

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: THE UTILITY OF VALUE:
RECTIFYING THE FLAWS OF SIGNIFICANCE AND
INTEGRITY IN AMERICAN PUBLIC HOUSING

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Public housing of the twentieth century is a significant historic and cultural resource in the United States. It represents the homes of tens of thousands of people, housing and social reform in America, the evolving practices of services for the poor, and histories of segregation and displacement. However, less than 0.2% of constructed public housing sites have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. I assert that this lack of recognition in preservation is a result of the intersection of devaluing spaces associated with poor people of color and the erroneous conflation of architectural significance with physical integrity.

While several public housing sites are discussed in this thesis, the primary focus is Barry Farm Dwellings' evaluation of historic significance. Through community engagement and

organizing, Barry Farm Dwellings, a site that was originally determined not eligible for historic designation, was successfully designated as a District of Columbia Historic Landmark.

This thesis explores why historic preservation has undervalued public housing and the how the tools for evaluations are failing to address complex sites. Grappling with how historic preservationists evaluate historical significance and integrity with regard to public housing, this thesis demonstrates that a values-centered approach can bring more holistic and defensible methods to public housing evaluations. Ideally, this could result in the preservation of historic public housing, or at the very least, result in mitigation measures if the housing is demolished. Public housing is an exceptionally important historic and cultural resource, yet many preservationists and agency reviewers have failed to apply the criteria for evaluating significance and integrity in a good faith effort. This thesis argues that the integration of values-centered preservation methods will yield more robust, transparent, equitable, accessible, and legally defensible preservation practices. Ultimately, the integration of values-centered preservation into the determination of eligibility process will produce a preservation practice that fosters community empowerment, a critical component to equitable preservation of public housing.

Subject Headings: Public housing, Perkins Homes, Barry Farm Dwellings, Langston Terrace Dwellings, values-centered preservation, stigma, equitable preservation, historic preservation, significance, integrity, value, Fred McGhee, Lawrence Vale, Thomas King, Randall Mason, Jeremy Wells, Baltimore, Washington DC, District of Columbia

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IN AMERICAN PUBLIC HOUSING

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For my mother, who deeply values the importance of being
critical and compassionate in her work and life. Thank you for teaching me that
learning is a lifelong practice.

PREFACE

In this country, housing justice and racial justice are inextricably bound. The fight for dignified, decent, and safe housing is also a fight for racial justice.¹ With this, it would be impossible and inappropriate to begin this thesis without contextualizing the gravity of the most recent injustice that occurred as this thesis was completed. On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, a Black man from Houston, was murdered by the police in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Likely due to the harrowing video of the incident—which was filmed by a bystander—Floyd’s murder has led to protests around the world calling for justice for Black people. His wrongful and untimely death is one of many Black folks’ who continue to die at the hands of police.² Just five years earlier, in 2015, Freddie Gray died after suffering from a traumatic spinal cord injury sustained during or immediately after an arrest by police. The arrest occurred on the grounds of Gilmore Homes, the public housing complex in Baltimore where Gray lived. Like Floyd, Gray’s death also sparked protests around the country calling for justice. All charges were dropped with the six officers involved in Freddie Gray’s death. Both of these men died because of excessive force used by the police.

Commenting on the over-policing of Black bodies also requires a discussion on the over-policing of public housing, which in the United States is predominately occupied by Black families.³ Following Freddie Gray’s death, the United States Department of Justice investigated

¹ For studies on the intersection of racial justice and housing justice see: “Housing,” Racial Equity Tools, <https://www.racialequitytools.org/plan/issues/housing/>.

² “Police Violence Map,” Mapping Police Violence, <http://www.mappingpoliceviolence.org/>.

³ On the policing of public housing see: “Police Patrols in New York Public Housing Draw Scrutiny,” *The New York Times*, December 15, 2014.

the Baltimore Police Department.⁴ In addition to finding that the police were using excessive force, the investigation highlighted that the majority of stops by police occurred in neighborhoods with higher concentrations of Black residents. As the investigation stated, “countless individuals—including Freddie Gray—were stopped multiple times in the same week without being charged with a crime.”⁵ This finding represents the targeting of Black people by police.⁶ This was further supported in the finding that police authorities across the country still use “stop and frisk,” which as *The New York Times* posited, “raises constitutional questions about the routine interactions between the police and public housing residents.”⁷

The continual violence against Black people can be contextualized, in part, through the history of segregation and public housing. This is supported through the statement put forth in an email sent on June 2, 2020 by the National Public Housing Museum (NPHM), an organization I discuss in Chapter Five of this thesis. Their executive director Lisa Yun Lee states:

We cannot begin to comprehend what is happening today without understanding the history of public housing...although public housing history is founded on the supremacy of white, landowning men with principles of segregation at the core, and must be reckoned with, we also know that the history of public housing includes stories of hope and collective joy.⁸

Lee’s statement addresses the tragedies occurring and contextualizes them in the history of segregation and discrimination in housing practices. She then highlights the importance of recognizing “stories of hope and collective joy.”⁹ This is critical, as it acknowledges the pain

⁴ “Investigation of the Baltimore City Police Department,” U.S. Department of Justice: Civil Rights Division, August 10, 2016.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Brentin Mock, “It’s Official: Racist Police Practices Are Endemic in Baltimore,” *CityLab*, August 20, 2016.

⁷ “Police Patrols in New York Public Housing Draw Scrutiny,” *The New York Times*, December 15, 2014.

⁸ Lisa Yun Lee, “Dreams Deferred, George Floyd and NPHM Solidarity Statement,” National Public Housing Museum, June 2, 2020.

⁹ *Ibid.*

inflicted on the Black community while also recognizing that the Black experience (as well as the public housing experience) should not be solely defined by pain.

My interest in public housing began as an interest in architecture. As the daughter of two architects, I was raised in a home that encouraged rich and critical discourse around the built environment. Between my parents' practices—my father in healthcare architecture and my mother in affordable, transitional, and supportive housing—there was always an understanding that architecture intersected with other fields (public health, planning, et cetera). After completing my undergraduate degree, I began working for my mother's firm, which designs public housing. My interest in understanding the history of public housing grew as we worked on the new scattered site projects around the city, and often passed by the sites of extant or demolished public housing complexes. There seemed to be such a stark contrast between the two, and it was obvious that both forms (scattered sites vs. the initial sites) had successes and failures. However, I was most intrigued by the notion that some people seemed to believe that they knew what affordable housing looked like, despite the fact that public housing exists in all sorts of residential building types.

This thesis grew out of work that I completed in my first semester in this program, when I selected Clarence W. Perkins Homes (Perkins Homes), a public housing complex in Baltimore, for a documentation project. I chose Perkins Homes because I passed the housing complex every day on my way to work and it had recently been identified for redevelopment. The goal of the course was to research and document a historic resource and argue for how it could be eligible for inclusion on the National Register for Historic Places under Criteria A, B, or D. The course deliberately pulled us away from the typical assessments under Criterion C for architectural significance and forced us to think critically about what it means for a place to be of value.

Central to my documentation was the assertion that Perkins Homes should be eligible under Criterion A for its representation of racist and discriminatory housing practices.

In this thesis, I explore how public housing has been undervalued in historic preservation. A large basis of this undervaluing is a result of stigmas rooted in racist and classist ideologies. While this thesis largely deals with public housing, the theories explored can (and should) be applied to all spaces plagued with stigma. It is imperative that the field of preservation works to be deliberately anti-racist and break down the aspects of the field and framework that continue to uphold white supremacy. As a white woman, I also must actively and continually practice anti-racism and continue to question my place, my privilege, and my power.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not exist without the incredible support of my thesis committee members Lauren Schiszik, Bryan D. Orthel, and David Rotenstein. It is through their continued and unwavering support that I was able to take on this research, for which I am eternally grateful. Additionally, I would also like to thank my professors who helped to foster my curiosity for the preservation of public housing. I also must thank the financial support granted to me through the Goucher Heritage Sustainability Scholarship and the 2019 Stephen K. F. and Katharine W. Lee Prize for my documentation on Perkins Homes.

Lastly, this work would not have been possible without the support of my friends, my family, and my partner, Justin, thank you for the hours of time you all invested in helping me navigate this thesis, I love you all.

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CHAPTER I PEOPLE & THE PRESERVATION OF PUBLIC HOUSING

Is there still a chance that the reputation of public housing can be restored? And, if so, is there a role for historic preservation in changing public opinion?

—Lawrence Vale, “Can Preservation Destigmatize Public Housing?”

Public housing of the twentieth century is an exceptionally significant historic and cultural resource in the United States. It represents thousands of people’s homes, housing and social reform in America, the evolving practices of services for the poor, and histories of segregation and displacement. It can be seen as a century of federally sponsored developments that have used the homes of poor people as testing grounds for the implementation of new design theories, legislation, and law enforcement. However, less than 0.2% of constructed public housing sites have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register).¹⁰ Because of the myriad of ways that public housing can be of value to a person or community—with both positive and negative connotations—its place in historic preservation has been largely undervalued. I assert that this lack of recognition in preservation is a result of the intersection of misconceptions perpetuating the devaluing of public housing and the conflating of architectural significance with physical integrity.

In the field of American historic preservation there has been a trend toward adopting more humanistic preservation practices like values-centered preservation. These practices are

¹⁰ Christina Sturdivant Sani, “Why Do So Few Public Housing Projects Receive Historic Landmark Status?,” *The Washington Post*, January 22, 2020.

defined by their prioritization of communities' own interpretations of value and place. While the theory has been bending toward more humanistic practices, the framework for preservation has largely remained unchanged. As it stands, the process of evaluation for historic significance and integrity provides a great barrier for places being recognized if they are not defined by their architectural significance. Due to this rigid framework many places of value, such as public housing, have been forgotten, omitted, or erased from the historic preservation discourse.

This thesis explores why public housing is a significant resource, why it has not been preserved, and how the utilization of values-centered preservation can change this outcome. Public housing is widely recognized for the perceived failures in its design and the deeply engrained prejudices about its residents. These stigmas have led to great barriers for recognizing and preserving the contemporary and historic significance of public housing in the United States. On the surface the perceived lack of value is the result of federal housing policies that manipulate, alter, and demolish sites impacting their integrity. Prodding further, the perceived lack of value is inextricably bound to a judgement of the people that reside in the housing. By being associated with economically disadvantaged people and, more specifically, Black people, race and class bias have led many people to blame residents for deteriorated buildings and crime. These interpretations, lacking compassion and context, have led people to believe that these spaces are not of value.

Central Explorations

This chapter will explore the central questions of this thesis, define important terminology, and detail the analytical methods used in the research of this thesis. This chapter will present the origins of American public housing which will set the stage for why public

housing is central to this thesis, presenting a building typology with a rich and complex history. Following this introduction, Chapter Two will detail how sites are identified and evaluated for their historic significance. The chapter will also explore definitions and criticisms around significance and integrity, which will ultimately present how the framework for evaluation of historic significance is overall too rigid and flawed in its application to public housing sites. The static application of significance and integrity in evaluations are a large reason for the lack of representation of sites with less visual significance in preservation. Chapter Three will return to public housing, exploring the process of evaluating public housing for historic significance with a breakdown of the National Park Service's Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPD) on public housing and through an assessment of the evaluations of historic significance and integrity of two different housing sites in the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area. Chapter Four will revisit the methods of values-centered preservation introduced in this chapter, define the central concepts in holistic preservation practices, and revisit public housing using these concepts. Finally, Chapter Five, will summarize the concepts and topics explored, and will provide suggestions for how the research could be expanded upon, particularly regarding interpretation and curation for the preservation of public housing.

Several public housing sites are discussed in this thesis: Pruitt-Igoe Homes, Langston Terrace Dwellings, Clarence W. Perkins Homes, and Barry Farm Dwellings. However, central to this thesis is the assessment of Barry Farm Dwellings' evaluation of historic significance. This public housing complex in Washington D.C. was originally determined not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places due to a lack of physical integrity. Subsequently, redevelopment began and many of the original buildings were demolished. This led residents to work with a local housing advocacy organization to file an application to designate Barry Farm

Dwellings a D.C. Historic Landmark. Because of protections embedded in the District of Columbia's historic preservation law, the initiation of a landmark designation review provided stakeholders with a moratorium on further demolition until a decision had been made.¹¹ Additionally, with D.C. being the capital of the United States, the local D.C. preservationists have jurisdiction over a large portion of federal properties. The outpouring of supportive testimony provided in the subsequent hearings of the landmark designation process made it evident that Barry Farm Dwellings is valued by many people, which begs the question of how the site was determined not eligible in the first place. Through community engagement and organizing, Barry Farm Dwellings, a site that was originally determined not eligible for historic designation, was successfully designated as a District of Columbia Historic Landmark. The circumstances surrounding Barry Farm Dwellings offer an opportunity to understand how historic designation procedures have established barriers in the preservation of public housing and how the contemporary use of historic preservation can become a tool for community empowerment.

This thesis explores why historic preservation has undervalued public housing and the shift within the profession that public housing is historically significant. Grappling with how historic preservationists evaluate historical significance and integrity with regard to public housing, this thesis demonstrates that a values-centered approach can bring more holistic and defensible methods to public housing evaluations. Ideally, this could result in the preservation of historic public housing, or at the very least, result in mitigation measures if the housing is demolished. Public housing is an exceptionally important historic and cultural resource, yet many preservationists and agency reviewers have failed to faithfully apply the legally required

¹¹ D.C. Law 2-144: "Historic Landmark and Historic District Protection Act of 1978," Washington D.C., 1978.

criteria for evaluating significance and integrity. This thesis finds that the integration of values-centered preservation methods will yield more robust, transparent, equitable, accessible, and legally defensible preservation practices. Ultimately, the integration of values-centered preservation into the determination of eligibility process will produce a preservation practice that fosters community empowerment, a critical component to equitably preserving public housing.

Central Scholars and Theorists

This thesis utilizes the research of many scholars and theorists, however there are three scholars in particular that are fundamental in understanding the research and theories proposed in this work: Fred McGhee, Lawrence Vale, and Randall Mason. The work of these three men is heavily relied on in this thesis, with each playing a significant role in each chapter.

Fred McGhee is an archaeologist and anthropologist whose work focuses on African diaspora in the United States. Pivotal to this thesis is McGhee's work to save Rosewood Courts, a public housing site in Austin, Texas. His experience working to designate and protect the site has resulted in a breadth of work that offer pointed and critical examinations of how preservation fails public housing. Additionally, McGhee offers critical research in understanding the relationship of public housing and the Black experience in the country.

Lawrence Vale is a historian, professor of Urban Design and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and director of MIT's Resilient Cities Housing Initiative (RCHI). Vale's research revolves around the history, politics, and design of American public housing. Central to this thesis is Vale's critical examination of the prejudices of public housing and how preservation needs to deliberately tackle the narratives of vilified places.

Randall Mason is a historic preservationist and professor at the University of Pennsylvania. Fundamental to this thesis is his research on values-centered preservation, which began while Mason was a Senior Project Specialist at the Getty Conservation Institute. Mason is largely credited with bringing values-centered preservation into popularity in American preservation. Mason’s critical reinterpretations of value and significance as fluid concepts are central to this thesis. His reinterpretation challenging their static origins in preservation is a thread throughout this thesis.

Why is Public Housing Significant?

Public housing refers to federally funded and subsidized housing. This thesis specifically addresses American public housing. As historian, Lawrence Vale, states: “Public housing is an American problem.”¹² This refers to the distinct ideological and structural differences in public housing in the United States from other countries. In the United States, there is a large and unwavering importance placed on homeownership. This ideology, greatly embedded in the so-called “American dream,” represents a fundamental issue concerning the perception of public housing. If a society places homeownership as the epitome of success, residents of public housing are seen as failures of the system.¹³

¹² Lawrence J. Vale, “The ‘Public’ in Public Housing,” *From the Puritans to the Projects* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 6.

¹³ For more literature on low-income homeownership see: Laurie S Goodman and Christopher Mayer, “Homeownership and the American Dream,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 32, no. 1, Winter 2018; William M. Rohe and Harry L. Watson, *Chasing the American Dream: New Perspectives on Affordable Homeownership* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018); and Anne B. Shlay, “Low-income Homeownership: American Dream or Delusion?,” *Urban Studies* 43, no. 3, March 2006.

The Origins of American Public Housing

During the Great Depression, newly elected Franklin Delano Roosevelt rolled out a series of programs and projects known as the New Deal. These programs were introduced to revitalize a country experiencing unprecedented unemployment and to rejuvenate a sense of patriotism among citizens.¹⁴ One aspect of the New Deal was the formation of the Works Progress Administration, a group tasked with hiring millions of unemployed citizens to work on various projects ranging from road construction, public art, park preservation, to housing construction.¹⁵ The housing constructed through this program ranged from single-family developments to multi-family apartment dwellings, most based on the ideals and interpretations of the English reformer Sir Ebenezer Howard's Garden City Movement. This movement prioritized well-constructed housing with an emphasis on green spaces and access to nature—an attempt to solve the health and social ills of dense, industrial urban cores.¹⁶ The Garden City movement also produced the German “Zeilenbau,” or the superblock.¹⁷ A prominent building typology of New Deal housing construction, the superblock's design organizes multi-unit dwelling sites to prioritize orientation, making use of courtyards that enabled light and cross-ventilation. The superblock was the dominant planning style used for the first iterations of public housing, but it was also used for other multi-tenant housing, like garden apartments. A notable example of garden apartments is the Buckingham Apartment Complex (Figure 1), listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2003 as a part of an Multiple Property Documentation on Garden Apartments in

¹⁴ “Reclaiming Patriotism for the Left,” *The New York Times*, August 21, 2018.

¹⁵ William F. McDonald, *Federal Relief Administration and the Arts: The Origins and Administrative History of the Arts Projects of the Works Progress Administration* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1969).

¹⁶ Peter Hall, “The City in the Garden,” *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design Since 1880*, 4th ed. (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 96.

¹⁷ “Garden Apartments, Apartment Houses and Apartment Complexes in Arlington County, Virginia: 1934-1954,” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2003), Section E, 7.

Arlington County, Virginia.¹⁸ The design and layouts of these garden apartments were nearly identical to many early public housing complexes.



Figure 1: Buckingham Apartment Complex in Arlington County, Virginia. [Source: HABS VA. 7-ARL,1339-1: Historic American Buildings Survey, *Buckingham Apartment Complex, Bounded by George Mason Drive, Henderson, Glebe, & Pershing Roads, Arlington, Arlington County, VA.* Arlington, VA, 1933. Photograph. [https://www.loc.gov/item/va1716.](https://www.loc.gov/item/va1716)]

The United States Housing Act of 1937

A hallmark of the New Deal was the passage of the United States Housing Act of 1937, which was used to clear growing “slums” in cities. These neighborhoods were places that were deemed blighted and centers of crime, and the federal government used new public health knowledge to justify their removals. In their place, federally-funded housing, the first of its kind in the country, was constructed.¹⁹ While often misunderstood as a program that created housing for low-to-extremely-low income populations, the affordable housing constructed was originally

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *United States Housing Act of 1937*; Public Law 75-412.

intended only for the working class, or as Vale describes, the “stable two-parent families whose limited rent-paying ability was presumed to result from a temporary delay in economic mobility caused by the Great Depression, World War II, or the postwar housing shortage rather than from any inherent personal failing.”²⁰ Those who were experiencing chronic homelessness and unemployment were deemed ineligible for the housing which was used to “reward the most meritorious of the working poor.”²¹ Eventually those chosen for housing in these earlier iterations were able to financially recover due to targeted government assistance in the form of federally-backed mortgages that allowed them to purchase homes, thus no longer needed this form of subsidized housing. In essence, they traded one form of federal housing assistance for another—the mortgages acquired for these privately-owned homes are just a different type of housing subsidy, and in fact make up billions of dollars of housing subsidy in the country. Yet public housing, which receives a small amount of federal funding in comparison, is what is negatively referred to as *subsidized* housing.²²

These original tenants of public housing, mostly white families, were able to move into their own private homes, moving out to the developing suburbs. This exodus, referred to as white flight, was an intended product of racist planning policies that enabled and encouraged the mobility of white families and prevented such mobility among Black families.²³ These policies included racially-restrictive covenants in deeds and the prominent practice of redlining which rated the risk of lending by area with a direct correlation to its racial demographics—white

²⁰ Vale, “The ‘Public’ in Public Housing,” 9.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

²² *Ibid.*, 6.

²³ For more on white flight and redlining see: Antero Pietila, *Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2010); and Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2017); and Lawrence Vale, *Purging the Poorest: Public Housing and the Design Politics of Twice-Cleared Communities* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013).

neighborhoods were deemed safer investments and black neighborhoods were considered risky—effectively making it easier for white families to move out to growing suburbs and obtain mortgages and leaving black families in the cities.²⁴ The exodus of white families left many vacancies in public housing units, leading to a subsequent shift by housing authorities toward housing extremely-low-income people. This was coupled with early integration of previously segregated sites, marking the beginning of public housing being predominately occupied by black residents, who were denied access to federally funded mortgages and other tools intended to lift citizens out of poverty.²⁵

The Housing Act of 1937, as historian Fred McGhee summarizes, “fully decentralized the construction, ownership, and management of public housing.”²⁶ This decentralization was the establishment of local housing authorities and shifts in financing. Through its various programs, the New Deal greatly changed the country’s relationship to government with the rise of publicly funded infrastructure opposed to the earlier prominence of private financing. This was just as evident in housing, where prior to the 1930s, most multi-tenant housing was entirely privately-owned. Although public funding was new, the act of providing housing to low-income people had been happening for centuries. This is explored at length by Vale in his assessment of the phenomena of holding a “public obligation to socially and economically marginal people in America,” as he states:

In this historical context, the large, publicly owned housing projects built in every large American city during the mid-twentieth century may be seen not as a unique and isolated phenomenon, but as one manifestation of a continuing struggle... Before there were public housing projects, there were model tenements, zoning laws, and philanthropic developers; there were settlement houses, working-class suburbs, and private charities; there were tax advantages for homeowners, land bounties for worthy veterans, and

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Vale, “The ‘Public’ in Public Housing,” 6

²⁶ Fred L. McGhee, “Heritage Dispatches from the American Approaches of Hell: Public Housing, Historic Preservation, and Environmental Impact Analysis,” *Environmental Practice* 18 (2016): 2.

