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Edited by Gregory K. Ingram and Daphne A. Kenyon

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Gregory K. Ingram and Daphne A. Kenyon

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Beyond "Accidents of Geography": Using Housing Policy to Improve Access to Quality Education

Elizabeth J. Mueller and Shannon S. Van Zandt

"As Americans, we are all born with equal opportunity, and then we go home," one of our professors used to say. Opportunities, in the form of good schools and other public services, as well as access to jobs or protection from environmental hazards, are neither evenly distributed across regions nor accessible to all (Briggs 2005; Galster and Killen 1995). The property tax–based funding system on which most public school systems rely provides an explicit link between school performance and income segregation. Beginning with the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Rodriguez v. San Antonio School District*,[1] school funding reform advocates have argued that heavy reliance on local property taxes for the funding of schools denies students in property poor districts equal protection as guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (Imazeki and Reschovsky 2003). Although the Supreme Court ruled against this claim, state courts have typically accepted the argument as a violation of state constitutions. Resulting inequalities in school funding were found to be inefficient, immoral, and illegal on the basis that "a system that allows the *accidents of geography* and birth to determine the quality of education received by an individual is inimical to the ideal of equal opportunity in the marketplace"

The conclusions put forward about the work of The Inclusive Communities Project and Foundation Communities represent the authors' analysis and should not be taken to represent the views of the organization.

1. *Rodriguez v. San Antonio School District*, 411 U.S. 1 (1973).

(Fernandez and Rogerson 1996, 136, emphasis added; see also Bahl 1994; Berne 1988).

Yet these "accidents of geography" are no accident at all. Scholars have documented the historical and contemporary factors that have produced the current "geography of opportunity" in U.S. cities. First, private restrictive covenants used during the development of residential areas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries established racially divided patterns still discernible in many cities (Silver 1997; Tretter 2012). Second, many cities codified these patterns through land use and zoning regulations in early comprehensive plans. Although racially restrictive covenants were later struck down by the Supreme Court in 1948,[2] restrictions on allowable uses and on lot size and property characteristics ensured that property values in wealthy (white) areas of cities would remain high while undermining home values in low-income and minority areas. Third, federal mortgage insurance, introduced during the Great Depression but most influential in the post–World War II era, reinforced these patterns through the use of underwriting criteria that rated the "security" of loans, favoring greenfield development, particularly in areas that were uniformly single-family construction and where nonwhites were absent (Jackson 1985; Massey and Denton 1993). Finally, federal affordable housing programs, beginning with the creation of local housing authorities and the siting of the first public housing developments in the 1930s, favored locating affordable housing in low-income neighborhoods. This reflected both a desire to replace dilapidated housing in such neighborhoods and local political realities. By the mid-twentieth century, a fairly durable pattern of income and racial segregation was in place in most cities. While racial segregation has declined over the past 40 years, economic segregation has increased (Abramson, Tobin, and VanderGoot 1995; Fischer 2003; Massey 2001; Massey and Eggers 1990). Yet market and sociological forces continue to impede the residential and spatial mobility of minorities (Van Zandt and Mhatre 2009; Van Zandt and Wunneburger 2011). Contemporary land use regulations, such as zoning for large lots, "NIMBY" (not in my backyard) attitudes, and economies of scale, lead developers to build homogeneous developments of single-family detached residences, while land available for affordable or subsidized multifamily housing is limited or isolated (HUD 2004; Pendall, Puentes, and Martin 2006). These practices exacerbate income and racial segregation (Dawkins 2005; Pendall 2000; Pendall and Carruthers 2003; Talen 2005).

Affordable housing policy, through rules regarding the proper location of such housing and the connection between housing, schools, and other local services, offers the potential to counter these patterns. Fair housing advocates favor using housing vouchers to provide access to heretofore off-limits wealthy areas with good schools. It is an explicitly rights-based position: all households, but particularly those that have historically been excluded from certain neighbor-

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2. *Shelley v. Kraemer*, 334 U.S. 1 (1948).

hoods or from access to valued services, should be able to choose where to live. Thus, success is defined as greater integration of low-income or minority households into areas previously off-limits to them, regardless of the result for those households in terms of education or other measures of economic or social mobility. Community development advocates favor holistic investment in housing and services in low-income neighborhoods, where affordable housing is more often sited, encouraging partnerships between housing organizations, schools, and other social service providers. While the movement's initial focus was on community control of resources, current practice emphasizes outcomes for residents.

Both strategies have the potential to positively affect school outcomes for low-income children. Each rests on key assumptions about the efficacy of the means for achieving its end goals. What do we know about the ability of housing vouchers to provide access to high-opportunity areas, likely to include high-performing schools? And what do we know about the relationship between school and neighborhood poverty and educational outcomes?

Housing Vouchers and Access to Opportunity

Vouchers are believed to increase demand for goods and services provided by the private market, presumably allowing lower-income households to compete with higher-income households for the same goods. The Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program, for example, has been predicated on the notion that housing vouchers will allow public housing residents to locate in high-opportunity neighborhoods that give them better access to a host of neighborhood-based amenities, including schools, transit, recreation or after-school activities, jobs, and so on.

In reality, existing studies find that housing vouchers rarely move people from low-income to high-income neighborhoods, in part because the higher-income neighborhoods have little if any affordable rental housing and in most states private landlords are not required to accept vouchers. As a result, positive outcomes for these households are limited (Buron et al. 2000; Feins and Patterson 2005; McClure 2010; Turner and Popkin 2010; Varady et al. 2010). Further, the availability of public goods in affluent neighborhoods is based at least in part on the absence of low-income households (Crane and Manville 2008). Class uniformity facilitates the willingness to pay for neighborhood goods and services (Fischel 2001).

Neighborhood and School Composition and Educational Outcomes

While the association between the socioeconomic level of the student body and individual student outcomes is strong, as highlighted in Coleman's seminal study (Coleman et al. 1966) and reconfirmed by Rumberger and Palardy (2005), the

extent to which school composition is causally related to student outcomes remains unclear. Much of the research suffers from an inability to isolate the impact of school composition from differences in the ways schools are organized and operated (Rumberger and Palardy 2005; Thrupp 1999; Thrupp and Lupton 2006). Such differences are often attributed more to disparities in school financing than to school composition (Kozol 1991). Yet findings related to the impact of redistributed financing are mixed. Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2002) found that while the amount of resources matter, the extent to which they matter varies greatly and indicates a high level of inefficiency. Orfield (1997) reports that success in school is largely due to a complex set of interactions between each student and his or her peers, teachers, family members, and neighbors—findings that are broadly supported in the literature (Crain and Mahard 1978; Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin 2002; Kain and O'Brien 2000; Mayer 2002; Orfield and Ashkinaze 1991; Rosenbaum, Kulieke, and Rubinowitz 1987).

