

The Wagner-Steagall Housing Act of 1937, enacted by President Roosevelt, demolished slum neighborhoods and attempted to beautify them by creating public housing units throughout the United States. Public housing activists “asserted that housing for as much as two-thirds of the population, should be provided by the government as a sort of public utility.”<sup>1</sup> “Housers, as these advocates were known, believed that the incomes of a majority of Americans would never be high enough to purchase sufficiently safe and sanitary dwellings.”<sup>2</sup> The government dreamt of Utopian visions where all “social classes would mix—and whose cleanliness and educative ambiance would assist the uplift of downtrodden”, little did they realize that in a matter of 15 years, public housing units often referred to as ‘the projects’ would become poorhouses costing the government millions in demolitions and renovations.<sup>3</sup>

Some might consider it poor planning on the part of the government. Three years before the Wagner-Steagall Housing Act, the Federal Housing Authority financed low-interest mortgages, booming the public’s gain in single-family homes. By 1940, defense plants and military bases were employing both men and women for production. Workers traveled to areas of production for these promising jobs, but soon realized that housing options had become “limited to moving in with another family or occupying an apartment

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<sup>1</sup> Husock, Howard "Public Housing As A 'Poorhouse'." *Public Interest* Fall:129 (1997): 73-86.

<sup>2</sup> Husock, Howard

<sup>3</sup> Husock, Howard

in a converted attic, basement, or garage.”<sup>4</sup> The government reacted by building family housing projects specifically for war production workers. The United States “channeled federal slum clearance funds into housing programs for defense areas, converting more than half of the three hundred existing public housing projects into war housing.”<sup>5</sup> “As the U.S. economy boomed after World War II, the lower-middle-class working families for whom the projects had been built discovered that they could afford privately built homes in America’s burgeoning suburbs.”<sup>6</sup> Public housing projects “fairly quickly, became the province only of the poorest—hardly the housers’ original vision of socially integrated model communities.”<sup>7</sup>

The city of Providence and the Providence Housing Authority built Providence’s first public housing project, Chad Brown (Fig. 1), for 1.25 million in 1941.<sup>8</sup> With 198 units built in over 20 two-story row houses, Roosevelt designated Chad Brown strictly as a “war housing project” from 1942-45.<sup>9</sup> The project housed 600 war production workers and was successful in its early years until vandalism and youth gangs began to deteriorate the project and its sense of community. By 1960, most of the war production population

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<sup>4</sup> Szylvian, Kristin M.. "The Federal Housing Program During World War II: In Search of an Urban Housing Policy in Twentieth-Century America." *From Tenements To The Taylor Homes*. Ed. John Bauman. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 200. 121.

<sup>5</sup> Crawford, Margaret. "Daily Life On The Home Front. Women, Blacks, and the Struggle for Public Housing." *World War II And The American Dream: How Wartime Building Changed a Nation*. Ed. Donald Albrecht. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995. 92.

<sup>6</sup> Husock, Howard "How Public Housing Harms Cities." *City Journal* Winter: (2003).

<sup>7</sup> Husock, Howard. "Public Housing As A 'Poorhouse'."

<sup>8</sup> Davis, Karen A.. "Providence Housing Authority Looks To Fill In Gaps." *Providence Journal* 22 February 2001: .

<sup>9</sup> Davis, Karen.

had moved out and Chad Brown was now home to primarily low-income residents of Providence.

With the aid of federal funding, the Providence Housing Authority continued the United States' efforts to provide temporary housing for low-middle-income families. In 1951, a groundbreaking ceremony for 700-800 dwelling units in the Hartford section of Providence (most western edge of the city) was soon to begin.<sup>10</sup> Cheer, Kent, Mather, Cruise and Aldrich of Providence designed the largest of Providence's public housing projects; Hartford Park, with four eleven-story elevator buildings, nine three-story buildings and twenty-eight two-story buildings.<sup>11</sup> The E. Turgeon Construction Company completed the project in 1953 for \$6,955,422, at the time, it was "the largest lump sum construction contract in the states history."<sup>12</sup>

Even before most of the construction began, Providence's 30.3-acre project was gaining national attention. In September of 1951, an article in the Providence Journal by Dr. C.E.A. Winslow, a Professor Emeritus of Yale's Department of Public Health, praised the project's design for "ideal housing for two-person families", but was unaware that most of the complex consisted of two-three bedroom apartments for single parent

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<sup>10</sup> "Housing Projects Will Be Started." Providence Journal 14 July 1951: 11.

<sup>11</sup> Doyle, James J. "Project in Providence is Cited by Architects." Providence Journal 28 October 1951: S3, 4

<sup>12</sup> "Housing Projects Will Be Started."

families of four and greater.<sup>13</sup> This would be a future cause of Hartford Park's many troubles.

In October of the same year, a four-month search throughout the United States recognized Hartford Park as one of the ten most notable housing projects for "distinguished design characteristics, high quality site planning, and pioneering use of materials or methods."<sup>14</sup> Projects in Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Corpus Christi, Chicago and Greenwich, CT were among the others recognized by the National Association of Housing Officials in the *Journal of Housing*.

