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Crite



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A Depleted Legacy: Public Housing in Houston

60 Years of U.S. Public Housing

A Pioneering Housing Program From the 1940s

Houston's Glendower and Melanie Courts

Market Housing in Houston

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Cite

The Architecture
and Design Review
of Houston

A Publication of
the Rice Design Alliance

33: Fall 1995 - Winter 1996

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the Susan Vaughan Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Cultural Arts Council of Houston/Harris County.

Cite (ISSN: 8755-0415) is published two times per year by the Rice Design Alliance and is indexed in the Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals.

The Rice Design Alliance, established in 1973, is a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to the advancement of architecture and design.

 *Cite* is printed on recycled paper.

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Cover: Houston housing for a socially diverse population. From left: private residence in the upscale Glendower Court neighborhood; crowded middle-income apartment complex on Allen Parkway; and Clayton Homes, a low-income public housing project in the East End.

Photographs by Paul Hester and Lisa Carol Hardaway, Fayetteville © 1995.

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The Rice Design Alliance, established in 1973, is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of architecture, urban design, and the built environment in the Houston region through educational programs; the publication of *Cite*, a biannual review of architecture and design; and active programs to initiate physical improvements. Membership in the RDA is open to the general public.

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FALL ARCHITECTURE EVENTS

RICE DESIGN ALLIANCE

Fall Lecture Series

The Public Landscape

Technology and economics have profoundly altered the landscape, and with it our relationship to nature. This series of lectures examines the role of landscape architecture in shaping our cities and public spaces.

20 September — Marc Treib, "Quest; Zest: Landscape Design 1980-1995+"

11 October — James van Sweden, "Natural Gardens: Gardens for the Twenty-First Century"

18 October — Catherine Brown, "Defining and Making the American Urban Landscape"

25 October — Robert Irwin, "Art in the Public Place"

1 November — Diana Balmori, "The New Park: American Agora"

All lectures will be given at the Brown Auditorium of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, at 8 p.m. For ticket information, please call (713) 524-6297.

Fireside Chat

Landscape Architecture in Houston

15 November

Houston landscape architects present their work. *Cullen Hall, University of St. Thomas, 7:30 p.m.*

RDA Ninth Annual Gala

High Style: A Salute to Stanley Marcus

Sunday, 5 November
Each year, the Rice Design Alliance acknowledges patrons of outstanding architecture and urban design with its Award for Design Excellence. The Board of Directors of the Rice Design Alliance will honor Stanley Marcus, chairman emeritus of the Neiman Marcus stores, with its 1995 award. As one of the most significant patrons of architecture and design in Texas during the 20th century, Stanley Marcus has elevated the perceptions, expectations, and judgments of several generations of Texans. Honorary chairmen are Mayor Bob Lanier and Mrs. Lanier and Mr. and Mrs. Gerald D. Hines; gala chairmen are Mr. and Mrs. Robert B. Tudor III; and underwriting chairmen are Mrs. Nathan M. Avery, Mrs. Matthew R. Simmons, and Mrs. Wallace S. Wilson.

Neiman Marcus Galleria, 2600 Post Oak Boulevard. Cocktails at 7 p.m., dinner and dancing to the Mike Carney

Orchestra at 8 p.m. Gala tickets may be purchased by calling the Rice Design Alliance.

RICE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

Fall Lecture Series

The Cullinan Professorship Lectures

Roberto Segre, professor of architectural history at the University of Rio de Janeiro and the Echeverria Polytechnic Institute, will lecture on Latin American architecture and urbanism.

18 September — "The Primitive Hut in a Tropical Paradise: The Search for an Appropriate House Type in the Caribbean"

25 September — "The First Modernity: European Influences and Utopian Thought During the 1930s"

2 October — "The Architectural Identity Crisis After 1945 in Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela"

9 October — "Caracas and the Survival of an Urban Tradition During the Age of Globalism"

Power of Two

How partners work in tandem for design and architecture.

19 October — Stanley Tigerman, Chicago

23 October — Gisue Hariri, New York

6 November — David Lake and Ted Flato, San Antonio

20 November — Donald Chadwick, Santa Monica

7 December — Ricardo Scofidio, New York

All lectures are held in the Farish Gallery, Rice University School of Architecture, at 7 p.m. For more information, please call (713) 527-4864.

Exhibition

"Citta Aperta/Open City": Photographs by Luciano Rigolini

15 September - 28 October

Contemporary cities are becoming increasingly similar. Luciano Rigolini, a Swiss filmmaker and photographer, captures this global phenomenon in ten large-scale photographs of nine cities, including Houston. *Farish Gallery, Rice School of Architecture.*

RICE UNIVERSITY

Symposium

"House, Home, Homeland," a Media Studies Symposium on Exile

27-29 October
The recent global changes in politics, technology, and social formations have raised fundamental questions about concepts of house, home, and homeland. This interdisciplinary symposium aims to explore some of these global and local shifts and the questions they raise about how we design and inhabit our homes. *Art and Art History Department, the Center for the Study of Cultures, and the Division of Humanities. Call (713) 527-4882 for information.*

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

College of Architecture Gala

Fifty Years of Excellence in Architectural Education

29 October

A gala celebration of the 50th anniversary of the University of Houston's College of Architecture benefiting the college's Alumni Foundation. *Atrium, College of Architecture. For more information, call (713) 743-2400.*

BRAZOS BOOKSTORE

"Philip Johnson in Texas"

8 November

Dallas architect Frank Welch, author of the forthcoming book *Philip Johnson in Texas*, and photographer Paul Hester will deliver an illustrated lecture on Philip Johnson. *2421 Bissonnet, 7:30 p.m. For information, call (713) 523-0701.*

RDA: LOOKING AHEAD TO SPRING 1996

Public Art Discussion

January 1996

A program held in collaboration with the Contemporary Arts Museum and the Cultural Arts Council of Houston/Harris County to broaden the dialogue about public art in Houston. *Date and location to be announced.*

Spring 1996 Lecture Series

Making It

6 March - 3 April 1996

Designers dream the dreams, but engineers and builders must make them realities. The lectures will focus on the process of transformation from idea to reality, including all its inevitable difficulties and convolutions. Speakers will include historians of technology, engineers, builders, and architects with particular engineering expertise.

CALL FOR ENTRIES

The Rice Design Alliance, in collaboration with the City of Houston Planning and Development Department, the Houston Archeological and Historical Commission, and the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance, will sponsor an open design competition to create a design for a Houston Historic Landmark Medallion that would denote historical designations under the City of Houston Historic Preservation Ordinance. Registration opens 15 March 1996, and the winner will be announced 6 June. A registration fee of \$50 is required. Please call the RDA office, (713) 524-6297, for registration information.

NEW HOPE HOUSING

Alex Hecht

On 9 April 1995, New Hope Housing celebrated the grand opening of its single-room occupancy (SRO) apartment building — the first SRO in Houston. In contrast to the traditional but temporary options for the homeless — a night at the Salvation Army, the Star of Hope, or the Coalition for the Homeless — an SRO provides a more permanent residence. SROs are furnished apartments with rents ranging from \$250 to \$300 per month (utilities included), considerably less than the average one-bedroom rental rate.

"It's really nice to have your own home and not have to leave the YMCA by seven a.m.," says Earl Hatcher, manager of New Hope and the former director of SEARCH, a homeless shelter.

The New Hope complex, a three-story, 43-unit project at 320 Hamilton Street, lies on the eastern edge of downtown's derelict warehouse district, where the city's homeless are concentrated in the highest numbers. The building was designed by Guy Jackson of Jackson & Ryan Architects to blend into the blighted area of mostly abandoned 1920s and 1930s structures.

The New Hope apartments are comfortable (the 175-square-foot rooms have private bathrooms, desks, microwaves, and miniature refrigerators), affordable (\$280 a month with a six-month lease), and well furnished (beds and lamps have been donated by IKEA). Christ Church Cathedral, which provided the concept and initial planning for the project, contributed \$400,000. Furniture was also donated by Compass and Charter banks, and Episcopal High School's graduating class of 1994 raised more than \$10,000 for additional furnishings. Security features include a coded entrance gate, burglar bars on the first-floor windows, and nighttime video surveillance. This summer, residents planted a community garden in the building's interior courtyard.

Less than a month after the dedication, the \$1.25 million complex was full and had a waiting list of 200. To meet the demand, several more SRO projects are under way. New Hope Housing is seeking financing for phases two and three at its current site, for a total of 129 units, and has applied for a \$500,000 HUD grant toward future conversion projects: the King George Hotel at 1418 Preston (100 units), the William Penn Hotel at 1423 Texas Avenue (161 units), and the Savoy Hotel at 1616 Main (231 units). In addition, the Houston Area Community Development Corporation is remodeling the 1414 Congress Hotel to provide 57 SRO units. ■

SISTER MARY JO FIGHTS CITY HALL

Alex Hecht

When Sister Mary Jo May, one of Second Ward's most visible activists, shifted her focus to the cause of affordable housing, she believed her efforts were negated by a powerful force: City Hall.

"The city tries to put those who are doing the housing in the same position as the poor," contends Sister Mary Jo, director of Guadalupe Social Services (GSS), a provider of transitional housing for women. "The city controls all the money and we are supposed to be grateful. Grateful beggars. It's just nonsense."

In 1991 May lobbied City Hall for funding to expand GSS. Operating out of a leaky, unsafe motel, GSS had provided more than 1,200 people a month with immunizations, clothing, food, and housing. City Hall initially pledged \$170,000 for a proposed expansion on two lots on South Jensen Drive, across from the site of El Mercado del Sol.

Expecting prompt fulfillment of the pledge, May and GSS instead suffered a host of delays. May dealt with four different community development directors over three years. Following established protocol, she constructed a model and a plot plan for the housing. But when a city official noticed that the two properties were two blocks apart and not adjacent, as the signed contract between the city and GSS stated, the city withdrew the \$60,000 earmarked for the second property from the project, claiming that May had not operated above board. "If I were trying to be devious," May exclaimed in October 1993, "why would I send a survey of that property with a map?" She added recently, "To tell you the truth, I think it was their way of getting out of giving the money."

In the fallout from her fight with the city and the subsequent coverage in the *Houston Chronicle*, May contends that many people involved in the local housing scene called to commend her for publicly challenging the city, which may well translate into political suicide as far as future contracts are concerned. "They all applauded the fact that I had spoken out on how hard it was to do business with the city," she says, "but nobody else was willing to step forward and say anything publicly."

Sister Mary Jo believes the second property will find funding, but probably not through the city. "I'd rather appeal to the generosity of the Houston community," she says, "than have to deal with the bureaucracy of the city. I wouldn't live long enough to see the money." ■



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Village Voice

John Mixon

What exactly are TIFs, PIDs, MMDs, and LGCs — and are they the way to create neighborhood-scaled governments in Houston?

If God didn't want Houston to spread from Galveston to Conroe, why did He provide it with such an abundant source of underground water? In other cities, new development could occur only at the connecting ends of existing water and sewer trunk lines. By contrast, in the last 30 years any Houston developer could drill a water well wherever a new freeway pointed and install a "package" plant to treat subdivision sewage. He could even avoid front-end investment costs by coaxing a friendly legislator to sponsor a local bill creating a kind of water district that was later called a municipal utility district, or MUD. After perfunctory legislative approval, the developer had only to house a few employees on the land and instruct them to vote to issue millions of dollars of general obligation bonds to pay for the water and sewer facilities. The "voters" also elected developer-friendly directors to run the district until the homeowners who bought into the subdivision took charge. Because the MUD's long-term debt was passed on to these homebuyers, the developer kept district size down to 200 to 300 acres so he could sell all his properties before the homeowners took control of the water district board. This practice produced a proliferation of small treatment facilities and precluded a regional approach to water treatment.

The MUD played a key role in Houston's unique development history and irrevocably determined the city's urban form. Now its progeny, special-service districts such as PIDs and MMDs (see sidebar), may play a similarly far-reaching role in our city's development.

In the sixties, seventies, and eighties, Houston enthusiastically endorsed MUD-financed growth and in its metro-dreams expected that systematic annexation of outlying subdivisions (when their bonded debt declined) would keep city tax coffers perpetually filled. Unfortunately, the combination of MUD sprawl and metro government didn't necessarily add up to a better city.

Houston in the 1950s was a compact city, but leapfrogging MUD subdivisions over the next 30 years generated urban sprawl that has no American peer. And sprawl wasn't all: ill-supervised MUDs dumped inadequately treated sewage into streams that flow directly into the city's surface drinking-water supply. Upstream MUD subdivisions dumped more flood-

waters than local bayous could handle. MUDs — along with industries and farmers — withdrew so much underground water that the surface started to sink, cracking streets and utility lines. The resulting subsidence saucers puddled the increased runoff around Houston instead of rushing it to the Gulf.

Houston's low population density stretched out streets and utility lines, with each mile serving fewer people and less taxable value than the urban standard. Year by year, Houston's aging infrastruc-

ture sank into greater disrepair, and an ever-outward momentum left inner-city land with little redevelopment value. Instead of being renovated or razed for renewal, decaying buildings spread their rot — first blocks of it, then neighborhoods, and finally entire quadrants of the city.

By the mid-1980s, age, cracking soils, expiring or unenforced deed restrictions, economic decline, and lack of zoning had left many pre-1970 residential neighborhoods in crisis. Equally disquieting were slow police response, ineffective mass transit, and a suspicion that no one listened or cared when trash stacked up and water-main geysers sprayed for weeks. The economic downturn of the 1980s also left shopping centers deserted, office buildings empty, and industrial and commercial sites abandoned.

During the 1960 to 1980 boom, state annexation laws that allowed Houston to reserve vast areas for potential annexation enabled the city (with Harris County's cooperation) to create a central government with remarkable geographical coverage. Today, with home-rule power over roughly 600 square miles inside its corporate limits and extensive regulatory power in 1,300 square miles of "extraterritorial jurisdiction," Houston may be the best-equipped city in the nation to address metro-sized problems. But the city's vast geographical range, from Clear Lake to Katy and from The Woodlands to Pearland, inevitably has distracted City Hall from neighbor-

hood-scale issues. For every advantage the city gained on a metropolitan level through large-scale government, individual Houstonians suffered a corresponding loss of local control.

Houston residents may not have associated the decline in local services with their city's obsession with metro-control, but residents of the few incorporated bedroom cities — West University Place, Southside Place, Bellaire, and the Memorial villages — clearly understood the value of responsive government that

is close to home. Speculative home-builders correctly predicted that affluent buyers would pay dearly for new houses in those cities, triggering a housing boom that far outstripped the sales pace in nearby Houston neighborhoods. Today, many inner-city Houston neighborhoods could match the bedroom communities' success if they were able to improve government services and bring them down to a local level. Without the reassurance of protective land-use regulation, better police protection, and infrastructure repair, private investors are unlikely to make the substantial capital investments required for renewal.

Mayor Bob Lanier's Imagine Houston project, begun in 1994, recommended conceiving of the metropolis as a network of "urban villages" in order to rejuvenate both the body and the soul of Houston neighborhoods. The idea contemplates a geographical focus and a local service component, and it requires a formal structure for channeling government services. Could special-service districts — the current incarnations of the MUD, such as TIF districts, PIDs, LGCs, and MMDs — provide a good structure for framing these urban villages?

The basic concept behind the various special-service designations is to create a district with special localized powers — of zoning, taxation, or management — to address some perceived local need. These public-private mini-governments can provide a variety of municipal services for specially defined areas and charge the

beneficiaries for the cost. Although these mini-governments were not designed with homeowners in mind, Houston's residential neighborhoods can tap TIF zoning power and PID assessment power to enhance local services. This potential has not been overlooked by Houston homeowners, who are eying the existing Lamar Terrace TIF/PID and other special-service districts already in place (see sidebar).

But the MUD lesson should be heeded: special-purpose districts can do both great good and great evil. TIFs and PIDs are not necessarily ideal mechanisms for empowering urban villages, because they were designed to do different, developer-friendly tasks that do not directly translate into neighborhood governance. As beneficial as current TIFs and PIDs may be for the community, their first priority is private profit. Public input is neither sought nor welcomed, and public benefit may be only an accidental by-product.

A multiplicity of localized special districts helped create the jurisdictional jumble that necessitated metro-government in aging urban corridors. Although the urban village concept is headed in the opposite direction, Houston could create a similar mess by employing special districts to excess.

Among the possible pitfalls, TIF districts may not perform as predicted. Unless immediate private investment occurs, as in Lamar Terrace, TIF projects may fail to spur private development and tax revenues. Moreover, TIF tax increments accumulate slowly, and a pledge of chancy future increments may not attract long-term lenders to finance capital improvements. Benefited areas must also beware lest a strapped city government cut services because of TIF or PID presence.

TIFs and PIDs might not serve lower-income areas well and may be unavailable for affluent homeowners. Legal procedures for creating special districts are complex and disabling. Southwest Houston homeowners have the cash and sophistication to start up a special district, but Fifth Ward would need substantial city help. Paradoxically, upscale neighborhoods may not qualify for TIF zoning because reinvestment zones are specifically designed to spur redevelopment in substandard areas.

The entire notion of capturing and plowing anticipated tax revenue back into a

With home-rule power over 600 square miles and 1,300 square miles of extraterritorial jurisdiction, Houston may be the best-equipped city in the nation to address metro-sized problems.

SPECIAL-SERVICE DISTRICTS IN A NUTSHELL

TIFs, PIDs, MMDs, and LGCs are "mini-governments," authorized by state legislation, that provide limited services and/or improvements in defined areas. Other than PIDs, they are managed by directors appointed or approved by the governing body of the city or other designated entities.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts
 Cities can designate substandard areas as reinvestment zones to encourage development or redevelopment, and taxing authorities can commit a zone's future increases in tax revenues to a tax increment fund that can be used or pledged to pay for approved projects in the zone. The board of directors has land-use zoning power. TIFs are aimed at promoting commercial development; residential areas qualify only if owners of more than 50 percent of appraised value in the zone petition for TIF designation. A residential TIF must devote one-third of its tax increment to low-income housing (not necessarily in the TIF zone). Cities cannot have more than 15 percent of total appraised land value in TIFs.

Public Improvement Districts (PIDs)
 Cities can create PIDs to assess specially benefited landowners for district improvements and services if petitioned by owners in the proposed district, with a majority block determined by land valuation and property ownership. PIDs lack administrative structure, so a separate management entity must be created to administer continuing services. Future assessments may be pledged to pay revenue bonds issued for improvements. Homestead law may prevent foreclosure on personal residences, but homeowners are personally liable for unpaid assessments and accumulating interest.

Municipal Management Districts (MMDs)
 The Texas Water Commission can create MMDs with power to levy ad valorem taxes and assess property owners for a variety of improvements and services such as security, planning and urban design, infrastructure, and parks. The commission acts on a petition from property owners in the proposed service area. MMDs are not authorized to serve traditional residential neighborhoods, and most homeowners are exempt from MMD taxes and assessments.

Local Government Corporations (LGCs)
 City council may file articles of incorporation to create a local government corporation and then contract with the LGC to exercise powers on the city's behalf. The statute primarily relates to transportation, but LGCs can perform other functions. *J.M.*

TIF district raises legitimate social concern. Increased tax revenue from a particular district does not intrinsically belong to that district alone. For example, when redevelopment increases River Oaks tax values, the increment belongs to the city at large.

Finally, only a limited number of residential neighborhoods can enjoy TIF benefits, including zoning, because the city cannot devote more than 15 percent of total appraised property value to TIFs. This is not immediately disabling, since Houston could accommodate \$9 billion in total TIF property value and has tapped only a minuscule portion of that figure thus far.

Considering their private orientation, awkwardness, and legal limitations, residential TIF/PIDs may best be used to showcase a significant urban village experiment. If the experiment shows promise for neighborhoods, the city can devise a more appropriate village-government mechanism. Uptown Houston's success in the Galleria area, for example, prompted the state legislature to pass general legislation authorizing MMDs. Houston can already bring many services — such as police substations and neighborhood planning assistance — down to a village scale, and could do even more if authorized by express legislation. If, for example, the primary value sought from a TIF is zoning power, the legislature could simply authorize less-than-citywide zoning.

Urban villages make sense in Houston, where city council serves metropolitan rather than local interests. Good sense, though, seldom translates into government action. The local real estate interests that defeated citywide zoning and successfully lobbied to prevent neighborhood zoning from being brought before the state legislature may be equally reluctant to share power through TIFs and PIDs. But many of the residents seeking special-service designation have power and influence as well, such as the homeowners in University Place who are currently investigating TIF or PID status for their neighborhoods. If pressed, they may test whether the developers' obsessive fear of land-use controls can be overcome by an equally strong desire to rescue a rich neighborhood at risk. ■

CURRENT MODELS OF TIFs, PIDs, MMDs, AND LGCs

Today, commercial landowners, not homeowners, use special-service districts to enhance value in their service areas and provide incidental benefits for the greater community.

• **Lamar Terrace TIF/PID**
 The Lamar Terrace redevelopment project employs both a TIF and a PID in a reinvestment zone near the Galleria. Through the TIF, the developer plans to plough increased tax revenues back into the district as public improvements and apply land-use zoning to protect new investments. The PID will support enhanced services for district properties through assessments. Lamar Terrace should renew land long overdue for redevelopment, while contributing one-third of the tax increment to a low-income-housing fund.

• **Midtown TIF**
 City council recently approved a 300-acre reinvestment zone that starts south of downtown at the Pierce Elevated and extends east and west of Main Street to the U.S. 59 connection with S.H. 288. The Midtown district is a paradigm of appropriate TIF designation, for it is aimed at revitalizing 175 blocks of this potentially valuable inner-city area, where property values have declined greatly over the past 20 years. Midtown wants to capture 25 years of future tax increment to improve local infrastructure and attract new residential investment, which the TIF will protect by deed restrictions and regulations.

• **Downtown PID and LGC**
 At the request of downtown landowners, city council in 1991 authorized a PID to assess them for enhanced services. The city also created a nonprofit LGC to administer the program. Downtown landowners pay about \$2 million annually to upgrade public safety, improve street maintenance, support planning and economic promotion, and recruit tenants to a cleaner, safer, more vital downtown area.

• **Uptown-Galleria Improvement District**
 A special 1987 state law created an improvement district to serve a downtown-size area near Galleria-Post Oak. The district's governing board applies its \$1.8 million annual tax revenue to enhance public safety, improve streets, and beautify this hotel, office, and retail center. Uptown's legal structure provided a model for later legislation authorizing MMDs.

• **Greater Greenspoint MMD**
 The Greater Greenspoint Management District provides management, taxing,

and special assessment authority to support improvements and services for a 12-square-mile service area near Intercontinental Airport. Commercial property owners pay \$1.3 million in annual assessments to improve security and public safety, planning and urban design, infrastructure, and parks. Unlike TIF/PIDs, MMDs cannot tax or assess single-family, duplex, or fourplex properties.

• **University Place**
 Some Southgate and Southampton residents have contemplated a TIF/PID for the Rice Village area bounded by Main Street, Kirby, the Southwest Freeway, and Brays Bayou, under the name University Place. TIF zoning could protect residential users from commercial intrusion and hush Village night spots while PID assessments elevate neighborhood services to the West University Place and South Side Place standard. Moreover, identification with a localized mini-government could invigorate citizen involvement, enhance property values, and increase University Place's power at City Hall.