Similarly, evidence on the role neighborhoods play in educational attainment is contradictory as to which neighborhood characteristics matter most and which adolescents may be most vulnerable to neighborhood effects (Brooks-Gunn, Card, and Krueger, 1992; Connell and Halpern-Felsher 1997; Ellen and Turner 1997; Garner and Raudenbush 1991; Haveman and Wolfe 1994). Early studies of housing mobility programs found dramatic improvements for children: those moving to predominantly white suburbs were significantly less likely to drop out of school, were more often in college track courses, and were more likely to enroll in four-year colleges (Rosenbaum 1996). Yet methodological problems have cast doubt on these findings: the studies were based on small, nonrandom samples of program participants; research focused on participants who had remained in the suburbs, since others could not be located; and factors used to screen residents, as well as the persistence required to enter the program, made participants difficult to compare to nonparticipants (Popkin et al. 2000). Studies of the federal Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing program, which were designed explicitly to facilitate evaluation of the impact of improved neighborhood conditions on former public housing residents, have found little evidence linking better neighborhood conditions to better educational performance. Program participation has been found to have small but significant effects on the characteristics of the schools attended and to result in a large drop in the share of female youths working and out of school, yet studies have shown no significant effects on measures of educational performance (Goering and Feins 2003; Orr 2003).

While research suggests that school composition and neighborhood setting matter to educational outcomes, it does not provide clear guidance as to the best ways to intervene. The next section presents two examples of efforts to use housing policy to influence the quality of education received by low-income children. Each is regarded as a successful example of its particular approach, thus allowing us to highlight the approaches themselves rather than problems with implementation.

A Comparison of Strategies for Using Housing Policy to Improve Access to Quality Education

Texas offers a useful case for an examination of the relationship between housing and education. The state has been at the forefront of the No Child Left Behind[3] initiatives, including the standardization of knowledge and skills testing. Further, Texas has been a battleground in litigation to redistribute school funding to overcome disparities in property tax–based funding mechanisms (Imazeki and Reschovsky 2003). Finally, Texas is home to four of the nation's top 50 largest metropolitan areas—Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, and Austin—each comprising significant populations of the nation's most disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups. This section uses programs in Dallas and Austin to illustrate community-based and mobility-based models for addressing the relationship between housing and education.

The Inclusive Communities Project, located in Dallas, Texas, has its origins in the fight against racial discrimination in housing and, more concretely, against the segregation of African Americans who live in Dallas public housing. The organization grew out of the Walker Project, which was formed in 1990 in response to the settlement of *Walker v. HUD* (1989),[4] a fair housing lawsuit brought on behalf of black public housing tenants against the Dallas Housing Authority (DHA) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The original lawsuit charged DHA and HUD with racially segregating public housing in Dallas, and the 2001 settlement created a special class of housing vouchers for use as a remedy (*Walker v. HUD*, 2001).[5] The Walker Settlement Vouchers (WSVs) were first issued in 2001 and were available for black DHA public housing and HCV participants. In 2004, a revivified Walker Project board changed the organization's name to the Inclusive Communities Project (ICP) and broadened the original mission of "[promoting] fair housing and [providing] support to Walker class members" to include "inclusive, non-discriminatory community development" (ICP, About Inclusive Communities Project n.d.).

Foundation Communities, located in Austin, Texas, was established in the early 1980s by student leaders from the student cooperative housing movement at the University of Texas. By the early 1990s, it had begun managing and developing affordable housing, under the name Central Texas Mutual Housing

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3. No Child Left Behind is an Act of Congress that supports standards-based education and has reformed the way that students are taught, the training of teachers, and school financing. The Act was signed into law by President George W. Bush; the ideas behind the law originated in Texas.

4. *Walker v. HUD*, 734 F. Supp. 1231, 1272, 1289 (N.D. Tex. 1989).

5. *Walker v. HUD*, No. 3-85-CV-1210-R, 3-96-CV-1866-R, 2001 WL 1148109 (N.D. Tex. Sept. 18, 2001).

Association. In 1997, under new leadership, the organization began to increase the amount of housing under its control through acquisition and rehabilitation of rental housing. By 2001, it had adopted its current name, Foundation Communities (FC), and had completed its first development project, a 200-unit apartment complex in affluent West Austin. The organization currently owns and operates 17 properties, primarily in Austin,[6] housing over 2,600 families. Over time, FC has developed an approach that integrates services—for residents, neighbors, and the broader community—aimed at helping FC residents "achieve educational success and financial stability" (FC, About Us n.d.). The organization's first youth services were developed in 1994, in response to feedback from residents about the importance of having a safe place for their children to go after school. In 2011, FC became owner of a second apartment complex feeding into a single elementary school in South Austin; children from FC's properties now formed the majority of the school population. FC began to partner more directly with the school and to think about siting future developments in areas where it could affect school performance positively (Huerta 2013).

These two groups, while facing similar challenges in terms of housing choices open to low-income (particularly minority) households and school segregation, have chosen very different strategies. ICP has chosen to focus its work on making housing vouchers a more powerful tool for opening up access to suburban areas with high-quality schools (and other services). It has used federal fair housing law to challenge both federal and local practices and has used settlement negotiations to garner additional resources and push for changes in program rules in ways intended to enhance the effectiveness of local voucher programs. Importantly, ICP has demonstrated, through the development of its own housing counseling program, how new program rules and policies can open up access to areas historically off-limits to low-income renters. (ICP is also working to increase rental housing options in those areas. More on this later.)

FC is a nonprofit housing development organization that initially relied heavily on federal resources and the federal low-income housing tax credits to finance its housing development and rehabilitation work. While its first development project in Austin was located in an area historically off-limits to affordable housing, it has more often sited or acquired projects in low- to moderate-income areas. Its approach has been to create its own set of resources, supported by private funders, within its developments. Over time, its siting decisions have become more attuned to strategic opportunities presented by local context (the new commuter rail line, the chance to transform a low-performing school) and to partnerships with local actors, including schools. In part because of changes in state rules for allocating tax credits to further fair housing goals, the organization increasingly seeks funding from private sources in order to site in high-need areas

6. FC also operates four properties in the Dallas metropolitan area.

or take advantage of local opportunities that do not conform to state Qualified Action Plan (QAP)[7] priorities (Huerta 2013).

The context for these organizations' work includes the patterns of racial segregation built over time through private real estate practices, city planning policies, federal housing policy, and local responses to school integration. This section examines the challenges faced by local organizations seeking to provide access to better education through locally implemented housing policies, discusses the work of ICP and FC in more depth, and explores the policy lessons that can be drawn from their experiences, as well as questions to be addressed in further research.

SEGREGATION IN DALLAS AND AUSTIN: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Austin and Dallas, while different in terms of their history of settlement and local economies, have in common a pattern of segregation rooted in private real estate practices in the early twentieth century, reinforced by city planning policies and federal housing finance and affordable housing policies. Both cities established areas early in their history where property values were protected by restrictive covenants limiting allowable land uses and also the race of residents (Graff 2008; Tretter 2012). In Dallas, the sharp separations between areas of black, Hispanic, and white settlement are a recurring theme in the city's history. At one extreme, wealthy enclaves have emerged in North Dallas (called the "park cities"), where restrictive covenants were used historically to create and protect high-value property, as well as white residents, from development or residents considered threatening. In Dallas, a 1916 city ordinance allowed residential racial segregation on a block-by-block basis. The ordinance was reaffirmed in the early 1930s and, though found to be unconstitutional, continues on and is supported through local lending practices (Graff 2008). Following the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954,[8] the integration of the children of black household servants in wealthy Highland Park was resisted, and some white residents paid the tuition for these children to attend black schools in Dallas. Most African American families moved out (Loewen 2009). In the 1940s, following a series of bombings of black homeowners in predominantly white middle-class South Dallas neighborhoods, the city bought out the black homeowners and attached racial restrictions to those properties (Schutze 1986).