Hartford Park was commended for its thoughtful design in maximizing space, its imaginative, ingenious site planning in providing all units with sun and air, and thirdly, for its progressive ideas in construction materials and methods.<sup>15</sup> The *Journal of Housing* reported, "the architects took the sting out of the high-rise buildings by widely separating them with the low buildings. Staggering the buildings on site permits wide open spaces between the fronts of the structures and provides good orientation for light and air."<sup>16</sup>

The four high-rise buildings were located at 12 Bodell Ave., 22 Whelan Rd., 375 Hartford Ave, and 10 Whelan Rd.<sup>17</sup> Each of the high-rises was designed in a T shape. 10 Whelan Rd. consisted of 120 one bedroom apartments for the elderly and was one of "the

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<sup>13</sup> Doyle, James J. "Praises Project at Hartford Park." Providence Journal 23 September 1951: 7

<sup>14</sup> Doyle, James J. "Project in Providence is Cited by Architects."

<sup>15</sup> Doyle, James J. "Project in Providence is Cited by Architects."

<sup>16</sup> Doyle, James J. "Project in Providence is Cited by Architects."

<sup>17</sup> "1953 Project" *Providence Journal*. 4 June 1987.: C 3

country's first public housing designed specifically for the elderly", while the other three high rises were designed with two and three bedroom two-story apartments.<sup>18</sup> The elevators in these buildings only accessed the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> floors giving tenants more safety, and access to the kitchen and living room floors of their apartments only (bedrooms were located above or below their kitchen level depending on their location in the building).

Providence began building public housing for a post-war population of 250,000.<sup>19</sup> Hartford Park was originally designed to fit the needs of Veterans of the Korean War, but most found better housing as the economy moved upwards. Low-income housing became the only option for poorer families and individuals.<sup>20</sup> As war veterans and production workers left the housing projects, the government found new ways to try to keep them filled. The Housing Act of 1954 allocated room in public housing projects for families whose homes were being uprooted as a result of urban renewal projects.<sup>21</sup> As Howard Husock states, by the 1960s, public housing projects were abandoned by the original occupants and those

left behind were the poorest, most disorganized, non-working families, almost all of them headed by single women. Public housing then became a key component of the vast welfare-support network that gave young women their own income

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<sup>18</sup> "Units for Aged Proposed in Vacated Building." 34

<sup>19</sup> "Units for Aged Proposed in Vacated Building." *Providence Journal* 20 April 1967: 1

<sup>20</sup> Smith, C. Fraser. "Life At Hartford Park: '2' – A Dungeon Above the Ground." *Providence Journal* 24 November 1969: 26.

<sup>21</sup> Szylvian, Kristin M..

and apartment if they gave birth to illegitimate kids. As the fatherless children of these women grew up and went astray, many projects became lawless places.<sup>22</sup>

In its first 6 years, Hartford Park was a success and units remained full. By 1960, there were seventy-five vacancies at 22 Whelan Rd and twelve and 12 Bodell Ave. “Hartford Park, designed as a stopping off spot on the road to suburbia, had grown stagnant.”<sup>23</sup> By 1967, three of the four high-rise apartments in Hartford Park were boarded up because of the violence, robberies and turmoil caused by the teenagers in the projects, “records show that ...it was closed not entirely because people were destroying it, but because they simply refused to live in it.”<sup>24</sup> While the violence seemed to encompass much of the surrounding neighborhood, the most serious problems revolved around the high-rise buildings. The Providence Journal declared in 1967 that the “situation demonstrates that in Providence, high-rise housing for the elderly is fine, but it just doesn’t workout for families with teenagers.”<sup>25</sup> New York City planner, Oscar Newman coined the term “defensible space” in regards to what kinds of architecture and spaces were more conducive to problems in public housing. He like other planners agreed that high-rises were the most dangerous of site layouts for public housing.

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<sup>22</sup> Husock, Howard "How Public Housing Harms Cities."

<sup>23</sup> Smith, C. Fraser. "Life At Hartford Park: Part of a Displaced Ghetto." *Providence Journal* 28 November 1969: 1.

<sup>24</sup> Smith, C. Fraser. "Life At Hartford Park: Where All Are 'Guilty'." *Providence Journal* 24 November 1969: 1.

<sup>25</sup> "Units for Aged Proposed in Vacated Building."

With towers set in vast open spaces, far back from the street, it was virtually impossible for residents to casually supervise activity on the sidewalk from within their apartments. The corridors, elevators, and stairwells of the high-rises constituted a virtual maze in which criminals could hide and escape. Their drab architectural style instantly identified them as the home of the most vulnerable members of society. And because middle-class communities did not want low-income housing, the projects invariably were located amid downtrodden neighborhoods plagued by crime.<sup>26</sup>

Providence Journal writer C. Fraser Smith describes the high-rise at 22 Whelan Rd: “it was an oppressive building with blunt facades of peeling pink concrete laced together at each floor with bands of chain linked fence.”<sup>27</sup> “You see a 12-year old boy smoking a cigarette while bouncing rhythmically on a hobbyhorse as if trying to decide which way to go—back toward childhood or onward if not upward. Children grow up faster at Hartford Park.”<sup>28</sup>

For many years, Providence officials tried to decide the fate of the three high-rise buildings. The Providence Journal reported in July of 1967 that Roger Williams College would be moving some of their sociology department into Hartford Park (Fig. 2).<sup>29</sup> Students and faculty would live in one of the high-rise apartment buildings and would

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<sup>26</sup> Kamin, Blair. *Why Architecture Matters*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001. 261.

