
**HOPE VI AND MIXED-FINANCE REDEVELOPMENTS:
A CATALYST FOR NEIGHBORHOOD RENEWAL**

ATLANTA CASE STUDY

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CREATING NEIGHBORHOODS THAT ARE COMMUNITY ASSETS.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1995, the Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA) began a transformation of its public housing stock into privately-owned and managed mixed-income communities, aiming to spur the revitalization of Atlanta's distressed urban neighborhoods. The model for this transformation was AHA's 738-unit Centennial Place development. Replacing the dilapidated and distressed Techwood and Clark Howell developments, Centennial Place represented a dramatic physical change in how Atlanta approached the provision of public housing. Rather than being a public housing project reserved exclusively for low-income households, Centennial Place seamlessly provides public housing units within a market-rate development acceptable to tenants with housing choices.

This shift in approach required a change in the design and layout of the development, the involvement of private companies in its ownership and management structure, and the provision of amenities and quality public services that low-income households need, and middle-income households expect. This effort's success is shown not only by the changes at the public housing site, but also by the neighborhood revitalization that the development has engendered off site. AHA has sought to replicate Centennial Place's success throughout its public housing inventory through the lessons the development offers on how public housing funds can be used to transform the living situations of public housing residents and their surrounding distressed urban communities.

A. Original Development

Fifty years after being unveiled as the nation's first slum-clearance public housing development, Techwood Homes and its sister development, Clark Howell Homes, were urban nightmares. In 1993, over one-third of the 1,195 barracks-style units were vacant and another third were occupied by overcrowded households. Despite \$15 million worth of repairs in 1981, the units had outdated heating, sewer, and plumbing systems as well as lead-based paint. More than 1,000 emergency work orders—nearly one per unit—remained to be completed at the two developments. Crime was rampant; in 1992, there were a total of 8,670 police and security field responses—an average of one every hour for the entire year. The 913 serious crimes reported at the developments in 1992 represented an average of more than one per household.¹

¹ Techwood Clark Howell HOPE VI Application submitted to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1993.

Although the design and layout of the developments isolated them from the surrounding neighborhood, their blighting influence was not so easily contained. According to the 1990 Census, despite its proximity to Atlanta's downtown, the neighborhood around Techwood/Clark Howell was one of the poorest in the city. The neighborhood's median income was just \$7,253—22 percent of Atlanta's median income. The neighborhood's poverty rate was 75 percent. Unemployment was at 27 percent among an adult labor force that had a 36 percent participation rate, meaning that just 26 percent of the adults in the neighborhood worked. The neighborhood was almost entirely rental housing that targeted Atlanta's poorest families: the community's upper-quartile rents were 28 percent below the city's lower-quartile rents. The few neighborhood services that existed, particularly the nearby Fowler Elementary School, were dilapidated and poor performing. The Carnegie Library on site, another symbol of decline, was closed and abandoned.

By the early 1990s, the Techwood/Clark Howell developments served as little more than warehouses for the poor that pulled down their surrounding neighborhood. The conditions at Techwood/Clark Howell resulted from four interrelated factors: (1) a poor design and layout that set the development apart from the surrounding neighborhood, (2) inattentive and failed public management, (3) federal policies that concentrated poverty in public housing and the neighborhoods where the public housing was situated, and (4) a lack of civic institutions and social services.

B. New Development

Ten years later, the site where Techwood/Clark Howell once stood is unrecognizable to its previous residents. On the site now sits Centennial Place, a 758-unit community of two- and three-story townhouses and the new state-of-the-art, \$13 million Centennial Place Elementary School. More than 300 public housing households still live there, but they now live in rental units that, from the outside, are mixed in with and indistinguishable from the 311 market-rate and 126 tax-credit units (affordable to families whose incomes are below 60 percent of area median income). Private management oversees Centennial Place's units, along with the development's tot lots, clubhouse, community room, and swimming pool. The desirability of the development is demonstrated by its market-rate rents, which increased to \$1490 for a three-bedroom apartment in 2004, a level comparable with market-rate rents throughout the Atlanta region.²

The surrounding neighborhood has similarly improved. Between 1990 and 2000, median household income rose 174 percent, far outpacing the city's 16 percent and the region's 7 percent increases. Over the same period, the area's workforce participation rate increased by 33 percentage points to a rate higher than that of the city as a whole. The neighborhood's unemployment rate decreased, despite an increase citywide.³ Crime has also plummeted—by 93 percent between 1993 and 2001.⁴ The neighborhood has also received significant private investment—an estimated \$356 million since Centennial Place began. Benefiting from the new school and social service programs,

² From McCormack Baron Ragan Management Services.

³ U.S. Census Bureau.

⁴ City of Atlanta Police Department, Government Housing Crimes Summary for Part-1 Crimes, Vandalism, and Narcotics provided by Atlanta Housing Authority.

student scores at the new elementary school rose remarkably in all areas between 2000 and 2003, and Centennial Place Elementary was recently singled out as one of only two schools in the entire Atlanta public school system that met all nine of its goals regarding attendance and test scores.⁵

The Centennial Place development demonstrates the efficacy of using public housing dollars as an engine for neighborhood revitalization. It was accomplished by turning the four problems of Techwood and Clark Howell on their head: (1) by financing the inclusion of public housing units within a high-quality market-rate development that was integrated with the surrounding community, (2) by partnering with private companies and integrating them within the ownership and management structure of the development, (3) by attracting middle- and moderate-income households to live in the development, and (4) by framing the development within a more comprehensive strategy for neighborhood redevelopment that included important public services and the engagement of civic leaders. Centennial Place transformed Atlanta's public housing, and it helped revitalize one of Atlanta's most distressed neighborhoods.

C. How Did They Do It?

Six factors were critical to initiating and successfully completing the Centennial Park development. Initiating the development required (1) leadership, (2) flexible financing, and (3) federal policy changes. Successfully completing the development required a development approach that (4) emphasized public-private partnerships, (5) engaged residents and community members in the process, and (6) saw the new development as a critical piece of a larger comprehensive neighborhood redevelopment. In addition to these six factors, AHA benefited from the 1996 Summer Olympic Games, which presented both a rallying point for the larger Atlanta community and a looming deadline.

However, there is more to the story than the redevelopment of a single site in one Atlanta neighborhood. Building upon the success of the Centennial Place development and relying on the same six factors, AHA implemented its Olympic Legacy Program, a redevelopment strategy to rebuild five public housing developments into privately-owned mixed-finance developments. As a result, there have been dramatic improvements in the quality of the public housing available to low-income families with similar neighborhood outcomes.

