

**De Facto Shelters:
Homeless Living in Vacant
Public Housing Units**

Mary K. Cunningham
Susan J. Popkin
Michael Eiseman
Kadija Ferryman

**De Facto Shelters:
Homeless Living in Vacant Public Housing Units**

Final

March 2005

Prepared by:

Mary K. Cunningham
Susan J. Popkin
Michael Eiseman
Kadija Ferryman

The Urban Institute
Metropolitan Housing and Communities
Policy Center
2100 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037

Submitted to:

The Ford Foundation
Community and Resource Development
320 E. 43rd Street
New York, NY 10017

Grant No. 1020-1348
UI No. 07032-007-00

The nonpartisan Urban Institute publishes studies, reports, and books on timely topics worthy of public consideration. The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people made significant contributions to the research design, data collection, and data analysis required to complete this report. We would like to thank Isabel Farrar of the University of Illinois-Chicago's Survey Research Laboratory for managing the data collection and field staff. Special thanks also to Sandra Young. Her direction and support were invaluable assets throughout the making of this report. Furthermore, we would like to thank her for making Ujima's facility available to us for meetings, trainings, and interviews. We would also like to thank the Ujima staff for their assistance and flexibility. Leroy Square and Eunice Crosby provided further insight for the report's research design. Thank you to Sudhir Venkatesh for acting as an advisor throughout the project.

Our interviewers must be thanked for their outstanding fieldwork. Surveying the entire development was at times a complex and daunting task that required a strong commitment on their part. Specifically, we would like to thank our field manager, Chris Devins, who did an excellent job securing and managing quality data, and managing interviewers. Thank you to Michael Ibrahim for recruiting residents for our in-depth interviews.

Thanks to staff at the Urban Institute who provided help and support along the way. We wish to thank Marge Turner for her thoughtful feedback on the earlier report and for her guidance throughout the project. Will Woodley served as an interviewer, data analyst, and an author for the first project report. Melissa Schick provided related literature reviews and efficiently coordinated interviews. Diane Hendricks did a terrific job preparing and formatting the final document.

Finally, we wish to thank the residents of Ida B. Wells for sharing their stories and placing their confidence in us.



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....5

 The Creation of De Facto Shelters..... 6

 Research Objectives 8

COUNTS OF THE HOMELESS IN WELLS 9

PROFILE OF THE HOMELESS LIVING IN WELLS..... 13

 Barriers to Stable Housing 15

 Strong Connection to the Wells Community 22

EXPANDING SERVICES FOR THE HOMELESS 27

REFERENCES 30

APPENDICES.....33



INTRODUCTION

The *Plan for Transformation*, initiated in 1999, calls for demolition of distressed public housing high-rises and construction of lower-density mixed-income communities. The plan, being implemented by the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), will substantially reduce the number of family public housing units, and relocate thousands of households with Housing Choice Vouchers.¹ As Chicago's public housing is demolished to make way for new mixed-income communities, an unknown number of homeless squatters living illegally in vacant public housing units will also lose their housing. As illegal squatters, these residents have neither legal right to relocation services nor the right to return to revitalized developments.

The squatters are not official CHA residents, making it unclear which city agency is responsible for responding to this urgent problem. The city is implementing an ambitious plan to assist to end homelessness. The plan, *Getting Housed, Staying Housed: A Collaborative Plan to End Homelessness*, represents a fundamental shift in the homeless service delivery system, from the current one that focuses on an emergency shelter system and transitional housing to a system that encourages a "housing first" philosophy.² The Chicago Continuum of Care, a consortium made up of homeless providers and staff from the city, is responsible for implementing the plan to end homelessness. Although this plan ostensibly addresses the issue of homelessness in the city, there is no specific plan regarding the hundreds of homeless living in public housing. Further, to date the CHA has created no formal policies to ensure that the squatters living in public housing are offered social services and safe, stable housing before public housing buildings are demolished.

¹ This plan calls for the redevelopment of 25,000 units, but will result in a substantial reduction in family public housing units (net loss of 14,000 units) with as many 6,000 families relocating to the private market with Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8). Since the plan was first approved in 1999, the CHA has demolished nearly 7,000 units, including 2,199 in FY 2002. The authority has rehabilitated more than 2,000 units, primarily in senior buildings, and begun construction on several small, mixed-income developments. Nearly 2,400 families have been relocated, about half within public housing and half with vouchers (Metropolitan Planning Council 2003). For more information please see *FY2005 Annual Plan for Transformation-Year 6*, which is available at <http://www.thecha.org/>.

² The goal of ending homelessness was first adopted by the National Alliance to End Homelessness in 2000. By 2003, the Bush administration had made it a "top objective" in the FY 2003 Budget. Although there is no federal money to support the plans, over 100 cities and some states have committed to developing a plan by 2004 (Burt et al. 2004).

"Housing first" focuses on first providing housing and then providing follow-up case management services. For more on this approach see the National Alliance to End Homelessness at <http://www.naeh.org/>.

See The Chicago Continuum of Care, *Getting Housed, Staying Housed: A Collaborative Plan to End Homelessness*. The plan is available at <http://www.chicagocontinuum.org/>.



The Creation of De Facto Shelters

The issues of public housing transformation and ending homelessness are inherently linked. Public housing has served as the housing of last resort in Chicago for many years; poor management and high crime rates have driven out most tenants who had other options. Federal preferences required that the housing authority give priority to applicants who were homeless or at risk of homelessness. By the 1990s, the population of the CHA's developments had much in common with the truly homeless: the residents were extremely poor, most were unemployed, many had mental health problems, and even more were substance abusers (Popkin et al. 2000). Without the safety net of public housing, as bad as it was, many of these residents would have nowhere to live.

In addition to these "at risk" tenants, the CHA's population also included a substantial number of homeless individuals who relied on public housing for occasional or regular shelter. Many CHA households included "illegal" residents, i.e., tenants who were not on the lease but who slept in the unit on a regular basis. Often, these were family members or friends with criminal records, technically barred from public housing, or simply down on their luck and needing a place to stay (Popkin, Cunningham, and Woodley 2003; Venkatesh 2003). It was not uncommon for several generations of a family to be crowded in a single CHA unit, with only a few—or maybe even no—legal tenants in the household. Some legal tenants passed their units on to other relatives, or sublet their units illegally. Until the late 1990s, CHA management of its properties was so poor that managers either overlooked or even permitted such practices.

As vacancy rates soared in CHA's high-rise housing during the 1990s—the result of poor management and deferred maintenance—the developments also became home to a hidden population of squatters. Despite the desperate need for assisted housing, waiting lists for public housing were long and unoccupied units often remained vacant, especially as plans began to demolish the high-rises and replace them with mixed-income housing. In some developments, vacancy rates exceeded 50 percent (Popkin et al. 2000). Many of these units were habitable, with heat, running water, working refrigerators, and electricity. These vacant units were an attractive option for many homeless individuals, especially with the overall lack of shelter beds and a shrinking pool of SROs and other affordable options. Vacant CHA units were particularly attractive options for people addicted to drugs—a person living in a vacant unit was free of the rules imposed by most shelters and, further, had easy access to drug dealers. Over time, the CHA's vacant units came to function as de facto shelters for the city's homeless population.³ As a result, the demolition of the CHA's developments will affect an unknown number of homeless people who have been relying on the buildings for shelter for many years.

³ The term "de facto shelter" was first used in "The View from the Ground," a series on the relocation and demolition of Stateway Gardens written by Jamie Kalven. See <http://www.viewfromtheground.org/>.



There is no systematic data about the size of the homeless population living in vacant public housing units. Advocates estimate that 166,000 people experience homelessness each year in the Chicago metropolitan area (Chicago Coalition for the Homeless 2002). One hundred and twenty-five temporary shelter programs in Chicago provide 6,000 beds each night. In years past, the capacity of the city's shelter system has been stretched, especially during cold Chicago winters (*Sun Times* 2001). Concerns about how the transformation of public housing will affect both public housing residents and the homeless residents living illegally in public housing buildings have been expressed in a number of media outlets; however there is no empirical evidence that shows a direct link between increases in the number of homeless and the *Plan for Transformation* (*Chicago Reporter* March 2004; *The Columbia Chronicle* May 2004; *Residents Journal* 2004). Without this information, it is difficult for policymakers to understand the extent of the problem and develop a plan to ensure that the squatters living in public housing end up in safe and stable housing.

This study focuses on Ida B. Wells/Madden Park, a development slated for demolition and revitalization since 2000. Wells is one of the sites for the Urban Institute's national HOPE VI Panel Study, and we have been tracking its progress since 2001.⁴ CHA contractors are demolishing Wells, which once included 3,200 units in three developments (Wells, Madden Park, and Darrow Homes) to make way for a new, mixed-income community that will be called "Oakwood Shores." Vast tracts of vacant land have replaced high-rise buildings and rowhouses. The four towers of the Darrow Homes are gone. Madden Park, which stood across the street from Wells, is gone too. With the demolition, the gang war that raged for years between the two developments has ended, but as the shooting has subsided, Wells has become a haven for drug dealers and now houses a thriving open-air drug market. Dozens of apartments in the remaining buildings of Wells and the Wells Extension—mostly six flats and mid-rises—are boarded up. Although hundreds of public housing residents still live there, the development has the feel of a ghost town.

The area surrounding Wells is changing, too. For decades one of Chicago's—and the nation's—poorest communities, the neighborhood is now rapidly gentrifying. Two other enormous public housing developments, Stateway Gardens and the Robert Taylor Homes, are also being demolished; another development, the long-vacant Lakefront Properties, is already gone and being replaced with new housing. South Lake Shore Drive, once the seediest part of Chicago's lakefront, is undergoing a makeover. The city has refurbished the nearby parks and added new playgrounds and recreational facilities. Market-rate townhomes and rehabilitated brownstones are selling for hundreds of thousands of dollars, mostly to affluent and middle-

⁴ See Popkin et al., *HOPE VI Baseline Report* (September 2002) for a complete description of the study methodology as well as study findings.



income African-American families, but to some white families also. The mixed-income development slated to replace Wells will be part of this new community.

