

SHARED HOUSING IN NEW YORK:

A QUALITATIVE EVALUATION

OF

PROGRAMS

A Citizens Housing and Planning Council Research Report

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PREFACE

The Lavanburg Foundation originally approached CHPC with an inquiry regarding the feasibility of evaluating shared housing programs in New York City and its surrounding suburbs. The shared housing concept is one that Lavanburg has long supported. CHPC did an initial feasibility study and concluded that the programs were too small and diverse for any quantitative evaluation to be meaningful. However, it was also concluded that this very diversity would make a qualitative, case-study research project particularly useful. The Lavanburg Foundation concurred and generously decided to underwrite the entire cost of the project.

CHPC's shares the Foundation's interest in the subject. The housing problems of the elderly in our region are sure to grow in importance with the aging of the population born after the Second World War. In general, the elderly have the lowest incomes of any broad demographic group and so are most vulnerable to displacement in an environment of rising housing costs and expiring subsidies. Moreover, physical limitations and emotional ties may make displacement more traumatic for them than for other low-income households. It is critically important that we have adequate anti-displacement safeguards in place as well as a variety of "safety net" options available for when those safeguards fail. We felt that the shared housing approach could be one of those valuable options. We also believed that the experience gained in managing shared housing programs for the elderly could have important implications for addressing the housing problems of other special needs groups.

This report presents the results of our survey of shared housing programs operating in the New York Metropolitan area. The study was primarily conducted by Paul Parkhill, who has worked to solve the housing problems of special needs populations at Common Ground Community House and elsewhere. We hope that our research helps to illuminate the potential and limitations of the approach and will contribute positively to the search for innovative solutions to pressing housing problems.

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INTRODUCTION

The term *shared housing* conjures up a variety of conflicting images for most Americans. Depending on the context, shared housing may imply dormitory-style living, single-room occupancy (SRO) tenancy, doubling up in the home of a relative or friend or even participation in a quasi-utopian “co-housing” community.

Among nonprofit housing and service providers in the United States, shared housing has taken on a narrower definition during the last twenty-five years or so. For these groups, shared housing is typically defined as “an arrangement by which two or more unrelated people share a dwelling within which each retains a private space” (AARP & National Shared Housing Resource Center, 1987, p. 3). In most instances this translates into one of two programmatic models:

- **Match-up arrangements:** A “home provider” rents space to a “home seeker”—sometimes, at a reduced rate if the home seeker can also provide services.
- **Shared living residences:** Tenants have private bedrooms but share common space, kitchens, bathrooms, laundry and/or recreational facilities.¹

For the purposes of this report, the term *shared housing* will refer exclusively to these two program models. The study will address related housing models to a limited extent—particularly, in cases where those models overlap directly with shared housing (e.g., shared supportive housing at The Aurora). It is not, however, the purpose of this report to offer a detailed description or critique of those related housing types.

The study will focus on six programs in New York City and Long Island, placing strong emphasis on those operating within the five boroughs. Shared housing tends to serve a primarily elderly population, so much of the discussion will focus on the needs of that particular group. To the extent that individual projects also serve other populations, such as the developmentally disabled or people living with AIDS, the report will also attempt to assess how the needs of those groups differ from or resemble the needs of the elderly.

Because much of the literature on shared housing focuses on programs outside the New York area, the study will necessarily involve some mention of national shared housing issues. It should be emphasized, however, that the purpose of the report is to offer a summary of the issues facing shared housing programs in New York City and its suburbs. New Jersey shared housing programs, though plentiful and worthy of serious study, will not receive attention here—primarily, because the political,

¹ As described in more detail later, the legislation drafted by the Kimmel Foundation further distinguishes between shared living residences and what it calls “shared multiple dwellings,” that is, buildings with more than one shared apartment; however, this differentiation is not made anywhere else in the literature of shared housing.

legal and regulatory context in New Jersey differs so dramatically from that of New York State.

Primary research for the study included in-person interviews with six program directors, three interview sessions with residents of shared housing and informal discussions with a variety of shared housing advocates, program directors and governmental agency representatives. Secondary research involved a review of literature on shared housing and related models that included books, articles and unpublished documents on that subject.

The qualitative nature of this research reflects CHPC's charge from the Lavanburg Foundation. The questions posed to shared housing developers, managers, service providers, tenants and policymakers in the New York City area were, for the most part, designed to solicit non-quantitative responses. Among the issues this report attempts to address are:

- What is the history of shared housing, and how did the current models evolve?
- How are shared housing programs and projects developed and managed in the New York City area?
- Who benefits from shared housing?
- For what groups is shared housing most cost effective?
- What draws people to live in shared housing (e.g., economic necessity, services, companionship)?
- How satisfied are current residents of shared housing? What factors contribute to their satisfaction or dissatisfaction?
- What policy issues and funding programs influence the success or failure of shared housing, both past and present?
- What can be learned from specific program models in the New York City area?

