

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (formerly 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information.

 X New Submission Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Tulsa Public Housing, 1966-1975

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

C. Form Prepared by:

name/title: Emily Lenhausen, Historic Preservation Specialist & Amanda K. Loughlin, National Register Mgr

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date: Oct.2020, rev. Dec. 2020, Feb. and Aug. 2021

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.



Signature of certifying official

Exec. Dir.

Title

8/12/21

Date

OHS

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**United States Department of the Interior
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Tulsa Public Housing, 1966-1975

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

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Section E: Statement of Historic Context

The purpose of this cover document is to explain the development of public housing in Tulsa, Oklahoma between 1966 and 1975. In the United States, “public housing” refers to housing for low-income persons that is provided or subsidized by the government. When the state legislature passed the Oklahoma Housing Authorities Act in 1965, Oklahoma became one of the last states to authorize the creation of local public housing authorities. The Act authorized municipalities to establish public housing authorities to address the lack of safe, sanitary, and affordable housing in Oklahoma communities, particularly for those with low incomes. The City of Tulsa established the Tulsa Housing Authority under this directive in 1966. Construction of the first purpose-built public housing projects in Tulsa began two years later in 1968, and the final project was completed in 1975. Following the completion of this project, the Tulsa Housing Authority continued to provide public housing services, however it shifted focus to programs such as rent subsidies for private properties. This cover document addresses those resources specifically built as public housing under the purview of the Tulsa Housing Administration.

I. Public Housing in United States

Public housing programs operating within a local context are intrinsically tied to federal public housing policies. Understanding the national context within which the city of Tulsa established its public housing program is critical to understanding the methods and processes utilized to develop public housing locally. This section briefly explains this underlying historic context.

Attempts to address the scarcity of acceptable and affordable housing for the poor in the United States at the national level began in the early twentieth century as the Great Depression threatened the availability of housing. The National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, the first major Federal housing program legislation, was passed in 1933. The Act created a housing division within the Public Works Administration (PWA) which served two primary purposes: the creation of much needed low-rent housing and jobs. The National Housing Act 1934 was passed the following year and established the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). This Act authorized FHA mortgage insurance for construction of single- to four-family dwellings and insured mortgages on non-government-built low-income housing. Although both acts addressed the issue of housing, neither made provisions for public housing. The first major legislation in relation to public housing did not come until three years later, when Congress passed the United States Housing Act of 1937. Under this Act, the United States Housing Authority (USHA) replaced the PWA housing division, and a partnership formed between the federal government and local public housing agencies (PHAs). It is this Act that serves as the basis for the current federal public housing program.

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Although the United States Housing Act of 1937 made strides towards establishing public housing programs in the nation, the outset of World War II and its related restrictions and moratoriums on construction briefly paused public housing development shortly after its passing. Federal action in relation to public housing did not resume until after the conclusion of the war. With the conflict terminated, Congress once again turned its attention to housing in America. Through the Housing Act of 1949, Congress declared that adequate housing was essential to both national security and the general welfare of the nation. Promising “a decent home and suitable living environment for every American family,” the Act prioritized new housing for low-income residents displaced by slum clearance and redevelopment and authorized the direct involvement of the federal government in public housing creation through primarily financial input. Key elements of the Act included slum clearance under urban redevelopment programs, increased FHA mortgage funding, and the purchase and repair of single-family rural homes. Notably, the Act confirmed a federal commitment to providing public housing for impoverished citizens both through the production of housing units and through financial means including the placement of caps on construction costs, tenant income, and rental prices.¹

Although the Housing Act of 1949 advanced public housing construction, it did not produce enough public housing to meet demand. This was due in part to funding inadequacies but also due to the Korean Conflict (1950-1953) which inadvertently diverted resources from the construction of public housing less than a year following the 1949 Act’s passage.² Conflicting attitudes towards the creation of public housing also limited production. While President Harry Truman supported public housing, many members of Congress did not and, citing the Korean Conflict, attempted to abolish the program. Ultimately, negotiations between President Truman and Congress resulted in far fewer approved units than needed. Further damaging the perception of public housing, the private real estate industry launched an anti-public housing campaign nationwide. Local governments supported slum clearance and urban redevelopment campaigns; however, instead of replacing cleared resources with public housing units, they typically chose to construct higher end, more profitable developments.³ Few local governments utilized federal funds made available under the Housing Act of 1949 in redevelopment schemes. While areas were cleared, difficulty enticing private investors to finance projects and challenges finding housing for displaced persons led to little rebuilding of cleared areas in most locations.

¹ For a more in-depth discussion of this era of public housing from 1933 to 1949, see Paul Lusignan, et.al., *Public Housing in the United States, 1933-1949*. Draft National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2004.

² Alexander von Hoffman, “A Study in Contradictions: The Origins and Legacy of the Housing Act of 1949,” *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 2 (2000): 310-313; National Commission on Urban Problems (NCUP), *Building the American City: Report of the National Commission on Urban Problems to the Congress and to the President of the United States* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1969), 111.

³ Von Hoffman, “A Study in Contradictions,” 313.

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The Eisenhower Administration (1953-1961) dealt an additional blow to public housing through the Housing Act of 1954. The administration did not prioritize public housing in federal policy and instead placed an emphasis on urban development and private sector investment in housing. The Housing Act of 1954, among other things, authorized a maximum of 35,000 additional public housing units in 1955, limited the total number of low-rent public housing units proposed under a new contract, and stated that new public housing units could not surpass those needed for families displaced by clearance and redevelopment projects.⁴ Reflecting the administration's focus on urban development, the Act also expanded slum clearance and urban development authorized under the 1949 Act to approve funds for the rehabilitation of blighted area rather than wholesale clearance. The language of the Act replaced the term "urban development" with "urban renewal" to promote new goals such as the rehabilitation of existing housing, building code enforcement, and the relocation of families displaced under such undertakings. An additional significant shift in federal public housing policy occurred two years later with the passage of the Housing Act of 1956. This Act shifted federal housing program priorities to support housing for the elderly. It opened public housing to single residents over age sixty-five, marking the first time single persons became eligible for public housing, and gave the elderly first priority for placement in public housing units whether they were displaced from sub-standard housing or not.

Affordable housing again became a focus of the federal government under the Kennedy (1961-1963) and Johnson (1963-1969) administrations. Signed in August 1965, the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965 established a new rent supplement program for low-income families and authorized the construction of 120,000 new public housing units to be constructed over a period of four years. The Department of Housing and Urban Development Act was signed the following month and established the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The primary responsibilities of HUD were to determine policies and programs to achieve "a decent home and suitable environment for every family," manage housing and urban renewal activities, and to coordinate between the agencies undertaking these activities.⁵ HUD was also responsible for providing technical assistance to entities in relation to community development and conducting studies of issues associated with housing and urban development programs. The Model Cities Program, authorized the following year under the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966, sought to improve living conditions for the nation's poor by emphasizing social welfare and development in addition to physical developments.⁶

⁴ Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA), *Brief Summary of the Housing Act of 1954, Public Law 560, 83rd Congress, 68 Stat. 590* (Washington, DC: Office of the Administrator, 1954), 7.

⁵ Congressional Research Service, the Library of Congress, *A Chronology of Housing Legislation and Selected Executive Actions, 1892-1992*, prepared for the Committee on Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs and the Subcommittee on the Housing and Community Development Housing of Representatives, One Hundred Third Congress, first session (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1993), 123.

⁶ Congressional Research Service, *A Chronology of Housing Legislation*, 133.

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A significant alteration to public housing construction was brought forth under HUD. The department established the Turnkey Construction program in 1966, introducing an alternative to direct government-produced public housing.⁷ Under the turnkey program, a developer assumed the expense and execution of a housing project and then transferred the completed project to the local PHA. First used in Washington, DC and Philadelphia, the method was chiefly responsible for a substantial increase in housing starts between 1967 and 1968.

In an effort to continue the successful development of cities, the Johnson Administration convened three commissions in 1967 to study the challenges with cities and to develop solutions to these problems.⁸ Among these commissions was the National Commission in Urban Problems (NCUP). In December 1968, the NCUP published a substantial report titled *Building the American City*. The five-hundred-page report found that segregation was the most dire problem in cities, particularly in relation to housing. Furthermore, the NCUP concluded that the larger the project, the greater the problems associated with social behavior and as a result recommended that future HUD projects be smaller in scale and geographically scattered sites. While the report identified significant problems with large, high-rise developments, it did not entirely denounce them. The NCUP found them to be successful when constructed as single-building projects for the elderly.⁹ Influenced by this finding, the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968 banned the construction of high-rise public housing buildings intended for families with children however permitted the building type for the elderly and disabled.¹⁰

While the Johnson Administration encouraged public housing and made significant improvements to the program, the succeeding Nixon Administration (1969-1974) was not equally supportive. This lack of support was heavily influenced by the perceived failings of the public housing program. The 1969 Housing and Urban Development Act of 1969 (Brooke Amendment) decreased the public housing rent limit from one-third of a resident's income to one-fourth.¹¹ Although intended to help protect poor tenants, the Act had significant unintended consequences. Reducing the amount of rent received also reduced the amount of money available to fund PHA operating expenses and capital needs such as building maintenance. Poor economic conditions of the 1970s further exacerbated this issue. As tenant incomes fell, rent payment decreased while building maintenance costs simultaneously increased. This cost imbalance resulted in deferred maintenance of properties, which led to a decrease in occupancy further decreasing revenue. In response to ongoing financial strife and property

⁷ NCUP, *Building the American City*, 120, 122.

⁸ The Kerner, Douglas, and Kaiser commissions each specialized in different areas of study.

⁹ NCUP, *Building the American City*, 123; William H. Ledbetter, Jr., "Public Housing. A Social Experiment Seeks Acceptance," *Law and Contemporary Problems*, Vol. 32, No. 3, Housing. Part 2: The Federal Role (Summer, 1967): 516.

¹⁰ New York City was one exception to this ruling due to population density.

¹¹ Congressional Research Service, *A Chronology of Housing Legislation*, 164; Alexander Von Hoffman, "History Lessons for Today's Housing Policy: The Political Processes of Making Low-Income Housing Policy," (Joint Center for Housing Studies, Harvard University, 2012), 41.

