

## ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD GOES  
UPSCALE: REDEVELOPMENT AS  
NEIGHBORHOOD CLEANSING

A Study of Courtyard Housing in the Pittsburgh  
Neighborhood of Squirrel Hill and Gentrification-  
Induced Displacement

Ruth O. Bergman, Doctor of Philosophy, 2011

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Despite an abundance of literature on gentrification that has been published over the past several decades, little attention has been focused on the fate of displacees once they have migrated away from their neighborhoods of origin. This study covers new ground by tracking displacees to their new sites of habitation and applying ethnographic methodologies to collect displacement narratives spanning a decade—from forced relocation to resettlement and beyond. I argue that, notwithstanding the “trauma” of eviction, outmovers were able to tap into their own personal as well as their collective sense of place-identity in order to better negotiate the relocation process, proving to be far more resilient than might otherwise have been anticipated. Furthermore I suggest that the informants, all former residents of a cluster of courtyard enclaves in the Pittsburgh neighborhood of Squirrel Hill, were empowered in their displacement journeys by the everyday practices of collaborative living that

they experienced as participants in a highly articulated socio-spatial system that I have called “court-ordered living.” Finally, this dissertation argues that the discourses surrounding gentrification-induced displacement be reflected upon from the vantage point of hindsight, providing new insights into the intersection of historic preservation, property rights, neoliberal governance, affordable housing, and what constitutes “a beautiful neighborhood” from the perspective of competing stakeholders across time and place.

# **Mister Rogers' Neighborhood Goes Upscale: Redevelopment as Neighborhood Cleansing**

A Study of Courtyard Housing in the Pittsburgh Neighborhood  
of Squirrel Hill and Gentrification-Induced Displacement

by

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To my husband Sam Bergman and  
community activist Sharyn Frederick

also

In memory of my recently departed siblings,  
Sam Flesher and Annabel Lindy

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## OVERVIEW

*"If we can make every neighborhood like Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, America would be a happier place."*

*President Bill Clinton*

There is often a disconnect between those social mores that are publicly applauded in the popular culture of adult-approved children's programming—namely values pertaining to personal responsibility, difference, tolerance, and what it is to be “a good neighbor”—and the reality of conflict resolution in gentrifying landscapes.

*Mister Rogers' Neighborhood Goes Upscale: Redevelopment as Neighborhood Cleansing* is a case study that takes an in-depth look at pockets of gentrification and displacement in the Pittsburgh neighborhood of Squirrel Hill—not incidentally Mister Rogers' real-life neighborhood. The study is compiled primarily from interviews with displaced tenants who resided in a cluster of historic courtyard complexes in Squirrel Hill—small enclaves that ironically approximated the “ideal” of community according to “the gospel of Mister Rogers.” Informant accounts of the vibrant community life that constituted the everyday cultural landscape of these model courtyard complexes underscore the extreme sense of loss and disruption in place-identity that ensued as tenants were forced to relocate, in most instances to neighborhoods other than Squirrel Hill. The gentrification agenda as described by the study's informants flew in the face of Fred Roger's iconic TV show that began each episode with the upbeat and all-inclusive theme song “Won't You Be My Neighbor?” The fact that Mister Rogers had a personal connection to the two primary sites that are the focus of this research—Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace—serves as a

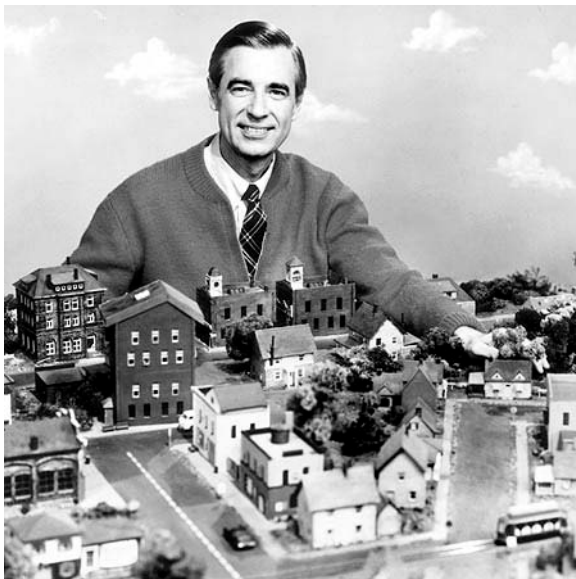
particular point of irony that frames the ethnographic record. As one informant sardonically jested, “You know, I think that what actually happened right here in Squirrel Hill would make a great Mister Rogers’ episode, like ‘what happens, boys and girls, when the bulldozer comes to tear apart your neighborhood?’ Just imagine if Mr. McFeely would say, ‘Well, you know kids, you’re just gonna have to suck it up!’” This response taps into one of primary focuses of this study, how the least empowered stakeholders in gentrifying landscapes—those who are socially constructed as unworthy of continued residency on their own lived turf—reaffirm their own internalized place-identity as they transition into new sites of habitation.

At the heart of all of Mister Rogers’ television programming is the explicit ethos of “everyday cooperative living.”<sup>1</sup> The invitation—“won’t you be my neighbor?”—is far more than a bid to come out and play nicely. Fred Rogers’ conversations with his television audiences, both young and old (many parents did in fact watch the show with their children) suggest not only that good neighbors are beholden to look out for one another, but that it is through the spirit of collaborative living that most of society’s ills can best be redressed. The narratives of everyday life in Squirrel Hill’s courtyard housing that are presented in this study represent the real-life embodiment of Mister Rogers’ virtual neighborhood, a model that has inspired near unanimous praise in the annals of childhood education and considerable lip service from the

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<sup>1</sup> William Guy, “The Theology of Mister Rogers,” *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood: Children, Television, and Fred Rogers* (Pittsburgh, Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), 101-122.

public at large.<sup>2</sup> Yet when it comes to the politics of placemaking in gentrifying landscapes, those with the most power (the state, landlords, realtors, property developers, banks, corporations, and other vested individuals and institutions) have tuned out the Mister Rogers' theme song—"Won't you be my neighbor," – and substituted the counter refrain—"Don't you be my neighbor!" The "don't" exercises its authoritative voice through the sanctioning of policies and politics that condone or contribute to the practice of *neighborhood cleansing*—the *diss*-placement<sup>3</sup> of an established population and the denial of that population's authority to define through its own lived practices what constitutes "a beautiful neighborhood" [Fig.1].



**Fig. 1. An early unattributed photograph of Fred Rogers and a model of his neighborhood that was likely used for advertising purposes**

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<sup>2</sup> "Even a cursory look through the literature establishes Mister Rogers' Neighborhood as the gold standard for "positive" children's programming." Mark Shelton (1996: 183). For his public service Fred Rogers was awarded numerous commendations, including The Presidential Medal of Honor, and two posthumous Congressional resolutions.

<sup>3</sup> The term *diss*-placement was introduced by Mindy Fullilove, professor of clinical psychiatry and public health at Columbia University (2005:166). *Diss*-placement, according to Fullilove, is about 'dissing' the people. "But clearly it is about \$\$\$\$ , power, control, exploitation and oppression of a group of people who often have no real voice."

A cartoon appearing on the June 21<sup>st</sup> cover of *In Pittsburgh* that went to print just about the same time that the tenants of Forbes Terrace, one of courtyard enclaves that are the subject of this study, “artfully” captures the claim of *neighborhood cleansing*. [See Appendix B for a full definition of *neighborhood cleansing*.] Displaced tenants are depicted as being “kicked to the curb” with an artist and a musician tumbling down the grand staircase of the courtyard complex—a can of paintbrushes and a guitar crashing onto the pavement below [Fig 2]. The cartoon was a lead-in to the article “Home Improvement? From Artists’ Colony to Rich Peoples’ Enclave—Is This the Future of City Living?” At the bottom of the cartoon, the collective voice of the displacees is captured with the simple statement, “There is No Alternative.”<sup>4</sup>

On March 5, 2003, the U.S. Senate unanimously passed Resolution 16 to commemorate the life of Fred Rogers. Then Pennsylvania Senator, Rick Santorum—elected in 1995—introduced the resolution to the floor presenting the following address:

We have lots of wonderful neighborhoods [in Pittsburgh]... we have a lot of old, wonderful ethnic neighborhoods. I think Mr. Rogers reflected that spirit in a lot of those communities—the close-knit caring spirit, looking after your neighbor in those communities. Some may suggest, that “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood” was from a bygone era that does not exist anymore, that neighborhood isn’t around anymore. Well, I make the argument that the

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<sup>4</sup> Charlie Deitch, “Home Improvement? From Artists’ Colony to Rich Peoples’ Enclave—Is This The Future of City Living?” *In Pittsburgh Weekly* 16.6, 12. The cartoon is a commentary on the perception by some that the process of *cleansing* the art based community from the neighborhood of Squirrel Hill was indeed a loss for the city as well as the displaced tenants. <http://charliedeitch.com/terraceuse.htm> (accessed Oct. 23, 2010).

neighborhood is what the neighbors make it, and that he set a pretty good model for what neighbors should be, and neighborhood can be, and hopefully, again someday will be.<sup>5</sup>

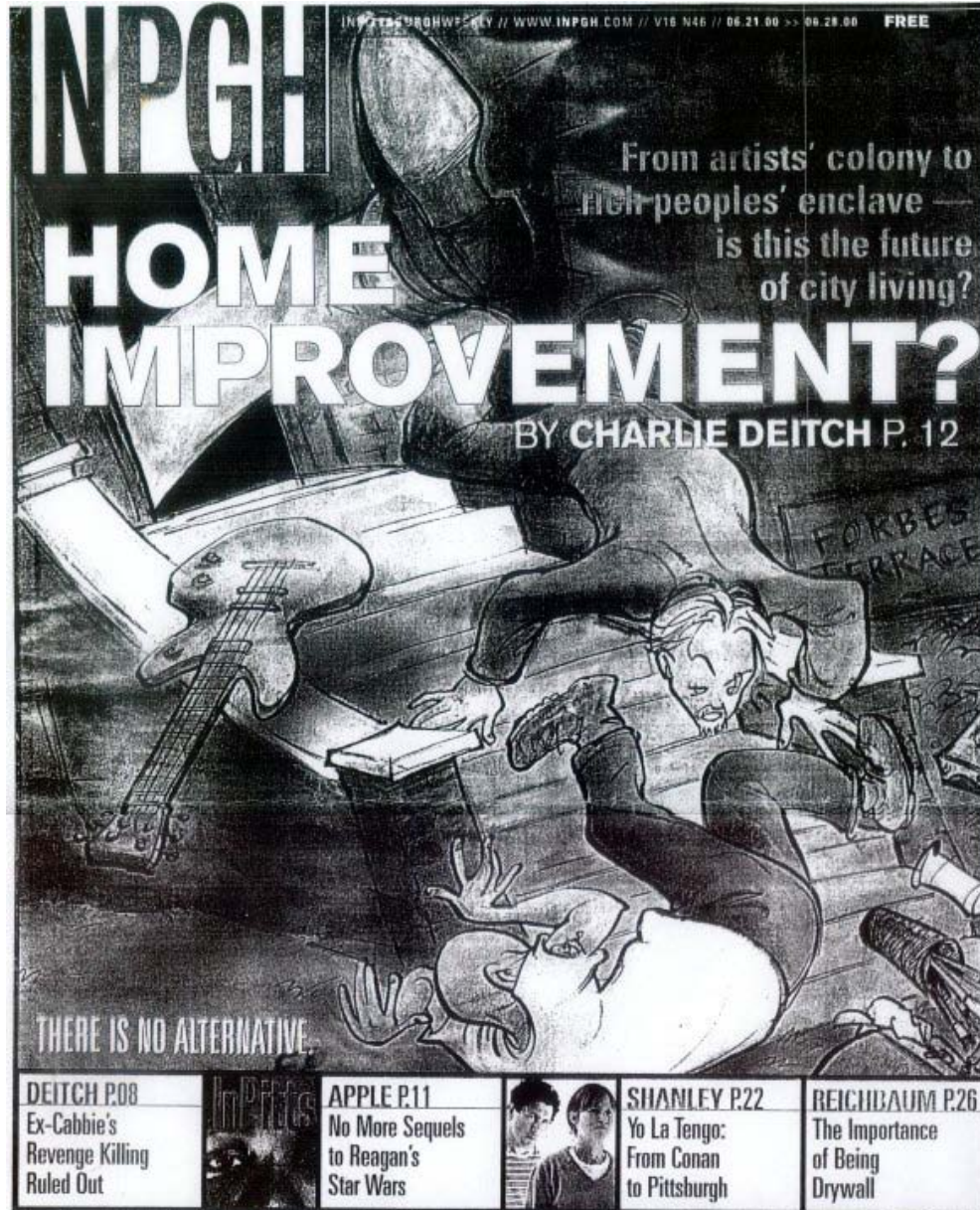


Fig. 2. A cartoon satirizing the eviction of Forbes Terrace tenants from their courtyard enclave (courtesy of the Pittsburgh City Paper)

<sup>5</sup> Congressional Hearing S.CON.RES.1—Honoring the life and work of Mr. Fred McFeely Rogers. (Agreed to Senate - ATS) March 5, 2003. <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c108:S.CON.RES.16.ATS> (accessed July 22, 2010).

Senator Santorum’s address, although apparently heartfelt, does not reflect the reality on the ground. Gentrification and displacement has for some time posed a threat to some of Pittsburgh’s “wonderful neighborhoods,” including housing pockets in Squirrel Hill—paradoxically the community that Fred Rogers called home from 1968 until his death in 2003. As generations of children learned the lessons of being a good neighbor from PBS’s daily broadcast of *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*, Pittsburgh’s power elite at once extolled the social justice agenda that Fred Rogers explicitly enjoined in his television neighborhood while concurrently enacting policies that were anything but! It is this hypocrisy that is brought into stark relief by the voices of Squirrel Hill’s courtyard denizens whose stories appear below—their experiences of everyday life and loss in a *neighborhood* that was surprisingly *Mister Roger-esque*—and their subsequent efforts to reenact that singular sense of *place* in less hospitable contexts.

Each chapter in this dissertation begins with the lyrics to a song associated with *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*—a device that is contrived purposefully to juxtapose the explicitly didactic *places* that serve as the settings for the long-running television show with the real *lived places* that are the subject of this study’s inquiry. In no way am I suggesting that the communities represented in this research are utopian. Rather, the ethnographic record draws a far more complex and nuanced picture of collaborative living that is clearly well beyond the simplistic, child-oriented purview of *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*—a fact that is given precedence in each of the subchapters headings that are *real* quotes from *real* neighbors living in Squirrel Hills’



courtyard complexes. These excerpts not only capture the voices of the study's informants but also serve as simple openers into the "thick description" to be culled from the qualitative research.<sup>6</sup> By resurrecting those who have seemingly vanished into the obscurity of the post-displacement landscape, this study provides a post mortem on the intersecting discourses of gentrification-induced displacement, historic preservation, property rights, neoliberal governance, affordable housing, and what constitutes "a beautiful neighborhood" from the hindsight of the most invested stakeholders in the gentrifying landscape—those targeted for "neighborhood cleansing" in the purported interest of neighborhood redevelopment. Finally, I have—here and there—interspersed citations and commentary from Fred Rogers and his followers to highlight the positions of various stakeholders whose particular constructions of *neighborhood* either support or stand in stark contrast to the *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* ethos.

The research agenda follows a schema that takes its inspiration from Peter Marcuse's<sup>7</sup> updated "right to the city" manifesto—a rallying call that in recent years has electrified the progressive planning community:

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<sup>6</sup> The term "thick description" was coined by anthropologist Clifford Geertz in *The Interpretation of Cultures* to describe his own method of doing ethnography (Geertz 1973:5-6, 9-10). His method not only explains behavior but its context as well so that the "the webs" of meaning in a given culture are decipherable to outsiders.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Marcuse is Professor Emeritus of Planning in the School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at Columbia University. He is a lawyer and planner, has been president of the Los Angeles Planning Commission, and has written extensively on housing and planning issues. Marcuse is considered by progressive scholars to be a leading luminary in the field of urban studies. The catchphrase, "the right to the city," originated with Henri Lefebvre in the late 1960s and was first popularized in the mainstream Anglo-American academy by Chester Hartman's (1984) who coined the phrase "the right to stay put." Recently, "the right to the city" manifesto has come to be associated with Marcuse (see Flierl, 2009).

Expose, Propose, Politicize... *Exposing* means showing the roots of a given problem; *Proposing* means developing concrete plans for doing what can be accomplished... so that planning is not only criticizing; *Politicizing* means understanding that such proposals require political action.<sup>8</sup>

The study is organized into Four Parts preceded by an Introduction and ending with a Conclusion. The Introduction first provides a historiography of the literature pertinent to this investigation, drawing from the fields of housing, gentrification, and environmental psychology. A contextual analysis follows, grounding the research in the physical and cultural particularities of Pittsburgh, the neighborhood of Squirrel Hill, and the specific case study sites under investigation. A presentation of the research methodology closes the Introduction. Part 1 and Part 2 focus on everyday life at Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace, respectively, as communities that exhibited a specific socio-spatial system indicative of a distinct place-identity that I have termed *court-ordered living*. [See Appendix B: Glossary] Each section relies predominantly on the voices of the residing tenants to establish first, the cultural landscape of each of the complexes prior to the initiation of redevelopment plans and second, tenant responses to the reality of displacement and relocation. A discourse on the intersection of historic preservation, property rights, neoliberal governance, affordable housing, and “the right to stay put” is examined largely from the perspective of the displaced tenants, as is a subtext on class, race, ethnicity and gender that threatened to undermine the very essence of *court-ordered living*. Part 3 focuses on the post-gentrification landscape of the displacees and explores the myriad

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<sup>8</sup> Peter Marcuse. “Changing Times, Changing Planning: Critical Planning Today.” *Progressive Planning* 182 (2010), 13-16. In 2008, Marcuse's mantra, 'Expose, Propose & Politicize' was chosen as the theme for the Planners Network Conference. The Planners network is a grassroots North American organization for people involved in planning. See the website for information on the conference: <http://www.planetizen.com/node/34244> (accessed Oct. 17, 2010).

ways in which outmovers were able to incorporate aspects of *court-ordered living* in their new sites of habitation, retaining some semblance of “place congruency” through creative performances of place-identity. Part 3 also examines the ways in which the gentrification of Squirrel Hill’s courtyard housing has not only had negative consequences for the neighborhood of Squirrel Hill but has spilled over into nearby working-class communities where displacees have become the new gentrifiers. Part 4 looks at how the incoming tenants to the newly refurbished complexes experienced a diminished sense of community compared to that of their predecessors. The Conclusion addresses social justice concerns—namely how critical urban studies can have greater policy relevance for neighborhoods experiencing the displacement pressures of gentrification. A reflection on the paradox of Mister Rogers’ daily dictum, “I’ve always wanted to have a neighbor just like you,” is revisited as a narrative that runs conspicuously counter to Squirrel Hill’s recent gentrification projects, forcing the question—What does it mean and of whom do we speak when presented with the familiar lyrics, “It’s a beautiful day in the neighborhood?” In other words, is it redevelopment or neighborhood cleansing when people are suddenly “swept to the curb like trash—just more debris getting in the way of neighborhood progress?”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> This metaphor expresses the sentiments of one of Forbes Terrace’s displacees. Other informants made similar analogies, with the term “trash” receiving special emphasis.

## INTRODUCTION

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Architects and planners have traditionally taken a deterministic approach in their consideration of spatial forms, expressing a greater concern with how the built environment influences human behavior than on the dialectic relationship between people and place. In recent times, however, New Urbanism and Smart Growth debates have invited greater interdisciplinary inquiry, creating alliances between architects, geographers, environmental psychologists, housing historians, and anthropologists, among others, so as to “exercise (their) sociological and geographical imaginations” towards “new understandings of structure/agency relationships that sit at the crossroads of micro and macro scales of social action.”<sup>10</sup> “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood Goes Upscale,” draws on three arenas of critical inquiry—Housing Studies, Gentrification, and Environmental Psychology—all fields that are themselves richly interdisciplinary. Within these broad academic traditions, I have further narrowed my focus to best address the project at hand with the following sub-fields situating my research: the literature on courtyard housing, its typology and history; theories of place-identity as they apply to domestic environments; and gentrification-induced displacement. Loosely interwoven into the proposed paradigm is yet another field of study, “Children’s Educational Media,” most specifically what has recently

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<sup>10</sup> Harvey C. Perkins, David C. Thorns, Ann Winstanley, and Bronwyn M. Newton, “The Study of ‘Home’ From a Social Scientific Perspective: An Annotated Bibliography,” in *New Zealanders at Home: The Meaning of House and Home* (Canterbury, New Zealand: Human Sciences Division Lincoln University, April 2002) 3-4, <http://www.ssrc.canterbury.ac.nz/research/RPHS/hh/homepub.pdf> (accessed June 20, 2010).

been referred to as “Mister Rogers Studies.” Although this body of literature is not formally accounted for in the literature review, it nonetheless frames the larger narrative of community and neighborhood identity that is the cornerstone of this study and provides a moral barometer for incorporating a social justice agenda into the gentrification debate—a topic that is not only implicit throughout the study but is specifically addressed in the concluding chapter. Finally, the conclusion also considers how “an insiders” view on *court-ordered living* might have relevance for applied environmental architecture and planning, inspiring designs for communities that value “quality of life” in terms of both individual and collective satisfaction—a consideration that broaches the critical moral question of “what property ought to be” and “could be” in a truly just society (Blomley, 2004; DeFilippis, 2004).

## **Courtyard Housing**

Courtyard Housing as it is defined in this study refers to a specific model of multi-family housing in which small groupings of rental homes (twelve to forty units) surround a central commons—an architectural configuration that creates a sense of physical and social enclosure.<sup>11</sup> There has curiously been little documentation of early courtyard housing in North America beyond architects Polyzoides, Sherwood, and Tice’s authoritative text, *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles: A Typological Study* (1<sup>st</sup> edition, 1982; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1992) that documents the historical, technical, and

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<sup>11</sup> While courtyard housing has a rich and very extensive history in places like the Middle East, China and Europe, the foci of this study are the Anglo-American prototypes dating back to the early twentieth century.

cultural forces that shaped a distinctive West Coast building type reflective of Mediterranean and Spanish Colonial influences. Although the book presents an extensive survey of courtyard housing in the Los Angeles area, its geographical specificity allows for no comparisons of like typologies in other locales across the United States or Canada. Additionally, *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles* focuses predominantly on the built environment with only a nod to the social and cultural dimensions of courtyard living.<sup>12</sup> No other comprehensive study on courtyard housing has yet to expand upon this seminal text, suggesting perhaps that courtyard housing of significance was exclusive to the Los Angeles area. Only one scholarly article on bungalow courts—“Bungalow Courts in San Diego: Monitoring a Sense of Place” (Curtis and Ford 1988) has surveyed courtyard housing beyond the immediate environs of Los Angeles. Although Curtis and Ford, both professors of geography, provide a rich accounting of courtyard housing in the late 1980s in San Diego, their primary emphasis is on the social components of courtyard living with little attention paid to the specifics of the built environment. Furthermore, their study makes only a few references to the existence of courtyard housing beyond the Golden State, only mentioning that some examples can be found in south Florida and southern Arizona. Rather, they stress the vernacular relevance of San Diego’s bungalow courts and their simulation of resort-like living. The only other scholarly research to have emerged on courtyard housing is a brief historic survey of courtyards in Portland, Oregon by Peter

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<sup>12</sup> See Mary Corbin Sies, "Towards A Performance Theory of the Suburban Ideal, 1877 to 1917," (1991). This essay serves as a key text (published contemporaneous with *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) that models how the methodologies of architectural historians and urban historians can be integrated to explore the dynamic interplay between the “physical” and the “cultural” elements of the built environment, providing a wider lens into how "actors" engage within their everyday built environments.

Keyes, a professor of architecture at The University of Oregon.<sup>13</sup> He identifies Portland's "straightforward and efficient, no-frills courtyard housing" as having only a tenuous relationship to the more stylized courtyards of Los Angeles and other western cities, suggesting there are perhaps other regions beyond Portland that have also developed their own vernacular expressions of the courtyard model. In fact, a more careful survey of the housing literature suggests that there are indeed other architectural models from the early twentieth century that also incorporated the concept of common park-like spaces as a design strategy for the promotion of neighborly interactions between households. Mary Corbin Sies ("American Country House Architecture in Context," 1987) identifies St. Martins, a planned community located in the Chestnut Hill area of Philadelphia, as a site in which small parcels of land were reserved to provide spaces for parks and playgrounds that encouraged outdoor family recreation and social gatherings. Among the models incorporated in the diverse site plans for St. Martins were domestic units connected by a series of walkways and grouped around a landscaped quadrangle. These nested courtyard complexes, interspersed within the larger community of St. Martins, were designed to entice residents into the central commons, facilitating both neighborly encounters and promoting community building.

While the literature on courtyard housing is scant to date, it has nonetheless served as a rallying call for preservationists to seek Landmark designation for

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<sup>13</sup> Peter A. Keyes, "Historic Courtyard Housing In Portland, Oregon: Characteristics," 2004. Keyes' research was funded by a University of Oregon faculty fellowship and can be downloaded at <http://www.uoregon.edu/~pkeyes/StreetcarHousing/Courtyard.pdf> (accessed Sept. 15, 2010).

endangered courtyard complexes that are integral to their own urban landscapes.<sup>14</sup> Courtyard housing has also been endorsed by urbanists as models for multi-family housing that offer an unusually high quality living environment, spurring a revival of sorts in some areas of the country (Newman, 2002).<sup>15</sup> Given the grass-roots movement to preserve traditional courtyard housing as well as the ongoing endorsement of new urbanists to revive this historic prototype, this research serves as an important resource for city planners and other stakeholders looking for viable solutions that best address current housing issues. It not only expands the geographic terrain of courtyard housing from the west to the east coast, but also takes a qualitative approach, accounting for the highly textured community component of courtyard living that has largely been sidelined in prior scholarship. As such, this study better fulfills the mission statement proposed by the authors of *Courtyard Housing In Los Angeles*—namely, that historic courtyard housing serves as “generative material” for the design of “more reasonable, more humane, more community-centered urbanism than that of contemporary America.” The history of Squirrel Hill’s courtyard complexes as they existed in the last decades of the twentieth century represent the ideal of New Urbanism with its emphasis on

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<sup>14</sup> See “Preservation Alerts and Issues,” 2010 Preservation Awards [http://www.laconservancy.org/awards/10\\_hwoodbungalows.php4](http://www.laconservancy.org/awards/10_hwoodbungalows.php4) (accessed Dec. 27 2010).

<sup>15</sup> In 2007, the City of Portland Planning Bureau held a competition for new designs for infill housing in existing neighborhoods, designating courtyard housing as a model prototype: <http://www.portlandonline.com/bps/index.cfm?a=bebcbj&c=deace> (accessed Sept 15, 2010). The competition drew entries from around the world. The City of Portland intends to facilitate the construction of winning designs by providing funding to adapt designs to building sites and by encouraging developers to partner with winning designers.



neighborhood diversity, accessibility to public spaces, and pedestrian-friendly environments.<sup>16</sup>

## **Environmental Psychology**

Environmental psychology is the study of the relationship between people and their physical environments—their perceptions, attitudes, actions, and interactions. It investigates the processes by which individuals and groups create and use places to generate a sense of personal and collective identity. The field of environmental psychology draws on multiple disciplines, including anthropology, geography, sociology, psychology, planning, engineering, and architecture. While environments can be broadly interpreted to include many contexts, this thesis draws predominantly on that scholarship within the field of environmental psychology that focuses on the interplay between human actors and their domestic built environments. Place-identity, as a subset of environmental psychology, best fulfills this requirement.<sup>17</sup> The concept of place-identity was first theorized by several humanistic geographers in the late 1970s (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1980; and Buttimer and Seamon, 1980). They all were in

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<sup>16</sup> See “The Charter of the New Urbanism” that was ratified at the fourth annual Congress in 1996: <http://www.cnu.org/charter> (accessed Nov. 12, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> Place attachment is also defined as the feelings we develop towards familiar places. (Altman & Low, 1992. While it has been suggested that place attachment develops and supports place-identity (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996) it is also argued that it is difficult to determine when place attachment becomes sufficiently embedded in ones self to be defined as a facet of identity Giuliani (2003). Still others question labels like "place attachment," "place-identity," and "place identification" altogether, arguing that they are theoretically and empirically difficult to differentiate (Speller, 2000).

agreement that place-identity is an integral component of personal identity<sup>18</sup> and were interested in how people interact with places to create a sense of belonging, purpose, and meaning in their lives. Relph also proposed that individuals who shared a place eventually integrated their personal place-identity into a common group identity (Relph 1976:45). Building on these foundational works, Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff, (1983) developed a more rigorous definition of place-identity that they described as

...a structure of the self-identity of the person consisting of broadly conceived, cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives. These cognitions represent memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings and conception of behavior and experience which relate to the variety and complexity of physical settings that define the day-to-day existence of every human being... [in] specific physical settings as well as types of settings (Proshansky et al, 1983:59).

One of the limitations in the study of place-identity has been a preoccupation with the spatial range of “the neighborhood” or “a locality:” for example, the east end suburb of Boston (Fried, 1963); Cape Cod (Cuba and Hummon, 1993); the London docklands (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996); and, shoreline property owners in northern Wisconsin (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001). As such, little is known about how people form attachments to other locations, whether they be larger or smaller in scale than the neighborhood. Additionally, most studies on place-identity have been more attentive to the social components of environments with less focus directed at the physical dimensions of place and its relation to place-identity. (Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001 ). “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood Goes Upscale,” with its focus on

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<sup>18</sup> The term “identity” is difficult to pin down as it is used differently across disciplines. Each field of study uses the term in accordance with its own traditions. Even within the same discipline, the meaning of “identity” is often imprecise (Breakwell, 1986).

the micro-scale of the courtyard complex, fills these gaps in the literature, suggesting that the convergence of place and social relationships varies within different spatial ranges and dimensions.

Moving beyond Proshansky and colleagues' definition of place-identity as a major conceptual mooring, Feldman (1990 and 1996) introduced the concept of settlement-identity to examine how locational preferences grew over time from lived experience. While her definition of place-identity paralleled that of Proshansky, her focus was on preferences exhibited for a particular type of settlement rather than a specific place. She focused on city, suburban, small town, country, rural or mountain identity that was "unique," "irreplaceable," and "deeply valued" (Feldman, 1996: 422).

Additionally, she suggested that people retained psychological bonds with types of places across changes of residence, allowing for a sense of place-congruency and continuity in highly mobile societies. Feldman employed in-depth interviews to explore residential autobiographies and to assess the strength of attachment based on a set of indicators of psychological bonds: *embeddedness, community, at-easeness, uniqueness of place, care and concern, unity of identities, bodily orientation, appropriation of place, and centeredness*. Her work is particularly relevant to the study of courtyard housing in Squirrel Hill, not only as a model that provides a comparative theoretical framework, but also for its introduction to the concept of place-congruent continuity that refers to those characteristics of places that are so internalized that they are likely to transfer from one location to the next. Although Feldman's theory of settlement-identity remains pertinent to the study at hand, it

nevertheless neglects the relationship between group-based dimensions of place-identity and future locational preferences—this relationship being one of the major theses of this work. In addition, Feldman did not look at specific types of domestic settings and their socio-cultural production as a component of settlement-identity—a highlight of this study. Courtyard housing is presented as a highly differentiated spatial prototype in which people assume a common place-identity that reflects deeply-held beliefs and values. There is a need for more studies that address the collective and social nature of settlement-identity at a finer scale to better understand the interactions between people and their material settings over time and place.<sup>19</sup>

Feldman's research did, however, influence a series of studies that expanded on the concept of settlement-identity to elucidate the long-term consequences of involuntary relocation and resettlement<sup>20</sup> (Speller, 2000; Milligan, 2003; Fullilove, 2005). These studies have demonstrated the extent to which widespread grief and mourning is often a prolonged response to forced displacement, further exemplifying how physical relocation is inextricably tied to psychological relocation. Few studies, however, have examined the ways in which grief responses are often mitigated as human agents resituate themselves in the post-displacement landscape, recovering a sense of identity-congruence and continuity with the past—yet another main point of inquiry addressed by this research.

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<sup>19</sup> For more on the individualistic bias in place-identity studies and other critiques of place theory, see Dixon and Durrheim (2000).

<sup>20</sup> Earlier studies include Fried, 1963; Stokols and Jacobi, 1982; Million, 1992).

## Gentrification

The rapidly changing demographics of urban centers in North America and Britain have been a subject of critical debate dating back to the mid 1960s when socially conscious scholars first began a discourse on the unjust and unequal outcomes of gentrification-induced displacement.<sup>21</sup> Ruth Glass coined the terms gentrification in her 1964 treatise *London: Aspects Of Change* when she observed a pattern in which working class neighborhoods were being "invaded" by members of the middle classes who were taking over "shabby, modest mews and cottages" and upgrading large Victorian lodging houses, resulting in the displacement of the original working-class population.<sup>22</sup> Among the foundational texts to follow in Glass's footsteps was Neil Smith's 1979 publication "A Back to the City Movement by Capital, Not People." Smith's market driven analysis sparked a two-decade dispute on the relative merits of production verses consumption side theories—causing a prolonged schism in the academy that was characterized by an ongoing point/counterpoint debate. Smith's position was further refined in later publications that traced gentrification to neighborhoods where there was evidence of a significant "rent gap"—the disparity between "the actual capitalized ground rent (land value) of a plot of land given its current use and the potential ground rent that might be obtainable under a 'higher and better' use (Smith, 1987: 462; also see Smith, 1996). When the gap is significant enough, land developers, landlords and "occupier developers" make profit by

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<sup>21</sup> Much of the core texts that are referenced in this study are rooted in an Anglo-American context and points of view. Although gentrification is a very varied practice, there are common experiences and praxes that are shared by the scholarly research coming out of these countries (see Lees, Slater, and Wyly, 2010:xviii).

<sup>22</sup> Ruth Glass *London: Aspects Of Change* (London: MacGibbon & Kee), 1964.

reinvesting in “devalorized” inner-city properties and preparing them for new inhabitants. Among those who felt that Smith’s analysis demonstrated an “economic bias” was David Ley (1994) who posited that the rehabilitation of post-industrial cities allowed for the formation of a “new middle class” that was creatively demonstrating its consumer preference for inner-city living as a lifestyle statement. More recently, there has been a general consensus in the academy that production and consumption side theories not only hold equal weight but are not mutually exclusive.

Smith’s emphasis on “uneven development” provides a major theoretical mooring for “Mister Rogers Neighborhood Goes Upscale,” as does his paradigm of “the revanchist city”—a term that Smith coined to capture disturbing urban conditions reflective of major shifts in the political terrain in the latter part of the twentieth century. Following the liberal era of the post-1960s that favored policies in support of redistribution, affirmative action, and antipoverty legislation, a new era of “neoliberal revanchism” took root—essentially a policy-driven discourse that heralded “revenge” against marginal populations, namely the working class, feminists, the homeless, activists, gays and lesbians, and recent immigrants. “The rallying cry of the revanchist city might well be: ‘Who lost the city? And on whom is revenge to be exacted?’” (Neil Smith, 1996: 222). However, Smith’s argument presents some limitations for this study given its singular focus on the abandonment and reclamation of the inner city—a very different context than the thriving cultural landscape of Squirrel Hill’s courtyard enclaves that have experienced continual habitation by a

middle-class population—albeit on a shifting economic scale—from their inception to the present.

Despite consensus in some areas, academics have continued to get caught up in their own "theoretical logjam," often squabbling over the causes of gentrification without due attention to its effects—namely the inequitable outcome of forced relocation.

Early scholarship on displacement looked at how it might best be measured (Schill and Nathan, 1983), struggled to arrive at a common definition of the process (Grier and Grier, 1980), and attempted to unpack the overall phenomena as it continued to unfold (LeGates and Hartman, 1986; Nelson, 1988), but few early studies put a human face on the displacement process. Despite this deficiency, many key texts published in the 1980s and 1990s were sympathetic to the concerns of displaced (Laska and Spain, 1980; Palen and London, 1984; Smith and Williams, 1986).

Although there was some contention over the gravity and reach of the problem (Sumka, 1979), gentrification-induced displacement was nonetheless a major concern that was scrutinized in the scholarship of the era. Most notably, Chester Hartman's "The Right To Stay Put" (1984) proved to be a rallying call for anti-displacement and affordable housing activists. In more recent times, Hartman's essay, with its strong moral overtones, has been resuscitated, escalating the tenor of intellectual exchange among scholars and polarizing the academy into opposing camps—those who have

minimized the severity and extent of displacement (Hamnett,<sup>23</sup> 2008, 2009; Vigdor, 2002; Freeman and Braconi, 2004) and those who have claimed that there has been “An Eviction of Critical Research From Gentrification Research” (Slater, 2006). This critique—founded on the premise that gentrification research has itself become gentrified with the dearth of recent scholarship on the inequitable effects of displacement—has found widespread support among many in the academic community (Slater, 2008; Shaw, 2008; Lees et. al., 2008).

Another pivotal work dating to the mid-1980s that has also retained its salience along with Hartman’s “The Right To Stay Put,” is Peter Marcuse’s “Abandonment, Gentrification, and Displacement: The Linkages in New York City” (1986). His four-fold definition of gentrification-induced displacement expanded the roll call of displacees to include not only those who have been directly forced from their homes by such blatant tactics as landlord harassment and rent increases, but also to include those who have been subjected to less visible forms of exclusionary practices.<sup>24</sup>

Slater’s recent revival of this foundational text is captured in his two essays entitled “Missing Marcuse” (2009) and “Still Missing Marcuse” (2010).

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<sup>23</sup> Hamnett has become the “poster boy” of displacement deniers since his 2003 publication, *Gentrification And The Middle-Class Remaking Of Inner London*. Hamnett argues that displacement in London has been negligible since 1961 because of a shrinking working class being replaced (not displaced) by an expanding middle class—in other word, that London’s labor force had been “professionalized.” For a biting critique of Hamnett see Slater’s *Still Missing Marcuse* (2010).

<sup>24</sup> To summarize here, the terms of Marcuse’s definition are broadly as follows: *Direct last-resident displacement* is either physical (e.g. when landlords cut off the heat in a building, forcing the occupants to move out) or economic (e.g. a rent increase); *Direct chain displacement* includes previous households that may have been forced to move at an earlier stage due to physical decline or earlier rent increases; *Exclusionary displacement* refers to residents who cannot access housing because it has been gentrified or abandoned, reducing availability; *Displacement pressure* signifies the dispossession suffered by poor and working-class families during the transformation of the neighborhoods where they live. See Marcuse, 1986 in *The Gentrification Reader*, 2010:333-357.



“Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood Goes Upscale” sits at the divide of current debates in both its methodology and research agenda. As an ethnographic study it offers a fuller view of gentrification projects by taking into account the multiple stakeholders in neighborhoods undergoing transition, including both the producers and consumers of newly gentrified landscapes<sup>25</sup>. Yet, it gives front and center stage to those who have all-too-often been forgotten in the process—namely, the displaced. This study takes seriously the call of many displacement scholars to fill a critical gap in the research by “prioritizing the voices, concerns and interests of those adversely affected by the gentrification” (Slater 2010). This entails locating displaced persons, or what Rowland and Atkins (2000:163) have called “measuring the invisible.” Newman and Wyly (2006) sum up the problem as follows: “In short it is difficult to find people who have been displaced... By definition, displaced residents have disappeared from the very places where researchers and census-takers go to look for them.”<sup>26</sup> This study covers new ground by not only tracking displacees from their communities of origin to their new sites of habitation, but also by expanding the scope of qualitative analysis through the collection of displacement narratives—from settlement to dislocation to resettlement and beyond. While there have been a handful of investigations that have located outmovers to assess their living circumstances

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<sup>25</sup> More specifically, ethnographic research into the studies of gentrification fills a void in the current literature that has focused most intently on the culture of those who “consume” new spaces by “replacing” others (consumption side theories) at the expense of those who have been displaced and “replaced” in the upscaling process as a result of market forces (productions side theories). In recent years there has been an agreement among scholars that a mixed approach best serves gentrification research.

<sup>26</sup> Kate Newman, Elvin K. Wyly, “The Right to Stay Put, Revisited: Gentrification and Resistance to Displacement in New York City,” *Urban Studies* 43.1 (January 2006), 23-57.

following displacement, these studies have been largely descriptive in their methodology, relying on surveys, postal questionnaires, informal interviews and other less intimate qualitative methodologies (Hartman, 1979; Legates and Hartman, 1986; Kerstein, 1990). Only Newman and Wyly (2006)<sup>27</sup> have attempted to conduct in-depth interviews with displacees using the New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey (conducted by the US Bureau of the Census every three years) to locate outmovers, but their pool of informants was by definition limited to the State of New York. As the principal investigator of this ethnographic study, I traveled across state lines, spanning both coasts to locate and interview potential informants. Additionally, this study departs from other gentrification research in its spatial focus. By zooming in on the micro scale of Squirrel Hill's courtyard complexes, I have attempted to reduce what Rowlins and Atkinson (2000) have referred to as "the 'noise' in the data" of displacement research, heeding their call for further qualitative research at a finer spatial scale. While the study at hand predominantly focuses on the identified courtyard communities, it nonetheless remains grounded throughout in the larger context of Squirrel Hill, providing a panorama of neighborhood change as it has progressed over time. This holistic approach is a nod to scholars who have recently argued that displacement cannot be fully understood if it is measured only as a snapshot in time (Newman and Wyly, 2006). Additionally, this study charts new territories. While resistance to involuntary relocation has been among the mainstays of the displacement literature (Zukin, 1982, Robinson, 1995, Wilson et al., 2004, Newman

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<sup>27</sup> They set out to question Freeman and Braconi (2004) who asserted that gentrification does not play a large role in displacing low-income households. They employed both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to yield a rich analysis of both the numerical level of displacement and the impacts on displacees.

and Wyly, 2006), this study looks at the structure/agency paradigm from the standpoint of the post-displacement landscape. As agents in the reconstruction of their domestic environments following forced relocation, most of the informants were able to reclaim a sense of power and control in their new sites of habitation through deferred acts of resistance—shedding the stigma of victimhood that had the potential to trail them for a lifetime. This study takes into account the relationships between “place” and “identity” and “structure” and “agency” in ways as yet unexplored.

Finally, this research heeds the call of gentrification researchers for a reappraisal of recent scholarship trends that have largely neglected the differential process of gentrification in favor of grand theories and overgeneralizations. In 1996, David Ley challenged the academy to redirect its research towards what he aptly coined “the geography of gentrification,” calling for studies that look at the specific contextualities of gentrification with the recognition that the process of neighborhood transformation occurs at different rates, in different cities (and even within different neighborhoods), under very varied circumstances. (See also Lees, 2000; Slater 2002; Lees et. al., 2010) “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood Goes Upscale” is one such example of a case study that investigates “the geography of gentrification,” from the micro-scale of its courtyard complexes within the broader context of the neighborhood of Squirrel Hill and the city of Pittsburgh.

## CONTEXT STUDY

### The Economic Landscape of Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh, once a booming industrial center with an extraction-based economy, has lost nearly 50 percent of its population in the past half century, the current population numbering approximately 312,000 residents.<sup>28</sup> Following World War II, while still in its prime as a major manufacturing center, Pittsburgh launched a new clean air and “revitalization” project known as “The Pittsburgh Renaissance.” While the so-called “Renaissance” has been used as a model for redevelopment across the country for decades, it has been deemed by some to have been seriously shortsighted, destroying over a thousand homes and other structures and displacing a still unaccounted for number of households, mostly black. In the early 1980s, Pittsburgh joined the ranks of rust-belt economies with the closing of its major steel mills and related industries. In an attempt to reposition itself in the global economy, the city launched new growth initiatives, transforming “The Steel City” into a hub for medical research, world-class universities,<sup>29</sup> financial services, and technology firms. “Eds and meds,” in fact, now constitute the largest private-sector fraction of the city’s economy. And undoubtedly, as the city continues to negotiate the transition from a manufacturing to a post-industrial economy, “eds and meds” will likely play an even more pivotal role.

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<sup>28</sup> See the *Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition* website: <http://www.shuc.org/demographics.htm> (accessed Oct. 17, 2010).

<sup>29</sup> There are now seven universities within a few mile radius of Squirrel Hill.

Prior to the expansion of the healthcare industry, Squirrel Hill's courtyard complexes were popularly known as "artist colonies," home to a population of moderate to middle income tenants whose cultural capital largely exceeded their financial capital. Currently, with the expansion of the university and health care sectors in Pittsburgh, the majority of tenants are affiliated with the UPMC consortium (University of Pittsburgh Medical Center), an \$8 billion integrated health enterprise headquartered just one mile from Squirrel Hill in downtown Oakland.<sup>30</sup> While the city has touted the ongoing economic and cultural renaissance attributable to this growing industrial behemoth, little attention has been focused on the role of "eds and meds" in the transformation of class in those neighborhoods surrounding Oakland.<sup>31</sup>

The theorization of class in gentrification scholarship has largely been concerned with the reconciliation of production vs. consumption side theories as they have applied to specific geographical contexts (Zukin 1982; Hamnett, 1984; Bondi, 1991; Clark, 1992; Lees, 1994; Smith, 1996). Concurrently, the academy has also been attuned to the interconnections between "people" and "places" worldwide within the larger context of an expanding global economy. In their 1984 essay, "A Class Analysis of Gentrification," Neil Smith and Michele LeFavre made the case that gentrification is not just a physical process of "inmovers" and "outmovers" involving different "urban

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<sup>30</sup> See "University World Wide Technology Streamlines IT Delivery for One of America's Best Hospitals," 2009. [http://www.wwt.com/external\\_content/downloads/UPMC\\_CaseStudy\\_042709\\_FINAL.PDF](http://www.wwt.com/external_content/downloads/UPMC_CaseStudy_042709_FINAL.PDF) (accessed Jan. 12, 2010).

<sup>31</sup> For more on the theorization of class within the context of "eds and meds" see Barbara and John Ehrenreich (1979) discussion of the "professional-managerial class." Also see some recent reflections on the middle-class in the city in the March 2005 issue of the *Journal of Urban History*, most specifically Carol E. Harrison, "The Bourgeois after the Bourgeois Revolution: Recent Approaches to the Middle Class in European Cities," 382-392.

actors” or “collective fits of consumer sovereignty,” but more inclusively a social process that entails both the global movement of capital and people representing opposing class interests.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, the authors argued that this process is happening concurrently in different cities across the globe at a particular moment in the history of capitalism, a process that requires the retheorization of class that integrates the interconnection between global and local networks. Neighborhoods that once assisted in the reproduction of labor power now function as

...commodities or groups of commodities, the production, consumption, and reproduction of which are a source of profit for certain members of the capitalist class. At least for the moment, the economic function of neighborhood has superseded the broader social function.

More recently, Rowland Atkins and Gary Bridges (*Gentrification in a Global Context: The New Urban Colonialism*, 2005) have proposed that the geographic foci in gentrification studies be directed along a continuum from the global to the local, tracking the intersection of international migrations and neighborhood change—what they have coined “a new urban colonialism.” Atkins and Bridges conclude that the literature on globalization should be geared to the scale of the neighborhood “that has been under-recognized as the site for the reproduction of a wider set of power relations” that support the displacement of “non-owning residents” in the interest of global economic competitiveness.<sup>33</sup>

The case studies of courtyard communities that are the focus of this dissertation

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<sup>32</sup> Neil Smith and Michele LaFaivre, “A Class Analysis of Gentrification,” in *Gentrification, Displacement and Revitalization*, eds. J. John Palen and Bruce London (Albany: Suny Press, 1984), 43-66.

<sup>33</sup> Rowland Atkinson and Gary Bridge, *Gentrification in a Global Context: The New Urban Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2005), 15.

link global processes and flows to the discursive construction of identities within the Pittsburgh neighborhood of Squirrel Hill. As Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace were “revalued” to accommodate the influx of a growing international pool of elite medical and research professionals, “non-owning residents” were rhetorically “control-alt-deleted” from the cultural landscape. What differentiates Squirrel Hill from most other urban locations facing similar circumstances is not the process of “colonialization” itself, but rather the social class of the population that was targeted for forced relocation. Whereas Atkins and Bridges, in accordance with most gentrification researchers, identify “the urban other” as almost exclusively “the working class,” the residents of Squirrel Hill’s courtyard complexes were irrefutably middle class, both in terms of their families of origin and their educational status. As such, this dissertation supports the research agenda of a growing number of scholars who are examining the various effects of deindustrialization and globalization within specific urban contexts (see Butler, 2006). Gentrification and displacement can no longer be adequately theorized exclusively within the paradigm of invasion-succession (the transformation of inner-city working-class neighborhoods into middle-class habitats) that has until recently dominated the literature but now must take into account the globalizing effects of capital flows and migration on regional economies and neighborhood identity as it unfolds in various geographical locations worldwide.

## Squirrel Hill's Cultural Landscape

Prior to the eighteenth century, Squirrel Hill was a virtual wilderness thickly forested with oak and hickory trees—a favorite source of food and shelter for the gray squirrels that inhabited the forest in abundance. When Squirrel Hill was incorporated into the city of Pittsburgh in 1868, the area was still sparsely developed, consisting mainly of farmland and a scattering of large country estates. It continued as such until 1897 when newly installed electric trolley lines opened up Squirrel Hill's labyrinth of sloping hills for the development of Pittsburgh's only remaining "virgin land." By the turn of the century, Squirrel Hill became the city's wealthiest district with the influx of Pittsburgh's elite Scotch-Irish and German-Jewish families who built gracious single-family homes that marked the first stage of development. In the early 1920s a massive relocation of Eastern European Jews who migrated from Pittsburgh's Hill District—a once thriving Jewish Community—was accompanied by a growth in institutions and commercial enterprises that lent Squirrel Hill a decidedly Jewish flavor. While Squirrel Hill became an epicenter for Jewish culture with Jews numbering approximately 40% of the population since the 1930s, the neighborhood itself remains Pittsburgh's most heterogeneous community, with at least 60% of the population representing diverse ethnic, religious, and racial groups and with a cultural climate that has always welcomed difference.<sup>34</sup> Its culturally diverse population

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<sup>34</sup> While Squirrel Hill is home to the largest Asian population in Pittsburgh, African Americans are sparsely represented. The majority of middle-class African Americans reside in the city's suburbs. The Latino presence for the larger region (Allegheny County) is too sparse to be of statistical significance. However, there is a large international community in Squirrel Hill that hails from the nearby universities and medical centers as well as a substantial population of Russian immigrants. See the US Census Bureau 2006-2008 American Community Survey. [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFacts?\\_event=&geo\\_id=16000US4261000&\\_geoContext=01000US](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFacts?_event=&geo_id=16000US4261000&_geoContext=01000US) (accessed Oct. 23, 2010).



includes a harmonious mix of all age groups and income brackets with a “come one come all” mentality. The neighborhood is also still known as the home of the late Fred Rogers, a source of great local pride to many Squirrel Hillers. His status as a neighborhood local is still lauded in the community seven years after his obituary first captured international attention in 2003. As in Mister Rogers’ television neighborhood, Squirrel Hill’s landscape accommodates a broad range of socio-economic groups as evidenced by the proximity of fashionably detached homes located within a block or two of more modest row houses, although those demographics are gradually changing as the cost of housing has increased in recent years.

Squirrel Hill was not a planned community but rather represented the speculative activities of a large number of stakeholders. The neighborhood was laid out in a modified grid, with a few streets deviating from the overall pattern. The one major exception was Beechwood Blvd.—located a few blocks east of Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace—that was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. in 1903<sup>35</sup>. The boulevard was designed to meander along the entire length of Squirrel Hill, from Fifth Avenue on its eastern end to the west end of Schenley Park. Although the City of Pittsburgh had hired Olmsted to draw up further plans, his designs were never

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<sup>35</sup> James Borchert and Susan Borchert, “Downtown, Uptown, Out of Town: Diverging Patterns of Upper-Class Residential Landscapes in Buffalo, Pittsburgh, and Cleveland, 1885-1935,” *Social Science History* 26.2 (Summer 2002), 311-346. The site for Hamilton Cottages was selected in 1910 near the intersection of two grand boulevards that were intended to serve as fashionable promenades. Located just a few blocks from Schenley Park, Hamilton Cottages was a very desirable address. For more on Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. see Jon A. Peterson, “Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.: The Visionary and the Professional,” in *Planning the Twentieth-Century American City*, eds. Mary Sies and Christopher Silver (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1996), 37-54.

realized. Instead, grand homes began to sprout up on broad boulevards that conformed to the overall grid pattern. By the early 1920s, continued subdivision and infill created a landscape dominated by more modest middle-class dwellings and a relatively significant pool of multiple-family housing. By the 1930s, with the opening of a major thruway to downtown Pittsburgh (a 10 minute drive), the few remaining lots in Squirrel hill were filled in and new development came to a near standstill. Today, Squirrel Hill is one of Pittsburgh's largest, wealthiest, and most populated neighborhoods with a population of about 26,000, comprising more than 10,000 households.<sup>36</sup> Within a one-mile radius of Forbes and Murray—Squirrel's epicenter—the average household income is \$89,000 and the median value of a home is \$225,000, although the average listing price has hovered in the range of \$400,000.<sup>37</sup> Apartment occupancy rates are 98.5% and, while the average rent is \$700,<sup>38</sup> this includes a substantial supply of subdivided single-family homes that are scattered throughout the neighborhood. Many of these conversions are sub-par and occupied primarily by students who are determined to squeeze as many bodies as possible into a single unit. While these conversions meet the most basic needs of college-age students, they do not have the necessary amenities to attract mature graduate students and households with children.

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<sup>36</sup> See The Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition website: <http://www.shuc.org/sqhill-overview.htm>

<sup>37</sup> See [http://realtimes.com/rtmcloc/Pennsylvania~Squirrel\\_Hill](http://realtimes.com/rtmcloc/Pennsylvania~Squirrel_Hill) (accessed Sept. 20, 2010).

<sup>38</sup> See the Robert Isenberg, *Pop City Moving Guide to Pittsburgh*, Oct. 25, 2006. <http://www.popcitymedia.com/cities/squirrelhill/movingguide.aspx> (accessed Oct. 10, 2010). *Pop City* is a weekly e-newsletter from the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh.

Squirrel Hill’s main retail district that originally consisted of a few shops and businesses at the corner of Forbes and Murray (the location of Forbes Terrace and Forbes Cottages and just three blocks from Beacon Gardens) is now a bustling corridor that extends another eight blocks southward—known locally by multiple generations of neighborhood youth as "up street" (a contraction of "up the street"). Until recently, most of the shops and restaurants in Squirrel Hill have been “mom and pop” operations, but recently corporate franchises seem to be encroaching on the landscape<sup>39</sup> [Figs. 3 & 4]. In 2004, the intersection of Forbes and Murray that had long been the site of a neighborhood gas station, was transformed into 52,000-square-foot of retail and office space packaged in “big box” construction that has overwhelmed the previously small-town charm of the central business district. While



**Fig. 3. The boundaries of Squirrel Hill’s courtyard enclaves in relation to the neighborhood’s commercial center.**

<sup>39</sup> Squirrel Hill’s business district is undergoing a redevelopment, with businesses such as Barnes & Noble and Panera Bread opening up shop in recent years. Currently the central retail district hosts a Starbucks, a Dunkin Donuts/Baskin Robbins, and several fast food chains. On the whole, however, much of the retail strip has remained intact with small business owners dominating the landscape.



**Fig. 4. The Squirrel Hill central business district immediately southeast of Forbes Terrace and two blocks from Beacon Gardens (courtesy of ClarkBHM)**

Squirrel Hill of late has lost a touch of its unassuming “steel town” persona that it once shared with other city neighborhoods, it still retains its reputation as an “artsy” community. One city guide recently characterized the neighborhood as a “Bohemian Rhapsody.”

Squirrel Hillers claim their own unusual culture, where liberal, laid-back attitudes combine with discriminating tastes in movies, dining and music. Here you can find video stores offering an eclectic array of video and DVD’s, and two theaters famous for showing foreign and independent films.<sup>40</sup>

For the most part, Squirrel Hill’s built environment has not dramatically changed in the 70 years since its early saturation, although there has been some new infill

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<sup>36</sup> Isenberg, 2006.

following the demolition of existing structures and the parceling of larger properties. Unlike some well-to-do neighborhoods in nearby urban centers such as Cleveland, well-heeled Pittsburghers did not abandon their city neighborhoods for greener pastures in suburban enclaves.<sup>41</sup> Today, the neighborhood remains home to up to five generations of kin and social networks. Nevertheless, over the last decade several institutional agents have begun an aggressive operation to “upgrade” much of the multi-family housing stock. With the “redevelopment” of this housing sector, students and others with modest incomes have had to reconsider their residential choices. This trend suggests that Squirrel Hill is experiencing a subtle form of gentrification that does not necessarily conform to standard textbook definitions of the process. In fact, I speculate that very few Pittsburghers would ever associate the word “gentrification” with the neighborhood of Squirrel Hill—the preferred community for the city’s wealthiest households for over 100 years. Terms that are typically, if at times inaccurately, linked to gentrification—such as “distressed,” “run-down,” “inner city,” “working class,” “blighted”—do not conjure up images of Squirrel Hill. And yet, gentrification-induced displacement in the neighborhood of Squirrel Hill has been in progress for close to a decade. While the process appears to have impacted mainly the local rental market (specifically the courtyard complexes that are the topic of this study and other multi-family housing units), the overall effect on the neighborhood of Squirrel Hill is far from negligible when viewed from the perspective of

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<sup>41</sup> Borchert, 2002: 311-346.

“exclusionary displacement.”<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, the population that has been displaced does not fall into the demographics usually associated with gentrification. Although Squirrel Hill’s displacees share a similar demographic profile with other “alternative minded” populations that have been well represented in the gentrification literature of major metropolitan areas such as New York and San Francisco, Squirrel Hill’s courtyard denizens differ in one major aspect from their big-city counterparts—they did not sow the seeds of their own destruction. In other words, they did not gain their foothold into the community from which they were ultimately displaced by setting into action the “snowball effect” of urban pioneering, a process by which increasingly more affluent consumers move into a neighborhood displacing earlier populations.<sup>43</sup> “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood Goes Upscale” widens the net of gentrification-induced displacement studies to include not only new sites for investigation but previously unacknowledged demographics. Along with this expansion in the research agenda comes a need for more flexible definitions of class that take into account the subtleties in different contexts. For the purposes of this study, I define gentrification as the process whereby an incumbent middle-class population is displaced by a

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<sup>42</sup> Many gentrification researchers have adopted a broader definition of the term displacement to include not only those who have been directly displaced but also those whose options for housing in previously affordable neighborhoods are suddenly limited as a neighborhood gentrifies and a household is “excluded from living where it would otherwise have lived” (see Marcus 1985:206). Identified as “exclusionary displacement,” this phenomena has far greater ramifications for neighborhoods than the direct last-resident displacement that occurs through rent increases or other market forces.

<sup>43</sup> The label “urban pioneer” that is commonly bestowed on first-wave gentrifiers, implies that no one worthy of recognition is currently living in those destination neighborhoods. In *Loft Living* (1989: 176), sociologist Sharon Zukin describes urban pioneering as an “artistic mode of production,” whereby artists convert industrial buildings into “artist’s loft complexes,” creating a “hip” ambience that contributes to increased property values. For a comprehensive account of artists and gentrification see Daniel Makagon, “Bring on the Shock Troops: Artists and Gentrification in the Popular Press,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 7: 1 (March 2010), 26 - 52.

succeeding population of the same class—one with sufficient income to meet the increased rents for properties that have been “upgraded” to attract a more “upscale” clientele.<sup>44</sup> I have also defined the displaced population as *the alternatively-minded class* to distinguish them from their successors and to reposition “class” to fit the contexts of this study.

### **Redefining Class: The Alternatively-Minded Class**

The *alternatively-minded class* is comprised of those who identify with or are at home with lifestyles that do not necessarily conform to conventional societal norms. While this includes those who may have an affinity for a particular subculture, such as hippies, goths, and punks who represent newer forms of alternative living as well as bohemians who have long been identified as nonconformists, it also includes those who place a high value on the freedom of self and others to assume a lifestyle that might well be perceived as idiosyncratic. In answer to the query “Who named Squirrel Hill And When?”—a question coincidentally posed to a Pittsburgh columnist in May of 2000 around the same time that Squirrel Hill’s courtyard denizens were being ousted from their homes—the following response made it into print: “Squirrels are, after all, best known for storing nuts, a function once performed by such boho

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<sup>44</sup> I have intentionally avoided the term “creative class” to distance myself from Richard Florida’s theory that an expansive “creative” presence (artists, musicians, lesbians and gay men and a group he describes as ‘high bohemians’) correlates with a higher level of economic development. In *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002), Florida elevates his definition of “the creative class” to a population of *übermenschen* who have the potential to bring about “a good kind of gentrification.”

enclaves as Forbes Cottages and Beacon Gardens."<sup>45</sup> Had the article appeared just a week later, the columnist could have added Forbes Terrace to her list of extinct "nut harboring" enclaves. Indeed Squirrel Hill's courtyard communities did have a reputation for harboring "oddballs," a status with which it was comfortable. The majority of residents did not present themselves as stereotypically middle-American, but rather took a certain satisfaction in their fringe status. In fact, Beacon Gardens as well as Forbes Terrace were often referred to as artists' colonies. "The arts" in this context encompassed all forms of creative expression, including music, theater, painting, design, film, and literature as well as the internet that was already well on its way to becoming its own creative medium. Even those residents who were not artists *per se*, identified to varying degrees as "non-conformists" in their social and intellectual leanings. While as individuals they clearly identified themselves as solidly middle class based on their families of origin, educational achievements, and cultural capital, their incomes could at best be described as "moderate" in comparison to those coming from similar backgrounds, and as a group they were likely marked by some as "other." In this sense, Squirrel Hill's courtyard denizens could be described as a marginal population, one that was highly vulnerable to displacement by higher earners from their own middle-class habitus. Furthermore, they were discursively constructed as unworthy of continued neighborhood status by those in positions of power based principally on their apparent deviance from "acceptable" class norms. As with the majority of studies on gentrification and displacement that focus on the role of class in the displacement process, this study follows suit, albeit with an

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<sup>45</sup> Jodi Nydes, "Who Named Squirrel Hill and When?" *Pittsburgh City Paper Online*, You Had to Ask, May 31, 2000, retrieved March 28, 2003. [www.pghcitypaper.com/archives](http://www.pghcitypaper.com/archives) (accessed Sept. 17, 2008).



“alternative” definition of class. However, this emphasis on class as a cultural category is not intended to suggest that race, gender, and sexual orientation did not intersect with class in Squirrel Hill’s courtyard complexes, but rather that class issues were the principle subject of discourse that dominated the ethnographic record.<sup>46</sup>

### **Renaming Gentrification Terminology: Revalorization**

In dispensing with more conventional definitions of class, I have also chosen to stay alert to taken-for-granted gentrification terminology that is in fact riddled with latent meanings. Popular, civic, and academic discourses on gentrification have from their inception tended to be muddled in a haze of “alliterative garble”—*revitalization, renaissance, regeneration, renewal, redevelopment, rejuvenation, restructuring, resurgence, reurbanization, and residentialization*—that all too often has obscured the real story behind the accumulation of property through practices that are not as innocent as they may appear.<sup>47</sup> For example, when the “use value” of a neighborhood is exchanged for its “real estate value,” lining not only the pockets of private investors but also the coffers of local governments, this process is often applauded through a neoliberal narrative of competitive progress. This practice follows a common path that starts with the predatory acquisition of land and property that has experienced “devalorization” (decrease in property value), with the intent of stimulating a “revalorization” (increase in value) through changes not simply to the

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<sup>46</sup> For an ethnographic study of gentrification that looks at the intersection of race and class see Elijah Anderson, *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community* (1990).

<sup>47</sup> Tom Slater, “Missing Marcuse: On Gentrification and Displacement,” *City* 13.2 (2009) 292 – 311.

housing stock, but changes in housing class as well—in essence alterations that are encapsulated in one of the above-mentioned alliterative labels.<sup>48</sup> In an attempt to distance from such disingenuous jargon, I have opted to substitute the term *revalorization* wherever possible to describe modifications to the built environment of Squirrel Hill’s courtyard complexes. While I have not been able to dispense with the alliterative “re” altogether, the “valorization” eliminates descriptives that insinuate imbued values (e.g., revitalization suggests that there was nothing vital in a given location to begin with).<sup>49</sup> As such, I frame the discourse on the valuation of property by developers and other local institutional agents to “dollars and cents,” unpacking those “value” judgments implicit in the gentrification idiom.<sup>50</sup>

### **The History Of Multi-Family Housing in the East End**

“Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood Goes Upscale” also diverges from other housing studies when placed within the historical context of Pittsburgh’s East End as it evolved near the start of the twentieth century. According to historian James Borchert (2002), Pittsburgh’s most privileged citizens developed alternative strategies

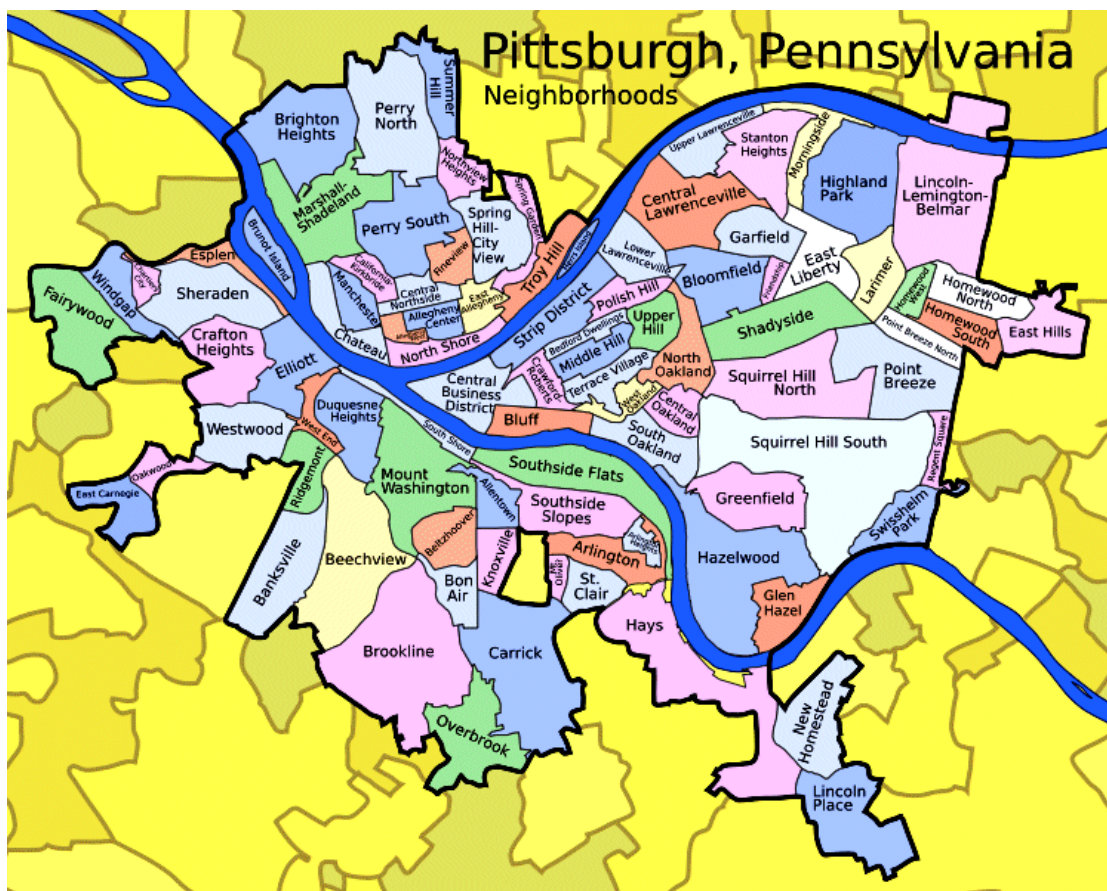
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<sup>48</sup> For a more detailed discussion of devalorization and revalorization see Neil Smith’s rent gap theory (Smith, 1987:165).

<sup>49</sup> Tom Slater, “The Downside of Upscale: Telling the Homeless to Find a New Home,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 30, 2006b. <http://economistsview.typepad.com/economistsview/2006/07/gentrification.htm> (accessed Oct. 20, 2010).

<sup>50</sup> The usefulness of the term “gentrification” itself has come under scrutiny in the academy. Along with the accusation that as a discourse it has lost its “ability to open up new insights,” it has been suggested that perhaps it may be time “to allow it to disintegrate under the weight of these burdens.” (Bondi, 1999: 255). Loretta Lees (2003) points out that many political administrations have banned the term “gentrification” altogether, speaking in more class-neutral terms such as “urban sustainability,” and effectively deflecting criticism and resistance.

for coping with the complexities of the modern city by creating “uptown enclaves” that represented a “modified urban-style residential landscape.”<sup>51</sup> Around 1900, two luxury apartment-hotels erected in Oakland (just 1 mile from Squirrel Hill) became home to affluent East Enders who were attracted to the myriad amenities and cachet of hotel living —the ten-story Schenley Hotel (1898) and the Iroquois (1903). [For a map of Pittsburgh neighborhoods refer to Fig. 5]



**Fig.5. Map of Pittsburgh neighborhoods**

<sup>51</sup> James Borchert, *Forming an Upper Class Uptown Culture: Ideology and Landscape in Pittsburgh’s East End 1880-1930* (2002). Pittsburgh, New York, Cincinnati and Toronto demonstrated a similar pattern, with its more privileged population gravitating to uptown enclaves. Borchert used “Blue Books” and Social Registers as his primary sources to track the changing residential patterns of Pittsburgh’s upper-middle class between 1887 and into 1930s.

