QUINNIPIAC TERRACE: NETWORKED FINANCING STREAMS AND NEW URBANIST PLANNING IDEALS PITCH A DREAM ON AN OLD PUBLIC HOUSING SITE

ABSTRACT

This thesis evaluates the success of the housing development Quinnipiac Terrace, built by The Housing Authority of New Haven and Trinity Financial in the neighborhood of Fairhaven in New Haven, Connecticut. The study looks in particular to the influence of the “New Urbanist” architectural movement as it was formalized in low-income housing production by the 1996 charter signed by Secretary of HUD Henry Cisneros.

As generalized studies on a national level can nullify the vast differences in quality and implementation of contemporary housing projects built with any of today’s multiple finance tools that include the federal grant program HOPE VI, the Low Income Tax Credit, and input and involvement from local Community Development Corporations (CDC’s), they need to be evaluated on a particularized basis. This paper contributes to a growing body of individual studies of these developments, with the philosophy backed by the literature that these studies are collectively necessary to build a broad view of housing production in the United States today. This housing redevelopment in particular has won several awards and as a product of controversial and uneven programs of low-income housing development should be examined to see on what criterion it can be considered to be the “success” that it has been, what framework or viewpoint must be enabled to view it as such, and conversely by what criterion or via what sort of lens it cannot. There has been substantial discussion, controversy, and media engagement with the architectural movement which arose in the early eighties known as “New Urbanism”. This study will evaluate the goals of the New Urbanists themselves and how they have been adapted into affordable housing production, as well as the success of these goals on their own terms in this particular development. It will then look to how such narrowly defined terms shortchange efforts at revitalization.

The literature review includes a range of ideological and aesthetic viewpoints on these shifts in housing from different theorists and practitioners; mostly but not exclusively from the fields of architecture and urban planning. Structural changes in the low-income housing policy environment throughout the last thirty years are reviewed via these different viewpoints, as is the architectural movement and product of New Urbanism.

In light of the impetus for these goals, which I discussed in the literature review, this study finds that landscaping goals in particular, expensive and the first to go when financing shortfalls occur, could be reassessed and reconfigured in a way that might be more productive than letting the landscape sit fallow and toxic, waiting to be finished by the city.