that were implemented during the 2003 relocation process. The analysis below focuses primarily on the relocation and resettlement process; analysis of CHA investment and financial practices, for example, are not addressed. The specific questions that organize the presentation of data are:

1. **Where did CHA families move during 2003 and what factors affected their movement?**
2. **What challenges did families leaving public housing in 2002 experience in the 12-month period after they relocated?**
3. **Given that non-leaseholders are a significant subpopulation of CHA developments, what challenges did they face relocating from public housing?**
4. **How does public housing transformation affect the structure and behavior of street gangs who once occupied CHA buildings?**



All photos by Sudhir Venkatesh

## DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This report analyses three aspects of family relocation and resettlement. The report begins by addressing the system-wide outcomes for all families who relocated during 2003. A correlate system-wide process study was conducted to assess CHA practices as well as the practices of those agencies that were awarded contracts to implement relocation and social services. An in-depth study of the experiences of families leaving the Robert Taylor Homes housing development is the third analysis made in this report.

Several sources of data are utilized:

1. Geographic data on all 887 families relocating during 2003.
2. Observation of, and interviews with, organizations that participated in the relocation process during 2003. This includes CHA senior staff as well as organizations given contracts to relocate residents and provide social services to families.
3. Direct observation of over 200 families who left the RTH in 2002 and who attempted to settle into new neighborhoods. Interviews were also conducted with these families.

The authors participating in this study have no formal connection with the CHA. The CHA provided no funds to the research team. Nor did they ask the research team to conduct an analysis of their practices. This report is not a formal or exhaustive program evaluation of the CHA's administration. We do acknowledge and appreciate the openness of CHA staff to the research being conducted.

A research grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation provided support for this research. Additional funding was provided by the Rockefeller Foundation.

A unique aspect of the methodology is the collaboration of social scientists and public housing tenants who are trained in social science research. Public housing tenants have been working with Professor Sudhir Venkatesh since he undertook a longitudinal study of family relocation from the CHA's Robert Taylor Homes development. Unlike other studies, the tenants on this project learn to conduct interviews, design questions, and analyze data and write results.

This collaboration is permitted through a direct partnership with We The People Media, Inc., a nonprofit organization that publishes *Residents' Journal*—the newspaper by and for Chicago's public housing tenants. In the past, Professor Venkatesh has worked with reporters at the *Residents' Journal*. Some of that work appeared in a book on the Robert Taylor Homes, *American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto*. One *Residents' Journal* reporter and research associate, Ms. Beauty Turner, now helps the research team to train other public housing tenants in social science methods.

It is the use of public housing tenants that both permits accurate data on families to be gathered and that helps the research team analyze information. Their experience proves invaluable in making sense of data, framing research questions, and organizing the analysis.

This study plans to continue tracking the experiences of CHA tenants for several years. The public housing tenants will continue to play an invaluable role in the longitudinal study.

## • Part I – 2003 CHA Relocation Activity •

### To where did CHA families move in 2003?

This section describes the relocation activity of all CHA families leaving public housing developments in 2003 as a result of building closure. The two sources of data are: (1) the geographic outcomes of all 887 families leaving public housing developments in 2003 due to building closure, and (2) first-hand observation of the agencies directing relocation and delivering services for families.

It is important to note several characteristics of this population. They are an overwhelmingly poor group with minimal work histories. 86% of the residents who occupy CHA family developments have incomes below 30% of the area median income (AMI).<sup>24</sup> CHA communities are disproportionately comprised of female headed-households who rely on public assistance and various social welfare programs for support

## 2003 CHA RELOCATION ACTIVITY (PHASE III)

### Total 2003 CHA Relocations (N=887):

**FINDING D Families had a variety of outcomes in 2003 relocation. While 67% (599) relocated into private housing market, 24% (208) remained in the CHA's public housing system.**

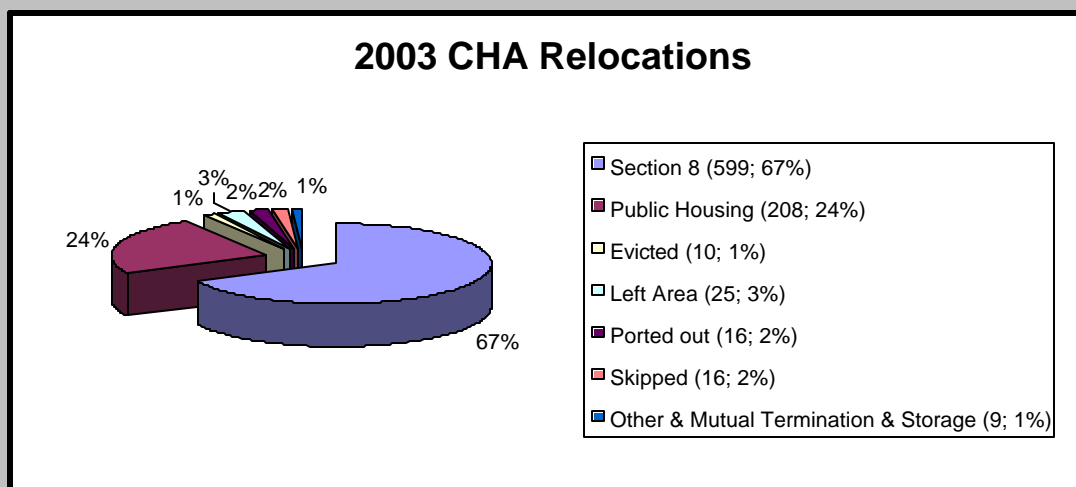
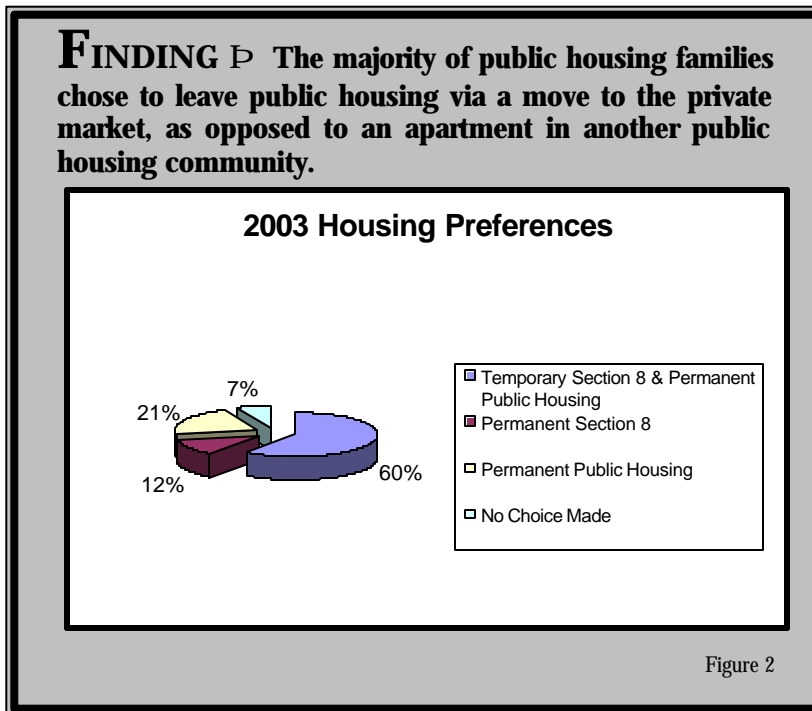


Figure 1

<sup>24</sup> Chicago Housing Authority. 2003. "Moving to Work (MTW) Annual Plan for Transformation FY 2004 – Year 5." Chicago: Chicago Housing Authority.

**Residential Preferences:** CHA families who relocate must fill out a “Housing Choice” survey.



They may choose a “Housing Choice Voucher” (formerly known as a Section 8 voucher, and hereafter abbreviated as “HCV”), which enables them to move into a private market unit; or, they may select “Public Housing,” which means they will be given a public housing unit elsewhere in the city. They may choose a “temporary” HCV, which enables them to return to public housing areas that are redeveloped, or they may choose a “permanent” HCV and forgo that right. Figure 2 lists the preferred choices of all 2003 relocated heads of households.

The families relocating in 2003 exercised a preference for HCV moves to the private market as opposed to resettlement into another public housing development. Overall, 72% of families moving in 2003 requested a HCV. The 2003 movers also overwhelmingly wished to return to public housing after the areas were developed into mixed-income communities. 60% percent of the HCV holders exercised their right to return at a future date; 12% said they wanted to remain living in the private market.<sup>25</sup>

In total, 81% of all CHA families scheduled to move in 2003 due to building closure wanted to return to public housing sites after redevelopment (The 2003 sample is similar to the overall public housing population, 89% of whom have expressed a similar desire to return.<sup>26</sup>)

<sup>25</sup> The Relocation Rights Contract offers the right to return for all “lease compliant” families, but does not guarantee that “all families displaced by redevelopment activity will be able to return to their site of origin or receive their permanent housing choice” (Relocation Rights Contract 4.c.1.) Families are aware that returning to public housing involves adherence to strict eligibility criteria. Private developers also understand this; at the time of this writing, no HOPE VI development plans include a sufficient number of public housing units for all of the original residents living on the site who expressed a wish to return.

<sup>26</sup> Chicago Housing Authority. 2003. “Annual Plan for Transformation FY 2003.” Chicago: Chicago Housing Authority.

**CHA Moves of Residents Preferring Private Market Relocation:**

**FINDING P** 24% (127) of the families wanting to move to the private market were unable to do so, and ended up living in another public housing apartment.