• **Other neighborhoods**
 A few Sharpstown sections and the Neartown Business Alliance (a Montrose property owners' association) have contemplated creating TIF/PIDs. The Heights, Meyerland, River Oaks, and Tanglewood could employ urban village concepts to good advantage. Homeowners in Third Ward and the Navigation area could control hot-sheet motels, liquor stores, and noisy bars, while capturing tax increments to improve their neighborhoods. The West Houston Association and Upper Kirby are also rumored to be seeking special legislation for their areas. *J.M.*

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David Todd

GREEN BUNGALOW REMODELING WITH CONSERVATION IN MIND

Houses are contradictory things. On the one hand, they are like nests and dens and La-Z-Boys — good and necessary props for comfort, security, and life itself. Not a very threatening picture.

On the other hand, the American Institute of Architects estimates that the building industry consumes 40 percent of the natural resources used by the U.S. economy. Wood makes up a large part of these resources. The appetite for lumber is gradually changing much of the East Texas Big Thicket into a clearcut, monoculture pine plantation. Once framed up and running, the typical all-electric house in Texas then annually consumes 19,000

kilowatt hours of electricity and causes the release of 10.5 tons of carbon dioxide, contributing to the risk of global warming. Some of our houses' effects are more local — witness the dune erosion on west Galveston Island, the wetland filling on the Kary Prairie, and the cedar destruction in the golden-cheeked warbler habitat of the Hill Country near Austin. Finally, after the contractors and subs and suppliers have all gone home, the construction and demolition debris they leave behind makes up 20 percent of the municipal waste stream.

Despite these dire statistics, my wife and I recently bought and remodeled a house



Wendy Pratt Todd

Green Building Sources

A short list of publications, publishers, agencies, nonprofits, and trade and professional groups that were useful to us in tracking down ways of building more sustainably.

- **Consumer Guide to Home Energy Savings**
American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy
2140 Shattuck Avenue, No. 202
Berkeley, CA 94704
A handy guide that gives statistics and advice on saving money and energy in different home appliances and pieces of mechanical equipment.
- **The Environmental Resource Guide**
American Institute of Architects
AIA Orders
P.O. Box 60
Williston, VT 05495-0060
(800)365-ARCH
The *Environmental Resource Guide* is very expensive (\$98 for AIA members and \$165 for nonmembers), but it is thorough, current, and accessible (especially if you are privy to the "master format" used in Sweets building materials guides). It is particularly good for tracking the entire life cycle of impacts associated with a building product.
- **The Sourcebook for Sustainable Design**
Boston Society of Architects
52 Broad Street
Boston, MA 02109-4301
(617)951-0845 (fax)
The *Sourcebook* gives a narrative of the different issues and possible responses in

sustainable construction, as well as a listing of manufacturers and retailers for the new, more sustainable materials and technologies. As is typical with most listings in the field, this one gets rapidly out of date: many phones will have been disconnected and addresses abandoned without forwarding directions.

- **Guide to Resource-Efficient Building Elements**
Center for Resourceful Building Technology
P.O. Box 3413
Missoula, MT 59806
(406)549-7678
A list of sustainable building materials, particularly alternatives to traditional wood products.
- **Sustainable Building Sourcebook**
City of Austin Environmental and Conservation Services Department
206 East 9th Street, Suite 17.102
Austin, TX 78701
(512)499-3504
Like the Boston Society of Architects' sourcebook, Austin's *Sustainable Building Sourcebook* is a fine introduction to general sustainable building problems and solutions and provides a useful list of government agencies, trade groups, consultants, and vendors active in the field. This book is more current than the Boston version, and its information is more applicable to the issues of hot climates. The city of Austin employs a number of very helpful experts on sustainable building as well.

- **Environmental Building News**
R.R. 1, Box 161
Brattleboro, VT 05301
(802)257-7300
An informative bimonthly newsletter with timely short updates on a variety of sustainable building issues, as well as one or two well-researched, in-depth articles on single topics. An excellent bibliography of handbooks, source books, magazines, and newsletters is also available.
- **The Naturalist's Garden**
by Ruth Shaw Ernst
The Globe Pequot Press
P.O. Box 833
Old Saybrook, CT 06475
Although not focused on Texas and Southwestern habitats, this volume has a great deal of information on how to provide better cover, food, and water for wildlife in an urban or suburban garden.
- **Green Seal**
1730 Rhode Island Ave., #1050
Washington, D.C. 20036-3101
(202)331-7337
Green Seal certifies products that it finds to be environmentally sound. While relatively new, it has prepared ratings for lighting, plumbing fixtures, major household appliances, and windows so far. In a world of hype, you may find this organization's independence and objectivity reassuring.
- **National Small Flows Clearinghouse**
West Virginia University
P. O. Box 6064
Morgantown, WV 26505-6064
(800)624-8301
We found this group's staffers to be

extremely knowledgeable about on-site wastewater treatment. They are funded by the Environmental Protection Agency and have good access to the federal government's technical support. Also, they seem well connected with state and municipal officials who can give advice about technical and permitting issues.

- **Real Goods**
966 Mazzoni Street
Ukiah, CA 95482-3471
(707)468-9292
Real Goods sells a wide variety of sustainable building products, with a strong suit in energy conservation products, from fluorescent light bulbs to caulking string to alternative energy sources such as solar and wind power systems.
- **A Catalog for the Residential/Light Commercial Sector**
Rocky Mountain Institute
1739 Snowmass Creek Road
Snowmass, CO 81654
(303)927-4178
The catalogue identifies sources for efficient plumbing and irrigation products.
- **Native Texas Plants: Landscaping Region by Region**
by Sally and Andy Wasowski
Texas Monthly Press
P.O. Box 1569
Austin, TX 78767
(512)320-6900
We found *Native Texas Plants* to be the most complete, best illustrated, and most accurate landscaping book for Texas and the Southwest with regard to local range and growing conditions.

anyway. Steeped in guilt, we tried to do the project in the most sustainable, environmentally friendly way we could.

Located in the Austin neighborhood of Travis Heights, the house is a traditional 1915 two-bedroom, two-bath, one-office, 1,670-square-foot, one-story bungalow. It fits in with the context of its neighborhood, but it is not a head turner. Together with our architect, Raymond Yin, we wrestled with questions of siting, energy efficiency, water conservation, and use of nontoxic and recycled materials. During our small project we found that there was no single best solution. Usually there were a number of good and competing answers with hard trade-offs among factors such as durability, cost, local availability, embodied energy, toxicity, and so forth.

We can't pretend that this is the complete and pure environmental house, nor that it is entirely novel. Still, it is a sign that we can create shelter that has a dramatically reduced environmental impact without having to huddle in a cave or build a house like a spaceship. ■



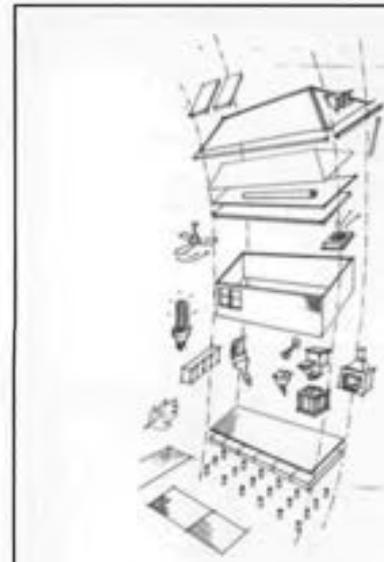
SITING

- Location within one mile of downtown cuts driving to work, shopping, and recreation, and avoids the habitat fragmentation and destruction linked to sprawl.
- Siting on a bus route permits easy use of mass transit.
- 1,680-square-foot footprint (20 percent less than average) minimizes material and energy use, while reducing impervious cover on the lot. The site has a relatively high overall permeability, with only 32 to 37 percent of its total surface being sealed. This reduces runoff and the attendant problems of flooding and pollution.



GARDEN

- Not removing trees for construction retains the advantage of natural, free cooling.
- Berms and mulching contain ground runoff.
- Surfaces are paved with locally available, water-permeable crushed granite.
- Roof gutters collect and distribute to the garden roughly 36,000 gallons of rainwater annually via a french drain and cistern, reducing runoff and lowering the need to irrigate with city water.
- The garden uses no pesticides or inorganic fertilizer and includes water, feeders, and houses for birds and bats.
- More than a dozen varieties of native, drought-tolerant plants provide berries for birds and flowering vines for bees and butterflies.

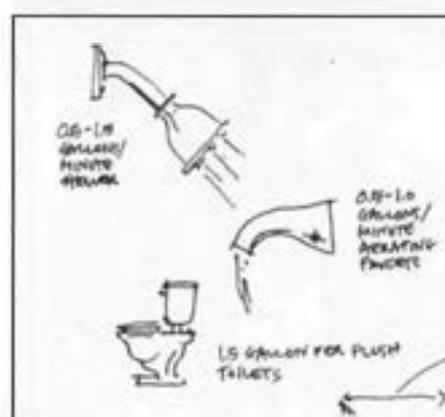


CONSTRUCTION

- The concrete slab is built on recycled broken concrete and stone taken from the site. The slab itself contains 20 percent coal fly ash, otherwise a waste product, and was set without volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, a whole family of carbon- and hydrogen-based chemicals that release a soup of fumes of varying toxicity at room temperature and pressure. These fumes are a concern on two accounts: toxicity to occupants (Americans spend 80 to 90 percent of their time indoors, where fumes from paints, adhesives, carpets, plywood, and other products can accumulate and create "sick building syndrome"); and threats to the atmosphere, such as ground-level ozone (of urban-ozone-alert fame, not the high-level, hole-over-the-Antarctic type).
- Wood and masonry are recycled in many cases. The patio and chimney are made from salvaged brick. The house also contains old doors, recycled framing studs, reused clapboard siding and beaded board, original concrete, and second-hand trim and paint.
- Exterior exposed lumber used on the fencing, garden, and deck is Colorado County juniper or ACQ-treated, sustainably grown yellow pine finished with low-toxicity boiled linseed oil. (Wood preserved with ammoniacal copper quaternary, or ACQ, is a less toxic alternative to

Wolmanized wood, which is preserved with the arsenic salt CCA, or chromated copper arsenate.) Small-dimension yellow-pine lumber and exterior-grade OSB and MDF were used for framing, subflooring and cabinetry. (Panels made from oriented strand board, or OSB, use chipped smaller trees, avoiding the need to cut older, larger trees. MDF, or medium density fiberboard, commonly known by the trade name Medex, is a more finely chipped wood panel, also made from younger, smaller trees than solid wood or plywood products would use.) Finish flooring used recycled longleaf pine. No rare wood species or formaldehyde-containing plywood were used.

- Fifty-year Galvalume channel-drain recycled steel-panel roof reduces the waste and new materials required for replacing typical 20- to 30-year fiberglass composite roofs.
- Borate-treated dry-blown cellulose insulation is made from recycled newspaper, keeps the interior well insulated, and avoids fiberglass. (Fiberglass is beginning to be suspected to be a carcinogen; Germany has listed it as a hazardous material in a similar ranking with asbestos.) The roof is lined with a mylar-backed, aluminum-coated radiant barrier that is estimated to lower attic temperatures by 10 degrees.
- Vinyl-framed, double-paned, low-E coated windows, coupled with 60 percent sunshade screens, were installed to protect against heat gain. Vinyl-framed windows are one-third the cost of traditional wood windows and are less likely to expand and contract, cutting down on drafts. As a result these windows have an infiltration rate of 0.03, less than a tenth of commonly accepted values.
- Low- and no-VOC adhesives, latex, castor oil, and milk-based paints, wall-texturing compounds, and water-based floor finishes were used to minimize offgassing and indoor air quality problems. Existing paint was left and covered because of lead content.



EQUIPMENT AND FIXTURES

- SEER 16.7 paired-compressor York air-conditioning unit with variable-speed blower is 50 to 70 percent more efficient than most units. Attic and ceiling fans help vent and circulate air.

- Blower-door testing helped find and seal all major duct leaks of cooled and heated air (20 to 60 percent duct losses are not unusual in houses).
- Ridge, hip, and louver vents allow convection to cool attic.
- 23,900-Btu, 70-percent-efficient wood fireplace insert can heat house without fossil fuels.
- Two 10' x 4' solar panels circulate warmed water through an exchanger to a gas-fired water heater.
- For lighting, daylight is used where possible, fluorescent and halogen lamps elsewhere, favoring task-lighting fixtures over ambient.
- Low-flow plumbing fixtures (faucets and showers at 0.5 to 1.0 gpm and toilets at 1.5 gpm) are estimated to use 41 percent less water than standard fixtures.

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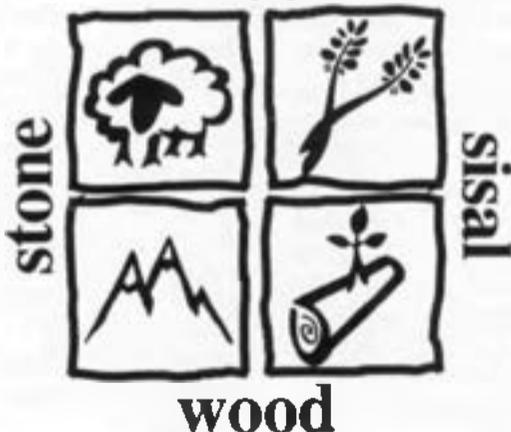
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THE NATURE OF CONTROL THE GREENING OF THE FLOOD CONTROL DISTRICT

Barry Moore

In the past, the Harris County Flood Control District has often seemed more concerned with draining land for developers and lining every local stream with concrete than with Houston's larger environmental picture. But lately there has been a sea change at the agency: no longer does the flood control district turn a deaf ear to environmental issues. And, with \$500 million in approved projects with the Army Corps of Engineers, and another \$1.5 billion in the wings in the form of proposed projects, the flood control district could be the biggest environmental player in town.

The Harris County Flood Control District was created in 1937 after the devastating floods of 1929 and 1935. In partnership with the federal government and the Corps of Engineers, over the years the HCFCD has completed major flood control projects at Addicks and Barker dams, Buffalo Bayou (wider and deeper than it used to be), White Oak Bayou, Brays Bayou, Sims Bayou, and Clear Creek. Most of these waterways were channelized in concrete, for years the agency's favored response to runoff problems. For its first half century the district was run as a typical good ol' boys' club, a style epitomized by the regime of Tom Langford, director from 1968 to 1976. "Public hearing" was simply not in Langford's vocabulary, and concrete seemed to be the only tool in his toolbox.

But since Art Storey took over as director in September 1989, the agency has begun to establish an excellent environmental record. Responding to organized citizen effort, it made the Corps stop construction on Sims Bayou (running across southern Harris County from Missouri City to the Port of Houston) and change the design to include more green and less concrete. It squelched the Corps's proposed aggressive channelization of 11 miles of Cypress Creek (which runs eastward from Cypress Station near U.S. 290 to its confluence with Spring Creek north of Humble) and pushed for a more sensitive treatment, which increased stream capacity by about 20 percent upon the project's completion in 1990-91.

Storey is excited about his Wetlands Mitigation Bank concept, which was approved on 15 August 1995 in a memorandum of agreement with the Corps. Under Section 404 of the Bush adminis-



Art Storey, director of the Harris County Flood Control District.

tration's Clean Water Act, land users are required to "mitigate" wetland acreage that is developed; in other words, if ten acres of wetlands are to be developed, ten acres of new wetlands must be created to replace them. Rather than have countless small and possibly inefficient wetland sites scattered around on different developments, Storey proposes a much larger mitigation wetland in the general area under consideration, built and funded by individual developers and based on a system of credits, appraisals, and fees. Both the private sector and municipalities



Flood control district workers mark trees that stand in the right-of-way on the Sims Bayou project, in order to relocate them.

like this concept, which could have huge environmental (and flood control) benefits. A site for the first of these mitigation banks has been identified in far northeast Harris County. Art Storey is eager to demonstrate the efficacy of the concept to other governing entities in the county.

"We are responsive to public concerns to do flood control with sensitivity," Storey says. "We take our expanded role with respect to the human and natural environment with enthusiasm; we will take the lead if we have the opportunity."

Under Storey, the district has changed in fundamental ways. There is a recognition that the district has many tools to use for flood control, not just one, and that it needs to discharge its mission with respect to the bigger environmental picture. There is a new commitment to bringing issues out in the open through public meetings, dialogues with city officials, and an energized task force. The flood control district has started encouraging park-type uses along HCFCD rights-of-way; already 50 miles of hike-and-bike trails have been put in place along county streams through this joint public/private program. Its new Environmental Services Department, the first in any local public agency, is charged with studying nonpoint pollution sources, with finding and developing the best grass for erosion control, and with moving and replanting trees otherwise doomed by flood control construction.

All these improvements cannot be credited solely to Storey. In large part they are the result of years of dogged citizen involvement, most notably that of environmental activist Terry Hershey and her group, the Bayou Preservation Association. "Now, when elected officials don't act, citizens get very involved," Hershey observes. Also, many people have moved to Houston from places with more progressive environmental attitudes, and they have begun to bring their expectations to bear on their adopted city.

Even with its new, improved attitude, the flood control district has its work cut out for it. Some of the sins of our past shortsightedness are soon to catch up with us; development cannot go on indefinitely on the flat and imperfectly drained Gulf Coast floodplain. For example, Brays Bayou is a flowing time bomb; designed in 1954 to handle "maximum development," it has been over capacity for ten years. Only 50 miles from the Gulf, only 50 feet above sea level, Harris County has an average slope for drainage purposes of only one inch *per mile*. Getting rid of heavy rainfall, never a simple matter here, gets more difficult and takes longer as new development adds impervious roads, parking lots, and roofs. This in-

turn causes the 100-year floodplain (the land that would be flooded in the type of deluge that is expected every 100 years) to spread to include land that we never expected to flood. If Houston is to have any good environmental features — urban wildlife habitat, streamside recreation corridors, recharged water tables, clean surface water for recreation, cleaner air, or buildings relatively secure from flooding — development in the floodplain must stop.

But which of the 34 governing bodies in Harris County will regulate development in the floodplains of our 22 watersheds? The scale of such a task is intimidating. The Brays and Sims watershed alone, 246 square miles, is larger than the entire city of Chicago, and the 6,500 miles of bayous, streams, creeks, and ditches in Harris County, placed end to end, would stretch from Beaumont to El Paso eight times. If government agencies can work together to handle this monumental problem, their efforts could serve as a model for future regional planning.

In the coming years, community planning may well take place within the larger framework of the natural environment, rather than the more limited and as yet consensus-lacking frameworks of urban land use, traditional city planning, or design. Art Storey feels that sensitivity to the environment is an idea whose time has come: "Even Tom Langford would be doing more sensitive projects now." ■



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Curtis Lang

A Depleted Legacy

Public Housing in Houston

This past year, Allen Parkway Village has been in the news once again, for what may prove to be the last time. Over the past dozen years, the 50-year-old public housing complex, Houston's largest, has become a familiar fixture in local newspapers. Through a series of efforts at demolition and redevelopment occurring under four mayors, Allen Parkway Village has generated seemingly unending lawsuits, public meetings, congressional hearings, even its own HUD amendment. It has attracted a large, diverse coalition of project residents, community activists from both the left and the right, academics, writers, documentary film makers, historians, preservationists, and religious and civic leaders. Allen Parkway Village has become such a *cause célèbre* — even if the cause is lost — because it embodies virtually all the problems at the Housing Authority of the City of Houston (HACH) since the agency's first major scandal in 1953.

HACH's mission is to provide low-income housing for the poorest of Houston's poor. A discrepancy exists between this legislated *raison d'être* and what HACH actually achieves. For the past 25 years and more, HACH has often been more successful in feeding tax dollars to developers and builders than in doing its mandated job.

HACH's Historical Roots

More than any other industrialized Western nation, the United States has traditionally looked to the marketplace to provide housing for its population. Houston's reliance on free-enterprise solutions to social problems makes the Bayou City a model for those studying the evolution of the American social contract vis-a-vis housing.

Two watershed events in the first half of the 20th century established a substantial role for an activist government in the marketplace. But the current negotiations between Republicans and Democrats to transform federal housing policy suggest that the government's active role may well be abolished.

Early in the century, the appearance of tenement reform laws forged a role for local governments to set standards and regulate housing safety.¹ During the 1930s, New Deal reformers were convinced that the unregulated operation of the free market and philanthropy togeth-

er could never provide housing for all Americans. They argued that public housing alone could deliver decent habitation for the poor. "Even at its inception, public housing was a controversial idea, and President Franklin Roosevelt himself had to be coaxed," reports Tufts University professor Rachel G. Bratt. "There was strong opposition from . . .

private homebuilders and savings and loan associations, who launched vigorous attacks on public housing, accusing it of being socialistic and representing unfair government competition with free enterprise. . . . They played major roles in organizing local communities to oppose the siting of public housing."²

Despite substantial opposition, Congress empowered the U.S. Housing Authority (USHA) in 1937 to fund local housing authorities, which would demolish slum neighborhoods and erect new housing complexes to replace them.³ The next year the city of Houston and the state of Texas established Houston's housing authority, governed by a five-member board of commissioners appointed by the mayor for two-year terms.

Unfortunately, the Housing Authority of the City of Houston (HACH) was created with a political structure that does not provide for oversight and accountability as safeguards against malfeasance. HACH was created by both state and local statutes as a public authority. Funded primarily by the U.S. Housing Authority (later the Department of Housing and Urban Development) and only supplemented by grants from the city of Houston, HACH is in budget and operation theoretically independent of the city. Although the mayor is ultimately accountable for what HACH does, the organizational charts of city government make it possible for him to claim to have only limited influence over what happens at HACH and only limited responsibility for a state-chartered public authority funded and audited by a Washington cabinet agency. This insulates the mayor from political heat resulting from any HACH mismanagement. Because HACH is a bureaucracy that answers to three different sources of power, it is a difficult target for reformers at any level. Where authority is diffused, so are responsibility and accountability.

During the period from 1940 to 1944, HACH built 2,215 racially segregated public housing units. For black residents HACH opened Cuncy Homes in Third Ward (across from the future site of TSU) in 1940 and Kelly Courts in Fifth Ward in 1941; for white residents it built Irvinton Courts, also in Fifth Ward, in 1942.⁴

The crown jewel of HACH's empire was San Felipe Courts. Designed by a group of Houston architectural firms led by MacKie & Kamrath and completed in 1944, San Felipe Courts was designed to enhance the beauty and commercial utility of one of Houston's most important civic corridors, Allen Parkway, a scenic boulevard winding alongside Buffalo Bayou that connects downtown Houston with the city's planned suburb for the



Allen Parkway Village, 1995. Its 1,000 apartments make up more than 24 percent of all public housing units in Houston. Only 21 apartments are currently occupied.

well-off, River Oaks. In 1988, the project was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district of national significance.⁵

Houston's housing authority built the 1,000-unit San Felipe Courts (renamed Allen Parkway Village in 1964) as low-income public housing with money from the United States Housing Authority. But in April 1941, Congress created the Division of Defense Housing to provide low-income housing near crucial defense plants, and when construction on San Felipe Courts began in 1942, the complex was designated as temporary defense housing. It was lived in by families of defense workers until 1947. In order to build the 37-acre complex, a section of Fourth Ward, Houston's oldest African American neighborhood, had to be razed, triggering vociferous protests from the displaced residents. That San Felipe Courts was designated from its inception as a whites-only project only fanned the flames.⁶

After World War II, an increasing number of white Houstonians came to share Fourth Ward's antipathy to the housing authority. In 1950, when Mayor Oscar Holcombe asked the voters of Houston to approve the construction of 5,000 more units of public housing, a bitter battle ensued, with opposition coming from the homebuilders' and savings and loan lobbies, as well as groups that opposed public housing for ideological reasons. The Council for Free Enterprise, which organized against the referendum, warned voters that public housing was opening the doors to "socialistic or communistic forms of government."⁷ Houston voters defeated Holcombe's proposal.

