

From Slum Clearance and Public Housing High Rises to the Olympic Village:

The History of Housing in Bronzeville and the Chicago 2016 Olympic Bid



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Title page photo of the Madden Park Homes by Annie Ruth Stubenfield from her collection of photos entitled "Hi-rise Living Chicago Housing Authority Style: The Ending of an Era in Bronzeville 1991-2005"

Abstract

In 2009, Chicago was one of four candidate cities still in the running for the 2016 Summer Olympic Games. During the days leading up to the Olympic decision and throughout the development of Chicago 2016's Olympic bid, debate and controversy arose. One central issue in this debate focused on the Olympic Village, proposed to be built on the near South Side of Chicago in a neighborhood known as Bronzeville. This neighborhood, the cultural and historical center of Black Chicago, has been the site of housing and city planning issues throughout the twentieth century. In my thesis, I present the Olympic Village as yet another example of housing controversy in Bronzeville. I also highlight the previous and contemporary waves of housing policies and articulate how the proposed Olympic Village fits into the most recent wave. Throughout my research, I analyze the influence and power of community leaders and activists in addition to the government's public policies as ways to analyze the ever-changing face of housing in Bronzeville. The proposals and policies of the City of Chicago, the Chicago Housing Authority, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Chicago 2016 Olympic bid in addition to numerous organizations of Bronzeville residents will together outline the approaches, problems, solutions, and hopes surrounding the continuing controversy of housing in Bronzeville. Ultimately, the Olympic bid and the resulting debate serve as an example of this most recent wave of housing policy and community development, illustrating its divergences from previous waves, its continuation of previous flaws, and its place within the history of Bronzeville.

Introduction

Moving On After the Bid

“The long bid process sparked a fruitful and informative debate around community development and how to uplift the city’s economically depressed neighborhoods and enrich the city as a whole. That debate revealed weaknesses in our workforce, our transportation system and in our entrepreneurial development, all of which are key components of the Chicago Urban League’s strategic approach to community well-being. The neighborhood transformation city leaders imagined at the beginning of the bid can and should be realized, even without the Olympics.”

Herman Brewer, Acting President and CEO of the Chicago Urban League
From a News Release, entitled “Chicago Urban League Responds to 2016 Olympics Decision”

“Chicago has not been awarded the 2016 Olympics. No Games Chicago thinks it is a very good decision for the people of Chicago. But what happens now?”

From *No Games Chicago*’s website

Around 10:30 a.m. on October 2nd, 2009, Chicagoans at Daley Plaza stood in silence after hearing the announcement that Chicago had not made it past the first round of voting in Copenhagen at the 121st International Olympic Committee Session and XIII Olympic Congress. As if waiting for a collective exhale, the thousands of shocked supporters and protestors who had gathered for this announcement remained frozen, while thoughts of what this means for Chicago’s future began to take form. In the following months, that strange unease would also

surround the various housing developments predicted and planned to appear in Bronzeville, including the proposed Olympic Village. Approximately two hours later, Rio de Janeiro received the good news that they would be hosting the 2016 Summer Games and Chicagoans were already making plans for a 2020 bid. While it only took the Olympic bid supporters at Daley Plaza that morning a few minutes to regain their gusto, enthusiasm, and pride of Chicago and its future, plans for affordable housing in Bronzeville did not recover so quickly.



Daley Plaza on October 2, 2009, photo by Denise Baron.

According to many statements made throughout the bid process, the Olympic Village development would occur with or without the Olympic Games. So when discussion turned to

development plans less than a week after the announcement in Copenhagen, attention was quickly focused upon the Olympic Village plans. The planned conversion of the Olympic Village into a multi-use and mixed-income development had spurred intense debate as well as optimism in a neighborhood that has been at the center of Chicago housing controversy throughout the twentieth century. As the cultural and geographic center of Black Chicago history and identity, any development or city-planning proposals as grand as the Olympics evokes an intense response in Bronzeville. Therefore with the loss of the bid, the previous debate around the proposed Village and its post-Olympic plans became more significant. Throughout the development of the bid, the Olympic Village and its post-Olympic use had been marketed as a potential site to continue redevelopment in Bronzeville that fit well with the City of Chicago's already existing plans for this neighborhood. The official bid book of Chicago 2016 tells that the Olympic Village "will transition to a mixed-income, residential community, establishing an exciting new neighborhood along Lake Michigan on the near South Side."¹ When the final edition of the bid book was published, the Chicago 2016 website boasted that the post-Olympic use of the Village "will provide affordable housing and anchor the transformation of the area." The bid book also detailed the steps throughout the development of the bid to ensure that this would happen, centering on the transferal of the site to a private development team. Many of these steps had already taken place by the time of the IOC decision of the 2016 Olympic City. The city had purchased the area around and including the Michael Reese Hospital and Medical Center and signed agreements with property-owners around the site. The city council had approved a tax increment financing (TIF) strategy for the site, which would raise funds for development projects and ultimately reimburse the various developers of the area for development costs. Demolition at the site had even begun at that point.

¹ Chicago 2016, "Chicago 2016: Candidate City, Ville Candidate," (Chicago: Chicago 2016, 2009) 202-203.

The political arena was also staged and ready for the construction of this housing development to begin. After months of work, Chicago 2016 had won the support of the federal, state and local governments. Significantly, the majority of the City Council had even come to back the bid. Through that cooperation, came the “Memorandum of Understanding,” which garnered even more support from neighborhood groups and Bronzeville residents in particular. The “Memorandum of Understanding” (MOU)² would still apply to any application of the Olympic Village plan; therefore, residents of Bronzeville would still greatly benefit from this creation of jobs and the City and Bronzeville’s City Council members would deliver on their promises of benefit from the bid. For one of the few times in the bid process, the various political parties were agreed in support of the continued development of the Olympic Village despite the loss of the 2016 Olympic Games.

Despite the rare political agreement, a critical element was missing: the Olympic Games. Without the financial stimulus and general enthusiasm surround the games, this plot of land in Bronzeville was as undesirable as before. During the days leading up to the October 2nd announcement of the IOC decision, signs around Bronzeville advertised “Cheap Apartments Near Proposed Olympic Village.”³ Yet these quickly disappeared after it became clear to developers that this land had lost a key element of value once Chicago had lost the Olympics. Not only was the site of the Olympic Village posed to welcome development, but the larger area in general would also increase in desirability because of the Village. Without the expected demand for affordable rental housing near Olympic venues, the Olympic Village development would not differ from the many other attempts at mixed-income housing in Bronzeville and

² The MOU is a legally binding agreement binding the City Council reached with Chicago 2016 to guarantee jobs, housing and more for minorities and residents living near Olympic venues. This will be discussed in detail in section IV. The Debate.

³ D. Bradford Hunt, Chicago History Museum’s Urban History Seminars, “Special Field Study: Public Housing’s Past and Present in Chicago,” 3 October 2009.

would most likely not spur additional development. Less than a month after the announcement that Rio had won, developers were already canceling plans to build new housing. New Image Development Co., for example, abandoned their plans to build a ten-unit apartment building and a twenty-unit condo building, just blocks south of Bronzeville⁴. Despite the continuation of plans to construct the mixed-income housing project at the site of the proposed Olympic Village, the other elements of expected development were crumbling.

The Years Before the Bid and the Changing Waves of Housing Policy

The unease of the weeks following the loss of the Chicago 2016 Olympic bid is well rooted in Bronzeville's turbulent and problematic housing past. Since the population boom of Bronzeville during the Great Northern Migration, housing has been a point of contention between the lower-income residents, the agents of progressive housing reform, the proponents of racial discrimination, and the various governmental figures. Starting in the 1900s, Bronzeville's legacy of faulty housing can be broken into waves of policy that have shaped and defined life in the Black Metropolis. The racist lending and leasing policies of the early decades of the twentieth century laid the problematic groundwork for housing in Bronzeville, followed by the government's entrance into legislating housing policy. This second wave, taking place in the late 1930s and 1940s, to provide housing to those in need was a progressive direction for the government, yet laden with racial discrimination and segregation. As public housing became a central focus of federal and local government, the high-rise became the symbol of this still flawed system. The intense deterioration of the physical structures and social security displayed the inherent flaws in the 1940s-1960s era design, organization, policies, and politics of public housing in Bronzeville and Chicago, at large. By the 1980s, the terrible state of Chicago public

⁴ Wendell Hutson, "Lost Olympic bid puts breaks on some affordable housing development." [The Chicago Defender](#) 29 October 2009.

housing was undeniable and finally in the 1990s, serious reform began. The demolition of decades of housing project construction began in this era and results in a number of problems, including displacement, relocation, and gentrification. The destroyed high-rise structures have now begun to be replaced by developments that stress a new organization of the residential structures, a new mix of residents of various economic statuses, a new emphasis on access to other amenities, and most significantly a new focus on residents' input. These various waves of policy defined the functioning of the neighborhood and the lives of the residents, yet did not take into account the input of those who actually live in Bronzeville, until a number of public housing systems failed.

Chicago 2016's plan for an Olympic Village in Bronzeville was yet another element of this most contemporary wave of policy. While the history of Bronzeville contextualizes and defines the bid and the debate around the Village, this Olympic proposal also is a part of the most recent attempt to overhaul affordable housing in the Black Belt. By incorporating lessons learned from previous housing project's failure and incorporating new trends of urban planning, the Olympic Village proposal imbedded itself in Bronzeville's housing history. In attempting to benefit both the bid itself and the neighborhood, the Village plan demonstrates a tension between being a temporary athletic residential structure and a long-term element of community development. The proposed Olympic Village inherited many of the debates surrounding housing in Bronzeville, while also creating new ones. The question of additional displacement was of course a central element to the discussion, as was gentrification. Community activist also asked who was truly meant to benefit from this development – the athletes or the residents, the Olympic Movement or Bronzeville? Through this debate, we can see the changing role of community activism in Bronzeville. Remembered for being “a city within a city,” because of its

economic independence during the era of policy-enforced racial segregation, Bronzeville has a long history of community action. However, this element of the neighborhood was stifled for much of Bronzeville's history because of political maneuvering at the city level and a lack of access to power. The debate around the Olympic Village highlights not only the long history of housing issues in Bronzeville, but also the increasingly powerful activism of its residents. The Olympic Village debate in Chicago is therefore relevant in terms of the neighborhood's future given the potential continued development of the Olympic Village proposal as well as in terms of Bronzeville's historical waves of housing policy. The proposed Village is not only an heir of prior debates and issues, but also indicative of the contemporary and forthcoming Bronzeville urban development.

I. Bronzeville's Beginnings

Throughout the twentieth century, life and housing in Bronzeville have been largely defined by waves of policies: some racially discriminatory, others well intentioned, and even others ambiguous. Not only have these waves of policies defined the identity and history of the Black Belt, but they also frame the contemporary debate surrounding Chicago 2016's Olympic Village proposal. The histories of "the Ghetto" and racial segregation, slum clearance and public housing's beginning, high-rise demolition and displacement, and mixed-income housing and re-development give meaning to the words and actions of the Olympic Village planners, the reaction of the residents, and the resulting discussion. Moreover, the proposed Olympic Village would have fit into the most recent wave of policies, while the loss of the Olympics for Chicago has made the future of such a development unclear. Significantly, the Olympic debate illustrated the contemporary role of the community's voice in the development process, placing unprecedented influence and power in the hands of Bronzeville residents. In the contemporary wave of housing policy, the recognition and influence of public input has become increasingly important, which was clearly demonstrated in the political maneuvering of the Olympic debate. Unlike earlier eras of housing policy, the contemporary wave, including the Chicago 2016 Olympic bid, places groups of organized citizens at the center of such debates about development. Just as the eras of racial discrimination, public housing failure, and re-development have played large roles in shaping Bronzeville, so would have the Olympic Movement in Chicago. The turbulent housing history contextualized and complicated the Chicago 2016 Olympic bid and will also shape the continued development of the site proposed for the Olympic Village.

The Early Years: Foundations and Nostalgia

The establishment of Bronzeville during the first decades of the twentieth century has remained a central element of the community's identity through a sense of nostalgia, while also beginning the legacy of problematic housing. These two results of Bronzeville's early years have two very different effects on the contemporary climate and the Olympic debate. The nostalgia surrounding Bronzeville's heyday has fostered a conception that despite and even perhaps because of racial segregation the residents of the Black Belt were able to function economically, socially, and culturally independent of the oppressive white mainstream society controlling the rest of Chicago. While exaggerated, this idea contributes to the sense of pride residents feel for their community and the symbolic importance of this area in the history of Black Chicago. To Chicagoans, and especially Black Chicagoans, Bronzeville is a mobilizing symbol of African Americans' success and self-determination. Conversely, the racially discriminatory lending policies and eventually HUD and CHA's public housing policies serve another purpose in setting the contemporary stage. These social and political policies established many of the flaws that continue to haunt housing issues today on a very practical level. While the history of tenement buildings and the beginning of public housing hold significant places in the collective memory of Bronzeville and Chicago at large, the slum clearance policies and initial public housing programs continue to influence the political structure and policy-making of contemporary housing projects, such as the Olympic Village proposal. While serving different purposes, the nostalgic and political elements of Bronzeville's beginning together shape the following periods of housing, activism, policy-making, and community in the Black Metropolis.