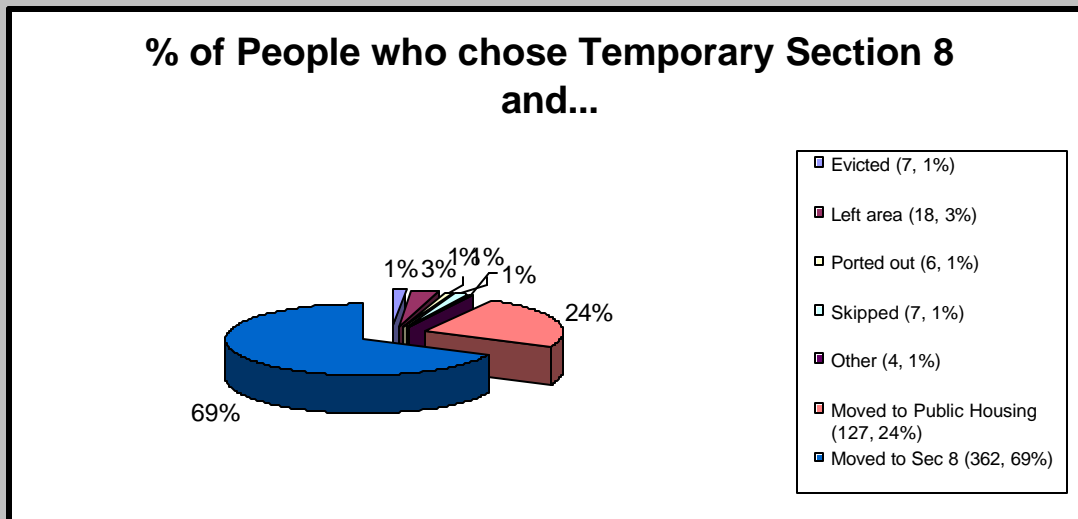


Figure 3

Of the 531 families who chose to move into the private market temporarily, 69% were able to do so after building closure. 24% could not find a home or apartment and so were “consolidated,” i.e., they were involuntarily moved to another public housing development temporarily until their HCV unit was ready (The remaining 7% had various outcomes including eviction, voluntary departure, and ‘porting out’ of the Chicago region with their HCV). We separate out discussion of HCV movers from those families who relocated into another public housing development (the latter includes families forced to “consolidate” as well as those who preferred to move to another public housing apartment).



**Private-Market/HCV Movers:** In 2003, families leaving public housing for the private market disproportionately moved into poor, predominantly African-American neighborhoods, i.e. non-“opportunity” neighborhoods, after leaving their public housing development (See Map 1 on opposite page). We employ the criteria defined by the Relocation Rights Contract (RRC), which specifies a non-“opportunity” neighborhood as one with either poverty levels greater than 23.49% or 30% or more African-American population.

**FINDING P** CHA families moving to the private market relocated overwhelmingly to racially segregated, low-income neighborhoods

Based on these criteria:

- 97% of all families relocating into the private market in 2003 (with or without a HCV) moved into a non-“opportunity” neighborhood that did not meet either the poverty or racial/ethnic criteria specified by the Relocation Rights Contract.

A breakdown reveals that:

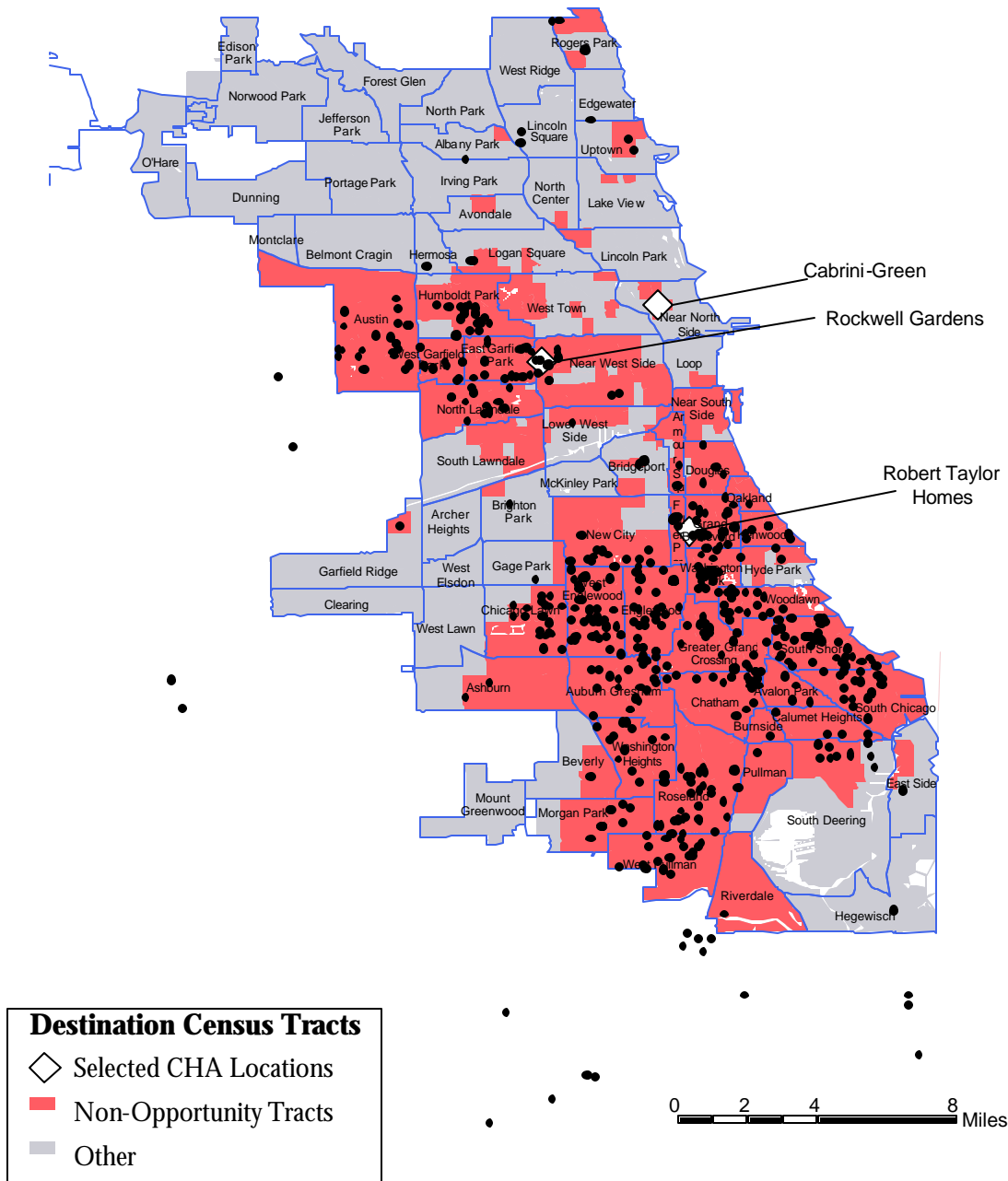
- 70% of the families relocating to the private market in 2003 moved into a non-“opportunity” area because their neighborhood exceeded the 23.49% poverty threshold in the RRC.
- 95% percent of the families relocating to the private market in 2003 moved into a non-“opportunity” area because their neighborhood had 30% or more African-American population.

This is not a marked improvement over past relocation.

Private-market communities and public housing developments with similar poverty and race/ethnicity attributes may nevertheless provide different opportunities and experiences for the relocating residents. By themselves, the above findings suggest that families participating in the CHA’s general relocation program are not moving into “opportunity” areas of the city. Additional research is needed on this population to document whether their lives have substantially improved as a result of their move. In other words, the move to the private market may still be a quality-of-life improvement for some individual families, particularly given that they left poorly maintained, socially isolated developments.

However, based on these findings, we conclude that, in the aggregate, the 2003 relocation did not yield a marked improvement over past years. Families were not able to establish residence in diverse Chicago neighborhoods and so continued to face poverty and social isolation. Moreover, an analysis of the relocating neighborhoods reveals that the non-“opportunity” areas are contiguous with one another; thus, families who end up in poverty spaces are not able to draw indirectly on adjacent areas which have resources associated with middle/upper income populations—e.g., higher performing schools, effective crime prevention services.

# All 2003 CHA Relocations



***“97% of family moves are in non-‘opportunity’ census tracts”***

**Families Moving to Public Housing in 2003:** Families may move into another public housing development out of choice or because they were unable to move successfully into the private market with their HCV—the latter state is called “consolidation.” Our study revealed a number of factors that produce consolidation. The most common obstacles were HCV units that failed to pass inspection before building closure, the difficulties of finding an HCV unit, and leaseholder inability to turn on utilities in their name because of their history of unpaid light bills. These factors are addressed below in further detail.

↪ **Pacing & Timing of Relocation.** Involuntary moves of families into public housing are partly related to the pacing and timing of relocation. In 2003, 62% of CHA families who chose to move with a HCV ended up leaving their housing developments after August 1, i.e., with only a month to prepare before the school year began. 50% moved after the school year began, thereby eliminating any real possibility to integrate into a new community adequately. These late-movers had greater difficulty

**FINDING P** The pacing & timing of relocation shape family consolidation in public housing.

finding a private market unit, and so were forced to “consolidate” by moving to another public housing development temporarily. Indeed, 68% of those HCV holders who had to consolidate did so after August 1.

↪ **Consolidation Experiences.** Consolidation movers as well as the general subpopulation may move to one of four CHA developments. Both groups face similar challenges in these sites. Families report fear of moving to a new public housing development because of safety problems—e.g., many report gang harassment, and threats to personal safety including burglary, robbery and assault in public spaces. Our study finds that two CHA developments used for consolidation have apartments that are well maintained. These are the LeClaire Courts and

**FINDING P** Consolidating families had varying experiences, depending in part on the housing development to which they were moved.

Dearborn Homes developments. Visits to Lathrop Homes and the Harold Ickes complex showed apartments in severe disrepair. We also found that CHA staff made efforts to honor leaseholder requests to move into particular public housing developments. Families often feared living in particular developments because of gangs and other safety concerns. The CHA honored their requests and attempted to relocate them safely.



