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- CHA families live in better housing in substantially safer, but still very poor, neighborhoods.
- Relocatees are struggling to pay their rent and utilities.
- Many families appear to still lack stable housing.

An Improved Living Environment, but...

Larry Buron, Christopher Hayes, and Chantal Hailey

When the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) launched its ambitious Plan for Transformation in 1999, it faced enormous challenges. For decades, the agency had failed to meet even its most basic responsibilities as the city's largest landlord. By the 1990s, a combination of failed federal policies, managerial incompetence, financial malfeasance, basic neglect, and a troubled resident population had left developments in a state of decay (Popkin et al. 2000). CHA families lived in a hazardous environment, exposed to lead paint, mold, cockroaches, rats and mice, broken plumbing, exposed radiators, and broken light fixtures. The developments and surrounding neighborhoods were extremely poor, had few amenities, and were beset with crime and violence. Within the buildings, residents had to cope with broken elevators and darkened stairwells that put them at risk for injury or assault.

A primary goal of the CHA's Plan for Transformation was to provide an improved living environment for residents of severely distressed public housing. In 2000, the CHA received a HOPE VI grant to revitalize the Madden/Wells community by demolishing the nearly 3,000-unit dilapidated development and replacing it with a new mixed-income community named Oakwood Shores. Another development, Dearborn Homes, was slated for revitalization a few years later and was often used to house residents from other CHA developments targeted for demolition who were reluctant to leave CHA housing or had not qualified for mixed-income housing or vouchers. The plan

for Dearborn Homes was to substantially rehabilitate its buildings.

For over 10 years, the Urban Institute has been researching the outcomes of residents from these developments. Our Chicago Panel Study has tracked and surveyed a random sample of 198 former residents of Madden/Wells since 2001; our Chicago Family Case Management Demonstration has, since 2007, surveyed 331 "hard to house" residents of Madden/Wells and Dearborn who received intensive case management and wraparound services (for more information on both studies, see the description of the Long-Term Outcomes for CHA Residents study on page 9). In 2011, we combined these samples

The CHA's Plan for Transformation has accomplished its most basic goal: most families now live in better housing in better neighborhoods.

to assess the long-term outcomes for CHA residents who had to relocate because their original public housing development was slated for demolition or rehabilitation.

This brief examines whether and to what extent the original residents of these distressed developments ended up in an improved living environment 3 to 10 years after relocating from Madden/Wells (the Panel Study sample) or 1 to 3 years after relocating from either Madden/Wells or the Dearborn Homes (the Demonstration sample). In general, these CHA families live in better housing in substantially safer, but still very poor, neighborhoods. Yet these gains are fragile; relocatees experience significant material hardship, and too many of those who have moved with vouchers live in neighborhoods where drug trafficking and violent crime remain significant problems.

Housing Stability

Changes to Assistance

In 2009, respondents from our two studies were distributed among three housing assistance solutions. Some residents temporarily relocated and moved back to Madden/Wells and Dearborn after the mixed-income developments were built or the remaining buildings were substantially rehabilitated, while most relocated permanently to another public housing unit or to private-market housing using a voucher. Demonstration participants who were required to move by the end of 2009 were encouraged to make a permanent housing choice; they could move to another public housing development, a mixed-income development (if they qualified), or the private market using vouchers. By 2009, 59 percent had chosen to relocate to other public housing or remain in a rehabilitated Dearborn unit, while just 28 percent had chosen vouchers. Panel Study families, in contrast, had relocated earlier and tended to relocate using

vouchers (54 percent); just 29 percent remained in public housing, and 17 percent no longer received assistance as of 2009.

Overall, roughly the same proportion of respondents in 2011 was using vouchers and living in mixed-income housing. The share in public housing, however, declined from 44 to 34 percent, and unassisted owners and renters rose from 7 to 15 percent.¹ Between 2009 and 2011 a small but significant share (7 percent) of housing assistance recipients left public housing or voucher programs and became unassisted. Panel Study members who lived in public housing in 2009 were most likely to become unassisted, although this proportion was still low. No single reason seemed to explain why participants were no longer on assistance, although many respondents mentioned their household income was too high to remain eligible.