Given its broad scope and limited length, this report will be able to address these issues only in an introductory fashion. Wherever possible, however, it will refer the reader to more comprehensive analyses and will suggest areas for future study.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Homesharing, defined broadly, is a very old and well-established practice in the United States. For early American settlers and homesteaders, whose limited resources frequently required group living arrangements, homesharing was often an important means of ensuring economic stability and growth. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, families frequently rented out spaces in their homes to others as a means of generating income. In rural locations this practice was also a means of securing help around the house or in the fields while providing lodgers with the opportunity to gain a foothold within a community. (See Jaffe, 1989, pp. 13–14.)

As industrial production created increased demand for a large urban labor force, shared housing options became simultaneously more plentiful and more institutional. Rooming houses, lodging houses, commercial hotels and shared worker housing developments proliferated in industrial cities, where high real estate costs made private apartments out of reach for much of the workforce. Shared housing arrangements were particularly attractive to migrants, immigrants and young people, many of whom had left their families in other parts of the nation or the world.

As Joyce Mantell and Mary Gildea point out, both the pre-industrial and the industrial models of homesharing tended to appeal to those in "transitional periods in the life cycle":

Homes tended to open up for home sharing when the families' own children were moving away or when a spouse had recently died. Couples in their forties and fifties and single homeowners often entered the home sharing market to supplement lost income, to gain companionship, or to obtain help with chores. . . . [H]omeseekers were in transition between family life and adulthood, unmarried, or starting a new job and wanting independence from the constraints of family life. (Jaffe, 1989, p. 14)

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, however, shared housing, in its various forms, came under attack by housing reformers. Often associated with "substandard" forms of housing and linked with the "immoral" behaviors of immigrants and the poor, shared housing came to represent a threat to middle-class notions of family life. (See, for example, Franck & Ahrentzen, pp. 21–22.) As Victorian attitudes gave way to Progressive Era social activism, reformers began to define the home and the family in increasingly narrow terms, developing an elaborate ideology around the notion of the single-family residence.

This ideology became codified in two important ways during the first half of the twentieth century. First, as municipalities around America began to adopt zoning resolutions, the single-purpose neighborhood of single-family dwellings became a widely accepted standard for development. Most American cities and towns (unlike their European counterparts) defined *family* narrowly, leaving unrelated inhabitants outside the embrace of such housing arrangements. Shared housing was thus systematically excluded from a large share of new suburban developments. Secondly, the economic and housing booms of the 1920s and the 1950s allowed a large number of Americans to own single-family homes for the first time. Higher incomes and lower housing costs, combined with restrictive zoning, dramatically reduced the incentive for these new homeowners to take on lodgers.

Urban areas, where single-family zoning was less of an issue, presented a different set of threats to shared housing. Market forces, combined with federal urban renewal programs, led to the systematic reduction of rooming houses, commercial hotels and other forms of shared housing during the mid-century decades. Public housing, which sometimes rose up from the ashes of demolished neighborhoods, provided more conventional private apartments and usually restricted subleases. As a result, shared housing options were reduced significantly between 1920 and 1970 in both urban and suburban neighborhoods.

In terms of sheer numbers, shared housing has not recovered from the impact of those early- and mid-twentieth-century policies and perceptions. Changing demographics, tightening housing markets and more liberal attitudes about lifestyle have, however, led to a range of new shared housing models during the late twentieth century. Those models include Abbeyfield housing, co-housing, some supportive single-room-occupancy (SRO) housing, shared living residences and homesharing match-up arrangements.

- **Abbeyfield housing.** Beginning in the 1950s, the Abbeyfield housing model — providing shared housing and modest nursing services in buildings housing ten to forty seniors — emerged in Britain, spreading quickly to Canada. Organized around local societies (and now boasting an international governing body), the Abbeyfield movement promotes a clear organizational structure, development model and ideology. (See Hemmens, Hoch, Carp, pp. 87–103.) Projects tend to cater to low- and middle-income residents and rely on volunteer labor to save on operating costs; rents are scaled according to the residents' income. While American projects such as Harvest Houses on Long Island have drawn inspiration from the Abbeyfield model, the movement has yet to gain widespread currency in the United States.
- **Co-housing.** *Co-housing* is a relatively recent term used to describe a collaborative development and group-living movement popularized in Denmark. First articulated by Danish architect Jan Gudmand-Hoyer and his colleagues in 1964, the concept grew into reality in the co-housing communities that began to emerge in suburban Copenhagen during the late 1960s. The model emphasizes participatory design and development, collaborative financing, shared resources and sweat equity. Projects are typically envisioned as attached or semi-attached private houses built around shared recreational space, community facilities and dining areas. Akin to early-twentieth-century planned suburbs such as Sunnyside Gardens or Radburn, the model maintains the notion of the private house or apartment while emphasizing the importance of shared neighborhood space and participation in community activities and decision-making.