The voters' rejection of the funding proposal effectively put the brakes on HACH. The fifth public housing complex, Clayton Homes, located in the East End near the foot of Navigation Boulevard, was in the planning stages prior to Holcombe's referendum. It was completed in 1952 only because philanthropist Susan Vaughan Clayton donated the property on which it was built. No new public housing would be built by HACH for the next 23 years.

HACH's problems were not just with public acceptance. In 1953, Ervin W. Blum, executive director of HACH for the previous ten years, was convicted of



Lenwood Johnson, president of the Resident Council of Allen Parkway Village, on the complex's tree-lined central street.



After the East End's Clayton Homes was built in 1952 (Wyatt C. Hedrick, architect), a 23-year dry spell followed in which no new public housing projects were built or purchased by the Housing Authority of the City of Houston.

extorting bribes in connection with awarding construction contracts for Clayton Homes. Blum's trial revealed that the HACH board of commissioners had been derelict in exercising oversight, and that federally funded programs to benefit low-income residents at San Felipe Courts were suppressed so that the HACH staff could use the funds and property for personal purposes. Blum was convicted and sent to federal prison, and four of the five members of the board of commissioners resigned.⁸

By early 1956 a third of San Felipe Court's 1,000 units were vacant. Eligible white families opted not to live there because of the complex's isolation from schools, churches, and shopping.⁹ There was no dearth of African American families who would have been happy to live there; all-black Cuney Homes and Kelly Courts were fully occupied and had waiting lists of qualified applicants needing housing. In 1956 the NAACP called on HACH to integrate San Felipe Courts. The housing authority refused to rent any of the 340 vacant apartments at San Felipe Courts to African Americans,

claiming that to do so would cause an exodus of white families into substandard market housing.¹⁰

HACH in the Seventies

When Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968, the nation committed itself to providing 26 million new or substantially rehabilitated housing units over the next decade,¹¹ and HACH resumed activity after its long nap with the 1975 opening of the Sharpstown-area Bellerive project for the elderly with HUD support.¹² Johnson's Civil Rights Act of 1964 ensured that Bellerive would be a racially integrated project. During the next seven years, all the rest of Houston's 11 low-income housing projects would be built.

Despite the Civil Rights Act, HACH still engaged in racial policies — just less overtly. When integration was mandated, HACH opened up some apartments to African Americans in Allen Parkway Village (which by then accounted for roughly a quarter of all Houston public housing), but reserved a significant num-

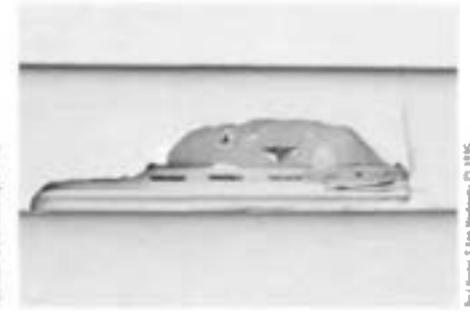
ber of units for whites, even though it often meant the units lay empty. HACH eventually dropped that policy in the late sixties and early seventies, and Allen Parkway Village became predominantly African American. Then — and only then — was it suggested that maintaining a housing project on that site was not a good idea. As HACH director Robert Moore explained in a November 1977 letter to HUD proposing demolition of the project, "[Allen Parkway Village's land values have] escalated beyond a cost where housing is the highest and best use."¹³ HACH began to make plans for the sale of the project.

Selling the land along Allen Parkway would provide a cash windfall for HACH while encouraging major private-sector development — always one of City Hall's primary goals. A secret September 1977 housing authority report sent from Mayor Fred Hofheinz's office to HUD, tantalizingly entitled "Project S," discussed a possible \$3.5 million relocation of Allen Parkway Village residents and sale of the project to private interests. The money thus gained, Houston officials argued, would fund a subsequent \$27.8 million building program to create new public housing and a \$40.5 million program to rehabilitate existing housing stock — all at no cost to the federal government.¹⁴

But Patricia Roberts Harris, HUD secretary under President Jimmy Carter, opposed the plan as part of a policy against disposing of low-income property if the property could be salvaged. Countering the HACH proposal, HUD authorized \$10 million in 1979 for the modernization of Allen Parkway Village. But both the Project S proposal and the modernization plan went nowhere.¹⁵

During this period, HACH developed an odd new strategy for raising money. In 1979 it created affiliated subsidiary companies, the Houston Apartment Housing Corporation and Houtex, whose mission was to raise money for HACH by purchasing troubled apartment complexes, repairing them, and renting units at market rates — essentially functioning as a private, for-profit developer, but financing the venture with tax-free notes.¹⁶ The housing corporation's first project was to buy the 327-unit St. Regis apartment complex at San Felipe and Midlane for \$8 million, with another \$4 million spent on renovations.¹⁷ Far from making

Right: Forest Green Townhouses (Ford & Heusch) were built in 1978 in far northeast Houston, east of 59 between Little York and Tidwell. In 1989–90, HACH demolished the original patio houses and built new houses (designed by Atlanta architects Bradfield, Richards & Associates) on their slabs. The 1990 houses are now falling apart. Although the townhouse residents were promised aluminum siding, what they got was plastic. Any impact shatters the siding, which tears the insulation and allows water to seep into the units.



Clayton Homes.

money to subsidize low-income housing, the St. Regis cost the HACH subsidiary close to \$2.5 million over a six-year period. The complex was sold in 1990.¹⁸

HACH in the Eighties

In 1981, with Ronald Reagan newly inaugurated and a free-market revolution sweeping America, the timing seemed perfect for a second attempt by HACH — working under Mayor Jim McConn — to sell Allen Parkway Village. HACH would receive cash for new entrepreneurial projects, and the city would get credit for sparking a massive development project that would extend downtown Houston halfway up Allen Parkway toward River Oaks. In short, the mayor could join the ranks of the private developers who have shaped large chunks of the city. Accordingly, HACH sent another confidential memo to HUD requesting permission to demolish Allen Parkway Village.

McConn admitted later that Kenneth Schnitzer — who developed Allen Center, Greenway Plaza, and the Summit — was the developer most interested in acquiring Allen Parkway Village from the city. Schnitzer confirmed that he had arranged to purchase the land for \$6.3 million. A confidential housing authority study con-

ducted in 1982 estimated the value of Allen Parkway Village at more than \$250 million, so McConn would have had a friend for life in Kenneth Schnitzer if the deal had been completed.¹⁹

Neither City Hall nor Houston's news media launched major investigations to discover who had received the \$1.3 million HACH disbursed via unrecorded checks.

Meanwhile, in Washington, assistant housing secretary Philip Winn, later to figure prominently in the HUD scandals of the 1980s, approved the secret HACH request to demolish Allen Parkway Village. But Irving Statman, then head of the Dallas regional office of HUD, and his deputy, Elbert Winn (no relation to Philip), disturbed that HUD investigators had uncovered monumental mismanagement at HACH, pestered Mayor McConn for months to clean up the agency. "I told them, 'You've got a terribly run, fiscally irresponsible staff here,'" Statman told reporters. "I made my plea to the [HACH] board. They turned a deaf ear on me."²⁰

Statman went public with the results of a damaging HUD audit, dated 10 July 1981, which showed that in 1979, 1980, and 1981, HACH failed to record checks totaling \$1.3 million and recorded another \$2.5 million worth of checks twice.

Furthermore, the general fund cash balance was off by more than \$800,000. This was not unusual for HACH: the audit disclosed that the agency had failed to balance its bank statements since 1977.²¹

HUD's auditors concluded that HACH had no viable cash controls and no accounting system adequate to support an audit. Further, they found that HACH had no routine maintenance program for low-income projects, and that HACH had not done the required modernization and repairs at Allen Parkway Village, having improperly used designated modernization funds for other purposes. HACH had spent \$564,632 of the \$10

million available through HUD for preparation of a complete set of construction documents to modernize Allen Parkway Village. The only money actually spent on the complex went for boarding up vacant units. Despite an initial uproar about the HACH scandal, neither City Hall nor Houston's news media launched major investigations to discover who had received the \$1.3 million HACH disbursed via unrecorded checks.

In November 1981, Kathryn J. Whitmire defeated Jim McConn and immediately moved to clean house at HACH. As in 1953, all members of the board of commissioners resigned. Whitmire's new board was chaired first by H. J. Tollett, Jr., and then by Gerry Pate, a Houston engineer who was one of the new mayor's top fundraisers. HACH tried to build three new scattered-site garden-apartment projects under Pate but in each case was stymied by neighborhood groups.²²

Mayor Whitmire hired Earl Phillips to be HACH's executive director, ostensibly because of his "insider" connections to HUD assistant secretary Jim Baugh. (Baugh was later indicted on federal conspiracy, bribery, and conflict-of-interest charges.)²³ Given a mandate to clean house at HACH, Phillips started by firing HACH official George N. Kyle in May 1983 for various swindles that included soliciting fake bids from contractors and collecting \$2.4 million in excess rents. Oddly, the dismissal did not trigger a broader investigation.²⁴

In September 1983, HACH released a report on Allen Parkway Village and Fourth Ward that was endorsed by a blue-ribbon commission of citizens including Gladys M. House, Jew Don Boney, George Greanias, James Ketelson, and Robert Moshbacher, Jr. The report recommended demolition of Allen Parkway Village and preparation of a comprehensive redevelopment program that would reshape Fourth Ward, although it did not address the concerns of historical preservationists.

But the timing was wrong. The most ambitious developer interested in the area at this point was Mayor Whitmire. Savvy commercial real estate developers already knew that the market in Houston for new, large-scale developments had disappeared in a glut of new office space, apartments, and other construction that

was still under way as the bottom fell out of the international oil market and Houston's economy. Kenneth Schnitzer and other major developers publicly downplayed the value of Allen Parkway Village and of Fourth Ward redevelopment in general, in response to the city's plans.²⁵ In 1985, Whitmire's planning department director, Efraim García, acting as broker for a consortium of Fourth Ward property owners, offered the whole neighborhood for a publicly subsidized, privately undertaken redevelopment package. Fourth Ward activist Gladys House succeeded in having nearly half the neighborhood designated as a National Register Historic District, complicating García's plans to use federal funds to relocate Fourth Ward residents. The crash in Houston's real estate market took care of the rest. There was no developer interest in a massive city-sponsored, urban-renewal-style redevelopment of Fourth Ward.

Yet the city's manifold problems with Allen Parkway Village and Fourth Ward redevelopment had not quenched the housing authority's thirst for real estate development. In late 1986, HACH board of commissioners chairman Gerry Pate unveiled plans for a public-private partnership to rehabilitate the former Holiday Inn on Memorial Drive, across Buffalo Bayou from Allen Parkway Village, to provide low-income housing for the elderly.²⁶ Robert A. Mosbacher, Jr., who enjoyed remarkable connections in the Reagan administration, lobbied HUD on behalf of the project, and HUD promised \$18 million in subsidies for the redevelopment as another public-private partnership.²⁷

By 1989, however, this project too had soured. It was over budget by \$2.2 million, prompting local papers to complain that no budgets or reliable accounting information were available from HACH for the project.²⁸ Although this was the identical problem that had caused the McConnell-era HACH scandal to erupt, and although Whitmire, Pate, and Phillips had all promised to clean HACH's house, the agency still lacked basic accounting systems. HUD pulled out of the Holiday Inn redevelopment project, which then fell apart in May 1989. The old hotel remains an empty hulk to this day.²⁹

HACH in the Nineties

The bursting of the great Texas real estate bubble of the 1980s took with it many of the state's banks, savings and loans, and developers, rendering any potential Fourth Ward development plan by the city worse than redundant. The downturn also caused further problems for HACH's "entrepreneurial" ventures.

In 1990, HACH's 1970s investments in unsubsidized housing in the form of suburban apartment complexes, such as the



HACH sank more than \$2 million into this former Holiday Inn on Memorial Parkway, even though it never owned the building. The public-private project was abandoned in 1989.



Cuney Homes was HACH's first public housing project (Stayton Mann-Milton McGinty, architects, 1940; first phase of ongoing modernization completed 1993, Bradfield, Richards & Associates). Located in Third Ward across from Texas Southern University, it was a blacks-only complex until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 mandated desegregation.

St. Regis and four others, unraveled, costing the FDIC \$7 million; blame was pinned on the downturn in the rental market.³⁰ And HACH was still unable to manage its basic accounting. HUD forced the unrepentant agency to disgorge refunds amounting to \$270,000 to public housing residents for "overcharges."³¹

Undeterred by market realities, American General and Cullen Center, two corporations interested in Fourth Ward redevelopment since 1987, announced plans in 1990 for Founders Park, a 600-acre development of upscale townhouses and apartment buildings along with shopping, offices, and a series of town squares, parks, and small lakes — all to be built in Fourth Ward and on the site of Allen Parkway Village.³² This plan was predicated on HACH's sale of Allen Parkway Village to private-sector interests.

In response, Allen Parkway Village Resident Council president Lenwood E. Johnson proposed rehabilitation of Allen Parkway Village "followed by emergence of small community businesses that would result in gradual economic

development." Working with University of Houston architecture instructor Nia Dorian Beemel, Johnson and Fourth Ward residents began to make a counterproposal, based on grassroots improvements rather than displacement and redevelopment, called the Allen Parkway Community Campus concept. Improved housing and sweat equity would enable Fourth Ward residents to redevelop their neighborhood to meet their own needs. Because of HACH's inability to sell the Allen Parkway Village property, the Founders Park plan would never leave the drawing boards. The community campus plan is still being cited in current negotiations, as the wrangling continues between saving the public housing project versus commercial development. (See "Update: Allen Parkway Village," p. 14.)

As of 1991, HACH was administering far fewer public housing units than San Antonio, Newark, Baltimore, and other much smaller cities.³³ It had a system-wide vacancy rate of 32 percent, largely because of the number of units it was holding vacant at Allen Parkway Village, a number that had increased substantially

after HACH began systematic depopulation in 1983. Moreover, HACH had received roughly \$16.8 million in subsidies and other funds generated by the operation of units in Allen Parkway Village up to 1991 (the figure is calculated by multiplying the per-unit subsidy figures reported in court records by the number of years from 1983 to 1991). This money was to have been spent on maintenance and repair. HACH's own consultants noted in a 1991 report that HACH records showed there had been no major repairs at Allen Parkway Village since 1981. If HACH did not spend the money on modernization, where did it go? Who, specifically, received it? Are there records?

The entire political landscape in Houston changed when Bob Lanier defeated Kathy Whitmire and took over at City Hall in November 1991. Neither candidate made Allen Parkway Village or HACH a major issue.

Bob Lanier was a supporter of the Founders Park plan for Fourth Ward—Allen Parkway Village redevelopment, which died because HACH could not finesse the demolition and "disposition" of Allen Parkway Village. But Lanier did not offer to enter into a public-private partnership with his fellow real estate developers. Founders Park advocates assumed that the area's strategic importance would be bolstered by Metro rail proposals given great visibility in the late 1980s, and by a possible statewide high-speed bullet train with a terminal in the redevelopment zone. It turned out that Bob Lanier hated rail. Founders Park, Metro rail, and bullet trains all disappeared into the dustbin of history, along with the comprehensive planning and zoning that Whitmire had routed.

Lanier has done little to undo HACH's dismal record. Houston now ranks last among all large American cities in housing assistance to poor families.³⁴ HUD auditors have recommended that HACH repay \$1.5 million for "misused housing funds." HUD auditors found that HACH still has no credible maintenance program and that 89 percent of all units inspected did not meet quality standards. HUD found that the poor condition of the housing projects was caused not by tenant abuse, but rather by poor maintenance.³⁵

In other words, nothing had changed at HACH since the 1952 scandal. A succession of Houston mayors has failed to administer HACH in a responsible manner, allowing millions of dollars to disappear without a trace. Neither taxpayers nor public housing residents have benefited from this type of public housing authority. ■



Allen Parkway Village, built in 1943 and designed by a group of architects led by Mackie & Kamrath.



The daycare center at Clayton Homes. El Mercado del Sal is visible in the background.

1 Peter Dreier and John Atlas, "Housing Policy's Moment of Truth," *American Prospect*, Summer 1995, pp. 68-77.

2 Rachel B. Bratt, "The Role of HUD in Housing and Community Development Systems," a working paper commissioned by a panel of the National Academy of Public Administration, July 1994, p. 13.

3 Stephen Fox, "San Felipe Courts Historic District," *Houston Chapter-American Institute of Architects Newsletter*, June 1988, pp. 2-3.

4 Tony Freemantle, "Public Housing in Houston," *Houston Chronicle*, 8 August 1982, p. 1A.

5 Fox, "San Felipe Courts."

6 *Ibid.*

7 Freemantle, "Public Housing."

8 Charles A. Frandolig, "Feds Tackle HHA Housing Scandal," *Houston Chronicle*, 10 March 1983.

9 Mel Young, "Housing Project Integration Asked," *Houston Chronicle*, 16 May 1986.

10 Frandolig, "HHA Housing Scandal."

11 Bratt, "Role of HUD," pp. 14, 15.

12 Freemantle, "Public Housing," p. 16.

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27 Philip Shemon, "HUD Grant Followed Mosbacher Jr.'s Phone Call," *New York Times*, 28 May 1989.

28 "Shameful Scenario," *Houston Post*, 5 April 1989, p. A18.

29 Tim Fleck, "House of Cards," *Houston Press*, 14 June 1990, p. 13.

30 Jerry Urban, "Housing Authority Falters."

31 Rad Sallee, "Tenants Blast Public Housing Officials," *Houston Chronicle*, 6 June 1990.

32 Rives Taylor, "Fourth Ward and the Siege of Allen Parkway Village," *Cite*, Fall 1990, p. 6, Spring 1991, p. 21.

33 James Robinson, "Housing Plan Spells Disaster," *Houston Chronicle*, 21 September 1991.

34 James Robinson, "Houston Is Last Among Big Cities in Housing Aid," *Houston Chronicle*, 24 November 1992.

35 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of the Inspector General, *Semiannual Report to Congress 29*, for the period ending March 31, 1993, pp. 25-26.

TIMELINE OF HACH PROJECTS

(All complexes are conventional public housing family developments unless otherwise noted.)

19 January 1938 — HACH established by Houston City Council

1940 — Cuney Homes, 3260 Truxillo, 564 units

1941 — Kelly Village, 1119 Grove, 333 units

1942 — Irvinton Village, 2901 Fulton, 318 units

1943 — Allen Parkway Village, 1600 Allen Parkway, 1,000 units

1952 — Clayton Homes, 1919 Runnels, 348 units

1975 — 75 Lyerly, 200 units (Section 23 leased elderly development)

1975 — 7225 Bellerive, 210 units (Section 23 leased elderly development)

1976 (major rehabilitation 1986) — Lincoln Park, 790 West Little York, 264 units

1977 — Oxford Place Apartments, 605 Berry Road, 230 units

1978 (reconstructed 1989) — Forest Green Townhouses, 8906 Forest Hallow, 100 units

1978 — 6000 Telephone Road, 200 units (Section 8 new construction elderly development)

1979 — Ewing Apartments, 1815 Ewing, 42 units

1981 — Long Drive Townhomes, 6767 Long Drive, 100 units (Section 8 new construction elderly development)

1982 — Kennedy Place, 505 Bayou, 60 units

1983 — Wilmington House, 4000 Wilmington, 108 units

UPDATE: ALLEN PARKWAY VILLAGE

Brad Tyler

For the last 18 years, Allen Parkway Village has been the stakes in a seesaw game of poker between various development interests and a loose-knit advocacy group spearheaded by the Allen Parkway Village Resident Council and the council's president, Lenwood E. Johnson. At issue: whether to tear down the 55-year-old, historically and architecturally significant 1,000-unit complex and let developers in to start from scratch, or to rehabilitate the existing

There is no faith among the residents that the land will retain any but token use as public housing if the complex is demolished.

property, after years of neglect, so it can serve its original purpose, as low-income public housing. The battle is being and has been fought on many fronts, generating myriad peripheral issues. Allen Parkway Village now symbolizes not just housing issues but racial issues, class issues, accountability issues, architectural and historical issues, policy issues, administrative issues, and political issues, not least of which is the fate of the adjacent Fourth Ward neighborhood of Freedmen's Town, whose future is widely expected to track that of Allen Parkway Village. Emotions have run high, for those on the front lines and to a lesser extent for the city at large. But the public emotion has begun to give way to tired, confused, eyes-glazed-over apathy.

A list of sore points between the two camps — preservationist versus developer, resident versus government — would run for pages. Cutting through the thicket of protagonists, hearings, and relevant legislation, one key issue emerges: distrust. The Allen Parkway Village Resident Council has come to distrust the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), whose secretary, Henry Cisneros, assured them in 1994 that no Allen Parkway Village land would be sold for commercial development and that the council would participate on an equal footing with HUD and the Housing Authority of the City of Houston (HACH) in developing an

acceptable proposal for the property.¹ According to Johnson and his supporters, these assurances have been steadily eroded and contradicted, in a fashion described by architectural historian and Allen Parkway Village advocate Stephen Fox as "remarkable for its lies, distortions, and misrepresentations."

On the other side of the fence, HACH executive director Joy Fitzgerald claims that the "partnership" proposed by Cisneros remains intact, and that "in the last 18 months, both HUD and HACH have met with the residents consistently for the purpose of developing guiding principles."

Yet HACH, and apparently HUD, do not trust Johnson and the Resident Council to make "best use" of the land without HACH oversight. The council's proposed alternative to demolition is what has been called a "community campus plan," first presented by the late University of Houston architecture professor V. Nia Dorian Beene in 1989 and supported since 1992 by Catherine M. Roberts. Embraced and refined by the Resident Council, it calls for rehabilitation of existing units and provision of educational, vocational, and medical services geared towards self-sufficiency for the residents of the project and neighboring Fourth Ward. HACH, while indicating that the community campus plan will be studied by its recently hired master planners for feasibility,² has at the same time, according to Johnson, been instrumental in delaying a \$300,000 HUD grant to the Resident Council for planning and development of the campus plan. Fitzgerald presents the delay in a different light. She asserted in a September interview that "I developed a contract [for awarding the grant] and sent it to the residents two months ago. I had no written or verbal comment until August 30, when they asked me to sit down and explain the contract. I said I would be happy to, and I haven't heard back."

The embryonic HACH plan — which, Fitzgerald explains, is unformed and dependent upon feasibility studies being carried out by HACH's master-planning team — sounds similar in some respects to the community campus plan, including a proposed mixed-use ratio of one-third traditional public housing, one-third "affordable" housing, and one-third housing for the elderly. Fitzgerald insists that HACH itself has no plans and that the master planner will be responsible for formulating HACH's plans. However, the HACH plan is so far vague and noncommittal, and the residents believe there will be only a token amount of public housing if demolition takes place.