Mobility and Stability

In 2009, many CHA families had been able to improve their housing conditions when they moved (Buron and Popkin 2010; Theodos and Parilla 2010). Between 2009 and 2011, however, 32 percent of households moved again (compared to the national average of 12 percent a year), which may indicate continuing housing difficulties.² Non-assisted respondents and voucher holders had the highest mobility rates.³ Mobility between 2009 and 2011 was also higher in the Demonstration sample than in the Panel Study sample, perhaps because Demonstration participants were able to use temporary vouchers and still remain eligible to move back into public housing after the rehabilitation was completed. While most Demonstration respondents that relocated with vouchers continued to use them, about 3 percent returned to traditional public housing and 8 percent entered mixed-income developments. There was no significant difference in the

number of moves for those who attended lease-compliance workshops or received counseling versus those who did not.⁴

Although moving can be a difficult event and is frequently involuntary, it may also be an opportunity for assisted households to find better neighborhoods. The most common reasons respondents gave for moving away from their previous address was that their unit was in bad condition (15 percent) or they wanted to find a safer neighborhood (11 percent). Despite major shifts in the Chicago housing market during this period, particularly events related to the foreclosure crisis, respondents rarely indicated that foreclosure, building sale, or demolition were the primary reason for their moves. Instead, many sample members reported seeking safety, and only a few respondents reported moving due to lease violations or eviction.

In 2009, neither Demonstration participants nor Panel Study respondents had moved far, and most still lived in high-poverty neighborhoods (Buron and Popkin 2010; Theodos and Parilla 2010). Our 2011 analysis produced similar results: residents who moved after 2009 and lived in traditional public housing in 2011 tended to stay in the same neighborhoods, moving a quarter mile or less. Although voucher recipients moved the farthest (with more than half moving at least two miles), these residents tended to cluster in specific neighborhoods.⁵ Previous research supports the finding that voucher recipients tend to relocate to specific areas, typically low-income neighborhoods not far from demolished public housing developments (although not necessarily near the developments they came from; see Popkin et al. 2012). So while sample members with vouchers moved farther geographically, they tended to remain in high-poverty, disadvantaged neighborhoods.

The experiences recounted by one voucher holder, living in a HUD-assisted development near the original Madden/Wells site, demonstrate both the costs of housing problems many assisted families face and the value of stable housing for these families:

Q: What was your most recent move like?

A: It was bad... the house I had just moved in on [last address], I liked it there. It was beautiful. I had so many doors in the house. And I had a balcony, a big yard. It was beautiful. It just seemed like the Lord had blessed me with that house. But the lady, she couldn't keep it up though, but it was beautiful. It wasn't nothing wrong with it. She just didn't really have the money, I guess.

Because that house, I had moved from first to there [last address], and it was better because, you know, my daughter died in the fire. It was like they couldn't get out the window, and then my other daughter, she ran down the stairs past the fire. She got out. My niece was dead on the stairs. My other niece was, died with my daughter, so it was kind of like messed up, really messed up. And all I asked this man to do was fix the window. And I felt like it was my fault. Because I could have be like, gee, would you fix the goddamn, but I never thought it was going to be a fire.

So when I moved to [last address], I felt better. Then when I got the paper stating it was going to foreclose, I just said, I can't take this no more. I'm tired of moving around. So my mind say, move back to [current address near original development]. And I promise you, this was my heart told me, you won't have to move again. And I been here going on four years.

Housing Quality

The CHA developments that residents moved from were extremely distressed, exposing them to such hazards as lead paint, mold, inadequate heat, and cockroaches and other vermin. Because of the CHA's revitalization efforts, all these residents had to relocate from these distressed developments, so the most direct effect of the Plan was a change in their housing unit. For most respondents, moving vastly improved their housing quality. More than three-quarters of the respondents in both the Panel Study and Demonstration reported their 2011 housing was in better condition than their original public housing; most other respondents indicated the new housing was about the same. A longitudinal analysis of all residents relocated from CHA public housing developments between 2002 and 2003 also reported substantial resident housing quality improvements by 2009 (NORC 2010).

