Elderly and Independent: The Crown Heights Apartments and Affordable Senior Housing in New York City

by

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Introduction

Until the age of eight, my nanny Norma cared for my sisters and me five days a week, arriving early in the morning and returning home each night. On select weekends, she would take me to her neighborhood in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, where I met her children and neighbors. I learned a lot from her during those formative years, and the bond I had with her was unmatched. After my family moved away and no longer needed Norma’s help, we remained in touch, but economic and personal woes ultimately led to tumultuous times for Norma, and we eventually lost contact. Then, two and a half years ago, I decided to try to find my old friend. After a couple of phone calls, I eventually got a hold of her. She had recently moved in to a brand new affordable housing development for low-income seniors in Crown Heights called the Crown Heights Apartments. I did not know such a building existed and learned that she had earned a spot through a lottery system and was settling in to her new home. I began visiting her there regularly and have continued to watch her adjust to her new surroundings. As Norma slowly familiarized herself with the Crown Heights Apartments, I did too. Every time I visit, I have questions about the architecture, the residents, the social services, and the political and financial background of this subsidized building for elderly residents.

Buildings like Norma’s are being constructed in New York City and other cities around the country in response to the rapidly growing senior population in the United States. As their numbers increase and government support becomes less reliable, elderly Americans are turning to alternative resources that enable them to live independently. Today’s seniors have different expectations than those of the past.
No longer do they want to age in their children’s homes or settle for a nursing home or assisted living facility. Urban seniors want to remain in their neighborhoods and maintain an active lifestyle that they can afford. By studying the Crown Heights Apartments, it is possible to gain insight into this entire field that includes many interrelated issues including financing, social concerns, and architecture. Developers of affordable elderly buildings, like the Crown Heights Apartments, carefully consider these issues.

The Crown Heights Apartments is located in the Crown Heights neighborhood of central Brooklyn, New York City, on St. John’s Place between Kingston Avenue and Brooklyn Avenue. Although situated near medical facilitates and other homes for the aged, the buildings are not linked organizationally. The apartment building has 172 residents in 143 one-bedroom units. Because it is subsidized, which makes it affordable, the developers and residents take advantage of various city, state, and federal subsidies that allow low-income elderly, meaning those 62 years of age and over, to afford independent housing in private apartments but also have access to convenient social services. This arrangement, a building with private apartments and care provided by outside organizations, is central to this model of affordable elderly housing.

Crown Heights, Brooklyn, is an urban neighborhood with a majority black population. Residents are both of African American and West Indian descent and there is a smaller but significant and influential Hasidic community. The three groups have had their conflicts over the years but all have relatively large numbers of low-income families. Brooklyn’s borough president and other local policy-makers feel
that the community could benefit from common programs that have unifying effects. Few of the umbrella associations of the past have had more than limited and short-term success, but the Crown Heights Apartments, with its diverse population of residents and range of social services, is an institution with potential to resolve neighborhood conflicts because this urban housing type not only benefits the residents but also serves to revitalize urban neighborhoods previously struggling due to economic or social adversities.\(^1\)

The Crown Heights Apartments is a representative model of the convergence of social concern and independent elderly affordable housing developed through public-private partnerships. Since 2004, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) has collaborated with the city’s Housing Preservation and Development Department (HPD) and the Housing Development Corporation (HDC) in meeting the affordable housing target set by Mayor Bloomberg’s 2003 Affordable Housing Plan. Previously the direct landlords of many of the city-owned affordable buildings, NYCHA and HPD have been turning to capable non-profit and for-profit developers to develop and operate rental projects with the help of government subsidies. The Crown Heights Apartments was an important addition to NYCHA’s portfolio of properties because one of the biggest challenges that the agency faces is finding ways to keep New York City’s senior residents living and participating in their communities. Apartments housing seniors currently constitute 34.5 percent of all NYCHA units, and that number is expected to grow.\(^2\)

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NYCHA administers project-based Section 8 housing subsidies, which fund rents for every unit within a building and all the residents in the Crown Heights Apartments. As a result, residents pay thirty percent of their incomes towards rent and the government subsidies make up the difference. Developers, such as those involved with the Crown Heights Apartments, are enticed by this form of subsidy because the government backing ensures a consistent income on rent. Private investors in the project also receive tax subsidies for helping to finance the building. A combination of non-profit and for-profit developers financed and planned the Crown Heights Apartments by utilizing government incentives, forming a public-private partnership that has become common for affordable elderly housing development.

As part of the initiative to incorporate private developers into the city’s affordable housing network, two private groups, SKA Marin Real Estate Development and Consulting and the Local Development Corporation of Crown Heights, developed the Crown Heights Apartments. SKA Marin is part of the private, for-profit sector but currently focuses on building affordable housing in New York City. They have developed a model for affordably housing elderly populations that they believe will be successful in coming years because the elderly demographic is the fastest growing population in New York City. Like most other private developers, SKA Marin tries to observe neighborhoods and determines the specific communities’ needs. Then, their architect, in this case Terjesen Associates Architects, designs a building that can accommodate independent, but sometimes frail, elderly people who want to remain members of their community. SKA Marin also prioritizes the inclusion of social services in their buildings by renting space to separate social
service providers, such as the Jewish Board for Family and Children’s Services (JBFCS) at the Crown Heights Apartments. These services are convenient and helpful but not operated by the developer, so they are available to residents but do not impinge on their independent status. Affordable housing developers all over the country have adopted this approach.

The other co-owner of Crown Heights Apartments is the Local Development Corporation of Crown Heights (LDCCH). LDCCH is a non-for-profit 501(c)3 organization serving as a vehicle for community and program developments in Central Brooklyn. The organization aims to serve “those least able to help themselves” by providing housing assistance, loans to minority- and women-owned business, instructional training in computer technology, social services to low and moderate-income families, initiatives for new developments, and affordable housing for low-income individuals and the elderly, such as Crown Heights Apartments.3 Their goal is to “empower, elevate, and enrich the Central Brooklyn community by strengthening its institutions, generating greater access to capital, developing affordable housing, assisting those in need with the appropriate social services, expanding access to technology, and fostering the growth of a wholesome and self-enriching environment,” and “[build] hope for seniors.”4 LDCCH, which alone could not fund the project, partnered with SKA Marin and built the Crown Heights Apartments project on an LDCCH-owned site.

With the decline of funding for Medicaid, elderly people are increasingly unable to afford the old model of nursing home care. In addition, available publicly

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4 Ibid.
owned land is diminishing. When building elderly housing, developers frequently seek communities where hospitals, transportation, and pharmacies already exist. Public agencies and private developers throughout New York and across the country are repeatedly building projects similar to the Crown Heights Apartments because they believe they are providing the best possible option for the growing low-income elderly population.

Buildings like the Crown Heights Apartments are also often included in gentrification efforts because developers attempt to preserve affordable housing in the wake of high-end development. As more low-income areas in New York City and other urban centers are being coopted by populations of young people looking for inexpensive rentals and untapped urban potential, residents of neighborhoods like Crown Heights are struggling to remain in their homes. Affordable development is changing to adapt to waves of gentrification, but instead of forcefully working against it, these developments are taking advantage of the growing momentum around fashionable urban revitalization movements.

Through my research, I will produce a fuller understanding of this type of housing, as exemplified by the Crown Heights Apartments. I will explore the national context for this building type and detail the newly evolving understanding that informs development. I will then discuss the architecture of this building type across the country. I will provide a context for understanding the New York State and New York City concern and support for elderly people and affordable housing generally before exploring the local precedent for Crown Heights and its funding patterns. At that point, I will thoroughly explain the key players for the Crown Heights
Apartments, examining their histories as applied to the project. Then, I will explain the building as it was designed and built. I will finish with resident characteristics and responses, and what has happened since Crown Heights, both locally and nationally, in this field.

Norma is happy to have a home to herself with heating and air conditioning and other basic necessities at a price she can manage, but Norma was very alone at first. Her family had dispersed and friends had moved on. She was in a new building without much help or company at all and felt distant from the Crown Heights she once knew so well where family and friends surrounded her and from where she commuted everyday to Manhattan for work. In addition, various health problems prevented her from continuing her previously mobile lifestyle. After living in the building for a couple of months, however, she was made aware of the social services available to her through the building itself and her government-issued insurance. She now feels safe in the building, but I know that not all of her needs are met. In order to find out whether this model is the right one to be replicated throughout New York City and the country, I will examine past responses to the low-income elderly housing issue and the current prevailing one. I have became more curious about the physical, social, and political implications of such a seemingly progressive project on its residents and neighbors. Not knowing of any other similar examples at the start of my research, I set out to gain a comprehensive understanding of the process of creating the Crown Heights Apartments and the importance of affordable elderly housing on cities all over the country.
Part I: The Affordable Elderly Housing Model: What the Elderly Need

In 2003, according to a report to congress by the Commission on Affordable Housing and Health Facility Needs for Seniors in the 21st Century, “1 in 12 Americans [was] 65 years of age or older, by 2020 1 in 6 Americans will be in that age bracket, and by 2030 the senior population will represent 20% of the total” population. As this population grows, “issues of poverty, housing availability, health problems, and service supports” exacerbate concerns about the elderly. After the 2002 meeting of the Millennial Housing Commission (MHC) and Commission on Affordable Housing and Health Facility Needs for Seniors in the 21st Century (Seniors Commission), the commission’s minority report also stated that between the years 2000 and 2020, the Black elderly population will grow at twice the rate of the White elderly population, and the Hispanic elderly population will grow at four times the rate of the White elderly population. Due to these demographic shifts, the Seniors Commission minority report called for at least 60,000 units of new subsidized elderly housing with supportive services built annually. In order to do so, Congress needed to allocate at least $200 million nationally towards preserving and improving existing elderly units that are in danger of being converted to conventional affordable housing stock or market-rate housing. Despite these apparent concerns, the 2002 Seniors Commission’s final report was devoid of any plans for senior housing. In the 2003 Seniors Commission report, Chester Hartman wrote that the “omission of seniors

6 Ibid. 86-87.
7 Ibid. 87.
8 Ibid.
from the MHC’s work leaves a strange void, as if somehow what seniors need by way of housing is totally unrelated to the housing problems, needs, and programs of others.”\(^9\) The needs of the elderly are frequently ignored by the media and Congress.\(^10\)

Current housing surveys, however, indicate a growth in every kind of senior residential developments in response to overall demographic changes throughout the country, but the federal government does not develop the majority of it.\(^11\) As the ever growing baby boomer generation considers its senior living options, seniors are more engaged, active, and vocal than previous populations were, and their expectations are different from those of the past.\(^12\) More elderly people are living alone and taking part in their communities.\(^13\) This is especially true in cities, where elderly housing takes advantage of community resources. The affordable elderly housing type as seen in the Crown Heights Apartments is a growing trend in the United States, and what the developers achieved in Crown Heights is representative of a national interest in providing more affordable urban elderly housing for the growing numbers of elderly people striving to maintain their independence.

This solution has not always been the dominant trend. By the 1970s in the United States, the nursing home industry was expanding, spreading the institutional, hospital-like environment, which became the dominant approach to senior care.\(^14\)

\(^9\) Ibid. 86.
\(^10\) Ibid.
\(^14\) Geller. 185.
Unfortunately, these facilities frequently fell into disrepair and poor management, and older people in need had trouble avoiding low-quality nursing homes.\textsuperscript{15} Despite earlier attempts at introducing alternative forms of elderly housing, such as the 1961 Freedom House model unveiled at the first White House Conference on Aging, the nursing home model persisted. The Freedom House model home was for single individuals wanting to live in their own homes and the product of exhaustive research into the needs of the elderly. The design included extra-wide door openings and strategically placed light switches. This approach later became known as “universal design” because it aimed to allow people to age in place with dignity.\textsuperscript{16} The “universal design” did not gain much traction in the elder-care field, but over the last twenty years or so gerontologists and other groups have rethought the nursing home model and are creating more “home-like care centers” and independent living developments where seniors can age with dignity.\textsuperscript{17} The nursing home precedent, however, was widespread and left a lasting impression on the field.

Nursing homes distribute services in a regimented fashion that diminishes individuals’ independence and privacy.\textsuperscript{18} But, Klinenberg wrote, “being old, alone, and isolated does not merely render us vulnerable when we’re sick or during a crisis, it can also dramatically diminish the quality of life every day.”\textsuperscript{19} The contemporary model aims to provide affordable care to residents but by accommodating their current lifestyles and promoting community without limiting mobility and

\textsuperscript{15} Klinenberg. 188.
\textsuperscript{17} Geller. 185.
\textsuperscript{19} Klinenberg. 159.
connectivity to one’s neighborhood. Nursing home care also consumes a large portion of Medicaid expenditures, so policy makers have emphasized the importance of alternatively funded services for older people. Cities and states have experimented with different ways of organizing and financing such services, and private developers have also responded to the demand for independent senior residences. As a result, age-specific independent housing is becoming more widespread as a means of keeping elderly people out of nursing homes longer. Although some neighborhoods still resist plans for this housing type because they do not want large-scale development or low-income residents in their communities, various planning policies and zoning restrictions have been amended to accelerate development. Senior developments are also believed to contribute to cities’ and towns’ tax bases while being less crime-prone and more sensitive to existing urban fabrics than other types of low-income developments.

Elderly people in the United States are realizing their ability to have more control over their later lives and to resist the control of adult children or institutions. Most seniors prefer to remain in their home as they age, although they recognize that it may not be properly equipped for their needs. Conventional nursing homes, however, are not appealing either. A home-like atmosphere outfitted for aging residents is a compromise many are willing to make if they are not yet in need of continuous skilled nursing care. Previously, according to Sonne Lemke and Rudolf Polhamus, Joyce. “In Search of New Models for Seniors’ Housing.” Urban Land (2008): 218-20. Print. 218.

Lemke. 200.
Adler. 34.
Ibid.
Ibid.
Ibid.
Dickinson.
Moos in their 2001 article for the *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, “Residential Alternatives for Older Americans,” “we have witnessed oscillations between centralized and decentralized responsibility for care of the elderly, between professional and informal approaches, and between medical and social models. The limitations inherent in any of these polar values tend to stimulate dissatisfaction and the development of alternative settings.”

Elderly people want to age in their homes but fear isolation and physical discomfort. A senior’s environment can have a significant impact on the well-being of that individual, and as more seniors elect to live alone or age in place, certain social and physical concerns have to be at the forefront of the housing discussion.

When housing the elderly population, their social concerns are critical. Growing numbers of people all over the world are living alone, especially seniors who are aging alone in their own homes. Many of these seniors remain isolated and fearful of crime in their neighborhoods while lacking supportive spaces. A Chicago heat wave in 1995 killed over 750 people, the majority of whom were elderly people living in the city’s public housing buildings. Without air conditioning and fearful of opening windows due to high crime rates, low-income seniors in need of a caring community suffered the most. Since then, cities have made efforts to better monitor the needs of elderly people, especially those living alone, so to avoid such repeated misfortunes. Overall, however, the majority of poor seniors in this country live alone. Being alone can lead to depression, which then reduces one’s desire to make contact with others. For seniors living below the poverty line, one out of every three sees

26 Lemke. 196.
neither neighbors nor friends for up to two weeks at a time. One out of every five
does not even take part in phone conversations with friends.\textsuperscript{28} This form of isolation,
however, is avoidable. Affordable elderly apartment buildings must promote social
independence while providing services needed for survival.

In addition to social concerns, physical needs must also be addressed in
environments housing the low-income elderly demographic because the environment
influences those with more resources less than it does those with less. William
McAuley and Joan Offerle wrote in their piece “Perceived Suitability of Residence
and Life Satisfaction among the Elderly and Handicapped” from the \textit{Journal of
Housing for the Elderly}: “when environmental or individual options are limited,
congruence between environmental characteristics and individual needs may become
more important.”\textsuperscript{29} For low-income elderly who have fewer means and therefore
fewer choices, their environment has a bigger impact on well-being than it does on
those with more money and support. Those with higher incomes, fewer physical
problems, higher levels of perceived safety, and regularly available transportation
have more social contacts and greater mobility.\textsuperscript{30} When environmental adaptations
are not considered in planning for the low-income elderly, it can limit choices and
therefore limit power, minimize privacy and independence, and fail to integrate
desirable support options.\textsuperscript{31} Proximity to services and building design must

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Ibid.} 50.
\textsuperscript{29} Offerle, William J. McAuley and Joan M. “Perceived Suitability of Residence and Life
Satisfaction among the Elderly and Handicapped.” \textit{Journal of Housing for the Elderly} 1.1
(1983). Print. 64.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid.} 65.
\textsuperscript{31} Leanoard F. Heumann, Mary E. McCall, and Duncan P. Boldy. \textit{Empowering Frail Elderly
People: Opportunities and Impediments in Housing, Health, and Support Service Delivery.}
accommodate an elderly person’s physical capabilities because degree of access can influence their mental state. Without having ease of mobility, elderly people feel trapped and isolated.

Elderly people who age in place often fear the risks involved in modifying their homes but are also hesitant to move in to a separate, outfitted development. However, well-being commonly increases among seniors who move into improved housing. The people who live in the Crown Heights Apartments, many of whom were already from the neighborhood or surrounding area, made the decision to move in to a new building with proper facilities because they either could not afford their previous living situation or it had become too cumbersome. Elderly people in Crown Heights who do not live in buildings like the Crown Heights Apartments are often challenged by stairs or other physical barriers and faced with increasing rents.

Environmental barriers within the home, like inadequate heating and lighting and inappropriate room arrangements and furnishings, can limit function. According to Leonard Heumann in his essay “The Role of the Built Environment in Holistic Delivery of Home- and Community-based Care Services to Frail Elderly Persons” from Empowering Frail Elderly People, these physical barriers in private homes, limit mobility, control, safety and full use of the environment…inappropriate layout and design of the living space may compromise full control and use of the house…maintenance and management of the house become complicated and costly and, in some cases, they are totally neglected, causing faster deterioration of the environment…All of these environmental shortcomings

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32 Offerle. 65.
may interfere with the enjoyment of aging in place and can shorten the time in which frail elderly people can live independently in their housing of choice.\textsuperscript{33}

The location of an elderly person’s home can also impede their physical mobility and social well-being. Neighborhoods that have high crime, pollution, poorly paved sidewalks, and heavy traffic without safe places to cross streets or open spaces to spend leisure time can limit mobility and keep an elderly person inside, often alone.\textsuperscript{34} When not socially connected or physically capable of reaching outside resources, elderly people are often confined to their buildings, so the amenities that the building includes can have a considerable effect on their welfare.

Personal safety, or perceived personal safety, can significantly influence senior citizens’ access to the world outside of their homes.\textsuperscript{35} If their buildings are well secured, residents are more likely to explore the common spaces and grounds. If living in a seemingly safe neighborhood, residents are more likely to venture outside the property. Elderly people who leave their buildings and neighborhoods frequently have more social contacts.\textsuperscript{36} Many of the Crown Heights Apartments residents lived in Crown Heights before moving in to the building. They wanted to maintain their ties to the community, which include churches and synagogues as well as extended family members and general familiarity. McAuley and Offerle wrote of the importance of the neighborhood to elderly people: “neighborhood thus becomes a more important element of their field of action. It is therefore expected that the

\textsuperscript{33} Heumann. 119.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid. 31.
\textsuperscript{35} Offerle. 68.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
association between perceived neighborhood suitability and life satisfaction will be higher for those who leave their building more often than among those who rarely leave their buildings.”

Affordable elderly buildings should be integrated into existing communities on which the residents can rely for certain social and health needs, but the buildings themselves should also provide basic services for those who rarely venture outside.