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maintenance issues, the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1970 established a requirement that at least 30 percent of public housing units in new or subsequent contracts be developed under the Section 23 leasing programs. Under Section 23, PHAs leased units from private owners and then made them available for public housing tenants under reduced rental rates. While the properties were privately owned, the PHA retained rights to tenant selection. The next significant alteration to public housing policy arose from these conditions. On January 5, 1973, the Nixon administration imposed a moratorium on all federal housing programs citing the deterioration of existing housing and the disarray surrounding private construction alternatives.¹² The moratorium froze all programs associated with low-income housing including rental supplement, mortgage insurance for low-income housing projects unaffiliated with PHAs, Turnkey Construction, and conventional public housing projects. It also outright terminated all other associated programs including the Model Cities Program and urban renewal.

Shortly after the resignation of President Nixon on August 9, 1974, President Gerald Ford signed the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, which essentially ended government construction of public housing.¹³ The Act consolidated the terminated programs, including urban renewal functions, Model Cities, public facility loans, and historic preservation, into one new program: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). Administered by HUD, the CDBG gave communities the authority to create development plans and programs tailored to their circumstances rather than federal programs. The new program required PHAs revise the tenant selection process to encourage a mix of income levels and loosen income limits. Additionally, the program required all households to pay a minimum rent of either 5 percent of income or the amount of a welfare payment designated for housing.¹⁴ One of the most significant provisions of the Act was the creation of the Section 8 program, which replaced Section 23. Under Section 8, subsidies were provided for tenants living in private housing and funding was made available to developers who create affordable housing. By 1976, Section 8 annually provided significantly more low-income housing units than previous means and new construction of public housing was no longer the main goal of housing reform.

¹² Janet L. Smith, "Public Housing Transformation: Evolving National Policy," in Larry Bennett, Janet L. Smith, and Patricia A. Wright, eds. *Where Are the Poor People to Live? Transforming Public Housing Communities* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2006), 29.

¹³ Smith, "Public Housing Transformation: Evolving National Policy," 29.

¹⁴ Congressional Research Service, *A Chronology of Housing Legislation*, 214.

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II. Public Housing in Oklahoma

Oklahoma was one of the last states to adopt enabling legislation to authorize public housing projects.¹⁵ Unlike other regions of the country which had experienced substantial growth during the nineteenth century, building booms within Oklahoma communities did not begin until the late 1920s.¹⁶ This later boom meant communities and buildings survived until the World War II era without many of the troubles seen in older communities, particularly those on the east coast, which had experienced greater early growth. Construction moratoria enacted during World War II further delayed problems such as overcrowding and traffic congestion in most Oklahoma cities. However, circumstances began to change following the war. During the 1950s, new housing construction could not keep up with demand, driving home prices higher and reducing the availability of affordable housing in many Oklahoma communities.¹⁷ Although housing prices in Oklahoma continued to climb, income levels remained stagnant, pricing many Oklahomans out of both new and existing housing. New residential suburbs on city perimeters drew businesses away from downtown, further fueling an exodus from, and the subsequent deterioration of, older, denser areas. Finis Smith, co-author of the 1965 Oklahoma Housing Authorities Act (OHAA), noted that “in the era marked by 1960, it became apparent that fine old homes and apartment houses were becoming tenements and slums.”¹⁸

Public housing efforts in Oklahoma, as in much of the country, were intrinsically tied to urban renewal. Urban renewal was seen as a means to infuse activity and vitality into deteriorating neighborhoods through the demolition or rehabilitation of aging building stock and the construction of new, modern buildings which reflected the prosperity and modernity of the age. In July 1959, Tulsa became the first large city in Oklahoma to form an urban renewal authority, and within two years the Tulsa Urban Renewal Authority (TURA) began its first project.¹⁹ Planning for the Seminole Hills urban renewal project in north Tulsa began in 1961.²⁰ The ninety-one acre site was the first urban renewal project in Oklahoma and encompassed the clearance of exceptionally poor properties and the rehabilitation of others to establish approximately one hundred low-income housing units.²¹

¹⁵ Finis Smith, “Public Housing in Oklahoma,” *Tulsa Law Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1967): 5.

¹⁶ Smith, “Public Housing in Oklahoma,” 5.

¹⁷ Smith, “Public Housing in Oklahoma,” 5.

¹⁸ Smith, “Public Housing in Oklahoma,” 5.

¹⁹ Steven Lackmeyer, “Urban Renewal,” *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, accessed September 18, 2020.

²⁰ Lackmeyer, “Urban Renewal.”

²¹ Lackmeyer, “Urban Renewal,” “Tulsa Busy on Urban Renewal Work,” *Daily Oklahoman* (March 21, 1964): 7. Contemporary reports do not specify under what funding mechanism these were created; however, it was likely under FHA financing.

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Although low-income housing projects were underway in Oklahoma prior to the 1965, these projects were completed in association with programs of existing entities, such as TURA and the FHA, and were often components of larger projects or goals. While public housing had long been a topic of legislation in Oklahoma, early efforts proved unsuccessful. The Oklahoma legislature introduced its first public housing bill under the Governor Ernest Whitworth Marland administration (1935-1939).²² Governor Marland attempted to bring New Deal programs and other aid to Oklahoma in response to dire economic conditions brought by the Great Depression. Despite the efforts of his administration, the legislature remained predominantly unsupportive, and many efforts, including public housing, never came to fruition.²³ Subsequent attempts to introduce public housing bills occurred during many legislative sessions following the Marland administration; however, as before, these attempts were unsuccessful.

The Oklahoma State Senate finally passed its first low-income housing bill in March 1963.²⁴ The bill, known as Senate Bill No. 97, included provisions for the clearance of slums and better quality low-income housing in the state.²⁵ According to Senator Clem Hamilton who voted for the bill, it resulted from an interim study prepared by the legislative council and had been in the making for approximately five years.²⁶ Citing statistics within the 1960 Federal Census, the study illustrated a severe lack of acceptable housing in Oklahoma. Approximately 34 percent of Oklahoma housing was found to be substandard. Cities, including Tulsa, contained at least 20 percent of the substandard housing in the state, while smaller communities had roughly double the amount or 42 percent.²⁷

Although the bill ultimately passed the state senate twenty-five to fifteen, it was not without controversy.²⁸ Opponents of the bill argued that similar housing endeavors in other states had not worked correctly and were too costly. Private industry, they insisted, was capable of solving the housing crisis more effectively.²⁹ Additional concerns included that any low-income housing projects completed in Oklahoma would be high-rise, institutional apartment buildings that exist as “islands which turn their backs on surrounding neighborhoods.”³⁰ Opposition was primarily expressed by representatives of builders, property owners, and private industry. In contrast, labor groups, city mayors, and the Municipal League expressed support for the bill with rural counties overall more

²² “Senators Hear Arguments About Public Housing Law,” *Daily Oklahoman* (February 13, 1963): 20.

²³ Bobby D. Weaver, “Marland, Ernest Whitworth (1874-1941),” *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*.

²⁴ “Senators Hear Arguments ...,” 20.

²⁵ “Bill Passed for Clearance of Slums,” *Muskogee Daily Phoenix* (March 21, 1963): 11.

²⁶ “Bill Passed for Clearance of Slums,” 11. Hamilton represented Poteau (Le Flore) and Sallisaw (Sequoyah County).

²⁷ “Senators Hear Arguments ...,” 20.

²⁸ “Bill Passed for Clearance of Slums,” 11.

²⁹ “Senators Hear Arguments ...,” 20.

³⁰ “Senators Hear Arguments ...,” 20.

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supportive than urban counties.³¹ In response to this controversy, Senator Hamilton posited that amendments to exclude Oklahoma and Tulsa counties from the bill would “probably be offered;” however, no such amendments occurred.³² Although Senate Bill No. 97 passed in the spring of 1963, over two years passed before the Oklahoma Housing Authorities Act (OHAA) became law. Effective June 18, 1965, the act found that:

there exists...in the state unsanitary, unsafe, and overcrowded dwelling accommodations... there is a shortage of safe or sanitary dwelling accommodations available at rents or prices which persons of low income can afford and that such shortage forces such persons to occupy unsanitary, unsafe, and overcrowded dwelling accommodations.³³

The OHAA noted that these conditions cause an increase in, and spread of, crime and disease, and found that substandard accommodations “constitute a menace to the health, safety, morals, and welfare of the residents of the state.”³⁴ Additionally, substandard housing was considered an economic liability to the state as it necessitated increased and disproportionate expenses on crime prevention, public health and safety, and other public and emergency services.³⁵ Section C of the OHAA stated that “these slum areas cannot be cleared nor can the shortage of safe and sanitary dwellings for persons of low income be adequately relieved through the operation of private enterprise” and furthermore, any housing project undertaken in relation to OHAA would not compete with private enterprise.³⁶ Moreover, the OHAA ruled that the building of public housing was a charitable and thus an accepted use of public funds because it is a matter of state concern. Along with the public interest aspect, the construction of residential resources and their occupation could drive overall economic growth and was therefore a net benefit to the state.

In addition to outlining the need for public housing in Oklahoma and justifying government intervention, the OHAA also authorized the creation of a public housing authority (PHA) in each city and county and with respect to each tribe, band, or nation.³⁷ Although the OHAA authorized the creation of these entities, local governing bodies ultimately decided whether or not to establish a PHA. These local municipalities declared, through formal

³¹ “Senators Hear Arguments ...,” 20.

³² “Senators Hear Arguments ...,” 20.

³³ Oklahoma Statutes, Title 63- Public Health and Safety [digitized online] available at: <https://oksenate.gov/sites/default/files/2019-12/os63.pdf>. The reason for the delay is unknown at this point.

³⁴ Oklahoma Statutes, Title 63- Public Health and Safety.

³⁵ Oklahoma Statutes, Title 63- Public Health and Safety.

³⁶ OHAA efforts were not considered in competition with private industry because private projects could not be completed or rented at the low-costs required.

³⁷ Smith, “Public Housing in Oklahoma,” 8.