To understand housing conditions more tangibly, we asked the original residents about eight specific housing conditions at baseline (when they lived in their original public housing) and during follow-up interviews. These conditions included broken plumbing, mold, peeling paint, broken heating, and infestation of cockroaches and other vermin. Living conditions seem to have improved for respondents since they relocated. For example, the share reporting water leaks in their home decreased from 59 percent in 2001 to 23 percent in 2011 for the Panel Study sample, and from 53 percent in 2007 to 17 percent in 2011 for the Demonstration sample. These improvements are consistent for both samples and for all housing conditions. At baseline (2001/2007), over three-quarters of respondents reported having two or more housing condition problems, but 25 percent or less did so in their 2011 housing. This finding is also consistent with

findings from the Moving to Opportunity study (Comey, Popkin, and Franks 2012).

While nearly all respondents in both studies report improved housing conditions, having housing assistance and the type of assistance matters. Fewer respondents living in mixed-income housing (6 percent) or traditional public housing (17 percent) report housing problems than respondents who are using vouchers (31 percent) or are no longer receiving housing assistance (42 percent). The low rates of housing problems in mixed-income housing is likely because that housing is relatively newly constructed, and property managers are more likely to maintain units to attract and retain market-rate residents. The relatively low number of housing problems in traditional public housing is somewhat unexpected, but it reflects a trend we first noticed in 2009 (Burton and Popkin 2010) as the CHA began aggressively rehabilitating its remaining traditional public housing developments.

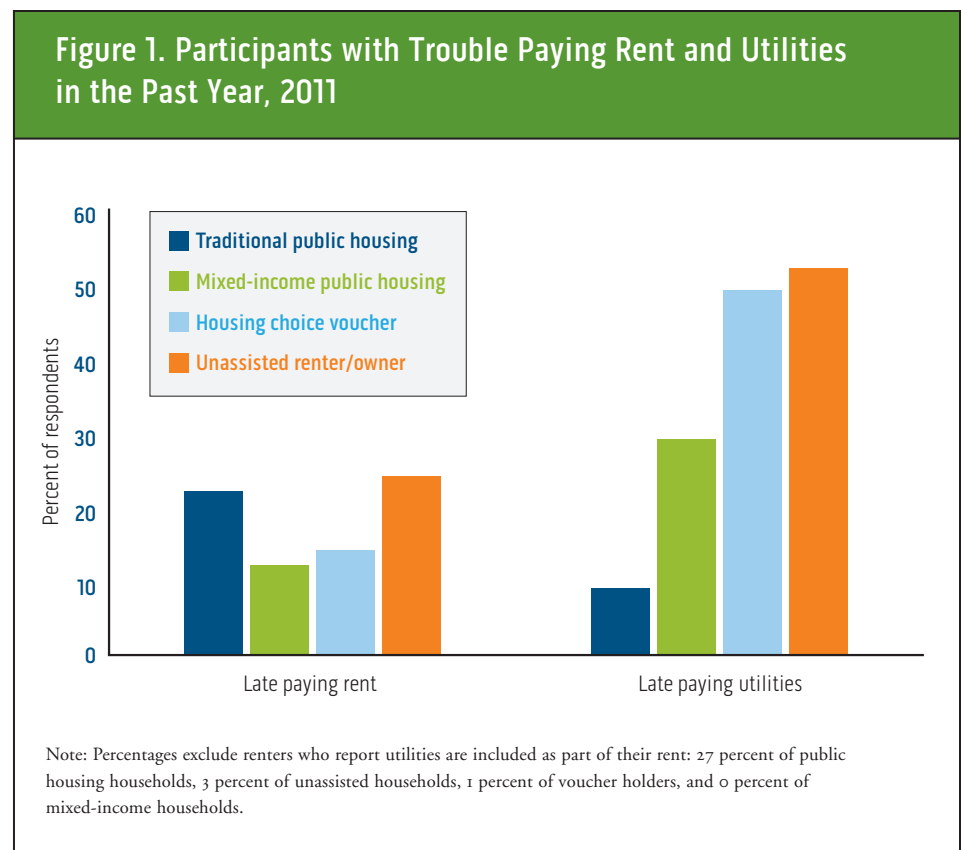
The relatively low ratings of housing quality by voucher participants also follows a trend we observed between the 2005 and 2009 Panel Study surveys. The size of the Chicago voucher program, which has grown by almost 50 percent since the Plan for Transformation officially began (from 25,233 vouchers in 1999 to 37,783 in 2011),⁶ may have affected the quality of housing inspections. Voucher holders may also be reluctant to report problems to their landlords or the housing authority for fear the unit would not be fixed and they would have to move again. Other Chicago studies have noted similar differences in housing quality problems between housing subsidies (NORC 2010); in Mobile, Alabama, some participants tried to make their own repairs or do their own rat abatement rather than report the problem and risk needing to find another affordable housing unit (DeLuca, Garboden, and Rosenblatt 2012).