What happens to the original residents of the buildings slated for demolition is a central focus of the Urban Institute's HOPE VI Panel Study. While conducting research for the Panel Study at Wells, which focused on the relocation of *legal* public housing residents, it became clear that many of the people living in Wells were living there *illegally*. With no lease and no legal right to relocation, the people squatting in Wells would be the hardest hit by the demolition of public housing units. To respond to this situation, we expanded our research to assess the extent of the problem of illegal squatters in Wells and the capacity of the social service system to respond to their needs.⁵

Research Objectives

This study has two main research objectives. The first is to count the number of homeless people illegally living in Wells. We hope that quantifying the extent of the homelessness problem at Wells will assist policymakers to develop an appropriate response. The second objective is to understand the squatters' current living situations, the factors that contributed to their homelessness, and their service needs.

In the remainder of this section we describe our data collection methods, including how we counted the number of homeless people living in Wells and our in-depth interviews with them. In the next sections we quantify the extent of the squatter problem at Wells, provide profiles of the homeless people living there, identify barriers to stable housing, and talk about their plans for housing when the buildings are demolished. Finally, we present recommendations for next steps.

Methodology

The report presents both quantitative data collected from a survey and qualitative data collected from in-depth interviews. We used three data collection methods:

Squatter Census. For two weeks in March 2003, a team of interviewers counted and surveyed the homeless residents squatting in Wells, specifically those sleeping in vacant units or

⁵ The Residents at Risk Study was funded by a grant from the Ford Foundation, and conducted in partnership with the University of Illinois at Chicago's Survey Research Laboratory (SRL) and Ujima, a resident-run nonprofit based in Wells. Sudhir Venkatesh, an ethnographer and principal investigator of a relocation study at Robert Taylor Homes, acted as an advisor to the project.



living in other spaces within buildings (trash rooms, hallways, and other communal spaces).⁶ Interviewers worked as a team, sweeping through specified sections of Wells each day. The team worked primarily in the early mornings and early evenings, in order to count and survey homeless squatters as they were leaving or returning. Each respondent received \$10 for completing the survey.

In-Depth Interviews. In addition to the survey, we conducted two rounds of in-depth interviews with a total of 32 homeless people squatting in Wells illegally. We conducted the first round of interviews in March 2003 and the second round in March 2004. A survey interviewer identified respondents for the in-depth interviews by canvassing the development during the day and recruiting respondents.⁷ We paid respondents \$25 for their time. The in-depth interviews allowed us to ask less structured questions to identify the factors that led them to become homeless and barriers that prevent them from obtaining stable housing; they lasted approximately 80 minutes. We transcribed and then analyzed the interviews for common themes.

Administrative Interviews. Finally, in summer 2004, we conducted administrative interviews with city officials at the department of housing and the Chicago Housing Authority, as well as local service providers. The purpose of these interviews was to expand our knowledge of what was happening on the ground at the time of data collection, and to understand the current plans to end homelessness and transform public housing.⁸

COUNTS OF THE HOMELESS IN WELLS

Homeless people illegally living in vacant units or hallways are a serious problem in Wells. Over a period of two weeks in early spring 2003, we counted 388 squatters in Wells (294 adults and 94 children, as shown in figure 1).⁹ Whether people who are living in public housing units are considered technically homeless is debatable. Many have been using public housing buildings as shelter for years. In a sense, they have become residents of the development. Even so, almost all (90 percent) of our respondents consider themselves homeless.

⁶ There are a number of methodological challenges associated with counting the homeless that make obtaining accurate estimates very difficult to achieve. We implemented a number of strategies to avoid double counting. Please see appendix A for a full description.

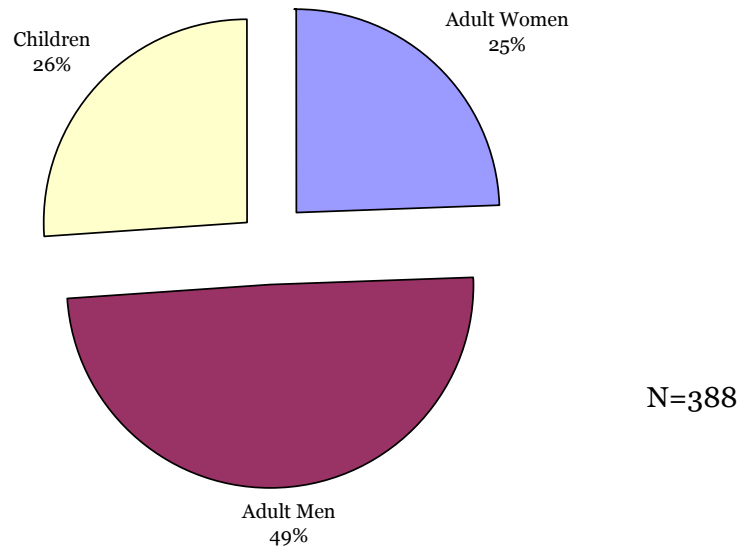
⁷ Because the in-depth interview respondents were recruited nonrandomly during the day, it is likely that we oversampled respondents that were not working at the time and were more likely hang out in the development during the day and undersampled families who were living in vacant units.

⁸ For a complete list of interview respondents, please see appendix B.

⁹ Our count of squatters living in Wells is likely an underestimate of the number of homeless people who live in Wells year-round. Counting the number of homeless people living in Wells during the winter months would most likely produce a substantially higher number.

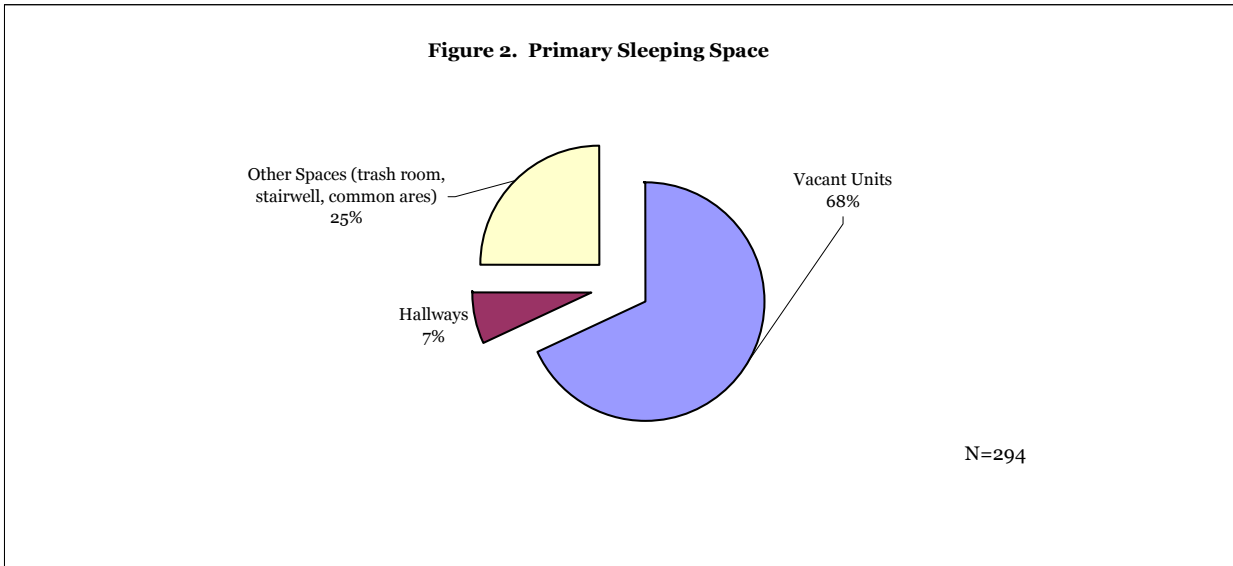


Figure 1. Count of Homless Living Vacant Units at Wells



There is no single agreed-upon definition of homelessness, although there are a number of definitions that are generally accepted by researchers and practitioners. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines a homeless individual as someone “who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and who has a primary residence in a temporary shelter, an institution, or a public or private place not designated for regular sleeping.” The definition also includes individuals about to be evicted or released from an institution with no subsequent residence identified.

By these definitions, all of the people we counted and surveyed are homeless. A little more than two-thirds of the squatters we interviewed live in vacant units (68 percent); some lived in hallways (7 percent), and the remaining live in other spaces such as the trash room or stairwell (figure 2). The units will all eventually be demolished. Further, sleeping illegally in any of these spaces means that the homeless people living in Wells confront the constant threat of eviction.



Unlike many homeless people, who tend to move around from night to night, the homeless at Wells have lived in the development for a long time. More than a quarter (28 percent) have lived in Wells for more than a year. More than half (57 percent) say they sleep in Wells seven nights a week. Others report spending some nights in friends’ homes (10 percent), relatives’ homes (17 percent), and homeless shelters (12 percent). Less than 1 percent say they ever sleep in SROs. Only 5 percent sleep in other areas in Wells, and 10 percent sleep in other public housing buildings (figure 3).

Most of the squatters say they secure a vacant unit and remain there for as long as they can—typically until the police come and clear them out. The task of securing vacant units by boarding them up has been extremely difficult. Often as soon as the unit is secured, homeless squatters or drug dealers will remove the boards immediately and move in.