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resolution, that a need existed for the local public housing authority to function.³⁸ Once a local government authorized the PHA, they then appointed a local five-person commission to administer the OHAA within the municipality.³⁹ By October 1, 1966, a little over one year after passage of the OHAA, seventy-seven municipalities, including Tulsa, formed local public housing authorities. Collectively they received applications for over ten thousand units.⁴⁰

III. Public Housing in Tulsa, Oklahoma

Brief History of Tulsa Development and Housing

The origins of Tulsa begin with the removal of the Creek peoples from their ancestral lands in Alabama and Georgia and their resettlement to present day Tulsa in 1833. Much of Tulsa remained cattle ranch land until the arrival of the St. Louis and San Francisco railroad in 1882.⁴¹ The arrival of the railroad quickly spurred development, and by 1890 the population numbered one thousand. Tulsa incorporated eight years later on January 18, 1889, and by 1900 the population numbered nearly fourteen hundred.⁴² Tulsa continued to grow at a steady pace until the discovery of oil in the area in 1901, and again in 1905, which triggered a substantial population and development boom. Between 1900 and 1910, the Tulsa population rose from roughly fourteen hundred to just over eighteen thousand, an increase of nearly 1,205 percent.⁴³ The discovery of oil in the vicinity drew scores of oilmen to the burgeoning city, leading to a robust period of economic growth and physical development within Tulsa. By 1920 the population soared to over 70,000 and by 1940 had more than doubled to 142,157.⁴⁴

Tulsa continued to expand at a slower, although steady, rate over the next decade. Suburban post-World War II expansion drove growth as Tulsa annexed housing additions developed on the periphery of the city. In 1948 alone Tulsa annexed forty-three housing additions, primarily in the south and northeast.⁴⁵ In addition to record annexation, Tulsa also experienced a record year in building. Over four thousand new single-family dwellings

³⁸ Smith, "Public Housing in Oklahoma," 8-9.

³⁹ Smith, "Public Housing in Oklahoma," 9.

⁴⁰ Smith, "Public Housing in Oklahoma," 1.

⁴¹ Carl E. Gregory, "Tulsa," *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*.

⁴² Gregory, "Tulsa."

⁴³ Gregory, "Tulsa."

⁴⁴ Tulsa City Council, *A History of Tulsa Annexation* (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Tulsa City Council, 2004): 5.

⁴⁵ Tulsa City Council, *A History of Tulsa Annexation*, 9.

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and thirteen hundred apartment units were estimated to be completed by the close of the year.⁴⁶ A second large annexation program the following year added an additional six and one-half square miles to the city limits and approximately seventy-five hundred persons to the population.⁴⁷ This pattern of growth continued well into the 1950s. By 1950, Tulsa had more than doubled in land area and the population reached 182,740. By 1960 the population had soared to 258,271.⁴⁸

The substantial growth in population after World War II left Tulsa in urgent need of housing. While FHA-secured mortgages for single-family dwellings constituted the bulk of home building during this period, the construction of rental housing under FHA programs also reached record numbers. In 1948, thirty-five projects representing \$9 million in FHA loans were approved in Tulsa.⁴⁹ Despite these advances, Tulsa still suffered from a shortage of housing, especially for low-income people. Private developers completed the new construction of rental property within the city, and consequently, rental prices prevented many low-income Tulsans from acquiring these units. In a January 1948 *Tulsa Tribune* article detailing three prominent rental housing projects either underway or scheduled to commence, rents were reported to range from \$49.50 to \$80 per month, far outside the reach of Tulsa's impoverished.⁵⁰ Although the need for low-income housing was acknowledged by 1948, it was not until the passage of the Oklahoma Housing Authorities Act of 1965 and the subsequent establishment of the Tulsa Housing Authority in 1966 that substantial, coordinated efforts to house low-income Tulsans commenced.

Seminole Hills: An Experiment in Low-Income Housing

Although the Tulsa Housing Administration (THA) was not officially formed until 1966, wheels were in motion as early as 1962. That year, the Tulsa City Commission authorized Mayor James L. Maxwell (1958-1966) to sign a contract for a \$136,275 Federal Housing Administration grant to oversee a low-income housing project.⁵¹ The five-year demonstration project called for one hundred single-family homes to be built within the Seminole Hills Urban Renewal Project area.⁵² Once completed, the homes were available on a lease-to-own basis to low-income families in Tulsa. The houses would sell for \$9,000 and families were required to make a \$300 down payment

⁴⁶ "Tulsa Builds: Population Gains Have Happened Before but the Year 1948 is the Record Year in Building History," *Tulsa Magazine* (Winter Quarterly, 1948-1949): 7.

⁴⁷ Tulsa City Council, *A History of Tulsa Annexation*, 9.

⁴⁸ "Annexations Double Tulsa's Land Area in '50s," *Tulsa Tribune* (January 16, 1960); Gregory, "Tulsa."

⁴⁹ Julian Rothbaum, "Tulsa Builds Housing in 1948," *Tulsa Magazine* (Winter Quarterly, 1948-1949): 18.

⁵⁰ "Tulsa Apartment Work Leads Area," *Tulsa Tribune* (January 2, 1948). This is equivalent to \$543.62 and \$878.58 respectively.

⁵¹ "City OK's Low-Income Federal Housing Grant," *Tulsa World* (August 1, 1962): n.p. This grant is equivalent to roughly \$1.17 million in 2020.

⁵² "Seminole Hills Project Wins National Interest," Unidentified Tulsa Newspaper, n.d. Vertical File, Tulsa Urban Renewal, Tulsa Public Library.

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within the five-year project period.⁵³ Eligible families were limited to a monthly income between \$175 and \$300.⁵⁴ The federal grant assisted with the home purchase and provided community services within the housing project. Over one-third of the grant funds, \$50,000, would be loans for the buyers while \$40,000 would go towards administration, \$25,000 for social work, and \$10,000 for contingencies.⁵⁵ The balance would go to the University of Tulsa to produce reports on the project.

Located in northeast Tulsa, the Seminole Hills project was the first housing project completed in association with urban renewal in the city.⁵⁶ The experimental program was a unique venture in the United States and from the outset was considered by some within the government and housing industries to be the precursor to private industry's answer to public housing.⁵⁷ The single-family dwellings within the project area were constructed by area builders and underwritten by the Tulsa Homebuilders Administration. Rent payments were limited to roughly 20 percent of a resident's total income and were applied towards the purchase of the house.⁵⁸ The pilot project attempted to forestall perceived fraud and abuses within government-assisted housing programs.⁵⁹ Some of the constructed homes were valued at nearly \$16,000, with supporters believing a sense of ownership and pride would inspire residents to maintain the area and, in turn, make the redevelopment a success.⁶⁰ Through administering the program as rent-to-own, the program hoped to limit the dereliction of property or financial failings, including the refusal of tenants to pay rent, that many opponents associated with low-income housing. Although the Seminole Hills project indicated an interest in and willingness to develop low-income housing in Tulsa, the city was yet to move forward with the development of public-housing programs. However, following passage of the OHAA, the city began to explore new options.

Tulsa Housing Authority Founding and Early Years

Shortly after the passage of the Oklahoma Housing Authorities Act, Tulsa began to explore establishing a public housing authority. In an October 1966 announcement addressing housing in Tulsa, the Tulsa Metropolitan Area Planning Commission stated that nearly one-fifth of the city's housing was substandard and that most tools to

⁵³ Purchase price and down payments were roughly equivalent to \$77,567 and \$2,586, respectively, in 2020.

⁵⁴ "City OK's Low-Income Federal Housing Grant." Roughly equivalent to between \$862 and \$2,586 2020.

⁵⁵ "City OK's Low-Income Federal Housing Grant."

⁵⁶ "Seminole Hills Project Wins National Interest."

⁵⁷ George Kane, "Abuses in Public Housing Expensive for Taxpayers," *Tulsa World* (March 20, 1964): n.p.

⁵⁸ Kane, "Abuses in Public Housing"

⁵⁹ Kane, "Abuses in Public Housing"

⁶⁰ Equivalent to roughly \$134,338 in 2020.

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improve this situation were federal government aid programs.⁶¹ The same year, Tulsa Mayor James Hewgley (1966-1970) received recommendations from several organizations, including a one-hundred-twenty-five-member citizens committee, and city entities to establish a housing authority in Tulsa.⁶² Following these recommendations, the Tulsa city commissioners authorized creation of the Tulsa Housing Authority (THA) in December 1966.⁶³ James Clouse served as the first director, and the THA office officially opened in 1967.⁶⁴ At the time of founding, an estimated 13,000 Tulsa families, roughly 17 percent of the population, could not afford adequate housing per reports.⁶⁵ Nearly 19 percent of Tulsa homes were found to be substandard, with roughly 12,000 considered deteriorated while 3,500 were classified as dilapidated.⁶⁶ At the time of the THA's founding, reports indicated 72 percent of welfare recipients lived in substandard housing. Of those, 91 percent had sanitation violations, 62 percent had electrical issues, 72 percent had experienced at least one major fire, and 50 percent had one or more reported tuberculosis cases.⁶⁷ A study issued by the Tulsa Metropolitan Area Planning Committee in 1963 found that approximately 85,000 low-income housing units would be needed by 1975. Of these, 62,600 units were allocated to new population growth while an estimated 14,650 units were allocated to families displaced by urban renewal or other government action.⁶⁸ Of the anticipated displaced families, an estimated 8,900 earned less than \$3,000 annually while nearly 13,000 had an income of less than \$5,000 a year.⁶⁹ Over 25 percent of displaced families would require housing costing less than \$6,000 annually or \$60 per month.⁷⁰

Beginning in late 1967, the City Demonstration Agency of Tulsa prepared a lengthy report titled *Tulsa Model Cities Program: A Comprehensive Demonstration Program to Improve the Quality of Urban Life*. Associated with the Federal Model Cities program established under the Johnson Administration, the Tulsa Model Cities Program had three areas of focus: city planning, social services, and economic projects.⁷¹ The program identified several areas of the city which were considered the most disadvantaged and which would benefit most from the

⁶¹ "Planners Says Much Housing Substandard," *Tulsa Tribune* (October 1, 1966): n.p.

⁶² Ginnie Graham, "Once-Cluttered Housing Agency Cleaned Up," *Tulsa World* (January 28, 2007): n.p.

⁶³ Graham, "Once-Cluttered Housing Agency Cleaned Up."

⁶⁴ "Housing Official Going to Tulsa," *Daily Oklahoman* (July 27, 1967): 21.

⁶⁵ Graham, "Once-Cluttered Housing Agency Cleaned Up." The article did not specify if seniors were included in this number.

⁶⁶ Graham, "Once-Cluttered Housing Agency Cleaned Up."

⁶⁷ Graham, "Once-Cluttered Housing Agency Cleaned Up."

⁶⁸ This estimation also included families displaced by highway construction, conde enforcement, or similar government undertaking.

⁶⁹ Equivalent to between approximately \$23,378 and \$38,964 per year in 2020.

⁷⁰ Approximately \$46,757 and \$467.57, respectively, in 2020.

⁷¹ Amber Wagoner, "Downtown Revitalized, Community Organized: A Comparative Analysis of Tulsa, Oklahoma and Portland, Oregon" (2016). *University Honors Theses*. Paper 228. <https://doi.org/10.15760/honors.226>. See also Tonne England, *Tulsa Model Cities*, Tulsa, OK: Tulsa Model Cities Program, 1971.