## FACTORS AFFECTING FAMILY RELOCATION IN 2003

The relocation of CHA residents is a complex process that involves residents working with the CHA and many other organizations. As indicated above, the 2003 relocating families tended to move into areas with similar poverty and racial/ethnic makeup to their previous public housing communities. This section describes the factors that shaped their movement to different neighborhoods.

### Factors shaping the movement of CHA residents to different neighborhoods:

1. **Tenant Preferences**
2. **Information Dissemination**
3. **Directing the Relocation Process**
4. **The Role of Relocation Counseling and Social Services**
5. **Family Struggles to Remain Eligible for Services**

**1. Tenant Preferences:** One explanation for the geographic distribution of CHA families in 2003 is that families have particular neighborhood preferences. In other words, there may be a preference among CHA families to live in particular Chicago neighborhoods, some of which may be non-“opportunity” in terms of racial/ethnic and poverty thresholds outlined in the Relocation Rights Contract. Gauging family preferences is a difficult task for social scientists, particularly in the case of public housing transformation, because families may not have adequate information on available housing stock and they may shift their preferences as they move through relocation and, as they acquire information and overcome challenges. This study avoids reliance on one-time preference assessments and consumer satisfaction surveys because they do not take into account the changing nature of individual preferences during the course of relocation. Instead, this study interviewed families in the Robert Taylor Homes—as well as in three other developments—throughout 2003 in order to understand how their orientation to different neighborhoods shifted as they move through the relocation process.

↪ **Orientation Towards Non – “Opportunity” Areas.** Public housing families show both an awareness of, and an interest in, some of the non-poverty, non-segregated neighborhoods in the city. However, when asked to describe the neighborhoods to which they would like to move, and expected to move, most listed areas where poverty levels were greater than 23.49% and where the local African-American population exceeded 30%. The communities of greatest preference were predominantly African-American neighborhoods that had lower than 20% poverty.

**FINDING D** Families are aware of “opportunity” neighborhoods, but they orient their search process to the low-income, segregated areas of the city.

Their leaning toward the city’s poorer communities is an outcome of their inability to afford to live elsewhere. Not only did families fear high housing prices in many of the non-“opportunity” areas, but they worried that they could not afford to buy food, clothing and household items at the local stores. These fears did not change as the process moved forward because many leaseholders received reports of high prices in local commercial establishments from their peers who relocated to “opportunity” areas.

↪ **Public Housing Resident Networks.** Their informal social networks shape public housing tenants' familiarity with non-"opportunity" areas. Public housing families live in highly dense social networks that are disproportionately comprised of other CHA residents. They rely on other public housing residents for information, money, services, and emotional/psychological support. Their network structure can affect their preferences in

**FINDING P** CHA families have social networks disproportionately comprised of other public housing residents.

significant ways. The majority of families expressed a desire to remain close to their existing friends and kin, with whom they had developed arrangements to exchange resources and support one another. When asked to provide addresses of such friend and relatives, they listed poor, predominantly African-American neighborhoods close to their public housing developments: these included Englewood, Washington Park, and Roseland.

↪ **Families Remain Close to Former Developments.** The majority of South Side CHA families remained on the South Side, and in a region close to their development; conversely, West Side movers made proximate moves to West Side communities (see Map 2 on opposite page). CHA families routinely express a need to remain close to organizations such as churches and grocery stores where they currently receive support, free food, credit, and short-term off-the-table employment

**FINDINGS P** 2003 families relocated into a region that was proximate to their respective developments.

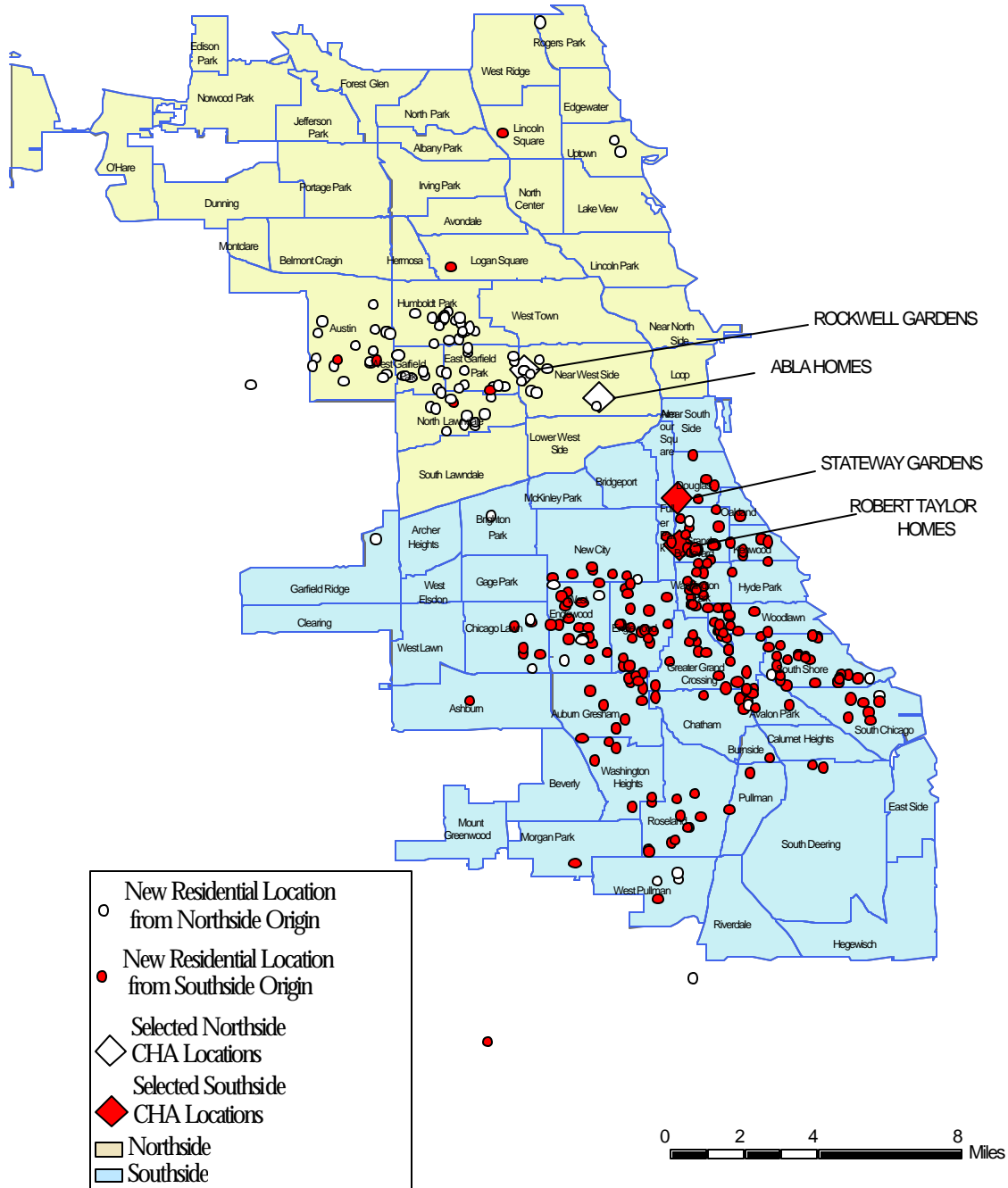
opportunities. In this way, their attachments provide disincentives to move far away and they lowered a family's willingness to entertain an "opportunity"-area move. As one resident of the Robert Taylor Homes noted, "If I run out of money, Pastor Wilkins gives me a little money, I can get free food from that store or some clothes. And, I run out of money a lot, times get tough, so I don't want to be far from these people. They help me."

**FINDINGS P**

• 74% of residents from ABLA and Rockwell (North/Westside developments) relocated to communities in the North/Westside of Chicago, while 18% relocated to Southside communities.

• 91% of residents from Stateway Gardens and Robert Taylor (Southside developments) relocated to communities in Chicago's Southside; 2% relocated to North/Westside communities.

# North/Westside vs. Southside Relocations (2003)



## 2. **Information Dissemination:**

↪ **Lack of Adequate Information.** Families did not have adequate information on different Chicago neighborhoods, a factor which also affected their decisions to move. There was generally a low-level of exposure among families to the so-called “opportunity” areas of the city. Even late into the summer months (2003), a point at which they should have attended relocation counseling sessions to acquire information about “opportunity” areas in the

**FINDING P** CHA families lack adequate information about “opportunity” areas.

city, the majority of families indicated that they had little if any understanding of the kinds of neighborhoods to which they could potentially move. It is true that, at this point, not all tenants actively pursued opportunities to learn about “opportunity” areas. There were high levels of tenant disengagement and, so many families never voluntarily attended the relocation counseling sessions where counselors discussed “opportunity” neighborhoods. However, few families found the relocation counseling sessions helpful: most indicated that they could not obtain an accurate picture of an “opportunity” area in a few hours; moreover, relocation specialists could not answer their specific questions about neighborhood quality, local retail pricing and commercial stock, area schools, etc.

↪ **Lack of Adequate Time.** There was also little time available for families to familiarize themselves with the city’s “opportunity” neighborhoods. Some families reported to research staff that they did not attend the meetings organized by CHA and Relocation Counselors; in other instances, they indicated that notices of these meetings never reached them. Research staff also met families who did not have a phone and so could not

**FINDING P** CHA families had little time to learn about Chicago’s “opportunity” neighborhoods.

be contacted easily. By the summer months, the dominant concern of families was to find another unit; they seemed less interested in surveying available choices than lining up any unit in hopes that they could avoid being consolidated into another housing development or left to live in a shelter or transitional housing.

