

ENGLISH WOODS – A PLANNING PERSPECTIVE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati [LASC] acting on behalf of residents of English Woods has initiated legal action to prevent the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority from demolishing 702 housing units, which comprise the bulk of the English Woods neighborhood. In order to present a professional analysis of the current status and future viability of the community from a planning standpoint, LASC has retained the services of a team of planning professionals. Applied Information Resources [AIR, Inc.] and the Community Design and Development Center [CDDC] have reviewed the history of English Woods, its current community configuration, its relation to the surrounding neighborhoods and the City of Cincinnati. In addition, the planning team has reviewed national research data on the likely future living circumstances for the current residents under a total demolition approach. Another important element was the review of the housing vouchers in the Cincinnati area.

The findings of this research were twofold.

First, English Woods continues as a viable family residential community. The initial construction quality of the buildings was excellent. And the design of the community continues to work well. In fact, English Woods most resembles two other Cincinnati communities constructed about the same time, Mariemont on the eastside and Greenhills to the northwest of the City. In all three of these communities, a design balance between various apartment sizes was struck. This has encouraged a progression for families from one bedroom to three or more bedroom units as families grew. All three communities have an emphasis upon common green space, playgrounds and recreation areas, and community centers. There is no apparent reason why this configuration that works so well in Mariemont and Greenhills could not once again support a thriving community in English Woods.

The second finding is the distressing outcome which awaits English Woods residents should the entire complex be demolished and their housing replaced with Housing Choice Vouchers. Research on a national level and locally proves conclusively that Housing Choice is in large part an illusion because the choices are so limited. Recipients of Housing Choice Vouchers are most likely to end up in predominantly poor, predominantly African-American communities within five miles of English Woods. This is hardly basis for a new start in life.

From a planning perspective there are better alternatives. A program of limited selective demolition, some new construction, reconfiguration of housing units to achieve units with more bedrooms at least two bathrooms, and completion of the kitchen and bath modernization program could lead to the reconfiguration of English Woods into a stable, secure community.

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A Study of the Proposed Demolition of English Woods



“Welcome to English Woods”
(where)

”...residents ...enjoy quality modern living”
Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority brochure

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| <u>Section</u> | <u>Page Number</u> |
|--|--------------------|
| Background | 1 |
| Aerial photograph | 2 |
| The Perspective of English Woods Residents | 4 |
| Renovation Not Demolition | 5 |
| The Neighborhood Setting | 7 |
| Land Use map | 7 |
| Current Plans | 9 |
| Vouchers and English Woods Residents | 9 |
| Vouchers by Highest Number of Units | 11 |
| Vouchers by Highest Percentage of Households | 12 |
| The Consequences | 13 |
| A Few Alternatives | 14 |
| Appendix | 15 |
| List of publications and references | 15 |