The lack of a thoroughly documented plan for replacement housing did not stop HACH from submitting an application in May 1995 for federal approval under Section 106 of the National Historic

Preservation Act of 1966 to demolish the greater part of Allen Parkway Village. The initial application called for the razing of all but 13 buildings — only 220 of the site's 1,000 units would remain standing. Charlene Vaughn, representative of the federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (which is responsible for advising HUD on any demolition proposal), has suggested maintaining 20 of the 82 buildings (comprising 358 units) as a compromise with architectural historians and preservationists, although this has not been agreed to by either party.³ Federal law mandates one-for-one replacement of demolished public housing within six years of demolition, and HACH has suggested that replacement housing could be built on the present Allen Parkway Village site, in neighboring Fourth Ward, or at other undetermined sites around Houston, while at the same time not ruling out options like "long-term commercial leasing" of the property.⁴ HACH has provided no master-planning specifics, either to the Allen Parkway Village Resident Council or the public at large. According to Sissy Farenthold, former member of the Texas Legislature and current member of the Resident Council Board of Advisers, "The part that we're so suspicious of is that they have six years to create replacement housing, and it's just very unlikely that there will be any. The problem is that there isn't any accountability, except to the mayor." (The HACH executive director is appointed by the HACH board of commissioners, who are in turn appointed by Mayor Bob Lanier.)

In early May, without yet having received federal permission to proceed with demolition, the city began negotiations with a planning team with political ties to Mayor Bob Lanier, despite the fact that the team — Tise, Hurwitz & Diamond of



HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF HOUSTON

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February 28, 1995

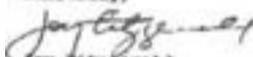
Kevin Marchman
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office of Distressed Public Housing
U.S. Department of Housing
and Urban Development
451 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington D.C. 20410

Dear Assistant Secretary Marchman:

By this letter be advised that on February 27, 1995 the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Houston (HACH) voted unanimously to seek the approval of the Department of Housing and Urban Development to demolish 850 units at Allen Parkway Village.

An application for demolition is being finalized and will be submitted to your office by March 17, 1995.

Sincerely,


Joy Fitzgerald
Executive Director

Boston, in association with Houston developer and Lanier campaign supporter Wayne Duddleston — had presented no "graphic perspectives," or artists' renderings, of the development, a prerequisite for consideration in the awarding of the HACH master-planning contract under HACH's own guidelines.⁵ After local media outlets, including the generally pro-HACH *Houston Chronicle*, questioned the ethics of the negotiations, Duddleston removed himself from the team, and on 31 September HACH passed a resolution selecting Tise, Hurwitz & Diamond to be the project's master planner.⁶ Lenwood Johnson believes that these actions constitute a breach of the partnership assurances received from HUD director Cisneros last year, and as such suggest a possible avenue of legal challenge to demolition.

In the event that HUD approves the HACH request for permission to demolish most of Allen Parkway Village — and the political climate in the Republican-controlled Congress has many observers guessing that this, the fifth such application since 1977, will finally be successful — Johnson and the Allen Parkway Village Resident Council have vowed to continue the fight with legal action on one or more fronts, assuming that as-yet-unsecured legal counsel can be procured on the residents' behalf. That's a big if. Community commitment to the residents' cause, says Johnson, has lagged over the course of the contentious battle, and some prior sources of financial support have dried up, leaving the residents' ability to secure legal representation highly uncertain. The Resident Council has twice before sued HUD using public service pro bono lawyers, but at present no one has stepped forward to take the residents' case.

If they can get a lawyer, one challenge to demolition may be raised over Allen Parkway Village's 1988 listing in the National Register of Historic Places, which necessitates the Section 106 historical preservation review prior to demolition. HACH initiated the review process with the Texas Historical Commission, but Johnson claims that the review's mandate for public involvement has been bypassed by a commission friendly to HACH and hostile to the Resident Council. Allen Parkway Village was nominated in 1993 as a state archaeological landmark, but this was tabled indefinitely by the Texas Historical Commission after Lieutenant Governor Bob Bullock (at Mayor Lanier's request) called in the staff of the commission for a consultation. Johnson points to this in support of his suspicion that the democratic process is being subverted in order to hasten demolition.⁷ The Frost-Leland congressional amendment of 1987, which prohibits the use of federal funds for demolition, may also provide grounds for a legal challenge.

And so the 18-year conflict continues, with HACH pursuing the city's decades-long agenda of demolition and Johnson and the Allen Parkway Village residents fighting tooth and nail for rehabilitation. According to Fitzgerald, HACH expected a completed Section 106 memorandum of agreement by mid-September to spell out how much of the complex HACH will be legally required to preserve, but as of press time HACH had not heard back from the Historical Commission. To go back to the poker metaphor, the game's not over yet; but longtime activist Farenthold says, "I have never seen an example [of HACH's many attempts at demolition] where they have all the bases covered like this." While Fitzgerald points out that no plans will be finalized until a memorandum of agreement is completed, she also suggests that demolition at the site could begin as early as December.

A 29 April 1995 *Houston Chronicle* editorial accurately if cynically mirrored that sentiment, declaring that "the housing authority now holds all the best cards." Whether they got the cards fairly, or even legally, is likely to be challenged at least once again. In the meantime, the bulldozers wait for their cue. ■

1 Telephone interview with Lenwood Johnson, 4 September 1995.

2 Telephone interview with Joy Fitzgerald, 7 September 1995.

3 James Robinson, "Housing Pact Could Beel Up Renovations," *Houston Chronicle*, 12 August 1995.

4 Telephone interview with Sissy Farenthold, 6 September 1995.

5 James Robinson, "Allen Parkway Village's Contract Talks Questioned," *Houston Chronicle*, 11 May 1995.

6 Ibid.; James Robinson, "Smell Test: Housing Authority Rules Not Meant to Be Broken," *Houston Chronicle*, 12 May 1995; Tim Fleck, "Lanier Village: The Mayor's Hands Are All Over the APV Redevelopment Plan," *Houston Press*, 11 May 1995.

7 Stephen Fox, "Allen Parkway Village, Houston, Texas, USA," *DOCOMOMO*, Journal 13, June 1995.

Reassessing Priorities

60 YEARS OF U.S. PUBLIC HOUSING

Jacqueline Leavitt

When Congress passed the National Affordable Housing Act in 1990, advocates of low-income housing hailed the landmark bill as evidence of renewed national commitment. But this initial optimism has been seriously eroded by a long and bitter struggle in which opponents of government involvement in housing appear to be getting the upper hand. The safety net, patched and resewn repeatedly since the 1930s, seems frayed beyond repair. The Democrats have proposed privatizing two major pieces of their party's New Deal legislation: public housing, a hard-won program for the temporary poor that became the last resort for a permanent segment of society; and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), the 100 percent insurance guarantee against mortgage defaults by homeowners.

Hostility to housing subsidies historically has been tied to other concerns. As the housing reformer Catherine Bauer wrote in 1934, "The history of housing reform is the history of conflict between a traditional ideal and an habitual prejudice." Americans idealize independence, self-sufficiency, and personal ambition, traits identified with the early pioneers, who are (mis)remembered as individually taming the frontier. As a consequence, many Americans attack public housing as socialism but simultaneously defend homeowner tax deductions for wage earners who save to buy a house.

Bestowing aid for certain needs or to particular people has been more or less acceptable at different points in the nation's history. The need to settle vast open spaces and relieve the crowding of laborers in the cities prompted the Homestead Act of 1862: free land was awarded to people who occupied and cultivated it for five years. In 1918, with national security a paramount concern, federally funded housing was built for shipyard and other war workers. Immediately after the war, however, the Emergency Fleet Corporation of the U.S. Shipping Board, the Bureau of Industrial Housing in the U.S. Housing Corporation, and the armed services' ordnance department all sold off their housing inventory.

Accepting Federal Intervention in the New Deal

In the 1930s, as the Great Depression equalized poverty to some extent, more

of the public were personally affected as the nation experienced widespread economic collapse and were therefore receptive to federal intervention. The subject of the general welfare was taken up in legislation that provided social security, unemployment insurance, aid to dependent children, guarantees for homeowners, and public housing. The relief was welcome when jobs were few and the future uncertain.

Homeowning, considered more worthwhile than renting, received protection as the federal government took steps to prevent an epidemic of foreclosures. The mortgage system was rationalized in

order to provide housing for defense workers. Migrations from the South by people seeking jobs in major northern, midwestern, and western cities placed pressure on private-sector housing, and the stock of publicly funded housing units became a necessary resource — even if not one always favored by upwardly mobile families.

After World War II, private market interests successfully lobbied and positioned themselves, maneuvering to take advantage of government incentives for home ownership and in effect undermining public housing. William Levitt and Sons, for example, shifted their operation from

"The history of housing reform is the history of conflict between a traditional ideal and an habitual prejudice." — housing reformer Catherine Bauer

order to provide fixed-rate mortgages over a 30- or 40-year period, and the Federal Housing Administration guaranteed full mortgage insurance to lending institutions.

In 1937 Congress passed the U.S. Housing Act. This authorized public housing, not initially as a program for poor renters, but as a public works project providing jobs for a submerged middle class. The poorest and people of color scarcely benefited from either federal employment programs or housing assistance. Prospective tenants for public housing were carefully screened. The preferred profile was a two-parent family with a working head of household. Reluctant legislators voted for the program in the belief that the federal government would demolish or sell its developments once the Depression had passed. The United States' entry into World War II saved public housing because the government needed to pro-

vide housing for defense workers. Migrations from the South by people seeking jobs in major northern, midwestern, and western cities placed pressure on private-sector housing, and the stock of publicly funded housing units became a necessary resource — even if not one always favored by upwardly mobile families.

After World War II, private market interests successfully lobbied and positioned themselves, maneuvering to take advantage of government incentives for home ownership and in effect undermining public housing. William Levitt and Sons, for example, shifted their operation from

rentals to home ownership programs that were able to capitalize on veteran programs that stipulated no down payment. In public housing, federal regulations reinforced the demand for private-sector housing through actively forcing out higher-income renters, typically white households. This changed the racial composition of public housing populations whose ranks were filled with African Americans emigrating from the South, in part due to the massive unemployment created by technological innovations in agribusiness. Over time, these large developments became institutionalized concentrations of the poor, who could not afford the increasing postwar rents of unsubsidized housing. The 1969 Housing and Urban Development Act included legislation sponsored by Senator Edward Brooke of Massachusetts, the only African American in the Senate at the time, that restricted rent to 25 percent of a tenant's income.

Since then the public housing stock has increased in fits and starts, responding to the politics of the time. Today, public housing represents about 5 percent of all rental units and is disproportionately located in urban centers. Despite public housing's negative image, the need for it is affirmed by the long lists of prospective tenants, some of whom may wait as long as ten years before securing an apartment.



Easter Hill Village, Richmond, California (De Mars & Hardison, architects; Lawrence Halprin, landscape architect). Photographed by W. Eugene Smith in 1957.

Favoritism and Inequities

After World War II, developers received incentives for building single-family houses for sale, thus reverting federal policy back to favoring the private sector and individual home ownership. From 1940 to 1950, home ownership rose from 43.6 to 55 percent of all families, then to 61.9 percent by 1960. It climbed to a peak of 65.6 percent in 1980, only to drop to 64.2 percent in 1990 and 63.9 percent in 1993. The 1980s was the first

time since the 1930s that home ownership rates fell, partly because of rapidly rising sales prices.

Ownership favoritism had other repercussions. Because the working class owned homes, it began to be identified, materially and ideologically, with the middle class. The civil rights movement and urban unrest in the 1960s exposed the inequities, however. Income tax deductions for interest paid on home mortgages benefited the wealthiest buyers. Access to single-family houses or to owning a home, primarily in suburbia, was restricted on the basis of race and income. Renters left behind in the cities had fewer units to choose from as urban renewal projects, beginning in the late 1950s, demolished more units than were replaced. Even in areas where housing supplies were adequate to meet demand, economic, racial, and ethnic discrimination still restricted a person's standard of living.

the poor and working poor. International opinion was at stake: the image of a caring and stable nation was shaken by assassinations of national leaders, lynching of civil rights workers, and bombings of churches. President Lyndon B. Johnson initiated Great Society programs that had their roots in the New Deal. Although President John F. Kennedy tried, Johnson successfully created the Department of Housing and Urban Development and named as secretary Robert C. Weaver — the first African American to be appointed to the Cabinet. Home-ownership and rental programs were directed by HUD to those whose moderate incomes exceeded public-housing limits but who were still outpriced in the private market. The working poor were assisted through mortgage interest rate subsidies, direct lending, and the secondary mortgage market. But programmatic flaws were apparent almost immediately. Below-market interest rates reduced monthly mortgage payments, but

ings. New owners could charge market rents; existing tenants who were unable to pay the higher rents were asked to leave or were evicted. Responding to these problems, subsequent legislation gave tenants the option of buying the buildings they lived in. But this was inadequate to protect people whose incomes were limited to begin with.

Reviving Rental Subsidies for Developers

In retrospect, 1974 was a watershed year in housing. Rising oil prices drove owners of single-family homes from the suburbs back to condominiums and townhouses in the cities, where they were closer to their jobs and less dependent on automobiles. In cities on the East Coast and in the Midwest, landlords abandoned multi-unit buildings that housed the poor. Relationships between different levels of government shifted as the strategy of

construction of new units and later including substantial rehabilitation projects. On the "demand side," tenant-based programs depended on existing affordable private stock that could meet program standards. In the project-based program, developers could use contracts for Section 8 certificates as collateral in order to obtain construction loans from banks. The certificates provided a steady stream of income that covered the difference between the fair market rent and the tenant's share of 30 percent of income (public housing had meanwhile adopted the higher tenant share of 30 percent as well). Nearly all 20-year assistance payments will expire between 1994 and 2002, raising problems similar to those created by previous time-bounded subsidy programs.

Under Section 8, tenants who qualified received 15-year certificates to rent existing units that they had to find. In mar-



Phot courtesy of the American Institute of Architects Library and Archives, Washington, D.C.

Ethnic and racial breakdowns among homeowners reveal the bias. In 1991, of 59.8 million homeowners, just under 90 percent were white, while only 8 percent were African American and 4 percent were Hispanic. Whereas two out of every three white householders owned, the percentage for African Americans was about 43 percent, and for Hispanics about 39 percent.

The federal government in the 1960s could not and did not want to abandon

shoddy construction and rising maintenance costs stretched already tight budgets. Beginning in the 1980s, HUD's inventory of foreclosed buildings grew.

The federal government also provided subsidies to developers to encourage them to build rental units in poor, high-risk neighborhoods. The impermanence of these low- and moderate-income units and its effect on tenants began to surface as 20-year subsidies ended in the late 1980s. Owners were permitted to sell their build-

ings. revenue sharing was implemented. Under President Richard Nixon, Congress passed the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and deep-subsidy Section 8 programs. Distributing block grant funds became the responsibility of local municipalities; awarding Section 8 certificates to tenants came under the purview of local public-housing authorities.

Section 8 included both project- and tenant-based programs. The former aimed at the "supply side," encouraging the con-

struction of new units and later including substantial rehabilitation projects. On the "demand side," tenant-based programs depended on existing affordable private stock that could meet program standards. In the project-based program, developers could use contracts for Section 8 certificates as collateral in order to obtain construction loans from banks. The certificates provided a steady stream of income that covered the difference between the fair market rent and the tenant's share of 30 percent of income (public housing had meanwhile adopted the higher tenant share of 30 percent as well). Nearly all 20-year assistance payments will expire between 1994 and 2002, raising problems similar to those created by previous time-bounded subsidy programs.

units and to defer crucial maintenance, resulting in substandard housing.

The Section 8 rental-housing voucher program was not available to local public housing authorities. Deferred maintenance and reduced revenues have persisted, and HUD has identified many "distressed" public housing developments around the country. In response to an 18-month rent strike by residents in public housing in St. Louis in the 1970s, the Ford Foundation stepped in and funded a tenant management demonstration program that was to become central to HUD's strategy in the 1980s and 1990s.

Cut the HUD Budget . . . Cut HUD . . . Convert Public Housing Operating Subsidies to Rental Assistance

Safety net strategies were unpopular during the administrations of Ronald Reagan and George Bush. Federal intervention, it was argued, prevented private enterprise from doing what it did best, and federal welfare and housing programs encouraged individuals to become dependent on the government rather than self-reliant.

HUD endured. But it suffered the largest cutbacks of any national agency in 1981. One-third of federal assistance to localities for housing and community development was eliminated, and states and localities did not uniformly fill the gap. An exception was New York City, where rising rates of landlord abandonment and pressure by housing advocates led to programs that were funded through municipal budgets and Community Development Block Grants. Alternative disposition programs transferred ownership from the city to community organizations or residents, a model soon adopted at the federal level.

Around the country, community and tenant organizations began to create an alternative to the traditional private or public landlord. These pioneers on the urban frontier learned to package multiple funding sources, sometimes in partnership with private developers and/or investors using the tax codes to shelter high incomes. The numbers of community development corporations grew. The savvy looked beyond housing toward more comprehensive economic development as a vehicle for maintaining a permanent stock of affordable housing.

Under the Bush administration, a program called HOPE (Home Ownership for People Everywhere), intended to shift ownership of rental units to tenants, became the federal government's centerpiece for pulling out of public housing altogether. HUD secretary Jack Kemp, arguing that home ownership was an extension of the 1960s civil rights movement for empowerment, restructured HOPE from an earlier program that had sold only 320 units to tenants. In the new program, resident management councils (RMCs) were funded to hire trainers familiar with public housing regulations and who offered classroom seminars that taught resident managers how to conduct tenant screening, develop eviction proceedings if necessary, and prepare generally to become managers if not owners of the public housing developments. This was followed by partnerships in which public housing residents worked as management apprentices alongside housing authority personnel. Federal funds were expected to cover capital expenditures prior to selling units to the residents, while allocations of Section 8 rental assistance funds would be available to assist the poorest tenants, but only for a specified time.

Housing advocates were skeptical about the ability of HOPE to create many jobs. Much of the pressure for passage of public housing during the 1930s occurred as part of the strategy to use public works programs as a vehicle for job creation for unemployed construction workers. Similarly, today's high unemployment rates are the reason why advocates see housing as an economic development policy. Nationwide evaluations stated that successful ownership depended on incomes of around \$11,000, almost double the existing median income of public-housing residents. The poorest tenants faced long-term losses if their incomes did not rise and subsidies were cut. Although advocates had won a one-to-one replacement provision to keep the permanent low-income housing supply from diminishing, this had the potential to further drain HUD's reduced resources.

George Bush's defeat for a second presidential term left the HOPE program without an advocate. And, although many resident public-housing leaders believed they could manage as well as the housing authorities could, low-income

residents and their advocates do not make national policy. The Clinton administration's policies are reflected in old and new catch phrases: resident management, mixing incomes, comprehensive planning to include neighborhood redevelopment, and encouraging economic enterprises.

As 1994 drew to a close, homelessness recaptured the attention of the public. Advocates of federal intervention debated the merits of two strategies: providing emergency facilities such as shelters, or increasing the supply of permanently affordable housing. The 1994 congressional elections confirmed a contrary position, the rejection of any federal intervention in private entrepreneurship at local levels.

At the end of 1994, the Democrats proposed to "reinvent" HUD. Central to their "blueprint" is divesting the federal government of public housing, converting operating subsidies to rental assistance, and competing for tenants with private rental housing. Public housing authorities and local government will be under no constraints to save, rehabilitate, or replace units. The Federal Housing Administration makeover was slated to tighten up lending restrictions so as to further reduce the numbers of Americans who achieve the American dream. It remains to be seen whether the Republican-dominated Congress goes even further.

What's Next?

A publicly led slash-and-burn program has begun. Eligibility requirements to obtain public housing are tightening. Applicants are being turned down if they cannot document their citizenship status. As a result, municipalities are planning homeless encampments where the non-housed will be stashed, and local organizations providing assistance to the homeless are arguing with each other over allocations. But at the same time, limited-equity cooperatives and mutual housing associations are gaining credibility across the country, most notably in New York City and Los Angeles. These forms of joint ownership permit greater protection for residents who are able to own a share in the American dream. Although partially assisted through public financing incentives, community development corporations still must piece

funds together in order to build or rehabilitate housing. Tenant leaders continue to emerge as organizers when their homes are in jeopardy.

In both academic and popular circles, people today talk about the loss of community and the uncertainty of the era in which we live. The concept of the general welfare, so central in the 1930s, is missing from the debate. Certainly many of the New Deal programs perpetuated or created inequities, and the growing bureaucracies became inflexible, paper-driven rather than people-driven agencies, but the public acknowledged the need for federal intervention.

Today many Americans repudiate that need, especially in housing. But the same people who argue against any sort of government intervention ignore the massive homeowner deductions that our tax policy supports. The rugged individual of the homesteading era was also dependent on the extended household and federal land giveaways to foster settlement in otherwise isolated areas.

The political tug-of-war continues over government's role while the housing crisis grows, beginning to equalize poverty once more but perhaps creating the conditions for the creative programs of the 21st century. ■

Kristin M. Szylvian

Our Mutual Friend

A Progressive Housing Legacy From the 1940s

During the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt, federal housing officials optimistically went about the task of solving America's housing problems. One of the most important pieces of New Deal housing legislation was the 1934 National Housing Act. Intended to serve both ends of the housing spectrum, it created the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) for the purpose of insuring low-interest, long-term mortgages and stimulating the economically distressed private real estate market. The National Housing Act also assisted families unable to afford home ownership. The Public Works Administration's Division of Housing oversaw planning and construction of the nation's first low-income public housing program, initially offering partial funding to nonprofit or limited-dividend corporations for slum clearance and low-cost urban housing developments.¹

Historians and housing policy analysts have focused their attention on these New Deal housing programs because of their lasting impact on the housing market. Likewise, the New Deal's Greenbelt Towns and the Subsistence Homesteads programs have interested scholars, architects, and urban planners because they offered alternative patterns of housing development. Less obvious, although still deserving of notice, are the New Deal's middle-of-the-road housing programs. These worked within the traditional pattern of middle-class, suburban home ownership, with certain important modifications.

The Mutual Home Ownership Plan, a program of cooperatively owned housing villages, is one of the lesser-known Roosevelt administration housing initiatives. (The term "mutual" was used instead of "cooperative" to avoid the stigma attached to the latter term by the failure earlier of many privately funded cooperative housing ventures.) Developed by Lawrence Westbrook, the Mutual Home Ownership Plan deserves attention for two reasons. First, it targeted middle-income families, sometimes referred to as the "forgotten third," who could neither afford to purchase a home nor qualify for low-income public housing. Second, the program was predicated on the belief that traditional home ownership was not in the economic or social interest of many wage-earning families. Instead, the program offered mutual or cooperative ownership to middle-income families as a way



Lawrence Westbrook turned World War II defense housing into an experiment in cooperative home ownership with his Mutual Home Ownership Plan, using designs by leading modern architects.

of helping them enjoy the benefits of home ownership without all of the risks.