Conversely, both cities established areas of African American settlement that lacked such property value–enhancing protections. In Austin, racial separation was codified when the city adopted its first comprehensive plan in 1928, one year after the state enabled zoning by statute. While racial zoning was illegal, the plan accomplished the same end by limiting where public services for African

7. Each state uses its own Qualified Action Plan to establish criteria to score proposed LIHTC developments. Projects that do not score well are unlikely to be awarded the tax credits.

8. *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

Americans would be available to a zone to the east of the central business district (Koch and Fowler 1928). Not surprisingly, given the lack of rules or covenants limiting property uses in this area, many industrial uses were found scattered throughout the area. A 1950s-era plan later codified this pattern, which is now gradually being changed through parcel-by-parcel rezoning following years of community protest (Pacific Planning and Research 1958). In Dallas, the flip side of racial exclusion and the resistance to encroachment on white neighborhoods was the concentration of African Americans in particular areas of the city and the deterioration of conditions in these areas. Attempts to improve conditions by razing slum housing faced challenges common to most cities, including the need to site replacement housing somewhere. The result was the high concentration of public housing for African Americans in areas of West and South Dallas (Schutze 1986). At the same time, a black middle-class neighborhood was planned, and racial lines were maintained (Wilson 1998).

The heavy concentration of public housing in West Dallas prompted a successful lawsuit against the Dallas Housing Authority and HUD charging segregation of public housing as late as the 1990s. In 1989, a court found "that the 'primary purpose of [Dallas's] public housing program was to prevent blacks from moving into white areas of th[e] city' and that the city deliberately took actions designed to create and maintain segregation through its public housing" (de Leeuw et al. 2007). Similarly, in 2010 a suit was filed against the state housing agency for its administration of the tax credit program, which has resulted in a pattern of segregated access to these units.[9] The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) has proposed a revised set of rules, not only for this region but for the whole state, intended to counter these patterns. In short, the dramatic nature of these patterns has withstood local implementation of housing policies and state rule making regarding the use of tax credits. Only legal challenges under federal fair housing law are beginning to force change.

In Austin, public housing—and affordable housing provided under later programs—has been distributed in a manner shaped by the patterns of racial and income segregation created in the early twentieth century and in response to the poor conditions in minority areas that resulted. Public housing and project-based Section 8 housing, programs that created housing between the late 1930s and the early 1970s in Austin, were sited primarily in low-income minority districts (Bushman and Mueller 2006).

As affordable housing programs and funding shifted toward the use of vouchers and tax credits, these initial patterns have remained remarkably durable. Only one affordable housing development has been located on the more affluent west side of Austin, while the rest are heavily concentrated in central East Austin and in a crescent to the east of downtown (figure 12.1). Housing Choice Vouchers

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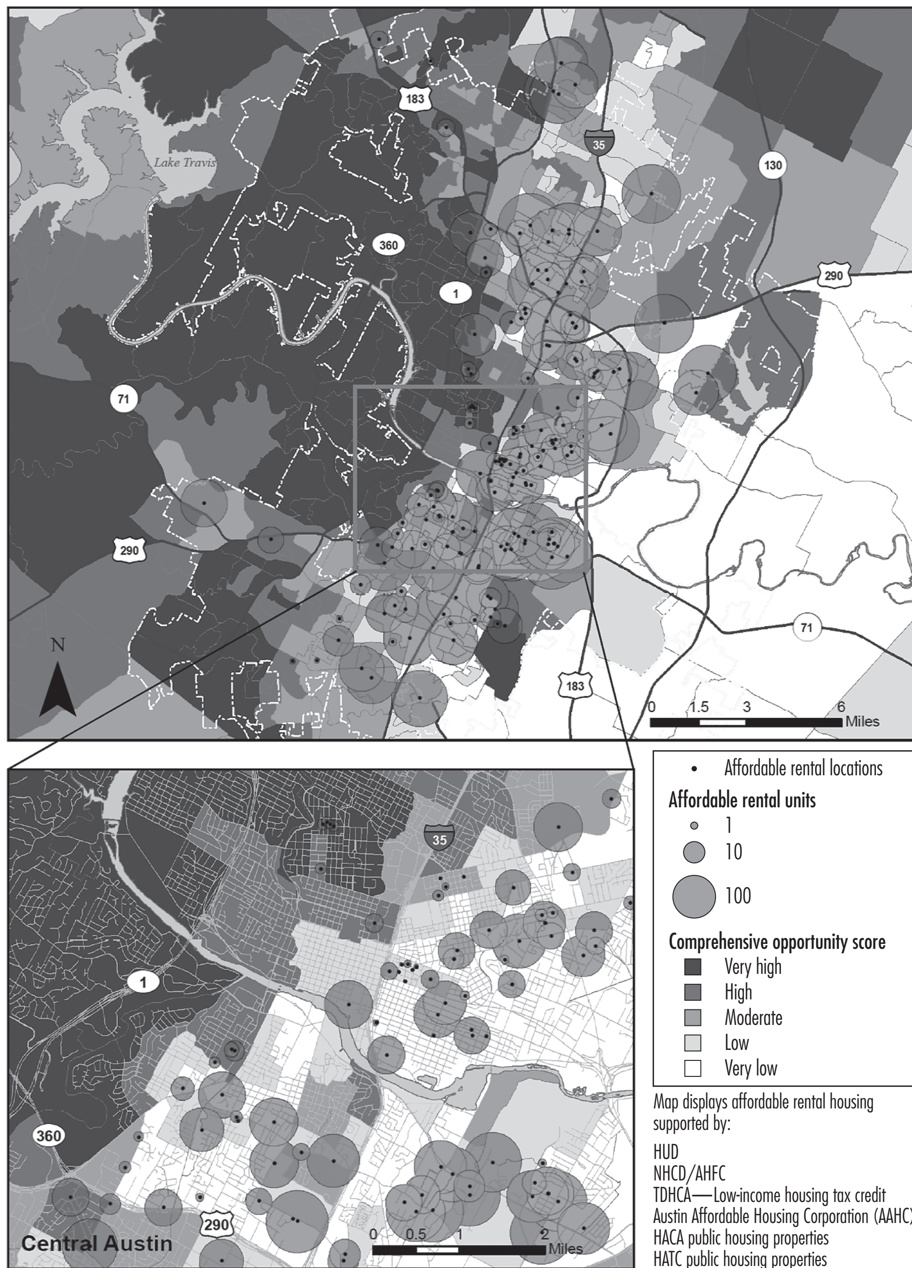
9. *Inclusive Communities Project v. Texas Dept. of Housing and Community Affairs*, 2010 WL 3766714 (N.D. Tex. 2010).