<sup>27</sup> Smith, C. Fraser. "Life At Hartford Park: '2' – A Dungeon Above the Ground."

<sup>28</sup> Smith, C. Fraser. "Life At Hartford Park: '2' – A Dungeon Above the Ground."

<sup>29</sup> “Roger Williams Use Hartford Park.” *Providence Journal*. 26 July 1967: 1

“begin an investigation of the social and socio-economic influences affecting public housing.”<sup>30</sup> By April of 1968, the Providence Journal published an article titled “Roger Williams Will Not Study Social Unrest” in which it revealed that Hartford Park was a greater challenge than they anticipated.<sup>31</sup> Two of their students had gotten arrested for marijuana possession, a third was arrested for cocaine possession, and all possibly due to the negative impact Hartford Park was having on them.

In the mid-1980’s grants from the government were distributed to the Providence Housing Authority so that they could demolish the three family unit towers in Hartford Park to create additional housing in their space and modernize the remaining two and three-story apartments (Fig. 3). In May of 1989, the first of the towers was ready to be demolished in a \$26.8 million modernization project. With 600 pounds of explosives, the blast should have been enough to collapse the entire building. “

Instead, the explosions took out much of the first floor and left the rest of the building leaning. The building, which came to be known as the ‘leaning tower of Olneyville,’ had to be taken down by a wrecking crew, in what turned out to be a three-month project.<sup>32</sup>

Until recently, renovations at Hartford Park have been in constant motion. Today, the three high-rise towers formerly located at 22 Whelan Rd, 375 Hartford Ave, and 12

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<sup>30</sup> Roger Williams College Advertisement *New York Times* 18 August 1968.

<sup>31</sup> “Roger Williams Will Not Study Social Unrest” *Providence Journal*. 29. April 1968. 1

<sup>32</sup> Davis, Karen A.. "Providence Housing Authority Looks To Fill In Gaps." *Providence Journal* 22 February 2001:

Bodell Ave are replaced by additional two and three story row houses (Fig. 4). When all was said and done, Hartford Park lost over 200 of its original number of units in the demolition and modernization project. The community has increased police patrol and built a police command center on the edge of the project. In fact, it was believed that by imploding the towers and building similar row house structures, they could decrease the number of crimes. While it has helped a bit, crime in the Hartford Park area and other Providence public housing projects is still a constant problem.

So, the question remains, what, if anything, works for the design of public housing?

Critics of public housing like Hartford Park have blamed the deadening uniformity of physical design, a characteristic that is being corrected to some extent in plans for new developments—by avoiding super-blocks, by attempting to blend new and old buildings and by moving into the concept of leased housing, where private market houses are rehabilitated and leased by the government.<sup>33</sup>

I can state the obvious by noting how most of the problems in Hartford Park were located in the eleven-story family high-rises. The remaining thirty-seven two and three-story buildings were for the most part serving their purpose with fewer problems. In 1935, the Public Works Administration: Housing Division published unit plans for the design of sites, buildings, and rooms proper for public housing projects. In their “Outstanding List

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<sup>33</sup> Smith, C. Fraser. "Life At Hartford Park: A Fate Worse Than Being Slum." *Providence Journal* 28 November 1969: 1.

of Items to be Avoided in Low-Rent Housing” (Fig. 5) they list “excessive heights of buildings—three stories considered maximum except for special conditions.”<sup>34</sup> The designers of Hartford Park did not call attention to this one avoidance until nearly fifty years later. In fact, when taking a look at the characteristics of house types provided by the Housing Division, you can see that the tallest height for a building is four stories (Fig. 6). The four towers belonging to Hartford Park are what the House Division considered Apartment House Type. It provides the greatest number of rooms per acre but lacks individual garden space, which we will further discover is important for a sense of community.<sup>35</sup> The row house type (Fig. 7), seen in the remainder of the Hartford Park project is the most expensive type of dwelling with an extremely low number of rooms per acre, but it provides more privacy and sense of ownership with private yards.<sup>36</sup>

Karen Franck discusses three changing stages seen in the designs of U.S. public housing from the 1930s to the present day:<sup>37</sup>

Stage 1: Semi-enclosed courts with walk-ups buildings in the 1930s and early 1940s;

Stage 2: Open space between lines of row house and walk-up buildings or around widely spaced elevator buildings, starting in the 1940s and extending into the 1960s;

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<sup>34</sup> United States Government Housing Division. *Unit Plans. Typical Room Arrangements, Site Plans, and Details For Low-Rent Housing*. Washington, DC: Housing Division, Public Works Administration, 1935.

<sup>35</sup> United States Government Housing Division. 5.

<sup>36</sup> United States Government Housing Division. 5.

<sup>37</sup> Franck, Karen. "Changing Values in U.S. Public Housing." *New Directions in Urban Public Housing*. Ed. David P. Varady. New Brunswick: Center for Urban Policy Research, 1998. 85-103.