During the first few decades of the 20th century, the foundations of Bronzeville's cultural, economic, and historical significance were first laid, as were its foundations of racial

segregation, poverty, and poor housing. A fifteen-foot tall statue named the *Monument to the Great Northern Migration*, by statue designer Alison Saar, stands at the “Gateway to Bronzeville” at the intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and 26th Street. Today this work of public art symbolizes the difficult journey that brought thousands of African Americans to Chicago’s south side in this era. The Great Northern Migration filled and eventually overcrowded the streets of the area on the south side that would come to be known as Bronzeville. The black population of Chicago doubled from approximately 44,000 to 110,000 between 1910 and 1920 and then again between 1920 and 1930, reaching 233,000 by the end of that decade.⁵ Bronzeville, as the center of Black Chicago life, was bursting at its seams.

The overpopulation of the Black Belt on the south side resulted in slums of intensely concentrated poverty. Called “the Ghetto” by insiders and outsiders alike, Bronzeville’s tenement buildings and kitchenettes were home to rodent infestation, rampant infectious diseases, high mortality rates, as well as most of Chicago’s African American population.⁶ The confinement of blacks to these living conditions was achieved primarily through a legal system of racially restrictive agreements and discriminatory lending practices that was bolstered by “a market strategy of steering black buyers and renters in black neighborhoods.”⁷ When these strategies did not succeed in containing the black population to the parameters determined by these racially restrictive policies, violence against blacks often ensued. Adding insult to injury, most black Chicagoans paid higher rents for this housing, which was clearly inferior to the housing of their white counterparts.⁸ The racist legal and real estate practices that defined

⁵ St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), 8.

⁶ Mary Pattillo, “Black Middle Class Neighborhoods,” *Annual Reviews* (2005): 308.

⁷ Pattillo, 309.

⁸ D. Bradford Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 18.

boundaries of the Black Belt locked the black population of early 20th century Chicago into overcrowded slum housing.

Despite the intense racial segregation confining this area, deteriorating housing, and unhealthy living conditions, Bronzeville flourished as a center of culture, business, politics, and life for Chicago's black community. During the height of Chicago's Jazz Age, Bronzeville and its nightclubs were central to the music scene. Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, and Bo Diddley all played the Bronzeville circuit at such iconic spots as the Regal Theater, the Palm Tavern, and the Parkway Ballroom. This neighborhood also played a significant role in the literature of the era as home to Gwendolyn Brooks, first African American recipient of the Pulitzer Prize, and noteworthy author Lorraine Hansberry.⁹ Residents of Black Metropolis through their music and literature defined the culture of early 20th century Black Chicago.

The neighborhood, called the "economic capital of Black America",¹⁰ fostered a number of entrepreneurs who opened retail shops, dance halls, restaurants, and many other businesses. The first black owned and operated bank and insurance company, for example, was open in Bronzeville by Jesse Binga in 1908. Publishing also flourished here. A number of black newspapers began in this era, the most notable of which are the *Chicago Bee* and the *Chicago Defender*. The magazine powerhouse, Johnson Publishing Company, producers of *Ebony* and *Jet*, was also based in Bronzeville. The flourishing business life of the Black Metropolis thrived in spite of the awful housing conditions and perhaps in some ways due to the restrictive legal and lending practices that maintained the borders of the Black Belt. Black businesses prospered in

⁹ Prairie Onion Cohousing, "Bronzeville History," Prairie Onion Cohousing, Sharing the Green Life, <http://www.prairieonioncohousing.org/bronzeville.html> (accessed September 24, 2009).

¹⁰ Michelle Boyd, "Reconstructing Bronzeville: Racial Nostalgia and Neighborhood Redevelopment," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 22 (2000): 110.

this environment where blacks had access to many markets and they did not have to compete with white operations. Whether or not this was the case, the economic legacy of Bronzeville has produced a modern conception that this neighborhood was independent of white society and control.¹¹ The businesses of early 20th century Bronzeville, therefore, illustrate the black community's sense of ownership of this neighborhood.

As the population of this neighborhood grew in between 1900 and the 1930, so did the parameters – both physically and politically. This slow and gradual expansion allowed for more and more political involvement of African Americans in the ward and city governments. Bronzeville then became the home of not only cultural icons and business entrepreneurs, but also politicians and political activist. In addition to the various city council members from the Black Metropolis, other political figures included Congressman Oscar Stanton De Priest, civil activist Ida B. Wells, and the first African American to head the Chicago Housing Authority, Robert Taylor.¹² Additionally, a number of politically engaged social agencies, such as The Urban League, the YWCA, and the YMCA, played significant roles in the development of Bronzeville's political identity.¹³

These elements of Bronzeville, the cultural, business, and political, all combine to create a dynamic community life. Even the contemporary identity of Bronzeville stems from the idea that residents had a unique sense of control over their lives, creativities, businesses, and politics during the early decades of the 20th century, the community's golden age.¹⁴ The reality of the community's self-sufficiency has perhaps been exaggerated by a sense of nostalgia, yet truth exists at the heart of the idea. This contemporary conception of Black Metropolis's heyday truly

¹¹ Boyd, 111.

¹² Derek Hyra, *The New Urban Renewal: The Economic Transformation of Harlem and Bronzeville,* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2008) 10.

¹³ Drake and Cayton, 392.

¹⁴ Boyd, 111.

frames the debate and community activism surrounding the contemporary Olympic Village debate in Bronzeville. This sense of nostalgia both creates a sense of pride in residents and mobilizes them to restore Bronzeville and at times, protect it.¹⁵ The way in which Bronzeville's holistic community is perceived contemporarily largely shapes how and why residents, organizers, and community groups responded explosively and skeptically to the proposal that placed the Olympic Village within their neighborhood.

As a "city within a city," Bronzeville provided black Chicagoans with a space and community to develop. This ownership is illustrated well by the existence of numerous churches throughout the neighborhood. Not only did residents worship in structures built to house their congregation, but they also often inhabited buildings used by previous religious denomination or founded "store-front churches," places of worship tucked into the urban business landscape. Also, Bronzeville was the center of social activity for Black Chicagoans, even non-residents of the Black Metropolis. The nightclubs, dance halls, and bars became the "third-place"¹⁶ for Black Chicago and allowed that element of Bronzeville life to thrive. Not only did Bronzeville encompass the cultural, economic, and political aspects of community, but it also foster the greater sense of Black Chicago life and identity.

The Beginning of Governmental Housing Policies

Near the end of the Great Depression a new era in Bronzeville's and Chicago's history began. The discriminatory real estate practices and government lending practices laid the groundwork in racially defined housing policies in the Black Belt. The segregation of blacks and

¹⁵ In a later section, the explanation and analysis of the "Mid-South Strategic Development Plan: Restoring Bronzeville" will support and elaborate on this idea.

¹⁶ Third-space refers to the additional space inhabited by people and associated with community building and identity. This third place is defined in reference to the home and workplace as the first and second places. This concept is detailed in Ray Oldenburg's book, The Great Good Place: cafes, coffee shops, community centers, beauty parlors, general stores, bars, hangouts, and how they get you through the day, published in 1989 by Paragon House.

whites in public housing projects began a new wave of policies that shaped Bronzeville's community. While the discriminatory legal and lending policies of this earlier period had defined the borders of the Black Belt, this new approach to housing policies and community development redefined the community. Beginning in the late 1930s, the public housing system altered the urban, cultural, economic, and political landscape of Bronzeville, yet maintained an environment of racial segregation and poverty. During the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, the policies of "urban renewal" seemed to be aimed at "Negro removal." In addition to Chicago's public housing system, redevelopment and land clearing for highways, universities, large commercial developments, and new residential neighborhoods also changed the community identity and environment.¹⁷ These redevelopments and the policies behind them changed the way Bronzeville residents lived and the way their community functioned.

The US Housing Act of 1937 began this new era in housing history and greatly governed the next thirty years of American public housing. This act followed in the footsteps of another New Deal policy. The 1933 National Industrial Recovery Act was the first significant public housing legislation and experimentation in the United States and allowed the Public Works Administration to conduct slum-clearing projects and to construct low-cost housing.¹⁸ The housing reformers behind the Housing Act of 1937 attempted to correct the mistakes of the NIRA and engage the half-century long debate surrounding the ideology, methods, and models of public housing. While one camp desired an antipoverty program that would rebuild slums to benefit the original residents, another argued for nonprofit building programs on unused plots of land that would benefit the working class. This tension was not resolved before the act passed in Congress, and a number of its flaws stem from this indecision. In addition to this tension,

¹⁷ Hyra, 3.

¹⁸ Hunt, 22.

another element of the act also weakened the act's ability to develop sustainable public housing projects. The act included a "market-failure ideology" that justified state intervention in the housing needs of the public. This ideology dictated that public housing was not meant to compete with higher-quality market housing, which therefore influenced the way housing authorities approached the costs and production of public housing in Chicago and the United States in general for the next thirty years.¹⁹

The US Housing Act of 1937 contained three core principles that characterized public housing across the nation during the 1940s, 50s, and 60s and still influence the way public housing is viewed today. First, the act defined the federal-local relationship that determined the implementation and continuation of these projects. Later the rapport between the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) and the federal entity would become problematic, despite this attempt to balance the control and decision-making. Next, the generous subsidies included in the law gave the CHA freedom in determining the policies, especially in terms of incorporating social goals. This element would later distinguish public housing from privately owned housing in detrimental ways. Lastly, the aforementioned "market failure ideology" of this act would also thwart the efforts of CHA, the Bronzeville community, and housing reformers to establish sustainable affordable housing options in the Black Metropolis.²⁰

Then mayor of Chicago Edward Kelly established the Chicago Housing Authority in 1937. During the first three decades of its existence in the 1940s, 50s and 60s, CHA was praised for its efficiency and good management. Headed by Elizabeth Wood and Robert Taylor, the CHA progressively engaged housing reform and eventually the rights of African Americans. Their housing policies aimed to replace the slums of both blacks and whites with quality housing

¹⁹ Hunt, 16.

²⁰ Hunt, 33-34.

in stable neighborhoods. Taylor, the aforementioned resident of Bronzeville and first African American head of CHA, in fact opposed the large, high-rise developments that were very much in vogue at the time. Despite the objection of Wood and Taylor, the city council voted to disregard many of their proposals and instead, initiated construction that followed the ill advised, nationally trends.²¹ The new construction plans included widespread slum clearance of Bronzeville and other neighborhoods mainly inhabited by Italian Americans and Polish Americans. The families displaced by these plans were relocated to new public housing projects, effectively creating a “second ghetto.”²² These high-rise developments were designed to be cost cutting, yet resulted in “shoddy construction, inadequate funding, and chronic mismanagement.”²³ These poorly constructed high-rises were often physically disconnected from the neighborhood and the grid-system streets, creating an urban landscape that concentrated poverty, separated it from other elements of the community, and was difficult to manage. Significantly, the physical structure inhibited the creation of a social structure. The absence of leadership and social networks in addition to the isolating architecture of the buildings rendered these developments very vulnerable to crime.²⁴ Wood and Taylor’s original plans to construct smaller housing projects within existing neighborhoods were replaced by the cost-effective and isolated concrete towers.

After years of debate and delays, the Ida B. Wells Homes opened in January 1941 between 37th and 39th street, Martin Luther King Drive and Cottage Grove. Covering forty-seven acres and costing almost \$9 million, this development was the first public housing project built in

²¹ Susan J. Popkin, Victoria E. Gwiasda, Lynn M. Olson, Dennis P. Rosenbaum, and Larry Buron, *The Hidden War: Crime and Tragedy of Public Housing in Chicago*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000) 11-13.

²² Arnold Hirsh, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago 1940-1960*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) 110.

²³ Margery Austin Turner, Susan J. Popkin, and Lynette Rawlings, *Public Housing and the Legacy of Segregation*, (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press, 2009) 3.

²⁴ Popkin et al, 12.

Bronzeville and made available to African Americans in Chicago. The 1,662 families who were lucky enough to move into “the Project” were “the envy of the whole South Side.”²⁵

Sociologists St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton interpreted this development as a way for families to achieve social and economic mobility, calling it the “mobility step to lower-middle class.” No one in the community, besides realtors, spoke up in opposition to this housing project. Rather, the residents of Bronzeville welcomed this development enthusiastically, marching in support of the Ida B. Wells Homes on dedication day of the project in 1941.²⁶ As the first government sponsored housing development in Bronzeville, it was regarded with optimism and hope. The policymakers also viewed the Ida B. Wells Homes as a victory in government policymaking that directly combated the poor living conditions of Black Chicagoans.