While some co-housing developments attempt to emphasize affordability and economic diversity, the vast majority do not. Residents are generally young or middle-aged professionals with children, and most work in urban areas close to the co-housing development. Co-housing began to catch on in the United States during the 1980s, leading to a number of successful developments throughout the country. (See McCamant and Durrett.)

- **Supportive SRO housing.** Primarily an urban model, supportive housing in renovated single-room-occupancy buildings began to emerge in New York City during the 1970s in response to burgeoning, crisis-level homelessness. Although many SRO buildings are renovated in such a way that tenants live in private efficiency apartments, some buildings still rely on shared bathroom and/or

cooking facilities. Most supportive housing projects also provide a high degree of shared community space, as well as facilities for on-site case management. Supportive housing differs dramatically from other types of shared housing in that it serves a much broader range of special-needs tenants and tends to house very-low-income individuals.

- ***Shared Living Residences and match-up programs.*** These two models constitute what is generally referred to as “shared housing” in the United States and are, as such, the focus of this report. Shared Living Residences in the U.S. emerged at about the same time as the Abbeyfield movement began in Britain but met with a far less enthusiastic response. It was not until the 1970s that the model began to receive acceptance among senior housing and service providers, and the movement did not really take off until the 1980s, when the cause was bolstered by the support of Gray Panther Maggie Kuhn’s Philadelphia conference on shared living for seniors. Match-up programs, too, received a great deal of attention in the 1980s. Like Shared Living Residences, they emphasized shared space, companionship and affordability for seniors and were a logical corollary to that model.

In spite of strong arguments about its cost-effectiveness and its potential social benefits, shared housing in the United States lost some of its momentum during the mid-1990s. Particularly in New York, shared housing remains a small and ill-publicized housing movement at the turn of the millennium. Even among those who work in housing development and management, shared housing is a little-known phenomenon.

A variety of factors seem to account for this loss of momentum. The popularization of assisted living for the elderly during the 1990s has served to direct attention away from shared housing initiatives. Government funding programs tended to dry up as shared housing lost its aura of innovation, or as agency attitudes about shared space changed. Zoning obstacles and community opposition in suburban and rural locations also played a role in slowing the proliferation of shared housing. Each of those issues is explored more thoroughly in the next section.

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND REGULATORY CONTEXT

The emergence of shared housing in the United States is directly related to major demographic, social and economic changes during the last several decades. Between 1980 and 1997, the median age in the United States rose from 30 to 34.9 years of age; the number of residents above 65 rose from approximately 25.5 million to over 34 million. While the entire population of the U.S. rose by just over 18 percent, the population over 65 rose by 33 percent. (US Bureau of the Census, 1998, p. 15) The "very old" (those over 75) are currently the fastest-growing age group in the U.S. and are expected to grow from 5 percent of the total population in 1980 to 10 percent by 2030 (Howe, p. 186).

Beginning in the 1970s, economic shifts, combined with changes in societal perceptions, led many women into the workforce for the first time, thereby reducing the ability and desire of many families to take care of their aging parents. By 1980, furthermore, 70 percent of householders over sixty-five owned their own homes, making them far less inclined to move in with children or to relocate to more institutional settings (Howe, p. 186).

In spite of a desire among many seniors to stay in their own homes after age sixty-five, many cannot keep pace with rising housing maintenance costs because of low retirement incomes. A large percentage also face health and/or mobility problems that make independent living difficult. Further, many of those who live alone suffer from loneliness, feel disconnected from the world around them and are concerned about their safety.

Proponents of shared housing often refer to the aging of America in explaining the importance of their model. Match-up programs provide an opportunity to house this burgeoning population by maximizing the use of existing housing resources, thereby avoiding the expense and complications of development. Shared living residences, which generally do involve capital spending, provide a more efficient use of space, thereby cutting down substantially on development and operating costs.² Consequently, both of these models can pass savings on to residents and serve those in greater financial need³

In addition to the cost argument, shared housing providers and advocates point to a variety of other benefits. Match-up programs enable many elderly homeowners to remain in their homes; they provide a resource for home upkeep and chores; and they can give both home provider and homesharer a greater sense of security and companionship. Homesharing models can also provide what one director calls a "form of preventative medicine," reducing the stress associated with living alone and ensuring that there will be someone to act quickly in the event that one or the other

² The Kimmel Foundation estimates the development costs of a two-person unit in a "shared multiple dwelling" at \$120,000, comparing this figure to New York State's Division of Housing and Community Renewal(DHCR) Housing Trust Fund program allocation of up to \$75,000 per unit for private apartments (or \$150,000 for two one-bedroom apartments).

