rehoused. Out of this effort began the second housing experiment at Columbia Point: its $250 million transformation into the mixed-income community now called Harbor Point.

In 1986, the Harbor Point Apartments Company was formed as an equal partnership between the CPCTF and a private development team led by Corcoran, Mullin, Jenkinson, Inc. The extraordinarily complex financing of Harbor Point involved a high degree of coordination between public sector agencies at all levels of government working together with a wide variety of private investors. Overall, approximately $175 million of the financing came from diverse government loans and grant programs, and $75 million was raised from private syndications, made feasible only when Congress, in 1987, passed special rules to preserve tax breaks for investors in Harbor Point. An attempt to obtain public funding to subsidize moderate-income housing to complement the low-income and market-rate units did not come through, however.

The redevelopment involved the demolition of approximately half of the buildings on the site, and the wholesale rehabilitation of all of the others. There was also substantial new construction of both townhouses and midrise buildings. The architects, Goody, Clancy & Associates and Mintz Associates, working with the landscape architecture firm of Carol R. Johnson & Associates, thoroughly reconfigured the site plan to make better use of water views, while creating a street grid reminiscent of Boston’s Back Bay neighborhood. The Harbor Point program also provided for new amenities, such as tennis courts, swimming pools, and various other recreational opportunities, plus an on-site system of support services, including day care, health services, and senior citizen programs.

After the first buildings were opened in 1987, 335 of the 350 tenant families remaining at Columbia Point when the redevelopment began moved into new apartments at Harbor Point. The redevelopment was completed in 1991 and, as of 1998, Harbor Point was operating at more than 90% occupancy. That said, it operated at a loss during its first years, due primarily to a soft real estate market that necessitated lower than expected rents.

With 400 of Harbor Point’s 1,283 units reserved for low-income families for the length of a 99-year lease, some heavily subsidized housing is guaranteed to remain. At Harbor Point, there is no difference in the design and level of amenities provided for subsidized and market rate apartments, and there is a formal agreement to make sure that no building houses more than 50% subsidized tenants, thereby ensuring a mixture of incomes throughout the development.

Both during and after the redevelopment process, Harbor Point was subject to considerable scrutiny in the local press, with criticism centered on the high level of public investment and on doubts about the prospects for social mixing between market rate tenants (most of whom are single individuals or couples and are highly transient) and the low-income, former public housing residents (most of whom are from larger families intending to remain for the long term). Other critics bemoaned the loss of subsidized units, noting that Harbor Point would house only about one quarter of the low-income families that Columbia Point did when it was fully occupied.

Overall, however, praise for the Harbor Point experiment has more than balanced the voices of its detractors. Despite its high public costs, many point to the inestimable societal value of transforming the single most stigmatized place in Boston into an amenity. Co-winner of the 1993 Rudy Bruner Award for Excellence in the Urban Environment, Harbor Point has been lauded not only for the physical and socioeconomic transformation of a dangerous, largely abandoned public housing project into a safe and attractive mixed-income and mixed-race community but it has also been commended as a model for resident involvement in all stages of a redevelopment process. Although the labyrinthine financing of this project may never again be replicated, Harbor Point may yet be an inspiration for other mixed-income public-private housing ventures using tenant-developer partnerships. (SEE ALSO: Urban Redevelopment)

—Lawrence J. Vale

Further Reading


Common Interest Development

Common interest development (CID) is any real estate development in which land or structures or both have been partitioned for sale to individual investors (typically landlords or homeowners) but wherein shared property rights (and sometimes financial responsibilities) are also assigned, whether explicitly or implicitly, with respect to tangible or intangible elements. Commonly, this term is used in reference to a “gated estate”: a walled-off cluster of dwellings built on private roads and accessed through a security checkpoint. Here, residents typically have exclusive use of their home and lot, a deeded right to use roadways and other community facilities, and an obligation to share in the maintenance of community facilities. In principle, the term could also be used to describe a condominium or cooperative housing project because these, too, involve elements of both shared property rights and exclusive use and often also have a concierge or doorman who controls...
access to the site. Consumers are attracted to such development in part because of the secure environment and in part because these developments provide services and amenities simply not possible elsewhere.