While residents of this housing project and the reformers behind it enthusiastically predicted this development would correct the failures of the slums, many unforeseen errors existed in the Ida B. Wells Homes. These two to three storey housing projects did not reproduce the flawed high-rise model; yet their organization did create similar problems of community isolation, removal from the street grid-system, and vulnerability to crime. Also, this project was significantly larger than the three previous housing projects of the early CHA. The Jane Addams Houses included 32 buildings for 1,027 families, The Julia C. Lanthrop Homes housed 426 families, and Trumbull Park Homes had units for 426 families.²⁷ These three smaller public housing developments catered almost exclusively to the white population and were located in the neighborhoods from which these residents had become displaced. All four projects simply

²⁵ Drake and Cayton, 660.

²⁶ Hirsh, 12.

²⁷ Encyclopedia of Chicago, “Chicago Housing Authority,” Chicago History Museum, The Newberry Library and Northwestern University’s Encyclopedia of Chicago, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/253.html> (accessed December 1, 2009)

moved the poor populations from the slums to the projects, while maintaining the color line of these racially defined neighborhoods. Not only did these first four public housing projects recreate the poverty of the slums that had been cleared for their construction, but they also renewed the racial segregation of Chicago neighborhoods and housing.

The color line maintenance was not accidental or veiled. Again, a federal policy, begun in the New Deal era, called the “Neighborhood Composition Rule,” prohibited federal government projects from altering the racial composition of the surrounding neighborhood. In other words, it dictated that tenants of a government development be of the same race as those in the immediate area.²⁸ Harold Ickes, former settlement house resident, NAACP leader, and Chicago native, disseminated this policy during his time as director of the housing division of the Public Works Administration (PWA).²⁹ While the “Neighborhood Composition Act” may have avoided disrupting the urban communities of existing neighborhoods, it also brought racial segregation into the following era of urban housing. This policy established the trend of progressive policy-making working within the confines of racial segregation.

The years following World War II brought major changes in Chicago’s public housing, including large developments for black veterans and more importantly, the U.S. Housing Act of 1949. Substantial federal funding came to Chicago and resulted in a dramatic increase in public housing on the South and West sides of the city, because white city council members by and large rejected plans for housing programs in their ward.³⁰ This political maneuvering resulted in the concentration of housing projects in Bronzeville, and yet the structure of the law had seemed to promise necessary decreases in racial segregation. Guidelines established in the Housing Act

²⁸ Encyclopedia of Chicago.

²⁹ Hirsch, 14.

³⁰ Encyclopedia of Chicago.

of 1949 provided “equitable treatment of the races and considerable care in relocating those displaced by slum clearance.”³¹ While these guidelines would have allowed African Americans to enter public housing units in more stable, white neighborhoods, the city council politics halted this progress.

The Beginning of the End: Public Housing’s Demise

The housing projects, constructed in this era, generally fit a few basic guidelines. On average much larger than the developments built in the 1940s, these buildings were in a “superblock” format. This organization destroyed the previous street grid that had existed and replaced it with grassy areas and large high-rise structures. Reaching fifteen to nineteen stories, these projects included on average 1,027 apartments, but ranged from 150 to 4,415 units. These buildings had a very plain, austere aesthetic in order to accomplish the lost-cost construction policy. These guidelines were very evident in the series of large projects constructed in Bronzeville along State Street. “The State Street Corridor” included two significant housing projects, Stateway Gardens and Robert Taylor Homes. Opened in 1958, Stateway Gardens included eight buildings and cost \$22 million. Accommodating approximately 3,000 people, this housing complex is a telling example of the prototypical Bronzeville public housing structure, which ultimately ended up ranking as the sixth poorest census tract in 1984.³² Robert Taylor Homes, on the other hand, illustrated clearly the mistakes design and construction made in Chicago public housing of his period.³³ This project also ran along the Dan Ryan Expressway, like the Stateway Gardens, creating a narrow strip of land dominated more or less exclusively by public housing. The Robert Taylor Homes were completed in 1962 and included a total of 4,321

³¹ Hirsh, 227.

³² Hunt, 261.

³³ This complex was ironically named about Robert Taylor, an African American activist and CHA board member, who eventually resigned from the board when the city council refused to approve potential construction of public housing that would induce racially integrated housing.

apartments, which fit into twenty-eight high-rise buildings of sixteen stories each. The housing complex was the largest public housing project in the United States. Each of these twenty-eight identical buildings was constructed in a U-shape in clusters of three buildings. The two mile long stretch of land which housed this complex was completely whipped clean of the street grid and created the “superblock” format, which eventually became overrun by violence and inaccessible to public services.³⁴ In an attempt to provide affordable housing that also maintained the racial segregation of the early twentieth century, the political maneuvering and the policies of 1950s and 1960s public housing dictated these flawed and inefficient guidelines. This high-rise design and organization housed was the basis for buildings that thousands of Chicagoans in cheaply constructed and isolating buildings.



Madden Park Homes

Photo by Annie Ruth Stubenfield from her collection of photos entitled “Hi-rise Living Chicago Housing Authority Style: The Ending of an Era in Bronzeville 1991-2005”

³⁴ D. Bradford Hunt, “What Went Wrong with Public Housing in Chicago?,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (2001): 2.



Robert Taylor Homes, photo from the CHA Image Gallery

As these constructions aged, they quickly deteriorated, both physically and socially. Given the cost-cutting mentality behind the construction of these public housing buildings, serious design flaws and lack of maintenance became evident. Additionally, the residents of

these housing projects started to speak up in protest. At the end of the 1960s, public housing began to change as a result of this physical and social deterioration. First, in 1968, the federal government stopped funding high-rise construction to build family housing. At this point, the CHA had already overseen the construction of 168 high-rises with 19,7000 apartments housing families.³⁵ By 1970, public housing tenants were also fully aware of the failure of these designs and voiced these concerns. In Bronzeville as well as communities across the nation, residents of public housing were demanding real control over their communities. While 40 percent of projects had active tenant councils by 1958, these groups were relatively ineffective and absolutely not consulted in constructing policy. The explosion of tenant organizations in the late 1960s also did not result in leverage over resources or input on housing policies, yet groups such as *Together One Community* and *Taylor Resident United*, formed in 1965 and 1966 respectively, organized many more tenants in efforts to form a tenants' union.³⁶ Despite the federal ban on high-rises and explosion of resident groups, the CHA did not reform its policies significantly in the 1970s and public housing residents continued to live in increasingly dangerous and dilapidating conditions.

One outlying example of activism during this era, however, did result in a monumental trial and eventual reform in CHA policy, yet not until the 1990s. *Gautreaux v. Chicago Housing Authority* began in 1966 as a suit Dorothy Gautreaux and other CHA residents brought against the CHA. This suit alleged that the CHA had deliberately segregated black families through tenant and site selection policies. This trial dragged out over thirty years and resulted in a number of innovative settlements. Since the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funded CHA, HUD was involved in one of the settlements, reached in

³⁵ Encyclopedia of Chicago.

³⁶ Hunt 214.

1976, which attempted to rectify the history of racial segregation by providing black residents of CHA public housing an opportunity to find housing in desegregated areas throughout Chicago.³⁷

This settlement resulted in the establishment of The Gautreaux Program, which aimed to accomplish the goals of the 1976 settlement through new construction and rent subsidies. This program ended in 1998, after having reached its target of placing 7,100 black families in affluent, white-majority suburbs.³⁸ This example of community activism turned legal process is often credited with beginning the desegregation of American public housing, yet its influence and results were not recreated in other examples of resident activism in Bronzeville during this era.

Despite the gains made by the Gautreaux Program in deconstructing the racial segregation of Chicago public housing, this program is an example of the “messy attempts” to remedy public housing during the 1970s and 1980s. Bronzeville contained at this time the highest concentration of public housing in the United States and some of the poorest areas in the country. In addition to this poverty, the physical conditions of the Bronzeville projects continued to deteriorate and foster gang violence. By setting the “superblocks” outside of the street grid-system, police officers were unable to patrol efficiently and even other public services, such as the postal service, were unable to reach these residents because of the overwhelming violence. For example, in 1988, the police district that included Stateway Gardens and Robert Taylor Homes had sixty-seven homicides, by far the highest in the city. By the early 1980s, Bronzeville projects were suffering from these problems across the board. The Ida B. Wells Homes, the Clarence Darrow Home Project, and the Madden Park Homes Project were all experiencing

³⁷ Encyclopedia of Chicago.

³⁸ Hunt, 244-249.

significant deterioration of the facilities and a loss of social safety that are characteristic of public housing in this era.³⁹



Clarence Darrow Homes, photo by Annie Ruth Stubenfield from her collection of photos entitled “Hi-rise Living Chicago Housing Authority Style: The Ending of an Era in Bronzeville 1991-2005”

The 1990s was a turbulent decade of change in the CHA, involving power struggles, demolition, and housing project reform. Given the numerous problems in the structures, organization, and policies of the contemporary projects as well as the institutional cronyism of the CHA, HUD took over the CHA in 1996. Nationally at this time, HUD introduced innovative policy change with its basis in high-rise demolition, which resulted in extensive high-rise leveling in Chicago beginning in 1996 and 1997. CHA programs before the HUD takeover, including Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE VI) and the Mid-South

³⁹ Hunt, 175-176.

Strategic Development Plan, as well as the CHA Plan for Transformation, which marked the reclamation of the CHA, beginning in 2000. This new era of policymaking emphasized the role of mixed-income housing and community input.

II. Development and Re-Development Plans

The Changing Direction of Government Policy

The detailed policy plans that were developed in the 1990s to overhaul not only the structure of public housing, but also the image explain the new direction housing took in Bronzeville. While the policies of the earlier periods largely affected the debate surrounding the Olympic Village of the Chicago 2016 Olympic bid, these later policies directly defined the plan, rhetoric, and philosophy behind the Village. The housing policies and context beginning in the early twentieth century and leading up to the demolition of the public housing high rises characterize the discussion and perception of Chicago housing; yet the contemporary policies, such as the Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE VI), the Mid-South Strategic Development Plan, and the Plan for Transformation, when combined with the community activism of Bronzeville, determine how and why the Olympic organizers constructed the plan they did. Central to this new policymaking approach is the idea of the mix-income housing. Also, unlike the previous periods, residents' input influenced public housing construction and management. Lastly, the nostalgic collective memory of Bronzeville's heyday took on a new importance in these policies. The analysis of each of these policies will reveal the approach taken by the Olympic planners and why this approach was necessary.

HOPE VI was an initiative taken on by HUD nationally, but it had specific implications for Chicago and Bronzeville, in particular. Begun in 1992 and put into law in 1995, this program was implemented in order to revitalize the least successful public housing projects and turn them into mixed-income housing developments. As the recipient of six HOPE VI revitalization grants, the CHA implemented this program as a city-wide system to clear public housing as is and replace it with new organizational methods of housing. Housing projects in Bronzeville,

such as Robert Taylor Homes, Ida B. Wells Homes, Wells Extension, Madden Park Homes, Clarence and Darrow Homes have all been targets of HOPE VI grants for demolition, revitalization, or both. New developments from these grants include a mix of public housing, affordable rentals, and market rate rentals, in addition to a number of units for sale within each income tier of housing.⁴⁰ This specific implementation of HOPE VI in Bronzeville was central in changing the direction of public housing of the neighborhood, as well as redefining redevelopment nationally.



Oakwood Shores, left and below, now stands where many structures of the Clarence Darrow Homes and the Madden Park Homes once were. Photos from CHA Image Gallery



⁴⁰ Diane K. Levy and Megan Gallagher, "Hope VI and Neighborhood Revitalization Final Report," *The Urban Institute Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center* (2006): 1.

HOPE VI, as implemented in Bronzeville, abandoned the design and organization of the failed high-rises and re-inserted public housing into the urban landscape. “New Urbanism,” a guiding urban planning philosophy of HOPE VI, dictates that housing developments must be dense, pedestrian friendly, and transit-accessible, meaning that the street grid replaced the previous “superblock” format. Also, the form of housing differs in that lower-rise duplexes and row houses are preferred to large apartment buildings. “Chicago-style townhouses and detached single-family houses on small blocks” have become the new design proposals of the State Street Corridor.⁴¹ In addition to being mixed-income developments, this style of organization also emphasizes being “mixed-use,” meaning that retail, residential, schools, and workplaces are all meant to be a part of this design. Redevelopments of Robert Taylor Homes, for example, utilized its proximity to public transit, schools, churches, community organization, the Chicago downtown, and common places of employment in the organization prescribed by HOPE VI. By funding the demolition of failed housing projects and the construction of new ones throughout the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, HOPE VI and its design guidelines replaced high-rise with lower-rise, “superblocks” with street grids, concentrated poverty with mixed-income, and urban isolation with mixed-use.