Figure 12.1
Affordable Housing Inventory in Austin, Texas



Map displays affordable rental housing supported by:

HUD
NHCD/AHFC
TDHCA—Low-income housing tax credit
Austin Affordable Housing Corporation (AAHC)
HACA public housing properties
HATC public housing properties

Sources: Housing data, City of Austin, Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department; opportunity zones, Kirwan Institute. Map created by Tom Hilde.

have only slightly broadened the choices available to low-income residents, who remain similarly concentrated, although white voucher holders are slightly more dispersed (Bushman and Mueller 2006). Landlords are not required to accept vouchers as a form of payment. Buildings constructed with federal low-income housing tax credits are required to accept vouchers, so the pattern of concentration of these properties reinforces the earlier patterns.

School desegregation came late to both regions and was not felt until the 1970s after legal challenges to local practices. Although challenges in Dallas began shortly after the *Brown* decision, the Dallas Independent School District remained under a series of court orders for three decades (Graff 2008). By 1975, the school population had become majority minority (*Dallas Morning News* 2011). By 2010, it was 93 percent black or Hispanic and 87 percent economically disadvantaged (TEA 2010). In 2003, federal district court judge Barefoot Sanders ended the court-ordered and monitored desegregation of Dallas schools. White South Dallas, the site of most of the contention over school desegregation, lost its white majority in the 1970s and 1980s (U.S. Census Bureau, various years).

Austin schools, after passing through a period of integration based on busing, have resegregated by race. While growth has fed a pattern of segregation between local districts in the region, the pattern of within-district segregation in the Austin Independent School District stands in contrast to districts that saw dramatic white flight, such as Dallas. School desegregation in Austin resulted first in the busing of students between neighborhoods. Since the discontinuation of busing in 2000 and the institution of a liberal transfer policy, Austin schools have rapidly resegregated, with several East Austin high schools declining rapidly (Ward 2006). Currently, close to 80 percent of white students in the district attend schools that are majority white—this in a district where over 62 percent of students belong to a minority group (TEA 2013; Ward 2006). The school racial and performance divide mirrors historical patterns of residential segregation. Current battles center on whether to address the problems of failing schools by contracting their administration out to private partners, possibly in the form of charter schools. The pressure placed on schools under federal and state accountability rules have largely resulted in a series of dramatic overhauls of the poorest schools, prompting pushback from school communities that consider these "accountability" measures to be another way to destabilize schools and students.

Perhaps because of the weak system of neighborhood representation in both cities, and the resulting dominance of the city council by debates over "the city as a whole" (Dallas) or developers versus environmentalists (Austin), the community-based housing model has not had the power seen in other regions. Instead, in Austin affordable housing as an issue did not gain traction until it gained the support of local environmentalists. This tenuous alliance may founder, however, on the shoals of current city policies encouraging increased density and redevelopment in central neighborhoods, including the historically segregated East Austin. In Dallas, housing politics are fragmented, with a coalition of nonprofit and for-

profit housing developers pushing for increased supply but often at odds with fair housing advocates focused on changing current patterns.

Finally, in both cities the current context for discussion of the connection between housing and education is the continued growth of the regions and recent planning initiatives aimed at capturing a greater share of regional growth within the central city. In both cases, the area targeted for infill development and transformation is the same area that has historically contained the unprotected, underinvested minority neighborhoods. The potential for dramatic transformation—and possibly large-scale displacement—forms the backdrop for these discussions. For Austin, the "desired development zone" created in the 1990s, under the banner of smart growth, begins downtown and extends eastward. The recently adopted comprehensive Imagine Austin plan outlines an ideal future city that is more "compact and connected" (via rail transit). For Dallas, the "southern sector" has been the focus of dramatic infrastructure investment and planning initiatives since the adoption of the city's current comprehensive plan, ForwardDallas!

These historical settlement patterns, shaped in both cities by social norms and codified by public policies, have proved remarkably durable. They also reflect, at some points, dramatic transformations related to school desegregation or public investment. Together, these patterns and policy histories form the context for the current work of ICP and FC.

INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES PROJECT

As described earlier in this chapter, the patterns of segregation established in Dallas included a dramatic concentration of public housing in West Dallas. It was this extreme concentration that led to the lawsuit *Walker v. HUD* and the resulting settlement, which prompted the formation of the Walker Project, since renamed the Inclusive Communities Project. The mission of ICP includes not only the provision of more housing choices for current voucher holders but also redress for past injustices. Advocacy and federal litigation are explicitly defined as part of its work. Strategically, the organization uses legal tools to produce policy changes at both the federal and local levels. As stated on ICP's website:

> ICP engages in educational, research, and advocacy activities that promote and support the policies underlying the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, as amended, 42 USC 3601, et. seq. and related civil rights laws. These policies include the creation and maintenance of stable, racially, ethnically and economically integrated communities, expansion of fair and affordable housing opportunities for low income families, and seeking redress for policies and practices that perpetuate the effects of racial and ethnic discrimination and segregation (ICP, About Inclusive Communities Project n.d.).

Using Litigation to Change Program Rules and Open Up the Suburbs The foundation for ICP's work was laid through the Walker public housing/Section 8

desegregation litigation. The case began in 1985, when Debra Walker sued the Dallas area suburb of Mesquite for refusing to allow the Dallas Housing Authority to administer Section 8 certificates in its jurisdiction, charging that this violated the Fourteenth Amendment and other civil rights laws prohibiting racial discrimination. The lawsuit was later amended to include DHA, HUD, and the City of Dallas as defendants and to create a class of plaintiffs. Through a process that involved "at least 17 appeals to the Fifth Circuit," one petition to the U.S. Supreme Court that was denied, 8 written appellate decisions, and 10 district court opinions, a substantial set of resources was created for the redress of past injustices. These included

- approximately 9,900 vouchers for use by *Walker* class members, along with $10 million for housing mobility counseling;
- approximately $22 million for the creation of housing opportunities in predominantly white areas of the Dallas metroplex;
- $2 million for the operation of a fair housing organization for work on the problems of low-income minority families;
- HOPE VI[10] funding for 950 units in West Dallas; and
- $94 million, provided by the City of Dallas, for neighborhood equalization and economic development in public housing project neighborhoods (Daniel and Beshara n.d.).

With these resources, ICP set about defining and modeling changes in program administration that will support the goal of providing meaningful housing choices to low-income households. These changes center on two key goals: (1) ensuring that voucher holders understand the differences in conditions and opportunities in different cities and neighborhoods in the region (including differences in school quality); and (2) ensuring that they will have the choice to live in high-opportunity areas of the region by guaranteeing that adequate rental housing exists and that local landlords will accept vouchers.

ICP has followed two strategies for achieving these goals. First, using funds created through the Walker settlement, ICP has created the Mobility Assistance Program, which works with DHA voucher holders. While this program was originally created to serve black DHA families qualifying for Walker Settlement Vouchers, it is now available to all DHA voucher holders. Second, again relying on Walker funds, ICP has created the Inclusionary Housing Initiative, designed to "affirmatively and effectively further such housing opportunities, with particular emphasis on market-driven high-opportunity areas of the Metroplex" (ICP, Building Inclusive Communities n.d.). In short, ICP is working to align voucher

10. HOPE VI is a federal grant program (Housing for People Everywhere) that provides funding to local housing authorities for the demolition of public housing and rebuilding as mixed-income developments.

program administration and outcomes with the program's original rationale as a mechanism to provide meaningful housing choices for low-income, often minority households.