Recent elderly developments, such as the Crown Heights Apartments, rely on community care more than on institutional residential care. The number of seniors currently relying on community-based services has grown as society ages, and with that, the variety of services offered has expanded to meet the growing number of low-income seniors aging in the privacy of their own homes. Visiting services provided by a community network, however, are more available in densely populated elderly buildings and not as obtainable for seniors distant from such concentrated places. This model for housing aging seniors is deviating from that of the 1970s nursing home solution. Seniors want their freedom without isolation, and a comprehensive affordable model that considers their physical and social needs has potential to satisfy them.

National Context: This Solution Around the Country

At the national level, architects, planners, and developers interested in city shaping are getting involved in urban senior housing. Urban housing, according to

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37 Ibid. 65.
38 Heumann. 29.
39 Ibid. 120.
40 Malinowski, Michael. “Affordable Senior Housing as an Engine for Urban Revitalization.”
Ron Nyren in his piece from *Urban Land* “Today’s Seniors’ Housing Reflects Connectivity,” can link residents to cities’ “retail, cultural, and service options easily reached by public transportation or by walking.” Earlier examples of urban elderly affordable housing, however, was not as integrated, and today’s developers are learning from past attempts. In 1976, Union Towers was built in Central Los Angeles. At the time, the lenders on the project, including the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), had restricted views of how senior affordable projects should appear. The development is located in a dense urban area, but it has failed to be an agent for urban change in the neighborhood. The 200-unit fifteen-story building is insular and “inwardly oriented,” making security systems simple but disconnecting the building from the neighborhood outside and isolating its residents. As a result, developers and architects are starting to think differently about this housing type. Affordable elderly housing does not need to be separated from society around it. Residents want to interact with their neighborhoods, which can simultaneously benefit economically and socially from their participation.

The Belltown Senior Apartments built in Seattle in 2003, for example, shows a progression from the Union Towers. Belltown Senior Apartments is an eight-story building with twenty-five studio and one-bedroom apartments for seniors earning forty percent or less than the area median. Senior Services of Seattle/King County, a non-profit organization, occupies the building’s bottom three floors with a health center, community room, Meals on Wheels service, and other supportive services. In

*42 Malinowski. 32.*
addition to a rooftop terrace and garden, the building is located near a bus stop and neighborhood shops.\textsuperscript{43} Also in Seattle, the Cabrini First Hill Apartments was built in 2006 and funded by HUD Section 202, which provides capital advances for construction and project rental assistance for developments serving the elderly.\textsuperscript{44} It too is intentionally accessible by multiple bus lines.\textsuperscript{45} As a result of these attempts to integrate buildings into their neighborhoods, their urban areas are more active and therefore safer. Elderly residence designs that engage surrounding neighborhoods thus participate in urban revitalization.\textsuperscript{46} Seniors currently living in urban settings are seeking affordable accommodations without drastically altering their lifestyles, and there is a lot of potential for cities willing to accommodate their elderly populations.\textsuperscript{47}

In order to earn additional funding for these developments, urban affordable senior projects often go beyond housing to address additional city needs, such as historic preservation, infrastructure upgrades, and public services like library improvements.\textsuperscript{48} Buildings may also include commercial storefronts and community programming available to the greater community. For example, Avalon Square in Waukesha, Wisconsin was built in 2004 and has 147 apartments for seniors funded through public-private partnerships. Aside from the café, fitness center, media center, art gallery, and retail space on the ground floor that are all open to the public, the building is also partly composed of a renovated building from the 1920s and a hotel.

\textsuperscript{43} Nyren. 45.
\textsuperscript{45} Nyren. 46.
\textsuperscript{46} Malinowski. 32.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid. 31.
\textsuperscript{48} Malinowski. 34.
from the 1870s. In order to maintain the original hotel façade and create a connection between the building and its surrounding community, the Waukesha Historic Preservation Society funded part of the project to restore the original hotel façade.49

Mission Creek Community in San Francisco, California, is another urban affordable housing project for seniors with an architectural design that integrates with the surrounding community. Started by the non-profit organization Mercy Housing California and built in 2007, the project has 140 units of affordable senior housing and shares space with a library branch, café, adult day care center, computer lab, meeting rooms, and retail spaces. The architecture also reflects that of the contemporary developments proliferating around the Mission Bay neighborhood and is therefore taking part in the area’s urban revitalization movement.50 These developments are not only appealing to residents but also to the greater communities.

In this growing national market, creativity in design has a prominent place. Senior living spaces should not be “bland” and “inefficient.”51 According to Joyce Polhamus, vice president of SmithGroup in San Francisco that develops this kind of housing and member of the American Institute of Architects Design for Aging Advisory Group, “a thoughtful design response carefully assesses what residents want and how they will actually use their space. While public process is given in other types of building design, seniors’ input has been scarce until now. But changing attitudes and new models—some that haven’t been tried or even thought of yet—will address their aspirations.”52 As a developer of elderly housing, Polhamus believes

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49 Nyren. 44.
50 Polhamus. 219.
51 Ibid. 218.
52 Ibid.
that seniors’ particular needs should be incorporated into the planning process. Polhamus wrote, “a national dialogue about senior living is essential, bringing developers, designers, and regulators together to respond creatively to seniors and to reconfigure a stale building typology. Everyone can contribute new perspectives, innovation, and fresh ideas to this pressing challenge. Great design can contribute to meeting that challenge.”53 With a well-designed affordable housing building, the residents and community can benefit both physically and socially.

A well-designed home for growing old can give seniors the opportunities to remain engaged in their communities even when abilities decline, provide access to the world, and be a relaxing space.54 Earlier examples, such as the Union Towers, were largely uniform and utilitarian, but newer models value a degree of customization in architecture while still maintaining consistency and accessibility.55 While older solutions were generally considered unsuccessful, a distinct few national examples have gained recognition for their architecture and service and left a lasting impression on the movement to expand this housing type.

### Historical Context: Significant Architectural Solutions

By examining the national architectural tradition of subsidized elderly housing, conventions from those solutions are recognizable in the Crown Heights Apartments design, although these repeated design elements might have been unintentional. Robert Venturi’s Guild House (1960-1963) in Philadelphia and Robert

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53 Ibid. 220.
55 Ibid.
Herman’s Mendelsohn House (1992) in San Francisco are both architecturally significant elderly housing projects revered for their consideration of the elderly’s architectural needs and desire to remain active community members.

Venturi designed Guild House for the Friends Neighborhood Guild, a Quaker organization after which the building is named, as independent low-income housing for the elderly (Figure 1.01). The postmodern construction is located in his home city of Philadelphia where he was raised a Quaker. The building is situated on a main road, Spring Garden Street, in the Spring Garden neighborhood of central Philadelphia where there are both residential and cultural institutions. The building has ninety-one apartments of varying types, a common recreation room located on the top floor behind the large arched window (Figure 1.02), and a garden.\textsuperscript{56} Venturi’s design intended to accommodate a complex and varied program by maximizing interior space and minimizing corridor space.\textsuperscript{57}

The windows, according to William Curtis, author of \textit{Modern Architecture Since 1900}, “rhyme with those in the area and were commonplace, standardized sashes of the kind found in the cheapest housing schemes.”\textsuperscript{58} The windows recall traditional row houses in Philadelphia and tenement-like Edwardian apartment houses. The change of scale, however, of these “almost banal design elements” adds to the quality of the façade, which reads as both conventional and unconventional.\textsuperscript{59} In this way, Venturi fulfilled one of his identifying design characteristics by

\textsuperscript{58} Curtis. 563.
\textsuperscript{59} Venturi. 116.
employing “‘old clichés in new settings’ and so gave ‘uncommon meaning to
common elements by changing their context or increasing their scale.’”

Venturi’s design manages to both blend in to its surrounding neighborhood and provide
residents with a sense of individuality. Its simplistic and modest design and use of
familiar materials and forms appealed to Quaker values while also representing
Venturi’s postmodernism. Because of these qualities, Guild House was added to the
Philadelphia Register of Historic Places in 2004. Since, Guild House has undergone
restoration work but mostly remains in its original form.

Although Venturi’s style is not conventional, certain elements of his design
have influenced the contemporary affordable housing trend that seeks an alternative
to the outdated high-rise solution. Guild House was an affordable project, so
economic constraints dictated conventional architectural elements in the design that
are repeated in the Crown Heights Apartments. Cheap bricks and standardized
windows, for example, kept costs lower. Guild House, like the Crown Heights
Apartments, also utilized grand columns at the entrance that emphasize its size and
importance. Venturi’s column, however, is polished black granite – not wood – which
contrasts the white glazed brick of the façade. This grand entrance welcomes
visitors and makes residents proud to live there. Guild House’s symmetrical façade is
accented with a large arch near the top of the building that also gives the building an

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60 Curtis. 563.
61 “What’s Historic?”. Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia. March 31,
Cavareratings: Your Source for Home Care and Senior Housing Ratings and Reviews.
March 31, 2013. <http://us-seniorhousing.cavareratings.com/senior-housing/united-states-
nursing-homes/pennsylvania-nursing-homes/philadelphia/friends-rehabilitation-program-
guild-house-philadelphia/>.  
63 Venturi. 116.
image of “openness” and “availability.” Venturi was interested in testing commonly understood imagery, yet the Guild House scheme has remained an inspiration for contemporary affordable housing.

Although Terjesen does not cite Guild House as an inspiration for the Crown Heights Apartments design, the Crown Heights Apartments in many ways references this older attempt at socially conscious architecture; however, Venturi’s aesthetic included an element of irony not replicated in the Crown Heights Apartments. Venturi chose to utilize conventions from commercial architecture at the time but then subvert them. In this way he was commenting on modern culture by implementing symbolic changes to what could be a conventional design. As an architect, however, he was still dedicated to creating a space about the elderly and for the elderly that would not force them to feel distant from the world around them.

In the 1970s, this alternative approach towards housing the elderly also thrived internationally. Herman Hertzberger’s De Drie Hoven (1971-1974) in Amsterdam aimed to create an environment in which elderly people could remain social despite physical barriers. Hertzberger’s design influenced Robert Herman’s later design for Mendelsohn House. Different wings of the building provide varying levels of care, but residents are able to access all amenities. The “village green” functions like an external courtyard but is inside and centrally located at the cross-section of the building’s wings. It is a space for casual social gatherings and planned

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64 Curtis. 563.
65 Ibid.
community events.\textsuperscript{67} Considered “internal streets,” the building’s hallways also have a social character. Windows in each apartment look out onto the hallways and create links between individual apartments and corridors, so residents can socialize with passersby (Figures 1.03, 1.04).\textsuperscript{68} Hertzberger’s sensitivity to social behavior despite decreased physical ability inspired Herman’s design in San Francisco.

Herman’s 189-unit Mendelsohn House is another example of architecturally unique affordable elderly housing that accommodates an existing neighborhood community. In the 1950s, federal bulldozers tore up San Francisco’s South of Market Street area. The district housed 4,000 people, most of them single, elderly, poor males residing in residential hotels, a common inexpensive housing option. The media and the city, however, considered the area “skid row” and wanted to make room for a new convention center, but the plan did not include enough relocation housing for all of the displaced people it would create. After years of protests and community organizing, Mendelsohn House was the result of a citizen-based effort to rebuild this San Francisco neighborhood without uprooting its residents.\textsuperscript{69} Mendelsohn House was the third project of four built by the non-profit group Tenants and Owners Development Corporation, and the building was named after one of the original activists for the project.\textsuperscript{70} The city funded the project and requested an attractive design because it would stand alongside the city’s main convention center (Figure 1.05). Because subsidies came from the city and not HUD, Herman had more

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid. 155.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid. 159.
\end{flushleft
freedom with the design, but he still chose to abide by HUD’s limits on the minimum apartment square footage and kept the project modest to avoid any necessary redesigning in case HUD money eventually became available. However, he included a bay window and recessed balcony in almost every apartment, creating a dynamic façade viewable from the convention center and a spacious feeling inside the apartments (Figure 1.06). In addition, the building includes a garden, a lobby intentionally reminiscent of the old residential hotels (Figure 1.07), a senior health clinic, and ground-floor common spaces.

Mendelsohn House is comprised of a nine-story slab and two wings, one seven-stories and the other three-stories, which together enclose a central courtyard. The use of wings to create a central courtyard is an approach borrowed from Hertzberger’s De Drie Hoven building (Figures 1.08, 1.09). The structure is primarily poured-in-place concrete with concrete piles projecting down to bedrock through the landfill underneath. The structural frame is covered with infill panels of painted cement plaster. The elevator cabins are oversized to accommodate wheelchairs and stretchers, and there is an emergency call system that links the apartments to the main desk and the manager’s apartment. Upstairs corridors have recessed front doors and shelves for placing packages. Some of these halls are double-loaded, but those on the sunnier sides of the building are single-loaded, to take advantage of the best light. Kitchen windows on these sides look out on to the hallway, which was also a feature adapted from De Drie Hoven (Figure 1.10). The internal windows provide a second source of light for the apartments and promote casual social interactions. Both Hertzberger and Herman envisioned the hallway as a place for social interaction,
while Venturi and Terjesen chose to deemphasize corridors spatially and highlight common rooms and apartments instead. Ten percent of the kitchens in Mendelsohn House have low countertops and other features for disabled tenants. The bay windows, balconies, and ironwork in the building make the building look like market-rate housing and therefore more desirable for residents and neighbors. Older local architectural types are also referenced in the roof design, which recalls the old residential hotels that defined the area and once housed many of the building’s initial residents.

Herman’s attempt to appeal to the neighborhood and its elderly residents is apparent in the Mendelsohn House design. Like the Crown Heights Apartments, Mendelsohn House feels open and inviting with a warm lobby space and garden. The apartment units are generally standardized but have a lot of natural light and space for movement. Mendelsohn House is a much taller building with more emphasis on the design of the corridors as spaces for social interaction, but the building set a precedent for attention to detail and feelings of security in an actively revitalizing urban environment. In addition, street-level common spaces for adult day-care and other activities have been central to designs since.

Following Venturi’s and Herman’s precedents, the contemporary New Carver Apartments in Downtown Los Angeles, California, is a six-story building for homeless elderly with a distinct and exciting design. Completed in 2009 for the non-profit organization Skid Row Housing Trust, the building was funded by the Los Angeles Housing Department, the State of California Department of Housing and
Community Development, and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.\textsuperscript{72} It is a ninety-seven unit building and includes job training services and mental health counseling.\textsuperscript{73} The building is located near transit stops and stores, and the ground floor has gathering spaces, tenant support services, a communal kitchen, a garden, counseling rooms, and staff offices. The building’s designers believed that affordable housing has the potential to improve the neighborhood in which it stands and act as an “anchor” in the community by having a visual “impact.”\textsuperscript{74} In 2011, the building won the HUD Secretary’s Housing and Community Design Award for Excellence in Affordable Housing Design. HUD’s report states:

this project pushes the boundaries of what affordable housing should look like and how architecture can transform communities. The development revived an underutilized neighborhood in downtown Los Angeles and made no distinction between affordable housing and high-end design. The housing, combined with on-site social services, is the most effective means of permanently ending homelessness in the community…the design provides a safe and secure environment, yet is porous enough to encourage interaction.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{72} Sullivan, Brian. \textit{Three Model Affordable Housing Developments Earn Prestigious HUD Secretary Design Award: Los Angeles, San Antonio and Seattle Developments Cited as National Models}: HUD, May 12, 2011. Print.
\textsuperscript{74} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{75} Sullivan.
The Crown Heights Apartments is part of this larger trend that considers how affordable elderly housing architecture can both improve a neighborhood and the lives of the individual residents.

There are a number of factors that initiate affordable elderly housing projects. As Michael Malinowski notes in “Affordable Senior Housing as an Engine for Urban Revitalization” from ArcCA: The Journal of the American Institute of Architects, California Council, sometimes they begin,

in traditional ways—[a request for proposal] issued by a Redevelopment Agency for a parcel it controls, for example. In other cases, affordable housing projects arise from grass roots efforts launched at the community level. The motive force might be a church with surplus property, a toxic abandoned industrial site, or even an individual architect looking past urban blight and crystallizing a vision that might act as the nucleus for assembling a development team.76

Community Development Corporations, however, predominate as initiating clients. If projects include services accessible to the community as well, government agencies are more willing to lend support. In addition, if the projects are successful, they have tendency to spur greater development in areas devastated by economic or social downturn. Neighborhoods can become more populated, more active, and safer for further investment. Elderly affordable housing is therefore a tool for initiating change, and New York City is at the forefront of this progression.

76 Malinowski. 34.
New York City

According to Eric Klinenberg, author of *Going Solo: The Extraordinary Rise and Surprising Appeal of Living Alone*, New York City offers “unusually generous public assistance for the elderly and the isolated. Practically every neighborhood has a senior center that serves lunches, organizes social events, and helps senior citizens enroll in public programs. Community groups and neighborhood organizations therefore encourage people to age in their communities, which keeps them from losing touch with friends, family and local institutions.” New York City has long been a desirable place for people to grow old, but the elderly population is running out of affordable living options, and the City is struggling to keep pace. In order to construct projects such as the Crown Heights Apartments that address the housing problem, political momentum in both the New York State government and New York City government is necessary. Various city and state groups are dedicated to advancing affordable elderly housing, and developers are taking advantage of the ongoing initiatives. New York’s governmental agencies recognize the needs of the elderly and are proactive in fulfilling this important voting block.

The demographics of the City’s elderly population is noteworthy because in 2010, the elderly population sixty years and older was 1,407,635, which was 17.2 percent of the City’s overall population. Thirty percent of people sixty and over were between the ages of sixty and sixty-four. This group has continued to age, and by 2030 people sixty years and over will increase to 1.84 million, a forty-seven percent

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77 Klinenberg. 181-182.
increase from 2000. Brooklyn and Queens are the boroughs with the largest number of elderly residents, each accounting for thirty percent of the City’s senior population. 38.2 percent of New York State’s entire elderly population resides in New York City, proving that it is a desirable urban locale for aging seniors. The older population has also grown faster that the City’s total population at 12.4 percent compared to the City’s 2.1 percent and the population under the age of sixty at .2 percent since 2000, raising the City’s median age overall. There has also been a significant increase in young elderly people (between the ages of sixty and sixty-four), and this pattern will continue as baby boomers age.

The City’s report, “Census 2010: Changes in the Elderly Population of New York City, 2000 to 2010,” states that: “the growth in very old New Yorkers results in a demand for services for long-term care. This is especially true for expansion of social and health care services to the homebound, who are disabled, frail, and have chronic diseases.” In addition, “the dramatic increase of the young elderly has an important impact on service models and utilization, challenging the City’s policymakers, families, and service providers to meet the needs of aging individuals who have different lifestyles and will likely present different needs from those of older generations.” These changes in the population will result in changes to New York City’s housing infrastructure. Private developers are realizing the economic advantage in building quality affordable housing for the elderly, and they will be the primarily source for such housing going forward by both restoring older

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80 Ibid.
developments and building new construction.

Insufficient affordable elderly housing is an issue in New York State and has become increasingly important to policy makers as the elderly population rapidly grows. In the late 1970s, there was an absence of effective community support services, so elderly individuals were frequently and unnecessarily institutionalized in nursing homes due to a lack of feasible alternatives for care. In response, the State of New York created the Community Services for the Elderly Program (CSE) in 1979. It aimed to:

- Improve the ability of communities to assist elderly people who need help in order to remain in their homes and to participate in family and community life; improve cooperation and coordination among the many providers of community services, which can help frail elderly people who are at-risk of premature institutionalization;
- Eliminate the confusion and frustration often experienced by older persons, their friends, relatives, and persons acting on their behalf when seeking services to meet the essential, and often chronic-care, needs of the elderly;
- Reduce the heavy reliance on institutions as a way to care for the older adult, prevent excessive restrictions on the freedom of needy older persons, and reduce the unnecessary public expense of caring for the needs of frail, at-risk older New Yorkers.