Stage 3: Private yards and semi-enclosed or fully enclosed courts for row houses and other low-rise buildings in the late 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

According to Karen Franck, Hartford Park is a Stage 2 project with row houses, walk-ups and elevator buildings throughout the grounds. It is not until recent developments that public housing has adopted State 3: the private-lifestyle. Starting in the 1990's more and more private dwellings were built for leasing to low-income families. In fact, Providence alone has more than 250 homes throughout the city. Many of which were bought in order to house the families who were still living in Hartford Park when the towers were destroyed. In the program, residents of the scattered site homes may even buy the home with the assistance of the Providence Housing Authority's homeownership program.

In Blair Kamin's book Why Architecture Matters, a chapter addresses the idea of self-ownership and community; it is titled "Fences, Individual Front Doors, and Porches Create Safe Spaces That Can Free Residents from Being Virtual Prisoners of Drug Dealers and Prostitutes."<sup>38</sup> He also introduces Oscar Newman's notion of 'defensible space' by discussing the importance of the physical layout of public housing and the personal layout with the members of the community. He sides with the Housing Division and the idea of having row houses as a structure for a public housing project taken from the German Zeilenbau style of parallel rows of two-to-four-story housing structures only

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<sup>38</sup> Kamin, Blair. Why Architecture Matters. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001. 259.

adding internal parking spaces and more courtyards (Fig 8).<sup>39</sup> Each family has their own space with a private entrance. They can also feel like they are part of a neighborhood or community with their own personal front yard and backyard landscaped as they wish.

Housing advocates have “often taken the form of environmental determinism, a belief that an ideal or improved residential environment will better the behavior as well as the condition of its inhabitants.”<sup>40</sup> Like Newman’s “defensible space”, private homes or even private entrances like these provided by row houses could improve conditions in public housing projects. Many public housing projects are trying to solve some of these problems by building community recreation centers and health centers to assist those living in the projects.

Howard Husock is harsh but not alone when he states, “public housing spawns neighborhood social problems because it concentrates together welfare dependent, single-parent families, whose fatherless children disproportionately turn out to be school dropouts, drug users, non-workers and criminals.”<sup>41</sup> The problems found in public housing are often blamed on poverty issues within the neighborhood or tenants. With an average of 3.4 persons per household, 91.5% of them are headed by a female (single mother) in Hartford Park. 2003 Department of Health and Human Service Statistics revealed that the in the city of Providence, 32% of female householder families are living

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<sup>39</sup> Pommer, Richard. “The Architecture of Urban Housing in the United States during the Early 1930s.” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 1978 37. (4): 240.

<sup>40</sup> Von Hoffman, Alexander. “High Ambitions: American Low-Income Housing Policy.” *Housing Policy Debate*. 1996. Volume 7 (3). 424.

<sup>41</sup> Husock, Howard "How Public Housing Harms Cities."

in poverty. HHS Poverty Guidelines are \$15,260 for a family of 3 and \$18,400 for a family of 4. The average income for a household in Hartford Park according to the Providence Housing Authority is \$9,952. This is not only more than half below the Rhode Island poverty line, but reveals that over 50% of the Hartford Park community is living at or below poverty level. With such a low-income level, one would assume that they are merely collecting social security or unemployment benefits, but this is not possible. The average income from only social security is about \$12,000 a year, just enough to support a family of two, yet still more than the average income of Hartford Park residents. (Fig. 9,10,11)

Like other cities around the United States, Providence has had its fair share of problems concerning public housing such as maintenance issues, budget concerns, crime rates and poverty. In fact, it appears that as soon as the city receives funding to help one project, they are in desperate need of more money to fix more problems across town. Although Hartford Park was one of Providence's most expensive public housing complexes, it is not the only one who has had demolition teams tearing up its buildings.

In 1941, the Providence Housing Authority was given more federal funding to build a second "war housing project" (after Chad Brown), in the Roger Williams section of town.<sup>42</sup> Roger Williams Homes opened its doors in 1943. The project contained 744 units spanning 23 acres bound by Thurbers Ave., Prairie Ave, Pavilion Ave. and Rugby

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<sup>42</sup> Davis, Karen A.. "Providence Housing Authority Looks To Fill In Gaps."

Street.<sup>43</sup> Roger Williams, like Hartford Park shared many of the same vandalism problems within its community. “By 1970, all but one of the buildings had been abandoned, and in 1975, the one occupied building was renovated.”<sup>44</sup> The Providence Housing Authority took control of the deteriorating project by demolishing nine of the vacant buildings in the mid 1980s.<sup>45</sup> By the early 1990s, only two buildings remained, dramatically decreasing the size of a 744-unit project down to only 40 (Fig. 12). In the mid 1990s, it was believed that the vacant land would be used for “Mandela-Woods, a 136 unit townhouse style apartment complex...constructed for low and moderate-income families.”<sup>46</sup> Up to this date, there have been many delays, and the status of Mandela-Woods still remains in question.