Defining "Best Practices" in Voucher Administration The Mobility Assistance Program, an outgrowth of the *Walker v. HUD* settlement agreement, was initially targeted to black DHA residents who were members of the "class" under the terms of the lawsuit. WSVs are meant to enable their holders to move out of neighborhoods "marked by conditions of slum and blight" and into areas with "more opportunity, less distress, and less crime" (ICP 2013, 4). Under the terms of the agreement, Walker Settlement Vouchers (WSVs) must be used in census tracts with a poverty rate and a share of black population below Dallas averages. In addition, the area must not include any public housing (*Walker v. HUD*, 2001). To make it more feasible for WSV holders to be able to rent in such areas, the value of the vouchers—that is, the amount voucher holders can use to cover the gap between 30 percent of their gross monthly income and the rent and utilities for a unit—is set to allow rental of an apartment costing up to 125 percent of the basic fair market rent set for the region.[11] This makes it more possible for voucher holders to live in a high-opportunity area, where rents are likely to be higher, without spending more than 30 percent of their income. Finally, WSV holders are given more time to find units to rent with their vouchers—up to 120 days, 30 days longer than the 90-day limit for HCV holders.[12] DHA provided moving assistance for the first use of a WSV, but not for subsequent moves or for those receiving recirculated WSVs (ICP 2013).

As the number of WSVs in circulation has declined, ICP has opened up the Mobility Assistance Program to all DHA voucher holders.[13] At the same time, ICP has more tightly defined high-opportunity areas, reducing the allowable poverty rate to 10 percent and requiring that the local median family income be at least 80 percent of the regional median and that the area include no public housing. For families with children, ICP added a requirement that the unit must be located in the attendance zone of a high-performing elementary school (ICP 2013). The rationale for imposing these requirements is that families do not need assistance finding units in areas that are not high performing (Julian and McCain 2013). For families that indicate an interest in moving to high-opportunity areas, additional resources are made available, including financial assistance with moving costs, such as security deposits, application fees, and utility hookup fees, and providing modest moving stipends.

11. HUD sets fair market rents at the 40th percentile rent for a regional market.

12. Voucher holders must return the vouchers if they cannot find a unit within the time limit.

13. Since 86 percent of DHA HCV holders are black, the obstacles they face are likely similar to those in the Walker class.

DHA has changed administration of the vouchers in some ways, but ICP continues to advocate for greater changes. For example, since October 2010 DHA has used small area fair market rents, which provide for higher rents in more affluent areas (though well below the level established for WSV households). This was a result of the settlement of *ICP v. HUD*.[14] At the same time, it does not allow longer than 90 days to find a unit that will accept the voucher. Only the dwindling number of households qualifying for WSVs (2,200 as of January 2011) receive the longer time period and higher rent limit (ICP 2013).

In addition to these changes, ICP has worked to increase the number of units in high-opportunity areas where vouchers can be used.[15] In surveys ICP conducts of landlords in targeted areas, the organization has documented the resistance of many landlords to rent to voucher families, even if they meet all the landlords' other screening criteria and will be paying rents within program limits (ICP 2013). Under certain circumstances, such as cases where a landlord has never before accepted a voucher family, ICP has offered landlords bonuses for participation (Julian and McCain 2013).

The effectiveness of this approach has been documented in a recent report, *Mobility Works*, released in April 2013 (ICP 2013). The report examines the relationship between mobility assistance and neighborhood conditions where DHA HCV households live. Using data for all 17,000 DHA voucher households and for those receiving housing mobility counseling from ICP, ICP found that "black HCV holders who receive some type of mobility assistance live in higher quality neighborhoods with more opportunity, less distress and less crime. Households that receive multiple types of assistance live in better conditions than households with less mobility assistance" (ICP 2013, 4).

To assess neighborhood conditions, researchers used a variety of measures of neighborhood quality. These include an index of neighborhood distress, created by the U.S. Department of the Treasury; an index of the availability of opportunity, created by HUD; the likelihood of being victimized by a crime, created by the Dallas Police Department; and 2000–2010 U.S. census data on the share of white, non-Hispanic residents and the share of those living in poverty in an area. The study found evidence that voucher households receiving mobility counseling, as well as access to the package of financial resources and supports ICP offers, are more likely to move to areas that are less distressed and have higher levels of

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14. *Inclusive Communities Project v. HUD*, 3-07 CV 0945-L (N.D. Tex.). In this lawsuit, ICP argued that the process HUD used to set the rents used to determine the value of vouchers in the Dallas area effectively steered low-income families of color into low-income minority areas and made rental housing in more affluent areas unaffordable to them (Julian and McCain 2009).

15. While many cities, and some states, prohibit discrimination by landlords on the basis of source of income, no city in Texas has adopted such a prohibition. Thus, landlords are not required to accept vouchers (ICP 2013).

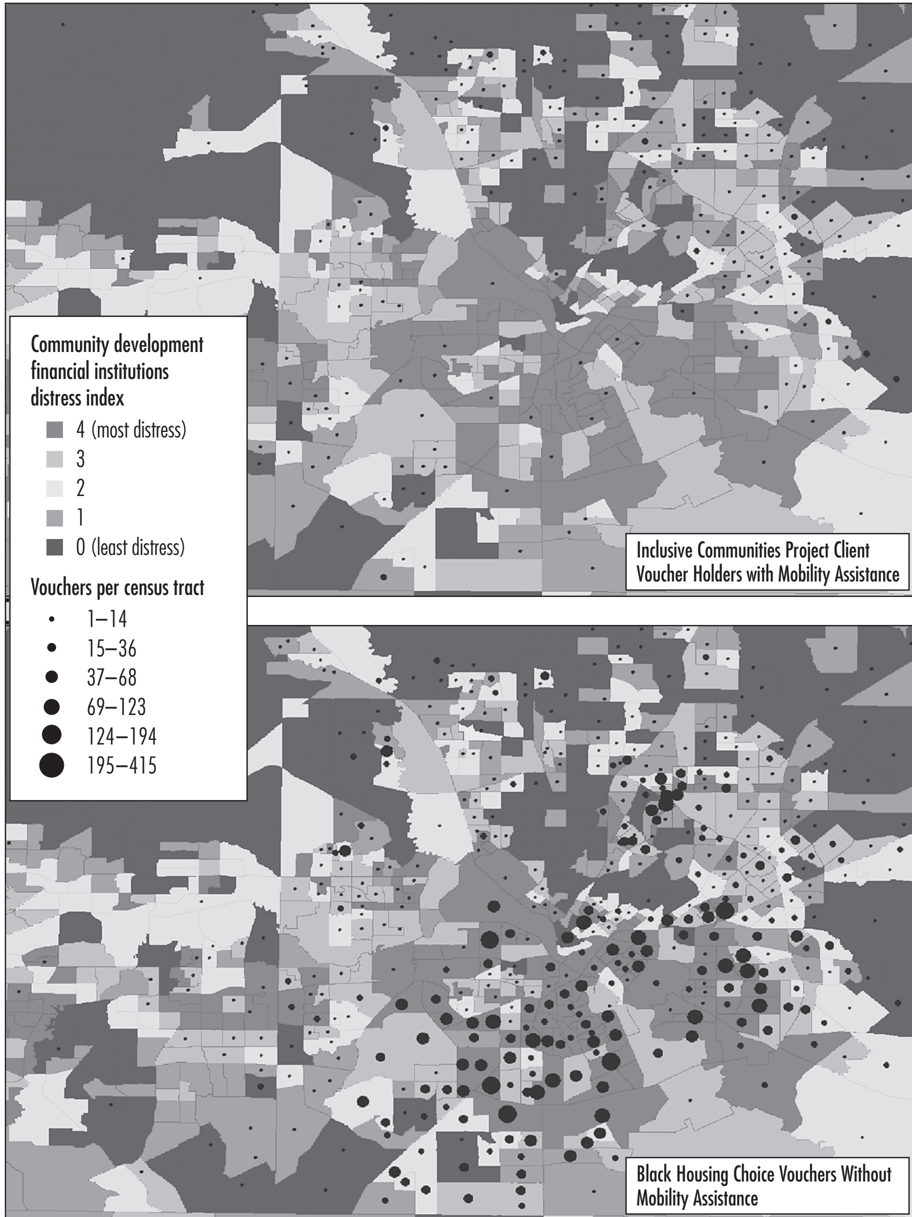
opportunity. Overall, the analysis found that the more types of mobility assistance provided, the more likely voucher households are to avoid the most distressed neighborhoods when selecting their units. Comparing the resulting patterns with our own map of school quality in the region (figures 12.2 and 12.3) suggests that ICP's emphasis on school quality in its housing counseling work may be yielding results.