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program. These areas were designated Model Cities Neighborhoods. The study analyzed the current state of housing in Tulsa and made recommendations for improved housing measures.⁷² The report found that 14,800 (16 percent) of Tulsa housing units were classified as substandard while 6,993 (67.8 percent) of housing units in Model Neighborhoods were considered as such.⁷³ A further 3,015 (3 percent) and 4,318 (41.9 percent) of total city and Model Neighborhood units, respectively, were classified as dilapidated and unrepairable. Per the report, the basic underlying causes of the Tulsa housing problem included inadequate original construction, obsolescent platting and improvements, the over-building of land, low household incomes, prejudicial attitudes, and an inadequate housing supply.⁷⁴ Compounding the problem was deficiencies in services and administration of existing programs.⁷⁵ A lack of code enforcement in low-income areas of the city coupled with restrictions on the eligibility, scope, and levels of benefit provided to low-income citizens by available public assistance programs also contributed to housing problems.

Despite inadequacies in Tulsa housing, many citizens resisted public housing projects in the city. The founding and construction of early THA projects were met with public outcry; complaints were based on unsubstantiated assumptions and often highlighted racist and classist attitudes.⁷⁶ Commonly expressed concerns included overcrowded schools, increased traffic, and reduced property values. Opponents feared that public housing projects would result in a significant increase in the number of poor, black residents in one place and that concentrations of impoverished peoples would result in increased crime.⁷⁷ In spite of early opposition, efforts to establish public housing began quickly. In April 1967, the Tulsa City Commission and the THA approved an application for \$450,000 in federal funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to develop plans for approximately 3000 low-rent units.⁷⁸ However, by the end of 1967, only roughly 240 units were available and over 300 applications were made to THA.⁷⁹ Of the available units, fifty (50) were for elderly

⁷² Mayor Hewgley submitted the completed report to HUD on February 3, 1969, roughly two years after the study began.

⁷³ *Tulsa Model Cities Program: A Comprehensive Demonstration Program to Improve the Quality of Urban Life*, City Demonstration Agency, Tulsa, Oklahoma (1969): I-51.

⁷⁴ *Tulsa Model Cities Program*, I-52.

⁷⁵ *Tulsa Model Cities Program*, I-52.

⁷⁶ Graham, "Once-Cluttered Housing Agency Cleaned Up."

⁷⁷ Graham, "Once-Cluttered Housing Agency Cleaned Up;" Correspondence between Jack E. Kelley and James Clouse, November 6, 1969, Tulsa Housing Authority Archives, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

⁷⁸ "Funds Requested," *Lawton Constitution* (April 13, 1967): 27. Roughly \$3.5 million in 2020.

⁷⁹ Graham, "Once-Cluttered Housing Agency Cleaned Up."

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residents with incomes less than \$3,000 per year.⁸⁰ The elderly units, located in the Bliss Hotel, rented for \$30 per month.⁸¹

Early THA Turnkey Projects

From its inception, the THA embraced the development of public housing units through the turnkey method established under the Department of Housing and Development in 1966. Turnkey construction authorized private developers to design and construct housing units which were then sold to the THA. Federal public housing guidelines, requirements, and cost limits shaped the developments. An April 1966 contract formulated between HUD and the THA outlined the maximum development cost, statutory development costs, and maximum cost-per-room for eight THA housing projects planned to commence.⁸² Under this contract, the estimated development cost was not to exceed an average of \$2,690,758.⁸³ Several factors, including project size and location, influenced this cost, the cost-per-room limitations remained constant. Public housing projects open to all ages could not exceed \$2,400 per room.⁸⁴ The allowance for elderly units was significantly higher at \$3,500.⁸⁵ Thus, architects and builders of senior public housing projects had a little more design freedom.

In 1968, the THA began seven major building projects. The plans amounted to over \$18 million in projected costs to create roughly 1,260 public housing units for Tulsa residents, with the intention to create an additional 1,580 units over the next three years.⁸⁶ A dedicated administration building was also included in the planning. This aggressive pacing prompted HUD to recognize the THA as one of the most progressive public housing authorities among the region's 630 agencies.⁸⁷ The first one hundred units brought into the THA inventory were acquired through the purchase of the demonstration homes located in the Seminole Hills Urban Renewal Project.⁸⁸

In addition to the acquisition of existing homes within the Seminole Hills project, the THA initiated new turnkey public housing projects. Construction of the two hundred-unit Pioneer Plaza apartments, Tulsa's first public

⁸⁰ "Housing Official Going to Tulsa," 21. Roughly \$23,378 in 2020.

⁸¹ Graham, "Once-Cluttered Housing Agency Cleaned Up." Units in the Bliss Hotel rented for roughly \$233.78 2020.

⁸² Consolidated Annual Contributions Contract: Part 1, PHA-3010, April 1966: 3; THA Archives.

⁸³ Consolidated Annual Contributions Contract: Part 1,3. Equivalent to roughly \$21.6 million.

⁸⁴ Consolidated Annual Contributions Contract: Part 1, 3. Equivalent to roughly \$19,280 in 2020.

⁸⁵ Consolidated Annual Contributions Contract: Part 1, 3. Equivalent to roughly \$28,117 in 2020.

⁸⁶ First National Bank & Trust Company of Tulsa, *Annual Report*, Tulsa, Oklahoma, (1968): 14

⁸⁷ Graham, "Once-Cluttered Housing Agency Cleaned Up."

⁸⁸ "Apartment Unit Plans Authorized," *Tulsa World* (October 29, 1968). Equivalent to roughly \$134.6 million in 2020.

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housing project specifically for the elderly, commenced in January 1968.⁸⁹ By August, three projects for non-seniors were underway, including the 160-unit Apache Manor apartments, 300-unit Comanche Park apartments, and the Seminole Hills Village project.⁹⁰ Unlike the other three projects, Seminole Hills Village was a continuation of an existing low-income housing project. In addition to acquiring the existing homes within the development, 150 new turnkey rental units were constructed. Of these, 145 were apartment units while the remaining five were single family dwellings.⁹¹ With the exception of Pioneer Plaza, all units were expected to be available for lease by spring 1969.⁹²

Housing projects in Tulsa followed national trends at this time. Low-rise developments for families and non-elderly people included single- to four-family dwellings in one- to two-story buildings. The multiple-building complexes included a community center and outdoor recreational facilities. Buildings were utilitarian in nature with little ornamentation. In contrast, high-rise apartment buildings of eight-to-eleven stories exclusively housed elderly residents. This single tower building included public amenities such as community gathering spaces on the main floor. While spare, the tower designs included architectural embellishments not found on other projects such as balconies or decorative masonry.

In late 1968 the THA announced several additional projects. In mid-October, a \$4.2 million contributions contract by HUD signaled the “go-ahead” for two new public housing projects.⁹³ Roughly \$2.4 million was approved for another senior citizens apartment tower while \$1.76 million was approved for the 110-unit Mohawk Manor project.⁹⁴ Nine days later a December 1 start date was announced for the \$3.45 million, 190-unit Riverview Park public housing project in the Westbank I Urban Renewal Project Area (*Figure 1*).⁹⁵ Families earning between \$3,000 and \$3,900 annually were eligible to apply for the one- to four-bedroom garden apartment units.⁹⁶ Although low-cost housing was a city-wide problem, these early THA projects were located primarily in north Tulsa; Riverview Park was the only one constructed south of downtown. THA chairman Joseph M. Wilkerson

⁸⁹ Greg Broadb, “Public Housing Unit a Gem for Old Folks,” *Tulsa World* (November 1969): n.p.

⁹⁰ “Tulsa Classroom Squeeze Expected,” *Oklahoma City Times* (August 14, 1968): 16; League of Women Voters of Tulsa, *Housing Report for Tulsa* (May 1969): 6.

⁹¹ “TURA Still Supporting Housing Plan,” *Tulsa Tribune* (December 4, 1967): n.p.

⁹² League of Women Voters of Tulsa, *Housing Report for Tulsa*, 6. Pioneer Plaza units were not anticipated to be available until November 1969.

⁹³ “Housing Start Signaled In \$4.2 Million Contract,” *Tulsa World* (October 15, 1968): n.p. Equivalent to roughly \$31.4 million in 2020 USD.

⁹⁴ “Housing Start Signaled In \$4.2 Million Contract,” n.p. This apartment tower was later named Hewgley Terrace. Allocations are equivalent to roughly \$17.8 and \$13 million USD, respectively.

⁹⁵ Equivalent to roughly \$25.8 million 2020.

⁹⁶ Equivalent to roughly \$22,438 and \$29,169 in 2020.

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explained that while future THA projects will probably be located “all over town,” the THA was limited in how much it could spend on land and that land was generally cheaper in north Tulsa where it was also closer to people in need of housing.⁹⁷

In 1969, the THA received sixty-six proposals for additional turkey housing projects, but approved only eight developments.⁹⁸ By June of that year, the THA was authorized to construct an additional 1,380 units to add to its inventory of 1,260 units previously contracted or completed.⁹⁹ Construction of the Mohawk Manor development began in January 1969.¹⁰⁰ Hewgley Terrace, a 150-unit senior apartment tower, was approved for a downtown site, and the Riverview Park project was expected to add an additional 190 units. By May 26, 1969, the THA received 3,100 applications for housing and 750 units were occupied.¹⁰¹ The tenant income ceiling was set at \$3,200 per person with an additional allowance of \$400 per dependent; displaced families were given priority followed by veterans and the elderly.¹⁰² Remaining applications were given priority based on the date and time the application was received.¹⁰³ While several projects were underway, the total units available fulfilled roughly 8.6 percent of the needed housing for low-income families.¹⁰⁴ An additional 1,380 units were to be constructed over the following three years, but this did not meet the need.¹⁰⁵ The administration building opened in the fall of 1969 just south of Pioneer Plaza tower.¹⁰⁶

Public Housing Opposition and Resolution

Although the THA committed to several large housing projects within a short span following its activation, controversy and opposition persisted. Throughout the year 1969, the THA and public housing in Tulsa came under attack from various opposition groups including property owners, business groups, and the Tulsa Board of Education. Among reasons for this opposition, site selection, the taxing of existing resources, negative impacts on neighborhoods, and questions about the transparency of THA activities were cited as the most common.

⁹⁷ “Open Meetings to Pinpoint Public Housing Sites Here,” *Tulsa World* (November 19, 1968): n.p.

⁹⁸ League of Women Voters of Tulsa, *Housing Report for Tulsa*, 7.