³ Although shared housing often does not serve the neediest segment of the elderly population, there is no shortage of data regarding the extent of poverty among the elderly — particularly, elderly women. According to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), more than 40 percent of elderly American women living alone subsist on incomes at or below 125 percent of poverty level (AARP, 1995, p.7). The situation is worse in New York: A 1999 Community Service Society report found that in New York City 40 percent of all elderly residents live on less than \$15,000 per year (Evans, p. 6).

of the sharers is in an accident or becomes ill. In cases of heterogeneous homesharing (e.g., intergenerational matches or seniors living with developmentally disabled individuals), the model can also promote greater understanding and acceptance between members of different groups.

As noted previously, homesharing models began to proliferate in the U.S. during the 1980s, leading to a variety of experiments and new funding sources. The development of homesharing networks was not distributed evenly across the country, however. New Jersey, Vermont and Minnesota were particularly receptive to the model and continue to be leaders in the field. In Minnesota the state has a dedicated funding line (\$400,000 in 1999) for match-up programs.⁴ In New Jersey, where the Mount Laurel decision mandates that localities provide resources for affordable housing, Shared Living Residences have become one of the preferred means of compliance.

In New York State, government involvement with shared housing was most intensive during the 1980s and early 1990s. During this period several government-supported technical assistance and funding programs emerged at both the state and the local level. They included:

- **DHCR Shared Housing Opportunities Program ("SHOP").** Created in 1982 by Howard Kimmel (now president of the Anna and Phillip Kimmel Foundation), the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal's SHOP program provided technical assistance, educational services, informational resources and advocacy to organizations interested in developing shared housing programs. The program, which did not have a budget, nevertheless played an important role in popularizing the notion of shared housing and facilitating discussion among program developers and state agencies. DHCR discontinued SHOP in 1989 because of staffing limitations.
- **SOFA/DHCR/Cornell University Shared Housing Education Program.** In 1986 the New York State Office for the Aging (SOFA) joined forces with Cornell University and DHCR to implement a statewide community education program on shared housing. Funded through an allocation from the federal government, the program offered training in program development, financing, planning and zoning to nonprofit groups and local officials.
- **DHCR Shared Housing Development Program.** Initiated in 1987, this program provided up to \$20,000 per unit for the development of accessory apartments, elder cottages and shared living residences.⁵ It also provided funding for the creation and operation of match-up programs. The program had a total budget of about \$2 million and closed down in 1998.
- **SOFA/OMRDD Joint Program.** In 1991 the New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disability (OMRDD) created a joint funding program with SOFA to encourage match-up placements between the elderly and the developmentally disabled. The program initially involved training for senior match-up program administrators and service providers working with the

⁴ According to Shelley Young, a match-up program director in Minnesota, the legislature expects to cut this funding after 2001.

⁵ Accessory apartments are private apartments built within existing homes; elder cottages are small outbuildings developed adjacent to existing homes.

developmentally disabled. During its first three years, the program resulted in approximately two hundred matches between developmentally disabled individuals and elderly homeowners. Because many developmentally disabled individuals relied on relatively small SSI or SSD disbursements for their incomes, however, many could not support rent and services in their new accommodations. In response, the focus of the program was changed to provide direct rental and service subsidies to developmentally disabled homesharers. (Stone, pp. 25–29.) Richmond Senior Services and the New York Foundation for Senior Citizens are the only New York City organizations still receiving funding through this program.

- ***Department for the Aging.*** Beginning in the late 1970s, the New York City Department for the Aging sponsored a pilot funding initiative for match-up programs. The program lasted into the late 1980s, when agency support lapsed. Some borough presidents opted to use discretionary funds to make up for the funding loss, using DFTA as the agency in charge of administering the funds.

Although shared living residences continue to emerge in New York and around the country, most capital funding programs for senior housing have shifted their focus toward more service-intensive and expensive assisted-living programs. The HUD 202 program, another major source for senior housing, does not allow for shared living arrangements. Match-up programs have fared even less well during the last few years, because many were formed using short-term private seed funding and could not sustain themselves once that funding ran out.

Currently, there is little direct funding in New York State for shared housing development and program operations. According to one official at the state's Office for the Aging, programs were discontinued for a variety of reasons, including a lack of sophisticated applicants, frequent zoning problems and — perhaps, most fundamentally — the fact that shared housing arrangements are "low-preference items" for most eligible tenants. State agencies have concluded that most people, given the option, would prefer to live alone. This has led to the de-emphasizing of shared living arrangements in favor of deeper subsidies for private apartments.

