Architectural Effects of Urban Renewal in St. Louis: An Examination of High-Rise Housing Development in St. Louis

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Architectural Effects of Urban Renewal in St. Louis:
An Examination of High-Rise Housing Development in St. Louis

by
Tingting Lyu

A thesis presented to the
Graduate School of Design & Visual Arts
of Washington University in
partial fulfillment of the
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August 21, 2017
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AUTHOR: Tingting Lyu

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I also wish to thank the followings for their invaluable help with my research. To Bob Hansman, for sharing his knowledge of public housing and history of St. Louis with me. To Fran Bruce at St. Louis Housing Authority, for dedicating her time to show me countless resources and special collections in St. Louis Housing Authority, helping me to access to the drawings of public housing projects, and other historic records. To the personnel at the St. Louis Public Library, the Missouri History Museum Library, and the libraries at Washington University in St. Louis for helping me access the many resources I have needed to make this writing possible.

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Tingting Lyu

Washington University in St. Louis
August 2017
Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis is a study of the history and impetus for the low-rent high-rise public housing projects constructed prior to 1965 in St. Louis. Except for the largest and most well-known Pruitt-Igoe project which already had been the subject of a lot of study, other major public housing towers were John J. Cochran Garden Apartment (MO 1-3), completed in 1952-1953; George L. Vaughn Apartments (MO-1-6), Joseph M. Darst Apartments (MO-1-7), and Anthony M. Webbe Apartments (MO-1-7a). These later projects opened between 1957-1960. By situating these projects within the urban renewal movement and the context of public housing provision in the nation, this thesis intends to establish the threads of social environment and various ideas and practices that shaped their form.

To do this, it draws on a variety of primary sources documented at the St. Louis Housing Authority. Project fact sheets provided basic design and construction information for each project. Architectural plans for all of the pre-1965 projects except Pruitt-Igoe were accessible at the SLHA. “Historical Background Report of St. Louis Housing Authority Developments”¹ by Landmarks Association of St. Louis Inc. provided an overview of public housing development in St. Louis derived from a variety of historical and secondary sources. “High-Rise Public Housing Towers in St. Louis, Missouri”², developed by the Preservation Research Office, provided a summary context narrative study for the high-rise public housing projects developed in St. Louis from 1949 to 1971. A series of “SLHA Master Plan” for the Vaughn

¹ Landmarks Association of St. Louis Inc, “Historical Background Report of St. Louis Housing Authority Developments”, (St. Louis Housing Authority, 1999).

Apartments, Darst-Webbe, and Blumeyer, published by SLHA in 1978 documented the project location map, general program historical information, as well as the survey and review of the built environment for these projects in the 1970s. “Cochran Towers-Architectural and Historical Documentation” provides historical and architectural documentation for the only one building that survived from the demolition of the John J. Cochran Garden Apartments public housing project.

SLHA’s Annual Reports could be found at the St. Louis Public Library and the Missouri Historical Society. Tenant Relocation: Low Rent Housing Project Carr Square Village “North Housing Area” and Tenant Relocation: Low Rent Housing Project Clinton-Peabody Terrace “South Housing Area”, both were published by the St. Louis Housing Authority in 1941. These two reports were about the study and survey of the north and south sites making way for the first two low-rent public housing projects: Carr Square Village and Clinton-Peabody Terrace. The reports were based on the “W.P.A’s Housing Survey of low-income housing” made in 1940 and “A Survey Of Living Conditions Of Families In The Area” made in 1940-1941 by the “social worker on the staff of the Tenant Relocation Division of the Housing Authority”. These two reports provided important historic information of the north site where the Vaughn Apartments were located and the south site where the Darst-Webbe complex was located. City Plan Commission’s Annual Reports from 1940-1960 offered the

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4 St. Louis Housing Authority, Tenant Relocation: Low Rent Housing Project Carr Square Village “North Housing Area” and Tenant Relocation: Low Rent Housing Project Clinton-Peabody Terrace “South Housing Area”, 1941. Both of the reports are available at St. Louis Public Library.
public housing progress in the independent section of “Housing”. These reports could be located in the St. Louis Public Library.

The city map of 1960s where all the low-rent high-rise public housing projects were located could be found at the Missouri History Museum Library, a digital map developed by Norbury Wayman in 1967 is also available on the site of “Washington University Digital Gateway”. Also, Big Map Blog has posted a 1968 aerial view of the city, which provided the aerial view of the Cochran Gardens, Pruitt-Igoe, Vaughn Apartments, and the most parts of Darst-Webbe.

Additionally, other promotional materials, images and descriptions could be located in the Missouri History Museum and the Washington University Special Collection.

A variety of articles published in *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, *Architectural Record*, *Journal of Housing*, although scattered, documented a range of historical information of these developments, such as “St. Louis: High Rise Buildings and Balconies” published by *Architectural Record* in 1954, which included architectural plans and detailed description of Cochran Gardens project’s development process, the siting and detailing considered by the architect in the design. “Darst and Vaughn Mass Housing Projects to Be Dedicated This Afternoon” published in *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in 1957 includes background and design description of Vaughn and Darst Apartments.

*Journal of Housing* carried a debate concerned with the trend toward high-rise public housing buildings in 1952- “High-Rise Housing- does it have a place in the public housing

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5 Wayman’s map of 1967
http://omeka.wustl.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/wayman_map/wayman_map_the-map


program (a few current comments for and against the use of high-rise buildings).”

Catherine Bauer Wurster, argued that “high-rise apartments are likely to wreck the public housing program,” Walter Gropius, said that “the multi-storied building is a direct embodiment of the needs of our age and that the disadvantages of a too spreading type of urban development are to be avoided.”

Immediately following the record of the debate, Minoru Yamasaki’s argument “High buildings for public housing: a necessity” was also published in the same issue. The architect argued that the high-rise approach was a necessity for public housing within the social and economic limitation. Anthony F. C. Wallace, an anthropologist engaged by the Philadelphia Housing Authority, also the Behavioral Research Council of the University of Pennsylvania analyzed why the argument and what lay behind the argument between Yamasaki and Bauer. He pointed out that “policy decision in either direction will have to be based on a clear understanding of what the public housing intends to do.” And the high-rise and low-rise had different conception of how families should live, what tenant life should be, even just “it

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12 Anthony F. C. Wallace, “Why the Argument: The High-rise, low-rise question is rooted in differences of goals ”, *Journal of Housing*, (July 1, 1952), 228.
shouldn’t be like slum life”. The controversy between high-rise and low-rise will not be solved until the ultimate aims of public housing were fully answered.¹³

This thesis also builds upon existing literature about low-rent public housing development in St. Louis. *Public Housing Myths: Perception, Reality, And Social Policy* showcases both the visions and the discourses that shaped the outcome of the high-rise public housings. Eugene J. Meehan’s *The Quality of Federal Policymaking: Programmed Failure in Public Housing* includes a narrative of the history of the St. Louis Housing Authority. Colin Gordon’s *Mapping Decline: St. Louis and The Fate of the American City* examines the causes and consequences of St. Louis’s urban crisis and traces the inadequacy of urban renewal concerned with private real estate restrictions, urban planning and zoning as well as federal housing policies; *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes: in Search of an Urban Housing Policy in Twentieth-Century America* published in 2000 especially “Why They Built Pruitt-Igoe” written by Alexander von Hoffman not only document the processes, official datasets, and outcomes of public housing projects, but they also illustrate the key concepts that structured the projects and the goals that municipalities and the state hoped to achieve through them. Joseph Heathcott’s dissertation, “The City Remade: Public Housing and The Urban Landscape in St. Louis 1900-1960,” contributes an analytical perspective and elaborates upon the origins of the ideas behind the high-rise public housings.

Sources outside of the fields of architectural and urban history can add additional perspective to the history of postwar high-rise public housing in St. Louis. Diane E. Wallman’s master thesis, “Meat Me in St. Louis: An Analysis of 19th Century Historic Faunal Remains

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¹³ Anthony F. C. Wallace. “Why the Argument: The High-rise, low-rise question is rooted in differences of goals” *Journal of Housing*, (July 1, 1952), 228.
from Cochran Gardens, St. Louis, Missouri,” includes some historical conditions of Cochran Gardens. Charles Kimball Bummings’s dissertation in 1976, “Rent Strike in St. Louis: The Making of Conflict in Modern Society,” paints a more complete picture of local tenants’ living conditions in the public housings and tenant-management relations; Uche A. Oluku’s dissertation, “A Comparative Analysis of the Effectiveness of the HOPE VI Program in Revitalizing Conventional Public Housing Sites: A Multiple Case Study in St. Louis,” in 2011 measured the concentration of poverty and minority households and the preponderance of female-headed households. He also measured housing-focused, neighborhood-oriented objectives: crime rates; vacancy and turnover rates; and new business investment in the public housing development.

After World War II, the Public Housing Act of 1949 cleared the obstacles at both the state and national levels and prevented the initiation of further low-rent housing projects after the completion of two pre-war low-rise public housing projects- Carr Square Village and Clinton Peabody Terrace and authorized federal funds for more developments in St. Louis. In the next decade, the Saint Louis Housing Authority would commission five major projects: MO 1-3 Cochran Gardens, MO 1-4 Captain Oliver Wendell Pruitt Homes, MO 1-5 William I. Igoe Apartments, MO 1-6 Vaughn and the related Vaughn Senior Citizen building, and MO 1-7 Darst-Webbe.

All the projects were designed by the firm Hellmuth, Yamasaki& Leinweber and its direct successor, Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum. George F. Hellmuth was a St. Louis native from a well-known architectural family. He graduated from Washington University’s school

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of architecture with a master’s degree in 1931. Winning a fellowship for his excellent academic performance, Hellmuth was sent to France to have a year’s architecture training at Ecole des Beaux. But when he came back in 1932, he discovered his profession was in a special state especially in St. Louis. Hellmuth soon found that it was almost impossible to develop private practice even in his father’s firm. At this early time, he mainly made working drawings for some small buildings such as police station, bus shelters. During the 1930s, he had designed a number of public buildings for the City of St. Louis. In 1939, Hellmuth went to Detroit and worked for SH&G (Smith, Hinchman and Grylls), where he met his future partner Minoru Yamasaki. In 1949 the two partnered with architect Joseph Leinweber to form a practice with offices in Detroit and St. Louis: Hellmuth, Yamasaki & Leinweber. Hellmuth's experience with the City of St. Louis left the firm well-positioned to compete for civic work; one of their earliest big jobs was the city's new airport terminal at Lambert Field. John J. Cochran Garden Apartment was the firm’s first major commission.

Professor Meehan believed that the problems of the projects built in the later 1950s including Vaughn, Darst and Webbe, would “have looked much worse if they were not compared to Pruitt-Igoe”. Vaughn and Darst were sharing very similar planning and


16 The firm in St. Louis was known as Hellmuth, Yamasaki & Leinweber while in Detroit, the office was known as Leinweber, Yamasaki & Hellmuth, according to firm description in HOK’s Architecture in the Real World.

17 St. Louis Housing Authority, Historic Recordation, 1999, 4.


designing strategies of nine-story towers; Webbe, originally the second phase of the Darst project, was completed in 1961. Two years later, an elderly building was added to Vaughn just across the O’Fallon Street. The elderly building was designed by Architects Hellmuth, Obata, and Kassabaum. According to SLHA’s *Historical Recordation*, equipping with a variety of special amenities such as wide halls, grab bars, and an emergency call system, the elderly building was the first of its kind in St. Louis and one of only a few in the nation.20 The elderly buildings proved to be the most durable of the era's SLHA developments. 21

Cochran Gardens began in 1942, because of lack of funds, the project was paused after site clearance and before the construction. The site cleared had been stayed empty for a decade. Cochran Gardens was the first to employ high-rise towers, in a complex of four-, six-, and twelve-story buildings.

The complex was built in a shallow U-shape around Neighborhood Gardens. It was the first example of the local tendency to cluster multiple low-income developments. This concentration of low-income residents dependent on public aid has been cited as one factor in the failure of many of the city's high-rise developments. Pruitt, Igoe and Vaughn, all originally intended as segregated black housing, were built adjacent to Carr Square; Darst and Webbe, slated for white residents, were added on to the Clinton-Peabody site. 22

The selection of sites reflected an intensely local set of determinations. St. Louis used public housing to deepen racial segregation and to prevent what city planner Harland


Bartholomew described as “Negro deconcentrating” from inner core neighborhoods.  

Architect Yamasaki argued that high buildings for public housing was a necessity. He believed that it was not because high-rise housing was better for living than low-rise housing, but because of social and economic limitations and requirements. He named these limitations as: “first, necessity of eliminating slums; second, the high cost of land in such slum areas; third, the question of density; fourth, the need for outdoor space in the centers of our cities.” He demonstrated his argument by firstly asserting that “we must clear slums”. “Slums are the cancers of our cities and the only time to stop a cancer is now.” Slums were regarded as cancers that would “kill our cities”. When it came to the question that why new housing should be built in the center of cities instead of outlying areas, the architect did not contest the pressure and difficulty in relocation and cost, but he insisted once a project or two was built, the pressure would be relieved. But how?