II. ORIGINAL DEVELOPMENT—TECHWOOD AND CLARK HOWELL

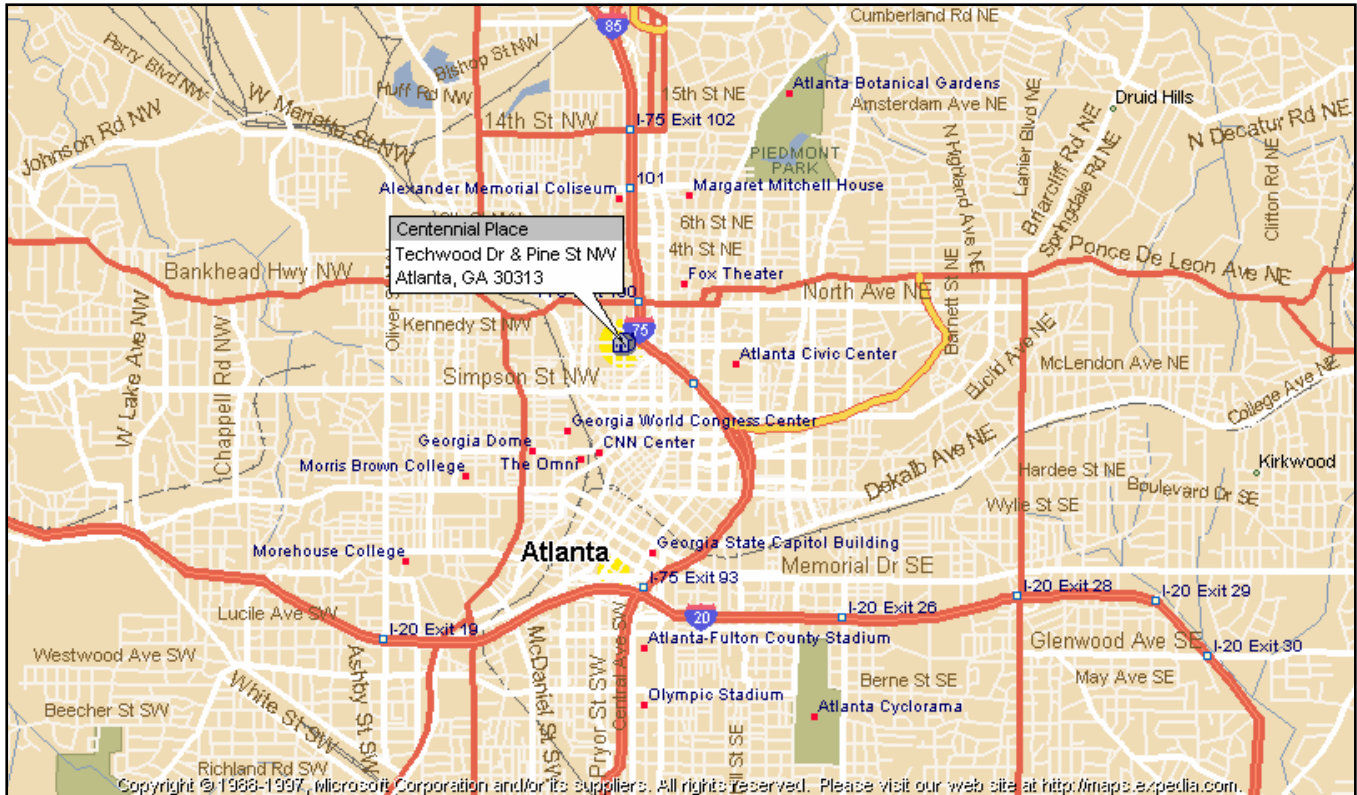
A. Location and History

The Techwood/Clark Howell site is located just north of downtown Atlanta. It is bordered by Interstate 75. The northern border abuts the Georgia Institute of Technology, and Atlanta University

⁵ Georgia Department of Education, Office of Student Achievement, Fourth Grade Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests, Centennial Place Elementary School, 2002–2003.

is within one mile. Coca-Cola World Headquarters is just to the west of the site, and CNN News and Turner Broadcasting are nearby.

Centennial Place Neighborhood Map



Source: Mapquest

Built in 1936 and dedicated by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Techwood Homes was the nation's first slum clearance public housing development. The development consisted of 571 units in 21 buildings on 21 acres of land. Four years later, the 624 units and 63 buildings of Clark Howell Homes were built on 36 acres adjacent to Techwood Homes.

B. Problems

Both developments were built with design features that later proved to be problematic. The developments were placed off of Atlanta's traditional street grid system, with numerous interior streets and courtyards that were difficult to navigate and with inadequate parking. The units were low-rise barracks style housing that was distinct from housing in traditional Atlanta neighborhoods. Many of the public housing units were small—over half of Techwood's units and nearly half (42 percent) of Clark Howell's units were one-bedroom or studio apartments. These units provided

inadequate space for contemporary families: Over one-third of Techwood's households lived in overcrowded conditions.⁶

Over time, poor management, deferred maintenance, and vandalism contributed to disrepair. In 1981, an attempt was made to attend to these problems when over \$15 million was spent for limited roof and stairwell repairs, asbestos removal, electrical system upgrades, and modest kitchen and bath modernizations. However, larger problems—outdated heating, sewer, and plumbing systems and the presence of lead-based paint—were not addressed. A unit-by-unit check in 1992 identified 800 emergency work orders at Techwood in addition to the backlog of 231 work orders at Clark Howell. Many units were in such a state of disrepair that they were left vacant—in 1993, 50 percent of Techwood's units and 20 percent of Clark Howell's units (a combined total of 412 units) were vacant.⁷

Crime was rampant throughout the developments. In part, this was due to the developments' central location and proximity to highways, which provided easy access within the Atlanta region to people seeking drugs and prostitutes. The development's vacant units and many interior courtyards also facilitated crime, serving as gang hangouts and locations for drug deals. In 1992, the Atlanta Housing Authority's (AHA's) police and security division dispatched police to the developments an average of 471 times per month. Combined with 3,016 field-initiated police actions, these actions added to a total of 8,670 field responses in 1992. Techwood experienced 0.814 crimes per unit while Clark Howell experienced 0.718.⁸

Before: Techwood/Howell Homes, 1993



Source: Atlanta Housing Authority

⁶ Techwood Clark Howell HOPE VI Application submitted to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1993.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

By the 1990s, Techwood and Clark Howell resembled little more than warehouses for the poor. Federal laws, policies, and regulations concentrated extremely poor households in developments that were isolated from their surrounding neighborhoods. These conditions demoralized the residents of Techwood and Clark Howell. Those who could moved out. During the first nine months of 1993, 45.4 percent of Techwood's households and 17.6 percent of Clark Howell's households moved out. In 1992, tenant receivables averaged just 38.5 percent for Techwood and 49.4 percent for Clark Howell, demonstrating not only that AHA was lax in its collections, but also that residents placed higher priorities on spending their limited incomes on something other than paying their rent and keeping their places in the developments.⁹

C. Techwood/Clark Howell's Impact on Surrounding Neighborhood

The conditions at Techwood and Clark Howell negatively affected the surrounding neighborhood. In 1990, median household income for the census tract that included Techwood and Clark Howell was just \$7,253—22 percent of the median income for the city of Atlanta and 14 percent of the median income for the Atlanta region.¹⁰ Perhaps more telling, 75 percent of the neighborhood's population lived in households with incomes below the poverty line (compared to the city's 27.3 percent and the region's 10 percent), just 35.6 percent of the neighborhood's adults were in the labor force (compared to the city's 62.6 percent and the region's 72.9 percent), and of this low labor force, 26.5 percent were unemployed (compared to the city's 9.2 percent and the region's 5.1 percent).¹¹

The surrounding neighborhood also deteriorated physically. The developments disrupted the neighborhood's street grid while the deteriorating structures at Techwood and Clark Howell depressed property values. Just 1 percent of the census tract's housing units were owner-occupied.¹² Of the rental units, upper-quartile rents were just \$197—28 percent less than the city's lowest-quartile rent of \$273 and less than a third of Atlanta's upper-quartile rent of \$639.¹³

The neighborhood's basic public institutions deteriorated, and neighborhood services became increasingly geared toward the most negative aspects of the developments. The neighborhood's elementary school, Fowler Elementary, was a poor performing, deteriorating public school located in the middle of the Techwood and Clark Howell site. It almost exclusively served children from Techwood and Clark Howell. Over 90 percent of the school's children received free school lunches, and families were not satisfied with the education their children were receiving. The Carnegie Library on the site was abandoned, and although the Metropolitan Atlanta YMCA had its headquarters near the Techwood and Clark Howell community, the area did not have a recreational

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ For 1990 data, the Centennial Place neighborhood is defined as 1990 census tracts 20 and 21, which translate into 2000 census tract 21 and block group 2 of tract 19 for the 2000 data. The area takes in a block or two to the east and west of the site and extends to the south and downtown approximately one mile to the Centennial Olympic Park.

¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau.

¹² "Centennial Place Economic Impact of Redevelopment," Strata Real Estate Alliance, LLP, September 2002.

¹³ U.S. Census Bureau.

facility. Immediately adjacent to the site were vacant lots, missions, day labor employment centers, and small retail stores—including liquor stores that often served as drug hangouts.