Homestead Act opportunities for thrifty pioneers; there were “Overseers of the Poor,” pauper auctions and laws of settlement; and there were almshouses, “bridewells,” and “houses of industry.” All of these helped to codify the relationships among land tenure, house form, and labor, and all were attempts at “improving poor people.”²⁷

Vale’s research contextualizes the origins of public housing in this country as being not only about the type of housing, but also about the history of how society has chosen to address social “ills” such as poverty and homelessness. This relationship is engrained in conversations regarding public housing, and as Vale summarizes, “public housing has become a deeply embedded artifact of American culture, but it has entered the body politic more in the manner of a splinter—unintended, painful, and difficult to dislodge.”²⁸ What Vale means by this is that while public housing is undoubtedly significant to American history, it is steeped in prejudice. Vale’s sentiment—identifying the lack of recognition of public housing in preservation as based in prejudice—is central to this thesis.

Embedded Stigma in Difficult Places

In order to discuss the origins of public housing, it is also imperative that the stigmas of the typology and residents are explicitly addressed. The purpose of this thesis is not only to explore why public housing is significant, but also unpack why it has largely not been recognized as such. The embedded stigmas in public housing are factors that contribute to their lack of preservation, and these stigmas can be assessed from a variety of vantage points. Studies and critiques of public housing policies have involved critiques of classism, racism, and issues of gender.²⁹ The most successful critiques employ intersectional critiques, a concept coined by

²⁷ Vale, “The ‘Public’ in Public Housing,” 1.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁹ A sample of work on public housing policy: Nicholas Dagen Bloom, Gregory Holcomb Umbach, Lawrence J. Vale, ed., *Public Housing Myths: Perception, Reality, and Social Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015);

black activist and historian Kimberlé Crenshaw, which explores the value of understanding the layering and intersection of different identities, producing more nuanced critiques of systems of oppression.³⁰

In order to explore the stigma surrounding the residents of public housing, there is a need to understand what stigma is and how it impacts marginalized and impoverished communities. The understanding of stigma as a concept is attributed to sociologist Erving Goffman who grounds the term in its Greek origins, referring to “bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier.”³¹ Central to his definition is a process of applying bad or negative associations onto people. It is an issue of perception: to be stigmatized is to be associated with something bad and then judged for it regardless of accuracy or context. A problematic notion in Goffman’s research is that it juxtaposes stigma as solely an issue of normal-to-other.³² This critique, widely discussed in the work of sociologist Imogen Tyler, highlights Goffman’s belief of stigma as simply the misrepresentation of the other. Tyler argues that Goffman’s text upholds the very power dynamics of the concept he explores. Essentially, while Goffman’s text was foundational in beginning the conversation of what stigma is, his inability to be critical with his own identity (one of power) prevents him from being critical with how stigma comes to be.³³ Later critiques of stigma place a larger emphasis on how and why stigma is produced. Imogen Tyler explores this, along with sociologist Tom Slater, in their

William G. Grisby, *Housing Markets and Public Policy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963); and J. Paul Mitchell, *Federal Housing Policy and Programs: Past and Present* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Center for Urban Policy Research, 1985).

³⁰ Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1990).

³¹ Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963): 1.

³² Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, 74.

³³ Imogen Tyler and Charlotte Bailey, *From Stigma Power to Black Power: A Graphic Essay*, (United Kingdom: *The Sociological Review Monographs*, 2019), 24.

argument that stigma's role and function cannot be understood without a "rich" and "full" understanding of their cultural and political economies.³⁴ This is not unlike values-centered preservation where holistic interpretations are fundamental in understanding significance. Because of this, the contextualization of stigma is of great importance for understanding the undervaluing of public housing.

Geographer David Robertson illustrates this concept of stigma in his research of a West Virginia mining town, which serves as a corollary to public housing.³⁵ He asserts that the general public's judgements about the people that live in marginalized communities are actually rooted in superficial judgements of the environment.³⁶ Robertson's theory is that people relate judgements of space to assumptions of the people that occupy that environment. It is the idea that when someone sees a dirty or dilapidated space, they assume that those who live there are at fault and, thus, must also be dirty, effectively associating "bad places" with "bad people."³⁷ Central to Robertson's critique is the general lack of sensitivity in looking to various economic, cultural, and political reasons for a community's perceived lack of maintenance. In his example of the mining community, this would mean considering how the industry of coal mining led to the complete degradation of the landscape, and that the landscape was not the fault of those who did

³⁴ Imogen Tyler and Tom Slater, "Rethinking the Sociology of Stigma," *The Sociological Review Monographs* 66, no. 4 (July 2018).

³⁵ A sample of studies on stigma in sociology: Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*; Glenn C. Loury, Pamela S. Karlan, Loïc Wacquant, and Tommie Shelby, *Race, Incarceration, and American Values* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008); Peter Squires and John Lea, *Criminalization and Advanced Marginality: Critically Exploring the Work of Loïc Wacquant* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2012); Imogen Tyler, "Resituating Erving Goffman: From Stigma Power to Black Power," *The Sociological Review Monographs* 66, no. 4 (July 2018); Imogen Tyler and Charlotte Bailey, "From Stigma Power to Black Power: A Graphic Essay;" and Loïc Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality* (Oxford: Wiley, 2013).

³⁶ David Robertson, *Hard as the Rock Itself: Place and Identity in the American Mining Town* (Denver: University Press of Colorado, 2010).

³⁷ This association of dirty-to-bad is deeply embedded in Victorian associations of cleanliness and morality, where virtue was considered to be directly related to hygiene. This correlation effectively incriminated the poor for their lack of access to basic hygiene, which is still present today. See: Gertrude Himmelfarb, "From Victorian Virtues to Modern Values," *American Enterprise Institute*, <http://www.aei.org/research-products/speech/from-victorian-virtues-to-modern-values/>, February 13, 1995.

not have the means to leave the area after the industry had depleted the resources and moved on. While Robertson is assessing a mining community, it is clear that one can—and ultimately should—apply these concepts to other spaces, like public housing.

Robertson's concept applied to public housing is exemplified through the infamous Pruitt-Igoe public housing site in St. Louis, Missouri (Figure 2). Pruitt-Igoe is likely one of the most well-known American public housing sites, alongside Cabrini Green Homes and the Robert Taylor Homes in Chicago, Illinois.³⁸ Its infamy—now discussed in many architecture, historic preservation, and urban planning curricula—is directly linked to its dramatic and publicly televised demolition in 1972 (Figure 3).³⁹ Pruitt-Igoe, a multi-acre public housing site designed in 1951 and completed in 1956, was a product of the United States Housing Act of 1949. Public housing built under this Act was distinctively different from public housing constructed under Housing Act of 1937, and was notable for their high-rise construction and multi-acre developments opposed to the earlier low-rise buildings on superblocks.⁴⁰ One similarity to the first-generation public housing was that these projects also involved the mass-raiding of homes and neighborhoods for these designs and displaced many people.

³⁸ Katharine G. Bristol, "The Pruitt-Igoe Myth," in *American Architectural History: A Contemporary Reader*, ed. Keith L. Eggner (New York: Routledge, 2004).

³⁹ Catherine C. Galley, "Pruitt-Igoe Housing Project," *Encyclopedia of American Urban History*, ed. David R. Sage (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2007): 2:615.

⁴⁰ McGhee, "Heritage Dispatches from the American Approaches of Hell," 2.



Figure 2 (Left): Pruitt-Igoe Homes in St. Louis, Missouri. [Source: Bettmann/Corbis, “Pruitt-Igoe: The Troubled High-Rise that Came to Define Urban America,” *The Guardian*, Photograph, 1956.]

Figure 3 (Right): Televised Demolition of Pruitt-Igoe in 1972. [Source: Bettmann/Corbis and Getty Images, “Pruitt-Igoe: The Troubled High-Rise that Came to Define Urban America,” *The Guardian*, Photograph, 1956.]

Designed by architect Minoru Yamasaki, who later went on to design the World Trade Center, Pruitt-Igoe featured thirty-three eleven-story buildings with 2,870 units over fifty-seven acres. It was considered of “mammoth modernist-style,” and was greatly influenced by the architect and planner Le Corbusier (Figure 4).⁴¹ Soon after its completion, the site became known for its crime, vandalism, and general lack of maintenance for the facilities. At its opening in 1956, Pruitt-Igoe was 95% occupied, by 1970 it was at 65% occupancy leaving around 1,800 units vacant. It was at this time that the site was declared by the St. Louis Housing Authority to be a slum, just like the neighborhood that it replaced.⁴² The St. Louis Housing Authority ultimately decided to demolish the properties in 1972, only seventeen years after it was

⁴¹ Galley, “Pruitt-Igoe Housing Project,” 2:615

⁴² *Ibid.*, 2:615.

constructed. The demolition was broadcasted on television, cementing the project as a failure of public housing to the entire country.⁴³

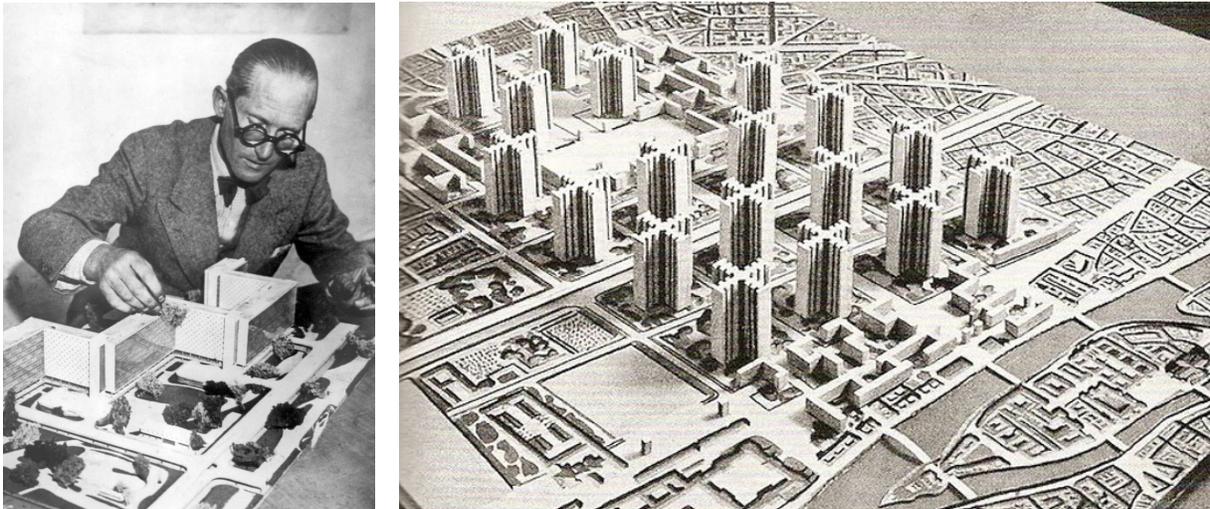


Figure 4: Le Corbusier: Radiant City (La Ville Radieuse). [Source: Kurt Kohlstedt, “Ville Radieuse: Le Corbusier’s Functionalist Plan for a Utopian ‘Radiant City,’” *99% Invisible*, February 23, 2018, <http://www.99percentinvisible.org/article/ville-radieuse-le-corbusiers-functionalist-plan-utopian-radiant-city/>.]

Since the beginning of its demise, the decline of Pruitt-Igoe was blamed on the residents by city officials. This narrative was later challenged when the site was assessed more holistically, or as Vale states, “even these most vilified towers have had their defenders.”⁴⁴ These defenders were gathering oral histories, developing nuanced curricula, and making documentaries that displayed information in more publicly accessible forms. These actions were deliberately challenging the notion that architectural historians were the experts, and instead sought the expertise of the community. *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth*, a documentary, most aptly addresses this complex narrative, especially when considering Robertson’s assessment of the mining

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 2:615.

⁴⁴ Lawrence J. Vale, “Can Preservation Destigmatize Public Housing?” *Bending the Future*, 2016, 240.

community.⁴⁵ The documented crime, graffiti, a lack of maintenance were all considered to be the fault of the residents by the city agencies that demolished the buildings. This film sought to expose the greater forces that led to the project's failure; including a lack of city services, isolation from the city, hyper-segregation of St. Louis' African American communities, the concentration of poverty, and various policies rooted in racist and classist ideologies.

Additionally, *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth* intentionally uses oral histories to tell the story of the rise and fall of the site. Through the involvement of past residents to tell their own interpretations of the creation, existence, and demolition of the site, the viewer is brought through the narrative of Pruitt-Igoe in a humanistic and compassionate manner. The stories—ranging from happy, laughter-filled stories to gut-wrenching recollections of loss and trauma—drive home the point that despite the various well-documented failures of Pruitt-Igoe, it was still home to many people. There were holidays celebrated there, dances held, and communities built. The manipulation and displacement of communities before and throughout Pruitt-Igoe's existence did not, and still does not, take away the fact that for a portion of time Pruitt-Igoe was where people were able to find love, nourishment, and respite in their lives. Pruitt-Igoe was home to thousands of people.

The infamy of Pruitt-Igoe and the stigma of public housing are critical in discussions around the preservation of public housing for two reasons. First, it addresses the complicated, bureaucratic, and policy-driven history of this housing typology. Second, it highlights the need for sensitive and compassionate interpretations of these public housing sites, because regardless of the public perceptions of these sites, they are people's homes. As Fred McGhee states, "the professional and ethical stakes in public housing cases are very high, because people's *homes* are

⁴⁵ *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth*, First-Run Features, 2011.

at stake.”⁴⁶ Public housing in the country is exceptionally significant and its legacy of stigma and prejudice have resulted in its lack of preservation. For this reason, public housing serves as a great building typology for applying values-centered preservation practices.

Defining Terms, Concepts, & Semantics

The definition of terms is critical in all fields, as language and their semantics both consciously and subconsciously create barriers between everyday people from professionals in the field. Barriers created through language are very common in professional and academic fields, and for historic preservation this presents itself in a multitude of ways. Often simple, innocuous phrasing can establish hierarchies when professionals conclude that they are conversing with someone less educated in their field. Despite knowing that phrasing can be innocuous, the assumptions made can have real impacts on preservation processes. This idea was explored by archaeologist Robert Schuyler in a review of a paper entitled “Some Thoughts on Theory and Method in Historical Archaeology,” where central to the review was questioning whether the author’s arguments were invalidated not being an expert himself. After breaking down his critiques, Schuyler states that the work is not to be rejected “because of the above differences in interpretation.”⁴⁷ Concluding that what many in the field considered “errors” should really be understood as alternative interpretations; a conclusion that is incredibly pertinent to the field of historic preservation where a site or resource can be interpreted and valued in a multitude of ways. Moreover, the hierarchical issues of who is deemed an expert is also evident when considering the semantic difference between *historic* and *historical*. *Historical* refers to

⁴⁶ McGhee, “Heritage Dispatches from the American Approaches of Hell,” 1.

⁴⁷ Robert Schuyler, “Reviewed Work: Historical Archaeology Forum, 1968, on Theory and Method in Historical Archaeology by Stanley South,” *American Antiquity* 35, no. 2 (1970): 230.

something of the past, it is *of history*, whereas *historic* refers to something of the past *of great importance*. Thus, the field of historic preservation is dealing with resources that are not just old, but of great historical, cultural, economic, and social significance. This implies that preservation professionals are the arbiters of what is not just of history, but of great importance to history.

These seemingly semantic-based issues relate to greater issues in historic preservation concerning who is the expert and who is not. In a wide breadth of disciplines, historic preservation included, scholars and professionals use the term *laypeople* to define the general public. This refers to someone who lacks professional or specialized knowledge in a specific field and intends to separate the professional from the everyday person, effectively creating a hierarchy. In general, but especially for the purposes of this thesis, these hierarchies need to be dispelled. Instead, within this thesis it will be understood that community members are to be considered the experts of their own environments.

Significance

In historic preservation, significance describes a resource's importance (to a person, community, municipality, state, or even nation) and its perceived worthiness of recognition. Under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, a set of standardized criteria were created in order to classify the different types of significance that could be embedded within a resource. These criteria are Criterion A and B with associative significance, relating to historic events and people; Criterion C with architectural significance, relating to important architecture, design, and engineering; and Criterion D with informational significance, often relating to archaeological significance.⁴⁸ In order to be considered eligible for listing in the

⁴⁸ National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the Criteria for Evaluation, National Park Service, 3.

National Register of Historic Places, a property must possess significance in either American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture under the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. This also applies to local and state historic registers, however the property then must possess significance specific to those localities. A resource can possess one, multiple, or all types of significance to be considered eligible. These criteria are explored at length in Chapter Two, which will include how significance has been redefined to represent communities' own interpretations.

Integrity

Once resources are assessed for their significance, they must be evaluated for their integrity. In historic preservation, integrity refers to a resource's ability to convey its determined significance. Like the Criteria for Evaluation, the NHPA also provides a standardized set of conditions through which integrity is interpreted. These seven aspects of integrity are Location, Design, Setting, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling, and Association. The determination of whether a resource has retained its integrity can be deeply subjective, and the National Park Service (NPS) has issued bulletins that provide insight and direction for how to make these determinations. These conditions and the issue of subjectivity are explored in Chapter Two, which details criticisms of integrity and how many preservationists misinterpret integrity to mean physical condition and subsequently conflate integrity with architectural significance.

Value

Similar to the concept of significance, the concept of values will be explored at length in this thesis. Simply speaking, to value something is to find it important. Central to this thesis is

the assertion that public housing has been undervalued in historic preservation. This means that while there are people who find public housing important, it largely has not been recognized in the field. Like significance, values can determine the embedded importance of a resource. A resource can have a variety of different values embedded within it, all individual and related to different contexts, experiences, backgrounds, and forces.

Values-Centered Preservation

This thesis explores values-centered preservation, a theory of preservation under the umbrella of human-centered practices. These practices place an importance on the organic and ever-evolving nature of people's values opposed to an importance on inanimate and static resources. Essentially, values-centered preservation argues that embedded values in a place are precisely what make a resource significant. The origins and concepts of values-centered preservation are discussed in Chapter Four.

Listing versus Eligibility

While there are many aspects within the processes of preservation worthy of exploration, this thesis is focused on the processes of evaluation for historic significance. An important distinction within this process is the meaning of "listing" versus "eligible for inclusion" used in the evaluation process. After realizing the sheer scope of review that would fall on the Keeper of the National Register, an amendment to the NHPA was ordered by President Richard M. Nixon in 1971. The amendment stated that all historic properties determined eligible for inclusion in the National Register were to be afforded the same protections and honors as being listed in the

National Register.⁴⁹ The National Register does not guarantee the protection of a resource, but being either listed or determined eligible for inclusion ensures a process for the consideration and mitigation of negative impacts to resources due to actions taken, funded, or licensed by the federal government through the Section 106 process of NHPA.⁵⁰

Research Methods and Sites

This thesis uses the Critical Topic Approach for its analytical method. In assessing a small selection of public housing sites in Baltimore and Washington, District of Columbia (Washington DC), a series of questions are implemented to understand how these sites' evaluation processes differed in order to illuminate flaws within the process. The questions are as follows: 1) What triggered the site's evaluation and preservation processes? 2) How was the site's integrity considered? 3) Were there non-tangible elements of significance? 4) How were the values of community members considered?

The sites analyzed in the thesis are Barry Farm Dwellings (Barry Farms) in Washington DC and Clarence W. Perkins Homes (Perkins Homes) in Baltimore, Maryland. Langston Terrace Dwellings in Washington DC is also described in Chapter Three in order to illustrate the preservation of public housing through the National Park Service's Multiple Property Documentation on Public Housing. Perkins Homes and Barry Farms are comparable sites for this study: they are located in the same region, were constructed under the National Housing Act of 1937, and are both in the redevelopment process under the federal Choice Neighborhoods Initiative program administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This initiative is an effort to transform communities experiencing concentrated poverty into

⁴⁹ Executive Order 11593: Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment, 1971.

⁵⁰ 16 U.S.C. 470f § 106; Protection of Historic Properties, 36 CFR Part 800.

mixed-income neighborhoods. The basis of the initiative comes from research that found economic, educational, financial, and health benefits for poor people living in mixed-income communities.⁵¹ With all of these sites being federally funded housing, changes trigger the Section 106 process of the NHPA. This process evaluates if proposals will have any potential adverse effects on properties listed in or determined eligible for inclusion in the National Register. For these reasons, these two sites serve as comparable case studies against which to assess concepts of significance, integrity, and values. Additionally, both sites were constructed following the Housing Act of 1937, resulting in the razing of neighborhoods deemed blighted in the 1920s and 1930s, producing a case-study for understanding the cyclical nature of investment and disinvestment in these sites.

A variety of methods were used to gather research for this thesis. These methods include: literature reviews; site-walks; meeting with professionals involved in these sites, including preservation planners at the Baltimore and District of Columbia planning departments, the State Historic Preservation Offices, and the organizing director at the housing advocacy organization Empower DC; meeting with historians and journalists doing relevant research including the executive director at the National Public Housing Museum, a historian at the National Park Service, and a journalist with *The Washington Post*; gathering governmental documents from the Baltimore and District of Columbia housing authorities and from respective preservation boards and commissions; newspaper archive research in *The Baltimore Sun*, and *The Washington Post*; and watching the recordings of public hearings past and present regarding these evaluations.

⁵¹ “Effects from Living in Mixed-Income Communities for Low-Income Families: A Review of the Literature,” *Metropolitan Housing and Communities Center*, (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, November 2010).

Conclusion

This chapter defined concepts and terms used throughout this thesis, dispelled semantic issues, and introduced a brief history on the origins of American public housing and its embedded stigmas. In this chapter, the concepts and topics that this thesis will grapple with have been introduced in order to explore how and why public housing, a significant aspect of American culture, has failed to be fairly recognized in historic preservation. Ultimately, this thesis will present how the adopting of holistic preservation practices in the process of evaluation can become a way for preservation to be utilized as a tool of community empowerment in public housing. The analyses of this thesis will support the theory that the integration of values-centered preservation methods will yield more robust, accessible preservation practices, ultimately producing a preservation practice that fosters community empowerment, which is a critical component to compassionate and sensitive preservation.

