



A SUMMARY REPORT

JUNE 1988

*Desegregating
Cabrini-
Green*

*Illinois Advisory Committee
To The U.S. Commission On
Civil Rights*

*This summary report of the Illinois
Advisory Committee to the U.S. Com-
mission on Civil Rights was prepared
for the information and considera-*

*tion of the Commission. Statements
and viewpoints in the report should
not be attributed to the Commission
or to the Advisory Committee, but*

*only to individual participants in
the community forum where the in-
formation was gathered.*

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Illinois Advisory Committee to the
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights
July 1988

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On September 8, 1987, the Illinois Advisory Committee held a forum in Chicago on the possibility of desegregating the Cabrini-Green housing projects. It chose this topic because there was publicity about the possibility of removing large numbers of existing tenants from the predominantly black projects and replacing the existing buildings with privately developed housing for the upwardly mobile who are able to pay premium rents for housing convenient to the central business district. In the course of preliminary work, the Advisory Committee learned that a proposal by Professor Ed Marciniak, author of Reclaiming the City, was being cited widely as an example of what might be done. The Advisory Committee thought that a study of the prospects for desegregation would inform the Commission about the climate of opinion on civil rights in the Chicago area and assist the Commission in its program planning.

At the forum and in interviews with a wide range of persons who were knowledgeable about public housing, the Advisory Committee heard conflicting perspectives. Housing experts and many leaders in Chicago thought that Cabrini-Green was a social disaster that should be remedied in part by demolition of some buildings and that desegregation of the area could be accomplished in the course of such a remedy. Representatives of tenants in the projects, while recognizing that the area had problems, thought these could be substantially remedied at relatively little cost and that it was unfair to forcibly remove tenants from a neighborhood and from a convenient central city location. In this report the Advisory Committee recounts what it was told might be done and the opposition to those proposals.

The Advisory Committee hopes this report will assist the Commission in its program planning for FY 1988 and beyond. The Advisory Committee will be following up on this topic in future program activities during FY 1988.

Respectfully,

HUGH SCHWARTZBERG, Chairperson
Illinois Advisory Committee

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INTRODUCTION

The Illinois Advisory Committee sought to determine whether it would be possible to desegregate one of the most infamous public housing projects--the Chicago Housing Authority's Cabrini-Green. To do so, after a preliminary collection of information, it held a community forum in Chicago on September 8, 1987. The presenters at that forum were: Prof. Ed Marciniak, author of Reclaiming the City; Prof. Charles Orlebeke, acting director of the School of Urban Affairs of the University of Illinois; Clarence Page, of the Chicago Tribune; Mary Decker, director of the Metropolitan Planning Council; Kale Williams, director of the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities; Alexander Polikoff of Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI); and representatives of the tenants and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).¹ The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) was unable to send a spokesperson.

The project now known as Cabrini-Green began as the Frances Cabrini Houses, a project planned before World War II but actually constructed during wartime. Fifty-five two and three story buildings were constructed in barracks style, but each unit had its own garden. There were 586 units.²

Cabrini Extension was completed in 1958. This added 1,925 units in 15 buildings of 7, 10 and 19 stories to the original Frances Cabrini Homes.³ This was necessary because, despite slum clearance, housing conditions in the area continued to be appalling in the period up to 1950. Finally, William Green homes were added in November 1961, 8 buildings each of which was 15 or 16 stories tall and contained 1,096 units. The Green homes as well as Cabrini Extension had large apartments (3-5 bedroom) on

lower floors and smaller units on upper floors.⁴ As of September 1986, the CHA said there were between 8,755 and 10,252 residents living in the Cabrini-Green public housing complex.⁵

Alexander Polikoff of BPI noted that the 14 highrise buildings had between 127 and 141 apartments each--a total of 2,144 apartments of which 1,365 were occupied. The 17 medium density buildings had 56 or 67 apartments each--a total of 1,093 apartments of which 889 were occupied.⁶