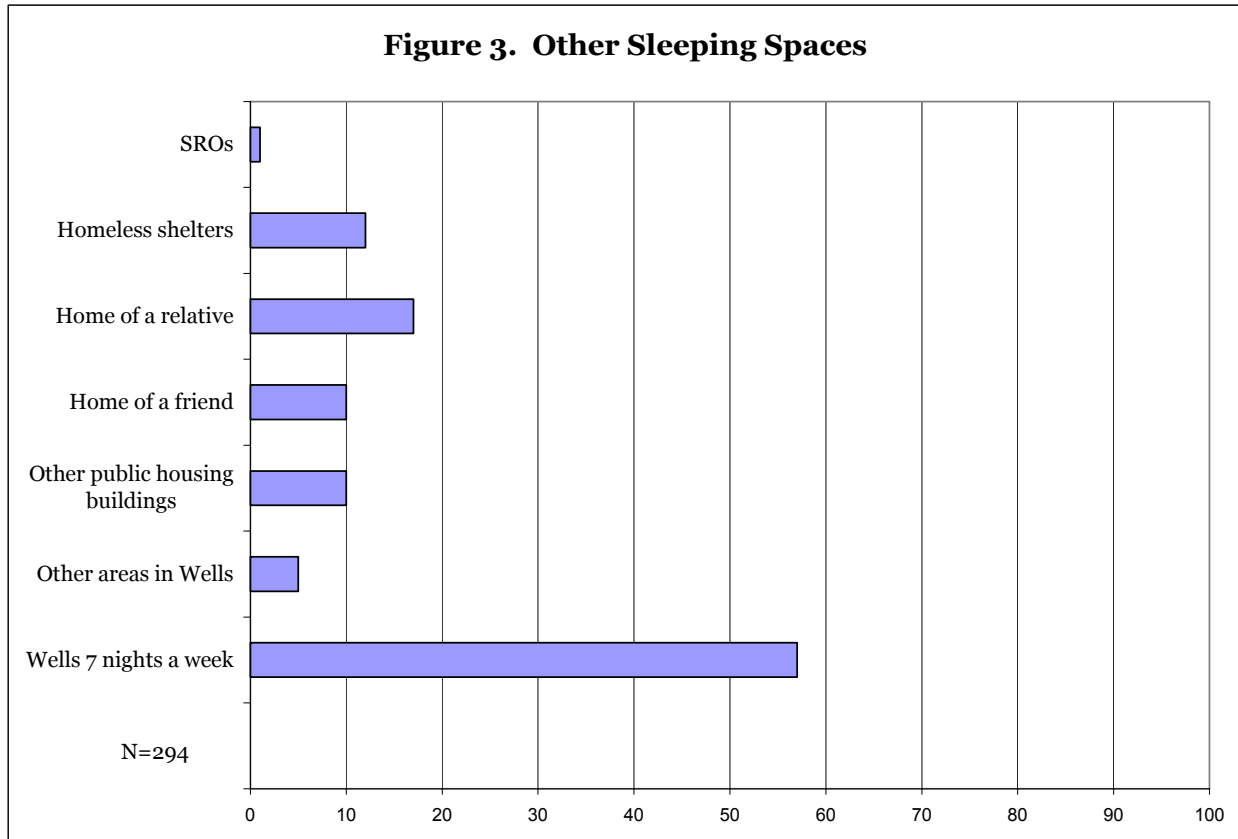
The CHA contracts with a number of companies to board up vacant units. Some contractors have been more successful than others in securing units. Critics have raised numerous concerns about the effectiveness of CHA’s contractors, as well as about the process of awarding contracts.¹⁰ It is clear from the number of squatters we counted that the efforts to board up the buildings at Wells have largely failed in keeping people out of the vacant units.

Most of the in-depth interview respondents said they viewed sleeping in a vacant unit at Wells as a step above staying in a homeless shelter. As one respondent put it, there is less hassle involved in breaking into a vacant unit than enduring the intrusive intake process at a homeless shelter. Homeless people squatting in vacant units can come and go as they please, and there are

¹⁰ See <http://www.viewfromtheground.org/> for a five-part series about the CHA contracting process for securing vacant units.



no rules and regulations and no time limits on their length of stay. One woman we interviewed explained that staying in a homeless shelter meant dealing with people that she thought were “below her.”

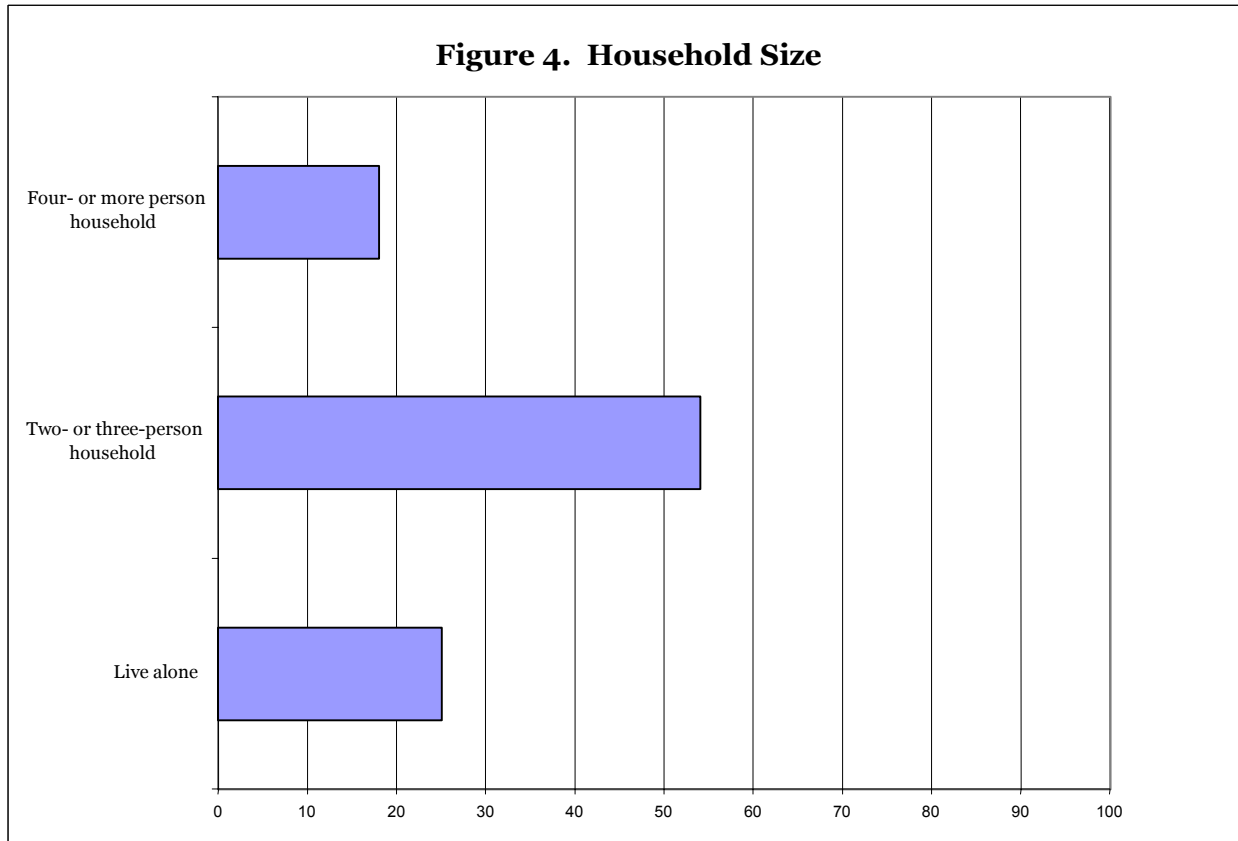


Fear of theft, rape, and other attacks in shelters is common among the homeless, and victimization can be a problem in shelters, although it is unclear how widespread the problem is (Chicago Department of Human Services 2004). One respondent in our study explained that his belongings could be stolen at shelters, so he prefers to remain in a vacant unit. Another said he could not look for a job and live in a shelter because it was difficult to take a shower and look presentable. “When I got out [of prison], I didn’t have nowhere to go, didn’t have no money. I really didn’t want to go to the shelter because there wasn’t anyway for my hygiene and to get out and look for a job”—Danny. Finally, and most disturbing, one young woman we interviewed said she had just left a shelter because one of the male supervisors at the teen shelter was having sex with the young women who stayed there.

The homeless living in Wells tend to stay in groups, or at least pairs. Most of the respondents stay with at least one other person regularly—nearly 25 percent live alone, 54 percent live in two- or three-person households, and 18 percent live in households of four or more (figure 4). We interviewed one couple, but, for the most part, our in-depth interviews



suggest that the squatters who double up live with friends or associates to whom they are not related.



PROFILE OF THE HOMELESS LIVING IN WELLS

The typical homeless person living in Wells is an unemployed, single male in his 40s who has a substance abuse problem. Many of the homeless men grew up in Wells and over the years have spent time in and out of prison, always returning to the community. As “unaccompanied homeless individuals with a disabling condition that have been homeless for a year or more or at least four episodes of homelessness in the past four years,” they meet HUD’s definition of “chronically homeless.” Individuals who experience chronic homelessness are more likely to have substance abuse problems, mental illness, weak attachment to the labor force, and histories of incarceration (Chicago Coalition for the Homeless 2002). Single males make up 74 percent of our sample of Wells squatters, compared with just 38 percent of the homeless population citywide (Chicago Coalition for the Homeless 2002). This difference probably results from the fact that the citywide count includes family homeless shelters. As single males, many



wind up on the street because they are the hardest to serve in an assisted housing system that is geared, for the most part, toward assisting families.¹¹

Not all of the homeless people living in Wells fit this profile: a little more than a third (36 percent) are women, and some, like **Dionne**, are single women with children. Our survey indicates that in Wells, there are 37 squatters who are living in vacant units with their children.

Dionne: Nowhere Else to Turn: Turning to the CHA for Temporary Shelter

Dionne is an attractive woman in her late 30s. Her family lived in Wells for a time when she was growing up; several of her relatives still live in the area. When she got into trouble, it was the only place Dionne knew to come.

Dionne used to have a regular job. She had even worked her way up to a supervisory position and was making decent money—enough to support herself and her three children. But for the past three years she has been in what she calls a “downward trend.” First, her mother died, and then she went into a profound depression. She says she felt so bad she could barely function. Getting out of bed each day was a major challenge. Her employer granted her a leave, but it was not long enough for her to recover. She lost her job and her apartment. Her father had a Housing Choice Voucher, and she and her children ended up becoming “illegal” members of his household.