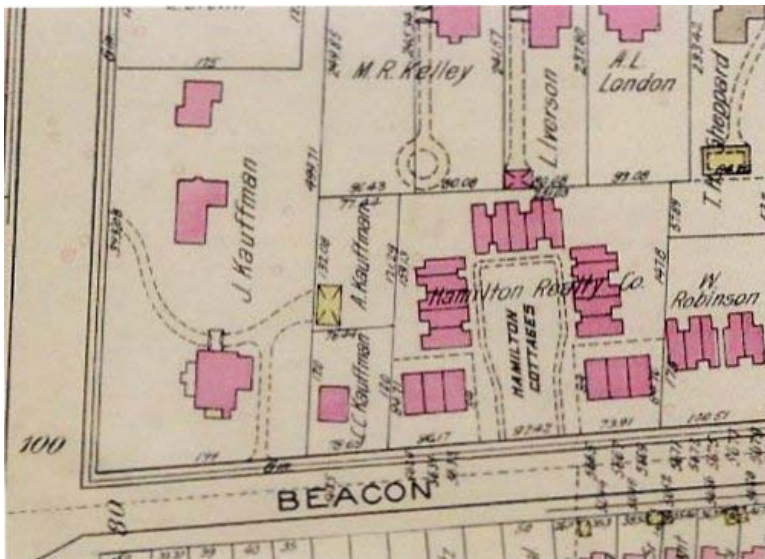
Hotel living, however, presented a challenge to rigid domestic ideologies that had long “sacralized” the home as a “haven” that sheltered the family from the competitive world beyond.<sup>52</sup> Nonetheless, Pittsburghers of influence apparently dismissed such concerns, taking their cue from the more sophisticated metropolitan centers of New York and Chicago where apartment-hotels proliferated. Nor were local trendsetters inclined to fall into step with those popular domestic advisors who extended their crusade beyond apartment-hotels to question the respectability of all multi-family dwellings and the moral laxity that purportedly went hand in hand with “residential propinquity.” In fact, around the same time that the Schenley and Iroquois hotels became coveted addresses, two apartment buildings explicitly conceived with an elite audience in mind broke ground in the East End neighborhoods of Shadyside and Point Breeze—The Heidelberg and Highland Towers—both designed by architect Frederick G. Scheibler Jr.<sup>53</sup> [See Appendix C for a brief bio] Scheibler’s most innovative experiments with multi-family housing, however, was realized in the design of Hamilton Cottages (Beacon Gardens) that married the principles of The Garden City movement with the domestic requirements of a well-to-do clientele that was looking for a happy compromise between the single-family home and the congregate apartment house dwelling. Several other upscale courtyard complexes also began to dot the landscape of Squirrel Hill—enclaves that

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<sup>52</sup> A. K. Sandoval-Strauss. *Hotel: An American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 263-266. Dating back to the mid-nineteenth century, apartment dwelling first became associated with the squalor of tenement living in New York’s and Chicago’s high-density residential centers.

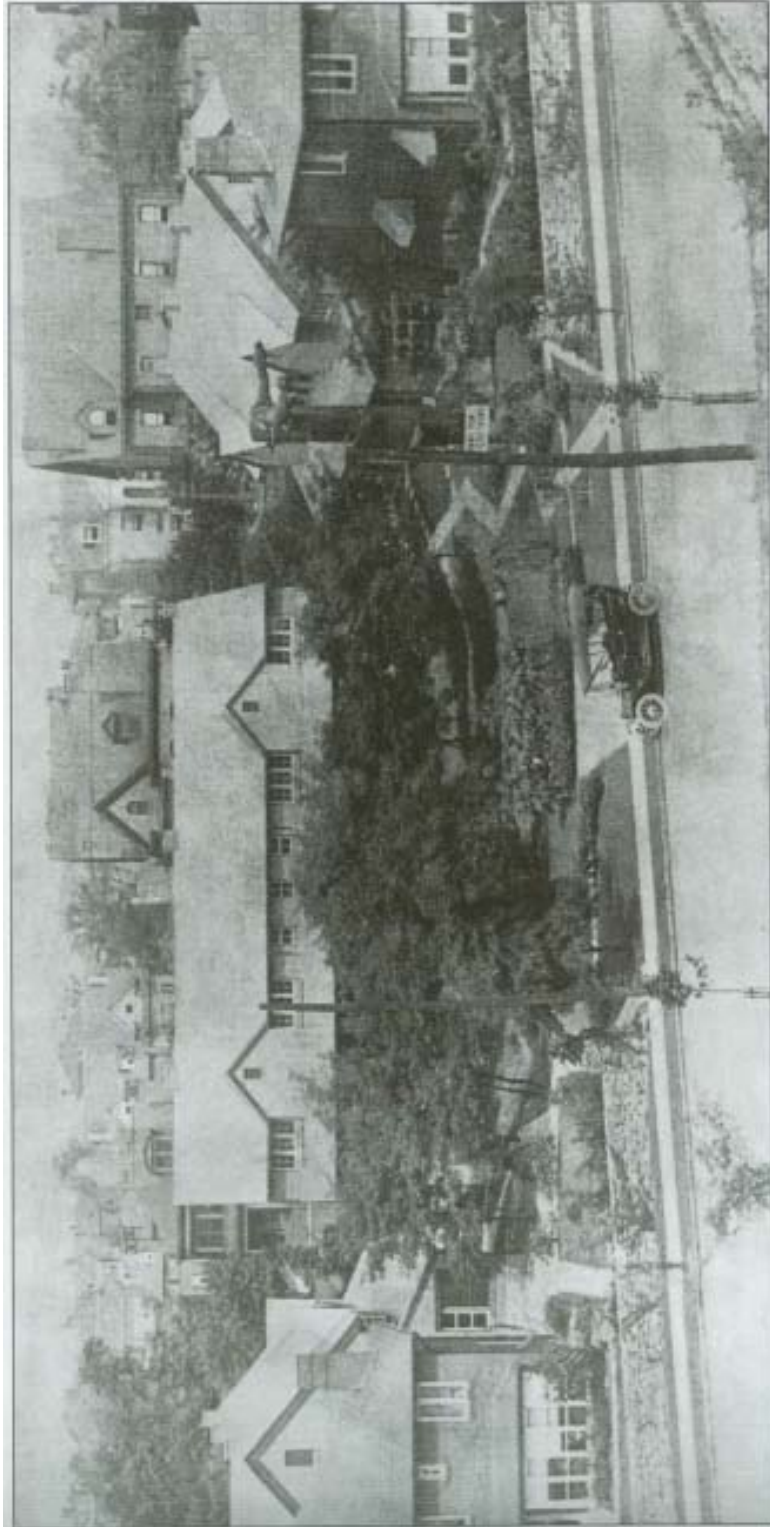
<sup>53</sup> Both properties are now listed as historic landmarks by the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation, and The Old Heidelberg has received historic designation by the city of Pittsburgh and is a protected site. For more on Frederick Scheibler see Martin Aurand, *The Progressive Architecture of Fredrick G. Scheibler, Jr.*, 1994.

were distinctly different from their west coast relatives most of which were designed by contractors and were far more modest in their conception and execution. Hamilton Cottages and Forbes Terrace represent a distinct housing hybrid that was likely unique to the neighborhood of Squirrel Hill and as such is an important part of the social history of American domesticity. Historic photos of the two complexes with accompanying plat details, as well as contemporary promotional materials, provide a glimpse into their early origins. [See Figs. 6 to 10] In a 1911 article appearing in *The Gazette Times*,<sup>54</sup> Hamilton Realty promoted its latest project, Hamilton Cottages, as "a unique grouping of renting houses... instead of a magnificent flat building."



**Fig. 6. 1923 plat detail of Hamilton Cottages (courtesy of Historic Pittsburgh website, GM Hopkins Company maps, plate 19B). Note the large properties surrounding the site and the contiguous plots of the famed Kauffman family, founders of Kauffman's Department Store and patrons of Frank Lloyd Wright who designed Falling Waters for Edgar J. Kauffman in 1935 ).**

<sup>54</sup> "Park in Center of New Houses," *The Gazette Times*, Feb. 28, 1911. <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=J-ba04ztB30C&dat=19110228&printsec=frontpage> (accessed Oct. 3, 2010).



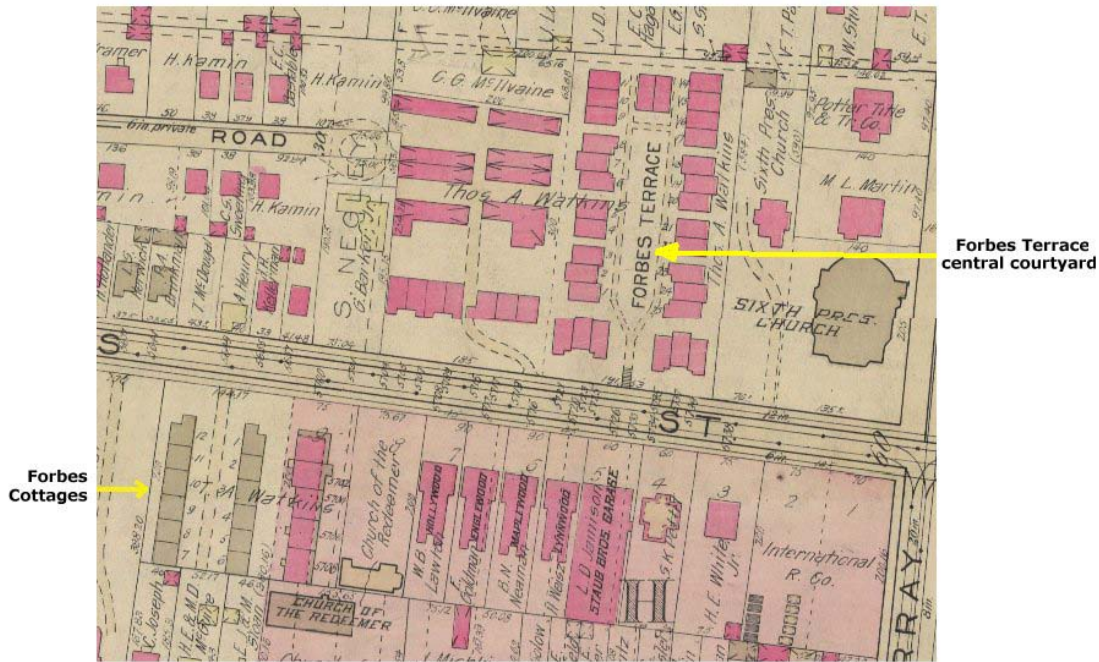
**Fig. 7. Hamilton Cottages circa 1913 (courtesy of the Carnegie Mellon University Architecture Archives)**



**Fig. 8. Forbes Terrace, circa 1921 (courtesy of the Pittsburgh City Photography Archives). This view omits the courtyard entrance, which is to the right. An automobile is captured ascending to the parking garages that were integrated into the original site design.**



**Fig. 9. Entrance to Forbes Terrace from the "grand staircase" with a view into the central court, circa 1960s (courtesy of Gern Roberts)**



**Fig. 10. 1923 plat detail of Forbes Terrace and a related courtyard complex, Forbes Cottages (courtesy of the Historic Pittsburgh website, GM Hopkins Company maps, plate 17B)**

Aside from assuring prospective tenants that all the latest amenities were to be included, particular mention was made of individualized services to be provided by "caretakers" who would be responsible for all maintenance needs inside and outside the complex. Hamilton Cottages was also touted as a likely bastion of stability, contrasting the complex's intended clientele with "flat dwellers" who were noted to be "great movers."<sup>55</sup> [Figs. 11 and 12]

<sup>55</sup> A 1913 article appearing in *The Ladies Home Journal* touted "court apartments" as a solution for single women needing safe, reliable housing. Courts were viewed as a compromise between the expense of a single-family home and the "indecent propinquities" of apartment life. See Una N. Hopkins, "A Picturesque Court of 30 Bungalows: A Community Idea for Women," *Ladies Home Journal* 30 (April 1913), 99; quoted in Dolores Hayden, *History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods and Cities The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods and Cities*, 1982: 40.



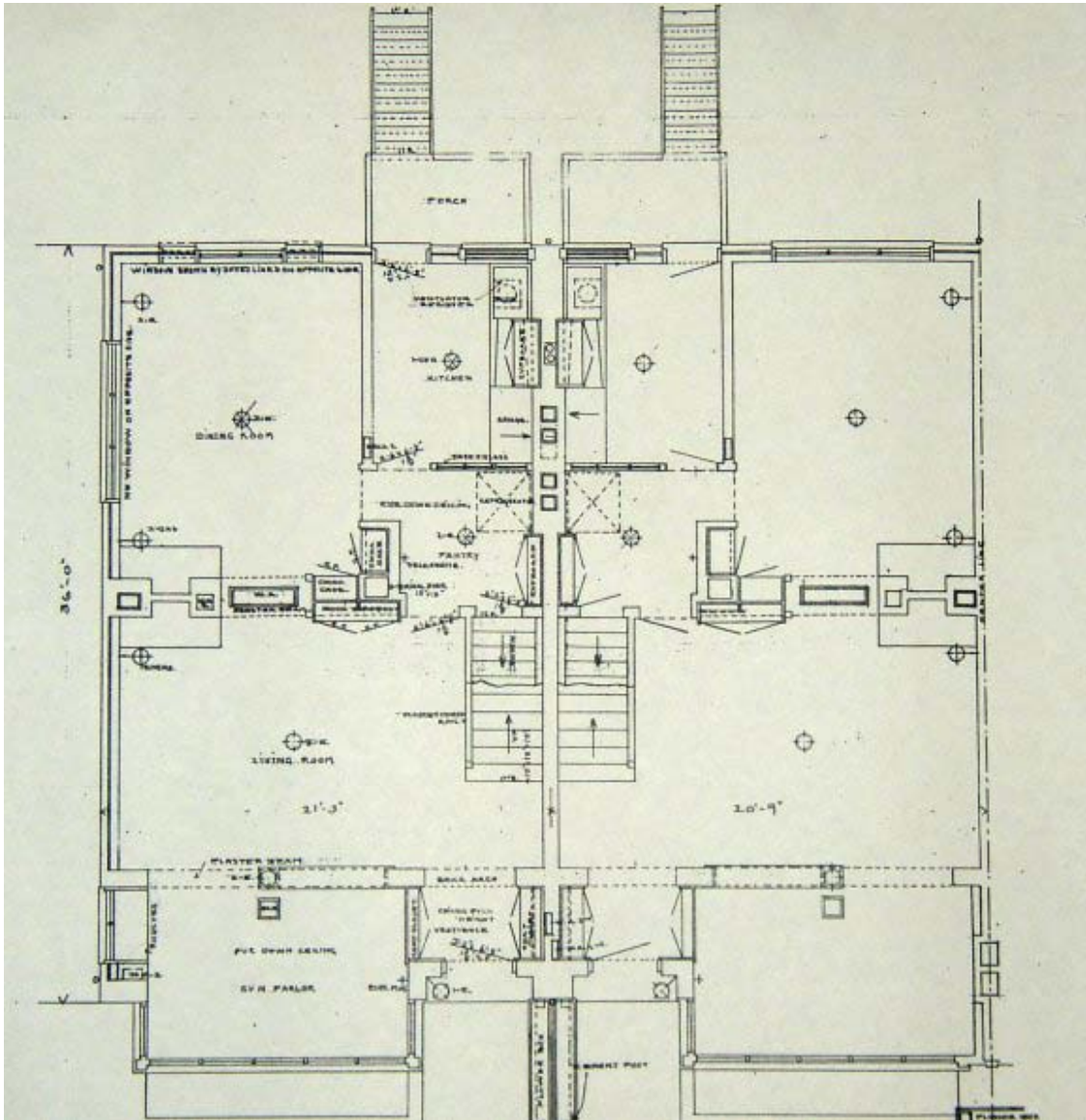


Fig. 11. Hamilton Cottages original main floor plan for two side-by-side units (courtesy of Carnegie Mellon University Architecture Archives)

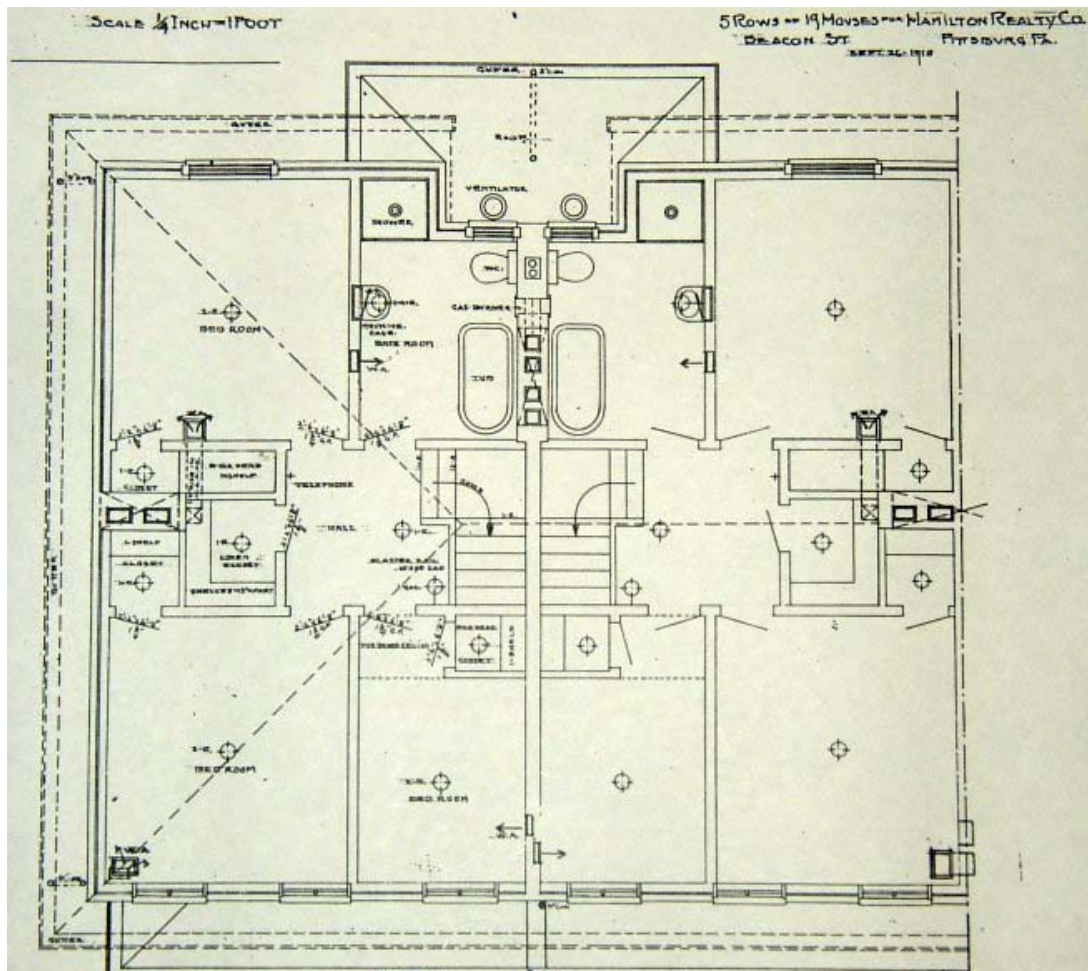


Fig. 12. Hamilton Cottages original 2<sup>nd</sup> floor plan for two side-by-side units (courtesy of Carnegie Melon University Architecture Archives)

The mention of full servants' quarters was also a bid to attract the attention of an "upscale" clientele.<sup>56</sup> [Fig. 13] Whereas Hamilton Cottages and its sister courtyard Forbes Terrace both boasted full servants' quarters, the Terrace also staked a claim to a well-heeled population with its provisions for an on-site parking lot and garages. As such, Forbes Terrace was likely to have been the first courtyard complex in the United States to introduce parking into its site plan, encapsulating "seeds of both the motel—the ultimate expression of mobility and alienation—and the village green—the traditional American expression of community" (Polyzoides et al, 1992:12).<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> While middleclass families frequently had servants in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it might be assumed that maintaining a live-in servant in a relatively small house that was equipped with all of the latest technologies was indeed a luxury. According to *The Pittsburgh Post*, many well-to-do families accustomed to owning a private home were realizing that owning large town houses, used only for four or five months of the year, were a liability and that apartment living offered a more desirable alternative, see "New Era Dawning For Market Here," *The Post Gazette*, Sept. 29, 1912, Sec. 4, p. 6.

<sup>57</sup> Courts in southern California did not begin to accommodate cars prior to mid 1920s (Polyzoides, 1992:32, 44). The parking design for Forbes Terrace "integrated the car without allowing it to tyrannize the dwelling"—a hallmark in architectural innovation that Polyzoides attributes to courtyard housing in southern California. I suggest that the architects of Forbes Terrace were not only prescient in their recognition of the soon-to-be ubiquity of the American automobile, but that they integrated a particular design strategy that was innovative for its time. The garages at Forbes Terrace were erected at the rear of the site with a side service driveway providing direct access to the parking area—much in the same manner as those courtyard complexes in Los Angeles that were terraced into sloping hills.

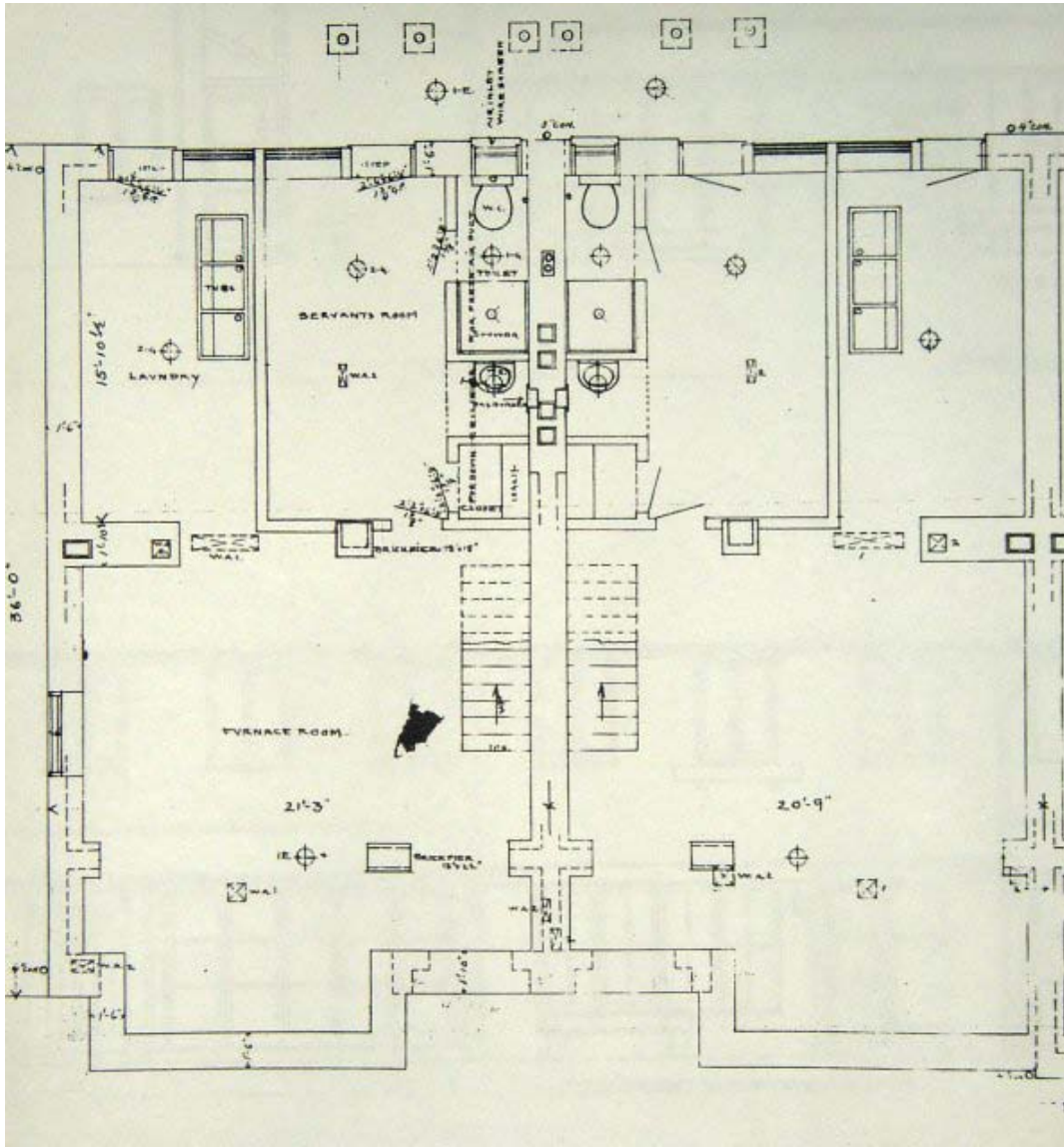


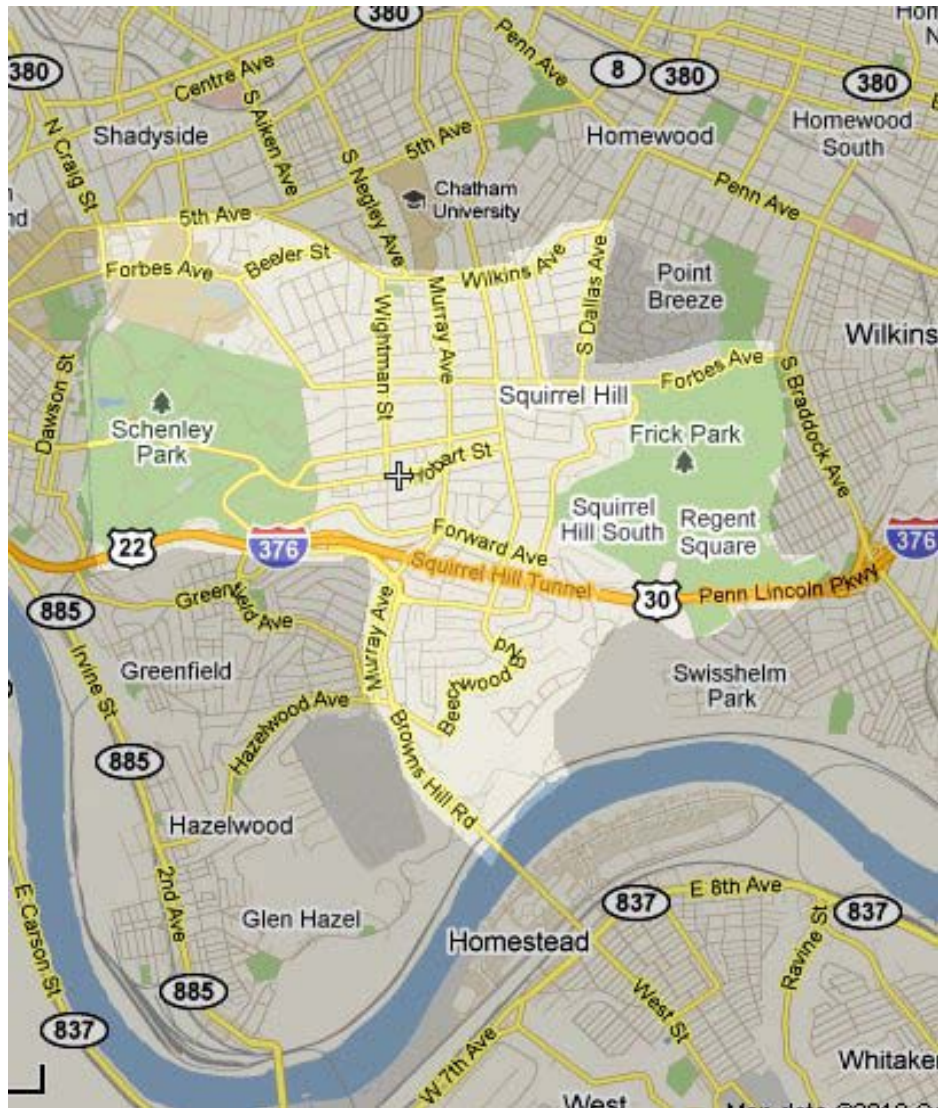
Fig. 13. Hamilton Cottages original basement plan (courtesy of Carnegie Mellon University Architecture Archives)

## **THE CASE STUDY SITES c. 1998-2000**

In the following descriptions, the two primary courtyard complexes under investigation, Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace, are described as they were in 1998 (before any changes took place) in the present tense. Two related secondary sites, Forbes Cottages and Wightman Place, are also included. All of these complexes were subsequently altered or destroyed. An account of the current status of each of the sites follows the contemporary descriptions *and is italicized*.

### **Hamilton Cottages/Beacon Gardens**

Hamilton Cottages, renamed Beacon Gardens some time in the 1950s, is located near the intersection of Beacon and Wightman in the Pittsburgh neighborhood of Squirrel Hill—just 1 block west of Murray Avenue's retail corridor. [Figs14 and 15] The complex was built between 1911 and 1913 by Hamilton Realty Company. Frederick G. Scheibler Jr. who had designed other "group cottages" for the firm, was commissioned to draw up the plans that were to be executed in two stages over a period of three years. Scheibler incorporated elements of the English Garden City movement in his design as well as other European reformist styles. The complex is composed of twenty-one two-story brick houses arranged in five rows



**Fig. 14. Squirrel Hill (highlighted) bounded by two major parks on the east and west**



Fig. 15. An aerial view of the Squirrel Hill courtyard complexes.

that make up a horseshoe formation.<sup>58</sup> The design of the site is unusual given the simple, understated elegance of the cottages that take a back seat to the spacious central commons [Figs. 16 & 17]. The units themselves are unique in design—a blend of the Craftsman style and Scheibler’s unique Modernist idiom. The five rows of town houses that comprise Hamilton Cottages are almost identical in concept but vary in execution. In addition to variations in the interior layouts, the main difference is exhibited in the roofline, with the buildings facing Beacon Street having hipped roofs as opposed to the gabled roofs and shorter chimneys than the units facing the courtyard [Fig. 18]. This central courtyard measures approximately 150 x 200 feet and is landscaped with trees and shrubs. A narrow path circumscribes the open area, providing access to each unit while a low stone wall separates the whole complex from the city sidewalk. The cottages are built of industrial red brick over wood frame construction. The first floor of each building contains a hip-roof projection covering both a porch area and a bay window for each cottage. The bay windows are composed of operable casement units across the front and porch sides. [Fig. 19] Several units retain an original stained-glass window in the dining room depicting an Arts and Crafts<sup>59</sup> style motif of irises. [Fig. 20] Most of the basement and first story windows and doors have steel I-beams serving as lintels, a signature of Scheibler’s designs [Fig. 21].

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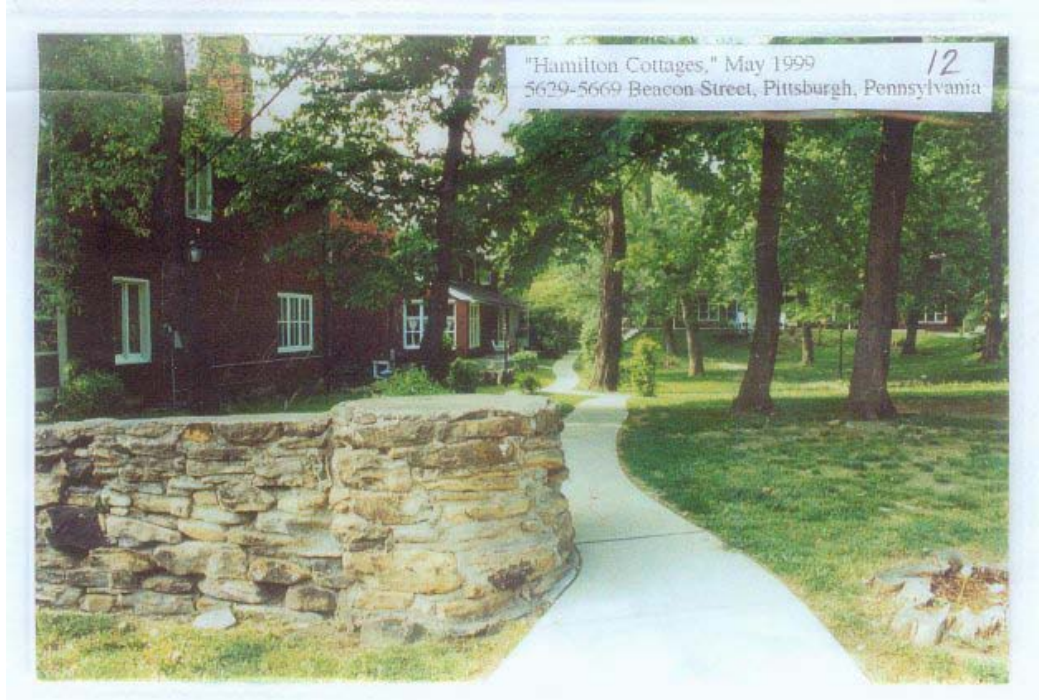
<sup>58</sup> The physical descriptions of Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace are in large part adapted from the historic nomination applications that were filed with Pittsburgh’s Historic Review Commission. However, other contemporary sources were also tapped to provide additional information.

<sup>59</sup> For more on The Arts and Crafts Movement see *The Arts That is Life: The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1875-1920*, ed. Wendy Kaplan, 1998.

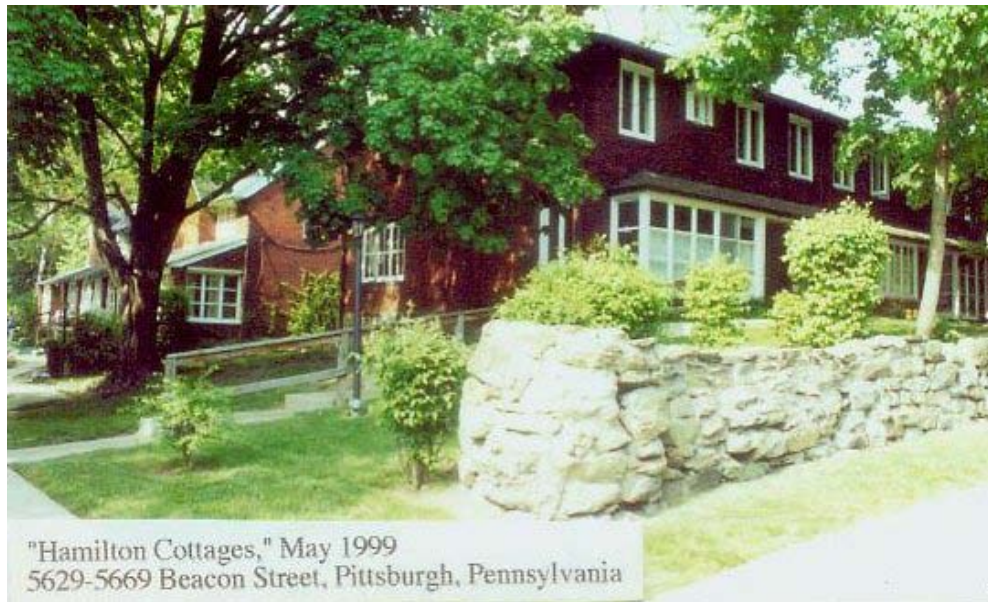




**Fig. 16. Panoramic view of Beacon Gardens pieced together from a series of photos, circa 1998 (photographer Sarah Smith)**



**Fig. 17. Partial view into the central courtyard of Beacon Gardens  
(photographer Sharyn Frederick)**



**Fig. 18. View of the front units facing Beacon Street with hipped roofs  
(photographs by Sharyn Frederick)**



**Fig. 19. A prototype of a Beacon Gardens sunporch with windows opening into a green space (photograph by author)**



**Fig. 20. Frederick Scheibler's signature iris window (photograph by author)**

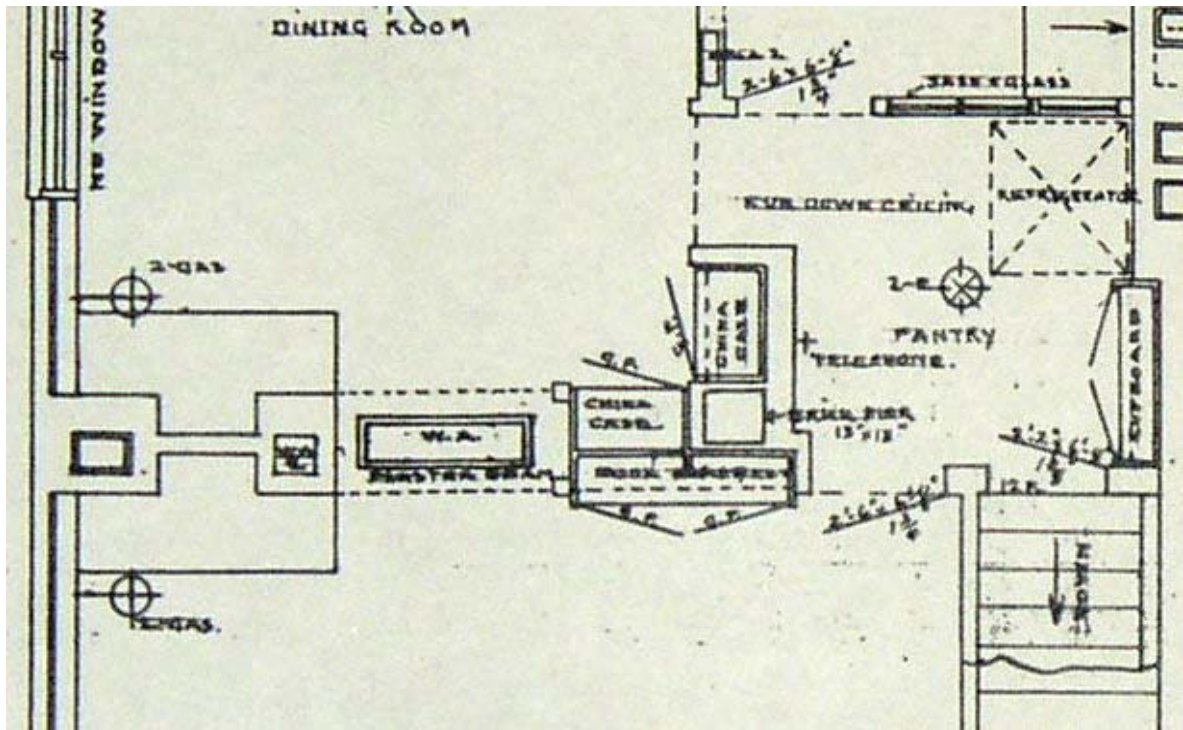


Fig. 21. Hamilton Cottages original plan: rear elevation (courtesy of Carnegie Mellon University Architecture Archives)

The interior finishes in most of the cottages are stained wood, including oak doors in an asymmetrical design, unusual postmodern room dividers, and novel closet and cupboard designs that reflect a progressive spirit. In each living room is a very plain fireplace opening in a section of exposed brick wall that is almost coplanar with adjoining plaster surfaces and that runs directly in the corner of the room. [Figs. 11, 22 and 23] Arts and Crafts styled china cupboards, room dividers, and similar elements are found in all of the units [Fig. 24]. Scheibler displayed exterior and interior views of Hamilton Cottages in the annual Pittsburgh Architectural Club exhibition for 1910-1911. Unfortunately, his entries were not illustrated in the published catalogue. Recurring advertisements that appeared in the classified following the completion of each stage of development described the location of Hamilton Cottages as "exclusive" and the houses as models of "refinement and culture." The ads also touted full servants' quarters, central heating, a built-in vacuum cleaning system and "every detail that adds to the beauty, simplicity and quietness of a modern home."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *The Pittsburgh Post*, Sec. 4, March 19, 1911.



**Fig. 22. Close-up of Scheibler's plans for oak built-ins and two fireplaces that divide the living room and dining room (courtesy of Carnegie Mellon University Architecture Archives)**

*In 1999, a local development company—Walnut Capital Partners—purchased Beacon Gardens and secured the vote of city council to proceed with drastic alterations to the site despite the fact that the Historic Review Commission and the Department of City planning had already determined that Hamilton Cottages/Beacon Gardens met the official city guidelines for historic designation. [See Appendix D] Nearly two thirds of the wooded commons is now a parking lot and only a moderate area in the rear serves as a common green space [Fig. 25]. Walnut Capital also proceeded with other “insensitive” changes to the exterior of the structures that were not consistent with the recommendations of the Historic Review Commission,*



**Fig. 23. Example of original, but refinished, interior built-ins that still survive in some Beacon Commons units (photographs from Walnut Capital Partners' rental search on the web)**



**Fig. 24. Original built-in china cabinet in a Beacon Gardens dining room (photograph by author)**



**Fig. 25. The Beacon Gardens paved courtyard  
(photograph by author)**

*a subject that remains a sore point for preservationists and the tenant community that was displaced by the developers. Likewise, interior renovations were also deemed to be “insensitive” to the architectural integrity of the structures and the legacy of Frederick Scheibler. Fortunately, a prototype of Scheibler’s original design is extant. Five units that extend east of the U parti of Hamilton Cottages were constructed simultaneously with the 15 units framing the court<sup>61</sup> [see Fig. 6]. These five additional units are connected by a footpath to the main courtyard and are identical in design to the structures surrounding the central commons. Up until the early 1980s, when these 5 units were sold off to individual homeowners, they had been considered to be part of the larger complex. My next-door neighbor, Dan, from*

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<sup>61</sup> These 5 units were owned by the wife of Frederick Bruckman’s business partner, Jesse Robinson, and were never officially part of Beacon Gardens. However, as a tenant of Beacon Gardens, I always assumed that these units were an extension of The Court and only became aware of their separate status when they went on the market shortly after I moved from Beacon Gardens.



*my residency at The Court purchased one of the five houses where he still resides. His house retains nearly all of the original features of the Scheibler plan and is depicted in several images to illustrate the units prior to revalorization. [Fig. 26].*



**Fig. 26. Dan's house that retains nearly all of the original features of Scheibler's plan (photograph by author)**

## Forbes Terrace

Forbes Terrace sits on sloping land near the intersection of Forbes and Murray Avenues—currently the epicenter of Squirrel Hill’s business district. The complex was built between 1913-1915, commissioned by Thomas A. Watkins and his brothers (both engineers) and designed in association with a local architect believed to be John E. Dwyer. The complex is composed of a grouping of 42 townhouses and apartment homes and six garage buildings terraced above Forbes Avenue [Figs. 27 & 28]. Two of the garage buildings house two apartments each for a total of four apartments. There are 35 garage spaces plus 15 outdoor spaces. The units can be reached by steps or a winding road that leads to a common parking area [see Fig. 8]. Twenty-five of the forty-two homes are configured of nine duplex, triplex, and quadraplex units that enclose a spacious central courtyard of approximately 75 x 100 feet. Two symmetrical triplexes on axis with the courtyard and arranged on opposite sides of a grand concrete stair entrance complete the frame, creating a U-shaped configuration much like Hamilton Cottages [Fig. 29]. In all, these 31 units that articulate the central commons are the main focus of this case study, and Forbes Terrace is defined as such throughout this work except where otherwise indicated.<sup>62</sup> A sidewalk circumnavigates the courtyard that is lined with trees and features four brick piers that

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<sup>62</sup> It was a general consensus among the informants that there were “two tiers” at Forbes Terrace: the 31 units that framed the central courtyard were considered to be “more desirable” and were more likely to attract long-term tenants who were more community oriented.



**Fig. 27. View of Forbes Terrace's central courtyard, circa 1999 (photograph by Sharyn Frederick)**



**Fig. 28. View looking out towards the street from the central commons of Forbes Terrace (photograph by Gern Roberts)**

support decorative lamps. All of the units have modest rear yards and enclosed back porches [Fig. 30]. Most of the two-story brick units have deeply overhanging eaves



**Fig. 29. View of Forbes Terrace's courtyard from the "grand staircase" (photograph by Sallyanne Klutz)**



**Fig. 30. View of a Forbes Terrace unit from the rear yard (photograph by Gern Roberts)**

and heavy brackets, hallmarks of the Craftsman style. There are long, narrow, windowed sun porches on the façade. Low rubble stone walls front some of the units. [see Figs. 6 & 7] Original stained glass windows remain in some of the dining rooms. A 1915 Post Gazette ad promoted Forbes Terrace as “the most modern up-to-date houses in the city,” boasting a central heating system and built-in refrigeration. They also noted that the houses were “artistically decorated,” “of a livable size,” and “face on a beautiful private park.” With its seven rooms and two baths, built-in Craftsman-style cabinetry, servant call buttons and large ceiling beams defining the first-floor, Forbes Terrace has historically been considered one of the most desirable addresses in the East End.

*In 2000, Walnut Capital purchased Forbes Terrace and a similar scenario played out between the tenants, the developers, The Historic Review Commission, and the City Council. Although Forbes Terrace’s courtyard remained intact (the site design already accommodated parking) changes to both exterior and interior spaces caused consternation on the part of preservationists and the displaced community, including the removal of all but one maple tree at the rear of the court [Fig. 31].*



**Fig. 31. Forbes Terrace after tree removal (photograph by Sharyn Frederick)**

### **Forbes Cottages**

Forbes Cottages, located south of Forbes, is situated diagonally across the street from Forbes Terrace. This small enclave was built by Thomas Watkins c. 1918. The community consists of twelve common walled 2 1/2 storied sand-faced town homes that are divided, six on a side, facing each other, and separated by small front yards and a common tree-lined sidewalk [Fig. 32]. While not a U- shaped parti in the manner of Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace but rather a double-bar parti (two narrowly spaced rows facing one another), Forbes Cottages central pathway



**Fig. 32. Forbes Cottages circa 1998 (photograph by Sharyn Frederick)**

nonetheless encourages residents to cross-paths on a regular basis, reinforcing community ties.<sup>63</sup> The large adjoining front porches further encouraged neighborly interactions. The five bedroom units have hardwood floors, fireplaces, and Craftsman-style built-ins.

*In 1998, Forbes Cottages was purchased by St. Edmunds Episcopal Academy to make room for the addition of an athletic field to be added to the school campus. The entirety of the site was razed despite protests from local preservationists and the displaced community.*

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<sup>63</sup> For an explanation of courtyard housing typology see “City of Fresno Historic Architecture Survey Report For The “Bungalow” Court Project,” (Fresno, California: The City of Fresno’s Historic Preservation Program and the State of California Office of Historic Preservation, Sept. 24, 2004 ), 17-18. <http://www.fresno.gov/NR/rdonlyres/42ED2C2A-B9F5-401D-8024-76EA1A796CD6/0/HistoricPresBungalowCourtProjectFeb122009.pdf> (accessed Oct. 23, 2010).

## **Wightman Place**

Wightman Place, built in 1918, consists of twelve stucco and stone town houses that wrap around the corner of Forbes and Wightman. The 2 ½ storied-houses have four bedrooms each with unusually large closets for the era and some units retain their original wood built-ins. Although there is no central commons, the site falls loosely within the typology of an L parti that opens up to the street, concealing an expanse of adjoining back yards and a parking area in the rear. Similar in design to Forbes Cottages, Wightman Place has large front porches that promote community interaction [Figs. 33 & 34].

*Walnut Capital Partners purchased Wightman Place in May of 2000 at the same time that it acquired Forbes Terrace. The residing tenants were displaced and the units were “modernized” by the developers. The parking lot was expanded at the expense of the common rear yards that have been reduced to small plots.*





**Fig. 33. Wightman Place immediately prior to revalorization (photograph by Sharyn Frederick)**



**Fig. 34. Wightman's L configuration simulating an enclosed commons in the rear (photograph by author)**

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Methodology**

My study of gentrification-induced displacement has been framed within the paradigm of cultural landscape analysis, most notably Jeremy Korr's "A Proposed Model for the Cultural Landscape Studies," 2002. Korr's model establishes a tripartite relationship between humans, the built environment, and nature. I have applied his five step process to examine Squirrel Hill's courtyard communities as follows: (1) A multisensory descriptive analysis of the sites under investigation has been presented, including the everyday "ritual" practices of the residing tenants. (2) The boundaries of the complexes have been set in time and space, including both the "creators" (the original developers and architects) and "alterers" (the development company that purchased and "remodeled" the complexes). The social boundaries are internally defined by the residents vs. the political boundaries defined by the developers who used their power to make property claims "conceptually independent of [the] humans within." (3) The various perceptions of the landscape from the perspective of competing stakeholders have been a primary focus, with attention to the role of human agency in the negotiation of contested spaces. Issues pertaining to aesthetic considerations pose questions pertaining to "who, if anyone, stands to gain or to lose from the landscape's design and appearance?" The terminology and language system of the "inhabitants" and "constructors" has been parsed with an understanding that landscapes are socially constructed by both "insiders" and "outsiders" (4) An exploration of the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between the

built environment, humans, and nature has been the primary conceptual framework for analysis. (5) The cultural landscape of the courtyard complex as a prototype has been defined as a distinct socio-spatial system coined “court-ordered living” that serves as a model of the dialectic relationship between humans, nature, and the built environment as it intersected with a discourse on historic preservation.

### Ethnography

Since the principal goal of this research is to explore the cultural landscape of Squirrel Hill’s courtyard complexes within the context of gentrification-induced displacement and from the perspective of multiple stakeholders, the methodology used was primarily qualitative. While I attempted to give each and every informant an open forum in which to present his or her own personal point of view, I must confess to my own bias as a principal investigator. Having previously resided at Beacon Gardens for five years in the late 1970s and early 1980s, I came to this study with a vested interest in the preservation of both the social and physical fabric of Squirrel Hill’s courtyard complexes as well as a predisposition to sympathize with those informants who were involuntary forced from their homes. [see p. 67, Ruth Bergman’s Home History]. As such my own “personal” perspectives and “cultural baggage” have “condition[ed] my interpretations and values allocated to them.”<sup>64</sup> While it was inevitable that some elements of self-ethnography—comparisons between myself and the subjects—were at play throughout the investigation given our

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<sup>64</sup> See Keith Hoggart, Loretta Lees, and Anna Davies, *Researching Human Geography*, 2002: 263. Also see Michael H. Agar, *The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction to Ethnography*, 1996: 93.

shared “cultural tradition” of *court-ordered living*, my own personal narrative has nonetheless remained peripheral to the collective narratives of the study’s participants.<sup>65</sup>

Although informants were on the whole surprisingly forthcoming in our interview session, I did not have the opportunity to develop a sustained relationship with most of the subjects as is the preferred methodology for an ethnographic study. Ideally, the process of inquiry should move through “several distinctive stages: from mutual apprehension, through exploration, to cooperation and full participation.”<sup>66</sup> Despite the fact that my time with the majority of informants was limited, I nonetheless suggest that on the whole subjects were able to fast-forward through the multiple stages of inquiry—a progression that I attribute largely to the fact that as incoming participants they were already highly invested in the study and were eager to open up and share information. The fact that I was “an insider” of sorts also facilitated my role as a co-participant, further accelerating a relationship of trust based on our shared cultural tradition of *court-ordered living*.

Building on the literature of courtyard housing, place-identity, and gentrification/displacement, the empirical research presented in this study expands upon and interconnects the existing literature, providing a ground-up ethnographic reading. Wherever possible I have quoted informants directly, taking my cue from

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<sup>65</sup> For more on the methodologies of a life history approach John Caughey, *Negotiating Cultures and Identities: Life History Issues, Methods, and Readings*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

<sup>66</sup> John. Caughey, “Cultures and Identities: A Life History Approach to the Study of American Cultures,” *American Quarterly* 34 (1982), 222-243.

John Langston Gwaltney who qualified his own ethnographic studies in the introduction to his book, *Drylongso: A Self-Portrait of Black America*, with the following acknowledgement: “The people whose voices are heard in these pages are eminently capable of self-expression, and I have relied upon them to speak for themselves.”<sup>67</sup> For the most part, data was gathered through semi-structured interviews that were open ended, encouraging respondents not only to speak to questions presented by the researcher but also to address issues of importance to them in their own words. Most interviews were taped and informants signed consent forms approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Maryland. Subjects fell into one or more of the following categories: displaced tenants, locals, developers, community activists, historic preservationists, journalists, and in-movers into the newly gentrified enclaves. Informants were located through public records, newspaper articles, and chain sampling.<sup>68</sup>

Primary interviews were conducted in a variety of locations: at home, in the workplace, in a favored local restaurant, and in one instance in a moving car while the informant provided me with a tour of the neighborhood and other Scheibler properties. Other less focused interviews were conducted in public venues or over the phone and via email. Most interviews were face-to-face encounters with individual informants, although I also conducted interviews with couples, reunited households, and friendship circles. Single interview sessions lasted between 1 to 3 hours, in some

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<sup>67</sup> John Langston Gwaltney, *Drylongso: A Self-Portrait of Black America* (New York: The New Press), 1980.

<sup>68</sup> Chain sampling is a process whereby interviewees are asked to identify other potential informants and, in some instances, arrange introductions.

cases with several follow-ups through virtual encounters. I met with two key informants, one from each of the primary sites, for multiple sessions. These sessions more closely approximated classic definitions of ethnographic inquiry in which the researcher and the informant establish a sustained conversation over time, allowing for deeper meanings to emerge as a more trusting relationship was established. The majority of interviews were recorded and transcribed. Data was then condensed and ordered to uncover any patterns or recurring themes for further analysis and interpretation.

In all, interviews were conducted with 28 displaced tenants, 20 of whom identified themselves as working directly in the arts or allied fields. The remainder represented a wide range of professions, from a civil rights attorney to several software engineers. I have included a brief description of all of the key informants from Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrance in Appendix A to help the reader keep track of the various interviewees and avoid repetitive introductions wherever possible. The youngest informant was 21 years old and the eldest was in her mid to late 70s.<sup>69</sup> The most highly represented age group was late 20s to early 40s, with a near equal tally of men and women participating. One lesbian and several gay males were included in the informant pool, although sexual preference in general was not considered a topic of significance for any of those interviewed given the overall liberal tenor of the courtyard complexes. Although I was unable to recruit any racial minorities for my research, other informants confirmed that people of color were in fact represented in

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<sup>69</sup> This list of informants include only those individuals that I personally interviewed.

each of the communities, although a white population predominated.<sup>70</sup> As regards the primary category of analysis for this study—“class”—I have chosen to depart from conventional determinates of socio-economic stratifications in favor of my own definition—namely, “the alternatively-minded class”—that is more in keeping with the idiosyncratic populace that was drawn to Squirrel Hill’s courtyard communities. A full explanation of “the alternatively-minded class” is provided in Appendix B.

In addition to the interviews with outmovers from Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace, I also recruited two inmovers to each of the complexes following *revalorization*, creating a “before” and “after” framework for further analysis. During these encounters, I attempted to suspend any preconceptions, hopefully allowing for comparisons and contrasts to emerge from the conversations. To provide for a more balanced perspective, I also interviewed the president of Walnut Capital Partners, four historic preservationists, two architectural historians, and three invested parties living in close proximity to the study sites. Finally, I visited each of the complexes periodically over a span of four years, observing the flow of outdoor activity across seasons while also engaging in informal conversations with those tenants I casually encountered on site—a very informal take on participant-observation.

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<sup>70</sup> At the time of displacement, there was a smaller than usual representation of minorities. During my own residency at Beacon Gardens (c. 1980) there were 4 interracial couples living at The Court.

Aside from the qualitative research described above, I also collected data from various sources, including archival materials,<sup>71</sup> local newspapers and journals, brochures, advertisements, signs, photos, historic maps, audio-visual records, and most revelatory—the personal documentation and artistic production of informants that spoke to their personal experiences of involuntary displacement and resettlement.

### **Ruth Bergman’s Home History**

Beacon Gardens, where I resided from 1978 to 1983, remains an important site of memory for my son and me in our joint life history. Following a messy divorce, this little hamlet in the heart of Squirrel Hill functioned as our extended family, creating a much-needed sense of place during a period of dislocation. It was also home to my new business partner who lived just a few doors down—an arrangement that allowed us to share a car, 2 cats and a dog, and 3 children in all. This proclivity for “gregarious living”<sup>72</sup> was first imprinted in my body and mind as a child growing up in a densely packed neighborhood of row houses in northeast Philadelphia, where the boundaries between households were indistinct and communal lawns, stoops, and

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<sup>71</sup> Archival sources include the files of Pittsburgh’s Historic Review Commission: *The Pittsburgh History and Landmark Foundation Walking Survey of Squirrel Hill* conducted in 1979; the Frederick Scheibler archives located at the Carnegie Mellon Architectural Library (the original blueprints and drawings for Hamilton Cottages’ site design by Frederick Scheibler are contained in the archives, although some are too fragile to be duplicated.); the video archives of The Squirrel Hill Historical Society; and Historic Pittsburgh online, a comprehensive collection of local resources that supports personal and scholarly research of the western Pennsylvania area. <http://digital.library.pitt.edu/pittsburgh/> (accessed Oct. 23, 2010).

<sup>72</sup> In her study of New York apartment buildings, Elizabeth Cromley makes the claim that collective spaces that were built into apartment houses provided places for informal interactions among a building’s tenants, creating a sense of neighborliness—especially in the case of young women with children who were able to rely on one another for childcare assistance (see *Alone Together: A History of New York’s Early Apartments*, 1990).



lightly trafficked streets became our extended playgrounds. This appreciation for shared living spaces that had been firmly established at a young age was further reinforced by my two years of residence on a kibbutz as a young adult and has influenced my choice of housing ever since. When I moved from Beacon Gardens in 1983 to purchase a home, I chose to live in another courtyard-like complex (a single-bar parti) that had a similar community spirit to that which I had experienced at Beacon Garden<sup>73</sup> [Fig. 35]. As such, my place-identity remained intact, and I was able to maintain a sense of place-congruency from one settlement to the next. For me, Beacon Gardens represented my “ideal” sense of home, a sentiment expressed to varying degrees by those neighbors with whom I had close contact during my own residency. One of the informants in this study, Phyllis, did in fact live at Beacon Gardens when I was in residence, and we remember one another from casual encounters. Mostly, however, it was her then teenage daughter who had the strongest recollections of me—still awestruck by my boyfriend’s souped-up motorcycle that remained parked at our front door when not in use.

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<sup>73</sup> A single row of 16 units that has a large fenced-in wooded commons that serves as a buffer from the public sphere of the sidewalk. Our community was popularly known as “The Row.”



**Fig. 35. My house in Shadyside after moving from Beacon Gardens  
(photograph by author)**

## PART 1: BEACON GARDENS

### Chapter One: Won't You Be My Neighbor

It's a beautiful day in this neighborhood,  
A beautiful day for a neighbor,  
Would you be mine?  
Could you be mine?

I have always wanted to have a neighbor just like you,  
I've always wanted to live in a neighborhood with you.

Won't you please,  
Won't you please,  
Please won't you be my neighbor?

*Fred Rogers, 1967*

#### “That Nestled Feeling”

A common theme that is woven throughout the eighteen tenant narratives depicting life at Beacon Gardens is a strong sense of community that constituted the everyday life of its residents. I have coined the term *court-ordered living* to identify this heightened sense of community that saturated the ethnographic record. *Court-ordered living* is best understood as a socio-spatial relationship in which the primacy of the central courtyard and the inward focus of its surrounding built environment orders the dynamics of daily social interactions in favor of collaborative living.<sup>74</sup> Although “court ordered” as an addition to the lexicon of housing typologies (a self-conscious play on words) in and of itself suggests the imposition of rules and regulations by an

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<sup>74</sup> This theory will be further tested in Chapter Five under the heading “I Seriously Doubt They Had What We Had.” This section surveys interviews with tenants who moved into Beacon Commons (previously Beacon Gardens) and Forbes Terrace following WCP’s *revalorization* of the two sites.

authoritative body, the completion of the descriptive with an emphasis on the word “living” indicates a more consensual relationship between bodies and space. Even though most informants reported that their initial attraction to Beacon Gardens was to a large degree predicated on an appreciation for the built environment—not excluding those who were initiated into the complex by friends already in residence—their lived experiences as tenants over time tended to exceed any prior expectations. This accrual of tenant satisfaction among Beacon Gardens’ and Forbes Terrace’s residents serves as a testament to the manner in which *court-ordered living* is a mutually constitutive process in which *the physical* and *the social* continually interact to generate a highly evolved sense of *place-identity*. In other words, while the organizing principles of Beacon Gardens’ built environment provided spatial cues for community building, those cues required human actors to assert their agency and transform that *space* into *place*<sup>75</sup>—from user-friendly to friendly-user—or, in keeping with the metaphor, creating what could be described as *court appeal*.<sup>76</sup>

In a near centennial tribute to Frederick Scheibler’s architectural legacy, the last residing inhabitants of Beacon Gardens were resolute in their recollection of the

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<sup>75</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan in *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977) proposes that “space” be thought of as that which allows movement while “place” be understood as pause that allows for the possibility of attachment. Through pause, he argues, it is possible for humans to transform “space” into “place”—in short from an undifferentiated site into one imbued with value.

<sup>76</sup> See Mary Corbin Sies, “Towards A Performance Theory of Suburban Idea, 1877 to 1917,” 1991. This essay serves a model of interdisciplinary scholarship that illustrates how the methodologies of architectural historians and urban historians can be integrated to explore the dynamic interplay between the “physical” and the “cultural” elements of the built environment, providing a wider lens into how actors “perform” within their everyday built environments.

courtyard complex as near idyllic.<sup>77</sup> The overall design of Beacon Gardens, with its modest 21 units juxtaposed to its generous commons, proved to be a winning combination. The complex was small enough in terms of population to encourage a sense of communal intimacy and ensure safety but large enough in overall scale to allow sufficient breathing room for its residents. Although tenants did identify with sub-groups based on age, household dynamics, and overall life-style preferences, there was a broad consensus among informants that the physical fabric of The Court (the diminutive for Beacon Gardens used by tenants and other insiders) contributed to a general sense of community cohesiveness. “The way that place [Beacon Gardens] was set up, you really got to know your neighbors,” exudes one of the younger set who was among a group of alumnae from several neighboring universities—namely Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) and The University of Pittsburgh (Pitt).

Everyone was so incredibly warm and the people that lived there were so different. You know, it’s like there were young people that were still in graduate school. There was this woman who was in her 60s who had a grand piano who had lived there forever, and then there were like Orthodox Jews, and it was really a melting pot—truly, people of color. It was a little bit of everything... and as far as I remember, nobody ever complained or judged how anyone else lived. If they judged, they did it quietly, silently. I certainly never felt it.

Indeed, throughout the interviews tenants shared this fundamental perspective, most often crediting the inward focus of the wooded courtyard as the glue that cemented a strong sense of community. Despite the fact that the central commons had lost some of its original park-like charm after years of wear and tear and ongoing landlord

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<sup>77</sup> The term “idyllic” within the context of current housing literature instantly raises a red flag, suggesting that we have entered into the realm of ideology. But my intent as Beacon Gardens’ ethnographer is not to naturalize some mythic past but rather to elicit memories of “doing” and “feeling” home—evidence of daily practices that help illuminate the dialectic relationship between the tenants of Beacon Gardens and their everyday built environment, both during their tenureship and in their subsequent locations.

neglect, it held special significance for Beacon Gardens' tenants. "The courtyard was such a symbolic thing," asserts a former resident:

To me, you know, that was the heart of the complex. It was always a little downtrodden because it didn't drain well, and it got muddy, and the kids and everybody would stomp out the grass, but it certainly pulled the whole community together in a special way.

Andy and Sarah, a young couple who lived at Beacon Gardens for over five years, were unfazed by the courtyard's unmanicured mien—preferring to regard the wooded commons as more of a communal nature reserve. "The courtyard had this unpretentious kind of beauty," asserts Andy. "I mean the way the trees in summer were like a canopy that prevented sounds from coming in, it was surprisingly quiet, especially our unit which was in the back."<sup>78</sup> Sarah chimes in with Andy, reflecting on the salubrious benefits of living at Beacon Gardens:

We could enjoy nature, just being surrounded by the trees, the open space, the quiet. It was ideal... When I think of the court, I recall it mostly in the early summer when it was lush, the grass was long, and the leaves were bright green, and everything was grown and natural. As soon as the weather turned nice, that was it. Just about everyone moved outside.

Queenie, a transplant from Oregon who moved to Beacon Gardens with her two young children, was of a similar mindset to Andy and Sarah:

I specifically chose to live in Beacon Gardens when I settled in Pittsburgh. It really appealed to me. I was coming from a much more rural area, and so I loved the trees and the sense of nature... I remember the sounds of woodpeckers and all kinds of birds; the constant sight of lightning bugs in the summer; the different smells. I mean, we were right in the middle of the city, and yet it smelled so clean... It was such a great environment for the kids and for me too.

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<sup>78</sup> As a landscape study, Beacon Gardens serves as an ideal model for fulfilling Dolores Hayden's call to recognize "the aesthetics of experiencing places with all five senses. (Hayden, 1995:43).

Not only was the courtyard proper recognized by residents as a major asset, but other design elements were also perceived as essential to the natural flow of everyday life. Set back behind a rubblestone wall, Beacon Gardens was removed from the public realm, affording a sense of privacy and safety for its residents while at the same time encouraging face-to-face encounters once within the inner sanctum of The Court [Figs. 17 & 18]. A footpath that began immediately beyond the stone wall and forked out to loop around the front entries of all the units functioned as a protected route intended for the passage of residents and visitors only. Additionally, the appointment of projecting sun porches with sizable French windows that opened into the commons invited both sociability and surveillance [Fig. 19]. This built-in sense of balance between the private, quasi-private, and the public sphere was experienced both physically and emotionally by the tenants of Beacon Gardens. For the five single mothers residing at The Court, four of whom I had the opportunity to interview, “safety” and “community,” “watching” and “listening” were words that repeatedly surfaced during our conversations.<sup>79</sup> “As soon as I walked off the street it was like this is my place, my park,” reminisces Phyllis, a visual manager for a major department store who raised her three daughters at Beacon Gardens. Felice, another single mother who moved into Beacon Gardens with her four children after separating

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<sup>79</sup> In 1972, architect and city planner Oscar Newman coined the term “defensible space” to describe those design elements of a building’s layout and site plan that enable inhabitants to serve as the primary agents in ensuring their own safety. The juxtaposition of dwelling interiors with exterior spaces and the placement of windows to allow residents to naturally survey the exterior and interior public areas of their living environments were among Newman’s guiding principles that are still practiced today with some revisions. While there is no documentation as to whether Scheibler’s site plan specifically took into account safety concerns, it is apparent that the placement of projecting bays with French windows opening onto the commons created a space that facilitated community surveillance, creating a sense of safety for its residents. See Oscar Newman, 1972: 65. <http://www.humanics-es.com/defensible-space.pdf> (accessed Oct. 23, 2010).

from her husband of seventeen years recalls the sense of comfort that *court-ordered living* provided:

There was just something that felt safe about the place. We were sort of off the beaten path even though we were right in the city. And I liked that people were always around, because I sort of felt nervous being on my own for the first time with my kids. It never felt like you didn't have any privacy, but it just it felt like you weren't alone... All you had to do to have your privacy was to walk into your house, and all you had to do to connect—especially in nice weather—was to go out on your front porch. I mean, you could just sit and talk to people while your kids were napping. It was that safe feeling and having the kids in such a safe environment. It was totally overwhelming for me to leave my marriage, to start school fulltime a week later and deal with the four kids who were in various stages of crisis because of our divorce. Living in the safety of the court with caring neighbors was very healing for me.<sup>80</sup>

Queenie, who lived at Beacon Gardens with her children for nine years while working as a graduate program coordinator at CMU, experienced The Court as “almost like an extended family that watched out for each other:”

What Mister Rogers is “preaching,” is cooperative, communal life. His parables suggest that the answer to our problems of personal dissatisfaction lies in the establishment of community in which people look out for each other and are looked out for in return.

William Guy, 1996  
“The Theology of Mister Rogers.”

I mean the kids, the animals, anything that was going on we shared. There was a sense of safety in that. And it's not like we all hung out together all the time. But especially in summertime, we would be out on the porches and go visit each other and talk, and the kids would be running around, and occasionally a dog or cat... You know, we all knew each other. We were more than just neighbors. We were a community in the real sense of the word.

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<sup>80</sup> A 1988 survey conducted of 20 courtyard complexes in San Diego, CA by two professors of geography at San Diego State University calculated that 92% of the residents were either divorced or single, a number that approximates the demographics of both Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace. In fact, a pet name coined for Beacon Gardens by one of the long-term tenants was “divorce court,” a nomenclature that characterized the population of the complex from the late 1960s to its demise in 2000. See Curtis and Ford, 1988. <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/88spring/bungalow.htm> accessed Oct. 23, 2010).



The tradition of dispensing with babysitters for in-court socialization was a real boon for single moms.<sup>81</sup> Small paved areas that fronted each of the units and functioned as patios, porches, and in some instances stoops, were yet another design feature that encouraged informal interaction between households. Jenny, another single mother, who moved into Beacon Gardens with her teenage children following the breakup of her marriage recalls the “built-in-sense of community” that helped ease her adjustment at a very rough juncture in her life:

Well there was a lot of visiting that went on. The way the courtyard was set up it invited neighborliness, you know, walking up to say hello. I mean it wasn't a bother. Since I was by myself a lot of the time (my kids went back and forth between me and their father), it was very nice to have people around when I came home... You know in this day and age when people move around so much, when so many people live far from their own families, it can be very lonely. The Court served a function, almost like a church group, if you know what I mean. Whatever else, we had each other.

This appreciation for *court-ordered living* was not limited to just single mothers but was voiced by childless households as well. “The kids, you know, they could just run and play and be friends with the other kids in the courtyard,” recalls Karin, one of the post-college-age crowd “It’s not like you had to tell the kids, ‘don’t run across the street’ because there was no street. It was a park; it was a playground, it was just great.” Indeed, Mac and Serge, two young men who spent a good chunk of their childhood at Beacon Gardens spanning most of the 1990s, recall The Court as a very

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<sup>81</sup> Architectural historian Elizabeth Cromley chronicles her own experiences with cooperative living as a young mother in an Upper West Side apartment building in the mid-sixties. “The apartment house served us young wives in endless essential ways: as a family home, a day-care center and play group, a mothers’ network for services and information, a shopping co-op, and a social circle.” (Cromley, 1999: xiii). For single mothers at Beacon Gardens, the experience of cooperative living had even greater remunerations given the everyday challenges facing single heads of households. The concept of planned cooperative housing for woman has been promoted by material feminists since the mid-nineteenth century (see Hayden, 2002:172).

“special” place. “I mean definitely it makes you appreciate community,” emphasizes Mac.

I mean it’s a much better setting and a much better setup to have a whole courtyard community and to be able to interact with everyone there as opposed to what seems like the U.S. standard of play dates where kids have their parents arrange everything. When we wanted to play with someone, we just went outside. Or at worse, we just had to knock on their door. Nobody had to call up and organize something in advance. That whole system just seems so artificial. Kids don’t get to make their own decisions. It feels unnatural.