Trouble Paying Utilities and Rent

While their living conditions have improved, CHA relocatees are struggling with significant material hardship: 16 percent of the study sample report being more than 15 days late paying their rent in the past year, and 40 percent report being late paying their utilities. Not surprisingly, unassisted respondents are having the most difficulty meeting their housing costs (figure 1). Public housing respondents are second most likely to be late paying their rent (22 percent) and the least likely to be late paying their utilities (9 percent). The late rent payments are troublesome as the housing authority uses program income to operate its public housing developments. Approximately half of both voucher holders and unassisted renters report having late utility payments in the past year, while a much smaller share report late rent payments. With private landlords, these respondents may be prioritizing their rent payments over their utility payments so they will not be evicted.

Neighborhood Quality

The Plan for Transformation aimed to improve not only residents' housing but also the neighborhoods in which they live. In 2011, almost all residents lived in neighborhoods that were less poor and racially segregated than their original public housing developments. Residents moved from two extremely poor South Side Chicago public housing communities (Madden/Wells had a 72 percent poverty rate, Dearborn 78 percent) with populations that were almost entirely African American (98 percent in Madden/Wells, 84 percent in Dearborn).⁷ The neighborhoods they moved to throughout the West and South sides of Chicago were less poor (average poverty rates of 41 percent) but still racially segregated. Because of the CHA's Plan for Transformation, almost no communities in Chicago are as poor as the develop-



ments these families moved from, and many families have significantly improved their conditions.

