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Peter Goldstein

*University of Minnesota, Morris*

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AVOIDING THE ESCALATION OF HOMELESSNESS THROUGH  
PUBLIC POLICY

Peter Goldstein  
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In order to effectually capitalize on many of the benefits of a representative democracy one must maintain a high degree of self-efficacy and adaptability, and a firm belief in the future. The promotion of ideals and policies requires a certain extent of communal support at its foundation, and a plethora of reinforcement to maintain a policy's relevance and work towards its successful passage. As could be inferred, marginalized groups sometimes struggle to ensure that their needs are being met, thus requiring collective acknowledgement that policies benefitting the atypical population will work towards the betterment of the entire populace. Considering that monetary influences perceptively gain increasing prevalence in the American democratic system, this notion holds particular truth when analyzing policies directed towards individuals experiencing homelessness. I intend to demonstrate that rather than maintaining stringent policies outlawing behaviors associated with the experience of homelessness, policy makers should focus on creating housing opportunities throughout the entirety of their districts, which will ultimately strengthen neighborhoods and decrease governmental reliance.

While the number of individuals currently experiencing homelessness varies significantly amidst the states, the last several decades have led to an outpouring of support for federally mandated programming and evaluations aimed towards strategizing ways in which we can collectively provide solutions and housing to a perceptively mounting societal ailment. Even though homeless populations have historically been viewed in a negative manner, the 1980s generated exceedingly deleterious sentiments as the broken windows theory gained increased popularity amongst legislators and voters alike (Sridhar 2006). In order to trace the roots of

these sentiments, it's important to ascertain an understanding of the threat of stereotypes towards deviant groups. Initially, religious teachings perceived destitute individuals as demonstrating the greatest form of piousness, but as conceptions of private property began to steer our political philosophy, admiration was replaced with intimidation and nuisance (Amster 2003). These impressions fuel our persistent demonization towards individuals experiencing homelessness, which generates feelings of urgency to exclude their existence within our communities through means of criminalization and suppression (Amster 2003).

I demonstrate through an analysis of contemporary public policies, their implications and outcomes, the background behind their institution and with theoretical research that effective practices ensuring the problems associated with homelessness, on an individual and societal level, are better solved through means other than criminalization. An examination of the variance in policy decisions and the economic conditions that resulted from them will explain our current state, as well as to provide ideals for future endeavors.

Upon a concise analysis of economic affairs, I shift my attention to the onset of policies that promote criminalization, with the intention of demonstrating their adverse, long-term affects on individual and communal stability. I then establish the concerns and affects of maintaining high concentrations of individuals experiencing homelessness and poverty in neighborhoods. Finally, I recommend conceivable alternatives that some states, including Minnesota, have instituted with the hopes of demonstrating the feasibility of improving the lives of individuals experiencing homelessness through avenues of public policy. While there is a multitude of

research regarding policy-making in the fight to end homelessness, I intend to provide a cohesive analysis of the often-unaddressed factors and repercussions that require modification in order for future policies to increase in efficiency and effectiveness.

## **Economic and Institutional Segregation**

### **New Deal- Post WWII Era Policy Ramifications**

As was aforementioned, in order to more accurately understand and assess the needs of public policy we must consider the policies they are replacing. This section explains legislation from the United States regarding homelessness and poverty in a manner that will allow for us to eliminate or reduce the negative implications upon the institution of future policy. The 20<sup>th</sup> Century brought forth major shifts in public ideals, practices and migration that are principally responsible for the institutions that perpetuate homelessness today. As the farming industry shifted towards more extensive farms, individuals unable to compete were forced to flock to major cities with the hopes of capitalizing and finding employment in growing urban industries (Freudenberg 2000). The New Deal policies that were advocated for unequivocally by the Roosevelt administration significantly expanded the roles of the American government. In order to alleviate the economic discrepancies that manifested themselves throughout the Great Depression, it was believed that government intervention was necessary to equitably allocate income back into the middle class in order to stimulate consumption (Vojnovic 2007). New Deal policies also began to reflect an increased national acknowledgement for the promotion of public goods in

order to counterbalance the growing consequences of unchecked externalities. This awareness led to an increase in the government's role in urban management, which is exemplified most notably by the upsurge of public sector employment made possible through increased taxation (Vojnovic 2007).

