



# The struggle for the future of public housing in Memphis, Tennessee: Reflections on HUD's choice neighborhoods planning program



Antonio Raciti<sup>a,\*</sup>, Katherine A. Lambert-Pennington<sup>b</sup>, Kenneth M. Reardon<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> City and Regional Planning Department, The University of Memphis, United States

<sup>b</sup> Anthropology Department, The University of Memphis, United States

<sup>c</sup> Graduate Program in Urban Planning and Community Development, University of Massachusetts Boston, United States

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 19 November 2014

Received in revised form 20 October 2015

Accepted 30 October 2015

Available online 11 December 2015

### Keywords:

Public housing

HOPE VI program

Choice neighborhoods program

Citizen participation

Advocacy planning

Empowerment planning

## ABSTRACT

This paper critically examines the Choice Neighborhoods Planning Initiative that was carried out in the Vance Avenue Neighborhood in Memphis Tennessee (USA). It tells the story of the involvements of a coalition of 25 neighborhood organizations in partnership with the City and Regional Planning (CRP) Department at the University of Memphis – called the Vance Avenue Collaborative (VAC) – in the CN Planning Initiative. Launched in 2011 with significant community support, the CN Planning Initiative ended in 2013 with a resident-led oppositional planning effort that challenged the institutional plan.

The VAC story explores some of the pitfalls that might arise in institutionally-created spaces for citizen participation, by revealing the broad range of tactics used by public officials to marginalize democratic citizen participation. Based on the issues that emerged during the CN Planning Initiative, the VAC created alternative strategies to respond to those generated through institutional planning. These counter-strategies, framed in Advocacy Planning and Action Research approaches were able to secure some important achievements along the way and might be useful for communities within publicly sponsored urban revitalization efforts.

Published by Elsevier Ltd.

## 1. Introduction

Over the last 25 years, many US cities have redeveloped low-income housing using the framework and funding provided by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) HOPE VI, and, more recently, Choice Neighborhoods Programs. The goals of these redevelopment programs are to physically and socially transform public housing into mixed-income residential communities by deconcentrating poverty (Greenbaum, Hathaway, Rodriguez, Spalding, & Ward, 2008), expanding housing choices for low-income residents, and transitioning from centrally controlled public housing to privately managed mixed-income housing (Goetz, 2012b). The existing literature on public housing covers a vast array of problematic issues that are associated with practices of relocation, including gentrification effects (Goetz, 2012a), racial and social segregation (Teitz & Chapple, 1998), and the erosion of local networks and existing social capital (Manzo, Kleit RL, & Couch, 2008). In an often-cited review article on public housing reform efforts and relocation practices, Goetz and Chapple (2010) show that the overwhelming majority of these programs failed to improve the well being of the targeted communities. Moreover, Fraser, Burns, Bazuin, and Oakley (2013) have argued, this strategy represents a broad-based, state-led effort to reclaim and “colonize” profitable

areas, often close to downtowns, for market rate housing and commercial development.

Memphis is one of many cities with a majority African-American population that has secured competitive HOPE VI grants since the mid-1990s (approximately more than \$155 million dollars). It did so, in part, by establishing a unique public-private partnership, Memphis HOPE, to promote family stability and financial self-sufficiency among public housing tenants through an integrated case management system. By 2009, HOPE VI had dramatically changed the public housing landscape in the city, eliminating all but two public housing communities located in the historic African-American Vance Avenue Neighborhood: Foote and Cleborn Homes (4a and 4b on left map in Fig. 1). As Memphis Housing Authority (MHA) prepared to apply for another HOPE VI grant to implement the Triangle Noir Redevelopment Plan (Self Tucker Architects Inc., 2008), which proposed to demolish and redevelopment Cleborn and Foote Homes, local pastors serving the Vance Avenue Neighborhood organized a coalition of twenty-four community-based organizations to discuss the needs of residents. In particular, they were concerned about the displacement caused by previous HOPE VI-funded redevelopment projects and the growing problem of homelessness in the nearby Central Business District.

The neighborhood coalition, led by St. Patrick's Catholic Church, invited the University of Memphis (UoM) City and Regional Planning Department to work with local residents and stakeholders to generate feasible alternatives to the one proposed by the City. Although HUD awarded the MHA a HOPE VI grant to demolish and redevelop Cleborn

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [araciti@memphis.edu](mailto:araciti@memphis.edu) (A. Raciti).