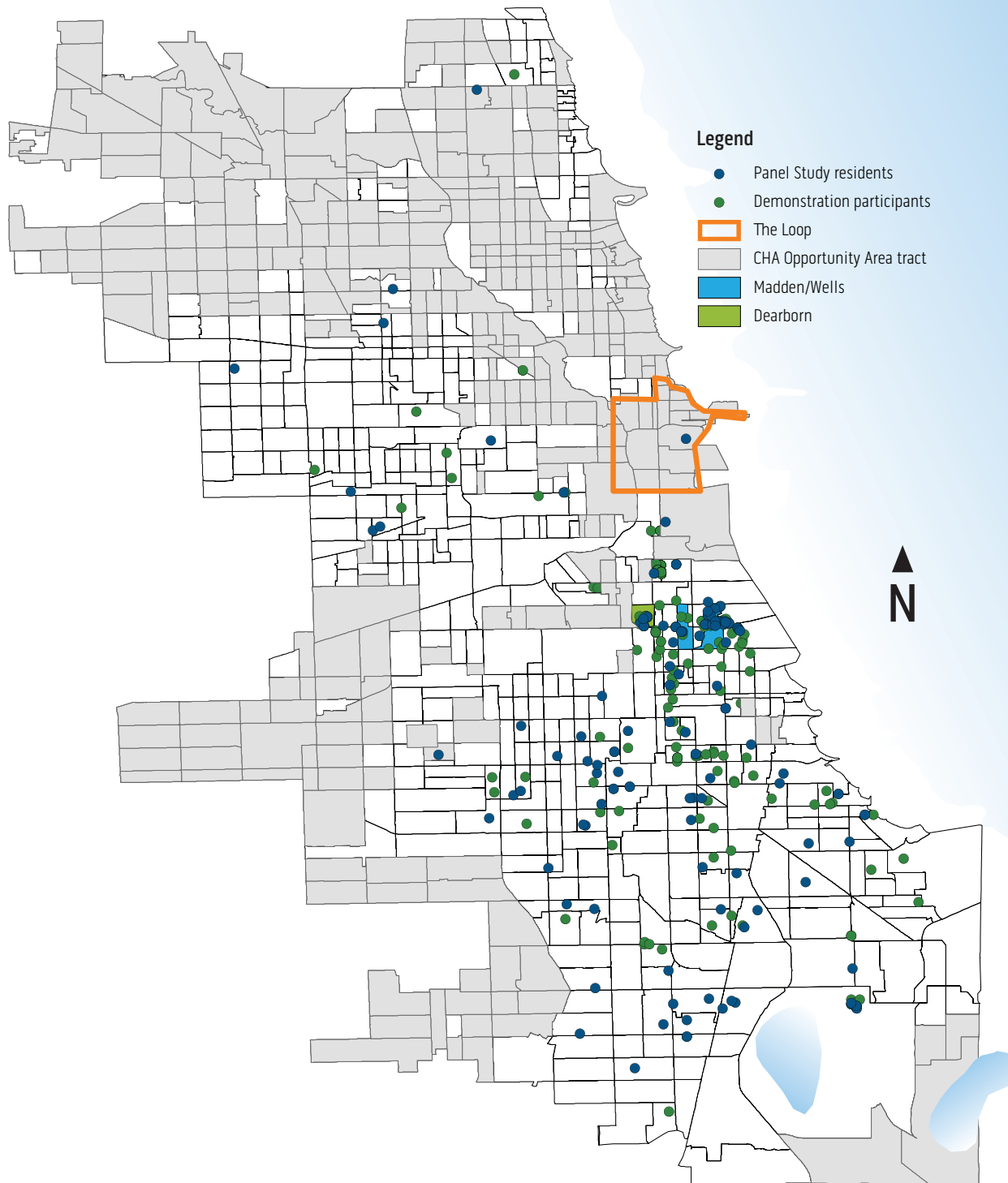
While residents' current neighborhoods are relatively better than their original developments, most are still very poor with large African American populations. About half of residents live in neighborhoods with poverty rates above 40 percent. Only a small portion lives in low-poverty neighborhoods: 18 percent of families' neighborhoods meet the CHA's low-poverty criteria (less than 23.5 percent of families with incomes below the poverty level), and 3 percent meet the Moving to Opportunity definition of low poverty (less than 10 percent impoverished). Most residents also still live in highly segregated neighborhoods: 84 percent of residents live in neighborhoods where over 75 percent of the

population is African American. Despite the mobility counseling offered to families during the Demonstration, only seven families from our study live in CHA-defined "opportunity areas," or census tracts with less than 20 percent of residents below the poverty level and a low concentration of subsidized housing (figure 2).⁸

