

Public Housing in America: *a brief history*

Bennington County Regional Commission
18 APR 2018

Public Housing in America; indeed Government involvement in housing in general has a brief history in the United States, The 19th century saw only scant regulation in tenement design, mainly in New York City; Building Codes and Zoning Ordinances only came into play in the second decade of the 20th century. The first public housing project built in the US was in Atlanta in 1934

Public Housing

A brief History

1867 - 1901 Tenement Reform

1937 Housing Act,

1949 Housing Act

1974 Housing & Community
Development Act 1974

1998 Quality Housing & Work
Responsibility Act

Prior to this, government involvement in housing was largely at the state level. The earliest housing legislation was the NY Tenement Act of 1867. Legislation specifically for Public Housing did not pass until the 1937 Housing Act, this Act, still in force was amended in 1949, 1974 and 1998.

THE CONGRESS

Early Tenement Reform

1867 Tenement House Act

1879 Tenement Act
(Old Law)

1895 New York Tenement
Act

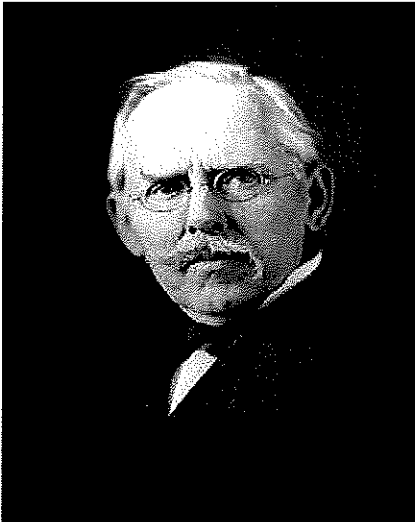
1901 NYC Tenement Law
(New Law)



The Tenement House Act of 1867, the state legislature's first comprehensive bill on housing conditions, prohibited cellar apartments; required one water closet per 20 residents and the provision for fire escapes; and a window for every room. The Second Tenement House Act (1879) ("Old Law") closed a loophole by requiring windows to face a source of fresh air and light, not an interior hallway. An amendment of 1895 required privies interior to the building. The failures of the Old Law led to the "New Law" . . .The New York State Tenement House Act of 1901 specified occupancy levels and required that new buildings be built with proper ventilation systems, indoor toilets, and fire safeguards.

Jacob Riis

How the Other Half Lives, 1890



A Best Selling Book that used graphic descriptions, sketches, photographs, and cold statistics to chronicle the squalor of New York's East Side slum district

In 1890, *New York Tribune* reporter Jacob A. Riis set fire to the city's social reform movement with the publication of *How the Other Half Lives*. Riis' book used graphic descriptions, sketches, photographs,XX and cold statistics to chronicle the squalor of New York's Lower East Side. The result was a book that quickly became a landmark in the annals of social reform.XX" With remorseless candor, Riis documented the filth, disease, exploitation, and overcrowding XXthat characterized the experience of more than one million immigrants.XX Riis helped push tenement reform to the front of New York's political agenda, and prompted Police Commissioner Theodore Roosevelt to call him "the most useful citizen of New York."XX

Housing Act 1937

Wagner Steagall Act



- Provided direct Federal Subsidies to Local PHAs
- Created the United States Housing Authority
- Built almost 300,000 units between 1937 and 1945

The early 20th century saw slow but steady progress in the government regulation of housing. The establishment of the New York City Zoning Ordinance in 1916 was the first in the nation. Zoning was later upheld as a lawful means of regulation in the famous case of *Euclid, Ohio vs Ambler Realty* in 1926 and what followed was an avalanche of zoning legislation nationally.

The Housing Act of 1937 also known as the Wagner Steagall Act was the first federal legislation to provide for publicly financed, built and managed public housing., it also provided for direct subsidies to be paid to local Public Housing Authorities. The law is still in force today and serves as a baseline to which all other federal laws are amended.

Housing Act of 1949

Part of Truman's "Fair Deal"

Provided \$1.5 Billion for slum redevelopment

Provided \$13 Billion in FHA and GI Mortgage Guarantees

Had a goal of 800,000 units by 1955



THE FIRST AMENDMENT TO WASHINGTON STATE

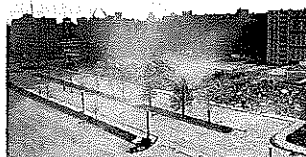
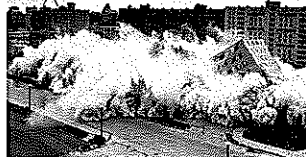
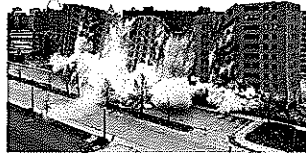
The Housing Act of 1949 has a mixed legacy , particularly with regard to the success of the urban renewal and public housing elements. The government fell far short of its goal to build 810,000 units of new public housing by 1955, *AND* providing ^{FD} little aid to cities suffering from housing shortages. In fact, because of projects like Lincoln Center, a New York City cultural development including 4400 apartments for which 7000 apartments were torn down, the Act's urban redevelopment programs actually destroyed more housing units than they built.