The study also found a shortage of housing available to black voucher holders in nonminority neighborhoods not marked by conditions of slums and blight (ICP 2013). This includes not only market rate, privately owned rental housing whose owners or managers need to be convinced to accept vouchers but also publicly supported affordable housing. While ICP criteria initially defined areas with public housing as inappropriate for voucher use, the problems investigators faced finding units available to voucher holders caused them to look to housing produced with federal low-income housing tax credits (LIHTCs) as a potential source of units. Under U.S. Department of the Treasury rules, housing developed with LIHTCs must accept vouchers (Julian and McCain 2013). To ensure that the one form of rental housing that must accept vouchers is available in high-opportunity areas, ICP now works to foster LIHTC development in these areas. ICP formed the Inclusive Communities Housing Development Corporation (ICHDC) to foster the development of affordable housing opportunities that will expand fair housing choices for low-income families, particularly minorities participating in the HCV Program. ICHDC has offered loans for predevelopment costs or gap financing to developers seeking to build affordable housing with LIHTCs in high-opportunity areas in the Dallas metroplex. In 2012, financing up to $50,000 was available to cover the costs and fees associated with preparing an application for 9 percent tax credits. ICHDC will forgive the loan in the event the applicant fails to receive a tax credit award.

In sum, ICP's approach focuses on pushing for changes that will give low-income minority residents real choices in where they live—choices that can be made based on an understanding of the factors that will shape their lives. For families with children, additional assistance is offered to those moving to a neighborhood with a high-performing school. ICP's work challenging the administration of the voucher program in the Dallas region has been predicated on the notion that vouchers can give residents access to neighborhoods offering them meaningful access to opportunities, including high-performing schools. Through the Walker litigation, ICP has established norms for the administration of voucher programs that have been used in subsequent challenges and by HUD as "best practices." In addition, through the organization's work with ICHDC, it is challenging suburban areas that have historically excluded affordable housing and/or rental housing more generally. This work is not as far advanced as the voucher work, however, and it remains to be seen how the rule changes in awarding LIHTCs by the state will impact the locational patterns of LIHTC developments.

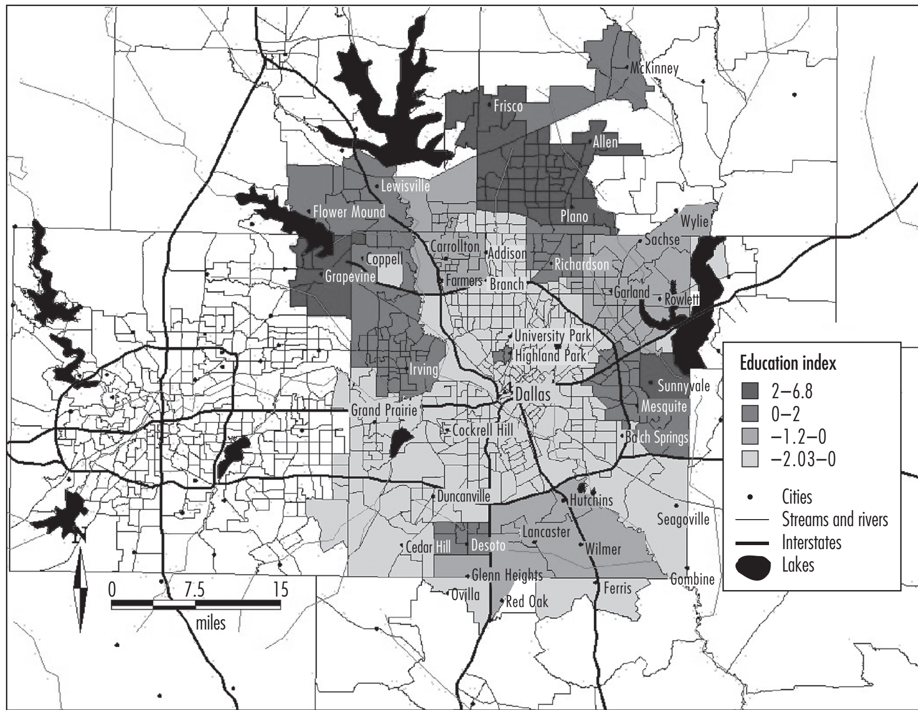
ICP's current focus on the development of affordable housing may create tensions for the group in advancing its work. Its push to avoid segregated areas

Figure 12.2
Mobility Assistance to Black Voucher Holders and Neighborhood Distress



Source: ICP, *Mobility Works* (2013). Map created by Abigail Self.

Figure 12.3
School Quality in the Dallas Metroplex



Notes: Education quality is measured by an index including measures of SAT participation, student-to-teacher ratio, and the school's accountability rating, which is based on student achievement on standardized tests and completion rates. Indices were formed by summing indicator scores for each dimension. Then, to standardize the measures, z-scores measuring standard deviations from the distribution mean were calculated for each. Thus, for example, a negative z-score represents a value below the mean for all the areas.
Source: TEA (2008). Map created by Pratik Mhatre.

has been framed as avoidance of areas with affordable housing. With the advent of LIHTC developments in these areas, however, the possibility that low-income minority students may make up a substantial share of local schoolchildren rises.