Neighborhood Conditions

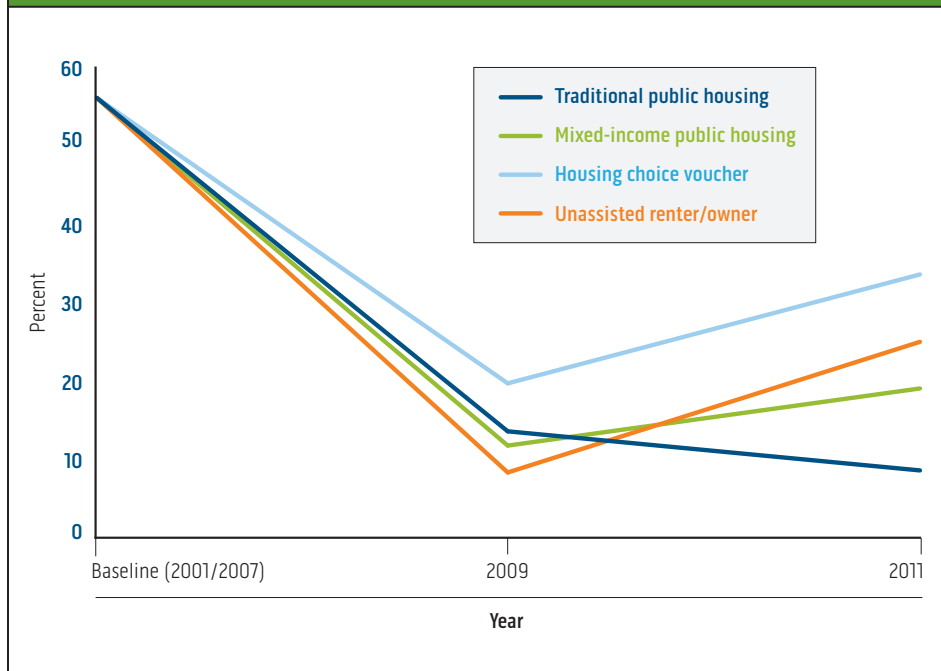
One aim of relocating public housing residents to new mixed-income public communities and new neighborhoods through housing choice vouchers was to provide better access to neighborhood amenities. Reports of physical disorder (trash in streets, graffiti, and vacant apartments or houses) as a big problem significantly decreased from baseline. In addition, residents' moves to better neighborhoods were

Figure 2. Current Neighborhoods of Long-Term Outcomes Study Residents



Sources: Long Term Outcomes Study (2011); Chicago Housing Authority (2011).

Figure 3. Share of Residents Indicating Shooting and Violence Is a Big Neighborhood Problem



coupled with increased perceived neighborhood collective efficacy and decreased social disorder from 2001/2007 to 2009. These changes were sustained during our 2011 follow-up.

Voucher holders' neighborhoods have been affected by myriad economic changes, including the housing market decline, the foreclosure crisis, and landlord disinvestment while awaiting major neighborhood redevelopment projects. These changes are evident in our survey findings; voucher holders are now more likely to report trash in the streets and vacant apartments as big neighborhood problems than residents living in traditional public housing. Beverly, a voucher holder living in Englewood, explained how her neighborhood has drastically dissipated in the three years since she moved, as residents and landlords sold their land to the company constructing a new rail line through the neighborhood.

A: They done tore everything down since I been over here... It's a ghost town. Look at all these vacant [lots].... They just tore one of the buildings down on that corner right there, the twin of that. Then, they're going to tear them two down behind, and that one over there on the other side.

Q: Does your landlord tell you about what the plans are, or...

A: He don't know nothing...I have to tell him about them...You know everybody is sitting on their hands waiting on the price [the railroad company is] going to pay them ...because eventually they're going to get it, you know, so they can be built. So they just waiting... see that house right there?... She only sold it for \$45,000, you know what I'm trying to say, she sold it for \$45,000, and that house is worth way more than that.

Perceptions of Crime and Safety

Residents feel safer in their current neighborhoods than in their original public housing developments. The portions of residents reporting shootings and violence as big neighborhood problems declined drastically from 69 percent of Panel Study respondents in 2001 and 50 percent of Demonstration participants in 2007 to 23 percent of residents in 2011. However, following citywide crime patterns, Chicago Panel Study respondents reported a significant decline in violence between 2001 and 2009 and an increase between 2009 and 2011 (9 percent of residents reported shooting and violence as a big problem in 2009, compared with 26 percent in 2011).

Deviating from the 2009 Panel Study finding of no differences in perceived safety among housing assistance groups (Popkin and Price 2010), voucher holders now report that violence is a bigger problem in their neighborhoods than do respondents living in traditional and mixed-income public housing communities (figure 3). In particular, a larger portion of voucher holders than traditional public housing residents report the following as a big neighborhood problem: people being attacked and robbed (27 percent vs. 18 percent), sexual attacks (14 percent vs. 6 percent), and gangs (30 percent vs. 19 percent). Voucher holders also feel more unsafe in their neighborhoods than those living in traditional public housing; 30 percent of voucher holders report feeling somewhat unsafe or unsafe outside their home at night, compared with 19 percent of traditional public housing residents.