The societal progression that occurred in the 1930s was idled by the necessity for American involvement in World War II. Rather than maintaining governmental attention towards expanding social programming, there was a widespread push towards manufacturing military equipment that required a reallocation of federal funding for military expenditures. While this stagnated social services, it also created a multitude of new employment that the government posited would account for the deficiency in availability of these services.

Following the Second World War, the government incentivized suburban growth through tax inducements, sparking mass migration amongst middle-class families that had been previously established throughout the cities. State and federal governments were enticed by suburbanization practices because they provided a mechanism for exclusion that was perceptively legitimate and legal. The methods they undertook included large lot zoning, stringent subdivision requirements and a barring of multiple family residences and other lower income housing. These undertakings ensured higher housing prices in the suburban neighborhoods that sanctioned them, furthering urban segregation by forcing lower-income individuals to maintain residence in the city. Not only did the tax and economic incentives entice individuals to move, they also lured businesses to uproot from their urban settings. As such, the influx of new migrants paired with the continued

disappearance of the opportunities that spawned urban migration facilitated the existence of the major quandaries throughout America's cities.

Low-income sectors of these cities were most affected by the changes, as the stability of entry-level jobs began to erode. Industrial positions soon became replaced by service industry jobs that notoriously stagnate wage potential (Freudenberg 2000). Thus, as the century progressed an increasing proportion of urban populations consisted of working families earning at or below the level of livable wages. Cities began to experience rapid reductions in their tax earnings as a result of a growing, nearly impoverished population and fewer employers. In addition to this, as states began to regain control of expenditure allocation through increases in the usage of block grants many urban needs were overlooked. Consequently, as city planners were attempting to provide for the increased demands for social services, education, and health care, their budgets were quickly stretched to capacity before sufficiently meeting the needs of the populace. Rather than attitudinal shifts supporting increased funding for growing sectors of impoverished citizens, there was an oppositional push to intensify funding for urban growth.

As cities began to receive less state and federal funding, those who could afford to relocate to suburban areas were doing so at even greater rates (King 1978). Cities across America were experiencing ruinous reductions in their populations, while simultaneously encountering staggering increases in the absorption of disadvantaged individuals. In order to account for these shifts many cities instituted policies that would provide tax incentives for middle class and wealthier individuals

to relocate or maintain residences in cities. These new policies exacerbated income disparities and further established geographic discrepancies in the allotment of social service funding, quality of police protection, along with more superior health services were afforded to these wealthier neighborhoods. Rates in the concentration of individuals with lower incomes shifted at exponential rates in an alarmingly brief period of time.

### The Expansion of the New Left and the New Right

While the expansion of urban ghettos created further divisions within communities, they also served as a driving mechanism to fuel the policies of the New Left (Vojnovic 2007, 274). At the forefront of the New Left movement was Lyndon B. Johnson and his belief that the federal government could culminate the United States into *The Great Society*. In order to accomplish his notion of government, Johnson set out to create policies that would address inequities at their core by providing opportunities and funding aimed towards strengthening urban infrastructures. Despite previous, unsuccessful attempts towards enhancing lower income housing, Johnson sought avenues that would rehabilitate neighborhoods as opposed to recreating them. Johnson realized that to truly combat the hindrances of poverty, on both an individual and societal level, federal expenditures for social services would require substantial investments (Vojnovic 2007, 275).

Throughout his presidency, federal spending, principally through the use of grants-in-aid to localized levels of government, rose consistently and enormously. The additional, centralized funding led to very encouraging results in the battle



against poverty, with a 10% decrease in the national poverty rate during a span of less than ten years (Vojnovic 2007, 275). However, the promise of Johnson's policies within the social service sector was short-lived as the subsequent decade established the need for military expenditures throughout Vietnam and brought a reassertion for the necessity of advancements in private industries. The expanded scope of the government was met with higher scrutiny following decreased profitability and productivity within many, major corporations. The diminishing profits exacerbated the rate of inflation prompting a significant proportion of the population to pull their support for a government they now perceived as over-arching (Vojnovic 2007, 275).