III. NEW DEVELOPMENT—CENTENNIAL PLACE

Successfully improving the neighborhood meant changing more than the cosmetic appearance of the developments; it required fundamental changes in the way AHA provided public housing. First, rather than designing public housing developments that were separate and distinct from conventional market-rate housing, AHA would finance the inclusion of public housing units within a market-rate development that was integrated with the surrounding neighborhood. Second, rather than relying on inefficient public management, private companies with experience in managing large-scale developments would have an ownership stake in the properties and maintain them. Third, rather than concentrating poverty in the developments, households with a mix of incomes would be eligible to live there. Finally, rather than ignoring the neighborhood and service context in which the developments are placed, an effort would be made to ensure that quality public services would be available to all residents. The concept is not to just create integrated housing, but to create opportunities for people of all income levels to interact together at home, school, and play. The resultant 738-unit Centennial Place development, which was constructed between 1995 and 2000, had all four of these characteristics.¹⁴

After: Centennial Place



Source: McCormack Baron and Associates

A. Design

Centennial Place is comprised of two- and three-story garden and townhouse units that resemble contemporary Atlanta neighborhoods. The site plan re-creates the original city street grid

¹⁴ The 738 units refers to the first four phases, which are completed. A fifth phase will include 105 homeownership units, 21 of which will be affordable.

with apartments facing the street. Each unit has on-site parking, and AHA retained the mature trees on the site to further help the development blend in with the older character of the neighborhood. Addressing the space needs of public housing families, larger units were constructed, and 66 percent of the three- and four-bedroom units are reserved for public housing families while only 13 percent of the one-bedroom units were reserved for public housing.

B. Private Management

Centennial Place was developed and is owned by a public-private partnership that included the Integral Partnership of Atlanta (a partnership of The Integral Group, an Atlanta-based urban development group, and St. Louis-based McCormack Baron Salazar) and AHA. It is managed by McCormack Baron Ragan Management Services. The property's marketing and management activities are conducted in the same manner as conventional housing. However, it is regulated by both public housing and Low-Income Housing Tax Credit rules to assure affordability compliance. The development experiences modest turnover and rarely has vacancies.

C. Mixed-Income

AHA and the developers often describe Centennial Place as a market-rate community with a seamless affordable component. Of Centennial Place's 738 units, there is nearly an even split between its market-rate units (311) and its public housing units (301); another 126 units are affordable rental units (up to 60 percent of area median income) financed with Low-Income Housing Tax Credits.¹⁵ There is no distinction between the public housing, tax credit, and market-rate units; as the AHA's Renee Glover has said, "If the affordable component is not seamless, the vision for creating a mixed-income community has failed." Each unit contains modern appliances, and from the outside, there is no indication that Centennial Place includes public housing units.

Centennial Place met the demand for downtown housing as units were available to lease. In fact, the market rate units leased more quickly than the tax credit and public housing units. Absorption levels continued to move swiftly over the four phases of the development with recent slowing in the one bedroom units. Market-rate and tax credit renters obviously are not concerned that public housing families are in the development or next door. Table 1 indicates that market rate rents continue to show steady increases annually. Rent increases between 1995 (the initial year of operation) and 2004 range from 42% for a one bedroom unit to 72% for a two bedroom one bath unit. Centennial Place provides quality downtown housing of a type formerly not available in Atlanta at affordable rates.

¹⁵ A homeownership phase of 105 units, 21 of which will be affordable, is currently in the planning stages. These units will be a combination of condominiums, townhouses, and single-family units.

Table 1. Centennial Place Market Rate Rent Increases 1995 –2004								
	Market Rate							% Increase 1995–2004
	1995	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	
1 BR	590	749	829	850	839	790	839	42%
2 BR/1BA	670	829	909	940	1,000	1,120	1,150	72%
2 BR/2BA	775	979	1,059	1,099	1,150	1,170	1,170	51%
3 BR	900	1,299	1,379	1,420	1,465	1,485	1,490	66%

Source: McCormack Baron Ragan Management Services

Household incomes in 2002 ranged from below \$10,000 to \$220,000, and the majority of households had incomes below \$30,000.¹⁶

Table 2. Household Income Mix at Centennial Place, Phases I–VI: All Unit Types 2004		
Income Range	Number of Households	% of Households
Under \$10,000 (Predominantly students)	212	32
\$10,001 to \$20,000	124	19%
\$20,001 to \$30,000	154	23%
\$30,001 to \$40,000	85	13%
\$40,001 to \$50,000	37	6%
\$50,001 to \$60,000	25	4%
\$60,001 to \$70,000	11	2%
\$70,001 to \$220,000	16	2%
Total	664	100%

Source: McCormack Baron Ragan Management Services

The units are also racially mixed. According to management, approximately 40 percent of the residents are Caucasian or Asian. Techwood and Clark Howell residents were almost exclusively African-American.

D. Public Services

Centennial Place was equipped with the amenities that middle-income households expect and the social services that low-income households need. The development has tot lots, a clubhouse, a community room, and a swimming pool. To help the public housing families reach self-sufficiency, a Workforce Enterprise Center was established on the site. The center provides GED training, computer training, and various job skills and job readiness programs, including monthly meetings of the non-employed residents. A number of non-public housing residents also participate in these programs. Centennial Place’s management employs one staff person—paid out of the ongoing operating budget—to serve as a liaison to the Workforce Enterprise Center and to ensure

¹⁶ McCormack Baron Ragan Management Services provided the following information: Data was available for 702 of the 738 households living at Centennial Place. Household incomes range from below \$10,000 to \$220,000. While the lowest income category is skewed by a large number of students, a significant number of households have incomes below \$30,000.

that the public housing families are meeting their lease requirements of employment, training, or education.

E. Momentum of Civic Leaders

Recognizing the need for quality public services in the neighborhood, Glover and Egbert Perry of The Integral Group worked tirelessly with other civic leaders to convince the Atlanta Public Schools to replace the failed, dilapidated Fowler Elementary School with the new \$13-million, high-performing Centennial Place Elementary School. Located on the Techwood Homes site, this new state-of-the-art school opened in September of 1999 with a new principal and teachers. It is a year-round school with a curriculum that is focused on math, science, and technology. The Georgia Institute of Technology's Center for Education Integrating Science, Mathematics, and Computing assisted with the curriculum and faculty development. Georgia Tech and Coca-Cola operate tutoring programs in the school, and the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund pays for special arts programs at the school. A new \$6 million YMCA recreation facility was built in conjunction with the Centennial Place School and provides the gym space for the school. The facility includes state-of-the-art physical fitness equipment, a computer center, and a Montessori preschool center for infants through five years of age. The original historic Techwood Community Center was rehabilitated into the Zell Miller Community Center to provide after-school recreation and education activities for children. A new Salvation Army Family Center was also built at the south end of the site with a new Boys and Girls club and day care facility.

F. Centennial Place's Impact on Surrounding Development

Just as the original Techwood and Clark Howell Homes had a blighting effect on the surrounding neighborhood, the Centennial Place development has reinvigorated the neighborhood (Table 3). Between 1990 and 2000, the surrounding neighborhood experienced changes similar to those that occurred at Centennial Place.

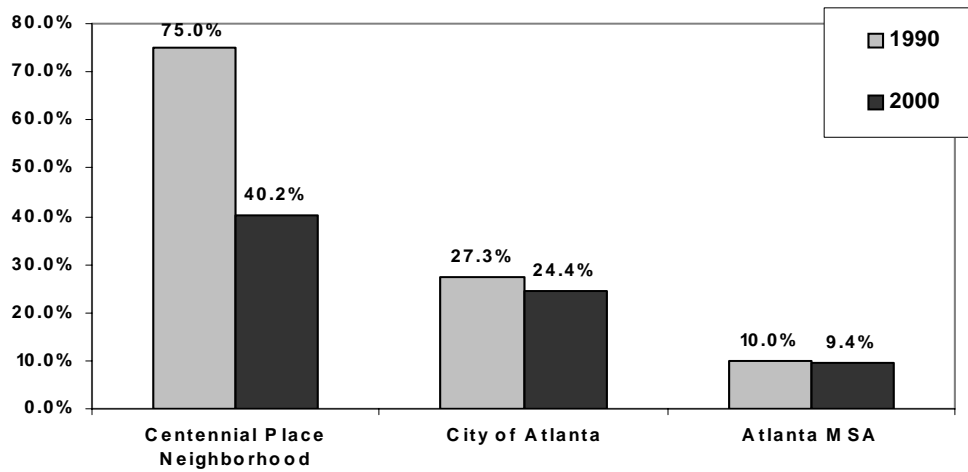
1. *Income, Poverty, and Employment*

Between 1990 and 2000, household median income increased 174 percent and per capita income increased 272 percent (see Chart 2). As is to be expected with affordable housing, the neighborhood's median income of \$19,866 was still below that of the city (\$37,546) and region (\$56,095), but the gap had narrowed substantially; the neighborhood's median income was now 52.8 percent of the city's median income as opposed to 22 percent in 1990. The neighborhood's concentration of poverty also decreased (see Chart 1). In 2000, households below the poverty line made up 40 percent of the neighborhood's population, nearly half the poverty rate of 1990. Though the neighborhood lost nearly a quarter of its population in the 1990s, the number of adults and percentage of adults in the labor force nearly doubled (from 903, or 35.6 percent in 1990 to 1,757, or 68.6 percent in 2000). By 2000, Chart 3 shows that the neighborhood's labor force participation rate of 68.6 percent actually exceeded the city's 64 percent rate. Though the neighborhood's

unemployment rate remained stubbornly high at 24.6 percent, between 1990 and 2000 the rate fell 1.9 percentage points, while the rate for the city increased by 4.8 percentage points.