The difference in feelings and perceptions of safety and violence may stem from the CHA's increased security and policing efforts in its public housing developments. From 2009 to 2011, Demonstration participants living in traditional public housing were the only group to indicate a decrease in groups hanging out, people selling drugs, and gangs as a big neighborhood problem. During our in-depth

interviews, two mothers living in public housing described how the security changes have improved their sense of safety and freedom in their developments and have kept the developments from returning to disarray.

The first mother said:

I feel more safer now. And then with the security being here from 5:00, as soon as management close, they come...now we could sit in the playground. We don't have to worry about no fights or, you know, you can bring your kids to the other playground for the babies.

In the words of the second mother:

When they did that big old sweep about six or seven years ago and got a lot of these guys that were selling the drugs and the so-called big gang bangers, it got better, you know what I'm saying? But now, it's a lot of the younger kids that try to be on the same bull crap.

But they really don't go nowhere because with us having the security down here, it's way better than what it was because we don't have to worry about the riffraff in the hallways, people hanging out in the hallways, people getting high in the hallways, people using the bathroom in the hallway. You know, ain't no kids ripping and running, so it's much better. But as far as the conflicts the kids have back and forth, it's not like it used to be.

Implications

The Plan for Transformation has succeeded in its most basic goal: most of these families now live in better quality housing and in better neighborhoods than the CHA developments where they lived in October 1999. These reductions in housing problems and crime, coupled with improvements in neighborhood

social cohesion after relocation, are substantial and represent real, significant improvements in the quality of life for these CHA residents.

However, this good news is tempered by evidence of ongoing challenges. First, despite the improvement in neighborhood conditions, most residents still live in high-poverty, hyper-segregated neighborhoods. Just 7 of the 381 families in the two samples live in what the CHA defines as opportunity areas. Second, voucher holders are subject to the vagaries of the private market and private-market landlords. The voucher holders in our study report more housing problems than residents in mixed-income or traditional public housing; in fact, the share of voucher holders reporting specific housing problems is closer to the share of unassisted residents in our sample than it is to the other assisted households. While research on other cities indicates that issues with voucher-holder housing quality (DeLuca et al. 2012) and underrepresentation of vouchers in opportunity neighborhoods (Ellen and Horn 2012) is not unique to Chicago, it is an issue that the CHA (as well as public housing agencies in other jurisdictions) needs to address. Finally, many families appear to still lack stable housing, moving relatively often with no perceptible improvement in housing or neighborhood quality. Many households also continue to experience serious material hardship.

The CHA needs to maintain the gains made in the quality of its mixed-income and traditional public housing developments, while increasing its efforts to ensure that all voucher holders live in adequate housing and that a higher share moves to opportunity neighborhoods.

The CHA must ensure that its traditional developments remain well managed and maintained so they remain decent places for its families to live. The agency will need to sustain its management oversight and rigorously

enforce its lease policies as well as continue to provide adequate case management and supportive services. These gains in housing quality were obtained at too high a cost—in dollars, CHA effort, and the sacrifice of residents who were uprooted, often multiple times, to make the building available for demolition or rehabilitation—to not to continue to maintain them.

Efforts to improve the living conditions for voucher holders need to be multifaceted. Chicago must ensure that there is adequate Housing Quality Standards inspection staff to enforce HUD's housing quality standards and that pre-inspections, re-inspections, and annual inspections are timely. The CHA needs to increase efforts to attract a broader range of landlords to the voucher program; this could improve the quality of voucher housing. The agency could consider giving voucher holders extended time to search for housing so they do not settle for lower-quality housing. Also, the CHA needs to ensure that voucher holders know they can rent from any willing landlord, not just those on the landlord lists provided. Finally, the CHA should continue to offer voucher holders access to mobility counseling and supportive services to make more informed housing choices. ■