Born in Belton, Texas, in 1889, Lawrence Westbrook earned degrees in engineering and law from the University of Texas at Austin. He served in the U.S. Army Signal Corps during

World War I and in the Texas Legislature from 1928 to 1932. As a member of the House Committee on Agriculture, Westbrook became convinced that cooperative enterprise could improve the financial status of impoverished Texas farmers. To that end he helped found the Texas Cotton Cooperative Association,

which helped cotton farmers market their crops more profitably.

In 1934, while serving as director of the federally funded Texas Relief Commission, Westbrook supervised Woodlake, a back-to-the-land project for families forced from their farms by economic hard times. Located on 7,600 acres in East Texas near Lutkin, the cooperative farming community of Woodlake was founded by Helen Kerr Thompson, widow of the Houston lumberman J. Lewis Thompson, and designed by David R. Williams, the Dallas architect who made a reputation for himself in the late 1920s by advocating the recovery of regional architectural traditions in the design of new buildings. Woodlake's residents hoped that they would someday own the entire agricultural village, including its houses, fields, and community facilities, but these hopes were never realized. Woodlake was trans-

Housing officials enthusiastically viewed the defense housing program as an opportunity to continue the experimentation begun under the New Deal.

ferred to the U.S. Resettlement Administration in 1935 and, like many other experimental New Deal communities, was eventually liquidated.²

Later in 1934, Westbrook's relief work took him to Washington, D.C., where he found employment with the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and shortly thereafter became assistant director of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). While at the WPA, Westbrook administered West Acres, a cooperative residential community for automobile workers in Pontiac, Michigan, which was partially funded by the estate of Michigan senator James Couzens.³

Westbrook left public service in 1936 to establish a privately funded cooperative residential community in Duval County, Florida. The Park Living development

was designed by David Williams, Woodlake's architect, and the Los Angeles modernist architect Richard J. Neutra. It capitalized on many of the architectural and design features of Radburn, New Jersey, billed as the "Town for the Motor Age." Like Radburn, the Park Living development was designed to encourage the growth of community spirit among its residents, with houses facing an interior park used by all residents. Although it

labor and social reform groups saw the defense housing program as a natural extension of the low-income public housing program administered by the United States Housing Authority since 1937. They called upon the Roosevelt administration to build defense housing developments that resembled the best low-income public housing developments — quality homes and community facilities specifically designed to instill a sense of

be needed after the war. Their underlying concern was that the defense housing program would set the stage for the growth of the low-income housing program, an action which they feared would lead to the socialization of the housing industry.

During the early phase of the program, before the U.S. entered World War II, the defense housing program was closely tied to the low-income public housing program. Federal housing officials regarded the defense housing program as an opportunity to continue the experimentation begun under the New Deal. (This would later change.)

As a result of his Great Depression experiences with cooperative home ownership, Westbrook played a leading role in guiding the experimental approach to early defense housing policy. In 1940 he was appointed special assistant to John M. Carmody, director of the Federal Works Agency, and made head of the agency's Mutual Ownership Defense Housing Division, where he directly supervised the construction of eight experimental defense housing developments. From the time of their inception, the housing developments built by Westbrook's division were distinctly different from the hundreds of other defense housing developments constructed under the Lanham Act, for they were specifically intended for sale under a mutual or cooperative ownership plan.

Westbrook's Mutual Ownership Division attempted to break new ground in housing in three ways. First, as with his New Deal projects, mutual home ownership was offered as an economic alternative to traditional home ownership. Second, his division hired leading modern architects to design defense housing in an effort to alter American housing aspirations. And third, the Mutual Ownership Division experimented with prefabrication and mass-production building in an effort to lower construction costs and accelerate the pace of construction. According to a November 1941 *New York Times* article, Westbrook's plan for introducing mutual home ownership among industrial workers in Texas, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana had the potential to "revolutionize real estate practices."⁷

The method by which Westbrook revolutionized the real estate industry was called the Mutual Home Ownership Plan. Although Westbrook's plan underwent a series of changes during the war and immediate postwar years, it originally proposed that residents of each of the eight defense housing developments form a mutual housing corporation in which each family was to purchase an equal number of shares. Instead of receiving the deeds of ownership to their dwelling units, residents would be issued Right of Perpetual Occupancy deeds that would be sold back to the corporation if the

family wished to move. The mutual housing corporation would lease the entire development from the federal government. After a predetermined time, the mutual housing corporation could exercise its option to purchase the development at the fair market value, contingent upon the approval of two-thirds of the residents. The federal government would function as the lender, providing a 30-year mortgage at an annual interest rate of 3.5 percent. When the mortgage was paid, the deed to the entire development would be held by the mutual housing corporation.⁸

According to Westbrook, cooperative home ownership offered middle-income families numerous economic and social advantages. Residents did not have to drain their savings accounts to make down payments before they could assume occupancy. Because all residents contributed to a maintenance fund, there was an incentive to minimize wear and tear on the property. A family could easily move or change homes in response to economic opportunity or changes in the household. Perhaps most important, residents had a voice in the management of the development through a board of directors formed both by government appointment and election by the residents.⁹

Westbrook and his boss, Federal Works administrator John Carmody, viewed the defense housing program as an opportunity to introduce mutual home ownership as an economic and social alternative to traditional forms of housing tenure. Moreover, they hoped to convince middle-income Americans of the impracticality of the single-family detached house and create public acceptance and appreciation for the kind of multi-unit housing built in many European cities after World War I.

Westbrook's Mutual Ownership Defense Housing Division hired prominent modern architects to design two of its largest defense housing developments.¹⁰ Joseph N. Hettle and Oscar Sronorov designed the division's first development, Audubon Village, built to house shipyard workers in Camden, New Jersey. According to a published report, Audubon Village was unique among public housing developments for its large homes and automobile garages.¹¹ Dallas architect Roscoe P. De Witt collaborated with Richard J. Neutra and David R. Williams on Avion Village, a 600-unit defense housing development located in Grand Prairie between Dallas and Arlington that was built to house aircraft workers. Reminiscent of the earlier Park Living development, it featured dwelling units that faced onto a large interior park. Pedestrian footpaths allowed residents easy access to a community center and recreational facilities without having to cross a road. Other notable features included sliding windows positioned to facilitate cross ventilation and movable partition walls that



Interior, Avion Village, near Dallas, as published in the 1941 *Architectural Forum* issue on defense housing. Roscoe P. De Witt, architect; David R. Williams, Richard J. Neutra, consulting architects.

failed financially before Westbrook's plans were realized, he anticipated that the residents would become shareholders in a corporation that owned the entire development. Despite the failure of Park Living, Westbrook remained a steadfast proponent of housing that brought together mutual home ownership and modern architecture and design.⁴

When the shortage of housing jeopardized the nation's ability to meet war production needs, Congress, eager to avoid the mistakes of the previous war, passed the Lanham Act in October 1940, calling for the construction of more than 700,000 units of public housing between 1940 and 1945 for "persons engaged in national defense activities and their families."⁵

How the Lanham Act was to be instituted was a matter of controversy. Organized

identity and belonging in residents. Building on the foundation already established by the New Deal low-income public housing developments, it was hoped that the planned communities constructed for defense workers would serve as the nuclei for postwar urban revitalization.⁶

The homebuilding, real estate, and banking interests took a different view of the Lanham Act. Initially, they resisted the creation of a defense public housing program, arguing that private industry could fulfill the housing needs of defense workers. When it became clear that federal intervention was necessary, they lobbied for the construction of temporary dwellings for defense workers, claiming that the construction of permanent defense housing was too expensive and would depress real estate values by creating ghost towns should the housing not

made it possible for residents in the three-bedroom units to expand the size of their living rooms.¹²

In addition to breaking new ground in mutual home ownership and architecture and design, the defense housing program served as a platform from which the Federal Works Agency could promote experimentation in building materials and mass-production building techniques, part of an effort to reduce the cost of housing and conserve strategic materials in short supply due to the war. Audubon Village and its seven sister developments strove to be "pioneering venture[s] in layout, construction facilities and financing," as a promotional report boasted. Federal Works administrator Carmody effused, "If we had 5,000 Audubon Villages inhabited by happy, intelligent, patriotic Americans, no Nazi propaganda would lull us to sleep."¹³

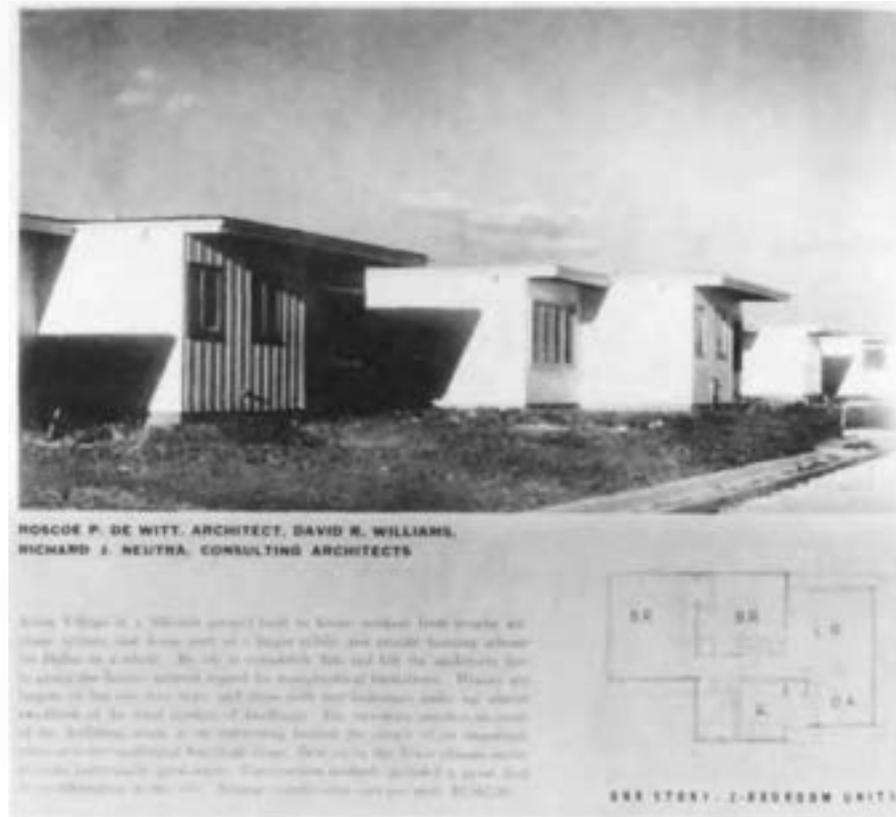
The mutual ownership division plunged headlong into housing prefabrication. The 500 houses fabricated for Audubon Village were built by the Joseph P. Day Housing Corporation at a rate of 20 houses per day in a nearby factory organized by the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). Eager to publicize the role of prefabrication in accelerating the construction of Avion Village, Westbrook authorized a house-building contest sponsored by the construction contractor and featured in *Life* magazine. The winning house, *Life* reported, was built in 58 minutes and 58 seconds. Immediately upon its completion, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Swore and their daughter Veneta moved into their new home.¹⁴

One of mutual ownership's most vocal supporters was organized labor, especially the CIO. On the other hand, banking, real estate, and homebuilding interests were adamantly opposed to mutual home ownership because of its alternative approach to home rentals and sales.

Ironically, the most serious threat to the Roosevelt administration's experiment in mutual home ownership came from within the administration itself. A top-to-bottom reorganization of federal housing agencies in 1942 abolished the Mutual Ownership Defense Housing Division and transferred responsibility for the defense housing program from the Federal Works Agency to the newly created National Housing Authority, whose conservative administrator, John B. Blandford, had little interest in the housing experimentation that characterized the early defense housing program under Carmody. Blandford's appointment — which was hailed by the homebuilding, real estate, and banking industries — marked a turning point in the defense housing program. Under Blandford, the focus of the defense housing program turned towards the construction of temporary dwellings. The period of innovation and experimentation that existed

under Carmody, Westbrook, and other New Dealers was over.¹⁵

The Federal Public Housing Authority, the administrative unit of the National Housing Agency that took charge of the



defense housing program, initially tried to back away from the commitments made by the mutual ownership division. Westbrook, on active duty with the armed forces and no longer a key player in federal housing policy, struggled to force the Federal Public Housing Authority to follow through on implementation of mutual ownership; he and the residents of the eight original mutual ownership communities eventually were successful in persuading the housing authority to sell the developments under the original terms of the mutual ownership plan. In addition, after World War II a number of other defense housing developments, perhaps as many as a hundred, were sold under a revised version of the plan.

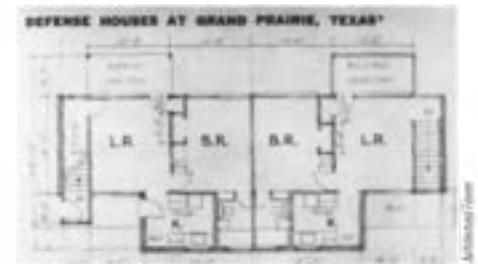
After World War II, Westbrook continued to lobby for federal commitment to mutual or cooperative home ownership. The closest he came to seeing his goals realized was in 1950, when Congress considered a set of amendments to the United States Housing Act that would have established a National Mortgage Corporation for Housing Cooperatives to offer low-interest loans to nonprofit corporations for the construction of cooperative housing. Due to the opposition of conservative congressmen such as Jesse P. Wolcott, a Michigan Republican with strong ties to the homebuilding, real estate, and banking industries, the amendments were defeated.

Near the end of his career in the late 1950s and early 1960s, as increasing

numbers of Americans were able to afford traditional home ownership, Westbrook never wavered in his belief that the federal government had blundered by not increasing public opportunities for mutual home ownership. In the



Half a century old, yet remarkably unchanged: Avion Village, 1945 (left), and 1995 (above).



Avion Village floor plan.

years before his death in 1964, he expressed regret that the Mutual Home Ownership Plan or a similar cooperative housing plan was not pursued in federal housing policy.

Although Westbrook was disappointed that his project did not revolutionize the real estate market, he would be pleased to know that today all but one of the housing developments built under his supervision are still owned by the residents on a cooperative basis and continue to provide the inhabitants with low-cost, high-quality housing, as well as a sense of community identity. In fact, 50 years after the construction of the cooperative developments, approximately one-quarter of the original inhabitants are still in residence, even though many could afford to purchase or rent homes elsewhere. In addition, the children and grandchildren of the original residents often occupy dwelling units as they come vacant.¹⁶

The optimism of New Deal and World War II housing officials has faded, and low-income public housing developments have come to symbolize the failure of federal housing policy. In contrast, the developments sold under Westbrook's Mutual Ownership Defense Housing Division were a success. A reexamination of public housing policy is in order, using the model of the Mutual Home Ownership Plan as a starting point for creating new cooperative housing initiatives. ■

1 Standard works on New Deal housing policy include Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981); Kenneth Jackson, *Craigslist Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Joseph Arnold, *The New Deal in the Suburbs: The Greenbelt Town Program* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971); Paul K. Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World: The New Deal Community Program* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959); and Roy Lubove, "Home and 'A Few Well-Placed Fruit Trees': An Object Lesson in Federal Housing," *Social Research* 27 (1960), pp. 469-86.

2 Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, p. 132; James Terry Booker, "The Woodlake Community: A New Deal Experiment in Rural Living for the Unemployed" (master's thesis, Texas A&M University, 1976).

3 Lawrence Westbrook with George Creel, "No Down Payment," *Colliers*, 2 February 1946, p. 28.

4 The Park Living development did not attract much press attention. Of the numerous books and articles published on Radburn, among the best is Daniel Schaffer, *Garden Cities for Tomorrow: The Radburn Experience* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982).

5 For a copy of the Lanham Act (PL 849, 76th Congress, 1940), see *Defense Housing Digest: A Summary of Laws, Regulations, and Results* (Chicago: National Association of Housing Officials, 1940).

6 The role that defense housing developments would play in postwar urban revitalization was examined in Phillip Fungello, *The Challenge to Urban Liberalism: Federal-City Relations During World War II* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1978), pp. 80-119.

7 "Tenants Buy Town in New Home Plan," *New York Times*, 9 November 1941, p. 44.

8 In 1947 Congress prohibited the Public Housing Administration, the Federal Public Housing Authority's successor agency, from functioning as a mortgagee to mutual housing corporations. Defense housing developments built by agencies other than the Mutual Ownership Defense Housing Division had to borrow money from private lenders. Mortgage insurance was available from the Federal Housing (continued on p. 37)

Joel Warren Barna

Glendower Court and Melanie Court How Many Houses Does It Take to Make a New Neighborhood?

For most Houston neighborhoods, there are no second acts. High-priced neighborhoods can remain stable for generations. But lower-middle-class and working-class neighborhoods — the bulk of the city's fabric — seem to converge eventually on the same trajectory, which runs from happy homeowners to rental property to boarded-up windows and vacant lots. The next generation of Houston buyers wants to live farther out, where the houses are bigger and more traditional looking, the traffic is less congested, and the streets are less cratered. Someplace with a wall around it.

Kingwood and First Colony are the current beneficiaries of this dynamic, just as Woodland Heights and Montrose were 80 years ago, but one day these enclaves will

Court, in red-brick two-story Georgian-style houses. The local landmarks were the residentially scaled, low-roofed, red-brick First Cumberland Presbyterian Church, on Avalon, and, at the area's eastern edge, a big Battelstein's specialty store with abundant parking. I recall noticing that Melanie Court, washed night and day by the traffic noise from Shepherd Drive, had become carport land. The neighborhood's vintage backyard garage sheds — too small to house the two or three cars that most families had by then — were used for storage or were simply falling down. Aluminum-roofed carports, level with or projecting beyond the house façades, were everywhere. To me, this seemed both natural and surprising. I was from the East Side near the Ship Channel, and I recognized



The way we were: a remnant of Glendower Court's more modest days.

slide into the characteristic Houstonian residential fabric, as found around Stella Link, South Main, Old Spanish Trail,

where a second or third generation of middle-class buyers has stabilized or even "upscaled" a section of the city,

Westheimer and Avalon, together only four blocks long and three deep, were developed in the 1920s for the city's burgeoning new class of office workers with cars. Today they manifest the qualities that make a neighborhood revivable, as well as some of the frictions and losses that come with neighborhood transformation.

I remember the area from the 1960s, when my then best friend was dating a girl who lived on Persa Street in Melanie Court. Thirty years ago, Melanie Court was an aging neighborhood where house-holders or their grown children lived in bungalows or small, ranch-style tract houses or, farther west in Glendower



Area map of Glendower Court and Melanie Court.

the carports as a sign that this was a working-class neighborhood. The surprise, I suppose, was finding a working-class neighborhood to the west of

From 1947 to 1992, it would have been possible to buy a lot at the edge of River Oaks and build right out to the lot line, using any materials, in any color, and in almost any form.

Montrose and Ella boulevards, or the Gulf Freeway east of downtown.

Just as there are exceptions at the top of the real estate market — River Oaks, Shadyside, and the Memorial villages, for example — there are a few neighborhoods

such as West University Place and parts of Bellaire.

Add Glendower Court and Melanie Court to the list of places getting a second act. These tiny neighborhoods west of South Shepherd Drive between



The Glendower Court neighborhood, Westgate at Devonshire.



Frank Welch & Associates, architect, 2225 Devonshire Lane, 1982.

downtown. In retrospect, I can see the threat to the neighborhood's longevity written in this change. The carports were crushing the civil sidewalk-lawn-flowerbed-front-porch continuum of middle-class place-making still to be seen in patches on adjoining streets. A neighborhood horn of the car was dying by the car.

Today, Glendower and Melanie courts are very different places. Cumberland Presbyterian remains, looking tiny, but Battelstein's is gone. It became a Frost Brothers, which stood empty for years before being cleared away and replaced by the Remington, an enormous brick and stucco apartment complex that fills



2225 Devonshire Lane, first-floor plan.

not only the Battelstein's building footprint but also the store's onetime parking lots as well. The neighborhoods themselves, although still recognizable, are changing swiftly. Many of the houses

nail guns from a dozen building projects made it almost impossible to think straight. Glendower Court and Melanie Court are among the hottest neighborhoods in Houston, turning into new places in the space of a few months.

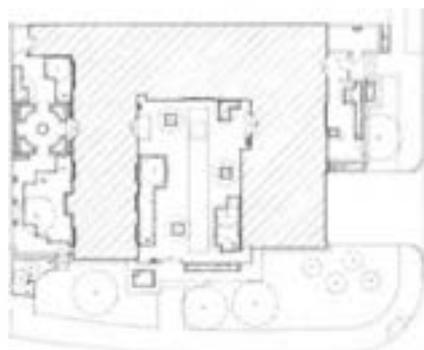
The pivotal event setting the stage for the current upheaval was the expiration, in 1947, of the neighborhood's original deed restrictions. This meant that requirements governing a building's minimum setback from the street, which had done so much to give the area its particular character, were no longer in force. Modified deed restrictions for the area were reinstated in 1992, but in the intervening years it would have been possible to buy a lot at the edge of River Oaks and build right out to the lot line, using any materials, in any color, and in almost any form. It would also have been possible to put up a business — anything from a lawyer's office to a lead smelter — anywhere in the neighborhood. Luckily for the residents, this didn't happen.

extent allowable under the city's building code. Welch's house, completed in 1982, broke with the neighborhood's traditional forms to create what was a new kind of object for this location: big, flat-roofed, elegantly stark, proclaiming a new code of urbanity.

Like any modernist architect dealing with a site facing into the hot afternoon sun, Welch designed the house with a tall sheltering wall, of St. Joe brick, turned to the street. A house from an earlier generation would have had an opening as its central ceremonial feature — a front door bracketed by columns and symmetrical windows. Here, however, Welch span the openings outward from the center. The main entry is tucked into a single-height pavilion at the corner of the stepped bay on the northern side, where the lot is narrowest, while the southern end is dominated by a three-car garage set into a two-story brick wall, made even more prominent in the streetscape by a gray-painted second-floor balcony placed with taut asymmetry at the house's southwest



Kenneth Bentsen & Associates, architect, 2224 Salisbury Lane, 1988, courtyard. Below: site plan.



visible a decade ago are gone. A few have given way to a handful of remarkable architect-designed houses. Most, however, have been replaced by new houses drawn from the pattern books of suburban house builders, but much bigger and much more elaborate in plan, elevation, and decoration. Chances are that the few original houses that remain won't be there for long. On a recent walk through the area, the noise of electric saws and pneumatic



Dining area, 2224 Salisbury Lane.

Nor did clients for new houses come to the area until the late 1970s, when the first of a series of small condominium projects was built, doubling the density per lot. Then a Houston art collector bought a corner lot at 2225 Devonshire (actually facing west along Westgate), tore down the old cottage, and hired architect Frank D. Welch (then of Midland, now of Dallas) to design a house that filled the lot to the maximum

corner. The house's massing gives way between the garage bay and the entry bay — the conventional central opening of the house is there, but it is inaccessible. Instead, a stepped, one-story wall shelters a garden with a pool, fronted by twiggy trees and low shrubs clipped into straight borders and little puffs reminiscent of stool seats. A wood-lattice pergola shelters the garden and shades a pair of enormous windows, set to either side of a tall



Curtis & Windham Architects, 2210 Westgate Drive, 1994.

brick chimney, that match windows on the east side of the house and provide a view through to the sky beyond, framing a glimpse of the gable end of the house next door.