↪ **Impediments Due to Building Conditions.** Even when tenants wanted to acquire such information on “opportunity” areas, it was not often forthcoming. In some buildings in the Robert Taylor Homes and Stateway Gardens, research staff documented compromised mail delivery. In both sites, staff found mailboxes torn open—and not repaired in a timely manner by property managers.

**FINDING P** Building conditions of the public housing developments compromised information dissemination to families.

On one occasion, property managers in the Robert Taylor Homes had blocked off access to mail by families determined “non-lease compliant,” even if families were still negotiating with the CHA to rectify their status and ensure their participation in the relocation program. In another instance, the Post Office did not deliver mail to one CHA building and did not provide adequate notification to tenants that their mail was being stored in a neighboring building; this two-week lapse resulted in increasing frustration for families and the loss of timely information regarding their status in the relocation process.

↪ **Inconsistent Information Dissemination.** Information regarding meeting times and locations were inconsistent and tenants received differing information from Relocation Counselors, Service Connector staff, property managers, Local Advisory Council officials, and assigned case workers. For example, some families were told by one property management company that they were

**FINDING D Multiple agencies provided inconsistent relocation information to families.**

“non-lease compliant” and could not “cure” their violations, and so were encouraged to move out immediately to avoid homelessness; a week later, they received discordant information from another official source and were told to “be patient” until the matter was cleared up. In another instance, leaseholders were told that they had to have utilities turned on in their name before they could move into a unit; at other times, they were told they could use the name of a friend, relative, or another person on the lease. This led to confusion and the inability of families to make their decisions clearly and with complete information, which delayed the relocation process unnecessarily.

↪ **The First Movers of Relocation.** A small percentage of households moved before mid-July, 2003. These so-called “first movers” were smaller in terms of household size; the “first movers” had few social support needs and understood how to work effectively with the many bureaucracies that are involved in the relocation process. The mid-July date, therefore, was significant in 2003 because in the later summer months with time running out, the CHA was forced to move those families who had greater

**FINDING D First movers have a significant influence over other families who move later in the process.**

needs and household obstacles—e.g., larger-size families could not find apartments with four or five bedrooms; families could not meet eligibility criteria; some had severe mental and physical health problems. CHA resources were insufficient to handle these families effectively.

These “first movers” exert an enormous influence over other relocating families because CHA families live in peer and kin networks disproportionately comprised of other public housing families. Families in the buildings rely on the “first movers” to a greater extent than other sources of information about potential neighborhoods, available housing, and so on. The “first movers” also are examples of successful relocation, thus other families look to their experiences when trying to move.

↪ **Relocation Sites of First Movers.** The first movers moved into non-“opportunity” areas of the city. Typically, they moved into areas close to their housing development. Many were employed or in job-training programs, and so they wanted to remain near to their workplace; they also relied on day care centers, churches, and other organizations close to their development for services. As one first mover said, “I just wanted to get a place close by so my life could go on. I got everything I need [around

**FINDING D First movers do not move at a higher percentage into “opportunity” areas of the city.**

my housing development], so I just wanted to get it over with and keep my life going.” First movers also wish to resettle well before the school year commences. One leaseholder who moved before July 1, 2003 said, “This means I can find a school, learn about the community, get to know what buses are around. I need time to do that.”

↪ **Influence of Relocation Counselors.** Relocation Counselors work for independent agencies subcontracted by the CHA. Their responsibilities are to help families find housing in the city by providing them information on available units and “opportunity”-area neighborhoods, and helping them to navigate the HCV bureaucratic process.

**FINDING P** Relocation counselors did not encourage first movers to consider “opportunity” area units, nor did they present information to other families who followed in the footsteps of the first movers

Families who moved said they had little time to take advantage of counseling available to make “opportunity” area moves. Some said they could not

afford to dedicate personal resources to learning about the city’s neighborhoods. Relocation Counselors reported that they felt it was not their place to challenge leaseholders—first movers and late movers—who expressed clear preferences. One relocation counselor said, “If a family has their act together and wants to leave, and so early, hey, that’s great news. Let’s get them out. They probably [are] working, have lives, so no, I never try to get them to move to other places. They’ll be ok wherever they live.”

Families remaining in the buildings will contact first movers for advice and information. They often notify their Relocation Counselors that they would like to move near to the first movers. It is at this point that Relocation Counselors tend to forgo giving families information on other “opportunity” areas. Instead, they tend to redirect their energy to other families in the building who have not established such preferences and/or who may be having trouble in finding units. The net effect is that the families with initiative are not given assistance and, as important, they are not being told that there may be other neighborhood that are available to them. In many cases, there may be an available unit for the leaseholder in an “opportunity” area that is also close to their friend.



### 3. Directing the Relocation Process:

#### “THE RELOCATION PROCESS”

1. **Housing Choice Survey:** Residents complete a survey indicating their preference for a (temporary or permanent) private-market unit or another public housing apartment. A “CHA Relocation Project Manager” meets with leaseholder to discuss the choices.
2. **Good Neighbor Workshop:** Residents must attend a five-hour workshop, at which they receive assistance with their upcoming move—e.g., information on lease compliance, good housekeeping, money management, and available services is discussed. They receive a certificate of completion, enabling them to move forward in the relocation process
3. **Recertification:** The property manager checks to determine whether residents have elected to return to public housing and assesses various aspects of the leaseholder’s background—e.g., rent delinquency—to ensure that residents are eligible to remain in the public housing program. Any violations of lease compliance are pointed out to residents at this time and a time-period is established so that residents can redress any “curable” violations.
4. **Lease Cure Period:** Property manager and Service Connector personnel help residents “cure” violations and restore their capacity to remain public housing residents.
5. **Relocation Planning Meeting:** 180/120 day notices are given to residents indicating the time period in which they must leave their building. 1-2 weeks after the notice, residents attend a meeting to understand the timing of the relocation process, their housing choices, and the agencies available to assist them in obtaining a new unit.
6. **Finding a Unit:** HCV holders work with their relocation specialist to find a unit. Their counselors help residents to identify 5 units and provide escorts to at least 3 units. Counselors are not obligated to show any additional units or provide additional escorts.



**Expertise of Agencies Responsible for Relocation.** There is a clear difference in terms of expertise at CHA and CDHS, the two agencies primarily responsible for directing the relocation and resettlement process. Although the CHA manages the relocation process, it must rely on CDHS to direct social services under the primary service referral system, the Service Connector. The CHA provides funding to the Service Connector program<sup>27</sup>, while CDHS administers the program by selecting and managing the agencies subcontracted to provide services. CDHS also conducts performance review and monitoring, and ensures the accuracy of weekly and monthly data reported on family outcomes.

**FINDING P** The levels of expertise and resources with respect to public housing relocation at CHA and CDHS vary. Lack of coordination of the two agencies throughout Summer 2003 made it difficult to relocate families effectively.

<sup>27</sup> In the revised budget for FY2003, CHA itemizes a total of \$28,744,000 fund for resident services. Not all services, however, are related to relocation. For example, expenditures include support for Service Connectors, payment to the elected tenant leaders, Family Investment Centers and Tenant Patrols (Chicago Housing Authority, *Moving to Work Annual Plan for Transformation-Year 5*). Funding for the “Service Connector” program gradually increased from \$5.9 million in 2002 to \$7.1 in 2003. CHA decided to allot \$13.6 million for the program in 2004 (Chicago Sun-Times, October 22, 2003).

Throughout 2003, CHA senior staff consistently demonstrated a greater understanding of the challenges of relocation and they responded to individual family concerns through direct outreach with families. CDHS's capacity is based on procuring manpower and resources for particular programs and services, such as shelters, transitional housing, and emergency care. Toward the end of the relocation period—roughly from August 1 until November 1, 2003—there was great need for services from CDHS, particularly for families requiring extensive support and for squatters living in the buildings. In general, CDHS were responsive to requests to allocate resources, but safety issues (e.g., CDHS staff sometimes were hesitant to enter developments), timely notification of LAC and property managers, and communication lapses regarding times and locations of services resulted in the failure to provide services on-site to families.

↪ **The “Joint Review” Process.** The CHA instituted an assessment and review procedure to pre-screen families. The procedure was voluntary. At the beginning of relocation, families could elect to be screened by CHA staff, service connector personnel, and other affiliated agencies. The screening, ideally, would yield a “needs assessment” for each family and provide a baseline report for the family’s move through the resettlement process. If done correctly, such a screening would differentiate hardship cases from those families requiring minimal services.

**FINDING P** The Joint Review was not comprehensive and available to all families.

The CHA dedicated resources in Spring 2003 for the Joint Review. CHA senior staff worked together to put such a pre-screening mechanism in place. Trained case managers should have conducted all interviews. In practice, only a small percentage of families were screened and there were not enough trained case managers to conduct the screenings. Many ended up filling out the forms themselves and did not have assistance with questions.

↪ **The Joint Review and First Movers.** Families who attended the pre-screening sessions in the early period of relocation were met with case managers who devoted attention to their needs. These families were also highly motivated and self-directed—they are referred to above as the “first movers” because they moved out before their neighbors. In other words, their needs were minimal.

**FINDING P** The Joint Review proved highly useful for “first mover” families.

These “first movers” consistently reported that the pre-screening proved useful in that it gave them a clear understanding of their needs and choices. Many said they changed housing options because they received good advice during the Joint Review process. This suggests that pre-screening can work. However, given that highly motivated families used the process, we conclude that not all families have the same likelihood of being screened. Additionally, the style of pre-screening does not suit those families with greater needs, individuals with literacy problems and physical disabilities, and individuals who have histories of poor engagement with bureaucratic systems. In other words, the current Joint Review procedure is not adequately tailored to serve poor people.

↪ **Changes in the Effectiveness of the Relocation Process.** Organizing an assessment and review process such that relocation and social services delivery occurs effectively is a labor-intensive process. It requires not only good design, but also continuous performance monitoring and adjustment. The Housing Authority appeared severely hampered in terms of time and manpower.