Yamasaki took example by the planning theory of “New Towns and the Town and Country Planning Acts of Great Britain.” He proposed that the planning in the country could be divided into two sections: first would be the establishment of new towns. And then public housing was conceived to be a part of “New Town” Plan, said the architect, large projects could not be built at the fringes of cities as it would be a waste of the resource in the inner city such as transportation. So he argued that building public housing in the center of the city would be


25 Ibid.

26 Ibid, 229.
a better way to take advantage of the city’s existing transportation system. At the same time, he assumed that it would provide great convenience for the decreasing population working in the central area of the city, by shortening the distance between home and office. And he again emphasized the importance of “eliminating slums.” The second section of the planning, Yamasaki disclosed, would be existing cities’ re-planning and rehabilitation, among which, removal of existing slums and rebuilding the neighborhoods would be the first task take. So in Yamasaki’s speech, high-rise housing was praised for not only providing open space outside the buildings, mitigating high land price, but also providing the community life at the same time. Other functions including laundry, outdoor drying areas and large outdoor play areas could also be provided in high-rise housing projects. In a word, high-rise approach was believed by Yamasaki and Mayor Darst- “they best suited the needs and limitations of the situation.”

Although Yamasaki regarded high-rise buildings as the best approach under the situation of the time, he did point out the limitations: high land-cost; high densities; desired outdoor space. Due to the Public Housing Administration’s insistence, they were forced to a density of 55 and 60 families per acre, which double the 35 per acre the architects planned before. Yamasaki believed the density of 25 to 35 families per acre would be ideal for offering large outdoor space and tenants’ privacy. However, every high-rise public housing project’s density exceeded this number. Cochran Garden Apartments were 39 units per acre which was

27 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
the lowest among the high-rise public housing projects; Pruitt Homes were 54.6; Igoe Apartments were 44.4; Vaughn Apartments- 39.4; Darst-44.4; and Webbe- 47.3.\textsuperscript{31}

Nonetheless, the architect Yamasaki was acutely aware of the problem. He called for enactment of laws to set the highest density to be 50 per acre for each high-rise housing project. Besides, he believed the density standard of 40 units per acre for the low-rise public housing projects set by the PHA would also not work out. As he analyzed, a density of 40 units per acre represented approximately an area of 1100 square feet for a family. Based on the PHA standards, the dwelling area of each two-story row house would take up roughly 460 square feet which then left 640 square feet area for each family. Parking area for one car needed 340 square feet. PHA standards required one-half the area for parking one car, which was 170 square feet. Then 470 square feet was left, covering streets, walkways, and drying yards. It was not enough outdoor space for children’s playing, life’s privacy, the playpen for keeping children’s safety. As Yamasaki believed, indoors and outdoors space was “one of the prime ingredients of a happy life.”\textsuperscript{32}

However, the subsequent development of high-rise public housing turns out to demonstrate the tremendous gaps between planners’ vision and the reality. How the design imagined the family structure revealed the limitation of understanding about family life in public housing projects as they imagined the numbers of bedrooms was all below four. So the big unit which contained more than 4 bedrooms were not provided adequately, resulting those big families crowded in the small units. The other side of this debate- Catherine Bauer, who focused on the living ability of new housing and concerned more about the social problems behind this. She pointed out the important issue which Yamasaki just put aside. She argued

\textsuperscript{31} St. Louis Housing Authority, “Public Housing Project Fact Sheets,” 1966-67.

that the first priority was to rehouse low-income families living in the slums. Thus, it was more urgent to provide more housing and expanding larger areas for housing construction.

Anthony F. C. Wallace, member of the Behavioral Research Council of the University of Pennsylvania, pointed out there was no answer to the high or low rises until the question of the aims of public housing “mechanically minded” and “socially minded” agreed on what they intended to do.\textsuperscript{33}

Chapter 2: The Context of Public Housing Policies and Ordinance

After the 1904 World’s Fair, St. Louis faced serious problems and radical challenges in the twentieth century. A big migration of African Americans from the south of the country and World War I led to housing segregation and race riot in July 1917. Isabel Wilkerson examined a large number of literary materials and oral histories, in order to the migration and racial prejudice through the migration process. It is mentioned that the seats on the bus from Monroe to St. Louis would be marked with wooden shingles with metal prong on the bottom, which said “colored” on one side and “white” on the other. Blacks have engaged in establishing the city but still restricted in the run-down ghettos by the invisible hand which kept the African Americans stay in their place.

In the 1930s, influenced by the Great Depression, a large number of working class people lost their jobs or could only earn very low wages. Affordable housing in the city was in a short supply and most of them were seriously deteriorated: broken structures, unsanitary condition, many of them had no toilets inside the house. Many low-income working people found it difficult to find affordable housing to live in. On this occasion, the U. S. government started to put in more efforts to provide housing for low-income families and poor people. President Franklin D. Roosevelt directly involved the federal government into the welfare revolution, through legislation and expenditure to offer public housing.

34 Joseph Heathcott, "Voices and Visions of St. Louis: Past, Present, Future" Keynote Panel https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jsUfEpZJwUc&t=704s
Having the problem of housing shortage for years, low-income families were in a tough situation and housing was very much desired by them. For a time, public housing offered new shelters for a lot of black working-class families who had been crowded in the old and decrepit row houses. Even so, the low-income especially black families were still in a great need for housing as public housing projects were somehow mainly restricted to white families. For instance, the pre-war public housing project Clinton-Peabody, was only designated for white tenants, as the St. Louis Housing Authority “justified through claims of a natural aversion between the race.”

Cochran Gardens opened in 1952 and were open for white families only. After a 1954 Supreme Court ruling ended discrimination in public housing, which caused a change in the policy, however, segregated patterns were reconstituted in other ways in the next decade.

In 1934, the Federal Housing Administration was established, which was regarded as one of the New Deal’s most successful measures. Subsequently, the National Housing Act of 1934 created the first federal program of subsidized public housing. In order to relieve the unemployment and solve the problem of substandard housing, i.e., the shortage of the decent, safe and sanitary dwellings for low-income working class families, a series of rules and regulations were introduced for the purpose of “slum clearance”. However, these regulations aggravated the existing economic and racial segregation. Under the regulations, many real estate business owners including small operators, private developers, builders, managers and appraisers, working on a local basis, became members who could participate in and implement

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38 St. Louis Housing Authority, *Historic Recordation*, 1999, 6
the federal government’s policy making.\footnote{Ramin Bavar, “Laclede Town: An Analysis Of Design And Government Policies In A Government-Sponsored Project,” St. Louis, Washington University School of Architecture M.Arch thesis, 1994.} And since they played a more engaged role in the deteriorating housing, most of which were occupied by low-income or unemployed African-Americans in the inner city, real estate business owners’ manipulation started to have a more important impact on the life of African-Americans.

Public policies and many programs set a lot of restrictions for racial minority in other ways and thus again developed the segregated housing patterns. Many housing subsidies went for the white families exclusively. According to Clarence Lang, the Federal Housing and Veterans administrations offered low interest rates for single-family dwellings in the west of the central city where a majority of white families lived.\footnote{Clarence Lang, Grassroots at the Gateway: Class Politics and Black Freedom Struggle in St. Louis, 1936-75, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 73.} Moreover, private lenders, real estate agents and other organizations including federal Home Owners’ Loan Corporation established neighborhood ratings systems that excluded black loan applicants, which resulted in more serious decay of the older neighborhoods. Finally, all these policies and programs worked together to facilitate the homeownership development for white people more and more exclusively. The sites selections for the public housing projects such as Carr Square Village, Vaughn Apartments were located in the business district’s declining northern fringe only compounded black residents’ lack of opportunities for independent homeownership and decent surroundings. According to Clarence Lang, “Housing deficiencies were also the result of continuing racial variance in income and wealth. In Missouri, legislative attempts to create state and local FEPC agencies reached a similar standstill, limiting the fight against Jim Crow hiring practices. Still, black workers held their gains in certain sectors, and even enjoyed some
modest improvement as St. Louis emerged from a postwar recession in April 1950.”

Therefore, public housing developments actually enhanced the existing segregated pattern and left black families in unfavorable conditions.

In addition to the housing regulations, zoning has been a tool used by the federal government to control the boundaries of African-Americans’ living area. The zoning plan of 1918 had allowed too great an area for industry and had permitted historic nuisances and nonconforming uses to persist. African-Americans’ movement was controlled and restricted by real estate agencies, neighborhood organizations, federal government policies, by assessing the economics of land value. African-Americans were restricted from certain areas and neighborhoods, and they were trapped in the “slum” areas in the central city. They were forced to stay in ghettos or public housing that the federal government and local housing authority later built. And after the slum clearance, public housing became the only place these families could move into. The development of public housing was implemented by the local developers and banking industries until Truman won the presidency of the U. S. in 1948. He approved a lot of public housing policies with the support of the Chamber of Commerce. The new administration passed the Housing Act of 1949, aiming to achieve the “goal of a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family.” The 1949 amendments to the Housing Act became the first to authorize slum clearance and urban renewal programs.


But for St. Louis, the redevelopment programs had been under operation before the Housing Act of 1949. As early as the 1920s, due to the highly developed industrial capitalism, developers extended out of the inner city to explore the urban peripheries thoroughly, often working with transit owners, utilities, and local government. After the rise of a powerful real estate and construction lobby in the 1920s, the federal government took a major role—largely through tax, banking, and insurance systems—in subsidizing private development of residential and commercial property on a national basis. People living in the central city were attracted by the new housing in the suburbs, not only because of the better environment, but also the banking loans guaranteed by the policies. More and more families moved out of the crowded city to the suburbs, which led to new housing programs for declining urban areas authorized by the Housing Act of 1949. The Act authorized funds to localities to assist in slum clearance and urban redevelopment, new construction, and activities not directly related to housing construction (open space land, neighborhood facilities, and basic water and sewer facilities).

The Missouri General Assembly passed the 1943 and 1945 legislation which was also known as the Missouri Urban Redevelopment Corporation Law, popular called Chapter 353. Chapter 353 was created specifically for St. Louis and authorized the clearance and redevelopment of “blighted areas.” The law’s goal was to help St. Louis deal with the shortage of decent and affordable housing and the overcapacities of the existing housing mainly in the center city. The urban renewal amendment together with Chapter 353 legislated by the federal and state governments endeavored to authorize local public agencies and also involved

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46 HUD Website https://www.huduser.gov/portal/hudtimeline_1940.html
private developers into the work of urban redevelopment projects. The Chapter 353 Urban Redevelopment Act passed in 1945 and was used for single projects or buildings.

In 1951, the state of Missouri passed the Municipal Land Clearance for Redevelopment Law, also known as Chapter 99. Chapter 99 was approved to allow certain areas to be designated as “blighted” and gave redevelopment authority (St. Louis Housing and Land Clearance Authorities) the power to operate land clearance and to purchase and sell the land to private developers usually at a reduced price.

Chapter 99 passed in 1951 would be invoked when federal dollars were needed to clear or acquire land. Chapter 99 was responsible for federal funds, and Chapter 353 aimed at facilitating redevelopment.48 The Board of Alderman approved a land clearance agency for St. Louis titled “St. Louis Housing and Land Clearance Authorities.”49

St. Louis then built two public housing projects Carr Square Village and Clinton-Peabody Terrace, both were immediately close to the downtown district. Due to World War II, housing construction was held up for defense constructions. The third project which was the later Cochran Garden Apartment planned was suspended. After World War II, housing construction increasingly grew up in a mass scale. With federal funds, and public housing was declared tax-exempt by a court decision in 1949, five major low-rent housing projects were soon under way, all primarily high-rise buildings, with federal insistence on minimizing land costs. The structures were of steel and concrete faced with brick.

Cochran Gardens, north of the central business district, completed in 1953, included 704 dwelling units, in two six story, two seven-story, and four twelve story buildings.


49 Ibid.
South of Chouteau Avenue, the Darst-Webbe complex was built on 28.5 acres between Park and Lafayette, Twelfth and Fourteenth Street. Eight high-rise buildings were to provide 1,238 units for low-income white tenants. Of the 515 old homes that had been razed for the project, 362 had lacked inside toilets and 131 had no running water. The complex opened in 1956 and 1957 with no racial bars, discrimination in public housing having been outlawed by the United States Supreme Court.

The Pruitt and Igoe Apartments, on the northwest fringe of downtown district, consisted of thirty-three eleven-story buildings each 170 feet long. Their combined capacity was nearly three thousand families. The first units opened in 1954 and 1955, the originally intended to be unsegregated but primarily black in fact.

The 657-unit Vaughn Apartments, consisting of four nine-story buildings just east of Pruitt-Igoe between Eighteenth and Twentieth Streets, opened in 1957. St. Louis had 6,138 postwar public dwelling units. Costing $80.4 million, in addition to the two prewar projects, which had provided 1,315 apartments for only $7 million.\(^{50}\)

Local press, city leaders, federal housing officials, and tenants celebrated the completion and openness of each project. Pruitt-Igoe, as one of the largest public housing projects in the nation, attracted extensive attention; planners and architects regarded Pruitt-Igoe as a model project for other cities.

But also, there was problem at the beginning. The first residents at Darst were attacked by groups of stone-throwing boys, and it was obvious that there was too little recreational space for thousands of children who lived in the high-rises.

Because of the growing need for elderly housing, during the planning of second phase of Darst and Vaughn, each high-rise building in these two projects were reversed to elderly apartment which was designed as a 9 story structure with 112 apartments.

Despite cutting cost, Pruitt-Igoe’s construction costs were 60 percent above the national average and 40 percent over the New York City average. 51

Low-rent public housing was Joseph Darst’s major goal, a part of the general framework of revitalizing the city. Raymond Tucker worked for Darst and made the chief catalyst for the effectuation of public housing projects.

By the mid-1950s, federal tax supports for commercial developers and direct federal support for highways provided incentives for unchecked growth on a scale that earlier entrepreneurs could never have imagined.52

Although St. Louis’s diversified economy made it less suffered from the Great Depression53, a population decline the 1940 United census showed for the first time as residents began to migrate to the suburbs.