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A PLANNING PERSPECTIVE

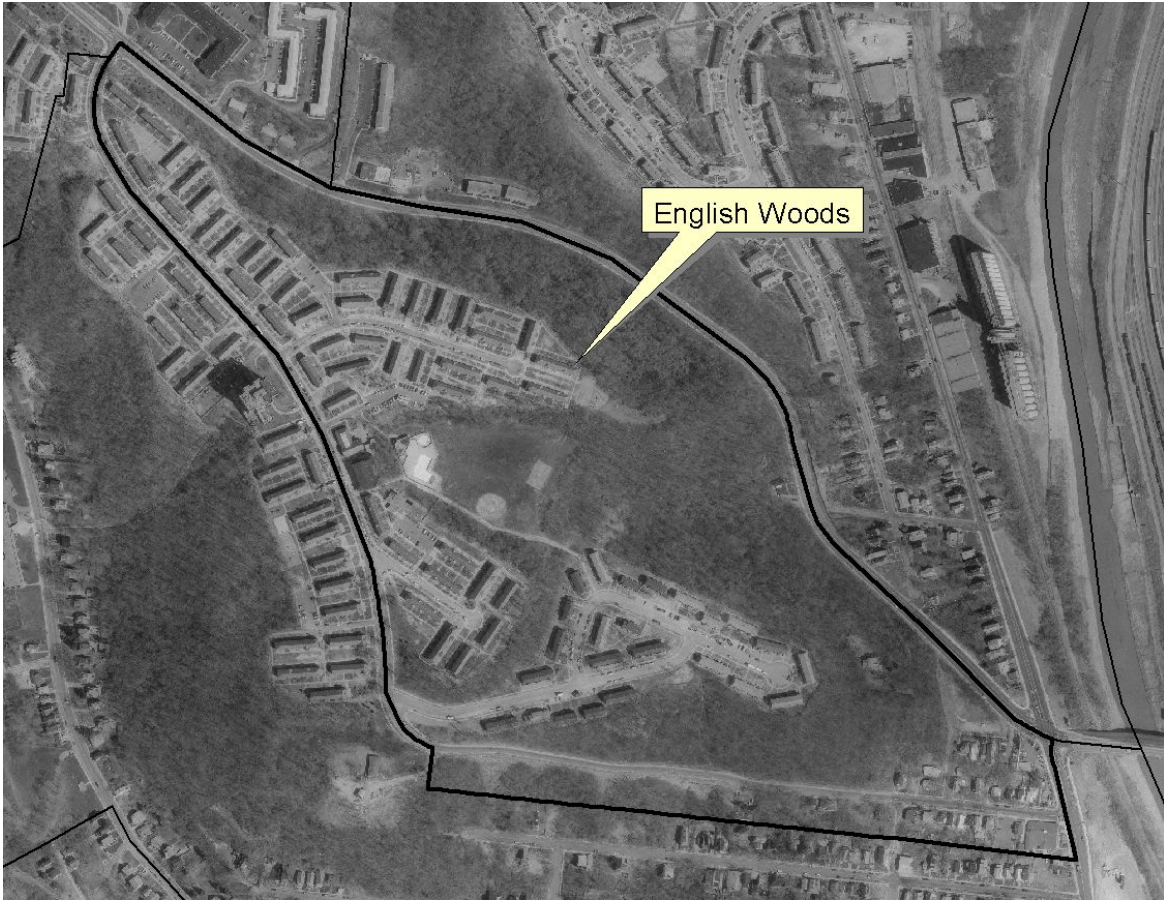
Background

Located on the near West Side of Cincinnati, English Woods, a public housing project owned and managed by Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority [CMHA], is one of the oldest remaining public housing projects in the city. Situated on an eighty-six acre site, made up of almost 1,000 units of housing, English Woods can be divided into three distinct portions. The original development of 702 units occupies almost 60 acres. The more recent town homes in English Woods Addition are situated on 25 acres in the southeast corner of the site. In the heart of the original section is the 138 unit senior housing tower, Marquette Manor. [Note-aerial photo]

Constructed just before World War II [1938-1942], English Woods reflects what was at that time the state of the art in terms of planned community development. In many respects, English Woods resembles two other Cincinnati planned communities, Greenhills and Mariemont . Built upon the East Side of the city, the original village portion of Mariemont is made up of combinations of brick townhouses and 2-5 story apartment buildings designed by British architects recruited for the project. Like English Woods, the units are clustered in groups of 3-6 and the parking is arranged at the rear of the buildings. In fact, Mariemont, a middleclass community, was intended for working class citizens and designed to mimic an English village setting. Much like English Woods, common green space and playgrounds are also a part of Mariemont's design.

Another new community design built in the Cincinnati area during this time is Greenhills. It was one three "British garden" communities funded with Federal support just prior to the Second World War. Like the other two, Greenhills has a community center building. It is noteworthy that all three of these communities have survived and served their residents well for more than six decades. English Woods reflects the positive elements of new community design and long term residents appreciate the value of such amenities.

English Woods is served by a primary artery [Sutter Avenue] that connects Western-Northern Boulevard and Beekman Street. Many of the units are arranged in three and four building courtyard fashion on three cul-de-sacs. In addition to on street spaces, parking is provided at the rear of the buildings, although in the very limited ratios that existed at that time with less than one parking space per unit.



The buildings are constructed of brick with slate roofs. This use of substantial materials is unlike today's use of veneers, vinyl siding, composition shingles and 'nominal' lumber. [A 2"x4" piece of lumber is actually 1 1/2"x5 1/2"] Each building contains between eight and ten units. As originally built, the units range from one to three bedrooms, and every unit has its own private entrance. In size, the units range from approximately 400 square feet to just under 1,000 square feet. There are no conventional basements, just crawl space. However, in selected buildings there is a basement furnace room. As was the practice in the time preceding World War II, hot water heat is provided from a single boiler located in one building – but serving as many as five buildings. Over time, modifications have been made, to the units including combining some one-bedroom units with adjacent units to achieve larger apartments. A kitchen modernization program was begun, but not completed. Landscaping improvements are also evident.

Situated on one of Cincinnati's many hillsides, English Woods' residents can watch the Labor Day fireworks, which take place on the riverfront less than five miles away. The relatively low density, less than twelve units per acre for the original development, means that there is considerable green space and play area. The topography and surrounding woods contribute to the sense of a unique neighborhood. In addition, Cincinnati Recreation Commission has a major playground and swimming pool as well as a Community Center. Units in two buildings have been turned over to Community Services for adult education, job

training and a teen center. In addition, a major non-residential building contains a large community meeting room, on site management offices and a space leased to a private entrepreneur where convenience store items are sold. Recent events which including the arrest of the store owner for theft and fraud, call into question the degree of attention CMHA has paid to this community 'amenity'.

The original English Woods development now has 702 units. The Addition, constructed in the 1960's, has additional 118 town homes arranged similarly to the original, although not as solidly constructed. Marquette Manor has 138 units designed initially for the elderly and disabled persons.

Although English Woods is described as "family housing" in the CMHA web site, it is more appropriately seen as single, female-headed family housing. Based on information developed by CMHA in February 2002, approximately 75% of the units have a female head of household. Just over 50% of the residents at that time were minors under the age of 18. Seniors over the age of 60 made up less than 5% of the population. The Marquette Manor residents, of course, supplement this latter number. Approximately one-third of the adults were employed either full or part-time. Almost 15% of the residents received Supplemental Social Security Insurance. More than 90% of the residents are African-American.

The Perspective of English Woods' Residents

What do the residents think about English Woods and its future? It is important to get the perspectives of some of the residents about this CHMA project and plans for its redevelopment.

Like the Community Councils in other Cincinnati neighborhoods, the English Woods Civic Association/ Resident Community Council serves as a forum and an advocate for English Woods' residents. This organization put forward a "Statement of Mission, Purpose, Goals, and Plan" concerning the redevelopment of English Woods. It declared that its mission "is to maintain and improve our community as good affordable housing for very low, low, and moderate income families to become self sufficient." Beyond being a voice for residents, "it seeks to work with CMHA, HUD, and the City of Cincinnati to achieve our goals."