CHAPTER II EVALUATING SIGNIFICANCE AND INTEGRITY: WHAT IS THE PROCESS?

The idea of “significance” is exceedingly important to the practice of historic preservation. In significance, preservationists pack all their theory, ideology and politics – and their wonder at the capacity to use historic fabric to reflect the past. A ‘statement of significance’ gathers together all the reasons why a building or place should be preserved, why it is meaningful or useful, and what aspects require most urgent protection. Once defined, significance is used as a basis for policy, planning and design decisions.

—Randall Mason, “Fixing Historic Preservation:
A Constructive Critique of ‘Significance’”

The field of historic preservation is shifting away from its traditional, building-centric approach toward a more people-centered practice. It is a shift that represents an understanding of the complexity of how places impact people. It also marks a departure from the field’s historic prioritization of the inanimate, physical aspects of the built environment. At its core, this shift is the recognition that values are complex, fluid, and changing—and not always represented in their tangible manifestations. Despite shifting values, the understanding of significance as it relates to preservation is still heavily rooted in physicality. Thus, at the core of the field—and central to this thesis—there is a disconnect between how significance is valued from how it is interpreted.

Grappling with this misinterpretation of significance requires a foundational understanding of how historic preservation in the United States came to be, from its grassroots practices to its bureaucracy-driven policies. This breakdown will bolster a better understanding of the current process of evaluation and will showcase what has historically been prioritized and omitted in the field. When used as intended, the American preservation system demonstrates a

clear favoritism toward properties possessing visual significance opposed to intangible significance. This conflicts with a field interested in moving toward people-centered practices, and it also implies a more arduous process for resources that are not centered around physicality.

This chapter will analyze the process of evaluating historic properties for their significance and integrity, and in doing so, illuminate a process that is flawed and in need of reframing. When retaining integrity is so often conflated with physical condition, it is problematic that a resource must convey its significance through integrity. So many aspects of significance have little to do with the physical properties of a resource. Alternatively, significance can lie in how the resource was used, changed, and manipulated over time. Thus, integrity should be assessed with all of these factors in mind. This is critical as it stresses the fluidity of the built environment—something the static framework does not. The understanding of significance, and the multiplicity of values that significance represents, has been evolving in the field. It is time that the process reflects these changes.

Origins of American Historic Preservation

Posited by preservationists Randall Mason and Max Page, “if you ask preservationists about the history of preservation, they might start with one of two stories,”⁵² which refer to Ann Pamela Cunningham working to save George Washington’s Mount Vernon estate in 1853, and the failure to save Pennsylvania Station in New York City in 1963 amidst major urban renewal in cities across the country. Mason and Page assert that while these events may be important in the history of preservation, they are not the foundational origins, and the assumption that they are

⁵² Randall Mason and Max Page, “Rethinking the Roots of the Historic Preservation Movement,” in *Giving Preservation a History: Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States*, ed. Randall Mason and Max Page (New York: Routledge, 2004), 6.

has led the field to “stop asking critical historical questions.”⁵³ This is an important distinction as it implies that while these events may not be the origins of preservation in the country, the frequent positioning of these events as such has led to a distinct perception of what the field stands for. Both of these events are rooted solely in the preservation—and more importantly, the *saving*—of *grand* buildings associated with *grand* people. In reality, the emergence of the preservation field can be traced to a wide variety of events and legislation from the establishment of the 1906 Antiquities Act to the establishment of the National Park Service. Often, these events can be categorized into two distinct paths: private and public. The intermingling of public and private preservation practices have produced the field as it is known today.⁵⁴ The understanding of these two paths is understood more simply as the private efforts like the “‘George-Washington-slept-here’ approach,” and governmental efforts “focused on the protection of natural landscapes, features, and parks.”⁵⁵ One side can be seen as grassroots and the other is grounded in bureaucratic oversight and legislation.

Although not the foundation of historic preservation as a whole, the demolition of Pennsylvania Station was one of the drivers that led to the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). This legislation, passed in 1966 under President Lyndon B. Johnson, was comprehensive and standardized national legislation for the protection of historic resources. The NHPA’s purpose, defined in Section 1(b) of the NHPA (Table 1), highlights an understanding of how the fabric of the built environment plays an important role in understanding the history of a nation. It was bolstered by previous actions and legislation including the 1906 Antiquities Act, the Historic Sites Act of 1935, the Historic American

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁴ Norman Tyler, “The Preservation Movement in the United States,” *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practice*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), 27.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

Buildings Surveys (HABS) of the 1930s, and the creation of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (National Trust) in 1949, among many others.

As is stated in §1(b) of the National Historic Preservation Act, the purposes of the Act are defined as follows:

- (1) The spirit and direction of the Nation are founded upon and reflected in its historic heritage;
 - (2) The historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people;
 - (3) Historic properties significant to the Nation's heritage are being lost or substantially altered, often inadvertently, with increasing frequency;
 - (4) The preservation of this irreplaceable heritage is in the public interest so that its vital legacy of cultural, educational, aesthetic, inspirational, economic, and energy benefits will be maintained and enriched for future generations of Americans;
 - (5) In the face of ever-increasing extensions of urban centers, highways, and residential, commercial, and industrial developments, the present governmental and nongovernmental historic preservation programs and activities are inadequate to insure future generations a genuine opportunity to appreciate and enjoy the rich heritage of our Nation;
 - (6) The increased knowledge of our historic resources, the establishment of better means of identifying and administering them, and the encouragement of their preservation will improve the planning and execution of Federal and federally assisted projects and will assist economic growth and development; and
 - (7) Although the major burdens of historic preservation have been borne and major efforts initiated by private agencies and individuals, and both should continue to play a vital role, it is nevertheless necessary and appropriate for the Federal Government to accelerate its historic preservation programs and activities, to give maximum encouragement to agencies and individuals undertaking preservation by private means, and to assist State and local governments and the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States to expand and accelerate their historic preservation programs and activities.
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Table 1: Purposes of the National Historic Preservation Act. [Source: 16 U.S.C. 470 § 1(b).]

The NHPA is a foundational, wide-reaching piece of legislation regarding the preservation of American heritage and its enactment marked the federal government's commitment to the management and protection of historic resources. Additionally, it codified the

creation of the National Register of Historic Places (National Register), arguably one of the most important components of the NHPA.⁵⁶ As determined by the NHPA, these resources can include:

districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture...buildings and structures on or eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (either individually or as part of a historic district), or designated as an individual landmark or as a contributing building in a historic district by a unit of State or local government.⁵⁷

The enactment of the NHPA also provided a standardized set of criteria for evaluating how resources would be considered eligible for listing. Notably, the National Register does not guarantee the protection of a resource but being either listed or determined eligible for inclusion ensures that there is a process to consider and mitigate negative impacts to resources due to actions taken, funded, or licensed by the federal government through the Section 106 review process.⁵⁸ As is defined in the NHPA, the Section 106 review process requires that:

The head of any Federal agency having direct or indirect jurisdiction over a proposed Federal or federally assisted undertaking in any State and the head of any Federal department or independent agency having authority to license any undertaking shall, prior to the approval of the expenditure of any Federal funds on the undertaking or prior to the issuance of any license, as the case may be, take into account the effect of the undertaking on any district, site, building, structure, or object that is included in the National Register.⁵⁹

Other federal regulatory processes pertaining to historic resources include the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process, which requires federally-supported or funded projects to be assessed for their impact on the environment; and Section 4(f) review process under the Department of Transportation Act, which requires all federally-funded Department of Transportation (DOT) projects to assess their potential effect on historic properties. When

⁵⁶ National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), 16 U.S.C. 470a(a).

⁵⁷ NRHP, 16 U.S.C. 470a(a) § 101(a)(1)(B).

⁵⁸ 16 U.S.C. 470f § 106; Protection of Historic Properties, 36 CFR Part 800.

⁵⁹ Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Federal Undertakings, 16 U.S.C. 470f § 106.

considering federally funded properties, such as public housing, every aspect of their planning, construction, alteration, and demolition can trigger these processes. Since this thesis is concerned with the preservation of public housing, the evaluation of historic significance and integrity are best understood through the Section 106 review process as these properties require regulatory compliance and will illuminate the processes' flaws with greater ease.

Identifying Historic Properties

A property must be rigorously analyzed to determine if it meets the criteria for evaluation in order to be eligible for listing in the National Register. The evaluation of a property can be triggered by regulatory reviews due to federal actions or could stem from a property-owner's or community's desire to designate a site as historically significant. While identifying properties for evaluation in situations of community interest can be driven by the interested party, identifying properties in a Section 106 review process is driven by the project's geographic boundary, or area of potential effect (APE). When a Section 106 process is initiated, an evaluation of all properties in the APE is needed to determine if the proposed actions, defined as the undertaking, will have any effects on eligible or listed historic properties.

While there are a variety of reasons a property may be evaluated, the question that follows is *who* has the power to decide if a resource is historically important? Under 36 CFR § 800.2(a)(1), Section 106 compliance requires adherence to the "Professional Qualification Standards" described in the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards (Standards)*. These qualifications identify who is deemed qualified to assess properties in a manner that is as objective and informed as possible. There are a range of experience requirements relating to each applicable field: History, Archaeology, Architectural History, Architecture, and Historic

Architecture. Meeting these qualifications, according to the *Standards*, means that these individuals are qualified to “perform identification, evaluation, registration, and treatment activities” in relation to historic properties.⁶⁰ However, while possessing the required qualifications may imply more objectivity, individual biases and subjectivity are never fully erased.

National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation (Bulletin 15) references this by stating that “the evaluation of integrity is sometimes a subjective judgement, but it must always be grounded in an understanding of a property’s physical features and how they relate to its significance.”⁶¹ This implies that while an evaluation can have personal bias and subjectivity, professionals with set qualifications that “ground” their evaluations in the physicality of a property are less likely to produce biased evaluations. Of course, regardless of qualifications, the potential for subjectivity and bias will always remain, which should be expected as people bring their own backgrounds, experiences, and subconscious goals to their evaluations. The potential for the existence of subjectivity should be of less concern, and instead a focus on the narrow breadth of whom is qualified to perform evaluations, thus producing a narrow breadth of bias, deemed acceptable by the *National Register*. All the more, while the National Park Service determines these fields to be the best suited to complete the evaluation process, seeing the range of backgrounds does raise questions about how the evaluation process could even be consistent purely based on the range of the fields listed. Even if all people are deemed qualified, evaluations can have different outcomes based on the individual

⁶⁰ “Professional Qualification Standards,” *Archeology and Historic Preservation: Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines [As Amended and Annotated]*, National Park Service, http://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/arch_stnds_9.htm/.

⁶¹ National Register of Historic Places, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, National Register Bulletin 15, Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1990, 44.

that performs them. A historian and an architect, both invested in sensitive evaluation processes, could assess a property completely differently and find different aspects of the property to be of importance, thus altering the evaluation process, or even producing different conclusions of eligibility.

In the process of evaluating properties there is documentation that is created to support the researcher's findings. While the Section 106 review process outlines documentation standards, the documentation can differ in depth and requirements depending on why the project is being evaluated and by whom. One such documentation tool is a determination of eligibility (DOE) which documents the findings of a property's significance and integrity, as outlined in 36 CFR Section (§) 63.2: Determination of Eligibility Process.⁶² At times, DOEs can look very similar to documentation for listing a property in the National Register, often including a description, a statement of significance, photographs, and maps. However, there is a distinct, important difference between being *listed* in the National Register and being determined *eligible* or *not eligible* for the National Register. Both fall under regulatory compliance for Section 106 consultations; however, states and local jurisdictions can determine their own appropriate consulting parties. The Section 106 process consultation involves local governments, involved tribes, interested parties, and the public.⁶³ However, these recommendations all feature language like "appropriate to the scale of," implying that state and local jurisdictions may deem some consulting parties not necessary for Section 106 compliance.⁶⁴ While anyone who expresses interest in participating can do so, a question of how is it ensured that they know they can participate remains.

⁶² *Determination of Eligibility Process*, 36 CFR § 63.2, (1977).

⁶³ *Participants in the Section 106 Process*, 36 CFR § 800.2.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

While a resource being considered eligible for inclusion triggers the same compliance regulations as a listing, the determination of eligibility forms have the potential to differ greatly. This can lead to the inconsistent preservation of resources. The completion of DOEs by local jurisdictions without formal adoption by the Keeper of the National Register, is an action that archaeologist Thomas King refers to as a “consensus determination of eligibility,”⁶⁵ meaning they are not technically official determinations, but they enable efficiency for evaluations to be done in a localized manner. This is not always done, but both Perkins Homes and Barry Farms engaged in this localized determination process. Since state agencies are able to set their own standards for what their DOEs entail, documentation can differ from one jurisdiction to the next. In this example, which will be further explored in Chapter Three, two DOEs were completed for public housing sites in Baltimore and Washington DC. While both public housing sites were determined not eligible for listing on the National Register, the DOEs were completely different in scope, length, and amount of documented research.

Consulting Parties and the Public

The public’s opinions are essential in the decision-making process when considering how the public’s role is defined in the Section 106 process.⁶⁶ The public’s “nature of involvement” is determined by the lead agency, and is framed around seeking and considering their views “in a manner that reflects the nature of complexity of the undertaking and its effects on historic properties” and “the likely interest of the public in the effects on historic properties.”⁶⁷ Notably,

⁶⁵ Thomas F. King, “Managing Impacts on Historic Properties,” *Cultural Resource Laws and Practice*, 4th ed (Plymouth: AltaMira Press, 2013): 144.

⁶⁶ *Participants in the Section 106 Process*, 36 CFR § 800.2.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

these involvements are very subjective and open for wide interpretation. Who defines the complexity of the undertaking and how is an agency to know the interest of the public ahead of involving them? The process of identifying properties and consulting parties for evaluations of historic significance begins to illuminate the flaws in the process, notably an opportunity for subjectivity and bias. These flaws are more apparent in the actual evaluations of significance and integrity, as this is what properties are assessed against in determining their eligibility for inclusion.

Although not addressed in *Bulletin 15*, the issue of only using “qualified” people to determine a resource’s significance has been intensely debated and addressed in later amendments to the NHPA, specifically with the adoption of Traditional Cultural Properties, later expanded in the publication of *National Register Bulletin 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties (Bulletin 38)* authored by Thomas F. King and Patricia Parker. Traditional Cultural Properties (TCPs) are defined as “places that communities think are important, because they—the places—embody or sustain values, character, or cultural coherence.”⁶⁸ While TCPs are typically thought of as Native American sacred sites, it is widely understood that the concept should apply to a variety of spaces. TCPs are important in the conversation of who determines significance, as it provides a different understanding from the “Professional Qualification Standards.” Central to TCPs is that the determination of a resource’s significance should depend on whether a community finds a place to be significant to them.⁶⁹ In *Bulletin 38*, this is explicitly addressed by asserting that “the integrity of a traditional cultural property must be considered with reference to the views of traditional practitioners; if its

⁶⁸ Thomas F. King, “Getting Started with TCPs,” *Places that Count: Traditional Cultural Properties in Cultural Resource Management*, (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2003), 1.

⁶⁹ King, “Historic Properties as Cultural Resources,” *Cultural Resource Law and Practice*, 90.

integrity has not been lost in their eyes, it probably has sufficient integrity to justify further evaluation.”⁷⁰ Essentially, the community’s interpretation of significance is fundamental in evaluating a resource. In addition to TCPs, the basis of community-as-expert is explored in folklore studies through community scholars, which utilizes the people of a community to direct their own research of place. While these establish frameworks for considering a wider breadth of values, it is not often considered for resources outside of the typical TCP scope.

The National Register Criteria for Evaluation

Evaluations are assessed against a set of standardized criteria created to organize and focus the types of properties deemed eligible under the NHPA. The criteria revolve around four aspects of historical and architectural significance: Criteria A, B, C, and D (Table 2); and then seven aspects that are not typically considered eligible with the exceptions to those rules: Criteria Considerations A, B, C, D, E, F, and G (Table 3).

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Table 2: National Register Criteria for Evaluation. [Source: Criteria for Evaluation, 36 CFR § 60.4.]

⁷⁰ National Register of Historic Places, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties*, National Register Bulletin 38, Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1990; see <http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb38>.

Ordinarily cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past [fifty] years shall not be considered eligible for the National Register. However, such properties *will qualify* if they are integral parts of districts that do meet the criteria or if they fall within the following categories:

- A. A religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or
- B. A building or structure removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value, of which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event; or
- C. A birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no appropriate site or building directly associated with his or her productive life; or
- D. A cemetery which derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or
- E. A reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or
- F. A property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own exceptional significance; or
- G. A property achieving significance within the past [fifty] years if it is of exceptional importance.

Table 3: National Register Criteria Considerations. [Source: Criteria for Evaluation, 36 CFR § 60.4.]

These criteria create a systematic process for identifying the different types of significance that a property may have, specifically when considering Criteria A, B, C, and D. Often A and B are considered associative significance, relating to a resource's association with historic events and people; C is considered architectural significance, often referring to important architecture, design, or engineering value; and D is considered informational significance, most commonly used for archaeological sites. These different types of significance all relate to a

property possessing historical significance and they must meet one or more of the four criteria in order to be considered eligible. This significance must also be understood through its historic contexts, which include the various economic, social, cultural, and political patterns and trends relating to its resource. Using historic contexts identifies how a resource's significance is to be understood in relation to its past, present, and ultimately future.⁷¹

Understanding Significance

The National Register Criteria for Evaluation establishes a structure for determining the types of significance that a property may have. Similar to how the “Professional Qualification Standards” attempt to reduce the bias in the evaluation process, the Criteria for Evaluation provides guidelines to support that to not all *historical* properties having *historic* significance. This is problematic. The guidelines for evaluating significance allow for evaluations that can be one-dimensional. This simplification occurs when the significance of a resource is thought to be understood through a single lens and unchanging. When significance is simplified it results in issues regarding the temporality of significance and the objectivity of significance.

Concerns of Temporality

First, there is a temporal issue when trying to simplify significance. Grounded in historic and prehistoric contexts, the National Register guides preservationists to solely interpret significance as it relates to the past. To believe that preservation is solely about the past is to have a narrow view of the field. Discussed at length in critical heritage studies, examining how preservation is utilized in this country and elsewhere illuminates less about the past, and more

⁷¹ NRHP, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, National Register Bulletin 15, National Park Service.

about how preservationists wish to curate the past for their future.⁷² As preservationists Jeremy Wells and Barry Steifel summarize, “‘significance’ is not based primarily on historical facts from an arbitrarily distant past...but on the contemporary meanings and values of everyday people.”⁷³ Essentially, contemporary values are just as important to significance as historic values. Thus, what is and is not preserved is representative of the context of a resource’s past, present, and future. Furthermore, the temporal issues of significance are also rooted in the problematic consideration of “significance” as static and unchanging.

Randall Mason critiques government agencies’ reluctance to update existing documentation—such as National Register nominations—stating that “once judgements are made about a site, its significance is regarded as largely fixed. Such inertia needs to be overcome, and each site’s significance needs to be seen as time bound and in need of periodic revision.”⁷⁴ Mason asserts instead that significance is an intensely fluid concept that will be understood and interpreted differently over time, and illuminates the flaws of interpreting significance as unchanging. Some agencies, including Maryland’s SHPO, the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT), are in fact doing exactly what Mason recommends—revising and updating their past documentations. However, Mason’s critique should not be understood on a minute agency-by-agency level. Instead, it should encourage that all documentation surrounding preservation be reviewed critically. While the lack of resources available to agencies is a very real barrier to more robust re-evaluations, continuing to root significance in the past will negate the multi-faceted complexity of significance.

⁷² On critical heritage studies scholars, see Jeremy C. Wells and Barry L. Steifel, *Human-Centered Built Environment Heritage Preservation: Theory and Evidence-Based Practice*, ed. Jeremy Wells and Barry Steifel, (New York: Routledge, 2019), 15-17.

⁷³ Wells and Steifel, *Human-Centered Built Environment Heritage Preservation*, 1.

⁷⁴ Mason, “Fixing Historic Preservation,” 64.

Concerns of Objectivity

Beyond temporal issues in how significance is understood, there is the issue of considering significance objectively. The assertion that the determination of eligibility process should produce objective evaluations negates the innate value of individual interpretations of places, or the significance of how people *feel* about a property. The importance of feeling and place, referred to as a “sense of place,” is the subject of place theorists such as Yi-Fu Tuan, E.V. Walter, and Tony Hiss. Central to place theory is a recognition that place can only be understood phenomenologically, or from individual experience. Thomas King describes it as valuing “the perception of significance in places—not based on specific, objectively definable characteristics but because they *feel* significant—as a legitimate and important quality of humanness, that has been largely overwhelmed in modern society by analytical objectivity.”⁷⁵ This asserts the idea that individual feelings and experiences should not only be considered but fundamental when considering the significance of a place. Essentially, the attempt to determine significance in an objective manner is to fight against the very human and organic nature of preservation of place.

Considering significance from an objective manner also raises discrepancies between places with and without visual significance. As Mason explores, “judgements about significance are narrowly drawn, pegged closely to the architectural history canons and historical associations validated by academics. As a field, preservation has shown little appetite for thinking critically about significance, or theorizing a way of handling significance.”⁷⁶ Mason’s critique is set in the earlier presented issue of *who* is given the power to determine significance, which for Mason is emblematic of how judgments of worthiness are established and upheld by preservationists. This addresses issues of hierarchal interpretations of value, this notion that spaces of greater

⁷⁵ King, “TCPs in Broader Perspective,” *Places that Count*, 82.

⁷⁶ Randall Mason, “Fixing Historic Preservation: A Critique on ‘Significance,’” *Places* 16 (2004): 64.

architectural and historical merit are considered to be of greater significance only because the people evaluating them have been conditioned through their work, education, community, and upbringings to believe so. This conditioning also establishes how implicit and subconscious bias perpetuate the field's lack of diversity. It is a critique of an institutionalized interpretation of significance. He continues by stating how the preservation field “has tended to rely on a standard of self-evidence similar to that used by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart in 1964 to define pornography and obscenity: ‘I know it when I see it.’”⁷⁷ Here Mason counters the assertion that one can understand significance just by seeing and implies that judgements made purely through sight and without greater context will always lack nuance.

