Employment and Housing Mobility: Promising Practices for the Twenty-First Century Economy

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The Mobility Agenda

The Mobility Agenda is a think tank that seeks to stimulate and shape a dialogue to build public support for strengthening the labor market, benefiting our economy, workers, and communities.

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INTRODUCTION

In the first half of the twentieth century, large metropolitan areas in the United States were much more concentrated than they are today.[1] Households could economize on commuting by residing close to work, and the typical working-class commute involved leaving a home and walking or riding a streetcar or bus to a nearby factory, warehouse, or rail yard.[2]

Today's workforce faces a very different commute. During the second half of the 1900s, U.S. metropolitan areas rapidly became less concentrated as population growth shifted from central cities to suburban areas.[3] As people left cities for the suburbs, jobs followed.[4] Evidence from Census 2000 demonstrates that decentralization of economic and residential life remains the dominant pattern in the United States.[5] Anecdotal evidence further confirms this research: activities are spread far and wide into housing subdivisions, shopping malls, regional schools, and industrial parks.[6] Limited-access highways, parking lots, school and church bus fleets, airport shuttles, and radio-broadcast traffic reports are the essential infrastructure of dispersed communities.[7]

This settlement structure is largely a product of post-World War II affluence and reflects the choices of an expanding middle class, the automobile, and investment in highways and roads that allow for less dense settlement patterns.[8] The demographic mix in the suburbs has changed as they have grown, becoming more racially and ethnically diverse over time and now including more low- and moderate-wage workers than central cities.[9] While both populations and jobs are growing in suburban areas, not all suburban areas are created equal. Suburbs include both high- and low-income areas. Some are job centers while others are bedroom communities. However, more jobs are located in higher-income suburbs than lower-income suburbs.[10]

The U.S. economy, workplace, workforce, and labor market have changed radically in the last 50 years, yet public and private policies have not kept up with the changes, contributing to a spatial mismatch between the location of jobs and the neighborhoods and communities in which workers reside. Federal, state, and local policymakers who deal with housing, employment, and transportation operate in separate silos (by both level of government and issue), making it difficult to craft coordinated policies that promote healthy communities. In addition, federal and state decisionmakers

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1 Margy Waller and Mark Alan Hughes, "Working Far From Home: Transportation and Welfare Reform in the Ten Big States," Progressive Policy Institute, 1999.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid. Jordan Rappaport, "U.S. Urban Decline and Growth, 1950-2000," Economic Review, Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City (2003): 15-34.
4 John Brennan and Edward Hill, "Where are the Jobs? Cities, Suburbs and the Competition for Employment," Brookings Institution, 1999.
5 Evelyn Blumenberg and Margy Waller, "The Long Journey to Work: A Federal Transportation Policy for Working Families," Brookings Transportation Reform Series, Brookings Institution, July 2003. Bruce Katz and Robert Lang, "Introduction," in Bruce Katz and Robert Lang, eds., Redefining Urban and Suburban America: Evidence from Census 2000, Volume 1 (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003). Harry Holzer and Michael Stoll, "Where Workers Go, Do Jobs Follow? Metropolitan Labor Markets in the U.S., 1990-2000," Brookings Institution, 2007.
6 Waller and Hughes, 1999.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 William Frey, "Melting Pot Suburbs: A Study of Suburban Diversity," in Katz and Lang, eds., Redefining Urban and Suburban America. Alan Berube and Elizabeth Kneebone, "Two Steps Back: City and Suburban Poverty Trends 1999-2005," Brookings Institution, 2006.
10 Holzer and Stoll, 2007.

typically focus spending and activities at the state, county, or city level, despite the regional nature of housing and employment markets.

Recent trends in rising energy costs and the number of home loan defaults and mortgage foreclosures have major implications for the development and health of metropolitan areas and the ability of low-wage workers to find affordable housing in desirable communities. Concern about global warming and higher gas prices may shift housing and development preferences away from low-density, auto-dependent areas. Urban or dense suburban neighborhoods with access to public transit and job centers may become more attractive after decades of decentralization. Turmoil in the housing market is destabilizing families and communities. Modest-income neighborhoods and those with weak housing demand are hit especially hard by foreclosures and evictions. Owners often do not maintain foreclosed properties, resulting in deteriorated and vacant housing stock that can blight a neighborhood, bring down neighboring property values, and destabilize an area socially and economically.[11] As our nation's spatial layout continues to change, so must policies and practices in order to strengthen our economy.