In addition to its organizational changes, HOPE VI also implemented the use of the “Housing Choice Voucher,” which allows families to rent housing in the private market with a rent subsidy. Made available to residents who had to leave public housing because of demolition, these were meant to produce at least two different scenarios for public housing residents who had previously had been limited to living in low-income areas. First, it allows

⁴¹ New Urban News, “HOPE VI Funds New Urban Neighborhoods,” *New Urban News: The Source for New Urbanism, Smart Growth, and Walkable Communities*, <<http://www.newurbannews.com/hopeVI.html>> (accessed December 10, 2009).

residents to move out of areas of concentrated poverty, poor schools, gang violence, and failing local economy – even if just for a short period while construction of new developments is finished. Second, the vouchers remove residents more permanently from communities of welfare, social problems, and problematic work ethic. Either way, the thought process behind these vouchers suggested that by removing tenants from the “bad influences” that had been fostered in public housing, they would be able to relocate to new communities and break their cycle of poverty.⁴² The Housing Choice Vouchers, by providing previous public housing residents with subsidies for market-rate housing, aimed to remove tenants from isolating housing developments and the detrimental influences of public housing communities.

Despite the innovative organization and use of vouchers, many see HOPE VI as a failing plan. Although the program has encouraged and enabled the CHA to clear poorly utilized projects and spur new housing development, critics argue that HOPE VI has destroyed more than it can construct, meaning that the number of new developments will not match the number of previous units. Decreasing the amount of affordable housing in Bronzeville will only solidify the displacement of residents who moved out when the public housing high rises were torn down. Some interpret this unequal redevelopment as proof that this program was not implemented to benefit those in most need. HOPE VI is therefore viewed by a number of critics as a way to “accommodate a growing interest in urban living among white suburbanites.”⁴³ New mixed-income housing developments would replace the poor with upper-income constituents and permanently displace the previous public housing residents. Similar critiques appeared in the debate surrounding the Olympic Village, because it contributes to this effort of mixed-income developments and to some critics, appears to be another example of the city manipulating poor

⁴² Sudhir Venkatesh and Isil Celimli, “Tearing Down The Community,” *National Housing Institute: Shelterforce Online* 138 (2004): 4.

⁴³ Venkatesh and Celimli, 3.

neighborhoods for its benefit and not that of the residents. These critiques highlight a large hole in the HOPE VI program as well as the Olympic Village's ability to redevelop Bronzeville.

Beginning in 2000, the "Plan for Transformation" marked the CHA's return to power under certain agreements with HUD. Called a "Moving To Work Agreement," HUD continued to oversee this new initiative, yet relinquished primary control for the first time since the takeover in 1996. The goals of this ambitious overhaul of Chicago public housing include 25,000 units of housing to be renovated or built new, 7,697 family units in mixed-income developments, 2,543 rehabilitated units in various sites, and more than 5,000 units in "traditional" public housing.⁴⁴ At the heart of this plan is the idea that communities will be strengthened by "integrating public housing and its leaseholders into the larger social, economic, and physical fabric of Chicago." This idea greatly resembles HOPE VI in that it emphasizes the positive influence of mixed-income housing on public housing residents and of re-integrating the street grid and small city-block into the public housing design. In many ways, the Plan for Transformation picks up where HOPE VI leaves off, by offering supportive services, like job training, job placement, substance abuse treatment, and day care among others, to tenants. Many of these developments, instead of being run single-handedly by the CHA, are managed by private professional property management firms. Additionally, this plan details the "streamlining" of the CHA in the wake of the takeover caused by mismanagement and corruption within this organization.⁴⁵

Many criticisms of the Plan for Transformation attack the assumptions made about the mixed-income housing, private management, and the future of these developments. Even called patronizing, critics question the philosophy behind mixed-income housing or the moralizing

⁴⁴ Chicago Housing Authority, "The Plan for Transformation," *Chicago Housing Authority Official Website*, <http://www.thecha.org/pages/the_plan_for_transformation/22.php> (accessed November 8, 2009).

⁴⁵ Chicago Housing Authority, <http://www.thecha.org/pages/the_plan_for_transformation/22.php>.

power of “responsible leaseholders” on public housing residents. Next, the assumption that private developers will be able to manage these developments with more efficiency than the CHA also is problematic. This concept trusts market-forces to avoid economic and racial re-segregation. Lastly, the plan bases its future on the durability of the “mix of incomes” within the development. These assumptions highlight holes in the Plan for Transformation and present possible failures for this latest CHA policy.⁴⁶

These policies lay out the new path for government participation in public housing, placing a large emphasis on mixed-income, mixed-use, private development, and sustainable projects. During many early announcements of these two government plans, policymakers called the superblocks of high-rises “the public housing developments of the past.”⁴⁷ Contemporary urban planners are attempting to throw out these old designs and policies, while also learning from their mistakes. As we will see in later sections, the planners of the Olympic Village latched on to many of these urban planning trends in attempts to create a bid that would not only be accepted by the IOC, but also by the neighborhood of Bronzeville.

The Community Makes Its Voice Heard

The Mid-South Strategic Development Plan: Restoring Bronzeville, beginning in 1993, focused exclusively on the Bronzeville area and improving the quality of life for the residents living there. This plan, unlike HOPE VI, offered suggestions based on the specific history, economic environment, and social community of the Black Metropolis. Most notably, “the Plan” highlights the historical significance and utilizes the ideas of nostalgic memory surrounding Bronzeville’s early years. Its goals of improving and enhancing “the quality of life for residents of the Mid-South area” and developing “clear cut guidelines for future developments from the

⁴⁶ Hunt, 294-295.

⁴⁷ Hunt, 286.

community perspective” are based in “restoring Bronzeville” to its previous glory.⁴⁸ The proposed economic development hinges on the creation of a tourism industry in Bronzeville surrounding Black history and culture, such as the jazz and blues heritage in the neighborhood.⁴⁹ The Plan identifies Bronzeville as the center of Black Chicago life and builds its development around that nostalgic collective identity.

The Plan’s focus on the historic identity and greatness of Bronzeville correlates with its emphasis on public input in the development and implementation of the Plan. Those who lived in the study area of the Plan were consulted throughout the Mid-South Planning Process, in order to make the benefits of the Plan available to the contemporary residents and not just the future generations. From 1991 to 1993, the Mid-South Planning Group hired someone to collect community input by holding meetings with residents and discussing which problems were most egregious in their lives.⁵⁰ These meetings led to the creation of five committees, focusing on health and safety, housing, parks and recreation, transportation, and economic development. Other meetings were also held to publicize their actions and events, solicit additional input, and enlist volunteers. This community-based strategy and the aforementioned emphasis on Bronzeville’s history establish the contemporary residents of the Black Metropolis as the “owners” of this neighborhood.

Like HOPE VI, the Mid-South Strategic Development Plan emphasized the importance of many public amenities, such as retail establishments, community services, and transportation opportunities, all organized around the residential aspect of the neighborhood. Additionally, population density is central to the successful implementation and long-term goals of the Plan.

⁴⁸ Wendell Campbell Associates, “Mid-South Strategic Development Plan: Restoring Bronzeville,” Chicago: Wendell Campbell Associates, Inc (1993): 1.

⁴⁹ “Mid-South Strategic Development Plan: Restoring Bronzeville,” 4.

⁵⁰ Michelle Boyd, “Defensive Development: The Role of Racial Conflict in Gentrification,” *Urban Affairs Review* 43 (2008): 13.

Lastly, the Plan resembles HOPE VI in the importance placed on job opportunities being available and increased through this development. Yet unlike HOPE VI, the history and character of the Black Belt as well as not displacing current residents are explicitly stated as foundational assumptions in producing development in Bronzeville. While the later mention of “an adequate supply of a wide variety of housing alternatives to accommodate a broad range of income levels and lifestyles” evokes the mixed-income initiative, the Plan received less criticism because of its central goal of keeping residents in their neighborhood.⁵¹

The most significant different between HOPE VI and the Mid-South Strategic Development Plan is the impetus behind these programs and organizers. Actually in response to the pressures of the outside forces, such as federal government, city elites, and CHA developers, community organizations of the Black Belt joined together and constructed this plan. First called the “South Side Partnership,” this group of community organizations approached the university in the immediate area, Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT), to collaborate on this plan, in order to gain support and smooth over previous hostility. Eventually calling themselves “The Mid-South Planning Group” or more simply “Mid-South,” they even partnered with the City of Chicago’s Planning Department in order to establish a sense of control in the revitalization of the neighborhood. By June of 1990, Mid-South had been formed and their resulting plan, while resembling other contemporary federal programs, allowed the residents to claim ownership of their neighborhood.

One such example of the community reclaiming control of their neighborhood and its revitalization is the “the Gateway Project,” a public art program along Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive between 24th and 35th Streets. Through collaboration with the Chicago Public Art Program

⁵¹ “Mid-South Strategic Development Plan: Restoring Bronzeville,” 3.

in 1994, public art works were selected by community members and placed along this prominent thoroughfare. Significantly, every work celebrates Bronzeville, through its beginning in the Great Northern Migration, its influential residents throughout the decades, and its particular place in Black Chicago history. While public art is present in many corners of Chicago, this was an ambitious and unprecedented attempt by community and city leaders to integrate the community in determining the artistic elements of the urban landscape.⁵²

Following the 1990s and the growing influence of residents' input, Bronzeville witnessed an explosion of community participation, through scholarship, commerce, and activism. Many groups followed the example of Mid-South and initiated collaboration with municipal and private entities, yet others cultivated an activist identity. Occurring at the same time as the CHA's Plan for Transformation, these groups have demanded a voice in the new housing developments. These are the groups who responded in various forms to Chicago 2016's plans to place the Olympic Village in Bronzeville. These groups, while focusing on various issues, all rally around the concept of the community reclaiming control of the Black Metropolis.

The Bronzeville Historical Society, founded in 1999 by "a small group of enthusiastic Black family researchers," took on the challenge of achieving, documenting, and preserving the histories of families moving to the South Side throughout the twentieth century. With their focus being on those who immigrated to and lived in Bronzeville, they collect records of notable African Americans who have contributed to the neighborhood, Chicago, or the nation. Primarily though, it serves as a resource to the community in locating family histories, offering education on how to research family history, publishing genealogical and historical research materials, and providing a forum in which residents can exchange methods and results. While the larger history

⁵² "A Guide to the Public Art of Bronzeville," Chicago: *Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs*, 1996.

of Bronzeville is of definite interest, the historical society has taken a special role as the family archivist and researcher of the Black Belt.⁵³

Instead of focusing on the past of Bronzeville, other groups, ranging from businesses to citizen activists, also evolved during these early years of the CHA's Plan for Transformation. A group called the *Bronzeville Area Residents' and Commerce Council* (BARCC) is involved with not only fostering community, but also with encouraging businesses to thrive in the neighborhood. Founded in 2004, the BARCC now has committees focusing on Safety and Security, Commercial Development, and Condominium Guidance. An additional group, *The Renaissance Collaborative, Inc.*, has its beginnings in four churches of the neighborhoods and continues now as a group devoted to addressing the housing issues of the community's low- and moderate-income residents. The TRC incorporated in 1992, yet did not open its doors at its current location until 2000, where they offer facilities assistance in nutrition, mental and physical health, employment education and training, and employment services among others. Another housing-based group, Housing Bronzeville, also deals with the neighborhood's needs and politics of housing. A voice in the debate surrounding the Olympic Village, this group not only offers aid to residents, but also advocates within Chicago's political system. While approaching it from various angles, these groups all embrace the trend in community reclamation occurring in Bronzeville.

⁵³ Bronzeville Historical Society Official Website, <<http://www.bronzevillehistoricalsociety.com/>> (accessed November 8, 2009).

III. The Olympic Village

Olympic Villages, as the communal housing center of the Olympic athletes during the Games, are at the heart of modern Olympic bids. Not only are the Villages analyzed as a hub of international and intercultural exchange to be used during the Games, but the International Olympic Committee (IOC) also considers this element of the Olympic Movement in the grander scheme of long-term city planning. Since the mid-nineties, the IOC has made it clear that “Olympic Villages are best planned when thinking about the long term urbanistic needs of each city.”⁵⁴ While Olympic planners aim to convert the Villages from temporary residences for athletes into integrated urban districts that fit into the urban and social framework of the existing neighborhood, this transformation is not always as successful as expected.⁵⁵ Two central elements of Olympic Villages factor into this difficulty of transformation. First, the architectural and physical organization of the Village must serve both temporary and long-term residents. In Bronzeville, the organizational challenge of the Olympic Village is complicated by the area’s legacy of public housing. The organizational failure of public housing in the Black Belt, specifically its separation from the street-grid, the austere architecture of the high-rises, and cost-cutting construction techniques, largely contributed to the malfunction of previous housing projects. Second, a social framework is necessary in incorporating the new district into the existing neighborhood. As the previous organizational failure of public housing in Bronzeville also demonstrates, a poorly organized development can inhibit this necessary social identity and community.⁵⁶ Given Bronzeville’s housing history, the Black Belt seems predisposed to increase

⁵⁴ International Olympic Committee, “International Symposium on Olympic Villages, Hundred Years of Urban Planning and Shared Experiences: Conclusions and recommendations,” *Documents of the Museum* (Barcelona: Olympic Studies Centre, 1997).