Despite one of the most equitable distributions of wealth during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, as measured by income percentage at the onset of the 1970s, the threat of inflation quickly shifted governmental control to the New Right. As opposed to the New Left, whose theoretical perspectives most closely aligned with social liberalism, the New Right was founded with principles resembling neoliberalism and public choice (Vojnovic 2007, 275-276). The New Right movement stressed that although governments can benefit the lives of their society's most destitute individuals, the process of doing so would deteriorate any opportunities for advantageous, political exploration. Following a decade in which normative expectations and beliefs were widely challenged and public distrust towards governmental agents was quickly amassing (Pew Research 2014), the New Right was able to reach the constituency through promises that the free market doesn't foster similar opportunities for self-interest as programs controlled and managed through bureaucratic institutions.

The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 created a new direction for federal policy-making prompting an almost immediate shift away from improving the state of homelessness through centralized expenditures (Vojnovic 2007, 276). Instead it was believed that lowering taxes, raising incentives for people to work, and again reducing the role of the US government would foster the intended economic growth. Without delay, the institution of tax reforms intensified the level of income inequality amongst the population (Vojnovic 2007, 276-277). Cities, attempting to capitalize on the emergent upper class, led initiatives geared towards removing single room occupancy housing from older hotels, thus forcing people onto the streets. In accordance with reducing federal spending the Reagan administration discontinued the urban policy ventures that were established during Johnson's presidency. Reagan contended that the regional commissions were not demonstrating consistent improvements, and thus were unfit to be maintained (Vojnovic 2007, 277). Their lack of perceived dependability strengthened Reagan's ideals that the most effective method that the federal government can undertake in addressing poverty is through pursuing economic growth and the maintenance of a hardline stance that the problems associated with urban paucity be handled by local actors (Vojnovic 2007, 277).

Reagan's administration understood that their initiatives needed to include some semblance of communal aid for lower income individuals, and thus they created the Section 8 housing program. The program was designed to give individuals who couldn't afford rent in more sought after neighborhoods assistance. It was believed that this would spread the burden of poverty more equitably amongst the

communities. Unfortunately, the program was never large enough to achieve its goals, and thus the concentrations of poverty largely remained a problem for urban areas (Tolson and Hand 1985). As the states began to incur additional responsibilities for addressing blight amid their communities, the aid they were dependent upon was shrinking quickly. However, Reagan's aspiration of economic growth was still achieved amongst members of wealthier subpopulations. While those at the top were achieving inordinate gains from the policies, the working class and members of racial minority groups were experiencing insurmountable challenges resulting from; wage stagnation, reductions in the availability of employment and social services, and redirected federal expenditures. (Tolson and Hand 1985) Following the Vietnam War, there was resurgence on the belief that the United States needed to reassert itself as a dominant military force. Increases in military programming and technology, paired with significantly less tax revenue greatly amplified our national debt, furthering the problem of poverty amidst our communities (Vojnovic 2007, 277).

### The Growth of Income Segregation

As the pervasiveness of income segregation became more and more dominant in urban landscapes, the implications for maintaining equity came into question. Income segregation is a multi-dimensional problem that has the tendency to segregate based upon economic and racial classifications within a geographic area (Reardon and Bischoff 2011). Typically, areas of higher affluence contain individuals who fit into the middle and upper earning classes, whereas lower-income

neighborhoods are increasingly more segregated. Historically, discriminatory housing practices maintained a clear division in the options for equal earners dependent upon their race. While many of the programs have become obsolete and denounced, the implications of their long standing existent are still being felt today through inequalities in labor opportunities, and discrepancies in educational and health outcomes. (Reardon and Bischoff 2011). As can be inferred, the quality of public goods and institutions is largely dependent upon the tax base and involvement of the jurisdiction, thus if an area has a high concentration of impoverished individuals the services will be of a lower quality and often perpetuates the experience of poverty or homelessness.

The predominant concerns regarded the correlation between large levels of income inequality and poverty in cities with higher preventable death rates (Ronzio et al. 2004). It was beginning to become apparent that cities were unable to curb the death rates because of discrepancies in funding for programs that assist impoverished individuals, mainly health care services. Through attempts to attract revenue generation cities often institute policies that are business-friendly, like lower taxes and less regulation. While this is promoted in a capitalist society, these pursuits create distribution inequalities that lead to increased expenditures by local agents (Ronzio et al. 2004). However, if cities are able to effectively reduce income segregation amidst their communities, they will be able to decrease the number of preventable deaths while simultaneously increasing availability to health and social services. While the notion of income segregation is primarily responsible for the onset and subsequent maintenance of Section 8 policies, the discrepancies in

neighborhood availability continue to exist because of insufficient funding.