When the CID involves more than just a few owners, a system of governance is required. As with condominiums and cooperatives, many CIDs are governed by a special-purpose nonprofit corporation. Such corporations have two main purposes in practice. One is to maintain and operate the elements that compose the CID. The corporation does this typically by levying fees on owners and then spending this revenue on maintenance and repairs. Typically, fees can vary from one owner to the next but have to conform to the contractual agreement by which the CID was created (e.g., a legal declaration in the case of a condominium). The second main purpose of the corporation is to develop and enforce rules for access to, and use of, the common elements and to resolve disputes among owners arising therefrom.

Arguably, the sharing of property rights among neighboring landowners has its legal foundations in a device, originating in common law, known as deed restrictions (alternatively known as restrictive covenants). In land subdivision, deed restrictions are used to prevent purchasers from subsequently using their property in a nonconforming way—for example, building a store in a residential subdivision or storing scrap metal on-site. Early in this century, U.S. courts ruled that each property owner in a land subdivision has the right to see enforced the deed restrictions on other owners.

It can be argued that CIDs are also rooted in the volunteer homeowner associations that sprang up in many neighborhoods over the last half century. Homeowner associations generally form to protect and promote the interests of existing residents. They give local residents greater scope for participating in community decision making as well as a united voice in dealing with politicians, bureaucrats, and real estate developers. However, there is a major difference. Unlike many CIDs, homeowner associations do not own neighborhood assets (e.g., local roads and parks) and cannot prevent nonresidents from entering the neighborhood.

In some respects, a CID is the private sector equivalent of a local government. A CID may maintain roads, sidewalks, parks, streetlights, and water and sewage systems; police traffic; and perhaps even have its own firefighters. However, a CID typically gives each dwelling a vote in community decision making rather than one vote per adult as in local government, and votes typically go just to homeowners (that is, members). In these respects, a CID is more like a club than a municipality. Inherent to a CID, as with almost any club, is some degree of exclusivity, self-segregation, and hence homogeneity. A CID attracts people with similar tastes and incomes and excludes those who cannot afford or do not want that particular bundle of shared property rights. In contrast, a democratic government is thought to be responsive to the needs of all citizens living in the community. (SEE ALSO: Condominium; Cooperative Housing)

—John R. Miron

Further Reading

Community Associations Institute

The Community Associations Institute (CAI) is a national organization of condominium, cooperative, and homeowner associations; builders; developers; insurance and real estate brokers; and individual homeowners. Founded in 1973, the institute is dedicated to developing and distributing the most advanced and effective guidelines for creating, financing, operating, and maintaining community facilities and services. It provides information and referral services, tracks legislation concerned with community association and housing issues, and hosts two national conferences and two law seminars per year. CAI also distributes more than 70 moderately priced publications and newsletters covering legal, financial, and management issues. Membership: 13,000 nationwide (1993). Staff size: 31. Contact person: Barbara Beach, staff vice president, Public Affairs Department. Address: 1630 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. Phone: (703) 548-8600. Fax: (703) 684-1581.

—Caroline Nagel

Community-Based Housing

Community-based housing refers to a range of activities that attempt to provide the residents of low-income neighborhoods with control over housing development and management in their communities. Community-based housing approaches include nonprofit development corporations rehabilitating and operating affordable housing, tenant ownership and management, self-help housing strategies, and land trusts for housing affordability.

The objectives behind a community-based approach to housing center on the development of affordable housing that is sensitive to neighborhood and community needs, that is developed through a democratic process that includes all elements of the community, and that puts ownership and control of housing development in the hands of community members.

The neighborhood movement of the 1970s in the United States saw the first development of a self-conscious, neighborhood-based agenda for housing policy. Groups from across the country coalesced in the early part of the 1970s to discuss methods of combating neighborhood decline, disinvestment, and rapid racial turnover in inner-city neighborhoods. In addition, a number of local groups continued to act to keep urban neighborhoods integrated through efforts to stop the blockbusting, redlining, and steering practices of lenders and real estate brokers. As community-based groups attempted to expand their neighborhood stabilization efforts, they began to focus more on methods to