⁵⁵ Sergi Valera and Joan Guàrdia, “Urban Social identity and Sustainability, Barcelona’s Olympic Village,” *Environment and Behavior* 34 (2002): 56-57.

⁵⁶ Valera and Guàrdia, 58.

the difficulty in this transition from temporary residence of Olympic athletes to long-term urban residential district.

The Olympic Village Plan

The Chicago 2016 planners aimed to confront this difficulty through their design and layout of the Olympic Village. The Village plan included twenty-one residential buildings of approximately twelve stories. Other public-space elements supplemented the residential core of the Village plan. The “Residential Zone,” “Lake Promenade,” and the “Olympic Village Plaza” are organized around and linked by the “Main Street.” Planned in a street-grid that diagonally intersected Martin Luther King Drive and 31st Street, the Village would have recreated the urban landscape of the surrounding neighborhood streets. The Lake Promenade was planned to include paths, a pool, and a performance theater. The Olympic Village Plaza would have contained outdoor cafes, cultural establishments, shops and services – including everything from a hair salon and post office to a dry cleaner and tourism agency.⁵⁷ Bronzeville’s location also offered significant benefits for its use during the Games and in their general bid. Situated “in the heart of the city,” Bronzeville’s proximity to other proposed venues contributed to its choice as the location of the Olympic Village. The proposed Village would have put ninety percent of the athletes within fifteen minutes of their competition venues and training facilities.⁵⁸ The Village planners aimed to house the maximum number of athletes and the convenience of the facility for the athletes, while still being able to create a community and urban structure that could flourish after the Games.

⁵⁷ Chicago 2016, “Chicago 2016: Candidate City, Ville Candidate,” (Chicago: Chicago 2016, 2009) 191.

⁵⁸ Chicago 2016, “Chicago 2016: Candidate City, Ville Candidate,” 103.

While some aspects of the Olympic Village design and layout avoided the mistakes of previous housing developments in Bronzeville, others followed the ill-formed plans of prior housing projects. The organizers of the bid aimed to overcome both the difficulties of post-Olympic transformation and Bronzeville's legacy of physical and social organizational failure with their Olympic Village proposal. Significantly, the proposed Village's organization seems to directly confront previous problems of isolating structures outside of the street-grid and lack of public spaces. The Village plan incorporated the street-grid; the establishment of a "Chicago-style" block layout corrects the prior mistakes of the Robert Taylor Homes or the Clarence Darrow Homes, which separated residents from municipal services and the neighborhood at large.⁵⁹ These housing projects also lacked public spaces that could allow residents to connect with their neighbors and form a social network within the housing project. The Village plan included such necessary public spaces to not only accommodate the athletes, but also to correct for previous urban planning errors.

Despite these positive elements of the proposal, the Village planners did not take into account all mistakes of the past. The size and volume of these twenty-one residential buildings recreate the isolating organization of the high-rise model, accommodating 16,000 athletes. Additionally, the twelve storey buildings of the Residential Zone violate the contemporary CHA guidelines that suggest the construction of residences comprised of 6 stories or less.⁶⁰ Additionally, the Village plan includes public spaces, which are very central to the creation of a social framework for this development after the Games; yet, the future of such elements as the Olympic Village Plaza and the Lake Promenade remains unclear. While the post-Olympic use of the Village is widely discussed throughout the bid book, the application of these public spaces is

⁵⁹ Landmark Illinois, "Alternative Olympic Village Plan Fact Sheet," *Press Release*, 13 August 2009.

⁶⁰ D. Bradford Hunt and Robert Lau, "Understanding the Demise and Transformation of Chicago's High-Rise Social Housing," *Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat Journal 8th World Congress* (2008): 6-10.

not detailed in the Chicago 2016 materials. The development market and popularity of these venues would, of course, play a large role in their post-Olympic use, yet the lack of a contingency plan within the Chicago 2016 proposal for the public spaces left a significant hole in the future of the Village. Whereas the organizers of Chicago 2016 incorporated lessons learned from previous CHA errors, the design and layout resembled in many ways previous flawed housing in Bronzeville.

The Post-Olympic Village in Bronzeville

The post-Olympic use plans that appear throughout the Chicago 2016 materials emphasize that the structure would become a mixed-income housing development, offering an abundant amount of affordable housing in Bronzeville. The residential buildings, as well as the other amenities, would transition from serving the international Olympic community to becoming a part of the local Bronzeville community. Many of these structures are built in order to remain after the Olympics, whereas many of the elements of the Olympic Village Plaza would have been temporary and therefore this land would have been available for redevelopment. This post-Olympic redevelopment could have specialized the Olympic Village Plaza for the neighborhood, through its selection of retail, restaurants, and cultural establishments. Based upon the philosophy of contemporary mixed-income housing and mixed-use developments and placed on the Near-South Side of Chicago in Bronzeville, the plan claimed to align “with the city’s long-term plans for this neighborhood.”⁶¹

The Village planners, in an effort to bolster the bid, bought the land for the proposed Village and began demolition of the previous structures of the Michael Reese Hospital campus. In a press release on July 2, 2009, Chicago 2016 announced they had completed the purchase of

⁶¹ “Chicago 2016: Candidate City, Vill Candidate, 203.

the proposed site for the Olympic Village. The purchase strategically reinforced their intentions to develop this land regardless of the bid's success. The purchase was organized so that the City of Chicago will not be required to make any payments to the seller for five years or to pay the full purchase price for fifteen years. The rights to this land will be sold to private developers who will proceed with construction and manage the development after the Games. This strategy allows Chicago 2016 and the city to avoid the critique that taxpayers' money was or will be the primary capital of this purchase. Primarily though, in the context of the post-Olympic use, this purchase strategy illustrates the emphasis placed on private management of developments in this new wave of housing projects.

The emphasis the Chicago 2016 planners placed on the post-Olympic use of the Village in the bid demonstrates that this structure was being pitched as a housing development that would fit into the contemporary trends of urban planning and housing. Not only did the Village proposal include an emphasis on the New Urbanism concepts of mixed-income, mixed-use, and amenity accessibility, but it also engaged the CHA's method of using private professional developers to construct and manage the development, while providing clear, precise, and even strict guidelines for the structures. The structures themselves embrace the new design and organization of the new direction of public housing, while also committing many mistakes of 1940s-1960s housing projects. In this way, the structures reflect the tension between the Village's identity as an Olympic residence and housing project. Its purpose would have been to house thousands of international athletes efficiently, and then transition into the more personalized housing project design of the twenty-first century. The very rhetoric of the bid book aimed to evoke the missions of HUD's HOPE VI and the CHA's Plan for Transformation so clearly that it claimed to be "aligned" with these policies in their future plans for Bronzeville.

Significantly, this development would not have received federal subsidies, unlike the CHA projects, which are largely funded and overseen by HUD. In this way, the Olympic Village design diverges from the CHA's Plan for Transformation.

While the bid overall followed the new model of HUD and CHA's housing developments, it did not initially incorporate the growing influence of community activism and resident involvement in the proposal. Many inside and outside of Bronzeville did not share Chicago 2016's vision for the Olympic Village in Bronzeville. Some resident groups voiced their opposition loudly, while others recognized this opportunity for political bargaining. Even other groups saw this as a positive development, yet demanded their needs be as important as the athletes in designing and implementing the Village. The resulting debate essentially sparked up because the Olympic Village was yet another example of this new housing project policy wave in Bronzeville that, at first, did not allow residents to influence the plans. While Chicago 2016 constructed a plan for the Olympic Village that detailed its post-Olympic application and desired contribution to Bronzeville, the proposal centers on its convenience for athletes and proximity to the other venues. Not only does it make a number of the same mistakes of previous housing project failures, but also it continues the legacy of problematic housing in Bronzeville, especially in its initial exclusion of resident input. Given the recently gained agency and influence of community groups, the support of the active Bronzeville community was as essential to the bid as incorporating the new direction of urban planning policy.

IV. The Olympic Debate

What began as simply an idea quietly talked about in powerful circle of Chicago politics eventually exploded into a public discussion that reached every corner of the city. Just the thought of Chicago as the host city of the 2016 Olympic Games evoked varying and polarizing reactions from Chicago's almost three million residents. The debate that ensued concerned the city and the Olympic bid at large, while another element of this public discussion pertained exclusively to Bronzeville and the Olympic Village. In both cases, Chicago 2016 approached the public debate with precise public relation campaigns and agreements. Beginning even before the official announcement of Chicago's Olympic bid for the 2016 Summer Olympics on May 16, 2007 and continuing through the October 2, 2009 IOC decision, Chicago residents, city officials, and representatives of the Chicago Olympic Committee took part in the city-wide debate around the Chicago 2016 Olympic bid, voicing their commentary on the use of tax payers' money, the status of Chicago's public transit, the long term use of Olympic constructions, and many other issues central to Chicago's Olympic future.

The public commentary on the bid as well as the reactions of Chicago 2016 illustrate the contemporary role of the public in urban development and city planning proposals on the macro level of the Olympic Games and the micro level of the Olympic Village. Additionally, this debate explicitly demonstrates that the Olympic Village inherited many points of contention, which developed throughout Bronzeville's housing history and the form of debate, which involved community leaders and activists calling for acknowledgment of public input, transparency of operations, and collaborative efforts in urban development. Ultimately, the involvement of community activism, either as support, opposition, or other forms of participation, shaped the Chicago Olympic debate just as Bronzeville's housing history shaped

the Olympic Village proposal. The Olympic bid, the housing legacy of Bronzeville, the development of community activism, and the changing waves of Chicago housing policy directly collided in this citywide debate. Just like other elements of the contemporary wave of housing and urban planning policy, the public debate focused upon the citizens' demand that the Chicago political powers recognize and incorporate public input.

The Key Players of the Chicago Olympic Debate

As the Olympic debate consumed the Windy City, Chicagoans from the political, cultural, activist and media spheres joined the citywide discussion. In a city notorious for its “pay to play” and machine-style politics, citizens reacted in a number of ways. Some disengaged and disinterestedly prepared for the Olympic Games or an Olympic loss, while others recognized the historical significance of the moment and entered the public debate. The elite and politically powerful of Chicago positioned themselves at the center of the Olympic proponents, while Chicagoans of various other positions engaged the debate at many entry points. Some citizens simply attempted to keep the Olympic Games out of Chicago, while others recognized the opportunity to use this media attention and debate to their advantage. Significantly, a number of community leaders and activists seized the opportunity to politically bargain within the debate, making the issues of their community known to the entire city and even world as Chicago sat in the Olympic spot light. Throughout the development of this public forum, Chicago media played a crucial role in providing an outlet for public opinion and acted as a resource in communicating facts, opinions, objections, support, proposals, and counter-proposals. Together the political powers, the organized citizenry, and the Chicago media combined to create a public dialogue on Chicago as an Olympic candidate city.

Chicago's Olympic dreams rested firmly in the hands of Mayor Richard M. Daley, mayor of Chicago since 1989. Committing himself wholeheartedly to the Olympic bid, Mayor Daley directly oversaw many aspects of the planning and political maneuvering. His dedication to the bid, while charging it with his political clout, power, and connections, also tainted the operation of the bid with his reputation of machine-style politics. Mayor Daley was able to garner the support of President Barack Obama, Michelle Obama, Hilary Clinton, and Oprah Winfrey to name but a few of the influential Olympic advocates. However, many Chicagoans, frustrated with the "Daley machine," saw the Olympic bid as an extension of the Mayor's office and reacted skeptically to the various proposals of the bid. The Olympic debate, therefore, was not simply a product of Chicago 2016's proposals combined with Chicago history and culture; it was greatly shaped by the legacy of the Mayor Daley and the public opinion of his administration.

In addition to the figures of Chicago politics who are often at the center of citywide public discussions, the Olympic debate featured another group, Chicago 2016, 501(c)(3) organization developing the Olympic bid. Chicago 2016's mission statement describes itself a "corporation whose mission is to seek the privilege of hosting the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Chicago. The committee's board consists of business, civic, athletic, cultural and academic leaders representing Chicago and the surrounding Midwest region." Often referred to as Chicago 2016 or the Chicago Olympic Committee, this organization worked very closely with Mayor Richard Daley as well as other city entities, such as the Chicago Parks District, the Chicago Transit Authority, and the Chicago Plan Commission among others. Chicago 2016 produced the bid books for the USOC and IOC decisions and developed all of the proposals, which comprised those Olympic documents.