With only 40 units, Roger Williams Housing has about 99 residents (Fig. 13). It is unique from other Providence Housing Authority properties in that it is the only one that has a 100% female head of household rate. With the entire population consisting of single mother and grandmothers, the average income rate for the project is still far below the poverty level for a family of three, but it is much closer to a yearly income of only government assistance. The Roger Williams community shares a daycare and middle school in the same location. At a recent meeting with residents, architects, business owners and school officials, the Providence Housing Authority determined that 41 out of

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<sup>43</sup> Davis, Karen A.. "Ideas Offered on Roger Williams Homes Site." *Providence Journal* 17 February 1998:

<sup>44</sup> Davis, Karen A.. "Ideas Offered on Roger Williams Homes Site."

<sup>45</sup> Davis, Karen A.. "Providence Housing Authority Looks To Fill In Gaps."

<sup>46</sup> WWW.ProvidenceRI.Com

48 people surveyed supported a “mixed income housing community” to be built on the property.<sup>47</sup> Although the first 20 years of life at Roger Williams may have been rough, a smaller community has changed the housing project for the better.

This raises the last issue. Using Hartford Park as an example, I have noted the impact different design structures have on public housing. Using the statistics on poverty levels from the Department of Health and Human Services and comparing those to the figures gathered from the Providence Housing Authority, I have also discussed the relationship of income levels in line with the social environments of both housing projects. Lastly, I have addressed the issue of population size within a public housing community. When expensive housing projects such as Hartford Park and Roger Williams fail, it is easy for critics to blame the situation on issues such as building type, income levels, location and size of the project. In fact, most of Providence’s housing projects and many across the United States have shared the same problems and criticisms. During the 1970’s, when projects like Hartford Park, Chad Brown and Roger Williams were undergoing their worst years, one housing project in Providence was getting national attention for its success.

Located in the northern Valley section of Providence, Valley View Homes “is an unimpressive cluster of sixty-four small buildings” and an example of a uniquely run successful housing project. Valley View Homes is an 11-acre project with 256 low-rise

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<sup>47</sup> Davis, Karen A.. "Ideas Offered on Roger Williams Homes Site."

units. Unlike many of Providence's other housing projects, women head only 25% of households at Valley View. The average income of Valley View residents is \$7,000. Like the other Providence housing units, it too is severely under the poverty line. In 1946, the Providence Veterans Committee "took advantage of patriotic postwar sentiments...to win City Council approval of a city-financed project for low and moderate income veterans."<sup>48</sup> The entire cost of 2.6 million was raised by the city of Providence without state or federal aid. It first opened its doors in 1949 for war veterans. The population at Valley View has changed to meet the needs of the community. In fact, it has accomplished what it set out to do; "it provides decent, inexpensive homes for the poor and moderate-income citizens of the nation."<sup>49</sup>

So far, Valley View Homes shares many similarities with Hartford Park and Roger Williams, but unlike the latter grouping, it has yet to go through a period of vandalism and deterioration. What makes Valley View so different? As mentioned before, Valley View is not a property of the Providence Housing Authority. It received its funding from the city without federal or state help. The Providence Housing Authority has over 250 scattered site locations and 14 public housing projects to look after within the city (Fig. 14). This results in delays and a battle for funding when more than one project needs money for improvements or maintenance (Fig. 15). Valley View finances itself. In fact, they are free to set budgets, policies and judgments that concern

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<sup>48</sup> Fuerst, J.S. & Roy Petty. "Case History In Providence: The Quota Approach to Housing" *The Nation* 9 April 1977: 429.

<sup>49</sup> Fuerst, J.S. & Roy Petty. 430.

their tenants without the approval of the government. As Fuerst and Petty address in their article, Valley View does not concern itself with issues of building type or poverty, instead it approaches public housing with “the quota approach”.<sup>50</sup>

This freedom of selection has enabled management to set up a good ‘mix’ of tenants, which public housing administrators universally say is the key to any project’s success. A balance of moderate-income and poor residents, or black and white, or working and welfare, or broken families and whole ones—not established by rigid rules but done strictly by judgment and good will.<sup>51</sup>

Tenants themselves are happy with the way this system works. Jean Barnes, a young black mother of two, states: “It isn’t democratic. But its necessary if we’re going to keep the project a good one. If too many black families move in, white families will move out, and this project would become another Chad Brown or Roger Williams.”<sup>52</sup>

Valley View Homes may have found the solution to solve the United States’ public housing problems. Perhaps the problems are a result that stem from the fact that the United States controls most public housing projects. If cities took control of their own housing issues and addressed concerns on a per site basis, maybe more communities would be more successful like Valley View. This is not to say that Valley View Homes has not had any problems with funding, but with site managers making the calls, they can

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<sup>50</sup> Fuerst, J.S. & Roy Petty. 428.

<sup>51</sup> Fuerst, J.S. & Roy Petty. 430.

<sup>52</sup> Fuerst, J.S. & Roy Petty. 430.

address issues concerning their own tenants rather than having to wait for instructions or approval from the government.

The failures of public housing have been blamed on the structures, people and location for many years. I demonstrated failures attributed to each of these causes in different cases in Providence public housing alone. With the success of Valley View Homes only miles away from the destruction of Chad Brown, Roger Williams and Hartford Park, a closer examination into the way public housing is run is needed. Public housing programs began in the late 1930's, yet many of the problems associated with it have not yet been corrected. Valley View Homes is proof that public housing can break the usual judgments and be successful.