Based on their own experiences growing up in The Court, Mac and Serge were able to articulate a requisite site design for child-friendly housing—providing a more intimate account of courtyard living than previously reported in user-based studies.<sup>82</sup>

Serge, who moved into Beacon Garden along with his family immediately upon his emigration from Russia, was taken off guard by the overall neighbor-friendly credo of The Court:

It [Beacon Gardens] was such an amazing place, like the way it was structured. It was awesome! ... You knew the people across from you diagonally, and you knew the person next to you, and you knew someone five houses down on some other side-angled house. I mean we had just moved from Russia, and we were like refugees, and luckily we found this great place. You know, everyone was really, really nice to us. We kind of didn’t understand where it all came from. It was such an American dream to live in a place where everyone said “hi” and looked out for each other.

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<sup>82</sup> Claire Cooper Marcus and Wendy Sarkissian in their book *Housing as If People Mattered: Illustrated Site Planning Guidelines for Medium-Density Family Housing* (1986: 110-111) provide the following guidelines for child-friendly housing designs: (1) parents need to be able to allow their children outside without constant, close supervisions (2) children need easy, casual access to other children without formal invitations to play (3) children should be able to experience the pleasures of the outdoors without the intrusion of adults. While these findings are consistent with informants’ assessments of courtyard housing in Squirrel Hill, the analytical lenses of the two studies vary in their scope. Marcus and Sarkissian, who culled their material from a broad range of collected studies, offer a comprehensive analysis of child-friendly housing, but their research does not provide the very up-close-and-personal perspective of informants such as Mac and Serge.

Serge not only spoke to me nostalgically of his own experiences at Beacon Gardens, but he recalls how his entire family, who had left the Soviet Union under dire circumstances, adapted well to their new homeplace:

My grandmother, who came with us from Russia, she just loved Beacon Gardens. She walked around inside the courtyard all the time. It was perfect for her. It was safe and at the same time flexible with so many different kinds of people. She was really sad when we moved and had to leave all that behind us.

Both Beacon Gardens and its sister court, Forbes Terrace, boasted veteran residents who resided 34 years and 50 plus years respectively in their courtyard complexes.<sup>83</sup> The paved footpath provided safe transport and an opportunity to socialize for both aging residents and those with physical disabilities. Serge and Mac both recalled one Beacon Garden resident who would ride around The Court in a small powered chair with an attached oxygen bag, following the same user-friendly route that was traveled by tots racing their tricycles within the safe confines of the courtyard loop [Fig. 36]. While aging residents found a comfortable niche at Beacon Gardens, younger folks in their twenties and thirties populated the complex in far greater numbers.<sup>84</sup> For the

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<sup>83</sup> After Phyllis, Dalia, my prior business partner, held second place as the longest residing tenant of Beacon Gardens. She lived at The Court from 1978 to 1999. Sadly, she died just six months after being displaced from Beacon Gardens.

<sup>84</sup> In a survey of San Diego courtyard housing (Curtis and Ford: 1988) most of the respondents were between 20 and 39 years of age. This demographic is consistent with my own findings regarding the age of those tenants residing in Squirrel Hill's courtyard complexes



**Fig. 36. Children in the safety of The Court (photograph by Daniel Leger)**

twenty-something Gardens the multi-generational and multi-cultural mix of The Court was perceived as a social plus.<sup>85</sup> Phyllis's mother, a constant presence at Beacon Gardens for many years, never arrived empty handed for her daily promenade to the rear of the court where her three grandchildren awaited her arrival. Informants remember the routine procession, including the offering of cookies and candies to any children who crossed her path. Although she was not a fulltime resident of The Court, she was nonetheless a part of the everyday landscape that contributed to the

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<sup>85</sup> Zai is a design and development firm that took first prize in the Portland Courtyard Housing Design Competition 2007. The firm promotes the concept of "Housing in Response to the Human Life Cycle." Included in the firm's vision for courtyard housing is "the connectedness of multiple generations." The opportunity for Beacon Garden residents to have meaningful interactions with people of all ages was an integral part of the community building process. <http://www.zai-inc.us/design.html> (accessed July 23, 2010).

sense of extended family that many of the tenants experienced.<sup>86</sup> The twenty-something set also took pleasure in their interactions with Beacon Gardens' children—a sentiment that was more than reciprocated. “I really remember Serge when he first moved in, and he didn't speak much English,” recalls Tom, one of a group of recent CMU graduates who was actively ensconced in the social milieu of Beacon Gardens:

He would hide behind the bushes and he would watch us. And then we could kind of coax him out to play, and he would just run around all over the place and would yell, ‘I like to run, I like to run.’ He would just run back and forth. I think it was just his way of like playing with us, not totally committing because he was still a little bit nervous.

Andy, a CMU graduate who was “the prop guy” for *Mister Rogers Neighborhood*, also retains fond memories of Serge and his courtyard buddy, Mac, both of whom frequently “hung out” on Andy's stoop where he was more often than not engaged in some project or another. Mac and Serge, as well as their mothers, recall that Andy would on occasion bring home the hand puppets that inhabited Mister Rogers' fictional kingdom—*The Neighborhood of Make-Believe*. While the characters in this imaginary neighborhood at times clashed and became frustrated with one another, they inevitably would work through their problems, exhibiting an overall sense of helpfulness, empathy, and concern that role modeled conflict resolution for young viewers.<sup>87</sup> When the puppets from *The Neighborhood of Make-Believe* visited

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<sup>86</sup> Tim Cresswell defines “a sense of place” as operating on a continuum from self and/or family, to neighborhood, to city, to the nation. “What makes a place not simply a dot on the map is that place is imbued with meaning by the people who are attached to in one way or another.” (Cresswell, 2004: 5) Phyllis's mother's “place attachment” to Beacon Gardens went beyond her role as the visiting grandmother. As a familiar face in the everyday landscape of the court, she was part of Beacon Gardens' extended family of friends and relatives. She felt a sense of belonging despite the fact that the court was not her primary residence. (Taken from a conversation with her daughter Phyllis.)

<sup>87</sup> For more on *The Neighborhood of Make-Believe* see The Family Communications Network website: [http://pbskids.org/rogers/make\\_believe/](http://pbskids.org/rogers/make_believe/) (assessed July 24, 2010).

Beacon Gardens, children and adults alike would crowd around Andy who would bring the puppets outside where they drew an appreciative audience. “It was really magical for them (the kids),” recalls Mac’s Mother, Queenie. “That’s one of the things that made The Court so special, she continues. “Here was this guy who worked for Mister Rogers living just a few doors down from us, and he was really so welcoming to all the kids.” Andy himself does in fact remember bringing home props from the show every now and again, but he does not recall working on them outside. “I did work on other projects out front—which neighbors probably assumed had something to do with the show—but they were more likely than not related to my own art and my band.” I conjecture that perhaps The Court kids had a peek here and there of the puppets or other familiar props from the show as they traveled on the footpath to and from Andy’s unit that was situated at the very rear of The Court. Although none of the informants overtly drew any parallels between Beacon Gardens and *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*, their sense that the two neighborhoods fittingly intersected is implicit in their animated recollections of Andy as a defacto representative from the popular television show.

Andy’s band, Operation Re-Information, was also the topic of much conversation at Beacon Gardens—one that inspired some controversy among informants—largely due to sounds of band practice that spilled over into the commons. Serge and Mac, however, thought the band was “pretty cool,” and in fact Mac admits to still having one of the band’s CDs—more as a fond keepsake than for active listening. Andy’s partner Sarah, who worked as a scenic painter for The Pittsburgh Public Theater and

The Civic Light Opera—would frequently join Andy outside, enjoying the company of the courtyard children. “You know, we’d sit out front on our little sidewalk by the front door and have a beer and, you know, just shoot the breeze with the kids,” recalls Sarah. Mac and Serge remember in kind, reminiscing about the times that Sarah and Andy would let them sit on their laps and play video games.

Although the majority of households at Beacon Gardens were childless, the overall environment was unanimously child-friendly. Karin, who is now a mother of a 3-year-old, wishes her daughter could enjoy the sense of abandon that *court-ordered living* permits:

It seemed to me like the people that had children there felt like their kids knew to stay in the courtyard. The kids just sort of ran around all over the place. You know, nobody really cared if they played on their porch or where they played. They could play behind all of the houses and in the middle of the courtyard, and they had little places to hide. And you know the parents didn’t have to worry about their kids. They didn’t have to keep their kids under lock and key.

While the courtyard proper on occasion served as a gathering space for adult activities—including yard sales, holiday cookouts, and special

Giving children the freedom to explore in safe, familiar places and in appropriate ways encourages curiosity - one of the most important tools for learning.

Mister Rogers’ website  
PBS Television Network

events—on a daily basis the park-like grounds at the center of the complex functioned largely as a children’s playground. “I remember some kids’ had their parties out front, birthday parties and stuff like that,” recalls Andy. “But generally it was just kids playing and riding their bikes around in there and playing soccer and frisbee in the big depression that would get flooded sometimes. Yup! The kids really used that

space.” Mac and Serge related several stories to me that were set in the central courtyard, including “the hanging story” in which The Court kids equipped “the very best tree for climbing” with a looped rope to provide easier access to higher grounds. Although this accoutrement was deemed unsafe by at least one parent who imagined a noose around her child’s neck, the kids continued to assert their territorial rights by hiding the rope in the mature treetops out of the sight of parental vision. Serge and Mac assured me that the rope served only for utilitarian purposes and dismissed any adult concerns as “bogus.”

Fortunately for those children old enough to escape the watchful eye of parental supervision, open spaces in the rear and to either side of the complex served as more intimate spaces for recreational activities.<sup>88</sup> Serge and Mac remember playing lots of games of kickball, baseball, and hide-and-seek in these alternative spaces that they experienced as sufficiently off the beaten track of the courtyard proper to allow for some autonomy without sacrificing the sense of safety that the complex’s walled enclosure provided.

Adults as well as children had their own “front” and “back” customs. Karin, a member of the court’s “night owls,” recalls returning frequently from her job on the late-shift and retreating into the tranquility of the area behind the rear units, joining a handful of neighbors to participate in nocturnal recreation:

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<sup>88</sup> In her 1978 essay “Remembrance of Landscapes Past,” Clare Cooper Marcus explores how children use outdoor hiding places to create a sense of self-autonomy. Allowing children the freedom to explore was among those aspects of *court-ordered living* that was highly valued at Beacon Gardens. .



We would be sitting on one of the triangular back porches behind the rear units just sipping wine and listening to the crickets and the lightning bugs or something, and I felt like I was in a lake house, like I'm on vacation. Like somewhere very far from any city. You know in that back area, that whole kind of strip back there, was sort of hidden off, and it was really distant from the traffic. And there were trees—oak trees, pine trees. And it was really peaceful. It really did feel like you were in a completely different space.<sup>89</sup>

This shared sense of occupying an alternative space nurtured what was described by Karin as “a little cult of personality... a handful of people who couldn't have come from more different worlds but somehow had a lot of common ground.”

The gradation of space—from very public to near total privacy—proved to be among the most defining elements of *court-ordered living* according to informant responses. The rubblestone wall, in particular, that set The Court off from the public realm held both utilitarian and symbolic values for tenants of all ages. Children and adults alike who used the wall as a perch had the option to observe and/or participate in the hustle and bustle of daily street life—remaining half in and half out the privacy zone of The Court. For those tenants whose units fronted Beacon Street, the rubblestone wall held particular significance as a symbolic boundary marker. The young “Goths” (named as such by Mac and Serge because of their black dress and overall presentation) who occupied one of the houses just beyond the entry to The Court—a unit that remained precariously unlocked at all times—described Beacon Gardens as a “self-protected environment.” For Chris, one of the residents of The Goth House, the wall's symbolic

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<sup>89</sup> Pittsburgh's architectural historian, James D. Van Trump, made the following observation about the environment of Beacon Gardens: “Despite the fact that Hamilton Cottages is not a large presence in the landscape, Scheibler's judicious placing of the row elements, combined with lawns, and greenery, produce an effect of almost rural spaciousness, of romantic seclusion” (see *Life and Architecture of Pittsburgh*, 1983:288).

value far exceeded any perceived functional value. “I really liked that stone wall,” reflects Chris:

It wasn't very high. It wasn't obtrusive in any way. But it was just enough to give boundaries, and it separated us from the rest of the street, and gave us a sense of being a community. I think that wall was the most interesting part of the whole thing. It was just a weird little wall, and it was just there. But the moment they took it down, it was sort of like, ‘why did they take my wall down?’ It just wasn't the same.

Nor was it just Beacon Gardens' tenants alone that recognized the significance of the rubblestone wall within the overall context of the larger site design. Sharyn, an architectural historian and preservation activist, as well as an honorary resident of Beacon Gardens,<sup>90</sup> had the following to say when I queried her about what she most appreciated about Beacon Gardens.

Probably, I would venture to say that the way architecture is laid out, the way those houses are arranged in a horseshoe shape, the courtyard, the trees, the safety, even just that wall. Just the wall, you know, you could jump over that wall. There were openings in the wall; you could walk right through it. I mean, it was not a fence, or gate, or barrier. It's a nestled feeling, and that nestled feeling makes you feel secure. And when you feel secure, you open up to your neighbors. You don't get into their business, but, you know, an older woman like Phyllis, doesn't feel threatened by a punk named Spaz,<sup>91</sup> and he can say ‘hi,’ and she can say ‘hi’ back. There's a feeling of almost like family in a situation like that. ... It's about creating a home, a sense of place.

In general, Beacon Garden tenants and frequent visitors had a deep appreciation for *court-ordered living* that came from everyday practices of inhabitation. Few had any foreknowledge of the complex's historic origins prior to the burst of publicity that

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<sup>90</sup> Sharyn, like Phyllis' mother, was more than just a visitor to The Court. She considered Beacon Gardens to be an important part of her place-identity based on her friendship circles, a sense of attachment to the site itself, and her passion for historic preservation.

<sup>91</sup> Spaz was a tenant of the Goth House who enjoyed cross-dressing. He is best remembered for his frequent public “performances” as a high school cheerleader.

surrounded the historic nomination process. Nor were they aware that Beacon Gardens had long been considered an important landmark.<sup>92</sup> Nonetheless, residents of The Court tapped into the complex's rich history through their own daily interactions with the built environment. "I didn't know it until the end that it was a Scheibler place and what that meant being part of The Garden City Movement and its historic importance," confesses Queenie who marvels in hindsight:

But they were such beautiful places—the woodwork that seemed very fine, and the servant quarters, the built-in vacuum system. Well, it was obvious that it was a very different kind of place with the courtyard and everything. And the rooms for around here, well the rooms themselves were really large.

Andy remembers how first-time visitors "just couldn't believe the place."

You know, they would come in and they could instantly tell that it was an architecturally significant kind of house: all the attention to details, the space itself, the courtyard—everything was remarkable. And the fact that it had a little used type of charm gave it yet another level of specialness, a sense that it had survived.<sup>93</sup>

Sarah further elaborates on Beacon Gardens' "specialness," noting the original casement windows that opened to the courtyard that were still in good working condition."<sup>94</sup> Although a few of Beacon Gardens' tenants bemoaned the poor

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<sup>92</sup> See The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission: PHMC Cultural Resources Database [http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/phmc\\_display.cfm?KeyNo=009358](http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/phmc_display.cfm?KeyNo=009358) (accessed July 23, 2010).

<sup>93</sup> See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1984). Bourdieu links aesthetics to social class, suggesting that the concept of "good taste" serves the interests not only of status but of power. This theory is tested by James and Nancy Duncan in their study of Bedford, NY in which people from similar social and regional backgrounds, and I would add cultural sensibilities, develop common aesthetic appreciations and shared taste. An example posed from the Bedford study is the appreciation of the old and decaying, a value of the picturesque. "A certain studied seediness, such as unrepaired stone walls... make reference to history that is valued by some and rejected by others" (Duncan and Duncan, 1993:56).

<sup>94</sup> Scheibler's design for Beacon Gardens met the requirements put forth by the housing reform movement of the late nineteenth and early 20th century. Reformers called for healthy living environments through increased access to light, clean air, and open space (see *Garden Cities of To-morrow* by the British urban planner Ebenezer Howard). When it was published in 1898, the book was titled *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*. In 1902 it was reprinted as *Garden Cities of To-*

condition of Scheibler’s original kitchens and butler’s pantries, they still retained an appreciation for the fine workmanship of the push button cupboards [Fig. 37]. The units also retained their original bathrooms that were tiled in an octagonal pattern with a blue mosaic border. For those tenants who had in fact moved to Beacon Gardens based, in some part, on their knowledge of Scheibler’s oeuvre, the privilege of residing in the complex took on ideological undertones. “When we started looking for a place to live,” explains Karin, “we were just really picky.”



**Fig. 37. A detail of the original kitchen cabinetry from Hamilton Cottages (photograph by author)**

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*Morrow*. For more on The Garden City Movement as it evolved in the U.S. see Mary Corbin Sies and Isabelle Gournay, “Greenbelt, Maryland: Beyond the Iconic Legacy,” in Richard Longstreth, ed., *Housing Washington: Two Centuries of Tradition and Innovation*, 2010.

Scheibler had really high standards, and Beacon Gardens was architecturally the kind of place where we wanted to live. Even though we were pretty young at the time, places that would have been okay with other people in our age group weren't really options. My husband, especially, had a very particular architectural aesthetic, and he knew exactly what he was looking for. So when we started just walking around the neighborhood checking out rental signs, we fumbled upon Beacon Gardens. We just couldn't believe our luck. I mean we already knew about the history of the place, but once we got to actually see the interior of the unit for rent, we were totally thrilled. It was like so light, there were lots of windows, it was a really open plan, the hardwood floors, all those built in cabinets, and the stained glass windows that were part of the place. The space made sense. And to top it off, it had this great outdoor space, the courtyard and everything. We were just crossing our fingers that someone hadn't beaten us to it. We couldn't write a check fast enough.<sup>95</sup>

Although Beacon Gardens reflected many of the aesthetic sensibilities of the widespread Craftsman movement of the era, the complex was anything but typical for its time. In fact, Beacon Gardens was conceived as an upscale experiment in multifamily housing designed as an alternative to high-end apartment living that was beginning to gain in both popularity and respectability among a middle to upper-middle class clientele near the turn of the twentieth century. An article appearing in *The Gazette Times* in 1911 announcing the plans for the construction of Hamilton Cottages described the project as “a unique grouping of renting houses,” that were planned to give tenants “attractive surroundings” with a central park 124x203 feet.<sup>96</sup>

[Fig. 38] Hamilton Realty promoted the property as a type of innovative housing that

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<sup>95</sup> A survey of courtyard housing in San Diego reported that tenants tended to share, among other traits, an appreciation for architecture. In so far as most of the courts they researched had not changed hands for at least half a century, the winning combination of architectural appeal (drastic changes to the site plan were absent) and affordability (rent increases were incremental) contributed to an overall sense of tenant satisfaction (see Curtis and Ford, 1988).

<sup>96</sup> “Park In Center of New Houses,” *The Gazette Times*, Feb 28, 1911, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=J-ba04ztB30C&dat=19110228&printsec=frontpage> (accessed July 26, 2010).

**PARK IN CENTER  
OF NEW HOUSES**

Hamilton Cottages on Squirrel Hill, Planned to Give Tenants Attractive Surroundings.

MORROWFIELD LOTS SOLD

Insurance Company Will Locate in Keenan Building—Contractors Busy.

A unique grouping of renting houses is planned by the Hamilton Realty Company on a plot of ground 252x250 feet fronting in Beacon street, near Wightman street, Squirrel Hill. William Robinson, president of the Hamilton Realty Company, announced yesterday that in addition to the six houses being completed which face in Beacon street, the company will start the erection at once of 13 more dwellings of the same kind, in groups, each house facing a park 124x203 feet with an entrance from Beacon street. This property is to be known as the Hamilton Cottages. "Instead of a magnificent flat building," said Mr. Robinson, "and employing janitors to take care of the buildings, it was decided to build 19 houses on this property. The company will employ men to keep the outside of the property—the lawns, shrubbery, flowers, tennis courts and children's playgrounds—in first-class condition. These caretakers also will see that all cellars are clean, and look after the dogs and cats.

"The Hamilton Cottages will each contain seven rooms and bath, with servants' quarters for each house; vacuum cleaning systems, built-in sideboards, bookcases, etc. The six houses that have been built have been quickly rented at \$39 a month. My experience with flats has been that of continually having vacancies to fill, for flat dwellers are great movers. Houses are much more satisfactory to the landlord, for when they are tenanted the lessees stay sometimes for years."

**Fig. 38. Newspaper promoting the "magnificent flat buildings" at Hamilton Cottages, Feb. 28, 1911 (Courtesy of The Gazette Times)**

substituted for "magnificent flat buildings." In addition to providing general upkeep, they advertised that the complex's extensive outdoor facilities—including lawns, shrubbery, flowers, tennis courts and children's playground—would be fully tended. Furthermore, the article stated that the caretakers would also see that cellars were kept clean and would "look after dogs and cats." Despite the fact that neither the tennis courts nor the children's playground were realized in the built plan—the areas that had been set aside for these amenities to the rear of the units remained integral to the

site—providing additional outdoor spaces for unstructured activities. In all, Beacon Gardens’ house-to-commons ratio was more generous than other pre-World War I housing of a similar typology—namely the bungalow courts of southern California. These west coast prototypes featured groupings of small one-story bungalows, usually situated around a narrow garden-like strip or a paved walkway with plantings<sup>97</sup> [Fig. 39]. Additionally, the interior living spaces themselves deviated from other contemporary courtyard communities in both size and amenities.<sup>98</sup> Although Beacon Gardens’ units were in accordance with popular Craftsman ideals that called for open floor plans and simplified decorative elements, the two-story houses’ also boasted seven full rooms plus servants’ quarters, the latter an amenity absent in any of the historic courtyard complexes that I have surveyed to date with the exception of Forbes Terrace [Fig. 40]. Clearly, Beacon Gardens deviated significantly from its west coast counterparts in the quality and scale of its built environment, a factor that I suggest further contributed to the realization of *court-ordered living* at its best.

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<sup>97</sup> The earliest bungalow courts were influenced by the 19<sup>th</sup> century religious campgrounds of the East and Midwest that featured cottages built around a common green. Similar tourist facilities were established in Southern California in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As former tourists returned to California to retire, builders may have been encouraged to provide permanent housing in the form of these earlier temporary courts (see Robert Winter, *The California Bungalow. Los Angeles*, 1980). The first permanent bungalow courts were quite modest in their conception. It was not until the late 1920s that bungalow courts in California began to develop into garden apartments designed by architects for a growing middle-class clientele. (Polyzoides et al, 17, 161) These later courts were more sophisticated in design than their predecessors.

<sup>98</sup> The only luxury courtyard housing in California that was contemporaneous with Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace was St. Francis Court in Pasadena (1909) that was designed by Cornell educated architect Sylvanus Marston. The complex was intended as a resort for wealthy tourists. Architect Irving Gill designed courtyard housing in Southern California around the same period, but his early courtyard projects were intended as low-income housing. One of his designed communities, Lewis Court (1910), was so well-received by the public that it quickly transitioned into middle-class housing (see Dolores Hayden, *Designing The American Dream*, 2002: 177).

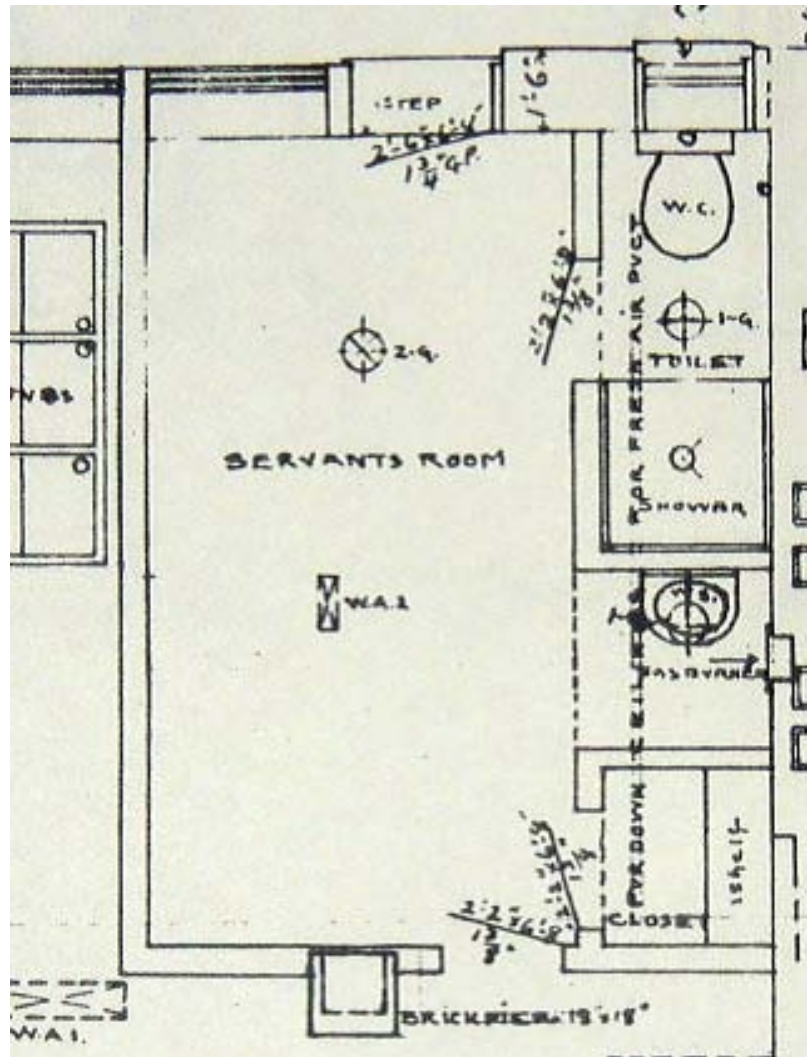


**Fig. 39. View of an early California bungalow court as it exists today (courtesy of the Hollywood Community Housing Corp)**

For single mothers especially, the roominess of the units was conducive to the demands of child rearing. “They were really large enough to provide me and my children a home,” explains Jenny, mother of two teenagers:

The fact that they were multistory townhouses was really important to me. They had the upstairs and downstairs, so it felt more like a home than an apartment. And the physical layout of the place was so great. I loved the way the front bedroom spread across the whole front of the house so you could look out into the courtyard. It was just so roomy and yet intimate. I was even able to set up one of the bedrooms as a sewing room with all my quilting equipment. That was such a luxury. It’s one of the reasons that I really liked living there [Beacon Gardens].





**Fig. 40. Hamilton Cottages detail of Scheibler's plans for the servants' quarters with separate entrance (courtesy of Carnegie Mellon University Architecture Archives)**

Overall, most of the tenants considered themselves very “spoiled” by their ample living quarters. For some, it meant that their domestic spaces also sufficed as work places that allowed for more at-home time. Phyllis was able to work on the mechanical Christmas windows for the department store where she was employed in her own spacious basement. “I just would go downstairs, and I sewed, and I pasted, and I glued—so it was like my workshop down there. I didn’t have to work as much

overtime at the store, so it was more time for me to be with my children.” For members of the Goth House, all of whom were artists, musicians, or writers, political and artistic projects were part of the everyday domestic landscape. “We had multiple zines being produced at our place,” boasts one of the Goths. “You know, underground magazines by punks for punks that were run out of the house.”

Ours was a feminist one, and there were others that had to do with different subcultures. One guy who lived with us who was a musician wrote a music zine. But the musicians in the house also made music. There was this really talented classical guitar major who was studying at Carnegie Mellon, and I always would fall asleep to his playing. He was so wonderful. He had to make a tape for me when we moved out so I would still be able to fall asleep.

Beacon Gardens’ resident band, Operation-Re-Information, used the basement in Valerie and Mark’s unit as a rehearsal space and recording studio. “Those basements were solid cement stone,” underscores Andy, who ascribes the loss of the band’s practice space to its eventual demise. “They were doing something very thoughtful and intelligent,” recalls Sharyn who was a big fan of Operation Re-Information:

I would call them a computer rock organization. They were playing around with ideas of economy and commerce, and what is a band, and what’s entertainment and, you know, what is musicianship. They were just questioning everything and doing it in such a funny and interesting way. They wrote their own software, they played their computers on stage. It was all very cool.

Band member Andy, who was also a serious photographer as well as a prop designer for *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*, used a portion of his basement as a dark room, cordoning off the laundry sink to develop photographs. He and Sarah would host slide shows in their house, events that Valerie recalls as among her fondest memories of Beacon Gardens. “Andy’s photographs were very bizarre and beautiful things,” she muses. “He had this really great artist’s eye.” Sarah also staked out her own

workspace, claiming the small back bedroom as a studio. “Yup, we really used every inch of those places,” affirms Andy. Indeed, Karin remembers Andy and Sarah’s workspaces flowing over to the outside of their unit so that certain projects actually became “communal-like” endeavors. “Sometimes Sarah and Andy would sort of have these projects going on outside,” recalls Karin. “And, you know, everybody who was hanging outside with them would just sort of pitch in and help them out.” In all, Beacon Gardens’ tenants maximized their singular built environment, both inside and out, taking full advantage of the breadth of possibilities that *court-ordered living* encouraged.

As informants further elaborated on their everyday lives at Beacon Gardens, many were able to make connections between their early childhood experiences and their appreciation for *court-ordered living*. Some evoked memories of domestic settings that shared commonalities with The Court despite some very different contexts: row houses in working class neighborhoods, suburban tracts with adjoining yards, and rural areas with an abundance of open fields and parklands. Karin, in her comparison of Beacon Gardens to the block on which she grew up drew the following parallels:

You know, my mom would let us out to play, and we didn’t have to be back until the streetlights went on. She really didn’t have to mind us very much because she knew that we were in our yard, or right out back in the alleyway, or at a neighbor’s house. And you know, she trusted all of her neighbors. And that’s sort of the way it was for the kids at Beacon Gardens. It was really a comfortable setting for me living there [Beacon Gardens] because it seemed so familiar.

Valerie, a graphic artists and musician, made a strong case for her affinity for *court-ordered living* based on her experiences growing up in Spain:

I loved Beacon Gardens! I loved the courtyard! I was born in Spain, and in Spain there is a tradition of courtyards. I think they really facilitate a sense of community... Walking off the street into Beacon Gardens, I almost always would see someone sitting out on their porch, or kids playing, or someone's cat or dog walking around. Yeah! It was this physical sense of immediate recognition, of being home... And it was really nice to walk out of your door and go into someone else's house and feel that you had a second house or a third house right next door to you.

While Valerie retained a very self-conscious awareness of the particulars that attracted her to *court-ordered living*, Phyllis—a resident of The Court for more than three decades—initially made no associations between her overall housing biography and her long-term residency at Beacon Gardens. In fact, Phyllis never mentioned to me that she had lived at Forbes Terrace (Beacon Gardens' sister courtyard) from birth to age seven until I inadvertently triggered that memory during our last of four interview sessions. I was at a point in my research when I had decided to expand the focus of my dissertation beyond Beacon Gardens to include a secondary site—Forbes Terrace—a decision that I shared with Phyllis over lunch at The Squirrel Hill Café, a popular pub that was located just a block from The Terrace (the diminutive for Forbes Terrace used by tenants). Upon learning that Phyllis was literally born into *court-ordered living*, I was eager to hear if she retained any memories that might provide additional insights into her tenure at Beacon Gardens. “I was really young, around seven, when we moved from Forbes Terrace,” Phyllis deferred, “so I’m not sure if it really had any affect on me.” Taking advantage of our close proximity to The Terrace, I suggested that we walk over to the complex so that she could show me the house where she once lived. Upon ascending the grand staircase that set Forbes Terrace off from the public sphere of the street below, Phyllis immediately took on a

different persona—assuming the role of a an insider and defacto tour guide. “I lived over here,” Phyllis announced, pointing to a house that was situated immediately to the right of the central commons. “You know Billy Conn,<sup>99</sup> the famous prizefighter?” Phyllis effused. “Well he used to live two doors down, over there, with the Jaffeys who I think were his guardians. I used to watch him having lunch everyday because he was always eating outdoors.” Moving towards the courtyard proper, Phyllis began to fall in step with the past—her body serving as a mode of access to childhood memories:

I remember there were always people in the courtyard and kids playing. There was this one lady who had show dogs who used to walk around in the grounds with her dogs. I was really fascinated with that. When I came outside, I would always look for the dogs... Almost everyone had gardens in their backyards and people visited each other. I think in that way [Forbes Terrace] probably had some things in common with Beacon Gardens.

Phyllis’ reentry into the domain of Forbes Terrace was perceivably a kinesthetic experience best understood within the paradigm of embodied memory—a discourse among theorists who argue that identity is essentially incarnate—namely, an organic relationship between the body and its movements through space over time. French philosopher Gaston Bachelard speaks of the homes that we are born into as our first universe—a cosmos that remains “physically inscribed in us” over the course of a lifetime.<sup>100</sup> Further theorizing on the principle of inscription is French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty who contends that,

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<sup>99</sup> Billy Conn was a Pittsburgh treasure, a light heavyweight boxing champion best remembered for his sensational near-defeat of heavyweight champion Joe Louis in 1941, Conn is still regarded as one of the greatest fighters of all time (see Andres O’Toole, *Sweet William: The Life of Billy Conn*, 2008).

<sup>100</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 14.

...the body assumes the role of a mediator in memory. Time is read off from the body because time incorporates itself in the body, is sedimented there: the body appears as temporality, sedimentation, temporalizing, corporeal mediation between me and the past.<sup>101</sup>

Based on theories of embodied memory, it is quite likely that Forbes Terrace was such a vital part of Phyllis' "body and being," that she had unwittingly transported the carnate experience of *court-ordered living* to all the subsequent places that she inhabited.<sup>102</sup>

From the perspective of embodied memory, Phyllis' recovered recollections of her early life at Forbes Terrace adds yet another layer of meaning to her appreciation of Beacon Gardens as a very "secure place." I am reminded of one my first interviews with Phyllis when she referred to the transformation that she experienced habitually upon entering Beacon Gardens as she proceeded along the footpath towards home. "I felt as if it was my own little cocoon," she professed. "It felt very secure." For Phyllis, as well as other informants, the experience of *court-ordered living* transcended the specifics of time and place—pointing at once to past, present, and future locations that remained geographically linked through embodied performances of home in all its multiple and overlapping dimensions. As intersecting discourses, embodied memory and place-identity will be further examined in Chapter 5 —"Making Something Tangible Out of Nostalgia."

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<sup>101</sup>Maurice Merleau-Ponty as quoted in David Krell, *Of Memory, Reminiscence, And Writing: On The Verge* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1990), 101.

<sup>102</sup> See Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin, Architecture and the Senses*, 2005. Pallasmaa is a Finnish architect and former professor of architecture at the Helsinki University of Technology. He is also the former Director of the Museum of Finnish Architecture. He argues that both the body and psyche are projected into architectural space and advocates further investigation into the role of the senses in the relationship between self and the built environment over time and place.

As Beacon Gardens' denizens enjoyed the unique perspective and orientation of privileged *insiders*, passers-by fantasized about the picturesque landscape that unfolded just beyond the busy street. Pedestrians ambulating along the exterior side of the rubblestone wall, as well as those who were able to catch a glimpse from the window of a moving vehicle, experienced Beacon Gardens as both a "space" apart and a "place" that was part of the larger connective tissue of Squirrel Hill. As a streetscape, Beacon Gardens welcomed the gaze of "outsiders" who took pleasure in the picturesque courtyard setting. The following excerpt appearing in *The Pittsburgh City Paper* shortly after the first bulldozers rolled into The Court suggests the extent to which Beacon Gardens was framed as a salutary "pause" in the "spatio-temporal" world of Squirrel Hill:

Not so long ago, in a place not so far away, noted Pittsburgh architect Frederick G. Scheibler Jr., created the Hamilton Cottages... It would come to pass that the 21 Squirrel Hill cottage-style apartments would be renamed Beacon Gardens. All the while they maintained their rustic charm, offering the best of city life but affording urban dwellers a welcome retreat at the end of their workday. The apartments sat on a chunk of land where majestic trees softened the sounds of cars whizzing by, where the songs of birds could be heard, undiluted by the goings on of the bustling neighborhood around it. Beacon Gardens would become inhabited by Pittsburghers of all sorts... It would become a place where children gathered to play. Neighbors to talk. Cats to roam unfettered.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Frances Monahan, "Path of Lease Resistance," *Pittsburgh City Paper*, June 30- July 7, 1999, News and Views, 5-6.

## “No Dirty Looks!”

As a prior tenant of Beacon Gardens, I myself was not in the least surprised that community accord was evoked as the norm among tenants, although it is difficult to account for this near universal experience that the literature on courtyard housing confirms.<sup>104</sup> While rejecting any absolute claims of environmental determinism, I nonetheless concur with informant accounts that credited the physical layout of Beacon Gardens as among one of the major factors that facilitated a strong sense of community—what I referred to in the previous subchapter as *court-ordered living*.<sup>105</sup> But I’ve also culled the interviews to look beyond the built environment to consider what other dynamics might account for the tenor of tolerance that characterized Beacon Gardens. There are five factors that I propose intersected with the everyday practices of *court-ordered living* to further foster a sense of community accord: (1) networking as the primary vehicle for filling vacancies (2) distinct yet complementary social networks (3) The Court’s longstanding reputation as an eclectic community (4)

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<sup>104</sup> In Curtis and Ford’s 1988 study of San Diego’s courtyard housing, tenants reported that they were highly satisfied with their living environments. When asked to rate their courtyard neighbors in comparison to other places they had lived, the majority experienced residents as “more friendly, more helpful, more considerate and more sociable.” Although Curtis and Ford admit that it is difficult to determine whether the courts studied attracted folks who are by nature “simply nicer than average” or whether the demands of courtyard living require “a certain attentiveness to the needs of other people,” they conclude that the latter is the more likely explanation.

<sup>105</sup> Architectural determinism is a theory employed in urbanism, sociology and environmental psychology that purports that the built environment is the main determinant of social behaviour. “In its most extreme form, this position argues that the environment causes certain behaviours, denying any interaction between environment and behaviour. Architectural determinism poses the idea that people can adapt to any arrangement of space and that behaviour in a given environment is caused entirely by the characteristics of the environment.” See A. S. Baum et al, “Environmental Psychology,” 2001, in *Corsini Encyclopedia of Psychology and Behavioural Science*, 3rd edition (2002.510). While I do not strictly adhere to the principles of environmental determinism, I do give credence to the role of the built-environment as an active agent in shaping social dynamics. I quote here material culturists Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning Of Things: Domestic Symbols And The Self* 1981: 16-17: “The material environment is rarely neutral: it either helps the forces of chaos that make life random and disorganized or it helps to give purpose and direction to one’s life.”



the stability provided by a population of veteran tenants (5) a sense of *intuited ownership* facilitated by landlord neglect. While these five factors were not necessarily explicit constructions, the degree to which they operated as mediators of everyday life at Beacon Gardens is apparent from informant responses to my explicit questions about perceived conflicts within the complex.

The cast of colorful characters who occupied the Goth House claim not to recall any discord among neighbors. Chris, who even today boasts multiple piercings and what might be construed as a decided edginess, remembers Beacon Gardens as a community very open to difference:

Yeah, everyone was very welcoming. Very open. Yeah, no dirty looks! Not anything like that. It's like I knew this place before I ever moved in because friends of mine used to live here, and there was a bunch of people who were doing the whole sort of punk-rock slacker thing back then. So just having more kids from CMU who had funny hair, well that just didn't really shock anyone. Yeah, we had no problems with the neighbors, no problems at all.

This observation is substantiated by several of the older tenants who actually enjoyed the generational mix: "I remember the Goth House," recalls Queenie. I really liked them. I mean, there was already a lot of diversity, so it wasn't going to bother anyone that they were different. Tenants understood that "difference came with the territory."

Reflecting further, Queenie adds:

The diversity at Beacon Gardens was natural because most of the units were passed on by word of mouth. You know, you'd hear that someone is leaving, and you have a friend and you tell them to check it out. Besides, I think there is a tendency for open-minded people to gravitate to each other and Beacon Gardens had that reputation.

You know, you don't have to look like everybody else to be acceptable and to feel acceptable... It's you I like. It's not the things you wear. It's not the way you do your hair, but it's you I like. ... The way deep down inside you.

*Fred Rogers, 1970*

This notion of what might be called a *self-perpetuating landscape of tolerance* is reinforced by the comments of several other residents who were drawn to Beacon Gardens through their own social networks, or what Andy described as “a tradition.”<sup>106</sup>

We already knew people who had lived at Beacon Gardens. We had gone to parties in the court during college, before we were even thinking about living there. So what we knew of it, we liked. Later, we spent a lot of time over there just hanging out with friends who had moved there. So when we heard there was an open unit, we just grabbed it. I think there was just a tradition of people who knew other people moving in.

Tom lived at Beacon Gardens during two nonconsecutive stints, first subletting a unit when he was in college from a high school buddy and then returning several years later to settle in for another six years. He attributes the strong sense of community accord that prevailed at Beacon Gardens to distinct yet complementary social networks:

All of us who were from the younger crowd had a real sense of community. We were about the same age and there was a real kind of *90201* kind of thing going on.<sup>107</sup> People were kind of dating people across the quad and going back and forth all the time. We really, really had a great community... But we also got along really well with the other people living there. I mean, you know, it was diverse: there were families that were older folks, and single women with children, college kids, and post-college kids going in and out who were fairly loud, but there was a lot of people who like had lived there for a good number of years, so it seemed very stable... it really felt like it was our home.

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<sup>106</sup> Mary Mcnamara, a columnist for the *Los Angeles Times*, documents a similar tradition of networking as the primary vehicle for filling vacancies in Los Angeles’ courtyard complexes. See “Courtyard Housing: Mythology Come To Life,” *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 25, 2003, E-1. <http://articles.latimes.com/2003/nov/25/entertainment/et-mcnamara25> (accessed Aug. 3, 2010).

<sup>107</sup> *Beverly Hills, 90210* is an American TV series that aired from 1990 to 2000. It chronicled the friendships and romantic relationships of a group of close-knit teenagers. *Melrose Place, 90201*, an updated version of the series, aired in 2009 featuring a group of young adults living in a West Hollywood apartment complex.

This pairing of a homelike sensibility and community cohesiveness with the presence of a well-established veteran population was a recurring theme that surfaced in many of the narratives of life at Beacon Gardens. The sharing of historical data by long-term residents with incoming tenants, including prior events and previous tenancies, helped to facilitate an intimate connection between neighbors, despite an inevitable turnover in population. “There was a real feeling of community there [at Beacon Gardens],” reflects a tenant who lived in the court for only a year prior to displacement:

I think it was because you had several people that had been there for a really long time. Like Phyllis who was the court historian and even some of the moms who were raising their kids there. It was their home, and they really wanted to develop a sense of community. I think that’s one of the main things that really drove the spirit of that place. I mean Phyllis could tell you what it was like in the court 20 or 30 years ago, and you would have this sense that you were a part of that ongoing history.<sup>108</sup>

A less expected premise that accounts for community accord stemmed from what I have named *intuited ownership* (a sense of entitlement—in other words—rights without deeds of title) on the part of tenants. Chris, one of the housemates living in The Goth House captured the essence of *intuited ownership* in the following rumination:

It was sort of like your own house because it seemed like the landlords weren’t going to take it upon themselves to do anything, so people really tried to take care of their places themselves. That is why it was so weird when Walnut Capital [the developers] all of a sudden came in and told everybody to get out. Well, it’s like we were here before you. This is like our place, and no one has ever bothered us. We pay the rent. We can control our own destiny...

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<sup>108</sup> Phyllis created for me a genealogy of The Court consisting of five pages of notes dating back several decades. It includes names of residents, which units they occupied, their occupations, and other little tidbits of information.

I mean, these houses have been here for a hundred years, and. they're going to be here for, you know, another hundred years. They're not like apartment buildings, or a college dorm, or something like that where you're only there temporarily. These were something more like real homes, a real community, more so than most other places, especially for Squirrel Hill.

Throughout the interviews tenants referred to their rental units as “houses” or more often “homes,” unlike the development company, Walnut Capital Partners, and the media who were more inclined to use the nomenclature “apartments.” This sense of ownership can in part be attributed to the dynamics of *court-ordered living* in which the thoughtful site plan of Beacon Gardens encouraged a heightened sense of community that tended to increase each households’ stake in both the personal and the collective landscape. But, as Chris suggests, one of the primary triggers for *intuited ownership* was landlord neglect.<sup>109</sup> Bruckman Realty’s suspension of responsibility for the everyday maintenance of Beacon Gardens empowered tenants to make social and material investments in the upkeep of a community in which they felt financially and emotionally vested.

One way that Beacon Gardens’ tenants expressed their sense of *intuited ownership* was through household projects that translated into sweat equity. Felice converted the entirety of her walkout basement into an extra bedroom for her teenage daughter explaining, “I was desperate for space, and I really was dead set against moving. I mean, I really thought I was going to be there forever.” Phyllis who made ongoing improvement to her unit, including kitchen renovations, was happy to write off the costs as long-term investments in a home where she expected to live out her

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<sup>109</sup> This sense of *intuited ownership* challenges many popular housing ideologies that tend to place a higher value on owner-occupied housing—a topic worthy of mention but one that remains beyond the breadth of this paper.

retirement years. Even some of the younger tenants who presumed that they would eventually move into their own homes were concerned with the upkeep of their domestic spaces. “I really tried to take care of the property,” emphasizes Chris. “I was even thinking about stripping all the woodwork just around the time we got evicted.” In fact, Karin and her husband did just that, restoring all of the built-ins and baseboards to their original oak finish. This show of pride in the leased landscape was a common value that cemented relationships between tenants, even as the changing demographics of Beacon Gardens had the potential to create conflict. Phyllis noted that the influx of more students and recent graduates in the later years changed the makeup of The Court, but it did not change the sense of community spirit.

There were some problems that came along with the influx of more students, like noise and uninvited guests. And sofas, in some cases, became part of the porch furniture, along with printed throws that substituted as drapes. [Phyllis had very traditional notions of the appropriate furnishing for domestic spaces]. But was there conflict between neighbors? Not really! We all cared about the place. We all got along.

The spirit of *intuited ownership* was also evident in the sharing of yard duty and communal gardening. One veteran tenant recalled “the pleasure” he took in outdoor housekeeping—most specifically hedge trimming and snow shoveling that required cooperation among tenants. “I just loved the way that place looked, and I really enjoyed taking care of things. It just felt like my home. It just felt like a very natural thing to do.” Queenie and several neighbors also put considerable effort into starting a community vegetable garden in the area that had originally been intended for use as

a tennis court.<sup>110</sup> Since the ground was not level and had a rocky consistency, she and her recruits trucked in dirt to prepare the earth, a considerable group effort. Another vacant space on the eastern periphery of Beacon Gardens was also allocated for use as a shared garden space, providing homegrown tomatoes and summer vegetables for distribution to friends throughout the complex.

Beyond the outlay of material investments, social assets were accrued through the organization of communal events that were all inclusive. “It was great place to have parties,” notes Queenie who organized an annual international potluck dinner in an open area to the side of her unit. “I always invited all the neighbors along with my friends,” she emphasizes. “It was such a great gathering place. I would go door-to-door and hand out flyers—‘come to my party’—and it seems like most people came and had a really good time.” Mac has wonderful memories of his mother’s potluck dinners:

Almost everyone would come back to the side of my house, and people would bring foods from their different ethnic backgrounds, and we would just interact and socialize. It was a good time and everyone sort of felt really close knit. There was a real sense of community.

Some of the tenants in the townhouses facing the street used smaller areas immediately around their units to entertain neighbors. Regardless of the setting, diversity was perceived as a desirable component of courtyard socialization as expressed by Karin who was among the younger “artsy” set:

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<sup>110</sup> Mark Bhatti, a principal lecturer at the University of Brighton School of Applied Social Science, investigates place attachments to home in the context of “the use” and “meanings” of the domestic garden. Bhatti not only draws connections between the creative process of gardening and an individual’s sense of place but also to the experience of collective identity as in the case of shared or communal gardens. See “The Meaning of Gardens in an Age of Risk,” in *Ideal Homes? Social Change and Domestic Life*, 1999: 181-193.

There was this sweet and very shy girl who lived in one of the units in the back of the court. We would have parties, and she would come over and maybe have a hamburger if it was a cookout. And then she would have parties and invite just about everyone. She was like an extremely religious Christian and would have like bible sing-along-type parties. You know, with acoustic guitars. Really different from our keg parties. So you know we were such very different people, but it was really great to hang out with her.

The story that wants telling in the Neighborhood is the story of acceptance, and the Neighborhood itself is a metaphor for just that—a community of acceptance where you are special just by being you, where you are liked just the way you are.

*Paula Lawrence Wehmiller, 1996*

Environmental psychologist Carl Graumann (1983) argues that people seek out places to live that are representative of their belief systems, with evidence pointing to the likelihood that an individual would not readily bond with a community that did not embody his or her values and aspirations. What made Beacon Gardens an exceptional community is that there truly was a respect for difference—whether it be a conservative Christian engaging in the spirit of a keg party—or its counterpart—a group of hipsters joining along in a evangelical sing-along. What was held in common was a sense of respect and openness for difference—a trait of the *alternative-minded class* who set the tone for Beacon Gardens’ social milieu. “We never had any issues or contentions with anybody,” asserts another of the younger crowd who admits, however, to socializing largely within her own sub-community:

I mean everyone was very kind, and the children were a lot of fun, and we enjoyed interacting with the kids and with the other families. But, I mean, I knew a lot of people by their face, but unfortunately I didn’t know everybody by name as well as I would have liked to. And I didn’t go over people’s homes as often as I would have liked to. But I think that at that time in my twenties, I was still a little self-absorbed and into my own little artistic community.

Residents of the Goth House were also less integrated into the courtyard community as well. With as many as five to six roommates sharing one unit at a time and an open door policy that encouraged friends to just “hangout” or “crash,” there was less incentive to seek companionship elsewhere. “I knew the other people to say ‘hi’ and everything like that,” muses a member of the Goth House. “But it wasn’t, how do I put it? I probably wasn’t the most social person outside my own group at that time, and I didn’t exactly go out of my way to meet other people. But everyone acted very friendly. And we did participate in some community activities.”

While “affability” remained the overall general tenor at Beacon Gardens, there were still moments when irritations surfaced between neighbors, suggesting that *court-ordered living* presented certain challenges stemming from differences in age and taste preferences. “There was this band that practiced in one of the basements,” recalls Tom.

They were like an experimental electronic kind of industrial band. I really liked them as people, but that band was a complete pain in the butt. They would just make noise, beat on things, and well it was really disruptive. But I guess that was the time, and nobody really bothered them about it. I didn’t really get into it; it wasn’t my kind of music. But okay, that’s cool. They were nice people, so I lived with it.

Although Phyllis expressed some minor frustrations with a few of the twenty-something set whom she felt did not maintain their units as meticulously as tenants in prior decades, she nonetheless valued the experience of living in a diverse environment—a sentiment that extended back to her earliest years at Beacon Gardens:

There were some Indian people who wanted to move in next door to me in the early seventies. Mr. Bruckman—the son of the original owner and a purported



member of the John Birch society—approached me and he said, ‘there are some Indian people who want to move in next door to you. Do you mind?’ And what I said is, ‘I don’t mind!’ But what he was looking for was me to say was, ‘yes I mind’ because he didn’t want them, and he wanted to put the onus on me.

The only tenant identified as even remotely undesirable was a presumed drug dealer whom Mac and Serge described as “a hippie with a long gray and white ponytail who had a lot of characters going in and out of his place.” But even this unsavory individual was not rejected outright. “He [the drug dealer] was always really nice to my children and really nice to me,” insists Queenie. Mac and Serge concur, joking about “the wizard” whom they remember as being evicted for selling crack but who was nonetheless a “really nice guy.” In all, they recall getting on well with almost all of the adults in the court. “Yeah, there were occasional conflicts with some of the grownups,” admits Mac.

But I don’t think there were ever any real issues. We got upset with some of the parents who were not always that fond of some of our antics, but we were kids, and overall it felt like a very feeling environment, and I think everyone really respected everyone else.

In all, the anecdotal record supports the premise that Beacon Gardens was indeed a haven for people of very different backgrounds and orientations. It would seem as if *court-ordered living* most likely attracted those people who were by nature not only more amenable to difference but also more inclined to suspend judgment in the interest of being good neighbors. One informant, in particular, captured the celebration of difference that she experienced as a resident at Beacon Gardens, sharing with me the following story of Christmastime at The Court.

You know, the big bay windows that faced the court? Well they were perfect windows for Christmas decorations. So we had the tree with lots of

decorations set up in that window. Christmas was a really big deal at our house, and we were just sitting around at 8:00 on Christmas morning admiring the tree, feeling all cozy. And then I noticed the kids across the courtyard going to school, and I thought, 'this is just the strangest thing that I've ever experienced.' I couldn't figure out for a moment what was going on until I realized it was the Orthodox [Jewish] kids who lived across the way, and it wasn't a holiday for them. It was just another day like any other day. It was really an exceptional moment for me. And, you know, things like that was one of the reasons that I really liked living at Beacon Gardens.

## Chapter Two: What Do You Do With The Mad That You Feel

What do you do with the mad that you feel  
When you feel so mad you could bite?  
When the whole wide world seems oh, so wrong...  
And nothing you do seems very right?  
What do you do? Do you punch a bag?  
Do you pound some clay or some dough?  
Do you round up friends for a game of tag?  
Or see how fast you go?

*Fred Rogers, 1967*

Much of the literature on gentrification depicts displacees as unfortunate victims of circumstance beyond their control. While case studies of resistance to displacement indicate that tenant protest is not necessarily an effective tool against forced relocation given the far-reaching arm of property rights, my research does suggest that those who are caught in the headlights of gentrification are not necessarily without alternative resources. Rather, compensation for the loss of home and community can be deferred, realized by some in future sites of habitation. Such narratives of resettlement are the subject of Part 3. However, the seeds of discontent that are sowed at the time of displacement can reap either prolonged feelings of personal disempowerment or generate new feelings of self-determination. Chapter 2 explores how tenants reacted to the immediacy of forced relocation, providing insight into how power was brokered by various invested parties to both undermine and

embolden the primary stakeholders<sup>111</sup>—Beacon Gardens’ residing population. Under scrutiny is a discourse on class that circulated in the displacement landscape with the developers, Walnut Capital Partners, representing evictees as “undeserving” of continued residency or what one informant referred to as “throwing out the trash.” Also addressed in this chapter is the manner in which the principles of *court-ordered living*, as defined in Chapter One, set the groundwork for a collective tenant response in support of historic preservation, most especially a series of last ditch efforts to save the central commons as a living legacy for future residents. Finally, the deracination of Beacon Gardens’ wooded courtyard is juxtaposed to the uprooting of its human inhabitants—a look at how “root shock” dominated the emotional landscape of the established community—impacting even those informants with the most optimistic long-term prognoses for successful relocation.

### **“It’s Hard To Be So Powerless”**

On May 1, 1999 Walnut Capital Partners (hereafter WPC) finalized the purchase of Beacon Gardens from its original owners, Bruckman Reality, for 1.3 million dollars.<sup>112</sup> Although there had been rumors of the pending sale for some time, tenants largely assumed that a change in ownership might translate into improvements to the

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<sup>111</sup> The short list of the many stakeholders include the property owners and the tenants of Beacon Gardens, eight citywide media organization, sixty-five interested citizens, City Council Members, The Mayor’s Office, The City Law Department, three employees of the Pittsburgh History & Landmark Foundation, the President and members of Preservation Pittsburgh, The Pittsburgh Planning Commission, the Pittsburgh City Housing Authority and Walnut Capital Partners. For details see the files of the Historic Review Commission located in the Pittsburgh Department of City Planning.

<sup>112</sup> See Patricia Lowry, “Beacon Gardens’ Protection Maintained,” *The Pittsburgh Post Gazette* A-13, June 7, 1999.

property that might be to their benefit. “When WCP first bought the gardens there was a brief period of time when people were excited,” reflects Karin.

Like, oh my goodness. This is really wonderful. Someone is taking an interest in this place. Look, it needs to be restored to its former beauty. Like these roofs are a mess, and we were like pointing out the things that could be improved... But, you know, it was only for about three weeks that we had any illusions that it was going to be a good thing for the place. We were like, ‘Oh! What were we thinking?’ Like we didn’t even know who they [the new owners] were. They hadn’t taken over the whole East End by that point.

The same day that WCP closed on Beacon Gardens they sent a letter to all of the tenants announcing the change of ownership. “Well we got this letter on May 1<sup>st</sup>,” Tom explains, handing me a page from an extensive portfolio of paperwork that he has carefully preserved over the past eight years.<sup>113</sup> “This letter says, ‘Hey we’re Walnut Capital, your new landlords, and we’re taking over, and everything is going to be great.’ Two weeks later we got this thing, and it says that my lease expires on May 31st”<sup>114</sup> [Fig. 41]. On Friday May 14<sup>th</sup>, after business hours, all but five of the courtyard tenants received hand-delivered notices ordering them to vacate their units within a designated time. While the majority of residents were granted 60 days to

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<sup>113</sup> Tom had kept every item of paperwork pertaining to the displacement process, creating an archive for future reference. His intent is “to write some type of story” (as yet undetermined) that gives an accounting of what he experienced during the few months between the time he received notice of WCP’s purchase of Beacon Gardens and his move to a nearby neighborhood.

<sup>114</sup> WCP did not in fact evict any of the residing tenants, an act that would have legally violated tenant rights. Under tenant protection laws, landlords cannot simply force someone from his or her home unless they are in violation of their lease, and even in such instances a landlord must first obtain a court judgment before proceeding with the eviction process. Technically, WCP did not evict the tenants of Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace. Rather than become involved in legalities, WCP finalized their purchases of the two sites in the late spring when nearly all of the leases were due to lapse. Tenants were then informed that their leases would not be renewed, and that they would need to vacate their units within 30 to 60 days.

**WALNUT  
CAPITAL**  
*Management*

May 12, 1999

Thomas Scuoteguazza  
5637 Beacon Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15217

Dear Thomas,

This letter is to confirm that your current lease expires on May 31, 1999.  
Please vacate your apartment on or before the 31<sup>st</sup>, and return your keys to our office,  
which is located in Shadyside at 5541 Walnut Street, Suite 200.

If you have any questions, or if you need assistance in finding an apartment,  
please contact our office at 412.683.3810.

Sincerely,  
Walnut Capital Management

5541 Walnut Street, Suite 200 • Pittsburgh, PA 15232 • 412.683.3810 • Fax: 412.683.3811

**Fig. 41. Tom's two-week vacate notice (courtesy of Tom Scuoteguazza)**

move, at least two tenants were given as little as two weeks notice, and five households were offered extended leases for up to a year without any explanation for the discrepancies in policy. Mac, who had lived at the court from age five to thirteen, aired his indignation in an interview with the local *City Paper*, one of the eight news outlets to become engaged in a media blitz over the future of Beacon Gardens and its residents:

I didn't like it much. I've lived here for two-thirds of my life, and one day, out of the blue, she [a woman representing Walnut Capital] kept opening the screen door, and hesitating but never saying a word. Instead she put a note in the mailbox that said, 'Get out in 60 days,' pretty much... It took her like two-and-a-half minutes to stick it in the mailbox on the door. She could see me inside and couldn't take the five-seconds to knock on the door and say 'Get out in 60 days,' pretty much. And it ain't right. It just ain't right.<sup>115</sup>

In my own conversation with Mac and other displaced tenants, it was immediately evident that ongoing resentment towards WCP's high-handed tactics was still palpable despite the passage of time. Studies in the field of environmental-psychology have long concluded that people who are forced to leave their homes exhibit symptoms of grief well beyond the experience of relocation and its short-term aftermath.<sup>116</sup> The following comments by several of Beacon Gardens' displaced tenants suggest the degree of their residual anger as a consequence of the "hurtful" manner in which they were informed of their impending displacement.

I remember I was sitting outside that day, and a secretary came from Walnut Capital delivering the eviction notices in every mailbox, which I thought was a pretty cowardly way of doing things. And you had like 60 days to get out. And, you know, everybody was shocked and totally despondent and didn't know what to do. (Queenie)

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<sup>115</sup> Monahan, 1999.

<sup>116</sup> See Fried, 1963; Stokols et al 1982; Brown and Perkins, 1992; Million, 1993, Fullilove, 2004.

I couldn't believe it. They just put it in all the mailboxes. They didn't even hand it out because they didn't have guts enough. They just stuck it into the mailboxes. That's the kind of people they were... I'll never forget that.  
(Felice)

I was home at the time, and she [the secretary from WCP] walks into the courtyard and started at the front and went around the circle and started putting eviction notices on all the doors with the statement that the company was being bought out and they were exercising their rights. Their rights? Well, what about our rights? It was terrible feeling so powerless. (Single mom)

Throughout the tenant interviews, WCP was deemed the primary culprit in the gentrification saga, a position consistent with much of the scholarly literature that emphasizes the lion's share of private enterprise in the displacement process.<sup>117</sup> Yet most urbanists also concur that the onus of displacement falls heavily on the state as well, most specifically through its partnership with private enterprise in ways that often facilitate the displacement of citizens and/or the dispersion of communities.<sup>118</sup> In fact a strong symbiotic relationship between public policy and urban renewal dating back to "The Pittsburgh Renaissance" of the 1950s to 1960s and continuing intermittently into the present, albeit in different guises, provided a climate ripe for WCP's "rehabilitation" of Squirrel Hill's courtyard communities.<sup>119</sup> As in many metropolitan centers, Pittsburgh's early urban renewal programs paved the way for the lucrative public-private partnerships that have to this date endorsed the concept of

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<sup>117</sup> See Harvey, 1973; Smith, 1996; Slater 2005; Atkinson 2003; Hartman; 1984; Imbroscio 2004.

<sup>118</sup> See Lees and Ley, 2008.

<sup>119</sup> The city of Pittsburgh undertook major urban renewal projects in the Lower Hill, the North Side, and East Liberty, removing slums but also causing major social dislocation. This uncritical celebration of the city's "renaissance" remains pertinent today as Pittsburgh's policy makers continue to act more as entrepreneurial agents of market processes and capital accumulation rather than acting to regulate markets in the interest of marginalized residents. For more on the partnering of private interests with local municipalities see Neil Smith, 1979; David Harvey, 1989; J. Peck, 2002.



“positive gentrification.”<sup>120</sup> Although a handful of Beacon Gardens’ displaced tenants expressed a broader understanding of the political underpinnings of gentrification, few at the time felt sufficiently empowered to take on “the old boys’ network” that stood behind WCP. Although tenants were largely consumed with the prospects of finding suitable housing within a limited two to eight week timeframe, they nonetheless became ensnared in a contentious discourse on class initiated by WCP as a justification for the company’s harsh eviction policies. Not only were the majority of tenants represented by the developers as unworthy of continued residency—a position made clear in their attitude as well as public statements—but discrepancies in policy regarding lease extensions ignited unprecedented tensions within the courtyard community itself—possibly derailing any chances for a more energized campaign of collective resistance. While much of the gentrification literature examines how class, race and to a lesser extent ethnic differences are potential sources of contention between incomers to a neighborhood and the preexisting population, less attention has been focused on how “the sitting” community is also vulnerable to internal discord as actors from different socio-economic and cultural positions attempt to navigate the

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<sup>120</sup> The idea that gentrification results in largely positive outcomes for cities and their populations is a position promoted by many policymakers, including *business improvement* strategists, real estate agents, developers, middle-class professionals, and more conservatively inclined academics. For more on the general rationale behind “positive gentrification” see Richard L. Cravatts: “Gentrification is Good for the Poor and Everyone Else,” *American Thinker* (August 01, 2007). [http://www.americanthinker.com/2007/08/gentrification\\_is\\_good\\_for\\_the.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2007/08/gentrification_is_good_for_the.html) (accessed on Aug. 4, 2010). Also see “Gentrification Benefits Many Blacks,” *UPI.com*, June 30, 2008. [http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/2008/06/30/Study-Gentrification-benefits-many-blacks/UPI-33411214859616/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/2008/06/30/Study-Gentrification-benefits-many-blacks/UPI-33411214859616/) (accessed Oct. 15, 2010). For a critique of positive gentrification see Tom Slater, “The Eviction of Critical Perspectives from Gentrification Research,” 2006: 37–57. The academic community’s response to Slater’s manifesto can be found in *A Special Issue of the International Journal of Urban and Regional Affairs* 32.1, March 2008.

displacement landscape.<sup>121</sup> Also lingering just beneath the collective radar was evidence of gender and age discrimination that remained largely unaddressed as tenants attended to the immediacy of their own pressing self-interests. Finally, a parallel discourse on historic designation—an initiative that ultimately prioritized the “built environment” over “the social fabric” of the courtyard community—further muddied the discursive terrain—in all likelihood to the short-term detriment of the tenants at large.

Class, in general, was a prime topic of discussion that saturated almost all of the displacement narratives. Mac, now a recent graduate from CMU preparing for an advanced degree, explains that he had intentionally used the slang “ain’t” in his *City Paper* interview to poke fun at WCP’s inferences that the residing tenants were ‘low class:’ “People felt really used,” insists another young resident who took umbrage at WCP’s condescending manner:

We just started to feel that they were taking advantage of us, like they didn’t want some of us as tenants. I really kind of felt that they considered us as being of a lower class than what they were looking for, and they didn’t really want us to stay as tenants. But they also like kind of wanted to keep us quiet, which is why they offered us a lousy \$200 towards moving expenses which was their little parting gift if we would just get out. They tried to make it like we should be thanking them.

Even though most of the tenants earned only moderate incomes, they nonetheless identified as solidly middle class based on their families of origin, educational achievements, and cultural capital. In fact, the majority of younger residents were

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<sup>121</sup> For a more complex accounting of neighborhood resistance to gentrification see Arlene Davila, *Barrio Dreams: Puerto Ricans, Latinos, and the Neoliberal City*, 2004.

alumni of CMU, widely considered an elite institution. Several recent CMU graduates who were employed in the technology sector and were already generating substantial incomes had opted to continue living at Beacon Gardens after graduation—a statement of their preference for *court-ordered living*. For those who had graduated in the arts, the appeal of the court was twofold—both its “boho”<sup>122</sup> cultural landscape and its affordability. As previously mentioned, Beacon Gardens as well as Forbes Terrace were often referred to as artists' colonies. Even those residents who were not artists per se, identified to varying degrees as non-conformist in their social and intellectual leanings, further contributing to Beacon Gardens' and Forbes Terraces' reputation as *alternative-minded communities*. Given the nonhierarchical ethos of *court-ordered living*, Squirrel Hill's courtyard denizens defied exacting definitions of class [see Glossary, Appendix B] —a factor that further exacerbated WCP's flagrant performances of superiority and overt abuses of power.

Sallyann, a tenant from Forbes Terrace who was a frequent visitor to The Court and coincidentally was an architect who was working as an intern in the Department of City Planning, confided to me that she had been “appalled” at the way WCP treated the Beacon Garden tenants “as if they were beneath them.” As an eyewitness to particularly egregious occurrences, Sallyann was eager to share with me her first impressions of the representatives of WCP who made no attempt to conceal their apparent disdain for the residing tenants:

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<sup>122</sup> Bohemian (boho—informal) is defined by The American College Dictionary as “a person with artistic or intellectual tendencies, who lives and acts with no regard for conventional rules of behavior.” The term has become associated with various artistic or academic communities and is used as a generalized adjective describing such people, environs, or situations. In the case of Beacon Gardens' residents, I would substitute “no regard” with “a flexible regard” toward conventionalities.

I was over at there [Beacon Gardens] when Walnut Capital was doing a walk through of the place, and it was obvious right off that they had a lot of disdain for the people who were living there. Andy and Sarah were standing in hearing distance from them [the representatives from WCP], and they're talking about getting these 'scum artists' out right away. Yeah, they're trashing the residents right in front of them. Like it just blows my mind! Don't they seem to realize that the people they are talking about were right in front of their faces, that these same people are going to be the future of Pittsburgh? And Walnut Capital is one of those companies that wants to talk about why people abandon Pittsburgh or don't want to invest in the city. I'm like, it's because you're driving them out! They [WCP] just don't even think. They were born with a silver spoon in their mouth, and they have no idea what it's like to start from scratch.

In addition to evoking class differences, WCP's eviction tactics indirectly introduced race into the discursive landscape of Beacon Gardens as evidenced by the interjection of the term "white trash" into the displacement narrative of one irate tenant:<sup>123</sup>

Walnut Capital came in, and it was like suddenly we were being referred to as 'white trash.' I mean, I accidentally overheard Todd Reidbord talking about some of the tenants, and he said some really hurtful things. And that was just so off because most of us were college-educated people, and everyone was employed. That was really hard to hear!

Tom, who also confesses to being privy to some decidedly offensive remarks made in his presence by a representative of WCP, was nonetheless taken aback when I shared with him the fact that the term "white trash" had surfaced in an interview session I conducted with another informant: "I'm very uncomfortable with the term 'white trash,'" Tom explains:

I think the term itself is implicitly racist... Whether its conscious or not, the term is a racist construction. But it's interesting that someone mentioned that to you because there's an underlying supposition that if it was somebody who appeared impoverished and was not African American then it makes sense that they would get kicked out because they were white trash. You know, I'm not saying that anyone had that malice in their hearts, but I can understand

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<sup>123</sup> For a discussion of the historical context for the term "white trash" see Wray and Newitz introduction to *White Trash: Race and Class in America* (1997, 3-14).

how part of the reaction to the gentrification project was the disbelief that it was actually happening to them [the tenants] because you can say that it's a little bit of a unique situation—as you put it yourself 'one middle-class population replacing another.' And I think some of the people's reaction to it was that all of a sudden they were cast in the role of 'the other,' and that was probably very uncomfortable for a lot of them. I mean gentrification is something you usually think of as happening to someone else.

Tom was not only uneasy about the racial implications that had surfaced but was equally disturbed by what he described as a mode of “tenant profiling” that he personally experienced. “I got to talking with Todd Reidbord around that time [shortly after the eviction notifications] about the situation,” recalls Tom.