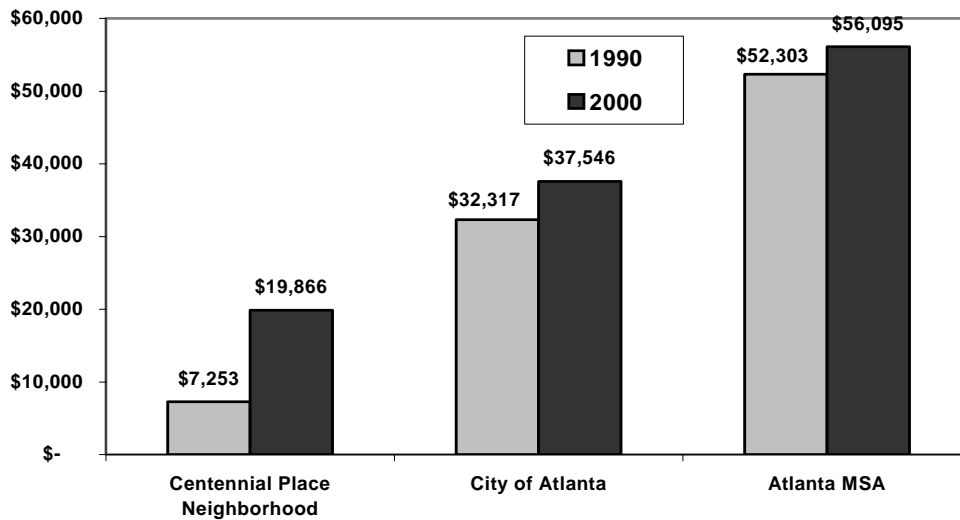
Table 3. Income and Employment Data In and Around the Centennial Place Neighborhood, 1990 and 2000			
Indicator	Centennial Place Neighborhood	City of Atlanta	Atlanta MSA
Median Household Income (2002 \$)	1989: \$7,253 1999: \$19,866 Change: 173.9%	1989: \$32,317 1999: \$37,546 Change: 16.2%	1989: \$52,303 1999: \$56,095 Change: 7.3%
Per Capita Income (2002 \$)	1989: \$4,944 1999: \$18,399 Change: 272.1%	1989: \$22,167 1999: \$27,829 Change: 25.5%	1989: \$24,514 1999: \$27,031 Change: 10.3%
Population Below Poverty Line	1989: 75.0% 1999: 40.2% Percentage Point Change: - 34.8	1989: 27.3% 1999: 24.4% Percentage Point Change: - 3.1	1989: 10.0% 1999: 9.4% Percentage Point Change: - 0.6
Adults in Labor Force	1990: 903 (35.6%) 2000: 1,757 (68.6%) Percentage Point Change: 33	1990: 192,794 (62.6%) 2000: 213,257 (64.0%) Percentage Point Change: 1.4	1990: 1,582,186 (72.9%) 2000: 2,208,940 (70.6%) Percentage Point Change: - 2.3
% Unemployed	1990: 26.5% 2000: 24.6% Percentage Point Change: - 1.9	1990: 9.2% 2000: 14.0% Percentage Point Change: 4.8	1990: 5.1% 2000: 5.0% Percentage Point Change: -0.1

Chart 1. Poverty Rates In and Around the Centennial Place Neighborhood, 1990 and 2000



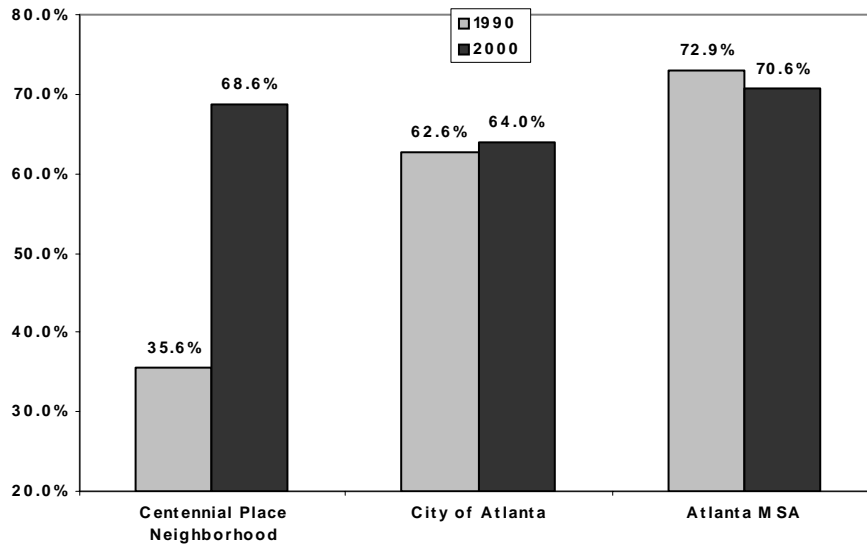
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Chart 2. Median Household Income In and Around the Centennial Place Neighborhood, 1990 and 2000 (in 2002 dollars)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Chart 3. Labor Force Participation In and Around the Centennial Place Neighborhood, 1990 and 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

2. Population Demographics

Between 1990 and 2000, the Centennial Place neighborhood became much more diverse. In part, this was because of an out-migration of the black population; between 1990 and 2000, the neighborhood’s black population decreased by 43.5 percent. However the neighborhood also became more diverse because of an in-migration of white population, which nearly doubled between 1990 and 2000. The result was a neighborhood with a higher percentage of whites (28.2 percent in 2000 compared with 10.5 percent in 1990) and a lower percentage of blacks (65.3 percent in 2000 compared with 86.7 percent in 1990), and with a racial composition more similar to that of the city of Atlanta.

Table 4. Population and Demographics Data In and Around the Centennial Place Neighborhood, 1990 and 2000			
Indicator	Centennial Place Neighborhood	City of Atlanta	Atlanta MSA
Population Growth 1990–2000	- 23.6%	5.7%	45.1%
White	1990: 421 (10.5%) 2000: 829 (28.2%) Change in total: 96.9%	1990: 122,327 (31.0%) 2000: 138,352 (33.2%) Change in total: 13.1%	1990: 2,020,017 (71.3%) 2000: 2,589,888 (63.0%) Change in total: 28.2%
Black	1990: 3,396 (86.7%) 2000: 1,919 (65.3%) Change in total: - 43.5%	1990: 264,262 (67.1%) 2000: 255,689 (61.4%) Change in total: - 3.2%	1990: 736,153 (26.0%) 2000: 1,189,179 (28.9%) Change in total: 61.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

3. Rents

The Centennial Place neighborhood's rental structure changed dramatically between 1990 and 2000. These changes obviously resulted from the demolition of Techwood and Clark Howell Homes, which dominated the rental stock in the neighborhood, and the construction of Centennial Place. The lower-quartile rent for the neighborhood increased from \$136 to \$189, remaining at roughly half the lower-quartile rent for the city as a whole. However, the median and upper-quartile neighborhood rents approximately quadrupled to \$559 and \$822, respectively. These rents were higher than the city's median and upper-quartile rents and comparable to the region's median and upper-quartile rents. The resultant rent structure suggests a neighborhood that is affordable to low-income families while remaining attractive and competitive with rents throughout the Atlanta region.