In virtue of the federal policy and change of physical environment, many middle-class whites move out of the inner city to the suburban areas. Annoyed by the pollution problem and increasingly crowded migrates in the center of the city; attracted by the better environment of the suburbs, more and more middle-class white people start to move out. At the same time, the built of high-way, automobile development made the “move” very convenient. Moreover, the housing act of 1934 provide cheap mortgages for the purchase of single-family houses. As a

51 Ibid.


majority of whites moved out of the inner city, those low-income African-American who could not afford to move were left to stay and crowd in the downtown area.

Most of the African-American lived in tenements which was in a terrible condition: shortage of the gas and water supply, extremely crowded space, poor sanitary conditions. These tenements were owned by the private developer who purchased the old and unused warehouse and rebuilt them to rent out.\(^\text{54}\)

Under the context of the overcrowding migration to the city of St. Louis and the abandonment of industrial land in the inner city, a new Comprehensive Plan was approved by St. Louis in 1947 which recommended “wiping out the obsolescent blighted areas and the costly decayed slums”\(^\text{55}\) and replacing them with low-rise residential buildings and public parks\(^\text{56}\). The plan was adopted but city mayor Joseph Darst replacing low-rise housing proposed by Harland Bartholomew with high-rise, high-density public housing. They anticipated that the new projects would attract the middle-class back from suburban and save the city of St. Louis.\(^\text{57}\)

In this plan, Harland Bartholomew claimed that “Blighted districts should be extensively rehabilitated before they degenerate into obsolete area, both a social need and an economic essential because of high rates of juvenile delinquency, crime and disease found in areas of poor housing. rehabilitation of blighted areas must be taken on a neighborhood basis also in order to protect environment and to create improved living standards. the new Constitution of


\(^{55}\) Saint Louis (Mo.). City Plan Commission, *Comprehensive City Plan, Saint Louis, Missouri* (St. Louis: Comfort Ptg& Stationery, for the Commission, 1947).

\(^{56}\) Ibid.

Missouri specifically provides for this type of rehabilitation. enactment of a Minimum Standards Housing Ordinance,”58

Early 1918 zoning ordinance of St. Louis was held unconstitutional in 1923 and the city was without zoning protection and direction for two and one-half years. In 1926, a revised and badly compromised zoning plan was adopted. 59

As the poverty was not provided government assistance with the choice of retirement instead of having to work as low-wage labor. The social security system did not provide people with an alternative to low-wage work. And African Americans were excluded from the option. New Deal legislation was shaped by whites and they had the power and could push through the legislation they want to put through. White democratic social security act, power over labor, determine whether people can choose to work when 65 years old. Payroll tax, unconstitutional state government employee contributes to payroll tax, made by the federal government, so people do not believe it.

Federal government made mortgage more accessible, by shifting the way they assess the property value, instead of assessing value based on material conditions of a house, they assess value based on location, demographics, access to jobs, and also surrounding neighborhood. So the assess of the value of the house is highly subjective, increasingly racialized, so the color-coded maps were created. FHA not give the mortgage directly but insure the mortgage. FHA removed the risks of the banks to give loans to white home buyers to buy house in suburban, and at the same time keep black families impossible to get the mortgage to invest capital and create home ownership.60 So, there is unleashing credits for

58 Harland Bartholomew, Comprehensive City Plan: Saint Louis, Missouri (St. Louis, 1947), 31.

59 Harland Bartholomew, Comprehensive City Plan: Saint Louis, Missouri (St. Louis, 1947), 19.
home construction in white suburbs for white home buyers. It’s making it possible for white home buyers to buy single-family houses in the brand new suburbs. So it subsidized American suburbs’ development. On the other hand, it’s starving urban neighborhood for capital, because it makes it impossible to get investment capital in any urban neighborhood and for black families to get close to those houses. These patterns of the legislation demonstrated the shift in popular understanding of the relationship between citizens and the state.

Housing Act of 1934, legislated during the Great Depression as a part of New Deal. Federal government provided cheap mortgages money for families. It was a success at first, but then it became an investment like stock market. People buy houses and then sell them to earn the profits.\(^{61}\) It finally resulted in a high interest rates and inflation.

The original urban renewal was aimed to attract back the lost residence, provide adequate decent housing, and regenerate the economy in the central city.\(^{62}\) This process not only was supported by the federal and local government but also involves the public redevelopment corporations and private investment.\(^{63}\) The city utilized the federal money, with the support of laws and ordinance legislated by federal government, as well as local initiatives provide the housing and regenerate the economy in the central city to conduct this mammoth urban renewal project.

The St. Louis Housing Authority was created under this circumstance in 1930s to solve the problem of housing shortage. Under the 1937 Housing Act, St. Louis built its first public housing projects: Clinton-Peabody on Chouteau Avenue which provided 1300 units for whites


and Carr Square Village for blacks on the northwest of downtown. Both of them were completed in 1942. Each of them was consisted of 50 low-rise row houses totally provided 650 units. During the second World War, construction was diverted from residence to industries. Thousands of transplants moved into already crowded neighborhoods to work in the factories. After the war, many housing left was old and deteriorated, and not enough for the increasing immigrants. Both the war and the unstable Missouri tax status of federal housing projects slowed the housing construction. Harland Bartholomew’s comprehensive plan suggested to clear the slum and blight areas in the central city of St. Louis and replace them with low-rise community with open space, greenery, adequate facilities and playground. As Alexander von Hoffman examined the reasons in his article “why they built Pruitt-Igoe”, the new Mayor Joseph M. Darst elected in 1949 played an important role in transforming the planned low-rise to high-rise towers. He was impressed by the Manhattan in New York City and ambitious to redevelop St. Louis to be an urban center. He said, “Children given the opportunity of residing under healthful community conditions and rescued from the squalor of slums will have greater physical, spiritual and economic strength to carry on the traditions of democracy.”

Federal policies provide important funds for public housing projects. Sufficient subsidize enables the budget for a larger-scale planning and construction. In addition, low rise,  


low density was only possible on cheap vacant lands\textsuperscript{68}, according to Robert Kohn, the first director of the PWA’s Housing Division.

So almost ten years after the completion of Clinton-Peabody Terrace and Carr Square Village, St. Louis built its first high-rise public housing project after the war- Cochran Gardens.

Chapter 3: The First High-Rise Public Housing Project in St. Louis: MO 1-3 John J. Cochran Garden Apartments

After the passage of 1937 Housing Act, SLHA acquired the funds to build two public housing projects which was intended to accomplish the goals of building decent, affordable housing for the poor and at the same time, getting rid of structures which were considered slums. By the end of 1941, construction on Carr Square Village and Clinton-Peabody Terrace was underway and St. Louis Housing Authority began site clearance for the third project later named Cochran Gardens.69

After almost all the land had been acquired and cleared, the development program was suspended because of the United States’ entry into World War II.70 Funding for the third project was terminated which directly halted the public housing development.

Almost eight years later, Congress’s passage of Housing Act of 1949 reactivated the project. Funds for public housing became available again. But by this time, the federal Public Housing Administration actively discouraged low-rise projects and encouraged denser high-rise buildings.71

Even months before the new Housing Act was legislated, the City abandoned the original architects who designed the first two low-rise public housing and engaged architect

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70 St. Louis Housing Authority, Annual Report, 1950, 8.

George Hellmuth. Hellmuth was then set on a tour of public housing programs in other cities.\textsuperscript{72}

John J. Cochran Garden is the first high-rise public housing project which was designed in 1950 and completed in 1954 for low-income families in St. Louis. Different from the pre-war public housing development, which was relatively unrestrained in developing the program with clients, post-war public housing development faced more constraints: strict budget, wartime material shortages. And these constraints greatly limited the design work for public housing such as density, heights, land coverage, numbers of dwelling units and materials.\textsuperscript{73}

Moreover, Congress placed severe restrictions on housing.\textsuperscript{74}

\textbf{Before Clearance for the Construction of Cochran Gardens}

Cochran Garden project was located in the Columbus neighborhood and placed by the side of the neighborhood gardens. The site was in a blighted area near North side of Downtown St. Louis bounded by Ninth St. to the west, south of Cass Ave to the north, Seventh St. to the east, and Carr St. to the South. It was about six blocks from the central business district. For the site where Cochran Gardens was located, it was a historical district before the clearance.

Columbus Square was located to the northeast of the old downtown area. According to Norbury Wayman’s \textit{History of St. Louis Neighborhoods} written in 1970, a number of two- and three- story row-houses were built to the north side of the downtown district, after 1840. These provided high density tenement quarters for the immigrant laborers who arrived here in the


1840's and 1850's. Many of these structures later fell before the wave of commercial and industrial construction which began after the Civil War. 75 At Tenth Street and Carr Street lived southern Italians. 76

According to Norbury Wayman’s history survey, the old north slums became deteriorated and noxious as early as 1870. Residents of all ages and races who lived in the slum homes were so obsessed by poverty, vandalism and crime that the tenements even had nicknames such as "Castle Thunder", "Crabber Alley" and "Wild Cat Chute." 77 Then, with the truck terminals and industries replacing a great number of slum houses, more and more residents gradually left the neighborhood. More and more slums were torn down, following the erection of industries, public housing projects brought housing back to the neighborhood, however, most of them were of much different structures compared to the early two to three stories’ row houses. Two public housing projects were raised here: Neighborhood Gardens Apartments built in 1936 and the Cochran Gardens public housing built in 1952.

Fire insurance maps illustrated the spatial organization of the residences described in Charlotte Rumbold’s Housing Conditions in St. Louis: Report of the Housing Committee of the Civic League of St. Louis (1908). Also in Diane E. Wallman’s Master Thesis “Meat Me in St. Louis: An Analysis of 19th Century Historic Faunal Remains from Cochran Gardens,” it analyzed Charlotte Rumbold’s report especially by studying how the location of different structures related to roads, alleys and buildings. According to the report: The typical block


presented a solid front to the street of two or three-story buildings of brick or wood. Then another such front faced the alley. And the residences in the alley would be equipped with a separate address for the postman.  

Each house covered the entire width of the lot with both front and rear. The entrance to the yard between the two houses was a passageway under part of the building, roofed over by the story above.

The alley tenements in the area were described as dilapidated, miserable and dirty, the people in them “poorer, sicklier, less cleanly and generally of lower standards in every way than those who live in front.”

A yard on O’Fallon Street between 7th and 14th Streets, according to the report, 134 persons shared four water-closets over a vault. And this was the normal density of use in the district.

While there seems to be a great deal of variability, from the mid-19th to the early 20th century, both the street and the alley buildings housed on average between 4 to 6 families each. The crowding within each tenement and flat varied from building to building, as did the organization of the residences. Some families lived in 44 flats containing simply a living room, kitchen and bedroom, others contained parlors and multiple bedrooms. Most residences in 1908 were recorded as containing kitchens, but “the gasoline stove comes out in May and the


79 Ibid.


cooking goes on out of doors.” In 1908, two-thirds of the apartments required rents under $10 per month.

The Development and Organization of Cochran Garden’s Master Plan

In its annual report, St. Louis Housing Authority believed that low-income housing programs not only provided families who once lived in slums with decent dwellings, but also a new environment with less juvenile delinquency, and “fuller, healthier and more useful lives”.

Restrictions and design changes reflected important shifts in policy and funding priorities.

In February of 1950, the Federal Public Housing Administration approved working drawings for the third low-rent housing project in St. Louis-known as MO1-3.

During the past years, SLHA built and financed the three projects: Carr Square Village, Clinton Peabody Terrace, and John J. Cochran Gardens from funds borrowed from private banks and investment syndicates. It sold short-term securities to private investors at very low interest rates ranging from about one-half of one percent to one and one-eight percent a year. At the end of each six-month period the notes were refinanced. The last refinancing brought a bid rate of .93 of one percent. Ultimately the Authority will switch to a long term permanent

82 Ibid.


84 St. Louis Housing Authority, Annual Report, 1950, 9.

financing which will make possible more rapid retirement of the investment. In order to keep rents low, however, once in permanent financing the Authority had to draw upon the available Federal contributions as needed to offset higher annual debt service costs. Federal government backed 90% of the Housing Authority bonds and making annual contributions to enable projects to be built and rented at low rents. In turn, Housing Authority could contribute back to the Federal Government through tax-exemption of the project. Originally this was to be 3% of the “net shelter rent.” That was the rent paid by the tenant less the cost of supplying the tenant utilities. However, the Housing Act of 1949 permitted this 3% contract figure to be changed to 10%.

During the war years, when the projects were not used for low-rent purposes but served to house war workers, the Federal Government allowed “voluntary payments” of taxes to the City in addition to the 3% “payments in lieu of taxes.” These “voluntary payments” made the payments from the Authority to the City during the war years equal to full taxes if the projects were otherwise assessed and taxable. From the list of the payments made by the housing authority, it could be seen that after 1948, the “payments in lieu of taxes” increased due to the increased 10% contract.86

MO 1-3 John J. Cochran Gardens for white tenants was authorized by the PHA in November of 1941.87 Immediately, the SLHA initiated site preparation on land designated as “blighted” by the Board of Aldermen. Once Congress appropriated funds for MO 1-3, the city engaged the services of Fred Hommond and E. C. Koch, architects with the local firm Jamieson


and Spearl. Because of the shift to high-rise construction after the war, the Jamieson and Spearl was eventually terminated by the Housing Authority.\footnote{Joseph Heathcott, "The City Remade: Public Housing and the Urban Landscape in St. Louis, 1900-1960", 337.}

According to a special section titled “Award-Winning Architect: George Hellmuth and His Career” published in St. Louis Post-Dispatch of May 13, 1956, Through a combination of practical ability, firm prestige, energy, salesmanship and political connections, Hellmuth obtained himself appointed architect for the St. Louis Housing Authority and went to work on the Carr street housing project which is now known as the John J. Cochran Garden Apartments. The project won him the medal of the St. Louis Chapter of the American Institute Architects and an honorable mention from the Architectural League of New York.\footnote{St. Louis Post-Dispatch, May 13, 1956, 3L.}

The architects studied plans used in New York Public Housings. However, they found the plans did not apply to the public housing projects in St. Louis due to the different building codes.\footnote{St. Louis Post-Dispatch, May 25, 1952, 94.}

For instance, in St. Louis, “smoke-proof” stairwells were required while other large cities were not.