In spite of the state's movement away from funding earmarked specifically for shared housing, efforts are currently underway to create a new, much larger shared housing capital program. At the beginning of 1999, the Anna and Phillip Kimmel Foundation, a small private foundation based on Long Island, put together draft legislation for a \$6-million program to be administered by DHCR. The legislation, introduced by State Senator Leibell and State Assembly Member Clark in the summer of 1999, provides for the following:

- ***"Shared Living Residences."*** The legislation provides up to \$50,000 per unit (i.e., private room) for acquisition and rehabilitation. Shared Living Residences are defined as "large family sized living structures that would provide private individual bedrooms with large shared areas serving as kitchens, dining areas and other living areas."
- ***"Shared Multiple Dwellings."*** Up to \$75,000 is allowed for the first sharer household (i.e., two private rooms, each one equipped with handicapped-accessible bathrooms), and up to \$45,000 in acquisition and rehabilitation costs is supplied for each additional sharer household. Shared Multiple Dwellings are defined as large buildings with several discrete households, all of which share common areas and building resources. The legislation assumes that these

projects would also be eligible for up to \$75,000 per sharer household through DHCR's Housing Trust Fund program.

- **Match-up programs.** Up to \$50,000 is given for the start-up costs of new programs, and up to \$25,000 per year for the ongoing costs of existing programs.

The legislation requires that at least 50 percent of Shared Living Residence tenants be above age fifty-five and that 100 percent of the units be affordable to people earning 80 percent of the area's median income. Income limits for tenants are not set out in the legislation, since it was the intent of the Kimmel Foundation to foster "socially and economically diverse" projects. No income limits were mandated for match-up programs.

New York State's FY 1999–2000 saw a remarkable \$17-million increase in funding for housing programs, including the addition of two new programs. The odds of similar increases occurring in FY 2000–01 are extremely low. The Kimmel legislation's emphasis on seniors, combined with its applicability to non-urban locations, should make it somewhat more attractive to legislators from suburban and rural locations, however, thereby increasing its chances of renewed funding.

Financing is not the only obstacle to shared housing development. Particularly in suburban and rural locations, restrictive single-family zoning continues to daunt many would-be shared housing managers and developers. One strategy for overcoming restrictive zoning involves broadening the definition of *family* to include non-related co-inhabitants, a strategy used by Harvest Houses. Another approach entails applying for a license or a variance permitting a "group home" (the zoning category under which shared living residences fall) in a single-family neighborhood. Both approaches are complex and time consuming, however — particularly, if community members choose to fight the development. (Pollack and Gorman, pp. 25–29.)

In spite of all the obstacles, however, most shared housing providers, program directors and residents continue to express enthusiasm for the model. And as the following analysis suggests, shared housing generally does achieve its goals of allowing homeowners to remain in place, maximizing existing housing, conserving capital funding and providing enhanced opportunities for companionship.

PROGRAM ANALYSIS

This analysis grows out of series of interviews and site visits carried out during the summer of 1999.

Case studies performed for this report attempt to present a range of perspectives on the successes and failures of several shared housing programs in the New York City area during the last two decades or so. The six programs included in the study constitute about half of the shared housing programs (active and inactive) in New York City and in Westchester, Nassau and Suffolk counties. The sample was selected to meet a variety of criteria:

- The sample covers urban programs (Eviction Intervention Services, The New York Foundation for Senior Citizens, The Burden Center, The Aurora), semi-urban programs (Richmond Senior Services) and suburban programs (Harvest Houses).
- It addresses match-up programs, Shared Living Residences, and "Shared Multiple Dwellings."
- It looks at shared housing programs serving a variety of clients, including the elderly, the developmentally disabled, people living with AIDS and low-income working people.
- It includes service-intensive programs and low-service programs.
- It includes active programs and inactive programs.
- It encompasses small programs, mid-sized programs and large programs.

Resident interviews were more difficult to arrange than were interviews with program directors. Some program directors cited concerns about residents' privacy; others simply could not generate interest or cooperation among residents. CHPC offered to provide small stipends to focus group participants, but even this did not inspire interest. In spite of this difficulty, however, three shared housing residents in two locations did agree to be interviewed for this report. This direct feedback, combined with the more thorough tenant research performed at The Aurora by the Partnership for Community Health, provides a good complement to the information provided by program directors.

Program Administration and Development

The mere fact that New York City and Westchester, Nassau and Suffolk counties support only nine active homesharing programs (and have seen four other programs fail) illustrates the obstacles that this model faces locally. In contrast, New Jersey's Bergen and Essex counties together offer approximately fifteen homesharing programs.

A variety of factors appear to contribute to shared housing's struggle in downstate New York counties.

Lack of targeted funding. By far, the most important factor that has an impact on the limited proliferation of shared housing in New York is the lack of dedicated government funding sources earmarked for match-up programs and shared living residences.

The legislation drafted by the Kimmel Foundation, if adopted, would substantially alter this situation. Whether the infusion of funding would prompt established nonprofit developers and service providers to move into the shared housing field, or the funds would be used primarily by existing shared housing providers, is unclear.

Agency skepticism. As noted above, New York State agencies opted to discontinue targeted funding because of a widely held belief that shared living is a "low-preference item" for those in need of housing. In addition, a large portion of federal, state and city capital funds is channeled through programs with strict design guidelines that generally favor efficiency apartments over shared facilities.