Once we get rid of the notion that a publicly subsidized low-rent housing project must be a grim quasi-prison for the most wretched of the poor—a publicly funded ghetto where tenants must learn to expect misery and squalor—then perhaps we can pattern future projects after Valley View, providing, finally, what public housing was supposed to be.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Fuerst, J.S. & Roy Petty. 431.

Figures

Figure 1: Chad Brown Aerial Picture



Figure 2: Roger Williams College Sociology Program Advertisement

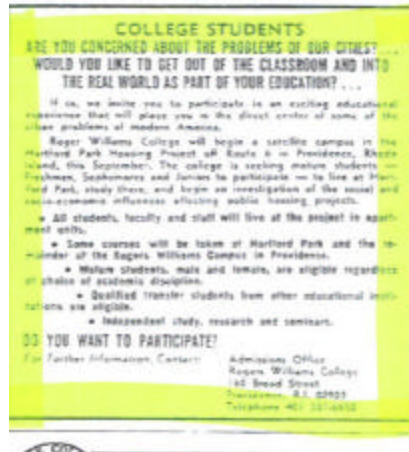


Figure 3: Planned Destruction of the Hartford Park Towers

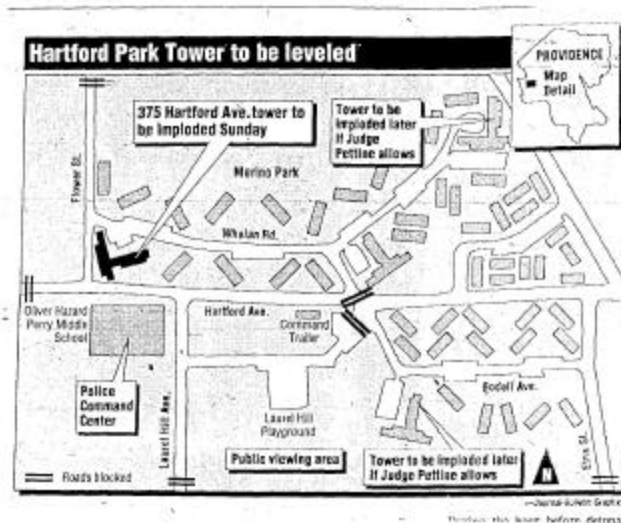


Figure 4: Hartford Park Aerial



Figure 5: Housing Division: “Outstanding List of Item to be Avoided in Low-Rent Housing

Design of Buildings

AVOID

- 1 Overemphasis of architectural detail instead of carefully studied mass effectiveness.
- 2 Unnecessary and discordant blending of materials on front elevations for decorative effects.
- 3 The absence of relation between exterior treatment and interior plan requirements.
- 4 Elaborating on detail that may prove to be a passing fad that will detract from the permanent value of the property.
- 5 Decorative details unrelated to structural frame.
- 6 Excessive hallways and corridors in plan.
- 7 Unnecessary basement or cellar space.
- 8 Giving choice plan locations to kitchens and bathrooms at expense of major rooms.
- 9 Excessive heights of buildings—three stories considered maximum except for special conditions.
- 10 Materials and equipment that may be inexpensive for initial cost but with high upkeep charges
- 11 Minimum plan dimensions as adopted by Housing Division, whenever possible.
- 12 Unnecessary or questionable extravagances that will tend to defeat the fundamental purposes and aims of low-rent housing work.

Figure 6: Housing Division: House Types

## IN VARIOUS HOUSE TYPES

DESCRIPTIVE ITEM	APARTMENT HOUSE TYPE	ROW HOUSE TYPE	FLAT HOUSE TYPE	COMBINATION FLAT AND ROW HOUSE TYPE	GALLERY TYPE
Land cost .....	Generally expensive ...	Typical of inexpensive land.	Typical of inexpensive land.	Characteristic of average price land.	From low to average.
Number of rooms per acre.	High .....	Extremely low .....	Low .....	Fairly high .....	Fairly high.
Number of stories ...	3 or 4 .....	1 or 2 .....	2 .....	3 .....	2.
Basements .....	Usually required .....	Optional .....	Optional .....	Optional but generally required.	Average.
Construction cost ....	Lower per room than other types.	More expensive than apartment house or flat house type.	Compares with apartment house type but less than others.	More expensive than apartment houses and flats but less than row houses.	Average.
Maintenance charges.	Higher than types where items such as janitor service, etc., are not required.	Low .....	Low .....	Low and efficient .....	When treated as apartment house type runs high, and low when developed as flat house type.
Dwelling unit sizes ...	2, 3, and 4 rooms .....	4, 5, and 6 rooms .....	3, 4, or 5 rooms .....	3, 4, or 5 rooms .....	3, 4, or 5 rooms.
Other remarks .....	Additional community facilities possible. Responsibility of tenant ceases at door of apartment. Lack of individual garden and lawn areas.	Individual garden lawn facilities. Reduced landscape maintenance because of private yards. High degree of privacy. Sleeping quarters on second floor an advantage.	Desirable in communities where tenants enjoy individual garden and lawn facilities. Stairway from second floor to basement is difficult to solve.	Question arises as to practicability of having row house tenant go up one flight. Problem of getting from second-floor unit to basement.	Helps toward a variation of units in a project. Considered characteristic of warm climate only. Living room and bedroom must be on opposite side of gallery.