Dionne cared for her father until he died about six months ago, plunging her and her children into even worse circumstances. She says she had hoped that the housing authority would transfer his voucher to her, but for reasons she does not understand, that did not happen. She and her children have been staying off and on with various relatives who live in and near Wells, but Dionne says none of them are interested in helping them long term. Her youngest child is having trouble in school and she does not know how to help him.

As working-class woman who has never been a drug addict, Dionne has no “street network” to provide support or information, and she does not know where to go to get food or shelter. Her oldest child, Lamont, has a job, which helps a little. But lately things have gotten so bad that Dionne has been reduced to begging on the street and sleeping in vacant units with her children. When she cannot find a vacant unit, she and her children sleep on park benches. Dionne feels terrible about what is happening to her “beautiful children,” but by now is so depressed that she simply has no idea how to reverse her “downward trend.”

These families include 94 children—52 are under 7, and 42 are between 7 and 17. Sixteen of those households are male-headed and 19 are female-headed. Citywide, 8 percent of the homeless have sole custody of their children (Regional Roundtable on Homelessness 2001), so it is relatively uncommon for homeless mothers to retain custody of their children (even if they are living “off the radar” in vacant units). All the women we interviewed during the in-depth interviews had children, but most did not have custody. Their children were living with their grandmothers, many whom live in public housing. **Felicia** is one mother who goes to extreme lengths to keep her children with her.

¹¹ Most federally assisted housing programs and cash assistance programs have eligibility standards that exclude

**Felicia: Daily Struggle, Tired of Being Homeless**

Felicia never had it easy. She is only twenty-two, but has already had a lifetime of pain. She was the oldest of eight children growing up outside Chicago. She raised her brothers and sisters because her mother “chose drugs and men” and would come home just to eat and wash up. She and her siblings were often left alone and she began selling drugs at any early age to support them. She knew drug dealing was trouble, but she also needed money to feed her siblings and to wash their clothes. School was hard for her because of all the pressures at home. She often missed days of school. At 16 she got caught dealing drugs and was arrested. Soon after she got arrested, her mother took her out of school so that she could spend more time at home taking care of her siblings.

At 16, Felicia got into an abusive relationship, became pregnant, and left her mother’s house to live with her grandmother in Chicago. As she tried to make ends meet, she got into another abusive relationship and got pregnant again. With two children, it became too crowded at her grandmother’s house and she had to move. Since then she has been staying with various friends and relatives for short periods of time. She has also stayed at shelters. At one shelter, she met another young woman with children and they bonded. This friend of hers knew about vacant units in Wells and she moved in there. She did not like living in vacant units, and would do anything to not have to live like that again.

Felicia has multiple barriers to stability. She is almost fully deaf due to an unmonitored case of childhood scarlet fever, has a criminal record, two small children, and no high school diploma. She says she is trying hard to finish school and get a job but it is a struggle. She has to keep moving from shelter to shelter. It is hard to find child care. She has no reliable transportation and has trouble keeping appointments. She has been going to counseling to try to deal with her upbringing and emotional and physical abuse, but things seem to be getting worse. Her ex-boyfriend is now trying to get his child removed from her care. Although she acknowledges that she is not in the best position, she wants to keep her children with her. She is tired of this homeless lifestyle but feels that she has no one to turn to.

Homelessness can have devastating effects on children. Homeless children have higher rates of exposure to violence, family separation, and are twice as likely to go hungry as other children (Family Housing Fund 1999). Studies have shown that homeless children tend to move frequently and often miss days of school or change schools, which can have detrimental effects on their academic standing (Chicago Coalition for the Homeless 2002). **Dionne’s** story of sleeping with her children in the park vividly illustrates the terrible risks for homeless children.

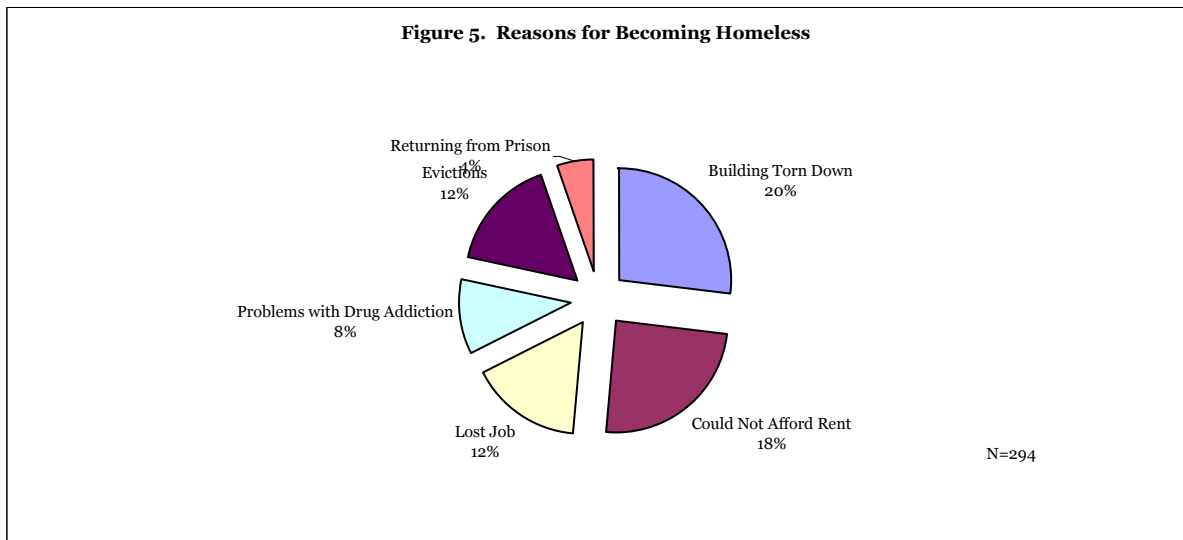
Barriers to Stable Housing

No single event seems to have led the squatters in our sample to become homeless. As noted earlier, most of our respondents have been living in Wells for more than a year and are chronically homeless. Unemployment, health problems, repeated incarceration, mental illness, and problems with drug addiction are among the most persistent barriers to stable housing for the homeless people living in Wells. These problems are common among the larger homeless population.

single adults.



A number of factors may have led to Wells squatters losing their permanent housing. In our survey, we asked each respondent how he or she became homeless. The most common response reported was “building torn down.” It is unclear if these squatters were a part of a legal CHA household or if they were living illegally in another building. About 18 percent reported that they had to move because they could not afford the rent, and 12 percent because they lost their job. Others moved because of eviction (12 percent) or drug addiction (8 percent) (figure 5).



Unemployment

Through our in-depth interviews, we identified three key factors that prevent squatters from securing stable housing emerged. First, almost all the homeless living in Wells are unemployed and therefore have little or no income to make rent payments; only 9 percent of our respondents reported that they are currently working. Within their current circumstances, obtaining employment is not a realistic goal for most squatters. Only 54 percent of squatters living in Wells graduated from high school or have a GED. Almost one in five (18 percent) reports a disability that prevents him or her from working (figure 6). With few or no skills and no permanent address, most of the homeless at Wells find it extremely difficult to find employment. As one respondent said, “*not having proper clothes and car fare to get from one place to the next*” makes it extremely difficult for him to even start looking for a job.



FIGURE 6. SQUATTER CHARACTERISTICS

Currently working	9%
High school graduate/GED	54%
Income less than \$5000	71%
\$5,000–\$10,000	15%
Greater than \$10,000	14%
Receive food stamps	33%

With the lack of a job and few prospects for getting one, most homeless living in Wells are extremely low-income, and are not receiving public assistance. About three-quarters (71 percent) have annual incomes of less than \$5,000 (most of those report zero income), and about 15 percent report income of \$5,000 to \$10,000 (figure 6). Further, most squatters do not receive any cash assistance (Social Security, SSI, or TANF), which could be because of difficulty of applying and collecting aid without a permanent address, or because they do not qualify. There are provisions that help homeless people access foods stamps, such as priority claim handling. So it is a surprise that the rate of food stamp receipt (33 percent) is slightly lower than the national average of 37 percent among homeless people (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty 2003).

To get by, the homeless people living in Wells work in the underground economy “hustling” as it is often described. During our in-depth interviews we discussed how squatters make ends meet. Many collect cans, panhandle, and do work “under the table” such as cleaning, landscaping, or construction. Many, like **Lester**, work in the illegal economy as a “lookout” or “security” for drug dealers in the development. These jobs pay in cash and, most often, in drugs. According to one respondent, a person can earn \$100 a day, plus a day’s supply of heroin, for this work. Women often resort to prostitution or rely on their boyfriends (usually in the active drug trade) for money. Our interview respondents also told us that selling stolen items, or “boosting” as it is commonly called, is another way to earn money.

**Lester: “Bottom of the Well at Ida B. Wells”**

Lester is almost 60 years old. He is a tall, lean man and the strain of being homeless and heroin-addicted for almost 30 years has taken its toll. Lester is in poor health, both mentally and physically. He recently had a heart attack and major surgery. He is depressed. He said he has hit the “bottom of the well at Ida B Wells”.

His parents died at an early age and then he lived with his grandparents. As his grandparents aged, he was sent to live with different relatives. He remarked that he has been “in transit” for most of his life. He spent some time in the Navy and held a few jobs, but he has spent most of his life in prison. Lester has not had stable housing since 1976. After his first major prison term, he “lost everything and tried to rebuild, restart over” but with limited options once out of prison he found himself back in jail.