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82. Ibid.
CSE promotes community involvement in caring for the elderly. The state government funds grants for the program, which enables localities to determine their specific needs and shape how they respond to the elderly care question. By putting the control in the hands of communities, CSE ensures that local organizations and services are keeping older New Yorkers out of institutions.

By allotting monies to localities, CSE facilitates access to personal care, home delivered meals, information, social adult day care, transportation, health promotion, and other services for elderly people all over New York State.\(^83\) During the 2010 to 2011 fiscal year (April 1\(^{st}\) 2010 to March 31\(^{st}\) 2011) approximately 61,000 seniors in New York State benefited from CSE funded services. Of these, 17,916 were low-income, 29,456 were frail and disabled, 37,901 were over the age of seventy-five, and 30,919 lived alone.\(^84\) The statistics show that those in need are accessing assistance through CSE services.

In addition to the state support, the New York City government is instrumental in promoting affordable housing development. The New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA), Mayor Bloomberg’s New Housing Marketplace Plan, and Age Friendly NYC are all initiatives working towards improved elderly housing. The DFTA was founded in 1968 as the Mayor’s Office for the Aging and was initially funded by the national Older Americans Act as a three-year trial project.\(^85\) DFTA currently, “administers and promotes the development and provision of accessible services for older persons and serves as an advocate on legislative and

\(^{83}\) Ibid.

\(^{84}\) Ibid.

policy issues.”

In 2010, 32.7 percent of people age sixty-five and over and half of people eighty-five and over in New York City were living alone. Thirty percent of those living alone were also living in poverty. New York City residents are suffering and DFTA is attempting to change their lives. As the lead mayoral agency addressing public policy and service issues for the aging and the largest local government agency in the federal Area Agencies on Aging network, the DFTA receives federal, state, and city funds dedicated to providing essential services for low-income seniors. This money is then channeled to community-based organizations in all five boroughs that contract with the DFTA. Services they provide include activities at senior centers, home-delivered meals, home care, transportation, and legal services. The DFTA identifies seniors’ needs through “ongoing consultation with consumers, providers, advocates, and elected officials, an examination of the potential impact of policy and legislative changes on New Yorkers, and an analysis of changing demographic patterns.” As a result, the agency is currently the primary agency in the city implementing strategies for improving the city’s livability for older persons.

In New York City, Mayor Bloomberg’s administration is focused on drastically increasing affordable housing across the board. In July 2003, Mayor Bloomberg passed the ten-year New Housing Marketplace Plan that aims to create and preserve 165,000 units of affordable housing for 500,000 people by 2014, which

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86 Barrios-Paoli. 5.
87 Ibid. 16.
88 Ibid. 5.
89 Ibid. 7.
includes an additional 1,000 units of Section 202 housing for seniors.\textsuperscript{90} The DFTA’s Senior Housing Initiatives Unit advocates for affordable and new senior housing under this plan, and it was because of the New Housing Marketplace Plan that NYCHA granted the Crown Heights Apartments with project-based Section 8 subsidies. This ongoing energy to improve seniors’ lives in New York City resulted in the creation of Age Friendly NYC.

Age Friendly NYC is an initiative started by Mayor Bloomberg, the City Council, and the New York Academy of Medicine (NYAM) in August 2009.\textsuperscript{91} Age Friendly NYC targets community organizations like the Local Development Corporation of Crown Heights and provides support for projects such as the Crown Heights Apartments. Age Friendly NYC was launched to prepare the city for the growing numbers of elderly people. The program, “brings together older New Yorkers, government agencies, nonprofit leaders, members of the business community, and a variety of other stakeholders to assess New York’s ‘age-friendliness.’”\textsuperscript{92} In 2007, the City and NYAM began assessing the age-friendliness of New York City by conversing with elderly residents and leaders from private, nonprofit, and academic sectors.\textsuperscript{93} After determining that New York City was not equipped for the demographic transformation, the commission was formed. Age Friendly NYC includes members of the business, education, civic, and non-profit sectors charged with recommending how the City can collaborate with these various

\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Ibid.} 16.
\textsuperscript{91} \textquoteleft\textquoteleft About DFTA\textquoteright\textquoteright.
\textsuperscript{92} \textquoteleft\textquoteleft Age Friendly NYC: Enhancing Our City's Livability for Older New Yorkers." Ed. Office of the Mayor, The Council of the City of New York, Committee on Aging, Subcommittee on Senior Centers 2009. Print.
\textsuperscript{93} \textit{Ibid.} 7.
sectors to enhance age-friendly resources. One of the primary goals of Age Friendly NYC is to increase available affordable housing that is safe and appropriate for the elderly population. Although the Crown Heights Apartments planning was already underway prior to this specific initiative, it is related to the ongoing conversation in New York City and work that the DFTA has been doing for years.

Age Friendly NYC’s specific plans include increasing seniors’ ability to age in place. For those living in NORCs, or Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities, Age-Friendly NYC plans to provide additional services, increase Section 8 vouchers available to older adults, and promote access to new models of housing that support aging in place.\textsuperscript{94} NORCs are generally places (buildings, developments, neighborhoods) with large senior populations but that were not built specifically for senior communities. NORCs are popular because approximately eighty-nine percent of seniors prefer to age in place in their own neighborhood or home, and as few as nine percent want to live in an “age-segregated community,” according to a study by the Harvard University Graduate School of Design.\textsuperscript{95} NORCs can fulfill seniors’ needs without removing them from their chosen location. In a recent article from The New York Times, “Sun City It’s Not,” Constance Rosenblum drew attention to a number of NORCs in New York City.\textsuperscript{96} Certain neighborhoods, such as Manhattan’s Upper West Side, which is the focus of the article, are home to many residents that moved there fifty years ago when people bought in to apartment buildings relatively inexpensively and now have no desire to sell their shares. Others

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid. 47.
happened upon rent-stabilized units and cannot justify moving to something more expensive or less ideal. As a result, some of these apartment buildings started catering to the large elderly populations residing in them.

NORCs serve many of the needs of elderly New Yorkers who want to maintain independence, but the city needs more affordable housing developments that can serve the same purpose. In order to increase affordable elderly housing, Age Friendly NYC proposes targeting housing funds and streamlining the process of building low income housing, altering zoning codes to facilitate construction of senior housing, re-zoning properties previously allocated to other purposes to accommodate senior housing construction, and providing loans for rehabilitation and new construction of affordable housing projects.97 Demand for subsidized senior housing currently exceeds supply, and the Age Friendly NYC initiative was implemented in part to remedy the problem by building more public-private developments while also better outfitting NORCs.

As part of the Age Friendly NYC initiative, HPD (New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development) also encourages developers to build more developments by providing them with “gap financing” for HUD Section 202 senior projects. Currently, the main source of subsidized, low-income housing for seniors in New York City is Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly, which began in 1959 as a federally operated HUD program that provides funding to non-profit organizations for new construction or rehabilitation of low-income rental housing with supportive services. Each year, HUD gives thirty million dollars to non-profits for construction and rent subsidies, and about 250 units of housing for low-income

97 “Age Friendly NYC: Enhancing Our City's Livability for Older New Yorkers.” 47.
elderly are developed through the HUD Section 202 Supportive Housing Program in New York City as a result. Age Friendly NYC, however, expects more in the coming years to sustain the growing numbers who need it.

According to the most recent *NYC Department for the Aging Annual Plan Summary*, there are currently 190 Section 202 buildings with approximately 17,680 units in the City. Additional housing includes fifty-seven New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments with over 10,000 units reserved for older New Yorkers. There are also seniors living in eighteen Mitchell-Lama sites with 3,533 units.98 The Mitchell-Lama program subsidized the construction of developments for moderate- and middle-income households. The State offered low-interest mortgage loans and tax exemptions for owners and placed income limits on tenants. Owners can currently choose to convert Mitchell-Lama buildings into market rate apartments or remain under the regulations of the HPD. Projects that use Section 8 subsidies, however, are on the rise because they are proven effective with elderly residents and cater to new construction projects and the current financial situation that requires hybrid financing.

The New York City government deemed affordable housing an important asset to the city’s elderly population and a primary approach to making the city more accessible for a growing portion of its population. By using existing infrastructure and promoting additional solutions, Age Friendly NYC has made it possible for more elderly to receive housing subsidies while providing incentives to landlords who provide housing to the elderly. Age Friendly NYC is an unprecedented program changing the way New York City supports the elderly population. The increase in

98 Barrios-Paoli. 16.
elderly New Yorkers, according to DFTA’s *Census 2010: Changes in the Elderly Population of New York City*, “has an important impact on service models and utilization, challenging the City’s policymakers, families, and service providers to meet the needs of aging individuals who have different lifestyles and will likely present different needs from those of older generations.” The city is continuously evaluating the situation and looking for new solutions, and developers are taking advantage of both the city- and state-driven enthusiasm.

The Crown Heights Apartments, and other similar buildings, was developed based on existing solutions to affordable elderly housing in New York City. Low-income elderly New Yorkers have been living in New York City’s NORCs and public housing projects, and the Crown Heights solution borrows from these precedents. In *Building Type Basics for Senior Living* from 2004, Bradford Perkins, David Hoglund, Douglas King, and Eric Cohen wrote, “some of the senior housing markets with the fewest new options are in the major cities. Various factors including higher cost, security, and land-use controls, as well as the natural development of NORCs (Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities), which serve the same role as planned senior communities, account for the limited number of urban models. The need is there, however, and a growing number of urban models are being developed.”

NORCs serve many of New York City’s seniors, and new affordable developments, such as the Crown Heights Apartments, share their sensitivity to aging in place but

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are more financially affordable and physically accessible because they are built for
the express purpose of housing low-income elderly.

NORCs

Instead of moving in to retirement homes or senior citizen developments, residents of NORCs prefer to age in place in their private, often upscale, developments. Rosenblum wrote that these New Yorkers are “attracted by convenient shopping, abundant mass transit and a wealth of cultural activities.” Unlike public housing projects where programs tailored to this population—such as on-site-social workers, escorts to medical appointments, and workshops on issues of interest to the elderly—are funded by city and state governments and rents are guaranteed to remain low, private NORCs have difficulty providing similar services because they lack financial resources. In many instances, non-profit organizations, largely operated by volunteers, have taken on the role of providing services to NORCs.

Within these private buildings, there is also “a problem of perception.” Young families are often wary of moving in to a building where older residents hold “chair yoga classes,” or other age-specific activities, in the common spaces. Certain buildings also resist implementing accommodations for the elderly, such as building ramps or handrails. Despite these challenges, New York City seniors remain in their preferred buildings and neighborhoods because the city currently lacks sufficient alternatives. With the advent of new housing options, like the Crown Heights Apartments, there will be more purpose-built affordable options for elderly

101 Rosenblum.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
New Yorkers. Like the new models, however, NORCs take advantage of community resources already involved in caring for the elderly, many of them functioning without government funding.

Grassroots efforts serve the growing low-income elderly population living in NORCs by providing services ranging from buying groceries for residents to organizing informational sessions about Medicare. For example, at Lincoln Towers, located on Manhattan’s Upper West Side, Project Open is a non-profit organization that tries to meet residents’ emotional and physical needs by providing a broad-range of services. As one observer describes, “One of the most popular events is the Wednesday-night class taught by a retired classics professor, which has up to 50 people reading plays by Aeschylus. The monthly blood-pressure checks, equally well attended, are administered in Project Open’s office, a cinder-block space outfitted with card tables and folding chairs.”

Despite low budgets and meager facilities, organizations such Project Open work to contribute to elderly communities. For example, “On New Year’s Eve, Project Open organizes a dinner for people who would otherwise be alone. Teenage volunteers help older residents master the mysteries of the laptop. Discussions on such issues as pain management and decluttering (a big issue in NORCs) attract 60 to 70 people at a time.” Project Open’s annual budget is about $100,000, largely financed by individual donations and grants from social welfare agencies. The budget covers a few paid social

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104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
workers and facilitators, but most employees are volunteers. Some organizations serving NORCs, such as The Lincoln Square Neighborhood Center, are without adequate management and funding and are failing to consistently provide services for their constituents. Many of these groups have been struggling to remain financially solvent, showing a need for an alternative way of assisting the low-income elderly.

Some of the non-profit groups working in NORCs have gone out of their way to provide on-site services at many of the NORCs around the city, similar to the way in which services are brought in to the building at the Crown Heights Apartments. This approach, however, has started to be inefficient for many groups. Dorot, meaning “generations” in Hebrew to represent the bond between young people and elderly people when the young care for the old, is another organization primarily run by volunteers that aims to alleviate social isolation and provide services to the elderly. It previously placed representative social workers in particular buildings weekly and provided meal deliveries, but now elderly residents must visit the Dorot offices to receive aid because, “efforts to establish on-site services proved formidable, in part, some people who study the effectiveness of NORC programs suggest, because of issues of scale.” Rosenblum quoted urban planner Harry Schwartz in her article as saying, “When you have large numbers of older people in one complex, as you do in Lincoln Towers it’s easier to provide services to help them. With just a handful, it’s a much greater challenge.” These organizations frequently do not have the

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107 Ibid.
108 D’Oca.
110 Rosenblum.
111 Ibid.
funds to provide the personalized care that many elderly people need, especially if their NORC is not sizable enough to be efficient for the organization. Although some groups such as Bloomingdale Aging in Place receive a portion of government funding, those resources have been dwindling of late, possibly allocated towards new alternative approaches to the elderly situation.

The elderly population in New York City is not only worried about their physical capabilities as they age, but they are also concerned about feeling isolated and lonely, so NORCs are appealing. In Rosenblum’s article, David Reich, who is a seventy-four year old retired researcher for IBM and founder of Bloomingdale Aging in Place said, “‘For many people, the desire is simply to connect with other people and get neighborly help when needed…this population is concerned about isolation, about loneliness,’” but “‘when people meet each other in a friendly situation they are more likely to accept help from those neighbors than they would from a stranger.’”

Those who found private housing years ago that they can still afford, choose to age in place because they want to remain part of a community. Evelyn Rich, also quoted in Rosenblum’s article, is a resident who helped start a social services program at Lincoln House and was on Project Open’s advisory board. She said, “‘we want to share with the communities we live in. We want to keep out of nursing homes. We’re retired, but we’re not tired.’” Eleanor Ledogar who is seventy-nine years old and a member of the Bloomingdale Aging in Place board said, “we don’t ever want to leave the neighborhood. And we hope we don’t have to.”

Those who cannot afford market-rate housing, however, have a difficult time finding available affordable

\[112\] Ibid.  
\[113\] Ibid.  
\[114\] Ibid.
housing in the city. Non-profit organizations have emerged to serve these populations as best they can, and NYCHA has also attempted to address the issues surrounding the elderly population living in its subsidized housing, but everyone involved recognizes the need for new models that can remain economically sustainable while serving more elderly residents more efficiently.

**NYCHA’s Previous Approach**

In addition to NORCs, NYCHA also attempts to house New York City’s elderly affordably and independently. Over thirty-five percent of NYCHA’s residents are sixty-two years of age or over, and NYCHA currently has forty-two developments for seniors and fifteen seniors-only buildings within mixed-population developments.\(^{115}\) Thirty-three of those forty-two developments, are “towers-in-the-park,” or isolated hi-rise buildings surrounded by landscaping that separates the building from the urban streetscape. The senior developments and buildings, however, are designed to maximize the residents’ mobility.\(^{116}\) Ramps in place of stairs, for example, eliminate some physical barriers. Senior centers are also intentionally located near to these buildings. All together, NYCHA has about 9,822 apartments designated for seniors.\(^{117}\) In addition, there are 7,694 apartments that have been retrofitted to accommodate families with people who are mobility-impaired.\(^{118}\)

One of NYCHA’s seniors-only buildings, Ira S. Robbins Plaza (1973) located on East Seventieth Street in Manhattan, is a twenty-story building exclusively for


\(^{116}\) D’Orca.

\(^{117}\) “Community Programs & Services: Senior Services”.

\(^{118}\) Ibid.
seniors. There are 150 apartments and about 159 residents. Like the Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association sponsors the senior center within the building. Like the Crown Heights Apartments, Robbins Plaza has convenient social services and is located near to bus and subway stations, but being from the era of Union Towers, spatial and social sensitivity were not priorities. Aside from the housing itself, NYCHA does, however, aim to increase access to community, educational, and recreational programs for its elderly residents.

NYCHA oversees over 400 community facilities, including senior centers, health care centers, and day care centers. These centers run literacy classes, computer training, senior companion initiatives, and more. There are also NYCHA social workers that help seniors obtain housekeeping help and personal care. NYCHA also partners with NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), to offer health screenings, nutrition workshops, exercise classes, medical referrals, immunization campaigns, and mental health services. There are NYCHA Service Coordinators that casually monitor seniors’ well-being with home visits and telephone calls at twenty-four developments, both conventional and seniors-only. In seniors-only buildings and developments, however, NYCHA guarantees that there is also always a staff member available to assist seniors when necessary. NYCHA is working to implement these senior programs at more conventional developments


121 “Community Programs & Services: Senior Services”.

122 Ibid.

123 Ibid.
where there are growing numbers of seniors aging in place.\textsuperscript{124} Currently, there are 137 Senior Centers among NYCHA’s conventional developments, and each center offers recreational, social, and medical services. New York City’s Department of Aging oversees many of these centers, but NYCHA operates forty-one of them directly. NYCHA is directly involved in the spectrum of elderly affordable housing and care in New York City, and will continue to be in the future even as approaches to affordable housing evolve.

NYCHA’s attention to the elderly population is progressing. While not nearly all of the New York City’s low-income seniors can live in one of the senior-specific buildings or developments, there are social services provided throughout the city. As more services for seniors develop in NYCHA buildings, more seniors are trying to move in to public housing. Out of the 155,000 people on NYCHA’s waiting list for public housing, about 22,000 are seniors.\textsuperscript{125} NYCHA, however, has started facing dramatic reductions in government funding, so it is considering new financing options that include creating partnerships with private and for-profit groups. Most of the City’s seniors aging in place, both in public housing and private NORCs, are aging in homes, neighborhoods, and communities initially designed for a different, younger demographic.\textsuperscript{126} The newer models that incorporate aspects of these previous solutions in New York City is changing the way older New Yorkers see their future.

From the popular NORCs and their non-profit services and NYCHA’s public programing directed at the elderly population in New York, comes a new concept of

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{126} D’Orca.
housing that combines subsidized affordable housing and non-profit organizations’ social services, like the Crown Heights Apartments does. These developments respect seniors’ independence while still offering convenient amenities, and more are being constructed throughout New York City. NORCs and NYCHA programs alone cannot accommodate all of New York City’s seniors who are stressed financially. Alternatives are necessary to supplement the older solutions, and there are examples of previous attempts from which NYCHA and private developers have learned.