OPPORTUNITY MOVES

The geographical hallmarks of suburbanization—lower densities and greater distances—combined with the decline in real wages, leave workers facing difficult decisions.[12] They may choose to remain in central city neighborhoods after years of urban disinvestment and employment decentralization have shifted job markets farther away. Or they may move from central cities to lower-density, auto-oriented suburbs, which do not always have plentiful, affordable housing options or job growth.[13] Confronted with this decision, some low-wage workers are making "opportunity moves" in order to better access jobs, safe neighborhoods, high-performing school systems, and other resources. While there is no fixed definition, opportunity neighborhoods typically are mixed-income areas with both affordable and market-rate housing.

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However, after any move, residents can find it challenging to reestablish a routine in a new neighborhood. Opportunity moves frequently require workers and families to leave neighborhoods containing friends, relatives, and familiar services, such as child care and public transit. Workers generally access those services through in-person visits to providers, and must add the visits to daily commutes between home, work, and other household errands.[14] Many service agencies are location-specific and less mobile than the populations they serve, and thus agency employees find it challenging to adequately respond to their clients'

11 Alan Mallach, "Tackling the Mortgage Crisis: 10 Action Steps for State Government," Brookings Institution, 2008. Joint Center for Housing Studies, "America's Rental Housing Crisis: The Key to a Balanced National Policy," Harvard University, 2008.
12 Ibid.
13 Blumenberg and Waller, 2003. Holzer and Stoll, 2007.
14 Scott W. Allard, "Mismatches and Unmet Need: Access to Social Services in Urban and Rural America," National Poverty Center Working Paper Series, no. 07-14, June 2007.

geographic shifts.[15] In addition, child care is a critical issue. Parents need access to child-care options and weigh a number of factors in their choice: location, quality, convenience, cost, scheduling, and availability.

Government officials, housing developers, service agencies, and others have developed a number of approaches to providing more housing options for working-class households planning a move into an opportunity neighborhood. At the same time, decisionmakers in changing neighborhoods and communities may commit few public or private resources to initiatives that address the needs of the working class.[16]

POLICY OPTIONS

Approaches to providing more housing options to low-wage workers in opportunity areas address both the "supply side" (producing more affordable housing) and "demand side" (providing housing assistance that supplements rental payments). Practitioners are also linking housing to services such as job training and child care, so that housing can serve as a platform for economic stability and advancement. Legislators and stakeholders have designed and used three main policy approaches to these issues. Overall, the policymakers focus on affordable housing and increasing access to opportunity, but they adopt policies that vary in their emphasis on moving to opportunity neighborhoods. In cases in which policymakers do not explicitly give priority to helping low-wage workers move to or stay in opportunity neighborhoods, they have unrealized potential to do so.

1. OFFER HOUSING AND MOBILITY INITIATIVES that combine rental assistance with housing counseling to support workers moving to opportunity neighborhoods.

The Housing Choice Voucher Program, previously known as Section 8, serves about two million low-income households.[17] The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development funds and regulates the program, while local authorities administer it.[18] Voucher holders rent housing on the private market from a landlord who agrees to participate in the program. The voucher supplements the renter's monthly rental payment; households pay up to 30 or 40 percent of their income toward rent, and the government makes up the difference, subject to payment limits.[19]

A priority of the voucher program is housing assistance and does not usually specifically target opportunity neighborhoods, either in recruiting landlords to participate or in providing counseling to participants to encourage them to look for housing in opportunity neighborhoods. Not surprisingly, then, vouchers do not ensure access to all neighborhoods. Voucher holders tend to be geographically

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Housing Choice Vouchers Fact Sheet," available at http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/hcv/about/fact_sheet.cfm#1, accessed February 25, 2008. Will Fischer and Barbara Sard, "Senate Bill Would Update and Streamline Housing Voucher Program," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, March 2008.
18 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Housing Choice Vouchers Fact Sheet."
19 Ibid.

clustered in low-income areas,[20] and, while the geographic distribution of voucher holders tends to mirror the distribution of affordable rental housing, some neighborhoods with affordable rental units house no (or relatively few) voucher holders.[21]

Mobility initiatives offer vouchers with enhanced counseling services to assist workers in moving to opportunity neighborhoods and connecting to the resources available in those neighborhoods. The Gautreaux and Moving to Opportunity initiatives are the most prominent examples of housing mobility efforts:

Gautreaux began in Chicago in the 1970s as the result of a discrimination lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Chicago Housing Authority. After the lawsuit, the Department of Housing and Urban Development set aside housing vouchers for public housing residents to move to predominantly white areas in the city or suburbs or racially mixed economically revitalizing areas.[22] Gautreaux provides powerful evidence that changing neighborhoods can produce a host of benefits. Participants who moved to the suburbs were more likely to work than participants who moved to neighborhoods within Chicago, despite having similar characteristics and employment histories before the move. In addition, children in the suburban families were more likely to stay in school, enroll in college-track courses in high school, attend college, or work full time if not attending college.[23]