⁹⁹ “Public Housing Plan Dropped,” *Tulsa Tribune* (June 2, 1969): n.p.

¹⁰⁰ League of Women Voters of Tulsa, *Housing Report for Tulsa*, 6.

¹⁰¹ League of Women Voters of Tulsa, *Housing Report for Tulsa*, 6.

¹⁰² League of Women Voters of Tulsa, *Housing Report for Tulsa*, 6. Equivalent to roughly \$22,695 and \$2,837, respectively, in 2020.

¹⁰³ League of Women Voters of Tulsa, *Housing Report for Tulsa*, 6.

¹⁰⁴ League of Women Voters of Tulsa, *Housing Report for Tulsa*, 7.

¹⁰⁵ League of Women Voters of Tulsa, *Housing Report for Tulsa*, 7.

¹⁰⁶ Building in use by THA in October 1969 according to “Protest Fails to Materialize on Southwest Housing Units,” *Tulsa World* (9 October 1969): E-8, clipping in 1940s-1960s folder, Tulsa Public Housing vertical file, Tulsa City/County Public Library.

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The selection of public housing project sites was particularly contentious. Concerns were first raised in 1968, prompting THA chairman Wilkerson to explain that land price and areas of need influenced site selection and the concentration of public housing projects in north Tulsa was the result of this.¹⁰⁷ Not only was land generally cheaper in north Tulsa, but also it was closer to people who needed housing, reducing the number of displaced persons. Thus, Wilkerson explained, north Tulsa was the logical area to complete public housing developments.¹⁰⁸ Displeasure over the development of public housing projects in north Tulsa spilled over into the following year. While protestors asserted that they were not opposed to large public housing projects, many believed that too many projects were completed in north and west Tulsa and that projects should instead be divided between all parts of the city.¹⁰⁹

Although much of the early opposition to public housing projects was located in north and west Tulsa, complaints arose from all sections of the city. During the summer of 1969, area property owners near the East Central High School in east Tulsa circulated roughly 1,500 petitions in opposition of a proposed public housing project in the area.¹¹⁰ The petitions cited concerns that schools and existing infrastructure could be overloaded, property owners might be assessed to pay for road improvements, and that area property values may decline.¹¹¹ That fall, the Southwest Tulsans for a Better Community group and City Finance Commissioner Jack O'Brien raised concerns that too high a concentration of public housing was being built in their section of the city and that THA procedures did not allow adequate time or provide sufficient information for involvement of the public when considering projects.¹¹²

Transparency, especially regarding site selection and public participation, was another key opposition issue. Although the THA was legally required to hold public meetings concerning upcoming projects, opponents regularly charged that these meetings were either held too late in the project planning process or were not sufficiently advertised to the public. The THA published the stipulated notices in small ads located within the *Tulsa County Legal News*, a publication with limited circulation.¹¹³ This choice prompted many accusations that, although the THA was in compliance with the law, it did not honor the spirit of the law, purposefully preventing public involvement.¹¹⁴ Public outrage at this perceived action was swift and strong; the Southwest Tulsans for a

¹⁰⁷ "Open Meetings to Pinpoint Public housing Sites Here."

¹⁰⁸ "Open Meetings to Pinpoint Public housing Sites Here."

¹⁰⁹ "Public Housing Plan Dropped."

¹¹⁰ Bob Beck, "East Residents Buck Low-Rent Housing Plan," *Tulsa Word* (June 22, 1969): n.p.

¹¹¹ Beck, "East Residents Buck Low-Rent Housing Plan."

¹¹² Jo Ann Bond, "Protests Prompt Call for Study of Public Housing," *Tulsa World* (October 16, 1969): 1C, 8C.

¹¹³ Jim Henderson, "Torrid Criticism Aimed at Public Housing" *Tulsa World* (June 16, 1969): n.p.

¹¹⁴ Henderson, "Torrid Criticism Aimed at Public Housing."

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Better Community civic group suggested a referendum on the ordinance that created the THA.¹¹⁵ To address public concerns, Commissioner O'Brien asked the City Commission to request the THA suspend approval of any housing projects pending a re-evaluation of procedures; however, this request was not accepted. In a letter to Mayor Hewgley and the commissioners outlining the request, Commissioner O'Brien cited "a disturbing amount of controversy" had been generated by the "the policies and actions of the Tulsa Housing Authority."¹¹⁶ In response to protests about THA procedures, new public hearings were held, and votes reopened on upcoming public housing projects. Over two hundred members of the public attended the hearings and strongly protested all but one of the presented projects. Following the re-vote, two previously approved projects were cancelled, and four new projects were approved.¹¹⁷

The Tulsa Board of Education and area schools raised similar concerns over the selection of public housing project sites. Although the THA began building public housing units the previous year, not until January 1969 did the Board of Education receive a master plan.¹¹⁸ The school board asserted that it was only notified of some projects, preventing accurate planning since it could not approve the building of new or expanded schools until there was a documented need.¹¹⁹ When notified ahead of time, the board could begin to plan future expansions, reducing the period a school was overcrowded; without notice, overcrowding must be tolerated longer. The Tulsa Board of Education stated that while it was not attempting to dictate public housing sites, seven tentatively approved projects would impair schools through costly and serious overcrowding. Furthermore, in-lieu payments made by the tax-exempt THA directly to the city were insufficient to replace taxes that would be owed by private developments. This contributed to a significant loss in potential funding for schools and prevented reasonable planning and construction of additional facilities to educate area children, including those living in public housing.¹²⁰

The THA modified several procedures to address concerns surrounding site selection and public participation. It announced that it would form a committee to review all site proposals and make recommendations before future projects were approved. The seven-member committee included a representative of the Urban Renewal Authority, Tulsa Public Schools, the Tulsa Planning Commission, the Model Cities program, the Federal Housing Administration, the Park Department, and the Tulsa Housing Authority. Per board chairman Wilkinson, each

¹¹⁵ "Calls Blast City Stand On Housing," Unidentified Tulsa newspaper, n.d, 1969. Public Housing Vertical File, Tulsa Public Library. There is currently no evidence this suggestion was followed through.

¹¹⁶ Bond, "Protests Prompt Call for Study of Public Housing."

¹¹⁷ Jim Henderson, "Two-Housing Projects Cancelled by Authority," *Tulsa World* (November 11, 1969) : n.p.

¹¹⁸ Henderson, "Torrid Criticism Aimed at Public Housing."

¹¹⁹ Henderson, "Torrid Criticism Aimed at Public Housing."

¹²⁰ J. Bob Lucas, "Schoolmen Rap THA Projects," *Tulsa Tribune* (July 24, 1969): n.p.

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agency appointed its own representative.¹²¹ According to the THA, future site selection would follow the new procedure. First, the site review committee considered the locations from the list of developer proposals. Following this review the THA held public hearings, notification for which would be placed in Tulsa's two daily newspapers.¹²² If the site was approved by the THA, HUD would then be asked to approve the site.¹²³ Only then would developers be notified to begin preliminary planning and acquire the proper zoning.¹²⁴ Under the new procedure, the public would be notified of potential projects earlier and be given a greater opportunity to have their say before the project moved forward too much.

With the chief public concerns addressed, the THA turned its attention to conditions within public housing projects. In the autumn of 1970, the THA received a report prepared by the University of Tulsa which included several recommendations for alterations to current and future public housing projects. A number of recommendations centered on the design and construction of projects and included, among others, a reduction in the size of projects and the selection of sites in areas with which tenants would already be familiar. Programmatic and social services recommendations were also made. Human relations seminars for THA and housing project site staff, on-site job training programs, health education, and household management sessions were all encouraged. The study also strongly recommended greater inclusion of tenants in decision-making processes. To encourage improved tenant-THA relations and improve access to social services in public housing, the study recommended the creation of the Community Relations Commission within the THA.¹²⁵

The THA designated the Community Relations Commission (CRC) as a coordinating agency to bring social services, including tenant driven initiatives, to public housing projects. The CRC made several recommendations to the THA to broaden the responsibilities of tenant associations, including allowing the associations to take part in the screening and evictions of residents and apartment unit inspections. The Apache Manor apartment complex was selected as the pilot project to try new initiatives. The CRC also recommend the creation of a THA tenant's advisory board to improve communication and dialogue between the agency and residents.¹²⁶ In addition to the recommendations made in the University of Tulsa study and activities of the CRC, Mayor Robert J. LaFortune (1970-1978) highlighted what he termed "the more human aspects of public housing."¹²⁷ Concerned that the THA

¹²¹ "Housing Authority to Hold Hearings on Two Projects," Unidentified Tulsa newspaper, 1969. Tulsa Public Housing Vertical File, Tulsa Public Library.

¹²² J. Bob Lucas, "Site Plan Inadequate?" *Tulsa Tribune* (July 3, 1969): n.p.

¹²³ "Housing Authority to Hold Hearings on Two Projects."

¹²⁴ "Housing Authority to Hold Hearings on Two Projects."

¹²⁵ "Needs are Cited in Public Housing," *Tulsa World* (October 7, 1970): n.p.

¹²⁶ "Housing Tenant Groups Seek Authority Increase," *Tulsa World* (October 11, 1970): n.p.

¹²⁷ Dale Speer, "Mayor Supporting 2 Pilot Programs," *Tulsa World* (December 11, 1970): n.p.

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had made many strides to provide public housing units, but that social services within public housing complexes had not been equally addressed, Mayor LaFortune made a December 1970 recommendation to the City Commission to provide counseling and recreation services to tenants living in public housing. The recommendation proposed a six-month pilot program to provide counselors and recreation supervisors for two public housing projects. Although the Tulsa Park and Recreation Department had previously administered some activities in association with public housing, the partnership had expired the previous summer. These recommendations provided recreation services to public housing tenants for the first time since the agreement ended and offered counseling intended to improve their overall quality of life.

Moratorium and the Conventional Model

Although the THA attempted to quell opposition to public housing projects in 1970, protests against such projects were renewed the following year ultimately resulting in a moratorium on new public housing projects until April 1971.¹²⁸ Site disputes, public input opportunities, and questions regarding turnkey development combined to heavily influence the moratorium. By July 1970, Tulsa had 1,110 public housing apartment units ready for occupancy.¹²⁹ However, some Tulsa residents again argued that in order to create these units, the THA had overstepped its bounds and bypassed public participation by failing to hold hearings or provide sufficient information to allow public input.¹³⁰ At this time turnkey development was also coming under suspicion. While proponents argued the turnkey method facilitated more rapid development, opponents raised alarm over the potential for fraud and graft. Though public officials were legally restricted from entering into contracts with a public housing authority, they were not prohibited from doing business with developers and contractors involved in projects completed for a housing authority.¹³¹ Public distrust in the efficacy of conflict of interest laws and government transparency in relation to turnkey housing projects had a significant influence in Tulsa and Oklahoma as a whole. In the September 1970 gubernatorial run-off, the topic reached the highest level of state government when candidate David Hall was questioned over his involvement in at least three public housing projects, including the Comanche Park project in Tulsa.¹³² As public opinion became increasingly opposed to THA practices and turnkey construction, the agency was forced to revisit its methods.