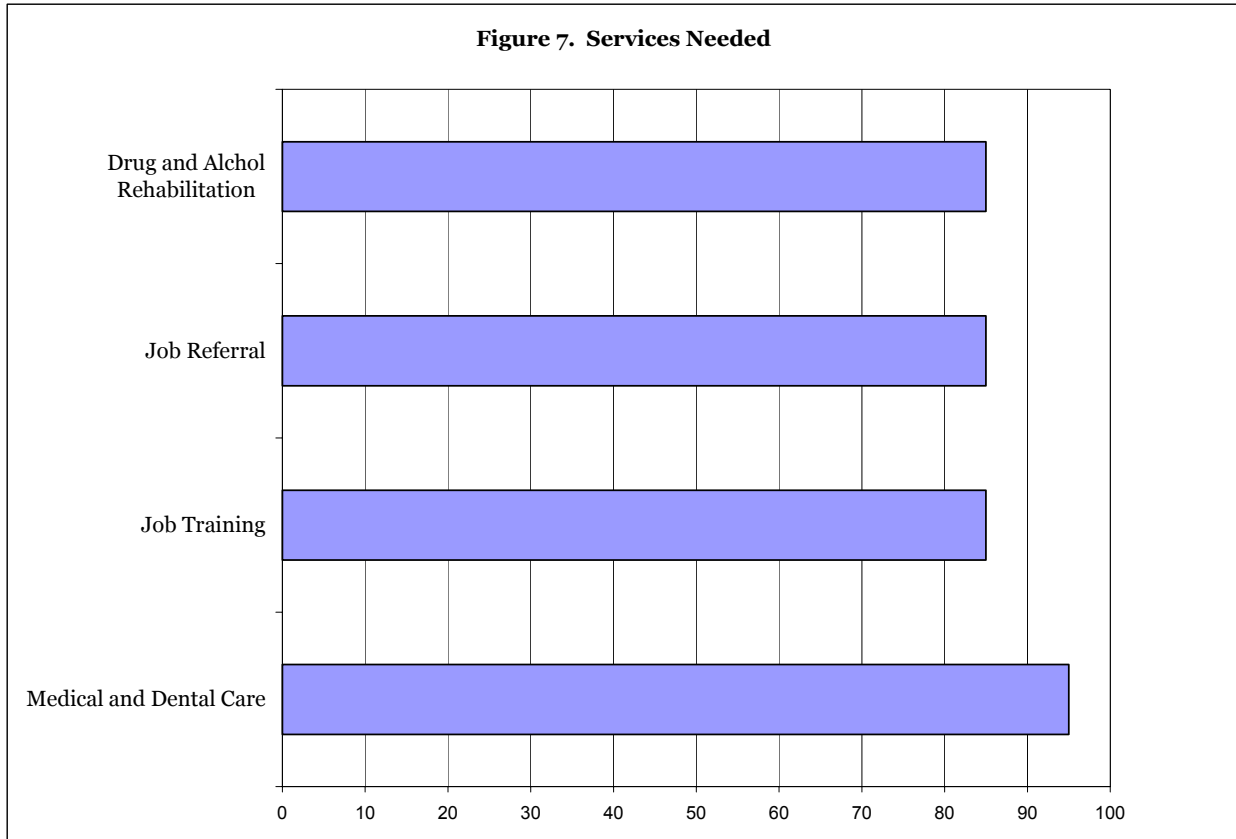
Lester knows that much of his trouble is due to his drug addiction. He used to steal and rob in order to get money for his drugs, but he does not do that any more partially due to his failing health. Now he works for drug dealers in the development as “security.” In exchange, he receives cash and drugs. He was in a methadone program over 10 years ago, but quit because in the program he had to drink methadone often, even when he felt he didn’t need it. He felt like he was kicking one habit to get a “worse habit.” Now and then he will stop using for a few days but then “turn back to drugs” when bad things happen.

Lester has been staying in Wells on and off for the past 20 years. Sometimes he can find a decent unit to live in with running water and electricity, but when he finally starts to settle in and acquire additional clothes, the unit is locked up and he loses everything all over again. He says he is often harassed by police who find him staying in vacant units. “They treat you like...you are lower than the scum on the bottom of their shoe”.

Recently, he has been feeling like he can do better, but he doesn’t have the means. He says, “there’s places I know I can go and talk to people to help me, but when it comes to that time, I don’t have the money for the car fare...I don’t have the clothing in order to go for an interview.” He has applied for Social Security and has been denied. He is trying to appeal because he says that if he can get Social Security he can maybe get connected to Section 8 or other low-income programs.

Substance Abuse and Addiction

Substance abuse and addiction is another major barrier that prevents squatters living in Wells from securing housing. Most of the homeless men and women we interviewed in Wells struggle with drug addiction. An overwhelming majority of the survey respondents (82 percent) reported that they needed drug or alcohol rehabilitation (figure 7). And almost all the men and women we conducted in-depth interviews with reported using drugs; nearly all considered themselves addicts. During the in-depth interviews, we spoke to just one woman and one man who reported that they did not use drugs. The drug users we interviewed reported primarily using heroin, although a few also use crack cocaine. The heroin necessary to support the habit of a typical addict at Wells costs \$30–\$40 per day.



Chicago is a main market for heroin use and distribution in the United States (Kane-Willis and Schmitz-Bechteler 2003). The city, along with most other urban centers around the country, experienced a heroin epidemic in the 1970s. That epidemic cooled in the following decade which witnessed the crack epidemic, but since the mid-1990s heroin use in Chicago has seen a second boom. Between 1995 and 2002, hospital discharges for opiate dependency in the city increased 93 percent (Kane-Willis and Schmitz-Bechteler 2003).¹² The signs and the consequences of the city’s drug problem are especially apparent in and around its distressed public housing. Even as the housing authority demolishes old buildings and begins redevelopment at Ida B. Wells Homes, the area remains an open-air drug market.

¹² The boom has been fueled in part by importation of the drug at a much higher level of purity than had previously been available. High-purity heroin has made an effective quantity less expensive, and allows users to inhale the drug rather than inject it. The Chicago Metropolitan area now has the highest rate of emergency department mentions for heroin of any metropolitan area in the United States (Kane-Willis and Schmitz-Bechteler 2003).



The heroin addicts we interviewed range in age from 40 to 60, and most adopted the drug in the 1970s or early 1980s. These men and women, and perhaps many of their fellow homeless people in Wells, are part of Chicago's (and the country's) first heroin epidemic. They are aging drug addicts, which adds to the complexity of serving them—more likely to have health problems, less likely to have resources. Over two or three decades of addiction, some of them have held steady jobs, maintained stable housing, gotten married, and had children; but now, weighed down by the problems that drugs have caused, and often other burdens and failures, they have become homeless. Others have struggled with housing instability their whole lives. Most had attempted recovery at least once, and some had tried several times. Some in-depth interview respondents report having been drug-free for years before returning to dependency.

Prisoner Reentry

Finally, many of the squatters living in Wells had trouble securing stable housing upon release from prison. About 4 percent of the squatters we surveyed reported that they moved into a vacant unit upon being released from prison. This number does not capture the number of squatters living in Wells that have been in prison previously and never found stable housing upon release, so it likely underestimates the number of squatters whose housing is unstable as a result of incarceration. Further, the number of ex-offenders who are homeless is likely to increase as a high number of men and women are released from prison each year. About 24,000 men and women are released from Illinois prisons each year (Chicago Coalition for the Homeless 2002).¹³

Like **Vanessa**, most ex-offenders have no place to turn when they leave prison. They have no money, no job, and likely no skills. Left without options, most of Chicago's ex-offenders return to the communities they came from, which are concentrated on the south side of the city. One study of the homeless in Chicago found that almost 18 percent of the homeless population had been incarcerated and were released from prison “with no place to go” (Chicago Coalition for the Homeless 2002).

Not all ex-offenders we interviewed experienced homelessness immediately after being released from prison. Many respondents who were ex-offenders stayed with friends or relatives after getting out of jail or prison, but for various reasons, these arrangements were temporary. One respondent mentioned staying with her cousin, but she had to leave because it was just too crowded. Some stayed with relatives illegally so they had to leave or jeopardize their family member's own housing. Many ex-offenders made several moves, “bouncing” from various family

¹³ According to La Vigne (2003), about half (51 percent, or 15,488) of these prisoners returned to Chicago, and 34 percent of them returned to six communities on the west or south side (Austin, Humboldt Park, North Lawndale, Englewood, West Englewood, and East Garfield Park).



members' and friends' homes before ending up at Wells. About a quarter (26 percent) of the respondents lived with friends or family before becoming homeless.

Vanessa: From Prison to Wells: Reentering the Community

Vanessa has been to prison twice, both times for drug-related offenses. Each time she was released, Wells was the only place she knew to return to. Vanessa is in her late 30s and is a long-term heroin addict—as she talks, she periodically “nods out” from the drugs. She has lived in the Madden/Wells community since she was a small child. Her mother lived in Madden Park, and when Vanessa became a mother at the age of 16, she moved into her own apartment in Wells.

Vanessa spent most of her youth “running wild.” Her mother kept her children most of the time. Her son just graduated from high school, her older daughter has a child of her own and lives with “some boy,” and her 16-year old daughter stays with Vanessa’s niece, a leaseholder in Wells. Vanessa sometimes stays there, too, but spends most of her nights staying in “vacancies” with a group of other homeless women.

Vanessa’s history of moving from apartment to apartment reflects the chaotic nature of the Wells community—the fluid way in which apartments and leases were traded and presence of illegal tenants tolerated by both tenants and the housing authority. She says she “gave” her first Wells apartment to her cousin, who had eight children, and moved into a different apartment with her boyfriend, who had “inherited” it from his “auntie.” They lived together until he got locked up; she stayed in the unit for a while longer until she was arrested herself. When she came back, she began staying in vacancies. She managed to stay in one for several years, even putting her own lock on the door. She was arrested a second time, convicted of drug possession, and spent about a year in jail. When she got out, she still had a key to her illegal unit and simply moved back in. Since demolition began at Wells, she has been moving from unit to unit with a group of fellow addicts.