Gautreaux provides powerful evidence that ***changing neighborhoods can produce a host of benefits.***

Moving to Opportunity was inspired by Gautreaux and authorized by Congress in 1992. This federal demonstration provided housing vouchers and mobility counseling to public housing residents in five cities and tested whether moving to higher-income neighborhoods would improve

20 Deborah J. Devine et al., "Housing Choice Voucher Location Patterns: Implications for Participants and Neighborhood Welfare," U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2003. Overall, more than 50 percent of voucher holders live in neighborhoods with poverty rates below 20 percent. However, voucher holders in cities are more likely to live in distressed neighborhoods: 24 percent live in neighborhoods with poverty rates of 20-30 percent; 18 percent in neighborhoods with poverty rates of 30-40 percent; and 15 percent in neighborhoods with poverty rates above 40 percent. About 25 percent of black households and 28 percent of Latino households with vouchers live in neighborhoods (both city and suburban) with poverty rates of 30 percent or higher, compared with about 8 percent of white families.

21 Ibid. For example, about 17 percent of neighborhoods in the 50 largest metropolitan areas have affordable housing but no voucher holders.

22 Leonard S. Rubinowitz and James E. Rosenbaum, Crossing the Class and Color Lines: From Public Housing to White Suburbia (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). Ruby Mendenhall, Stefanie DeLuca, and Greg Duncan, "Neighborhood Resources, Racial Segregation, and Economic Mobility: Results from the Gautreaux Program," Social Science Research 35 (2006): 892-923. Initially, the criterion for the destination neighborhood was that the population had to be less than 30 percent black. In 1981, program rules allowed participants to move into areas with a higher black population if the neighborhood was revitalizing economically.

23 Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum, 2000. James Rosenbaum and Susan Popkin, "Employment and Earnings of Low-Income Blacks Who Move to Middle-Class Suburbs," in Christopher Jencks and Paul Peterson, eds., The Urban Underclass (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1991). Susan J. Popkin, James E. Rosenbaum, and Patricia Meaden, "Labor Market Experiences of Low-Income Black Women in Middle-Class Suburbs: Evidence from a Survey of Gautreaux Program Participants," Journal of Policy Analysis and Management 12, 3 (1993): 556-573. Movers to suburban neighborhoods were about 14 percent more likely to have jobs than movers to city neighborhoods, although there were few differences in average hourly wages or number of hours worked each week. However, because Gautreaux did not have an experimental design with control and experimental groups, program results cannot be attributed conclusively to changes in neighborhood characteristics instead of other factors such as the personal traits of participants. Nonetheless, participants were assigned to suburban or city locations in a quasi-random manner, allowing valid comparisons.

educational, employment, and other outcomes for public housing residents.[24] The Moving to Opportunity interim evaluation reported a number of positive impacts on participants, including improved housing quality, increased neighborhood safety, reduced likelihood of observing or being a victim of a crime, and improved mental and physical health of adults, with an especially dramatic reduction in depression.[25] While there were no significant impacts across the five sites in employment and earnings, there were significant increases in employment rates and earnings in a few individual sites, especially among adults under age 40.[26]

In addition, other mobility initiatives are in place in Baltimore, Dallas, Minneapolis, and other cities, and are usually the result of litigation against public agencies similar to the Gautreaux lawsuit.[27]

2. INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING in opportunity areas by directing affordable housing production toward those areas.

- The **Low Income Housing Tax Credit** is the federal government's principal mechanism to support the construction and/or rehabilitation of affordable rental housing and provides tax credits against federal income tax obligations to investors in affordable housing. Launched in 1987, this tax credit had supported the development of more than 1.5 million affordable housing units as of 2005.[28]

  State officials administer the tax credits, allotting them to developers on a competitive basis, measured against state housing agency priorities and other development proposals. To qualify for credits, housing developments must include a certain percentage of units that are affordable to households with incomes below 50 or 60 percent of area median income.[29] Tax-credit-backed developments are often located

> *The Low Income Housing Tax Credit...had supported the* ***development of more than 1.5 million affordable housing units as of 2005.***

24 Margery Austin Turner, "Moving Out of Poverty: Expanding Mobility and Choice through Tenant-Based Housing Assistance," Housing Policy Debate 9, 2 (1998): 373-394. John Goering, Judith B. Feins, and Todd M. Richardson, "A Cross-Site Analysis of Initial Moving to Opportunity Demonstration Results," Journal of Housing Research 13, 1 (2000): 1-30. Margery Austin Turner and Lynette A. Rawlings, "Overcoming Concentrated Poverty and Isolation: Lessons from Three HUD Demonstration Initiatives," Urban Institute, 2005. Moving to Opportunity was implemented in Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York.