Mason's critiques are critical when considering architectural significance in historic preservation. People with different professional backgrounds will pursue alternative approaches to evaluation, such as the architect versus the historian, yet there is still an assumption that architectural significance can be understood just from looking at a property—an assumption in direct conflict with Mason's critiques. There are many reasons where this may not even be the case even from an architectural significance standpoint. One can imagine an important historic framing technique that could not be understood from the street, a new technology implemented at the site, or an engineering feat. Despite understanding that just looking will not provide adequate information regarding historic significance, it is a practice that is still used today. This practice is indicative of a lack of resources and funding available, both necessary for a thorough job. Again, like the temporal issue of significance, the misinterpretations of significance return to an issue of what funding and resources are available. It is evident that the evaluation framework

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 64.

for understanding significance through static and objective means is not addressing the full potential and complexity of what significance can represent to a place or community

Understanding Integrity

When a property is evaluated just from sight, it is not only a missed opportunity for a deeper understanding of the property's significance, but for understanding its integrity as well. In the evaluation process, the assessment of integrity is pivotal, as determining the eligibility of a property largely falls on the possession or lack of integrity. After the historic or prehistoric contexts of a property and its area(s) of significance are determined, integrity must also be assessed. There are seven aspects of integrity: Location, Design, Setting, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling, and Association (Table 4).⁷⁸

Integrity is defined by the National Register as “the ability of a property to convey its significance.”⁷⁹ The issues surrounding integrity begin with this definition: to whom is the property conveying significance? At face value, integrity must be conveyed to the professionals tasked with evaluating. King addresses this conflict in stating how “[preservationists] sometimes lose track of this basic principle...[they] begin to think that [they] ought to be the arbiters of integrity, treating the National Register as though it were designed for [them] rather than for the American people.”⁸⁰ This notion that the National Register is designed for the people argues that preservationists' first obligation should be to the people, not the process. It then begs a return to the question of whom this conveyance is for, which when read at face value, could be interpreted as literally anyone interacting with a place at any time.

⁷⁸ NRHP, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, National Register Bulletin 15, National Park Service.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁸⁰ King, “Historic Properties as Cultural Resources,” *Cultural Resource Laws and Practice*, 90.

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1. Location is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.
 2. Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.
 3. Setting is the physical environment of a historic property.
 4. Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.
 5. Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.
 6. Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.
 7. Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.
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Table 4: The Seven Aspects of Integrity. [Source: NRHP, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, National Register Bulletin 15, National Park Service.]

King goes on to address this as well, recognizing that “surely the property must convey something to someone, but [preservationists] ought to be careful not to slide into thinking of integrity entirely in terms of what the property might convey to a visitor seeking enlightenment about the property’s life and times.”⁸¹ By this, King is stating that there is a balance between recognizing that a property needs to be valued by someone, but that its significance cannot be instantly communicated to every person that interacts with it. Through his remarks, King illustrates the primary concern surrounding integrity: its subjective interpretations. While concerns of subjectivity and bias are considered between who is performing an evaluation and how its significance is interpreted, the concept of integrity is where even in *Bulletin 15* there is an acknowledgment of the possibility of subjective interpretations.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 91-92.

While historic preservation is not solely for structures, the understanding of integrity is deeply rooted in the physical world. A property does not need to retain all seven aspects of integrity, but it is understood that they should retain *most*, if not *all*, in order for a property to be considered for inclusion in local, state, or federal registers of historic places. This presents another misunderstanding in the field, which is the conflation of integrity and condition. While integrity does not refer to the physical condition of a property, it is often interpreted as such. A property's significance does not need to be communicated through its physical—or structural—integrity to the individual or agency assessing it. Evaluations of integrity should be understood as malleable and specific to the resources and those who find them significant; where the integrity of a small post office may be heavily rooted in the community's feeling and association, while a modernist high-rise may be rooted in its design and materials. Even though preservationists must assess all properties through these aspects of integrity, Criterion C is more bound to the concept than others. This criterion is defined by the National Register as a resource that embodies:

The distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.⁸²

While there are examples of vernacular structures recognized for their architectural significance, for many people, Criterion C represents grand architecture. Defining Criterion C, King acknowledges that the criterion “generally speaking... is the architectural historian's favorite criterion—a dog-trot house, a Classical Revival courthouse, or a parkway designed by the Olmsted Brothers—can be eligible simply for being what it is.”⁸³ King's assertion that these properties are eligible for just being themselves is key to the problematic relationship of

⁸² NRHP, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, National Register Bulletin 15, National Park Service.

⁸³ King, “Historic Properties as Cultural Resources,” *Cultural Resource Laws and Practice*, 87.

associating significance with physical integrity; if these properties' very existence is their significance, it supports a flawed notion that significance can be understood just from being seen.

These interpretations of Criterion C present an issue for simpler structures that are immediately assumed to be less significant, due to their lack of ornament and grandeur. Architecture that is less ornate or robust in relation to details, design, and materials faces an issue when being evaluated for eligibility as changes to their fabric have a much greater impact on their physical integrity. Additionally, if there are fewer defining characteristics, an alteration of one aspect, like the addition of ramps, can have a disproportionate impact on integrity. This is because its character-defining features can so easily be transformed without care to the original intent of design. However, thinking of a property's change over time as a loss of integrity is a narrow understanding of integrity. It bolsters the issue of interpreting significance as temporally bound and disregards that change over time itself can be significant. Instead, evaluating the integrity of a property that has undergone changes highlights the need for a better understanding of the significance of vernacular architecture. This is addressed at length in the work of Henry Glassie, a folklorist and architectural historian, who grounds the relationship of person-to-building in a deeply conceptual understanding of culture and materiality.⁸⁴ As Glassie vividly states:

A building's reality consists of the changes it has undergone as much as its original state. Its fabric is the rich record of those changes and to strip them away is to destroy historical data and assault the building's historical being.⁸⁵

Essentially, Glassie argues that changes to a property are fundamental to the significance of the property's relevance over time. The fabric of the built environment is defined as a record,

⁸⁴ Henry Glassie, *Material Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

⁸⁵ Henry Glassie, "Vernacular Architecture and Society," *Material Culture* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 20.

implying that change is an inevitable and important part of any resource. This interpretation clearly connects to William Morris, founder of the Arts and Crafts movement, who found the changes of a building to be fundamentally connected to its significance.⁸⁶ Moreover, vernacular spaces are often not solely (or not at all) significant for their architecture or design, but also for their social, cultural, and informational significance. Historian Dell Upton illustrates this in his “overlapping circles of knowledge,” where he utilizes the concepts of Venn diagrams to show how buildings relate to other buildings and people through their different overlapping categories.⁸⁷ While vernacular spaces may hold a great deal of significance in many aspects, the narrow interpretation of integrity is what often prevents their inclusion on historic inventories.

Similar to significance, the issues in evaluating integrity are represented in who is tasked with evaluating and attempting to evaluate objectively. When a property is determined to not have retained its integrity, it is often framed as if the loss of integrity is final, when in reality integrity can be regained through rehabilitation, restoration, reconstruction, and preservation. However, with most preservation ordinances adhering to the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation*, to regain integrity would still place a disproportionate emphasis on physicality. This mirrors issues surrounding significance and the rooting of interpretations as static and of the past. Just as significance is fluid, a loss of integrity is not necessarily lost forever. When integrity is interpreted as something that cannot be regained, it presents a framework that is not only lacks depth and nuance, but effectively values places that are already well-maintained over those that have been altered and manipulated.

⁸⁶ “The Protection of Ancient Buildings: Morris as Preservationist,” *University of Maryland Libraries*, <http://www.lib.umd.edu/williammorris/morris-as-preservationist/>.

⁸⁷ Dell Upton, “The VAF at 25: What Now?,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, (2006): 14.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted how the current process of evaluating properties for their historic significance and integrity is hindered by flaws rooted in seeking static and objective evaluations in a process that is incredibly fluid and complex. The reliance on objectivity makes it difficult for many practitioners to separate a consideration of physical integrity from architectural significance, which is why the two concepts are so often conflated. Consider the fluidity of significance and integrity in relation to Mason and Page’s discussion on the foundation of preservation history. It was established that many preservationists believe the history of American preservation to be rooted in saving grand buildings. The misattribution of American preservation beginning with Ann Pamela Cunningham and the demolition of Penn Station—events nearly a century removed from one another—supports a framework that values the static interpretation of significance and integrity and negates the significance of contemporary values.⁸⁸ In addition to lacking nuance, the framing of the origins of preservation around the saving of grand buildings associated with grand people also bolsters visual significance as more important.

Significance and integrity are concepts that can be utilized to understand the wildly changing and evolving landscape. As is defined by the NHPA, one purpose of preservation is representing “the historical and cultural foundations of the nation” which “should be preserved as a living part of our community life and development.”⁸⁹ When the evaluation process is taken at face value it becomes a barrier to all resources not rooted in visual significance. There is a disconnect between how significance and integrity are interpreted by preservationists from how they are understood by the public, ultimately creating barriers for the preservation of places that

⁸⁸ For more on the preservation of the recent past see: Richard Longstreth, *Looking Beyond the Icons: A Legacy of Architecture and Landscape from the Recent Past* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016).

⁸⁹ Purposes of the Act, 16 U.S.C. 470 § 1(b).

have more complicated, difficult, or nuanced relationships to people. As place theorist E.V. Walter states, “a place has no feelings apart from human experience there. But a place is a location of experiences. It evokes and organizes memories, images, feelings, sentiments, meanings, and the work of imagination.”⁹⁰ The preservation framework needs to change and embrace the organic and fluid nature of place, no longer centering architectural significance and physical integrity. This would push against the static and physically bound origins of the field and require the prioritization of community values and more holistic interpretations of significance.

⁹⁰ E.V. Walter, *Placeways: A Theory of the Human Environment* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 20. As quoted by: King, “TCPs in Broader Perspective,” *Places that Count*, 83.

CHAPTER III AMERICAN PUBLIC HOUSING: APPLYING THE PROCESS

Is it, therefore, not the case that, even post-1949, public housing built in America *may* be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, as well as other National Register criteria, because of the unique story it tells about how the government, along with the professions of architecture, planning, and others, spatially institutionalized race and class prejudice across the country?

— Fred McGhee, “Heritage Dispatches from the American Approaches of Hell”

American public housing is a building typology with a rich and complex history. Public housing in the United States has gone through many iterations all bound to changing housing and planning policies. Most people associate public housing with the buildings of the 1960s and 1970s, characterized by high-rise towers and imprinted in the mind of the public as centers of crime, instead of the first waves of public housing constructed in the 1930s and 1940s.⁹¹ This first-generation housing refers to the public housing in the United States created in a series of government efforts targeting unemployment, growing “slums,” and a lack of quality housing in cities around the country following the Great Depression, and later providing housing for returning veterans from World War II.⁹² Fred McGhee, notes how these misconceptions have impacted the preservation of public housing, and that “this lack of differentiation has powerfully influenced policy debates concerning the role of public housing in American society and has also strongly impacted historic preservation debates about which forms of public housing architecture and planning are worthy of commemoration in the National Register of Historic Places.”⁹³ Over

⁹¹ McGhee, “Heritage Dispatches from the American Approaches of Hell,” 2.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 4.

the past thirty to forty years these earlier structures have entered the timeframe to be considered for historic designation, however the negative association with later public housing has effectively driven the conversation regarding public housing's value and led to an overwhelming lack of representation of public housing sites on historic registers. "Out of more than 10,700 public housing projects that were built between 1930 and 1980, about [thirty] are among the 95,000 entries of the list,"⁹⁴ National Park Service (NPS) historian Paul Lusignan told a *Washington Post* reporter writing on the preservation of public housing. That amounts to less than 0.03 percent of all public housing projects constructed.

Noted in Chapter One, public housing is an exceptionally significant historic resource, yet it remains entirely underrepresented in preservation. Chapter Two addressed how sites are identified and evaluated for historic significance and integrity and explored the criticisms around how the evaluation process is interpreted. The static application of significance and integrity in evaluations was explored and determined a large basis for the lack of representation of sites with less visual significance in preservation. This chapter will return to the topic of public housing, exploring the process of evaluating public housing for historic significance. First, this chapter will assess the National Park Service's guidance on evaluating public housing, then, through an evaluation of two different housing sites in the Baltimore and Washington D.C. region, this chapter will address why public housing should be preserved and what has prevented its preservation.

⁹⁴ Christina Sturdivant Sani, "Why Do So Few Public Housing Projects Receive Historic Landmark Status?," *The Washington Post*, January 22, 2020.

Evaluating Public Housing

In 2004 the National Park Service (NPS) in collaboration with the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) prepared a Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPD) entitled *Public Housing in the United States from 1933-1949*. This MPD divides up public housing projects constructed within the years covered into three distinct periods: Public Works Administration (PWA) Public Housing (1933-1937), United States Housing Act of 1937 Public Housing (1937-1940), and World War II-era Housing (1940-1949).⁹⁵ Through the context study, the MPD provides preservationists with research and tools for evaluating public housing sites for their historic significance and integrity, which is most valuable for preservation agencies and housing authorities with limited resources for research.⁹⁶ It is intended to provide a foundation for understanding that public housing sites have the potential to be historically significant.

While the publication of a public housing context study is a clear demonstration that both NPS and HUD understand that there is historically significant public housing, the guidelines outlined in the report create greater barriers for public housing eligibility. The MPD states, “the purpose of this report is to provide a means to evaluate the historic significance of properties currently operated under the federal public housing program administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.”⁹⁷ This means of evaluation is in the form of guidelines for interpreting the Criteria for Evaluation specifically for public housing. These guidelines, bound in part by the period of significance, create a narrow interpretation of what is

⁹⁵ Paul Lusignan, “Public Housing in the United States, 1933-1949,” CRM: The National Register of Historic Places, 2002.

⁹⁶ McGhee, “Heritage Dispatches from the American Approaches of Hell,” 7.

⁹⁷ “Public Housing in the United States from 1933-1949,” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2004), Section H, 97.

considered significant for public housing. This is central to McGhee's critiques of the preservation of public housing. McGhee states, "by claiming that only PWA housing (along with, perhaps some USHA housing) had architectural merit, the report authors utilized an elitist conception of architectural history, misinterpreted the meaning of modernism in architecture, and furnished reinforcement for the flawed notion that bad design and not disinvestment or housing authority mismanagement were responsible for the supposed 'failure' of America's public housing program."⁹⁸ Essentially, McGhee argues that while at face value the MPD is a report on the potential significance of public housing, the way that it is written actually contributes to the lack of public housing represented on historic inventories.

Another issue is the assertion in the MPD that public housing must be evaluated as historic districts. A district is defined as "a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development."⁹⁹ Although public housing projects can contain a variety of building types and resources, they are to be evaluated as a whole. The guidance that pertains to identifying contributing versus non-contributing resources is identified in the MPD as the following, "an eligible historic district may even contain resources that do not contribute to the significance of the property...this is acceptable as long as these noncontributing features are few in number and do not adversely affect the ability of the larger district to convey its significance."¹⁰⁰ Individual aspects of public housing sites will only be considered for eligibility in "rare instances where the exceptional importance or fragile nature of the property might merit such designation."¹⁰¹ The insistence of assessing public housing sites as districts is likely due to the fact that the entirety of

⁹⁸ McGhee, "Heritage Dispatches from the American Approaches of Hell," 8-9.

⁹⁹ "Public Housing in the United States from 1933-1949," NRHP, Section F, 68.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, Section F, 90.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, Section F, 68-69.

the plans, or superblocks, are critical in understanding the site’s significance. However, as McGhee states, there are “federal policies that, over the last 35 years, have emphasized the destruction of public housing, the dispersal of residents, and the replacement of public housing with newer units.”¹⁰² Time and time again, public housing is altered, manipulated, and demolished with little regard to the impact of the site’s significance or integrity, and the directive in the MPD to include the entire district could result in the ineligibility of public housing sites.

Ideal Public Housing for Preservation

McGhee posits that the MPD establishes a narrow scope for what public housing is to be considered historically significant. These public housing sites are to be complete districts likely of the PWA-era, which was notable for higher budgets and more prominent ornamentation. For this thesis, using McGhee’s critiques, these sites will be seen as the perceived *ideal*. One such example is the Langston Terrace Dwellings (Figure 5) in Washington D.C., which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1987, over a decade before the context study was published.

Langston Terrace Dwellings is a 274-unit public housing complex designed by African American architect Hilyard Robert Robinson, FAIA.¹⁰³ The complex was constructed in 1938 in Northwest Washington D.C. over a 13.7-acre site. The site consists of fifteen two-story buildings featuring red brick masonry adorned with terra cotta bas reliefs applied to various buildings (Figure 6). The buildings surround four streets creating a square, a site plan that draws from

¹⁰² McGhee, “Heritage Dispatches from the American Approaches of Hell,” 2.

¹⁰³ The credentials FAIA (Fellow of the American Institute of Architects) refer to a licensed architect (AIA) with the professional organization of American architects receiving fellowship, a distinguished honor in architecture that recognizes exceptional work and contributions to the field. “College of Fellows,” *American Institute of Architects*, www.aia.org/pages/6075263-college-of-fellows/.

superblock ideologies. The buildings on the interior of the square are all located around a central courtyard. The topography features many hills and ample, mature landscaping.¹⁰⁴

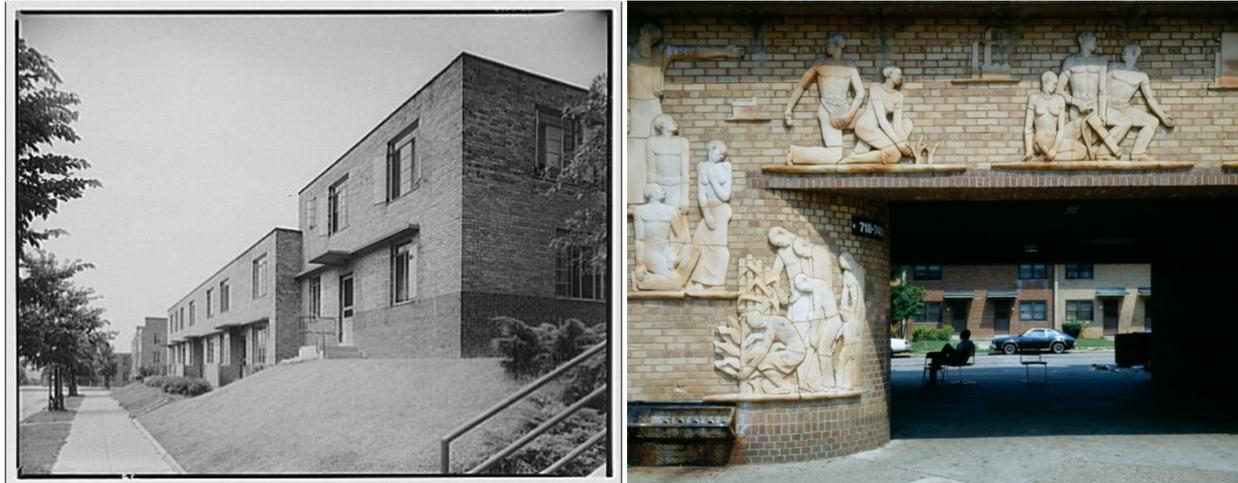


Figure 5 (Left): Langston Terrace Dwellings in Washington, DC. [Source: Horydczak Photograph Collection, LC-H814-2189-028, *Langston Housing Project. Buildings along sidewalk at Langston Housing Project*, Washington, DC, 1920-1950. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2019676115>.]

Figure 6 (Right): Terracotta Bas Relief Sculptures at Langston Terrace. [Source: Carol M. Highsmith, LC-HS503-1385, *Intricate Art Deco Bas Relief in Anacostia Neighborhood*, Washington, DC, 1980. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2011630840>.]

In 1987, members of the Langston Terrace Dwellings Residents' Council, along with preservationist Glen Leiner, prepared documentation to nominate Langston Terrace for listing in the National Register.¹⁰⁵ With the successful listing, Langston Terrace became one of the first public housing complexes listed on the National Register, as well as the first public housing project designed by an African American architect to be listed. Its nomination for listing marked

¹⁰⁴ Kelly Quinn, "Making Modern Homes: A History of Langston Terrace Dwellings, A New Deal Housing Program in Washington D.C.," (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 2007).

¹⁰⁵ Quinn, "Making Modern Homes," 2007.

a desire to preserve and honor the property's rich history. This was abundantly evident in a 1987 *Washington Post* article reporting on the designation, stating:

After assessing the appropriateness of various architectural applications last week, the city's Historic Preservation Review Board pondered this: Should it designate as a historic site a pioneering public housing complex that showcased the talent of a gifted black architect, abated the misery of hundreds of Depression-era blacks and appeared on the board calendar because of the tenacity and pride of current residents? Resoundingly, joyfully and unanimously, the board voted yes.¹⁰⁶

The effort to designate Langston Terrace Dwellings was in part an effort to represent more Black history in the field of historic preservation—an effort still underway over three decades later.¹⁰⁷

The listing of Langston Terrace was of great importance for the preservation of African American history. However, one must wonder if Langston Terrace was not in such whole and good physical condition at that time, would it have been determined eligible for listing? While the 1987 designation was a step forward in Black representation in historic preservation, it is hard to believe that the designation was rooted in racial equity considering the fact that in 2020 there is still a great lack of racial diversity in the field. It would be reasonable to assume that the importance of Langston Terrace from an African American historical context was a positive addition to a nomination that was in reality rooted in architectural significance. While this is impossible to know, it is apparent that Langston Terrace Dwellings represents the type of public housing that the MPD based its evaluations on. These public housing sites of the PWA-era are sites that may have a great deal of social, cultural, and informational significance, but their eligibility has been driven by their architectural significance and physical integrity.