In 1976 the Chicago Housing Authority provided housing for about 4.5 percent of the population of Chicago in 1,273 buildings--30,462 units of family housing, 9,175 of housing for the elderly and 3,098 units under private ownership but leased to the authority.⁷ Thirteen percent of its family tenants were in two-parent families, only 28 percent had incomes over \$5,000 per year, 95 percent were black, 3 percent were white, and 2 percent were Hispanic.⁸

A survey of Cabrini-Green tenants in 1986 showed that 87 percent of families in Cabrini-Green highrises were headed by females and there were an average of 2.2 children per family under age 16.⁹ The residents had lived in their apartments on the average of 8 years. Of those tenants responding to the survey, 65 percent reported they received "welfare," 15 percent reported receiving wages, 13 percent received social security, 5 percent were unemployed, and 4 percent did not respond to the survey. Two-thirds of the adults surveyed in 1986 were looking for work.¹⁰ Thirty-four percent of adult respondents had not graduated from high school.¹¹

Prof. Marciniak commented:

[The] changes in public housing over the last forty years were described by Patrick J. Nash, when a CHA board member in 1982, as follows:

It was originally designed as a public works project.
In terms of housing, it evolved into an initial stepping

stone for working people who stayed for a time and then moved on to private housing. Now it has further evolved into a permanent home for many people--for whole generations. They live there until they die. It was not designed to house so many poor people. Through legislation and various procedural changes, we now have located in public housing a disproportionate number of families whose only milieu is welfare life, who do not live by the same standards as the original residents. I don't think the CHA as an agency has ever come to grips with that.

Today, giant high-rise public housing projects like Cabrini-Green have become housing of the last resort, institutionalized housing, more or else permanent shelter for single-parent households. Public housing was not designed to accommodate such families en masse. If public housing is intended to house such families in the 1980s and 1990s, Congress¹² will have to revise radically the existing program of public housing.

Devereux Bowly, in his book, The Poorhouse: Subsidized Housing in Chicago, 1895-1976, notes that:

The residents were treated like children, and the tragedy is that for some it was the self-fulfilling prophecy--they acted like children and were satisfied to have public housing and welfare policies control their lives. Public housing thus tended to perpetuate a permanent class of dependent people, unable to fend for themselves.¹³

The poor became isolated from heterogeneous environments, from community institutions that would have made life more comprehensible, and from job opportunities.¹⁴ With the advantage of hindsight, families need not have been put in highrise buildings at all. The same number of units could have been put on the same land in a low-rise configuration.¹⁵ For example, the construction of Robert Taylor Homes covered only 7 percent of the land set aside for the project. If apartments of the same size had been built as low-rise, three story buildings, then only 40 percent of the land would have been used and the remainder could have been used for parking lots and play areas.¹⁶ The construction of Cabrini Extension used less than 16 percent¹⁷ of the land and Rockwell Gardens left 85 percent of the land vacant.¹⁸ As the stock of housing remained relatively constant in the city

while the flight to the suburbs made more housing available, especially to black Chicagoans, the desirability of poorly designed and maintained public housing projects decreased during the 1970's.¹⁹

The housing market tightened during the 1980's. The Leadership Council of Metropolitan Open Communities (LCMOC) published a report, Market Failure and Federal Policy: Low Income Housing in Chicago, 1970-1983, that showed the supply of housing available to the low-income minority had declined.²⁰ Indeed, LCMOC suggested that even middle-class blacks and Hispanics were increasingly living in overcrowded conditions or in housing in need of rehabilitation. LCMOC suggested that older housing units vacated by better off whites did not trickle down to minorities.²¹