25 Turner and Rawlings, 2005. Margery Austin Turner and Xavier de Souza Briggs, "Assisted Housing Mobility and the Success of Low-Income, Minority Families: Lessons for Policy, Practice and Future Research," Urban Institute, 2008. Elizabeth Cove, Margery Austin Turner, Xavier de Souza Briggs, and Cynthia Duarte, "Can Escaping from Poor Neighborhoods Increase Employment and Earnings?" Urban Institute, 2008.

26 Turner and Rawlings, 2005. Turner and de Souza Briggs, 2008. Cove, Turner, de Souza Briggs, and Duarte, 2008.

27 Diane L. Houk, Erica Blake, and Fred Freiberg, "Increasing Access to Low-Poverty Areas by Creating Mixed-Income Housing," Fair Housing Justice Center, 2007.

28 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "U.S. Housing Market Conditions, 4th Quarter 2007," February 2008, available at http://www.huduser.org/periodicals/ushmc/winter07_1/USHMC_Q407.pdf, accessed June 30, 2008.

29 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "U.S. Housing Market Conditions." Zhong Yi Tong, Amy Bogdon, and Michelle Bowman Mengel, "The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit," Fannie Mae Foundation, 2003. Specifically, tax-credit developments must meet the following affordability requirements: a) at least 20 percent of the units are occupied by households whose income is less than 50 percent of the metropolitan area's median family income, or b) at least 40 percent of the units are occupied by households whose income is less than 60 percent of the metropolitan area's median income. Rents on affordable units are limited to a maximum of 30 percent of qualifying income. Developers must commit to keeping the project affordable for 15 to 30 years.

in low- to moderate-income neighborhoods.[30] State officials develop their own plans to allot the credits, but federal guidelines create incentives for developing affordable housing in distressed neighborhoods as a community revitalization strategy.[31]

- State and local policymakers are also using a variety of tools to develop more affordable housing.[32] **Inclusionary zoning** is a promising affordable housing strategy and, because it is directly linked to market-rate housing development, is more likely than many other strategies to produce affordable housing located in an opportunity neighborhood. Under inclusionary zoning policy, housing developers include units affordable to low- and moderate-income households in new developments in exchange for non-monetary compensation such as density bonuses, fee waivers, and expedited permits that reduce construction costs.[33] This policy is most effective in areas that are experiencing growth, since affordable units will be generated only if private development occurs.[34] There are inclusionary zoning ordinances in 350 to 400 local jurisdictions around the country, mostly in California, Massachusetts, and New Jersey.[35]

3. LINK AFFORDABLE HOUSING and **RESIDENT SERVICES** to improve renters' access to economic mobility, a powerful approach that can benefit property managers, families, and the community as a whole.

- **Affordable housing organizations** such as Enterprise Community Partners and NeighborWorks America **develop and strengthen resident services** within affordable housing developments. Resident services focus on personal and community asset-building through referrals and/or on-site services. Common services include after-school care, computer centers, and referrals to outside services such as child care, adult education, and job

30 Jill Khadduri, Larry Buron, and Carissa Climaco, "Are States Using the Low Income Housing Tax Credit to Enable Families with Children to Live in Low Poverty and Racially Integrated Neighborhoods?" Abt Associates, 2006. Lance Freeman, "Siting Affordable Housing: Location and Neighborhood Trends of Low Income Housing Tax Credit Developments in the 1990s," Brookings Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, 2004. Kirk McClure, "The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program Goes Mainstream and Moves to the Suburbs," Housing Policy Debate 17, 3 (2006): 419-446. The Khadduri study looked at units with two or more bedrooms placed into service between 1995 and 2003 in metropolitan areas with populations greater than 250,000. It found that about 80 percent of housing units were located in neighborhoods with poverty rates of more than 10 percent. The Freeman study found that while tax-credit units are not generally in the most distressed neighborhoods, they are more likely to be in neighborhoods with higher poverty rates and proportions of African-American residents than the average for their metropolitan area. The McClure study found that about two-thirds of tax-credit units overall are located in moderate-poverty neighborhoods (with poverty rates of 10-40 percent) and about 9 percent are in high-poverty areas (with poverty rates over 40 percent). Suburban tax-credit units were more likely to be in low- and moderate-poverty areas, and central city tax-credit units were more likely to be in moderate- and high-poverty areas.