The English Woods Civic Association/ Resident Community Council states its general goal "is for the English Woods community to be a good place to live for very low, low, and moderate income families." In order to reach that goal, the organization drafted some specific objectives such as maintaining and improving the rental housing for "very low, low, and moderate income families," and modernizing the housing in the development. Further goals deal with setting up programs to help the residents achieve self-sufficiency, and obtaining training and technical support for the Resident Community Council to do its work. A final goal deals with creating an English Woods Resident Management Corporation with the eventual objective of establishing a "resident owned" housing development.

In a section entitled "Plan," the Council then included a list of steps that need to be taken in the redevelopment process. It calls for "the complete modernization of English Woods in

three phases...” This three-phase approach would allow for the modernization work to occur without the need to relocate families outside of English Woods. It also states that “all former residents in good standing who moved since 2000 will have an opportunity to move back to English Woods as work is completed.” It provides the option for residents to move during the modernization phases by using Section 8 vouchers, and CMHA scattered sites.

In terms of specific redevelopment plans, the Council calls for combining most of the one-bedroom units into larger units and modernizing the two and three bedroom town houses. Its planning list also includes making fifty apartment units “accessible for persons with disabilities.”

The Council development plan has the residents “plan the renovations at English Woods.” It would also establish programs to train residents to be part of the workforce in the modernization project, and at least 40% of the redevelopment jobs would be set aside for the residents.

Interviews were conducted with several English Woods’ residents. These interviews re-enforce the points emphasized in the “statement of mission, purpose, goals and plan” drafted by the English Woods Civic Association/ Resident Community Council. A synthesis of the interviews indicates that these single parent women with children oppose CMHA’s proposal to demolish most of the English Woods’ units, as they believe that the units can be renovated to acceptable standards.

Renovation, not Demolition

CMHA has declared that the units in English Woods are obsolete and no longer marketable because of lack of space and modern amenities. However, the resident-interviewees contend that CMHA could renovate the units at English Woods. The one bedroom units could be renovated to create the two and three bedroom units which are more rentable and in demand. For the current units with two or three bedrooms, they believe that limited modernization will make them highly marketable to low-income families.

According to the residents who were interviewed, English Woods is a community that is convenient in terms of access to transportation and accessibility to Downtown and the freeway. The bus route number 64 comes right into English Woods and it is a good bus route as it travels cross town from Westwood to downtown to Mt. Auburn, Avondale, Hyde Park, Oakley and Norwood. Bus ridership statistics show that 300 riders catch the number 64 each day.

A major consideration about the current demolition proposal that concerned the resident interviewees is the loss of housing options. Affordable housing is the top priority for many women with children who are in the process of making the transition from welfare to work, and English Woods provides the security of affordable housing. Even equipped with a Section-8 Voucher, the move by a welfare family to other rental housing in the suburbs or elsewhere will often bring on more financial obligations than the family can afford.

Even a move to a comparable apartment in another neighborhood would bring additional upkeep expenses and utility costs. The interviewees speculated that such a move might require more money to pay for children-related services, transportation, and other resident activities. In addition, moving low-income families further out from the inner city, according to the interviewees will often isolate these people from the social services, support groups, and programs that are helping them to improve their lives. If the goal is to move families from public housing such as English Woods to more traditional neighborhood and suburban areas, then they believe this process requires making sure people are ready for such a step rather than forcing everyone to move with a major demolition.

While there is not the convenience of shopping in nearby stores, many residents go downtown or out to Western Hills to shop. There is a grocery store located in English Woods, but its prices are higher than the super markets in the rest of the city.