The house's interior spaces, finished with simply detailed walls of brick and gypsum board and floors of marble and carpet, are set in a plan that matches the solid-void play of the exterior. The entry opens to a long U-shaped gallery wrapped around an office-bedroom-bathroom suite. The gallery leads to a two-story-tall living room whose high east-west windows and french doors open onto the pool garden; a window wall opens onto a small garden court on the east side. The living room leads to a one-story dining room, which leads in turn to the house's most dramatic space, the double-height breakfast room with its enormous corner fireplace, adjacent to the open-plan kitchen. Upstairs are bedrooms and a library.

Welch's project announced the beginning of a change that would make Glendower Court into an eastward extension of what bookstore owner Karl Kilian long ago defined as "shallow River Oaks" — the neighborhood of Dickey Place just to the west, east of Kirby — where those unable to buy lots in River Oaks proper settled. The number of wealthy Houstonians with ties to downtown, the Galleria, and the Medical Center had grown, putting pressure on the area. Glendower Court and Melanie Court were the closest "underdeveloped" neighborhoods to this

zone. At the same time, Welch's project improved considerably on the hard-edged, overly monumental "inwardly focused dwelling walled off from its surroundings" that Stephen Fox identified as "the preferred River Oaks house type of the '70s" in the 1990 *Houston Architectural Guide*. Welch's design hinted that Glendower Court could be transformed into an area hospitable to the high-style, low-key modernism found on Tiel Way and other streets to the north, at the eastern edge of River Oaks.

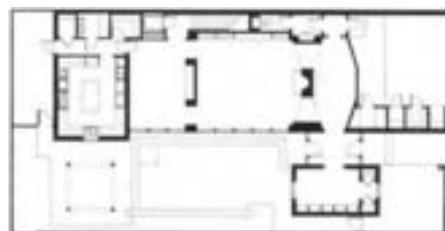
But first, all hell broke loose. Welch's project was built in 1982, at the peak of the 15-year-long Houston real estate boom, right about the time that a young developer named J. R. McConnell was transforming himself from Montrose handyman to major real estate tycoon. McConnell, drawn to the neighborhood by the same forces that had attracted Welch's client, began buying lots. A long-time resident says that McConnell bought up nearly a third of the neighborhood over the course of a year, and that people in the neighborhood were constantly being harassed by McConnell's agents to sell. McConnell promised neighborhood residents that his development would be a fulfillment of the Anglophile tone promised by the area's street names (Devonshire, Salisbury). He would build a little village, with brick-lined streets and gas coach lamps. To show how serious he was, he put up a sign on Salisbury Lane, next door to Welch's project, announcing the imminent construction of townhouses designed for the site by

minium project in the 2100 block of Kingston, designed by Makover Levy Architects, with grandiose engaged columns framing a façade hideously detailed in stucco to resemble Florentine stonework and rising from twin garages to a very mundane composition shingle roof.

With McConnell's exit, the pace of change slowed in Glendower Court. The next event of note took place when architect Kenneth E. Bentsen bought the lot that was to have been the Michael Graves showcase. In 1988, Bentsen built a modern house finished in gray stucco for himself and his family. The house responds to the massing and coloration of its Frank Welch neighbor, with a similar central pool court (although it has a door



Living room (above) and first-floor plan (below), 2210 Westgate Drive.



Michael Graves. However, when the Houston real estate market went bust, McConnell went bankrupt (he would later commit suicide while awaiting trial on charges stemming from what was then the largest bank-fraud trial in U.S. history). Instead of a little Mayfair, he left behind a collection of apartment buildings and condominiums that the neighbors decry as ugly and poorly built. Among these is a real landmark: a condo-

to the street) and walled side gardens. The rooms of the Bentsen house are more domestically scaled and more intimately proportioned than those of the Welch house, with multicolored stone and tile floors and simply detailed walls that form a backdrop to the Bentsens' collection of antique furniture and art. The grandest space is the dining room, glazed on the west side to face the pool court. It contains a monumental staircase that stretches in a single, low-sloped line across the width of the room's eastern wall. Bentsen says he was drawn to Glendower Court by its proximity to River Oaks and downtown and by its lack of deed restrictions, which meant he could build a zero-lot-line house and thus make the house larger than he could on a similar lot else-

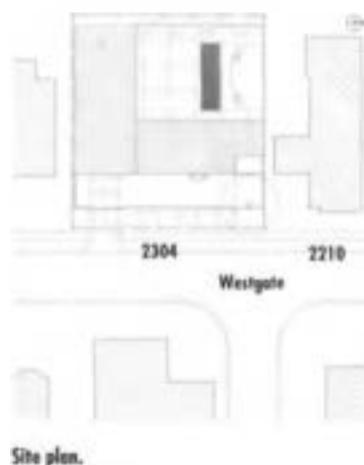


Adjacent to 2210 Westgate Drive, house designed by Carlos Jiménez Architectural Design Studio, 2304 Westgate Drive, 1994.

where. Bentsen drew his room widths to the maximum buildable limits of the site, about 24 feet from the curb. "From there, I just threw it up into elevation, and it worked," he says.

The pace of change from Glendower Court's past to its future is accelerating: Bentsen's house on Westgate has recently been joined by two other inward-facing modern houses.

The first of these, at 2210 Westgate Drive, is by Curtis & Windham Architects, young architects best known for working in an academically correct classical idiom. But for this building, according to Russell Windham, the client wanted nothing even indirectly classical in the design — no columns, no pediments, no cornices, no symmetry, not even any golden-section window proportions. What the client got is a severe rectangular composition in St. Joe brick and glass. Nevertheless it exudes a sense of decorum and refinement from each revealed junction of wall and floor and every precisely placed rain gutter. On a 50-by-100-foot lot, the house presents its narrow elevation to the street: a simple entry and a small garden, along with a garage door surmounted by a brick wall with a corner window. The house is pulled to the northern edge of its site, maximizing the space available for a side court on the south, onto which the house's ground-floor living room and dining room open. A vestibule and a



small library form a projection sheltering the court from the street.

The Curtis & Windham house shares a wall, at the edge of the garden court, with the house to the south, at 2304 Westgate. Designed by Carlos Jiménez, this building expands both the materials palette and the boundaries of the modernist iconography used in the Welch, Bentsen, and Curtis & Windham houses, while carrying their shared minimalism a step further. The L-shaped house, with curved metal roofs and walls of rose-colored concrete masonry units, consists of a one-story wing parallel to the street and a two-story wing parallel to the south property line. Together with walls on the north and west property lines, these wings enclose a large, nearly square courtyard with a swimming pool. A stucco wall, just over eye height, separates



Dining room, 2304 Westgate Drive.

the single-story wing from Westgate Drive. It encloses the entry vestibule, which shares a long, half-vaulted ceiling with the living room. At the junction of the wings, a garage faces the street. Lined up behind it are a dining room, a kitchen, and a library. Bedrooms and a study are upstairs.

The house's tightly controlled plan and the free shifts in section that open rooms to changing light are themes in Jiménez's work. Here they are joined by intriguing details, such as a chimney that looks like one of those optical-illusion drawings that is a single cylinder at one end and a double cylinder at the other. Only later is one reminded of the way Frank Welch, working half a block away, used a dramatically proportioned chimney to help relieve the visual impact of an inward-facing house.

In fact, the four modern houses on Westgate are full of visual harmonies and correspondences — enough that they form a new kind of urban ensemble for Houston, evincing a pattern of zero-lot-line neighborliness. Of course, as buildings in variants of the modern style and as upscale intruders in a less-expensive neighborhood of vernacular buildings, these houses all implicitly criticize, if not actually reject, their context. They have reshaped the street frontage at the same time that they have asserted a higher,

more demanding aesthetic sense by stripping away unnecessary ornaments and formalities.

Nevertheless, the echoes among the houses, in their high-style, modernist way, recall the faded urban conventions of the neighborhood's aboriginal Georgian houses. Their high walls, recalling urban sources in Europe and Mexico, contain the private realm of each house, intensifying its privacy. In addition, the walls seem to intensify the relationship of each house to the natural world. Instead of the lawns and plantings that form diffuse zones around the typical suburban house, these houses, inside their walls, have gardens that are actually part of the house. Each house also has a less successful appendage in its narrow vestigial garden strip (in the case of the Jiménez house, there is actually a strip of dark green concrete that some of the neighbors see as a gratuitous and unfunny joke) facing the street.

If the natural world is embraced by these houses, however, the social world is excluded. Whereas the older houses of Glendower Court were set in an environment that welcomed pedestrians with layers of formal devices, the houses on Westgate Drive present only their walls and their garages. Turning the garages into tightly constrained street-side openings, and building them into podiums for a bedroom wing, the strategy in each of the four houses, would seem to be an effective way of taming the car and saving the house and neighborhood from the ravages visited on it during the 1960s. But it means that much of each house reads, to the passing pedestrian and driver, as a great big garage. The houses on Westgate Drive are talking to each other, but it is a closed conversation. One is reminded of the plazas that architects and developers added to their office buildings in the 1960s and 1970s, ostensibly as gathering places that would foster urban life. The plazas looked good on paper, but experience showed them to be places that few people wanted to walk through, much less spend time in. Here, what has been gained in exploring new possibilities for urban housing forms means the loss of a good deal of urbanity.

A different vocabulary and a different approach to the street are employed in a fifth remarkable architect-designed house

in the area: the house called El Jaral, at 2106 Persa, two blocks east of Westgate Drive. Its designers, Taft Architects, have adapted a vernacular South Texas ranch house, which the clients chose explicitly as a model, to a new suburban context. The clients also wanted the house to be exceptionally connected to the outdoors and to be maintenance free. The two-story house, stretching north-south

local context. Tall and three lots long, like a couple of barns on a ridgetop in Jim Hogg County, the Taft house is a long way from the unofficially agreed on codes of civility and ceremony once enshrined in the houses of Melanie Court and Glendower Court. For that matter, with its hard-chic concrete-block walls (the mortar was dug out between each block to emphasize the shadow lines), its bal-



Taft Architects, El Jaral, 2106 Persa Street, 1994.

across three 50-by-100-foot lots, is pulled back to the western edge of the site and separated from the street by courtyards, a fence, and a wide strip of garden planted in native South Texas flowers, shrubs, and trees. Kitchen, living room, and library are on the first floor, while bedrooms are upstairs. The courtyards are bisected by a one-story, stucco-clad volume with a barrel-vaulted metal roof—the living room. To the south of the living room is a courtyard with a swimming pool, while to the north is a larger automobile court. All the rooms in the house are a single volume deep for cross-ventilation, a throwback to the days before central air conditioning became standard in Houston houses. The clients' collection of folk art and fine art, most of it with a connection to South Texas or Mexico, enlivens the interiors, helping punctuate the house's flowing spaces into defined functional zones.

Even more than the inward-turning architect-designed houses on Westgate, El Jaral is an object building, a one-of-a-kind, that makes a radical shift in the



El Jaral, loggia.

cony railings made of industrial pipes and fencing, and its sharp metal brackets, the house is a long way from the "preferred River Oaks house type" of recent years, although it clearly marks the eastern limit of the expansion of shallow River Oaks through Glendower Court and Melanie Court.

If El Jaral looks a little alien in its context, it is because our eyes are trained to expect



El Jaral, 2106 Persa Street, living room.

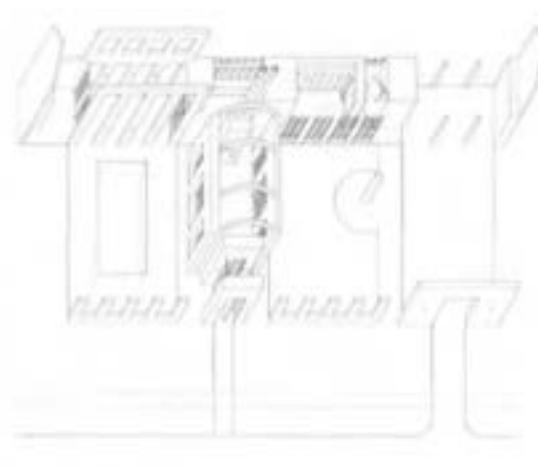
houses set back, all at the same depth from the street, behind unfenced lawns and shrubs, with neat front doors and demurely framed picture windows. Deciding which tradition, out of many possibilities, is the one to guide contemporary building is a complex, culturally determined matter. In fact, the vernacular South Texas ranch house, with its response to climate and its connections to

speculative apartment units (some a couple of feet apart to avoid the expense of a firewall), in addition to zero-lot-line houses with the overstated, mixed-up visual themes often found in builder-style houses in the outer suburbs—tall, spindly pediments set halfway into a front porch, a melange of semi-historicist elevations and fenestration, and oversized corner "quoins" of stucco. In terms of sheer area, the architectural high style is losing ground to the builder vernacular in Melanie Court and Glendower Court. On Westgate Drive, the high-style houses form their own context, but they are isolated in their neighborhood, just as El Jaral is.

It may take an act three before everything gets sorted out, to see which strain—high style or builder style—is better adapted to the cultural and economic forces at work today, and to see if Melanie Court and Glendower Court expand River Oaks or begin to regress back to the mean, the trajectory of most Houston neighborhoods. ■

regional culture, makes a lot of sense in a suburban context, as David R. Williams and O'Neil Ford argued in the 1920s and as Ford demonstrated many times in later decades.

As things are developing, though, El Jaral will be looking more exotic in its context, not less. Across Persa and up and down surrounding streets, developers have started piling on the square footage, building



Projected drawing.

Cartier-Bresson in Houston, 1957

I. a u r i N e l s o n

I have never been interested in the documentary aspect of photography except as a poetic expression. Only the photograph which springs from life interests me. Henri Cartier-Bresson

In April 1957, Henri Cartier-Bresson came to Houston at the invitation of John and Dominique de Menil to photograph the American Federation of Arts'



A private prop jet conveyed attendees of the 1957 American Federation of Arts convention to see art in other Texas cities.

1957 convention, which the Menils helped organize. The 48-year-old photographer, using an inconspicuous 35mm Leica whose silent shutter allowed him to anonymously document the streets of the world, had already created some of the most memorable images of the 20th century. At the time of his visit to Houston, Cartier-Bresson had achieved a level of popular and critical recognition previously unattained by any photographer.¹

The 114 prints resulting from Cartier-Bresson's visit, never widely published or exhibited,² portray a particularly dynamic moment in Houston's history. During the preceding decade the city's population had doubled, and its wealth had increased fivefold. Annexation of 27 outlying districts by city council had recently doubled its size. The photographs mark the juncture when the Magnolia City became Space City, as the pace of the Old South began accelerating to that of an international metropolis.

Cartier-Bresson's photographs of Houston share the qualities for which his more familiar work is known. They feature a broad range of locales and not infrequently were taken amid large gatherings of people. The photographer used the same technique he had employed to great effect during his 1938 series of the coronation of George VI or his 1948 images of Gandhi's funeral, in which he turned his back on the central event in order to capture images of the crowd. Cartier-Bresson is especially known for his photographs of individuals in intimately observed and commonplace moments — photographs that, as Lincoln Kirstein observed, transform the everyday into a never-fading permanence, in the French tradition of Degas and Baudelaire. Cartier-Bresson's photographs derive their meaning from both their subject matter and the rigorous arrangement of formal elements, achieved by split-second timing on the part of the photographer. Negatives were never cropped or altered in the developing process. Borrowing from Stendahl, Cartier-Bresson described his endeavor as "putting one's head, one's eye, and one's heart on the same axis."

The American Federation of Arts convention ran from 3 April to 6 April 1957 and was held at the Shamrock Hotel. It included speeches and panel discussions, exhibitions, house tours, poolside luncheons, and banquets; on the third day, a private plane ferried delegates on a day trip to museums and private collections in Dallas, Fort Worth, and San Antonio. Visitors to Houston wandered the Shamrock, its green-carpeted, fully air-conditioned public rooms undoubtedly resonating with allusions to its recent depiction in the 1956 movie *Giant*, starring James Dean and Elizabeth Taylor. The conference was the first time African Americans were permitted to attend events at the hotel, although black conferees still could not register as overnight guests.

The conference, the largest in the federation's history, attracted an audience of more than 1,400 when only 200 had been anticipated. Approximately 60 percent of the registrants were Texans. *Arts*,

Art News, the *New York Times*, *Fortune*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, *Life*, and the United Press sent staff to cover the event from New York aboard a private jet chartered by the conference organizers. The discus-



Philip Johnson (center) and James Thrall Soby (right) at the American Federation of Arts convention, organized in large part by the Menils and held at the Shamrock Hotel.

sion panels were composed of some of the art world's most influential scholars, critics, artists, collectors, and dealers. Art historian Meyer Schapiro of Columbia University delivered the keynote address. Other important participants were Rudolf Arnheim, Gregory Bateson, Stuart Davis, Marcel Duchamp, Jimmy Ernst, Sidney Janis, Randall Jarrell, Philip Johnson, William Seitz, James Thrall Soby, and James Johnson Sweeney. The toastmaster for the annual banquet was actor and collector Vincent Price. *Art News* reprinted five of the convention speeches in the summer of 1957, including the conference's most lasting contribution, Marcel Duchamp's talk "The Creative Act."

The Menils invited Cartier-Bresson to stay on after the convention and photograph various locations in and around Houston. In fact, the record of the conference proceedings constituted only about 15 percent of what he shot during his visit. Local architect Howard Barnstone and the Menils took the photographer on a wide-ranging tour of neighborhoods and industrial sites such as the Houston Ship Channel, the Anderson, Clayton & Company cotton warehouses, oil drilling sites, and chemical plants. He also went downtown, where Foley's department store, occupying some of the most expensive retail property in the country, shared Main Street with the old Stelzig's Saddlery shop, founded a century before. He visited school assemblies, country clubs, such neighborhoods as Third Ward, Fourth

Ward, and River Oaks, and even a tent revival outside Humble.

The convention visit was not Cartier-Bresson's last to the Houston area. In

1962 he was invited by John de Menil to photograph the historic architecture of Galveston. The resulting photographs, along with those of architectural photographer Ezra Stoller, were published in 1966 by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, in Howard Barnstone's book *The Galveston That Was*. Like the Houston photographs, they show a

Southern town in the midst of irrevocable change, a record made possible by Cartier-Bresson's unique ability to range beyond the prescribed boundaries of social class, race, and the rural or urban context.

The author and Cite magazine are grateful to Henri Cartier-Bresson, Dominique de Menil, and the Menil Collection for their generous assistance and their permission to reproduce these photographs.

¹ Cartier-Bresson had already photographed the postcolonial world under the auspices of Magnum, the first cooperative agency of photojournalists, which he helped found. His travels had taken him to India, Burma, and Pakistan, to China during the last six months of the Kuomintang and the first six months of the People's Republic, and to Indonesia at the moment of its independence. In 1953 he was one of the first photographers to be admitted to the Soviet Union after Stalin's death and the restoration of international relations. By 1957, Cartier-Bresson's numerous international honors included two Overseas Press Club awards, for his reportage following the death of Gandhi in 1948 and for his work in Russia in 1954.

² The first major monograph of his work, *Images à la Savante*, appeared in 1952. Translated as *The Decisive Moment*, it was a great influence on American photographers of the 1960s, particularly Helen Levitt and Bruce Davidson. Cartier-Bresson's first museum retrospective, an exhibition of more than 400 works, was the first show of photography to be installed in the Louvre; it was touring under the title *The Decisive Moment* in Japan, Canada, and the U.S. in 1957, the year of his visit to Houston.

³ A Schlumberger Companies newsletter, *Intercom*, published a selection of the photographs in its August 1958 issue, edited by Howard Barnstone. In spring 1959, *The Forum*, a literary magazine at the University of Houston, also published a small group of them. In 1968, an exhibition of Cartier-Bresson's photographs in the Cologne Kunsthallen featured a single work from the Houston series, a dockworker on the Houston Ship Channel, mistakenly labeled as having been taken in New Orleans in 1958. This is the only time a work from the Houston series was selected by Cartier-Bresson for exhibition. The first exhibition of the series was held at the Menil Collection in November-December 1994 and featured 24 of the 114 photographs in the 1957 series.



The cotton-classing room at Anderson, Clayton & Co. (above). Twins downtown on Main Street (above right). Elmo's Coffee Shop, Preston Avenue, on the near north side of downtown (right).

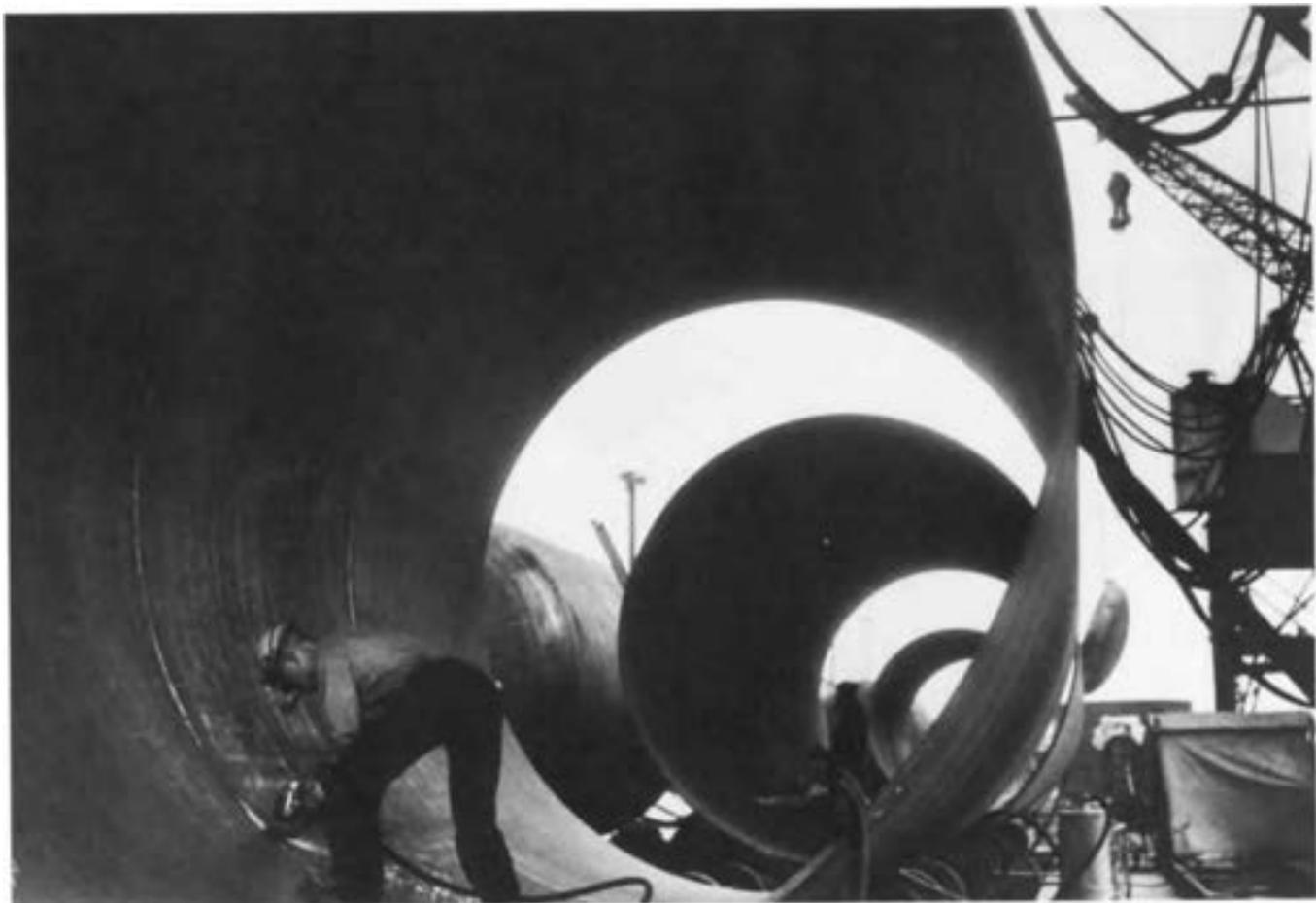




The hat section at Foley's department store (above right). Street scene (right). River Oaks Country Club (below right).