And he was speaking in a friendly tone, sort of showing off, maybe trying to engage. He wasn't all that much older than some of us, and I think he didn't want to be thought of as the bad guy. But then he started talking about the lack of 'curb appeal' of the people that were living here [Beacon Gardens], meaning me. He was talking about me! I was part of that 'curb appeal.' It just didn't make sense to me... I was angry about the way they went about things. It wasn't very ethical, and it wasn't very respectful of the people that were living there.

WCP's representation of the majority of Beacon Gardens' tenants as undeserving of continued tenureship is part of a larger urban discourse on who has “the right to the city.”<sup>124</sup> Loretta Lees et al in their recent book *Gentrification* (2008) address the plight of those most vulnerable to displacement, namely marginalized renters:

The politically effective middleclass have been more willing in recent years to villainize renters, the poor, the homeless, and any other individuals whose presence might possibly undermine property values. And improvements in the quality of life for a community's residents simply cannot be enjoyed by those

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<sup>124</sup> The basic principle of “the right to the city” was originally articulated in by French philosopher Henri Lefebvre in 1967. According to Lefebvre's theory, power relations underling urban space would need to be restructured with the transfer of control from capital and the state to the urban populace (see Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, 1996). Building on Lefebvre's doctrine of citizens' “rights to the city,” Chester Hartman (1985) advanced the notion that people's “right to stay put” superseded owners' “right to displace.” Hartman's “right to stay put” is a basic premise of progressive displacement studies.

who lose out on the right to be community residents. In recent years, these rights become more tenuous, as gentrification has accelerated and undermined the security of marginalized renters in many cities.”<sup>125</sup>

As such, WCP’s “villainization” of Beacon Gardens’ tenants followed a common ploy by capital to justify the displacement of vulnerable renters. In media interviews, the principals of WCP, Todd Reidbord and Gregg Perelman, took the position that the developers were “the good guys” who were making a substantial investment in Squirrel Hill’s declining housing stock.”

We’re taking substandard housing and we’re the ones making these apartments comfortable and well-run for people going forward.<sup>126</sup> (Reidbord)

We’re looking for people... who are looking for clean, modern interiors... who [have] an interest in the history and the beautiful architecture... The people who rent from us will appreciate the investments we’ve made.<sup>127</sup> (Reidbord)

We are making an investment to repair and renovate the buildings... in order to have a good product, they need to be done to a level that people want to live there.” (Perelman)

The class inferences implied in the above newspaper excerpts substantiate informants’ claims of tenant profiling on the part of WCP. Beacon Gardens’ residents were being represented as insufficiently refined to appreciate “comfortable” and “well-run” housing, as being backwards and unclean as well as lacking an interest in history and architecture. In a letter to the Historic Review Commission, Susan Warner, the consulting architect overseeing WCP’s rehabilitation of Beacon Gardens, argued that the exterior improvements proposed by the developer were needed “in

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<sup>125</sup> Lees, Slater and Wyly, *Gentrification*, 2007: 84.

<sup>126</sup> Kathy Sinicrope, “Apartment Complex Embroiled in Debate Over Historic Integrity,” *Tribune-Review*, Pittsburgh Live, October 12, 1999 (see the files on Beacon Gardens archived at the HRC).

<sup>127</sup> Monahan, 1999.

order to attract high-level tenants,” further corroborating that a discourse on class privilege was driving a public debate on housing. Reidbord, however, deflected charges that discrimination was at play maintaining that, “They [the tenants] were treated certainly within their legal rights... I resent being portrayed as somebody who’s not interested in tenants’ rights.” Yet in an interview that I conducted with Reidbord in 2007 regarding the courtyard properties that WCP had acquired between 1999 and 2000 he made the following statement:

When we took over they [the tenants] were mostly groups of students with roommates that lived in those places. They were poorly maintained, and none of the people really wanted to stay. I mean they weren’t the kind of people that were looking for newly renovated places anyway. They were just there for cheap rent.

Even as Walnut Capital maintained its neoliberal position<sup>128</sup> as “the good guys” who were regenerating the housing stock in Squirrel Hill for the greater good of the community, Beacon Gardens’ tenants continued to fight back through the local press. “He [Todd Reidbord] is a powerful man making big decisions,” protested one of the tenants who inconveniently received his two-week notification to vacate his unit immediately prior to a prearranged vacation abroad. “He [Reidbord] should show some consideration for the people and the community that those decisions affect.”<sup>129</sup> Other tenants also stepped up to the plate to air their grievance in a string of media

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<sup>128</sup> Neoliberalism in the gentrification literature refers to a new wave of urban colonialism comparable to changes witnessed following the European “Age of Discovery” in the sixteenth century. Fueled by vast disparities in the distribution of wealth and power, it is argued that neoliberal policies justify the exploitation of vulnerable residents who in the gentrification process are colonized by more privileged classes. For more on this subject see Marcuse, 1985; Harvey, 1989; Atkinson and Bridge, 2005; Hackworth, 2006; Peck, 2007).

<sup>129</sup> Monahan, 1999.

interviews that kept Beacon Gardens in the news from the week immediately following the vacate notifications in May and concluding only with the unanimous ruling of city council to deny historic designation in November. “Squirrel Hill Tenants Fight Renovations: Seek Historic Designation to Halt Apartment Updates,” read the headline of an article appearing in *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.<sup>130</sup> Tenants made their case not only for the historic preservation of the built environment but also for the protection of the larger cultural landscape. Sarah, who initially spearheaded the nomination for the protections of Beacon Gardens’ built environment, was equally as adamant about the potential loss of The Court’s cultural mix: “He [Reidbord] wants us out of here. He’s made up his mind that we’re low-income idiots. But there is really an amazing slice of life here, with punk rockers, two Orthodox Jewish families, an interior designer, a medical student and a retired woman.”<sup>130</sup>

In all, the sudden seismic shock to the cultural landscape of Beacon Gardens spurred the tenants into collective action. But just beneath the surface tiny fissures appeared that had the potential to unravel the otherwise tight-knit community. A shift from the laissez faire policy of an absentee landlord to the aggressive gentrification agenda of new capital not only upset the prior “hands off” tenant/landlord relationship that had indirectly boosted community accord but provoked a heightened sense of previously unacknowledged differences that unsettled the status quo. While the tenants outwardly bonded in defense of their collective turf, they nonetheless remained vulnerable to WCP’s manipulative tactics—namely a show of favoritism towards a

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<sup>130</sup> Tom Barnes, “Squirrel Hill Tenants Fight Revalorization,” *The Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, May 18, 1999. See the files on Hamilton Cottages archived at the Pittsburgh Historic Review Commission, Department of City Planning.



few tenants whose leases were renewed or extended without explanation. Tenant interviews suggest that a discussion surrounding class, initially prompted by WCP's deprecating manner towards the entirety of the collective, quickly permeated the internal terrain of the courtyard community—a virtual snake in the garden. “It wasn't one policy,” contends a tenant who took exception to the way the evictions were handled. “Some people got 30 days, some people got 60 days, and then if you were friends with Walnut Capital's president, then you got a year. It just made no sense to me.” The above comment alludes to the fact that one of the tenant's father—a member of Pittsburgh's business elite—was presumed to move in the same circles as the principals of WCP. Yet another tenant who attributes her own lease renewal to “having the right connections,” made the following observation:

My sense, looking at the people who did not get an eviction, is that they were not perceived by Walnut Capital as being struggling students or of a lower class but people who might be able to afford the new rents after the remodeling... But they also had to remove any clients that didn't fit their model of who they wanted to live there. And their model of their ideal tenant was upper-middle class, yuppie types,<sup>131</sup> very affluent. Grad students and lower income class really didn't fit the mold. They had the power to throw out whoever they wanted to, and they did.

Even though informants are in total agreement that the topic of class disrupted but did not ultimately splinter community accord, lingering curiosity and a tinge of resentment regarding the preferential treatment afforded to a handful of residents continues to circulate in the post-displacement landscape. One of the attendees at a

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<sup>131</sup> Newsweek called 1984 the “Year of the Yuppie” (see John Burnett and Alan Bush, “Profiling the Yuppies,” 1984). Yuppie is an acronym for “young urban professional,” and describes a lifestyle and attitude associated with the Reagan era. Yuppies were criticized for being wasteful, overly consumptive, materialistic and with little concern for those lower on the food chain.

tenants' meeting that was called immediately following the vacate notifications observed that underlying tensions were apparent from the outset:

You know, those who weren't leaving, they had this awkward thing to have to tell everyone that they were staying. But they didn't seem terribly awkward about it. It was almost like they were kind of happy that they didn't get evicted. One family at the meeting just said blithely 'well we're not moving.' We just couldn't figure out how the decisions had been made. Were they better people? Did they keep house better?

Beyond class, speculation over the possible role of ethnicity as a mitigating factor was also proposed. Several tenants presumed that Jewish households were exempted from immediate dislocation given the premise that WCP, whose principals are also Jewish, were protecting their own. It was rumored that one of the Jewish households actually attended the same synagogue as Reidbord, further suggesting the role of ethnicity in WCP's show of favoritism. Although four of the five households who were granted extended leases were in fact Jewish, there was at least one of those households that not only received a 60 days vacate notice but also was subjected to excessive landlord harassment. While it remains unclear whether or not ethnicity did in fact play a role in WCP's decision-making process, this supposition continues to percolate among some of the displacees. In the final analysis, only Phyllis took advantage of her lease extensions. By fall, she was the sole tenant of Beacon Gardens and desperate to find a new home.

Yet another accusation of discriminatory practices was related to age, namely that WCP felt little or no obligation to extend any courtesies to the younger tenants. This was grounded, in part, on the fact that some of the units had been passed down from

housemate to housemate without new leases being in place, although yearly renewals with signatory lines indicated that changes in tenancy had been established. “We were young and potential trouble makers,” surmises Tom, “and they thought they could get away with just kicking us out because, at least in my case, I just didn’t have a copy of the original lease.” Some informants also made the case that WCP took advantage of certain female heads of households who appeared the most vulnerable to landlord harassment, an accusation that highlights how class and gender intersected in the gentrifying landscape.<sup>132</sup> In one such instance WCP used explicitly sexist language to demean the physical appearance as well as the personal habits of a single female tenant. Felice was also targeted by WCP, her house under siege within days of her vacate notification. “I mean the way they treated my friend, it was unbelievable,” articulates Queenie, who even now can hardly contain her distress:

They were tearing things apart and doing physical stuff just outside of her house at midnight and stuff like that. It was so bad that one of the contractors came to her and said, ‘you know we’re on strict orders to work straight through. But you know legally, if we’re told by the police to stop, we’d have to.’ In other words, he signaled her to call the police so that she could get some sleep. They were really, really horrific to her. The way she was mistreated I thought was almost to the point where she could actually sue.

Yet other stories suggest that WCP’s gender bias was apparent in the overall mode in which the company transacted business with single female tenants. The following incident was related to me by a resident who expressed total dismay over the

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<sup>132</sup> While an analysis of the intersecting categories of class and gender with respect to gentrification has been addressed in the academic literature, it has been examined largely from the perspective of consumption-side theories. The argument that gender should be understood in the context of class in gentrification studies has been put forth by feminist geographer Liz Bondi who takes the position that female “incomers” are attracted to locations in city centers not merely as a show of residential preferences but rather as a response to “different structures of patriarchy” within the prevailing class structure (see Liz Bondi, 1991:196). In another vein, Peter Williams (1986) attributes women’s increasing educational achievements as providing the necessary capital to exert greater control over their housing choices. In all, the predominant literature focuses more on the agency of female gentrifiers rather than on those women who have been displaced by others, often of their own gender.

offensive manner in which she was “scammed” by WCP during their acquisition of Beacon Gardens:

I got a call from Kefalus [the property management company] asking me if some people from the insurance company could come and look at my house. So I said okay, and the entourage came with their papers and their clipboards. And they walked in and starting walking around and acting as if I wasn't even there. I felt so violated! It was like I was invisible. So I said, “who are you?” to one of the guys, and he said they were from the insurance company. But later on I found out that they were the new buyers. They weren't in the insurance business at all. It was Todd Reidbord and Gregg Perelman from Walnut Capital. I couldn't believe their nerve.

Some tenants, however, saw the principals of WCP as merely shrewd businessmen who participated in “equal opportunity discrimination,” despite their claim that they were “the good guys.”

I mean, they were businessman, and they didn't want to kick out anyone they thought might come back to haunt them, whether it was a particular tenant, or someone else in the community who could cause problems. So that's why the Orthodox Jewish family, or the pregnant lady, and Phyllis who had lived there for 34 years all got extensions. It didn't have anything to do with them being Jewish or anything else like that. At least, that was my impression.

The “pregnant lady” and her husband were actually newcomers to Pittsburgh who had lived briefly with Karin, an old college friend, in a unit facing Beacon Street. The young expectant couple subsequently rented their own place in the rear of The Court without knowledge of the major construction that was already in the planning stages. According to Karin, the recently ensconced family felt equally duped by WCP, having signed a year's lease only to discover that they would be living in the center of a large construction site:

Jamie and Austin had lived with us for a while when they first moved to Pittsburgh. And they just loved The Court. She thought this place was like paradise. So they rented a unit in the back and it was great. But then things got crazy. WCP was constantly working on the 2 units on either side of them. So

there was just mud everywhere and noise. And, you know, like she's saying 'I just got settled and have this brand new baby, and I can't believe it. I have to pack-up everything and move again. I mean they could have told me! They could have had a little courtesy and told me. You know, you're welcome to move in. Just know that this is coming.' But they never said a word to her about anything.

Probably Mac summed up the gentrification process most effectively with the following commentary:

I don't know. It felt like an indignity. You know, being there, being just kind of brushed around, thrown about, because they clearly didn't respect us or care about us having certain rights... Regardless of who got evicted and who didn't, it was bad politics and not nicely done. It really was gentrification, and they had to get rid of the people that were not quite living up to their standards.

This sentiment was echoed by one of the single mothers who voiced her sense of helplessness in a media interview: "Our backs are against the wall. This is a real loss. There is a real community spirit here. But I guess legally they can force us to move. It's hard to be so powerless."<sup>133</sup>

WCP continued to remain confident that it wielded unchecked power in Pittsburgh's strong property-rights environment.<sup>134</sup> Cultural geographer Richard L. Schein maintains that the construction of American landscapes is rooted in a cultural system based on the primacy of property rights.<sup>135</sup> He argues that this system is realized in numerous individual decisions that result in a "discourse materialized"—a landscape that can serve as a disciplinary force to regulate residents or a liberating medium

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<sup>133</sup> Barnes, 1999.

<sup>134</sup> For more on property rights and land regulation see Dennis J. Coyle, *Property Rights and the Constitution: Shaping Society Through Land Use Regulation*, 1993.

<sup>135</sup> Richard H. Schein, "A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting an American Scene," 1997.

when successfully challenged. But with Reidbord's repeated assertion to both tenants and the Historic Review Commission (hereafter HRC) that "no one is going to tell me what I can do with my property,"<sup>136</sup> it was apparent that forced displacement was inevitable and that tenant rights as well as historic designation would likely be thwarted.

Desperate to maintain some control over the future of the cultural landscape, Beacon Gardens' tenants called upon their councilman, Bob O'Connor, to intercede on their behalf and on behalf of the property itself. While O'Connor did make an appearance to survey the situation, he refused to communicate directly with any of tenants. "We ran after him saying, "What's happening? What's happening?" recalls Phyllis. "Help us! Help us save The Court! But I believe that he was working with Todd Reidbord and wasn't going to do anything to help us."

Unfortunately, Beacon Gardens' tenants were up against a stone wall when it came to garnering the support of their local representatives. Pittsburgh's optimistic, largely uncritical celebration of an urban renaissance that had begun decades earlier with the demolition of the lower Hill District was still in the air as policy makers wrestled over how to best invigorate the city's rustbelt economy in an increasingly competitive

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<sup>136</sup> This claim to total autonomy was reported by informants representing both Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace. However, Reidbord also made his position public in an interview published in *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*: "We don't think we need supervision from them [The Historic Review Commission] to do what we want to do." See Dan Fitzpatrick, "Residential Projects To Give Forbes-Murray Homey Look," *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* online, April 11, 2000 (accessed on Nov. 15, 2007).

global market.<sup>137</sup> As such, the Beacon Gardens community inadvertently became caught up in a highly controversial citywide discourse on “revitalization” involving a major redevelopment project slated for downtown Pittsburgh that had city officials and local preservationists deadlocked over the future of the city.<sup>138</sup> It was in this political climate that repeated phone calls from the tenants of Beacon Gardens to Councilman O’Connor remained unanswered. Mac, who at age 13 was still very idealistic, could not believe that O’Connor had such little regard for his constituency. “We were all pretty angry,” he explained:

We all learned to dislike Bob O’Connor because he was very much in support of Walnut Capital doing whatever they wanted. He in no way represented our community, and it was terrible the way he acted. It was like ‘go ahead and do whatever you want.’ He was completely against making it a historical landmark. We all knew that we were getting evicted, but at the very least we all hoped we could preserve the site. But O’Connor just blew us off.

Incidentally, on July 2, 2006 throngs of Mister Rogers fans, including Pittsburgh's Mayor Bob O'Connor (who had just been elected Mayor in January), came together on the Fourth of July weekend to sing "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" for a new film

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<sup>137</sup> Lees and Ley (1988) have made the accusation that many planners and policy-makers are guilty of collective amnesia with respect to the considerable damage incurred by post-war slum clearance to community networks. They reference a 1957 study by British sociologists Young and Wilmot who showed the effects of displacement on urban working-class communities who were relocated from East London to estate housing in Essex (see Young and Willmott, *Family And Kinship in East London*, 1957; also see James Frazer *Beyond Gentrification: Mobilizing Communities and Claiming Space*, 2004). These texts explore how the combined forces of investment interests and city government can foster a false sense of neighborhood revitalization and city competitiveness through the transformation of neighborhood space and identity.

<sup>138</sup> In 1999, Mayor Tom Murphy supported a plan to “revitalize” downtown Pittsburgh—a plan that entailed razing historic structures to make space for national retailers. An acrimonious debate between various stakeholders captured the headlines for the better part of 1999, thus sidelining other preservation concerns and deflecting attention away from the plight of Beacon Gardens. See Eric Miller, "Fifth-Forbes: A Renewal Review," *The New Colonist*. [http://www.newcolonist.com/ff\\_pitt.html](http://www.newcolonist.com/ff_pitt.html) (accessed Aug. 4, 2010)

about the city of Pittsburgh by Carl Kurlander.<sup>139</sup> Mr. McFeely,<sup>140</sup> representing Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, helped lead the sing-a-long. Throughout the making of the film, Kurlander and his crew gathered crowds from Times Square to Beverly Hills to sing Fred Rogers' theme song "Won't You Be My Neighbor?"

It was obvious to Jenny why Bob O'Connor had been less than "a good neighbor" and a disinterested councilman when it came to representing the tenants at Beacon Gardens. "It all had to do with raising the housing values," she reasoned, admitting that she really "could see the other side."

This was at the very beginning of Walnut Capital's buyouts and reconstruction projects, and at the time it seemed very obvious to me what was going on.<sup>141</sup> You had a neighborhood that had some undervalued property, and Walnut Capital got a couple of those properties really inexpensively. It was a steal and they were going to wring everything they could out of it... I knew that the historic nomination was going to create huge issues. I'm always looking at the renter's side but also from the owner's side because I've been on both sides of the street. It can be a real bear if you end up getting historic acceptance because of what the requirements are. So obviously Walnut Capital did not want that to happen because they were afraid that the costs would increase so dramatically to do the renovations. And the city was pulling for Walnut Capital because they were becoming a big part of the city's tax base. So they [the city] were not going to let anything happen that would jeopardize that happening. And when you look at that in terms of

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<sup>139</sup> Carl Kurlander, speaking of his film, *My Tale of Two Cities*, describes it as a feel-good film about the city of Pittsburgh. He celebrates the spirit of community and represents Pittsburgh as city where each day holds the promise of being "a beautiful day in the neighborhood." Kurlander dedicated the film to the late Mayor Bob O'Connor (the prior city council representative for Squirrel Hill who refused to even engage in any conversations with the tenants of Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace). O'Connor died suddenly of a rare brain cancer shortly after the filming of the songfest. <http://www.mytaleoftwocities.com/> (accessed Aug. 8, 2010).

<sup>140</sup> Mr. McFeely is a regular character on *Mister Rogers Neighborhood*. As "the speedy delivery man" Mr. McFeely knows everyone in the neighborhood. The name "McFeely" comes from Fred Rogers' own family history. His mother's maiden name was McFeely.

<sup>141</sup> Prior to the purchase and rehabilitation of Beacon Gardens, WCP was largely known for the "mallng" of Walnut Street, a town center in Squirrel Hill's neighboring community of Shadyside. The gentrification of Squirrel Hill's multi-family housing began with WCP's plan to upscale Beacon Gardens.



the entirety of their [WCP] projects, I mean, let's face it. Basically, Walnut Capital was on their way to owning the whole East End, and Beacon Gardens was just the tipping point, that first domino. This was the beginning of a large-scale buyout that has continued, and it's among the things that turned Walnut Capital into the huge conglomerate that it is now. So trying to fight Walnut Capital was like trying to fight city hall. Let's get real. There was no way that Bob O'Connor was going to face off against WCP.<sup>142</sup>

Most often, arguments that promote the physical desirability of “regeneration” are linked to local taxation systems that legitimate displacement, considered a minor problem, in order to achieve competitiveness in a global economy. Pittsburgh's power brokers took refuge in the municipality's reputation as “The Renaissance City,” aligning themselves with developers such as WCP that were well versed in the “alliterative garble” of *revitalization, renaissance, regeneration, renewal, redevelopment, rejuvenation, restructuring, resurgence, and reurbanization*.<sup>143</sup> In fact, when a hearing was held in the chambers of Pittsburgh's City Hall (specifically in the chambers of the Department of City Planning) to determine Beacon Garden's historic status several supporters of the initiative were appalled by the following shocking declaration of defiance uttered by Todd Reidbord: “You can say whatever you want, but the Mayor will do whatever I say.” While Reidbord's statement of immunity from regulation can be viewed as over the top, such alliances between private enterprise and city government are not uncommon. James Frazer, in his book *Beyond Gentrification: Mobilizing Communities and Claiming Space* (2004), explores how the combined forces of investment interests and local policy makers can

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<sup>142</sup> Arguments that promote the physical desirability of “regeneration” are often linked to local taxation systems that legitimate displacement—considered a minor problem—in order to achieve competitiveness in a global economy (see Frank F. DeGiovanni, “An Examination of Selected Consequences of Revitalization in *Six U.S. Cities*, 1984: 67-89).

<sup>143</sup> Slater, 2009: 292-311.

transform neighborhood space and identity through a discourse that links neighborhood “revitalization” with city competitiveness, leading to what I have identified in my research as *neighborhood cleansing*. Whereas resistance to gentrification in the United States during the 1970s and 1980s had been marked by “intense political struggles,” the 1990s witnessed “a palpable decline of community opposition—a circumstance largely attributable to the further entrenchment of neoliberal governance.”<sup>144</sup> Appropriating the language of neoliberalism, WCP argued that the “rehabilitation” of Beacon Gardens benefited the overall community of Squirrel Hill, equating the movement of a free market and the company’s own self-interest with “the optimal social good.”<sup>145</sup> This tack was in concert with a widespread emergence in the 1990s of “a more aggressive and generalized program of gentrification... anesthetized under the banner of urban regeneration,” a position that justified *neighborhood cleansing* in the interest of global interurban competition.<sup>146</sup>

In Pittsburgh, as elsewhere, the unconditional support of local government for corporate developers created an environment not only eager to displace and disperse an increasing number of low-income renters but also to “effectively displace

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<sup>144</sup> Jason Hackworth and Neil Smith, “The Changing State Of Gentrification,” *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 92.4 (2001), 464-477.

<sup>145</sup> Neil Smith, “New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy,” *Antipode* 43.3 (July 2002), 427-450.

<sup>146</sup> Nicholas Blomley, *Unsettling The City: Urban Land And The Politics of Property* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 31.

opposition and resistance itself.”<sup>147</sup> Given the prevailing political climate, it is noteworthy that Beacon Gardens’ residents felt sufficiently empowered to mount any opposition whatsoever. It is also noteworthy that the residents were able to put aside any personal grievances relating to disparities in lease extensions and present a united front to WCP—most certainly a response consistent with the tenets of *court-ordered living* as previously discussed. Without breaking file, Beacon Garden tenants requested a meeting with WCP, demanding that a upper-level representative be present so they could “be heard and receive honest information.” A copy of the talking points to be addressed at the meeting scheduled for the Sunday afternoon following the Friday notifications to vacate speaks to the degree to which tenants were not only invested in one another but in the preservation of the site as well. Even in the face of near certain displacement, the park-like area that had come to symbolize *court-ordered living* at Beacon Gardens took on special significance as a site of collective memory and a way of life to be preserved for future occupants.

According to the notes taken by Tom at a preliminary meeting of Beacon Garden tenants, the need “to share information, feelings, ideas, and support” topped the agenda. The two primary issues under discussion were (1) Our personal situations—*us*, and (2) “Hamilton Cottages” survival—the place.<sup>148</sup> That the two themes were interspersed throughout the meeting notes, indicated that “survival” was understood to be rooted in both the “the place” as much as “the right to remain in place.”

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<sup>147</sup> Loretta Lees, Tom Slater and Elvin Wyly, *Gentrification* (New York and London: Routledge, 2007), 81.

<sup>148</sup> The fact that the tenants had begun referring to the site as Hamilton Cottages rather than Beacon Gardens suggests the extent to which they recognized and supported the bid for historic designation.

Although the threat to the physical integrity of the site was taken as a community affront, tenants agreed that there would be no mention of the bid for historic designation at the meeting with WCP since the developers had not yet been officially notified of the property's nomination with the HRC. A future meeting was called to further explore the particulars pertaining to historic designation. A plan for a signed petition to save the courtyard was put on the agenda as well as a plan for a group protest to gain public attention.

Even though tenants were on uncertain ground regarding their legal rights to make any demands of WCP, they nonetheless insisted on being treated with respect. This was evident in several of the talking points, including a demand for an

Far from serving solely as some kind of glorified Dr. Feelgood, bathing viewers in a vague glow of affirmation, Mister Rogers should be understood as proclaiming an ethic of challenge and responsibility. ... It is an ethical system that depends, in part, upon each person's letting go of some of his or her gains, spreading those gains around, showing love to other people so that those other people can eventually show love in return.

*William Guy, 1996  
The Theology of Mister Rogers*

explanation on the part of the new landlords as to why households were given different vacate notifications. Class inferences were also challenged: "Why was the assumption made that some of us are 'low income' people," and "why weren't we given the option to stay in one of the newer units?" Some of the issues to be opened for discussion were concrete concerns, such as the return of security deposits and an assessment of potential problems. But there were also items on the agenda that underscored a sense of community spirit that ultimately transcended individual concerns. Listed under the heading "What do we Want?" and "What Can Be Done?"

was the call for emotional support—not to “feel alone.” Tenants emphasized the necessity of staying attuned to one another during the displacement process as well as a desire to stay in touch once dispersed. Calling on the special resources of individuals within the complex, one tenant offered therapeutic touch for relaxation and stress management, while another tenant volunteered to tap his personal network to explore possible legal and financial assistance for tenants in dire circumstances.

Gathering in the rubble of the courtyard that had in just a few days been turned into a construction site, the tenants arranged a circle of lawn chairs immediately in front of the dumpster and just beyond the site where a porta-potty would shortly appear [Fig. 42]. Several attendees recollect how the community refused to kowtow to what they



**Fig. 42. Beacon Gardens tenants meeting with Walnut Capital representatives in the central courtyard. Note the dumpster already situated on the grounds (photograph by Sharyn Frederick)**

perceived as Reidbord's intimidation tactics. "It was an extremely tense meeting," recalls Sarah, who noted that everyone was very angry. During my interview with Sarah, as she leafed through the album of photos that I had assembled from various informants documenting that now infamous meeting, she quite suddenly became agitated, pointing out the image of an unidentified representative from WCP who exuded an ominous presence:

That's the guy! The one standing up with papers in his hand hovering behind the seated folks. That's him! He barely said a word during the whole meeting. He just stood there, almost like a security guard. It was pretty unbelievable. I think he was just there for intimidation purposes. I mean he never said a word.

Even though folks have different memories of exactly what transpired at that Sunday afternoon meeting, nearly all of those interviewed were in agreement that Reidbord's pretense of concern was disingenuous and that his demeanor was condescending. In an attempt to set himself apart, Reidbord remained standing outside the loop of lawn chairs. "It took several tenants to coax him to take a seat inside the circle and take off his sunglasses so we could see his eyes," recalls one of the meeting organizers. Yet another tenant's testimony characterizes the general tenor of the meeting:

I remember having this feeling like they posed it as a meeting where they wanted to really understand where we were coming from and meet us half way. But it became pretty quickly apparent that it wasn't going to change anything. It wasn't remotely productive Yeah! I mean it actually got a little bit intense because people were really upset. They were scared because things were very ambiguous about what was going to happen and how much time people really had. I mean, we had our whole lives to pack up, and we just felt so duped. Like they could have told us sooner, in that first letter. It almost felt like they knew what was happening, and they were trying to squeak out whatever rent money they could get until the final hour.

Repeatedly during my interviews with displaced tenants from Beacon Gardens, the photographs of the courtyard meeting elicited responses of distress, with several informants exhibiting physical signs of upset—what one informant referred to as an unpleasant “flashback.” Mindy Fullilove, a professor of clinical psychiatry and public health at Columbia University and author of *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America* (2005) argues that such labels as “posttraumatic stress disorder,” depression,” “anxiety,” or “adjustment disorder,” to categorize the emotional pain of displacement are in and of themselves insufficient. Rather, she maintains that to understand the “the emotional truth” of what she refers to as *root shock* it is necessary to witness “the whole story” as experienced by those whose “emotional ecosystem” has been uprooted. The presentation of acute stress responses (i.e., uncontrollable shaking, bouts of tearing, outbursts of anger, and moments of profound silence) that were exhibited by more than a handful of this study’s informants lends credence to Fullilove’s diagnosis of *root shock* as a condition with potentially long-term implications.

Although the meeting between the tenants and WCP itself did not bring about any dramatic changes in the attitude or policy of the new landlords, there were some minor concessions placed on the table for consideration. Reidbord agreed to contemplate short-term lease extensions on a case-by-case basis and offered to look into the possibility of loaning a company vehicle to assist tenants who could not afford moving expenses. At least one informant conceded during our interview that he felt there was a moment when Reidbord was actually trying to “reach out” to the

tenants. “But all that all changed,” he countered “when Walnut Capital got wind the next day of the historic preservation nomination:”

You know, he [Reidbord] might not have respected the sensitivity of the situation when he agreed to a meeting, but I do think he may have been reaching out to try to ease the process a little. At first he came on very hard. It was like a first volley, and that was the bad cop lawyer move. And then near the end he was trying to come in and be the good cop. Now was he sincere? Again I think he was conflicted. But when he found out the next day about the historic preservation nomination, this gave him an opportunity, you know, to just say, ‘It’s not my fault. You tenants who sided with these zealots, these historic preservation zealots—well they’re crazy these people. They don’t care about you, and they don’t care about anything except these old buildings. So I’m done with you.’ I mean, I know it was an excuse. But I also think it’s fair to say that if in the process of negotiating how long people had to leave he might have been more collaborative had it not been for this historic preservation nomination. But after that he no longer was as flexible about working things out on a case-by-case basis.

Most of the tenants, however, had no illusions that Reidbord had any intention of easing the pain of the displacement, regardless of the situation:

I really don’t remember that much other than the fact that he [Reidbord] was cold. He was just plain dismissive. He was going to do what he was going to do, and there was nothing that anyone said that affected him. I’m not even sure why he went through the motion of showing up. I mean it was obvious that he did not want to be there. Why would you want to sit and look at all the people that you had just screwed? But he came mostly because it would look good in the papers... But

More and more I’ve come to understand that listening is one of the most important things we can do for one another. Whether the other be an adult or a child, our engagement in listening to who that person is can often be our greatest gift. Whether that person is speaking or playing or dancing, building or singing or painting, if we care, we can listen.

*Fred Rogers, 2003  
The World According to Mister Rogers*

then he might have been sorry that he came because things started getting very aggressive. Most of the people that were spearheading things were very passionate, and the one positive thing that came out of that meeting is that it felt really good to see people fighting back.



Even a poignant protest poem written and presented by 13-year old Sergey fell on the deaf ears of Reidbord who appeared, by all accounts, eager to bring closure to the meeting. Sergey does not remember the exact words of the poem he read that day, but he does recall a sense of desperation “to get them to listen” [Fig. 43].



**Fig. 43. Serge reciting his poem  
(photograph by Sharyn Frederick)**

Even though tenants were told they could return in a year when the units were fully renovated, it was clear that few if any would be able to afford the increase in rent which would be at least double their current rate. With discontent looming large following the departure of Reidbord and his unidentified accomplice the meeting might have ended on a down note had it not been for a spontaneous group protest that

magically transformed the mood from somber to celebratory. Mark, an African drum maker who was a relative newcomer to the court, filled me in on the specifics of the scenario that followed. Apparently all of those in attendance experienced the community spirit that was engendered:

There was this woman from Haiti who was living at Beacon Gardens at the time who came to me and said in no uncertain words, 'you have to bring that drum outside. These people need it bad.' My wife and I took our drums out and everybody gathered in the middle grassy area and danced and voiced their opinions and frustrations. The Haitian woman was right! She knew the healing power of the drum. [Fig. 44]

I remember that," reminisces Andy:

We had a sort of protest party. I never really had done anything like that before. I would see people drumming, and for some reason it didn't really speak to me. But as soon as we had this cause and this community spirit and we got out the drums, it was really awesome. It was brilliant."

Although tenants did initially organize in an attempt to resist WCP's sudden encroachment and retain some sense of self-empowerment, enthusiasm was unfortunately short-lived and ultimately tempered by a sense that the odds were unfavorably stacked. One community activist who lent a hand in preparing the nomination for historic designation described the post-eviction climate as grim:

Everyone was feeling really fragile having to pack up and leave with so little notice. So it was really hard to build a constituency to fight back. Let's face it. It was an underdog battle from the beginning! I mean the people that lived there were really passionate and loved their homes, and they loved living there. They loved the community. But they were more fragile than I might have ever guessed. Let's face it. They had a letter in their hand telling them to leave and that just kept them from really getting on the bandwagon and really being proactive. It wasn't that they were less determined. It was just a reality that they had to keep planning to move whether they thought they could change the outcome or not.



**Fig. 44. The African drum circle (photographs by Sarah Smith)**

## “It Could Have Been Historic”

The preservationists who were invested in securing historic designation for Beacon Gardens were primarily focused on preserving the physical fabric of the site. There was little hope from the outset that protection might extend to include the historic and contemporary actors whose everyday habits of mind and body had given shape to the cumulative cultural landscape of the courtyard community.<sup>149</sup> While indeed it is questionable whether anyone could have changed the final fate of Beacon Gardens and its tenants, it is still regrettable that the official preservation discourse focused predominantly on how the cottages were “planned, designed and built,” to the exclusion of how they were “inhabited, appropriated, celebrated, despoiled, and discarded.”<sup>150</sup> Architectural historians provided testimony that was inconsistent with oral, textual, and physical evidence—misrepresenting the cultural significance of the

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<sup>149</sup> Despite the failure of the HRC to protect the interests of Beacon Gardens’ residents, it is nonetheless significant to note that there is an historical precedence for the successful alliance of community activists and preservationists in the city of Pittsburgh. Manchester, one of Pittsburgh’s inner-city neighborhoods, represents a classic case of how stakeholders with varying agendas can come together to realize positive outcomes. In the 1980s, various interested parties in the community of Manchester joined forces to collectively navigate the process of neighborhood revitalization (see Wallace, 1996: 232-234). Stanley Lowe, a community activist who previously opposed the intervention of preservationists, served as a liaison between the Pittsburgh History and Landmark Foundation, private investors, charitable endowments, and elected officials to help facilitate community consensus.

<sup>150</sup> Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public Memory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1997), 15.

site and the relevant connections between historic and contemporary actors.<sup>151</sup> As a consequence, the Historic Review Commission did not uncover important documentation that would have added further credibility to the proposed nomination:

- Its exemplification of a pattern of neighborhood development or settlement significant to the cultural history or traditions of the City.
- The site's identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the cultural, historic, architectural, archaeological, or related aspects of the development of the City of Pittsburgh, State of Pennsylvania, or the United States.

Although the garden complex had long been known as an “artists’ colony,” missing from the historic nomination was an important link between the renowned African-American sculptor Selma Burke and Beacon Gardens. Burke had lived at the courtyard complex in the early to mid 1970s while serving as a sculptor-in-residence

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<sup>151</sup> In researching the history of Hamilton Cottages/Beacon Gardens, I discovered that in the second decade of the twentieth century two well-established but distinct groups of native Pittsburghers elected to live side-by-side in Squirrel Hill's first courtyard complex, Hamilton Cottages: an elite population of Scotch-Irish active in “polite” society, and a prosperous community of German Jews committed to a reformist agenda. (See the 1920 census; *The Pittsburgh Jewish Community Book: Comprising the Names and Addresses of Members and the History of Jewish Organization*, 1920; *Prominent Pittsburgh Families*, 1912; blueprints for Hamilton Cottages in the Carnegie Mellon University architectural archives, 1910-1911). Having ascertained the ethnic mix of the complex's earliest residents, I began to make probable connections between the well-heeled tenants who had initially occupied Hamilton Cottages and the more recent middle-class inhabitants of Beacon Gardens prior to its rehabilitation. Both eras of occupation represented a non-normative residential mix. It is my contention that a shared appreciation for *court-ordered living* cemented a sense of community among Hamilton Cottages' original residents in much the same way as it did for its contemporary population. Further research also suggests that the aforementioned also applies to the residential mix of Forbes Terrace and Forbes Cottages. This historical framework was absent from the historic nomination.

at the Carnegie Institute.<sup>152</sup> It was an exceptional choice for Burke given that Squirrel Hill was predominately a Jewish neighborhood with only a small scattering of African Americans. It was also significant that the last African Americans documented to have resided at Beacon Gardens were live-in domestics dating back to the 1930s.<sup>153</sup> According to anecdotal accounts, Selma Burke's arrival at the court stirred a sense of excitement and pride among the residents.<sup>154</sup> It is particularly noteworthy that this slice of history was absent from the historic nomination when viewed in relation to a concurrent bid for historic status in Squirrel Hill that did win the approval of city council—the Murray Hill Historic District. Those who supported the nomination for designation of Murray Hill as a historic district aggressively promoted the fact that author Willa Cather had briefly made her home with friends who resided in one of Murray Hill's fashionable Victorian domiciles. Would a similar claim linking Beacon Gardens to a black cultural icon have heightened the tenor of the preservation debate to include the voices of African Americans invested in their cultural history? While an official accounting of the preservation initiative to gain landmark status for Beacon Gardens can be reconstructed from the trail of documents filed away in the office of Pittsburgh's HRC, a far more expansive narrative includes

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<sup>152</sup> Burke's most well-known work, although not always attributed to her, is the portrait of Franklin D. Roosevelt that appears on every dime. While residing in Pittsburgh, Burke also taught over 60,000 African-American school children at the Carnegie Institute and opened neighborhood art centers in Homewood and East Liberty. Burke was named a Distinguished Daughter of Pennsylvania in 1993. Two of her most compelling pieces were executed and/or exhibited while residing at Beacon Gardens: *Big Mama*, 1972, and *Peace*, 1972. "Showing powerful images of women, Burke's 1970s pieces could easily be associated with the themes put forth by the prominent Women's Art Movement of the decade." (See "The Sculptural Legacy of Selma Burke," Lori Verdername, *Masters of American Art*, 2003: [http://www.artsnet.org/anyonecanfly/library/Verderame\\_on\\_Burke.html](http://www.artsnet.org/anyonecanfly/library/Verderame_on_Burke.html) (accessed Aug. 3, 2010).

<sup>153</sup> See the 1930 Census.

<sup>154</sup> Mrs. William Bruckman, whose husband was one of the heirs to Beacon Gardens, spoke highly of Selma Burke in a telephone conversation we had in 2006.

not only those fragments of lost history that have yet to be restored to the historic record, but the voices of the tenants themselves whose own account of habitation and resistance to eradication constitute the continuing cultural landscape of Beacon Gardens as it survives in the minds and bodies of its occupants—a historic status that can not be erased by a perfunctory ruling of Pittsburgh’s city council. The following account of Beacon Gardens’ historic preservation initiative is viewed largely through the portal of those contemporary actors whose support for landmark designation intersected with a concomitant claim to “the right to stay put.”

The day following the tenants’ meeting with Todd Reidbord, WCP was officially notified that Beacon Gardens had been nominated for historic designation, at which point the attitude of the developers turned from near total disregard to outright punishment. In a letter to the tenants, WCP claimed that the company was being held “hostage” by a legal process initiated by “non-residents,” and as a consequence there would be no further meetings and no extensions granted unless support for the initiative was withdrawn. Despite the developers’ intimidation tactics, tenants continued to back the bid for historic status, signing petitions, rallying support from the media, and attending meetings when they could. As one invested party put it, “if we weren’t going to live at Beacon Gardens anymore, if we couldn’t afford to live there, at least the people that were [going to live there] could live in them as they were intended to by the original architect.” In a circa. 1910 rendering of Hamilton

Cottages, the central courtyard is depicted as sparsely landscaped<sup>155</sup> [Fig. 45]. It is speculated that this was an intentional omission on the part of the architect so as to provide a better view of the site that would have otherwise been obscured by trees and plantings. However, depicted in the rendering is the remains of a dead tree whose only secure branch supports a child's swing. The questionable tree reappears in an early historic photograph of the courtyard, suggesting that Scheibler was unwilling to erase even this one element from the landscape of Hamilton Cottages. There is little doubt that the excavation of the central commons violated the very core of Scheibler's architectural principles.

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<sup>155</sup> Note that this presentation drawing is not consistent with the project that ensued. Of the twenty-one houses finally built by the Hamilton Reality Company, the six facing Beacon Street were completed in March of 1911. While these six units departed from the original arrangement that had called for two groups of four houses at the entrance to the central courtyard, their actual architectural design remained in accordance with the initial renderings. An additional fifteen units, grouped in three units of five surrounding the central court, were not ready for occupancy until fall of 1912. They diverged in both size and design from the standing six, suggesting that the second stage of development had involved a reassessment of the project



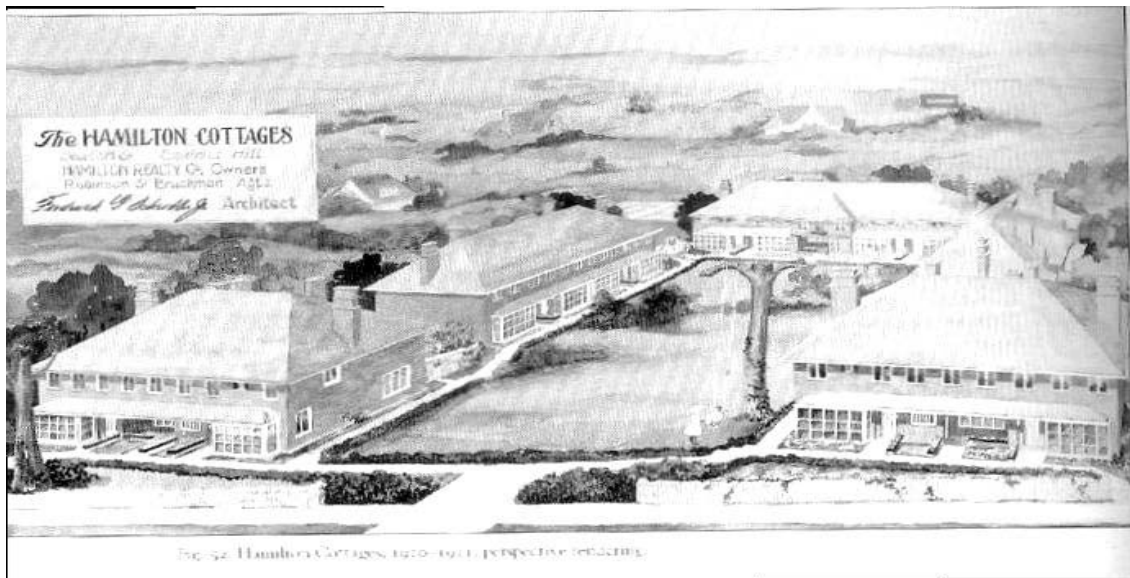


Fig. 52. Hamilton Cottages, 1910-1911, perspective rendering.

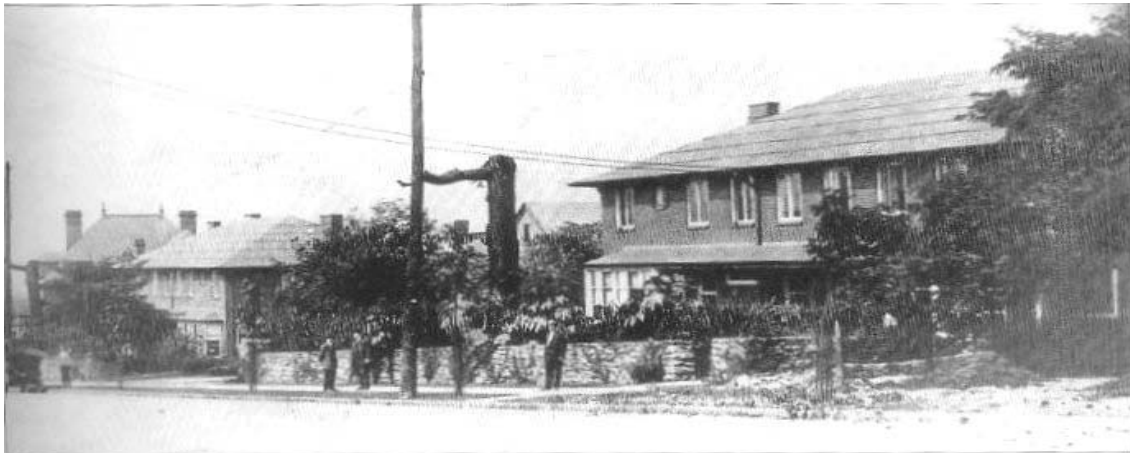


Fig. 54. Hamilton Cottages, 1910-1911

**Fig. 45. Hamilton Cottages rendering prior to construction (above, c. 1911) and photo after completion (below, c. 1913) courtesy of The Carnegie Mellon Architecture Archives**

In all, eight citywide media organizations joined together to take up the cause. Appearing in the *Pittsburgh City Paper* was a picture of the already despoiled courtyard with a group of tenants holding up placards indicating the number of years they each had resided at Beacon Gardens [Fig. 46]. The “no parking” sign that one of the younger tenants held was a tongue in cheek assault on WCP’s determination to turn the courtyard into a parking lot as was the number 88 tacked on a nearby tree.

Nor was it incidental that three dogs were posed in the foreground of the photograph, one seated in the lap of a resident holding a placard with the number six. Although



**Fig. 46. Tenants holding placards representing their number of years of residence at Beacon Gardens. Note the “no parking” sign and the number on the tree (courtesy of The Pittsburgh City Paper).**

there was a “no pets allowed” policy at Beacon Gardens, the property management had turned a blind eye to any infractions, and animals were very much a part of the everyday landscape. For some tenants the prospects of finding new homes with a

lenient pet policy was daunting.<sup>156</sup> Finally, the unidentified tenant depicted holding a placard indicating 34 years of residency was absent from the photo shoot by intent.

Phyllis explained that the fear of repercussions was what kept her away that day, although she did in principle support the protest:

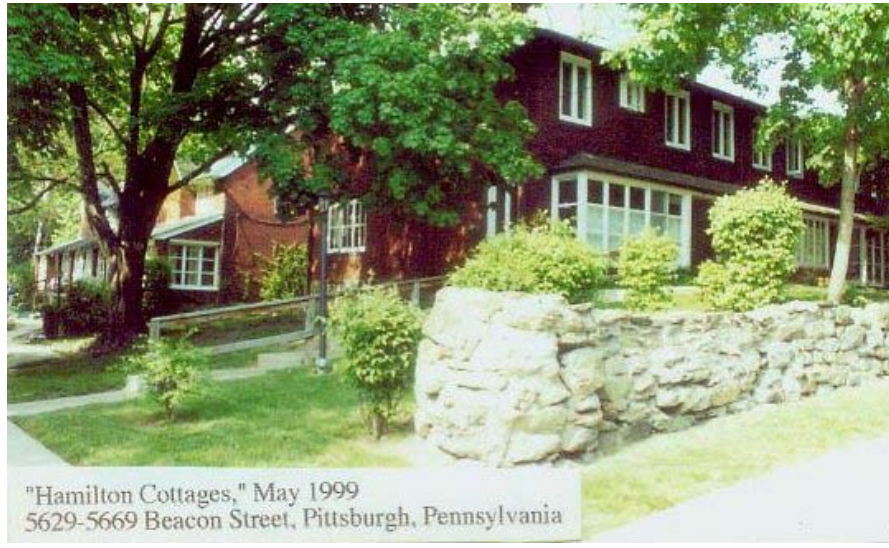
I didn't want my picture in the paper because it was a matter of how long I was going to stay there [Beacon Gardens]. I mean, a lot of people were given 60 day notices to leave and I was given a year. I didn't want to jeopardize that by going against them, although I supported everybody that was there. I was betwixt and between.<sup>157</sup>

WCP continued to take the position that the company was acting in the interest of the community, pointing out that the property had been for sale for a number of years and that another buyer might have razed the site altogether and put up a new apartment building or even a nursing home. “We are saving these units and renewing the housing stock in Squirrel Hill,” proclaimed Reidbord who insisted that WCP was merely attempting to modernize the apartments that suffered from outdated electrical wiring, plumbing, and aging kitchens and baths; this did not explain why WCP was intent on adding decks to the rear of the apartments or enclosing the whole of the complex with wrought-iron fencing [Fig. 47]. Although, Beacon Gardens’ tenants were well aware that the property had been poorly maintained and initially welcomed the idea that WCP might be making essential improvements—they had not

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<sup>156</sup> Concerns regarding the toll of displacement on households with pets is not unique to Beacon Gardens. See Lisa Gartner, “The Furriest Victims of Condo Conversion: Pups of Rogers Park,” *North by North Western*, March 11, 2008. [www.northbynorthwestern.com/2008/03/8250/the-furriest-victims-of-condo-conversion-pups-of-rogers-park](http://www.northbynorthwestern.com/2008/03/8250/the-furriest-victims-of-condo-conversion-pups-of-rogers-park) (accessed Aug. 6, 2010).

<sup>157</sup> Senior citizens are among the most vulnerable populations in gentrifying landscapes. Among the few cities that provide protections for the elderly is New York City that has put into place a rent relief program that provides exemptions from rent increases for elderly tenants living in rent-regulated buildings. Landlords who offer below-market rents to senior citizens are eligible for a tax adjustment, but this provision does not apply to unregulated buildings (see Newman and Wyly, “The Right to Stay Put, 2006: 23–57).



**Fig. 47. Beacon Gardens' rubblestone wall in apposition to Beacon Commons' wrought iron fencing (upper photograph by Sharyn Frederick and lower photograph by author)**

anticipated that the actual integrity of the historic property would be compromised and that the new rents would become prohibitive. While tenants were in agreement that the property had been in a gradual state of decline long before WCP's takeover, they nevertheless concurred that the privilege of living in the court outweighed the fact that the prior owners had been negligent. "I have to admit that there were wires hanging in the basement, and they really did need to do work on the plumbing," notes Queenie. "I once lived for two weeks without water. So it just goes to show that people really tolerated a lot and still wanted to stay." Tom was of a like mind: "Kefalus [the prior management company] had this totally laissez faire attitude. They just weren't very responsive to clients. That's the way they were. But, you know, the rent wasn't bad, and we loved it there. It wasn't perfect, but we put up with it." On June 4th the Historic Review Commission voted unanimously in support of temporary protection for Beacon Gardens, with a final ruling pending further hearings and the vote of city council. Construction of rear decks, replacement of windows and brick pointing was halted until further notice [Fig. 48]. Arthur Lubetz, president of Preservation Pittsburgh<sup>158</sup> and adjunct professor at CMU, stepped into the arena to support the nomination

I hope there's a way to compromise the developer's desire to increase his cash flow with the importance of these building... Scheibler is one of the most significant architects in Pittsburgh this century. It's appalling how many of his designs are being altered or destroyed because of insensitivity.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Preservation Pittsburgh is a non-profit advocacy group dedicated to preserving the region's historic, architectural, cultural, and environmental heritage. Members, who include both professional preservationists and interested citizens, are united by their concern that the future of Pittsburgh's irreplaceable architectural and landscape treasures is in jeopardy. See the Preservation Pittsburgh's website, <http://www.pittsburghheritage.com/> (accessed Aug. 6, 2010).

<sup>159</sup> Manny Theiner, "Restore Faith, Not Historic Townhomes," *Pittsburgh City Paper*, May 19, 1999, Real Estate Section, 6m.



**Fig. 48. The rear decks that were completed after historic designation was denied (photograph by author)**

Martin Aurand, director of the CMU Architectural Archives and author of a monograph on Scheibler, emphasized that Beacon Gardens stood out among Scheibler’s many group cottage projects for its site and scale. In my interview with Terry Necciai—the preservation architect who passionately pleaded for Beacon Gardens’ landmark designation—he made the following observation:

It’s really clear that these houses on purpose make themselves secondary to the trees. The houses were very plain, but the bay windows—well what’s really happening is it makes a 70 square feet sun porch feel like it’s out in the courtyard. The architecture is letting itself play supporting actor instead of the star.

WCP’s plan to turn the central commons into a parking lot raised a huge outcry among preservationists and tenants alike, threatening the very essence of *court-ordered living*. “Everyone loved the courtyard as sort of run down as it was which really wasn’t that rundown,” protests Andy.

I mean, it had its low points, but it was still an amazing resource of green space, and WCP was so disingenuous. I mean they were going to invest time and money into it, but they weren't looking at what an amazing space it was. I mean things that we [the tenants] all kind of took for granted because it just worked, they just didn't get. Like nobody had, or very few people had, air conditioners because the shade of the trees helped keep the houses cool. So when they announced that they were going to cut down the trees, everyone who was ever ambivalent about this company coming in was suddenly just pissed off. It was like they overlooked almost all the positive things about the original plan. I knew that somebody should reinvest in these units and fix them up, but to level the courtyard? I mean it's sort of like you can't stop that kind of economic opportunity, but everyone wanted to see them do something a little more in keeping with how it was originally designed.

“I still feel a lot of bitterness about that parking lot that they [WCP] just bulldozed over,” admits Queenie:

I was really upset about the trees, and just the thought of a parking lot gave me a really bad feeling. They even swore to us that it was only a very small part up front that would get paved, and they would keep all the trees in the back. But they didn't! It's still upsetting when I go by there.

Sallyann, an architect living at Forbes Terrace, was appalled at the lack of thought that went into solving the need for parking. “I knew that given the population that WCP wanted to attract, that they would have to provide parking,” she admits, “but I would never ever have recommended that they just maul that courtyard and make it a parking lot.”

They could have created permit parking for the residents on Beacon. There's plenty of parking on that street. In any case, they could have come up with a more attractive solution that would have maintained the character of the place—something more artistic that would have woven parking into that courtyard. They could have maintained much of the landscape and done a cobblestone court that would be the type of place where you would still want to hangout when all the cars weren't there. There were different creative solutions they could have been considered, but they just wanted to bring in the bulldozers.

Sharyn, one of the preservationists who had helped prepare the historic nomination, was relentless in her effort to save the central park ground, making the case that the 13 large locust trees had just reached maturity, giving the full affect to the courtyard as it was originally conceived by the architect. Cutting down the trees, she asserted, was going to change the feel and function of the courtyard, and even if new trees were planted, it would take at least another 50 years to recreate a similar environment. In a community letter to WCP, the tenants collectively made a fervent plea to preserve the courtyard:

You are in possession of a property unlike any other in the city... The open natural courtyard makes this property unique. It is your greatest asset. We feel without a doubt, that there is absolutely no need for a parking lot here. Parking on the street is never an inconvenience, never! To live in the city limits overlooking a large garden courtyard of grass and trees is extremely rare and is exactly the reason why we love to live here and why we must beg of you to preserve it. We implore you to recognize the value of this courtyard space and immediately halt plans to construct a parking lot.<sup>160</sup>

“We lost the whole courtyard and trees because they needed a parking lot,” decries Queenie. “Well people got along without a parking lot all those years,” she continues:

Sometimes it was a hassle, and I have to admit we were always getting tickets on trash day, but truthfully it was worth it. They [WCP] said that people would complain that it was too far to walk all the way back to the rear units. Like give me a break! You know, you don’t move into a place like that if you

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<sup>160</sup> This quote comes from a letter filed in the Beacon Garden archives of the HRC.



don't want to walk back there. We called it yuppifying it at the time, but I guess it's really what you're calling gentrification.<sup>161</sup>

“It was pretty devastating when news of the parking lot started bubbling around,”

pronounces Karin:

You know, when people asked me about the parking lot, I said that every single person who lives there right now would gladly drive around the block a couple of times in order to have all those trees in the middle. You know, to have a place to sit outside and feel transported is something really special. You didn't feel like you were in the city... I mean, those old trees were planted when Beacon Gardens was first built. They were part of the whole place, and they just didn't understand.

Even a resident who admitted during an interview that the courtyard had been over idealized by some of the tenants, noting that “it [the courtyard] was kind of a crappy yard that was not level and had huge drop-offs from the sidewalk,” nevertheless conceded that having such a large expanse of green space in the city was an undeniable luxury and that “the courtyard really did bring everyone together.” No one, however, was more vehement about the transition of the courtyard into a parking lot than Chris who could hardly contain his contempt:

It sucked when that parking lot went in! I mean it filled up with SUVs. That was just like the epitome of everything that had gone on there. They had taken this park-like space, this place where people were meeting, and they paved over it. How should I put it? They had to have a parking lot so these disgusting fucking yuppies could move in, so they wouldn't have to find a

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<sup>161</sup> Yuppies as the perpetrators of gentrification is a common representation in the displacement literature. David Ley (1996) argues that gentrification in Canada was instigated by a burgeoning counter-culture where ‘hippies became yuppies,’ remaking entire neighborhoods to suit their upwardly mobile aspirations. For another perspective that implicates artists as complicit with yuppies see Dan Knauss, “Artists and Yuppies Working Together,” *Riverwest Currents Online Edition*, July 2002, <http://www.riverwestcurrents.org/2002/July/000036.htm> (accessed Nov. 12, 2009). However, some researchers have warned that sweeping generalizations about yuppies are unfair: “Much resistance to gentrification is centered on simplistic slander of ‘yuppies’, slanders that are seemingly oblivious of the frequent observation that gentrifiers are hugely a diverse group that cannot be reduced to this label” (see Lees et al, 2008:123). To attribute neighborhood change solely to the influx of yuppies is to over simplify a varied process, displacing the burden of the negative consequences of gentrification away from capital factions (see Beauregard, 1990: 855-874).

place to park on the street and god forbid have to walk a hundred feet. That pissed me off!<sup>162</sup> [Fig. 49]

As tenants took exception to Reidbord's rationale that the need for a parking lot trumped all the benefits of having a central commons, Reidbord further reinforced his perception of the apparent class differentiation between the residing tenants at Beacon Gardens and the target audience for Beacon Commons, making the following statement: "The kind of people I want to attract are the kind of people that want a parking space when they come home form work," implying that perhaps Beacon



**Fig. 49. "All those SUVs" in the new parking lot (photograph by author)**

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<sup>162</sup> One of the key questions addressed by The Portland Courtyard Housing Design Competition in 2007 was, "What is shared open space really for? Is it a place for people to park their cars and then for kids to play on as an afterthought? Or is the courtyard meant to be a green space without autos or a concrete/asphalt surface?" [http://www.courtyardhousing.org/downloads/brief\\_web.pdf](http://www.courtyardhousing.org/downloads/brief_web.pdf) (accessed Aug. 6, 2010).

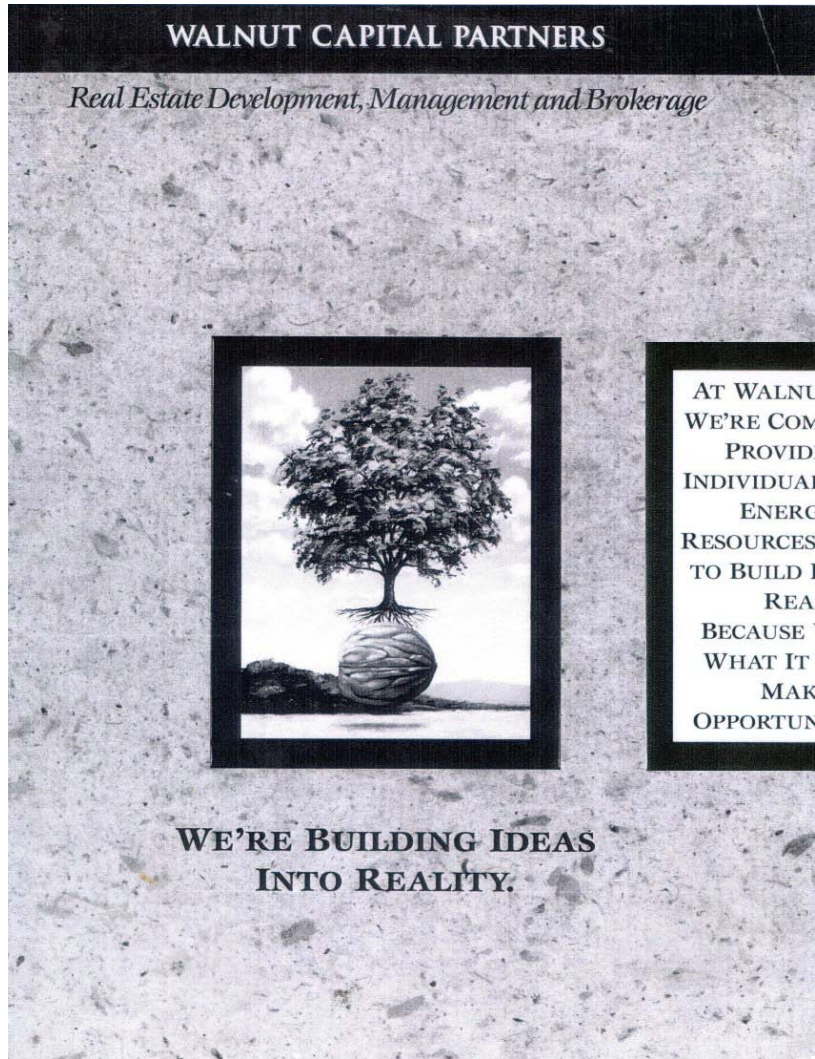
Gardens residents were not gainfully employed or sufficiently hardworking. Patricia Lowry, the architectural critic for the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, also begged to differ with WCP, calling the demolition of Beacon Gardens' courtyard "a great loss." In her end of the year review of Pittsburgh's changing architectural landscape for the year 2000, Lowry eulogized the demise of Beacon Gardens' park-like commons with the following remark: "Squirrel Hill's newly upscale Beacon Commons, erected around 1910 as the U-shaped Hamilton Cottages, gained a parking lot but lost its soul: the courtyard of towering trees"<sup>163</sup> [Figs. 50 & 51].

The ultimate indignity to the courtyard denizens, however, was the Beacon Commons sign announcing "Coming Soon. Completely Restored Historic Townhouses" that was placed at the entrance to the central commons, even as most of the tenants still remained in residence [Fig. 52]. For all of the tenants the sign was an unforgivable affront. "I didn't resent that they had the right to acquire these properties," expounds one of the single moms who tried to take a less partial position:

Everybody agreed that there were things that needed to be fixed and repaired, so of course I understand that they would want to recover what they put in. I mean that's a business. But it's how they did things, like how they treated the people, and also how they treated the property itself. I mean, not to get too hokey, you feel like these properties have almost a personality of their own, and I feel like they sort of just went and sort of stomped on everything, including the people... It was like they removed huge hunks of the personality, the character of the place, the social aspect of them, the nature part, and also Scheibler's architecture... and now they're using that to sell them! You know the idea of that just irks me. I couldn't believe what it said

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<sup>163</sup> Patricia Lowry, "Places: Door Closes on a Year Constructed With Controversy, *The Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, Dec. 30, 2000 <http://www.post-gazette.com/magazine/20001230lowry5.asp> (accessed Oct. 24, 2010).



**Fig. 50. A Walnut Capital flyer, circa 1999, declaring its mission statement (courtesy of Pittsburgh's Historic Review Commission archives)**



**Fig. 51. Aerial view of Beacon Commons in 2001 (photographs from Walnut Capital Partners' rental search on the web)**

on the sign. It just really bubbled up again all over again just talking about it. We were being mistreated, and the property was being mistreated. We all really cared about the place. I mean, it was special, and everyone knew it was special. And the part of all this that still eats me is I felt it was doable [historic preservation]. They could have had everything and made it all right for us too. They could have treated people properly. But they were ferocious about it.



**Fig. 52. The infamous sign boasting historic status that enraged Beacon Gardens' tenants (Photograph by Sharyn Frederick)**

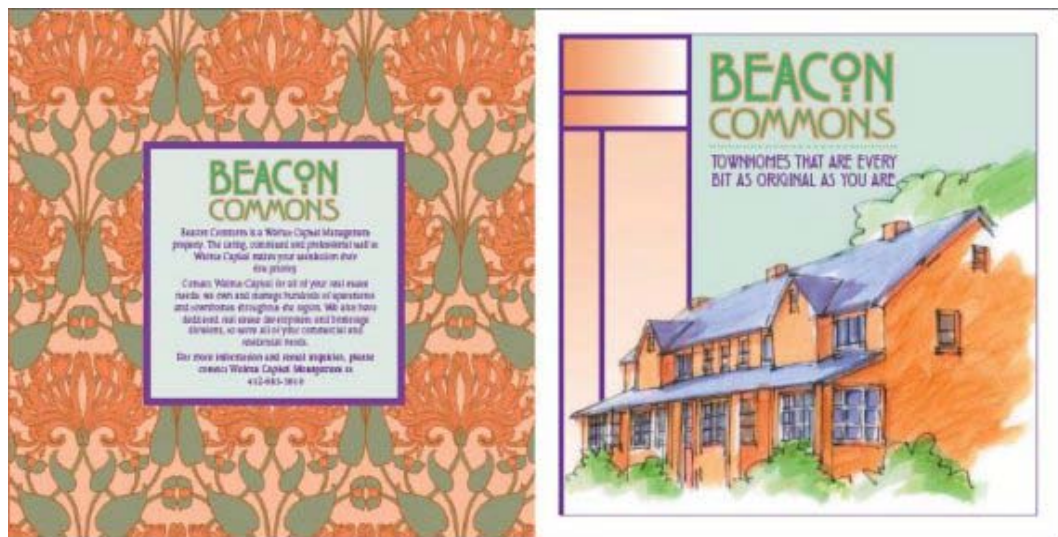
Sharyn described the sign as a “double slap in the face.” “First they purposed to remove so much that was so really precious about the place... and now they were using that to sell them.” WCP was sufficiently attuned to the market to take full advantage of what has been coined “the gentrification aesthetic,”— in part a process of urban conservation that reuses and recycles history in a deliberate ploy to distinguish and demarcate a new middle-class pattern of consumption that espouses

the “return to historical purity and authenticity.”<sup>164</sup> This was evident not only from the offensive signage but from the brochure that WCP’s prepared to market the site:

[Fig. 53]

Beacon Commons: Townhomes That Are Every Bit Original as You Are... There is simply no other rental properties quite like Beacon Commons, a Pittsburgh original for nearly 100 years... These classic homes have been updated inside and out to preserve and enhance the meticulous workmanship of the period, while incorporating the highest quality modern utilities.

The promotional pamphlet that was marketed following “renovations” went so far as to evoke praise for Frederick Scheibler with the following tribute:<sup>165</sup>



**Fig. 53. The cover of a Beacon Commons’ brochure that that was widely marketed**

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<sup>164</sup> Michael Jager "Class Definition And The Aesthetics Of Gentrification: Victoriana in Melbourne", in *Gentrification of the City*, eds. Neil Smith and Peter Williams (London: Unwin Hyman, 1986), 86-87.

<sup>165</sup> The brochure also conjures up a sentimentalized association with Arts and Crafts era as suggested by the William Morris motif that serves as the background for the leaflet’s cover. The conventionalized stained-glass window and the Old Bookman graphics incorporated into the brochure’s design further evoke a sense of Arts and Crafts authenticity.

In 1910, renowned architect Frederick Scheibler broke ground on a series of graceful brick homes known as the Hamilton Cottages. Each one was unique, yet they were built together to create a private, beautifully landscaped courtyard community. In 2000, these homes were lovingly restored to their original splendor and renamed Beacon Commons

This ruse on the part of WCP, already evident in the offensive sign, was not lost on the tenants of Beacon Gardens who were genuinely invested in the preservation of the site. Sharyn was especially indignant given her professional experience with the restoration of prior historic properties. “I mean, in the long run it doesn’t cost more to renovate a building in a historic way,” insisted Sharyn:

I worked with a preservation architect for years, and we at least found it was cost effective. Some things cost more in the short run, but in the long run you know that if you are going to advertise and say that these are historically renovated units, then you need to actually do that. You need to replace the windows with windows that approximate the original. You don’t just put in a new vinyl window that doesn’t match in use, or purpose, or function and then call it an historic restoration.

Others were equally distressed by the implications of the sign:

We almost died when we saw that sign. “Beacon Commons.” ... Like where is the commons? Well there was a commons before you destroyed it. And, yeah, we thought about how completely restored they were [the units] when you started tearing out the original oak cabinets and dumping them into the freaking dumpster.

While the hypocrisy on the part of WCP riled all of the tenants, Queenie’s reaction was also deeply personal:

It just seemed that there was so much disregard for the places themselves. I guess it sounds sentimental, but the historical treasure that it was... I mean that really hurt people. It’s beyond just how they treated us, which was bad enough. It was just so unnecessary to do it that way. I guess it’s their money, but still they could have fixed things to be within the historical standard. And they didn’t! They chose not to, you know, in spite of all our protesting. And now on top of it, they’re calling the place historical. No! It could have been historic but they ruined that.