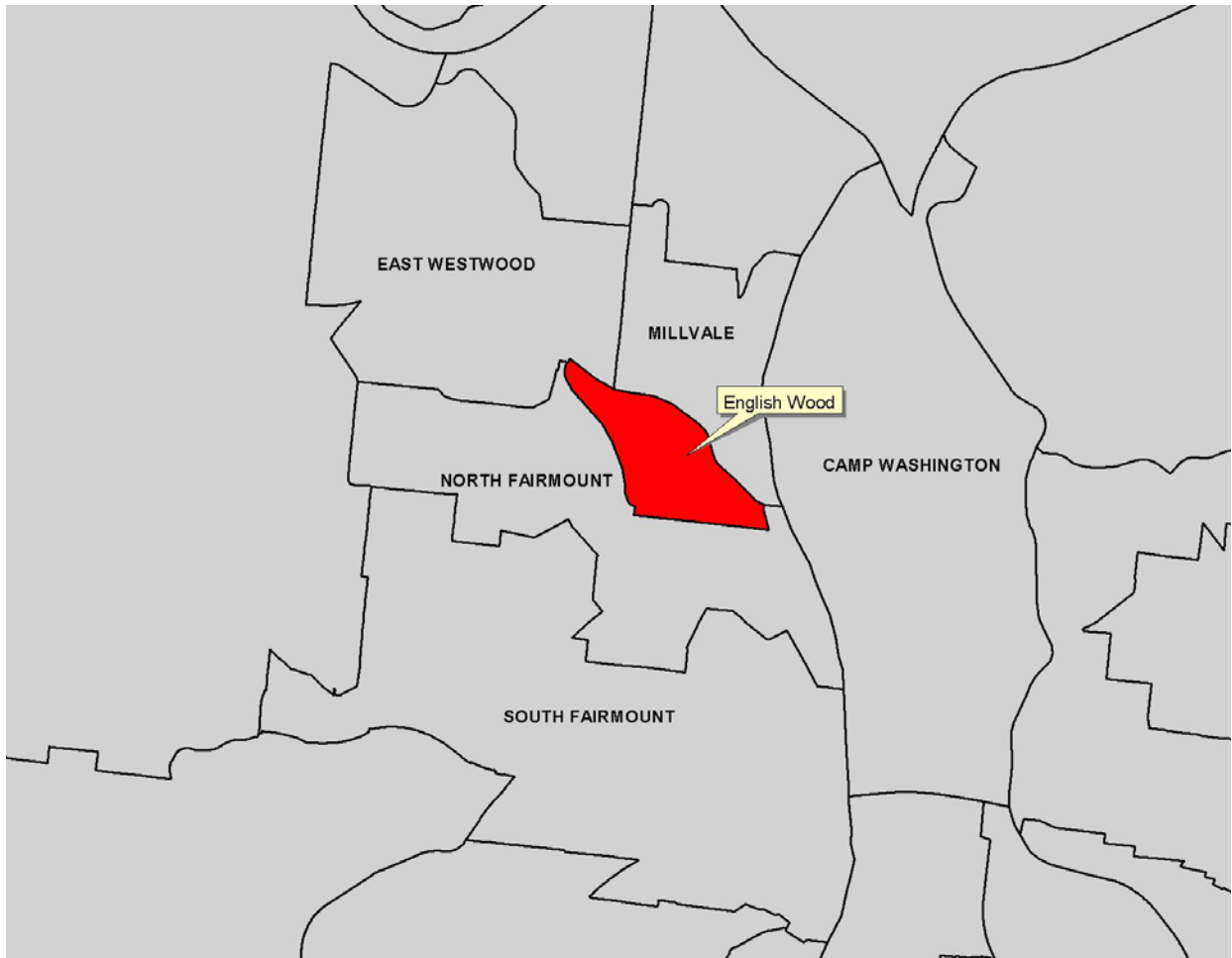
Another factor that CMHA cites to confirm the non-viability of English Woods is the problem of crime. The resident interviewees counter that CMHA could solve this problem by enforcing its lease violation policies and moving the drug dealers and “trouble making” residents out of English Woods. They also aver that CMHA could create a much healthier community in English Woods by establishing new social service and employment training programs that fit the current needs of many English Woods’ tenants.

In conclusion, the English Woods interviewees agree that affordable improvements could be made to the units of English Woods without disrupting the whole area with demolition. They feel that many of the residents are satisfied with the community and do not wish to locate to other areas that would bring further financial obligations and isolation. With some improvement the units could be attractive and viable for certain people seeking housing.

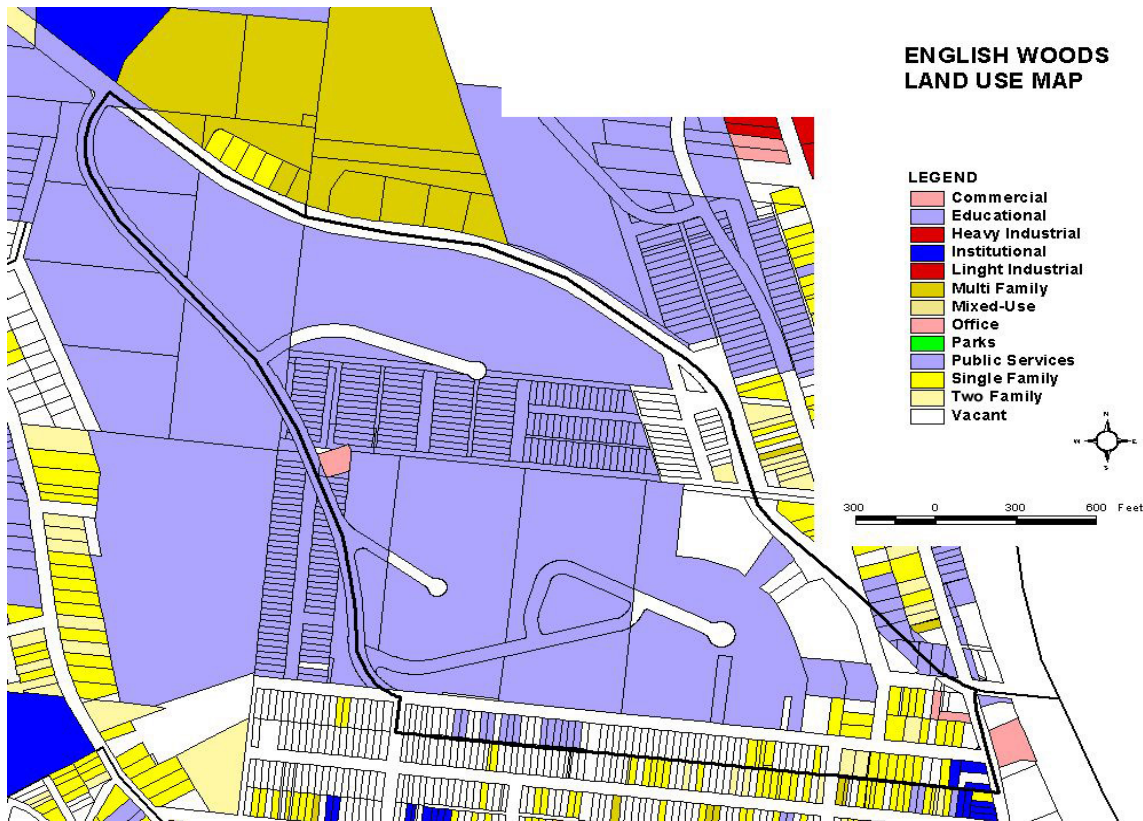
The Neighborhood Setting

The City of Cincinnati has designated English Woods as one of its fifty-two neighborhoods. As such, it is eligible for support from the Neighborhood Support Program. The Community Council/Residents Council has been an active force representing English Woods with City departments and Council.