Additionally, as middle-upper class households are spread more evenly throughout a community, the quality of health and social services improves and is less burdensome on local governmental agencies (Reardon and Bischoff 2011).

The 1980s and 1990s brought forth a shift in legal immigration into the United States. Twice as many people were coming to America than just a few decades prior, and many of these new immigrants were moving into major cities (Freudenberg 2000). Rather than a continuation of European immigrants, the majority of these new American citizens were of Asian or Latin American descent. The new citizens began to experience similar societal, economic and employment sequestration as the other marginalized groups living in urban cores, further disseminating a new form of urban ghettoization (Freudenberg 2000).

In addition to the growing diversity of our urban areas during these two decades, major national attention was being provided to two specific afflictions that became prescribed to lower-income populations; the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and a supposed crime epidemic that was amplified by the emergence of crack-cocaine (Freudenberg 2000). The prevalence of addiction in the 1980s is arguably one of the most damaging scourges experienced by the United States, as it affected entire families and neighborhoods. The sale of crack cocaine quickly became the primary employment opportunity across sectors of metropolises, further bolstering urban violence (Freudenberg 2000). Crack cocaine is widely hailed as being extraordinarily debilitating to users, creating further discrepancies in the workplace. In addition to this, crack is often perceived as a drug used

predominantly by African Americans, which has spawned the formation of policies that hold disparate sentences to other drug offenses. The sex trade in urban areas grew as addicts sought ways to support their habits. By 1996, the CDC published a report outlining HIV as the leading cause of death throughout urban populations. Many of these deaths were attributed to a lack of availability of health care services, including treatment and needle exchange programs, as well as higher infant mortality rates within neighborhoods that had greater concentrations of poverty. (Ronzio et al. 2004)

Furthermore, in preserving the opportunities for prosperity, decreases in federal subsidies for lower income housing has resulted in the conversion of lower income housing to be utilized for other purposes that perceptively would bring more money into urban areas (Freudenberg 2000). Despite major cutbacks to programming that benefited impoverished individuals during the presidencies of Reagan and Bush Sr., the Clinton era ushered in a new effort to place emphasis in addressing the expansion of economic inequality and stipulations to increase programming and affordable housing within communities that were in dire need. One of the first initiatives that Clinton undertook in addressing the state of homelessness was through provisions that would allot additional funding for the McKinney Act (Cohen 2015). The McKinney Act was legislated in the late 1980s to address the growing popularity for the notion that homelessness is a multi-faceted problem that demands additional services along with the assignment of housing. These services include addressing addiction through rehabilitative treatment and counseling, providing primary care in addition to mental health care and increasing educational

and job training opportunities. While the McKinney Act was held in high regards and perceptively progressive for nearly two decades, service providers began to acknowledge and publicize the ways in which the Act contributed to the pervasive state of homelessness.

Their primary concern is that the McKinney Act places a “Housing Readiness” stipulation on individuals experiencing homelessness, that requires them to go through a series of stages before they’re deemed ready for permanent housing. These prerequisites, service providers contend, are overwhelmingly difficult to achieve without consistent and safe housing (Cohen 2015). Within the last decade, the notion of “Housing Readiness” has been replaced with “Housing First”, and subsequent legislation and funding promotes policies that place people in housing before attempting to administer services. In recent years, much of the funding that was dedicated to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the federal agency tasked with making policy recommendations to Congress and managing national programming that addresses the needs associated with homelessness, has to be apportioned to housing. This leaves many programmatic initiatives by the wayside, unless undertaken through state and communal entities (Cohen 2015). This results in the primary functioning of the McKinney Act to be unaddressed, which has expanded the potential for the reoccurrence of homelessness on an individual basis.

## **The Inherent Implications of Criminalization**

To further demonstrate failing policy endeavors in the fight to end homelessness, it is imperative to include an analysis on the practice of criminalization.

Panhandling, loitering, public intoxication and trespassing are all examples of public nuisances that deserve to be addressed through public policy. Additionally, they are all behaviors that are often considered inherent to the experience of homelessness, and as these two notions have intersected we've created a system in which homelessness almost inevitably results in criminal persecution to the detriment of everyone. Quality of life infractions need to be reconsidered and public sentiment can no longer reflect a perceived necessitation for inequitable law enforcement and protection.