Figure 7: Housing Division: Row House Plan

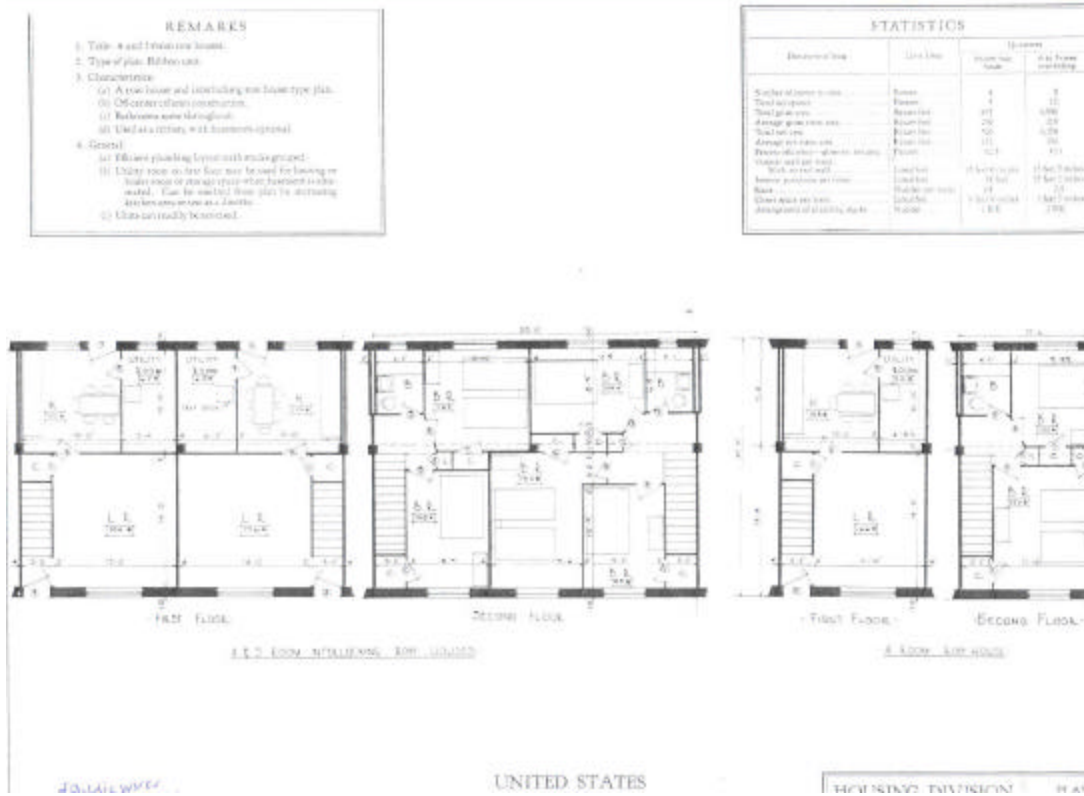


Figure 8: Housing Division: Row House Site

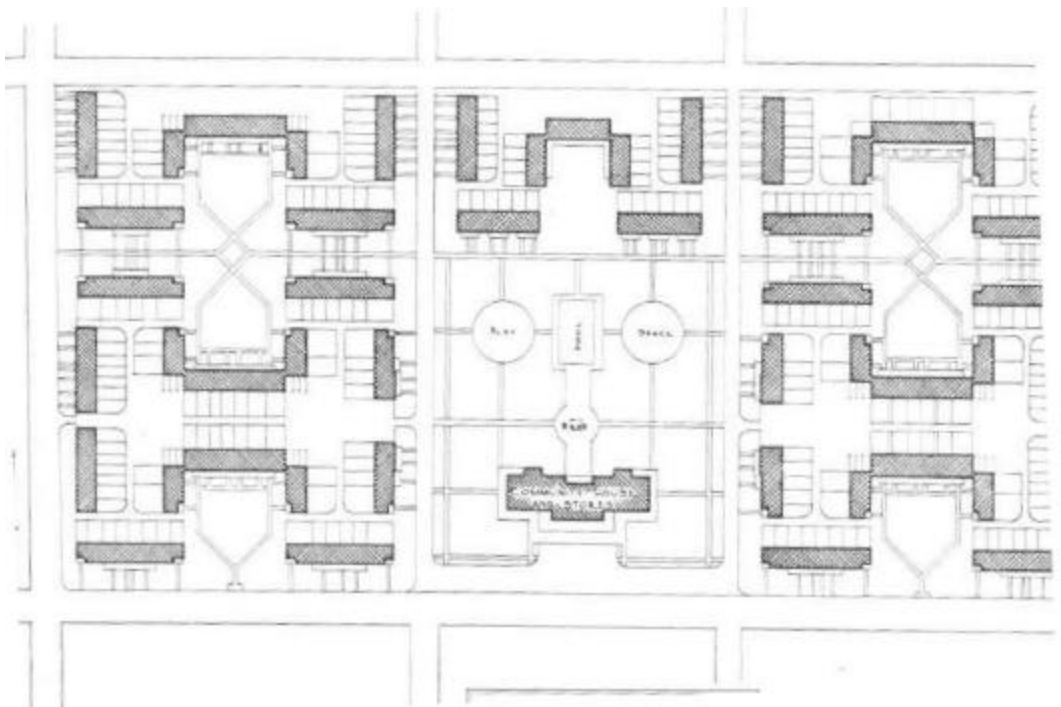


Figure 9: Hartford Park Statistics

<b>Hartford Park (Family)</b>	
<b>Population</b>	
Number of units	388
Population	1,243
Households	365
Ave # persons per household	3.40
<b>Gender</b>	
Female head of household	91.5%
Male head of household	8.5%
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>	
Caucasian	3.0%
African American	18.1%
Hispanic	77.5%
Native American	0.5%
Asian	0.8%
<b>Income</b>	
Average household income	\$9,953

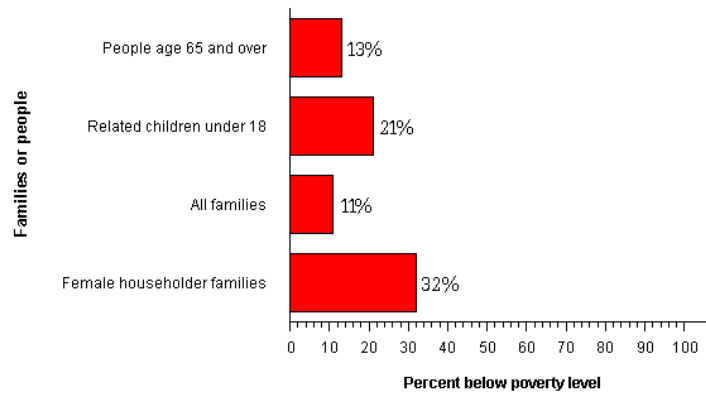
Figure 10: HHS 2003 Poverty Guidelines

<b>Size of Family Unit</b>	<b>48 Contiguous States and D.C.</b>	<b>Alaska</b>	<b>Hawaii</b>
1	\$ 8,980	\$11,210	\$10,330
2	12,120	15,140	13,940
3	15,260	19,070	17,550
4	18,400	23,000	21,160
For each additional person, add	3,140	3,930	3,610

**SOURCE:** *Federal Register*, Vol. 68, No. 26, February 7, 2003, pp. 6456-6458.

Figure 11: Providence Poverty Statistics

Poverty Rates in Providence County, Rhode Island in 2002



Source: American Community Survey, 2002

Figure 12: Roger Williams Aerial



Figure 13: Roger Williams Statistics

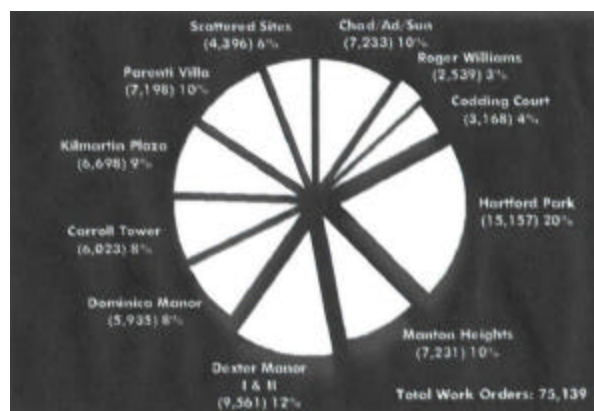
<b>Roger Williams</b>	
<b>Population</b>	
Number of units	40
Population	99
Households	32