¹²⁸ "Extension Urged on Housing Ban," *Lawton Constitution* (January 20, 1971): 14. Projects previously approved were not subject to the moratorium.

¹²⁹ "Public Housing is Ailing," *Philadelphia Daily News* (July 13, 1970): 19.

¹³⁰ "Public Housing is Ailing," 19.

¹³¹ Dave Dryden, "Tulsa Switches Housing Development to 'Conventional,'" *Daily Oklahoman* (June 14, 1971): 40.

¹³² "Hall Pledged Housing Involvement Statement," *Sapulpa Daily Herald* (September 10, 1970): 9.

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In July 1971, the agency made a significant modification in operation when it switched from turnkey construction to the conventional model.¹³³ Under the conventional model, the THA would select and acquire the site, hire an architect to design the building(s), and then select a builder through a competitive bidding process. The builder with the “lowest and best” bid would be awarded the contract.¹³⁴ This model was the basis for the earliest public housing projects in the country. The decision to transition from turnkey to the conventional model was also influenced by changes in key THA personnel. Prior to the switch, a new executive director, development director, and board chairman joined the THA. These members favored the conventional model, with newly-appointed development director Claude Miller stating that the switch “takes the politics out of things,” and that the THA must move away from the turnkey method “because there can be scandals in it. We [THA] want everything out in the open.”¹³⁵ Although the THA formally embraced the conventional model, the switch did not commit the agency to complete all future projects under it.

The THA quickly announced two new projects to be completed under the conventional method.¹³⁶ Planning for LaFortune Tower, the THA’s first conventional project, began in 1972.¹³⁷ LaFortune Tower was also unique as the first project regulated by new THA policies that required project architects to seek out and include the ideas of affected citizens and groups when designing a housing project.¹³⁸ Murray, Jones, Murray architects were engaged to design the 201-unit elderly housing project which included an eleven-story, 181-unit apartment tower and five fourplexes.¹³⁹ LaFortune Tower joined Pioneer Plaza and Hewgley Terrace as the third public housing project for the elderly in Tulsa and highlighted the desperate need for additional elderly housing units in the city. Construction on LaFortune Towers commenced in 1973. By August of that year, the THA administered 3,034 units, 700 of which housed elderly residents.¹⁴⁰ Both Pioneer Plaza and Hewgley Terrace reached full occupancy and potential residents joined waiting lists. LaFortune Tower opened in October 1975.¹⁴¹

¹³³ Dryden, “Tulsa Switches Housing...,” 40.

¹³⁴ Dryden, “Tulsa Switches Housing...,” 40.

¹³⁵ Dryden, “Tulsa Switches Housing...,” 40.

¹³⁶ Dryden, “Tulsa Switches Housing...,” 40. One of the two projects announced was LaFortune Tower, however the second project is not specified. Contemporary news reports suggest this may refer to the conversion of the Osage Hills apartments to public housing.

¹³⁷ “LaFortune Name Due on Complex,” *Tulsa Tribune* (February 10, 1972); “Public High-Rise Planned,” Unidentified Tulsa newspaper, c. 1972. Tulsa Public Housing Vertical File, Tulsa Public Library.

¹³⁸ “Public High-Rise Planned,” Unidentified Tulsa newspaper, c. 1972. Tulsa Public Housing Vertical File, Tulsa Public Library.

¹³⁹ “Housing Tower Approved for Tulsa Elderly,” *Tulsa World* (April 11, 1972): n.p.

¹⁴⁰ Bob Foresman, “LaFortune Tower Construction is Near,” *Tulsa Tribune* (August 3, 1973): n.p.

¹⁴¹ “LaFortune Tower Lauded,” *Tulsa Tribune* (October 3, 1975): n.p.

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THA Shifts from Purpose-Built Public Housing

The opening of LaFortune Tower in 1975 marked the end of the era of purpose-built public housing in Tulsa. In keeping with national trends and legislative changes at the federal level, including the passage of the 1974 Community Development Act, the THA shifted its focus away from housing unit production in the mid-1970s. Rather than produce new purpose-built public housing units, the THA re-centered its efforts on Section 8 housing and rent subsidies. This shift was in part due to ongoing economic hardships. In August 1972, funding shortfalls triggered rent increases for tenants across multiple THA projects as well as an anticipated end to the THA leased housing program. The THA faced a \$350,000 operating expense shortfall and soon filed a legal suit against HUD over allocated funds which had not been distributed.¹⁴² The THA ultimately decided to postpone the termination of the leased housing program until the legal suit could be settled, however noted the elimination of the program would result in significant savings for the agency. In a *Tulsa World* article covering the issue, THA director Tom Hares reported ending the program would result in a savings of roughly \$100,000 but would also require the eviction of some two hundred families.¹⁴³

In the spring of 1973, Tulsa was chosen as one of twelve cities to participate in an experimental program developed by HUD to study the efficacy of various types of agencies over subsidized housing projects.¹⁴⁴ Although developed under HUD, the THA would administer the two-year program which provided rent subsidies for up to nine hundred low-income families in Tulsa.¹⁴⁵ Unlike existing rent subsidy programs, the experimental program was not limited to specific housing units and instead allowed qualified tenants to receive the monthly market rent for modest, standard housing less 25 percent of their income. The subsidy was then to be used for housing of their choice. Planning to develop the execution of the program was to begin in May with a program-start date anticipated for July 1.

The first families to participate in the experimental program registered in July, with the remainder of the nine hundred-family quota to be filled over the following seven months.¹⁴⁶ HUD made available subsidies totaling \$1.5 million in dispersal during the project.¹⁴⁷ Although the project was originally planned to span two years, this staggered start meant the project would ultimately extend to three years. Director Hares stated the typical participant family would have a monthly rent of \$143, including utilities, and the subsidy would pay an estimated

¹⁴² "Rent Boost OKd [sic] in Public Housing," *Tulsa World* (August 31, 1972): D4. Equivalent to roughly \$2.12 million in 2020.

¹⁴³ "Rent Boost OKd [sic] in Public Housing," D4. Equivalent to roughly \$622,679 in 2020.

¹⁴⁴ "City Among 12 Chosen for New Housing Program," *Tulsa Tribune* (April 18, 1973): n.p..

¹⁴⁵ "City Among 12 Chosen for New Housing Program."

¹⁴⁶ Steve Logue, "900 Tulsa Families to Get U.S. Rent Subsidies," *Tulsa Tribune* (May 25, 1973): n.p.

¹⁴⁷ Equivalent to roughly \$8.8 million in 2020.

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\$80 with the tenant responsible for the remaining \$63.¹⁴⁸ Eligible tenants were required to meet gross income criteria based on family size.¹⁴⁹

Family Size	Gross Income Cap (1973)	Equivalent in 2021 USD ¹⁵⁰
1	\$3,800	\$23,518
2	\$4,600	\$28,469
3-4	\$6,000	\$37,134
5-6	\$7,200	\$44,561
7+	\$9,050	\$56,010

By mid-1977, the THA operated 4,534 housing units, 2,434 (54 percent) of which it owned.¹⁵¹ The remainder were privately owned units leased or otherwise subsidized. In July 1977, the THA began the dissolution of its leased housing program, slashing the number of units from six hundred to three hundred.¹⁵² Through the program, which first began testing in 1973, the THA leased private property and subsidized the rent for approved tenants.¹⁵³ Although the THA substantially reduced the number of public housing units available under this plan, it expanded units available under the Section 8 program. Under this alternative, tenants were allowed to choose their own housing and the THA provided a subsidy for rent.¹⁵⁴ In contrast to the leased housing program which lost 50 percent of its units, the new program increased from three hundred to nine hundred units, resulting in a net increase of three hundred public housing units.¹⁵⁵ Following national trends, rent subsidies replaced new, purpose-built public housing construction as the primary mode of providing housing assistance in Tulsa.

Conclusion

Between 1966 and 1975, the Tulsa Housing Authority (THA) sought to alleviate the shortage of safe, secure, and affordable low-income housing through the construction of purpose-built public housing units. When the Oklahoma legislature passed the Oklahoma Housing Authorities Act in 1965, the state became one of the last

¹⁴⁸ Monthly rent equivalent to roughly \$838 in 2020 USD, with approximately \$469 and \$368 paid by the subsidy and tenant, respectively.

¹⁴⁹ Logue, "900 Tulsa Families to Get U.S. Rent Subsidies."

¹⁵⁰ Rounded to nearest dollar.

¹⁵¹ "Tulsa Housing Authority Closes Leasing Program," *Daily Oklahoman* (July 14, 1977): 67.

¹⁵² "Tulsa Housing Authority Closes Leasing Program," 67.

¹⁵³ "Rent Subsidy Test," *The Daily Oklahoman* (May 26, 1973):61.

¹⁵⁴ "Tulsa Housing Authority Closes Leasing Program," 67.

¹⁵⁵ "Tulsa Housing Authority Closes Leasing Program," 67.

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states to authorize the creation of local public housing authorities. This authorizing legislation allowed the city to establish the Tulsa Housing Authority in 1966. The primary goal of this agency was to address a problem which had been acknowledged decades prior. Although Tulsa housing had undergone impressive growth immediately following World War II, newly constructed housing was too costly for many low-income Tulsans or was in suburban neighborhoods far from services on which they relied. Simultaneously, much of the city's older, more affordable housing stock had fallen into disrepair, leaving a large percentage of low-income residents in substandard housing.

The development of public housing projects completed under the THA was heavily influenced by federal public housing policy and programs. Most were completed utilizing the turnkey construction program, established by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in 1966, whereby a private developer selected a site and constructed units at a fixed price. Upon completion, the project was then transferred to the THA to manage. Construction of the first purpose-built public housing projects in Tulsa began under this method in 1968, however public opposition emerged almost immediately. Between 1969 and 1971, concerns frequently rose over site selection, public involvement opportunity, the overtaxing of resources, and transparency. Ultimately, these concerns forced the THA to modify its public hearing, site selection, and construction policies.