¹⁰⁶ Anne Simpson, "Langston Wins Historic Status," *Washington Post*, August 27, 1987.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Sites of Contested Significance

Langston Terrace represents another important aspect of the preservation of public housing: its impact on African American culture. McGhee posits in his article “Heritage Dispatches from Hell,” that this impact is at the center of public housing’s significance and that the lack of preservation of public housing is indicative of the multitude of erasures of the African American experience in society. McGhee states that “alongside jails and prisons, public housing constitutes perhaps the most important effort on the part of the government to implement the ‘physical’ aspects of American apartheid.”¹⁰⁸ This is the understanding that the significance of public housing is also founded in its use by governments as a tool for segregating, displacing, and controlling people.¹⁰⁹

Langston Terrace Dwellings represents the ideal public housing for evaluations of historic significance because the site is both rich in social and cultural significance as well as being architecturally significant with a high degree of integrity. Because of this, it would be difficult to dispute Langston Terrace Dwellings’ historical significance. For many other public housing sites, with their own rich histories, the determination that they lack integrity often makes them ineligible for listing. This is best understood through an assessment of the evaluation of two regionally specific public housing sites: Barry Farm Dwellings (Barry Farms) in Washington D.C. and Clarence W. Perkins Homes (Perkins Homes) in Baltimore, Maryland. These sites were chosen for their geographic locations, their period of construction, their similar architectural styles, and because both sites were chosen for current federal revitalization efforts. Due to these

¹⁰⁸ McGhee, “Heritage Dispatches from the American Approaches of Hell,” 4.

¹⁰⁹ See also: Bryan Lee Jr., “America’s Cities were Designed to Oppress,” *CityLab*, www.citylab.com/perspective/2020/06/george-floyd-protest-urban-design-history-racism-architecture/612622/, June 3, 2020.

revitalization programs, both sites have been evaluated for their historic significance in accordance with Section 106 regulatory compliance, and the sites have had different outcomes.

Clarence W. Perkins Homes Property Description

Perkins Homes is a public housing complex located in East Baltimore, Maryland. The 688-unit complex was constructed in 1942 over a 16.2-acre site. The complex consists of fifty structures: forty-eight apartment buildings, one community space/leasing office, and an early-twentieth century firehouse that predates the housing development. The buildings are all well-defined two and three-story structures featuring red brick masonry, flat roofs, and low parapet walls with metal coping (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Clarence W. Perkins Homes in Baltimore, Maryland. [Source: Photograph by author.]

Notable as an example of superblock construction, the front facades of the buildings all face away from the streets, creating courtyards and allowing for quiet, private access to units. The rear facades are visible from the main streets and are not set back from the immediately adjacent sidewalks (Figure 8). Low-rise with flat roofs, the buildings all retain a distinct, solid rectangular form unmistakable from the street. With the exception of three bas-relief plaques above the entrance of the community building and engravings stating “PERKINS HOMES” at the courtyard entry points, the buildings on the site lack any ornamentation (Figure 9).

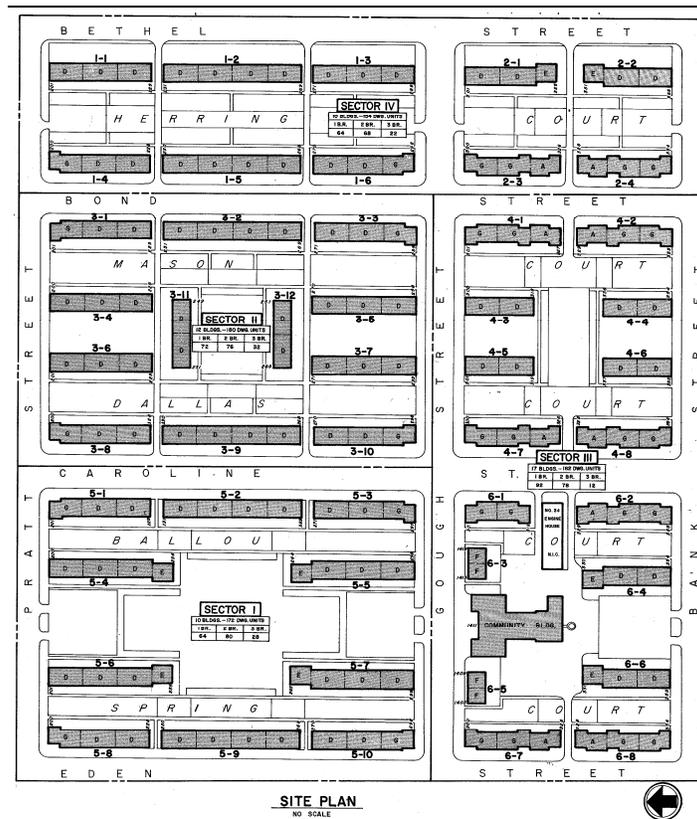


Figure 8: Site Plan of Clarence W. Perkins Homes. [Source: EMG, Project No. 93141.10R-002.052, Perkins Homes, 2010.]



Figure 9: Perkins Homes Courtyard Entry Pillars. [Source: Photograph by author.]

The site is defined by its minimal decoration, orientation, and sheer amount of buildings. From its initial occupancy in 1942 to 1971, Perkins Homes had no significant changes to the building fabric. In 1971 all of the windows, previously casements, were replaced with steel double-hung windows.¹¹⁰ In 2004, in compliance with the Uniformed Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS), the site was modified to include wheelchair accessible units bringing the total units from 688 to 630. This renovation was the result of the *Bailey v HABC* consent decree,

¹¹⁰ Maude Parker, "Tenant's Complaint," *The Baltimore Sun*, August 12, 1971.

where HABC was sued for not adequately providing affordable housing to disabled people and was subsequently required to produce 756 UFAS-compliant units.¹¹¹

Barry Farm Dwellings Property Description

Barry Farms is a public housing site in Southeast Washington, D.C. located east of the Anacostia River. The 442-unit complex was constructed in 1943 over thirty-four acres consisting of sixty-four buildings as permanent low-income housing for African Americans (Figure 10). The buildings, all two-story low-rise buildings, are attached duplexes that are rectangular in shape with continuous low-pitched gable roofs covered in brown asphalt shingles with stucco-clad walls ranging from shades of off-white to light brown (Figure 11). Originally the units had exposed concrete block exterior walls with both flat and gabled roofs. The entrances to the buildings feature small awnings over poured concrete entryways. The buildings are oriented to create courtyards and are set back from the road ten to fifteen feet lending a rather suburban setting. The roads are wide and there is a network of concrete sidewalks running in front of and behind the buildings for pedestrian connectivity. The topography of the site leads to many vantage points of the greater D.C. metropolitan area throughout the site. In the 1980s some flat roofs were converted to gabled roofs, though the majority of roofing was gabled to begin with (Figure 12). In that same time period, the windows and doors were all replaced, and the exterior walls were stuccoed.

¹¹¹ “Physical Needs Assessment of Perkins Homes (MD #3),” Due Diligence for the Life Cycle of Real Estate, EMG (Maryland: 2011), 15.

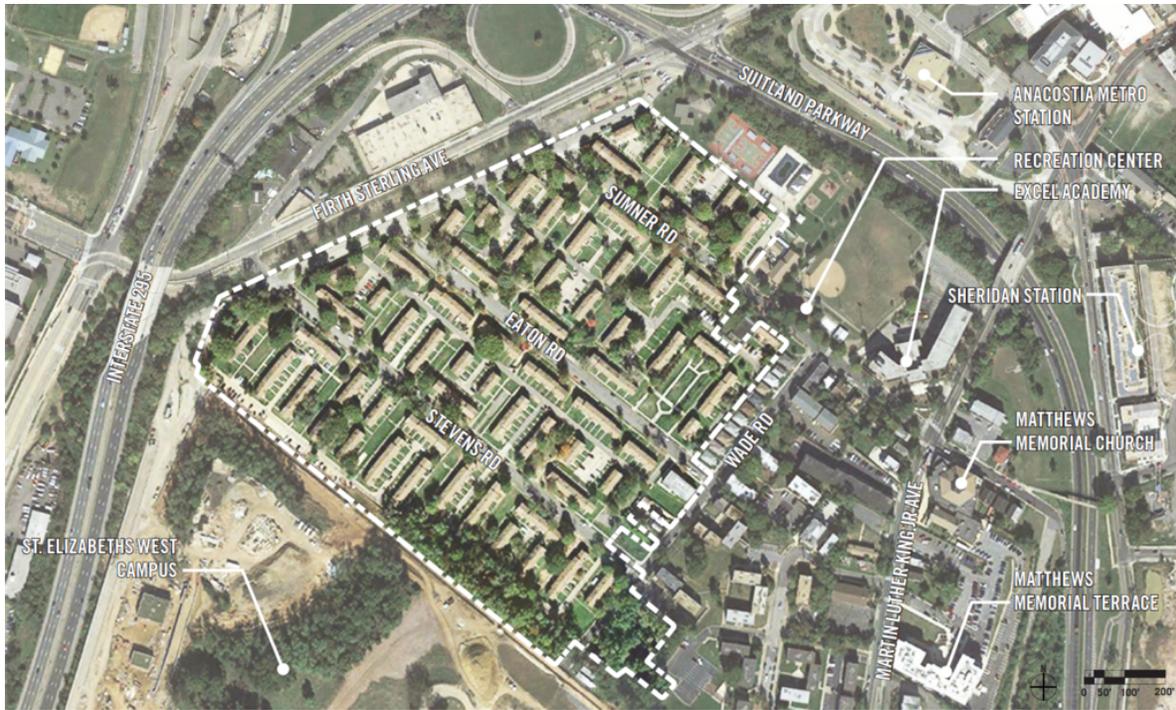


Figure 10: Site Plan of Barry Farm Dwellings. [Source: “Site Tour,” Barry Farm Redevelopment, <https://www.barryfarmredevelopment.org/site-plan>.]



Figure 11: Barry Farm Dwellings in Washington, D.C. [Source: “Barry Farm Dwellings,” Application for Historic Landmark or Historic District Designation (Washington, DC: Historic Preservation Review Board, 2019).]



Figure 12: Historic photograph of Barry Farms showing a mix of flat and gabled roofs. [Source: Gottscho-Schleisner, Inc, LC-G613-445236, *Barry Farms Housing Development*, Washington, DC, 1944. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2018722791>]

Triggers for Evaluations

The evaluations of significance for Perkins Homes and Barry were triggered through initiatives by their respective housing authorities. Along with dozens of other public housing sites across the country, Perkins Homes and Barry Farms were identified for redevelopment as a part of the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (Choice Neighborhoods) for revitalization of distressed neighborhoods experiencing extreme poverty.¹¹² This program, an Obama administration initiative that rolled out in 2010, was the successor of the HOPE VI program which funded the large-scale demolition—and, to a lesser extent, rehabilitation—of public housing and development of scattered-site affordable housing in mixed-income neighborhoods in

¹¹² McGhee, “Heritage Dispatches from the American Approaches of Hell,” 4.

the 1990s and 2000s.¹¹³ While HOPE VI and Choice Neighborhoods have been marketed as necessary for these neighborhoods, there has been careful language around Choice Neighborhoods to clarify that it is not solely about the demolition of public housing. As the Housing Authority of Baltimore City assures, “where HOPE VI focused on the transformation of public housing, Choice Neighborhoods is more comprehensive, focusing on the transformation of entire neighborhoods.”¹¹⁴ Criticizing these assurances, McGhee addresses how demolishing public housing has “to rest on an intellectually substantive foundation,” because of their representation of “significant taxpayer investment.”¹¹⁵ McGhee states that it is necessary to develop and market how public housing had failed in order to get buy-in for the financial implications of its wide-scale demolition. He posits “the notion that it was acceptable, even necessary, to destroy people’s homes because of the positive benefits that ‘mixed income’ redevelopment would furnish on the residents of public housing was controversial at the outset, but went seriously unchallenged for years.”¹¹⁶ Between HOPE VI and Choice Neighborhoods, over 365,000 housing units were demolished as of 2012, with an additional 285,000 approved for demolition, representing around twenty percent of all public housing in the country.¹¹⁷ McGhee describes how HUD and housing authorities have actually perpetuated stereotypes around public housing and contributed to their lack of preservation, describing their actions as “[engaging] in a program of public housing dismantlement.”¹¹⁸ This was evident in Baltimore, where it was found that public housing tenants were sexually harassed and abused by HABC maintenance workers

¹¹³ McGhee, “Heritage Dispatches from the American Approaches of Hell,” 4; “Choice Neighborhoods,” U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development,

http://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph/cn/.

¹¹⁴ “Perkins Somerset Oldtown Transformation Plan,” Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC), 2015.

¹¹⁵ McGhee, “Heritage Dispatches from the American Approaches of Hell,” 5.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

who demanded sexual favors in exchange for maintenance work. *The Baltimore Sun* reported “when the women did not comply, they said, the repairs were not made—exposing them to unsafe conditions such as mold, lack of heat and risk of electrocution.”¹¹⁹ This not only represents an overtly dehumanizing and predatory injustice faced by public housing residents, but also points to a deliberate lack of maintaining public housing.

In 2014 the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the redevelopment of the Perkins Homes, the former site of Somerset Homes, and the Oldtown neighborhood into a “Community of Choice,” Baltimore’s Choice Neighborhood program.¹²⁰ Somerset and Oldtown neighbor Perkins Homes to the north and northeast. The RFP called for development proposals that implemented mixed-use and mixed-income strategies, with the primary purpose of revitalizing the area and the secondary purpose of connecting the Baltimore neighborhoods of Harbor East and Fells Point—economically-booming neighborhoods that are considerably wealthier and whiter—to the growing Johns Hopkins Medical Campus, one of the largest employers in the city.¹²¹ Similar to Baltimore, the District of Columbia issued their own program, the New Communities Initiative (NCI). NCI was implemented to “revitalize severely distressed subsidized housing and redevelop communities plagued with concentrated poverty, high crime, and economic segregation.”¹²² The DC program targeted four neighborhoods in total: Barry Farms, Lincoln Heights, Northwest One, and Park Morton. The goal of Barry Farms’ redevelopment is to “improve the residents’ quality of life by addressing both the physical architecture and human capital of the community.”¹²³ The Barry

¹¹⁹ “Tenants to Share Up to \$8 Million in Settlement of Sex-for-Repairs Lawsuit,” *The Baltimore Sun*, January 8, 2016.

¹²⁰ “Perkins Somerset Oldtown Transformation Plan,” HABC, 2015.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² “About the New Communities Initiative,” *New Communities Initiative*, www.dcnnewcommunities.org/about-nci.

¹²³ “Barry Farm Redevelopment Plan,” *New Communities Initiative*, www.dcnnewcommunities.org/barry-farm-development/.

Farm Redevelopment Plan, led by the non-profit developer Preservation of Affordable Housing (PoAH), was approved in 2006, and in 2010 the plan was awarded a Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant.¹²⁴

PoAH's website for the redevelopment states three pillars of the plan; Preservation, Affordability, and Sustainability.¹²⁵ The first pillar, preservation, states: "the redevelopment will preserve public housing and provide [one-for-one] replacement of existing units, in a mixed-income neighborhood and with affordable housing options for families of all sizes."¹²⁶ The second pillar, affordability, states: "central to the redevelopment is the construction of new, affordable mixed-income rental and for sale housing. 40,000 square feet of retail space will be built to serve the community."¹²⁷ And the third pillar, sustainability, states: "there will be new roads, utilities, landscaping and community facilities. New connections will be made to neighborhood amenities, including the nearby Anacostia Metro, and the community will be certified LEED."¹²⁸ These three pillars are supposed to guide the principles of the redevelopment, but using McGhee's criticism of the marketing around these programs, these pillars appear superficial. For one, there is the issue of noting the one-for-one replacement, a point that is often made in public housing redevelopment but has been contested.¹²⁹ There is also the use of preservation in these pillars and in the developer's name, which has little to do with explicit historic preservation, but the insistence that affordable housing will remain, regardless of

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ "About the Redevelopment," *Barry Farm Redevelopment*, www.barryfarmredevelopment.org/about-the-redevelopment-2/.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Defending one-for-one: Rolf Pendall and Leah Hendey, *A Brief Look at the Early Implementation of Choice Neighborhoods*, (Washington DC: The Urban Institute, 2013); contesting one-for-one: "Does Public Housing Redevelopment Actually Help: How to Prevent Public Housing Residents From Ending Up Worse Off," *East of the River DC News*, November 14, 2019.

how that looks, or what the income eligibility requirements are. It then begs the question of why there is need for both the preservation and affordability pillar when they both are referring to the presence of affordable housing in the neighborhood, and neither explicitly address preservation.

The efforts of Choice Neighborhoods echo the intention of housing reform undertaken during the New Deal, identifying severely distressed neighborhoods is a clear parallel to the slum clearance efforts of the first waves of public housing. Early efforts to raze neighborhoods in cities around the country were rooted in ideologies that found concentrations of poverty as the cause of social ills, resulting in blight.¹³⁰ The intention of these newer programs seem to be the same. For this reason, Lawrence Vale has referred to these as “twice-cleared communities.”¹³¹ A concept used to describe the cycle of razing and rebuilding in poorer neighborhoods between the slum clearance and public housing construction of the Housing Act of 1937 and the later programs to justify their demolition in the 1980s-2000s.¹³²

Considerations of Integrity

Neighborhoods selected for Choice Neighborhoods were found to have high poverty rates and neighborhoods that were economically distressed.¹³³ Additionally, the physical condition of the buildings were generally deemed to be blighted or distressed.¹³⁴ The redevelopment of Perkins Homes and Barry Farms under this program triggered Section 106 reviews because these are federally-funded projects on federally-owned property. The Section 106 review process

¹³⁰ Paul A. Jargowsky, “Stunning Progress, Hidden Problems: The Dramatic Decline of Concentrated Poverty in the 1990s,” *The Living Cities Census Series* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2003).

¹³¹ Lawrence J. Vale, *Purging the Poorest: Public Housing and the Design Politics of Twice-Cleared Communities*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013).

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Matthew F. Gebhardt, *Spatial Analysis of Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant Applicants and Neighborhoods*, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2014.

¹³⁴ Daniel M. Abramson, *Obsolescence: An Architectural History*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

ensures that the proposed project will avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects to historic resources.¹³⁵ For these sites, a Determination of Eligibility (DOE) was written to document the findings that both sites were not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, with both reports identifying loss of integrity due to alterations as their basis of reasoning. Thus, any demolition or alterations of the sites would be allowed. Perkins Homes' DOE, completed by a preservation planner in Baltimore City's Planning Department, has seven pages of narrative and analysis with no photographs or maps in the digital copy (MHT does not accept digital photographs and scans, requiring that preservation planners submit hard copies of archival black and white photographs and maps), whereas Barry Farms' DOE, completed by a D.C. preservation planner, has one paragraph of narrative, two maps, and one photograph. These two reports are compared side-by-side in Table 5 in order to showcase the similarities and differences between Baltimore and Washington D.C.'s allowable evaluations (Table 5).

¹³⁵ 16 U.S.C. 470f § 106; Protection of Historic Properties, 36 CFR Part 800.

Site	Clarence W. Perkins Homes	Barry Farm Dwellings
Determination	Not Eligible	Not Eligible
Reasoning	Loss of integrity due to alterations.	Loss of integrity due to alterations.
Alterations Identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Windows replaced. - Entryways replaced. - Addition of ADA-compliant ramps, metal railings, and doors. - Alterations to awnings. - Several courtyards paved for parking and new playgrounds added. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flat roofs converted to gabled roofs. - Windows and doors replaced. - Exposed concrete block exterior covered with stucco. - “Significant” interior modifications.
Date of Filing	Draft DOE was submitted to MHT in 2014. As of April 2020, the DOE has not been formally accepted by MHT, but it was stated by a planner that they are supportive of CHAP’s findings.	September 15, 2011 by DC State Historic Preservation Officer David Maloney.
Applicable Criteria	Perkins Homes was evaluated under National Register Criteria A and C.	Barry Farm Dwellings was evaluated under National Register Criteria A, B, and C.
Published Research	CHAP’s draft DOE entails seven pages of research. The document includes an architectural description, historic context of public housing in Baltimore, a history of Perkins Homes, a history of the architect, a description of its namesake Clarence W. Perkins, and an evaluation.	DC SHPO’s DOE entails one paragraph of description and support.
Additional Support and Figures	There are no maps, plans, or photographs attached to CHAP’s draft DOE.	There is a map noting the general location of the housing site, a dimensional site-plan with streets, and one photograph of a building.
Exceptions to Findings	Suggested: 1. Interpretive exhibition space acknowledging the history; 2. Incorporating firehouse into design; 3. Incorporating structural panels on community building; and 4. Developing programming around public and oral histories.	With no archeological surveys done, preparer concludes “potential for the presence of archaeological resources.”

Table 5: Comparing the Determination of Eligibilities of Clarence W. Perkins Homes and Barry Farm Dwellings. [Source: Compiled by author from respective DOEs.]

Technically, Perkins Homes’ draft DOE has not been formally accepted. Baltimore’s Commission on Historical and Architectural Preservation (CHAP) prepared the draft document in 2014 and Maryland’s SHPO, Maryland Historical Trust (MHT), has not yet formally accepted the DOE into their catalog. In email correspondence with MHT preservation officer Amanda Apple on January 7, 2020, Apple confirmed that the DOE was pending and that MHT concurred with CHAP’s findings. Barry Farms’ DOE was filed on September 15, 2011 by the D.C. State Historic Preservation Office. While these DOEs declare that each site is not eligible for listing, a breakdown of their assessments illuminates how a lack of defined parameters for depth of research led to very different reports. The comparison highlights that while both sites were determined not eligible, their conclusions differed. The Perkins Homes DOE concludes that public housing is exceptionally important in Baltimore’s history, but that Perkins Homes is not the best example in the city. Expanding on this, CHAP detailed a list of recommended actions for how the history of Perkins Homes could be honored in the new development, using strategies that are common mitigation measures in Section 106 proceedings.¹³⁶

On the other hand, Barry Farms’ DOE notes, “although the properties may be notable from social history standpoint, they were so dramatically altered in 1987 that they no longer retain sufficient integrity to convey any significance they may have once had.”¹³⁷ The statement mentions the housing site being constructed for black defense workers, but ultimately does not state if that is why it “may be notable” for its social history. While the regulations require the use of consulting parties and making a good faith effort, the length of Barry Farms’ DOE further supports concern for the depth of research documented. Though it is impossible to know how

¹³⁶ “Memo: Historical Significance of Public Housing to Housing Authority of Baltimore City,” Commission on Architectural and Historical Preservation, Baltimore: City of Baltimore, April 9, 2015.

¹³⁷ “Barry Farm Dwellings” Determination of Eligibility, District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office, 2011.

much research was done, who was called upon for consultation in the Section 106 process, and how the determinations were made outside of what has been documented and published in public record.