Ave # persons per household	3.10
<b>Gender</b>	
Female head of household	100.0%
Male head of household	0.0%
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>	
Caucasian	3.1%
African American	21.8%
Hispanic	68.7%
Native American	0.0%
Asian	3.1%
<b>Income</b>	

Average household income	\$12,429
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Figure 14: Providence Housing Authority Public Housing Map



Figure 15: Maintenance Percentages Per Housing Project



### Image Sources

Figure 1,4, 12: [WWW.ProvidencePlan.org](http://WWW.ProvidencePlan.org)

Figure 2: Roger Williams College Advertisement. *New York Times* 18 August 1968.

Figure 3: “Blast Will Topple High-Rise on Sunday” *Providence Journal* 18 May 1989: A10

Figure 5,6,7,8: United States Government Housing Division. *Unit Plans. Typical Room Arrangements, Site Plans, and Details For Low-Rent Housing*. Washington, DC: Housing Division, Public Works Administration, 1935.

Figure 9,13, 14: [www.PHA-Providence.com](http://www.PHA-Providence.com)

Figure 10: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/03poverty.htm>

Figure 11:  
[www.census.gov/acs/www/Products/Profiles/Single/2002/ACS/Narrative/050/NP05000US44007.htm](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Products/Profiles/Single/2002/ACS/Narrative/050/NP05000US44007.htm)

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