In 1982 the Illinois Advisory Committee published the proceedings of a forum on housing in Chicago. At that forum, Leonard S. Rubinowitz, Professor of Law and Urban Affairs at Northwestern University, summarized the prevailing litigation. Hills v. Gautreaux,²² begun in 1966, was actually two pieces of litigation, one against the Chicago Housing Authority and another against the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. In 1966, black tenants in, or applicants for, public housing in Chicago filed separate actions against CHA, alleging that it deliberately selected sites for public housing within the black community in order to avoid placing black families in white neighborhoods, and against the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for assisting the discriminatory practice by providing financial support for housing. The plaintiffs sought to end this practice and for public housing units to be scattered over the city. Federal District Court Judge Austin ordered CHA to build its next 700 apartments in predominantly white areas and three-fourths of all subsequent units in predominantly white areas and

implement a nondiscriminatory tenant selection policy.²³ Ultimately the district court had to set aside State law giving the city council veto over site selection to get approval of sites for the first new units.²⁴ Even then however, few sites were acquired or developed as of 1979. In the HUD portion of the litigation, following a 1976 Supreme Court decision, HUD negotiated voluntary agreements whereby it would be possible for blacks to move into federally subsidized private housing in white neighborhoods in both the city and suburbs.²⁵ There were also exclusionary zoning cases, designed to eliminate the barriers to private development of low-income housing in the suburbs. The most notable of these cases was Village of Arlington Heights v. MHDC²⁶ and HOPE Inc. v. County of DuPage²⁷ These were part of the setting for the Cabrini Green controversy.

Notes

1. Proceedings of this forum are hereafter cited as SAC Meeting Notes, Sept. 8, 1987.
2. Devereaux Bowly, Jr., The Poorhouse, Subsidized Housing in Chicago, 1895-1976 (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), pp. 35-36.
3. Id., p. 117.
4. Id., pp. 118-119.
5. Metropolitan Planning Council, Untapped Potentials, The Capacities, Needs and Views of Chicago's Highrise Public Housing Residents (September 1986), p. 8.
6. SAC Meeting Notes, Alexander Polikoff, Sept. 8, 1987.
7. Bowley, op. cit., p. 221.
8. Id., pp. 221-222.
9. Metropolitan Planning Council, Untapped Potentials, p. 14.
10. Id., p. 16.
11. Id., p. 15.
12. SAC Meeting Notes, Prof. Ed Marciniak, Sept. 8, 1987.
13. Bowley, op. cit., p. 224.
14. Id.
15. Id., p. 225.
16. Id., p. 126.
17. Id., p. 116.
18. Id., p. 121.
19. Id., pp. 228-230.
20. Leadership Council of Metropolitan Open Communities, Market Failure and Federal Policy: Low Income Housing in Chicago, 1970-1983 (n.d.).

21. Id., p. 11.
22. 425 U.S. 284 (1976).
23. 296 F. Supp. 907, 304 F. Supp. 736 (1969).
24. ILL. REV. STAT. Ch. 67 1/2, sec. 9 (1962).
25. Illinois Advisory Committee, Housing: Chicago Style (October 1982), pp. 31-32. See also Hills v. Gautreaux, 425 U.S. 284 (1976).
26. Id., pp. 32-33.
27. Id., pp. 33-34.

THE CHARACTER OF CABRINI-GREEN

There are two views of Cabrini-Green. One is the generally accepted view among housing experts that it is a disaster area marked by incompetent bureaucratic efforts and social unrest. This view is the one that can be read in the press and most of the housing literature. The other view is that of some tenant leaders of the projects and their supporters. These acknowledge that the projects have their problems but contend they are nowhere near as serious or as irreparable as the popular view suggests.

The public image of Cabrini-Green deteriorated to such an extent that in 1981 the then-mayor of Chicago moved into the project to show it was possible to live there safely.¹ This gesture was not seen as having any long term effect on the conditions there, however. The project was seen as fighting a losing battle with the forces of crime and decay.² By 1986, Cabrini-Green was being described as a "battle zone."³ Three-quarters of the CHA residents polled in a 1986 study believed the highrises (including Cabrini-Green) were not safe. Only 24 percent rated the areas safe during the day and 60 percent stated the areas were very unsafe at night.⁴

Describing conditions at CHA projects, Professor Marciniak stated:

As a slumlord, the CHA operates substandard properties in violation of the building, elevator and fire codes, as well as the City's tenants rights ordinance. Tenants do not receive services to which they are entitled. Improvements are promised but seldom arrive. Armies of cockroaches continue to invade apartments. The hallways and elevators stink of urine. Conditions are so unsafe that the Illinois Bell Telephone Company sends only three-person crews into Cabrini-Green: one to guard the truck and two to⁵ share the elevator to the apartment where the telephone needs repair.