Results of Determination of Eligibilities

With both Perkins Homes and Barry Farms determined not eligible for inclusion in the National Register, the redevelopment projects were able to begin without any Section 106 consultation process. In July of 2018, HABC received its first grant toward the razing of Perkins Homes, which has not started as of April 2020. At the same time, in 2018, many of the structures at Barry Farms were demolished. The demolition of Barry Farms was halted when Empower DC, a housing advocacy organization, along with the Barry Farm Tenants and Allies Association (BFTAA) filed an application with the D.C. Historic Preservation Board to designate Barry Farms as a local historic landmark. This subsequently halted any further demolition while the application was being reviewed. This is unique to local preservation in Washington D.C. since they have jurisdiction over many federal properties unlike most local jurisdictions. At that time, 200 families had already been relocated and over thirty structures were demolished, about fifty percent of the original development.¹³⁸

Earlier in 2011, after the D.C. government secured a Choice Neighborhood grant for Barry Farms, Empower DC worked with Barry Farm residents to create BFTAA.¹³⁹ Empower DC, BFTAA, and an attorney, Ari Theresa, successfully appealed the original plans for the

¹³⁸ Paul Schwartzman, “Why Some D.C. Residents Want Landmark Status for a Public Housing Complex,” *Washington Post*, September 25, 2019.

¹³⁹ “Barry Farm,” *EmpowerDC*, www.empowerdc.org/barry_farm.

redevelopment through the D.C. Zoning Commission.¹⁴⁰ Following that effort, in 2018, they filed a landmark nomination for Barry Farms with the D.C. Preservation Office that is thirty-one pages long and includes fifteen contemporary photographs, two historic photographs, one map identifying the original land plots, and a map identifying the proposed landmark boundary (Figure 13).¹⁴¹ The research details the significance of the land chosen for the site as well as numerous stories of significant African American history that was central to Barry Farms—from slavery abolitionists to advocates fighting for school integration to the founders of go-go music. While there were other public housing sites being constructed in Washington D.C. in the 1940s, Barry Farms is significant for being a portion of the 375-acre site purchased in 1867 by the Freedmen’s Bureau, a federal government agency for the settlement of African Americans after the Civil War.¹⁴² The original settlement, Washington D.C.’s first intentional community designed for African American home ownership, included 266 families and was notable for its significant residents who were community leaders and elected legislators involved with African American Civil Rights, integration, and anti-slavery legislation. When Barry Farms was constructed, the public housing site retained the original street layout of the settlement and kept the streets that were named after anti-slavery legislators like Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ “RE: Withdrawal of Z.C. Case No. 14-02 and 14-02A – First-Stage PUD, Related Map Amendment, and Two-Year Extension @ Various Lots in Squares 5862, 5865, 5866, and 5867,” Holland & Knight LLP, May 30, 2018.

¹⁴¹ Government of the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office. Application for Historic Landmark Designation: Barry Farm Dwellings, 2019.

¹⁴² “Barry Farm Dwellings,” Application for Historic Landmark or Historic District Designation (Washington, DC: Historic Preservation Review Board, 2019), 8-9.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 8-9.



Figure 13: Proposed Boundary for Barry Farm Dwellings Landmark Application. [Source: “Barry Farm Dwellings,” Application for Historic Landmark or Historic District Designation (Washington, DC: Historic Preservation Review Board, 2019.)]

At the time of its construction, Barry Farms was the largest public housing complex in Washington D.C. for Black families. This is important because in the 1940s, there was a large influx of African American families that migrated north to Washington D.C. for job opportunities following President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Executive Order 8802. This Executive Order, passed in 1941, banned racial discrimination in defense industries, of which there were many in the D.C. metropolitan area during World War II, which drew African Americans to the region and resulted in an increased shortage of housing.¹⁴⁴ The breadth and detail of research presented a narrative of Barry Farms that was drastically different from the original DOE. The historic significance of Barry Farms was even more evident at the public hearing before the

¹⁴⁴ Chris Myers Asch and George Derek Musgrove, *Chocolate City: A History of Race and Democracy in the Nation’s Capital* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 274.

Historic Preservation Review Board on July 25, 2019.¹⁴⁵ Dozens of individuals and community groups showed up to the hearing to voice their support for the landmark designation. Lasting over three hours, residents, preservationists, and people just generally interested showed up to share why they valued Barry Farms. There to oppose the landmark designation was a single representative the D.C. Housing Authority.

According to a *Washington Post* article in October of 2019, about a month after the hearing, a representative of the redevelopment team met with residents in order to discuss the intentions of including the history of Barry Farms into the redevelopment.¹⁴⁶ This meeting, meant to assuage concerns of residents, highlighted “that the developer planned to incorporate art exhibits, oral histories and path markers, among other things, to celebrate the property’s history. But preserving the buildings that are the focus of the landmark nomination [would be] virtually impossible because of disrepair.”¹⁴⁷ The developer argued that while Barry Farms had significant stories, the physical buildings had not retained sufficient integrity and were not an important part of that history.

Reconsidering Integrity

Integrity was a central issue in the hearings surrounding Barry Farms’ landmark designation. As was first outlined in its DOE, Barry Farms had undergone a series of alterations through time: flat roofs converted to gabled roofs, replacement of doors and windows, covering the exposed-concrete block exterior walls with stucco, and “significant interior modifications.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ DC Preservation Review Board Public Hearing on July 25, 2019.

¹⁴⁶ Paul Schwartzman, “D.C. Panel Voices Support for Historic Landmark Status for Barry Farm,” *Washington Post*, October 31, 2019.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ DC State Historic Preservation Office Determination of Eligibility Form: Barry Farm Dwellings Public Housing Units, September 15, 2011.

D.C.'s preservation board was tasked with addressing these integrity concerns while also recognizing that the research and hearings showcased that the community felt that Barry Farms was significant. In working to resolve the issues of integrity while giving weight to the desires of the residents, the Board presented the following statement:

While the buildings were altered significantly in the 1980s and are in poor to deteriorated condition, rehabilitation and restoration to their original appearance, contemporaneous with the time period of the significant residents, would help to convey their historic and commemorative significance. As was encouraged by the Board's December motion, a preservation plan should be developed as part of the larger site's redevelopment that includes removing the applied stucco finishes and the gabled roofs on the end units, restores missing porches, and replicates original windows and doors.¹⁴⁹

The Board had to reconcile breaking up the district of the public housing complex for its nomination, as the Multiple Property Documentation recommends, since half of the buildings had already been demolished. The Board recommended a new boundary, stating that a revised boundary statement "should recognize that as a fragment of the larger Barry Farm, the recommended cluster still appropriately illustrates the historic and cultural importance of Barry Farm and its associations with African American Civil Rights. The test of integrity would be applied to the property under that context, rather than under the context of public housing."¹⁵⁰

Due to the reduction of the boundary to about six percent of the original site, the Board concluded that it was better to consider Barry Farms significant for its association with African American history as opposed to public housing, implying that the Board found considerations of integrity to be less critical for the context of African American history. On January 30, 2020 the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board granted Barry Farm Dwellings landmark status and immediate protection with the smaller boundary.

¹⁴⁹ Historic Landmark Case No. 19-07: Barry Farm Dwellings Historic Preservation Review Board, January 2020.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

In a statement released by Empower DC after the announcement of the landmarking, organizing director Daniel del Pielago, said that, “throughout this process, we have been asked to compromise our true vision for this historic landmark, and this proves how little weight is given to community input in projects that involve the mayor and politically connected developers.”¹⁵¹ Despite the Board and Preservation Office presenting the revised boundary as the product of flexibility and negotiation, Empower DC’s statement asserts a different sentiment. While the group and residents were excited for a portion of the site being designated after years of work, it was, no doubt, disappointing to not be able to keep all that was proposed, considering it was already half of the original site.

Perkins Homes’ Significance

Although the DOE report is still under review, Perkins Homes will be demolished within the next few years. According to residents and preservation planners within CHAP and employees at HABC, the residents of Perkins are in favor of the demolition as they want to live in better, updated housing.¹⁵² In assessing Perkins Homes’ DOE report, it appears that there was considerable effort put into the documentation. However, with the reevaluation of Barry Farms’ DOE report in mind, it is reasonable to assume that all public housing residents may hold greater values to these spaces, but lack housing advocates to assist them in the process.

It begs questioning then, what aspects of Perkins Homes could be considered of greater significance than was determined originally. The DOE concludes that there is no denying the significance of public housing in Baltimore, but it is difficult to defend Perkins Homes as the

¹⁵¹ “For Immediate Release: Thursday, January 30, 2019,” *EmpowerDC*, January 30, 2020.

¹⁵² “Near Posh Harbor East, Baltimore is Razing Public Housing to Build New Homes. What’s That Mean For Tenants?,” *The Baltimore Sun*, November 13, 2019.

best example of public housing in the city. Perkins Homes was one of the first seven segregated public housing projects in Baltimore City (Table 6).

Public Housing Site (Year Opened)	Initial Racial Demographic	No. of Units	No. of Acres	Estimated Dwelling Units Demolished	Estimated Population Displaced
Armistead Gardens (1941) *	White	700	80	N/A	N/A
Douglass Homes (1941)	Black	393	10.5	433	1,210
Gilmor Homes (1942)	Black	647	11.9	358	1,441
Latrobe Homes (1941)	White	701	18.7	585	2,053
McCulloh Homes (1941)	Black	434	9.3	449	1,255
Perkins Homes (1942)	White	688	16.8	799	2,304
Poe Homes (1940)	Black	298	7.5	344	1,140

* While Armistead Gardens was one of the originally constructed public housing sites in Baltimore, it was turned over to defense housing before its opening and was incorrectly labeled “slum clearance” as it was built on vacant land.

Table 6: Demographics and Displacement at Original Segregated Public Housing Projects in Baltimore. [Source: Compiled from “Housing Project Submitted to U.S.: Approval of \$18,813,801 Plan by President Expected in Two Weeks,” *The Sun*, May 7, 1938; and “Types of Families Living in Baltimore’s Low Rent Projects,” Department of Housing and Community Development, Baltimore, 1968.]

Perkins Homes was named after Clarence W. Perkins, the first Executive Director of Baltimore’s Housing Authority, who died in 1939 before the completion of construction, for his promotion of slum clearance efforts in Baltimore City.¹⁵³ At the time of Perkins’ death, the site selected for Perkins Homes contained around 811 families, totaling around 2,301 people, who were all moved out of the site temporarily or permanently for the project construction to begin.¹⁵⁴ The first families moved into the site in 1942, mostly white war workers as the need for veteran

¹⁵³ “Area to be Known as Perkins’ Homes: Housing Authority to Honor Services of Man in Promoting Slum Clearance,” *The Sun*, August 24, 1939.

¹⁵⁴ Clark S. Hobbs, “Slum Dwellers on the Move: The Housing Problem,” *The Evening Sun*, October 12, 1939.

housing had increased with the ending of World War II.¹⁵⁵ In 1955 Perkins Homes was integrated. As stated by historian Rhonda Williams, HABC desegregated the all-white public housing complexes, and in order to prevent the perception of “Negro onslaught,” the desegregation included the moving of Black families as well; the move into Perkins Homes on May 31, 1955 included five white families and nine black families.¹⁵⁶ While a growing number of white families fled the city for the suburbs, people of color were unable to leave the cities due to policies like redlining. The demographic of Perkins Homes shifted to be majority Black. With this shift in demographic, there was a shift in services. Fighting inequities like lack of maintenance were Black women activists and residents who played a significant role in defending the residents of Baltimore’s public housing, including Perkins Homes.¹⁵⁷ Within the past decade, the former industrial sites and working-class neighborhoods surrounding Perkins Homes have been revitalized and have become wealthier, whiter neighborhoods.

With this brief summary of Perkins Homes history, there is a need to return to the NPS’s MPD to assess if Perkins Homes could be considered eligible for inclusion on local, state, or national historic registers. While it was determined that the MPD largely fails to support the designation of public housing, there are suggested historic themes listed in the MPD that can help frame why and how Perkins Homes could be considered significant. The historic themes include architecture, art, community planning and development, ethnic heritage, politics/government, and social history (Table 7).¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ “Arms Housing Planned for Old Slum Site: 400 Units to be Built Where 275 Homes Long Stood Vacant,” *The Sun*, March 21, 1942.

¹⁵⁶ Rhonda Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women’s Struggles Against Urban Inequity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 111.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ “Public Housing in the United States from 1933-1949,” NRHP, Section F, 92-95.

Theme	Criterion	Suggestion
Architecture	Criterion C	Serves as a physical symbol within a community of housing design and construction standards developed through the efforts of the housing reform movement.
		Represents an important example of a particular architectural style influential to the development of public housing.
		Contains good examples of design features, facilities, or equipment distinctive to its use as public housing.
Community Planning & Development	Criterion A	Represents a community's significant efforts to eliminate its slums and to develop well-planned low-cost housing for the urban poor.
		Represents significant federal efforts to encourage community development through the construction of public works projects.
		Is or was perceived as a symbol of community pride and achievement in a particular accomplishment or period of its history.
	Criterion B	Is associated with a significant individual who made important contributions to eliminating slums and alleviating persistent housing shortages through public works.
	Criterion C	Represents an important or exemplary illustration of early large-scale housing development in which uniformity of design, low ground coverage, and precise spatial relationships and traffic patterns were combined to create a new environment for the urban poor in place of the squalor and congestion of the slums.
	Social History	Criterion A
Exemplifies the social ideals and planning standards of federal housing at the local level.		
Criterion B		Served as an important focus of community pride and community activity.
	Criterion B	Is associated with an individual who made important contributions to the public welfare through the development of public housing.

Table 7: Sampling from “Suggested Historic Themes and Areas of Significance That Could be Applied to Public Housing.” [Source: “Public Housing in the United States from 1933-1949,” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2004), Section F, 92-95.]

Looking at some of the suggestions for significance under these themes helps to illustrate how Perkins Homes could be found eligible for designation, such as the community planning and development context under Criterion B for Perkins Homes namesake Clarence W. Perkins, the Baltimore Housing Authority's first executive director, known for his "contributions to eliminating slums and alleviating persistent housing shortages through public works."¹⁵⁹ Or with the social history context under Criterion A for the importance that black women activists played in the site's history and developments.¹⁶⁰ These are just two suggestions, but both of these are specific examples to Perkins Homes using the suggested themes, which argues that Perkins Homes may in fact be a good representation of Baltimore's public housing, unlike CHAP's finding.

Conclusion

In 2020, the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Review Board designated Barry Farm Dwellings a District of Columbia Historic Landmark, despite the findings of the initial 2011 DOE report concluding that the site lacked sufficient integrity to be considered for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The initial DOE report's single paragraph of analysis relied on the issue of physical integrity. With the landmark application, the issue of integrity was still contested but ultimately was found to no longer prevent its eligibility as the values of the community were so well documented. The efforts of Empower DC supporting the residents of Barry Farm are without a doubt a large reason for the success of the efforts, but still their efforts only yielded one small portion of the original site. The preservation of this smaller site, one-sixteenth of the original public housing site, represents a bigger issue with regards to significance

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Section F, 92.

¹⁶⁰ Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles Against Urban Inequity*.

and integrity. The smaller boundary means fifteen-sixteenths of the original site will be demolished, which will undoubtedly impact the site's integrity. This decade-long process from DOE report to landmark designation for Barry Farms showcases a process that is imperfect. With this, Barry Farms presents a case study for how public housing has historically been omitted in preservation conversations and how this omission has disregarded many people's values. Additionally, the labor by Empower DC and BFTAA showcase how other sites, like Perkins Homes, may lack the resources and advocates to amplify their values.

When considering the assessments of Barry Farms and Perkins Homes, it becomes evident how these play into the greater role of the preservation of public housing. The fact that a public housing site is of value is of little use in preservation if the framework continues to support integrity over community values.

CHAPTER IV
ADOPTING HOLISTIC PRESERVATION PRACTICES:
ADDRESSING THE FLAWS

That image [of Pruitt-Igoe’s implosion] was so powerful, so full of emotion, that it could easily be used to support any previously-held beliefs or prejudices about federal housing or modernist architecture. Or even the poor themselves.

—Roman Mars, *99% Invisible, Episode 44: The Pruitt-Igoe Myth*

Confronting exclusion and vilification based on their race, class, and gender, cohorts of poor black women, black men, and children sought access to the democratic promises of society. Their efforts to obtain material needs like shelter and income, to preserve decent communities, and to secure a modicum of respect are all components of historic struggles for working-class social justice.

—Rhonda Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women’s Struggles Against Urban Inequality*

The thought-provoking documentary *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth* addresses the infamous rise and fall of the public housing site by critically examining the political, economic, and social factors that impacted the site, while also introducing a series of former residents to help tell the story. The success of *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth* breaking down stigmas about public housing was a result of involving people that lived there and producing a film that dealt with the complicated narrative of public housing in a sensitive and compassionate manner. As Fred McGhee states, “the professional and ethical stakes in [the preservation of] public housing cases are very high, because people’s *homes* are at stake.”¹⁶¹ If preserved ethically, the preservation of active public housing sites intersects with architecture, design, planning, public health, economics, politics,

¹⁶¹ Fred L. McGhee, “Heritage Dispatches from the American Approaches of Hell,” 1.

and more. Addressing a building typology that is entrenched in stigma and stereotypes is already complicated; the fact that it someone's home makes it even more so as public housing does not exist in a vacuum. For this reason, public housing of the twentieth century serves as an ideal typology to assess the opportunities for values-centered preservation. Residents of public housing have predominately lacked decision-making power in their own environment, resulting in preservation that may misrepresent resident's own interpretations of value and significance.

In order to rectify the issues of static, one-dimensional evaluations of public housing, there needs to be an emphasis on compassionate and holistic interpretations of residents' values. What does this mean? Essentially, preservationists must take deliberate actions to shift and change the predominant narratives around public housing. This idea is central to Lawrence Vale's essay, "Can Preservation Destigmatize Public Housing?", where he explores how preservationists can—and should—use their work to challenge problematic narratives. Vale presents what he believes are the three efforts of preservation: 1) retaining and celebrating significant cultural assets; 2) instigating engagement with challenging and difficult aspects of the past; and 3) "altering a narrative in ways that can rehabilitate the reputation of once vilified places, while also promoting a corresponding reassessment of their inhabitants."¹⁶² What Vale means is that when dealing with places that have complex, vilified narratives such as public housing, their preservation cannot solely be the physical preservation of buildings, but must be a fluid and constant reinterpretation of space paired with tangible preservation. Central to his essay is a proposal for preservation that deals with intangible significance—in fact, it seems to argue that holistic preservation, in this case used to destigmatize, may at times have nothing to do with the physical preservation of structures, but rather the preservation and rehabilitation of values.

¹⁶² Lawrence J. Vale, "Can Preservation Destigmatize Public Housing?" in *Bending the Future*, 2016, 241.

Essentially, Vale presents an outline for how values-centered preservation applies to the preservation of public housing.

This chapter explores how preservation can better represent the values of public housing through holistic preservation practices. This will be achieved through a thorough examination of the different concepts of values-centered preservation and a reinterpretation of how public housing can be evaluated, utilizing the public housing sites discussed in Chapter Three as case studies. Through humanistic preservation, there is an opportunity to rectify the flaws of the evaluations process that at-present prevent much of the public housing stock in the country from being determined eligible for listing in historic registers.

Origins of Values-Centered Preservation Practices

Humanistic preservation practices, defined by a prioritization of intangible aspects of significance, grapple with the innate value of community-initiated actions opposed to expert-led actions.¹⁶³ This places an importance in the preservation of both tangible and intangible resources of a community if (and ideally only if) those resources are of value to that community. This is in direct conflict with the traditional assumption that a practitioner is the expert and instead gives importance to communities' own contemporary interpretations of value and significance. This allows everyday people to be the experts on what is and is not of value in their own community. Summarizing the work of critical heritage historian Laurajane Smith, Jeremy Wells describes how this goes against "a fundamental tenet in orthodox practice by assuming that heritage is in the present, not the past, and that practice must address the present as well as

¹⁶³ See Laurajane Smith, Yi Fu Tuan, Thomas King, Randall Mason, Jeremy Wells, and Max Page.

conceivably the future too.”¹⁶⁴ Within historic preservation, these interests mark the shift toward adopting values-based preservation practices.

Values-based preservation is a theory of preservation that falls under the umbrella of human-centered practices. Defined by Jeremy Wells and Barry Steifel, human-centered preservation seeks to bring together practice and theory that prioritize the contemporary interpretations of people’s values. Wells and Steifel illustrate that the overarching theme of human-centered practices exist at the convergence of two distinct fields: values-based conservation and critical heritage studies.¹⁶⁵ Central to the practice is a deliberate effort to breakdown preconceived notions of authority and shift power to everyday people. The reasoning for this, as they describe, is because “the meanings and benefits of heritage conservation continue to be defined by those inside the system who already have power, this endeavor [continues] to have little relevance to the public.”¹⁶⁶ With this, they posit, “what would the professional care of old places look like if it could more fully encapsulate the meanings and values of the public instead of conservation for the sake of preserving buildings in and of itself?”¹⁶⁷ Wells and Steifel believe this question to be new territory, concluding that the answer to this question is still largely unknown, but what is known is that “human-centered conservation implies that the act of conserving must be predicated on understanding people’s motivations, behaviors, meanings, and values.”¹⁶⁸ The reason for their defining of the two distinct fields is central to Wells and Steifel’s question. They see values-centered preservation as the adoption of values in practice, whereas critical heritage studies is the evolution of the theory of interpreting

¹⁶⁴ Jeremy C. Wells and Barry L. Steifel, *Human-Centered Built Environment Heritage Preservation: Theory and Evidence-Based Practice*, ed. Jeremy Wells and Barry Steifel, (New York: Routledge, 2019), 1.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 317.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 317.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 327.

value. To Wells and Steifel, a successful preservation practice would fully embrace the theoretical aspects of values while also grounding them in the regulatory bureaucracy of practice. Being rooted in practice, the concepts explored in values-based preservation are more pertinent to this thesis. However, to disregard the theories explored in critical heritage studies would be directly opposing Wells and Steifel’s goals for a human-centered practice. The field of critical heritage studies is defined as follows:

Performed from a largely ethnographic perspective that emphasizes narrative, depth of meaning, and understanding marginalized voices; as such, it is nearly entirely focused on civil experts and disarming conventional heritage conservation practice across all of its sectors of engagement.¹⁶⁹

Most important in this definition of critical heritage studies is the role of practitioner to everyday person. The practitioner is no longer seen as the expert, instead critical heritage studies centers around “an effort to transfer power to civil experts.”¹⁷⁰

On the other side of human-centered practice is values-centered preservation. The origin of values-centered preservation is often attributed to the work of Alois Riegel, noted by Wells and Steifel for his division of the “values associated with built heritage into a dichotomy of ‘historical value’ and ‘age values.’”¹⁷¹ The concept of values-centered preservation was brought to popularity in the United States by the work of Randall Mason, Erica Avrami, and Marta de la Torre with their Getty research project, “Values in Heritage Conservation.”¹⁷² Mason defines values-centered preservation as providing “the framework...for dealing holistically with particular sites and addressing both the contemporary and historic values of place,” recognizing that the intent is “protecting the significance” of place and noting that significance is drawn from

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 15; Avrami, Erica C., Randall Mason, and Marta De la Torre, *Values and Heritage Conservation: Research Report*, (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2000).