Vanessa wishes her life were different. Her children are ashamed of her and her daughter has never let her see her grandchild. She talks about knowing she needs to get into a drug rehab program so she can help raise her grandchild, but says she knows the motivation has to come from within. In the meantime, she gets by begging and acting as “security” for the local drug dealers. She says she does not understand why the housing authority won’t let her and the other homeless people in Wells stay in the vacant units—she says they keep them up better than the legal tenants and keep the “young boys” from getting in and vandalizing the units. Like the other squatters in Wells, Vanessa has no idea what she’ll do when Wells is gone and still hopes that the fact that she once had a lease means that she is entitled to a new apartment.

We did not specifically ask how many of the respondents had ever spent time in prison during their lifetimes. We only know how many were previously incarcerated immediately before moving into vacant units. However, our in-depth interviews suggest that incarceration is a widespread problem among the homeless men and women living in Wells. Most of the men, and some of the women, we interviewed had spent time in prison; many had committed their first offense at an early age. Further, the majority of the ex-offenders we interviewed are nonviolent offenders who were arrested on drug possession or sale charges, making them ineligible for public housing and other federal housing subsidies such as Housing Choice Vouchers. Many ex-offenders have multiple offenses on their record, which further limits their eligibility and attractiveness to potential landlords. One respondent explained her situation: “I



went to jail. When I got out I never had my own apartment, and I couldn't get one because of my background"—Vanessa.

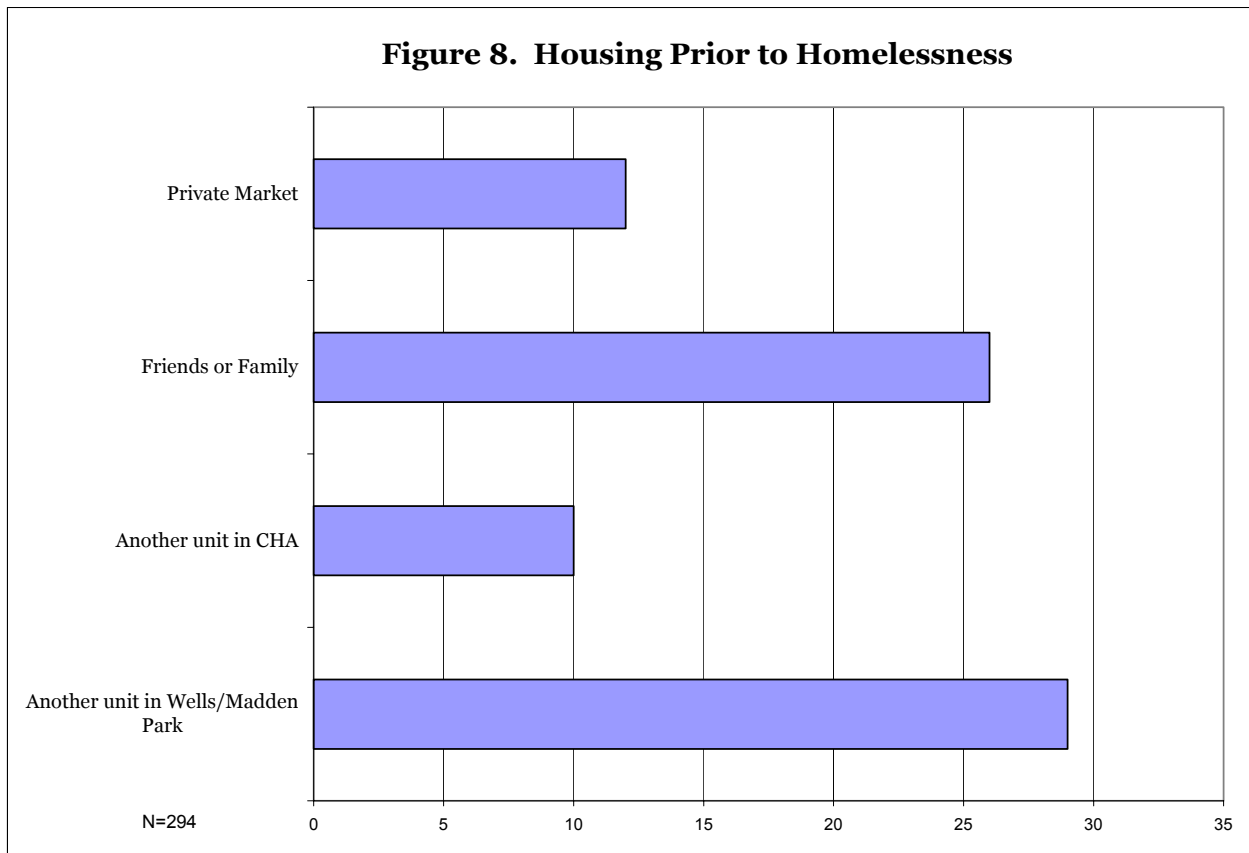
In addition to being banned from federal housing assistance, many ex-offenders are barred from receiving cash assistance because felony drug convictions carry a lifetime ban on TANF. Felons are also barred from receiving certain types of federal education aid such as student loans, which further limits avenues to self-sufficiency.

Lacking safe and stable housing upon release from prison can affect recidivism. As noted, eligibility guidelines for most public assistance programs exclude ex-offenders, who, without assistance, have trouble making ends meet after being released from prison. Further exacerbating the problem is that most ex-offenders return to the communities they came from, areas that are high-crime and infested with drugs.

Strong Connection to the Wells Community

The homeless people living in Wells have exhausted their housing options. They have nowhere else to go, so they return to the people, neighborhoods, and communities they know. More than two-thirds (67 percent) have lived in public housing buildings as legal residents, and 75 percent lived specifically in Wells (figure 8). While there is a high percentage of once-legal residents in this sample, it is unclear how many homeless people living in Wells have been evicted from public housing. It is also hard to say how many have lost their housing as a result of one-strike policies that allow housing authorities to evict tenants for “illegal drug-related activity and alcohol abuse, which threaten the safety and well-being of other residents” (Fleischer et al. 2001).

The homeless people living in Wells have strong connections to legal public housing residents, and are likely to make attempts to seek shelter with relatives living in the revitalized development. About half of our respondents have family living in Wells as legal residents, and 87 percent have friends living in the development. These former residents have nowhere else to turn for shelter, so they turn to their family and social networks in Wells who help them survive. A majority of the homeless men whom we interviewed have relationships with women who are legal tenants. The women who live in Wells as legal residents are their mothers, sisters, girlfriends, wives, and mothers of their children.



Many interview respondents who are addicted to drugs, like **Joseph**, reported being estranged from their families. Several respondents spoke of estrangement from non-drug using family members, either because family members pushed them away or because the users themselves did not want family members to see them in, or suffer consequences from, their difficult circumstances. The breakdown of relationships with non-using family members due to drugs deprives some squatters of a potentially important source of support. According to our respondents, many of the people they do interact with regularly also use or deal drugs. That drug users interact with other users is not surprising, especially given the frequency of heroin use in this population, but this kind of interaction presents a significant hurdle to any addict attempting recovery. Several respondents talked about times in their lives when they were able to stop using heroin while they lived elsewhere, but said they came back to the drug when they returned to Wells. In the words of one man:

I come back here and I'm in the same situation, you know. I need a change of scenery. I need to leave from here or the drugs need to leave from here in order for me to stay clean...I come back here and everybody offering me drugs.—Joseph.

**Joseph: Drugs Destroyed His Family Relationships**

Joseph became addicted to drugs while he was serving in Vietnam; he was 18 years old. He returned home, got clean, and worked at his dad's construction company. For a few years he worked and went to school. When his dad died suddenly, Joseph moved back to Wells with some friends. It was not long before he started doing drugs again.

Joseph is 49 and is living in a vacant unit at Wells with three other squatters. He has been to prison twice, for drug-related offenses. Except for his time in prison, housing instability has become the norm for Joseph, spending time in and out of shelters and SROs.

Like many people addicted to drugs, Joseph talks about getting clean and getting a job. He's been to drug rehab about four times. He estimates that in the past 30 years he has spent about eight years (on and off) not using. He explains that he really wants to quit drugs but feels trapped by his surroundings. "I need to leave from here. I come back here and I'm in the same situation, you know. I need to change the scenery. I need to leave from here or the drugs need to leave from her in order for me to stay clean."

Drugs have destroyed most of his relationships with his family. His girlfriend of 22 years finally gave up trying to make him quit. His brothers and sisters, who live in other states, all hold professional jobs and do not stay in contact. Occasionally, he visits his mother, but he doesn't go too often because he's afraid she'll see him in a bad way.

He remembers that before he left for Vietnam he promised his grandmother that he would not do drugs. He broke that promise. "The first time I did some drugs, she died and I feel responsible for that, you know. I felt that my promise to her, I broke it, and that was punishment for breaking my promise."

For many of the homeless people living in Wells, the connection goes beyond friends and family. Many consider Wells their home. They move into vacant units, cook meals, sleep, and blend in—some even buy locks for their doors. Some decorate their units and paint the walls. One woman proudly recalled compliments paid to her by property management for how clean she kept her unit that she had been living in for almost three years. *"I have my own [unit]. I don't even know the address, but housing came up to my place and I'm thinking they going to put me out, but it was so neat and clean, and I had decorated it with stuff"*—Vanessa. In this case, the management allowed her to stay as long as she agreed to keep her head down and her apartment clean. Our in-depth interviews suggest that the homeless people squatting in Wells have worked out a system of deals with property managers, the police, and legal residents so they will look the other way. Some managers accept bribes or monthly rent payments. In one case, the housing management helped one homeless woman apply for housing assistance.