Although English Woods is surrounded by South Fairmount, North Fairmount, East Westwood, Millvale and Camp Washington, the site topography and the railroad yards to the east mean that North Fairmount and East Westwood are the most readily accessed contiguous neighborhoods (See land use map below)



These communities are made up of a mixture of small lot, single family development, and multi-family development ranging from four families to the larger Shelton Terrace located across Western-Northern Boulevard from the main entrance to English Woods. There is limited retail and commercial development in these neighborhoods. Major shopping for groceries and other retail needs is located further out Western-Northern Boulevard or Harrison Avenue. [note land use map]



English Woods itself is zoned ‘R-5’ for multi-family development and would allow for more dense concentrations per acre. The surrounding areas in North Fairmount and East Westwood sport a variety of zones ranging from B-1 to R-4.

Metro, Cincinnati’s public transit operator, provides service to English Woods via Route #64. The bus is one of Cincinnati’s few east-west, cross-town services, and goes from English Woods to the employment concentration of the hospitals and the University of Cincinnati, and continues on to the Hyde Park Plaza. Although ridership has declined in recent years, on a typical weekday over three hundred people board the #64 from the English Woods bus stops.

The children of English Woods are close by to two Cincinnati Public elementary schools. However, the new schools construction plan calls for the complete discontinuance of the

North Fairmount School located on Baltimore Avenue close by the western edge of English Woods. Presently, the students are attending the former Heinhold School that is also located on Baltimore Avenue – but north of Western-Northern Boulevard.

Subsequently, the plan calls for elementary school students to attend either the new Roll Hills School located further north on Baltimore or the renovated Millvale School that is presently on Beekman Street. CPS plans for the Heinhold site call for the construction of a new Montessori High School. How this will impact English Woods' children is unclear since Cincinnati Public School data indicates that the majority of students [58.5%] attend Central Fairmont. A related puzzling fact is that the February 2002 CMHA census shows 430 young people from the ages of 5 through 17 while the October 2003 CPDS data accounts for only 123 students including the Addition.

Another key community asset is the community health clinic. This new facility is located on Beekman St. at the end of Sutter is utilized by most residents living in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Current Plans

The 1994 Five-Year Plan which CMHA prepared called for substantial renovation and upgrading of the English Woods units. In 1999, almost 90% of the 702 original family town homes were occupied. Through a conscious and determined approach, the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority has reduced the occupancy to about half of that number. Under normal conditions, turnover in public housing and other subsidized units averages almost 30% per year. Given CMHA's reluctance to lease up the units as they become vacant, it is a tribute to the determination and commitment of those still in residence. CMHA has also been quick to board up units as they become vacant. Although some might justify this as a strategy to prevent vandalism and other mischief, it also has a clearly negative impact upon the appearance of the community.

One positive side to the vacant units is that sufficient parking spaces are now available for those who remain. This modest amenity is also being threatened as CMHA begins a policy of consolidating the remaining residents into a small number of relatively contiguous buildings. From a management standpoint, this has benefits in terms of heating and such things as snow removal. From a resident's standpoint, this forced relocation is an expense and a considerable bother.

The reason for these actions by CMHA have to do with the evolving effort to demolish English Woods. Having been rebuffed by the City, residents and HUD in an attempt to the site to a HOPE VI project, CMHA has stepped back to a 'Demolition Only Plan. Under the proposal, all 702 units and the office/ meeting room/ commercial space of the original development would be bulldozed leaving only Marquette Manor and the Recreation Commission building on top of the hill. At this time, CMHA says that it intends to maintain the family units in the Addition. The promise to 'eligible' residents when demolition is approved is a HCV voucher. Unfortunately,, the promise of free choice through Section 8 [now HCV] has proven to be an illusion.

Vouchers and English Woods Residents

In moving residents out of English Woods CHMA is offering residents of English Woods placement in another public housing project or scattered site location, if available. Most residents will end up with a Housing Choice Voucher to move to the private market. Among the questions that arise is how easy is it to get a voucher, confront housing discrimination challenges (NIMBISM), and then find a suitable place, and finally do vouchers deconcentrate very low-income households.

Generally, finding housing with Housing Choice Vouchers is difficult because only a limited number of landlords accept vouchers, there is a long waiting list, and frequently the available housing is no better than the place left behind in terms of the condition of the apartments and neighborhood.

Finding housing with vouchers is not easy. Typically, however, many landlords do not like to accept tenants with Housing Choice Vouchers. Landlords refuse vouchers for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is that in some neighborhoods [e.g. Clifton, Hyde Park, Mt. Lookout] they would receive less rent than the market rate for the rental units. Voucher rental apartments make up a small percentage (10%) of the total rental units. There are about 10,000 out of 140,000 total rental units. Currently, however, the rental market is soft except for 3-5 bedroom apartments, and as vacancy rate goes up, the landlords are willing to take Housing Choice Vouchers.

There is a long waiting list for vouchers - 2-3 years. If CHMA offers vouchers to the residents of English Woods for an immediate relocation, they would have to move ahead of those who have been on a list for a long time. There are approximately 10,000 vouchers for the county and about 5% are turned back in each year, so only about 500 vouchers are available annually. So, the availability of voucher rental property is limited.