**FINDING D** Relocation was effective in the initial period, but the rushed pace of relocation over the summer made it difficult to carry out effective assessment and redirection of resources.

Before July 2003, CHA senior staff not only showed receptivity to making necessary adjustments, but they had the time to provide intensive feedback and direction to agencies carrying out relocation—e.g.,

Service Connector personnel, Relocation Counselors, property managers. After July, the pace and demands of relocation made it difficult for the CHA to fulfill these functions. Thus, adjustments and redirection of resources often never occurred. By mid-summer, there were hundreds of families that needed to be moved before the arbitrary building closure date and all personnel felt pressured to meet the deadline.

**4. The Role of Relocation Counseling and Social Services:** Two of the most important actors that impact a family's ability to relocate are the Relocation Counselors and the Service Connector agencies that give families referrals to social service providers. The former help families find new units and the latter provide ongoing support to families to ensure that they receive services during their transition.

Relocation Counselors' main task is to help residents find apartments in the private housing market. They inform residents on various neighborhoods, set up tours to "opportunity" areas, identify available units, and escort residents to these apartments. Along with the Service Connector organizations, they also participate in the organization of needs assessments for residents.

Service Connector personnel must work on-site. While staff responsibilities are primarily to provide referrals, they must also conduct assessment and case planning for each family. Service Connector employ case ratios of one caseworker per 100 households. Each household must be assigned a caseworker.<sup>28</sup>

↪ **Effectiveness of the Service Connector.** Approximately 20% of families that we interviewed reported receiving satisfactory help from the Service Connector program. In general, such families were highly motivated and required only minimal attention and support families; they also had great experience soliciting services from bureaucracies.

**FINDING D** The Service Connector proves useful to self-motivated families.

<sup>28</sup> The research team observed the work of Service Connector staff and held conversations with them throughout 2003. However, staff only spoke with approximately 12 staff members. These findings should not be viewed as a formal evaluation of the program as a whole. Instead, our focus was to understand the family's perception of the Service Connector and to document Service Connector personnel and their interactions with, and approach to, CHA families.

↪ **Impediments to Service Connector Effectiveness.** Service Connector staff expressed great frustration when trying to outreach, engage and service CHA families. One staff member working in Robert Taylor said that screening and assessment was “impossible” given that their focus was on getting people out of the buildings in a short time.

**FINDING P Service Connector staff reported great difficulty servicing public housing residents.**

“There’s no way, in a summer with hundreds of people, that we can really try to stay on top of each family. We just really try and get them what they need quickly and so they can leave. If we had more help, maybe we could look each week or each month and say, “how’s Mary doing, what does she need.” But we don’t have the time for all that.”

Another Service Connector staff member on the city’s Westside said that, by late summer, adequate assessment and service delivery was not possible. “By August, we just really give up on the ones who have a lot of problems. By that time, we just can’t do nothing for them. I mean, we can’t even *find* them! So, how can we serve them? It is sad, really, because they’re the ones who are left.”

This staff member continued by expressing the need for a bifurcated model of service delivery. Her statement is instructive:

“What I think we should do is to have us working with the people who really know what’s going on. I think that there are a lot of people with mental problems, they don’t come in and see us, they yell and scream at us. I mean, we’re not the one for them. They need more help than we can give. They need a different place to go.”

Other Service Connector personnel echoed this belief, namely, relocation of hardship cases should be carried out by experts who have familiarity with the so-called ‘hard-to-house’ population. No staff member we spoke to felt they were capable of addressing CHA families who required extensive social services and assistance. Service Connector agencies currently contracted by the CHA do not have the required expertise and it would be a mistake to continue to expect them to service families requiring anything more than referrals to self-motivated families.

↪ **The Design of Service Connector Agencies.** Service Connector agencies are limited in their utility for most public housing families because they are a referral service. When the Service Connector staff received information from the CHA’s Joint Review process, no mechanism existed for them to incorporate the information so that families might receive specific services and assistance. Moreover, Service Connector staff expressed lack of familiarity with case management-based delivery. The net result was that resources in place were often left under-

**FINDING P Service Connector agencies are not effective in the provision of intensive case management and needs assessment.**

utilized. And, as important, families grew less engaged because the Service Connector personnel could not give them answers to questions or assistance with their requests.

↪ **Ability of Agencies to Relocate Families to “Opportunity” Areas.** The agencies responsible for relocation services demonstrated in 2003 that they do not have the capacity to move families into “opportunity” areas. However, they were given financial incentives to move families to “opportunity” areas.

**FINDING P Relocation Counselors did not help families to make moves outside of low-income, predominantly African-American areas.**

Several Relocation Counselors admitted to research staff that their contacts with landlords were in predominantly African-American and poor/working

poor communities. They expressed frustration at having to move large numbers of residents in a short period of time. When interviewed, their own suggestion was to have smaller caseloads and greater time to contact families in non-poor communities, particularly in the “opportunity” areas.

↪ **Pressure Tactics of Relocation Counselors.** Research staff spoke with many families who reported that their Relocation Counselors pressured them to accept units in low-income, racially segregated neighborhoods. The Counselors also told leaseholders that they would lose their eligibility to participate in the relocation program if they did not act quickly and accept the unit given to them.

**FINDING P Relocation Counselors pressured families into accepting units quickly; most such units were in low-income, racially segregated neighborhoods.**

When asked if these allegations were true, staff at one Relocation agency admitted to using pressure tactics. A staff member said with a tone of frustration:

“If we don’t tell them they have to move, then time will run out and they’ll have to move to another project. So, yes, we get them going quick, even if they have to move to a unit that’s not the greatest.”

These pressure tactics increased significantly during the final months of relocation activity.

**5. Family Struggles to Remain Eligible for Services and Supports:** According to the Relocation Rights Contract, families must remain “lease compliant” throughout their tenure in the public housing program in order to remain public housing residents and to qualify for the right to return to the newly developed mixed-income communities. Achieving lease compliance involves proceeding through a “Right to Return Re-Certification” process at which tenants must demonstrate adherence to several rules, including noninvolvement in drug related activity, good housekeeping, timely rent payments, no unpaid utility bills, and no nonleaseholders living in the apartment. A tenant who meets these standards is deemed “lease compliant.”

↪ **Utility Bills.** In past years, tenants have had difficulty achieving lease compliance because of unpaid utility bills. In some cases, the problem stemmed from tenant refusal to pay bills, but there was also improper practices attributed to Commonwealth Edison. These included improper determination of light bills; failure to read apartment meters, and inadequate reporting to tenants regarding monies owed. The graph below is a self-report of utility debts incurred by residents of a Phase III development. The distribution

**FINDING P** Utility-related problems unfairly hampered residents from moving through relocation and locating a private market unit before building closure.

shows that almost 67% of the residents report having an outstanding utility bill amounting to more than \$500.

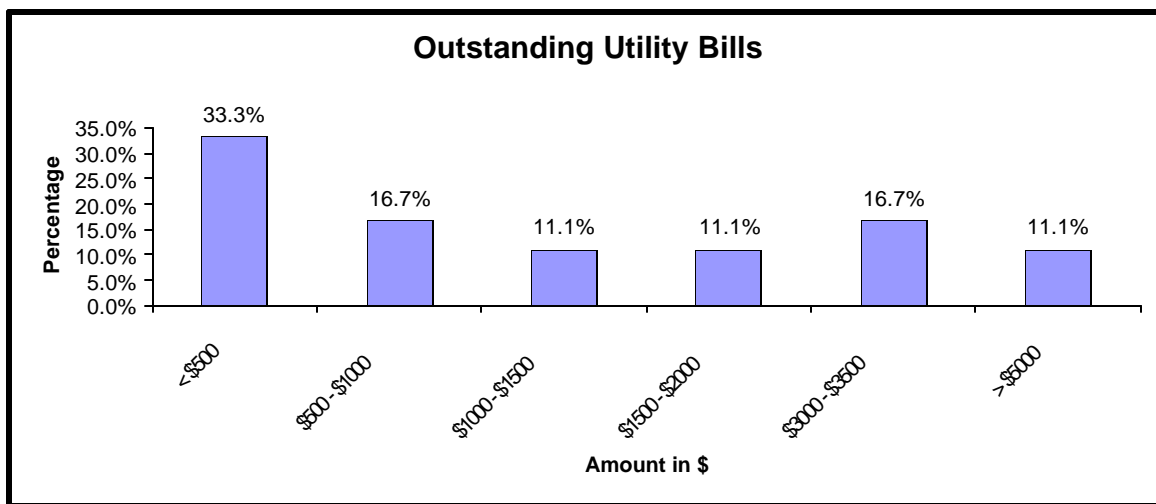


Figure 4<sup>29</sup>

Utility bills continued to be an impediment to effective relocation during 2003. In its investigative reporting, the *Residents' Journal* newspaper raised several flags concerning these problems. Civic actors responded by pressuring the CHA and Commonwealth Edison to find an appropriate solution. Research staff observed several practices that caused concern. Commonwealth Edison staff refused to enter buildings and read meters, citing safety worries. Instead, they told tenants that all bills would be estimated. In other cases, tenants worried that they were receiving bills based on meters that recorded usage in adjacent apartments; property management affirmed these suspicions and worked with tenants to call Commonwealth Edison. Our research staff could not document whether the utility company took adequate action; however, self-reports by families indicated that the utility company failed to contact them.

Commonwealth Edison also sent inaccurate light bills to families. Research staff called Commonwealth Edison to report utility bills that varied month-to-month by several hundred dollars—e.g., July's bill might be \$7,000 and the August tab might be \$2,000. Residents were understandably confused. Commonwealth Edison personnel provided no assistance; in one case, research staff overheard a Commonwealth Edison assistant belligerently reply to a leaseholder on the phone, "If you just paid your bill you wouldn't have this problem. Just pay the higher one, I'm going to make sure that that's the one you have to pay from here on out." In other cases, residents admitted to failure to pay and in still other cases, there was no grievance process such that an adequate resolution could be established before residents were declared non-lease compliant.