Mac shared his mother’s outrage:

It was more about throwing out the trash than having a sort of diplomatic process. I like that they talked about the legal process [historic preservation] as hindering them... I think it was just a way of saying, 'we're going to screw you one way or another since you're trying to fight back, and we're going to have to do it [razing the courtyard] even faster.'

Mac's reference to "throwing out the trash" speaks to both the stripping away of the physical and social fabric of Beacon Gardens—in other words, a campaign of *neighborhood cleansing* shrouded in the cloak of neighborhood renewal. In all, tenants' profound distress over the insensitivity of WCP to both "the site" and "the residents" suggests the extent to which a deeply embedded sense of place-identity was under threat. Beacon Gardens had played an active part in the construction of its residents' personal identities through the everyday practices of *court-ordered living* and would continue to serve as a site of collective memory once the tenants had moved away. Damage to the physical environment of The Court was experienced as a personal violation—one that had the potential to interfere with the process of "place-referent continuity"—the maintenance of ties with a specific place that links past, present, and future locations, ensuring a sense of self congruence and psychological well being.<sup>166</sup>

Holding on to some glimmer of hope, Sharyn continued to pursue the bid for historic designation, insisting that her motive was not to be an "obstructionist." "I wasn't asking them to spend more money," she explained. "I was just asking them to spend their money differently... Keep as much as you can, and if you absolutely can't

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<sup>166</sup> See Rowles, 1983; Lalli, 1983; Devine, 1994.



replace it, try to have it remade in kind.”<sup>167</sup> Even Tom, who had expressed concerns that the preservation initiative may have compromised tenants’ short-term interests, revised his perspective during the course of our interview:

I didn’t have a problem with the nomination for historic designation, itself. But the process, by its very nature, was not going to jibe with process of helping the tenants. It wasn’t focused on the people; it was focused on the buildings... When everything happened, I thought it was important that we look out for the tenants, weighing the human element against the historic review process. I wanted it to be, not just for me, but also for everyone, as smooth a transition as possible, because it really was a hardship to move. At first it seemed as if WCP might work with tenants on a case- by-case basis, but that changed as soon as they got wind of the nomination. I was a little bit concerned that the nomination process was at expense of the residents. It became an “us” vs. “them” situation. Don’t take me wrong. I was not opposed to the process of historic review. In retrospect it probably would have been one of the more important aspects of this whole process had it happened and had it been preserved properly. Even though people would still have been forced to move out, it would have preserved something tangible, something to be proud of when you drove past the place. It would have been wonderful!<sup>168</sup>

But in the final analysis, WCP was unwilling to forgo complete control over Beacon Gardens’ fate. Reidbord dug his heels into the ground claiming, “In a perfect world I’d like to do a perfectly historic renovation, but that’s not possible. There’s a limited budget... and we need to stay within that budget.” In a letter to the CEO of WCP, Terry Necciai, a registered architect specializing in preservation, offered his assistance should WCP elect to take advantage of government incentives such as the Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program. The letter remained unanswered. It was evident that no one was going to tell WCP what to do with its property!

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<sup>167</sup> Sinicrope, 1999.

<sup>168</sup> Tom is reflecting on my experience as a participant on a tour offered by The Society of Architectural Historians during their 2007 conference in Pittsburgh. The tour stopped at several Scheibler complexes to study the renowned architect’s contributions to the city and to the progressive movement. The tour sidestepped Beacon Commons despite its proximity to other locations visited for reasons that are apparent. .

It was time for further action. Among the tenants was a sign-maker for a local department store who explained his inspiration to regain some sense of dignity for Beacon Gardens residents:

WCP put a billboard in the court to advertise the upcoming "improvements" minus, of course, the lower-class citizens currently living there. Well, if one had access to a vinyl sign making machine one could copy the type face and match the color to make some subtle "corrections" to an existing sign. It was a very satisfying project in that the change was almost subliminal. In changing "Walnut Capital Management" to "Walnut Capitalists, Ruthless Management" it was up for a good three weeks before the powers that be noticed it [Fig. 54].

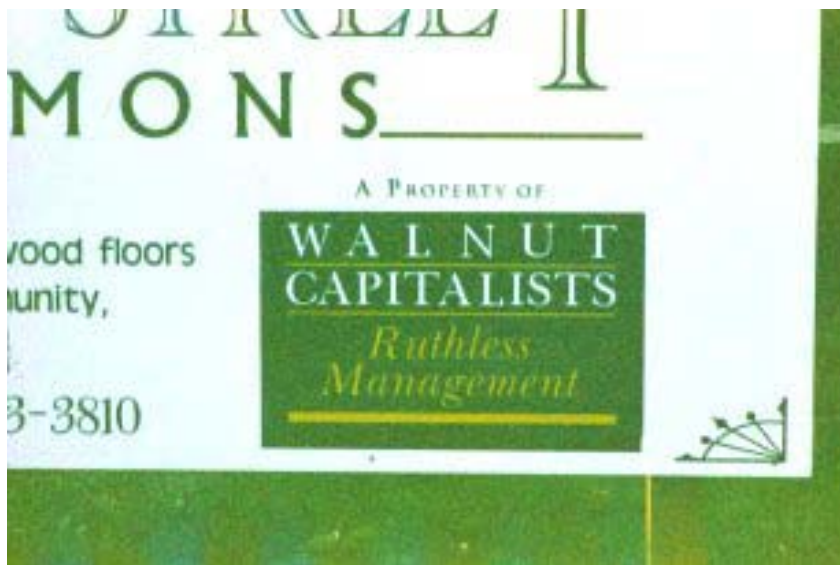


Fig. 54. The altered sign (photograph by Mark Schaaf)

In fact, the altered sign provided such a sense of psychological compensation for Beacon Gardens tenants that children and adults alike soon began to leave their own imprint in the form of graffiti. One of the courtyard teenagers happened to be on the spot when the guys from Walnut Capital first encountered the defaced sign: “Yeah, they were pretty upset when they saw what happened to the sign.<sup>169</sup> They just kept looking at it like, ‘what’s going on here?’ They just couldn’t understand why it was trashed.” According to Felice, the sign was also used as a target for playing mumbley pegs, thus adding an additional layer of remonstrance. Although no one remembers the exact wording of any of the graffiti that emblazoned the sign, one tenant recalls writing something along the lines of “coming soon to your neighborhood to triple your rent.”<sup>170</sup> Even though the tenants of Beacon Gardens were ultimately unable to stanch the flow of indignities imposed by WCP, they nonetheless found subversive outlets to protest their disempowerment and regain a means by which they could assert their place-identity and retain some sense of control over their own lived turf.

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<sup>169</sup> Graffiti protesting gentrification has long been a common outlet for demonstrating resistance. See the photograph of anti-gentrification graffiti reading “No more yuppies please” at a construction site in Lower Park Slope in New York City on The Gentrification Web <http://members.multimania.co.uk/gentrification/> (accessed Aug. 8, 2010). See also the graffiti reading “Gentrification Kills” that has been appearing on buildings on Georgia Avenue around the Park View and Petworth neighborhoods. See P.J. Orvetti, NBC news online, July 20, 2010 <http://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local-beat/Gentrification-Kills-Graffiti-on-Georgia-Avenue-98828309.html> (accessed Aug. 8, 2010).

<sup>170</sup> See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 1984. De Certeau examines the ways in which people subvert the strategic forces of dominant structures through the performance of tactical acts that spontaneously play out in everyday life. Tim Cresswell, channeling de Certeau, makes the case that while places are most often defined by those with the greatest power, people can resist and subvert those definitions through acts of defiance (see *Place: A Short Introduction*, 2004).

## **“It Was Just Kind of Shocking”**

A sense of community solidarity continued to intensify among the tenants, as the threat of displacement loomed large. “When we realized that like this was near the end, everything became even more precious,” reflects Karin:

Some people who used to be a little more private started really reaching out to each other... You know, we started utilizing the courtyard more, and there was more interaction, more socialization. It was like the last hurrah. I guess everybody still had this small hope that we could save this place and stay here and be like a little family.

But as the certainty of displacement became indisputable, tenants quickly began to come to terms with the reality of the situation. “There was a big yard sale,” recalls Sarah [Fig. 55]:



**Fig. 55. The yard sale (photograph by Sarah Smith)**

It was our last ditch community effort before we all had to move... I remember it was really different than the yard sale we had before the evictions, because now it was like everyone was trying to get rid of everything. There was only maybe one or two people who could probably afford to buy a house, and most of us had to fit all of our stuff into much smaller places.

“I had 34 years worth of stuff in my basement,” grumbles Phyllis. “People came from everywhere. It was like the meadows, or a flea market. I felt like a lot of memories were going in someone else’s hand.” Felice was similarly distraught at the desperate state of affairs as tenants moved towards a disquieting sense of closure:

It was so awful the way things started to disintegrate. People were so overwhelmed just trying to leave, and most of us didn’t have any spare money. So we were trying to sell whatever we could at the yard sale. It was so awful to end that way, after all the good memories.

There was one happy outcome, however, involving Queenie’s piano:

It was very sad for me that I wouldn’t be able to move my piano into our new place. But Tom had just bought a house, and he had room for a piano. So I sold it to him. It felt good, you know, that he had it because his house was built around the same time period as Beacon Gardens, and I felt like it was going to a good home. If you talk to him, will you ask him if he still has the piano?

Tom, in fact, still has the piano. “I try to keep it tuned, even though nobody plays it,” he assures me.

She [Queenie] gave it up very reluctantly, so I try to take good care of it. I bought it from her for a small amount. It was just enough to make it an actual sale and not a gift, and the agreement was that she could come over and play it anytime. But she never did come.

While tenants tried to remain supportive of one another, the immediacy of their own situations took priority. “One of the problems for all of us was that all of a sudden you had 20 families that were looking for rental properties at the same time,” recalls one of the single mothers:

That in itself was a problem because essentially they all wanted the same apartments. And everybody had to have some place to go. So people were chasing after apartments and trying to find homes. A few had the resources to buy a house, but that was unusual. Most of us had to make do with what we could afford, and that was a whole lot less than how we were used to living at Beacon Gardens.

“We did not have the luxury to shop around for housing,” repines Queenie.

We just didn’t know what to do. It was horrible! I mean people were really traumatized. There were people moving with grocery carts. It was a real mess. A lot of us had no money or reserves to move. One of the tenants told us about some group that would lend money on a onetime basis. I remember going to get help, and they gave me a few hundred or something. We really tried to be supportive of each other, but it was really discouraging... It was just kind of shocking because it uprooted everybody’s stability.

For people that wanted to stay in Squirrel Hill, especially those who had pets, there were even fewer options. “I particularly remember that first Sunday after the evictions when everyone got the paper, and we were all looking at the classified because finding places to live was not going to be easy,” recalls one distraught tenant:

There were so many of us looking at the same time. We were really scared. By then I had two cats, and I had to find a place that allowed pets. But lots of the people had animals in The Court. I mean, it was one of the attractions of living there. Let’s face it. No matter how desperate, no one was going to get rid of their pets. I mean, let’s show a little compassion for living things.

For households with both children and pets, the situation was even further compounded. “I did find a place in Squirrel Hill,” confirms Felice, but I didn’t tell my landlord about Shaela. That’s the puppy in the picture from the newspaper.” [see Fig. 46].

So that [the new housing] didn’t last long. I mean, I wasn’t supposed to have pets. It was just a fiasco. We finally ended up moving here [her current residence which is HUD housing]. Nothing particularly drew me here. It was just absolutely having to move and being totally overwhelmed with having no

money. So a friend of mine [Sallyann from Forbes Terrace] heard about some city-subsidized loan for first time homeowners... and she helped me get this place. And it felt like such a big loss for a really long time. I mean, even though this isn't that far away, it's not near anyone without driving and stuff. I think we've lived here maybe for seven or eight years, but I still miss Beacon Gardens, and the boys still talk about what a great place it was and still talk about being raised there. It was such an abrupt change in everyone's life. We were just sort of depressed because there's a different mentality here. I didn't have to worry when the boys went out to play in The Court. But here the kids punch and beat up on each other. It's a whole different thing because people just aren't as easy to connect with and get to know. It was the total opposite at Beacon Gardens

Felice's choice of the word "depressed" is telling from the perspective of place-identity theory. The above statement is a prime example of what Edward Relph (*Place and Placelessness*, 1976) describes as a trajectory from "existential insideness"—an unselfconscious condition of feeling deeply rooted in a place—to its opposite—"existential outsideness"—a sense of incongruity and alienation that is often experienced by newcomers to a place. The sense of being "an outsider" for Felice, however, did not ease over time given the extreme contrasts between her experience of *court-ordered living* at Beacon Gardens and her very different experience of alienation in her current neighborhood.

Phyllis' displacement narrative also follows a path from "existential insideness" to "existential outsideness." Not only was she the most veteran resident of Beacon Gardens, having taken up residence 34 years prior to WCP's takeover, but she was also the last to depart. Relph suggests that the more immersed a person feels inside a place, the greater will be his or her identity with that place. Terrified at the prospect of leaving her home, Phyllis took advantage of the eight months left on her lease. Prolonging the inevitable, she refused to budge even amidst the mayhem of

construction. It was not long before Phyllis would look out her front door and see construction workers using the porta-potty in the rubble of the courtyard. “Everything smelled like a sewer,” she recalls, “and there was a cloud of dust everywhere:”

Can you imagine? I’m there all by myself living in piles of dirt, and dust, and noise. One night I heard noises outside. I was scared. I couldn’t sleep. So I called the police. They come with a flashlight and Greg Perleman [CEO of WCP] had to come over. He had the nerve to chew me out screaming, ‘How dare you call a policeman?’ And I yelled right back. ‘What are you talking about? I’m living here by myself, and I hear noises on both sides of me. You have workers working at midnight. Don’t you ever say that you’re upset with me! I’m upset with you!’

The last straw, however, came one rainy night when Phyllis took a spill and seriously injured her ankle.

It was obvious that they just wanted me to move out. There were no cautions taken. There were no sidewalks anymore. I had to walk in the mud and they cut the lights from the lampposts. It was crazy! That’s when I decided to sue... I wanted to show Walnut Capital that they just couldn’t take advantage of people in that way and that it wasn’t the honorable thing for them to do... You know, all the wonderful years of enjoyment living in The Court was soured by that one year that they tried to step all over me.

With her lawsuit filed, Phyllis escalated her search for housing in Squirrel Hill where she had lived the entirety of her life. “It was my house and my neighborhood that defined me,” protested Phyllis, and I was in danger of losing both.”

Phyllis’ sense of her impending loss is consistent with longstanding qualitative studies that have investigated the relationships between aging and place and the critical role that home plays in sustaining a sense of personal identity for aging



adults.<sup>171</sup> Physically, socially, and emotionally habituated to *court-ordered living* over the better part of her lifetime and to Squirrel Hill since birth, Phyllis was a prime candidate for *root shock*. Unable to afford housing in the only neighborhood she had ever known, Phyllis was forced into the ranks of a particularly fragile demographic—female seniors living in communities experiencing gentrification.<sup>172</sup> Beyond location, Phyllis was also concerned about finding a space large enough to accommodate several treasured pieces of furniture and a baby grand piano that she was loath to part with. But with time running out, Phyllis finally settled on a small apartment just a few blocks away from The Court that was beyond her long-term means but provided temporary shelter as she continued her house hunt. Regrettably, it was the end of the road for some of Phyllis’ prized possessions that she begrudgingly abandoned in a state of last-minute frenzy. As she shared with me photos dating to her years at Beacon Gardens, Phyllis became increasingly distressed. “See this chair?” she pronounced as she pointed at photo in the album. It’s a Saarinen chair. It’s called the womb chair. I loved that chair. Do you know what I did with it? I put it in the dumpster along with the Paul McCobb sofa. That’s how crazy I was to get out of there. I was just one big ball of anxiety. I just didn’t know what to do.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> See Hartman, 1979 and Petrovic, 2007.

<sup>172</sup> See Newman and Wyly, 2006. They argue that seniors, in particular, find it difficult to remain in the gentrifying city when housing prices increase while their sources of income do not.

<sup>173</sup> Place is described as humanized space to which people bond emotionally, creating the experience of *insideness*. “Place exists at different scales... a favorite armchair to homeland to the whole earth (see Yi-Fu Tuan *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, 2001: 149). For the relationship between how people decorate their homes, both inside and out, to communicate who they are also see Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Rapoport, 1982; Despres, 1991).

Phyllis spent the next several years living a nomadic existence, moving out of her small apartment and in with her adult children, only to move out again into various short-term rentals. Eventually, Phyllis was forced to come to terms with the fact that she could not continue to live in the community that defined her. “I was so attached to Squirrel Hill,” repines Phyllis.

You don’t need a car. You can walk everywhere. There are buses everywhere. I knew so many people. It was my home. It was the only place I knew. But after looking around for a few years, I had to be realistic and look someplace else... It was three years before I finally settled on something, and it wasn’t in Squirrel Hill. One day I just walked into this place that my realtor found, and I said, ‘I’ll take it.’ I was nuts. At my age what was I going to do? I thought I could never move out of the neighborhood [Squirrel Hill], but I did.

Uprooted from a community and a way of life that she has been unable to replicate since her departure from Beacon Gardens, Phyllis continues to feel like “a stranger” in the neighborhood where she now resides.<sup>174</sup> Stripped of her status as Beacon Gardens’ veteran insider and the ontological security that *court-ordered living* facilitated, Phyllis remains largely anonymous in her new neighborhood.<sup>175</sup> Although she has tried to make the best of her current circumstances, Phyllis admits to a sense of alienation that looms just beneath the surface:

I’ve moved on, but it’s all still there subconsciously. You read an article or something surfaces, like you asking to interview me. You start to remember how wonderful it was living there [Beacon Gardens]. I mean just talking with you reminds me of how wonderful it was. When I left there, I really was angry. After living there for 34 years to have someone tell me that I can’t do

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<sup>174</sup> For more on place-identity and the aging see Graham D. Rowles, “Place And Personal Identity In Old Age,” *Appalachia. Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 3 ((1983), 299-313.

<sup>175</sup> See Ann Dupuis, David C. Thorns, Home, “Home Ownership, And The Search For Ontological Security,” *The Sociological Review* 46.1 (Feb. 1998), 24–47. The authors argue that home can provide a locale in which people can work at attaining a sense of ontological security in a world that at times is experienced as threatening and uncontrollable, a concern especially for the elderly.

that anymore and erasing everything that was so familiar and second nature. I still feel that way sometimes. Why did they make me leave? Why did they make me leave?

Karin was also thrown off kilter following her forced relocation from Beacon Gardens, despite the fact that she and her husband have lived there past eight years just a few blocks away from The Court in a comfortable upper-level duplex. “It’s so different living here than Beacon Gardens,” expounds Karin.

When we first moved there [Beacon Gardens], people came over and introduced themselves. They just knocked on the door. You know, people were interested in knowing who their neighbors were. When we moved in here [her current residence], I just felt as if suddenly we were totally isolated. I mean, like we we’re very social people, but there’s just no place to sit outside and just hang out with other people. People go in and out of their air-conditioning, and there’s a disconnect. I don’t know. No one ever bothered to knock on our door and introduce themselves. We actually went over to the two houses directly up the street from us to introduce ourselves. Like, ‘we’re your new neighbors.’ And they were very like standoffish. And they just seemed kind of suspicious of us. Like, ‘why are you here?’ ‘Well, we don’t want anything from you. We’re just saying hello.’ That was really a shock after The Court.

Queenie, who was desperate to keep Mac in the Squirrel Hill school district where he had been enrolled since kindergarten, was ready to pay significantly more for less just to stay in the neighborhood. “I found this half of a duplex a block from Alderdice [the local high school],” recounts Queenie.

It was owned by an elderly woman who lived in the other half. And I mean it was quite a leap in price from Beacon Gardens, even though it was smaller. We went from a 3 bedroom really big place to a place that was probably less than half the size. And the neighborhood was not particularly friendly. I mean it was culture shock in a way because all of us were friends at Beacon Gardens, and even if we weren’t friends, we were acquaintances who knew each other. That sense of community, people watching out for each other, was completely gone.

Queenie's travails were further exacerbated when her landlady died shortly after she and Mac had moved in, and the property was sold. "I got kicked out again," Queenie expounds:

So when I looked for my next place I kept asking everyone, 'do you think you might be selling anytime soon?' Yeah, I felt really vulnerable. By then I felt really motivated to buy a place, but things were getting more expensive all the time in Squirrel Hill. At that point I just had to be practical. Mac needed to finish at Alderdice [Squirrel Hill's high school]. So we moved to a place that was way inadequate. I mean, it's ridiculous the way we live. And I was worried all the time about the place getting sold, like when is this going to happen again?

Even Chris, a member of The Goth House, who was well compensated as a software engineer and unencumbered with dependents admits that he was "in shock," along with his neighbors.

I mean, there were a lot of people who were mad about what had come down, and there was just a lot of people that didn't know how they could be doing this to us. I still have strong feelings about what happened... When it all came down, I was a little panicked. I mean, we needed to find a new place. We had people that still wanted to live together, and I didn't want to leave the area because I liked living in Squirrel Hill.

Although Chris did find a house for himself and one of his Beacon Garden roommates to rent in a court-like complex just a few blocks away from The Court, Wightman Place [Figs. 33 & 34], his residency was short-lived. Within the year, WCP's purchased that property as well, renewing in Chris a rage that dated back to his earlier eviction from Beacon Gardens. All of Chris' frustrations came out in the ongoing saga of his "trampled garden," a story that he shared with me exuding such intense emotions, almost as if it had happened yesterday:

Early May, like the week we got the eviction letters from Beacon Gardens, I had just planted a garden. I didn't care that much about gardens at that point, but you know, I said, 'Hey! I have a little strip of land that's just a few feet by

a few feet, and no one will step on it because no one goes back there. So I planted some stuff there: some tomatoes, some okra, some peppers, and stuff like that. And then the letters came, and I was like, 'okay, we're going to have to leave soon, but, you know, I'll at least have the plants to take with me.' But they turned around and destroyed my garden. One of the workers just turned around and trampled everything I had planted. I mean, up until then it was just sort of like 'this is the capitalist process at work. It sucks! But, you know, this is how it goes.' But when they trampled my garden, that was sort of like adding insult to injury, and I became so angry. If they had just left it alone, I would have dug everything up and replanted it wherever I moved. And I really, really, believe that that's a big reason why having a garden has become so important to me. They set off a trigger when they destroyed something I had created and that really mattered to me [Fig. 56].

Chris' "trampled garden story" ironically does not end with his departure from Beacon Gardens. Uprooting what little survived of his flattened crops to replant in transportable garden containers, Chris relocated his newly potted plants to a small window balcony off his new house at Wightman Place. Regrettably, Chris' miniature garden was also destined for destruction by WCP.

Within the year, the Wightman properties were also purchased by WCP and mayhem, once again, set in. Much to Chris's dismay, what remained of his salvaged vegetable garden was shortly thereafter flattened again—this time by slate dust that poured from the roof as workers began construction on the site without prior notification to the tenants. "I just couldn't believe that it was happening all over again," decried Chris.

And so I called and I said 'what were you people thinking?' ... I was so mad, I actually went down to the Walnut Capital offices, and it was like they treated me like scum... So when we started looking for a new place, every landlord that I talked to I said 'have you've been approached by Walnut Capital? Do you have any plans to sell to Walnut Capital? What do you think of Walnut Capital? The place where we finally moved we picked partly because it was really nice and partly because it was the kind of place that Walnut Capital would never buy. It was a large single Victorian that had been broken into apartments, and we figured given their MO that they would never buy something like that.



**Fig. 56. The trampled garden (photograph by Felice Scott)**

For Sarah the sense of personal violation and indelible loss was also still palpable in the spring of 2007 when I visited her and Andy in San Francisco:

The feeling that you're being kicked out, that whole feeling of being evicted. It's different for people who choose to move, because you can plan for it. You're in control. But when you're given such a short time to get out of your house, you're in 100% crisis mode. They might as well have stormed into my bedroom and started tearing through my underwear drawer. Like going through my most private papers and possessions. It's a very invasive feeling when you have no control over your situation.

Prior to moving to California, Andy and Sarah relocated to a neighborhood not far from Squirrel Hill, setting up house in an upper level apartment that had many redeeming qualities but was not really a substitute for Beacon Gardens. "To tell you

the truth, we were spoiled by living in Beacon Gardens because it had so much space and there were so many great things about it,” remarks Andy. While he still has warm feelings about the “good years” at Beacon Gardens, Sarah’s memories remain bittersweet. Although she and Andy have made a life as successful artists in San Francisco where then now live, they have not completely recovered from what they consider “the trauma” of displacement. Andy confesses that, “the whole Beacon Garden experience did kind of scar us. When we got evicted, the band broke up. You know we were all thrown in different directions. It was just the end of an era.” Sarah agrees with Andy’s assessment, although for her the experience was even more heart wrenching:

The Beacon Garden thing! All the trouble of fighting about the parking lot! Seeing all the trees cut down! Feeling the pain! Going to all the historic preservation meetings, one after the other. It took its toll. I was kind of ready to leave Pittsburgh after all that.

During the summer months of 1999, as Beacon Garden tenants were uprooted from their homes, the HRC continued to collect data and hold meetings. WCP, although resistant to the “stranglehold” of historic designation, was compelled to reach a compromise with the HRC regarding the design of the parking lot given that temporary designation was in place. Rather than paving the entirety of the central green space, it was agreed that a portion towards the rear would be converted into a common area.<sup>176</sup> While Walnut Capital and the HRC were able to come to terms on a design, the reconfiguration that was agreed upon meant that the parking lot would have to extend further towards the street without encroaching on the sidewalk and

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<sup>176</sup> The revised map for the Beacon Gardens’ parking lot, dated August 26, 1999, is located in the files of the Pittsburgh HRC.

without reducing the allotted number of parking spaces mandated by city code. Hence began a power struggle between the department of city planning, the department of public works, and the department of zoning, deflecting attention away from other preservation goals and creating a bureaucratic nightmare that resulted in a less than desired outcome.<sup>177</sup>

In the final analysis, almost two thirds of entire courtyard was felled, leaving only a diminished portion fronting the rear units to stand in as a commons. By year's end, The Pittsburgh History and Landmark Foundations' newsletters characterized the newly appointed Beacon Common as an eyesore, proclaiming:

What was once a wonderful example of group cottages by one of Pittsburgh's most renowned architects, now in the cold of winter looks like a suburban complex. The 13 trees that were in the center courtyard have been removed, new aluminum windows and smooth as opposed to raked, mortar joints, adds to the loss of texture."<sup>178</sup>

Terry Necciai, who concurred with the History and Landmark Foundation, provided me with a more nuanced post mortem of Beacon Gardens' when I had an opportunity to meet with him in Alexandria, VA where he is currently working as a preservation architect:

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<sup>177</sup> Stefanos Polyzoides et al (1992) point out that most, if not all, courtyard housing erected prior to the 1920s was built with no provisions for parking, rendering them obsolete by current zoning standards. The authors suggest that cities overcompensate for the automobile today and question whether parking requirements are the best solution when they compromise quality of life. In alignment with Polyzoides is Morris Newman, a Los Angeles-based architect and journalist, advocates the need for urban code reform to better accommodate the requirements of courtyard housing. He calls for progressive architectural solutions to discourage "cut-rate," speculation that limits open spaces for tenants and disregards the importance of attractive streetscapes. Newman also emphasizes the need for a supportive political environment to boost acceptance of these ideas. See, "Courtyard Housing Revival," *Architecture Week*, (July 24, 2002), D1.1.

<sup>178</sup> "Demise of a Scheibler Complex," *Pittsburgh Historic Landmark Foundation Newsletter*, February 2000: 8.



The new aluminum windows they put in certainly fit the openings—but they ended up creating something that looked brand new. But what is really interesting is what they did to the bricks. When Hamilton Cottages was built, the bricks had been raked, which is technique of pressing the mortar back to the final pointing so that there is a recess of a quarter of an inch or a little more from the face of the brick to the mortar. And this creates shadow lines and makes the brick look a little bit antique. And I think they also used dyed mortar. All of this was meant to make Hamilton Cottages look older, a little dingy, even when it was brand new. Walnut Capital took one look at it and said, ‘oh the mortar is all worn in—we’re going to have to fill it in.’ And they turned around and filled it in, and it makes it look like something more like public housing. It’s just a totally different treatment of the same kind of a box. Once they filled in all those shadow lines, you’ve got a long row of plain brick that looks brand spanking new, and you’ve taken away all the character. So it was something really subtle that made a big difference. I mean it was something subtle enough that you really had to explain it to people that weren’t tuned in completely—but you didn’t have to explain it to the residents. They got it from just from living there.

As a bevy of bureaucrats deliberated over the thirteen large trees and the five smaller trees that would have to be removed to make room for the parking lot, support for a more inclusive preservation agenda fell by the wayside. Most significantly, however, was the absence of any concern among Pittsburgh’s policy makers regarding the “uprooting” of the tenants. Even given the unlikelihood that Beacon Gardens might have received historic protection, the tenants’ “bodies” had already been marked for clearance along with the 88 year old locust trees, a mandated deforesting that uprooted both the physical and social fabric of the complex irrevocably.<sup>179</sup>

Although Beacon Gardens’ older tenants and those with young children were the most vulnerable to long-term *root shock*, the younger tenants also experienced an enduring sense of loss. Sarah’s very first response to an email from me requesting an

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<sup>179</sup> See Walnut Capital Partners’ tree removal proposal in the files of the HRC.

interview opened with, “My heart still longs for Beacon Gardens.” Tom, who was friendly with most of the twenty-something set, understands this lingering sense of loss. “It may seem overly dramatic or hyperbolic,” he explains:

But you need to remember it was our youth. It wasn't just that we were young, but we were young in that amazing place in that time. So everything was bigger than life. We were bigger than life. It [Beacon Gardens] was conducive to that kind of 'me.' Yeah, it really was.

Although Tom himself confesses that by the time WCP came along he had already considered the possibility of buying a house of his own, he was still not quite ready to make that move. “I guess maybe I was sort of growing out of it [Beacon Gardens], and I was probably going to leave within a year or two:”<sup>180</sup>

I was working as a computer consultant, so I was making pretty good money. I could afford to live somewhere else. But I just kind of enjoyed living that life, and it was really by choice that I stayed there. I think you had a lot of people at Beacon Gardens who loved where they lived and really wanted to live there forever.

In actuality, interview statements from tenants confirm Tom's assumption:

- Oh, we would always go back to Beacon Garden. I mean, compared to where I live now, it's like apples and oranges. It's a similar kind of interior space, but it's not the same kind of community. I mean, we'd go back Beacon Gardens in a second if we could. I'd much rather raise my kid in a place where she can run wild and be free with other kids. (Karin)
- I was so disappointed when it ended. I would have just stayed there forever. It was just such an incredible blend of things and people. If Walnut Capital hadn't come along, we'd probably still be living in that same house today. (Felice)
- They did destroy a community, a little insular community that was sitting right there that is no more. I don't know if I can ever recapture that. It was such a great place. Socially it was the best place I lived, and I can't imagine anything being

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<sup>180</sup> Tom, along with several other young tenants employed in the technology sector, shared a sense of collective upward mobility. Unlike most of the tenants who were priced out of returning to the newly appointed Beacon Commons, Tom's preference for *court-ordered living* reflected a temporary lifestyle preference as opposed to a long-term commitment. Place theorists account for variations in the intensity of place-identity that may vary from individual to individual and change with the spatial transitions associated with different life stages (see Bonaiuto et al, 1996, and Feldman, 1990).

better. I wish we could just turn back time. I would be back in a heartbeat.  
(Queenie)

## Chapter Three: Hello, You're Welcome Here

It's a perfectly beautiful day for playing,  
Perfectly beautiful day for saying,  
"Hello, you're welcome here.  
It's a perfectly beautiful day.

Especially when friends like you come visiting,  
Friends like you who make us feel so special.  
Certain things start happening when you're visiting  
When we're together, we're certain to say.  
It's a perfectly beautiful day for playing.

*Fred Rogers, 1970*

### **"Two Degrees of Separation"**

The previous sections have illuminated the many ways in which the tenants of Beacon Gardens came to interact with their built-environment—what has been theorized as *court-ordered living*. Since buildings, much in the same ways as texts, exist largely in relation to one another, it is my contention that Beacon Gardens as a housing prototype is best understood within the context of its neighboring complexes. As sites that interacted one with the other, Squirrel Hill's courtyard complexes shared a free flowing socio-spatial ecosystem that nurtured not only a particular group identity but also a collective consciousness as well—a repository from which a more expansive narrative of *court-ordered living* and its loss can be drawn. Throughout my interviews, especially with the younger set—informants freely intermingled references to Beacon Gardens, Forbes Terrace, and Forbes Cottages, suggesting that the sense of place that these communities evoked was not site specific but rather overlapping and interpenetrating. Proshansky (1978) theorized that place-identity can transcend the relationship that a person or group has with a specific location and function "trans-spatially" for types of places that share common characteristics.

All built between 1911 and 1920, Squirrel Hill's courtyard complexes shared a certain communal predisposition that over the years nurtured an environment ripe for cross-pollination, especially for younger tenants whose inter-courtyard networks constituted a cultural landscape unto itself. Karin recalls just "hanging out" or "partying" at all three complexes. "You know, it was such an incestuous community," she laughs.

There was total overlap. Everyone knew everyone else, or if you didn't know someone, you knew their friends. I would say that the people who lived in the different courts were very likeminded. You know, it wasn't six degrees of separation. It was like maybe two degrees, if that.

Sarah, like Karin, draws strong connections between the multiple sites. "We were at home in all of those places," she muses. "We were constantly in and out visiting our friends, you know, trying to figure out our future in highly creative ways. I think we fed off of each other's energy." As a member of "Operation Re-Information," Andy best remembers the other complexes for the role they played in Pittsburgh's art and music scene:

We had a lot of our college friends who were artists or had bands living in those places [Forbes Terrace and Forbes Cottages], cause the places were huge and the basements were great for practice space. It was all very social. We all hung out together, so it was definitely a community-building thing.

Yeah, I knew a lot of the people over there [Forbes Terrace and Forbes Cottages]," affirms another Beacon Garden tenant:

That's where this story really takes off, because I used to go to parties over there all the time when I was in grad school. They [the tenants] tended to be on the creative side. So there were lots of musicians, but lots of people that were involved with the computer business too, and a lot of grad students. There were people over there doing all kinds of different things very much like Beacon Gardens.

Pat, a member of Beacon Gardens' Goth House, reels off a list of musicians and the names of the bands from Forbes Cottages. He notes that a couple of "the guys" who were living at The Cottages prior to its razing relocated just down the street to Wightman Place, maintaining a sense of connection to the surrounding courts as well as the immediate neighborhood. In fact, it was one of the draws that attracted Chris and Pat themselves to Wightman Place following their unsettling thirty-day notification to vacate Beacon Gardens. Although Wightman Place was not laid out as a courtyard complex per se, Chris nonetheless felt that there were real similarities between that site and "the real" courtyard complexes located nearby. "The way the Wightman units formed a right angle, like an L, created a feeling of enclosed space in the back where all the yards connected," explains Chris.

It was really conducive to socializing and helped you get to know your neighbors. The big adjoining porches on the front of the houses that were set back from the street also brought us together. So even though it wasn't really a courtyard, we did have a nice little community of people.

Wightman Place, however, only gained full status as a court-like community after outmovers from Forbes Cottages put it on the map as an alternative location in 1998. It was Beacon Gardens, Forbes Terrace, and Forbes Cottages whose cultural landscapes had intersected for well over a decade that constituted a socio-spatial triumvirate—an extended community distinct unto itself. "There was definitely as sense of solidarity that linked those courtyards," asserts Sallyann.

I had different friends who lived in one or another of the complexes at one time or another. I mean, even if I didn't know the people who were living there at the time, I knew a whole chain of people who lived there over time. Mark lived in a house at Beacon Gardens that Josh originally had, and he got it from another friend and so on. I mean, I knew the whole chain of friends who lived in that house. I think that it was because people that you knew

would also gravitate to that kind of housing. It almost was cult-like the way we were drawn to those places. We were like one big community.

Most of the younger tenants from Forbes Terrace that I had an opportunity to interview shared similar sentiments about the interconnectedness of Squirrel Hill's courtyard complexes. Interviews confirmed that the loss of Forbes Cottages in 1998 came as a deep blow to many of the residents of Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace alike, firstly because its razing sounded an early death toll for Squirrel Hill's active Indie music scene given the preponderance of noted musicians who were displaced, and secondly because it raised concerns about the future of Squirrel Hill's remaining courtyard communities and their shared cultural ecosystem.

Throughout the 1990s, Forbes Cottages and Forbes Terrace (located diagonally across the street from one another) were jointly considered to be the epicenter of Pittsburgh's thriving Indie music scene—housing such local bands as The Mud City Manglers, The Hendricks Trio, Anti-Flag, Storm & Stress, and Don Caballero. In fact, Forbes Avenue was on occasion referred to as Abbey Road, a reference to the iconic Beatles' album whose cover depicted the band members crossing the road outside London's Abbey Road Studios where many Beatles albums were recorded. In her book *Root Shock*, Mindy Fullilove sums up the intricate interconnectedness that exists within a given neighborhood and the probable repercussions that are likely to follow sudden disruptions to the community's socio-spatial ecosystem. Referencing the demise of Pittsburgh's and Chicago's jazz scenes following those cities' mid-century slum clearance projects, Fullilove describes how the delicate interplay

between “home, street, and club” was disrupted, forcing the jazz industry to find other venues for survival in Europe, Japan and academia:

All people—live in an emotional ecosystem that attaches us to the environment, not just as our individual selves, but as beings caught in a single, universal net of consciousness anchored in small niches we call neighborhoods or hamlets or villages. Because of the interconnectedness of the net, if your place is destroyed today, I will feel it hereafter. ...The idea that your hurt has an effect on my life requires us to believe in “action at a distance,” ... We now understand the seemingly impossible proposition that the flapping wings of a butterfly in Beijing could affect the weather in New York. It is from that perspective that we must view the ecosystem of emotions. *Root shock* rips emotional connections in one part of the globe, and sets in motion small changes... jazz musicians in search of a venue... that spread out across the world, shifting the direction of all interpersonal connections.<sup>181</sup>

Among the first to recognize the potential long-term repercussions of Forbes Cottages’ demolition and the dispersal of its pool of talented musicians was preservationist Sharyn Necciai and Forbes Terrace resident Gern Roberts who jointly improvised a plan to call attention to the plight of the complex. While its sister courtyards were not yet imperiled, Sharyn and Gern sensed that more was at stake than the loss of one Squirrel Hill courtyard complex. Concerned that Forbes Cottages might just be the first in a longer list of targeted sites, they staged an onsite art installation, performing an all night vigil to protest the impending demolition. “We made a mock memorial,” recalls Sharyn [Figs. 57 & 58].

We wanted to get people’s attention in an interesting way, to really touch them so they would look at this courtyard and think ‘Why are they destroying this amazing place?’... We went to the Homewood cemetery dump and gathered silk plastic flowers and memorial banners that were really tacky and used them to create this crazy memorial. We kept lighting lots of little cheapie candles. It was Saturday night, you know, and we wanted the college kids who were getting out of bars, walking home laughing and staggering, to see our

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<sup>181</sup> “Fullilove, 2005: 17.



installation and be touched. I wanted them to understand what a loss it was to everyone in the community, that we needed to preserve these little hubs of creativity...

Sharyn was keenly aware of the consanguinity between the courtyard complexes and the threat of loss to the whole extended family:

There was a similar cross section of people in these courtyard gardens: wild and crazy artists who were highly educated and very intelligent, but also some families and older people... It just seems that most of my friends lived in these terraces or courtyard gardens... Then, in a short period of time, I mean, within a couple of years, you could watch it happening—boom, boom, boom—these little clusters of houses were all of a sudden facing a changing future. I gave everything that I had to try and save them. But once one was gone, it just seemed like there was no going back. It was like a house of cards that just came tumbling down.

Indeed, just a year after the razing of Forbes Cottages, WCP's purchase of Beacon Gardens sent shock waves throughout the collective landscape. Sallyann, who as previously mentioned was an intern at the Department of City Planning Department living at Forbes Terrace, immediately stepped into the fray in the hopes of facilitating communications between the new landlords and the soon-to-be displaced tenants. Prepared to act as a mediator at the infamous meeting that took place between the Beacon Gardens tenants and WCP, Sallyann was derailed by the highly charged emotional climate that made mediation near impossible. "I was an intern in City Planning at the time, and I had a pretty good idea what the rules were," affirms Sallyann. But they [WCP] don't play by the rules:



**Fig. 57. The Forbes Cottages memorial assembled from the cemetery's trash heap (photograph by Sharyn Frederick)**



**Fig. 58. The remains of Sharyn and Gern's protest at Forbes Cottages (photograph by Sharyn Frederick)**

I remember Todd Reidbord pushing my friend Sarah over the edge, and at one point she just had to walk away because she was shaking and in tears. I remember Andy going after her because she was so upset... Here I was this stupid 23 year old who thought that maybe I could do something to help, but things were way out of control by the time I became involved.

Sallyann was more successful serving as a resource for Beacon Garden tenants, informing them of their rights and providing emotional support. She takes particular satisfaction in the fact that she was able to help Felice and her family secure a URA [Urban Redevelopment Authority] loan to purchase a home. “I felt really connected to that community [Beacon Gardens],” asserts Sallyann, “and I did whatever I could to help out.”

Not only were Squirrel Hill’s courtyard complexes linked socio-spatially, but a handful of peripatetic individuals felt sufficiently at home in each of the complexes to migrate from one community to the next as opportunities and changing life circumstances arose. Dan, a graduate of CMU in rhetorical theory who currently works in multimedia and facility design, lived at various times in one or another of Squirrel Hill’s courtyard complexes. “Yeah, I lived in a lot of those places,” he laughs.

I lived in The Cottages [Forbes Cottage]. I lived in The Terrace. I even sublet a summer place at Kamin Cottages<sup>182</sup>—you know the ones right across from Beacon Cottages—so I almost lived there [at Beacon Gardens] too. And I had friends who went through the same kind of migration as me. I mean, I think Tim Williams [a well-known Pittsburgh musician] may have lived in all of those places.

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<sup>182</sup> Kamin Cottages is a sequestered courtyard complex accessible only by a steep flight of steps ascending from Beacon Street. The houses are privately owned, although there are always several that are available for rent.

Even those who claimed to have had a decided preference for their own courtyard community still reported having a special affinity for their neighboring enclaves. This became apparent when informants from both Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace expressed a shared sense of pride in one particular household at Forbes Cottages affectionately known as “The House of DUH”—a large unit that served as the home and practice space for the nationally famed Don Cab Band<sup>183</sup> [Fig. 59]. In the days immediately before Forbes Cottages was leveled, fans of the band living in neighboring courtyards took doors, mailboxes, and other architectural elements from the house as souvenirs of both the band and the complex itself. Informants regaled me with stories and even photos that documented how the history of the band had been preserved through material that was salvaged from the soon-to-be razed structure, most particularly doors inscribed with sections of the bands large musical catalogue. That these scraps of a memorabilia are still highly valued by their owners attests to the extent to which the aggregate community retains a sense of collective pride in a shared cultural landscape that is now defunct.

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<sup>183</sup> Don Caballero is a rock group from Pittsburgh affectionately called "Don Cab" or "The Don" by fans. Formed in the summer of 1991, the group released five albums between 1993 and 2000 and then disbanded in November 2000.

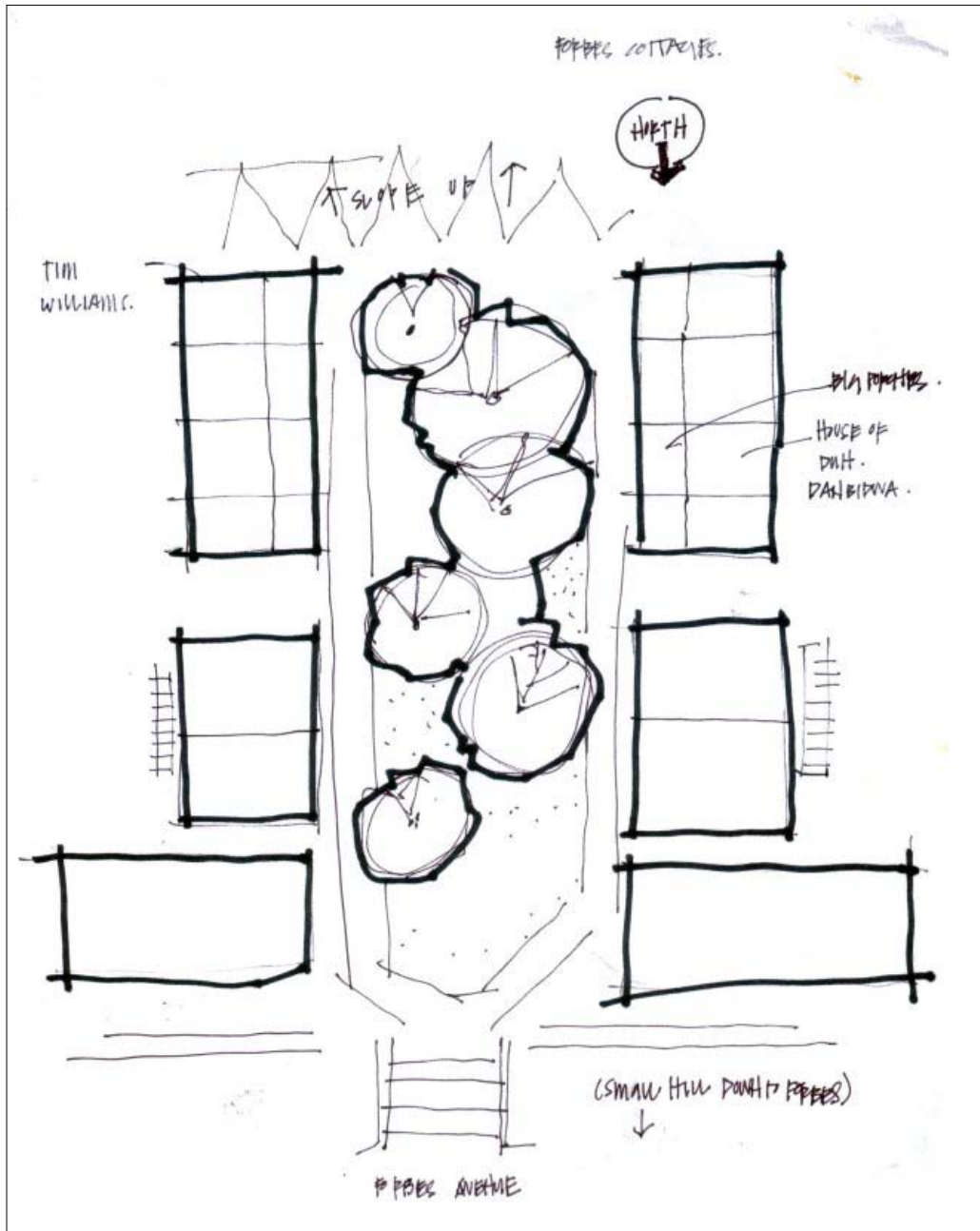


Fig. 59. An impromptu drawing of the Forbes Cottage site design by Sallyann (a prior resident of Forbes Terrace and architect in Pittsburgh's Department of City Planning). Notice that she has indicated the 'House of Duh'

In all, Squirrel Hill's young courtyard denizens were intertwined in such an intimate sense of communal place-identity that damage to one complex reverberated throughout the others. Recalling the day when Beacon Gardens' central commons was demolished, one of the tenants from Forbes Terrace shared with me the following eyewitness account [Fig. 60]:

I remember standing on the sidewalk and watching them cut down all those trees. People were just watching in horror from the street, completely dumbfounded. I felt very sad that day and totally helpless. It was almost like a funeral. I was thinking that this is happening to them, but we could be next. Anyway you look at it, it was a huge loss.



**Fig 60. The razing of Beacon Gardens central courtyard to make room for a parking lot (photographer Sharyn Frederick)**

## PART 2: FORBES TERRACE

### Chapter Four: A Place of Our Own

A Place Of My Own  
I like to have a place of my own—  
A step on a staircase, a drawer or a chair,  
A corner, a spot anywhere,  
A place I can call my own.

*Fred Rogers, 1970*

#### “The Crown Jewels”

Forbes Terrace as a case study serves as a comparative model to Beacon Gardens, providing a broader perspective on *court-ordered living* and the displacement process as it played out among neighboring courtyard complexes in Squirrel Hill. The tenants of Forbes Terrace, unlike their Beacon Garden counterparts, experienced two stages of displacement. The first stage was anticipatory and took place over the several years immediately prior to WCP’s acquisition of the property. Beginning around 1998, around the same time that Forbes Cottages was razed, several tenants made a preemptive decision to move on their own volition rather than wait to be “kicked out.” Although this response to the threat of impending displacement falls under the general umbrella of Marcuse’s definition of “displacement pressure,” it differs sufficiently to earn its own classification as a distinct pattern of relocation—what I have named *anticipatory displacement*. Marcuse describes “displacement pressure”



as the dispossession suffered by poor and working-class families during the dramatic transformation of the neighborhoods in which they live.<sup>184</sup> *Anticipatory displacement*, as it unfolded at Forbes Terrace, was not a response to “dramatic” changes in a “poor or working-class neighborhood” but rather a subtle alert system that specific “devalORIZED” sites were likely to be targeted for gentrification in an otherwise stable middle to upper-middle class neighborhood.

There were multiple factors that propelled *anticipatory displacement*. The first was predicated on chatter in the community about the near certainty that a change in ownership was imminent and a suspicion that the complex would either be razed for new construction or remodeled for a more upscale clientele. Forbes Terrace as well as Wightman Place were considered “the crown jewels” of an extensive portfolio of properties that dated back to developer Thomas A. Watkins who had amassed a real estate empire in Squirrel Hill during the first quarter of the twentieth century. His will had stipulated that his properties were to go into a trust and not be sold until 21 years after the death of his last child at which time the trust was to be liquidated and the money dispersed to the surviving heirs. It was commonly known among the tenants at Forbes Terrace that the trust would be finalized in 2000 and that the fate of the complex was questionable. The property had for years suffered from benign neglect due to the indifference of 26 Watkins heirs who drew regular income from the estate without allocating a sufficient portion of their profits for routine upkeep. In that the owners were perceived as absentee landlords who were disinterested in maintaining their property paradoxically facilitated a proprietary air among the tenants in much

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<sup>184</sup> Marcus, 1999.

the same manner as was reported by tenants at Beacon Gardens. Despite the ongoing deterioration of the built environment, the majority of Terracites (a nickname used by those living at Forbes Terrace) expressed overall satisfaction with their housing, having invested considerable sweat equity in their homes as well as valuable social capital in the community.

Yet as the year 2000 drew near, a handful of tenants began to express concern over the site's precarious future, creating a hypersensitized climate that translated into a desire for homeownership. For many of the younger tenants, especially those who had just started families or were planning to do so in the near future, the pressure to find affordable housing took hold as early as 1998 when the demolition of Forbes Cottages contributed to a slow but steady exodus from The Terrace. Among those who were identified as stage one displacees, few were able to find reasonably priced housing in Squirrel Hill and were forced to look elsewhere—predominantly in nearby working-class and African American communities that were ironically ripe for gentrification.<sup>185</sup> While stage one could be perceived as voluntary relocation and therefore not technically displacement per se, it became evident from my interviews with early outmovers that their accelerated departures were to a large degree precipitated by the uncertainty of living on a figurative “fault line” and that tenants would have much preferred to have remained at Forbes Terrace had the units been made available for purchase.

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<sup>185</sup> The East End neighborhoods that became the target destinations for the art-based community of displacees are Friendship, Bloomfield, Lawrenceville, and Garfield (see map in Appendix B, Fig. i).

Further accelerating the impetus for relocation among The Terrace residents was the 1999 acquisition of Beacon Gardens by WCP and the prospect that a similar fate was likely to befall Forbes Terrace. There were those tenants, however, who held out hope that a different fate awaited them. Even as friends and neighbors moved away and the social fabric of The Terrace began to slowly show signs of unraveling, long-term residents and Terrace diehards continued to resist relocation. It was not until WCP had finalized its purchase of Forbes Terrace and informed all of the residing tenants that their leases would not be extended that the second stage of displacement commenced.

While the two-stage displacement model that emerged from the Forbes Terrace case study begs further comment that will be addressed in later sections, it is first necessary to provide a broader context for analysis through the juxtaposition of everyday life in The Terrace with the empirical data already parsed from the research on Beacon Gardens. Having once established a comparative model suggesting the tenor of *court-ordered living* as it was experienced in Squirrel Hill's non-contiguous enclaves during the last decade of the twentieth century, I will proceed to explore the displacement process as it unfolded for both complexes across time and place on a scale from self to community.

### **“I Just Liked The Whole Feeling Up There”**

The expression *up there* was a descriptive that surfaced so frequently during my interviews with Forbes Terrace's displaced tenants that it almost substituted as

another name for the complex. The terracing of the court and its surrounding units above Forbes Avenue, a main artery from Oakland into the business center of Squirrel Hill, provided tenants with a sense of privacy that promoted neighborliness in much the same way that the rubblestone wall created *that nestled feeling* for Beacon Gardens.’ If anything, even greater privacy was assured by The Terrace’s near total removal from the street. During the course of interviewing prior residents of Forbes Terrace, I was struck by the degree to which their accounts of *court-ordered living* mirrored those of Beacon Gardens’ displaced tenants. This applied to informants from both stages of displacement, including seven tenants representing stage one whom I met with in a group setting<sup>186</sup> as well as six residents from stage two whom I interviewed individually. Gern, a young man of many talents who held the position of marketing director for Pittsburgh Filmmakers, the nation's oldest and largest independent media arts center, had the following to say about The Terrace:

It was kind of a neat little quirky community of people. There were a bunch of 20 or 30 something people in college or just out of college that lived *up there*, but there was also Mrs. Johnson who was 90 something who had lived at The Terrace for 50 years. She would come outside and walk her dog everyday and she had these really great stories to tell. And then there were people like Vinnie who was around 40 and had been there for maybe 20 years who was friendly with Mrs. Johnson. We had a kind of garden club. There was also a family from Africa who I got to know. You know, there was something about that kind of mingling that was really enriching, having all these different people living in this little community.

The general sentiment among Terracites regarding the quality of life at Forbes Terrace was near unanimously positive. “I mean people really helped one another,”

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<sup>186</sup> This meeting was orchestrated by stage-one displacee Sallyann who suggested that we meet as a group over brunch, volunteering to host the event at her house. She was very excited at the prospect of reuniting with her fellow Terracites.

emphasizes Sandra, a single mother of two adolescents and primary caretaker for her handicapped brother. “I could have called on any one of my neighbors to help any time. There’s just no question in my mind.” While Sandra was an attorney by profession, she had been forced to piece together several part-time jobs after she relocated from New Mexico to Pittsburgh in the early nineties to help nurse her brother through a kidney transplant—a procedure that unfortunately proved unsuccessful. Because her brother continued to have special needs, Sandra was particularly appreciative of both the physical and social fabric of The Terrace:

There was a young minister who lived with his family in The Terrace who really looked after my brother. He [the minister] held bible classes in his house and all my brother had to do was to walk up the path and he could be there. The minister also would take him to church, which really was a godsend for me. He was on dialysis at the time, and I was working a lot just trying to keep my head above water. It was just such a great place for him and a really big help for me.

All of the tenants interviewed reminisced about the spirit of “collaborative living” that they experienced while living at The Terrace. “I think the landscape actively worked to bring us together and create a strong sense of community,” posited Dan. Nearly everyone recalled how kids and adults alike would rush to help carry Mrs. Johnson’s groceries, a diminutive nonagenarian who was somewhat of a cult figure for Terrace denizens. In general, neighbors were quick to pitch in and help one another without “keeping score.” One resident in particular is remembered with gratitude, a medical resident named Brad who lived in The Terrace with his wife and twin offspring. Brad was The Terrace’s de facto doctor—a literal “lifesaver” for many of the tenants without health insurance. “I remember that Brad would do free exams for us,” Sallyann recalls appreciatively.

He would diagnose people and even write prescriptions. I remember when my roommate had a really bad case of bronchitis and he took care of her. It was really great because a lot of us just didn't have money to run to the doctors with every little problem.

Bob Carpenter—a project planner who lived at The Terrace with his wife Amy, an attorney who worked for the city—reminisced about the informal barter system that was common practice at The Terrace:

A neighbor who worked at a bakery kept us supplied with bread. I would make like batches of hot sauce, and I'd give him some, and he'd give me several loaves of bread. We were always just trading things. It was just little funny things like that which comes to mind thinking back about how great a place it was to live.

“Even gardens were shared,” emphasizes Sallyann:

Our house was at the top of the slope, so we had full southern exposure in the front. So we planted heavily there, but I also planted some stuff near Gern's house. And then Gern planted all around 12, which was the one next to our house. He planted everywhere. It was like, “you're not using x, y, or z piece of land. Can I use it? Sure, why not?” And then there was usually a tradeoff like a piece of artwork for a regular supply of vegetables.

In fact, Sallyann drew parallels between her experiences living in a cooperative in Denmark and the experience of *court-ordered living* at The Terrace:<sup>187</sup>

The year that I moved in, which was 94, I had just come back from living for a year in Denmark where, you know, co-housing is the big thing in city in terms of community living. But that was one of the models for living, and The Terrace had that same feeling to it. I wouldn't say that I specifically moved there because of that. I moved there because my friends were there, but I did come into it feeling like, 'oh this is like co-op and has that aspect of it with the communal sensibility.'

“It was that sharing thing,” conveys another tenant who tries to recapture for me the essence of *court-ordered living* at Forbes Terrace:

Someone would have a washer and dryer. Someone else didn't but had a car or a grill. Everything was up for grabs. I mean we just traded things

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<sup>187</sup> See Dolores Hayden's mention of co-housing in Denmark in *Designing The American Dream*, 2002: 177.

constantly. A piano here, a bike there. There was this real sense of collaborative living. We even had communal pets. It was just understood that we shared and shared alike.

Much in the manner of Beacon Gardens, The Terrace was a “pet-friendly” environment. “I would say that it was really part of the whole community experience,” emphasizes one of The Terrace’s many pet lovers. “Even Mrs. Johnson had Allie,” she laughs.

I mean here was this was this tiny little old lady, not even 4’10”, with this huge golden retriever. You’d hear her yelling ‘Allie, Allie’ and the dog would be all the way across the commons. It was really comical. But there was always someone around to help out when Allie took off.

Bob, conjuring up a familiar scene from his Forbes Terrace days, describes sitting in his living room on many a summer day when “all of sudden you’d have a pack of dogs running through the house. They’d just push open the screen door and chase each other around the house. They weren’t just any dogs. They were really more like community dogs.” Roaming cats were also a familiar site at The Terrace. Sallyann credits the large feline population of “Terrace kittens” to the complex’s reputation as a “cat friendly” community that would readily adopt homeless kittens.

People would just abandon young litters in the courtyard on purpose knowing that we’d take them in. And since there wasn’t any pet policy, it wasn’t a problem. “It was really a free for all. I mean, I’m not even sure if we ever signed a lease with them [the landlords]. The last thing they were worried about was the cats grazing on the lawn... It was just so easy to have a pet at The Terrace. You could go away without worrying because there were always neighbors who were happy to pet sit. And of course we would do the same in return.

In general, informants credited the strong sense of community to the central commons, further corroborating the principles of *court-ordered living* already

established from the Beacon Garden interviews. “You could walk out onto your lawn, but it wasn’t your lawn, it was everyone’s lawn,” exudes Sandra.

It was just such a welcoming place. People would have parties or open houses and we would all be invited. Children ran between the different places. I remember that our house was a kind of children’s lending library. I had all these books from when my daughter was a little girl and there was this one little girl in particular who would come over all the time and borrow them. Sometimes my daughter would sit and read to her. That’s the kind of place it was.

Parents of younger children concurred that Forbes Terrace was an “ideal” place to

raise children. “These days everybody is

scared to let your kids out alone,”

explains one young mother whose

daughter had the run of the court during

their tenancy from the mid to late 90s.

As a neighbor, we all have something important to give to our other neighbors. We may not even realize that we’re giving it, because our gift can be as simple as a smile or a wave of the hand.”

*Fred Rogers, 2003*

*The World According to Mister Rogers*

“Kids could just go outside anytime to play with their friends, and you really didn’t

have to worry too much about them.” The Terrace was also a familiar haunt for Fred

Rogers who would now and again take a stroll around The Terrace following Sunday

services at the Sixth Presbyterian Church that was located immediately around the

corner from Forbes Terrace. “He [Fred Rogers] used to walk into the courtyard after

church sometimes just to say hello and wave at everyone,” reminisces one Terracite.

He loved the gardens and the people sitting on their porches. It seemed to be just as

much a treat for him as it was for all of us.” Terrace residents considered Mister

Rogers to be part of their extended community and his spontaneous Sunday afternoon

visits a welcome addition to the everyday landscape of *court-ordered living*. While it

was unusual for an outsider to intrude on the privacy of the insular commons of

Forbes Terrace, Fred Rogers must have felt a special affinity for the quaint



community. His occasional promenade around the courtyard was understood by tenants as a tacit invitation—“Won’t You Be My Neighbor?”<sup>188</sup>

Extemporaneous socialization went hand in hand with *court-ordered-living*, especially in the summertime. “Sometimes I’d come home from work when it was really hot outside and someone would pull out one of the kiddie pools, and we’d fill it up with cold water and buckets of ice,” recalls Sallyann.

And everyone would pull their chairs around and put their feet in and sip on a cold beer. Sometimes you might just be sitting on your couch and someone would put on a radio or stereo in the window and everyone would just come outside to just sort of hang out. Other times we’d hear someone through the walls in the kitchen making noise, and you’d call over ‘what are you making?’ And I’d say, ‘well I’m making such and such, and if we put it together we can make a really nice dinner.’ And then we’d call someone else to come over. It was just such a great thing because it wasn’t planned. It was totally spontaneous.

“People really got to know each other,” recalls Gern. “There was lots of different stuff going on that I remember, but I would have to say that the Sunday brunches were a really big part of the community.” Sallyann, a regular participant in the Sunday morning get-togethers savors memories of what she describes as “the traveling brunch.”

Since we lived so close to the Squirrel Hill shopping district, it was really easy to just run down the street and get bagels or whatever. And someone else would get the Sunday Times or bring a tray of coffee. And somehow or another we would just all get together and have this communal brunch. We never knew exactly which house we’d wind up at. It would just somehow come together.

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<sup>188</sup> According to The Terrace grapevine, Fred Rogers’ son was a close friend with Mark and Becky, a young couple living at Forbes Terrace in the mid 1990s. Mark and Becky were frequent guests at the Rogers’ summer home in Nantucket, so there actually was a very intimate connection between the Rogers’ household and at least one family at Forbes Terrace.

Sallyann's nostalgia for this court ritual first became apparent when she suggested that our interview session take place at her house over Sunday brunch, and that she would attempt to assemble as many of her ex-neighbors as she possibly could. The link between social traditions and a group's strong emotional attachments to those places where the established traditions were constructed is supported by studies in place-identity, although it is also theorized that such relationships can not be reconstituted once displaced from their community of origin.<sup>189</sup> The six prior Terracites that arrived at Sallyann's with various baked goods and other brunch fare in hand were all tenants who had opted for stage one displacement, although a couple of stage two displacees had been invited but were unable to attend.<sup>190</sup> While most everyone had maintained ties to one another and to special friends who continued living in The Terrace for the year or two following their departures and confessed to having had a vested interest in the well-being of the complex and its tenants up until its swan song in 2000, few had continued to stay in contact once Forbes Terrace changed ownership and the sitting population had been dispersed.<sup>191</sup> Nor did I get the sense as the brunch disbanded and people made their farewells that the nostalgia-laden reunion had necessarily set a precedence for future get-togethers. In her book, *Root Shock*, Mindy Fullilove argues that,

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<sup>189</sup> See Tuan, 1974; Stokols and Jacobi, 1990.

<sup>190</sup> Although most of those contacted were eager to participate in the get-together, Sallyann was unable to find a Sunday morning that was convenient for all the invitees. Since I only traveled to Pittsburgh every few months, the timeframe was also limited by my schedule.

<sup>191</sup> The exception to this rule was residents whose friendships were predicated on relationships established outside of their tenancy at Forbes Terrace, namely those who had established a connection prior to taking up residency at The Terrace.

Root shock, at the level of the local community, be it neighborhood or something else, ruptures bonds, dispersing people to all the directions of the compass. Even if they manage to regroup, they are not sure what to do with one another. The elegance of the neighborhood—each person in his social and geographic slot—is destroyed, and even if the neighborhood is rebuilt exactly as it was, it won't work. The restored geographies are not enough to repair the many injuries to the mazeway.<sup>192</sup>

Beyond the tradition of “the traveling brunch” was yet another spontaneous social practice that one of the younger set described as “the moveable feast” [Fig. 61].



**Fig. 61. The “moveable feast” at Forbes Terrace (photograph by Sallyanne Klutz)**

Peter, a fine arts graduate student at CMU, explained that parties at The Terrace had a tendency to morph together as revelers from one household were drawn into the vortex of their neighbor's concurrent festivities. Recollecting one party in particular, Peter shared with me the following story:

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<sup>192</sup> Fillilove, 2005:14

I remember that there were a lot of Y2K New Years parties going on at The Terrace and they turned into one big party with everyone just moving from one house to the next. I'll never forget it because here we were all these characters partying together, and it was the new millennium and everyone was on guard with the Y2K scare.... Well most of us wound up together when it was near midnight. We had this big countdown 5, 4, 3, 2, 1—Happy New Year. And all of a sudden all the lights went out. I remember thinking that if it really was the end of the world that at least I was in my own element. As it turned out, there was a power outage in all of Squirrel Hill, but at the time we were all really spooked and all really relieved to be together.

“Movie-night” was still another community-building experience that was all the more special for its “spur of the moment” informality. “Sometimes in the summer we’d have one of those beautiful starlit evenings and it was like, ‘let’s have a movie night!’”

We would hang a screen between two of the big lampposts, and we’d unscrew the lanterns and attach some kind of adapters for the projector. Then we could all sit on the porch steps around that part of the court in theater style with popcorn and beer and watch films theater style. We didn’t do it all that often, but when we did, it was great. It’s a real good memory.

Courtyard celebrations of all kinds, including graduations, birthdays, holidays and other less ceremonious occasions inevitably became community events in a “come one, come all” spirit. For holidays, Gern would take on the task of decorating The Terrace with festive touches, especially at Halloween when he would hang gourds grown in his garden from the mature trees that were interspersed around the periphery of the courtyard. There were also community yard sales where, “we would sort of pitch in to help each other out or try to buy each other’s stuff.” Additionally, Forbes Terraces’ generous lawn sufficed as a playing field for pick-up games of kickball, Frisbee and a variety of other recreational games for kids and adults alike. This was

one of the main differences that set Forbes Terrace apart from Beacon Gardens where the uneven more densely wooded central commons was largely allocated to the children while adult activities were more often organized around the periphery of the courtyard or in grassy areas beyond the courtyard proper. Additionally, The Terrace's raised open porches added another dimension to *court-ordered living*. They mediated between the private realm of the house and the shared central commons, at the same time providing opportunities for intra-court interactions but also limiting socialization on occasions when privacy was desired [Fig. 62]. I will return to a discussion of this



**Fig. 62. Bob and Amy's tongue-in-cheek porch sign  
(photograph by Bob Carpenter)**

difference in site design in a later section that compares the two courtyard communities as they currently function following *revalorization*.

Overall the balance between public and private life at Forbes Terrace demonstrated the same natural equilibrium as already described by Beacon Garden tenants. "If you wanted company there was always someone around to talk to," confirms one resident who lived for seven years at The Terrace. "But if you just wanted to be in your own

world, nobody bothered you.” Even an informant who admitted to being less socially inclined than her more gregarious Terrace neighbors found the sense of community spirit to be contagious. “I’m a pretty insular person,” admitted Meagan:

I wasn’t looking to create a feeling of community when I moved to Forbes Terrace. You know, it just sort of happened. I guess you could say I just liked the whole feeling *up there*. I remember one day when I was really pregnant I was sitting on the porch on pillows waiting for my birth class. These people [new tenants] came by, and I didn’t really know them at the time. And they said, ‘oh, we just had a baby, and they told me about their birth experience and to do this and to do that. That really hit me. Here were these people whose names I didn’t even know who immediately felt comfortable talking to me in that way. I think the expectations of how people interacted *up there* was different because we were such an intimate community.

Although Terracites by and large attested to their deep appreciation for the community’s public arena, at least one interviewee did express a modicum of ambivalence:

In The Terrace you were either in your house or in the middle of everyone else’s life. So if you were having a nervous breakdown you couldn’t just hide it from everyone, which was both good and bad. It’s just the way it is. It’s a function of living in a tight-knit community—a kind of personality trait of a place like The Terrace... Sometimes I would intentionally go out my back door because I didn’t want to be trapped by this one neighbor who was always trying to flag me down with some problem or another. I mean, she was really a nice person, but getting caught in her net could at times be annoying. But it wasn’t really that big deal.

For the most part, however, conflicts between neighbors at Forbes Terrace were incidental, especially prior to stage one displacement. “My band might have caused some minor conflicts when we practiced there [in the basements unit],” admits Karl whose band—The Karl Hendricks’ Trio—is now a nationally recognized group that

has released seven albums.<sup>193</sup> “But no one ever called the police or freaked out over it. I can only remember one occasion on which I had words with a neighbor, and that had nothing to do with the band. Someone accused my cat of attacking her dog. ‘How dare you let your killer cat out!’ Those were the type of conflicts that I remember, and they were mostly humorous. No big deal.” Gregg, another Terrace musician, was founder of a band befittingly called The Working Poor; much to my amusement, his group recently released a CD called “Eat The Middle Class.”

Sallyann credits the “laidback” tenor of the garden complex for the sense of community accord:

The whole thing was that no matter who you were if you were ready to take part and be responsible you didn’t have to be someone who would have everyone over or do a lot of things. But if you were just like a considerate person living in close quarters with other folks there were no issues. You might have some little issue over something small, but you just worked it out without it becoming a major production.