Fortunately, the mid-late 1990s also brought serious economic growth back to our communities stagnating the expansion of the crack epidemic. Yet, policy makers and subsequent legislation have not been disillusioned by the absence of the blight that addiction augmented throughout lower income populations. As a result, many cities have instituted policies that enforce quality of life infractions that disproportionately perpetuate the experience of homelessness. In order to justify quality of life infractions, policy-makers have traditionally looked towards two specific avenues; the broken windows theory and the notion that our public spaces need to be redistributed equitably amongst the populace (Amster 2003). The broken windows theory posits that if a window in a building, presumably a building that has been abandoned or is currently unoccupied is broken and left unfixed all of the other windows will suffer a similar fate.



In applying this theory to criminalization, specifically criminalization of behavior that is associated with the experience of homelessness, if panhandling is allowed to occur or occupation of public spaces is left alone then subsequent, more harmful behavior will begin to manifest itself in the area. Conversely, if policies and resulting police enforcement are able to effectively dismantle or remove the adverse behavior initially, it will demonstrate to everyone else that the area is still regularly monitored, thus perceptively safe (Amster 2003). While the broken windows theory may appear equitable, the insinuations it renders seriously deprecate our notions of judicial equity by assuming that policing should occur in order to prevent the possibility of future crimes by other people. Thus, the broken window theory creates a justification for ridding individuals who have not committed a crime and provides rationalization for conducting widespread sweeps of homeless encampments (Sridhar 2006). The theory also reinforces negative sentiments towards individuals experiencing homelessness by assuming that they are more likely to be the perpetrators of violent and dangerous law-breaking behavior. In fact, individuals experiencing homelessness are increasingly more prone to being the victims of violent offenses (Foscarinis 1996). Redirecting our attention to ensuring that their rights are upheld through law enforcement practices will decrease public health care expenditures and create a safer environment for every member of our communities.

Almost every major metropolis has places within them that are beyond the point of eradicating negative acuties through the passage of ordinances that restrict assemblage and panhandling. Primarily, places where encampments have been

established often become perceived as no longer belonging to the community, but to the homeless population (Amster 2003). Regardless of whether more serious crimes, dangerous situations or substances are germinating in these areas, there are obvious implications on their existence for policy-makers, citizens and city planners alike. Predominantly these concerns exist over the safety of individuals who live, work, participate in leisurely activities, shop or travel amongst these vicinities. Therefore, in order to preserve the wellbeing and prosperity of a neighborhood, the existence of homelessness must be kept out of sight and out of mind (Amster 2003).

Thus, many communities continue to enforce measures that prevent necessary, life-sustaining actions to be taken by individuals experiencing homelessness.

Sleeping in public places, occupying public spaces, panhandling, and the enforcement of quality of life infractions are all offenses that have the potential to garner fines, jail sentences and other penalties, often including the destruction of temporary shelters, for people stuck in homelessness (Sridhar 2006).

Criminalization efforts are also enforced upon care providers, with the intention that a lack of or ban on aid will prompt the absence of homelessness in areas where these measures are enacted (Foscarinis 1996). While the justification for implementing and enforcing these ordinances is continually justified through a belief that public health is a priority and that public spaces should be widely accessible for all members of a community, the adverse implications of such policies create barriers for communal development (National Coalition for the Homeless 2014).

Additional criminal records further hinder the reentry into housing, as many property-owners, especially those who own and manage lower-income residences, are principally more inclined to accept individuals and families who have fewer infractions (National Coalition for the Homeless 2014). In addition to this, measures aimed towards sweeping homelessness out of communities through criminalization are not cost effective, create vast inequities in the fulfillment of constitutional rights and further the problems associated of living without a home. While violations of the constitutional rights for individuals experiencing homelessness are highly contentious, The US Interagency Council on Homelessness is adamant that these ordinances violate 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment protections (Foscarinis 1996). The constitutional abuses are as follows; 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment infringements come in the form of restricting content-based speech through measures aimed towards curbing supplicatory actions, 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment transgressions occur when law enforcement agents destroy encampments or rummage through them without explicit cause. Since many of the actions that are being made illegal are arguably necessary to live, the criminalization of such actions imposes cruel and unusual punishments, thus contravening upon the safeguards of the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Finally, indiscriminate enforcement of policies that aren't widely understood and disseminated creates voids in due process and equal protection guarantees (National Coalition for the Homeless 2014).