<sup>29</sup> Source: Resident survey conducted by project staff.

↩ **The C.H.A.N.C.E. Program.** In August 2003, the CHA attempted to help residents with

**FINDING D** The C.H.A.N.C.E. program, developed to address the utility bill problem, offers potential to help families, but it was not in place before 2003 relocation began.

unpaid utility bills by developing a program to protect unfair loss of public housing eligibility. The CHA worked with Commonwealth Edison to create a new program to help families cope with high utility bills. On September 10, 2003, the so-called “C.H.A.N.C.E.” program was un-veiled in order to provide debt relief to families. Those families with outstanding light bills in excess of \$300 were eligible to participate in the program. Families would have to participate in a review

procedure. If declared eligible for C.H.A.N.C.E support, they would pay for 1/3 of their outstanding utility bills; the CHA would also pay 1/3 of the total amount and, Commonwealth Edison would issue debt forgiveness for the remaining amount.

There were some initial roadblocks for families that prevented them from participating in the C.H.A.N.C.E program. For example, in Autumn 2003, research staff observed several dozen residents in the Robert Taylor Homes make phone calls to Commonwealth Edison, CHA, Service Connector personnel, and property managers. All of the residents had the necessary money to make a payment and rectify high utility bills. However, not a single family could actually deliver the payment: Commonwealth Edison said they had no representative assigned to implement the C.H.A.N.C.E program; property managers refused to take money, as did the Service Connector staff.

Some families grew understandably frustrated and they reported leaving the public housing program because they could not turn their utilities on in their new homes. The research staff documented nearly two-dozen families who did not participate in relocation and who voluntarily left public housing because they could resolve their utility bill problem. These families were told by the property manager that their bills could not be rectified; based on this information, which was not necessarily accurate, families decided to find alternative housing, sometimes living with friends and relatives, because of their belief that they were ineligible for public housing. There was almost no help available to the families from Service Connector and property management. CHA senior staff tried to intervene but often it was too late to locate the families and reinstate them in the public housing program.



## • Part II – Phase II (2002) Relocation •

### How did Phase II Families Fare in 2003?

Part II discusses the experiences of CHA families leaving the Robert Taylor Homes (RTH) public housing development in 2002. This section documents their attempts, during the one-year period after building closure, to resettle into new homes and new communities. The discussion focuses on families making the transition to the private market as well as families moving into other public housing developments.

## THE RESIDENTS

**Resident Characteristics:** Our sample includes 209 families who left RTH development in 2002.

### FINDINGS P

- **Public housing remains a significant resource for low-income families in Chicago who cannot afford private market rents.**
- **60% of legal households in the sample have non-leaseholders in their unit.**
- **24% percent of all private-market movers subleased their apartments to other families at least once in the year after their move. Most left because of inability to pay rent; they moved in with friends and relatives.**
- **Accurate measures of public housing populations must be increased by 35-40% to reflect the true residential population.**

Some chose to leave the public housing system, some preferred to use Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) to enter the private housing market and others were forcibly evicted from public housing altogether.

Our sample includes three types of public housing residents:

1. **Leaseholders:** occupants recognized by the property manager and the CHA as legal tenants of RTH. As a general pattern, leaseholder families are headed by single women, with five or six people in residence. On average, there are three or four children in each household. Children of relatives or friends may also live in the same unit.

2. **Non-leaseholders (NLHs):** (a) sub-leasing family units composed of (at least) one parent and (at least) one child or (b) individual boarders. NLH pay a fee either to the property manager, a leaseholder, or the LAC to live in the building.

3. **Squatters:** persons occupying units that are officially designated by the CHA as vacant.

The chart below displays the composition of the sample before they left RTH in 2002.

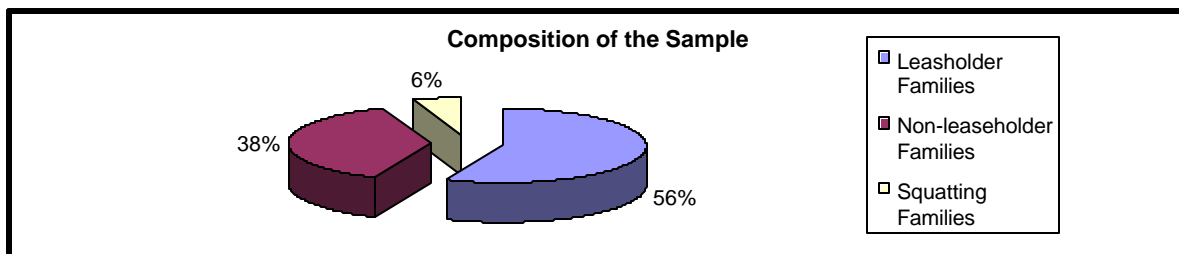


Figure 5

**Public Housing Resident Networks:** It is important to analyze public housing families in terms of their relations with one another. Network data was gathered in order to capture the relation of public housing resident to one another.

↪ **Network Density.** There is an extraordinarily high degree of co-familiarity among the residents (in the form of friends, kin or neighbors). Phrased in technical terms, in our sample the density of a building network was 60%, meaning that out of all possible relations in the building, 60% were actively utilized.

**FINDING** ▢ **Our findings suggest that social relations in a public housing development tend to be highly dense.**

When asked to describe their peer relationships, residents said that 75% of their closest friends lived in the same or adjacent building. Public housing residents rely on informal ties in order to exchange information about the relocation and resettlement process.<sup>30</sup>

↪ **Networks and Relocation.** Many have not developed wide-ranging social ties outside of public housing, and they report difficulties establishing new relations with neighbors, city agencies, and local organizations in their new settlement areas.

**FINDING** ▢ **The loss of friendship ties as a result of relocation entails some negative consequences for a number of residents who move to private-market communities.**

The network survey revealed that there are two social groups in public housing. One has relatively sparse relations – with 19% density. In other words, they tend not to socialize with others in the building. The “first mover” portrayed in the previous section usually belongs to this group. In comparison, the second group is more inter-connected with 97% density. It is important to note

that those who used the Service Connector program tended to be in the first group.

## RELOCATION TO THE PRIVATE MARKET

**Relocation to the Private Market:** It is important to note that the relocation experiences of public housing residents are diverse. While there may be some residents who experience a relatively smooth transition to their new homes, others have experienced great instability.

**FINDINGS** ▢

- Family instability in the private market resulted because of multiple moves in the year after building closure.
- Non-leaseholders who moves in with families also added to the instability of the household.

Over the course of 12 months, many families in the sample ended up moving in with each other. In the majority of cases, a lease-holding family would receive other families who had either lost their lease or who had been living with them in RTH off-the-lease. This situation creates instability both for the families who are moving in as well as the leaseholder whose lease is in jeopardy. Both must hide non-leaseholders’ presence from the CHA and other administrative agencies.

<sup>30</sup> For a discussion of the role of social networks in public housing communities, see Venkatesh, Sudhir A. 2000. *American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Twenty-one percent of the residents report problems regarding non-leaseholders who moved in with them. Common problems include non-leaseholders performing illegal activity in their homes and landlords demanding extra rent “under the table” in exchange for non-leaseholders living in the unit.

## FAMILY RESETTLEMENT INTO NEW COMMUNITIES

**Resettlement Neighborhoods and Residences:** Families leaving RTH may move to another public housing development or to the private market. Much of the discussion below focuses on private-market experiences, however it is worthwhile to note that a significant number of families (30%) were consolidated during 2002.<sup>31</sup> Consolidation moves occurred because families could not find a private market unit—typically their inability to move into the private market resulted from units failing inspection or inability to place utilities in their name. Both experiences are discussed and distinctions are made when relevant.

↪ **Housing Preferences.** Below is a distribution of housing preferences for the 2002 leaseholding sample. It is important to note that nearly 1/5 of the sample have left the public housing program. The most common reasons are rent delinquency and violations of the lease, such as having non-leaseholders in the home.

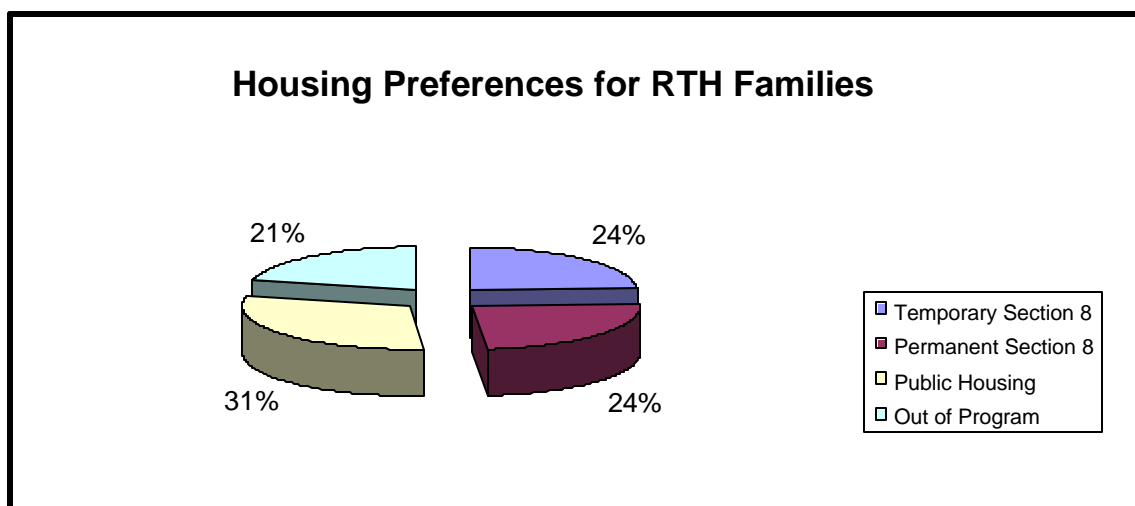


Figure 6

<sup>31</sup> Families unable to find private market housing before building closure are moved temporarily into another public housing development. This process is referred to as “consolidation.”