Furthermore, while vouchers have helped to distribute some of low-income people to neighborhoods throughout Hamilton County, most of the voucher rental property is still in areas where there is a large concentration of low-income renters. When sorted from a list (see Appendix) of all the vouchers according to the neighborhoods with 100 and more units and also the highest number of units, already impacted neighborhoods have the most voucher renters. They are: Avondale, Mt. Airy East Price Hill, Evanston, Pleasant Ridge, Over-the-Rhine, Roselawn, Springfield Township, West End, and Westwood.

In conclusion, although some English Woods residents have been able to get HCV certificates and find places, as a group, they have not found especially good places nor moved to a better neighborhood. Also, for the most part finding housing with Housing Choice Vouchers is difficult because of

- Small number of landlord who accept vouchers,
- A long waiting list, and
- Placement in housing that is not much better in terms of the condition of the apartment and neighborhood.

The review of national studies listed in the Annotated Bibliography in the Appendix shows that this is a problem everywhere.

| Total | City/ County | Neighborhood | Total Population | African American | % African American | Median Family Income | Total Households | Owner | Renter | H/O Rate | % of All HU | % of Rental Units |
|--------------|-------------------------|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| 321 | City | Mt. Airy | 4136 | 2850 | 69% | \$22,231 | 1,627 | 287 | 1,340 | 18% | 20% | 24% |
| 146 | City | Over-the-Rhine | 1712 | 1437 | 84% | \$12,778 | 796 | 12 | 784 | 2% | 18% | 19% |
| 118 | City | Over-the-Rhine | 1358 | 1106 | 81% | \$10,265 | 647 | 38 | 609 | 6% | 18% | 19% |
| 64 | City | S. Fairmount | 1071 | 440 | 41% | \$23,947 | 396 | 133 | 263 | 34% | 16% | 24% |
| 80 | City | Over-the-Rhine | 1141 | 943 | 83% | \$12,500 | 517 | 61 | 456 | 12% | 15% | 18% |
| 58 | Cit | Walnut Hills | 950 | 883 | 93% | \$22,596 | 387 | 111 | 276 | 29% | 15% | 21% |
| 42 | City | West End | 547 | 374 | 68% | \$22,450 | 285 | 79 | 206 | 28% | 15% | 20% |
| 93 | City | East Price Hill | 1876 | 512 | 27% | \$31,250 | 635 | 253 | 382 | 40% | 15% | 24% |
| 79 | City | Walnut Hills | 1389 | 1267 | 91% | \$19,301 | 580 | 135 | 445 | 23% | 14% | 18% |
| 32 | City | West End | 663 | 546 | 82% | \$29,375 | 236 | 47 | 189 | 20% | 14% | 17% |
| 169 | City | Roselawn | 2874 | 2211 | 77% | \$37,132 | 1,273 | 532 | 741 | 42% | 13% | 23% |
| 93 | City | Over-the-Rhine | 1357 | 921 | 68% | \$14,670 | 707 | 16 | 691 | 2% | 13% | 13% |
| 206 | City | Westwood | 3888 | 2831 | 73% | \$27,003 | 1,582 | 570 | 1,012 | 36% | 13% | 20% |
| 266 | City | Avondale | 5072 | 4654 | 92% | \$24,745 | 2,134 | 486 | 1,648 | 23% | 12% | 16% |
| 170 | City | Avondale | 3357 | 3209 | 96% | \$17,730 | 1,433 | 302 | 1,131 | 21% | 12% | 15% |
| 105 | City | S. Fairmount | 2180 | 1039 | 48% | \$26,678 | 891 | 278 | 613 | 31% | 12% | 17% |
| 62 | County | Springfield Township | 1445 | 860 | 60% | \$47,227 | 532 | 357 | 175 | 67% | 12% | 35% |
| 320 | City | Westwood | 6517 | 4030 | 62% | \$28,100 | 2,824 | 946 | 1,878 | 34% | 11% | 17% |
| 145 | City | East Price Hill | 3439 | 583 | 17% | \$30,170 | 1,308 | 495 | 813 | 38% | 11% | 18% |
| 136 | County | Springfield Township | 3545 | 2687 | 76% | \$48,205 | 1,235 | 894 | 341 | 72% | 11% | 40% |
| 98 | City | Evanston | 2553 | 2399 | 94% | \$30,372 | 915 | 418 | 497 | 46% | 11% | 20% |
| 119 | City | East Price Hill | 2993 | 420 | 14% | \$32,983 | 1,127 | 437 | 690 | 39% | 11% | 17% |
| 44 | City | Avondale | 1049 | 964 | 92% | \$11,333 | 428 | 66 | 362 | 15% | 10% | 12% |
| 232 | City | Pleasant Ridge/columbia tusculum 88/91 | 5086 | 2377 | 47% | \$40,119 | 2,282 | 1,065 | 1,217 | 47% | 10% | 19% |