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 15.

values which can only be understood when professional preservationists “solicit the views of congeries of stakeholders, both official and unofficial, experts and laypeople.”¹⁷³

This preservation model posits that in order to understand significance, one must understand the values of a place to the community impacted. Central is the concept that value is not static or singular, which Mason describes as “the multiplicity of values in heritage.” He dates this concept back to the eighteenth-century philosopher David Hume, employing the following quotation from Hume’s work to illustrate this:

[A] thousand different sentiments, excited by the same object, are all right; because no sentiment represents what is really in the object...Beauty is no quality in things themselves: it exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty.¹⁷⁴

Essentially, Mason says that the values of a site do not exist on their own as obvious and immutable things, rather that people embed values into places, and those values are steeped in the context of those particular people’s backgrounds, experiences, and roles. Much of the criticism surrounding values-centered preservation is that it does not go far enough. As Wells and Steifel discuss, the methodology does “little to disarm expert rule,” and thus believe that “a values-based approach to the professional care of old places does little to change practice as it allows practitioners to haphazardly create meaning-thin values that are then used to justify decisions that have already been made.”¹⁷⁵ This criticism is the basis for Wells and Steifel’s proposal for a marriage of values-based preservation with critical heritage studies. Yet this criticism also revolves around an assumption that the framework must be taken apart, rather than amended. Abandoning the current framework is an enticing idea when considering how

¹⁷³ Randall Mason, “Theoretical and Practical Arguments for Values-Centered Preservation,” *CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship* 3, no. 2 (2006).

¹⁷⁴ David Hume, *Of the Standard of Taste* (Green and Grose, 1875).

¹⁷⁵ Wells and Steifel, *Human-Centered Built Environment Heritage Preservation*, 15.

significance and integrity are misinterpreted at present, however, the reality of providing a completely new framework is not necessarily feasible. With the existing flaws in how the criteria for evaluation process is currently undertaken, many resulting from a lack of resources and money as explored in Chapter Two, it is difficult to imagine how these resources could be pooled for such a large undertaking. Of course, a lack of resources does not dismiss a need for retooling. Instead, while preservationists must continue to operate under the existing framework, attention should be paid to critically interpreting these human-centered theories. By assuming that the framework, at present, will not be dismantled and redrawn, there is still room to assess the value of amending and adapting with values-centered practices.

Values-Centered Preservation

Defining “value” is critical in the discussion of values-centered preservation. To Mason, it means that the term has no relation to the concepts of ethics and morals, “but rather to the simple insight that any particular thing or place has a number of different values in the sense of characteristics.”¹⁷⁶ He uses an example of a chapel in New York City, St. Paul’s Chapel, where he argues how the resource could have artistic value, historic value, spiritual value, and economic values, among others. His insistence that value is not related to ethics and morals is critical as it rids the association of valuing being only for good and positive things. Instead, his definition implies that any place could be of value for negative, positive, or neutral reasons. Mason’s use of value shows a clear, direct correlation between the concepts of value and significance. He asserts that a site’s significance, no matter what type of significance, is based in the values that an individual or society attribute to that site. In addition to this definition, Mason

¹⁷⁶ Mason, “Theoretical and Practical Arguments for Values-Centered Preservation.”

also emphasizes how values can be hierarchal, with some as more important than others. As he states, “decisions must be reached by prioritizing some values over others (say, the commemorative values of a great writer’s birthplace over the economic value of building a strip mall on the same spot.)”¹⁷⁷ While the intention of this prioritization makes sense from a process standpoint, he is essentially stating that there needs to be an evaluation of which values are to be most valued, a concept that is both confusing and seemingly in conflict with the notion of accepting the multiplicity of values in the first place. However, as Mason’s reasoning is based on placing importance on whose values are gathered, he is essentially positing that the hierarchy of values cannot be determined by the preservationist but gathered from “knowing about the range of different values, and who speaks for them.”¹⁷⁸ Mason also relates his concepts of value to how people interpret the concept of place, stating, “one...can readily observe that these different values are perceived through different lenses, they can conflict (often, but not always), and are susceptible to change. ‘Place,’ in other words, should not be seen as a simple notion. Places contain a great deal of complexity and contradiction, as does any effort to preserve, develop, or manage them.”¹⁷⁹ Mason cites David Lowenthal to further explain this, summarizing Lowenthal’s theory that the relationship of people to past and to place is constructed from political, cultural, economic, and social forces.¹⁸⁰

Mason’s research around values-centered preservation is important for its insistence on understanding the complexity of values and the fluid nature of place. As time progresses, the political and cultural landscapes shift and evolve, and with these shifts, the values of place ebb and flow as well. By using a values-centered approach, preservationists would work to

¹⁷⁷ Randall Mason, “Fixing Historic Preservation: A Critique on ‘Significance,’” *Places* 16 (2004): 68.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

understand the changing cultural landscapes of the spaces they are evaluating, recognizing that the most holistic approach to preservation would be gathering as many differing interpretations of value as possible.

Preservation for People

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is embracing this practice, as demonstrated by its publication of *Preservation for People: A Vision for the Future* in 2017. This document lays out a process for how the field of preservation could alter how it operates in order to better represent their belief that “preservation is about people.”¹⁸¹ As the publication outlines, “while preservationists of [fifty] years ago often framed their work—our work—by explaining the impact places have on our spiritual, social, and economic well-being, our federal preservation infrastructure—regulations, funding priorities, documentation, survey directives—have tended to focus almost entirely on the built environment, and especially buildings.”¹⁸² This document, in highlighting the vast possibilities that places can represent, unintentionally highlights that while the practice of preservation has transformed to include people, the process has not.

Central to the publication are three concepts forming a manifesto: 1) “A people-centered preservation movement hears, understands, and honors the full diversity of the ever-evolving American story;” 2) “A people-centered preservation movement creates and nurtures more equitable, healthy, resilient, vibrant, and sustainable communities;” 3) “A people-centered preservation movement collaborates with new and existing partners to address fundamental social issues and make the world better.”¹⁸³ These aspirational intentions of how preservationists can work to be more people-centered in their practices encourage preservationists to be more

¹⁸¹ *Preservation for People*, National Trust, 2017.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 4.

flexible and collaborative in their process. In essence, the report presents a manifesto that reflects the theories of values-centered preservation practices laid before them.

Disconnects in Practice Theory and Application

Between the publication of *Preservation for People* as well as the preceding scholarly work, it is evident that the field is starting to recognize a shift in preservation practice toward valuing people over buildings.¹⁸⁴ However, when we assess this movement against the process of evaluation explored in Chapter Two—just one aspect of preservation—it is apparent that there are disconnects between the theory and its application. The application of values-centered practices is not required in the evaluation process for historic preservation. However, many preservationists have been employing these concepts for years in order to achieve more inclusive, sensitive preservation outcomes. The establishment of Traditional Cultural Properties (TCPs) as described in Chapter Two provides one example for how alternative interpretations of value have already entered the process. Central to Thomas King’s work is how understanding the significance of a TCP requires the community to be the decision-makers and direct their preservation narratives. As King states, “the integrity of a traditional cultural property must be considered with reference to the views of traditional practitioners; if its integrity has not been lost in their eye, it probably has sufficient integrity to justify further evaluation.”¹⁸⁵ His work provides a basis for placing the power of preservation discourse within the communities, a deliberate dispelling of the preservationist-as-expert. However, the lack of consideration of TCPs outside of the context of Native American sacred sites, despite an understanding that sacred sites are not the only type of TCP, makes it difficult to pull other resources into its scope.

¹⁸⁴ *Preservation for People*, National Trust, 2017.

¹⁸⁵ King, “How Did TCPs Come into Our Vernacular?,” *Places that Count*, 31.

While some practitioners use values-centered preservation methods, its lack of requirement further supports how the interpretation of values and significance can differ from one preservation program (or SHPO or local jurisdiction) to the next. Here lies a great disconnect in the evaluation process and it exists at a multitude of levels. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards have listed a series of qualifications that one must meet in order to be considered qualified to undertake a historic evaluation with the assistance of given criteria. However, as discussed in Chapter Two, these Standards have failed to provide thorough and inclusive interpretations of significance. In theory, the insistence of professional qualifications should still yield rigorous research, which is important, however this then begs questioning how this can be monitored in a field that lacks its own professional standards and licensure. Architects have the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and planners have the American Planning Association (APA). The very act of being a licensed architect or planner requires that professionals must continue to learn (through continuing education) if they want to retain their license or certification. These continuing education credits, often given at conferences and lectures, present an opportunity for the fields to ensure that practitioners are knowledgeable on shifts in their fields. With the field of historic preservation lacking any professional credentials, the professional qualifications lack the weight that other field's qualifications may represent. Thus, when significance and integrity are assessed, there are further opportunities for continued bias and subjectivity rooted in static interpretations of place.

Utilizing alternative models of preservation practice is important in keeping the field of preservation relevant. In order to be relevant, the field must address its flaws. One such flaw is in the lack of breadth and depth in research that produces one-dimensional and harmful interpretations of history. Values-centered preservation is just one avenue for addressing this

flaw. Mason asserts that values-centered preservation “offers [a framework] for dealing holistically with particular sites and addressing both the contemporary and historic values of a place.”¹⁸⁶ There is a need for reframing the intention of preservation, placing equal importance on historical and contemporary values. For Barry Farms, this looks like the valuing of the history of Civil Rights activists that lived in Barry Farms alongside the valuing of the current residents. By reframing preservation to consider values of the past, present, and future, Barry Farms preservation is less concerned with its tangible preservation, but how the values are captured, displayed, and remembered. Concerned with contemporary values, values-centered preservation is a practice that should be adopted and embedded within the framework moving forward. This holistic approach to preservation is not merely considering the greater cultural contexts that exist within a site, but the multiple values embedded within a site at any time. This framing positions the contemporary values of sites as equally important, if not more important, than the past.

Reconsidering Public Housing

In order to assess how values-centered preservation can benefit the evaluations of public housing, public housing must be reconsidered for its contemporary values. This will be presented in three parts: an evaluation of the flaws of the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPD): *Public Housing in the United States from 1933-1949* discussed in Chapter Three; a reinterpretation of the landmark designation of Barry Farms; and a discussion of the ways that contemporary values have been gathered in public housing using Barry Farms and Perkins Homes.

¹⁸⁶ Mason, “Theoretical and Practical Arguments for Values-Centered Preservation.”

Multiple Property Documentation on Public Housing

The MPD on public housing, published in 2004, provides a historic context for evaluating public housing and illustrates the potential for significance within American public housing, defining different aspects of significance—from social to artistic—and tools for addressing issues of integrity. Within the MPD there is guidance that public housing should be evaluated as districts, meaning that all of the buildings, objects, landscape ornamentations, and structures be evaluated as a whole rather than individually. In Chapter Three, this was explored in order to better understand the flaws that the MPD creates when evaluating public housing, such as McGhee’s critiques of its narrow focus. Within the public housing sites explored in Chapter Three, there were inconsistencies in how their evaluations adhered to the recommendations of the MPD. Notably, the eventual adopted boundary for the Barry Farm Dwellings landmark application was considerably smaller than the proposed boundary—four buildings instead of the proposed thirty-two—with the first proposed boundary including just half of the original site. The Historic Preservation Review Board’s reasoning for the smaller boundary was that “the recommended cluster still appropriately illustrates the historic and cultural importance of Barry Farm and its associations with African American Civil Rights. The test of integrity would be applied to the property under that context, rather than under the context of public housing.”¹⁸⁷ This statement shows an intentional departure from the MPD guidelines which seek evaluations of housing projects as whole districts. The departure is used to justify their support of a landmark designation only being about one-eighth of the landmark nomination and one-sixteenth of the original Barry Farms site. While at first it appears as if they are defying the guidelines of the

¹⁸⁷ “Historic Landmark Case No. 19-07: Barry Farm Dwellings,” District of Columbia Historic Preservation Review Board, January 2020, 3.

MPD for public housing, they are not considering Barry Farms as significant in the context of public housing; instead it is considered eligible for the significance of African American Civil Rights. Barry Farms, as a case study, shows how conclusions based off of the MPD require reevaluation.

There is a need for the MPD on public housing to be revised regarding its guidance on evaluating public housing as districts. While the notion of preserving public housing in a whole and unaltered manner is ideal—evident within Langston Terrace Dwellings—there is a real difference between what is ideal and what is realistic. While evaluation of public housing as a district should remain an option, there should also be different options to allow for other circumstances, such as where it is only possible to evaluate a portion of the site because the remainder is no longer standing, or cases where only a portion of the site can still be considered historically significant.

This issue of how alterations impact the integrity and significance of a site can best be understood through the value of vernacular architecture. Public housing sites have been subjected to many alterations, demolitions, and changes in their existence. These alterations can range from window and door replacements that are needed to meet changing building code requirements to the addition of accessibility measures for disabled residents. Discussed in Chapter Two, Henry Glassie critically deals with embedded values in place through vernacular architecture. Central to his work is the importance placed on how a building's fabric changes, stating how "its fabric is the rich record of those changes and to strip them away is to destroy historical data and assault the building's historical being."¹⁸⁸ Glassie asserts that the significance of a building is not in its original intended design, but in its changes. This sits in direct conflict

¹⁸⁸ Henry Glassie, "Vernacular Architecture and Society," *Material Culture* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 20.

with the typical used assessment of integrity, described by Thomas King, ““Would a person from the property’s period of significance recognize it?” If the answer is ‘yes,’ it has integrity; if ‘no’ it [does not].”¹⁸⁹ This tool of assessment is supposedly able to “simply” determine integrity, though, as Glassie states, this ignores the significance of all of the changes of a building since its period of significance.

Considering this through the lens of values-centered preservation, which directs that a property’s contemporary values are to be considered, the changes of a building should be considered added layers of significance. If applied to the evaluation of public housing, this challenges the insistence of evaluating public housing as whole and uninterrupted districts. Instead, the building fabric of public housing sites that have experienced major changes, alterations, and demolitions would have just as much potential for significance and integrity as sites that have remained wholly intact. This change could have a variety of impacts including a simple shift in how preservationists think about the context of the sites they evaluate. This would mark a definitive departure from the “subjective decision making [which reflects] a bourgeois conception of architectural significance that conspicuously overlooks the roles of race and class in American housing policy as well as the architectural practices over the course of the 20th century,” as Fred McGhee describes.¹⁹⁰ The current evaluation process places far too much weight on the architectural significance of public housing, using the static interpretations of integrity for judgements. Instead, Glassie’s understanding of changing fabric could allow for evaluations of public housing to be based in contemporary values instead of antiquated values rooted in subjectivity and prejudice.

¹⁸⁹ Thomas F. King, “Historic Properties as Cultural Resources,” *Cultural Resource Laws and Practice*, 93.

¹⁹⁰ Fred L. McGhee, “Heritage Dispatches from the American Approaches of Hell,” 9.

Values and Power at Barry Farms

The hearings surrounding Barry Farms' landmark designation made it abundantly clear that the site held immense value to a variety of people for entirely different reasons ranging from political activism and civil rights to go-go dancing and music and more.¹⁹¹ Barry Farms represents the idea of multiplicity of values embedded in place. Critical to the successful landmark designation of Barry Farms was the assistance of Empower DC in organizing residents and holding a variety of stakeholders accountable in the process. Empower DC states their mission in their work regarding Barry Farms as “organizing against displacement [and] building support for a resident-led vision for the future of Barry Farm public housing community.”¹⁹² Notably, the mission has no direct reference to preservation, however, the understanding of how preservation can aid Barry Farms in achieving its mission is apparent: the designation of Barry Farms as a landmark can be used to fight against resident's displacement and leverage community involvement in the development process. Essentially, it is a way for preservation to become a tool of community empowerment.

The designation of Barry Farms as a D.C. Landmark is a great example of the power of activism and the power of people within preservation. Barry Farms is a great case study for highlighting the power of a passionate community invested in their environment. The story of its landmark designation was described tongue-in-cheek by Empower DC's Organizing Director as David and Goliath. This echoes many other stories in the history of the preservation field, of overcoming opposition by those who do not want preservation. However, this narrative is complicated by the question of who the “Goliath” is. Is it the developer seeking a new financial

¹⁹¹ “Barry Farm,” Empower DC, www.empowerdc.org/barry_farm.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

opportunity in the neighborhood? Is it the local housing authority seeking the demolition and redevelopment of a neighborhood they failed to properly maintain? Is it the federal government for funding these practices? Or is it the D.C. Historic Preservation Board who took months of deliberation, hearings, and discussions to ultimately only accept a portion of the site? This is not to dismiss the work of the D.C. Preservation Board and their ultimate designation of landmark status, but rather to assert that the bureaucracy at times allows regulatory compliance to outweigh values, especially when they are in conflict with each other.

The understanding of the various authority figures in Barry Farms' process highlights the importance of Empower DC in its successful landmark designation. Empower DC's initial work with Barry Farms was through helping residents form the Barry Farm Tenants & Allies Association (BFTAA). Through the forming of BFTAA, Empower DC was able to assist tenants with their requests and meetings with stakeholders. Residents were able to stay informed, engaged, and committed to the process. Empower DC, as an entity, was an invaluable resource for the tenants in achieving their goal and utilizing preservation as a tool of community empowerment; not every public housing site around the country has access to a seasoned and well-connected housing advocacy organization. Even with Empower DC's assistance, the ultimate landmark involved a massive shrinking of the boundary, which showcases just how arduous the process of preserving public housing can be. However, even with the smaller boundary, the landmark designation of Barry Farms is a clear preservation success story for the community.

Gathering Community Values

While Empower DC was an integral part in the coordination of the community organizing by residents for the landmark designation of Barry Farms, the research that was gathered to write Barry Farms' landmark nomination was also an important part of its successful designation. The landmark nomination was compiled by preservationist Sarah Shoenfeld, with the majority of its content provided by Alcione M. Amos, a historian and curator at the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum (ACM). Later the landmark application was supplemented with even more social history including a documentary, *Barry Farm: Past and Present*, by filmmaker Tendani Mpulbusi.¹⁹³ Amos' research provided a foundation for documenting the historic significance of Barry Farms, and much of the information had come from the collections of the museum.

The ACM is a community museum founded in 1967 as the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum as an outreach effort by the Smithsonian for commemorating the local African American community.¹⁹⁴ The mission of the museum is to illuminate and amplify the collective power of the local community, highlighting that "as our neighborhoods undergo social, economic, and environmental changes that individuals alone cannot address, there is a need for communities to bring together their combined knowledge and strengths."¹⁹⁵ Since its conception, it has housed dozens of exhibitions as well as public and educational programming, serving "as a model for community museums and a principal force in the African American museum movement."¹⁹⁶

The ACM, located in the same neighborhood as Barry Farms, has played an important role in laying the groundwork for gathering this community's history and community values.

¹⁹³ Tendani Mpulbusi, *Barry Farm: Past and Present Part 1*, Film, 2010.

¹⁹⁴ "History," Smithsonian: Anacostia Community Museum, <http://www.anacostia.si.edu/About/History>.

¹⁹⁵ "Mission," Smithsonian: Anacostia Community Museum, <http://www.anacostia.si.edu/About>.

¹⁹⁶ "History," Smithsonian: Anacostia Community Museum, <http://www.anacostia.si.edu/About/History>.

Since the 1970s, the museum has been collecting oral histories on Barry Farms (Table 8). These oral histories, compiled in various special collections, document the community’s opinions on race relations, police relations, segregation, and community development. Additionally, from 2017 through 2020, the museum hosted at least a dozen programs related to the history and significance of Barry Farms (Table 9). The importance of the ACM’s work for Barry Farms landmarking is two-fold. On one side, the regular programming relating to Barry Farms has enabled residents and the larger community to learn about the history of the neighborhood, which helps people value the history of the site. On the other side, the oral histories gathered over the past four decades document the contemporary values of residents and provides information about the evolution of the neighborhood over time.

Collection Title	Date	Description
Social History: Anacostia and Barry Farms	1970s	Oral histories of residents describing race, law enforcement, and maintenance.
History of Anacostia	1973	Lecture on how the government segregated communities in Anacostia by Thomas Cantwell.
Neighborhood Change Project	2014	Documenting changes in urban communities through community and stakeholder perspectives.
Anacostia in “A Right to the City” Exhibition: Oral Histories	2018	Oral histories gathered for exhibition that ran from April 21, 2018 - April 20, 2020.

Table 8: Collections Pertaining to Barry Farm Dwellings at the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum. [Source: Compiled by author from Smithsonian: Anacostia Community Museum, <http://www.anacostia.si.edu/>.]