Delores Wilson, president of a tenant's committee being trained to manage one of the buildings in Green project, said that tenants were not continuously shooting at each other, scattering garbage all over the project, or "lazy people" sitting home all day. She noted that conditions

were worse in private housing. At least her project had fireproof buildings and playgrounds.⁶ She noted that even in Cabrini project the level of shootings was much reduced. There were graffiti but no hazardous substances around that project. She believed most of the project's problems were due to the attitude of public officials who failed to provide the resources that the projects needed to be viable. The necessary resources, she said, included funds for repairs of the elevators, hiring of more janitors and plumbers, and more attention to the general maintenance of the buildings. She believed that the press had concentrated on the bad news from the projects and failed to report the many successes. She felt improved policing and sanitation and street repair would do much to improve the projects' image.⁷

The Chicago Housing Authority acknowledges there are many problems. Its acting executive director, Brenda Gaines, agreed that maintenance of projects has been inadequate.⁸ In 1983, CHA had \$76 million in unspent maintenance funds. However the funds are now depleted due to maintenance costs of older buildings. She asserted that HUD has underfunded CHA for maintenance of its projects.

Although CHA provided some security officers, crime is a problem. There are 65 existing CHA security officers, and 52 will be added. Poor tenant selection also caused difficulties. The public housing projects became housing of last resort, and CHA relaxed its screening procedures to fill vacancies. This resulted in entry of some people with antisocial behavior into the projects, and courts do not evict persons from the projects for antisocial behavior. Further, as long as the person is paying rent or does not have an alternative to public housing, that person will not be evicted by the courts.⁹

HUD expressed a general concern about the projects, noting its sense of general mismanagement.¹⁰ HUD personnel noted that New York City seemed

to have done much better than Chicago in maintaining highrise projects. HUD staff also noted that while Cabrini-Green had a high vacancy rate, the similarly constructed Taylor project had a much lower vacancy rate. But until HUD reviews actual occupancy, which it last did in 1984 and planned to do again during 1987, HUD could not be sure what was happening at the projects.¹¹

Notes

1. New York Times, Mar. 23, 1981; New York Times, March 27, 1981; New York Times, Mar. 29, 1981; New York Times, Apr. 2, 1981.
2. Wall Street Journal, May 5, 1981.
3. Time, Dec. 15, 1986.
4. MPC, Untapped Potentials (September 1986), p. 33.
5. SAC Meeting Notes, Ed Marciniak, Sept. 8, 1987.
6. Interview with Delores Wilson, June 18, 1987 and SAC Meeting Notes, Delores Wilson, Sept. 8, 1987.
7. Id.
8. Interview with Brenda Gaines, Aug. 4, 1987.
9. Id.
10. Interview with Maryann Taranowski, Chief of Assisted Housing Management Branch, HUD, Region V, Aug. 5, 1987.
11. Id.

EFFORTS TO DESEGREGATE PUBLIC HOUSING IN CHICAGO

Martin Meyerson and Edward Banfield have recounted the origins of segregation in Chicago's public housing.¹ By the end of World War II, they note, slum clearance and use of replacement highrise construction had developed a momentum that was unstoppable. As late as 1949, building on vacant land as an alternative would have meant breaking down some of the racial isolation that characterized the city.² Matters were not helped by the U.S. Public Housing Administration, which reportedly told the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) that it would be left up to the city to decide whether to segregate by race but the total number of public housing projects would have to be equitably distributed between blacks and whites.³ Although in the late 1940's Mayor Martin Kennelly was supportive of public housing, under a 1948 law that gave the city council a veto over site selection each alderman was able to exercise a veto over what could be built in his ward.⁴ A black was appointed as chairperson of the CHA board of commissioners which was an effort by CHA to gain support in the black community to immunize itself from political interference.⁵ The board of commissioners oversees the operation of CHA, in developing policies and the approval of bids and contracts. During this period the board was perfectly aware that in choosing sites it chose the racial composition of projects.⁶ It sometimes miscalculated, however. For example, Cabrini was expected to be 80 percent white but blacks moved into Cabrini because white war workers would not do so in sufficient numbers.⁷ The impact of CHA, Federal agencies, and others in creating segregated public housing is recounted in the Gautreaux litigation.