Vouchers – Highest Percentage of Household (Sources: HUD, US Census Bureau)

| Census Tract | Hamilton County | CMHA | Total Units | Neighborhood | Total Population | African American | % African American | Median Family Income | Total Units | Owner | Renter | H/O Rate | % of All HU | % of Rental Units |
|--------------|-----------------|------|-------------|--|------------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|--------|----------|-------------|-------------------|
| 85.01 | 76 | 245 | 321 | Mt. Airy | 4136 | 2850 | 69% | \$22,231 | 1,627 | 287 | 1,340 | 17.60% | 19.73% | 23.96% |
| 100.02 | 73 | 247 | 320 | Westwood | 6517 | 4030 | 62% | \$28,100 | 2,824 | 946 | 1,878 | 33.50% | 11.33% | 17.04% |
| 68 | 85 | 181 | 266 | Avondale | 5072 | 4654 | 92% | \$24,745 | 2,134 | 486 | 1,648 | 22.80% | 12.47% | 16.14% |
| 57.02 | 53 | 179 | 232 | Pleasant Ridge/columbia tusculum 88/91 | 5086 | 2377 | 47% | \$40,119 | 2,282 | 1,065 | 1,217 | 46.70% | 10.17% | 19.06% |
| 88 | 47 | 159 | 206 | Westwood | 3888 | 2831 | 73% | \$27,003 | 1,582 | 570 | 1,012 | 36.00% | 13.02% | 20.36% |
| 67 | 60 | 110 | 170 | Avondale | 3357 | 3209 | 96% | \$17,730 | 1,433 | 302 | 1,131 | 21.10% | 11.86% | 15.03% |
| 110 | 46 | 123 | 169 | Roselawn | 2874 | 2211 | 77% | \$37,132 | 1,273 | 532 | 741 | 41.80% | 13.28% | 22.81% |
| 16 | 23 | 123 | 146 | Over-the-Rhine | 1712 | 1437 | 84% | \$12,778 | 796 | 12 | 784 | 1.50% | 18.34% | 18.62% |
| 93 | 40 | 105 | 145 | East Price Hill | 3439 | 583 | 17% | \$30,170 | 1,308 | 495 | 813 | 37.80% | 11.09% | 17.84% |
| 216.02 | 44 | 92 | 136 | Springfield Township | 3545 | 2687 | 76% | \$48,205 | 1,235 | 894 | 341 | 72.40% | 11.01% | 39.88% |
| 95 | 33 | 86 | 119 | East Price Hill | 2993 | 420 | 14% | \$32,983 | 1,127 | 437 | 690 | 38.80% | 10.56% | 17.25% |
| 17 | 45 | 73 | 118 | Over-the-Rhine | 1358 | 1106 | 81% | \$10,265 | 647 | 38 | 609 | 5.90% | 18.24% | 19.38% |
| 89 | 39 | 66 | 105 | S. Fairmount | 2180 | 1039 | 48% | \$26,678 | 891 | 278 | 613 | 31.20% | 11.79% | 17.13% |
| 39 | 21 | 77 | 98 | Evanston | 2553 | 2399 | 94% | \$30,372 | 915 | 418 | 497 | 45.70% | 10.71% | 19.72% |
| 94 | 27 | 66 | 93 | East Price Hill | 1876 | 512 | 27% | \$31,250 | 635 | 253 | 382 | 39.80% | 14.65% | 24.35% |
| 10 | 11 | 82 | 93 | Over-the-Rhine | 1357 | 921 | 68% | \$14,670 | 707 | 16 | 691 | 2.30% | 13.15% | 13.46% |
| 11 | 20 | 60 | 80 | Over-the-Rhine | 1141 | 943 | 83% | \$12,500 | 517 | 61 | 456 | 11.80% | 15.47% | 17.54% |
| 35 | 15 | 64 | 79 | Walnut Hills | 1389 | 1267 | 91% | \$19,301 | 580 | 135 | 445 | 23.30% | 13.62% | 17.75% |
| 87 | 20 | 44 | 64 | S. Fairmount | 1071 | 440 | 41% | \$23,947 | 396 | 133 | 263 | 33.60% | 16.16% | 24.34% |
| 219 | 29 | 33 | 62 | Springfield Township | 1445 | 860 | 60% | \$47,227 | 532 | 357 | 175 | 67.10% | 11.65% | 35.43% |
| 21 | 9 | 49 | 58 | Walnut Hills | 950 | 883 | 93% | \$22,596 | 387 | 111 | 276 | 28.70% | 14.99% | 21.01% |
| 34 | 13 | 31 | 44 | Avondale | 1049 | 964 | 92% | \$11,333 | 428 | 66 | 362 | 15.40% | 10.28% | 12.16% |
| 8 | 9 | 33 | 42 | West End | 547 | 374 | 68% | \$22,450 | 285 | 79 | 206 | 27.70% | 14.74% | 20.39% |
| 14 | 9 | 23 | 32 | West End | 663 | 546 | 82% | \$29,375 | 236 | 47 | 189 | 19.90% | 13.56% | 16.93% |

Vouchers – Highest Number of Units (Sources: HUD, US Census Bureau)

THE CONSEQUENCES

If the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority is successful in its plans to displace the residents and demolish their community, there are clear consequences. These include impact on the residents, pressures on immediate surrounding neighborhoods, undue financial burden, and a change in the city, county and region.

For the residents, it can be anticipated that while almost all will receive Housing Choice Vouchers, a smaller number will be able to use those vouchers. Those who fail to find satisfactory housing are most likely to be those with large families, disabilities or other conditions that make them less able to compete in the general society. For example, the home finding process itself is very difficult to conduct if one has children in tow, if one has to rely on public transportation to reach new housing, and if the new housing itself has to be on a public transportation line. If a home seeker has health problems or employment circumstances that make time off a difficult thing to do, the task becomes more complicated. In today's middle class world, no one buys a house without having a housing inspection made. The history of Section-8 vouchers and their housing inspections is sufficiently checkered as to raise the serious possibility that although eligible for Housing Choice Vouchers, the housing itself is not necessarily of the same quality as English Woods is today. Further, families whose lives have settled into workable patterns involving schools, employment, medical care, and worship may find these thrown into disarray. For families whose daily existence is a struggle to achieve modest progress, such upset can be catastrophic.