Lack of rental subsidies. The minimal number of incremental Section 8 vouchers and certificates provided by HUD during the middle and late 1990s has made it more difficult for shared living residence managers and match-up program administrators to serve low-income people. OMRDD's move toward rental and service subsidies for developmentally disabled homesharers demonstrates that successful, affordable shared housing requires an ongoing investment.

Lack of interest among more sophisticated developers. Perhaps because of the lack of targeted funding, shared housing has not attracted much attention among the larger, more sophisticated nonprofit or for-profit developers in the New York area. Common Ground's involvement in The Aurora is one exception, although Common Ground's role is that of property manager, not developer. In general, developers of shared housing tend to be small organizations and are unaccustomed to assembling complex financing packages. As a result, many groups rely on private fundraising or single-source government grants to underwrite their projects.

Labor intensiveness. Shared housing programs (particularly match-up programs) are extremely labor intensive. Although match-up programs tend to rely on a single program administrator, they often draw extensively on volunteers and other agency resources. Homesharers frequently rely on program administrators for much more than placement, even when the program is not staffed to handle ongoing mediation or counseling. New York's housing scarcity, combined with the high cost of housing, makes finding appropriate apartment shares more difficult, thereby intensifying the workload. Shared Living Residences are also somewhat more labor intensive than conventional housing arrangements, because there is a more conscious effort to build community and a greater need to resolve disputes. On the other hand, they are substantially less labor intensive than nursing homes, assisted living programs or supportive housing.

Lack of public understanding. Shared housing plays such a small role in the New York housing market that it is not widely recognized or understood by those who might benefit from it. Dorothy Landau-Crawford, director of Richmond Senior Services, indicated that the National Shared Housing Resource Center attempted to build a national publicity campaign for shared housing some years ago but could not find an appropriate spokesperson. The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) publishes several free pamphlets on the model, and several homesharing manuals exist. Nevertheless, until New York offers a greater number and variety of programs, public understanding of the model is likely to remain vague.

Zoning. Zoning is an obstacle to shared living residences primarily in suburban and rural environments. Of the six programs discussed above, only Harvest Houses encountered any zoning disputes. Zoning is a major concern for New York State

funding agencies, however, and has contributed to their decision to move away from targeted funding for shared housing.

Cost–Benefit

Match-up programs. None of the match-up programs featured in this report could support more than one paid full-time staff person, although in every case that staff person could draw on other organizational resources and/or volunteers. The annual rate of successful placements varied considerably from program to program — from fewer than ten at the Burden Center to over ninety at Eviction Intervention Services. This particular disparity appears to result primarily from EIS's ability to rally a large number of placement staff volunteers, although it may also have to do with differences in outreach strategy, rent expectations and target clientele. The New York Foundation for Senior Citizens, for example, makes between twenty and thirty matches per year but finds apartments at rents dramatically lower than those found by EIS. In general, with the exception of the Burden Center, all of the match-up programs featured in this report achieve remarkable results, given their tiny budgets and tight staffing.

Shared Living Residences. Even the small number of Shared Living Residences discussed in this report is too varied to allow general cost–benefit conclusions to be drawn. The Aurora, for example, is a deeply subsidized affordable-housing project with intensive on-site services; Simonson Place's affordable rents result primarily from location and the absence of services; and Marie's Place and Harvest Houses offer more extensive resources but charge rents hovering around \$1,000 per month.

The diversity among these projects also makes it difficult to compare their development costs. It is fair to assume, however, that the Kimmel Foundation is correct in asserting that shared facilities cut down on overall development costs by reducing the number of bathrooms and kitchens necessary and by reducing the overall square footage per occupant. Shared housing also allows tenants to economize on utilities, household supplies, and food.

Physical Space and Design

It was not the purpose of this report to perform a particularly detailed assessment of how physical space and design influence the success or failure of shared housing arrangements. Nevertheless, a few observations bear mentioning:

Lack of design principles. Unlike Co-housing or Abbeyfield housing, shared housing is not a coherent movement with a well-articulated design ethic. The layout of shared living residences appears to be driven by social, economic and contextual factors far more than by overarching design principles.

Space constraints. In New York City, homesharers placed together through match-up programs often struggle with space constraints. Small apartments and a lack of outdoor space add an additional layer of complication to homesharing arrangements.

Importance of private space. In spite of the fact that shared space is the defining principle of the model, most shared housing providers emphasize the importance of privacy. The more private space homesharers have, the more satisfied they are likely to be.