FOUNDATION COMMUNITIES

Austin has sustained a consistent pattern of growth since the 1980s, gradually transforming the area from one of the nation's most affordable cities to the city in Texas with the highest housing costs (Community Action Network 1999), fueling gentrification in central neighborhoods and poverty sprawl on the outskirts of the city. Foundation Communities was formed in the early 1980s, when student housing cooperative members used their own funds to create a housing program

for low-income families. From the start, the focus of the organization has been on increasing the supply of quality housing affordable for low-income residents. By the early 1990s, the organization had adopted the name Central Texas Mutual Housing Association (CTMHA) and began purchasing rental housing in Austin in the depressed real estate market, including housing from the Resolution Trust Corporation. In 1998, under new leadership, CTMHA was awarded federal LIHTCs to carry out its first major construction project, a 200-unit complex that FC successfully sited away from existing affordable housing. It was the first affordable housing built in West Austin. Since renamed Foundation Communities, the organization has grown into a nationally known provider of quality affordable housing, offering family housing with a range of on-site services to over 2,500 families in Austin and Dallas (FC, About Us: Affordable Homes n.d.). The average family housed includes a single working mother with two children and an income of $26,000. In addition, FC now provides supportive housing for 345 formerly homeless adults in Austin (FC, Affordable Homes n.d.).

Housing Plus Services While operating citywide, FC has historically focused on developing apartment properties that offer on-site services for residents, some of which are also open to residents of surrounding neighborhoods. Youth programs have formed the centerpiece of their services since an initial program was formed by the Sierra Ridge Residents' Association in 1994. Parents at this site wanted a safe place for their children after school. The services offered are intended to be "tools that educate, support and improve [the families'] financial standing" (FC, Affordable Homes n.d.). FC services include free after-school and summer programs for 700 children, classes to increase literacy and financial stability for over 300 adults, financial coaching and courses in money management and home buying, and assistance for low-income high school students in applying for financial aid for college. Over time, FC has added other services, such as free tax preparation at Community Tax Centers, open to all low-income central Texans. Over 17,000 households have been served, bringing $27 million in refunds to the region. Residents of FC's efficiency apartment complexes also receive assistance with chronic health issues, disabilities, and low literacy. To provide these services, FC partners with local social service agencies providing case management for residents. Politically savvy, the organization has worked hard to document the impact and value of its services to the broader community. In 2012, FC estimated the total value of its services to the region to be approximately $19.7 million (FC, Affordable Homes n.d.).

FC, like many housing development organizations, has had to balance many factors when siting its properties. The organization has historically operated citywide and has not viewed itself as attached to a particular neighborhood or community. While FC was able to locate its first tax credit project in a growing area that had no other affordable housing present, since that time its projects have been located in low- to moderate-income neighborhoods. This does not mean that FC is indifferent to the presence of opportunity, but rather that it judges

locations in different terms and has been able to win tax credits for projects that assess locations in a more forward-looking way. For example, FC won tax credits to create the first affordable housing community on the region's commuter rail line, and it has recently been awarded tax credits to build efficiency apartments in Austin's rapidly changing downtown.

Over time, however, FC's experience along with changes in tax credit rules have led the organization to take a different approach to both siting and funding its projects. Increasingly, FC is looking for opportunities to locate near poorly performing schools, where the organization's leaders are convinced that the group can have a positive impact. In response to ICP's 2010 lawsuit against the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs for its administration of tax credits in the Dallas region, TDHCA crafted a new approach to scoring based on the criteria ICP currently uses, prioritizing low-poverty areas with incomes close to the regional median and high-performing schools. This makes it highly unlikely that FC will be awarded tax credits for any project in Austin. At the same time, and despite the changes in tax credit scoring, FC's experience in one South Austin neighborhood has convinced the group to seek out low-income neighborhoods where it can have the most effect.

Austin's St. Elmo Neighborhood In 1991, FC purchased the Sierra Ridge apartments in South Austin. Over the next 20 years, the only other apartment property in the neighborhood, Shady Oaks, located directly across the street, slowly deteriorated. In 2011, FC was finally able to purchase Shady Oaks, renaming it Sierra Vista. Together, these two properties comprise 388 units and form the only multifamily rental housing in the neighborhood. Children from these properties now account for the majority of students at St. Elmo Elementary School. Over the past decade, the student population at the school has become poorer and more heavily Hispanic. Census data confirm the rising number of poor Hispanic families in the neighborhood during the first decade of the twenty-first century (Falgoust et al. 2011). While the average household income for the area was $44,265 in 2009, the average income for renters was likely much lower. A 2011 survey of Sierra Ridge residents found that 93 percent had incomes below $31,000 (Falgoust et al. 2011).

These data mirror the demographics of the school. Between 2000 and 2009, St. Elmo's student population became poorer and more Hispanic, and the share of students with limited English proficiency grew. Nonetheless, during the same period, student performance steadily improved and the school has been rated "recognized" since 2009.[16] Table 12.1 shows that low-income students at the

16. Under Texas's accountability system, schools are ranked based on meeting goals under the national No Child Left Behind law. Schools can be ranked academically unacceptable, acceptable, recognized, or exemplary. The Austin Independent School District as a whole is ranked academically acceptable, as are most of its lowest-income schools.

Table 12.1
St. Elmo Elementary School, Academic and Demographic Data (%)

	Proficient in Reading (sum of all grades tested)		Hispanic		Limited English Proficiency		Economically Disadvantaged		Student Mobility
	2003	2010	2001	2009	2001	2009	2001	2009	2009
St. Elmo	76	93[a]	74.9	90.2	37.6	59.1	75.4	91.6	20.6
District	85[b]	82[b]	50.0	58.8	19.0	29.2	50.1	62.7	23.4

[a] All students.
[b] School group median score.
Source: TEA (2002, 2010).

school outperformed the district average for all students on standardized tests by 2010 (TEA 2010).

FC has offered after-school services at its family properties since the mid-1990s. While the original motivation was to provide safe after-school care for residents' children, over time FC has worked to improve the quality and range of programs available. The group's Community Learning Centers offer instruction in reading, help with homework, and physical fitness activities. They also offer academic enrichment in science, technology, engineering, and math, including robotics, as well as Internet-based programs (since many of the residents do not have Internet access at home). In several sites, the centers serve a significant share of children at the local elementary school and have begun to partner more directly with the school. Center staff track data on student attendance, grades, behavior, and standardized test results. The programs have strong, consistent attendance. St. Elmo students outperformed the district average on standardized tests (FC, Revitalizing the St. Elmo Neighborhood n.d.; Huerta 2013). The feedback the centers get from the principals they work with is that their efforts are a welcome complement to the work of the school. The current focus on testing has left low-income schools unable to provide the kind of enriched curriculum that higher-income schools routinely offer.

Beyond the performance of the individual children FC learning centers work with, the organization has begun to see the impact its work can have on the overall performance of the schools. Access to stable, affordable rents reduces the likelihood that residents will move, thus reducing student mobility rates. The frequent moves of low-income students are a key factor explaining poor academic performance (Mueller and Tighe 2007). A survey of Sierra Ridge residents found that over 60 percent had lived in their apartments for three years or longer (Falgoust et al. 2011). According to Julian Huerta, FC's director of community

services, these school-level impacts have led FC to think about intentionally selecting communities for future housing developments or rehabilitation in order to impact poorly performing schools (Huerta 2013).