As the research has shown, English Woods residents are most likely to seek new housing as close as possible to their current location. This will place additional pressure on a limited, generally older private housing stock in surrounding neighborhoods of North Fairmount, East Westwood, Millvale, Camp Washington and South Fairmount. Such pressures often lead to overcrowding and increase of private rentals to match the level of the vouchers carried by the English Woods residents. Any community can absorb a certain amount of change over time. However, the negative repercussions of the influx of such a substantial number of housing seekers in the community are certain to be significant.

For the city and county, it seems likely that those residents who do not locate in the immediate surrounding neighborhoods will invariably end up in other areas of concentrated vouchers. This impact will be seen in Springfield Township and Avondale and Roselawn as well as other neighborhoods. Furthermore, as the City of Cincinnati and Hamilton County both seek to reclaim lost population, it seems counter productive to talk about demolishing units built at a reasonable density. Demolition only further reduces the population. Then to consider after some period of delay replacing the units with less dense development is certainly not consistent with a growth strategy. Finally, from a planning standpoint, the Housing Authority's announced intentions of keeping English Woods Addition and Marquette Manor on the site seriously challenge the economic range of housing alternatives that could be placed on the cleared land.

A Few Alternatives

The essential elements for a viable community at English Woods are already in place. Brick buildings with slate roofs present an air of stability. Community facilities and amenities augment this setting. And the existence of Marquette Manor provides a natural movement for older residents that would allow them to remain in their community. As mentioned earlier, the apartments themselves could profit from modernization of kitchens and upgrading of various other infrastructure elements. Selective demolition would permit appropriate reductions in the density as well as the addition of appropriate number of parking spaces for today's requirements. Many of the units are currently compatible with the establishment of private backyards in the English town home garden style.

Also, the site has the capacity for limited new construction. This could offer other housing choices and an improved commercial center.

It is quite easy to envision a program of home ownership that converts most of the units from apartments to condominiums or a cooperative. All too often as outside experts view public housing, the solution to changing the income mix is seen to require changing the buildings and the residents. As has been proven conclusively in Mariemont and Green Hills, a far better approach is to change the income levels of the current residents. Education, job training and supportive services hold more promise for turning English Woods around than does the wrecker's ball.

Appendix

List of publications and references:

Lincoln Court Memorandum of Understanding with CMHA, 1999

“ An M.O.U. signed between the Lincoln Court Resident Counsel and CMHA agreeing to the substantial demolition, partial rehabilitation, and substantial relocation of Lincoln Court residents”

CMHA proposed site plans for Lincoln Court, 1999

“Several alternatives of schemes delineating various development density options”

American planning association, November,1998, Agencies with an attitude, Renewing Urban Renewal September, 2000

“The APA article describes the multiple options that Housing Authority Directors have chosen to redevelop Public Housing sites with and without the use of HUD HOPE VI funding, the focus revolved around the ability for the Directors to creatively partner with various institutions and developers in building better communities. Looking across the country, housing officials are talking less about housing and more about community, and about partnerships and finance.”

HUD research department, ABT and associates, an Historical and baseline assessment of HOPE VI volume II case studies, August1996, volume III Technical Appendix August 1996.

“The assessment of the various case studies is on going and therefore inconclusive at the time of the completion of the reports, further assessment is required to conclusively address the pros and cons to each development”

The Hope VI resident Tracking Study, A Snapshot of the current living situation of original residents from eight sites, November 2002.

“ The study tracked residents throughout the country who have been relocated due to the HOPE VI redevelopment requirements, the analyses of each site ranged in geographic location from the East coast to the West and reported on the various challenges residents had with the relocation and employment opportunities.”

Housing Choice Voucher Location Patterns, Implications For Participants and Neighborhood Welfare, January 2003.

“ The Housing Voucher Program assists over 1.5 million households, it is HUD’s largest rental assistance program. In the 50 largest MSAs, where about one half of all program participants live, most are living outside areas of poverty concentration.”

David Varady and Wolfgang Preiser, CMHA Residents' Needs Assessment Survey, Measuring Change Between 1995 and 1996, June 13 1997.

"A high proportion wanting to move because they did not like their neighborhood More than half experiencing one or more social or physical problems, CMHA maintenance response is poor."

CMHA Demolition Only Application For English Woods Development (ohopoo4002) February 2003.

"CMHA will provide English woods families with many housing options that are based not only on affordability, but also on the style, location and amenities that best meet each family's needs. The need for demolition is based upon; a- Changing market conditions that have resulted in this property not being rentable; b- Non viability and physical obsolescence of the property.

The site is situated in a way that creates a sense of isolation from the larger community."

National Center On Poverty Law, Where Are The Public Housing Families Going? Paul Fisher, January 2003

" The majority of Public Housing residents in Chicago relocated to areas of high poverty concentration predominantly black, and in most cases have increased the rate of poverty in those respective neighborhoods, the access to jobs and other economic opportunities did not improve due to the relocation."

Urban Institute, a nonpartisan economic and social policy research organization. August 2003.

"Chicago risks, enormous increases in homelessness as public housing is demolished, residents may end up without a home or lose the right to replacement housing", " an immense human suffering"