Notes

1. Use of assistance includes survey nonrespondents for whom assistance was known.
2. The mobility rate for households in the Chicago Metropolitan Statistical Area from 2005 to 2010 was 43 percent.
3. Since the 2009 survey, 43 percent of voucher holders moved once or more and 7 percent moved twice or more. About 26 percent of mixed-income residents moved once or more, and only 18 percent in traditional public housing moved once or more, almost all of them only once. Non-assisted respondents moved at much higher rates: 56 percent moved once or more, and 8 percent moved multiple times.
4. A higher proportion of public housing residents received counseling (36 percent) than did vouchers holders or residents of mixed-income developments (16 and 26 percent, respectively).
5. Most Panel Study respondents with vouchers in 2011 were still clustered in West Side and South Side neighborhoods.
6. Our in-depth interviews with voucher holders suggest some of this growth may be due to the national foreclosure crisis, which has forced renters to quickly find a new place when the landlord faces foreclosure. Voucher program size in 1999 reported by Finkel and Buron (2001) and in 2011 by the Chicago Housing Authority (2012).
7. The share of residents living in poverty and racial concentration is assessed at the census tract level. Census 2000 is the data source for the original developments. Current housing data are attained from the American Community Survey 5-year 2005–10 estimates (poverty rate) and Census 2010 (racial concentration).
8. Definition from http://www.thecha.org/pages/opp_map/2662.php.

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Long-Term Outcomes for CHA Residents

The Long-Term Outcomes for CHA Residents study builds on two major Urban Institute research initiatives that examined the effects of the Chicago Housing Authority's (CHA) Plan for Transformation on resident well-being:

- **The Chicago Panel Study** (The Panel Study), funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, was a follow-up to the five-site HOPE VI Panel Study, which examined resident outcomes from 2001 to 2005. In Chicago, the Panel Study tracked residents from the CHA's Ida B. Wells Homes/Wells Extension and Madden Park Homes who relocated between 2001 and 2008. Researchers surveyed a random sample of 198 resident heads of household in 2001; follow-up waves were conducted with 174 residents in 2003, 165 residents in 2005, and 136 residents in 2009. A high mortality rate contributed to the sizable attrition between 2001 and 2009. The Urban Institute conducted in-depth, qualitative interviews with select residents to better understand the lives and challenges of these individuals and families.
- **The Chicago Family Case Management Demonstration Evaluation** (The Demonstration)—a partnership between the Urban Institute, the CHA, Heartland Human Care Services, and Housing Choice Partners—tested the feasibility of providing intensive case-management services, transitional jobs, financial literacy training, and relocation counseling to vulnerable public housing families. The demonstration ran from March 2007 to March 2010 and targeted approximately 475 households from the CHA's Dearborn Homes and Madden/Wells developments. Researchers administered resident surveys to the universe population in these sites: 331 residents in 2007 (response rate 77 percent) and 287 residents in 2009. Again, mortality contributed greatly to study attrition. In-depth interviews and an analysis of CHA administrative records, case manager reports, and publicly available data helped researchers contextualize survey findings. A supplemental process study, which relied primarily on in-depth administrative interviews, weekly service implementation monitoring, and regular meetings with project partners, assessed the efficacy and cost of the Demonstration's implementation. The Demonstration was funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Partnership for New Communities, JPMorgan Chase, and the Chicago Housing Authority.

The Long-Term Outcomes study consists of 10- and 4-year follow-up surveys, respectively, and in-depth interviews with Panel Study and Demonstration participants. In summer and fall 2011, researchers surveyed 106 Panel Study respondents and 251 Demonstration respondents; 24 respondents were represented in both samples. Researchers supplemented this work with 31 in-depth, qualitative interviews with adults and youth. Administrative data specific to clients and to their neighborhood enriched the analysis. The principal investigator for the study is Susan J. Popkin, Ph.D., director of the Urban Institute's Program on Neighborhoods and Youth Development. Funding for this research was provided by the MacArthur Foundation and the Chicago Housing Authority.

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URBAN INSTITUTE
2100 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037-1231
(202) 833-7200
paffairs@urban.org www.urban.org