Pruitt - Igoe, St Louis, 1955



TYPICAL OF PROJECTS CONSTRUCTED OUT OF THE 1949 BILL
Completed in 1955, Pruitt-Igoe is perhaps the most infamous public housing project of all time. It consisted of 33 11-story apartment buildings on a 57-acre site, on St. Louis's lower north side. The complex totaled 2,870 apartments, one of the largest in the country. Saddled with serious design flaws, the apartments were deliberately small, with undersized kitchen appliances. "Skip-stop" elevators stopped only at the first, fourth, seventh, and tenth floors, forcing residents to use stairs in an attempt to lessen congestion. ~~The same "anchor floors" were equipped with large communal corridors, laundry rooms, communal rooms and garbage~~

Pruitt Igoe 1972



By the early 60s Pruitt-Igoe became internationally infamous for its crime and poverty. It began to fall into disrepair because of lack of proper maintenance; originally an integrated project it became heavily segregated, by 1970 only half the units were occupied, demolition began in 1972, by 1975 a mere 20 years after opening the entire 33 building project was razed

Housing & Community Development Act 1974

Created Section 8 Voucher Program

Authorized Entitlement Communities (Block) Grants

Created National Institute of Building Sciences

The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, amended the Housing Act of 1937 to create Section 8 Housing Voucher Program, It also authorized "Entitlement Communities Grants" the so called Block Grant Program, ~~to be awarded by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development,~~ and created the National Institute of Building Sciences. Under Section 810 of the Act the first federal Urban Homesteading program was also created.

Housing & Community Development Act 1974

Section 8 Voucher Program

- Voucher Income Limits:
\$22,650/1pr... \$34,950/4pr
- Voucher Holder select unit from the Private Market
- Program Participants pay 30% of monthly income
- Voucher subsidizes the balance of the monthly rent up to the established market rate:
1br=\$750, 3br=\$1240

SECTION 8

THE VOUCHER PROGRAM IS THE MOST
SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC ^{HOUSING} PROGRAM OF ALL TIME

~~WITH A VOUCHER A PUBLIC HOUSING~~

A VOUCHER HOLDER MUST PAY 30% OF THEIR MONTHLY INCOME IN RENT WITH THE VOUCHER COVERING THE REMAINING 70%

INCOME LIMITS ARE ADJUSTED BY SIZE OF HOUSEHOLD AND THE UNIT TO BE RENTED CAN COST NO MORE THAN 110% OF THE ESTABLISHED MARKET RATE

Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998

- Requires 8 Hours of Community Service for able bodied adults living in Public Housing
- Prohibition of concentration of low-income families in public housing
- Requires PHAs develop a 5 year plan plan with annual updates

Bennington Housing Authority

Bennington Housing Authority

Public Housing

- Established by the Town of Bennington 1970
- 195 Public Housing Units
- Current Waiting List 230, 1-2 year wait depending on unit size
- 4 Campuses
- Operating Budget \$ 2,700,000
- Capital Budget \$300,000



We are a public agency, it is governed by an autonomous Board of Commissioners, appointed by the Bennington Board of Selectmen. We operate under guidelines set by the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). ~~Its purpose is to provide and manage low-cost housing. The buildings are operated on the income from rents and an annual subsidy from HUD.~~

Bennington Housing Authority

Willow Brook 75 units



Brookside 50 units



Bennington Housing Authority

Beach Court 20 Units



Walloomsac 50 Units

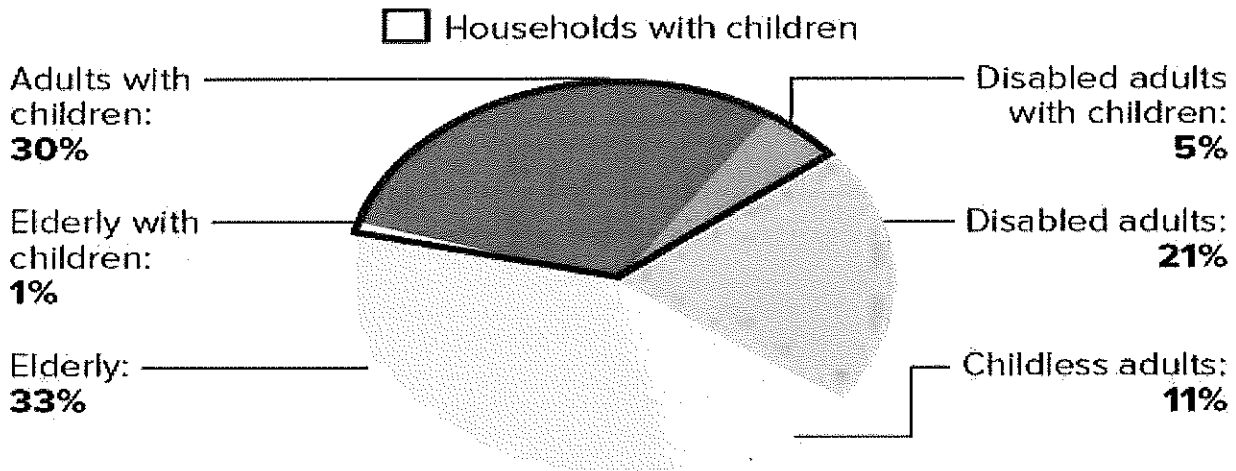


Bennington Housing Authority

Section 8 Vouchers

- 193 Vouchers
- Waiting List currently at 195
- About a 2 year wait

Nearly All Households Using Federal Rental Assistance Include Children or People Who Are Elderly or Disabled



Sources: CBPP tabulations of 2014 HUD administrative data, and the USDA's FY 2014 Multi-Family Fair Housing Occupancy Report.

89% OF HOUSEHOLDS USING SECTION 8 OR PUBLIC HOUSING INCLUDE EITHER CHILDREN/ELDERLY OR THE DISABLED.