Tent revival, Humble, Texas
(above, left and right). Grinding
welds inside storage vessels,
Houston Ship Channel (below).





Loading flour, Houston Ship Channel (above left). Two boys (above right). The Gulf Freeway, only five years old, where it cut through Third Ward (below).



Gabriella Gutiérrez

From the Grassroots

The Greater Third Ward Community Plan

With a June 1993 request for proposals for comprehensive planning assistance, the Third Ward Redevelopment Council officially kicked off an ambitious, highly progressive, and long overdue effort to revitalize the greater Third Ward, an area of the inner city southeast of downtown that lies north of Old Spanish Trail, east of Main Street, south of Interstate 45, and west of (and including) the University of Houston. Predicated on community participation and privately funded by local benefactors, the project represents a unique and important grassroots planning effort in a city in which

seen as an infringement of the rights and privileges of the business elite.² The Greater Third Ward Community Plan may serve as a model for other local community activists and planners to emulate.

The main purpose of the nonprofit Third Ward Redevelopment Council is to coordinate the revitalization of the greater Third Ward. Officially established on 24 August 1992 and currently chaired by the

ning area was established to coordinate the effort.

The newly established Third Ward Redevelopment Council secured verbal commitments to the project and promises of financial support from Texas Southern University, the University of Houston, and the Texas Medical Center — the major institutions in the planning area.⁴ Resources and staff assistance have been

Third Ward, from which the Greater Third Ward Community Plan has emerged, is one of Houston's four original city council districts and oldest neighborhoods. Stephen Fox describes it in the *Houston Architectural Guide* as "a landscape that spatially depicts the development of Houston's Afro-American community from a culture formed under the impact of legal segregation to one that has won nominal equality."⁸ Despite persisting inequities and socioeconomic disparities, Third Ward remains a distinctive and culturally rich community, resonant with African American history, from which some of Houston's notable black leaders have emerged. The *Houston Press* characterized it as charming and historic, "one of the most fascinating areas in town," and designated it "Best Neighborhood" in the September 1994 Best of Houston issue.

Community planner Roberta Burroughs — a former Third Ward resident whose firm, Roberta F. Burroughs and Associates, was awarded the Greater Third Ward Community Plan contract in April 1994 — calls the neighborhood one of Houston's best-kept secrets. Burroughs, who has a background in sociology and urban planning, is well versed in community planning and committed to getting people involved in neighborhood redevelopment. Her firm's "asser-based planning" focuses on a community's strengths, seeking consensus on strategies for improving conditions in the neighborhoods as well as maintaining the healthy areas. Her planning team, which included program and policy evaluators Decision Information Resources, planner Sara Jane White, and the civil engineering firm Terra Associates, developed the plan in four phases. The planning process has been something of a laboratory for students and faculty from Texas Southern University and the University of Houston, who have participated in facilitating community meetings, surveying land use in the neighborhoods, and exploring urban design concepts for a linear greenway.

Phase one of the plan, completed in July 1994, involved setting goals and objectives and eliciting residents' opinions about existing conditions, the community's problems and potentials, and possible improvements. Housing, land use, economic development, transportation and circulation, community facilities, city services, human services, the arts, and community empowerment were identified as critical issues.⁹ Phase two reviewed and analyzed existing conditions. Strategies for addressing community problems and reinforcing community strengths were presented to the community for its feedback in draft form during phase three. Phase four consisted of refining the draft plan to reflect public response. The final plan was presented to the public on June 3 in a community celebration organized by the Third Ward Redevelopment Council and held at TSU.



These boarded-up shotgun houses will soon make way for single- and multifamily housing, to be built by a newly formed community development corporation in Third Ward.

development decisions typically descend from above. From the start the Third Ward Redevelopment Council made public involvement a key condition of the planning process, stating emphatically that "the plan must directly reflect the priorities of the residents and area civic organizations."¹

This from-the-bottom-up endeavor is especially significant for Houston, a city many sociologists and planners consider the antithesis of the planned city. The role of government in Houston has been to accommodate the needs of capital rather than community; conventional planning is

Rev. Manson Johnson, the council is a coalition of universities, hospitals, businesses, churches, civic organizations, and residents. It grew out of a series of breakfast forums held by Texas Southern University in 1990 to present a campus master plan to Third Ward stakeholders, during which concerns were voiced about issues affecting the quality of life in the community.³ It became apparent that a comprehensive plan was needed to develop effective strategies to address those issues and guide revitalization in Third Ward. A formal organization made up of representatives of community groups, businesses, and institutions from the plan-

provided by the city of Houston, Metro, and the University of Houston, and many local banks and foundations have contributed funds.⁵ Neighborhood churches and other civic groups and individuals are also collaborating with the council and its team of community planners.

The "greater" Third Ward addressed in the plan comprises 12 neighborhoods, several public parks, the medical center, and the campuses of TSU and UH⁶ and is adjacent to Midtown, downtown, and the East End.⁷ The planning area covers approximately eight square miles, roughly a third the size of Manhattan.

The council is planning an event in the late fall to kick off implementation of the plan.

In addition, the International Federation for Housing and Planning announced in October that a team of University of Houston architecture students (working under the direction of the author) earned first prize in the seventh annual International Student Design Competition for their project "A Greenway for the Greater Third Ward: Connecting Diverse Urban Communities," conceived as part of the Greater Third Ward Community Plan.

A comprehensive community plan serves as a guide for city officials, public agencies, and private interests planning for the growth, revitalization, and redevelopment of a community. Grassroots cooperative projects throughout the country have succeeded when undertaken in the spirit of cooperation and good faith. The Greater Third Ward Community Plan is an important example for shaping a vision of Houston for the next century that is responsive to the needs of all the city's citizens regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status. ■



Team leader Roberta Burroughs (third from right) and team member Mark Ingram (standing, left) discuss goals for circulation with Third Ward Redevelopment Council board members.



One of several modernist houses in Greater Third Ward.



The intersection of Scott and Blodgett (near Texas Southern University and the University of Houston) is a terminus of one of several "economic revitalization corridors."



Calvary Baptist Church, 3019 Dennis, 1947, in the Third Ward neighborhood.



Second Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, 3317 Francis, is one of nearly 40 churches in Greater Third Ward.



House on South MacGregor Way in the Riverside Terrace neighborhood.

- 1 Third Ward Redevelopment Council, "Requests for Proposals for Comprehensive Planning Technical Assistance for the Greater Third Ward Community," June 1993, p. 6.
- 2 Stella M. Capek and John I. Gilderblom, *Community Versus Commodity: Tenants and the American City* (Albany: State University of New York, 1992). In chapter 6, "Cities Without Urban Grass-Roots Movements: The Case of Houston," the authors compare Houston with Santa Monica to demonstrate the possible consequences of each city's approach to governing.
- 3 Third Ward Redevelopment Council, "Requests for Proposals," June 1993, p. 3.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- 5 Donors to the Greater Third Ward Community Plan include Bank of America, Bank of Houston, Bank One, Texas N.A., Bank United, the Brown Foundation, Compass Bank, Enterprise Bank, Guaranty Federal Bank, the Houston Endowment, Inc., NationsBank, the Shell Oil Foundation, Southwest Bank of Texas, Southwestern Bell Telephone Company, Tenneco, Inc., and Texas Commerce Bank.
- 6 The 12 neighborhoods are Third Ward, Binz, Riverside Terrace-Washington Terrace, Southwood-North MacGregor Oaks, Tierwester-Canfield Oaks-College Oaks, Oak Manor-University Woods, University Oaks, West MacGregor, Parkwood Drive-South MacGregor, Southland, Ardmore, and Devonshire-University Place. Hermann Park, the Brays Bayou hike and bike trail, and MacGregor Park are the major parks. See Roberta F. Burroughs and Associates with Decision Information Resources, Inc., and Sara Jane White, AICP, Inc., "Third Ward Community Plan Background Report: Population, Employment, Housing," October 1994, p. 19.
- 7 Burroughs and Associates, "Greater Third Ward News," April 1994.
- 8 Stephen Fox, *Houston Architectural Guide* (American Institute of Architects-Houston Chapter and Herring Press, 1990), p. 144.
- 9 Burroughs and Associates, "Greater Third Ward News," December 1994.

Ernesto Luis Maldonado
and Frank Whitson

AFTER THE SPRAWL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS WORK TO RECLAIM THE INNER CITY

Houston is a city without boundaries—either geographic or legislative. Its western prairies stretch to the Brazos River, with no natural boundary stopping its potential expansion. The fact that Texas law allows for continual annexation of land in the city's extraterritorial

on the edge of all U.S. cities easily accessible for subdivision. Houston, with its flat lands, has been particularly prone to sprawl: its area is now 594 square miles, with a population density of 4.6 people per acre. Los Angeles, the other "car" city, has an area of 453 square miles and

building rather than profit. CDCs generally are formed by concerned citizens who have learned from civic activism that change is best accomplished through coalitions of many stakeholders focused on one task. The task they choose is developing their neighborhood.



Paul Pfeiffer & Jim Hightower © 1995

Navigation Boulevard, in the neighborhood of the Second Ward Community Development Corporation.

jurisdiction diffuses any pressure for redevelopment of the inner city. Houston's development community has always preferred to build new housing with new infrastructure on newly subdivided land, while neglecting or abandoning the city's historic neighborhoods: the original six wards, the communities of Harrisburg and Magnolia, and other such neighborhoods developed before World War II.

The availability of federal and state subsidies for the construction of new roads, highways, and ring roads has made land

a population density of 12 people per acre. Chicago—like Houston, founded in the 1830s—occupies 234 square miles, with 18.6 people per acre.¹

But there are forces bucking our city's ingrained habit of suburban spread. In the late 1980s, a group of community development corporations (CDCs) began working to build below-market-rate housing in Houston's older inner-city neighborhoods. The function of CDCs is to generate development and new construction, much like private development. Their focus, however, is on community

Currently, 39 CDCs throughout Houston have projects planned, under construction, or completed. How has the CDC movement fared in Houston, in the face of a culture based on individual rather than community initiative?

On 12 December 1994, New Foundations for Neighborhoods—a program of the United Way and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, a national intermediary organization that provides technical and financial support to CDCs—conducted a bus tour to show corporate leaders, bankers, and local legislators



Houston's largest community development corporations.

housing developed by four of Houston's leading CDCs. At the first stop, at the corner of Garrow and Palmer in the East End near Navigation, were two houses built by the Second Ward CDC — the first single-family houses built in Second Ward in 50 years. Next were 30 units of new single-family housing built by the Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation, part of an extensive proposal to redevelop Fifth Ward with new housing (including multifamily housing), new businesses to revitalize Lyons Avenue, an educational festival scheduled for October 1996, partnering with the Neighborhoods to Standards program, and beautification and tree-planting projects. Also on the tour were seven houses just being completed by the Acres Homes CDC on huge Acres Homes lots (originally planned to accommodate subsistence farming), outside the Loop and west of Interstate 45 around Little York; and 13 new single-family houses built by the Greater Houston Urban Redevelopment Corporation in the Laura Koppe area off 59 North.²

Mortgage financing for most of the housing on the tour was provided by a zero-percent mortgage program administered by New Foundations and the Houston Housing Finance Corporation, a public, nonprofit housing finance agency, with permanent financing available from area banks such as First Interstate and Texas Commerce. The city has offered funding assistance in the form of "soft" second mortgages: when the first mortgage is paid, the second mortgage is forgiven.

The CDCs whose projects were presented on the tour are four of 23 currently assisted by New Foundations, up from only three in 1991. Although this total pales in comparison to the Chicago



Two homes on Garrow Street (Karen Hamilton, architect), built by the Second Ward CDC: the first new housing in this neighborhood in the last 50 years.

area's 100, the growing number of CDCs in Houston does show that the idea is catching on. The Heights CDC is well on its way to completing eight new houses in 1995. The Houston Area CDC is redeveloping a downtown hotel, the 1414 Congress Hotel, into a 57-unit single-room-occupancy (SRO) facility, designed to provide subsidized housing as a transitional step for those wishing to get out of area shelters but not yet able to afford permanent housing at market rates.

The Greater Park Place CDC, the Near North CDC, and the Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans CDC (AAMA-CDC) have ongoing programs to rehabilitate or develop new housing capacity in their service areas while they foster efforts to revitalize or beautify their neighborhoods. Other CDCs, such as the Third Ward CDC and the Frenchtown Community

Association, are currently working on master planning and community center developments. All these efforts point to the benefits that can accrue from the maturation of the CDCs' boards of directors and their relationships with the corporate, financial, and governmental entities of the city of Houston. These relationships are the key to the future of the CDC movement in Houston.

The typical CDC project takes several years to design, permit, build, and sell. The long gestation periods frustrate many participants and jeopardize projects with contingent funding. For example, Community Development Block Grants or Home Investment Partnership Program money from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development may leverage bank loans, which may leverage foundation grants. Thus a hitch in one funding source can imperil all. Delays are due to several factors. Inevitable difficulties result because the board members of the CDCs are largely novices: for many this is the first effort at understanding the complexities of building permitting and

hoods: safe parks and meeting places, good schools, and shopping opportunities stemming from neighborhood initiative.

True to Houston's suburban bias, the first CDC projects have filled vacant land in older neighborhoods with suburban-style, single-family detached housing. Only the Fifth Ward CDC has realized that the area it is redeveloping is now a part of an urban entity. At some point in the future the inner-city neighborhoods must make a commitment to a housing type other than the single-family detached house, one that will permit greater density to offset the high cost of redeveloping older neighborhoods.

In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs describes the distinction between catastrophic redevelopment (when an area is allowed to deteriorate completely so that developers can justify demolishing the entire neighborhood every 50 years or so and begin construction with a clean slate) and incremental redevelopment (when small increments of funding are provided continuously so that a context is left for the new buildings and additions to the neighborhood). Catastrophic redevelopment results in single-age neighborhoods that are built in a short period of time and whose buildings age simultaneously. Securing new mortgage funding is difficult for older, single-age neighborhoods in decline. Thus begins a downward spiral of deterioration that reinforces the logic of scrapping the neighborhood and beginning again with yet another single-age neighborhood, which is later vulnerable to the same problem.

Funding incremental redevelopment can preserve a neighborhood and even allow opportunities for new development to respond to the existing context. The successful CDCs will be those that create a community of individuals working toward a development process based on incremental funding, to preserve the history and substance of the neighborhood. A relatively new mechanism of development, the CDC projects have the potential of redefining strategies for the renewal of Houston's inner-city neighborhoods. ■

1 City of Houston Planning and Development Department, "Demographic and Land Use Profile for Houston, Texas," June 1992, p. 9.

2 James Robinson, "Affordable Homes Provide Extra Reason for Holiday Joy," *Houston Chronicle*, 13 December 1994, p. 19A.

3 James Robinson, "Is the Housing Authority Underserving Hispanics?," *Houston Chronicle*, 14 August 1994, pp. 1C, 6C.

construction. The process is further slowed by the byzantine process of development platting, surveying, designing, permitting, contracting, and selling property in older neighborhoods. Extended schedules and inflated development budgets may result when redeveloping land with hidden environmental hazards, such as those that deterred the city of Houston from completing a 59-unit project at the Milby Bus Barn site despite an extensive, expensive, and successful remediation effort.

Most CDCs begin by building single-family detached houses in the \$55,000 to \$65,000 range, but these small individual projects fail to address the critical need for 20,000 units indicated by Houston's housing authority.³ And, except for the Fifth Ward CDC, few of the CDCs have looked beyond house construction to the larger forces that create viable neighbor-

Alex Hecht

HANDS-ON HELP HOUSTON GROUPS THAT WORK FOR LOW-INCOME HOUSING

A number of concerned Houston activist groups are battling their city's legacy of inadequate low-income housing. "Housing is a basic human right," asserts Mathew Mapram, a member of the Mayor's Task Force on Affordable Housing and director of a local community housing group. "We have an obligation to strengthen our society, and low-income housing has traditionally increased the tax base and revitalized our community. And when people have something to protect of their own, they don't go out and destroy other people's property."

Perhaps the best-known housing group at work in Houston is Habitat for Humanity, an international nonprofit organization that builds houses for families whose incomes do not exceed \$19,000. A majority of Habitat's funding and volunteer labor come from corporations and civic organizations, but the families also pitch in, donating 300 hours of "sweat equity" to each Habitat project. A Habitat mortgage costs about \$40,000, with monthly payments of \$250 to \$300. Since the completion of its first Houston home on Christmas Eve 1988, Habitat has finished 78 houses, mostly in Second and Fifth wards, housing 316 people, including 222 children.

Advocates for Housing, a nonprofit agency created in 1990 to develop safe and sanitary housing for lower-income families, is considered the legislative watchdog for the affordable-housing issue. Advocates prints a monthly newsletter designed to keep its 500-person mailing list — which includes politicians, the boards of community development corporations, banks, architects, builders, developers, churches, and social service providers — abreast of policy changes that could affect affordable housing.

For the past two years, Advocates for Housing has been developing a proposal to create a nonprofit agency called the Land Bank, which would assist in the redevelopment of abandoned or severely tax-delinquent properties. According to James Neidinger, executive director of Advocates for Housing, the concept targets the thousands of vacated, deteriorating properties seized by the city and county taxing districts each year that must by law sit idle until the foreclosure sale on the steps of the county courthouse — a two-year minimum.



A NOAH crew works on rehabilitating a dilapidated house.

"In the middle of a block of nice houses in an otherwise stable inner-city neighborhood, you'll see a vacant shack, maybe a vacant lot, or some property that somebody obviously doesn't care about," Neidinger says. "The property just sits there for years and years. The Land Bank would act as an intermediary to help somebody, either a CDC or some neighbor, bring the property back up to standard."

ACORN (the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) helps low-income families find funding to help them buy their own homes. In 1994 ACORN helped 836 low-income Houstonians secure mortgages. "We are a grassroots organization," explains Mathew Mapram, director of ACORN. "We don't want workers who are looking for name recognition, but people who want to revitalize their own houses or neighborhoods." Started in 1970, ACORN makes sure that banks follow the Community Reinvestment Act, which requires them to put 25 percent of their

banking deposits back into the community. According to Mapram, banks have historically avoided investing in lower-income areas, illegally redlining poorer, nonwhite neighborhoods. ACORN provides loan counseling for lower-income people who don't have traditional credit, don't know about mortgages, or are intimidated by the banks. "If a family has paid \$500 or \$600 in rent for the last five years but hasn't been paying their utilities on time," says Mapram, "why shouldn't they get a mortgage? They could afford a \$40,000 or \$50,000 home easily."

Within the past five years, 39 nonprofit community development corporations (CDCs) have started up in Houston, working to build new housing in the city's older neighborhoods. The largest, the Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation, boasts more than 5,000 members and is currently constructing a 312-unit apartment complex. New Foundations for Neighborhoods, the result of a 1992 partnership between the United Way and the Local Initiatives

Support Corporation (LISC), helps CDCs in their mission of community building by providing ongoing training, from real estate projects to organization to structure; by offering loans and grants; and by providing retail initiatives for CDCs hoping to attract large grocery chains to their neighborhoods. "Instead of simply dumping money into a community," explains New Foundations director Marshall Tyndall, "you have ownership of a project by the community."

Private Sector Initiatives (PSI), a privately funded organization, repairs homes in lower-income areas one weekend a year. Using 5,000 volunteers from Houston-area churches and businesses, PSI works on 250 Houston homes a year, mostly in inner-city neighborhoods such as Sunnyside and Acres Homes.

On a smaller scale is the Neighborhood Organization for Acceptable Housing (NOAH), a seven-year-old nonprofit group that also repairs inner-city homes. NOAH president Gene Antill, one of the

founders of Habitat in Houston, was dismayed by the number of people who contacted Habitat searching for a simple rehabilitation, which Habitat does not provide. In 1988 Antill left Habitat and helped found NOAH. Operating out of Trinity Episcopal Church, it repairs between 30 and 35 houses each year. This past summer, working with St. James Episcopal Church, NOAH sponsored a work camp for kids in Third Ward that completed repairs on five homes.

For building materials, NOAH relies on donations from churches and materials from contractors demolishing houses in West University Place. For labor, NOAH works with another extension of Trinity Episcopal Church, New Creations (formerly called Lord of the Streets), a construction company that employs formerly homeless men. The eight regular workers are mostly recovering alcoholics and drug addicts, who are acting on the 12th step in their recovery process — "Give back what you receive."

George Burrell is a New Creations employee. In 1993 Burrell had been evicted from his apartment for not paying his rent and was living on the street. He was an alcoholic. He did not have a job. He sold his blood to stay in shelters on cold nights. After a seven-month stay in a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center, he found his salvation and sobriety in New Creations, which mandates Bible study each morning and a Sunday breakfast and Eucharist. With a background in carpentry and electronics, Burrell was immediately handy at the work sites. Today he holds a management position at New Creations.

"We're helping out in any way we can," says Burrell, on his way home from a job in Fourth Ward. He is driving through Montrose, past properties he has rehabilitated and others he wishes he could. "It amazes me how many houses and small apartment complexes are shut down that are not in really terrible shape. And two blocks down the street, when you go underneath the freeway you see four guys making a home under there. . . . It just blows me away. There is so much work to do in Houston." ■

Volunteer Housing Organizations

- Habitat for Humanity 521-3552
- Advocates for Housing/The Land Bank 224-5408
- ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) 863-9002
- New Foundations for Neighborhoods 759-6057
- Private Sector Initiatives 659-2511
- NOAH (Neighborhood Organization for Acceptable Housing) 748-1639
- New Creations (the Rev. Garrett Wingfield, Trinity Episcopal Church) 528-4109

"Our Mutual Friend"

(continued from p. 21)

Administration under Section 213, which provided for loans to cooperatives.

9 Residents paid a monthly fee to cover interest, amortization, insurance, taxes, maintenance and repair, vacancy reserve, and administrative expense. See "Homes Under 'Camden Plan' Not for Rent, Not for Sale," a supplement to the *Philadelphia Courier-Post*, 13 December 1941.

10 Westbrook's Mutual Ownership Defense Housing Division was not the only constituent of the Federal Works Agency that enlisted leading modern architects to assist with its program: in 1940 and 1941, the United States Housing Authority and the Division of Defense Housing also hired notable architects to design defense housing developments. Bauhaus architects Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer worked in New Kensington, Pennsylvania; Eiel and Eero Saarinen in Center Line, Michigan; Richard Neutra in San Pedro, California; George Howe and Louis I. Kahn in Middletown, Pennsylvania; and Clarence Steen in Shaler Township, Pennsylvania. Frank Lloyd Wright was hired to design a project in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, but it was never built. These and other defense housing developments were featured in articles in several architectural journals, including *Architectural Record*, *Architectural Forum*, and *Penet Points*, between 1940 and 1943. I examine the hiring of renowned architects to design defense housing in my forthcoming book, *Public Housing Goes to War: Federal Housing Policy and World War II*. The role of these architects in wartime construction is also examined in the exhibition *World War II and the American Dream: How Wartime Building Changed the Nation*, at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C., November 1994–December 1995. The exhibition catalogue was recently published under the same title by the MIT Press.