31 Specifically, the guidelines provide incentives for development in "difficult development areas," areas with high construction, land, or utility costs relative to median income, and in "qualifying census tracts," tracts in which at least 50 percent of households have incomes less than 60 percent of the area median family income or have a poverty rate of 25 percent or more. See http://www.huduser.org/Datasets/qct/dda2007_notice.pdf and http://www.huduser.org/Datasets/qct/dda2008_notice.pdf, accessed April 24, 2008.

32 The website www.housingpolicy.org, developed by the Center for Housing Policy, provides extensive information on state and local affordable housing policies.

33 Density bonuses allow developers to build at a greater density than residential zones typically permit, allowing them to build additional market-rate units without having to acquire more land.

34 Rick Jacobus, "Delivering on the Promise of Inclusionary Housing: Best Practices in Administration and Monitoring," PolicyLink, 2007. PolicyLink's Inclusionary Zoning Tool, available at www.policylink.org, accessed April 24, 2008. D.C. Office of Planning, Inclusionary Zoning: A Primer, 2002.

35 Gerrit-Jan Knaap, Antonio Bento, and Scott Lowe, "Housing Market Impacts of Inclusionary Zoning," National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education, 2008, citing Douglas Porter, "Inclusionary Zoning for Affordable Housing," Urban Land Institute, 2004.

training.[36] Resident services reduce property management costs related to turnover and non-payment of rent by helping families improve financial management, access crisis-prevention assistance, and link to services that can increase earnings.[37]

- The voluntary, federal **Family Self-Sufficiency** initiative is administered by local housing authorities and made available to adult public housing residents and those using housing vouchers. This initiative combines affordable housing, case management, and an escrow account. Proceeds from the escrow account can be used for such purposes as homeownership, education, transportation (including the purchase of a vehicle), or starting a business.[38] The program is small, serving about 50,000 to 70,000 families, and participants have had much greater increases in income than non-participants.[39] Managers of the Family Self-Sufficiency effort are in the unique position of offering information about opportunity neighborhoods that will best support the participants' goals regarding education and employment.

- **Car ownership** initiatives reduce the cost of owning a vehicle and improve access to driving for low-wage workers. Leaders in communities across the country have developed more than a hundred organizations dedicated to increasing affordable, reliable, private automobile ownership for low-wage workers.[40] Many employers report that lack of reliable transportation is a major barrier to retaining low-wage workers. Through vehicle ownership, workers have a reliable means of transportation to and from work and are able to maintain employment in areas that are not accessible by public transit. In addition, workers without a car have a hard time searching for or accepting better-paying jobs if public transit does not take them there.[41] Cars are also the key to other assets: low-wage workers with a car are more likely to be homeowners than those without one, perhaps because car owners have a wider choice of locations for affordable, safe housing.[42] Housing mobility supporters

...low-wage workers with a car are more likely to be homeowners than those without one...

36 National Resident Services Collaborative, "Resident Services for Families in Affordable Housing: A Background Paper," 2005. Tony Proscio, "More than Roof and Walls: Why Resident Services Are an Indispensable Part of Affordable Housing," Enterprise Community Partners, 2006.

37 Enterprise Community Partners, "Research Demonstrates Positive Impact of Family Resident Services on Property Financial Performance in Selected Mercy Housing Family Properties Over Two Years," 2007. Research in this field is still developing. Research on affordable properties managed by Mercy Housing found that properties with resident services experienced reduced property vacancy losses, legal fees, and bad debt compared with similar properties without resident services.

38 Robert C. Ficke and Andrea Piesse, "Evaluation of the Family Self-Sufficiency Program: Retrospective Analysis, 1996-2000," Office of Policy Development and Research, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2004. Jeff Lubell, "Expanding Asset-Building Opportunities for Low-Income Families Through FSS," FSS Partnerships, 2005.

39 Ficke and Piesse, 2004. American Association of Service Coordinators, CFED, FSS Partnerships, NAHRO, National Low-Income Housing Coalition, and the New America Foundation, "Recommendations for Strengthening HUD's Family Self-Sufficiency Program," 2006. Participants who enrolled in 1996 experienced a 72-percent increase in median income by 2000, from $6,936 to $11,960. The median escrow account disbursement was $3,351. Among a comparison group of non-FSS participants in public housing or the voucher program, the increase, 36 percent, was only half as large over the same time period, from $6,606 to $8,996.

40 www.opportunitycars.com.

41 While public transit may take workers to their jobs, it is often less efficient due to increased travel times, multi-stop trips, and schedules that do not reflect the demand of many low-wage workers.