According to Hellmuth, the Cochran Gardens was “an adaptation of many housing plans with several innovations unique in St. Louis”\footnote{St. Louis Post-Dispatch, May 25, 1952, 106.} and “with the experience gained at Cochran, it has been possible to improve on those plans still further in the Capt. Wendell O. Pruitt Apartments.” Hellmuth explained, “Whatever public housing is built in the future will be even better, as architects gain more knowledge of the problems and possibilities of their particular field”. Comparing to Cochran, Hellmuth believed that the Pruitt Project had been
improved over the Cochran Apartments “up-to-the-minute in every respect on the basis of present standards.”\textsuperscript{92} Hellmuth and Minoru Yamasaki designed corridor space as recreational room in the Pruitt project and arranged laundry room “so that no one has to go more than one floor to reach them.”\textsuperscript{93} Yamasaki explained that it was not easy for a mother with several pre-school children to take clothes to the laundry on first or basement floors with the kids.

On May 25, 1952, \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch} reported Cochran Gardens having a three-day open house observance. John J. O’Toole, executive director of the St. Louis Housing Authority, replaced the planned formal dedication with a three-day open house at Cochran Gardens to let “more people can see what we are doing over there.” Mayor Darst commented on O’Toole’s open house program by saying “I sincerely believe all St. Louisans can be extremely proud of today’s tangible evidence that our efforts to rid the city of slums and replace them with decent housing for low-income families are meeting with success. At Cochran, we not only have one of the most modern public housing projects in the nation, but one which is serving as a pattern for other areas throughout our country. Although we are opening this 704-family project today, we are also going forward with other projects which in the next few years will make public housing accommodations available for 9000 St. Louis families or 40000 persons in the low-income brackets”, he stated, “I can think of no better way for the citizens of St. Louis to fight its slum problems which breed Communism, crime, juvenile delinquency and disease than through this great public housing program which is working hand-in-hand with private capital in the urban redevelopment program.”\textsuperscript{94}

\textsuperscript{92} \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, May 25, 1952, 106.

\textsuperscript{93} \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, May 25, 1952, 106.

\textsuperscript{94} \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, May 25, 1952, 106.
A day nursery, a community building and a project office, facilities include space and equipment for athletic activities, cooking and sewing classed and classed in adult education. Outside recreational space included tot lots, a baseball field, places to “just sit,” and other playing grounds.

Buildings were built with reinforced concrete and buff face brick, casement sash, concrete floors. Each apartment had a bathroom and was equipped with a range, a refrigerator, closet space, and each had an outside balcony. A new type brick called the “SCR” brick has been developed by the structural clay product research institute, permitting sturdier but less expensive home construction.⁹⁵

A picture titled “tentative new design for housing” published on July 1, 1949’s St. Louis Post-Dispatch demonstrated that new architect Hellmuth was presenting his sketch for a six-story building for MO 1-3 project. Mayor Darst, chairman of St. Louis Housing Authority, Blumeyer and attorney of SLHA, Paul J. Kaveney were examining the sketch. They were planning for the city’s third low-rent public housing project which would provide 1248 family apartments, on the north of the downtown district owned by the St. Louis Housing Authority. The proposal would be submitted to federal officials for approval, according to the Post-Dispatch of May 25, 1952. It was proposed to erect 12 buildings, each 13 stories high, on the 18-acre site offering eight separate apartments on each floor of each building. The site was located on the north of the downtown area bounded by Carr, Seventh and 9th Streets and the alley south of Cass avenue, except the eastern block which had been occupied by sponsored by Neighborhood Association. Neighborhood Gardens Apartments bounded by O’Fallon, North 7th, Biddle and North 8th Streets were built in 1933 and designed by Hoener, Baum& Froese.

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⁹⁵ St. Louis Post-Dispatch, May 25, 1952, 106.
The low-rent housing project was acclaimed for not only well planned, designed and constructed, but also using St. Louis’ traditional vernacular bricks. 96

On the west side of the Cochran Gardens site, across two streets, on the Biddle and North 11th Streets, sit the St. Joseph’s Catholic Church which now is one of the landmarks of St. Louis. 97 It was first built in 1844 by the Jesuits. Then in 1866, the building was expanded. In 1881, Adolphus Druding designed the Baroque façade and tower cupolas to the building. At the early 20th century, the St. Joseph started to show decay as the industry came. Tower cupolas were demolished in 1954. Two nearby churches built in the 19th century were demolished during the urban renewal. 98

The 12 buildings which were designated for middle-income families of this time, would cover only 11 per cent of the area of the site, leaving extensive provision for light and air and for landscaping and recreational spaces.

On July 1, 1949, City and housing officials announced the engagement of George F. Hellmuth as architect for the project, examined tentative sketches by Hellmuth calling for six-story buildings. As the authority considered the previous public housing projects were too “barren and ugly”99, Blumeyer requested Hellmuth to pay more attention to the appearance, and when it came to the building cost, Blumeyer believed that Clinton-Peabody Terrace could have been much improved in the appearance if adding $200,000 at most to the final $2,500,000 budget. Hellmuth conceived to use different types of bricks to make the structures show more attractive appearance.


98 Ibid.

99 St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 1, 1949.
However, Arthur A. Blumeyer, chairman of the St. Louis Housing Authority, an arm of the city government, told the Post-Dispatch that Hellmuth would lay before regional officials of the Federal Public Housing Authority at Chicago similar plans with 13-story structures.

Hellmuth has made preliminary architectural studies for the new establishment. He will proceed now to develop the plans in greater detail, for submission to PHA. How soon that can be done has not been determined. Announcement of the local authority's intention to proceed as quickly as possible with this housing project followed immediately after passage of the new national housing act by the House Wednesday. The undertaking will be carried out under terms of that act.

Mayor Joseph M. Darst announced the intention to draw new plans after a conference with Blumeyer, Hellmuth and Paul J. Kaveney, attorney for the authority. Appointment of Hellmuth was recommended by the Mayor and Blumeyer said the authority found him highly acceptable. The authority agreed to issue to Hellmuth a letter of intent to employ him as the architect when funds become available under the new law.

The architect Hellmuth presented two sets of sketches. One was for an “in-line" plan, calling for long buildings with a long central corridor on each floor, flanked on either side by apartments. The other was for cross-shaped buildings.

He recommended the in-line type because it would provide general cross-ventilation and give all kitchens outside ventilation, and because it afforded greater privacy. He also exhibited a rough rendering of the exterior design in-line building. Using of a six-story and 12 six-story structures the project would have 576 apartments. One elevator would be required for each building at six stories or two elevators at 13 stories. Each apartment would have a combination living and dining room, a kitchen, a bathroom and at least one separate bedroom.
Some units would have two or three bedrooms, or possibly four, as PHA called attention to the desirability of providing for large families.¹⁰⁰

No through street would be left within the site, but only abbreviated sections of Biddle, O'Fallon and Eighth streets, with provision for parking of tenant’s automobiles on them. The buildings would be scattered over the site with appreciable distances between them, leaving considerable space for trees and shrubbery. Hellmuth proposed to include a major recreational area near the north end of the site, probably including a baseball diamond and tennis courts, and six minor play areas elsewhere. City and school playgrounds were near the site also. Brick walls would be used and the framework presumably would be the usual steel and concrete.

Hellmuth conceived to apply a variety of types of brick to enhance the appearance of the structures. The exterior design sketch he submitted showed a structure of extreme simplicity of lines, almost box-like, except for a recess at the point of the central hallway.

And, the architect confidently told the City Hall conference that he believed the design would prove attractive once carried out in greater detail.

Blumeyer requested Hellmuth to give careful attention to the matter of appearance, as the authority's present low-rent housing establishments have been criticized as “barren and ugly.”¹⁰¹ The authority will be confronted with requirements to limit its expenditures, but Blumeyer, recalling that Clinton-Peabody Terrace cost about $2,500,000 to build, said it could have been made much more attractive at a cost of not more than $200,003 additional. Notably, no cost estimate of the proposed new project had been made at this time.¹⁰²

If 13-story buildings were used, the new establishment, known at that time only by the symbol, "M-3" would accommodate a population of 3000 to 5000, depending on the size of

¹⁰⁰ St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 1, 1949, 3.
¹⁰¹ Ibid.
¹⁰² St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 1, 1949, 3.
families. Old plans for this site, which was almost entirely vacant land, had been scrapped by the authority. They called for numerous structures, varyingly of two-story and three-story height, for 551 apartments. Blumeyer said the design was unattractive and too large a portion of the site would have been occupied by buildings under this plan. The site cost the authority about $578,000. Several years ago PHA earmarked a capital guarantee of $2,755,000 for the project, which allotment still stands. However, it was made at the now outmoded allowance of $5000 per apartment, which is insufficient at present costs and for the larger number of units now contemplated.\textsuperscript{103}

Attorney Kaveney told the Post-Dispatch that cost limitations in the new bill $1750 per room or possibly as much as $2500 per room, depending on conditions should prove workable for St. Louis. This would amount to $6125 or $8750 per apartment for the minimum size planned, three and one-half rooms. The proposed 1248-apartment capacity of M-3 compared with a total of 1315 dwellings in the St. Louis authority's existing enterprises, Carr Square Village and Clinton-Peabody Terrace.\textsuperscript{104}

According to the first plans at the SLHA dated 1950, the complex was composed of 12 red brick high-rises towers and organized to provide open space between the units to provide a sense of community. The project was planned for 704 units in total housing 3070 persons on a site of 18.03 acres. They were designed in line with the modern and simplified principle with 12 towers sitting in the site, the buildings on the ground only occupied 11.5% of the site area.\textsuperscript{105} The building density was 39 units per acre. The architect designed three types of

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{105} Lynn Josse and Michael R. Allen of Preservation Research Office, “Cochran Tower-Architectural and Historical Documentation”, St. Louis Housing Authority, April 12, 2011, 2. MO1-3 Fact Sheet, St. Louis Housing Authority files.
buildings for the 12 tall buildings including six 6-story high buildings, two 7-story high buildings, and four 12-story high buildings. All of them were built as independent red brick high-rise buildings.\textsuperscript{106} It was reported that no unusual methods or materials were possible under the PHA regulations. So the architects had to pay more efforts on the planning to achieve the living qualities and economies.\textsuperscript{107}

The architect elaborated the design intentions and ideas in an article published by \textit{Architecture Record} of June 1954 by stating:

“...we tried to eliminate the stigma often attached to such projects, and it was imperative to avoid a feeling of regimentation. To help accomplish this, the spaces between the units were as carefully studied as the units, building heights were varied, design details such as entrances were individually considered, and primary colors were used on balcony doors. The emphasis on residential quality seems to help eliminate some of the institutional aspects common to such projects and appears to justify a design approach rather than a statistical approach as a basis for planning.”\textsuperscript{108}

The site was acquired before World War II for a project of 550 units covered 18 acres, but the postwar housing shortage forced a much larger number of units in the same limited space. To keep the openness, the high-rise scheme was adopted. Of the open public space, 40 percent was for lawn, 10 percent was for plants, 3 percent was for sitting, walking and parking.

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.


Walking paths were covered with red bricks, and designed to give each building its own privacy and individuality. Architects made efforts to break regiments and provide more diversities in both exterior and interior of units. Each building was equipped with individual porches and balcony doors were also brightly painted.

Landscape was designed by Harland Bartholomew & Associates. William C. E. Becker, who was a Chief Engineer of Bridges and Buildings for the city, was designated as the Structural Engineer for the project. The project also won the gold medal from the St. Louis chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1953 and an Honorable Mention in the architectural League of New York’s 1953 exhibition.

In June 1954’s *Architectural Record*, an article named “St. Louis: High Rise Buildings and Balconies” published to praise the primary idea of highlighting the residential quality with open space and public facilities. Speaking of the design ideas, the architects say, “we tried to eliminate the stigma often attached to such projects and it was imperative to avoid a feeling of regimentation.” So the architects not only carefully studied the space of the units themselves but also the space between the housing units. To meet the required units at the restricted site, high-rise could be the only approach to the openness that the architects desired. The space designed between the units were used for recreation, play spaces and drying yards. Each ground floor or basement floor provides space for laundries and storage. Each building unit has an individual balcony and tenants could use it as a private “front porch”.

Cochran Garden Apartments were the first project that used concrete block in public housing construction in St. Louis. However, due to the building code which required most

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109 *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Sep. 9, 1956.

110 *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Sep. 9, 1956.

multi-story buildings to sustain four-hour fire resistance which was considered restrictive and expensive to the building industry, only the masonry block unit was allowed to be used. Masonry blocks are made of aerated concrete by stacking and placing the concrete with mortar.\textsuperscript{112} To increase the strength of the wall, these blocks are often placed vertical and horizontal steel reinforcement bars into the concrete. By this means, masonry block walls are a cost-effective alternative to brick walls. Due to the lack of aesthetics of masonry blocks, architects designed to place the masonry blocks behind the brick wall so that it still kept the brick façade while cutting the cost of the typical interior brick wall by replacing them with cheap but strong masonry block.