Future Housing Plans

As the buildings are demolished, many respondents find it more difficult to find a place to stay and none of the respondents we spoke to had any long-term plans for stable housing. When we asked what they would do when Wells was demolished, about a third (32 percent) reported they "didn't know," and 28 percent reported that they planned to move to another



public housing building. One respondent explained her plans: *“I don’t know. Because once they tear this down, I don’t know what’s going to happen. That’s why I need to get it together before then...my life has been so messed up for so long...and if I get that one helping hand, I won’t disappoint them.”*—Laura. Some (19 percent) planned to move in with family or friends living in public housing units. Some like **Roy** intend to turn to the city’s shelter system. Likewise, during our in-depth interviews a few mentioned that they had “no idea” what they would do when the buildings were gone. Most of our respondents (72 percent) plan to sleep in Wells for “as long as they can.” Although they realize that at some point the development will be demolished, none of the homeless people we interviewed were making any plans to find alternative housing.

When we asked what type of housing they would like to have, almost all of our respondents said they would consider a public housing unit (82 percent) and 85 percent said they would accept a Section 8 voucher. About three-quarters said they would consider sleeping in a homeless shelter and 76 percent said they would live with friends or family. Finally, 79 percent said they would consider living in an SRO (figure 9). However, given their histories of substance abuse, the restrictions on former felons, and the limited supply of SROs and shelters,

Roy: No Future Housing Plans

Roy is a 43-year-old homeless man; he looks thin and sick, but he has kind eyes. He is tied to Wells, but he moves from place to place. He spends some nights with a kind neighbor in the development, an older woman who lets him sleep in her unit for free. To show his appreciation, he goes shopping for her, cleans her apartment, and sometimes picks up her grandchildren at school. If he has the money, he pays 10 dollars to sleep in the unit of another neighbor. Occasionally, he spends a night in the hospital, at the mission, or with his sister, but many nights he sleeps alone in a spot in the hallways of Wells that he keeps clean. Roy panhandles for money, and believes that he lacks the toughness or street smarts to join in the drug trade at Wells without getting into trouble.

Roy grew up in the CHA’s Lake Park development, and married at the age of 25. He was then employed as a forklift operator in a candle factory. Roy began using heroin socially in the early 1980s and became addicted. His wife was also a heroin user. The couple relocated from Lake Park using a Section 8 voucher, but lost the voucher due to a failure to follow through on paperwork after Roy’s wife temporarily left the city to spend time with her sister. Roy blames that failure in part on the couple’s heroin use. Roy was laid off from his job in 1986, became unable to both pay rent and support his heroin habit, and he and his wife began relying on family and sleeping in the hallways at Wells. He has not had permanent employment since.

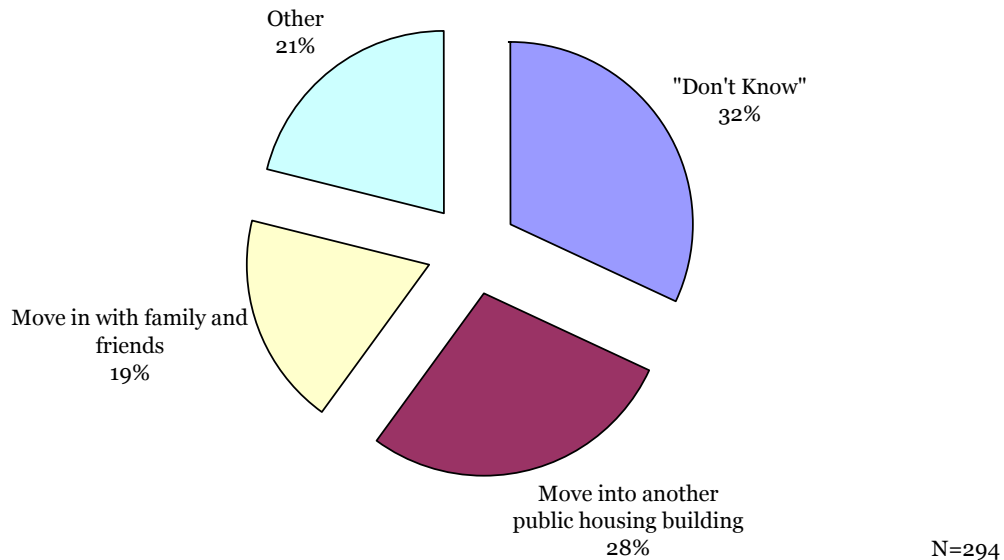
Roy was arrested for dealing drugs and spent a year in prison. Following his release from prison, Roy did not use heroin for six years. He believes that giving up drugs cost him his marriage; his wife continued to use, and the couple split up. He has taken up heroin again during the past year, but says he is now only an occasional user. He says he turns to heroin only to deal with depression and escape the cold. He would accept drug counseling if it was offered to him, and he would like to help educate others about drugs. He would like to be closer to his family, but says that his drug use has kept him distant from his sister and brother. He has two adult children, but does not like to be around them, because he does not want them to see his poor circumstances.

Roy was not aware of plans to demolish the development. He says that if the buildings where he now sleeps were torn down, he would most likely move further downtown, and spend more time at the mission. He is trying to get a job and find a place to live, but drugs, alcohol, depression, a lack of proper clothing, and a lack of money for cab fare have made it difficult for him to achieve those goals.



these choices reflect Wells squatters' hopes rather than realistic possibilities. *"I would love to be able to get out in my new car or have a couple of credit cards, you know, just to live a normal life because waking up hungry every day, not knowing where your next meal is going to come from, when are they going to knock at this door and tell us that we got to get out."*—Mary.

Figure 9. Housing Plans After Demolition





EXPANDING SERVICES FOR THE HOMELESS

The objectives of this study were to count the number of homeless people currently living in Wells and gather data that would help us understand their characteristics and the barriers that they face. We found that there are almost 388 homeless people living in vacant units at Wells, enough to warrant immediate attention from policymakers. And there is evidence that the situation in Wells is likely repeated, at least to some degree, in all of the remaining public housing developments.¹⁴

The squatters living in Wells are a mix of families and single adults that face numerous barriers to securing stable housing. Weak attachment to the labor force, problems with substance abuse, and prison reentry are among the biggest barriers. They have no plans for housing after the buildings are demolished, and, because of their strong connection to Wells, are likely to try to return to the revitalized development. This presence could have devastating effects on the success of the mixed-income development, which will rely on investment from private-market tenants. Further, this study makes it clear that the city's biggest social service initiatives—to end homelessness and transform public housing—cannot succeed unless both target the homeless population who have been using CHA housing as de facto shelters. It is imperative that the city and the housing authority immediately begin planning to meet the challenge of housing these vulnerable households and individuals. The study suggests two starting points:

- 1. The creation of targeted services for the homeless population living in vacant public housing units must be addressed in the *Plan to End Homelessness*.**

Both the CHA and the Chicago Continuum of Care need to work together to find solutions for the squatters living in public housing. As our data indicate, not all squatters need the same types of housing and services. The mothers and children who are sleeping in vacant units need long-term, permanent family-supportive housing. Without access to stable housing, homelessness will have devastating effects on the children especially.

The squatters with substance abuse problems may be among the hardest to serve of the homeless population. Their housing needs go beyond housing; they need access to effective harm reduction programs, methadone clinics, and perhaps even residential

¹⁴ This study cannot provide an exact count for other public housing developments. However, other researchers and advocates have documented the phenomenon. Venkatesh's (2002) study of Robert Taylor, while not a complete census, found comparable numbers of off-the-lease residents in the buildings he studied. The CARA Program, an organization that provides services to non-leaseholders in Stateway found that, in one building, there were 68 people who were living illegally in CHA households and 26 people living in vacant units (View from the Ground.com).



drug treatment centers. For these squatters, drugs are the primary obstacle to improving their housing situation and finding stable work, but the struggle for survival that comes with unemployment and homelessness makes recovery from drug addiction even more difficult than it would be under less chaotic circumstances.

The city should also expand its efforts to help ex-offenders. Currently, there are very few programs that provide any kind of services for these ex-felons and certainly no coherent plan for what to do about their housing. Addressing the needs of ex-felons will help not only CHA residents, who face the risk of having their families destabilized and their rights to housing assistance jeopardized, but also the larger community; without help, these ex-felons are likely to commit other offenses.

2. Dedicated resources to help the city's homeless providers track where the homeless entering the shelter system are coming from. Specifically, monitoring any increases related to the Plan for Transformation.

Our data cannot ascertain the extent to which the policies that make up the transformation of public housing contributed to the homeless population at Wells. The *Plan to End Homelessness* calls for the development of a homeless information management system (HMIS).¹⁵ This system should collect information that requires entries to the shelter system to identify the address each person was living at before entering the shelter. Collecting this information will allow policymakers to make early decisions about where to target homeless prevention programs (neighborhoods, buildings, etc.). More specifically, the HMIS should collect data to identify former CHA residents that have fallen out of the relocation process and may be eligible for replacement housing. These data would allow policymakers to monitor concerns about public housing demolition leading to increases in homeless.

A focused effort and targeting of city resources to assist the homeless now living in Wells could lessen the suffering of these individuals and benefit the city as a whole. Taking care of the city's poor residents goes beyond acting compassionately; there are real social costs connected to the failure to do so. The city and the county spend millions of dollars on the shelter system and responding to drug use. Most of the shelter resources are used by the chronically homeless who churn in and out of the system, and the dollars spent on drug abuse are concentrated on enforcement rather than treatment (Chicago Continuum of Care 2002; Edwards 1998). Some studies show that early homeless intervention programs that provide stable housing result in savings spent on shelter use, public health services, and incarceration (Culhane 2002). Further,

¹⁵ This system will be funded primarily from \$1.3 million in federal funding. The plans for the system outline an Internet-based case management system that will track services to more than 15,000 of the city's homeless clients.



the cost per day of supportive housing is significantly less expensive than shelters, jail, prison, mental health facilities, and hospitals (The Lewin Group 2004).

The coming demolition and redevelopment of Wells presents a potential opportunity to get the squatters living at Wells off the streets permanently. The city and its partners should seize this opportunity to target services to a sizable portion of the city's chronically homeless. If the city ignores this problem, it risks significant increases in the number of homeless "on the street" as Wells and other public housing developments are demolished.