Table 5. Rental Rates In and Around the Centennial Place Neighborhood, 1990 and 2000			
Indicator	Centennial Place Neighborhood	City of Atlanta	Atlanta MSA
Renter-Occupied Units	1990: 1,562 2000: 1,266 Change: - 19.0%	1990: 88,626 2000: 94,674 Change: 6.8%	1990: 398,038 2000: 505,307 Change: 26.9%
Cash Rent: Lower Quartile (2002 \$)	1990: \$136 2000: \$189 Change: 38.8%	1990: \$273 2000: \$341 Change: 25.0%	1990: \$473 2000: \$515 Change: 8.8%
Cash Rent: Median Value (2002 \$)	1990: \$142 2000: \$559 Change: 294.2%	1990: \$471 2000: \$541 Change: 15.0%	1990: \$607 2000: \$673 Change: 10.8%
Cash Rent: Upper Quartile (2002 \$)	1990: \$197 2000: \$822 Change: 317.7%	1990: \$639 2000: \$775 Change: 21.4%	1990: \$742 2000: \$821 Change: 10.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

4. Additional Investment

According to a 2002 study commissioned by AHA and conducted by Strata Real Estate Alliance, LLP, a total of \$356 million has been invested in new projects in the Centennial Place vicinity since the development began. These investments include \$75.55 million in condominium construction, over \$30 million in apartments by the end of 2003, an estimated \$104 million in office, mixed-use, and retail developments, and \$147 million in hotel construction. Beginning in the 2000

tax year, the city of Atlanta received an additional \$830,200 from this reinvestment. These tax payments will increase annually as tax abatements burn off over a ten-year period.¹⁷

Homeownership has grown from less than 1 percent in 1990 to 12 percent in 2000 (from 15 units to 173 units), fueled by numerous condominium and loft developments in which units have sold for between \$100,000 and \$750,000. The average home sale in 2001 was \$243,667.¹⁸

Non-housing related investment has also increased. Business license volume has grown 165 percent from 1990 levels. SunTrust opened a new branch bank on the site in the historic Carnegie Library building on the Techwood site. The CEO of Home Depot recently announced plans for a \$200 million aquarium near Centennial Olympic Park, and Coca-Cola announced that it would create a new World of Coca-Cola Museum near Centennial Olympic Park.

The Strata Study estimates that at least 75 percent of the new housing would not have been developed if Techwood/Clark Howell had remained, and the other 25 percent would have been significantly delayed and sold for much less. Centennial Olympic Park may have “eventually” attracted office uses if the Techwood and Clark Howell Homes remained, but Strata questioned whether the aquarium would have located there.¹⁹

5. **Public Safety**

Overall, the area has experienced a 76 percent drop in crime. Only auto theft increased.

	1993 Techwood/Clark Howell	2001 Centennial Place Neighborhood	Percentage Change
Homicide	1	1	0%
Rape	3	0	-100%
Robbery	61	8	-87%
Ag Assault	108	2	-98%
Burglary	29	13	-55%
Larceny	38	18	-53%
Auto Theft	18	20	11%
Total	258	62	-76%

Source: Atlanta Police Department

6. **Improvements in Education**

Centennial Place School was recently singled out as one of only two schools in the entire Atlanta school system that met all nine of its goals for increasing attendance and test scores.²⁰ The

¹⁷ “Centennial Place Economic Impact of Redevelopment,” Strata Real Estate Alliance, LLP, September 2002.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Secretary of State Cathy Cox, “Media and Issues.” www.sos.state.ga.us/sac/school.htm (July 2005).

school achieved this success while serving an impoverished student body—74 percent of the children attending Centennial Place School receive subsidized school lunches. Ninety-seven percent of the student body is African American. Centennial Place Elementary School is proving that low-income, minority, inner-city schools can succeed.

Each year the state of Georgia administers the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test in reading, language arts, and mathematics to students in grades four, six, and eight. The test measures how well students are mastering specific skills. Students are assigned one of three scores: did not meet state standard, met state standard, or exceeded state standard. Test scores of Centennial Place fourth graders improved consistently from 2000 to 2003 as seen in Chart 5. By the 2002–2003 school year, fourth grade test scores (reflecting children who were in first grade when the school opened) were meeting or exceeding state performance levels and were outpacing the scores of the Atlanta School District, as well as the state. Chart 6 shows that 97 percent of fourth graders met or exceeded performance standards in reading. English and language arts scores meeting or exceeding performance levels were 96 percent, and math scores meeting or exceeding performance levels were 91 percent.²¹ Today, the Centennial Place Elementary School ranks among the top elementary schools in Atlanta.

Chart 5. Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) Administered to Centennial Place Elementary School Fourth Graders, 2000–2003²²

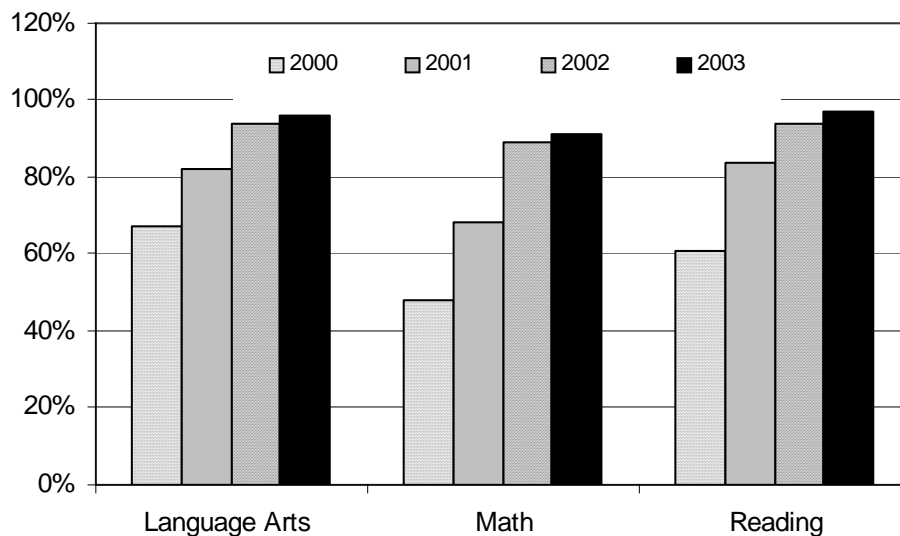


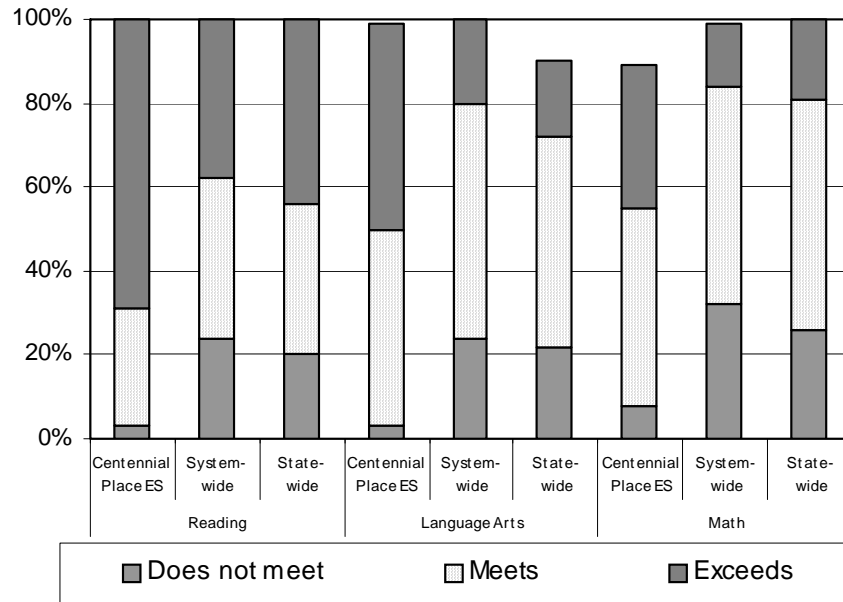
Chart 6 compares test results of Centennial Place fourth graders to those throughout the Atlanta Public Schools and the state. In each case, Centennial Place test scores surpass those of the city and the state. In English/language arts, the percentage of students exceeding the state standard was more than twice that of the city and the state. Similarly, the percentage of students at

²¹ Georgia Department of Education, Office of Student Achievement, 4th Grade Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests, Centennial Place Elementary School, 2002–2003.

²² State of Georgia Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, available at <http://www.gaosa.org/> (July 2005).

Centennial Place exceeding state standards in math and reading were far above those of the city and the state.