Although purpose-built public housing had been the primary focus of the THA since its inception, the agency shifted its method of providing housing during the early 1970s, as leasing and rent subsidy programs began to provide an increasing number of housing units. As federal public housing policy moved to prioritize such programs over the creation of purpose-built public housing units the THA followed suit. The last purpose-built public housing building completed under the THA was constructed in 1975. Following the completion of this project, the Tulsa Housing Authority continued to provide public housing services, however it did so primarily through programs such as rent subsidies for private properties.

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Section F: Associated Property Types

Properties eligible under this context were constructed for the Tulsa Housing Authority (THA) between its formation in 1966 and 1975 specifically for low-income tenants or to support the administration of the city's public housing program (*Appendix A*). The state legislature passed the Oklahoma Housing Authorities Act in 1965, enabling cities like Tulsa to form entities to oversee the construction and administration of low-rent housing within their jurisdictions. In 1966, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) established the Turnkey Construction program to reduce the amount of time local jurisdictions required to plan and construct housing. Under this program, private developers assumed the expense and execution of the housing project and upon completion, transferred ownership of the property to the local housing authority. Most of the housing projects constructed for the Tulsa Housing Authority utilized the turnkey method. Only one project, LaFortune Towers, was built under HUD's conventional public housing program.

Public housing property types found in Tulsa include complexes with multiple buildings and individual high-rises. Project locations within the city were intentionally selected. The first public housing projects in Tulsa were constructed in the 1960s during an intense era of growth and urban renewal. Housing was placed on available land, regardless of proximity to central business districts. Projects occurred on previously undeveloped land at the outskirts of town; however, areas deemed blighted also were replaced with new dwellings. High-rise senior housing projects were located near downtown.

Property Type: Low-rise Housing Project

Low-rise Housing Projects will be evaluated as historic districts due to their characteristics as planned building complexes whose component parts often lack distinction. Eight of the eleven housing projects constructed in Tulsa are low-rise projects. These projects are collections of one- to two-story buildings that house one or more dwellings for families. Each project includes a small community building with offices, gathering spaces, and often laundry facilities. Landscape planning includes recreational areas such as playgrounds and ball courts, trash enclosures, and clotheslines. Parking occurs in designated lots; each building at South Haven Manor has a driveway.

Because of cost control measures, buildings are primarily utilitarian in character. Brick is the most common cladding material, and it is often mixed with lap siding either to distinguish window bays or second stories. Roofs are generally asphalt shingle; although, standing seam metal has been used as a replacement material in at least one project. Most windows have been replaced. Roof forms range from gable to gable-on-hip to gambrel, as at Comanche Park.

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Property Type: High-rise Housing Project

The Tulsa Housing Authority inventory includes three high-rise structures built for senior citizens. After 1968, federal law disallowed the use of high-rise elevator structures for public housing except as senior housing. The High-rise Housing Projects range from eight (Hewgley Terrace) to eleven (Pioneer Plaza and LaFortune Tower) stories. High-rise Housing Projects will be nominated as buildings.

The design of High-rise Housing Projects contrasts with those of their low-rise counterparts. Costs per square foot were higher for senior housing projects, which led to more freedom of design. For instance, balconies are a common characteristic of these high-rise apartment buildings, and interiors feature design details not found in low-rise buildings. At Hewgley Terrace, for instance, a fireplace adorns the main lounge. Brick and concrete are the predominant exterior materials at the three towers in Tulsa, and each features a flat roof. Outdoor recreation spaces such as terraces and patios are integrated into the designs of the buildings.

Of Tulsa's housing projects, the senior high-rise towers are located closest to downtown. These buildings are the focal points of their sites, even if the site contains other buildings. Landscaping is minimal and confined mostly to grassy areas and a few ornamental trees. Parking occurs in designated lots surrounding the towers.

Programmatically, the main floor functions as the community space with offices, lounges, and recreation rooms. Central double-loaded corridors organize studio and one-bedroom apartments on each of the upper floors. When first constructed, the building manager lived on the main floors of each building in a two-bedroom unit; today these are rented to tenants.

Property Type: Administration Building

In 1969, the Tulsa Housing Authority decided to repurpose a building to the south of Pioneer Plaza as a dedicated administration building. From early 1967, when THA began operation, to the fall of 1969, the organization functioned out of existing city buildings. The THA deemed the former bottling plant near Pioneer Plaza convenient for reuse as an administration and maintenance building.

The Dr. Pepper Company constructed the two-story flat-roofed brick building in 1959 as a bottling plant (*Figure 3*).¹⁵⁶ The concrete framed structure historically contained a two-story volume of space with a smaller two-story brick office mass at the south end of the building. Alterations in 1969 converted the open interior into two usable

¹⁵⁶ "Apartment Site View Spectacular," *Tulsa Tribune*, n.d. [1969], clipping in Pioneer Plaza folder, Tulsa Public Housing vertical file, Tulsa City/County Public Library.

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floors for offices and public meeting rooms. The L-shaped plan includes the main rectangular mass constructed in 1959 and a smaller rectangular addition constructed between 1970 and 1980. Brick additions to the primary south façade created a full rectangular footprint. The 1969 brick additions match the brick used on Pioneer Plaza. The circa 1975 west brick addition sets back a few feet from the south elevation of the 1959 building. The tapestry brick is a different color.

The primary south elevation features regularly spaced windows on both stories between brick stair towers. A metal canopy covers the entrance bay in the center of the elevation. Five regular bays organize the south elevation of the addition. Inset window walls fill the first story, and large tripartite windows pierce the upper façade. Individual fixed windows pierce the west and north elevations of the addition. The west concrete wall of the 1959 features a shed-roof entrance at the south end, adjacent to the addition. Two large garage bays pierce the north elevation. The east elevation of the building is devoid of fenestration. The interior of the building features updated finishes throughout.

Significance of Public Housing Property Types

For a property to be eligible for the National Register it must retain historic integrity and have documented historic significance at a local, statewide, or national level. There are four criteria of historic significance under which a resource could be eligible.¹⁵⁷ Criterion A is for those properties associated with events that have made significant contributions to the broad patterns of the nation's collective history; Criterion B properties are associated with significant people; Criterion C represents those resources that embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, are the work of a master, or represent a distinguishable entity whose individual components lack distinction; and Criterion D covers properties that have yielded or are likely to yield important information. Eligible properties in Tulsa will be locally significant and nominated under Criterion A and/or C.

Local Significance

Resources eligible under this context are expected to be locally significant for their associations with public housing in Tulsa; none are expected to be significant at a statewide or national level. The need for adequate housing was a national issue, but national housing policies impacted the character of public housing projects in Tulsa. Eligible properties will demonstrate how their existence within the historic housing context of Tulsa—public or otherwise—is significant. A project's importance is based on how it was intended to meet the need for low-rent housing, how it fit within or influenced local architecture and/or community planning, how it demonstrated or influenced the social and political history of its community, among other factors. Decisions

¹⁵⁷ For additional guidance on how to apply these criteria, see National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation (1990, rev.)

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regarding the construction, maintenance, and administration of housing projects were made within the Administration Building, which also hosted public meetings and resident gatherings. The building functioned as a focal point of the administration of Tulsa's public housing program.

Criterion A: Association with Significant Events

Potential Areas of Significance: Social History

A property may be eligible under Criterion A for its association with the efforts of the Tulsa Housing Authority to provide housing for people in need between 1966 and 1975. The projects constructed in Tulsa are the results of political and social events that shaped the city and provided housing. An eligible resource must demonstrate its significant association with the THA to alleviate housing shortages beginning with the establishment of the housing authority in 1966. An eligible property must successfully argue how it represents the themes and contexts discussed in Section E within Tulsa.

The following research questions can help to determine if a project is significant under this criterion: How did the project seek to alleviate housing shortages within Tulsa; did it fulfill the need? What federal laws provided for this housing? What was the city's attitude toward public housing? What demographics were most in need of housing at the time a project was planned and constructed; why? What was the impact of the housing on said demographic? How did the community react to the proposed project, and how did community reaction affect the project? How (or does) does this project fit within Tulsa's housing and urban renewal context? THA annual reports and local newspaper articles, especially from the time of project dedication, can be resources for answering these questions.

Public housing projects created within the context of this document may be eligible under Criterion A in the area of *Social History* for their association with the direct efforts of the federal government through the THA to promote the welfare of the Tulsa's poorest residents by providing a decent home; The greatest number of eligible resources are expected to be significant under Criterion A in the area of *Social History*.

Criterion B: Association with Significant People

No resources are expected to be eligible under Criterion B. None of the extant Tulsa projects is directly associated with a person significant to the political and social context of public housing. Properties named for an individual are not eligible under Criterion B unless that individual had a direct, exceptionally significant role in the construction of the project. Although named for Mayor James Hewgley, who initiated the creation of the THA, Hewgley Terrace (1970) is not eligible for its association with the mayor. Further, no projects in Tulsa best represent a significant person's historic contribution to the context of public housing. It should be also noted that while significant events related to a significant person may have occurred in a nominated property, unless the

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property was the focus of the event and person related to public housing, it is not eligible under this context for that reason.

Criterion C: Design/Construction

Potential Areas of Significance: Architecture, Community Planning & Development

Few public housing projects in Tulsa are expected to be eligible under Criterion C. However, the dwelling structures embodied the guidelines established by HUD that physically characterize public housing. None of the projects constructed in Tulsa are expected to be the work of a master or possess high artistic value. Rather, there may be examples that embody the distinctive characteristics of a public housing project.

To determine the significance of a project under Criterion C, the following questions can guide research: What extant features characterize the property (e.g., ornamentation, spatial arrangements between buildings and public spaces, historic materials) and are they highly intact? How does the property reflect HUD's design guidelines? How does this project uniquely interpret the established guidelines, overcoming challenges set forth in the guidelines? How does this property differ from similar properties within Tulsa, especially similar public housing developments?

Projects created within the context of this document may be eligible under Criterion C in the area of (1) *Architecture* if the created property represents a distinctive example of public housing within the confines of established guidelines that overcome the challenges of the prescribed guidelines; (2) *Architecture* if the component parts represent a highly intact and distinguishable example of a planned public housing project, even if the design is not of high artistic value, because it exemplifies the era; (3) *Community Planning & Development* as a significant and good example of public housing that illustrates urban planning theories of the time period that reshaped the landscape, often replacing substandard dwellings and altering the spatial arrangement of a specific part of a community.

Criterion D: Information Potential

Eligible public housing projects are extant with few if any significant missing components. As such, properties are not expected to be eligible under Criterion D.