11 "Village Called Only Signpost," clipping file, Audubon Park Mutual Housing Corporation, Audubon Park, New Jersey. See also "U.S. Speeds Village of New Homes for Defense Workers," supplement to the *Philadelphia Courier-Post*, 13 December 1941, and "Building for Defense . . . Government Housing in a Hurry," *Architectural Forum*, May 1941, pp. 341–44.

12 Kristin M. Szylvian, "Avion Village: Texas' World War II Housing Laboratory," *Legacies*, Fall 1992, pp. 28–34; "Built Fast But Last," *Dallas Morning News*, 28 July 1985, pp. 1C, 7C; Willis Winters, "Avion Village: Enduring Values of Community," *Texas Architect*, May–June 1988, pp. 24–29; clippings on Avion Village, Dallas Public Library; clippings on Avion Village, Grand Prairie (Texas) Public Library; clippings on Avion Village, Avion Village Mutual Ownership Corporation, 800 Skyline Drive, Grand Prairie; and correspondence between Williams and Neutra in David R. Williams Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Edith Garland Dupre Library, University of Southwestern Louisiana, Lafayette, files 2–16, 2–17, and 2–18. See also David Williams, "Defense on the Home Front: Avion Village, a Park Living development of the Federal Works Agency," *Dallas Magazine*, May 1941, pp. 18, 21.

13 "Village Improves National Morale," says Carmody," in "U.S. Speeds Village," supplement to the *Philadelphia Courier-Post*, 13 December 1941.

14 On prefabricated housing at Audubon Park, see "20 Prefabricated Houses per Day — Built by Joseph Day" and "Weigel Veteran at Rush Jobs," clipping file, Audubon Park Mutual Housing Corporation, Audubon Park, New Jersey. On Avion Village, see "Texas Workmen Build Finished Home in 58 Minutes," *Life*, 6 June 1941, pp. 59–60, 63.

15 Federal experimentation in building materials and techniques continued under Blandford because it offered economic promise to the private home-building industry. A small number of architecturally significant defense housing developments such as Neutra's Channel Heights, were built after the reorganization plan went into effect, but these were carryovers from the earlier period. These issues are examined in detail in my forthcoming book, *Public Housing Goes to War: Federal Housing Policy and World War II*.

16 For the growth of community identity in the defense housing developments sold under the Mutual Home Ownership Plan, see Kristin Szylvian Bailey, "The Federal Government and the Cooperative Housing Movement, 1917–1950" (Ph.D. dissertation, Carnegie Mellon University, 1988).

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William T. Cannady
and Jonathan King

MARKET HOUSING IN HOUSTON

Does the construction and design quality of Houston's recently built housing result from consumer demand, greedy developers, cautious lenders, or careless politicians? Market forces affect the design and location of new apartments, townhouses, and speculative housing projects more than they do those of commercial and institutional developments. And several factors peculiar to Houston make the market's influence even stronger than in comparable cities.

The need for security, both real and perceived, is unquestionably driving residential design in Houston. Both renters and home buyers are demanding safe, crime-resistant neighborhoods. Therefore, the

youngest population of all the states; the population is predicted to double in the next 35 years, and with the economic impact of NAFTA contributing to that growth, the average age will remain low in the coming decades.¹ Mobility, another important factor, is high — almost 30 percent of Houstonians move every 15 months, making this the nation's fifth most mobile city.² These factors make Houston more dependent on rental hous-



The Park at Westgate, in the Galleria area. Design and location of rental property are increasingly dictated by lenders rather than architects or even developers.



Reata Apartments on Allen Parkway: packing in apartment units, tenement style, and sacrificing open space and sunlight.

rental and condominium development currently successful in Houston is a type of feudal compound or walled enclave located in what is perceived as a "neutral" or "better" area of the city. This kind of development creates an unprotected no-man's-land between the walled compounds, defeating any larger sense of neighborhood or community.

The few close-in neighborhoods perceived as safe are going for top dollar. Developers and individual homeowners are building single-family houses in established subdivisions such as West University Place, Southampton, River Oaks, and Tanglewood, replacing older, modest houses with new ones that have twice the square footage — or more. Overscaled and often unimaginatively designed, these houses are built for owners who pay a premium for the property and want a showy structure to fill up their valuable land. Both the homeowners and the developers want maximum square footage for a bottom-dollar construction price. Design and quality are sacrificed.

Another crucial factor in building trends in Houston and statewide is our sizable per capita renting population. Fewer than 60 percent of Texans owned their own homes in 1993, which placed the state 44th nationally in that regard. Home ownership in Houston has declined more than 5 percent since 1970, a period in which the nationwide rate increased. The ability to afford a down payment on a house is a function of age, marital status, income, and mobility. Texas has the third

ing than most major cities, and as a result, developers have been more influential than in places where buyers speak with greater authority.

Developers, in turn, claim that design and location of their projects are dictated by lenders. This means that lenders become the interpreters of demand. In the past, local savings and loans or bank loan committees, who were familiar with the developers, sympathetic, and willing to take business risks, financed both large and small projects. Today, fiscal conservatism fed by the saving-and-loan debacles of the last decade guides loan policy. Lenders are now large insurance companies, pension funds, university endowments, and real estate investment trusts. They are more interested in portfolio management than in design or creation of neighborhoods. Formerly, developers with large-scale projects were the tastemakers. Now lenders have become the arbiters.

Midtown: A Case Study

Within Loop 610 there is a great deal of underused real estate located south of the Pierce Elevated freeway and north of the South End/Museum District between Louisiana Street and State Highway 288. Called Midtown, this zone is convenient to most of Houston's cultural institutions, jobs both downtown and in the Texas Medical Center, parks and recreational facilities, churches, and commercial centers. Although this could be an extremely desirable residential area, development is not occurring. It will take a long-range, comprehensive, cooperative

effort by the city, the county, the state, the school district, major developers, lending institutions, and insurance companies to give rise to a significant number of housing units in this inner-city area. Although the Midtown area did receive a glamorous makeover in *Houston Life*,³ the artist's conception of the neighborhood had little grounding in reality and may even have exacerbated the areas' problems by raising landowners' hopes, which in turn can

real political interest in making the 30- or 40-year commitment for tax abatement, police protection, public transportation, high-quality school programs, and public buildings. In addition, large-scale development will require expenditures for infrastructure improvements. And the racial, ethnic, and class-based issues of displacement — or assimilation — of the neighborhood's current residents will have to be addressed.



The Remington, stands on the site of the old Battelstein's department store on South Shepherd.

raise land values, making redevelopment more difficult.

Development in Midtown will have to counter a number of obstacles. These include a perception of a high level of crime and danger, poor public schools, and land ownership fragmented in small parcels that are difficult to assemble into sites suitable for major development. Liability exposure and insurance costs figure centrally into the lender's and developer's cautious approach to such a location.

Real estate expert Warren Dold of Exxon Land Management points out that visible first steps by both the public and private sectors are needed to spark further lender and developer interest in Midtown. Those initial efforts might be focused on attracting urban professionals without children to the area, but long-term development must include families. To attract such a diverse population, good educational facilities, as well as security provisions to deal with crime and allay the perception of danger, are essential. Any large-scale residential development in the area, even a coordinated public-private effort, will in its early phases confront the choice between walled-in compounds and street-related complexes. While the preponderance of new housing in Midtown will certainly be rental projects, future development on a large scale should include owner-occupied single-family and condominium housing. Without such stability, it is hard to create successful neighborhoods.

The big unknown is whether there is any

There are powerful negative factors in developing the Midtown area, but precedents in other cities with similar conditions have been successful. New York City has been facing an analogous situation in redeveloping 307 acres of beachfront property in Queens, vacant since it was cleared by the Lindsay administration in the late 1960s. Since all plans for large-scale, sweeping redevelopment of the area have failed, the Republican Giuliani administration is starting mod-



Electric meters at the Reata.

estly, making just a few blocks available for developers, who will build 180 two-family townhouses, aided by infrastructure improvements provided by the city. It is a small demonstration, not a mammoth development. Unsubsidized housing, reliance on private development, and modest scale seem more in keeping with the political spirit of the day.

Is There a Place for Architecture?

Do the design professions have a serious part in all this? Or is architecture superfluous to the provision of mass housing in Houston? Obviously, the problem of Midtown cannot be solved by architects

and planners alone. But redeveloping the area in progressive steps is a design problem as well as a political, social, and economic one.

Houston has a few well-designed inner-city residential projects that provide positive models of multifamily housing. Arlington Court townhouses in the Heights (1985, William F. Stern & Associates, Architects) is a clear example of a well-designed, small townhouse project that in scale and texture slips gracefully into a neighborhood that is beginning to redevelop but retains its historic character and small-town scale. The Court at Museum's Gate on Montrose (1985, Jay Baker for Compendium) is another successful example of a block-square development, with underground parking so full use can be made of the dense urban neighborhood site. This project was influenced by Lovett Square (designed by this article's co-author, William T. Cannady), which set an example back in 1978 of what might be done with the area later known as Midtown. Isabella Court (1929, W. D. Bordeaux) on Main Street in Midtown is a classic example of harmonious urban housing.



Parking at the Park at Westgate.

These projects give their neighborhoods a sense of permanence and set an example of quality design and construction. Some of the newer speculative housing projects, however, appear to be good candidates for instantaneous slums. With designs driven by utility and efficiency, the projects often have no shared common space except for parking lots, hallways, and fire stairs. Finished with some cobbled-together historical details — one new project is described in its own marketing brochure as "pure 18th-century Paris today . . . drawn from the traditional residences of the Parisian Left Bank . . . the pediments and pilasters are Greek, the Mansard Towers are Louis XV, and the Italian and Gothic influences are apparent . . . the design is at once classical and pure"⁴ — they offer no views (except into neighbors' windows), and an incredible harvest of mechanical and electrical equipment

grows everywhere. Poor construction and inadequate maintenance will most certainly lead to rapid decay.

Multifamily housing design is especially complex because market considerations impose demanding financial goals and constraints. Contributing to the design problem are land-use controls, building codes, and conventions of construction.

Most multifamily-unit designs are repeats and variations on market-proven products. Lenders believe that innovation in design means unwarranted additional risk. Even so, outstanding models have been built over the years, some of which are still applicable today. For example, the 18th-century Georgian terrace houses of London, Edinburgh, and Dublin could be prototypes for Houston today. Twentieth-century types, especially in England, Scandinavia, and Europe, are relevant to Houston's needs.

Since speculative housing is a major part of the fabric of this city, designers, lenders, developers, and politicians share responsibility for the quality of residential construction in Houston. If a

turnaround is to come for areas such as Midtown, the architectural profession needs to lead a movement for a public-private concord toward a type of new construction that is both durable and conducive to neighborhood stability. This could generate a major improvement in the our city's quality of life. The alternatives for Houston's future are not attractive. ■

1 U.S. Census Bureau data, quoted in *Houston Chronicle*, 12 December 1994.

2 *Tierra Grande*, *The Journal of the Real Estate Center* (Texas A&M University), Fall 1994.

3 Linda Barth, "Long and Lean and Green and Lovely," *Houston Life*, 12 August 1994.

4 Brochure, *La Tour Fontaine*, 2400 Fountainview, June 1994.

DESIGN OUTSIDE THE ARCHITECTURAL SPOTLIGHT

Stephen Fox



Munio Gitai Weinraub, *Bauhaus Architect in Eretz Israel* by Richard Ingersoll; photographs by Gabriele Basilico. Milan: Electa, 1994. 239 pp., illus., \$45

Shaping Seattle Architecture: A Historical Guide to the Architects, edited by Jeffrey Karl Ochsner. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press in association with the American Institute of Architects, Seattle Chapter, and the Seattle Architectural Foundation, 1994. 401 pp., illus., \$40; \$19.95 paper

Two recent books by *Cite* contributors break new ground by documenting the careers of architects whose work, by and large, has not figured in canonical accounts of 19th- and 20th-century architecture.

Richard Ingersoll has produced an extremely handsome monograph on the work of the Israeli modern architect, Munio Gitai Weinraub, who practiced in Haifa from the mid-1930s until his death in 1970. A Polish Jew, Weinraub (who in the 1960s Hebraized his surname to Gitai) was involved from his youth in Zionist-Socialist activities. He attended the Bauhaus in 1930 but was suspended by its director, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, for participating in political protests. Nonetheless, Mies hired Weinraub to work in his studio, and readmitted him to the Bauhaus in 1931. Weinraub left the Bauhaus in 1932. The next year he was expelled from Germany. He worked for Karl Moser's firm in Zurich until 1934, when he was able to immigrate to Palestine, where he spent the rest of his life.

Ingersoll analyzes Weinraub's career in Palestine as an effort to apply the ethic (to employ one of the terms of Reyner Banham's ethic-aesthetic dichotomy) of Bauhaus functionalism to Haifa's Zionist-Socialist milieu. Ingersoll particularly draws attention to the thoughtfulness and care with which Weinraub and his partner, Al Mansfeld (who had trained with Auguste Perret), produced modest housing and community buildings for the new workers' suburbs of Haifa and for nearby kibbutzim. Although rigorously simple, this work was often stylistically conventional rather than vanguard. By examining the evolution of specific projects, Ingersoll demonstrates Weinraub's commitment to using a "modern" democratic participatory pro-

cess to formulate architectural designs, even when this frustrated his modernist formal inclinations.

Ingersoll contrasts the urbanity of Weinraub and Mansfeld's large public buildings — such as the 1946 Central Synagogue in Haifa and the 1948 General Federation of Labor Building — with Weinraub's production following the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. During the 1950s and 1960s, Weinraub's institutional complexes, social housing estates, and commercial buildings became more formally assertive, although never pretentious or exaggerated. Ingersoll notes that these larger projects exhibit a decline in urbanistic responsiveness that was balanced by Weinraub's continued commitment to the expressive resolution of architecture and construction detail.

Giorgia Dalla Pietra's graphic design and Gabriele Basilico's photographs help amplify Ingersoll's text in presenting the inherent quality of Gitai Weinraub's buildings — as well as the insensitive alterations that have befallen many of them. In this modest but conscientious monograph, Ingersoll explores Weinraub's work within social, political, and ideological contexts to show how he translated Jewish, European, and socialist idealism and modernist architecture to Palestine in the middle third of the 20th century.

Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, now a Seattle architect and assistant professor of architecture at the University of Washington, has contributed significantly to the formation of a body of knowledge on the architectural history of Seattle and Washington state. His most recent effort is the compilation of a biographical dictionary of Seattle architects to which more than 20 historians have contributed, including Dennis A. Andersen, Meredith L. Clausen, Grant Hildebrand, and Thomas Veith.

Seattle was founded in 1852. During the 1880s, when the profession of architecture was first established there, the city's population grew in a rapid series of economic expansions and contractions. As the result of a disastrous downtown fire in 1889, Seattle acquired a collection of substantial late-Victorian public and commercial buildings. These were followed in the early 20th century by skyscrapers, imposing public institutions,

and impressive residential architecture. Ochsner and his associates profile the practices of 45 Seattle architects in short, comprehensive essays illustrated with photographs and drawings of their subjects' most important buildings.

By assembling such a catalogue, Ochsner demonstrates how rich an architectural heritage Seattle possesses. Rather than representing only the work of white male architects, some of the book's most compelling illustrations are of buildings by female and minority architects, such as Elizabeth Ayer, the Japanese-American A. K. Arai, and the African American Benjamin F. McAdoo, Jr. *Shaping Seattle Architecture* documents the careers of Seattle architects who achieved wider reputations (such as Robert C. Reamer, Paul Thiry, Paul Hayden Kirk, and Victor Steinbrueck) as well as many others whose work deserves to be better known — in particular eclectic architects from the first half of the 20th century. In addition to the major profiles, there are shorter, unillustrated entries on another 81 Seattle architects, a list of major out-of-town architects who designed buildings in Seattle, and extensive bibliographic references. There are also entries on Native American architecture, pattern-book architecture, and vernacular building types. The comprehensiveness, organizational clarity, and impressive graphic design of *Shaping Seattle Architecture* make it a model for other U.S. cities to follow.

Ingersoll, and Ochsner and his collaborators, demonstrate that in the field of architectural history, one can — to quote a popular bumper sticker — act locally while thinking globally. Their research, scholarship, and publications make available not only factual knowledge but an interpretive breadth that rescues their subjects from the suspicion of provincialism and, even more critically, the futility of collective oblivion. ■

SHAPING SEATTLE ARCHITECTURE

A Historical Guide to the Architects

Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, editor



PRESERVING MODERNISM: A RICE DESIGN ALLIANCE SYMPOSIUM

Richard Ingersoll

*We may live without her, and
worship without her, but we
cannot remember without her.*

— John Ruskin on architecture

The first public awareness that historic buildings should be saved for their cultural significance — however hostile the prevailing mood may be to their style or prior purpose — arose during the early years of the French Revolution. After the demise of Robespierre and the Terror, intellectuals and artists, disturbed by the vandalism of religious and monarchical monuments, sought to neutralize the odious associations of these buildings and reinterpret them as objective witnesses to history and repositories of national artistic traditions. It is a lesson that apparently needs to be relearned every generation. For example, not until the late 1950s was there much consciousness of 19th-century Victorian buildings as “historic.” Once reviled by both classicists and modernists, they are now revered. The preservation and restoration of Victorian buildings has not only become economically viable but has even led (unfortunately in my opinion) to neo-historical revivals.

What could be said of Victorian buildings 40 years ago can be said of Modernist works today. A great many buildings of the period stretching roughly from 1930 to 1970 are being eliminated without the slightest consideration of their value as cultural artifacts, a course of destruction that can seem almost as vindictive as the assault on the symbols of the *ancien régime* in 1789. One particularly sorry example that comes to mind is the demolition of painter Robert Motherwell’s house and studio in Amagansett, Long Island, designed by Pierre Chareau — one of the few buildings of that gifted designer’s career. Other examples, such as the “classical” remodeling of one of Craig Ellwood’s skin-and-bones Case Study Houses in Los Angeles, are legion. Could it be that there is a conspiracy to erase all traces of Modernism from society now that the Cold War is over?

Of course, in a city such as Houston, which has quite an obvious commitment to the culture of oblivion, the idea of preserving buildings of any historical period has been anathema. The Rice Hotel remains only by a miracle, a testament to what was once a lively downtown with a street life facilitated by the hotel’s armature of marvelous, shady



A controversy arose in Savannah, Georgia, about whether to preserve this 1950s Modernist building or refashion it with a more historically compatible facade. The preservation review board rejected the redesign.

cast-iron colonnades. Almost every other remnant of this time — really not so long ago — has been generously offered to the wrecking ball. The city that refuses to be zoned only reluctantly adopted a preservation ordinance in February 1995. The Greater Houston Preservation Alliance, while it has done much to educate the public, functions mostly as a condolence society. As with the issue of zoning in Houston, one has to ask about preservation: Why ruin a perfect record? If the true character of the city is oblivion, isn’t it best to forget?

Just in case there are some brave souls who would dare challenge this *Zeitgeist* of collective amnesia, on 25 January 1995 the Rice Design Alliance sponsored the symposium *Modern Preservation: Back to the Future*, held in the Jones Auditorium of the classically Modernist University of St. Thomas, one of Philip Johnson’s most disciplined and unpretentious works in that style. Moderated with charm by Houston architect Rafael Longoria, the symposium presented three speakers from different parts of the country testifying to the difficulty of getting Modernist buildings recognized as “historic.”

First to speak was Ellen Beasley, who has worked in preservation throughout the South and West and is currently a member of the city of Houston’s Archeological and Historical Commission. Beasley described the struggle in Savannah, Georgia, to preserve a Modernist bank built in the 1950s in

what is now the downtown historic district. Although Savannah has one of the oldest preservation movements in the country and the degree of public awareness is high, many there have strong reservations about whether any structure built after World War II is worth saving. The bank building was designed with innovative brise-soleil louvers and planes of unrendered granite. The building was taken over by the city for offices; during

necessity of the legal authority of preservation ordinances, as well as fiscal incentives. He chose as a positive example the preservation of the Greyhound Bus Station in Washington, D.C., a 1930s Streamline Moderne building, which required ten years of battles. Behind the rehabilitated station is a multistory office tower, installed to generate revenue.



Architect’s proposed remodeling of the building at left.

one remodeling, a well-intentioned architect proposed refashioning the bank’s exterior in a more historically compatible skin. The new facade would have had a further drawback of being much less energy efficient, eliminating the thermal mass of the stone elevations and the greater cooling capacity of the shades and replacing them with poorly insulated synthetic materials. While Savannah’s preservation ordinance wisely states that buildings should not be given a falsely historic appearance, public sentiment about the original modern elevation was ambivalent, and the proposed remodeling found considerable support. Savannah’s preservation review board nevertheless turned it down.

Next, Richard Longstreth, an architectural historian and director of the historical preservation program at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., summarized the national situation since the formulation of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Longstreth led controversial campaigns to save such modern commercial artifacts as Shoppers World in Framingham, Massachusetts, one of the first regional shopping malls, which was demolished last year. In his presentation he went so far as to proclaim that “someday soon we will have to start thinking about saving urban sprawl.” His point is that to allow the wholesale elimination of what a historical period produced is to deny that period’s historical validity and the individual’s participation in a historical continuum. Longstreth emphasized the importance of grassroots movements but insisted on the

The last speaker, Diane Wray, founded the Modern Architecture Preservation League in Denver to avert the impending destruction of Denver’s Civic Center Library and I. M. Pei’s Zeckendorf Plaza. Wray succeeded in saving the library (which had a subsequent addition by Michael Graves), but failed to save Zeckendorf Plaza, which is currently slated for massive reconfiguration, which will “completely destroy the composition,” according to Wray. The Preservation League is currently working to catalogue modern buildings throughout Colorado, anticipate which can be saved, and proceed to obtain landmark status for them. Wray’s successful strategy has been to focus on buildings that are occupied by people sympathetic to the authenticity of Modernist architecture or to select such public buildings as schools, libraries, and power stations, where there is a public obligation to recognize the issue.

All of the speakers agreed that Houston needs to initiate a similar survey of buildings built since 1950, perhaps under the aegis of the Rice Design Alliance. For oblivious Houston, the Menil Collection offers an intriguing example of how to proceed in a city with an underdeveloped sense of public life, in this case by subtly preserving through camouflage. The 40 bungalows surrounding the museum building, painted a uniform gray with white trim, have given a neutral, uncanny unity to a neighborhood that otherwise lacks distinctiveness, preserving the scale and type of the buildings while giving them a new look and function. More important to the process of preservation is the creative reprogramming of these spaces as new sites of production: they serve as offices for museum personnel, studios for artists, display spaces, and nonluxury, moderate-income family housing. Preservation of these buildings has not entailed freezing them in time. Rather, it has allowed them to evolve gracefully into an urban amenity — a goal that is certainly appropriate for preservation efforts throughout the city. ■



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