Chart 6. Fourth Grade Criterion Referenced Competency Test: Percentage of Students at Each Performance Level for Centennial Place Elementary School, System-wide, and State-wide for the 2000-2003 School Year²³



IV. HOW DID THEY DO IT?

In 1993, the AHA was one of the poorest-performing housing authorities in the country. It was at serious risk of being taken over or put into receivership by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). How did it change direction and become one of the highest-performing housing authorities in the nation and arguably one of the most successful at implementing the HOPE VI program?

A number of key elements aligned between 1993 and 1995 that enabled the AHA to strategically reposition itself to address the AHA’s critical failings and set forth a new vision for public housing.

A. Leadership

In 1994, AHA’s board of commissioners, after an exhaustive national search, asked its chair, Renee Glover, to leave her corporate law job and take over as AHA’s executive director. Glover, an Atlantan, was a successful corporate and finance attorney with little experience in managing real estate but significant business experience and exposure to AHA’s problems due to her service as

²³ Ibid.

board chair.. Glover assembled a new team of senior staff with significant private sector real estate management experience. Glover and her team, being from outside the public housing world, refused to accept the status quo of inadequate housing, concentrated poverty, and the waste of human capital created by the intolerable living environments of AHA's developments.

Glover was determined to run the AHA as a first-class real estate operation. She reorganized the AHA and hired high-quality managers. She developed a new paradigm for delivering public housing resources to the Atlanta community. Three overriding goals were established:

1. Mainstream families and end the stigma of public housing assistance. Create human rebuilding programs focused on job training, educational and recreational opportunities for youth, and building strong families.
2. Leverage federal dollars to provide market-caliber housing. Create an income stream for the AHA to end its dependency on the federal government and ensure long-term financial sustainability.
3. Revitalize public housing to make it an asset to the community and the larger neighborhood.²⁴

B. Flexible Financing

Under its prior administration, AHA secured a \$42 million HOPE VI grant to address all of Techwood Homes, a small portion of Clark Howell Homes, and replacement housing off-site. The original plan was to use these funds to modernize the existing developments and retain the 100 percent low-income character of the site. The original 1993 plan would not address the lack of parking at the site or the difficult-to-police interior courtyards. Although the modernization plans would have provided improved living conditions, they would have done nothing to address the basic problem of the developments being community eyesores that concentrated poverty and stigmatized their residents. In addition, the cost estimates for the rehabilitated units were as high as or higher than the costs of new construction. Renee Glover challenged AHA to think beyond these plans and to rethink the very nature of public housing.

²⁴ Atlanta Case Study, unpublished, by Renee Lewis Glover May 28, 2002.

Table 7. Sources of Funds	
221 d(4) First Mortgage Debt	\$18,000,000
Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Equity	\$18,000,000
AHA HOPE VI Funds	\$42,000,000
Atlanta Public Schools	\$13,000,000
Civic Funds - Philanthropy	\$5,000,000
Conventional Debt Financing - Retail	\$4,000,000
Conventional Home Mortgage Financing	\$20,700,000
Home Buyers' Equity	\$2,300,000
Public Improvements - City of Atlanta	\$30,000,000
TOTAL	\$153,000,000

Source: Atlanta Housing Authority

Table 8. Uses of Funds		
Centennial Place Apartment Homes	Residential	\$60,000,000
Centennial Place Elementary School	Institutional	\$13,000,000
Centennial Place YMCA	Institutional	\$5,000,000
SunTrust Branch Bank	Commercial (Historic)	\$1,500,000
Zell Miller Community Center	Institutional (Historic)	\$1,500,000
Centennial Place Retail Center	Retail	\$4,000,000
Cupola Building	Institutional (Historic)	\$3,000,000
Centennial Place Condominiums	Residential	\$8,000,000
Centennial Place Townhomes - For Sale	Residential	\$15,000,000
Remediation/Demolition and Site Preparation		\$5,000,000
Infrastructure and Streetscapes	Public Improvements	\$30,000,000
Social/Human Services Program		\$7,000,000
TOTAL		\$153,000,000

Source: Atlanta Housing Authority

C. Federal Policy Changes

The federal government was also rethinking public housing, and it implemented two important policy changes that enabled AHA to take a new approach. First, Congress eliminated the one-for-one replacement rule that required public housing authorities (PHAs) to provide a new replacement unit before demolishing an old unit. This policy had hamstrung PHAs throughout the country that wanted to demolish and replace dysfunctional sites. The second important change was the advent of the public housing mixed-finance program that allowed housing authorities to create mixed-income developments that could be owned and operated by private development partners. AHA seized the opportunity to use this new flexibility to fulfill its new mission and became the first housing authority in the country to use the mixed-finance program. AHA invested a significant amount of time, effort, and money in the legal aspects of pioneering this program to the benefit of other PHAs and the affordable housing industry, which used AHA's documents as templates for their own work.

D. An Olympic Opportunity

An additional factor that facilitated AHA's work was the upcoming 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta. As the Olympic clock was ticking, Glover used the opportunity of the Olympics to rally the corporate and civic sectors to assist her in transforming the AHA. Techwood and Clark Howell were near some of the Olympic venues and across the street from some of the planned Olympic dormitories. With Techwood and Clark Howell as the poster children of failed public housing policy and failure at the AHA, Glover reconsidered the 1993 HOPE VI plan that called for the rehabilitation and reconfiguration of Techwood/Clark Howell. Using the upcoming Olympics, Glover was able to plug into existing civic engagement to move public housing transformation onto the civic agenda.

V. THE DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

With these initial conditions in place, AHA and the Integral Partnership could move forward with the Centennial Place development. Successfully completing the development required a development approach with three aspects: (1) fostering public-private partnerships, (2) engaging residents and community members in the process, and (3) creating a comprehensive redevelopment plan that considered the development and its surrounding neighborhood holistically.

A. Creating Viable Public-Private Partnerships

AHA issued a request for proposals for a program manager/development partner to create a mixed-income development. The Integral Partnership of Atlanta—a partnership of the Integral Group, an Atlanta-based housing development firm and McCormack Baron Salazar, an experienced affordable housing developer from St. Louis—was selected. Together, AHA and The Integral Partnership of Atlanta began to work with HUD to chart the new territory of creating a mixed-income development. With the Olympics looming, pressure mounted on the development team as well HUD and the city to make the effort a success.

An entirely new legal and financing structure had to be created to develop Centennial Place. Because public housing had never been built under private ownership, private financiers had to be convinced that the project could work. Glover, the development team, and Atlanta's civic and political leadership helped convince the Georgia Housing Finance Agency (GHFA) of the importance of mixed-income housing developments. GHFA ultimately incorporated the concept into its tax credit plan. This change ultimately led to an initial \$700,000 Low-Income Housing Tax Credit award that provided an equity investment of \$4 million. The equity investor, Sun America, after a difficult underwriting process committed to the new financial structure of Centennial Place in large measure due to the track record and historical relationship they had with the development team.

Finding a first mortgage lender willing to risk the possible foreclosure of a public housing site was virtually impossible. The development's first mortgages are guaranteed by a Federal Housing

Administration (FHA) 221(d)(4) mortgage. These mortgage guarantees represented another big risk taken by HUD, as the FHA and a public housing authority had never worked together.

AHA participates in the ownership entity, receives a portion of project cash flow, and retains ownership of the land. AHA has entered a 60-year lease with the development partnership. When the term of the lease expires, ownership of all the multifamily residential units, including the market-rate and tax credit units, will revert to AHA. AHA receives one-third of the development's annual cash flow, up to \$120,000. Above that level it receives 60 percent of the cash flow. A project reserve was also established to protect the development from federal funding cuts to public housing operating subsidies, a major concern of the developers. All cash flow payments are deposited to the reserve until it reaches an established ceiling. Beyond the ceiling, the AHA receives its payments. In 2002, AHA received in excess of \$100,000, providing AHA with a new source of revenue beyond HUD appropriations.²⁵

B. Engaging Residents and Community Members in the Process

Without strong and committed resident leadership, Centennial Place could not have become a reality. For many years, a core group of resident leaders at Techwood and Clark Howell Homes worked on a variety of issues, in particular safety and education. This group put significant time and effort into the original 1993 HOPE VI application. In order to realize AHA's development vision, the residents needed to be convinced that it was in their interest to change the plan to create a mixed-income development with less public housing—something that had never been done before. Given the history of relations between the residents and the AHA, a new level of trust needed to be created.