The best known proposal for change is that of Professor Ed Marciniak, author of Reclaiming the Inner City.⁸ He noted that Cabrini-Green has a vacancy rate of 30 percent and that it sits on prime land suitable for upscale development. He believes it would be possible to relocate the tenants if one building at a time were reduced in size or the buildings were converted to housing for the elderly.⁹

In a summary of his proposal, Professor Marciniak suggests:

1. Empty the Cabrini-Green high-rise with fewest occupied apartments.
2. Transfer the building's households to other vacant apartments in the project or relocate them into either other projects or scattered sites.
3. Recycle the vacated building for some other use or tear it down.
4. Sell the land, if the building is demolished, to a private group for construction of Atrium Village type housing.
5. Curb further movement of households into the Cabrini-Green high-rises, steering tenants to other projects.
6. Strengthen the effort to help other Cabrini tenants move out.
7. Empty a second, then a third high-rise, again based on lowest occupancy rates.¹⁰

Professor Marciniak argues that efforts at rehabilitation have proved unsuccessful.¹¹ This view is apparently attracting some support, at least in the eye of the chief political columnist of the Chicago Sun-Times.¹² Others, such as James Compton of the Chicago Urban League and Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, shared this view.¹³

Prof. Charles Orlebeke commented that that proposal is highly conceptual. In fact, he and Professor Marciniak note that no developer has actually come forward with a proposal for private use of Cabrini-Green land if it should become available.¹⁴ Professor Orlebeke noted that it would take a long time for any developer to determine what might be done and that there has been no analysis of the options for utilizing the project.¹⁵

Professor Orlebeke noted that many projects had problems similar to those in Cabrini-Green. With the advantage of hindsight, planners would

not have built the highrises and the web of regulations that resulted in the current tenant mix would not have been promulgated. He stressed recognition that a Federal rescue of the project was impossible. He urged that, in considering options, private developers not be viewed as devils. He suggested that change should be encouraged within the parameters that the existing residents be involved in the planning and the total number of units on the site be held constant. He believed that much needed to be determined before planning could begin--such as the market value of the site, the legal rules governing sale, and the cost of rehabilitation. Developers should reveal any proposals they had for change.¹⁶

A complicating factor is that one of the leading efforts at desegregation in the Cabrini-Green area, the Atrium Village project (built as a private effort by neighborhood religious institutions and desegregated on both racial and economic lines), is now being challenged by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) on the same bases used in the Starrett City case.¹⁷ DOJ complained that Atrium Village was in violation of the Fair Housing Act of 1968¹⁸ by using a quota system to discriminate against blacks seeking to rent apartments in the complex. The quota was designed to maintain no more than 50 percent black occupancy.¹⁹

Despite the absence of a firm plan to deal with Cabrini-Green, there remains a general agreement that "something" must be done and that the existing situation is intolerable. Many of those consulted on this topic suggested there might be ways by which Cabrini-Green could at least be partially emptied and its population dispersed in ways that promoted desegregation.²⁰

Proponents of change start with the basic view that highrises as a way to house families have failed and should be abandoned.²¹ But it should be noted that many tenants preferred the highrises for the same reasons that the affluent do.²²

Alexander Polikoff of BPI, lead attorney in Gautreaux, believed it was possible to decrease the density of some of the larger projects by knocking down some buildings. He noted that because of the vacancy rates, the number of highrises could be reduced from 14 to 9 without removing tenants from the area, if all apartments in the remaining buildings were made habitable. He believed a reduction in density should create additional community space and be done in conjunction with area economic development. He also thought there should be active affirmative marketing for a rescaled project. As a special case, he believed it would be possible to sell off Cabrini-Green and rehouse the tenants better than they are housed in the projects.²³