Beginning as early as June 2007, Chicago 2016 Chairman and CEO, Patrick Ryan began building his team and announcing various appointments, which eventually included Arnold Randall who served as Director of Neighborhood Legacies for Chicago 2016. This position of the Olympic bid team acted as a “liaison between Chicago 2016 and the communities around Chicagoland in ensuring the appropriate Games legacies and development.”⁶² Previously, Randall served as Commissioner of the Department of Planning and Development, “overseeing the city's residential, commercial and industrial economic development strategies,” and prior to that position, he served as the Mayor's Deputy Chief of Staff for Economic Development. As Director of Neighborhood Legacies, Randall communicated often and well with many neighborhood organizations; and yet, not only because of Chicago 2016’s close ties with City Hall but also because of his personal experience working directly under Mayor Daley, community leaders indicated that his allegiance to the bid and the city overrode his position’s commitment to Chicago neighborhoods.⁶³ While Randall and Chicago 2016’s dedication to Chicago neighbors was questioned and debated, the position of Director of Neighborhood Legacies importantly demonstrated Chicago 2016’s recognition of the need to communicate with Chicago neighborhoods about the Olympic bid process and proposals and acknowledgment of the need to recognize the organized power of community and neighborhood groups.

The organized public who took part in the Olympic debate took every form of stark opposition, collaborative partnerships, political alliances, collective bargaining, and everything in between. A few organizations especially made their voice heard in the Olympic debate. On their website, No Games Chicago called itself a “a diverse group of citizens who have come together from across Chicago to oppose the city’s bid for the 2016 Olympics.” No Games

⁶² Chicago 2016, “Chicago 2016 announces new additions to bid leadership team,” *Press Release*, February 6 2009.

⁶³ Annie Ruth Stubenfield. Personal Interview, March 4, 2010. and Dhyia Thompson. Personal Interview. 4 March 2010.

Chicago did not approve of the Olympics in any form coming to Chicago and they made this opposition heard through protests, including a large one across from Daley Plaza on October 2, 2009, the gathering site of Chicago 2016 supporters for the announcement of the IOC decision. Another group, Southsiders Organizing for Unity and Liberation (SOUL) is a community organization serving the neighborhoods of Chicago's South Side and addressing issues ranging from public education and health care to public transit and land use. SOUL, through their Gold Line proposal engaged Chicago 2016 and used the debate to push their agenda of public transit improvements for the South Side. Another community organization, Housing Bronzeville, that concentrates itself on developing, maintaining, and supporting affordable home ownership in Bronzeville and the surrounding neighborhoods, entered the Olympic debate in a similar way as SOUL. Housing Bronzeville presented Mayor Daley with a proposal that demanded that affordable housing be an element of the bid in a more substantial way than proposed by Chicago 2016. In order to voice their concerns about the Olympics and its proposed effect on Bronzeville, this group communicated relatively frequently with city officials and Chicago 2016 representatives and even met with IOC representatives when they visited Chicago in April 2009. Many other groups of organized citizens were of course part of the Olympic debate, yet these examples offer insight to the approaches the public took to engaging city officials, Chicago 2016, and the debate, at large.

Chicago media, both widely-distributed and neighborhood-based, played an essential role in the citywide public discussion through the presentation of the information and opinions, which ultimately formed the Chicago Olympic debate. Significantly, newspapers, radio, and other media outlets served two different roles within the debate. First, the press reported the basic facts of the plan as well as the historical context involved in the Olympic proposals; and second,

the media was an outlet of various opinions, both supportive and oppositional. Each publication differed in its ratio of information and opinion, while also varying on the extent to which articles would contain both informational and opinion-based content. Often, neighborhood newspapers and specific city-wide publications, such as the *Chicago Journal* and *Chicago Reader*, offered large articles of public opinion from Chicagoans, as either community leaders or average citizens, whereas newspapers, such as *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Sun-Times*, offered more informational reporting. Essentially, both aspects were central to the formation and development of the Olympic debate.

The landscape of the Chicago Olympic debate shifted and morphed in between May 2007 and October 2009 largely because of the aforementioned key players, from Mayor Daley and Pat Ryan to the members of No Games Chicago and Housing Bronzeville. Just as the influence and actions of these key players determined the debate, as did their reputation and previous experiences, not unlike the century of housing debates in Bronzeville. Importantly, as demonstrated by the media coverage, organized groups of citizens and community leaders had a significant voice in shaping and affecting the public forum of the Olympic debate and the Olympic Village debate.

Chicago Debates the Olympics

Even before Chicago was chosen by the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) to be the United States bid city on April 14, 2007,⁶⁴ Chicagoans were aware of the Olympic buzz; yet it was not until early January 2008 that the Olympic debate erupted with the public release of the Chicago 2016 Olympic bid details. Chicago publications, ranging from prominent periodicals such as the *Chicago Tribune* to neighborhood newspapers such as the *Hyde Park Herald* and

⁶⁴ Greg Hinz, "USOC picks Chicago for 2016 Olympic bid," *ChicagoBusiness*, April 14, 2007, <<http://www.chicagobusiness.com/cgi-bin/news.pl?id=24588&bt=Olympic+Bid&arc=n&searchType=all>> (accessed March 10, 2010).

Austin Weekly News, became one site of this public forum. Through Chicago periodicals, in addition to radio and neighborhood meetings among other lines of communication, the Chicago Olympic debate took form and focused on issues affecting everything from the use of the Chicago Park District facilities to the demolition of an architecturally significant building.

The use of taxpayers' money in the development of the bid as well as the proposed Olympic projects was continually a central element of the debate. When Mayor Richard Daley first unveiled the city's Olympic aspirations in 2006, he stated that no public money would be needed to cover the Olympic costs. Rather, Daley argued, the private sector would pay for the Games. At the time, skeptical citizens questioned how realistic or truthful this statement was. A year later in March 2007, the City Council was signing an agreement committing the city to \$500 million for the Games and the park district to another \$15 million for the aquatics center.⁶⁵ Significantly, Mayor Daley's guarantee that no public funds would be used to stage the Games came before he was up for re-election in November 2006. Additionally, the USOC was scheduled to make their decision for US bid city in April 2007, only six months after Daley's election. Less than five months after Daley's re-election and one month before the USOC decision, the City Council was voting on the ordinance that asserted the city would cover up to \$500 million for the Olympics. Despite this ordinance, Daley continued to assert that the city would not ultimately spend taxpayers' dollars on the Games, unless "everything else fails," as he told reporters.⁶⁶

In the following months, Daley and Patrick Ryan, the Executive Director of Chicago 2016, attempted to maintain the limit of public funds to \$500 million, despite the host city

⁶⁵ Ben Joravsky, "Magic Beans: The mayor's new Olympic Village plan would bet taxpayer dollars on risky real estate speculation," *Chicago Reader*, July 24, 2008, C5.

⁶⁶ Ben Joravsky, "On the Hook: Did Mayor Daley ever really believe the public wouldn't have to pay for the Olympics?," *Chicago Reader*, July 2, 2009, G2.

contract, which is the agreement candidate cities are expected to sign before the IOC decision. The host city contract gives the city full financial responsibility for any losses from the Games, meaning the City of Chicago would cover all cost overruns, even beyond \$500 million, the limit determined in the City Council ordinance. Daley and Ryan lobbied for amendments to the contract that would recognize the limits voted upon by the City Council. They resisted signing the standard host city contract until June 2009; and afterwards Chicago 2016 saw a sharp decline of support.⁶⁷ In February 2009 before signing the host city contract, a *Chicago Tribune* poll said that 61 percent of Chicagoans supported the Games, which went down to 45 percent in September 2009, less than three months after the contract was signed. Additionally, in the September 2009 poll, 84 percent of Chicagoans disapproved of using public money for the Games and 75 percent opposed Daley's promise of an unlimited financial guarantee in the event the Games result in a loss of money.⁶⁸ Not only did the agreement to use public funds cause controversy, but the manner in which this agreement was established also went against public opinion, resulting in the steady decline in support of the bid. Regardless of the strategy behind the City Council ordinance capping the amount of public money to be used, the attempts to amend the host city contract, and the eventual signing of the contract, the public became less and less supportive of the bid during the weeks leading up to the IOC decision, especially in terms of the use of taxpayers' dollars.

Chicagoans also debated the status of the transit system and its ability to accommodate the Olympic Games. The public transportation of potential host cities has become increasingly important to the IOC in the last few decades. Beginning in the late 1990s, the IOC has included

⁶⁷ Joravsky, "On the Hook," G2.

⁶⁸ Todd Lighty and Kathy Bergen, "Olympic opposition getting second wind as support in Chicago fades," *Chicago Tribune*, September 3, 2009, <<http://archives.chicagotribune.com/2009/sep/03/local/chi-olympics-poll-03-sep03>> (accessed March 10, 2010).

a transit specialist in the evaluation commission that reviews bid cities.⁶⁹ The public transit of Chicago was therefore important to the bid, the debate, and the community organizations that used the Olympic discussion to highlight the inadequate transit on the South Side.

While some claimed Chicago's public transportation was a strong element of the bid, many residents of the South Side disagreed. In an interview with the *Chicago Journal*, Slim Soot, interim director of the Urban Transportation Center at the University of Illinois-Chicago, stated that one of the strengths of "the Chicago proposal is that most of the venues are eminently reachable by public transportation systems. We don't have the extensive systems and frequency of trains that Tokyo and Madrid have, but our venues are located where we have the most concentrated parts of our public transportation network."⁷⁰ Members of Southsiders Organizing for Unity and Liberation (SOUL), a South Side community organization, did not agree that the transit system of Chicago was a strong element of Chicago bid, and actually used the Olympic bid as an opportunity to highlight the inadequacies of Chicago public transportation, especially the insufficient service to South Side residents. SOUL's proposal⁷¹ proposed to increase the number of trains running along the Metra Electric South Chicago branch train, a commuter train separate from the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) that runs through one of the most densely populated areas of the South Side. The Metra Electric makes stops on the South Side just once per hour and is therefore not convenient or useful to South Side residents. SOUL proposed that this train run every ten minutes, accept CTA fares, and allow transfers between CTA and Metra, thus enabling South Side residents to "save money on gas and reach jobs that are often located in

⁶⁹ Nicole Cohen and Melissa Way, "Does our transit system stack up?," *Chicago Journal*, February 19, 2009, 6.

⁷⁰ Cohen and May, 8.

⁷¹ This transit proposal was nicknamed the "Gold Line," a reference to the Olympic theme of the proposal, as well as the "SOUL train," a reference to the 1970s TV show and the organization sponsoring the proposal.

far-flung suburban industrial parks.”⁷² SOUL, through their transit proposal, entered the Olympic debate to not only critique the public transit systems of Chicago, but to also to use the Olympic attention to generate improvements in the transit that serves their community.

Beginning a year before the IOC decision in October 2009, SOUL identified the Olympic debate as an opportunity to make gains for their community. Leaders of SOUL set out to insure that Chicago 2016 was “accountable and inclusive” in their development of the bid, given the amount of Olympic construction that was proposed to be placed on the South Side.⁷³ Transit had been an on-going issue in their organization and SOUL leaders decided to push Chicago 2016 and the City to improve transportation methods to the South Side, because it benefited both the bid and the community. Speeding up their proposal in order to insert their proposal in the Olympic debate, SOUL found a number of allies in Chicago 2016, caused at least in part by the Chicago Olympic Committee’s goal “to get everyone to get on board.”⁷⁴ The willingness of Chicago 2016 to cooperate with SOUL demonstrates their need of community and resident support, especially in terms of the larger public debate. Their collaboration with Chicago 2016 in developing the Gold Line as well as their combination of bid and community benefit attracted the attention of National Public Radio and the Chicago Tribune.⁷⁵ While the Gold Line proposal encountered roadblocks because of Chicago’s Olympic loss, both SOUL and Chicago 2016 ultimately benefited from what their cooperation contributed to the debate and their respective proposals.

In addition to public funds and public transportation, another public entity that received much attention in the Olympic debate was the use or abuse of the Chicago Parks District. In an

⁷² “Transit Campaign – the GOLD Line,” Southsiders Organizing for Unity and Liberation, January 11, 2009 < <http://www.soulinchicago.org/2009/04/transit-campaign-gold-line.html>> (accessed January 2, 2010).

⁷³ Thompson, 4 March 2010.

⁷⁴ Thompson, 4 March 2010.

⁷⁵ Thompson, 4 March 2010.

attempt to keep costs low, the bid included the use of many existing structures, including McCormick Place, the United Center, and Soldiers Field among others; and yet many of proposed Olympic constructions upset park advocates. The bid proposed the extensive use of Washington, Douglas and Jackson Parks for field hockey track, and swimming facilities. Additionally, an Olympic Club and a Sponsors Village would occupy the southern half of the Washington Park, while the northern half would be primarily taken up by the 80,000-seat, 100-acre Olympic Stadium.⁷⁶ A new complex for cycling and beach volleyball would be constructed on Northerly Island and a tennis facility would replace current tennis courts and softball fields in Lincoln Park on the North Side of the city. The use of public park space was not the only concern; the use of Chicago Park District power also caused many Chicagoans to question to merits of the Olympic bid. In January 2009, the Park District's Board of Commissioners granted the General Superintendent and CEO Tim Mitchell the ability to sign over the use of parks across the city to the 2016 Committee without approval from the board in a public meeting, which was the normal protocol. Board President Gery Chico defended this decision in saying "These are rather extraordinary commitments we're making. On the other hand, this is a rather extraordinary opportunity."⁷⁷ Despite Chico's justification, May Toy, President of the Skinner Park Advisory Council joined other park advocates in protesting this use of power. "They gave them blanket authority but yet it's not discussed openly," said Toy, "So nobody knows what the agreements are going to be, how the commitments and resources of the park district are going to be used."⁷⁸ The organization, Friends of the Parks, saw this agreement as a potential opportunity to include public input on the Olympic planning and parks use and planned to push for regular

⁷⁶ Kate Hawley, "Park advocates struggle to digest Olympic bid book," *Hyde Park Herald*, February 25, 2009, LCM.