A two-tiered resident-engagement process was developed. First, the AHA and the development team worked with a task force of Techwood and Clark Howell resident leaders. This 15- to 20-person task force would work directly with Glover and the Integral Partnership of Atlanta to hammer out the many difficult issues involved in the development. The task force negotiated the development's income mix and relocation and rights of return policies. It was also active in the planning process—identifying community needs including schools, recreation, and employment and ensuring that the new development would address more than just housing.

The second tier of the planning process involved updating and soliciting input from the community through larger meetings of over 200 residents. At these meetings, task force members took the lead in articulating the difficult decisions that needed to be made. A representative of the Integral Partnership of Atlanta estimated that 150 to 200 meetings were held with residents and other key stakeholders.²⁶ Glover and her senior staff attended all of the critical resident meetings, and according to all parties concerned, there were many difficult and acrimonious meetings.

²⁵ Interview with Richard Baron chairman and CEO, McCormack Baron Salazar.

²⁶ Interview with Egbert Perry, chairman and CEO, The Integral Group.

According to Dovie Newell, one of the resident leaders, the mixed-income plan was originally “not well received” in the community. In response to the residents’ concerns, the development team gave the task force three redevelopment scenarios: one involving all public housing rehabilitation; another involving tax credit new construction; and a third with a mix of public housing, tax credit, and market-rate housing. The task force and development team weighed the financial and social implications of each scenario.

The turning point for the residents, according to Newell, was when they made a site visit to a McCormack Baron mixed-income property. The residents had never seen such quality management and design in low-income housing. After the visit, at a large community meeting, a young man blurted out, “Tear them down. What are we trying to save? Rats and roaches?” Apparently, this started a spontaneous group chant of “Tear them down. Tear them down.” Several meetings later, when a closed ballot vote was taken, the residents voted to tear the developments down and start over as a mixed-income community.²⁷

The task force also addressed the difficult issue of relocation. The residents enlisted the assistance of Atlanta Legal Aid to develop what became known as a Further Assurances Agreement (FAA). The FAA documented the agreements reached between the residents, the AHA, and the development team. Every resident was eligible to return provided that they were current on their rent and utility bills; had not committed certain crimes within the past five years; and had a job, were participating in a self-sufficiency program, or were in school. The employment requirement was included to ensure that the families at Centennial Place were given new life opportunities as well as new housing opportunities. Residents over age 55 or on disability were exempt from the work or self-sufficiency requirement. As part of the relocation process, resident leaders worked with AHA’s relocation specialist to help residents become current on rent and utility payments.

Residents were given the choice of rental assistance using temporary Section 8 vouchers, permanent Section 8 vouchers, or moving to another public housing site during the construction process. Atlanta’s regional housing market is conducive to accepting housing vouchers and many families moved to the suburbs, with no single community receiving a disproportionate number of voucher holders (the highest concentration of voucher holders in a community is 13 percent).²⁸ Because it was lowering the density of housing on the site from over 1,100 units to 728 units—only 40 percent of which were for public housing families—AHA began an off-site development program for Techwood and Clark Howell. This commitment to additional off-site public housing was critical to winning the residents’ support. In addition to the four phases of on-site rental replacement on the Techwood/Clark Howell site, AHA sponsored three off-site mixed finance developments—totaling 224 public housing replacement units—as Techwood and Clark Howell replacement units (these off-site replacements are described in Appendix 1).

²⁷ Interview with Dovie Newell, task force member and former Techwood resident.

²⁸ Interview with Renee Glover, CEO, Atlanta Housing Authority.

A curious phenomenon at Centennial Place is that only about one-third of the public housing units are occupied by original Techwood/ Clark Howell residents.²⁹ The AHA, development team, and resident leaders identified four main reasons:

1. Satisfaction with new housing. Once families settled in their new housing, often in suburban communities using Section 8 vouchers, they did not want to move again.
2. Fear of previous conditions. Many households had bad memories of the crime at Techwood and Clark Howell and did not want to return.
3. Inability to meet the eligibility criteria. Some households knew they could not return due to the criminal background check, especially as it applied to their children.
4. Self-selection. Some people did not want to participate in the self-sufficiency programs as a lease requirement, and they chose not to return knowing management would be tougher with respect to such requirements.³⁰

Relocation continues to be a sensitive issue, and AHA continues to track its residents' relocation outcomes.³¹

C. Creating a Comprehensive Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan

After these difficult issues were resolved, the development team, AHA, and the residents engaged key community stakeholders in a neighborhood planning process. Rather than focusing solely on planning a public housing community, they were planning a new neighborhood.

The first task was identifying the most important community needs. The residents, AHA, and the development team identified the following four areas:

1. Jobs. Residents wanted jobs, and with the changes in the lease requirements and welfare reform, they needed to find employment.
2. Childcare. To work, heads of households needed a safe environment and quality care for their children.
3. Recreation. There were few structured after-school activities for children in the neighborhood.
4. Education. Parents were dissatisfied with the education their children were getting at Fowler Elementary School.

²⁹ According to McCormack Baron Management.

³⁰ Interview with Renee Glover, CEO, Atlanta Housing Authority.

³¹ Appendix 2 provides information on the relocation outcomes of AHA residents.

Each of these areas was ultimately addressed in the Centennial Place development, leveraging investments by the Atlanta Public Schools, the YMCA, the Salvation Army, AHA, and other service providers.

Perhaps the most significant effort was made with respect to education. The residents, the developers, AHA, and some corporate leaders got behind the concept of creating a new state-of-the-art elementary school as part of the Centennial Place development. AHA wanted to provide public housing households with the best opportunities possible, and a new school was clearly a priority for residents. The developers knew it would be a challenge to attract middle-income families to an area still perceived as one of Atlanta's worst. A new school would help to change the community's image.

Modest funding had been set aside by the Atlanta Public School Board to rehabilitate the existing Fowler Elementary School, but the stakeholders persuaded the school board to build a new school instead. A key participant in this effort was Norman Johnson, Assistant to the President of Georgia Institute of Technology. Johnson had worked in the Techwood and Clark Howell neighborhood for several years, and he observed that, in over 50 years, no child, black or white, from Techwood or Clark Howell had ever crossed the street to attend Georgia Tech. With the support of the president of the Georgia Institute of Technology, Johnson argued that a new state-of-the-art elementary school was necessary for the neighborhood, not just rehabilitation of the failing Fowler School. More than building a new structure, he argued that new systems needed to be put in place, including a new principal, staff and curriculum. Ultimately elected to the Atlanta School Board, Johnson was able to make the case for a reconstituted school. The planning for the school became part of the Centennial Place development's master plan. A complicated land swap was arranged with the Atlanta Public Schools to move the school closer to Georgia Tech and place it on land formerly occupied by Techwood Homes.

Every child of former residents of Techwood and Clark Howell was guaranteed a slot at the school, no matter where the household now lived.³² Before the school opened, administrators contacted the former Techwood and Clark Howell families to invite them to enroll their children. Today, the school is a modified magnet school serving, in order of priority, children from Centennial Place and the surrounding area, former Techwood and Clark Howell residents, and the larger Atlanta student population. The school population is 97 percent African American and has a poverty population of over 74 percent. Centennial Place Elementary School has shown consistently improving test scores, in many cases exceeding the score levels for the city and state.³³

VII. OLYMPIC LEGACY PROGRAM

The AHA's Glover wanted the transformation of Techwood and Clark Howell to be more than a stand-alone showpiece; she wanted it to be the beginning of an effort to cast a bold new vision for

³² Interview with Cynthia Kuhlman, principal, Centennial Place Elementary School.

³³ Georgia Department of Education, Office of Student Achievement, Report Card, Centennial Place Elementary School, 2002–2003.

public housing in Atlanta. Other AHA developments had equally deplorable conditions as those at Techwood and Clark Howell (one, Eastlake Meadows was nicknamed “Little Vietnam” due to the prevalence of criminal violence). They too needed to be transformed, and fortunately, Glover inherited \$71 million of unspent HUD modernization funds for these developments. However, Glover knew she needed to act quickly and boldly as AHA was still under threat of HUD takeover and she feared HUD would rescind the modernization funds. Glover therefore decided to include the Eastlake Meadows, John Hope Homes, Carver Homes, and John Eagan developments in a comprehensive redevelopment program that she named the Olympic Legacy Program.