Date	Program Title
June 28, 2017	Curator Talk with Alcione Amos: The History of Barry Farm/Hillsdale Community
September 20, 2017	Lecture: The Power of Place: Preserving the Legacies of African American Settlements
February 15, 2018	Brown Bag Lecture at the Wilson Center: History of Place
March 14, 2018	Ten Strong Women of Barry Farm/Hillsdale with Alcione Amos
April 17, 2018	2018 DC Emancipation Day Curator Talk with Alcione Amos
July 5, 2018	History of Place: Barry Farm/Hillsdale, a Postbellum African American Settlement with Alcione Amos
September 23, 2018	Bus Tour of Barry Farm/Hillsdale
June 8, 2019	Bus Tour of Historic Barry Farm/Hillsdale with curator and historian Alcione M. Amos
July 1, 2019	Curator's Talk with Alcione Amos: Barry Farm/Hillsdale
August 5, 2019	Curator's Talk with Alcione Amos: Ten Strong Women of Barry Farm/Hillsdale
September 9, 2019	Curator's Talk with Alcione Amos: Civil Rights Activism and the Barry Farm/Hillsdale Community
October 19, 2019	A Right to the City Author Talk Series: Lawrence J. Vale

Table 9: Programming Pertaining to Barry Farm Dwellings at the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum. [Source: Compiled by author from Smithsonian: Anacostia Community Museum, <http://www.anacostia.si.edu/>.]

The breadth of programming and collections hosted through the ACM illustrate that there were a plethora of resources defining Barry Farms' values when the original DOE was drafted. The oral histories gathered in the 1970s alone illustrate how there was evidence of contemporary and historic values embedded in the community. The original determination of not being eligible shows that the research that was completed was insufficient and should not have been formally accepted. For this reason, the Barry Farms landmark designation not only highlights the importance in gathering multiple values, but the importance of working to find where those values have been collected. These collections enable a compassionate and nuanced preservation of Barry Farms, one that considers the changing landscape and the importance of community interpretations. While the original DOE failed to understand the values of Barry Farms, its reevaluation showcases a preservation process that centers empowerment and the uplifting of voices.

Preservation Futures

Looking at Barry Farms, it is evident how values-centered preservation yielding holistic interpretation of values can support dignified and defensible preservation of public housing. This use of values-centered preservation can help rectify the flaws of prescriptive and static evaluations of significance and integrity. At the core of this issue, there is a question of why we preserve anything at all, and in this, the framing of why we preserve is critical. As was presented in Chapter Two, Mason and Page have posited that preservationists often wrongfully attribute the origins of preservation to Ann Pamela Cunningham with Mount Vernon and the demolition of Penn Station. This is critical, as it presents the field as rooted solely in the preservation of *grand* buildings. When we assess this against the concepts presented in this chapter around

contemporary values, an understanding of how early preservation goals have been misinterpreted are illuminated. In tackling this, Mason states, “as the preservation field became professionalized over the twentieth century, it has overemphasized the fabric side of the memory/fabric connection. The reasons for this focus are clear: the scientific methods and objective standards used to treat fabric gave legitimacy.”¹⁹⁷ This “memory/fabric connection” Mason references is his way of discussing a connection of memory to environment. He is identifying the importance placed on physical integrity, which is an assertion, or assumption, that the physicality of preservation is what people think legitimizes the field as a whole. He goes on to present an alternative approach, “the *raison d’être* of historic preservation [is] to be the cultivation of memory.”¹⁹⁸ Mason argues that preserving the physical fabric of a building can be one way to cultivate memory, but that simply preserving fabric will fail to sustain memory. Simply put, Mason argues that our desire to fix the broken aspects of our environments have inadvertently impacted how we interpret significance in historic preservation. This is a problem because it inevitably puts pressure on the static nature of physical spaces opposed to the fluid and ever-changing significances that different cultures, politics, and economies embed into a place. Mason goes on to present an outcome of this disconnect that is apt in the context of this thesis:

The fixing mentality, though it works very well for theorizing change vis-à-vis stone or wood deterioration, falls short in explaining how society’s contemporary use of historic preservation is related to contemporary social issues – for instance, the burgeoning presence of African-American histories in U.S. public memory of the post-Civil-Rights-era generation.¹⁹⁹

With this critique of significance, we are left with a theory further supporting obstacles in the preservation of public housing. While issues of alterations leading to a lack of physical integrity

¹⁹⁷ Mason, “Fixing Historic Preservation,” 64-65.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

have been discussed in this thesis, Mason's critique highlights why it is important that we consider significance outside of the physical fabric. This considers the importance of public housing in American history in order to understand topics ranging from slum clearance to fights for integration to simply understanding iterations of multi-family housing.

In Mason's more recent work, he has shifted to using the term "Engaged Preservation," an iteration of values-centered preservation. He defines engaged preservation as a "call to draw on craft, science, and physical design," and a need for preservationists to "embrace critical thinking and progressive politics; and directly address social issues beyond heritage per se."²⁰⁰ Mason's call for engaged preservation seeks a practice that balances the values of archival and curatorial processes with values of activism and advocacy in the built environment. When considering who balances these values, this theory could further perpetuate the practitioner as expert, or it could represent a shift toward the practitioner as facilitator. This facilitator places the practitioner as support to community experts, someone who facilitates preservation that is community driven. This can be clearly seen in the reevaluation of Barry Farms. Just this year, the value of place was no longer reduced to the issue of physical integrity, like it was in the 2011 DOE, but instead, the value of place was attributed to the values of community members past and present. The work of Empower DC and the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum mark a true balance of archival and curatorial processes valuing activism and advocacy.

Mason argues that preservationists that operate within this model are also concerned the creation of affordable housing, establishing civic-minded centers, and eradicating poverty. An assertion that preservationists practicing engaged preservation understand how the field intersects with cultural, economic, political, and social issues. Of course, Mason's work does not

²⁰⁰ Randall Mason, "Engaged Preservation," *Journal of Architectural Education* 72, no. 2 (2018): 203.

exist in a vacuum. This prioritization of activism in preservation is happening alongside the emergence of anti-racism work in academia and the increasing importance of the Black Lives Matter movement.²⁰¹

Conclusion

The case of Barry Farms shows how the preservation of places with complex and vilified narratives cannot solely be rooted in physical preservation, but in a fluid and constant reinterpreting of space paired with tangible preservation. This chapter explored the origins of human-centered preservation practices in order to reinterpret the process of evaluating public housing in preservation. This chapter reinterprets Barry Farms to showcase how preservation can become a tool for the preservation of public housing.

This chapter concludes that contemporary values must be just as important, if not more important, than historic values in place. Through holistic and culturally sensitive preservation methods, values-centered preservation provides an opportunity to rectify the flaws of the evaluations process that currently serves as a barrier to much of the public housing stock in the country being determined eligible for listing in historic registers.

²⁰¹ Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (New York: One World, 2019).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The potential of historic preservation as a social movement is immense; it has the capacity to help forestall the destructive and unregulated development that threatens to destroy the places Americans love. But before it can achieve its vision, the preservation movement must lose its blinders and open itself to the new possibilities that only an understanding of history can provide.

—Randall Mason and Max Page, *Giving Preservation a History*

In this thesis, I propose that public housing has been undervalued in historic preservation due to stigma and narrow interpretations of significance. This thesis offers a reframing of how significance and integrity should be considered when interpreting the values of marginalized communities, prioritizing dignified and holistic interpretations of values. I have found that the adoption of values-centered preservation practices is one way to rectify the fact that American public housing has failed to be fairly represented in historic preservation. The undervaluing of public housing, due in part to prominent and persistent negative stereotyping of both public housing and its residents, is rooted in the misinterpretations of significance and integrity in historic evaluations. The misinterpretations are static and objective endeavors that result in evaluations that lack depth and nuance, often result in findings of ineligibility for historic designation, and ultimately lead to the erasure of marginalized communities in preservation. This thesis grapples with the failure of the existing framework of historic preservation processes to be inclusive of public housing and provides recommendations for how to remedy this. Through an exploration of the evaluation processes of significance and integrity, this thesis demonstrates

how values-centered preservation practices can address the issue that public housing is an exceptionally important historic and cultural resource type, but the current evaluation process does not support this. The analyses in this thesis support the theory that the integration of values-centered preservation methods will yield more inclusive, equitable preservation practices that will ultimately foster community empowerment, a critical component to compassionately preserving public housing.

Findings

In this chapter, the concepts and topics explored in this thesis are summarized. Then, it details how the research can be expanded upon in future work, focusing on research regarding interpretation and curation for preservation. This thesis explores why public housing is a significant resource, why it has not been preserved, and how that can change. Largely known for its widely recognized design and deeply engrained prejudices, the perception of public housing has resulted in a general disregard of its potential for historic value despite a rich and complex history. As is evident in the evaluation processes of Barry Farms, the utility of preservation and the reinterpretation of values showcases how preservation can be a tool rather than a barrier to communities.

This thesis explores the process of evaluation for determining historic significance and integrity through public housing in the United States. Public housing elicits strong opinions, stereotypes, and stigma from society. These negative perceptions have greatly impacted the perceived value of public housing, and arguably leading to a general omission from historic registers and commemorative landscapes. Addressing this omission is a goal of this thesis, centered around three questions: what is the process of evaluation, how is the process applied to public housing, and how can the introduction of values-centered methods benefit this? With a

process of evaluation that prioritizes the designation of architectural and historical greats (i.e. spaces of and for the white man), the reinterpretations of significance and integrity presented in this thesis are critical for considering the preservation of public housing, often dismissed for physical conditions, lack of integrity, and strict determinations about significance and value.

This exploration illuminates that the contention between integrity and significance is indeed a great barrier to listing many places in national and local historic inventories. With this, it is evident that the values of communities are central for utilizing preservation as a tool for community empowerment. The introduction of values-centered methodologies in the preservation framework is one way to rectify the flaws of evaluating historic properties as it places an emphasis on contemporary community-based values opposed to static interpretations of the past.

Chapter One

Chapter One explored the central questions of this thesis, defining important terminology, and detailing the analytical methods used in the research of this thesis. Additionally, Chapter One presented the origins of American public housing in order to highlight why public housing is this thesis' central topic.

Chapter Two

Chapter Two detailed how sites are identified and evaluated for their historic significance. The chapter explored the concepts and criticisms of significance and integrity, ultimately presenting how the framework for evaluating is rigid and flawed. The static

application of significance and integrity in evaluations are a large reason for the lack of representation of sites with less visual significance in preservation.

Chapter Three

Chapter Three returned to a discussion of public housing, exploring the process of evaluating public housing sites for historic significance. Central to the chapter was a summary of the National Park Service's Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPD) *Public Housing in the United States from 1933-1949*. The chapter also included an assessment of the evaluations of historic significance and integrity of two public housing sites in the Baltimore and Washington D.C. region.

At both sites, which were found not eligible for listing on the National Register, there was a tension between what is deemed significant (whether national significance or local significance) and what, in the eyes of outsider observers, retains physical integrity. For Barry Farm this tension is more evident: the DOE in 2011 represents how outsiders (the preservationists) reduced Barry Farms to its perceived integrity; whereas the 2019 landmark nomination represents the multiplicity of values embedded within the site. For Perkins Homes, the contention is less obvious. With Perkins Homes only having a DOE at this point, the insistence by CHAP that Perkins Homes is not the best representation of its typology in Baltimore is central. Whether Perkins Homes is or is not the best representation of public housing in Baltimore represents this tension of what is deemed significant and by whom.

Chapter Four

Chapter Four introduced the various aspects of values-centered preservation. The chapter defined the central concepts of holistic preservation practices and revisited public housing using these concepts.

As was stated in Chapter Four, there is a bit of a David and Goliath story within the Barry Farm Dwellings Process. Regardless of whether the DC SHPO is that Goliath or not, there is no way to avoid the glaring obstacles created by the bureaucratic obligations of the preservation process provided.

Further Recommendations for Research

Alternative Sites

This thesis focuses primarily on Perkins Homes and Barry Farms. However, there are countless public housing sites in the country that should also be assessed through these values-centered practices to evaluate their contemporary values. One such example, also in Baltimore, is the Edgar Allan Poe Homes (Poe Homes) built in the first iteration of federally funded construction alongside Perkins Homes. Initially a segregated black public housing development, Poe Homes is considerably smaller than Perkins Homes, originally 298-units compared to Perkins Homes' original 688-units. Like Perkins Homes, Poe Homes is slated for redevelopment through the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative. Poe Homes is a part of the "Poe, Poppleton, Hollins Transformation Plan," shortened to "Transform Poe."²⁰² Poe Homes was also not

²⁰² "Transform Poe," Housing Authority of Baltimore City, www.habc.org/habc-information/programs-departments/planning-development/transform-poe/.

recommended for eligibility by the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) or the local historic preservation staff. In the 2006 DOE report, the significance of Poe Homes is summarized with:

As the first public housing project built in Baltimore, the Edgar Allan Poe Homes are important in the history of Baltimore housing and services for the poor...as such, the complex meets NRHP Criterion A. Unfortunately, the Poe Homes buildings have been altered drastically and lack integrity...the Edgar Allan Poe Homes are recommended not eligible for the NRHP.²⁰³

This, to no surprise, greatly echoes the research of Perkins Homes in Baltimore as well as Barry Farm Dwellings in the District of Columbia. Poe Homes made a lot of headlines in 2019 not for the transformation plan, but instead for being without water for five straight days. A water main break, commonplace in Baltimore due to aging infrastructure and insufficient budget, left hundreds of residents without water for food, bathing, or drinking.²⁰⁴

Notably, Poe Homes are named after the famed Baltimore poet Edgar Allan Poe. Edgar Allan Poe's homes, a National Historic Landmark and Baltimore City Landmark, neighbors the public housing complex and houses the Poe Museum. Due to the proximity of the museum, there is a desire to preserve and restore the particular building of the Poe Homes site that neighbors the museum in order to tell an even greater, more robust story the area – from the rowhomes of the Poe family, to the slum clearance efforts of the 1930s, to the housing complex's rise and demise.

Interpretation as Mitigation versus Collaboration

The redevelopment of Poe Homes shows an active intention to incorporate interpretation planning in its preservation plan. Interpretive programming has become more popular in recent history, notably for interpreting places with difficult and complex narratives. Often, the function

²⁰³ MIHP B-5119, Maryland Historical Trust Determination of Eligibility Form: Edgar Allan Poe Homes, 2006.

²⁰⁴ "Water Main Break Leaves Baltimore's Poe Homes Public Housing Residents Without Water for Days," *The Baltimore Sun*, June 20, 2019.

of interpretation in preservation is seen as secondary (not the act of preservation, but rather rooted in education). However, the rising popularity of interpretation in preservation can also be understood through Criterion D, part of the criteria for evaluation explored in Chapter Two. Typically thought of as being solely for archaeology, Criterion D is defined by the National Register as resources “that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.”²⁰⁵ In relation to interpretation, Criterion D can be used to represent the significance of place that may yield information through community engagement and collaboration. The possibility of understanding Barry Farms, Perkins Homes, or other public housing sites through this lens warrant further investigation outside the parameters of this thesis.

Interpretive planning, when implemented well, necessarily engages local knowledge and history.²⁰⁶ Often seen as an aspect of museum work and public history, interpretive planning is the act of dissecting and presenting information to the public—whether for a museum collection, a historic site, or a city as a whole. Interpretive planning includes various techniques such as creating plaques that identify historic spaces and events; first person interpretation (reenactors); third person interpretation (docents informing without performing); as well as guided, self-guided, audio-visual (AV), and digital tours.²⁰⁷ Perkins Homes and Barry Farms present two different opportunities for interpretive programming: one of mitigation and one of collaboration respectively.

While Perkins Homes was determined not eligible for designation on the National Register, the Executive Director of CHAP, Baltimore’s preservation commission, issued a letter

²⁰⁵ NRHP, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, National Register Bulletin 15, National Park Service.

²⁰⁶ For greater depth into the authenticity of exploring interpreted landscapes: Jillian M. Rickly-Boyd, “Establishing Authenticity in a Tourist Landscape: Spring Mill Pioneer Village,” *Material Culture* 41, no. 1, 2009, 1-16.

²⁰⁷ “Introduction to Interpretation,” Museums Galleries Scotland: Supporting Scotland’s Museums, www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/advice/collections/introduction-tto-intterpretation/.

stating that the department recognizes the significance of the property, and while its alterations resulted in a lack of integrity, the redevelopment of Perkins Homes should include “permanent interpretive exhibit space” and “public history initiatives such as oral histories.”²⁰⁸ In the case of Barry Farms, the original DOE in 2011 listed no avenues for interpretive programming. Then during its subsequent landmark designation process, the staff report stated that “it is further recommended that a preservation plan be developed for the retained buildings, that the applicants consider developing design guidelines for the site, and that oral histories of residents be collected as part of the effort to develop a neighborhood heritage and cultural center.”²⁰⁹ This later recommendation represents an importance on collaborative interpretation. Of course, this recommendation likely did not take into account the already robust and complex collections of the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum which already has oral histories collected between 1970-2018 from Barry Farm residents and surrounding neighbors.

These two plans highlight different approaches to interpretation; Perkins Homes represents interpretation as a tool for mitigation and Barry Farms represents interpretation as a tool for collaboration. Essentially, Perkins Homes’ programing is being used to mitigate the razing of the development, whereas Barry Farms’ programming is allowing community programming to guide the preservation program.

National Public Housing Museum

There are other spaces that utilize interpretive planning to highlight the history of housing. Notable examples are the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York City, the

²⁰⁸ Eric Holcomb, “City of Baltimore Memo: Historical Significance of Public Housing,” Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation, April 9, 2015.

²⁰⁹ Historic Landmark Case No. 19-07: Barry Farm Dwellings, District of Columbia Historic Preservation Review Board, January 2020.

District Six Museum in Cape Town, as well as the Hull House Museum and National Public Housing Museum (NPHM) both in Chicago. As NPHM’s website states, these museums are places “for social reflection, public dialogue, and education.”²¹⁰ Specifically, the NPHM is of special importance as it is the only museum in the country dedicated solely to the history of American public housing, and it is located in a former public housing site.²¹¹ The work at NPHM, led by executive director Lisa Yun Lee, serves as an example for navigating the preservation of public housing in ways outside of the bureaucratic confines of the preservation process. The NPHM was created at the will of former residents, along with public housing advocates. Lee describes that, “they profoundly understood the power of place and representation, tenaciously demanding a museum that would serve as a visible reminder of the history of public housing.”²¹² This led to the museum becoming the first, and currently the only museum dedicated to public housing in the United States. Lee shared that the impetus for a museum was the residents’ understanding of “how a cultural institution might be a site for resistance against erasure and forgetting. They felt that there was an important role for a museum – one in which they could control the narrative – in their struggle for determination.”²¹³ The NPHM provides a vehicle for past and current residents of public housing to not only learn about the history of public housing, but to direct how that history is gathered, shared, and stored. This is a crucial element to how the programming of the NHPM is rooted in processes that value the community as the experts. Additionally, in a phone conversation with Lee on February 17, 2020, she mentioned that a major goal of their curatorial endeavors is to consistently engage in

²¹⁰ “Place,” National Public Housing Museum, Chicago, www.nphm.org/our-vision/place.

²¹¹ Maya Dukmasova, “The National Public Housing Museum’s Long Journey Home,” *Chicago Reader*, July 5, 2017.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 12.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

practices that focus of decolonizing museum spaces, so as not to perpetuate problems of history gathering and storytelling from the past.

Lawrence Vale and Visions for Preserving Public Housing

How stories and histories are told is another important and sensitive topic in interpretive programming around public housing. In a subject so often saturated with stereotypes and stigmas, the interpretations of these sites can often be reduced to “poverty porn.” As Lee defines, “it is important to present difficult stories of neglect, violence, and abandonment—which are all part of the troubling history of public housing—without caricature, without re-inscribing stereotypes, and without inviting...poverty voyeurism.”²¹⁴ Lee’s comments the importance of sensitive storytelling reiterate Lawrence Vale’s interpretations of how preservation can work to destigmatize public housing. As discussed in Chapter Four, Vale presents a theory for how preservation can become a tool for the rehabilitation of places with vilified narratives.²¹⁵ Vale’s essay directly references the NPHM and their programming fulfilling his proposed preservation practice, that is, one not solely rooted in the physical, but a constant reinterpretation of values as it relates to space. As he concludes:

The ongoing effort to convert the last-standing building of Chicago’s Jane Addams Houses (completed in 1938) into the National Public Housing Museum deserves full support...a future National Public Housing Museum might deliver a more nuanced assessment of what public housing has meant to its residents over the last eight decades. Without such a museum, the vital sociocultural legacy of public housing will ultimately be left to disembodied books and films. However valuable, these fail to preserve remnant microcosms of the built world that once existed—to remind American that access to public housing could be seen as a reward rather than a prison sentence.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

²¹⁵ Lawrence J. Vale, “Can Preservation Destigmatize Public Housing?,” *Bending the Future: Fifty Ideas for the Next Fifty Years of Historic Preservation in the United States*, ed. by Max Page and Marla R. Miller, (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016): 241.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 243-244.

Vale's assessment of the NPHM showcases an important pitfall of Perkins Homes' interpretive programming, which is that it will be disembodied from the context of the actual buildings. With this, Vale would likely prefer Barry Farms' programming that plans to involve the remaining buildings. Vale's proposal for preserving public housing is based in a holistic interpretation of values that prioritizes the de-stigmatization of complicated places, and he lays the groundwork for future research on this subject: a critical examination of the preservation of public housing sites through their interpretive programming.

Conclusion

This thesis finds that public housing can better be represented in historic preservation through more holistic interpretations of values. This adoption of values-centered practices will ultimately place an importance on the contemporary values of place, creating a space for public housing to be evaluated with greater dignity and respect to its residents. For public housing, which is rooted in so much stigma, the importance placed on contemporary values will open up a preservation process that can work to honor and designate public housing in a field that has failed to do so. The field of historic preservation has been trending toward human-centered practices, but the framework has not changed to adopt these trends. This thesis has presented a thorough examination of the tools for evaluating significance and determining integrity, using public housing to illuminate the flaws of this framework and why it is in need of reinterpretation.

The lack of recognition of public housing in preservation is a result of the intersection of misconceptions perpetuating the devaluing of public housing and the conflating of architectural significance for physical integrity. This intersection has resulted in significant barriers for

recognizing and preserving the contemporary and historic significance of public housing in the United States. This thesis illuminates how values-centered preservation can serve as a tool for recognizing the significance of public housing and rectifying the flaws of the current process. Ultimately, the integration of values-centered preservation produces a preservation practice that fosters community empowerment, and a path toward compassionate preservation of public housing.

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