The HANAC (Hellenic American Neighborhood Action Committee) Archbishop Lakovos Senior Residence in Astoria, Queens is an earlier example of this effort in New York City. HANAC is a social services organization that built Lakovos Senior Residence in 1993 for low- to moderate-income seniors. Funded by a HUD Section 202 grant, the building has one hundred apartments, a laundry room, parking lot, garden, and recreation community space. There is also a HANAC-operated senior center where seniors can get meals, social services, recreational programs, and transportation services. HUD also funds an on-site Service Coordinator. Like the David Chavis Apartments, built ten years prior, the building is bright red brick and stands out against its surrounding neighborhood. This stylistic approach was altered in more recent HANAC projects similar to the way that LDCCH modernized its more recent projects’ designs.127

Examples of earlier efforts to provide affordable housing for New York City’s elderly exemplify the start to a larger pattern forming across the country. The Crown Heights Apartments is a solution to affordable elderly housing architecture and

development derived from previous attempts in New York City and on a national scale. The way the building was financed, residents are served, and plan was designed are all results of local and national historical examples from which developers and architects have learned. In New York City, independent affordable elderly housing consisted largely of NORCs where elderly people live in private buildings and take advantage of onsite or convenient social services run by non-profit organizations. New York City has also had large-scale public housing projects, some of which are elderly-only, where NYCHA provides social services. Both NORCs and NYCHA programs, however, do not serve all of New York City’s needy seniors and are struggling financially to maintain their current load. Guild House and Mendelsohn House represent previous attempts at housing neighborhoods of elderly residents in architecturally sensitive spaces. The architectural and social issues surrounding affordable elderly housing in this country are addressed in the Crown Heights Apartments solution. It is leading the way to more projects like it in New York City and has inspired other strategies that similarly combine resources while predicting urban redevelopment and growth to best suit low-income elderly residents.
Part II: Crown Heights: History and Prospects of the Urban Environment

Crown Heights, Brooklyn has a varied population and history that provide important context for the Crown Heights Apartments. Contemporary affordable housing developments attempt to continue neighborhood patterns and immerse residents within them. An overview of the neighborhood’s history, demographics, and architecture is therefore necessary in situating the building and understanding its developers’ and designers’ perspectives.

Crown Heights is located in west central Brooklyn, surrounded by Prospect Heights to the west, Flatbush to the south, Brownsville to the southeast, and Bedford-Stuyvesant to the north (Figure 2.01). Eastern Parkway is the principal thoroughfare running through the length of the neighborhood with commercial districts branching off of it on Franklin, Nostrand, Kingston, and Utica Avenues. Crown Heights is bounded by Atlantic Avenue to the north, Ralph Avenue to the east, Empire Boulevard to the south, and Flatbush Avenue to the west. Local residents say, however, that the westernmost boundary has recently been moving further east to Franklin Avenue as demand for housing in Prospect Heights, a slightly more expensive neighborhood that borders Prospect Park, has increased and pushed its boundaries east into Crown Heights. If this shift continues, affordable housing in Crown Heights will become scarcer.

129 Ibid.
The Crown Heights neighborhood is also home to a number of cultural institutions that make the area unique and desirable. Elderly people as well as the younger, wealthier population arriving can benefit greatly from such a culturally vibrant neighborhood. The neighborhood is home to the Brooklyn Children’s Museum, the Jewish Children’s Museum, and the Weeksville Heritage Center on Bergen Street. Brower Park, a popular place for playing basketball and walking dogs, is also nestled between Brooklyn and Kingston Avenues on Park Place, about two blocks from the Crown Heights Apartments. In addition, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Prospect Park, the Brooklyn Museum, and the central branch of the Brooklyn Public Library are all on Eastern Parkway at the western end of Crown Heights, the area quickly being adopted by Prospect Heights. Medgar Evers College and the Society for the Preservation of Weeksville and Bedford-Stuyvesant History are also located within the Crown Heights boundaries.\textsuperscript{132}

Eastern Parkway itself is a designated New York City Scenic Landmark. The main road, with subway lines running beneath it, has pedestrian malls on each side and sets the tone for landscaping throughout Crown Heights. Crown Heights’ blocks, as a result, are regular contenders in the Brooklyn Botanic Garden’s “Greenest Block in Brooklyn” contest.\textsuperscript{133} The West Indian Labor Day Parade, the largest parade in New York City, travels along Eastern Parkway attracting two million spectators every year.\textsuperscript{134} Commercial streets perpendicular to Eastern Parkway, such as Nostrand and Utica Avenues, have a variety of stores such as bargain centers, record shops, fast

\textsuperscript{132} Jackson. 333.
\textsuperscript{134} Jackson. 333.
food chains, and Asian markets. But Franklin Avenue is becoming a center for restaurants and stores geared towards the younger generation moving in, and Kingston Avenue, which the Crown Heights Apartments abuts, is the commercial epicenter of the neighborhood’s Jewish community.\footnote{Telpha.}

Parts of the neighborhood are changing, and long-time Crown Heights residents fear they will lose their neighborhood to those willing to pay higher rents. While development may be inevitable, it should ideally consider the already existing residents, not solely the newcomers. The Crown Heights Apartments is significant because it is new development and an attempt to reinvigorate a formerly desolate area, but it is made for those who have lived there through it. It is not a high priced development hoping to encourage relocation of those with money like properties on the neighborhood’s western boundary. The gentrification, however, will continue to spread further east, and eventually the Crown Heights Apartments will have to decide whether to integrate itself into the soon-to-be gentrified market-rate neighborhood or stand markedly as a symbol of earlier times.

In a recent \textit{New York Times} article discussing the changing population in Crown Heights, Jake Mooney described the neighborhood as a “broad arc” with “Prospect Heights to the western side and Ocean Hill and Brownsville far to the east. In area it is roughly two square miles. The two ends share little in terms of housing; the west is marked by tree-lined streets and brownstone and limestone town houses; to the east, past Albany Avenue, blocks have an exposed, sun-baked feel.”\footnote{Mooney.} It is a
densely settled neighborhood in its two square miles, but it has a diverse history that remains relevant in the area today.  

Crown Heights History

The land on which Crown Heights now stands was once a heavily wooded area. When Europeans arrived, the Lenape Indians occupied the area. During the Revolutionary War, it was the site of multiple battles, including the Battle of Long Island, otherwise known as the Battle of Brooklyn. Some historians even attribute the name Crown Heights to this battle when the British outmaneuvered General George Washington’s army and won the use of the convenient road that passed through the area. During the early nineteenth century, the area was a rural landscape and part of the village of Bedford. Development soon followed.

In 1835, the New York State Legislature passed “an act authorizing the appointment of commissions to lay out streets, avenues, and squares in the city of Brooklyn.” Brooklyn’s street grid expanded throughout Crown Heights, and most traces of the Revolutionary era roads disappeared. Northwestern Crown Heights, however, remained fairly rural into the 1850s, but the foundations for the neighborhood’s suburban, and later urban, growth were forming. Innovations

139 Ibid.
140 Ibid.
142 Ibid. 12.
143 Ibid. 13.
included new transportation links between Crown Heights and the Brooklyn waterfront ferries that linked Brooklyn to Manhattan. In the 1870s development in northwestern Crown Heights intensified as construction on the Brooklyn Bridge progressed. The public, “including real estate owners, brokers, developers, and prospective homeowners,” expected large-scale development to follow its opening, but speculators also wanted to preserve some of Crown Heights’ rural charm in the new plans.

As the hallmark of the suburbanism implemented in Crown Heights, Eastern Parkway was completed in 1874. Running for 2.2 miles between Prospect Park and Ralph Avenue, the wide tree-lined boulevard was part of Calvert Vaux’s and Frederick Law Olmsted’s comprehensive city plan for Brooklyn. The two landscape designers, most well known for designing Manhattan’s Central Park, coined the term “parkway” to describe a road built for scenic driving, such as Eastern Parkway. Olmsted and Vaux had planned for the road to be the center of a system of connected parks and parkways throughout Brooklyn, which included Fort Greene Park, Ocean Parkway, Grand Army Plaza, and Prospect Park. The plan was never completed, but their vision of bringing the country to the city and ensuring the existence of open space, fresh air, and greenery in urban residential areas influenced later construction in the area.

The families and planners in Crown Heights wanted the neighborhood to remain high end, so large mansions and apartment buildings were constructed.

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144 Ibid. 12.
145 Ibid. 15.
146 Jackson. 333.
along Eastern Parkway and around Prospect Park in an attempt to protect Crown Heights from the urban sprawl taking over other neighborhoods in the city. It was not until the 1950s that “less affluent” residents began inhabiting these same homes.\textsuperscript{148}

In anticipation for the 1883 Brooklyn Bridge completion, residential construction in Crown Heights increased.\textsuperscript{149} Throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Crown Heights was home to mostly white, Protestant residents, and there were a number of churches and other related institutions in the area.\textsuperscript{150} In the 1920s when the Eastern Parkway subway line opened, construction of elevator apartment houses and four-story walk-up blocks of flats were more frequent than the grand homes of the previous generation. Then, after World War II, a large population of Hasidic Holocaust survivors relocated to Crown Heights. In 1950, the population of Crown Heights was fifty percent Jewish, and descendants of this community remain in the neighborhood today.\textsuperscript{151}

The twentieth-century urban growth movement continued until the area fell into decay in the 1960s.\textsuperscript{152} Like many other neighborhoods in New York City that suffered from a poor economy, Crown Heights experienced a deteriorating housing stock and rising unemployment and crime rates.\textsuperscript{153} Many of the middle class white residents and businesses moved out of the neighborhood, and larger numbers of black immigrants moved in.

\textsuperscript{148} Krase.
\textsuperscript{149} Danza. 19.
\textsuperscript{150} The Zion Home for the Colored Aged which had been located in Weeksville between the 1870s and 1900 but then moved to St. John’s Place and Kingston Avenue, across the street from where the Crown Heights Apartments is located today.
\textsuperscript{151} Jackson.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{153} Danza. 35.
Neighboring Bedford-Stuyvesant started attracting large numbers of African American families by 1930. By 1950, the neighborhood was more than eighty percent black. Then, Crown Heights gained a large African American population. At the time, Caribbean immigrants were a small group and tended to settle in Central Harlem or Bedford Stuyvesant after arriving in New York City.\textsuperscript{154} Throughout the 1950s, however, the black population, including people of Caribbean descent, increased. By the 1960s, Crown Heights became the core of the city’s Caribbean community, and by the 1990s the area was considered “the center of Caribbean-American life in the United States.”\textsuperscript{155} Since the 1980s, however, the white population of Crown Heights, including members of the Lubavitch Hasidic movement that has its headquarters on Eastern Parkway, has also increased.\textsuperscript{156} Tensions between these two groups came to a head over three days of rioting and violence after an automobile incident in 1991.\textsuperscript{157}

Riots began on August 19\textsuperscript{th} 1991 after a Guyanese child was struck and killed by an automobile that was part of a motorcade transporting the Lubavitch Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson. Racially charged anger and deadly violence erupted between the Lubavitch community and the black community in Crown Heights. Previously divided between those of American descent and those of Caribbean descent, the black community united over the situation because the incident represented ongoing racism and inequality in the neighborhood. After the rioting ceased, community associations were proposed, such as a daycare program and a conflict resolution task force, to bring the people of Crown Heights together. The

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\textsuperscript{154} Ibid. 35.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid. 34-35.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{157} Abrahamson. 132.
\end{flushleft}
African American, West Indian, and Hasidic groups all have relatively large numbers of low-income families, so community organizers thought that they could benefit from common, unifying programs. Although it is an improved situation, the different groups continue to be occasionally driven apart by minor conflicts over rent and differing morals.\textsuperscript{158} As a result, land values have not risen above affordable levels until relatively recently. David Chavis Apartments (1982), an affordable senior building also owned by the Local Development Corporation of Crown Heights (LDCCH), and other housing options were made possible because land was inexpensive due to neighborhood’s turbulent history, but recently affordability has become a problem in this once affordable enclave.

Crown Heights Historic District

Because of the rich and varied architectural and social history in Crown Heights, a specific section of the neighborhood, Crown Heights North, was designated a New York City Historic District in 2007. The neighborhood preservation committee argued that there is an abundance of significant architectural stock worth preserving in the neighborhood that is still standing partly due to the lack of development during the 1970s and 1980s. Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz grew up in Crown Heights and supported the neighborhood gaining historic standing.\textsuperscript{159} He spoke to the City’s Landmarks Preservation Committee in 2006 and said that the new historic status, “strikes the right balance between preserving the character of some of our most beautiful historic areas while also

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid. 134.
\textsuperscript{159} Dugan, Kevin. “The Uncertain Fate of an Old Brooklyn Nook.” Inprint: Eugene Lang College and New School University Newspaper 2007.

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planning for our bright future.” Although there were decades of economic and social decline in Crown Heights, Markowitz and the committee believed that preserving some of the neighborhood’s history would help it gain status and resources for the future. There had been an enthusiastic push to preserve Brooklyn neighborhoods throughout the 1970s, but very little had been designated just before Crown Heights. Afterwards, however, many other Brooklyn neighborhoods such as Prospect Heights and Fillmore Place in Williamsburg received the City’s Historic District designation. Crown Heights’ historic status is significant because it marked an interest in its future. The historic character of the neighborhood makes it an appealing place to develop, especially for upscale inhabitants.

The Crown Heights Historic District contains various styles and eras of architecture. There are freestanding villas on spacious plots of land from the 1850s during the area’s suburban development and row houses constructed in the 1870s in anticipation for the 1883 Brooklyn Bridge opening and subsequent population growth. According to the Landmarks Preservation Committee’s report, the row houses have been selected because they “exhibit many design features typical of the style, including incised ornament, projecting bracketed window surrounds, eared lintels and door hoods, angular wood cornice brackets, and… heavy cast-iron stoop balustrade and newel posts.” During the 1890s, the popularity of architects McKim, Mead & White and the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition informed the public and

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160 Dugan.
162 Danza. 4.
163 Ibid.
architectural profession about the beauty of ancient and Renaissance styles, which are reflected in the neighborhood’s “balanced and subdued” classically styled homes.\textsuperscript{164}

The area around the Crown Heights Apartments is particularly praiseworthy for its early twentieth century architecture. The report noted the Romanesque Revival row houses on the south side of St. John’s Place between Nostrand and New York Avenues (1898-1903), the modest Renaissance Revival-style row houses on the south side of Lincoln Place between New York and Brooklyn Avenues (1903-1908), and the classically inspired apartment buildings on the north side of St. John’s Place between Rogers and Nostrand Avenues (1903-1908).\textsuperscript{165}

Each New York City borough developed during the 1920s in its own way, but Brooklyn was the most diverse.\textsuperscript{166} The Crown Heights North Historic District contains row houses, attached houses, freestanding residences, churches, and apartment buildings dating from the middle of the nineteenth century through the 1930s.\textsuperscript{167} Styles include Romanesque, Renaissance, Colonial, Mediterranean, Medieval, and Tudor Revival. There has not been equivalent architectural development in the area since the 1950s. Despite social changes, much of the historic character of the neighborhood remains unchanged.\textsuperscript{168} The architects of the Crown Heights Apartments, therefore, did not only have to consider the diverse social history of the area but also the varied architectural history. The architects wanted the building

\textsuperscript{164} Ibid. 5.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid. 38.
\textsuperscript{167} Danza. 4.
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid. 6.
to respect its older surroundings but also appear contemporary and symbolize the neighborhood’s progress.

Crown Heights Today

Crown Heights is again transitioning; there are demographic, economic, and political shifts occurring. Historically, the neighborhood has attracted a variety of racial groups that have not always peacefully cohabitated the area. For years, Crown Heights has been a diverse and divided community with Caribbeans and African Americans concentrated in the northern part and Hasidic Jews in the southern part. According to the 2010 census, however, the white, mostly young, population around Franklin Avenue increased by fifteen percent since 2000.\textsuperscript{169} Now, Crown Heights is thirteen percent white, seventy-four percent black, two percent Asian, and ten percent Hispanic.\textsuperscript{170} This distribution is not accurately mimicked in the Crown Heights Apartments, which has a much higher percentage of Asian Americans. But in 1994, less than one percent of the population in Crown Heights was Latino, Asian, or other ethnic groups, and then between 2000 and 2010 the Asian population in Brooklyn increased by 75,838 people.\textsuperscript{171} The neighborhood and its surroundings are changing, and the makeup of the Crown Heights Apartments reflects that. The Crown Heights Apartments also has potential to act as a unifying community organization in this neighborhood because it caters to the neighborhood’s diverse community by pulling

\textsuperscript{169} Siwolop.
\textsuperscript{171} “New York City Demographic Shifts, 2000 to 2010”.
together various kinds of community services and housing an elderly population that shares the same problems and desires.

Today in Crown Heights, however, there are still signs of a troubled past as well as signs of a changing future. In 2012, the *New York Times* published a piece on the current gentrification in Crown Heights. Liz Robbins, who primarily researches and writes about New York City history and news, cannot forget the past but also recognizes the future of the area, as it follows so many other Brooklyn neighborhoods:

These are two divergent snapshots of a remarkably refashioned commercial strip that 20 years ago was marred by drug dealers and dilapidated storefronts in a neighborhood torn apart by racial and religious violence. Now Franklin Avenue is the epicenter of a renaissance, the next subway stop on Brooklyn’s gentrification express. But unlike the transformation in Park Slope or Williamsburg, this story is different — and far more complicated — because it is set on scarred earth.\(^{172}\)

In 1980, the 77\(^{th}\) precinct, which includes Crown Heights, Prospect Heights, and Weeksville, led the city in homicides with eighty-eight murders, and the 1991 riots left lasting and apparent racial tensions. However, crime has declined significantly since the 1990s with more police officers on patrol and a better economy throughout

New York City. 173 There are still storefront churches and an insufficient housing stock, but Crown Heights has seen rehabilitation. A variety of developers and organizations have utilized public and private funds for rebuilding the area. 174 But many residents, mostly individuals who have lived in Crown Heights since before the infamous acts of violence in 1991, are hesitant about these new developments and residents. 175 They are fearful of getting priced out of their homes, supermarkets, and neighborhood. Others welcome new, young groups in hopes they will bring new life to this sometimes violent and poverty-stricken area of Brooklyn.

Community Board 8 is at the forefront of decision-making in Crown Heights. New York City’s Community Boards function as advisory groups throughout the five boroughs. The boards are comprised of volunteer members that make decisions regarding zoning, community needs, and budgets and represent a given district’s residents while working with government agencies. Community Board 8, which includes Prospect Heights, North Crown Heights, and Weeksville had a population of 127,013 in 2006, and more than eighteen percent of that population was above the age of fifty-five. 176 This sizable elderly population has continued to age. Within Community Board 8’s jurisdiction, twelve percent of population thinks their neighborhood is an excellent place to live, forty percent think it is a good place to live, thirty percent think it is a fair place to live, and eighteen percent think it is a poor place to live. 177 Because there are such varying lifestyles present in Crown Heights,

173 Mooney.
174 Danza. 35.
175 Dugan.
176 Results from NYC Feedback Citywide Customer Survey: Brooklyn Community Board #8 2006. Print.
177 Ibid.
there are a variety of reflections on the quality of life. When polled, however, survey respondents in Community Board 8 thought that one of the most important issues facing New York City was housing. The elderly population is growing, resident satisfaction ratings are varied, and the neighborhood is in need of more affordable housing. The Crown Heights Apartments’ developers recognized these neighborhood concerns and the building responds to many of them. But the developers were also aware that the neighborhood will continue to evolve, and they could either try to stop it or join in and hope for long-term economic gain.