The Olympic Legacy Program essentially packaged these three developments with Techwood and Clark Howell Homes in a redevelopment plan that would rebuild approximately 3,000 units of public housing while creating four new mixed-income neighborhoods. Rather than approaching each development separately and sequentially, the Olympic Legacy Program enabled Glover to approach the city, the Atlanta Public School Board, and the civic and corporate sectors with a strategic vision for public housing revitalization and neighborhood change in time for the Olympic Games. The program also assured HUD that serious planning was ongoing so that HUD would not rescind the funds. The Centennial Place strategy of mixed-income comprehensive neighborhood revitalization was to be used as the model for this package.

AHA needed to augment its staff with sophisticated development talent if it was to implement and coordinate the Olympic Legacy Program on an expedited schedule. AHA engaged the Integral Group (one of the development partners of Centennial Place). Its role was to use the expertise gained in planning and executing the Centennial Place development to expedite and simplify the process so other developers could participate in the Olympic Legacy Program. Essentially, AHA’s development apparatus was privatized to a sophisticated private-sector developer. The Integral Group of Atlanta oversaw the master planning of the sites, managed resident meetings, hired third-party professionals for AHA, coordinated the solicitation and hiring of development partners, and negotiated, with the assistance of AHA staff, the terms of the developments with the development partners.³⁴

Each of the Olympic Legacy sites is now a mixed-income development based on the Centennial Place model. The on-site replacement at Eastlake Meadows, John Hope Homes, and John Eagan are completed. Additional off-site replacement for Eastlake Meadows and Techwood/Clark Howell is under construction. Every site provides recreational and child care programs; access to, and coordination with, a community center; and investments in building new schools or significantly rehabilitating existing schools. These developments will have served as a catalyst for over 3,000 new units of rental housing, with 1,200 of the units reserved for public housing families.

³⁴ Interviews with Egbert Perry, Chairman and CEO, The Integral Group. and Renee Glover, CEO, Atlanta Housing Authority.

In each of the Olympic Legacy neighborhoods, where the distressed public housing once stood, there are obvious signs that the private real estate market is being restored. Real estate prices are appreciating. New private market housing is being built in some neighborhoods, and a new grocery store recently opened near the new East Lake Village, the second Olympic Legacy site. At the Perry Homes redevelopment site, another of the Olympic Legacy sites now under construction, a large private homebuilder began acquiring land in the area once it heard that AHA was going there next.³⁵ AHA is now leading the affordable housing development market in Atlanta.

The Olympic Legacy Program has been expanded to include five additional distressed public housing communities. Early phases of some of these developments have been completed, while other developments are under construction and others are in the planning stages awaiting HUD funding. As of March 2003, a total of 3,848 new housing units had been built or were under construction. Public housing replacement units totaled 1,515. An additional 2,570 new units were in the planning stages with public housing replacement totaling another 943 units.³⁶ AHA estimates that when completed, the Olympic Legacy Program will have invested approximately \$220 million in public housing capital, leveraging \$1.5 billion in new investment in historically disinvested neighborhoods.³⁷

VII. CONCLUSION

The Atlanta Housing Authority has gone from an institution that caused neighborhood decline and deterioration to becoming the market leader for neighborhood investment in Atlanta. With Centennial Place at the forefront, the Olympic Legacy Program is changing the face of Atlanta neighborhoods. These “new neighborhoods” have the characteristics of neighborhoods of choice—economic integration, quality schools, safe streets, social services for lower-income families, and recreational opportunities for youth. The Atlanta formula was not simply new construction of housing, but rather a comprehensive approach to community rebuilding. AHA and its partners, including the residents, call it “changing the sociology of the neighborhood.”

Public housing families are no longer stigmatized by the place they live. They blend into the community and have the same life opportunities of families of higher means. Residents no longer consider themselves public housing families; they are simple residents of Centennial Place or one of the other Olympic Legacy neighborhoods. The children of these communities now have the opportunity to attend high-quality schools where real learning is taking place. The adults have access to job training and employment opportunities and are taking advantage of these opportunities, as the income data indicates.

Through the leadership, vision, and perseverance of AHA executive director Renee Glover, a new kind of public housing program has evolved as well as a new kind of public housing authority.

³⁵ Interview with Renee Glover, CEO, Atlanta Housing Authority.

³⁶ Information provided by the Alisias Group.

³⁷ Atlanta Case Study, unpublished, by Renee Lewis Glover, May 28, 2002.

Partnership is the rule of the day—partnership with residents, private developers, and the local civic and political community. The private and civic sectors are now participants in the public housing program in Atlanta, something that would have been unheard of in the past. Public and private resources are being targeted to improve these communities and the lives of their residents. Officials of AHA, Atlanta Public Schools, and the city meet regularly to plan and coordinate programs and resources, assuring comprehensive approaches to neighborhood revitalization.

While significant public resources were required to make Centennial Place (and the other Olympic Legacy sites) a success—the public housing dollars, \$10 million in city infrastructure, \$13 million for Centennial Place Elementary School—the question remains: What is the cost of not making these investments? And what is the value of the investment? What is the value of a drop in the crime rate by 93 percent in the Centennial Place neighborhood? What will be the savings from student achievement scores going up significantly? What is the value of residents trained and working at good jobs? What is the value of the new taxes generated by the additional investments? What new opportunities exist for relocation families living in suburban locations? There is also a value to the creation of additional affordable and market-rate housing, stimulated by public housing investment. What is the value of creating a vibrant neighborhood?

Ultimately, the most important factor in the success of the Centennial Place development was the willingness of everyone involved to take risks. “We got everything we wanted,” said Newell. “You’ve got to take a risk. If you do not take the risk, you never know.”

APPENDIX 1:
OFF-SITE TECHWOOD AND CLARK HOWELL REPLACEMENT UNITS³⁸

- Summerdale Commons, located approximately three miles south of Techwood, is a combination new construction and rehabilitation of an existing apartment complex. Developed in two phases, Summerdale consists of 244 units:

Public housing	74 Units
Tax credit	120 Units
Market-rate	50 Units

Summerdale was AHA's first off-site replacement. The neighborhood is a stronger neighborhood than the original Techwood site. It is near transportation, shopping, and a school that has recently experienced new investment.

- Ashley Courts at West End is located approximately one-quarter of a mile away from Atlanta University Center. It is across the street from a mass-transit station, with a major retail center just a block away. It was developed by the Integral Group on land for which it had been granted site control. It consists of 112 units:

Public housing	34 units
Tax credit	34 units
Market-rate	44 units

- Ashley Courts at Cascade was developed on the former Kimberly Homes public housing site. The site is approximately one-quarter of a mile away from a desirable upper middle-income African-American Atlanta neighborhood with access to shopping and transportation. Developed in three phases, it consists of 428 units:

Public housing	116
Tax credit	155
Market-rate	157

³⁸ Relocation data provided by the Atlanta Housing Authority.

APPENDIX 2: CENTENNIAL PLACE RELOCATION RESULTS

A total of 4,755 families had the opportunity to move from substandard housing due to the Olympic Legacy Program redevelopments.

- 76 percent or 3,630 families accepted relocation assistance.
- 11 percent moved outside of the relocation process.
- 12 percent did not respond to offers of assistance, were evicted for failing to comply with their lease, or died during the time period of the relocation process.

Of the 3,630 families that accepted relocation assistance,

- 56 percent or 2,027 families chose Housing Choice vouchers as their housing of choice.
- 36 percent or 1,309 families chose to move to other public housing communities.
- 1 percent or 37 families purchased a home.
- 7 percent or 257 families moved into private housing or remained on site until the new community was completed.

Of the 3,650 families that accepted relocation assistance,

- 1,447 or 45 percent informed AHA that they did not intend to return to the redeveloped community.
- 1,668 or 55 percent indicated that they intended to return.

Of the 1,668 families that indicated a preference to return,

- All were invited to apply for apartments at the revitalized site.
- 40 percent chose not to respond to the invitation to return.

Of those who responded to the invitation to return,

- 56 percent of the families were approved to return to the revitalized site.
- 20 percent of the families decided not to return after responding to the initial invitation.
- 24 percent were not approved to return.