42 Evelyn Blumenberg, "Beyond the Spatial Mismatch: Welfare Recipients and Transportation Policy," Journal of Planning Literature 19, 2 (2004): 182-205. Blumenberg and Waller, 2003. Margy Waller, "Auto-Mobility," Washington Monthly, October/November 2005. Margy Waller, "High Cost or High Opportunity Cost? Transportation and Family Economic Success," Brookings Institution Policy Brief, no. 35, Center on Children and Families, December 2005.

have begun to form partnerships and referral relationships with initiatives designed to help low-wage workers afford car ownership.[43]

Table 1. Policy approaches that provide more options for workers and families to move into opportunity neighborhoods

Policy Approach:	Goal:	Specific Programs:
Housing mobility initiatives	Combine housing rental vouchers with housing counseling to help workers and families move to opportunity neighborhoods and connect to resources.	• Gautreaux • Moving to Opportunity • Local initiatives such as those in Baltimore, Dallas, and Minneapolis
Increasing the supply of affordable housing in opportunity areas	Produce or rehabilitate affordable housing.	• Low Income Housing Tax Credit • Inclusionary Zoning and other state/local initiatives
Linking housing assistance to social and employment services	Combine affordable housing with services designed to improve worker and family economic stability.	• Resident service coordinators in affordable housing developments • Family Self-Sufficiency initiative • Access to car ownership

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS FOR MOVING FORWARD

Housing assistance and mobility initiatives illustrate practices and policies that encourage success for low-wage workers moving to opportunity neighborhoods.

1. Identifying opportunity neighborhoods

Mobility initiative leaders are increasingly defining opportunity neighborhoods based on concrete assets such as good schools, proximity to employment centers with skill-appropriate job openings, community colleges, job training and adult education services, and access to public transportation, child care centers, and other neighborhood services. Movers and community leaders can create "opportunity maps" of specific regions that analyze multiple indicators of community health,

43 Margy Waller, "Opportunity and the Automobile," Poverty and Race Research Action Council Newsletter, Janaury/February 2006.

including proximity to jobs and public transit, income levels, crime, and school quality.[44]

Currently, only a few mobility initiatives (similar to Gautreaux or Moving to Opportunity) actively identify opportunity neighborhoods in this manner. It is not common practice among most affordable housing developers or rental assistance programs. Thus, one major obstacle to supporting moves to opportunity neighborhoods is that leaders are not taking action to systematically identify such neighborhoods.

Recommendations:

- Decisionmakers should identify opportunity neighborhoods based on a concrete assessment of assets and revisit the designations periodically to account for neighborhood change.
- Community leaders should analyze the spatial distribution of jobs and industries with skill levels appropriate for mobility initiative participants in order to improve employment options.
- Local officials should also consider the major public transit routes and their proximity to housing and job centers. Many communities, especially suburban ones, are not well served by public transit, and employers require workers with access to affordable, reliable vehicles.[45]

2. Moving into—and staying in—opportunity neighborhoods

Low-wage workers often face a lack of information about rental markets, uncertainty about moving to new areas, and landlords who are unfamiliar with rental vouchers or are unwilling to rent to voucher holders.[46] Without active housing counseling of the type provided in the Moving to Opportunity and Gautreaux initiatives, households may stay in familiar, distressed neighborhoods.

Movers are more likely to realize the benefits of an opportunity neighborhood when they stay in that neighborhood for an extended period.[47] Common reasons why low-wage workers move from opportunity neighborhoods include housing market pressures and problems with property owners who take steps to opt out of assisted housing initiatives.[48]

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44 john a. powell, Jason Reece, Christy Rogers, and Samir Gambhir, Communities of Opportunity: A Framework for a More Equitable and Sustainable Future for All, Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, 2007. Jason Reece, "Connecting Housing to Opportunity," Kirwan Institute Update, Spring/Summer 2005. Barbara Samuels, presentation on the Baltimore Thompson Mobility Program, at the Employment and Housing Mobility Roundtable convened by the Mobility Agenda and the Poverty and Race Research Action Council, July 9, 2007, available at http://www.inclusionist.org/files/BSamuels.ppt (accessed April 11, 2008). Xavier de Souza Briggs and Margery Austin Turner, "Assisted Housing Mobility and the Success of Low-Income Minority Families: Lessons for Policy, Practice, and Future Research," Northwestern Journal of Law and Social Policy 1, 1 (2006): 25-61. Cove, Turner, de Souza Briggs, and Duarte, 2008. Gautreaux and Moving to Opportunity used demographic indicators such as a neighborhood's racial composition or poverty level to determine whether an area was an "opportunity neighborhood," which researchers now consider to be overly rough proxies for attributes that make a neighborhood a good place to live and raise children.