⁷⁷ Peter Sachs, "Mitchell's new powers: Park District CEO can secretly lease land to 2016 Committee," *Chicago Journal*, February 5, 2009, LCM.

⁷⁸ Sachs, LCM.

public hearings as Olympic plans progressed.⁷⁹ Like the aforementioned elements of the Olympic debate, Chicagoans and community leaders pushed Chicago 2016 and city officials to recognize and incorporate public input into the bid. In the case of park use, the Olympic debate again focused upon the communication and cooperation of citizen groups and municipal authorities.

The parks controversy, in addition to the question of public funds for Olympic use and public transportation improvements, all touch on a central element of the Olympic debate, which focused upon the long-term use of the Olympic facilities and their benefit to neighborhoods and communities across the city. The bid included post-use plans for many of the proposed constructions, and Chicagoans were split on their judgments of the proposed Olympic structures' advantages. Some Chicago citizens critiqued these proposals and questioned their projected benefits, while other saw them as future gems of Chicago architecture, history, and culture. In order to construct the Olympic Stadium, for example, a baseball field and acres of open space would have been destroyed. This open space, significantly, is part of the park designed in 1871 by Frederick Law Olmsted, the landscape architect of New York City's Central Park; because of its legendary designer and its place in Chicago history and public life, Washington Park is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.⁸⁰ Opponents of the Olympics fought to keep Washington Park as Olmsted would have wished – free of an 80,000-seat Olympic Stadium. Various park advocates suggested that even if the Olympic Stadium is constructed there for the Games, the Olympic Committee should be responsible for removing the entire structure, leaving Olmsted's vision for the park intact. Proponents of the Olympics, such as Leroy Bowers, Vice President of the *Washington Park Advisory Council*, supported the Olympics coming to Chicago

⁷⁹ Sachs, LCM.

⁸⁰ Tyler Blue, "An Olympic Stadium's lasting legacy: What's the impact of the proposed Olympic stadium?" *Skyline*, June 4, 2009, LCM.

in 2016, saying, “The sacrifice that we’re going to give up for a short period of time is well worth the world camaraderie and solidarity.”⁸¹ In addition to the intangible benefits of the Games, Bowers also noted the facility Washington Park would eventually gain. After the Games, the Olympic Committee uniquely proposed to collapse the stadium from an 80,000-seat into a 2,500 to 3,500-seat facility and it would function as an amphitheater. Debates around other proposed Olympic structures resembled the Stadium public conversation, in that regardless of their stance, pro or con, Chicago residents wanted Olympic developers to consider the historical and social context in which the Olympic structures would be placed as well as the eventual effect on the community. Community leaders, on both sides of the Olympic debate, primarily wanted Chicago 2016 to develop the bid around the legacy and future of Chicago’s individual neighborhoods.

Chicago’s Focus on the Olympic Village and Bronzeville

The larger Olympic debate that gripped Chicago for years before the October 2nd, 2009 decision of the IOC did not only comment on how the Games would change Chicago, but also significantly commented on what effect the Olympic bid proposed to have on Bronzeville. Many of the elements of the debate across the city either were concerned directly with the Olympic constructions proposed to be in Bronzeville, namely the Olympic Village, or were parallel to debates happening on the micro level within Bronzeville and neighboring South Side neighborhoods. Within the Bronzeville Olympic debate, the use of taxpayers’ money in constructing the Olympic Village and the post-Olympic plans of structures like the Olympic Village pertained specifically to Bronzeville, while also contributing to the larger citywide debate. The details of the Memorandum of Understanding, the location of the Olympic Village site, the question of affordable housing, and the displacement of low-income residents, however,

⁸¹ Blue, LCM.

were discussed across Chicago, and yet were uniquely relevant to South Side residents. So while the debate in many ways took on the form of the larger debate, some elements of the Bronzeville debate were unique to the South Side. More importantly, the localized debate of the Olympic Village recreated the contemporary power dynamics of city officials, Chicago 2016, groups of organized citizens, and the media, demonstrating the current role of community input in public debates.

At a proposed price tag of \$1 billion dollars, the Olympic Village proposal was the most expensive individual project of the bid and therefore a primary focus of the debate on the use of public funds for the Olympics.⁸² Additionally, this specific project complicated the larger debate because of the added financial instability of the housing market. The proposal of the Olympic Village relied on independent contractors and developers purchasing the rights to develop this site and manage it after the Olympic Games. Given the economic atmosphere of 2008 and 2009, the public questioned Chicago 2016's plan to invest \$1 billion dollars in a housing development during a recession, especially when using public funds to do so. Despite these public fears, the City of Chicago purchased the site of the proposed Village, the Michael Reese Hospital for \$85 million in early 2009. The hospital campus, near 31st and Martin Luther King Drive, was purchased from Medline Industries, after a series of complicated negotiations and re-negotiations. Ultimately, Medline only received \$65 million, because the company agreed to make a \$20 million "charitable contribution" back to the city that was proposed to cover demolition and clean up costs.⁸³

As previously mentioned, many Chicagoans in the citywide debate feared that the use of public funds in building Olympic structures would be a gamble of taxpayers' money. Given the

⁸² Dwayne Truss, "Council ignores will of the people," *Austin Weekly News*, September 24, 2009, 5.

⁸³ Joravsky, "Magic Beans," C5.

price and size of the Olympic Village, Bronzeville was the epicenter of these concerns. Some called the Olympic Village “the major risk of the bid,” implying that the Village was the most likely place public funds would be squandered.⁸⁴ “If Chicago does not win the bid,” said a writer for the *Gazette*, a small Chicago newspaper, “some fear the City will be stuck with a property that few will be interested in developing due to the declining real estate market and that taxpayers will not be able to recoup the site’s \$85 million cost.”⁸⁵ The Olympic Village debate, therefore, combined the contentions around using public funds for the Olympics with the contemporary and problematic housing market.

Chicago 2016 crafted the post-Olympic use of the Olympic Village, as mentioned in the previous section, to illustrate how the bid would positively affect the South Side for years after the Games. Despite the plan to convert the Village into a mixed-income, multi-use housing development, residents of Bronzeville and throughout Chicago questioned the probability of this proposal’s success. The full plan of the development suggested that the hospital would be demolished, the site cleared, and then the site would be sold to independent developers in order to recoup the \$65 million invest made by the City. The developers would be expected to build the Olympic Village complex, and after the games, they would sell or rent the units in the open market. Not only did the problematic financial climate cause concerns, but also given the history of housing failures in Bronzeville, residents are hesitant to enthusiastically support a prospective development, especially one of this size, cost, and risk.⁸⁶

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) of the Olympic debate, given its focus on the employment of minorities and residents near Olympic constructions, sparked debate and

⁸⁴ Truss, 5.

⁸⁵ Julie Sammarco, “Chicago 2016 acquires Michael Reese Hospital land for city,” *Gazette Chicago*, February 1, 2009, LCM.

⁸⁶ Stubenfield, 4 March 2010.

controversy throughout the South Side. In March 2009, Chicago 2016 and the Chicago 2016 Outreach Advisory Council, comprised of local community groups, signed a MOU “spelling out major economic and community considerations as part of the 2016 Olympic Games.”⁸⁷ In the months leading up, community leaders, including Alderwoman Toni Preckwinkle of the 4th ward, Cheryl Jackson, president and CEO of the *Chicago Urban League*, and others debated the content of the MOU, such as provisions for communities in and around proposed Olympic venues, minorities, women, veterans, and disabled persons. Ultimately, the agreed upon version of the MOU stated that 30 percent of contracts “connected to an Olympics here go to minority owned firms, with 10 percent given to women-owned companies.”⁸⁸ This agreement also stipulated that 30 percent of Olympic Village housing would be converted into affordable housing after the Games and that an independent compliance committee would be formed to monitor the success of the agreement. After Chicago 2016 and the Outreach Advisory Council signed the document and the City Council approved the MOU,⁸⁹ Alderwoman Preckwinkle said, “The price of victory is eternal vigilance. We have a document. And it’s our obligation as local elected officials to be sure that the Olympic committee makes good on its commitments.”⁹⁰ As Preckwinkle suggested, the MOU was the result of community input and its success would also be because local leaders’ continued surveillance of these promises.

Not all were as enthusiastic about the ultimate agreement. Emil Jones Jr., the former state Senate president, criticized the agreement, calling it an insult “to the very individuals and

⁸⁷ Wendell Hutson, “Jones issues scathing rebuke of Games agreement for Blacks,” *Chicago Defender*, April 22-28, 2009, 1A.

⁸⁸ Micah Maidenberg, “‘Memo’ on Olympic bennies: Language about contracting, affordable housing,” *Chicago Journal*, April 12, 2009, LCM.

⁸⁹ The MOU was also called the Olympic Community Agreement, especially in the City Council discussions.

⁹⁰ “Chicago City Council Approves Olympic Community Agreement,” *City Room*, Chicago Public Radio WBEZ, Chicago, April 22, 2009.

communities it alleges to benefit and protect.”⁹¹ Jones critiqued the percent of construction hours given the minority workers and suggested that it be increased from 10 to 40 percent. Communities for an Equitable Olympics 2016, a group of citizens, and Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization (KOCO), a Mid-South organization, were also involved in pushing Chicago 2016 and the City Council to produce such a document, yet were not completely satisfied with the numbers, like Jones.⁹² Despite the controversial document that resulted from the MOU debate, the inclusion of community leaders within the negotiations and planning meetings demonstrates the political power of such organizations and leaders. Not only was their input heard, but they also had many designated seats at the table. Jones and others, however, would argue that the right people were not in those seats.

At the center of the Olympic Village debate was the choice of the location. The Michael Reese Hospital campus was identified by the Village planners as an optimal location because of its proximity to the other proposed venues, as previously mentioned, as well as its location in a neighborhood already identified as important “to the city’s plan for regeneration of the near South Side.”⁹³ Yet many activists and even Chicago residents from all across the city objected to the hospital’s demolition, given its status as an architectural and historical gem. This thirty-seven acre site in the 2900 block of South Ellis Avenue includes several buildings designed by renowned Bauhaus architect Walter Gropius. Many of these structures would be demolished to make way for the Olympic development and Chicagoans vehemently spoke up in opposition to this. Leading the crusade was the Gropius in Chicago Coalition and Landmarks Illinois, who even developed an “Alternative Olympic Village Plan,” which slightly altered the location of a

⁹¹ Hutson, “Jones issues scathing rebuke of Games agreement for Blacks,” 1A.

⁹² Maidenberg, LCM.

⁹³ Chicago 2016, “City of Chicago Completes Purchase of Proposed Olympics Village Site,” *Press Release*, 2 July 2009.

number of residential buildings and the Olympic Village Plaza to allow for the preservation of many Gropius-designed buildings.⁹⁴ The arguments of the activists seemed to emphasize the historical value of these buildings, instead of the value of the site to the community. The loss of jobs at the hospital seldom appeared in their objections, and the arguments against the demolition of these buildings had little to say about the Bronzeville community's development or history and nothing to say about the possibility of affordable housing. The debate surrounding the Michael Reese Hospital campus as a location of the Olympic Village sparked a discussion on the demolition of the site, instead of the future of the development.

The concerns of the Gropius advocates, which contributed to the Olympic Village debate, were not representative of those of Bronzeville residents. Many community groups on the South Side prioritized affordable housing over historical architecture and produced proposals that would use the Olympic bid as an opportunity to increase the affordable housing in Bronzeville. These proposals were also an attempt to prevent the displacement of low-income resident that is often caused by Olympic developments and other similar forces of urban renewal, which Bronzeville had witnessed in recent decades. Housing Bronzeville, as previously mentioned, developed such a proposal that urged the City to commit to building affordable homes on currently vacant lots, so as to reverse the decrease in population of Bronzeville that has occurred over the past thirty years, because of the demolition of the public housing high-rises and the subsequent displacement. During the IOC visit in April 2009, representatives of this community organization met with IOC representatives as they toured Bronzeville. After that meeting, Housing Bronzeville spokesman, Kenneth Williams reported back to the IOC via an internet video on their website saying, "Today we report back to you, saddened in the knowledge that the

⁹⁴ Landmarks Illinois, 1.