Tenants also enjoyed the dual benefits of being situated in the heart of a neighborhood center while at the same time being what one tenant described as “almost cloistered.” Even as Beacon Gardens boasted an ideal location offering the distinct advantage of insularity amidst centrality, Forbes Terrace one-upped its sister courtyard situated as it was atop Squirrel Hill’s commercial epicenter:

You know, even though we were right in the middle of the city you didn’t have that crowded feeling. Once you walked up the steps into the court it was peaceful. You could get away from the hustle and bustle of Forbes and

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<sup>193</sup> See information on The Karl Hendricks Trio: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Karl\\_Hendricks\\_Trio](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Karl_Hendricks_Trio) (accessed Aug.26, 2010). While researching this band, I was intrigued to discover that two brothers, Jake and Noah Leger, were drummers at different times for the group. The Leger family lived next door to me during my residence at Beacon Gardens.

Murray, but at the same time you weren't completely isolated. We had our own little community *up there*. I think that the whole Forbes Terrace setup had a lot to do with that. We really did have the best of both worlds.

The luxury of living at once in a “cloistered community” located within a neighborhood hub was particularly valued by those tenants with limited resources and/or special needs, as iterated by Sandra who took full advantage of the many amenities just beyond the staired entry to The Terrace:

What was great about our little community is that all you had to do was walk down the steps and you could go to the bank, you could walk to the post office, to the JCC [Jewish Community Center] across the street. You could do window-shopping—basically walk up the street to see what was going on—walk to the library. I mean, the people at Forbes Terrace, well a lot of them were in the creative field and they didn't have tons of money. And single moms and the elderly and the disabled, like my brother on dialysis, who had to watch their pennies could just go down and catch a bus or walk to the bank or walk to a grocery store. There were lots of coffee shops and little places, so I mean, you know, you didn't have to have a lot of money to feel like you had a life.

Although most of the tenants of Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace were far from indigent, there were a few occupants who lived with friends or family members rent free—a kindness that was possible based on the spaciousness of the units. Following displacement as extended families tried to squeeze into much smaller dwellings, it was not always possible to keep entire households intact. Sandra's brother, still on dialysis and with few resources, had no alternative but to move into a church member's basement.

Veteran Terracite Mrs. Johnson, despite her age, was fortunately not in the same position of vulnerability as some of her neighbors when she received her notice to vacate her unit. While Mrs. Johnson had served in a comparable role to that of Phyllis



in the decades prior to displacement—acting as the community historian and providing a sense of stability for successive generations of Terracites—her post-displacement narrative took a very different direction than that of her Beacon Garden counterpart. Having witnessed significant changes in the demographics of The Terrace over her forty-seven years of residence—from predominantly nuclear families of academics and other professionals to a greater percentage of young artists and students—she was prepared psychologically and financially to accommodate another changing of the guard.<sup>194</sup> However, Mrs. Johnson was unwilling to let WCP get the best of her when it came to haggling over the steep increase in the new rents. According to The Terrace grapevine, she “played hardball,” with the developers, retaining an attorney who negotiated a lifetime lease for her that was below market value.<sup>195</sup> Making arrangements to return to her same unit following WCP’s *revalorization* of Forbes Terrace, Mrs. Johnson temporarily moved into her summer home until the major construction had been completed. Although the feisty nonagenarian was not ultimately displaced from The Terrace, she nevertheless felt disheartened for her many neighbors who would not be returning. “I don’t blame those kids for being upset,” she stated emphatically in a newspaper interview:

I’m afraid a lot of them won’t be able to afford the new rents. I’ll be sorry to lose them. All of these young people up and down the courtyard are lovely people. I’ve never met one who was disrespectful. They are some of the best neighbors I have ever had.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> See Deitch, 2000.

<sup>195</sup> It is not surprising that Mrs. Johnson was reluctant to leave her home after nearly five decades of residency. Multiple studies have indicated that places are enmeshed in a person’s identity, particularly when he or she has lived there for many years and especially for the elderly (see Fried, 1963; Stokols et al, 1982; Giuliani and Feldman, 1993).

<sup>196</sup> Deitch, 2000

Despite their near sixty year age difference, Gern and Mrs. Johnson shared a special friendship, bonding largely over their passion for gardening. Gern was mesmerized by Mrs. Johnson's tales of The Terrace's garden clubs that were active in prior years. "She would reminisce about the old garden clubs and what things were grown and how everyone was really into their gardens," explains Gern:

So when I started digging up my yard and found evidence of people who had planted there before, I got this really strong sense of being connected. It was like an archaeological dig. I found stonework and glasswork. I tried to incorporate all of it into my own garden because it was a part of Forbes Terrace's history, and I wanted to preserve that.

Nor was Gern the only young tenant to befriend Mrs. Johnson. "I remember Mrs. Johnson telling us stories about how The Terrace used to be filled with CMU professors," proclaims Sallyann. "They had their own little cocktail hour, which sounds very formal, but was probably not all that different from our keg parties." Sallyann, reflecting further on the continuity of The Terrace's social fabric over the years, explains how her particular unit contributed to a sense of community stability despite a frequent turnover of housemates:

There was a rotating cast of women who lived at our place over ten years or so, and they all had a very communally-oriented spirit. I mean, we didn't want just anyone to move in. It was like, 'I'm leaving and you're leaving, but let's find someone else who will fit in.' Now I'm talking about roommates, but it was that same kind of mentality when any vacancies became available in The Terrace... Most of us felt as if it were our home as opposed to just a house. So even though we were all renters, we felt like we were long-term folks. And when likeminded people moved in, they instantly felt like long-term residents too.

This passing of the community torch to new tenants largely paralleled the mode in which new vacancies were filled at Beacon Garden—perpetuating the spirit of *court-ordered living*. The network of friends and family that served as a feeder for

attracting new tenants to Forbes Terrace was quite diffuse, extending in some instances beyond the local community. “I made some friends from Pittsburgh when I was traveling across country,” recalls Peter who at the time of this fortuitous encounter was preparing to relocate from Berkeley to Pittsburgh to attend CMU:

My car broke down, and we got to talking. They told me about Forbes Terrace and how great it was. So when I moved to Pittsburgh it was already in my mind to check it out. And then I meet a fellow student who lived at The Terrace, and he brought me to see the place. I knew right away! I just loved it. The unit that I moved into with a couple of other students had been passed down from person to person for years. It had this continuous history that made the place really special.

For Meagan, her connection to Forbes Terrace reached back into her early childhood:

I already knew Forbes Terrace when I moved in from when I was in elementary school at St. Philomena [a local parochial school]. I had this one friend, Paul, who lived there who turned me onto rock when I was probably 10 or 11 years old. The first time I ever heard a Led Zeppelin album was in The Terrace and it actually turned out that the house that Paul grew up in was the house that a lot of the musicians have lived in. So in my mind The Terrace really has had this long history of being a progressive music scene.

Also fostering a sense of community at Forbes Terrace was the same proprietary air that tenants experienced at Beacon Gardens—a consequence of the *laissez faire* management style of Watkins Reality. As with Beacon Gardens, tenants were willing to forfeit the benefits of responsible stewardship on the part of the landlord for the privilege of living at Forbes Terrace and maintaining control over their own spaces. “I really felt we were better off not having them [the landlords] come around to check things out,” insists Sallyann.

For instance, I redid my kitchen. I took down all the cabinets, and I repainted them and made everything look so much better. I didn’t want to have to ask the landlords for permission every time I started a new project. I just did whatever I felt needed to be done without anyone questioning me.

“It was like, ‘don’t you feel lucky to live there,’ explains Alyssa.

This place is a goldmine. We’re two steps away from anything you could ever want. You don’t need a freakin’ car, and I don’t care if the roof is caving in or something is leaking. I wasn’t going to tell them [the landlords] that something was wrong unless it was really bad because first of all they were not going to do anything about it anyway, and second of all they just might start raising the rent if they did. Because it was really cheap, and if you were willing to fix things yourself, you could live in this prime site in the heart of everything like it was your own place.

“Well you had no choice but to think of it as your own place,” insists another

Terracite:

Because if you called the real estate people, they wouldn’t come to fix anything. So you better learn right off how to fix your furnace and how to do electrical wiring if you wanted to stick around... Part of my theory was if they don’t come *up here* they’ll continue to forget about us. And on the one hand that’s bad, but on the other hand that meant that they never ever remembered to send out the lease renewals, so the rent never went up. The other tradeoff of the landlord not having a presence there was that we didn’t bother to ask the landlord when we wanted to do something like dig up the front yard. We just dug it up. It was our place, and we did whatever we wanted.

The only evidence that the landlords took any interest in maintaining the complex was the sporadic appearance of a yard crew that proved to be more of a menace than an amenity. “They would come through with a weed wacker,” recalls Sallyann, “and they’d weed-wack our flowers. We had to run outside and yell at them. We finally started putting signs up. ‘Please don’t cut me down. I’m a flower.’ And we’d have those signs all over the place in everyone’s gardens.”

Also challenging conventional definitions of ownership was the voice of the local press that unanimously came out in support of The Terrace’s constituency following Walnut Capitals’ takeover. “Residents feel the company is a prime example of bottom-line thinking, with a simplistic ‘because I own it, that’s why’ mentality,

asserted Charlie Deitch in his *In Pittsburgh* article, “A Terrace Dies In Squirrel Hill: From Artists’ Colony To Rich Peoples’ Enclave.”

...[But] they [the tenants] see their *own* time in Forbes Terrace as an investment of sorts. They spent years making it a place worth living, and despite deteriorating conditions. They took a cluster of buildings and turned it into something special—a community. They don’t have a deed to the property, but they are the true owners of Forbes Terrace. Those building were bought and paid for with time and heart long before Walnut Capital plunked down the cash. And now they must relinquish ownership so someone else can turn a profit.<sup>197</sup>

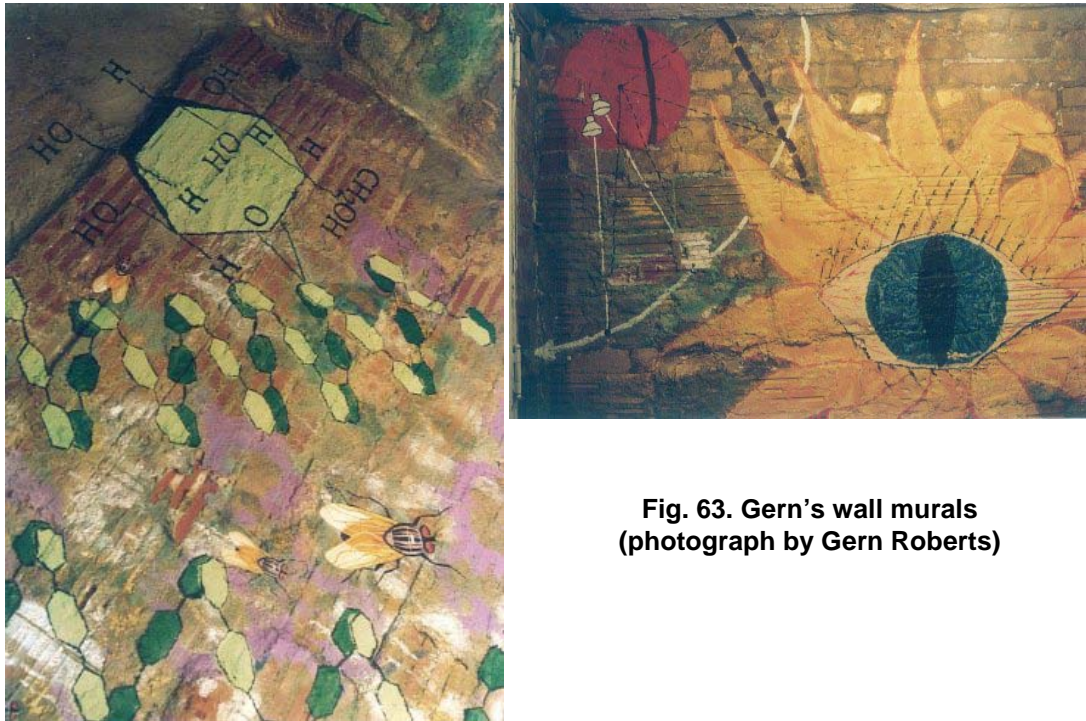
Not only were Terracites facing displacement from their domestic spaces, but they were also contending with the loss of studio and practice spaces that were essential to their artistic production. Terracites, like their Beacon Garden counterpart, were able to make good use of their spacious homes to pursue creative endeavors without concerns about the hovering presence of an overly attentive landlord or the complaints of fractious neighbors. “You could walk through here [The Terrace] and hear music coming out of the houses from the different bands practicing... see someone sitting on the porch practicing the violin, someone else painting,” reported Gillian, a performer with Dance Alloy, Pittsburgh’s premiere modern dance company.<sup>198</sup> As with Beacon Gardens, the servants’ quarters and the expansive basements served as studio spaces for The Terrace’s population of musicians and artists. The lower level of one unit housed an old fashioned printing press that cranked out posters and CD covers by a succession of enterprising tenants. The press,

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<sup>197</sup> Deitch, 2000.

<sup>198</sup> Deitch, 2000.

too large to be moved, was reluctantly left behind when the premises were finally vacated for *revalorization*. Gern, who actually lived in the servants' quarters of a friends' unit, painted the walls with a series of murals that were not only an expression of Gern's artistic proclivities but also an indicator of the extent to which he considered Forbes Terrace to be his long-term residence—his home [Fig. 63].



**Fig. 63. Gern's wall murals  
(photograph by Gern Roberts)**

Sharing with me photographs of his wall murals, Gern still holds out some dim hope that his “cave art” has survived WCP's *revalorization*. “I wonder if they're still there,” he muses as he delves into an interpretation of his “murals as representative of both his ideas about art and science and his feelings about how one goes about creating a home:

I was very interested in science. There's a sunflower and that's a satellite and those are neurons, scientific symbols, and these are hieroglyphics. Those are just leaves. All of this was executed using silver and gold leaf to create a faux scaling. People don't invest that kind of creative energy in places that they

don't care about. When I moved in, I stayed up for weeks and took out all of the rotting stuff to prepare the walls for my murals. I mean this was my home. It wasn't just a place to crash.

“We make our homes. Not necessarily by constructing them, although some people do that,” reflects philosopher Robert Ginsberg.

We build the intimate shell of our lives by the organization and furnishing of the space in which we live. How we function as persons is linked to how we make ourselves at home. We need time to make our dwelling into a home. Home is not built in a day.<sup>199</sup>

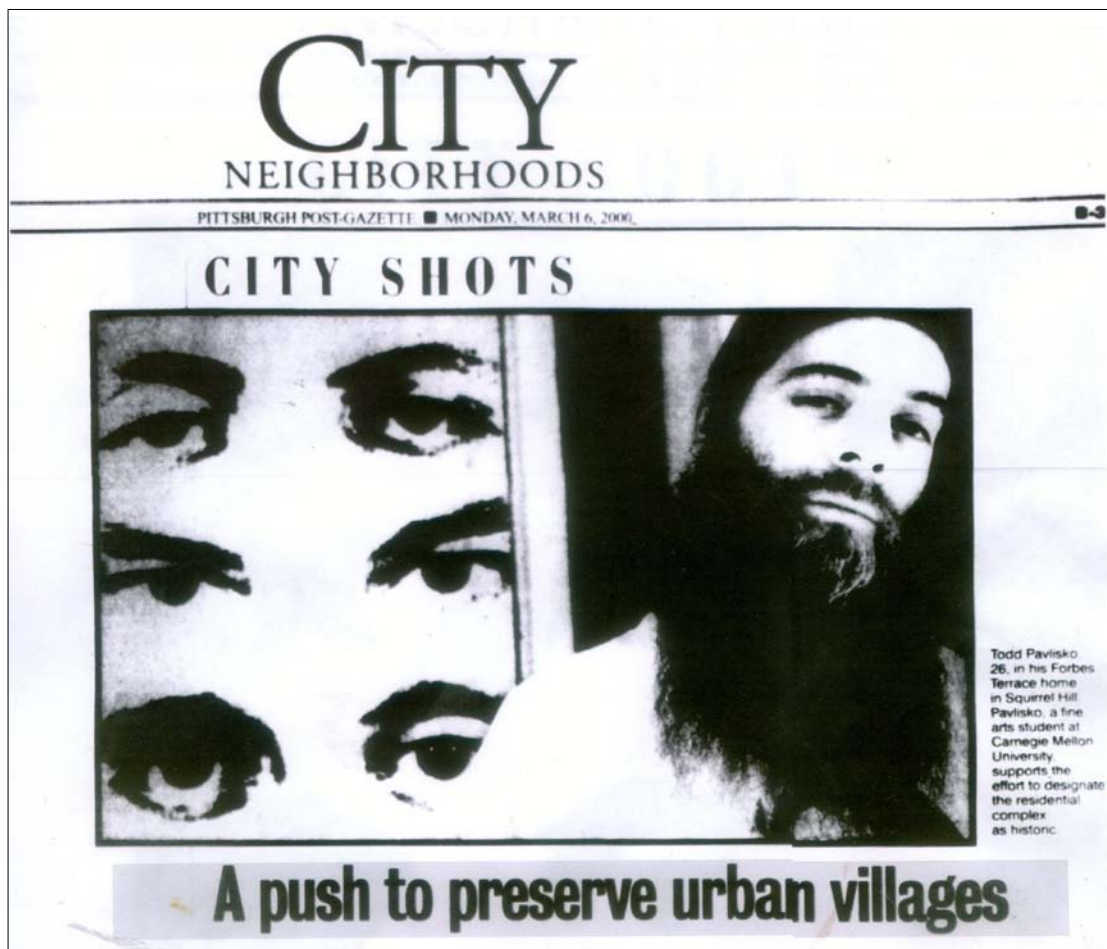
Terracite Todd Pavlisko, a fine arts student at CMU and curator at The Warhol Museum during his tenure at Forbes Terrace, was also deeply invested in maximizing his Forbes Terrace unit towards creative ends. Todd recalls shelling out \$900 of his own money to convert the first floor of his home into a gallery and lecture hall as a venue for his personal enterprise—Gallery Green. “That figure just sticks in my mind,” Todd emphasizes. “That’s just how much I was ready to invest in a place where I intended to stay for a good while.” The gallery was founded in part to facilitate cultural exchange programs that focused on social action and community dialogue. “We had some really well-known artists give presentations at the gallery,” recalls Todd, “including Thomas R. Hipschen<sup>200</sup> and J.S.G. Boggs —best known for his hand-drawn, one-sided depictions of U.S. banknotes and the "Boggs-Bills" that he

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<sup>199</sup> Robert Ginsberg, "Meditations on Homelessness and Being at Home: In the Form of a Dialogue," in *The Ethics Of Homelessness: Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. John M. Abbarno (Amerstam/Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1999), 31.

<sup>200</sup> Tom Hipschen, employed by BEP (US *Bureau of Engraving and Printing* ) since 1968, is recognized worldwide as the finest U.S. picture engraver. He is credited with engraving the original master dies for more than 130 BEP-produced postage and revenue stamps for the U.S. Postal Service, Panama Canal Zone, the Department of the Interior and several other production facilities. This body of work has required the interpretation of designs from a wide variety of media. For more on Hipschen see his video at <http://specials.washingtonpost.com/mv/onbeing/63/> (accessed Aug. 9, 2010).

prints for use in his interactive performances.<sup>201</sup> I remember drawing as many as 150 attendees to lectures and video presentations at Gallery Green. A haunting photo of Todd is captured in an article appearing in *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* with the headline “A Push To Preserve Urban Villages” [Fig. 64]. Todd is posed next to a study of repetitive images depicting raised eyebrows—a fitting statement of his



**Fig. 64. Displaced tenant Todd Pavlisko supports the historic nomination of Forbes Terrace (courtesy of *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*)**

<sup>201</sup> For more on Boggs see Counterfeit or Counterfeit?  
[http://freespace.virgin.net/julian.moseley/Dreamland/jsg\\_boggs.htm](http://freespace.virgin.net/julian.moseley/Dreamland/jsg_boggs.htm) (accessed Aug. 8, 2010).



consternation over his impending displacement. Todd was among a cadre of up-and-coming CMU students residing at The Terrace who would, in a few years, capture international audiences. Most notable among this group were Peter Coffin,<sup>202</sup> an artist whose works are now exhibited in museums and galleries in the US and abroad, and actor Pablo Schreiber who played Nick Sobotka on the highly acclaimed series *The Wire*. Pulitzer Prize-winning author Michael Chabon lived in The Terrace during the early 1980s while a student at the University of Pittsburgh. His first novel, *The Mysteries of Pittsburgh*, is set in and around Forbes Terrace where the book's first person narrator is depicted as residing. In his musings, the narrator makes the following observations about the complex:

The Terrace had been, many years ago, a fashionable place to live. A horseshoe of large, identical brick houses enclosing a long incline of grass, it still retained some of the genteel quality of an enclave that had once attracted families with servants and livery.<sup>203</sup>

Although one Terracite attempted without success to contact Chabon to enlist his support for historic designation, the book nonetheless memorializes The Terrace as it stood prior to its *revalorization* by WCP and attests to the caliber of creative talent that the community attracted.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> See Peter Coffin's biography at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter\\_Coffin\\_%28artist%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Coffin_%28artist%29)

<sup>203</sup> Michael Chabon, *The Mysteries of Pittsburgh* (New York: HarpersCollins, 1988, 2005), 43.

<sup>204</sup> During my conversations with displaced tenants from Forbes Terrace, several interviewees spontaneously informed me with considerable pride of Michael Chabon's association with The Terrace. As a prior artist/resident Chabon and his novel, *The Mysteries Of Pittsburgh*, strongly contributed to an enhanced sense of place for the pool of creative talent that continued to occupy The Terrace.

In all, Terracites put down roots in their courtyard complex, investing in both the social and physical fabric of the community. In much the same spirit as Beacon Garden tenants, they continued to retain a stake in the future of the complex, even as it became a near certainty that eviction was inevitable. The charm of Forbes Terrace isn't just the red bricks and shady courtyard anyway," exclaimed a feature writer for *In Pittsburgh*.

It's the talent, personality and ambitions of its tenants... It's the garden Gern Owens has cultivated over the last five years, in which he carefully chose plants indigenous to the area. What makes Forbes Terrace special is the fact that even though the last remaining residents are just months away from leaving, they still care about what happens to their home.<sup>205</sup>

### **"It Was An Uphill Battle"**

When WCP came into possession of Forbes Terrace, the residing tenants' worst fears were quickly realized. Beyond concerns related to their impending dislocation, tenants were uneasy about the future of the physical site given WCP's track record with Beacon Gardens. Although Forbes Terrace did not have the same cachet as Beacon Gardens which had been designed by Pittsburgh's native son, Frederick Scheibler, it still had many of the same hallmarks of the Craftsman style, including large open floor plans with built-in cabinets and bookcases as dividers, large ceiling beams defining the first floor rooms, and an abundance of light and hardwood throughout. The complex was recognized as an early representative of The Garden City Movement along with its neighboring complex, Beacon Gardens. Peter recalls that his next door neighbors, two of whom were architectural students at CMU, would

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<sup>205</sup> Deitch, 2000.

frequently invite him to parties with other students from their department and how the conversation would inevitably turn to Forbes Terrace—“the importance of its design” and “how proud they all were to be living there.”

As early as June 2008, when tenants first became aware that the Watkins’ estate was nearing the end of its sunset provision, Peter’s neighbor Bob posted an SOS on the Cyburbia Forum’s blog asking for advice. “Help needed in Pittsburgh for preserving 1920’s Craftsman-style house.”<sup>206</sup> The posting announced that the tenants were in the formative stage of setting up a preservation group to help save Forbes Terrace. Sandra, also an Arts and Crafts enthusiast, was particularly concerned about the survival of her unit that still retained almost all of its original decorative finishes:

One of the things that I really liked about the house was all the wood. Everywhere there was wood, in the dining room, in the living room. More wood than I’ve ever seen in a house that size before. It wasn’t painted over. It was just lovely. And we had stained glass windows too. And it almost felt like you were really, really wealthy living there, like rich folks who live in those great big mansions but on a smaller scale. So even though it was smaller and you were connected with your neighbors, you still had that same quality. I was really proud of my house, and visitors always commented how nice it was. Just the idea that they [WCP] would change a thing sent chills down my back.

For the most part, The Terrace units were still in possession of their original windows and doors as well as enclosed back porches that had once served as milk porches for daily dairy deliveries [Fig. 30]. From an historical perspective, the rear porches were of particular significance to Gern who helped spearhead the bid for historic status.

“It’s rare that you find a community of houses that all have their original milk sheds,”

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<sup>206</sup> See Cyburbia Forums, <http://www.cyburbia.org/forums/showthread.php?t=21398> (accessed Aug. 8, 2010).

he explained. “You might find a single house that will have that kind of rear porch but not a whole complex of houses.” Gern was among those long-term residents who had resisted the first stage of displacement, staying on in the hope that the enclave could be saved. Even as roommates moved away, Gern maneuvered to assure his continued residency, albeit not his original unit. On three occasions he relocated to other units in the courtyard, joining up with existing households that had space for a roommate. Forbes Terrace was Gern’s home, whether it was unit 3 or unit 11. Committed to the principles of *court-ordered living* that transcended any specific space within the complex, Gern was not about to walk away without a fight.

Still shell shocked from the total demolition of Forbes Cottages in 1998, followed by the paving of Beacon Gardens’ central courtyard in 1999, Gern joined forces with Sharyn and Terry (the same preservationists who had nominated Beacon Gardens) to petition for historic designation of Forbes Terrace. Taking it upon himself to collect much of the primary research that he hoped would make a compelling case for the protection of The Terrace, Gern holed himself up in several of Pittsburgh’s archives for days on end.<sup>207</sup> The prepared nomination was submitted in February, and by April the HRC had provisionally approved the application for protection. The preservation scenario that played out followed the same storyline as Beacon Gardens’ bid for historic status. WCP staked its claim of ownership at the end of April by immediately serving thirty-day vacate notices to The Terraces’ residing tenants and

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<sup>207</sup> Among other documentation, Gern located early plats of Squirrel hill, identified the first residents of The Terrace and found the original building permits, the first classified ad, and information on the Watkins family.

making public its determination to follow through with their own redevelopment plans despite the pending nomination. Terracites, along with community activists and preservationists, screamed “historic insensitivity” on the part of WCP and accused the developers of “gentrifying yet another funky Squirrel Hill garden complex.”<sup>208</sup> The HRC held hearings, concluding that Forbes Terrace met eight of the ten requirements for protection specified under The Pittsburgh Historic Preservation Ordinance.<sup>209</sup> Two claims of significance, in particular, helped make the case that The Terrace was historically important: firstly, its early representation of the Garden City movement in Pittsburgh, and secondly as part of a network of garden apartments<sup>210</sup> in the East End of Pittsburgh:

- This property exemplifies a pattern of neighborhood development which quickly became one of the dominant patterns in the development of Squirrel Hill and may have influenced other neighborhoods... The success of the garden apartment ideal is reflected in the nationally acclaimed Chatham Village complex at Duquesne Heights on Mount Washington, built more than a decade after Forbes Terrace. Although the origins of Chatham Village can be traced to earlier works by its architects, Clarence Stein and Henry Wright, the earlier construction of this

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<sup>208</sup> Chris Potter, “Saying Yup To Yuppies: Another Squirrel Hill Apartment Complex Goes Upscale,” *Pittsburgh City Paper Online*, News and Views, Fall 2000. <http://www.pghcitypaper.com/archives/newsarch/feature/nz00/nz61400.html> (accessed Jan. 26, 2003).

<sup>209</sup> The HRC proceeded with its nomination of Forbes Terrace despite the fact that the Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition did not support historic designation based on The Coalition’s concern that the call for historic preservation was in fact merely a tactic to regulate the developers. “The Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition is a non-profit community group dedicated to preserving and improving the quality of life in the 14th Ward of the City of Pittsburgh.” <http://www.shuc.org/coalition.html> (accessed Oct. 20, 2010). It is curious to note that WCP continues to justify its displacement policies on the basis of The Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition’s position of support, posting the opinions of the executive director of The Coalition on their marketing website. [http://www.walnutcapital.com/aboutus\\_inthenewsarticlePG2.htm](http://www.walnutcapital.com/aboutus_inthenewsarticlePG2.htm) (accessed Oct. 20, 2002).

<sup>210</sup> Technically, Beacon Gardens is not a garden apartment complex but rather a grouping of townhouses. A garden apartment complex is comprised of low-rise apartment buildings built with landscaped grounds surrounding them. The apartment buildings are often arranged around courtyards that are open at one end. A garden apartment has some characteristics of a townhouse: each apartment has its own building entrance, or just a few apartments share a small foyer or stairwell at each building entrance. Unlike a townhouse, however, each apartment occupies only one level. See Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (accessed Jan. 8, 2011).

complex in Squirrel Hill shows that some of the same ideas had already been tried in Pittsburgh with great success at a smaller scale.

- This complex is related to a number of other distinctive, non-contiguous garden apartment complexes disturbed throughout Squirrel Hill and Pittsburgh, as well as to the various non-contiguous designs by Frederick Scheibler, distributed throughout the East End of Pittsburgh.

As expected, WCP opposed any oversight claiming property rights. With precedents now on WCP's side, Reidbord announced with certainty that "City Council will support us again."<sup>211</sup>

While WCP did not find it necessary to pave The Terrace's courtyard proper as off-street parking was available onsite, the proposed re-landscaping of the enclave's green spaces nevertheless raised some eyebrows—most especially the excavation of the flowering trees that edged the central greens as well as several oak trees interspersed throughout the landscape. WCP defended this decision insisting that the trees were not only diseased but claiming that they were not even original to the site plan. During my interviews with displaced tenants, all took exception to Reidbord's assertion that the trees were "just weeds that had sprouted up over time"<sup>212</sup> Gern, a horticulturist, is quite certain that the ornamental trees were integral to the original site design. "Those trees were purposeful," he asserts. They were spaced around the commons and were obviously there to present a canopy of sorts." Terracite Sallyann, an architect, was in agreement [Fig. 65]:

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<sup>211</sup> Potter, 2000.

<sup>212</sup> Todd Reidbord made this statement during an interview I conducted with him on Nov. 17, 2007. He claimed that WCP had in fact returned the courtyard to its original state based on historical photos that he had seen prior to the excavation of the tree removal.

It was obvious that those trees were very much a part of the original design. They were placed on a fairly regular grid and were all of a variety of flowering crabapple trees. There were a couple of places where there were holes where one had died that completed the grid. Come July or August when the fruit started dropping they made a mess, but it was totally worth it because they were absolutely stunning. It was like a fairytale, as if it was snowing in April [Fig. 28].

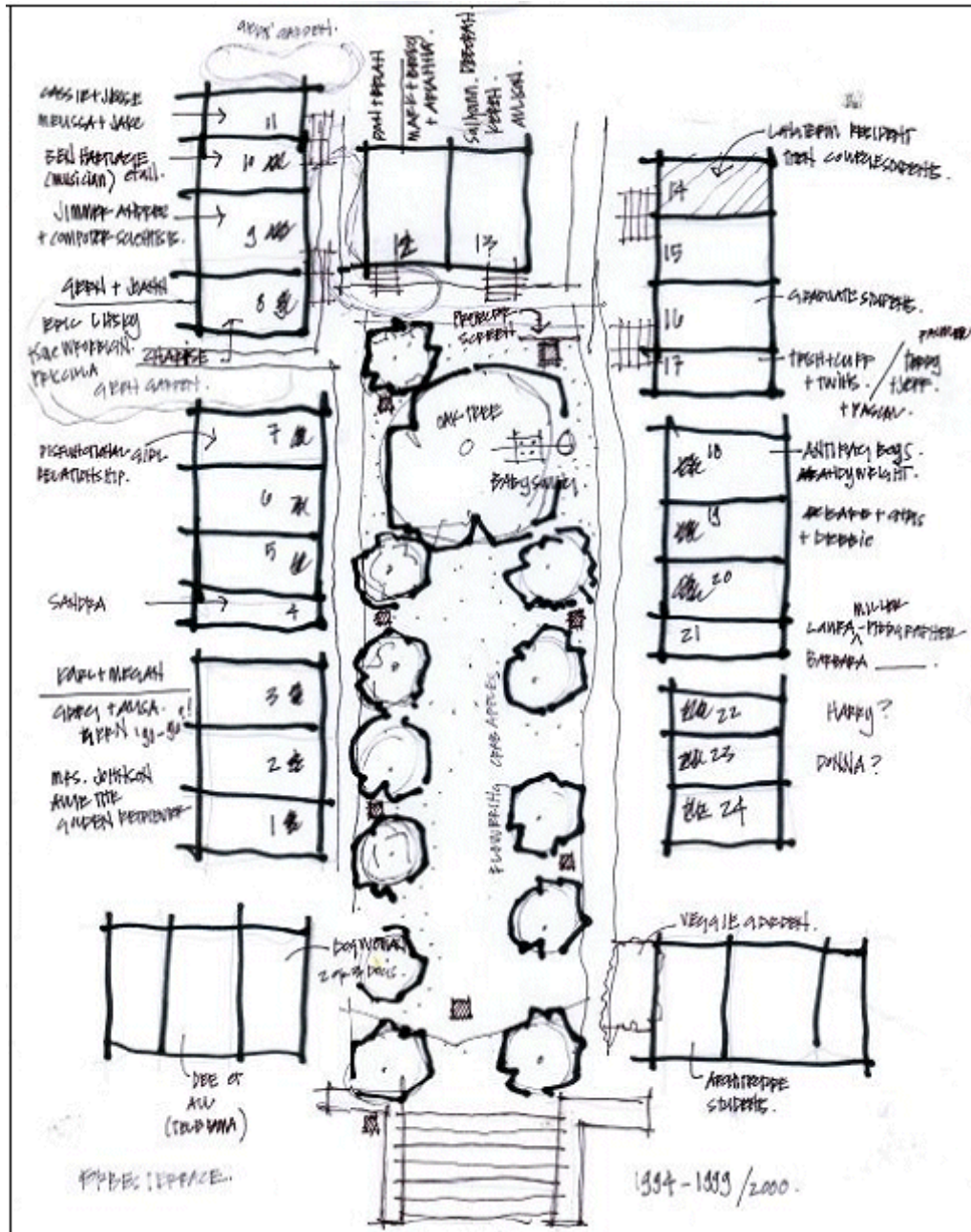


Fig. 65. An impromptu drawing of the Forbes Terrace site design by Sallyann depicting the regular grid of the fruit trees

Although Gern points out that the fruit trees were possibly too damaged and diseased from age and neglect to be saved, he believes that the idea of the trees themselves could have been saved with a more ambitious re-landscaping plan that did justice to the original site plan.

The alteration of the units themselves evoked the same outcry as previously exhibited by champions of Beacon Gardens with preservation activists decrying the uniform replacement of all of the original wood windows frames with vinyl, and the disposal some first-floor built-ins to accommodate powder rooms. While the local media spoke out in support of the preservation initiative, exhibiting the same bravado as it had previously demonstrated with Beacon Gardens, the dominant discourse broadened its focus to address the long-term ramifications of gentrification for the greater neighborhood of Squirrel Hill. John DeSantis, chairman of the HRC, set up a flare of warning with the following statement to a reporter:

Change is coming and “not just to Forbes Terrace but the entire community. Emerging demographic and economic forces could reshape Squirrel Hill and not necessarily for the better... People haven’t noticed it yet because they haven’t been directly affected. But what’s going on with Forbes Terrace is just the beginning... Most of Squirrel Hill was built within about fifteen years of each other in the 1910s and 1920s. That means that homes will start deteriorating within fifteen years of each other. The aging housing stock, and an aging population without the resources to repair it means that developers will be looking for bargains. There are a lot of sharks swimming around, developers who will put a few dimes up front and do nothing for 30 years but make money. Walnut Capital isn’t bad or good. They are the market. But the community needs to wake up and see if you don’t control the market, the market will control you.”<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Potter, 2000



The realization that the gentrification of a few courtyard complexes in Squirrel Hill could be the beginning of a slippery slope downward for neighborhood diversity added a new dimension to the public debate that had only been touched upon a year prior when Beacon Gardens had permeated the news. “It was not just the question of who was being displaced at present but who could afford to live in Squirrel Hill in the future,” decried one tenant. For Squirrel Hill, the gentrification of its courtyard complexes in 2000 was just the tipping point for a much larger buyout of its extensive multi-family housing stock. “Exclusionary displacement” was fast becoming a reality for the creative pool of students and graduates from CMU and Pitt who had long had a strong presence in Squirrel Hill.<sup>214</sup> “It’s to the point where students who want decent housing or people of a certain income level or profession wouldn’t dare inquire about housing in Squirrel Hill,” decried Gern:

There has been a push by a lot of people to get rid of what they think of as ‘the riff-raff.’ And that’s too bad. Because this is our home, and it’s a very special place to a lot of people... And in the end, the people who care the most about the neighborhood as it has existed for nearly a century will be standing on the outside.<sup>215</sup>

The long-term consequences of WCP’s *modus operandi* was not lost on Dan who made the following public statement in *The Pittsburgh City Paper*:

It’s not like we’re a bunch of crack heads: We’re college-educated professionals who suddenly can’t afford to live here. Places like Forbes Terrace are little neighborhoods, little communities that are being flattened. Pittsburgh has to do everything that it can to attract young people,” but when

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<sup>214</sup> A recent report on the state of student housing in Pittsburgh by The Community Outreach Partnership Center arrived at the following conclusion: "Over the past few years, control of rental housing in Oakland, Squirrel Hill, and Shadyside has shifted from a variety of management companies, private owners, and commercial owners to a few major management companies and landlords. The student housing market in these communities is very much a seller’s market, and prices have risen sharply as a result." <http://www.pitt.edu/~copc/ohio%20state%20report.htm> (accessed Oct. 4, 2010).

<sup>215</sup> Potter, 2000

places like The Terrace go upscale, the writing is on the wall if you're just starting out.<sup>216</sup>

The accusation that WCP was intent on getting rid of what they considered to be “the riff-raff” was a commonly held opinion that was confirmed by the company’s unwillingness to consider any alternatives that might have permitted greater inclusivity.

Once tenants were in receipt of their notices to vacate, all discussions were closed. Gern, who remembers having come across articles in the CMU newspaper that promoted Pittsburgh as an architectural tourist destination, suggested to WCP that Forbes Terrace might be better served if some of its units could be rezoned for multi-use with a few of the units converted into bed and breakfasts, some set aside as affordable rentals, and the remaining privately owned. “You know that way you would still have people who are really invested in the place,” explained Gern. “And because of that it’s going to be a better place for everyone. But WCP wouldn’t listen to anybody,” Gern continues:

Todd Reidbord would just admonish people [saying] that change was hard, and then when you would try to present to him a different business model he would tell you ‘no one is going to tell me how to run my business.’ So change was apparently hardest for him. And I have to say that the local government was obviously supporting him because I tried to have a meeting with Bob O’Connor [the councilman who had previously rebuffed Beacon Gardens tenants] and he wouldn’t even talk to me.

Another tenant who attended the hearings at the HRC threw out the idea that The Terrace might be able to retain some of its diversity if it were in part a retirement

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

community for still-active seniors with perhaps some of the younger tenants remaining in residency, an idea that was immediately rebuffed by the developers.

Reidbord's assertion that there is something inevitable or optimal about "change" as narrowly defined by WCP and their supporters is a prime example of how gentrification, displacement, and community polarization can be easily naturalized. Recently, several high-profile scholars have caught the attention of the mainstream press with their characterization of gentrification as a "natural" ongoing process that is not only inevitable but ultimately beneficial for communities with an aging housing stock.<sup>217</sup> These proponents of "neighborhood change" (clearly a euphemism for displacement in this context) whom I have labeled "gentrification apologists" have sparked an energetic backlash from other more socially conscious scholars who argue that there is nothing natural or advantageous about gentrification given the resultant displacement and neighborhood polarization that ensues.<sup>218</sup> Nonetheless, "gentrification apologists" have given development companies such as WCP legitimate status as neighborhood benefactors, allowing Reidbord, for one, to publicly deflect attention away from the all-too-obvious relationship between his company's implementation of uneven socio-spatial practices and the realization of capital

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<sup>217</sup> See Lance Freeman (Associate Professor in the Urban Planning at Columbia University), "Displacement or Succession? Residential Mobility in Gentrifying Neighborhoods". *Urban Affairs Review*, 40.4 ((2005), 463-491. See also Jacob L. Vigdor (Professor of Public Policy at Duke University), "Does Gentrification Harm the Poor?" *Brookings-Wharton Papers on Urban Affairs* (2002) 133-173. For examples of the articles in the mainstream media spawned by these scholars see Rick Hampson, "Studies: Gentrification A Boost For Everyone," *USA Today*, April 19, 2005 [http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-04-19-gentrification\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-04-19-gentrification_x.htm) (accessed Aug. 30, 2010). Lisa Chamberlain, "Exploding The Gentrification Myth: Columbia Prof's Surprising Findings," *The New York Observer*, Nov. 16, 2003. <http://www.observer.com/node/48338> (accessed Aug. 20, 2010).

<sup>218</sup> Slater et al, 2008

accumulation. While numerous informants reported that alternative plans for Forbes Terrace were tossed out onto the floor at the HRC meetings, the question of who stood to profit the most from the gentrification of Squirrel Hill's courtyard complexes remained mute as elected officials continued to unconditionally support WCP's inflexible agenda.<sup>219</sup> Perhaps Sandra best captured WCP's intractability in the following diatribe that she delivered during our interview.

Maybe if they [WCP] weren't just interested in making a gamillion bucks, if they had just been a little more progressive in their thinking, they could have created a really fine environment with a great community spirit with a quality of life which would have benefited everyone—children, poor people, disabled people, smart people, professional people, artistic people, people of all different colors and races. That's what it's supposed to be about. I mean heavens to Betsy, are we going back to Andrew Carnegie's times where only the rich and the powerful have the opportunity for quality of life?

As Terracites grasped at straws in hope of sparing the complex from turning into another of WCP's "plastic rehabs," it became apparent that the developer's plans were already carved in stone. "The preservation nomination was an uphill battle," explains Sallyann speaking at once of both Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terraces:

There was this whole misunderstanding of what ownership and property rights was and what these types of nominations can do. I was an intern in City Planning at the time, and I had a pretty clear perspective that the best we can do is make sure they don't tear places like this down. You can't regulate ownership of property. You can't regulate income level or rental level of the

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<sup>219</sup> One example of a successful union between historic preservation advocates and the affordable housing community is St. Andrew's Bungalow Court in Hollywood CA. Built in 1919, the property had fallen into disrepair. However, in 1992 it was acquired by a local nonprofit housing developer, Hollywood Housing Corporation, and the property was rehabilitated as low-cost housing for victims of HIV/AIDS. The developers used a combination of Community Redevelopment Agency money, federal grants, tax credits and loans to assist in the finance of the project. Not only was the St. Andrew's Bungalows restored with sensitivity, including the retention of the property's mature trees, but it was listed on The National Register of Historic Places in 1998. While WCP is decidedly not a nonprofit developer, the use of tax credits and other untapped resources may have allowed for a more sensitive restoration and the earmarking of several units for lower-income households (see *Affordable Housing Through Historic Preservation: Tax Credits and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Rehabilitation*, 1995).

tenants. It's really frustrating. I don't know that anything could have been done unless someone could have come in as a white knight with a lot of money to buy the properties outright. And then they would still have to bring everything up to code and make all of these improvement that needed to be done... So unless there is a federal subsidy for preserving great places instead of building crappy concrete boxes, we're going to have the same outcome... The whole New Urbanism thing, you know they're building these cardboard places that no one can afford to live in. Like there's this new urbanist ideal and it still cost \$450,000 to afford a house. They're not solving anyone's problems. Maybe they're getting rid of McMansions, but they're not actually building neighborhoods like what we had in Squirrel Hill... I mean I do understand that you can't ask developers to lose money, and we didn't have a foundation to come running in to save us. Had we gotten organized let's say 5 or 10 years earlier and had a plan in place maybe we could have had a different outcome. But nobody knew how to do that.

In all, tenants indicated in their interviews that, given the choice, they would have remained at Forbes Terrace indefinitely. "If I had the option of buying one of the units and it was at a respectable price, of course we would have jumped on it," asserts Bob. Sallyann was of a like mind. "I definitely would have stayed if I could have," she affirms:

When the rumors first came up about whether Watkins was selling, we were trying to find someone with a father who had a million dollars to buy the whole place and then maybe we would buy them back over time. That was everyone's dream... For us The Terrace was our first adult homes, and we were very attached to the place.

As anticipated, WCP exhibited the same predatory approach towards The Terrace's residing tenants as it previously had at Beacon Gardens. Sandra was particularly hard pressed to meet the sixty-day notice to vacate given her particular set of circumstances. "I was just so hurt, so disgusted, and so humiliated," she recalls close to tears:

I asked them if they could just give me a little more time and they threatened to turn off all of my utilities by the end of the month, and there was no compromise. They treated me and the others as if we were something less than human. They didn't have a morsel of compassion for us. 'It's our property now, so get out.' I was humiliated because I was treated with so little respect being the head of a family with two children and disabled brother who were all dependent on me. And there wasn't anything I could do about it as the head of the family. I just had to, you know, put on a good face. My kids and their friends had to help me pack up and move, and I was so embarrassed in front of them because I wanted to be able to organize everything nicely, efficiently, and orderly and I didn't have time to do that. I had to keep working. I couldn't take off work. It was just a horrendous experience.

When you combine your own intuition with a sensitivity to other people's feelings and moods, you may be close to the origins of valuable human attributes such as generosity, altruism, compassion, sympathy, and empathy.

*Fred Rogers, 2001  
Commencement Exercises,  
Marquette University*

Bob and Amy also were frustrated with the prospect of simultaneously packing up their house and looking for a new place to live. "We ended up with a situation where we really had to scramble to find a place," remembers Amy:

Our lease was up on May 31st, which was a Thursday, and we asked them if they could give us until Saturday, which was like a couple of days. It's not like they would have started work before then. And they said, 'Oh no. The utilities are being turned off.' We even offered to prorate the rent two days, and they were like so nasty and rude. They wouldn't budge an inch. And, you know, I was doing some landlord tenant law at the time, and I was working in legal services. And I knew you just couldn't shut off someone's utilities. What did they think, that they were above the law? Knowing the judges that I know, I could have gotten an injunction against them. I mean they've gotten away with a lot of stuff just by intimidating people. I could have done that, but we're talking about a Friday, and we'd be without electricity, gas, and water until at least Monday. So it just wasn't worth it.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Such harassment by landlords intent on enforcing their own timetable for displacement is not uncommon. For instance, in 1981 the tenants of Garfield Place, an apartment block in Park Slope Brooklyn that was slated for conversion into co-ops, not only had their hot water and heat cut off for 10 days but were denied access to the fuse boxes in the basement of the building (see J. Goodno 1982:1; cited in Lees, et al, *Gentrification*, 2008: 30).

Peter related an even more egregious experience with WCP. “I have no affection in my heart for Todd Reidbord,” he announced during our interview.

He was very corrupt. He, or one of his people, actually broke into our apartment and turned off the main switch to the electricity. It was a very trusting place, so we rarely locked the door to the basement. I heard this funny noise, and I looked outside and I saw someone exiting the basement and running away towards his car. We called the police and filed a report, a trespassing complaint. I mean our lease said we had the right to renew, and we believed that legally we were in the right. We knew our rights, and were willing to fight. You can’t threaten us. We have the right to stay. But we couldn’t deal with the continual harassment. They stole our barbecue, our garden tools, our bikes whatever they could get their hands on.

While Peter continues to harbor resentment towards WCP’s for the company’s blatant bullying tactics, it is the memory of his “trashed” vegetable garden (reminiscent of Chris’s experience at Beacon Gardens and later Wightman Place) that stills evokes the most ire. “I saw Reidbord standing with this guy and pointing at our vegetable garden,” he recalls:

He must have hired the guy to take the garden out because a little while later he [the hired hand] come back and did what he was told to do. Not only was our vegetable garden completely gone, but on the sidewalk, right in front of our place, there were these layers of what used to be our garden in a huge garbage pile. We took care of that garden, and we took care of the house. We were busy with finals and just trying to get by and all this was happening around us. It was very depressing.

Not surprisingly, given my prior interviews with Beacon Garden tenants, the punitive razing of garden spaces, even before the tenants had vacated their units, was an unforgivable act of intimidation that has had a lasting impact on the displacees. Gern, who was taking classes in native landscape horticulture at the time, had been trying to incorporate indigenous plants into his rear garden for the past several years. The expansive vegetation, which extended beyond his own property line to include several

of his neighbors' plots, was lovingly tended by Gern who considered it to be a "communal garden" for everyone's edification: [Fig. 66].

I mean, I was growing things like goldenrod and sunflowers, mostly native plants that would grow in this habitat. I also cultivated vegetables like tomato and corn. The native plants would bring the bees in and pollinate the vegetable plants. It did look a little messy, but it wasn't supposed to be manicured. It was suppose to have wildness to it. I know Todd Reidbord saw it as weeds. But I also know people from the Pittsburgh Garden Center who I had studied with came over and admired it... and folks in The Terrace understood and appreciated what I was doing.

It was not only portions of Gern's indigenous garden that fell prey to WCP's bull dozer as he sat by helplessly, but a little hut that he had constructed at the rear of his house that served as a private retreat [Fig. 67]. One manifestation of place-identity

The urge to make and build seems to be an almost universal human characteristic. It goes way beyond meeting our need for survival and seems to be the expression of some deep-rooted part of being human... But we don't have to understand all of someone else's creative efforts. What's important is that we communicate our respect for their attempts to express what's inside themselves.

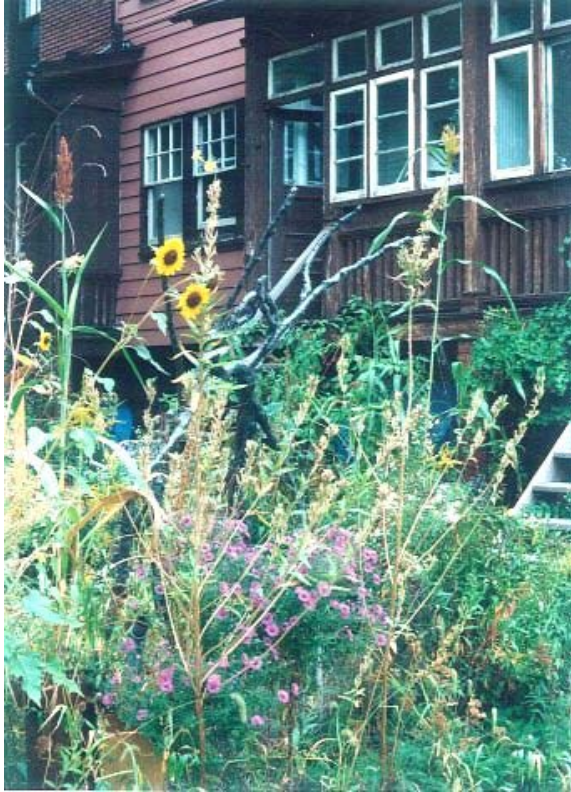
*Fred Rogers, 2003  
The World According to Mister Rogers*

entails human actors casting themselves as "imaginative users of their environments, agents who are able to appropriate physical contexts in order to create, here, a space of attachment and rootedness, a space of being."<sup>221</sup> Gern's memory of his razed hut captures his profound sense of loss when he was forced to relinquish "self-regulation" over his own environment—a situation that not only contributed to a rupture in his sense of "self-coherence" but also damaged his "self-esteem."

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<sup>221</sup> John Dixon and Kevin Durrheim 2000 "Displacing place-identity: A Discursive Approach to Locating Self and Other," *British Journal of Social Psychology* 9, 28-29.





**Fig. 66. Gern's indigenous garden (photograph by Gern Roberts)**



**Fig. 67. Gern's hut (photograph by Gern Roberts)**

You know, behind those houses there were a lot of trees, and there was this invasive species of grapevines that were damaging the trees. So I took it upon myself to cut them all down to help protect the trees. But I took those grapevines, and I built this little hut out of it, just to have a little place to go to. And I used to sit in it and read. And that was one of the things that really, really hurt. Right after we got our eviction notices they very quickly moved in and plowed it down. You know, it very much felt like direct intimidation tactics. They even took stuff out from under my porch and from off the milk porch. You know, it was bullying for no reason other than intimidation, and I just had no recourse. I felt totally helpless!

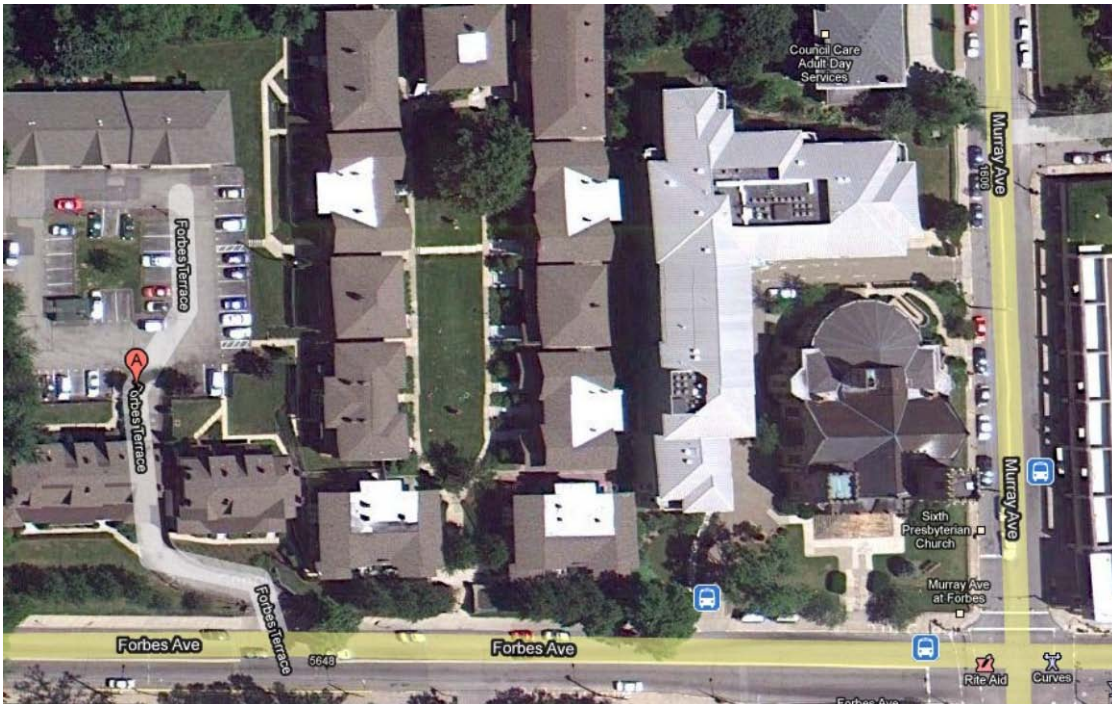
In fact, Gern was so wary of WCP's capacity for emotional brutality that he used a pseudonym when interviewed for newspaper articles. Even eight years after his displacement, when I first contacted Gern to request an interview, he did not initially return my calls or respond to my emails. When Gern finally did agree to meet with me, he initially remained guarded. "It's just too hard to go back and revisit the whole thing," he says apologetically. "I mean it still hurts, and I just want to put all of that behind me."

Even though informants unanimously agreed that WCP was ruthless in its tactics, a few nonetheless credited the development company for not leveling the site altogether and building new high-rise condominiums. "Yeah, I remember when I heard that WCP bought the place. It was like, those bastards," recalls Dan.

But I got to thinking about it and on the one hand they were assholes, and sitting around talking about it now, I still think they were assholes. You don't forget. But The Terrace is still there. I mean, Forbes Cottages is now a playing field for rich kids, and The Gardens is a parking lot. It's like, they're still assholes but at least The Terrace is still there.

Bob concurs noting, "As much as I hem and haw and, you know, bitch and moan about what they [WCP] did, I have to give them some credit that they didn't raze it [Forbes Terrace] and put up more condominiums." The reference to "more

condominiums” was a taunt directed at The Sixth Presbyterian Church (as previously mentioned, Mister Rogers’ house of worship) that sold the land immediately surrounding its edifice to the Mosites Company for the development of 27 upscale condos in the heart of Squirrel Hill<sup>222</sup> [Fig. 68]. Craig Stevens, regional coordinator



**Fig. 68. Aerial view of Forbes Terrace (center) with new condos surrounding the Sixth Presbyterian Church (right) (aerial photo taken from Google Earth)**

for the Pennsylvania Low Income Housing Coalition and a member of the same Sixth Presbyterian Church himself, admitted that the congregation “had some pangs of conscience” over the project and were committed to making amends by setting up provisions for the allocation of more affordable housing. Just exactly “where” Stevens and the congregation had in mind is questionable given that he himself confessed that there were “few prospect(s) for affordable housing in Squirrel Hill.” In fact, The Mosites’ condo development purportedly provided WCP further

<sup>222</sup>The condos ranged in price from \$275,000 to \$375,000.

incentive to pursue their bid for Forbes Terrace. In an article appearing in *The Post-Gazette* in April of 2000— “Residential Projects To Give Forbes-Murray Homey Look” –the Mosites Company and WCP were linked as related enterprises that were jointly committed to turning the intersection of Forbes and Murray into “the hottest residential addresses in the East End.” At the same time that religious leaders in New York City and elsewhere were being enjoined by community activists to stand up to investors who were purchasing small apartment buildings and evicting long-term residents,<sup>223</sup> Fred Rogers’ church was not only aiding and abetting WCP’s Gentrification agenda, but by the admission of its own congregants, assuming the role of gentrifiers in their own right.<sup>224</sup>

While most ex-Terracites were ultimately priced out of Squirrel Hill as affordable housing became more scarce, Bob considers himself very fortunate that he and his wife Amy weathered the storm, eventually purchasing a house not too far from The Terrace. “I mean, do I harbor deep seated traumatic experiences from the whole business?” muses Bob.

Not really. I mean, we loved The Terrace! We would have stayed. I still feel the loss, but in the end things worked out for us. But not everyone was as lucky as we were to find a place in Squirrel Hill. I just hope that other people don’t get screwed, glued, and tattooed whenever a place like that [Forbes Terrace] winds up on the market.

Bob and Amy were among the few Terracites representing stage two displacement who suffered only a brief sense of dislocation following their abrupt departure from

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<sup>223</sup> See Lees et al, 2008: 254.

<sup>224</sup> The same critique could be made of St. Edmund’s Academy’s decision to purchase and then raze Forbes Cottages for an athletic field. On the Academy’s website it notes that the school has historic roots in the Episcopal tradition, including the core value of “respect for the needs and feelings of others [http://www.stedmunds.net/abo\\_why.asp](http://www.stedmunds.net/abo_why.asp) (accessed Oct. 12, 2010).

Forbes Terrace. Initially they were forced to rent “a dump” on the border of Squirrel Hill and Greenfield (a working class neighborhood that has begun to experience some gentrification) before a promising fixer-upper, just a short distance away, fortuitously came on the market at an affordable price. “We were really ready to take the plunge,” explains Amy. “All the bad things that happened at Forbes Terrace really gave us the incentive to buy our own place,” she adds. “I think we got the last good deal in Squirrel Hill.” He and Amy are still living in this house today along with their four-year-old daughter. Their bumpy but ultimately satisfying transition from Forbes Terrace to new housing was not, however, typical of other stage two displacees. Rather, Bob and Amy’s ultimate satisfaction with their post Terrace housing more closely resembles the experience of early outmovers who had the foresight to exit on their own terms and the wherewithal to purchase their own homes.

## **“The Writing Was on the Wall”**

### **Stage One Displacement:**

Forbes Terrace’s early outmovers, mostly young couple and families who were positioned to make a transition from renters to homeowners, were also more open to the possibility of relocating to working-class and ethnic enclaves that were in close proximity to Squirrel Hill. A slow but steady exodus from the Terrace began around 1997 as tenants became concerned about the future of the complex. “We had heard for a couple of years already, I mean it was sort of the gossip in The Terrace, that the sunset provision in the Watkins will was due to come up soon,” explains Meagan.

We began doing the count down of when it might be coming up. It was around December of 98 that we decided to move, which was around the same time a lot of our peers who had been there for a while were also beginning to move. And part of that was that folks were getting to the point where they were able to buy their first house, and part of it was because we knew what was coming in a couple of years.

Meagan and her family found a house in the Bloomfield/Garfield district, a working class neighborhood not far from Squirrel Hill. “We really didn’t want to move,” she insists.

I kept trying to buy the house in The Terrace. I kept asking if they would sell it. I mean, we really would have liked to stay. We knew the property was going to change hands. All along I really wanted to own a house, and it became pretty clear that we were going to have to look elsewhere.

Around the same time, several other young households purchased homes in the same area as Meagan, including Alyssa and Gregg. Sallyann, who married shortly after her early departure from the court, purchased a house with her husband in Friendship (a transitioning working-class neighborhood) just a couple of miles from The Terrace. Among stage one displacees, only Dan and his partner Brian were even remotely in a

financial position to immediately consider the possibility of purchasing a house in Squirrel Hill. “The fact that The Terrace was going to come on the market was one of the goads that got us looking when we did,” asserts Dan.

We could have played around until it actually happened. But we knew that the writing was on the wall years and years ago because we had heard early on that come 2000 Watkins could sell. When we first moved in it was like ‘yeah, there are ghosts in the basement that are going to haunt us sooner or later.’ But it was like ‘who cares? Are we going to be here in 10 years?’ But we actually really wound up liking The Terrace and stayed for about 5 years and would have stayed longer. When we finally started thinking about leaving, it wasn’t like ‘this place is a crap hole and we want to move.’ We just knew that we should go now because we weren’t going to be able to stay even if we wanted to. Rumors were circulating at the time that The Terrace was going to be leveled because someone had already bought the land right next door and was getting ready to put up condos. We thought The Terrace was just going to go away like Forbes Cottages. And the closer we got to 2000 the more pressure we felt to buy our own place. That coupled with us wanting to make a long-term investment, you know owning as opposed to renting, finally was the deciding factor.

The condo rumor was indeed realized within the year. Plans for the erection of a luxury high rise adjacent to Forbes Terrace was unwelcome news for Terracites, even if the courtyard complex itself was to be spared a similar fate.<sup>225</sup> The Mosite Company paid \$450,000 in late 1998 for one acre of land purchased from The Sixth Presbyterian Church. The church, which had been Forbes Terrace's "friendly neighbor" for over 75 years and as previously mentioned was also Fred Rogers' house of worship, was to be cordoned off from The Terrace by an L-shaped structure designed to wrap around the religious edifice, crowding The Terrace and obstructing

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<sup>225</sup>A sense of place-identity not only comes from an individual’s or group’s attachment to a specific site or neighborhood, but also from the “dis-identification” with others spaces and ideologies. See Nancy Duncan, "Confronting Representations," *Environment and Planning A: Society and Space* 11 (1993), 473-486. Luxury condo dwellers were not perceived as “good potential neighbors” for Terracites who wished to preserve the “authentic” fabric of the immediate neighborhood.

tenants' view [see Fig. 68]. Dan and Brian were indeed prescient in the decision to begin formulating a plan for relocation sooner rather than later. "The idea that maybe we could just hang on hoping that things might work out was just pie in the sky,"

insists Dan:

We didn't know for sure that The Terrace wasn't going to get razed altogether. And even if it wasn't and the units came up for sale individually, it was going to be way out of our price range. We figured it was like going to be way over \$100,000 a unit, and that seemed insane with the repairs that would be needed. I don't have that kind of money! Then they [Mosite Development Company] built those crap condos next door for \$350,000, and that was the real give away. It was sort of a slap of reality that we were sitting on prime real estate and that we better get moving before we got kicked out.

Dan and Brian finally managed to find a house in Squirrel Hill that had been on the market for over a year. "This absentee landlord living in California just wanted to dump the place," explains Dan, "and we just kept low-bidding him until we finally wore him down." Although they were "financially strapped" for the next several years trying to restore a multifamily house to its single-family origins, Dan and Brian consider themselves very fortunate to have been able to stay in the neighborhood. Squirrel Hill was, after all, out-of-reach for most Terracites who were forced to look elsewhere for housing. Regardless of where they finally settled, however, those tenants who left of their own volition in anticipation of displacement reported overall greater satisfaction with their subsequent housing choices than those tenants who were evicted.

Curiously, as stage-one displacees settled in to their new residences, they became increasingly more critical of Terrace in-movers who were perceived as less community oriented than their immediate predecessors. This observation touches on



yet another unmentioned discourse on community investment that surfaced during my interviews with Stage One displacees that proved inconsistent with the assessments of those representing Stage Two. For Sallyann and other early outmovers, “the writing on the wall” was not merely a reference to the impending threat to Forbes Terrace’s built environment but to what some stage one displacees perceived as the gradual unraveling of the complexes’ social fabric. “Near the end, I’d say around the time we left, the sense of community began to change,” attests Sallyann.

Younger and younger people started moving in who didn’t have that sense of responsibility that we had. If you’re having a big party you need to let all your neighbors know, and you cut things off at a certain hour because there is a family with two-year old twins who need to go a bed. This was just something that had always been understood. It was totally unspoken... So there was a core group of residents who had lived there for 5 or 10 years who felt like things were beginning to fall apart.

“The vibe really began to change around the time that we were leaving,” interjects

Dan:

It was only a couple of houses at the time, but the place started to feel different. There was this one house of grad students who didn’t really talk to anyone. Somebody kept parking in front of my garage. I don’t know why it changed. I know that when we first moved in we already knew a few of the people who had been living there for awhile, and I wonder if that might have had something to do with it. You’d come in and it’s like, ‘Oh! So here’s the social organization. Here’s how it operates. But if you come in and you don’t know anybody, well it’s just another house... Well I think that that network began to break down when we started to move out. We weren’t going to say to a friend, ‘You looking for a place? Hey, why don’t you move in here,’ because they’d just have to move out in a year or two.

However, this sense that *up there* was “going down hill” was not necessarily a sentiment that was shared by those residents who chose to remain at The Terrace. My conversations with stage two displacees who held on until the bitter end as well as media accounts suggest that the social fabric of the community remained intact even as stage one displacees moved away and vacant units were repopulated with younger

tenants, predominantly students. Sandra doesn't recall any problems with the last wave of renters, describing life at The Terrace as "very harmonious" throughout her tenure. Amy and Bob remember everyone being "really friendly"—even with the turnover of neighbors in the last couple of years—although they do acknowledge that a sense of resignation did result in a degree of property neglect as forced relocation became more of a certainty. "Before people got booted out during those last few months," recalls Bob, "you'd get a leak in your sink, and you weren't going to break your neck trying to fix it. You'd give them [the landlords] a call, and if they came and fixed it, okay. And if they didn't, well don't hold your breath." Mrs. Johnson who had seen many tenants come and go over her tenureship commented in a press interview that, "All of these young people up and down the courtyard are lovely people. I've never met one who was disrespectful. They are some of the best neighbors I have ever had."<sup>226</sup> Gern, however, does recollect one household that proved to be problematic near the end—the punk house—but admits that they were an isolated case:

The Terrace was a really peaceful place. The only people I ever had any problems with were near the end was when these punk kids moved into one of the back cottages and tried to graffiti up the place. I didn't like that. But that's the only conflict that I can remember. I mean, they were pretty young and a little on the snotty side. It was just like, 'Come on. There are families living up here, and you don't need to do things like that.'

Peter and Todd, both of whom moved to Forbes Terrace just as some of the veteran Terracites were moving out, gave glowing accounts of *court-ordered living* that were nearly identical to those of their immediate predecessors. In addition, neither Peter

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<sup>226</sup> Deitch, 2000

nor Todd could be dismissed as “outsiders,” since both had been introduced into the Terrace through an existing network of tenants from CMU who had no doubt been well versed in the social dynamics of *court-ordered living*. While it is difficult to draw conclusions from this inconsistency in the qualitative research without further inquiry, it is nonetheless of interest to note that stage one displacees perceived newcomers to The Terrace as interlopers. Despite the fact that these early outmovers avoided the unsettling experience of forced relocation, they nonetheless left their Terrace homes with the sense that Forbes Terrace, as they had known it, was doomed to extinction and that the process was already well underway by the time the first proverbial foot was out the door. For some stage one displacees, “the writing on the wall” became more and more decipherable with each rookie Terracite who took up residence. These newcomers not only posed a potential threat to longstanding courtyard norms, but they were by default ineligible for long-term status, having been destined for displacement immediately upon arrival.

### **Stage Two Displacement:**

While there was a slow but steady attrition of tenants from Forbes Terrace over a period of several years, many of the residents took a “wait and see” approach, not fully taking in the imminence of their situation. WCP had not yet reached the top of the pecking order in Squirrel Hill’s real estate market, allowing for the possibility that another less rapacious developer might assume ownership of the property. There was also the sense that “the beating” WCP had taken in the press over the “Beacon

Gardens debacle” might well serve as a deterrent to any future investors who dared to behave so unconscionably. Sandra was among those Terracites who hoped for a better outcome and was completely taken off guard when she, along with her Forbes Terrace neighbors, received a certified letter from WCP in mid-April instructing tenants to vacate their units by the end of the month.<sup>227</sup>

I guess I was under the impression that we had a chance, that maybe we would actually be able to stay when the property went up for auction. And even if they [WCP] took over, I thought that maybe they had learned their lesson at Beacon Gardens, and that they would make sure not to repeat the same mistakes with us. You know, give us a little bit more leeway with time and be a little more flexible when it comes to preservation.

Such optimism proved to be unfounded. Sandra, along with the Terrace’s remaining tenants, was given even less consideration than Beacon Gardens’ displacees. WCP had in fact learned their lesson so well that there were no meetings and no discussions whatsoever. “We weren’t offered a rent break or even a priority on the new units,” Sandra recalls. “There certainly was no olive branch of any kind. It was more like “get out now!” Tenants who had bided their time, reluctant to move prematurely, were thrown into panic. “I was trying to find a house that I could afford that was big enough to keep my family together,” bewails Sandra.

But there just wasn’t enough time. I had to take my brother into account. He was the most important one because of his disability. But we couldn’t stay together as a family. There just wasn’t enough money to support everyone on one income. He had to temporarily move into a church member’s basement apartment. And even where he lives now, because of his disability and economic situation, he’s very isolated. He doesn’t have access to the same kind of community he did at Forbes Terrace, and he doesn’t have access to the same life style. He can’t just go down to Forbes and catch the bus or hang out at the library at the corner of the street. His quality of life has been totally compromised. It’s very sad for him.