As new residents move to Crown Heights, tensions from the 1990s unrest still exist because housing is becoming scarcer for long-time residents. The new residents are mostly white, young artists and professionals or families seeking affordability. Most of them are concentrated around Franklin Avenue where they are mostly unaware of the “undercurrent of unease.” For a neighborhood that has seen so much social disorder, it is difficult for many residents to accept these young people in to their neighborhood. Knowing that the newcomers have not been there long and may not stay, residents feel as though there is a “social cohesion gap right now.” In 2004, “one Hasidic landlord posted a complaint on a local news Web site about the immodesty of the new ‘yuppies,’ rallying his neighbors to take back Crown Heights. Some wary African-American and West Indian residents… expressed fears that the demographic change would force people who have endured the neighborhood’s worst moments to move.” The transformation that Crown Heights has gone through to

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178 Ibid.
179 Siwolop.
180 Ibid.
181 Ibid.
become a vibrant neighborhood of restored nineteenth century brownstones, however, does not erase the recent past from many New Yorkers’ memories. Crown Heights will still not suffice for many people looking for an inexpensive rental in the city.¹⁸²

Some black business owners in the area, however, say that the influx of the newcomers has not even resulted in more customers.¹⁸³ Richard Green, founder of the Crown Heights Youth Coalition in the mid-1980s said, “the racial violence occurred in part because blacks and Jews had kept to themselves.”¹⁸⁴ These groups continue to keep to themselves for the most part, but Green feels that this cannot continue with the new group coming in. “The young, largely white professionals who have arrived in larger numbers in recent years now constitute the third prominent group” in the area, and many believe that although Crown Heights is different, the influx has not significantly affected the important things like public transportation, parks, and shopping districts.¹⁸⁵ The remaining older residents are mostly not white and low-income.

Crown Heights has long been a place of many peoples, but inevitably, as Leanne Rivlin wrote in “Group Membership and Place Meanings in an Urban Neighborhood” from the *Journal of Social Issues*, “problems arise when a territory is shared by groups with conflicting values and life styles and different incomes, or groups of different religious and ethnic background.”¹⁸⁶ Neighborhoods only remain

viable when they change to adapt to incoming residents, but the new residents must also coexist with those already there. In order for these changes to be successful, a critical mass is needed to support a social network, and changes that reduce the available persons below this number can force changes in life styles. Also important to the critical number are questions of what services a group requires and the minimum number necessary to sustain these services. Thus, belonging to groups that have a sufficient number of members to enable them to function is yet another consideration, along with the nature of the group moving into the area.

Crown Heights is going through a stage of renewal and change. Residents have existed thus far by primarily socializing within their groups, shopping at their own stores, and living in their own buildings, which has kept the neighborhood largely divided. The elderly population is diverse but shares the same needs, so by addressing this “critical mass,” resources come to Crown Heights and unite the community. The Crown Heights Apartments was built for the existing elderly population but also appeals to the new incoming residents.

Currently, there are approximately 15,000 Hasidim in Crown Heights, 10,000 of which are Lubavitch, and 160,000 black residents, both African American and West Indian. Despite their different lifestyles, food, and dress, there are growing numbers that live on the same blocks and in the same apartment buildings. African

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187 Ibid.
188 Ibid. 78.
189 Abrahamson. 123.
American and West Indian residents, however, have continued to feel that the Lubavitchers receive preferential treatment with community leaders and politicians. For example, there is regular police-run traffic control outside of the Lubavitch headquarters on major holidays, a kind of security rare to black institutions.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}} As rising rents displace both the black and Hasidic locals, however, both groups are finding that they are forced to find new homes in other poorer areas. Displaced residents have even charged landlords with racism who seemingly favor younger, white inhabitants.\footnote{Dugan.}

The newer groups moving to Crown Heights are contributing to the housing crisis because they often have greater incomes than the existing population. The median annual household income in Crown Heights is $38,524, and thirty percent of the population is living below the poverty line.\footnote{\textit{Results from NYC Feedback Citywide Customer Survey: Brooklyn Community Board #8.}}\footnote{Siwolop.}\footnote{Dugan.} Although large apartment buildings with market-rate prices are still relatively rare in the neighborhood, rents have become more expensive with the arrival of new residents willing to pay more than those who have been living in Crown Heights for decades.\footnote{Siwolop.} Community Board 8 is working with developers to designate areas for more affordable housing.\footnote{Ibid.} In general, “…the outer boroughs, especially Brooklyn, have experienced an influx of a young, relatively affluent population fleeing the high rents of Manhattan,” and Crown Heights has to adapt.\footnote{Plunz. 324.} Even if new affordable buildings are constructed, it is
important to maintain the favorable neighborhood dynamics. By restricting the Crown Heights Apartments to elderly residents, the building is occupied by people who were priced out of Crown Heights and other similar Brooklyn neighborhoods, such as Coney Island from where a substantial number of the Asian American residents came. Newcomers to the area, being mostly young, are not the target tenants. In this way, the Crown Heights Apartments is appealing to the struggling Crown Heights.

The Crown Heights Apartments is located on St. John’s Place, off of Kingston Ave (Figure 2.02). It bounds the most densely populated Hasidic Jewish sector and the Crown Heights North Historic District. St. John’s Place is a two-way street with wide, clean sidewalks and trees planted sporadically throughout its length. There is a bus stop outside of the Crown Heights Apartments and a regular stream of foot traffic. Across the street from the Crown Heights Apartments is a row of three-story brick buildings with commercial spaces on the ground level and apartments on top. These buildings house a barbershop, two electronics stores, two small storefront churches, and a few small grocery and convenience stores. Further down the block, there is a public storage facility and its loading dock. There is also a large Rite Aid with adjacent parking lot. Looking down Kingston Avenue, towards Eastern Parkway where the Chabad Lubavitch World Headquarters is located and the Number Three Subway line stops, there are more small three-story brick buildings, some of them painted from their original colors. Grocery stores, a pizza place, a fried chicken restaurant, the LDCCH offices, an upscale kosher restaurant, and a liquor store line the street. Above these storefronts, and interspersed between them, are more walk-up

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198 Rivlin. 77.
apartments and brownstones. This is the relatively non-descript environment directly surrounding the Crown Heights Apartments. Although there is a significant commercial district, there is a housing and service shortage as residential and commercial rents continue to rise.

Most of the buildings just outside the Crown Heights Apartments are small and old. The Crown Heights Apartments is the newest and largest building on the block. Separated from the neighboring David Chavis Residences by a small plot of grass, the two buildings are both taller than the rest of the buildings in the vicinity. The Crown Heights Apartments also has large, three-paned windows that starkly contrast the much smaller traditional style windows on the buildings across the street. In addition, the detailing and incremental setbacks in the brick of the façade, while subtle, make the building more ornate than the neighboring David Chavis building.

The Crown Heights Apartments, while not a high rise, has a presence on the block. It does not have ground-floor commercial businesses like many of the other buildings, and its scale is quite bigger. The landscaping clearly distinguishes it from the hardtop around it without distancing it too much from the sidewalk (Figure 2.03).

The Crown Heights Apartments references both the David Chavis building and the surrounding neighborhood. In the architect’s opinion, the streetscape directly surrounding the building does not provide particularly exceptional inspiration, and the David Chavis building, with its bright brick, stands out too much. The Crown Heights Apartments is then the equalizing force between the small brownstones and the bright David Chavis Apartments. The linked landscaping also creates a campus-like space that produces a sense of continuity and community between the two senior buildings.
without completely separating the buildings from the urban landscape. The architects and developers had intended for the community spaces and services available in the building to be accessible to the entire neighborhood, so the architecture had to appeal to the neighborhood as well as the residents. This approach is common among contemporary affordable housing developments that do not want to disrupt natural urban structures. In order for such a project to be realized, an expansive group of individuals and organizations get involved, set terms, and supply capital.

City-Wide Structures Involved in the Creation of the Crown Heights Apartments

The Crown Heights Apartments’ existence required many interconnected parties, each with its own role, making the project a complex undertaking. There are city-wide administrative structures as well as the local Crown Heights agencies. City-wide bureaucratic structures work on many affordable housing projects at any one time, raising money and approving construction projects. These agencies include NYCHA, HPD, and HDC. The participants involved with this building in Crown Heights also raise money, but more importantly, they design, build, and manage the project to best serve the community. These players include LDCCH, SKA Marin, and Terjesen Architects. Still other components and participants exist, but the following are the most essential contributing groups.

1. Historic Overall Role of the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)

The ways in which affordable housing has been built in New York City has varied over the years, and the Crown Heights Apartments is an example of one of the
most contemporary approaches. Housing authorities exist in cities and towns all over the country, and the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) has remained at the center of affordable housing in New York City. NYCHA was created in 1934 and completed New York City’s first public housing development, First Houses, in 1935 on Manhattan’s Lower East Side.\textsuperscript{199} Public housing, or projects developed and managed by the municipal government, remained the prominent affordable housing model until the 1970s. Yet in that decade, entire neighborhoods in New York City were destroyed by arson and abandonment, so the city’s housing agency, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), bought the abandoned buildings, making it the second largest landlord in the city after NYCHA.\textsuperscript{200}

HPD planned to rehabilitate the buildings and house the growing numbers of homeless New Yorkers; however, the Nixon Administration cut federal subsidies that had historically funded housing assistance programs. In order to continue funding housing programs, New York had to develop innovative programs, such as Mayor Koch’s proposal to use revenues from Battery Park City entrance fees to finance bonds. Under his administration, other revenues came from the Housing Development Corporation (HDC) that issues bonds and provides subsidies and low-cost loans to develop and preserve housing, the city’s capital budget, and various other state and federal sources. Local private financial institutions also provided financial support.

In the 1970s, businesses were also moving out of New York City, so tax revenues diminished and municipal services reduced. Without the income to pay municipal expenses or the ability to borrow money during the fiscal crisis of 1977,


\textsuperscript{200} “Housing Policy in New York City: A Brief History.” New York: NYU Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy. Print. 2.
NYCHA had to evolve the ways it funded affordable housing. Federal housing programs were no longer categorical grant programs that provided agencies with large sums of money and the freedom to apply the public money to housing in any way they saw fit.\(^{201}\) In other words, the federal government decided to stop funding public housing outright. Instead, funds would only be granted to specific programs or projects, not public housing generally. Alternative approaches to affordable housing continued, and the use of Section 8 vouchers (explained below) and private investment in affordable housing increased. Instead of the federal government providing the city with a lump sum to build public housing, affordable housing was funded by a variety of means, more like it exists today for projects like the Crown Heights Apartments.

The new and multifaceted funding solutions from the 1970s and 1980s involving private and local government funding remain within the New York City housing network. The City continues to add to the housing stock, but affordability is increasingly challenging as federal money continues to dwindle for local housing authorities. Different issues than those present in the 1970s, however, prevent affordable housing construction. According to “Housing Policy in New York City: A Brief History,” a report compiled by the NYU Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy, contemporary reasons limiting affordable housing construction include several interrelated issues:

Federal support for housing is declining, while the supply of vacant land

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available for residential development is dwindling. Increasing the supply of new housing requires either the rezoning of manufacturing and commercial areas to allow for housing (something the city is already doing) or increasing density in existing residential areas. HPD is also working with other city and state agencies to identify obsolete publicly-owned facilities that could be rebuilt as affordable housing.\(^{202}\)

The city needs more housing, more land, and more money. Private land in New York City is expensive, so HPD is attempting to find public land suitable for housing. Each program that the City introduces to combat the housing shortage “has at least one goal or objective, a source of legal authority and funding, and a basic structure that helps to link the government incentive or regulation to a mechanism that will (it is hoped) lead to the desired goal or objective.”\(^{203}\) Because these programs are involving more private groups, including both developers and community development corporations, NYCHA is working with the federal and state governments to create incentives that encourage more private investment.

As evidence to its commitment to affordable housing, New York City has historically spent more on affordable housing per capita than any other municipality. Some of these funds originate from federal grants and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, but more than half has been generated through the city’s capital budget, or the issuance of municipal bonds.\(^{204}\) Because of the fundraising and organizing that

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\(^{202}\) “Housing Policy in New York City: A Brief History.” 12.

\(^{203}\) “Understanding Affordable Housing.”

NYCHA does, it is considered one of the most efficient and effective large housing authorities in the country.

Currently managed by General Manager Douglas Apple, NYCHA provides or enables “access to safe, stable, affordable housing for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers.” NYCHA is a large and highly functioning organization that oversees various kinds of affordable housing including the archetypical public high rise buildings but also project-based Section 8 projects that are privately developed. In addition to increasing the supply of affordable housing, NYCHA also runs community programs such as after school activities for students, computer lessons, and early literacy programs. It also employs thousands of people, twenty-five percent of which live in public housing or utilize Section 8 subsidies. Because it encourages private development, it can better manage its own public projects, so its funding and staffing are not so heavily burdened by operating units. For the Crown Heights Apartments, NYCHA administers the project’s Section 8 subsidies for every unit’s rent.

2. Section 8 vouchers, 1974-present

NYCHA owns and manages affordable housing but also administers Section 8 rent subsidies, or vouchers. In 1974, Section 8 was appended to a 1937 federal law that made it so that the principal way of intervening in affordable housing would be through rent subsidies, not direct development subsidies. Under Section 8, the government would “subsidize the difference between the fair market rent of an

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205 George.
206 “PlanNYCHA: A Roadmap for Preservation.”
207 Ibid.
apartment and a fixed percentage of the tenant’s income.” Section 8 certificates and vouchers are part of a federally funded program but are administered by local housing authorities, such as NYCHA. Section 8 allowed for increased private sector housing production because private groups can allocate initial construction money and be confident that residents’ rents will be paid later on, as seen in the Crown Heights Apartments.

In New York City, NYCHA, the City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), and the State Department of Housing and Community Renewal oversee Section 8 distribution. In their 2002 article from the *Journal of Urban Affairs*, “Subtenures and Housing Outcomes for Low Income Renters in New York City,” Gregg Van Ryzin and Thomas Kamber explained Section 8: “Tenants receive a certificate or voucher from the administering agency and can use it to subsidize the rent in any privately owned apartment that meets housing quality and rent reasonableness standards.” Under traditional Section 8, individuals are given the freedom to find their own housing, but it must meet certain criteria and individual landlords have to agree to accept the voucher. Frequently, individuals with traditional Section 8 vouchers have difficulty finding apartments that meet the housing agency’s strict criteria or they encounter hesitant landlords unconfident in the applicant’s ability to pay the unsubsidized portion of rent or unwilling to do the necessary government-issued paperwork. Section 8 later developed alternative ways of funding affordable housing. Instead of subsidizing individuals’ rents, Section 8 subsidies were

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208 Plunz. 313.
awarded to entire projects. Unlike tenant-based Section 8 assistance, project-based funding is tied to a unit, not an individual renter.\(^{210}\) These projects are either newly renovated rehabilitations or entirely new construction, like the Crown Heights Apartments. Every unit in the building receives Section 8 subsidies, but if for some reason a resident leaves the building, the Section 8 subsidy remains tied to the unit and does not move with the departing individual.

Despite the Section 8 program’s successes, its funding has been cut significantly since the Reagan Administration in the 1980s. Other funding sources, however, have become available. Localities take advantage of federal Housing Development Action Grants, a program started in 1983, to fund their Section 8 programs. HUD also currently provides 6.1 million dollars annually for NYCHA’s project-based Section 8 developments because the agency is successful and reliable. There are a lot of people on the waiting list for individual Section 8 unit vouchers, and funding and availability is variable from year-to-year, depending on federal funding.\(^ {211}\) Since 2010, NYCHA’s Section 8 program has been at capacity and fully utilized, which means that despite a waiting list of 125,000 applicants, new vouchers will only become available through attrition.\(^ {212}\) National studies have found Section 8 to favor elderly households because it houses those in need and enhances mobility for people unlikely to do damage to an apartment, building, or neighborhood.\(^ {213,214}\)

Project-based Section 8 projects for elderly residents, such as the Crown Heights


\(^{212}\) Ibid.

\(^{213}\) Van Ryzin. 202.

\(^{214}\) Ibid. 216.
Apartments, are becoming more common because neighborhood boards are more likely to approve elderly low-rent buildings over conventional affordable housing developments. Stephen Golant, writer of *Housing America's Elderly: Many Possibilities/Few Choices*, explained this pattern: “government decision makers, community leaders, and housing sponsors…perceive the elderly to be a more socially desirable and easier to manage tenant group than the nonelderly poor—especially minorities.” The low-income elderly population is rising, and they are occupying large portions of affordable housing. With project-based Section 8 subsidies, these elderly people can remain in their apartments without the fear that their landlord will suddenly stop accepting their vouchers or admit non-elderly residents. NYCHA is increasing its use of Section 8 subsidies throughout the city as more private investors participate in constructing and developing projects.

3. New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD)

As part of the network of institutions dedicated to producing affordable housing in New York City, HPD works with governmental, community, non-profit, and for-profit partners to increase the availability of well-maintained affordable housing and strengthen neighborhoods by reinvigorating urban development and providing helpful social services. The agency also operates its own smaller, and slightly different, Section 8 program separate from the HUD-funded and NYCHA-

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216 Other common HUD programs for the elderly are: Low Rent Public Housing; Section 236; Section 221(d)(3); Section 202; and Section 515 of the FmHA.
217 In New York, elderly public housing projects contain a substantial percentage of young disabled persons (about twenty-seven percent of the resident population), but this does not occur in project-based Section 8 buildings, such as Crown Heights Apartments.
operated program. The HPD program is more focused on providing rent subsidies for preservation-related housing developments, which the federal government has been ambivalent about doing.\textsuperscript{219}

The HPD also determines eligibility of all projects and development teams that participate in land sale and tax exemptions programs related to affordable housing.\textsuperscript{220} After approval is granted, along with HDC, HPD awards pre-development loans that provide working capital for developers to put towards construction.\textsuperscript{221} The city also depends critically on the involvement of local financial institutions and private investors to provide both financial and technical support for these projects.\textsuperscript{222}

After the wave of 1970s abandonment, HPD strived to build neighborhoods by revitalizing parts of the city that had been decimated by disinvestment and deterioration.\textsuperscript{223} The new housing brought services back in to communities. In 1989 HPD began consistently turning to non-profit and for-profit developers to develop, own, and operate affordable housing. To incentivize these private developers, there were subsidies for new affordable housing construction projects, Low Income Housing Tax Credits available for equity investors, and tax abatement for developers of the newly acquired abandoned buildings.\textsuperscript{224} The city’s effort to work with community-based non-profits not only created housing but also helped with neighborhood revitalization. HPD is currently the agency responsible for

\textsuperscript{221} “Understanding Affordable Housing”.
\textsuperscript{222} “Housing Policy in New York City: A Brief History.” 4.
\textsuperscript{223} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{224} Ibid. 5.
implementing Mayor Bloomberg’s New Housing Marketplace Plan, and it provided the Crown Heights Apartments’ development team with financing for construction.²²⁵

4. New York City Housing Development Corporation (HDC)

The New York State Legislature created the New York City Housing Development Corporation (HDC) in 1971 as an additional means of supplying financing for affordable housing independent from the City’s capital budget. Initially, HDC concentrated on providing financing to large-scale rental developments, but now it primarily issues bonds and provides subsidies and low-cost loans to help develop and preserve affordable housing.²²⁶ It is a public benefit corporation, or chartered by the state to provide a specific benefit to the public. Although HDC also funds housing projects that are not for low-income residents but also for middle-income residents, it has recently focused on affordable housing projects. Along with NYCHA and HPD, HDC provided financing for the Crown Heights Apartments because the project fulfills their mission to increase the supply of multi-family housing and revitalize neighborhoods.²²⁷

Local Players in the Creation of the Crown Heights Apartments

NYCHA, Section 8, HPD, and HDC provided the primary funding for the Crown Heights Apartments’ construction and operations, but the Local Development Corporation of Crown Heights, SKA Marin, and Terjesen architects collaborated to

²²⁵ “Department of Housing Preservation and Development”.
²²⁷ Ibid.
design, develop, and implement their concept in Crown Heights. Each of the three private groups has an area of expertise, and together they determined what the neighborhood and elderly community needed and worked to achieve that.