Not only do criminalization efforts encroach upon constitutional protections and hinder individual efforts to secure long-term housing, they impede upon the pursuit of services and employment. Organizations and employers often utilize systematic

approaches to establish who is most deserving, eligible, or most qualifying for a position or allotment of aid dependent upon an individual's criminal history (Foscarinis 1996). While it is often understandable and justifiable to reject an applicant for a position or housing based upon their criminal histories, the continuation of quality of life infractions creates a class of criminals that have been convicted of crimes without specifiable victims. Effectually, the perpetrator becomes the victim for something that is often, ultimately, out of their immediate control. Additionally, the enforcement of criminalization policies requires additional actions to be undertaken at nearly every level of the criminal justice system. This is especially problematic considering that many of our nation's detainment centers are filled to capacity, the costs that come from jailing an individual are exorbitantly higher than sheltering that same individual, and our justice system is not equipped to handle the fundamental causes that bring about homelessness (National Coalition for the Homeless 2014).

### **The Costs of Homelessness on Youth**

The costs of homelessness are often obtained through an examination of expenditures that are incurred through hospitalization and medical treatment, detainment, and transitional housing/shelter costs. Supportive housing advocates contend that in order to garner a more accurate understanding of the costs associated with homelessness, one must also include opportunity costs that are squandered as a result of the experiences and situations associated with homelessness. While every individual who is currently experiencing homelessness

experiences a conglomerate of lost availabilities, youth are increasingly more vulnerable to incur increasingly detrimental opportunity costs.

Although the number of people who are currently homeless has gradually reduced over the last few years, we still face the burden of having nearly 23% of our national homeless population under the age of 18 (Henry et al. 2014) Out of the 135,701 children only 6,274 of them were unaccompanied. While statistically this is a rather imperceptible problem, homeless youth require auxiliary government aid for longer periods of time than the majority of individuals experiencing homelessness. Additionally, the challenge of maintaining both state and federal education quotas becomes increasingly more burdensome for educators and policy makers when their students are without stable housing. This is amplified when considering the relationship between income segregation and educational opportunities, as the quality of schooling and educational opportunities are often lower than areas with a more affluent tax base.

If we employ a hypothetical situation to balance the quality of education afforded to people of different socio-economic statuses the costs of homelessness still become evident. Children who are experiencing homelessness are more susceptible to acute and chronic illnesses, emotional or behavioral problems and are more likely to develop or intensify mental health issues than their peers. (Henry et al. 2014) In addition to these problems, transportation is increasingly more difficult to guarantee without permanent residences resulting in frequent absences and recurrent transitions to new schools. Taking all of this into account, children who

are experiencing homelessness are more likely to have to repeat a year, and have a lower trajectory towards graduation.

Despite a clear correlation betwixt homelessness and educational failures it's still important to note that homelessness is not always perceived as a communal problem. However, the implications of maintaining current standards will not only be maladaptive to childhood success but they potentially could be a national hindrance. Half of the population of individuals currently facing homelessness resides in five states; California, New York, Florida, Texas and Massachusetts (Henry et al. 2014) Nevertheless, even amongst the aforementioned states, the variance in individuals is at a seemingly never ending flux that often leads to misinformed interpretations of policy effectiveness and hinder the development and implementation of possibly more effective legislation. Minnesota exemplifies this well, although the state was ranked admirably at providing services aimed towards ending homelessness, we still experienced one of the largest percentage increases in homeless populations in the United States. While this almost immediately equated to an inability for organizations to support every individual seeking shelter, it is contributing to prompt actions on behalf of our legislators.

### **Policy Analysis: The Twin Cities**

In order to analyze the productivity of policies addressed towards ending homelessness in the United States, it's imperative to scrutinize state based initiatives in order to identify and understand approaches that work and others that require additional adjustments. Minnesota has been on the forefront for providing

and instituting effective policies that seek to end the perpetuation of homelessness and recidivism within the judicial system. Despite their nationally renowned legislation, Minnesota, with particular emphasis placed on the Twin Cities, exemplifies the repercussions of instituting legislation without careful consideration of potential implications. In 1996, one year after the establishment of the Minnesota Supportive Housing Demonstration Program, Minnesota reported an annual, average decrease in spending per individual of \$9,600 for people that were placed in supportive housing (The National Alliance to End Homelessness 1998).