↙ **Communities of Resettlement.** The primary recipient communities are Englewood, Grand Boulevard, Washington Park and South Shore. These communities are followed by West Englewood, Douglas, South Englewood and Roseland. These are mostly high-poverty neighborhoods with predominantly African-American populations.

	<b>Unemployed %</b>	<b>Mean household income (\$)</b>	<b>% below poverty level</b>	<b>African-American Population %</b>	<b>Median rent asked (\$)</b>
<b>Englewood</b>	12.5	19,513	44.6	98.3	483
<b>Grand Boulevard</b>	11.9	17,184	50.8	98.3	310
<b>Washington Park</b>	13.4	17,479	51.8	98	436
<b>South Shore</b>	9	29,954	25.4	97.2	479

Table 1

**Experiences in the New Communities - Consolidation:** In 2002, the CHA overestimated their capacity to move families into the private market and so were forced to place families in other public housing sites. This did little to engender trust and confidence either among families or the wider civic community. For example, in 2002, the CHA wanted to relocate 991 families to the private market<sup>32</sup>, but ended up only relocating approximately 400 families with temporary and permanent HCVs.<sup>33</sup>

**FINDING P** The CHA was unable to relocate many families into the private housing market. These families were then forced to return to public housing, which has resulted in both positive and negative experiences for these families.

For some families, consolidation was a positive experience because the new units were well maintained. Visual inspections and resident satisfaction surveys

indicated that the units in two consolidation sites—the Dearborn Homes and LeClaire Courts—were in good condition; residents report high degree of satisfaction with property management. However, apartments in two other sites—the Lathrop Homes and the Ickes Homes—could be as poorly maintained as the most dilapidated unit in RTH. In these areas, residents report high rat and roach infestation and inability to receive timely maintenance and upkeep; they also report problems with managers and on-site services.

**Experiences in the New Communities- Private Market:** Private market families include those who relocated using HCVs and those who moved on their own. There are a number of challenges public housing families face who relocate into the private housing market. It is encouraging to note that 58% reports being happy with their new private-market housing unit. In the following section the difficulties that relocates have experienced in the private market and the rates of their return to their old public housing community will be discussed.

<sup>32</sup> Chicago Housing Authority, *Moving to Work (MTW) Annual Plan FY2002*.

<sup>33</sup> Social Service Providers Meeting, May 2003.

↪ **Difficulties in the Private Market.** Families expressed concerns regarding their private-market resettlement.

**FINDING P** Families who have relocated to the private market are experiencing problems with their landlords, difficulties paying their rent and utility bills, and have expressed concern about the safety of their new neighborhood.

Twenty percent of relocating families report problems with their landlords (including those who moved without an HCV), 30% are experiencing problems in paying rent and utilities on time.

Safety is still a major concern for residents in the public housing system regardless of their housing choices. 39% of the families report some kind of concern with crime and gang activities in their new neighborhoods.

↪ **Return to the Robert Taylor Homes Area.** A significant number of families continue to return to the area around RTH. The average distance residents have to travel in order to get to RTH is 3.9 miles. Thirty-eight percent of the residents report going back every day; 73% return to RTH at least a “few times a week.”

**FINDING P** A large number of families return to the RTH area at least “a few times a week.” The more often residents return there, the less satisfied they are with their new neighborhood.

Frequency of return to RTH	%
Everyday	38
Few times a week	35
Once a week	13
Once a month	9
Less than once a month	5

Table 2

Most often, families return to RTH visit churches and social service centers, or because they continue to enroll their children in schools around RTH. Residents who visit RTH less frequently (once a month and/or less than once a month) report a greater degree of satisfaction in their new neighborhood than those who return to RTH more frequently.

Family heads who keep their children in schools near RTH speak of trusting relationships with teachers. Commuting back to the old neighborhood, however, proves to be a difficult task because of time and energy that must be expended. Those families who enroll their children in schools around RTH report difficulty paying for transportation—families often were unaware of free transportation services available—and they must travel several miles each morning and afternoon. Given their inability to afford public transportation, parents suggest that they sometimes keep children at home or send the children to live with friends near the school. Both situations are disadvantageous to the healthy education of children and for stable relations between parent and child. Those families that choose to enroll their children at schools in their new neighborhoods did not report such difficulties. These families not only tended to visit the RTH area less frequently, but they also use amenities in their new neighborhoods more extensively than those with children enrolled in schools in their old public housing neighborhood.

## THE SQUATTERS

### What challenges do squatters face relocating from public housing?

Chicago public housing developments are a *de facto* homeless shelter. Our research suggests the continued importance of public housing for a “squatter” community of homeless and poor adults and their families. The CHA has known for three decades that its developments house people off-the-lease. Our research staff has found CHA staff and its property management firms successfully enabling non-leaseholders to remain viable residents in the buildings. This can result simply from generosity: research staff observed numerous cases in which CHA staff and property managers in Robert Taylor went out of their way to help squatters in need—e.g., by forgoing eviction, looking the other way when families with children live in vacant units. The challenge is to ensure that current resources are allocated in an effective way to build on the precedent that has been set. In other words, how can a program be developed to help CHA and property managers ensure that the squatting population participates in relocation effectively?

**Squatter Characteristics:** Squatters comprise a significant percentage of the public housing population. Squatters can include homeless persons who use public housing as shelter as well as families who have lost their lease due to lease compliance problems and who remain in the building as illegal tenants. Research staff monitored the whereabouts and experiences of squatters after they left the developments in order to document their coping strategies.

#### FINDINGS

- Squatters tend to be heavily dependent upon public housing as a source of shelter. The squatter populations of public housing are integral members of the public housing community.
- Approximately 34% of all squatters report paying either local tenant leaders, property managers, or gangs a monthly sum for the right to live inside the buildings.

In general, three types of squatters may be identified:

1. **Older men (35+ years)**, single or divorced, strong work histories, relatively low levels of drug addiction, high rates of alcohol use, minimal self-reported involvement in criminal activity.
2. **Younger men (20+ years)**, single, with severe drug and alcohol addiction problems, minimal work experience, and higher rate of involvement in criminal activity.
3. **Single mothers with children**, lost their housing and welfare benefits, continue to live illegally in buildings afterwards.

The distribution of each type of squatter differs in each of the Robert Taylor Homes buildings. For example, in buildings with strong tenant representation (i.e., Local Advisory Councils), there are fewer numbers of single men; the squatting population tends to be older men and single mothers with children who pay the local tenant leader, property manager, and/or the gang for the right to use the building as shelter.

A summary portrait of squatters reveals the following traits:

- Squatters include both working and employed persons: 12% report working legally. Most work in service sector jobs. Those not working report receipt of some form of income from informal work—e.g., car washing, selling clothing, prostitution, recycling.
- 81% percent report a history of residency in public housing of at least 10 years—this may not be continuous. In general, older men have lived in public housing for longer durations and more

often. Younger men and women squat intermittently in public housing, moving to the private market and returning on occasion.

- Squatters usually live with one another. 18% report living alone, while 29% live with friends, relatives or partners, and 53% live with other squatters. At some point in their lives, nearly every squatter has shared a dwelling with other homeless persons and squatters.

- 12% percent of the squatting population can be categorized as families (the definition of family being at least one parent and one child). Most of these families squat with their children, although there are examples where parents have their children stay periodically with friends or relatives while they continue squatting.

Squatters form an integral part of the public housing community. Residents report that the squatters play the following roles in CHA buildings: janitor, handyman and housepainter, escort, drug dealer, babysitter, lookout for gangs, car mechanic. In every building, we have found at least ½ dozen squatters who help conduct maintenance and janitorial services. In some cases, they are remunerated by individual tenants who request their help. However, in three buildings, we have identified squatters who report being paid by the property manager to perform such functions. This is a concern because the property management firm is eliding safe, legal labor arrangements; squatters often use electrical equipment and perform construction work, which places them at risk of workplace injury. Moreover, given that squatters report receiving \$10-20 per day, there is also gross violation of minimum wage standards.

**Relocation Sites of Squatters:** The reliance on public housing suggests that squatters use the developments as a beacon to orient their movements in and around the city. When they lose housing elsewhere or are down on their luck, they will move into a public housing unit.

**FINDING P** Squatters are a highly transient population. When the building in which they have been living has been demolished, they either move into another public housing development or experience homelessness or private market instability.

Squatters are a transient, unstable population. Nearly 52% of squatters report experiencing homelessness in the year after building closure. On average, a squatter moves at least twice (the mean is 2.7 times) in the year after building closure. 4% stay in Single Room Occupancy (SRO) dwellings and shelters, while 5% stay with friends or relatives. 78% prefer public housing (where they can come and go freely) to shelters and SROs.

**Trajectories of Squatter Movements:** Squatter movements after building closure suggest two modal trajectories:

**FINDING P** One year after building closure, 13% of the squatter population is homeless.

1. Homelessness or highly unstable private market residence for short duration, followed by attempts to return to public housing.

2. Immediate relocation to another public housing development where they establish relations with tenants and property managers, often paying one of them (or the gang) for the right to inhabit an apartment.

**FINDING D** 80% of the squatter population moved to another Southside public housing development, such as the Ida B. Wells complex or the Stateway Gardens, after building closure.