1. Local Development Corporation of Crown Heights (LDCCH)

   The Local Development Corporation of Crown Heights (LDCCH) is a non-profit community based organization and the co-owner and developer of the Crown Heights Apartments. The organization was founded to assist individuals in need and raise money to improve the housing stock and the commercial sector of Crown Heights. In total, LDCCH has developed 202 housing units for low-income residents, including seniors.

   Reverend Clarence Norman officially founded LDCCH from his Baptist church in 1987 although he had purchased land and developed the David Chavis building in the community earlier than that. As a religious leader, he wanted to help provide housing for people in the community, and in the 1970s there was an abundance of available abandoned properties in the city. In Crown Heights, a lot of wealthy families that had owned land, sometimes since World War II, had made enough money to leave for somewhere more prestigious. The City then took over the empty buildings and provided basic services, such as lighting and heating, for new low-paying tenants; however, the City could not manage these properties for an extended period of time. The City put these properties up for auction at very low prices because they primarily wanted them in the hands of private organizations or

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individuals that could effectively manage them. At such auctions, Reverend Norman, and his church, purchased multiple properties, including the eventual site of the Crown Heights Apartments. At the time, it was common for religious organization to lead affordable housing and social services initiatives in neighborhoods like Crown Heights. The Lubavitch community and other churches were also offering their members education and social services.229

Under executive director Caple Spence, LDCCH now owns twenty-three different housing projects, three of which the organization built and developed: David Chavis Apartments (1982, 2008), Kings County Senior Residence (2005-2006) and the Crown Heights Apartments (2010). These three larger buildings are all low-income senior citizen buildings and LDCCH’s major holdings. The remaining twenty buildings are small buildings for low-income residents but not limited to senior citizens. They are generally six- or four-floor walkups with about sixteen apartments, five or six apartments per floor. On a number of sites, many of these smaller buildings stand side by side on the same block, uniting the residents but remaining individual buildings with their own entrances and utilities. Recently, however, the organization has focused most of its attention on the three larger senior citizen developments and an upcoming charter school.230

Reverend Norman originally developed the David Chavis Apartments at 230 Kingston Avenue in 1982 before LDCCH was officially formed. When Reverend Norman and his church bought the land, there was an existing building on the site that functioned as a hospital and a nursing home. The group demolished the old building

229 Anton Tomlinson (Project Manager at the Local Development Corporation of Crown Heights) in discussion with author, 11 January 2013.

230 Ibid.
and built a new apartment building for low-income elderly and named it after a prominent individual involved in the community at the time. The federally funded building opened in March 1983. On the property where the Crown Heights Apartments was eventually built, adjacent to the David Chavis Apartments, there was a large parking lot and surrounding land. Before the Crown Heights Apartments was constructed, the David Chavis building was renovated and updated, but it remains housing for low-income elderly (Figure 2.04).

LDCCH’s Kings County Senior Residence, which opened in 2006, has 172 one-bedroom Section 8 apartments for residents sixty-two years of age and older who plan to age in the building for the rest of their lives, or until they are unable to care for themselves and have exhausted all resources except for a comprehensive nursing home. Supportive services such as homecare, meals, and housekeeping are available to them. The building is on the grounds of the Kings County Medical Center and adjacent to the Susan McKinney Nursing Home, a long-term-care facility. The Kings County Senior Residence therefore serves as a component of the continuum of care for elderly people in the area. It is a building primarily for independent seniors, but its proximity to the nearby hospital and nursing home that also has a senior center allows for easy access to extensive supportive services. In order to build Kings County, LDCCH received a grant from the New York City Council and Mayor Bloomberg’s office and acquired a finance package and tax-exempt bonds from HDC and permanent credit enhancement by HUD, which involved placing additional insurance against the financing.

232 Ibid.
LDCCCH recognizes that there are increasing numbers of seniors and an excessive demand for low-income housing. By addressing seniors with limited financial resources, some of whom may continue to work but whose income does not exceed the Section 8 eligibility, LDCCCH considers their developments breakthrough programs made possible by joint efforts with public, non-profit, and private sectors. The organization had planned for Kings County Residences to be a model for future programs, and the Crown Heights Apartments expanded on it.

The architecture of the two buildings differs slightly. Although both buildings were planned to maximize space by using double-loaded hallways but spacious apartments, the Crown Heights Apartments lobby and common spaces are more grand and bright than those at the Kings County Residences. Both buildings are primarily brick, but the Crown Heights Apartments has aimed to blend in to the neighborhood and harmonize with the existing David Chavis building. Their common styles emphasize their common patronage and purpose, but the immediate context for the Crown Heights Apartments is a neighborhood that is developing quicker than the one around the Kings County Residences. SKA Marin could predict the value of a more ornate building on that site.

The Crown Heights Apartments is slightly smaller than the Kings County Residence at 143 one-bedroom Section 8 apartments for individuals 62 years of age and over. Homecare, meals, and housekeeping services are also available to residents if needed. LDCCCH set out to build the Crown Heights Apartments for the same reasons that they built Kings County, and as a “sister project” to Kings County, the

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Crown Heights Apartments had the same developers and architects. SKA Marin, the for-profit developer that provided both funds and leadership for the project, worked with LDCCH on the Kings County Residence and David Chavis Apartments, so the two corporations had experience collaborating on affordable housing before the Crown Heights Apartments. It cost over $40 million to build, and $3.75 million of that came from the NYC Council, but HUD, HDC, HPD, Dormitory Authority of the State of New York (DASNY) that provides funds and construction services to public and private organization serving the public good such as universities and non-profit healthcare facilities, NYC Capital funds, and NYCHA were all involved in funding the project as well.234

There are several ways that LDCCH collects funding for these projects. Normally, they go to the HUD, HPD, and NYCHA, and then receive project-based Section 8 rent subsidies for each unit. There are also tax credits that come off of the net profit, which discount expenses. Syndicates, or individuals or companies that invest large sums of private money, were also involved. Syndicates take advantage of tax credits and enjoy the profits from the project. In the case of the Crown Heights Apartments, the primary syndicate was the co-developer, SKA Marin, which will be explained in detail below. LDCCH has a contract with SKA Marin for about twenty years, or until the building is paid off. SKA Marin owns fifty percent of the building currently, while LDCCH only technically owns one percent because, as a non-profit, the organization could not invest much of its own money.235 LDCCH could not have developed these projects alone.

234 Anton Tomlinson.
235 Ibid.
After the contract is up and lenders are paid off, the building will be repositioned, or reevaluated to determine any necessary updating and repairs. For example, the building may need a new roof or there may be a more efficient heating system available, so the property is refinanced to accommodate these updates.\footnote{236} David Chavis Apartments went through this debt retirement, refurbishing, and refinancing process before the Crown Heights Apartments was built. SKA Marin handled the refinancing and Section 202 approval and Terjesen designed the renovation. On these projects, once all of the money is together for initial construction, LDCCH commissions an architect’s design and hires contractors.\footnote{237}

Within each of the senior residences, there are certain individuals that ensure that operations run smoothly. Each building needs a superintendent, handyman, and porter to staff the building. Then, there is a management company separate from LDCCH. The management company representative in the building, Alicia Allen, collects rent, addresses complaints, coordinates with inspectors, handles upkeep, and pays bills. The management company also controls the competitive tenant application process. Before the doors open to tenants, LDCCH must publically announce that the building is open for rental applications. Ads are placed in local newspapers and circulations around the community. There is a huge shortage of housing stock for senior citizens, and the public is only getting older, so these apartments are highly sought after. Applicants mail their materials to the management company, and officials read the first applications in the order that they receive them, making sure that applicants meet all of the necessary qualifications. The first applications that

\footnote{236}{\textit{Ibid.}} \footnote{237}{\textit{Ibid.}}
meet all of the qualifications, such as age and income limitations, receive apartment units in the building. If somebody ever leaves the building, applicants from a waitlist are approved.

Non-profits are becoming an essential link in affordable housing because they are able to target specific groups and needs. They are committed to keeping their housing affordable to low-income households indefinitely and have no desire or incentive to reap capital gains or charge market-rate rents. Also, non-profits are often committed to serving the poorest, most needy families while providing various supportive services beyond housing, such as employment counseling, childcare, and education.238 In addition, “nonprofits are sometimes the only groups willing or able to construct or rehabilitate housing in the toughest urban neighborhoods,” where these services are most needed.239 LDCCH is the co-owner of the Crown Heights Apartments and its fundamental link to the neighborhood.

2. SKA Marin: The Private For-Profit Developer

SKA Marin is a co-owner and co-developer of the Crown Heights Apartments. LDCCH has the relationship with the community and SKA Marin pulls together private money to combine with the government funds. This developer has extensive experience working with non-profits on designing, funding, and managing affordable housing developments.

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238 Schwartz. 199.
239 Ibid.
SKA Marin was founded in New York in 1985. Initially a consulting firm working on affordable housing and community revitalization projects with housing and social service clients, SKA Marin learned about the intricacies of the affordable housing process. In 1990, the firm began doing construction management and has been recognized by NYCHA for their efficient and quality work. SKA Marin’s focus has always been on affordable housing and supportive services. Currently, however, the firm recognizes that seniors aging in place is the fastest growing population in New York and wants to find new mixed-use models to help those wishing to remain in their neighborhoods while also capitalizing on the venture.\textsuperscript{240}

As a private investor, SKA Marin invests in projects like the Crown Heights Apartments and plans on getting reimbursed over the course of fifteen to twenty years. In addition to a portion of the income, the firm receives tax credits for their interest in the project. More private development groups are partnering with community development organizations like LDCCH to develop and profit from affordable elderly buildings. SKA Marin is currently working on another affordable elderly project in Brooklyn with Terjesen Architects.

3. Terjesen Architects

Terjesen Associates Architects designed the Crown Heights Apartments. The firm was founded in 2002 and has primarily focused on affordable housing projects. One of the two founding partners, Richard Wood, had previously worked at HUD approving affordable housing projects that requested funding from the federal

government. There, Wood gained experience with HUD functions and requirements and also learned what works architecturally in affordable buildings and what does not. He brought that knowledge to the private sector, and Terjesen has since been responsible for the design and rehabilitation of numerous elderly and assisted-living housing projects throughout the city. Because they are so familiar with the process, HUD has also hired Terjesen to design their projects.²⁴¹

Terjesen has worked with private developers and non-profit groups to create and reconstruct apartment buildings for the elderly. These buildings must comply with the local, state, and federal regulations such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), HUD and HPD. In addition, Terjesen’s designs aim to be energy efficient. The firm is largely inspired by high-end residential development in New York City, so certain stylistic elements frequently seen in Manhattan apartment buildings are incorporated into their affordable designs. Terjesen’s previous experience designing healthcare, residential, and commercial projects provided the necessary foundation for designing the Crown Heights Apartments.²⁴²

Terjesen worked with SKA Marin and LDCCH on the Kings County Residence and the renovations of David Chavis Apartments before designing the Crown Heights Apartments. The firm has also done other similar projects with other groups in New York City. Completed in 2008, for example, Sunset Gardens Residence is an HUD-financed senior residence for eighty senior citizens. Located in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, which is a very diverse western Brooklyn neighborhood with a high poverty rate, the building includes a common room, landscaped garden,

²⁴² Ibid.
library, and lounge. There is also a roof terrace with plantings and seating areas.\textsuperscript{243} A neighborhood non-profit, Lutheran Medical Center, developed the community facility on site. Like the Crown Heights Apartments, social spaces are essential to the community that was devoid of many social services.

The architects at Terjesen were included in the project planning for the Crown Heights Apartments from an early stage because they already had an existing relationship with the developers. It was only after Terjesen had completed the David Chavis renovation work in 2007, however, that SKA Marin officially hired Terjesen to design the Crown Heights Apartments. The architects were informed of the project but not given the approval to begin developing drawings and plans until funding sources were confirmed. Terjesen is now in the process of building its fourth senior affordable project with SKA Marin, forming a recognizable pattern and repeating partnerships that build this housing type New York City.

Terjesen plans on continuing to design more of these buildings as long as the growth of the elderly population persists. This type will continue to evolve, however, and the architects will learn from their past efforts. Terjesen always approaches these projects aiming to maximize the number of units, the amount of landscape, and height of the building within the given zoning regulations of a specific site. At the Crown Heights Apartments, for example, Terjesen minimized the parking lot area because they have learned that elderly low-income tenants are less likely to own cars than other low-income or market-rate families. They have also learned how best to accommodate handicap-related residents. Terjesen abides by HUD and HPD fair housing design specifications. Such guidelines provide a minimum square footage for


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apartments, for example. Terjesen also follows the ADA code for accessibility and the Fair Housing Act, so designs include bathrooms, kitchens, and bedrooms large enough to fit mobile wheelchairs and walkers.244

Terjesen believes that the Crown Heights Apartments is leading the way for this category of housing. It is the best solution for seniors because it gives them flexibility to live alone in a space they can manage. They receive the comforts of modern living and energy efficiency keeps their bills low. In addition, Terjesen’s affordable projects always include community and/or commercial facilities so to provide a benefit to the communities. Neighbors can purchase a cup of coffee or partake in community activities. The amenities that are included are determined based on what already exists in the neighborhood and what the neighborhood could use. For example, Crown Heights had a senior center and a lively commercial street a block away but was in need of more social services.245

The Crown Heights Apartments is the result of an extensive joint effort; public and private institutions raised funds for initial construction and continue to subsidize rents and operations. A non-profit group is fulfilling its mission to the community by providing housing to a needy population and serving its neighbors. A for-profit developer is taking advantage of the aging population faced with a difficult housing market. All the different organizations involved in the project have their niche of concern without much regard to the other components, so it is difficult to establish an overall picture of the building and its parts. This background understanding, however, is essential in determining how the Crown Heights

244 Prag Surti.
245 Ibid.
Apartments aligns itself with others of the type. Design is becoming more important to affordable housing projects as developers and city agencies understand the correlation between good design and residents’ well-being. Working with LDCCH and SKA Marin, Terjesen took care to understand the needs of clients and residents and built a building with them in mind that could also someday be converted to market-rate housing.

The Building Design

All of the participants described above influenced the design of the Crown Heights Apartments. The ultimate design reflects the neighborhood and residents as well as the government agencies’ restrictions and developers’ tangible and intangible program requirements.

SKA Marin has an income formula that determines how many units are needed to profit from their properties. For the Crown Heights Apartments, SKA Marin needed 140 units or more, so Terjesen built 143 apartments. Because it is subsidized housing, the building budget was smaller than for market-rate housing projects, but the structure must withstand years of wear and tear nonetheless. Ornamentation is limited and generally only the most practical materials are used. The clients also requested a residential community room for sit-down dinners, birthday parties, etc. They wanted a nice grand space, so Terjesen created a two-story community room (Figure 2.05). In addition, the clients wanted an ornate and warm lobby, like those seen in apartment buildings in Manhattan, so Terjesen built a two-story space again and accentuated it with a range of materials. The clients also
requested basement level rooms to rent out to doctors or community programs (Figure 2.06).\textsuperscript{246}

Aside from the program expectations, the developers and architects also had design expectations. Terjesen and the developers wanted the building to blend in to the neighborhood around it. The David Chavis Apartments is a large, red, minimalist building surrounded by small brownstones. It was built in the 1980s to stand out, but contemporary approaches to affordable housing prefer buildings imbedded into their environment. The scheme of the Crown Heights Apartments was therefore an attempt to make the area around the building a more cohesive architectural style by borrowing elements of the David Chavis Apartments, such as red brick, but also by referencing the other buildings and brownstones in the neighborhood. By uniting the two buildings in design and landscaping, Terjesen created a link between the buildings and the neighborhood. The historical significance of the area’s architecture, as recognized by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Committee, was not Terjesen’s primary inspiration, however, so the architects placed minimal importance on the area’s historical architecture when designing the building.

The Crown Heights Apartments occupies half of the block between Kingston Avenue and Brooklyn Avenue (Figure 2.07). A tall iron fence separates the building from the public sidewalk. Once through the fence, there is a small landscaped plot before the main doorway. A maroon awning with the building’s name on it shelters the front doorway. To the right of this main doorway is the street entrance to the Jewish Board of Family and Children’s Services. A secondary entrance also connects the clinic to the building within. The building’s main entranceway consists of two sets

\textsuperscript{246} Ibid.
of glass double doors. Between the two doorways, there is a small vestibule where the “CyberDoorman” is located; this is an unusually expensive security system for affordable housing but makes an impact on residents and visitors. The security system consists of an electronic monitor and a camera. All residents in the building can see who enters the building through individual screens connected to this camera installed in each apartment. Non-residents, however, must use the monitor to contact a building staff member who can unlock the door remotely. From this spot in the vestibule, visitors can also clearly see through the glass doors to both the street from which they came and the inviting lobby within.

The bright lobby has double-height ceilings from which chandeliers hang (Figure 2.08). A variety of materials cover the visible surfaces making the room feel detailed and luxurious. To the left of the lobby is a common room with a frosted glass wall that lets in natural light but also maintains privacy. On the right, there is a desk where security personnel sit and admit visitors into the building (Figure 2.09). The two-cabin elevator bank is directly across from the entrance. There are also two flights of stairs on the left and right ends of the building. The second floor elevator bank, directly above the lobby, is also visible from the entrance because the double-height room includes a second floor mezzanine above. The raised second-story hallway has a decorated railing that draws the eye up. The ornate ceiling also emphasizes the scale of the room. Hallways to the left and the right of the first floor elevators lead to common spaces and apartments (Figure 2.10). To the rear of the elevators is the entrance to the courtyard area and parking lot in the back (Figures
2.11, 2.12). Only residents have access to this area. Visitors can exit to the back, but a key is required for reentry in to the building.

Upstairs, the hallways are more insular than the open lobby. The corridors have lower ceilings and fluorescent lighting (Figures 2.12, 2.13). Nonetheless, the hallways are bright and clean. Colorful works of art hang on the walls and linoleum tiles cover the floors. The double-loaded hallways have apartments on both sides, making the halls appear homogenous. Those on the side of the elevator face the back courtyard and parking lot, and those on the other side face St. John’s Place. Inside the apartments, all of which have very similar layouts, there is one bedroom, one bathroom, a living room, and a small but open kitchen that can be accessed from the entryway or the living room. Large windows bring light in to the living room and bedroom, so the space is well lit. The bathroom is large. It has a tub and grab bars suited for elderly residents. The bedroom is also large. The living room has room for a couch and chairs as well as a dining room table. The kitchen, while small, includes all of the necessary appliances. These apartments are big enough to allow for an elderly person to get around in a wheelchair or with a walker and also have a guest or helper stay in the living room, but they are small enough for easy upkeep.  