Furthermore, the individuals that received supportive housing were significantly more likely to gain employment, which contributed to fewer, long-term state sanctioned expenditures. Despite these advances, there was still a large population of individuals experiencing homelessness headed by a growing proportion of children. Hennepin County recognized the need to address the issue of homelessness further, and, in 2006, implemented The Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness.

The notion of establishing programs that would end homelessness in ten years began in 2000 when the National Alliance to End Homelessness urged legislators around the country to create frameworks that would gradually work to end the experience of homelessness. While it was a bold decree, its audaciousness caught the attention of both HUD and the President. Once the idea of the plan had been endorsed by federal agencies, hundreds of cities signed on to attempt, through varying means, to end homelessness in a designated period. As can be inferred from the year that Minneapolis adopted a plan, they were not amongst the first cities to

spring to action. Nonetheless as we near the end of that ten-year program, analyzing its success will provide us with a conception of how to move forth.

Hennepin County's plan outlined a comprehensive series of goals, and subsequent actions to meet each goal that are in accordance with preventing homelessness, expanding outreach and increasing support services and housing opportunities. In order to prevent homelessness, the first recommendation from the committee is to gradually expand Hennepin County's Family Homeless Prevention Assistance Program (FHPAP). In 2006, FHPAP served nearly 1,600 households and was nationally recognized as corresponding with best practice for preventing homelessness. The idea was to take a program that had an exemplary success rate and increase the availability of funding so that it could effectually expand by nearly 150% in ten years. The expansion of funding would allow for the program to not only serve more people, but to serve an entirely different population, as the services would no longer need to be allotted primarily for families experiencing homelessness.

Upon the implementation of The Ten-Year Plan, best practice most closely resembled the stipulations established in the McKinney-Vento Act, that support services should be administered before housing. However, the program was adapted as more policy-makers acknowledged the need for rapid rehousing. Thus, funding was reallocated to ensure that the availability of housing was at the forefront, with any additional resources being used for support services. The shift to rapid rehousing appeared to be effective, with significant lulls in the amount of people utilizing emergency shelters in Hennepin County. However, 2009 led to a



reemergence of homelessness as the availability of jobs for people without a college degree were in minimum wage sectors. The discrepancies in employment opportunities were amplified by the fact that rents were raising rapidly within the city and vacancies were limited (Beckman 2014). While this was especially problematic for families, it also affected Hennepin County's homeless singles as the availability of resources were again often allocated to families and children. After several years, 2009-2012, of minimal funding increases, the prosperity of the last few years has prompted city officials to expand service funding from \$238,000 to \$4,000,000 by the end of fiscal year 2015 (Beckman 2014). While much of the increased funding will be utilized for services to ensure that fewer children experience homelessness, the increases result in less dispersal across the board.

Not only have the additional resources led to increases in housing stability, they've also resulted in the efficacy of Hennepin County's shelters. While it is important to note that not everyone seeks help to remove him or herself from the experience of homelessness, and there is still a significant portion of the homeless population who are wary of shelters, the number of unsheltered individuals is diminishing at a very rapid rate in Hennepin County. Although it would be significantly maladaptive to insist that every individual receiving shelter services be placed on track for rehousing, the decreases in those who are unsheltered means that more people are receiving amenities and assistance that have been demonstrated to result in fewer localized costs to our governmental agencies. While each shelter has a variance in the services they offer, the increases in available resources have created allowances for shelters to experiment in programming. One

of the more interesting collaborative programs is the Employment Pilot, a service that helps individuals experiencing homelessness, many with little to no prior work experience, gain the acumen and insight to pursue and obtain employment with livable wages. While the program is not yet widely accessible, it has gradually increased each year of its existence and has continued to maintain a stable success rate, and upsurges in the number of people who achieve self-sufficiency (Beckman 2014).