Kale Williams, executive director of the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, thought some of the housing could be redesigned for the elderly and single persons, a task that would take 10-15 years.²⁴ He thought there could be more intensive use of section 8 and a revitalized scattered site program, and with counseling, such as that provided by his organization, this might have a desegregative effect. Section 8 Housing is a HUD-sponsored program to provide low- and very low-income families with safe and sanitary housing in private accommodations. HUD pays the difference between what an eligible household can afford and the fair market rent for the housing unit.²⁵ Mr. Williams also thought it would be possible to build townhouses in the neighborhood that could be rented for subsidized payments of \$300-375 per month. He noted that there could be agreements with private developers for a quota of public housing tenants. He also urged construction of affordable private homes in the area that might be purchased by tenants.²⁶

Mary Decker, of the Metropolitan Planning Council, expressed concern that the limited discussion she had heard about the site suggested

replacing only about one-third to one-half of the housing units.²⁷ She also thought much could be accomplished by increased tenant participation in management and efforts to diversity the economic mix of the projects. She thought the Marciniak proposal was interesting but that it fails to show money can be raised to provide replacement housing. She urged efforts to improve the tenant mix by removing the income cap, currently \$6,500 in Chicago, and encouraging two-parent families to move in. She called for efforts to ensure that tenant leaders were not forced out of the projects as their incomes rose.²⁸

Notes

1. Martin Meyerson and Edward Banfield, Politics, Planning and the Public Interest (The Free Press of Glencoe: 1955).
2. Id., p. 34.
3. Id., p. 40.
4. Id., p. 867.
5. Id., p. 85.
6. Id., p. 122.
7. Id., p. 123.
8. Interview with Ed Marciniak, June 18, 1987.
9. Id.
10. Perspective, Chicago Tribune, Feb. 20, 1986. Submitted for the Advisory Committee record at the community forum.
11. SAC Meeting Notes, Ed Marciniak, Sept. 8, 1987.
12. Chicago Sun-Times, June 4, 1987.
13. Interview with James Compton, Aug. 4, 1987, and SAC Meeting Notes, Ed Marciniak, Sept. 8, 1987.
14. Interview with Charles Orlebeke, July 20, 1987.
15. Id.
16. Id.
17. Interview with Charles Infelt, June 18, 1987. See also, United States v. Starrett City Association, No. 87-6132 (2nd Cir., March 1, 1988).
18. 42 U.S.C. secs. 3601-3619 (1982).
19. United States of America v. Atrium Village, U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, No. 87 C 6527 (1987).

20. SAC Meeting Notes, Ed Marciniak, Charles Orlebeke, Clarence Page, Mary Decker, Alexander Polikoff, and Kale Williams, Sept. 8, 1987.
21. Interviews with James Compton, president of the Chicago Urban League, Aug. 4, 1987; Alexander Polikoff, BPI, Aug. 5, 1987; Kale Williams, Leadership Council, June 22, 1987; Mary Decker, Metropolitan Planning Council, July 6, 1987 and SAC Meeting Notes, Charles Orlebeke and Clarence Page, Sept. 8, 1987.
22. SAC Meeting Notes, Mary Decker, Sept. 8, 1987.
23. Interview with Alexander Polikoff, Aug. 5, 1987 and SAC Meeting Notes, Alexander Polikoff, Sept. 8, 1987.
24. Interview with Kale Williams, June 22, 1987 and SAC Meeting Notes, Kale Williams, Sept. 8, 1987.
25. Section 8, U.S. Housing Act of 1937, 42 U.S.C. 1437f (1980).
26. Interview with Kale Williams, June 22, 1987 and SAC Meeting Notes, Kale Williams, Sept. 8, 1987.
27. Interview with Mary Decker, July 6, 1987.
28. Id. and SAC Meeting Notes, Mary Decker, Sept. 8, 1987.

PRESERVING THE STATUS QUO

While many are in favor of changes at Cabrini-Green that would move tenants out and thereby offer at least the chance to increase integration at the project, some tenant leaders and their supporters take a different view. For them Cabrini-Green is home.