In 1956, the Mayor Tucker called a meeting with a group of building industry people regarding developing a new Building Code for St. Louis. Through five years consulting and discussion, the new Building Code was legislated March 31, 1961.\textsuperscript{113} The \textit{New York Times} published an article named “St. Louis Revises Its Building Code” on March 28, 1961. Different from the old Building Code which was enacted in 1945, designating specific building materials for specific types of construction, this new Building Code enabled the construction company to use any building materials meeting the requirement of “fire-safety, strength and durability”.\textsuperscript{114} While the old code required most multi-story buildings to sustain four-hour fire resistance which was considered restrictive and expensive to the building industry, the new Code ran into controversy though. Supporters includes those developers who were planning high-cost projects and some believed that the new Code attached enough importance to fire

\textsuperscript{112} “Masonry Block Wall”, \url{http://www.timberpost.com.au/glossary/masonry-block-wall/}

\textsuperscript{113} “St. Louis Historic Preservation,” accessed March 20, 2017, \url{http://stlcin.missouri.org/history/peopledetail.cfm?Master_ID=987}.

safety. On the other hand, some parts of the new Code were opposed by the masonry industry and the “International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers”, as they had been required by more restrict fire safety regulations under the old Building Code.

Subsequently, the pass of the new Code accelerated the redevelopment of many public housing projects, some of which had been delayed before. They utilized less-expensive building materials and construction methods which were not permitted under the old code.

Through the study of the public housing projects in St. Louis, it was Cochran Garden Apartments designed in 1950 when concrete block firstly came into use in public housing architecture in St. Louis as an early form-masonry block. At this time, concrete block replaced the half brick wall in the low-rise public housing projects as a more affordable building material.

(in the early public housing projects: Carr Square Village and Clinton-Peabody, the typical exterior wall was composed of two layers of bricks.) So the typical wall consisted of bricks facing outside and concrete block facing inside. This is a typical use in Cochran Gardens, Darst Apartment and Blumeyer Apartments. Pruitt-Igoe housing complex exhausted a variety of forms and organizations of concrete blocks to achieve a unique architecture effect. This, in a sense, reflects the endeavor and ambitions that the government officials and public has put into this large scale public housing project.

In addition to the traditional way of using concrete blocks in foundation construction, concrete block replaced traditional building material such as brick and masonry to cut the building cost and at the same time guarantee the safety and strength. Furthermore, the issue of new building code made possible a new lighter concrete block coming into use in public housing due to the change of composition in concrete block.

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115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
In a word, as the result of the economic and building technology development as well as policy making, public was developing toward a more cost-effective, lighter and more simplified way with the participation of concrete block.

**The Management and Quality of Life in Cochran Garden Apartments**

As Catherine T. Ingraham pointed out in his article in Inland Architect, Cochran Gardens had been influenced by its struggle for “self-rule”. After the deterioration and vacancy, the community of public housing tried to redevelop the Cochran Gardens. A group was established to survey the tenants’ need and what they thought should be changed in Cochran. The results of the survey showed that one of the tenants’ concern was safety. Many thought the portholes were decorative, but the guards use these portholes to monitor people coming and going. As the tenants were mostly unemployed women with children, Bertha Gilkey, the president of the Cochran Gardens Tenant Management Corporation, launched the “resident empowerment” campaign to let the tenants take control as a way of tenant management. In the 1970s, the community elected an organization named “Tenant Affairs Board” which represented the community in the redevelopment of Cochran Gardens.  

The Board was part of the redevelopment team together with McCormick and Baron development companies. They conducted a series actions such as site studies, political and community evaluation without fund support to make Cochran Gardens a better place to live. Tenant managers have devoted a lot of efforts dealing with physical maintenance of the apartments and social problems of the tenants.  

Starting from 1976, the Tenant Management Corp (TMC) had successfully managed Cochran, transformed the conditions and made it a better place to live for over 20 years.

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Between 1978 and 1992, SLHA offered a renovation grant of more than $33 million to Cochran, more than any other public housing project in St. Louis.

Cochran Gardens became well known as one of the successful projects of residents living in the worst public housing trying to improve their living conditions. It even once became a model that President George W. Bush visited Cochran Gardens in 1991 showing how public housing projects can be managed in the country. However, the success did not last long when the detreating issues that the tenant managers had little control over them came out, a decade after the management of tenants indicated problems existing in this early experiment of public housing manage system.

Although tenant management improved the living conditions in Cochran Gardens, the limitations still existed. As New York Times reported, on the night of Sunday, September 29, 1992, four teenagers climbed into a gray Oldsmobile Cutlass and headed for Cochran Gardens. When they arrived, they hit the gas and roared into a courtyard, set the fire around in a group of youths. Amanda Terry living on the sixth floor, heard the shots and ran out of the apartment to see his nephew laying on the ground with a bullet in his chest. At that time, St. Louis murder rate had increased out of control.

The Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1996 required viability assessments of public housing projects with 10 percent or higher vacancy. By 1999, Cochran public housing did

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119 Uche A. Oluku, Dissertation “A Comparative Analysis of the Effectiveness of the Hope VI Program in Revitalizing Conventional Public Housing Sites: A Multiple Case Study in St. Louis”, University of Missouri-St. Louis, April 7, 2011.


122 Uche A. Oluku, Dissertation “A Comparative Analysis of the Effectiveness of the Hope VI Program in Revitalizing Conventional Public Housing Sites: A Multiple Case Study in St. Louis”, University of Missouri-St. Louis, April 7, 2011.
not meet HUD’s viability assessment. In 2002, 289 units of Cochran Gardens were demolished under HUD’s Conversion Plan.

The even-look façade made each individual building more exposed to crime.\textsuperscript{123} In the late 1960s, Cochran was rife with crimes and poverty. The building’s physical conditions were severely deteriorated like other high-rise public housing projects in St. Louis. In 1969, public housing tenants called rent strikes in St. Louis. Cochran Gardens’ occupancy became only 65 percent in 1970.\textsuperscript{124} In 1976, as the vacancy rate increased to 50 percent, according to one accounting of Cochran Gardens, the housing was seriously deteriorated, and public housing authority even the police was afraid to go into the building.\textsuperscript{125}

Cochran Gardens was vandalized during the rent strike. One building was vacant, broken pipes caused flooding. Lobbies, entrance were most seriously vandalized: walls were marked, mailboxes were destroyed, elevators were attacked.

In 1998, another rent strike took place against the Cochran Tenant Management Association that a group of tenants refused to pay the rents. Later that year, the SLHA’s Director accused that the Tenant Management association did not use the funds in a proper way. Then the management contract with the Cochran Tenant Management Association was ended by the SLHA.\textsuperscript{126}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{123} Catherine T. Ingraham, “A Design for Public Housing, Tenant Management Thrives at Cochran Gardens”, Inland Architect, July/August 1986.
\item \textsuperscript{124} Charles Kimball Bummings, “Rent Strike in St. Louis: The Making of Conflict in Modern Society.” PhD diss. Washington University, St. Louis, 1976, 86.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Catherine T. Ingraham, “A Design for Public Housing, Tenant Management Thrives at Cochran Gardens”, Inland Architect, July/August 1986, 42.
\item \textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Chapter 4: MO 1-6 George L. Vaughn Apartments

Immediately after the Housing Act was passed in July of 1949, the SLHA began to make plans to rehabilitate other areas besides the three areas prior the war. Reports and studies of the City Plan Commission together with additional surveys and studies made by the Authority, resulted in the selection of a forty-six block area, comprising some 152 acres, in the DeSoto-Carr neighborhood as the next area to be redeveloped. SLHA planned to spend approximately $50,000,000 in the area. After all these studies, it was decided that this area should be rehabilitated jointly by the City of St. Louis by its providing a twenty-two acre park, the Authority by building low-rent public housing units on 100 acres of ground, and Urban Redevelopment Corporations using private capital to provide middle-income housing and commercial facilities to serve the people in this area. According to the annual report, to keep family displacement at a minimum, the SLHA selected a site with most vacant land for the MO. 1-4 project, a 34 acres-area which was planned bounded two sides of the city park and for 1522 dwelling units while the north was planned for the fifth project MO. 1-5 on 25 acres for 1296 units.

As recorded in the 1949-50 annual report of the City Plan Commission, St. Louis Housing Authority prepared the preliminary plans for reconstruction of the DeSoto-Carr neighborhood district bounded by 18th street, Jefferson Avenue, Franklin Avenue, Cass Avenue. The plan for DeSoto-Carr called for low-rent housing projects in three successive stages to be known as MO-4, MO-5, MO-6, comprising approximately 2,490 families on 83 acres and 750

dwelling units for middle-rent housing on 25 acres. At this time, MO-4 was designed for six-story buildings, MO-5 and MO-6 designed for two- and three-story buildings. Apart from the housing projects, the plan also included one large and one small park on some 19 acres. Another eight acres intended for a new public school site and an enlarged existing public school site in addition to a 4.5 acres’ site for enlargement of St. Stanislaus Catholic Church and School.

On September 27, 1950, the City Plan Commission approved the preliminary site plan for the DeSoto-Carr district of approximately 100 acres excluding parks and schools. Preliminary plans called for a number of 11 story elevator type apartment buildings for about 72 families each, and a number of two story row-type houses. The plan also proposed a 22.5 acres’ recreational area ant three or four acres designed for school site.

As the plan and a Hugh Ferris drawing of 1950 showed, Bartholomew and the commission envisioned arrangements of garden apartment buildings with verdant pedestrian courts. The redeveloped areas would adapt the work of Wright and Stein and the Zeilenbau model to produce residential complexes similar to the better-designed public housing projects of the 1930s such as Carl Mackley Houses in Philadelphia and Techwood Homes in Atlanta.

According to the Post-Dispatch of 1949, December 25, “some taller buildings might be provided at the start”, spokesmen said, “to get a larger number of new dwellings quickly available” thinking that would facilitate removal of families from other parts of this or other slum-clearance sites.

Mayor Darst told reporters it was intended to use the city-owned DeSoto playground, a bare block (Twenty-second, Twenty - third, O'Fallon, Division) as the first scene of construction. This would make possible erection of an appreciable number of dwellings without disturbing any present residents of the area. A large park would be provided later. According to the plan, a large volume of other land vacant or used for industrial purposes in the site could be utilized at an early stage to avoid dispossessing residents until new housing was available for them. But none of the specific plan and measures for the uses was provided.

**The DeSoto-Carr Neighborhood Before Clearance**

DeSoto-Carr Neighborhood which was bounded by the 18th Street, Jefferson, Franklin, and Cass. It was named for two of the 82 neighborhood residential units into which the city had been divided by the Plan Commission. The total area was 180 acres, of which 80 acres were occupied by existing public streets and by establishments which was proposed to leave untouched.

The site had 3208 families living on it before the clearance for reconstruction, representing a population of about 11,200, mostly blacks, with some whites occupying the northeastern corner.\(^\text{132}\)

As shown by the 1940 census, dwellings in this area were nearly all more than 50 years old and none was less than 30 years old. The census showed that the great preponderance of dwellings was classed as substandard—in need of major repairs or proper sanitary facilities. To a large extent they were overcrowded 10 years before 1949 and indications were that this condition had grown worse. Rents in much of the area were $10 to $14 per dwelling monthly. All were less than $20. However, as families there usually “doubling up” under the same roofs, the actual rent was much lower. Ownership of homes was relatively small and the extent of mortgages was small. St. Stanislaus Church, school, on twentieth street, between O’Fallon and

Cass were retained. It was proposed to omit from the site to be acquired most of the frontage on the north side of Franklin avenue, some of the frontage on the south side of Cass avenue, and most of the frontage on the east side of Jefferson Avenue, as this was developed for small business already, and could be fitted into the plan. It was considered that cost of clearing these would be too great. One block of the Franklin frontage, between 21st and 23rd, not now used commercially, probably would be taken over. Assessed valuation of the remaining 100 acres, which the Housing Authority intends to acquire by purchase or condemnation, is $2,755,080. How near the assessment figure the actual price would be remains to be determined. But presumably the cost may be somewhat above the assessment which for tax purposes was at the rate of 63 cents per square foot; the lowest figure within the entire slum region.\textsuperscript{133}

Carr Square Village is within the southern part of the Carr neighborhood. The northern part of the Carr district has an intensive industrial development, but some officials think this might lend itself to some future housing development. Planning experts regard the new site as excellent for the purpose. It is self-contained, because it is not crossed by any important street except Twentieth, while all four of the streets bounding it are important traffic arteries, 18\textsuperscript{th} street, on the east, being in the city plan for a major express highway. Proximity to Carr Square Village, general convenience of location and relative cheapness of the site were other factors taken into consideration, according to the report by Post-Dispatch.\textsuperscript{134} The City Plan Commission map of the DeSoto-Carr housing site showed the large volume of non-residential property, much of which offered opportunity for early conversion to modern housing. The significance of this is that many such parcels of property can be used to provide new dwellings without dispossessing present residents of the neighborhood. As new housing was made

\textsuperscript{133} St. Louis Housing Authority, \textit{Tenant Relocation: North Area}, 1941, 42.