The architects created a standardized design for the individual units because the building had to be efficient and durable. The developers and architects, however, also wanted the building to appear as much like market-rate housing as possible. Unit flooring is laminate tile, which is less expensive and more long lasting than alternative floorings like tile, wood, or carpet. Metal doorframes, aluminum windows, and wood cabinets in the kitchens, however, are all costly design elements and add to  

the quality of the space.\textsuperscript{248} In addition, there are Energy Star appliances throughout. As part of a series of relatively new energy-efficient building requirements for affordable housing, developers and architects must include energy efficient appliances in their building plans. The architects went beyond the appliances, however, and as a result, the Crown Heights Apartments meets the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) standards.\textsuperscript{249}

Because the building’s efficient use of lighting and power meets NYSERDA requirements, the owners get rebates. NYSERDA certification is similar to LEED certification, but it is a less expensive program. A LEED-certified technician does not need to oversee the project and attend to copious amounts of paperwork. SKA Marin decided that LEED was not worth the additional cost but had Terjesen design a building that fulfills the NYSERDA standards. These energy-saving tactics were primarily material features, such as efficient appliances and weatherized windows, instead of spatial considerations. The energy efficient building rewards the developers and the residents with financial benefits.\textsuperscript{250}

In terms of the palate of materials, architects on affordable housing projects are often limited to cost-efficient materials. The materials chosen must be both economical to purchase as well as easy to maintain. For example, the Crown Heights Apartments does not have any external glazing other than the individual windows. The building is primarily concrete, stone, and brick, which are long-lasting and efficient materials. For the foundation, poured-in-place steel-reinforced concrete columns and beams support precast steel-reinforced concrete planks. It is not an

\textsuperscript{248} An HUD requirement.
\textsuperscript{249} Prag Surti.
\textsuperscript{250} Ibid.
entirely steel-reinforced structure, which would have been more expensive, but in
certain spaces of the building more steel is required. The lobby, for example, has
double-height ceilings to convey opulence and openness, and two steel columns cased
in wood uphold and support that structure. The finished wood matches other wood
detailing in the room and conceals the steel. The façade of the building, while
primarily brick, is also finished with stucco, making it more integrated with the
neighborhood.

The architects did not consider the area directly surrounding the Crown
Heights Apartments – the storage facility, small walk-ups, etc. – to hold significant
architectural character worth repeating in the Crown Heights Apartments. Their
design, however, made sure to not overshadow the already existing neighborhood
style. Terjesen’s designs for SKA Marin have become increasingly detailed and
exciting with every project. Compared to the Kings County Residences, for example,
the lobby at the Crown Heights Apartments is much larger and more ornate. The
common spaces are also larger and more decorated. Institutional architecture
surrounds the Kings County Residences, and the building’s design reflects that. The
building is large and red brick. There is also a wall of windows and a uniform facade.
The Crown Heights Apartments appears more residential.

Crown Heights was in need of a building like the Crown Heights Apartments,
and can still benefit from more like it. The neighborhood’s history has a left a lasting
impact on the area to which LDCCH, SKA Marin, and Terjesen reacted. With the
help of NYCHA, Section 8, HPD, and HDC funding, the three private organizations
applied their expertise to the project. The building’s final design reflects the
requirements and expectations required by all of these participants. What has happened in the building and in the Crown Heights neighborhood since the Crown Heights Apartments’ opening situates the building in a widespread and diverse urban movement.
Part III: Reactions and Results

The Crown Heights Apartments is home to a lucky group of elderly New Yorkers. They feel as though the neighborhood is quiet and peaceful and that neighbors appreciate and admire the building. Not all residents are retired, but admittance is capped at people receiving $32,000 in annual income, including pension and social security income. Residents are then required to pay thirty percent of their income towards rent, and the remaining portion is paid for by their Section 8 subsidies. No resident is paying more that $700 a month on rent, but personal payments range; there are residents who pay $620 and others who pay $400. Forty percent of the building’s population is Chinese, which is a much higher proportion than in the Crown Heights neighborhood overall. The majority of the Chinese population in the building did not move from within Crown Heights but primarily came from further reaches of Brooklyn. Just ten percent of the building is African American and ten percent Hispanic. Although the building intended to represent the neighborhood’s racial and ethnic makeup and there is unanticipated inconsistency, Brooklyn has a growing Chinese American population, which is represented in the building.

An essential component to this housing type is that developers contract with local organizations to provide services to a diverse resident group such as the one in Crown Heights. These services range from social work to healthcare and are also often available to the public as well as building residents. These buildings, however, also rely on the existing services within the community. If the area is severely lacking

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certain amenities, developers will often try to include them in new senior affordable buildings. Conveniently, there is a senior center in the David Chavis Apartments next to the Crown Heights Apartments that has regular meal service and social events, so the Crown Heights Apartments does not regularly provide these options. The Jewish Board for Family and Children’s Services and nurse on duty, however, provide additional services. The developers took the time to determine what services to include in the building based on what was already available in the community.

The Jewish Board for Family and Children’s Services runs an outpatient mental health clinic in the Crown Heights Apartments. Under the management of Chaya Travis, the JBFCS clinic rents the space in the building on the ground floor and provides services for the community, with a door to the street as well as one that leads straight in to the building. This is the first JBFCS clinic in a senior facility, but JBFCS has been serving New Yorkers since 1893. There are services for individuals, families, couples, and groups. There is also a psychiatric nurse practitioner on staff to administer psychological evaluations and oversee medication usage. The clinic accepts patients’ Medicaid, Medicare, private insurance, and out-of-pocket payments. They currently provide services in Hebrew, English, and Spanish but are willing to enlist additional staff members who speak other languages, including Chinese, if there are patients who require it.252

JBFCS had a relationship with the Crown Heights community before the clinic in the Crown Heights Apartments existed. The organization provides services to students in schools in the community and is involved in other programs for

252 Chaya Travis (Administrative Supervisor at Crown Heights JBFCS Clinic) in discussion with author, 26 November 2012.
education and preventative awareness campaigns. They also work with other community organizations. There are JBFCS clinics in all five boroughs and in Westchester, totaling to 150 programs and fifty sites. If a service is required in Crown Heights, they can easily access services within their own agency to utilize, but senior citizens tend to accept their difficulties even when they are unhappy and have a difficult time seeking help. JBFCS wants the elderly residents to know that they can change their lives.\footnote{The last time I visited the Crown Heights Apartments, I noticed a poster on Norma’s desk from JBFCS. It had been either slipped under her door or placed in her mailbox and announced the upcoming group therapy sessions. She saw me reading it and said, “that’s a great organization there.” However, Norma has not once attended a JBFCS event or session. She’s aware of its existence and believes in its mission but is not taking advantage of the resource.}

Most of the clinic’s clients are Crown Heights residents who do not live in the building. The seniors within the building have access to the clinic; however, getting them to utilize it has been a slow process. Since opening the clinic over a year ago, Chaya and her team have held a number of poorly attended events and group sessions. But they are continuing to advertise in the building and introduce themselves to the building’s residents in hopes of growing their client base and bettering seniors’ lives. The staff is continually doing outreach in hopes of attracting more of the seniors, and they are working on getting a formal support group established. A significant portion of residents also does not speak English; many of them speak Chinese. Although the clinic aims to accommodate them and provide the services they need in the language that they speak, it is hard to get ahold of that information from them. The clinic has been working with the building’s management department to more effectively reach out to the building’s elderly. They want their
patients to be comfortable and their services to be culturally sensitive. They hope the
clinic continues to grow and build support in the building and community at large.\textsuperscript{254}

In addition to support from JBFCS, the building’s manager Alicia Allen provides regular aid to the residents and organizes additional outside assistance. Alicia is a resource for residents. Always on call, Alicia makes sure that tenants can approach her about issues regarding rent or help in their apartments. She fields complaints and is in charge of making sure that every tenant’s Section 8 package is organized with the government agencies and prepared for recertification. Although SKA Marin coordinates with NYCHA to implement the Section 8 unit subsidies, Alicia helps residents complete their personal forms required for receiving them, which is especially helpful for residents who do not speak English. Alicia also collects the monthly rent from all tenants.

In addition to handling financial aspects of the building, Alicia also organizes for outside organizations to run programs in the buildings. She has not had much luck with senior-oriented programs run by City agencies; however, Alicia organizes informal social gatherings and advertises them by placing posters in the lobby, creating a community-like atmosphere. Other outside organizations rent out common spaces in the building and offer additional activities and programming for residents. The senior center around the corner also attracts many of the building’s residents because they can go there to play cards, get hot food, and socialize with other elderly people in the community.\textsuperscript{255}

\textsuperscript{254} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{255} Norma Wilson (Crown Heights Apartment Resident) in discussion with Author, 28 February 2013.
Alicia also organizes The Visiting Nurse Association’s regular visits to the building. The Visiting Nurse Association has a contract with the building and serves a large portion of the building’s residents. Every Tuesday for two hours a nurse comes to the building to help residents with their medications, diet, and other medical needs, such as checking blood pressure or administering flu shots. Although the nurse normally sets up in a common space and most residents go downstairs for their visits, Alicia knows who in the building needs this care, so she can also coordinate with the nurse to visit individual apartments if necessary. Between twenty and thirty percent of the residents in the Crown Heights Apartments have some form of home care from The Visiting Nurse Association or other organizations; this kind of service is highly utilized in the building and proves effective.

Resident Responses

In a place like the Crown Heights Apartments, residents essentially choose how they live their lives. Although there is still threat of isolation and loneliness, residents are comforted by partaking in a community with other people in similar situations. Welcoming common spaces and activities inherently provide for a better alternative than what many residents had previously when living with family members or in walk-up apartments where rents were unpredictable. There are different races, religions, and backgrounds, but in the building there are no noticeable conflicts reminiscent of those that have existed outside its walls.\textsuperscript{256} Residents learned about the building from their churches and other community organizations. Many of

\textsuperscript{256} Ibid.
them did not know much about it before entering the lottery, but they were aware that
they wanted to stay in the Crown Heights area even in old age.

Norma used to sit on the benches along Eastern Parkway and partake in
community activities there. She enjoyed spending time with friends and attending
church functions. Not as physically or socially able as she once was, she realizes the
value in a building like the Crown Heights Apartments because she does not have to
go out of her way to feel as though she belongs. She is still familiar with the
neighborhood and finds it peaceful and fellow residents well behaved, which is not
always the case in conventional affordable housing developments. Her needs have
changed since she first moved to Crown Heights and raised her children there, but her
situation is not unique among her neighbors.\(^{257}\)

According to Norma, the management team is helpful and treats residents with
respect. If in need of maintenance assistance or an extra set of hands, there is
somebody available to help. Norma admitted to not frequenting the community room
alone or regularly partaking in group activities, but the feeling of support around her
is palpable. When she ventures downstairs to visit with the nurse or simply waits in
the lobby for a ride to the doctor, the other residents with whom she interacts are
always pleasant.\(^{258}\) She knows that her situation could be much worse, and she
appreciates the opportunities she has received even though she still faces hardships. It
may seem like an easy solution to her, but there were several interconnected parts
involved and numerous spatial and social considerations made in order for Norma to
maintain this lifestyle.

\(^{257}\) Ibid.
\(^{258}\) Ibid.
Resident Selena Legister also moved into the Crown Heights Apartments when it first opened in 2010 and has been grateful for the accommodations.259 She also does not regularly utilize the building’s amenities or expose herself to the building community, but she is confident that if there is ever anything she needs, the privileges are accessible. As a Jahovah’s Witness, Selena feels it is important to respect everyone she passes, so she regularly converses with and preaches to people in the building. She even speaks to the Chinese residents who do not speak English because she considers the building her home and its residents her family.260

Selena has lived in Crown Heights for over forty years and watched the building’s construction from her apartment around the corner knowing that she coveted a spot in the Crown Heights Apartments when it opened. She has remained connected to the neighborhood because she is involved with her ministry, but she is aware that there are residents in the building who do not have an active life outside of the building. Older people tend to accept their lives the way they are and do not strive to improve them because, according to Selena. They expect too much and cannot cope with the realities. The senior center at the David Chavis building, however, provides computer classes and serves lunch, and the managers are constantly improving the services available there. Overall, Selena is perfectly content with the whole operation and has a positive outlook, but she recognizes that it is not so for many of her neighbors.261

259 Selena Legister (Crown Heights Apartment Resident) in discussion with Author, 1 April 2013.
260 Ibid.
261 Ibid.
Residents range from those like Norma who spend most of their time indoors and passively interact with the building and neighborhood community to those like Selena that actively pursue conversations in the building and maintains a full life outside the building. What ties the residents together, however, is their common condition: they want to remain in their city despite personal difficulties and a changing landscape around them. There is not enough of this housing in New York City for people like Norma and Selena. New Yorkers living in public housing are lucky to have the affordable prices, but the outdated housing type does not meet many of their needs. Based on NYCHA surveys and focus groups, it is apparent that NYCHA participants of all ages are asking for more of the amenities available to those living in affordable housing developments like the Crown Heights Apartments.

Over 1,000 NYCHA public housing residents and more than 600 Section 8 participants took part in phone surveys and focus groups that measured levels of customer satisfaction. About two-thirds of public housing residents are satisfied with their units and building grounds, but just over half of those polled were satisfied with the condition of their individual buildings. Residents largely reported feeling unsafe and dissatisfied with the quality of maintenance in the NYCHA buildings. The inclusion of management offices, senior centers, and community centers, however, make a significant difference for residents, and NYCHA-provided programs such as job training are beneficial.262 These responses helped formulate NYCHA’s plans for the future, which largely include collaborating with local organizations to provide more social services. The aspects of NYCHA housing that New Yorkers found most

significant are those emphasized in the new affordable housing model. Group-specific programing, security, and on-site maintenance are essential to providing residents with a comfortable home.

New York City non-profit organization Common Ground creates affordable housing and enhances communities and neighborhood revitalization efforts by using a model similar to the Crown Heights Apartments. For example, The Domenech (2011) in Brownsville, Brooklyn has seventy-two apartments, forty percent of which are reserved for homeless seniors with special needs and sixty percent are for low-income seniors from the Brownsville area. On-site services include case management, recreational activities, self-sufficiency workshops, and health and medical care coordination and support. The building is energy efficient and includes a garden space, computer lab, and laundry facilities. The building is also wheelchair accessible and has twenty-four-hour security. The development group has observed that, “the scores of residents who derive stability, enrichment and a sense of community at our buildings year after year…grows to the thousands.” Beneficiaries of Common Ground projects are both residents and community members seeking affordable prices and supportive services. Data proves their success: “our Quality Assurance & Compliance Department continuously evaluates the functioning of our buildings, the stability of our tenants, and our program outcomes to ensure we are meeting our goals. This attention to both quantitative and qualitative indicators helps us identify and implement best practices and develop new programs and services to respond to

changing client needs.” In response to the NYCHA surveys and successes by groups like Common Ground, NYCHA is changing the way it operates affordable housing to more closely resemble the new model exemplified in the Crown Heights Apartments and adapt to a changing urban landscape in New York City.

After the Crown Heights Apartments

Since the Crown Heights Apartments opened in 2010, this housing type has continued multiplying nationally and in New York City. The elderly population has continued to grow and funding has become increasingly more difficult to come by. As a result, more private developers are partnering with local non-profits to build affordable elderly housing. These partnerships are funding their projects through a variety of government and private sources. The developers involved in the Crown Heights Apartments and the residents that live there consider it a success and a model worth repeating throughout urban areas, and in response, government agencies are changing their methods. The Crown Heights Apartments filled a void in the neighborhood, and elderly residents are thankful for what they do receive from the building, which is evident in the building’s social atmosphere and from residents’ and administrators’ responses.

In New York City, NYCHA has long been the owner and operator of its public housing developments. NYCHA also facilitates other projects and administers subsidies such as Section 8 vouchers, but now NYCHA is implementing a “land lease” program. Recognizing the steady decline in government funding over the last decade, NYCHA is investing in alternative sustainable sources of income. Having

\[265\text{ Ibid.}\]
had discussions with their residents, NYCHA determined that they did not want to
demolish existing public housing, but that the agency could not subsist on current
numbers alone as need continues to increase. In response, NYCHA has decided to
lease some of its own land to private developers. The private developers will then
finance, construct, and operate new buildings, of which about eighty percent will be
market rate and twenty percent low-income housing. NYCHA’s income from this
program will go towards building improvements citywide and prevent the agency
from increasing rents and displacing families. This exemplifies a dramatic shift
away from the older approaches to affordable housing and more towards the Crown
Heights Apartments model.

Recent events have also inspired NYCHA to further decentralize housing in
New York City in an effort to better preserve housing and maintain residents’ well-
being. The deaths caused by the 1995 Chicago heat wave left a mark on urban
housing communities; however, seniors are still living in unsupervised subsidized
housing and suffering as a result. In a report released in March 2013 by the Furman
Institute on the effects of 2012’s Hurricane Sandy on housing stock in New York
City, researchers reported that some of the neighborhoods hit hardest by Sandy “have
a high share of their population over 65 years old…27 percent of the households in
the surge area include seniors, three percentage points higher than throughout New
York City. Further, seniors living alone—an especially vulnerable population during
an emergency—make up 12.1 percent of all households in the surge area.”

267 Sandy’s Effects on Housing in New York City: Furman Center for Real Estate & Urban
from advancing funding options, NYCHA needs to implement strategies for better emergency preparedness, especially among elderly populations living alone. Without personnel on staff or community organizations nearby, the old model of housing low-income elderly is insufficient. New affordable housing models are necessary to better accommodate elderly people in such situations. Unfortunately, much of the development in Crown Heights following the Crown Heights Apartments has been of a different sort and for a different clientele.

The Crown Heights Apartments is part of a continuing development trend in Crown Heights; however, most of the ongoing development in the area is tailored to a different demographic. During this wave of gentrification, started before the Crown Heights Apartments, there has been little affordable development. Similar to the northern section of Bushwick, Brooklyn that has become known as East Williamsburg, the western part of Crown Heights has been coopted by encroaching Prospect Heights, becoming what some real estate developers call “ProCro.” In this area, there is a mix of high-end condominium and retail development alongside the remaining affordable apartment houses and bodegas in danger of being purchased and converted.268 Although “ProCro” is further west than the Crown Heights Apartments, there is general fear in the neighborhood that the high-end developments will continue to spread and overtake the population that has lived in Crown Heights for generations.

Policy and Moelis Institute for Affordable Housing Policy. Print. 8.

The kind of development seen in this part of Brooklyn began with a fifteen-story glass and steel condominium building at Grand Army Plaza designed by Richard Meier in 2008. The boxy, glass-walled style building multiplied all over the Prospect Heights area, earning the name “fish tank” condos.\(^{269}\) St. Johns Heights (Figure 3.01), designed by Karen L. Jacobson on the corner of Classon Avenue and St. John’s Place, and The Prospect (Figure 3.02), designed by Lynne Breslin and completed in September 2010, are both examples of the “fish tank” condo trend. Such developments cater to a younger crowd willing to pay up to $300,000 for a 490-square foot one-bedroom apartment. Businesses such as Abigail Café and Wine Bar and the Glass Shop coffee shop followed this wave of development, taking advantage of the newcomers moving in to the neighborhood. Younger people moving in and setting up businesses consider this area a blank canvas dissociated from the riots and violence of the past; however, this narrow outlook takes a toll on the existing housing stock and businesses in the neighborhood.\(^{270}\)

The majority of the new development in Crown Heights is centered around Franklin Avenue at the western end of the neighborhood. According to an article on Narratively, a website devoted to providing the local perspective to news stories in cities, “since 2008, fifty-two new businesses have opened along Franklin Avenue north of Eastern Parkway, with sixteen of them arriving in 2012.”\(^{271}\) Although there


\(^{270}\) *Ibid.*

are community-oriented services sprouting up, such as It Takes a Village community space where members are currently mostly young white families, the cost of commercial and residential real estate on Franklin Avenue is quickly rising. Section 8 rentals are expected to convert to condos, and many long-time Franklin Avenue shoppers are going to Fulton Mall in Downtown Brooklyn for cheaper prices. When new restaurants and shops started moving in to Franklin Avenue storefronts, many of them catered to the gentrified, future neighborhood rather than the more mixed low-income one. In addition, the area around Franklin Avenue became an NYPD “Impact Zone.” Crime rates in the vicinity decreased but at the cost of long-time residents getting forced out.\textsuperscript{272}

Real estate agencies in the neighborhood, such as MySpace NYC, are also actively pushing residents out of their inexpensive rentals so that they can rent the units at higher prices to younger people moving in, which is causing tension in the area. More quality affordable housing, like the Crown Heights Apartments, is needed but is not the dominant development trend. Large-scale high-end development is only increasing. In the \textit{Narratively} article, Maura Ewing and Vinnie Rotondaro wrote:

\begin{quote}
 a group of investors led by Jonathan Butler, founder of the popular real estate blog Brownstoner as well as the artisanal Brooklyn Flea market, and including the Goldman Sachs Urban Investment Group, purchased the former Studebaker service station at 1000 Dean Street, just off of Franklin Avenue, for $11 million. They plan on turning the building into a mix of commercial
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{272} Ibid.
and creative spaces that should be completed in the summer of 2013, and will likely receive another $20 million in investment—a level never before seen in Crown Heights.\(^{273}\)

Such projects were recently unimaginable in a neighborhood like Crown Heights, but around the time Butler and investors purchased the Studebaker station, “a Long Island group bought an empty lot at the corner of Franklin and Eastern Parkway for over eight million dollars. Sixty-three luxury condos and more than eight thousand square feet of street-level retail are in the works.”\(^{274}\) Organizations such as the Crow Hill Community Association and Nostrand Park advocate within Crown Heights for outside investment, but the City Planning Commission moved to rezone Crown Heights in an attempt to preserve its character and encourage affordable housing development. In 2013 a group of artists proposed to convert an abandoned warehouse into an apartment building with studio spaces, but none of the thirteen planned units were reserved for affordable housing. Community Board 8 did not support the live-work space proposal because they wanted to “preserve the area’s industrial nature and encourage affordable housing.”\(^{275}\) Community Board 8 and the City Planning Commission are hoping to attract larger developments with mandates for affordable housing.