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<sup>227</sup> That deadline was later pushed back until the end of May but did little to relieve the tension.

Sandra's brother is a prime example of how displacement can completely dismantle an individual's life—what geographer David Smith (1994) condemns as “a heinous act of injustice:”

[To] deprive people of their territory, their community or their home, would seem at first sight to be a heinous act of injustice. It would be like taking away any other source of basic need-satisfaction, on which people depend absolutely ...But this experience is not simply deprivation: there is a literal necessity to be re-placed. People who have lost their place, for one reason and another, must be provided with or find another. There is no question about it. People need it. They just do."<sup>228</sup>

Even though Sandra has managed to purchase a tiny house for herself and her children in a “stable” middle-class neighborhood not too far from The Terrace, she nonetheless feels that she has taken a “giant step down” from her previous life as a Terracite. “There really isn't the same sense of community here,” she opines.

I don't really feel a part of my street. Even though we have a block party every once in a while and even though there are different people who come and go, I don't feel a part of it... Economically, almost all of us at The Terrace were in the same boat, even though otherwise there was a lot of diversity. And that's the thing! There is a stereotype about economics which broke down in Forbes Terrace because you had people of different ages, people at different points in their life, different cultural backgrounds. We were all pretty much the same economically, but we were so different. When I left, it just wasn't the same. Now I live in a place that is suitable to my economic class, but I'm very isolated from that kind of diversity. I really don't like that. Now I have to really go out of my way to mix with people that are different from me. There really isn't the same sense of community. I'm not as connected. We all helped one another, and that's something that I really miss. ... It's just not the same. Truly, there really is a way to live, and there is a better way to live. And when you have a better way to live and you can't keep it because you're forced out, it really stinks... It didn't have to happen that way! If they [WCP] would just have taken the time and examined the alternatives, done some creative thinking, I think it could have worked out for everyone.

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<sup>228</sup> David M. Smith *Geography and Social Justice* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 152.

Sandra now needs to travel beyond the confines of her neighborhood to find the social and cultural stimulation that was previously just beyond her doorstep. Her experience is consistent with place theories that juxtapose the question of “Who am I” to the second question “Where am I.”<sup>229</sup> For Sandra, her place-identity as a Terracite and her experience of *court-ordered living* was such an essential component of her self-identity that she is now unable to fully acclimate to her new environment. Her displacement narrative parallels that of Beacon Garden displaces Felice and Phyllis—a journey from “existential insiderness” to “existential outsiderness.”

Gern was a little better prepared than Sandra to make a move when his notice to vacate finally arrived. Anticipating the worst, Gern had already put some of his belongings into storage and had begun the process of scouting for housing in the Regent Square area, a neighborhood where some friends from work were already living. “I guess at some point near the end I just kind of gave up,” repines Gern. I realized the handwriting was on the wall, and I had to get out whether I wanted to or not.” Nonetheless, the reality of saying his final goodbyes to Forbes Terrace proved to have had a lasting impact that has not completely dissipated with time. Although he now enjoys a spacious apartment with separate living and studio spaces, ostensibly a step up from the spare servant quarters that he occupied at The Terrace, Gern speaks of his rupture from his previous life at The Terrace as having caused irreparable damage. “There was a community *up there*,” he stresses.

I felt really broken at the end. I just reached a point where I had no fight left in me. It still feels like such a loss. It was more than just a place to live. It was my home. I feel very lost from that community. Some of it was more personal

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<sup>229</sup> See Proshansky, 1983; Dixon and Durrheim, 2000.

stuff. Some of it was just the place itself and some of it was all the friends that I lost as everyone went their separate ways. I really wish that that it could have gone on.

Gern confesses that he probably could have afforded to muster together the higher rent had he been willing to move back following “renovation.” “But, I couldn’t stand to stay there and watch the place turn into something totally different from everything that meant something to me.”

Even some of the student population, whom one might surmise to be far more resilient than their older and more settled neighbors in The Terrace, continue to experience a sense of dislocation in the near decade since their departure. “When we got kicked out it was a devastating blow,” insists Todd:

It [Forbes Terrace] had such a spirit of originality, a real creative edge and killer people. It really was an alternative space, very *avant-garde*. It was such a profound experience living there. I think it’s now in my DNA. It was so impactful... After we left, we found a great place in Squirrel Hill to rent, but nothing that compared to The Terrace. Year after year, whenever I’ve moved, whether it was Chicago or New York, I kept looking for something like The Terrace. I would walk into something that was called a Terrace or a Court, but it wasn’t even close... My wife and I now live in a condo in Chicago’s West Loop that has “Terrace” affixed to its name, but it’s a joke. There’s a common area between the buildings with some sloping greens, and there are some benches and trees. But no one ever uses it. There’s no epic staircase like at The Terrace. It’s not this magical place once you get into it. It just a space you drive by on the way to the garage. It’s not truly a courtyard.

Todd’s confessions that he now considers Forbes Terrace to be part of his DNA is one of the singularly most telling statements made by any of the informants in this study. His poignant metaphor breathes fresh air into studies on place and identity that have theorized environments as more than just settings in which identity can be

established and developed but rather more significantly as self-referent locations that constitute identity itself.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> See Graumann, 1983; Korpela, 1989; Giuliani, 1992; Twigger and Uzzell, 1996.



## PART 3: POST DISPLACEMENT

### Chapter Five: I'm Still Myself Inside

I can go far away, or dream anything,  
Or wear a scary costume or act like a king.  
I can change all my names  
And find a place to hide.  
I can do almost anything, but  
I'm still myself,  
I'm still myself,  
I'm still myself inside.

*Fred M. Rogers, 1990*

#### “Making Something Tangible Out of Nostalgia”

The term “nostalgia” was coined in 1699 to describe loss of home as a life-threatening condition—a concept that largely corresponds with the body of literature on grief reactions to displacement from the annals of environmental psychology.<sup>231</sup> Yet “nostalgia” has in modern times taken on the connotation of signifying a utopian sense of the past. I myself, during the course of this study, have on occasion questioned to what extent the research data might be reflective of informants’ idealization of their courtyard histories. I have nonetheless concluded that the unanimously positive associations recounted by Squirrel Hill’s courtyard denizens suggests that their collective narrative of *court-ordered living* cannot be discounted as

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<sup>231</sup> The term “nostalgia” is formed from two Greek roots: *nostos*, meaning a “return home” and *algia* meaning “pain.” The Oxford English Dictionary defines nostalgia as “a form of melancholia caused by prolonged absence from one’s home or country; severe homesickness.” The word nostalgia was coined in 1688 by a Swiss medical student, Johannes Hofer, in his publication entitled “Medical Dissertation on Nostalgia, or Homesickness.” See Robert Clark, “Nostalgia,” *The Literary Encyclopedia*, first published November 19, 2005; last revised April 05, 2007. <http://www.litencyc.com/php/stoics.php?rec=true&UID=1642> (accessed December 27, 2010).

a mere chimera. Additionally, the contemporary historical record—primarily press interviews with tenants that proliferated between 1998 and 2000—are entirely consistent with current accounts. Finally, as a former courtyard resident myself, I have drawn on my own life history that is largely consanguineous with the collective narrative of *court-ordered living*.

Hence, for the purpose of this study, I have settled on a definition of nostalgia that is closer to its earliest origins—namely a sense of ongoing *homesickness* for a lost place that continues to inhabit the present in both subtle and not so subtle ways. Fred Rogers’ song, Trees, Trees,

**Tree, Tree, Tree**

Tree, tree, tree,  
tree, tree, tree,  
tree, tree, tree,  
Tree, tree, tree.

We love you,  
Yes, we do.  
Yes, we do,  
We love you.

*By Fred Rogers, 1970*

*(On one of Yo-Yo Ma’s visits to Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood he played Tree, Tree, Tree on his cello.)*

Trees, serves as a metaphor for the uprooting of a socio-spatial ecosystem that sought fertile ground for transplantation in the post-displacement landscape.

The previous chapters have explored tenants’ experiences with *court-ordered living* and losses associated with the displacement process. Although informants in each of the communities studied did engage in nominal acts of resistance to protest gentrification, particularly the Beacon Gardens residents who were initially hopeful that justice might prevail, the ultimate outcome was forced relocation and the denial of preservation initiatives. Given the disparity of power between the multiple actors

in most gentrifying landscapes, such an outcome is hardly unexpected.<sup>232</sup> Yet this ethnographic study moves beyond the experience of displacement to examine the ways in which the tenants of Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace were able to reclaim their sense of agency in their post-displacement landscapes. Through interpersonal interactions, residential choices, and creative endeavors, most tenants were able to mitigate their feelings of loss and—to quote Sarah—move on “to make something tangible out of nostalgia.” This process of reaffirmation entailed active engagement with two temporal moments—the tapping of intellectual and affective responses rooted in the past (mental and/or embodied memories of *court-ordered living* and its sudden dissolution) as vehicles for regaining a sense of agency in the present. In this sense nostalgia is not defined as the passive longing for a bygone era but rather is understood as an instrumental force that holds the potential for transforming the here and now through performances of place-identity.

According to anthropologists Andrew Strathern and Pamela J. Stewart, the reconstruction of lived space is not about re-creation or replication of a prior environment, but rather is the reconstitution and rebuilding that is based on the footprints of an embodied past:

When people move to new places they bring a corpus of cognitive and bodily experience with them. New places are “inscribed” by incomers with the remembered experiences of previously lived places [both physical and imagined] and identities are formed through amalgamations of previous and

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<sup>232</sup> A case study that eerily parallels Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace is Christie Court, a bungalow court in Santa Monica that was denied historic status in 2004 despite a massive effort on the part of community activists. “The City Council found itself having to choose between developers and preservationists and, once again, the developers won,” reported Gene Williams, staff writer for “The Lookout News.” [http://www.surfsantamonica.com/ssm\\_site/the\\_lookout/news/News-2005/July-2005/07\\_28\\_05\\_Bungalow\\_Complex\\_Denied.htm](http://www.surfsantamonica.com/ssm_site/the_lookout/news/News-2005/July-2005/07_28_05_Bungalow_Complex_Denied.htm) (accessed Sept. 10, 2010).

currently lived emplacements within political, religious, geographical, and social environments that are very much individual and shared constructs of the mind and of bodily experience.<sup>233</sup>

Of all the displaced tenants that I interviewed, Serge's idealization of Beacon Gardens was among the most poignant. "I just remember so much green," recalls Serge. "Everything was green, and the sun was shining through, and you could smell the fresh air... My family lived in a small, dark apartment in a huge complex in the Soviet Union, and here it was like the total opposite." Beyond Serge's unrestrained joy in his memories of the physical environment of Beacon Gardens, it is his all-encompassing appreciation of the social fabric of the community that has continued to resonate in his life post-displacement. "Growing up at Beacon Gardens has definitely helped me learn how to socialize well," effuses Serge:

There's no doubt about that! I know it helped me. It was great! I mean, not speaking the language and having all these kids like just around you, and trying to help you out, and just hanging out. It was really nice to have the support of the community. I don't think there could have been a better experience when my family moved here, because if we had lived somewhere else, I think they would have been really paranoid. My dad's already a very paranoid person. He is a product of the Soviet Union. When we moved here and everyone was so wonderful, and everyone took the time to say, 'Hi! How are you?' It really made a big difference for all of us. It was fantastic. I'm so glad I grew up at Beacon Gardens. I would never trade it for anything.

Serge ended our interview on a note of appreciation, thanking me for resurrecting Beacon Gardens for him to revisit—"...sort of a way of honoring the past." Although Serge may have left The Court pushing a shopping cart stuffed with his personal belongings, his sense of self needed no external props for transport. Having

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<sup>233</sup> Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern, "Body and Mind on the Move: Emplacement, Displacement, and Trans-placement in Highlands Papua New Guinea. Revised version of the paper presented at the 18th Conference of International Association of Historians of Asia (IAHA), December 2004: 6-10. [http://www.rcss.sinica.edu.tw/capas/publication/newsletter/N27/2704\\_03.pdf](http://www.rcss.sinica.edu.tw/capas/publication/newsletter/N27/2704_03.pdf) (accessed Oct. 2, 2010).

internalized the social principles of *court-ordered living*, Serge remains close to friends from The Court and only hopes that someday his own children might also enjoy the benefits of living in such a “caring environment.”

While a strong connection has survived between the families of school-age children at Beacon Gardens, as in the case of Serge and Mac, most of the displaced tenants have drifted apart over time and place. Nonetheless, an acquired appreciation for “intimate” city living remains one of Beacon Gardens’ most enduring legacies for those displacees who have been scattered near and far. All but one of the displacees who participated in this study have chosen to settle in compact city neighborhoods where there is a greater probability of everyday friendly encounters and easy access to urban cultural institutions. Only one female informant reported that she now has a suburban address. She is quick to clarify, however, that the suburban township where she currently resides is not a good fit. “It’s a nice area, but it’s not me,” she confesses:

If it was up to me, I’d move back to Squirrel Hill in a heartbeat. But my husband [she married after leaving Beacon Gardens] is dead set against it. I know I can’t go *home* again, but I’d like to at least try to regain some of that experience. We had everything there: the courtyard, all the interesting people, great restaurants and we were so close to Oakland with all the museums and cultural centers.

Hummon (1990) suggests that distinctiveness of place-identity is confirmed when an individual distinguishes himself or herself from others with statements such as “I’m a city person,” defining oneself as distinct from another type of person. Feldman (1990, 1996) further elaborates on Hummon’s “distinctiveness” theory, arriving at the term “settlement-identity” to account for why people identify strongly with certain types of places:

Place attachments are developed through an individual's habitual and satisfying everyday experiences of the tangible surroundings of home place. Through these experiences the home becomes an enduring symbol of self, of the continuity of experiences, and of that which is significant and valued by the inhabitant.<sup>234</sup>

Feldman's empirical studies in residential mobility suggest that people form place bonds to a type of settlement (city, suburban, or rural contexts) that are often sustained over a lifetime. For Beacon Gardens tenants who had been immersed in the socio-spatial practices of *court-ordered living*, locational preferences following displacement extended beyond Feldman's broad categories of city, suburban, and rural to include more finely grained distinctions in the social and physical fabric of targeted destination communities.

Andy and Sarah see many commonalities between their choice of neighborhoods in San Francisco and their prior experiences as residents of Beacon Gardens. "We have some really cool neighbors in the little section of the city where we live now," reflects

Andy:

And it's a really a very varied group of people. There's like these old Italian immigrants who have been there for 50 years. And then there's a guy who is like a total character who plays with a band and dresses up like an old lady sometimes. Our upstairs neighbors are kind of corporate professional types. Then next to us are these artist potters. So we sort of have the same eclectic feel as we had at Beacon Gardens... Those were very formative years for us. Very formative!

Sarah nods in agreement: "Sometimes we think we should move to an apartment more sunny, a little warmer, because we're on the first floor. It's really cold. But we always come back to the fact that we love our neighbors." Similarly Chris, the tenant

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<sup>234</sup> Roberta Feldman, "Constancy and Change In Attachments To Types Of Settlements," *Environment and Behavior* 28 (July, 1996), 419-446.

who suffered multiple evictions from WCP, finally purchased a house of his own in Pittsburgh's historic Mexican War Streets. He draws strong parallels between his prior residences and his current neighborhood:

One of the main reasons why I moved to the Mexican War Streets is because the very first day I went to look at a house everyone in the neighborhood was really friendly and talked to me about what a great community it is. And I met so many people that day, and it just reminded me of all the things that I had lost in terms of community because of what happened with Walnut Capital.

Valerie, who currently resides in center city Philadelphia, describes the unusually narrow street on which she lives as “very comforting.” “I’ve really gotten to know my neighbors,” she says, “and there’s that whole sense of community that comes from living in that kind of contained space.” Two of the tenants from the Goth House who presently rent a row house on a small street in Squirrel Hill, enjoy a sense of neighborly camaraderie that is not unlike the experience of living at The Court. “All of the houses here are connected, and all of them have back yards that adjoin,” she explains. “So it’s all a very open community, and we can all just walk around and visit in each other’s yards.” In fact, almost all of Beacon Gardens’ displaced tenants have been able to find housing with outdoor spaces for gardening, socializing and/or communing with nature—all requirements that have proved to be very highly valued. Sarah and Andy’s San Francisco apartment has a small front patio where they maintain a little garden. “Having a connection to the outdoors was something we just were not willing to sacrifice after living at Beacon Gardens,” asserts Sarah. “We could compromise on interior space but not on the outdoors.” Karin and her husband, who moved into a second floor duplex in Squirrel Hill still manage to get their “nature fix.” Their unit is replete with an enclosed deck surrounded by mature trees that simulates the experience of living in a tree-house, a small but essential

compensation for having been banished from what Karin playfully still refers to as “Eden.” Even Chris, who still harbors resentment towards WCP over his razed garden has found a satisfactory outlet for his lingering grievances. “When I finally purchased my own home,” he boasts, “one of my first projects was to fix up my backyard so I could have a garden. That was my very first priority.” Chris gives me his web address that takes me to photos of an enclosed rear yard under construction, a little haven to accommodate a private garden that will remain undisturbed from the intrusions of the outside world.

In addition to outdoor spaces, most of the tenants interviewed expressed an appreciation for the interiors of Beacon Gardens, and several were successful in finding housing of a comparable era and aesthetic. “My house has a similar feel to Beacon Gardens,” expounds Tom. “The rich wood, the cabinet built-ins, the mantels that are not ornate, the simple lines, the style of window casements, and just the flow of the open floor plan.” Karin notes the same list of Craftsman features that characterize her upper-floor duplex:

There are definitely commonalities between this place and The Court. The built-ins are almost exactly the same, and everything is crafted from old sturdy wood. We were really looking for a place that was built around that time [first quarter of the twentieth century] because we like that feeling of lots of wood surfaces. Here we have all hardwood floors and some of the doors that are original. Yeah! There are a lot of things that are very similar. And since we really left Beacon Gardens with the feeling we weren’t ready to go, finding this place was like a little bit easier of a let down, being that we were so bummed [Fig. 69].





**Fig. 69. Karin's dining room: above and below, a Beacon Gardens dining room (upper photograph by author and lower photograph from Walnut Capital Partners' marketing website)**

Not coincidentally, another displacee from Beacon Gardens rented the near identical downstairs unit of the duplex, unbeknownst to Karin and Sean. “We were really surprised when we found out that Kathy was moving in downstairs. We already knew her from The Gardens, so that was really a plus.” Although I did not have the opportunity to interview Kathy, I think it not unlikely that her choice of housing was inspired, at least in part, by the same aesthetic sensibilities that had attracted Karin and Sean. Phyllis has moved into a tiny ranch-like house, but she’s still trying to figure out what she can do to create a more inviting environment. “Having an Arts and Crafts house for all of those years was really important to me,” Phyllis repines.

“Every time I see stuff from that period, I just want to go with it, even though I’m not sure if it works with my house.<sup>235</sup> Like I’d love to have Frank Lloyd Wright panels for my front door.” On her dining room table Phyllis assembles for me some samples of decorative motifs that she intends to incorporate into her home in hopes of recapturing the Craftsman ambience that she once enjoyed at Beacon Gardens. Although Phyllis’ existing environment is not entirely consistent with her previously established place-identity, she nonetheless continues to contemplate how she might rectify this sense of incongruity by incorporating physical elements of her prior residences into her current home.

Early in my interviews, when I first asked informants what aspects of their life at Beacon Gardens they took away with them, I had anticipated responses similar to those documented above relating to the physical and social fabric of the built environment. But I soon discovered that tenants carried with them other practices born from their lived experiences that speak to the complexity of residual place-making that I had not foreseen. Several of the informants spoke of commitment to responsible rehabilitation that influenced their choices of housing. Andy and Sarah, both ardent preservationists, were unwilling to compromise in their post Beacon Garden housing. Prior to moving to San Francisco, they lived for a short while in an aging apartment house that met their criteria for “responsible rehab.” “When we

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<sup>235</sup> Phyllis’ place-identity is not only linked to Beacon Gardens but also to a particular architectural aesthetic and ideology. Prior to her move into Beacon Gardens, Phyllis had lived in a single-family home that was not so coincidentally also designed by Frederick Scheibler—the Mushroom House—a popular Squirrel Hill landmark. Although Phyllis did not initially know that Scheibler was the architect for Beacon Gardens, she reported that she felt almost immediately at home upon moving into The Court, a fact that she attributed to the Arts and Crafts sensibilities of both residences.

finally realized we really going to have to move,” recalls Sarah, “we were looking frantically for a place everyday:”

And finally we settled on this one apartment because the landlords, a biracial couple, really cared about the neighborhood and were investing in a block that was rundown ... and they were really focused on preserving as much as they could, saving, you know, the tile, the woodwork, keeping everything they could and trying to keep the neighborhood together too.

Valerie, another of Beacon Garden’s eco-conscious displacees, first moved from Beacon Gardens into a building that had been rehabbed by a female developer – “a rehab that I supported,” she notes. [Fig. 70]

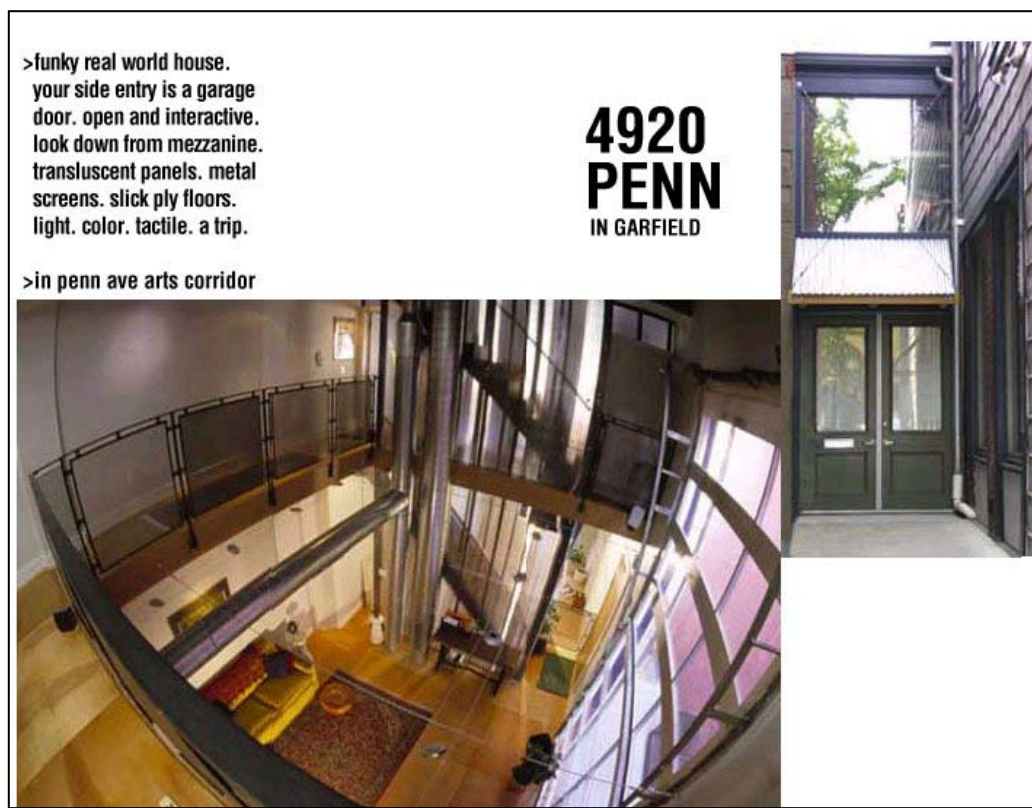


Fig. 70. Valerie’s rehabbed condo in Garfield (advertisement from “Lofts in Pittsburgh” website)

It was a vacant shell that she [the developer] turned into like a loft house that was all open in the middle like an interior courtyard. I think that my place had been a business, and it had a fire at some point, so it was abandoned. She did a whole bunch of rehabilitations that were really good, you know, buying vacant factories and converting them into lofts. I filled my courtyard-like interior with lots of potted plants, so it had an indoor/outdoor feel to it. And there was a big sliding glass garage door, not intended for a car, but just so it opened the whole space to the outside.

Despite Valerie's good intentions, some gentrification watchdogs have made the case that even the upgrading of previously vacant properties may lead to "price shadowing" that affects the rents and property prices of households in close proximity, creating displacement pressures on those with fewer resources.<sup>236</sup> Valerie has since moved to Philadelphia where she has completed a masters program in City Planning at The University of Pennsylvania. She now works as an advocate for residents in a poor urban neighborhood that has been targeted for gentrification. Looking back, she still considers the shabby treatment of Beacon Gardens' displaced tenants to have been highly "unethical" and the proposal to turn the commons into a parking lot "an atrocity." Elaborating further in an email, Valerie explains:

Beacon Gardens was really unique in its spatial layout and its natural interior. In an age where progressive developers are trying so hard to integrate sustainable principles, Beacon Gardens already met the criteria of good green design. To integrate nature well in an urban setting is highly valuable, and it's too bad the developer was too short-sighted to see this. These kinds of poor decisions [and I've seen many of them in this car-crazy culture] have led me to become a city-planner and advocate for more people-friendly developments, neighborhoods, and regions.

While Valerie works to safeguard fragile communities from developers like WCP, other displacees of Beacon Gardens have taken less visible yet meaningful actions to

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<sup>236</sup> See Hall and Ogden, 1992 and Neil Smith, 1996.

empower themselves as well as to protect others from abusive landlords. Two tenants who took legal action against WCP feel that they have, in part, been compensated for the shabby treatment they experienced at the hands of the developers. Several other tenants attempted to unseat the local councilman, Bob O'Connor, who had unapologetically sided with WCP against his own constituents. They take some satisfaction in having voiced their discontent in the public square during his mayoral campaign, even though he won the election. More circuitously, some tenants have sought out opportunities to cast aspersion on WCP's dubious business practices within the context of their everyday business encounters. "I wasn't going to walk away with my tail between my legs," spouts one very disgruntled evictee speaking for both himself and his roommate immediately following their displacement.

So when I started looking for a new place I made sure that none of our prospects had any ties to WCP. We actually discovered that a lot of other landlords, especially ones that were run as investments by professionals, you know, like lawyers and doctors, hated Walnut Capital. We were not shy about letting our feelings be known, and they were not shy about hearing what we had to say. Since then, I've never missed an opportunity to discredit them [WCP], and I think their reputation has followed them.

One displaced tenant, who has become involved in development himself, takes particular pleasure in dissuading other companies from doing business with WCP, while yet another displacee—now a landlord in his own right—uses WCP as his personal measure for "how not to be a bad landlord."

As illustrated in this section, Beacon Gardens' tenants enacted multiple and varied roles as agents in the construction of their post-displacement landscapes. It was Sarah, however, who really caught my investigative attention after I happened upon her web gallery even prior to our first meeting. Sarah's "political and environmental tableaux

reassessments” exemplify how place-identity can be continually reconstituted in the imagination [Figs. 71, 72 & 73]. Exploring the destructive relationship of humans with nature in her haunting canvasses and installations, Sarah hearkens back to Beacon Gardens and its regrettable despoliation. Frequently adopting the iconography of tree stumps, she creates intersections between her experiences at The Court and larger social issues—what she in her own words describes as—“making something tangible out of nostalgia.” A mission statement posted on her website elaborates further:

In capitalist America today, nature is dead. Tamed, cleared, cut, paved over, polluted or lost forever by Man's hand. The destructive nature of how we live today fosters a deep longing for a return to a time and place where the land was unspoiled. I try to make something tangible out of that nostalgia by piecing together decorative and narrative elements with the mood and mystery of old images to create allegorical pieces dense with associations.  
<http://www.sarahasmith.com/>

During our interview session and subsequent email correspondence, Sarah made several definitive connections between her artistic output and her ongoing “yearning” for Beacon Gardens:

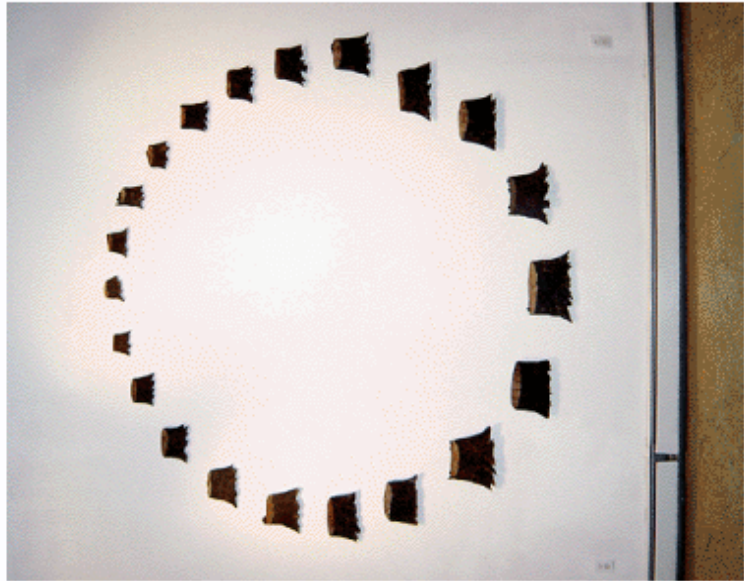
I think I was deeply affected by the shocking image of our beautiful courtyard soon after they cut down all the trees and the place was reduced to a muddy wasteland of huge stumps. There were tire tracks from bulldozers zigzagging through it all, and that certainly left an impression that has influenced my art in terms of content and images... I would say that my use of tree stumps are visual reminders of a decision made that can never be undone.



**Fig. 71. Sarah working on one of her “environmental reassessment” tableaux**



**Fig. 72. Sarah’s foray into public art (courtesy of Sarah Smith)**



**Fig. 73. More of Sarah's tree trunks (courtesy of Sarah Smith). The large image is named "Sustained Illusion."**



I was particularly intrigued by an image I found on Sarah's website of a stump assemblage mounted on the wall of the construction site in Brooklyn. So I asked her to explain to me her intent:

Not much thought went into it at the time. The gallery where I was part of a group show back in Feb. 2006 was just 3 doors down from this site. I had made this piece the night before. It's got all the leftover leaves and unused stumps from the large installation I made for the gallery. I nailed everything onto this found piece of wood and had planned to hang it inside the gallery, but it really didn't seem to go well in there. Mounting it on the plywood wall at the construction site just seemed the right thing to do! So, it became my first foray into public art as a kind of statement about the environment.

Andy, who is also an artist, presented some interesting insights into Sarah's art and its relationship to Beacon Gardens

Well it seemed to me that Sarah had stopped making art for a while around the time we were evicted from Beacon Gardens. And it seemed like because of the political climate, and then the whole Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> thing, and the aftereffects of all that stuff... that it all suddenly made sense. Like things that happened at Beacon Gardens are just sort of miniscule versions of some of these political maneuvers that have always happened that are so destructive and so kind of short sighted ... And it's like on a small scale it's the same exact thing. And so to me, like there's a very strong connection. Her political and environmental reassessment tableaus make perfect sense coming out of the experience we had at Beacon Gardens, and I have always thought that the stumps she was painting directly connected those two things.

Andy has also contributed to Sarah's work by providing much of the recycled materials that she integrates into her paintings. "I've helped Sarah because I'm always pulling things out of the trash. The real material history has been very important to the symbolic significance of her work." Recycled materials also "drive" Andy's own body of work as he explains in his own mission statement posted on his website:

All objects have a beginning and an end, at least when it comes to our economic value system. Objects allude to reference points in the built landscape, our own reality, and we reinforce this structural vernacular on many levels from the cubes that we live in to what we imagine a fence “means”. Our burning need to make order out of chaos subsides only briefly before our true entopic nature overrides us and trashes it all. Mining San Francisco's dumpsters, I salvage wood strips of plaster lath discarded during home renovation projects and re-assemble them into geometric wall drawings and structures... Their history, both natural and as a building material, form the basis of their re-use (<http://www.andyvogt.com/>) [Fig. 74].

During my visit with Andy and Sarah, we all acknowledge the obvious links between their eco-art and Beacon Gardens. It is only as I am about to say my final goodbyes, however, that I notice a lone dollhouse propped on a shelf in Andy and Sarah's studio [Fig. 75]. The miniature, I am told, was rescued, by Andy from a trash heap and now sits in a shelf in their studio. Andy jokingly draws parallels between his dollhouse and Beacon Gardens, pointing out its gabled entry and slate roof. The three of us laugh and bemusedly consider its possible significance. Rescued from certain demolition, I later muse, the toy house has unwittingly found its niche as a *placescape*, a site that is bound together through the immaterial bond of memory and imagination—a testament to the continual recapitulation of place-making across both time and space.

In my conversations with tenants from Forbes Terrace, I was struck by how similar their stories of relocation were to those related by Beacon Gardens' displacees. Paramount among informants' priorities in their choice of post-displacement housing was the desire for a community in which neighborliness extended beyond the perfunctory polite exchange.



**Fig. 74. Andy's installation made from recycled building materials (courtesy of Andy Vogt)**



**Fig. 75. The dollhouse reminiscent of Beacon Gardens (photograph by author)**

Although Amy and Bob look back at Forbes Terrace as near ideal, they nonetheless consider their current living arrangement “pretty good.” “We live on a block of row houses with adjoining backyards,” explains Amy:

We hang out with our neighbors all the time. The kids can just run back and forth between the different places, and we’re always having impromptu cookouts and other activities together. It’s more than, ‘can I borrow a cup of sugar?’ We’re really close with our neighbors. It’s not The Terrace, but it has some of that same feel to it.

Bob concurs with his wife, expounding further on the similarities between their current residence and Forbes Terrace:

We’re really tight with our neighbors, and there’s some real diversity here too. One of the houses in our row is being rented right now by three freshly minted policemen from the academy here. I mean, we have some pretty unusual neighbors, and I mean that in a good way. That’s one of the things you take from living in places like Forbes Terrace instead of like living in some Ryan Home or condo complex where everything is homogeneous. You relish the interesting people! And even if they don’t seem so interesting right off, a lot of times you’re surprised. Having lived with a bunch of oddballs at The Terrace, we’ve become really open to other people. We could never move to a place where people are more interested in building fences than getting to know each other.

Sallyann has also settled comfortably into the home she purchased in Friendship (a transitioning working-class neighborhood) following her early departure from The Terrace. “I’ll always miss Forbes Terrace,” Sallyann admits, “but I really like living here [Friendship] because I still have that strong sense of community:”

It’s kind of like the way things operated in The Terrace. There are people on my block who have lived here for 20 or 30 years, but there’s also a bunch of new people. And there is this dynamic that goes on, what I call ‘the friendship syndrome,’ that is very much like the way it was at Forbes Terrace. When we moved here, the long-term residents picked up very quickly that we care about our neighborhood. I just think that our sense of community coming from The Terrace just clicked with theirs [the long-term residents] because it is more of a struggling neighborhood, similar in a lot of ways to The Terrace. So the guy in the back who shovels the alley behind our house and does all

kinds of different things that benefit everyone feels comfortable coming over to us and complaining about some of the other neighbors who keep more to themselves and just don't seem to care about what goes on.

Sallyann's description of the social dynamics in her post Terrace neighborhood demonstrates the manner in which she has successfully incorporated some of the communal aspects of *court-ordered living* into her current living situation.

While Bob and Amy and Sallyann transitioned quickly into living environments that were simpatico with The Terrace, Peter's journey was far more protracted. "I've been trying to recreate that environment we had at Forbes Terrace ever since I left there," insists Peter who moved to New York a few years after leaving The Terrace:

When I moved from Forbes Terrace I took with me a distrust of landlords and real estate people. I had a fear of being taken advantage of. It changed my attitude about how you deal with people who have power over you. I didn't feel stable. I wanted to secure a place of my own. I became an advocate for tenant rights, not just for myself but also for my friends. The whole business with Forbes Cottages and Beacon Gardens and The Terrace affected a lot of people. But I guess there are no laws to protect people's feelings.

Peter further believes that his experiences at The Terrace and his subsequent displacement set him on a nine year trajectory that has finally brought him "full circle" to a place where he can call "home."

Being a struggling artist in New York, I didn't have a lot of options. But I think that one of the reasons that I worked so hard to build my art career was my desire to get enough money together to recapture something like I had at Forbes Terrace. It took me nine years, but I just moved to Brooklyn and my block is the closest I've come to rebuilding the life I had back then. I was attracted to it [the block on which he lives] because it reminds me of Forbes Terrace. It's probably one of the greenest streets in my neighborhood and even though it's not a courtyard, they abut each other [the houses], so we're really close to our neighbors... I'm really trying to rebuild that sense of community, everyone getting together and sharing. One of the first things I want to do is to plant a community vegetable garden. I'm going to rebuild that community that I lost nine years ago. It's like I've come full circle. I took me nearly a decade, but I'm finally where I want to be.

Unlike Sarah who has used her art (the iconic tree stumps) directly as an outlet to express her “yearning” for Beacon Gardens, Peter has literally capitalized on his artistic production to recreate a facsimile of his life at Forbes Terrace. J.E. Malpas, professor of Philosophy at the University of Tasmania, proposes in his book *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (1999: 180-181) that

To have a sense of one’s own past is to have a grasp of one’s own present and future in relation to ‘the story’ of one’s embodied activity within particular spaces and with respect to particular objects and person. The past cannot be pried away from the places—that is, from objects and person as they interact within particular spatio-temporal regions—with respect to which the past is established. This is so with respect both to the past that can be recounted as part of a personal biography and to the past that is articulated through communal narrative and history.

Sarah’s and Peter’s personal biographies, as well as the communal history established from the collective narratives of *court-ordered living*, underscore how “the past can not be pried away” from particular “spatio-temporal regions.” For Sandra, however, who has not been able to assuage her profound sense of loss since departing from Forbes Terrace, there remains a sense that the past has in fact been “pried-away” and that her present is lacking in comparison. Like Phyllis, Sandra has taken some comfort in her current housing, namely its “Arts and Crafts feel” that is somewhat reminiscent of Forbes Terrace. “My house is about the same era as Forbes Terrace,” explains Sandra, “and that’s one of the things that sold me on the place.”

It has little square windows in the living room and dining room with little wood mullions that remind me of my old house. And it has a fireplace with a nice wood mantle and wood floors and stairs. I may never fit into this neighborhood, but at least I have my little Craftsman house which is some small consolation for all that I lost.

Gern, like Sandra, retains a fair amount of nostalgia for Forbes Terrace, but he has found some very practical as well as creative channels for mitigating his sense of loss—especially in respect to his garden. In fact, Gern devised a strategy to salvage whatever remained of his garden—an impulse reminiscent of Chris, who was compelled to transplant his vegetable garden to Wightman Place. With great earnestness, Gern described to me his “horticultural rescue mission” that continued for several years following his displacement:

It broke my heart to see my garden uprooted, so I tried to save whatever I could. The place I moved into after The Terrace only has a very small plot in the front, and I really needed some time to figure out how I was going to make a garden. So I took my Corallorhiza plant, a rare native wisteria, to my parents who live in West Virginia, and that got saved. The rest of the garden I parceled out to my friends from The Terrace. They kept them in their gardens until some of them moved on to more permanent places, and then they [the plants] came back to me. My friends would ask if I had room for them [the plants] and I'd say, 'There's room! I'll find room.' So over time a lot of my plants that got uprooted came back to me, and they're in my garden now. It's a little piece of my life from Forbes Terrace that I've been able to hold on to.

Gern has not only maximized his small front yard to nurture his peripatetic garden, but he has also used his artistic ingenuity to commemorate a funky bathtub garden that had been somewhat of a curiosity at Forbes Terrace [Fig. 76]. The bathtub had been salvaged from a nearby building—an ecological as well as aesthetic statement on Gern's part. Using a series of photographs and film that he had taken of his now defunct garden of recycled materials intermingled with a variety of plantings, Gern assembled an art installation entitled “The Krebs Cycle.” Pulling a CD of photographs from his office desk to bring up images on his computer, Gern proceeds to tell me about his bathtub garden and the installation it inspired:



**Fig. 76. The bathtub garden and upper left seeds sprouting (photograph by Gern Roberts)**

While I was still living at Forbes Terrace in the late 90s, I photographed and filmed my garden as it developed over one year. Then later, in 2003 or 2004, I did an installation called “The Krebs Cycle” using those photographs. It involved scientific images of how we view the cultivation of plants, and it also involved Native American symbology—how we cultivate the land. The installation had 3D transparencies of my garden as it evolved through a yearly cycle... WC tried to destroy my garden, but they weren’t able to destroy the idea of it.

Nor was “The Krebs Cycle” Gern’s only art installation that was inspired by his bereavement over Forbes Terrace. In response to his eviction from The Terrace, Gern staged a performance called “A Frozen Moment” [Fig. 77]. “I printed up a whole lot of historical black and white photographs of Forbes Terrace and used them as icing on cakes,” Gern effuses.





**Fig. 77. A frozen moment with black memorial ribbon (photographs by Gern Roberts)**

I stored them in a freezer to be served at this fundraiser—a one-night event at the Strip District. I just carved those cakes up and kept serving them to people at the event. It was my little protest, how a whole way of life can just disappear.

Before I concluded my visit with Gern, he directed my attention to a photo collage of flora tacked to his wall that he identified as blooms from his Forbes Terrace garden [Fig. 78]. Sitting on his desk directly below the collage he pointed out an enlarged photo of a corn stalk—an image taken from his vegetable garden and framed in cornhusks preserved from the very same plot as the photographed corn [Fig. 79]. “I made multiple copies of the corn-stalked framed photo,” Gern recalls, “and I gave them away to some of my friends at The Terrace for Christmas gifts one year. These scattered memorabilia construed from remnants of Forbes Terrace’s past serve as mini *placescapes*, not only for Gern, but for all those Terracites who continue to



**Figs. 78 and 79. Gern's collage of garden blooms from Forbes Terrace and right his corn construction (photograph by Gern Roberts)**

retain some small seeds of nostalgia for a bygone era that has found fertile ground in new sites of habitation.

### **“There Goes Another Property”**

Beyond the changes to Squirrel Hill's courtyard complexes that have already been examined in the previous sections, there remain unanswered questions pertaining to the impact of these changes on the overall cultural landscape of Squirrel Hill.

Preservationist Terry Necciai shared the following commentary with me:

It was very complex! The powers to be in the city were not ready to deal with the idea that enough time has passed to consider Squirrel Hill historic. The city preferred to put their heads in the sand and say, ‘Well that’s twentieth century, and we don’t need to worry about that in terms of preservation.’ But Hamilton Cottage was the tip of a very large iceberg for Squirrel Hill, and the titanic was coming right at us... There were places like Hamilton Cottages that everyone knew would be coming up for sale when the Watkins estate went on the market. The changes that they [the city] were allowing Walnut

Capital to make were not just architectural. There was the whole perspective from the social fabric side. I would say for us [preservation activists] it was really kind of a gateway project [Beacon Gardens], because we were anticipating what was going to happen down the line, and we were thinking, ‘what about the rest of Squirrel Hill?’ I mean, if you ask the question, ‘Why does Squirrel Hill look the way it does, why doesn’t it look like Manchester or the South Side?’ and the answer is because Squirrel Hill isn’t just a neighborhood. It’s hundreds of Hamilton Cottages. They all don’t have courtyards—there are only a few that do—but it’s what Hamilton Cottages set the tone for. There is no question that on paper it was easy to identify Beacon Gardens as something distinguishable, but there is also no question that it was an avalanche, and part of the avalanche was a social avalanche.

Terry’s reference to “a social avalanche” links place-identity to historic preservation and concerns in the planning and design community worldwide about the loss of individuality and distinctiveness between different places as an effect of cultural globalization.<sup>237</sup>

In actuality, Terry’s prophecy has been realized as WCP has bought up much of the multifamily housing complexes in Squirrel Hill and squeezed out the broad mix of socio-economic groups that until recently populated the neighborhood.<sup>238</sup> This “avalanche” of displacement and obstruction to preservation initiatives gathered momentum even with the founding of The Squirrel Hill Historical Society in 2000, the collective initiative of Terry and Sharyn. While these two founding members have since relocated to northern Virginia, the organization has nevertheless grown into a well-established Squirrel Hill institution, albeit not necessarily as it was originally conceived. The Society is not an activist institution but rather focuses its attention on

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<sup>237</sup> See Zetter and Watson, 2006.

<sup>238</sup> There are still old houses that have been broken up for cheap student rentals in Squirrel Hill, what one informant referred to as “dumps.” But even these multi-family conversions are quickly disappearing as the neighborhood continues to upscale. Some have been razed for new condos while others have been converted into religious centers for the ultra-Orthodox community. Many have been purchased by individual households and returned to their original function as single-family homes.

“gathering, preserving, and celebrating the historical memories” of Squirrel Hill.<sup>239</sup>

Paradoxically, six years after its founding, the organization hosted Todd Reidbord, president of WCP, as their guest speaker. The following announcement advertising the event appeared on the Historical Society’s website:

Walnut Capital is one of Pittsburgh's largest and fastest growing real estate management, development and brokerage companies. Since its inception in 1997, the firm has amassed a retail and multi-family residential property portfolio valued in excess of \$150 million... [Quoting Reidbord] “We view ourselves as partners with our clients, our employees, our community and our environment.”

The open forum, which was videoed for The Society’s archives, provides some interesting insights into the opposing agendas of stakeholders in the neighborhood of Squirrel Hill. Reidbord, speaking on behalf of WCP, made the following introductory statement:

Our Squirrel Hill projects have been a really nice opportunity for us and if you look at it from the overall perspective of Squirrel Hill, it’s been a nice thing for Squirrel Hill as well. We’ve been able to attract the right kind of people. And since the rents are high, I think it’s spurred a little bit of a renaissance in terms of other people fixing up their properties in Squirrel Hill.

Indeed, an article in appearing in *Pittsburgh’s Business Times* in 2003 headlining “Building Owners Find Time Right To Renovate, Add Value to Property,” lauded WCP for starting a new trend in Squirrel Hill, noting that “these boys [Reidbord and

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<sup>239</sup> See the Squirrel Hill Historical Society Homepage: <http://squirrelhillhistory.org/>. In May of 2007. I joined a walking tour sponsored by the Squirrel Hill Historical Society that was promoted as a tour of “The Garden City Movement in Squirrel Hill.” I had to bite my tongue when the tour guide stopped the group in front of Beacon Commons and proceeded to present a history of the site with no mention of the controversy that had ensued just eight years prior when historic Hamilton Cottages was denied historic designation.

his partners] said, ‘We’re going to change the rental market’ and they did.’<sup>240</sup>

Singling out Forbes Terrace as one of WCP’s pioneering ventures, the reporter applauded the development company for meeting “an unmet demand for well appointed apartments” especially for those in the 25 plus age range. This sense that money was to be made in an upwardly spiraling rental market was a topic of some interest to several of those in attendance at the Historical Society event. One audience member who was eager to glean insights into WCP’s “strategy for success asked about the company’s business plan, evoking this response from Reidbord.

It wasn’t some great plan that we had but something that we fell upon. I mean here [in Squirrel Hill] you have to take advantage of what comes around. But we sort of had a plan. And that is that we liked the university areas. So as long as you can rely on the university and medical centers for the base of your renters, you have a pretty good chance of being successful. Largely because you attract a lot of people from out of town who are not as sensitive to higher rental prices as a native Pittsburgh might be who looks at things a little differently. And people like that are not necessarily here for a very long time, so they’re willing to spend a little more money... You know, this has changed the tendencies in Squirrel Hill. It used to be that the person who lived in an apartment here would stay for 20 years. I mean, we don’t find that anymore. Most people stay a few years and then move on, sometimes back to where they came from.

Taking exception to Reidbord’s framing of WCP’s displacement policy as a positive strategy for the community of Squirrel Hill were several audience members who were eager to challenge the development company’s *modus operandi*. “What’s your company’s philosophy about getting rid of people paying lower rent?” piped in one indignant attendee. “I mean do you have an overall feeling of why you are doing that? Just sweeping them [tenants] out of the property because they can’t afford the

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<sup>240</sup> Tim Schooley, “Building Owners Find Right Time to Renovate, And Add Value To Property,” *Pittsburgh Business Times*, August 8, 2003. [http://www.walnutcapital.com/aboutus\\_inthenewsarticlePBT5.htm](http://www.walnutcapital.com/aboutus_inthenewsarticlePBT5.htm) (accessed Aug. 31, 2010).

new rents?” Reidbord unapologetically justified the company’s displacement policy referring to “the dirty little secret around Squirrel Hill,” namely that “there are lots of properties that are still in terrible shape, even just a block to two from where you live... right in the heart of Squirrel. And some people are buying them up... and they’re finally cleaning them out.” While encouraging other community members to join in the gentrification bonanza, Reidbord articulated WCP’s specific cleansing mission:

We look for opportunity. As entrepreneurs we look for properties that are *underserved* and *underutilized* and have a tremendous amount of potential... I mean, here there isn’t a shortage of apartments or housing in this market. The question is, where does everyone fit in that whole scheme? And when properties are deteriorated and the place is not kept up... and the owners start lowering the rent, then the people who are living there don’t expect anything. It’s kind of a self-fulfilling prophesy that if you don’t take care of your property the people who are living there don’t care about it either, and it continues to deteriorate, and it gets to the point of ‘okay’ and the owners just say, ‘let’s just sell the damn thing. I can’t deal with it anymore.’ And that is sometimes where we come in. We look for potential. Obviously it involves people relocating, but that happens naturally anyway. Most people who moved out were sort of short-term tenants who were going to move anyway, and naturally we just gave them the incentive to do it a little sooner.

Reidbord’s cleansing mission is revealing in both the content and tenor of his delivery. His claim that those properties identified by WCP as having “potential” are populated by tenants who “don’t care” about their domestic environments is contradictory to what the developers actually encountered. Not only did the tenants of Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace resist forced relocation based on their passionate commitment to both the social and physical fabric of their communities, but they overwhelmingly expressed concerns about the future integrity of their collective built environment even as their own termination of tenure was assured. The only lack of

investment was on the part of negligent landlords—a situation that spurred tenants to assume even greater responsibility for maintaining the physical integrity of the properties. In fact Reidbord’s co-opting of the term *underserved* in juxtaposition to his construction of *the undeserving* is oxymoronic. According to HUD, an *underserved* location is a housing sector in which lower to moderate income households do not have access to affordable housing—hence the need to create, protect and increase accessibility to affordable housing.<sup>241</sup> Reidbord’s misconstruing of Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace as *underserved* is particularly egregious in so far as the term is an explicit attempt to justify WCP’s profiteering at the expense of a real *underserved* market—those renters already trying to maintain a tenuous foothold in Squirrel Hill’s escalating real estate market. Additionally, Squirrel Hill’s courtyard complexes were far from *underutilized* as suggested by Reidbord. The ethnographic record substantiates that tenants maximized their courtyard communities as both domestic spaces and as sites for creative pursuits. More accurately, Reidbord’s reference to *underutilization* is construed only in terms of the developer’s concern for capital production without due attention to cultural production.

During my own interview with Todd Reidbord in Nov. of 2007, he expressed similar disdain for the tenants of Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace,

Whether we’re a preschooler or a young teen, a graduating college senior or a retired person, we human beings all want to know that we’re acceptable, that our being alive somehow makes a difference in the lives of others. There’s so much more to everyone you will ever meet than will ever meet your eye.

*Fred Rogers, May 14, 1974  
Episode 1387,  
Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*

<sup>241</sup> See the HUD website “Government Sponsored Enterprise Data,” HUD website <http://www.huduser.org/DATASETS/gse.html> (accessed Aug. 09, 2010).

aiming his most vicious attacks at those residents living above the garages at The Terrace. “Those people you wouldn’t even want to talk about... I mean, I knew people that lived on the next street over, and they were afraid to even walk through there. You wouldn’t believe it, but there were rats in those places.”<sup>242</sup> This depiction of danger and blight was countered by Gern who had a very different understanding of the situation:

I feel WCP kind of painted them, the folks above the garage, as a bad element that they had to eradicate. I mean there was this guy named Vinnie who lived in one of those apartments for around 20 years and he had a beautiful garden. Yeah, there was definitely a rat infestation *up there*, there was definitely that sort of problem, but that was brought about by Watkins’ neglect. The landlord did nothing. We even set up rattraps on our own trying to get rid of those rats... Just about all of us tried to take care of the whole place. So it’s just insulting for someone like Todd Reidbord to say that the people *up there* were just trashing the place. That hurts. That really hurts. That’s why I’m willing to revisit all of this, because I know what really happened.

Nor did Reidbord express anything besides disregard for the remainder of Forbes Terrace and its tenants as the courtyard communities existed prior WCP’s cleansing crusade.

That place was really a wreck. I mean the interiors, I mean it was just falling apart. The wood trim, the roofs, everything there was a mess... None of the other people [aside from Mrs. Johnson] wanted to stay. I mean they weren’t the kind of people that were looking for newly renovated places. Everyone knew that they were basically just there for cheap rent... Now we’re of the mentality that if you spend a lot of time screening tenants on the way in and get the right kind of tenant you don’t have too many problems. We make sure we know who our tenants are. About 80% of them are affiliated with the university medical center. We don’t have any problem with these people. They have their money together. They’re studying to be residents. They work out just fine.

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<sup>242</sup> Although several Terracites interviewed informed me that they did not have much contact with the tenants residing above the garage, Gern considered several of these Terracites to be integral part of The Terrace and believed they shared with other members of the complex a genuine concern for the well-being of the site. Author Michael Chabon had lived in one of the units above the garages in the early to mid 1980s.



Reidbord's explicit claim that WCP's had in essence engaged in a cleanup mission that benefited the entire neighborhood of Squirrel Hill not only took me off guard during our interview but also met with similar resistance from some audience members at The Historical Society forum. "But how do you feel, living in Squirrel Hill,"<sup>243</sup> demanded one attendee who was not prepared to let Reidbord off the hook. "So do you really feel that what you are doing is of benefit to the community, or is it a business. I mean, for you, if you upscale you get a lot more money?" Reidbord, without skipping a beat, categorically defended his potentially conflicting roles as both an institutional gentrifier and good citizen of Squirrel Hill:

Well, I don't think they're mutually exclusive. I think it's good for everyone. It's good for us. There's no question about it. But it's also good for the community. I don't think one has to be at the expense of the other, and I think that when properties are well maintained it's good for the community. If I told you what some of those places were like, you would all be horrified that people were living like that in Squirrel Hill, next door to you. It's good for everybody.

Despite Reidbord's insistence that Squirrel Hill stood to benefit from WCP's cleanup campaign—particularly the company's strategy to systematically displace long-term tenants with transients affiliated with Pittsburgh's medical centers—at least one audience member remained skeptical of such a claim. "Going back to what you had to say about catering to people from the university who just stay a few years," he quizzed. "Don't you think you have a role to play?"

I know that those residents are busy, but don't you think if they had an opportunity to play a role in the community they might. Is there something you can do to facilitate that or somehow tap into corporations and say, 'hey

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<sup>243</sup> Reidbord does in fact live in Squirrel Hill just a few blocks north of Forbes Terrace. WCP's offices, however, are located in the adjoining neighborhood of Shadyside.

we already have this population living here. Let's get them involved and maybe get them to stay here?'

Reidbord, essentially evading the question, redirected the discussion to a recent conversation he had had with the mayor (at the time Bob O'Connor) on how to best stimulate job growth in Pittsburgh. When asked about the role of "city hall" in overseeing the types of projects that WCP has undertaken in Squirrel Hill, Reidbord further corroborated his close relationship with the city's power brokers, announcing that he had been appointed by the mayor to sit on Pittsburgh's planning commission:<sup>244</sup>

When Bob O'Connor appointed me to the planning commission, one of the things that he was committed to was making the process [redevelopment] in the city easier and more friendly to do. They [the city] don't really give you a hard time. There are code issues in this city, but there isn't very much oversight. There probably should be more.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Reidbord still sits on the Planning Commission under the city's current mayor, Mayor Luke Ravenstahl. In 2008, Reidbord became the subject of controversy when he slipped out of a pivotal meeting of the Planning Board to attend a basketball game. Instead of remaining to listen to the emotional public testimony of 30 residents of the Hill District who had organized to protest the finalization of a master plan for the erection of a hockey arena in their community, Reidbord excused himself (ostensibly to attend a University of Pittsburgh basketball game) and said he would return for the vote. The community group, that had hoped to negotiate a community benefits agreement that would boost development and commerce in the Hill District before a plan was passed, was outraged. In response to the outbursts of indignation, the mayor did send a member of his security detail to retrieve Reidbord in time for some of the testimony and the actual vote. The city planning commission voted that evening 5-3 to move ahead with the project despite community protest. See Rich Lord, "Mayor Shoos Planning Panelist Back To Arena Meeting From Game," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* online, January 16, 2008, [www.post-gazette.com/pg/08016/849537-52.stm](http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/08016/849537-52.stm) (accessed Aug.9, 2010).

<sup>245</sup> A community response to WCP's latest project, Bakery Square (the 6.5-acre former Nabisco plant site) in East Liberty is presented in a documentary about the gentrification of this predominantly black East End community produced by Chris Ivey. WCP's receipt of \$10 million in tax-exempt financing by the city's Urban Redevelopment Authority based on the site's status as a "blighted" area has come under scrutiny by others beside Ivey. Common Cause, a statewide watchdog group, has challenged WCP's preferential treatment by the city, noting that the developers gave \$16,000 to the mayoral campaign just as Bakery Square was getting underway (see "Coin-Operated Politics," *Pittsburgh City Paper*, Feb. 14, 2008).

Despite the fact that several attendees had challenged Reidbord on critical points in his presentation, the meeting concluded that day with little consensus on the consequences of inflated housing and rental costs in Squirrel Hill. While some of the attendees clearly looked to WCP for advice on how to “make a killing” in a prime real estate market, others had little or nothing to contribute to the conversation. What remains notable about the event, however, is that a constituency of community stakeholders were still intent on holding WCP accountable for the displacement of tenants from Squirrel Hill’s courtyard communities more than six years after the fact. They not only challenged WCP purported motives in its handling of Forbes Terrace and Beacon Gardens, but also challenged the company’s overall “clean-up” agenda that was still in progress as Reidbord and his partners continued their sweep of the neighborhood, adding to an already sizable real estate portfolio.

By 2006, WCP had acquired a better share of the Squirrel Hill’s multi-family housing stock, adding property after property to its portfolio and branding the neighborhood with its slap-in-the-face” logo—“The Best In City Living.” Amy and Bob are all too aware of WCP’s expanding reach. “Every time you drive around Squirrel Hill it seems like ‘there goes another property to Walnut Capital,’ mocked Amy. Reeling off a list of properties recently acquired by the development company, Amy could not contain her indignation. “Well, you already know about Forbes Terrace and Beacon Gardens,” she began, “but those were just the first of many.” [Figs. 80 and 81].



**Fig. 80. Walnut Capital properties in Squirrel Hill: Hobart Court (top) and Wightman Street Apartments (photographs by author)**



**Fig. 81. Walnut Capital properties in Squirrel Hill: Hempstead Apartments—two of seven buildings (photographs by author)**

And then they bought a bunch of different places along Wightman. Then there's Pocusset Street. Oh, and they got the places on Hobart and what's that other street near there [Hempstead, I add]. Yeah, and don't forget the Towers on Forward that they're working on now. I mean, it's just one property after the other. It's almost as if we're under occupation.

Bob and Amy are particularly sensitive to WCP's expanding reach in Squirrel Hill, given a near close encounter with the developers that literally came "a little too close to home."

The people who live next store to us got solicited by WCP not that long ago. They were putting out feelers about buying our whole row of houses. I told him [the neighbor] outright. I mean if WCP even tried to solicit me, I'd really try to screw them. They would have to pay through the nose. On second thought, no way! There's no way I'm selling to them. Over my dead body, because I'm still that angry about what happened at The Terrace and what's happening right now to Squirrel Hill.

This sense that WCP's continued expansion into Squirrel Hill represents a menace to the entire neighborhood was reiterated by one informant after another, with all in agreement that Squirrel Hill has undergone a major transformation in recent years.

Karin acknowledges that while rents had begun to rise in Squirrel even before WCP's takeover, she believes that the prices really started to escalate as the developer's presence became near ubiquitous:

The oppressively high rents definitely made it harder for young people who were not yet established to live in Squirrel Hill. I mean, Squirrel Hill used to be where you'd be when you were in college or recently out of college or just getting started. Now most of the people that I know live in Friendship or Regent Square. It just squeezed out a whole population of people who were our friends, who really cared about this neighborhood and wanted to live here.

Some displacees, such as Chris, find Squirrel Hill so changed that they have little desire to even "hang" there except for an occasional visit with those few remaining

friends who have maintained a foothold in the neighborhood. “I think Walnut Capital’s impact on Squirrel Hill has been devastating,” pronounces Chris:

Their effect has been to drive up everyone’s rents and force out most of people that I thought gave the neighborhood character. There used to be a lot of people who were recently graduated and working at their first jobs right out of school who were doing things a little differently. But now all of the affordable, interesting housing has changed, with all the yuppies living where we used to live. And I think this has altered the character of the neighborhood for the worse. Now you have high-rises going up, condos going in, stuff that fundamentally changes the nature of the neighborhood and essentially the feel of it. I mean it seems a lot less interesting and friendly than it used to be, so I don’t even spend that much time there anymore.

Meagan, who left Forbes Terrace with her family during stage one displacement, voices a similar opinion to Chris, but expands the discourse to include those already existing homeowners who have found themselves in dire circumstances as the neighborhood has continued to upscale as well as those prospective residents who have been priced out of the market altogether.

I know so many people who got into a lot of trouble when their taxes went up two or three times. Their taxes went from like \$1200 to \$4800 a year and then they were stuck with these properties they couldn’t afford. I know three people that that happened to. Honestly, I don’t know. When I grew up in Squirrel Hill, well I lived there my whole life until I went to college. And everyone I went to school with were middle class. It was such a nice place to live. And now, people have been priced out of Squirrel Hill. The taxes are outrageous, and you can’t buy a decent house for under \$300,000. It’s just not the same neighborhood. People who might have lived there at one time, well they wouldn’t even bother looking now.

Increases in housing expenses associated with gentrification not only displace current residents who are often priced out of their own neighborhoods but also “scare off” future residents who are deterred from even considering certain neighborhoods that were once considered viable options but are now perceived as out of reach. Even when a unit is voluntarily vacated and reenters the housing market without significant

changes to its built environment, it will likely draw from a different demographic pool than those who have moved away.<sup>246</sup> Sallyann makes a further observation, maintaining that even if she had been able to “scrape together” the necessary resources to live in Squirrel Hill, the sense of community that she prized had already been significantly compromised:

For those of us [friends from Forbes Cottages, Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace] with moderate incomes, trying to stay in Squirrel Hill would have meant sacrifices beyond the monetary. It’s a quality of life thing. The sense of community would have been shot anyway because if you’re working so hard to pay your mortgage or your rent, and you have a nanny that is coming from somewhere else because you’re not going to hire the girl down the block for heavy duty daycare, and all the kids are over-programmed because you’re not around, well there’s no way you’re going to get to know your neighbors anyway. You might as well live somewhere more affordable and have the time and energy to feel like you’re really part of the community.

In the final analysis, very few displacees from Squirrel Hill’s courtyard complexes have remained in Squirrel Hill. While a handful have leased apartments or houses in the neighborhood, only four families are known to have actually purchased homes in Squirrel Hill—all at a distance from the neighborhood’s central hub and with two bordering on the historically working-class neighborhood of Greenfield where housing is still affordable, but for how long? Amy and Bob who own a house on the border of Squirrel Hill and Greenfield consider themselves among the lucky few. “It was just a fluke that we found a house that we could afford in the neighborhood,” confesses Amy. “Just about everyone that I talked to from The Terrace wanted to stay here. People really had a deep appreciation for Squirrel Hill, but they just couldn’t afford it.” Other Terracites have crossed the border altogether, ironically

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<sup>246</sup> See Peter Marcuse’s expanded definition of displacement in “Gentrification, Abandonment, and Displacement,” 1985:195-240.



moving into neighborhoods ripe for gentrification. Sallyann did the actual math that accounted for this dispersion of displacees into nearby working-class, ethnic, and black neighborhoods:

If you think about it, you had folks that were living in these places [the court communities] and they were paying probably \$650 to \$800 a month for a minimum of three bedrooms. That would buy you a house in decent condition somewhere under like \$75,000 or \$80,000 with mortgage and taxes. And you just couldn't find that in Squirrel Hill even seven or eight years ago. You know, we bought our little place here in Friendship for like \$65,000 in December of 2000, and I think that was sort of like at the cusp. And even if you weren't buying, it was already almost unaffordable to rent a decent place here. Even a place like this that is fairly basic, you can easily rent it for \$1200 or \$1300 a month. If you were like young and splitting it two ways with a buddy it could all be somewhat reasonable if each person pitched in. But as far as buying a house in Friendship now, you can't find a house for under \$150,000. And even though Pittsburgh prices are lower than a lot of other cities, it's still up there for a lot of people considering that our salaries are in many instances lower. So more and more artists and young people like us are moving into working-class neighborhoods like Garfield and Lawrenceville where the prices haven't yet sky rocketed.

But prices have already begun to "sky rocket" in Lawrenceville according to those who are moving into the neighborhood. "Destination: Lawrenceville," an article featured in the City Neighborhood section of *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* in 2005, noted the nine art galleries, several restaurants and three upscale coffee houses that had opened on Butler Street (the main retail district) since 2002 when the working-class neighborhood began to see a major influx of newcomers, mostly artists. One new resident to the neighborhood is quoted as saying, "I didn't think moving here was a gamble... [since] the funky, edgy, quirky people and many artists had moved in

ahead of me.”<sup>247</sup> In 2006, The Blackbirds Lofts and Artists Studios—under the auspices of Artists and Cities (a non-profit organization)—debuted a 50,600 sq. ft. project that was built on a reclaimed brownfield site on Butler Street in Lawrenceville. The fifteen market-rate, loft-style condos/studios which sold out almost immediately were priced from \$99,000 to \$385,000. Despite its “non-profit” status, any claims to “affordability” are highly questionable considering the cost of buying into The Blackbirds Lofts<sup>248</sup>

Since the 1980s, urban analysts have made the observation that hipsters, artisans, and bohemian types most frequently represent the first stage in a multi-phased gentrification progression.<sup>249</sup> Those on the cultural vanguard often edge their way into lower-income neighborhoods looking not only for affordable housing but also for suitable workspaces. “Appearing to be ‘outside’ class relations; they and their products are seen as an expression of ‘everyman’ or the human essence.”<sup>250</sup> As such, they function as *urban pioneers*, not only displacing households (if only minimally at first) but also long-established local businesses with boho coffee bars, offbeat art

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<sup>247</sup> Diana Nelson Jones, “Destination: Lawrenceville,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.com* Nov. 14, 2005. <http://www.societyforculturalexchange.org/pdf/Destination.pdf> (accessed Oct. 12, 2010).

<sup>248</sup> See The Blackbirds Lofts’ website [http://www.energycodes.gov/news/ecodes2007/presentations/pre/tours\\_Blackbird\\_Lofts-Artist\\_Studios.pdf](http://www.energycodes.gov/news/ecodes2007/presentations/pre/tours_Blackbird_Lofts-Artist_Studios.pdf) (accessed Oct. 12, 2010).

<sup>249</sup> Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change*, 1982; David Ley, “Artists, Aestheticisation and the Field of Gentrification,” 2003; Vanessa Mathews, “Aestheticizing Space: Art, Gentrification and the City,” 2010: 660-675; Daniel Makagon, “Bring On The Shock Troops: Artists and Gentrification in the Popular Press,” 2010: 26 - 52.

<sup>250</sup> “The Occupation Of Art And Gentrification,” reprint of the article “No Reservations: Housing, Space and Class Struggle,” *News From Everywhere and Campaign For Real Life*, London, 1989. <http://libcom.org/library/occupation-art-gentrification> (accessed Aug. 9, 2010).

establishments, and funky boutiques. Since early colonizers are predominantly white and largely represent a higher socio-economic background than the existing population, they often serve as a bridge to subsequent stages of gentrification that draw from a pool of increasingly higher earners with a taste for the cultural cachet of an “authentic” neighborhood. Keeping pace with the market, housing speculators begin buying up multiple properties in the neighborhood, either in hope of making a quick turnaround on their investments or with the intent of bulldozing entire swaths of the built environment to make room for high-rise condominiums and upscale retail. Frequently, pioneering gentrifiers are priced out of the very neighborhoods that they initially colonized, leading to successive stages of social fragmentation with each new population invasion.<sup>251</sup>

Meagan and her husband who purchased a house that borders Garfield following their departure from Forbes Terrace are well aware that their relocation choice is the source of some irony. She maintains that she “feels bad” about incipient gentrification in Garfield. “Soon nobody is going to be able to afford a house anywhere on the East End,” she protests:

They [speculators and pioneering gentrifiers in neighborhoods close to Squirrel Hill] are taking these places and making properties absolutely unaffordable. They think that gentrification means getting \$300,000 for a place that two years ago was \$30,000. We live in Bloomfield, but we’re on the border of Garfield right near Garfield Artworks. Our mortgage is \$90,000, and I know how we have struggled to keep our house. I don’t know how somebody who doesn’t own a house now could buy one today. I just hope that they don’t start hiking up the property taxes here... and like these aren’t even

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<sup>251</sup> Jason Hackworth and Neil Smith, “The Changing State of Gentrification.” *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* (2001): 464–477.

great neighborhoods yet. And then they have to spend a lot of money to fix them up, and there's still plenty of drugs and crime you know. It's not necessarily a good place to have children. You can't have your children go out and play. Not like at Forbes Terrace... On our block there hasn't been too much displacement yet. They're mostly older people. But there's been a lot of hipster types moving into the area, so it's just really a matter of time.<sup>252</sup>

Meagan is apparently conflicted about the changes in her neighborhood, decrying at once the inflation of housing prices in the Bloomfield/Garfield area but also hoping that the social fabric of the neighborhood will "improve" with the influx of more middle-class residents. In a 2008 interview with Manny Theiner,<sup>253</sup> the owner of Garfield Artworks and a native son of Squirrel Hill, he corroborated that "a lot of the creative crowd from Squirrel Hill have either left town or moved here [Garfield or nearby]." He notes, however, that there's been a lot cultural tension between the black community and the new whites who have moved in, admitting that "it's two worlds in one location." "We have *The Friday Night Art Crawl* along Penn Avenue," he elaborates. "We usually draw as many as five to six hundred people who come to check out the dozen or so galleries and cafes along the block, but none of the black residents participate. There's no interest whatsoever."