Delores Wilson opposed demolishing the existing housing because there were so many in need of housing.¹ She argued that the only reason there was support for demolition was that Cabrini-Green was prime real estate that could be developed for other purposes, that demolition would make the rich richer. She argued that if HUD and CHA would put some money into the projects, it would be possible to revitalize them. She liked living in Green housing and did not want to move. She suggested that if Cabrini-Green was underutilized, that tenants be moved from Robert Taylor houses. She argued that it was unrealistic to send the residents to the suburbs because they needed public transportation and that would be lacking out there. She noted that in her building they had floor captains, zone captains, and 17 committees addressing the variety of tenant needs.²

Lillian Swope of Cabrini agreed.³ She argued that what was needed was more staff and improvement of some of the buildings. She stated that most tenants did not believe they would get better housing if they were relocated and that in any case it was not feasible to relocate the large number of tenants in the project.⁴

Rev. Charles Infelt, a community leader and pastor of a local church, suggested that CHA was deliberately creating vacancies in Cabrini-Green to justify demolition.⁵ He believed the social dislocation caused by the gutting of community organizations when Cabrini-Green was first built was now being remedied and that there was a chance for the community to

help itself. He believed that income policies which removed the tenant leadership as they became middle class and concentrated single-parent households in the projects had hurt. But he believed that stable CHA management and increased use of tenant management organizations could remedy many of the detrimental conditions that tenants complained about. He believed violence and lack of personal security could be remedied by altered policing practices.⁶

Professor Orlebeke noted that while he did not oppose change at Cabrini Green, he believed it would have to be done in a way that would protect tenants' rights and he had seen no real analysis of the available options to do so.⁷

Brenda Gaines, acting executive director of the CHA, was dubious about suggestions to tear down the highrises.⁸ She thought it would be necessary to determine how to replace the lost housing and what would be done with the available space.⁹

Maryann Taranoski, Chief of the Assisted Housing Management Branch of the Region V, U.S. Office of Housing, tried to reassure tenants regarding HUD's role in any proposed demolition of housing.¹⁰ She noted that neither a developer nor CHA had ever approached HUD with plans for demolition of all or part of Cabrini-Green. She stated that before such a proposal would be considered by HUD, CHA would have to give tenants 45 days to comment on any plans and would have to provide written responses to those comments. If HUD deemed the responses insufficient, it might require CHA to comment further. The mayor would have to approve demolition before HUD would consider approval. There would need to be plans for adequate relocation benefits, and CHA would need to provide as many units of public housing at alternate locations as it planned to demolish; section 8 certificates,

which could not be used as a substitute. She noted that decisions about demolition of as large a project as Cabrini-Green could be made only by HUD headquarters staff in Washington.¹¹

Notes

1. Interview with Delores Wilson, June 18, 1987.
2. Id.
3. Interview with Lilian Swope, June 19, 1987.
4. Id.
5. Interview with Charles Infelt, June 18, 1987.
6. Id.
7. Interview with Charles Orlebeke, July 20, 1987.
8. Interview with Brenda Gaines, Aug. 4, 1987.
9. Id.
10. SAC Meeting Notes, Maryann Taranowski, Sept. 8, 1987.
11. Id.

SUMMARY

It is easy to accept the widely held view--a Cabrini-Green racked by violence and characterized by social misfits unable to find alternate accommodations. This view is shared not only by the press but also by many experts on housing. They point to mismanagement by the Chicago Housing Authority as a primary cause of the problem--poor maintenance, poor policing, poor tenant selection. They concur in the view that highrises cannot work, that Cabrini-Green cannot be "fixed" and the only viable way to resolve the social problems, including racial concentration, is to gradually demolish the existing larger structures. Set against this perspective is that of the tenant leaders who note that much is being done or could be done to make Cabrini-Green more viable. They do not see the situation as a disaster, merely a set of problems--maintenance, tenant selection, violence--that agencies of the city could remedy with Federal assistance. They see Cabrini-Green as their home, no worse than other neighborhoods. They do not wish to be pushed out in the name of progress.