FC's experience in the St. Elmo neighborhood has caused the group to think not just about its potential impact on the school but also about its effect on the larger neighborhood. FC has been impressed by the ideas of the Harlem Children's Zone,[17] particularly the idea of providing services to neighborhood kids from birth to college. FC has opened up access to its services to all children at St. Elmo Elementary School, rather than prioritizing the housing development's residents, as in other sites. It has expanded its preschool program from 15 children to 45, serving three- and four-year-olds, who will also get a year of prekindergarten at the school. The Community Learning Centers work with these children on their English, since most come from monolingual households. The centers offer parenting classes in partnership with a local nonprofit. They also intend to bring more resources to the middle school children in this neighborhood, who currently attend an academically unacceptable middle school. FC's long-term goal is to make more services available to neighborhood families and to have a large percentage of these families take advantage of the services. While it is too soon to measure the results of these efforts, FC is convinced that these services—particularly the addition of prekindergarten and greater coordination with the elementary school—will further benefit the children.

Paralleling its work in the St. Elmo neighborhood, FC has begun to work in partnership with coalitions in other poor neighborhoods of the city. The group participated in the effort to obtain a Promise Neighborhoods grant from the federal government in the St. Johns neighborhood of North Austin, working closely with a school-based coalition on efforts to reduce student mobility. FC is also partnered with a broad coalition of groups working in the Dove Springs neighborhood, with support from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, which focuses on improving education and children's health in central Texas.

While historically FC viewed its work as focused on the development of housing plus services for its own residents, over time the group's educational work has caused it to broaden the scope of its endeavors and to view neighborhood-scale partnerships more positively. FC now seeks out opportunities where the need is high, where opportunities for partnership exist, and where the group can work on a large enough scale to see an impact on schools and other local institutions. The effects of its programs on the children participating in them (assessed through qualitative measures of impact, sustained standardized test

17. The Harlem Children's Zone, Inc., is a nonprofit organization that provides a comprehensive range of free services for thousands of children and families in a 100 -block area of Central Harlem in New York City. Their approach aims to break the cycle of poverty for those served by keeping children on track from preschool through college and into the job market (Harlem Children's Zone, History n.d.).

results, and grade point averages) were visible before the organization purchased its second property in St. Elmo (FC, St. Elmo Initiative Stats n.d.). How this will shape school performance now that FC has more leverage remains to be seen, but the prospects are good.

Conclusions

Existing literature on past patterns of residential and school segregation paint a depressing picture of the prospects for meaningful integration, highlighting the remarkable durability of patterns of exclusion. This chapter presents two contrasting strategies for using housing policy to improve the quality of the education available to low-income children. In the first case, the Inclusive Communities Project, housing vouchers are used to enable low-income families to gain access to schools in affluent areas, where they will encounter few other poor students and will benefit from the quality of services residents of these areas demand and support. In the second case, Foundation Communities, the development of housing with a range of on-site educational and other family support services are used to provide the educational enrichment activities that low-income students seldom receive at school or at home.

The two groups emerged from very different traditions, although both view their work in terms of the larger landscape of opportunities available to low-income households. ICP hopes to make vouchers a more powerful tool for giving families real choices about where they live. ICP assumes that if presented with good information about their choices, and under better program rules, more households will choose to move to high-opportunity areas. At the same time, the group has been thwarted by the refusal of landlords in high-opportunity areas to accept vouchers. In response, it has begun to emphasize affordable housing development, targeting particular neighborhoods, in order to increase the supply of housing in these areas that will accept vouchers.

FC is well acquainted with the difficulties associated with siting housing in affluent (or even moderate-income) areas.[18] Yet over time, and as the organization has grown in capacity and scale, FC has come to see the power it can have to change entire low-income school communities through its work. FC has become an important partner to schools and to other organizations seeking to change neighborhood conditions that undermine schools.

Both groups face a difficult task, and replicating either approach would require a steep learning curve for any entrant to the field. Yet several points can be drawn from their experience that may help other regions and organizations think about their own strategic choices. First, developing a strategic approach

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18. Ironically, ICP's efforts to prioritize federal tax credits for use in high-opportunity areas have made it even more difficult for FC to fund its efforts, since it rarely works in areas considered high opportunity (Huerta 2013).

requires understanding the current patterns of rental housing availability and the relationship between rental housing options and existing school inequities. Such a strategic approach entails the identification of expected outcomes—in other words, these organizations found that they needed to identify what improved housing options are intended to achieve. Second, such an approach requires flexibility. Both groups have adapted over time as impediments or opportunities have arisen. Finally, having identified education as a priority, these groups have designed programs that require an understanding of the educational geography: where are the best opportunities available? Austin has a different "opportunity map" than does Dallas. In Austin, chances for improving local schools and working within the district are stronger than those in Dallas.

The literature on the relationship between housing, neighborhood, and school performance demonstrates the complexity of the influences on educational outcomes for children. Clearly, relationships exist between neighborhood and school contexts, as well as housing stability and education quality. On one hand, children benefit from being in classes with high-performing classmates, strong teachers, and great resources. Further, they benefit from safe neighborhoods and calm conditions that facilitate study and focus. On the other hand, children in affordable housing in low-income areas benefit from social networks within their neighborhoods and can benefit from the integration of educational services into their residential communities. Their schools benefit from improved resources and supportive programs for low-income children, such as those provided by FC's Community Learning Centers.

Both organizations began with ideas about the type of neighborhoods they would work with; both have changed their thinking to some extent based on their experiences. ICP began with the idea that it could move families to "good" neighborhoods, where they could benefit not only from better schools but also from other types of high-quality public services and opportunities from which they had been excluded by historical patterns of segregation and other forms of exclusion. Yet ICP found that even with vouchers and active assistance in using them, barriers to access remained. ICP has expanded its portfolio to include strategies for opening up the suburbs to affordable housing development.

FC began with a focus on its properties as communities, with on-site services targeted to residents. As the organization achieved scale and momentum in a few parts of town, it began partnering with schools, opening up services to the entire school population or to the broader neighborhood. FC began looking for models for engaging the neighborhood and providing a more comprehensive set of services through partnerships. It now seeks out poorly performing schools where it can have an effect, but in areas where there are organizations and resources to build on.

Both community- and mobility-based approaches are needed to provide a range of choices and opportunities for low-income families. Policies at both the state and federal levels must maintain support for both types of programs. Recent rule changes governing federal tax credits made by the Texas Department of

Housing and Community Affairs have attempted to allow for both: tax credits are to be prioritized in high-opportunity areas or in areas that have a community revitalization plan, a policy change that recognizes that more affordable units are needed in high-opportunity areas, while higher-quality units are also needed in distressed neighborhoods (Van Zandt and Mhatre 2009). To date, however, the revitalization plan aspect of the rule has been defined in terms of historic urban renewal/revitalization plans, rather than the sort of partnerships and initiatives being built by FC.

The experiences of these two groups suggest that rather than seeing mobility- and community-based approaches as opposed, we should recognize the need for an integration of these strategies. Opening up neighborhoods to vouchers in the absence of laws requiring that landlords accept them, as well as in suburbs that have historically included little rental housing, will not work without explicit efforts to create affordable rental housing options there. Similarly, community revitalization efforts cannot be targeted based solely on need; successful efforts will require partners and resources.

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