It is striking to note that squatters disproportionately move from one public housing building to another. Ultimately, this pattern of movement will have to change as additional CHA buildings are demolished. However, for the present time, on the city's Southside, squatters should not necessarily be seen as inhabitants of a single building or public housing development. (This holds particularly for the young variant who move often between residences.) Estimates of size of squatter population are best determined by grouping housing developments together: for example, Ida B. Wells and

Robert Taylor 'share' many squatters who move freely between the two places, calling each community their home at different time periods.

Some squatters who move immediately to another public housing development report paying the property manager, the local tenant leaders and/or the gang in order to have monopoly access to a vacant unit. Typical payments include \$50-\$100 per month to the property manager. The gang may not require monetary payment. They typically require that squatters store guns and drugs for the gang in their apartment, and permit the use of their apartments for prostitution (which the gang may also control).

**Squatter Networks and Relocation:** Once a squatter claims monopoly access to an apartment, they will either change the lock themselves or surreptitiously pay the property manager's staff to do so. Afterwards, the squatter is able to 'sub-lease' the unit to other squatters, often making up ½ of the required monthly payment through sub-leasing arrangements. Indeed, squatters typically recruit one another after having established safe residence inside a public housing apartment. In this way, it is important to view squatters not only as transient and isolated but also as moving in and part of social groups.

**FINDING D** Three different types of social networks were found among the squatter sample. The type of network to which a squatter belongs has profound consequences for his/her experience with the relocation process and the type and place of residence into which he/she is relocated.

A particular squatter network will remain closely affiliated, usually over a period of 6-18 months, with a small set of persons with whom s/he will share resources, friendship

and support, and place of residence. The squatter can have strong, longstanding connections to the buildings; they must develop such networks to ensure their own physical safety and their personal property. There are three general types of squatter networks. Each is described below.

1. **Single Broker:** The single broker network is very common inside public housing developments. In this network, a single individual typically has managed to build a relationship with CHA staffers, property managers, gang members, and other persons who allow them to live illegally in the building. They are the first point of contact for other squatters. They routinely find apartments for homeless persons, they share resources and their own residence, and they act as a source of information and resources (e.g., dates of building closure, potential food sources, job openings).
2. **Widespread Ties:** This network is more common in private market communities. In this network, a small group of squatters move in concert with one another; typically, they have some familiarity with one another. This is a classic squatting arrangement in urban poor communities that possess many abandoned properties in which squatters live for short periods. The networks usually contain three to five persons. In public housing, such networks exist but this does not imply that squatters arrive at buildings *en masse*. Typically, these networks exist in buildings with poor tenant leadership, where the formal tenant patrols and informal tenant patrols are minimal.

3. **Dual Broker:** The dual broker arrangement is also quite common in public housing developments. In this arrangement, two squatters may cooperate with one another to share an apartment or colonize new vacant/uninhabited apartments. Typically, as they leave one apartment for another, they will spread word to their collaborator that an apartment is available—this collaborator may then choose to move in or notify others of the available space. In public housing, squatters living in the building tend to develop relationships out of social and emotional support. At times, those relationships can turn into formalized economic arrangements wherein two squatters join forces to claim access to empty apartments. After paying the local tenant leaders and/or property managers a small fee for permission to reside in the building, they will bring in other squatters and/or sublease the vacant units for a small fee.

**Consequences of Relocation:** Relocation has had a profound impact on the lives of all squatters.

## FINDINGS

- As a result of relocation, older, male squatters continue to rely on public housing as a source of shelter.
- Young male squatters often pose a threat to the new place of residence to which they relocate.
- Relocation leaves women squatters and their families highly vulnerable due to a lack of available services and because they are often forced to engage in illegal activities in order to procure housing.

1. **Older Male Squatters:** The older, male squatters leaving RTH shun shelters. Many have lived illegally in public housing for years, either as squatters or non-leaseholders. These persons typically seek to replicate their situation by moving to another public housing development; their efforts are directed to finding an apartment by paying other squatters, LAC members, or property managers. Many of these persons do not have drug problems, although they report using alcohol frequently.

2. **Young Male Squatters:** Young male squatters with severe drug problems pose a great risk to the community. Residents report that during the final 8-12 months before building closure, single male squatters move into the building and threaten household safety.

3. **Women Squatters:** Women who squat face a distinct set of challenges affecting both themselves and their children during building closure.

Many women report having to work for gangs or in prostitution rackets for money or for the right to stay in

buildings, which further reduces their ability to safely protect their families. This appears to be a particularly acute problem for those who are declared non-lease compliant. These individuals accept opportunities to earn money illegally, including prostitution, in order to support themselves temporarily during relocation.

Women in general reported an interest in transitional housing and domestic violence services. Currently, they are being offered little assistance from available service providers or from the Service Connector program. Women have expressed considerable reluctance using Service Connector for issues related to domestic violence and sexual harassment. This is affirmed by Service Connector staff who report that they are unable to gain confidence with women on such issues.

## THE GANGS

### How does public housing transformation affect the structure and behavior of street gangs?

Public housing transformation has affected the movements of street gangs. Although some of the gangs that inhabited public housing developments along State Street disbanded once their buildings were closed, this research documents many gang organizations that have relocated to other neighborhoods in Chicago and beyond. In other words, by dispersing gangs into the private market, the CHA's plan for transformation is directly affecting the citywide realignment of street gangs. The following section will discuss this realignment. It is important to note that the patterns presented in the following section are based on documentation of the gangs not only in the RTH, but in all of the public housing along the State Street Corridor.

**Building Closure and the Opportunity for Exit:** After buildings close, street gangs do not relocate *en masse*, i.e. all of their members do not follow one another to another private market or public housing neighborhood. Instead, the process is punctuated and typically involves a short-term decrease in the absolute size of the gang.

**FINDING P** The transformation process has allowed many gang members an opportunity to exit the gang after their families leave public housing.

On average, roughly 40% of the adolescents and young adults leave the gang immediately after relocation. Although the number of gang members who exit is high, over time, some members do

eventually return to the gang. Indeed, 5% of those who exited will return to the gang one year after relocating; 26% will return after eighteen months.

**Sites of Street Gang Relocation:** Street gangs leaving South Side public housing have disproportionately migrated to five primary areas of the city. The CHA has responded to these developments by realigning their service connector program; the new emphasis on community integration will help alleviate the impact of the new gang connections that are being formed.

**FINDING P** Street gangs leaving South Side public housing are primarily relocating to the following areas:

- Greater Grand Boulevard
- Greater Grand Crossing /Avalon Park
- South Shore/South Chicago
- South Suburban Chicago
- Englewood/ W.Englewood

**Public Housing Gangs in Private Market Communities:** Roughly  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the public housing gang leaders planned for building closure by developing connections to street gangs in private market communities. The typical scenario involves senior gang leaders meeting with private-market gangs in order to develop new relationships.

**FINDINGS**  $\supset$  More than one half of public housing street gangs have successfully penetrated private-market communities.

The consequence of this has been twofold:

1. Public housing gangs have been influential in the development of an economic orientation of street gangs in the private market
2. Relocated gangs have successfully incorporated a greater number of women to their membership.

The formation of relationships between senior public housing gang leaders and private-market gangs is primarily motivated by economics. In the majority of cases, relationships were formed in order to ensure illegal income generation from narcotics trafficking. Schools in private market communities are the primary place where relocating gang members from public housing encounter their private-market counterparts.

Slightly more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the street gangs have successfully penetrated private-market communities either by taking over existing gangs in those areas or by developing relationships with them. In  $\frac{1}{4}$  of these cases, the gangs leaving public housing have helped

the local gang to develop an economic orientation—typically, by helping them to find drug suppliers and establish a street- and school-based narcotics trafficking operation.

An additional outcome of relocation has been the increased incorporation of young women into the relocating street gang. The result of such incorporation entails two consequences for these women:

1. One consequence has been increased reports of young women to domestic abuse.
2. A second consequence has been increased reports of young women holding drugs and guns for gang members.

The increasing involvement of young women in gang activity is a worrisome sign. Our research indicates that women entering gangs previously had little, if any, involvement in drug trafficking, car theft, and other illegal activity. Moreover, many had not suffered physical abuse and sexual abuse. As a result of entrée' into gang activity, they have become involved in criminal activities and have fell victim to harassment, abuse, and in some cases rape. A few women have embarked on sex-work as a result of their involvement in street gang, which exposes them to further violence.



## GENERAL POLICY GUIDELINES

This research report has provided both an overview of 2003 relocation activity citywide and an intensive study of the post-relocation experiences of those families leaving the RTH development. Based on the findings, the report offers several policy guidelines for future relocation activity. These guidelines should also be considered in the subsequent stages of the CHA transformation Plan, namely the stabilization of public housing families and their preparation to return to the newly developed “mixed-income” units which will occupy the land where CHA developments once stood.

- **Realistic Pacing:** The CHA must set a schedule for relocation in accordance with its capacities and expertise. Relocation of families must not exceed the services available. The Housing Authority should ensure that families are moved well before the commencement of the school calendar year.
- **Prescreening and Assessment:** The CHA should conduct a thorough system wide review of relocating families, employing family-based case management principles, so that family progress can be monitored and assessed throughout the relocation and settlement period.
- **Effective Relocation Counseling:** The CHA should subcontract with relocation counseling agencies that are able to give families an adequate exposure to housing units in the “opportunity” areas of Chicago. Families should be given assistance in order to learn about available housing outside of low-income, predominately African-American neighborhoods.
- **Social Service Delivery:** The CHA should develop a social service delivery program that builds on the expert understanding of poor families who bring with them enormous personal hardships, household hardships, and mental and physical health challenges.
- **Gang Intervention:** The City of Chicago should take the lead in developing gang intervention strategies to help youth exit from street gangs and make the transition to new communities.
- **Non-leaseholders:** Non-leaseholders should be given sufficient services in order to stabilize their own private-market transition.