Shared living residence size. Opinions regarding the appropriate size of shared living residences varied slightly. Mid-size and large facilities (such as Marie's Place and The Aurora, respectively) tend to be divided up into distinct apartments housing two, three or four people each. The directors of those programs did not believe that putting more than four people into an apartment made any sense. The overall size of the project does affect the ability of residents to get to know each other; it does not seem to have an impact on the viability of a project as a whole, however, nor does it seem to influence the success of the apartment-sharer relationship. By contrast, Sister Jeanne Brendel of Harvest Houses argued that eight people sharing the same facilities works quite well, creating a critical mass of activity and interaction while maintaining a level of intimacy.⁶

Sociological Factors

The most interesting and difficult part of this analysis involves the sociology of shared housing. Why do people choose to live together, and how well does it work? Are there identifiable patterns regarding successful matches and successful programs? What are the major points of cooperation and conflict among homesharers?

Compatibility issues. Both the primary and the secondary research performed for this report points toward a general lack of consensus about what makes a successful homesharing arrangement. For example, some argued strongly that intergenerational matches do not work well (because of lifestyle conflicts), while others indicated that many intergenerational matches work extremely well, since differences in schedule often allow for greater independence and privacy for each sharer. The most commonly shared conclusion appears to be that the success of homesharing fundamentally depends on finding professional placement staff who are capable of assessing interpersonal compatibility on a case-by-case basis. This compatibility may be influenced by a variety of external factors (e.g., age, religion, personal habits) but must be re-evaluated in each case.

Motivation for homesharing. There is a much greater degree of consensus regarding what motivates people to live in shared housing. Although most program directors will argue that loneliness and difficulty with home upkeep do play a part in the decision to share a home, they also admit that those who have other options — hiring a home-care professional, living in a private apartment in an assisted-living residence and so on — will usually avoid sharing space. People who choose to share housing tend to do so out of economic necessity. Because most shared housing is not heavily subsidized, few homesharers are genuinely poor; however, many are unable to compete for private housing in New York's very expensive market. Home providers who participate in match-up programs are those most likely to give greater weight to

⁶ Karen Franck, discussing a 1981 homesharing study by S. West, draws a correlation between project size, resident satisfaction and project design. She writes: "Significantly those residents in West's research who were most satisfied with group living were living in groups of 6 to 10 members; those least satisfied were in groups of 16 to 20. Building form contributed significantly to the amount of active social sharing among residents. The greatest amount of social interaction occurred in buildings of several stories, such as townhouses, and the least amount occurred in sites with detached, horizontal layouts. Residents in the former also were more satisfied with the amount of privacy they had. Since these were older houses, West speculates that the townhouses may have had more transition spaces and niches (stair landings and breakfast nooks) that allowed casual exchanges between residents when they were on their way somewhere." (Franck and Ahrentzen, p. 6.)

non-financial considerations, because they are generally more financially stable than home seekers.

Length of stay. Length of stay in shared housing varies widely. Many senior homesharers tend to stay (in the words of one program director) "until death or nursing home," since there is often nowhere else that they can afford to go. Younger homesharers tend to stay for less extensive periods of time, because homesharing for that group is often a temporary solution to a short-term financial or personal transition (e.g., divorce).

Heterogeneous matches or homogeneous matches. Many directors of match-up programs cited high success rates for homesharing between elderly and developmentally disabled individuals. Most attributed this to the added level of services provided to developmentally disabled homesharers. Senior homesharers knew they could call someone if problems arose and often enjoyed having another person come to the house on a regular basis.

Other types of heterogeneous matches are not as universally endorsed, although there do seem to be strong indications that heterogeneous homeshares are likely to work at least as well as homogeneous shares. The Aurora survey found a slightly higher rate of satisfaction among intergenerational homesharers; Gloria Milliken at EIS argued that matches between men and women tend to be more successful than other kinds of heterogeneous matches. As noted above, however, there is no rule of thumb regarding this issue.

Katherine Aswel, of the New York Foundation for Senior Citizens, indicated that many of her clients express a preference for a homesharer from a particular religious or racial group; however, the extent to which those preferences result in the exclusion of particular racial, ethnic or religious groups could not be determined.

Common interests or association. Jim, a resident of Harvest Houses, argued convincingly that successful shared housing depends upon some sort of baseline affiliation, such as religion or union membership. This observation was corroborated by match-up program participants Marie and Mabel, whose success appears to derive (at least in part) from their shared Catholicism. The importance of this kind of social affinity appears to grow in proportion to the number of homesharers living together, because the potential for conflict rises in a larger group. Harvest Houses encourages a notion of family among its homesharers, and shared religious outlook is an important tool for developing this feeling.

Equality. Successful homesharing appears to work better in situations where homesharers have roughly equal responsibilities and levels of authority within the house. Since there is an inherent inequality in home-sharing arrangements where one person is a homeowner or long-term renter, many match-up program directors insist that homesharers split rent, household chores and physical space evenly. Shared living residences are better equipped to keep homesharers on equal terms from the outset and to intervene in situations where one person inclines toward dominating behavior.