Criteria Consideration G: Properties Less than Fifty Years Old¹⁵⁸

Due to the time period covered under this context (1965-1975), Criteria Consideration G will apply to some of the eligible properties. A property listed in the National Register generally must be at least fifty years old in order

¹⁵⁸ For more information, see National Register Bulletin 22: Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years (1979, rev. 1998).

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for its significance to be based on documented historical perspective. However, properties which have gained significance within the past fifty years can be eligible for the National Register if their historic significance is documented to be exceptionally important to its local, state, or national context. The exceptional significance of eligible public housing constructed within the last fifty years is contextually explained in this document's Section E, which discusses the contexts within which projects were built in Tulsa. Properties less than fifty years old are also the direct results of events, laws, and architectural trends discussed within this document; to be eligible as part of this document, a property meeting Criteria Consideration G will be significant under one of the criteria described above. No other Criteria Considerations are expected to apply to properties nominated under this cover document.

Registration Requirements for Public Housing Project Types

Individual buildings and historic districts nominated under this context must have been constructed for the Tulsa Housing Authority as a High-rise Housing Project, a Low-rise Housing Project, or as the administration building. Eligible properties nominated under historic context must be locally significant under Criteria A and/or C, as described above, as well as retain historic integrity.¹⁵⁹ All properties change over time, but the degree to which the alterations have occurred needs to be evaluated to ensure that a Tulsa housing project continues to convey its historic significance.

An eligible resource must be in its original *location*. The location of a project within the City of Tulsa was intentionally planned and is therefore an integral part of its physical historic context. Properties will not be relocated. Although no known cases exist, individual dwelling structures formerly part of Low-rise Housing Projects that have been relocated away from the original project location have lost their physical context and therefore are not eligible.

Setting refers to the immediate landscape within the nominated boundaries of the property. Setting includes the way in which buildings relate to each other, how they relate to the landscape, and how the landscape itself defines the property. Setting also refers to how the project relates to its surrounding physical context since the projects were intentionally sited. Intactness of the surrounding environment is not essential to the eligibility of a nominated property.

Design and material alterations must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine if the cumulative effect negatively impacts historic integrity of the project. The *design* of a public housing project is paramount to its historic integrity and significance. Design refers to how buildings are arranged within a landscape and how the

¹⁵⁹ Integrity is defined by a property's location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling.

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landscape may have been altered to support the buildings. Design also refers to what building types were constructed and their character-defining features such as roof forms, fenestration patterns, and entries, and even to what style may have been applied to the buildings. Recent efforts on the part of the THA have updated the original designs of buildings within their housing projects. For instance, buildings at South Haven Manor that formerly had flat, faux mansard roofs now have steeply pitched front gables (*Figure 2*). Other Tulsa projects constructed in a Modern Movement style now have applied Classical style ornamentation such as columns, shutters, and gabled porticos. Buildings must retain their historic forms and spatial relationships to one another. Districts that retain only a small number of original buildings or whose buildings have been substantially altered are unlikely to be eligible. New buildings or site features within a project boundary should be sited so as to not interfere with the circulation and spatial arrangement of the dwelling units.

Design also refers to the interior arrangement and sizes of spaces. Interior intactness of individual dwelling units is not as important as the intactness of the group of dwelling buildings or the spatial arrangements within a high-rise project. Units have often been remodeled to accommodate needs of residents over the years. In high-rises, the interior intactness of public spaces should be discernible (e.g., double-loaded corridors, public lobbies, public gathering spaces, shared amenities), but the intactness of the design of the dwelling units themselves is not as important to eligibility. Interiors should still be legible as residential. For Low-rise Housing Projects, the historic design integrity of the exterior is a priority when assessing eligibility.¹⁶⁰

Materials correspond with design and are related to the individual component parts of a public housing project. A nominated property will have historic integrity if it retains key historic materials from its period of significance. Alterations to THA properties have included the replacement of windows and doors, the installation of new cladding, and the removal of asbestos-containing materials. In assessing material integrity, the property must still clearly convey its historic character. New windows should be of the same or compatible design as the historic ones; they should also be the same size so as not to increase or decrease the dimensions of openings. If historic siding has been replaced, in-kind materials should be used. For example, new lap siding has replaced historic lap siding on several THA properties. The new material may be compatible if historic features of the building, such as window trim has been retained and if the replacement material matches the dimensions and texture of the original. Roof coverings may be new, but roofs should retain their historic shape. Interior materials, especially the finishes and fixtures of individual dwelling units, are expected to have been modernized and are not essential to the overall integrity of the project. Where character-defining materials do occur, such as historic built-ins, these should be retained where feasible.

¹⁶⁰ Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, "Affordable Housing and Historic Preservation," Policy Statement (November 9, 2006): 4. The ACHP recommends keeping a focus on the exterior design of Public Housing.

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It is difficult to evaluate integrity of *workmanship* in many public housing buildings from this time period. Architectural ornament was minimized, low cost building materials emphasized, and modern construction technology utilized. Few projects are expected to have evidence of artisans' labor and skill.

Where integrity of location, setting, design, and materials is intact, the integrity of *feeling* is expected to be present. Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. In other words, it is an eligible property's physical and cultural parts that remain able to convey its historic sense of place. Similarly, a property will retain its integrity of *association* with its historic context if it retains the character-defining physical attributes that express its historic significance. Public housing projects must still communicate their significance through the retention of historic integrity.

Eligible projects will be highly intact and convey their historic character especially through the retention of their historic locations, designs, and materials. When assessing the eligibility of a Low-rise Housing Project, the focus should be on the exterior integrity both in terms of site planning and individual buildings. The eligibility assessment of a High-rise Housing Project should also focus on the integrity of the building's exterior and interior public spaces (lobby, corridors, public gathering spaces).

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Section G: Geographical Data

This cover document applies to public housing projects executed by the Tulsa Housing Authority within the city limits of Tulsa, Tulsa County, Oklahoma. The eleven properties constructed for the THA were each within a six-mile radius of downtown (*Figure 4*). The administration building and two projects, Pioneer Plaza and Hewgley Terrace, are within the downtown environs. Southwest of downtown, across the Arkansas River, are LaFortune Towers and Riverview Park; South Haven and Parkview Terrace are furthest south. The westernmost project is Sandy Park. Northeast of downtown lies Seminole Hills, Apache Manor, Comanche Park, and Mohawk Manor. The three high-rise senior housing projects, Pioneer Plaza, Hewgley Terrace, and LaFortune Tower, are closest to downtown, while the other eight (8) low-rise, family housing properties are located further away from the city center.

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Section H: Methodology

The purpose of this cover document is to streamline the evaluation of public housing projects within the jurisdiction of the Tulsa Housing Authority (THA). The eleven properties constructed between 1966 and 1975 share a historic context. In consultation with both the THA and the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Rosin Preservation prepared this document in conjunction with the National Register nominations for Pioneer Plaza and Hewgley Terrace. This effort developed the single context and registration requirements for use by the THA and SHPO on future registration efforts and/or to aid in the evaluation of these properties for Section 106.

The THA archives, housed in the headquarters building at 415 East Independence Street, provided primary documentation, including formation information of the THA, early meeting minutes of the governing body, and historic plans. The Oklahoma Room at the Tulsa City-County Public Library retains substantial vertical files related to general public housing issues in Tulsa, as well as individual properties. The Tulsa Historical Society supplied a few images of projects, and the Oklahoma State Archives digital collection provided general information about housing laws and housing statistics. Historic issues of local newspaper publications were a significant source of information contemporary to the planning and construction of THA projects.

Rosin Preservation conducted a reconnaissance survey of the THA projects in September 2020 to gather information on current conditions, historic integrity, and property characteristics. Additional survey of Pioneer Plaza and Hewgley Terrace involved visiting the interiors of each tower.

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Figure 1. Riverview Park at 23rd & Maybelle Avenue in western Tulsa, as shown during construction in the fall of 1969. Source: *Tulsa Tribune* (2 October 1969): n.p., clipping in 1940-1960s folder, Tulsa Public Housing vertical file, Tulsa City/County Public Library.



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Figure 2. Top: South Haven Manor in March 1971. Source: J. Bob Lucas, "South Haven—A New Departure," *Tulsa Tribune* (1 March 1971): 1-B, clipping in the 1970 folder, Tulsa Public Housing vertical file, Tulsa City/County Public Library. Bottom: South Haven Manor in March 2012. Source: Google Street View; verified September 2020.



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Figure 3. Snippet of Sheet 51 of the Tulsa Sanborn Map 1915-June 1962, vol. 1., showing the bottling plant that would become the THA administration building. Inset is the THA office in 2020, looking NW, as taken by Brad Finch, f-stop photography.



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Figure 4. Map of Tulsa, showing locations of the eleven public housing projects constructed between 1965-1975. Circle represents a six-mile radius from downtown. Map from Google Earth.



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Appendix A. Tulsa Housing Authority Projects Built between 1966-1975. Note: The National Register eligibility of the following properties has not been assessed.

Project Name	Project No.	Address	Year	Property Type	HUD Program	Notes
Seminole Hills	OKLA 73-1	1624 E Virgin	1969	Family/Multi	Turnkey	Pre-dated THA, but expanded under THA; rehab ca. 2000
Comanche Park	OKLA 73-3	3608 N Quaker	1969	Family/Multi	Turnkey	Rehab. 2020
Pioneer Plaza	OKLA 73-4	901 N Elgin	1969	Senior/Tower	Turnkey	
Apache Manor	OKLA 73-5	2520 N Marion	1969	Family/Multi	Turnkey	Rehab. 2020
Mohawk Manor	OKLA 73-6	3637 N Birmingham	1969	Family/Multi	Turnkey	
Hewgley Terrace	OKLA 73-7	420 S Lawton	1970	Senior/Tower	Turnkey	
Riverview Park	OKLA 73-8	2254 S Jackson	1970	Family/Multi	Turnkey	Demo. 2020
South Haven Manor	OKLA 73-17	4007 W 56 th	1970	Family/Multi	Turnkey	Rehab. ca. 2010
Sandy Park	OKLA 73-10	6301 W 11 th Pl	1971	Family/Multi	Turnkey	Rehab. 2020
Parkview Terrace	OKLA 73-12	5973 S Santa Fe	1971	Family/Multi	Turnkey	
LaFortune Tower	OKLA 73-13	1725 Southwest Blvd	1974	Senior/Multi	Conventional	
THA Administration Building	N/A	415 E Independence Ave	1969	Administration Building	N/A	Core built in 1959; reused and expanded in 1969 for THA