Jenny, one of the single moms from Beacon Gardens who now lives in a Pittsburgh suburb admits to feeling conflicted on the subject of gentrification, indicating that

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<sup>252</sup> The concern over the gentrification of Pittsburgh's working-class neighborhoods has led to the formation of the Pittsburgh Directory Action Resource. The message on their website is very direct, "Are you gentrifying neighborhoods in Pittsburgh? A call to white bohemian, anarchist, artist, radical, activist, hipsters, etc... Think about how you move through the city, where you move to in the city, where you have events and how it affects the people who are living there." <http://pittsburghdirectoryaction.org/category/gentrification/> (accessed Oct. 7, 2010).

<sup>253</sup> Manny Theiner is also a journalist. He wrote the article "Restore Faith, Not Historic Townhouses," in defense of Beacon Garden tenants that appeared in the *Pittsburgh City Paper* in May 19, 1999.

she, too, would be investing in neighborhoods that are upscaling if she had the money:

I really can't blame anyone for wanting to get in on the market. I would if I could. Fixing up properties in distressed neighborhoods can be for the greater good. Raise the water and lift the boat at the same time. But I guess you can justify anything! I mean, how do you get to be George Bush? Landowners have a responsibility to themselves and their communities to take care of their property, and that always means higher rents. Let's face it. Tenants are at the mercy of their landlords who have the power to control where they live. I mean, how basic is that? So there are always going to be some people who are upset, and there's always going to be tension. Still, I wish it could be done differently... It's happening all over the country, and even though each situation is different, the end game is the same. Some people win and some people lose.

Justifying gentrification on the basis that it creates a ripple effect that ultimately benefits all stakeholders is a position that is advocated by some authoritative voices that I have already named "gentrification apologists." Included in this coterie is New Urbanist architect Andrés Duany who maintains that gentrification

...rebalances a concentration of poverty by providing the tax base, rub-off-work-ethic and political effectiveness of a middle class, and in the process improves the quality of life for all of the community's residents. It is the rising tide that lifts all boats.<sup>254</sup>

Given that gentrification still has its supporters within the elite community of architects and academics, it is no wonder that displacees from Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace who have relocated to neighborhoods that are currently in the process of gentrifying remain ambivalent about their housing choices. Sallyann is of two minds about the inflation of rental housing in the Friendship area where she now lives. "We have a lot of places in our neighborhood which people are buying to fix up and rent," she explains.

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<sup>254</sup> Andres Duany, "Three Cheers for Gentrification," *American Enterprise Magazine* (April 1, 2001) <http://www.allbusiness.com/specialty-businesses/1082842-1.html> (accessed Sept. 1, 2010).

But they don't realize what it actually takes to do that. So if you're going to buy a place and break it up into units you have to bring it all up to code standards, and then you're going to end up having to raise the rents. You can't have a place like Forbes Terrace for people who don't pay much rent because there isn't that sense of built-in community that we had at The Terrace where people are willing to maintain their own places... So unless there is a federal subsidy for preserving great places instead of federal subsidies for building crappy concrete boxes, there aren't going to be any more Forbes Terraces or Beacon Gardens to live in anywhere.

While many of the displacees from Squirrel Hill's courtyard complexes have moved into neighboring communities, others have reluctantly left the Pittsburgh area altogether, distraught not only over the loss of their courtyard communities but soured by the city's indifference to the pool of local talent that Squirrel Hill had long nurtured. The first indication that relocation was incipient was the loss of several celebrated musicians from Forbes Cottages who chose to leave Pittsburgh in 1998. One local musician captured the ramifications of this exodus of creative talent from Pittsburgh in the following web posting:

A sad day in Pittsburgh: the famed Forbes Cottages are closing, leaving many Pittsburgh bands with no living/practice space. One example: one member of Don Caballero has already left town, with another to follow soon... Local government here expends a great deal of effort courting some large corporation that will create jobs for everybody, but they overlook small business, where most job creation occurs. What they should do is divert some of their business resources to fostering small businesses like, well, bands. One of the things the city has going for it is a vibrant local music scene—it's one of the things that keeps people from leaving... except that they do leave during periodic scene changes, like this one: one of the few clubs booking Indie bands closes, or living/practice space goes down, etc., and there's a cultural brain drain from the city. Local musicians are voting with their feet, and it's being ignored because they're young, low-profile [in town, anyway] and for the most part not clearing massive amounts of money. While it may hurt more

for a city to lose a large corporation and its jobs, it also hurts a city when talent leaves in any number.<sup>255</sup>

Following in the footsteps of Forbes Cottages, many of Beacon Gardens' and Forbes Terrace's talent pool reluctantly left Pittsburgh to resettle in larger hubs that portended greater opportunity. Andy and Sarah called it "the end of an era," moving with what remained of their band Operation Re-Information to San Francisco. Among the outmovers from Forbes Terrace was Peter Coffin who now calls Brooklyn home. "I was so impressed with Pittsburgh when I first moved there," recounts Peter.

The city really did a lot to encourage the arts. I really wanted to live in Pittsburgh after I finished school. It was such a great experience. At the time I thought that maybe I would teach art in Pittsburgh. But after the whole Forbes Terrace thing I just wanted to leave. All of the artists were priced out of Squirrel Hill and were moving to Garfield or Friendship. It just wasn't the same. Once the neighborhood changed, I decided to move to New York. Pittsburgh lost a lot of talent when all this came down with Walnut Capital.

Peter's decision to leave Pittsburgh is consistent with the basic premise of place-identity, namely that people seek out environments that are congruent with their sense of self.<sup>256</sup> Once Peter no longer identified with the neighborhood of Squirrel Hill, he opted to move away as did much of the city's burgeoning talent.

Preservationist Terry Necciai, musing about the attrition of Squirrel Hill's young reservoir of talent, made the following observation:

There was a generation X demographic living in those courts, but they were not your typical slackard types. They may have had some of the fragility of that generation, but on the whole they were very focused. Quite a few had

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<sup>255</sup> Don Caballero, "Music Consumption: Random Musings," Nov. 3, 1998. <http://www.mauricerickard.com/index.php/1/page/8> (accessed Oct. 28, 2010).

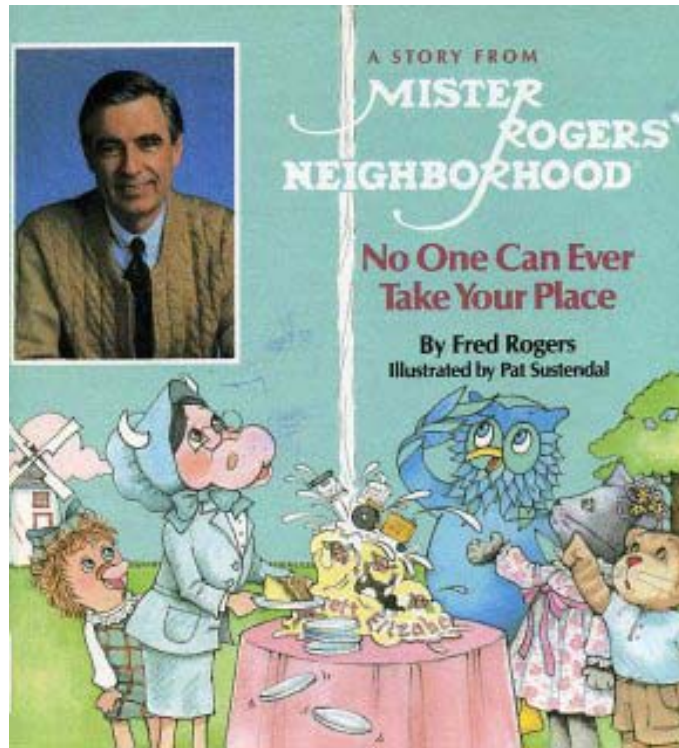
<sup>256</sup> Feldman, 1990 and 1996.

come to Pittsburgh for art school, and not just any school but an expensive one at that [CMU]. They really wanted to stay in the neighborhood, but maybe that's where their fragility began to show. You know, with one thing after another it got to a point where they were fed up. It was time to move on... And on the flipside, what did the city, the neighborhood, the developers—what did they lose in the process? I would have to say that probably from their perspective they didn't experience any loss. They were just clearing out a bunch of kids, some of whom were living together with maybe three or four people in a house and sharing the rent. Not exactly their idea of the best tenants. In dollar and cents, which was all that mattered to them, there was absolutely no loss. For Pittsburgh, however, I think it was a major loss.



## PART 4: POSTSCRIPT

### Chapter Six: No One Can Ever Take Your Place



**Fig. 82. Mister Rogers' storybook, 1988  
(photograph by author)**

#### **“I Seriously Doubt They Have What We Had”**

While Beacon Gardens' and Forbes Terrace's displaced tenants retain a collective cultural memory of their lived experience in their courtyard complexes, the sites themselves are now experienced by all of those tenants interviewed as sites of loss. For Beacon Gardens' prior tenants, the loss is even more acute given the transformation of their central commons into a parking lot. “There truly used to be a sense of community there,” emphasizes Felice who still speaks of Beacon Gardens wistfully:

It existed! It really did. But I have a feeling that it's not the case anymore. It looks very sterile. I never see anybody when I go by there. So what's the story with the people that are living there? I don't know for sure, but I think that gutting the commons did take away what it was. Just to have more expensive housing there doesn't make it a better community.

“So I guess there are probably people who go by who say, ‘they finally fixed these places up,’” conjectures Queenie.

And lets face it. There were things that needed to be fixed... But it's very sad to me that they didn't keep all of these features that were so vital to the original plan and were so vital to the sort of subculture that we had. I seriously doubt that they [the current tenants] have what we had.

Phyllis has only returned to the site of her previous home once, and by her own account, it was a disorienting experience:

When I moved from Beacon Gardens not all of my mail was getting forwarded. So I went back to my house and rapped on the door. It felt really funny. They weren't home, but their next-door neighbor was, and he said he'd tell them. I really couldn't wait to get out of there. It just felt so strange. I just didn't belong anymore.

Tom is mystified that the new Beacon Commons units seem to be always filled to capacity. “I would really like to hear how they [the new tenants] like those places,” he pronounces:

I guess there's a market for certain people who want to come in and live in an area for a while and leave. They don't want to invest in a home. I mean, there's plenty of cheaper rentals in Pittsburgh where you can get more than what you can get in a Walnut Capital place. But there is a certain urban cachet to living in one of those types of homes with a sense of history in this neighborhood. I think people are attracted to that cachet, and they're disconnected from what happened here in the past. I mean, I kind of understand the market that Walnut Capital is after. But it makes absolutely no sense to me personally that anyone would ever want to live there [Beacon Commons] even if they're able to afford the rents. I certainly wouldn't want to live there now.

Michael Jager in his essay "Class Definition and the Aesthetics of Gentrification" suggests that the process of "buying into history" through settlement in historic urban districts is an expression of the new middle-class's need to exhibit its social distance from those perceived to be "beneath them" as well as the desire to create identities founded on "consumption as a form of investment, status symbol and means of self-expression."<sup>257</sup> Whether or not such motives can also be attributed to those now living at Beacon Commons' opens up a more extensive inquiry into the history and current makeup of the complex following the 1999 *revalorization* of the property, including the degree to which the principles of *court-ordered living* are still extant.

Brooke, who lives in the unit where Jenny once lived, is a young academic who moved to Pittsburgh from Buffalo to take a seat on the faculty at CMU. She was attracted to Beacon Commons because it "was the nicest of all the renovated places that I was shown:"

I just jumped at the place. At the time I didn't know anything about its history, but overtime I started to hear different things. There was someone who worked in my department who used to live here [at Beacon Gardens] who told me about this place maybe a year after I moved in. [After some back and forth, we determine that the person in question is Queenie]. She said, 'did you know what they did to us?' And she was really very upset about it! She told me that she used to live here with her sons and that everyone got kicked out. I heard all about the sense of community everyone had and what a loss it was for everyone.

Brooke has lived for five years at Beacon Commons, making her one of the longest residing tenants of the complex. The population of the complex, according to Brooke, is an ever-changing cast of medical residents or academics on fellowships, some with

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<sup>257</sup> Jager, 1986: 87.

families that include small children. She notes that initially she had very little contact with any of her neighbors:

I was a single person living here by myself, and I didn't really know anyone. I came, and went. I worked a lot. I still work a lot. So I really didn't get to know very many people at all except to say 'hi' and 'bye'. It wasn't until I got my dog, and I was outside a lot more that I started to meet a couple of other people who also happened to have dogs. So I got kind of close to a few families, and through them I sort of met some other people in the complex... In the beginning, I remember seeing people sitting outside on the lawn way in the back with their kids. But then a lot of people moved, and it just kind of stopped. I mean, you just hardly ever saw anyone outside, not even little kids. And then recently, I started to see some kids playing out there again. But there is constant turnover here, and I think that's why you can't really develop a sense community. From what I've heard from Queenie, I don't think it's anything like it used to be.

Brooke does qualify this statement, however, pointing out that there are two households in the rear of the complex whose tenants moved into at Beacon Commons about a year or two after the complex's *revalorization*. They're like a little family," Brooke observes. "So they'll have cookouts together on occasion. But there's never like a big community-wide sort of get together or anything like that." Brooke speculates that the degree of friendliness between neighbors has varied over time, depending on the idiosyncrasies of individual tenants. Although Brooke does admit that she has enjoyed socializing with a few of the tenants who have dogs, the downside has been contending with those neighbors who are not pet friendly.

I mean, like there was this one woman who lived here for a while on the end, and she was not a happy person. So she didn't like a lot of things, including the dogs. And whenever she didn't like something she complained about it to Walnut Capital. That made life very unpleasant for everyone.

Even though she considers herself and others in the complex to be responsible pet owners, Brooke maintains that the complex's canine population has been a source of

friction between neighbors. Much to her distress, she has become embroiled in an ongoing lawsuit filed by her next-door-neighbor who claims that he was bitten by her spaniel. “An invisible dog bite,” she sneers. Summing up her years at Beacon

Commons, Brooke is not in the least sentimental:

Looking back at my experiences here I might think, okay, there were times that I enjoyed living here, and there were periods when I had a sense of community. But at the same time I don't think I'm going to look back and say, 'I'm going to miss living here.' I'll probably be happy to move on because there have been bad things that have happened here, some really difficult things. And I don't personally get the sense that in general people are attached to this place. I haven't really heard anyone say anything along that line, primarily because most of the people who have lived here have come knowing they're only going to live here for just a year or two. So I think they don't get attached.

Ironically, among the more disturbing incidences that Brooke has encountered while living at Beacon Commons is the theft of her car from the much-disputed parking lot.

“I was feeling worried about living here after that,” she confides:

I had like papers with my address and some personal things in my car. And then one night, around that same time, a man came up to my door and kept knocking, and it kind of freaked me out. I just wanted some more security. So I called Walnut Capital and asked them to put new locks on the door. But they refused. They claimed they needed to maintain the original locks because the doors were historic. But I think it was about money because none of them [the doors] had identical locks. So I ended up just paying for it out of my own pocket, because I felt like I'd be safer.

At Brooke's suggestion, I arranged to interview Roy, one of the tenants living in the rear units who moved into Beacon Commons shortly after its *revalorization*. Roy and his wife Suzie moved to Beacon Commons nine years ago. They were the second tenants to occupy the remodeled unit where Serge and his family had once lived.

Unlike almost all of the tenants who have populated the complex since its

*revalorization*, Roy and Suzie are long-term residents of Squirrel Hill. “We were living in the town homes on South Negley and it was three floors,” explains Roy.

“And with the kids gone we were looking to downsize:

But we didn’t know if we wanted to rent or buy. I remember reading in paper that Walnut Capital was going to redevelop this property and that it was in a trust or something from a family that once dominated real estate in Pittsburgh. I saw that the neighbors were going to fight it, and felt that they were being displaced. But then I heard nothing more until I saw that they were up for rent. So I came over and looked at it and liked the location, and we’ve lived here ever since. I think we’ve lived here longer than anyone else, except for our next door neighbors—they’re old friends that we got to move in here right after us—and there may be someone in the front that’s been here a while, but I don’t know them at all.

While Roy appeared willing to proceed with our interview, he nonetheless expressed some suspicion about my motivations as a researcher. After broaching a few general questions pertaining to gentrification and displacement as a topic of research, ones that I gladly answered, Roy moved into defensive mode. “Here’s where you and I may disagree about these properties,” argued Roy:

I have some experience in this community, and these apartments were rundown. I walked past here several times, and it looked like this property was on a slide. If I remember correctly, it was raining and the yard was very muddy. It looked terrible. I thought it was becoming a neighborhood eyesore. The other properties you talked about I am not as familiar with, other than the fact that they were nothing special. They were very hidden, and you didn’t pay much attention to them. This one, because of the front court, you could see how rundown they were. So I was happy to see the reinvestment in the community and the purchase of the three other properties. The upgrades that were made are in keeping with Squirrel Hill’ property values and in maintaining the stability of this community, which is very rare. Most people that I’m friendly with, like people from Detroit and Cleveland, say ‘I can’t go back to my old neighborhood. In fact I can’t even go back to the neighborhood that I first relocated to because that’s bad now too.’ We’ve kept Squirrel Hill stable with the constant turnover of reinvestment and remodeling of existing properties... Now I would say that this was probably a comfortable setting for the people that used to live here. From what I understand there was a lot of Orthodox Jews here, and this is a great location for their educational

centers. I feel bad to some degree they couldn't stay because they couldn't afford the new rents. I think I heard that the rents tripled from what they were paying, and that's like saying to them 'you can have a steak at Mortons for \$50 when they don't have \$50.' I mean, I do understand that, but in the same vein, I think the results outweigh all that.

Unlike Brooke who had the opportunity to hear about Beacon Gardens from Queenie, Roy's background information on the history of the site is predicated almost totally on his own cursory observations and some general misinformation—a point that he actually concedes later in our conversation. While neither he nor Brooke can be identified as status seekers “buying into history,” they nonetheless have enjoyed the modern amenities of their “renovated” units that meet the requisite standards that WCP's had insisted were necessary to attract “the right kind” of tenants. Regarding the displacement of prior tenants, Roy is definitively in WCP's camp, arguing that the company has helped renew the housing stock in Squirrel Hill—a mission that he admits regrettably requires some “neighborhood cleanup” if standards are to be maintained. Nonetheless—Roy is not particularly enthusiastic about the overall population of tenants that the complex now attracts. He explains that while the first generation of Beacon Common residents were “not that bad” the caliber of tenants has since declined:

Well I would say at one time it was a little more diverse here, with doctors, dentists, lawyers and young professionals. Now I would say that 70% are associated with the universities, either CMU or Pitt. The earlier tenants setup housekeeping: they put blinds up, they put drapes up, they took care of the property. They cleaned up after themselves, they treated it as their home... There was this Guatemalan couple, a Brazilian couple, and a couple from Mexico. It was so nice to interact with people of different cultures and backgrounds. It was great. We became very close. A few of the families would get together for Fourth of July picnics or other holidays on the lawn in front of our house. Every Friday night in the summer that was nice there used to be kids and families on that lawn. But that early group of tenants stayed for

just a couple of years, and when they moved out a lot of people came for maybe six months or a year. And it wasn't the same. They didn't put up any drapes, they didn't stop the litter, they had folding chairs for furniture and ironing boards in the living room. I mean, they just didn't care. You probably know better than I, when you come to a city for a year to do an internship or a residency you put your focus on that. You're not really looking to make friends. You're not really looking to make enemies. You're just looking to have a place to sleep, to get up and go do your thing. And in a year you go back to where your life is really going on in your mind. And so that's what we're entertaining here for a while.

Paradoxically, the general tenor of Beacon Gardens' population as it existed prior to the current *revalorization* closely approximates Roy's own criteria for "the right kind" of tenants—namely those who are invested in their community and its upkeep. It is unclear why the first wave of tenants at Beacon Commons were more community oriented than subsequent in-movers, although it is possible that WCP's early marketing hype may have attracted a more enthusiastic clientele whose initial excitement over living in the newly remodeled complex unfortunately was not sustainable—an inevitability given the rapid tenant turnover reported by both Brooke and Roy. What is clear, however, is that "the sense of community" that did briefly exist during those first couple of years at Beacon Commons in no way approximated the spirit of *court-ordered living* that had characterized Beacon Gardens prior to its *revalorization*. The likely reasons for this disparity in community ethos is further examined in a later discussion that addresses the post-gentrification landscape of both Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace within the larger landscape of its sister complexes.



Despite the downsides of life at Beacon Commons, Roy reels off a list of pluses that he attributes to the complex:

I mean, first you have the Squirrel Hill shopping center, which is really vibrant,” as you probably already know. If you want a cup of coffee, it’s right down the street. You can just walk there.<sup>258</sup> Then we have the outdoors. If I want to smoke a cigar, I can go out front, or sit out in our back where it’s nice and its quiet. You don’t feel closed in. You know, I said to my wife at one point, ‘Let’s buy a condo.’ She said, ‘No! I need to know that I can walk out my door and there is fresh air and little green grass, and I think this living experience is absolutely terrific.’

In fact, Roy and Suzie would consider living at Beacon Commons forever, except for the lack of adequate space:

We came from a big home with lots of big closets that we just don’t have here. When our kids are visiting, it’s just too crowded. My other daughter is coming home in two days with her husband and dog and then, oh my god, chaos sets-in because there is no place to get lost.

It is interesting to note that while the Beacon Gardens tenants had considered their units extremely spacious, Roy and Suzie feel cramped—a discourse on lifestyle as much as square footage. Although Roy is critical of WCP for their short-term lease policies, he is otherwise complimentary of their management style: “You pay your rent, and they take care of everything,” he explains. “We needed a new roof. They put a new roof on. They take care of the grounds. They’re terrific that way.” I find this statement particularly interesting since during my interview with Brooke she had expressed a multitude of grievances against WCP, including the fact that she had difficulty getting her roof repaired:

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<sup>258</sup> Dowell Myers, professor of urban planning at The University of Southern CA. and city planner Elizabeth Gearin have combined survey results with demographic projections to chart a growing demand for dense, walkable living environments in the United States among aging baby boomers. See Dowell Myers and Elizabeth Gearin, “Current Housing Preferences and Future Demand for Denser Residential Environments,” *Housing Policy Debate* 12.4 (2001), 633-59.

You know my roof leaked a bit into my bedrooms upstairs and in the bathroom. So I called and asked them [WCP] to fix it and they would say, 'Yeah! We're going to fix it.' And I assumed they had fixed it. But the next time it rained my ceiling would leak again. And then if I called them back they would say 'You know how hard it is to get a roofer?' and that went on for a couple of years.

Brooke's experience with WCP suggests that the developers may still be guilty of gender discrimination despite the fact that they have successfully cleansed the site of suspected "undesirables," replacing "the riff-raff" with their own definition of "the right kind of people."

When I ask Roy if he has experienced any conflict with neighbors, he is adamant in his response:

I think the rents being what they are creates an atmosphere, an environment, that is professional. And they [the tenants] prefer no conflict at home. They want to come home after a long day at work and relax. They want as little bullshit as possible. And that's what they get.

However, later in our conversation, Roy does admit to "getting into it" with a couple of neighbors whom he considers irresponsible tenants. "I guess with the turnover we have, every once in a while you're going to get a crackpot and that's going to create problems."

As we begin to conclude our conversation, Roy expresses some curiosity about life at Beacon Gardens prior to its *revalorization*. "Someone was telling me that someone lived here for like 30 years," Roy queries. "What was it like when you lived here?" he prods. I show him some historic pictures of Beacon Gardens and the more recent photographs of the complex immediately prior to WCP's takeover. Roy is totally intrigued with the circa 1913 snapshot of Hamilton Cottages as well as the panoramic

view of yard that I have pieced together to capture an insider's perspective [Figs. 6 & 16].

Suzie, who has just returned home, is immediately beckoned over by Roy to look at the photos. "Look at this picture from 1913 of Beacon Gardens," he exudes. I would gladly have forgone my parking space for this," he says half joking:

Maybe come tomorrow morning when I want to park my car, I may not feel that way. But this was a real treasure. Right in the middle of this city was this beautiful landscape. Look at the trees that they tore down. That's a shame. That breaks my heart. It was like a park back here with all the trees. It's a shame. It really is!

Few of Forbes Terrace's displacees have revisited Forbes Terrace since its gentrification. Sandra has intentionally avoided the immediate area surrounding The Terrace, claiming that

It's just too painful. I don't go anywhere near there. I was so burned that I haven't even thought about it [The Terrace] for so long. And now remembering everything is bringing tears to my eyes. I don't like to even think about someone else living in my house.

Unlike Beacon Gardens' courtyard that is visible from the street, it is difficult to get a glimpse of Forbes Terrace's central courtyard without ascending the "grand staircase." Bob admits to visiting The Terrace on an impulse shortly after its *revalorization* but confesses that he found the experience demoralizing. "I walked *up there* one time when I was passing by," he recalls. "But I felt really sad. I was sad that I wasn't living there, and I felt sad that all of my old neighbors were all over the place and that we hardly got to see each other anymore. It was just so weird how that life just disappeared." Amy, who has stopped by on occasion, is not impressed with the purported improvements that WCP has touted in its ads. "Even if you go *up there*

and look at what it's like now, it's not like they did a class number one job," she proclaims. "It's like 'Let's do everything as cheaply as we can and start collecting those big fat rent checks.'" Sallyann is in agreement, claiming that The Terrace is "a mere shadow of its past."

Even though they [WCP] didn't do a lot to the exteriors, everything is so generic looking now that it's depressing. They replaced all the original wood windows with vinyl, and they filled the arched windows with this really bad looking glass that looks all wrong. The lampposts they put in, these faux historic lampposts that are probably ten feet high, are so over scaled that they look ridiculous. What with most of the trees gone and those ridiculous lampposts, the courtyard has lost any sense of intimacy.

Sallyann is also unnerved by the lack of individuality that used to differentiate one house from the next. "No one puts interesting stuff out on their porches anymore, so there is this sense of sameness," she deplores:

Even though the houses are of a very similar design, when we lived there every house had a very different character because people had really unique kinds of things on their porches and in their windows. We didn't have prototypical generic gardens, compliments of the landlord. All the tenants were growing different things so every place had its own flavor. There's no character *up there* now. And the few times I stopped by, nobody was outside. From what I've seen, I think it's fairly safe to say that 'there's no way that they [the new tenants] use the commons the way we did.'

Indeed, *turf personalization* at Forbes Terrace today is minimal given the master-landscaping plan that WCP has installed [Fig. 83]. Gone are the small garden spaces fronting each of the units [Fig. 84] that had been cultivated individually and in some instances collectively by prior Terracites, although some current households still exude a semblance of individualization through the placement of potted plants and other decorative items on porches and near entryways. Beyond this observation of



**Fig. 83. Walnut Capital's master landscaping plans that replaced personalized gardens (photograph by author)**



**Fig. 84. Bob and Amy's personally designed garden (photographs by Bob Carpenter)**

diminished household personalization, I had the opportunity to further test Sallyann's hypothesis about the use of the commons in my interview with two tenants from Forbes Terrace, both of whom have lived at The Terrace for over five years. I spoke first with Rob, a single father who was initially attracted to the court for its child-friendly amenities but is now—just days away from 'packing up and moving on.' "I moved here as a single father when my son was four and I was 44," Rob offers by way of explanation:

I had no support systems. I had to figure out where to live and what to do. It was a matter of changing my career and my life for my boy. I wanted to live where kids could play, where it's safe in the city. The people who live here are decent people, you know doctors, residents and professionals. There was a push to get younger professionals from the medical and university groups here, and that's the kind of environment I wanted for my kid. It was the best transition housing I could find. He could play in the courtyard. He could ride his ride bike anywhere, even in the parking lot where there were signs up about safety. There was a nice group of people here. I'm not that social. I usually stay with my own. But it was nice that there were courtyard parties that my kid could enjoy. In the summer, I would even move a screen and projector outside and create a drive in type of movie. It was all about the kids.

Rob, whose description of Forbes Terrace expresses some of the same sensibilities for *court-ordered living* as experienced by prior incarnations of Terracites—namely the sense of a built-in community for young children—nevertheless has remained aloof from the adult population despite the fact that they meet his socio-economic requirements for being "the right kind of people."

There are good people living here and it's a nurturing environment, which is why I've hung around for so long. I truly believe it's a great support system with quite a few stay at home moms. They can afford to stay at home because their husbands are doing okay... I think that before Forbes Terrace was probably project housing planned for a lower level of people, but WCP has really done a great job converting this place into a better setting for upwardly mobile professionals.

Just a week following my phone conversation with Rob, I visited with another Forbes Terrace resident, Jennifer, a professor at Pitt. She moved into The Terrace with her husband in 2003 but moved out temporarily in 2004 to complete a fellowship in Washington, DC. “We really like Forbes Terrace,” affirms Jennifer. “We like living here because it’s really convenient, and it’s fun. So we just signed another lease for the coming year.” Jennifer “stumbled” upon Forbes Terrace while doing an internet search for rental properties in Squirrel Hill. She had just completed her Ph.D. in St. Louis and was offered a tenure track position at The University of Pittsburgh. Jennifer and her husband are still reluctant to buy a home in the area, maintaining that their careers have not yet solidified to the point where they are ready to make that kind of commitment. When I queried Jennifer about her neighbors at Forbes Terrace, her response came in rapid fire: “Doctors, doctors, doctors,” she replied.

The people who live here are mostly medical doctors. They come here on fellowships, for one, two, or three years in one of the hospitals. So there are just a few people that have lived here a really long time, but most come and go. The people across the way over there in no. 5 have been here since 2001 and they have three daughters, one of whom is getting ready to start high school. They moved here from Namibia, but their father is French and the mother is American. And another family whose been here for a long time, they’re in no. 24. They just love it here. They also have a daughter. They’re both physicians. There’s an older woman that we’ve never met in no. 1. [I surmise that this is Mrs. Johnson who retains her lease but no longer lives on the premises].<sup>259</sup> In all this time, I’ve never seen anyone go in or out of that house except for once when some people came up the stairs looking for no. 1 and they were very emotional. One of the women said she had lived there once or maybe that her mother lived there. Something like that.

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<sup>259</sup> During my interview with Todd Reidbord in 2007, I learned that Mrs. Johnson continued to pay the rent on her unit, although she actually resided with relatives given her advanced age. In early 2009, on a visit to The Terrace, I noted that her unit had been cleared of its furnishings. By August of 2010 Mrs. Johnson’s unit for nearly 60 years was no longer under her tenureship. New tenants sat on the porch enjoying a pleasant summer evening.

Given that doctors and academics are the predominant population, it is not surprising that The Terrace population “reads like a Benetton ad.” According to Jennifer, “there’s a lot of “diversity” here, but not much “adversity.”

There are a few Indian families. Let’s see, there’s some Asian families. And there are some people from Taiwan. It’s not so conservative. Everyone is pretty liberal. Except there is one family—well, just chatting with them on the lawn and a letter to the editor which was very strongly worded—I won’t get into it, but they’re not the norm. There was an African American family who lived over there, but they bought a house. He’s a vice president for a major corporation.

Jennifer proceeds to account for a few of the other tenants, including a single mom living in no. 4 who is a leasing agent for WCP and several families from Israel whose husbands all work for a technology company and only plan to be in Pittsburgh for a few years:

The parents all speak pretty good English, but the kids don’t so they’re not yet integrated into the rest of the community. And I think one of them told me they lived on the kibbutz.”<sup>260</sup> Almost everyone here now is from somewhere else. There’s really only one family that I know that lived here [they just moved away] who is actually from Pittsburgh, a father and son [my prior informants] and they’re in the process of moving out.

When I ask Jennifer about this family, she admits that they were the only real “odd balls”<sup>261</sup> at The Terrace and the source of some communal discord:

He [the father] would show movies on The Terrace that were not appropriate for younger children. That made people very angry, and he wasn’t very tactful about it. Like he would set up his movie screen and play inappropriate movies that he was actually trying to encourage little kids to watch. They

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<sup>260</sup> One of my first homes as a young adult was a kibbutz where I resided from 1967-1970. When I moved into Beacon Gardens in 1978, I was struck by the strong commonalities between *court-ordered living* and my experiences as a young kibbutznik (someone who is a member of a kibbutz). It seemed like a natural evolution that these newly arrived families now residing at Forbes Terrace had been attracted to the courtyard complex that undoubtedly had a familiar feel. While only 2 of these families actually lived in units surrounding the courtyard, all of their friendship circle made good use of the commons.

<sup>261</sup> The moniker “oddball” was not a pejorative for prior residents of The Terrace who welcomed difference, albeit Rob might well not have been a good fit for Forbes Terrace before *revalorization*.



were inappropriate for the age level, and it was loud, and people were trying to sleep. Movies like *Platoon* and I think *Pink Floyd the Wall!*

Jennifer's description of the movie fiasco at The Terrace is very much at odds with Sallyann's nostalgic recounting of "movie night" in her era. A further source of irritation among current residents involves "irresponsible pet owners who do not clean up after their dogs." Jennifer explains that in such situations tenants notify WCP who send a warning letter stating that future offenses will result in a fine. On the whole, however, Jennifer maintains that there is little conflict among neighbors. She also attests to an informal social network among families with children—the predominant population at The Terrace:

We have social events. They're pretty informal. Usually it's just a couple of us will get together and say 'Hey, next Friday let's get together and everyone bring an appetizer and will put the chairs out on the lawn and will have drinks.' That kind of stuff happens. Anyway—people with kids—we're usually outside when it's nice. But every once in a while someone will try to get something together that's a little bit more organized, and people will bring snacks to share. For a while there was someone living here who was sort of our party planner, and she would come up with dates and distribute flyers to everybody. So everybody felt like they were included. That was probably the most structured it's ever been, and now that she's gone, we probably won't have anything like that anymore.

While Jennifer is friendly with some of her neighbors, there are tenants that she doesn't interact with at all. "We don't know everybody living here," she affirms:

We really only know the people with kids who play in the courtyard. There's two women that live next door who are friendly when we run into them, but they don't have children, and they pretty much stick to themselves. There's also a gay guy who lives across the way, but he doesn't socialize with people very much. I don't even know his name. .

Nonetheless, Jennifer maintains that there is a communal spirit at Forbes Terrace that she enjoys, even if it is not all-inclusive.

We like the communal aspect of The Terrace. You notice there are a lot of toys out on the lawn. People leave their kids' toys out, and it's expected that they're just kind of shared toys... Another reason that we like it here is because we're raised from the street and that gives you a sense of being a little self-contained community. Yet we have all the conveniences of urban-ness. We don't drive very much. We walk everywhere, and the busses are convenient. So we have all the benefits of that urban-ness, but it's quiet back here. We're very comfortable with our neighbors and it feels safe [Fig. 85].

Looking into the future, Jennifer is hopeful that her family will find similar neighbor-friendly housing when they are finally ready to purchase a home.



**Fig. 85. Communal play equipment situated in the central commons of Forbes Terrace (photograph by author)**

My guess is that if we we're going to purchase a house that it would be a place that has a similar feel to Forbes Terrace. We have friends who used to live here who bought a house in Point Breeze that is on a short dead-end street, and it operates very much like Forbes Terrace. Everyone has kids, and they all know one another. They all play on the street all the time. The only traffic is from the people who live there. So something like that really appeals to us.

Clearly the socio-spatial dynamics of *court-ordered living* have imprinted themselves on Jennifer in as much as she has expressed an interest in replicating the sense of community she has enjoyed at The Terrace—a settlement-identity that she shares with her prior Terrace neighbors who now live on a cul-de-sac.

Attempting to piece together my conversations with Ed and Jennifer of Forbes Terrace with those of Brooke and Roy of Beacon Commons, I began to surmise that despite the near identical demographics of the two complexes, differences in the social fabric of the two communities might likely reflect difference in their respective built environments. During my onsite research that extended from 2006 to 2009, I took every opportunity to stop by both Beacon Common and Forbes Terrace whenever I was in Pittsburgh, hoping to get a better sense of everyday life at both complexes. My visits, which spanned all the seasons as well as various times of the day and the week, permitted me to make some overall observations about the ways in which the two locations accommodated outdoor socialization. While neither complex exhibited the very active landscape that typified *court-ordered living* as it was practiced in the years preceding *revalorization*, each site retained some of the communal feel of its prior occupations. The small green space at the rear of Beacon Commons still appears to function as a commons of sort, although I never saw more than a sprinkling of tenants utilize the space. Stopping by one Sunday afternoon in late spring, I struck up a conversation with a woman who was outdoors with her toddler—a blanket spread out on the mini-commons and toys scattered about. After introducing myself as a prior tenant who was conducting research on the complex, I

inquired as to the whereabouts of her neighbors on such a beautiful day. She shrugged her shoulders and offered the following explanation:

There's a lot of people moving in and out of these places. We just had a big turnover this past month. So people are getting acquainted all over again. I mean, I haven't even been here a year myself. And almost everyone is pretty busy. So it's all very casual. People with kids come out mostly on the weekends when it's nice outside and sometimes late on weekday afternoons. I enjoy that. But it's a kind of hit and miss kind of thing.

Nor is the small commons a very welcoming space. Not only have all the mature trees been cleared so there is no protection from the sun, but the greens now extend directly into the parking lot. Additionally, the small porch-like areas extending beyond the entryways of each of the units are now void of any outdoor furnishings, suggesting that these spaces are no longer in active use. The daily perambulation of tenants around the common walkways for purposes of socialization is now an obsolete tradition. The wrought iron fencing and row of hedges that front the townhouses appear to serve as barriers that likely discourages neighborly interactions as tenants ambulate along the shared pathway to their individual units [Fig. 86]. The rubblestone wall that once gave the complex "that nestled feeling" is mostly gone, except for a few forgotten expanses to the sides of the u-shaped complex. Given these changes to the built-environment, children at play now require the watchful eye of an attentive adult.

In contrast to Beacon Commons, my impromptu visits to Forbes Terrace more often than not revealed some telltale signs of life, even on those occasions that I happened upon a deserted courtyard. Toys and tricycles were frequently strewn about the



**Fig. 86. Brother and sister playing on the Beacon Commons lawn. The hedges and fencing privatize areas in front of the units, discouraging informal socialization (photograph by author).**

commons, corroborating Jennifer’s description of the central greens as a communal space where children’s playthings were shared. From a few brief conversations with several residents that I encountered over several visits, I discerned that the courtyard not only served as a play area for Terrace kids but as meeting ground for parents who had the opportunity to form their own social networks. “I’ve gotten to know some of my neighbors,” expressed one of several women who had gathered outside on a pleasant spring afternoon:

We occasionally do things together with all the kids, like going to the toy lending library or just walking around the neighborhood. We’re almost all from out-of-town, so it’s nice that there is a little community here... We’re really lucky that we found this place. It’s so central and there are so many families with kids.

In addition to Forbes Terrace’s ample courtyard, a built-in sense of insularity also contributes to its more resilient social fabric. With the courtyard raised above the street and its entrance only accessible by way of “the grand staircase,” parents can

relax and enjoy their neighbors while children play in the confines of the commons. However, the absence of all but one mature tree seems to have dampened the spirit of outdoor living that characterized The Terrace prior to *revalorization*. With the canopy of fruit trees no longer shading the central commons, the courtyard is not only less inviting, but tenants are more likely to remain indoors during warm weather months. This, in combination with the installation of central air conditioning, has irrevocably altered the summer landscape of Forbes Terrace, resulting in a very different “courtscape” from years prior. While the current residents of Forbes Terrace still appear to appreciate a greater sense of community than the tenants living at Beacon Commons,<sup>262</sup> they nevertheless do not exhibit the same spirit of *court-ordered living* that Sallyann painted for me in broad strokes during our interviews. Gone are The Terrace hipsters who had once cooled their feet in the community kiddy pool, sipping their beers and unwinding in the relative shade of the central commons. In the dead heat of a late summer afternoon, Forbes Terrace’s central greens is devoid of any signs of human habitation beyond a few scattered toys—a “ghost court” of years past.

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<sup>262</sup> Beyond the anecdotal record that attests to the existence of informal social networks at Forbes Terrace and my own field observations, it was interesting to discover that one current resident of The Terrace has set up a social network for the complex on Facebook—described as “A neighborhood group for current, former, or future residence of Forbes Terrace in Pittsburgh, PA. (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=51693207273>), There is no equivalent of Beacon Commons.

## CONCLUSION:

### Chapter Seven

#### “What Would Mr. McFeely Say?”

I've been thinking about the kinds of choices we make each day. What is it—who is it—that enables us human beings to make choices all our lives. What choices led to ‘ethnic cleansing’? What choices lead to healing? What choices led to the chipping away of the Berlin Wall” What helped those students to choose to lie down in front of the tanks in Tiananmen Square. What really matters is not just our own winning but helping other people to win, too.<sup>263</sup>

*Fred Rogers, Commencement Address in 2002 at Dartmouth College*

In the idealized world of *Mister Rogers Neighborhood*, and in the pedagogy of Fred Rogers, “what really matters is not just our winning but helping other people to win too.” This basic tenet did not hold true for Fred Rogers’ real life neighborhood of Squirrel Hill. What choices led to *neighborhood cleansing*? What choices led to the displacement of people from their homes, “swept to the curb like trash, just more debris standing in the way of urban progress?” This study argues that housing is not just a commodity but an essential “human need” and that taking someone’s place devoid of any compassion is morally indefensible. Early on in my investigation, one sardonic informant evoked the spirit of Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood with the question “What happens, boys and girls, when the bulldozer comes to tear apart your neighborhood?” Just imagine if Mr. McFeely would say, ‘well you know kids, you’re just gonna have to suck it up!’ ” It has been my task to help answer that informant’s question by allowing the reader to intuit the experiences of those subjects who

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<sup>263</sup> Mark Collins and Mary Kimmel, *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood: Children Television, and Fred Rogers*, 1996: xviii.

participated in this study by first and foremost prioritizing their voices. Their displacement narratives authenticate claims of long-term emotional, psychological and social distress that some gentrification scholars and institutional agents have all-too-readily dismissed in their euphemistic refrains of—*revitalization, renaissance, regeneration, renewal, redevelopment, rejuvenation, restructuring, resurgence, reurbanization and residentialization*.<sup>264</sup> But informants’ home biographies also attest to the resiliency of place-making across time and space as outmovers embarked on their displacement journeys. I argue that this resiliency on the part of Squirrel Hill’s courtyard denizens to retain a congruent sense of place-identity/ settlement-identity is in large part a function of their everyday immersion in a highly evolved socio-spatial system that I have defined as *court-ordered living*. As such, the experience of *court-ordered living* was transported in the minds and bodies of the displaced population, who, through their own moxie and ingenuity found new ways to perform their place-identity by “making something tangible out of nostalgia.” Informant accounts of *court-ordered living* offer an insiders’ view of how Squirrel Hill’s courtyard denizens came to embody such a deeply rooted place-identity through their ongoing engagement with their everyday cultural landscape: and not just the landscapes of their own courtyard complexes—but their interactions with multiple noncontiguous courtyard enclaves that were socio-spatially intertwined. As such, I have attempted to “people” Roberta Feldman’s dense theoretical framework for analyzing settlement-identity by largely dispensing with such weighty terms as *embeddedness, at-easeness, uniqueness of place, care and concern, unity of identities, bodily orientation, appropriation of place, and centeredness*, substituting instead the more heartfelt

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<sup>264</sup> Slater, 2009: 292



voices of the study's informants— in their own words—“that nestled feeling”...  
“that whole feeling *up there*.”

As a case study, *Mister Roger Neighborhood* moves across disciplines in search of solutions for both preserving the cultural landscape of fragile neighborhoods and building potentially more inclusive and satisfying communities. Firstly, the study's ground-up approach provides an intimate look at the complexities of neighborhood place-making and underscores the frequently underestimated consequences of gentrification-induced displacement. Secondly, ethnographic accounts of forced relocation suggest that place-based research may have applicability for the development of better strategies for mitigating the negative effects of displacement, both in the moment and over time through deferred acts of resistance. Thirdly, the study functions as a cautionary tale for planners and stakeholders concerned with the preservation of both the physical and the social fabric of cities where neighborhoods are rapidly losing their individuality and distinctiveness as a neoliberal narrative of competitive progress has contributed to the homogenization of *place*. Fourthly, the research serves as “generative material” for the design of “more reasonable, more humane, more community-centered urbanism than that of contemporary America.”<sup>265</sup> A case in point is Cranberry Township, located 20 miles from downtown Pittsburgh. In 2008, the township adopted a “Traditional Neighborhood Development Ordinance,” identifying “best practices” for multi-family building types.<sup>266</sup> Posted on

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<sup>265</sup> Polyzoides et al, 1992.

<sup>266</sup> See the Cranberry Township website  
[http://www.comitta.com/portfolios/Other\\_services/Ordinances/Cranberry.pdf](http://www.comitta.com/portfolios/Other_services/Ordinances/Cranberry.pdf)

their website is a photograph of Forbes Terrace with the caption "Green Court Precedent." Regrettably, Beacon Gardens—now Beacon Commons—has been omitted from the ordinance for all too obvious reasons. Nonetheless, the ethnographic record does suggest that in spite of the drastic changes to Beacon Gardens' site design residents continued to engage in some of the practices of *court-ordered living*, providing strong evidence that design does indeed make a difference in setting the social tenor of the built environment.

Following Peter Marcuse's manifesto, "Expose, Propose, Politicize," I now pose the question, "What more can be gleaned from *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood Goes Upscale* "... so that planning is not only criticizing but also proposing and politicizing?" One of the mechanisms for averting the adverse effects of gentrification-induced displacement that I propose involves "preemptive action"—but not *flight*, the response of stage one displacees from Forbes Terrace, but rather *fight* for "the right to stay put." Revisiting the graphic cartoon depicting Terrace residents being "kicked to the curb," [see Fig. 2] the conclusion that "there [was] no alternative" can be unpacked from the advantage of hindsight. Instead of community abandonment, early outmovers might well have rallied their neighbors, building collective political capital and the necessary authority to demand self-determination. What if early outmovers had not succumbed to an overwhelming sense of futility? What if those who were determined to "stay put" had not lapsed into a state of denial regarding their uncertain future? What if, alternatively, neighborhood collaboration had faced off against *neighborhood cleansing*?

One possible solution that was never explored was the adoption of a *limited equity cooperative* (hereafter LEC), a strategy to retain affordable housing by tapping into government and/or private resources to buy properties directly from the landlord as a preemptive measure against displacement.<sup>267</sup> In an LEC, residents share ownership of a building and retain control over their housing. A *right of first refusal* gives an empowered tenancy the right to buy the existing housing before it is offered up for sale to another party. This tactic was successfully implemented in Pittsburgh's north side in 2002 when a local tenant organization, The Northside Coalition for Fair Housing, used creative financing to purchase more than 300 units for tenants who were facing imminent displacement.<sup>268</sup> While it could be argued that The Northside Associate Properties—zoned as section 8 housing—does not serve as a comparable model for Forbes Terrace—“the crown jewels of the Watkins Estate<sup>269</sup>—the success of The Northside Coalition for Fair Housing nonetheless illustrates what can be achieved when a community comes together to fight displacement. Had the tenants of Forbes Terrace organized early on to enlist the help of impassioned community activists and die-hard preservationists to raise the necessary funds, perhaps it would have been possible to prearrange a mutually satisfying alliance with the Watkins heirs

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<sup>267</sup> For more on LECs see Susan Saegert and Lymari Benítez, “Limited Equity Housing Cooperatives: Defining a Niche in the Low-Income Housing Market,” *Journal of Planning Literature* 19:4 (2005) 427-439.

<sup>268</sup> See The North Side Properties website: <http://www.northsidetenants.org> (accessed Oct. 14. 2010).

<sup>269</sup> Although poorer neighborhoods that are in need of quality affordable housing have the most to gain from LEC conversions, more upscale sites have undergone a similar process. In the 1990s and 2000s many luxury rental properties in Manhattan and Chicago, and to a lesser extent in Washington DC and the Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach areas, were converted to LECs. For more see J. DeFilippis, *Unmaking Goliath: Community Control in the Face of Global Capital*, 2004: 89-92.

(deemed benignly neglectful by the tenants) before the property actually went on the auction block—a best case scenario. But even if such an agreement did not pan out, at least the money to compete in the bidding process might have been in place, foiling WCP’s plan to “steal the property.” The same principle applies to Beacon Gardens. Had the tenants’ antennae been attuned to impending changes in the market, perhaps Bruckman Realty would have been amenable to a tenant buyout. There is good reason to believe that the property was still a source of pride to the Bruckman family who understood the significance of the architecture and would most likely have preferred to retain Scheibler’s original site plan.<sup>270</sup> Since Forbes Terrace was sold by a sealed bid the exact purchase price is not known, but it has been estimated that all three residential properties in the Watkins estate that were on the auction block would likely to fetch in three million dollar range.<sup>271</sup> All things considered, both Beacon Gardens (purchase price, 1.3 million) and Forbes Terrace (purchase price curiously not accessible from online public records) did not sell for outrageous sums of money given the historic stature of the properties and their prime locations. Nor were the cost of “renovations” for each of the properties excessive: \$1.7 million for Beacon

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<sup>270</sup> In a telephone conversation that I had with Mrs. William Bruckman in 2006, she made known that the extended family took great pride in the fact that Frederick Scheibler had been the architect of Hamilton Cottages. The family had already donated the original architectural plans and other primary resources to The CMU architectural archives.

<sup>271</sup> “Squirrel Hill Properties to Be Sold by Sealed Bidding,” *The Tribune-Review* Feb. 25, 2000. Located in the Heinz History Center Archives, folder Squirrel Hill. Using Allegheny County’s online public records, I have had no success locating the purchase price of Forbes Terrace. While the property is currently assessed at \$3.3 million dollars, the purchase price is recorded as zero. See <http://www2.county.allegheny.pa.us/RealEstate/Map.aspx?ParcelID=0086F00220000000%20%20%20%20&SearchType=3&CurrRow=0&SearchName=&SearchStreet=&SearchNum=&SearchMuni=&SearchParcel=0086F00220> and <https://www.recorder.county.allegheny.pa.us/palr/controller> (accessed November 8, 2010).

Gardens' 21 units, and \$3 million for all of the 38 units that comprised Forbes Terrace, not just the 31 units that framed the courtyard.<sup>272</sup>

Not only was it feasible that the necessary funds might have been raised to save the two properties from *revalorization*, but the practices of *court-ordered living* suggest that Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace were ideal candidates for conversion into an LECs. Firstly, residents of Squirrel Hill's courtyard complexes had a head start in the practice of democratic management, the most frequently cited challenge facing LECs. Secondly, it is recommended that LECs have professional facilitators and educators to implement shareholder education, leadership training, and effective management—a role that could have in large part been facilitated by in-house residents given the diverse pool of cooperative-minded residents that *court-ordered living* attracted. At Forbes Terrace alone there were at least two attorneys, one of whom specialized in tenant-landlord relations, an architect working in city planning, and a facility designer. Thirdly, the challenge of cooperative property maintenance—a particularly difficult task for an LEC if the built-environment is in poor condition upon purchase—was a “slam dunk” for practitioners of *court-ordered living*. Given the social history of Forbes Terrace and Beacon Gardens, a *proprietary air* had already been entrenched even prior to the formalities of rightful ownership. There is little doubt that the sites would have been well maintained under the auspices of an LEC. Finally, housing cooperatives are widely considered as an ideal housing option for populations that otherwise might not be able to attain homeownership (e.g. young

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<sup>272</sup> A. Martini and Co. General Contractors' website <http://www.amartinigc.com/files/Multi-Family%20Residential.pdf> (accessed Oct.16, 2010).

adults, single heads of households, and the elderly)—a perfect demographic match for Beacon Gardens and Forbes Terrace.

In conclusion, I would also like to provide a political platform for The Pittsburgh Directory Action Resource Guide that has put out “a call to white bohemians, anarchists, artists, radicals, activists, hipsters, etc.” asking, “Are you gentrifying neighborhoods in Pittsburgh?”

Think about how you move through the city, where you move to in the city, where you have events and how it affects the people who are living there... Talk to people in any neighborhood in which you are thinking about buying a house. Even if you think your neighborhood is really far from being gentrified, it is still important to think critically about these issues and how they relate to your interactions with people in your surroundings.<sup>273</sup>

As Beacon Gardens’ and Forbes Terrace’s displaced tenants have comfortably ensconced themselves in such gentrifying landscapes as The Mission District, Brooklyn, and Pittsburgh’s East End working-class neighborhoods, the question of personal accountability comes to the forefront. “What choices lead to [neighborhood] cleansing?” posited our “good neighbor,” Fred Rogers. I ask in kind “how can one choose to participate in the process of “replacing” an existing population, no matter how minimally and how guilelessly, and yet continue to decry the dubious practices of such institutional agents as WCP? Are you an urban pioneer? Are you in danger of being displaced further on down the line by more affluent in-movers? Either gentrification is “good for everyone,” as some displacement apologists would have us believe, or it simply isn’t! While it is clear that the art-based community that was

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<sup>273</sup> See The Pittsburgh Directory Action website <http://pittsburghdirectoryaction.org/category/gentrification/> (accessed Oct. 14, 2010).

displaced from Squirrel Hill's courtyard complexes and multi-family housing is also entitled to affordable housing, it is also clear that this "catch 22" demands that all interested parties give careful consideration as to their place in the *displacement food chain* before the engines of gentrification claim the entirety of urban space exclusively for the most privileged class.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> Included in the appendices is a list with descriptions of successful alliances between multiple stakeholders in aging courtyard complexes and garden apartments who have come together to help preserve affordable housing and resist gentrification-induced displacement in their communities.

## APPENDIX A: LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS

### **Beacon Gardens Key Informants:**

Sarah	artist, set designer for <i>The Pittsburgh Public Theater</i> and <i>The Civic Light Opera</i>
Andy	artist, photographer, musician, prop designer for <i>Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood</i>
Queenie	graduate program coordinator at <i>CMU</i> , single mother of two
Mac	middle school student
Valerie	graphic designer
Tom	Information technology practice manager
Jenny	photographer, weaver, coordinator at <i>The Carnegie Museum of Art</i> , single mother of two
Phyllis	visual manager of major department store, single mother of three
Serge	middle school student
Felice	college student, poet, single mother of four
Mark	African drum maker, musician
Karin	waitress, student, artist
Chris	network research programmer, poet
Wandi	Ph.D. student at <i>CMU (Department of Social Design Services)</i> , writer
Pat	musician
Sharyn	architectural historian, preservation activist (honorary member of Beacon Gardens)
Terry	preservation architect, preservation activist (neighbor of Beacon Gardens)



**Forbes Terrace Key Informants:**

Peter	graduate student of fine arts at <i>CMU</i>
Sallyann	architect, intern as a city planner
Gern	marketing director for <i>Pittsburgh Filmmakers</i> , artist, gardener
Alyssa	letterpress printer
Dan	rhetorical theorist working in multimedia and facility design
Gregg P	musician, curator at <i>Andy Warhol Museum</i>
Sandra	freelance attorney, single mother of two, caretaker for her handicapped brother
Todd	graduate student in fine arts at <i>CMU</i> , curator at <i>Andy Warhol Museum</i> and <i>Gallery Green</i>
Megan	nurse, mother of toddler
Brain	information technologist
Bob	web designer, project planner, humor writer, stand-up comic
Amy	attorney for <i>Pittsburgh's Neighborhood Legal Services Association</i>
Karl	musician, song-writer

## APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY

### *the alternative-minded class*

The *alternatively-minded class* is comprised of those who identify with or are at home with lifestyles that do not necessarily conform to conventional societal norms. While this includes those who may have an affinity for a particular subculture, such as hippies, goths, and punks who represent newer forms of alternative living as well as bohemians who have long been identified as nonconformists, it also includes those who place a high value on the freedom of self and others to assume a lifestyle that might well be perceived as idiosyncratic. Squirrel Hill's courtyard communities had a reputation for harboring "oddballs," a status with which it was comfortable. The majority of tenants who resided in Squirrel Hill's courtyard complexes did not present themselves as stereotypically middle-American, but rather took a certain satisfaction in their fringe status. In fact, these enclaves were often referred to as artists' colonies. "The arts" in this context encompassed all forms of creative expression, including music, theater, painting, design, film, and literature as well as the internet that was already well on its way to becoming its own creative medium. Even those residents who were not artists *per se*, identified to varying degrees as "non-conformists" in their social and intellectual leanings. While as individuals they clearly identified themselves as solidly middle class based on their families of origin, educational achievements, and cultural capital, their incomes could at best be described as "moderate" in comparison to those coming from similar backgrounds, and as a group they were likely marked by some as "other." In this sense, Squirrel Hill's courtyard denizens could be described as a marginal population, one that was highly vulnerable to displacement by higher earners from their own middle-class habitus. Furthermore, they were discursively constructed as unworthy of continued neighborhood status by those in positions of power based principally on their apparent deviance from "acceptable" class norms.

### *anticipatory displacement*

*Anticipatory displacement*, as it is used in this study, is not a response to the impending threat of large-scale neighborhood transformation but rather a response to cues that specific "devalORIZED" sites within an otherwise stable neighborhood are likely to be targeted for gentrification—a subtle alert system that triggers preemptive actions.

### *court-ordered living*

*Court-ordered living* is best understood as a socio-spatial relationship in which the primacy of the central courtyard and the inward focus of its surrounding built environment orders the dynamics of daily social interactions in favor of cooperative living. Although “court ordered” as an addition to the lexicon of housing typologies (a self-conscious play on words) in and of itself suggests the imposition of rules and regulations by an authoritative body, the completion of the descriptive with an emphasis on the word “living” indicates a more consensual relationship between bodies and space. *Court-ordered living* is a mutually constitutive process in which *the physical* and *the social* continually interact to generate a highly evolved sense of *place-identity*. In other words, while the organizing principles of the built environment provided spatial cues for community building, those cues required human actors to assert their agency and transform that *space* into *place*—from user-friendly to friendly-user—or, in keeping with the metaphor, creating what could be described as *court appeal*.

### *displacement apologists*

*Displacement apologists* minimize the consequences of *gentrification-induced displacement* by framing their discussions within the paradigm of “neighborhood change.” As such, neighborhood transformation is lauded as a *natural* process that results in largely positive outcomes. *Gentrification apologists* have sparked an energetic backlash from other more socially conscious scholars who argue that there is nothing natural or advantageous about gentrification given the resultant displacement and neighborhood polarization that ensues. Nonetheless, *gentrification apologists* have given private and institutional gentrifiers legitimate status as neighborhood benefactors, deflecting attention away from the all-too-obvious relationship between capital accumulation and uneven socio-spatial practices.

### *Gentrification and neighborhood cleansing*

For the purposes of this study, *gentrification* is defined as the process whereby an incumbent middle-class population is displaced by a succeeding population of the same class habitus, albeit with greater financial resources to meet the increased rents for properties that have been “upgraded” to “attract the right kind of people.” This process entails the discursive construction of the incumbent population as unworthy of continued occupancy, a practice I refer to as *neighborhood cleansing*.

### *intuited ownership*

Intuited ownership is a sense of entitlement to tenure without a deed of title. This “proprietary air” that was exhibited Squirrel Hill’s courtyard denizens can in part be attributed to the dynamics of *court-ordered living* in which the thoughtful site plan of Beacon Gardens encouraged a heightened sense of community that tended to increase each households’ stake in both the personal and the collective landscape. But, as suggested by tenant accounts, *intuited ownership* was further boosted by landlord neglect. The suspension of responsibility for the everyday maintenance of the complexes on the part of the property managers empowered tenants to make social and material investments in the upkeep of their communities, reinforcing a collective sense of intuited ownership

### *revalorization*

*Revalorization* is the process whereby the “use value” of a neighborhood is exchanged for its “real estate value.” This process follows a common path that starts with the predatory acquisition of land and property that has experienced “devalorization” (decrease in property value), with the intent of stimulating a “revalorization” (increase in value) through changes not simply to the housing stock, but changes in the housing class as well (see Neil Smith’s “rent gap” theory, 1987). I have opted to substitute the term *revalorization* wherever possible to describe modifications to the built environment of Squirrel Hill’s courtyard complexes, dispensing with such euphemistic terminology as revitalization and renewal etc. that is not only laden with value judgments, but deflects attention away from the primary driving force behind gentrification-induced displacement—capital accumulation.

## APPENDIX C: BIO OF FREDERICK SCHEIBLER

From the Carnegie Mellon University Architecture Archives Scheibler Collection at <http://bluerose.library.cmu.edu/Research/ArchArch/scheib.html>

### **Frederick G. Scheibler, Jr. (1872-1958)**

Frederick G. Scheibler, Jr., a Pittsburgh native, received his architectural training as an apprentice in local firms before opening his own office ca. 1901. His first independent works were quite conventional in their use of historical precedents. Unlike most of his contemporaries, however, Scheibler developed a deep interest in the progressive European architectural movements of the turn of the century, and by 1905 was experimenting with forms inspired by the Arts and Crafts Movement, the English Free Style, the Viennese Secession and Art Nouveau. Although Scheibler has often been characterized as a modernist, and some of his works have strikingly modern qualities for their time, he is best understood as a progressive—an architect who attempted to restate traditional architectural ideas in a new and personal way. For example, Scheibler, unlike most modernists, did not repudiate ornamentation. But Scheibler's ornament was unlike that of his contemporaries, for he used simple art glass and tilework—which often featured naturalistic motifs like flowers and birds—to accent plain stucco or brick walls. His trademark, the exposed I-beam lintel over windows, doors, and porches, was a frank and highly unusual use of a modern structural material in the role of a traditional building element.

Scheibler's apartment buildings, houses, rowhouses, and so-called "group cottage" developments are particularly striking elements in the built environment of the Pittsburgh area because of the architect's ability to create original compositions through the use of dramatic massing, rich detailing, and varied materials.

Many of Scheibler's early projects are documented by complete sets of working drawings and occasional watercolor cartoons for art glass and tile. The working drawings for later projects -- i.e. plans, elevations, interior elevations and details, and a structural section -- were often compressed onto one or two sheets that apparently doubled as presentation drawings.

#### *Scope and Content*

The renderings, drawings, blueprints, specifications, and photographs of the Scheibler Collection document almost 100 Scheibler projects, nearly all in southwestern Pennsylvania. Photographs from a 1962 Scheibler exhibition at the Carnegie Institute augment materials acquired from Scheibler's office.

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August 20, 1998 – <http://www.library.cmu.edu/Research/ArchArch/scheib.html>  
Martin Aurand, Architecture Librarian and Archivist.

## APPENDIX D: HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN PITTSBURGH

From the Historic Review Commission's website at  
[http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/cp/html/historic\\_review\\_commission.html](http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/cp/html/historic_review_commission.html)

The purpose of City Historic Designation is to preserve the historical, architectural and visual characteristics of structures, sites, objects, and neighborhoods that are not protected by the zoning ordinance, and which make those places distinctive. Historic designation is an honor recognizing the importance of a particular place to Pittsburgh's heritage. For this reason, the Historic Review Commission (HRC) has been established to protect the existence and appearance of designated structures, sites, objects, and districts. The Historic Review Commission (HRC) protects and maintains historically and architecturally significant buildings and neighborhoods in the City. The HRC is comprised of seven members appointed by the Mayor which must include an architect, a preservationist, a realtor, a building inspector, and a planner. The Commission recommends to City Council buildings which should be nominated for historic designation and administers the designation and subsequent review process. Its goal is to ensure that the changes that come inevitably with time will not destroy the historic character of individual buildings and their neighborhoods. Once a structure, site, object, or district is designated, its appearance comes under the jurisdiction of the Historic Review Commission, which must review and approve all exterior work that is visible from the public street or way. There is an established regulatory process for the HRC's review of visible exterior alterations, including demolitions, new construction and additions to buildings that have been designated. The regulatory process sometimes removes some of the discretion that property owners now exercise over the appearance their buildings. In exchange, the City acts to maintain the character of entire neighborhoods and to establish a certain basic standard for renovations, so that no individual owner can degrade an entire area through thoughtless remodeling, and so that places important to Pittsburgh's past will be preserved intact for future generations. Such regulation may sometimes be controversial, but it is not illegal or unconstitutional; courts have consistently upheld the right of the municipality to designate and regulate historic landmarks and districts.

Guidelines: The Historic Review Commission reviews all proposals on their own merits, but bases its judgment on a set of guidelines drawn from the Federal Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, modified by the Commission to reflect suggestions solicited from each historically designated neighborhood. These modifications are made in attempt to suit the guidelines to the unique character of the specific historic district, since each area has its own architectural character and functional requirements. The goal of the guidelines is to retain the distinctive and historical character of the district without placing unreasonable financial burdens and time delays on building owners and residents. The guidelines ask that original elements be retained and repaired, if possible, or replaced to match the appearance of the original elements. If original elements are missing, new ones that are visually compatible with style of the building can be appropriate. The

Commission takes into account the cost of repairs and replacements, and weighs them against its charge to preserve the historic character of the building and the neighborhood.

Postscript:

In 2003 the chairman of Pittsburgh's Historic Review Commission, John DeSantis, who had tangled with city officials over the historic protection of Squirrel Hill's courtyard complexes, exited his position as chair after ten years of service for undisclosed reasons. "I would not be surprised if certain powerful entities would be happy to see him leave that position because he's eloquent and zealous," declared Joseph Sabino Mistick, a prominent Pittsburgh attorney who had been active in preservation initiatives during a prior administration.<sup>275</sup>

In 2010, Michael Stern, the chairman of Pittsburgh's Historic Review Commission for seven years followed in his predecessors footsteps, citing concerns about the city's commitment to historic preservation as the impetus for his resignation. In a letter to Mayor Luke Ravenstahl, Stern stated that he had come to question the administration's genuine support for historic preservation. "I cannot successfully preside over a Historic Review Commission that does not receive the trust and support of a city administration that shares an appreciation for the economic benefits of thoughtful preservation."<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> See Patricia Lowry, "DeSantis Makes Historic Exit – Ends 13 Stormy Years as Historic Review Commission Chief," *The Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, March 13, 2003/  
<http://www.phlf.org/2003/03/13/desantis-makes-historic-exit-ends-13-stormy-years-as-historic-review-commission-chief/> (accessed Jan. 12, 2010).

<sup>276</sup> See Adam Brandolph, "Some Doubt Support of Historic Preservation in Pittsburgh," *Pittsburgh-Tribune Review*, Thursday, September 16, 2010  
[http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/cityregion/s\\_699638.html](http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/cityregion/s_699638.html) Accessed Jan. 1, 2010).



## APPENDIX E: MODEL ALLIANCES

In recent years municipalities throughout the United States are being challenged to come to terms with aging garden apartments and courtyard housing that makes up a major component of the affordable housing stock. Below are some examples of communities that are facing this challenge head on:

- **The partnership of The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), with the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency** who have joined forces to promote the preservation and rehabilitation of historic low-income garden apartments (among other prototypes) as “a viable - and valuable - option” to demolition and the displacement of residing tenants.” Many of the Chicago’s now crumbling garden apartments date back to the era before WWII and exhibit architectural ideals of the Garden City Movement and International Style architecture. While these properties, unlike Squirrel Hill’s garden apartments, fall under the category of public housing, the strategy to protect historically significant garden apartments and their tenants through the effective partnership of local, state, and federal historic preservation agencies combined with the use of available tax credits may provide a workable model for socially conscious private developers to emulate.  
<http://americancity.org/magazine/article/historic-preservation-saving-high-rise-public-housing-maclean/>. (accessed Aug. 6, 2010)
- **The Somerset Development Company of Washington, DC** has partnered with preservation agencies and local governments to promote the redevelopment, preservation, and affordability of courtyard and garden complexes in the area. Somerset, that also partners with tenant associations and resident councils, has assisted in the creation of non-profit organizations for fund-raising, and established Tenant Service Funds to ensure the provision of on-going tenant services. See the Somerset website:  
[http://www.somersetdev.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=blogsection&id=5&Itemid=27](http://www.somersetdev.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogsection&id=5&Itemid=27), (accessed, Nov. 10, 2009).
- **The Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles (CRA/LA)** interceded to halt the razing of four historic bungalow courts. Three of the four properties were proposed for demolition simply to clear the land and enhance their appeal as development sites. The Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles (CRA/LA) stepped in, conveying the historic value of

the properties and asking a nonprofit developer to explore alternatives to demolition. Ultimately, the endangered properties were acquired by Hollywood Community Housing Corporation, a nonprofit development company that rehabilitated the forty-two one- and two-bedroom units as scattered (non-contiguous) special-needs and low-income housing. Federal historic preservation tax incentives provided a tax credit of 20 percent of the project cost.

[http://www.laconservancy.org/awards/10\\_hwoodbungalows.php4](http://www.laconservancy.org/awards/10_hwoodbungalows.php4)[http://www.laconservancy.org/awards/10\\_hwoodbungalows.php4](http://www.laconservancy.org/awards/10_hwoodbungalows.php4) (accessed Oct. 20, 2002)

- **The District's Housing Finance Agency** is one of the first agencies in the country to close on a deal under the U.S. Treasury Department's New Issue Bond Program, and Webster Gardens is the first housing development in the city to take advantage of the funds. The HFA was established in 1979 to stimulate and expand homeownership and rental housing opportunities in Washington, D.C. DCHFA's multifamily housing program offers financing to create and preserve affordable multifamily rental housing throughout the District of Columbia. The program offers private for profit and non-profit developers low cost construction and permanent financing that supports the new construction, acquisition, and rehabilitation of rental housing to meet the demand of quality affordable housing for individuals and families throughout the city. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/05/10/AR2010051004126.html> (accessed Oct. 20, 2010)
- **Addison Court Housing Cooperative (ACHC)** is a 10-unit independent nonprofit corporation in West Berkeley set up under the auspices of Northern California Land Trust. The Trust is "a private non-profit corporation created to acquire and hold land for the benefit of a community and provide secure affordable access to land and housing for community residents. In particular, CLTs attempt to meet the needs of residents least served by the prevailing market."  
[http://www.ebcoho.org/pages/Addison\\_Court\\_Housing\\_Cooperative/?name=Addison\\_Court\\_Housing\\_Cooperative](http://www.ebcoho.org/pages/Addison_Court_Housing_Cooperative/?name=Addison_Court_Housing_Cooperative) (accessed Oct. 20, 2010)

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