45 Cove, Turner, de Souza Briggs, and Duarte, 2008. Turner and de Souza Briggs, 2008.

46 Stefanie DeLuca, "The Continuing Relevance of the Gautreaux Program for Housing Mobility: Recent Evidence," in Philip Tegeler, Mary Cunningham, and Margery Austin Turner, eds., Keeping the Promise: Preserving and Enhancing Housing Mobility in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program (Washington, D.C.: Poverty and Race Research Action Council, 2005). Turner and de Souza Briggs, 2008. Cove, Turner, de Souza Briggs, and Duarte, 2008.

47 Turner and de Souza Briggs, 2008.

48 Jennifer Comey, Xavier de Souza Briggs, and Gretchen Weissmann, "Struggling to Stay out of High-Poverty Neighborhoods: Lessons from the Moving to Opportunity Experiment," Urban Institute, March 2008.

Recommendations

- Housing assistance initiative leaders that have not traditionally considered themselves providers of mobility assistance – such as the Housing Choice Voucher Program and the Family Self-Sufficiency Program – should incorporate mobility counseling into their operations.
- Housing counselors should provide information about the benefits of moving into an opportunity neighborhood, including a discussion of employment and education options (both adult/postsecondary education and the K-12 system). Counselors should pay attention to the spatial match between housing, employment, and child care. Finding and retaining a job can be challenging if home, work, and child care are not convenient to one another.[49]
- State officials should develop affirmative marketing initiatives to inform low-wage workers of housing opportunities (such as tax-credit housing) as well as provide incentives to property managers who rent to movers with vouchers.
- Within the Housing Choice Voucher Program, coordinators should recruit additional landlords. Housing agency officials can also identify areas for outreach that will expand neighborhood choices as well as best practices.[50]
- Local officials should simplify and strengthen options for movers to "port" vouchers across jurisdictional lines to expand their housing choices.[51]
- In order to help participants stay in opportunity neighborhoods, mobility initiative officials should provide post-move services, such as helping to resolve problems with landlords, providing "exception rents" to allow voucher holders to pay higher rents in tight markets, and "second-move" counseling in cases of unavoidable moves to help participants stay in an opportunity neighborhood.
- Community leaders should create initiatives to improve access to driving for low-wage workers as well as improve the quality and frequency of service on heavily traveled city bus and subway routes.
- Decisionmakers should implement policies recognizing the cost of commuting, one of the few work-related expenses that receive no tax benefits in the United States, as a tax on earned income and implement tax policy to alleviate those expenses.[52]

3. Creating more affordable housing options in opportunity neighborhoods

Tax-credit and voucher initiatives are generally more successful than public housing in providing housing opportunities outside of distressed areas, but the clustering of these units hinders goals of social inclusion. While there are tax-credit developments in suburban locations, it is unclear whether tax-credit housing in these locations is passively mirroring the demographics of a local community or offering opportunities for those interested in moving from more distressed neighborhoods.

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49 Turner and de Souza Briggs, 2008. Presentation by Xavier de Souza Briggs, Elizabeth Cove, Cynthia Duarte, and Margery Austin Turner, "How Does Leaving High-Poverty Neighborhoods Affect the Employment Prospects of Low-Income Mothers?" July 9, 2007, Employment and Housing Mobility Roundtable.

50 Margery Austin Turner, Susan Popkin, and Mary Cunningham, Section 8 Mobility and Neighborhood Health, Urban Institute, 2000.

51 Mary K. Cunningham and Philip Tegeler, "Portability and Housing Choice: Preserving the Right to Inter-Jurisdictional Portability Using a Central Reserve Fund," in Tegeler, Cunningham, and Turner, eds., Keeping the Promise. Philip Tegeler, "New Directions for U.S. Housing Policy: The Unmet Potential of Two Large Programs," in William L. Taylor, Dianne M. Piche, Crystal Rosario, and Joseph D. Rich, eds., The Erosion of Rights: Declining Civil Rights Enforcement Under the Bush Administration (Washington, D.C.: Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights, with the assistance of the Center for American Progress, 2007).

52 Waller, October/November 2005.

An increasing number of local officials have supported inclusionary zoning policies, but only a fraction of all local jurisdictions use this approach. Research on existing initiatives suggests that such programs should be mandatory, as voluntary initiatives produce less housing.[53] Ideally, affordable units are built in the same location as the market rate units to foster economic integration, but some localities allow developers to pay a fee in lieu of building such units.