Independence and dependence. Studies of intergenerational homesharing in particular tend to concentrate on the degree to which independence and dependence contribute to successful matches. Again, much depends upon the personality, preferences and needs of particular individuals. In the case of Marie and Mabel, Mabel was perhaps too independent for Marie, who was looking for more

companionship; at the same time, Mabel's independence appeared to contribute to the success of their relationship, because the two women's limited time together allowed less opportunity for conflict. Interestingly, homeshares where one individual is formally dependent on another for services or home care tend to last longer than matches with higher levels of independence (Jaffe, *Caring Strangers*, 1989, p. 206).

CONCLUSION

Because of the breadth of this report, there is almost no subject covered herein that could not be explored in much greater depth. Potential areas for future research include: comparisons between shared housing programs throughout New York State, or between New York and other states; more detailed analyses of the conceptualization, financing, design and management of particular projects; discussion of ways in which shared housing might serve a needier population; and assessments of demographic changes and/or trends in housing (e.g., how many households in New York might be classified as "underutilized").

Sociologists have been studying the social implications of shared housing for at least two decades now, but the literature remains somewhat thin. To some extent, no amount of study will answer the basic questions about what makes homesharing successful, who is best served by it or even whether it is a good idea. The results of the Aurora survey illustrate the difficulty of drawing clear conclusions about such a heterogeneous group of people. The diversity of programs and projects under the shared housing banner complicates the analysis even further.

Based on the research performed for this report, it appears that shared housing, in most of its various incarnations, achieves its goals. It is relatively affordable, it helps senior homeowners remain in place, it makes more efficient use of existing housing resources and development dollars and it encourages social interaction and vitality among residents. All of this recommends shared housing as a valuable, if minor, contributor to New York's housing market.

Perhaps the most significant unanswered question remaining is whether there will ever be a large audience for shared housing or whether, on some fundamental level, it simply goes against the grain of most Americans' expectations about housing, family and community. The historical prevalence of homesharing (defined broadly) underscores the fact that such expectations evolve over time and are always mediated by changing social norms and economic conditions. In the face of a mushrooming elderly population and a potential Social Security crisis, Americans may very well be forced into more pragmatic attitudes about issues like privacy in housing. For the time being, however, it seems clear that shared housing advocates have a long way to go before the model achieves anything like widespread understanding or acceptance.

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SHARED HOUSING PROGRAMS: NEW YORK CITY AND WESTCHESTER, NASSAU AND SUFFOLK COUNTIES

Active Programs

Program: The Aurora: Actors Fund of America/Common Ground Community
Type: Shared Living Residence/Supportive Housing
Address: West 57th Street
New York, NY
Contact: Barbara Davis
Phone: (212) 221-7300

Program: Eviction Intervention Services
Type: Match-Up
Address: 150 East 62nd Street
New York, NY 10021
Contact: Gloria Milliken
Phone: (212) 308-2210

Program: NY Foundation for Senior Citizens
Type: Match-Up
Address: 150 Nassau Street
New York, NY 10007
Contact: Katherine Aswel
Phone: (212) 962-7559

Program: Project SHARE: Richmond Senior Services
Type: Shared Living Residence / Match-Up
Address: 500 Jewett Avenue
Staten Island, NY 10302
Contact: Dorothy Landau-Crawford
Phone: (718) 816-1811

Program: Babylon Homesharing
Type: Match-Up
Address: Town Hall Annex, Room 9
281 Phelps Lane
North Babylon, NY 11703
Contact: Beth Eggleton
Phone: (516) 422-7671

Program: Harvest Houses
Type: Shared Living Residence
Address: 235 Cold Spring Road
Syosset, NY 11791
Contact: Sister Jeanne Brendel
Phone: (516) 482-9044

Program: Project SHARE: Family Services Assn. Of Nassau County
Type: Match-Up
Address: 336 Fulton Avenue
Hempstead, NY 11551
-Contact: Jessie Inz
Phone: (516) 292-1300

Program: A Home
Type: Shared Living Residence
Address: P.O. Box 745
Chappaqua, NY 10514
Contact: Joan Arnold
Phone: (914) 666-0740

Program: Westchester Residential Opportunities
Type: Match-Up
Address: 470 Mamaroneck Avenue, Suite 410
White Plains, NY 10605
Contact: Doris Schear
Phone: (914) 428-4507

Inactive Programs

Program: Burden Center for the Aging
Type: Match-Up
Address: 1751 Second Avenue
New York, NY 10128
Contact: Bill Dionne
Phone: (212) 879-7400

Program: HANAC Senior Center
Type: Match-Up
Address: 31-14 30th Avenue
Astoria, NY 11102

Program: Jamaica Services Program for Older Adults
Type: Match-Up
Address: 92-47 165th Street
Jamaica, NY 11433

Program: Greater Sheepshead Bay Development Corp.
Type: Match-Up
Address: 2930 Avenue X
Brooklyn, NY 11235