\textsuperscript{134} \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, Dec. 25, 1949.
available, these people can be shifted and the present old dwellings torn down to make room for still more new structures. As indicated by the key, the map marked the present residential portions, industrial properties, the unusually large number of junk yards, and some vacant lots. Some parcels seemed too small for immediate use. DeSoto Playground was to be the scene of first construction; a larger park and playground would replace it later. The map, covering the entire DeSoto neighborhood of the city plan (west of Twentieth street) and the entire Carr neighborhood (east) shows the relationship of the new project site to the existing Carr Square Village (public housing) and to an intensive industrial section north of the latter. An aerial photograph made December 24, 1949 of most of the area in the DeSoto-Carr of the view towards the Mississippi river. Cole street runs toward the river at right and is the first street north of Franklin avenue, the southern boundary of the 47-block site. Many old famous historical landmarks were located at this area, for instance, 1849 Cass Avenue, was James Clemens, Jr. House designed in 1858. The house was one of the landmarks of St. Louis now. It was acclaimed to be “an outstanding and rare example of using cast iron.” The house was sold to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in 1878.

As Alexander Von Hoffman pointed out in “Why They Built Pruitt-Igoe,” although in the early postwar years, St. Louis held a strong support for slum clearance and urban redevelopment, instead of high-rise slab towers, Bartholomew’s comprehensive plan called for

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“modem low-rise garden-city communities” for DeSoto-Carr, The city’s new mayor of 1949 had played an crucial role in transforming the redevelopment plans for DeSoto-Carr.\textsuperscript{138}

The city’s sixth conventional public housing development MO. 1-6, was planned on just the east side of the park and projected to provide 2700 dwelling units.

Before 1947, DeSoto-Carr had been regarded as the worst neighborhood in the city in the City Plan Commission’s 1947 Plan. The plan called for a series of physical improvements including neighborhood redevelopment, better traffic system, more public recreational space to bring people back to St. Louis and made progress for the city. The inner-city neighborhoods were urged to get rid of the slums and reconstruct. DeSoto-Carr was regarded as one of the city’s two “extremely obsolete” neighborhoods by the Plan.\textsuperscript{139} DeSoto-Carr is an area covering about 180 acres. The plan proposed to clear the properties and build a city park- DeSoto Park equipped with recreational facilities, community center, two new schools.

The north side of the site was the Carr Square Public Housing complex which replaced the heart of the old Irish neighborhood known as “Kerry Patch”. The old Patch was bounded by 16\textsuperscript{th} Street-22\textsuperscript{nd} Street-Cass-O’Fallon.

**The Plan and Design for George L. Vaughn Apartments**

MO-1-6 George L. Vaughn Apartment located on the east side of the Pruitt-Igoe, and occupied a 17.5-acre site. The site was bounded by 20\textsuperscript{th} Street to the west, Carr Street to the south, 18\textsuperscript{th} Street to the east, Jefferson School and Vaughn Senior Citizens Building to the north. The apartment was named after an city official and civil liberties lawyer.\textsuperscript{140} The complex was


\textsuperscript{140} “Darst and Vaughn Mass Housing Projects to Be Dedicated This Afternoon”, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 28, 1957.
also developed by I.E. Millstone Construction Co. and designed by Hellmuth, Yamasaki & Leinweber and the landscape was designed by Harland Bartholomew & Associates. First plans were submitted to SLHA in 1954 and the construction began in January, 1954 and completed on June 19, 1957. Total cost was $8,710,857. Until now, St. Louis had 6138 in total postwar public dwelling units costing $80.4 million, while the two prewar public housing projects: Carr Square Village and Clinton-Peabody Terrace provided 1315 apartments for $7 million. 

The city plan commission on December 15, 1954 approved an application referred to it by the Board of Public Service which was filed by the SLHA for authorization to use and develop a tract of land bounded by Cass, Hogan, 18th, Carr and 20th Streets for a low-rent housing project to be known as Mo. 1-6, phase I and II. Under date of December 21, 1954, the Board of Public Service granted this permit to the Authority under terms of “Community Unit Plan” provisions of the zoning ordinance (No. 45309) Section 18. Demolition of buildings in Phase I in the area between Carr and O'Fallon was in progress in 1955.

Construction of the first units in the Phase II area between O'Fallon and Cass was originally expected to begin about November, 1957. The plan commission in May 1957 approved a revised plan for Phase II, showing a slight redesign of the proposed building at the southeast corner of 20th and Cass which was intended for occupancy of aged.

The Drawings of Vaughn Apartments showed that the project was developed in two phases bisected by O'Fallon Street during the period of 1957-1963. Total site area was 25.7 acres, land cover was 12.8% and the density was 196 persons per acre, 51.36 dwelling units per acre. The site plan also left an area for proposed school site between the two phases along the O'Fallon Street.


According to the project data and schedule presented on the drawings dated on May 17, 1954 documented in SLHA, the building types and numbers are as follows. Architects designed A, B, C, D four building types and 1320 dwelling units in total were intended to be built. Phase II was composed of two type “C” buildings and one type “D” building. The layout of phase I and II located on the site plan of October 29, 1954, and was revised five times until June 10, 1955.

Phase II intended to build 1178 bedrooms for 2073.5 persons, among which building “C5” and “C6” provided 96 1-bedroom, 236 2-bedroom, 72 3-bedroom, 36 4-bedroom, building “D7” provided 24 1-bedroom, 59 2-bedroom and 27 4-bedroom. But finally phase II was canceled, so the site area was cut to 16.67 acres and dwelling units reduced to 656. Density was reduced from 51.36 to 39.4 dwelling units per acre. Only Phase I’s four 9-story buildings of reinforced concrete and masonry exteriors were built. Two “Y” shaped buildings named “BLDG. A” and two “⅜” shape buildings named “BLDG. B”. Each “BLDG. A” had 110 dwelling units while each “BLDG. B” had 220 dwelling units. Using reinforced concrete structure and bricks in variegated colors used on the exterior walls.

Office and Nursery space was located at “B” BLDGS and applied similar design with Darst Apartment. Nursery room located at B-4, unit 402 contained a large play room and an office room, an isolation room with two toilets and a kitchen. Meeting room space was added in the Vaughn apartment.

Office space located at Building B-3 unit 302, once entering the office space through the two doors on each long edge, people came into a rectangular waiting room. There was a door open to the main office room. The office room was attached by a closet corridor connected tenant relations, manager office on one side, and storage room, two toilets on the other side. Office room also opens to a cashier room on the other side.
The land was cleared for Vaughn project in 1954 to 1955 together with the Plaza Square project.\footnote{Charles Kimball Bummings, “Rent Strike in St. Louis: The Making of Conflict in Modern Society”, 1976, 134.}

A major change took place in public housing projects was the composition of residence population. In 1957, Vaughn opened with 99 percent of blacks. “Following the court order of December, 1955, to desegregate public housing, proportions of blacks rose sharply at both Cochran reached to 40 percent and Peabody reached to 21 percent, by the decade's end. Overall, on December 31, 1959, the proportion of blacks in the program as a whole was 76 percent. The comparable figure for the same date in 1954 was 33 percent; for 1950, 50 percent.”\footnote{Charles Kimball Bummings, “Rent Strike in St. Louis: The Making of Conflict in Modern Society”, 1976, 139.}

Vaughn Apartments were projected to provide 2700 dwelling units of one to five-bedroom size.\footnote{Joseph Heathcott, “The City Remade: Public Housing and The Urban Landscape in St. Louis 1940-1960,” August, 2002, 399.}

**The Management and Quality of Life in Vaughn**

Vaughn project was dedicated on April 28, 1957, according to a SLHA spokesman, more than 95 percent of oldsters (age 65 and up) in St Louis, their yearly income was less than $3000, besides, those on old age assistance rolls only get $60 a month. 75 percent of those oldsters lived with or supported by their relatives. The spokesman believed that these people should at least be independent and have their own decent separate housing.\footnote{“Darst and Vaughn Mass Housing Projects to Be Dedicated This Afternoon”, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 28, 1957.}

By April, 1957, 25,000 people moved in public housing buildings for low income families. On average, each unit had 1.75 adults and 2.75 children. Up to that time, 6,201

\footnote{“Darst and Vaughn Mass Housing Projects to Be Dedicated This Afternoon”, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 28, 1957.}
dwelling units were under SLHA’s jurisdiction. There would be 1800 more units to be built and other more to be planned to meet the commitment of totally 9200 units under the 1949 Housing Act. To live in public housing, people have to meet the income limits, according to a brochure published by SLHA,

“If you are a single person sixty-five years or older, or if there are two people in your family, your income must be less than $3,000 yearly ($58 per week or $1.45 per hour for 40-hour week)”;

“If there are three of four in your family, your income must be less than $3300 yearly ($63 per week or $1.58 per hour for 40-hour week)”;

“If there are five or more in your family, your income must be less than $3700 yearly ($71 per week or $1.77 per hour for 40-hour week)”;

For each child under 21 in the family, adult can make $2 a week more than the top limits. The rent included heat, electricity, gas and water was determined by the families’ annual income and ranges from $27 and up per month. The brochure gave an example: “Family of two adults with $125 per month income would pay $28 per month rent”, “Family of two adults and two children with a $40 a week income would pay $35 per month rent”; “Family of two adults and five children with a $50 a week income would pay $40 per month rent”; 147

Families were not required to pay higher rent for larger apartment as the rent were depended on the computation of income and the family size.

“Each apartment has an electric refrigerator, gas range, modern bathroom, built-in cabinets, closet space, plenty of air and sunlight.” Said the brochure.

George L. Vaughn Senior Citizens Building was bounded by 20th Street to the west, O’Fallon Street to the south, Jefferson School to the east and City Park to the north. It was

147 “Darst and Vaughn Mass Housing Projects to Be Dedicated This Afternoon”, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, April 28, 1957.
designed around 1958 by Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum and completed on September 30, 1963. The total cost was $2,108,694.\textsuperscript{148}

MO 1-6A, dedicated in 1957 as the Vaughan Elderly Apartments. Vaughan, moreover, was the first project in the city to adopt the currently popular cross design, with buildings laid out in the form of an X, each leg separated by a stack of breezeways much beloved by architects. When dedicated, Vaughan boasted a total of 660 units in 12 towers, each eleven-stories tall.\textsuperscript{149}

Vaughn Senior Citizen Building was designed to be an eight-story building and constructed with bricks.

As Joseph Heathcott disclosed in his dissertation, the near north side of St. Louis was transformed to a quite different place after Vaughan was completed and occupied: a modern planning version of urban order replaced with the old traditional block by block of the nineteenth century city.” If one walked down Carr Street in 1960, she would encounter housing projects stretching for nearly two miles between 7th Street and Jefferson Avenue. Public housing altered the visual register of the city, establishing the Modern tower block as a routine feature of the postwar urban landscape.\textsuperscript{150}

The second stage of construction added a 112 unit, high-rise elderly building to the site of approximately 19 acres. The development adjoins the western boundary of the DeSoto Carr Urban Renewal Area located on the near northside of the City of St. Louis, a short distance from its Central Business District.

\textsuperscript{148} St. Louis Housing Authority, \textit{Historical Recordation}, 63.


The history of the Vaughn complex parallels that of each of the other conventional family developments in St. Louis constructed in the twenty-year period from 1942-1961. The tenant composition changed dramatically form 1955-1970 as families whose incomes exceeded the PHA continued occupancy limits were required to seek housing on the private market. These families were gradually replaced by underemployed and fixed-in-come minority families, many of whom increasingly sought public housing as a permanent residence because of their inability to afford unassisted housing. The operating costs of the PHA during this time increased at a rate which was far greater than its rental income which remained relatively constant. Thus, as a result of both the age of the structures and vandalism at the sites, services were reduced at the time when maintenance and mechanical problems began to intensify.

The Problems includes: Large families residing in inadequate unit sizes; Skip-stop elevators; Isolation of laundry rooms; Open access to the buildings; Lack of designed exterior recreation and “passive greenspace” areas; Faulty window units; Worn apartment entrance doors. The Authority used several contract managers in the Vaughn Apartments since 1973, However, it did not save the project. In1995, three towers among them were demolished under the HOPE VI.

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152 Ibid.


Chapter 5: MO 1-7 & 7a Darst-Webbe Apartment

The Near South Side Before Clearance

Located at the south of downtown, immediately the east of the Clinton-Peabody Terrace and of City Hospital, the Darst Site comprised eight city blocks bounded by Lafayette Avenue to the south, 14th Street to the west, Hickory Street and Peabody School property to the north, and 12th Street to the east. Similar to the near north side, the near south side was also mixed race and poor at that time, with a larger percentage of whites born in Missouri or Arkansas. There were a smaller population from southern or eastern Europe plus a contingent of Syrian families. Regardless of the diversified neighborhood, public housing development regard it as a white neighborhood and transformed it to a racially homogeneous project.

According to the survey of the south area in SLHA’s “Tenant Relocation”, 82 percent of the inhabited dwelling units at the time of the W. P. A. survey were substandard; 78 percent of the residential structures in South Area were in need of major or minor repairs. Not only the tenants lived in substandard dwellings, 66 percent of the owners who lived in the area occupied dwellings physically or occupancy below standard.

Rentals in South Area were low. More than 96 percent of the dwelling units rent for less than $17.5 per month. And the amount of rentals related little to the size of family.

