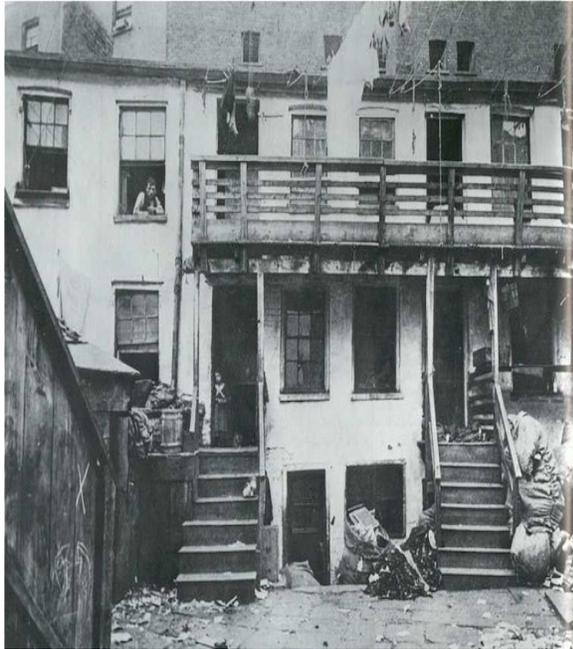


The Road to

Public Housing



Before Housing Act

Before Housing Act, there were small steps taken toward housing reform. Tenement Acts that were passed, only scratched the surface on dealing with the major problems faced in slums.

During the 1840's religious, moral and sanitation reformers believed that slums degraded health and moral values of those living in them. Actual living conditions that were faced by the tenants were not a top priority, rather how they were seen as eyesores to the rest of society. *How the Other Half Lives* a compelling book by Jacob Riis, which showcased to the rest of the world how the poor and immigrants were living in horrendous conditions. **The Progressive Era** was a time for social reform. During the 1920's

Housing Acts

During the 1930's the Great Depression **The National Housing Act of 1934** was seen as a way to revitalize the housing market and create jobs.

Reformers called on the federal government to provide a rental program that would not only help the poor and working class. They also wanted more than just building codes to better housing. The passing of the Housing Act of 1934, created the Federal Housing Administration (FHA).

The Housing Act of 1937

Gaining national support by cornering slums as a threat to cities. The **Wagner Housing Act**; passed as more enthusiasm to rid the city of its slums grew. This new housing act

established a public housing program meant to attack slums. The newly created FHA, would make loans, grants, and annual contributions to local public housing agencies. These agencies would buy land, develop, and manage the housing projects that would be built.

Opponents of the bill fearing that public housing would compete with private housing, created a ceiling to keep public housing for low income people.

The Housing Act of 1949

Urban Renewal helped spark interest in public housing after it had lost funding in the 1940s. The Housing Act of 1949, held majority of the provisions from the **1945 W-E-T bill**, whose main goal was “a decent home and suitable living environment for every American family” - though this hardly proved to be the case.

Problems that came With Public Housing and its aftermath

Increasing number of housing came with scrutiny. High-rise buildings, that public housing came to be known for, gave it more of an institutional feel. Crime would soon thrive in these environments and even further taint the public's view of public housing.

Finding where to built public housing was always a challenge, as many neighborhoods fought hard to keep them out.

Segregation was known to go on in public housing, even after the 1961 order that barred discrimination in public housing, most tenants were still segregated by race.

Urban renewal allowed the government to seize blighted areas and sell them to either

public or private developers. It had more political support in the beginning than public housing. Often slums would be cleared and no new housing would be built, causing slums just to be placed somewhere else. Objection against urban renewal projects by tenants that felt their neighborhoods and homes were threatened. Urban renewal ended by the end of the 1960's, but the damage it caused on many neighborhoods had been done.

A half a century of public housing, the program had yet to reach its vision. The building of housing units did not solve the social and economic problems brought on by its poor residents. It also alternatives to public housing created a two-tier system. Public housing for the poor and home buying programs for the middle and upper class.



Public Housing Today

Today's focus on public housing is preserving what is left. There is no indication that housing reform will push for public housing. Much of what public housing is today is figuring out how to keep it afloat.