\(^{273}\) Ibid.
\(^{274}\) Ibid.
In nearby Brownsville, there is, however, an ongoing large-scale affordable housing development and community renewal project. In June 2010, Re-Vision Prospect Plaza held a workshop where community members and professionals gathered to discuss re-making a vacant public housing project, Prospect Plaza. The site is part of Community District 16, which includes the Ocean Hill and Brownsville neighborhoods. NYCHA houses almost twenty percent of Community District 16’s population (20,814 people) in twenty-two developments, making it the highest concentration of public housing in New York City. After highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the existing neighborhood to determine what the new development should include, NYCHA and HPD chose four private development groups to develop the 200,000 square foot area for new affordable and public housing. In total, 364 housing units will be created, eighty of which will be NYCHA public housing and the rest affordable units. In addition, there will be a supermarket, rooftop greenhouse, and recreation area.

In the 1990s, HUD awarded NYCHA a HOPE VI grant to revitalize Prospect Plaza, but it was never utilized. HOPE VI grants emphasize partnerships with community residents, other housing agencies, local governments, non-profit organization, and private businesses. $15.5 million in HOPE VI Grant funds will be allocated towards Prospect Plaza for this overdue redevelopment project. The funding was revived because the project is now part of Mayor Bloomberg’s New Housing Marketplace Plan to increase affordable housing in New York City.

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276 Re-Vision Prospect Plaza: A Community Planning Workshop: New York City Housing Authority. Print. 2
277 Ibid. 3
278 “NYCHA, HPD Announce Developer for Prospect Plaza”. January 18, 2013. Re-Vision
SKA Marin has also continued to develop affordable elderly housing in the area. Terjesen and SKA Marin repeated their housing model shortly after completing the Crown Heights Apartments and collaborated on another similar project. Riverway Apartments in Brownsville, Brooklyn (construction completed March 2013) is a 116-unit senior residence funded by private investment, HUD, HPD, and the DASNY (Dormitory Authority of the State of New York). The building’s apartments maximize habitable floor areas, like in Crown Heights, and there is also a landscaped private courtyard, indoor parking, roof terrace, and a common room. The first floor of the building houses a senior center operated by the Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens, a non-profit organization serving the needs of the growing elderly population in the two boroughs. Because the architects already had experience accommodating SKA Marin’s needs, they knew what amenities and facilities the developer expected in the design.

NYCHA recognized SKA Marin for its work on affordable housing in the past, and the senior center at Riverway has been deemed an Innovative Senior Center (ISC) by the DFTA (New York City Department for the Aging). The senior center goes “beyond the offerings of the traditional senior [center] to include flexible and expanded hours on evenings and weekends, and flexible café-style meal times.”

The senior center at Riverway has expanded health and wellness programs including

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280 “Terjesen Associates Architects, PC”.

281 Reed, Jeannette. *City Department for the Aging Announces Opening of Two New Innovative Senior Centers in Brooklyn: Riverway and Surf Solomon Join Eight Other New Centers as Part of Ambitious Initiative to Help Seniors Stay Active and Healthy.* New York City Department for the Aging, 2012. Print.
“access to fresh fruits and vegetables from farmers markets and community supported agricultural programs, geriatric mental health services, chronic disease self-management programs and meditation classes.” ISCIs are part of the Age Friendly NYC plan, and with the opening of Riverway, there is now at least one ISC in all five boroughs. This new senior center model is indicative of an approach to urban revitalization endorsed by SKA Marin.

Other development organizations are following suit. HANAC (Hellenic American Neighborhood Action Committee) had previously developed affordable senior housing in the 1990s and continued to learn from this model when they built the PCA Senior Residence in Astoria, Queens in 2012. Built after the Crown Heights Apartments, PCA Senior Residence appeals to a similar demographic and attempts to achieve the same goals as the Crown Heights Apartments. All of the units at PCA are for people sixty-two years and over, and under HUD qualifications, the maximum income for a resident is $29,050 for a one-person household and $33,200 for a two-person household. Developed with the non-profit Presbyterian Church of Astoria, the six-story building has sixty-six units of both studios and one-bedroom apartments. There is also a parking lot, recreational garden, indoor community space, and office space for an on-site senior services coordinator. Like their earlier project and the Crown Heights Apartments, HANAC included on-site social services provided by an outside organization. Funding for this building came from HUD Section 202 Capital Grant Dollars, Low Income Housing Tax Credits, the Queens Borough President Helen Marshall, former State Senator George Onorato, Federal Home Loan Bank, and

282 Ibid.
283 Ibid.
HUD Office of Community Planning and Development Home Investment Partnerships (HOME) funds administered by the HPD. The architecture is also similar to that of the Crown Heights Apartments. The brick and stucco pattern is repeated and the scheme fits in to the surrounding streetscape because the building is not set far back from the street. The organization’s 1993 building, however, is much less conscious of its surroundings. Made of bright red brick with small, uniform windows repeated throughout the façade, it is more typical of older affordable housing styles, and similar to the David Chavis building, but does show a progression from the 1970s high rise to the present prevailing model.

Other examples completed in 2012 by non-profit development group SEBCO (South East Bronx Community Organization), Intervale Seniors and Webster Commons, both in the Bronx, are unique in that multigenerational families can occupy them; only one member of the household must be fifty-five years of age or older. SEBCO formed in 1968 as a force for rebuilding the Bronx. SEBCO’s projects have been funded by a variety of federal and local agencies, including HUD and HPD, and SEBCO operates two senior citizen centers under contract with the DFTA. In SEBCO’s developments, households must be limited to those earning no more than sixty percent of the area median income, or about $38,000 for a family of two people in a one-bedroom apartment and $48,000 for a family of four people in a two-bedroom apartment. Intervale Seniors is an eight-story building with forty-eight apartments, thirty-four of which are one-bedroom and thirteen studio apartments. There is a laundry room and large common room on the ground floor with access to a

garden and outdoor sitting area. Webster Commons is a twelve-story building with fifty-one two-bedroom and one-bedroom apartments. Rents range between $540 per month for a one-bedroom and $836 for a two-bedroom. There is a laundry room, computer lab, office for a SEBCO social worker, and a large common room on the ground floor. These projects are additional examples of private-public partnerships forming in response to the growing elderly population in New York City.

The Crown Heights Apartments was developed during a wave of gentrification in Crown Heights, Brooklyn; however, the affordable elderly development is at the forefront of a different kind of development across the city. Although often overshadowed by the high-end condominums and retail around Franklin Avenue, the pioneering affordable developments multiplying in Crown Heights and its surrounding environs are noteworthy. They may not rescue every person who gets priced out of the neighborhood, but they do appear as the antidote to the private development taking over more corners of once-affordable Brooklyn. Instead of catering to the future market, these developments seemingly cater to the existing populations that wish to stay there. By focusing on elderly people, developers operate under the auspice that they can revitalize whole neighborhoods by encouraging and enabling elderly populations to remain active in their communities.

As these buildings create safer spaces, however, more expensive development will emerge. As neighborhoods continue to change, these properties will also earn value, and developers will eventually reap the profits. Private enterprises are currently developing Crown Heights into a desirable and trendy Brooklyn enclave, and the

government-sponsored groups advocating for affordable development are
simultaneously taking advantage of the economic and social transformations by
predicting future economic potential.
Conclusion

Only once delving deeply into my research did I realize how contemporary and pertinent the issue of urban affordable elderly housing is. The elderly population in the United States is obviously expanding, but these seniors are not like their parents. Elderly people want to maintain their independence in old age and remain in their own neighborhoods. They want to feel safe and secure but do not want to report to institutional personnel. As they physically and mentally worsen, they want their home to be comforting and not restrictive. Seniors are at risk of isolation and depression, especially those who are low-income, but if there is a supportive community, their well-being can be significantly improved. By catering to low-income elderly people in urban areas, affordable housing developments target a key demographic while also benefiting surrounding communities through the architectural designs and services provided in the buildings. Such innovative developments would not be possible without the various non-profit, for-profit, local, state, and federal groups involved in planning and financing.

Using the Crown Heights Apartments as a case study, I can now see how important affordable elderly housing is to urban areas undergoing momentous change. It is possible to accommodate the baby boomers without compromising their individuality or the urban spaces they inhabit. Public housing and private development cannot remain two separate approaches. Instead, the two sectors are merging together in new ways.

Developers like SKA Marin had the forethought to utilize government subsidies and create a quality affordable building with units comparable in size to
those in market-rate apartment buildings in the area. For twenty years, this building is mandated to be affordable housing for elderly residents utilizing Section 8 unit subsidies. The neighborhood around the Crown Heights Apartments, however, is changing. Gentrification is creeping closer to the Crown Heights Apartments site, and residential and business prices are steadily increasing. New, young, white residents are moving in. This change began before the Crown Heights Apartments was constructed but has intensified since and will only continue in years to come. As a result, the building will increase in value, and once the twenty-year contract is through, SKA Marin has potential to make a sizable income on the property by admitting residents willing to pay market-rate for the units. It is impossible to ignore that SKA Marin and the like are probably looking forward to long-term returns on their properties. NYCHA is also taking part in this changing market in hopes of benefiting from gentrification.

NYCHA no longer has to rely on groups like SKA Marin to partake in the future of private-public affordable housing development. NYCHA is starting to lease land to private developers that must abide by the housing authority’s particular requirements. Comprised of primarily market rate units, these developments yield profits for NYCHA and the private developers. NYCHA is therefore both contributing to Bloomberg’s New Housing Marketplace Plan by adding more affordable units to the city’s stock while also producing income from the market-rate units that can go towards rehabilitating deteriorating NYCHA public housing developments. As more affordable neighborhoods in the city become overrun by gentrifying forces and higher-income residents, NYCHA will be there to house a
small portion of the local low-income residents while simultaneously making revenue on the newcomers looking for market-rate units. Like the Crown Heights model, NYCHA is combining the issues of affordability and gentrification.

Although I initially understood it as an unmatched example of positive collaboration standing alone in Crown Heights, the Crown Heights Apartments is part of a much more complicated web of development proliferating in New York City. The ultimate question is whether or not the Crown Heights Apartments works with or against the ongoing development. At first it appears as though the building is an attempt to preserve the neighborhood and its residents while providing them with services and comforts previously difficult to find, but instead I speculate that it is more closely related to the growing high-end development. Despite the Crown Heights Apartments, Crown Heights will continue down the path that other Brooklyn neighborhoods have gone, and the gentrifying influence on Franklin Avenue and the surrounding area will spread. Later, additional low-income neighborhoods in Brooklyn will face similar fates. SKA Marin is taking advantage of this trend, and NYCHA is starting to benefit from it as well. There is no doubt that the Crown Heights Apartments serves its residents well and provides a sensitive alternative to the commonly understood model of elderly housing, but there appears to be an underlying motive driving this development that closely links it to a clashing kind of urban growth. The Crown Heights Apartments stands as the intersection between these kinds of development while still serving those most in need.
Images

Figure 1.01
Exteriors of Guild House with granite column and arched window. Uniform Windows reminiscent of those found in the neighborhood’s older construction. Designed by Robert Venturi. Venturi. 117.
Figure 1.02
Interior of common room in Guild House behind the prominent arched window. “Guild House Rehabilitation”.

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In De Drie Hoven, windows in each apartment door open onto hallways and allow residents to socialize with neighbors passing by. Designed by Herman Hertzberger. Hertzberger. 159.
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Figure 1.05
Diagram of Mendelsohn House and two other low-income apartment buildings in relation to Moscone Convention Center.
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Mendelsohn House central courtyard.
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Figure 2.01
Figure 2.02

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Layout of the Crown Heights Apartments grounds. The L-shaped building on the right is the David Chavis Residences.
“Crown Heights Apartments Grounds.”

Figure 2.05
Ground floor common room in the Crown Heights Apartments. Double height ceilings, lighting, windows, and flooring create an unusually grand space.
“Crown Heights Common Room.”
Figure 2.06
Additional common space in the Crown Heights Apartments basement. Organizations and individuals can rent spaces to hold functions or provide services. “Crown Heights Waiting Area.”

Figure 2.07
Figure 2.08
Interior of Crown Heights Apartments lobby. Double height ceiling, mezzanine, ironwork, and lighting create a welcoming space unusual to affordable housing. Desk frequently occupied by security personnel. Double cabin elevator to access all floors. “Crown Heights Lobby.”

Figure 2.09
Figure 2.10
First floor plan of the Crown Heights Apartments.
“The Local Development Corporation of Crown Heights Profile.”

Figure 2.11
Rear view of the Crown Heights Apartments. The courtyard joins the building to the neighboring David Chavis Residences.
“Crown Heights Apartments Backyard.”

Figure 2.12
Typical floor plan of residential floors in the Crown Heights Apartments.
“The Local Development Corporation of Crown Heights Profile.”
Figure 2.13
Typical double-loaded hallway in the Crown Heights Apartments, this one from the third floor. Bannisters line the wall to aid the elderly residents.
“Crown Heights Apartments Third Floor Hallway.”
Figure 3.01

Figure 3.02
The Prospect in “ProCro,” Brooklyn. Designed by Lynne Breslin. “Classon Ave.”
Annotated Glossary

**Age Friendly NYC** – An initiative under Mayor Bloomberg, the City Council, and the New York Academy of Medicine that aims to prepare New York City for the growing population of elderly people. Brings together older people, government agencies, non-profit organizations, and for-profit organizations. LDCCH and SKA Marin fed off of momentum in the city government pushing organizations to develop affordable senior housing.

**CSE** – New York State Community Services for the Elderly Program. Puts the control of elderly services into the hands of localities that then use state-sponsored grants to provide services.

**DASNY** – Dormitory Authority of the State of New York. Provides financing to public and private institutions that serve the public good, such as universities and non-profit healthcare facilities. SKA Marin utilized DASNY funds for the Crown Heights Apartments and Riverway Apartments.

**DFTA** – New York City Department for the Aging. Administers the development of accessible services for older people and advocates on legislative and policy issues related to seniors. Receives federal, state, and city funds to run senior centers.

**DOHMH** – New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Partners with NYCHA to provide services at the housing authority’s senior centers.

**HANAC** – Hellenic American Neighborhood Action Committee. A social services organization that built Lakovos Senior Residence (1993) and PCA Senior Residence (2012). HANAC’s developments utilize a public-private partnership similar to the one seen in the Crown Heights Apartments.

**HDC** – New York City Housing Development Corporation. Issues bonds and provides subsidies and low-cost loans to developers constructing and preserving affordable housing. HDC was one of the funding sources for the Crown Heights Apartments.

**HPD** – New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development. Awards pre-development loans to developers constructing or preserving affordable housing. HPD was one of the funding sources for the Crown Heights Apartments.

**HOME** – HUD Office of Community Planning and Development Home Investment Partnerships. Federal funds administered by local housing agencies. In New York City, HPD administers HOME funds to affordable elderly projects, such as HANAC’s PCA Senior Residence (2012).

**HOPE VI** – Homeownership and Opportunity for People Everywhere VI. Provided Public Housing Authorities with grants for developing comprehensive revitalization
public housing projects. Recipients of HOPE VI grants are required to provide supportive services for residents. Typically, Public Housing Agencies that received HOPE VI grants selected for-profit and non-profit groups to develop and operate the new projects. Re-Vision Prospect Plaza in Brownsville, Brooklyn received a retroactive HOPE VI grant and is revitalizing the development with for-profit and non-profit groups.

**HUD** – U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Federal government agency that provides funds for affordable housing. Funds Section 8 subsidies for the Crown Heights Apartments.

**ISC** – Innovative Senior Center. These centers offer flexible and expanded hours and additional transportation options. Meals are often served in a café-like setting to provide members greater flexibility. Organic meals, rooftop gardens, nutrition programs, mental health programs, and fitness centers are included. ISCs are one of the fifty-nine public initiatives under Age Friendly NYC. In SKA Marin’s newest project, Riverway, the senior center is an ISC.

**JBFCs** – Jewish Board for Family and Children’s Services. Social service provider in New York City. Clinic in the Crown Heights Apartments is run by JBFCS.

**LEED** – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. Energy efficiency standards for buildings. Although the developers of the Crown Heights Apartments did not pay the admittance fee, they were still dedicated to an energy efficient design.

**LDCCH** – Local Development Corporation of Crown Heights. Based in Crown Heights, a non-profit organization that provides affordable housing and social services to the community. A co-owner and developer of the Crown Heights Apartments.

**MHC** – Millennial Housing Commission. A federal commission formed in 2000 to assess the federal government’s role in increasing available affordable housing across the country.

**NORC** – Naturally Occurring Retirement Community. Common in New York City, these unintentional senior communities slowly evolve and adapt to provide services for elderly residents. Can be a building, development, or neighborhood.

**NYAM** – New York Academy of Medicine. Works on providing health services to elderly New Yorkers. One of the collaborating organizations on Mayor Bloomberg’s Age Friendly NYC initiative.

**NYCHA** – New York City Housing Authority. Oversees affordable housing in New York City. Initially developed and managed public housing. Oversees the HUD funded Section 8 distribution for the Crown Heights Apartments.

**SEBCO** – South East Bronx Community Organization. Non-profit development group in New York City that built Intervale Seniors and Webster Commons, two affordable elderly buildings built in 2012.

**Section 8** – HUD funded subsidies tied to housing units, not individuals. The Crown Heights Apartments utilized Section 8 subsidies, administered by NYCHA, to provide affordable rents for residents.

**Section 202** – Supportive Housing for the Elderly. Provides funding to non-profit organization for new construction or rehabilitation of low-income housing with supportive services for seniors.

**SKA Marin** – Private developer based in New York City that focuses on affordable housing. Co-developer and owner of the Crown Heights Apartments.

**Terjesen** – Architecture firm with experience in affordable housing. Designed the Crown Heights Apartments.
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