About 33 percent of the dwelling units visited by the social worker contained “extra” families or more than one and one-half persons per room, the standard usually listed as acceptable occupancy. 10 percent of the dwelling units had more than three rooms while 32 percent of the households had five members or more. With units of few rooms, and with the

sharing of toilets and baths, there was little privacy for the majority of the households in South Area. For two rooms, one usually became a combined bed-room-sitting-room. For larger families, the kitchen had to serve as a bedroom. The living room was found not a commonplace in the South Area. Instead, the kitchen was more real center of living for the family where meals were served, family gathering together.\(^{155}\)

In June, 1953, City Plan Commission recommended four sites for future public housing in a report submitted to St. Louis Housing Authority.\(^{156}\) On April 27, 1953 the Board of Commissioners of the St. Louis Housing Authority requested the City Plan Commission to study additional areas for development of low rent public housing and to recommend at least additional three sites for 1500 dwelling units for consideration. The SLHA asked to investigate six potential sites: “the Chouteau area between 7\(^{th}\) & 12\(^{th}\) Streets”; “the Chouteau area between 14\(^{th}\) & 18\(^{th}\) Streets”; “the Marine Avenue area”; “the area from 7\(^{th}\) & 12\(^{th}\) – Sidney to Geyer”; “the Third Street Produce Row area”; and “Possible extension to the Cochran area”. The first two and the fourth were all located on the south side area.

In addition to the six site areas suggested by the SLHA, the City Plan Commission was requested to recommend at least three additional sites for 1500 dwelling units for the development of future low rent public housing.

In this report, the City Plan Commission recommended additional four sites for future public housing which were “7th-11th-Hickory-Park”; “Mississippi-Jefferson-Park-Hickory”; “14th-18th-Gravois-Lafayette”; “Kosciusko-Illinois-Osage-Cahokia-Chippewa”. Three of them are located in the South Side Reconstruction Area and a fourth is a predominantly vacant tract in the Marine Avenue Area.

\(^{155}\) St. Louis Housing Authority, *Tenant Relocation: South Area*, 1941, 40.

\(^{156}\) “A Report on Future Public Housing Sites” prepared for the St. Louis Housing Authority by the City Plan Commission, May 1953, available at St. Louis Public Library Special Collection.
The City Plan Commission first studied three general areas which are: “produce Row Area& Possible Extension to Cochran Project”; “South Side Area” and “Marine Avenue Area”.

For the Row Area bounded by Third Street, Cole Street, Ninth Street and Cass Avenue, the Board recommends that because of the existing industrial and proposed expressway needs and high value of land and improvements eliminates this area for a possible new housing site. To meet the requirement that the acquisition cost cannot exceed 1500 per unit for a public housing project land uses, at least 1,655 dwelling units have to be built on the 15.1 acres’ land. This means the density would be 176 dwelling units per acre while the Cochran Garden Apartment was 44.157

The extension of Cochran Gardens area was also not recommended by the Commission as they thought Cochran project had already created school and recreational problems that have not yet been solved. There are no public schools for white children within walking distance and those from 14 to 30 blocks distant are filled to, or beyond, capacity. There were no adequate park and playground area for all age groups. the high land values, establishment of trucking and other industries, the school and park problems to be faced, and the need for through major streets eliminate the possibility of the extension of Cochran project for future public housing land uses.158

City Plan Commission studied the South Side Reconstruction area bounded by Chouteau Avenue to the north, Sidney Street to the south, Jefferson Avenue to the west and the Mississippi to the east. The report showed that only 3% of the entire 928-acre area was vacant. 43,016 persons lived in 12,932 dwelling units in the area in 1953. Of the total

157 “A Report on Future Public Housing Sites” prepared for the St. Louis Housing Authority by the City Plan Commission, May 1953, available at St. Louis Public Library Special Collection.

158 Ibid.
residential dwelling units, 87% were renter occupied; 72% had no private bath and 31% had no running water. 159

The South Broadway section of the plan was developed in the Commercial-Industrial plans by the Plan Commission. Proposed land use plan showed the crosstown expressway at Eighteenth Street serving as the main boundary to the west. All principal public and semi-public uses have been retained. The proposed scheme plans for a population of 43,660 persons in 10,917 dwelling units. The density of proposed public projects was established by computing the minimum number of dwelling units that could be built at the acquisition cost of $1500 per unit. Areas to be reconstructed for private housing has been figured at a density of 45 dwelling units per gross acre.

More open space and necessary community facilities to better serve the needs of the people. The City Hospital site had been expanded to Eighteenth and Park and each school site has been enlarged where schools were to be retained. Community facilities such as parks and playgrounds, schools and shopping areas have been determined by using standards developed by the Committee on Hygiene of Housing of the American Public Health Association. 160

Comparing the proposed land use to the existing one, less land was devoted to residential and commercial uses due to the improved site design that would be achieved when the area was redeveloped. More public and semi-public land has been proposed in order to enlarge existing schools and parks and to provide open space around many churches and parochial schools. The total area in streets and alleys retained the same since the proposed land use was based on present net acreage. In reality, much less area would be devoted to streets and alleys on the final plan due to street closings and replatting of the present gridiron system.

159 “A Report on Future Public Housing Sites” prepared for the St. Louis Housing Authority by the City Plan Commission, May 1953, available at St. Louis Public Library Special Collection.

160 Ibid.
The report pointed out one of the greatest problems in the reconstruction area was the inadequacy of schools. The existing school situation was far from satisfactory. Rooms were filled beyond capacity, many schools were obsolete and all lack adequate playground space. A report made by Mr. J. Ernest Kuehner, Director of Education, disclosed that 8 additional classrooms were needed more than a year ago (March, 1952). The authorized Mo. 1-7 project would require at least 37 additional classrooms if only one public elementary school child was estimated for each family.

The future land use plan proposed abandonment of three schools that are in conflict with the industrial and commercial development plans east of Seventh Street. These are the Pestalozzi, Dumas and Humboldt Branch Schools. Changing conditions since the schools were built have resulted in industry and commerce enveloping them.

Staff of the SLHA and representative of the Land Clearance Authority gave eligible families first preference in public housing, which in more than adequate to accommodate them.161

The Darst-Webbe complex was built on 28.5 acres between Park and Lafayette, Twelfth and Fourteenth Streets.162 Eight high-rise buildings provided 1238 units for low-income white tenants. While the complex replaced the original 515 old homes, 362 of which had lacked inside toilets and 131 had no running water.163

October 24, 1951, the City Plan Commission approved the site area for Mo. 1-7 bounded by 12th street, 14th street, Park Avenue and Lafayette avenue. This was an extension

161 July 7, 1954, a letter from Eugene C. Farrell, chairman of the Advisory Committee for Relocation to Dr. John H. Windom.


of the area from Chouteau to Park, and it amended the Commission’s action of July 25, 1949, at which time four sites for public housing and four sites for urban redevelopment were designated.\textsuperscript{164} Then SLHA began the purchase of property in March 1953.

In February 1955, demolition of buildings was begun in the clearing of the remaining 11 acres bounded by 12\textsuperscript{th} Street, Hickory Street, 14\textsuperscript{th} Street and Chouteau Avenue. Additional units would provide the second phase of this development.

Ordinance Number 47511 approved April 15, 1955 authorized the vacation of streets and alleys in City Blocks 410-11-12-14, 470-71-72-W, 73-W and 475.\textsuperscript{165}

Darst/Webbe was constructed on the near south side of the city during the period 1955-1961. The two sites were contiguous and had been managed both jointly and separately. Webbe was built on a site of 12 acres with 580 dwelling units- 112 units of which were specifically developed for the elderly in a separate 8-story building on the site. The Darst complex was constructed with 656 family units in four 9-story buildings on a site of 15 acres located immediately south of Webbe.\textsuperscript{166}

Original plans called for 1200 apartments on the 25-acre site, but curtailment of the national public housing program by Congress made it necessary to divide the Darst project into two phases.\textsuperscript{167} Work on the second phase of 540 apartments had been deferred waiting for additional federal funds appropriated.\textsuperscript{168}

\textsuperscript{164} City Plan Commission, Annual Report, 1951-1952, 38.
\textsuperscript{165} City Plan Commission, \textit{Annual Report 1954-55}, 62.
\textsuperscript{166} St. Louis Housing Authority, Master Plan Darst-Webbe.
\textsuperscript{167} \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, November 25, 1956.
\textsuperscript{168} \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, November 25, 1956.
Post-Dispatch recorded on January 14, 1953 that “city authority to begin buying 18.5-acre site for new housing and 1202 unit Chouteau project approved by Truman”.169 The article announced that SLHA started the acquisition of the 23.5-acre site for the 1202 dwelling units public housing project after the approval of President Truman. Original application was made for 1548 units, but the Federal Public Housing Administration cut this down to 1202 in its national allotment of available backing. The understanding has been that the 1202 units would be placed on the eight-block area between Chouteau and Park avenue, while the four-block area between Park and Lafayette would be held for possible future addition of other 346 units they believed that PHA intended to authorize for M 1-7 in the next fiscal year.170 Although only part of the dwelling units were approved, the authorization covered acquisition of entire site for full development.

Hellmuth, Yamasaki & Leinweber designed the project, which included a relatively sophisticated (and largely unrealized) landscape program by noted landscape architect Emmett J. Layton. Plans date to 1954, the same year as Vaughn, and construction ended in 1957. Emmett J. Layton was the designer of downtown wall in St. Louis including Memorial Plaza and Aloe Plaza, across from Union Station. He also taught at Washington University School of Architecture and was president of the Missouri Valley chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. He was also a member of the Clayton City Plan Commission and was on the board of governors of Tower Grove Park.171

169 St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 14, 1953.

170 St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 14, 1953.

171 “Find a Grave,” https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=67627194
The influence of Corbusier’s “towers in a park” concept was evident at Darst\textsuperscript{172}: on a 14.75-acre site, the building footprints consumed only 71,210 sq. ft., which was 11.08 percent of the site area. The rest of the site was left for landscaped open space and automobile parking which could accommodate 250 cars.

The four nine-story towers of the Joseph M. Darst Apartments (MO-1-7) on 14th Street south of downtown essentially repeated the Vaughn design on a smaller site. Darst Apartments was bounded by Lafayette Avenue to the south, 14th Street to the west, Hickory Street and Peabody School property to the north, and 12th Street to the east. The total area of site was 14.75 acres (642,653 sq. ft.). The project was made up of four “Y” shaped nine-story buildings. It was completed in 1956. One linear twelve story skip-stop elevator high rise buildings. The buildings consisted of five modules with one lobby, elevator and incinerator chute access located in each of the modules on either side of the centrally located “Y” shaped breezeways providing tenants with sitting areas on each floor. Elevators operated on a skip-stop system for economy, with stops only at the first, fifth and eighth floors. The modules were interconnected only at the elevator stop floors which were the first, fifth and eighth floors for the nine story buildings and first, fifth, eighth and eleventh floor for the twelve story building.

The original design and installation included living units on the first floor of each of the end modules with the balance of the first floor space allocated for lobbies, laundries, toilets, community space and offices. In addition to the apartment buildings, the site also contains two boiler houses with 150 ft. high masonry flues.

SLHA followed this project with the original second phase of Darst Project MO-1-7, the Anthony M. Webbe Apartments (MO-1-7A) completed in 1961 on the superblock to the north. Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum, local successor to Hellmuth, Yamasaki & Leinweber,

\textsuperscript{172} “Darst and Vaughn Mass Housing Projects to Be Dedicated This Afternoon”, \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, April 28, 1957.
designed the four-building group that included two nine-story towers similar to the Darst buildings, an eight-story elderly apartment building and a 12-story tower. The eight story structure would be the city’s first public housing accommodations specially designed and equipped for senior citizens.

Afterward, Darst and Webbe were merged into Darst-Webbe, following the convention set by Pruitt-Igoe. HOPE VI funds allowed the St. Louis Housing Authority to demolish Darst-Webbe in 1999.

SLHA’s original fact sheet for the MO 1-7 Joseph M. Darst Apartments (January, 1960) documented the information of the project: per acre has the population of 169.173

Darst apartments also features the skip-stop elevator design like the Pruitt-Igoe complex. Elevators stop on 1st, 5th and 8th floors. Each building equipped with 5 community rooms on 1st floors, there were no nursery facilities unlike the projects before.

The buildings were constructed with reinforced concrete, with masonry exterior walls. Masonry and plaster were used as interior partitions. Total play areas were 5(under school age) 10,056 sq. ft. total. Car parking area could accommodate 150 cars.

The project provided 162 1-BR units, 296 2-BR units, 144 3-BR units, 36 4-BR units, 18 5-BR units,

The Darst apartments were furnished in yellow bricks with steel and aluminum trim. Masonry units were widely used in Darst apartments’ typical exterior walls and were constructed behind the face bricks. Also, laundries and restrooms directly used masonry units as the faces.

Residents

The first residents at Darst were harassed by gangs of stone-throwing boys, and it was soon obvious that there was too little recreational space, especially for the thousands of children

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173 St. Louis Housing Authority, Fact Sheets, Darst.
who were stacked in the high-rises. Lack of shopping facilities, health services and public
transportations near the project brought a lot of inconvenience to the residents. Also, not only
the job opportunities were quite limited, the crime and vandalism was high.

Jean King said that the apartment had already began to sink into the “desperate morass”
when he moved into the Darst Apartments in 1963. “People were afraid to come at night; people
were afraid to leave their homes during the day,” she recalls, “The police wouldn’t come in
here—they were afraid of the people and the people were afraid of them.”\(^{174}\)

Tenant management has made some progress in the five public housing projects. 3250
units were under tenant management. Vacancies had been reduced over the three years by 18
per cent and maintenance backlogs have decreased by 78 percent, rent collections are rise
evidently.\(^{175}\)

SLHA’s Master Plan intended to serve as an administrative framework for the
coordination and staging of construction funded under various grant programs.\(^{176}\)

**Siting**

The Darst Apartments consisted of eight large buildings creating many similar exterior
spaces between them.