City of Chicago has chosen not to make the commitment we requested.”⁹⁵ Despite “the very helpful support of some members of the Chicago Olympic Committee,” the City did not agree to fund the construction of the proposed affordable homes. While the collaboration between this group of organized citizens and Chicago 2016 did not result in a victory, the community voice had a prominent role in the debate on the Olympic bid, affordable housing, and low-income resident displacement.

Together these various elements of the Olympic Village debate create a picture of the new power community leaders and groups have gained in this new wave of housing policy. Unfortunately, this new gain of authority and recognition within the Olympic debate did not result in tangible victories for the local community. With the loss of the Games, many initiatives lost momentum and have not regained the media attention and political bargaining power that the Olympic Village debate created.

Overlapping Debates:

Olympic Debate as Continuation of Housing Debate

Many facets of the Olympic Village debate resemble previous controversies of prior waves of housing policy, yet differ in the treatment of community input. In this way, the Olympic debate inherited the central issues of Bronzeville’s housing history and re-contextualized them in the public discussion of the Olympic Village. The clear application of these concerns, such as the debate elements concerning nostalgia, displacement, and community input, supports the inclusion of the Olympic Village in the litany of Bronzeville housing controversies. The Olympic debate therefore was an example of how the contemporary wave of

⁹⁵ Housing Bronzeville, “Housing Bronzeville’s Chicago 2016 Message,” <<http://standupforbronzeville.org/HBhome.htm>> (accessed October 3, 2009)

housing policy will deal with these central issues that have been part of Bronzeville housing for decades.

The residents of the South Side notably did not join the crusade to save the Walter Gropius buildings of the Michael Reese Hospital, making a statement on what sense of nostalgia influences community development in Bronzeville. As previously noted, nostalgia, especially of the golden age of Bronzeville during the early decades of the 20th century, has shaped the way Bronzeville residents conceive of the culture of the South Side. This nostalgia has motivated community leaders to organize public art commissions for the neighborhood and even earn historical status for many landmarks of black businesses. However, the legacy of Gropius clearly did not evoke the same sense of history and culture, demonstrating that the nostalgic impulse of Bronzeville community development does not compel residents to conserve or restore any element of historical culture on the South Side, but rather the pieces that are relevant to the Bronzeville identity and the history of Black Chicago.

Whenever the Olympic debate was contextualized within the South Side, the issue of displacement remained central to the discussion. Just as the CHA's Plan for Transformation and recent trend of gentrification, the Olympic Village proposal made low-income residents fear that they would be forced to move out of Bronzeville because of the increasing costs of living in this neighborhood. The well-known newspaper of the South Side, the *Chicago Defender*, often articulated this pervasive concern in their articles. "I am afraid that if the city wins their Olympic bid it would displace many of us poor, Black folks," said Cathy Weatherspoon, 88, when interviewed for an article in the *Defender*, "My building is three blocks from the Olympic Village site and I can't see the city spending all that money to build the darn thing knowing that

welfare folks live a few blocks away.”⁹⁶ Such remarks were not uncommon throughout every stage of the Olympic debate. At a panel discussion, organized by No Games Chicago, conversation and questions focused on the displacement of low-income residents, blaming it on the “development driven” forces of the Olympics.⁹⁷ When the IOC visited Chicago, their meetings with community organizations, such as Housing Bronzeville, also convinced them of these issues. “It’s always difficult to build housing for the Olympics and not displace anyone,” said Gilbert Felli, an IOC member, “and they (Chicago 2016) need to address this issue.”⁹⁸ The common concern, from residents, activists, and even the IOC, that the housing development of the Olympic Village would cause low-income residents to lose their place in Bronzeville both reinforces the placement of the Village proposal within Bronzeville housing history and demonstrates that this proposal included many mistakes of previous housing development failures.

The most significant overlap of the Olympic and housing debates, however, must be the role of the community within the decision-making and planning processes. Unlike the public housing programs beginning in the 1940s and 1950s, this most recent wave of housing policy includes an element of community outreach, involving the collection of community input and the communication of plans to community members. Many debate to what extent this community contact is affecting the urban planning policies of CHA, HUD, Chicago 2016 and such groups; and yet, the recognition that developers, politicians, and city planners must at minimum acknowledge the political and social influence of community organizations and leaders demonstrates the new voice of the Bronzeville community in their housing history.

⁹⁶ Wendell Hutson, “The city winning its 2016 Olympic bid could mean some residents lose their home,” *Chicago Defender*, July 16-22, 2008, C1.

⁹⁷ Maidenberg, LCM.

⁹⁸ Wendell Hutson, “IOC gives credence to Olympics displacement concerns,” *Chicago Defender*, April 15, 2009, C1.

Community Activism's Effects on the Bid

Just as Bronzeville's housing history shaped the Olympic Village proposal, the contemporary strength of community activism shaped the Olympic debate. This effect is most evident in two elements of the Olympic bid, the *50 Wards in 50 Days* initiative and the Memorandum of Understanding. These two aspects of the bid were results of community groups participating in the public forum of the debate and the recognition on the part of Chicago 2016 that they could not win the bid without the support of these groups of organized citizens. Again, the success of the *50 Wards* town hall meetings and the MOU was questioned and the essential motivations were scrutinized by Bronzeville leaders and organizations, yet without the community voice in the conversation neither would have been a part of the Olympic bid or debate.

The *50 Wards in 50 Days* initiative was a push from Chicago 2016 to communicate the details of the bid to Chicagoans across the city and to have a forum for their questions and reactions to be voiced. In the wake of the host-city contract announcement that Chicago would assume full financial responsibility for the Games, representatives of the Chicago Olympic Committee organized these town hall-style meetings to take place in field houses and cultural centers in every corner of the city. Beginning July 15th, 2009, the Olympic Committee aimed to reach every ward before the October 2nd IOC decision. "We want to showcase the benefits of bringing the Games to Chicago and provide every bit of information we can about the tremendous opportunity we have to create a better future for our children and our city by hosting the Games," said Chicago 2016 chairman Ryan.⁹⁹ In an effort to bolster public support after the host-city contract announcement, each presentation was tailored to show the specific benefits of

⁹⁹ "Olympic Sales Pitch: 50 Wards in just a few weeks," Evening News, Ben Bradley (anchor), American Broadcast Company, WLS-TV/DT, Chicago, July 7, 2009.

bringing the Games to each area of Chicago. Despite these presentations some residents remained unconvinced, demanding, for example, that the City deal first with more pressing concerns like violence and the state of public education before inviting the Olympics to come to Chicago.¹⁰⁰ Chicago 2016 organized these town hall meetings at the eleventh hour, realizing what a detrimental effect low public support could have on their Olympic aspirations for Chicago. This last-ditch attempt to reach out to Chicagoans illustrates how the community voice influenced and shaped the Olympic debate and the actions of the Chicago Olympic Committee.

The MOU, in addition to the *50 Wards in 50 Days* initiative, represents the contemporary role of community activism in discussions of urban planning. Numerous citizen groups and community leaders called for such an agreement continually from the first days of the Olympic debate until October 2nd. At a *50 Wards in 50 Days* meeting, State Representative Deborah Graham of the 78th district, seated among other residents, voiced her concerns. “I just want to assure that while everyone else is taking their piece of the pie from this plan,” said Rep. Graham, “you are taking an active role to ensure a fair disbursement of resources throughout the city for minority areas.”¹⁰¹ The eventual agreement, approved by the City Council, and the Chicago 2016 Outreach Advisory Council, comprised of community leaders, did not meet the approval of all residents, yet the process through which the MOU was developed included Bronzeville leaders and residents at every stage. Their involvement in the production of the MOU, very much like the *50 Wards* initiative demonstrates the strength of Bronzeville community activism and the recognition of this power.

¹⁰⁰ Robert Felton, “Residents give low score to Olympic bid,” *Austin Weekly News*, July 30, 2009, C5.

¹⁰¹ Felton, C5.

Conclusion

What's Next for Bronzeville?

Each wave of housing policy in Bronzeville highlights something different about the contemporary Chicago society. The Great Northern Migration, the redlining practices that developed with the increase of the black population in Chicago, and the slums that were created by this overcrowding illustrated how the intense racism of the day defined the housing of Black Chicagoans. The second wave, which initiated government funded and directed housing projects for low-income Chicagoans, demonstrated that despite progressive and well-intention plans, the ever-present racism continued to segregate blacks into worse housing and living conditions. Following this flawed beginning, the federal and local government continued to build upon these problematic foundations that were laden with racial discrimination and segregation. As an apt symbol for this period, the story of the Bronzeville public housing high-rise shows how this attempt to remove the slums of previous decades actually recreated them. The cost-cutting mentality behind high-rise construction resulted in intense deterioration of the physical and social structures in Bronzeville public housing.

Following the demise of the high-rise, a new era of reform was ushered in by the demolition of problematic housing developments. Although city planners and policymakers have embraced a new urban planning philosophy that emphasizes mixed-income and multi-use structures in attempts to correct the mistakes of the each prior wave, this most recent wave is also plagued by issues of displacement, relocation, and gentrification. The current period of housing development has also begun to incorporate the input of those who actually live in Bronzeville and the various housing developments, largely caused by the increased activism in Bronzeville during the last decades. As illustrated by the Chicago 2016 Olympic bid, this contemporary

wave aims to overcome the racism, flaws and shortcomings of previous housing policies through urban designs that integrate economic classes and recreate housing that encourage social structures to thrive.

The Olympic bid perhaps most significantly demonstrated another key element of this new wave: recognition of community input and influence. Despite the presence of community leaders throughout the history of Bronzeville, policies and proposals were by and large written uninfluenced by those they affected. Herein lies the largest oversight and shortcoming of the housing policy that has been enacted in Bronzeville over the years. The lack of residents' input in the creation, implementation, and revision of the housing policies of Bronzeville is one of the root causes for the various housing failures on the South Side. For example, well before the Plan for Transformation was begun by the CHA, public housing residents were organizing into residents' councils and housing project organization in response to the poor conditions, crime, and lack of public services. The public housing residents recognized, understood, and lived through the failure of the high-rise model years before the local government corrected their mistakes. These groups of organized citizens, however, were largely ineffective because the community voice was not heard by the CHA at this time. Not only did the local government fail to listen to resident's concerns, but they also rendered most of these organizations and leaders relatively unsuccessful by simply not recognizing their role in the urban development process.

City officials, urban planners, and developers of this contemporary wave of housing policy are attempting to communicate more efficiently with residents of Bronzeville; yet many South Siders still feel that plans or proposals for Bronzeville are told to and not developed with residents.¹⁰² In the case of the Chicago 2016 Olympic bid and debate, certain exceptions exist of

¹⁰² Stubenfield, 4 March 2010. And Thompson, 4 March 2010.

course, such as the MOU, yet there are many more examples of this unilateral communication, such as the *50 Wards in 50 Days* initiative. Instead of involving Bronzeville residents and leaders from the beginning of the bid, Chicago 2016 scrambled during the last few weeks before the IOC in order to reach out directly to Chicagoans. Therefore, the bid was developed by the politically powerful of Chicago and eventually communicated to the rest of Chicago, very much like previous housing policies. While this dynamic is nothing new to Chicago, it is ultimately flawed, and perhaps deteriorating.

Although many factors contributed to the eventual loss of the Chicago 2016 Olympic bid, the public outcry of opposition absolutely affected the IOC's decision. For instance, after meeting with neighborhood groups during their visit to Chicago in April 2009, the IOC expressed many of their same concerns, such as issues of displacement and affordable housing. Additionally, as public support of the bid dropped, the probability of the 2016 Olympic Games appearing in Chicago seemed to plummet as well. If the Chicago 2016 Olympic bid and the Olympic Village debate tell us anything, it is that community development propositions, such as the Olympic bid, must incorporate the needs, concerns, and participation of the local residents from its onset in order to succeed. Chicago 2016 achieved this on one level by developing a plan for an Olympic Village that would transition into affordable housing post-Olympics, yet did not fully embrace community participation or communication until much later in the process. In the context of this most recent wave of housing policy, Bronzeville community activism has developed to the point that whether city officials, the CHA, or the Olympic Committee initially include them in the conversation or not, Bronzeville residents will make their voice heard. When a proposal or plan is developed for Bronzeville and not with Bronzeville, past examples would

suggest that the Bronzeville voice would then be one of opposition primarily because it does not incorporate their concerns and perspective.

The future of successful affordable housing and urban development in Bronzeville relies on the efficiency and success of organized Bronzeville residents. A strong push for a Chicago 2020 Olympic bid does not currently exist, but any such plans of that magnitude now require the input and support of community leaders and citizens, given the growing power and influence of organized groups of Bronzeville residents, as displayed in the Olympic debate that raged from April 2007 to October 2009. Therefore, if developments of the Michael Reese Hospital site continue without the support of the Olympics, it will be through the support of Bronzeville's community leaders and activist.

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