Hennepin County's greatest feat from the onset of the Ten-Year Plan has been in its resiliency and adaptability. Continually, legislators and service-providers have come together to reassess and reapportion funding and attention to meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness. Currently, Minneapolis is set to remove a restriction that limits shelters to being in places of worship. The push is coming from non-profit organizations that have been established to manage and provide the necessities and services to shelter guests. Initially the restriction was implemented because faith groups were the first ones to respond to the need of sheltering individuals, especially during the winter months. Yet, they were not equipped to handle the sophisticated problems that arise with ending the experience of homelessness, so they resorted to leasing their properties out to organizations. Thus, it became conventional to insist that shelters be limited to these properties, as they required less aid to maintain (Lee 2015). However, none of these buildings are suitable for inhabitation, creating inconsistencies in availability of beds on a nightly basis as many shelters maintain lotteries for the space they have. Despite the evident need to reimagine spaces for shelters, not everyone is on board with lifting

the implemented restrictions. Community members are often wary of allowing shelters into their neighborhoods, as an inundation of individuals experiencing homelessness is often not an attractive prospect (Lee 2015). In order for an effective change to be implemented both sides will need to be taken into account, which is a conceivably time consuming process to be undertaken during the winter months. Additionally, Minneapolis is set to reopen the Section 8 voucher process for residents for the first time in nearly eight years. This will allow for an influx of applicants from the area to seek out housing subsidies.

While policy makers and social service agencies in Minneapolis are achieving strides in the process of ending homelessness, they're simultaneously creating daunting achievement and opportunity gaps that require attentiveness. As emphasized annually by Myron Orfield, a former state legislator and professor in the University of Minnesota Law School, Minnesota, since the early 1980s, has created a new form of urban segregation as a result of the programs and policies for community development in lower income areas. Prior to this period, Minnesota had reserved funding for widespread development of lower income housing throughout the wider, metropolitan area. This meant that while lower income housing was being reapportioned or built within the city, other and increasingly more developments were being established throughout the suburbs. The results of these programs are noteworthy, especially during the 1970s, as subsidized housing at the beginning of the decade was clustered in the Twin Cities, 90 percent of all lower income housing, but by the end of the decade this number was down to only 60 percent (Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity 2015).

However, several forces came together to stagnate the process of lower income sprawl throughout the region. As public sentiments concurred on the need to reintegrate the bulk of housing resources back into the central cities, subsequent policies reflected this ideological change. Additionally, it became much easier to acquire developmental funding from banks for remodeling or renovation projects in areas that had higher proportions of foreclosed or vacant lots. As could be inferred, these neighborhoods often also have less political and residential influence, which allows for developers to continually increase their projects with less pushback from the surrounding area. Despite momentary setbacks, primarily resulting from evaluations of school districts, the last few decades have led to an insurgence of lower income housing in neighborhoods that were already struggling with impoverished conditions. While these new developments have been effectual at providing much of the need for long term housing in the state, they have also created metaphorical vacuums that fail to promote true, neighborhood revival largely because of the lack of generated tax revenue and an inability to attract higher earning citizens. Without opportunities to advance the conditions of these areas, the experience of poverty is exacerbated and reinforced through the continuation of underrepresentation, neglected schools and fewer public institutions.

### **Final Thoughts for Future Considerations**

The difficulties of establishing legislation that will actually diminish poverty in a sustainable way are extraordinarily daunting. These policies will require an

intersection of federal and localized endeavors, as well as shifts in the paradigms of public perception, understanding, and relief. They necessitate continued patience and a grasp on the potential outcomes. First, it is imperative that we remove restrictive measures aimed towards eliminating the existence of poverty in our communities. As criminalization efforts demonstrate, homelessness has an imperceptible chance of being permanently resolved within the criminal justice system. The evidence presented in this project reveals that the imposition of fines, jail sentences, and criminal records create barriers that diminish opportunities for self-sufficiency. Then, it becomes necessary to rebalance the distribution of impoverished conditions in a manner that is supportable and viable for communities. If we continue to overburden neighborhoods with high concentrations of lower-income individuals, the experience of homelessness will be in a state of perpetual marginalization and prolongation, because educational, institutional and communal quality, support and development will be stagnated by inefficient funding and advocacy.

The continuation of expenditures, on both a localized and national level, is required to ensure that programs, services, and housing are accessible and able to be maintained. The redirection of funding will inevitably leave some institutions worse off, but it is negligent to persist incarceration and justice system spending at the rate we do, when the results are lacking in feasibility. Principally, it is imperative to continue to insist and demonstrate the savings that are secured through institutional investments that actually seek to diminish the causations for poverty and homelessness. Our collective success is dependent upon the preservation of

communal stability. The economic divide that has been created and intensified through years of imprudent policy-making is counter-productive to the fight against homelessness and poverty. These policies lead to ineffective and inefficient results that exacerbate harmful repercussions.

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