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## A housing site that worked for families

### Residents stayed and got new homes

By Jason Grotto, Laurie Cohen and Sara Olkon | Chicago Tribune reporters  
July 6, 2008

While redevelopment of Stateway Gardens on the South Side reveals pitfalls with the Plan for Transformation, a different approach in another part of town has allowed more residents to return to a revitalized neighborhood.

At the Henry Horner Homes on the Near West Side, redevelopment proceeded much differently—in large part because the process occurred in phases and residents fought successfully for a say in what would happen. Instead of relocating families and demolishing all the high-rises before building replacement housing, Horner residents who wanted to remain on site stayed while new homes were constructed.

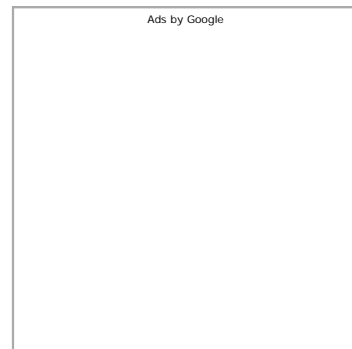
As at many [Chicago Housing Authority](#) developments, years of neglect had left more than half of Horner's high-rises vacant. So planners moved residents into vacant units, leaving a handful of buildings empty to be demolished.

Residents never had to move away, eliminating the difficult task of tracking families. It also eliminated the ability to block certain families from returning—good for those families, bad for developers looking to reduce the concentration of public housing residents.

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Most of this happened under the watchful eye of a federal judge and before the city officially launched its demolition efforts. In fact, without Horner and other developments where substantial progress was made before the city launched its plan, the overall success rate would be far worse for rebuilt family housing.

"We were able to make sure the redevelopment was done in an organized manner," said William Wilen, lead housing attorney for the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law who sued on behalf of Horner residents and won a consent decree.

Today, all 464 Horner families who opted to stay on site are now living inside fully redeveloped homes, allowing activists and developers to create job programs that build off the stability offered by the new development.

"I'm proud of the residents who stood up and said they wouldn't

let them just take the buildings and displace the families," said Crystal Palmer, a resident leader at Horner. "People that wanted to stay, stayed."

Next to Stateway, the redevelopment of another curtain of high-rises, the Robert Taylor Homes, also is instructive.

Developers there focused on rental apartments rather than selling condos and town homes. In fact, developers haven't built a single for-sale unit at Taylor, so they haven't been hit as hard by the downturn in the housing market.


But since the plan started, they have built 164 public housing units—three times the number that has gone up at Stateway.

Even at Taylor, the housing slump has affected construction. That's because Habitat Co., the court-appointed overseer of CHA construction, has required a mix of rental units and for-sale homes to spur economic and racial integration in the new communities.

Habitat executives said they have told the development team at Taylor to hold off on building more public housing until market-rate homes are built and sold.

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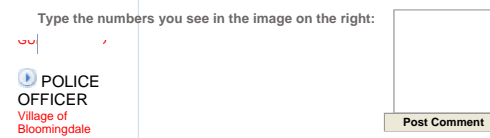
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