Darst-Webbe was clustered on a 28.5-acres site. The surrounding empty buildings were
a great danger to children; there were no adequate recreational facilities around; and
transportation, shopping was limited. For the site design, Park Avenue and Hickory Street cut
through the site making the buildings open to uncontrolled passing traffic which contributed to
crime and vandalism in the late 1960s. Site selection not only have an influence on the amount
and kind of resources and services the tenants could get from the community, but also

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\(^{176}\) St. Louis Housing Authority, Master Plan, Darst-Webbe, Nov. 1978, 3.
determines the costs of providing a safe and healthy environment including essential police and fire protection, garbage disposal, education, and utility services. Purchase and renovation of slum land, required by national policy, added significantly to development costs. Undoubtedly some property owners benefitted but a majority of others suffered from the siting process. Finally, there were minor cosmetic benefits of keeping abject poverty out of sight, or certain psychic effects for some but only for the neighborhoods and minor personal impacts there was no enough area for outdoor activities and sports. Unfortunately, site selection was apparently unaffected by consideration for the long-term impact of location on tenant population or housing administration.

Segregation

Located on the predominantly white south side, Darst-Webbe complex was planned effectively as an all-white developments adjoining Clinton Peabody when it was completed in 1962.

Design

Darst Apartments were planned as two phases generally divided along Hickory Street. Phase one was composed of four buildings named as BLDG. A-1, BLDG. B-2, BLDG. A-3, and BLDG. B-4. “A” and “B” indicates two different types. Type A features a shape of “Y” while Type B features a shape of “*”.

The new designed “Y” shaped structures were intended to provide breezeway sitting areas on each floor.

BLDG. A-1/A-3


BLDG. A-1 has 110 units and composed of two 4-2 units, two 1-2 units, and one 5-1 unit. These units were connected by corridors.

Building entrances of 1-2 units and 5-1 units were designed at the central public space. 4-2 units’ entrances were open to the hallway which connected to the 1-2 unit.

BLDG. B-2 has 220 units.

**Unit Plans**

**4-2 Unit- A Building**

4-2 units were located at the end of the two long edges of the “Y” building. It contains two housing units on each floor. One unit has two bedrooms, the other has four bedrooms. Each unit has a same-size bathroom and a “living-dining-kitchen” space. Vertical transportation of 4-2 unit was reached by a stair case locating at the middle of the two entrances and open to the corridor.

**5-1 Unit- A Building**

5-1 Unit’s plan was nearly a quadrate measured 41’by 44’. Each floor has two housing units: one with five bedrooms, the other with one bedroom. But they all only have one same-size bathroom which is not unreasonable.

**1-2 Unit**

First floor of 1-2 Units were equipped with a lobby in the middle of the space. The lobby space connected laundry and drying area on one side and tenant storage room on the other side.

Only in certain of the 1-2 units, first floor was equipped with tenant storage, locations were displayed on the plans of A-5, A-6, A-7, A-8.

1-2 units were designed with skip-stop elevators. Elevator stops at the fifth and eighth floor.

For the 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9 floors,
2-2 Unit-- B Building

B Building’s 2-2 units were at the middle of the building plan. Plans of floors 1 through 9 features a symmetric design and comprised of four housing units. Two stair cases were placed at end of two short sides. All the entrances were open at the short edge. Each unit had a main “living-dining-kitchen” space and two bedrooms, one bathroom.

3-3 Unit- B Building

3-3 Units were the mirror design of 4-2Unit. Four 3-3 units sit at the end of BLDG- B. For Floors #1 through Floors #9, plan was symmetrical design composed of two dwelling units and a stair case. Every unit has three bedrooms, a “living-dining-kitchen” space, a bathroom and a small storage room.

Office and Nursery (Drawing A-15, office’s location referring SH# A-5, nursery’s location referring SH# A-8)

Office space was placed at the 1-2 Unit of the Building A-3. Once entering the office space through the two entrances, people came into a rectangular waiting room. There was a door open to the main office room. The office room was attached by a closet corridor connected to tenant relations, manager office on one side, and storage room, two toilets on the other side. Office room also opens to a cashier room on the other side.

Nursery space was placed at the 1-2 Unit of the Building B-4. Nursery space was consisted of a big play room equipped with an office room and isolation room, two toilets and a kitchen.

Laundry Facilities

According to SLHA’s fact sheet\textsuperscript{179}, there are total 60 rooms for laundry in the Darst Apartment. 6 coin operated laundry and drying rooms on the first floors. 54 manual laundries

\textsuperscript{179} Project Fact Sheet, MO I-7, Joseph M. Darst Apartment, St. Louis Housing Authority files, MO36P001007, Darst Webbe Family.
for tenant owned machines and hand laundry on elevator stop floors. (1<sup>st</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> floors)

**Inside Recreational Facilities**

5 community rooms on 1<sup>st</sup> floors.

**Heating**

2 boiler plants. Each includes 3 low pressure steam boilers. Gas-oil fired.

**The Management and Quality of Life in Darst-Webbe**

Tenant composition changed dramatically between 1955-1970 because of income limits. Those families whose incomes exceeded the PHA continued occupancy limits were required to seek housing on the private market. These families were gradually replaced by underemployed and fixed income minority families, many of whom sought public housing as a permanent residence because of their inability to afford unassisted housing. The operating costs of the PHA during this time increased at a rate which was far greater than its rental income which remained relatively constant. Thus services were reduced at a precise time when maintenance and mechanical problems began to intensify as a result of both the age of the structures and vandalism at the sites.

Darst-Webbe were originally designed with a total of 1,236 units, until 1978, they had 785 units available for occupancy of which 655 were occupied. Units were lost through first-floor conversions for community and administrative space; “marriages” of smaller units.

**Design Deficiency**

Site design lacked “defensible space”<sup>181</sup>. As Oscar Newman’s Many exterior space between the buildings was quite similar. These spaces were not very well contained and tend

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<sup>180</sup> St. Louis Housing Authority Master Plan: Darst/Webbe, St. Louis Housing Authority files.

to visually flow out between the widely spaced buildings. Many space between buildings remained undefined, meaningless within the site. Pedestrian and vehicular circulation was not clear and functioned efficiently. Some of the spaces contain recreation facilities most of which were play areas. Some outdoor facilities were related to each building, others were not and therefore do not encourage identity with the buildings. Parking was not closely related enough to each building. Parking areas were not located within direct sight of the building entry points.

The present multiple entry points to the building

Open outside stairs provided access to the second and third floor large family units.

The main entrance did not face directly access walkways to the parking areas serving each building.

There were no enough barriers for the edges of the site area serving each building. except for some fences or walls played as actual physical barriers, other barriers such as some grade changes provided only psychological barriers.

Walkway system was not clear and random pedestrian access between buildings were not obvious.

Large families had to reside in inadequate unit sizes. The very large families required 6 or more bedrooms. They have to “subdivide families where possible to create two or more eligible households” or “use the PHA Section 8 Existing Program” or “rely on normal turnover patterns”

Skip-stop elevators made management and maintenance difficult. All units, except those on elevator stop floor, have only a single fire stair for egress.

Laundry rooms were isolated; Open access to the buildings not only cased danger to the residence but also made management hard. Multiple access into buildings made security untenable. Designed interior recreational and social service areas were insufficiency. There were also short of the designed recreational exterior and “passive greenspace” areas.
MO-1-7A, Anthony M. Webbe Apartments which located at 14th Street to the west, Chouteau Ave. to the north, Tucker to the east, Hickory Street and Peabody school to the south. According to first plans available at SLHA, Webbe Apartments were designed in 1958. 5/9/1961. Tenants began moving into the Webbe elderly building in November 1960. The project was designed by the firm of Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum. John Falvey, as the Mechanical & Electrical Engineer, William C. E. Becker as the Structural Engineer Robert Joyce, Utility Engineer, Emmet J. Layton as the landscape Architects. The total cost was $9, 114,523.

The four buff brick buildings in the Webbe complex were similar to those of the Darst complex immediately south; the two three-wing middle buildings used essentially the same design as their 9- story neighbors to the south. The senior citizen high-rise was eight stories high, and the remaining building was twelve stories high.

The St. Louis Globe-Democrat reported that Webbe's elderly building was the first of its kind in St. Louis and one of only a few in the nation at the time.

By the late 1960s, due to factors of rent structure, security problems, vandalism, inadequate play and common space, and the compounded problems which were caused by lacking of maintenance. These problems then drove more and more tenants away out of the buildings. Darst-Webbe’s averaged vacancy was below 95%. In 1980, Darst was only 78 percent occupancy while Webbe with 82 percent, and Vaughn with 74 percent.\(^\text{182}\)

In the 1970s, the FHA cut back the funding for new public housing projects. More efforts were put into the repairs and maintenances for the old housing buildings. However, the repairs and rehabilitation did not save most of the high-rise low-rent public housings. Six years after a spirit of immense optimism in the firs low-rent public housing in St. Louis, most of the

\(^{182}\) St. Louis Housing Authority, *Historical Recordation*, 7.
original conventional developments have been partially demolished. Apart from Pruitt-Igoe’s demolition, three of Vaughn’s five towers were demolished in 1995, and in 1999, the HOPE VI authorized the demolition of Darst-Webbe.\textsuperscript{183}

In \textit{City Politics: Private Power and Public Policy}, as Dennis Judd and Todd Swanstrom stated:

The public perception of low-rent projects as “stark symbols of racial segregation, crime and poverty in the inner cities, and as such they overwhelm a different, more complex lesson that can be learned, which is that not all public housing has been a failure. Town house projects built in the 1960s and after have often been quite successful- and of course not in the news. The legacy and the enduring reality of the high-rise projects tend to overwhelm the success stories.”\textsuperscript{184}

\textsuperscript{183} St. Louis Housing Authority, \textit{Historical Recordation}, 8.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The shift from low-rise to high-rise strategies reflected important political, social and aesthetic changes. Like the low-rise public housing development, the postwar housing projects shared same core of low-rent public housing program in planning and slum clearance.

The reconfigured landscape that featured post-war high-rise public housing projects, resulted from the decades of planning, architectural design, housing reform and public policy-making.

The planners and designers of high-rise public housing projects not only assume particular family type occupying the housing, but also a particular kind of work life and social experience there. The design created some livable space for the tenants, and an improvement through the planning and designing could be tracked from the drawings and life experience in the project. The “Y” shaped towers of Vaughn and Darst-Webbe replacing the long slabs blocks of Pruitt-Igoe, provided more directions from which people entering the buildings, opened more varied outdoor space on the ground, people used the breezeways as a public space meeting and playing.

These improvements made Vaughn and Darst-Webbe projects survived longer than Pruitt-Igoe.

However, the ambivalent federal policies as well as some inadequacies in site selections, design, construction contributed to the subsequent tribulations. The federal government did not provide constant support and maintenance for the public housing program. The gaps between planners and designers’ assumption of the way tenants using the space and the reality resulted problems with it. They imagined the family structure would be mostly with family members
no more than four people, so most of the units had less than four bedrooms, which made big family crowded in many small dwelling units.

Moreover, with limited understanding of the deepest social and economic problems of the St. Louis, high-rise public housing projects became a large-scale segregated program making a total residential segregation of whites and blacks and contributing a more difficult challenge for the poor and the city.
Chapter 1&2

St. Louis Street Map of 1930
Urban development plan for the DeSoto-Carr, St. Louis Housing Authority Annual Report

Aerial view of St. Louis riverfront before clearance, 1932. Source: Missouri History Museum

John O’Toole, director of the SLHA, in a back yard at 1918 Division Street west of downtown in October 1953. He is accompanied by two visiting federal housing officials. The dwelling would be demolished for the Vaughn housing project. Phot by Ken Gouldthorpe of the Post-Dispatch.

Housing conditions in south area before clearance
Chapter 3
slums replaced by Cochran Garden project, source: Missouri History Museum.

MO 1-3 Cochran Garden Apartments Site Plan
Tentative new design for one of the buildings in Cochran Gardens project displayed at the Mayor’s office, June 30, 1949

Map of the John J. Cochran Garden Apartments, Source: St. Louis Housing Authority

Aerial view of the John J. Cochran Garden Apartments, Source: Missouri History Museum

Cochran Gardens plans, Source: Architectural Record
Area before construction of the Cochran Garden Apartments

Model of the John J. Cochran Garden Apartments

Interior view of the Cochran Gardens at 1228 North 9th Street, Source: Missouri History Museum

Cochran Gardens Project under construction, Source: Missouri History Museum

Interior view of the Cochran Gardens at 1228 North 9th Street, Source: Missouri History Museum
Chapter 4

the map of DeSoto-Carr district before clearance, 1949, source: St. Louis Post-Dispatch
slums replaced by Vaughn Apartments, Source: Missouri History Museum

MO 1-6 Vaughn Apartments Site Plan
the site plan of Vaughn project, 1954

1st floor plan of Vaughn
typical floor plan of Vaughn

 Vaughn Apartments, Source: Annual Reports

Exterior view of the Vaughn project, Source: Missouri History Museum

Figure 5.1 MO 1-7A Webbe Apartments Site Plan

Figure 5.1 MO 1-7 Darst Apartments Site Plan
the site plan of Darst-Webbe

elevator stop floor plan of Darst apartments

typical floor plan of Darst apartments
Director of the St. Louis Housing Authority, John O’Toole, “explains a model of part of the future Darst public housing project at Chouteau Avenue and 12th Street in December.” Post-Dispatch.
Webbe apartments

Darst Apartments, corner of 12th Street and Lafayette Avenue, Source: Missouri History Museum

Construction Progress at Darst Apartments, Source: Missouri History Museum
Darst-Webbe_exteriors showing the breezeways, Source: Missouri History Museum

Darst Apartments, Source: Missouri History Museum

Darst Apartments, Source: Missouri History Museum

Non-white dwelling units in St. Louis, 1950
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