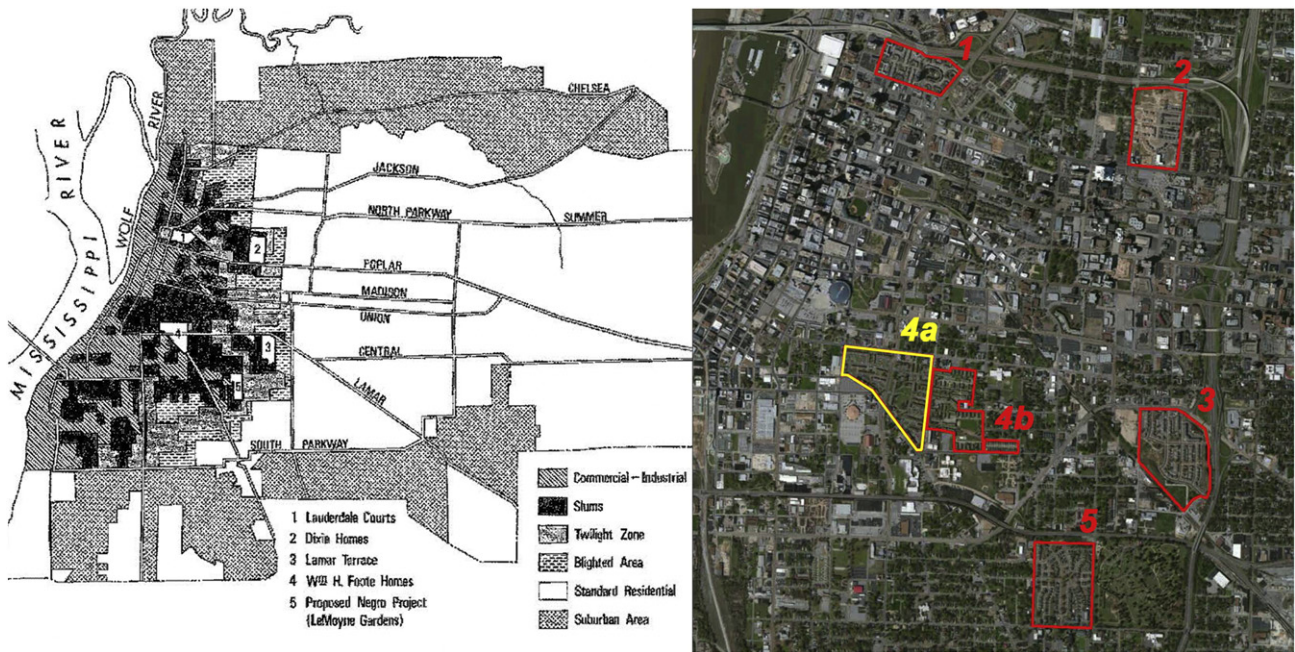


Fig. 1. Comparison between a 1939 map of the sites of federally-funded public housing projects and a current aerial view of Memphis with the same sites redeveloped with HOPE VI programs. Foot Homes (4a) is the only remaining complex. Base maps source: Memphis Housing Authority, “More than Housing” 1939 (reproduced from Roger 1986 p. 77) (left) and Google Earth (right).

Homes in 2010, the coalition, later called the Vance Avenue Collaborative (VAC), met monthly throughout 2010–2011 to discuss possible future revitalization opportunities for the neighborhood and for the city’s last remaining public housing complex: Foote Homes. In 2011, the Division of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and MHA invited the VAC and their University partners to be part of their Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant Application with the goal of preparing a comprehensive transformation plan for Foote Homes and the surrounding Vance Avenue Neighborhood.

This paper critically examines the Vance Avenue Choice Neighborhood Planning Initiative (VACNPI). It tells the story of how the VAC’s involvement in the Choice Neighborhoods planning process in 2011 and 2012 (Fig. 2) brought relevant and controversial issues to bear on the discussion of public housing in Memphis. The Vance story allows us to explore some of the pitfalls that often arise in

institutionally-created spaces for citizen participation and reveals the broad range of tactics and demagogic discourses (Fainstein, 2010) used by public officials to marginalize democratic citizen participation (Arnstein, 1969). VACNPI demonstrates that despite having formalized spaces for citizen participation (required by Choice Neighborhoods guidelines), inclusion in the context of institutionalized planning does not ensure marginalized groups’ genuine influence and power in decision-making processes (Miraftab, 2009). Based on the issues that emerged during the VACNPI, the VAC tailored counter-strategies to respond to those generated through institutional planning. These counter-strategies, framed in Advocacy Planning and Action Research approaches (Reardon, 2003), were able to secure some important achievements along the way and might be useful for communities working within publicly sponsored urban revitalization efforts (Bratt & Reardon, 2013).

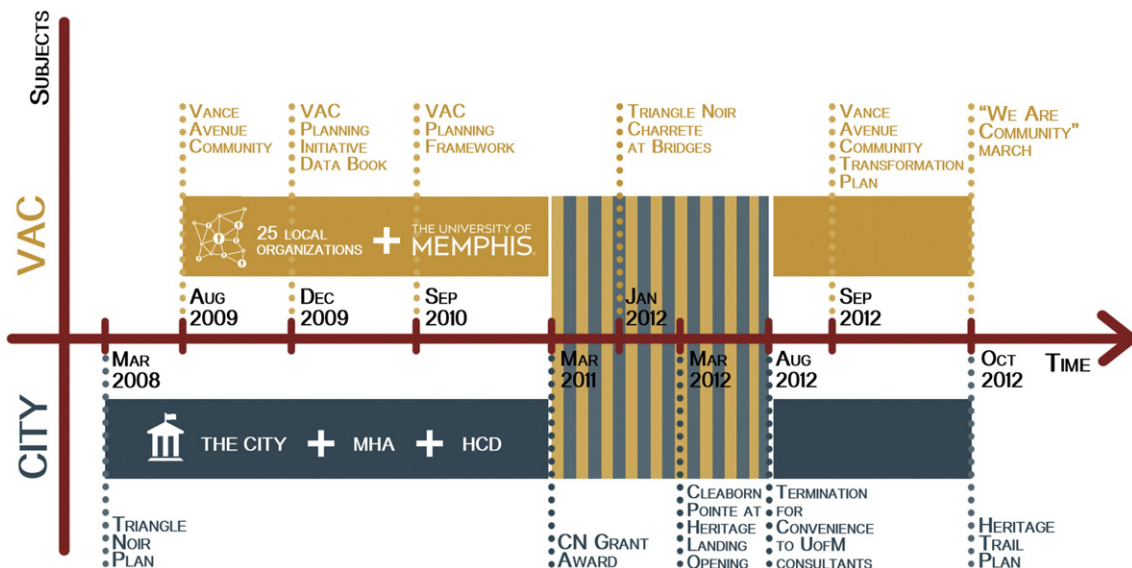


Fig. 2. Timeline representing the overall planning process for the Vance Avenue Neighborhood, from the birth of the VAC until today.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1008166>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1008166>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)