REFERENCES

- Bale, Lisa. May 10, 2004. *Columbia Chronicle* "Experts deem city's 10-year plan imperfect."
- Buron, Larry, Susan Popkin, Diane Levy, Laura Harris, and Jill Khadurri. 2002. *The HOPE VI Resident Tracking Study: A Snapshot of the Current Living Situation of Original Residents from Eight Sites*. Report prepared by Abt. Associates, Inc., and the Urban Institute for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Caputo, Angela. March 2004. "Forgotten People." *Chicago Reporter*.
- Chicago Housing Authority. 2004. *FY 2005 Annual Plan for Transformation—Year 6*. Moving To Work (MTW).
- Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. 2002. *Homelessness: The Causes and Facts*. Chicago, IL: Chicago Coalition for the Homeless.
- Chicago Continuum of Care. 2002. *Getting Housed, Staying Housed: A Collaborative Plan to End Homelessness*. <http://www.continuumofcare.org/>.
- City of Chicago Department of Human Services. 2003. *Request for Proposal for CDHS Support Services for CHA Residents*. Chicago, IL: Chicago Department of Human Services.
- Culhane, Dennis P., Steven Metraux, and Trevor Hadley. 2002. "Public Service Reductions Associated with Placement of Homeless Persons with Severe Mental Illness in Supportive Housing." *Housing Policy Debate*. 13(1): 107–63.
- Cunningham, Mary K., Susan J. Popkin, Erin B. Godfrey, and Beata A. Bednarz. 2002. *CHA Mobility Counseling Assessment Final Report*. Urban Institute Report. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.
- DeKoven, Samantha. 1999. *For Rent: Housing Options in the Chicago Region*. Chicago, IL: Metropolitan Planning Council.
- Edwards, Brian K. 2000. *The Public Investment: The Social Cost of Drug Use*. Part 2 of The Drug Use Prevention Strategy Project. Roosevelt University Institute for Metropolitan Affairs, Chicago IL.
- Feins, Judith D., Debra McInnis, and Susan Popkin. 1997. *Counseling in the Moving to Opportunity Demonstration Program*. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, Inc.
- Fischer, Paul. 2003. *Where Are the Public Housing Families Going: An Update*. Chicago: National Center for Poverty Law.
- Fleisher, Wendy, Julianne Dressner, Nina Herzong, and Alison Hong. 2001. *Keeping the Door Open: A Guide for Employment Programs Serving People with Drug Problems*. Part III. Washington, DC: Corporation for Supportive Housing.



- Great Cities Institute. 1999. *For Rent: Housing Options in the Chicago Region*. A Report to the Metropolitan Planning Council. Chicago: Metropolitan Planning Council.
- Hart-Shegos, Ellen. 1999. *Homelessness and Its Effects on Children*. Minneapolis, MN: Family Housing Fund.
- Health and Human Services. 2004. "The 2004 HHS Poverty Guidelines" Federal Register.
- La Vigne, Nancy G., Cynthia A. Mamalian, Jeremy Travis, and Christy Visser. 2003. *A Portrait of Prisoner Reentry in Illinois*. Urban Institute Report. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Lawrence, Curtis. 2001. "Homeless Shelters Nearly at Capacity" *Chicago Sun-Times*. October 9.
- The Lewin Group. 2004. *Costs of Serving Homeless Individuals in Nine Cities: Chart Book*. Washington, DC: The Lewin Group.
- Kane-Willis, Kathleen, and Stephanie Schmitz-Bechteler. 2004. "A Multiple Indicator Analysis of Heroin Use in the Chicago Metropolitan Area: 1995 to 2002." Roosevelt University Institute for Metropolitan Affairs, Chicago IL.
- National Coalition for Homeless. June 2001. *Homeless Families with Children: Fact Sheet #7*. Washington, DC: National Coalition for Homeless.
- Popkin, Susan J., and Mary K. Cunningham. 2000. *Searching for Rental Housing with Section 8 in Chicago*. Urban Institute Report. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- . 2003. *Residents at Risk: A Profile of Ida B. Wells and Madden Park*. Report prepared for the Ford Foundation. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Popkin, Susan J., Mary Cunningham, and Erin Godfrey. 2001. *CHA Relocation and Mobility Counseling Assessment Interim Report*. Report prepared by the Urban Institute for the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Popkin, Susan J., Laura Harris, and Mary Cunningham. 2001. *Families in Transition: A Qualitative Analysis of the MTO Experience, Final Report*. Report prepared by the Urban Institute for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- Popkin, Susan J., Victoria E. Gwiasda, Lynn M. Olson, Dennis P. Rosenbaum, and Larry Buron. 2000. *The Hidden War: Crime and the Tragedy of Public Housing in Chicago*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Popkin, Susan J., Diane K. Levy, Laura E. Harris, Jennifer Comey, Mary K. Cunningham, and Larry F. Buron. 2002. *HOPE VI Panel Study Baseline Report—Draft*. Report to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.



- Popkin, Susan J., Diane K. Levy, Laura E. Harris, Jennifer Comey, Mary K. Cunningham, and Larry F. Buron. 2002. *HOPE VI Panel Study Baseline Report*. Report to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Regional Roundtable on Homelessness. 2001. *Facing Homelessness: A Study of Homelessness in Chicago & the Suburbs*. Chicago, IL: Regional Roundtable on Homelessness.
- Snyderman, Robin, and Steven D. Dailey II. 2002. *Public Housing in the Public Interest: Examining the Chicago Housing Authority's Proposed Service Connector Model*. MPC Fact Sheet # 2. Chicago, IL: Metropolitan Planning Council.
- Sullivan, Thomas P. January 8, 2003. *Independent Monitor's Report No. 5 to the Chicago Housing Authority and the Central Advisory Council*. Chicago.
- Tompkins, Sara Simon. 2003. *Homelessness and Food Stamps: Rights and Barriers*. Washington, DC: National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty.
- Urban Design Associates. 2000. *Chicago Housing Authority HOPE VI Application*. Pittsburgh, PA: Urban Design Associates.
- Venkatesh, Sudhir. 2002. *The Robert Taylor Homes Relocation Study*. Report from the Center for Urban Research and Policy. New York, NY: Columbia University.
- We the People Media. Downloaded November 18, 2004. "Homelessness: A Constant American Tragedy" <http://wethepeoplemedia.org/articles/maryjohns/anamericantragedy.html>.

APPENDIX A:

SURVEY METHODS

APPENDIX A

Survey Methods

Squatter Survey

For two weeks in March 2003, our team of interviewers counted and surveyed the homeless residents squatting in Wells. We defined squatters as any person who was staying at least one night in a unit, hallway, or other area in a Wells building. When an individual was identified as both a squatter and over 18 he or she was given a survey that lasted approximately 10 minutes. The respondent received a \$10 gift certificate to a local grocery store for participating. The group worked in the evenings when squatters were likely to be securing a place to sleep and in the mornings when many squatters had not yet cleared out for the day. The group systematically surveyed one building at a time in hope of not double counting or missing any squatters living in Wells.

Because there was no prior reliable data on how many squatters would be living in Wells and squatters tend to be nomadic, great care had to be taken when quantifying and surveying squatters. Our interviewers had to be able to identify squatters, quickly gain their trust, and then secure accurate information from them. Furthermore, we had to make sure that squatters on the move were not double counted. We also needed to be sure that our respondents were actually squatting in Wells and not just spending the day in Wells, living off the lease in an “official unit,” or just coming to Wells to secure a gift certificate.

It was very important that our interviewers would be able to identify, approach, and openly communicate with squatters. We selected interviewers who were experienced working with vulnerable CHA residents and the homeless. Two interviewers were long-time residents of Ida B. Wells who had also worked successfully as interviewers on the study’s household census. Two other interviewers were journalists; one who had worked in CHA developments and the other with the homeless. The remaining two interviewers were the study’s field manager and SRL employee, both experienced working with the needy and homeless on Chicago’s south side. All interviewers went through a day and a half of training, in which interviewers reviewed the survey and practiced methods for ensuring confidentiality and data accuracy. Specifically, interviewers learned how to handle potentially unsafe scenarios and situations where they believed a respondent was being dishonest.

Several precautions were taken to ensure as accurate a count as possible. The interviewers always worked as one group to allow them to monitor if another interviewer was accidentally surveying someone who had already been surveyed. Interviewers reported on different occasions the need to turn away squatters who had already been interviewed by a coworker. Also, our two interviewers who were well-known long-time Wells residents often knew if someone was a squatter or just pretending to be a squatter. To further improve accuracy, once the survey began, interviewers explicitly told respondents that they would receive an incentive even if they had been surveyed before, were coming from outside of Wells just to

receive the voucher, or were Wells residents but not really squatters—we just asked the respondent to be honest. This gave respondents no incentive to lie in order to receive a voucher. Interviewers reported a positive response to this approach and reported that some respondents were, in fact, not squatting at Wells. These surveys were dropped from our data set.

After every outing, the field manager used a map of the development to mark off the building that had been surveyed. Surveys were then tallied and checked for errors. Surveys were also matched with voucher receipts to ensure that no vouchers or surveys were unaccounted for.

APPENDIX B:

**ADMINISTRATIVE INTERVIEWS
RESPONDENT LIST**

APPENDIX B

ADMINISTRATIVE INTERVIEWS RESPONDENT LIST

Larry Ouellet
University of Illinois at Chicago
Community Outreach Intervention Projects

Larhonda Legras
Darlene Humphrey
Heartland Alliance

Daniel Jean
Greater Grand M.H. Center

Nancy Radner
Partnership to end homelessness

Ed Shurna
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless

Brady Harden,
Inner Voice

Ellen Sahli
Chicago Department of Housing

Meghan Harte
Chicago Housing Authority

Molly McGraph
Chicago Department of Health and Human Services