Recommendations

- Federal officials should revise the statute governing the Low Income Housing Tax Credit to foster the development of more tax-credit housing in opportunity neighborhoods. Community leaders and other stakeholders should examine and monitor outcomes from their state's Qualified Allocation Plan, which establishes state priorities and eligibility criteria for awarding tax credits to developers.
- Federal, state, and local policymakers should encourage other affordable housing dollars to target opportunity neighborhoods, including federal initiatives such as the Community Development Block Grant.
- State and local actors should organize coalitions with a diverse membership to advocate for inclusionary zoning ordinances at the state and local level and learn from other localities about crafting effective policies.
- Policymakers and state and local actors should work to preserve existing affordable housing that is threatened by market demands and a lack of resources by standardizing and updating information about current properties and coordinating policies that support affordable housing.[54]

4. Linking affordable housing to economic opportunities

Public initiatives focused on housing, employment, and asset-building services tend to have separate funding streams, guidelines, and eligibility criteria, making the integration of the services a challenge. While most housing assistance operators acknowledge the relevance of services such as child care and employment assistance, they do not usually fund them or incorporate them into already existing initiatives.

The Family Self-Sufficiency initiative is one of the few examples of a public effort to link housing assistance with employment-related services. However, it is fairly small, enrolling less than five percent of families with children in public housing and the Housing Choice Voucher Program.[55] A principal reason local operators are not serving more people is the shortage of funding for Family Self-Sufficiency coordinators to provide case management. This is not a high priority for state and local housing authorities, who see their core mission as administering public housing and voucher initiatives.[56]

Local decisionmakers typically do not give priority to funding for resident services programs, since policymakers usually limit the use of affordable housing dollars to construction, rehabilitation, and the

53 National Housing Conference, "Inclusionary Zoning: The California Experience," 2004.
54 http://www.housingpolicy.org/toolbox/strategy/policies/preservation.html?tierid=188, referenced September 30, 2008.
55 Barbara Sard, "The Family Self-Sufficiency Program: HUD's Best Kept Secret for Promoting Employment and Asset Growth," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2001.
56 Lubell, 2005.

management costs directly associated with maintenance.[57] To make the case for increased investment, resident service administrators are documenting outcomes both for property managers and families. The National Residents Services Collaborative has developed a core set of outcome measures to track the progress of participants in affordable housing resident services initiatives in training, employment, housing, and financial education.[58]

Recommendations

- Local decision- and policymakers should make initiatives like the Family Self-Sufficiency Program a priority for state and local housing authorities.
- Developers of affordable housing in opportunity areas should work with foundations and state and federal governments to develop more sustainable funding strategies for resident services initiatives, including a demonstration program with an evaluation component.

CONCLUSION

National decisionmakers have not made the development of affordable housing in opportunity neighborhoods an important goal, nor have they given priority to the movement of low-wage workers out of distressed neighborhoods into opportunity neighborhoods. The Low Income Housing Tax Credit and voucher initiatives are both large federal funding streams representing unrealized potential to expand housing opportunities for low-wage workers.[59] Housing mobility initiatives such as Gautreaux and Moving to Opportunity, while significant, have functioned as boutique operations. The goals and practices of these initiatives have not been incorporated into the standard Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Federal policymakers generally delegate key decisions about affordable housing production policy to state officials through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit and block grants. While these federal efforts have successfully stimulated the development of decent affordable housing, they have typically done so in low-income, distressed neighborhoods. Affordable housing development takes place in distressed neighborhoods in part by design, with the goal of stimulating community development, but also by default because local exclusionary zoning or land use policies limit the development of affordable rental housing in many jurisdictions, especially suburbs.[60] Federal government officials provide little oversight of state and local government representatives regarding their actions to identify and ameliorate regulatory barriers and other impediments to fair housing.[61] In addition, funding streams and programmatic rules related to housing, social services, employment-related services, and asset-building typically operate in separate silos. Local, regional, and national policymakers must address all of these issues.

57 National Resident Services Collaborative, "Resident Services for Families in Affordable Housing." Proscio, 2006.
58 National Resident Services Collaborative, "Recommended Resident Services Outcome Measures," 2007. National Resident Services Collaborative, "Discussion Group Paper: Research on the Impact of Family Services," 2007. Enterprise Community Partners, "Research Demonstrates Positive Impact of Family Resident Services on Property Financial Performance in Selected Mercy Housing Family Properties Over Two Years," 2007.
59 Bruce Katz and Margery Austin Turner, "Rethinking U.S. Rental Housing Policy," Joint Center for Housing Studies, 2007.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid. Alanna Buchanan, Tamica Daniel, Jonathon Hooks, Shayla Parker, and Philip Tegeler, "Building Opportunity: Civil Rights Best Practices in the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program," Poverty and Race Research Action Council and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, 2006. Tegeler, 2007.

Decisionmakers should strengthen opportunity, inclusion, neighborhoods, and our economy by facilitating successful moves to opportunity neighborhoods utilizing these suggested policies. Recommendations focus on a mix of federal, state, and local policies; state and local leaders can support and pursue the federal recommendations in order to provide greater access to better neighborhoods for their area's low-wage workers.

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